

2022 SUBJECT COMMITTEE AND COLLECTION REPORTS

Natural History Committee

This report summarises the activities of the section during the summer/autumn of 2022 and the proposals for future events.

1. Events

Five Field Events were planned for the summer/autumn. Attendance by SANHS members has been much lower than hoped though an 'open invitation' survey of a Taunton churchyard was considered successful, however one event was cancelled due to no bookings for it.

Write-ups of these events are posted in the SANHS e-Bulletin.

2. Zoom

Two zoom presentations are proposed for the winter period on a) Steep Holm; b) Shetland organised through the SANHS webinar group.

3. Members Meeting and Talks

Due to low numbers attending these meetings and the cost of hiring venues the Natural History committee has decided to discontinue with these meetings.

4. Field Meetings 2023

Normally the Field Events are held at different venues around the County but for 2023 a single venue is being considered at Long Run Meadow, near Bishop's Hull. This would fit in with the SANHS thoughts for family orientated activities but would require the agreement of the existing conservation group.

5. Pat Hill-Cottingham Fund

Two applications for grant aid from the Fund were awarded grants of £500.00. These were for surveys of the Flora and Fauna of Steep Holm which although five miles from the coast is, administratively, within Somerset. The third was for a survey of Lichens on ancient Oak trees within Piddle Wood, near Staple Fitzpaine. This application was awarded £122.00.

6. Ecology in Somerset

The current editor of Ecology in Somerset is standing down so a search is on for a replacement editor for 2023.

This report summarises the activities of the section over the winter 2022/2023 and the proposals for spring and summer events.

1. Field events

Two Fungi Forays were held with the first at Triscombe Stone in the Quantocks, the second at Wood in the Mendip Hills. Both were successful and reported in the E Bulletin.

2. Zoom

Two zoom presentations were held through the SANHS Webinar Group. The first on Shetland by Matt Eade from Naturetrek, has been written up for the E Bulletin, the second on Steep Holm by Stephen Parker, currently being written up for the E Bulletin.

3. Field Meetings

It is meeting is proposed for Thurlbear Wood. Meetings at the Avalon Marshes- with the archaeological section and at the Cary Moor Environmental Centre are under consideration with potential meetings at Honeygar Farm, Somerset Wildlife Trust's 're-wilding' project in the Brue Valley, Hestercombe Gardens and St. James's Churchyard, Taunton, being investigated. These meetings will be Family Friendly with children's participation encouraged, though numbers etc will be limited.

4. Pat Hill-Cottingham Fund

Both the projects offered funding for 2022/23, Lichen Survey and Steep Holm Survey have had their respective projects extended for 2023/24 to allow survey completion and report writing to be concluded.

There have, at the time of writing this report, been no applications to the Fund for 2023/24.

5. Ecology in Somerset

A replacement editor for EoS has not, as yet, been found and with papers promised the search continues.

6. Philip Radford's Books

Philip's books and sound recording equipment has been donated to SANHS library by his daughters with the condition that any not required by the library may be sold for the benefit of SANHS. The books and field recorders have been collected by NH members and are being assessed.

David Reid, Chairman, Natural History Committee, March 2023

Archaeology Committee

The Committee decided on a cautious reintroduction of 'live' meetings following the lifting of Covid restrictions in February but also decided to continue meeting on-line to enable far-flung members to attend committee meetings with minimal environmental impact and greater convenience. We felt it important also to continue delivering some meetings on-line so that we could continue to reach a wider audience not only beyond Somerset but beyond the UK and to engage speakers also at a distance. The Committee has met four times via Zoom during the year and by email in between to discuss SANHS business, review current archaeology in Somerset and organize our programme of events as follows.

Our annual archaeology day was held live at Wembdon on 26 March with John Allan as our keynote speaker on the subject Glastonbury Abbey: an archaeological overview and a panel of speakers including Daniel Connor (Senior Archaeologist, Balfour Beatty) and Bob McIntosh (Project Officer, Oxford Archaeology) on Archaeological discoveries on the Mendip Hills section of the Hinkley Point C Connection Project. A panel of speakers contributed to our day conference on recent work on Roman Somerset which was held in conjunction with the Local History Committee in Taunton on 21 May. On 5 November a one of our series of pottery workshops organised in association with the Medieval and Later Pottery Research Group was held at Wells and Mendip Museum.

On-line on 12 November we joined South West Implement Petrology Committee of the South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries, Devon Archaeological Society, Cornwall Archaeological Society and the Prehistoric Society in delivering an international day conference in memory of Dr J J Taylor entitled Sourcing prehistoric materials – new perspectives: the contribution and legacy of Joan Taylor and on 24 November a webinar by Dr Oliver Kent on the subject of China comes to Wells, an outcome of an Arts Council funded project identifying and publicising part of a remarkable post-medieval group of pottery from the excavations behind Wells and Mendip Museum.

We are grateful to our colleagues Cat Lodge and Amal Khreisheh for organising many of our events and to the webinar team for delivering our on-line events.

Finally we pay tribute to members who have died in the past year notably Roger Carter (Dec 2021) and Brian Murless (April). Both made immense contributions to our knowledge and understanding of Somerset and are sadly missed. Our sympathies go to their families.

David Dawson, Convener on behalf of David Baker, Chair, March 2023

Library Committee

Following a year with no meetings, the Committee met in March, May and November 2022; the pattern of three meetings a year was now agreed to be sufficient. As before, we welcome representatives from the four subject committees to the Library Committee, in addition to five directly elected members.

Library liaison meetings between SANHS, SWHT and SCC also lapsed during the COVID pandemic, but a meeting held in December 2022 renewed the SANHS Library Management Plan for the usual three years, 2023-25. Review meetings are held annually.

