

Dear Friends of the Museum, I am Dan Sancisi the Museum Manager. Firstly, I want to thank you all so much for supporting the Museum, your moral support is as valuable as the money that you raise and donate for good projects or acquisitions. You have also helped so much by initiating and administering the gift aid donation scheme at the museum which is now approaching its second year. The scheme boosted eligible donations by 25%, there is still work to do to find a way to encourage more visitors to gift aid their donations, I believe this is achievable and will be even more successful in the future.

Recently you bought a puppet theater that will be used during educational and craft activities for children, and you also paid for the manufacture of a stone quern, made by local stone masons, which has been an innovative teaching tool for demonstrating grinding grain to make flour. It is going to be especially relevant to our summer exhibition 'Abingdon's Oppidum: trade and crafts in an iron age settlement'.

Highlights for year 2023 to 2024, we have enjoyed...

- 1.1** **May 23** - Professor David Martill has released a paper breaking news of our pliosaur specimen's huge size which has attracted worldwide media coverage. The article can be found here <https://www.port.ac.uk/news-events-and-blogs/news/giants-of-the-jurassic-seas-were-twice-the-size-of-a-killer-whale>
 - 1.2** A live broadcast of the Bun Throwing from the roof-terrace.
 - 1.3** **June 23** - Projects have included a virtual reality view from the Museum roof with 'Lost Monuments' visible in the Market Place and Abbey Gardens. This is downloadable here: <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/lost-monuments-of-abingdon/tour.html>
- 1.1** **Events**
- 1.2** Heritage Open Days ran from 8 September 2023 to 17 September 2023. The Museum created a short exhibition for the festival titled 'Creativity in the Collection'.
 - 1.3** The exhibition consisted of Oswald Couldrey paintings of Abingdon Town scenes and highly ornamented garments and footwear from our collection.



1.4

1.5 In addition to the exhibition your officers collaborated with local archaeologist Jeff Wallis to create an online tour of the Oppidum ditch route around Abingdon. This was launched on 16 September 2023 and attracted 77 viewer/virtual participants on the day and has run several times successfully since.

1.6 The tour can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/HCnz-BY2Ezs> and is designed to accompany a tourist, using a smart phone, on the tour.

1.7 Visitors for the Heritage weekend totalled 347.

1.8 This year's HOD festival is an event 'The Vicus and Pario Gallico; Iron Age experience' at the Abbey Buildings on 14 September. We hope for a very large turnout. We hope that the AMF will be able to hold a stall at the event or at the Fun in the Park event on the 7 September, which would be an ideal opportunity to market the HOD event.

1.9 Visitors 2023 – 2024

1.10 From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, we welcomed 21,195 visitors into the museum, which puts us back to pre-covid levels. This year we hope to reach 25,000 visitors or close to.

1.11 Exhibitions

1.12 The four exhibitions for 23-24 were 'Abingdon Alphabet' by the Abingdon quilters group, which was colourful and very skilled. They also donated generously from workshops they gave raising over £500 for the museum.

1.13 'The Lost Monuments of Abingdon' exhibition brought Abingdon's rich history to the fore, while Geoff Dunbar's 'Comic Recollections' show gave us a humorous insight to some of the characters that make Abingdon's a special place to live. It was really something to see many of those who featured in the caricatures walking around the gallery at the private view!

1.14 2024 began with a spin off from the Women of Abingdon digital project which runs every year during March. 'Celebrating Abingdon Women in the Arts and Science' made us appreciate some great achievements and artwork, which happened to be made by women with a connection to

Abingdon.

- 1.15** Our current exhibition 'MG100, evolution of an icon.' Opened on 6 April after several months of research and collaboration with the MG Car club.
- 1.16** Carwow, a car online magazine, will be bringing the Cyberster to the Market Place over 19 & 20 June, well worth a look.
- 1.17** The summer exhibition 6 July to 29 September is 'Abingdon's Oppidum; trade and crafts in an Iron Age settlement'.
- 1.18** The exhibition showcases many items loaned by the car club as well as objects from the museum collection and has proved extremely popular.
- 1.19** **Collections**
- 1.20** The Museum Manager and Collections Officer have reorganised the fossil display in the Attic Gallery to display the pliosaur cervical vertebrae, featured in Professor Martill and Megan Jacobs article.
- 1.21** Their scientific paper demonstrated that the Abingdon Pliosaur fossils are from the biggest proven pliosaur discovered to date (at the time of publication).
- 1.22** The new display was launched during the ATOM festival in March 2024.
- 1.23** **Events**
- 1.24** The ATOM Festival week was an opportunity for the Museum to host events on Saturday 16 March 2024.
- 1.25** Oxford Geology Trust's (OGT) object handling and specimen discussion workshop, 'Boneheads' social media blogging Q & A session and Jeff Wallis' fossil display and talks formed the line-up for the day.
- 1.26** The Trust were overwhelmed with keen visitors wishing to learn about geology and fossils, OGT's hard work and dedication to the subject was rewarded by over 300 visitors.
- 1.27** Ben Thomas' 'Boneheads live' session split the day in two with morning and afternoon seminars held in the Kempster Room, which can be viewed on YouTube
https://youtu.be/JKVNT2OVj7s?si=CSbpdroO6_WTrjHb .
- 1.28** In the Attic Gallery alongside the new pliosaur display, local Palaeontologist Jeff Wallis talked about Jurassic Abingdon to an interested audience, adding a narrative to the reworked interpretation panels and fossil displays.

1.29 The Basement Museum

1.30 At 4 East Saint Helen Street, in Abingdon town centre, the owner has created a museum space in the building's basement, due to extraordinary finds he made while excavating it.

1.31 He has 'curated' the space to display artefacts such as roman pottery, clay pipes, a functional water well, and many other curiosities. Well-lit cases present the material beautifully, he has also made interpretation panels to inform visitors about the history of this usual cluster of archaeology.

1.32 The Museum is planning to create access to the space by appointment.