

*Amesbury History Centre CIO*

*Where History Begins*



# Amesbury History Centre Business Plan

2020 - 2025

[www.amesburyhistorycentre.org.uk](http://www.amesburyhistorycentre.org.uk)

4 Church Street, Amesbury, Wiltshire, SP4 7EU

Registered charity 1176636

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# Introduction

The Amesbury History Centre evolved from an original concept, formed in 2011 by a local group of enthusiastic people to promote, preserve and celebrate the local history of Amesbury and surrounding areas, with history ranging from the Ice Age right up to the present day.

The Amesbury History Centre CIO was awarded charitable status in 2018 and is currently in the process of receiving accreditation to The Arts Council.

The Amesbury History Centre will run an educational, interactive and modern program which aims to attract people of all ages from the local areas and become destination point for tourists.

This business plan demonstrates that the Amesbury History Centre can be financially sustainable and generate income, whilst keeping the core exhibition space open to the public for free. This will be achieved by, but not limited to, provision of a coffee shop and the hiring of space for various events.

The Amesbury History Centre will use local and online marketing, along with a website and social media channels, to attract people to the History Centre and subsequently into Amesbury Town Centre.





# Amesbury History

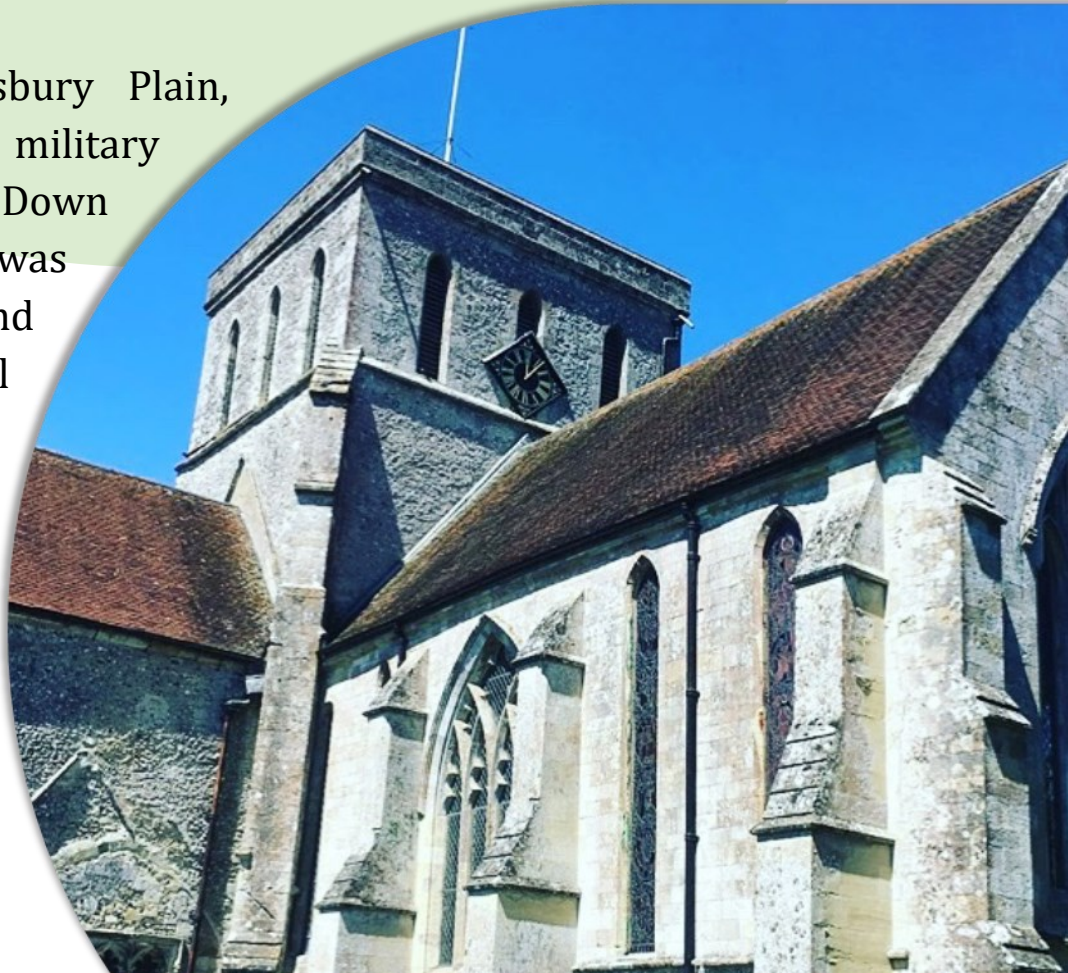
Amesbury may not impress us with a sense of history in the way that other, much newer towns do. And yet this small Wiltshire town, hidden in the valley of the Avon, can trace a clear record of human activity and settlement going back to before the formation of the British Isles.

