

Corsham Spotlight

July 2008

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Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society



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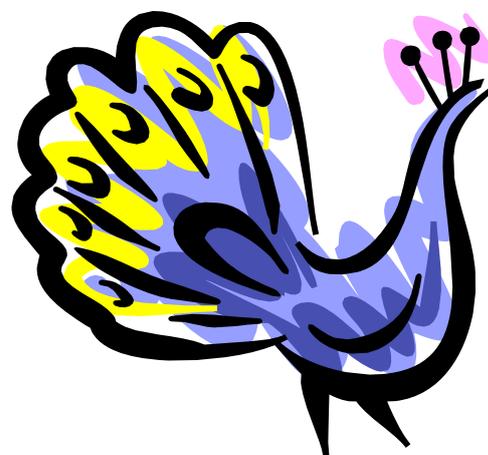
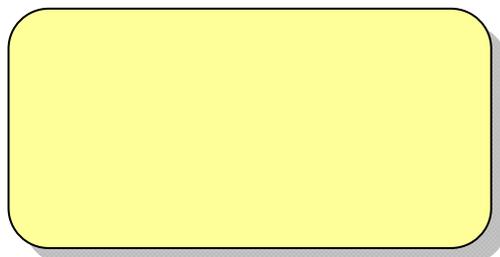
AGM

The 2008 AGM took place in Corsham Town Hall on May 15th, followed by a screening of a film of the 1967 Corsham Carnival (introduced by Norman Duckworth) and an informal discussion of issues arising out of the proposal to relocate the Porch Surgery to a site in Rudloe. Joan Maciver organised the splendid refreshments between the formal meeting and the film.

After the (retiring) Chairman had welcomed members, he noted with regret that no nominations had been received for this position, nor for the post of Vice-Chairman (vacated by Peter Tapscott). Furthermore, Dr John Harwood had announced his decision to stand down as Treasurer after many years of committed service. In all, five new nominations – one of whom had volunteered to stand as Treasurer - had been received for the Executive Committee. It was agreed that the vacancies among the Executive Officers should be resolved at the next meeting of the Executive Committee on June 10th.

Members remembered with affection the work of the President, Anne Greenly, who had died in March. Anne Lock, a former Chairman of the Civic Society, had been nominated as her successor and was duly elected by the meeting. Michael Rumsey (a 'Corsham boy' who has recently returned to his roots) was elected as the new Treasurer.

Formal reports from the Secretary, Sally Fletcher, and (outgoing) Treasurer recorded the success of the Society's many activities and the very satisfactory state of our finances. Both were thanked for their excellent work - as were our auditor, Ron Davies, and outgoing committee members, Pat Whalley and Eric Mahy (who had transferred the video of the Corsham Carnival onto DVD for this occasion). Questions were raised about the Society's collection of artefacts and the financial situation of the Mayo restorations.



Arising out of a long and vigorous debate about Primary Health care in the Corsham/Box area, it was resolved that the Corsham Area Community Partnership should be approached to help coordinate public opposition to the scheme. Members were also asked to write individually to the surgery and/or local health authorities to express their views for or against the proposed changes. It is clear that the Society continues to act as a vibrant forum for discussions about local issues and corporately makes a significant contribution to matters of forward planning, conservation, regional history, heritage, and culture. The film of the 1967 Carnival (made shortly after the founding of the Civic Society) reminds us of the strong community bonds that existed 40 years ago as today.

Wyndham Thomas



Since the first Executive meeting following the AGM, a new Chairman has been elected. Here he tells us a little about himself.

INTRODUCING YOUR CHAIRMAN

Your Chairman for the 2008/2009 term of office is Les Davis, Honorary Vice President. Born in North Camberwell, South London, he has many happy memories of fun and games in both 'Peckham Rye and Grove Parks', also the lovely gardens attached to those parks. He joined the Royal Air force whilst in his late teens and completed six years service, and was demobilised in November 1945. He had married a Wiltshire girl, his dear wife Maude, with whom he shared 62 years of happiness. Maude passed away in June 2003; she was a wonderful mother and companion. Les has been a salesman, and worked in mechanical engineering at the MOD, Spring Quarry. A bout of ill health contributed to his retirement at sixty three. He has recovered exceptionally well and enjoys life, his hobby philately and bicycle histories are his major pastimes, together with numerous research projects on the history of Corsham.

He is a life member of the RAFA and the Corsham Civic Society.

Review

Our first speaker for the year was Maurice Hancock, a long serving member of the Corsham Fire Service.

The meeting was held at the Corsham Fire Station, and Maurice took us through the history of Corsham Fire Brigade - with many anecdotes, from its commencement in the mid 1800's, to the present day. We were then invited to make a close inspection of the current fire tenders, and came to understand much more about their present day duties. How things have changed since the Victorian era. Once they had to catch a horse to pull the tender to the site of a fire; now it is very high tech, and aren't we all very thankful for it? We were delighted to make a donation to the Corsham Fire Brigade, and to the Fireman's Benevolent fund.

