



Tela



The Magazine of The Friends of
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

September 2025

This newsletter is completely FREE



The Wintour Chasuble
from Stonyhurst College. On loan
to *The Nature of Gothic* exhibition
by the British Jesuit Province. The
exhibition continues at the
Museum until mid December

See the article on p.6

PROGRAMME 2025/26

**Unless otherwise indicated, meetings
are held in the Museum on the second
Tuesday afternoon of the month at 2pm.**

14th October 2025: Dr Cynthia
Johnston: *Floriography: The meaning
of flowers in medieval manuscripts*
(see p7)

11th November: AGM followed by a
talk by Mike Millward on *Typology*
(see p7)

9th December: Mark Stein talks on
The Frescoes of Sienna Cathedral

13th January 2026: Isaac Hart: *Past
Haunts - ghosts and hauntings in
Lancashire manor houses*

10th February: To be announced

10th March: Raymond Watton: *The
Unknown Mozart - a musical talk
which will be held at Blackburn
Cathedral*

14th April: To be announced

12th May: Jamie Holman will discuss
*the Museum's recently restored
Weavers' Banner*

9th June: Members of the Museum
staff talk about some aspect of their
work.

NB Details of the David Shipway
Lecture, the Coffee Morning and
Garden Party will be announced when
available

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Janet Ross is now the North West Regional Coordinator for BAFM. Blackburn Friends have had a good relationship with BAFM over many years. Joy Heffernan and David Shipway were BAFM NW Regional Coordinators in the past, and we are pleased to be able to assist this important national support organisation once again.

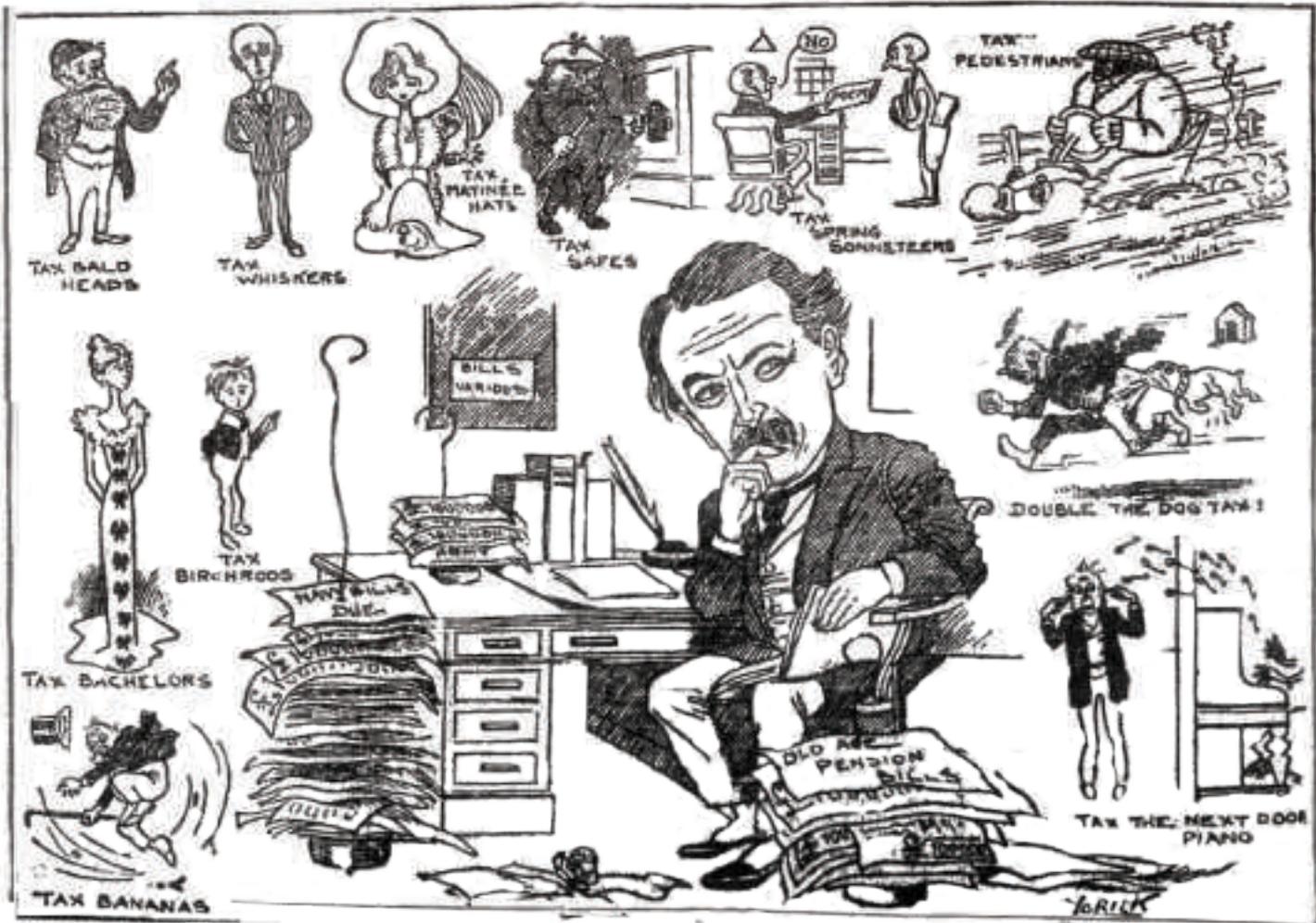
Tela entered for the 2025 BAFM Newsletter of the Year Award. Disappointed not to emulate John Turkington who won the award in 2011 when he was editor, we were runners-up.

