

SANHS AGM 2021

2020 REPORTS ON SUBJECT COMMITTEES, COLLECTIONS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Natural History Section Report to the AGM 2021

The activities of the Natural History Section over the past year were severely curtailed by the restrictions imposed on meetings due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

We were unable to hold any field meetings and all proposed indoor meetings were also cancelled.

Some members of the Society formed a small informal group to enable meetings to be held through Zoom and Webinar meetings and, with their help and guidance, our section has been able to hold committee meetings, via zoom, to consider our activities in view of the current and potential meeting restrictions.

Their help with the setting up of Webinar meetings, thanks to Dr. Lizzie Induni and the web team, public talks were given. The first, in December was an introductory talk on Fungi given by Stephen Parker and due to its success Stephen followed this with an in-depth series of illustrated lectures during February and March. These lectures were in much greater depth covering the occurrence of fungi in a range of habitats and included Lichens, as they are an association of a fungus and an alga.

In April, Francis Farr-Cox gave an excellent illustrated presentation on British Spiders, a fascinating introduction to the wide variety of spiders to be found here in Somerset.

The section is most grateful to Dr. Induni for hosting these lectures and the committee is hoping to hold further Webinar meetings in the future, details of which will be advertised in the eBulletin and on the SANHS website.

Our last meeting, in May this year, will be our annual members meeting, held as a zoom meeting and hosted by Stephen Parker.

I am pleased to say the Natural History section contributed an engraved brass plaque for the commemorative seat to celebrate Dr. Philip Radford's 100th birthday.

There has been one application to the Pat Hill-Cottingham Memorial Fund for the coming year, which was a modified application of last year's withdrawn application, for equipment to further Entomological Surveys across the Somerset Levels and Moors. The committee approved the application.

The committee continues to edit and publish natural history reports from special interest groups and other papers received for publication in SANH Proceedings and to keep members informed of its activities with reports in the ebulletin and on the SANHS website.

**David Reid,
Chairman.
Natural History Committee.
April 2021.**

Archaeology Report 2020-2021

On 21st February, 2020, before the lockdown, we held a successful Community Archaeology Day at Shipham. Because of Covid restrictions we had to postpone our Annual Archaeology Day for 2020 which was scheduled for March.

On 1st August 2020 we participated in producing the first SANHS webinar on the pottery kiln at Dunster. David Dawson showed us round and explained it all to us.

We have contributed to the SANHS response to HMG consultation "Planning the Future", and we have responded to the proposal to redevelop Debenhams in Taunton.

Our Annual Archaeology Day for 2021 was held on 27th March via Zoom. The speakers were Dr Jodie Lewis on Ritual Neolithic Monuments on Mendip, Jonathan Castro Orellana on A Late Bronze Age Settlement Enclosure at Bishops Lydeard, Shirley Blaylock and Fiona Pink on Exmoor's Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment 2016-2017 and Helen Winton on Aerial Archaeology in Somerset. Many thanks to all the speakers and to Amal and Cat for setting up the meeting and rescuing it when it was about to crash. Over 150 persons attended the meeting and voluntary donations were received.

Our usual committee meetings have continued via Zoom.

We are planning a Bronze Age Study Day for 2nd October 2021. If we are able to have a physical event we hope to hold it at North Cadbury. If not, via Zoom. We already have five excellent speakers lined up.

David Baker (chair).

SANHS – Library Committee annual report

The Committee has not met since February 2020, but the Library continues to tick over. Some new books have been received, and journals continue to arrive regularly – to be processed in batches between lockdowns.

One interesting acquisition was the first few parts of a continuing series called 'River Friend: a series of riverine books', covering all aspects of river ecology, biology, landscape, history and human interaction. SANHS member Dr Sylvia Haslam is a co-author.

Somerset Heritage Centre was closed to the public for most of 2020, so no visitors have been able to use the Library. However, David Bromwich has continued to respond to enquiries received. Library matters have also been included in the monthly e-bulletin, sent to all members and supporters, when possible.

Carol Dimmer has continued her work on cataloguing the miscellaneous topographical illustrations collection, and is currently waiting impatiently to re-start this project as soon as SHC can admit volunteer workers again.

Sue Goodman, Library Committee Chair, April 2021.

SANHS Historic Buildings Committee Report for AGM 2020

Because of the difficulties of Covid, the committee met virtually on Zoom in 2020. We welcomed 3 new members to the committee – Alison Bunning, Tony Harding and Mark Lidster.

Events In 2020 the HBC planned to visit various places such as Gurney Manor, Cannington Court and Ashton Windmill, the possibility of shared events with other committees such as archaeology considered. However, covid intervened.

Webinars

The webinars are currently being run by members of SANHS HBC. We welcome people from other committees. Our first webinar was a joint event between the Archaeology committee and HBC, with David Dawson talking about the old kiln at Dunster. This was followed by the Dunster project series of lectures from Jerry Sampson, Isabel Richardson, Mary Ewing, Nat Alcock, and Barbara Hoffbauer. Since then, we have had contributions from the Natural History committee, with Steve Parker talking about Fungi and Francis Farr-Cox's lecture on Spiders. Advertising the webinars through the SANHS website has increased traffic to the website- 3500 views in November 2020. Some of the webinars were put onto You Tube, and are available through the SANHS website, and videos made about the Dunster project were viewed 63 times in the month of October. We are hoping to plan a series of talks for the autumn season with all aspects of SANHS participating. One of the benefits of running webinar lectures is that it is inclusive for people who might not find it easy to access live meetings; but of course, this also means that people without computers are not able to access talks. We hope that in a post Covid landscape SANHS will be able to provide both webinar lectures and live events.

