

Bradford on Avon Museum Newsletter/Spring 2013



New display focuses on woodworking

The work on the air-conditioning left little time to carry out any major work on the museum over the winter, except to convert the case that displayed some of our Holt collection last year.

This year it is devoted to woodworking and carpentry, through old hand tools that were mostly used at Forster's works in Winsley.

FJ Forster was a builder, decorator and undertaker. On his retirement in 1955 he sold the firm to the much larger company of G Manning in Combe Down, Bath, but work continued in Winsley under Jack Mortimer.



Most of the tools, including the beautiful brass and beechwood plough plane pictured above, are stamped with the names of both Fred Forster and Jack Mortimer.

One day, when we have space, we might have a workshop display in which we can reassemble our morticing machine, which also came from Manning's.

Quiz team triumphs

The museum quiz team's knowledge of subjects as diverse as horticulture, vintage TV comedy and American folk music won it first place in the annual Children's Society quiz, held at the Riverside Inn. The team members were thrilled with their Easter-themed chocolate prizes.



Museum chairman Mervyn Harris presented Doreen Ellis with a pot plant and garden token at the stewards' social in January

Saying it with flowers

At the museum stewards' social on 17 January, we presented Doreen Ellis with a small – garden-related – gift to mark her retirement as organiser of the stewards' rota, a role she has undertaken for many years with calm, effective efficiency.

Doreen has been, and still is, an ardent and active supporter of the museum. Her dedicated support has been unstinting and she will continue to steward whenever she can.

She confesses that the 'email age' has passed her by, but recognises that it is a helpful means of keeping stewards advised of when help is needed or information needs to be sent out.

All those present at the social warmly applauded Doreen's outstanding contribution to the museum and I would like to re-echo that now. Thank you very much, Doreen!

MH

Publications group adds more titles

The museum's publications group published five new booklets in 2012. These have been very well received and, altogether, we have sold about 600 copies. The most recent, on The Hall, has proved to be very popular and we have now had to reprint it. It was pleasing to know that Dr Alex Moulton saw the booklet and sent us a message to say he was thrilled with it.

The publication of the booklets was made possible by some generous sponsorship from:

Kingstons Estate Agents, Hanover Management Company, Leigh Park Hotel, Geoffrey M Saxty Estate Agent and Dr Moulton. We shall be looking for new sponsors for further titles.

The group is now considering a programme for the coming year. There are no firm plans yet, but a number of possible subjects have been mentioned, including the Early Wool and Cloth Trade in Bradford, the Roman Villa, Belcombe Court, Saxon Bradford and Bradford's Bridges.

For regularly updated news, pictures, events listings and a wealth of information about the museum and its exhibits, visit our wonderful website: www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk

A breath of fresh air

The air-conditioning machinery in the museum was finally replaced in December of last year. The process was less disruptive than it could have been, despite a delay in finishing the work that was caused by the failure of some parts to turn up on time.

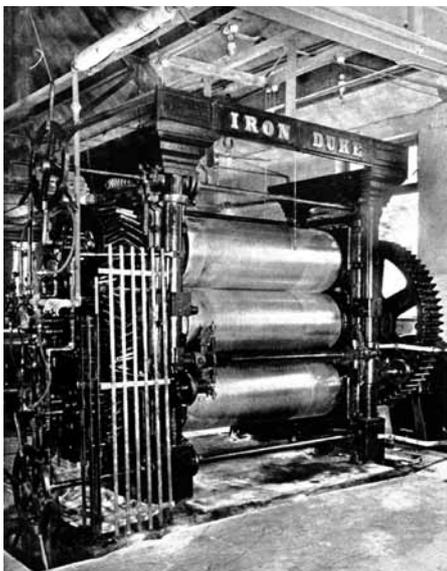
The result is that we shall not freeze in the winter and will keep cool if ever we get a hot summer again. On the other hand, the new machinery doesn't control the relative humidity and we will have to wait to see how this affects the environment.

John Peak

When John Peak died in February, just short of his 90th birthday, the museum lost one of its longest-standing stewards. He was especially to be found stewarding the museum on Sundays with David Stokes. The notes he left in the day-book had rather more literary style than most, always celebrating the enjoyment of the visitors.

We are sorry to report that another of the museum's former stalwarts, Margery Segar, died in March.

