

Bradford on Avon Museum

Newsletter/Autumn 2013



BoA on TV

Bradford on Avon will feature on the small screen, not once, but three times in January. First, the museum will be featured on BBC2's *Antiques Road Trip*. Co-presenter James Braxton was filmed visiting the museum, looking at the pharmacy, commenting on some of the items on display and trying his hand at making pills.

Paul Martin – of BBC1's *Flog It!* – will be looking at parts of the town, especially Tory, during an interlude in the popular programme.

Finally, Channel 4 is making a new series on canals, featuring actors Timothy West and Prunella Scales. While on the Kennet and Avon, they came to Bradford and were filmed at various sites including the Tithe Barn and the Saxon Church.



Fifteen museum members recently enjoyed a day out in Dorset, organised by Jane Mann – pictured with Mervyn Harris and David Stokes. The group visited the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne Minster, as well as Martin Green's farm and museum at Sixpenny Handley. See page 3 for Gill Winfield's report.

The Duke's progress

Progress is being made on bringing an important piece of our industrial heritage back to Bradford on Avon. Terms for siting the restored calendar machine known as the Iron Duke in Kingston Road have now been agreed with Linden Homes. This means a site survey can now be carried out and a plinth planned. The Museum Society and Preservation Trust are working together on this project and we hope the Duke might be in back Bradford before the end of 2014.

Hello campus!

As part of Wiltshire Council's plans to provide community 'campuses' in towns across the county, Bradford on Avon Community Area Network is consulting residents about what they would like to see provided locally. The preliminary consultation continues until the end of November, and the Museum Society has already registered an interest in the process. But individual views are also very welcome – so do sign up, either using the form enclosed with this newsletter, or online, and make sure your priorities are taken into account. Find out more, and have YOUR say, at www.yourcampus.me

Changing places

The big story for the museum this year is this: our need and search for new, larger museum premises. In this issue of the newsletter, museum chairman Mervyn Harris outlines the situation – and looks at some possible solutions.

“Our museum regularly acquires more artefacts. A good thing? Yes. But, increasingly, we need to display more artefacts; study, conserve and catalogue more items; store material in the best possible way; prepare more material and fulfil requests for displays; expand our links with local schools and other parishes in the Bradford Hundred; develop our role in education, IT, archaeological exploration and publications; proclaim the wonderful cultural heritage that exists here, and use this to expand and exploit the commercial potential of our area. The list goes on. We can't fulfil these ambitions in the premises we currently occupy. That is an indisputable fact.

“We've looked at a lot of options over the past three years, the most recent being the Riverside Inn site, which is going to be redeveloped by the owners, with a planning application already submitted. Doing this in conjunction with the Tourist Information Centre – which has eight times the footfall of our museum – and

the Preservation Trust, with its experience and competence in restoring and managing old buildings, has mutual advantages. There would be significant obstacles to making it work for all three organisations, but the potential synergistic gains to be had make the project worth exploring. It would also have the benefit of bringing an attractive building, in a central, prominent town site, back into long-term use for the benefit of the community.

“Allied to the long term future of the museum, is a proposal to have a campus in Bradford, where local services can be located centrally in either purpose-built or converted premises.

“Supporters of the museum, together with other organisations involved in the cultural heritage of our town and local area, now have a unique opportunity to register views on what they would like to see incorporated into a campus project. The museum needs your support for its inclusion in this proposal, perhaps as part of a larger culture and heritage development. Please read the details on the enclosed leaflets and do respond now. Or you can respond directly via the www.yourcampus.me website. Remember, if we don't speak, we won't be heard!”

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

Grant for research

As part of the museum's ongoing research into the early origins of Bradford, trustee Sophie Hawke visited the British Library to examine the diaries and journals of the Rev John Skinner, Rector of Camerton.

The Rev Skinner (pictured below) visited and sketched many archaeological sites both at home and abroad in the 19th century – including Bradford on Avon and the surrounding area.

