

ON THE OFFENSIVE

Well-loved, albeit risqué, comic Jim Davidson plays Frome

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We take a trip back to 2005 and our first Battle of the Bands

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Thriller – Live is a spectacular show celebrating the King of Pop

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BRIDGING THE PAST AND PRESENT: Organisers of a forthcoming exhibition celebrating the life and work of Benjamin Baker show the simplicity of the construction of the Forth Rail Bridge

PICTURE: Will Nicol

New exhibition celebrates an extraordinary engineer



A six-week celebration of an extraordinary Somerset engineer takes place for the first time at two venues in Frome.

The life and work of Benjamin Baker will be explored and highlighted at Rook Lane Chapel and Frome Museum from Saturday, June 13 to Saturday, July 24.

In the mid-19th century, Frome was full of the noise, bustle and fumes of Victorian metal works.

Into these surroundings was born the visionary, global engineer Benjamin Baker.

Baker was responsible for some of the most audacious structures of the time.

He designed the Forth Rail Bridge, for which he was knighted by Queen Victoria, and the Aswan Dam.

He also designed the metal cylinder that brought Cleopatra's Needle back from Alexandria to London and tunnelling systems for the London Underground and the Hudson River Tunnel into New York.

This June and July, thanks to Heritage Lottery funding, and support from Buro Happold and the Institution of Civil Engineers, Benjamin Baker will be celebrated back in his home town with the first exhibition exploring his work.

There will be images of Baker's most famous achievement, the mile long Forth Rail Bridge under construction.

At the time the longest bridge in the world, these little-known photographs show an industrial masterpiece, the first-ever steel bridge, in the making from 1883 to its completion in 1890.

These were taken by his assistant Evelyn Carey, and printed from the original glass negatives held in the National Archives of Scotland.

They will be shown in the galleries of Rook Lane Chapel alongside rarely seen vintage prints, on loan from Getty Images, of two of Baker's other remarkable projects, the transportation of Cleopatra's Needle and the construction of the Aswan Dam.

Outreach co-ordinator Pippa Goldfinger said: "The exhibition will show the character and dynamism of Baker's extraordinary life."

"We are also using this opportunity to show young people in Frome the creative excitement of engineering, past and present, at a time when there is a national shortage of young people choosing engineering as a career option."

There will be an expansive education



programme for all ages running alongside the exhibition.

Graduate engineers from the Institution of Civil Engineers will mentor local college students through the construction and load-testing of cantilevered bridges, while more than 1,000 first and middle school children will learn the rudiments of bridge building, with sugar cubes and straws instead of steel.

Culminating alongside this year's Frome Festival, other activities taking place in the

Bridging the World season include Read All About It! at Frome Museum which will re-create a Victorian reading room, with a plethora of material relating to Baker, alongside books and periodicals on the art of engineering today.

The Forth Bridge: Benjamin Baker and the birth of Structural Expressionism will be an engineering debate hosted by NVB Architects and Rook Lane Arts, with Anthony Hunt, Mark Whitby and George Ferguson.

Bridging Distances with Rosie Jackson will be a writing workshop inspired by Rook Lane Chapel's exhibition of Benjamin Baker's extraordinary feats of engineering.

Forth Bridge Night: Benjamin Baker And The 39 Steps will see James Laurenson play Sir Benjamin as he delivers his 1887 Royal Society lecture. This will be followed by a special screening of Hitchcock's The 39 Steps (1935), featuring Robert Donat's dashing Forth Bridge escape.

Bridges and Domes: Family Workshop NVB Architects and Rook Lane Arts give families a hands-on opportunity to explore simple architecture and engineering, and make a den in the process.

Caroline Wood