

# BLAKE NEWS

## Summer 2026

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

by  
**Stewart Richards**

So, we come to the second issue of the *Blake News* for 2026, having experienced the hottest May on record which reached 32°C, – more than 15°C higher than what is normal for Somerset. Even with these high temperatures your heat-resistant volunteers still managed to plant over two hundred summer bedding plants, special thanks to Steve Clapp, Tony Aspey, and Roger Blackburn. The plants were sourced from Lonsdale Nurseries, Chedzoy at a very favourable price.

We are about to receive a significant legacy from a local visitor to the museum and one of the requests was to provide security for cyclist's bicycles whilst they visit the museum. A large planter was purchased that allows bicycles to be secured to it, this was also planted with geraniums and a picture is included.



*Photo Mike Searle*

During the last couple of years support for the monthly talks has been, to put it politely, dismal. It was decided by the committee to put a working party together



to do something about this with the focus on publicity, and thanks to Steve Austen for driving this initiative and to Elliot Cornish, who has produced the first two posters which have been eye catching and effective.

A measure of the effectiveness of this publicity drive is that there have been full houses at the last three talks and for the ones held in May and June it was standing room only. In total we have had close to 120 attendees at the three talks.



"Full House at the June Talk"  
*The Tide is High* presented by Captain  
Jessica Tyson

*Photo by Stewart Richards*

Owing to this success, further forays into publicising the 'Friends' will be taking place as the year progresses and you will see these efforts arriving in your mailbox in due course.

Becky, mine host at the Fountain Inn, held a highly successful Charity Horse Race night on behalf of the Friends and managed to raise more than £500, –

many thanks to Becky for arranging the event and for your enthusiasm to further help the fund-raising activities of the Friends. It is greatly appreciated!

The coffee morning continues to do well, and we regularly make close to £100 per event, thank you once again for the small team of ladies who make this happen. In addition to this, membership of the Friends remains strong, and people are always willing to help with the various activities the Friends undertake, and we should all be glad of that commitment.

As many of you will know Mike is about to retire as curator and the Town Council will be engaging a full time employee, to, amongst other things, assume the Museum rôle.

Currently, the Friends have one page – which is quite limited – within the museum website, and with Mike's departure the Town Council will be managing the website in the future. The Friends, as a result, will be creating their own online presence with a website.

In addition to this the Friends will also be using various software packages to enhance the promotion of our events using social media and making the site information rich.

Currently we are in the fortunate position that we will receive all this software support at no charge because we are a registered charity. So, think about what you would like to see and let us know and we will see what we can do to make it happen.

### **Centenary Mug**



*Photo: Stewart Richards*

High Quality Mugs celebrating the Centenary of the museum originally offered at

£7.50 now available for just £5. Available at the museum shop.

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 the 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.

### **CURATOR'S CORNER**

**By**

**Mike Searle**

The museum reached a milestone in April when it celebrated being 100 years old. Blake House was purchased by the Bridgwater Borough Council in 1924 to become the town's museum. The founding of a museum was instigated by the mayor, Cllr. Walter Deacon, as part of the 'Brighter Bridgwater' movement, to give the townsfolk a pride in the town's rich history. Cllr. Deacon was also the driving force behind the 1927 Bridgwater Pageant.



*The Mayor, Alderman Walter Deacon, speaking at the opening of the Museum, 15 April 1926*

To celebrate this achievement, a centenary event was held at the museum with invited guests and speakers. We were privileged to welcome Mr. Alex Dunn, the son of Mr. Angus Dunn who was the museum's second curator, and also the town's librarian, following in the footsteps of Mr. Gerald Cuzner the first curator. Alex gave us a great insight into his father's life and achievements.

Other speakers were introduced by me following the history and development of the museum. The speakers were Alan

Hurford, former Town Clerk; Rob Gardner, Volunteer Co-Ordinator; Stewart Richards, Chair of the Friends; Rachel Bellamy, Museum Development Officer, South West Heritage Trust, and Kathy Pearce, Mayor. Kathy then declared the museum open for hopefully another 100 years.

Not forgetting Robert Blake, I then proposed a toast to Blake and the

museum.

Guests were then able to view the 100 Years Centenary exhibition and enjoy the refreshments provided, which included various sandwiches and cakes and the usual tea and coffee. A 100 years birthday cake was cut by Rachel Bellamy.

The event was considered a most successful one.



*L-R-Alan Hurford, Alex Dunn, Stewart Richards, Rachel Bellamy, Mike Searle, Rob Gardner.  
Photo Brian Bateman*



*The Mayor, Cllr Cathy Pearce  
Photo Brian Bateman*



*The Ceremonial cake  
Photo Brian Bateman*

### **Accreditation.**

I am pleased to announce that the museum has been awarded full accreditation by Arts Council England. This is a significant achievement

especially in our centenary year. The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums. To qualify, museums must meet standards on how they are managed, for the services they offer and on how they care for collections. The award lasts for five years.

### **Acquisitions.**

Recent donations include a 'Gladstone' Bag. Contents include various glass containers with silver caps, a manicure set in a leather case, and a mirror, also in a leather wallet. The bag belonged to the valet of a gentleman and was probably used in WW1.

A donation of a 1930s boy scout's uniform by Mr. Cecil Luscombe, our oldest serving volunteer.

The museum has also been gifted a superb scroll, presented in a wooden case, which was presented to Mr. Arthur Wevell J.P., on becoming a freeman of the borough.

### **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:

<https://www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk/friends.htm>

Museum:

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

Bridgwater Heritage Group:

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