

# BLAKE NEWS Autumn 2022



## Chairman's report by Stewart Richards

Well, as we are in the final quarter of the year, the Friends activities continue. The Coffee Mornings are being extremely well attended by both old and new attendees; consequently, significant funds are being raised with more than £100 being realised at each event. Thanks to all of you who attend and the also thanks to the ladies who make these events so successful. It has been decided not to hold a Coffee morning in January as it will be too close to the New Year Bank Holiday.

Financially the Friends have been very successful in 2022 in raising funds by either holding events such as the Coffee Mornings and Band Concert catering as well as significant donations. This will allow the Friends to make a substantial donation to the museum in lieu of a new cataloguing system for all the artefacts held within the museum. The raised planter previously discussed is awaiting installation which will take place when the restored weathervane from the Industrial Co-Op which stood on the corner of Chapel Street and King Street is available. The refurbished gate from the Cornhill will be positioned in the garden in the New Year.

We have had several visits recently and during the year from schools and other organisations associated with children and this has significantly changed the ratio of child visitors to adults, with children to date for 2022 making up over 20% of the visitors for the year. This is very pleasing and hopefully with some of the initiatives we have going forward this number will further increase.

The first steps on the restoration of the mill have started with options and feasibility studies due to commence before much longer. The goal is to restore the outer shell of the mill to how it looked at the beginning of the 20th century, internally it is hoped to re-purpose with a multifunctional room for school and other organisations to use when visiting, provide meeting facilities, improved catering facilities, upgraded toilet facilities to include full access for disabled visitors to the museum and generation of green power from the water wheel when it is restored. I will keep you appraised of the progress being made in each edition of Blake News.

Finally, as we approach the season of festivities I offer my best wishes to you and your families and look forward to seeing you at the Christmas Fair and in 2023.

## Curator's report By Mike Searle

The museum closes on Sat 5th Nov. for the Winter and we will then be reverting to Winter opening hours of Saturdays only from 11.00 - 3.00, with last entry being at 2.00.

Book Sales commence on Sat 12th Nov. up until Sat 17th Dec. when the museum closes up completely for two weeks over the Christmas period. The museum will then reopen on Sat 7th Jan 2023 and book sales will recommence. The museum will reopen for the new season on Weds 5th April 2023 (Subject to change).

The museum will be closed on Sat 26th November for a Christmas Fair.

## *FREE ENTRY* *Friends of Blake Museum* *Christmas Fair*

*In aid of museum funds*  
*at*

*The Museum*  
*5 Blake Street, Bridgwater*  
*Sat 26th Nov. 10.00 - 1.00*

*\* Tombola & Raffle \**

*\* Charity Stalls \**

*\* Books \**

*\* Bric-a-Brac \**

*\* Museum Shop & Christmas Cards \**

*\* Home-made Produce \**

*\* Refreshments \**

Donations for the Christmas Fair may be brought to the museum on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th Nov. between 10.00 - 1.00. **Please do not bring items to the museum before these dates as we do not have the storage space.**

**Bridgwater Heritage Group  
by Dr Miles Kerr-Peterson & Tony  
Woolrich**

Numerous materials have been added to the Bridgwater Heritage Group website since the Summer 2022 edition of *Blake News*. As has been mentioned before, each week this year we've been publishing the *Bridgwater Alfred* from that date from 1832, and by the end of this year we will have completed the run . of papers we have.

We've been expanding several existing pages, most recently notes and photographs of the polymath Clark brothers. Thomas Clark 1793 – 1864 . was a grocer and botanist who built Halesleigh Tower (the Quantock Gateway), while John Clark 1785 – 1853 was a publisher, historian, poet and inventor, most notably a waterproof cloth (which he sold to . Mr Macintosh), and an early computer that could compose Latin poetry.

More materials have been added on Robert Blake, primarily early twentieth century booklets, while the section of the website devoted to Bridgwater Castle is undergoing some revisions.

The section of the website devoted to the history of the town's utilities has been expanded, with the addition of new pages on the development of electricity in the town, and another on the telephone exchanges. Work is in progress on a page about the Town's gas works.

Wholly new pages have been added on the memorial inscriptions inside St Mary's Church. It is an expanded version of an inventory published by the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society on 2013-, See:

<https://bridgwaterheritage.com/wp/conservation/churches/anglican/st-marys/st-marys-2016-reordering/st-marys-monumental-inscriptions/>

Between 2010 and 2018 some 30 leaflets on the Town's history were written and displayed in stands round the Blake Museum for visitors to take away. These have all been recently re-formatted so they may be read on a Smart Phone by accessing a QR Code while going round the Museum.

These have all been published on the website in a series of pages headed *Studies in Bridgwater History* ; see: <https://bridgwaterheritage.com/wp/historical-sources/studies-in-bridgwater-history/>

One of these, on Entertainment in Bridgwater was originally a museum exhibition held in 2013 and devised by Dennis Warren. It described the town's theatres and cinemas. It has been updated to cover the new Scott Cinema at Northgate Yard, and opened this autumn.

Finally, a research page has been added looking at Heraldic China with the seal of Bridgwater. These inexpensive pieces of Edwardian tat are a reminder that Bridgwater was once a popular tourist stop-off for those exploring the West Country, and we learn something from these little items about what the town's retailers thought would sell.



On 20 November you can look forward to the Bridgwater History Day, to which we will be contributing two videos, one on the history of the town's street names and a second on the Stained Glass Windows inside St Mary's Church.

**NOTE**

All talks will be held in the Blake Museum, starting at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated. Any variation to the programme will be announced on the News page of the Friends' web site, [www.blakemuseumfriends.org.uk](http://www.blakemuseumfriends.org.uk), and if possible will be published in the *Bridgwater Mercury*.

Visitors' charge £3.00

**Please bring a small item to the talks for the  
Raffle**

**COFFEE MORNINGS IN AID OF FOBM FUNDS  
FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH  
10.30-12 NOON**

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**Websites:**

Friends: [www.blakemuseumfriends.org.uk](http://www.blakemuseumfriends.org.uk)

Museum: [www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk](http://www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk)

Resources: [www.bridgwatermuseum.info](http://www.bridgwatermuseum.info)