



NEWSLETTER 5

JANUARY 1988

GROUP NEWS

Meetings held October - December 1987

The new season opened on 7 October with Dr. Angus Buchanan's convincing demonstration of the role of physical evidence in reconstructing the past, from man-made landscapes and settlement patterns down to small artefacts and even inscriptions. His copious slide display of local examples included stone, quarries, coal spoil heaps, paper and brass mills, Green Park station, and the civil engineering of the Avon navigation. The ensuing discussion ranged equally widely, touching on such matters as invisible evidence (e.g. metallic residues in soils indicating a former industrial site) and the teaching of Bath history to schoolchildren.

At the meeting on 4 November Christopher Pound introduced the seminar on republishing historic Bath maps with a stimulating slide show of possibilities. Rich cartographic data from estate and tithe maps, plans showing railway engineering or boundary reform proposals, the plotting of geological deposits and urban developments, all whetted the appetites for the discussion that following, which considered the variety of formats, scale, reproduction and distribution methods, print-runs and funding arrangements open to the Group. Copies of the maps suggested for initial reprinting were on view and a working party was set up there and then to formulate realistic proposals, (to be convened by C.P.).

Elizabeth Holland's much-awaited talk on her researches into the Tudor Guildhall was held, suitably enough in the present Guildhall, on 3 December. Her findings - that the site was immediately east of today's Guildhall and that the building had been timber-framed - were based on close attention to Corporation records (e.g. charters, Chamberlain rolls, a seal of 1319, property deeds and leases with attached plans) combined with the evidence of surviving medieval buildings, such as part of Escortt's house incorporated into Casa Fina, Broad Street, Bath, and the Laura Ashley shop in Oxford. During the questions and comments that followed it was suggested that trial excavations in the area might prove rewarding. The Group's Committee will pursue this.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS - P. T. 0.

New Members

<i>Mr. K.J. Birch,</i>	<i>3 Combe Park, Lower Weston Bath</i>	<i>BA1 3NP</i>
<i>Mrs J.H. MacCormack,</i>	<i>9 Leopold Buildings, Upper Headgemead, Road, Bath</i>	<i>BA1 5NY</i>
<i>Ms. Lorna McRobie,</i>	<i>8 Marlborough Street, St James's Square, Bath</i>	<i>BA1 27X</i>

Forthcoming Meetings

1. These remain as listed in the programme except for one important change which members should please note. The meeting originally scheduled for 6 April at the Reference Library and which includes the A.G.M., has been moved forward one week to WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL at the same venue. This is to avoid a clash with the Historical Association's national conference which this year meets in Bath.
2. With reference to the other meetings:
 - (a) It is expected that Dr. Haber's paper on 7 January will be attended by a number of Bathonian guests who furnished him with oral reminiscences of Haile Selassie's sojourn in Bath in the late 1930s.
 - (b) The Small Towns Project, topic of the meeting on 4 February, is funded by the European Community E S R C to investigate selected small towns in Britain and France between 1600 and 1850. Tony Scrase, our regional co-ordinator, has worked particularly on population and occupation patterns at Bath and Wells in this period
 - (c) Our second visiting speaker, Dr. Penelope Corfield on 2 March, has a deserved reputation for her lively scholarship on 18th-century urban society. Among her many published articles and books, The Impact of English Towns, 1700-1800 (O.U.P., 1982, available in paperback) is much to be recommended.
 - (d) Dr. Ken James, one of our own members who speaks on 5 May, has recently deposited at the Reference, Library a copy of his thesis on 18th-century music in Bath. A splendid source and a rewarding read before or after the meeting.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

1. The Medieval Settlement Research Group, a national body founded in November 1986, brings together archaeologists, historians and geographers to study settlements of all kinds, mainly concentrating on the period 5th - 16th centuries. For further information and membership details write to Dr. C.C. Dyer, School of History, University of Birmingham, P.O. Box 363, Birmingham, B15 2TT. The annual subscription is £5.00.
2. At the Institute of Historical Research (University of London) a new Centre for Metropolitan History has been inaugurated. While its focus is the society, economy, culture and fabric of London, it is also concerned with London's dynamic relationship with other areas of the British Isles and with the world at large. Beyond that its purview extends to the study of other metropolitan areas. It is collaborating with the Museum of London and similar organisations and has taken on the 'Social and Economic Study of Medieval London' which since 1979 has been working on a pioneering reconstruction of the medieval city. Besides organising seminars the new Centre is currently compiling a comprehensive bibliography of printed sources for London history (up to 1939) and a register of research in progress. Information can be obtained from Miss H.J. Creaton, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU.