Despite a reduced budget, items purchased for the Library during 2022 included:

Trees, by Peter Thomas (Collins New Naturalist series, 2022)

The nature of Somerset's coast, by Nigel Phillips (2022)

Britain in the Middle Ages: an archaeological history (2007)
Scenes from prehistoric life (2022), both by Francis Pryor.

We also maintained our journal acquisitions, by subscription and by exchange with scientific and heritage societies, universities, and similar institutions.

Notable donations included:

Fragments of the Bronze Age: the destruction and deposition of metalwork in south-west Britain and its wider context, by Matthew G. Knight (Prehistoric Society, 2022).

The Ray Society 150th anniversary: in celebration of the Ray Society established 1844, and its founder George Johnson (1797-1855), by Elizabeth Platts (Ray Society, 1994: includes 8 facsimile prints).

[*Two research reports on tree-ring analysis of Somerset buildings*] by Martin Bridge & Cathy Tyers (Historic England, 2019 & 2020).

China comes to Wells: 'a remarkable discovery', by Oliver Kent (Wells & Mendip Museum, 2022).

My life, by Thomas Bewick (Folio Society, 1981).

We continue to record all library accessions for the annual volume of SANHS Proceedings, along with a list of locally relevant articles in non-Somerset journals. Library news is contributed to the annual Newsletter and the monthly e-bulletins.

We have supplied information on Library & Archive holdings – assets to be listed as part of the conversion to SANHS CIO.

The Library is able to make use of SWHT's team of conservations volunteers to help with cleaning books and journal volumes.

Work on the Library webinar is progressing; to be shown later in 2023.

Sue Goodman, Library Committee Chair, February 2023

Historic Buildings Committee

The HBC has met 4 times over the last year, twice of those on Zoom. Usually, we have a full attendance of members. The members are: John Page, Alan Hudson, Nathanael Williams, Harriet Induni, Mary Ewing, Martin Salzer, Nigel Pearce, Chris Sidaway, Chris Chanter and new member James Verner. The committee was chaired by Lizzie Induni.

Heritage Open Week, in the second week of September, was a great success. Eddie Gaines ran films on many of the days to the delight of visitors. There were about 300 visitors, and many people left their names and emails, wishing to be kept in touch with events. Some money was collected for donations to the project. The building is

now back 'in house'. SCC gave £7,000 towards the repairs and running costs. Plans are being made towards the opening up and running of the building. An extremely successful Family Fun Day was run at the hall to encourage people to join SANHS as a family. Thanks were given to Christine Webster.

The Local Listing Project

The Wyndham Hall was proposed for Local Listing and accepted by the listing team. Unfortunately, the Bridgwater cinema, another suggestion, was not accepted. However, Nathanael's recommendation of the three Bridges at Cannington was commended. He has also nominated other Bridgwater buildings such as the Animal Feed Mill. Other possibilities (Crypton Building, WH Smiths and the Sports Direct building) are being considered. To inform SANHS members of the local listing process, a very informative webinar was presented by Mary Andrews. The HBC are pleased to announce that the Local List website is now live and ready for sharing. It is possible to record buildings either on the SWHT website or the Know Your Place website. The HBC will contribute to this project.

<https://swheritage.org.uk/historic-environment-service/local-heritage-list/>

Events

In April a group of 16 young people from the Mick Aston's Young Archaeologist (MAYA) group visited Dunster and were hosted by Barbara Hoffbauer and Lizzie Induni for a walking tour, taking in a number of important historical sites. In July, David Baker and Chris Sidaway led a fascinating tour of the historic buildings of Bridgwater.

Surveys

During 2021/2, Lizzie Induni, Maggie Dinning, Alison Bunning and Jill Strobridge visited and made an assessment of Drake House. Although the building does not appear particularly old (probably early eighteenth century), the plot of land on which it has been built, may be part of an early Saxon village. Lizzie Induni is seeking permission to conduct a small archaeological expedition on the site and has also written to SWHT requesting the same.

The Dunster project is reported separately.

Lizzie Induni, Historic Buildings Committee, March 2023

Early Dunster Project

Background

Members of SANHS Historic Buildings Committee have always had an interest in recording Somerset vernacular buildings and in recording them, resulting in a large volume of records (approx. 2,000) having been deposited at the former Somerset Records Office. After a lapse of some years, it was agreed in 2013 to start a recording group with outreach and new volunteers to help raise awareness on the

value of early built heritage in West Somerset in particular (Other areas of Somerset being well covered by SVBRG).

Dunster seemed a good place to launch the project as there were already 20 or so records of buildings there. In preparing an exhibition for the launch event, it was noted that a great many of these had early styles of roof structure. In 2017, Historic England were inviting bids for their "Early Fabric in Historic Towns Initiative" working with volunteer recording groups. After Initial work in Porlock and Milverton, the group made a submission which was successful for further investigation of the early structural fabric in Dunster.

The Agreement

As well as funding for the project, Historic England would provide a training programme (carried out in 2018) and would organise dendro-dating which would supplement work carried out by Time Team 2012 - 2018. The group would hold exhibitions and stage events, as well as depositing a record of each building studied with the South West Heritage Trust, which replaces the former Record Office. The intention is that publication will otherwise continue after the end of this project.

Timetable

The project started in spring 2018 with an original completion date of summer 2020, but it soon became apparent that there was a lot more early structural fabric than had been anticipated, and an extension of time of two years was requested. The arrival of the pandemic in 2020 was a further impediment to progress so another extension was requested until May 2023, the current deadline.

