



# Newsletter

Spring 2021



## A Brighter Horizon - Ian Tittley, Chair of Trustees

Our strange way of life under lock-down has continued throughout the dark days of winter and early spring with the Seaside Museum having remained closed since October, and will be for a couple of months to come. But, there is a brighter horizon. Although we have been in semi-hibernation with our Museum Administrator, Clare, on flexible furlough working just 10 hours per week, life hasn't been quiet. In January new windows were installed in the office, and soon we will be able make the top floor presentable especially the collection store. Clare has been coming into the museum twice per week to make sure that all is well and let in various service engineers to do their tasks and also to deal with people who have made purchases by email or by telephone. She tells me that our 2021 calendars are a sell-out. Excellent!

Trustees have been meeting by Zoom monthly to discuss the implications of lock-down and other Government rules and recommendations for this virus period.



Clare and I have held regular monthly meetings with Craig Bowen the Trust's CCC client officer and museum mentor to keep our fingers on the pulse with what is happening with CCC and the museum world.

It now looks as if we can open the shop from April 12th and the museum from May 17th providing the pandemic doesn't worsen. However, we may not open precisely on these dates but probably a few days or week or so later allowing time for preparation. Also, we may probably only be able to open the museum a few days per week. When we can re-open, we will, as we did last summer, create a safe environment for volunteers and visitors by implementing PPE, social distancing, sanitizing, and Track and Trace measures until an all-clear is given by the Government.

In order to open, we are looking for as much help as possible. We continue to welcome new volunteers to the museum family, so for those of you who are not, please give it some thought.

Trustees have also been busy with attracting new members to the Board. We are very pleased to welcome Justin Burns, Douglas Downing and Victoria Mulford to the Trust. If any of you would like to become a Trustee, do get in touch.

Financially, during lock-down we have sought all the Government grants available to businesses that have had to close and as a consequence the Trust's balance sheet is looking reasonably healthy.

Our plans are dependent on success in keeping Covid-19 down. For the time being, stay at home as much as possible, have the vaccinations, wear your masks, and keep fingers crossed for life returning to near normal in late spring and summer.

# Sensory Mat for Education and Outreach

BY MARION, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH VOLUNTEER

In 2019 the Educational Outreach committee discussed the idea of making a mat with fabric pictures to show the special features of Herne Bay. Obviously cost and man power were a consideration. The idea was to use the mat with groups of children at special events, or when school parties visited the museum.

We had several meetings to work out the way forward and I offered to co-ordinate the project and make the mat up.

After deciding about the content, some members of the team offered to make some of the pictures and I sourced a suitable duvet from a charity shop to use as a background



At our last meeting before the first Lockdown I offered to complete a section of the mat so that we could all have an idea how the mat would look when completed.

Not long after, an opportunity arose to attend a workshop about museum mats in relation to a completed, professionally commissioned mat for Folkestone museum.

It was a very stimulating session that fired me up with lots of ideas and enthusiasm. In particular the possibility of using the mat for a much wider audience in the community was very exciting.

Within the week it was Lockdown. With all the time in the world and the generated enthusiasm from the workshop, I was swept along to continue with the mat. Apart from a few meters of binding bought when shops were allowed to open in the Summer, I have recycled fabric and trimmings found in my own collection at home.

This means that the completed mat has cost very little and helped the environment.

It will probably be a long time before we can use our mat, but it is waiting in the wings.

# Reculver Church and Art as a Tool to Inform Coastal Erosion

BY SANDRA, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH VOLUNTEER

The cliffs at Reculver are formed from soft sands and clay making them very unstable. This, together with erosion caused by the sea, has led to frequent landslides. In 'British Landscape through Maps East Kent (Coleman and Lukehurst 1967)', it is said that when the site of the Roman fort at Reculver was investigated in 1781 it was a perfect rectangle. As we know, much of the land where the fort was situated has now disappeared through erosion. St Mary's Church stands within the walls of the Roman fort. It was built on the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon church in the twelfth century.

