

HISTORY OF BATH
RESEARCH GROUP

NEWSLETTER 3

MAY 1987

GROUP NEWS

Subscriptions for 1987-88 are now due. Single subscriptions (£4) or joint (e.g. husband-and-wife) subscriptions (£6.50) should be sent to Trevor Fawcett, 25 Northampton Street, Bath, BA1 2SW. Cheques should be made out to the History of Bath Research Group. It would be appreciated if subscriptions could be paid promptly to save the Secretary's time and expense in issuing reminders.

Summer Social Meeting - Please see bottom of page 4.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Apologies were received from Jennifer Beazley, John Kite and Chris Pound.
2. In her annual report the Chairman referred to the success of the first year's programme, to her own succession as Chairman in mid-year following the regretted resignation of Phil Hemmings, to the usefulness of the Newsletter and to the Edmund-Rackian role of the Secretary. She mentioned also the setting up of the working party on sources for Bath history, the likelihood that a series of historic Bath maps would be issued (partly at the Group's suggestion) and the decision to join the Avon Local. History Association.
3. The Treasurer presented audited accounts showing that the Group's income up to 22 March 1987 amounted to £304.83; of this £257.50 came from 53 single memberships at £4 and 7 joint memberships at £6.50. In the same period expenditure on hire of rooms, photocopying, printing, stationery, postage and other items amounted to £188.65, leaving a balance of £116.18. Her recommendation that subscription rates remain unchanged was approved.
4. COMMITTEE: Two members of the 1986-87 Committee were standing down (Philippa Bishop and Paul Cresswell) and nominations had been received for Mrs. Marta Oliver and Dr. John Williams. The meeting then approved the following Committee for 1987-88. Chairman - Brenda Buchanan, Secretary - Trevor Fawcett, Treasurer - Mary Wills, other Committee Members - Marta Oliver, Chris Pound, Judith Samuel, John Williams.

5. The Chairman spoke finally about future plans for the Group, inviting members to let her or the Secretary have any suggestions about the form, venue, day and subject of meetings. (There was evidence at the A.G.M. that an occasional Thursday meeting would be welcome to some members.) It was hoped to arrange a summer social meeting, perhaps at Prior Park. The Chairman also spoke of the potential value of the Newsletter for reporting concisely on members' research, and mentioned the importance of the scholarly convention of fully acknowledging sources and assistance.

MEETINGS HELD JANUARY - APRIL 1987

On 7 January at the Huntingdon Centre Judith Samuel developed her account of Bath's Jewish community already published in Bath History, Vol. 1, showing how the history of a particular group can be pieced together from many fragments of evidence, including the visual records with which she illustrated her talk.

The visit to the Camden Works Museum (now the Bath Industrial Heritage Centre) on 4 February enabled members to hear about the J.B. Bowler business archive and the progress made on the cataloguing and indexing of the various correspondence, commercial catalogues, periodicals, ledgers and workbooks, directories, illustrated calendars, photographs and physical objects from mineral water bottles to lathes and screwdrivers - samples of which had been laid out in a special display on the Group's behalf. A tour of parts of the museum was included.

Peter Davenport's talk at No. 4 Circus on 4 March dealt with the theoretical interrelationship of archaeology and history, taking as an example the change in the interpretation of Prehistory from one aiming at a narrative explanation to the modern preference for analysis based solely on archaeological evidence. His paper was illustrated by slides and, during the questions that followed, the recent excavation of No. 4 Circus was appropriately touched an.

On 1 April, after completion of the A.G.M., Dr. Roger Rolls spoke about past diseases of Bath, discussing for example contemporary medical theory behind the claims for the efficacy of the water treatment and the reasons for the prevalence of lead poisoning. Between the illustrated talk and the subsequent questions and comment, members were taken on a tour of part of the old Mineral Water Hospital to view the paintings (by Hoare, Morris, etc.) and the manuscript records and other material relating to the Hospital's history.

NEW MEMBERS

Miss Sally Butler, 2 The Batch, Upper Swainswick, Bath, BA1 8BX

Mr. Leslie Holt, Westwinds, Hayesfield Park, Bath, BA2 4QE

As an institutional member of the Avon Local History Association the Group now receives ten copies of each issue of the ALHA's informative Newsletter. Copies are available for members to see or borrow at monthly meetings.

EXHIBITIONS, CONFERENCES, etc.