Outcomes

- Major launch event with talks and exhibition with approx.
- 34 properties surveyed including the Castle Gatehouse, the Old Priory and the Old Manor at Lower Marsh. Reports for a number of these are still in progress.
- Two different displays arranged for Dunster Museum including a model of a medieval open hall house.
- Exhibitions held in St. George's Church, Dunster
- Major on-line event incorporating talks, videos, and exhibition.
- Articles submitted for various local magazines and for SANHS Proceedings
- Major completion event being planned for June 2023

Volunteers

Surveying volunteers number 17 with some more active than others. Most members on the Project Team have also been involved in surveying at some stage, but there are

2 further members. In addition, there have been 4 volunteer research contributors, two of whom are still active with the group. In addition to this, 6 experts have kindly given their help and advice.

Assets

The Project has no substantial material assets being mainly focussed on photography equipment and accessories and data storage and printing. Surveying and drawing equipment has been supplied to some extent although individuals use their own. Health and safety equipment and first aid kits have been provided.

SANHS Website

The Project has a presence on SANHS website, which includes a record of the on-line event and copies of the project newsletter.

South West Heritage Trust (SWHT)

Records are deposited in batches under the usual arrangements with the standard form used for deposits.

Additional copies of the report are given to Dunster Museum and to the individual property owners. Digital copies are sent to Exmoor National Park Authority for entry on their Heritage Environment Record (HER) and to all volunteers. The Historic Buildings Committee will retain a digital copy of all reports and other ancillary information.

Mary Ewing, Project Leader, Early Dunster, March 2023

Local History

During the last year this committee, though still small in number, has had a full programme of talks and visits. In early 2022 Tom Mayberry remembered the 200th anniversary of the sale of Taunton Castle by the Bishop of Winchester in an online talk. Following that, Colin Spackman gave a live talk in Castle House on the Eastons of Bradford. A fascinating visit to the Watchet Radio Museum was followed by a Symposium on Roman Somerset. That was a full day event in St. Andrews Church Hall. Des Atkinson, a former member of our committee, led a tour of Exeter, with another 200th anniversary following, this time with Mary Siraut commemorating Taunton's hospitals, though the present hospital building is only eighty years old. Finally in 2022 David Victor discussed the differing two Manors of Preston Bowyer.

Although the programme was topical and varied there has been a problem with the size of the audiences in many cases, a problem which is not restricted to our organisation. Hopefully we can get back shortly to the numbers we used to have. My thanks to all those who contributed to these talks in so many ways.

John Page, Chair of Local History Committee, March 2023

Publications Committee

The publications committee met four times in 2022. *George Cumberland: Farming – Family – Fossils* by Jane Evans was published in the summer and launched at Weston super Mare Museum and at Taunton Castle. Work continued on David Rabson's *River Tone* and two archaeological monographs, on sites in Taunton and Bath, are being considered.

Chris Webster, Chair of the Publications Committee, March 2023

**SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL
SOUTH WEST HERITAGE TRUST**

**Report on Activity Relating to the Library of the
Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2022**

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of activity relating to the management of the SANHS Library during 2022. 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 2022. Aspects of the forward management plan continued to be implemented and a new forward plan was agreed. An annual meeting 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.'

Initial work was undertaken towards a project to enable the strongrooms to operate on a more passive basis. This will have environmental benefits and reduce reliance on high use of utilities.

3. Access

Books from the library were consulted in the searchroom at the Somerset Heritage Centre. During 2022, 64 books were requested from the library for use in the searchroom. A total of 18 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.

Volunteers continued to help with building and developing thesaurus information, which is greatly enhancing the searchability of the online catalogue. Work also continues to streamline the organisational thesaurus.

4. Projects and Development Work

A revised three-year SANHS Library Management Plan has been created for the period 2023-25. This was jointly drawn up by the Hon. Librarian, Deputy Hon. Librarian and SHWT staff. It included an assessment of the progress made during the

time of the previous plan, which had been held over for an additional year due to the pandemic.

Work has finished on the integration of the SANHS journals. This means that all archaeological journals have been amalgamated into the main series, which has been reordered to improve access. Work has continued to update the online catalogue with the new locations.

A programme of cleaning of books has commenced, working with the SWHT conservator. This project is working on books identified as benefiting from treatment.

5. 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 2022 new acquisitions comprised 337 books and journal parts.

Dr Janet Tall, Head of Archives, Learning & Development

Kate Parr, Local Studies Librarian

South West Heritage Trust on behalf of Somerset County Council 20 March 2023

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022–23, 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. On 1 April 2023, Somerset County Council will become part of a unitary authority called Somerset Council. Somerset County Council will for legal purposes be the continuing parent entity of the new authority, and although the County Council's name and make-up will change, its legal identity (in respect of the agreements referred to above) will remain the same. In other words, the agreements will remain in force.

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 an asterisk * include collections owned by SANHS.

