



NEWSLETTER 11

JANUARY 1990

GROUP NEWS

MEETINGS HELD OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1989

On 5 October **Dr. Tony Walter** began his well-illustrated talk on "back-to-front" Georgian houses by showing that, while Classical, 18th-century Bath terrace design resulted in harmonious facades at the front, it made for awkwardness behind, with stair half-landings cutting across window openings. From about 1800 different sorts of plan were tried out in the new crescents and terraces of Widcombe, Lyncombe, Bathwick, Sion Hill and elsewhere. In some, the main rooms were now located at the back, facing the best views (e.g. Widcombe Crescent); in others the principal facade itself moved to the back (e.g. Bloomfield Crescent); and sometimes front and rear elevations were given similar weight (as in Darlington Place). There was a strong emphasis on private gardens and romantic seclusion, seen most notably at Woodland Place, and even the houses of prosperous tradesmen began to be set back from the road with cottage gardens in front. At isolated Macaulay Buildings the traditional terrace seems to be pulling apart, foreshadowing the next stage, the semi-detached house - which allowed the staircase to be side-lit but destroyed the Classical facade since behind the centre stood the party wall. Bay windows and Gothic informality offered possible solutions, otherwise the semi-detached gave way to the detached villa. Tony Walter's intriguing thesis, with all its sociological and economic overtones, prompted his question: how far was Bath a pioneer in the evolution of suburban domestic architecture?

The Group met on 1 November for the first time at the historic site of Abbey Church House, alias Hetling House, for 80 years the HQ of the Bath and West Society. Our speaker, **Dr. David Brooke**, emphasised the two major sources he had used in his work on the navvies at the time of the construction of the GWR. Census returns, printed only in summary form for 1801 - 31, become increasingly more informative from 1841 to 1871 and provide essential data for social, economic, demographic and genealogical research. Also revealing are criminal court records. Petty Sessions minute books have rarely survived (but Chippenham, for example, has some, covering offences punishable by fines). More important - and often neglected - are records of Country Quarter Sessions (those at Taunton still consulted in their original rolls); these deal with crimes against property, conditions in workhouses and prisons, maintenance of roads and bridges, licensing, etc. Cases before the Western Circuit Assizes (for murder, burglary, arson, etc.) are best traced through the local press since the original documents have been over-thoroughly weeded at the PRO. Using such evidence, Dr. Brooke argued that the navy has been much maligned. On the GWR many navvies were not itinerant but recruited locally (probably farm labourers). If they were often drunk and disorderly, so were other residents of Lacock, Box, Chippenham, etc., who sometimes attacked the navvies or stole railway materials. Accompanied by wives and children, the navvies lodged in local farms, houses and taverns, or lived in cabins by the railway. Their spiritual needs were met by railway missionaries and Methodist chapels, and at the Anglican hostel at Batheaston. At harvest time they deserted the railways to work in the fields; and provisioning them (and their horses) must have had a significant impact on the local economy.

At the summer assizes of 1642 both the Royalist and Parliamentary parties were touting for support in the streets of Bath. However, as John Wroughton explained in his illuminating talk on 6 December, the Bath area was predominantly for Parliament, and remained so throughout the Civil War. Moreover, both the city and country elite were deeply imbued with Puritanism. This is apparent from the pressure exerted c. 1620 onwards against drunkenness, sexual licence, Sabbath-breaking, popular pastimes, and unseemly behaviour. The approved ethic, which stressed family discipline, hard work, and responsible citizenship, was undermined, though, by the rising numbers of hungry and disorderly poor, for which the remedy was a house of correction set up in Bridewell Lane c. 1632. One small but formidable faction, headed by Henry Chapman, stood out against Puritanism and the erosion of traditional culture; this group had Royalist sympathies. Much of John Wroughton's account dealt with the struggle of the group to dominate the Corporation through acts of defiance like public reading of the Prayerbook, symbolic bull-baitings, and outrageous electioneering tactics that even involved the arrest of Council members to stop them voting. In the end, thanks to the Corporation Act of 1662 which ousted many of the Parliamentarian-Puritan members from the Corporation, Henry Chapman and his followers achieved power in Bath after R11. It was to be their vigorous promotion of the city that paved the way for Bath's development into a major spa resort.