It was necessary to make a change to our advertised programme for March, and Ernest Hird, very kindly stepped into the breach with the very interesting story of the life of Robin Tanner, an engraver and educationalist of the highest standard. Robin had married Heather Spackman, of the 'Corsham Spackman family' of local renown. They had spent their married life in a cottage at Kington Langley where Heather wrote books and Robin illustrated them, whilst pursuing his career as a School Inspector, which gave him the opportunity to inspire many teachers and pupils alike to greater things.

April brought us Karin Meak who explained how best to research a family tree, accompanied by an excellent PowerPoint presentation, and informative hand-out notes, we were all inspired to take the time to explore our 'roots'.

The AGM in May is reported on the first page.



Fireman in 'Lancers Tunic' – worn from late 19th century to 1960/70

Donations

In March we told you of the ledger and an order book which Mr Peter Johnson of Timberleaze, Lanes End Gastard had found in the old Co-op Shop, many years ago,

The 'Ration Register' is dated 1941, and lists customers names and their Co-op share Number, in relation to the purchase of coal from the Co-op. The other appears to be a book of orders dated 1938.

Here is an extract : 22nd March 1938 - 1pr 'Dawn' corsets 31" - 8/11d (approx 44p today)

22nd March 1938 - 27" child's hat and coat set (blue) - 8/11d - if not in stock please order

25th April 1938 - one 32" Raincoat - 17/11d.

Do you remember yours or your mother's Co-op share no.?



THE CORSHAM TIC MOVES WITH THE TIMES

There has been a dramatic transformation at the Corsham Tourist Information & Heritage Centre (affectionately known as the 'TIC') in Corsham's High Street over recent weeks. Readers are urged to pay the Centre a visit to appreciate the changes for themselves – even those of you who might previously have felt that a tourist information centre presumably intended to focus visitor attention on your own home town has probably nothing of consequence to offer you personally. The TIC can show you just how wrong such an assumption has been!

The scale of the work has been extensive. The cost has been borne by the District Council (NWDC). The fundamental reason for the expenditure was to render the Centre compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995 (whose provisions were further extended in 2005). Applied to such a public place, this requires, in effect, that those of us who have some form of mobility disability should have an equal access opportunity to those who do not. NWDC had recognised the need to undertake changes to the CTI&HC prior to its hand-off of the responsibility to operate the facility to the Corsham Area Development Trust (CADT) – which it did in October 2006. Now was time to do it. The CADT, understandably, wished to minimise the disruption to its 'business'. At the same time it wished to maximise the benefits that might accrue to that business. The CADT has had a considerable input to the what, the when, and the how of the work. It is well-pleased with the result.

Prior to the work, the CTI&HC comprised three rooms, all fronting on to the High Street and accessible through the one front door. There are still three rooms. However, the room that was the 'Stone Room' and the room that was the 'Sales Office' have now been interchanged. Why? To enable the French Doors that had long been concealed behind displays in the Stone Room (as was) to be opened up, so as to provide the 'Disabled Access'. The front door on to the High Street remains. However, we now have a second one – albeit one that is intended primarily for those lacking the mobility to manage the front door. Access to that second one is via the path that runs between the TIC and the next-door property – many thanks for allowing us the use of this path for this purpose, Tom! – and a gate that has long-existed in the boundary wall of the garden of Arnold House (the building in which the CTI&HC is situated).

New furniture has been purchased for the new Sales Office. The result is truly amazing! The whole experience is lighter and more inviting to passers-by. Our cliental who are disabled can get into and out of the Centre without difficulty. Additionally, they can move between the three rooms without the kind of restriction that was presented by that immense 'control desk' that had graced the old Sales Office for so many years. We can even include such folk in the team that runs the Centre.

Unfortunately, progress of this type comes with a price. In our case, this was disruption to our normal business and a mammoth amount of work for the team that you see at the Centre. I am pleased to say that the former was kept to an absolute minimum. We were 'closed' for one Saturday morning, only. We reopened at normal opening time (10 o'clock) on the following Monday morning – the 2nd June. By the time you read this, we will have held an 'official re-opening'. This is scheduled for Wednesday, 25th June, at 9:30am. District Cllr. Viv Vines will cut the ribbon – and handover the refurbished facilities to the CADT's Chairman, our own District Cllr. Christine Reid. We will have a special exhibition – loaned from our good friends at the Kemble-based 'Bristol Aero Collection' group – showing aspects of the BAC engine manufacturing facility that was established underground at Spring Quarry during World War II to augment the occasion. All very newsworthy, we reckon!

Our staff have been tremendous throughout this exercise. They comprise 5 part-time employed members and approximately 15 volunteers. The efforts applied over the 'change-over weekend' were particularly impressive. Corsham owes you all a huge vote of thanks – which the two directors of the CADT, Ian Storey and myself' are extremely pleased to lead.

