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The Corsham Civic Society wins an Award

The Mayo Memorial Restoration has been granted the prestigious 2008 Marsh Award for Public Sculpture (Restoration section), by the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association (PMSA), an organisation supported by English Heritage. We were nominated for this year's award by Andrea Garrihy (well-known to many of us here in Corsham), approximately one year ago.

Peter Tapscott, our manager of the project, had recently been in contact with Ian Leith, of the NMR (National Monuments Record) in Swindon - a part of English Heritage. Ian has been part of the evaluation panel for this year's award. Peter was able to provide him with the additional information/photographs that the evaluation required.

Peter, in putting the final touches to the obligatory 'video record' of the project, added a small section at the end, to mark the presentation of this award to the Society in recognition for its work on the project.

The Presentation of the Award took place at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Somerset House, London on Thursday, 27 November 2008. We asked Peter to make the trip to London to collect it - and provide any description of the project that may be



required. The DVD probably did the job nicely.)

Many people have had an input into this task, and we must thank them all for their work, but principally we have to thank Peter, who has spent many hours managing the project, and we are all extremely grateful for his enthusiasm and commitment.



Editorial

We must apologise for the fact that we had to cancel our BBQ this year, but everyone will appreciate that the weather was so unpredictable. (No wonder we are obsessed with talking about it!), it was thought it was better to cancel the event than get to the venue and have no cover if it rained. I think you will agree soggy beef burgers are no fun!! Hope we shall have better luck next year.

We were more fortunate with our August Outing - **A Visit to Radstock Museum, celebrating the Coal Mining Industry.**

It was another summery English evening, heavy showers, but mostly dry. Thankfully we were inside and it did not matter. As predicted, it was a very interesting evening. Dennis Chedgy, (who had told us about setting up the Museum last year) gave a slide presentation showing how the coal came to be discovered, and was worked in the area for over 200 years, which included the contribution by the very rich Waldergrave family, on whose land a great deal of the coal was to be found. Countess Waldergrave had married three rather elderly husbands who had died, (her fourth a Liberal MP), and she became very involved in the industry and the family lives of the miners. Many cottages were built for the men, which must have provided some comfort against the poor wages and the background of the terrible conditions in which they worked underground.

The museum is laid out extremely well with examples of the rooms in which the families lived, complete with scullery; and the shop selling their daily needs. The trouble was, several members said, "I can remember my grandmother's kitchen looking like that", which rather put us in our place!

To end the evening there was a welcome cup of tea/coffee on hand in the tea shop and a gift shop in which to browse.

Thank you to Dennis and his colleague, who guided us through the Museum. If you haven't visited the area, it is well worth the trip and appropriate for all ages.

Our new Programme for 2009 is enclosed with this Newsletter, and there is much planned to interest both the local and the newcomer. Do come and join us.

The Weavers Riots

During the 18th century hand weaving was in decline, wages were poor, men were contesting the wages paid to women, and of course machinery was being introduced. Norman has discovered 2 interesting snippets which relate to Westbury House and shows the unrest in our area at the time. See also Page 8.

In 1767 a clothier named Joseph Saunders had workshops and a dye house adjoining Westbury House. By 1788 Joseph Phelps was leasing it and attempting to convert a carding engine for scribbling. Three years later a mob attacked the house with stones. Phelps and his neighbours reacted by firing on the mob and killing 3 people. The engine was seized and burned on the Town Bridge.

Three years later Phelps was dead and a Dr Bethel had taken it on. (It was his son, Richard, who was to become Attorney General and eventually Lord Westbury).

Thomas Timbrell a Banker in Bradford and Trowbridge became the owner in the early 19th century, and the workshops were let to Samuel Mundy & Co, which also occupied a factory at the Chantry. There was a large dying business run from the site for many years under the name of 'Spackman and Timbrell'.

Source: LONDON GAZETTE 1799 (copied as written)

" I send you this to inform you That wee the Clothworkers of Trowbridge Bradford Chippenham and Melksham are almost or the greatest part of Us Oute of work and wee are fully convinst that the gretests of the Cause is your dressing work by Machinery. And wee are determind if you follow this Practise any longer that wee will keep som people to watch you About with loaded Blunderbuss or Pistols And will Certainly blow your brains out it is no use to Destroy the Factorys But put you damd villons to death And that you may depend upon will be don the County then but make up your lost soul is blown into Hellfire And this shall be done a surre as you are alive give your Brother Brown a caution of this as hee will shear the same fate and Cook and Bamford also there is everything gott in readiness for the Busness now you know what you have to Trust to it will be no use For you to cry out when to late when you be in hell I mean you was better perswade your mother from her early Ways in it or shee will share The same fate do Consider and put a stop to it in Time or Death and damnation will be your fate.

