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NEWSLETTER 50

FEBRUARY 2003

GROUP NEWS

A Word from the Editor.

Can I make a plea (once more) for contributions? This is the newsletter of the History of Bath Research Group, and I am sure that those of you who belong to other history-related organisations have news of meetings and projects which would be of interest to fellow members of the HBRG. (Remember, if you want to advertise an event, you will have to think ahead because of the publication dates of the newsletter.) If you have read a book which you think would be of interest, then let me have its title, even if you do not feel up to a review. I would like to thank Trevor Fawcett for continuing to share his latest literary finds with us, but a variety of different voices and different views can only improve the newsletter. I also need volunteers to write up reports of meetings. Again, I would like to thank Stuart Burroughs, Dr. Andrew Swift and Dr. Michael Rowe for their excellent accounts of the last three meetings, but I do seem to be going round the same little group of willing volunteers. So, please – look at your programme, decide what subject interests you, and call me on 01225 310364 to volunteer. However, my “Notes and Queries” section at the end of the last newsletter did evoke a response: from Trevor Fawcett, who provided a thought-provoking reading list for the Mayor’s Guides, and Owen Ward, who has a new query which he hopes members may be able to solve. I also include a query from a member of the public, which research by Judith Samuel has partly answered, but some questions still remain. Finally a friend of David Crellin’s is looking for help in an interesting history project.

I look forward to a full letterbox (or inbox if using e-mail). While on the subject of e-mail, I have decided to abandon the freeserve address, as it seems rather unreliable, so please use my hotmail address which I give below.

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MEETINGS OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2002 & JANUARY 2003

October, Museum of Bath at Work, Speaker, Marek Lewcun, Report, Stuart Burroughs. Recent Archaeological Discoveries in the Bath Area. Marek Lewcun, a member of HBRG, presented the first Autumn lecture of the 2002-3 season with a fascinating, surprising, even revelatory presentation on the work of the Bath Archaeological Trust over the last year or so.

Marek began with an example of how aware all organisations who dig in the ground are of the value of what they sometimes uncover – Wessex Water in this case. A request to investigate what appeared to be a shattered sword uncovered during enlargement works at the Oakwood reservoir at St. Catharine's revealed in fact an unusual geological formation *resembling* a shattered sword. However the fact that organisations such as Wessex Water now consider it a duty to report such finds, even if, as in this case shown to be false, has to be a positive state of affairs.

An indication of how wide the term “archaeological discovery” has become was presented with a review of the work the BAT has undertaken at De Montalt water mill, a building in Northgate Street, no. 7 The Circus, Twerton Malthouse and the Roman Baths.

De Montalt Mill at Combe Down, an industrial building with a succession of different occupants since its construction in 1805 is in the process of planning for renovation and conversion. The BAT was asked to undertake a “Standing Building Survey” on the structures and in doing so they revealed a fascinating mill building, its machinery originally driven by a waterwheel 56 feet in diameter!

At William Pitt's former home at 7 The Circus, the garden is being redeveloped. During work to convert the sunken garden of this former nursing home the remains of a separate kitchen and cellar arrangement was uncovered. This was installed at the request of Pitt and his wife.

No. 15 Northgate Street, which adjoins Slippery Lane and is on the route of the old city wall and an Anglo-Saxon ditch, had been surveyed in every regard whilst the survey of a row of now demolished back-t-back cottages in Twerton involved contacting former inhabitants when the old rooks were uncovered. A former malthouse at Twerton, alongside the cottages, which has been converted to a modern use, had also been surveyed.

During the redisplay and renovation of the East Baths site at the Roman Baths an excavation of an area previously considered too hazardous owing the proximity of the York Street supporting vaults was investigated. The strengthening of the vaults and supports had rendered the area safe and an arrangement of fragile hypocaust *pilae* was excavated and are now on display as part of the new exhibition in this space.

In “shadowing” a team from Wessex Water undertaking borehole drilling for a new sewage disposal installation on Newton St Loe meadows a quantity of Roman material possibly associated with the Newton Villa was revealed, whilst a trial drilling at Locksbrook Road discovered, amongst alluvial material, more Roman material possibly indicated a nearby settlement in Newbridge near the Locksbrook Cemetery.

