



# **Tewkesbury Museum Supporter's Newsletter**

**SEPTEMBER  
2022**

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Exam results are out and school holidays are nearly over. August has been a busy month, with several days topping 40 visitors. There have been lots of children, and a short crisis of supply of mouser badges. That is now resolved, and badge making is a priority task for quiet times. Shortly, mice will be replaced by penguins as the Raymond Priestley story takes over the Martin Cadbury Room.

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## **What is a Museum?**

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has announced that a proposal for a new museum definition has been approved.

This definition replaces the version agreed in 2007:

*“A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.”*

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## **Charter Day**

Probably following on from the success of the 1931 pageant, Tewkesbury Town Council enthusiastically embraced a suggestion from Mr B. C. (Bertie) Gray, the acknowledged keeper of the town's history. The suggestion was to celebrate the anniversary of the granting of the Town Charter by William III on July 13 1698.

One of the rights granted in the charter was for the Mayor and Corporation, the Burgesses and commonality to perambulate the Borough boundaries. His suggestion was that this right should be exercised, and two other significant events; the Battle of Tewkesbury and the purchase of the Abbey; should also be commemorated.

In the early afternoon of July 13<sup>th</sup> 1932 the corporation and officials assembled at the Town Hall for robing, and were conveyed by motor-coaches to the Vineyards, where townspeople and visitors had gathered round a newly erected memorial stone.

This commemoration stone marks the spot which was at the time reputed to be part of the site of Holme Castle, the ancient baronial residence which existed in the borough many centuries ago. It was erected by the town council at cost of £36, the designer of the stone being the borough surveyor, Mr. W. Ridler. The memorial is built of brown Horton stone from Banbury. On each of the four sides a cast iron tablet commemorating an aspect of the Town's history, though not necessarily, with the knowledge we have today, accurately. The

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Mayor's first duty was to unveil this memorial, with a suitable speech. The National press, in the form of the Daily Mirror, published a photograph commemorating this event on its front page!

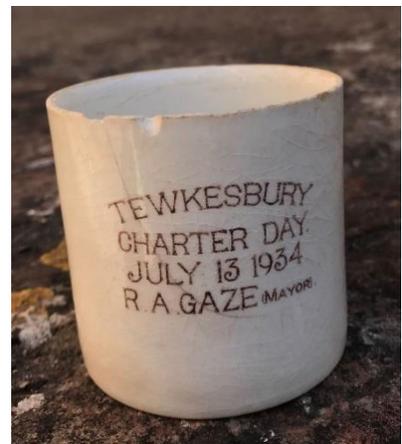


Next was the perambulation. The Corporation and officials, followed by the general public, walked in procession to Swilgate and Barton-roads, Chance and Station-streets, Oldbury to Bredon-road bridge, thence to King John's bridge, the sluice path, and the Quay. Owing the persistent drizzling rain which marred the proceedings, the route was now altered via Back of Avon (instead of the Severn Ham), and down Church street to the Abbey, where a united service was held.

Folk dancing in the main streets in the evening was prevented by heavy rain, and the display which was to have been held on the Sports Meadow took place in the Watson Hall, which was packed with people, as admission was free.

In 1933 the commemoration was less ambitious, but it was again marred by wet weather. The beating of the bounds was simply a token procession through the streets but the highlight was a visit by Gwen Lally, the director of the 1931 pageant, with a reunion of pageant actors. The choir treated the town to a performance from the top of the Abbey tower.

1934's programme was smaller again, with a civic procession to the Abbey, the official opening of the Vineyards playing fields, followed by community singing and a Punch and Judy show. Beating the Bounds was off the agenda. Schools all put on celebratory teas for their pupils, and maybe distributed commemorative mugs at the same time? The Museum has acquired a small collection of these.



1934 seems to have been the last Charter Day celebration. There were mutterings about the cost, so maybe it was stopped for that reason. Nowadays, the closest weekend to July 13<sup>th</sup> is likely to be the Medieval Festival weekend. William III is a little too modern for that.

