Staithes Museum
staithesmuseum@gmail.com

Newsletter

October 2026



Our next volunteers' meeting

All volunteers are welcome Thursday December 10th for an informal volunteers' meeting. The time will be at 18:00, in smugglers above Staithes gallery. Come for some Christmas cheer and chat!

Hello!

This month, we've got lobster pots on YouTube, a beautiful painting to win in our winter raffle, childhood memories of Staithes, new stories from the archives, some rather astonishing website and social media statistics, and a few requests for your help – from sharing your memories to supporting our women's history project!

John Cole's Lobster Pot Films – Now on YouTube! 🎥





Have you ever watched our films of Staithes lobster pot maker John Cole upstairs in the museum, but never quite had time to sit down and listen to the whole story? Good news! Both films are now available on our YouTube channel, so you can enjoy them from the comfort of your own home.

Hear John talk about his family's generations-long tradition of lobster pot making, share his memories of Staithes, and demonstrate the skills behind this traditional craft.

🎬 Watch John's story: John Cole: A Staithes Lobster Pot Maker
🪢 Watch him make a lobster pot, step by step: John Cole: How to Make a Lobster Pot

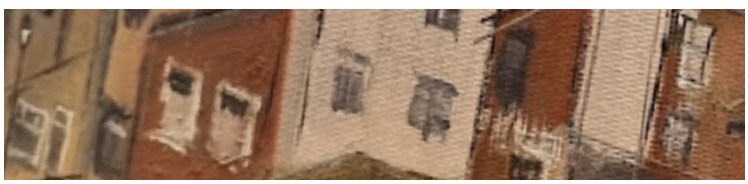
Going with the flow: a little piece of Staithes



Our winter raffle prize has arrived at the museum, and we're delighted to have this beautiful original oil painting by Ian Burdall on display. Generously donated by the artist, the framed painting shows Staithes Beck, with a traditional fishing boat moored on the water.

It's a familiar scene, but one that's worth pausing over. The boats, the water, the buildings gathered around the beck: they're all part of what makes Staithes Staithes.

Ian is a marine artist whose work celebrates the boats, coastline and maritime communities of our part of Yorkshire. He has exhibited at the Staithes Arts and Heritage Festival, where artists gather each year to take inspiration from the village and its surroundings.



When we shared a photograph of the raffle painting on Facebook, people began discussing the boat in the picture. It appears to be a double-ender – a coble with a pointed bow and stern – and someone wondered whether it might be the Mizpah.

Ian joined the conversation to explain that he hadn't painted any particular double-ender. He simply enjoyed "going with the flow". Sometimes it's about capturing the feeling of a place: the movement of ropes and the water, the shapes of the boats and the everyday sights that make a village distinctive.

Staithes has long attracted artists. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, painters including Laura Knight and Harold Knight lived and worked here as part of the artists' colony now known as the Staithes Group.



They were drawn to the village's distinctive light, dramatic coastline and working community. Fishing wasn't simply picturesque scenery: it was a demanding livelihood, shaped by tides, weather and the risks of working at sea.
The double-ender remains an important symbol of that heritage. These sturdy local fishing boats were adapted to the conditions of the Yorkshire coast, and generations of Staithes families depended on fishing for their living. Paintings such as Ian's help keep that maritime character visible, even as the village itself changes.

At the museum, we're fortunate to care for objects, photographs and stories that tell us about the people who lived and worked here. Art gives us another way into that history – one that begins with colour, shape and atmosphere, and can lead us towards memories and stories of our own.





Win an original painting and support Staithes Museum

Thanks to Ian's generosity, you could own this original, framed oil painting of Staithes Beck. Our winter raffle costs £5 per ticket, with just 200 tickets available. The winning number will be drawn on Friday 4 December 2026.

We're aiming to raise £1,000 to help keep Staithes Museum sustainable and open through the colder winter months. As a small, independent museum, we're grateful for every bit of support that helps us care for our collections and continue sharing the stories of our village.
You can buy your ticket in the museum shop or through our online shop at staithes-museum.org.uk. Online purchasers will receive their unique ticket number by email.

A beautiful painting, a generous local artist and a chance to support your village museum. Thank you, Ian, for this wonderful donation – and good luck to everyone entering the raffle!

A map of Bill Hinchley's childhood Staithes – where should it go?

What was Staithes like when you were growing up? For Bill Hinchley, the village was full of shops, cafés, pubs and small businesses, each with its own characters and stories. We've been working on a new map based on Bill's memories of the village, marking the places where these businesses once stood and bringing together the stories he's shared with us.

There was Mrs Crooks' fish and chip shop, where you might find yourself heading upstairs to take part in a beetle drive; Mr Brooke's paper shop, where Bill collected newspapers for his morning paper rounds before school; and Gladstones' grocer's, which caused quite a stir when it became the first shop in the village to open on a Sunday. The Co-op had a grocery department, a drapery, a butcher's and a hardware department, while the post office even had a little lending library. And these were just some of the many businesses that made up everyday life in Staithes.