The BAFM Conference this year is in Bristol, 4th October. Details are available at <https://www.bafm.co.uk/2025/05/20/52nd-bafm-annual-conference-2025-in-bristol-saturday-4-october/>

The Museum & Art Gallery are promoting an interesting sounding series of musical events in the Victorian Gallery during the next few months. The first was on 20th September. The address of the booking site is: <https://bwdvenues.com/whats-on/>

(To see the Museum events, click on the "Venue" button near top right and pick "Blackburn Museum" from the list)

BUDGET HINTS FOR THE CHANCELLOR.



The Chancellor will probably have presented her budget before the next issue of Tela comes out, so here is a topical cartoon from the Blackburn Weekly Telegraph for 6th April 1912 which might offer some hints.

Thanks to Philip Crompton for sending it in.

A Guided Tour of Samlesbury Hall



Members were invited to join a guided tour of Samlesbury Hall during July and a small group gathered there to take advantage of one of the regular, free tours being offered this year.

Janet Ross reports:

On a glorious summer's day in July members of the Friends of Blackburn Museum took a tour of Samlesbury Hall.

The Trust that takes care of Samlesbury Hall is offering free guided tours on Sundays (unless there is a wedding event) to celebrate the 700 years since the hall was first built.

We saw priest holes, secret rooms, a window rescued from Whalley Abbey and learned about the families who lived there over the centuries.

Our guide was interesting and knowledgeable and the tours go on in to the Autumn if you would like take the opportunity to visit in this special anniversary year.

Steve Gregson adds:

Members were invited to join a guided tour of Samlesbury Hall on Sunday 13th July. What a thrill as I especially remembered going to our cycling club annual dinner dance decades ago. The friendly girl I took then is still living locally and remembers her white headscarf blowing about as we drove there on my Lambretta. It was as if she was another ghost: the white lady is well known there, not the white double-decker Ribble bus of those times.

Not forgetting the camera to photograph the Hall's noted statue that we man-handled into the back of a soft-topped Landrover with its head between driver and passenger fellow cyclists.

More recently, the transport was quite a challenge, us being without a vehicle these days. Not able to ride my bicycle, it was on the bus to Blackburn and then the Preston bus to the Hall. Being Sunday service, there were long waits, but seven of us, including another public transport used, arrived in good time on a sunny day.

A tour is certainly to be recommended: lovely grounds, interesting architecture, period windows, solid old wood floors, priests' holes, an informative guide, no charge! It survives off donations and any profit from the tasty snacks we bought.

Please put it on your list of things to do - guided tours of various kinds continue throughout the year; details are on the Samlesbury Hall website.

