

# Corsham Spotlight

November 2007  
Volume 5, Issue 3



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## Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society

### Editorial

Having asked our membership in recent months what they felt were the burning issues that should be addressed in our town, one subject stood out above all others – the lack of a police presence on our streets. We see traffic police in their vehicles, police cars apparently racing with all haste to - somewhere? But to report an incident in the middle of the High Street, you will rarely find a policeman. Yes, you can make a phone call, but it may be some time before a policeman reaches you by car.

This is the financially driven system our local constabulary has to adopt in order to meet their 'targets'. It is not the way our members (or I am sure, most of the general populace) want our town to be policed. Are Corsham and the surrounding district really so crime free?

If someone is attacked, property vandalized, there is a burglary, or an accident, people want to feel that there is someone in authority to which they can turn as soon as possible. It is understood that lost property can be handed in at the local library, there are information leaflets available, and a non-emergency phone number, none of which is of any use when one is in dire need of help!

We have Community Policemen, who do walk in the town, but many people have not yet encountered them, and it is not altogether clear what action they are able to take in a real emergency.

We can appreciate that funding may not allow Corsham to 'warrant' a fully manned Police Station, but why not make provision for one or two Policemen to live and work here who could be available to local people. Some will say this is going back to the 'village bobby', and new methods of operation are necessary in our changing times. But was it so expensive to maintain a dedicated policeman housed in one area?

Car parking problems and charges were the second area of concern, particularly the amount of cars parked for instance, on

*Complementary Copy*



Station Rd and other areas away from the Car Parks. A refund of 30p for the first hour does not assist those who work in the town and have to park all day. A problem to be addressed by the local Councils.

Other issues highlighted were, litter, vandalism, and the proliferation of 'A' Boards in the High St, in some cases as many as 3 for one shop. If they were placed in the cobbled area in the centre of the street it would be an improvement; they are becoming quite a pedestrian hazard.

It was also pointed out that there are no retirement homes to buy in Corsham, the nearest are in Chippenham & Calne. The Plans Committee have voiced their concerns to NWDC many times on this issue. The present increase in our population may be of younger families, and we welcome them, but sooner or later, ageing parents want to live nearer to their families, and there is presently no suitably designed accommodation to be purchased here.

We shall be following up these points in the near future, and will keep you informed of progress.

*Pat Whalley*



## Review

The topic for our July meeting was Place Names. Dr John Chandler gave us a very interesting insight into the derivation of certain names, and how, as we go about on our travels we can identify some of the strange and wonderful titles for streets, villages and towns. I can feel a 'quiz' coming on sometime in the future to test our memories!

The weather was kind to us on the 11<sup>th</sup> August, for our BBQ in the gardens of Heywood School, a lively attendance of about 25 members, ensured that food and beverages were consumed with gusto. Our thanks to Eric and Trudy for being chefs for the day!

Similarly, an enjoyable trip was had on the Kennet & Avon Canal on 17<sup>th</sup> August. Fortunately we had another pleasant, sunny day and were able to enjoy the flowers and fauna, the antics of other "sailors" - and the huge pieces of cake served from the tea rooms when we reached the half-way mark. The boat must have been carrying more weight on the return journey!!

At our September talk, when we returned to the 'restored' venue at the - "Pound", Gill Bowden gave us an extremely informative and amusing look at the life of the Registrar. "Hatches, Matches & Dispatches" (Births, Marriages & Deaths) took on a whole new meaning for us! This included learning some of the pitfalls we may encounter when looking into our own Genealogy. With the considerable help of one of our members, Joyce Taylor, we had Family Trees on display for Charles Mayo, Miss Dorothy Pictor and Lt Daniel Clutterbuck - each of them being subject of our 'Adopt a Grave' Scheme at St Bartholomew's Churchyard. More information on that to come in the future.

The October meeting concerned the Mayo Restoration Project. Many thanks must go to all that worked towards the successful completion of this programme, none more so than the Project Manager, Peter Tapscott who led and co-ordinated the whole thing. The meeting concluded with stories of Corsham - around the table. A very lively meeting.

### WHO OWNS THIS FOOTBALL TROPHY?

Hilary Light, one of our contributors in the July Spotlight, has in his possession a football trophy

It is 130mm high, with two handles. The wording inscribed on it:

*"Hawthorn & District Football Challenge Cup  
Presented By*

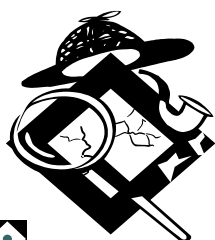
**R. Lloyd Roberts  
1944"**

Can anyone tell us its origin, to whom it belonged, or who should hold it now?