Most dramatically the BATA was responsible for encouraging Channel 4's Time Team to investigate the possible route of the Fosse Way Roman road from Oldfield Park to Lansdown. A proposed route carried the road across the river near the site of the Hinton garage up through Victoria Park, under the Royal Crescent and towards Northampton Street. In addition to proving this the discovery of Roman remains during the construction of St. Andrew's Church, between 1870 and 1873, at Julian Road, encouraged an associated excavation here to discover more about structures which may have had a connection with the Fosse Way. Excavations in rain and sun confirmed the route of the Fosse Way, with associated burials, being revealed in trenches dug in front of the royal Crescent. Nearby a fine Roman wall was found beneath the foundations of St.

Andrew's Church. (The church itself had been destroyed by firebombing in 1942 and demolished in the 1950s and 1960s.)

The opportunity to hear the latest information concerning this important excavation before the screening of the Time Team programme in March 2003 was fascinating.

November, Weston Church Centre, Speaker, Ruth Hayden, Report: Dr. Andrew Swift.

Mrs Delaney An unfortunate clash with the meetings of at least three other history societies—Lyncombe & Widcombe, BIAS and the Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society—meant that fewer members than usual turned out to hear a fascinating talk on one of one of Bath's most celebrated eighteenth-century visitors.

Born at Coulston near Devizes in 1700, brought up in London and the Cotswolds, she was invited to stay at Longleat House by her uncle, Lord Lansdowne, when she was 17. An arranged marriage to Alexander Pendarves, a 60 year-old Cornishman with unappealing habits, swiftly followed. After his death six years later, she returned to London and joined the ranks of fashionable society. In 1729, she met Jonathan Swift during a visit to Ireland, and in 1743 she married his friend and fellow clergyman, Dr Patrick Delaney. Throughout her long life (she died in 1788), she made frequent visits to Bath.

Ruth Hayden's illustrated talk gave us a vivid picture of her life, times and opinions. She also spoke of some of the discoveries she had made while researching the life of her distant ancestor—the sort of discoveries most researchers can only dream of. One phone call, for example, led to the discovery of a sketchbook, locked away in a cupboard for two and a half centuries. It was filled with pictures of the people, some of them very poor, whom Mrs Delaney met on a tour of Ireland in 1744-5. On another occasion, a chance comment at a talk on Mrs Delaney led to the opening of a box in a dusty attic and the rediscovery of a long-lost book of silhouettes.



Mrs Delaney is most famous for the series of flower studies, made from cut paper, which she embarked upon at the age of 72. A few examples of these were shown. One of a mimosa was made up of 450 leaves and 120 flower stamens, each represented by a separate piece of coloured paper. So accurate were her flower studies, that leading plantsmen sent her cuttings of newly-discovered species so that she could record them.

The talk ended with the intriguing suggestion that the reason Mrs Delaney is so little known today is that no hint of scandal or impropriety ever attached itself to her. This, perhaps, says more about current biographical and historical obsessions than it does about Mrs Delaney.

POSTSCRIPT It is a pity that the talk was so poorly attended, but the scheduling of three other history society meetings on the same night was almost certainly to blame. Given the large number of local history groups in the Bath area, perhaps a “clearing house” system, whereby groups could check to see what other events are planned, could be one way of avoiding this. A website would be the obvious answer, but, as this could be a bit ambitious, it need be no more than a desk diary kept, say, at the information desk in the central library, where people could enter details of meetings, etc. As well as optimising the number of people attending meetings, it would also mean that we would be less likely to face the difficult task of choosing between up to *Horse Chestnut Paper Collage* four events on the same evening.

Editor's Note: Numbers have been quite low at several recent meetings, and we should perhaps be trying to encourage new members. In order to give a taster of the sort of work

we do, I have been writing the occasional article for a new publication, The Bath Magazine. The magazine accepts articles on the history of Bath from other writers, and if you wish to contact them, they may well be interested. However, they only require about 750 words.. The February edition will also be carrying a small advertisement about the HBRC, so perhaps our numbers will increase.

January , BRLSI, Speaker, Jane Coates, Report, Dr. Michael Rowe

The BRLSI Collections Members were welcomed by Jane Coates who had not only provided a leaflet on the functions of the Institution and a brief chronological history, but had arranged a special display of treasures and a series of photographic records.

