

# PROCEEDINGS

## OF THE

### HISTORY OF BATH RESEARCH GROUP



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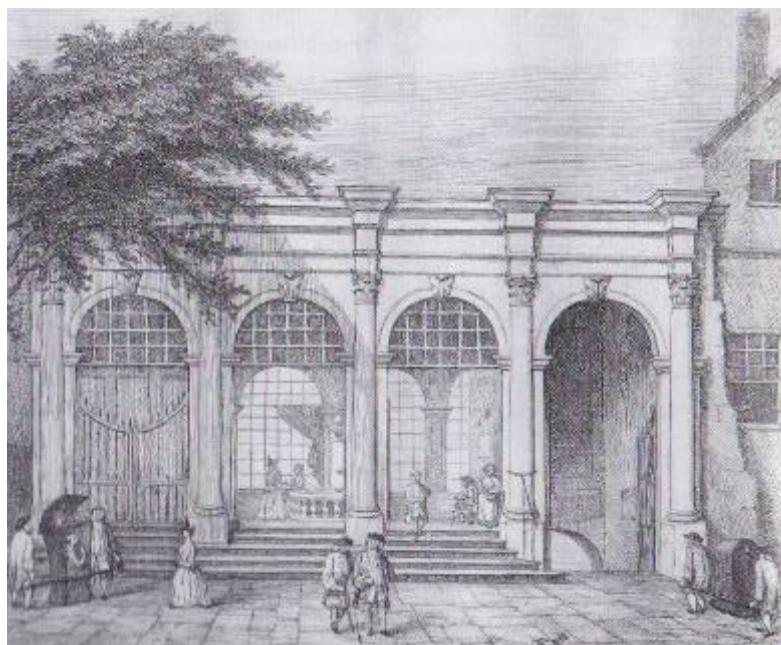
2013-14

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second edition of our "Proceedings" covering meetings from September 2013 through to June 2014.



The adjacent drawing by John Fayram, from the collection in the VAG, shows the first Pump Room which had been opened in 1706 and there followed in 1707 the first:

**"Rules laid down by Richard Nash Esq. MC., put up by Authority in the Pump Room, and observed at Bath Assemblies during his reign"**

Elsewhere during these two years, Marlborough's victory at Ramillies drove the French out of the Netherlands and Louis XIV sued for peace.

In addition - the Wigs negotiated an **Act of Union with the Scots** and in May 1707 our two Parliaments were united and the island became Great Britain.



## MEETING REPORTS

## WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT LITTLE SOLSBURY?

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Stephen Clews

**Reporter** Stephen Clews/Nigel Pollard

This talk was delivered by Stephen Clews and looked at the history of excavation, the archaeological context of the Iron Age hill fort and some recent geophysical research carried out by Rick Buettner and John Oswin of the Bath & Camerton Archaeological Society. The magnetometry results from this have been particularly exciting.

The scene was set with illustrations of the early excavations carried out on Little Solsbury in the 1930s by Falconer and Adams and in the 1950s by Dowden. Some of the finds held in the little known museum of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society were illustrated and some pottery and grain from the site held at the Roman Baths was displayed. The link to the Spelaeological Society museum website is > <http://www.ubss.org.uk/museum.php>

**RIGHT:** A cooking pot from the 1956 excavation on display in the Spelaeological society museum.

**BELOW:** Decorated weaving combs from Little Solsbury on display in the Spelaeological Society museum



The context of the hillfort, which is of Middle Iron Age date with a terminus of circa 300BC, was discussed within the wider framework of hillforts and their development in Britain and the southwest in particular. Rick Buettner and John Oswin's research has transformed our understanding of the site, confirming the presence of numerous hut circles in a densely packed interior. There is even a trackway discernible leading to a particularly large building. Subsequent quarrying activity has nibbled away at the edges of the site and in places the embankments have been lost. There is only one place where the ditch is clearly visible as a surface feature, and a casual observer might not realise what they are looking at. It is likely that there were originally two entrances, one of which was subsequently blocked.

SHERIDAN, LINLEY AND MATHEWS: FACT AND FICTION

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Norman Cunningham

**Summary by** Norman Cunningham / Nigel Pollard

In 1772, Thomas Mathews, grandson of Admiral Mathews, fought two duels with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, famous writer of *The School for Scandal* and *The Rivals*, about Elizabeth Linley, who later became Mrs. Sheridan. The first duel was in London, the second in Bath.

These duels, and the events leading up to them, have been written about more times than almost any other incidents in the history of Bath. They appear in several biographies of Sheridan and in at least three of Elizabeth Linley. They have been mentioned in the introductions to books of the plays of Sheridan, and in some of the books about the history of Bath. The details given have varied considerably over the years, but nearly all the writers have regarded the leading characters as Sheridan, the Hero, Elizabeth Linley, the Heroine, and Thomas Mathews, the Villain. Indeed, Mathews has become more villainous over the years.

The events which led to the duels, which happened in Bath between 1770 and 1773, began with a broken engagement. Elizabeth Linley was, at sixteen years, a very popular concert singer, with a beautiful soprano voice. It was either at the end of 1770, or early in 1771, that Miss Linley became engaged to marry Walter Long, a very wealthy fifty-seven-year-old landowner. Then, in the summer of 1771, Long broke off the engagement.

In March 1772, the twenty-year-old Richard Sheridan and Miss Linley went off together to France, and Sheridan let it be known that he was rescuing her from the unwelcome attentions of Thomas Mathews.



Mrs Brinsley Sheridan (Elizabeth Linley)  
(National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC)

On April 8, a letter from Mathews appeared in the *Bath Chronicle* calling Sheridan a liar and a treacherous scoundrel. Shortly afterwards Elizabeth Linley's father found where she was living in France (a convent), went there and brought her back. Sheridan returned to London, where he learnt that Mathews was staying in an hotel, and went to his lodgings to confront him. Whatever was said there did not affect the outcome, which was a duel in the Castle Tavern, Covent Garden, on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1772.

Mathews lost this duel, and on May 7<sup>th</sup> the *Chronicle* printed an apology from Thomas Mathews to Sheridan for his earlier letter. Two months later, however, on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1772, the paper reported that there had been a second duel, which Mathews had won and in which Sheridan was severely wounded. After his recovery Sheridan left Bath, and on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1773 he married Elizabeth Linley at Marylebone Church, London. His subsequent career, as dramatist, theatre manager, and Member of Parliament is very well known indeed.

Those are the undisputed facts, but writers have, over the years, relied upon two fictions.

These were, first, a farcical comedy, written and produced by Samuel Foote, entitled *The Maid of Bath* at the London Theatre Royal, Haymarket, in June, 1771, and, secondly, a letter printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1825, claimed to have been written in 1772 by Elizabeth Linley, which was proved to be a forgery.

John Watkins, the first biographer of Sheridan (1817) and a later biographer, Walter Sichel (1909), both believed that Foote's comedy was basically true, and Sichel accepted the magazine letter to be "a transcript from a genuine letter".

