



NEWSLETTER 38

JANUARY 1999

GROUP NEWS

MEETINGS HELD OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1998

ASPECTS OF MANORIAL HISTORY OF LYNCOMBE: Mike Chapman (with Elizabeth Holland) and ANCIENT BARRACKS FARM: Allan Keevil, 7 October, chaired by Trevor Fawcett: Thanks to contributions like these, packed with the findings of meticulous new research, the early history of Lyncombe and Widcombe is at last being put on a secure basis. The old manorial centre was not at Widcombe, despite the church there, nor at Prior Park, but in Lyncombe near a point where a tributary spring joined the Lyn Brook. Mike Chapman explained how the manor had developed, beginning in 970 with King Edgar's grant to Bath Abbey of lands called Clifton (after Beechen Cliff?). Under successive bishops and priors part of it became a hunting park while part was farmed by tenants. At the Dissolution the estate returned to the Crown — under Elizabeth it was overseen for her by Sir John Harington — but then passed to a royal auditor, Hugh Sexey, and thus, through his Somerset connections, into the hands of the Bruton Hospital trustees who received from it an annual rent of £120. Sequestered for a time during the Civil War, it was eventually sold off (though with fee-farm rents) and the manor regained by the Chapmans. In the 18C, while Widcombe underwent its own changes under the Bennets and Aliens, the former manor farm was transformed. The main house was rebuilt into the present Lyncombe Hall; spa and pleasure gardens came and went; and after the Chapmans the site passed to other owners — King, Maltby, and then Howse who gave some land for a Unitarian burial ground. After c.1800 buildings sprang up across the whole parish, some to the design of Harcourt Masters. Rounding off his talk, Mike Chapman just touched on these and on the Glasshouse site.

Allan Keevil then concentrated attention on Barracks Farm, one of several ancient land holdings within Lyncombe. The earliest (Roman and mediaeval) habitation may have stood at the head of the Lyn Brook, but by 1219 the hide of land acquired by the de Berewykes lay lower down the hill. This family held the property for the next two centuries, obtaining grants of two buildings plus rights to enclose from the Prior in 1256-60. It subsequently passed to the Pyland family before briefly reverting to the Priory in 1531. Enlarged by purchase to nearly three times its original 60 acres, it was later divided into an upper and a lower farm — a separation made more brutally obvious when the new turnpike of Wellsway was driven between them soon after 1800. Though Allan Keevil traced a succession of proprietors from Robert Chapman, the apothecary, (1681) onwards, he pointed out that the actual tenant farmers on the premises for some 200 years

were the Clement family. By 1788, when a ploughing competition organised by the Bath & West took place on one of the fields, it was being farmed by a keen member of that Society, Richard Clark. Some of the land was later sold, redistributed, rebuilt, or used for the turnpike, but no-one took up the suggestion that summer lodgings might be erected on the site. The old Lower Farm building remained until quite recently and in one of the final slides we saw Peter Coard's drawing if it before demolition in the 1970s.

TREVOR FAWCETT

FOUND IN THE ATTIC — NEW DRAWINGS AND PHOTOS OF BATH: David McLaughlin, 4 November, chaired by Philippa Bishop: In his talk, David McLaughlin referred to material which has been added to the collections of the City Archives. The most recent of these 'finds' were drawings offered by their private owner to the Council. David, as a member of the Spa Team, was one of the first to inspect them. Because of their importance for Bath, the Victoria and Albert Museum's Purchase Grant Fund helped with a 50% grant towards the purchase of the drawings. Some of these plans are of the new Pump Room, dated 1790, when Baldwin was City Architect. There are some later ones by Palmer which show changes to Baldwin's proposal, e.g. the addition of the shop. Of great interest at this particular time are two plans of the Cross Bath, also by Palmer and dated 1797. It was most fortuitous that they came to light during the week when the plans for the new Spa project were drawn up. They helped members of the Spa Team to support their concept that the original north facade could be re-used in the new design.