The Museum has a collection of pictures of the church. These were made between c.1777 and 1851. When we look at these pictures, we can understand why the church was partly demolished in 1808 and how the soft cliffs have eroded over time.

In 2011, a project supported by the Maritime Archaeology Trust and part funded by the European Regional Development Fund was created to support coastal management and climate change planning on either side of the English Channel. One part of the project involved using paintings, drawings, and prints to give a detailed and historical view of long-term coastal change, as a record prior to the use of photography. An important premise of the report is that past coastal change will enable a more accurate prediction of future changes and potential impact.



**The Reculvers, William Daniell RA 1827**



**View of Reculver, Stewart Westmacott 1851**

Two paintings from the museum collection, one by William Daniell and the other by Stewart Westmacott are included in the report. These show that over a time span of about 100 years, the rate of erosion was significant.

There are two earlier pictures in our collection. The first by Benjamin Thomas Pouncy (c.1750-1799) dates from around 1777. Margaret Burns wrote an article for the Herne Bay Historical Record Society Summer 2017 Quarterly Newsletter, Issue No 6. She noted that paintings of Canterbury by Benjamin Pouncy were exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1777 and suggests that Pouncy may also have visited Reculver while in Canterbury.



**Reculver Church, Benjamin Thomas Pouncy c. 1777**

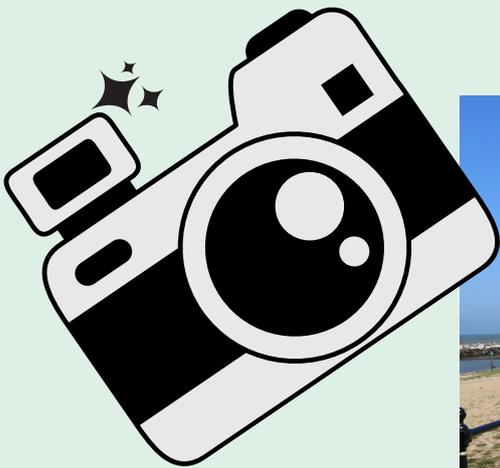


**Reculver from the Shore, Denis Deighton 1817**

A watercolour painting 'Reculver from the Shore' painted by Denis Dighton in 1817 shows what was left after a Vestry meeting held in 1808 when it was decided to demolish the church. In 1807 a northerly storm combined with a high tide battered the coast at Reculver. This caused further erosion to the cliff on which the church stood and destroyed part of the wall around the churchyard to within about 30 feet of the walls of the church.

Trinity House stepped in to ensure that the towers were left as a navigational aid and bought what remained of the church for £100. In addition, groynes were built to protect the cliff.

## My Favourite Place in Herne Bay



Where's your Favourite Place in Herne Bay? Take a picture and enter our photo exhibition.

We have extended the deadline to 26 April.

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in their photographs. If you need to print your photograph The Studio are offering a special price of £3.50 for an A4 print if you let them know it's for the museum competition. Email your photographs to [daniel@theonlystudio.co.uk](mailto:daniel@theonlystudio.co.uk) and arrange payment.

Entry Form and Terms and Conditions available here <https://bit.ly/2ZTQJif>

All the photographs submitted will form our reopening exhibition. Don't forget to pop in, admire the wonderful talent and vote for your favourites. The top 12 will make up our 2022 calendar, which will be available in the autumn.

# A Snail with a Tale!

BY IAN, CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Take a walk along Herne Bay's beach and see how many different shells have been washed ashore, the small snail-like periwinkle perhaps, or a cut-throat razor-like razor clam, or the flattened native Oyster, spiral Whelk shells resembling giant snails, and also the Atlantic Slipper Shell (sometimes called the Slipper Limpet). Which of these occurs most commonly on our beach?



The Slipper Shell!

In places a beach may be entirely of the Slipper shells but if we could go back to the 1870s at the beginning of Herne Bay's heydays not a single Slipper Shell would have been seen on the beach.



