

Museum Report Appendix B

1. Staff changes

We are excited to announce that Katie Petley-Jones, the Curatorial Assistant, is now on maternity leave following the arrival of her new baby girl on the 21st March. On the 7th March Lucy Cokes joined the team as the Curatorial Assistant maternity cover. Lucy has a background in conservation and is fitting in well in her new role.

In addition, we recently interviewed for the Curator maternity cover and are delighted to announce that India Jolly will be taking on this role. India is currently the Museum Coordinator at Liskeard Town Council and will be joining the team in late April / early May (date TBC).

With these changes Kate Green, Community Engagement Officer, has now increased her hours to three days a week to support the team with group and school visit bookings and workshops.

2. Visitors

In 2022 we welcomed **12,556** visitors to the museum and St. Leonard's Tower. In contrast, the previous museum saw an average of 2,000 – 2,500 visitors a year (open from Easter to October).

3. Exhibitions and changing displays

3.1 Enhanced by Words, 22nd-29th April

This exhibition, in collaboration with Bright Lights Writing Group, will take place in the community room in Newton's Place and is free to visit. During this week there will also be creative writing interspersed throughout the museum offering new interpretations of objects on display through a creative writing lens.

3.2 Fired for Royalty: Royal Commemoratives from the Torquay and South Devon Potteries, 10th June-6th July

In celebration of the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

Torquay Pottery Collectors Society are collaborating with the museum to put together a unique chance to view a range of local pottery that have links to commemorative events through history.

This exhibition, displayed within the main museum gallery, will celebrate a range of ware made by local potteries, such as the Watcombe Terracotta Company, the Torquay Terracotta Company and the Aller Vale Art Pottery. Often these local pieces contained more hand-applied work than the better-known transfer decorated Staffordshire ware, so it is an exhibit not to be missed.

This exhibition is postponed from last year which had been scheduled to tie in with the Queen's jubilee year. Following the passing of the Queen we felt it would be appropriate to delay until the King's Coronation.

3.3 *The Science of Collections, August*

The Science of Collections will explore the ways in which natural history intersects with history, heritage and museums and what we can learn from these fascinating collections.

As well as our own entomology collections, this will feature the loan of a lynx from Bristol Museum which was captured in Newton Abbot in 1903. A study of this 'big cat' was undertaken in recent years enabling us to look at the science behind this object.

Other displays will include fossils linked to a Natural History Museum project which is taking place in Newton Abbot and the geology of the area.



Lynx being loaned from Bristol Museum for *The Science of Collections* exhibition

3.4 *Ipplepen Coins*

Until recently, there was little evidence of any Roman influence in Devon beyond Exeter. This all changed in 2007 when two metal detectorists discovered Roman coins at a site in Ipplepen. This soon challenged perceptions on the extent of Roman influence in the south west and led to a series of archaeological surveys and excavations run by the University of Exeter, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the British Museum and Devon County Council.

The project revealed a local town in existence before Roman presence in the area, evident through the discovery of Iron Age roundhouses. Of particular significance at this site was the presence of 245 Roman coins and Roman pottery suggesting that an exchange in goods and money was taking place here on a larger scale than known in other villages in Britain at this time.

This site is of enormous significance for enhancing our understanding of Romano-British history and we are delighted to be exhibiting a selection of the incredible Roman coins which are kindly on loan to us from Torquay Museum.

These 2,000 year old coins are on display in the museum throughout 2023.

The coins are displayed in our new star object case. This is a high spec case suitable for the display of loans and sensitive material.



Ipplepen Roman coin display

3.5 St. Leonard's Tower refresh

This year sees a refresh of the displays in St. Leonard's Tower. We are working with the design team at The Creative Core, who designed the displays in the museum, to produce new interpretation within the tower.

This includes information boards on the ground and first floor, a new showcase for the tower model and interpretation. The install for this is scheduled for the week of the 11th April ahead of the reopening of the Tower for the spring / summer season in May.

