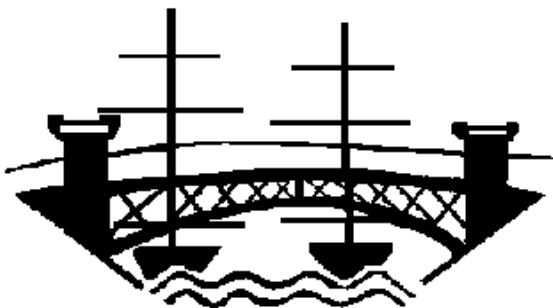


BRIDGWATER & DISTRICT CIVIC SOCIETY

(Established 1972)

Patron: The Rt. Hon The Lord King
of Bridgwater C.H.



Registered Charity No. 265031

NEWSLETTER

Edition 12

(April - June 2010)

Editorial

As we approach spring we continue to look forward to another busy year with much going on within our Society. So much re-development is planned in and around Bridgwater in the next few years. You will already have read about many of these projects in the local Press. All the more reason for the Society to continue taking an active interest in these plans, and to offer sound advice/views as appropriate. We are sure you also have views and we are always ready to hear from you.

A word about the website – it is well worth a visit; 40 pages of content, masterminded by Dr Peter Cattermole. It is extremely interesting and indeed surprising when one looks at the scope and depth of research undertaken under the umbrella of the Civic Society.

Durleigh Brook Project

The Bridgwater Heritage Regeneration Partnership, which has Society President Derek Gibson as its Chairman submitted a planning application and an application for Listed Buildings Consent on 18th March to Sedgemoor District Council, in respect of the above project. Once registered by the Council as the local Planning Authority, details of the applications can be inspected at the Council Offices in King Square, or on its planning website.

It is envisaged that the opening up to view of the Brook between St. Mary Street and Blake Street, with a connecting walkway between, will not only constitute a visual tidying up of that part of the town, but also provide a welcomed facility and an encouragement to riparian property owners in turn to adapt and enhance their respective premises.

Derek will bring along copies of the final design/production drawings for members to see at our Annual General Meeting on 21st April 2010.

The Civic Trust

We wish to make a correction to our last Newsletter – the name of the new organization should have read *Civic Voice*. As already reported, the Chairman, Philip Smeed, will address this subject at the forthcoming AGM. All views will be taken into account and it is anticipated that a decision will be made at this meeting as to whether or not we proceed.

Wembdon Road Cemetery

The Cemetery is under the control of Sedgemoor District Council. The Council is responsible for general maintenance, health and safety. It would be fair to say that this responsibility is minimal.

Much work has been done on the Wembdon Road Cemetery by Miles Peterson, who has been devoted to this project in between his studies at Glasgow University.

There has been a notable level of interest in this Cemetery recently. Under the orchestration of Miles, the *Friends* have been established as an organization and launched on 27th March at the Blake Museum. Miles spoke on the *Friends of Wembdon Road Cemetery* project. An enormous amount of research has been carried out, resulting in all the *residents* being documented, and more than 1200 inscriptions transcribed. The details are now available on the website, www.bridgwatercemeteries.org.uk. People researching their origins can now access this useful information. (Within days, an Australian was impressed with outcome...what a small world we now live in.)

Congratulations Miles. This has been a mammoth task, whose success was due to the dedication and determination of all those involved.

With the renewed interest and assistance of the *Friends* group, we hope to develop the cemetery into a friendly parkland/garden area.

Town Trails Guide

The Town Trails Guide was launched on Saturday, 27th March, at the newly refurbished ground floor of the Blake Museum, by the Mayor of Bridgwater, Councillor Ken Richards.

This is a fully illustrated and refreshing publication. It details three choices of walks within the Town, which afford an insightful and interesting historical background to the town and its growth through the centuries. It will no doubt appeal to visitors and residents alike.

Well done to Miles Peterson for his commitment and enthusiasm in putting this small volume together, and thanks to Vice-Chairman Dr. Peter Cattermole, for his invaluable contribution in producing such an informative publication.

The Guide is available from the Museum and the Office of the Town Clerk in High Street, Bridgwater; from the Civic Society Vice-Chairman at 32 Friarn Street, and at the Society meetings, as well as at the

Bridgwater & District Archaeological Society meetings, contact Dr Aubrey Knowles aubreyk@btopenworld.com. At £2.50 per copy - this will be money well spent!

The funding for the Guide was provided by the Bridgwater Town Council.

Treasurer

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Brian Webb as the new Treasurer. Brian is already well known to many of you and we know you will join us in making him welcome. He is taking over from Jack Naphthine, who has performed so admirably over the past several years. We have no doubt that Brian's experience will contribute greatly to the Society.

