

BLAKE NEWS

Autumn 2025 ≈



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by

Stewart Richards

As we approach our Annual General Meeting to be held at the museum 7.30pm 14th October 2025 I can report on a highly successful year for the 'Friends'.

The first very pleasing item to report is that our membership number is staying steady and we have recently recruited a number of new volunteers. As you are aware that without these volunteers who give of their time freely, we would not be able to open the museum to the public.

It is also pleasing to note that our visitor numbers to the end of August are up by 15.4% year on year. The number of children visiting the museum has already exceeded the number for the whole of 2024. If the numbers continue the current trend, then we may have the best annual visitor numbers since the pre pandemic year of 2019.

So why are the numbers so good this year? There are two reasons one is several successful events held this year at the museum and in Blake gardens such as the VE day celebration arranged by the 'Friends' and events arranged by the town council such as 'The Farmyard Circus' and Living History Day. We have also had a very significant school visit this year.

In addition to the above we have had a good year financially as will be evident when the figures are released at the AGM. There has been a substantial legacy from a member of the Blake family, the coffee mornings continue to do well and the fairs have been well supported.

The talks program continues to be a struggle for the reasons specified in the last newsletter. Your committee will be putting together a working team to look at the issue to see what we can do to reinvigorate the talks program. Our decisions and actions will be reported in due course.

The 'Friends' have now made a further significant donation to the town council to complete the safety repairs in the courtyard

and also to remove the asbestos roof on the shed and replace with pan tiles, this work should be completed by the end of the year.

The garden has looked good this year but not quite as good as 2024 because of the very dry weather and the high temperatures experienced.



Mike Searle

The memorial bed in the lower garden is now fully complete with the plaques remembering former volunteers who are no longer with us. It is well worth a visit to see the names of those volunteers. The bed will be dedicated by the Vicar of St Mary's once timing is agreed upon.

The 'Friends' will be announcing some enhancements to the membership package in due course and hopefully these will be seen of value to the members. One thing that has been announced is that 'Friends' can purchase books published by the 'Friends' at a significant discount.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM.

Please don't forget that Annual Subscriptions are due now.

CURATOR'S CORNER

by

Mike Searle

There is very little from me regarding **Curator's Corner** this time around. The re-accreditation return is taking longer to complete than anticipated. We had to ask for an extension to the deadline of August 1st which was

granted with a new deadline of November 1st. And now, due to a software issue at the Arts Council, our application has to be done in a different way and the deadline has now been set as December 1st.

In November we will be looking at ways to celebrate 100 years of the museum opening (opened April 1926). A few ideas have been put on the table but it needs more discussion so that we can celebrate 100 years properly.

Sedgemoor FM have put together a series of history videos which can be found on their YouTube channel. You might like the Robert Blake one!

<https://www.youtube.com/@sedgemoorfm104.2>



One of the Ermine Street Guard, at a recent Living History day in Blake Gardens.

Mike Searle

OBITUARY ELEANOR DIXON



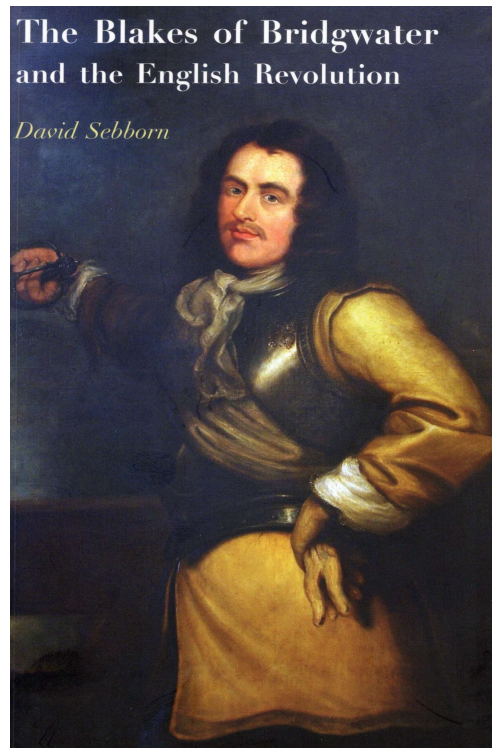
Picture by Alzheimer research

Eleanor died On 13th August 2025. She was a well known and loved member of the communities of Crewkerne and Bridgwater, and was a member of the family of General at Sea Robert Blake, and there are many family

ties in and around the Bridgwater and Crewkerne areas.

She was lay pastor at the Crewkerne and Bridgwater Unitarian Chapels, an Honorary Citizen of Crewkerne and supporter of the Blake Museum in Bridgwater, where she was one of the team that worked on the museum refurbishment, twenty years ago, on the return to the Town Council.

BOOK REVIEW



The Blakes of Bridgwater and the English Revolution, **2025, 158 pp.** **by**

Dr Miles Kerr-Peterson

The book is only available from the museum and is priced at £11.80. The book will be discounted to members of the Friends to £10.00, but you will need to show your membership card to get the discount.

Most accounts of General-at-Sea Robert Blake (1598-1657), present quite a lonely picture of England's greatest admiral. A brilliant man, heroic, determined, resolute, as well as organised and thorough, yes; but a man married to his cause and his work. With no wife and children, he was unencumbered and able to fully devote himself to establishing the English navy on the course that would lead it to rule the waves for the next three hundred years.

That picture is delightfully challenged in David Sebborn's new book, *The Blakes of Bridgwater and the English Revolution*, just published by the Friends of Blake Museum.

Robert is shown as a devoted family man, surrounded by brothers or nephews throughout his career and wholly less alone than is usually depicted. Sebborn embeds Robert's life and career within the broader picture of his family – ancestors, siblings, cousins and nephews, with their origins on the Quantocks, their establishment in Bridgwater, then their ultimate scattering around England and the New World.

Sebborn presents the sometimes impenetrable complexities of sixteenth century trade, religion and society in a clear and easy to understand manner. Robert's momentous career is neatly summarised throughout the book, in a way that's brief enough to keep the chapters moving on and set within the story of the wider family, but with no loss of adventure or sense of importance.

Not only does this book give us a wholly new and richer perspective on Robert Blake, but it also tells us a lot about Bridgwater – it's connections to the Quantocks, it's trade with the wider world, and how it fit into the politics of England during this disastrous century.

Praise must be given to Elizabeth Sebborn and Mike Searle's effort to bring David's unfinished manuscript to perfection and publication. This is a very professionally produced publication, which befits the terrific quality of the research and writing.

IMPORTANT

Please note that the Friends' site no longer exists. Instead there is now a page on the museum's site

www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk/friends

**COFFEE MORNINGS IN AID OF
FOBM FUNDS**

**FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY
MONTH**

10.30-12 NOON

**PLEASE BRING A SMALL ITEM TO
THE COFFEE MORNING FOR THE
RAFFLE**

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Websites:

Friends:

www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk/friends

Museum: www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk

Bridgwater Heritage Group:

[www https://bridgwaterheritage.com](https://bridgwaterheritage.com)