Iron Duke plans move on

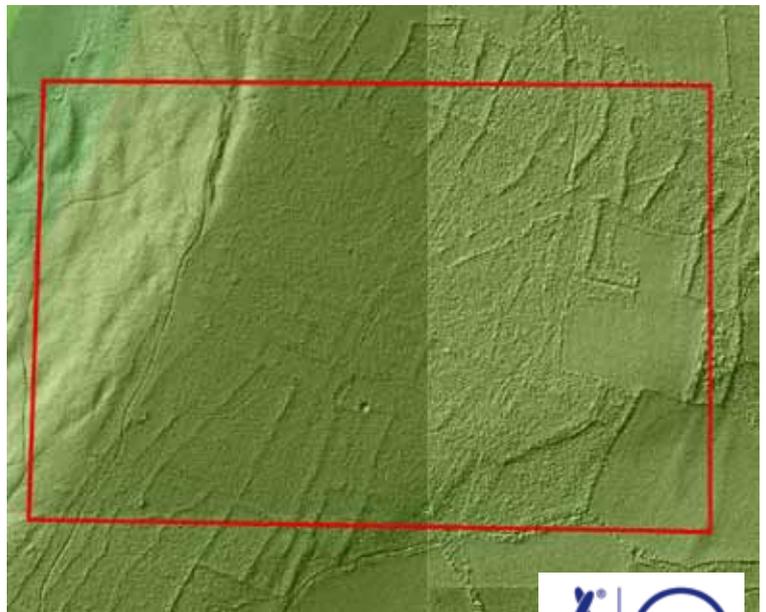


We are delighted to report that Wiltshire Council has granted planning permission for the Iron Duke to be housed on a site north west of Kingston House. The rubber rolling machine was built in 1849 for the Kingston Mill rubber factory, which opened the previous year. At present, it is housed – disassembled – at the Bristol Industrial Museum.

News by email

If you would prefer to receive your copy of the newsletter by email, please contact museum treasurer Chris Dale – at chris@cdale99.fsnet.co.uk

Ancient landscapes revealed by survey



The Lidar survey images reveal ancient field boundaries and other features in remarkable detail



Museum trustee Roy Canham reports on the latest phase of the £10,000 Lidar mapping project, funded by the National Lottery

We have now received our £10,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project to map the ancient landscapes of Bradford on Avon Hundred, and in late December a contract to carry out the Lidar survey was placed with Geomatics (part of the Environment Agency based in Bath). This aerial survey technique maps the landscape with laser beams and can reveal detail of ancient features.

Panic set in on 14 January when I received a signal that the data had been captured three days earlier. We were determined to get a photographic record of each field before vegetation started to grow, so that we could judge down the line just what kind of ground condition the Lidar had encountered. The panic-mode was enhanced by the forecast of snow, certain to obscure everything! But a small band of volunteers rapidly got round the territory and we have better than 90 per cent cover.

Lidar data needs lots of processing, since the aircraft returns with a mass of points that have to be resolved into a regular grid, correlated with the Ordnance Survey national grid. Our

requirement is a grid set at 50cm (0.5m) intervals, which is fine enough to pick up archaeological detail.

It was suggested by staff at Bath that I provide two test areas to check whether the data processing methods were doing the job. I selected a part of Winsley and a section of Inwood near Farleigh Wick, both areas where we know that ancient field-systems are still visible but are hidden by tree-cover.

The image reproduced above, kindly supplied by the Environment Agency shows a large part of Inwood – you can see the woodland edge towards bottom right. Within the wood, the lines of the ancient fields are clearly visible, and on the left you may see the steep slope of the valley side, too steep for ancient cultivation.

This is a very successful result. It gives me hope that we will learn a lot when we have the total Lidar output. I plan to hold a series of meetings – for discussion of progress and also for work – so please get in touch if you would like to be kept informed.

Busy AGM focuses on profile-raising proposals

A well-attended AGM, held on 10 April, heard about the museum's various successes over the past year.

The trustees want to raise the profile of the museum and increase support and membership

during this coming year. Useful ideas on this topic came from a discussion at the end of the meeting.

It was followed by sumptuous food and drink – a legendary feature of the museum's AGM.

Keep up with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BradfordOnAvonMuseum
Do visit the page, 'like' it and share with your Facebook friends!

