



NEWSLETTER 36

MAY 1998

GROUP NEWS

'The Bath Cemeteries'. The planned visit to the Abbey Cemetery on 11 June has been replaced by one to the Baptist Burial Ground in Lyncombe, led by Colin Johnston. The other two visits remain as announced.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 8 April 1998

1. Apologies for absence came from Angus and Brenda Buchanan, Bill Hanna, George Harries, Maria Joyce, Alex Kolaczowski, Godfrey Laurence and Judith Samuel.
2. The minutes of the AGM of 17 April 1997 were accepted. Assurances have been received that Bath property records will remain at Bath Record Office for the present at least, if for no other cogent reason than the lack of space for them in B&NES legal offices at Keynsham. We understand that the question of future access to the Bath Chronicle's files of newspapers is being taken up with the BC by Jacquie Campbell, the B&NES officer for libraries, arts and archives.
3. In her chairman's report, Philippa Bishop remarked on the varied range of the 1997-98 programme and thanked all those who had participated. The malfunctioning slide-projector at the March meeting was much regretted; a reply was still awaited to a letter written to Bath Central Library on the subject.
4. The General Secretary introduced the first draft of the Bibliography of Publications on Bath 1911-1996. [For details see pp. 7-8 later in this *Newsletter*.] A paper copy of both the author and the subject sequences was shown at the AGM and others had been lodged at Bath Central Library and Bath Record Office. The complete bibliography was also available for searching on disk and HBRG members could obtain copies at the cost of a disk. Members were urged to provide bibliographical details of publications missed on the first trawl and of items published 1997 onwards for inclusion in a future second edition which could feasibly be put on a wider sale. Another possibility might be to make it available through one of the Internet websites currently springing up in Bath.
It was noted that the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts has launched an inquiry 'to establish whether adequate provision is being made for the care and consultation of the nation's archives and manuscripts as we approach the Millennium' and that bodies such as the HBRG were among those asked to offer comments and suggestions.
6. The Treasurer, Colin Johnston, took the meeting through his clearly presented annual statement of accounts which still showed a healthy balance of £711.71 in spite of a deficit of £52.25 on the year. The HBRG's funds had been transferred to a single Lloyds Bank account designed for societies such as ours. The balance sheet was approved by the AGM, as was the recommendation to leave the annual subscription rates unchanged.
7. Marek Lewcun and Mike Chapman explained their initial ideas for a project that would absorb some of our surplus funds, namely the republication of early Bath maps in A4 book format. This would be of value to most HBRG members as well as to many other researchers and would help conserve the originals, but reproduction would need to be of professional quality. Further volumes covering outlying parts of the city and later periods might be considered at a future stage. The

AGM raised various questions (book versus pack format; non-published surveys; digital scanning; financing by public subscription) for the HBRG Committee to consider.

8. The 1997-98 Committee was then re-elected for 1998-99 with the following changes: Dr. Amanda Berry would join the Committee as Meetings Secretary; Trevor Fawcett (in the absence of any other nomination) would continue as General Secretary for one more, but final, year; and - for reasons of the HBRG's constitutional limit on the size of the Committee - Kirsten Elliott would serve as a co-opted member.
9. There was no other business.