We are Yours the Clothworkers of the afforsaid Towns

April 7th 1799"



Review

Our summer programme began with a most interesting talk by Sir Maurice Johnston, whose distinguished military career had culminated in the post of Deputy Chief of Defence Staff during the Falklands War.

Having later served as Deputy Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Wiltshire, he then became Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire 1996 –2004, and his experiences in this field were quite fascinating. From the day to day running of the post, to the massive organisational skills required to arrange and 'control' Royal visits, interspersed with visits to local towns and villages, and opening events - this was an exceptional task.

For relaxation, Sir Maurice had learned to engrave glass, and brought some fine examples of his work to show us. It was fortunate, he explained, that the glass engraving requires immense concentration, and therefore is only attempted for short periods of time, which enabled him to practise his craft between other events.

Rex Sawyer, a regular visitor to our meetings, gave us a most stirring account of the history of Imber Village, on Salisbury Plain. Situated seven miles from any other habitation in any direction, it was an isolated spot, but it was well populated in the 18th & 19th centuries, principally an agricultural community, but with its own blacksmith, a small shop, and in later years a Post Office, it sustained its population very well.

However, in the 1930's the MOD started buying pockets of agricultural land from the local farmers, and in 1943, the by then dwindling population, were told they had 40 odd days to move out. The MOD wanted the whole village to enhance the training facilities they had already well established on the Plain. What a wrench for those people, some who had lived there all their lives, and their ancestors before them. In the 1960's there was a movement to try and get the people restored to their village, petitions and rallies were raised, but all to no avail. The only concession was that people could visit the village, twice yearly, to hold a service in St Giles Church, and wander among the ruins. In the intervening years many of the houses had collapsed, and some new concrete buildings had been built for the soldiers to use for combat training. Thankfully there cannot be many of the original inhabitants remaining in the area to see its decline. If you pass nearby now, you may catch a glimpse of those ugly, but some may say, necessary buildings. What a pity it had to be established at the expense of a whole community. The September meeting gave us an evening of Wiltshire stories and reminiscences presented by several members. Some ghostly, some amusing, and some which added to our knowledge of the County. We shall look forward to another event of this nature perhaps next year.

New Book: 'A Life Revealed', by Ernest Hird

Ernest Hird will be well known to Civic Society members as the author of *Corsham and the Spackmans* and the history of the *Lady Margaret Hungerford Almshouse and Free School*. During the past year, with his wife Margaret, he also presented a fascinating Open Meeting Talk on the educator and artist, Robin Tanner.

His friendship with Heather and Robin Tanner (daughter and son-in-law of Herbert Spackman) together with access to many previously unpublished documents have equipped Ernest with unique insights into the Spackman family. This new book focuses on the life of Herbert (whose youthful diaries have been available in print for some time) and details the astonishing range of his subject's skills and obsessions as revealed in later diaries, letters and rare photographs. Herbert was a man of many parts: a master of Esperanto and Pitman Short-hand, a talented cricketer, a professional photographer, and a gifted musician who could as easily tune a piano as lead an orchestra or dance band.

The author chronicles Herbert's life with obvious sincerity and sympathy. Here is a character motivated by high principles. His opposition to alcoholic drink and his suspicion of universal vaccination are counterbalanced by his championing of standardised spelling and absolute dedication to his children. He made an immense contribution to the community – even buying a redundant hall for use as a school and rehearsal space in the garden of his Priory Street home. Although never wealthy in the orthodox sense, Herbert emerges as a man who was very rich in love for mankind and in the inner peace that emanated from his particular blend of humanitarian and Christian philosophies.

Ernest Hird has captured the true identity of the man and tells his story in a fluent and accessible way with copious illustrations. This is a distinctive, substantial, and eminently readable contribution to Corsham local history studies. *A Life Revealed* can be purchased from the author and/or at meetings of the Civic Society for £10 (which for 360 pages is a real bargain). With Christmas approaching, this book would make an excellent present for family members or friends/relations now residing outside the Corsham area.