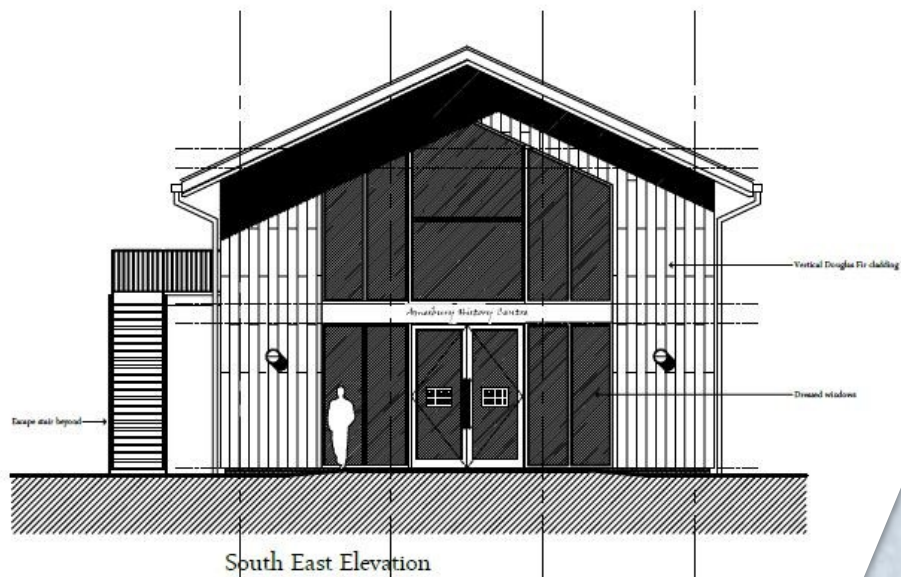
Recent discoveries at Blick Mead, near Vespasian's Camp, make it clear that man has lived at Amesbury for more than 8000 years. The Mesolithic base camp, identified by Open University staff and students, makes Amesbury the oldest continuously occupied place in Britain

Amesbury is ten miles north of Salisbury and home to the famous world heritage site Stonehenge, which has 1.5 million visitors annually.

Amesbury's parish church, St Mary and St Melor, is a former Benedictine Abbey and stands 100 yards from the Amesbury History Centre. The 1000-year-old church is also believed to be the site of the burial of Queen Eleanor of Provence, wife of King Henry III.

Surrounded by Salisbury Plain, Amesbury has a rich military history. Boscombe Down airfield in Amesbury was home to UK Test and Evaluation and is still home to the Empire Test Pilot School.





# The Vision

## MISSION

Amesbury History Centre aims to tell the story of historic Amesbury in an educational, interactive, modern and professional setting.

## VISION

The History Centre will be a museum that has a unique visitor experience and engages all ages with a mix of great story telling and interactive elements.

The History Centre will be a focal point for tourists and coach tours visiting the area.

The History Centre will engage with the local population by regularly hosting events and lectures.

A café within the History Centre will generate income.



# Objectives

The objectives are targets to enable the Amesbury History Centre to realise their vision:

- Deliver a high-quality visitor experience.
- Establish sustainable funding through donations and sales.
- Use modern marketing techniques to keep visitor numbers high.
- Work with local business to increase visitor numbers in Amesbury.
- Establish an education package to be utilised by local schools.
- Train an enthusiastic group of volunteers.
- Run a carbon-neutral building.





# Deliver a high-quality visitor experience

The History Centre will use a mixture of text, video and interactive elements to create a great storytelling experience. Using the vast local knowledge of the history of Amesbury and the skills of many of the members, the modern displays will be both engaging and informative.

The Amesbury History Centre has a vast collection of items that were discovered in the local area including ten-thousand year-old flints, a replica Mesolithic boat and Roman pots. Along with text and video, these tell a fascinating story. Large display boards will enable visitors to walk through time.

Interactive elements have been created, such as a 360° VR documentary of a local archaeology dig which is presented by Professor David Jacques. Using virtual reality will put visitors in the middle of archaeological excavation and make them feel like they were there.

Visitors with young families will be catered for with activities that all the family can enjoy.

A café space has been designed into the plan to enable people to stay, socialise and study.