Other changes will include a monitor on the first floor to show livestream footage of the bells and clock mechanism. This will take the pressure off volunteers giving tours up to the bell chamber. Another new feature will be replica stocks which can be used outside the Tower, thanks to Councillor Mike Ryan.

3.6 January display changes

Keeping the displays fresh by changing them is important for the conservation of the collection as well as keeping interest for returning visitors. We used the closure period in December / January to change a range of displays. This included:

- Costume case – changed to children’s clothing and toys
- Costume area, dressing table – boy’s first dress, Victorian belt and collar
- Conservation & Community area - Sandford Orleigh wooden panel on display (left hand case when looking with the carvings behind you)
- Your Space case – collection of cameras
- Object of the month – Jan/Feb object selected by volunteers at Christmas do – they chose a piece of WWI trench art and postcards (this has since changed and continues to be a success bringing out different objects each month. March’s objects were chosen by a work experience student)
- New acquisition case – miner’s lamp and posters. This links to the 1980s Welsh mining strikes and the involvement of the town in supporting the miners.

In addition, the Milber figures loan has been renewed for a further year and will be relocated this week to the display case currently housing the medieval crucifix which is being returned to RAMM this week.



Costume case featuring children’s clothing and toys

3.7 Your Space – curated by Community Engagement Officer Kate Green

We like to keep changing our community cabinet to make sure that there is always something new to see. Since January we have had a fascinating display of cameras collected by Community Engagement Officer Kate Green. This month will see a new

display featuring ‘What’s in Store?’ artworks made by local school children, followed in May by a fascinating set of visual diaries created during the Covid lockdowns by Newton Abbot artist, Jackie Bailey. Vibrant snapshots of the world during the strange times of the pandemic burst off the pages of Jackie’s journals – a must see!

Then in June a much gentler collection will fill the cabinet, a collection of pottery cats! This will coincide with the exhibition of royal-themed pottery from Torquay Pottery Collectors Society, *Fired for Royalty*.



Current display of cameras in the Your Space case

4. Training

4.1 Volunteer front of house

In January the Curator and Curatorial Assistant ran two refresher training sessions for front of house volunteers. This worked well and we received good feedback from these sessions. It gave the volunteers an opportunity to catch up after the Christmas break, it gave us a chance to give the volunteers a tour of the display changes and it worked well to refresh the volunteers on front of house procedures and health and safety.

4.2 British Sign Language

Following feedback from the volunteers at the front of house training, it was felt that it would be helpful to have a basic understanding of key words to welcome deaf or hard of hearing visitors into the museum who use BSL. As accessibility is a core aim of the museum we have arranged an introduction to BSL training day for volunteers and staff for the 18th April.

4.3 Copyright training

Charlotte Edwards, the Museum Administrative Assistant, attended copyright training delivered by the South West Museum Development group.

4.4 Natural History Museum training

We are involved in a project with the Natural History Museum where they are loaning us equipment to catalogue and photograph parts of our entomology collection. This came about following our successful award of Green Grant funding to carry out a condition check of the collection. Part of this involved going to Bristol Museum to receive specialist training by the Natural History Curator. This project has revealed that there are important specimens within the museum's collection, some of which are now extinct.

This led us on to be referred to the Natural History Museum as a participant for the pilot project where this large national museum works with and supports smaller museums with important natural history collections. We will receive training through the project in early April.

4.5 First Aid training

First Aid training for museum and Town Council staff will take place on 5th May.

5. Museum Stores

The development and extension of the museum stores has been moving forwards. Following the acceptance of the planning application we have turned our attention to funding this project.

The costs of the build and professional fees are over £250,000 which puts us in the large grant category when applying to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This essentially means the same application process as the Newton's Place project.

To be successful with funding from the NLHF the focus needs to be on community use more than the functional storage side.

The Community Engagement Officer and Curator have submitted an expression of interest to the NLHF asking for a total of £377,867 in funding. This includes the cost of the build, fitting out, archaeological investigations, additional Community Engagement Officer time, resources to run activities etc. We would need to fund at least 5% of the project costs which would include in kind staff time, room hire for meetings and donations to the museum which have already been excluded from the amount requested from NLHF.

