

# Corsham Spotlight

November, 2004

Volume 2, Issue 3

*Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society*

## Editorial

### TRANSPORT IN CORSHAM

The comment I receive most often, from residents and visitors alike, is that **“Corsham is a really nice small town, but there is nowhere to park”**.

We locals know this to be true, and probably have found ourselves one or two little niches in which to park when we are stuck. But people visiting, or thinking of coming to live here - of which there are many, don't have the local knowledge, so they choose not to prolong their visit. Similarly, potential shop owners, looking to establish a business, will not see any advantage in coming here, if people are not able to park.

Can we overcome this? It is difficult to identify a potential site, close to the town, which would be suitable. The only available space is perhaps part of 'Springfield' behind the swimming pool. But I expect a lot of people might think that to be too far away from the shops. But should we be considering the benefit to our health – all that exercises!! Alternatively could it become a Park & Ride?

Are our current arrangements for car parking suitable? Perhaps if we did not have 2 long stay car parks, it would discourage those working in the town from each bringing in an individual car, and would free up many spaces for maybe a limit of a 2 hour stay. But if the ability to park free of charge, for a 'long stay' is removed, we must ensure there is a decent, regular bus service. We do seem to be seeing a few more of the mini buses scurrying about, and these do cover some of the outlying districts, however, you can only get to Melksham and back once a day, (quite a lot of people come in to work from Melksham), and on the regular route - to reach Trowbridge you have to go to Bath and change, to reach Swindon – it's the Chippenham bus and change.

Is there not good reason to re-introduce school buses? How much easier it would be to travel along Pound Pill, Stokes Road, Lacock Rd, Priory St or Orchard Rd in term time.

### ***Oh for a railway station!!***

We welcome the traffic calming measures being undertaken in Pickwick Rd and Priory Street, and with more off street parking coming into being, there will



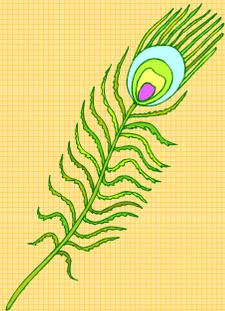
soon be even less opportunity to park in the street. It is a problem that is not going to go away, and I understand that this subject was one of major concern highlighted at the recent Open Forum run by the Corsham Area Community Partnership. Let us hope that someone came up with some possible solutions. The car can be such a useful piece of machinery, but the roads of our small towns were not designed to take them, and the problem is country wide; so if you have any ideas as to how we might solve this problem – please write and let me know, and we will pass them on to the Town Council.

I have spoken to the Town Clerk, Dave Martin about the problem, and he assures me that transport issues in the town are a high priority for the Town Council. They have conducted a survey of businesses in the town, and the response has shown that many employees do come to work in individual cars daily. One of the options the Town Council is intending to consider is to introduce a charge for the long stay car parks. (First 2 hours free, then charges for the rest of the day, with possibly Wednesday and Saturday pm and Sunday - all day, free of charge.). They are also keen to promote car sharing.

I am sure that these measures would help, but I think it is imperative that we improve our public transport system too. Coincidentally, a leading article in the Chippenham News, week ending 14<sup>th</sup> October, announced that NWDC were addressing this problem, and considering bringing in car parking charges over the whole of North Wiltshire. Monies received would be put back into maintenance and improvements.

A step forward perhaps, what do you think?

*Pat Whalley*



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## The Future of the Corsham TIC

Readers will have seen reference in the local press to the possible imminent closure of the Corsham Tourist Information and Heritage Centre which occupies rooms at Arnold House in the High Street. The articles have been based on rumours circulating in the town. This Society has been a firm supporter of the TIC and has been concerned to hear these stories. The Centre is run by NWDC. We have written to their Monkton Park offices, with a copy to our own Town Council, expressing our views that the TIC provides a valuable service to the town and that its range of facilities should be widened rather than the whole operation closed down.

The apparent basis for the rumours is NWDC's desire to make cost savings in its budget. As far as we are concerned NWDC has been afforded an excellent opportunity to make a return on the expenditure it incurs in running a TIC. It occupies premises which are made available to it by the Corsham Town Council at very favourable rate. It sees a good level of visitors through its doors and stocks an extensive range of products. We believe NWDC can do a lot better – and is simply not rising to the challenge with sufficient energy and imagination.