In Foote's play Watkins and Sichel believed that a rascally character was Mathews. As the character in the play was a bachelor, and his proposal at the end of the comedy was turned down, Sichel was positive that Mathews had been either unmarried or only just married at the time. In fact he had married Diana Jones in 1763. In the 'letter' in the *Gentleman's Magazine* Mathews was said to have been persecuting Miss Linley for three years, and Sheridan was rescuing her from his immoral behaviour. Sheridan was thus fully justified for taking her to France.



Richard Sheridan by Gainsborough Dupont



Thomas Mathews by Thomas Gainsborough

(Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA)

In his book, Thomas Moore, Sheridan's second biographer, (1825) gives another reason for Elizabeth's departure from Bath with Sheridan; along with Mathews' persecution of her, she had developed an "increasing dislike of her profession". But was this true?

Emanuel Green, a Bath historian, read three papers (on Thomas Linley, Richard Sheridan and Thomas Mathews) in 1902 and 1903, later published, in which he suggested that Sheridan was "throwing the blame of the elopement" upon Mathews, who was in fact innocent.

Did they leave for the reason given? In Emanuel Green's paper on Sheridan, he suggests that Sheridan

*could no longer brook even the semblance of a rival in the young girl's mind, so he proceeded to get rid of Mathews by making him odious first in her eyes and then trying to do the same in her eyes of all Bath. . . . Taking advantage of her hatred of her profession and her equally hated bondage to her father, the youth now persuaded her that flight alone would save her from these troubles.*

This explanation has not been accepted by other writers. Mathews is still regarded as the evil persecutor of Elizabeth Linley, and Sheridan as her rescuer.

So to the duels. The first took place in London, and on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1772 the *Chronicle* printed Mathews's apology:

*Being convinced that the expressions I made use of to Mr. Sheridan's disadvantage were the effects of passion and misrepresentation, I retract what I have said to that gentleman's disadvantage, and particularly beg his pardon for my advertisement in the Bath Chronicle.*

Mathews had lost the duel. So why was the second duel fought? According to *The Bath Chronicle* (July 9, 1772) it "was occasioned by Mr. Sheridan's refusal to sign a paper testifying to the spirit and propriety of Mr. Mathews's behaviour in their former encounter. This refusal induced Mr. Mathews to send him a challenge which was accepted and Kingsdown was the place." Another reason has been suggested: that after Mathews' printed apology Sheridan continued to say that he had rescued Miss Linley from Mathews. This was most important to him, as he wanted to marry Elizabeth, so when Mathews protested and demanded another duel he agreed. Sheridan lost this second duel, and when his second asked him to beg his life, he replied : "No by God, I won't." The two seconds then interceded, and Mathews, it is claimed, left for France.

Thomas Mathews eventually returned to Bath, and made his home at 19 Portland Place, where Thomas and Diana lived until his death in 1820 and hers two years later. His obituary in the *Bath Chronicle* reads:

*A gentleman of a very ancient and respectable family in the county of Glamorgan and nearly half a century an inhabitant of Bath where he was well known and esteemed by an extensive circle of friends, associating with the prevailing wits and celebrated characters who during that long period visited this fashionable city.*

This is not how he is remembered today.

Foote's farcical play has been mainly discounted as fiction. But what about the elopement? Nearly all writers believe that Sheridan was rescuing Elizabeth from the dreadful Mathews. This belief is based mainly on Moore's biography, which he was asked to write by Sheridan's family. Was Mathews the villain? Or was Emanuel Green right?

In his paper about Mathews, Emanuel Green quotes from Dr. Samuel Johnson: "Sir, many things that are false are transmitted from book to book and gain credit in the world."

I think Mathews would probably have agreed with this.

## BATH'S FIRST THEATRE ROYAL

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker**      Malcom Toogood

**Abstract**      Michael Rowe / Nigel Pollard

In 1736, an Act of Parliament was passed suppressing unlicensed playhouses of which Bath had had one of only limited means and a poor reputation.

However, as the city grew and became more fashionable in 1747, a Bristol actor named John Hippisley recognised the obvious need for a purpose-built and dedicated theatre in Bath, and issued a proposal addressed to "The Nobility and Gentry of Bath" which stated:

*"Plays are like mirrors made, for Men to see, How bad they are, how good they ought to be. Theatrical Performances, when conducted with Decency and regularity, have been always esteem'd the most rational Amusements, by the Polite and Thinking Part of Mankind: Strangers, therefore, must be greatly surpris'd to find at Bath, Entertainments of this sort in no better Perfection than they are, as it is a Place, during its Seasons, honour'd with so great a Number of Persons, eminent for Politeness, Judgment and Taste; and where might reasonably be expected (next to London) the best Theatre in England."*



Malcolm described the Founding and development of the Theatre on the Orchard Street site by The Palmers – father and son and gave tantalising pieces of information about its original interior.

A domed painted ceiling with allegorical scenes of Apollo and the muses, in relief, must have been very charming but it was removed to allow better ventilation of the space due to public complaint about the bad atmosphere.

In addition to the facts recorded in his book, 'Bath's Old Orchard Street Theatre', which is still available, Malcolm elaborated on the actors known to have performed there before the new Theatre Royal was built in 1806.

He illustrated this part of his talk admirably with many fine and rare images of the players, such as those shown below:



John Henderson

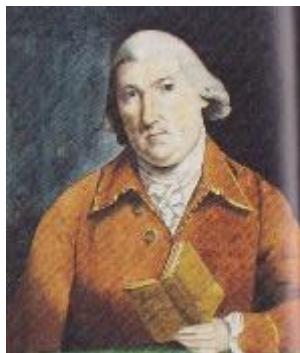


John Palmer



Sarah Siddons

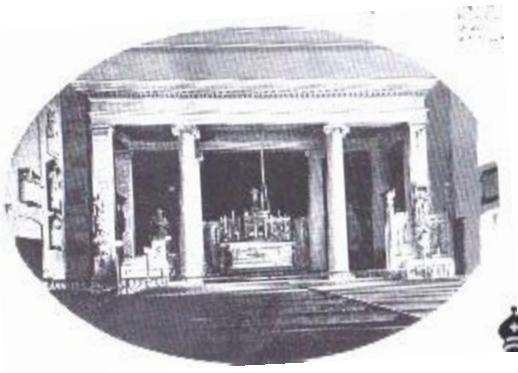




< Mr Keasberry was Actor/Manager from 1771-1795 who following the sale of the Theatre by John Palmer Junior (NOT the actor shown on the previous page) to himself and William Dimond, on retiring himself handed over the management to William Dimond > himself to becoming an Actor/Manager, who developed the Theatre further and took it over to its current home in Beaufort Square.



The conversion into a chapel, Masonic Hall and its Roman Catholic burials were also described.



The serious threat to the building of the complete destruction of the property next door during the bombing was less well known by members and illustrations reminded us of how close we were to losing this fine building altogether. It was on the Council's demolition list after the war.

