

BLAKE NEWS Summer 2022

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by Stewart Richards

Well, what a difference a year makes, at this time last year, it was visits by appointment, social distancing was the norm, and it was a very subdued reopening to the public. This year it is full steam ahead numbers of visitors are growing, and we have had a couple of group visits that have been coordinated by Patsy Robinson, there was a visit by Holford History society to the museum on 14th June where they made a significant donation to the museum and purchased £40 worth of books. This was followed by a visit from the Regional Furniture Society on 24th June who also made a significant donation and £27 worth of shop purchases. There was also a visit from St Mary's primary school with some sixty pupils visiting over the 23rd and 24th 2 of June. It is always such a pleasure to have children visiting the museum. There are also a few other group visits being worked on, the more the merrier!

The 'Coffee Mornings' are gaining momentum, the latest held at the beginning of July in the garden, taking advantage of a warm sunny day, it was an amazing success with over £110 raised.

A recruitment day was held in Angel Place and although not a total success we did gain volunteers. A further recruitment day is going to be held in the Public Library foyer Wednesday 6th July 10am – 2pm. A volunteer experience document has been produced as a handout at the recruitment days, explaining what volunteers get out of volunteering the view is that as a volunteer you get more out of the experience than you contribute.

The garden has been tidied and replanted with summer bedding using two hundred plants to achieve this. A big thank you to Elizabeth Ives, Tony Aspey, and Roger Blackburn for facilitating this work and I am sure that the garden will look even more magnificent than what is already an impressive display to unfold as the season goes on.



The upper garden on 22 June.

Photograph by Stewart Richards



The new display for the Bridgwater Industrial CoOp weathervane is well in hand with the octagonal raised bed being constructed from green oak by the 'Men's Shed.' This display will also have a plaque to commemorate Jane Woolrich a true 'Friend' of the museum, a fitting tribute, and a plaque to mention the 'Men's Shed' involvement in the display construction. The Band concerts will start on Sunday 10th of July at 2pm and will run for 7 weeks, as usual the museum garden will be open for the serving of hot and cold beverages with home made cake and ice creams on offer. I look forward to seeing you at one of these events.



Photograph by Stewart Richards ex Blake Museum

The remains of the vane atop the Co-Op building before demolition. Note the similarity of architecture with the demolished YMCA building on Salmon Parade

In addition, the iron gate from the Cornhill toilets that was propped against the wall in the lower garden has been shot blasted and powder coated (see picture) and will be erected and displayed in the lower garden.



The gate in the restorer's workshop

Photograph by Stewart Richards

EVENTS

The **Band concerts** will start on Sunday 10th of July at 2pm and will run for 8 weeks, as usual the museum garden will be open for the serving of hot and cold beverages with home made cake and ice creams on offer. I look forward to seeing you at one of these events.

10th July - King Alfred Concert Band

17th July - Congresbury Brass Band

24th July - Westcan Show Choir or Cam Chilcott (singer/guitarist)

31st July - Cam Chilcott (singer/guitarist) or Westcan Show Choir

7th August - Burnham & Highbridge Band

14th August - Lazy River (Jazz)

21st August - Kingsbury Episcopi Band

24th and 31st will be decided in the next few days.

July will be a very busy month, for on Sat 9th July is the **Quayside Festival**,

The Bridgwater Quayside Festival is a free annual festival of events, street theatre, music, creative arts activities celebrating with our local and global audiences.

Expect live music with Louis and the Iguana's, Arquebus, Skintight Samba, Mitchell and Vincent, Michael Baker, Sumo and Jules, Hullabalooers, Ben and Alfie, Voices of the People Choir. + more.

Two Music stage's. FREE outdoor shows, stunning street theatre, Strong Lady Productions, aerial circus, Cirque d'Silks,.

