

MEETINGS HELD JANUARY - APRIL 1989

Under **David McLaughlin's** enthusiastic chairmanship an expert trio of speakers (**James Elliott, Francis Kelly** and **Arnold Root**, with archaeological back-up from Peter Davenport) fielded a wide range of questions on historic Bath buildings at the Huntingdon Centre on 5 January. Only a verbatim report could do justice to the illuminating detail that emerged on such topics as the Victorian fashion for lowering first-floor windows (arising from Picturesque antecedents), the quality of Georgian construction, earlier customs in painting exterior woodwork, street levels and vaults, the Royal Crescent ha-ha, the Empire Hotel, distinctive 20th-century buildings, and the organisation of the local conservation service (together with the constraints under which it operates). At least one member of the audience felt inspired by the evening to seek out the Romanesque capitals in Bath Abbey, the evidence of a 17th-century structure behind re-fronted no.10 Stall Street and two notable examples of suburban architecture - the house designed by C.F.A. Voysey in Shaft Road and the modernist Kilowatt House off North Road. No doubt others were similarly stimulated by this our first experiment with a "brains' trust".

"Site", "structure" and "furnishings" were **Dr. Joe Bettley's** key points for the examination of mediaeval churches in the Bath region when he spoke on 1 February, illustrating his talk with some excellent slides. He demonstrated that prepared eyes can find plenty of evidence of churches established on prehistoric and Roman sites, as well as many survivals from the Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque periods. Pagan and popular symbolism is common in later mediaeval churches with sheila-na-gig, green man, and other figures among a wealth of other stone-carvings, furnishings, stained glass, monuments, and fine timberwork. Rewarding churches close to Bath include those at North Stoke, Bitton, Englishcombe, Wellow, Lullington, Orchardleigh, St. Catherine's, Tockenham, and Codford St. Peter, though Dr. Bettley also covered other good examples in the region.

The meeting of 2 March gave members a chance to hear a challenging paper by **Dr. Peter Borsay** who has been tracing the evolution of Bath's Georgian "image" over the last 250 years or so. In the 18th century two conflicting views arose: one of an urbane, egalitarian, handsome spa, the other more satirical, realistic and uncomplimentary. The morally censorious 19th century tended to play down Georgian Bath and emphasise instead both the Roman period and its own contemporary achievements. Around 1900 the promotion of the city became more deliberate with an intensified concern for historic associations (hence commemorative plaques) and culminating in the Bath Pageant of 1909. Another status-raising act was the restoration of the Assembly Rooms in 1938. The modern cult of 18th-century Bath has been compounded of aesthetic, literary, anecdotal, and nostalgic elements, all useful in marketing the city and (except for dissenting voices like that of R.S. Neale) largely approving in nature. Peter Borsay's talk showed how mythologies and ideologies colour people's attitudes to Bath's past and need to be taken into account by its present-day historians.

Once AGM business was completed on 12 April, **Dr. Mary Ede** spoke on Bath's connection with the Great Exhibition of 1851, which began officially when the Mayor was invited to a public relations banquet in London at which Prince Albert participated. In March 1850 a meeting at the Guildhall drummed up local support and appointed a local committee of gentry and tradesmen. In due course a further committee came into being to help artisans travel on cheap railway excursions to the Exhibition at which as many as 45 Bath concerns and individuals showed their wares. Among the categories of Bath exhibits were furniture, carriages and invalid chairs, textiles, fancy work (e.g. needlework and basketry), ornamental metal and stonework, engineering (a sawing machine, a crane, a smokeless stove, etc.), footwear, and miscellaneous items shown by Isaac Pitman and others. The Bath Chronicle reflected the huge local interest generated by the event, the numbers of citizens (of all classes) who went up to Kensington, and the Victorian municipal energy displayed. Whether there was any useful spin-off for Bath in attracting visitors and trade seems more doubtful.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

1. We welcome as new members Dr. Peter and Anne Borsay (History Dept., St. David's University College, Lampeter, Dyfed, SA48 7ED) and Mr. Peter Michael Carey (31 Sydney Buildings, Bath, BA2 6DB). Peter Borsay's book The English Urban Renaissance is due for imminent publication; he continues to research the "image" of Bath following his recent talk to the Group. Anne Borsay is investigating in depth the earlier history of the Bath General Hospital. Peter Carey is an architect with David Brain Partnership.
2. John Kite has now retired as Area Librarian of Avon County Library.
3. Julia Moss has moved to 2 Park Street, Bath, BA1 2TB.

