

The Museletter

March/April 2014



A museum fit for the future

As we reported in the last newsletter, Bradford on Avon Museum has been taking part in the Sustainability Pilot Programme funded by the South West Museums Development Programme.

The project has been running since January, and is due to finish at the end of March. Together with Tim Burge, the museums advisory service office for Wiltshire, we have been through the 'self assessment' phase, and we have begun work on our 'improvement plan'. This plan enables us to capture and prioritise tasks to make the Museum more sustainable in the long term.

As a result of our involvement in this programme, we are eligible to apply for a grant to help us to carry out some of the tasks in our

Improvement Plan. We have decided to apply for funding to put together a professional prospectus, which states the Museum's vision and mission, and our ambitions for the future. The aim is for the prospectus to help us to raise our profile in the local area.

As you'll know from previous newsletters, we are continuing to search for new and expanded premises with space to mount temporary exhibitions, and to carry out research, as well as storage space to allow our collection to grow. The new prospectus would help to support any such bid for new premises.

For more information on the sustainability project, please contact Kate Turnbull at turnbullke@googlemail.com or telephone 01225 866328.

Briefly ...

Bradford is still attracting television programme-makers and again the Museum is playing its part. The latest was the first episode of the series Great Canal Journeys, in which husband and wife Timothy West and Prunella Scales call in on a trip along the Kennet & Avon canal. The programme, which was shown on Channel 4 on 10 March, featured an image supplied by the Museum. The programme's makers, Spun Gold, are giving us a generous donation.

After a long wait, we have now signed a lease with Linden Homes and Pentland Estate Management to site the Iron Duke alongside Kingston Road.

We can now move on to design and build the supporting plinth, and then seek funding to refurbish, rebuild and re-site the 19th century calendar machine in Bradford on Avon.

The Iron Duke, built in 1848, was used to roll sheet rubber and cotton together and vulcanise them to make waterproof fabric. This was the actual machine with which Stephen Moulton started the rubber works in Bradford in 1848 and is important not just in Bradford's history, but in the history of technology.

Acting on a tip-off that a set of tools relating to the former Uncles iron foundry in Bradford on Avon were coming up at an auction at Ludlow, the Museum put in a bid and waited with fingers crossed. We are happy to say that we were successful in acquiring these items and will tell you more about them in the next edition of *The Museletter*.

Kingston House option explored

A group of Trustees and Honorary Curator Roger Clark recently viewed Kingston House, to see whether it could provide suitable museum accommodation.

It is a large building on three floors, with its principal entrance sited on the north side facing Kingston Road. Sadly, the only access from the attractive south façade facing Kingston Square is at lower ground level into the cellar area.

The interior has some attractive architectural

features, but it requires major internal refurbishment to become useable.

While the situation of the building is close to the proposed site for the Iron Duke, it would be challenging to attract visitors to it, as it is significantly outside the town's commercial and business centre.

Linden Homes has a potential buyer with a current option to purchase the lease. We will keep a watching brief.

Floods offer up some natural history exhibits

One consequence of the recent floods was that some emergency dredging work was carried out on the river. This meant that large numbers of shells of some freshwater molluscs were dragged out of the water – unfortunately for many of the owners, who were still in residence at the time.

The opportunity was taken to collect a few

for the Museum's collection – a rare foray into the realm of natural history, due to the difficulties of preserving organic materials. Photographs and information about some of these and other mollusc shells from the local environment can be found on the Museum website at: www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/archives/593

U3A geology group enjoys Bradford visit

The Museum hosted a visit on 4 March from Devizes U3A Geology Group, who came to learn something about the local geology in conjunction with a look at the old quarries at Murhill, Winsley.

Roger Clark, the Honorary Curator, entertained them to an illustrated talk and gave them an opportunity to look at some of our

small collection of rock samples and fossils. They were also able to handle some tools used in stone quarrying and masonry, including the giant stone saw known as a frig-bob.

The visitors were generous in their contributions to our donations box – and had perfect weather for their visit to the Murhill quarries.

The trustees are still looking for an honorary secretary. If you would like to help, please contact Mervyn Harris on 01225 863440.

The museum has just produced its latest booklet: *The Domestic Woollen Industry at Bradford-on-Avon*, written by well-known local historian Ken Rogers.

The booklet covers the history of the industry from the mid-13th century to 1790, when the factories largely took over the woollen trade. It's available now, price £3, from the Museum and Ex Libris in the Shambles.