We have lots of ideas for projects involving the community which would be possible with the new store including community curation projects, creative projects inspired by the collection and behind the scenes tours.

The application process is as follows:

1. Submit expression of interest (completed, waiting to hear back)
2. If successful, we will then be invited to submit a full application

3. Full application to be submitted in August 2023
4. If successful, we would be looking at 1 year for the development phase
5. 3 years for the delivery phase, to include 1 year for the build and 2 years to deliver activities within the store

6. 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.

7. Schools and groups

In 2022 we welcomed:

- 872 visitors to the museum as part of school or home education visits
- 1209 visitors on group or informal education visits
- We reached 218 people during school outreach visits
- 277 people were reached during community outreach visits

Interest in school, home education, group and outreach visits continue in 2023 with demands to book visits in which is fantastic.

7.1 Home education

As well as monthly home education Lego workshops that are being run in the museum with Brick Ideas, the Community Engagement Officer is starting to run bi-monthly home education art workshops. This was requested by a home education parent who attends the Lego workshops with their child. The group came in to visit the museum a couple of weeks ago and the next step will be to run a workshop in the community rooms on the 10th May.

7.2 Learn Devon Notable Newtonian course

The museum is collaborating on a course run by Learn Devon to deliver a course for adults with additional needs over the span of 6 weeks. This course is focusing on notable Newtonians.

8. Community engagement events and projects

8.1 What's in Store?

Our project this Spring, called 'What's in Store?', aims to share many unseen items from our collection, but through the eyes of young, talented artists in the town. We have shared a range of objects with pupils from local schools and they have interpreted each object using various artistic media. Their wonderful artworks will be

on show throughout April in our Your Space cabinet and community area in the museum.

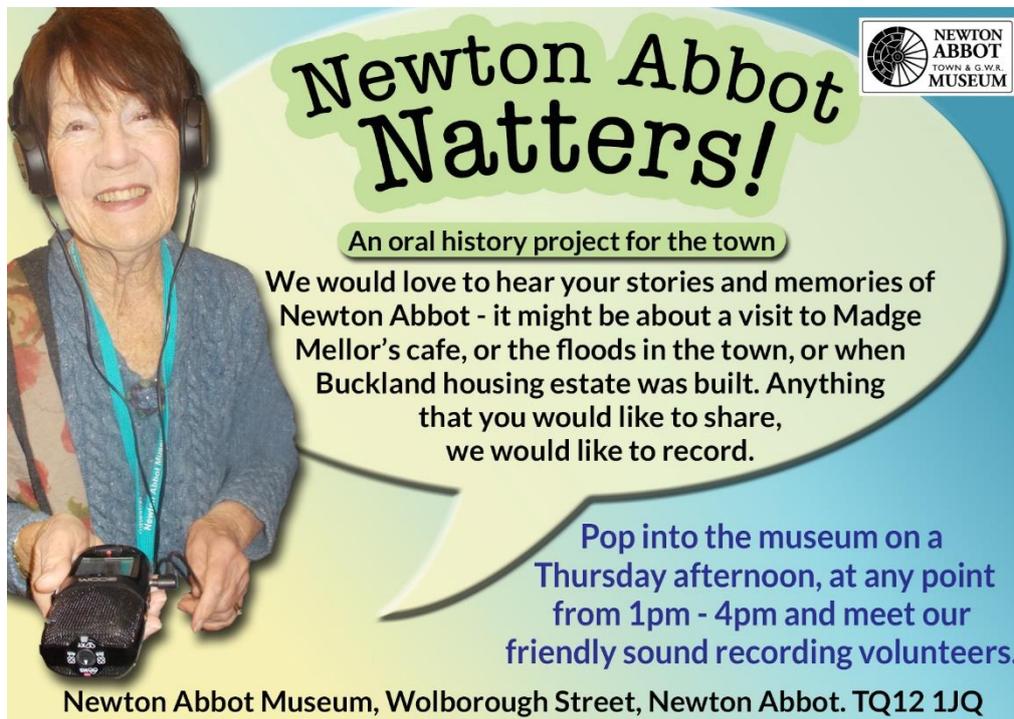
The project has been a great success. Kate Green has worked with three schools – Wolborough school, Glendinning Academy and Highweek school. We have had 46 students who have seen a wide variety of objects from the museum stores and have made a range of artworks for each object, interpreting it in different ways using paper cut outs, pastels, clay and pencil. A good model for future work