Sophie said: "My intention is not only to compare Skinner's sketches and diary extracts of the local landscape in the early 19th century with the archaeological features that still remain and how they appear now, but also to investigate features he recorded but which no longer exist."

Radstock Museum



"Most of his manuscripts are held at the British Library and it will require a number of further visits both to examine the pertinent documents and arrange for digital copies of the relevant pages.

"I recently applied to the Art Fund for a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Grant to assist with travel costs to London – and the museum has been awarded £185 towards expenses for this research project.

"I look forward to continuing this exciting research, as the Skinner manuscript relating to Bradford on Avon has proved very interesting, especially with regard to the Budbury area. The research will add to our knowledge, both of the early landscape of Bradford on Avon and surrounding area and of the archaeological finds on which we already working, particularly those from Budbury.

"As a result of the research on the Skinner manuscripts, we expect to be able to stage an exhibition at the museum, together with talks, and a new booklet as part of our publication series."

A Land Through Time

An exhibition setting out the results of our Heritage Lottery funded historic landscape project will be on show in the Library Meeting Room from 23 November – 2 December.



Left and below, The Priest's House Museum; above, the group at Down Farm



Dorset trip first of many?

Museum trustee Gill Winfield was one of the group that visited Dorset earlier in the autumn. Here's how the day went ...

One Saturday in September, 15 Museum members met at Wimborne Priest's House Museum and Garden in the heart of the beautiful market town of Wimborne Minster. Our visit, arranged by Bradford on Avon Museum member Jane Mann, began with a talk about the history of the museum, followed by a tour which included the storage and workshop facility.

The building was most recently owned by Hilda Coles, granddaughter of an ironmonger. She died in 1987, and the house and garden were left to the Governors of Wimborne Minster, a local charitable trust. Hilda requested that the building should be used as a museum for the town and district, and provided an endowment income.

A quote from their literature: "Using collections rich in archaeology and costume, and childhood and local history material, the museum tells the story of East Dorset. Period rooms, from a 17th century hall to the working Victorian kitchen, show how life and work has changed in this historic townhouse. There are 10 galleries to explore. Displays include audio descriptions and children's activities. A beautiful walled garden, gift shop and tearoom complete any visit."

The museum works closely with the local community. People participate through volunteering, exhibitions, reminiscence workshops, community projects, learning and

family activity programmes. Those of us working on the Budbury finds at the Museum research premises off Silver Street were certainly impressed with the excellent workshop facilities.

We all left the Priest's House Museum with our heads buzzing with ideas for own own museum, when we relocate.

After lunch in the town we moved on to Dr Martin Green's farm near Sixpenny Handley. Jane had arranged a private visit to his museum and a tour of the many prehistoric sites on his farm.

After time in the museum we walked out on to the land at Cranbourne Chase which has been farmed by Martin's family for several generations. From an early age Martin began trying to unravel the mysterious past which lay all around him.

