



G R O U P N E W S

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Apologies were received from Monica Baly, Jennifer Beazley, Stephen Bird, Doreen Collyer, Mac Hopkins-Clarke, Marta Inskip, Colin Johnston, David McLaughlin and Mary Wills. About 35 members attended. Minutes of the previous AGM were accepted.
2. Reporting on another successful year the Chairman nevertheless noted that a number of members never attended any meetings, which rather defeated the purpose of belonging to what is intended to be a participatory group. Otherwise attendances at meetings were very commendable. During the year the committee had taken stock of its own composition and decided to propose the addition of a Vice-Chairman to the officers. It has also suggested setting up a refreshment rota for meetings, and reconsidered the conditions for membership of the Group. It has responded to a proposal on establishing a steering committee of interim trustees for the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, and corresponded on arrangements at the new Bath Central Library. The Sources Working Party had deposited copies of further lists at the Central Library, Bath Record Office, and No. 4 Circus, but not at the Huntingdon Centre where a request for a set had been based on a misunderstanding. The latest list, compiled by Mary Wills, covered holdings in the Central Library and would be particularly useful. Ron Fullagar added that a listing of companies' records in the Bristol region has just been published (see page 5).
3. The Treasurer presented the annual accounts in a new and lucid manner, showing moneys related to the Sources project separately, and also funds invested in a high-interest account. At the date of the audit the Group's account stood at £843.33 as compared with £688.22 a year earlier. The advance purchase of 25 copies of Bath History 3 had yielded a profit. There was general agreement by the meeting that the Group should not pay unnecessarily high rates for the hire of rooms; Godfrey Laurence pointed out that as funds increase it may be possible to revive the idea of republishing a series of early Bath maps. Other members raised the possibilities of achieving charitable status, of paying subscriptions by bankers' orders, and of life subscriptions: all these will be discussed by the committee, as will Leslie Holt's suggestion of appointing a membership secretary. In order to encourage prompt payment of subscriptions, the Treasurer proposed that fees for those renewing before 1 July 1991 should continue at £4.00 single/£6.50 joint, but that late renewers should be charged £4.50/£7.00 respectively. This was agreed by members unopposed.

4. The meeting accepted a constitutional amendment, proposed by the committee, seconded by Owen Ward, that the wording be altered to state: "A Committee of eight members is responsible . . . It consists of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and four ordinary members." The word "**Chairman**" would be retained. A revised copy of the constitution will be circulated in due course.
5. The following Committee for 1991-92 was then approved en bloc:

Chairman - John Ede,	Vice-Chairman - Colin Johnston,
Secretary - Trevor Fawcett,	Treasurer - Judith Samuel,
Committee members - Brenda Buchanan, Mike Chapman, Lutz Haber and Jean Manco.	

The Treasurer announced her intention of standing down in April 1992. Lutz Haber, seconded by Godfrey Laurence, then moved a vote of thanks to Brenda Buchanan for her efforts on behalf of the Group during her period of chairmanship.
6. The Secretary asked for further support for Bath History through a commitment to purchase extra copies of Volume 4, in advance of publication in May 1992, on what it is hoped will be the same terms as for Volume 3. After discussion the meeting agreed to take 50 copies in all. On Elizabeth Holland's suggestion it was also agreed that the Group's name should if possible be mentioned in the publication as a supporter.
7. The Secretary reported on an exchange of letters with Ms. Pauline Dyer, until recently Avon Community Leisure Officer, about the new Bath Central Library. The AGM requested the committee to maintain its pressure for an improved service to local history, and in particular for the appointment of a local history librarian.

