

# Bradford on Avon Museum

## The *Museletter*



Spring 2018

[www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk](http://www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk)

### MUSEUM AGM 15th March: Summary Report

#### Chairman:

**Iron Duke:** Mervyn reported that, whilst one booklet on the social history aspects of the rubber industry in BonA has yet to be published, the Iron Duke Project has now been successfully completed.

**Signage:** Meetings had been held with the Town Council and the TIC about improving the town's signage. Whilst Daryl has now left the TIC, we hope that the Town Council will continue the initiative. We have also had discussions with the Library about improving the Museum's signage there.

**Holt Premises:** The Museum Research Group [MRG] meet at Holt regularly and, with the extra space, find it to be a better place to do their work and store artefacts.

**The Vaults:** At the invitation of the Museum, Bruges Tozer have drawn up innovative plans for the Museum to create a display on the platform area leading on to Kingston Road. It has received a welcome from nearby businesses, and the site owners have given their approval. However, work on the first floor will impinge on the area below, so an inevitable delay on creating the display will occur.

**Museum Grille:** After discussion with the manufacturers of the security grille, we hope to provide a different locking system which will be easier to operate when accessing the Museum.

**New Trustee:** Valerie Holden has joined the Trustee Team, but will still act as the Museum's Hon Sec. She will be a welcome and valuable member of our team.

**New Museum:** Our search for a new, larger and more accessible museum continues. Lloyds Bank and Rooth's shop have been considered but discounted as unsuitable for various reasons. We have engaged with the new Town Council and are having on-going discussions with Cllr Simon McNeill-Ritchie, who has a particular interest in cultural matters. We hope to see a favourable outcome in due course, but it won't be imminent.

**Thanks:** Mervyn paid tribute to all Museum stewards, trustees and supporters, and thanked them for their hard work, commitment and support.

#### Other Reports:

**Finance:** Chris reported a good set of results, with net income at £6.5K. Investments rose by £5K and the shop made a surplus of £2.5K. Visitor numbers increased by 18% in 2017, over 300 people attended Discussion Group meetings and the Museum's website attracted over 17,000 visitors(!).

**Curator:** Roger reported on some important donations to the Museum, in

particular a set of tennis balls in their original packaging, which were made in BonA. During the winter closure, he had managed to generate some extra space in the Museum cabinets and put in some new displays.

**Museum Groups:** various trustees reported on successful outcomes for Events, MRG, Discussion Group, Publications, Education and Publicity.

### THE ALMHOUSE BADGE



This small badge in the Bradford on Avon Museum recalls days of poverty yet benevolence. The four poor men who inhabited the Hall's Almshouse in Frome Road were given two coats a year, one for winter and one for summer. They were required to wear the badge on their sleeve.

The badge depicts three silver poleaxes on a black background. A similar heraldic shield can be found over the doorway on the front of the building together with the motto *Deus et Pauperis* (for God and the Poor). This represents the coat of arms of John Hall. He founded the almshouse in 1700 and supported it financially with an annual endowment of £40 paid for from the rent of Paxcroft Farm near Hilperton which he had bought a few years earlier.

John Hall and his successors at the Hall controlled the nominations to places, although the Vicar of Bradford was to be one of the trustees, until 1887 when a new charitable scheme was agreed. The

Moulton family who bought the Hall in 1848 also supported the Almshouse with Horatio Moulton bequeathing £1,000 in 1894. This is commemorated by the addition under the shield of the legend 'Improved, restored and further endowed 1891-3 by Horatio Moulton of Kingston House.' When Paxcroft Farm was sold in 1901 there was still a rent charge on it payable to the Trustees. The connection with the owners of the Hall is also marked by the initials K and M on the two chimneys - for the Dukes of Kingston and Earls Manvers.

Many changes have taken place over the years. Originally it had four tenements, each with a room below and one above, connected by a steep winding staircase. In more recent years there has been the installation of bathrooms and central heating and, in 1989, the conversion into four flats.

The men were well provided for. Apart from their coats, they received in 1834 a weekly allowance of 3s 4d. This had increased to 7s 6d in 1908 but after old age pensions had been introduced the allowance was reduced to 5s. The men also had their own garden plots.

The building is Grade II\* listed. The exterior remains largely unaltered and the building has survived various crises including a proposal by the Turnpike Trustees in 1824 to knock it down and rebuild it elsewhere in order to improve the Trowbridge Road junction.

