



NEWSLETTER 22

SEPTEMBER 1993

## GROUP NEWS

### MEETINGS HELD MAY - JUNE 1993

Topics and venues sometimes match and on 6 May Amanda Berry gave her talk on the funding of 18th-century hospitals very suitably at the Mineral Water Hospital itself. Having sketched in the background to early spa development, she pointed out that the Elizabethan Act designed to limit the numbers of sick poor travelling to Bath expired in 1714, but that the campaign which ensued to establish a national hospital at the spa was similarly motivated by the wish to control numbers and to discriminate between patients deemed admissible. The subscription list, opened as early as 1723, was boosted in the late 1730s by widespread advertising and the printing of donors' names in the London Gazette. Among arguments put forward for the new institution was its usefulness to medical knowledge by enabling large numbers of case studies to be followed systematically. Conditions for admittance were circulated nationally. Infectious diseases (including venereal and tubercular) were never treated, and patients had first to be properly certified in their parish of origin and then vetted by a Hospital committee for potential curability. Over £4,000 had been raised by 1742, but since supporters had no right to nominate patients (the usual rule elsewhere), financial patronage counted for little at Bath compared with more casual donations. In the 1750s, a period Amanda Berry has especially studied, the Hospital's income amounted to c.£12,000 compared with over £26,000, £15,000 and £12,000 respectively at the Hospitals in Bristol, Exeter and Northampton. But whereas regular subscriptions were the mainstay of revenue at these other places, in Bath they accounted for only 11%. The source of almost two-thirds of the Bath Hospital's income was irregular philanthropy - 22% from casual donations, 31% from fund-raising events (notably the April and October collections for the Hospital at churches and chapels across the city), and 11% from legacies. The crucial contributions from the visiting company were solicited in every way: benefit theatre performances and breakfastings, a charity box at the Pump Room, prominent publicising of benefactors in the Annual Reports, reminders about the Hospital in local guidebooks, the parading of patients at the Abbey Church to prick the public conscience, and finally by persuasive pressure from Richard Nash and Dr. William Oliver, two of the Hospital treasurers. Analysis of known benefactors suggests that visitors outnumbered residents in charity by at least four to one. Not one Bath resident, moreover, bequeathed money to the Hospital during the whole 1750s period, a measure of the way it was seen as a national institution from which local patients were specifically excluded.

Our summer outing took us to Clifton where Dr. Tim Mowl conducted an energetic two-hour perambulation of the Georgian suburb that sprouted on and ultimately transformed the once open downs. We began however at the riverside level of the original Hot-Wells and noted the trademarks of their influential early builders, George Tully and Thomas Paty, i.e. conservative brick construction, 'lessines' dividing each house in a terrace from its neighbour, stepped stone voussoirs, and the use of slag and clinker from the local metal industries. Higher up the hill the influence of Bath was evident in the great substructure raised by John Eveleigh for Windsor Terrace, originally intended as a crescent though eventually assembled hotchpotch after the 1790s slump. The employment of Bath stone (e.g. in the Paragon) and the long raised, pavement of Royal York Terrace also recalled Bath, but Clifton townscape is often more romantic, unexpected, and dramatically-sited. The boring of deep Sion Spring through the rock and the exploitation of sites owned by the Merchant Venturers' moved the spa wholly on to the downs. William Paty and others introduced a somewhat more up-to-date idiom in the next burst of speculative building, interrupted by the French wars, that included the Mall, Royal York and Cornwallis Crescents. The subsequent change from speculative spa architecture to terraces and houses for prosperous Bristolians anxious to escape the squalor and pollution of the lower town (especially after the riots of 1831) could be seen in the work of Charles Dyer, Charles Underwood and R.S. Pope (e.g. the latter's Vyvyan Terrace). Clifton Green returned us to an earlier age of Baroque and sub-Palladian design before we plunged downhill through narrow passageways to the leafy backwater of the Polygon and so to our starting-point. Tim Mowl's lively commentary on this walk can be filled out at leisure through his book To Build the Second City (1991) and complemented by another recent publication, Donald Jones, A History of Clifton which tackles the subject from a quite different angle.