NEW AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

1. John Hudson Bath in Old Photographs (Allan Sutton 1988, £6.50) is the fourth compilation of this kind published in recent years for an apparently insatiable market.
2. Keith Dallimore continues his tried formula of plan-sketch-and-caption guides with Exploring Combe Down (Millstream Books, 1988, £2.50). One useful plan marks the stone workings.
3. Eileen Harris, "John Wood's system of architecture", Burlington Magazine Feb. 1989, vol. 131. pp. 101-107: another addition to the Wood literature on the heels of Tim Mowl's book.
4. Jennifer Beazley, a member of our Group, is the editor of Inside Churches: a Guide to Church Furnishings, to be published by the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies in early May at £9.95.
5. Jean Manco kindly draws attention to The Observant Traveller, ed. Robin Gard (HMSO), which includes a catalogue of MS. travel diaries held in the county record offices of Great Britain. She has noted the following entries mentioning visits to Bath:-

Clywd Record Office D/NH/1074: Diary of Elizabeth Giffard, 1766-7. (Two extracts from this diary are printed in The Observant Traveller: one describes a visit to the theatre under Simpson's Rooms, the other gives interesting detail about the Kingston Baths.)

Cornwall Record Office R(S)1/174: Diary of Rachel Stackhouse, 1800.

Hertfordshire Record Office 84630: Diary of Mary Martin Leake, 1798.

Norfolk Record office MS80 T 131 C: Diary Anon, 1826-1838.

North Yorkshire Record office ZGY/T5: Diary of William Gray 1809-11.

Northamptonshire Record Office I.L.2688: Diary of Sir Justinian Isham, 1730.

Nottinghamshire Archives office M 23,904: Diary of Abigail Gawthern, 1805. Published in Thoroton Society Record Series 33.

Shropshire Record Office 567/5/5/1/6-7, 15-6, 17, 27: Diary of Katherine Plymley, 1795, 1796, 1799 and 1807.

Suffolk Record Office HA21/B1/1: Diary of William Kirby, 1759.

LOCAL HISTORY IN SOMERSET AND DORSET

A weekend course held at Dillington College, March 1989

(Report by Sally Butler)

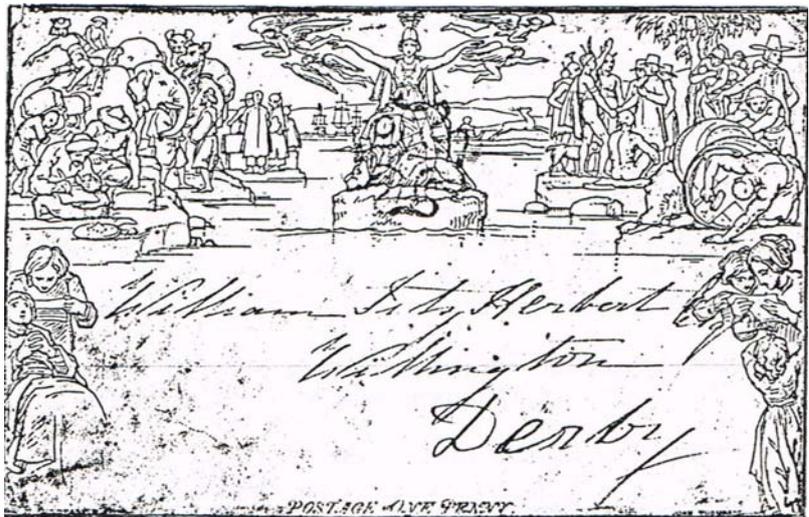
This course on "Sources, Methods and Projects" was well attended by people ranging from amateurs to experienced researchers. We had a stimulating series of talks from different experts. Joe Bettey described church records with many excellent illustrations of buildings. Mike Costen gave an enthusiastic introduction to the indications of Saxon settlement in place-names. Hugh Jaques explained some of the amazing details of ordinary life that can be gained from Poor Law records. Brenda Buchanan made the complicated framework and finance of the Turnpike Trusts readily understandable, while Sandy Buchanan gave us valuable information on the sources of industrial enterprise in Somerset. Finally Robert Machin described his work on vernacular architecture in Dorset, linking house to probate records and bringing past families vividly to life. The whole left us inspired and encouraged to follow our own studies.