Blake Museum

The Museum is now looking splendid after refurbishment. The official opening was on Wednesday 31st March. So much hard work yielded outstanding results, but there are still many projects in view. Congratulations to all who contributed towards this project. It is a great credit to the heritage of the Community.

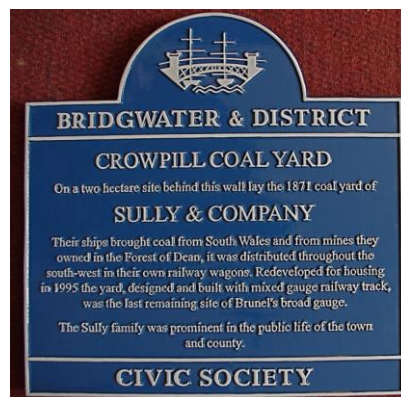
Blake Gardens

These Gardens have received some tlc over recent years, however those of us with longer memories (possibly tinted a slight hue of pink) can remember those halcyon days, of raised scented flower beds, (for the benefit of the visually impaired), wonderful rose gardens and, of course, perfect summers' weather.

The Society would like to put its weight behind efforts to recover lost ground and endeavour to achieve improvements to this wonderful facility right in the centre of the Town. The Gardens have huge potential. The Town Council regularly funds summer bands to play in the band-stand on a Sunday. The Museum Garden is now a joy to behold and, subject to weather, would be a pleasant way to spend a Sunday summer afternoon with friends.

Any ideas on this and, indeed, any other aspect of the work of the Society are most welcome.

Sully Plaque



dominated the coal trade in the area, bringing in coal in their own ships across the channel from south Wales and their own pits in the Forest of Dean. Their Crowpill coalyard was laid out to connect with the Bristol & Exeter Railway branch across the river to the docks which opened in 1871, for distribution locally and in their own rail wagons to many parts of Somerset, Devon and Dorset.

The plaque commemorates the trade and in particular the fact that the Crowpill yard contained the last remaining relics of Brunel's broad gauge railway track still existing as originally laid out, until finally torn up in 1995 when the site was developed for housing by the Knightstone Housing Association.

The plaque can be seen on the wall alongside the outer basin of the dock.

Annual General Meeting

This will take place at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 21 April in the Activity Room, Victoria Park Community Centre. Please do come to this important event. The Society can only continue a presence in the community with your support. Please note that only members who have paid up membership subscriptions may vote. So if you haven't, please keep our new Treasurer busy before the meeting!

Programme of Events 2010-2011

All future Talks will be held in the Meeting Room of the Blake Museum. The move has been necessitated by the fact that Victoria Park is fully booked in the coming year – a question of 'first come-first served' and we were beaten to it by a larger group.

Whilst on the subject of our Programme we must mention that we still require a Programme Secretary;

The latest of the society's wall plaques was unveiled on Friday 26 March 2010 by Miss Juliet Sully, whose grandfather was a director of the company. It commemorates the importance of the Sully family in the economic history of Bridgwater. Their company, Sully & Co,

someone who, between now and the end of this year, can arrange events of interest for year 2011-2012. This new programme has been produced by the joint effort of various members of the Committee, but it has placed an additional burden on members who are already overstretched by other activities. We do not want to reach a situation whereby we have no programme at all, so can somebody help please?

Dates for your Diary

- 21/04/2010 7.30pm Annual General Meeting
- 15/05/2010 2.30pm: Visit to Somerton. Guided tour led by Nancy Langmaid (Somerton Historic Society), followed by refreshments
- 12/06/2010 2.30pm: Visit to Wiveliscombe. Guided tour by Wiveliscombe Civic Society, followed by refreshments.

For further information about meetings/events visit the Society's website or call Bernice on 01278 459659

Newsletter

Our aim is to produce regular quarterly editions. The next issue is due on 1st July 2010. Members are kindly requested to email their contributions to newsletter@bridgwatcivic.org.uk by the 20th June, to ensure we publish the Newsletter on schedule.

Did you know.....?

Visiting Taunton can, from the parking point of view, be a frustrating affair. The launch of the Taunton Gateway Park and Ride last November alleviates that problem. It is sited on the A358, just off Junction 24 of the M5. An Adult day return fare is £2.00. For further details on fares, routes and times visit www.somerset.gov.uk

Having overcome the burden of trying to find somewhere to park, you might feel more motivated to follow the Taunton Heritage Trail. The route is marked by heritage plaques in the ground. There are some interesting stories to be discovered. One example is St. Mary Magdalene Church*. A church has stood on this site since at least the 12th Century. The magnificent 163 foot tower was rebuilt to its original design in 1862. To raise the stone during construction, a pulley system was used, operated by a donkey walking down Hammett Street. When the work was completed, the donkey was hauled to the top of the tower to admire the view it had helped to create! (*Source: Your/Somerset published by Somerset County Council)