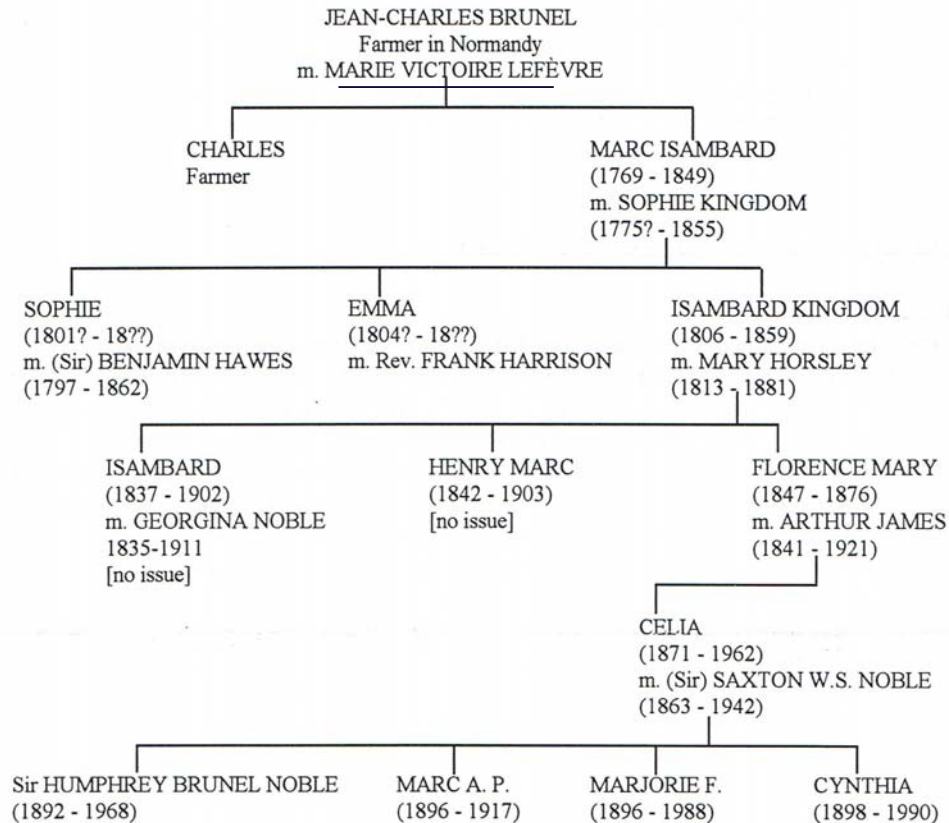
MEETINGS HELD JANUARY - APRIL 1997

THE BRUNELS IN BATH: Professor Angus Buchanan, 7th January, chaired by Joan Day — Some interesting links between Bath and the Brunels have emerged from a study by Prof. Buchanan of a collection of private papers in the University of Bristol Library. The initial portion was a gift from a descendant, Lady Cynthia Noble, who lived in Bath. The family tree opposite shows the principal Brunels in the nineteenth century. Jean-Charles Brunel was a farmer in Normandy, whose first son stayed on the farm, while the second was Marc Isambard who came to Britain in 1799 and, on his arrival, married Sophie Kingdom. Their first son was Isambard Kingdom Brunel who married Mary Horsley. Their three children were Isambard, Henry (who together wrote the standard biography of their father) and Florence, later mother of Lady Celia Noble, who also wrote about her family (Ile Brunels, Father and Son').

For his first journey to Bath, I.K. Brunel did not have the advantage of the GWR; he travelled outside the horse-drawn coach and stopped over in Bath, probably at the White Lion Hotel, on his way to Bristol in connection with the Clifton Bridge competition. On one occasion (1830) he called on William Beckford, whom he described as 'always in motion', gentlemanly, well-informed, warm and welcoming: Brunel was presumably seeking support for his entry in the Clifton Bridge competition. A year later he visited Lansdown Races where he met a number of Bristol people and 'did a little bridge business'. He also went looking for suitable stone for his bridge at Murhill quarry, finding it 'hard and durable but too white'. Although the first Act for the Great Western Railway was not granted until the year 1835, by then his survey was well advanced. It was begun in March 1833, and in that year he wrote in his diary how one morning he set out from Bristol on horseback by 6.30 in the morning and was at Mr. McAdam's in Bath at a quarter to nine. He went on to Claverton where he discussed problems of civil engineering with the 'bigoted, obstinate, practical' canal engineer Blackwell about the route of the Black Dog Turnpike. He rode around Lyncombe and Widcombe and dismissed any possibility of taking his railway along that bank of the river, but by November the present line had been decided upon. The Census enumerator's book for 1841 shows one I.K. Brunel in residence on census night at the [White] Lion Hotel, aged 35, a Civil Engineer; the occasion of his stay was probably the opening of the GWR from London to Bristol.