## Sustainable funding through donations and sales

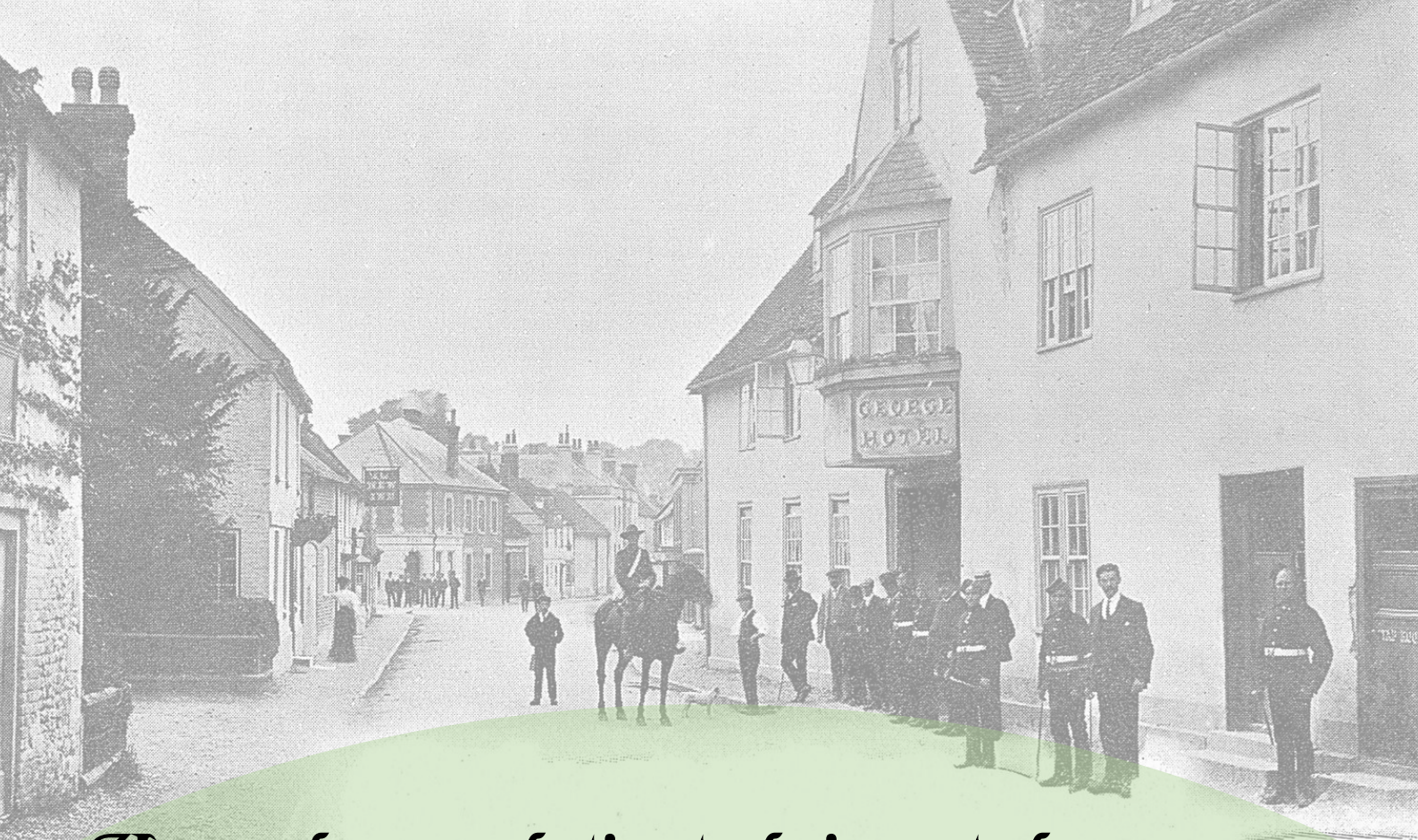
There will be no fixed entry fee for entry to the History Centre exhibition space. A free attraction will encourage as many visitors as possible, especially from tour groups.

Donations to the Amesbury History Centre will be encouraged using well-placed donation boxes as well as donation card machines.

A source of income will be a café area within the History Centre. Light food and drink will be supplied by a local business and will be served by History Centre volunteers. When the History Centre is closed in the evenings, the ample café space will be available to hire for local community groups and private functions at a competitive rate.

A small gift shop area will sell books on local history as well as high-quality, locally-made souvenirs.





## ***Use modern marketing techniques to keep visitor numbers high***

The Amesbury History Centre will be marketed both locally and nationally.

The local press will be used to provide advertising for exhibitions or events and cover stories of the opening to encourage visitor numbers. Printed leaflets will be distributed to a larger area; including other museums, pubs, restaurants, shopping centres and service stations.

Nationally, the Amesbury History Centre social media page and website will use video storytelling and interactive elements to stand out and encourage engagement and higher visitor numbers. The website will have a choice of multiple languages, including Mandarin Chinese.



# Work with local business to increase visitor numbers in Amesbury

Amesbury Town Council and local businesses are very proactive about promoting visitors to Amesbury. The Stonehenge Chamber of Trade has created a website, [www.visitamesbury.org](http://www.visitamesbury.org), and the Amesbury History Centre is a significant contributor on this site. This incentive will work to encourage tourism and trade into the town centre, alongside partners including Visit Wiltshire and English Heritage.



[WWW.VISITAMESBURY.ORG](http://WWW.VISITAMESBURY.ORG)





## **Establish an education package that can be utilised by local schools**

The Amesbury History Centre's primary purpose is to educate, and teaching local schools plays a significant part in the vision.

By creating an educational session that can be delivered to visiting schools, future generations can be inspired to take a more active role in learning about history. The session will last approximately two hours and will involve elements of listening to local historians, watching our VR documentaries and interactive group activities.

A monthly young Archelogy club will be established and delivered by the History Centre's skilled volunteers.





A word cloud centered around the words "Volunteering" and "Volunteer". The words are in various colors and sizes, representing different aspects of volunteering. The background is a light green and yellow gradient.

Words included in the cloud:

- Volunteering
- Volunteer
- difference
- initiative
- thank
- worth
- activity
- treasures
- life
- generous
- inspire
- hope
- development
- build
- feeling
- happy
- projects
- respect
- promote
- human
- united
- forward
- good
- available
- quality
- altruistic
- talent
- tender
- improve
- offer
- love
- grateful
- however
- support
- local
- positive
- motivate
- involved
- social
- community
- enjoy
- time
- rewarding
- skill
- give
- service
- you
- helping
- socialising
- caring
- impact





## ***Run a carbon-neutral building that improves the environment in the local area***

Amesbury History Centre have the perfect opportunity to create a carbon-neutral museum. Green energy suppliers will be contracted; the site will have space allocated for a bicycle park and electric vehicle charging point; and the building will be surrounded with plants and trees. Waste from the History Centre will be recycled where possible. Local wildlife organisations will be consulted to encourage wildlife onto the site.

