

Getting back to normal

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- an amazing collection of beetles
- Bristol Street Art exhibition



From the Chairman

Isle of Man visit

I am delighted to report that our first major event since lockdown, a visit to the Isle of Man postponed from 2020, took place in October and was a great success. You can read about it in more detail later in the newsletter. Particular thanks go to the organisers – Gary Gostelow and Mary Bailey – for their tenacity in ‘keeping the dream alive’.

All our trips take a lot of work and patience to set up, fill places, handle payments and deal with changes as they arise. For a trip like this which eventually takes place more than 18 months after it was first advertised, with all the uncertainty of what lockdown rules would be in place months in advance, the challenge is multiplied. And, of course, the Isle of Man closed its borders for months, which increased the complexity. The team of organisers can – and I am sure do – take great satisfaction in having run an event which has been successful in giving the participants a very enjoyable holiday, in raising money for us to use for the benefit of the museum, and in celebrating our emergence from the tough constraints of lockdown. Many thanks to all who made that possible.

AGM

It was great to be able to welcome almost 40 members to our AGM at M Shed in September after our well-attended and successful online AGM last year. The formal business was dealt with as expected, and we welcomed Susan Hibberd to the committee. Susan was a well-known member of FoBAG before the merger, alongside her late husband John.

The short presentations afterwards from four members of staff were varied, entertaining and informative. Our thanks go to them for ‘coming to work’ at the weekend to support us. With the start of the AGM moved to 2.30, there was plenty of time afterwards to chat and share tea and cake.

I know that quite a few members come primarily to show their support for the work done throughout the year by the committee and the Events Group. That is much appreciated – but I am pretty sure they all enjoyed the afternoon too.

Getting back to being sociable

The Isle of Man holiday and our AGM are just two examples of the opening up of our programme now that rules are more relaxed and many of us are feeling more comfortable meeting people face-to-face – and what a pleasure it is to take part in those events! Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find more opportunities including talks, coach trips and behind-the-scenes visits, which as well as broadening our

horizons, give us the chance to renew friendships which may have lapsed in the last 18 months and to create new ones.

Museum in-person programmes are steadily increasing. I took great pleasure in volunteering for the Docks Heritage Weekend at the start of October, engaging with the public and chatting with staff and other volunteers. It was a tremendous success, with the cranes, boats and railway locomotives all among the activities delighting the visitors, and we were lucky enough to have lovely sunny and mild weather throughout.



▲ Docks Heritage Weekend 2021

© Bristol Culture

Margaret Kerr Bequest

Since our last Newsletter we have received a further £50,000 from the estate of Margaret Kerr, bringing the total received to £200,000. As yet, there are no specific plans for us to use that generous bequest, but such a large amount has potential to make a really significant difference in the work of the museum.

Behind the Scenes tours at M Shed

Due to staff shortages the historic houses need to wait until the spring to reopen but the weekday Behind the Scenes tours at M Shed are run by volunteers, so have been able to restart. As you may know, I am one of the tour leaders and I have loved being able once again to share my knowledge and enthusiasm with small groups of visitors who in general seem to me to be more appreciative and more engaged than they were before lockdown. As I write, tours are at 11.30am Tuesday to Friday and at 3pm on Wednesdays. There is no need to pre-book but, as numbers are limited, I would advise arriving a little early and asking the Box Office in the foyer to put your name on the list.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

*Cover photo: The giant Lady Isabella waterwheel at Laxey.
See the article on page 7.*

© Ann Wood.

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Autumn sees the closure of the very successful exhibitions, displays and interventions running in the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and M Shed over the summer. The photographic interventions at BMAG have been thought provoking, dramatic and of high standard. The Vanguard exhibition of Street Art at M Shed has reminded us of the role the city has played in establishing this art form (and the re-sale of Banksy's part-shredded artwork in October for £18.5 million reinforces this fact). The survey associated with the display of the statue of Edward Colston closed in early October and the display itself will come to an end in early January. But as one set of exhibitions closes so we see a new suite arrive. As well as the ever-popular Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition at M Shed, we are all excited by the Grayson's Art Club exhibition which will feature at BMAG, a reminder of the TV programme which to many during lockdown was a breath of fresh air.

Another highly successful exhibition has been held not in Bristol but in Bordeaux, where so many of our Bristol School works of art have been on loan. Back on show in BMAG this autumn, the legacy of that loan is hopefully a strong one whereby we can liaise and work with our European friends in new ways in future.

In the last Newsletter I mentioned the reopening of Blaise Museum and the anticipated reopening from early autumn of Red Lodge and Georgian House Museums. Very sadly this was not to be. The combined impact of sickness, necessary self-isolation due to Covid and the vacancies in our Front of House team saw us taking the very difficult decision to close Blaise and not reopen the other two museums this year. We are now focussing on trying to ensure that all our main 5 museums are up and running from the beginning of April 2022 (and although general reopening of the three Houses to the public has not been possible this winter, we are continuing access to supervised programmed activities for certain groups.)

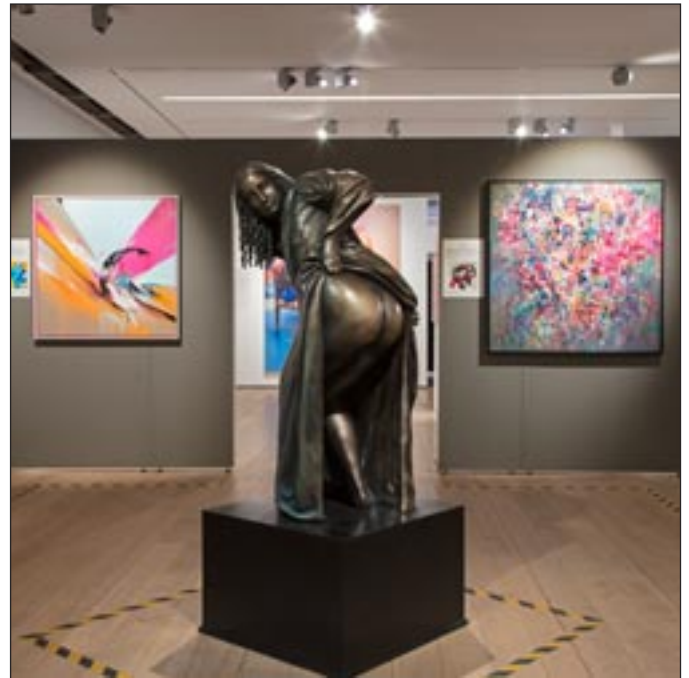
Although the impacts of the pandemic are still with us, seeing the dockside outside M Shed alive for the Docks Heritage Weekend at the start of October, with throngs of visitors, railway engines in steam, the public riding in the cab of a crane to learn how to operate the jib and the historic boats in action again, and all on a lovely sunny couple of days, made it feel as if we are past the worst and on the way back!