We understand that, despite earlier indications, our TIC will now survive at least until the end of the next

financial year (April 2006). However, we must regard it as “under threat”. This is where you, our members and readers, come in. You can actually help to make the case for the TIC to remain open into the further future. The TIC shop cum office has a “footfall counter” – a device for registering the arrival of every person who enters the building. We urge you to activate it more than you have ever done before. Once inside you will find a range of goods which are a valuable addition to any home. Buy some! If you are an organiser of events, use the ticket-selling and advertising facility that NWDC offers. The commission it charges is really quite small. If you are a small business (café, restaurant, public house, B&B, craft shop, etc), ensure the TIC knows you exist and hold a stock of leaflets describing what you have to offer. Likewise clubs and organisations. Hardly an hour goes by without some new arrival to the town coming into the Centre to ask for information about what the locality has to offer.

We will harry the local authority to do more to meet the needs of the community. We also need you to demonstrate how valuable it could be if it were to promote its capabilities better and organise itself more effectively.

## Christmas Lunch

Our Christmas lunch is arranged for 9 December 2004, at Cinnamon Restaurant in the High Street. Please make sure you have booked. (Seating is limited, but contact –

Eileen Soanes at our open meeting on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November, or on 01249 712631 for details). We do hope you will be able to join us.

## Joe James – Local Historian

Joe has long been interested in local history, and has been a member of our Society for many, many years. He has regaled us with many reminiscences about the town, including the ghost stories, and given us many historical facts, which we shall store for posterity – and thankfully, he is still doing it! Joe has recently agreed to give us a series of small items about the history of our town and its past occupants. (See “A peep at the past” on page 9). I know these will prove to be of great interest.

The Society felt that it was time to acknowledge Joe's immense contribution to the Society, and we have asked him to become an Honorary Life Member. We are delighted to record that Joe has agreed, and we would like to celebrate this event at the January Open Meeting - 28th January, at 8pm, Pound Arts Centre.

Everyone is welcome, you never know, we might yet hear a few more stories of Corsham during the evening.



## Heritage Open Days, 2004

We are pleased to be able to report that the programme devised for this year was very well received, with an excellent take up rate of visitors to each venue. We were fortunate to have good weather, which surely encourages people to get out and explore.

James Methuen-Campbell gave an excellent talk on 'Nine Generations of Methuens', and gave us a clear picture of the development of the Court, and an indication of how one deals with the very expensive problems which arise every few years – falling ceilings and water damage from collapsing pipe work, to name but two. Just like running an ordinary house, but many times more costly!!



Galena Leadworks had capacity audiences yet again, so it looks as though there are still people out there waiting to have the opportunity to see the workings of this remarkable industry, and we hope that Dave and Jesse will be willing to open their doors again sometime in the future.

Monks Chapel and Chapel Plaister – these two small but perfectly formed chapels also attracted great interest, with lots of visitors to both sites, including many local people who “had seen the buildings and always meant to go in, but never got round to it.” That is so often true of how we behave in our own locality isn't it?

Heywood School very generously became our prime commercial sponsor this year at very short notice, for which we are extremely grateful. Our thanks go to the Principals – Mr and Mrs Hall, who also allowed the school to host a Children's Quiz/Treasure Hunt on the Saturday. This was arranged and run by Fiona Coldridge, Head of History, thank you Fiona; and prizes were awarded of two book tokens, each valued at £5, from the Corsham Bookshop. Winners were –

Melissa & Jasmine, Melissa is in year three at Corsham County Primary, and Toby & Romilly of years 3 and 1 at Heywood School.

Certificates have also been issued to each child who took part in recognition of their participation.

In the event. It sounds as if they all had a good time!

Bill Hadfield's 'Weird and Wonderful Chairs' were on display at the Gallery, the Pound Art Centre, these innovative designs raised much interest, and we hope very much to have the opportunity to display them again at some later date.



St Bartholomew's Church helpers ensured that the church building was open on each day of the event, no easy task when you rely on volunteers to be on duty during the open period. Our thanks to everyone who contributed their time.

The Town Walks were well supported, this is always a popular item, and as we continue to have more newcomers coming to live in the town, we are sure this item will run and run!