1. The third successive exhibition organised by Elizabeth Holland at the Reference Library (13 April - 2 May) concentrated on the history of Bath Street. A lucid descriptive text and rich visual display drawn from detailed plans, prints, postcards, tradesmen's ephemera and recent colour photographs, outlined the centuries of change since Baldwin's Neoclassical street first provided dignified, shop-lined access to the Cross Bath, previously only approached through narrow lanes. The area's later history included the building of the Grand Pump Room Hotel, the establishment of the Royal Baths/Physical Treatment Centre (c. 1920- 76), the destructive fire of July last year, and the present comprehensive redevelopment on the north side to create a covered shopping precinct. Given the substantial archival and other research presented in this and the earlier exhibitions, and the trouble taken over the lay-out (by Jeff Clark), it seems a pity that they have been on view so briefly. Perhaps Grosvenor Square Properties Group, which is responsible for the current redevelopment, might be encouraged to mount a permanent display on the site?
2. The 15th Annual Conference of the Association for Industrial Archaeology will take place at the University of Bath on 11 -13 September 1987. Its programme will concentrate on the region's industrial development and its physical remains. In addition to a variety of lectures there will be an underground visit to a Bath stone quarry, a tour of features of the Kennet and Avon Canal and an expedition to the Port of Bristol. A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of - - - Avon will be available. The conference secretary is David Alderton, 48 Quay Street, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP9 BEY, but information may also be obtained from a member of our Group, Owen Ward, 77 Hansford Square, Combe Down, Bath, BA2 5LJ (work 826826, home 832529).

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

1. Mrs. F. Repper, Museum Curator at the new Bath Industrial Heritage Centre, Camden Works, Julian Road, Bath, BA1 2RH, is compiling a register of names and addresses of people prepared to answer very occasional queries relating to their particular local or subject expertise. She would therefore welcome offers from members of the Group. Please let her know direct or alternatively give Trevor Fawcett your authority to pass on your name, address and research interest(s) as listed in the Directory of Members.
2. Information has been received about the recently-formed Centre for South-Western Historical Studies, whose orbit reaches as far as Avon and which the Group intends to join as an institutional member. Established by the University of Exeter, the Centre will produce a Register of Current Research and an annual newsletter. The theme of its first annual symposium, held in November 1986, was the military history and defence of the South-West. It is hoped to give details of the November 1987 Conference in our Newsletter 4.
3. The ESRC is funding a project on the Small Towns in Britain 1600- 1850, as part of a joint study with French investigators. Initially this is focussing on specific towns - of which Bath is one - with emphasis on population trends, economic development and the compilation of a bibliography. Population statistics will be processed on the mainframe computer at Loughborough University, though the British directors of the project, Peter Clark and Kathy Gaskin, are based at the University of

Leicester. The main local researcher is A.J. Scrase of Bristol Polytechnic, but further collaborators are needed. Special forms are available for recording data and collaborator's workshops are held periodically to pool ideas and discuss problems. It is hoped to invite Mr. Scrase to describe his own work on the project, but if in the meantime any member is interested in participating he/she should contact Trevor Fawcett for further details.

BRUTON WATER

Bath has traditionally enjoyed a good supply of fresh water, brought to its citizens from springs on the hills. Gilmore's map of 1694 marks a small building in the middle of High Street which housed a water cock; and there were others elsewhere. By the middle of the 18th century, when John Wood wrote his Essay towards a Description of Bath, the number of conduits in the city amounted to ten.

The main water supply came from Beechen Cliff, arising out of springs on Magdalen (or maudlin) Hill which belonged to the Trustees of Bruton Hospital charity, and therefore known as "Bruton Water". The yearly rent of £10.10s. paid by Bath for the use of the water provided the charity with a reliable source of income, which went to the maintenance of several elderly men and women, and the clothing and education of twelve boys. The founder of the charity, Hugh Sexey, had for twenty years until his death in 1619 held an important position as one of the Crown Auditors of the Exchequer. In his will he remembered his birthplace by establishing Sexey's School and Hospital at Bruton and endowed them with various properties including the Manor of Lyncombe and Widcombe at Bath.

Bath Council's published history of its waterworks (1878) relates how in 1862 the "Bruton Water" agreement finally came to an end with the transfer of £350 Consols 3% into the charitable funds of Hugh Sexey's School and Hospital, to bring in £10.10s. per annum. As events proved, it was a propitious time to conclude the agreement, since the construction of the Devonshire Tunnel under Combe Down in 1874 (for the Bath extension of the Somerset and Dorset Railway Company) brought about a serious reduction in the supply of water to the two reservoirs on Beechen Cliff.

CONNIE SMITH.

SUMMER SOCIAL MEETING, Wednesday 3 June, 7.30 p.m. at Newton St. Loe

Following the success of last year's summer social evening at the Herschel Museum, a similar event has been arranged this year in the eighteenth-century house of the Langton of Newton Park, now part of Bath College of Higher Education. As this is an additional meeting, a charge of £1.50 per person will be made to cover the costs of hiring the roan and of providing suitable liquid refreshments. You are welcome to bring a guest on this occasion, but since numbers have to be limited to 50 persons those wishing to come should return the attached slip as soon as possible. Payment can either be made now (together with renewal of membership - see page 1) or at the meeting on 3 June.

I/we wish to come to the summer social meeting at Newton St. Loe on 3 June. (Please give name(s).)

I/we include/do not include payment of £1.50 per person on my/our membership renewal cheque.

(Please return to Trevor Fawcett, 25 Northampton Street, Bath, BA1 2SW.)