Why? Here begins our tale.

The mid 1800s were the peak of the Edible Oyster (Latin name *Ostrea edulis*) industry with hundreds of millions passing through Billingsgate fish market every year and sold on street corner stalls and in taverns and eateries in London and other big cities. It was a massive business with lots of money to be made and was probably the reason for the unsuccessful Hampton, Herne Bay and Reculver Oyster Company that brought about major change to the coastline at Hampton - but that's another story. In order to reinstate depleted oyster beds a foreign oyster, the Virginian Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*), was introduced to the coast of southern England, and in particular between 1887 and 1890 to the Blackwater Estuary in Essex (an oyster fishery since Roman times) across the Thames estuary opposite Herne Bay. Unfortunately, hitching a ride with the American oysters were other marine animals including the Slipper Shell.



The Slipper Shell's Latin name is *Crepidula* (meaning a slipper) *fornicata* (translation not needed!!), a species whose native range is the Atlantic coast of America.



It has a rounded light-brownish shell with reddish-purplish streaks and patches, and inside a ledge or 'septum' which makes the shell resemble a slipper. Slipper Shells may occur singly or in stacks or chains with females at the bottom and males at the top (hence *fornicata*!), but, as new shells are formed males gradually turn into females with hermaphrodites in the middle. The Slipper Shell is a suspension feeder filtering phytoplankton from seawater. It lives on the seabed below low tide level to 15 m depth (but may go deeper) in sheltered bays or estuaries with flat, muddy-sandy-gravelly-shelly beds (a habitat like that of the native oyster).

It may occur in great numbers with densities of up to 20 tons per acre recorded from derelict oyster beds; in the early 20th century 35 tons were dredged from the Blackwater in four weeks, and over 1000 tons were taken from the Blackwater and Colne estuaries in 12 months. The shells washed on to Herne Bay's beaches are dead but large numbers of living animals can be seen at Bishopstone during low water of spring tides when the sea goes a long way out.

The Slipper Shell is a serious pest on oyster beds and has contributed to their abandonment; it blankets the beds to several inches thick and smothers them by weight of numbers, also starving them and entrapping faeces and sediment adding to the smothering. The impact of the Slipper Snail on the marine environment is considerable by altering habitat and changing the nature of sea-bed communities of plants and animals. This is happening to Herne Bay's offshore environment below low tide level which we are less aware of being out of sight and out of mind; nonetheless, evidence is seen washed on to our beaches.

At present there is no commercial demand for the Slipper Shell but there are possible culinary uses. One web-site suggests eating them raw or cooked briefly and eaten with garlic butter with dulse (the red seaweed *Palmaria palmata*).

We plan to tell museum visitors more about the impact of non-native species on Herne Bay's coastal and marine heritage, the latter an important aspect of the town's story, as part of new exhibitions dealing with changes to the coastline. When life returns to normal we hope to hold events on the seashore and activities in the museum looking more closely at our marine plants and animals.

## Come and Volunteer With Us

Fancy getting involved with the museum? Why not come and volunteer with us. We are currently looking for people who can help out with Front of House when we are able to reopen. Please email [hernebaymuseumtrust@gmail.com](mailto:hernebaymuseumtrust@gmail.com) if you'd like to find out more.

Would like to volunteer but don't have much time or live too far away? Why not become an armchair volunteer?

All you need to do is follow us on our social media platforms and

- Share a post
- Like a post
- Tag a friend
- Comment and say something nice
- Give the museum a shout out and spread the word



## Virtual Elevensies Continues On

Our fortnightly Virtual Elevensies carry on over a year after they started. They are a great opportunity for everyone who volunteers at the museum to catch up, put the world to rights and admire lockdown projects and achievements. Looking forward to when we can resume our afternoon tea parties and other social events in person.

**SPECIAL THANKS FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS: IAN, SANDRA,  
AND MARION**