David then described a volume of photographs, donated by a German descendant of the Chapman family and now also kept in the City Archives. The photographic images are by Francis Lockey, a resident of Swainswick. He took photographs of the city between 1849 and 1861 using the calotype and wax paper process. The volume contains 46 scenes of Bath streets, 1 of Batheaston, 6 of South Wraxall and 10 of Farleigh Hungerford. These photographs are the earliest known ones of Bath and the surrounding area.

Slides which accompanied the talk underlined the importance of these drawings and photographs for future researchers. In the case of the Cross Bath plans, they had already been used as a springboard for new design.

MARIA JOYCE

MEMBERS' NEWS

Dr. Monica Baly died on 12 November. This is a sad loss of a HBRG member, known nationally for her doughty campaigning on behalf of the nursing profession and for her chief scholarly publications: Nursing and Social Change and Florence Nightingale and the Nursing Legacy. More locally she was for over twenty years a tireless battler for the interests of the Royal Crescent. Among the obituaries were those in the Bath Chronicle (17 November) and Guardian (20 November).

New members: Mrs. Angela Marks, 5 West Avenue, Oldfield Park, Bath, BA2 3QE.

Capt. Anthony A. Smith, 5 Henrietta Street, Bath, BA2 6LL.

Dr. Ann Sumner, Holburne Museum and Crafts Study Centre, Gt. Pulteney Street, Bath, BA2 4DB.

"RICHARD GAY of HAYCOMBE"

In the Baptist Quarterly, Vol. XXXVII, no. 8, October 1998,

by KERRY BIRCH

The early history of dissenters in Bath is sparsely recorded from the very nature of Dissent; illegal, underground, persecuted until the Toleration Act of 1689. Kerry Birch's article on Richard Gay of Haycombe is therefore a useful addition to our knowledge. He explores the story of Gay as it has come down in oral tradition and establishes the considerable size of the Baptist conventicle meeting at his house in Haycombe by 1669. Richard Gay was active in national Baptist life as well as the Western Association of Baptist churches. He belonged to a radical family (John Gay who supported Col. Pyne during the Commonwealth was either Richards's father or his uncle). No connection, however, has been established with the Dr. Robert Gay who leased land to John Wood in the 18th century. M.E. EDE

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above article was a unsolicited article from Mary Ede. Should any members wish to contribute to the newsletter in this way, the editor will be pleased to receive copy at any time for the following issue, March, September or January.

OTHER SOCIETIES, GROUPS, etc.

The South-West Women's History Network is a regional forum for discussion on all issues relating to women's history and the study of gender in history. It promotes research in these major topics and is interested in relevant sources of information in the south-west. Meetings, seminars, study days and an annual conference are variously held at UWE (St. Matthias Campus), Bath Spa University College or the University of Exeter and visits are made to local archives and museums. The publicity leaflet states that the Network is "always looking for people to give talks about their area of research or interest, at whatever stage and however informal". For details of membership or programme contact their Secretary, Kath Holden, 30 Charlcombe Lane, Larkhall, Bath, BA1 6NS, tel. Bath 427903.

MEETINGS OF OTHER GROUPS

University of Bristol Centre for the Historic Environment is organising a course of ten meetings on "The English Country House" on Mondays from 2.30 to 4 p.m. starting on 11 January in Holy Trinity Church, Monmouth Place., Bath. The tutor will be Roger Ashley and the fee is £42. Booking forms are available from the HBRG General Secretary.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Ken Andrews, Mr. Bowler of Bath, Victorian Entrepreneur and Engineer, (the author, 1998).

Anne Borsay, 'Returning patients to the community: disability, medicine and economic rationality before the Industrial Revolution' [Using the 18C Bath Hospital as a case study], Disability and Society, vol.13, no. 5, (1998) pp. 645-63.

Mike Chapman, John Hawker and Elizabeth Holland, The J. Charlton Map of Lyncombe and Widcombe, 1799, Bath, Survey of Old Bath, 1998. A 34-page booklet discussing the map drawn for the Bruton estate (plus a fold-out reproduction).

