



NEWSLETTER 31

SEPTEMBER 1996

GROUP NEWS

ANNIVERSARY SUPPER

Honey whiggs? Oxford John? 'Skirrets'? Salmagundi? Nesselrode pudding? Just some of the items on the menu on 24 April when twenty-nine members and guests sat down at Somerset House, Bathwick Hill, to celebrate our tenth birthday. Most appropriately the supper was devised and masterminded by the hotel's owner, Jean Seymour, herself an HBRG member and food historian, who drew on Eliza Acton's Modem Cooking for Private Families to come up with a sequence of dishes appropriate to c.1830 when Somerset House was built. After two brief speeches by the Secretary (recalling the founding of the HBRG) and Vice-Chairman (looking to the future), Jean Seymour rounded off a memorable occasion by telling us something of the house's history and its careful restoration over the past decade or so.

MEETINGS HELD MAY – JUNE 1996

Steve Poole paid a welcome return visit on 9 May to speak on John Allen, pawnbroker made good, man of property with a £5000-a-year rent roll, frustrated Bath freeman, and sometime high constable for Bathforum. Allen's big grudge was against the oligarchic 30-man Corporation whom he claimed had long usurped the freemen's ancient rights and thwarted their aim of profitably developing the Common. Following the efforts of the radical orator Henry Hunt to win a Bristol seat, Allen and S.C. Graves proffered themselves as freemen's candidates at the October 1812 Bath election, so challenging the Corporation's monopoly. During a fracas in the crowded Marketplace, the Guildhall windows were stoned and six 'rioters' arrested, though Allen's supporters rescued him from the constables. Subsequently he backed off from a reform petition to parliament, apologised to the Corporation, and was ridiculed by his opponents. But in 1816 he returned to the fray, both at Bath and Frome, when high bread prices revived agitation and galvanised the Bath Union Society, a cell of radical local tradesmen whose activities were secretly reported to the Home Office by an infiltrating Government spy. Some of them helped Henry Hunt, Allen's friend, organise a protest meeting in January 1817, first at Hunt's premises in Walcot Street, then in Orange Grove, when Lord Camden, Recorder of Bath, was particularly vilified. Allen took no part, though he accompanied Hunt to London with a petition and then voted for William Cobbett's milder demands. Realising it had been infiltrated, the Union Society dissolved and Allen again escaped incrimination. Politically he lay low in the 1820s, only to re-emerge in the safer 1830s when he joined the platform at reform meetings and — his crowning moment — chaired a vast public meeting on the High Common to mark the 1832 Reform Act. His attempted candidature at the next election was spurned, however, in favour of Roebuck, and even his attempts to obtain a Council seat were frustrated until 1838. Allen showed no more interest in protest movements, not even the strong Chartist caucus at Bath, and Hunt perhaps got it right in calling him a 'mushroom reformer'.

This year's outing, on 12 June, was to Englishcombe, a rewarding historic landscape on Bath's own doorstep. Mary Stacey (now Built Heritage Manager for B&NES) had first surveyed the parish 13 years ago and was an ideal guide. As field-names show, woodland once covered a greater area than now and probably filled the gaps in the great pre-Conquest boundary of Wansdyke which could be seen from the church heading off towards the hill-fort of Stantonbury. In the other direction Wansdyke marks the line of Englishcombe's main street (also mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charter for Dunkerton) with buildings of various dates, including the mid-17C Crossways House at the junction. With special permission we were able to enter the normally out-of-bounds site of Culverhay Castle, built in the 13C by the De Gournays who also held nearby Newton and Harptree but whose lands were temporarily confiscated by the crown after Sir Thomas de Gournay was implicated in the murder of Edward II in 1327. In the 15C the estate finally passed to the Duchy of Cornwall, the present owner. From the castle's grassy mound (its stone footings excavated in the 1950s) we could view, across the former boundary of Newton Brook, the northern part of the parish — Barrow and Haycombe — with the 'ridge-and-furrow' of recent nursery gardens. Returning to the village below the church we next visited another field site, a hidden spring from which water was apparently conveyed by overhead pulley some 250 yards up the slope to a planned Victorian farm (Manor Farm, c.1860) where gearing in the stone barn enabled various agricultural processes to be mechanised. Near this farm stands 17C Rectory Farm and the great 14C tithe barn built by Bath Priory — now restored and visitable on Sunday afternoons. The tour ended inside the parish church, St. Peter's, which is full of memorable features — Norman capitals and arcading, misaligned tower and Gothic chancel, double squint looking into the De Gournay chapel, scratch dials, unusual George VI royal arms, etc. (The fall of the steeple in 1703 caused much damage and re-building.)



Chave's Tea Gardens, Englishcombe, c.1910. Mrs. Chave ran the gardens from 1905-16, after which the site reverted to a farm (now Blake's Farm). Illustration and information from Paul De'Ath, Bath (Archive Photograph Series, 1995).

MEMBERS' NEWS

Edward Bradby: The very sad news of Edward Bradby's death was reported in the Evening Chronicle on 22 August 1996. HBRG members will especially recall his sterling work of sorting and listing bundles of documents at Bath Record Office, a voluntary labour which prompted his engaging short article two years ago in Newsletter no. 25.