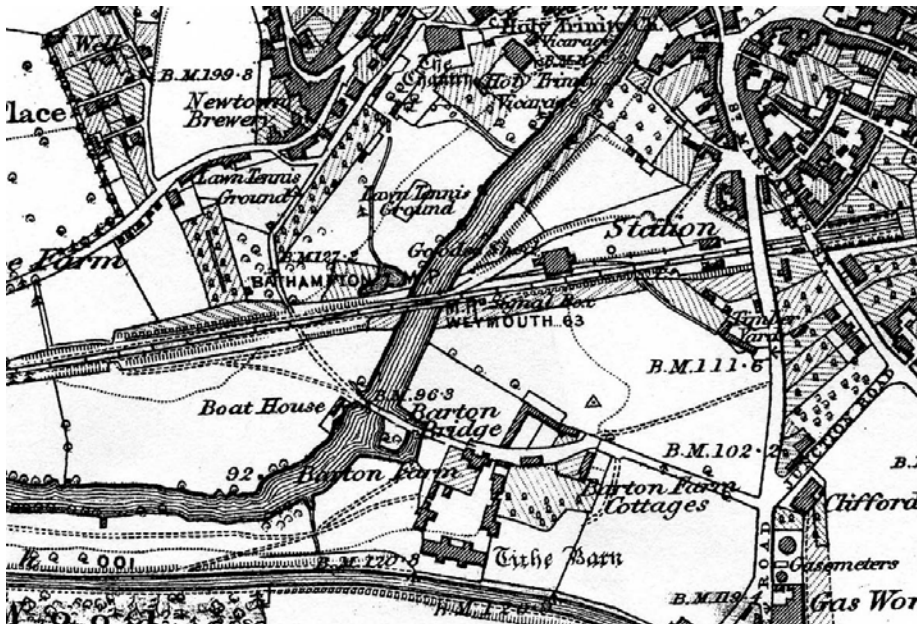
A hundred years before, Augustus Pitt Rivers carried out pioneering archaeology on Cranborne Chase. It was his aim that archaeology would reach a wider public and it is with the same intention that Martin has written about his own work in his book – *A Landscape Revealed: 10,000 years on a chalkland farm*, published by The History Press. We felt very privileged to be shown the land by this man who has invested his life in its interpretation.

We hope to have more outings for members in the near future: if anyone is interested in organising a trip, please contact our chairman, Mervyn Harris.



Trip organiser Jane Mann looks at some of the exhibits at the Down Farm museum

Digging up the past



Bradford in 1889 – many of the open areas still survive

There's plenty of scope for archaeological research in Bradford, says trustee Roy Canham

I detect a growing interest in getting some archaeology done! We had a good discussion group meeting on urban excavation, so perhaps this is a good time to speculate on what might be possible.

First, what are we looking for? Up above the town, the high ground attracted early habitation – the Roman villa at St Laurence School and an Iron Age hillfort at Budbury – and a number of us are convinced there is far more still underground.

A 'garden survey' some 10 years ago recorded a wide scatter of Roman pottery and tile stretching south from the school towards the Winsley Road, and this technique could be extended further. So this area, call it the Bearfield-Budbury zone, is an interesting target for diggers.

The question that also pops up is 'what was happening down by the River Avon at this time?' Very difficult, just one piece of evidence in our museum: the Roman sculptural fragment found embedded in a wall in St Margaret's Street. Where did it come from – was there a Roman riverside settlement?

It pays to look at the archaeology of the Avon Valley more broadly. In my working life as County Archaeologist, I conducted aerial surveys along the valley from Sherston, past Malmesbury, Chippenham and Melksham, recording prehistoric settlements and burial sites, Romano-British farmsteads and much else, all

along the well-drained gravel terraces that flank the river. At the edge of Bradford, the trail dries up because the river enters a steep-sided valley. From here on terrace formation, so attractive to early communities, is rare. But look carefully at flat areas – the Country Park and perhaps even Westbury Gardens – and you will see some potential for encountering ancient settlement traces. Call this the Valley Zone

Within the town, other research issues arise. We have a long history, with an early reference in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle dated to AD652. A monastery was founded here in 705 and the Saxon church built around 1000. The town flourished in the Middle Ages as a centre of the woollen industry. In our museum collections we have very little from this time. Why? It's a classic problem for the archaeologist – a town with a wealth of historic buildings sees very little redevelopment, so no chance to dig and discover.

So what can we do? There are several possibilities, ranging from further garden surveys to a geophysical survey of available open areas and trench excavation.

Can we do this as a Community Dig? We do have in the membership a number of people with digging experience, and some working space in Silver Street for processing finds. We have open spaces in both zones, but we need permissions and funds to cover insurance, equipment etc. It would be valuable to hear your views.

Bradford's other chemists

The Christopher chemist shop that is preserved in the museum should be familiar to everybody, but it was not the only one to trade in Bradford, and we have a few articles that relate to some of the others.

