



NEWSLETTER 57

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GROUPNEWS

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EDITORIAL

A note from the retiring editor

When I took on the editorship of the Newsletter in 2005 I agreed to do it on a temporary basis until someone more permanent could be found. I am happy to say that Chris Noble has offered to succeed me, and will be confirmed in the appointment at the AGM in April. My thanks to all the contributors who have made the job so easy.

Philippa Bishop

MEETING REPORTS

20TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

21" June 2006

The dinner to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the HBRG was held at the Bathwick Boatman Restaurant on 21" June last year. We apologise for this rather belated acknowledgment of what was a most successful event enjoyed by 22 of our members and their partners. The enthusiasm shown by those present for what the group does, and what it stands for, assures its continuance for many more years to come.

BATH MUNICIPAL ALLOTMENTS

Wednesday 18th October 2006

Speaker: Malcolm Hitchcock

Report by Mary Ede

Though there were a number of privately run allotments in Bath before 1908 it was only after the Act of that year (placing a duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments to meet the demand) that the City Council began to purchase land for that purpose. A Small Holdings and Allotments Committee was formed by the Council and bought the first site in 1908. This was in Larkhall, some way from the houses up the hill: an area of 4.35 acres, and still in current use. A larger area at Coronation Avenue (now called Monksdale) was bought in 1913; but it was the wartime shortage of food after the U-boat campaign of 1916 that led to the provision of another four sites on both sides of the city. By 1918 the Council was administering 500 plots.

After the War pressure by the Government to plough up public land led to the allotments on Lower Common in 1921. Where the Council could not purchase land, it rented, as in a site in Prior Park Road (now the garden centre). Though the Committee's brief was also to set up small holdings, it never succeeded in doing so: Lyncombe Hill Farm, for instance, purchased in the late 1930s, instead was used for the City of Bath Boys' School. Acts of 1922, 1925 and 1950 refined previous legislation, including safeguards against closure and the protection of individual plot holders.

During the Second World War the number of allotment sites increased dramatically, as parks were extensively ploughed up. Malcolm Hitchcock illustrated this by his display of very interesting aerial photographs of 1946-7 alongside large-scale maps on which he had identified all the sites. At the end of the War there were 2200 plots, the usual standard size being 10 perches or 30.25 square yards; and these continued to increase to a peak of 2500 in the early 1950s, with a total acreage of about 150. Thereafter numbers decreased, thanks to changing lifestyles, commercial pressures, the need to provide municipal houses. Parks were reinstated, rented sites went first, then others were released during the 1960s and 70s. In the last few years there has been a revival in interest: reasons raised in discussion included the organic movement and the numbers of women taking allotments. Today there are some 950 plots (not all full size) on 19 sites, and a long waiting list. Interestingly, the rent has remained roughly equivalent to a labourer's wage of 1908.

The group is indebted to Malcolm Hitchcock for his informative talk; and members may like to know that a full account is being published in 'Guidelines', the newsletter of the Mayor's Honorary Guides.

DISCUSSION OF THE **HBRG** WEBSITE

Tuesday 14th November 2000

Speaker and Reporter: David Crellin

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss how the History of Bath Research Group should move towards providing a website presence and what the ground rules should be for placing material on the site and how members should interact with it.

The meeting began with an overview of the way in which the web is changing the way in which historical research is being carried out and how it may develop in the future. I outlined the current state of affairs regarding the prototype website that was built in 2006 which contains a number of items from the group archives.

The key points for discussion, identified before the meeting were:

- 1 What content do we want on the website?
 - a. Current Programme
 - b. Old Programmes
 - c. Newsletters
 - d. Articles by members
 - e. Membership application form
 - f. A Wild
 - g. Links to other sites
- 2 Copyright and how we deal with it
 - a. Do we need some form of copyright agreement from members?
 - b. Who owns what at the moment?
 - c. What are members views on copyright?
- 3 What access do we want for the website?
 - a. Free to all
 - b. Members area
 - c. Charged for.
- 4 Membership policy with the potential for more virtual members
 - a. Related to access but what and how do we charge?

- b. Are there any limits on membership and if so what?
- 5 Other issues not listed above

I outlined some of the key points about web development which include:

- 1 The need to have interested enthusiasts who edit the Bath content for Wikipedia etc.
- 2 A number of regular contributors. Website popularity is driven by how often a site is updated and so to get a successful site new content need to be included all the time.
- 3 Plenty of material to build the site from.

