



# Corsham Spotlight

Journal of the Corsham Civic Society  
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*Contributions to Spotlight are very welcome. Please contact the editor, John Maloney, at: [johnmaloney2003@aol.com](mailto:johnmaloney2003@aol.com)*

## Taste of Corsham Food Festival



A well known member of Corsham Civic Society (far right) placing an order (Photo by Jody Gaisford - <http://www.jodyphotography.co.uk/>)

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## ***From the Chair***

The 53rd Annual General Meeting of the Society took place in the Town Hall on Friday, May 17th with a good number of members and friends attending. It was a pleasure to make two presentations to long serving committee members who have now retired from active service with the Society. Jean Beech, the now retired Membership Secretary, cannot remember how many years she has worked at the job but we have been so grateful for Jean's work that she is now an Honorary Vice President of the Society and she received an orchid to further her collection. Dr Negley Harte served the Society for 9 years as the Programme Organiser and retired in December last and he too has been made an Honorary Vice President and last year was given a first edition copy of Robin & Heather Tanner's wonderful book entitled 'Wiltshire Village' which he was thrilled to receive. The Society is deeply indebted to Jean and Negley for their hard work during the past years. At the conclusion of the AGM we all enjoyed the Wine & Cheese party organised by John Holmes, the new Social Organiser for the Society ~ thank you John.

It is sad to record the passing of a Life Member, one who worked so hard for the progress of Corsham's town centre and I'm referring to the late William 'Bill' Hall who died in April. Do please see the obituary on page 11. But it is also good to welcome a new Life Member, Christopher Johnson from Pickwick and we look forward to welcoming him to forthcoming meetings.

We have 2 visits coming up to Beckford Tower (August 8<sup>th</sup>) and the Roman Museum in Bath (September 6<sup>th</sup>), details of which appear in this magazine on p. 20.

With such good weather upon us currently, I wish everyone a very enjoyable Summer.

**Michael Rumsey**

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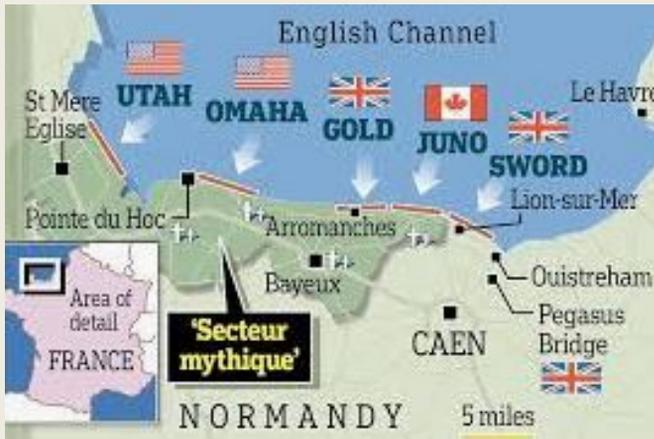
## D-DAY



June 6th was the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The Imperial War Museum has a website setting out key facts - <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-10-things-you-need-to-know-about-d-day> - and its outpost, HMS Belfast (which led the fleet on D-Day), has extensive displays including a special *Family Mission D-Day Edition*, an interactive storytelling experience based on personal stories from those who served on D-Day (24th July – 31st August 2019) ~ <https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/hms-belfast/family-mission-dday-edition-summer-2019>. HMS Belfast is a famous Second World War survivor and today an iconic London landmark; on board you can listen to hundreds of stories from those who actually worked on the warship during the D-Day landings.

On D-Day, 6th June 1944, Allied forces launched a combined naval, air and land assault on Nazi-occupied France code-named Operation 'Overlord', the Allied landings on the Normandy beaches marked the start of a long and costly campaign to liberate north-west Europe from German occupation. Early on 6th June, Allied airborne forces parachuted into drop zones across northern France. Ground troops then landed across five assault beaches - Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. By the end of the day, the Allies had established a foothold along the coast and could begin their advance into France.

*Article continues next page...*



A command team led by American General Dwight D. Eisenhower was formed in December 1943 to plan the naval, air and land operations. 'Deception Campaigns' were developed to draw German attention - and strength - away from Normandy. To build up resources for the invasion, British factories increased production and in the first

half of 1944 approximately 9 million tonnes of supplies and equipment crossed the Atlantic from North America to Britain. A substantial Canadian force had been building up in Britain since December 1939 and over 1.4 million American servicemen arrived during 1943 and 1944 to take part in the landings. D-Day required unprecedented cooperation between international armed forces. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) was an international coalition and although the Allies were united against Germany, the military leadership responsible for 'Overlord' had to overcome political, cultural and personal tensions.

By 1944, over 2 million troops from over 12 countries were in Britain in preparation for the invasion. On D-Day, Allied forces consisted primarily of American, British and Canadian troops but also included Australian, Belgian, Czech, Dutch, French, Greek, New Zealand, Norwegian, Rhodesian and Polish naval, air or ground support.

It was the largest combined naval, air and land operation in history! The invasion was conducted in two main phases - an airborne assault and amphibious landings. Shortly after midnight on 6th June, over 18,000 Allied paratroopers were dropped into the invasion area to provide tactical support for infantry divisions on the beaches. Allied air forces flew over 14,000 sorties in support of the landings and, having secured air supremacy prior to the invasion, many of these flights were unchallenged by the Luftwaffe. Nearly 7,000 naval vessels, including battleships, destroyers, minesweepers, escorts and assault craft took part in 'Operation Neptune', the naval component of 'Overlord'. Naval forces were responsible for escorting and landing over 132,000 ground troops on the beaches. They also carried out bombardments on German coastal defences before and during the landings and provided artillery support for the invading troops.

'Overlord' did not bring an end to the war in Europe, but it did begin the process through which victory was eventually achieved. By the end of August 1944, the German Army was in full retreat from France, but by September Allied momentum had slowed. The Germans were able to regroup and launched a failed but determined counter-offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944. This defeat sapped German manpower and resources and allowed the Allies to resume their advance towards Germany.

