



Blandford Museum Newsletter for December 2017



Blandford Bridge under repair, November 2017

The temporary closure of the bridge, and the effect this had on the town's traffic, are a reminder of the part the bridge played in the growth and prosperity of Blandford in the eighteenth century.

See 'Blandford as a Transport Hub' inside.

Blandford as a Transport Hub

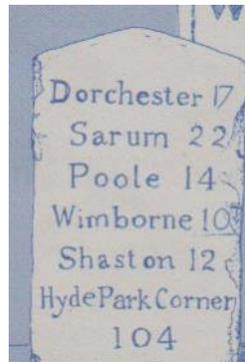
Looking at the queues of vehicles in the town centre today, one might feel that traffic is more of a nuisance than a benefit; but in the eighteenth century, when most of the town-centre buildings we see today were built, things were different. Because of the social and economic changes which were transforming the country at the time, long-distance travel was becoming more common, and more important, than it had been ever since the departure of the Romans. The only available response, a hundred or so years before the coming of the railways, was better roads.

Private finance provided the solution. Groups of trustees could set up turnpike trusts which would take on responsibility for selected roads and recover their costs by charging tolls from travellers. Turnpike trusts reached Dorset in the 1750's and one of the first to be created (1753-4) ran through Blandford because the bridge, already in existence, linked the road from London and Salisbury to Dorchester, and onwards to the ports of the south-west. During the prolonged wars with France at the time, this route was the quickest connection from London to the vitally important naval bases at Plymouth and Falmouth, as seen in the epic journey of Lieut. Lapenotière from Falmouth to London in November 1805 bearing the news of the victory at Trafalgar and of the death of Lord Nelson. One of his numerous changes of horses took place at Blandford, as commemorated in a plaque on the wall of the Greyhound Hotel.

Many of the inns and hostelries of Blandford benefited from the road as staging points where horses could be changed and travellers could spend the night, and as collecting points for goods. Inns such as the Crown, Greyhound, Red Lion and Bell all had yards for

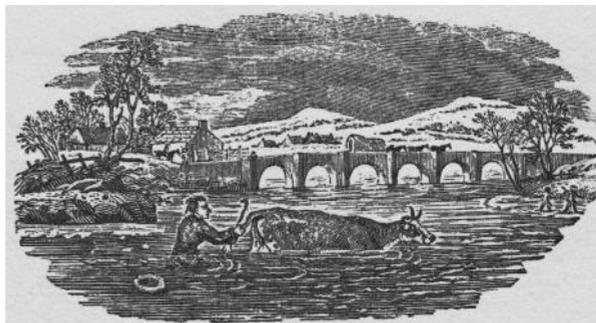
the long-distance coaches and paddocks for the horses. Blandford as a market town also grew during the time of the turnpikes because of the ease with which goods could be brought in and local produce sold away. When the turnpike system was at its height seven different turnpikes converged on Blandford, all bringing business over the bridge - the milestone still standing where the road passes the Crown Hotel indicates some of the many routes it served: -

Little is known about the bridge at the time when the turnpike first crossed it, except that it is said to have been narrow. The bridge as we see it today was built in 1783, as a result of the extra traffic brought by the turnpikes. It does apparently incorporate something of the medieval arches of the old bridge, at the end nearer the town. Although much wider than the original, it had to be widened again in 1821. Since then it has been repaired and strengthened from time to time, culminating in the work being done this year.



Turnpiking became something of a mania, with turnpikes being proposed, and sometimes even built, in places where it seems now that the traffic could never have been enough to repay the cost. But it all came to end with the arrival of the railway. By 1882 all the turnpikes in Dorset had closed down, and the roads were free to all users again.

Of course, not everyone had been prepared to pay for what had once been free, as this eighteenth century wood engraving by Thomas Bewick illustrates!



