



NEWSLETTER 17

JANUARY 1992

GROUP NEWS

MEETINGS HELD OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1991

The new season opened on 2 October with a talk on the Survey of Old Bath's latest venture, an investigation by Elizabeth Holland and Mike Chapman of the way the Kingston Estate developed in the 1740s. Centrepiece of the evening was a scale map showing the state of building and rebuilding around 1745: this it is hoped to publish with an explanatory text as an aid to future research. In his exposition Mike Chapman concentrated on ten plots in particular. (1) Abbey House, including the discovery of the east end of the Roman baths and eventual creation of the Kingston Baths and Church Street; (2) the Old Post House and Ralph Alien's nearly adjoining town house which never did have a north wing to spoil the garden view of the Abbey; (3) Upper Abbey Orchard, where Thayer's rooms and the separate Concert Room (or Puppet-show House) covered part of the former bowling green; (4) Lower Abbey Orchard, the site of Harrison's several-times-extended Rooms; (5) Wood's Grand and South Parades, whose construction forced some demolition (of Benjoy's Coffee-house, for instance) to allow access; (6) the Orchard Street Theatre, built in two stages, c. 1750 and 1766, and involving some encroachment; (7) the site of a short-lived theatre near Ham Gate (not Abbey Gate as Phyllis Hembry has it); (8) the Ham itself, which Wood intended unsuccessfully for his imperial forum; (9) the Garden House (vignetted on Gilmore's map) which disappeared along with its garden when Gallaway's Buildings overspread the plot; and (10) Hull's or Bull's Garden, where Lord Weymouth had built his house by the 1740s. Much of the leasehold evidence for the map came from the Kingston papers at the University of Nottingham, so it was appropriate that Wendy Bowen, the archivist now cataloguing these crucial documents, should be pre-sent at the meeting. She felt the reason behind the development was probably the straightforward profit motive, pointing to the pressing need for funds to rebuild Thoresby, the family's Nottinghamshire seat, after the fire there in 1745. Who, though, among the hard-headed team of agents and lawyers who managed the Kingston properties led the Bath operation is still to be discovered.

Lutz Haber's paper on the first 75 years of the Holburne Museum - given on 7 November in one of the picture-hung galleries - was an ideal bridging topic for a joint meeting with the Friends of the museum. The story began with private acquisitions of paintings and other objets d'art by the 5th baronet, Thomas William Holburne. Housed amid High Victorian clutter at 10 Cavendish Crescent, the collection eventually passed to his last surviving sister, Mary Ann Barbara, who accepted (with her main advisers, Dr. Charles Coates, the Rev. H. Hoyte Winwood, and the London solicitor W.J. Carlisle) that it should become the core of a new Bath museum. Obtaining her preferred home for the collection, the former Sydney College, nevertheless seemed beset by difficulties, and on her death in 1882 the terms

of the bequest itself proved contentious. In the end the trustees (including Charles McKillop, the local Tory politician Robert Blaine, and the appraiser J.T. Rainey) settled on the old Savings Bank in Charlotte Street (now the Registry Office) and here the Museum opened in 1893 in the care of Percy Bate, historian of Preraphaelitism. Although it was no great public attraction, the trustees declined to collaborate in the city's Victoria Art Gallery venture and sought their own salvation. An increase in endowment income from 1906, an energetic effort by the Rector of Bath, the Rev. S.A. Boyd, finally secured Sydney College. Much remodelled by Reginald Blomfield, the larger building attracted nearly 7000 visitors in its first full year, 1917, despite very restrictive opening hours, but only a modest average of c.4000 in the '20s and '30s. While reorganisation in 1921 brought local representatives onto the Board, more tangible benefits arose from growing contacts with the National Art Collections Fund, Carnegie Trust, and Museums Association. Between 1939 and 1946 the building was under requisition by the Navy, the contents being dispersed to country houses. Once the museum reopened, its financial state soon worsened, though the Friends of the Holburne raised funds for exhibitions and other projects, and loans to other museums spread the collection's reputation. Faced with the possible loss of the museum to Dyrham, Montacute or elsewhere, the city at last raised the meagre annual grant of £100 to £1800 and then £3000. But the reserves continued to be raided, experts advised, trustees argued, a merger with the Victoria Art Gallery was mooted, until at last the University of Bath offered a rescue deal - the point where Lutz Haber ended, having demonstrated his unrivalled knowledge of the Holburne's archives and his skill at unravelling a tangled history.

