



NEWSLETTER 42

MAY 2000

GROUP NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 5 April 2000

1. Nineteen members attended. Apologies were sent by Samantha Baber, Douglas Bernhardt, Doreen Collyer, Kirsten Elliott, Andrew Fletcher, Angela Marks, Michael Rowe and Owen Ward.
2. The minutes of the AGM held on 7 April 1999 were confirmed.
3. In her chairman's report, Philippa Bishop, referring to the meetings which had taken place during the year, singled out for special mention the presentation by a panel of three members on the theme of Funerals. As this had attracted a good audience and stimulated a lively discussion it was clearly a format to be repeated in future programmes. The answers to the questionnaire sent out last autumn had established that in the main the number and type of meetings were broadly acceptable to most members and that there were few problems of transport or timing which prevented anyone from attending. The Questionnaire had also elicited the names of those who would be willing to contribute to the proposed Street Gazetteer of Bath. This was a most worthwhile and appropriate project for members of the Group to promote; and later in the agenda, Trevor Fawcett would be reporting on its progress.
4. David Crellin handed out copies of the new leaflet/brochure which he had devised and printed. Following its distribution to the Library and other relevant outlets, it had already been the means of attracting four new members to join the Group. His proposal to publicise future meetings by sending a news item to the Bath Evening Chronicle was approved; and he was thanked for all his efforts to make the work of the Group better known. After some debate it was decided that visitors who attended meetings should be asked to make a contribution: minimum suggested donation £1.
5. Trevor Fawcett described the progress made so far in implementing the proposal for a comprehensive Street Gazetteer of Bath. As a follow-up to the two preliminary meetings of interested parties last October and December, a small sub-committee had been appointed to work out standards of procedure and ways of establishing the database. A pro forma document was being produced, which would provide guidance for researchers in presenting the material they had gathered. Anyone willing to take part should contact him with suggestions as to the area which he or she would prefer to research. It was stressed that at this early stage of the project it would be difficult to formulate exact rules about the scope of the material to be collected. There would always be an opportunity in the future to add further information where appropriate.
6. David Crellin reported what had been achieved during the year on a number of digitising projects in which he was concerned. One of the most important was his voluntary work undertaken in collaboration with Bath Central Library to digitise photographs and prints in their collection. He showed some impressive examples of these images, which could be accessed — and acquired for a fee — by researchers on the library database (though not currently on the Internet).

7. Colin Johnston reported on the successful joint bid by B&NES (Archives), North Somerset Council (Libraries), and Somerset County Council (Archives), to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to create a computerised database of their combined catalogues which would be available on the Internet and at selected public outlets. The grant of £227,000 in total over a three—year period would be supplemented by funding from the three local authorities to bring the amount up to the £300,000 necessary for the completion of the work. A trained archivist was to be appointed for two years to catalogue unlisted material at Bath; and other staff employed at Somerset Record Office. An integral part of the project would be the invaluable contribution made by volunteer groups and individuals. One of the conditions attached to the grant was the formulation of an archive strategy, with its provisions to be implemented within five years. Colin thanked the Group for its letter of support which, together with similar letters from other local groups, had undoubtedly contributed to the success of the bid.
8. Colin Johnston, now speaking as Treasurer of the the HBRG, presented the Statement of Accounts for 1999-2000, which showed the income from subscriptions slightly less than the previous year, and the bank interest considerably less, due to the lower Bank Rate. On the other hand — and despite an increase in the charge for room hire — the total expenditure was less than the previous year (particularly in the case of printing, stationery and stamps.). This resulted in a slightly lower deficit of expenditure over income of £52.30. Although the Group's assets were somewhat diminished, the balance of £601.35 remained a healthy sum, thus obviating the need for any increase in subscription rates.
9. Colin Johnston, who had served for many years on the Committee and for the past eight years as Treasurer, had signified his wish to retire. He was warmly thanked for everything he had done to keep the finances in such excellent order. Since no nominations had been received to fill his post, it was proposed, and confirmed, that David Crellin had agreed to combine the posts of General Secretary and Treasurer. The rest of the Committee were re-elected en bloc. Judith Samuel announced that she would be giving up as Editor of the Newsletter at the end of the year, i.e. by the time of the next A.G.M.

Once the formal business had been concluded, wine and juice were served before Philippa Bishop's talk on "Queen Charlotte's Visit to Bath in 1817" (see pp. 6).