Illustrations:: Watercolour of Samlesbury Hall in the early 19th century by J C Butler. [Yale Centre for British Art]

Interior of Samlesbury Hall by Edmund Mercer, 1936 [From Out and About with a Sketchbook (see page 9 below)]



Letters

I notice that the British Museum have an exhibition entitled 'Hiroshige: Artist of the Open Road', with tickets priced at a minimum of £18 each person who attends (I dread to think how much their catalogue of the exhibition is). It makes an interesting comparison with the exhibition at Blackburn Museum a couple of years ago (the catalogue is not dated) of Hiroshige's '53 Stations of the Tokaido Road', with 55 wonderful prints exhibited for free (with a free catalogue). The BM exhibition will probably get thousands of visitors, whereas our museum no doubt got significantly fewer. I just thought I'd highlight the difference between the two museums (there are obviously other reasons for the discrepancy).

Cheers, Jeff Cooper

Editor's note: The Blackburn Exhibition took place in 2021 and received 4,000 visitors.



THE OTHER RICHARD BURTON

by Ian Ferris

There have been many illustrious winners of the British Open Golf Championship; Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Tiger Woods, Gary Player, Tony Jacklin, Seve Ballesteros, Nick Faldo, Rory McIlroy and Richard 'Dick' Burton.

The latter may not spring instantly to mind but this locally born winner has the distinction of holding the Claret Jug for the longest period of time and was the last proper 'Club Professional' to win the Open Championship.

Burton had two other top 10 finishes in the Open yet played only one other major but still went on to have a successful career as a club professional, as did his two brothers, and represented Great Britain in the Ryder Cup on three occasions, 1935, 1937 & 1949.

His future career was almost predetermined after being born on the family farm situated just above the clubhouse of Darwen Golf Club on the 11th October 1907.

Richard had two older brothers, Tom and John, and their fascination with the game began with watching members play past the farm. The 18 hole moorland course was a stern test of golfing ability which proved to be a good grounding for their future careers.

Richard and his brother's first experience of the game was hitting bobbins around the farm with an old walking stick until they were given some old golf clubs.

At this stage being a professional golfer must have seemed a world away but instead of hitting bobbins he began as a teenager working with them as a four-loom weaver at Cobden Mill. The mill later became Crown

The Darwen News, Friday, July 14, 1939.

Darwen Man World Golfer No. 1.

"DICK" BURTON'S WONDER GOLF
TO WIN THE OPEN.

Former Weaver, Greensman, and
Professional at Darwen.

Used to Hit Bobbins with Old Walking
Stick.

TO THE WINNER OF THE 1939
CHAMPIONSHIP.

This feat of "Dick" Burton's is
far and wide,
And one in which Darwen
special pride:
"May his courage and confidence
grow less"
And the victory he's won less
greater success.

When all the excitement "has gone
the board,"
Ye golfers of Darwen I ween
afford:
A well deserved tribute, can offer
day.
Our product! Game enough, to
out U.S.A.

Paints in Darwen.

Richard's love of golf persisted and he began caddying at Darwen Golf Club before deciding that working in the outdoors was preferable to the noisy, dusty atmosphere of the mill.

He successfully applied for the position of greenkeeper before succeeding his brother John as the Club Professional in 1929 aged 21.

Burton continued his golfing education and three years later in order to gain more experience of competitive golf moved as Professional to Hooton Golf Club, now called Ellesmere Port Golf Club.

At the same time the Burton family claimed a unique hat-trick of Club Professionals at Darwen when Richard's remaining brother, Tom, was appointed.

In 1934 he won his first tournament, the Northern Professional Championship, the first of many titles. The following year he began his three appearances for Great Britain in the Ryder Cup in which his personal record was two wins, and three defeats.

In 1937 he was appointed the professional at Sale Golf Club where he remained until 1946. And it was whilst at the Cheshire club he won the 1939 Open Championship. In honour of his feat they have The Richard Burton Lounge and The Richard Burton Trophy. They also have on display the putter he used to win the Open. Darwen GC also have the irons that Burton used on his way to victory at St Andrews.

The 74th Open Championship was played on The Old Course at St. Andrews, Scotland, July 5-7, 1939.

1. Dick Burton 70-72-77-71 - 290
2. Johnny Bulla 77-71-71-73 - 292
3. John Fallon 71-73-71-79 - 294

The weather was windy on the final day and Burton was a contender hoping to improve on his fourth placed finish the previous year. His rivals had already completed their rounds so he was in the fortunate position of knowing he needed to score 73 or better to win the title.