8.1 Twilight Sketching

We restarted the bi-weekly Monday evening event on 6th February. This runs from 4-6pm every other Monday and is open to all to attend. Visitors bring their own sketchbooks and pencils and enjoy two hours of calming music and sketching being inspired by the museum and its displays. The events are well attended with new people coming each time. People are enjoying the activity and the social occasion.

8.2 Newton Abbot Natters, oral history project

We have launched an oral history project with volunteers to provide a regular time to record anyone with tales of Newton Abbot. This means that visitors who come in and mention that they were the chef at Madge Mellor's for example, can be given a postcard to let them know they are able to drop in on a Thursday to make a recording with one of our volunteers on a Thursday.



The image is a promotional poster for the 'Newton Abbot Natters!' oral history project. It features a photograph of an elderly woman wearing headphones and holding a portable voice recorder. The text is arranged in a speech bubble shape. At the top right is the Newton Abbot Town & G.W.R. Museum logo. The main title 'Newton Abbot Natters!' is in a large, bold, black font. Below it, in a smaller font, is 'An oral history project for the town'. The main body of text is in a black font, inviting people to share their stories. At the bottom, in a blue font, are the details of the recording sessions. The address is at the very bottom in a black font.

8.3 Warm Space

The Warm Space has taken place each Friday, with the addition of homemade soup and bread which has been appreciated by those attending. Numbers attending are in the region of 6. The last Warm Space took place on Friday, 24th Feb. This has been

a really good thing to offer the town and so instead of Warm Space, the offer has been extended to *Chat Space*, a space to come in for a tea, coffee and chat every Friday from 1-3pm.

9. Volunteers and work experience

The museum currently has 57 active volunteers who assist with a range of activities including front of house, behind the scenes collections work, education and conservation to name a few.

We are still receiving applications for new volunteers.

We welcomed a work experience student from Newton Abbot College to the museum for a week in February. Anna worked on a range of projects including selecting and installing the object of the month, creating social media content, writing a blog and supporting Toddler Tuesdays.

10. Events

10.1 Makaton choir

A Makaton choir are using the community rooms to rehearse weekly. This will result in a concert being performed in the building on the 25th March. This is the second time we will be hosting the Makaton choir and is something that we hope to continue to support in the future.

10.2 Easter and summer trails

There will be an egg related trail within the museum throughout the Easter holidays. This will be free and there will be a small, free prize for all completed trails.

For the summer holiday we are working with Brick Ideas to create a Lego train trail around the museum. This will be free to do and will be available throughout the summer holidays.

11. Children's events and activities

11.1 Toddler Tuesdays

These sessions continue to be a success running every Tuesday during term time from 9.30-10.30am. The sessions are led by volunteers from the Education team and involve story time, music, toys and a chance to explore the museum. On the last Tuesday of the month Kate Green runs an activity for the children. Due to the high demand for these sessions we introduced a booking system which seems to be working well.

11.2 Make and Create

The family art workshop in February focused on the 18th century love token. We were 'sold out' with 17 children and 15 adults.

Kate Green has been planning activities for the year ahead in conjunction with Town Council staff to connect with other activities in the town – the Coronation and the Freedom of the Town event and the opening of Newton's Place on 1st April.

These free family friendly craft sessions are proving very popular and are often fully booked.