I think that's enough on the refurbishment – although there are so many little stories concerning the project which I could relate to you (some amusing, some not!). Additionally, there are many other aspects of the development of the CTI&HC – and that of Corsham's tourism economy that is the real focus of the CADT's efforts – but time here now does not allow. Perhaps, another occasion.

One final point, however. Demonstrable use of the Centre by the public is vital. 'Footfall statistics' have been maintained over many years. Organisations which are able to provide the funding for our continued existence look to see these figures increasing. You can play a real part in ensuring that they do. Please support your TIC and make a point of 'dropping in' whenever you can. You are assured of a warm and friendly welcome.



Peter Tapscott, Director, Corsham Area Development Trust



THE SCHOOL BELL

Margaret Shrewring had raised the question of where the old school bell had gone after being apparently moved from The Pound. (Once known as Corsham Junior School). Her research brought several memories.

The school bell rang for five minutes before school began. It did not matter how far away from the school gates the children were, they automatically ran. To be late meant doing 'lines' – writing "I must not be late for school" twenty or thirty times. If by any small chance you were late and able to arrive unobserved, you waited until assembly finished and hopefully mingled with your classes they emerged from the 'big classroom' (used as an assembly hall). Then all you had to do was file back to your class with the tune of 'Men of Harlech' being played on the grand piano by teacher, Mrs Owen. A hand bell was rung for mid morning break and at the end of lessons.

I have been in contact with many past pupils – some who no longer live in the Corsham area, they all remember the old school bell evoking memories, and that it played a significant part in their school lives. A school friend who lived in Priory Street said when she heard the school bell she had to run like h...!!

Some old boys reported having rung the school bell, it was considered a privilege to do so. Of course, the girls were never allowed to ring the bell.

Peter Snape, (past pupil) said when he played cricket for Corsham, he used to aim at the school bell, hoping to score a six!

Martin Hancock, Station Commander, Corsham Fire Service, remembered he and his crew dismantling the bell from the old school in 1993.

The bell is now safely hanging in the present Corsham County Primary School, complete with bell rope. Thank you Margaret, another mystery solved.

Margaret Shrewring

CCS ANNUAL EVENING WALK

26 members and guests of the CCS braved the threatened rain (which didn't materialise) this evening to undertake the Society's annual "Walk / Supper", which, this year, took in the delights of Lacock. Just over an hour's walking was followed by a much-appreciated meal at the George Inn, West Street - reputed to be Lacock's oldest hostelry.

The George was both the starting and the finishing point of the walk. The route took us out past the ford close to St Cyriac's Church, over the field with a large number of sheep for company, out on to the road near the river bridge, through Reybridge, right at the road junction, along the road through Bewley Common and past Bewley Court, right at the road junction near the Bell Inn, back over the river near Lacock Abbey - and thence to the welcoming embrace of the George Inn.

A good time was had by all. Grateful thanks are due to Geoff Knapp who led the walk.

DON'T FORGET OUR ANNUAL BARBEQUE!

At Heywood School, Priory Street, Corsham, 16th August 2008, 12 noon – 2.30pm.

We will provide the food. You provide the wine/lemonade, and a chair to sit on.

A great time will be had by all !!!!!



MAYO PROJECT GEARS ITSELF FOR THE LAST LAP

The Mayo Memorial Restoration Project is now entering its final stage. The monument itself is restored – and looking good for the summer-visitor season. As I write this article, the good members of the Pickwick W.I. are in the course of replacing the plants which occupied the memorial's front-facing water trough over the winter and spring months with attractive summer bedding plants. The Town Council has undertaken to include these plants in its daily 'bowser run' around the town council to stop them withering in the hot sun that we all now expect.

Now we must complete the associated works. This includes putting the finishing touches to our video record of the Project and issuing an 'Interpretive Leaflet' which explains the who, the what, the why and the how. The latter will be accompanied by an 'Information Board' to be erected close to the site of the memorial. When all these are done, we can hold the completion 'Celebratory Party', which, these days, is considered to be an essential ingredient of all such projects.

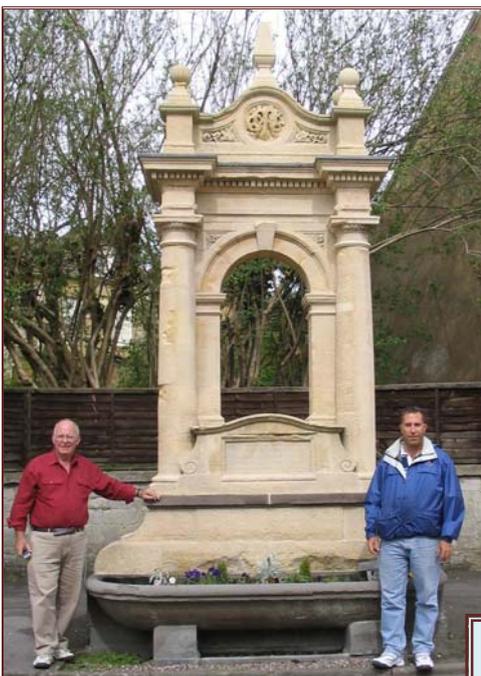
I try to provide you readers of the Society's regular newsletter with an update on the Project for inclusion in each edition. This works quite well. I am obliged to submit quarterly Progress Reports to the body which is the Project's biggest single source financial support – being the Heritage Lottery Fund. By a happy coincidence, the dates of the two 'report' correspond almost exactly.