In June 1843, Marc Isambard Brunel, having been ill with a stroke, came on holiday to Chilcompton where one of his wife's sisters, married to Thomas Mudge, was resident. The Mudges had a daughter who married into the Marchant family. Unlike his son, Marc Brunel was able to enjoy his first journey to Bath by taking the railway. While at Chilcompton, although supposed to be convalescing, he continued to conduct Thames Tunnel business by post at a moment when it was opened to the public. In mid-July he travelled to Bristol to see the launch of the S.S. Great Britain, returning a day or two later, going and coming back via Bath. After a dash to London for a momentary meeting with the

THE BRUNELS



Queen who much to his chagrin had managed to view the Thames Tunnel without him, he was given a tour of Cheddar in the Marchant equipage and viewed the stalactites. He attended the funeral of Thomas Mudge in November, and also went to Clutton for the tombstone, which was set up at the grave in Chilcompton churchyard.

Subsequent discussion at the meeting was mainly concerned with Celia, Lady Noble, a Bath notable, of whom there is a portrait by Sickert in the Victoria Art Gallery. There is also a Brunel Society plaque to commemorate the centenary of the opening of the GWR on one of the bridges over the railway in Sydney Gardens. The grave of Thomas Mudge at Chilcompton, on the other hand, has not so far been located.

OWEN WARD

THE BATH PAGEANT OF 1909: Bruce Crofts, 12th February, chaired by Maria Joyce — In size and extravagance, though not in importance, the pageant was the greatest event in Bath's history. There had been a 'folk play' in Sherborne in 1905 but the name became 'pageant' as the idea spread and by 1908 there had been 22 such events in the U.K. and U.S.A. David Evans, a Bath pharmacist, had seen the Sherborne play and in a letter to the press suggested that Bath should copy it. A public meeting in

the Guildhall was held in December 1908 but the room was not full and there were doubters ('you can't hurry composers'). However some were more positive ('even Cheltenham has had a pageant') and when Sturge Cotterell moved that there should be a Bath Pageant in July 1909 it was agreed with only two against.

The idea of preparing it in a mere seven months is incredible to our age of instant communication — yet it included arranging for young ladies from the twelve places called Bath in U.S.A. and two in Canada to appear, costumed and rehearsed, when correspondence had to travel by sea! Those at the meeting, with some additions, formed a general committee to appoint an executive of seventeen and some specific posts, including Frank Lascelles, the top name in pageants, who agreed to come for the final month to superintend the event. They did not meet again but responsibilities were divided down via many subcommittees. For example 800 ladies were meeting daily in 32 sewing parties in Bath and fourteen in surrounding villages.

There were to be eight historical episodes, each with a separate author, organiser and cast. These were the Dedication of the Roman temple, Sack of Bath after the battle of Dyrham, Coronation of Edgar, Henry VII and Oliver King, Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1590 including a masque of Bladud (with trained pigs in a prepared swamp!), the Battle of Lansdown, Beau Nash and Ralph Allen, and Queen Charlotte's visit in 1817. The finale, depicting homage from the western world, was where the transatlantic Baths came in. Hundreds appeared in each episode — a total cast of about 4,000! Speaking parts were few, however, so early rehearsals could be in houses and halls.

The pageant took place in Victoria Park where a large stand was erected — but could spectators have heard the words at seventy yards? It was performed daily for a full week and many Bath groups watched dress rehearsals the previous week. Each performance lasted three hours. There were, of course, many problems but they were overcome. Bruce Crofts delighted his audience with the amusing asides that brought alive his deep knowledge. Businesses hesitated over giving workers time off to train as extras but City dustmen filled a vacancy and it was agreed that they could keep their specially designed underwear: there were Temperance objectors to practising marching on a route that passed eleven pubs: there was a shortage of vestal virgins but 'Miss C. is anxious to become one and so is her mother'.

Astonishingly to the 1990s, there was no idea of making money out of the pageant. Promises of funds were made but in the event ticket sales covered costs. The arrangements for performances were as impressively thorough as for the planning stages and, with good weather throughout, the Pageant was a great success. For all the amusing sidelines we must stand in awe of such organisation involving so many in the City.