N E W M E M B E R S

Mr. David Humphrey, 35 Park Royal, Montpelier Road, BRIGHTON. BN1 3BL

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Note also the following change of address:-

Mr. Ian Crow, Top Flat, 12 Russell Street, BATH. BA1 2QF

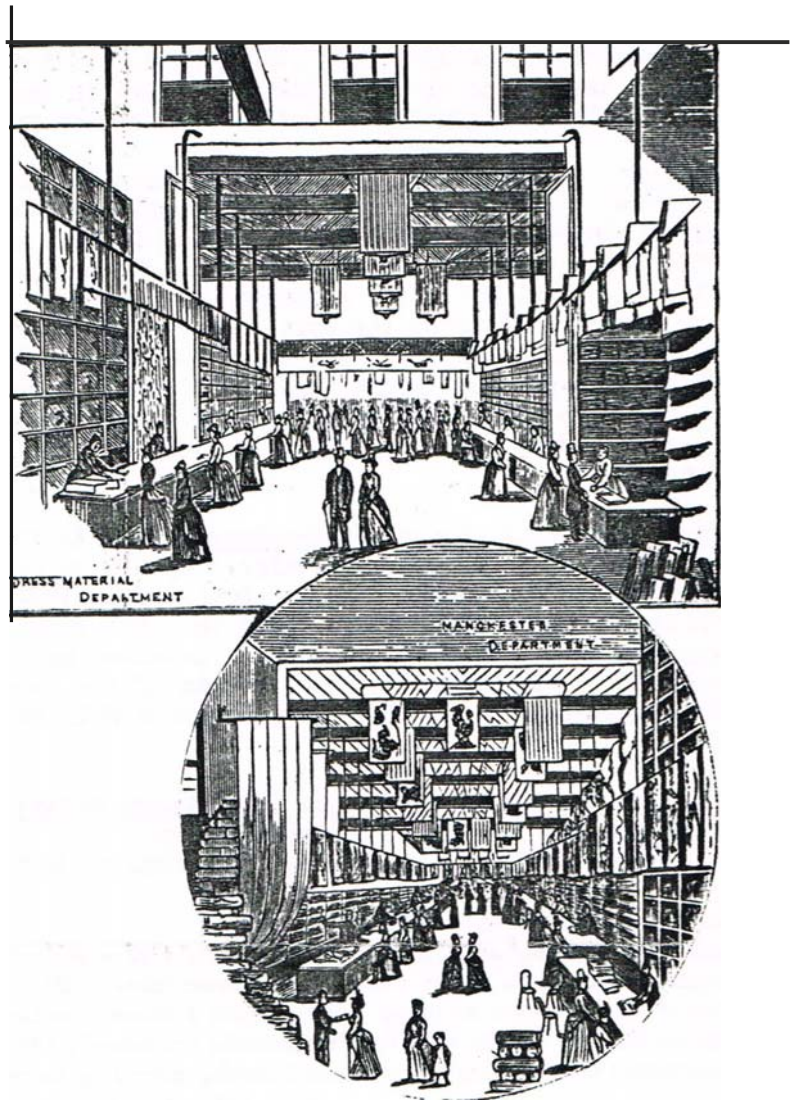
SCHOOL HISTORY PRIZE

In October the working party sent out a brief questionnaire to all fifteen Bath schools and colleges offering GCSE courses to sound out their views on submitting pupils' work for an annual prize. From the ten questionnaires that came back completed it was clear that only a few schools now offer GCSE courses which include a local history component. In several schools local history projects are carried out at a lower level, in years 1 - 3 (age groups 11 - 13), a practice that the National Curriculum may well encourage. The working party nevertheless felt doubtful about offering a prize at this level, particularly when it would still be a minority of schools that might be expected to participate. An alternative suggestion for sponsoring an occasional prize for sixth-formers, older students and adults, was also considered, but turned down partly for practical reasons. The School History Prize proposal has therefore been dropped, though our effort to set up this small competition is not seen as wasted. Useful contacts have been made with schools and several teachers showed enthusiasm for the idea.

BATH HISTORY, volume 3

The next volume of Bath's regular publication on local history is due in May 1990, and as it happens all eight contributors are members of the HBRG. Articles by Angus Buchanan, Marta Inskip, Trevor Fawcett, Tim Mowl, Kenneth James, Steve Poole, Mary Rde and Lutz Haber deal with a broad mix of topics: Bath's bridges, the King's Bath properties in the 17th century, 18th-century luxury shops, later Georgian proposals (by Repton and others) to develop the Ham, Rauzzini's musical perfectionism, Radical and Loyalist tendencies around 1800, Bath's involvement with the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Emperor Haile Selassie's exile in the city. The retailing price in the bookshops will be £6.95 a copy. However, the HBRG will be obtaining a stock at a concessionary rate and can therefore supply members for a limited period at the reduced price of £5.50 per copy. If therefore you wish to take advantage of this offer, please send a brief note to the HBRG Secretary stating your requirements. Payment can be made at the time of delivery in May. N.B. Copies of Bath History, vols. 1 & 2 can also be supplied to members at £4.95 each or £9.00 for the two. (Postage and packing extra when this is necessary.)

Views of the Dress Materials and Manchester departments at EVANS and OWENS store, Bartlett Street, from The Pictorial World 13 September 1888. Some of the shop assistants lived in-house.