MEETINGS HELD JANUARY - APRIL 1991

Dr. Monica Baly's subject on 2 January was the provision made for the "deserving" sick poor in late-Georgian Bath. City residents were barred from the General Hospital until 1835 on the grounds that they had access to hot-water bathing anyway - but various other charitable organisations offered Bathonians medical treatment. In 1788 James Norman, a failed Bristol surgeon, set up a casualty hospital in Kingamead Street. Four years later the Bath City Infirmary opened on Lower Borough Walls; in the charge of a matron and perhaps limited to ten beds, it also accepted out-patients and treated many accident cases. These two institutions merged in 1826 to form the Bath United Hospital located in Beau Street. The Walcot Street Penitentiary and Lock Hospital "for fallen women" had a melancholy reputation and a high death rate. More progressive in outlook the Monmouth Street Society helped suitable applicants with meals, home visits, maternity support, and preventive vaccination. Parish paupers (c. 5% of parishioners, and predominantly women and children) might qualify for miscellaneous outdoor relief such as the services of apothecary-surgeons and nurse-midwives, medicine from dispensaries, or money towards burial expenses. Bath's poor houses - places of last resort for feeble, badly handicapped and bedridden parishioners - amalgamated in 1785 into a single institution watched over by a committee which investigated complaints and, when necessary, sacked unsatisfactory masters and surgeons. Though health care of the poor depended on philanthropy and the rates, it was generally flexible, pragmatic and humane. Regrettably the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) ushered in the harsher regime of workhouses, which were instituted in Bath under the chairmanship of the Rev. Thomas Spencer. The measure was locally controversial, resulting in a burst of pamphleteering and even threatened High Court action over the refusal of outdoor relief to an 80-year-old woman. During her talk Monica Baly drew attention to the vivid testimony of the poor in coroners' records, where common causes of sudden death show up as industrial and street accidents, often drink-related, and suicide. In the ensuing discussion the Pauper Charity, the Humane Society (for reviving people apparently drowned) and various dispensaries and friendly societies were mentioned, while Dr. Michael Rowe circulated three copper tokens issued by such bodies.

Private versus public provision was also at the heart of John Kite's revelatory account (on 6 February) of the grudging development of a municipal library service in Bath. Legislation of 1850 and 1855 empowered local authorities to establish free libraries on the rates, and many towns gradually responded. In Bath it was left to private initiative. A short-lived effort by the Bath Literary Club in 1852 was followed in the mid-1860s by another abortive project, the People's Hall, born out of the Rev. James Fleming's series of "penny readings". While enthusiasts like Isaac Pitman and J.W. Morris continued to promote the public library idea, noisy meetings of ratepayers in 1869 and 1872 rejected it, as did a meeting and postal ballot in 1877 - despite the success of a pilot library financed by C.W. McKillop. This institution, by now called the "Bath Public Library", collapsed in 1880 when ratepayers were again opposed after a massive propaganda campaign on both sides. Nevertheless, several donations to the city (e.g. the Chapman collection) enabled a modest reference library to open in the Guildhall's north extension. The 1897 Jubilee produced an art gallery but no better library, and in 1906 local ratepayers even spurned a grant from the Carnegie fund. Cedric Chivers' offer of a children's library was also turned down. Over the next 20 years more donations and a small budget increased the reference collections, now in Bridge Street, and in 1924 a lending library was at last set up in the Art Gallery's former printroom. Other library locations were considered later, even the Assembly Rooms, but the war halted an ambitious scheme for using the market site. Key events since then have been the damaging 1960 flood, the reference library's move to Queen Square in 1964, the transfer of authority to Avon C. C. in 1974, and in 1990 the amalgamation of lending and reference functions in the brand-new Podium building - where this most informative and entertaining talk was appropriately given. A display of photographs and campaign literature helped to recall a period when Bath was scandalously at the bottom of the national league in public library provision.

On 7 April Joan Day put her extensive knowledge of the brass industry at our service when she spoke on its development in the Avon valley. For centuries England had imported its brass from the Continent, mostly in the form of made-up wares - the Gothic candelabrum in Bristol Cathedral being a fine example. In 1702, however, the Quaker entrepreneur, Abraham Darby later of Coalbrookdale Ironworks fame - was instrumental in establishing the first successful brass manufacturing company in the country, basing it at Baptist Mills on the River Frome, just north of Bristol. While furnaces continued to operate on this site, the insufficiency of the Frome to power the "battery" hammers led to a string of subsidiary mills being founded along the Avon, at Keynsham as early as 1705, at Saltford, at Weston by 1711, and elsewhere. These mills all had water-powered hammers (the heads reverberating against the anvil at an incredible 250 strokes per minute) which beat the brass into vessels (pans, bowls, etc.) or thinner sheet, with annealing furnaces for reheating the brass and modifying its crystal structure. In 1728 the "new cut" at Weston left the mill on an island with a stone bridge (still surviving) to the north bank. A ferry plied to the Twerton side where some of the millmen lived. Darby had originally brought in expert workmen from the Continent and the names of some of these "Dutchmen" survive in Twerton parish records. Almost certainly, however, they were Germans from Stolberg, near Aachen, where Joan Day herself discovered not only a prosperous brass industrialist of to-day but also a photograph of the hammering process which tallied exactly with the oral witness of an old Saltford workman. In fact the earliest physical evidence of the industry is now at Saltford where an annealing furnace has been restored and which once (like Keynsham) had rolling mills as well. Local brass can still be seen in certain Bath shopfronts, in the chandelier at Walcot Church (dated 1754, made in Bristol), in castings used by the Bath furniture trade, and even in old musical instruments manufactured by the firm of Boosey. Eventually it was cheap brassware from the Black Country that forced most of the Avon mills to close by the 1820s, though Saltford survived until 1905. An engrossing lecture, backed up by a carouselful of slides, which brought an almost forgotten industry vividly to life.