JOHN EDE

JOSEPH AND JOHN PLURA IN BATH: Dr. Ann Sumner of the Holburne Museum and Trevor Fawcett, 19th March, chaired by Philippa Bishop — Together, the speakers gave fascinating accounts of the careers of the Italian sculptor, Joseph (Giuseppe) Plura, who came to Bath c.1749 and his son John who became an auctioneer here. A pioneering article 'The Pluras of Turin and Bath' by John Fleming published in the *Connoisseur* (November 1956) has provided the basis for all further research on the family. Fleming was at that date the owner of the marble *Diana and Endymion*, Joseph Plura's masterpiece that has recently been purchased by the Holburne Museum and is now without doubt the finest piece of 18C sculpture in Bath. Ann Sumner described how the sculpture was acquired for the Holburne and set the piece in its 18C context, showing how it functioned as a virtuoso performance advertising Plura's formidable skills as a carver. It was used as a show-piece both in Bath and London, where Plura moved in 1755 and died in 1756. Plura appears to have started out in Bath in the workshop

of Prince Hoare, the brother of the painter William Hoare, and is believed to have carved the full-length of Beau Nash for the Pump Room in 1752 before setting up his own statuary yard in 1753.

As Ann Sumner pointed out, if Plura did indeed produce the rather stiff *Beau Nash* it suggests he was more at ease working on a small scale, although the arms on the pediment of the Grammar School (for which he was paid £26.5.0 in 1753) are vigorously designed and carved.

After Joseph Plura's death, his widow (the Bath-born, Mary Ford) brought the young family back to Bath and her son John was to become the leading fine art auctioneer in the town in the latter part of the century, with premises in Milsom Street and John Street. As Trevor Fawcett showed, he conducted some of the most important sales of the period, including that of William Hoare's collection in 1794. Newspaper advertisements illustrate how he progressed as upholsterer and auctioneer, and overcame the blow of a serious fire on his premises in 1785. That auctioneers like Plura were well-known members of the community is clear from a poem about him published in the local press in 1793 and a song 'The Fair Bath Auctioneer' published by Dr. Harington in 1795. SUSAN SLOMAN

MOSELEY VERSUS COLLIER, 1746-47; CROSS-CLASS COURTSHIP IN THE BATH MARRIAGE MARKET: a reading by Mary Ede, following the AGM, 8 April 1998, — A chapter from Lawrence Stone's historical study of official and semi-official marriage alliances, *Uncertain Unions*, this illuminating tale derived from evidence submitted to the 18C Court of Arches over a contested claim of marriage between Arthur Collier, a 37-year-old lawyer of modest means, and Elizabeth Moseley, the 36-year-old daughter of a Staffordshire baronet. Both anxious to wed, they became acquainted at Bath in spring 1745 and despite the class difference a secret love affair blossomed. A marriage offer was accepted and then sustained even when Arthur learned that Elizabeth's £5,000 portion was not legally settled on her but depended on her ailing father's approval of her suitor. This Elizabeth was reluctant to seek for fear of her parents' refusal, though she and Arthur continued to consort at Bath in autumn 1745, and again in January and in spring 1746, by which time they were not only meeting on quiet walks about Bath, at his rooms in Wade's Passage, and clandestinely at the Moseley lodgings, but probably sleeping together. The spa furnished surprising freedoms for unmarried people to associate, but it was also full of prying eyes and at length the gossip about the pair reached the ears of Elizabeth's father. Elisabeth was whisked away to Staffordshire and Arthur sued her for the restoration of conjugal rights. But though he won his case in the lower court, this judgment was overturned on appeal, for while Arthur had the evidence of Elizabeth's letters, he never had her signature on the marriage contract he had drawn up, nor the witnesses he needed. As poignant as any contemporary novel, the story ended with Elizabeth being married off to a country squire and the whole Moseley fortune eventually going to a distant cousin for the lack of nearer heirs. Mary Ede told it to us enthrallingly.

TREVOR FAWCETT

MEMBERS' NEWS

New members: Mrs. Pauline A. Hanna and Mr. W.W. Hanna, Shirley Cottage, Beechen Cliff, Bath, BA2 4QS

Change of address: Mrs. Alexandra Kelly, 46 Box Road, Bath, BA1 7QH.

REGIONAL HISTORY CENTRE (RHC)

This new Centre has been established within the faculty of Humanities at the University of the West of England, St. Mathias Campus, Bristol, under the direction of Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming. Its purpose is to promote local history research and teaching in partnership with interested groups and individuals. The word 'regional' in the title is intended to cover Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Wiltshire and S.E. Wales. The RHC will circulate a newsletter twice a year, following the example of the former Bristol Historical Databases Project whose work it continues and develops in some respects. A programme of seminars has been initiated, and a major conference and monograph are planned on the slave trade in the Bristol region.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Judith Samuel, Jews in Bristol 226 pp., 40 illustrations, Sansom & Company, Bristol, 1997, The book discusses Bristol's role in the history of Anglo-Jewry from the medieval community before the Expulsion of 1290 and then from the resettlement in 1658 to the role thereafter played by Jews in the local community until modern times. Obtainable from the author, £17.95.

