

## **Chard Museum Report November 2016**

### **Area West**

Vince Lean, the new Chairman of the museum, has found the last year challenging, but is optimistic about the future, the report below is a highlight of issues raised by Vince. The museum has been open at its present premises, Godworthy House, since 1970, its aims are two-fold: -

- I. To serve the local community by keeping a record of the social history of the town & its people
  - II. To conserve, store & where possible display local artefacts, documents & photographs relating to the town
- It is a totally manned by volunteers & opens to the public from Easter till the end of October for just over 1000 hrs. It is a registered charity, managed by a committee of trustees & has an overall membership of around 220 people
  - Because of the overheads, such as rent & general running costs, an entry fee of £4 per adult is charged; under 16's are free. During 2015 the museum received a total of 1344 visitors (made up of 1162 adults & 182 children). This figure remains surprisingly stable season after season, though it can fluctuate during a poor summer
  - The museum also actively encourages visit from local schools & community groups. During the last year visits were made by Manor Court, Redstart & Avishayes Primary schools & Chard School. In addition, museum staff made visits to the Laurel's Centre with an exhibition of photographs of the town.
  - In a new venture with schools, two members of the museum spent the day at Merriott, where the local school had twinned with Haselbury School. The theme of the day was "up, up & away", and the museum spent an enjoyable time talking to the children about Stringfellow, one of the Victorian pioneers of flight, from Chard.
  - The museum works closely with the Town Team, & in tandem with the Chard festival week in July, held a free open day to the towns' people. This was followed by another free event, a Heritage Craft day in September. Between the two events the museum attracted close to 800 visitors from the town & further boosted the museum's visibility
  - Whilst the museum, at present, is a stable entity, there are concerns about the future. Whilst the income from visitors, friends & other income streams covers the rental of the buildings (£11000), for the first time this year, they have had, to pay 10% business rates which amounted to £1075. Should this rise in the future (full business rate could equate to £10741 per year), the museum would seriously have to consider its viability
  - The other major concern is the renewal of the lease in 2018/19. Until the museum know whether their future lies in Godworthy House it's very difficult to plan for the future & develop the museum. If the museum is to move, adequate notice will need to be given – this will be to help the museum raise money via outside funding