Thomas & Emanuel Taylor claimed to be the oldest in Bradford, dating back into the 18th



century. Their shop is now the Bunch of Grapes pub in Silver Street, where William Harris had been a chemist in 1830. By the late 19th century they found the side-line of wine and beer selling more profitable. They built large premises across the road in the 1880s and the old shop became the pub. Several of their bottles and stoneware jars can be seen in the museum.



Willson's was in the Georgian building that was demolished in 1961 to give better vehicle access to what is now called Lamb Yard. The photograph above is from the 1890s and shows Walter Henry Willson's young sons, Walter and Harry, with his assistant. Harry Courtenay Willson succeeded his father. Above the door is the sign of George Marks, who preceded Willson, and a giant pestle and mortar sign. The museum has a few objects from the shop, including a medicine bottle found at Conkwell and recently donated. A big jar for displaying natural sponges in the Christopher collection may be one of those seen in the window.

The third and much later chemist in Silver Street is the only one that still operates. Arnold Scrine was the son of a Bradford butcher and was apprenticed



to Richard Christopher. One wonders what Christopher's reaction was to him opening his shop directly opposite! He died in 1959 and the shop carried his name for many years after under different ownership. Scrine's sign is preserved in the museum.

Roger Clark

Keep up with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BradfordOnAvonMuseum
Do visit the page, 'like' it and share with your Facebook friends!

Discussion group covers wide range

We now have a new group for members. The discussion group is held on the first Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm in the Library Meeting Room. These informal sessions are FREE to members and cover a broad range of topics.

So far we have had three enjoyable and informative evenings: with Roy Canham on The Potential for Urban Archaeology in Bradford on Avon, and Ivor Slocombe on Documents Covering Earlier History in Bradford. Most recently, Sophie Hawke led a well-attended discussion on An Introduction to Geophysics.

Future sessions include:

4 December: Update on the “Ancient Landscapes of the Bradford Hundred” Project (Roy Canham)

5 February: Researching War Victims (Jonathan Falconer)

You don't need to book – just turn up.

Although this group is for members, it is also a perfect introduction to the Museum, so if you know someone who is not yet a member, bring them along: non-members can attend one session before being encouraged to join.



Earlier this year, John Kemp of Iron Acton Primary School contacted us via the website to ask for advice. His students were studying the River Avon from its source to Avonmouth and wanted to visit Bradford on Avon.

As part of the Museum's commitment to education, trustee Gill Winfield arranged to meet them in Westbury Gardens on a hot and sunny day. Gill says: “Twenty 9 and 10-year-olds, with their teachers, duly arrived and we started by looking at the Town Bridge where they showed their artistic prowess by making some very good sketches. The height of the 1882 flood mark (pictured) surprised them.

“After following the river footpath to the country park, we diverted to visit the canal, where two of them helped open the lock. Serendipity at play!

“We continued to Avoncliff weir, discussing the harnessing of water power, and of course they found the aqueduct fascinating.”

In September we received a book of the children's work, which can be seen in the Museum.



One evening in summer the Bradford Scout Group visited the museum as part of their Local History Badge. Gill Winfield and David Stokes showed them around the Museum and answered their questions about local matters.

Geophysical surveys at farm sites lay groundwork for big dig

Geophysical surveys of two sites in Bradford on Avon have yielded some interesting information, says trustee Sophie Hawke

Bradford on Avon Museum had hoped to run a Community Dig this autumn but time has been against us so we plan to do this next year. Instead, as part of our preparations, we recently carried out a geophysical survey at Barton Farm with the help of the Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society (BACAS).

Using their resistivity meter, we surveyed the area between the Tithe Barn and Victory Field. This area was selected as it is a flat, open space, just outside the Scheduled area of the medieval Barton Farm complex. The resistivity meter can detect buried walls underground to a depth of 0.5 metres.