The map is a way of preserving more than the locations of old buildings. It helps us picture a village where children ran errands for their parents, neighbours shopped on credit, fresh bread deliveries drew a crowd, and local businesses were woven into the rhythms of daily life. Bill's memories give us a glimpse of a Staithes that many residents will remember, and that younger generations might find surprising.



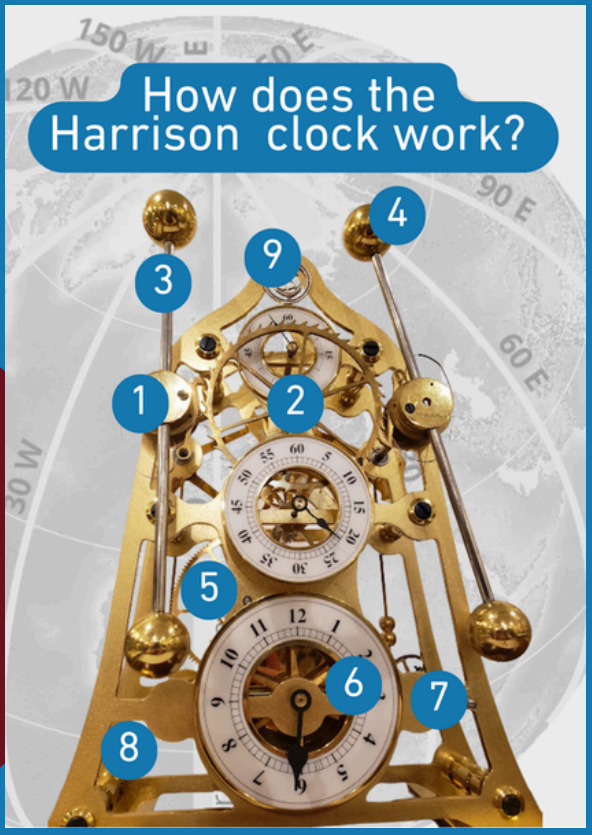
We're now working on turning the map into a large display board, with help from the North York Moors National Park, who are kindly supporting us with printing. But we have a question for you: where should we put it?

Could it go on the brick wall outside the museum, where people could explore it as they pass? Perhaps it could help screen off the office area, giving the team a little more privacy. We could even put it on the ground, as we do with some of our other large printed boards to help protect the collection. Or, once we've made a bit more room on the back stairs, that might be the perfect home for it.

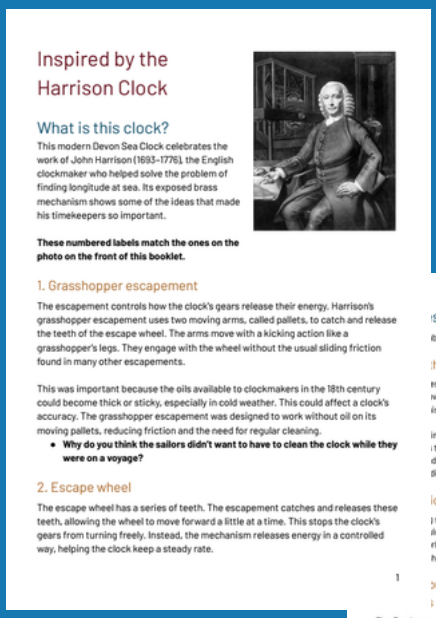
We'd love to hear your ideas about where the map would be most useful, and whether there are any businesses, buildings or memories of Staithes in the fifties you think we should know more about.

A different kind of museum label: the Harrison Clock

One of the projects I've been working on as part of my curatorial apprenticeship is a new educational booklet about the Devon Sea Clock in the museum.



Rather than a traditional museum label, which has to squeeze an awful lot of information into a very small space, this booklet takes its time! It explains the different parts of the clock, from its ingenious grasshopper escapement to its interlocking gears, and explores how John Harrison's ideas helped sailors find their way around the world. There are questions and little puzzles along the way, too, so you can have a go at working things out for yourself.


Inspired by the Harrison Clock

What is this clock?

This modern Devon Sea Clock celebrates the work of John Harrison (1693–1776), the English clockmaker who helped solve the problem of finding longitude at sea. Its exposed brass mechanism shows some of the ideas that made his timekeepers so important.

These numbered labels match the ones on the photo on the front of this booklet.

1. Grasshopper escapement

The escapement controls how the clock's gears release their energy. Harrison's grasshopper escapement uses two moving arms, called pallets, to catch and release the teeth of the escape wheel. The arms move with a kicking action like a grasshopper's legs. They engage with the wheel without the usual sliding friction found in many other escapements.