He also referred to the recent return to the building of two fine oil paintings; one by Hoare and the other by Robinson of Bath. These hung at the hall until the 1930s but then moved to St Michael's in Walcot. In the recent reordering of the church they went into store until representations to the Abbey, which owns them, led to their return to the Orchard Street hall last year

Malcolm also reminded members that the building is much more accessible than before and the Chairman endorsed the suggestion that those who have not visited have missed a treat.

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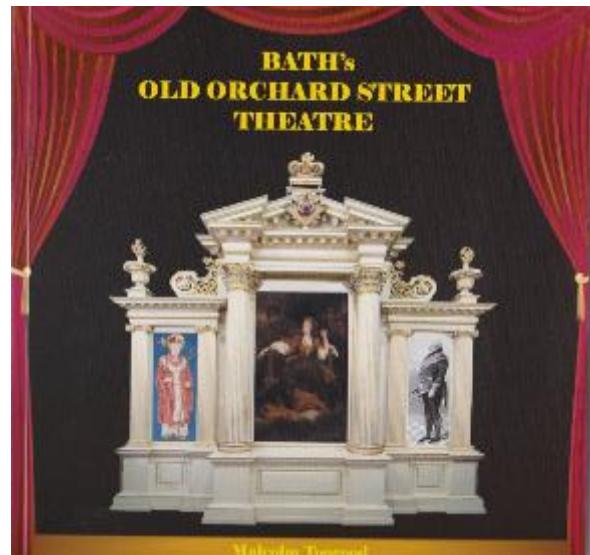
The initial quotation and all the images used in this Report have been taken from Malcolm's aforementioned book:

"Bath's Old Orchard Street Theatre"

Published by Cepenpark Publishing Ltd. Chippenham

ISBN 978 0 9564230 0 9

Price £ 9.95 from all good booksellers.



## THE COTTERELLS OF BATH

Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> January, 2014	St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall
Speaker	Nigel Pollard
Abstract	Nigel Pollard (Edited by NP)

While the Cotterell name has made a number of appearances in Bath history over the last three hundred years or so, to date, little has been done to link the generations together. This talk was a first attempt therefore to record the history of this remarkable family and the legacy they have left to the City of Bath.

The author has currently traced the family back as far as 1617, to a Roland Cotterell, a currier of Birmingham where he and his wife Alice became some of the earliest Quakers, both fined and informed upon for their beliefs in a then very intolerant society. In 1670 their son Jacob, also a Quaker/currier moved to the then thriving port of Bewdley on the River Severn and it was here that he and his family, following the Toleration Act of 1689 became major players in both Quakerism and business, not only locally but down river in Bristol. While their eldest son continued as a currier, their youngest son Benjamin became a warehouseman and became part of the industrial revolution, trading between Coalbrookdale and Bristol and indeed the family gets a mention in the diaries of Abraham Darby's Clerk, Johannes Kelsall. It is by these Severnside/Quaker links that the family, though marriages into the Harward's, Sherward's and Fowler's arrive at the home of Jacob and Mary Sturge of Westbury on Trim where a Henry Fowler Cotterell marries their daughter Sarah on St Valentine's day 1815.



# Bewdley Riverside 1776 by Abbot (Bewdley Museum)

Both Henry's father-in-law and his two brothers-in-law were land agents and surveyors and it is little surprise therefore that he also took up land surveying and indeed his name appears on a beautifully drawn estates plan of Astley, Abberley and Martley, south west of Stourport-on-Severn, dated 1817, preserved in the *Worcestershire Record Office* >

No family so well connected would have been unaware of the business potential around Bristol and Bath at this time and sometime between 1817 and 1827 Henry and Sarah move to Bath.

Here, a number of his letter books are preserved at the *Museum of Bath At Work* and those dated between 1828 and 1832 show that he became Engineer to the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway. With an office on Broad Quay, he also worked for the Bath Turnpike Trustees and the Kennet and Avon Canal Company and also looked into the land requirements for the proposed Clifton Suspension Bridge.



In 1827 Henry is noted in the local Friends Meeting Minutes as one of those to help progress a new burial ground at Widcombe and was later instrumental when The Friends bought their current Meeting House in York Street in the 1860s

Henry's father Joseph died in 1836 and left all his estate for his son to sort out which he finally completed in 1841 when he and Sarah moved to a new home at 5 Macaulay Buildings in Widcombe and had teamed up with Thomas Cooper to form *Cotterell & Cooper*, Land Surveyors, with offices first at 35 St James Parade and then at No.5 Terrace Walk. Henry and Sarah had had six children, all Worcestershire born: Frances Marie (b.1815), Jacob (John) Henry (b.1816), Joseph Francis (b 1818), John Sylvanus (b 1819), William Sturge (b.1822) and Frederick Fowler (b.1823)

Frances Maria, married in 1855 a Samuel Saunders, a Master Miller and Farmer from Market Lavington who continued to live in Bath where Samuel became a "Manufacturing Chemist".

Henry and Sarah's eldest son Jacob (John) Henry followed his father into the Bath based surveying profession. He too become a Quaker and at the age of twenty signed "The Pledge" and in 1838 became the 1st Chairman of "Bath Juvenile Temperance Society" and in 1861 was elected President of the "Bath Temperance Association" the year they donated the "Rebecca Fountain" to the Corporation of Bath.

However, to historians he is primarily remembered for his mapmaking. In 1845 Jacob married Louise Gregory from Galton at which time his father made him a partner in the firm which on his fathers' retirement, he teamed up with Henry Spackman to form the partnership of *Cotterell & Spackman*.

On the domestic side, life was just as busy. Father and son had now acquired some land down on Prior Park Road, assumedly from the Bewdley legacy, on which they built two rather grand houses. Henry and Sarah moved into "The Summer House" in 1849, and Jacob, Louise and baby daughter into "Bewdley Villas" in 1850, the latter directly adjacent to the Friends Burial Ground and both of which are shown in an extract of one of the aforementioned maps held in the *Bath Record Office*.



Henry and Sarah's second son Joseph Francis was born in 1819 at Sea Mills, Bristol where in 1844 he part founded with his younger brother Frederick the Wallpaper Business *Cotterell Brothers (CB)* of Bristol and Bath of which more later. Following the death of his first wife, he married again and was by 1851 living in Congresbury as a Master Decorator, employing 25 men, assumingly still part of the family firm - CB.

However, whether disillusioned by the loss of his first wife, or looking for a change he had by 1861 moved both home and job and is living at Avon Side Cottage, Saltford and working for *Withy & Co.* the Aerated Water Manufacturers in Orange Grove where he is noted as employing 26 men and lads.

His one son, "Cotti" (baptised Henry Fowler) emigrated to Australia where he purchased the *Bulli Times*, and later became the most successful and well-known real estate agent in the region, an area close to Sydney.