Ray Barnett Head of Collections & Archives

Winter Lectures Series

Bristol Museums have delivered a Winter Lecture Series between October and April every year since 1948. Past speakers have included many of the leading experts of their time and some famous faces.

For many years the Winter Lectures have been sponsored by the Friends so they can remain free and open to all. Lectures are all connected in some way to Bristol Museum's amazing collections and cover a range of subjects including geology, natural history, archaeology, art and world cultures. This winter the museum is returning to holding the talks in-



▲ *The Moona Lisa* by Nick Walker
© Nick Walker

person. Details are published well in advance on the Museum's What's On web pages. The next talk is at 7.30 on 9 December, in the 440-seat Priory Road Lecture Theatre of the University of Bristol, on the very current subject of how the culture of indigenous peoples is represented in major museums. Booking online is recommended but not essential.

Museums at Night 2022

In early March, the museum will be running a ticketed evening event inspired by Grayson's Art Club, celebrating the feelgood potential of creativity and self-expression, and featuring artists in a range of media and plenty of chances to get hands-on. Watch out for details on the Museum's What's on page.

Lunar New Year

The museum will celebrate the Year of the Tiger with community partners, live in BMAG, over the weekend of 12-13 February. (Subject to government and council guidelines and to the levels of COVID in the New Year. Capacity may be reduced compared to pre-pandemic levels.)

Family volunteering

Starting in October the museum is trialling a new approach to volunteering to increase engagement with families in the Lawrence Weston area. Monthly sessions run in partnership with the Parks department and Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre involve families in archaeology, wildlife spotting, bulb planting and other activities around Blaise Museum and estate.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2021

M Shed – Until 5 June 2022

Wildlife Photographer of the Year, produced by the Natural History Museum, has returned to M Shed with a brand new set of 100 extraordinary images telling the story of a planet under pressure and giving us a deeper understanding of the issues facing nature and the actions we need to take to protect it.

Gaze through the lens of some of the world's best wildlife photographers and marvel at the beauty of our planet. From curious underwater species to majestic soaring birds, immerse yourself in this year's most remarkable nature photography and photojournalism.

Now in its 57th year, Wildlife Photographer of the Year is the most prestigious photography event of its kind showcasing the world's most astonishing sights. Launching in 1965 and attracting 361 entries, today the competition receives 49,000 entries from all over the world.

Each image has been selected by a panel of international experts and the winning images are selected for their creativity, originality and technical excellence.

For the first time in five years ticket prices have been increased by £1, which will help the museum to recoup a little of the income lost due to the pandemic. Standard entry is £6, concessions £4.

Lockdown chicks

Storm fox

© Jonny Armstrong, Wildlife Photographer of the Year

© Gagana Mendis Wickramasinghe, Wildlife Photographer of the Year





The Isle of Man

28 September – 5 October 2021

After a year's wait and much apprehension, it was a relief finally to set off for the Isle of Man, even though it was at 6.00 am from the Bristol Hotel. A Crown Dependency, the island has its own parliament founded on a rich history dating back to the Vikings. We were able to discover much of that history, as well as information on the earlier settlers, with help and advice from Lynn McKibben of Manx Heritage and Nicola Pemberton and Helen Leigh of the Friends of Manx Heritage. We are grateful to them, and to our coach driver, Phil White, for ensuring that our holiday was enjoyable as well as informative.

Thanks are due to Gary Costelow for putting together the itinerary for the trip although, sadly, he was unable to travel himself due to ill-health.

Mary Bailey

Wednesday 29 – Douglas

Our first morning involved a walk along the elegant Victorian promenade and then through the town of Douglas past some familiar shops and others packed with Isle of Man souvenirs – many based on the theme of the TT races. We climbed the steep hill (some cleverly using the lift in a multi-storey carpark) and the challenging steps to arrive at the Manx Museum.

Our guide, Helen, gave us a very brief historical perspective then let us loose to explore this delightful and informative museum. We learned that the Isle of Man has a population of 85,000, largely of Celtic ancestry, and has been inhabited for over 10,000 years. The Vikings invaded in the 10th century and departed in 1265. They left a lasting legacy: intermarrying with the Celts, mining lead and silver and producing coinage and ornaments. They established law and order through the Tynwald parliament which survives to this day.

The museum showed us living conditions through the ages. The main sources of revenue were fishing and mining. From the 20th century onwards, tourism, overtook them and in 1913, 600,000 tourists visited the island. However, many Manx people, particularly miners, emigrated all over the world, and there are Manx Associations to be found in many unlikely places.

We learned some interesting history. Henry IV granted the Isle of Man to Lord Stanley in return for the gift of two falcons for every future monarch of England to be presented on their coronation days. The Stanley family took control for 300 years. In 1765 the British crown took over the island as a dependency, hoping to recoup revenue lost through smuggling. Currently the Queen is the Lord of Man. In 1881 women on the island got the vote. Emily Pankhurst's mother lived on the island and, ironically, got the vote before her daughter!

The island has an impressive artistic pedigree. The Douglas School of Art was established in the 20th century – one renowned Liberty's designer, Archibald Knox, taught there for some 40 years. The art galleries contained some pleasing water colours and sea scape paintings. Everywhere we saw the Manx flag with its three legs which carries the motto 'Wherever you shall have thrown it, it will stand'. An interesting film about the Tynwald completed our visit.