We thank everyone who contributed to this event by opening their doors, exhibiting, selling tickets, making signs & posters, stewarding or giving financial help; which together resulted in another very successful weekend. Special thanks are also due to NWDC and the Corsham Town Council for responding positively to our applications for financial contributions toward the overall cost of staging such an event.



## Review

*What have we been up to since our last issue of 'Spotlight'?*

**Gloucester Docks** - In the balmy weather of August, we spent a very interesting day at the newly regenerated Gloucester Docks. A guided tour had been arranged for us by the Gloucester Civic Society, which enabled us to view so much more than if we had been wandering aimlessly around. We started at the National Waterways Museum, and paused to see a delightful small church used by seaman on a regular basis at the height of the docks working life. Our walk took us past The Priory, somewhat renovated over the years, but still showing strong evidence of it's previous 'life', and on to the Cathedral – what can one say about such a massive and awe inspiring structure. Originally a monastery, it was taken over by Benedictine monks in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. William the Conqueror commissioned the building of the present Church in 1059. Henry V111 dissolved the Abbey, of course, but the building became the Cathedral for the new diocese of Gloucester in 1541. Let's hope it stands for a further 1000 years. A 'free time' period and a liquid lunch for many rounded of an extremely pleasant day.

Our many thanks to Gloucester Civic Society for arranging such an enjoyable day.

**Heritage Open Days** – We were lucky with the weather once again – see our full report on page 3.

**Saving Buildings at Risk – a talk by Colin Johns of the Wilts Historic Buildings Trust.** This was an extremely interesting evening, Colin explained how buildings were chosen to be preserved; one of the main criteria being – ' what use it can have following restoration' Among his many slides he showed us pictures of the current restoration of the cottages at Pickwick, near the Hare & Hounds which when completed will once again become living accommodation. Perhaps we shall get a chance to visit the buildings before they are re- occupied.

**'Hidden Depths', Wiltshire's Geology – the basis of our landscapes and buildings.** This was a most interesting look at what makes up the ground beneath our feet, and how it was formed so many million years ago. Isobel Geddes, of the Wiltshire Geology Group showed us how we could identify the clues in the landscape which is right before our eyes, and I am sure we will all look around us and see a totally different view in the future. Isobel has also written a book on this fascinating subject entitled "Hidden Depths of Wiltshire" - a recommended read!

**A Pictorial Journey of the Somerset Coal Canal.** Another entertaining evening was supplied by Roger Halse, Archivist for the Somerset Coal Canal Society, who took us on a pictorial journey from Dundas Aqueduct near Limpley Stoke, to the Paulton & Timsbury Basin. The Somerset Coal Canal was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1794, and was promoted by the mine owners of the North Somerset Coalfields as a cheaper means of transporting coal to the markets in Bath, Wiltshire and beyond. The only other form of transport at that time was by pack-horse or horse and cart, which could only cope with limited quantities and resulted in high prices.

Much of the canal is on private land, but other parts are accessible by public footpaths, so bear it in mind for the future, visualise - a warm summers day, in beautiful countryside and a chance to imagine the barges and the horses slowly making their way toward each lock, and think how lucky we are not to have to undertake such labour!

## “Saving Buildings at Risk.”

Having taken to heart much of Colin John's words in our September talk, we thought you might like to know about some very small buildings which are at risk – in St Bartholomew's Churchyard.

Perhaps you will have seen the tombstones (many of which are Listed) covered in ivy and weeds, and in need of some TLC.

Church members have come up with a scheme to care for these graves – details on Page 5



## St Bartholomew's Church, Corsham - "Adopt a Grave"

*In the Churchyard, there are many very old tombs and graves – 62 of the monuments are "Listed".*

*This scheme recognises the need to care for the whole churchyard in a spirit of Conservation, not only by caring for the graves but also maintaining a sanctuary for fauna and wildlife. New planting is underway, and habitats are being created for many species.*

- *You may like to take responsibility for a 'tomb', and clear it of ivy – once a year.*
- *You may prefer to take on a grave on which flowers may be grown, or which may need only general maintenance and grass cutting around the edge a few times a year.*

*There are however several important regulations to be observed when taking on the care of a grave – no scrubbing or scraping, mosses and lichens must be allowed to remain etc.*

*No chemicals are to be used in the churchyard.*

*If you are interested in taking part in this scheme, it is essential that you contact our lady -in -charge , Mrs Clare Raybould, who whilst welcoming you with open arms, would advise you of the do's and don'ts; and whilst you may nominate a grave, Clare must know who is doing what and where !*

*On Wednesday afternoons, Clare and her helpers can be found working in the churchyard, or you can telephone her on 01249 716493.*

- *Please take a moment to go and see what is involved and help if you can.*

## Charge of the Light Brigade



We have a grave in St Bart's Churchyard, dedicated to the memory of Lt Daniel Clutterbuck, 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, wounded in the 'Charge' on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1854, and who died in 1906.

