

Corsham Spotlight

November, 2003
Volume 1, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society



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Editorial

What a wonderful summer Corsham has enjoyed. Lunch on the Lawn provided us with the opportunity to 'out' ourselves to the unsuspecting public as far as Heritage Open Days (HODS) was concerned.

I am sure Peter's old top hat was a certain eye-catcher!! The Corsham Festival played to record audiences and added to the financial well being of the Association which makes it all happen. We delivered two events into its programme, free of all charges – the Secret Underground Cities presentation and Sticke Tennis at Hartham Park. Both had minimal impact on the Festival's expenditure column, while attracting valuable income. Meanwhile the Twinning Association's French Market Morning was its normal successful self. As we go to press, their annual visit to Jargeau is taking place.

Our thanks are due to all the fine Corsham people who bring these excellent events into our world.

Heritage Open Days

Wow – what an experience! Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves so much. The town has so much to offer, and a lot of it was available to all – and free of charge. The weather played its part superbly well. The best comment I heard over the weekend came from a Corsham resident. "It is like we have been on holiday" she said.

We had 46 tours spread over 11 attractions. This resulted in just under 1000 available places, against which we achieved an average take-up rate of 81%. We gratefully extend our thanks to the staff of the Tourist Information and Heritage Centre for registering our visitors so efficiently. In addition to local



folk, we had visitors from other parts of Wiltshire, from Somerset and Gloucester, as well as from Bristol and from London, we even had someone from New Zealand.

What was especially rewarding to the Society's HODS Support group was to have provided an event which was capable of bringing so many of Corshams individual communities together. The list is almost endless – the Town Council, NWDC, Corsham Chamber of Commerce, Corsham Estate, the Almshouses, St Barts, Pound Arts Centre, TIC, local schools, Martingate Centre, Hartham Park and town businesses. We decided, back in October last year that we should throw the town's hat in the ring, and we hope we have demonstrated that Corsham is special – if ever that were needed. As a Society our aim is to celebrate the past, but also to influence Corsham's future to the benefit of us all.

It took a lot of hard work by a lot of enthusiastic, willing volunteers to make this happen – but it was FUN, and our thanks go to **everyone** who helped to make it happen. We all got a tremendous kick out of it. Indeed there is now only one problem. HODS is an annual event – how do we follow it next year? Of one thing you may be sure – we fully intend to do so.



Welcome to New members

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to our Society – Brian and Ann Eatock of Academy Drive (Brian is involved in work with the Corsham Youth issues group and the Corsham Skateboard Project).

Clive Drewett of Station Road, Mrs Margaret Ferguson of Chestnut Grange, Jeremy & Pam Hallett of Mansion Mews, Mrs Yvonne

Hepburn of Chestnut Grange, Malcolm and Carol Llewellyn of Rudloe, John and Joan MacIver of Neston, John and Cynthia Weldon of Brook Drive, Elizabeth Windsor-Sharp and her husband of Erneston Crescent, and - last but not least - Jan Tapscott, our Chairman's wife, who feels more able to join in our activities as she embarks upon her final year working in a local practice.

Visit to Hartham House

There was an excellent turn-out for the Society's visit to Hartham House on 26 September – 44 members attended. In a way this was surprising, as many of our members had already taken advantage of the opportunity offered by our hosts to explore the building and its grounds when it had been the venue for the concluding item in our HODS programme, only eleven days earlier.

Perhaps that spurred even more interest.

It was also extremely pleasing to see so many of our new members present. As usual Les Davis, our Programme Organiser completed the visit preliminaries, and then Mr Eric Porter, Vice Chairman of the Alkemi Group, made the presentation and led the subsequent tour. The content of the talk – and the style in which it was delivered – was highly entertaining.

We are very fortunate to have such a well cared for and well presented “stately home” on

our doorstep. It was particularly interesting to hear that it was a straight choice between Hartham and Sandringham by the Royal Family as to which should be purchased as an additional Estate which resulted in the latter being selected.

Our relationship with Hartham Park, Mr Jeff Thomas (owner and chairman of various companies sited there and co-coordinated from there), and Mr David Dowden (Managing Director of one of those companies) is a valued and growing one. We thank them for their help and generosity.