12. Stover Park project

Restoring Stover Park is a 3 year National Lottery Heritage funded project. The museum will receive some funding to participate in this project by working with a team of volunteers to conduct research that will feed into new interpretation around the park and that can be accessed digitally. This is due to commence late April and run until September. In August 2025 we will be putting on an exhibition linked to the project and the research that the volunteer team will have been working on.

13. Financial Donations

The museum and Tower received a total of £3,500.56 in donations in 2022 (Jan-Dec)

New for 2023 we have a Donation station so we can receive donations via card. Between the 23rd Jan and 22nd Feb we received £97 in donations via card

14. Newton Abbot Museum Feedback Report 2022-23

2022

14.1 Public Comment Card

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

In 2022 we received 250 comment cards.

- The average satisfaction score was 4.8 out of 5 (we convert the faces to a numerical score for analysis)
- The average visitor age was 29 (this is the mean average)
- 46% of visitors who left comments were under 16s, the next largest demographic was the over 60s with 26%. Our youngest recorded visitor was 6 months old and our oldest was 104!
- The majority of our visitors are from Devon.
- Most comments (68%) expressed general positivity to the museum. 12% used the comment space to make a suggestion, 12% named their favourite part of the museum and 8% specifically praised the front of house team.
- The model train and interactive elements were named most frequently as people's favourite part.

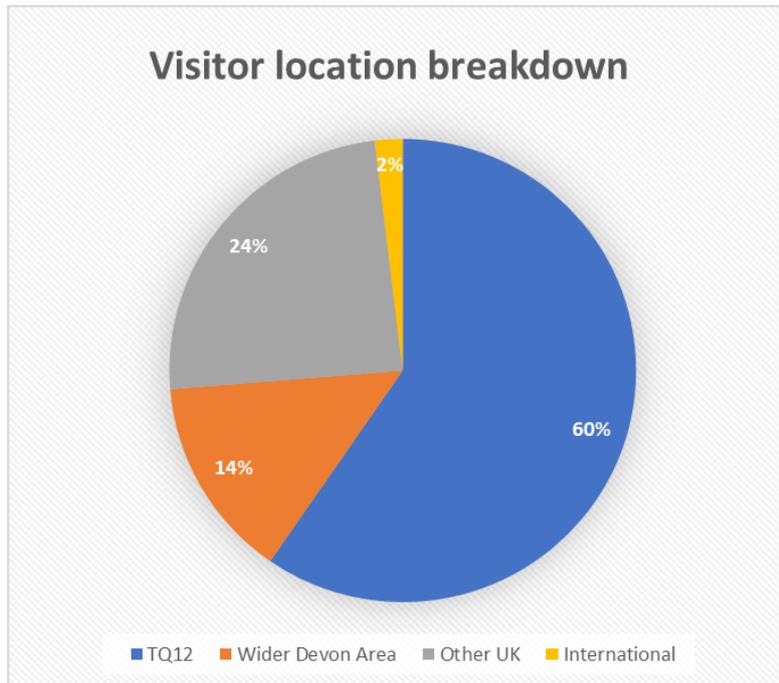
Sample of comments:

'Very educative, the displays were very interactive and the staffs were very polite. Great place to visit. Thanks'