## **MEMBERS' NEWS**

1. Congratulations to Niall Rothnie who has been appointed Head of History at St. Mary's College, Crosby, Liverpool (but will continue his contact with the HBRG).
2. Two names to add to the list of members:  
Marek J. Lewcun, 63 The Oval, Bath. BA2 2HD  
John Beaumont, 7A Upper Church Street, Bath. BA1 2PT
3. Ruth Fisher recently published a valuable article on the court set up to manage the jointure estates and revenues of Queen Anne of Denmark and Queen Henrietta Maria, and which lasted from 1604/05 to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642: N.R.R. Fisher, 'The Queenes Court in her Councill Chamber at Westminster', English Historical Review no. 427, vol. 108 (April 1993), 314-37.

Peter Carey has prepared a report for Bath City Council on 'Street signs in Bath' with recommendations on the conservation of historic lettering and on good practice for a city which has a particularly fine heritage of street lettering.

1. In May 1993 the 28-acre grounds of Prior Park came into National Trust ownership. A £400,000 appeal has been launched to help restore the historic landscape and some of its architectural features (Palladian and Sham bridges, Grotto, Ice House) before the Park is opened to the public.

2. The Bath Postal Museum expects to have a small permanent display on 'Bath and the Post' ready by September. The notice of 1804 reproduced on the right shows the delivery service extending into the burgeoning suburbs and as far as Batheaston.



## POST-OFFICE, BATH,

JULY 6th, 1804.

3. The Centre for South-Western Historical Studies (to which the HBRG belongs) holds its annual symposium at the University of Exeter on Saturday 20th November. This year's theme sounds of particular interest to some of our members - 'The Observer's Gaze: Antiquarian and Topographical Writers in S.W. England, c. 1600-1900' - and includes papers on 'Somerset topographical writers 1700-1900' by Dr. Robert Dunning (Victoria County History: Somerset) and 'Dorset antiquarian and topographical writers' by Dr. Joe Bettey. Please contact the HBRG Secretary if you need further details.

4. The latest CSWHS [Newsletter](#) lists a number of academic theses of local relevance completed in or by 1992, including:

R. Hanley, 'Village and small town in the Roman West Country' [Avon, Somerset, Glos.,] (Ph.D., Nottingham)  
Frances Davies, 'Acta of bishops of Wells and Bath, 1061-1205' (Ph.D., Oxford)

Dominic Lockett, 'Crown patronage and local administration, 1485-1509' [incl. Dorset and Somerset] (Ph.D., Oxford)

A. Barnes, 'Charitable education in Wells, c. 1500-1891' (Ph.D., Manchester)

Peter Wakelin, 'Pre-industrial trade of the R. Severn' (CNA, Wolverhampton)

Donald Bateman, 'Printing history in Bristol, 1800-1914' (CNA, Bristol Polytechnic)

Peter Brett, 'Liberal middle class and politics in three 19C provincial towns' [incl. Bristol] (Ph.D., Durham)

Penny Bonsall, 'Somerset and Lothian miners, 1919-47' (Ph.D. Warwick)

E.A. Mills, 'Changes in the rural spacial economy of an English county: Somerset 1947-80' (Ph.D., Bristol)

Joseph Peachey, 'Mediaeval Yeovil' (M.Phil., Reading)

HIS MAJESTY'S POSTMASTER-GENERAL having been pleased to establish a REGULAR CONVEYANCE OF LETTERS to *Sidney-Place, Daniel-Street, Bathwick-Street, Margaret's-Hill, Mark's-Buildings, Gay's-Place, Richmond-Hill, Beacon-Hill, Snow-Hill, Half-Moon-Street, Dover Street, Albemarle-Street, Lower East-Hayes, Higher East-Hayes, Kensington-Place, Grosvenor-Place, Beaufort-Buildings, Lamb-bridge, Lark-Hall, Davor's-Buildings, and Bath-Easton, in the Vicinity of the City of Bath:—*

The Publick are hereby respectfully informed, that Letters will be sent to and delivered at the above Places as early as possible every Day, after the Arrival of the London Mail; and that a RECEIVING-HOUSE is fixed at *Mr. Keeling's, Grocer*, near the Lamb, at BATH-EASTON, to take in Letters, at One Penny each; where a Messenger (under the above Authority) will call every Afternoon, at Four o'Clock, to convey them to the Post-Office in Bath, in Time to be forwarded by the respective Mails to all Parts of the Kingdom.