After the business of the AGM on 10 April, Brenda Buchanan gave a lively, fact-packed account of the London-Bath road between 1700 and c. 1830, with particular reference to the work of fifteen different turnpike trusts in improving the stretches successively under their care. She emphasised that the highway, far from being simply a "social artery" conveying coach passengers to and from Bath, served a vital function in the transport of goods and movement of farm animals. By the 1690s parish labour or financing had become quite inadequate for maintaining the national road network, so that turnpike legislation rapidly developed. The Bath Turnpike Trust originated in 1707, but until 1757 remained dominated by gentry J.P.s rather than business men. As Brenda Buchanan had earlier demonstrated, renewal legislation was often significant in the extension of turnpiking. In her talk she described the features of the 107-mile route from Hyde Park Corner westwards: the massive stabling at Hounslow (and its notorious "gentlemen of the road"), the dangerous way to Maidenhead and its Thames toll-bridge; the great coaching centres of Reading (where ginger nut biscuits were created to succour the hastening traveller) and Marlborough (whose Castle Inn had the greatest reputation of any on the road), then the most gruelling section, over Marlborough and Roundway downs, until this route was circumvented by alternatives to the north (through Caine and Chippenham) or south (through Devizes and Melksham); and so onwards across Kingsdown and steeply down - until in 1826 Macadam joined the Bath Turnpike Trust and at last engineered a better descent from Blue Vein into Box. This was a talk and slideshow full of information: about the watercarts that laid the dust (or animal droppings!) along parts of the route, about milestones and inn clocks, names scratched on the windows at Devizes' Bear Inn, gauges for checking wheel widths, and ways of evading payment of tolls - as by parking one's gig outside the Holloway toll-house and walking into town. And even more evocative than prints of stagecoaches were slides of the once busy London-Bath routeway now in places little more than country tracks; or a view of Shockerwick House, the mansion built for Walter Wiltshire, thrice mayor of Bath, who made a fortune out of road haulage.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Edward Bradby, 13 Hansford Square, Combe Down, Bath. BA2 5LH
 Mrs. Bridget Cox, 8 Trossachs Drive, Bath. BA2 6RP
 Miss Gwen Davies, 4 Springfield Close, Rudloe Park, Corsham. SN13 0JP
 Mrs. Joan Day, Hunter's Hill, 3 Oakfield Road, Keynsham . BS18 1JQ
 Mr. Roy Day, " " " " " " " " " "
 Mrs. Alex Kolaczowski, Park House, Park Gardens, Bath. BA1 2XP

B E A U L I E U L O D G E , K E L S T O N R O A D

This late 18th-century house was built for John Zephaniah Holwell, formerly an East India Company surgeon, Chief Justice at Calcutta, and a survivor of the notorious "Black Hole". Having left India in 1760, he lived for a time at Milford Haven before moving to Bath around 1780. He took a precocious interest in Indian philosophy and religion, even publishing on the subject. His Dissertation on the origin, nature, and pursuits of intelligent beings appeared under a Bath imprint in 1786. Subsequently he left the area and died at Pinner, Middlesex. The present owner of part of Beaulieu Lodge (now divided) has asked whether anyone in the HBRG has further information on Holwell's decade in Bath, or about the house, its date, or its builder. It was occupied in the early 19th century by a Mr. Tickell, a medical man, according to G. Monkland, Supplement to the Literature and Literati of Bath (1855), Pp. 8-9.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

1. Barbara Murison, "Getting and spending: William Blathwayt and Dyrham Park", History Today December 1990, pp.22-28.
2. Avon Past 15, Autumn 1990, contains separate articles by Mick Aston (speaker at the HBRG's May meeting) and Dr. Joe Bettey (a former speaker to our Group) on the site and suppression of the Priory at Hinton Charterhouse.
3. Maria Joyce and H. Mary Wills, Bath in Old Picture Postcards (1990), reproducing 140 early postcards with helpful annotations.
4. Business in Avon and Somerset: a Survey of Archives, ed. Jennifer Green, Philip Ollerenshaw and Peter Wardley (Business History Centre, Bristol Polytechnic, 1991). Available from Dr. Peter Wardley, Business History Centre, Department of Humanities, St. Matthias College, Oldbury Court Road, Bristol, BS16 2JP, price £10 including p. & p.
5. Cambridge University Press is to publish a new multivolume Urban History of Britain under the general editorship of Peter Clark who will himself edit the volume on the early modern period. Further details in due course.

