

Bradford on Avon Museum

The *Museletter*



Autumn 2018

www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk

Anyone for tea?

A recent new acquisition for the Museum's collection is this four-piece silver-plate tea set. Each piece is engraved with the initials H.J.T. and the teapot's base has been engraved "Presented to H.J. Taylor Esqr. by Fellow Townsmen Bradford-on-Avon May 20th 1931".

Harold John Taylor was a member of a family who ran a number of businesses in Bradford in the 19th and 20th centuries. He became the manager of the wine, beer and spirit merchants Thomas & Emanuel Taylor after his father died around 1914. The business had begun, in the building that is the Bunch of Grapes public house, as chemists from which they developed the wine trade, building a big new shop and store on the other side of Silver Street in about 1880.

He seems to have retired in 1931 and probably moved away, leaving the business in the hands of another person and the original building as the pub, under its first landlord, Frederick Greenland. He evidently had a role in the public life of the town after too, resulting in the presentation of the tea set by Erlysman Pinckney JP, Chairman of the Urban District Council, at a special dinner in the Town Hall.

The tea set was given to the Freemasons by Roger Durston, now deceased, who ran the shop after Taylor. Following an enquiry a few months ago related to the will of Joan Taylor, probably HJT's daughter, the Masons decided that it was nothing to do with them and presented it to the Town Council, who suggested that the Museum would be an appropriate place for it.

Some research needs to be done into Taylor's involvement with the UDC.



Acquisition of a clock, built by a Bradford on Avon clockmaker, will appear in the next Museletter.

Westbury Heritage

I visited Westbury's Heritage Centre, with a group of Westbury Rotarians, at the end of October. Westbury has a significant cultural heritage, which isn't always obvious. Sited on the ground floor of a former shop on the High Street, the Centre aims to tell the story of Westbury's past and raise the profile of its heritage. It is staffed by volunteers and supporters of the Westbury Heritage Society, an organisation with charitable status which has received HLF grants for past projects. The Centre's rent is paid by the Town Council, but the Society gets income from visitor donations, sales from the shop, member subscriptions, profit from talks and exhibitions, plus occasional donations. It has a website, www.westburyheritagesociety.org.uk, and publishes a Newsletter.

The Centre recently featured on the BBC's Repair Shop programme, which helped to mend the broken arm of a 300kg cast iron statue of Hercules, which once graced the beam engine at Bitham Mill. It was broken following a fall but, having been expertly repaired, it is now proudly back on display in the Centre's shop.

The Heritage Society's Autumn Newsletter featured several events and achievements. Julian Orbach gave a talk about Westbury's historic buildings during the town's Festival. The town also took part in the national Heritage Open Days scheme, where access is given to places that aren't normally open to the public. An historic photographic exhibition was arranged in All Saints Church, as part of the Westbury Festival and, in conjunction with Wiltshire Family History Society, a special event was held in October to help people trace their ancestors. The Newsletter also reported that a member had spotted an invalid carriage in Sandringham Motor Museum which has been built especially for George VI by the Westbury firm of Carters. It was powered by a 36 volt battery, could travel at 8 mph and cost £327! Similar carriages were made for Edward VII and George V. The firm was established in 1850 and was last in Westbury near Bitham Mill.

The Heritage Centre has a significant range of reference books, maps and

photographs which visitors can browse through. It stores a lot of resource material and artefacts that aren't on display. Sadly, the building is not well built and has no environmental control, which has precluded the Heritage Centre from acquiring Museum Accreditation. However, I was impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm of the volunteers who, despite various constraints, are determined to deliver a valuable service to the Westbury community, on a very limited budget.

Westbury's industry and employment was traditionally based on woollen manufacturing, glove making, iron ore mining and the railways. In the C20, cement manufacturing came to dominate the town - literally in the case of the cement works chimney. Now there is a thriving Trading Estate, with a new one being built nearby which, with other smaller ones, offers a wide range of small and medium-size businesses for employment and services in the area. Like Bradford on Avon, it has been promised a by-pass for decades and, like us, still hasn't got one. Plus ca change!

Mervyn Harris

CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

Would you like to help run our Museum? Do you know someone who might?