The clay tobacco-pipe industry, Marek Lewcun's topic on 4 December, turns out to have a long tradition in the Bath area. Four rare late—Tudor pipes, while maybe not local, were recovered from Acton Court, and after 1620 (once James I's tobacco taxes had gone) the industry became established to the east and south of Bath, and notably around Norton St. Philip where the Hunt family were particularly active. C.1650 migrating pipemakers like John Gay set up in Bath itself, but manufacture was also widespread in a triangle extending to Devizes and Warminster - with an offshoot at Marshfield. Gradually, however, smoking gave way to snuff-taking, leaving the pipe industry concentrated in main towns - Bath, Bristol, Taunton, Gloucester. The chief makers in late Stuart-early Georgian Bath were the **a**aker brothers Richard and John Tylee, the prolific Robert Carpenter and his son John in St. James's then Walcot Street, and Giles Howell. Identification is aided by the Bath makers' uncommon willingness to stamp their initials or names on their products. Some had links with Rode, but another manufacturer, John Smith, arrived in 1739 from Woolverton. Smith's sons, Jeremiah and Joseph, later had their business in Bridewell Lane where James Clark took over the workshops after Joseph's bankruptcy in 1799. Other pipemakers in the early 19th century gravitated to the Avon Street/Milk Street area. Bath's most prominent Victorian manufacturer was Joseph Sants of Gloucester, who in 1853 moved the pipe factory from Bridewell Lane next to his pottery works in Milk Street. His son Walter managed the firm until the First World War virtually killed off the smoking of clay pipes. During their last 60-odd years the pipes - which had evolved from short-stemmed, small-bowled types to long-stemmed, full-bowled pipes with a prominent 'spur' - became far more ornamental, even figured. Marek Lewcun illustrated all this in a splendid set of slides, paying due regard as well to technical matters (like the manufacturing process or sources of suitable pipeclay). Based on lengthy documentary research as well as archaeological expertise, his detailed chronology of local pipemaking is now of service in dating excavation levels - given that pieces of fragile but expendable (at six for a penny) clay pipes turn up on sites so often.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Stuart Burroughs, 24 Rivers Street, Bath,
(Curator of Bath Industrial Heritage Centre)

Mrs. Kirsten Elliott, 2 Dixon Gardens, Upper Lansdown Mews, Bath, BA1 5HH.

TOWARDS A FRIENDS OF BATH RECORD OFFICE?

A proposal to form a users' organisation to support the Record Office is now being acted on. History Group members who are also habitués of the Record Office will be receiving an outline of the proposal with the Newsletter; other members interested in the well-being of the Record Office can obtain a copy from the HBRG Secretary. At present a steering committee is canvassing support for a Friends group with the hope of calling a meeting of users in February to establish the new group and agree its constitution and aims.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

1. Susan Sloman, 'General Wade's altar-piece for Bath Abbey: a reconstruction', Burlington Magazine August 1991, pp. 507 - 10.
2. Louis Hodgkin, A Brief Guide to Nelson and Bath (Nelson Society, 1991).
3. Hot Springs of Bath: Investigations of the Thermal Waters of the Avon Valley, ed. G.A. Kellaway (Bath City Council, 1991). Among articles on the hydrogeology, chemistry and medical aspects of the springs are several of a more historical character on William Smith, early theories about the quintessence of the mineral waters (by Roger Rolls), their past uses for lead poisoning and gout, and the former springs of the Avon Gorge.
4. Neil Jackson, 19th-Century Bath Architects and Architecture (Bath, Ash-grove Press, 1991). David Crellin has contributed the following brief review.

Neil Jackson's stated objective in this book is to explain the 19th-century buildings of Bath, putting them in their national context and thus justifying their appearance. It does not claim to be either an architectural history or definitive in its coverage. His secondary objective is that the respect which is now universally accorded to the Georgian buildings of Bath should also be given to its 19th-century buildings.

There is no doubt that the book is well researched and there is a great deal of fascinating information contained in it, both useful for anyone studying the architecture of Bath and interesting for those who appreciate the city and want to know more about how it developed during this period. One of the most striking features of the book for me is its demonstration that in the late 18th and early 19th centuries the bulk of the fine architecture in Bath was carried out by local architects who were brought up imbued with the problems and opportunities that Bath offered as an architectural environment. Surely John Pinch produced the most elegant way of building on a slope yet devised? Later in the century Bath architecture became more and more influenced by architects from outside, particularly for the major public buildings. Personally, though, I am disappointed to find so little mention of the late 19th-century terraces and domestic buildings. These were built principally by local architects and in my view represent the most significant continuance of a building tradition that was started in Bath in the early 18th-century.