I also use the initial 'Project Progress Summary' section of the HLF report as the basis for the quarterly update that Brian Gibbs – the Society's own 'webmaster' – posts under "Mayo Memorial" on our website: www.corsham-civic-society.co.uk. I commend it to you! The whole report to the HLF runs to 6 pages. This summary is much shorter. It also includes a straight listing of 'Significant Events (most recent at the top)'. Item 1 on the latest update shows that on 26 April 2008, we received a visit from Craig (son) and Lindsay (father) from Australia. Contact arose from their monitoring of our progress on the CCS website and their use of the 'Contact Us' facility. See below.

The next 'event' on the Project is the installation of the Commemorative Plaque – to mark the restoration undertaken at this time. The Plaque is to be placed on the rear-facing aspect of the memorial, immediately above the smaller of the memorial's two water troughs. The specialist stonemason into whose hands this work has been entrusted reports that the work is in hand. Installation is promised before the end of June.

Peter Tapscott, Project Manager for the Mayo Memorial Restoration Project

THE MAYO FAMILY - DESCENDANTS



Peter Tapscott and I were very pleased to have the opportunity to meet Craig Garrett and his father Lindsay in late April, when they came from their homes in Australia to visit Corsham, and to identify the Mayo grave in St Bartholomew's churchyard, to see the restored Memorial, Ivy House, and the Mayo Pike!

As you might imagine many photographs were taken to ensure a concise record was maintained. Craig and his father are descended on the Mary Hayward side of the family (Charles Mayo's wife), and whilst they were in the UK they had visited the Wilts Record Office at Chippenham, and the Gloucester Record Office, and were travelling then to the Isle of Man where they had identified other family members. They are true Genealogists, and they have promised to keep in touch with us, in order that we can keep up with the family story.

It was very nice to meet them both, thank you Craig and Lindsay.

Pat Whalley

*Australia's Lindsay and Craig
Researching their Family Roots*



A Backward Glance through the Visitors' Book

By James Wills

There was a time when cigarettes and tobacco smoking were fashionable and we recognise that now it is part of a by-gone age. But it may be worth recording for posterity the story of one famous family business WD & HO Wills of Bristol. Very kindly recorded for us by a descendant. James Wills.

I am fortunate to possess a very old, frayed leather bound Visitors Book which began life in Bristol in 1927. Glancing through the now faded pages of this volume arouses a certain amount of nostalgia, memories of names, often faceless and of gracious living long ago – now forgotten.

This rather special book belonged to my Grandfather who in October 1947 moved with his wife from their house near Bristol to take up residence at Fogleigh House in Box. Here they stayed until 1955 and although a very small child in the early 1950's, I have vivid memories of my visits to the seemingly towering Gothic residence still standing today on Box Hill where I rolled down the grass verges to fish with a bent pin in the Bybrook.

Of particularly staunch Victorian principles, my Grandfather was indeed a formidable character as he sat in his armchair adorning a smart pressed suit, stiff white collar and motif tie. I particularly remember the ever present halo of tobacco smoke encircling his head. For my Grandfather was Frank Oliver Wills, the great-great grandson of HO Wills, the founder of the Bristol firm of tobacco manufactures WD&HO Wills.

The brand name of WD&HO Wills will not conjure up many memories with those today under the age of thirty, but it is a fact that throughout nine English monarchs the name of WD&HO Wills was indeed a household name.

The origins of the tobacco trade in Bristol can be traced as far back as 1497. John Cabot set sail aboard his ship The Matthew, from Bristol to North America, which ultimately led to Bristol becoming a major trader with the New World, as ships from Bristol carried goods to settlers in the new colonies and returned to England with holds full of tobacco leaves from which Bristol's cigarette production grew.

But how did WD&HO Wills all begin?

It was in the 16th Century when Anthony Wills residing in the parish of Saltash in Cornwall married his first wife in 1510 thus beginning a huge family, now very divided, of whose members many could arguably be likened to characters out of Goldsworthy's epic Forsyte Saga.

Two hundred and seventy six years later in 1786 we can piece together a journey from Salisbury to Bristol one September evening when a 25 year old young man sat in an uncomfortable position on top of a stage coach. His father, Edmund Wills was a watch and clock maker in Salisbury and the young man had listened often to his father talking of the emerging tobacco trade and he had decided that it was certainly a career to consider.

The Stage Coach finally reached Bristol and entered Temple Street and on into Bath Street where the spires of familiar churches came into view silhouetted behind the masts of ships moored in the river Avon. Finally coming to rest at The Bush Tavern only a stone's throw from the top of Corn Street as it is known today, the traveller's baggage was taken off the coach by the hustler who received a generous tip from the traveller. On entering the tavern the young man signed his name on the register as Mr H. O. Wills.

