



NEWSLETTER 34

SEPTEMBER 1997

GROUP NEWS

MEETINGS HELD MAY - JUNE 1997

When in 1837 excavations for a railway cutting revealed a Roman villa near Newton St. Loe, the G.W.R. company was enlightened enough to allow its 19-year-old engineer, Thomas Marsh, a couple of months to carry out an archaeological dig, to record the site in measured drawings, and to lift two mosaics. The latter were installed at Keynsham station until 1851, but then moved to Bristol, where they suffered progressive damage, ill-treatment and neglect until quite recently when the tessera'd fragments were re-sorted and identified. This sorry tale was related by James Russell in his excellent illustrated talk on 15 May. Fortunately other crucial documentation survived: Marsh's excavation notebook, his careful drawings long preserved by his daughter, a letter he wrote late in life describing his part in the dig, and his annotated copy of W.L. Nichols' *Horae Romanae*, a not-wholly-correct contemporary account of the Newton St. Loe discovery. The villa had two substantial buildings, one possibly for public business, the other — with its mosaic floors and hot bath — more domestic in character. The chief mosaic showed the popular motif of Orpheus charming a circle of wild beasts, though all the figures, executed in the style of the Cirencester and Littlecote (Wilts.) mosaicists, had been squashed with difficulty into a frame of cruder geometric patterns. With comparisons drawn from across the Roman empire, James Russell then put the Newton villa in broader context. It can be dated to the early 4C when West Country villa life was at its peak and wealth went into private rural estates rather than urban benefactions. Bath is ringed with villas of different sorts, the greatest one of all, at Keynsham, perhaps belonging to a major provincial official. The whole district was prosperous with agriculture, quarrying, tile making and metal working, as well as the attraction of Bath's hot springs. Eventually some villas seem to have been attacked during barbarian invasions and others abandoned when their owners sought refuge within the walls of Bath. Their descendants may have lived on until the 6C and the decisive defeat by the Saxons at the battle of Dyrham. James Russell's comprehensive study of the Newton St. Loe villa is available in a 24-page pamphlet updating his article in *Bristol & Avon Archaeology* vol. 9 (1992) 2-23.

The 1996-7 season ended with a walk round Larkhall expertly led by David Crellin on 4 June. A set of photocopied hand-outs from local maps helped to clarify the perambulation which took us into many unsuspected corners. We began at St. Saviour's, a Commissioners' church of c.1839 reputedly designed by Pinch and with a chancel extended in 1882 by Major C.E. Davis. It was built on the former 'Haines's Furlong' which had descended to Ann Tanner and whose

boundary markers still survive .in places, though a projected 'Worcester Square' was never realised. Round the corner, London Road is bordered by two substantial developments of the 1790s, Beaufort (West and East) and Eveleigh's enterprising Grosvenor, but the nearby Beaufort Place and Lambridge Place are simpler builders' developments. Neither the no-longer extant watermill on the Lam nor the original Lark Hall (on the site of the pub in Larkhall Square, appear on Thorp's maps of 1740-5, and the whole suburb has a late-Georgian and Victorian 'village' character. This was very apparent as we continued along St. Saviour's Road (once the highway to Gloucester) and diverted through Larkhall Place and Dafford's Buildings. Further ahead we reached the Lam stream again, the area of the short-lived 19C spa (now the Bladud's Head) and the pre-1740 Dead Mill, part of whose older fabric seems to be incorporated in the present structure. On the uphill return, the grounds of St. Saviour's Infants/Junior schools mark the site of Brookleaze House and the long terrace of Worcester Buildings, both lost, but higher up Worcester Place was saved and nearby Vale View Place, never completed, also remains. The tour ended most hospitably at David Crellin's house with refreshments and a small display of documents on Larkhall and the house itself.

MEETINGS 1997-98

The new season's programme is included with this Newsletter. Again it is filled with good things and we hope that all members living locally will try to give their support even if they can attend only occasionally. As agreed at the last AGM, the job of chairing meetings is to be spread more widely among the HBRG membership. The same is true of writing reports of meetings for the Newsletter. We hope that in due course you might be willing to participate in one of these capacities.

MEMBERS' NEWS

It is hoped to send out a new list of members along with the January Newsletter. Please let the General/Membership Secretary know of any changes or updates needed to your current entry.

Jennifer Beazley's NADFAS team has added inventories of Hinton Charterhouse and Claverton to their impressively lengthening run of local church records.

Warm congratulations to Kerry Birch who became minister of Gas Green Baptist Church, Cheltenham, at the end of August following his ordination on 28 June at Tewton Baptist Church.