In the main, this is a book for academics rather than the casual reader, not having the narrative quality of a book such as The Victorian House (Marshall and Wilcox) or the authority of The Georgian Buildings of Bath (Ison) or The English Terraced House (Muthesius). It only partially achieves its objectives in that the national context is well presented but justification for the appearance of the buildings in some cases eludes me.

THE STUART GUILDHALL

Considering it was the centre of Bath's administrative and judicial life for 150 years, as well as being a common venue for Corporation celebrations, balls, plays, and other events, the Stuart Guildhall is oddly little known. Bath History, volume 2 gives the beginning and end of the story with Elizabeth Holland's account of the Guildhall's relocation in 1625 to its island site in the Market Place, and - on the front cover - Edward Eyre's view of the building on the eve of its demolition. But various puzzles remain.

The Guildhall proper stood over the open Market House, but whether it was erected directly on the foundations of the Tudor structure is uncertain. This point does affect John Wood's claim that the original design came from Inigo Jones, since one of Wood's arguments was the precise 221 ratio of the ground plan. (In favour of Jones he also argued that the end elevation was a perfect square, that the design and Ionic detailing followed ancient Roman precedent, and that Jones's mother was a Bathonian related to the Trymnes.) Even if the design did ultimately stem from Jones or a follower, it was erected by stonemasons more familiar with local vernacular and in time it underwent various alterations.

The first substantial change came with the insertion of a large round-headed window in the north front, probably involving the loss of an Ionic half-column from the middle of the upper storey. A likely date is early 1658 when much civic refurbishment took place on the occasion of Lord Protector Richard Cromwell's visit. But while a Council meeting in December 1657 agreed to have "more light added to the Counsell house" (as well as to build a chimney on the east side), there is no obvious record in the Chamberlain's Accounts except a bill for glazing in 1658 (and the only evidence of a chimney is on the west). According to the Bath Advertiser (27 November 1755) the overlarge new window not only spoiled the elevation but weakened the structure so that the building had to be reinforced by diagonal buttresses at each corner, displacing the original double columns.