Wyndham Thomas



Donation

Margaret and Doug Gray of Rudloe have very kindly donated to the CCS a map of Corsham dated from 1921. It had come into their possession some time ago when they were researching details of the ownership of the pedestrian area of the High Street which runs between the Methuen Arms and the Corsham bookshop. Margaret had suffered a fall outside Mountjoy's Opticians, and it was necessary to ensure that the paving slabs were replaced safely. The paving was rectified, but there are still some uneven spots in that whole area. Perhaps someone should be re-visiting the problem?

Corsham Primary School Art Award 2008

Since its inception in 2004, the Society has sponsored a fourth Special Award for outstanding Art work in our local Primary Schools.

All Schools were invited to participate but only Corsham Primary School took up the challenge and their children produced entries of great merit on the theme "Things that Fly".

Initially, and with the help of Miss Palmer, the School co-ordinator, two pieces of work were chosen from each class and were displayed in the 'Art at St Bart's Exhibition'.

Then with the expert assistance of Geoffrey Williams-Glover, well known local artis, a winner and two runners up were selected. They were:-

1st – Tyrone Beasley. Year 5, for an exquisite 'Dragonfly'.

2nd – Nick Sheppard. Year 5/6 Broadwood, for a 'Mythical Creature'

3rd – Rhianna Evered. Year 2. For a '3D Balloon'.

At the kind invitation of the Headteacher, Mrs Fiona Allen, the presentation took place as part of the Special Award Assembly on Thursday 23rd October and Geoffrey was there to hand over the prizes. Also present were Les Davis, and Kathy Thomas representing the Society.

As well as receiving a pocket water colour set, Tyrones 'Dragonfly' had been skilfully framed by Steve Hible of Right Angle Framing, as his contribution to the competition.

Thank you Steve and Geoffrey for assisting us with the Award.

Kathy Thomas



Poetry Corner

Les Davis, our Chairman has brought this lovely poem to our attention – he explains: -

This poem is one of many by the Wiltshire poet 'Alfred Williams' whose numerous verses were published from the early 20th century whilst he worked as a hammerer in the stamping shop of the Great Western Railway Works at Swindon. During his 20 years at the GWR he taught himself several languages. He was born at South Marston in 1877 and served in the Great War, he turned to market gardening on his return from Egypt. He received the recognition of a Civil List Pension.

My mother and father-in-law were 'cottagers' in Box; this poem is a little nostalgic for me as I recall the difficult times they shared in the nineteen thirties.

THE COTTAGERS EVENING

*Sweet, simple poverty! How I love to see
The humble labourer's poor and homely fare,
The rustic fireside's cheerful, ruddy glare,
The blazing log, sawn from the woodland tree,
The singing kettle, spouting furiously,
The husbandman's return, the good wife's care,
The golden-tinted loaf, the steaming ware,
The infant, perched upon the father's knee!
To see them sitting at the frugal board,
And hear the chosen compliment address,
The general happiness so well exprest,
The fond endearment and the loving word:
Parents and children mutually adored
And after, peaceful slumber's balmy rest.*

Alfred Williams



Corsham Link

This is a registered charity offering personal help to people living in Corsham, Neston and Gastard regardless of age or circumstances, and in complete confidence.

They provide Transport - to and from hospitals, Doctors, Dentists etc, and to visit patients in hospital. They will visit the library, collect prescriptions, and do shopping for the housebound. They also visit the elderly, and read to the blind.

There are no charges, but they look for donations to help cover costs.

If you need their services – Tel: 712961

If you have time to spare as a volunteer, to help in the community or to raise funds please contact 01249 712961.

Pat Whalley



‘The Duke...’

The building at the south east corner of Priory Street – The Duke of Cumberland – has in the last year or two ceased to be a public House. It has been purchased privately and Planning permission has been sought and gained to convert it into a single dwelling. So perhaps now is the time to take a look at which Duke gave this establishment its name - because there were at least five candidates!

In 1644 the nephew of Charles 1 – Prince Rupert of the Rhine – was created the first Duke. He died without heirs in 1682. In 1689 the younger daughter of King James 11 – Princess Anne – was married to Prince George of Denmark, and presumably to give them an English name the King created the title ‘The Duke of Cumberland’ again. Prince George died in 1708 without heirs.