Research

Most of research work into historic buildings has been done as part of the Early Dunster project which has a separate report. Tony Harding and Lizzie Induni have been doing personal research into corrugated iron buildings in Somerset.

Slides

Commander Williams slide collection, which was bequeathed to the HBC, is in the process of being made available to all members of SANHS. John Page has completed scanning the images, so we can now plan for the images, which are copied onto a hard drive, to be stored in the SANHS room in the Castle, as soon as it is open. John has also made a database of all the slides which will be stored on the hard drive with

the images. Further research using the slide data is being investigated by Martin Salzer. The HBC hopes that the slides will be stored by SWHT.

Website – Tony Harding has been updating the HBC and Early Dunster parts of the SANHS website. A member's area of the website is being developed by webmaster Harriet Induni; this should facilitate hosting aspects of the Early Dunster project and Commander Williams slide collection as well as many other aspects of SANHS.

Debenhams

David Dawson coordinated a report to Somerset CC objecting to the demolition of Debenhams stores in Taunton, with contributions from the HBC. The 20th century society were informed about the demolition and submitted their own report objecting. The 20th century society further promoted the issues surrounding the demolition of department stores and the effect this would have on town landscapes throughout Britain. This story was on the BBC Radio 4, the Guardian newspaper and the Somerset gazette. Taunton was mentioned in all three.

Report sharing with Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group (SVBRG) – agreed to share buildings reports with HBC and we would do likewise for them. These would be stored in the SANHS room in the castle.

Lizzie Induni (chair) April 2021

Early Dunster Project Report for 2021 AGM

Desk top research and some limited surveying work outside of lockdown has been possible during the last year. Resulting information and drawings are still being prepared. In view of the early dates of the properties, the work is extremely complicated. The report on the Castle Gatehouse is complete but is still awaiting dendro-dating. The company appointed by Historic England is based in Nottingham and so it has been difficult for them to visit. Other reports would also benefit from their results, some of which are being written up from previous visits. Historic England have been understanding of the difficulties of the last year which should lead to an extension of the proposed completion of the Project beyond the current September 2022 deadline.

In September 2020, the group staged a very successful series of webinars together with an on-line exhibition. Information from this event can still be seen on the SANHS website (<https://sanhs.org/early-dunster-project/autumn-2020-event-archive/>). Another webinar is planned for the 8th May. A display for Dunster Museum was set up right at the beginning of the Project and the group is now re-designing these boards to reflect work carried out to date and to complement the model so excellently constructed by member, Tony Harding. It is hoped that these boards will be in place by the time the Museum opens in late May 2021.

The work is proving to be exceptionally interesting, and it is intended to prepare a publication (or publications) of all the findings of the group beyond the planned

completion date. A full archive will be deposited with the Somerset Heritage Centre and another with Dunster Museum.

**SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL
SOUTH WEST HERITAGE TRUST**

**Report on Activity Relating to the Library of the
Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2020**

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of activity relating to the management of the SANHS Library during 2020. It has been made under clause 7.1(g) of the Library Collections Agreement (LCA) of July 2010.

The care of the library under the SWHT has continued throughout 2020 despite the challenges that have arisen due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Aspects of the forward management plan which runs from 2019-21 continued to be implemented. An annual meeting between SANHS, SWHT and SCC has been held.

2. Collection Care

The library continues to be cared for in environmentally-controlled strongrooms, providing a constant temperature and humidity which supports the long-term preservation of the books and related material. Strongroom conditions have been constantly monitored using data loggers, and regular building checks have been undertaken to ensure we meet the requirements of BS 4971:2017 'Conservation and care of archive and library collections' and BS EN 16893:2017 'Conservation of Cultural Heritage.' Regular checks of the collection and conditions continued to be made throughout the periods of lockdown.

3. Access

Books from the library were consulted in the searchroom at the Somerset Heritage Centre. Due to the national lockdowns there were periods of time when it was not possible to provide access in the searchroom. Services were provided as normal until 18 March when the Somerset Heritage Centre was closed to the public. A Covid-safe service was then resumed from the beginning of August until December, with the exception of November when there was a second national lockdown.

To ensure the safety of the public and staff there were limits on the length of visits, the numbers in the searchroom at a time and all visits were pre-booked using an online system. A quarantine system was introduced to ensure that items from collections were only handled in a safe way and an additional cleaning regime was introduced in the searchroom. Feedback from members of the public was positive, with people appreciating the ability to undertake their research in an environment where they felt safe.

During 2020, 36 books were requested from the library for use in the searchroom. A total of 28 books were borrowed by Society members during the year. Details of all

loans are entered on a spreadsheet. Staff also continued to answer enquiries relating to SANHS collections throughout the year, working from home during periods of lockdown.

Online catalogue

Volunteers continue to help with building and developing thesaurus information, which will greatly enhance the searchability of the online catalogue. Work continues to streamline the Organisational thesaurus. This project has been able to continue throughout the year and significant progress has been made.

