

BLAKE NEWS

Spring 2026 ≈



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by
Stewart Richards

Well, here we are at the first Blake News of 2026 and so much has happened already in this centenary year for the museum. The mill restoration project has restarted, and my word has it restarted. A recent visionary meeting took place on what we see as the future for the mill and not just the mill but for the museum as well. This meeting started to look at what should be done going forward to ensure that the museum is used by the people of Bridgwater as well as tourists to the town. It is especially important that a coherent plan is put together that will involve community input, all this to ensure that a strong case can be put together for the seeking of funding to facilitate the realisation of the project. Updates will be provided with respect to progress related to this process either through Blake News or specific reports.

I walked into the lower garden and was greeted by a beautiful display of daffodils in the memorial bed situated in the lower garden, really saying that Spring has arrived. If you look at the picture at the edge of the bed, you will see a number of plaques in memory of the former volunteers who are no longer with us.

The Friends arranged a highly successful Spring Fair that was opened by the Town Mayor Kathy Pearce. The takings were well in excess of £900, a big thank you to Roger Blackburn for coordinating the event and to all the volunteers who ran the various stalls. In addition to this the last Coffee morning in March realised takings of £139 a record as far as anyone can remember.

These funds enable the Friends to contribute towards or fund projects at the museum and recently funding was provided to get the courtyard paving refurbished which had become hazardous due to trip Hazards.



Stewart Richards

As already said, there will be a lot happening in 2026 with a special event to celebrate, the museum centenary in August which will coincide with living history day, a revitalised talks program and other events which will be publicised when plans have been finalised.

So please visit and enjoy the museum during this centenary year of your museum

CURATOR'S CORNER

by
Mike Searle

As we approach opening for the season on Weds 8th April, there has not been a lot happening at the museum. The upper garden courtyard has now had the paving slabs re-grouted and some slabs have been relaid. Also additional slabs have been laid to tidy up some rough areas. This was done just in time for the spring fair and visitors were able to start enjoying the garden once more. There has also been some maintenance done to the guttering, and window frames have been repaired and painted.



Mike Searle

The museum has been gifted a fine Andrew Rich (of Bridgwater) long case clock, manufactured in the 1825 - 1840 period. The clock dial and movement is a rare example made by Jones and Arter. The case is not the original but it is a very fine case indeed. The clock now takes pride of place in the hallway as it is 8ft tall and would not fit elsewhere. The long case clock that formerly stood in the hallway has been moved upstairs to the the Gallery.



Mike Searle

An update regarding re accreditation. The accreditation returns were submitted in November of last year (Dec 1st was the deadline). There is a two stage process to go

through but what I can tell is that we have been recommended for full accreditation. This means that there are no areas for improvement. The next stage is that the submission goes before an accreditation panel for scrutiny. We won't be notified of the outcome until the end of April.

As you will probably know by now, I am retiring as curator of the museum this year. Quite when this will be I do not know but I will be staying on until a suitable person is engaged. It is now time for someone younger to take the museum forward.

Some dates for the diary.

FOBM talk dates are:

14th Apr. *1820 Connections between and Bridgwater Settlers and South Africa* Cllr Dawn Denton

12th May. Talk TBC

9th June. Talk TBC

14th July. Talk TBC

15th Sept. *The River Parrett*. Peter Randle

MUSEUM VISION DAY

By

Helen Astill

(Bridgwater Town Council Fund-raising officer)

Bridgwater Town Council commissioned museum consultant Hilary McGowan to lead a Visioning Day and complete an Options Appraisal to help shape future plans for Blake Museum.

The Visioning Day took place at Bridgwater Arts Centre on 11 February and brought together around 20 people including heritage professionals, Blake Museum volunteers and Friends, Town Council officers and councillors. It was a lively and positive session that explored key themes and stories, visitor engagement, ideas for the mill project and the wider vision for the museum's future.

Hilary will now move into the next stage of her work which includes interviewing key stakeholders involved with the museum before producing her full appraisal report.

This process will support the museum in progressing actions set out in the Forward Plan, developed as part of the accreditation work. It will also help outline the immediate priorities, longer term ambitions and potential opportunities for redevelopment in the future.

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