Is this why Corsham had a street named Clutterbuck Rd?

## Skating on Corsham Lake

It seems that Corsham was a popular venue in the 'olden days'!

Extract from 'The Spackman Diaries'

*December 4th 1879*

*"An awfully cold day. Went down to the pond (the lake) before breakfast with Lewin, Clara, Sarah, Ernest and Clare and I enjoyed it very much. There were a great many people down there mostly from Bath and Bristol I saw the place where I fell in last Tuesday"*

*Newspaper item 21 January 1917*

*"Some enjoyable skating has taken place on the lake in the park since last Saturday, there being a splendid sheet of perfectly safe ice. On Sunday afternoon there were from 200 – 300 present. The only accident was one of temporary immersion of a gentleman who helped in the successful rescue of a dog from the lake"*

With thanks to CJ Hall 'An illustrated History of Corsham'



## Chippenham – Is there a Medieval Fort?



Have you seen in the local Chippenham news lately, the item on the possibility of there being the remains of a medieval fort under part of what was until recently the “Goldiggers Nightclub?”

Plans are well underway to provide 49 new flats for the elderly, and a shopping parade on the site.

The three Art Deco facades are to be retained at the front of the building when work commences.

But what of the medieval fort?

The story of the castle comes from work by an archaeologist named John Briton who located a medieval mound on the hill in 1812.

Wiltshire Archaeological Society have completed their first search for the 900 year-old remains, and found undisturbed soil underneath the floor dating back to the 1600's, and they have now obtained permission to conduct a further search for these ancient buildings. Digs will take place in February 2005.

It is thought possible that there should at least be the remains of houses facing Timber Street dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

We shall keep you posted on developments!

Perhaps later on we shall be able to get Mike Stone, of the Chippenham Heritage Centre, to give us talk on the legend and the discoveries made on the site.

## Anybody Here Seen Grandma...?

*The computer's Swallowed Grandma  
Yes, honestly it's true  
She pressed 'Control' and 'Enter'  
And disappeared from view.*

*It's devoured her completely  
The thought just makes me squirm  
Maybe she's caught a virus  
Or been eaten by a worm.*

*I've searched through the recycle bin  
And files of every kind  
I've even used the internet  
But nothing I did find.*

*In desperation I asked Jeeves  
My searches to refine  
The reply from him was negative  
Not a thing was found online.*

*So, if inside your inbox  
My grandma you should see  
Please 'Scan' 'Copy' and 'Paste' her  
In an e-mail back to me.*

*Anon*



## Corsham Station Campaign

### *“Jubilation & Relief at EIP Report on WCC Structure Plan!”*

The Civic Society's Station Campaign has been up and running eighteen years, since 1986. In the early nineties we achieved a safeguarding clause at the Hearing of the County Structure Plan plus the station site delineated in greater detail in the NWDC Local Plan and support within the Bath City Plan. Land for car parking was purchased by NWDC and with a local train service in place within the First/Thames franchise, a bid was made and granted for Rail Passenger Partnership funding – Corsham even appeared as a destination in the Summer Timetable 2003! But in January 2003, following the Hatfield crash and realisation of insufficient investment in rail infrastructure since privatisation, the SRA withdrew their RPP funding nationwide.

The Deposit WCC Structure Plan was issued for consultation in 2003 and an objection was lodged by Network Rail/SRA to the continued inclusion of the safeguarding clause plus station re-opening proposals. This came as a nasty shock, affecting as it did not only Corsham, but Wootten Bassett, Wilton and the re-siting of Melksham Station. In the event neither organisation sent a representative, but Government Office South West argued the case on their behalf, suggesting instead that the congestion caused by the E/W flows into the Bristol/Bath PUA's (Principal Urban Area) identified in the Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study, could be overcome by “the bus and priority measures”.