He didn't start well but recovered in time for the difficult second nine where his long driving powers proved crucial, finally winning in style with a birdie on the 18th to win by 2 strokes.

His prize money was £100 (£8,350 today). This year's 2025 champion pocketed £2.3m .

The Mayor of Darwen sent a telegram congratulating the local lad his victory. The Darwen News made the most of this newsworthy event proclaiming the town was proud "so great a championship should rest in such worthy hands" and a poem was written by A.B. Robinson which also appeared in the newspaper to celebrate his achievement...verse 1 of 7..

"To The Winner of The 1939 Open Championship

This feat of "Dick" Burton's is hailed far and wide,
And one in which Darwen takes especial pride:
May his courage and confidence never grow less
And the victory he's won lead to greater success."

As to why Burton held the Claret Jug for the longest, the clue is in the year of his success. Within a couple of months World War II broke out and The Open was not played again until 1946, a period of seven years. Ironically a few weeks later Burton was in the RAF and the fairways at the Old Course ended up being used by the RAF as runways.

Shortly after his famous victory in 1939, Burton published a golf instruction book titled 'Length with Discretion' but then the war intervened and he was unable to fully capitalise on his Open success.

He finished 12th in 1946 in attempting to defend his title and continued to play in the tournament until 1968.

Before the 1946 resumption of the Open Championship Burton wrote to the Royal & Ancient, "Dear Sirs, Please find enclosed my fee of five guineas for this year's open. I will bring the trophy back when I come."

Later in life he was asked if he regretted not being able capitalise on the win but he simply replied, "I was lucky enough...a lot of those who watched me at St Andrews also went off to war and they never came back. Some of my friends didn't make it either, I did."

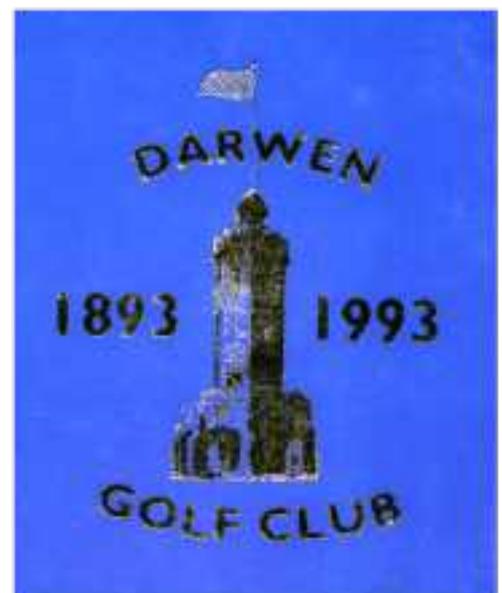
Immediately after the war he moved away from his Northern roots and was appointed the Professional at Coombe Hill Golf Club in Kingston, Surrey where the former 'Darrener' became friendly with golf commentator Peter Alliss.

On a parochial note Burton, just one year before his Open win, produced a record breaking 63 round at Wilshire Golf Club. Unfortunately as it occurred during a 36 hole fourball it cannot be classed as a record.

Richard 'Dick' Burton died in hospital at Kingston upon Thames on 30 January 1974 after a long illness.

All photographs are courtesy of the Cotton Town Project.

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The Nature of Gothic: Reflecting the Natural World in Historic and Contemporary Artistic Practice

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery 13 September - 13 December

A review by Mike Millward



John Ruskin's phrase 'the nature of gothic' in the exhibition title refers to artistic representation of the natural world. In this important show we see not only how medieval manuscript borders enclosed the words on the page, how similar effects persisted early printed books and how Islamic design influenced western book design, but how this extends to later fine and decorative art.

The revival of medieval practice and design by Ruskin's followers in the Arts and Crafts Movement is illustrated here with private press books, textiles and ceramics which demonstrate the joy of making the medieval in a modern world.

