



NEWSLETTER 7

SEPTEMBER 1988

GROUP NEWS

1. Enclosed with this Newsletter and List of Members is the programme of meetings for 1988-89. Please note the varying Wednesday and Thursday dates and the fact that two meetings occur in the second week of the month. We hope to have coffee available before all meetings this season except on 4 May. As usual the occasional guest is welcome at meetings but please remember to give a token 50p to the Treasurer or other Committee member for any non-member attending.
2. The Group's Committee has now sent its comments on the County of Avon's Discussion Paper on the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (see Newsletter 6). Please ask the Chairman if you wish to read our response which made several objections to the proposals.
3. Questions are invited (in writing) well ahead of the brains trust on historic Bath buildings arranged for 5 January. This is an excellent opportunity to put your inquiries to the panel of speakers, particularly on the fabric and social use of local buildings. How much brick was used in Bath before 1800? Why were so many Georgian 1st-floor windows lowered in the 19th century? What were Victorian sanitary arrangements like? How were servants accommodated? Whatever your queries, please pass them to the Secretary not later than 7th December.

MEETINGS HELD MAY-JUNE 1988

On 5 May Dr. Ken James spoke of the development of 18th-century concert-life in Bath from its rather ad hoc beginnings (e.g. musical accompaniments to bathing and banqueting; musicians visiting under private patronage), through the founding of the Pump Room band in 1710 and Assembly Room concerts by 1725, to the splendid music occasions of the second half of the century performances by Italian musicians and celebrities like J.C. I .ch and Arne, the arrival of Herschel and his rivalry with the musical entrepreneur Linley, and finally the ascendancy of Rauzzini in the later decades when Haydn visited the city. Tape-recordings of pieces by Vivaldi, Chilcot, Handel, J.C. Bach and Haydn interspersed Ken James's talk, illustrating contemporary music idioms and changing styles, and at the end questions were raised about concert venues, glee clubs, audience reactions, and other matters.

The social evening on 1 June was held this year in the mansion at Prior Park overlooking a dramatic evening view of Bath. Chris Pound and Gillian Clarke gave a slide presentation on the history of the grounds and plans for their future development, then led a walk to see some of the still visible evidence of former garden features. Back indoors there was an opportunity for members and guests to see into the former chapel, the only part of John Wood's interior to have escaped the fire of 1836. Wine and other refreshments were served, as is now traditional on these occasions.

MEETINGS, continued

CONFERENCE ON EARLY STUART BATH, 18 June 1988 at KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL

(report contributed by Rosalie Wood)

Sixty persons attended this very successful whole-day conference, and the warm hospitality of the headmaster, John Wroughton, and the school (and the excellent catering) contributed greatly to the occasion. There was a splendid display by the Survey of Old Bath of scale maps by Marta Oliver and of a pamphlet Citizens of Bath: Occupations in Bath in the Reign of James I by Elizabeth Holland. We now have a clear record of the buildings and the inhabitants of the city in 1641. This is a brilliant achievement.

The first speaker, Stephen Bird, Keeper of Local History at the Roman Baths Museum, described a visual tour of the Stuart city, and illustrated this with slides of maps and buildings. Bath was still a walled city with four gates, of which only the east gateway now remains and a small stretch of wall. In 1641, the Abbey had become the main church and two older churches were in decay. The condition of the three narrow parallel streets in the north of the city would have resembled Slippery Lane today.

John Wroughton then presented the material for the Survey of Old Bath. He pointed out the display of maps, explaining how they had been created by the study of old leases and other documents, and discussed the occupations of the citizens as presented in the pamphlet Citizens of Bath: these included Sir John Harrington, godson of Queen Elizabeth I, mayors, clothworkers, innkeepers, doctors and almsfolk. Based on his own researches he then went on to the founding of King Edward's School by Edward VI and its endowment together with 106 properties in the city under the trusteeship of the Bath Corporation. In the course of time all but 6% of these were lost, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Professor Robert Alexander of Point Park College, Pittsburg, U.S.A., gave a description of his researches into drama and amusement in Bath.

There are few references to medieval drama in Bath but payments to the main Elizabethan and early Stuart actors' companies are recorded in the City Chamberlain's accounts; including the Admiral's, Chamberlain's, King's, Queen's companies, etc. They probably performed in the Guildhall, inns and private houses. Payments ceased in 1613 probably due to increasing puritanism. The chamberlain of St. Michael's-without-the-Walls recorded lending a crown, probably for use in folk ceremonies.

Dr. Roger Rolls spoke on the flowering of medicine in 17th-century Bath under the title 'Asylum chronicorum morborum', illustrating his talk with slides. The theory of the four humours was still current and Bath water was thought particularly suitable for treating phlegm, the cold moist humour. Palsy, forgetfulness, infertility and skin rashes were treated and some improvements were probably due to the successful treating of lead poisoning. Herbs were also used but surgery was rare. Physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and patients came from near and far.

John Wroughton returned to describe the impact of the Civil War on the citizens. Bath was occupied by the Royalist and then by the Parliamentary forces. There was considerable loss to people as houses, horses and food were requisitioned. The Council no longer recorded an outlay to help poor people with clothes and housing repairs. The later Hearth Tax returns show big variations; some buildings have six or seven hearths while others, particularly in Walcot, have only one.

