

The Museletter

January/February 2015



Tithe map sheds light on land use

One of the mysteries in the development of our local landscape is the location of the open field system of the medieval period. This method of farming in narrow strips – ‘ridge-and-furrow’ – often leaves clear traces, especially on land that has been maintained as pasture in recent centuries. But around Bradford there is little to see.

One source of information is the tithe map. This dates from 1841 and although ownership patterns and farming methods had changed much by then, the size and shape of many of the fields indicate land which was being farmed in the Middle Ages. The long narrow fields represent the enclosure of blocks or furlongs of the traditional strip-field arrangement – marked in green on the image.

So the tithe map gives us a start on mapping medieval land use. Another source of information has now come to light. At a recent talk I outlined the problem of mapping the topography of Bradford. The landform is complex, made more difficult to interpret by quarrying and the close-packed array of buildings. We need a clearer view to assess where

early settlement may have been located. The Geomatics Group, part of the Environment Agency, is willing to provide without charge copies of their Lidar data for projects undertaken by non-profit organisations, and have kindly supplied the Lidar ‘tiles’ that cover the town. We used this aerial survey technique in our 2013 landscape study and it was very successful. Ritchie Brown once again undertook the processing and further work is needed to get at the topography, but the big surprise is the remarkable view of the medieval landscape that has emerged.

If you compare with the tithe map detail in green, the Lidar confirms the interpretation of the narrow fields, but extends the plot of ridge-and-furrow substantially. This is your chance to undertake some archaeological fieldwork. Winter conditions of low-angled sunlight, short grass and freshly ploughed fields are perfect for detecting eroded earthworks. You might like to check for traces of these ancient fields. If you get a good photo, please send me a copy!

Roy Canham
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Pevsner historian to give buildings lecture

Architectural historian Julian Orbach, who recently moved to live in Bradford on Avon, is revising the Pevsner Architectural Guides, and is currently working on the Wiltshire volume. He has kindly agreed to give a talk for the museum on the buildings of Bradford.

The talk is on Wednesday 18 March, at 7.30pm, in St Margaret’s Hall.

Tickets are £5 members/£8 non-members and are available from the Museum or by contacting Roy Canham or Kate Turnbull (see Contacts section on page 2).

What’s new?

The museum reopened on Wednesday 14 January after the winter closure, and we had 73 visitors on the first four days.

There are a number of new exhibits on show – as usual, Roger Clark has been busy over the winter break, organising new displays, repairing and repainting.

In the corridor is a small case of items that relate to the J & T Beaven leather and glove works in Holt, including examples of gloves and sample swatches of leathers.

A new top shelf has been added to the display of miscellanea behind the glass wall in the corridor, with new exhibits comprising a tin-plate jelly mould; a surgical instrument steriliser from the former barber shop of Ernie Sadd in Silver Street; a footstool made from roof timbers of the old medieval St Katharine’s church in Holt, with a medallion set into it commemorating the new chancel in 1891, and a stoneware lidded jar with the name of someone in Holt.

The Roman case has new graphics and some new objects, notably a bronze bow brooch that was found by Museum Trustee Roy Canham (see the website: <http://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/archives/9118>).

In the left-hand side of the blue case is the box of tools that were purchased at auction Ludlow, Shropshire, last year. They are mostly made of brass and were used and perhaps made in the Uncles iron foundry in Trowbridge Road for shaping and smoothing sand moulds ready for casting the hot metal.

The top of the blue case is developing into a washday display, with a bucket, enamelled washing boiler, washboard, soap blocks, cast iron flat irons and an old electric iron.

Inside the chemist shop there is a new rack for displaying the books and postcards that are for sale and an up-to-date price list. The ‘reference department’ has been tidied up and given a new top.

One of the pharmacy prescription books is now again in the case with the weights and measures: this is a ‘prop’ for Ivor Slocombe’s talks on the pharmacy. Unfortunately this has displaced photos of the Christopher family for the time being, although there is still one of Angela Christopher.

There are also some other small changes around the museum for you to spot.

Discussion Group

First Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

Discussion Group covers a wide range of subjects, and if you haven't been along to a session yet, do try it out this year.

The meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Library Meeting Room, and are FREE to museum 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.

The first two sessions of 2015 are both led by authorities in their fields. Anne Willis and David Godwin are both local bell ringers: Anne is captain of Westwood Tower, and David captain of Bradford Tower. Brian Davison is a former Senior Inspector of Ancient Monuments at English Heritage, and has written a number of books on the subject of castles.

Upcoming sessions will be:

WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY

A History of the Church Bells of Bradford on Avon, led by Anne Willis and David Godwin

WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH

Castles, led by Brian Davison

WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL

TBC (once confirmed, details will be posted on the website, Facebook and Twitter, and emailed round to all members on email)

WEDNESDAY 6 MAY

The current restoration of the Somersetshire Coal Canal at Timsbury & Paulton Basins to Radford, led by Derrick Hunt

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@googlegmail.com

Briefly ...

A shelter design for the Iron Duke callendering machine has been chosen and will be submitted for planning approval shortly. The joint project by the Museum and Preservation Trust to restore it and re-site it back in Bradford is likely to cost upwards of £45,000. A preliminary grant enquiry has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to help with the cost. Additional funding may be required, besides the £10,000 already donated by Dr Alex Moulton. If all goes well, the project could be completed by the end of this year

Following 2014's successful community digs, further excavation in Hen Field/Victory Field is planned this April, to investigate traces of possible Saxon buildings found previously.

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

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

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

Additional office holders:

Roger Clark (Hon Curator): 865785

Mary Clark (Stewards' organiser): 865785

Gillian King (Stewards' organiser): 866387

Joceline Bury (PR & Newsletter): 867348

Test your local knowledge

The entertainment at the museum stewards' new year social event in January included a light-hearted quiz. The trustees thought other museum members might enjoy testing their general knowledge – so here goes with the first section of the quiz, ten questions all about Bradford on Avon. We'll include part two in the next edition of *The Museletter*. Answers are at the bottom of this page.

1. Where do the paint colours 'dark stone' and 'light stone' appear in Bradford on Avon?
2. Bradford on Avon town bridge has a number of arches. How many?
3. Cyprinidae, Eleotridae and Ptereleotridae are all family names for what?

4. Whose painting, *The Parish Clerk*, depicts Edward Orpin, of Church Street?

5. Who wrote the 1990 Bradford on Avon community play, *Under the Fish and Over the Water*?

6. What is the Iron Duke?

7. The Town Club in Market Street (the building, not the members) played a part in which religious movement?

8. Which eponymous weapons inventor lived at Midway Manor, near Wingfield?

9. Which saint is often portrayed holding a gridiron, the instrument of his martyrdom?

10. Which 1980s television drama series featured the Tith Barn as the great hall of Nottingham Castle?

Save the date: the museum AGM will be held on Wednesday 25 March at 7.30pm in the Library Meeting Room. Come and enjoy delicious refreshments!

Quiz answers

1. The railway station – they are the heritage colours used to repaint the station buildings and footbridge; 2. 9; 3. Gudgcon; 4. Thomas Gainsboroughs; 5. Peter Terson; 6. A callendering machine, used in the rubber industry; 7. Methodism – both John and Charles Wesley preached there; 8. Maj Gen Henry Shrapnel; 9. St Laurence; 10. HTV's *Robin of Sherwood*