



Winter shut-down November 2009-March 2010

Much work was done during the shut-down, some of it in atrocious weather. Though some work was done by contractors, most was done by volunteers. We are most grateful for all the effort put in.

The main tasks done were to:

- Re-roof the mill in advance of conversion for storage.
- Erect a metal fence in the lower garden alongside the Durleigh Brook. Create new garden beds and plant them up.
- Install new rainwater drains, and make improvements to the roof guttering to fix a bad leak.
- Insulate the Museum roof.
- Create a new exhibition gallery in the old Blake room.
- Install a hearing-aid loop system, a fitted carpet and new shutters in the Meeting room.
- Create access ramps for wheel chairs
- Re-model the shop with new sales units.
- Re-decorate the Gallery.
- Partition and create a store at the side of the Archaeology room.
- Install a new hot-water heating system to replace the electrical storage heaters downstairs and next year upstairs.
- Undertake extensive electrical work, including running a new main to the Mill
- Undertake extensive painting and carpentry work.

In parallel with the work on the building, another team worked on the collection. In the main this involved preparatory work before the Museum's catalogue can be updated.

The main tasks done were to:

- List the contents of the paper archive storage boxes in the archaeology store.
- Record the contents of boxes of artefacts in gallery store cupboards.
- Put into order the object history files.
- List the contents of the picture store
- Photograph the Museum's lingerie collection from the local manufacturer Bairdwear, for posting on the website.
- Scan the coin collection for posting on the web-site.



Paul Besley working in the garden



The re-modelled shop



The Meeting Room

The Museum was not completely closed during the shut-down, and we were able to assist a number of enquirers, including the BBC who wanted information about a Bridgwater sea-farer for a forthcoming 'Who do you think you are?' programme. The regular schedule, of Friends' and Archaeology Society talks took place. We hosted a training day for the Environment Agency.

In December the Friends held a Christmas Fair and raised some £320.

The Museum hosted a visit from eleven students studying a construction diploma at Bridgwater College, who were looking at building conservation techniques and stone restoration. A slide-presentation was made about the work in the Museum and a floorboard was taken up in the Meeting room to show the state of the joists before the repairs. They had spent time learning about the restoration of the Town Hall and the building of Saint Mary's Church.

LEARNING

In January we hosted a symposium for teachers, taking as the theme our painting of the ketch *Irene*. This was a trial, (one of two in Somerset) funded by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council to encourage regional museums to adopt the approach

of the long -running 'Take one Picture...' project. In this, a picture from the National Gallery is taken as the theme and applied by schools across the country. The trial is to see if local art can be used by small museums like ours.

Nine teachers attended from local schools, and education providers from the County Council. Eight museum volunteers were involved - five in talking to them and three in helping behind the scenes with aspects of the catering and other jobs. A Bridgwater catering firm provided a splendid lunch - soup, filled jacket potatoes and salad and a choice of sweets.



The ketch *Irene* (1907)

The meeting room was set up with four computers as well as the big projection screen, and panels were displayed about aspects of the *Irene* and her life. These were prepared in advance of the exhibition to be held 25 May-27 June. Teachers were encouraged to think about aspects of the *Irene* - Where was she built and by whom? What did she carry and where? Where is she now? - with view of developing lesson plans in history, geography, art, science, English, design and technology, etc, etc.

Special 'Notes for Teachers' were prepared drawing together most of the historical notes in a compact form. In addition numerous web links were assembled on all aspects of maritime life and made available on the Museum's website. Though it is a teaching aid for primary schools it has been designed to be of use by students of all ages from eight to eighty.

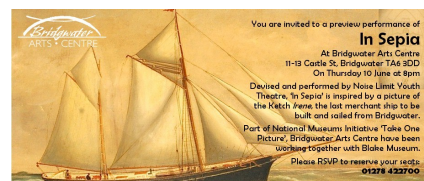


Geoff Harding demonstrating knots.

Displays were in both the Meeting and the Blake Rooms and the visitors were encouraged to see the Maritime Room, where a display of 20 small-scale waterline models of Bristol Channel sailing ships was brought out of store specially for the occasion. This was made thirty years ago by a previous curator, and is now a permanent display in the gallery.

The results of this event have been quite spectacular. In May alone we have had bookings for seven school visits to the Museum, with more booked for June. The quality of the work the

children have produced is very high, and will feature in the Irene exhibition. The Arts Centre has devised a theatrical presentation - *In Sepia*, based on the *Irene*. It is presented by the Noise Limits Youth Theatre on 11 June at 8.00pm. Please contact Kay Robins if you wish to go,.



We are now planning for next year's teachers' symposium, which we hope will become an annual event in the Museum's calendar.

EVENTS

The Gallery

- 11 May - 5 June, Art by the The Dockside Daubers,

The Meeting Room

- 25 May - 27 June an exhibition to celebrate 103 years since the launch of the *Irene*, the last Bridgwater-built ship.
- August, dates TBA - *Bridgwater Buildings*, an exhibition arranged by the Bridgwater and District Civic Society.
- October, dates TBA - *The Bridgwater Way of Death*, Graveyards and Cemeteries in Victorian Times.
- November, dates TBA - *Carnival*

BAND CONCERT DATES - ALL SUNDAYS AT 2.00 pm

13 and 27 June

11 July

25 July

08 Aug

And the Bandstand Marathon 26 Sept

SHOP. The newly refurbished shop is doing well, with almost £500 taken by the end of May. It is well worth a visit, with Bridgwater themed goods for sale such as cross-stitch kits and Museum-produced notelets using Chubb pictures. Museum Friends have a discount, of course.

THE MILL. Work on this is continuing with the clearance of builders' rubble and the installing of a new floor. Once finished it will store Museum objects from Colley Lane

FOBM NEWS

In order that the Museum may flourish, it is vital that all FOBM and volunteers play their full part in running it. More help is needed, please, particularly in custodian and cleaning duties as well as being a key-holder on occasion. There is an urgent need for assistance in manning the office and helping in FOBM treasuring duties. The number of schools coming to the Museum now means that we need more people willing to assist with the children. Can you help, please?

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www.bridgwatmuseum.org.uk