Mike Chapman and Elizabeth Holland, eds., The Survey of Bath and District, no. 10, October 1998, 32 pp. of news and short articles (incl. John Hawkes on Prior Park 16C-18C, Stuart Burroughs on the patent windmill at the Fuller's Earth Works, Marek Lewcun on the city wall, and Elizabeth Holland on the Hetling site).

James Crathorne, The Royal Crescent Book of Bath, London, Collins and Brown, 1998. A picture book with a derivative text.

John Ede and Rowland Symons, Heraldry in the Vault of Bath Abbey, an illustrated, 16-page pamphlet, full of detail, including a complete listing of the shields.

Mary Ede, Bath High School, 1875-1998, Bath, Ralph Allen Press for the Bath High School Old Girls' Guild, 1998). Review promised in the March issue.

Trevor Fawcett, 'Hospital, casino, holiday resort, heritage site: the 18C transformation of Bath', The Historian, no. 59, autumn 1998, pp.4-8.

Brian J. Gibbons, 'Mysticism and mechanism: the religious contrast of George Cheyne's representation of the body and its ills' British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, vol.21, no. 1, spring, 1998, pp.1-23.

Rachel Kennedy, Between Bath and China: Trade and Culture in the West Country, 1680 to 1840, Bath, Museum of East Asian Art, 1998.

Robin Anna Lambert, 'Bath et son patrimoine architectural: etude critique de sa protection au 20e siècle. These, Universite de Paris I, Pantheon-Sorbonne, 1998 (6 parts in 3 boxes). A useful doctoral thesis tracing architectural conservation at Bath in 8 stages between 1900 and 1996.

Jean Manco, Spirit of Care: the 800-Year Story of St. John's Hospital, Bath, Bath, the Hospital, 1998. A well-illustrated hardback with much new material.

Bath History, vol. 7. 1998, ed. Brenda Buchanan, published by Millstream Books. Articles by Christopher Woodward on the prehistory of architectural conservation; Jean Manco on Saxon Bath; Trevor Fawcett on science lecturing 1724-1800; Hilary Arnold on Margaret Graves's letters from Bath 1793-1807; Deirdre Le Fay on Mrs. Lillington's funeral and Jane Austen's legacy; Michael Forsyth on the architect Edward Davis; Owen Ward on Isaac Pitman and the 4th Phonetic Institute; Sally Festing on Charles Richter and Bath Cabinet Makers and Angus Buchanan on floods at Bath.

TITLE DEEDS TO COUNCIL-OWNED PROPERTIES

Members will be aware that in 1997 the legal staff of Bath & North-East Somerset Council proposed moving the collection of title-deeds of Council-owned properties from the Guildhall to Keynsham.

A lack of storage accommodation in Keynsham resulted in the proposed re-location being postponed, but not abandoned. In October 1998 I was notified that, as part of large-scale office re-organization, the removal of title deeds would now be going ahead. The memo. reads:

"I understand that there is a demand from the public for access to deeds for research purposes, and Legal Services have undertaken to provide supervised access to deeds at Riverside as required. This may of course inconvenience Bath-based researchers who have become accustomed to having access to the deeds in Bath, but in my view this is more than counterbalanced by the requirements of Legal Services to have deeds and files conveniently situated at their main centre of operations."

The time-table for this move is April 1999.

A meeting between the Head of Libraries, Arts and Archives, and the Legal staff involved is promised, in order to re-iterate the concerns expressed by myself and many HBRG members.

