



NEWSLETTER 33

MAY 1997

GROUP NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 17 April 1997

1. Apologies for absence came from Amand Berry, Jane Clothier, Bruce Crofts, Ian Crow, Michael Rowe and Susan Sloman.
2. The minutes of the AGM of 11 April 1996 were accepted. The Secretary reported he had written to the Chief Executive of B&NES in September 1996 expressing the HBRG's concern about the proposed removal of Bath property records from the BRO to Keynsham, and had also made representations to Richard Ashby, Head of Libraries and Archives, on the subject. Other HBRG members, including Doreen Collyer (on behalf of the Widcombe-Lyncombe group) and Godfrey Laurence, had also lodged strong protests. A decision was expected on 21 April, and if adverse the HBRG would seek to reverse it.
3. The Chairman, John Ede, reported another successful year of meetings, not forgetting the anniversary dinner, but queried whether the timing of meetings prevented some members attending more often.
4. The first edition of the selective bibliography of publications on Bath (from 1911 onwards) had been delayed by difficulties at the Bristol Historical Databases Project end, but disk and hardcopy versions should be available in summer 1997.
5. The Treasurer announced another small surplus (of c.£47) on the year, though bills (of c190) for room hire had not yet been received. Larger sums than usual had been handled because of the anniversary dinner and the publication of Bath History vol. 6. His statement and proposal to leave the annual subscription unchanged were both approved, and his hard work in caring for the HBRG's finances was applauded. Godfrey Laurence wondered whether the current balance of c. £763 was unnecessarily high and it was agreed the new Committee should look at this.
6. The suggested rewording of two sections of the Constitution had been circulated to members in advance and the Chairman explained the reasons for the proposals — (a) to make the quorum requirement for any future constitutional changes less onerous, and (b) to spread the work-load and responsibilities of running the HBRG, particularly with regard to the duties of the Chairman and the Secretary. 29 out of 81 current members being present (i.e. above the one-third of members needed), the modifications to the Constitution were both accepted unanimously by vote.
7. The following Committee was then elected for 1997-98: Chairman — Philippa Bishop, Vice-Chairman — Michael Rowe, Treasurer — Colin Johnston, General Secretary and Meetings Secretary — Trevor Fawcett, Newsletter Editor — Judith Samuel, other members — Mike Chapman, Kirsten Elliott and Marek Lewcun. The retiring Chairman, John Ede, then thanked the outgoing Committee, particularly Alex Kolaczowski and John Wroughton who were standing down, and was himself thanked on behalf of the HBRG by Lutz Haber.

8. Under other business, Mary Ede raised the question of future access to the Bath Chronicle's runs of newspapers when it moved to a fresh site. The Treasurer reported that the B.C.'s photographic collection (1970s onwards) might be transferred to Bath Central Library or the Record Office.

MEETINGS HELD DECEMBER 1996 - APRIL 1997

Recent work on the Abbey Church roof and windows has revealed another eight heraldic bosses, bringing the total to 106 — so John Ede told us on 18 December in a most informative talk illustrated with dozens of close-up views taken from the high scaffolding. This heraldic treasure reflects the building's history. Most shields at the East end — in the aisles, main chancel and clustered round the great window — date back to the Bishop Oliver/Prior Bird rebuilding and are therefore pre-Dissolution, though they include a Jacobean substitution for the original Tudor royal arms and various 19C replacements. At the West they largely belong to the early 17C roofing of the nave or the great 19C restoration, while the bosses in the main nave may be Jacobean examples shifted from other locations or Victorian stone copies. Previous identifications of the bearers by R.E.M. Peach and in the standard heraldic sources (Burke or Papworth) were not always accurate or complete, and despite new detective work a few puzzles remain. Some of the shields represent monastic institutions and of course the city of Bath, but the vast majority are personal. They range from the arms of King Edgar (cross and four martlets) to the sometimes questionable heraldry of Victorian benefactors. Ecclesiastics and their families feature prominently — especially those responsible for the early 17C and mid-19C building campaigns, bishop Montague and rector Kemble — yet the absentee Tudor bishop, Adrian de Castello, also makes a considerable showing. Perhaps most interest attaches to the private benefactors however. From the earlier period Lord Burghley and his steward Thomas Bellot mingle with the Chapman family and George Reeves of New College, Oxford. The Victorian armory is even more diverse. Besides the ubiquitous leopards and anchors of the energetic Kemble appear the shields of office-holders during the Scott restoration (Long, Gill and Schum — the latter using the badge of St. John's) and other local landowners and worthies: Manvers, Cleveland, Langton-Gore, Skrine, Murch, Moger, Tyte and others. John Ede led us lightly but expertly through all the niceties of heraldic colours, symbolism, quarterings, and even the odd baton sinister, and provided a completely fresh insight into the Abbey Church's history.