Study days help group with conservation work

From the chairman



Group member Sue Maude, centre, looks at a sherd, with help from Lorraine Mepham, study day leader, standing; below, Gill Winfield and Jane Mann work on pottery identification

The museum now has a lively research group which is developing a database and archive of the history and archaeology of the Bradford Hundred. Some members are concentrating on discovering ancient field names and their historic connections. Others are attempting to map field systems and other archaeological features in the local landscape. The group also holds occasional discussion sessions for members to share their latest discoveries and interests together.

Some of the group meet on Monday mornings, and have been studying and conserving a significant collection of finds which Adrian Powell, a local archaeologist, has assembled since the 1980s. A large number of these finds, consisting of Iron Age, Roman and medieval, were from field walking and rescue excavation at Budbury Ridge.

Adrian has maintained a watching brief on just about every form of ground disturbance in Bradford on Avon, but has also walked many of the fields in Bradford and Winsley, always taking care to seek permission from the landowner. The result is a wide-ranging collection of archaeological finds offering a unique glimpse into the historic development of the Bradford Hundred.

As part of the archiving of these finds and also of those from the recent excavations at Budbury Manor, some members of the research group recently took part in pottery identification Study Days at Wessex Archaeology, Old Sarum, under the leadership of Lorraine Mepham who is an expert in identifying pottery from archaeological excavations throughout the country.

Sophie Hawke, Jane Mann and Sue Maude all participated in these study days. The pottery identification was based on different types of



local pottery from prehistoric, Iron Age and Roman through to post-medieval dates. We were given many to look at, some of which were from kiln sites such as Savernake (Marlborough), Crockerton (Warminster), Laverstock (Salisbury) and Verwood (Dorset).

Pottery has been in use in Britain since Neolithic times and is the only man-made material which survives unaltered in the ground for that length of time. It can be used for dating evidence, interpreting site function, site status, social and economic change, changes in eating habits, and trade routes.

The study day was extremely helpful to those members of the research group who are currently working on creating a detailed analysis and final report of this large collection of finds from the Budbury area and elsewhere, belonging to Adrian Powell.

CBA Wessex regularly hold study days which are open to the public. Details can be found on their website – <http://www.cba-wessex.org.uk/index.html>

Welcome to the spring edition of our newsletter. Since the publication of the last edition, you will of course all have heard of the death of Dr Alex Moulton, at the age of 92. He was the founding patron of our museum and a remarkable man – an engineer, designer, inventor and founder of the Moulton Bicycle Company in 1962. Many tributes have been paid to him, including one from Sir James Dyson at the 50th anniversary of the founding of Moulton Bicycles last year. Alex's achievements will live on in the treasury of Bradford's heritage.

Our museum's website continues to be a 'beacon of information', thanks to the huge amount of dedicated work that our honorary curator, Roger Clark, puts in to keep it relevant, up-to-date and easy to read. After you've read this newsletter, do make a point of visiting it and reading in more detail about some of the items referred to in this edition. Then go on a virtual exploration of the museum and just be amazed at how much information is there. The museum's site attracts a huge number of hits from people all over the UK and worldwide, and Roger is scrupulous in replying in detail to all enquiries – I know because he kindly copies me his replies. The queries are wide-ranging and can vary from the mundane to the esoteric. I continue to be staggered by the interest shown by people in our beautiful town, and it is brilliant that Roger is nearly always able to give enquirers the information that they seek.

The success of the publications group is evident in this newsletter, as is the awarding of an HLF grant for the Lidar Project, which will explore what lies beneath the ground in an area of land near Winsley. Trustee Roy Canham's archaeological expertise, determination and enthusiasm brought this about, and we all look forward to seeing the outcome of the aerial survey. Exciting news could just be around the corner or, in this case, just below the ground. Remember St Lawrence School's playing field...

There is a lot of activity going on within the research group, and it is attracting more people who want to explore, and catalogue in detail, artefacts which have been found hereabouts.

Future museum premises continues to occupy the minds of the trustees. The need for larger, modern, more prominent and accessible premises becomes more urgent with each passing month. Space to display material to better advantage, work rooms and suitable storage facilities are a few of the more urgent requirements of the museum. We struggle to do what we want, and need, to do with our current facilities. The museum could take a huge leap forward if suitable new premises can be found. We are exploring various options but, if you have any suggestions to make, do let me know

*Mervyn Harris
Chairman*

JM

Dorset visit planned

An outing to Wimborne Museum and Dr Martin Green's Down Farm, Cranborne Chase, is planned, hopefully for a Saturday in June.

Wimborne Museum – <http://www.priest-house.co.uk/index.php> – has a new visitor centre with community space and tearoom, in an attractive garden.