MEETINGS HELD JANUARY - APRIL 2000

ASHES TO ASHES, DUST TO DUST, Michael Rowe, David Crellin and Kirsten Elliott, 5 January 2000, chaired by Philippa Bishop: The idea of a meeting devoted to a single theme — in this case, funerals — with contributions from three researchers, was an innovation that proved to be a great success. Michael Rowe began by describing the extremely grand funeral in Westminster Abbey of William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath, who died of a chill in 1764, at the age of eighty, after returning from Spa in Belgium. His body was transported from Bath House, Piccadilly, to the Abbey, where it lay in the Jerusalem Chapel until the burial service could be conducted by Zachary Pearce, the Dean of Westminster. It eventually took place at night, when the Earl's body was interred in the space he had reserved for himself in the Islip Chapel, alongside the graves of other members of the family (which he had previously had removed from their original resting place in St. Martin's in the Fields). Their names are recorded on a plain slab with the family arms. The fact the the burial shroud was of linen rather than the standard wool added an extra cost to the funeral, which the accounts show amounted in all to the huge sum at that time of 111 guineas.

By contrast, the interment in 1808 of his descendant, Henrietta Laura, Countess of Bath, was held in the daytime and cost a good deal less, though marked by similar pomp. After her death in Brighton at

the age of forty-one, the Countess was brought to Bath House in Piccadilly and from there was taken to the Abbey in a procession formed of thirteen mourning coaches and an additional sixteen coaches belonging to those of the nobility who were in town at the time. Wrapped in her shroud of satin and point lace, within her lead coffin enclosed in a wooden shell, she was buried beneath a plain slab in the rather gloomy South Cloister, close by Leoni's monument to her grandfather, Daniel Pulteney.

Following these two aristocratic ceremonies in London, our second speaker, David Crellin, moved to a middle-class funeral in Bath that of Frederick Dowding, city solicitor and one-time Mayor, who died on 3 September 1861, aged sixty-six. He had asked to be buried at St. Saviour's, where a client of his, a certain Ann Tanner (who had left him a substantial bequest in her will) had also given land to the church. Despite this request, he was in fact buried in Lansdown Cemetery, on the morning of 7 September, after a service held in the mortuary chapel (that is the Tower built by William Beckford, 1825-7, and converted into a chapel after 1848.) According to the report in the Bath Chronicle, the mourners seem to have been exclusively male: neither of Dowding's two sisters were mentioned as having been present. Because of his standing in the city, the funeral cortege linked up at the bottom of Lansdown Hill with yet another procession of carriages bearing local dignitaries, members of the legal profession, etc., who had come to pay their respects.

Our third speaker, Kirsten Elliott, took as her subject the funeral of Robert Stickney Blayne on 15 December 1897. Born in 1816, a colonial merchant who had retired to Bath, Blayne was active in both local and national affairs: first as councillor for Lansdown in 1872, then Mayor in 1873, JP in 1875 and he was knighted in 1890. Standing for Parliament in 1885, he converted what had been a Radical majority of 353 into a Conservative majority of 237. The Bath Chronicle reported the funeral of this prominent citizen in great detail. The leading carriage of the first eight (which bore the immediate family mourners) was in fact empty except for the floral tributes. Then came Lady Blayne, Sir Robert's second wife, with the children of his first marriage, followed by the relatives of his first wife, Constance Moger, and followed in turn by the executors of his will and his London solicitor, by his doctor and his Bath solicitor, by the servants and the tenants. The cortege, after winding along Sion Road and down the hill, was met by further carriages waiting in Milsom Street with civic dignitaries and representatives of a number of local interests: the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Archdeacon of Bath, the Mayor, councillors and magistrates, the Inspector of Weights and Measures, members of the Conservative Association, the Fire Brigade, the Bath and County Club, the Avon Rowing Club, the Mineral Water Hospital, the Friendly Brothers of St. Patrick, the YMCA, the Bluecoat School and so on. In this case the cortege was moving in the opposite direction from the Dowding funeral, since it came down from Lansdown and proceeded toward the Abbey, where the service was held, before the interment in Locksbrook Cemetery. Blinds were drawn down over shop windows and people lined the streets to watch the procession pass: the paper noted in particular "the silence of that great crowd". The exhaustive list given of the floral tributes — which included (among many others) white carnations, Parma violets, 'choice exotica', hyacinths, azaleas and chrysanthemums — underlined the Victorians' pride in the products of their hothouses and their love of conspicuous display. The meeting ended with a lively discussion from the floor.

PHILIPPA BISHOP

NEW WORK ON ROMAN BATH: Peter Davenport, 2 February, chaired by Marek Lewcun: The speaker, Director of Excavations for Bath Archaeological Trust, gave an illustrated account of some of the most recent archaeological excavations and discoveries in the city and the major advances they have made towards answering some old questions. New thinking on the laying out of the Roman town was explained, together with some less traditional ideas which have come to the forefront of current thinking.