In the afternoon we walked further into Douglas to visit the Tynwald. In 979, this system of government was introduced by invading Vikings and still prevails. It is claimed that the Tynwald is the oldest continuous parliament in the world. It consists of two elected chambers – the House of Keys and the Legislative Council – each consisting of 12 representatives of constituencies throughout the island. Elections are held every five years. Most elected members are independents. Ten women were elected at the last poll.



▲ Jubilee Clock donated in 1887 by George Dumbell QC member of the House of Keys, a philanthropist and famously dodgy businessman

▼ The House of Keys



TRIP TO THE ISLE OF MAN

The two chambers together form the Tynwald in which laws are debated and agreed. No abstentions are allowed. Each year on Tynwald Day (usually 5 July) all laws enacted that year have to be read out in Manx and English to a large crowd made up of dignitaries and locals at Tynwald Hill. The Queen, as Lord of Man, was represented by Princess Anne this year. I found the whole procedure fair and democratic but rather cumbersome.

Gillian Davies



▲ *The Ancient Tynwald Hill*

Thursday 30 – St Johns and Peel

Our appetites whetted by an overview of the island's history and culture at the Manx Museum, Douglas, the Friends were eager to explore further afield, and our first destination was Peel, on the west coast. Carol set the tone for the day, asking if we had packed our sun cream as the deeply grey skies glowered down, and we were most grateful for her relaxed execution of Mary's thoughtful plans. Thanks to these, we welcomed on board Peter, a Blue Badge guide, who won our hearts with his gentle manner and Bristol connections.

The sights started just metres from our hotel as the coach expertly spun round the uniquely elliptical roundabout that we were to get to know so well, and statues on another revealed the origin of many common phrases, such as 'brass monkey' and 'keeping your powder dry'.

However, we were heading to the heart of Island politics ... a green field! Not just any field, this was the site of the ancient Tynwald, where, to this day, laws must be read aloud before formal adoption. We had been warned this was on a hill, and many of us were imagining something on the scale of Snowdon, or at least Glastonbury, but even the most charitable would probably have stopped at 'mound' and thankfully too, as we took up position on one of its three levels. Only then did we find out that where you stood denoted your position in society, although none of us were quite certain who was standing in the footsteps of this year's royal representative, Princess Anne.

Once at Peel, we crossed a causeway onto yet another island, St. Patrick's Isle, and followed the narrow stone track now slick with drizzle, up past the Black Dog with his supernatural reputation, and into the ancient castle and cathedral, all the while wrestling with coats and hats as the elements fulfilled their earlier promises.

The atmospheric site richly rewarded our resilience, emphasising the bleak conditions faced by those stationed there over the years. From the mysterious 10th century round tower to Victorian additions, much history could be told by those stones, and the crashing waves left us in no doubt of its defensive advantages. A visit to the barrel-vaulted cathedral crypt, architecturally untouched since its Norman construction, astounded many of us, even if we had to rely on mobile phone torches to descend, while above ground we heard of the modern excavation of its most famous resident, the Viking 'Pagan Lady'.

Peter's expertise extended to Manx culinary specialities, and some resourceful Friends found the legendary kipper baps during our lunch stop, while the inclement conditions did not stop Davidson's ice cream proving remarkably popular for tea. In between, we explored the picturesque streets of Peel, all of which seemed to wind uphill, on a trail that took us back in time in more ways than one. The High Street showed none of the usual chain store trappings, and it was easy to imagine cellars full of illicit goods from 'the running trade', next to the many churches and chapels. Peter's local knowledge was invaluable, as his tour included all the prettiest garden displays, demonstrating the residents' genuine pride in their delightful town.

Having stood in the ruins of the original, we all agreed the new cathedral had a far more convenient setting. Yet it was equally intriguing, with surrounding allotment plots echoing its tangible sense of community, and beautiful stained-glass windows and distinctively sinuous Archibald Knox plate demonstrating the continuation of the island's strong artistic traditions. A fitting end to a day that had included a flavour of the many wonderful strands of life that form the story of this island and its population.

Keira Stobie



▲ *10th century round tower at Peel Castle*

Friday 1 – The Laxey Wheel and the Snaefell Railway

We rode on the Manx Electric Railway from Douglas to the town of Laxey. The front tram (there were only two and they seemed to work just as well going backwards) rattled cheerfully along, emitting piercing whistles whenever the rails crossed a road – seemingly every few seconds! We enjoyed the views of the coast on one side and rolling countryside on the other, passing stations no larger than garden sheds. More like bus shelters than railway stations. At Laxey terminus, we walked up the Glen Mooar valley towards the old lead and zinc mine.

Underground mining, primarily for lead, lasted here on the east side of the island from the late 1700s until about 1920. By far the most famous local feature, the gigantic open-air waterwheel called Lady Isabella, remains in operation, nicely painted and bedecked with flags to attract us to the site. I knew the wheel provided pumping power, but I was surprised to find out how a water flow got to it, and, particularly, how its power was configured to pump water from the mine and to provide other motive power there. We climbed up the spiral staircase on the outside of the tower in bright sunshine.

The Laxey wheel is an overshot wheel. The water is fed to it by a horizontal trough from a tower at one side. Water gets to the top of the tower from mountain shutes or 'lades' which are higher up the valley than the top of the tower. These feed a cistern from which pipes push water under pressure to the top of the tower. The water then falls into the top buckets which pull the wheel round. The giant wheel generates a very substantial torque on its central shaft from the weight of the water.