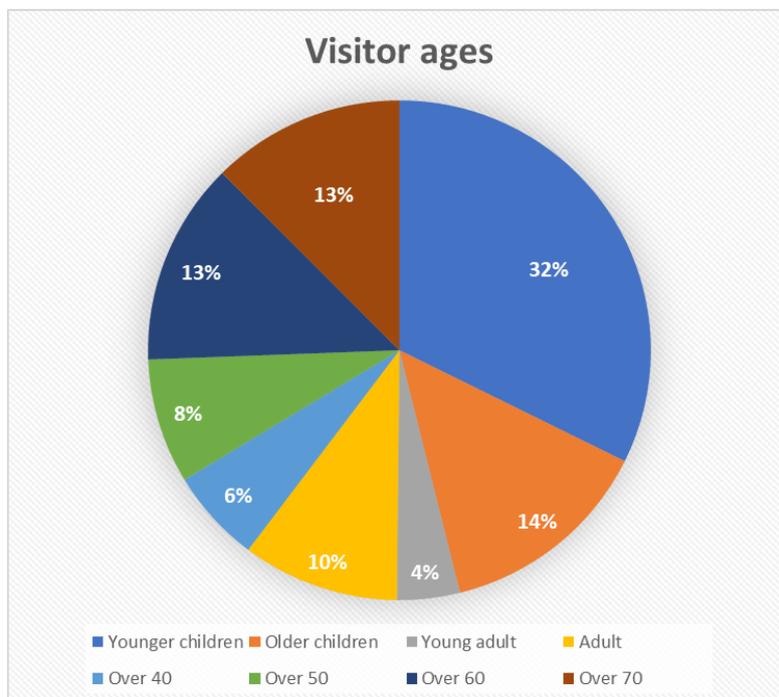
'A beautiful space and history collection. I love all the interactive things for youngsters'

'Stepping back in time, generations of my family lived in newton abbot'

Demographics



TQ12	93
Wider Devon Area	22
Other UK	38
International	3



0-9 (Younger children)	94
10-15 (Older children)	34
16-25 (Young adult)	11
26-40 (Adult)	14
41-50 (Over 40)	11
51-60 (Over 50)	16
61-70 (Over 60)	23
71+ (Over 70)	26

14.2 Trip Advisor

- On Trip Advisor we are number 3 on the 'Things to Do in Newton Abbot' page (up from 14 in 2021). 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 86 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 small museum that leaves a big impression

Nov 2022

There are some very interesting exhibits on display here, a few of which are 'hands on' and interactive. It was really satisfying to be able to manually operate the old levers of Newton Abbot's former Signal Box and see the Railway signals mounted nearby, respond accordingly with a resounding clunk. You get the feeling the levers we're made to last for ever, it's a pity local railways didn't similarly survive.

Railwayana from the great days of GWR, South Devon and Newton to Moreton Hampstead Railway give a hint of days gone by. From the Neolithic to Victorian times, nicely displayed exhibits all contrive to capture your interest. In short, it's a small museum that leaves a large impression and is certainly well worth visiting. Dave, a Volunteer Staff member was welcoming and helpful throughout my visit lasting some 50 mins

5 star

Great little museum

Jul 2022

Great little museum and a lovely way to occupy children for an hour. There's lots of hands on activities and dress up which they will love. Even better its free !!!

5 star

What a gem!

Apr 2022

The outline timeline of Newton's history was very informative.

The exhibits were a great mix over Newton's long history.

14.3 Facebook Reviews

We are rated five stars on Facebook. Due to page restructuring Facebook is not a very popular place to leave reviews.

We have one review comment for 2022:

'I took my little boy to the museum today , he loves trains and this was very fun and educational for him .

It was really good as there is things for little ones to explore to and found it very interesting .

All the staff were friendly and informative too . Will definitely be returning ! 😊

Thank you' March 2022

14.4 Google Reviews

We have 89 reviews for the Museum on Google, with an average rating of 4.7 (7 of these refer to our old site)

Sample Comments

5* A very good insight into Newton Abbot, and helpful staff 🧡. Phil.

5* Highly recommended. Converted church. Plenty to see and do. Change a railway signal. Helpful staff

5* Interesting and sympathetically renovated.

5* Entry is free. Hands on things for small people. A credit to our local community. Friendly volunteers. Great stuff.

2023

14.5 Public Comment Card

- We had 70 respondents via comment card for this reporting period (Jan to March)
- Our average rating is 4.9 out of 5
- The average age of respondents is 29.5
- 60% of people who made a comment just left a generally positive comment. 18% pointed out specific things they enjoyed in the museum. 16% highlighted the excellence of the staff and 8% made a suggestion.
- 84% of respondents were from Devon, with 22 of these being from the Newton Abbot (TQ12) area, so we remain very popular with local people.
- This year we added a question to the card asking how they heard about the museum. Most people found us through word of mouth from a friend or family member (52%). 10 visitors saw the building, either while walking around town or from their car. A few people read about us in the newspaper, saw a leaflet, or found us online.