Jane introduced Rob Randall who was to conduct part of the tour and she described the voluntary work which she, Sally Denning and others had undertaken over a period of about 6 years.

In the period between the suspension of the Institutions activities in 1959 and its resurrection in 1993, the collections had been disrupted by distribution between various local authority sites, by sales and by loans to other authorities. The enormous efforts of Mr. Kite and of Maria Joyce in fighting for the core collection of archival material were noted.

This along with old incomplete lists and catalogues clearly continues to provide an enormous amount of work in re-ordering the remaining parts of the library, the archives and the physical collections.

Jane referred to the concept of archival as distinct from other material and fortunately was able to recount that many of the legal documents, minutes and proceedings records had survived. Many are unique documents and are now in the bank for security. They owe their survival to diligent Secretaries of the institution although, of course, this meant that the selection preserved has a strong legalistic flavour and little correspondence survives.

Annual reports and minutes are fairly complete and reflect the well-known ups and downs of the organisation.

The usefulness of work done by Trevor Fawcett, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Kite was acknowledged.

The display put together for the group included material on the founding fathers of the institution, notably Hastings Elwin, the Terrace Walk buildings and the Casali paintings. There was material of Masonic interest, items which related to the manor of Keynsham and meteorological records by Jenyns. There were pictures of the Duncan brothers who linked the institution with the Ashmolean museum, and of the 3rd Marquis of Lansdown who gave money to, and promoted the work of the Institution in the early days. The famous Darwin letters were illustrated. Members also noted the standing display on the "Adopt a Book Scheme". It is possible to contribute, according to one's means, to the renovation of volumes in the library and some members have already helped in this way. The subscriber to this scheme has their signature and details recorded on a slip stuck into the book if they so wish.

The tours of the various parts of the archive library and collections revealed mouth-watering glimpses of what has survived. Questions and conversation were continuous. The library still contains 7,000 of the original 20,000 volumes and much of Bath interest. There are old catalogues of the Jenyns and Moore collections and entry of updated lists on to databases is well underway to appropriate standard. Approximately 7,600 items are already listed, as are 582 items of the archives.

Boxes of unresearched callotypes, photographs of 19th-century Shanghai, unique drawings of now vanished murals in South America, local topography mirror printing and parliamentary records give just a taste of the diversity of material. Newspaper cuttings of the Jenyns field trips and the Jenyns herbarium including Bath plants were noted. There are seals and intaglio imprints, plaster casts, stuffed birds, butterflies, fossil and bones of all descriptions and in various stages of decay.

Conservation is a major issue and great efforts are being made to meet the requirements of the Southwest Museums authorities to allow registration as a museum in due course. The scope for interactive research with other Bath organisations and the opportunity for the extension of members' work were clear to see. This was one of those visits where the Chairman needed to step in and with graceful thanks tell everyone that it was high time to go home.

Footnote: There is a curious story to the stuffed bird collection, which Andrew Swift was able to narrate to our BRLSI guides. In 1916, during the darkest days of World War I, Bath City Council met to discuss whether this collection of rare birds should be sent to London. The decision was deferred. One councillor stated that he "did not think . . . that at a time like this it was opportune to study the destination of a few stuffed birds." It throws an interesting light on some of the unexpected preoccupations of that traumatic time.

BOOK REVIEWS

Of our five books on offer this issue, two deal with two rather neglected periods of Bath's history,, while two others take us back into Georgian Bath. Finally we have the latest Bath History.

1. Peter Davenport, *Medieval BATH Uncovered*. (Tempus Publishing Ltd. 2002) ISBN 0-7524-1965-X. Reviewed by Kirsten Elliott.

Most visitors coming to Bath must sometimes think that the city has only had two previous incarnations. Firstly there was Aquae Sulis, and then comes the Georgian period. With a bit of luck they may hear about the Civil War, and railway and canal buffs like to hear something about Victorian Bath, but the rest is wreathed in mists of forgetfulness and neglect. It is therefore a bold step to try to interest the public in medieval Bath; bold, and long overdue. Has Peter Davenport succeeded?