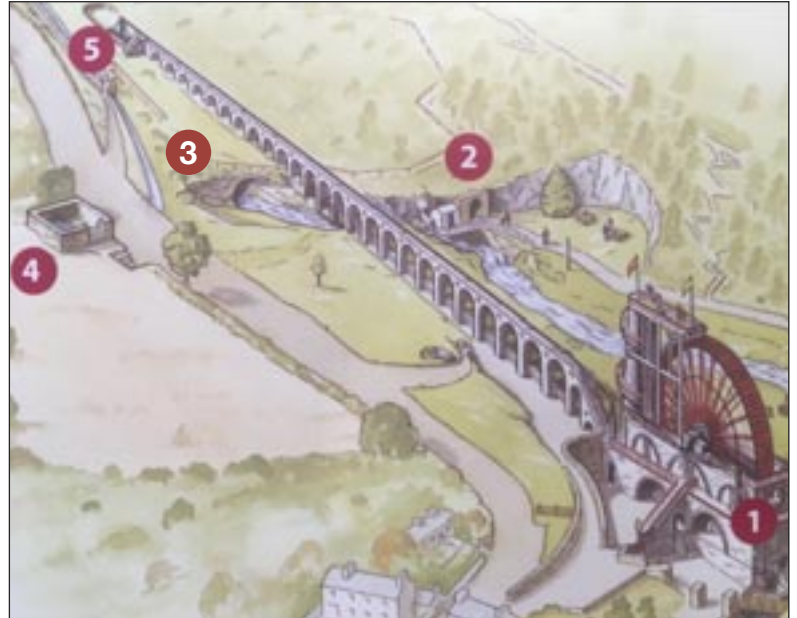
The wheel turns a crank which produces horizontal forward and backward motion to drive a push rod. At a length of 180m, this pushrod must be one of the longest ever made. The power was used to work pumps in the mine and also a man-engine. This was a reciprocating post with horizontal platforms attached to it so that miners could step onto them, be raised 2.4 metres by the vertical movement, then step off to wait for the post to descend. As the post started to rise again, each miner would then step on to the next platform which carried them upwards another 2.4 metres. The post would carry 150 miners at the same time on their jerky journey upwards. Each one took 150 steps on and off the post to be lifted to the surface.

At one stage the mine produced 3,000 tons of ore per year. Ore was not processed locally because there was no coal on the island, so cleaned ore was sent to Swansea for smelting. Once mined, ore was sorted, and stones removed in the nearby washeries powered by a smaller waterwheel called Lady Evelyn. These working areas employed women and children and were probably more hellish than the mine itself. What remains of these buildings has now been converted into a pleasure garden and this is the lower terminus of the Snaefell Mountain Railway.

We reassembled and boarded the single coach electric mountain train and set off upwards. The first section of the line runs along and up the valley and gives a good view of the wheel and the viaduct running to the mine. Then the track begins to climb more steeply and runs into the farmland on the side of Snaefell itself.

There is an intermediate station called the Bungalow on the road which now is part of the famous TT course. From this, the line climbs round the mountain summit on three sides which give splendid views of the island before turning back to reach the terminus itself. We rested in the spacious café where we all enjoyed our refreshments sheltered from the strong summit wind. The relaxed ride downhill (with no sense of an imminent run-away thanks to the centre rail braking system!) was an opportunity to reflect and enjoy the spectacular views as we descended.

Harry Hibberd



▲ *Diagram of the workings of the Laxey Wheel*

- 1 Wheel
- 2 Old Adit Level
- 3 Overflow from cistern
- 4 Cistern
- 5 Top of the mine shaft

▼ *The Snaefell Electric Railway*



Saturday 2 – Castletown

Castletown, our next destination and erstwhile Manx capital, lies at the south-east corner of the island. We passed a bronze George Formby 'leaning on a lamp post' on our way to Douglas station. Here we embarked on our steam train to Castletown, drawn by the Caledonia steam locomotive. With its old-fashioned compartments and leather strap windows, it brought memories of our childhoods. We sped along through the green rolling Manx countryside, steam drifting past the window, the cattle and sheep scattering as we passed. In Castletown our guide Helen met the train and gave us a brief introduction before leaving us to explore Castle Rushen.

The castle, the best-preserved mediaeval castle in Europe, held surprises and delights round every corner, as various rooms were 'peopled' with realistic wax figures, even one sitting on an 'en suite' toilet, accompanied by a lavatorial soundtrack! The castle dates back to the 10th century and after use by the Norse-Gaelic rulers of the Isle of Man the castle changed hands repeatedly between the Scots and the English. It played a part in the English Civil War when the then Lord of Mann, James Stanley, fought and died on the side of the Royalists. His wife held the castle against opposition but a rebellion led by Manxman William Christian led to its surrender. In later centuries the castle became a prison and mental asylum. Eventually it became decrepit and was restored by Manx Heritage in the 20th century.

We emerged from the Castle into welcome sunshine, and crossed over to the Old House of Keys, once the centre of 19th century political life on the Island. The building has been restored to its appearance in 1866 – a milestone in Manx history when the old self-elected House of Keys took its first steps along the road to modern democracy by passing the House of Keys Election Bill and becoming a popularly-elected body. During our visit, under the guidance of the ebullient 'secretary', we were able to vote on various topics through the ages and see how democracy developed in the Island – sometimes years ahead of England – and the effect that political decisions have had, and continue to have, on the Manx nation. We witnessed active debate between large 'portraits' of historic members which came to life and spoke their opinions to each other and to us. There were a few topics that were slightly contentious but, overall, we voted peaceably!

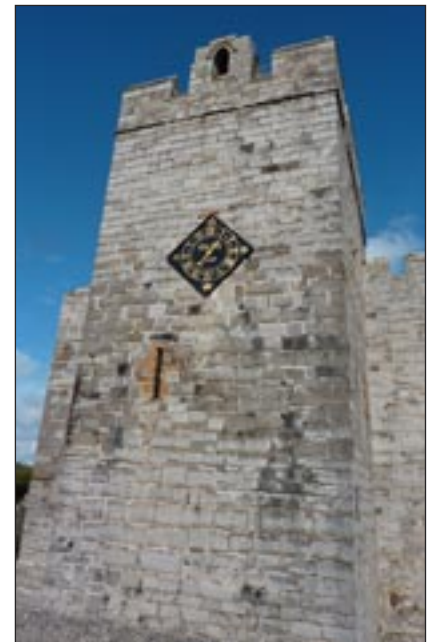
Meeting our guide Helen again in the newly restored Castletown square, we were conducted down to the metal swing footbridge renamed Cain Bridge in honour of the Isle of Man's only Victoria Cross holder, Major Robert Henry Cain. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry and leadership at the Battle of Arnhem in 1944. His daughter Frances unveiled the bridge in 2014. She was married to Jeremy Clarkson, who owns the cottages attached to the nearby lighthouse.