*Article continues next page...*

Members of the French Resistance and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) provided intelligence and helped weaken defences through sabotage. The Allied deception campaigns succeeded in convincing the Germans as late as June 1944 that the main invasion force would still land elsewhere. The threat of this larger, second invasion kept German reinforcements tied down away from Normandy. Defence also suffered from the complex and often confused command structure of the German Army as well as the constant interference of Adolf Hitler in military matters. However, the Allies faced a number of setbacks both on 6th June and in the months that followed.

D-Day was made possible because of Allied efforts across all fronts, both before and after June 1944. In planning D-Day, Allied commanders drew important lessons from previous failures at Dieppe in France and Anzio in Italy.

In March 1945, British and American troops crossed the Rhine, eventually linking up with Soviet forces and Germany surrendered on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1945.

*With acknowledgements to the Imperial War Museum*

### **A World War One Peace Day Commemorations and Memorial Woodland Opening was held at Hartham Park on Friday 19th July**

On 19th July 1919, a national Day of Peace was declared to mark officially the end of the First World War. There was a victory parade in London involving 15,000 troops, with music and entertainment in the parks. Other cities, towns and villages held their own celebrations and, in Corsham, this involved a children's Sports Day and Tea in the grounds of Corsham Court. One hundred years on, on Friday 19th July 2019, local schoolchildren recreated that event, thanks to Heritage Lottery funding, in the grounds of Hartham Park.

The schools' sports were followed by the official opening of the Hartham Park Memorial Woodland. The woodland is made up of 121 trees, one for each Corsham man lost in the Great War, that were donated as part of a project run by the Woodland Trust and Wiltshire Council. At 11.30am, Jeff Thomas, owner of Hartham Park and his team, declared the woodland open to the public in a short ceremony.

**John Maloney**

**The Corsham WW1 Memorial Woodland at Hartham Park**

As part of Wiltshire's Centenary commemorations for the end of the First World War, Hartham Park are honoured to support the local community tree planting project as a legacy for our fallen heroes.

In honour of the 121 Corsham servicemen who sadly lost their lives, a very special woodland is being created for the public to visit from 2019.

**HARTHAM PARK**

Corsham Wiltshire Council WOODLAND TRUST

## Corsham 10k and 2k run events

On a breezy but dry day the 39th Corsham 10k and 2k races took place on Sunday, April 28th, with 1,000 adults tackling the 10k and 200 children runners completing the shorter distance. The young runners tackled the 2k run through a section of Corsham Court Parkland.

Organised by Corsham Running Club, the 10k route started on the Lacock Road and included the village of Neston [see map below]. Notably, the MOD Corsham Field Gun team tackled the 10k course with a field gun as part of their training for the annual Royal Navy Field Gun competition!



**Left:** the 2k run in Corsham Court park.  
**Right:** the 10k run starting in the Lacock Road



The runners in both races were notable for their efforts, staying power and good humour. It was my first time as a marshal for the 10k run and I was surprised and touched by the number of runners who said 'Thanks, marshal' or similar.

*With acknowledgements to the Gazette & Herald*

**John Maloney**

## Blue Sky Festival and Taste of Corsham Food Festival



The Blue Sky Festival took place during 11th-16th June and was a joyous, warm, quirky festival of the arts featuring an extraordinary variety of music, dance, theatre, comedy, talks, film, family events, performances,

exhibitions and workshops. Events took place at The Pound Arts Centre with others based in the Springfield Community Campus and in Corsham High Street during the Taste of Corsham.

Organised by Corsham Town Council and sponsored by Martingate, Taste of Corsham was a food and drink experience with something for everyone [cover photograph]. Taste of Corsham teamed up with The Pound Arts Centre who brought music and entertainment on the Taste Stage (between Co-op and Café Grounded), as part of the Blue Sky Festival. Octavian once again kindly donated a case of Champagne as the prize for the town's Taste Trail.



Visitors could sample tasters at local shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants, and not only discover Corsham's delicious food and drink but be in with a chance of winning six bottles of bubbly too!



A fantastic selection of Wiltshire's finest producers were in the High Street with a great range of food and drink goodies - everything from rum to roast potatoes, Lovett Pies to Pepperpot Paella and lots in-between. Not to overlook the live music on the Taste Stage arranged by The Pound as part of their Blue Sky Festival, along with Folk in a Box there was a silent disco and a ukulele workshop.



Artists Anya Beaumont and Jo Taylor were on hand at the Town Hall to talk about their exhibition of work inspired by Corsham's architecture (which ran until 12th July - and is also on at The Pound too). Transition Community Corsham was in the Martingate Centre promoting their sustainable initiatives and their new Community Food Group, *Incredible Corsham*, giving away free plants and tasters and presenting talks.

**John Maloney**

## 'Memrobilia'

### First World War memorials

For many years, while on holiday on North Wales, I have driven past a war memorial made from a huge block of Welsh Slate erected by the Oakeley Slate Quarry Company of Blaenau Ffestiniog. It contains the names of 24 former employees of the company that died during the First World War, 3 of them being brothers and 15 served in the Royal Welch Fusiliers whose Regimental Museum I have visited several times situated in Caernarvon Castle. I have no idea how much the central panel of slate weighs, but it is probably 10 tons. At one time the Oakeley Quarry at Blaenau Ffestiniog held the world record for being the largest slate quarry and in its heyday employed 100's of local men. It still produces slate as does the Bethesda Quarry near Llanberis.



### The End of an Era

The first Saturday of June saw the end of an era for the High Speed 125 mph trains that have been passing through Corsham for the last 40 years. The HSTs, as they were known, have been travelling Great Western Railway routes from Paddington to Penzance, also Paddington to Bristol, and to Gloucester and Cheltenham, plus the South Wales routes to Newport, Cardiff and Swansea. For 40 years these trains have safely traversed these lines and now they have departed for either scrap, storage or have been transferred to other lines such as Glasgow and Edinburgh to Inverness etc. They have been replaced by the new Hitachi bi-mode trains of 9 or 10 coaches which will eventually travel from Paddington to Thingley Junction using 25kv electric power and then diesel power for the remaining part of the journey to Bristol Temple Meads. On Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup> I stood on the Pound Pill railway bridge at 5.45am waiting for the special 'Last' HST to come through on its way to Paddington and my photograph shows just that plus a photo of the new Class 800/802 bi-mode electric/diesel trains.