Henry and Sarah's third son John Sylvanus also followed in his father's footsteps and became a surveyor, but for him the wider world beckoned and he joined the New Zealand Land Company and sailed out to a new life in New Zealand. He settled down in Nelson but got caught up in what became known as the "Wairau Incident" - a confrontation with the native Maoris in which, as a Quaker refusing to fight, he was killed, aged just 24. However, in his honour, his cottage became the first Quaker Meeting House in Nelson, one of the first in New Zealand and the monument to those killed in the "Wairau Incident" at nearby Marlborough, bears the inscription "Sylvanus John Cotterell. / (Son of Henry Fowler Cotterell Esq. / of Bath Somerset.) / Surveyor"

While little is known of Henry and Sarah's fourth son William, other than he was given Part Tenancy by his father of Byde Mill in Devizes, we know a great deal about their fifth and youngest son Frederick Fowler Cotterell, who as noted previously set up together with his elder brother Joseph the "Paper stainer and paper hanging Merchants":- COTTERELL BROTHERS or "CB" in 1844

This Company, which grew into a major industry in the area, was to become a household name and exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and was the subject of a major article in the *Bristol Times and Mirror* of March 6 1923, the year their grandson, Henry Frederick Cotterell, by now chairman of CB, became an Alderman of Bristol City Council.

In Bath their offices were originally at 5 Bridge Street and then also at 5 & 9 James Street. However following the 1<sup>st</sup> World War they consolidated their operations at 13-15 Walcot Street where they remained until closure c.1952.

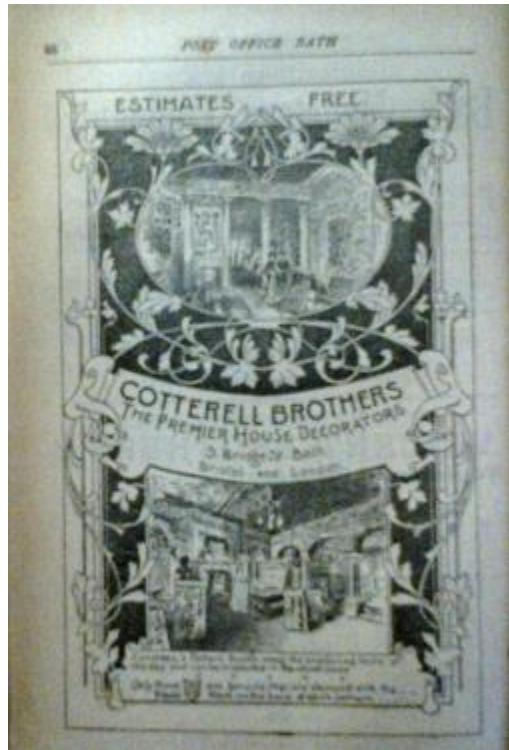
Examples of their Pattern Books can be seen at the British Wallpaper Archive held by the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester.

The final Cotterell to be discussed was Henry Frederick's brother Thomas Sturge, who while starting off at the family firm CB in Bristol, later moved to Bath and became General Manager of the "Bath Stone Firms Limited" and took up local service on Bath City Council.

1908 he commissioned Voysey to build him "Lodge Style" at Combe Down, recognised today as the most important twentieth century house in Bath and one of Voysey's most significant late buildings while a year later, with the support of his wife Edith, he becomes one of, if not the main mover behind the Bath Pageant of which he was Chairman of the Executive Committee.

Thomas was Chairman of the Libraries Committee from 1906-11 and Deputy Chairman from 1919-27, becoming an Alderman and finally Mayor in 1930.

However, he is remembered mostly today for setting up the *Bath Corps of Honorary Guides*.



## JOHN AND CHARLES PALMER: BATHS' MULTI-TASKING ENTREPRENEURS

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2014      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Dr Brenda Buchanan

Abstract Prof Angus Buchanan (Some images by NP)

In this talk Dr Buchanan demonstrates convincingly that some of the less well-known individuals and families in the history of Bath can often be rewarding subjects for historical research. She has already written the ODNB entry for John Palmer (1742-1818), the instigator of the mailcoach services in the eighteenth century, and in the course of gathering information for this subject she discovered many interesting details about the Palmer family which justify a more extended examination.

The Palmer family probably moved from Faringdon to Bath early in the eighteenth century and established themselves in malting, brewing, and the manufacture of tallow candles. There were many profitable openings for energetic entrepreneurs in Bath at this time, and the family businesses in the area between South Gate and the navigable Avon did well and enabled them to move gradually up the social scale. They acquired a family home in Gallaway's Buildings, now Number 1 North Parade Buildings, and gave substance and support to the movement to set up a theatre. John Palmer's father - also John (1703-1788) - ensured that his son received a sound education in the hope that the boy would enter the Church, but John Palmer the younger had other ideas and preferred to work in the counting house of the family business. He soon made a favourable impression by supporting his father in the task of acquiring a Royal Patent for the theatre, which was achieved in 1768. When his father retired in 1776 the patent was renewed in his name, as was that of 1779 for the theatre recently acquired in Bristol. The two Theatres Royal and their companies of actors were run together as one enterprise, their status allowing them to draw on actors from the London stage.

The original home of the Bath theatre survives as the Masonic Hall in Old Orchard Street, and it is likely that the Palmer chandlery in Lower Borough Walls provided the candles for illuminating it.

John Palmer younger bought a large house on the west side of the borough known as West Hall, where it is likely he set up a spermaceti works to make the superior candles used in his theatres and in the homes of the wealthy. He married Mrs Sarah Mason, a widow of Clifton, and they had a family of six children.

By the early 1780s his energies were turning to the delivery of the national mail. He devised an improved and speedier mode of delivery by suggesting the introduction of specially designed mail coaches, operated by trained staff and able to pass freely day or night through toll gates.

The system of cross country routes initiated by his Bathonian predecessor Ralph Allen, which removed the need for all mail to go through London, was developed further, and in addition the dispatch of mail from the capital was no longer to be held back by government business.

The scheme was accepted after a successful trial on the Bristol-Bath-London road in 1784, and Palmer accepted responsibility for setting up and operating it on a national scale. In 1786 he was appointed Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post Office at a salary of £1500pa and a percentage of the improved revenue received. Palmer succeeded in making his plans work but unfortunately there was no provision for his retrospective application of the new system to the existing postal service, as a result of which he was



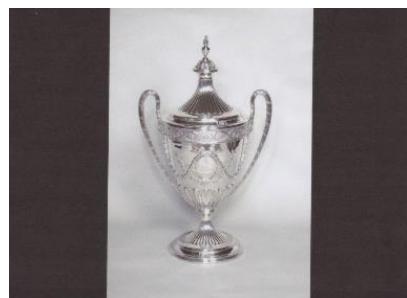
John and Sarah Palmer had three sons, of whom the youngest, Edmund (1782-1834) became a Captain in the Royal Navy and was drowned at sea, while the eldest, another John (1774-1851) became a clergyman and Rector of Peldon, Essex. It was the second son, Charles Palmer (1777-1851) who carried on his father's connection with Bath, in what became a remarkably varied career. His father made sure that he had a good education at Eton and Oriel College Oxford before he enrolled in the Army in 1796 as a cornet in the 10<sup>th</sup> Dragoons. This was the Prince of Wales' own Regiment, with which Palmer served in the Peninsular War of 1808-14, becoming lieutenant-colonel in 1810 and aide-de-camp to the Prince of Wales in 1811. But he fell out of Royal favour over a military dispute about discipline and punishment and together with some fellow officers he was dispersed to other regiments, in Palmer's case the 23<sup>rd</sup> Dragoons. Here, however, he was promoted to the rank of major-general, being known thereafter in Bath as 'General Palmer'.