The title lay dormant for a while. In 1726 the third son of George II. and Caroline of Ansbach, William Augustus, aged only five, became the new Duke. There is a picture of him at Chatsworth, with his brother and five sisters. He became a soldier, and at the age of 24 was at the battle of Fontenoy, where among other wounds, he lost his good looks by a sword slash across his face. However, he continued in his military career and fought in Scotland giving him his – possible well deserved name – the Butcher of Culloden. He died in 1765, possibly as the result of old wounds. However, he was not all bad. He created the landscape at Virginia Water and bred – among others the racehorse Eclipse.

His title then went to his nephew, Henry Frederick, the third son of Frederick Prince of Wales. Henry’s only claim to fame seems to have been that he married against his Father George 111’s wishes. His wife was Mrs Anne Horton, a tall haughty woman and fortunately there were no legitimate children. This marriage gave rise to the Royal Marriages Act, forbidding members of the Royal Family marrying where they might choose (viz. The duke of Windsor who could have been crowned Edward VIII).

The title then reverted to Ernest Augustus, the 5th son of the prolific George III . In the race to provide a legitimate heir to the “mad” king he married in haste, and in the same year that Queen Victoria was born, Prince Ernest fathered Ernst (no second ‘e’). Ernst’s cousin Princess Victoria became Queen of England, leaving vacant the position of the King of Hanover (Queen Victoria was banned from taking the German royal title). So Ernst happily took the title ‘George V King of Hanover’ quite legitimately in 1837. Actually the swinging name board in Priory St proclaims the name “Duke of Cumberland” and underneath “William Hanover”, which may or not be absolutely correct.

“George v of Hanover” fathered Ernst Augustus, but the title of Duke of Cumberland was taken from him in 1919 because of his pro-German leanings. There is however, a descendant and heir, Prince Ernst Augustus of Hanover born in 1954, the great grandson of the 3rd Duke and nominally the present head of the House of Hanover.

So, the Duke of Cumberland whose name was used to identify the inn at Priory St, Corsham, was possible WILLIAM AUGUSTUS, fifth son of George III, born in 1721, died in 1765. Papers in the vaults at Wiltshire History Centre confirm that the earliest reference is 1753, which would give credence to the fact that the Inn was named as an honour to this Duke, in spite of the fact that he was not a very honourable character.

Victoria Houghton



“The Duke”

Portrait by Joshua Reynolds, 1758



Compiled, from various sources, but mostly from books in the Corsham Library on the Hanovarians, and material from the Wilts history centre.



Station Campaign

Do visit the Campaign's website at <http://corsham-station-campaign.org.uk> as we are so fortunate to have Jim Avery who, apart from his skill in setting it up in the first place, continually keeps the site updated with news and views. Do log on and enter details of journeys, congestion hot spots, etc.

You will be concerned to hear that there has recently been a further call on the Section 106 monies (on which almost seventy letters and emails were sent to the Town Council earlier this year, requesting the Amenities Committee safeguard the whole of the £250,000 for its original purpose). The most recent one was to provide supplementary funding for a local school. We responded that any inequalities of funding should be addressed by the Education Authority, whilst in longer term, the reopening of the station would be of benefit to all Corsham children, assisting them in gaining access in the future to further education and employment.

On the 26th September I attended the Joint Transport Forum of the West of England Partnership where I met with many familiar faces, one being Mike Carroll of FGW, also Mike Greedy of Passenger Focus and Cllr. David Jolly who supports the Portishead Group. Rail use has risen almost 20%, whilst bus use has fallen. One hopes this will encourage Officers/Members to support funding for rail projects!! I took the opportunity of the 'Sixty Second' slot to mention the following:

The Exec.Summary of the Climate Change Action Plan for the SW (Section 7 Carbon Emissions from Transport) - refers to "the 99% of transport emissions in the SW arising from road-based travel and that reductions in the overall level of emissions present enormous challenges to transport policy and subsequent implementation, requiring a real "step change" in approach...."

The need for the WoEP to address access and levels of rail frequency/capacity to cater for the housing projections in West & North Wiltshire. Drew attention to the almost 20% rise in population in Corsham, plus expansion of the MoD - 2,100 personnel - Spring Park's projected 1,000 employees, not to mention the Retirement complex, and requested a meeting for WCC/WoEP and stakeholders.