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## King Cholera

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We've just been through the traumas of the covid epidemic, which makes this short account of a death from cholera even more poignant. It isn't from Tewkesbury's alleys. It's from the writings of Mrs Emily Lawson, wife of the Vicar of Upton upon Severn, who wrote the first published history of the town:

*Jane Allen was a bright, pleasant, little woman, and had been a nurse in Worcester Infirmary, where, however, her experience of sickness has not made her courageous. She*

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*was especially nervous and timid about this new disease... It is believed that she had been ailing for some days but no one about her knew of what deadly significance were those Premonitory symptoms, until one July evening, when She was seized with the cramps of cholera. Those who were her neighbours remember how they crowded into her room and fled from it again in horror at her distorted face and limbs, and the pain which nothing could remove or either lesson. They heard her cry is almost ceaselessly through the night, and at times they were so shrill and piercing, that the father of neighbours in Dunn's Lane could not rest but came to their doors, Full of pity for the poor young creature, and of terror at that which might be coming on themselves. Towards daybreak those agonising cries ceased, and Jane Allen late all blue and shrunken, but free from pain, till death came sometime in the morning of July 24.*

This happened in 1832, at the same time as Tewkesbury's first major outbreak. The scene must have been repeated all over the land.

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### **An 1837 Stitch Story**

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There's a large box in the Civic Room store which contains a blue banner. It is far too large to display in the museum, but it deserves to be better known, having a fascinating history.

In 1837, there was a General Election, and one of the candidates for Tewkesbury (where two MPs were elected) was a Mr Joseph Peel. The press described, in huge detail, a dinner held at the Swan Hotel, with 257 participants, in his honour. There were a huge number of speeches and toasts, each faithfully recorded. The London Evening Standard's account includes:

*'The principal room was decorated with flowers and evergreens, and in the centre was a beautiful banner, presented to Mr. Peel by the ladies of the borough and neighbourhood, and which displayed an elegant specimen of their needlework. In the centre of the banner, the ground of which was blue, were Mr. Peel's arras, encircled by a wreath of laurel -. motto, "Industria." Underneath; "Peel and the Constitutional Monarchy." On the top was a crown on the right; on the left a mitre; at the bottom a sheaf of wheat, and a dove with an olive branch; the whole in needle work. Several well-executed devices were displayed, bearing appropriate mottoes: - "Peel, the friend of the Poor;" "Dowdeswell, the Champion of our Independence;" "Victoria ;" "Church and State;" "Submission to the Laws;" "Loyalty to the Queen;" "Justice to the People;" "Freedom of Election, and no Intimidation;" "Purity of Election;" "Peace and Plenty;" "Success to Trade, Agriculture, and Commerce."*

This is the banner in the store.

The circumstances of Mr Peel's standing bear repeating. In the 1835 election, Mr Dowdeswell was returned for the Tories and Mr Martin for the Whigs. Mr Law, Tory, was defeated, and refused to stand again in 1837, saying that Tewkesbury had agreed to split its representation between the two parties. There were some of the Tory persuasion who were not happy with this and wished to force a proper competition. The London Daily News had an explanation of how Mr Peel was selected:

*'One evening, whilst things were in this position, a host of Tewkesbury tradesmen who frequented the smoking room at the Swan Hotel were assembled as usual to discuss their pipes and ale. They were all tories, and the conversation naturally turned on the election.*

*"Well", said one of them, "if we had a second man we should carry him yet". "Go and get him", said another. "I have had more than half a mind to it", responded the first. One of the oldest of the party shook his head and knocked the ashes out of his pipe gravely; but the more urgent spirits at the bottom of the table, who had got by this time to the glass of gin and water, urged the townsman on, and in five minutes it was determined he should go on a foraging expedition for a candidate, and bring back whomsoever he could find.*

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*At this moment a horn was heard out of the Inn window, and there rattled up to the door a coach, that stopped there to change horses. The night was a fine one: no time was to be lost, so up jumped the tradesmen on to the roof, the Coachman cracked his whip, and off they went towards Cheltenham.*