Picnic in the Park – Blake Gardens with free family arts/crafts activities, puppet shows and a carnival fete in the park. Lots of stalls and the children's festival parade

We have had a very successful exhibition *Remembering the Falklands Conflict 40 years on..* This will end on Sat 9th July.



Photograph by Mike Searle

The following exhibition will be *Bridgwater Then & Now* in photos.

JOB VACANCIES

We are seeking two people who would be prepared to carry out a monthly fire alarm test on a regular basis. It should not take anymore that about 20 minutes. Its not an onerous task. Please contact Mike for further details

VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED

More helpers are needed to assist on Band Concert days for help with Baking and for general assistance in setting up. Please see Jayne Cornish.

NEWS

We have had good increase in income reaching just over £1000.

Shop sales: £151

Donations: £651 – Plus £1140 raised in memory of Jane Woolrich.

Refreshments: £116

Book sales: £21

Coffee mornings: £111 in July (the best ever yet)

We have paid out goodly sums for Shot-blasting the gate and the purchase of the timber for the new raised garden bed and for a new Card reader for the shop.

Subscriptions

Due on the 1st of September of the Membership year, please.

a) Individual: £14

d) Youth: £5

b) Family: £20

e) Corporate: £30

c) Institution: £20

COFFEE MORNINGS IN AID OF FOBM FUNDS ARE HELD ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH 10.30-12 NOON

FOBM MEMBER IS APPOINTED THE NEW MAYOR

Cllr Liz Leavy has been appointed Mayor for the next year.



Photograph by Geoff Searle

She has been at long-standing member of FOBM, and at one stage was a Custodian.

She was a teacher and worked at Haygrove, Chilton and Sydenham and then finally at Bishop Fox's in Taunton. Then she worked in Bridgwater Library.

She takes a special interest in the arts, becoming the town council's portfolio holder for art, culture and heritage in 2019 and now Mayor in 2022

CURATOR'S REPORT

By Mike Searle

NEW ARTEFACT

We have just been given a painted name board 10 ft 6 in long which might from the stern of a sailing vessel. It was found in the back of a builders' store. The design of the

Town Arms indicates it dates from the late C19. A quick preliminary search of online *Lloyd's Register of Shipping* has only found a Liverpool-based paddle steamer from the 1880s and no sailing vessels, so more research will be needed. On the other hand it might have come from a feature in the Bridgwater pageant of 1927. But what?



Photo graph by Mike Searle

NEW EXHIBIT



Long case 5 / 6 Day Clock, c.1792

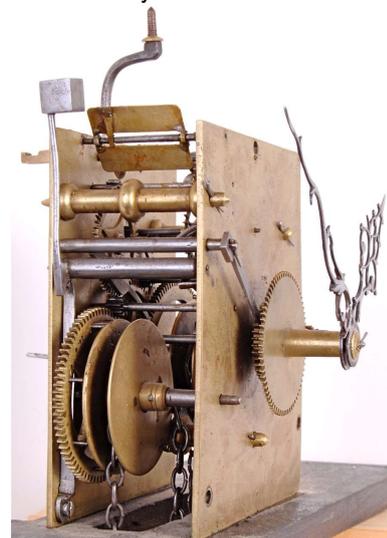
BWRAB: 2022/1/13

Photograph by Mike Searle

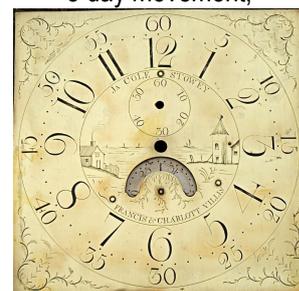
Movement by James Cole (1762-1838) of Nether Stowey. 8 day single weight movement. The case was made in 2010 in English Oak and cross banded in yew. It has been constructed in a contemporary style using traditional methods by Nial Woodford, cabinet maker, of Stogursey

The dial plate was engraved by James Cole for Francis Villis & Charlotte Parsons to commemorate their marriage, 16 February, 1792 at Overstowey.