O T H E R N E W S

1. On 13 May the Royal Photographic Society opens an exhibition of hitherto unknown calotypes of the Bath area taken by the Reverend Francis Lockey (1796-1870). The prints have been painstakingly re-created from the original negatives by Mike Gray and the accompanying booklet includes a text by David McLaughlin.
2. The Huntingdon Centre has launched an ambitious appeal to fund a permanent exhibition on The Building of Bath, focussing on the historical construction and townscape of the city. The display will eventually include architectural models, diagrams, drawings, tools, materials, and architectural fragments, all in a purpose-built installation. Individual members of the History Group have already become involved in the project and can be expected to give further specialist assistance. Contact Sally Ann Miller at the Centre for further information.
9. In 1990 the Bath Postal Museum will devote a special exhibition to the Bath Post Office in the age of Rowland Hill to celebrate the 150th anniversary of uniform penny postage.

1840 ONE PENNY MULREADY ENVELOPE sent from Bath to Derby.

The back of the envelope shows it to have been cancelled at Bath on Sunday, 10th May, 1840.



THE VICTORIAN SUNDAY POST
(contributed by Stephen Howard)

As an alternative to postage stamps, pre-paid wrappers and envelopes were introduced in 1840, but public ridicule of the florid design on their fronts, executed by William Mulready, RA, led to their rapid withdrawal. The Mulready story is well known to stamp collectors, but this example, purchased recently for Bath Postal Museum by its Trustees, draws attention to a less well known facet of postal history. The important feature is its postmark, applied in Broad Street, where the museum is now located; no.8 functioned as Bath's Post Office between 1824 and 1855. Consultation of the ingenious Perpetual Calendar, or tables for finding the day of the week for any date AD (copyright), published in Whitaker's Almanack, indicates that it was handled on a Sunday.

As in many towns outside London, it had long been the practice for Bath Post Office to provide services on the Sabbath. Often these were not limited to the minimum necessary for efficiency, for example just forwarding the mail for delivery on Monday. Deliveries were made, and it was possible to buy money orders in many of the major offices. Some concession to the Sabbath was made by restricting business hours, and in particular by arranging for deliveries to take place before 10 a.m.,

thus releasing the letter carriers for attendance at divine service. In London there were even special postmarks to instruct the sorters to prepare the mail before ten o'clock.

The Society for Promoting Due Observance of the Lord's Day was not impressed. From its establishment in 1833 it had made the abolition of all Sunday labour in the

Post Office a priority. One of the leading centres of the campaign was Bath. In 1848 more signatures against Sunday postal services were raised in Bath than in York or Liverpool. The campaign was given added prominence, perhaps, by the election of Anthony Ashley Cooper, later 4th Earl of Shaftesbury, as the City's MP in July 1847. In November, with Melmoth Walters and the Rev. J.T. Baylee, he was in a deputation from the Bath Society for Promoting the Observance of the Lord's Day which waited on the Post Master General. National opposition was brought to a head in 1849, when Rowland Hill introduced the forwarding of mail from London post offices on a Sunday. Hitherto, letters arriving in the capital on Saturday night had been detained until

Monday morning. The Sabbatarians did not limit their opposition to the new regulation but renewed their attack on Sunday labour in general. On 23rd June 1850, the Evangelical interest in Parliament succeeded in forcing a late division on the issue, which they won.