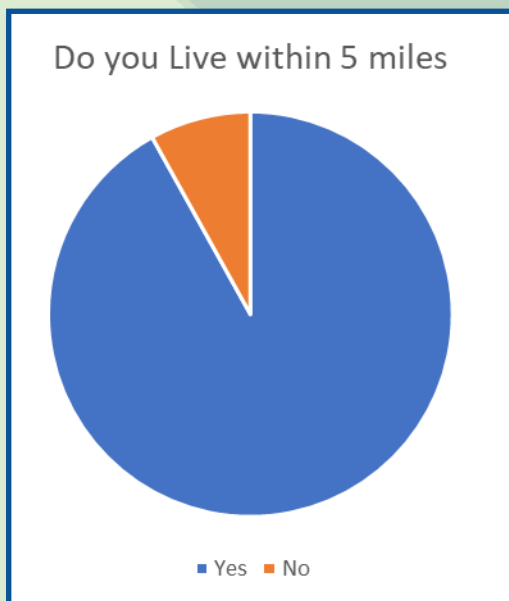
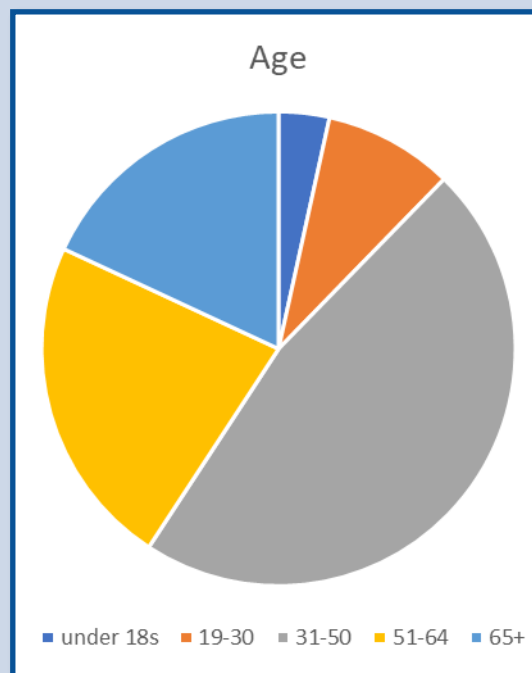
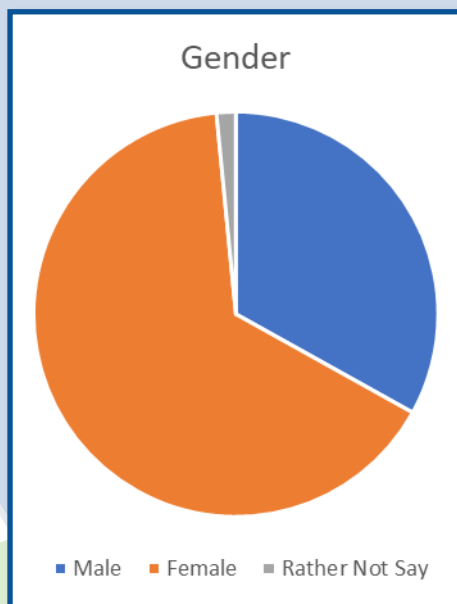




# Our Survey

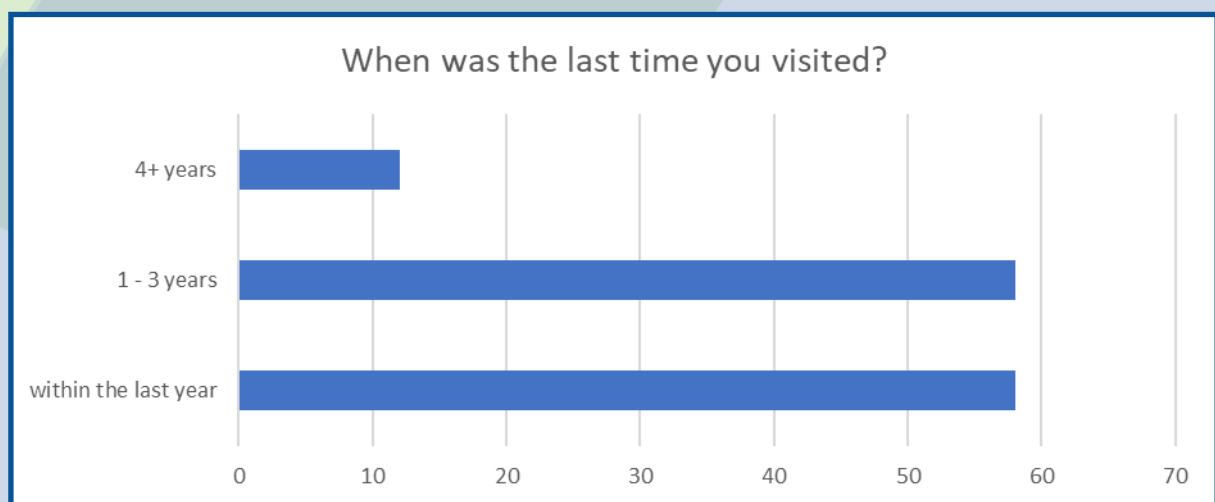
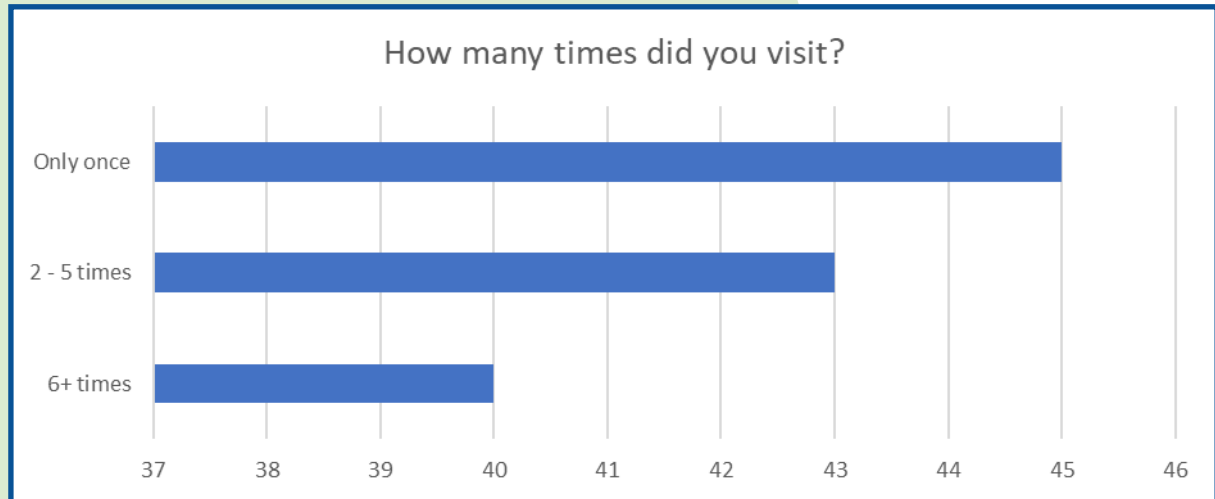
A questionnaire was put to the public via the Amesbury History Centre website for one month to encourage people to answer a few questions about their thoughts on the new History Centre. Survey results were published on the History Centre's social media pages and in local press. Below are the results of this survey.