Sample Comments

'Very friendly staff, beautiful old building and lots of interactives.'

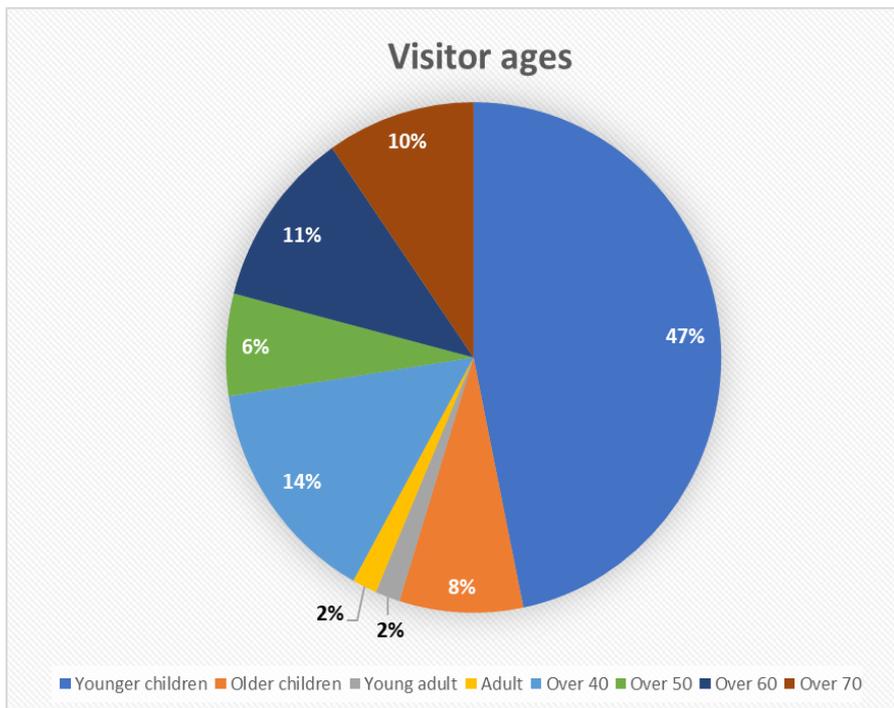
'Excellent displays- good, informative and attractive. Some nice ideas to include local community. '

'Amazing place. Boys and adults really enjoyed it'

Demographics



TQ12	22
Wider Devon Area	27
Other UK	7
International	2



0-9 (Younger children)	29
10-15 (Older children)	5
16-25 (Young adult)	1
26-40 (Adult)	1
41-50 (Over 40)	9
51-60 (Over 50)	4
61-70 (Over 60)	7
71+ (Over 70)	6

14.6 *Trip Advisor*

We have maintained our position as number 3 attraction that we achieved in 2022. Our average rating remains 4.5 stars.

We've had one review this report period:

5* Great experience on a rainy day Mar 2023

I took two children to the Museum on a Teachers Strike day. It was very good, educational and fun for them to learn about the history of their town. Staff was lovely and attentive, we couldn't ask for more. And it was free admission!

14.7 *Facebook*

We haven't received any further review comments for the museum via Facebook.

14.8 *Google*

We have had 15 reviews on google maps this year. Our average rating is 4.7. The majority of our ratings were 5 stars. We did receive a low rating of two stars by someone who was disappointed that there wasn't more material about the war on display. We have since provided this person with images of WW2 which matched his area of interest.

Sample comments:

5* Very sweet and nice people who told us about the place executions are really good and laid out free entry and just had the best time would highly recommend

5* Excellent, helpful friendly staff

5* Cannot recommend enough. I went with a friend and our toddlers and they were so entertained. Lots of interactive activities. Will definitely return. They had a lovely time. And the lady was so informative and friendly. Engaged with us lots.