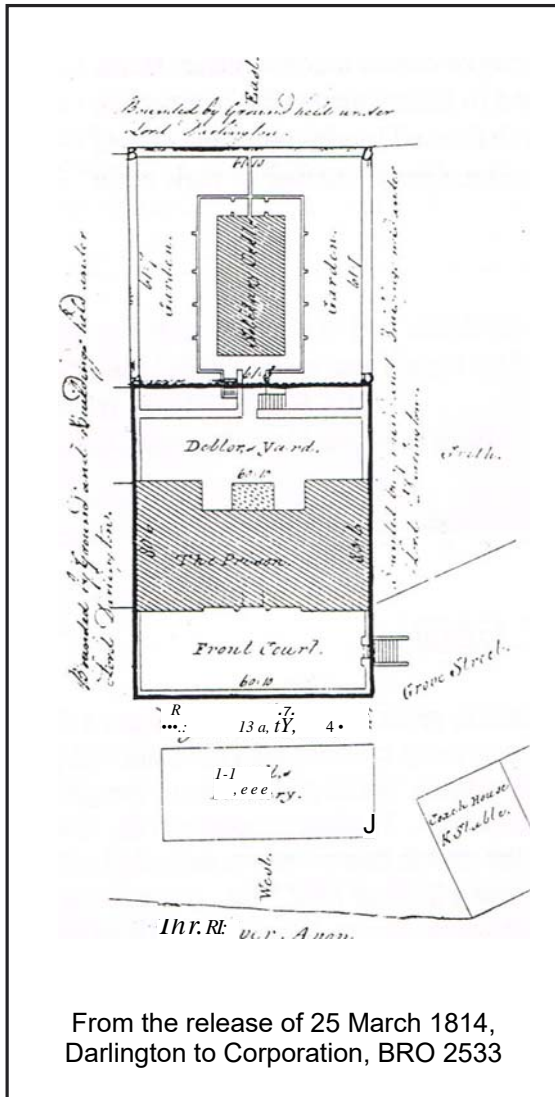
COLIN JOHNSTON, Archivist
Bath & North-East Somerset Council

GROVE STREET GAOL

Curiously little detailed work has been done on Bath's successive prisons at St Mary Northgate (1583?-c.1773) and Grove Street (c.1773-1842), the former sometimes being confused with the Bridewell (built 1630-4 near the future Bluecoat School site and alternatively called a 'house of correction', though more in the sense of a workhouse than as a place to confine malefactors). Holding prisoners in the tower of redundant St Mary's — with the grammar school housed in the church below — was a makeshift solution that in John Wood's words 'turned the HOUSE of GOD ... into a DEN of THIEVES'. Despite periodic repair and reinforcement (e.g. in 1683 and 1733) it was never wholly secure. Two deserters held there in 1758, for example, sawed through the window bars and killed the gaoler's maidservant in a desperate attempt to escape, and in 1766 all the prisoners got away by the time-honoured method of forcing the bars and letting themselves down on knotted sheets. Conditions inside were miserable. One inmate complained in 1771 that he'd been held there almost a year, lacked a bed to lie on and sometimes went short of food.

William Pulteney's plan to develop Bathwick thus provided an opportunity to build a gaol expressly for the purpose. His negotiations with the Corporation and other property owners from 1768 onwards enabled him to exchange and purchase the land he needed to create Bridge Street and Pulteney Bridge while in return the Corporation obtained water rights and a plot of ground (measuring 60' x 80') in Boatstall Mead across the river on which to erect a municipal prison. Pulteney tried to dictate the prison architecture by commissioning plans (now held by the Soane Museum) from Robert Adam, but the Corporation preferred a local man and perhaps a cheaper design. But whom did they turn to? Ison states categorically the plan was by Thomas Wan Atwood. He was certainly on the Council's planning committee and, later on, in December 1773, was asked to pass accounts for both new water supply and prison (Jane Root has suggested that the young Thomas Baldwin may well have provided Atwood with the actual designs. On