The survey participants mostly live within five miles of Amesbury and span a wide age range. A full breakdown of the survey demographic is illustrated below:

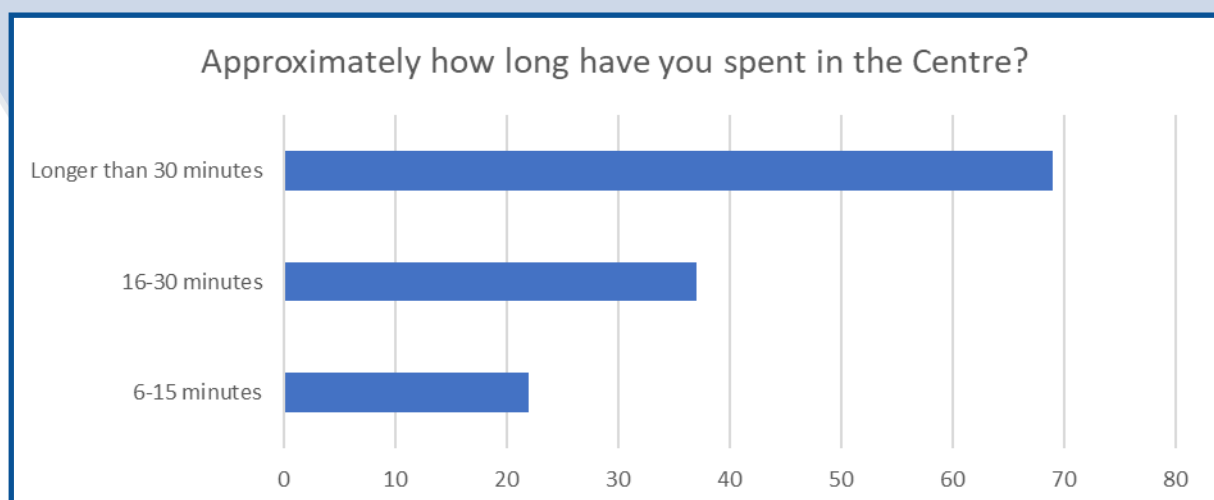




Despite most survey respondents living in proximity to Amesbury, 35% had only visited the History Centre once. Additionally, 69% of respondents had visited the centre less than six times over an eight year period. To improve on this in the future and increase return visits, Amesbury History Centre will be adding special exhibitions, and hosting lectures and other events.