This was important because the oils available to clockmakers in the 18th century could become thick or sticky, especially in cold weather. This could affect a clock's accuracy. The grasshopper escapement was designed to work without oil on its moving pallets, reducing friction and the need for regular cleaning.

- **Why do you think the sailors didn't want to have to clean the clock while they were on a voyage?**

2. Escape wheel

The escape wheel has a series of teeth. The escapement catches and releases these teeth, allowing the wheel to move forward a little at a time. This stops the clock's gears from turning freely. Instead, the mechanism releases energy in a controlled way, helping the clock keep a steady rate.

1


s Longitude work?

bout finding your position on the globe using time

h turns once every 24 hours

s about 24 hours to complete one rotation. As it turns, the Sun ve across the sky. When the Sun reaches its highest point, it is local is happens at different times in different places.

in the East, and sets in the West, so places to the east reach solar noon to the west reach it later. This is why it's midday in Italy before it's don (technically, it's also midday in London 12 minutes before it's iff, but most countries today just agree to stick to one timezone).

ich provides a reference time

sail, a navigator could set an accurate clock to the time at Greenwich. ld continue to show Greenwich time during the voyage. The navigator rk out local solar time by observing the Sun. Comparing the two times hip's longitude.

our represents

The Earth rotates through 360 degrees in 24 hours.
360° ÷ 24 hours = 15° per hour.
This means that the difference between Greenwich time and local solar time can be used to calculate longitude.

- 15 minutes = 3.75° of longitude
- 30 minutes = 7.5° of longitude
- 1 hour = 15° of longitude
- 2 hours = 30° of longitude
- 4 hours = 60° of longitude

longitude

6

The idea is to make the clock more accessible by offering another way to explore it, with something visitors can pick up, work through at their own pace, and take home with them. It's also a reminder that interpretation doesn't have to mean putting another paragraph on the wall: sometimes a different format can open up an object's story to a whole new audience.

Free copies are available to take home from the museum, and you can also find the booklet on our website in the Education Resources section. Next time you visit, see if you can work out how a clock can do far more than tell the time!

Website update: A hub for Staithes history



Before:

A few headings along the top, not many subheadings. Not easy to find what you're looking for.



After:

More subheadings under each topic. All our pages link to each other, and the blog is all over the website, not just under one heading.

Since discussing it at the last trustees' meeting, we've been giving our website a bit of a spring (autumn) clean! Following recommendations from our Accreditation assessment, I've reorganised the pages, made our policies easier to find, and divided the site into two main sections: Explore Staithes, for local history and village stories, and Explore the Museum, for everything about the museum itself and how to get involved. Volunteer Wayne Fox has also taken some gorgeous photos for us to show off!

One of our main aims was to make the website easier to contribute to and find. Previously, most of our written content was tucked away in the blog, with relatively little information on the other pages. I've updated much of the information and added more links to blog articles throughout the site, so visitors can discover stories wherever they start exploring.

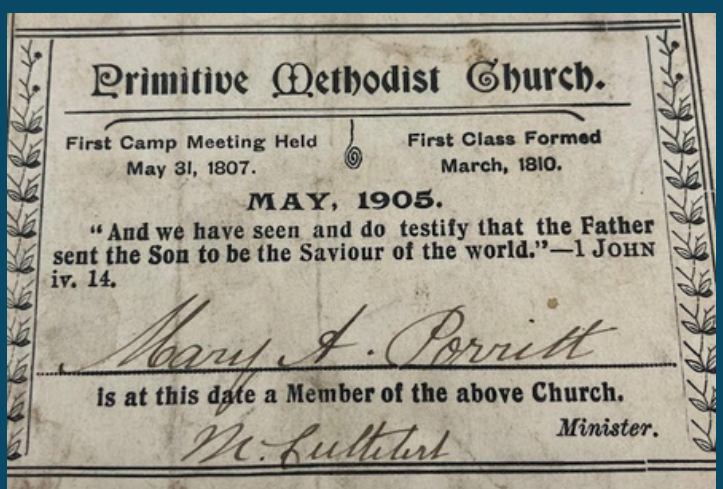
And here's the exciting bit: we want YOU to help us fill it with stories!

The trustees' vision is for our website to become a hub for Staithes history, bringing together the knowledge, memories and research of people who know and love the village. There are so many fascinating stories to tell, and we certainly can't uncover them all ourselves.





Myself, age 5, Aunt Geneva, Aunt Hilda



Primitive Methodist Church.

First Camp Meeting Held May 31, 1807.

First Class Formed March, 1810.

MAY, 1905.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."—1 JOHN iv. 14.

Mary A. Porritt

is at this date a Member of the above Church.

Minister.