Concern also expressed that Banes should be supporting Wiltshire's planned bypass through the Wellhead Valley - and requested delegates Google "Westbury Bypass". Jonathan Manning - in the September issue of "Country Walking" described the 7 mile route from Westbury's White Horse as "taking in a landscape from the spectacular to the sublime"!

TravelWatch SW held their autumn meeting in Taunton on Sat 4th October. It was great to hear Dave Ward of Network Rail speak of the changes wrought on the engineering side since he took over the Western Region a year ago. This has led to the implementation of far closer working with FGW, resulting in punctuality statistics that are in a different league to last year. At this meeting I recognised a "Wessex" face who has since become Route Manager for FGW. I feel a meeting to discuss a possible way forward for Corsham aspirations is necessary - plus a Saturday coffee morning to rally local support for a postcard campaign perhaps! Watch the website - and the Corsham Diary - for details - and of course the next bright yellow CSC Update.

Anne Lock

More on MAYO

The Society's project to restore Corsham's Mayo Memorial achieved a new milestone on 15 August. Members who had been involved in the project, together with those of other organisations in the town, gathered to witness the installation of the plaque, recording that the 100 year-old monument was restored this year, to something approaching its former glory, by the Corsham Civic Society, with the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund and a grant from the Corsham Town Council.

Amongst those present were Pauline Feeney, President of the Pickwick WI and Lynn Butler. Lynn is a member of the WI and takes responsibility for ensuring that the small garden that now occupies the Memorial's water trough remains the attractive feature it now is.

As I declared to the local press, in my capacity as the Society's project manager, "The restoration of this monument to one of Corsham's greatest Victorian benefactors, Charles T Mayo, and the work undertaken to explain his contribution to today's generation, has been a great success. Our Society is a member of the Civic Trust, and is one of over 700 such groups in the country. Griff Rhys Jones has just been appointed President of the Trust. We can be confident that a project such as this will have great appeal to him. Griff is a great rallying point for the civic society movement."

Our picture shows workmen from the company, James Long, of Trowbridge, attaching the plaque to monument.

Peter Tapscott, Project Manager for the Mayo Memorial Restoration Project



A Local Life: Richard Bethell

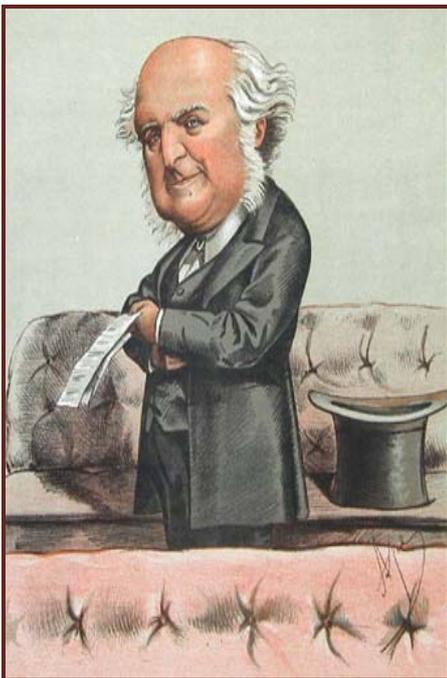
Richard Bethell, 1st Baron Westbury (30th June 1800 – 20th July 1873), was the son of Dr. Richard Bethell of Bardford-on-Avon. He was a boarder at the Hungerford Almshouses School – presumably under the mastership of John Slade, before gaining a Fellowship at Wadham College in 1818.

In 1823 he was called to the Bar, attaining Queens Counsel in 1840. He was responsible for the reform of legal education that ensured that:

'students, before coming to the Bar, should have at least some acquaintance with the subject they were to profess (sic).'

He was created Lord High Chancellor in 1861 with the title Baron Westbury of Westbury (during the Palmerston administration). His ambition was to compile a digest for the whole law. Although this was soon found to impracticable, he was responsible for the Divorce Act of 1857. His career was marred by a number of events and appointments showing: *'a certain laxity and want of caution'*, and he resigned the office in 1865.