New/renewed membership: Ms. Jane Clothier, 25 High Street, Frome. BA11 1 ER
Ms Elizabeth Jeffreys, 2 Fernside Cottages, The Barton, Corston, Bath. BA2 9AJ

Changes of address: Ian Crowe, 58 Norreys Avenue, Oxford. OX1 4SS

Alex Kelly, 22 Solsbury Way, Bath. BA1 6HH

John Wroughton, 41 The Empire, Grand Parade, Bath. BA2 4DF

PROGRAMME 1996-1997

Once again an array of speakers and topics to entice and stimulate. During the run-up to Christmas, Mike Chapman will elaborate on the theme of his new booklet (see Recent Publications below), Stan Hitt will speak from his long experience as head of Bath parks, and John Ede will describe his latest findings from the Abbey after close inspection of the roof bosses from the forest of scaffolding. The new year opens with Dr Graham Davis who has long been researching Irish communities in Britain. Anne Borsay (from St David's University College, Lampeter) then continues her exploration of the Bath Hospital, on which she has already written two important articles, and George Harries addresses the question of Poor Law provision in two early 19C Bath parishes. The AGM will be accompanied by an attractive presentation by Paul De'Ath on the local perfume trade illustrated from his own collection of scent pots. And we end the season with James Russell describing and contextualising the excavated Roman villa near Newton St Loe, and with another outing to a Bath village, this time perambulating Larkhall with the help of David Crellin. Meetings here to have everyone, surely, reaching for their diaries?

NEW ACCESSIONS TO BATH RECORD OFFICE

(Note by Colin Johnston)

Both quantity and quality are in evidence among this year's accessions to the archives. Quantity in the form of over forty boxes of papers from Bath District Health Authority, whose twenty-two years' existence at Combe Park ended on 1st April this year when Avon Health Authority took over.

Early photographs of remarkable quality were presented to the office showing many previously unknown views of Bath in the 1850s. The album of 61 calotypes was received from a descendant of Captain Chapman, who last century gave a companion volume to the city (now in Bath Central Library).

Other significant accessions include Bath District Teachers' Association (later N.U.T.), minute books and press-cuttings, 1874-1966; ledgers of Mundy, Brewer & Johnson, stock- and share-brokers of Milsom Street, 1863-1938; and papers of Bath Allotment Holders' and Gardeners' Association 1954-1970.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Bath History vol. 6 (1996) — Contents previewed in HBRG Newsletter no. 29.

Mike Chapman, A Guide to the Estates of Ralph Allen around Bath (Bath, Survey of Old Bath, 1996). Based on the survey map in Bath Record office — which it reproduces — this new guide is in the same format as the Survey of Old Bath's earlier publication on the Kingston Estate and shows, among much fresh information, the boundaries of the medieval bishop's park. (See also the HBRG Programme, 16 October 1996).

Barry Cunliffe, English Heritage: Roman Bath (London, Batsford, 1996).

Trevor Fawcett, 'Spa dentistry: practitioners in 18th-century Bath', Dental Historian no. 30 (May 1966) 28-43.

Fikret K. Yegül, 'The thermo-mineral complex at Baiae and De Balneis Puteolanis', Art Bulletin vol. 78 no. .1 (1996) 137-161. A detailed study of the ancient Græco-Roman spa of Baiae, near Naples, with which Bath was sometimes fancifully compared by 18C classicists.

Two useful publications on nearby towns:

Harold Fassnidge, Bradford on Avon Past and Present, Revised edition (Bradford-on-Avon, Ex Libris Press, 1993).

Kenneth Rogers, Trowbridge: History and Guide (Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1994).

Members are asked to tell the Secretary of anything they publish on Bath for inclusion in future Newsletters and also to draw his attention to other relevant items they come across.

A DISGUSTING FASHION AT THE ABBEY CHURCH IN 1800

"... it were to be wished that the 'repaired and beautified' of some unmerciful white-and-black-and-yellow-washer, did not present itself so conspicuously to everyone who enters ... [the Abbey Church's] doors. There is a disgusting fashion in Somersetshire, as well as in some [other] parts of the country, of bedaubing churches with a harlequin-variety of white and yellow; the body is washed with yellow, and the mouldings and ornaments, the pillars, capitals and branches, of the Gothic columns, are most sacrilegiously picked out, to use the language of the house painters, in white: then, to complete this tasteful arrangement, the vile monumental tablets, of which, surely, the very vilest are in Bath's abbey-church, are bordered with enormous patches of lamp-black."