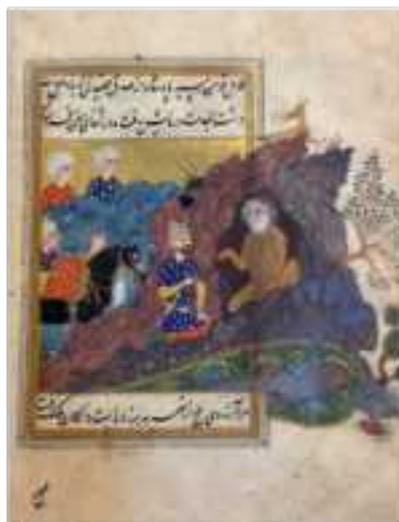
Co-curated by Dr Cynthia Johnston, from the University of London and Anthea Purkis, from Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery, the exhibition draws from the Blackburn collection including from the R E Hart Bequest, together with generous loans from the British Library, Manchester Art Gallery, Cambridge University Library, Chetham's Library, John Rylands Library, Stonyhurst College, National Museums Liverpool, De Morgan Foundation, Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Tullie House Carlisle and Wigan & Leigh Archives.

"The Nature of Gothic" is a powerful example of what happens when a local museum thinks nationally and curates with ambition" says Anthea Purkis. "It's about weaving Blackburn's story into a much larger cultural fabric."

In Cynthia Johnston's words, "Through Blackburn Museum's exceptional collections, we are able to explore this shared cultural theme of gothic decorative art using the natural world, present across books, paintings, textiles and ceramics. Blackburn's collections are astonishing in scope and quality. With this exhibition, we place it within the national narrative of collecting, creativity and cross-cultural exchange. The loan from the



British Library is particularly significant and generous, it includes six medieval manuscripts, including a national treasure, the early 15th century Bedford Psalter and Hours, made in the London workshop of the famous illuminator, Herman Sheere. This is matched by a manuscript from the Museum's Hart Collection, also from Sheere's workshop."



The exhibition occupies the entire Hart and Watercolour Galleries, redecorated and upgraded for the exhibition. They look splendid; the new lighting makes things easier to see, the labels are informative and accessible, but the main thing is the stuff on show – it is fantastic! I have known this museum for almost sixty years, quite a few of them as curator, but I have never seen it home to such a splendid array of wonderful things. If you enter the Hart room from the Victorian Gallery, you are greeted by the spectacular Easter Chasuble made by Helena Wintour in 1655, on loan from Stonyhurst College. Proceed into the room and more and more wonders are revealed.

Many of them are from the Hart Collection, and familiar; they hold their own in some exalted company including the Bedford Hours, truly a national treasure. We can see illuminated psalters and books of hours, some of England's earliest printed books, Henry VIII's own copy of the works of Prosper



of Aquitaine, a rare medieval illuminated Qu'ran and William Morris's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, hand written by him with illustrations by Burne-Jones.

Blackburn's fine collection of Royal Lancastrian lusterware is shown with earlier De Morgan pieces; Morris designs are compared with earlier fabrics which influenced them.

In the Watercolour Gallery, Albert Moore's "Loves of the Winds and Seasons" looks better than ever, displayed alongside lovely works by him from Manchester Art Gallery. Works by Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Arthur Hughes allow comparisons not usually possible as there are no PreRaphaelite pictures in the Blackburn collection.

Finally, Post-modern work by north west based contemporary artists Nehal Aamir and Jamie Holman draw on medieval and Persian manuscripts and the Tregaskis bindings which can be seen in the exhibition.

All in all, the exhibition holds together well. The curators are to be congratulated on creating a

coherent narrative which connects the extremely varied material on show. It increases understanding of the long and profound influence of the middle ages on the modern world. The excellent and well illustrated accompanying catalogue is good value at £8.

All this is funded by the Brian Mercer Trust and is part of the Museum's National Portfolio Organisation status, awarded by Arts Council England.

