

November 2022

A Note from the Directors

Dear Member,

We hope this latest newsletter finds you well and you have had an enjoyable summer this year. As you're probably aware, the museum faced a few challenging uncertainties during the summer. We are now delighted to once again confirm that the Cornwall Cultural Investment Board have agreed upon a package of support for the museum. We are extremely grateful that Cornwall Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Arts Council and Historic England have recognised the positive trajectory of Royal Cornwall Museum's long-term support for a sustainable future. This initial support will help us transition further into our longer-term plans.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all our members for the huge amount of support we have received, your kind words have kept the entire team going through tough times and we all appreciate it greatly. During the summer, we were constantly reminded of how well-loved and treasured the museum is, not only by the people of Cornwall but by people across the globe. We were overwhelmed to be sent hundreds of messages of support across our social media platforms, with messages and donations emerging from Australia, the USA, France and Italy. To say thank you to the public, we recently hosted a free-admission open day where we welcomed over 250 people into the museum for games, handling sessions and crafts.

This year we were also deeply saddened to hear the news that Queen Elizabeth II had passed away in September, just three months after the museum had hosted the Mayor of Truro and his guests for a cream tea to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. The Royal Institution of Cornwall now fondly remembers the visit of Her Majesty The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh to the Royal Cornwall Museum on Maundy Thursday 31 March 1994 (pictured below).

Jonathan Morton,
Executive Director

Bryony Robins,
Artistic Director



What's On

Current Exhibitions:

Into the Carrick Roads - Exploring Hidden Cornwall

23 July - 23 December

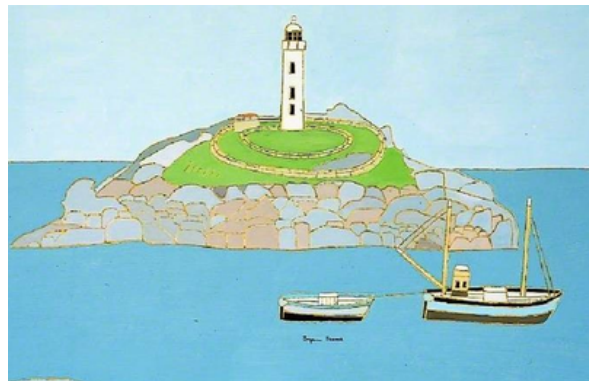
A visual journey along the river from Falmouth to Truro by award-winning Cornish-based artist Andrew Barrowman, capturing the changing light and landscapes on his travels.



A Different View

20 September onwards

Bryan Pearce's life and work in a retrospective that explores his unique eye within the context of the Modernist art movement that emerged in Cornwall in the middle of the last century.



Lepidoptera

15 November - 14 January

An exhibition by Cornish-based artist Bridget Macklin exploring the decline in butterflies through her ceramic artwork and the Royal Cornwall Museum's butterfly collection.



People.

8 November - 23 December

An exhibition of photographic portraits and a collection of first-person accounts from individuals, couples and families in Cornwall affected by housing insecurity and homelessness. In collaboration with St Petrocs and the people of Cornwall, brought to life by photographer Gavan Goulder and Streetdraw 24.



What's On

Events:

Lepidoptera - Printing and Origami with Bridget Macklin **Saturday 3 December, 11:00 am-2:00 pm**

Learn how to create and print origami butterflies with Bridget Macklin as part of the exhibition Lepidoptera. This drop-in workshop will give you a chance to work with Bridget, creating and printing with paper butterflies to take home. For all ages.

For more information and to book your place please visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lepidoptera-printing-and-origami-with-bridget-macklin-tickets-431599675247>



People. Workshop

26, 28 November & 13 December

Using photographs and research from the People. exhibition as well as artworks and objects from the RIC collection, participants will be taken on a journey through portraiture and self-identity. Expect polaroid camera activities, guided exploratory discussions, object handling and artwork viewing from Royal Cornwall Museum's stores as well as an introduction to the People. exhibition from members of the project team. For more information and to book your place please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/people-workshop-tickets-441530578847?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

In the Dead of Winter: A Murder Mystery at the Museum

9 December - 13 February

This winter, three crimes have taken place at Royal Cornwall Museum and it's up to you to solve them! Use a blueprint to help you discover the suspect silhouettes and weapons hidden around the museum to crack the cases. The murder mysteries are £2 to solve each case. Younger ones can hunt for the Spriggans hiding around the main gallery and join us for silhouette crafts on Saturdays.

