

# BLAKE NEWS

## AUTUMN 2009



### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at the Meeting Room, Blake Museum, 13 October at 7.30pm

With this newsletter are included papers for the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Blake Museum. Please read these 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 the majority of the elected positions, as well as the co-opted members. All the elected members are Trustees of the Charity as well. The positions of Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Programme Secretary need to be filled, as does the post of Shop Manager.

### Please consider being nominated.

In addition, the Annual General meeting will be asked to vote on changes to the Constitution. This has been brought about by the need to strengthen the management of the Museum.

### ADMINISTRATION

Administrative tasks have featured much in recent weeks. Many readers will not be aware of the mass of detailed behind-the-scenes administrative work that has been needed from volunteers from the Friends to enable the Museum to function as an accredited Museum.

The work of preparing the documentation for the biennial review of Accreditation is nearly finished. This has to be done every two years, and is the means of ensuring the Museum maintains high standards. A Statement of Purpose has been drawn up, with a list of Key Aims. From this a list of Guiding Practical Objectives has been drawn up, which informs the schedule of tasks to be done during the various shut-down periods.

Much time has been spent finalising various notes for Museum Volunteers on health and safety procedures. Work has also been done writing the Museum Disaster Plan for the Accreditation, in organising log books for fire precautions and ladder inspections, and in formulating the Museum's policies for Learning. Also setting up the procedures for the relevant volunteers who deal with children who need to be vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY Museum Talks to the end of 2009

Tuesday 10 November. *My life as a Policeman*, Cllr Philip Smeed  
Tuesday 9 December, *Afternoon entertainment 2.15 – 3.45. The Annual Christmas gathering at the Museum.*

### Winter shut-down for continuing refurbishment

Thursday 12 November 2009 to Tuesday 31 March 2010 but meetings and pre-planned visits continue.

### Invitation to tea

All Friends, Custodians and volunteers are invited to tea at the Museum on Wednesday 16 September at 3.00pm. This is to say thank you to everyone who has ever helped over the years to ensure the Museum was saved and remains open.

### Forthcoming exhibitions

9-22 September – Handwriting  
13-24 October – Bridgwater Choral Society  
Gallery, 1-31 October – Wembdon Painting Group  
25 May - 6 June 2010 to celebrate 103 years since the launch of the *Irene*, the last Bridgwater-built ship

### VOLUNTEERS

A heartening number of new volunteers have added themselves to our ranks in recent weeks. Not all wish to become a Friend, of course, but their help and enthusiasm is very welcome. We must not be complacent, for people move on, and the numbers should be kept up.

### VISITORS TO THE MUSEUM

Visitor numbers have been good in recent weeks, with a number of mornings exceeding twenty, and on one day we had over fifty. Quite a number were parents and children, and the shop did well in consequence.

### HISTORICAL RESEARCH AT THE MUSEUM

#### A LIST OF THE ELECTORS

Who polled at BRIDGEWATER, April the 17<sup>th</sup> 1754

The Right Hon. Earl of EGMONT,  
The Right Hon. GEORGE GODDINGTON,  
ROBERT BALCH, Esq;

This List is published in Justice and Honour to the virtuous and glorious uncorrupted ELECTORS of this Borough, who made for noble's Stand at the late Elections, against all the base Attempts of Men, not content to be corrupt and venal themselves, but malignant enough to be the Instruments of corrupting and deluding Others. A noble Stand indeed! And what mult add to their Honour, is, That in Support of good and just a Cause, they bore their own Expenses, at their Weekly Clubs, from the Time their noble Candidate declared for the Borough, to the Day of the Election. But as some malicious Suggestions have been thrown out to asperse the Characters of those honest Electors with the Imputation of Bribery, and thereby reduce them to an equal Degree of Infamy with the Corrupted themselves, the Propagators of such Falshoods are publicly called upon and defied to produce a single Instance in Proof of such vile Intimations.