The new 'bi-mode' diesel/electric  
Clan 800/802 High Speed Train



Last HST to pass through Corsham

*Article continues next page...*

## A personal view of 'Trainwest 2019'

As one who received his first Hornby Dublo train set on Christmas Day 1949, I've always been fascinated by railways both full size and model size and it was good to see over 1500 people, of all ages, visiting the Springfield Centre on Saturday and Sunday the 13th & 14th of April. There were 20 model layouts on show as well as 31 trade stands and every available space at the centre was used.



I particularly liked the 'Amiens 1918' model by Callum Willcox of Bristol which showed the influence of narrow gauge railways on the Western Front. For something more amusing the 'Scratchy Bottom Halt' by Mike Walshaw from Dorset, brought back memories of the wonderful 15 inch gauge railway created by Rowland Emmett for the Festival of Britain 1951 which he called the 'Far Tottering and Oyster Creek Railway' and this was laid out in the Battersea Pleasure Gardens.



**Above:** model of Kannot burn railway

**Left:** Amiens 1918 tracks and trenches model

**Below:** 'Scratchy Bottom Halt' by Rowland Emmett, OBE, a noted cartoonist who published cartoons in "Punch" depicting railway scenes with strange, trains etc.



This is the 4th year that Trainwest has held its exhibition in Corsham and each year visitor numbers have increased so now I shall look forward to the 2020 exhibition which will be held on April 18th & 19th 2020.

**Michael Rumsey**

## The John Parker Gallery & Shop, 15 Martingate, Corsham

I started in the antique business in 1964 at the New Caledonian Market in Bermondsey, London. My family had been in the antique business for three generations on my father's side and three on my mother's. So I suppose I never had a chance! It was not long before I realised I ought to think about a shop and found one in London's Fulham Road opposite Chelsea Football Ground. My father, Richard, and his brother, Philip, had a long established antique business further up the road, at the posher end, amongst many other well-known and respected dealers.

Antique dealing was so very different in the sixties when I started. You had to attend auctions then, or have a representative there, as there was no such thing as telephone bidding. Prices were very different and nobody really thought of investing in art and antiques, you just bought and sold. There were more shops, especially outside London and the opportunities to buy previously unseen items was much greater due to the fact that a lot of dealers in the country bought items from private individuals as there were far fewer salerooms then; today virtually everything goes to auction and nearly all auctions are listed on the net, so the exposure is global.

In the last few years English antique furniture, which was my specialty, has become less fashionable than it was and the majority of antique shops have closed, not just because of that but for all the usual reasons of costs, rent, rates etc.

In the last six years I have dramatically changed what I sell, being much more focused on art and now, since moving to Corsham, I have discovered a lot of lovely things all made locally. I am a great believer in supporting local businesses and manufacturers and Corsham has them in abundance ~ <http://www.theparkergallery.co.uk/collectables/> and <https://www.facebook.com/thejohnparkergallery/>



John Parker Gallery & Shop on the corner of the High Street and Martingate Centre



What rivals? Paul Martin assisting John Parker with a prize draw.

*Article continues next page...*

Corsham is the most lovely town or as many people say to me 'village', which I think is part of its charm, that although being a town it feels very village like. Notable poet John Betjeman said in 1978 that Corsham High Street was 'probably the finest High Street left in England'.

I am fortunate to have discovered Corsham for my gallery, if rather late in life, but I couldn't be happier and get involved in local matters as much as I can. George, my lovely fox red Labrador, loves it here and has made many canine friends who he meets in the park; another thing about Corsham is it is perfect for dog owners.

As the Sunday Times recently reported 'the historic centre has a wealth of independent shops' and it stated, twice, that 'Corsham is hot!'



Review on the JPG&S website ~ 5 stars. *Fantastic Gallery & Shop run by John & Jackie [above] who have impeccable taste, full of unusual, eclectic & beautifully chosen cards & prints in the heart of historic Corsham* (Simone Daisy Mitchell)

### And yet more antique dealers ~ Agatha Raisin comes to Corsham



Oh dear, led away by the police!

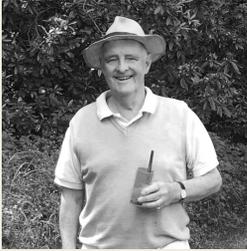


You have been warned!

In April, *Agatha Raisin* a who dunnit comedy drama was being filmed outside Paul Martin's antiques shop, renamed Bladon's. The heroine is a public relations professional who gives up her life in London in the hope of starting a new life in a seemingly quiet village in the Cotswolds but soon finds herself a suspect in a murder case: so began Series 1 in an episode *Agatha Raisin and the Quiche of Death* which was filmed in September 2014, mainly in Biddestone. In 2019 the streaming service Acorn TV commissioned Series 3, which will be four 90 minute episodes or 8 45 minute episodes. Screening is likely to start later this year.

**John Maloney**

## Obituary – William Hall (1939 – 2019)



William "Bill" Hall always relished the adventure of doing something for the first time. Although he had years of property experience, he had never owned a shopping precinct when North Wiltshire Council asked him to refurbish what is now the Martingate Centre. He could see that he could improve it and worked tirelessly to do so.

Having served in the Queen's Own Hussars and completed an MBA at Wharton Business School, Bill spent most of his working life creating furniture businesses. With his long term business partner, he pioneered the introduction of open plan offices in the 1970's and soon found himself importing and ultimately manufacturing the furniture that they needed. Those same skills led him to furnish UK airports, premier league football stadiums and middle eastern palaces.

