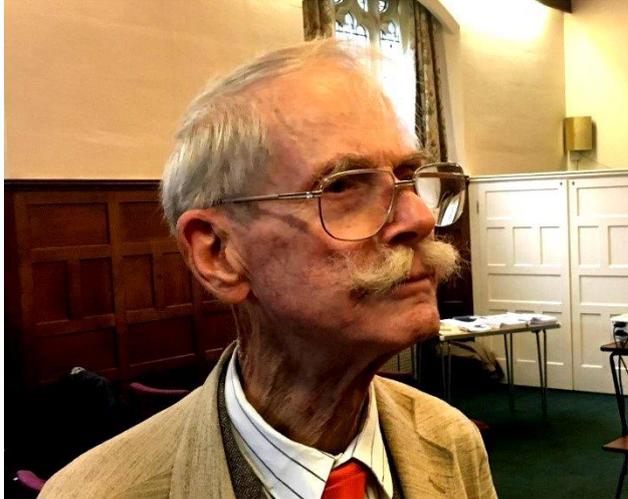


Mike Chapman

It was with the greatest sadness and sense of loss that The History of Bath Research Group received the news of Mike Chapman's death on 26th December 2022.



Mike was one of the earliest members of the group and served on the committee for many years.

Mike has been central to the understanding of the city and its surroundings since around 1986 never mind his school boy curiosity as a volunteer with the famous Wedlake excavations at Camerton. His early experience in the army, in the Royal Engineers, where he was introduced to the mysteries of cartography, has over subsequent years proved a priceless

asset both to other researchers and to the Council. Mike was not only a gifted researcher but he was always ready to share his sometimes hard won information. His comments about Bath and his maps are so often quoted and indeed are central to many publications. In particular his work on Council projects, not least the hugely successful Spa project, ensured a real understanding of the sites involved and the proper recording of what was inevitably destroyed in the redevelopments. His Spa Quarter maps showing the evolution of the area around the springs is unlikely ever to be bettered and will be consulted for many years to come.

Mike was one of the first to sign up to Trevor Fawcett's History of Bath Research Group in 1986 and he has contributed ceaselessly to its work ever since and was still a member of the committee right up to the time of his death. The meetings always ended with a session of questions for Mike in an attempt to download his brain further to enhance the efforts of lesser mortals.

The Survey of Old Bath project occupied a great deal of his time over the years. He and Miss Elizabeth Holland set about using the Council survey of properties and sites as recorded in 1641 to construct an accurate map of Tudor and Stuart Bath. The details and site plans came from the city collection of Deeds and their drawings which have been designated as of national importance and Mike stitched together their information in a most precise way. He finished the final version of the map shortly before he died and it will be published as a central feature of the new historic map of the city showing all the historical periods. This currently is being created with the Historic Towns Trust. Miss Holland of the Survey of Old Bath tells me that working with us on that project brought a great deal of pleasure to Mike's last year of life. Miss Holland also said that Mike's work brought 'distinction' to the Survey.

Mike gave fascinating talks which captured his audiences and he edited journals and produced pamphlets too numerous to name on his interests in the Somerset coalfields and in industrial archaeology. He also had just about completed a major work on water in Bath and I believe that will have the finishing touches completed and it will be published.

Mike had an extraordinary visual memory which the Victoria Art Gallery exploited in identifying old views of Bath from lost view points and in naming lost streets and buildings. This skill allowed the Gallery to enhance the experience of visitors to exhibitions about Bath by giving more detailed descriptions on labels and wall boards than would otherwise have been possible.

Mike's journals written for the Survey of Old Bath are all on the HBRG website and any pamphlets and other articles that are not already in the public domain will be offered to the city archives department.

Mike Chapman's legacy to the city of Bath in his published work is substantial and will inform research relating to The World Heritage Site in perpetuity. His example in relentlessly pursuing accurate research will spur on many others to achieve excellence in their work and so enable the public not only better to understand the city but to enjoy contributing to its conservation, preservation and to its appreciation worldwide.