Illustrations:

Opposite page, top to bottom

Bedford Psalter and Hours, English, ca 1414-22 [British Library]

Blackburn Psalter, English, ca 1260-80 [Hart Collection, Blackburn Museum]

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, 1872, handwritten by William Morris with illustrations by Burne-Jones [British Library]

Morals of the Beneficent, Persian, late 18th century [Hart Collection, Blackburn Museum]

Above, left to right

Easter Chasuble made by Helena Wintour in 1655, [Stonyhurst College]

Royal Lancastrian lustreware vase by Walter Crane, 1910 [Blackburn Museum]



The opening talk of new season on 14th October, will be a talk by Cynthia Johnston related to the exhibition:

Floriography: The meaning of flowers in medieval manuscripts



The current exhibition at the Museum looks at the use of the natural world in decorative art from the late medieval period through to the Arts and Crafts Movement. For this talk, I will focus on the meaning of flowers in decorative borders of late medieval manuscripts. The red rose, the lily, the tri-colour or wild pansy, the carnation and many more each had specific meanings for the medieval reader. Artists used the flowers as emblems in a variety of inventive ways in both their illuminations and border designs. We will also look at this practice as sustained in the embroidery of the recusant Catholic community in the 17th century. We'll look closely at the work of Helena Wintour in the 'Easter' or 'White Chasuble' from Stonyhurst College which is in the exhibition [illustrated left].

The meeting on 12th November will include a short AGM, followed by another talk relating to the exhibition, when Mike Millward will discuss *Typology - the concept of the Old Testament prefiguring the New*. This is illustrated by some items in the "Nature of Gothic" exhibition, including the *Biblia Pauperum* in the Hart Collection.

TWO LARKHILL CHURCHES

Visit to Holy Trinity and St Albans Churches, 18th June 2025

A good sized group of Friends assembled at Holy Trinity Church, Mount Pleasant to visit this redundant Church of England commissioners' church, designed by Edmund Sharpe of Lancaster and built in 1837. We were welcomed by Ken Ford, keyholder for the Churches Conservation Trust, who described the main features of this large preaching church.



We then walked a short way downhill to Larkhill and St Albans, a large and splendid late 19th century Roman Catholic Church designed by Edward Goldie, a prominent Catholic church architect. Unfortunately, Father Jude could not be present, but he had arranged for plenty of information about the building to be available.



The two large churches provided an interesting contrast. As well as being very differently presented - one redundant and neglected, the other resplendent and beautifully furnished - we could see the different architectural treatments between a preaching box and a church designed for ceremonial observance.

Many thanks to Ken and Father Jude for their help in making this visit a success.



Photographs: Thanks to Karen Jones and Ian Ferris

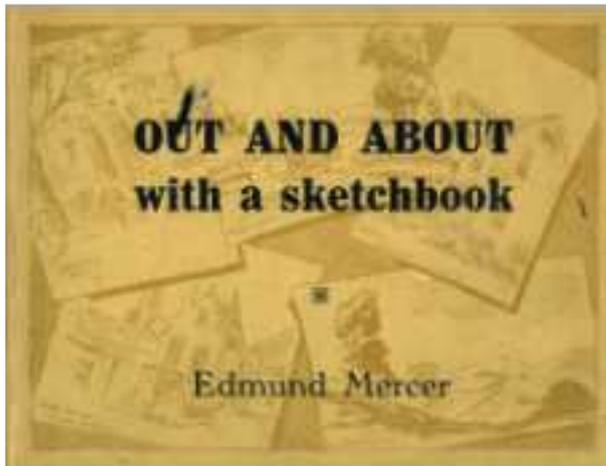
A HOUSE IN KING STREET - postscript



The previous issue of Tela contained an article about the building which now houses the Outdoor Action camping shop. Ken Ford has sent me an image of a drawing by the Blackburn artist Charles Howarth which is identical in all respects except the figures on the right. Did Charles Howarth copy the watercolour, or was Strachan's watercolour based on the Howarth drawing? Interesting question which has encouraged me to do some research. Progress, if any, will be reported in Tela in due course.