Staff continued to work from home during the periods of lockdown. This provided the opportunity to undertake significant work on indexes, resulting in the launch of almost 250,000 entries online. This is transforming access to collections and includes entries from SANHS collections.

3. Projects

Collaborative work between SANHS volunteers and staff from SWHT has continued up until the first lockdown on 18 March. Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions have meant that it was not possible to have volunteers working on the site after that date.

Due to the restrictions in access it may be necessary to extend the time period of the current SANHS Library Management Plan to enable all the projects to be completed.

4. Acquisition

Acquisition of new items for the library continued, based on the recommendations of the Society's Library Committee and the Hon. Librarian and in accordance with the provisions of the LCA. During 2020 new acquisitions comprised 219 books and journal parts.

Dr Janet Tall
Head of Archives and Learning
South West Heritage Trust
on behalf of Somerset County Council
18 March 2021

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

Annual Report by Somerset County Council to Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

Introduction

2020/2021 has been dominated by COVID-19 and its consequences for the staff and services of the South West Heritage Trust. The Trust's museum sites were closed from 18 March until 15 August. After reopening, the museums closed again for the second and third national lockdowns. The pandemic has affected all aspects of Somerset Museum Service's work but despite many challenges this period has been defined by positive developments and new opportunities.

1. Staff

Laura Burnett, Finds Liaison Officer with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, left on 19 March 2020 to undertake a PhD at the University of Exeter. She had been in post for 10 years and during that time achieved a remarkable depth of knowledge about a great range of archaeological objects discovered, not least, by metal detectorists. It was knowledge which she generously shared.

Sabrina Ruffino-Giummara left her post as Finds Liaison Assistant on 30 October at the end of her contract. During the two years Sabrina was with the Trust she worked with dedication and skill to support the Portable Antiquities Scheme and to undertake a wide-ranging audit of stored museum collections.

Dan Broadbent. Museum Manager at the Museum of Somerset has taken up a new post as Historic Heritage Officer for the Quantock Hills Landscape Partnership Project. Dan joined the staff in 2013 as Senior Visitor Services Assistant. The Trust has started the process of recruiting a new Museum Manager.

Geoff Flower left his post as Learning Officer at the Museum of Somerset to begin a new role with Learn Direct, part of Devon County Council

Mary Bell, Visitor Services Assistant at the Museum of Somerset, gave up her post on 20 August after 9 years' service. She made an outstanding contribution in many different ways and saw the museum grow to its present strength and confidence from the beginning.

Jess Norrish, Visitor Services Assistant retired from the Museum of Somerset in December. Jess became Visitor Services Assistant at the Museum of Somerset in 2012 and contributed so much of her enthusiasm and good humour to the museum.

In November Maria Kneafsey became the new Finds Liaison Officer for Somerset, having moved from a similar post in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. In 2017 Maria completed a PHD in Roman archaeology with the University of Exeter.

Claire Marston joined the Trust as Learning Officer on 4 January 2021. Claire previously worked at the Bristol Aerospace Museum and the National Railway Museum. She will be based at the Museum of Somerset.

Carrie Park became a Visitor Services Assistant at the Museum of Somerset on 12 January having previously worked with the Dorset Wildlife Trust.

Dominique Gearing has started work at the Trust as Museum Futures Trainee. Museum Futures is run in partnership with the British Museum and is designed to invest in a new generation of diverse museum professionals through on-the-job training in digital skills related to museum collections. Dominique will be working across archives and museums on a range of projects and initiatives.

2. Funding

Very welcome financial support was received during the year from sector-based schemes. Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Emergency Fund has made possible CCTV improvements, Wi-Fi in outdoor spaces, digital training and equipment, payments technology and some essential maintenance. A grant from Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Fund has allowed the Trust to build reserves. It is also supporting investment in outdoor facilities and the creation of a family-focused temporary exhibition capable of being marketed for wider hire and income generation.

From April 2020, the Trust has used the government's job retention scheme to support salary costs for roles that have been affected by the pandemic. The Trust has also been received support from the government's Business Support Grants.

3. Audiences

3.1. Museums and Schools

The Trust has continued to deliver its 'Museums and Schools' programme and has recently received confirmation that a further year's funding will be made available by Arts Council England and the Department of Education. The programme is intended to connect museums with local schoolchildren, targeting areas with high levels of deprivation and low cultural engagement.

Though COVID-19 has had a major impact on work with schools, seven schools were able to visit during the autumn term to take part in workshops. Visits took place on Mondays and Tuesdays when the museum sites were closed to general visitors. The Loans for Learning collection has been used extensively during the pandemic and the

Trust has continued to engage with young people through partnership projects. A collaboration with Contains Art, Watchet, focused on providing art materials for vulnerable children in West Somerset.

Learning resources and facilities have continued to receive investment from 'Museum and Schools'. This has included the enhancement of the learning pages on the Trust's website and the creation of new resources. The Trust is also exploring opportunities to develop outdoor learning spaces at the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum.

There are now 45 schools that subscribe to the Heritage Learning Service and an additional 14 non-subscribing schools also use the service.

3.2. Evaluation

An online public consultation process about reopening was completed in the summer of 2020 and received over 1,300 responses, including hundreds of narrative responses. This information was used to plan the reopening of the museum sites in August 2020.