the other hand Richard Jones, the city surveyor, declares in his usually accurate memoirs that he planned and began the prison, so perhaps Atwood subsequently usurped Jones's place? At all events the Mayor laid the foundation stone on 7 May 1772 and construction was probably complete by late 1773, with the transfer of prisoners from St Mary's being made across the still unfinished Pulteney Bridge. Ison's account of the prison design is somewhat deficient. The main block actually straddled the centre of the site. It was preceded by a raised forecourt or terrace at the level of what nowadays appears as the rusticated first floor but which was then reached from the street by a flight of stairs on its south flank. Sometime in the 19C (possibly c.1849 when the then vacant block was converted into a police barracks) the forecourt was removed, so exposing the basement as we see it today and removing a severe blockage from Grove Street. The initial raising of the forecourt may have been in the realisation that this was a damp, flood-prone site — as the prison-reformer John Howard recorded when he saw over the building about 1774 and noted also



the 'offensive sewers' in the debtors' exercise yard behind the prison block. Howard found that petty offenders were held in four rooms on the ground floor (i.e. the rusticated storey) and debtors on the two or three floors above, with two debtors' common rooms (male and female) on the second floor and a workshop in the attic storey where debtor prisoners could make appropriate items for sale (even, in the case of one former Wicksteed employee, engraved seals).

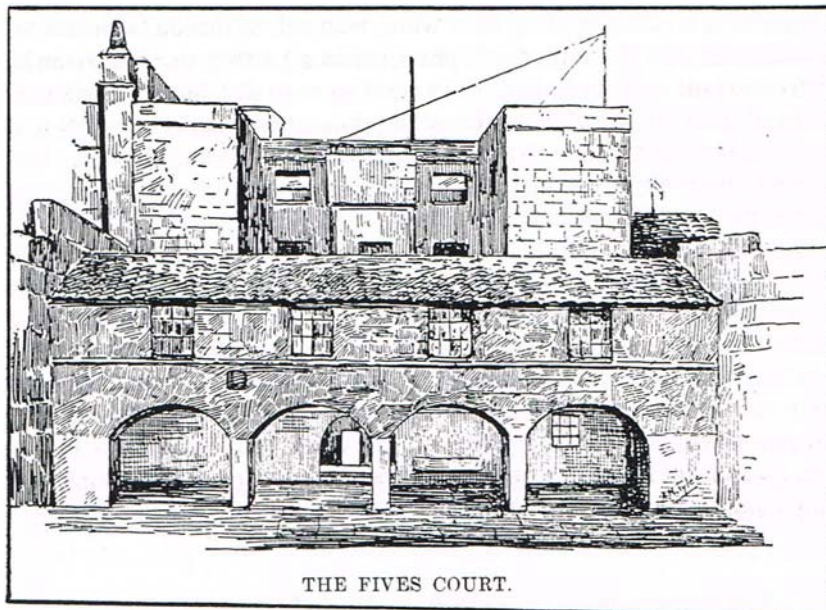
In September 1780 the Corporation leased from Pulteney a further 61' x 61' plot behind the prison and walled it round as an extra court. Was this an insurance policy against future demands on accommodation? After the recent Gordon Riots eight suspects had needed to be held safely in the prison for several days pending their removal to Shepton Mallet gaol, while one of the convicted rioters later spent his last night in Grove Street before he was hanged. Those charged with felonies were imprisoned at Bath only briefly before going before the city justices and then being committed to Shepton or Ilchester, the county gaols, to await trial. (One such example is an Irishman accused of robbing a house in Queen Square in 1783 who managed to escape with the aid of two women accomplices.) Otherwise the prison held people serving their time for misdemeanours (minor offences) and — easily the majority — for debt or, in some cases, inability to pay the gaoler's fees. After the 1783 escape the prison was repaired; later the gaoler's room was, it seems, installed beside the main entrance as another safety measure; and in 1794 the city architect Palmer raised all the perimeter walls by three