REVIEW OF MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022–23

Objectives	Resources	Responsibility	By when	Progress
Access				
Implement temporary exhibition programmes and associated events programme at MoS, SRLM and Weston Museum: MoS: <i>*In Xanadu: Coleridge and the West Country:</i> <i>*Myths and Monsters</i> <i>*In Fashion</i> SRLM: <i>Craft – Somerset Portraits and Voices</i> <i>Music, Mud, Mayhem - Photographing Glastonbury Festival</i> <i>*Horse Power</i> Weston Museum: <i>Sentimental Journeys: The Art and Life of Ivy Millicent James</i> <i>The World of Martin Brown: Horrible Histories and other Dazzling Drawings</i> <i>Wildlife Photographer of the Year</i>	SWHT plus grant aid and sponsorship	SA, TB, LB, AK, RM, BM, SC	March 2022 – June 2022 July 2022 – October 2022 November 2022 – March 2023 March 2022 – June 2022 June 2022 – September 2022 September 2022 – January 2023 February 2022 – June 2022 June 2022 – September 2022 September 2022 – January 2023	Complete Complete Complete Complete Complete Complete Complete
Stewardship				
*Re-submit revised Accreditation Forward Plan.to ACE		SA, EG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Reorganise museum stores and update storage locations of collections.		AK, BM,	Ongoing	Ongoing

Paper 7 SANHS Annual General Meeting 20th May 2023

*Continue adding to, checking and upgrading data on CMS.		AK, BM	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Continue to work with SANHS in conserving paintings owned by the Society.		SA, AK	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Deliver project to conserve banners, supported by match funding from SANHS.		EG, BM, RM	October 2022	Complete
*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	Complete
Continue programme of targeted acquisitions.		TM, SA, AK, BM	Ongoing	Ongoing

MUSEUM FORWARD COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023–24

Objectives	Resources	Responsibility	By when	Progress
Access				
Implement temporary exhibition programmes and associated events programme at MoS, SRLM and Weston Museum:	SWHT plus grant aid and sponsorship	SA, TB, LB, AK, RM, BM, SC		
MoS:				
<i>Sentimental Journeys: The Art and Life of Ivy Millicent James</i>			March 2023 – July 2023	Ongoing
<i>Alex Scheffler</i> (title TBC)			July 2022 – October 2022	Ongoing
<i>Alexander Hollweg</i> (title TBC)			November 2022 – March 2023	Ongoing
SRLM:				
<i>Flow</i>			May 2023 – September 2023	Ongoing
<i>Simon Hitchins</i> (title TBC)			September – 2023 December 2023	Ongoing
<i>Exhibition by Somerset Artist/Maker</i> (TBC)			December 2023 – March 2024	Ongoing
Weston Museum:				
<i>Quentin Blake: Illustrating Verse</i>			March 2023 – June 2023	Ongoing
<i>Myths and Monsters</i>			June 2023 – October 2024	Ongoing
<i>Dr Who</i>			October 2023 – April 2024	Ongoing
Stewardship				
*Re-submit revised Accreditation Forward Plan.to ACE		SA, EG	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Reorganise museum stores and update storage locations of collections.		AK, BM,	Ongoing	Ongoing

Paper 7 SANHS Annual General Meeting 20th May 2023

*Continue adding to, checking and upgrading data on CMS.		AK, BM	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Carry out review and rationalisation project focused on social history collections		BM, EG. SA	March 2024	Ongoing
*Continue to work with SANHS in conserving paintings owned by the Society.		SA, AK	Ongoing	Ongoing
*Complete 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 and Art Uk		BM	Ongoing	Ongoing
Upload data about new acquisitions to Art Uk and South West Collections Explorer		BM	Ongoing	Ongoing
Continue programme of targeted acquisitions.		TM, SA, AK, BM	Ongoing	Ongoing,

Sam Astill
 Head of Museums and Engagement
 South West Heritage Trust
 on behalf of Somerset County Council
 26 March 2023

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

**Annual Report by Somerset County Council
 to Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society,
 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023**

Introduction

In the past year museums managed by the South West Heritage Trust and supported by funding from the County Council have continued to recover well from the impact of COVID. At year end, annual visitor numbers to the museums had exceeded pre-pandemic levels, and the performance in the two quarters from July to December was particularly strong. The Learning Service continues to experience greater demand than ever before and the Trust's programme of exhibitions, events and activities has been particularly successful. There has been a major focus on managing the implications of inflationary pressures and on planning the steps necessary to maintain the Trust's resilience and effectiveness.

The relationship between the Society, the County Council and the Trust has continued to be expressed through a pattern of regular meetings and not least through the SANHS Museum Collections Panel. Where actions, events or activities referred to in this report have involved SANHS assets or cooperation, that involvement is here very gratefully acknowledged. In respect of the museum collections, those belonging to the Society, the Council and others are distinct in ownership and documentation but are curated and interpreted by the Trust as a single resource because of their complex curatorial interrelationship. The Forward Plan accompanying this Annual Report indicates actions, events or activities that include collections belonging to the Society.

1. Staff

Rob Webley, Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, joined us on 6 June to cover Lucy Shipley's Maternity leave to 31 March and will now continue in this role following Lucy's departure.

Christopher Painter and Kerry Morris joined the Trust on 22 June as Visitor Services Assistants at Somerset Rural Life Museum.

Laura Heal joined the Trust on 3 August as Visitor Services Assistant at Somerset Rural Life Museum.

Jon England joined the Trust on 10 November as an Exhibition Technician with the Museums Service.

Additional funding has allowed the Dorset Finds Liaison officer post to be made full-time and for a short-term assistant post (based at the Somerset Heritage Centre) to be appointed. Brittany Walsh joined the Trust on 17 October as Finds Liaison Assistant on a 6-month contract funded by the British Museum.

Natasha Paine, Visitor Services Assistant at Somerset Rural Life Museum, left the Trust at the end of March to become Environmental Education & Care Farming Officer at Magdalen Farm, near Chard. Natasha was a key member of the museum's staff following its reopening in 2018.

Carrie Park, Visitor Services Assistant at the Museum of Somerset, left the Trust on 17 November to join the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group in Wellington as their Membership and Procurement Assistant.

Claire Martin, Digital Marketing Assistant, left the Trust on 21 November to join Queen's College, Taunton, as their full-time Digital Marketing Executive.