Mike Millward

EDMUND MERCER

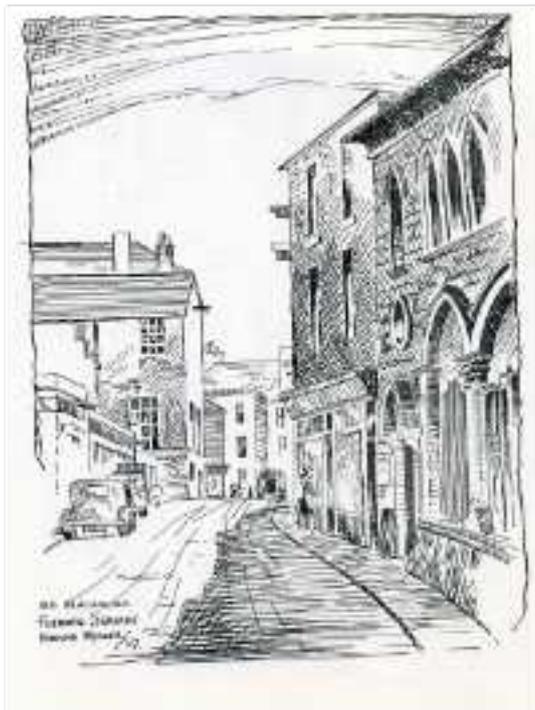
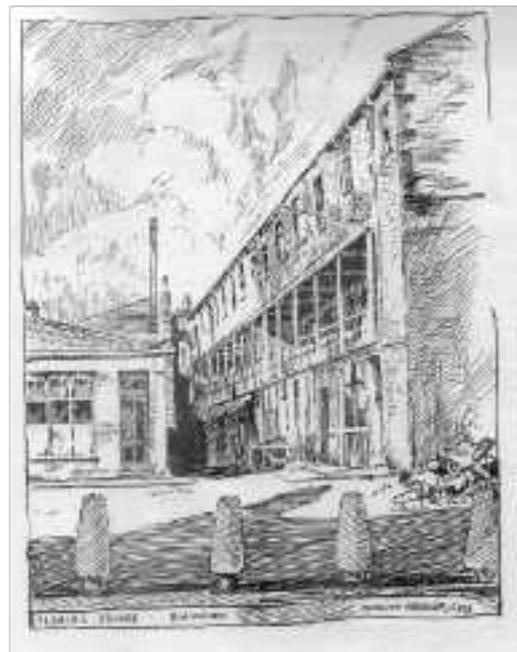


Thanks to Philip Crompton once again for pointing me in the direction of interesting material for Tela. This time he has lent me his copy of Edmund Mercer's "Out and About with a Sketchbook."

Edmund Mercer was a local printer and founder member of the Blackburn Artists Society. I knew him when he was still printing at the Cremer Press on Whalley Banks in the 1990s - a forthright and lively man who was excellent company. His press closed after the theft of his equipment in 1997.

Here are a few examples from his published sketchbook, all near the top of King Street, some still recognisable today, others now completely gone.

Mike Millward



*Drawings by Edmund Mercer from "Out and About with a Sketchbook"
(clockwise from top left)*

*Fleming Square 1972; Fleming Square 1973; Fleming Square 1947;
Northgate, 1973*

COME AS YOU REALLY ARE Exhibition review



Come As You Really Are is a nationwide project with exhibitions taking place across the UK during 2025 - 2026. The first exhibition took place in 2024 at a former department store in Croydon, London. One of the exhibitors was Ken Ford, Hon Treasurer of the Museum Friends. As part of the 2025 Festival of Making the Museum & Art Gallery displayed some of the material from the much larger Croydon show, including Ken's, together with items from other local hobbyists. Similar exhibitions are taking place all over the

country - there is one on at this very moment in Wolverhampton.

The whole project is the idea of the London-based artist Hetain Patel and produced by the dynamic art company Artangel.

The display took up the whole of the Hart Gallery and looked wonderful, with lots of vibrant colour and great variety. There were some brilliant examples of costume and quilting among the wide variety of objects.

However, I found it odd that there was no information about the exhibits or exhibitors. When I asked about this, the answer was that this was intentional. The explanation from the organisers being that 'The exhibition wanted to focus on the hobbies themselves, without pressure of external explanation or validation, celebrating and giving a forum to those who keep their hobby to themselves'.

I would have loved to know who made the amazing textiles and why and how these collections were made, and I know from talking to other visitors that I am not alone in this. It seemed to me to have reduced the impact and value of a very attractive exhibition.



Photographs:

Top: Part of Ken Ford's corner

Middle: Tailored jacket

Bottom: Quilt with scenes from the life of Christ

Mary Waters



It is with great sadness we report the death of Mary Waters after a long illness. Many of you will remember Mary, a long-standing member of the Friends who served on the committee from 2011 until her retirement in 2023.