The conference closed with an open forum when three of the speakers replied to a variety of questions from the floor. Over £200s worth of books were sold during the course of the day at a bookstall of relevant publications looked after by senior boys at the school.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Several recent and forthcoming publications deserve attention. Elizabeth Holland's extremely useful pamphlet dealing with local occupations in the early 17th century, Citizens of Bath (Widcombe Press, 1988), has been referred to by Rosalie Woods above.

Gainsborough in Bath is the printed record of the summer exhibition at the Holburne Museum - though alas not all the works on show could be illustrated. Besides the informative catalogue entries for 24 oil paintings, 5 drawings, and sundry documents, the booklet contains essays by Ann Sumner and Philippa Bishop summarising the current state of knowledge on Gainsborough's Bath period and his circle of friends and patrons.

Graham Davis's recent publication Bath beyond the Guide Book: Scenes of Victorian Life (Redcliffe Press, 1988) collects together his vignettes of 19th-century social conditions first printed in the Bath Chronicle.

Due in October is John Wood - Architect of Obsession (Millstream Books) by Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw surprisingly enough the first full monograph on Wood and the first attempt to provide a coherent account of this driven man and the complex background to his architecture.

Looking further ahead, in 1989 the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments with the Ordnance Survey intends to publish two historic Bath maps: Roman Bath, which, despite the name, will incorporate material on the medieval and early modern city up to the late 17th century) and Georgian Bath. The Bath Archaeological Trust, the Survey of Old Bath, and the HBRG have all been contributing data and suggestions to the compilers. A somewhat similar map on the city of York has appeared already.

DEPARTURES FROM BATH

Sam Hunt ends his multifarious duties at no. 4 Circus in September and takes up new ones at the Area Museums Council for the South West at Hestercombe House near Taunton. Diana Smith moves about the same time from the Geology Museum in Queen Square to Haslemere.

Ann Sumner, Assistant Curator at the Holburne Museum (and organiser of the Gainsborough exhibition) has already departed. Her post has been filled by Barbara Milner from the staff of the Victoria Art Gallery (and a member of the HBRG) to whom go our congratulations,

DATING OF LOCAL BUILDINGS

In the course of trying to update and supplement the information given on the well-known plan of Bath in Walter Ison's standard work The Georgian Buildings of Bath for the RCHME/OS map mentioned above, it has become apparent how much detail remains to be gathered from scattered sources on the construction of the city's buildings: the architects, promoters, builders and craftsmen involved and the precise dates at which streets, blocks and individual houses were laid out and erected. If you have any data which might add to or correct Ison's, the HBRG Secretary would be grateful to have a note. In due course these revisions could be printed in the Newsletter.

1. **COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES.** The city's Director of Environmental Services, Mr. L.T. Sparks, asks whether any member of the Group is willing to make the necessary research enquiries into the stay of the Emperor Louis XVIII at 72 Great Pulteney Street in order to establish the basis for recognising the house by a plaque. This work would have to be completed fairly quickly (before Christmas, say) and summarised in a brief report. Please contact the HBRG Secretary as soon as possible if you are interested in undertaking this.
2. Mr. David E. Shuttleton of Edinburgh is currently researching the life and work of Dr. George Cheyne, 1673-1743, whose later career was spent in Bath. Again, if you have any useful information (outside the most obvious sources) please let the Secretary know for passing on

Other Organisations, Lecture Series, &c.

1. Newsletter 3 drew attention to the relatively new Centre for South-Western Historical Studies, based at the University of Exeter, to which we belong as an institutional member. On Saturday 19 November the Centre will be holding its annual symposium at Exeter in co-operation with the Southern History Society (whose journal Southern History was described in Newsletter 1) on the theme 'Social change in southern England, 1600 - 1850'. The provisional programme lists four topics and speakers: (Dr. J. Barry, Dr. S. Jackson, Dr. J. Chartres and Ena Cumming) plus a panel discussion and the Centre's very brief AGM (15 minutes allotted:). The meeting lasts from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the cost to members is £2.50 excluding lunch. If you wish to attend or to know more details of the programme, please contact your Secretary - who has in addition a copy of the Centre's Register of Current Research available for consultation.
2. The Group is also an institutional member of the Avon Local History Association which recently circulated a list of 44 local history societies and 12 other affiliated institutions in the region, with another fourteen archaeological groups belonging to the Avon Archaeological Council. These umbrella organisations produce a joint Newsletter which we receive in ten copies and display at our monthly meetings. Worth looking out for since it contains regional news, notes on local publications and a diary of forthcoming meetings by member organisations (including our own).
3. The 1988-9 WEA class programme lists two relevant 8-week courses. Dr. Roy Hope, one of our members, tutors on 'Victorian Bath: Culture, Education and Society' from 4 October, while Dr. J.H. Bettey, our speaker on 1 February next year, begins a course on 'Local History and Society in the Bath Region' on 29 September. A history of Bath WEA from 1912 to 1987 has just been published and is available from the author Michael Turner, at 11a Church Acre, Bradford-on-Avon, BA15 1RL, price £2.30 post free (86 pages, illustrated). Cheques should be made payable to Bath WEA.
4. The autumn lunchtime lecture series at the Guildhall will cover four of the 'villages' of Bath. Details should be published in the near future.

ADVERTISEMENTS are an obvious source for the history of local retailing, property sales, entertainments, private schools, professional services, etc. This one comes from The Historical and Local New Bath Guide (Bath, C. Duffield, c.1832)

The gentleman is referred to in "Jews in Bath" (Bath History, I).



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