

TA VISTOCK MUSEUM

Charity Registration No.1098266

Annual Report



Spring 2018



TAVISTOCK MUSEUM ANNUAL REPORT – SPRING 2018

The report contains a brief summary

1 Last Season (March – October 2017)

The Museum Management Committee (MMC) is pleased to report that the 2017 season has been successful but far from our best one. A count of entries in the visitor's book shows that the museum was open on approximately 215 days between the 27th March and the 31st October, and there were 7,097 visitors.

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>
March	254	294	95	334	291
April	813	885	665	869	886
May	1083	895	792	919	978
June	853	923	851	942	836
July	1071	1166	1192	1355	1023
August	1302	1751	1601	1616	1084
September	1151	869	980	1241	920
October	<u>783</u>	<u>782</u>	<u>984</u>	<u>937</u>	<u>1079</u>
	7310	7565	7160	8213	7097

The visitor numbers this year showed a significant downturn during the summer months. This is attributed to the dreadful summer weather, and a reduced number of tourists due in part to the coach operators being put-off by the proliferation of scaffolding throughout the town. Saturdays remain our busiest day, and Mondays and Fridays the least busy.

Our exhibitions were 'Commemorating the Bi-centenary of the Opening of the Tavistock Canal' and 'WW2 Liberator Air Crash on Plasterdown' (Bob Jones). Both exhibitions have been praised by our visitors. At the end of October 2017 the museum hosted a painting exhibition of the lifetime work of Richard Woolcombe, a Tamar Valley fruit grower and talented local artist. Following the exhibition the museum acquired five paintings by the artist, one of which shows the Tavistock Group of Artists in the Fenner Room. In early November 2017 there was a successful launch at the museum of Robert Waterhouses's new book *The Tavistock Canal – Its History and Archaeology* which is published by the Trevithick Society.

There were 141 replies to our visitor survey, the results of which are attached to this report. The majority of visitors enjoyed their visit and all considered our stewards had been welcoming and

helpful. Once again the survey indicates that the majority of our visitors are people on holiday who are visiting the Museum for the first time. A disappointing aspect from the survey is that despite our spending a lot of money on our leaflets and websites the majority of visits are not pre-planned. Visitors still find their way to the Museum largely as a result of seeing our external signs.

Our visitor donations in 2017 were £3710 (which amounts to 53p per person). This compares with £4,493 in 2016, £3,222 in 2015 and £4,672 in 2014. Our income in 2017 from the museum shop and outside sales was £9,423. This compares with £8,851 in 2016, £6,527 in 2015 and £4,652 in 2014. In May 2017 the Museum was notified by West Devon Borough Council that its 20% discretionary grant had been reduced to 10% which would have resulted in the payment of nearly £600 in rates. On appeal the full 20% grant was restored and we are grateful for the support of local West Devon councillors and Geoffrey Cox, our MP.

The museum has not undertaken any major building works this year but re-plastering work was completed above the main entrance doorway, a new front entrance security light was installed, LED lighting was installed in the Fenner Room, CCTV was installed in the two upstairs galleries and a new computer was purchased for the Modes archiving.

This season approximately fifteen persons have been involved in stewarding on a regular basis. Our thanks go to Roderick Martin and Paul Croucher for managing the archway books, Margaret Blowey, Barbara Watson and Christine Gallie for providing many plants for sale, Gary Peters and Trevor Kerswill for running the museum shop, and Sarah Smith for stewarding support on Sundays. Also to Annie Snook for maintaining the small front garden which was awarded a 'thriving category' in the Britain-in-Bloom awards.

In October 2017 our oldest steward, Graham Kirkpatrick, passed away. Graham was a stalwart of both the museum and the subscription library, and will always be remembered for his boundless enthusiasm. He played a key role in the 900th Tavistock Market Charter Celebrations in 2005 and contributed, often at his own expense, a number of displays in the museum: the most recent being a Sir Francis Drake poster. Last year his 90th birthday was celebrated by a surprise party at the museum, an event which he very much appreciated. Sadly another of our long-serving stewards, Margaret Blowey, became unwell and in February 2018 she also passed away. Margaret was born and lived most of her life in Tavistock thus enabling her to be highly knowledgeable about the local area. Both Graham and Margaret were excellent stewards and our museum is the poorer for their loss. Fortunately a number of young people have come forward to help with stewarding. We are grateful to Ellie Danes, Rachel Gump, and Chantelle Bennett. Our youngest MMC member, Sarah Smith, left for university at Winchester and we wish her well.

As in previous years the museum has provide tourists with information and distributed a wide selection of leaflets for local accommodation providers and local tourist attractions. In February 2017 the museum published a new booklet 'The School Punishment Book' based on records for Stowford Church of England School between 1935 and 1947.

2 Next Season (March - October 2018)

The museum will re-open on Saturday the 24th March 2018.

This year our main exhibitions will be 'One Hundred Years of Motor Buses In Tavistock' which features a large number of model buses (loaned by Geoff Savage) and Ronald Gard – A Hero of the Great Escape.

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF TRUSTEES AND MMC MEMBERS

Mrs. Judith Whitcomb was re-appointed by the Tavistock Town Council as their representative to the Trust.

Trustees (as of February 2018)

Tom Young (Chairman)
Roderick Martin (Museum Manager)
Peter Gallie (Museum Treasurer)
Paul Croucher
Linda Elliott
Sue Davies
Trevor Kerswill
Keith Shorter
Pat Warne
Barbara Watson

Mark Tosdevin (Plymouth Museum) – Museum Advisor

Museum Management Committee (as of January 2018)

Roderick Martin (Museum Manager)
Peter Gallie (Museum Treasurer)
Kevin Dickens (Photographic Manager)
Paul Croucher (Exhibitions Manager)
Linda Elliott
Trevor Kerswill
Jane Young
Irene Evans
Sarah Smith
Gary Peters

Comment

The Visitor Survey findings are very similar to previous years. The majority of our visitors are of the older generation, come into the town by car, visit with their family, and have a general interest in local history. As recorded in previous years a concerning aspect is that the majority of visitors have not been to the museum before. This and other responses indicates that most of our visitors are people on holiday rather than residents.

The survey also shows that the majority of visitors decide to come into the museum after seeing our outside signs and surprisingly few pre-plan a visit on the basis of our website or leaflets. Clearly our outside signs have proved a good investment but these still need be improved upon.

Again this year we appear to be doing most things right as the majority of our visitors put the museum in the excellent / good category. Everyone considered our stewards helpful and friendly. Currently we have a good record on trip advisor and are rated fifth on things to do in Tavistock.

Visitors have come up with relatively few suggestions on how the museum should be improved. Clearly better labelling particularly of the mineral specimens is an essential. Some of the visitor suggestions which are well worth following up: quiz for children, displays of mining photographs and geological map of the Tavistock area, mining photographs, an improved trade tools display, and information about the modern Tavistock.

RM

November 2017

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