Over the course of the next few days Henry Overton Wills wandered down Old Market Street where even in those early days there were at least fourteen businesses in that small vicinity registered as tobacco manufacturers.

A local newspaper at the time complained that pigs and goats were allowed to wander the streets with impunity and the lives of inhabitants were endangered by the heaps of rubbish. For the streets were no more than 25 feet wide – there were no pavements and the upper stories of the timber built houses leaned precariously over the cobbled streets.

Very soon after his arrival in Bristol, Henry Overton Wills joined the firm of Samuel Watkins as a partner in his tobacco manufacturing business at 73 Castle Street. Three years later Mr Samuel retired and the firm became known as Wills and Co. By the end of that year the remaining partners John Collins and Aaron Northport had retired and the firm became known as H.O. Wills and Co.

To H.O Wills and his nine employees, those early days were full of excitement and adventure. A time when the cottager could not only hear the hum of the spinning wheel, but also could look out over the fields and valleys and see smoke rising from the newly erected chimneys and countless new factories in the distant cities. This was of course the time of the Industrial Revolution when England was changing from primary agricultural to that of a country where more and more people were earning their living by working in a factory.

Henry Wills made a point of inviting his employees for Sunday lunch on a regular basis to join him and his wife and small son William in their gabled Redcliffe Street House. While employees in other parts of the country were destroying their machines and burning hayricks in outbursts of hatred and hunger, the early Wills employees were quietly stripping tobacco leaves and talking about the arrival of their new cutting machines. HO Wills and Co moved from Castle Street in



1791 when they joined forces with Peter Lilly at 112 Redcliffe Street and the company became known as Lilly and Wills.

From the late 19th Century factories were built and extended not only in Bristol but also in London, Swindon, Dublin, Newcastle and Glasgow. The "Bristol" was the first cigarette made at Wills by hand, introduced in 1871 it appeared in several guises until it was finally withdrawn in 1974. Subsequent makes such as Three Castles (immortalised in Thackeray's book *The Virginians*) appeared in 1878 along with the equally famous Gold Flake which is still on sale today. Woodbines followed in 1888 and for many years was the most popular cigarette in Britain, especially with soldiers in the trenches in the 1st World War. Familiar brands followed - Capstan, Cinderella, Honey Cut, Passing Cloud, Embassy and Wills' Fine Shag. By the turn of the 20th Century the Tobacco industry was a major employer in Bristol where production facilities were built throughout the city, especially in the Bedminster and Ashton Gate areas. WD&HO Wills became known for its family spirit and belief that all workers should enjoy themselves. The company pioneered canteens, free medical care, sports facilities and paid holidays. The first factory built in Bristol in 1866, boasted dining rooms and a kitchen for each department. Indeed, the company was renowned for being excellent employers – and offered a job for life.

HO Wills died in 1826, but in 1830 when the accession of King William IV was celebrated in Bristol, a new era began. H.O's two sons took over the business and the name changed to the more familiar W.D&H.O Wills. William, the elder son, had joined the firm in the year of The Battle of Waterloo as a senior partner. It was his profound deafness later in life that contributed to the accident that led to his death in London in 1865 when he was knocked down by a horse omnibus in Snow Hill.

The other son, H.O Wills (the second) married twice and sired 22 children. Being a great benefactor, H.O laid the foundation stones and financed the building of over 30 Congregationalist churches in Bristol and it was his son H.O Wills (the third) who gave Bristol its University. In memory of him his two sons Sir George and Harry added several university buildings and were responsible for the Wills Memorial Tower at the top of Park Street and also the erection of the Victoria Rooms in Clifton.

One poignant entry of that evocative Fogleigh House Visitors Book, written in 1947, to me remains particularly pertinent: Returning home from the horrors of the Japanese invasion of Singapore in February 1942 was my own father Alan Oliver Wills.

Alan Wills was to have been married to my mother in St Cuthbert's Church in Darlington on the very day that England declared war on Germany in September 1939. Ten days earlier, on the 25th August, Alan, a serving officer in the RNVF, had received a telegram informing him of immediate embarkation from Southampton to an unspecified destination. His bride to be was Rosamond Margaret Batty whom he had met while working at the WD&HO Wills factory in Swindon where she was Personnel Supervisor. The wedding was postponed indefinitely, but thankfully (at least for my three brothers and I) took place some years later – one of the many, many romances that blossomed over the years at WD&HO Wills!

In 1901 Sir William Henry Wills 1st Baron Winterstoke formed the Imperial Tobacco Company from a merger of W.D. & H.O. Wills with seven other tobacco manufacturers and became one of the World's largest tobacco companies. Thus it remained until 1988 when Imperial Tobacco finally withdrew the Wills brand in the United Kingdom, with the exception of the popular Woodbine and Capstan, which still carry the Wills name.

From that huge empire, now well into the 21st Century only the warehouse buildings on Bristol Harbour remain prominent, now converted to other uses and the Bedminster factory is now taken up by the innovative Tobacco Factory Theatre.