4. The Museum of Somerset

The Museum of Somerset was closed from 18 March to 15 August. During lockdown, staff regularly attended site to carry out security, infrastructure and environmental checks. A member of staff stayed in Castle House to ensure there was a constant presence at the museum.

Prior to reopening in August, a new visitor route was established supported by signage and equipment to keep staff and visitors safe from COVID-19 infection. An online booking system was created to manage visitor numbers and meet the requirements of Test and Trace. The booking system includes a donations function.

Between 15 August and 24 December 4,483 people visited the Museum of Somerset. Donations per-head increased from 30p per person to £1.47 per person. Overall, the site performed remarkably well in terms of income and visitor numbers when benchmarked against other UK museums and cultural attractions.

NLHF funding was used to invest in the museum's CCTV system, contactless donations technology and staff uniforms. Essential maintenance, including redecorating the Welcome Space, was also funded through the NLHF grant.

4.1. Temporary Exhibitions

There has been a full and varied programme of temporary exhibitions.

Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier
9 November 2019 – 18 March

Tristram Hillier RA (1905–1983) was one of the most accomplished and distinctive 20th-century British artists. Painting for many years from a base in Somerset, he created pictures in a uniquely intense and memorable style. Opening on Saturday 9 November 'Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier' brought together over 50 pictures from private lenders and from national and regional collections. Major works included 'Variation on the Form of an Anchor' and 'La Route des Alpes' from the collections of Tate Britain and 'Pylons' and 'Quantoxhead' from National Galleries Scotland. It was the first retrospective of Hillier's work in more than 30 years. The exhibition received local and national coverage including a positive review in The Times.

The illustrated catalogue for 'Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier' was published by the Trust. The catalogue, which features a foreword by Simon Martin of Pallant House Gallery, is a record of the most ambitious temporary exhibition the Trust has yet attempted.

The Arborealists

23 November 2019 – 23 March 2020

The Arborealists are a group of professional artists, from across southern England, who share the rich and versatile subject of the tree. Over a period of two years they visited ancient woodland sites on Exmoor and Dartmoor to produce works in response to the landscape. More than 50 artworks were on display. The Arborealists worked in partnership with the Exmoor and Dartmoor National Park Authorities to explore the landscape. The resulting artworks depict many of the parks' most beautiful and iconic spots.

Reaching for Rainbows

17 November –

'Reaching for Rainbows' is an exhibition of photography that documents an extraordinary time in the history of Somerset. The images were all taken by local photographer Jason Bryant during the Coronavirus pandemic. The collection of 60 images chronicles the experiences of individuals and communities as they respond to the challenge of COVID-19 and being in lockdown. Photographs include rainbows, people expressing their thanks to key workers, families reuniting and rediscovering their local environment, and the new normal of face masks and hand sanitiser. Alongside the exhibition the Trust is creating a community archive to record the lockdown stories of local people and places.

4.2. Events and Digital

During the pandemic the Trust's Programme Delivery Group has met fortnightly to plan and deliver an on-site and digital programme.

The Trust worked with its digital contractor Surface Impression to create software that supports online exhibitions. A digital version of 'Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier' was the first exhibition to feature on the Trust's website. 'The Arborealists' and 'Reaching for Rainbows' have also been added. The Trust plans to

invest further in digital exhibitions infrastructure to improve the user journey and accessibility.

The annual Somerset VCH lecture was successfully held online on 5 November. Professor Mark Stoye talked about the impact of the English Civil War on Somerset. 137 computers were online for the event. The Trust has also delivered a 'Lockdown Lectures' series featuring notable speakers such as James Crowden and Martin Hesp. The series focused on the West Country's landscape.

During October, the Trust delivered a programme for Black History Month, featuring stories from the Museums and Archive services. The programme included a range of blog articles exploring Black History in Somerset and Devon and a talk on the Windrush generation in the South West: <https://swheritage.org.uk/news/black-history-month/>

The Trust created online content for LGBT+ History Month in February, including blog posts on Oliver Messel (1905-1978), the leading set designer for theatre and film who worked on camouflage designs for pillboxes on the Taunton Stop Line, and Doris Hatt, the Modernist artist: <https://swheritage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Oliver-Messel-PDF-proof.pdf>

A limited number of COVID-safe events were delivered by site teams, including a Halloween event for families that was run across three evenings. After reopening in December, a programme of Christmas Santa events was held in the museum courtyard and almshouse. Learning trails have remained a popular feature of the museum offer for families. Visitor feedback received on-line and in person was very positive.

4.3. Castle House

The holiday apartment continues to be let through Sykes Cottages and performed well in the summer and autumn.

5. Somerset Rural Life Museum

Prior to reopening, the museum was prepared to safely welcome visitors back. A one-way route was established at the site along with COVID signage, hand sanitisation stations and social distancing measures.

The 'Museum Unlimited' annual pass has continued to perform well during 2020. The Trust has used NLHF funding to develop an online facility to sell Museum Unlimited passes and to book entry. Between 15 August and 24 December 2,984 people visited Somerset Rural Life Museum.

A grant from Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Fund is being used to develop the site's facilities. Improved electrical supply and better access to the orchard will

support the delivery of outdoor events. The Trust also plans to install estate fencing on the front lawn to enable this important space to be used for programming. Plans for new external signage are also under development.