Museum Late

9 December, 6 pm-9 pm

Join us at Royal Cornwall Museum in the dead of winter for an evening of mystery and mince pies. This museum late is a chance to explore the museum after hours with live music and drinks as well as a chance to solve the three mysterious cases. Remember, every object tells a story...



Collections News

The Courtney Library

We would like to acknowledge the huge commitment and knowledge that Angela Broome brought to the Courtney Library during her years of service for the RIC. Under Angela's stewardship, the library supported many researchers, scholars and enthusiasts, and no doubt inspired many great works. We are hugely indebted to Angela and wish her well with her future endeavours.

Opening hours remain by appointment on Wednesdays and Fridays 10 am – 1 pm, 2 pm – 4 pm. Our collections team will continue to provide access to books and archives and ensure they are cared for.

Addressing the Costume Collection

We are delighted to share that a student from Falmouth University has begun working with us as part of the Costume Society's Museum Work Experience Grant.

The grant supports a degree-level student in a voluntary placement, where they gain experience in working with costume collections in a museum setting. Led by Jeni Woolcock (Collections and Engagement Manager), the work provides vital experience and skill-development. It is also allowing RCM to address some of the needs of the collection.

Together, we are methodically working through the Textile Store, photographing many objects that have never been illustrated in the catalogue, condition checking, undertaking inventory and auditing documentation. We've made improvements already, solving problems that we didn't realise we had! The placement will run until June 2023, when our student moves on from university.



Radioactive Minerals

Many of you may know that the RIC has in its care some 157 radioactive minerals. These have come to us from many donors, one as early as 1824 from the RIC's own council member, Dr Potts. Others comprise a very small fraction of the collections of Philip Rashleigh (purchased in 1903), James Wickett (bequeathed in 1922) and Richard Barstow (acquired throughout the 1970s and 80s).

In updating our Radiation Protection documentation during 2021, we discovered that we will need to provide further shielding in the storeroom to meet with current regulations around radioactive materials.

We also learned that we are almost certainly never going to be able to display the minerals, and that we do not have the facilities or proper licensing to use them for research purposes. This left us pondering how we can make our museum safer, and how the minerals can be better utilised. Our Collections and Engagement Manager has been liaising with specialists working in museums and academia to understand what the best course of action is regarding these minerals.

We know that many of our members are particularly concerned about the mineral collections, and we want to reassure you we are well-aware of the importance of the collections at the RIC. This has been at the heart of this project with the intention to find the best solution for the radioactive samples.

Rashleigh Mineral Gallery Project

In 2021 we secured part of the Truro Town Fund. A large proportion of this fund is designated to the inclusion of refurbishment of a digital lab in the Rashleigh Gallery, which will allow our visitors and researchers to interact with the collections in a way that has previously been unachievable. We are bringing together a panel of academic and specialists to advise on our plans and aim to start planning the project, including public consultation in early 2023.

Our aims are:

- We aim to improve the current offering, ensuring it meets current accessibility standards in terms of language and presentation. Specialist information and terminology will continue to be included as part of layered interpretation, so that general visitors alike can enjoy the collection. This will create a multi-faceted gallery that is an inspiring space for everyone to learn, able to reach all audiences.
- We aim to keep all mineral specimens currently on display in the gallery and retain Sir Arthur Russell's curatorial design.
- We want to retain the historic cases, fix lighting issues and making alterations that allows all visitors to see the samples on display.
- We want to incorporate a design that includes flexibility as it's important that we are able to update the exhibition as new information, research and ways of thinking emerge.
- We will include a digital lab that enables us to live stream expert talks both into the space and out to people's homes, providing greater access to our collections and understanding of them.

We will work with our academic advisory panel throughout the project. It is our ambition to protect this important collection, keep it on display, retain and build on current interpretation, and make the gallery more accessible to inspire future generations.

