

# THE BLAKE NEWS Autumn 2010

FOBM is ten years old this year



## Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Blake Museum Tuesday 12 October at 7.00pm

With this newsletter are included papers for the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Blake Museum. Please read them carefully, since they are important, and your support is needed. Do attend the meeting if you possibly can.

There will be vacancies to be filled on the Committee for all the elected positions, as well as the co-opted members. All the elected members are Trustees of the Charity as well.

As well as the historic role of organising talks and fund-raising for the Museum, since last year the Friends have been responsible to the Town Council for running the museum on a day-to-day basis.

## PLEASE CONSIDER BEING NOMINATED

The last newsletter was issued in May with the appeal for more volunteers to assist in running the Museum, particularly on the administration side, but the response was very disappointing. While cover for the custodians, the shop and the garden is very good, there is still an urgent need for practical assistance, such as decorating and maintenance, administration and book-keeping, design and exhibition skills.

Since the Museum reopened in April, the regular attendance of working parties on Mondays has continued, and a great deal has been achieved.

## Building Works

The mill is now properly in use as a store, and all the artefacts from Colley Lane have been moved there. A great deal of building work was done before the shelves could be installed and the move undertaken, and we are most grateful to the handful of volunteers who made this happen. The archaeologists are now beginning to sort the many boxes of specimens, and check them against the catalogue.

## Garden

The Monday team has been very active, as anyone who has seen the garden recently will agree. As well as the tasks of making the garden beds and stocking them with plants and trees, they have repaired the tops of several of the garden wall pillars, by re-cementing the loose bricks and cap stones. A recent task has been to dig out a mound of earth and rubble between the garden shed and the garden wall. The earth has been sieved out for re-use on the garden beds and the rubble bagged up for disposal.

The Museum Friends have just purchased for the garden a pair of decorative large-capacity water butts. This will stop having to use metered water in dry weather.

A short length of metal fencing with a gate has been erected across the end of the mill leat. This provides safe access to the back door of the mill.



The Blake Gardens side



The new fence

## Learning

The Irene exhibition was highly successful, with over 300 children coming in 11 classes. After the main exhibition closed all the children's art work was displayed in the Gallery for the whole of August, and attracted much interest.

Next year's 'Take One Picture ...' theme will be Bridgwater Castle, taking as the picture Miles Peterson's modern bird's-eye-view of Bridgwater in 1600. As well as the history of the Castle, themes about the medieval town and people, the events of the siege in the Civil War, and the later development of the site with Castle Street will also be covered. We plan to have the teachers' symposium in January next year, with the public exhibition in the summer.

Work has now started on researching for this. The teachers' web page will have all manner of medieval themes, such as the history of castle building locally, timber framed buildings, medieval costume, dance and music, medieval cookery, Bridgwater civic life and commerce.

## The Bridgwater Room



Remains of Saint John's Hospital, Eastover

Work has started on the displays in the Bridgwater room. Some of the archaeological remains have been secured to the walls by metal cramps, as has the Splash plaque, commemorating the opening by Princess Diana in 1991, and salvaged when the pool was demolished. Also in the room is one of the cast iron cheese presses, brought back from the Colley Lane store, and an earthenware bread oven, made in the nineteenth century by one of the local brick works. In use it would have been heated up by wood, and the bread baked by the residual heat from the oven walls.



The Splash plaque

## Talks

The Friends' talks for this session have now finished, but a new series for 2010-11 will start after the AGM. Details will be on next year's Membership cards, available at the AGM.

## Band concerts

Only one of this year's sessions remains, on 26 September. These have been great fun to do, and have raised useful funds for the Friends. The money we raise like this from subscriptions, the shop and the Christmas Fair is used to support the Museum by helping pay for things like the water butts and picture restoration. We shall welcome new money making ideas.

The date of this year's fair has not yet been decided but it will be publicised at meetings and on the friends Web site.

## Library

In recent weeks the Library has acquired two new tall bookcases. We have been gifted the books of somebody who was collecting new books from our area about thirty years ago. Once they are housed and listed we will set about filling the gaps. Recent book purchases have included some reference books about the Victorian and also castles.

A database has been added to the computers so we can now access the existing catalogue properly and begin to catalogue the backlog.

## SHUT DOWN

This year's shut down will start mid-November and run to the end of March. Work will be done to continue the refurbishment, to include work on the heating and electrical systems as well as small repairs and decorating. A Winter Works schedule has been finalised and will shortly be circulated to the volunteers who helped last year.

As well as this, work will continue in parallel on the curatorial side with cataloguing. More photographs will be scanned.

The displays in the Blake and Bygones rooms will be refreshed. The Blake ceramic (now hidden behind a case in the Battle room), by Bridgwater children about 30 years ago will be moved downstairs and modern display cases will be fitted up in the Blake room.

In the Bygones room it is planned to fit up the space below the long display case opposite the door with more storage cupboards and sets of shallow drawers for housing flat plans and exhibition materials. The space under the large double sloping-topped display case will also be fitted up with shallow drawers. Some of the displays in the cases will be retired and replaced with new displays on law and order and some of the Museum's silver collection.

It is planned to move all the flat plans and other papers to the Bygones room from the Library and scrap the two plan chests there, so freeing up space.

Another task is to go right round the museum making explanatory captions for the artefacts that will be mounted on matching wooden plinths like those in the hall under the Chubb paintings.

In collaboration with the Engine Room we will investigate the feasibility of having animated touch screens in the galleries so children can learn about Blake, the Battle Sedgemoor, and the like.

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