

## JOHN RAPSON GALLERY REFURBISHMENT AND NEW EXHIBITION LAUNCH

The new exhibition '*In Reflection: Photographs, Peacemakers and Pacifist Emily*' (*Meet the people of Liskeard and the District through photographs by local camera artists. Uncover stories of peace and friendship within the portraits of Catherine and Leonard Courtney. Trace the life of visionary Emily Hobhouse as we mark the centenary of her passing.*) will open in the recently refurbished John Rapson Gallery on March 20<sup>th</sup> (the Spring Equinox), with a preview event for invited guests in the evening of March 19<sup>th</sup>. We are delighted to confirm that we have engaged highly regarded designers to produce and instal the exhibition's interpretation. Wignall and Moore have recently refurbished the Mineral Gallery at the Cornwall Museum and Art Gallery, Truro; they are also creators of the Story of Emily part of the display at our museum. We cannot wait to share the new exhibition with our visitors.

## RAPSON DIGITISATION PROJECT

The Digitisation Project has been developing well, with Volunteer Hollie doing a superb job at coordinating it. Conservator Sarah Allen praised our progress during her visit on site in November and continues to offer remote support until end of January 2026. Our November Volunteer Open Morning with a focus on Collection Digitisation attracted two interested candidates, one of whom has now officially started volunteering with us. We are now working towards sharing the images scanned from John Rapson's original negatives to date through the recently purchased digital kiosk which will feature in '*In Reflection*'.

## MUSEUM PLANS FOR 2026/2027

Museum's Learning Programme will be the focus of our fundraising efforts this year, with a grant application planned for early Spring 2026. We are also hoping to start the process of conservation of museum's collection of vintage clocks; we will be seeking additional funding to make that happen. It is our plan also to replace internal signage at the museum, to align it with the museum's new branding and increase visibility. In addition, the museum's accreditation is expected to come up for renewal around December 2026, for which we will be preparing over the course of the year. We will also be implementing recommendations for improvements made by the Crime Prevention Officer in his last report.

## DONATING OBJECTS TO THE MUSEUM

From January 2026, the Museum is inviting donors to bring in their objects on selected days only (Thursdays 11-4, Fridays 11-4, and 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday every month 10-1). We also encourage our donors to get in touch before making a trip to the museum, to tell us about their objects and associated stories. We acknowledge the importance of acquiring new objects and the opportunity to take the donor through the process in a thoughtful and unhurried manner, which is why we are introducing this change to our usual practice.

## HAZARDS IN COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME

The Museum is taking part in the Museum Development South West (MDSW) programme on identifying Hazards in Museum Collections, with the first training session already behind us. Two of the museum volunteers took part, as did Museum Manager. More training sessions are expected in early 2026. Participation in the programme opens funding opportunities, which we will consider, time allowing.

## VOLUNTEERING TEAM

We currently have 21 volunteers on our records, with 10 attending regularly. We are going to pause active recruitment for a short while and focus on nurturing our existing team. We are likely to host another recruitment event in the Spring.

## LEARNING REPORT

Lizzie, our Learning Volunteer, has produced her own detailed report of the work in the past two months, as well as a forward plan for the year as follows:

### **November/ December**

At the end of November, we welcomed Sir Robert Gefferys Primary School years 1 and 2 across four sessions over two days. The classes were learning about toys though time; a short whirlwind presentation was given on toys throughout history, after which the children had the opportunity to play with our replica Victorian toys from the schools loan boxes and follow a short trail.

At the start of December, we welcomed the ARC unit from Liskeard School and Community College over two days to explore the museum and learn a little bit about where our Christmas traditions come from which we did via a trail. They then had fun working in teams to wrap presents (empty cardboard boxes) with just paper and string and finished their visit by making pinecone Christmas trees.

Both schools really enjoyed their visits.

Craft activities for December were limited due to space and time, but we launched Christmas letters to Santa for which I replied to each one who paid. We responded to 11 letters.

We found out after we advertised this that a shop in town was replying to letters, which we believe was for free.

### **Upcoming education activities plan for 2026**

Home education sessions start on 19<sup>th</sup> January, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month (term time only) They are charged at £5 per child per session payable in advance so that enough resources are prepared, we will also have no more than 10 children at any one time. The activities for these will be tied to the reopening of the Rapson Gallery to begin with and will be looking at cameras in history, silhouette portraits and Emily Hobhouse. We will then look at the Edwardians in March.

We are looking to include chargeable activities for adults at the start of this year in the lead up to the gallery reopening; one to have an evening event, Still Life Drawing for Adults and Scrapbooking for adults – charges TBC we are considering around £10 per person.

February half term was originally set to be activities related to the gallery reopening as the original planned opening date was supposed to be for half term. However, as this has now moved out towards Easter those activities will be held during the Easter Holiday and will be explained shortly. Therefore, February half terms activities and family trail will now be “All the fun of the Circus” inspired by Rapson’s photos of Elephants stopping in Liskeard for a drinks’ stop at the Pipewell.

There will be no Home Education sessions in April due to when the school holidays fall.

Once the Easter holidays arrive (which will then line up with the Rapson Gallery now being open) the holiday activities will be “Faces and Places”.

Activities will be scrapbooking for children and self-portraits. We are also hoping that Lore & Piece will be back with us to deliver another archaeology session which will be a chargeable activity.

Should Home Education sessions be successful in the first term then we will continue into the summer term; the children will have sessions on transport in Cornwall and the industrial revolution.

May half term we are hoping to have the Cornish Bottle Archive at the museum with a display and our half term activities which I have been asked to somehow involve bottles. My working title is a “Pirates Life for Me” and will be making an ocean in a bottle plus we will add in another themed activity yet to be worked out!

Home education in June and July will look at World War II. There will be no sessions in August.

Summer Holidays working title is “Trip around the World” with activities inspired by different countries, travel and Cornish miners who emigrated.

In September, Home education will look at the Victorians until October half term should we deem the programme still viable - it will be fully assessed as to its merits when it stops for the summer.

November and December will focus on Christmas Traditions once more and build on last years theme, possibly including a children’s and an adult’s workshop.

Where possible activities will involve re-purposed items throughout the year.

Holiday activities which are timetabled will be advertised on Eventbrite again as we were inundated with children in the summer, we tested the Eventbrite system in October and this worked reasonably well, we just need to make it clear that parents only need to book places for their children and not themselves too. We do have the option to add a donation box on the Eventbrite booking system.

We are inviting and encouraging more schools to book to visit the museum in 2026 and since this report was originally produced we are suggesting a donation of £30 per class.

I am also looking to get the object handling boxes re-introduced this year; I have suggested that there should be a charge for them in line with other museums.

My thought is to charge £15-£20 per box with a discount if schools order a set of boxes for a topic - i.e. we have three boxes for the Victorians all containing different items including dress up costumes. Some of the boxes contain use once items which will need replacing or items that will run out - i.e. the Victorian classroom box contains dip pens and exercise books, the books will need replacing, the dip pens will require ink, and nibs will need to be replaced once they wear out or break. I also suggested a breakages fee of £10 for any items damaged as when assessing the boxes I have needed to repair a number of items in the costume box –costume can currently be repaired by me but if I am not available to do this then we would have to pay someone to repair them. If other objects are damaged, we would still need to pay someone to repair them or the cost we need to go towards replacing it.

Lizzie (Learning Volunteer)