

Report from the Archivist

“Snapshots in Time: Mapping Wells” collaborative exhibition

This joint exhibition ran at the Bishop’s Palace from 6th May to 30th September 2017. It included three of the most significant charters from the City Archives, and as far as I know, this is the first time they have ever been on public display, so it was a great opportunity for people to see them. The feedback from visitors was outstandingly positive and complimentary; for instance, “A wonderful and informative exhibition, well laid out and easy to follow. Obviously well researched. The charters are a big bonus”.

“Firefighting in Wells and the Mendips” exhibition

This exhibition ran at Wells Museum from 5th August to 13th September 2017. Like the previous firefighting exhibition, it was extremely well received. Reproductions of City Archives documents were again included and the Archivist helped organise the exhibition.

Heritage Open Day

This year we again broke all records, with a huge total of 595 visitors to Wells Town Hall on Saturday 9th September 2017. It would not have been possible without the wonderful support of volunteers, to whom profuse thanks are offered. Displays covered Wells railways, charter fairs, the North Somerset Yeomanry and the Bishop’s Barn. Other exhibits included vintage local postcards, panoramic photos of Wells in the year 2000, and “Wells in Mosaic: The Story So Far”. There were various displays showcasing material from the City Archives. In particular, there was a brand new local history exhibition (specially researched and written by the Archivist and two volunteers) entitled “Cage, Cowhouse and Clink: Prisons of Wells from Medieval Times to the Present Day”. This proved a great attraction, and will run for a month at Wells Museum in July 2018. Another Archives display, “Faces from the Past”, is still running in the ‘Archivist’s Choice’ case in the Town Hall foyer.

Looking at Heritage Open Days at venues across Wells, the Archivist again produced and organised distribution of the joint leaflet advertising what would be happening. Across the City, an impressive ten venues took part, along with Wells Walking Tours.

“Search and Learn” Galleries at Wells Museum

The Archivist continues to be heavily involved in the project for establishing the new galleries, which will tell the story of secular Wells.

Training courses

In September the Archivist attended a day’s workshop in Bath run by The National Archives and entitled “Archives Unlocked”. It presented the current national archives policy and action plan.

Mid Somerset Archivists and Curators Group

On 28th September 2017, the Archivist hosted a meeting of this group at the Museum. Seventeen attendees were given a tour of the City Archives and a visit to the “Snapshots in Time” exhibition. The Archivist had also organised two presentations for them, on the new Wells Museum galleries and on establishing a community archive at Clevedon Pier.

Victorian Dinner

The idea of a dinner which recreated some of the dishes from the banquets at Victorian Mayormakings arose from finds during an Archives Box Listing session. Beautiful menus of lavish banquets at the Swan Hotel were unearthed. Plans are now progressing for a charity dinner at the Swan on 4th February 2018, at which original and reproduction documents from the City Archives will be on display.

Dr Julia Wood
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