Lord Westbury died on 20th July 1873, within a day of his special antagonist Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford and Winchester. As Lord Westbury was celebrated for his sarcastic humour, the duels between the two must have been something to savour, for we are speaking of 'Soapy Sam', as Samuel Wilberforce was known, who was humiliated by Thomas Henry Huxley (Darwin's Bulldog) during the famous 1960 Oxford Union debate on 'The Origin of Species'.



Lord Westbury in the House of Lords

(Cartoon by Pelligrini Vanity Fair, 1869)



'Soapy Sam' Wilberforce

(Cartoon by Pelligrini, Vanity Fair, 1869)



Thomas Henry Huxley

(Cartoon by Pelligrini, Vanity Fair, 1871)

Norman Duckworth

¹ The epithet 'Soapy Sam' was coined by Benjamin Disraeli, who found him: *'Unctious, Oleaginous, and Saponacious'* – 'nuff said!



CACP Works towards the Formation of the Unitary Authority

The Society has been a major contributor to the workings of the Corsham Area Community Partnership (CACP) since its inception in the summer of 2001. Soon after it was launched, the CACP mounted an eventually-successful application to the Government's 'Market & Coastal Towns Initiative' (MCTI) and was granted £25k to undertake something called 'community planning'. That money has since been fully drawn-down, in stages, and the Partnership has attracted small amounts of additional funding from both the county and district councils since then – together with 'support' in the form of ongoing officer time and creativity throughout. I have personally been the Society's representative on the CACP's Steering Group from its formation – and remain so today. Regular readers of 'Spotlight' will have seen various articles in which I have tried to convey the nature of the CACP – and its activities/achievements.

Several other Corsham-interested organisations have contributed effort to the CACP. These include all three elements of local government, the commercial sector, service-providers, as well as the voluntary sector. Please note, however, the CACP is not simply focussed on Corsham. Rather, it directs its attention at the 'Corsham Area', as defined by the so-called 'Area 4' of NWDC – hence the term CACP.

The CACP has been one of about 20 'ACPs' across the length and breadth of Wiltshire. All have been different. Ours has been one of the better ones – better organised, better funded and better supported. But not the best.

I guess it has to be said that the CACP had so progressed with its 'community planning' project, augmented by other more specific projects which it had gathered along the way, that it had reached the stage where it was 'coasting'. Then along came Wiltshire County Council's quest to become a Unitary Authority. That has given the CACP a new reason to exist and a new momentum.

This, I am sure, for most of you, needs some explanation.

A cornerstone of WCC's successful application to central government that Wiltshire should acquire UA status and adopt a UA structure was that it already had a bottom-up approach to its relationship with the community that it served and wished to take this to the next level. Its 20 ACPs were held up as the model upon which democratic decision-making under UA would be based. This proved to be a powerful argument – and won the day. The Wiltshire UA comes into existence at the beginning of the 2009-2010 financial year, i.e. nominally on 1 April 2009. There is much to be done in the meantime to make this happen. A 'Transitional Process' is presently underway. The 20 ACPs are caught up in this.

The Wiltshire UA foresees significant decision-making (including that relating to spending) being devolved to 'Area Boards'. At the present time the exact number of these across the county has not been decided. They will be supported by ACPs – of which there will probably be rather fewer than the present 20 (probably no more than 18).

Area Boards will comprise elected representatives (councillors), responsible persons from service-provider organisations and representatives of ACPs (there may be more than one ACP within the area-of-interest of any one Area Board). The exact way in which all this operates is being worked out as we speak. It must be finalised by 1 April 2009. Time is short.

WCC has created a group of 12 'Project Managers' to work, as a team, during this 'Community Boards Development Phase' to evaluate all the options – and to recommend how the structure might operate post 'go live'. Each Project Manager has responsibility for more than one ACP. Ours is called Dave Roberts. Dave has established a Task Group for Area 4. I am the CACP representative to that Task Group. The work of the Task Group is progressing, albeit slowly. There is a lot to do.

Dave is also assisting the CACP to become 'fit for purpose' under the UA structure – and to be able to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that it is so. Unless we can do this, the present CACP cannot lay claim to this role in the new UA structure. A replacement would have to be devised and put into place.

NWDC is assisting this process. It has offered the CACP £2k (in cash) to pay for admin support, together with 10 days of assistance from Community First – both to be used by 31 March 2009. The CACP has accepted this offer.