We are always looking for ways to improve our Museum and widen the scope of what we can offer our visitors and our community. We are seeking two new officers, one to have a particular role in education, liaising with schools, and using the museum's resources to stimulate curiosity and learning about our town and the Bradford Hundred. The second role is to identify and plan events that will present the Museum's work more widely and help raise its profile. These office holders would work with, and be supported by, the current Trustees.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in either of these roles, please contact Valerie Holden 01225-869159, or mail to: vjholden@gmail.com

Elizabeth Grace Hignell 1911 - 2001

Elizabeth (Beth) Hignell came to Bradford on Avon in 1943, a refugee from the bombing in Bristol, and for the rest of her life lived at number 7 St Margaret's Street. Information in her election address of 1959, when she stood unsuccessfully for election to the Urban District Council, tells us that Beth ran her own business in Bristol and was one of the first women to be invited to join the Bristol Chamber of Commerce. She later worked as a Welfare Officer and for the Ministry of Health. Beth took a keen interest in local affairs and from 1959 to 1974 she kept a series of scrapbooks initially entitled "it makes you spit", although she later dropped the title. For the most part her books contained press cuttings from the Times and News (later to be the Wiltshire Times) interspersed with cuttings from other newspapers and occasional personal documents such as invitations to local events. Her selection represents some of the noteworthy issues of the day and in particular articles and letters making the case for preservation of the historic cottages that were at the time threatened with demolition. They also show how the conflict between preservation and new build was played out in the town, and especially at the then Urban District Council. Individuals are mentioned when their antics and comments were seen by the reporters to be newsworthy and the cuttings present

a fascinating view of the arguments for and against.

The first page of the first scrap book contains a report out-lining the conservation debates and the formation of the Bradford on Avon Preservation Society. Beth was especially active in seeking, unsuccessfully, to save the cottages in St Margaret's Hill and it was her conviction that the character of the town needed to be preserved that led to her election in 1963 as Vice-Chairman of the Preservation Society.

She recorded a wide range of subjects including the activities of the Urban District and County Councils, local business and the people involved, floods and snow and the occasional accident and misdemeanour. Saving the Kennet and Avon canal, then dry from the town wharf to Dundas, has a mention. There are photographs showing new homes for the elderly and pictures showing proposed or actual physical changes.

What emerges from this selective information is a town make up that is very different from today. The Urban District is given a high profile as are the planning activities of the County with the councils frequently in conflict on how Bradford on Avon should determine its future. There are photographs that show the creation of the St Margaret's Hall car park and construction of the

footbridge together with frequent references to "the traffic problem". The renovation and conversion for the town of St Margaret's Hall is recorded, as is the demolition of Knees building at Knees corner.

The achievements of Alex Moulton with his hydrostatic suspension system and the design of the 1960's Moulton bicycle are shown, as are the fortunes of the Bradford on Avon built Marcos sports car.

Perhaps surprisingly, she put together her scrapbooks without comment and it is for us to look at the selected articles and pictures and determine their relevance using the benefit of hindsight.

I first met Beth in the early 1980's, so in many ways my views on the contents of her scrapbooks is influenced by talking to her about the town and its people. A lady of great character and spirit, she had a refreshingly positive view of life and was quick to recognise good points in others, especially the young. When necessary she was also determined to stand up for what she believed in and was therefore one of the important band of local conservation pioneers for whom we in Bradford on Avon have much to thank.

Colin Johns



Left: Some of Elizabeth Hignell's scrapbooks

Right: I to r Mrs E.G. Hignell, Mrs M. Sheppard, Mrs G.M. Anderson, and Mrs E.E. Hall sorting 2,800 letters to be delivered to every house in Bradford appealing for funds to help child victims of the Vietnam war.

(Times and News 5 April, 1968)



'A Night with Phil Harding' is a great success

Bradford on Avon Museum's Q & A session with archaeologist, Phil Harding, proved extremely popular. St Margaret's Hall was almost full on the evening of Friday 27th October, with people attending to hear former Wiltshire County Archaeologist, Roy Canham, expertly quiz Phil Harding on subjects ranging from their first meeting to Phil's views on Stonehenge! This was the second of our annual Autumn lectures which I have organised and Phil has proved to be a great speaker and very keen to support Bradford on Museum. We are very grateful to him, Roy, and all those who attended, as well as to Cobb Farr for making this such a successful event.

Sophie Hawke
Museum Trustee

I. to r. Sophie Hawke, Phil Harding, Roy Canham



New Volunteer Stewards urgently needed

We have had a good stewarding year, and we value our volunteer team who ensure we keep the Museum open. But with the passing of time we lose people who find they can't steward any more for various reasons, and it is now clear that we badly need fresh volunteers to join our team and bring us up to strength again, otherwise we will have difficulty opening on all of our scheduled sessions. We have had a few recent situations where potential visitors were rather annoyed when they found the museum closed when it was advertised to be open, which is embarrassing and obviously not good for our image.

