

H I S T O R Y O F B A T H
R E S E A R C H G R O U P

NEWSLETTER 2

January 1987

G R O U P N E W S

1. Following the regretted resignation of Philip Hemmings in early September, Brenda Buchanan accepted the invitation of the Committee to become Chairman of the Group. Christopher Pound agreed to fill the vacancy on the Committee.
2. The Committee has formed a working party to consider what the Group might do to make the source materials for Bath history better known. Its members are Brenda Buchanan, Sheila Metcalf, Mary Wills, Colin Johnston and Trevor Fawcett; any of whom would welcome suggestions on the subject.
3. Meetings up to Christmas 1986

The opening lecture for the Group was given by Colin Johnston on October 1st at the Guildhall, under the title "The Bath City Record Office: its contents and uses". In it he provided an excellent and revealing survey of the holdings of the Record Office. It is hoped in due course to make this information publicly available.

The second lecture was given by Brenda Buchanan on November 5th at the Huntingdon Centre - an appropriate date for her to tell us about the production of gunpowder in the Bath area, to the accompaniment of flashes and explosions all around. Based in part on research already published and part still to be published, her words and illustrations offered a fascinating insight into a little known subject, as well as stimulating a lively session of question & answer afterwards. The evening was rounded off by Trevor Fawcett's presentation of various contemporary accounts of elaborate firework displays in the 18th century.

The next lecture was given by Dr. Roy Hope on December 3rd in the Bath Society Room at Green Park Station, on "Some Aspects of Educational Development in 19th Century Bath". After considering the general provision of education through the monitorial and later the board schools, he shed most interesting light on particular topics including the development of technical education in Bath from the 1890s onward, the special contribution of private schools, and the abortive attempt in the late 1830s to found a university on a site near Sham Castle.

4. At the first meeting in the New Year at the Huntingdon Centre on January 7th, Judith Samuel will give a lecture on the subject of "The Jewish Community of Bath and its wider context". Members are invited to come early (doors open from 7 p.m.) for a cup of coffee and a chat beforehand.
5. Non-members are welcome at the occasional meeting on payment of 50 pence per person.

6. New Members

Mr. Michael Bishop, 16 Cranwells Park, Bath. BA1 2YD
Mr. Michael Gray, 4 Bath Road, Beckington, Bath. BA3
6SW Mr. Michael Tollit, 176 London Road West, Bath. BA1
7QU Mr. R. Williams, 97 Rodden Road, Frome, Somerset.

7. Change of Address

Mrs. Jean Manco, 17 Bennett's Road, Lower Swainswick, Bath. BA1 7AW

8. Correction to List of Members

Mrs. Julia Moss, 21 Cranwells Park, Bath. BA1 2YD

9. The next issue of Avon Conservation News, devoted to the theme of local history, will include a short article on the History of Bath Research Group.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Genius of Bath: the City and its Landscape by Christopher Pound
(Bath, Millstream Books, 1986) £7.50

With the help of prints, drawings, maps and some apt quotations, this book examines Bath's physical expansion over the past 250 years in relation to its natural setting. Much of the emphasis is on the development of the Georgian city, seen against contemporary theories of landscape gardening and Picturesque aesthetics. In his accounts of the landscaping of Prior Park, the innovatory schemes of the Woods, the lay-out of pleasure gardens and the spread of terraces and villas up the slopes of Lansdown and Bathwick, Christopher Pound argues that Bath's 18th- and early-19th-century builders took account of the *gerthto ioci*, the special character of each site. From the 1840s, however, and down to the present day, planners and planning regulations have tended to neglect landscape values at the expense of more mundane considerations. As a result, in spite of the creation of the Green Belt in the 1930s and occasional examples of enlightened development before and since, the city's historic landscape has not been conserved and protected as it deserves. The question is thus posed: what should be done?

A Portrait of Richard Graves by Clarence Tracy
(University of Toronto Press, C/o International Book Distributors,
66 Wood Lane End, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP2 4RG) £31.50 Autumn 1986

According to the publishers, this new study of the 18th century rector of Claverton points out a number of striking parallels between his life as a clergyman and his achievement as the author of the comic novel The Spiritual Quixote.

NOTES FROM BATH REFERENCE LIBRARY

contributed by Mary Wills

At the end of 1985 a start was made on the computerisation of Avon Libraries. Most new books now do not appear in the 'old-fashioned' card catalogue but are included in the microfiche catalogue, which is completely updated every month and contains details of books added throughout the County Library (not just those in Bath Reference Library).

A copy of this catalogue is available for public use and is usually to be found lying on top of the wooden catalogue drawer unit. Two microfiche readers are on public access in the main reference room, with another reader in the Research Room. The staff will be happy to introduce you to this new technology it really is very easy to use and has the added advantage of indicating which libraries have copies for loan.

Another change you may have noticed is a new classification scheme and a new location for some of the local books. Since October most books on the County of Avon, including Bath, are being given class numbers starting with L, according to a newly-devised local scheme which aims to accommodate local topics more easily than the Dewey Decimal Classification. Books with numbers beginning with L can be found on the open shelves between the Somerset collection and the Wiltshire collection. The shelves have not yet been re-labelled so they still masquerade as "Wiltshire".

Two notable recent additions to stock

The catalogue of music in the Bath Reference Library to 1985 compiled and edited by Jon A. Gillespie; Volume 1 - Mss, Letters, Indexes. Published by K.G. Saur, 1986 (Volumes 2, 3 and 4 should be published some time next year).

The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, Volume 1, Part 1: The Site. (In two parts, consisting of a volume of text and a box of plans and microfiches) by Barry Cunliffe and Peter Davenport. Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1985.