The answer must be yes, although he has not been helped by his publishers who have given the book a rather dreary, flimsy cover, seem incapable of dealing with the "d" of old pence, and, worst of all, printed Savile's map not only upside-down, but back to front. However, ignore these minor details and get to the meat of the matter. Spanning the period between the collapse of Aquae Sulis to the dissolution of the monastery, the text bowls along with great clarity and enthusiasm. It also provides an object lesson to those writers who feel that tackling a serious subject means humour must be avoided at all cost. Moreover Peter Davenport cares about the characters in his story, with the result that they become living people and not dry statistics. Thus he ponders about the reason why Henry Peytevin sold property at the west end of Stalls Churchyard. After putting forward several possibilities, he adds, "this does make us aware of the complexities and excitements that lie behind the dry legal documents that survive to us."

He is quite right, which makes it all the more frustrating when very occasionally he tentatively retreats into a mass of information without explaining it. This occurs when experts disagree about an interpretation of the facts or are unsure of their meaning. I think that there are two reasons for this. Firstly, he is aware that all too many history books are based on theories - when facts pop up to discredit the theory, the author does his or her best to discredit the facts instead. So he plays fair and gives us all the known facts. Secondly, under the present iniquitous system faced by Bath Archaeological Trust, they have to tender for site-work, even here in Bath, where they are surely the experts. Thus, I suspect, Peter Davenport does not want to put forward an idea which some other expert may later discredit, for fear it will endanger the standing of the BAT. I think this is a pity, for if some of the material is difficult to interpret for the experts, it is impossible for a layman. Provided he makes it clear that what he is giving is his own interpretation based on his considerable experience, and not a fact, I do not think there is a problem.

However, this happens rarely, and there is no doubt that this is a book that should be on the bookshelf of anyone who has serious claims to be an historian in Bath. Not only does it provide an insight into the medieval period, but it also helps to explain later developments. Finally I would applaud his habit of giving further reading at the end of every chapter, which usually includes his sources.

2. Jason Scott-Warren, *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* (Oxford U.P., 2001) ISBN 0-19-924445-6. Reviewed by Trevor Fawcett.

Queen Elizabeth's godson, courtier, wit, epigrammatic poet, translator, early publicist for the utilitarian water closet, and not least squire of Kelston manor, Harington (1560-1612) continues to attract scholarly interest. This latest book deals with his attempts to obtain place, favour and influence through judicious gifts of his various publications - notably his impressive translation of Ariosto's Italian epic *Orlando Furioso* (1591) and his *Tract on the Succession to the Crown* (1602), a defence of the Scottish James VI's claim to the English throne. For Bath readers a key section discusses the specially customised copy of Ariosto that Harington presented in 1600 jointly to his wife Mary, living at Kelston, and his mother-in-law, Jane Rogers of Cannington (Bridgwater) for whom he seems to have built a small house in Bath. Bound into the volume were 52 of Harington's MS. epigrams throwing a sometimes revealing light on his touchy family relationships and on life at Kelston itself (e.g. Harington angling locally for trout at the 'ford' - meaning Saltford?). When Jane Rogers died in 1602 a fierce dispute over her property blew up between Harington and his Cannington brother-in law, Edward Rogers, and resulted in Star Chamber law suits. In 1603 Harington suffered a 21-week spell in gaol not over this, but because he stood guarantor of a £4000 debt incurred by his uncle, Thomas Markham.

At Kelston he beautified his late Tudor manor house and garden adjoining the church. In the county he fulfilled his duties as a Somerset J.P. His connections with Bath, however, where he had an ally in Dr Sherwood, are still little known (except for his material aid in restoring the Abbey Church), though his Puritan son John (1589-1654) would later serve as Member for Bath in the Commonwealth Parliament. At the Restoration his grandson "Captain" John Harington (1627-1700) almost forfeited his Somerset estates for supporting Cromwell's cause, and was in any case obliged to live at Corston until his recalcitrant mother Dionysia, occupying the Kelston house, died in 1674. The subsequent Corston and Kelston branches of the family stemmed from the "Captain's" third and fourth marriages, respectively through his sons Benjamin and Henry. The latter sold off Kelston in 1759, and the old house was soon pulled down and a new Georgian mansion built commandingly above the Avon. It was one of Henry's grandsons (and son of the formidable Dr Henry Harington, Bath physician, musician and sometime Mayor) who in 1769 first published a miscellany of family papers under the title *Nugae Antiquae*. Several of the letters included, written by or to his forebear Sir John Harington in the early 1600s, have remained prime sources for the characters of Elizabeth and James I and their courts ever since. *Nugae Antiquae* is considered in Scott-Warren's book, but not Sir John's descendants mentioned above. For these the best genealogical source remains the extra-illustrated two volumes of F.J.Poynton's *Memoranda... relating to... Kelston* (1877-85) in Bath Central Library.