From the bridge we moved on to the Old Grammar School, the oldest roofed building in Castletown. Here were laid out the blackboards, and rows of wooden desks facing the teacher, of a typical Victorian school. There were charcoal sticks and boards which are used when parties of school children are shown around. How different they must find the old system! In times past the school was surrounded by noisy abattoirs and holding pens for the doomed animals. Very different to the peaceful place today, on a grassy knoll next to the ocean. Here ended our informative and enjoyable Castletown visit.

Sue Black



▲ Friends admiring the Caledonia steam locomotive



▲ Elizabethan clock at Castle Rushen given to Castletown by Elizabeth I

▼ The Smelt monument in Castletown Square



Sunday 3 – Cregneash and Rushen Abbey

Cregneash is set in the hills above Port St Mary. There was a settlement here as early as 1700. Much of the village has now been purchased by the Manx National Heritage as a folk museum, demonstrating village life about 100 years ago. Typically, the cottages are single storey and built of stone with two rooms and a thatched roof. Here villagers eked out a living farming their small holdings, supplementing their income with fishing or mining.

Many of the cottages have been extended, often with a second storey added but Harry Kelly's cottage remains largely untouched.

Following his death in 1935, it was given to Manx National Heritage and opened to the public in 1938. To one side of the entrance is the 'big room', a welcoming and well lived-in room stuffed with furniture and ornaments plus an open turf fire where the cooking would have been done. To the other side is the bedroom which would have accommodated all the family. Below the thatch is a turf layer, for insulation, and from the outside you can see where the thatch itself had to be anchored down with ropes, and sometimes even fishing nets, to withstand the high winds.

By contrast, up the hill, Church Farm is much grander with two storeys and a tiled roof. There are four rooms downstairs including a small dairy, which contains a churn for butter making, and a laundry which brought back memories with its boiler and heavy mangle. There is a lot more to see. There is a blacksmith, a joinery, Ned Beg's cottage with a garden full of flowers and a grand view of the countryside. There are herb and fruit gardens, a working farm with shire horses and the local Loaghtan sheep. The exhibition above the gift shop has plenty of interesting information about life on the Isle of Man. We are grateful to Manx National Heritage and their guides for opening specially for our visit.

Lunch proved to be a highlight of the day. Thanks to Phil, our driver, in a change of plan we went to the Sound Café where I had a crab sandwich to die for. More interestingly, there was a most spectacular view over to the Calf of Man with a wild sea breaking on the rocks, and seals playing in the waves and basking in the sunshine. Here you really knew you were on a small rocky island in the middle of the ocean.

On to Rushen Abbey in the afternoon. Despite starting life as an Abbey in the 1100s, it was advertised as having been a courthouse in the 1770s, a dance hall in the 1920s, a pleasure garden in the 1970s and a nightclub in the 1980s. I was pleased to find the site was almost completely given over to the history and daily life of the Abbey.

Set in peaceful and extensive gardens containing many of the same herbs and flowers as were grown by the monks, the ruins of the Abbey are well laid out and clearly explained on sign boards. A largely intact tower dominates the ruins. There is an extensive exhibition explaining the history of the Abbey, starting from 1134 when King Olaf gifted it in the belief that he would enhance his spiritual status and be recognised as a good Christian ruler. The life of the Cistercian monks and the lay brethren is nicely illustrated, and there is plenty to interest adults and kids alike. A fruit picking competition kept many of us entertained.

This was a lovely day, full of surprises. Thanks Mary and Carol for making it so.

Sue Pears

Photos for the Isle of Man trip were taken by Harry Hibberd, Judith Jones, Sheila Round and Ann Wood



▲ Cottages in Cregneash

▼ Detail of a roof stay on a cottage in Cregneash. Ropes attached to stones in the walls hold down the thatch in high winds



► The 15th century tower at Rushen Abbey

Monday 4 – Tourist Trophy TT and Celtic Crosses

Our last day was an eclectic mixture of very old and not so old guided by Blue Badge Guide Peter Beighton. Starting from Douglas we were to travel the 37¾ mile course of the Tourist Trophy Race more commonly known as the TT. Our journey was more sedate, taking a whole day including two stops to view Celtic crosses and to eat lunch in Ramsey compared to just over seventeen minutes for each of the six complete laps on a racing motorcycle.

TT course

The races for motorcycles started in 1904 having been preceded in earlier years by tourist car races set up by Gordon Bennett (yes – that Gordon Bennett!). There were breaks for World War II and Covid, but the two-week event should resume in May/June 2022. The island roads are closed during the days by an Act of Tynwald. The course includes the Snaefell road, the main commuting route from Ramsey to Douglas, which ascends to 13,000 feet. However, the TT brings considerable income as 25,000 bikes and riders and 35,000 spectators descend on the island which has a population of 85,000. Besides there being accommodation in hotels and tents, islanders let rooms for the fortnight so perhaps are not so upset about the TT disturbing their commutes. There are grandstands in fields, some cottages alongside the road have bales protecting windows and most bends have very descriptive names – some based on the name of a rider who crashed and died there! There have been 151 deaths since 1911. The first week is for practising and the races take place in the second week. The fastest riders have reached speeds of 206mph in sections of the track but average 135mph over the whole course

Celtic crosses

There are thought to be many undiscovered Manx Celtic crosses, some buried and some still incorporated into buildings and fence lines. We were shown two collections at churches. Braddan Old Kirk on a hillside on the outskirts of Douglas was our first stop. The church dates from the 9th century and access was either through a gate or over a step stile – a gap in the wall filled with a horizontal stone. Here the crosses were housed in the church and remarkably well preserved, showing many different designs and sizes. One notable inscription was of Daniel in the lion's den or was it the gates of Hell? There were dragons and dogs and Viking influences. Most appeared to be made of possibly local limestone but they might have come from elsewhere so that is for further investigation. Amongst interesting gravestones in the churchyard were a number of cholera burials from 1832 with small headstones, incongruous compared to some elaborate Victorian monuments.