N. This Letter denotes such as promised to vote for Lord Emswore, but badly qualified him.  
P.N. These Letters denote such as signed an Invitation to Lord Emswore, but badly defected him.

Single Voters for Lord Emswore.		Placed in the Joint Lists of Mr. Deane and Mr. Deane.		Placed in the Joint Lists of Mr. Deane and Mr. Deane.	
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memories of the district, to researching the lives of the fallen whose names appear on war memorials.

Scans have begun to be placed on the Museum's website of various documents, such as electors' lists, and names of people in receipt of the Bread Dole, under the old Poor Law. Resources like these are of great value to family historians. Work needs to be done to transcribe the names in these lists.

The Museum's collection of photographs will also be placed on the web, and will require identifying and captioning.

This is important work, and if you have a serious interest in history, please consider helping on the local history team.

## GARDEN ARCHAEOLOGY



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Ancient worked stones resting in the garden are meticulously recorded by young archaeologists led by Kerri Wheeler, BA, assisted by Ceri Maltby and Sam Foster.

Young archaeologists who have joined the volunteers for the summer have been investigating the stones in the garden.

All the archaeological artefacts have been recorded to proper archaeological standards, and individual pieces taken out of present display for detailed recording, measurement and identification. Three splendid pieces of columns from the Franciscan Friary from the 1335 excavations at Friar Avenue have been identified, together with a piece of window tracery from the Hospital of St John. These will be brought inside for display in the Larger Objects Gallery (Room 4, formerly the Blake room).

## HALL PANELLING

All the panelling up the staircase and in the hall has now been scraped, stained with Vandyke Brown, then finished with beeswax and turpentine, before being buffed to a glossy finish. It positively glows - many thanks to Chris Leigh, the volunteer responsible. The panelling in the entrance lobby will be done shortly.

## OBJECTS DONATED TO THE MUSEUM

The *Bridgwater Mercury* for December 1913, with pages of local advertising; a collection of sail-makers' tools - thread, wax and a

selection of various needles; the name plate from the front door of the Bridgwater Building Society's office in King Square, (now the offices of Sedgemoor District Council); a bronze medal struck in 1974 to commemorate the demise of the Borough of Bridgwater, and two medals struck in 1918 by the Borough Council to celebrate the end of the First World War.

We have to be very selective, restricting objects to our collecting area, and filling gaps in our coverage. Just because it is old won't guarantee we will take it, but we can often suggest an alternative home. We are heartened by what the public is bringing in, and their evident pride in helping the Museum.

## BATTLE OF SEDGEMOOR MODEL ON THE MOVE

The Museum sub-Committee agreed to the transfer of the model of the Battle of Sedgemoor to the new Zoyland Heritage Centre. See <http://www.zoylandheritage.co.uk/> The aim is to advance the education of the public in the Battle of Sedgemoor and related history, including the role of St Mary's Church, Westonzoiland, Somerset

The model is too large to be got up the stairs to the present Battle of Sedgemoor display, so there was no alternative to taking it out of the building. The model was reputedly built by a previous Vicar of the church, about 50 years ago, so it is apt that it returns there.

## BAND CONCERTS

The final concert of the season will be given on Sunday 27 September by Taunton Concert Band starting at 2.00pm. The Friends will again be serving refreshments as a means of raising funds for the work we do.

## LEARNING

Learning is not just for children, but for visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

A three-year action plan has been devised for learning with the aim of the Museum delivering quality presentations, activities and information. There is the goal of the Museum becoming a centre of excellence.

It is planned to refresh the displays and create new ones to reflect the new Statement of Purpose, so that visitors are better informed about what they see. Volunteers are urgently needed to work on the enhancement of the displays. If you have skills in design and graphics there is a place for you.

Arrangements can be made by schools, colleges and other organisations who wish to visit and experience on-site activities. These will be tailor-made to satisfy the objects of the visit by individual groups.

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