Trevor Fawcett, The Bagatelle and King James's Palace: Two Lyncombe Pleasure Gardens (with Notes on Lyncombe Spa and Wicksteed's Machine). Produced in a limited number of copies (with illustrations and sources) and available from TF at £2 a copy.

BIAS Journal no. 30 (1998) includes short articles on 'Mechanical Enterprise in 18C Bath', 'Stothert's Foundry, Southgate Street, Bath', and 'A Trial Excavation of the Suspected Site of the Caisson Lock, Combe Flay, 1997'.

Christopher Woodward, 'William Beckford and Fonthill Splendens: Early Works by Soane and Goodridge', Apollo Feb. 1998, vol. 147, pp.31-40. Contains references to Beckford's Tower and Bath Theatre Royal.

Laurence Keen, ed., 'Almost the Richest City': Bristol in the Middle Ages (Bristol Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 19, 1997).

Gerald Schuch, Weston Estates in the 19C, Bath 1997.

Trevor Fawcett, 'Bath Entertain'd: Amusements, Recreations & Gambling at the 18th-Century Spa', (Ruton, 1998). Trevor Fawcett has burrowed into Bath history and produced a choice collection of interesting nuggets. The amusements and recreations of 18th-century Bath were a mixture of the strange and the familiar. Who now understands the exclusion of members of the Corporation from events at the Assembly Rooms? — merely because they were 'in trade' ! Or the popularity of 'Breakfasting' as a social event — although it could be revived as an indoor occupation for tourists on a wet morning?

I had not realised how the arrival of 'society' drove out crude rural activities like wrestling, 'throwing at cocks' and the delightful 'running with Feet in Bags' (now only seen at children's sports), and in 1793 the Bath Improvement Act even tried to stop 'football in the street' (sic — this on p.64 is the only misprint I have noticed). These activities were replaced with 'deep play' at all forms of gambling — cards, dice, horses, roulette — the folk at Bath would bet on anything.

I imagine Trevor is saving most of his material on Societies & Clubs for another volume, but the picture of local chimney-sweeps meeting twice-weekly for games and tripe suppers certainly whets the appetite.

The longest article is on Assemblies & Assembly Rooms, but nearly as long is a fascinating account of Pleasure Gardens, an almost forgotten form of entertainment. The climate then must have been better for outdoor amusements. The section on "Rambling" highlights the lack of well-maintained paths and the existence of "no trespassing" signs — mirroring the current debate on the right to roam.

The cross references are useful, but I found myself looking for an index of people and places. The alphabetical arrangement juxtaposes such diverse amusements as Florists' Feasts and Gambling, Pleasure Gardens and Poetry Contests, Raffling and Rambling; and each subject is given just enough to encourage the reader to find out more.

H. MARY WILLS

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLICATIONS ON BATH , 1911-1996

Now available in its first draft edition, this bibliography has had a lengthy gestation. It was first conceived at a HBRG meeting in October 1994 when Matthew Woollard from the Bristol Historical Databases Project (then established on a three-year grant at the University of the West of England) told us about the Bristol bibliography, a computerised database of publications from 1911 onwards concerning Bristol. Since Bath had nothing comparable, and since the inputting of data on Bath could be absorbed within the Bristol project, we agreed (as reported in *Newsletter* 26) to produce a parallel bibliography for Bath, covering the same timespan and using the same style, format and other parameters. As far as coverage went, this meant attempting to *include* all relevant books and theses, and significant articles, pamphlets and other documents, but to *exclude* slighter works, trade directories, most business publications (e.g. annual reports and prospectuses), party political literature, programmes of events, audiovisual material and maps. In the event it sometimes proved difficult to be absolutely consistent on what to put in or leave out, especially with certain types of semi-published reports produced by or for local authority departments. Certain decisions, while having the merit of clarity, have resulted in the omission of some potentially useful items, e.g. the deliberate exclusion of pieces printed in *Bath City Life*, *Guidelines*, *HBRG Newsletter*, etc., though these could always be added later in a second edition. Similarly, certain guidebooks and other publications appearing in repeat editions have been only sampled. More to the point is that important and perfectly relevant publications must inevitably have been overlooked in this first trawl despite all the help and co-operation received from the institutions who gave free access to their collections during the search for relevant titles - Bath Central Library, Bath Record Office, the Roman Baths Museum, and the B&NES Department of Environmental Services.