Brenda Buchanan has edited Gunpowder: the History of an International Technology (Bath University Press, 1996). Her own contribution to the volume is on 18C Bristol powdermakers, a subject she has already written up in Transactions of the Newcomen Society vol. 67 (1995-6) pp. 125-59.

Susan Sloman's article, 'Sitting to Gainsborough at Bath in 1760', appeared in Burlington Magazine May 1997, pp. 325-8.

Tony Walter, who will be conducting the HBRG visit to the Abbey Cemetery in June 1998, has published 'John Claudius Loudon and the Bath Abbey Cemetery' in Avon Gardens Trust Newsletter 18 (1997).

BATH CHRONICLE, 5 Feb. 1784, p.3

Letter from 'LONDONIENSIS'

"I asked the Master of the Pump, What was the subscription for walking there? He answered me in a polite manner, Nothing. Upon this I was induced to make other enquiries, but ... not being willing to interrupt him in his business, I retired, and went home to my breakfast. At noon I returned, and found him more at leisure, and having some knowledge of his family, I asked him to come to my lodgings and eat a bit of supper with me. In the course of our talk, I observed to him, there were many names on his book who I supposed all drank the waters? In return he informed me, that the book was more a book of intelligence for the inspection of the company than otherwise; and that many who came to Bath for the waters, would not set their names down because they would avoid impertinent visitors; and that many who had drank then departed without paying him, which he imagined must be owing to their not being informed that he stood there at the expense of more than 8001. [£800] a year [for rent], and was to hold the place only for two years."



This room has an atmosphere.

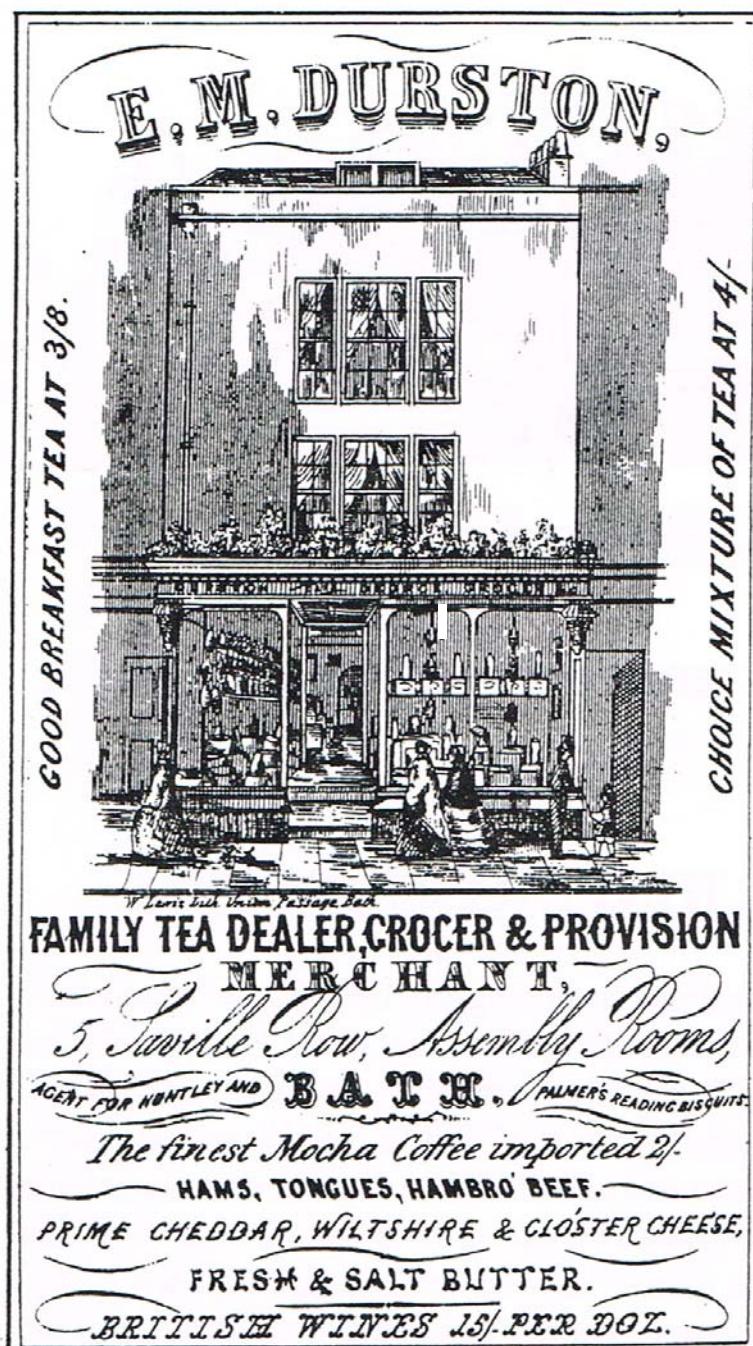
from W.E. Richards, "TAKING THE WATERS", London Opinion, June, 1933.