E X H I B I T I O N

Michael Chapman kindly draws attention to a forthcoming exhibition of photographs, maps and artefacts relating to the Somerset Coal Canal. This is being prepared by the Avon Industrial buildings Trust in collaboration with Niall Allsop, author of books on the Kennet & Avon Canal and Navigation. It will be shown in the Moore Room of the Bath Reference Library from 23 March to 23 April 1988 to coincide with the publication of Mr. Allsop's forthcoming book on the subject. The exhibition will give a broad view of the canal throughout its history up to the present day, dealing also with such related aspects as tramways, collieries, (e.g. at Camerton) and the canal's role in the career of William Smith, the 'Father of English Geology'. Present-day remains of the canal will be indicated, including details from recent work carried out by the Trust at the Combe-Hay lock flight and Midford Aqueduct. Attention will also be given to the landscape and natural environment of the Cam and Wellow valleys. (The organisers would welcome the loan of any relevant photographs or other material. Contact Mary Stacey BRISTOL 290777, ext. 6272.)

NOTES FROM BATH REFERENCE LIBRARY

contributed by Mary Willis

For Use next Few months the BBC Domesday Project can be seen at the Reference Library (by appointment, evenings only). Although it has no historical data, and very little relating to Bath, members of the Group may find it of interest.

Somerset County Library has produced a set of Local Studies Packs on the villages and parishes of the historic county. Copies of those relating to places now in Avon have been deposited in the Reference Library. They are, of course, most useful for school projects, etc., but the basic information - population figures, location maps, Kelly's directory entries, etc., will be of interest for anyone needing background details on the places covered.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

A GUIDE TO THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF AVON by Joan Day
(Bristol, printed by D P C Stationery Ltd., 99 West Street, 1987) £1.80

The annual conference of the Association for Industrial Archaeology was held at the University of Bath in September 1987 and this small guide was published for the benefit of those attending. Its subject matter is however equally relevant for those of us who already live in this area but are strangers to our industrial heritage.

The guide seeks to locate, list and describe a selection of the more significant surviving industrial features of the county of Avon, so that the physical evidence of this aspect of its past may be placed in an historical and geographical context. In this it succeeds very well, for within a publication of fifty-two pages the reader is introduced to most of the major remaining features as well as to many of those of lesser rank. Its layout is designed to aid the exploration of the sites listed, for the county is divided according to local authority districts, within each of which a tour could be organised. On this plan Bath is treated as a separate unit, a convenience for those living here which is emphasised by the fact that both front and back covers display scenes from this city. To help those anxious to follow particular interests, sites have also been indexed by subject. Each section is provided with a useful map. Within the limitations of space and cost, the guide provides an admirable introduction to the surviving physical features of our industrial heritage.

BRENDA BUCHANAN

BATH PAST AND PRESENT by Maria Joyce and H. Mary Wills
(Newbury, Countryside Books, 1987. £6.95

Bath Reference Library holds a valuable collection of photographs documenting local buildings and streetscapes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. A selection of these (plus the odd print) are usefully reproduced in this new publication with recent photographs by Noel Joyce on facing pages for comparison. The captions provide additional information and point up changes that have taken place over the intervening years.

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES ON BUILDINGS

Apparently most existing Bath plaques were put up in two or three batches at the recommendation of a special Council committee early this century and in the light of available information at that stage. As is now well known, some plaques were fixed to the wrong buildings; others identify buildings where the person named lodged only briefly, and in yet other instances, buildings with genuinely important associations are not commemorated by plaques at all. From time to time individuals make proposals for new plaques to the Local Authority but at present there seems to be no established procedure for assessing claims and taking action to fix plaques when appropriate. Two recent proposals have been forwarded to the History Group in case we wish to become involved in providing a properly researched list of recommendations. We could do this only if a number of members volunteered to do the research. Already we have one offer to investigate scientific associations. Would other volunteers please contact the Secretary; not later than 31 January 1988.

ARCHERY IN BATH

The Honorary Archivist of the Grand Western Archery Society, Mr. H.D. Soar, has been studying the history of archery as a sport and social relaxation at Bath. The still extant Bath Archery Club dates back to 1857, but the pastime had an earlier existence locally. Mr. Soar, who owns a considerable collection of recreational archery materials, is particularly interested in two matters: first, the public 'Archery' planned as part of the Grosvenor Pleasure Gardens in the 1780s; and second, the similar facility at Mr. Blackwin's Spa, which lasted for a short period from 1837. He would however welcome any information about early archery in the city. The pastime grew in popularity among the nobility and gentry about the 1780s, the first society - the Robin Hood Society of Gloucestershire - meeting from 1788. Who knows about Georgian enthusiasm for archery in Bath? Please communicate with Mr. Soar at 65 Chiltern Close, North Common, Warmley, Bristol, BS15 5UL.

S T O P P R E S S- JUST RECEIVED: Newsletter No. 2 of the Centre for South-Western Historical Studies, available for inspection at January meeting.

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