Meanwhile, Charles Palmer had also embarked on a political career by being elected as a Member of Parliament, in which capacity he was able to secure an award of £50,000 for his father in 1813, in addition to the pension he had already received. He subsequently opposed the Bath Gas Lights Bill on behalf of the Mayor and Corporation in 1818, but was not successful and the Gas Company was established that year. Like his father Palmer was a Liberal Whig, though held by some to be a Radical, as a result of which he lost his seat in the 1826 election. As his support for the Reform Bill became well known through his speeches, publications, and attendances at rallies this radicalism became more evident, and when the Bill was passed in 1832 the electorate of Bath expanded from 30 to almost 3,000 and Palmer was amongst those returned to the Reformed Parliament, in which he remained until 1837.

Perhaps the most curious of Charles Palmer's many careers was that as a vintner. After the French defeat at Toulouse in April 1814 and the abdication of Napoleon, he was one of many British officers who made their own way home from Spain through France. On the way he stopped in Bordeaux where, with a dash of the old family business enterprise, he bought a vineyard at Cenon, near the city. He made a very considerable investment in this enterprise, with a staff of French and English experts, and the wine from *Château Palmer* became very popular in Britain. It is still highly regarded and commands a premium price in the present wine market. Palmer's Georgian style *château* at Cenon was abandoned in favour of one of more typically French design when the estate was sold in 1843, and is now an arts centre.



Back in Bath, Charles Palmer maintained many of his father's old interests, particularly in the theatre, when in 1805 the building in Old Orchard Street was replaced by the new Theatre Royal in Beauford Square, and in 1823 when he assumed a managerial role for the theatre although most of the active running of the enterprise was left to his staff. He married Mary Elizabeth Atkyns of Hunterscombe House in Buckingham and they lived in Brock Street, but with his London responsibilities Palmer also had an apartment in the Albany, Piccadilly. They do not appear to have had any family, so that with his death in 1851 the close association of the Palmers with the City of Bath came to an end. But there are family portraits in the Victoria Art Gallery, memorial tablets in the Abbey, and a fine piece of family silver in the Guildhall - a splendid Cup presented to John Palmer by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, hallmarked 1789/90 and given to the Corporation of Bath in 1875 by Miss Henrietta Palmer, the eldest surviving child of Captain Edmund Palmer in memory of her grandfather.



## LANSDOWN AND OTHER FAIRS

Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2014	St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall
Speaker	Mike Chapman
Abstract	Mike Chapman (Edited by NP)

A "fair" was a relatively ephemeral event, held only once or twice a year for the sale of both animals and goods, usually during the fair "season" between Lammas (1 August) up to Martinmas in October. It differed from a "market" which would be held weekly for at least a certain part of the year and came to include groups of settled stallholders - similar to traders renting permanent shop premises. Charters were frequently acquired which allowed "extra" days for a particular fair, but this seems merely to have been a way of confirming its right to be held. Fairs attracted entertainers as well as farmers and traders - strolling players, jesters, musicians, fortune-tellers, astrologers, and the like - originators of the present-day funfair. Although detailed descriptions of these events are rare, records exist for those held in Bath which allow them to be traced:

## **The Bishop's Fair (Feast of St. Peter & St. Paul] - 29 June)**



As early as 1102 King Henry I granted to John of Tours, Bishop of Bath as well as overlord of the city, the right to hold "...fairs on the feast-days of St. Peter". This right was also included in the protection given by Pope Adrian to Bishop Robert, John of Tour's successor, in 1156 and by Pope Adrian in 1178. The fair itself was apparently situated in the High Street and adjoining streets, on the north side of the then Cathedral (i.e. Abbey) Church.

Confirmation of the fair was also granted by King Edward I in 1284. In this instance the right to hold the fair was stated to run for ten days, i.e. on the vigil, feast, and morrow of St. Peter & Paul, and the 7 days following. It was granted all traditional liberties and customs, but not in such a manner as to injure neighbouring fairs. This charter was confirmed again in 1313, 1331, and 1340, each confirmation giving the king the right to receive a further payment. All these charters are still held in the Bath City Archives. In the 1760s John Wood, in his *Essay* states that "...still remaining.. is a Fair held in the Heart of the City, upon the 29th Day of June, or the feast of Saint Peter and Paul..." By 1785 it is described as a cattle fair and by the mid 19th century had also acquired the title *Cherry Fair*.

**The King's Fair** (Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist - 29 August)

In 1275, during the enquiry by Edward I into feudal privileges, the jurors for Bath testified that;

*..the king was accustomed to have certain fairs in the city of Bath on the day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. Afterwards the Prior of Hinton [Charterhouse] obtained a charter from the lord King Henry [III], father of the lord Edward who is now king, for a having a fair the same day at Hinton, which he has at the expense of the fair of the city of Bath of 10s. per annum, some three leagues [5 miles] from the city aforesaid. (Rot. Hund. p.138.)*

There is no charter for this fair, as the king would not need to issue one to himself, and nothing further is heard of it. It was presumably supervised by the king's bailiff, but its site is not known - possibly it was held outside the west gate, near the site of St John's Hospital just within the walls. Outside the gate lay the King's manor of Barton which is mentioned in Wood's story about Bishop John de Harewell who made benefactions to his church during the reign of Edward III.

## The Prior's Fairs

The two *Prior's Fairs* were held outside the city and later became well-known. They were granted to the Prior of the monastery at Bath by King Edward I in 1304; "...a yearly fair in his manor of Lyncombe for 2 days on the vigil and feast of the Invention of the Cross, and another in his manor of la Berton next to Bath for 2 days on the vigil and the feast of St. Laurence the Martyr. Both sites can be identified;

### (Lansdown) (Feast of St. Laurence, 10 August)

From the title of this charter (*De feriis de Lyncombe et Lantesdon*), it is evident that the second fair mentioned here was held on Lansdown on the northern part of what was once the King's manor of Barton (i.e. not immediately outside the city). In 1334 the Prior was granted an extension by Edward III "...of his fair at the manor of la Barton; of an extra 5 days preceding the vigil of the feast of St. Laurence, and an extra 1 day following the same feast-day", a total of 8 days, from 4 to 11 August. St Laurence was the patron saint of the medieval chapel (already in existence by the 13th century) which still stands on the Down opposite the Blathwayt Arms, and the fair was held in front of the chapel on the open common alongside the road there.