In pursuit of its need to demonstrate 'fitness for purpose', the Steering Group of the CACP has been numerically extended in its coverage of service-providers and generally strengthened. Previously it comprised 8 persons plus one (WCC) support officer. Additionally it now comprises representatives of the Wiltshire PCT, Wiltshire Police, Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service and WCC's Youth Development Services. An agenda for developing and demonstrating this clear 'fitness for purpose' is presently being created and implemented. Public meetings of the so-called 'Wider Partnership' will be part of that agenda.

Meanwhile the background work of the CACP continues. Funding of £1k was extended to the team organising the Corsham Alternative Sports Event (CASE) held on Springfield on 27 September. We continue to support of ECOlerne (Colerne Sustainability Action Team). We made a £400 'pump-priming' grant to this organisation in June 2006. We are currently considering how we can support a 'Slipper Event' being developed by one or the original CACP Steering Group member organisations.



Recent Developments at the CCS Website

Those of you who follow our activities via the Society's website will have noticed some striking changes over recent weeks. August, in particular, saw some significant changes. Quite apart from the updating required to reflect changes in the Executive Committee and Officer line-up, Brian Gibbs (our 'webmaster') and I have been busy making sure that our 'electronic public' have no excuse when it comes to knowing what the Society is up to, recent past, present and future.

All of this has become that much more important as our site becomes the Corsham site to watch and becomes 'linked' to an increasing number of other sites whose readerships take an interest in the same things as we do – Jim Avery's **Corsham Diary**, <http://corshamdiary.org.uk/>, is an excellent case in point.

So, what has changed on our website?

For a start, the 'Programme' section now contains everything we have planned from now until the end of calendar 2009 – even into 2010, if you want to be pedantic. Dates, time and venues – where known – are all identified. Any of these which have yet to be finalised will be shown on here, just as soon as they are.

Next, we have made a real effort to step up the number of 'press releases' that we make, thereby enhancing our public profile and increasing our prospects of continuing our meteoric growth in membership and the attendance at our regular 'Open Meetings'. The 'Latest News' section records all our Press Releases, as we released them. I mention this latter qualification because two aspects soon become clear to all those who try to get the local newspapers to print an article that has been carefully crafted to say exactly what one wants it to say. Firstly, the newspaper in question may choose to emphasise an entirely different 'angle' derived from your original story. Secondly, that newspaper's editor may choose to omit your story entirely – dependent upon whatever else is seen as being fit to 'hit the headlines' that particular day. Notwithstanding all this, we are fairly successful in getting our message across – as a glance at the five items listed since 6 July 2008 will reveal.

Lastly, we have introduced a whole new section, entitled 'Corsham Civic Society Awards'. This is dedicated to the awards system that the Society has developed since its introduction in 2004. The system extends from an Art Award and an English Award for local schoolchildren to a Building Award for projects which enhance the appearance of Corsham and its surrounding villages. Previous winners are recorded, where appropriate.

All three Awards serve extremely valuable purposes – both to the local community and to the Society.

Standby to see further developments to the Society's website. We are convinced it is the way to go. We urge you to watch the site on a regular basis. Entering it – www.corsham-civic-society.co.uk – as one of your 'Favorites' (please excuse the spelling!) will make this especially easy.

Peter Tapscott, Publicity Officer

The Pictor stories in the July issue brought forth some additional reminiscences:-

Michael Rumsey, our Treasurer was able to provide us with more information:-

"Fogleigh House, which lies just outside Box on the main A4 road, was built by James Pictor. It had extensive grounds and the greenhouses were always full of exotic plants and fruiting trees. My friend Harry Maslen was once painting near the greenhouses and enquired of Mr Pictor whether or not he could buy a bunch of grapes, which he saw hanging there, for his sister who was in hospital in Bath. James Pictor took out his purse and gave him money to buy some grapes in Bath before visiting the hospital as he couldn't possibly allow Harry to have a bunch from the greenhouse!

James Pictor died in 1914 and left, in his will, the sum of £440.00 to be invested in Government funds and the interest to be used to help 20 deserving women and 20 deserving men in the village – '*The money to be distributed every Christmas by the Box United Methodist Church Trustees*'. When my Mother became Church Treasurer in the early 1970's, the amount to be distributed was £15.50. The Charity Commissioners allowed the Church to reduce the number of recipients to 15, allowing each person to receive £1.00. Later, the money was transferred to the care of the combined Parish Church charities in Box and is now distributed by them when required.