LECTURES, COURSES, EVENTS, etc.

1. Supplementing the earlier exhibition on "The Baths of Bath", a display of photographs at the Bath Reference Library in the last fortnight of September 1986 provided a visual record of recent excavations and demolition work, together with the aftermath of the fire in the area of the Hot and Cross Baths (once known as Bimbery) and the New Royal Baths and Physical Treatment Centre.
2. Avon Local History Group seminar on publishing was held on Saturday, 4th October at the Friends' Meeting House, Hampton Road, Bristol. I had previously done research on the cost of publishing and found them expensive. At the Seminar groups of several local history societies were present. Most had considerable experience of doing their own publishing, cutting costs considerably. They do their own typing, layout, etc. so the only cost is the printing. In most cases they meet to put the pages together. Certainly a lot can be done by this method. Their products look very professional and are sold within the groups, through bookshops and the local Museum Service.

Judith Samuel

LECTURES, COURSES, EVENTS, etc. - continued

3. A one-day course organised by the University of Bristol was held at the University of Bath campus on 22nd November, 1986, to publicise archaeological activity in Bath during the last two years and to speculate on some of the findings. The main sites discussed were Swallow Street, the garden of No. 4, The Circus, the corner of Julian Road and Northampton Street, and the north side of Bath Street. All this work is due for publication.
4. The University of Bristol has arranged another one-day course, this time on "The Bath Spa", to be held on Saturday, 21st March, 1987, at the Green Park Station meeting room. The speakers will be Sam Hunt, Dr. Graham Davis and Dr. Roger Rolls. Prior enrolment is said to be essential. Contact Dr. J.H. Bettey, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, Wills Memorial Building, Queen's Road, Bristol, BS8.
5. Avon Industrial Buildings Trust has recently compiled a slide show and lecture explaining its work. The presentation, given by the MSC Community Programme Project Manager, can be booked through the Trust by telephoning BRISTOL 291349.

NOTES and QUERIES

1. Information is urgently needed about the former Moravian Chapel, 1765, on Monmouth Street (near the Griffin Inn) because of an imminent public inquiry into the proposed demolition of the Minister's house still existing at the rear of the site. In particular details are wanted of the original construction of the Chapel, its appearance, history and eventual demolition. Please communicate directly with Francis Kelly, 33 Northampton Street, Bath.

2. The Gentlemen's Catch Club

During the late eighteenth century in particular a succession of Catch Clubs flourished in Bath's social scene. Their membership figures ran to hundreds, but their gatherings were much smaller. Songs around the table alternated with gossip as the glasses were refilled. The clientele was entirely male. The words of the catches and glees they sang were flippant, vulgar, gallant and uplifting in turn. (The uplifting songs were, as a rule, the least interesting). A vast collection of the music they sang lies in the Bath Reference Library's collection and a wide selection of these pieces has been gathered and a few will be performed, with brief but illuminating commentary, at a meeting of the especially reconstituted Gentlemen's Catch Club. Any Gentleman, able to keep a part (in tune), is particularly asked to speak to the undersigned at a future meeting of the Group.

OWEN WARD

NOTES and QUERIES- continued

3. Joseph Day (1855 - 1946) Two-stroke Engine Pioneer

In 1952 staff of the Science Museum appealed - without success - for any information about an English pioneer of the internal combustion engine called Joseph Day. He designed a valveless two-stroke gas engine of considerable significance, which was patented in 1891-2. Examples survive in the Science Museum and the Deutsches Museum in Munich.

Day came from a Catholic family with long connections with Bath in Avon. He was born in September, 1855, in Bayswater, London, and after school at Beaumont, Windsor, he became one of the first engineers to train at the Crystal Palace School of practical engineering. After a three-year pupilage at Stothert and Pitt's engineering works in Bath, Day set up there as an engineer in 1878. After various partnerships and the first of a series of patents granted over 1878-1908, he built the Victoria Ironworks in Spring Gardens, Bath, in 1883. He was elected A.M.I.C.E. in 1887.

An attempt to raise capital in 1892 to develop his Gas Engine patents failed to attract shareholders and the costs of the whole enterprise soon proved too much for Day and his last partner who went bankrupt in 1893. Day then removed to Weston-super-Mare where he continued active, as an inventor if not as a manufacturer, until 1902. By 1904 he was in London and with the help of his father - a noted London lawyer - he recommenced the manufacture of Day "valveless" two-stroke stationary and marine engines by 1906. These were later produced by the Day Motor Co., Ltd., of 1908 in Putney. The engines had only three moving parts and would run equally well forwards or backwards. They achieved world-wide sales, as petrol and paraffin models. Day was an inspiration too behind the two-stroke engined Trojan car of 1912. The First World War interrupted this work as the firm became busy on Government contracts. In 1923 his firm was reformed as the Day Foundry and Engine Co., Ltd., in Richmond, Surrey, but Day engines had ceased manufacture by 1927. Day died aged 91 on Christmas Day in 1946 near Twickenham, apparently quite forgotten.

His role in showing that the two-stroke engine could compete, especially in the field of marine engines, with those working on the Otto four-stroke cycle deserves proper recognition. Information on any aspect of Day's life and work is sought for a planned biography, in particular data on the evolution of the marine boat engine. News of the survival of any Day engines or other artifacts would be particularly welcomed. Please write direct to H.S. Torrens, Lower Mill Cottage, Furnace Lane, Madeley, Crewe.

CW3 9EU

POTENTIAL NEW MEMBER

If you know o/ anyone. who would be interested in joining the Group or would like further information about it please ask them to get in touch with:-

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(Telephone: 312396)*