Please Contact Hilary Light Tel: 01249 713662.



## Luzzell's Well



Joe James has continued his research on the question asked in the July issue. He has discovered the name

'Luzzell's Lane' identified as a place name in 1520 at Gastard. Our detectives remain 'on the case'.



## Restoration of the Mayo Memorial Is Completed

For once a structural renovation completion prediction proved correct! The scaffolding went up during week-commencing Monday 11 June - and came down during week-commencing Monday 13 August.

In between, the stone was washed, the lead work was renewed and re-bedded, the stonework was re-worked (within the constraints imposed by NWDC's Conservation Officer and to her entire satisfaction) – and your project manager learnt a new word ("dentil"). Dentils (as in teeth) are those rectangular pieces of stone, which are placed beneath a continuous run of stone such as the one which features on the Mayo Memorial. I couldn't have told you before, but they are separate pieces which are made off-site and fitted into ready-prepared holes in the main structure. Their longevity will obviously depend upon the material used to form them. Some of those on the Memorial were barely recognizable as the original item, their sharp edges long since having disintegrated. The Officer agreed to some of them being replaced – but only some. Our stonemason would have been willing to provide more. On this occasion, a negotiated outcome was not influenced by the depth of a pocket!

The timely completion allowed our Chairman, Wyndham Thomas, to take some "Completion Photographs" for his Mayo Exhibition for the then upcoming HODs mini-festival. Our picture shows Kathy Thomas and Rob Fleming, the stonemason into whose care we entrusted the renovation work, in front of the freshly restored Memorial.

As well as fashioning what remained of the original stone and replacing small parts where this was appropriate, Rob (who is a local man, with a young family) coordinated the work of the other specialists. These included Galena (Dave and Jess Bevan) for the lead work and JKH Ltd (John Harrod of Swindon) for the stone cleaning – using the same processes as were used on Nick Keyworth's Osborne House.

Throughout all this, our structural conservation project management advisors, CMS (Bath) Ltd continued to provide their expert services – and all for free. We are hugely appreciative of the personal attention afforded to our project by their Victoria Smith (Quantity Surveyor), as well as by the firm's Managing Director, Paul Coleman, and the rest of his team. We benefited from the use of their

procedures, their tendering lists, their awareness of planning matters and the application of their quality systems. We really are lucky to have such a professional company operating in the middle of our town.



Our source of financial assistance – the Heritage Lottery Fund – also played its part. In recent weeks, it has become timely to apply for the 2nd Advance Payment (bringing the total so far advanced to 95% of the full grant). The cheque arrived within days of it being requested! Our major creditors are being paid to their liking and the project continues to enjoy a positive cash flow.

*Peter Tapscott (Vice Chairman, & Project Manager for the Mayo Memorial Restoration Project)*



### **From Wilts and Gloucester Standard 1891**

*A penniless stranger of wretched appearance, whose rent clothes and bruised face gave evidence of severe ill-usage, appealed to a railway booking clerk to let him have a ticket on credit to enable him to reach his home. "Can't you get the money from a friend in the town?" was the question.*

*The reply told the whole story: "I have no friends in the town; I am a football referee!"*



## Heritage Open Days, 2007

As usual, the Heritage Open Days, organised by a small sub-committee of the Executive, proved to be a great success, with attendance's of about 450 at the events in St Bart's Church, The Town Hall, The Almshouses, The Pound Centre, and Corsham Court. All the tickets were taken well in advance for those events (Town Walks, etc) for which they were required, and an exceptionally wide range of countries of origin were represented – from the Czech Republic to Holland and from New Zealand to Scotland! Of course, not all came to Corsham specifically for HODs but all seemed very interested and pleased to be here. Your chairman even met up with a former school friend from Bridgend who was researching the history of his great-uncle whose name (Lodge) was on the church war memorial. Needless to say, neither of us recognised the other (beards not being permitted at secondary schools in South Wales in the 1950s!).

