

Doverly Manor Museum Autumn Newsletter 2022

In my last report I wrote about the ongoing and dramatic issues with damp in Doverly Manor. The process of drying out the thick and, in places, saturated walls has been lengthy and is ongoing. Once the walls are dry the remedial painting can be undertaken. It has been an incredibly frustrating period for a museum team that are keen to get on with preparing for our reopening. Although it has been a stressful period, I take comfort in the support of the community and the knowledge that the Manor has stood for over 500 years and will certainly withstand this, but there have been times when I wondered if I would!

Our Late-Night Shopping waffles were thoroughly enjoyed by all who called by and we are grateful to Rosalinde Haw, her grandson Henry, Denise Sage and Sarah Eastwood for preparing, serving and keeping the waffles flowing. They were delicious.

We are saddened by the loss of Rosemary Toeman. Rosemary was a long serving steward and the Museum's Poet Laureate. A gifted poet, her poems featured in many of our exhibitions and dramatic evenings in the Solar. She will be remembered as a lovely gentle presence in museum and village life.

A recent exhibition of the work of Waistel Cooper, has highlighted how fortunate the Museum is to have such a remarkable collection of his work, owned and on loan, on display. The majority of the pieces are from his years at Culbone and which many consider his finest work, as they reflect the essence and elements of the surrounding woodland.

We are always grateful when someone shares their personal research into local families. I have recently been sent the story of David Ridler, born in 1791 to Elizabeth and David Ridler of Higher Mill, Porlock, and whose many military adventures included the Battle of Waterloo. When the Museum reopens David's story will be available to visitors. After almost a lifetime away, it was to Porlock that he returned for his final years.

Along with other venues and organisations in the village, the Museum will be marking the Queen's Jubilee with an appropriate display and items from the collection that reflect her years of service. There is a story of Queen Victoria, in her open coach, and celebrating her long reign. One of her Ladies in Waiting looked horrified when 'a rough man' in the crowd shouted, 'Well done Old Girl, but the Queen merely smiled and said, 'I quite liked that'. We would never refer so disrespectfully to Queen Elizabeth as an 'old girl', but I think we would all echo the 'well done'.

There was quite a nostalgic look back passed on to me recently. An account of a young men's cycling club's tour of the Southwest on the brink of WWII. They passed through Porlock and among Bernard Tate's diaries was a leaflet titled, 'Porlock Church -Points of Interest.' On September 13, 1939 his entry read: 'War declared. Club activities suspended.' One wonders how many of those once carefree young men made it home from the battlefield?

As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, when we reopen, the exhibition in the Museum Solar will reflect village life during the war years.

I will hope to see you at the Museum.

Lita Strampp, Curator