In 1576, after the Dissolution of the priory, Lansdown Manor was granted to Thomas Kerr, a clerk of the Privy Seal, on which he was allowed two fairs; the traditional St. Laurence's Fair, and another to be held on the feast of St. John before the Lateran Gate, 6 May. Nothing further is heard of the second fair, but in 1708, soon after Lansdown came into the possession of the Blathways, the Lansdown fair was granted an extension by Queen Anne for two extra days for 95 years.

From hereon Lansdown becomes more widely known, and descriptions of it begin to appear towards the end of the 18th century. In fine weather the fair drew huge crowds onto the Down, even in harvest-time. There were the usual gingerbread stalls and chapmen selling cheap trinkets or "toys", and rides on swings and roundabouts were already making an appearance. Entertainments included Punch and Judy shows, dancing booths, tumblers, itinerant mummers, "raree shows" (peep-shows), conjurers and "sleight-of-hand operators", with music being provided by fiddlers, singing girls and organ grinders. Tall ladies, wild beastesses, monkeys, wild animals, and dancing bears are also mentioned.

The oil painting "Lansdown Fair" by Thomas Barker (1767-1847), now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, gives an idea of the fair in 1813 at a quiet moment. It depicts a group of men playing bowls, a popular activity at the fair, but one of the main attractions at the time was the holding of prize fights between pugilists from Bath and Bristol, events which frequently degenerated into public disorder and were increasing suppressed. The first serious incident was recorded by Mainwaring in 1808 at what he called the Lansdown "Revels", when a man was shot dead by a constable attempting to break up a drunken brawl.



### (Holloway) (Feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross, 3 May)

The other of the Prior's fairs was held on the Bear Flat in Lyncombe on the south side of the city. In 1539, when it was still in the hands of the Crown after the Dissolution of the Monastery, it brought an annual income of 9s.4d. - somewhat more than the Lansdown Fair at that time.

Like Lansdown, this was also a popular event in the 18th century and drew customers out of Bath. In 1754 a horse fair was added to its attractions, "there being great Encouragement for it given". Wood mentions that it was still held on the third of May, but Collinson's apparently contradictory statements that, "...fairs have from ancient time been held in this city, viz... on the invention of the Holy Cross (now discontinued)...", and, "...A fair is held annually in this parish [Widcombe and Lyncombe], on the 14th of May, and is called Holloway Fair, from its being kept at the top of that street.", may merely refer to the change of date to the New Style equivalent.

By 1839 the Fair was already dying out.

### The Citizen's Fair (Candlemas - 2 February)

Another fair, granted to the Mayor and citizens of Bath by Henry VIII in 1544 also appears to have been held in the High Street. Known as *Candlemas Fair*, it was to be held yearly within the city on the vigil, feast, and morrow of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary (2 February) and the four days following, together with “..a Court of Piepoudre, and all purprestures, tolls, etc., belonging to such fairs” (Bath City Archives). The border of this charter contains some quaint and well-executed devices in pen and ink. In 1590 the Candlemass fair was confirmed in the Charter of Queen Elizabeth.

This fair, also under the control of the city bailiff, appears prominently in the earliest surviving Chamberlain’s Accounts, starting from 1569. Entries for “..casuall recayttes...receved of the profyttes of Candellmas fayer” appear regularly up to 1593 when they cease.

In the 18th century John Wood reports “..still remaining... is a Fair formerly held in the Heart of the City, on the 2nd of February, or the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but now changed to the day after” (Wood, p.418), but by 1791 the date of the fair had again been changed to the New Style equivalent of 14 February (Collinson, p.28). By the mid 19th century this fair had also acquired the title *Orange Fair*.

### The Rise of the Funfair

To some extent the two fairs held in the city were undermined well before 1700 by the rise of permanent markets and shops, and by 1800 were further overshadowed by the success of the new city market. In 1776 it was decided to lease the Fairs and Markets to the bailiffs for an annual tax free rent of £360 “due to the enlargement of the market” but by the 1830s they were doing so little business (as well as being a traffic obstacle) that provision was made in the City of Bath Act of 1851 for their removal from the High Street.

However, the Provision, Coal & Cattle Market Committee at a meeting in 1852 proposed the establishment of a monthly market for Cattle in Walcot Street which in 1854 was reported in the **Bath Chronicle** as:

*..the Bath Orange Fair, which under the powers of the City Act has been curtailed to a cattle fair, took place on Monday last in Walcot St.”*

There are also photographs of one of the Ladymead “Cattle” Fairs in Walcot Street dating from the mid 1890s, but this appears to have been one of the last.



Although the great days of the steam funfairs from the 1880s onward are less obvious in Bath than elsewhere, possibly because of the parallel rise of the large travelling menageries and circuses, these attractions were certainly present, as appears on a photograph of Broad Quay in the 1920s. This fair, which visited the city at Christmas as well as at other times of the year, was appropriately sited in the “rough” area of Bath where respectable people did not go. Prize fights were still held at this fair which evidently continued to entertain the sort of clientele familiar to George Sanger. However, it kept going throughout WWII (in accordance with the edict of Winston Churchill - whilst observing the necessary blackout regulations) to maintain civilian morale.

After the war it moved to the Cricket Ground in North Parade Road, and in 1963 made a further move to the Victoria Park as part of the festival week, where (as Rogers’ Funfair) it continues to entertain large numbers of the “juvenile members of the community”.

## TROUBLE AT THE MILL: WORKERS' UNREST AT TWERTON WOOLLEN MILLS

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2014      Museum of Bath at Work

