

The Museletter

May/June 2014



Miss Christopher – aged two



Many older Bradford residents will remember Angela Christopher, who was the final owner of the chemist shop which now forms the centrepiece of the museum. This delightful portrait is a studio photograph of her at the age of two.

It is part of a small collection of family photographs that arrived earlier this year from a relative of the Christophers in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.



Museum trustee
Gill Winfield at
the Summer
Jamboree in
Westbury Gardens

Spreading the word

More people in Bradford on Avon now know we have a museum – and where it is, thanks to trustees and volunteers who have been setting out our stall at local events.

Trustees Gill Winfield and Kate Turnbull, and chairman Mervyn Harris, were all at our stall for the Summer Jamboree in Westbury House Gardens on 7 June. Conversations with the general public ranged from garden finds and Saxon statues to geography and pottery.

Mervyn also had a good chat with a lady from the Norden dance group who were performing with local morris dancers.

The previous month, Kate and Gill ran the stall at the Christ Church May Fayre on bank holiday Monday, 5 May.

We'll be taking our display to a number of fetes and other events this summer – for details of these, and other upcoming events, see the listings on the back page.

Baptism and burial registers shed light on social history

The Museum has just been given a complete transcript of the Baptism and Burial Registers for Bradford on Avon covering the period 1566 to 1837. Obviously these are of particular interest to family historians but a great deal can be gleaned from them about other aspects of the town's history. Some periods have much more detail than others but a quick survey reveals some interesting items.

Not much has been written about the involvement of Bradford in the Civil War and whether there was any actual fighting in the

town. But for 1643 the burial register records the death of three soldiers, one of whom died on the bridge.

We all know the story of Jenner and his discovery of vaccination for small pox around 1800. But it is difficult now to comprehend the extent of the illness before that time. The burial records for the period 1710 to 1734 give information about the causes of death. There was a serious outbreak of small pox in 1711-2: from March 1711 to April 1712, 75 people died from it. It then seems to have died down but a few

years later it flared up even more seriously with 111 deaths between September 1720 and the end of 1721.

The end of the 18th century was particularly bad for child deaths. In the three years 1780 to 1782, there were 297 burials of which 105 (more than one third) were children.

A more thorough analysis of the records will, I am sure, reveal further information about the town's history, not least about its population before the censuses began in the 19th century.

Ivor Slocombe

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

From the chairman

Our museum is entering a new phase of its existence. Since opening in 1990, a lot has been achieved, and we can be proud of that. But we now face the challenge of finding larger, suitably adapted, more accessible and visible premises, which will enable the museum to meet its needs, and that of our locality, in a more effective, transparent and sustainable way.

A key theme will be to expand what the museum can offer to all its users. The potential to deliver positive, measurable, commercial benefits to our town is there. So too is the potential to offer educational engagement and fulfilment across a wide spectrum of age groups. The rich cultural heritage of our locality attracts exploration and enjoyment. We have unique elements, including the story of the rubber industry; Roman villas and Saxon remains; extraordinary geology, and history extending back several millennia – the list could continue.

Delivering a service, of which we can all be proud, requires our museum to be run in a sustainable way and according to modern standards. Our museum's accreditation status is due for renewal this year. This used to be seen as a 'hoop to jump through', but it is now a dynamic, continuous process that requires regular revision. Engagement with our 'users' (visitors, membership, supporters, advisors, etc) and delivery of national standards appropriate to the size of our museum, are key components of modern accreditation. Protocols and processes must now be set up, which have to be tested against the museum's core vision: "To explore, understand and share the rich heritage of the Bradford Hundred with the community and visitors."

A lot of work on sustainability and accreditation needs to be done. But we are blessed in having a cadre of committed, competent supporters, who are able to take on these challenges. If you would like to know more about this, or offer your skills and help, do contact us for more information.

Mervyn Harris

Bob Butler

We were saddened to learn of the death of Bob Butler, one of our long-serving stewards.

Bob and his wife Janet moved to Bradford on Avon in 1987, after Bob retired as head of art at Haileybury College, in Hertfordshire.

He soon joined the Monday Group of artists, where he very much enjoyed portrait painting – and was always delighted when the sitter liked their portrait enough to buy it. He was also a skilled landscape artist, with the canal and the boats a favourite subject.

Bob enjoyed his stewarding duties, and never lost his interest in the museum and all that went on there. We will miss him very much.

Auction find provides industrial history link



Brass working tools acquired by the museum from an auction in Shropshire

Bradford on Avon once had three iron and brass foundries that were producing many of the cast iron inspection covers that can still be seen in the streets of the town today.

The process of casting in molten metal starts with making a wooden pattern which is used to make a shaped hollow in a two-part mould of sand. The box of brass tools pictured here

– which the museum purchased at auction in Ludlow, Shropshire, in March – were used in the smoothing and shaping of the sand moulds before the two parts were put together and the metal poured in.

The museum is grateful to John Berrett, a Trowbridge auctioneer, for telling us about the sale.

Roger Clark



Iron Duke shelter design is chosen

The museum and Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust invited submissions from two local architects – Richard Swann of Bruges Tozer and Sarah Gibson of LaBox – to design a 'shelter' for the Iron Duke, with the purpose of providing some protection from the elements for an outdoor exhibit.

Both submissions were innovative and different. The chosen design is shown, and we think this offers a clear but subtle combination of weather protection and visitor engagement with the Iron Duke, a callendering machine used at Kingston Mill.

The process of doing a site survey and building a plinth will now begin.