From the Chairman

Dear All,

I must apologise for not being a very good Chairman at the moment. The truth is that my family has had to come first due to a bereavement and therefore I am just not around in Blandford for at least half of the working week. Instead I am in Frome, helping to deal with family matters there. It's strange as we adapt and change to our new circumstances and commutes.

Although the Museum is now closed for the winter, I know from past experience that this is in fact a time of great activity—much-needed refurbishment in the office and as usual archivists and curatorial staff, students and others beavering away working on various projects dear to their hearts and ours. So, with great tidings to one and all, have a joyful winter time and take care.

Nessa Hickish

Planning for the Museum's Future

In recent months, the Council of Management has been considering what should be the long term development plans of the Museum. It has come to the conclusion that we should endeavour in the future to expand its scope to provide a cultural hub for Blandford, where a wider range of heritage, research and artistic activities can be supported than we are able to provide at present. This would involve acquiring suitable additional premises, and working in co-operation with other organizations in the town with similar interests to our own.

It has also been proposed that we should convert the Museum's present unincorporated charitable status into a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO). This is the form of charitable organization recommended by the Charity Commissioners and will have the advantage for our trustees of relieving them of their present unlimited responsibility for any problems with the Museum's financial affairs.

These are important changes and we will keep you informed of further developments and will deal with any queries you may have.

Tony Owen
President

Deceiving the eye of the museum visitor

Most visitors to the museum do not realise that they 'are being taken for a ride'. They are led to believe that the play-space beside the doll's house extends much further back than it actually does. The artist Philip Le Bas used his skills to use the 'trompe l'oeil' effect, the art of illusion, to enhance several of the museum displays.

To the right of the doll's house is an area with two girls in white smocked dresses playing with toys. They would seem to be in a large play area. This illusion is achieved by pinning the carpet, on which the girl has her feet, part-way up the wall and painting the dado beyond it higher on the wall.

The electricity cupboard door within the panelling in the cobbler's workshop is deceptively painted to appear as a separate door. That it is not is apparent only when trying to open the door—when only part of it opens.

The blacksmith's red-hot hearth and chimney stack in the forge display appear to extend well to the right beyond the blacksmith. It does so only by its reflection in a mirror on the museum wall behind the blacksmith making the hearth twice as big as it actually is in the model.

Upstairs, the railway carriage and compartment from which King George V and Winston Churchill have just stepped, is made to seem, by falsifying perspectives, much further back than it actually is in the display.

All these are unique solutions to our desire to make the Museum exhibits effective and enjoyable within the spaces available for them, and they are one of the significant features that give the museum its feeling of depth, comfort and homeliness.

Michael Le Bas



The Museum Archives

Our museum is unusual among the local museums of Dorset in having built up, since the time of Ben Cox the first Curator, extensive collections of information about the town. Included is the history of the buildings of Blandford, the people of Blandford, occupations and trades, local societies, the presence of the military and role in both World Wars, collections of local newspapers and thousands of photographs of people and places, a big map collection, a library concerning Blandford, and much more.

The collections are available to all museum members at no charge unless photocopying of pictures or documents is required. For access, please contact the curatorial staff.

There are extensive files and information on the following:

Local villages

Blandford families (A-Z)

The Great Fire of 1731

Floods

Coaching

Town history, its streets and residents, alley ways, individual houses, shops, institutions and place names

Schools

Churches

Building Stones

Trades: lace, gloves, buttons, account books

Coinage

Clocks and watchmakers

Town Directories back to 18th century

Census records from 1841

The Royal Naval Division in WW1

WW1 Military activities at the Camp

Defence of Blandford in WW2

Deeds and documents

Costume

Marching Band

Brewing

Smuggling

Alfred Stevens

Personal scrapbooks donated to the museum

Books (library) on Genealogy, Blandford families and buildings, Country Crafts,

Antiques, Archaeology

Michael Le Bas

-and an example, from Mark Churchill, Archive Assistant

Our archive holds considerable more than 7000 items. Here are just a couple as examples taken almost at random from material recently donated—an invitation card and menu from the dinner held in the Headquarters Mess of the Royal Signals at Blandford Camp in 1972, on the occasion of the granting to the Regiment of the Freedom of Entry to the Town.