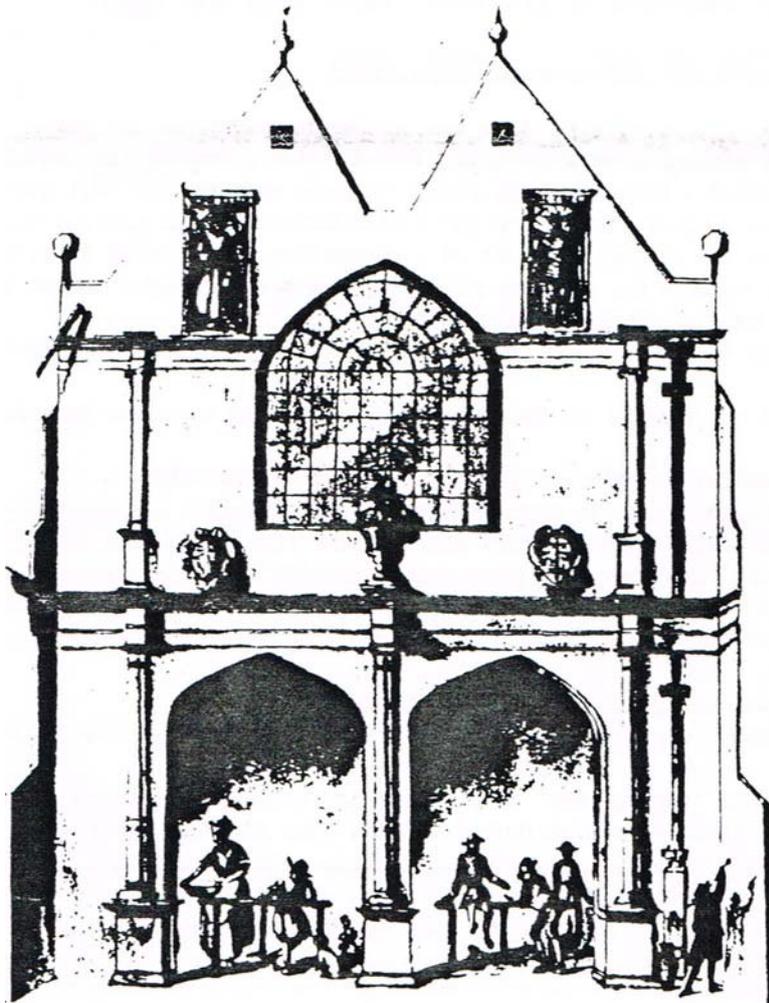
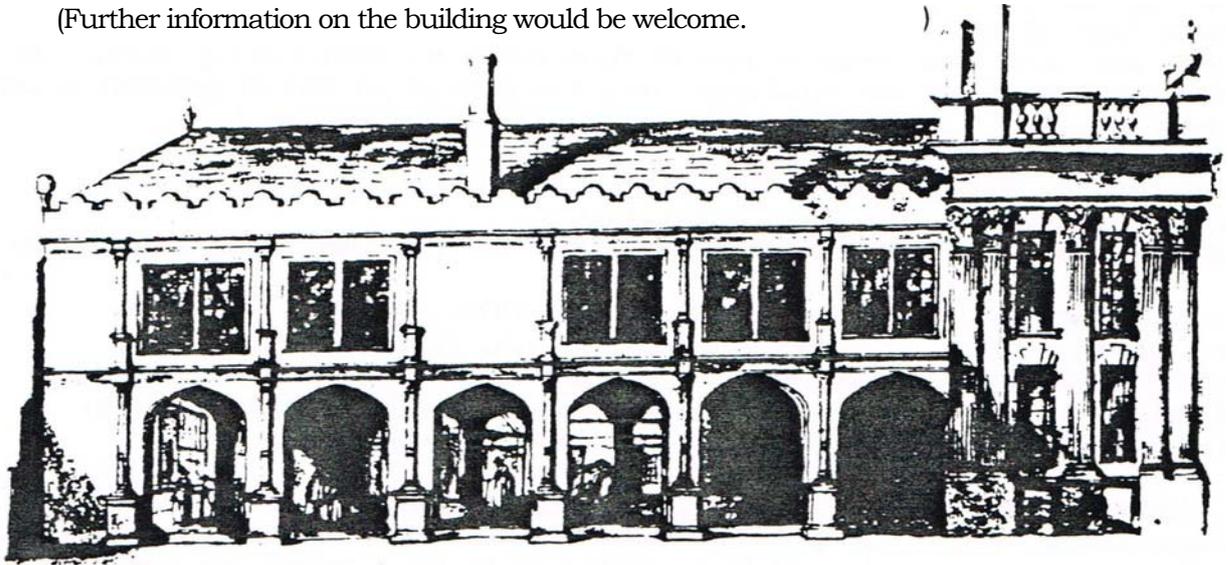
The later story is clearer. The building of a smart Pump Room (1706) and Assembly Room (1708-9) must have made the Guildhall seem old-fashioned. In 1710 it was resolved to have it wainscotted and the casement windows changed to fashionable sashed form, though no action was taken until 1718 when Robert Gay gave £100 for the purpose and was rewarded with the city freedom and a seat in Parliament. Besides the wainscoting (done in Dutch oak by one Richard Buscomb) and the casing, the Council asked for a 'compass cornice'

(?). A more fundamental modification followed in 1724-5 when the internal stair from the Market House into the south side of the Guildhall chamber was removed, enlarging the latter by a fifth. The whole south end was rebuilt, with a new staircase and extra rooms, apparently under the direction of William Killigrew who had been recently responsible for the Bluecoat School, St. John's Chapel, and the new ballroom at Harrison's. Richard Jones, soon to become Ralph Allen's clerk of works, worked on this extension - which however his brief autobiography attributes to "one Colledge, a Sidmouth architect at that time in Bath". This time there was no benefactor and a further £200 had to be borrowed from the city's chief creditor, Walter Estcourt, to finish the job. In 1727 the vaulting of the Market House was at last completed and four years later the ground floor parlour became an office for the Town Clerk. Meanwhile the Council chamber had been half transformed into a municipal art gallery. Thomas Quilly's royal and city arms (painted in 1632 but often touched up since) had long been part of the decor, but in 1728 the series of Council portraits commissioned by Marshal Wade from Van Diest was put on show, with Wade's own portrait added in 1731. More pictures were hung later: the Prince and Princess Wales, a further set of Van Diest portraits, and eventually Nash, Camden, and Pitt. The bronze head of Minerva dug up in 1727 was also displayed.