*Ivor Slocombe (Museum trustee)*

## ROCKET SCIENCE

Two of the Trustees attended the Wiltshire Museums Group meeting on 15th March, held at the Science Museum Archives and Library in Wroughton. We were joined by a variety of other museums from the area, ranging from the large Swindon Museum & Art Gallery and Wiltshire Museum, Devizes to the smaller Market Lavington Museum and Museum of Computing, Swindon.

Matt Moore, Head of the National Collections Centre, updated us on the use of the site in Wroughton, explaining the plans to expand the storage space for their collection. It is currently to capacity in the seven World War II hangars and includes, cars, buses, civil aircraft and rockets. The new building will be on a huge scale and will provide better environmental conditions for storage as well as improved management for the collection.

We were given a couple of presentations on various grants that could be made available to the museums, ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand pounds. These could either be individual applications, or in collaboration with neighbouring museums, to improve public engagement, quality of practice, research into collections, temporary exhibitions and so on. It gave us plenty of food for thought on different ways to fund a variety of projects we are working on for the future.

We had a very useful presentation on the actions required by small museums to comply with the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that will come into effect to all EU states from the 25th May. Brexit will have no effect on our Museum falling in line with this and we will have to comply with these regulations. Two of our Trustees, Kate Turnbull and Peter Mann, had pre-empted this action and had already started work to make sure we comply with the new regulations. The guidance offered helped to confirm and reinforce our knowledge on the subject. More information will be available for Museum members soon on our updated Privacy and Data Protection policies to ensure we are in time, and in line, with the new regulations.

The highlight of the day was a tour of the Archives & Library Collection, who were hosting the meeting. They had laid out a variety of items that they thought would be of interest to us. A few examples included:

- Work by Galileo Galilei
- Documents by Isaac Newton
- Diaries of Florence Nightingale
- Drawings of Egyptian architecture during the Napoleonic campaign
- Coloured etchings of The Great Exhibition, 1851

- The archive of aeronautical engineer, J. W. Dunne, who developed the tailless swept wing design to improve aerodynamic stability
- The archive of John Evershed, an English astronomer, who was the first to observe radial motions in sunspots
- Books owned by and written by Patrick Moore (did you know he'd written a series of science fiction novels?)

You can visit the Science Museum Archives Collection, it's free, but you have to make an appointment (01793 846222). They are only open on Fridays, between 10am-5pm, but it is well worth the effort. The site is host to a vast collection linked to science, industry, engineering and medicine, dating as far back as the 15th century.

You can also visit their collection of 150,000 objects and archives online at [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk) or if you prefer a day out, make an appointment, take a packed lunch (it is very remote, so no chance of popping out for a sandwich) and drive across the site to the Library along a former World War II airstrip, getting up close and personal with the huge hangars and what remains of the World War II military architecture.

*Sarah Howard*

*(images by Peter Mann, 15th March 2018)*

*Viewing some of the exhibits at the Science Museum Archives and Library in Wroughton*



### TRIPADVISOR

The Museum's profile continues to be high. If you would like to have a look, the link is: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7s4u6w>

## MEET THE MUSEUM TRUSTEES



### Dr Sarah Howard

Sarah has been a Trustee since December 2016, responsible for Education.

Sarah is an architectural historian, writes for specialist architectural journals and lectures at the University of Bath. After achieving a first degree in Architectural Conservation, Sarah and her husband moved to Bradford on Avon, where she studied for the Master of Philosophy in Architectural History and Theory at the University of Bath. This was closely followed by a PhD, also in Architectural History and Theory, specialising in twentieth century architecture.



### Ivor Slocombe

Ivor Slocombe has had a long career in education, in teaching History and in educational administration including twelve years as Chief Education Officer for Wiltshire. Since retirement he has researched many aspects of the history of Wiltshire and Bradford, producing a number of books and articles and regularly lecturing. He heads the Museum's publications group.



## THE MEMORY BANK - Bradford on Avon's oral history

The Bradford Hundred Memory Bank is an oral history project affiliated to the Museum which has been gradually accumulating recorded memories from residents of the town and the surrounding villages, to add to the archives of both the Bradford on Avon Museum and also the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham. It is hoped that they will be made available to all via the Museum website. The Bradford Hundred covers all the parishes shown on the map above.

The Memory Bank has expanded from recordings made by Margaret Dobson in 1989 and is managed by a small team of volunteers. Over recent years our numbers have diminished and we are now looking for people who might be interested in joining us, particularly if they can help with the job of transcribing the recorded tapes. This involves listening to the recorded digital file on your computer, and typing it up into a transcription which will then accompany the recording into the archives. You don't need to be a fast or experienced typist, and it is possible to slow down the recording so you can keep up more easily.