3. Trevor Fawcett *Bath Commercialis'd - Shops, Trades and Market at the 18th-century Spa* (Ruton 2002) ISBN 0-9526326-3-2 Reviewed by Kirsten Elliott.

This is the third in Trevor's series of books about Bath, the other two dealing with the entertainments and the corporation. In the next issue I hope to include an article by a modern Bath businessman, the photographer Neill Menneer, on how he feels that running an enterprise in modern Bath compares with life for his counterparts in the 18th century, having read this information-packed book. And there is plenty of information in

this slim volume. Trevor provides the background stories to the florid advertisements which appeared in so many of the Bath newspapers, in the days when there was no Advertising Standards Authority to hold imaginations in check. As a fellow trawler of the local journals, many of the names are familiar to me, but even so, I discovered plenty of extra, often intriguing, facts. I knew, for example, that ice-cream was a favourite dessert, but I did not know that in 1800 so much was being eaten that it affected butter prices. The better-off were asked to abstain while the food shortages continued.

Not only does Trevor deal with all types of businesses, he also takes a detailed look at shops, and finally adds a postscript about the Evill family. In the extent and variety of their enterprises they are a good example of how one family managed to get its fingers into several pies, although they are certainly not unique in doing so. It is not always appreciated how many upwardly mobile people there were in 18th-century Bath - of course, there were also the downwardly mobile, usually, though not always, through bankruptcy. The Evills are a microcosm of this phenomenon.

4. Edited Michael Rosenthal and Martin Myrone *Gainsborough* (Tate Publishing 2000)
ISBN 1-85437-397-8 Reviewed by Kirsten Elliott

This is the catalogue for the exhibition held recently at Tate Britain. From the last newsletter members will know I am an unashamed Gainsborough fan, and this excellently staged exhibition only increased my admiration. I suspect that many of you saw it but for who did not now face a transatlantic voyage as it has travelled on to Washington and before moving on to Boston. However the catalogue fortunately stands on its own as a record of Gainsborough's developing talent. Some of the last works, such as *Diana and Actaeon*, are very strange indeed; the figures have an extraordinary fluidity which calls to mind much later painters. Besides the paintings there are also the sketches: ladies of all types, including a distinctly come-hitherish lady seen in St. James's Park; outdoor scenes; animal studies, including the delightful series of drawings of a cat. Gainsborough himself seems to have been particularly pleased with this, as, unusually for a sketch, he signed it. There is plenty in the catalogue to please those looking for a Bath connection, not least the cover, which features that wonderful portrait of Elizabeth Linley. In it, Gainsborough captures an indefinable fleeting expression passing across her lovely face. Is it sorrow? Was the marriage with Sheridan already beginning to lose its charm - or is she about to break into a smile? If you cover the left half of her face she looks distinctly sad but cover the right half, and she is giving you a positively roguish glance. Was she really like that - or is it just a painter's trick? The excellent text not only includes an opinion about that, but gives an insight into the lives of his other sitters and his relationships with them.

5. Edited Brenda Buchanan *Bath History IX* (MillstreamBooks 2002) ISBN 0-948975-65-2

Reviewed by Kirsten Elliott

This volume was very much delayed but I hope that most of you will have now received your copy and perused the eight articles, which range from the Heraldry of Bath Abbey, by John Ede and Roland Symons, to modern times with Angus Buchanan's story of Bath University. There are two very contrasting diaries - one of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys and her visits to Bath ranging over half a century, and the other of Edward Snell, a journeyman engineer, who worked for the Stothert family in the 1840s. There are two items on building and architecture, the first on the gaol in Grove Street and the second on the architect John Pinch the Elder. Art is featured in the form of Sickert's life - and death - in Bath, as told by Philippa Bishop, and the last item is something of an oddity, a Victorian showman's account of Fonthill Abbey.