As I dust the Visitors book and return its now fading pages to my bookshelf, I consider just how drastically life has changed since those days I have described. We in the 21st Century are now very aware through medical research of the considerable harm inflicted by cigarettes.

But, despite all, The Wills family were subsequently responsible for financing Mill Hill School in London, Taunton School in Somerset, The Homeopathic Hospital in Bristol, the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery and the St Monica Home of Rest on the Downs and not forgetting Bristol University.

The Dulverton Trust established by deed in 1949 by the 1st Lord Dulverton to provide funds for such charitable institutions still operates as an independent charitable grant-making organisation. Since its foundation, the Dulverton Trust has made grants totalling well over £60M, which have provided much-needed support to thousands of charities.

JB Priestly who wrote in his *English Journey* in 1934 "Among the best examples of people activated by civic pride are members of the Wills Family in Bristol. They have chosen to remain in Bristol, the city that made their fortunes for them and they have spent enormous sums of money in the place."

Oh! What a wealth of memories and nostalgia in those faded pages!

Acknowledgements

With grateful thanks to Roger Till author of "Wills of Bristol" and to The Wills Family Records.



RUDLOE STONES PROJECT

Over the course of the first three months of the year, Westlea Housing led and completed a unique and fascinating project to create a trail of six 'educational stones' in Rudloe, with the stones being located at carefully-chosen sites in various parts of the neighbourhood. Each stone features part of a picture and a question linked to the history of the area. The Corsham Civic Society is proud to have played a role in the project.

Westlea led the project and provided the bulk of the funding. Hanson's Quarry donated the stone and A4 Aggregates gave a discount on the engraving. Additional funding came from the area's Extended Schools Network Co-ordinator.

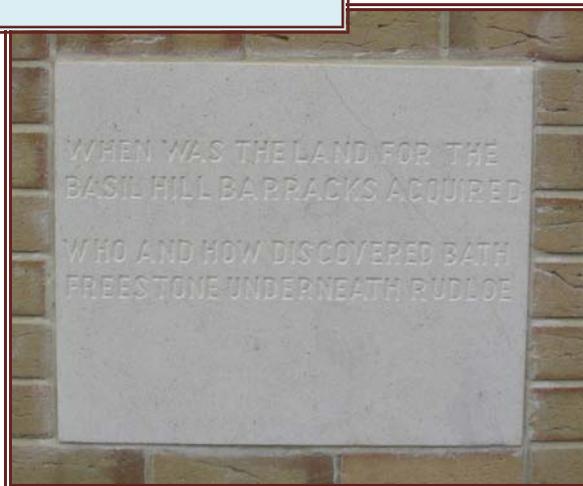
The Society's role was to contribute towards the framing of the questions at each of the six sites. Local schools will receive a map of the area along with copies of the questions and the answers. This will support both the Art and History subjects in the curriculum. Pat Whalley had a major involvement in this activity.

Pat's contribution did not end there. The Corsham Area Development Trust donated a quantity of its leaflet "Corsham's Stone Age" which is normally sold at the TIC for 30p per copy and was actually written by Pat. Copies of the leaflets were included in a pack assembled for each pupil of the three schools participating in the project – Broadwood School, Rudloe and Regis, Corsham. In return, the CADT and its TIC were afforded a 'special mention' in the Press Release that Westlea Housing issued to mark the completion of the project. Hopefully this will further increase the 'footfall' at Arnold House – where the 'Stone Room' already attracts a lot of favourable comment.

The formal unveiling of the sixth stone took place at the Rudloe Community Centre on Monday, 1 March. The Society was invited to attend and was represented by Pat Britton, Geoff Knapp and the writer. An excellent culmination to a superb community effort!

Peter Tapscott

One of the Six Stones



Steve Rover-Parkes and schoolchildren unveiling the stone, mounted in the wall of Rudloe Community Centre, 31st March, 2008.

Obituary

'Members will no doubt be aware of the sad death of Janet Clifton (1952-2008). Her fortitude and faith in the face of an aggressive brain tumour were a source of inspiration to all who knew her. The Society sent

one of the hundreds of messages of condolence received by Roger and family.

Janet's funeral on June 2nd was attended by c.560 people from many countries and communities. Somehow they all packed into St Bart's Church for an extremely moving celebration of her life. Collections were taken for the Macmillan Nurses and the St Bart's Spire Appeal (which currently stands at c. £91,000). Any Civic Society members who would like to make a contribution in memory of Janet Clifton may do so via the Funeral Directors, H. Merrett (57a Pickwick Road, SN13 9BS). '

Wyndham Thomas



STATION CAMPAIGN

The Public Meeting called for 23rd May last enjoyed a fair level of support and good contacts were made with many anxious to be involved in taking matters forward. The meeting opened with a presentation by Mike Greedy of Passenger Focus on Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) for the next 10 years, which is currently at an early consultation stage. He said that decisions about future services were made by the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail based on properly-evidenced research with the support of local authorities. He urged campaigners to produce up-to-date information.