MUSIC			MENU	
March	Marching	March	Stewed Saffron	
Dance	The Magic Flute	March	
Serenade	My Fair Lady	an Overture	Chicken Meringe	
Waltz	The Emperor	Entrée	Parsnips Potatoes	
Suite	Le Fava	LEGNONE	
Serenade	Symphonic Parture of	an Road	Cherry Gâteau	
	Gold Parter		
			Desserts on Horseshoe	
			
			Fruit	Coffee
			Kitchen Appliances	
			Mixer/Toaster Griddle	
			Machine 1958	

The Victorian Garden

The Garden Club has had, as always, a busy year and plans for next year are under way, as the next Newsletter will reveal. Of course there is little to do on the ground at this time of year, but an extra fundraising opportunity arose in November, when we were asked to cater for a private party at the Scout Hall and had a good time preparing and serving an 'English Tea' to 50 guests.



The Club always welcomes new gardening members—contact *Elaine* at 451580

'Nippies for the Day' serving the 'English Tea' - Elaine, Mary, Gillian and Heather

Director's News

The Museum does a lot to encourage and involve young people, from infant schools to university students on vacation. I was asked to give a talk this month at the Dorset Museum Association AGM, of which the Blandford Museum is a member, about the work we do with young people who volunteer at the museum and the importance of our resident, permanent volunteer staff who support them. This was highlighted at this AGM because we are considered to be the leading light in the way in which we work with young people. In the words of Vicky deWit, Dorset Museums' Advisor, "Blandford Museum is the only museum in Dorset working with young people in this way and in these numbers". We can all be proud of the reputation Blandford Museum has built in our Learning Programme.

The last two months have been very busy and eventful. We have been applying for grant funding to improve the museum building and it now looks very likely that we will receive £4500 of 'Section 106' money, although not yet certain. The Lidl 106 money was requested to renovate the kitchen, toilet and reception and shop areas at the front of the museum. A larger grant has been applied for from the North Dorset Local Action Group Leader money of about £26,000. The Leader money will go to new electrics, lighting, insulation, heaters and dehumidifiers, all aimed at dramatically improving the museum environment. Although not yet certain about either of these pots of money, we have been assured that our projects are strong and we have an excellent chance of being funded. We should know by June of 2018, with work commencing October 2018.

One requirement of the Leader money is that we commit to remain open more of the year. We will be looking for new stewards to help us do this and hoping our long-standing stewards will continue throughout the year as well. We hope you will consider volunteering a few hours a week in the newly developed Reception area in 2019!

Sylvia Andrews

Archaeology Group Report

Our new season started brilliantly with Lilian Ladle in September talking about Hadrian's Wall with her wonderful enthusiasm. The room was full. Could we maintain that level of interest? Yes, we did. The room was also full to overflowing for Paul Cheetham's Talk about the Roman Lake Farm fortress site in October, and when Julian Richards spoke of "6,000 years of pottery" in November. All incredible Speakers, and for each we had very many people saying how much they enjoyed it.

Also in November on 21st, we had Coirstaidh H. Trevarthen, the Portable Antiquities Finds Liaison Officer, together with Claire Pinder, Senior Dorset Archaeologist, examining and identifying Finds from the public in our Museum, and that was a very happy and successful event. There were more than 30 items evaluated, within 10.30 a.m. until 1 p.m. from Iron Age, to Roman, to Medieval, to Georgian, and Victorian, and consisted of coins, brooches, a ring, metalwork, glass bottles, horse paraphernalia, buckles, buttons, oyster shell, worked bone and pottery. Most of them were from the Parishes around Blandford where there are fields to walk. For the next evaluation in March we hope there will also be more items dug from gardens in Blandford, which may be at quite a depth – frequent fires over centuries would have raised the ground level.