*“Fine night, sir”, said a fellow passenger beside him. The Tewkesbury tradesmen turned round to reply. It was a man in a drab great coach with large silver buttons. On each button was a “bee”, and the motto ‘Industria.’ The fellow passenger was evidently a gentleman’s servant. The Tewkesbury tradesmen got into conversation with him. But his mind was full of one subject, and he soon diverged into it. He mentioned that he was going somewhere to look for a candidate. “well now,” said the footman, “might my master do for you?” “Where is he,” said the tradesmen? “Inside,” responded his fellow passenger. “who is he?” Was the next enquiry. “Why, Mr Joseph Peel”, replied Thomas “a cousin of Sir Robert’s”.*

*“Stop the coach!” shouted the elector. The coach was stopped. Mr Peel, to his infinite astonishment, was awoke from a sound doze, and carried back to Tewkesbury. The next day the walls were placarded with his address soliciting election at the hands of the constituency.’*

This sounds more like urban myth than fact, but it is what the press reported!

The election results (on a far smaller electorate than today) were:

Dowdeswell	219
Martin	192
Peel	169

Rather fewer voted for him than attended his dinner, but as a complete stranger to the town, who had only spent a few, apparently unexpected, days there, he must have worried Mr Martin’s Whig supporters somewhat. Mr Peel seems never to have returned to Tewkesbury.

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## Talks

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The autumn talks programme is almost upon us, and will be at a new venue. Because of some double booking at the Trinity Church Hall the talks are transferring to the Baptist Church in Station Road. This is a comfortable venue and has the advantage of a built-in projection and PA system. It’s a little further to walk for some, but it has an adequate car park for drivers. Importantly, there’s a well-equipped kitchen for tea and cakes.

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The autumn programme is:

4<sup>th</sup> Oct: Hidden Voices: Women in Tudor and Stuart England - Kirsty Bingham  
18<sup>th</sup> Oct: Chedworth Roman Villa – A (virtual) Guided Tour - Nick Humphris  
1<sup>st</sup> Nov: “He went about doing good”: the life of Dr Edward Thomas Wilson  
- David Elder  
29<sup>th</sup> Nov: Deserter to VC Hero - Mike Kean-Price

Doors open at 6.30 for 7.00 start. Charge is £3.00

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It might seem premature, but we’re now thinking about the next talks series, for spring 2023. Any suggestions for topics or speakers would be very welcome.

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September marks the beginning of other talk programmes. Three worth attending are:

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September.** Tewkesbury Civic Society: Defford Airfield and the story of airborne radar: Tim Barney. 7.30pm at the Old Baptist Chapel.

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**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September.** Tewkesbury Historical Society: The Dowty Years; Martin Robins and Adrian Buckmaster. 7.45pm at the Methodist Church.

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September.** The Deerhurst Lecture: Worcester and Odda of Deerhurst; Prof, Francesca Tinti. 7.00pm at Deerhurst Church.

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## Walks

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The Wednesday evening Alley Strolls programme has come to an end for 2022, driven by the increasing darkness in the latter part of the walks. Eight walks attracted 204 walkers, though some of these came on more than one walk.

We're now starting the Sunday afternoon programme, with fortnightly walks leaving at 2.30 from Warder's Alley, starting on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

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A further development from the Alley Cats project is that the 'Alley App', which has been available (free) for some time for users of Apple iPhones or iPads, through the Apple Store, has now been developed for use on Android mobile phones and can be downloaded from the Google Play Store. Search for 'Project Alleycat'. There will be an official launch on 12 September at the Library's tech. Lab open afternoon.

The app is a mobile phone-based information store for the alleys, with descriptions, locations and direction on a map. It also has 3 virtual guided tours, with both spoken and written guides.

There is an app using the same structure to provide a battlefield guide, which is currently only available for Apple devices.

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## Guides Open Day

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We're approaching the end of the Girl Guide centenary exhibition in the Martin Cadbury Room. This has been very popular, and it is surprising how many visitors were once Guides!