During the rebuilding of the church in 1972, the pink marble wall plaque describing the Pictor Charity was unfortunately broken and was subsequently thrown away!"



Organisational Matters

A New Era for the Civic Trust

As revealed in the enclosed leaflet "Will you help me to make better places for people?" the Civic Trust has secured the services of Griff Rhys Jones as its new President.

The work that civic societies do is important and it is vital that this work continues. Perhaps now more than ever, decisions on planning, development, heritage and regeneration, decisions which affect us all, are being taken by central government rather than by locally elected councillors and it is difficult for local civic societies to respond to the plethora of government consultations that come out thick and fast and demand close scrutiny as well as timely written responses. The role of the Civic Trust in trying to influence government policy on our behalves is therefore an important one. The Civic Trust is able to canvas civic society committees and members for their views and to play these into discussions with Ministers and government officials. However, without this grass roots membership, the ability of the Trust to respond meaningfully would be severely hindered.

It is also important that the Civic Trust becomes a recognised campaigning organisation, not just by central government but also by local authorities, developers and opinion formers generally. To do this effectively, it needs to command attention in the media so that the 'Civic Trust brand' becomes much more recognisable and recognised amongst members of the public at large. With Griff Rhys Jones as our President, we are optimistic that such recognition will follow. Griff and the Trustees and staff of the Civic Trust will be working in months to come on a new strategy to ensure that matters of concern to our civic society members are taken forward and debated.

Already, Griff has written one article which appeared in The Times on the dubious value of large screen televisions in public spaces that will be a 'legacy' of the 2012 Olympics. You can read his article at:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article4419260.ece

The Civic Society 'Movement'

One of the questions uppermost in our mind at national level is how do we build a strong civic society movement, rather than just being seen as a collection of civic societies focused on local issues. When societies pool their skills, their knowledge and, yes, their enthusiasm, they become stronger as a result. Sharing ideas and practices, helping other societies with practical advice and support can pay dividends all round, but this can also be very time consuming for volunteers to do, especially alongside their other commitments. Some societies would dearly love a helping hand from time to time, perhaps by way of coaching or someone to act as a sounding board. Even in Corsham, we do sometimes turn to the Trust for help and advice!

As a member of its National Committee, I have been working with the Civic Trust to see what can be done to strengthen the support they can give to local societies and their committees. I hope to be able to report some positive developments on this front in the near future.

How you can help....

To create a recognisable national civic society movement, the Civic Trust needs to do two things: it has to recruit a campaign/Public Relations manager and it has to develop some additional services for civic societies, for example, providing training and networking opportunities. This will, of course, cost the Civic Trust money that it has to raise from grants and donations. But, with over 700 civic societies with a collective membership of around a quarter of a million people, it should be possible to raise some funds from the civic society membership itself.

This means asking you for a donation that would go straight to the Civic Trust. However, the real spending power of your donation will be to help provide better services for local civic societies, including Corsham, and to help raise the profile of the movement which will also help us to raise our own profile locally. The enclosed leaflet contains a personal message from Griff Rhys Jones. I do hope that you will give his request that you support the Trust with a donation your fullest support.

Peter Tapscott



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
16 th January 2009	New Year Social (St Aldhelm's Church Hall)
27 th February	Michael Rumsey (John Fowler and the Steam Plough Works, Leeds)
27 th March	Mike Stone (Chippenham's Early Origins)
24 th April	Paul Connell (The Chippenham Bomb)
15 th May	AGM (Followed by a Social Gathering and Discussion) (St Aldhelm's Church Hall / 7 for 7.15pm)
19 th June	David T Smith (Cricket in Corsham) CCS Walk (Date to be confirmed)
24 th July	Dr Negley Harte (Who were the Flemish Weavers?)
August	No Open Meeting - CCS Outing and BBQ (Dates to be confirmed)
25 th September	Dinah Starkey (Two Tudor Gentlemen)
23 rd October	Steve Flavin (Biddestone and Hartham in Postcards)
27 th November	Ela Palmer (Director of ASHTAV) - (Issues in Conservation)
December	No Open Meeting
15 th January 2010	New Year Social (Venue to be confirmed)

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.

Corsham Civic Society
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Registered Charity No: 275321

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

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