Forthcoming Social Events

The two ‘social events’ in our calendar are traditionally the Christmas lunch and ‘Mulled Wine and Nibbles’ – the former taking place in the run up to Christmas and the latter taking place in January.

Our Christmas Lunch is to be held at “Cinnamon”, High Street, on Wednesday 17th December at 12.30 pm. If you would like to attend, please advise Pat Britton, our membership

secretary, on Corsham 716289. There is a limit to numbers, because of the size of the restaurant, so please let Pat know soon if you wish to attend.

Mulled Wine and Nibbles night will take place at the Pound Art Centre on 23rd January 2004 at 8pm. No need to book, this is our normal 4th Friday of the month meeting. Do please join us, it gives everyone a chance to get to know each other better, and makes a friendly start to the new year.



Don't Knock the Rot!

Over 40 CCS members and guests were enlightened and entertained by Becky Midgely from the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust last Friday, who gave a fascinating talk about Home Composting. Despite the potential for being 'green', 'technical' and boring, Becky illuminated this subject with wit, enthusiasm and vigour.

We discovered that there is a danger that we may run out of potential landfill sites for our rubbish in North Wiltshire in the next five years unless we begin to dispose of some of our bio-degradable discards at home, that plastic bags never degrade - only shred over a five hundred year period, that recyclable plastics are identified by a number stamped on them and many other interesting facts



associated with this rather 'not nice' subject. The date was arranged a year ago, and that impeccable timing meant that the talk was given in the same week that our 'WheelyBins' were delivered!

Composting Ambassadors – also known as (it was suggested) ComPesterers - were represented by Laurie Lewis and Clare Raybould, who were present to explain their role and answer questions.

A lively discussion was reluctantly brought to a close after two hours, with Becky leaving a range of brochures and leaflets for the audience, and the promise of being available to answer questions by phone.

Our Approach to Programme 2004

At this time of year the Executive Committee is giving considerable thought to next year's programme of talks and visits. Les Davis, our Programme Organiser has, as usual, proved himself to be resourceful and creative and does a magnificent job in coming up with new ideas.

However, this year we felt it was time for each member of the Executive to come up with item suggestions. HODS has brought a renewed interest in the Society, and we have some valuable new members. It is up to us to ensure there is something to interest every member – and to have it available to suit the the maximum number of people. The Executive is soon to hold a meeting to approve the latest set of proposals,

and we hope to have the new programme published ready for our 28th November meeting. Be prepared to see a wide range of talks and visits in the 2004 programme. We also hope to arrange more events (including visits to other societies), and to hold some of these on days of the week other than Fridays – in direct response to requests from some of our members.

We hope you will like the finished article. As ever, we would welcome your comments when we release the Programme.

Forthcoming Executive Committee

Executive Committee meetings will be held on the following dates

- Tues 9 December 2003
- Tues 10 February 2004
- Tues 13 April 2004
- Tues 8 June 2004

If any member should wish to attend as an

Observer, they are very welcome to contact our Chairman – Peter Tapscott, to make the necessary arrangements.

All meetings will be held at The Royal Oak Corsham at 2pm



Questionnaire

Within the pages of this Spotlight, you will find a Questionnaire, which will enable you tell the Committee how you feel about the job that they are doing, and how our Society can be improved.

The purpose of this questionnaire is twofold – to improve the service we provide to the members of the Corsham Civic Society and to seek to ensure we exert maximum influence over decisions which affect our local community. We need **your** views. Please answer as many of the questions as you feel able to. Do not feel bound to answer all the questions. Simply leave blank those against which you feel unable to respond. There is an opportunity for you to provide your name if you wish, but do not feel bound to complete this part. Its only purpose is to allow follow-up of detailed comments, should this be beneficial to the Society.

Our immediate objectives are reproduced on the right. Please return questionnaires to any member of the Society's Executive Committee by Friday, 5th December 2003.