*By Command of his Majesty's Postmaster-General,*

S. LOTT, Surveyor.

Keith Dawson, 'Town defences and urban morphology since 1500' [Bristol and Exeter] (M.Phil., Exeter)  
 Derek Portman, 'Somerset gentry and the Great Rebellion' (Ph.D., Bristol)  
 David Hussey, 'The port of Bristol and the coastal trade of the Bristol Channel c.1680-1720' (Ph.D., Wolverhampton)  
 Martin Gorsky, 'Philanthropy in Bristol, 1780-1870' Ph.D., Bristol)  
 K. Cochrane, 'The development of the port of Bristol in the 19C' (M.Phil., Nottingham)  
 Jennifer Paull, 'Working-class women, gender relations and popular culture in S.E. Somerset, c.1880-1939 (M.Phil, Lancaster)  
*These are in addition to dissertations completed by HBRG members and reported in our Newsletters 16 (John Wroughton), 18 (Ian Crowe), 20 (Brenda Buchanan) and 21 (Steve Poole).*

5. Recent publications:

D.G. Shaw, The Creation of a Community: the City of Wells in the Middle Ages (Clarendon Press, 1993)  
The Visitation of Somerset and the City of Bristol 1672 (Harleian Society, n.s. vol. 11, 1992)  
 Martha Skeeters, Community and Clergy: Bristol and the Reformation, c.1530-1570 (Clarendon Press, 1993)  
Marriage Allegation Bonds of Bath and Wells Diocese to 1755 (microfiche reissue of 1909 edition, Weston-super-Mare, H. Galloway)  
The Somerset Protestation Returns and Lay Subsidy Rolls 1641-2 (microfiche reissue of 1975 edition, same publisher)  
 Holburne Museum, The History and Collections (pub. by the Museum 1993, in connection with its centenary)  
The Building of Bath (Building of Bath Museum, 1993) An excellent, well-illustrated pamphlet based on displays in the museum, including brief sections on surveying, masonry, carpentry, windows, paint and wallpaper, etc.  
 Richard K. Morriss, The Buildings of Bath (Alan Sutton, 1993) Black-and-white photographs with unoriginal short text.  
 Tim Mowl, Palladian Bridges: Prior Park and the Whig Connection (Millstream, 1993). A 40-page booklet with good illustrations (some in colour).  
 Graham Finch, Bath Shopfronts: Guidelines for Design and Conservation (Bath, 1993).

## **AN EVENING ON THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, 12 May 1993**

**(report by Brenda Buchanan)**

Historians of Bath are once again indebted to Miss Elizabeth Holland and her colleagues for their energy and enterprise in organizing a lively meeting on aspects of the history of the region in the seventeenth century. The first talk by John Ede on the arcane world of heraldry in this period set the scene by relating our local concerns to the national context. He showed for example that the 'red hand of Ulster' on the arms of the Holburne of Menstrie was an indication of a baronetcy created by James I to help fund his purposes in Ireland. Similarly the right to include the lions of England on a corner of a coat-of-arms such as those of the Lane family was the sign of a reward from Charles II to a loyal follower. Changes in the display of coats-of-arms were a powerful indicator of fluctuating political authority. Those of the Commonwealth were rapidly replaced by those of the Crown in public buildings such as churches when the monarchy was restored. The complicated images described by the speaker were skilfully illustrated by his own paintings, which deserve a wider circulation so that they may be studied more closely.



The Lane arms



The Commonwealth arms

Trevor Fawcett then spoke about the informers and spies who flourished in Bath because the spa facilities gave a cloak of legitimacy to the religious and political dissidents who gathered here from time to time. The century began with the Gunpowder Plotters meeting in Bath, and finished with the display of familial suspicion which led Queen Mary to instruct the Bath Common Council that her sister the Princess Anne, with whom she was at loggerheads, was not to be accorded deference by them. In between times informers listened for any expression of dissent by Council members, citizens, or visitors, all of whom faced the cruel choice posed by the often feverish world of seventeenth-century politics and religion, of holding to principles or trimming to avoid trouble. Small wonder that having presented a loyal Address to the King in 1680, some citizens went on to greet with acclaim the protestant Duke of Monmouth on his triumphal tour of the West Country, although the city gates were later closed against his rebel soldiers. These tangled tales were most capably unravelled for us by our speaker.