The Historic Environment Service have led successful repairs to a historic boundary wall adjacent to the site entrance. Work has also started on the installation of stone setts in the farmyard that improve access to the Community Learning Space. This work has been generously funded by the Friends of the Somerset Rural Life Museum.

Digital signage has been installed in the Welcome Space. The signage will be used to promote the Trust's learning programme, welcome schools and encourage donations.

5.1. Temporary Exhibitions

There has been a successful programme of temporary exhibitions.

My Somerset by Alison Jacobs

20 January – 21 March 2020

'My Somerset' was a new exhibition of paintings and iPad art by Somerset-based artist Alison Jacobs. Alison's artwork often explores the county's rural landscape and environment, which is an important influence on her practice. A sense of connection to the real physical environment, especially the landscape and flatlands on the coastal margins, is a constant source of fascination and inspiration for her.

Somerset Reacquainted

19 September –

'Somerset Reacquainted' is a project which captures the essence of a rural county in lockdown from the perspective of more than 60 artists. It seeks to reflect and communicate the experience of isolation we all shared. The artists' responses are at once deeply personal but also more widely applicable. The exhibition includes a display of images, text, digital work, objects, sketches and original artworks produced through the project. It gives an insight into an artistic exploration that is rarely seen by the public.

5.2. Events

The site has continued to build on its strength as a venue for craft and artistic workshops linked to the site's collections and temporary exhibitions programme. In the autumn a series of workshops was delivered in the museum's Community Learning space. The autumn workshops were fully booked and included basket making, rake making and stained glass making.

During the summer, the site offered families and young people the chance to engage with the site's collections through creative trails and hands-on activities including several farm animal days. The Abbey Barn was decorated for Christmas and lights

were put up in the orchard. A fully booked Santa event was held in the farm kitchen and included a museum trail and activities.

Over four hundred people from across the world attended an online talk by Professor Ronald Hutton on the history and mythology of Glastonbury.

6. Weston Museum

The Trust has continued to provide curatorial advice and support to Weston Museum in its fourth year of operation after its Heritage Lottery Funded redevelopment. During the pandemic, curatorial staff have contributed to the museum's digital programme and monitored the museum's environment and collections.

6.1. Temporary Exhibitions:

We delivered two temporary exhibitions in 2020–21

From Village to Town: Weston-super-Mare's Built Heritage

8 February – 9 May 2020

This exhibition brought together objects, images and film to tell the story of Weston-super-Mare's architectural development over the past 250 years. It expanded on Historic England's new publication 'Weston-super-Mare: The Town and its Seaside Heritage'. The exhibition celebrated a complex and remarkable heritage which reflects Weston's transformation from a small village to a busy seaside resort. It was been created by the Trust in partnership with North Somerset Council and Historic England.

Reaching for Rainbows

17 November –

A version of the 'Reaching for Rainbows' exhibition (see 4.1 above) has also been shown at Weston Museum.

7. Collections

7.1. Accreditation

Staff delivered actions included in the Accreditation Forward Plan. Significant progress was made on the documentation backlog during a two-year Collections Management Project.

The project involved the audit of six stores with a total of 150,864 objects from both the TTNCM and WESTM collections. 146,0645 objects have a record on database, while 4,023 objects have been given a Temporary Number.

7.2. Lead Ingot

A loan agreement relating to the Westbury-sub-Mendip Roman lead ingot was finalised between Somerset County Council, the Trust and Wells & Mendip Museum on 18 December 2019. The ingot was finally put on display at Wells & Mendip Museum in September 2020. The display of the ingot at Wells and Taunton will be on an alternating annual cycle.

7.3. Small Grant Big Improvement

In 2019 the Trust received a grant from the South West Museum Development Partnership's Small Grant Big Improvement programme to aid the re-packing of the Friendly Society Banner collection. The grant helped the Curator of Social History, Costume and Textiles to purchase conservation-grade packing materials to roll the banners and provide better standards of collections care. A training session on banner storage was provided by Bristol-based textiles conservator Alison Lister. Approximately 20 banners have now been re-packed, including a number of examples from the SANHS collection. A Friendly Society banner from Midsomer Norton is due to be displayed at Somerset Rural Life Museum following conservation work funded by the Society.

7.4. Fine Art Conservation

We have been able to fund the conservation of two important oil paintings with the support of the bequest fund. The first is a portrait of the Duke of Monmouth from the studio of Sir Peter Lely dating from around 1670. The second is a painting known as The Somerset Hat, a portrait of Mrs Spiller of Cheddon Fitzpaine by Jean Clark dating from 1943. Painting conservation is being carried out by Seonaid Wood with assistance from Alan Bush for the structural work and the frame conservation will be carried out by Teresa Llewellyn. We hope to display the works in The Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum respectively.