On 16 January, Graham Davis began his account of the Irish in Bath, 1770-1850, by postulating two periods of local social crisis; one in the later 18C when Bath was becoming less exclusive and losing out both to other resorts and to the vogue for Romantic travel; the other in the 1830-50s when a moralising climate, Chartist agitation, health scares and growing mendicancy, all created anxieties. In each period the Irish proved a useful butt for criticism. In the 1770s, literary sources — Smollett, Anstey, Sheridan — provide examples of caricature Irish visitors (especially impoverished gentry) making their presence felt at the spa. In the 19C a wave of Irish famine refugees settled at Bath, many of them from County Cork arriving via South Wales and Bristol. By 1851 they numbered about a thousand — a small community in comparison with the great Irish settlements in Scotland, Lancashire, London, and many smaller English towns, but still significant, noticeable, and easily scapegoated. Contemporary reports described their ragged appearance, drunken behaviour and brawling, and sometimes poked fun at their brogue. They tended to live in crowded premises in the Avon Street area: thus in 1851 no. 9 Avon Street had 58 residents, 38 of them Irish (mostly interrelated). Some supported themselves by laboring

jobs or as costermongers. Others relied on charities such as the Monmouth Street Society. On the whole, however, the 1851 Census shows the lot of Irish residents in Bath to be not unlike that of the city's poor generally — and most of the children were receiving some schooling. There was probably also a support network from other Irish people in Bath, including Catholic clergy, though not necessarily from the better-off Anglo-Irish living in the smart suburbs. In the brisk discussion that followed Graham Davis's paper his theory of a late-18C crisis was questioned, and different views were expressed on the validity of imaginative literature and visual caricature as historical evidence — though they might contain important kernels of truth.

The General Hospital as an instrument for improving the status, profits and expertise of medical practitioners in 18C Bath: this was Anne Borsay's theme on 19 February. Doctors of the time had a mixed press and were roundly satirised in pieces like The Diseases of Bath (1737). On the other hand, unpaid service to the Hospital did much to redeem their image. In 1739 physicians made up 10% of the governing body, and of the 23 who obtained honorary medical appointments to the Hospital between 1740 and 1830 many had first served as governors. With surgeons, it was the other way round; their appointments usually preceded their governorship. Medical governors were rather more assiduous in attending weekly committees than their lay brethren, at least up to 1800, and William Oliver made a particularly strong contribution to the early committee. The rewards of such service were partly economic and social. Since mid-18C Bath had perhaps five times more physicians to population than the national average, competition for patients was strong. Socialising with other Hospital governors therefore offered a select few physicians and surgeons opportunities to extend their private practice among the local elite. And with economic gain went social advance, for the philanthropic profile of Hospital service raised the gentlemanly status of the professionals involved and countered the mercenary image of doctors. Association with the Bath and West, the Harmonic Society, or the Literary and Scientific Institution also gave a social pay-off. One further advantage of professional links with the Hospital was clinical, for it permitted many more patients to be observed systematically and for records of cases to be analysed statistically. Rice Charleton and William Falconer both used these new arithmetic procedures to good effect in treatments for paralysis and rheumatism.