What's On

March/April 2014

Discussion Group

First Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

Our Discussion Group is going from strength to strength. Pam Slocombe's session on Researching Bradford's Buildings – Fieldwork and History, attracted 32 attendees.

The meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Library meeting room, and are FREE to members. Non-members can attend one session before being asked to join.

If you know of someone who isn't a member, do bring them along – it's a great introduction to the Museum. Topics for the next couple of months will be:

Wednesday 7 May

Looking Into Pottery This session will include the opportunity to view pottery sherds under the microscope (led by Gill Winfield).

Wednesday 4 June

An Introduction to the Archaeology of Wiltshire (led by Roy Canham).

If you wish to suggest a topic, or would like to offer to lead a session, please contact museum trustee Kate Turnbull on 01225 866328 or email turnbullke@googlemail.com

Exhibition: Peter Maundrell's Bradford on Avon

We are currently planning an exhibition of photographs by well-known Bradford photographer Peter Maundrell. The exhibition will take place from 12 – 31 May in the Library meeting room. The photographs, largely dating from the 1970s and 1980s, capture views, buildings and everyday life in the town.

Exhibition: First World War Centenary

Thanks to those of you who have been in touch with old photographs, diaries, sketches and other items relating to the First World War – it's been fascinating to see what has been passed down.

We are particularly keen to hear from anyone who has memories of relatives who lived through the Great War, as the Bradford Hundred Memory Bank, our oral history group, would like to record these stories.

Our exhibition takes place from Monday 4 – Sunday 24 August in the Library meeting room, and will cover four themes: The Eve of War, The Front, The Home Front, and Twin Towns. We would love to include some oral history in our exhibition.

If you can contribute in any way, please contact Kate Turnbull at turnbullke@googlemail.com or on 01225 866328.

Community Dig gets under way

The Museum has arranged to excavate on land to the east of the Tithe Barn, near Victory Field.

The dig started on Saturday 29 March, and will continue for up to two weeks, working 9.30am to 4pm each day.

To find us, we are just above the small car park at the end of Pound Lane.

We know little about archaeology in the town, so anything is possible. Near the Tithe Barn we may see signs of activity in the Middle Ages, but it's a shot in the dark.

We plan to investigate other sites in Bradford over the next two years.

All are welcome to try their hand at digging, but volunteers under 16 years old need to be

accompanied by a parent, and all workers need to wear sturdy boots.

If you are interested, please contact Roy Canham – on 01225 866748 or roycanham@btinternet.com – to book a slot, or just call in at the dig anytime for a chat.

● We will be holding a Finds Identification Day on Saturday 5 April to run alongside our Community Dig site. Roy Canham (former Wiltshire county archaeologist), Roger Clark (museum curator), and Sophie Hawke (archaeologist) will be on hand to help identify finds. Bring along any type of find (please note we do not give valuations) to the dig site (just east of the Tithe Barn, near Victory Field) and see anything we have found on the dig.

Membership subscriptions

It's that time of year again when membership subscriptions are due for many of you. If you are not sure whether you are up to date with your subscription, please contact Chris Dale.

If you do not already pay by standing order, please could you consider doing so, as it saves us a lot of work in checking and chasing payments?

If you are a tax payer, please consider filling out a Gift Aid form. This increases the value of your support to the Museum by over a quarter! The Museum Society is a registered charity and is eligible to reclaim

from the Revenue the equivalent of any tax you have paid on your subscriptions and donations.

You can download both forms from the Museum website at www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/membership. Just click the 'PDF Membership Mandate Form' link for the standing order form, and click the 'Gift Aid form' link at the bottom of the screen for the Gift Aid form. Alternatively, you can contact either Chris Dale (01225 862193) or Kate Turnbull (01225 866328) for paper copies of these forms.

Useful numbers

Museum trustees:

John Banks: 863134

Roy Canham: 866748

Chris Dale (Hon Treasurer): 862198

Mervyn Harris (Hon Chairman): 863440

Sophie Hawke: 863934

Ivor Slocombe: 862525

Kate Turnbull (Membership): 866328

Gill Winfield: 868179

Roger Clark (Hon Curator): 865785

Mary Clark (Stewards' organiser): 865785

Gillian King (Stewards' organiser): 866387

Joceline Bury (PR & Newsletter): 867348

Visit the museum online

Details of upcoming Museum events and news are posted on the website, Facebook and Twitter.

The website – www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk – also contains a wealth of information

on all sorts of topics relating to the Bradford Hundred.

We have a Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BradfordOnAvonMuseum. And we're also on Twitter at [@BoAMuseum](https://twitter.com/BoAMuseum)