7.5. Pleistocene Animal Bone

In 2019 Somerset Museums Service facilitated an important research project on the SANHS-owned collections of Pleistocene animal bone. The project, called *Hungry Like a Wolf*, examined the impact of carnivore competition and environment on morphology and prey choice. Led by Professor Danielle Schreve (Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London [RHUL]) and Dr Angela Lamb (NERC Isotope Geosciences Laboratory, British Geological Survey), with Dr Lucy Flower (Geography, RHUL), it built on a pilot project, supported by SANHS, which used stable isotope analyses on Pleistocene mammal bones to shed light on predator-prey relationships. The NERC Isotope Geosciences Facility at the British Geological Survey funded carbon and nitrogen isotope analysis of a further 135 samples. The results provide a deeper understanding of Pleistocene carnivore prey choice under differing climatic regimes and competitors. They also establish the degree to which direct (stable isotope) and indirect (morphometric) measurements of diet are 'in step'. This is the largest and most significant dietary isotope study done on Pleistocene mammals using British material. 114 specimens from the SANHS collection were

sampled and of these 63 produced viable collagen, which is an excellent success rate given the age of the material (between 40,000 to 200,000 years old). The authors of the study submitted a draft manuscript focusing on the stable isotope results in February 2021. It should be published later this year.

7.6. Herbaria

Unfortunately our volunteer team of five members of the Somerset Rare Plants Group has been unable to visit the Somerset Heritage Centre in 2020-21 due to the pandemic. However, they continued to collect new specimens in the field in the spring and summer and over the winter period have mounted these in their own homes ready for inclusion in the herbarium when they can return to onsite volunteering.

7.7. Human Remains

7.7.1. Repackaging Human Remains

In 2019 we began a project to reorganise and repackage the human remains in our care in line with best practice. Unfortunately, no further progress has been made on this project in 2020-21 due to the restrictions on onsite working because of the pandemic.

7.7.2. Life and Death in Iron Age Somerset

During the summer of 2018 Dr Richard Madgwick (Archaeological Scientist at Cardiff University) visited the Somerset Heritage Centre to look at the remains of 130 people from the Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council and Glastonbury Antiquarian Society collections. With four undergraduate students he examined the remains and, where appropriate, took samples. By looking at how bacteria attacked the bone microstructure, it was possible to discover how the remains were treated immediately after death. Different funerary practices leave different traces of bacterial attack. The team discovered that excarnation – exposing a body to the elements through so-called ‘sky burial’ – was rarely practised in Somerset. Instead it seems that most people were buried soon after death but dug up when their soft tissue had rotted away. Some bones were then extracted and circulated or curated before being deposited elsewhere.

Isotope analysis on surviving human teeth allowed the team to work out where 40 of the individuals had grown up. It seems that 31 people were probably raised in Somerset and nine came from further afield. Of these nine, three were probably from the Mediterranean and one from Brittany. The team discovered that people’s remains were treated in the same way after death regardless of where they were from. Whether people had met a violent end or had died naturally also made no difference to their treatment. The project has greatly enhanced our understanding of Iron Age Somerset, suggesting that it was a more multi-cultural place than had been previously understood. Findings will be published in 2021.

7.7.3. Ancient DNA

In 2017 and 2018 Dr Ian Armit (Professor of Archaeology, University of Bradford) and Dr Tom Booth (Senior Research Scientist, Pontus Skoglund Laboratory, The Francis Crick Institute) visited the Somerset Heritage Centre to sample Bronze Age and Iron Age human remains from the SANHS, Somerset County Council, North Somerset Council and Glastonbury Antiquarian Society museum collections for ancient DNA analysis. This work was carried out as part of a project to sequence the genome of British people over time, led by David Reichs of Harvard University. These samples have now been analysed. When all the results from the DNA analyses of Bronze Age and Iron Age human remains from collections across Britain are looked at together they show that there is a change in ancestry in England, but not in Scotland and Wales, around the Late Bronze Age (c. 1000 BC). This suggests that there were migrations of people into Britain, probably from regions in modern-day France, Belgium and Germany. It is thought that this might be related to the development of Celtic languages in Britain. The results are going to be published in the journal Nature in 2021 under the title 'Large Scale Migration into Southern Britain in the Context of a Peak of Mobility in Middle to Late Bronze Age Europe'. This is the largest ancient DNA study ever reported.

7.7.4. Cannington Quarry Park Cave

In 2019 Sharon Clough (Senior Environmental Officer, Humans Remains, Cotswold Archaeology), was awarded a grant by the British Association for Biological Anthropology and Osteoarchaeology to radiocarbon date two samples from the human remains from Cannington Park Quarry Cave, part of the Somerset County Council museum collection. The remains of at least seven individuals were recovered in 1964. Sharon became interested in the human remains while analysing the burials from Cannington bypass as part of the archaeological work that has been taking place at Hinkley Point. She wanted to establish whether the human remains from Cannington Park Quarry Cave had been placed in the cave in prehistoric times or whether they were originally buried in the Roman period in a nearby cemetery at Cannington and had ended up in the cave after being disturbed during quarrying. Sharon took samples from two thigh bones, one from an adult and one from an under-18. The radiocarbon dates demonstrated that the bones from both individuals dated from over 9,000 years before present (which for this purpose is 1950). When calibrated the date ranges for the samples from the two individuals were 8545 to 8328 cal BC and 8237 to 7976 cal BC (both at 95.4% probability). This shows that both individuals dated to the early Mesolithic period (10,000–7000 BC) and are broadly contemporary with the human remains of Cheddar Man from the nearby Gough's Cave. This research is significant as Mesolithic human remains are extremely rare with only 20 firmly-dated sites known from Britain. The cave was completely destroyed by quarrying in the 1980s so the human remains are the only evidence of this important Mesolithic burial site. We are currently in discussions with Cotswold Archaeology and Dr Tom Booth of The Pontus Skoglund Laboratory at The Francis

Crick Institute to agree a further phase of research on these remains, which will include stable isotope and ancient DNA analysis.

8. Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series

Somerset Museums Service was awarded funding for a project in partnership with David Dawson (pottery specialist, Dawson Heritage) to create a Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series and make it accessible online. The funding from Historic England includes provision for the South West Heritage Trust to recruit an archaeological pottery specialist trainee on a 12-month fixed-term contract for three days a week. The project aims to improve the standard of archaeological reporting and the publication of pottery and the sustainability of pottery expertise in the region. The project began on 1 April 2020. Because of the pandemic, however, the main elements of the project, including the recruitment of the post, have had to be postponed until later in 2021.

7.9. Acquisitions

Some significant acquisitions were made during 2020–21.

At a sale in Exeter on 10 March the Museums Service acquired a large bronze cauldron of the mid to late 17th century, evidently made by Phillipa Sturton of South Petherton. The Sturton's were a well-known dynasty of makers, but this is the first probable example of Phillipa's work and a very welcome addition to our holdings. The Service already cares for the national reference collection of English cauldrons and skillets.

A silver seal matrix, found by a metal detectorist near Wincanton, has been acquired for the collection with support from the ACE/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, Headley Trust and Friends of the Museum of Somerset. The seal matrix is made of solid silver and dates from AD 1275-1325. Surrounding the intaglio on the die face is an inscription in Lombardic characters within an engraved beaded border. This inscription comprises a single name and reads: 'S'IOhANNIS.DE.WIKE+' which translates as 'Seal of John de Wike' suggesting it belonged to a John de Wick, Wike or Wyke. The intaglio has been identified by Martin Henig, an expert on Roman art and the foremost specialist on Romano-British engraved gems, as being a Roman gem showing a young Octavian (who would later become the first Roman emperor using the name Augustus) in the guise of Mercury, the messenger god.

A miniature by the artist Sarah Biffin was acquired at auction by the Museums Service. In recent years the service has bought several paintings by this remarkable Somerset miniaturist and now holds probably the largest public collection of her work. Sarah Biffin was born without hands or arms at East Quantoxhead in 1784. From an early age she showed great ability in drawing and painting, holding the pen or brush in her mouth. Eventually her skills were recognised by the Earl of Morton who brought her to London. There she painted portraits of royalty and the wealthy, including George III, George IV and Queen

Victoria.

A construction by the Somerset artist Rachel Reckitt has been donated to the museum collection by the Golsoncott Foundation. *Hollow Tree* is based on an observation in an Exmoor Lane and dates from the early 1970s. The sculpture was probably included in the artist's 1974 exhibition in Bridgwater. The Trust is planning a major retrospective of Reckitt's work at the Museum of Somerset.

7.11 Museum Development

Rachel Bellamy, Museum Development Officer for Somerset, has supported over 60 museums and heritage sites in the last year. Museums have received extensive advice and support regarding funding including Business Support Grants and emergency funding opportunities. Museums have also been able to access support linked to conservation, volunteer development, accreditation and business planning.

The Museums in Somerset Group received a grant from the Small Grant Big Improvement fund for a project to improve social media skills within community museums and to increase their profiles as tourist destinations. The project partners are Visit Somerset and South West Museum Development whose Digital Development Officer has delivered training on social media skills. The project has given 16 museums business pages on the Visit Somerset website and access to other support from Visit Somerset.

The Museum Development Officer has continued to work alongside the Museums in Somerset Group. Committee meetings and county group meetings have been held online.

7.12 Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)

The work of the PAS in Somerset has been very different in the past year. Despite the almost complete absence of outreach opportunities the recording of finds has continued online. Treasure reporting has continued with numerous cases submitted and completed when conditions have allowed. 296 new objects have been added to the PAS database in 243 records and the Trust's PAS team have also updated and enhanced older records to reflect current standards and protocols. This has resulted in updates to 670 records. Contact has been maintained with the excellent PAS volunteers. The PAS team also supported excavations at a site in Somerset connected with a significant treasure find.

7.10 Hadspen

Staff from the museum service have contributed to the development of the reconstructed Roman villa and museum at Hadspen, Castle Cary.

8. Review of the Museum Forward Collections Management Plan 2019–20 and the Forward Plan for 2020–21

This report is provided below.

Sam Astill
Head of Museums
South West Heritage Trust
on behalf of Somerset County Council
March 2021

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

**MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021–22,
UNDER THE TERMS OF AGREEMENTS DATED 2 SEPTEMBER 2008
AND 31 OCTOBER 2014**

By an Agreement dated 2 September 2008 Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society agreed to lend to Somerset County Council, and the Council agreed to accept on loan, museum collections belonging to the Society.

Under the terms of the Agreement of 2008 the Council agreed to consult the Society in developing a Forward Collections Management Plan and in reviewing the plan. The Council also agreed that it would submit an Annual Report on the plan to the Society's Annual General Meeting. Under a Forward Loan Agreement dated 31 October 2014 between the Society, the Council and the South West Heritage Trust, it was agreed that some obligations of the Council under the Agreement of 2008 would be jointly performed with the Trust, as more fully set out in the Agreement of 2014.