We maintained the safeguarding clause was correct; the recently completed Bath/Bristol to South Coast Study had concluded that there was not a high level of strategic N/S traffic on the A350 but flows were affected by huge E/W flows. Recommendations included new signage to keep HGV's on the M4/34 and Wiltshire's involvement in a “Transport Board” – the four authorities of Bristol, Bath, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset were in future to produce one Local Transport Plan – not four as in previous years. A further study, the **Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study** is ongoing. (Do please ensure that anyone you know who regularly travels around, or across the PUA logs on to [www.gbsts.com](http://www.gbsts.com). The simple consultation exercise can be completed on line). We argued this latter study had an horizon of 30 years and it was therefore correct for the rail safeguarding and station proposals to remain in the Structure Plan.

Interestingly the Panel Chairman asked Wiltshire whether it would be possible, were the panel to

recommend a Transport 2000 view, for funding to be transferred from the roads to rail schemes? The County's spokesman prevaricated and suggested Government office should respond to that question! Much to our surprise GOSW's answer was “No” – maintaining that once funding was allocated to a scheme it was impossible to transfer it to another project. However this response rather overlooked the fact that the schemes to which the Panel referred had not been funded – indeed Wiltshire's LTP containing the schemes was not to be submitted for a further month!

The Panel's Report, released on 21 October – is exceedingly succinct:

*“..we find it difficult to accept that bus services are the long term solution for reducing car use. We are aware that work is underway to prepare a Greater Bristol public transport assessment. We are of the opinion that the study should encompass the needs and opportunities in Western Wiltshire”*

.....and on rail station safeguarding

*“..we do not accept GOSW argument .... Development of high quality bus services, priority measures and parking restraint can be delivered by the Local Transport Plan process .....But do not accept this is an argument against the protection of potential rail station sites!”*

The West of England Partnership met 22 October. The scale of the Board's task is immense, but there was agreement that rail investment was needed now, before further development across the area was considered. Portishead is in a similar situation to ourselves, except their development is much larger and given permission on the understanding that the freight line would be re-opened to passenger traffic and rail services instituted. They identified understandable resentment amongst the population at this situation – developments such as these should really not be allowed to proceed until the public transport improvements are in place.

Are you aware of any housing development that has been allowed without its accompanying 'distributor road' in place?

Anne Lock



## Management of Waste in Wiltshire

Wiltshire County Council continues to pursue the difficult solutions required to solve the management of our waste. Anne Lock and I have regularly attended the Forum WCC originally established to guide work on the Local Plan. As members of this forum we were invited mid - October to a one-day consultation on the development of the Wiltshire Waste Management Strategy. This proved to be quite a difficult exercise and we need to meet again to discuss and clarify our observations.

The Waste Local Plan has passed through many key stages and our Local Planning Authorities intend to adopt it in February 2005. However, things move on and the new Planning and Compensation Act requires swift action to replace Local Plans with 'Local Development Documents'. Wiltshire is at present achieving

21% recycling from the tonnage of waste collected; they are on target to achieve 27.5% for 2004/05, and hopefully 33% by 2005/06.

We must continue to reduce the total amount of waste by – maximising recycling and composting and recovering value from residual waste. ***This is not an option but essential if we are to avoid financial penalties to be paid to the EU possibly by 2010. We must get to grips with the problem now.*** Visit – [www.wasteinwiltshire.com](http://www.wasteinwiltshire.com) for further information.



Pat Britton

## Corsham is Not Dead on Saturday Afternoons..

There seems to be a general misconception doing the rounds concerning the Opening Hours of shops in Corsham town centre. We have discovered that it is a commonly held view that "Corsham shops close on Saturday afternoons". We have carried out simple study to check whether this is true. We are delighted to report that it most certainly is not true!

*Our research reveals the following:*

Quite apart from the shops which you might expect to open late on a Saturday afternoon (Somerfield – closes at 8pm, Forward Video – closes at 10pm), many retailers remain open until 5:30pm. These include the Corsham Bookshop, Boots, Rontos, The Factory Shop, Newshop, Green Ginger, Corsham DIY and Stokes. 5 o'clock marks the close-of-business for The Cheesemonger, the 'Value Shop', Theodora's and DAC Stationers, while it is 4 o'clock for Design & Crafts, Frock Follies, Right Angle Picture Framing, Sunshine Travel and West County Cleaners. The Tourist Information & Heritage Centre stays open until 4:30, Barnett Brothers until 3:30 and The

Gables (R A Cornford) until 3:00. Dotty Pots - the latest arrival at the Martingate Centre – stays open until 6 o'clock.