Our thoughts are with her husband Mike and their family.

Dorothy Whipple Celebration, 7th June

June was a busy month for the Friends, with the garden party, visit to churches and the David Shipway Lecture as well as the normal monthly meeting.

Many Friends also attended the splendid celebration of local author Dorothy Whipple at the Library on 7th June. There was a new film by Ro Lara about the author's life, a talk by Cynthia Johnston about how Blackburn appears in the novels, and a lovely reading performance by Beggars Belief Collective of a short story, *The Private Secretary*, first published in 1914.

The day was brilliantly well organised by the Library and enjoyed by all who were there.

Friends' Garden Party

The Garden Party took place at the home of Mike and Dot Millward on Sunday afternoon, 29th June. The weather was kind after a rather gloomy morning, and a good number of Friends gathered, raising a total of about £350 towards Friends' funds..

Despite almost everyone having a camera in their pocket these days, in the excitement of the occasion no one seems to have remembered to take any photographs, so we are reduced to showing the garden before anybody arrived.

Thanks to all those who came and to members who helped on the day



Mike and Dot

Ernest Marsden



In early August, the press and media reported the naming of a street in Rishton after the distinguished Lancashire atomic scientist Sir Ernest Marsden. Readers may remember the short article in *Tela* in Autumn 2022 by my late friend Pat Gavin explaining the nature of Marsden's discovery.

Sir Ernest - who was born in Rishton's Hermitage Street in 1889, and attended Blackburn's Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School - conducted ground-breaking work into the construction of the atom

whilst studying as an undergraduate at Manchester University in 1909.

Pat Gavin was always keen to inform the world about scientists from this area, and I like to think that he would be pleased with this news.

Photograph: Getty Images

Mike Millward

The Friends of Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery is a registered charity founded in 1982 with the aim of promoting and supporting the Museum.

Subscriptions for the year are: Individual membership £15, or £25 for two members at the same address. Student members: £3.

Guest fee for individual lectures £3.

COMMITTEE MATTERS

The committee met on 9th September.

Museum manager Rebecca Johnson reported on

- the excellent visitor numbers during the Blackburn Rovers Exhibition, the Festival of Making and "Come As You Really Are."
- Improvements to the building, including lighting renewals, toilet refurbishment and the new access ramp.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 4th November. Please send any matters of concern to the secretary.

Our new President, Cynthia Johnston attended for the first time and was welcomed to the meeting. She enthusiastically described the exciting preparations for the imminent "Nature of Gothic" Exhibition.

The Annual General Meeting will take place on 11th November. After the poor attendance in 2024, the committee has decided to incorporate the AGM into a normal meeting, with a speaker. The Museum Manager's report on museum progress would be given as part of the meeting devoted to museum developments, usually held in June.

This year, The AGM will be followed by a talk by Mike Millward relevant to the "Nature of Gothic" exhibition, which will be on show at the time.

Jeff Cooper has been a stalwart of the committee for more than 20 years, and treasurer for 18 years until 2023. He has resigned as he and his wife Christine are moving to Herefordshire. We wish them all the best in their new home and thank them for all they have done to help the Museum and the Friends over the years.

Members of the committee are required to stand down after a period of three years, but can seek re-election. This year it is the turn of Gillian Mason, Janine Monaghan and John Turkington. There is also a vacancy on the committee caused by the resignation of Jeff Cooper.

The officers (chairman, treasurer and secretary) are required to seek re-election each year. All three are prepared to stand again.

Nominations for members of the committee are invited and must be made to the secretary by 21st October 2025.

Mike Millward, Secretary

Committee Officers and Members

Ken Ford, Hon Treasurer and
Membership Secretary

Rebecca Johnson, Museum Manager,
(ex-officio)

Bruce Kitchin

Gillian Mason

Valerie Miles, Chairman

Janet Ross (BAFM NW Regional Co-ordinator)

Mike Millward (Hon Secretary & Newsletter)

Janine Monaghan

Robert M Svarc

John Turkington, (Programme, Outings)

Mike Waters

Raymond Watton

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For up-to-date information about events at the Museum, see the Museum website

<https://blackburnmuseum.org.uk/>