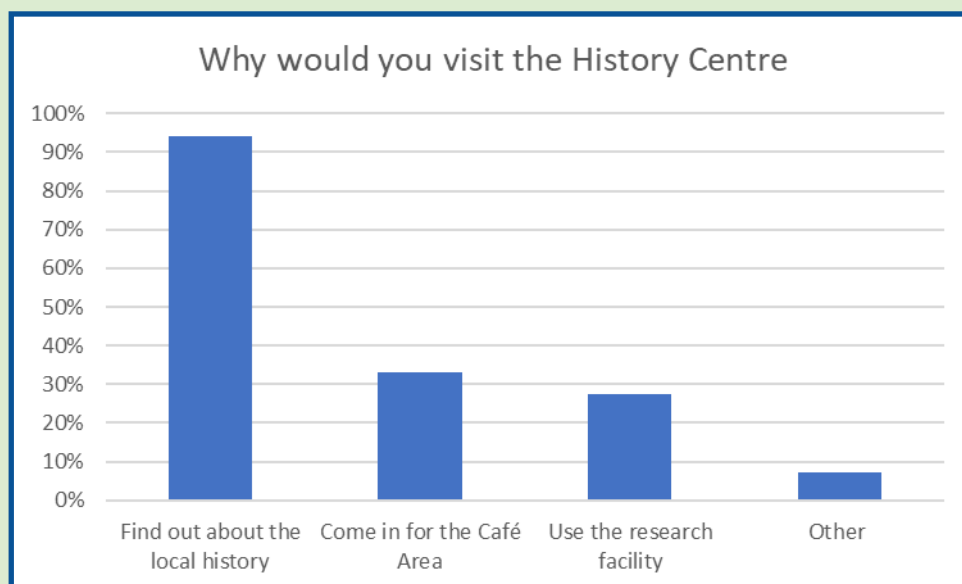
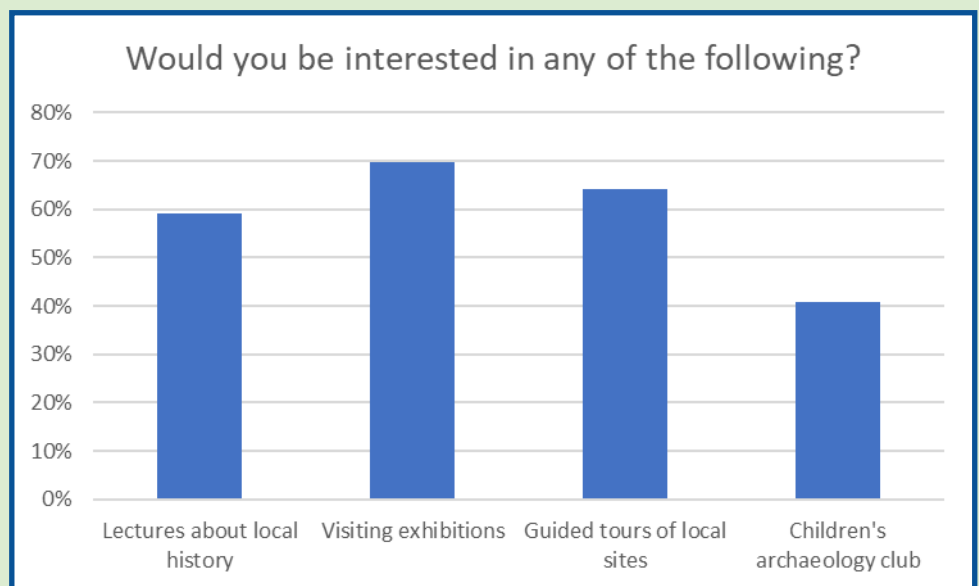
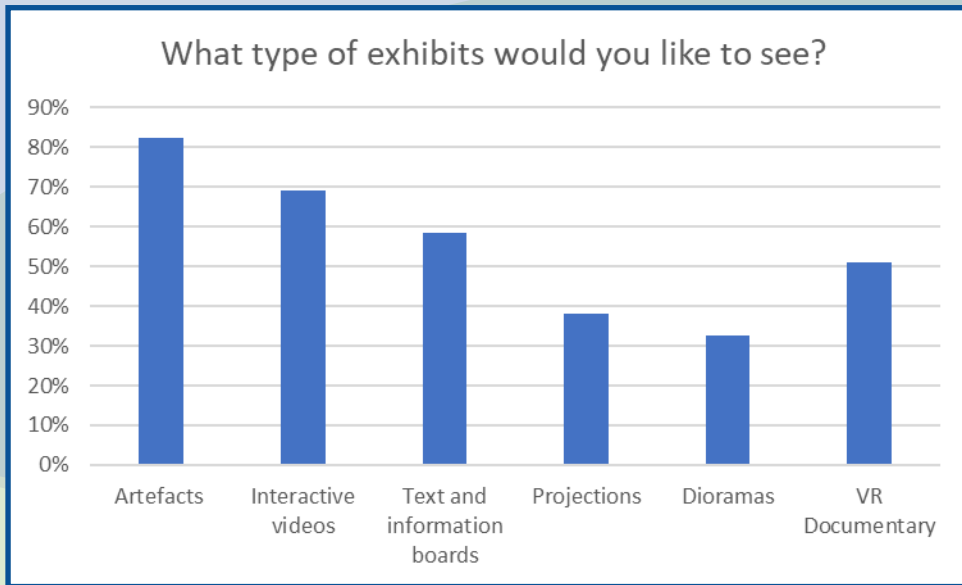


Most visitors to the History Centre spent more than half an hour in the exhibition space, and visitors will be encouraged to stay longer in the future by having a café and shop, as well as a small research facility.





Further questions in the survey asked respondents what they would like to see in the new History Centre, which has informed plans for the centre, both in terms of exhibition space and other activities on offer.