As this is such a wide-ranging set of subjects, I would like to invite members to submit a critique of any article which interests them, to be published over later issues. Perhaps the

authors might also like to let us hear something of the research behind their published work.

☛ If you do not have a copy, our secretary David Crellin, has asked me to point out that the HBRG still has some copies left at the discounted price of £6.99 instead of £8.99.

NEW MEMBERS

Dr & Mrs R Tan	Orleigh Mount, St Stephens Road	Bath BA1 5PN
Mr Stoneman-Merrett	57A Garden Flat Newbridge Road	Bath BA1 3HF

Notes & Queries.

1. **Mr Guynette.** No one supplied information about the missing Master of Ceremonies. If anyone should encounter this “lost” MC, I would still like to know about it.
2. **Dr. Wilkinson.** There was no response on this either. This fascinating man seems to have been something of a polymath where science is concerned, but he is generally recognised as a geologist, and a friend of William Smith. Smith is now very much flavour of the month, but Wilkinson is neglected. Was this the same Dr Wilkinson who was called in to comment on a poisoning at a coroner’s inquest in 1831? If so, he was living at Old Sydney Place. Unfortunately I do not have the time or the scientific knowledge to give him the attention I think he deserves, but if any member of a scientific bent is looking for a new project, can I commend Dr. Wilkinson?
3. **Richard Taunton.** OWEN WARD would like to know if anyone has come across Alderman Richard Taunton in the course of their studies. He founded Taunton’s School in Southampton, which Owen attended, but he died here in Bath in 1752. Why was he in Bath, where did he live, and where is he buried?
4. **Garden Temple, Devonshire Place.** I was approached by a Mr. John Toplis who lives at Devonshire Place, and is researching its history and immediate neighbourhood. With the help of Connie Smith he has uncovered some interesting details about previous owners, etc. One building is particularly puzzling. In what was once a garden and is now surrounded by residential property is what is known as the **ROUNDHOUSE**, a type of garden temple.

See illustration.



Mr Toplis had heard a story that it had been built as a Jewish temple and that unleavened bread had been baked in the “basement”. Judith Samuel was able to tell us that there was indeed a Jewish connection, but not until 1869, when a prominent member of the community, Abraham Abrahams leased 2 Devonshire Place, in the grounds of which it stood. But was it built for him or was it there already? The

technical feat of building an elliptical stone structure indicates it must have been quite an expensive project. Does anyone have any further information about it?

5. The Bath Timewalk. A friend of DAVID CRELLIN’S

PROPOSAL FOR A CREATIVE, HISTORICAL, EDUCATIONAL PROJECT THAT GIVES RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO BATH A SENSE OF THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY

The Bath Timewalk is a long line of stones, one for each year of at least the last two thousand years. Each stone bears a number – the year – and a short series of facts about what happened at that time.

- Some of the facts are epic: the fall of the Roman empire; the death of Jesus Christ, the enlightenment of Buddah, the start of the second world war.

- Others seem trivial by comparison, yet they set a social context that makes a link with all our lives: the first time a westerner tasted chocolate; the first mention in the history books that underwear had become common.
- Finally, there are milestones that mark the long history of this world heritage city in context: the opening of the first Roman spa; Jane Austen's first visit; Nelson's time as a resident.

Arranged in a line, the stones stretch around a kilometre, ie two thirds of a mile. It would take an average person fifteen to twenty minutes to stroll down them - but many people will choose to take much longer as they stop and read them - drawn into seeing their own life in the context of history.

What's the point?

Each of us is blessed with three-score years and ten, or so, upon this earth. Yet we live in a city whose very stones record a time-span far longer: the lifetime of perhaps twenty-five generations. Visitors to the city hear of Romans, royalty and Jane Austen. Nothing in the city today conveys the enormity of that experience and it's this gap that the timewalk aims to fill. It's a simple, direct and powerful way to give residents and visitors access to history.



This proposal is currently being discussed with BANES and if you would like to contribute to this concept and the text on the stones please call David on 01225 850020.