We applaud these businesses for their commitment to making Corsham a recognised shopping location. We take it as part of our role to promote the use of our local retail facilities. We value the vitality that they bring to our town centre. We urge all our members to demonstrate their support for the efforts of our retailers by "buying local" wherever possible.



## A Peep at the Past

### CHRISTMAS IN THE 1920'S

*Electric lighting came to Corsham in 1924, but I can remember the gas lighting. The lamplighter with his long pole, the sudden gleam of the gas mantle, a white star against a twilight sky!*

*Christmas in Corsham really started with butcher Tommy Ive's (now Cinnamon) display of turkeys.*

*Scores of them hanging from the rails above his shop windows, in all weathers.*

*My father's shop, H James, (now the 'cut price' shop), was right opposite, an old fashioned ironmongers.*

*Near deserted is our modern High Street on this, the afternoon before Christmas day. In contrast December 24<sup>th</sup> was probably the year's busiest twelve hours in the 1920's. Shoppers abounded, even at 8pm.*

*In those days most housewives did all their own Christmas cooking; ware pudding basins were sold by the dozen. In great demand were 12-seater mince pie tins. The 'exchange rate' in turkey roasting tins soared. "Too big for our oven Mr James" and "This one don't fit our turkey".*

*From 8.30am to 8pm my parents addressed the flood of customers, while my sister and I were left in the hands of a kindly 'help'. Twilight brought the strains of the Town Band from the street, music mellowed and muffled by the throng.*



*My father had a bright idea involving our famous Town Crier, Charlie Bethel. One peal of his bell and silence descended, listeners probably expecting the habitual notice of water shortages. But no – "Mr HR James wishes to thank his customers for their patronage throughout the year ....etc, ending with a seasonal greeting to all.*

*Later Charlie would come into the shop "I done the High Street and Pickwick Rd, Mr James, and thank 'ee for the ten shillings". This little Christmas innovation became an anticipated tradition over the years. It may not have increased turnover but it certainly added to the Christmas spirit of the 1920's.*

*Later that evening two sleepy children were eased into their Sunday Best by two tired adults. My father fetched his BSA motorcycle and with the three of us in the minuscule sidecar we chugged off to Chippenham to spend Christmas with grandparents. I often wondered "Why Chippenham?" although an aunt once suggested to me that Santa Claus sometimes by-passed Corsham! Years later, when I had children of my own I found this not to be true!*

Joe James



## The Wanderer Returns

Those of you who follow the fortunes of our intrepid Programme Organiser, will know that Les made a return trip to Jargeau in August to reward them for the kindness shown him when he met with an accident during the annual Twinning Association visit last year. The reward was a presentation on the subject of our much-respected Almshouses.

Les prepared well for the visit – as you would expect. He was well armed with photographs and sent his presentation commentary ahead to be translated in readiness for the big day. He then delivered his talk in his native tongue, pausing every few minutes to permit one of the locals to deliver the French version. A masterly stroke!

Les reports that he was wined and dined to excess, and a busy programme of visits had been arranged for him. Among them, a firework display on the eve of Bastille day; followed by a trip to Orleans, where he was given a private viewing of the new Town Hall with all its splendid furnishings and paintings of famed French aristocrats, and of course, Joan of Arc. The next day saw him viewing the 17<sup>th</sup> century Chateau Neuf, a building full of history of French Kings and nobles. Visits followed to Blois, the Basilique de Clery St Andre, Briare where the canal aqueduct over the river Loire meets with a second canal. – The metalwork was designed by the engineer responsible for the Eiffel Tower. Then, just in case he became bored, there was a carnival night, other churches and



museums to see and a BBQ. This was all firmly rounded off with a 2 hour tour of Paris and a look at the Bastille!

Between all this, Les was not allowed to rest on his laurels. He was interviewed on the local radio and proceeded to wax lyrical about his life history.

We were pleased and relieved to have him back safely at the end of it all. We just don't know how he does it!!!!



## Another Peep at the Past

Those who might dip into the Victorian history of Corsham would soon encounter the name of 'Richard Balch', butcher, farmer and benefactor.

