

GROUP NEWS

A Word from the Editor.

I must apologise for the lateness of this newsletter. As some of you will know I have had some fairly drastic changes in my life, not least a move to a new address – 27 Wellsway, Bath BA2 4RR for those who wish to contact me. From now on the newsletter should return to its regular pattern and all contributions will be gratefully received - although I do not guarantee that a little judicial editing will not occur to make the newsletter fit the required number of pages. My telephone number remains unchanged at 01225 310364 and I can be e-mailed at [kirsten t_elliott@hotmail.com](mailto:kirsten_t_elliott@hotmail.com).

With the newsletter comes your new programme of events. The Committee hopes that you will enjoy the wide variety of events (including visits) that has been arranged for the coming year.
Kirsten Elliott.

MEETINGS MAY AND JUNE 2001

May 2001 at Bath Green Park Station.

This was a talk by Tony Scrase on crosses, conduits and other medieval street furniture. From places diverse as Glastonbury and Somerton, we were shown crosses, some of which plainly showed their religious origins, other simply resembling a pillar. Wells, seat of the diocese, still has in its market-place a cross and well more or less combined. The waters still flow through the streets much as they did when they were important to local citizens. However, like many that we saw, it had undergone changes over the years. Some crosses have travelled. Bristol's high cross, no longer cherished by its townsfolk, was bought up by the banker Henry Hoare for his gardens at Stourhead. Of the religious centres in the West Country, Bath has lost all its crosses, even that in the Cross Bath. The conduits too have disappeared.

Some so-called crosses have more to do with markets, such as those at Castle Combe. Perhaps the most famous is the Yarn Market at Dunster.

This was, it had to be said, a very specialised talk about a subject which perhaps we take for granted. Next time we pass a preaching cross, road-side well or market building, we should recall the days when these formed a focus for the population.

Summer outing: 7th June 2001 - Swainswick. By John Ede.

About 15 members enjoyed an evening wander round the village of Swainswick under the expert guidance of Sally Butler who has done considerable research during her 20 year's residence there. The summer evening sun showed this delightful valley at its best and from several gardens there were views across the Avon Valley to the distant Prior Park.

Two cottages, with evidence of having at one time been three, with some widely scattered fields were given to St. John's hospital c.1220 and are still let to "deserving" tenants but the dominant landowner was Oriel College, Oxford from mid C16 until just after World War I. Unfortunately the College kept records of leases but not of buildings or tenants. Copyholds survived into Victorian times. Most dwellings owned fields, usually spread about the parish. Only Church and Manor show visible early building but we saw a number of later buildings on early sites including the Old Forge, probably dating from before 1800, and continuing as a forge until recent times. Pickwick farm, with 136 acres is named from the purchase of the lease by Eleazer Pickwick of the "White Hart" in Bath.

Soil moving slowly down the steep slope is evident at a number of houses where first floors are more nearly ground level than the entrance doors. There are a number of larger houses with backs to the road and gardens sloping south to a distant view. Several times we passed an unprepossessing clutter of heterogeneous buildings and then went through a gate to find on the other side they were splendid C18 gentlemen's houses with inspiring gardens, totally hidden from passers-by. Such were Upper Swainswick House, Hill House and Glebe House and we express gratitude to their owners for the privilege of entry to their gardens. Such houses are evidence that Bath professionals in the 18th century sought nearby residences.

William Prynne was born in Hill House: his father was Oriel College representative in the village. Glebe House became the Rectory in 1812. It has a side building that was at one time a school run by a curate. It had 10 pupils in 1841. Rector John Earle, author of a history of Bath in 1864, moved the school when he married.

We then came to the Manor House: the front much as in a print of c. 1800 but with Victorian alteration: the back (seen from the churchyard) shows signs of blocked medieval windows. There is a remaining barn of the 1620s and, in the grass in front of the manor, still visible traces of a vanished early wing and, beyond to the north, of landscape gardening.

Finally we entered the Church, by that time vacated by a bell-ringing practice! It has no unity but a number of interesting features; a Norman door, a C13 window, a Perpendicular north aisle in which, to the surprise of some, are the tombs of the two John Woods. Perhaps a single tablet can sum up the feel for an earlier Swainswick that we had absorbed from our tour,

"Jane Danvers, died 5 July 1801, aged 82 years, seventy of which had been passed in this parish in the exercise of benevolence to her poorer neighbours and in social intercourse with the more affluent."

Thank you Sally Butler.

Bath Gazetteer

It was suggested at the AGM last April that over the forthcoming year we should attempt to date as many Bath streets as possible. This is a reminder of that target and a call for interested members to assist on the project. Initially we want to tackle the period 1860 - 1940. It is proposed to break this down into four 20-year periods on which individual helpers would work - either singly or, better, in small teams of two or three --always with the aid and advice, as necessary of Trevor Fawcett. By focussing on 20-year periods helpers will perhaps find the task more interesting and rewarding. Would anyone willing to help please contact Trevor on 312396 by 7th October, or by letter at any time.

New Publications

Trevor Fawcett has written a new book entitled *BATH ADMINISTER'D, Corporation affairs at the 18th-century Spa*. It traces every aspect of the Guildhall's involvement in everyday spa life from managing the vital hot springs to preserving law and order. It was the narrow self-elected council which took all the key decisions, chose the Bath MPs appointed the town officials, leased out properties supervised the market, filled the magistrates' bench, and at different times largely rebuilt central Bath. All this is covered in over 100 entries. It can be read straight through, casually dipped into, or used for quick reference or a springboard for further research. It is published by Ruton and costs £8.

Other publications to note are Vol. 141 of *Somerset Archaeology & Natural History*, 161 - 169 where there is an article by Trevor Fawcett, *French Émigrés at Bath, 1789 - 1815*. For those whose interest extends to Bristol there is *Bristol Cathedral: History & Architecture*, edited by John Rogan and published by Tempus, £14.99.

Finally a request from the Editor. As some of you may know, I am working with a colleague on a study of Bath's pubs, inns and taverns, past and present. We have already compiled a huge list of pubs, some existing but many lost, and are still discovering more. The explosion in numbers of pubs and beer-houses which followed the Duke of Wellington's Beer Act has not yet overwhelmed our databases and we would be delighted to receive any snippets of information including personal reminiscences about Bath's ale houses.