In the event the curtailment of Sunday deliveries and collections lasted just two months, thanks to the public outcry that followed. The arrival of the mail was too important a part of the English Sunday to be sacrificed to religious

sensibilities. Not only were letters delivered, but also a growing selection of Sunday newspapers, including Bell's Weekly Messenger and the Sunday Observer. When the question of abolition had been raised in the past, the Secretary to the Post Office had concluded: **"It is always difficult however good the object may be to trench in the smallest degree on the established public convenience"**. He referred to services in Bath in 1824, though it was applicable elsewhere.

The senior officials in the Post Office, led by Rowland Hill, were as opposed to the end of Sunday labour as the public, from fear at the likely loss of revenue. The introduction of the penny post ten years before had caused a major fall in income. It showed signs of recovery but the Treasury was apprehensive. There was much to lose.

Sunday deliveries were the largest of the week, as Rowland Hill informed Parliament in 1850. Considerable sums were also made from sales of money orders. The continuation of Sunday services was very hard on the clerks, sorters and letter carriers. A clerk at the Bath office wrote to Melmoth Walters: **"the night-work is vitiating to the constitution of many; the few occasions when we have the bare hour of Divine Service free from labour, some are fatigued and hungry, some are anything but clean and fit to appear..."**.

MICROFORMS IN BATH REFERENCE LIBRARY

(notes contributed by Mary Wills)

Although few of the following are new to the library, it might be worthwhile to remind members that several theses relating to Bath are available on microfiche or microfilm.

- D. BEARDMORE: Opportunities for urban conservation in Bath and their related economic costs, 1976, microfiche.
R.K. BLUHM: - Bibliography of the Somerset coalfield, 1969, microfilm.
C.E. BROWNELL: John Wood the elder and John Wood the younger: architects of Bath, 1976, microfilm.
D.A. BUSH: - - Bath 1780 - 1830: fifty years of industrialisation, 1979, microfiche.
B.S.R. GREEN: Community decision making in a Georgian city, 1968, microfiche.
M.K. HILL: - - The City of Bath in 18th century English novels, 1984, microfilm.
K. JAMES: - - Concert life in 18th century Bath, 1987, microfiche.
Also available as a photocopy of original typescript.

As well as theses the library has other interesting items on microfilm, including the archives of the Bath and West Society; the Letters to John Wood and to Dr. Cheyne from the letterbooks of the Duke of Chandos; and the Letters to Selina, Countess of Huntingdon from Dr. Cheyne. The originals of the latter two collections are in the Huntington Library, California.

BATH CITY RECORD OFFICE

(notes contributed by Colin Johnston)

Notable accessions to the Record Office in 1988 include the following collections:-

- Royal United Hospital, financial and administrative records, 1826-1979.
Walcot Methodist Church, registers of baptisms and burials, 1815-1961.
Bath City Council, Department of Environmental Services:
Building Control plans, 1865-1906 (indexed).
Bath Choral and Orchestral Society records, 1882-1988.
Shutter and Co., paint and wallpaper merchants, (additional deposit)
financial records, 1858-1923.
Bath & County Club, (additional deposit) minutes and accounts, 19th-20th centuries.
Stone, King & Wardle, solicitors, (additional deposit) clients' deeds,
16th-20th centuries.

Finding-aids, and aids to researchers, completed this year include an index of defendants' names in the Quarter Sessions books, 1837-1856; a personal and place name index to the Office's photographic collection; and a street index to the City Rate books, 1766-1811. In addition, a catalogue of the archive of the Royal Bath & West & Southern Counties Society (1777-1987) has been prepared, and transcriptions received of two items at the Somerset Record Office: the Walcot Poor Rate assessments (1734-1756) and St. Michael's parish registers (1569-1760).

THE NEWS LETTER IS COMPILED BY THE SECRETARY AND TYPED BY JUDITH SAMUEL.