If 600 memorial tablets in the Abbey Church testify to the wealthy side of Bath, vagrant removal certificates and poor relief accounts show the other side of the coin. Early 19C magistrates, as George Harries explained on 12 March in his study of the Poor Law in operation, had legal powers to set poor rates, appoint parish overseers, and examine and 'settle' any individual lacking the means of support. Out of the local authorities only the overseers and rate collectors had much first-hand knowledge of how the poor lived — the woman lodging at 54 Avon Street, for example, who received only 6d. a week in relief, refused a harsh place in the poorhouse, tried to survive by picking bones, but ultimately perished from starvation. Long residence in a parish conferred no right to assistance; the test was place of birth or — for a wife — place of father's or husband's birth. Settlement records are not only moving human documents, they demonstrate the lengths gone to in order to establish the facts. Thus, when Ann Garrett (and her 2 young children) claimed relief in St. James's parish, Bristol J.P.s were asked to examine her husband, an army sergeant who had once worked in Bath for a coal-merchant and as a servant, but hailed from a Wiltshire parish. This was enough to enforce removal, but since the rules for military families were more flexible, it was to Plymouth the family went with the removal expenses reimbursed. Sometimes removals took the other direction, as with a 27-year-old labourer, Thomas Parker, who in 1819 was returned to St. James's parish, where he originated, from Derbyshire (the

itinerary of his week-long journey, accompanied by constables, being detailed on the back of the removal order). Pregnant women would be forcibly examined to discover the father and then hustled away as quickly as possible to avoid a local parish being burdened with the child. The impressive case-work of one parish vestry can be studied in Walcot. With a strong-minded rector in Dr. Moysey the vestry met fortnightly to decide which applicants should be paid, maintained in the poor house, put on labouring duty, removed, or otherwise dealt with. Between 1819/20 and 1820/21 it managed to reduce overall annual expenditure from £10,710 to £8,498 by narrowing rules of entitlement, forcing removals and drastically reducing occasional relief from £1,144 to £258 (133 recipients down to 25). What came across strongly in George Harries's absorbing talk was the large administrative effort the old Poor Law entailed.

A different Bath again was evoked by Paul De'Ath's short paper on 17 April following the AGM. Or, rather, two Baths — the decorous 19C environment of Milsom Street hairdressers and perfumers, compared with the Victorian rubbish-tips at Midford, Weston and elsewhere in which their product containers sometimes turn up mingled with bottles, plumbing equipment, flat irons, footwarmers, and other refuse of the past. In the last 20 years of pit-digging and library-delving Paul De'Ath has acquired considerable data on the hairdressing/perfumery firms of Victorian Bath, many of whom sold their own brands of hair tonics, creams, washes, dyes and pomades, both locally and nationally (and even overseas). Finigan of Milsom Street had worldwide distribution of his 'Nutritive Cream' to prevent hair greying, as did George Hancock of Beehive House (Old Bond Street) for his hair improver 'Balsam of Honey' which had the royal signet. Other businesses included Henry Stockman and J.F. Breeze (among whose distinctive products was Bear's Grease) and the French perfumer Henri Molle noted for 'Pompadour Cream'. All these had shops in Milsom Street while others had fashionable sites in New Bond Street, Union Street, the Corridor, Saville Row and Brock Street. Pot lids and bases in various dimensions have been excavated for some 10-12 Bath firms, usually identifiable by printed inscriptions and designs, and most in surprisingly good condition, as the speaker's excellent slides and small display from his own collection showed.



TWO FROM POT LIDS PAUL DE'ATH'S COLLECTION

MEMBERS' NEWS

- Change of address: Jane Root, 1 Moravian Cottages, Weston Road, Bath, BA1 2XX.
- Forthcoming lecture: John Wroughton will be delivering a lecture in the 'Bath Abbey 2000' series at the Pump Room on Friday 27 June at 8 p.m. The title is 'Bath Abbey from Civil War to Age of Reason'. Tickets at £5 from the Secretary of the Friends of Bath Abbey, 13 Kingston Buildings, BA1 1LT.

RECENT AND IMMINENT PUBLICATIONS

- Amanda Berry, 'Balancing the books: funding provincial hospitals in eighteenth-century England', Accounting, Business and Financial History vol. 7, no. 1 (1997) pp. 1-30
- Kerry Birch, 'Baptist burial grounds in Bath', Baptist Quarterly vol. 37, no.1 (1997). Ian
- Crowe (ed.), Edmund Burke: his Life and Legacy (forthcoming May 1997).
- Margaret Cox and Gwynne Stock, 'Nineteenth century Bath-stone walled graves at St. Nicholas's church, Bathampton', Somerset Archaeology & Natural History for 1994, vol. 138 (1995) pp. 131-50.
- Marek Lewcun, 'Excavations on the site of an aerated water manufactory at the Empire Hotel, Bath, 1995', BIAS Journal no. 28 (1996) pp. 30-34.
- Ian White, Watch and Clock Makers in the City of Bath (Phillimore, 1997).
- John Wroughton, The Stuart Age, 1603-1714 (Addinson, Wesley, Longman, May 1997). A reference book for students, teachers and the general public.
- N. Du Quesne Bird, 'Token currency in Bath, 1636-1675', Notes & Queries for Somerset and Dorset vol. 34 (September 1996), pp.82-86.