Having sold Hille Ergonom in 1989, he rescued school furniture manufacturer Metalliform from bankruptcy. Saving the jobs of the loyal staff at the Barnsley factory, many of whom stayed with the firm for forty years or more, was one his proudest moments.

In 2002, Corsham became the focus of Bill's working life and remained so until his death 17 years later. He passionately believed in Corsham's future and invested accordingly. But beyond the buildings, Bill had a strong sense of duty to others which he preferred to follow quietly and often unseen. Never one to suffer fools gladly, he was equally quick to lend a helping hand.

In order to protect his family's long term interest in Corsham, Bill brought his son Andrew into the business in 2013. Usually, but not always, agreeing with Andrew on business decisions, Bill was deeply relieved to see Martingate and Corsham continue to thrive.

William Hall, owner of Martingate, was born on 18th June 1939. He died from leukaemia at Dorothy House Hospice on 24th April 2019, aged 79. He leaves his wife and three children.

*We are grateful to his son, Andrew Hall, for this obituary and photograph of Bill*

### **Bill Hall ~ a personal tribute**

I've only lived in Corsham for some 4+ years but came into contact with Bill on a number of occasions. I had a couple of interesting chats with him about our background in developments in and around the City of London ~ he as developer, me as archaeologist. As a town councillor and editor of this magazine, I admired his efforts – and Andrew's - to improve the appearance of the Martingate Centre through the commissioning of murals (*Spotlight*, Spring issue, p.21 and Summer issue, p.21).

*Article continues next page...*

I appreciated his encouragement and helpfulness in readily providing access to buildings in the High Street for the *Corsham High Street Project* [CHSP], namely, Nos. 5, 11 and, most recently, No. 1 The Gables, Pickwick Road.

### No. 1 The Gables, Pickwick Road

Larry St. Croix (who made a photographic record), Pat Whalley, Cath and I, were able to inspect the building that was formerly Granny's Attic: although not part of the current CHSP it could be included in a later phase. It proved to be an interesting property: the structure of the roof with a stone mullion window is suggestive of 17th century date and the two fine windows on the first floor appear to be Georgian. On the ground floor there is a full length Victorian shop window which is an unusual survival in Corsham. It is a Listed Building (Grade II) and had been undergoing extensive refurbishment through liaison with Wiltshire Council's Conservation Officers.



Frontage and flank wall [to the left of Tongs] of No.1 The Gables, Pickwick Road.



A fine example of an early street light attached to No.1 which Bill Hall had especially reconditioned.



**Above:** flank wall with apex oval light and, below it, recessed mullion window with hood over.



**Above:** large roof truss structure being examined



**Left:** looking down on staircase from upper floor to ground floor

**Above right:** fine fireplace, probably Edwardian



**Right:** Recessed mullion window [see flank wall photo] viewed from the attic floor



**John Maloney**

## Lacock, Bowden Hill, Lackham, Reybridge ~ Part 1

The charming village of Lacock sits on Corsham's doorstep, and is probably known the world over. A wonderful place to take visitors, but how often do we take the time to really appreciate the surroundings, until we see it again through other people's eyes. Familiarity dulls our sight perhaps.



**Left:** map of Lacock and surrounding areas, Andrews & Drury, 1773.

**Below:** Lacock is the setting for much filming, including *Pride and Prejudice* [Mr Darcy is shown], *Cranford*, *Harry Potter* et al.



But where might it all have started?

Earliest finds in Lacock have been Roman, with coins found at Wick, Lackham and the appropriately-named Silverfield. With a settlement at Sandy Lane and several villas nearby it would seem most likely that people were living here at that time. However, the name dates from Saxon times when the earliest settlers lived by the Bide (Bye) Brook which runs through the village. The Saxon word is 'lacuc' or 'little stream'.

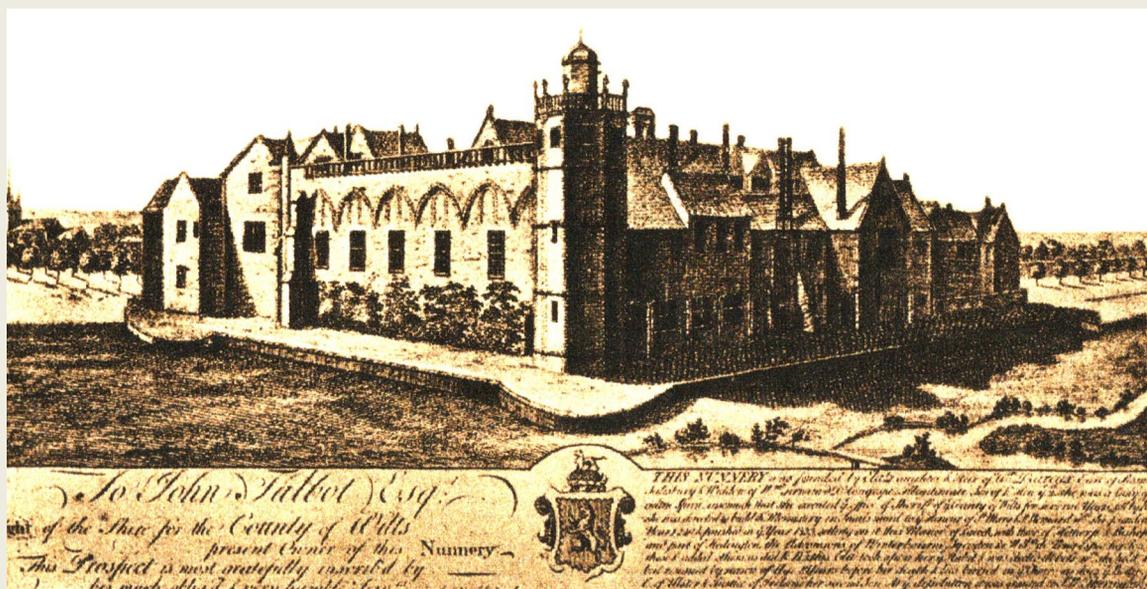


The Roman road between London and Bath [see diagram above] lies at the southern boundary, and after the medieval period the London to Bath road came over Naish Hill and crossed the river at Reybridge. The west takes us towards Gastard and Corsham. The royal forests of Melksham and Chippenham came close to the edges of the settlement. So there was every reason for a village to grow up around the church and eventually to evolve into a prosperous market town on the sheep driving route to London.