Our second look at crosses was just outside Ramsey at Maughold church, where there had been a pre-Norse monastery. Most of the crosses had been found in the churchyard and were less well preserved under an open sided shelter. One showed a Viking ship and others were claimed to have Anglican influences. It was thought one of the larger ones would have stood near the church gate.

At lunch time we were taken into Ramsey and shown the Albert Tower which was built because Prince Albert on a royal tour left his seasick family, rowed ashore and, incognito, climbed the hill to a viewpoint. There, he said, a tower should be built. Did he contribute to the cost? We may never know. In Ramsey, we sampled Davidson's Manx ice cream. I tried grey vanilla (invented for a competition) which gave the sampler a noticeably grey tongue with which to remember our Manx trip!

Marianne Pitman



▲ The 750cc Yamaha ridden by Carl Fogarty in the 1992 Senior TT when he achieved the fastest ever lap. His average speed of 123mph remained the record for 7 years



Celtic and Viking crosses at Braddan Old Kirk



Arnos Vale

Wednesday 18 August 2021

Gary could not have chosen a better time for our guided tour of Arnos Vale. We turned off from a very noisy, busy main road into a sunny, tranquil oasis. We all met up outside one of the lodges of Greek Neo-Classical design and divided into two groups.

Our guide was the jocular Alan Bambury, familiar from a previous tour, looking very distinctive, wearing a bow tie, hat, and a big smile. We were first given an overall history of the cemetery, which was established in 1837, and covers 45 acres of spectacular landscape wooded with trees, many of which feature in classical literature, including cypress, cedar, pine and laurel. The cemetery was conceived as an Arcadian landscape with buildings by Charles Underwood, a builder from Cheltenham who became famous designing neo-classical buildings in Bristol. We learned that the first burial was in 1839 but originally Arnos Vale was not as popular as church graveyards. However, as inner-city cemeteries filled, Arnos Vale became more used as a final resting place.

We followed our guide along 'The Ceremonial Way', a wide circular promenade passing through the Arcadian Garden. We stopped beside the area affectionately known as 'Soldiers' Corner'. Here we saw a Bath stone World War I memorial, erected by the Red Cross with marker stones for graves where poppy wreaths are laid on Remembrance Sunday. After a poignant pause, we re-joined the path to see some of the more prominent graves of the famous people who changed lives in Bristol. These included George Müller, founder of the Ashley Down Orphanage; Dr William Budd, the physician, epidemiologist and pioneer in the treatment of cholera; members of the Wills tobacco family who employed hundreds of local people and helped found the University of Bristol; William Herapath, the analytical chemist. The most impressive tomb along the way was that of Raja Rammohun Roy who died in 1833, was buried in the back garden of Beech House, Stapleton, and re-interred in Arnos Vale 1844. He was one of the greatest figures of early modern India and many of his followers come as pilgrims to pay homage at his most elaborate tomb. We followed our guide past the Conformist and Non-Conformist Chapels. He showed us where those followers are buried, and the various symbols depicted on the stone memorial angels.

Arnos Vale is very much alive with weddings, cemetery walks, dog walking, a café, curiosity tours, murder mysteries and all manner of events. There was so much to see and absorb, we definitely will need another visit. Many thanks to Alan, who made the history so interesting, with his big smile and jocular manner. Thank you to Gary for organising our most enjoyable visit.

Hilary Cleeve



▲ Anglican Chapel



▲ The Soldiers' Corner



The tomb of Raja Rammohun Roy ▲

Photos by Alan J Bambury

The Crinoidea

A Natural History of the Crinoidea or Lily-shaped Animals, 1821

2021 is the bicentenary of the publication of *A Natural History of the Crinoidea or Lily-shaped Animals* by J. S. Miller (né Müller, 1779 – 1830) – the first curator of the museum of the Bristol Institution. Born in Danzig, little is known about his early life. He came to Bristol in 1801 aged 22, with the intention of moving on to America; however, he literally missed the boat as it had sailed the day before he arrived. He stayed in Bristol, and married Margaret James of Bedminster in 1806 and had four children: a daughter who died in infancy and three sons, two of whom were the Bristol school artists W.J. Müller (1812–1845) and E.G. Müller (1816–1888). Miller had a wide interest in the Natural Sciences, in particular entomology, conchology and botany. But he is remembered today for his work as a curator and as a palaeontologist.

In 1823 Miller was appointed the curator of the museum of the Bristol Institution and remained in post until his death in 1830. He corresponded with many significant early geologists such as Mary Anning, William Buckland and Rev. W.D. Conybeare and was very highly thought of as a scientist both in the UK and on the continent. His friend, the geologist Henry Jelly, described this appointment as ‘impossible to recur without feeling of deep regret and sorrow’ due to the ‘excessive confinement and continual occupation to which he was subjected’. Miller would spend long days at the fledgling Institution, often from 10 am to 10 pm, organising the constant influx of new donations and acquisitions and showing visitors the collections.

But before he took up his post at the Bristol Institution, Miller published a pioneering book that was the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance – *A Natural History of the Crinoidea or Lily-shaped Animals*. Crinoids, or sea-lilies, are a class within the echinoderms (which include the starfish). They are still around today, are incredibly beautiful and, despite the name, they are animals.

In his book Miller defines the crinoids as a group for the first time by systematically describing, illustrating, and organising them. His work is based on specimens from the fossil record as living crinoids were at that time thought to be intermediate between fossil crinoids and starfish. The book is beautifully illustrated by Miller himself (not by either of his artist sons). He was supported and encouraged in producing this work by many significant geologists of the time such as Conybeare, Buckland and Henry Thomas De la Beche. However, it also brought him conflict with some, for example George Cumberland, who was also interested in crinoids and published his own work *Reliquiae conservatae* in 1826.

Before he undertook his work the crinoids were ‘a mass of error’. Miller introduced ‘order and arrangement into a family so extensive, and so totally misunderstood’. The class were arranged by him into four ‘divisions’, including nine genera and over twenty species. The book was very expensive to produce; it contains fifty costly lithographed drawings alone. Even though Miller had a long list of subscribers who helped with expenses he never made his money back, giving away many copies of the book to ‘... individuals whom he supposed unable to purchase it’.