The other role involves meeting individual residents of the town and listening to them recall their memories, whilst using a simple device to record their conversation. No specialist skills are required; a friendly face and an interest in hearing about people's past are much welcomed by the local residents.

Both roles are rewarding and stimulating. It is fascinating to hear these insights into the life of our town and its surrounding villages from decades ago. It is vital we continue the work before more memories are lost forever.

The recordings and their transcriptions have contributed to several books written on the history of Bradford on Avon and will be available to researchers, writers and historians for many years to come.

We will be meeting in May this year and would be happy to demonstrate the process and answer any questions you might have. Training in using the equipment and support will be provided. Your individual contribution can be as brief as you wish. Just one transcription job would be a great help. Please do pass on this request for volunteers to anyone else who you think might be interested.

If you would like to find out more, please contact me at [stephanie.laslett@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.laslett@gmail.com) and copy to Mervyn at [meeharris@icloud.com](mailto:meeharris@icloud.com). We can then note your interest and advise you when a meeting will be held. Thank you.

Stephanie Laslett

Example:

*"You could get on your bicycle and cycle up to Westbury Hill. We used to do that when we were eight or ten. Four or five of you just got on your bikes and cycled over there and no-one would worry. You didn't get any traffic to worry about. You just took your sandwiches and that was it. . . . We used to get petrol at Stampers Garage and then it all moved up to Stones at Station Garage. If you wanted a Morris car you got it at Stampers Garage. If you wanted an Austin, you had to go round the corner to Stones. . . . You could tell what make of car it was by the sound of the engine. You could just walk across the road because you could hear them coming."*

## DISCUSSION GROUP

### Talks for 2018

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

The meetings take place on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm in the Library Meeting Room, and are FREE to members (please remember to bring along your new, blue membership card!). 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.

### 2018 sessions:

*Wednesday 4th April*

#### **Industrial & Provident – Bradford on Avon Co-op Society**

Led by Roger Clark

*Wednesday 2nd May*

#### **The Saxons in Wiltshire**

Led by Roy Canham

*Wednesday 6th June*

#### **Bradford's shops in the 1950s**

Led by Stephanie Laslett

*Wednesday 4th July*

#### **The true story of our unique railway station and its restoration – a talk to launch the Footbridge Canopy Project**

Led by Peter Mann

*Wednesday 1st August*

#### **NO MEETING**

*Wednesday 5th September*

#### **St Laurence School and its Roman villa**

Led by Sophie Hawke

*Wednesday 3rd October*

#### **The diaries of Beth Hignall – 'It makes you spit!'**

Led by Colin Johns

*Wednesday 7th November*

#### **Rowley – Bradford's lost medieval village**

Led by Rob Arkell

*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](mailto:turnbullke@googlemail.com)

## EVENTS COMING UP ...

### a. Millennium Embroidery Exhibition

Library Meeting Room  
26th March - 23rd April

b. **Old BoA shops** Repeat of very popular exhibition in shop windows from several years ago.

Contact Stephanie Laslett: 07841 158071, [stephanie.laslett@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.laslett@gmail.com)

### c. Holy Trinity Church Street Fair

Saturday 7th July  
Museum stall. Volunteers needed please.

### d. Romans Exhibition

Library Meeting Room  
August

e. **Autumn Guest Lecture** - details TBC

f. **Museums at Night** - details TBC

g. **"Countdown to Peace"** - organised by Simon McNeill Ritchie on behalf of Town Council. A remembrance of the ending of WW1. 30+ events throughout the town.

### h. Holy Trinity Church Xmas Tree Festival

- December  
Details to follow

## New publication from Bradford Museum

### BRADFORD LEIGH FAIR

200 Years of Trade, Revelry,  
Wickedness and Vice



Robert Arkell

A discussion group meeting was held last November when Robert Arkell, following extensive research, presented the story of the Bradford Leigh Fair which had been held from the mid-18C through to the 1960s. Now he has compiled a fascinating account, with lots of illustrations, which will be added to the growing collection of Museum publications.

A5; 44 pages, colour throughout; Price £4.00

## 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.

### Museum Trustees:

Chris Dale (Hon. Treasurer): 862198  
Mervyn Harris (Hon. Chairman):  
863440  
Sophie Hawke: 863934  
Valerie Holden (Hon. Secretary):  
869159  
Sarah Howard: 07771 714497  
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