The Guides are holding an Open Day on the 4th September from 11.30am to 2.30pm in Tewkesbury Town Hall.

They will have on display the full centenary of Guide uniforms along with some other guiding memorabilia. We are all invited along, and a past in Guiding is not a prerequisite!

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## News from Evesham

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The Almonry Museum in Evesham, is a Grade 1 listed building, somewhat larger than Tewkesbury Museum, but with similar problems of urgently needed repairs and improvements. It has been on the 'at risk' register since 2016, and has been following a similar process towards obtaining funding.

Evesham Town Council, who own the building, has agreed to support the restoration project with a grant of £260,000, which is 10% of the £2.6 million needed for the project. The museum is anticipating that the remainder will come from the DCMS's Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND).

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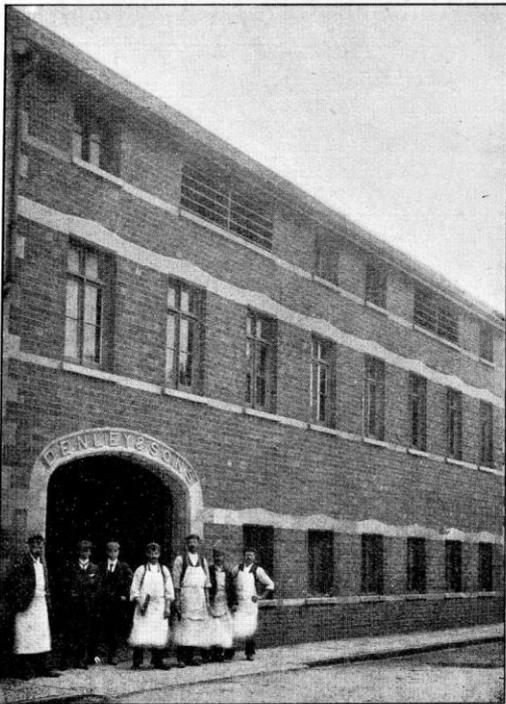
## Past Tewkesbury

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A Tewkesbury guide book from 1902/3 contains a series of sixty full-page advertisements for Tewkesbury businesses, most with photographs of the premises. This item, building contractor and builder's merchants, is the sole contribution from East Street.

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- DENLEY AND SONS -  
BUILDERS  
AND  
\* BUILDERS' MERCHANTS. \*

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MONUMENTAL WORKS :-  
East Street, Tewkesbury.

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DEPOT for all kinds of BRICKS, TILES, PIPES,  
CEMENT, and LIME. ————

— Bath and Forest of Dean Stone. —

— ÷ —

ENGLISH & FOREIGN TIMBER  
And Building Materials generally.

SPECIAL PRICES QUOTED ON APPLICATION.

Telegrams :- "DENLEY, TEWKESBURY."

Charles Denley, a stonemason from Sevenhampton, moved to Tewkesbury in the 1840s and set up in business as a building contractor and builder's merchant, establishing his yard in East Street in 1861. In 1892 he retired and the business passed to his son Thomas. Thomas died of a sudden heart failure at the age of 50 in 1903, at about the time of publication of this advertisement. He had no-one to follow him and the business was wound up. The yard and contents were sold up in 1907.

The property was eventually bought by the Midland Electricity Board, and in 1954 their staff social club opened there. This thrived until in 1964 they decided to close it and sell the premises. A group of their employees raised the £4,000 needed to buy it, and opened the Town Crest Club. This ran for forty years, until the changes in the way people socialised made it non-viable. After a few empty years the site was sympathetically repurposed for residential use and is now a block of houses.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

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This newsletter is intended for supporters of the Museum. It is confined to local history, the background to items in the museum collection and things which the compiler thinks are interesting. I hope you also find them interesting!

Contributions are very welcome, and will add to the range and variety of topics covered. If you have a few minutes to type up something you're researched, or even to suggest a topic which might be of general interest, please email [info@teWKesburymuseum.org](mailto:info@teWKesburymuseum.org) .

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