We will keep members up to date with information as the project develops, will be undertaking public consultation and we would like to hear your thoughts.

Collections News

A Link with the Past - Sir Richard Hussey Vivian

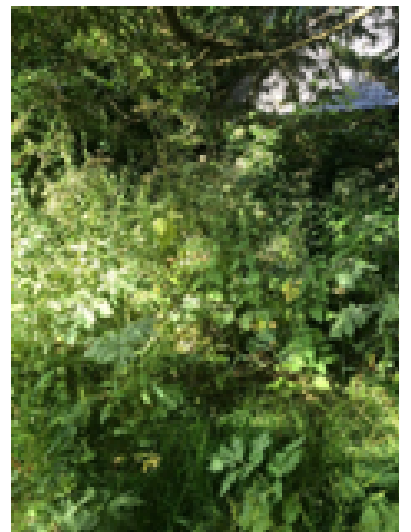
The fine (and large) painting on the stairs in the museum of Sir Richard Hussey Vivian by Martin Shee is an important part of the RIC's fine art collection. Most people are probably aware, or will soon learn, that he was a distinguished soldier who fought at the Battle of Waterloo.

What is perhaps not so generally known is that he was a founding member of the Royal Institution of Cornwall who, on the coronation of George IV in 1821, was despatched to London to present the congratulations of the RIC Council and to request royal patronage. This was granted and has been in place ever since. Sir Richard Hussey Vivian became the MP for Truro and was a prominent Truro citizen until his death in 1842. He died in Baden Baden and his body was brought back to Truro where he was eventually interred in St Mary's Old Burial Ground.

Recently, in an act of support for the RIC, Ellis and Jemima Lockhurst set out to find his grave, eventually discovering the gravestone covered with brambles. They cleared the area and exposed the inscription on the stone. Another link with the past is the name 'John Vivian' on the stone. He was Hussey Vivian's father, also a founding member of the RIC, and it was part of his house in Union Place that in 1828 became the museum's first settled home until the move to its permanent River Street premises in 1917.

We are grateful to Ellis and Jemima for reviving the memory of this important Truro citizen and showing how closely linked the RIC is to the history of Truro.

Margaret Morgan, Documentation Officer



Photographs courtesy of Ellis and Jemima Lockhurst

Collections News

Emily Goddard, Collections and Engagement Officer

I have had an exciting time since I started working at Royal Cornwall Museum in February, getting to grips with the wonderful (and sometimes weird) collection! We have been working on many different projects as a team, and it's been fun getting to grips with exhibitions and working with such a varied collection. I've been up ladders, filled and painted walls of galleries, dusted a model frigate and packed up paintings ready for loans, among many other things. So, I thought I'd write about a few brief highlights of my last few months, and what I'll be doing going into 2023!

I travelled to London during the extreme heatwave in July, for the deinstallation of the World of Stonehenge at the British Museum. We had loaned them our Bronze Age lunulae from St Merryn for the exhibition. It was amazing to see the scale of the process, with objects from many different museums and institutions from all over the UK and beyond, and exciting to be a small part of it. Our lunulae were carefully packed away in beautiful new storage boxes, a slightly nerve-wracking process as they are incredibly delicate, all ready for their safe return to us at the beginning of August for Gathering Light.

Another highlight for me was being able to explore parts of our collection from Oceania with a researcher from the University of Bristol, Polly Bence. Polly is a specialist in Pacific ethnography and was really pleased to learn more about our collections, and who bought them here to Cornwall. She has also visited us previously when researching our coconut fibre armour from Kiribati. Her visit sparked my interest in learning more about the different nations we have represented in our collection, and how the objects ended up in Truro! I look forward to hearing more from Polly about her research and anything more she can tell us about our collection.

While 2022 is certainly not over, and we have more exciting things planned before Christmas, I am already looking forward to next year's exhibitions. We are going to be very busy with projects at the beginning of 2023, so I am getting a head start on researching and planning for an exhibition in March entitled Rebel Voices. This will be telling the story of Cornish rebellions, and how modern Cornish society and culture have been influenced by historical social movements. I am finding the research very exciting and hopefully this will be interesting and engaging for visitors from Cornwall and beyond!

