

# The Museletter

March/April 2015



## AGM honours stalwarts

Thirty-six members filled the Library Meeting Room for our 25th Anniversary AGM. It was an evening packed with reports, updates, new information, questions, voting, presentations, wine and delicious 'eats'. The turnout was impressive, as was the engagement everyone had with all that took place.

In recognition of their unstinting support and work for the museum over 25 years, including their time as trustees and office holders, Mervyn presented John Banks and Doreen Ellis with framed citations of their new role as vice-presidents. Both have retired from active involvement in the museum but will still be kept fully informed of museum activities and can act in an advisory capacity if they wish. Both were delighted to be honoured in this way, and were warmly applauded by the members present.

The meeting covered a wide range of subjects, including an update on our accreditation application and the publication of a prospectus.

The museum's lease in the library ends in June. A new seven-year lease has been negotiated with Wiltshire Council to continue on our present site, but we will have to contribute a minimum of £1,100 a year from July.

The Silver Street premises, an invaluable asset used regularly by the Museum Research Group, is being sold in April. We have not been charged for using the building, but the new owner may require us to leave – and at the very least we will have to pay for electric and business rates amounting to £350 and £600 a year, respectively. An urgent search is on to find replacement premises. Please let us know of any possible alternative sites.



▲ Doreen Ellis and John Banks

Income for 2014 was close to the 2013 level, with shop and book sales showing strong growth.

Acquisitions continue to arrive – Roger displayed an impressive large metal AA town entrance sign which advertised Bradford on Avon's attractions to visitors.

Exhibitions during the year included the Maundrell photos, the First World War and the Beau Street coin hoard in Bradford, Millennium embroidery in Bath and Lidar in Trowbridge. There were archaeological digs at Budbury and Barton Farm, and four new titles were added to the museum's booklet list.

As always, new stewards are very welcome: contact Gillian King or Mary Clark if you can spare even a couple of hours a month.

*Mervyn Harris*

## Mystery of Roman coin discovery

James Vincent of J Alex Brown hardware store recently showed Museum Research Group members two Roman coins found by his grandfather near Priory Barn. The Ordnance Survey map of 1889 records the discovery of Roman coins at this location, and the date of discovery is given as 1818, clearly an earlier discovery.

The coins are Roman silver denarii of the Republican period, probably dating to 50-100BC. Coins of this date are not casual losses. They are normally found as part of coin hoards of much later date, deposited during the Roman rule of Britain (AD43-410). It appears people hung on to the older coins for their special value, and kept them with the family savings.

It looks therefore as if there is, or was, a Roman coin hoard buried near Priory Barn, and parts of it have come to light on two separate occasions. Coin hoards are very interesting because people tend to bury them in times of trouble. Distribution maps of hoards by date show the impact of seaborne raiders attacking different parts of Roman Britain at different times.

For us, this putative hoard indicates a Roman establishment nearby. Not perhaps a person from the St Laurence School Roman villa, but more likely the owner of a Roman house or farm in the river valley, who climbed the wooded slope to bury his or her life savings in a secret location. Sadly, the fact that the hoard was never recovered suggests that this person met a grim fate. *RC*

## 2015 subscriptions are now due

**Museum subs for 2015 are now due. Can you help your museum's hard-pressed finances?**

At our recent AGM, it was explained that our running costs for this and subsequent years will rise by approximately £2,000 – higher outgoings under our new library lease, plus rates/electric for the Silver Street premises for as long as we are able to stay. We've not had to pay any of these before, so this is a huge increase.

After a full discussion, the AGM generously proposed that members' subscriptions should be raised. Levels are currently £10 individual and £15 family and were set many years ago – but still a bargain! The trustees have to set sub rates, so will consider this at their next meeting.

A rough calculation indicates that if all members, including life members and overdue subscription members, added £5 to their subs level payment this year, the museum would receive an extra £1,200, covering a big chunk of our additional running costs. Gift Aid adds a further 20 per cent.

**What can you do to help? Here are SIX actions we invite you to take:**

1. **Pay your relevant subscription now and, if you possibly can, add on a minimum gift of £5 to your subscription level.**
2. **Sign a Gift Aid declaration if you possibly can.** You can backdate subs for four years.
3. **Set up a standing order for your annual subscription.** This reduces admin for you and us.
4. **Pay subs to our new Lloyds Bank a/c – sort code: 30 98 75; account no: 50243560.** A new standing order form is enclosed.
5. **Check with Chris if your subs are up-to-date (contact details over page).** As well as paying the current subscription, you may like to consider paying some of the overdue balance.
6. **Ask for any forms/information you need (contact details over page).**

We look forward to your support, as always, because our town deserves a good museum, which it has. The museum is free to enter, run very efficiently and at low cost, thanks to our dedicated cadre of volunteers. Our 25th Anniversary is here. The next 25 years beckons. We are planning for that already!

Thank you very much indeed.

*Chris, Kate, Mervyn*

# Discussion Group

First Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm

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.

Sessions held so far this year have been A History of the Church Bells of Bradford on Avon, led by Anne Willis and David Godwin, Castles of the Norman Conquest, led by Brian Davison, and Trowbridge: a most unlikely County Town, led by Ivor Slocombe. Anne and David's session was full of fascinating facts, Brian's session challenged our perceptions of Norman castle-building, and Ivor's talk focused on the interesting story of how Trowbridge, of all places, became the county town of Wiltshire.