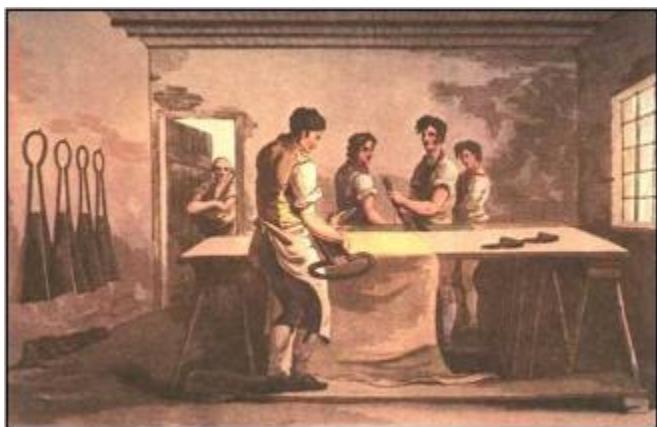
Speaker      Stuart Burroughs

Abstract      Stuart Burroughs

### The Twerton Outrages of 1797

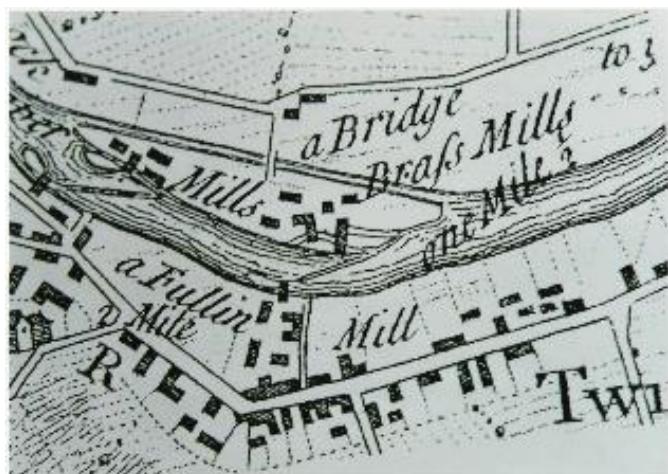
In December 1797 a plot involving intended murder, arson, destruction of private property, by civilians, during wartime at the village of Twerton was foiled only by good luck and good intelligence. What became known as the Twerton Outrages, a West Country example of industrial discontent - which preceded the activities of the Luddites by more than ten years- had its roots in the structural changes in the woollen industry of the south of England and of Twerton's location.

During the 18th century the domestic woollen manufacturing industry (i.e. the completion of stages in the processing of wool undertaken partly or wholly in the home) was a highly demarcated industry. There were many separate stages involved in transforming a fleece to fabric including cleaning, carding, spinning and weaving and each involved many workers specialised in that trade alone. In the second half of the century not only were clothiers (businessmen who controlled the domestic production system and paid the 'outworkers') beginning to centralise production in workshops, which then became powered mills, but they then also introduced machinery to speed up production. This was the era of the spinning jenny, the scribbling machine and the carding engine. Each machine replaced those handworkers who depended upon the trade and there was inevitable discontent. In the heart of the area involved in the Wiltshire woollen industry - Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon and Melksham, the introduction of powered machinery into the new workshops invited violence and machine breaking. In the 1791 a riot in Bradford-on-Avon involved two protesting workers being shot.



However until the final stage of processing the woven cloth - shearing of the fabric surface - was mechanised, discontent was sporadic and intended more to cajole and discourage clothiers from mechanising. The introduction of machinery which would mechanise the precise and intricate 'shearing' put out of work a group of highly organised and collectivised workers who were determined to use violent methods to prevent the mechanising of this stage. So vociferous were the activities of the shearers in Wiltshire that clothiers, rather than run the risk of outright violence by buying in shearing machinery, instead looked to have this work completed elsewhere- to subcontract it to geographically distance businesses.

Twerton had a long established woollen manufacture but compared with Wiltshire producers and mills, was a modest operation. As a consequence there was less opposition to the new machinery, as there were fewer workers to protest. The Wiltshire clothiers, aware of the competitive position of the Yorkshire and Gloucester mills, sent their woollen fabric to Twerton from the beginning of the 1790s where shearing machinery had been introduced as soon as it had been invented. Frustrated by the distance to Twerton unemployed shearers began writing "letters of threat to person and property" which were sent to Twerton and the subcontracting clothiers of Wiltshire.



Eventually in December 1797 magistrates in Bath received intelligence of a plan for 800 shearers to congregate ‘at dead of night’ at Hinton and to march to the Twerton watermills with every intention to set light to the factory and its contents and to murder the mill owners. A troupe of local militia, including infantry, dragoons (mounted infantry) and a field piece (artillery) was dispatched to Twerton and, presumably having heard what was awaiting them, the marchers dispersed before they reached the village.

A group of 150 shearers were rounded up and brought to Bath magistrate’s court where, as no offence had been committed they were released. It may be that some sympathy for the hardships of the shearers had its part in the decision to release the men – who had been brought to the point of destitution in some cases.

The unrest was bound to end badly and in 1802, after a mill at Littleton was destroyed by fire, one of those responsible, Thomas Helliker, was tried and hanged.

Although threats continued into the early 1800s, the combination of permanent garrisons of militia, the threat of the ultimate sanction and professional troops in the Wiltshire mill towns and resignation had the discontent gradually subside.



## WALK: SALTFORD

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2013

Leaders:

Tony Coverdale - Brass Mill

Richard Canter - Saltford Manor

Abstract

Nigel Pollard (with references)

What a surprising place Saltford is. The village down by the river is a revelation to all those who only know it from the A4 Bath to Bristol road, a road originally built as the by-pass.

This evening's walk took the form of two distinct visits, one the well-known Brass Mill, down on the river, and the other to the old manor house up in the village.

The first visit was to the Saltford Brass Mill, opened by special arrangement through the offices of the "Saltford Brass Mill Project" led by Tony Coverdale, who are working towards the restoration of this unique industrial monument.

Abraham Darby started making brass at Baptist Mills on the Frome in Bristol (near the start of the M32) in 1702, brass making later being transferred to Keynsham's Avon Mill, because of its better water supply. Saltford thereby became one of a series of mills working in brass in the Avon Valley during the eighteenth century where river transport was used to deliver brass ingots and coal up to Saltford, Weston Mill, Bath and other mills in the vicinity.

The earliest main process involved the shaping of brass sheet into hollow-ware vessels, such as pans, bowls, and vats. Large water-powered hammers were used originally, to beat the brass ingots into sheet, and then faster hammers shaped the sheet into hollow-ware. This beating process was known as 'battery', so Saltford Mill was known as a brass battery mill.

The brass was malleable enough to be worked cold, but rolling and hammering could continue only for a limited period as the brass would 'work-harden', causing cracking. To prevent this, partially worked brass was periodically softened by heating, or 'annealing' it.

When this work originally started, individual pieces were heated over charcoal. Soon the Bristol industry devised bulk annealing in large furnaces heated with local coal. The brass goods were protected from damaging coal fumes by an inner sealed arch, introducing a new type of large-scale 'muffle' furnace.

The remaining Saltford annealing furnace, one of four once working at the mill, is the best surviving example of this important local innovation. The only other examples are at Kelston Mills, where only the outer walls remain.

In a Sales Catalogue of 1865 four waterwheels of 15ft diameter were listed at Saltford Mill which would have been mainly of wooden construction but in addition an iron wheel was also included which had not been listed in a surveyor's report some ten years previously. This comparatively new wheel of that time must be the one of 18ft 11 in diameter that survives,



still in a workable condition at Saltford thanks to a considerable maintenance programme, carried out by volunteers during 2003-4.

After the brass mill closed in 1925 the wheel was adapted with a chain drive to operate an electric dynamo which provided a lighting system to the newly installed leisure facilities in the building. Later, the system was used to power a saw bench for boat building and maintenance.

More information and details of all the various exhibits can be seen on the Mills Web site at [www.brassmill.com](http://www.brassmill.com). The Brass Mill is the only surviving building, still with a furnace and working water wheel, remaining from a group of eighteenth century mills making copper and brass goods in the Avon Valley between Bristol and Bath. The Brass Mill is cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers, The Saltford Brass Mill Project, who carry out husbandry tasks within the building and research the fascinating history of the Copper and Brass Industry.