Five ideas to get you started

Perhaps you've researched your family tree, remember the village as it used to be, or know something about Staithes that you've never seen written down. Here are just five subjects we'd love to explore further:

1. Growing up in Staithes – What was childhood like here 20, 50 or 80 years ago? Tell us about school, games, mischief and everyday life.
2. Your family history – Did your ancestors fish, farm, build boats, run businesses or do something unexpected? We'd love to hear their stories.
3. Village characters – Who was the person everyone knew? Share your memories of the characters, storytellers and local legends who made Staithes what it is.
4. How Staithes has changed – Remember when the village looked different, when particular buildings were still standing, or when everyday life followed a different rhythm? Photographs and personal memories are especially welcome.
5. Your favourite museum object – Have you researched a building, uncovered an old photograph, deciphered a historical document or stumbled across a mystery? We'd love to hear what you've found!

You don't have to be a writer!

We're actively looking for people to write guest articles for our blog, but you don't have to write it all yourself. You don't need to be a professional writer, a historian or a technical whizz. You don't even need to have a finished article ready.

You could send us a few paragraphs about a family memory, share some research you've already done, or simply get in touch with an idea you'd like to explore. We can help you shape your material into a blog post and get it published on the website.

Photographs, old documents and personal recollections are particularly welcome. And don't worry if you think your story is too small or ordinary to be interesting. The everyday details of village life are often the things that future generations most want to know about.

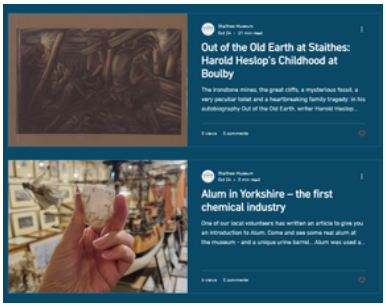
Have a story to share? Get in touch with Staithes Museum and tell us about it! The museum belongs to the community, and the more people who contribute their stories and research, the richer our picture of Staithes (and the more useful our website) becomes.

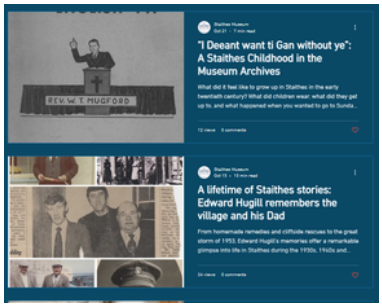
New on the blog: five more stories from Staithes

I've been adding some new articles to the Staithes Museum blog myself this month, and they cover quite a range of subjects – from a very peculiar toilet to the challenge of finding your way across the world by sea!

First up, Stephen May has written an introduction to Yorkshire's alum industry, explaining how this rather remarkable substance was used in everything from dyeing cloth to making candles. We've even got real alum and a very unusual urine barrel here at the museum, so you can find out more when you visit!

Two of the articles came from books in the museum archives that I've been reading on my bus journeys home. Harold Heslop's Out of the Old Earth describes his childhood at Boulby, with its ironstone mines, towering cliffs, mysterious fossil and heartbreaking family tragedy. Meanwhile, Reverend W. T. Mugford's From an English Pit to an American Pulpit gives us a glimpse of growing up in Staithes in the early twentieth century. His memories include childhood clothes, Sunday School and the small details that make the past feel wonderfully real.





Another article grew out of my interview with Edward Hugill, whose memories of Staithes and his dad take us back to village life in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the great storm of 1953. From homemade remedies to rescues on the cliffs, his recollections are a reminder of just how much local history can be preserved by listening to the people who remember it.

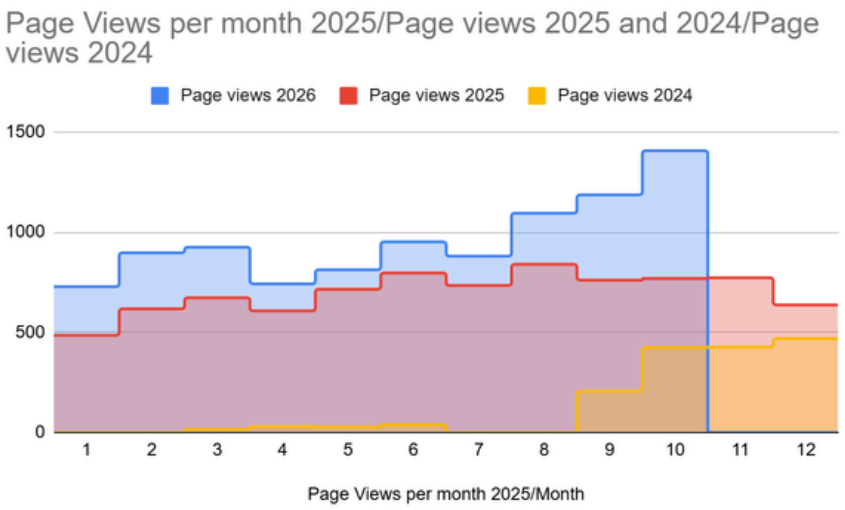
Finally, if you've ever wondered how sailors could work out where they were in the middle of the sea, our article about the Devon Sea Clock explains how this fascinating mechanism connects to John Harrison's quest to solve one of the great problems of navigation. It's a chance to learn more about an object you can see for yourself in the museum.