An early advertisement for a local product taken from Rayner's 1/- Directory of Bath and District (1900). This was the year in which William Harbutt - while still running an art school with his wife, Elizabeth, at 15 Alfred Street, Bath

launched into full-scale manufacture of plasticine in a converted 5-storey flour mill at Bathampton, convenient for both canal and railway distribution. Plasticine could be bought by the pound, or in boxes of four colours (grey, red, blue and yellow) at 1/-

and 2/6. Much of the early promotion stressed its educational and artistic advantages: it "awakens genius and stimulates the inventive, constructive and artistic faculties in all who handle it". However this advertisement concentrates on its play potential.

**HARBUTT'S
PLASTICINE**

**WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT
CAN BE DONE WITH IT.**

**A GAME!
A TOY!
AN OCCUPATION!
MODELLING
MADE CLEAN & EASY.**

THE IRISH IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BATH

None of the standard accounts of Georgian Bath seems to recognise the high profile of the Irish in the city, and though R.S. Neale suggests a substantial immigration he records only just over 100 adult Irish Catholics settled here by 1785. The Protestant Irish community would certainly be larger than that, but whatever their religious affiliations the resident Irish were far outnumbered during the season by their visiting compatriots for whom Bath became the favoured spa. By November 1735 William Pulteney was telling Jonathan Swift that many Irish families were staying at Bath, while other friends of the Dean tried to lure him too over from Dublin for the sake of his health and all the entertainments. Swift wouldn't be tempted, but many others succumbed - like the young Irishman Maclachan in *Tom Jones*, on his way to Bath "to try his luck with cards and with the women". (Sir Ulic Mackilligut and Captain O'Donaghan in *Humphry Clinker* seem to have had similar intentions.) Once in Bath they all made their presence felt, entering into the diversions with gusto, expecting Dublin newspapers at the coffee-houses, and strongly influencing the choice of master-of-ceremonies (three of whom, Derrick, Brereton and King - were Irish themselves). In July 1752 some of the Protestant Irish who had lingered on into the summer even celebrated the Battle of the Boyne with a bonfire and bell-ringing. But better-off Catholics, educated abroad, also came: in 1761/2 one foreign visitor found them crowding the rooms and able to speak better French than most English. The residents were always eager for Irish news. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was "perpetually asked" in early 1772 whether his father in Dublin would obtain his patent for the Crow Street Theatre there "which all the Irish here take for granted". In return it seems the Dublin press readily published news from Bath.

Letters written from Bath often mention the sheer numbers of Irish visitors: "I am at this place encircled with Irish and West Indians (i.e. plantation owners)", reported one in 1764. In 1783 the bluestocking Elizabeth Montagu arrived to find "a multitude of Irish who come in quest of amusement." Three years earlier she had been amused herself by "a young man who I took for one of the Cherokee Kings lately arrived but was assured he was an Irish beau who was to begin the Ball ...". In 1789, when Bath was full of émigrés taking refuge from the Revolution, it was a matter for remark that at the balls for once "the sound of french prevail'd over the Irish accent which reigns pretty generally at Bath". Without the great Irish influx it was acknowledged that local trade would have suffered. As one Bath woollen draper put it, the Irish "may justly be termed the main-pillar and support of these public places of resort. Their favours may be compared best to the beauties of showers of rain ...".

In 1799 they were still coming in large numbers. "You need not tell me", wrote one Irishwoman to her niece at Bath, "how full of Irish the town is at present: I am told that there are two thousand families, and I believe I know forty at least." It seems unlikely, however, that the annual immigration continued at this level for much longer. The Act of Union, becoming law on 1 January 1801, had a drastic effect on the Irish gentry and middle classes. Dublin was suddenly reduced from a thriving capital to a stagnating provincial town, and many wealthy families fled. In 1807, during the renewed wars with France, Bath experienced a very different style of Irish visitor - the "reckless and devil-may-care" Irish Riflemen passing through from Bristol to Andover. "Whilst in Bath, our Irish recruits roamed about the town, staring at and admiring everything they saw, as if they had just been taken wild in the woods. They all carried immense shillelaghs in their fists, which they would not quit for a moment ... being ready to make use of them on the slightest occasion." An irresistible if alarming picture to end with.

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The Newsletter is compiled by the Secretary and typed by Judith Samuel.