Various mid-18th-century visitors mention the stone-built Guildhall, its 'neat' Council Room, and the figures of King Frigar and the mythical King Coel 'peeping out' from niches above the fishmongers' stalls. Besides official business, civic entertainments continued to be held here - like the balls and suppers given by Thomas Potter, the new Recorder, in 1758, and by the local MPs Pitt, Ligonier and Seabright in 1761 and 1763. But physically the Guildhall was now in poor shape. In 1747 it had to be supported on east-iron props. In 1758 the roof needed repair. In 1760 the structure was described as 'ruinous' and Ralph Allen offered £500 towards a replacement. By 1766 it seemed on the verge of collapse 'for it leans already considerably' (Samuel Derrick, Letters), and soon afterwards the roof and walls had to be cramped to prevent further spreading.

The protracted wheeling-and-dealing that led to the erection of a magnificent successor has been described by Walter Ison. The moment Thomas Baldwin's Guildhall became habitable and before the workmen were even out, the Council fled its former home and sold off the materials for f,161 on Faster Monday, 1777. Thomas Malton's aquatint, done later that year, shows the Marketplace cleared and the traffic-encumbering Stuart Guildhall gone for good.

(Further information on the building would be welcome.



James (or George?) Vertue drew the old Guildhall from the north and the west probably c. 1750. Variant later copies exist at the Victoria Art Gallery (three copies of each drawing) and Bath Central Library (at least two copies of each).

The last AGM of the History Group agreed to support the continuation of Bath History by offering, in advance of publication, to take fifty copies of Volume 4. It is now expected that the volume will be out in April, or at the latest May, 1992. Although now under the imprint of Millstream Books in place of Allan Sutton, its format will follow closely that of earlier volumes. Again the contents offer a varied mix of important topics and this time cover a period from Roman to 20th-century Bath. As a small innovation one of the contributions takes the form of an edited document rather than a written article.

R.S.O. Tomlin, Voices from the Roman Sacred Spring;
Jean Manco, Bath and 'the Great Rebuilding';
John Wroughton, Puritanism and Traditionalism: Cultural and Political Division in Bath,

1620-1662;

Brenda J. Buchanan, The Great Bath Road, 1700-1830;
Ellen Wilson (editor), A Shropshire Lady in Bath, 1794-1807;
Mac Hopkins-Clarke, A Change of Style at the Theatre Royal, 1805-1820;
John Kite, 'A Good Bargain': the Struggle for a Public Library, 1850-1924;
David McLaughlin, 'Mowbray Green and the Old Bath Preservers'.

Members of the History Group will be able to obtain copies through the Secretary a concessionary rate. The price for members has not yet been set, but, as a guideline, for Volume 3 it was fixed at £5.50 (a saving of £1.45). Orders for copies are now being accepted by the Secretary. Please indicate if you want more than one copy.

BATH TOWN COUNCIL, 1 MAY 1894

Mr. RICKETTS moved - "That this Council, viewing with alarm the increasing danger of bicyclism, requests the Parliamentary Committee to prepare and present a memorial to the Home Secretary praying for legislation in the direction of (1) limiting the pace at which a bicycle may be ridden in towns and populous villages; (2) the necessity of a bell continuously ringing in similar places; and (3) a prohibition against leaving bicycles in such places unattended." He explained that the motion arose out of a discussion at the Watch Committee as to the dangers which the public had to endure through the reckless riding of cyclists. It was a common thing for cyclists to ride through the streets at a rate of 12 to 14 miles an hour.

Mr. GOOD seconded, and said within the last six months he had been nearly injured from five to ten times by the reckless driving of cyclists.

Mr. CHIVERS hoped Mr. Ricketts would not persist in the clause as to allowing bicycles to stand in the streets.

Mr. Alderman STURGES moved that the matter be referred to the Parliamentary Committee . . .

Mr. KNIGHT spoke of the benefits and pleasure to be derived from cycling, and said the dangers were much less now than they used to be with the old high machines. Most danger arose from people who having passed a certain time of life and lost certain of the faculties they possessed in earlier days, when they stepped from a pavement hesitated and did not know what to do. Mr. Ricketts and similar gentlemen who had difficulty in moving about the streets should be labelled "Dangerous to cyclists" (laughter). He hoped the Council would be superior to such old womanish ideas (hear, hear).

Alderman CLARK contended that the present regulations were not enforced.

Eventually Alderman Sturges's amendment was agreed and Mr. Ricketts was added to the Parliamentary Committee.

(From Bath Chronicle 3 May 1894 p. 7. The 'regulations' were presumably those published on the 'Bicycle handbill' issued by the Watch Committee in 1889 and redistributed in 1897. Has any copy survived?)

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