



NEWSLETTER 4

SEPTEMBER 1987

G R O U P N E W S

- 1 Enclosed with this Newsletter is the programme of meetings for 1987-88. In response to requests from members who find it difficult to attend Wednesday-meetings the Committee is this year experimenting with meetings on Thursdays as well. Please note the appropriate dates in your diary. As usual the venue for meetings varies.
2. You will see from this Newsletter that the Group now has its own logo, based on an idea suggested by a graphic design student at Bath College of Higher Education and kindly realised by one of our members, Mike Gray. The design alludes to- the-curved terraces of Bath as well as to its 18th-century chairmen.

Meetings held May - June 1-1987

In a stimulating talk given on 6 May at the Huntingdon Centre Dr. Tim Mowl used the architectural and landscape theory of the Picturesque movement (circa 1800) to explain the designs and siting of Italianate villas (especially by H.E. Goodridge) in Bath and its neighbourhood, c. 1825-1850. Among the buildings discussed and illustrated were Beckford's Tower, the villas of Upper Bathwick Hill with their loggias, towers and irregular plans (Montebello, Fiesole, Woodland Place, Casa Bianca, La Casetta, Oakwood) and houses at Kelston, Colerne and further afield.

The June social meeting was held this year in the-eighteenth-century house at Newton Park. Besides giving members an opportunity to meet informally, the occasion proved both instructive and entertaining, with Dr. Graham Davis outlining the rise and fall of the Gore-Langton family and Owen Ward's male-voice quartet performing catches and glees in the tradition of the Georgian gentlemen's singing clubs.

NEW MEMBERS

Dr. Monica Baly, 19 Royal Crescent, Bath, BA1 2LT

Mr Michael John Hall, 4 Beechen Cliff Villas Beechen Cliff Road, Bath. BA2 4QR

Miss Sylvia Ini, 4 Ladymead House, 112 Walcot Street, Bath, BA1 5BG

Mrs. A. R. Joeke, The Hermitage, St. Catherine, Bath, BA1 8HE

Mr. & Mrs. G. F. Laurence, St Cuthberts, 20 Church Street, Bathford, Bath, BA1 7TU

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Dr. Tim Mowl, 4 Elmsgrove Road, Redland, BS6 6AH

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

1. The Social History Society is keen to recruit new members, academic or otherwise-. This national association organises an annual January conference and issues a newsletter twice a year. The annual subscription is £3. For further information and application forms write to Mrs. Wendy Constantine, Centre for Social History, Furness College, University of Lancaster, LA1 4YG.
2. A research project has been established to survey the history and archaeology of the St. Catherine Valley, near Bath, together with its ecological, geological and topographical context. The organiser is Mrs. Rosemary Joeke who has just joined our own Group (see New Members above).

E X H I B I T I O N S

1. During August the Victoria Art Gallery staged another of its largely topographical exhibitions under the title "A Bath Panorama". Most of the paintings, watercolours, drawings and prints came from its permanent collection and included old favourites by Sperin, Cozens, Melton, Rowlandson, etc. as well as less familiar items. Two of H. W. Bunbury's long caricatures were on view, plus a selection of portraits and miniatures by local artists. Of particular note were two oils from a private collection; one showing Terrace Walk and the other Orange Grove in the late 18th century (the former better known in a reduced water-colour version not in the exhibition).
2. "Beyond Mr. Pulteney's Bridge", an exhibition at the Holbourne of Menstrie Museum from 5 September to 18 October, throws new light on the development of the Bathwick Estate. It centres on a hitherto unexhibited group of 30 maps, plans and drawings prepared for the Far]. of Darlington and Dukes of Cleveland, together with correspondence between John Pinch and J. and H.E. Goodrich, the Bath architects, and the Earl of Darlington and his agent Thomas Scarth, Also on display are Bathwick Estate Office copies of drawings for terraces and villas built in Bath in the period 1808-1860. The exhibition has been organised by the Bath Preservation Trust.

NOTES FROM BATH REFERENCE LIBRARY

contributed by Mary Wills

The Library has recently issued some reproductions of local interest: a copy of Speed's 1610 map, as printed in Warner's History of Bath, is now available on tinted heavy weight paper at 30p. Also available are 12 views of Bath by S. J. Loxton, from the original pen and ink drawings in Bristol Reference. Library, at £2 for the full set, £1 for six or 20p each.