You can find all five articles on the Staithes Museum blog. They're well worth a read if you're interested in local history, village life, industrial heritage or the stories behind the objects in our collection.

How’s the website doing, anyway?

It's a question worth asking! We've been adding quite a few new pages, stories, photographs and resources to the museum website this autumn, but is anyone actually looking at them?

The answer, encouragingly, is yes!



Comparing the first ten months of 2026 with the same period in 2025, our website has seen:

- 9,620 page views, up from 6,992 – an increase of 38%.
- 6,007 visits, up from 3,687 – an increase of 63%.
- October was our busiest month yet, with 1,406 page views. That's an 83% increase on October last year!

In fact, every single month this year has beaten the corresponding month in 2025 for page views. And it's not just people popping in to check our opening times. They're reading our stories, too.

Our most popular new articles this year include Headless Ghosts and Hob Hole Cures, about a Victorian visitor to Staithes; the story of Marie Lowden, the Toffee Crackle Lady; our poetry competition; and a look at the curious relationship between Methodism and superstition in 1970s Staithes (based on David Clark’s book between Pulpit and Pew).

It's particularly pleasing to see these local history stories finding an audience. The website is becoming more than just a place to find practical information about visiting the museum – it's an increasingly useful resource for discovering Staithes and its people, wherever you happen to be.

There's still plenty of room to grow. Visitors are currently looking at slightly fewer pages per visit than they were last year, so we'd love to encourage people to explore a little further once they've arrived.

But the overall direction is very encouraging. More stories, more pages, more visitors, and more people discovering what makes Staithes such an extraordinary place.
If you haven't visited the website recently, there's quite a lot to discover!

And then there's Facebook...



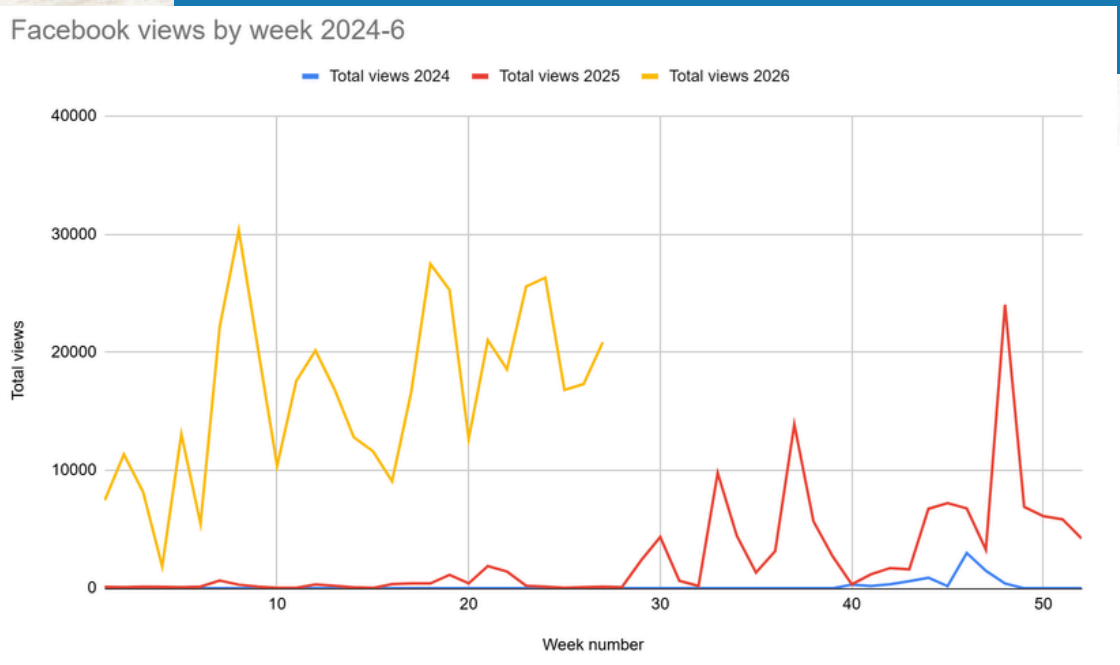
On the previous page, I seemed rather pleased with our 9,620 website page views. But wait until you see our social media report. Goodness.

Between January and October this year, our Facebook posts clocked up 758,000 views, compared with 63,000 in the same period last year. We've had 12,639 interactions – likes, comments, shares and other activity – compared with just 1,081 last year. We've also gained 543 new Facebook followers, against 83 in the same ten months of 2025.