The collections of the Society, the Council and others are distinct in ownership and documentation but are curated and interpreted as a single resource because of their complex curatorial interrelationship. This plan therefore details actions which in some cases relate not just to the Society's collections but to the wider museum resource managed and cared for by the Trust on behalf of the Council. It also details actions which are not predominantly collections-related, but which have direct curatorial implications.

Objectives marked with * include collections owned by SANHS.

REVIEW OF MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020–21

Objectives	Resources	Responsibility	By when	Progress
Access				
Implement temporary exhibition programmes and associated events programme at MoS, SRLM and Weston Museum: MoS: <i>Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Tristram Hillier</i> <i>The Arborealists</i> <i>Martin Brown: Horrible Histories and other books</i> <i>*Quiet Revolutionaries: Coleridge and his Friends in Somerset:</i> <i>Brian Rice (TBC)</i> SRLM: Music, Mud, Mayhem: Photographing Glastonbury Festival <i>*The Bath and West: A Celebration</i> Selling exhibition (TBC) Weston Museum: Wild Hares and Hummingbirds: The Natural History of an English Village <i>*Fine Art Exhibition (TBC)</i>	SWHT plus grant aid and sponsorship	SA, TB, LB, AK, RM, BM, MG, SC	November 2019 – April 2020 April 2020 – July 2020 July 2020 – October 2020 November 2020 – February 2021 February 2021 – July 2021 March 2020 – July 2020 July 2020 – November 2020 November 2020 – March 2021 June 2020 – September 2020 September 2020 – March 2021	Complete Complete Postponed Postponed Postponed Postponed Postponed Postponed Postponed
Stewardship				

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*Monitor Accreditation Forward Plan.		SA, EG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Re-organise museum stores and update storage locations of collections.		AK, BM, SGR, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue adding to, checking and upgrading data on CMS.		AK, BM, SGR, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to work with SANHS in conserving paintings owned by the Society.		SA, AK, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Deliver project to conserve banners supported by match funding from SANHS.		EG, BM, RM	June 2020	Ongoing
*Support the creation of a Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series, using Historic England funding.		Ak, EG and David Dawson	December 2021	Ongoing
*Continue to support the Somerset Rare Plants Group to incorporate recently-collected specimens of pressed vascular plants into the newly-reorganised historic collection of pressed vascular plants.		AK and members of the Rare Plants Group	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to support research to analyse the geochemistry of carnivore tooth enamel using specimens from the Ice Age mammal collection.		AK, Danielle Schreve and others	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to support research into ancient human DNA using samples from human remains.		AK	Ongoing	Ongoing
*License key items through Bridgman Images.		AK, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
Continue to support the Somerset Military Museum Trust in a review of collections.		MM, SA, BM	Ongoing	Complete
Continue programme of targeted		TM, SA, AK,	Ongoing	Ongoing

acquisitions.		BM		
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MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021–22

Objectives	Resources	Responsibility	By when	Progress
Access				
Implement temporary exhibition programmes and associated events programme at MoS, SRLM and Weston Museum: MoS: <i>Royal Photographic Society Exhibition: RPS 162</i> <i>Martin Brown: Horrible Histories and other books</i> <i>The Art of Brian Rice: Sixty Years of Paintings and Prints</i> <i>Quiet Revolutionaries: Coleridge and his Friends in Somerset:</i> SRLM: Sense of Place: An exhibition of ink drawings and print making by Joanna Briar *The Bath and West: A Celebration Selling exhibition (TBC) Weston Museum: Wild Hares and Hummingbirds: The Natural History of an English Village Ivy Millicent James exhibition (title TBC)	SWHT plus grant aid and sponsorship	SA, TB, LB, AK, RM, BM, MG, SC	May 2021– July 2021 July 2021 – October 2021 October 2021 – March 2022 March 2021 – May 2022 May 2021 – July 2021 July 2021 – October 2021 November 2021 – March 2022 June 2021 – September 2021 September 2021 – March 2022	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Stewardship				
*Monitor Accreditation Forward Plan.		SA, EG	Ongoing	Ongoing

Paper 5 SANHS AGM 2021

*Re-organise museum stores and update storage locations of collections.		AK, BM,	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue adding to, checking and upgrading data on CMS.		AK, BM, SGR, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to work with SANHS in conserving paintings owned by the Society.		SA, AK, MG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Deliver project to conserve banners supported by match funding from SANHS.		EG, BM, RM	October 2021	Ongoing
*Support the creation of a Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series, using Historic England funding.		AK, EG and David Dawson	December 2023	Ongoing
*Continue to support the Somerset Rare Plants Group to incorporate recently-collected specimens of pressed vascular plants into the newly-reorganised historic collection of pressed vascular plants.		AK and members of the Rare Plants Group	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to support research to analyse the geochemistry of carnivore tooth enamel using specimens from the Ice Age mammal collection.		AK, Danielle Schreve and others	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to support research into ancient human DNA using samples from human remains.		AK	Ongoing	Ongoing
*License key items through Bridgman Images.		BM	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Update information about Fine Art collections on Art UK website.		BM	December 2022	Ongoing
Continue programme of targeted acquisitions.		TM, SA, AK, BM	Ongoing	Ongoing,

Sam Astill
 Head of Museums
 South West Heritage Trust
 on behalf of Somerset County Council
 March 2021