Immediate Objectives

- To continue to influence the development of the revamped Corsham Shopping Precinct
- To bring about Corsham's participation in Heritage Open Days, England's national celebration of our country's architecture and heritage
- To continue to seek to ensure that all development is in accordance with the Corsham Conservation Area Statement (to which we made a major contribution)
- To prepare a Design Statement against whose criteria developers may only submit their proposals
- To continue active participation in the Local, Waste & Transport Plan processes
- To achieve our aim to introduce kerbside collections and local waste recycling
- To bring the Society's Station Campaign to a successful conclusion
- To maintain our interest in archive material, as we seek to uncover and preserve records of Corsham's past by adding to our growing collection of photographs, artefacts, and recorded memories of past times
- To establish a museum/heritage centre in a central location in Corsham, aided by the Heritage Initiative Fund
- To improve communication, through a website and more frequent newsletters, to a wider audience

Reminder - New Subscription Charges

Effective from 1 January 2004

Life Members	£40.00
2 or more life members in the same household, EACH	£30.00
Full members per annum	£10.00
2 or more full members in the same household, EACH	£ 8.00
Junior members per annum	£ 1.00
Corporate members per annum – bronze / silver / gold	£75 / £250 / £500

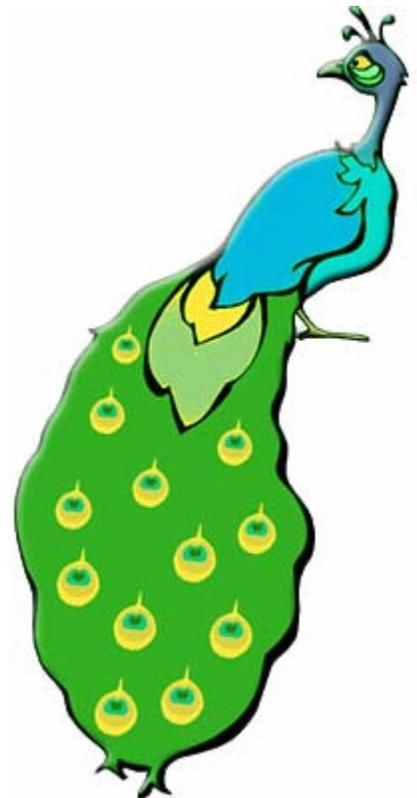
If you currently pay your subscription by Standing Order, then it would be most helpful if you can make the necessary arrangements to increase the payment to that amount which applies to your type of membership with effect from the New Year.

ASHTAV AGM

The Association of Small Historic Towns And Villages (ASHTAV) Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday, October 24th, and Anne Lock attended.

A full report will be included in our next Spotlight

Anne has also had insufficient time to do justice to an article about Corsham Station – Again more later



The Chairman's Vision

In short, it is for the Corsham Civic Society to be the most respected and influential body of public opinion in the area.

To achieve this lofty goal, I believe we must adopt the following objectives – and pursue them vigorously:

- Become the Local Community group with which people wish to be associated.
- To become expert in whatever we take on.
- Provide the best facilities for the presenters we invite to address our members and their guests.
- Increase our membership to 140+ by the year end.
- Make membership more rewarding.
- Widen the age range of our membership, and in so doing gain access to a wider range of experience, skills and enthusiasms.
- Develop further our relationship with local schools and youth groups.
- Improve our interaction with Corsham Town Council.
- Continue our excellent relationship with NWDC and WCC.
- Develop friendships with neighbouring Civic Societies.
- Develop a relationship with the local business community.



*Good King Peter
last looked out...*

- Keep plugging away at the “Immediate Objectives” listed under our “Why Join the Civic Society?” in our leaflet “Corsham Civic Society, Shaping the Future” – all 10 of them.
- Achieve quickly the one concerning the establishment of a Corsham Museum.
- Encourage membership to the Executive - especially to officer positions.
- Deliver financial security to our Society – and develop a means of keeping it that way. NB. Our participation in HODS 2003 had an immensely positive impact on this.

A Utopian vision, I hear you say. I realise that it sounds like a big task. However, we have made huge progress over the last 12 months. Every one of them is within our grasp.

The enclosed questionnaire is intended to elicit your views on how we should develop our Society. There are some general points and some specific points. Your views are important. I can assure you that the Executive Committee will pay attention to all of them.

The next meeting of the Executive is scheduled for 9 December. Please do your best to return your response to Pat Whalley, Secretary, by that date – failing that, to any member of the Executive who is most convenient to you.

Our early 2004 ‘Spotlight’ will carry an analysis of your responses.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Peter

Family History Memorabilia

You will have seen mention in this newsletter of our intention to start a Museum in Corsham.