Correction

HBRG Newsletter 32 (January 1997) wrongly stated in the report of Mike Chapman's talk that the Ralph Allen estate map had been transferred to Bath Central Library. In fact the transfer was from the Library to Bath Record Office.

Apologies also that the HBRG logo was missing from page 1 of Newsletter 32.

EDMUND BURKE: SOME BATH CONNECTIONS

by Ian Crowe

AN ENGRAVING OF
EDMUND BURKE
AFTER REYNOLDS'
PORTRAIT



No. 11 North Parade has recently emerged from her restorative bandages and, after careful washing and scraping, faces the twenty-first century with a sort of youthful antiquity. Within her rooms two hundred years ago, the great parliamentarian Edmund Burke lay dying. He had arrived in the city at the beginning of February 1797 and left it on 24 May, having gained no relief from his illness, to return to his home at Beaconsfield and 'a habitation more permanent', dying there on 9 July. As the bicentenary of his death approaches, Burke's reputation will also undergo careful washing and scraping, and, though he spent little time in Bath, the nature of his connection with this city may shed significant, if tantalisingly imperfect, light on crucial and understudied aspects of his career.

Conor Cruise O'Brien's recent biography of Burke, *The Great Melody*, revived interest in Burke's Irish background, and it is this aspect of his life which seems to underpin the most prolonged periods of his association with Bath — i.e. the 1750s, when he had arrived on the English scene but not yet entered politics and his last, despairing visit of 1797. Between those periods he visited the city only sporadically: twice, very briefly, in 1774 during the election campaign at Bristol; in 1790, during a tour of the West country after completing his *Reflections on the*

Revolution in France, when he was enthralled by 'a rich cave or mine of Roman antiquities' that was being unearthed at the time in Stall Street (the pediment and other parts of the temple of Sul-Minerva); in 1792, for his wife's health, and, four years later, for his own, when he was treated by Dr. Caleb Parry for the symptoms of the disease, tubercular enteritis, that was to kill him. With a smattering of other visits, this is, perhaps, not such a good attendance record for somebody who was MP for Bristol between 1774-80.

The first of the two Bath periods that I have identified, the 1750s, concerns Burke's reception into a foreign environment, and it is poorly documented. He arrived in England from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1750 to pursue, as his father understood it, a career at the Middle Temple. From then until 1758, by which time he had lost his sense of a legal vocation (together with his father's allowance) and was making a precarious but not fruitless career as an author and pamphleteer, there are just nine surviving letters in his hand. Burke became well-acquainted with the area around Bath very early on, and his connections there probably followed routes familiar to Irish immigrants and traders. At least once he lodged at Turleigh, near Bradford-on-Avon, with a landlady, Mrs. Druce, who (he noted excitedly in a letter to an acquaintance) ascribed her evident decline in social standing to the accession of the Hanovers, and whose neighbours were 'heartly Jacobites, that is, a sort of people whose politics consists in wishing that right may take place, and their religion, in heartily hating Presbyterians'. Burke's mother was a Catholic of the Nagle family, from Ballygriffin in County Cork, and one of Burke's ancestors, Richard Nagle, had been Attorney-General for James II, bringing persecution down upon the extended family after the Glorious Revolution. One should not make too much of a humorous Jacobite reference in a private letter to a close Quaker friend, but it is worth noting that Conor Cruise O'Brien gives renewed credence to the old rumour that Burke made an aborted move to Rome around this time. In any event, no speculation is necessary when it comes to Burke's friendship with the Irish Catholic, Dr. Christopher Nugent, an expert on hydrophobia, who was practising in Bath in the 1750s. In a letter from Turleigh (dated 1751 in the manuscript but probably written a year later) Burke referred, in verse, to his already extensive debt to Nugent: 'Ts now two autumns since [you] chanced to find/ A youth of body broke, infirm of mind'. In 1756 Burke was taken in by Nugent again, after the exertions of publishing his first important work, *A Vindication of Natural Society*. This time he fell in love with Nugent's daughter, Jane, whom he married the next year. She, too, seems to have been a practising Catholic.