A plan of the city walls, mostly Roman but partly rebuilt during the medieval period, showed that the use and detail of the northern half of the Roman town remains almost entirely unknown, with only a few 19C discoveries indicating that the north-west quadrant, at least, contained some fine buildings. More recent work, however, in the southern half of the town, has shown that in the first two centuries this area, at least, stayed a largely open cobbled area with the only structures appearing to support the temple and bathing establishment, suggesting that Bath began life as a pilgrimage centre sitting on its own in the countryside. This theory was first hinted at in 1986 when part of a pipeclay figurine of a dog was found during excavations west of the Temple. Not long after, during excavations in advance of the first attempt to revitalise the spa in 1989, a near complete dog figurine was recovered from the bottom of an early Roman ditch crossing the Beau Street site. Dogs were important in Celtic religion and were associated with medicine, healing and the goddess Diana.

The most recent excavations on the spa site have revealed that an early Roman road had existed parallel with the ditch, running from north west to south east, and that these were later built upon by structures, including one 150 feet long, on a new north-south line. The buildings do not appear to be domestic, and a public use seems most likely. Floor levels relating to the later Roman period were largely truncated by the 18C and 19C work by John Wood the younger and Decimus Burton respectively, but these themselves merit interest in their own right, with Burton's design including a floor supported hypocaust-style over a large spa water storage tank, which would have provided natural heating to the rooms above and around it.

Concurrent with work at the spa, less publicised excavations in the nearby cellars of Bellott's Hospital were revealing similar results. Bellott's also produced a Roman road, this time on the later north-south alignment and standing proud from a gravelled open area to its west. A large structure to its east was later downgraded in the 4C to receive a blacksmith's workshop. This was found very much as it had been subsequently abandoned 1,600 years ago, leaving behind a large block of limestone on which an anvil had once stood and waste slag, awaiting either recycling or disposal, banked up against the walls. The discoveries at Bellott's Hospital bore a remarkable resemblance to those at the Abbey Heritage Centre in 1993, where a road was also found raised above a gravelled area surrounding it and where later Roman activity included pewter working, almost certainly serving the temple and bathing complex. The overall results from the spa and Bellott's Hospital sites, together with the 19C archaeological records made by James Irvine when the original Royal United Hospital was built between them, have added substantially to the known layout and understanding of this quadrant of the walled Roman area. Combined with the presence of later buildings erected on the temple precinct, there is now evidence to indicate a change in attitude to the religious centre. There are similar thoughts elsewhere in Roman Britain, and in London, for example, there is evidence that the walled area was largely empty in the 4C.

Outside the walls in Bath, it has long been realised that, with all the Roman roads heading towards a confluence at the far end of Walcot Street and the long history of discoveries in the area, that it was here that the actual living town was located. Excavations between 1989 and 1992 at Nelson Place and Hat and Feather Yard enabled the first scientific examination of the structures here. Narrow strip buildings were fronted by a colonnade alongside what was probably the road from London reaching the confluence of routes into Bath. In the very earliest period a road had branched off towards Bathwick via a river crossing, before being built over to include a blacksmith's workshop. Not far to the south, on-going excavations and observations at the former Aldridges' auctioneers site have yielded similar results, with strip buildings terraced into the hillside and late Roman industrial activity including a potter's kiln and associated by-products. One wall here survived to a height of 24 courses, and while most of it remained buried, it would appear that its top was still exposed in the 17C. An unexpected discovery was that of a small group of isolated burials adjacent to the wall, one of which was in a lead coffin and attracted the interest of the producers of BBC's Meet the Ancestors.

Still outside the walls, investigations in advance of the next contemporary development, at the old tramsheds site on Walcot Street which will be accompanied by further archaeological work, has demonstrated that ribbon development gradually led to the religious and town components of Roman Bath being linked together. Beyond both, the fortunate few of the population lived in villas. Previously unknown examples do not come to light frequently, but one such example has done so at the former Oldfield Boys School site on Wells Road, where the complex afforded at least one mosaic and a bath house. Other villas close to the town, which sometimes evolved from farmsteads, are already known at Norfolk Crescent and the Lower Common, and together they may have once belonged to those who played a role in the religious and town centres over which they would have had a fine uninterrupted view of their achievements, which we so eagerly search for and continually learn about today.