2. Funding

On 4 November the Trust was very pleased to learn that its bid to Arts Council England (ACE) for funding as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) had been successful. The bid proposals focus on increasing the engagement of underserved communities, and specifically on issues of rural isolation and low socio-economic status. ACE funding will be received over a three-year period from 1 April 2023.

3. Audiences

3.1 Learning

The 'Together Again' social prescribing project, funded by Arts Council England, was completed and an evaluation report created by Exeter University. The project has offered a range of opportunities for families, adults and toddlers, those reached including people with mental health issues, Ukrainian refugees and families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. The project also provided heritage-based activities to be used at two 'warm banks' in Wellington during the winter. 'Together Again' has taught us a great deal. Much knowledge and experience has been gained about working with community organisations from outside the heritage sector and new ways of reaching audiences. Our social prescribing work will continue with the support of the Arts Council England through our NPO activities.

Bookings for reminiscence sessions remain strong and are received from across the county. Sessions take place during most weeks in settings including care homes, community groups and friendship groups. Those attending are mostly individuals who are older and are particularly vulnerable to loneliness and rural isolation.

Learning workshops for toddlers have continued to remain popular at the Somerset Rural Life Museum and the Museum of Somerset. Additional drop-in sessions are being offered at the Museum of Somerset in response to requests from parents and carers.

3.2 Schools

Demand for our Learning Services now exceeds pre-pandemic levels. The Trust's experience is untypical of many other heritage organisations who closed their learning offer throughout the pandemic and have not yet recovered.

The academic year 2022-23 is likely to be the busiest we have yet experienced. There are now 55 subscribing schools (the maximum manageable number) and since April 2022 we have been providing services to over 100 Somerset schools as well as to some out-county schools. Finding ways to resource extra capacity is becoming an increasingly pressing issue.

Arts Council England has confirmed that funding for the 'Museums & Schools' programme will continue during the next financial year (2023-4). The funding has been used in a variety of ways, including engagement activities associated with the 'In Xanadu' exhibition. It has also been used to improve resources and encourage participation from schools with high pupil premium.

The Trust worked with the consultants Culture Force to create secondary school resources to support the study and understanding of Black History in Somerset. The resources were launched in October for Black History Month. The work has been undertaken in response to a growing number of requests for better access to such materials for teaching local history from a balanced range of perspectives.

An extensive review of the Trust's safeguarding policies and procedures, which are particularly relevant to the Learning Service, has recently been completed. Fees and charges for the Trust's services to schools have been revised and were approved by trustees on 17 January.

3.3 Evaluation

The Museums Service has worked with the Audience Agency again this year to collect data from visitor surveys at our museums and to create site-specific reports. The reports have provided powerful insights into the experiences and motivations of visitors and will be used to strengthen programming and onsite engagement. Data has also been collected in relation to temporary exhibitions and events.

4. The Museum of Somerset

The Museum of Somerset continued to recover well throughout 2022. The booking system for general visits was phased out in the Spring when the COVID restrictions were relaxed. There has been strong engagement with exhibitions and events and a total of 73,500 people visited the museum during the year.

A consultancy to improve the retail offer at the Museum of Somerset is now underway and the Trust is working closely with Somerset County Council to take forward a focused programme of capital works at the site in the forward year.

The annual closed period at the Museum of Somerset, which took place between 10 and 13 January, was very productive. Among other things, it made possible work relating to flooring and the hearing loop and repairs to broken windows.

4.1 Temporary Exhibitions

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

In Xanadu: Coleridge and the West Country 12 March 2022 to 21 May 2022

The manuscript of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' was loaned by the British Library for 'In Xanadu: Coleridge and the West Country'. The exhibition was seen by over 10,000 people, including school groups who took part in specially created learning

workshops. 'In Xanadu' was widely praised for its design and curatorial approach and received extensive publicity, including in the national press.

Myths and Monsters

16 July 2022 – end October 2022

'Myths and Monsters' opened on 16 July. It was built around 70 artworks by 17 of the most-celebrated children's book illustrators and was colourful and family friendly. The exhibition and associated programme were created by the Trust in collaboration with Events

of Wonder, the founders of the Bath Festival of Children's Literature.

11,800 people visited the exhibition during August and many people enjoyed a programme of linked activities. A series of free drop-in toddler sessions, funded through donations and delivered by the museum's Visitor Services team, helped maintain high engagement with family audiences.

In Fashion: How a Changing World Shaped What We Wear

12 November 2022 to 18 March 2023

This exhibition explored how changes in society have dictated fashion from the late 1700s to the present-day, featuring costume from the Museum collections. The exhibition, which was curated and designed in-house, was very popular and was inaugurated by a successful private view. A programme of events and workshops, together with online talks by the curators, authors and broadcasters Amber Butchart and Amy de la Haye, were well received.

4.2 Digital and Events

Blogs and social media content have continued to be generated relating to many areas of Trust activity. Two new digital exhibitions have recently been published. The first contains a number of short films resulting from Kate Lynch's 'CRAFT' exhibition: <https://swheritage.org.uk/digital-exhibitions/craft-somerset-portraits-and-voices/>. The second displays artworks by secondary and primary school children, created as part of the Take One project. Because lockdown meant that the art could not be displayed at the Museum of Somerset, it has been made available online instead: <https://swheritage.org.uk/digital-exhibitions/take-one-project-2022/preston-school-yeovil/>

Online and hybrid events have been trialled with different pricing models during the year. The results of the trials are helping to shape our digital offer. Tom Mayberry gave a successful talk on Coleridge as part of the programme for the 'In Xanadu' exhibition. The talk was held in the Great Hall of Taunton Castle with forty-nine people attending in person and a further fifty who joined online. An external audio-visual company supported the delivery of the event which received positive feedback from live and digital users. On 6 October the archaeologist Professor Mark Horton spoke on the subject of 'Old Worlds, New Worlds' (an event promoted by the Friends of the Museum of Somerset); 'An Evening with Phillipa Gregory' took place on 8

November; and on 21 November Professor Ronald Hutton confirmed his local popularity with a talk on the Arthurian legends relating to the Lady of the Lake. The talks reached a total of 468 people.

