

**SUBMISSION BY THE FRIENDS OF BLAKE MUSEUM FOR  
MEETING OF THE MUSEUM SUB COMMITTEE OF BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL  
TUESDAY 2 MARCH 2010**

---

With the agreed departure of Dr. Peter Cattermole in his role as Honorary Museum Co-ordinator for the Bridgwater Town Council and Blake Museum, it is appropriate to address those areas of responsibility formerly carried out by him and to consider administrative arrangements from 1 April 2010. This document is intended to be an honest appraisal of the current situation.

It is fair to say that the FOBM has strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others. Many skills have been freely given and acquired by volunteers with the help and leadership of Dr. Cattermole and which can be carried on into the future. Weaker areas reflect the need to obtain the necessary expertise to ensure the assigned work is carried out under the terms of the 'Memorandum of Understanding'. Below is a summary of the areas of administration and maintenance identified to continue the work of sustaining the Blake Museum. These have been categorised under Strengths, Weaknesses and Absences. Titles have been given, where appropriate, only to distinguish ownership of the area from that of supporting volunteers.

It should be emphasised that the role of acquiring volunteers for all aspects of the Museum has been and will continue to be a key activity.

---

**STRENGTHS**

Custodians' Co-ordinator

We have a designated Co-ordinator with 30 volunteers. We continue to work to widen the volunteer base with emphasis placed on other skills they might bring to those areas where we are weak.

Museum Budget for 2010-2011

We have a designated Budget Administrator who will consistently monitor and act as interface between FOBM and BTC.

Archiving/Conservation/Cataloguing Manager

We have a designated Co-ordinator who has the assistance of 5 other volunteers.

Exhibitions/Displays Manager

We have a designated Co-ordinator/Researcher with the assistance of 1-2 volunteers. A programme of subjects for a variety of exhibitions for the coming year is almost in place, with the first to be mounted in May. More help needs to be identified soon to assist with the work entailed to prepare for each exhibition and to keep within time-frames.

Learning Co-ordinator

We have a designated Co-ordinator for interface with schools/additional activities which engage other young people. Assistance can be given by 1-2 other existing volunteers with previous experience in the Museum but more help will be required as this develops.

Garden maintenance Manager

We have a designated, very experienced gardener who has the assistance of a horticulturist. We can also draw from our existing volunteer base to assist as and when required.

## **WEAKNESSES**

### Museum Keyholders

We have 3 active Keyholders plus 2 emergency Keyholders (who unlock and lock up only). Two other Keyholders are unable to offer permanent assistance at present; one recovering from illness and the other with family commitments which restricts activities at any given time. For security/trust purposes we have tended to place a restriction to recruitment of volunteers from within the FOBM membership. The current situation places an additional burden on the present active Keyholders who accept the situation, but it is a problem which must be rectified with some urgency.

### Shop Manager

We have a designated Shop Manager with the help of 2-3 volunteers to assist with shop duties on re-opening. Again this is a weak volunteer base which needs to be widened.

### Accounting/Treasurer

We currently have difficulties in this area. The current FOBM Treasurer is a young man who has private work/study commitments. This means that he does not have the flexibility of time available to him to maintain the up-to-date recording of transactions of the FOBM accounts. We are in the process of addressing the situation.

### Building management/maintenance

Excellent work has been carried out by ca: 10 volunteers under the leadership and employing the skills and knowledge of Dr. Cattermole. Some of the volunteers who started with us in the winter closedown of 2009-2010 have continued their work during the present phase. By this same token it is anticipated that some will continue to offer their services in the future. In addition we have benefited from the assistance of volunteers from the 'Prospects' agency which has boosted the number of volunteers available at any given time. However this assistance is transient and regular support cannot be guaranteed since those sent to us are eventually placed in full time employment. By and large the present Winter Works Schedule is pretty well on target.

There are specific areas of expertise such as electrics, plumbing, carpentry etc. where future committed assistance may not be forthcoming. In this event reliance will have to be placed on the employment of Contractors which has been factored into the 2010-2011 Museum Budget, hence the need for a Buildings Supervisor/Caretaker. So this area at present must be considered as a weakness.

### Catering Manager

We have benefited from the voluntary work of a lady for some years for special events at the Museum/Band Concerts who, in turn, has several volunteers to assist at these events. At present she is recovering from illness but is confident she will be able to assist at some period after Museum re-opening. However we must be realistic and accept that the timing of recovery cannot be foreseen. This is regarded as a minor weakness as the Museum can cope in this area. We are cognisant of the fact that Food Safety Regulations/food preparation directives need to be observed and that appropriate certification is essential for us to offer this service.

### Housekeeping/Cleaning Supervisor and Volunteer Cleaners

We have one regular volunteer who, when the Museum re-opens, can only work on one specific day each week. Other volunteers have performed cleaning duties at irregular times. It is vital that this important area is covered by a rota of volunteer cleaners on a daily basis, preferably under the supervision of a Housekeeping Supervisor who would also be responsible for purchasing cleaning materials/arranging and supervising the professional cleaning of carpets/ specialist cleaning as required and other contingencies.

Website Manager/In-house publishing

We have a designated volunteer who, to date has provided valuable assistance. With a fuller understanding of what the roles entail, he has volunteered to act as Webmaster for the Museum website as well as Website Manager for the FOBM website. He has produced graphics for exhibition displays; posters; in-house publications and other material as required for the Museum and he has volunteered to continue to do so. Again, in the event of incapacitation, further help needs to be identified.

---

**ABSENCES**

Buildings Supervisor/Caretaker

We have not identified a volunteer for this role. Bearing in mind the comments under 'Building management/maintenance' above, a project management/interface with BTC is crucial.

Office Administrator/Museum Secretary

We have still not identified a volunteer for this role. Serious interest was expressed by a lady at the 'Take one hour' event in Angel Place last Friday but this can only be considered as a possibility until discussions take place.

Other areas which also need to be considered:

Health and Safety to include record keeping; fire equipment tests; alarm etc.  
Ordering and invoicing.  
Answering public enquiries - research and liaison with outside bodies.  
Maintenance of network; communications equipment; computers.  
Maintaining Museum Accreditation Standards.  
Applying Museum Documentation Procedures.  
Identifying Conservation needs.

Summary

The past year has proved to be a steep learning curve in so many areas, a few of which have been alien or complex for those endeavouring to implement many of the procedures vital to the professional management of the Museum. For this reason many of the tasks/procedures have been easier to achieve by those volunteers with experience brought from their previous working careers. Other procedures will take longer to establish until more volunteers with the appropriate skills are identified. Having said that, all volunteers in the Museum over the past 15 months or so have contributed in every way they can and to the best of their ability.

Bernice Lashbrook – Secretary  
on behalf of the Friends of Blake Museum

23 February 2010