If you would like to get involved, please contact us for more information at: [www.brassmill.com](http://www.brassmill.com)

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The second half of our visit to Saltford was to the Norman Manor House, the home of Richard and Julia Canter.

This house, built in the 12th century, was named some years ago as the oldest continuously occupied home in Britain and boasts both a Norman window and 13th century ecclesiastical paintings.

Records show that when the Domesday Book was compiled, the estate on which Saltford Manor was built was owned by Geoffrey the Bishop of Coutances. It then became part of the Honour (the term for a large estate that passes from father to son) of Gloucester and in the 12th century was in the hands of Earl Robert of Gloucester, the richest and most powerful baron in the West Country.

The manor house itself is thought to have been built some time before 1150 and remained a tenant holding of the Gloucester earldom.

It was leased to a succession of families, including the Rodneys, an eminent Somerset family, in the 15th century, and then the Flowers - thought to be part of the brewing empire - in the 17th century. The Flowers are thought to have altered the manor considerably, changing the front, adding a wing and building on kitchens.

But the Georgians and Victorians are not thought to have altered the five-bedroom house at all and today, after considerable restoration work, Saltford Manor is a curious mix of ancient and modern.



Our thanks again to Richard and Julia Canter for inviting us into their home.

## WALK: ODD DOWN & ST MARTIN'S HOSPITAL

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2014

Leaders

Mike Chapman & Michael Rowe

Abstract

Nigel Pollard

This walk was an insight into the southern highways and byways of Bath from the days of the Wansdyke up to the present day. We met outside the Cross Keys Inn on the Midford Road, at the crossing point of a number of eighteenth century Turnpike Trust roads including those of Bath 1717 and the Black Dog 1752.



The evening's perambulation is shown on the following "Bing" aerial map from which it can be seen that from here we went north across to the Bradford/Frome Road – another meeting of the ways.



From here we walked down the Frome Road to the area known as "Glasshouse", so named due to the number of Glass works around the area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries - all now gone. The attraction of this location was due, it was suggested, to the easy availability of sand, limestone and coal within the vicinity.

The group then moved on to St Martin's Hospital where Michael Rowe gave us a detailed account of not only its long history, but also of his own part in that history over the last forty years or so.

The main building seen from the Midford Road is of the Union Workhouse dating from 1838 >

The Bath Poor Law Union was formed on 28th March 1836. Its operation was overseen by an elected Board of Guardians representing its 24 constituent parishes as listed below:

Bath: St James—St Michael—St Peter & St Paul — Walcot, Bath Hampton, Bath Easton, Bath Ford, Bathwick, Charlcombe, Charterhouse Hinton, Claverton, Combhay, Dunkerton, English Combe, Langridge, Lyncombe & Widcombe, Monkton Combe, St Catherine, South Stoke, Swanswick, Twerton, Wellow, Weston, Woolley.

Later Addition: Freshford (1883)



The population falling within the union at the 1831 census had been 64,230 with parishes ranging in size from Wooley (population 104) to the city of Bath itself (38,063). The average annual poor-rate expenditure for the period 1832-35 had been £19,928 or 6s.2d. per head.

The new workhouse was built 1836-8 to a design by Sampson Kempthorne. It was designed to accommodate 600 people and cost around £12,300. It was based around one of Kempthorne's Y-shaped designs which can still be seen from the aerial photo shown on the previous page. The buildings, mostly of three storeys, were faced with Bath stone. The original bell is preserved in the hospital reception hall.



Originally, a room in the north-eastern arm of the "Y" would have served as a chapel. However, a separate chapel bearing the date 1846 was erected to the east of the main building. The builder was an inmate by the name of John Plass, a copy of whose portrait can also be found in the main hospital reception hall. He started work on it at the age of 78 and died on the 5th June 1849 aged 82.>

In 1924, the chapel was dedicated to St Martin of Tours but it has since been de-consecrated and is now used as a store room.



In 1894, the British Medical Journal set up a "commission" to investigate conditions in provincial workhouses and their infirmaries. Following a visit to Bath, the commission's report catalogued the establishments' shortcomings. The ground-floor wards in the infirmary were "dark and squalid"; the staircases were steep and narrow; the water supply was inadequate, with all hot water for the infirmary needing to be carried from a boiler across a courtyard; no hot water was available at night except by

boiling a kettle. The infirmary's sole night nurse had up to 230 beds to supervise, and the medical officer lived a mile away and was not in telephone contact with the workhouse. The commission strongly recommended that the nursing staff be increased and placed under the control of a qualified nursing matron. It was also suggested that new infirmary buildings be provided since "no amount of patching and remodelling would overcome the stubborn facts of structure".

For many elderly paupers, the workhouse was where they would spend their final days. Most of the workhouse dead were buried in unmarked graves on the other side of the Frome Road, opposite the Red Lion — a total of 4,289 between 1839 and 1899.

In 1905, the workhouse became known as Frome Road House, and later as Frome Road House Poor Law Institution. During the Second World War, an EMS (Emergency Medical Service) hospital operated on the workhouse site. In 1948, with the inauguration of the National Health Service, it became St Martin's Hospital.



Following this most detailed site visit where the group also gained entry to the aforementioned chapel and visited the main hospital building, they moved on down the Wellsway to the interestingly named area of Burnthouse.

While there does not seem to be any firm knowledge of the name, or of the type or age of any “burnt house”, it is obviously fairly old as it is mentioned on eighteenth maps and was known to John Wood on whose land it once stood.

At this point of the walk a slight detour was made to where the Fosse Way is believed to join with the Wansdyke, a further reminder of how Odd Down is truly a meeting point of ways. The group then walked back to the Cross Keys along the route of the western Wansdyke.

The area of the western Wansdyke became the border between the Romano-British Celts and the West Saxons following the Battle of Deorham in 577 AD

Although some antiquarians considered West Wansdyke to stretch from Bathampton Down south east of Bath, to the west of Maes Knoll, a review in 1960 considered that there was no evidence of its existence to the west of Maes Knoll. In 2007 a series of sections were dug across the earthwork which showed that it had existed where there are no longer visible surface remains. It was shown that the earthwork had a consistent design, with stone or timber revetment. There was little dating evidence but it was consistent with either a late Roman or post-Roman date. It has further been suggested that the West Wansdyke continued from Maes Knoll to the hill forts above the Avon Gorge from where the crossings of the river at Saltford and Bristol as well as at Bath could have been controlled.



A 1,330 yards (1,220 m) section of Wansdyke (shown below), which has been designated as an Ancient monument, was our natural way back to our starting point at the Cross Keys.

A most interesting walk to finish off the HBRG 2013/14 season.



Editor: Nigel Pollard - [nigel.e.pollard@zen.co.uk](mailto:nigel.e.pollard@zen.co.uk)

HBRG Web Site: [www.historyofbath.org.uk](http://www.historyofbath.org.uk)