

The Bournemouth Daily Echo, Saturday 12 April 1919

AN INTERESTING PRIVATE MUSEUM AT CHRISTCHURCH

Christchurch readers will be both interested and gratified to learn that at an early date, probably next week, Councillor Herbert Druitt will throw open the Red House to the public for the inspection of his unique collection of curios, etc.

As will be remembered Mr. Druitt, at a recent meeting of the Christchurch Town Council offered to present the collection to the town on the condition that proper safeguards should be provided. This generous offer is still receiving the consideration of the council, and in the meantime Christchurch residents will soon be able to see for themselves the contents of a most interesting museum.

The collection includes many pre-historic and other specimens found in Christchurch and district, which are of great local interest.

The Bournemouth Daily Echo, Saturday 19 April 1919

THE RED HOUSE MUSEUM

A NEW ATTRACTION AT CHRISTCHURCH

“What is that picturesque old building of red brick, with its square windows and fine roof, which is to be seen opposite the vicarage in Quay-road?” This is a question often asked by visitors to Christchurch. The answer is most interesting. It was once the workhouse, but it is at present known as the Red House, and is the private property of Councillor Herbert Druitt.

The opportunity now occurs for visitors to see the interior, which will fulfil the wish of many, for its largest room on the first floor was this week opened to the public for the inspection of a display of antiquities and objects of interest, all collected locally. Councillor Druitt, it will be remembered, who has devoted many years of his life to collecting the articles contained in the museum, generously offered, at a recent meeting of the Christchurch Town Council, to present his collection, which is a valuable and really splendid one, to the town, on condition that proper safeguards should be provided.

Christchurch has always been in need of an official museum of this kind, especially considering its ancient origin, and Councillor Druitt's offer exposes a course which leads directly to a speedy fulfilment of a long-felt want. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Council will soon see its way clear to quickly take advantage of Mr. Druitt's offer.

As one enters the room where the exhibits are laid out one is at once struck by its stately and imposing (if a trifle sombre) appearance. Particularly noticeable is the low roof, with its heavy oaken beams, which harmonise well with the general surroundings.

The whole of one wall is occupied by a collection of Palaeolithic implements, many of which are very fine and form the largest collection in existence of these relics of early man found in the neighbourhood. They come from all over the district – from Parkstone to Milton – and their age is counted in hundreds of thousands of years.

Opposite to them, in glass cases, are Neolithic implements, polished and rough Celts [*sic* – ‘celts’, or Neolithic picks], and a collection of over 150 arrowheads, many of an exquisite workmanship that is surprising. Modern man would certainly possess more admiration and pride for his primitive ancestors if he realised the ingenuity and amazing cleverness of his forerunners.

At the south end of the room is a large case containing Bronze Age pottery dating back to 500 B.C., at a time when the use of iron was still unknown. Most of these urns were used to bury the cremated remains of the dead. The case contains a remarkable beaker (or drinking cup), found some years ago in Christchurch, in an almost perfect condition.

The Quay-road side of the room is devoted to pottery found in the neighbourhood, from from the beautiful black Cordonea ware of the late Keltic period (about 500 B.C.) back to the Gaulish red ware of the 4th century A.D. Here we find cooking pots and pans and remains of red-flanged bowls.

In a case devoted to Hengistbury is a set of remarkable cast-bronze coins only found in this neighbourhood.

On the walls are local prints of interest, notably the fine mezzo-tint portrait of the first Lord Lyons of Christchurch, and the only engraving known of the last of the Plantagenets, Margaret Countess of Salisbury, whose beautiful chapel is one of the features of the Priory Church. Here, too, is a print of the house built by Lord Bute at Highcliffe, which was succeeded by the present castle. The old prints of Bournemouth and Christchurch, which are also to be seen, are both rare and interesting.

The education value of the collection is great. Here one can see the very implements and pottery used by the early inhabitants of Britain mentioned in all up-to-date history text-books. The above-mentioned, however, are but a few of the treasures it contains.

Altogether the museum is well worthy of a visit. We are given to understand that, if it receives sufficient public support, it will be added to on a large scale as time goes on, as Mr. Druiitt possesses many more articles than those already on view.

Nothing is more fascinating or interesting than an hour or two spent in a museum of this kind, for its magic and irresistible charm transports one on a magic carpet back to the days of primitive man, and then leads one back again, step by step, through the ages, conjuring up before the mind of the visitor visions of years gone by the while.

It is hoped, therefore, that this unique addition to the sights of Christchurch will be visited by hundreds during the coming summer, and that it will become a permanent place of pilgrimage in an ancient town which can itself boast of its thousand years or more.

Research by Alex McKinstry.