A series of 'Talk and Tea' events returned to the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum this spring. All the talks sold out and were well received. An autumn series is currently being planned.

Christmas at the museums in Taunton and Glastonbury was among the most successful for many years in terms of visitor numbers and engagement with activities. Visits by Santa were sold out and feedback was very positive.

4.3 Castle House

The holiday apartment continues to be let successfully and the ground floor has been used by a variety of local groups for meetings and workshops with several organisations using the space for the first time.

5. Somerset Rural Life Museum

Somerset Rural Life Museum has continued to perform strongly. Booking systems were relaxed in the Spring. Visitor numbers have recovered and by the end of the year were exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Audience engagement with activities and events has continued to grow.

Capital investment has taken place at the site with the installation of new steps and estate railing in the orchard. The Trust is also seeking planning consent for a new sign at the entrance of the museum.

5.1 Temporary Exhibitions

Mud, Music and Mayhem

11 June to 9 September 2022

This exhibition brought together images from 20 years of the Glastonbury Festival as captured by the Somerset-based photographer Jason Bryant. He chose his personal favourites for this special show marking the return of the live festival. As a further expression of the Trust's ambition to take its work to diverse community settings, a pop-up version of the exhibition was shown at the festival itself and was seen by over 10,000 people. The exhibition featured in *The Sun* newspaper. A successful programme of associated activities was delivered over the summer.

Horse Power: The Story of Horses in Rural Somerset

17 September to 7 January 2023

Through paintings, photographs, museum objects and film, the exhibition explored the different ways in which horses have been central to Somerset's rural heritage. A centrepiece of the exhibition was Minehead's famous Hobby Horse. During Somerset Art Weeks a spectacular contemporary artwork accompanied the exhibition in the

Abbey Barn. 'Blinkers', by the artist Jacky Oliver, was co-commissioned with the Trust's partner Somerset Art Works. The exhibition was accompanied by a programme of talks and family activities.

Gathering the Past

24 January to 7 May 2023

This exhibition is an opportunity to see some of the objects and archives acquired by the Trust since 2014. It includes archaeology, historic documents, paintings and sculpture that have stories ranging from deep prehistory to the present day. A highlight is Sir Peter Lely's fine portrait of the Duke of Monmouth, 1675, which has recently been cleaned and restored. The items have not been displayed until now and their acquisition has been supported by a range of generous donors.

5.2 Events

The museum's regular programme of craft and heritage workshops continued to perform strongly. The programme, which involves a range of freelance artists and makers, has now become a staple part of the site's offer for adults.

The Wassail event at Somerset Rural Life Museum returned in its pre-pandemic format on 14 January, now with the addition of Morris Dancers. 150 people enjoyed the event which was sold out.

Family activities remain an important part of the museum's offer during the school holidays. In the last year workshops were linked to the 'Horse Power' exhibition as well as the site's collections and to the seasons. The Trust has continued to offer 'Golden Apple Tickets' to families with low income through the 'Museums and Schools' programme.

6. Weston Museum

The Trust continued to provide curatorial advice and support to Weston Museum. Exhibitions have been a prominent area of activity in the last year.

6.1 Temporary Exhibitions

We delivered three temporary exhibitions in 2022–23.

Sentimental Journeys: The Art and Life of Ivy Millicent James

5 March - 12 June 2022

This exhibition showcased the work of Somerset artist Ivy Millicent James (1879-1965), a celebrated postcard artist and active suffragist who lived and worked in Weston-super-Mare during a time of great change in the role of women within society. Alongside her older sister Maud, she made a name for herself publishing Christmas cards, postcards and calendars. Her designs were part of a postcard boom that spread across Europe at the turn of the 20th century. Sentimental Journeys brought together a selection of Ivy's original watercolours, postcard and Christmas

card designs, sketch books and personal effects in order to celebrate her remarkable life and achievements.

The World of Martin Brown: Horrible Histories and other Dazzling Drawings
23 July – 12 November 2022

This exhibition brought together an inspirational array of cartoons and art by Martin Brown. He is among the most accomplished cartoonists of his generation and since 1993 has illustrated Horrible Histories, working with author Terry Deary to create one of the best-loved series of children's books ever published. Underpinning all his work is his wish to use the power of illustration to entertain and educate, and his belief that everyone should pick up a pencil and draw.

The Natural History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year
26 November 2022 – 19 February 2023

The exhibition was on loan from the Natural History Museum in London and featured 100 exceptional images which capture fascinating animal behaviour, spectacular species and the breathtaking diversity of the natural world. Using photography's unique emotive power to engage and inspire audiences, the images shine a light on stories and species around the world and encourage a future of advocating for the planet.

Quentin Blake: Illustrating Verse
4th March – 27th May 2023

Quentin Blake: Illustrating Verse is the first exhibition dedicated to Quentin Blake's illustrations for poetry and is on loan from the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration. Quentin Blake has been writing and illustrating poetry throughout his 60-year career. Many of his own books feature rhymes and songs, and he has collaborated with writers including Michael Rosen and local author Roald Dahl. Sketchbooks and rough drawings give a rare insight into Blake's writing and book design process, as well as the creation of characters for Roald Dahl's novel Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and his own Mr Magnolia.