One of the principal reasons for introducing the discussion *was* to address the concerns that had been expressed by Trevor Fawcett concerning whether the old Newsletters should be made available on the website. In addition we also need to be careful to ensure that copyright issues are dealt with on a website in an appropriate manner.

Overall the discussion was not very successful as it rather got bogged down in a debating whether the newsletters should be made available on the website. In addition it was clear that there was a great deal of concern about the way in which Wikis work with the view being expressed that much information in Wikipedia was incorrect on the subject of Bath. The key point here is that if it is wrong it is up to us to fix it. Anyone of us is free to edit the article on Bath, create new articles on Bath history etc.

Following the meeting I feel that the group does not yet have a core of web enthusiasts who will be able to form the nucleus of a team able to build useful content on Bath History for the site. Without this I feel that all we are likely to have will be a site which is rarely updated and so has little 'web presence'.

VISIT TO THE MASONIC HALL

Wednesday 17th January 2007

Report by Trevor Fawcett

After our arrival at the Masonic Hall in Old Orchard Street we received a warm welcome and were escorted round the whole building by three senior lodge members. The basic structure dates from 1750 when the first provincial Theatre Royal opened on the site. Nowadays the only physical vestiges of its thespian origin appear to be a few supports for scenery (or stage boxes?) The theatre having moved out in 1805, the interior was much transformed in order to become the Roman Catholic chapel of 1809. The freemasons, who had met for most of their Bath existence from the 1720s at various inns, obtained their own purpose-built hall in York Street in 1817. Many years later, after one of their leading members, Charles Geary, had foreclosed on the mortgage and removed all the furniture, the freemasons in the 1860s found a new home in Orchard Street once the Roman Catholics had removed to StJohn's, South Parade. Altered again, the building now assumed its present form.

Our tour, starting in the vestibule lined with the honours boards of different lodges, continued into the impressive main space, the former auditorium and now the temple. Everywhere there was Masonic symbolism, from the 'G' (for 'God') on the ceiling and the King Solomon reredos behind the Master's chair to the Knights Templars' heraldry and the two net-shrouded globes. At present around seven Masonic lodges, two groups of Knights Templars, and other associated bodies hold their meetings here. Downstairs, behind the temple, we visited a small chapel, and on the other side of the building saw the recently excavated vaults. Here a short corridor contains memorial stones of Roman Catholics once interred, including that of a former emigre the marquis de Sommery, who died in 1847.

We then climbed several flights to the museum, where the main display shows Masonic 'jewellery', mostly gold, silver and plated insignia. Among other interesting items were Victorian portrait photographs and the piece de resistance: an early example of gas-lighting equipment from its original installation in the temple in 1819. This prompted one of our guides to enlarge on William Murdock, inventor of gas lighting, and to mention the visible remains of a gas retort in a Corsham car park. We ended a fascinating tour in the refreshment room. Not all the historical details we had been offered were quite accurate, since a proper history of Bath freemasonry remains to be written. For the eighteenth century, though, a summary account can be found in *Bath Administer'*.

THE ADMIRALTY IN BATH

Wednesday 14th February

Speaker: Don Percy

Report by Philippa Bishop

The speaker began by tracing the development of the Admiralty from the time of Henry VI11 up to the 1930s. He

described the relationship between the sea-going navy and its largely civilian administration, with the role of the various departments. During the thirties it became clear that Germany was making massive increases in the size of her navy. Britain's response was to try and keep pace by building more ships, while at the same time making plans for the evacuation of the Admiralty from London in the event of war. This meant that in September 1939 these plans could immediately be put into effect. The main departments assigned to Bath included the following: Naval Construction; Naval Ordnance; Naval Stores; Navy Accounts and Contracts; Dockyard; Engineering; Electrical Engineering; Armaments Supply. There were also the branches entitled Priority and Production; Technical Reproduction; Common Services; and Civil Establishments. Because of the good forward planning the staff were able to begin work at once in the buildings which had been commandeered for their use as offices: hotels (such as the Empire), schools (such as Kingswood and the Royal), even the Holburne Museum. It was clearly an enormous operation, carried out with speed and efficiency. The billeting officers had to arrange living accommodation for the staff, mostly in private houses where the newcomers were hospitably received even if conditions might be cramped and spartan.