Miller’s fossil collection was purchased by the Institution after his death and several specimens described and figured in *Crinoidea* survive in the collection today. The museum also has the copy donated by Miller himself, cared for in the Geology Library. A copy of this important and rare book has also been scanned by Harvard University and is available to view online via the Biodiversity Heritage Library. I was pleased to show the original along with these beautiful fossils at a Friends’ talk in September.

Deborah Hutchinson Geology Curator



▲ Plate II from *Crinoidea* illustrating the specimen C4416 bottom left (inverted)

© Bristol Culture

▼ Fossil specimen C4416 *Actinocrinus triacontadactylus* from Plate II of J.S. Miller's *Crinoidea*

© Bristol Culture



Japanese plate

A fine porcelain Japanese plate donated to Bristol Museum

In 2012, Yuko, a member of the Soroptimist International (SI) Aquamarine Kure presented a Japanese porcelain plate to the SI club in Bristol. This plate commemorates the special Friendship Link between the two SI clubs. Links between clubs, such as this, are incredibly valuable as part of the Soroptimist culture. The plate was chosen by Yuko's boss, Mr Kenji Yamamoto, a generous man who enjoyed supporting community work. He encouraged Yuko to join the local Soroptimist Club, thinking it would benefit from her language and IT skills. Kenji supported many artists, especially Japanese painters as well as a few sculptors and potters. At his company, the staff change paintings and vases in all the guest rooms, meeting rooms and entrances every month according to the season. Yuko thinks Kenji chose this plate because cherry blossom is a prominent symbol of Japanese culture.

On 13 September 2021, Soroptimist International of Bristol enjoyed a presentation from Senior Curator Kate Newnham. Kate explained the historical meaning of different flowers in Japanese art, from different seasons to traditions, moods, and personalities – and that Japanese art can have many meanings, depending on the presence of a flower. This included an explanation of the meaning behind the design on the Japanese plate owned by SI Bristol, which depicted cherry blossom (the layered sort) – the flower of springtime.

The plate was made by one of Japan's top crafts makers, Inoue Manji. Inoue first specialized in Arita ware – a traditional colourful pottery form. Later, he worked in white porcelain and for this work became celebrated worldwide. Over the past 50 years, Inoue has received innumerable prestigious awards, including being designated as a 'Living National Treasure' by the government of Japan in 1995 for his contribution to the cultural heritage of Japan through his hakuji pottery. His son and grandson continue working in the family business.

At the conclusion of Kate's talk, Sue Perry, the current President of SI Bristol, presented the plate to her as a contribution to the Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives' collection of Japanese art, where it is now displayed and can be enjoyed by visitors to the museum.

Marion Reid



▲ *Japanese porcelain plate decorated with cherry blossom*
© Bristol Culture



▲ *Yuko, in 2012, holding the Bristol Blue glass medallion given to her by the then President Pauline Curtis on behalf of SI Bristol.*
© Lynn Ellis

▼ *Kate Newnham Senior Curator Visual Arts, Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives receiving the plate from President Sue Perry.*

© Ivete Hunt



Soroptimist International is a leading global women's voluntary organisation. It has close to 80,000 members in more than 3,000 Clubs in over 100 countries around the world. Soroptimists inspire action and create opportunities to transform the lives of women and girls through a global network of members and international partnerships.

To find out more visit <https://sigbi.org>

Kate Newnham will give a talk on Flowers in Japanese Art to the Friends at the spring lunch on Saturday 2 April – see the enclosed booking form.

The Dr D. A. Kendall Bristol Beetle Collection

We would like to give a big 'Thank You' to the Friends for providing the funds to acquire an incredibly important beetle collection at auction. This large collection of 2,753 specimens was collected mainly in the Bristol region at Long Ashton, Nailsea, Priddy, Failand, Charter House, Goblin Combe, Abbot Pool and Bristol City, from the 1960s until the late 2000s by Dr D. A. Kendall. It is a gem, rich in data recording where and when the beetles were collected. We were keen to ensure that it came to Bristol rather than risk being lost to science.

Every beetle specimen has labels giving the key information. Bristol Regional Environmental Record Centre is in the process of digitising Dr Kendall's beetle data as part of the Bristol Ecological Emergency, declared by the city in 2020, which will use a 'Bristol Wildlife Index' to track changes towards 2030. This collection provides evidence of the species that were present in the recent past and can be made physically available for study.

What makes this collection even more special is its richness in the less showy beetles that our other beetle collections contain. This gives us a broader collection of British beetle species, and better coverage of the diversity here in Bristol. The collection is also useful for education as it contains larvae, pupae and burrows of beetle damage in wood, which is rather unusual for an insect collection.

The collector was a true local expert. Kendall had an interest in insects from childhood that led to a 45-year professional career in pure and applied entomology. He was a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society and a Member of the Association of Applied Biologists and is credited with over 200 publications in scientific journals, books, conference proceedings and agricultural magazines. He was a Government Research Entomologist at Long Ashton Research Station 1995-2009, and then became an Independent Consultant, a Registered Expert Witness and Examiner for the University of Cambridge.