7. Somerset Brick and Tile Museum

The Trust has continued to trial different ideas at Somerset Brick and Tile Museum and has delivered talks and tours as well as successful workshops for families and adults. The monthly Coffee and Clay sessions provide affordable adult engagement with the site. Courses provided with Somerset Recovery College have continued: <https://someretrecoverycollege.co.uk/about/> A project plan for redisplaying the museum and bringing it into fuller use for learning and community purposes has begun. Bids to grant-giving bodies are intended for supporting the revival of a unique Somerset site.

8. Collections

8.1. Accreditation

Staff delivered actions included in the Accreditation Forward Plan. Work has begun on revising this plan to cover the years 2024-27.

8.2. Reorganisation of the Museum Stores and Location Audit

Work has continued on the project to reorganise the museum stores and to update the storage locations of museum objects.

A specialist consultant has been appointed to support work to rationalise social history and agricultural collections presently kept in commercial storage. The consultancy will provide us with greater understanding of the collections and their significance.

Work has begun on location audits of the collections on display at the Museum of Somerset and at Somerset Brick and Tile Museum.

We have also begun to plan for the return of the majority of the coins in the Frome Hoard to the Somerset Heritage Centre. All of the 52,503 coins, except 198 currently on display at the Museum of Somerset with the hoard vessel, have been at The British Museum since 2010 where they are being documented and prepared for publication.

8.3. Collections Management Systems

We have continued to add to, check and upgrade data on the museum collections management system.

Work has also begun on a project to expand the Trust's use of the Enquire system to the Somerset Museums Service beginning with the curatorial team. It is currently used by the Somerset Archives and Local Studies team to manage enquiries from the public. Initial meetings have been held with Metadatis, who manage the system.

8.4. Banner Project

Bethan Murray, Curator of Social History, Costume and Textiles, has rolled and repackaged the collection of banners in the care of the South West Heritage Trust in line with best practice. Work is underway to hang these on a purpose-built racking system and to begin conservation work on a number of significant examples including banners from the East Brent Harvest Home.

8.5 Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series

Work on the Historic-England-funded Somerset Pottery Fabric Type Series Project continues to progress well. Naomi Payne, Archaeological Pottery Specialist, has now been in post for 15 months of her 18-month contract.

Over the last year work has focused on ensuring that the sherds selected for inclusion in the type series provide a good geographical coverage across Somerset and also that the information collected about each sherd meets the requirements of Historic England's data structure.

When complete the type series will become an essential reference collection comprising about 200 sherds of medieval (410-1540) and post-medieval (1540-1901) pottery excavated in the county.

8.6. Somerset Rare Plants Group

Members of the Somerset Rare Plants Group have returned to volunteering on a bi-weekly basis on the project to reorganise, update and document the collection of pressed plant specimens known as the Somerset Herbarium. One focus over the last year has been to update the storage locations of the main vascular plant collection following its reorganisation into taxonomic order (following Stage 3). This project is now about two-thirds complete. A second focus has been the mounting and preparation of recently collected specimens for accessioning. Dandelions (*Taraxacum* spp) have been a priority for new collecting and since 2016 a total of 562 dandelion sheets, encompassing 162 species, have been accessioned to the collection.

We were very sorry to hear of the death on 31 October 2022 of Liz McDonnell. She had been a curatorial volunteer at the Somerset Heritage Centre since 2015 and had worked with colleagues from the Somerset Rare Plants Group to reorganise and document the pressed plant specimens in the Somerset Herbarium. It is now one of the best-curated collections in the South West. Liz was an outstanding botanist who is much missed by her botanical friends and colleagues.

8.7. 'Nature of the Beast'

The Natural Environment Research Council has awarded Professor Danielle Schreve and Dr Lucy Flower of Royal Holloway and Dr Angela Lamb of the British Geological Survey funding for a three-year research project entitled 'Nature of the Beast? Resolving drivers of prey choice, competition and resilience in wolves'. The South West Heritage Trust provided a letter of support for this project, which follows two successful pilot studies carried out on Pleistocene wolf material and prey specimens. These demonstrated the viability of techniques including stable isotope analyses and showed their excellent potential for the study of carnivore palaeodiet.

The new project will be the most in-depth exploration yet of diet in modern and ancient wolves, assessing the impacts of changes in climate, environment, prey community and carnivore competition on feeding behaviour and morphology. The three co-investigators will also work alongside modern wolf ecologists to track

wolves and collect scat samples, as well as feeding in the findings from their fossil ancestors to better understand wolf resilience and tackle conservation issues today.

As part of this project, we were visited in February 2023 by researcher Dr Amanda Burttt from Royal Holloway, an archaeologist who specialises in the study of dogs and wolves. Her current post-doctoral research project focuses on dental microwear analysis (studying tiny marks on the surface of teeth). Dr Burttt made moulds of 200,000- to 50,000-year-old wolf teeth from Somerset cave sites including Banwell Bone Cave, Bleadon Cavern, Hutton Cave and Sandford Hill. She will create casts from the moulds and examine them to reconstruct the wolves' diets.

8.8. Ancient DNA

We have continued to support the ongoing research projects focusing on the analysis of ancient DNA from samples taken from the human remains of individuals from Somerset in the care of the South West Heritage Trust. This includes the work of Professor Ian Armit of the University of Bradford and Dr Tom Booth of the Pontus Skoglund Laboratory at The Francis Crick Institute.