feet with *chevaux de Frise* spikes on top. Only in 1801, however, was the rear court that had been leased in 1780 finally built on when Palmer erected a felon's block of 'solitary cells' running east-west. The number of inmates was increasing and climbed again after 1805 once the Bath Small Debt Act allowed the city's Court of Requests to handle debtors of up to £10 (previously only £2), increased its jurisdiction to 35 parishes and empowered it to hand down sentences of up to 200 days, though some prisoners served even longer. By 1812 there was already talk of acquiring adjacent ground and freeholds from the Darlington (formerly Pulteney) estate, and converting existing premises (e.g. the damp basement) to better use. The bill for bedsteads, bedding, prison clothing and the basic prison diet (plus salaries of gaoler, turnkey, matron, surgeon and chaplain — now all paid appointments) continued to escalate, and between 1819 and 1822 the Gaol Committee not only considered adding an extra storey to the solitary cells but risked

purchasing adjoining land to the north from the innkeeper Eleazor Pickwick for £834 in order to extend the prison. Yet something more radical was needed. With the frank admission that the place was inadequate and disorderly, the Gaol Committee recommended to the City Council in December 1822 that they finance a completely new building. What effectively stalled further action was a new Gaol Act (1823), which seemed to require the city to build a larger prison that it could afford. Moreover this would amount to a supplementary *county* prison, since the three inner Bath parishes had lately been forced to start paying a Somerset rate, with arrears back to 1820, largely to cover the costs of imprisonment and trials of Bath offenders at county establishments. Ultimate responsibility for running the prison, including the appointment of the gaoler, had at the same time passed from the two Bath Sheriffs to the County Sheriff.

By 1830 the work load at Bath's Court of Requests had mounted to 80 cases a week and pressure on prison accommodation was severe. It was then compounded by the establishment of the long-demanded Quarter Sessions Court at Bath in April 1837 which strained not just the limited accommodation but the costly prisoner transfers between Bath and Shepton, obliging the Corporation to invest in a special guarded caravan. The site of the existing prison was now considered 'objectionable', but the city architect Manners estimated it would cost £30,000 to build a new one to take 200. Again the possibility of spreading onto adjacent land was investigated and rejected, as was a site already acquired for £1100 near Devonshire Buildings. In 1839 the Gaol Committee evaluated four other sites offered, one at Odd Down, another by Oldfield Lodge and two at Twerton, finally settling for a Twerton site despite its difficult approach. Until the new prison was ready the old one had to be expensively maintained. The estimate for the first six months of 1839 alone came to over £1100, and considerable sums were spent over the next three years on physical alterations, additional turnkeys (warders), and supplies of food, clothing and other consumables. This still failed to satisfy the Recorder who presided at the Quarter Sessions. The old prison, he insisted in 1841, was 'altogether unfit for the reception of the miserable people who are sent there', an evil that had been staring Bathonians in the face for years. Apart from minor tinkering there was little that could be done at that stage, but Twerton Gaol was rising fast and was finally ready to receive prisoners transferred from Grove Street in late August 1842, six years before Bath's Court of Requests was turned into a county court. Grove Street Prison had survived nearly 70 years but the structure then lived on as a police barracks. Twerton lasted only about half that span, closing in summer 1878.

Rear view of the Police Barracks from the Bath and County Graphic May 1897.
The building was then being used as quarters for unmarried constables.



DAME LINDSEY'S FIRST ROOMS

Between c.1697 and c.1715 Dame (Mary) Lindsey was a celebrity singer at the London theatres and concert rooms, especially in ballad and Italianate opera. She may well have performed at Bath during her later public career and was certainly frequenting the spa by October 1714 when Alexander Pope writes of enjoying her company. The Bath connection therefore long antedates 1730 when she became the first manager of the new Assembly Rooms built by John Wood on Terrace Walk for the London druggist, Humphrey Thayer. Usually called Lindsey's Rooms at the time, these were in fact not the first such premises at Bath to be named after her, since there is abundant evidence of a Lindsey establishment some ten years earlier.