So to kick off our recruitment drive, may I take this opportunity of asking our members to consider any ways they can of recommending to friends/acquaintances/relations that they consider joining our stewards team? Anyone interested who would like to know more should email me at petermann46@btinternet.com and I will respond very quickly. If every member could help us find a potential steward, this would greatly assist your Museum. To get a flavour of how enjoyable stewarding is, Alison Craddock has written about her first year:

"This year, I became a volunteer steward for Bradford on Avon Museum. This was something I always thought I would like to do, and retiring from

the Town Council gave me the time to take on another volunteering role. The commitment of a few two-hour sessions each month is a very pleasant way to spend a few hours. We are so lucky in Bradford to have so much varied history to present both to locals and visitors.

Many visitors like to have a chat about the exhibits - and the Chemist Shop never fails to catch everyone's enthusiasm. Older visitors love to identify products they used to buy in the past. I have enjoyed the chance to talk to visitors about the Museum and about Bradford's history.

The number of visitors varies from just a few to a steady stream, depending on weather and holiday periods. On quiet days, I have very much enjoyed browsing through the great selection of local books and getting to know more about Bradford on Avon's history, improving my local knowledge and therefore becoming more confident about talking to visitors."

We have a flyer advertising the positive benefits and interest of being a volunteer steward, which we are planning to spread widely around the town in various ways. If anyone would like a pdf copy of this flyer to show to friends, please let me know and I will email you one.

Peter Mann

Business Plan

The trustees have published a new Business Plan for the three-year period 2018 to 2021, which can be downloaded from the 'About Us' section on the Museum website: <http://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/about-us>. The Business Plan describes in full what sort of Museum we are, lays out our Vision and Objectives, how we are organised and managed, and gives details of our financial structure. It also includes various key policies such as our Collection Policy. Finally, the Business Plan lists the six Aims we have set ourselves for the next three years to continuously improve what we do. All members are encouraged to download and read the Plan and contact Trustees if you have any questions or comments or would like to help with the various activities shown in the Plan.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Your Museum is compliant with this Regulation. We have ensured that all personal data held by us and all systems holding this data are securely passworded. We have written a Privacy Policy which can be found on the Museum website at: <http://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/privacy>. This Policy will be followed by Trustees whenever dealing with personal data.

Wreath laying at BonA War Memorial

The Museum Trustees decided that it was appropriate for our Museum to lay a wreath in this centenary year of the ending of WW1. The wreath was laid at the War Memorial on the Town's Remembrance Day Service on Sunday 11th November.



Bradford on Avon Museum

Volunteers are at the heart of all we do

JOIN OUR THRIVING STEWARDING TEAM!

Can you help?

- 2-hour sessions
- You choose which sessions you wish to do
- Full training and a comprehensive guidance pack are given



The rewards are numerous!

- Meet interesting visitors
- Learn more about the history of our town
- Play a part in preserving the town's rich heritage
- Social events for you to enjoy

If you are interested please contact:

Peter Mann, Trustee – Bradford on Avon Museum
E: petermann46@btinternet.com T: 07779 347962

<http://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/>

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Memberships run from 1st January each year. The subs are:

Individual member: £15

Family membership: £20

Cheques or cash can be sent to Chris Dale (treasurer); or Kate Turnbull (membership), whose contact details are given below. For those who pay by standing order this can continue to be on the anniversary of joining.

If you haven't already set up a standing order, could you consider doing so now? This can be done via on-line banking (if you have this) to:

Bradford on Avon Museum Society

Sort code: 30 98 75

Account number: 50243560

And please give your name as the reference (or, if you prefer, contact us for a standing order form). Thank you.

We are issuing annual membership cards now, which will secure your Member's discount at events and talks; and there will be an opportunity to check/amend your details.

Thank you for your continuing support which is vital to the Museum's future.

AIM (Association of Independent Museums)

As an independent museum, our Museum subscribes to this organisation, which publishes a quarterly Bulletin, highlighting some of the Association's activities & services, and those of its members. Here are some extracts from the October Bulletin:

"History Makers" - the 'father of the Tube', a forensic scientist & two world-class engineers.

An article by Tim Burge, features a grant scheme that can enable exhibitions to be created about the lives and achievements of extraordinary historical figures from the worlds of engineering and science.