In addition to the commandeered buildings there were the purpose-built, single-storey offices known as 'hutments', such as Foxhill and Ensleigh, which have lasted long after their supposed span of life. Our speaker, who came to Bath in 1949 as a young naval draughtsman from the Chatham dockyard, gave a graphic account of what it was like to work at Foxhill then, and described how changes came about over the years. In due course proper desks and drawing boards were substituted for the original bare trestle tables, and essential security installed for important (and often secret) documents. The hours remained long, and the workload intense; only the typists enjoyed an official tea-break.

At this point in his talk, owing to pressure of time, Don Percy was forced to curtail some of his material. He concluded with a brief description of the complex procedure for warship procurement. We are most grateful to him for giving us such a wealth of fascinating information, enlivened with his personal reminiscences. He has kindly agreed to leave a copy of his text with our Chairman, Michael Rowe, for anyone who would like to consult it for further details.

BOOK REVIEWS

JOHN RHODE, *GOLF: A LITTLE HISTORY* (published privately, 2000, available at £1 from the Secretary's Office, Bath Golf Club)

Owen Ward

This short account of the local golfing scene, has been written by John Rhode, a long-standing member of Bath Golf Club, drawing most of his material from the minutes of meetings which date back to the foundation of the Club on Hampton Down in 1860. His touch throughout is sufficiently light to render his narrative readable, and very largely comprehensible, even by a non-golfer. There are passing references to changes in the hardware of the game, such as the heavier balls calling for heavier clubs, as well as to momentous decisions such as the purchase of a mule to replace the horse which had been hired from time to time to pull the mower and the roller.

An 'impression of the exclusivity of the membership' in 1903 can be gleaned from a reproduction of the subscription list for that year, one of many documents included (and the only one calling for a magnifying glass). A Ladies' Club was formed in 1883, and an Artisans Group (for those going out to work from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) in 1936.

JOHN WROUGHTON, *TUDOR BATH: LIFE AND STRIFE IN THE 'LITTLE CITY 1485-1603* (Bath, The Lansdown Press, 2006), £14. 99

Trevor Fawcett

The claim in the preface that Bath's Tudor history has hitherto been 'shrouded...by impenetrable mist' may be exaggerated, but this attractive volume certainly fills a publishing void between Peter Davenport's *Medieval Bath Uncovered* and John Wroughton's own *Stuart Bath* to which this new work is a companion in format and style. One reason for the comparative neglect of the city's Tudor past may lie in the perceived dearth of evidence, yet many sources do exist, both national and local, and John Wroughton has been assiduous in ferreting them out. He has sufficiently organised his narrative into six chapters based on key dates, with additional information (mainly longer quotations from a variety of sources) supplied in separate panels within the text. The pictorial content is an important feature, and imaginative use has been made throughout of contemporary engravings, modern line drawings, photographs, and artists' reconstructions to eke out the limited amount of Tudor imagery from Bath itself.

Much of the 'strife' referred to in the subtitle arose from national events impinging on the local scene. The dissolution of Bath Priory in 1539, peaceably though it was achieved, had a momentous impact on the small walled city, freeing urban space for later development, saddling the citizens (in due course) with a large ruinous church, and bolstering the power of the Corporation - an oligarchic body that sequestered much of the new grammar school's endowment and eventually, just as deviously, grabbed land to extend the municipal boundaries. Equally momentous was the imposition of the Protestant religion under Edward VI and Elizabeth I (with a brief Roman Catholic interlude wider Mary) when the old rituals and popular festivals were transformed and the churches stripped of their Papist imagery - graphically revealed, for example, by the St Michael's churchwardens' accounts. The Queen's famous visit in August 1574 was chiefly remarkable perhaps for the boost it gave to the spa and to work on the Abbey Church. The threat of Spanish invasion and Catholic plots, especially in the 1580s, affected Bathonians far more, as an excellent description here of trained bands, weapons, costly musters, and general Catholic repression goes to show.

Next to die more striking episodes a more general picture of sixteenth-century life emerges - including interesting pages on building activity, the worsening problem of poverty and vagrancy, public health, city governance and local justice, the cycle of feasts and merrymaking, and the decay of the cloth trade. Proper attention is paid to the management of the city's greatest asset, the hot springs and baths; but the rather sudden modishness of the spa, while mentioned, is not fully accounted for. There is no reference here to Phyllis Hembry's argument (in *The English Spa, 1560-181.3*) that promotion of the spas at Bath and also Buxton was an act of deliberate government policy under the respective patronage of the earls of Pembroke and Shrewsbury, and that the two spa treatises written by William Turner (1568) and William Jones (1572) were effectively official propoganda. As for the influence of more local grandees, it is surprising to find so little said about Sir John Harington of Kelston, Queen Elizabeth's godson.