Take the comment of Thomas Smith of Shaw House, Melksham, who during a Bath visit in May 1721 called on Dr. Cheyne, found he had company and stayed for the entertainment, which included singing by one Mrs. Lindsey 'that keeps the Gaming House in Bath'. Indeed more than a gaming house, for Thomas Coke of Holkham, down in Bath from Norfolk that same spring, hired Dame Lindsey's on one occasion for an entertainment and supper, with music for dancing, at a charge of about £27 — more or less what hiring Harrison's Rooms cost him a couple of weeks later. Again, in August 1721, Sarah Osborn wrote that she had left her brother dancing at a ball in Bath 'and went with some Ladys to Lindseys where I sat down to G[u]inea Commerce ...' A few days later she was there once more, venturing out, despite a feverish cold, to meet 'all our great Ladys at Lindseys'. Around the same date the Countess of Bristol, who was undergoing spa treatment at Bath, likewise indulged in the amusements now and then. 'I have been but three times at Lindseys since I came, & once at Harissons', she wrote home on 16 August. And on her return to Bath two years later, she and a few friends were entertained privately by Dame Lindsey on Sunday (normally Lindsey's free day) when her hostess sang 'like a nightingale' to a lute accompaniment. Between these dates, in summer or early autumn 1722, there had been an outbreak of smallpox at Bath. This had driven the visitors away and persuaded Harrison to close the Assembly Rooms earlier than usual, 'he not thinking it worth his while' according to another witness, Mrs. Francis Vaughan. But by later November the smallpox was virtually over, customers were returning, and Mrs. Vaughan reported that 'wee have a good dell of company in town and thay met every night ither at hayis rooms, linsees or cornishis'.

Where these rooms all were remains to be proved, but some facts are known. Thomas Cornish, a milliner, rented the largest premises in the row of 'raffling' shops on the south side of Gravel Walks (the future Orange Grove), while the goldsmith Philip Hayes occupied the adjoining shop which Cornish himself would spread into in 1724. Though conveniently located, just round the corner from the Assembly Rooms, these were quite small buildings and could have accommodated only a modest social gathering, so it is possible that the venues mentioned in 1722 may have been elsewhere. (Could 'comishis', for example have been instead the double property that Richard Cornish held by 1716 near the old Abbey Gate?) More mysterious is the location of Dame Lindsey's address. At first sight one candidate for this might seem to be the impressive house erected early in 1720 by the then Mayor of Bath, Alderman William Collibee, against the north side chancel of the Abbey Church, its fine pilastered front facing onto Gravel Walks. There was definitely a later connection, for we know that in 1728 Collibee sublet these premises to Francis, 2ⁿd Lord Hawley, who eventually married Dame Lindsey's sister, Elizabeth Hayes. Moreover, in position and quality the building would have been suited to a high-class casino.

Unfortunately the hypothesis is rather spoilt by John Wood, who tells us that on his return to Bath in May 1727 he was at first much occupied with Dame Lindsey's plans, which apparently involved re-building her 'Assembly House' during which period she temporarily lodged at a small house in Stall Street. Wood's chronology of events, which has to be deduced from his tale of the unfortunate Sylvia, is not wholly clear but it suggests that Dame Lindsey's original assembly room or gaming house 'went by the name of *De la Mains* from the builder and former Occupier of it'. No property-owning De la Main has yet turned up in Corporation or Kingston records before the 1760s (and then only in the area of Cross Bath Lane and Westgate Street, including the *Bunch of Grapes* tavern), but if Dame Lindsey's new room was strictly a rebuild, then it seems likely her first one did stand on the site subsequently occupied by Thayer's Assembly Rooms of 1730. On the other hand, if De la Main had originally built his house here, it would have intruded onto the old bowling green, a fact one might have expected to find documented. Whatever the answer, Dame Lindsey's first casino was in existence by spring 1721 and quite possibly earlier. To judge by the notable company it attracted, it clearly offered serious competition to Harrison's, the established Assembly Rooms. It might well explain why Harrison decided around this time to improve his own still relatively small premises by building on a ballroom. That would be superior to anything his rival could show and might see off the threat to his lucrative monopoly. In the end, of course, it may simply have persuaded Dame Lindsey to join Thayer and Wood in the their own large project.

The Newsletter is compiled and typed by Judith Samuel.