The Down Farm landscape includes parts of the Dorset Cursus and Ackling Dyke, Bronze Age barrows and Roman and Iron Age buildings. It is a rich, multi-period site surrounded by lovely countryside.

If you are interested in joining what promises to be a very enjoyable day out, please contact Jane Mann on 01225 865967 for details.

Dig out your jumble

We're looking for donations for a grand jumble sale in aid of museum funds, to be held on Saturday 20 July at the Masonic Hall in Church Street, from 10am until 2pm. It's the perfect opportunity to declutter for a very good cause. Bring your jumble to the hall from 8.30am on the day, or call Joceline Bury on 01225 867348 if you have items for collection.

Save the date

A mini-conference on the topic of Anglo-Saxon Bradford will be held on Saturday 6 July from 2-5pm at St Laurence School. Look out for more details soon on our website.

Who's who

The museum trustees are:

John Banks: 01225 863134

Roy Canham: 01225 866748

Chris Dale (Hon Treasurer):
01225 862198

Mervyn Harris (Hon Chairman):
01225 863440

Sophie Hawke: 01225 863934

Ivor Slocombe: 01225 862525

Gill Winfield: 01225 868179

Kate Turnbull: 01225 866328

Other roles:

Roger Clark (Hon Curator):
01225 865785

Anne Willis (Hon Secretary):
01225 865865

Joceline Bury
(PR & Newsletter): 01225 867348

Shadows on the landscape



Members of Bradford on Avon museum research group and Imber conservation group on their recent field trip to Cheverell Down

Spotting ancient field boundaries isn't easy, members and friends of the museum research group found on a recent visit to Cheverell Down. You need the right weather, the right light and a break in use of the site – to the west of Salisbury Plain – for military training.

But when the light is right, even novices in the 15-strong party had managed to get their eye in as the sun dropped towards the end of the afternoon. So we were all able to pick out the lynchets – lines of raised or lowered ground – of at least two interlocking Iron Age farming systems.

The Bradford on Avon party, organised by former county archaeologist Roy Canham, was joined by members of the Imber conservation group, who appeared to know every inch of the landscape, right down to which potholes we should try not to step into.

Led by Nigel Cope, they also deployed their expertise with geolocation equipment to help Roy fine-tune the detail of previous attempts to plot the field system on to aerial photographs and old maps.

DM

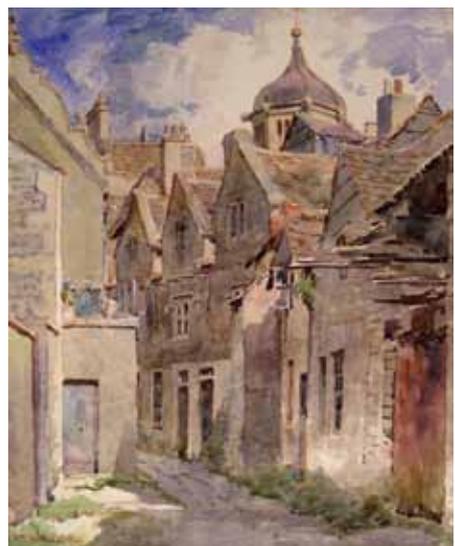
Bradford on Amstel?

We were a bit puzzled when a former Bradford resident told us about an advertisement on the internet for an oil painting of Amsterdam. It was said to be by George Hendrik Breitner (1857-1823), who was a Dutch impressionist and friend of Van Gogh. It was in fact a view of Bradford – of Hang Dog Alley, looking towards Church Street from the Bullpit – despite having "G.H. Breitner Amsterdam" faintly written on the back.

Breitner only visited England once, coming to London in 1897, and, even if the 'Amsterdam' painting looked like his work, he is very unlikely to have visited Bradford. The town can look very foreign from some viewpoints and we have previously seen paintings labelled as Lake Maggiore, Italy.

The picture was quickly sold and we don't know where it has gone: look out for it in the newly reopened Rijksmuseum.

The subject was clearly a popular one – the painting reproduced here is a view dating from around the 1920s of *Hangdog Alley from the*



Bullpit by WH Allen (the original is in Devizes) and we have another similar watercolour from around 1900 on display in the museum.

Bradford on Avon Museum needs you: call Anne Willis on 01225 865856 if you would like to become a member of the Museum Society – or pick up a form in the library or museum