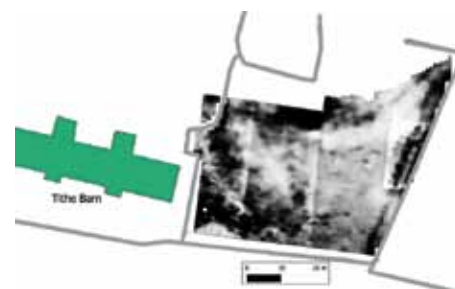
Once downloaded, the initial results were very interesting (*see top right*). They appear to show an earlier boundary wall to the east running north to south; possible canal digging debris along the wall running west to east, and possible earlier walls in the north west corner by the Barton Farm complex.

Thanks to Leo Wirtz, senior ranger, Barton Farm Countryside Park, Ritchie Brown, Dr John Oswin and BACAS for their help with this project.

Earlier in the year – in April – Museum Research Group members helped with a geophysical survey of the garden at Budbury Farm, as part of our research into the early origins of Bradford on Avon.

With the help of Dr Oswin, from BACAS, we conducted a resistivity survey and profiling of the lawn in front of the house.

Initial results (*below right*) suggest that there is a building with a range of rooms beneath the lawn. This may be an earlier phase of the Budbury Farm house (possibly medieval). However, taking into account the Roman finds



discovered in this area, including building foundations seen in 1986 during Adrian Powell's watching brief, it is also a possibility that the building is a classic winged corridor Roman villa. In addition, it is in a sheltered location, south facing with good views towards Westbury – a likely spot to build a villa. We hope to conduct a small excavation there soon.



Thanks to the owners, Mr and Mrs Finnigan and family, for allowing us to survey their garden; also to John Oswin and BACAS for the loan of their geophysics equipment and Roy Canham for georeferencing the results plot.

Remembering 1914

Next year marks the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. There will be commemorative events happening all over the country, and we'd like to 'do our bit' in Bradford on Avon by mounting exhibitions, recording war memories, putting up blue plaques to commemorate servicemen and women, and running other events.

If you have ideas for events or exhibitions to mark the centenary, or if you would like to get involved in any way, please contact Kate Turnbull on 01225 866328 or at turnbullke@googlemail.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

Gill Winfield: 868179

Kate Turnbull (Membership): 866328

Other roles:

Roger Clark (Hon Curator): 865785

Joceline Bury (PR & Newsletter): 867348

Start spreading the news ...

Since the discussions we had earlier this year at the Museum AGM, we have been working hard to improve communication with members and to broaden the range of events and activities we offer.

Over the past few months we've introduced some new events and publications:

- **What's On** – we have produced two issues (so far) of this one-page summary of upcoming events which you should have received by post or email

- **Discussion group** – we have started a new museum discussion group for members (see p2)
- **Outings** – Jane Mann organised a members' trip to The Priest's House Museum, Wimborne, and Down Farm on Cranborne Chase (see p2)

I have just taken over responsibility for membership, and my first job is to update the contact details we have for members. In many cases it seems the information is incomplete or out of date, so I will be following up with each member soon to check that we have the correct details for you. As we only have postal addresses for many members, I will probably be

popping a note through your door (if you live locally) soon!

I would particularly like to collect email addresses for those members who have email. As a charity we do need to be mindful of costs, and sending an email saves us printing and postage costs, as well as being a quick yet non-intrusive way to contact you.

Of course, we promise not to bombard you with email or give out any of your contact details to other organisations.

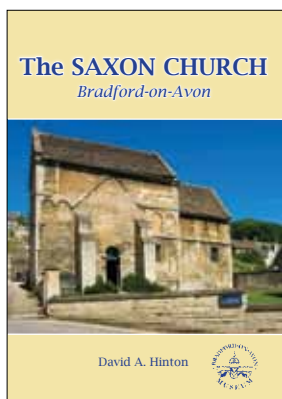
I will also be looking at ways to make it easier for you to pay your subscription, and to find out whether your membership is up-to-date.

Finally, I would love to find out more about why you joined the Museum, what you think would encourage others to join, and whether you have any suggestions for events, activities or groups. Please contact me with your thoughts.