Community dig uncovers ancient features close to Tithe Barn

Our first community dig was a great success, attracting a great deal of interest and 'paving the way' for further excavation of the area, says museum trustee Roy Canham

The Museum Research Group chose for its first excavation the small field between the Tithe Barn and Victory Field. Museum Trustee Sophie Hawke had previously carried out a geophysical survey of the field, which indicated a deposit of stone running parallel to the east boundary wall.

When we examined this area, we noticed a slight bank running up to the wall, and visible also in Victory Field (pic 1). Archaeologists get very excited about earthworks like this, partly because features that are barely visible are often ancient, having been flattened long after they have fallen out of use. So this bank was an obvious choice for some digging.

In trench 2, the limestone rubble which showed on the geophysics was exposed (pic 2). If you look top right, you will see a single flat stone projecting from the wall. Gareth Slater suggested that this is the remains of a stile, subsequently blocked. This indicates that the bank was already in existence when the wall was built, something confirmed in the north section of trench 1 (pic 3). Here the



foundation trench of the wall (marked with an arrow), cuts through bank material.

Why is this of interest? The wall forming the field boundary is depicted on an 18th century map, and seems to be part of the original layout of Barton Farm. It is now much repaired but in its original state it is of the same build as the wall running from the tithe barn at the bottom of the same field, and both walls are well built from well-shaped blocks or 'ashlar', not limestone rubble. So there is some likelihood that the wall is of medieval origin, perhaps 14th century like the tithe barn.

The implication is that the wall-builders were re-using a pre-existing boundary, not unusual. But some boundary – measuring the bank's full extent – gives a width of about 9m, and the work in trench 1 revealed that its western margin had been defined or strengthened by two phases of retaining wall (pic 4).

This bank therefore is not just a field or property boundary. In its day it was substantial, and looks like some kind of defensive feature, and our next objective must be to find out whether it was flanked by ditch.

We also need better dating evidence. At present we have small fragments of crude pottery from the bank material. At first glance these sherds could be either prehistoric or Saxon, but they are so small that I suspect they could have been in the ground when the bank was built and accidentally incorporated.

More interesting is the presence of two masonry fragments which are most likely to have come from a Roman building in the area. This suggests the bank is later Roman or, more likely, Saxon. We need to do more digging!

It was great to see so many helpers and visitors. If you want to help out on future digs, let me know so I can make sure you get an opportunity. This work was aided by a grant from Bradford on Avon Town Council, which is much appreciated.

Roy Canham

01225 866748; roycanham@btinternet.com



Discussion Group

First Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

The museum Discussion Group continues to cover a wide range of subjects. Since the last *Museletter*, we have had a talk from Jonathan Falconer on researching military ancestors, and Gill Winfield has discussed the work she and other members of the Research Group have been doing in 'looking into pottery'.

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.

As this *Museletter* goes to press, the subject for Discussion Group on Wednesday 2 July is yet to be confirmed. This will be posted on the website, Facebook and Twitter, and emailed around to all members on email, once we have the details.

There will be no Discussion Group meeting in August, due to the holidays, but we will be back again on Wednesday 3 September.

In order to continue providing sessions on wide range of topics, we need your help! If you would like to suggest a topic, or would like to offer to lead a session, please contact Kate Turnbull (Museum Trustee) on 01225 866328 or at turnbullke@gmail.com

WWI exhibition takes shape

Thanks to articles in previous issues of the *Museletter*, and our recent appeal in the *Wiltshire Times*, we have had several offers of items and family history relating to the First World War.

We would like to thank all those 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 still 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 and use them as part of the exhibition.

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.

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

Millennium Embroidery on show in Bath

The museum has been invited to display the Millennium Embroidery in Bath from 1-16 August, as part of the Quaker Tapestry Exhibition in Bath Abbey and the Quaker Meeting House in York Street. Anyone involved in making the embroidery is invited to the Launch at 4pm on Friday 1 August.

Fetes and fairs

Our first 'outings' of the year were to the Christ Church May Fayre on the early May bank holiday Monday, and the Summer Jamboree in Westbury House Gardens on 7 June. We are hoping to have a stall at many more fêtes and fairs over the summer, including:

- Saturday 5 July: Holy Trinity Church Street Market
- Saturday 19 July: Westwood Church Fête, 2 – 4:30pm, Westwood Manor

There are many more local fêtes over the summer, and although we won't be able to go to all of them, we are hoping to add a few more to this list.

We will have portable objects on display, pottery sherds, museum information and our publications.

We want to raise our profile in the community, but to do this we need your help! If you could spare an hour or two to help run the stall at any of these events, please contact Kate Turnbull (Museum Trustee) on 01225 866328 or at turnbullke@gmail.com

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

Home needed for roll of honour

All the refurbishment work at St Margaret's Hall means there is no longer space for the First World War Roll of Honour, which used to be displayed in the foyer. Unfortunately, there is no room either to display or store it at the museum at present, so the Town Council is keen to find a home for it. If anyone has any ideas about an appropriate place for the panel, they should contact the town clerk.

The panel itself is an intriguing object. Museum trustee Ivor Slocombe explains: "The panel is not a list of those actually killed in the First World War – that memorial is in Westbury House Gardens. I understand this panel was rescued from the Liberal Club.

"I was always puzzled by it because it is completely full of names as if it was done in one

go. But if you look closely you will see that the names in the first few columns are in alphabetical order and the rest are in random order. The answer seems to be that this is a list of those who served in the armed forces in the First World War, not just those who were killed.

"The panel must have been started in 1915-16 and listed in alphabetical order all those who had joined up by that date. Then names were added after that date as other men joined up. The fact that the list finishes, neatly covering the panel, is not a coincidence, as we know that there was a second panel which was lost.

"So it is not a memorial to those who were killed in the war, but an incomplete list of those who served in the war."

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)