Once he had entered political life, Burke was dogged by these Catholic connections. His father-in-law, as a medical practitioner, could continue openly in his faith (and famously endeared himself to Dr. Johnson at the Club by his Friday fasting on omelette), though the source of his education — probably in France — remains a mystery. Dr. Nugent offers an interesting contrast with his namesake, Robert 'Craggs' Nugent, an earlier resident at 11 North Parade and one of Burke's predecessors as M.P. for Bristol, who was brought up a Roman Catholic, converted to a sort of irreverent Protestantism and then reverted to Catholicism before his death. Burke —who was at first tarnished with an imaginary Jesuit education at St. Omer and later portrayed in Jesuit garb in political cartoons until his death — was, understandably, extraordinarily sensitive about his religious and Irish background. This may be why we will only ever have an imperfect glimpse of the Irish network vital to a man like Burke who was hovering uncertainly between Ireland and England. Trevor Fawcett has presented some fascinating insights into the contemporary Irish presence in Bath (HBRG Newsletter no. 15), but we are still left to wonder what records have been lost, e.g. burnt during the Gordon Riots in 1780. Irish and Catholic preoccupations stayed with Burke throughout his career, and they are evident during his final stay in 1797. The starkest picture of Burke at this time is offered by William Wilberforce, who visited him at North Parade on 17 April: 'Burke was lying on a sofa much emaciated, and [William] Windham, [French] Laurence, and some other friends were around him. The attention shown to him by all that party was just like the treatment of Ahitophel of old: it was as if one went to

enquire of the oracle of the Lord'. Wilberforce's presence should remind us of Burke's significant role in humanitarian issues of his day, from criticism of the treatment of Indian natives by the East India Company to his early contribution to the crusade against slavery. Burke's religious beliefs were nothing if not rooted in the practical, and they were given particular force by his early experience of the injustices under which Catholics lived in his native Ireland. Just a few weeks before his visit Wilberforce had published his Public View.^{*} Later Hannah More reported that Burke had spent his last two days reading this work, and had said that 'he derived much comfort from it, and that if he lived he should thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world'.

Wilberforce was visiting Burke to discuss the recent naval mutiny at Portsmouth. This threat to British security and the situation in Ireland occupied Burke and his disciples for the next few months, and Burke's continuing, impressive grasp of current developments was fuelled by the fear that French revolutionary ideas would infect the disaffected Irish community. Those around Burke shared his concerns about India, Ireland and the Jacobin threat, and one in particular is worth mentioning — French Laurence, who came from a prominent local family, the son of Richard Laurence, watchmaker of Bath and member of the Corporation. French Laurence was M.P. for Peterborough and Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, and was Burke's chief means of communication at this time with Windham, the War Secretary, and Earl Fitzwilliam in whose ill-fated term as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland (Dec. 1794-Mar. 1795) Burke had placed such high hopes. Laurence's brother Richard, brought up and educated in Bath, was later to become Archbishop of Cashel in Tipperary, not far from the Nagle heartland in southern Ireland of Burke's maternal ancestry. We are clearly observing the binding influence of the Fitzwilliam family here. The Irish dimension, and especially the Catholic Emancipation movement, certainly consolidated the small group that attempted to carry Burke's teachings into the next century. French Laurence became a particularly important custodian of his posthumous reputation.

The future influence of Edmund Burke, embodied in that scene before Wilberforce, still requires clarification. The secondary sources have largely been unkind to Ahitophel's disciples. Laurence died in 1809 and Windham the next year, and Burke's reputation waned with them. What is clear, however, is that Burke himself left Bath as he had entered it — caught and held in an emotional and very functional Irish web. In many ways the influence of Ireland on Burke is similar to its presence in the history of 18C Bath, not least in its elusiveness. There is something appropriate, then, in focusing on the brief but intense moments when Burke and Bath connected.

* Public View of the Prevailing Religious System of
Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes
of this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity.

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