1. **Digging Deeper at the London Transport Museum** explores innovations by James Henry Greathead, which made travelling by tube possible and had a major influence on underground engineering around the world.

2. **The Father of Modern Forensics** at the National Justice Museum in Nottingham enables children and young people to learn about the work of Sir Bernard Spilsbury in forensic science.

3. **Hawkshaw and Barlow Untold** raises awareness of the achievements of engineers Sir John Hawkshaw and William H Barlow who completed the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol.

Tim has invited AIM readers to submit names of other historical figures who they believe might deserve a higher public profile. More details at <https://tinyurl.com/yc8j875k>

Business Rates

The Upper Tribunals (Lands Chamber) recently ruled in favour of York Museums & Gallery Trust that its business rates should be based on net income rather than the cost of rebuilding, as favoured by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The ruling should mean substantial rates reductions for museums across the UK, but the VOA refuses to back down, so overpayment of rates continues. Some substantial reductions have been secured, viz: Wythall Transport Museum £158,000 to £9,000, Walsall Leather Museum £20,500 to £1.

The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums

Supported by the Arts Council of England, Hallmarks Grants offer "Main Grants" [£4-12K] to put AIM Hallmarks ideas into practice, and "Small Grants" [£3-6K] to support museums in improving their financial sustainability through cost saving or income generation.

Industrial heritage

A new report, by the All-Party

Parliamentary Group on Industrial Heritage, says that more needs to be done to 'protect and cultivate' Britain's industrial heritage, which is part of our national identity. Historic England already funds an Industrial Heritage Support Officer, and will be identifying future projects to be worked on, either on its own or in partnership with others such as AIM. AIM's president and leading authority on industrial heritage, Sir Neil Cossons, comments: "This report identifies the challenges and opportunities presented by Britain's great historic industrial places, their meaning for communities and wider importance to the nation, and the need to establish a wider strategy to secure their future. The report's recommendations set out what needs to be done; they are to the point, realistic, achievable and require the most serious consideration".

Read report at: <https://tinyurl.com/y7yut9uy>

Museum Profile - Leominster Museum

This museum faces similar challenges to ours: providing a service to everyone in the local community, staying solvent, and maintaining Accreditation standards. They hope to get funding soon for a major renovation of their building [an 1855 Mission Hall] and redisplay of their collection. They had 2723 visitors last year, don't charge admission, and attract mainly tourists and people aged over 50. The museum is run by volunteers and holds almost 4,000 items relating to Leominster and the local district, but has no dedicated education/meeting room, inadequate storage & curatorial space, and poor heating. [This sentence has a familiar ring about it! - Ed]

Museum Trustees:

Chris Dale (Hon. Treasurer): 862198

Mervyn Harris (Hon. Chairman):
863440

Sophie Hawke: 863934

Valerie Holden (Hon. Secretary):
869159

Peter Mann: 07779 347962

Ivor Slocombe: 862525

Kate Turnbull (Membership): 866328

Honorary Patrons

Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett,
(President)

John Banks (Vice President)

Doreen Ellis (Vice President)

Additional Office Holders:

Roger Clark (Hon Curator): 865785

Roger Jones (Newsletter) 865191

Stewards' Organisers:

Peter Mann: 07779347962

Gillian King: 866387

Sarah Howard

Sarah recently advised us that she has had to retire as a Trustee because her work has increased and taken her to London, where she now plans to live. We heard this news with great sadness and regret. Sarah has been a 'star Trustee', taking charge of educational matters, doing research, writing articles and general helping the Museum a great deal in a wide range of ways. We offer her our grateful thanks & wish her well in her work and future move to London.

EVENTS COMING UP ...

Christmas Tree Festival

Holy Trinity Church: 4-9th December

2019

Steward's Evening - Library Meeting Room. A "Thank You" Party for all our stewards. Do bring along a prospective steward, as we need to increase our steward numbers for 2019. An evening of "Food and Fun, with a drop to drink". PS It would be helpful to know in advance who you might bring as a 'steward guest'. Please contact Peter Mann: 07779 347962 or email petermann46@btinternet.com

DISCUSSION GROUP

Wednesday 5th December

Local History Question Time (sort of Gardener's Question Time meets Antiques Roadshow)

Our Panel: Roy Canham, Roger Clark, Ivor Slocombe and Pam Slocombe

If you would like to offer to lead a session in 2019, please contact Kate Turnbull (Museum Trustee) on 01225 866328 or at turnbullke@googlemail.com

The Museum Trustees wish all Members and Museum supporters a blessed and peaceful Christmas