

West Somerset Rural Life Museum

Registered Charity No. 1065071

NEWSLETTER 2015

In 2013 The National Trust decided to close the public toilets and give the site to the Allerford Reading Room who very reluctantly made provision for public access to the new building subject to their being cleaned for them. Thankfully the Selworthy & Minehead Without Parish Council took over the responsibility for paying for cleaning at a significant cost. In 2015 The Museum and West Country Blacksmiths (Allerford Forge) began making annual donations towards these costs.

A new government scheme called Gift Aid Small Donations (GASDS) was introduced in 2014 which enabled the Museum to claim tax relief on small donations of up to £20. In 2015 GASDS was worth £358 to the museum. A surprise bequest from Jenny Bogle, an unknown visitor who had obviously been delighted with the Museum, led to a donation of £500.00. Another visitor was John Langley of Burnham Model Railway Club who specialises in making 00 gauge railway wagons. Inspired by a hessian sack with a Minehead owner's name on it that he saw in the Museum, he made and sold a number of wagons which resulted in a donation from him of £458.

With the help of Michael Ferguson we were the lucky recipients of a number of items belonging to Ted Wells of Doulling, Somerset. He had put together an eclectic mix of artefacts which he displayed around the county as an exhibition called 'Clean and Decent'. The items included a rare Earth Closet, a travelling bath (of a type used by Winston Churchill when in the army), washboards, Izal toilet rolls, a wooden 'two-seater' toilet (adult and child), an ancient washing machine and numerous other items related to ablution and sanitary needs. David Voisey has now reconstructed the exhibition.

Our Chairman Peggy Anderson was unfortunately unable to return to the Museum as quickly as expected although she recovered well from her operation. She WILL be back later in 2016! It quickly became obvious how much we had relied on Peggy's input. We are grateful to Pauline Hall for taking over responsibility for the Stewards rota, and with Patricia Pridmore, care and ordering for the Shop. Other losses to the well-being of the Museum include Michael Ferguson our able and long-suffering Secretary who reluctantly resigned from his position in 2015 (effective from April 2016). He has been with the Museum for 10 years and not only strived to keep us on the straight and narrow (especially with the Charity Commissioners) but did outstanding work in cataloguing much of our archive material. The Museum is now in need of a Secretary and an Archivist! Another loss was Derek Fawcus who has moved to Suffolk. He not only carried out many of the day-to-day maintenance jobs which continually crop up, but cleaned and renovated many of our rusty and neglected artefacts. The ticking Thistle clock is thanks to his skills. We are very lucky to have David Voisey who has stepped into the void and is continuing the excellent work.

Museum visitor figures at 1734 were slightly up on 2014.

We have been pleased to welcome Patricia Pridmore and David Voisey as Trustees for the Museum.

Thank to all those giving their time and efforts in making the Open Day (free entry) a success, with takings on the tombola and donations exceeding £200.

Thanks to everybody for their work and continuing support.