



## Totnes Museum Volunteers Newsletter

### May 2019

#### Message from Tony Whitty, Chair of the Museum Trust

Dear Volunteers, I hope you will find this newsletter useful. So much is starting to change in the museum that I thought you would appreciate an update. I will try to do one regularly!

I must begin by sending thanks to everyone who helped to give Ann Rutherford a fitting send off for the huge contribution she has made over the years as a Trustee. We are all very pleased she is not disappearing completely and will still be around to help manage the shop.

We are extremely fortunate to have recruited four new Trustees with an excellent range of museum experience:

**Anne Austin** who specialised in history at university and has a background in organisational administration

**Diana Waters** who lectures in museum studies at Plymouth and Exeter and has a strong background in Heritage work both nationally and internationally

**Lawrence Bruce** who has background in communications

**Jacqueline Edelman** who has worked in museums internationally.

And of course, I am relieved that we retain the invaluable services of **Peter Bethel, Alan Roffey and Judy Westacott**. I am honoured to remain as Chair for a further year and hopefully to help steer the museum to retain its accredited status.

We also have the voluntary services of **John Crellin**, who you will probably have seen in and around the museum. He is helping Trustees in an advisory capacity as someone who has a great deal of experience of museums in the UK and internationally.

#### Arts Council Accreditation

##### What is it?

The Arts Council of England has a set of standards which guide how museums are run throughout the country. They have recently changed the way they assess museums against these standards. We are among the first museums in the country to be reassessed under their new criteria.

##### Why is it Important to gain accreditation?

Without accreditation it is very difficult to apply for grants. As you know since the Town Council withdrew funding from us four years ago, we are dependent on donations or grants in order to stay open, we do therefore need to be able to apply for grants as and when we can.

With accreditation, funders are assured that we have got our governance right and are managing the museum and its collections in a professional manner. The standards are stepped according to size and location, but it is nevertheless a demanding process!

### **How will it affect you as a volunteer?**

Thankfully, it won't involve you in any more work ; however, you will notice things change over time to enable us to comply with the new standards and you will certainly be asked, at some point, for your opinions especially on the section called " users and their experience" .

### **So where do we start?**

All Trustees and Kate are currently busy reviewing all of our policies. Trustees are working in three groups looking at

- Organisational health
- The collections and how they are managed
- Users and their experience

We have to have up to date policies in place for all of these three areas

Kate is ensuring that we have policies which meet the required standards for volunteers in respect of recruitment, induction, management of rotas, data protection etc

### **The Forward Plan for the Museum**

Having done that we need to construct a "Forward Plan" which must detail everything we plan to do to ensure that we are compliant with the standards and can be sustainable.

It sounds a lot...and it is, for sure, a lot of work. However, its good for any organisation to take time to review how it's doing and it's helpful to have a national standards framework like this to work to.

### **Time Scale**

The first opportunity to submit for accreditation is the end of July. However, we are all volunteers, so our time is obviously limited. We will do whatever we can to meet that deadline, but we may need to postpone until Autumn and if necessary, we can apply for an extension. We have only just received the final forms for submission from the Arts Council so hopefully, if necessary, they will be sympathetic to a slight delay.

### **Other News**

#### **The Kitchen**

John C is reworking the kitchen using the accreditation standards for collections. You will notice that he is providing interpretations of the objects and developing narrative about how an Elizabethan kitchen would be used.

#### **Exhibitions: Totnes Women's Voices**

Has used interactive technology for the first time in an exhibition and also invited visitors to vote and to comment on the exhibition, it's worth reading some of the comments made. Many votes have been cast! Its also part of enhancing the users' experience. As a result of the grant received to enable this exhibition the museum now owns the Touch Screen and the TV. The exhibition will close on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

## **Eric the Robot Exhibition**

Opens on July 2. The Royal Society has given us a grant of £3000 to become a Place of Science to showcase a mini working replica of Eric, Britain's first robot (1928) and the life of Capt. WH Richards who was brought up in Totnes. More about this in my next newsletter

## **Thank You**

Finally, a big **Thank You** to all of you for the time you give to our wonderful museum. Please feel free to email me with any comments, ideas and suggestions on [tonywhitty@yahoo.com](mailto:tonywhitty@yahoo.com)

**Tony Whitty**  
Chair of Totnes Museum Trust