*Article continues next page...*

The Domesday Book, 1086, records the settlements at Lacock and Lackham as similar in size, although Lacock possibly had a small Saxon church. It is thought that the current church, St Cyriac's, replaced the earlier building and has been rebuilt and increased in size several times. Lacock had 2 mills and 1/2 an acre of vineyard while Lackham also had 2 mills. The name Lackham could be derived from the Old English for the village where leeks or garden plants generally, grew. How appropriate for today's Lackham College of Agriculture.

The manor of Lacock was owned by a Norman, Edward of Salisbury, and by the early 13th century it had been handed down to Ela, Countess of Salisbury. Ela, being a pious woman, wished to establish a religious house and this was achieved on 16th April 1232 when she founded the Nunnery of Lacock in the morning and the Priory of Hinton in the afternoon. She was 45 years old which was a good age in the 13th century. She had given the whole of her manor of Lacock to God and St. Mary in 1229 and then proceeded to build an Augustinian house on an area called *Snaylesmeade* between the river and the church. She received stone from the quarry at Hazelbury from Henry Croc and oaks from the royal forest of Chippenham.

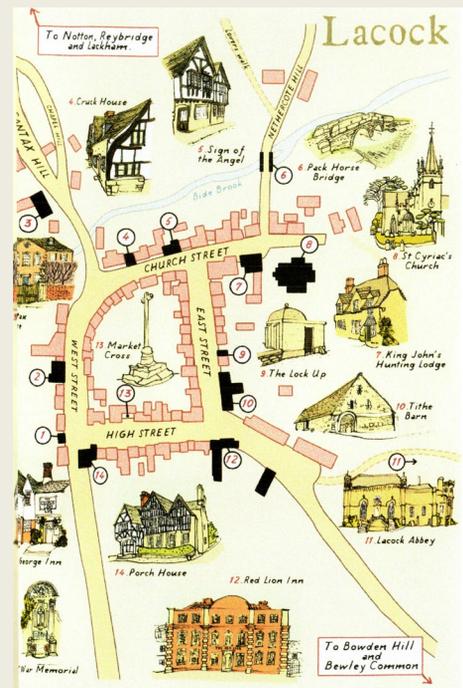


Lacock Nunnery. From an old engraving by Beek 1732

Ela became a nun in 1237 and took over as abbess in 1240. She died in 1261 at the age of 74. In the time of the second abbess, Beatrix of Kent, water was brought to the abbey from a conduit on Bowden Hill. Lands were given to the abbey up until 1300 and in the 14th century the churches of Lacock and Clyffe Pypard and, a little later, Shrewton, were also included. The community had its own mill, brewhouse and bakehouse, while its chapel of St. Edmund was served by three chaplains.

The religious community was never large and probably did not exceed 25 nuns at any time while, in 1473, there were only 14. Originally the nuns were mainly noblewomen but later less exalted ladies came to this abbey.

Outside the abbey grounds was the medieval village and manor [see opposite]. The village had developed to the west of the late 11th century church of St. Cyriac with the market-place lying immediately west of the churchyard. A grid pattern of streets was created with Church Street and High Street running parallel to one another, east to west, joined by East Street and West Street parallel to one another north to south. This grid pattern gives Lacock the appearance of a small medieval town and it was often referred to as the town of Lacock. The road between Melksham and Chippenham passed along West Street and continued up Cantax Hill, while another important route would have been over the packhorse bridge, or through the ford, from the market place, to the London to Bath road near Reybridge.



Acknowledgements to *Lacock From Old Photographs*, Chris Breach, 2019]

People would have been tenants of the abbey and paid for their land in work or goods. Ela obtained various charters for fairs and markets during her lifetime. In 1237 a fair was granted on the feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury (7th July) while in 1242 came the grant of a Tuesday market. In 1257 the nuns were granted a substantial fair on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (29th June) and for the following six days, while the right to a Monday market was also given. In 1261 came the confirmation of a Friday market.

This was obviously a thriving community, and in the latter part of the 13th century and early part of the 14th century the village was also becoming a prosperous wool and cloth centre, helped by the proximity of the London to Bath road and Reybridge which remained the only bridge in the area across the Avon until the 17th century.

The nunnery seems to have been a well disciplined community. In 1536 there were 15 nuns, 3 novices and 36 servants. The order and knowledge of the nuns was said to be good and the abbey was allowed to continue on the payment of a substantial fine. However, three years later, on 21st January 1539, the abbey became one of the last monastic possessions to be surrendered during the dissolution of monasteries. Following the dissolution, much of the feudal system was ending and tenants started to make payments for their land and labourers were paid for their work.

Houses in Lacock at this period were often of cruck construction and an example from the 14th century can be seen in Church Street. At this time Bowden Hill and the area to the east was still well-wooded but, this being a royal forest, timber may have been obtained from elsewhere.

## Review of *Corsham Revealed More*

This is Giuliano (Julian) Carosi's second book in quick succession about Corsham ~ the first was *Corsham Revealed* and was published last summer [Spotlight, Summer 2018 p.22]. Some of you will be familiar with his name on Facebook site, 'Mr Corsham', and know that he has collected and shared stories of the town for many years.

Julian has lived in Corsham all his life: his father was an Italian prisoner of war who loved this country so much that he decided to stay after WWII. Julian went to Corsham School and his interest in Corsham's history really took off after winning a local 'Know Your Corsham' history' competition' in 1979.

As with the first book, this volume [over 300 pages, some 150,000 words, hundreds of images and 26 'stories'] is a veritable cornucopia of 'the past, personalities, prefabs, people and places' in Corsham. Social history is his forte and Julian states that "You will not find much on Corsham's usual subjects".