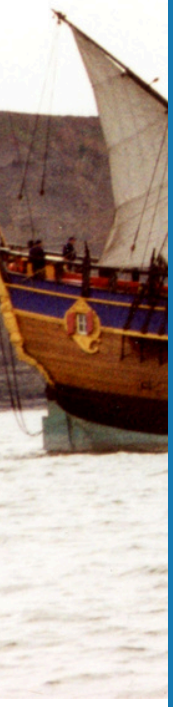
Instagram is growing too, with 87,000 views and 2,417 interactions, compared with 5,500 views and 199 interactions last year.

All told, that's nearly 845,000 social media views and more than 15,000 interactions across the two platforms.

So perhaps those website figures aren't quite as impressive as I thought!







But actually, the two things do very different jobs, and we wouldn't want to lose either of them.

Our website is where people can find out about visiting, explore our collections and read our longer stories. It's also where people can actually buy things from the online shop or make a donation. Those are important things, and social media can't do the same job.

Facebook, on the other hand, is where we have conversations. It's where local people share memories, recognise faces in old photographs, correct our mistakes, contribute their own knowledge and tell us stories we might never otherwise have heard. It's our village noticeboard, history discussion group and occasional source of very useful gossip, all rolled into one.

And it's not just numbers for the sake of numbers. One of our most-viewed posts this year, about moving a second Cod and Lobster pub sign into the screening room, reached more than 7,000 accounts. A post about our Phil the fossil's offer of local fossil expertise got 11,000 These are the sorts of things that get people talking!

So the website and social media aren't really competitors. One gives people somewhere to visit, shop and donate; the other helps us keep in touch with the people who care about Staithes and its history.

We'll be keeping both busy!

Holly and the munitions girls

What can we learn from the women who helped win the First World War?

This year, we've been delighted to welcome Holly to Staithes Museum for work experience as she explores how to turn her History degree into a career. She's been researching the Staithes munition girls – local women who worked at Skinningrove Iron Works during the First World War – uncovering the people behind the history, from where they lived to how they spent their spare time. In this article, Holly shares some of her research journey, the discoveries she's made, and why these remarkable women deserve to be remembered. We're looking forward to sharing the finished project with you in November!





As a recent History graduate, I am often asked what my plans are to turn history into a career. Doing work experience here at Staithes Museum has enabled me to explore paths in this sector that have always interested me, such as archiving and curating. Most significantly, it has allowed me to understand the importance of preserving and celebrating local histories.

While being here I have been researching local first world war histories, specifically those of the Staithes munition girls who worked at Skinningrove Iron Works. The history and recognition of the munitionettes nationally is often not a topic that is explored in broader WW1 narratives and so researching them, especially those from the local area has been such a rewarding project. It has been so fascinating to look at who the women were, where in the village they lived, what other professions they had, and what they did in their spare time when they weren't completing life-altering work. These women are exceptional local figures and it has also been amazing to hear how well they are remembered within their families on the museum's social media.

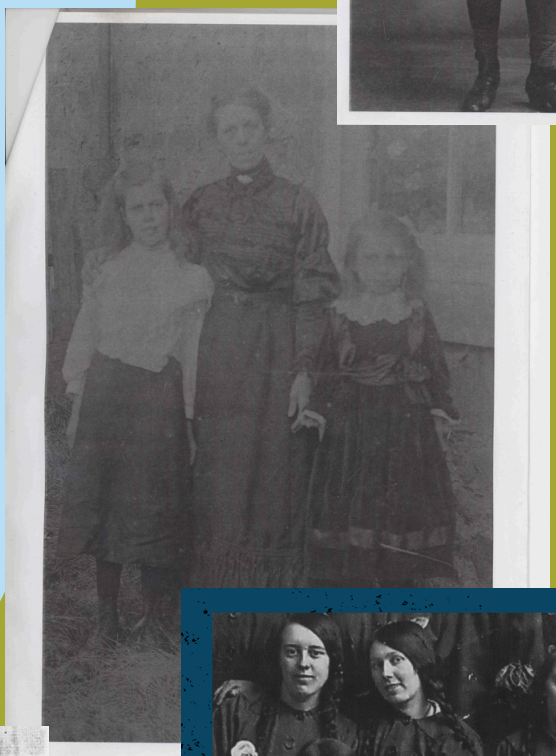
In doing research for this project, I explored many resources, travelling to the Land of Iron Museum in Skinningrove in order to collect any other information regarding the factory and conditions for the women of Staithes during this period and why this location was so important to the war effort on the coast. I had also been corresponding with the Cleveland's Industrial and Archeological Society, who provided me with so many helpful articles on the subject of industry and munitions in the area during the war.

I went for a day to Whitby Museum, which not only aided me in understanding what Staithes looked like in the early 20th century through their catalogue of photos but also taught me invaluable information for future work with archiving and collections. All of these sources were incredibly helpful and appreciated, they were so accommodating and supplied me with so much information to expand my research.

