

Museum Report 03.2024

1. Staff changes

Katie Petley-Jones returned to work as Curatorial Assistant on 25.03.2024 after her year's maternity leave, which means we have had to say goodbye to Lucy Cokes.

Curator, Charlotte Dixon, will be returning from her maternity leave on the 20th May with India Jolly leaving on the 23rd.

2. Visitors

In 2023 we welcomed **13,201** visitors to the museum and St Leonard's Tower, including education groups and events. This is 645 visitors more than in 2022. We also saw our busiest day ever, with 232 visits to the main museum, upstairs exhibition and events in one day.

3. Exhibitions and changing displays

- *Stover Canal Trust*

In collaboration with the Stover Canal Trust, we will be running an exhibition within the main museum space celebrating the work of the Trust since their formation.

There will be objects and photographs on display, and will link to our ball clay display.

- *100 Years of the High Street*

We are currently in the planning process for a summer exhibition that will be on display in the St Leonard's Room based around the last 100 years of the high street. This has been inspired by Austins' 100th anniversary this year.

One of our volunteers has a special interest in the town and has created a spreadsheet of all of the shops that would have been in the town when Austins was first opened. We are linking these to objects in the museum collection and will be doing a call-out on social media to ask the public if they have items relating to Newton Abbot shops that they would like to loan for the duration of the exhibition.

- *Christmas Changes*

Over the winter closure we made our annual changes around the museum:

- The cases in the hallway near the toilets now have items relating to local manufacturers.
- The costume case has two newly acquisitioned wedding dresses in it.
- The New Acquisitions Case has a leaving book from Newton Abbot Hospital, with caricatures painted by Charles Lane Vicary.
- The Object of the Month & Photo wall are changing each month.

4. Training

- *Volunteer Update/refresher*

In January the Curator and Curatorial Assistant ran two update sessions for the volunteers, letting them know about the changes we had done around the museum. We also introduced them to the Curio app, which allows people to scan QR codes on their phones to read object labels and the new museum Pastport which encourages repeat visits.

It also gave the volunteers the opportunity to ask us any questions involving their role at the museum.

- *British Sign Language*

In April the volunteers and staff at the museum undertook BSL training. Everybody got involved and took away tips on how to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing visitors, as well as basic BSL that would be useful to us.

- *First Aid training*

First Aid training for museum and Town Council staff who were not already qualified was undertaken in May.

- *SW Museum Development (SWMD) Training*

India, Lucy and volunteer Alandra, have all taken part in different, free training offered by SWMD. This includes object labelling, conservation, Engaging with LGBTQ+ communities, Sensory Trust training, Copyright training and museum management.

5. Signal gantry / bequest

We are in the process of receiving a financial donation to the museum specifically for the conservation / restoration of the signal gantry. This is coming to us as a bequest following the sale of a locomotive name plate. This could potentially reach up to £12,000 in an auction. We will find out the total in the following months, but it will bring in a substantial amount to kick start fundraising to carry out work on the signal gantry.

Following the sad passing of Nick Perring at South Devon Railway who was interested in working on the project, we need to find someone else who can advise and carry out this work. A large part of the costing will be the hire of scaffolding.

6. Volunteers and work experience

The museum currently has 51 volunteers who are actively supporting the museum, and 60 on the books. They assist with a range of activities including front of house, behind the scenes collections work, education and conservation to name a few.

5 of these volunteers have joined us in the last three months, and we hope to keep up this momentum throughout the year.

We have two Duke of Edinburgh students who regularly come in on a Saturday to go towards their volunteering hours for their Gold DofE award.

We have a student from an additional needs school who comes in every other Wednesday afternoon and undertakes a multitude of different works under the supervision of the curatorial assistant and her support staff.

7. Stover Park project

Restoring Stover Park is a 3 year National Lottery Heritage funded project. A group of our volunteers spent last summer undertaking research in a variety of different topics which Stover had asked us to look at. This research will then be used to create the interpretation boards around the park. We are still, unfortunately, awaiting feedback on the work they did.

8. Financial Donations

The museum and Tower received a total of £3,155.27 in 2023.

9. Newton Abbot Museum Feedback Report 2023

2023

9.1 Public Comment Card

2023 (data includes Jan- July as full data has not yet been input. A full 2023 report will be available at a later date)

Within the museum we provide postcards which allow visitors to rate their satisfaction with the museum and leave a written comment.

In 2023 Jan-July we received 219 comment cards. So, we are on track to have received more comment cards than last year.

- The average satisfaction score was 4.9 out of 5
- The average visitor age was 41 (this is the mean average). This average is significantly higher than last year, but this may be because the summer holiday figures have not yet been added, which always include a high number of children.
- 43% of visitors who left comments were under 16s, the next largest demographic was the over 60s with 34%. Our youngest recorded visitor was 1 year old and our oldest was 93!
- As with last year, the majority of our visitors are from Devon with a high proportion of these being very local from the TQ12 area. Our most distant visitor came from Australia.
- Most comments (62%) expressed general positivity to the museum. 6% used the comment space to make a suggestion, 20% named their favourite part of the museum and 12% specifically praised the front of house team.
- Interactive elements were named most frequently as people's favourite part.