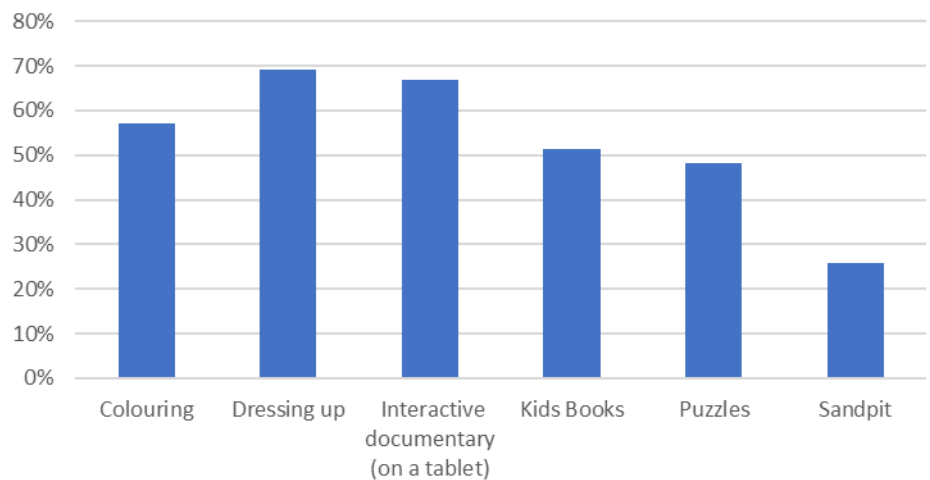


### How in depth should the exhibits be?



- Part text and part videos/audio
- Key facts and figures (with optional extra reading in a study area)
- The complete story (Lots of text)

### What should the "Kids Corner" Include?



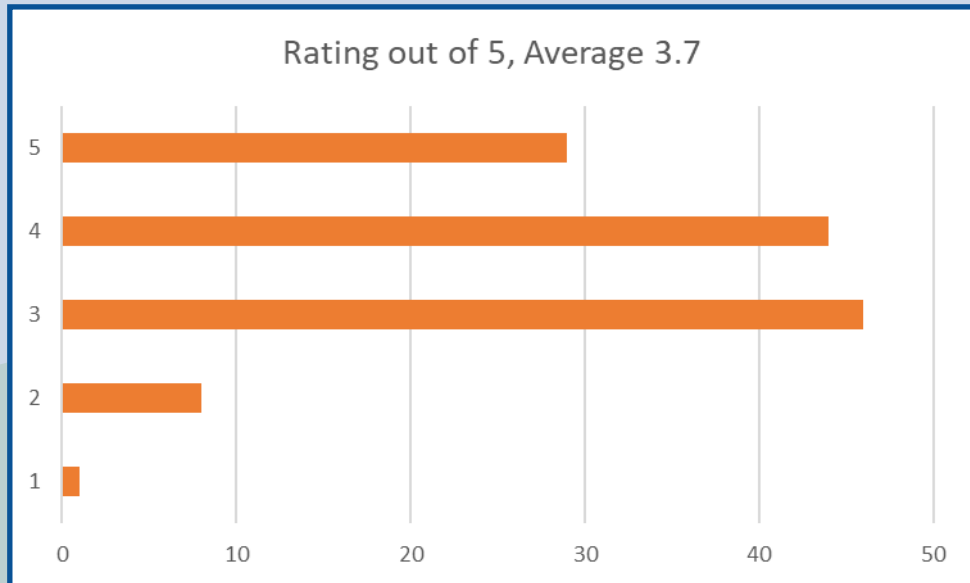
33% of respondents indicated that they had heard about the Amesbury History Centre from either social media or the internet. The website, social media pages and tourist site listings are up to date and easy to find, which will attract a high number of visitors to the new centre.

### How did you first hear about the AHC



- Social Media
- Internet
- Other
- Recommendation from someone
- Posters
- Newspaper

Respondents from the survey, who had previously visited the Amesbury History Centre, gave a rating out of five which averaged at a 3.7.



Surveying of visitors to the reopened Amesbury History Centre will continue, both within the History Centre and online, with the aim of improving visitor rating and encouraging return visits.





# Charity Trustees

## Chair—Christina Gane

Christina was born in Poole and lived in Bournemouth and Shaftesbury before moving to Amesbury four years ago. She studied as a mature undergraduate student at Southampton University and went on to be awarded a Master's Degree in History, and a Diploma in Modern Social History Research by the Open University. Her interests are Victorian censuses and the development of 17<sup>th</sup> century landscapes. Christina was an office manager for 8 years and then found herself in her dream job as a school librarian at Stonehenge School until she retired.

## Deputy Chairman—Mark Verbinnen



Mark is an Aircraft Engineer based at MOD Boscombe Down. He joined the Trustees in 2018 after being invited to manage the website and communications. Mark is a Town Councillor and committee member of the local Chamber of Trade, using his contacts to help publicise Amesbury to a wider audience and bring tourists to the History Centre.



## President—Norman Parker

His introduction to historical research began in 1940 when he joined Vickers Armstrong at their Weybridge Works. He worked throughout the war repairing crashed Wellington bombers and Spitfires. This continued post-war at High Post and Chilbolton. It was briefly interrupted by a spell in the RAF before joining the Ministry of Defence at MOD Boscombe Down in 1951. He worked at Fairey Aviation between 1955 and 1958 on the Fairey Delta 1&2. He joined Pains-Wessex as a quality manager, until he retired. In 1975 he formed, with Peter Goodhugh, the Amesbury Society and in 2012 established the Amesbury History Centre. Norman continues to volunteer at the History Centre a number of times a week and has always proven to be a source of knowledge for visitors.



### **Secretary – Peter Emblin**

Peter is a retired prototype body maker having spent 40 years working for Jaguar/Landrover. Having moved to Amesbury in 2017 he learned about Blickmead. This encouraged him to learn more about the area and volunteer at the History Centre. Being an amateur photographer Peter was asked to make a record of all the items on display for a digital record, and in 2018 he was asked to take on the Secretary's job for the Amesbury History Centre with great help from the outgoing secretary. He is really looking forward to the opening of the New Amesbury History Centre and the challenges it will bring.