NOTES ON BATH'S EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COFFEE-HOUSES

"Next, stroll to Coffee-House, - peruse,
With Air of Negligence, the News"

New Bath Guide (1764)

Turk's Head/Sheyler's/Morgan's/Grove Coffee-House. Stood on west of Orange Grove at south corner of entrance to Wade's Passage. In existence by 1690 or earlier. Run by Robert Sheyler and family (to c. 1731), Charles Morgan (father and son of the name ?, c. 1731-71), George Frappell (1771-1796), and John Thomas (1797-). Enjoyed a virtual monopoly until 1750. According to John Wood his plans to extend the Pump Room were thwarted in 1733 by the Mayor, Richard Morgan, anxious not to spoil the trade at his son's coffee-house. By the 1740s was said to have 300 - 400 subscribers in a full season. Mentioned in various contemporary accounts - e.g. Dudley Ryder (1716), Viscount Percival (1730, who describes several debates there with the Dean of Exeter, Speaker of the House of Commons, etc.), John Wood (1765 ed., p.437, giving breakfast prices), and Edmund Rack's MS. Journal (1779-80).

Parade Coffee-House. Opened October 1750 in the building now occupied by the Huntsman pub but until then the shop of J. & P. Ferry, silk merchants. Thereafter run by Richard Stephens (1755 - 67), Robert Boulter (1767 - 69), William Mackclary (1769 - 72), Peter Temple (1773? - 75), Meshach Pritchard (1776 - 1800, also for a time proprietor of Spring Gardens), John Bastin (1800-). Guide-books sometimes

refer to the fine view from its windows. Another attraction was a billiard table, with a servant to act as "marker". Here in May/June 1772, R.B. Sheridan penned a long letter justifying his action with regard to his rival, Captain Mathews.

Ladies' Coffee-House. An unusual institution. Perhaps began as a "toy-shop", offering female customers refreshments and newspapers. In 1740 the blue stocking Elizabeth Montague complains of having to hear about everyone's ailments there. By 1755 seems to have stood on east side of courtyard in front of Pump Room, managed by Elizabeth Taylor (of the adjoining jeweller's) and Clementine Foord. In the 1760s and 1770s it stood on the west side, next-but-one to the Pump Room. Richard & Ann Immins took it in 1772 but it was let again in 1773. Lydia Melford in Humphry Clinker says that young women were banned because "the conversation turns upon politics, scandal, philosophy, and other subjects above our capacity". A visitor records having her breakfast at the coffee room in May 1774, but did it survive much longer?

Upper Assembly Rooms Coffee-House. As first built the Rooms contained a "commodious" coffee-room upstairs, opened in October 1771 with the usual supply of newspapers for subscribers. But in June 1772 the Managing Committee decided to build a coffee-house annexe onto the west front, to right of main entrance. This appears on prints of the Rooms, balanced by later billiard room to left of main entrance. It was run by the tenants of the Rooms, i.e. Robert Hayward (1771-78), Ann Hayward (1778-82?), Henry Derham & William Stroud (1782?-96), William Stroud (1796-).

Other Coffee Rooms and Houses (with known dates)

Christopher Inn, Market Place (coffee room, 1763)

York House Hotel, George Street (coffee room, 1769, run by Robert St. John Lucas in partnership from 1770 and alone from 1772)

Bond Street Coffee-House (1772)

Oath Coffee-House, Stall Street (Samuel Smith, 1772 - 79)

Angel Inn, Westgate Street (coffee room, James Cole, 1782)

Argyle House, Argyle Buildings (coffee house & tavern, various proprietors, 1790 - 97)

Spring Gardens (coffee room for "respectable tradesmen", 1795)

Churchyard Coffee-House (also called Georgde, opened by George Frappell as a branch of the Grove Coffee-House just before his death in July 1796; continued probably by a son).

St. James's Coffee-House, St. James's Square (1796 -)

Sydney Gardens (coffee room by 1798)

City Coffee-House, Market Place (Thomas Osman, 1799 - 1800)

Many coffee-house proprietors were licensed victuallers who served wines and spirits as well as coffee, etc. Soups, savoury jellies, whipped syllabubs, and other refreshments were also available.

For a comparison with Bristol coffee-houses (beginning with the Elephant, 1677) see MS. 22709 at Bristol Reference Library.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Peter Horsey, The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660 - 1770 (Clarendon P., 1989). A major contribution, with proper attention paid to Bath, by a member of the HBRG who gave us a paper in March on "The Image of Georgian Bath".

A.J. Scrase, Wells: a Study of Town Origins and Early Development (Bristol Poly-technic Department of Town and Country Planning, 1989). Another useful publication by a former speaker to the Group (in February, 1988).

THE NEWSLETTER IS COMPILED BY THE SECRETARY AND TYPED BY JUDITH SAMUEL.