MEETING OF LOCAL HISTORY GROUPS

Representatives of a dozen or more local organisations (including the HBRG) gathered on 30 April at a meeting called by Stuart Burroughs to hear what the Bath Industrial Heritage Centre could offer them in the way of research resources, borrowable materials (e.g. slides, oral history tapes), facilities for meetings and space for contributions to the &BC's Newsletter. In return, the BIHC would welcome other societies' newsletters and any details of their members' research in the areas of local industrial and social history, especially 18C onwards. It would also be willing to help mount exhibitions on appropriate themes if local societies wished to cooperate on the research and organisation of such displays. At the meeting there was some discussion about the value of forming an association of local history groups in Bath. The outcome was inconclusive but Elizabeth Holland, Secretary of the Survey of Old Bath (as well as a HBRG member), volunteered to sound out opinion further.

NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD CENTRE

A new gallery and shop has opened at the National Monuments and Record Centre of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments of England, which moved to Swindon five years ago. The vast archive of the Centre contains more than 7 million items including aerial photographs of the entire country and maps, records and photographs of archaeological sites and listed buildings. The gallery is open Wednesdays to Saturdays (10.00 am to 6.00 p.m.) and Sundays 11.00 am to 5.00 p.m.. Visitors are able to access the collection via computer and leave requests for further information.



From the Newsletter of the Area Archaeological Council, Avon Local History Association.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Dr. Hugh Torrens will deliver the Michael Cross Lecture (Bath Industrial Heritage Trust) at the Bath Society Meeting Room, Green Park Station, at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, 15 September 1997, admission £2 (tickets available from Bath Industrial Heritage Centre, tel. 318348). Title of the lecture: 'Technical Innovation around Bath and Bristol: some Lessons from History'.

On 26 November the results of the Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society's current dig at Stratton-on-the-Fosse will be described by Jayne Lawes, Director of Excavations, on Wednesday 26 November at 5.15 p.m. at the University of Bath. This lecture (in the GULP series) will cover three years of excavation at this Roman-British settlement.

NEWSPAPER DATINGS FOR BATH BUILDINGS, 1737-69

Buildings may often be roughly dated by eye from stylistic and other features, or from documentary evidence such as property deeds, rentals, ratebooks, guidebooks, contemporary letters and diaries, and — quite exactly sometimes — from news items and advertisements in the local press. The following list is entirely derived from newspapers. *BA=Bath Advertiser*, *BC=Bath Chronicle*, *BJ=Bath Journal*, and *GJ=Gloucester Journal*.

- GJ 27 Sep. 1737: Queen Square — 3 [new] large houses (4 rooms per floor) to sell or let.
- GJ 5 Sep. 1738: Barton Street [i.e. lower Gay Street] — *Star & Garter* (6 rooms per floor), with a fives court (100'x40'x40') and another covered building (80'x20') to sell or let — enquire John Wood.
- GJ 9 Oct. 1739: Barton Square [i.e. Queen Square]: [new] building on E corner of N side, built by Chisley 'after the highest Manner of Finishing now practised, and in the Modern Way of Building'.
- GJ 3 Jun. 1740: Longmead, between Kingsmead and Locksbrook: new house beside footpath to Brass Mills and next to upper Bristol road, with fine slope to SE (with summerhouse, arbours, stew pond, canal, 2 acres walled garden planted 2 years, a new walled garden unplanted).
- BJ 6 Jan. 1745/6: Walcot Street — 2 new houses.
- BJ 17 Jul. 1749: Simpson's Rooms: the great assembly room [i.e. ballroom] now building.
- BJ 12 Feb. 1749/50: Orchard Street: building plot for sale [site of new theatre?].
- BJ 8 Jan. 1753: Cheap Street — corner house near Marketplace to be pulled down to improve street.
- BJ 25 Jun. 1753: Lansdown Road — a house to let in Belvedere.
- BJ 8 Oct. 1753: Town Acre to be auctioned.
- BJ 25 Nov. 1754: Top of Broad Street to top of Ladymead — to be leased for building.
- BJ 3 Mar. 1755: Widening of old bridge and improving city approaches [i.e. by pulling down N and S gates, etc.] apparently completed.
- BJ 17 Mar. 1755: Abbey House — ancient structure is being pulled down to erect new one on same site.
- BJ 18 Aug. 1755: Letter on finding of Roman baths below foundation.
- BA 22 Nov 1755: Circus — on 18 Nov. Lady Stanhope moved into first house ready for occupation; houses of William Pitt in Circus, and of James Munday and Dr. Harley in Gay Street will soon be ready.
- BA 8 May 1756: Lansdown Road — 2 new houses just above Belvedere.
- BA 17 Apr. 1756: Vineyards — Charles Haynes has granted the vineyard in building plots to Thomas Omer and most have been taken for building.
- BJ 4 Jul. 1757: St. James's — tenders to build wall of new burial ground.
- BJ 22 Aug. 1757: 'The new arch'd Way from the Church-Yard to the Abbey Green'.
- BJ 13 Mar. 1758: Abbey Green — foundation stone of Kingston's intended buildings laid 6 Mar.
- BJ 20 Mar. 1758: South Parade — preparations for making a way [i.e. steps] down to river ferry and boats.
- BJ 17 May 1758: Circus — more ground leased to build several more houses.
- BJ 19 Jun. 1758: Circus — reservoir (60' diameter, 7' deep) is being made in centre 'to supply the adjacent Buildings with Water'.
- BJ 21 Aug. 1758: Near old bridge — Mr Williams in the New Buildings next to Mr Bradley's. BC 21 May 1761: Lansdown Road — ready-furnished house at Ainslie's Belvedere to let.
- BJ 24 Aug. 1761: Broad Street — Corporation maintain their rights in ancient road from St. Michael's Poorhouse wall to houses in Broad Street and has just leased

