

Hello everyone

Welcome to the lockdown edition of Totnes Museum's newsletter. Firstly, and most importantly, I hope that you are all keeping safe and well through these most extraordinary worrying times.

It has been quite a shock for all of us at the Museum, suddenly finding that our plans to open on 30th March were thwarted as the lockdown began. A group of volunteers and Kate had been busy preparing the Museum for its grand reopening and now it feels like the *Marie Celeste* as you walk through the Museum: some rooms ready and waiting for visitors; others still requiring a few finishing touches, with only shrouded mannequins for company.



Laurence Bruce, one of our trustees, has been taking photos of the Museum and its exhibits over the past few weeks. These are being posted onto Facebook and Twitter, where you will also find posts and questions set by another of our trustees, Tom Coia.

Please take a few minutes to look at these posts. It would be helpful if you could 'like' and 'share' the posts, so as many people as possible are kept up to date with Museum news.

The trustees, along with many other people, have discovered Zoom and we are holding virtual meetings to ensure that the Museum is ready to open as soon as the lockdown is lifted. There will still be a lot of 'hands-on' work to

get the Museum looking its best just before we open again.

Alarms

The area which has been a major focus for the trustees over the past couple of months has been all things electrical and security. This follows a Fire Risk Assessment, plus a Security Review by the Arts Council of England (ACE) and a review of the Museum's electrical systems. The priority was the installation of a new CCTV system, which we financed through help from the Friends of the Museum, Totnes Town Council and dipping into the Museum reserves. The intruder alarm system is also in desperate need of renewal, as the current system has become obsolete and it is virtually impossible to acquire spare parts. As well as this, our fire alarm is outdated and under current regulations no longer appropriate for the building. So, both these alarms also need fixing.

The trustees have been acquiring quotes etc. and it has now been agreed to have both alarm systems replaced and monitored by ADT. Before these new systems can be installed, we need to bring the electrical system up to date.

Work on this is starting now and will be followed by the installation of the alarm systems.



As you can probably guess, this has all taken a great deal of time and energy to sort through, but it does mean the Museum meets and indeed surpasses necessary regulations before it opens to visitors again. Fortunately, while this work is being carried out the Archive

Centre can continue with research work online.

None of the above electrical work comes cheap, indeed some of the quotes have been eye-watering! Luckily, we have been able to finance it all through fundraising and a very generous donation, which also allows us to complete several other capital works to both the building and the exhibition rooms. In the past the Town Council funded maintenance work in the Museum, but they have recently looked at our lease again and concluded, after legal advice, that they are responsible only for the floors, walls and roof of the Museum; everything else is the responsibility of the Museum Trust, which means much higher running costs than we have had in previous years.

Accreditation

Now for some good news! As many of you already know, a major achievement prior to shutdown was the awarding to Totnes Museum of our Accredited status by ACE, the body responsible for Museum standards and a grant awarding body for Museums throughout the country. The accreditation process took 18 months, with several delays due to ACE technical hitches. In the end, we submitted our application on 30th August – the deadline was 31st August! – and a few months later we were informed that we had passed with flying colours.



Museum accreditation is the benchmark for a well-run museum. The award shows a museum is being responsibly managed and governed – and other museums recognize that. Additionally, accreditation demonstrates a museum’s professionalism, which makes it easier to get funding and helps give confidence to lenders and donors. So, though the process

was arduous and very time-consuming, it should certainly reap rewards going forward.

Museum People Profiles

We thought you may be interested in learning a little more about people involved in the Museum - trustees, volunteers, visitors - so we will hope to have more profiles in future editions. Here we meet two trustees:

I am **Jackie Edelman**, a fairly new trustee of around 18 months. I know some of our volunteers but yet to catch up with many of



you, so here is a little about me. I started my museum career long ago at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. After some years teaching, I moved on to Hampshire Museums and then the Royal Armouries. My interest in maritime history led me to the Naval Museums in Portsmouth. I finished my career on a high, developing workshops and exhibitions for the new National Museum in Qatar. When we returned to the UK, I was really pleased when Tony accepted my application to be a trustee at the Totnes Museum, a gorgeous building with a gem of a collection.

I am **Laurence Bruce** and I have been a trustee for just over a year. I have worked in market research and communications for agencies and government departments. Often this work was focused on measuring and understanding customers’ experiences; my most recent role was in the NHS, working with patients and identifying ways to improve their GP visits, hospital appointments and stays. I am also a photographer and had an exhibition in town last year. I’ve recently moved back to this area; I grew up in Torbay and have family there.

Over to you! Please consider writing a short paragraph about yourself and why you are involved with Totnes Museum. We will add your contribution to the next newsletter.

Who Are Our Visitors?

We would like to learn more about the Museum's visitors – who they are, where they come from – and learn how we can get even more people to come to the Museum. We already count visitors thanks to the system we have in place at reception. Our plan is to conduct research to find out more: what visitors like and don't like about the Museum; what they expected to find versus the reality; what they would like to see more of. Feedback from our visitors on these questions should help us improve people's experience of the Museum and its collections, bring in more visitors and help ensure the Museum's survival and improvement.

Covid-19

Whatever we think of the lockdown and Covid-19, one thing that is certain is that it is an incredibly significant event in our history. With this in mind, do you have anything which is specifically Covid-19 related? If so, could you please save it, as it may form part of a future exhibition at the Museum. If the artifact has a Totnes connection, even better. Apparently, the letter from the Prime Minister is now going for as much as £80 on eBay!



Best wishes to everyone