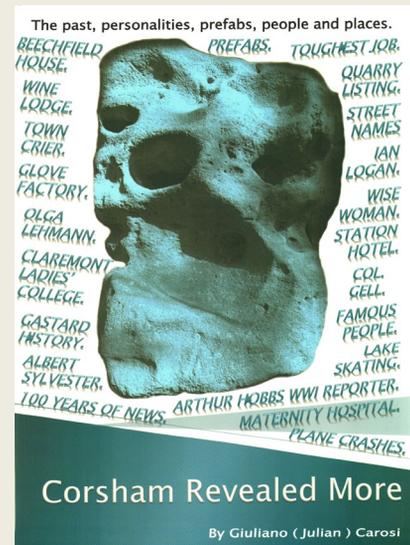
There are major articles on *Prefab Bungalows – Married Quarters and Hostel Sites* (48 pps), *Gastard – a history* (35 pps), *Beechfield House* (formerly *Pickwick House*), including the *Goldney family* (15pps), the *Maternity Hospital*, *Alexander House* (13pps) and many other articles including the minutiae of *Area Street and Place Name origins* and *Famous and Notable Personalities of Corsham*. There are some charming anecdotes, for instance, *Neston – Charlie Barnes and his three cows!* and *Skating on Corsham Lake* (right).

It could be said that the topics covered are random but, in fact, the overarching thread is Corsham, its history, people, events and buildings. It is a pleasure to dip into the book. The book is for 'everyman' with an interest in Corsham in all its variety, as Julian asserts, "Corsham is so much more than just a sleepy old Wiltshire town!". A fact that he recently demonstrated (see top of next page)



The book is an admirable achievement: it took 12 months of trawling through over 15,000 articles, has been self-published and self-financed and is 'not for profit'. It is highly recommended. Those of you who enjoyed his first book and look forward to the second, will doubtless be pleased to learn that a third volume is in preparation for 2020.

Price £20, from the author and Corsham Bookshop.



**John Maloney**

### **Corsham High Street Walk**

On Tuesday 25th June Julian Carosi led a history walk in the High Street so that we 'could learn about some of the more obscure facts about our town's history!' His enthusiasm shone through and he told some interesting stories.



### ***Notices and forthcoming events, etc***

#### **Corsham Neighbourhood Plan [CNP] ~ latest update**

The Neighbourhood Plan Examiner has visited Corsham and produced a list of questions and further points for clarification. The points included detail of some of the maps, and suggestions regarding some of the policies, in particular, around green infrastructure. Responses have been submitted by the Town Council and Wiltshire Council and are available online on the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan website - [www.corshamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.corshamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk). The Examiner will issue a 'fact check' report shortly, before publishing her final report and recommendations. A referendum would follow later in the year.

#### **Proposed Burlington Grange development (Land north of Bath Road, Pickwick)**

On 27th June, the Planning Inspectorate announced that the Public Inquiry [PI] which had been due to open on 2<sup>nd</sup> July had been postponed due to the Inspector's illness. The new date for the PI is now expected to be in January 2020.

#### **Boundary Commission for England**

Further to the report in the Spring 2019 issue of *Spotlight* [pps. 17-18], there follows Wiltshire Council's inadequate response to representations made by Corsham Council, the Pickwick Association and many individuals ~

##### ***Corsham Pickwick***

*The Commission made a series of large changes to the Council's proposals in this area. A number of areas proposed to be within the Corsham Without division were instead moved into this division around the Hudswell area, and the Council accepts that this makes an amount of community sense. The Council has some concerns about the effective community balance of the proposals in combination with Corsham Town in respect of the character and feel of the areas being divided between them. However, after much consideration the Council is prepared to accept that the proposals are not contrary to the criteria of the review [what about the arbitrary split in Pickwick village!?!] and are preferable to any suggestion of a two member division, which it very strongly objects to.*

***The Council therefore supports this proposed division. The Council supports the name Corsham Pickwick for this division.***

Previously, it had been reported that Wiltshire Council had said it would not further support the objections due to 'having bigger fish to fry'; could that have a bearing on the Boundary Commission's recent announcement:

The Commission has listened to the views of the public put to it during an earlier consultation, and now proposes to change its plans, to reflect the significance of the evidence we received. Due to the significance of the proposed changes in **south and south-east** Wiltshire, the Commission is now accepting additional opinions and comments (submissions) from local people about the areas affected!

***Is it possible to have a surfeit of cream teas?*****Pickwick Association ~ Cream teas at the Manor**

This highly popular Summer event will once again take place in the gardens of Pickwick Manor, the home of Lucy and Tom Brakspear and family, on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> July. The ticket cost is £8 [children under 5 are free] and can be obtained from Tony Clark, 6 Academy Drive, ~ [tony.clark88@btinternet.com](mailto:tony.clark88@btinternet.com) ~ tel: 01249 715905 and Jacquie Johnson, 9 Woodlands ~ [johnsoncn@hotmail.com](mailto:johnsoncn@hotmail.com) ~ tel: 01249 716210.

Ticket prices don't reflect the true cost of this lovely occasion and the Association has to exclude the financial risk of 'inclement weather' so, should it be necessary to cancel the event, there will not be refunds. However, in that event, ticket holders would be welcome to collect their cream teams from Lucy's kitchen at Pickwick Manor [opposite the Hare and Hounds PH] between 4pm and 5pm on the day ~ you would need to provide your own containers.

The Association hopes to top up its funds via a raffle and would be grateful for prizes to be donated ~ please bring them along on the day or drop them off beforehand to David Taylor, 9 Academy Drive. The plant sale is a particular attraction so any donations of plants would be welcome on the day.

***Do please buy your tickets as early as possible as places are necessarily limited*** and the volunteer team of scone and cake-makers need to know how many to make well before the day.

**Middlewick House**

The gardens at Middlewick House in Corsham, formerly the home of HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, and now home to Nick Mason of Pink Floyd and his wife, actress Annette Lynton Mason, are to be opened on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019 from 11am to 4.30pm in aid of two local charities. The event is later in the calendar due to Nick's commitments with his new band and the Saucerful of Secrets International Tour.