### **Treasurer – Peter Davies**

Peter joined Amesbury History Centre shortly after retirement in 2013 and accepted the office of Treasurer a year later. His working life includes 22 years' involvement with the Defence Industry where his financial experience stems from accounting for military units, leading to a promotion as Financial Officer for the Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas. He was made responsible for maintaining and growing their financial and Charity Commission registered accounts valued at the time of £3.5 million. Peter has interests in archaeology, The National Trust, The Orkney Islands and preserved railways.



### **Paul Horrobin**

Paul is a retiree from looking after the day to day running of Antrobus House (Amesbury). After leaving school he served his time as an apprentice steel fabricator. Following this, he spent 4 years in the RAF fire service. On leaving, he continued as a Fireman for the next 18 years. Over the years he has developed and run a selection of very diverse businesses. Paul has been a Town Councillor and remains an active fundraiser for the RNLI. He has a keen interest in history which eventually led him to the Amesbury History Centre where he became one of the founder members of the CIO.





### **Penny Davies**

Penny is originally from Ipswich in Suffolk. She qualified as a barrister in 1995 and spent five years in private practice in chambers in London, covering a range of work involving criminal and civil litigation. In 2000 she was commissioned into the British Army as a Legal Officer. Over the past 20 years Penny has worked in a broad range of international and domestic law areas and been posted across the world including Bosnia, Germany, New Zealand, Iraq, Afghanistan, Cyprus, United States and the UK. Penny has a degree in Law LLB (Hons) and a Master's degree in Defence Studies from Kings' College London. She has volunteered with a number of charities, including as Chairman of the British Forces Animal Rescue & Rehoming Centre in the Sovereign Base Areas, Cyprus for two years. Penny has been a volunteer with English Heritage at Stonehenge for two years, with Oxford University Museums volunteers and most recently at the Blick Mead dig in Amesbury. Penny has been a member of the Amesbury History Centre for two years.

### **Chris Kenward**

After serving 25 years in the Royal Army Medical Corps I transferred to the Scientific Civil Service and was awarded an MBE in 2001. A keen chess player I served as Chairman of the Salisbury Chess Club for 12 years and during that time organised a Grand Master event in Salisbury which won the English Chess Federation Small Club of the Year 2006 award. As a resident of Amesbury since 1986 my other main interest is Medieval History and have been a committee member of The Amesbury Society for a number of years.

# Our Supporters

## *John Glen MP – Member of Parliament for Salisbury*

The centre is an important part of its community and is staffed by enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers who are very skilled at sharing their love of the town with visitors and fellow residents alike.

I visited when the current plans were still being developed and I was struck by the way the plans centred around the needs of the community – not just offering a more inspiring and interactive exhibition space for the artefacts on display but also providing better facilities for research and space for visiting schools and youngsters to play and learn.

Of course, the new History Centre will also be able to welcome more tourists – giving them a reason to combine a visit to Stonehenge with a stop in Amesbury where they can make use of its independent local shops and eateries, with all the benefits that brings to the local economy.

I am delighted to offer my wholehearted support to Amesbury History Centre.

## *Fred Westmorland – Mayor of Amesbury 2019*

Our landscape is filled with history, but offers few opportunities to engage with that history. Amesbury welcomes the History Centre CIO's plans and recognises its potential to inform our population and to attract the visitors we need for economic viability and growth.

I believe that the new Amesbury History Centre offers a unique opportunity to develop and enhance the tourist economy in the Amesbury area. By encouraging visitors to stay longer and to explore the area it will undoubtedly help to secure the future of our Town.

I wholeheartedly support the plans.



# Our Supporters

## *Vicky Parks– Chair, The Stonehenge Chamber of Trade*

On behalf of the local businesses in Amesbury and surrounding area The Stonehenge Chamber of Trade welcomes the new Amesbury History Centre. Amesbury town has always fallen into The City of Salisbury's shadow. The Stonehenge Chamber was formed in 2007 to provide local businesses in Amesbury and surrounding villages with its own identity away from the Cathedral city.

Coupled with Stonehenge the History Centre will help attract both day trip visitors and tourists wanting to stay overnight. This itself will provide a much-needed boost to the local economy and help lift the spirits of the town and business proprietors.

As the History Centre is within the town other businesses not directly relevant to tourism are likely to also benefit by default due to the increased footfall as tourists walk between the Centre and the coach parking. A further benefit of the History Centre is that it falls within walking distance to Stonehenge which lends itself to further business opportunities.

The Amesbury History Centre is fully supported by the Chamber members and looks forward to working alongside it in the very near future.

# Our Supporters

Professor David Jacques—University of Buckingham  
Blick Mead and Amesbury “The Cradle of Stonehenge”



Stonehenge can justly claim to be one of the most famous prehistoric sites in the world, but much about its origins and the choice of its location on Salisbury Plain remain a mystery. Although recent archaeological investigations have revealed stunning new details of the monuments that sprang up in its immediate vicinity during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC, much less attention has been paid to establishing the area's 'back story'. The nearby Neolithic settlement of Durrington Walls has been identified as the likely home of the community that raised the celebrated stones, but until recently no residential sites pre-dating the late Neolithic period had been identified within the entire area of the World Heritage Site. This was all set to change with the excavations at Blick Mead, the results of which will be showcased by the Amesbury History Centre.

For a full description of the archaeological discoveries at Blick Mead, visit [www.amesburyhistorycentre.co.uk](http://www.amesburyhistorycentre.co.uk)