Having set up the Corsham Diary website, Jim Avery kindly offered to create a website for us also and this was launched on the 23rd May. Those attending were able to view it for the first time as they returned to the Foyer of The Pound as the meeting closed. Please - log on to <http://corsham-station-campaign.org.uk> and contribute details of any journeys you may make – and encourage neighbours and friends to do the same. Where do you journey to; where are the congestion hotspots; how long are the delays you experience and is this a daily toil, or perhaps undertaken less often. Whatever, we want to hear about it. Do urge any and everyone to log on and record their experiences.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Transport told the Bath Chronicle reporter that: "We are aware of the campaign and the website. The only service that travels through is the half-hourly Bristol to London and to stop at Corsham would cause lengthy delays! Importantly they also said that "To reopen would not be impossible but it is subject to a business case which would need to be presented to Network Rail in the first instance." If you agree, please sign the petition on the Civic Society's stall, or at the Library, urging the District Council to invest in an up-to-date Study of Need, rather than a limited rail-link bus service to Chippenham. Thank you!

Anne Lock

1st CORSHAM CUB SCOUTS

Civic Society members, Pat Whalley and Les Davis, were delighted to be invited to attend a cub scouts evening in June, beside Corsham Lake (Scout headquarters), to assist in imparting knowledge about the history of the centre of Corsham, to enable a 'six group' to attain the 'Local Knowledge' badge.

After the cubs had drawn a map of the area, and identified places of interest, we produced a few 'then and now' pictures, to show what the town had looked like previously – the Mayo Memorial (before and after restoration), the High Street, before the Precinct, Beszants shop etc; and told them about the beginnings of Corsham, the Poor House and the story of the Spackman fire. A pleasant evening, enjoyed by all concerned.

Our thanks go to John Howe, the Group Leader who extended the invitation. It was extremely interesting to see the many and varied activities set up for the young people there – and how they all enjoy it!!!

Pat Whalley



THE PICTOR FAMILY



Tourist Information Centre – Arnold House

The Society's interest in the Pictor family arises for three reasons – this was a stone quarrying family; the daughter of the family bequeathed Arnold house, 33 High St, for the use of the townspeople of Corsham; (it is now the Tourist information Centre), and in recognition of both these reasons, the CCS has adopted the family grave in St Bartholomew's churchyard, and wants to identify it as of some importance in the history of the town. We therefore set our researchers to work, to find out what they could about the family.

The principal character in relation to quarrying in Corsham is William Smith Pictor who was born in Box 1847, one of twelve children born to Job P(r)ictor and Mary Fluester. Job was a 'farmer, builder, and quarry mason', he had been born in



Ramsbury, Wilts, but presumably had travelled this way for work, and met his wife who was from Biddestone, they married in 1827. Job is known to have started quarrying at Boxfields in 1829. In 1856 Waterhole quarry was opened by the Pictors, and moved to Spring Quarry in 1875.

As was quite often the case during these times William's siblings did not make 'old bones'. Two sisters died in their twenties, another at 19, another apparently at birth, and a brother aged one year. Then there were seven. Three boys and four girls, the boys – William, Robert and Cornelius, were destined to follow father's footsteps into the quarrying business.

In 1867 William took himself a wife, a 19 year old young lady, Emma Wilson, who had been born in Guilford, and was then living in Box with her family. An eventual family of 8 children arrived between 1867 and 1886.

According to John Poulsons book "Ways of Corsham", "Mr William Pictor bought Hazelbury Quarrie from the Thynne family of Longleat in 1868 because he had an interest in quarries".

By 1877 the 'Pictor & Sons Quarries' were established, with sites at No 6 Corsham Quarry (Nr Garrison church at RAF Rudloe), No 7 at Spring Quarry; and no 5 Quarry at Box, followed by Monks Park and Eastlays, (Gastard).

It is believed that a Pictor family lived at The Wilderness, Stokes Road, and at Pockeridge House, but this could have been any group of William's extended family.

We do know that William and his family were living at Pickwick House, Bath Rd between 1871 and 1901. (This is the large house with the stone summerhouse in the grounds just past the entrance to Academy Drive on your left, if travelling to Bath). William, his wife and four of the children were present on the day of the 1881 census, together with a Governess, Nurse, housemaid and cook. The Pictors were obviously doing very well, and their business – together with the Randall & Saunders quarries were known to make up the largest quarrying concern in the area.

Pictor's were the leading firm in the formation of 'The Bath Stone Firms' in 1887.

The first chairman and MD was William's brother Cornelius Pictor, and other family members were shareholders:-

William Smith Pictor	Corsham Quarrymaster
HR Pictor	Box Quarrymaster (Williams nephew, son of Robert. Lived at Rudloe House)
Job Pictor	at Box (probably another uncle – father Job had died in 1857).
Alan Pictor	became MD in 1932
Mark Pictor	MD in 1940 when the quarries were requisitioned by the Admiralty for storage.