I am hoping by the time my project is ready to be presented to you in November, you love it and become as enthralled in the history of the Staithes munition girls as much as I have become and if you have any other stories about them that you wish to share, please reach out!











The Women Who Made Staithes

Shipowners, businesswomen, artists, wartime workers and seaside heroines: Staithes has some remarkable women's stories to tell!

We've been chosen as a cause in the Co-op Local Community Fund, and we're using the opportunity to research and share more stories of the women who helped shape our village. We already have some wonderful women's stories at the museum; this project gives us the chance to explore a particular theme in greater depth.

Last month, we shared a blog post about Marie Lowden, and this month we're researching the munitionettes – young women who took on dangerous industrial work during the First World War, including at Skinningrove.

There's no shortage of fascinating characters! Alice Brown owned a 154-ton sailing ship in 1844, while Ann Moore inherited a fish-curing business employing more than 90 people in 1837. Mary "Mollie" Verrill, meanwhile, stood in freezing seawater for three and a half hours during the 1900 wreck of the S.S. Staithes, helping to save its crew.

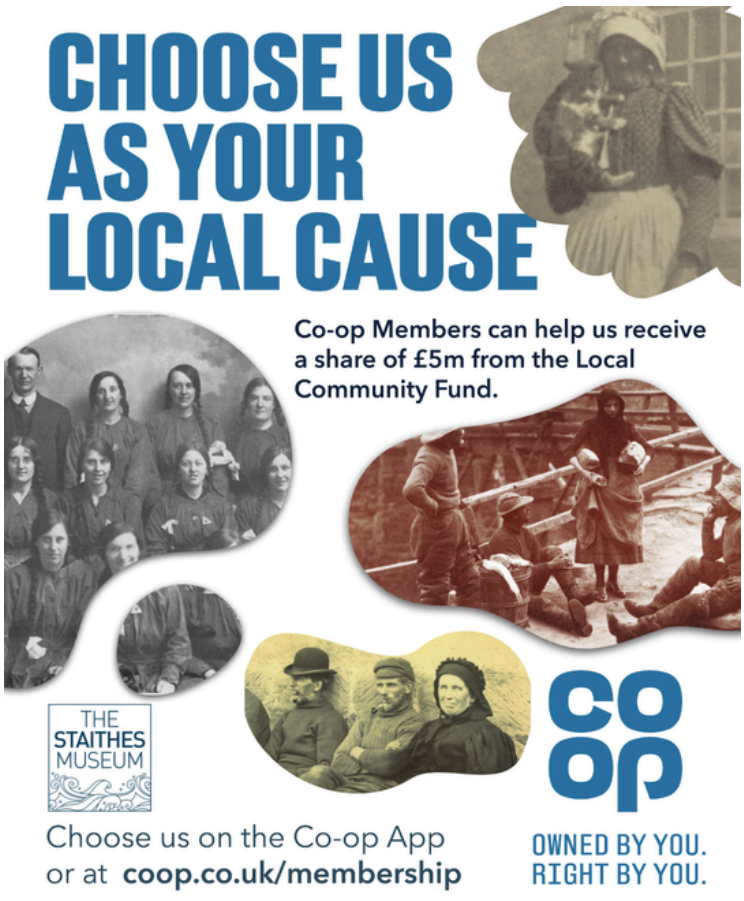
We'll be digging into the archives to discover more stories like these.

Help us uncover more stories!

You can support this project through the Co-op Local Community Fund. If you're a Co-op member:

1. *Open the Co-op app and go to the Wallet tab.*
2. *Find the section for supporting your local community and choosing a cause.*
3. *Search for Staithes Museum and Heritage Trust and select us as your cause.*

Alternatively, sign in to your membership account online via the Co-op website. When you shop with Co-op and collect community stamps, you can direct your support towards our project. Every member who chooses us helps us work towards sharing more of Staithes' fascinating history!



Charlie's top ten tips: How to survive work experience at Staithes Museum

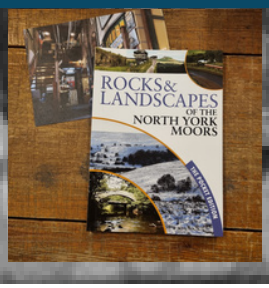
Over the past eight weeks, we've had Charlie with us on a work experience placement through the Jobcentre. He's done a brilliant job, learning how to open and close the museum, welcome visitors, use the till and take responsibility for the day-to-day running of the shop.

In fact, Charlie's cashing-up has been perfect five weeks in a row. That's five weeks of balancing the books without a single mistake – something plenty of people would be very pleased with!

Now that his work experience placement has officially finished, we're delighted that Charlie has agreed to carry on volunteering with us. It's been a real pleasure having him on the team, and a great example of how work experience can benefit everyone involved.