This will be the fifth year that Nick and Annette have kindly opened their gardens to raise money for local charities. This year's proceeds will be split between The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust - [www.wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirebobbyvan.org.uk) - and Wiltshire Air Ambulance - [www.wiltshireairambulance.co.uk](http://www.wiltshireairambulance.co.uk). Visitors will be able to wander around their beautiful gardens and the menagerie of animals. The BBC recently interviewed Mr and Mrs Mason about their garden for their coverage over the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Visitors can also expect to see a selection of Nick's classic and high performance cars.

*Article continues next page...*

Numerous artisans and traders will be there selling everything from plants to art. The weekend will be fun for all the family with the Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team's climbing frame challenge to climb the equivalent of Everest. Refreshments will be available with a delicious selection of cakes on offer as well as a barbeque. Entry is £7, children under 12 years – free.

Nick and Annette Mason said: "We love supporting the two charities – The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust and Wiltshire Air Ambulance – on our open weekend and it's a wonderful way of making sure we get everything done in the garden!" (see *Spotlight*, Spring 2019, pps. 7-8).

## PICKWICK ON THE GO!



**A new Pickwick Association website** has been established through Revolution Arts (<https://pickwickassociation.uk/> ~ NB the new website is currently being 'transitioned' and so is incomplete). Revolution Arts have an interesting website - <https://www.revolutonarts.com/> - and also developed and maintain the Corsham Civic Society website - <https://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk/https>.

## The Pickwick Conservation Area Appraisal

The draft appraisal is well under way and is expected to form the basis of the eventual submission to Wiltshire Council. It incorporates much of the draft of **A history of Pickwick and its buildings** by John Maloney which will be the basis for the CCS talk on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

## STORYTOWN FESTIVAL AND THE PICKWICK AND DICKENS EVENT

Neville Farmer, a Pickwick councillor, has been in touch with me about plans for this year's *StoryTown* event, which will be on 18th-20th October. It's Corsham's celebration of all things tale-telling, in all their formats. The team are working on some projects alongside Bath Spa Uni's Paper Nations initiative and also with a number of local writers, authors and groups on various activities to take place on and around that weekend. With that in mind, contact has been made with the Pickwick Association with a view to a link up, quite literally, with the Charles Dickens Pickwick association. Also, Corsham Regis School have said that they would very much like to be involved. Marnie Forbes Eldridge is well connected to the school and is keen to help put this together. Marnie has acted, directed, written, produced and run workshops and training in theatre and drama for the past twenty years: she is an Associate Director with Prime Theatre and has worked with the RSC, RADA, etc. ~ <http://www.marnieforbeseldridge.com/>.

It is envisaged that there will be readings from Dickens, acting, poetry, music hall and some costumes. So all you budding thespians come and join the Storytown team, the Pickwick Association and Corsham Regis School in putting on an enjoyable and memorable event ~ everyone welcome! [contact the Editor by email].

**NB Cross Keys Junction Improvements** will commence on 22nd July and are expected to last 8 weeks. There will inevitably be disruption! For more details ~ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/.../art.../improvement-works-corsham>

**John Maloney**

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE DICKENS OF A THOUGHT

Adverse comments have been made about names chosen for new developments: Burlington Grange [Stone Quarry Follies would be more appropriate], Bath Road, [Gladman]; Pickwick Court, Copenacre [Bellway] and [What the] Dickens Gate [!], Bradford Road [Bellway]. Since Bellway are so keen on Dickens' connections, why not be adventurous and have Scrooge Buildings, Jagers Pit Residences, Bleak Estate, Squeers Street Dwellings or Tattycoram Mansions?

**John Maloney**

## VISIT TO BECKFORD'S TOWER

This neo-classical tower was constructed as a study retreat and to house William Beckford's precious collection of art and rare books. The Tower is now home to a museum collection displaying furniture originally made for the Tower, alongside paintings, prints and objects illustrating William Beckford's life as a writer, collector and patron of the arts.

**A guided tour of the Tower will take place on Thursday 8th August 2019 at 6pm. Numbers are limited but there are a few places still available. Cost £8.50 p.p.** The Tower is in Lansdown Rd., Bath, and parking is restricted and so car sharing will be organised.

**Contact - John Holmes**, 168, Brook Drive, Corsham, SN13 9AZ  
01249 712628 or 07948 465967



## VISIT TO BATH ROMAN MUSEUM AND BATHS

**Will take place on Friday 6th September ~ see the Spring issue for details.**

There is a 'beneficial' charge of £13.50 per person. **First come, first served! Please let the editor know if you wish to be included.**

**So far less than 10 people have signed up and to make the offer viable for the Bath Roman Museum there needs to be a minimum in the group of 15. SO DON'T DELAY, confirm with John Maloney!**



## **CCS REVIEW**

### **March**

At a very well attended meeting, Paul Johnson of the Trans Wilts Forum gave us an excellent overview of the criteria required to enable the re-opening of a Corsham Railway Station. But first, members had been requested to complete an on line questionnaire giving details of their potential usage of the station. From a very small response the replies were positive, (around 64% indicated they would use the station) but it could hardly be used as a representative survey.

The Town Council have a continued interest in the subject - in the form of a Corsham Railway Station Town Team, and have met with Wilts County Council, and are considering the best ways to present a continuing case for the re-introduction of a station. Our speaker suggested that the Civic Society might consider it worthwhile to create a 'Friends of Corsham Station Group'. Which could perhaps help put pressure on MP's and others, and show that there is a continued interest in the subject, and a recognition that it would help not only local people, but the wider economy and the environment. There are difficulties to be overcome, not least the fact that we are on an Intercity Branch line, and any franchise for a smaller train to reach Bath or Chippenham, to allow changes for an onward journey, would have to be able to set a timetable to run between their schedule. It seems that there remains much work to be done.