Schools News

Kate Clayton-Jackson, Learning Engagement Officer

Since starting in June, I've been extremely busy with bookings from both schools and Home Education groups. As ever, there is an extremely high demand for our sessions on Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome and they comprise 90% of our bookings.

Schools appear keener than ever to bring pupils for a day out, especially after they missed so many extracurricular opportunities during Covid. The cost of transport has proved a barrier for some, however, with support from the grant from Cornwall Heritage Trust, most groups are able to get here. We have also started suggesting the groups consider train travel which is a much cheaper option for some schools.

I have just returned from a two-week outreach project. We were asked by the St Barnabas Mat Academy to devise and deliver a workshop on Mining to 355 Key stage 1 pupils (aged between 5 and 7) across 13 schools in the Saltash, Liskeard and Bodmin areas. This was a mammoth undertaking, not only delivering the 22 handling sessions, but also devising an engaging 45-minute workshop for such a young age group on such a mammoth topic! Feedback has been very positive so it is certainly something we may consider if we are approached again.

We are fully booked until February, so the Learning Team will continue keeping busy and doing what we do best – engaging a new generation of museum devotees!

Community Engagement News

A Different View – Looking and sketching group

We have launched a looking and sketching group in partnership with CHAOS group and local social prescribers. This group meets weekly until Christmas and experiment with sketching, crafts and fine art using 'A Different View' and the work of Bryan Pearce as a resource.

Volunteers

Over the summer and autumn we have had an influx of volunteers join our team, assisting with front-of-house welcome, learning and engagement projects, library and collections work. We are lucky to have such a skilled and dedicated volunteer base who contribute to making the museum a welcoming and friendly environment.

Community Engagement News

Monday Museum Club

Our weekly club for individuals living with dementia in partnership with Memory Matters is thriving thanks to small grants from the Clare Milne Family Trust and Cornwall Rural Community Charity. Participants enjoyed discussing work in the 'A Different View exhibition' as well as engaging in activities designed to promote positive brain function.

Cornwall Quilt

The Threads of Survival Cornwall Quilt is now complete thanks to volunteers Lesley, Sarah, RCM staff member Amanda and many other contributors. The quilt is the work of 46 individuals across Cornwall and was created as part of the Threads of Survival exhibition in the summer. The quilt is displayed in the museum until November 2022 and will then join the national Threads of Survival collection. For more information on Threads of Survival please visit <https://www.999callfor NHS.org.uk/THREADSOFSURVIVAL>



Activities from Monday Museum Club



The Community Quilt

Some of the Rewards of Volunteering at the Royal Cornwall Museum

It is indeed a rewarding experience to volunteer at the Museum. Firstly, the staff always seem cheerful. Even when all were under pressure during the recent funding crisis, their warmth and humour remained. That suggests to me that they are a strong team, mutually supportive. And, individually, of course they have considerable expertise, working within the focused and very necessary framework of developing the museum to be an inspiring and challenging place for the community it serves. Three of the most recent exhibitions illustrate this for me.

Andrew Barrowman's paintings of scenes of the river Fal are works that bring out the beauty of this stretch of water. A friend of mine reminded me recently that, in experiencing any work of art, the experience should always become a dialogue. As a volunteer, I was able to experience just that several times a week. I have frequently come away with a renewed sense of natural beauty and a horror of what human pollution is doing to the seas and waterways.

The exhibition on the South African War not only praised the role of Cornwall's Emily Hobhouse in bravely exposing British brutality, but also raised questions about Britain's imperial past which still have not been widely asked, let alone answered. Within me, it caused a resonance with Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Finally, the exhibition featuring the Shropshire gold pendant made me think of the universality of art and its ability to transcend the limitations of time and culture. Yet, it also highlighted our ignorance of its full meaning. Whilst its beauty can still speak to us, we do not know in any comprehensive way the world of meaning in which it was created. As I looked at it, I realised that although I could see and admire it, I was not really understanding it at all.

These are just some of the rewards I have been given. I look forward to many more and remain utterly grateful for what the Museum's staff are doing.

Colin Bradley, Volunteer

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