For Charlie, it's been a chance to build confidence, practise communication and customer service, learn practical workplace skills and become part of the local community. For the museum, it's meant having an extra pair of capable hands, someone reliable and responsible who can take on useful work and is happy to learn new things.

So, if you're thinking about doing work experience yourself, who better to ask for advice than someone who's just done it? Here are Charlie's top ten tips for surviving a placement at Staithes Museum.









Charlie's top ten tips

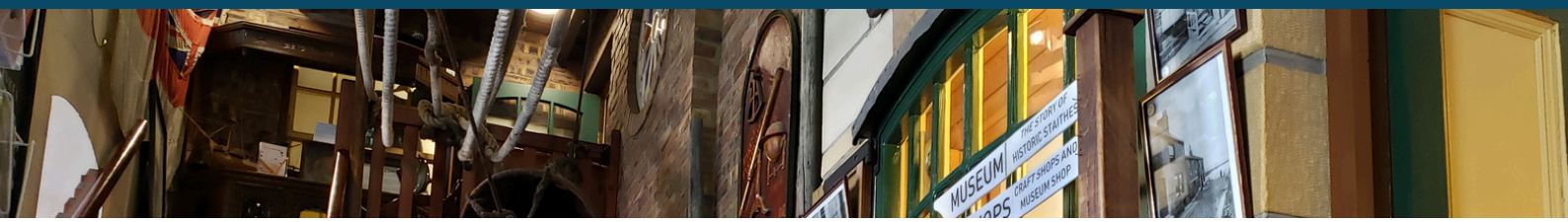
1. Drink lots of caffeinated drinks. Tea, coffee and energy drinks.
2. Don't put the flag up upside down. People will come in asking if you're in distress.
3. Beware of members of the public turning off the dehydrator in the Bill Hinchley Room. You have been warned.
4. Towards the end of the day, turn off the Bill Hinchley TV when there's nobody in there, so you can close on time.
5. Be confident and outgoing. You'll meet all sorts of people.
6. Use your initiative. There's always something useful to do if you know where to look.
7. Communication is important. You're part of a team, after all.
8. Bring extra layers. It gets cold!
9. If it's nearly closing time and people are still looking around upstairs, get the door keys and take them upstairs ready to lock up. Make sure to jingle them loudly.
10. Bring a form of entertainment. There will be days when there aren't many visitors and there's nothing more to do.

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Thank you, Charlie, for all your hard work, good humour and excellent cashing-up. We're very glad you're staying on, and we look forward to having you as part of the museum team for a while longer.

And if you (the reader) are considering work experience, remember: you don't have to know everything on day one. Being willing to learn, taking responsibility and getting stuck in can make a real difference – both to you and to the organisation giving you an opportunity. If you are looking for retail experience like Charlie, or curating experience like Holly, we'd love to sort out a placement for you.



A little help with my university portfolio!

I'm putting together my university portfolio for this semester, documenting some of the projects I've been working on at Staithes Museum. Last time, my marker challenged me to demonstrate the impact of my work, rather than simply listing what I've produced.

I think some of the most meaningful impact is best measured through individual experiences and stories, rather than visitor numbers and statistics. So I'd love to hear from anyone who has encountered any of the following projects:

- ***Our North York Moors National Park film*** *– the new film introducing the museum and making it more accessible to people who might not be able to visit in person.*
- ***The object poetry competition*** *– inviting people to write poems inspired by museum objects, with the winning entries displayed alongside the objects themselves.*
- ***Objects Speak*** *– our activity booklet encouraging visitors to engage with the collection and imagine the stories objects could tell.*
- ***Our Harrison clock booklet*** *– exploring the history of the clock through an accessible, object-based booklet.*
- ***Our blogs and museum newsletter*** *– sharing stories from the archives, objects and people of Staithes, including some of the lesser-known histories of the village.*
- ***The Staithes munitions girls project*** *– researching the women from our area who worked in munitions during the First World War, helping to bring their stories back into local history.*
- ***Achieving museum accreditation*** *– the work behind securing official Arts Council England accreditation for Staithes Museum, and what this means for the museum, its collections and its future.*

Has any of this made a difference to you? Have you discovered something you didn't know, seen an object differently, been inspired to write something, found the museum more accessible, or enjoyed learning about a particular piece of Staithes history?

I'd be enormously grateful if you could send me an email or leave a message describing your experience - an actual impact my work has had . A couple of sentences is plenty, and it doesn't need to be formal.

I'm not fishing for compliments! Honest, specific examples of what difference these projects have made are much more useful to my portfolio than just feedback that you liked it. .

I'm particularly interested in hearing about the effect these specific projects have had on people who have used or encountered them. Your experiences will help me demonstrate the real-world impact of my work for my university assessment.

Thank you for helping me with my homework!