Full of detail though Tudor Bath is about the city and some of its inhabitants, the regional setting is largely disregarded. Some comparison with other Somerset towns such as the richer (on taxation evidence) and more populous Taunton and Wells would have been helpful, as would a paragraph or two on relations with the much bigger Bristol. Trade with Bristol was after all important enough by 1619 for Bath to be granted theoretical permission to make the Avon navigable for vessels transporting Bristol merchandise. Almost every book reviewer can produce a wish list, however, whatever die author's efforts. It is more useful to signal John Wroughton's actual achievement. We now have a solid, well-researched and often vivid account of our Tudor city. No longer can we plead ignorance about a forgotten century.

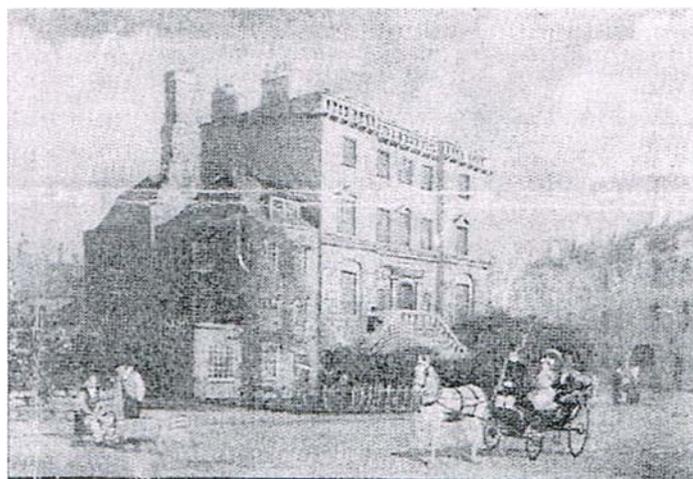
NOTES AND QUERIES

THE NEW GAOL AT BATHWICK: A POSTSCRIPT TO BATH HISTORY (VOL. IX, 2000)

Chris Noble

When I contributed a history of this building to Volume IX of *Bath History* it was generally accepted that the original main entrance to the Gaol was through what is now the central window on the first floor (1). John Howard had reported: 'The ascent to this prison... is by a fine flight of steps' (2). Though probably not the entrance or exit for prisoners, it would have been the entrance for visitors.

But exactly how this was achieved from Grove Street, and the detail of that part of this attractive building, remained unclear, though a plan dated 1814 showed a short set of steps rising to a 'front court'. An earlier print in the Chapman Collection (1808) reproduced in my article does not help. It shows an entrance as



II OLD PRISON: the work by Wm Clement Padfield described above, though the lo

However, early in 2005 I saw, at a Bathwick Local History Society exhibition, a press cutting from the Bath Chronicle which reported a then forthcoming sale on 28th February 1995, of two 'Naive Paintings' at Aldridges. The extract from the Chronicle, dated 27th February 1995, described 'a mid-19th century view of the Bath City Prison in Bathwick Mead near to Grove Street, by Wm. Clement Padfield'. A picture captioned as the 'Old Prison' by William Clement Padfield accompanied the report. I have not been able to trace the artist nor the current

whereabouts of the picture. Is it with a dealer? A private collector? The original negative of the press photo which would have provided a better image is also elusive. The best I can offer is a copy of the image in the Bath Chronicle, and even that is a photocopy copied.

The two images, Padfield's and Chapman's, are so similar that it seems that one was derived from the other, though Padfield's picture includes a picturesque foreground with carriage, gentlefolk, wheelbarrow and rustic figures. But what struck me as particularly interesting was to see the clearly portrayed image of what I would like to believe must have been the original main entrance with a rather imposing double set of steps leading up to it. Or was this artistic licence? Does anyone know who William Clement Padfield was, or where his picture is now? I should be most grateful for any further information.

(1)Walter Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bath* (Faber and Faber, 1948), p 99.

(2)John Howard, *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (Warrington, 4th ed.), p 360.