It was fitting that the culmination of our evening was the talk by Dr. John Wroughton, for as the Head of King Edward's School he has generously allowed successive meetings on the seventeenth century to be held on the premises of the Junior School. Sadly this was the last such occasion for John is shortly to retire, but as his talk showed, the school's loss will be Bath's gain. His subject was the great Freshford clothier John Ashe, whose business prospered after the general decline of the cloth trade in the early years of the seventeenth century, largely through the use of Spanish wool to produce a material which was lighter and more fashionable than the traditional heavy broad cloth of the West Country. But although an innovator in business matters, John Ashe was a firm adherent to the causes in which he believed, however great the personal cost. He had shown his metal in the 1620s and 1630s by his protests against forced royal loans and levies, and in the Civil War he gave substantial financial support to the parliamentary cause despite the losses sustained through plunder and the inevitable disruption of trade. However he was no fanatic, and after the war he sat in Parliament as a moderate and also found the grace to speak in support of some of Bath's families then suffering hardship. This was clearly a man of principle for whom our speaker felt a deep admiration, communicated most fully when Dr. Wroughton shared with us his pleasure at finally coming face to face with John Ashe after twenty years of research. The happy meeting came about at Corsham Court, through the discovery of a painting held by the Methuen family into which the daughter of John Ashe had married. The continuing association of the Methuens with Corsham Court demonstrates one of the enduring attractions of local history, seen in all the talks given this evening, which is that it enables those who share this interest to appreciate the present more fully by seeing it in the perspective of the past. Many thanks to all who made the meeting possible. It is expected that copies of these papers will become available for consultation in the Bath Record Office.



## **EVENING ON TUDOR BATH, 11 August 1993**

Not content with organising the 17th-century Bath event, Elizabeth Holland proceeded to offer another trio of speakers on the Tudor period. Jean Manco's talk on the rebuilding of the Priory Church was properly illustrated by slides since her evidence was based on close visual attention to maps (Smith, Savile, Gilmore), drawings (Hawksmoor, Hoare), and the existing fabric. Particularly valuable was her discussion of the east end and the south side - with its rebuilt transept end (after the weakened wall had collapsed), probably cut-down cloister, and improved Prior's lodgings. The new east end had a Lady chapel, but Protestantism later swept this Papist symbol away, allowing the great East window to be lengthened and so bringing more light to the interior.

Robert Alexander, an American researcher working on the Toronto series Records of Early English Drama, pointed out the unreliability of 19C transcriptions and the need to re-examine the sources on early dramatic performance. In Bath however these are scanty. The late-15-century St. Michael's churchwarden records refer to a crown (used in the Whitsuntide 'King Edgar' ritual?), but have no reference to miracle and mystery plays. The Chamberlain's Accounts document many payments to visiting companies of players from at least 1569 onwards, but Puritan influence after 1600 seems to have dissuaded them from coming to Bath - though not to Bristol which had an early-Stuart playhouse. Court cases of the time suggest that instead a more scurrilous, libellous, real-life drama was being acted out.

Mike Chapman (with Elizabeth Holland) provided some informative vignettes of Tudor citizens based on their stipulations in wills and on a Star Chamber court case. Thomas Chancellor (d.1497), a wealthy self-made clothier, took a typically business-like view of the bequests needed for the salvation of his soul. A Cheap Street mercer (Cox alias Jeffreys, d.1511) was more public-minded and bequeathed silver and gilt to the Guildhall; his property in Union Passage gave Mike Chapman an opportunity for an excursus on the word 'twitcher', a local dialect term for a narrow passage. Finally the violent quarrel between Thomas Homer, chief bodyguard to Prior Hollewey, and William Crouch, the powerful clothier of Englishcombe, evoked a picture of lawlessness that seems to have had roots in the threatened Bath broadcloth trade.

## **A NINETEENTH-CENTURY WIFE SALE AT BATH**

"In our Market-place yesterday a man named Stradling offered his wife for sale to the highest bidder. The lady, it appeared, had been sold for half-a-crown on Monday at Lansdown fair, but the bargain was not considered legal - first because the sale was not held in a public market place, and secondly because the purchaser had a wife already. The lady was dashingly attired, and had a halter, covered with silk, round her neck. The biddings amounted at last to five shillings, at which sum it was understood she was bought in. It happened, however, very unluckily for the husband of the fair one, that the police had an eye to this little transaction, for just as the affair had concluded he was apprehended for having created a public disturbance, and was politely handed to a temporary lodging in the Bath goal. The above disgraceful exhibition assembled, as may easily be imagined, an immense concourse of spectators." - Bath Chronicle 15 August 1833.

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