When we achieve that goal we shall be looking for interesting items of our local history to include in the displays.

If you have anything which tells us more about the history of Corsham and its inhabitants, family stories, photographs, or other memorabilia, which you would be willing to part with, we would be most grateful to hear about it. (with your permission, we could of course, just copy any precious photographs)

Alternatively, there may be something you would be willing to release ‘on loan’.

So many precious stories are lost in this ‘throw away’ society. It would be so nice to be able to save more of our history for the future.

Contacts:

Peter Tapscott - 714453

Anne Lock - 01225 810357

Pat Whalley - 713618



The Victorian School Experience

By Barbara Dimmick, (who acted as steward for this HODS Event item.)

When first I saw the room at the Pound Centre that was to be the venue for the “Victorian School Experience” I was rather disappointed, for having visited Sevington School where everything is brilliantly authentic Victorian, here was only a small sample of equipment from a Victorian Classroom. However this was understandable, given that only a small car was available for transport. But Celia “Miss Squire” dressed very severely in black, did wonders to convey the atmosphere.

My task was to dress the children up to look like Victorian pupils, pinafores (one size fits all) for the girls, who they all seemed to enjoy wearing; (several mothers took photographs). The boys were less enthusiastic about the waistcoats, which were in various sizes, which complicated things a little, and appeared less authentic!

Waiting in the common Room, there was a certain amount of rowdiness from the boys and giggling from the girls, but when “Miss Squire” appeared with her bell, and order to “line up, the smallest at the front” there was an amazing transformation. In silence they followed her to the classroom and when they returned at the end of their ‘experience’ they were just as orderly.

It was originally intended to be a “children only experience”, so when a number of adults appeared, bearing tickets, I was somewhat taken aback. But not “Miss Squire”. The adults were ordered to observe from the back of the room, while the children sat on forms, or even on the floor, when there was a large invasion!

All I know of what went on in the classroom was hearing the sound of “All things bright and beautiful” coming through the wall. It was written on a large sheet of paper in the style of writing associated with pointed steel dip pens, for which the introduction was “pot hooks and hangars” written on slates with slate pencils. Of course the famous line “The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate” was included.

I did catch sight of incredibly boring reading cards, bearing sentences of ‘the cat sat on the mat’ variety. Also on the blackboard was a ‘pounds, shillings, pence and farthings’ sum (long division, I believe, being the most daunting).

When the children returned, they appeared enthusiastic over their experience, no doubt because of the novelty value, especially the silence! The adults said how interesting it had been, and some began to reminisce.

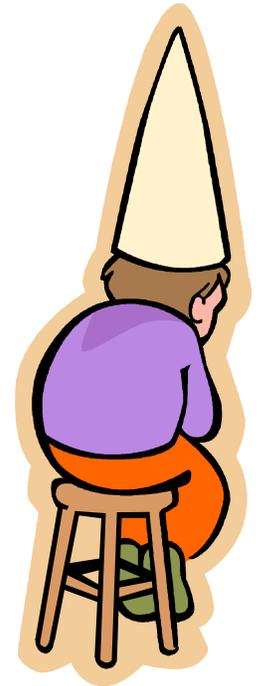
Congratulations to “Miss Squire”.

“Old Corsham” Project

We are starting to Catalogue our collection of old photographs of Corsham, and will shortly need your help. Some of the prints are of unknown places and some, I’m sure have interesting stories to tell.

We plan to have an evening (or two) where the photographs will be projected on large screen, and any and all members who feel that they could help identify places, or indeed are just curious will be welcome

More later



Where do you Live?

Elm Hayes – a local field name

Ethelred Place – King Ethelred the Unready had a hunting lodge at Corsham.

Kings Avenue, Queens Avenue - referring back to the days when Corsham was known as Corsham Regis, and was a manor in the Queens Dower.

Kirby Road – named after Richard Kirby, founder of the Kirby's Charity in 1672.

Lypiatt Rd/Lypiatt Mead – Lypiatt comes from the word Lepegate (leap gate) which is a low gate in a fence that can be jumped by deer, but not other animals. This probably dates back to when Melksham Forest spread close to the settlement at Corsham.

