

History Group notes 14-11-22

Present: Roger, Mary, Harry, Lyndsay, Ed, Ian, Sue, Alan, Sheila, Liz, Jim, Phil, Lynn, Nigel & Brian

The main item of the meeting was a presentation by Liz of how to access the museum catalogue using the remote desktop configuration file, which will be provided to those who need it, together with a sheet of instructions.

The catalogue uses the MODES museum software and contains over 110,000 entries, many of which contain multiple artifacts.

There are limits to the number of remote users and to the number of MODES users. It is not clear how this will be manifest so guidance will evolve as experience is gained.

The primary mode of use is using the search facility. Liz demonstrated this using several searches, including for things, places and people. Care needs to be taken with search terms as the accessions may have used abbreviations, e.g. POH for Hutchinson

The births, marriages and deaths list extracted from Newspaper collection can be found by searching for "spreadsheet"

The results of research that have been deposited in the museum, may be found by searching for "research".

Users are requested to avoid Monday, and Wednesday mornings as that is when accessions are being added.

If an entry is found that is of further interest, the accession number and location should be noted and emailed to Liz. If appropriate a digital copy will be made. Otherwise an appointment will be needed to visit the archives.

Liz's presentation was very helpful and five members signed up to have access: Lyndsay, Ed, Ian, Brian and Roger. Liz indicated that it would take her a couple of weeks to get things ready for access, which could then be provided by sharing the configuration file by email.

Mary queried the timeline for the railings being placed on the Esplanade. She had a photo from 1924 showing railings at the Clifton end, and another from 1950 showing railings extending to the Bedford Steps. From the memories of those present it was deduced that the remainder of the railings were most probably put in place as part of the beach management scheme in the mid 1990s.

Nigel had received an enquiry about Emily Dora Bertram, living in Sidmouth in 1947, from a biographer. She may have lived in Sidmouth during the war, but arrived too late for the 1939 census. It is believed that she lived in Holmdale. If anyone finds any additional information, please let Nigel know.

Nigel had also received a booklet from the Little Book Club of Leeds containing a personal history of gunner Ernest Newsome who married in 1917 then went to the front and was killed on Dec 31st of the same year when his ship hit a mine on the entrance to Alexandria harbour. The book says that his wife moved to Sidmouth and ran the Biarritz café on the sea front. There was a wide ranging discussion on where this might have been, which continued after the meeting, with considerable differences of opinion as to whether the Pea Green Boat had previously been a café, and if not, what the other options were.

Ian recalled that the records of the death of the Duke of Kent referred to him being treated by the King's doctor, but that a recent article by the Hampshire family history society gave that honour to Dr Wilson a ships surgeon who was the Duke's personal physician. In reality Wilson attended the Duke first and then called in the King's doctor. They both removed quantities of blood, which almost certainly caused his death.

Ed reported on the discovery of 535 flint artifacts in the field next to Greenway Lane that is being proposed for housing development. The field name in the tithe survey was Woodwalls, possibly indicating that this is ancient woodland. Ed also pointed out that the definitive map shows Greenway Lane as being on the line of the Roman Road. A discussion followed on where the road would have crossed the river Otter, given that Harpford is named from the crossing (Harp being a contraction of Herepath - the Saxon name for the military road). Ed also commented that there was growing evidence of the survival of bronze age field boundaries in the Sid Valley and surrounding valleys.