The method of compiling was in theory straightforward: bibliographical details of each publication were written on 5x3 cards at Bath in the prescribed style and then passed to UWE for keyboarding and eventually printing out. In practice several difficulties arose, particularly over inadequacies in the software (which led to errors in sorting the author and subject sequences) and over the assignment of subject categories (in which the UWE team initially lacked experience). In the end the whole system of subject categories had to be largely revamped and the many subject terms reassigned. Together with the replacement of Matthew Woollard in mid-term by his UWE colleague Spencer Jordan, the problem over subject listing was a major reason for the delay in completing the first draft of the bibliography and explains why the cut-off date was extended from 1995 to 1996.

What we have then is a far-from-comprehensive but still extremely useful listing of 20th-century publications on Bath and the district five miles round. Copies of the print-out, arranged both by authors

and subjects, can be consulted in Bath Central Library and in Bath Record Office. Additionally the Library will eventually hold the database in disk format, allowing searches to be made on the whole text according to any desired keyword. (HBRG members may also purchase copies of the disk at cost price.) Now that the Bibliography is there for use, it is hoped that HBRG members will test its possibilities. But while a search of the files is likely to throw up titles new to you or perhaps half-forgotten, it will also probably reveal gaps in the data. Would you please keep a note of publications you believe should be included and pass them to Trevor Fawcett to add to an updated second edition in the future. These should include titles published 1997 onwards. Any bibliographical or keyboarding errors you notice in the present lists, and any suggestions for improvement, should also be passed on.

EXAMPLES FROM THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thomas, K., *The Bathampton I Knew*, Bath, [1990?]

Thomas, S., *Discovering Bath [for Children]*, London, Oxford University Press, 1995

Thom, C.M.J. & Thorn, F.R., *The Letters Patent of King Edward the Sixth Establishing a Free Grammar School at Bath. [Latin text and English Translation of the School Charter]*, Bath, 1972.

Thornton, J.L., 'Charles Hunnings Wilkinson, 1763 or 64-1850' *Annals of Science*, 23, 1967, 277-286

Tindall, L. & Odgers, D., 'The Conservation of Roman Rendering at the Roman Baths, Bath', *Transactions of the Association for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings*, 10, 1985, 3-9

Tomlin, R.S.O., 'Voices from the Sacred Spring', *Bath History*, 4, 1992, 7-24, 0 948975 29 6.

Tompkins, J., *Portraits of Bath. Drawings by Grace D. Bratton*, Bath, Kingsmead Press, 1976, 0 901571 78 4 (hardback) 0 901571 80 6 (paperback)

Tompkins-Keil Marble Co., *Bath Stone and its Uses*, New York, [1920s]

Toogood, S., *The Townswomen's Guilds in Bath, 1940-1990*, [Bath], [1991?]

Torrens H.S., 'The Bath Geological Collections', *Newsletter of the Geological Curators Group*, 1, 1975, 88-124.

Torrens, H.S., 'Early Maps of the Somersetshire Coal Canal', *Cartographic Journal*, 11, 1974, 45-47.

Torrens, H.S., 'Early Years of Stothert & Pitt' *Journal of the British Industrial Archaeological Society*, 9, 1976, 24-31.

[Followed by five other items by H.S. Torrens.]

Tracy, C., *A Portrait of Richard Graves*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987, 0 8020 5697 0.

THE ANNE FRANK EXHIBITION is being held at the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery from 2-30 June 1998. If readers fancy a trip to Bristol, this exhibition is well worth a visit.

It commemorates the life of Anne Frank, the author of the Diary, and ends with information about genocide in the 20C since the Second World War.

The Newsletter is compiled and typed by Judith Samuel.