8.9 Art UK

Bethan Murray, Curator of Social History, Costume and Textiles, has continued to work on the project to update the Art UK website so that all artworks in oil or watercolour in the care of the Museums Service are included on this online catalogue along with images and key information. Sculptural works have also been added to the online database.

8.10 Acquisitions

We have continued to acquire museum objects in line with the Collections Development Policy.

The Cheddar Brooch is a very rare early medieval silver and copper alloy disc brooch found by a metal detectorist near Cheddar in 2020. It is of national significance and is the first of its kind ever found in the South West. It probably belonged to a person of very high status during the period 800 to 900 AD. The acquisition was made possible thanks to support from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Art Fund and The Friends of the Museum of Somerset. Conservation work will now take place before the brooch goes on display at the Museum of Somerset in the autumn.

The painting *Taunton & London Royal Mail* by the genre painter E. J. Pegrum dates from the late 19th century and recreates a scene from the 1820s showing a Royal Mail coach travelling the turnpike road near Glastonbury. The Tor is in the background. Following conservation, the painting will be displayed at Somerset Rural Life Museum.

A miniature watercolour on ivory of a boy with a fishing rod, dated 26 March 1842, has been acquired. It was painted by the artist Sarah Biffin (1784-1850) shortly after

she established herself in a studio at Bold Street, Liverpool. Sarah was born without arms or legs and was baptised at East Quantoxhead. From an early age Sarah showed great ability in drawing and painting, holding the pen or brush in her mouth. At the age of 13 she began to work for a travelling showman called Emmanuel Dukes. Eventually her skills were recognised by the Earl of Morton who established her in a studio in London. There she painted royalty and the well-to-do, including George III, George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria. After the earl's death in 1827, Sarah struggled to support herself. She died in poverty in Liverpool at the age of 66.

Five art works by Sarah Biffin were loaned to the Philip Mould Gallery, London, for their exhibition 'Without Hands: The Art of Sarah Biffin'. The Trust now holds what is probably the largest public collection of her works. The exhibition was widely noticed in the press and online: <https://www.ft.com/content/7f547fdc-5557-4cd7-800c-8fdbab39828c>

8.11 Conservation

The portrait of Hannah Ellis, belonging to SANHS, was conserved with SANHS support. Museums Service staff continue to work with the SANHS Museum Collections Panel to identify further works that require conservation. A Somerset milk float was conserved by the Devon wheelwright Greg Rowland prior to display in the Abbey Barn at Somerset Rural Life Museum.

8.12 Museum Development

Rachel Bellamy, Museum Development Officer for Somerset, has continued to provide support to museums and heritage sites across the county by working with colleagues at South West Museum Development to enable the county's 63 museums to access grants, training programmes and other opportunities. Rachel has also helped museums access grants and other new support provided by the government, local authorities and funding bodies to aid recovery from the effects of the Covid pandemic. The MDO is Accreditation Mentor for eight museums in the county which do not have museum professionals in their team. This role involves providing advice to support accreditation and to attend trustee meetings. In the last year the MDO supported a variety of projects including work to enhance the digital reach of community museums through membership of Visit Somerset and support for sites seeking to improve environmental performance.

8.13 Portable Antiquities Scheme

The Portable Antiquities Scheme team have continued their ongoing work to record archaeological finds in Somerset, Devon and Dorset in partnership with the British Museum. This has included the delivery of finds surgeries and other learning activities at South West Heritage Trust sites and regional museums.

Funding from the British Museum for the Portable Antiquities Scheme has been confirmed until March 2025. Additional funding has allowed the Dorset Finds Liaison

Officer post to be made full-time and for a Finds Liaison Assistant (based at the Somerset Heritage Centre) to be appointed on a fixed-term contract.

8.14 Hadspen

The new Roman Museum and reconstructed Roman Villa at Hadspen (The Newt in Somerset) opened to the public on 6 June 2022. Trust staff contributed to their creation. The Roman Museum includes the display of items on loan from the Somerset museum collections, including the SANHS collection. Design and curatorial team staff led the mount-making, installation and associated collections management processes.

8.15 Avalon Archaeology

Museums Service staff have supported activity associated with opening of the Avalon Archaeology Park. Landscaping was completed during the summer and has transformed the appearance and accessibility of the site. Volunteers have continued to work towards the completion of mosaic floors in the Roman building, and several impressive wall paintings have been added to the Saxon longhall. They depict scenes from the life of King Alfred in Somerset. The Lottery-funded Outreach and Engagement Officer began work in November to deliver a programme of activities for a range of audiences. Improvements to the wider Avalon Marshes Centre site have also continued and the construction by Natural England of a new toilet block and other facilities is underway.

8.16 Community Events

On 2 April 2022, the Curator of Archaeology visited Carhampton Heritage Centre with archaeological finds from Eastbury Farm, Carhampton, as part of the Centre's summer season launch. 76 people attended a talk.

On 8 February 2023, the Curator of Archaeology gave a talk entitled 'Treasures from Exmoor and Beyond' to Watchet Museum Society. There were 30 attendees.

On 3 March 2023, the Curator of Archaeology and the Archives Engagement Manager welcomed 20 volunteers from the Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme to the Somerset Heritage Centre for a tour of the site with a focus on archaeological collections.

On 4 March 2023, 20 children and five adult helpers from Mick Aston's Young Archaeologist's Club visited the Somerset Heritage Centre for a tour of the museum stores and an object handling session.

9. Review of the Museum Forward Collections Management Plan 2022–2023 and the Forward Plan for 2022–24

This plan is provided separately.

Sam Astill
Head of Museums and Engagement
South West Heritage Trust
on behalf of Somerset County Council
26 March 2023