

BLAKE NEWS

Those members receiving this newsletter by post will find their membership cards in the envelope the newsletter came in.

Friends of Blake Museum

CHRISTMAS

FAIR

In aid of Museum funds

FREE ENTRY

**The Blake Museum,
5 Blake Street, Bridgwater
Saturday 30 November, 2019
10.00am – 1.00pm**

**Bric-a-brac ~ Books ~ Raffle
Tombola ~ Museum Shop
Charity Stalls ~ Craft Stalls
Home-made Cakes & Bread ~ Preserves
Refreshments**

Items for the Fair may be delivered to the Museum Mondays and Thursday up to 28 November 10am – 3pm or on the morning of the 30th.

Cakes especially welcome.

Dates for your diary

A trial of limited Saturday opening for visitors will take place during our normal closure period. The times will be 11.00 until 3.00, with last entry at 2.00. During this period, the normal FOBM book sale will take place.

Museum fully closed Monday 16 December – Saturday 11 January 2020.

The regular closing of the museum to the public is from Saturday 2 November 2019

Last talk for 2019, 12 November at 7.30 pm by Hannah West on the Friary

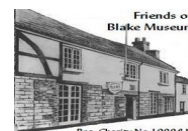
Last Coffee Morning for 2019 is 28 November – all welcome. No Coffee Morning in December, but re-start on 30 January.

Thursday 12th Dec., 2019, 10.00am is the Volunteers, Custodians and Keyholders thank-you coffee morning for this year.

Spring Fair, Saturday, 21 March, 2020, 10.00am – 1.00pm.

The Museum re-opens to the public on Tuesday 7 April 2020.

Autumn 2019



At the Museum, on the Saturdays openings between 10 am and 1pm.

Douglas Allen Negative digitisation programme:

Rita and Allen Jones have recently scanned 1982. This leaves just 17 years worth to do which is anticipated will take another year to complete. Unfortunately a high number of negatives have become stuck together having been stored in tight conditions and are beyond salvage.

Museum Publicity:

For the first time a company called Take One Media (you may have seen the large leaflet dispensers in various locations) have been used to distribute some 15,000 tourist leaflets out to a wider audience than we have previously been able to reach. The period covered was June, July and August, and it is planned to do the same again for 2020.

Shut Down

As well as the regular refreshment of displays in the Bygones Room and routine maintenance, the major task this year will be the construction of partition in the Bridgwater room, to give Nick privacy. The outside face of the partition will give much-needed display space in the exhibition area.

Chairman's report to the AGM by Stewart Richards (Abridged) Attendances

These have been good, and we are likely to beat last year's total of around 3500. School visits were over 750 compared with last year's 535, which is a 40% increase. We've also had visits from various adult groups. More than 30 people saw the Mill on Heritage day

Recruitment of Volunteers

The overall number of Museum Friends is a little more than last year. Volunteer custodian and key-holder numbers have held up, but there is a need to recruit more, since opening times have now extended to Saturdays in Shut Down.

The Band Concerts

Takings for this year were £885, an increase of 14% over last year. It might well have been about £200 more were it not for the Blake Gardens being closed one Sunday by the police, following an incident of assault.

Initiatives with Bridgwater & Taunton College

There are several initiatives:

- 1) Living History Days, aimed at schools, with college students as costumed actors.
- 2) The use of digital media to enhance the promotion of the museum, and to aid disabled visitors who can't get upstairs.
- 3) Involvement in the Mill restoration, both practically, and also through social media.

- 4) Involvement in the museum garden.
- 5) 2 week students' art exhibition.
- 6) A - level history students volunteering at the museum on the curatorial/library side. This used to be done in the early days with students photographing womens' costumes and coins.

Monthly talks

These have gone very well, with only one remaining for this series, by Hannah West on the *"Life and death in late medieval Bridgwater" - The Friars of Friar Street*. Tues 12th November.

The Future

The visitor numbers have increased by approximately 15% this year over 2018. I believe we should aim to try to exceed over 5000 visitors by 2022, and preferably in 2021. We should produce a strategy to achieve the goal of 5000 visitors within the next three years, an uplift of 42% from where we are now. We've achieved 15% in 2019, so this should not be too much a stretch.

Friends of Blake Museum Committee for 2019/20

Officers & Trustees

Chairman - Stewart Richards
 Vice Chairman - Rob Gardner
 Secretary - Ann Hamblett
 Treasurer - Lesley Withers
 Committee Member and Fundraising Co-ordinator
 - Roger Blackburn
 Committee Member - Mike Searle (Hon Curator)
 Committee Member - Brian Withers
 Committee Member - Tony Aspey

Co-opted members

Schools and Group Visits Co-ordinator
 - Patsy Robinson.
 Talks Programme Secretary - Paul Berryman
 Shop Manager - John Walker
 Refreshments Co-ordinator - Jayne Cornish
 Publicity Officer and Blake News editor - Tony Woolrich

Next year's plans Programme of talks 2020 To be arranged

Exhibitions next year 2020

Bridgwater & Taunton College with an Art Exhibition.
 The Sedgemoor Stitchers.
 More Photos from the Douglas Allen Collection.
 Friends of Wembdon Road Cemetery exhibition 10 yr Anniversary, will also include a talk by Dr Miles Kerr-Peterson

Other temporary exhibitions to be confirmed.

Mill project

The possessory title claims for the South room and the area over the brook at the rear door of the archaeology store have been successful, so there is now one Land Registry title for the museum and the mill. We will shortly be submitting the application to the Architecture Heritage Fund for £15K. This will cover the start-up costs of architects' and surveyors' fees. We are also talking to the Heritage Lottery Fund, as a preliminary to making a formal grant application to embark on the work of restoration.

John Chubb

A new museum web page will be launched about John Chubb, with lists of the paintings.

Bridgwater history online

The website WWW.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk was established the late Dr Peter Cattermole in 2012 as a means of making the town's history more widely known, and publishing the results of academic research. Pages relate to the lost architectural treasures, churches, the biographies of Bridgwater scientists, source texts, etc.

It aims to complement the material on the Museum's own website and is open to anyone researching the town's history, who might wish to get their findings known

Recent work has concentrated on the making of digitised copies of the writings of the Bridgwater historian T. Bruce Dilks, (1865-1942),

<http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/friar/Dilks/bibliography/index.htm>,

and in publicising the extensive Borough Archives, which run from the Middle Ages to the present day.

<http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/bridgwaterarchives.org.uk/Archives/Archives.html>

Bridgwater History Day Arts Centre, Castle Street

Saturday 23 November. 10.00am – 4.00pm

The event will be free as will the lunch!

There will be six different speakers, films, photos, and displays so people can stay for the day or drop in and out as they wish.

Val Bannister, David Greenfield. Chris Sidaway, Brian Smedley, Matthew Smith, and Stewart Richards

Topics covered will include:

Bridgwater's 6 bridges, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Breaker Morant, Donald Crowhurst and British Cellophane.

All day display by the Blake Museum.

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Museum: www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk

Museum history: www.bridgwatermuseum.info