Some Recent Additions to the Library

Fuller's Earth: a history of calcium montmorillonite; by Robert H. S. Robertson.

Published by Volturno Press, 1986. Although this is not strictly speaking a 'local' book, the subject matter is of local interest.

Bath: a Study in Planning and Development, 1700-1830, 1945 - 1982; by Philip Hemmings.

3 volumes, photocopy of original typescript.

The Changing Face of Weston in the 19th Century, 1801 - 1901; by Gwen Froud.

Photocopy of original typescript.

The Baptists of Bath, 1751-1851; by Kerry Birch. Photocopy of original typescript.

The Story of our Village by Claverton Down Women's Institute. Original album of photography And text, together with a box of papers. relating to the history compiled in 1953. This has been deposited at the library on the demise of the Claverton Down Warren's Institute.

Ferrner's Journal, 1759/1760: an industrial spy in Bath and Bristol; by Bengt ____ ,

with introduction and notes by A.P. Woolrich. Published by De Archaeologische Pers, Eindhoven, Nederland. (1986)

John Wood the elder and John Wood-the younger: architects of Bath by Charles Edward Brownell.

Columbia University, 1976. Microfilm.

NEW PUBLICATION

Prior Park: a Compleat Landscape, by Gillian Clarke
(Bath, Millstream Books, 19-87) £5.00

This is the first publication to concentrate on the landscape setting of Ralph Allen's Palladian mansion, particularly from the late 1730s, when the planting of the hitherto bare but naturally terraced site began, down to the significant modifications in the 19th century during its Catholic ownership. Drawing on plans, plans, prints, written descriptions, and the still surviving evidence on the ground, Gillian Clarke pieces together the development of the estate against a background of aesthetic ideas. The naturalistic landscape garden was pioneered in Britain and Prior Park was among its earlier examples. Much is rightly made of Alexander Pope's well-documented involvement in the original planning, though not of the likely influence of William Shenstone, creator of a renowned garden near Birmingham and an intimate of the rector of Claverton, Richard Graves, Allen's friend and neighbour. As Prior Park evolved, the grounds became dotted with association-rich features: a cascade with a figure of Moses, bridges, Gothick buildings, a grotto, a Chinese gate, a thatched cottage. But the estate was a ferme ornée with a practical side, kitchen garden, stack-rearing and timber growing, and it would be interesting to know more about the economics of its creation and management. One of the virtues of this very useful compilation is that it indicates the gaps in our knowledge and the need for further study of the historic landscape.

THIMBLE MILL, WIDCOMBE

It is generally accepted (after Ken Clew) that Thimble Mill once served as steam pump to return water from the bottom-lock on the canal either to the pound which serve that lock, or else to the top of the flight. In the latter case, the decorative chimney higher up the flight (opposite Abbey View Lock No. 11) might have belonged to a steam-powered auxiliary pump. Exactly what sort of pumps these might have been is not known.

But this would not explain the name. One piece of folk history claims that the mill used to drive machines which wound cotton onto thimbles. Ron Fullagar, however, has pointed out that the site and mill building were owned by the G.W.R. in 1845, six years before they took over the canal. Rather than winding cotton onto thimbles, could the mill have been making "thimbles" (cf. 'bobbin mill')? If so, what was a thimble, and did the G.W.R. have any use for them? Could the mill have been adapted to make "thimbles" as well as pumping water - which can only have been an intermittent exercise? What happened to the 1801 engine taken out from Crofton and moved to Bristol by canal in May 1846 (according to Clew)? Why are the two chimneys on the Bath flight so markedly different? How was pumped water conveyed from the bottom pound to the top lock (or pound) - if it was? And what about the other pumping station (if such it was) further up the flight? It may be that neither belonged to the canal since no records of either apparently exist in the Kennet and Avon Canal papers. Comments please to Owen Ward, 77 Hansford Square, Combe Down, Bath. (832529).

The Newsletter is compiled by the Secretary and typed by Judith Samuel.