Moxhams – William Moxham bequeathed £10 in his will of 1621, to be employed for the best use of the poor of the parish.

Newlands Road – Henry III gave his brother, Richard Earl of Cornwall 'new land' in Corsham. Newlands Road, occupies part of this new land.

Pound Mead/Pound Close/ Pound Pill – The village 'pound' was situated in the area of the Bowling Club in Station Road.

Priory Street – It is believed that the remains of a Prior's Cell is evident in the grounds of Heywood School in Priory Street.

Purleigh Road – near the site of an ancient Barn, known as Purleigh Barn.

Stokes Road – used to be known as Pound Pill Mead Lane. There is also a local builder, one William Stokes who according to the 1881 census lived in South Street. I wonder if his name is remembered here.

Swan Road – There was a "Swan Inn" which stood opposite the "Hare & Hounds" at Pickwick – described as a small Brewery and Ale House.

Tellcroft Close – derived from the field name "Tillcroft" found on the 1838 Tythe Award Map.

The Cleeve – was known as "Priors Clift" and was on the ancient roadway from Glastonbury to Malmesbury, via The Ridge, used by Pilgrims.

The Laggar – another field name "Leggan Ground" (enclosed paddock). Shepherds would leave their sheep in enclosures while they stayed overnight at "The Pack Horse" (now known as "The Flemish Weaver" in the High St) before driving the animals to market and shearing.

The Tynings – Field name. Tyn = enclosure, ing = marshy.

This brings us to the end of our available information of place names around Corsham. If you have knowledge of any others, please let us know. We hope to bring you some more interesting information about past local people in our next issue, and if you have an interesting tale to tell please contact Pat Whalley on 713618.



Executive Committee Members

Mr Peter Tapscott,	Mrs Pat Whalley,
Mrs Pat Britton,	Mrs Ann Lock,
Mr Eric Mahy,	Mr John Lock
Mr Les Davis	Mrs Anne Greenley
Mr David Bowen-Jones	Mr Geoff Knapp
Ms Eileen Soames	Mrs Vida Flower
Mr Norman Duckworth	Mr Bill Langley-Jones

All Committee Members are reminded of the schedule of Executive Committee Meetings listed on Page 3 of this Spotlight.



Civic Society Officers

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Mr Eric Mahy, 15 Towcester
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We're on the Web!

See us at:

Under Construction!

Obituaries

Tom Burnard

It was with great regret that we heard of the death of Tom Burnard. He was probably best known for his support and involvement in the Corsham Photographic Society but we were also proud of his membership of the Civic Society. Tom and his wife Marjorie regularly attended our open meetings

from the late 70' into the 90's. Immensely gifted, he and his colleagues worked together to present the society with an extensive photographic record of Corsham, many samples of which were the work of Harold Brakspear and Herbert Spackman dating from early 1900. Tom was an exceedingly modest, quietly spoken gentle man who will be sadly missed. The world was a better place for his presence in it Marjorie, their daughter and family have been proffered our most sincere condolences and reminded that we share their sadness at his passing.

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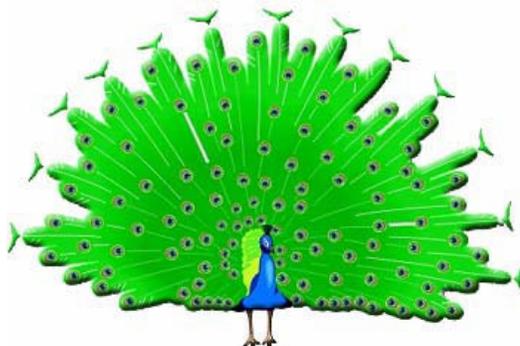
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Corsham Civic Society

Corsham Civic Society was founded in 1963 to represent the people of Corsham in all aspects of conservation, preservation and the promotion of this delightful Wiltshire town.

The Society is a registered Charity, a member of the Civic Trust and ASHTAV (Association of Small Historic Towns & Villages of the UK).

It is our aim to promote high standards of planning and architecture, to create a wider awareness amongst the local population of environmental issues, the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area, and to secure the preservation, protection and improvement of features of public amenity and/or historical interest, both in Corsham and in the surrounding countryside.



Corsham Civic Society

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