

Heritage to the fore as new information centres open

Cath Foster
c.foster@bathchron.co.uk

History is being remembered with the opening of two new information centres in the Bath area.

The revamp of an information point at Monkton Combe was a chance to commemorate a string of anniversaries linked to the area's canal and railway past.

Meanwhile, the restoration of an aircraft is being celebrated at a new tourist information centre in Corsham.

New information panels were unveiled at the Brassknocker Basin Canal Visitor Centre at Monkton Combe on Friday at an event which also celebrated the end of the 12-week roadworks at nearby Limpley Stoke.

Chairman of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Cllr David Bellotti, was the guest of honour, and reminded other guests that the authority had supported a bid for European funding to build the visitor centre 10 years ago.

He officially reopened a historical display with new interpretation panels containing recently discovered photographs of the Somersetshire Coal Canal before its closure in 1898.

A highlight was the arrival, by narrowboat, of one of the King Bladud's Pigs statues. Brassknocker Pig – painted in traditional canal colours by artist Julia Trickey – will be installed at the basin for the rest of the tourism season.

The occasion also commemorated the 110th anniversary of the canal closure, the centenary of the building of a railway line in the area, the 50th anniversary of the rail line's closure, and the 20th anniversary of the reopening of the restored section of the canal.

The Tourist Information Centre in Corsham is now fully accessible for disabled people following a facelift.

The TIC and Heritage Centre in



High Street was officially reopened by Cllr Vivian Vines and the chairman of the Corsham Area Development Trust, Cllr Christine Reid.

The busy high street centre, which used to be council-run, has had a complete makeover and now aims to promote the area's attractions more effectively to visitors and residents alike.

Ian Storey, a director of the trust, said: "The trust has been successful in operating this centre at a significantly lower cost to the public purse, and this prevented a much-valued service from being closed.

"We are delighted with the improvements, and customers have commented favourably on the new layout."

To coincide with the reopening, a



GRAND ENTRANCE: the canal pig designed by artist Julia Trickey, left

new exhibition has been launched that tells the story of the restoration of a Bristol aircraft engine which was built in Corsham in late 1943 or early 1944.

The Centaurus engine itself is on permanent display at the Bristol Aero Collection at Kemble airfield in Gloucestershire, but the exhibition has been loaned to Corsham after the centre helped to provide historical background material.

The engine was built underground in the secret wartime defence facilities that were developed at Spring Quarry.

Admission to the exhibition is free and it is open from 10am to 4.30pm on weekdays and 10am to 1pm on Saturdays.

Meanwhile, a decision has been made on the future of the tourist information centre in Bradford on Avon.

The Vaults building on the Kingston Mills development site will now house Bradford Arts Vaults Enterprise (BRAVE) and the town's voluntary-run tourism centre.



CUTTING THE RIBBON: Cllr Vivian Vines does the honours at the Corsham centre, watched by Allan Seeley, the project manager, and Cllr Christine Reid, chairman of the Corsham Area Development Trust

PICTURE: Kevin Bates

**“listen maybe its
time to move”**

1793
Bonhams