

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 26

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Latest News of the Museum

Winter Work Progress - new displays

Our winter work is coming along with thanks to the continued support and efforts of the Museum winter work team. The Hayloft floor has been thoroughly washed and cleaned and now has a protective coat of wood oil, helping to preserve it for future use.

New carpet has also been laid on the top step outside the office door and the Hayloft door, improving both safety and appearance.

We are especially grateful to a member of the Men's Shed who has built a new display box for the Old School photographs. This replaces the broken boxes and makes it much easier for visitors to view and enjoy these important pieces of our local history.

Another Men's Shed member and volunteer of the museum has replaced the framework that houses the open sign on the gate post.

The Stables have also seen a change in layout. The railway cabinet has been repositioned just inside on the left as visitors enter, now complemented by the newly reframed viaduct blueprint above. This move has allowed the weights and measures cabinet to be relocated to the end of the gallery, helping to refresh the overall flow of the space.



Diary Dates February 2026

Thursday 19th February 2026

Museum Coffee Morning

10.15 - 12.15 at the Axis Centre, Markets Street, (behind the cinema)

Friday 6th February 2026

Rotary Club Fish & Chip Quiz

(Museum has a team attending to support this charity.)

Friday 13th February 2026

Exmouth in Bloom Quiz Night

at the GWSA 7pm (Museum has a team attending to support this charity)

Just before we closed for the end of season, we were delighted to receive a donation of a large model of HMS Exmouth.

The model, built by one of our own volunteers, will be newly displayed in the former Railway display cabinet, bringing it together with the other HMS Exmouth artefacts already on display nearby, and helping to tell a more complete story of the ship. The Docks and Ferry has moved to the other end of the Stable gallery to where in 2025 we had the Nelson and Trafalgar display.

Quiz nights & Donation Tin

The monthly quiz nights that Pete Hayes has been running at The Wings Bar throughout the season have raised a fantastic £375 for the museum fund.

A big thank you to Pete for putting together the questions each month and for running the quizzes on the night – it's very much appreciated !

The museum is also very grateful to The **Wings Bar**, not only for the use of the bar but also for donating the prize each month for the winning team. On most occasions, the winning team kindly donated their prize to the museum to be used as a raffle prize at events throughout the season.

The museum is incredibly grateful to the many local businesses and community groups who support us by keeping donation tins on their counters. A special shout-out goes to the **Exmouth Arms** on the corner of Sheppards Row, who are also proud members of the Sheppards Row Community Association. The most recent donation tin emptied there contained a fantastic £122.82, taking the total raised in less than six months to over £500. This is an amazing achievement and a real example of community spirit in action. A huge thank you to everyone at the Exmouth Arms, and to their customers, for their continued support and generosity.

WWII Bomb

On Wednesday 14 January 2026, a vessel dredging the marina uncovered an unexploded bomb. This discovery led to a mass evacuation, which also affected several museum volunteers, some of whom were required to leave their homes for one or two nights.

In the Museum Cottage Gallery, a map of the town marks the spot where the bomb fell more than 80 years ago.

The device was safely assessed by specialists. X-ray equipment was used to identify the type of fuse in the explosive. Once this had been established, the 250 kg bomb was carefully removed from the dredger and transported out to sea. It was placed on the seabed at a depth of approximately 17 metres and safely detonated.



The Champion Oak Tree in Phear Park

We have the most wonderful selection of mature trees in our centrally placed Phear Park, which as many people would know that it was originally the private park gifted to the town by the Phear family who lived at Marpool Hall in 1910.

Although there are well over 300 trees in the park, a number of which are Oak trees, such as English Oak, Turkey Oak, Holm Oak, Hungarian Oak and Red Oak. But one of them is known as a Lucombe Oak, which because of its grandness, was given the title of a Champion Tree.

This was due to it being one of the largest of its type ever recorded in the UK, with a girth of 8.5m and a height of 30m and

is believed to be between 200 & 300 yrs old. But what many people would be unaware of is that this Lucombe Oak tree was born and bred just 10 miles away in Exeter by an important nurseryman by the name of William Lucombe.

He was originally the head gardener for a Mr. Thomas Bell at Mamhead in 1720. William Lucombe eventually founded his own nursery in Alphington where he "bred" this Oak, which was across between a



Turkey Oak and a Cork Oak. This oak had different features, such as being semi evergreen and successfully raised at a nursery in 1762. It continued as Lucombe Nursery under his son John Lucombe for some years, but eventually the Nursery was taken over by a Pince family in 1824 and then sold to the city of Exeter 1912, and now known as "Pinces Gardens" where it became a public park with lots of amenities for the local people.

"From little Acorns do mighty Oaks grow"

A leaflet "The Trees of Phear Park" can be obtained from the library and the Champion Tree is no. 1 on the map.

Photo is the property of Kevin Twemlow who wrote this article for the Newsletter
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