### **April**

Our April meeting was re-located to the Mansion House, where we received a warm welcome and a presentation by Suzanne Gough, the Senior Project Manager for WCC, and Jolyon Rose the Manager of the Building, who explained the details of the development and restoration of the main house and the introduction of the extension. Attendance was high, with many members and non-members taking the opportunity to tour the building, and learn how it will be used as a Digital Centre for small businesses in the future. The restoration has been sympathetically undertaken, and the modern addition takes nothing away from the main house. A thoroughly enjoyable and informative evening.

### **May**

The evening of the Annual General Meeting and an opportunity to socialize afterwards with cheese and wine. A small gathering, but an excellent opportunity to catch up for a chat with members whose paths do not cross so regularly.

### **June**

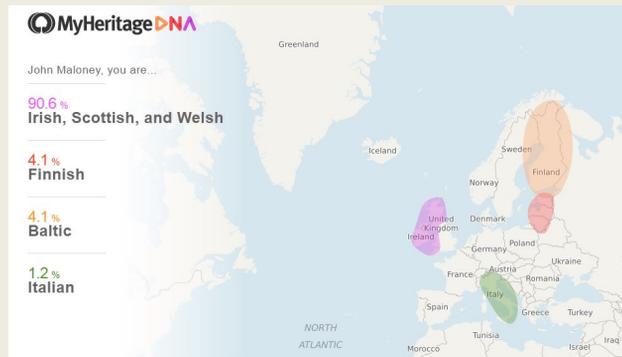
Kayleigh Spring who is a member of the Wilts Conservation & Museums Advisory Service based at Wilts History Centre, came to explain to us how the CMAS carries out its numerous tasks. We learned a great deal about how items arrive and the methods of restoration undertaken within Service and also how much we can do to care for our own precious objects at home, whether it be textiles, paintings or other mediums. It was an extremely interesting and informative talk, enjoyed by everyone.

**Pat Whalley**

## Who do I think I am?

Earlier in the year, I saw a special offer from Ancestry DNA and applied for a test kit. When it came I took a mouth swab and sent it to the USA for testing. The results are opposite: not surprisingly given my parents and all my grandparents were Irish, Celtic genes predominate.

Quite surprising are Finnish, Baltic and Italian genetic ethnicity! I'd rather like to think that the first two relate to a Viking ancestry and the latter one to Roman but its not as simple as that! I get regular updates about people from all the world that share the same DNA strands and now have some hundreds of second/third cousins! What joy ~ as if I didn't already have a sufficient number of known Irish ones!



**John Maloney**

**APPLY NOW**

## Travel grants for change-makers

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SEE [WWW.WCMT.ORG.UK](http://WWW.WCMT.ORG.UK)

Apply by 17 September 2019 for travel in 2020

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- Science, technology & engineering
- Suicide prevention
- Open category

Young people are encouraged to apply

If anyone is interested in applying for a Churchill Fellowship and wishes to discuss the matter with a Churchill Fellow/member of the Corsham Civic Society you can contact Larry St Croix via email: [larry.stcroix@btinternet.com](mailto:larry.stcroix@btinternet.com) (Churchill Fellow 1986).

## Postscript ~

Paul Martin's website is up and running ~

<https://www.decorativecollective.com/dealers/the-table-gallery>

# CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY 2019

All meetings are at the Pound arts centre (telephone 01249 701628) at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated. Members £1, Non-Members £3. Guests are very welcome.

- July 26th** Edward Barrett, '**After the Falklands – Post War Logistics**'
- Aug 8th** **VISIT:** Beckford Tower visit ~ details inside
- Sept 6th** **VISIT:** Roman Baths, Bath ~ details inside
- Sept 27th** John Maloney, '**A history of Pickwick and its buildings**'
- Oct 25th** Michael Rumsey, '**Steam into the Industrial Revolution**'
- Nov 22nd** A Musical Evening
- December** No meeting

- *Please note that the Programme may be subject to changes*
- *NB new attendance fees*

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 ASHTAV (Association of Small and 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 historical interest, in Corsham and the surrounding countryside.

Corsham Civic Society, 91 Tellcroft Close, Corsham, SN13 9JQ, Wiltshire. Registered Charity No: 275321

## Join Corsham Station Friends!



Corsham Civic Society (CCS) is launching a new group, *Corsham Station Friends*.

CCS has been leading the campaign to re-open Corsham station since the 1980s when a survey report confirmed overwhelmingly that most people wanted to re-open the station with access to Bath, Bristol and Swindon. This March Paul Johnson was the CCS speaker who, as Chairman of TransWilts, explained their aim was to open several stations across Wiltshire (including Corsham) building on their success at Melksham where passenger journeys now number 75,000 pa.



Corsham Station and Hotel in a postcard dated 15<sup>th</sup> July 1945 sent to an address in Priory Road ~ John Maloney

Whilst not hiding the many hurdles that remain to be overcome, Paul said he believed the creation of a group, affiliated to TransWilts, would provide helpful evidence of local support, lobbying as appropriate. Corsham Town Council meanwhile set up the 'Town Team' in 2016 to work towards a successful reopening for Corsham .

Having campaigned on behalf of the Society across the Bristol/South West region for 25+ years and given the continued rate of development in Corsham; climate change; the pressure for us to get out of our cars; cut journey times; take more exercise, it seems eminently sensible to take his advice and continue the Society's support for a re-opened Corsham Station.

Will you join the group? We do hope that you may be as willing as some members at our AGM to join the "Friends". The cost is just £5 p.a. thereby indicating your support by becoming an individual member of TransWilts (Corsham). This will enable you to access the "friends-area" of the TransWilts website and receive regular newsletters ~ <https://transwilts.org/>

Please consider completing the form below and send to ~

Pat Whalley, 27 Elms Hayes, Corsham SN13 9JN or Anne Lock, 3 The Cleeve, Corsham SN13 9JG

----- **DETACH HERE** -----

### **APPLICATION to become a member of CORSHAM STATION FRIENDS**

**Name ~**

**Date ~**

**Address ~**

Cheque enclosed for £5 made payable to Corsham Civic Society **Y/N**