MAREK LEWCUN

17C AND 18C BATH GOLDSMITHS: Alexandra Kelly, 1 March, chaired by Michael Rowe — This talk brought together the results of recent research into the history of goldsmithing in Bath, largely concentrating on the 17C and 18C. Although there had been a mint in the city as early as the 10C, hardly any information about it seems to have survived from the medieval period. Not until the beginning of the 17C, when general prosperity in the West Country stimulated the growth of a number of provincial mints in centres round the region, did records begin to proliferate and thus make the task of the researcher easier. In the early 1620s the Reeve family of silversmiths moved from Crewkerne to Bath; and by 1623 Spencer Reeve was settled in premises fronting Stall Street, from which he produced mostly smallware. His son George (1623-76) carried on his father's work, and achieved greater public prominence: he was elected to the City Council, and was eventually buried in the Abbey where his grave is marked by a brass memorial plaque. George's son Matthew further carried on the same tradition, also being elected to the Council. However, the strong vein of Puritanism which characterised the family caused him to be tried for treason during the reign of James II. Although acquitted and readmitted to the Council in 1687, he decided to emigrate. He removed the whole family to Barbados, where eventually his son, George, was to continue the business.

Other names of silver workers in Bath during the last half of the 17C and the first half of the 18C include John Sherston (c.1665-1700); Philip Hayes (who came from Marlborough, settled in Bath in No. 21 Orange Grove and is remembered chiefly for the plate he made for Queen Anne in 1704; John Elderton, who came from Frome to Bath and Philip Masters, whose premises were in Wade's Passage and whose son, Benedict, made filigree work his speciality.

By the end of the first quarter of the 18C, with the rapid increase in Bath's popularity as a spa and as a centre of fashion, a number of immigrant Huguenot craftsmen decided that it was in their interests to leave London and settle in a flourishing provincial city like Bath. One such was Peter Goulet, who had a shop in Orange Grove and who trained several apprentices. Another was Paul Bertrand, married to Mary Deards, the daughter of a London toymaker. The tendency now was to diversity, producing and selling a variety of articles which would attract the tourist market. Moses Roubel, based in Ladymead, advertised himself as jeweller as well as goldsmith. Henry Chilcot — whose premises were successively in Stall Street, then Orange Grove, and finally Green Street — advertised his daughter, Mary, as specialising in 'hair' work (that is pictures and devices ingeniously woven out of hair for rings and lockets). By 1800 a typical goldsmithing business was the kind run by William Evill, who had his workshop in Borough Walls for the manufacture of items like wedding rings, thimbles and watches, as well as retail outlets elsewhere for selling these and other goods.

PHILIPPA BISHOP

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S VISIT TO BATH, 1817: Philippa Bishop, 5 April, chaired by Trevor Fawcett. After Queen Anne's stay in 1703 no crowned British monarch graced the spa for over a century until Queen Charlotte came for the cure in 1817. By then the Regency had been in effect for six years and the 73-year-old Queen no longer wielded much power outside the royal household, but in general she still commanded popular affection as a fecund mother and the dutiful consort of the now incapacitated George III. On 3 November 1817, having made fast progress from Windsor, the royal party reached Bath half-an-hour before the welcoming illuminations were due to be lit. Their superior lodgings in Sydney Place were ready however, and there the Queen rested the next day before the public appearances began — first at the Pump Room, and then on the afternoon of 6 November at a ceremonial reception at the Guildhall which went ahead despite the last minute report that the Queen's granddaughter, Princess Charlotte, had produced a still-born child. Worse news followed that evening as the Duke of Clarence (the future William IV) was delivering a rambling speech, again at the Guildhall, to the Mayor's guests. The Princess too lay dead, the Prince Regent's only legitimate offspring and hence the repository of future dynastic hopes. Within 48 hours the Queen was back at Windsor for the funeral and Bath was sharing in the national mourning. And then, against expectation, she returned to Bath without fuss or military escort for a further four weeks. During this time she regularly took a sedan to the Pump Room to drink the waters and hold informal levees with local worthies (admitted by ticket or kept at a distance by a chalked line on the floor). Though she failed to make full use of royal pews installed at the Abbey or Theatre, the Queen did tour Bristol in a carriage and attend the Mansion House. there, while the artistic Princess Elizabeth viewed Bailbrook House, a collection of Hewlett flower paintings at Smallcombe (now Oakwood), and the antiquities in the Bath Street museum. The Duke of Clarence meanwhile did the honours at a public ball and received the freedom of Bath. Queen Charlotte returned to Windsor in time for Christmas and lived on another year. By the time she died the younger eligible royals were all being hurriedly married off to try and preserve the succession by another heir. The successful outcome of that would be Queen Victoria. TREVOR FAWCETT

MEMBERS' NEWS

We welcome the following members:

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