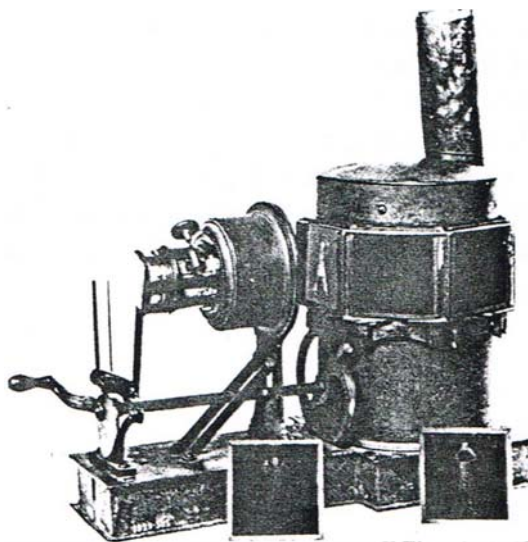
(from William Mayor, The British Tourists (1800) vol. 6, p. 277)

CINEMA COMES TO BATH

The birth of the film industry - dated conventionally from the Lumiere brothers' first shows of moving-pictures in 1895 - was remembered in Britain on 2 June 1996 (a year later than in France) by special anniversary screenings and £1 entrance prices. But while Bath cinemas duly participated in this national celebration, a more appropriate local date three weeks later passed by unnoticed. It was on Monday 22 June 1896 that commercial cinematography arrived locally in the guise of the Animatographe, a projection system devised by a Newcastle-on-Tyne photographer, A. Rosenberg (later official film recorder of the Boer War). The system was probably a variant on the Lumieres' or the rival Acres/Paul methods. According to the *Bath Chronicle's* preview, the week-long series of showings came about through C.B. Oliver, lessee of the Upper Assembly Rooms, who offered Bathonians:

an early opportunity of seeing the Animatographe, the remarkable development of 'living photographs' which is proving such a draw at the London Halls and in the most important provincial towns. The 'living photographs' are produced by the exhibition, in marvellously rapid succession, of a series of photographs depicting various scenes and events, and so cleverly is it done that these scenes are shown on the screen with as much faithfulness as though one were watching the original scenes.

Shown four times a day in the ballroom — 'the coolest salon in Bath' — the Animatographe was a relative rather than absolute novelty. Bath audiences had long been familiar with lantern-slide shows and these had recently become easier to stage through the introduction of electric projectors. In February-March 1893, for example, the Arts and Crafts designer-architect C.R. Ashbee (unsuccessful in the competition for the Guildhall extension) had delivered in Bath a course of six University Extension lectures on architecture illustrated by glass slides, including some of Bath buildings. Long before that the Bath inventor J.A.R. Rudge had experimented



In the 1920's: Rudge's original method of projecting glass lantern plates in quick succession— but it did not attain the change every 1/10th of a second necessary to give a true semblance of motion. This 1872 apparatus was preserved in the collection of Will Day F.R.P.S., friend and biographer of Friese-Greene; he founded the Royal Photographic Society Kine Group, and is buried next to F-G in Highgate Cemetery.

Illustration and caption from Reece Winstone, Bath as it was (Bristol, 1980)

with different methods of fast-sequencing slides to suggest continuous motion, among them his Biophantoscope of 1884 which made use of dissolving views. William Friese-Greene's contribution (from his studios at 7 Corridor and 34 Gay Street) was to substitute the new material 'celluloid' for glass. It was his prototype cine-camera that was demonstrated to the Bath Photographic Society in 1890. Contemporaries also knew scientific toys like the zoetrope and Edison's peep-show device the kinetoscope, both of which also created an illusion of movement from a succession of images. But 'unlike the kinetoscope', the *Chronicle* explained, the revolutionary Animatographe allowed 'many people ... [to] see the various views at once. It is an astounding invention and will be more extraordinary still when the phonograph is adapted to it, and the pictures are thus accompanied with the sounds going on at the time of photographing'. This journalistic prefiguring of the talkies, a generation later, must have been inspired by the oral remarks which introduced each performance and which were preserved in script at least until 1936 when they were partially quoted in the *Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald* of 18 July. The audiences in 1896 were told that the Animatographe was to the eye what the phonograph was to the ear, and that:

The spectator who witnesses the working of the machine will find it hard to assure himself that he is not looking at an actual scene, as the movement is so exact. There is no break in continuity, and the smiles and gestures follow one another unbrokenly The capabilities of the invention are appalling. For instance, a provincial audience, by the combined use of the phonograph and animatographe may listen to the voice of a statesman speaking at Westminster and witness every movement and gesture with which the speech was emphasised.

The initial programme seen at Bath apparently had no political content but did include a boxing match, a lynching, the death scene of the heroine from George du Maurier's *Trilby*, a fire rescue complete with fine smoke effects and a demonstration of the dentist Colbon extracting a tooth from a gas-anaesthetised patient. These, at least, are episodes mentioned in the script, though another Bath programme known to the British Film Institute is said to include 'A Serpentine Dance by Loie Fuller' and 'In a Blacksmith's Shop'. The projector operator was named as Ben Davis (of Lower Oldfield Park) and the audiences turned up in sufficient numbers for the press to call the event 'the rage of Bath'. Nevertheless, when photographic entrepreneur Rosenberg and Assembly Rooms manager Oliver got together with Carlton Fredericks (later well-known as a West Country concert organiser) to consider a further Animatographe season at Bath that autumn, the venture was thought too risky to pursue from lack of public demand. So *fin de siecle* Bathonians must have been somewhat reluctant film fans after all.

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