Sample of comments:

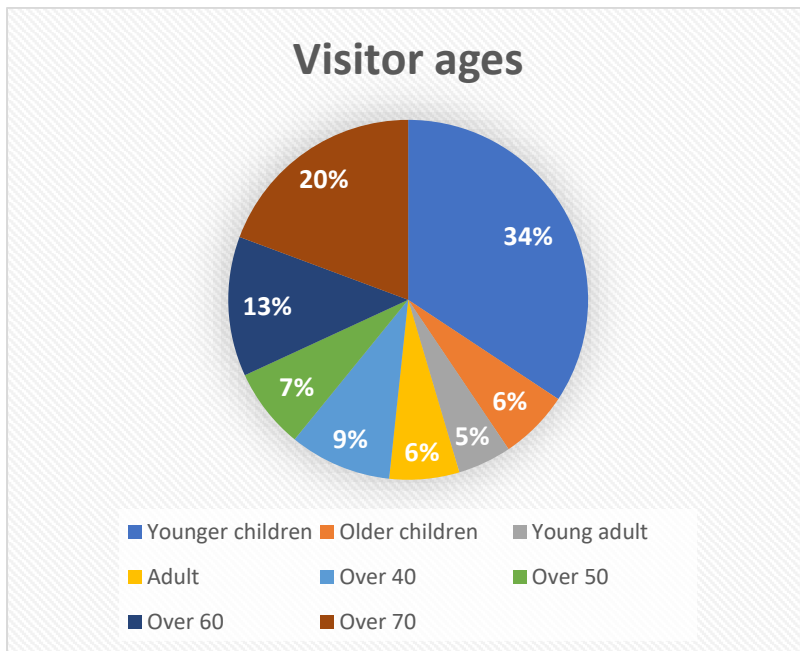
‘A beautiful building, wonderfully restored- lots of lovely exhibitions and we will be back (with grandchildren)’

‘Lovely museum, fascinating artefacts- lots of info and the staff are fantastic, so enthusiastic and informative. Lovely way to spend a couple of hours’

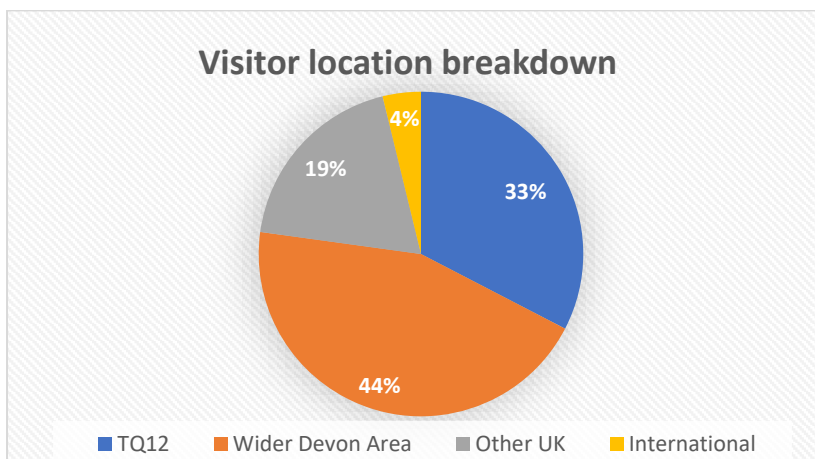
‘Spencer loves the train areas! He loves pulling the levers and watching the signals. He likes to draw on the vase and sit and have a water in the cafe upstairs. staff are lovely and friendly :)’

‘Absolutely wonderful. Spent a happy childhood in Newton Abbot and this brought back lots of lovely memories, especially Madge Mellors! Will come back very soon with my mum :)’

Demographics



0-9 (Younger children)	71
10-15 (Older children)	13
16-25 (Young adult)	10
26-40 (Adult)	13
41-50 (Over 40)	19
51-60 (Over 50)	15
61-70 (Over 60)	26
71+ (Over 70)	40



TQ12	60
Wider Devon Area	82
Other UK	35
International	7

9.2 Trip Advisor

- On Trip Advisor we have stayed at number 3 on the 'Things to Do in Newton Abbot' page. This places us on the front page when you look up Newton Abbot on Trip Advisor.
- We have a 4.5 star rating.
- We have 95 reviews in total (although 58 are about the old site)
- At our new home we have received no ratings below 4.5.
- As with our comment cards, reviewers most frequently mention the friendly staff and interactive elements.

Sample Comments:

5 star

A lovely little museum

Feb 2024

A lovely little museum with interactive displays and lots of interesting features. The staff are very friendly and helpful and the setting in an old church is beautiful.

5 star

Aug 2023

Absolutely fantastic gem of a museum. Dad and I visited at the weekend and we loved it. Free entry which is unbelievable given how big the museum is along with the exceptionally friendly and knowledgeable staff.

We would highly recommend a visit here with something for everyone. There is also a car park right next door and great toilet facilities. Lots of interactive activities too. We will certainly be back soon.

5 star

Brilliant place to take the kids!

Aug 2023

Went with my 5 year old daughter, she loved the butterfly trail upstairs and the secret mouse house! My favourite part was how very friendly the staff were, every interaction we had with them was brilliant. The all really took time to speak with my daughter and engage her with the museum.

9.3 Google Reviews

We have 127 reviews for the Museum on Google, with an average rating of 4.7 (7 of these refer to our old site)

Sample Comments

5* Such a lovely little museum. Good mix of local history and railway history. The staff were so helpful, knowledgeable and friendly. Well worth a visit

5* Small but very interesting museum, giving an insight into the history of Newton Abbot. There is a section on the railway reaching the town which contains some interactive exhibits. Well worth a visit.

5* We really enjoyed this museum, beautifully restored and laid out well, informative and interesting. Thoroughly enjoyed our visit. Will be going back.....