The clock was gifted to the museum by Nial and Deborah Woodford in May 2022.



8 day movement,



12" square brass dial plate with engraved Arabic numerals

Photographs by Nial Woodford

WHO'S WHO AT THE MUSEUM?

This will be an occasional series



Colin & Monica
Quality Assuring Monica's latest bake!

We joined the Friends of the Museum when we both retired over 15 years ago, and Colin began helping with the major refurbishment work. We then became custodians which was remarkably interesting, chatting to the many interesting visitors from all over the UK as well as from abroad. As custodians and Friends of the Museum we have also learnt more about the Museum and Bridgwater as we are not local to the area. Monica loves helping and baking for the coffee mornings, band concerts and Museum Fairs, enjoying the social side and making new friends. There is a great camaraderie amongst the Friends as we all enjoy a laugh.

BRIDGWATER HERITAGE GROUP

<http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/>

by Dr Miles Kerr-Peterson & Tony Woolrich

Much work over the last couple of months on the Heritage Website has been technical tinkering, so the pace of publication has slowed a little. That said, there have been a few new additions that will be of interest.

In terms of small articles, we've recently added an account of the seizure of Robert Blake's (grandfather to the General-at-Seal) ship, the *White Hart*, by MacLean of Duart on Mull in 1580, which resulted in the death of a crewman, Geoffrey Walker, whose body was cut into pieces and cast to the dogs, the aggressors saying: *'Englishmen's fleshe woulde make Scottishe dogges runne well'*.

Additional notes have been added to the pages on St Margaret's School, and additional notes have been added to the page on St Mary's Church spire, including a height comparison with Taunton St Mary's, St Mary Redcliffe and Salisbury Cathedral. It's probably safe to say that the steeple of St Mary's Bridgwater is the tallest medieval church in Somerset.

New ongoing research pages have been added on the Spelling of Bridgwater and the Friends and Associates of John Chubb. Seeking finally to settle the 'e' question of Bridgwater, the evidence so far suggests the first modern use of the town's current spelling is 1666, although it's

very likely earlier instances will be found. The first 'Bridgewater' came in 1555 in Queen Mary's Charter, which is also the first instance of the 'd' emerging, that letter being completely unknown through the middle ages in the name. Otherwise, there was little consistency with the use or not of the middle 'e', things being even more confused by the addition of a third 'e' on the end, hence 'Bruggewatere' as a popular form. So far 49 variations of the spelling have been found.

The Friends and Associates of John Chubb forms part of the work done about 15 years ago, when the second part of the Chubb drawings was acquired by the museum: (see last issue). It will be an illustrated account of the people who have been identified.

A file of letters in the Town Hall about the publication by the Somerset Record Society in 1971 of Vol 5 of T. B. Dilks's transcriptions of the Bridgwater Borough Archives, (to 1485), suggests there was material for at least another volume of the medieval archives. When Dilks died in 1949, his transcriptions had reached the start of the reign of James 1 in 1603. They were returned to the Council by his literary executor but have been un-examined since. There are, today, 26 unlisted boxes of Borough Archives, many reaching to the C19 and C20, in the Archive at Taunton, several of which, perhaps, hold Dilks material, so a future project is to discover what is there, and see if more of Dilks's research might be published.

We are beginning to think about writing the scripts for history videos to be screened at the next *Town Council History Day*, in November.

Finally, and sadly, the most extensive addition to the website recently has been an obituary for the late Derek Gibson MBE, who passed away in the Spring. The town has much to thank Derek for, and we'd encourage you to read and learn about his fascinating life.

TALKS: NOTE

The next series of Museum talks will begin in 2023. They have been in abeyance due to Covid.

Annual General Meeting

This is always on the second Tuesday of October, so this will be on Tuesday 11 October at 7.30, pm

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Websites:

Friends: www.blakemuseumfriends.org.uk

Museum: www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk

Resources: www.bridgwatermuseum.info