Born in 1827, we find him married at the age of 24 and running the family business. Present day site – Corsham Bookshop, and before the arrival of the Precinct – Beszants Butchers shop). Note the pillar head carvings.

As an elected trustee of local charities, he could not have been so happy as a director of the troubled Gas and Water Companies of the day.

During the widening of Stokes Road his farm waggons conveyed the spoil to Broadstone (just beyond Prospect). Panic hit Corsham when it was learned that only FIVE grave sites remained in the whole parish. Richard offered land for 'instant internment', had his offer been accepted future funerals would have terminated in the Lypiatt Road area !

The burgeoning stone industry was producing many workers searching for building plots, Richard obliged. Many quarrymen and masons then received their pay, half of which came in ashlar stone, helping one another to build their houses. This led to the establishment of South Street and the Cleeve.

The final accolade for Richard Balch was his election

as "Coroner for the Liberties of Corsham". The appointment of a coroner was granted in the Royal Charter of about 1230. Corsham was then exempted from the jurisdiction of the Sheriff of Wiltshire, and held it's own Courts. This privilege survived until the First world War.

In celebration of his Golden Wedding Richard presented the town with a footpath. The 'Golden Path' connected the High St with Alexander Terrace. (part is still in use, from Newlands rd to Alexander Terrace, alongside the Royal British Legion).

Richard Balch died in 1915. His "genial presence" was especially missed at the meetings of the Court Leet. (Another legacy from the Royal Charter). Afeature of this gathering was Richard's singing of the following lines:-

"Let each man learn to know himself  
To gain that knowledge let him labour;  
To improve those failings in himself,  
Which he condemns so in his neighbour".

Joe James

## Social Programme

28 January	Mulled Wine & Conversation. A Social get - together.
25 February	A History of Heywood by Mrs P Hall, Principal of Heywood School
18 March	'The Berks and Wilts Canal' – A Canal Trust Nominee
22 April	18th Century Devizes. Dr Lorna Haycock. (NH&AS Wilts)
27 May	AGM (7pm for 7.15pm) at The Almshouses, Corsham followed by - Campanology, the story of bells and bell ringing. Michael Horseman.
8 June	Evening visit to Corsham by Trowbridge Civic Society.
15 June	Morning visit to Devizes with the town History Society.
24 June	To be announced at the AGM.
22 July	An offering by Les Davis – to be announced at AGM
August -	A Day Trip & A BBQ – to be arranged.
8/11 September	Heritage Open Days
23 September	Victorian Memorabilia (Fun & Games) David Harries
28 October	A History of Bradford on Avon – related by Mrs Margaret Dobson.
25 November	Life of the village Labourer in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century. Dr Alan Dodge.(Freshford History Society).
December	Christmas Lunch to be arranged



# Corsham Civic Society

## Civic Society Officers

### President

Mrs Anne Greenly

### Chairman

Mr Peter Tapscott, 4 Charlwood  
Road, Corsham

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.Corsham-Civic-Society.co.uk](http://www.Corsham-Civic-Society.co.uk)

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## Obituaries

### Carol Smith.

We were extremely saddened to hear of the death of Carol Smith. Such a vibrant lady, always ready to help others and to be involved in local activities. As a Civic Society member she particularly became involved in the arrangements for our HODS weekends, and did an incredible job in organising and judging the local school art contributions, to which the Civic Society presented a

special prize. An artist in her own right, she worked with others to create the annual Art Exhibition at the local church, an event that is widely supported and enjoyed. We shall miss her ready smile, and lovely personality. We extend our sincere condolences to Ron and the family, and we hope to see Ron back at our meetings very soon.

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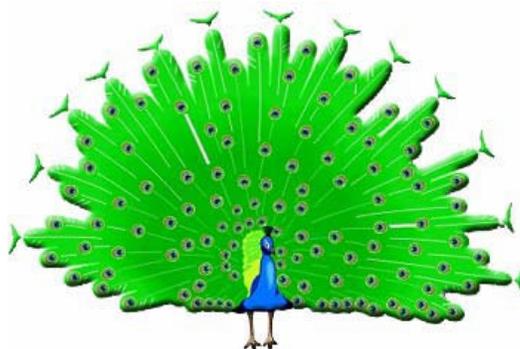
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### *Corsham Civic Society*

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

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

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



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