



South West Heritage Volunteers September 2018 Newsletter

Compared with 2017 the number of HV projects are slightly down, this is explained by the 6 projects completed since the last report. There are currently 7 new projects at various stages of preparation. The number of volunteer hours has increased, this is partly explained by the preparation required by those societies involved with the 50th Anniversary, additionally 3 societies (24 volunteers) received their 2 year re-training as set out in the Library Agreement. It is pleasing to be able to report that three societies new to Heritage Volunteering will be starting projects in the foreseeable future. We have also been invited to give a presentation on Heritage Volunteering to our newest society, Taunton Evening. This will be take place at their January meeting.

The balance of projects has altered during this past year, the majority of projects are now archive based, with 3 textile based projects and two stewarding projects. Unusually for the South West there are currently no Parks and Gardens projects, though this should change during the next year. The 7 new projects are all archive based. A large project for 2019 will be the Cornish poet Charles Causley and will involve volunteers working at two sites, Launceston and Exeter University. The project is being led by TAS Liskeard and both TAS Dartmoor and TAS Exeter who are new to volunteering will be involved. The other society new to Heritage Volunteering is North Devon, they will be working with the North Devon Record Office on a project recording the papers of the Chichester Estate. The Devon Record Office has three projects waiting for our volunteers to become available.

There is a new HVR now in place at TAS Sidmouth to replace the previous HVR who is now the Society Chair. There will hopefully be a new HVR in place at the Totnes Society to replace "The Totnes Team" who have completed their term of office. It is an indication of the difficulty in recruiting HVR's that of the 16 societies currently with HV projects that the Chairman in 5 are doubling up as the HVR.

Because of reorganisation at RAMM Exeter the Exe Society textile project at RAMM has been suspended. It may be possible to restart this project at some stage in the future. The Exe Society is currently investigating other potential textile projects, possibly church fabrics.

The Librarian at the Morrab Library Penzance, who acted as Project Leader for the Morrab Library project, has now retired and has been replaced by the Librarian from Durham Cathedral, who has also previously worked as the Librarian in several specialist libraries.

The reduced funding available for museums is affecting all museums and our volunteers are closely monitoring the situation. Also our connection with SWFed and AIM (Association of Independent Museums) is enabling us to be aware of any museums that are in difficulty.

The South West 50th Celebrations proved to be a valuable shop window for Heritage Volunteering with most of the societies attending making a point of visiting the HV display. Many visitors had not previously appreciated what the Heritage Volunteers were achieving with their projects or the range of projects. The display focused mainly on book and textile conservation with additional information on Parks and Gardens projects. There was also a demonstration of embroidery conservation work on a kneeler loaned by Bristol Cathedral. The HV display would not have been possible without the help and support of several of our societies for which we are most grateful. In particular I would like to thank TAS Falmouth for the book conservation display and also the National Maritime Museum for the loan of some valuable exhibits, the Exe Society for the loan of a tapestry display and arranging for the explanatory display boards and also TAS Taunton Vale for the loan and transport of the large altar hanging which was much admired.

Visitors to the HV stand came from as far away as Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, the Midlands and South East, several were casual visitors who were on holiday in the area and previously had no knowledge of The Arts Society. It proved to be good publicity and a good networking opportunity.

It is hoped that it will be possible to produce a Volunteers leaflet for the South West later this year, it will cover all the volunteering arms of The Arts Society.

Soon it will be time to start thinking about our Annual HVR Spring Meeting possibly in March next year, the date will be dependant on Society and Area commitments. Exeter seems to be the best place with good train and road links to the rest of the South West. In the past few years we have had two meetings at RAMM and one in the

Cathedral. If we return to the Cathedral it will be possible to have a good choice afternoon events very much geared to our interests. If you have recommendations for possible alternative venues please tell me. We will need seating for 25 > 30 people, access to catering and the possibility of an entertaining and informative after lunch tour lasting about 1-00 to 1-30 hours. As several of our members arrive by train any alternative must be within walking distance of the station.

And Finally

The SWFed (South West Federation of Museums and Art Galleries) are having their annual two day conference next year at the University of Exeter Penryn Campus.