

CHAIN BRIDGE FORGE – OVERVIEW

July 29, 2011 geofftaylor Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Education, Museum Archaeology, Post Medieval Archaeometallurgy, bank, Blacksmith, conservation, Edward Fisher, Fiction, Forge, GBP, general town Blacksmith, George Robert Dodd, Harbour Master, Heckington, http, Marvel Comics, port of Spalding, River Welland, Visual arts



Chain Bridge Forge: Preserving a 19th Century Blacksmith

It is situated on the east bank of the River Welland about one mile from the town centre, only four metres away from the river itself. The building dates back to the early 1800's and in 1826 it appeared in White's Directory and it shows that the Blacksmith was a Francis South. It then appears to have been sold to Edward Fisher who was general town Blacksmith and from his 1850–60 day books it showed his trade also included the servicing the boats that used the port of Spalding. In 1898 the Dodd Family took ownership of the Forge and were recorded as Spalding's last Harbour Master. Three generations of the Dodd family worked the forge. George Robert Dodd originally from Heckington in Lincolnshire had learnt his trade at Newmarket and presumably it had paid well enough for him to get married and purchase the forge for £280. The Forge had to adapt with the times and in the 1950's Geoffrey Dodd business almost ended but he turned his hand to making carnival floats for the Spalding Flower parade and this continued for another 30 years. In 1989 the building was sold to the local Council and work was done to preserve its structure but sadly was not developed as a museum.

Today we hope to fulfil this vision and The Friends of Chain Bridge Forge has been formed to conserve the artefacts, tell the story of this historic building and build an educational programme which will involve schools and the community. The building is approximately 12.3m long and 6.3m wide. It is subdivided internally into three spaces, the largest of which contains the forge and main work space. The floor is mainly of hard packed earth, with large pieces of stone and slate covering some areas. The building has remained largely unaltered and retains its original contents and is a treasure trove of artefacts and documents which illustrates this wonderful building past and the Blacksmiths that have worked it.

The Forge has recently been awarded £50,000 of Heritage Lottery Funding and therefore the project has commenced. If you would like to follow our progress or would like to contribute then please view our website <http://www.chainbridgeforge.co.uk>