Upcoming sessions will be:

**WEDNESDAY 6 MAY:** The current restoration of the Somersetshire Coal Canal at Timsbury & Paulton Basins to Radford, led by Derrick Hunt.

Information on future sessions will be added to the website, Facebook page and Twitter once confirmed, as well as being included in the Museletter.

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@googlemail.com](mailto:turnbullke@googlemail.com)

## Budbury discoveries revealed

An intriguing evening about the Budbury area was held in March for a small group of local residents at 4 Budbury Place.

Led by Roy Canham, a power point presentation was given of the Museum Research Group's archive and excavation data to show various features which had been discovered from 1969 to 2013.

It was hoped that the residents might recognise particular aspects of Adrian Powell's finds, as many of those present have lived at Budbury Ridge and the Rug Factory area since the houses were built or renovated. Enthusiastic reactions and interest ensued!

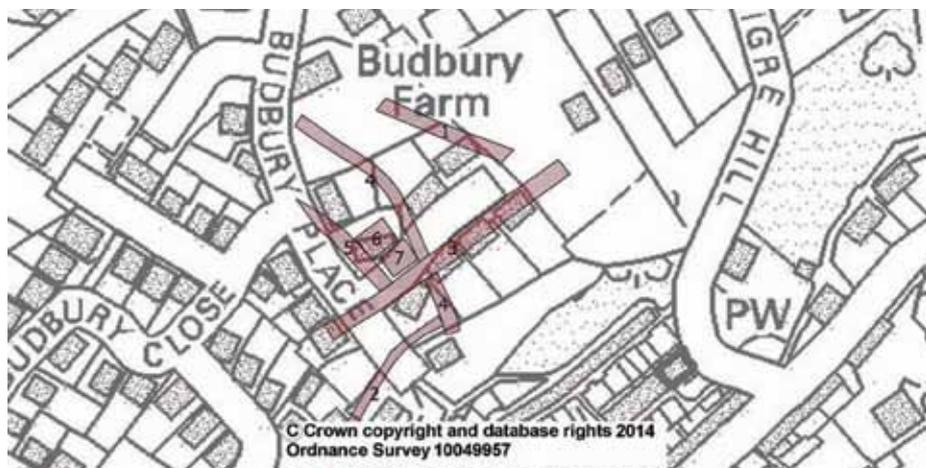
Features shown were a possible Bronze Age pit with large pottery fragments, a probable Roman temple site as identified by Mark Corney and Iron Age hill fort ditches.

Further excavations and a garden survey of the area are in the pipeline and it is hoped that another such evening will take place for a wider Budbury audience.



▲ A sample of the pottery found in 1989. This material is highly significant. It suggests occupation of the Budbury promontory before the Iron Age hillfort was constructed. Pits like this often occur in large numbers and there would have been prehistoric dwellings nearby. Even where topsoil has been removed during building development, pits and ditches still survive because they are deep, down-cut features.

The Budbury residents who attended the evening are now gardening with keen eyes! *Jane Mann*



▲ This plan shows the full set of features found at Budbury Ridge. Item 4 is the trackway described above, and 5 is the ditch which lines up with the Iron Age ditch found in Jane's garden and is, we believe, part of the Budbury hillfort.

## Popular talk

More than 100 people turned out for Julian Orbach's lecture on the Buildings of Bradford at St Margaret's Hall on Wednesday 18 March. It was a fascinating evening, and we received lots of positive feedback after the event.

Julian was an excellent speaker – he talked us through important buildings and key features of the frontages of Bradford's buildings, and entertained us with numerous anecdotes.

After the talk, many people stayed to chat, and buy the books that were available from the Museum, Wiltshire Buildings Record, and Preservation Trust 'stalls'. It was a hugely enjoyable evening and a lot of money was raised for the museum from ticket and booklet sales.

## Secret garden open

Jane and Peter Mann will be opening their garden at 4 Budbury Place on Sunday 28 June, as part of the Secret Gardens event, which this year is in aid of the museum. There will be artefacts and illustrations of the excavations on view, and the garden will be open from 2-6pm.

## New trustee

Peter Mann has been appointed as a new museum trustee. He is a committed museum supporter and we welcome him as a trustee.

## Volunteers' Day

The museum will be taking part in Bradford Volunteers' Day on Sunday 7 June. This should be a good opportunity to attract new members – and especially some extra stewards. We do need people to run the stall – please contact Mervyn if you can help.

Museum trustees:

**Roy Canham:** 866748

**Chris Dale** (Hon Treasurer): 862198

**Mervyn Harris** (Hon Chairman): 863440

**Sophie Hawke:** 863934

**Peter Mann:** 865967

**Ivor Slocombe:** 862525

**Kate Turnbull** (Membership): 866328

**Gill Winfield:** 868179

Additional office holders:

**John Banks** (Vice President)

**Doreen Ellis** (Vice President)

**Roger Clark** (Hon Curator): 865785

**Mary Clark** (Stewards' organiser): 865785

**Gillian King** (Stewards' organiser): 866387

**Joceline Bury** (PR & Newsletter): 867348