We know that William Smith Pictor died in 1890- the death registered in Bath. But we have an entry in Herbert Spackman's diary on the 24th July 1890 that sadly records "Mr Pictor died in Bristol Asylum".

Wife Emma was left with 8 children – 3 were plus 19, and may have been out in the world, but the rest were aged 4 to 15, so parental care would still have been paramount.

We have no record of when the family moved into Arnold House, 31 High Street, but since mother Emma did not die until 1936, and daughter Emma Amelia until 1947, it is reasonable to assume that at least the three ladies of the family including Dorothy Joan, might have lived there together for some time. Dorothy finally lived there alone, and probably very lonely, until her death in 1959, at which time she bequeathed her house to the Corsham Parish Council, to be put to use for the people of Corsham.

The family grave records:

William Smith Pictor – died 1890 age 43 and Emma his wife – died 20 June 1936 aged 89
 Bernard Douglas Pictor– died 5 July 1918 aged 47
 William Adolphous Pictor- died 24 January 1937 aged 59
 Emma Amelia Gertrude Pictor – died 9 September 1947 aged 72
 Dorothy Joan Pictor – died 14 ? 1959 aged 76.

Finally, we found that there was once a canal boat called 'Pictor' built in 1935 for the Grand Union Canal Co. Was this anything to do with this family I wonder?

A story of just over 100 years, demonstrating the impact of just one family in Corsham. The marks of their picks are left in the quarries, and their legacy remains in the town.

Joyce Taylor & Pat Whalley



... since we were looking at the Pictor family, connected to Arnold House, 31 High St., and now the Corsham Tourist and Heritage Centre. It seemed logical to research the 'Arnolds'. However they seem rather elusive, so if anyone can tell us more please let us know ...

The Arnold family are recorded as coming from Lacock - pre 1600. Living at Arnold's Mill they maintained a business as Clothiers.

A William Arnold married Jane, daughter of William Gibbons, a mercer from Corsham. This William Arnold apparently occupied and re built Arnold House in 1703, adding the Georgian face.

William and Jane had 8 children, four of whom pre deceased him. William died in 1719 leaving four children, and land owned by the Arnold's, which had been ceded to him by Thomas Colborne of Seend as part of Williams's marriage settlement to Jane Gibbons.

Son William 1681 –1746, married one Sarah Hulbert, they had 6 children, 3 of whom lived longer lives. The most fortunate was William who died aged 80 and was described as a 'gentleman'.

Daughter Sarah made a good marriage to Robert Neal – see below.

Most of the land in the centre of the town was at that time owned by the Arnold's until 1891, when a greater part of it was surrendered to John Alexander Neale who also took possession of the Arnold family records.

... this leads us to another family – The Neales...

Sarah, daughter of William and Jane Arnold , married Robert Neale, who built the Mansion House in Pickwick Road, between 1721 –24. The land on which it is built was known as Home Tything, and had belonged to Sarah's father-William Arnold. The house was obviously built as a home for his newly married daughter. The Mansion House cost £2,224.to build. It was a private residence until at least the 1850's, when it was sold by the last of the Neales. Known as Corsham School, among it's scholars was Richard Bethel, later to become Lord Chancellor of England, and the 1st Lord Westbury. Sarah & Robert had 5 children, four of whom did not survive past the age of 25. All the family are buried at Corsham, and their tombs can be seen in St Bartholomew's old churchyard, near the west wall. The surviving son Robert, went on to become MP for Wootten Bassett. Sarah died in 1745.

Their eldest son Robert married Elizabeth Smith from Colerne in 1735. They had a family of 4 children, twins who died shortly after birth, and a daughter who survived to age 14. The eldest son Robert survived. He married Grace Goldstone who was a granddaughter of George Duckett of Hartham.

So the wheel turns again and we have another family connection in Corsham. But that is a story for Hartham House to reveal.

The Neales retained their possession of the Mansion House until at least 1907, though they had ceased to live in it from about 1856. The last 'Neale' to live at the Mansion House – until 1795, was Lady Grace Neale, a Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Charlotte and companion to Princess Amelia.



Mansion House

Hartham House



Corsham Civic Society

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.Corsham-Civic-Society.co.uk

PROGRAMME FOR 2008

Date	Event
July 25th	The Story of Imber Village with Rex Sawyer
August 16th	Annual BBQ at Heywood School, Priory St. Corsham 12-3pm
August 19th	Society Outing to Radstock Museum
September	Heritage Open Days
September 26th	Wiltshire Readings and local stories by members
October 24th	Researching Family Military History with Paul Riches
November 28th	Tramways in Corsham – Les Davis
December	No meeting
2009	
January 23rd	Celebration of the New Year – a Social Gathering, St Aldhelms Church Hall.

All meetings to be held at 8pm

Venues may change. Please check our notice board at Chapel Etc.

Guests are welcome. Members - £1, Non members - £2

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.

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Contributions to Spotlight are welcome. Please contact Pat Whalley (Editor) on

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