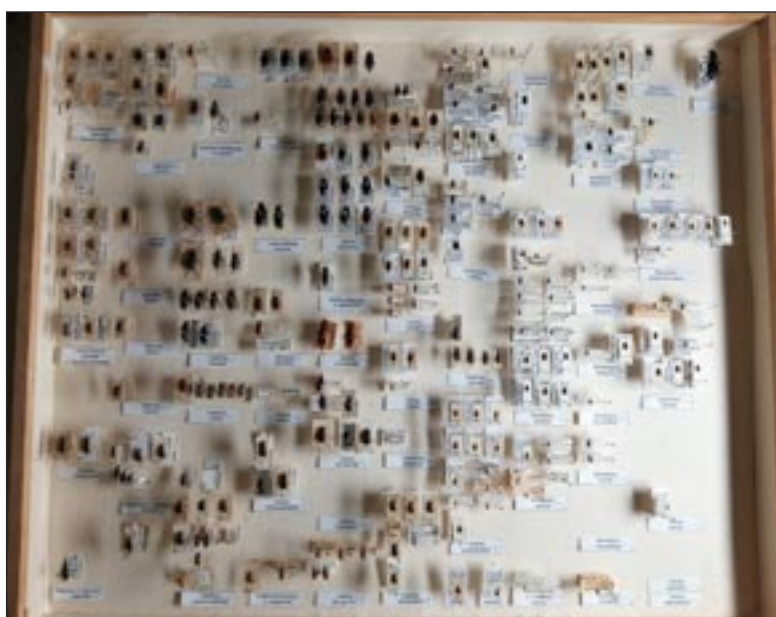
Every specimen has more than one potential use to future researchers. Scientists from around the world regularly contact our Natural Sciences department, looking for data about certain species of insects. These feed into published results on the decline of these species. For example, we have helped with requests to DNA sample some of our rarer beetles to establish the population genetics of these past and present, and to work out their relative population genetic health.

Our beetle collection has starred in many publications and scientific studies. It inspired the programme 'Life in Colour' with Sir David Attenborough, and 'Amaze Me', a BBC Facebook programme by Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin. As a result, over half a billion people from around the world have seen images of our beetle collection



▲ Dr Kendall's Beetle Cabinet
© Tenants Auctioneers

One of the drawers from
Dr Kendall's Beetle Cabinet
© Bristol Culture





◀ **Forest Cockchafer**
Melolontha hippocastani. A close relative of the familiar may bug or common cockchafer. However, it is considerably rarer and more localised in northern and western Britain.

© Bristol Culture

▶ **Strandline Beetle**
Eurynebria complanata. A local, rare coastal species, now classified as endangered. It lives on the strandline of beaches, hiding under driftwood and feeding on amphipods (sand-hoppers).

© Bristol Culture



Since acquiring the Kendall collection, we have already had two highly relevant enquiries. One from Germany by Andreas Herrmann who is working on the beetle family Dermestidae and required a whole list of those we hold in our Natural Sciences department. The other was from Max Barclay at The Natural History Museum, London as this collection held three of their specimens of exotic Tenebrionidae from David Sharp and E.B. Brown. He is unsure how they came there but suspects a loan for research in the days before proper record keeping. We plan to return these three specimens back to their rightful owner.

Rhian Rowson Natural History Curator

Bristol Street Art

Behind the Scenes at Vanguard/Bristol Street Art –
Thursday 23 September

I really did not know what to expect at this exhibition. The rooms were packed with colourful photos and images by a multitude of street artists. These works showed important moments, key events and ground-breaking works by extraordinary street artists, including Bill Posters, China Mike, Dicy, Eko, Feek, Inki, Mau Mau, Mr Jago, Sickboy, Swoon and, of course, Banksy. The show examined and showcased the creativity of the city's innovative underground scene, exploring new visual styles British and Irish artists have created by drawing inspiration from nature and new tech.

Bristol street art started in the 1980s. Its anarchist origins were influenced by many styles from near and far, including hip hop, American art and skate culture. In the 1990s, street artists were driven underground by official clampdowns but there were certain areas in Bristol where their work continued to flourish. In the noughties street art re-emerged, exploding back on the scene in many different forms including, notably, as protest art. The first Upfest in 2016, was Europe's largest street art and graffiti festival, and promoted Bristol as a world centre for street art. Since then, commercialism has crept in with shops now selling artwork and clothes, especially T shirts, related to street art. Street art has become almost acceptable.

I enjoyed the humour (including the artwork and sculpture of *The Moona Lisa* by Nick Walker) and seeing some of Banksy's work. An interesting video showed different aspects of Bristol street art and some of the derelict areas that have been transformed by the urban creatives. I was intrigued by a mosaic Portrait of Jake by Matt Small and Through a Curtain – a wall video with mirrors which was strange but compelling.

In the foyer of M shed is a suspended *Airspray Can and Purple Splatt*. This was commissioned by the museum from the artist Filthy Luker, who specialises in giant inflatable artworks, and will be on permanent display. Whatever you think of Bristol street art, it certainly has had a big influence on the city.

Thank you to Carol Ouvry for organising this fascinating visit.

Catherine Dixon



▲ **Airspray Can and Purple Splatt artwork**
in the foyer of the M shed

© Bristol Culture

Bristol Photo Festival – Island Life

Monday 6 September 2021

This exhibition is part of Bristol Photo Festival, which is continuing into December at various locations, including at the Martin Parr Foundation based at the Paintworks. There is an offer of membership to the Foundation which I am considering taking up.

The Martin Parr Foundation has a vast collection of photos which were taken post-war by some 60 photographers. These images show some important public events – such as the Aberfan disaster and the Poll Tax riots – and many aspects of everyday life at the time. These images are now of historical interest and a cross-section was on display at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery.

There was a wide-ranging variety of photographers and subjects both in black and white and colour. The street life images were particularly fascinating. They included all facets of street life including children playing (images which would not be permitted these days), housewives hanging washing, alfresco hair cutting, social gatherings, bingo at the Mecca Hall, old customs, industrial and coal searchers on a slag heap (which could have been in Eastern Europe but was in fact taken in South Wales) and many more. The Irish conflicts featured with a disturbing view of people running down an urban street.

Humorous subjects also feature, and my favourite of all the photos was of chaotic pre-wedding preparations featuring a small boy in his best clothes and a lady's hair in curlers covering his head and face. It was entitled 'I am not a wedding photographer'. 'Before and after' photos of two ladies and two men with a further two photos of them taken 30 years later showed how we all inevitably age. All this was brought up to date with a photo of Colston's statue just about to enter the water in the docks, with hand-written comments around the frame.

I thought this was a very stimulating exhibition which would be greatly enjoyed by most people. My thanks to Carol Ouvry for organising the visit.

Catherine Dixon



▲ **Aberfan Disaster**
© David Hern

Check it out on the BMAG website

▼ **Skipping rope game**
© Homer Sykes



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The opinions expressed in this
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