garden here for building.

BC 10 Sep. 1761: Vineyards — new small house near Bladud Buildings occupied by William

Keep.

BJ 17 May 1762: Circus — more land taken for building further houses.

BC 3 Mar. 1763: Circus — soil and rubbish being dumped on still unbuilt parts.

BC 15 Dec. 1763: Lansdown Road — an unfinished house at Ainslie's Belvedere next to a finished house.

BC 6 Dec. 1764: Circus — centre house in upper side is being prepared for Duke of Bedford.

BC 18 Apr. 1765: Lansdown Road — finished house in Ainslie's Belvedere to let.

BC 9 May 1765: Circus — new house on E side, with back way to Miles's Court, to sell or let.

BC 4 Jul. 1765: Kingsmead Street — house being built by Charles Frime, but 2 loads of ashlar from Singer's quarry stolen.

BC 12 Dec. 1765: Marketplace — newly built house at upper end occupied by Walter Taylor.

BC 13 Mar. 1766: Vineyards — new house with colonnade occupied by William Molesworth. BC 3 Apr. 1766: Abbey Baths — now complete and will open in a few days.

BC 18 Sep. 1766: Octagon Chapel — raising first piece of framing for dome but one killed and others injured when scaffolding collapsed.

BC 14 May 1767: Lansdown Road — [building] land opposite Hutchinson's Buildings to let. BC 21 May 1767: Royal Crescent and Queen's Parade: foundation stone of first house in

Crescent laid last Tuesday; foundations also being dug for a house in intended Queen's Parade.

BC 16 Jul. 1767: Vineyards — 2 houses occupied for 1 year.

BC 3 Sep. 1767: Chatham Row — 2 new houses in 'Pitt Street' looking across to North

Parade.

BJ 15 Feb. 1768: Marketplace — first stone of new Guildhall laid.

BJ 4 Jul. 1768: Paragon Buildings — Corporation to lease land of Hooper's Garden, from James's stable to garden lately belonging to the *Bell*. Same date: Walcot Street? — Walcot Poor House recently erected.

BJ 12 Sep. 1768: Margaret Chapel — subscription opened for building it.

BJ 30 Jan. 1769: Alfred Street — new house on corner from Prince's Buildings for sale.

BJ 10 Apr. 1769: St. James's Church — main outside work on rebuild is finished [BJ 13 Nov. and 25 Dec. 1769: first marriage and divine services held since the rebuild]. BC 27 Apr. 1769: Old Bond Street — first stone of 'Bond Street' laid.

BC 4 May 1769: Trim Street — demolition and rebuilding of Trim Bridge in progress.

BC 25 May 1769: Upper Assembly Rooms: first stone laid.

BJ 15 May 1769: Hooper's Court, near Walcot Church — 2 small new houses.

BC 29 Jun. 1769: Thomas Street, Ambury — 2 new houses not quite finished.

BC 2 Nov. 1769: Walcot Street — York House hotel to open on 7 Nov.

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The Newsletter is compiled and typed by Judith Samuel.