Do book now for our Annual (general knowledge) Quiz and Fish Supper on Saturday 27th January at 7.00pm in the Parish Rooms. (Phone 01258 452831 to book a place, £8 per person.) Julian Richards has agreed to be M.C. again, and so it should be another lovely fun evening.

See overleaf for more archaeological events in 2018. Subsequent programme items will be in the next Newsletter. Our programme is usually listed in Forum Focus, and on the Museum noticeboard.

Sally Woodlock

Blandford Forum Museum Trust
Archaeology Group Talks Programme

In the Museum at 7.30 p.m.

2018



Thursday 18th January, 2018

Steve P. Wallis (Senior County Archaeologist,
D.C.C.)

**“The Archaeology of the South
Dorset Ridgeway”**

(including details of the Weymouth Relief Road
finds)

Saturday 27th January: Quiz night and Fish supper

Thursday 15th February, 2018

Lawrence Shaw (Heritage Mapping and Data Officer)

**“Shedding light on the New Forest’s History –
the results of LIDAR and other surveys**

(LIDAR can strip the vegetation from overhead surveys to show ground levels)

Thursday 15th March, 2018

Edrys Barkham (of Bryanston School)

Bryanston Digs by Archaeology Group and the School + A.G.M.

(last year’s report, and ambitions for 2018.)

Thursday 19th April, 2018

Mike Allen, (Environmental Archaeologist)

Discoveries at Wor Barrow

(from interpretations of items within the soil)

Thursday 17th May

Adrian Green

of Salisbury Museum re: Gen. Pitt-Rivers

NO CHARGE DONATIONS APPRECIATED

For further information: 01258 452831

50p Entry

Pre-order from
Pennards



Blandford Museum Victorian Garden
in association with Pennard Plants

POTATO FAYRE

SEED POTATOES – select each tuber, over 60 varieties

BULBS – onions, shallots, garlic

HERITAGE SEEDS – numerous varieties

PLANTS – fruit trees, soft fruit, perennials

ADVICE – talk to the experts

STALLS – local produce and information

CAFÉ 'PATATAS'

Pimperne Village Hall

(Pimperne, near Blandford, DT11 8UZ)

Sunday 28th January 2018

10.30am – 1.30pm



Further info from Gillian 01258 454491

CASH ONLY – No broadband!

Leaving Legacies to the Museum

Leaving a legacy is a simple way to ensure your enduring support for the Museum. A leaflet has been written to help you decide whether this would be right for you. A copy is enclosed with this Newsletter, and further copies are available from the Museum.

The museum is closed now for its usual winter refurbishment. It will reopen at Easter next year, when we shall look forward to seeing you again.

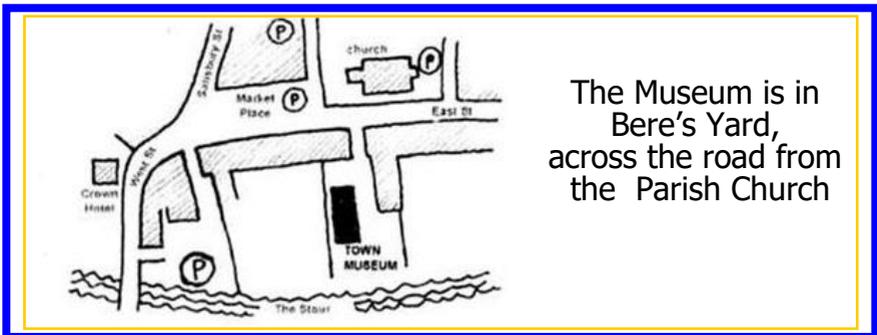
The opening hours are from 10.00 till 4.00, Monday to Saturday

And finally:-

A

Merry Christmas

To all our Members



Blandford Museum Trust

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Newsletter editor: Tony Owen