Please do feel free to email or call me, with any questions regarding your membership.

Kate Turnbull (01225 866328)
turnbullke@googlemail.com

Our Hon Secretary, Anne Willis, has stepped down after many years of sterling service – and we need to replace her, urgently. If you are interested, please contact Mervyn Harris on 01225 863440


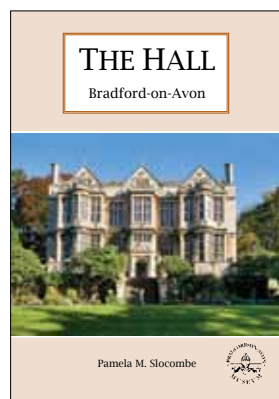


The Saxon Church
by David A. Hinton
24 pages; full colour; Price £2.50

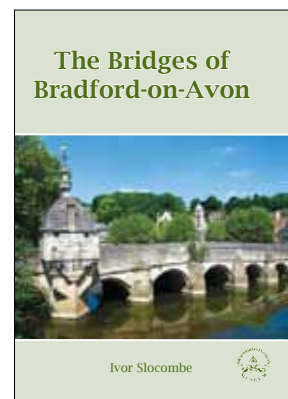
Booklets of local interest published by Bradford-on-Avon Museum:

Copies available from:

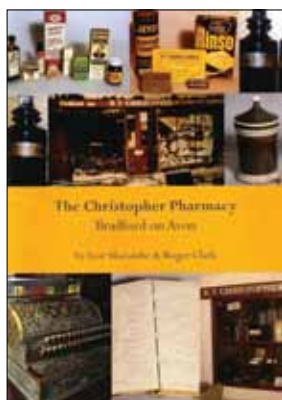
- * Bradford-on-Avon Museum
- * Ex Libris Bookshop
- * Tourist Information Centre

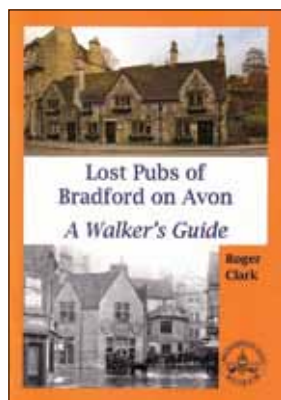
The Hall
by Pamela M. Slocombe
44 pages; full colour; Price £4.00



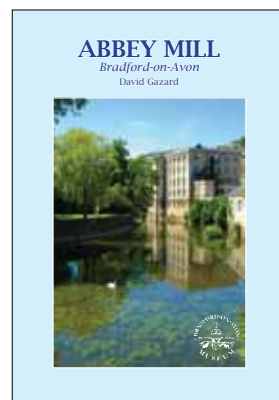
The Bridges of Bradford-on-Avon
by Ivor Slocombe
28 pages; full colour; Price £3.00



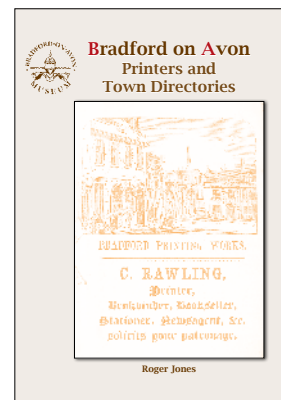
The Christopher Pharmacy
by Ivor Slocombe & Roger Clark
14 pages; full colour; Price £2.00



Lost Pubs of Bradford on Avon: A Walker's Guide
by Roger Clark; 12 pages; full colour; Price £2.50



Abbey Mill
by David Gazard
16 pages; full colour; Price £3.00



Bradford on Avon Printers and Town Directories
by Roger Jones; 28 pages; Price £2.50

Bradford on Avon Museum needs you: contact Kate Turnbull on 01225 866328 or turnbullke@googlemail.com if you would like to become a member of the Museum Society. You can also pick up a form in the library or museum, or fill in an application online at www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk/membership