This year, the Exhibition of material associated with Charles Mayo and the Restoration of the Mayo Memorial provided an additional attraction, as did talks by James Methuen Campbell, Robin Jackson, and Stephen Flavin. At the renovated Pound Centre, we were greeted with complimentary tea and coffee before being introduced to the new layout of the historic old school that many Civic Society members will have remembered from their youthful education (perhaps with mixed emotions!). Thanks are due especially to Nicholas Keyworth (Artistic Director) and Ian Martin (General Manager) for giving up their time at such a busy stage in the re-opening of the Pound Arts Centre.

One of the most heartening aspects of HODs 2007 was the number of volunteers who came forward to steward the various venues and events. As ever, it was a nucleus of 'old hands' who carried out the main administrative jobs and we hope that further assistance will forthcoming in this area in future. To all who helped this year - by putting up banners, distributing publicity, stacking chairs, assembling displays and making tea – our warmest thanks. Ideas for 2008 are now solicited!

*Wyndham Thomas, (Chairman)*

## Down Another Memory Lane



*Do you recall the article in our July issue resulting from the discovery of sign advertising H.A. Grant, Turf Accountant (found at the Haques Takeaway in the High St.)?*

*We subsequently found that Mr Grant had at one time operated his business from his garden shed in Williams Grove (off Station Rd)*

*The building still exists and now we have the photographic proof!*

*See pictures. Indeed we will go further - from that same venue there was once a dancing school - see picture. We have it on good authority that there are some people in Corsham who can remember the school, though no-one will admit to having lessons!*



## Station Campaign, Update

The last Update ended with our finger's metaphorically crossed in the hope that the Panel to the Regional Spatial Strategy would, when considering the evidence produced on Bristol's heavy rail system, rule that there should be investment in stations and more frequent local rail services – their Report is still awaited. Our participation in French Market Morning has added names and contact details of those willing to help the Campaign in the future

On September 21st I attended a meeting of the West of England Partnership and heard Barbara Davis, Transport Officer, describe their plans for the future of the old Avon area. I took the opportunity to question whether both Corsham and Portishead Station reopening remained an aim of the Partnership, many speakers having referred to Section 106 Agreement funding for future infrastructure projects. Barbara Davis indeed confirmed that Corsham and Portishead remained on their radar. Reassurance was also obtained from her that they intended transport projects would be completed prior to the commencement of residential developments to ensure our situation was not replicated elsewhere. We were not surprised to hear her report that the Bristol area regularly received four-five times less funding for transport than their northern counterparts - for a public transport system which was four-five times worse. Bristol is the only Core City to operate without the benefit of a Passenger Transport Executive. This situation is the reason that we, in common with many other local campaign groups, have been pressing for the area to be granted a Passenger Transport Authority. (Do tap "pteg" into Google and view the reports on this website which is maintained by the Passenger Transport Executive Group).

The following Saturday Peter Blackburn and I were in Taunton at the TravelWatch SW meeting where the new head of SW Network Rail, Dave Ward, made everyone feel far more optimistic about the future. He had led the Network Rail team in Kent, over the period of the construction of the high speed line, and then spent a year in Japan to study their methods. His conclusion was that their system ran efficiently because their preparation was meticulous i.e. signalman check points at 4.00 am to ensure there are no problems at 5.45 when the first trains run! He explained many recent problems of unreliability, particularly on Thames services, were due to a new piece of equipment being used by one of the five engineering companies involved in maintenance for Network Rail. He discovered one team had not been thoroughly trained and a segment of the points infrastructure had been inserted upside down, causing constant signalling failures over a long period. He was very obviously a hands-on person who intends to get the best from our ageing Great Western infrastructure.

The recent newspaper report that Cllr. Chris Reid had assured Katherine Park residents that our Station could not be reopened before 2018, and would they not prefer the £250,000 Section 106 monies be used to build a community hall, could not pass without challenge. I wrote immediately to Peter Jeremiah, the District Secretary, to enquire whether it was equitable or democratic for new residents to decide on a matter of importance to the town as a whole and a key aim of the Corsham Community Partnership Plan. From him we learnt that it was he who had changed the terms of the Agreement at the time the Bristol/Oxford train service had been removed in 2003 (to safeguard the use of the 106 Agreement monies for a community project) but its end use will in fact be debated by Councillors at a meeting of the District Council early in 2008

Anne Lock

## Civic Society Building/Restoration Award 2007 - Result

Members will recall that photographs of the three nominated premises were displayed at our July Meeting so that discrete visits or inspections could be carried out. A vote was taken on September 28 after the sparkling presentation on Hatches, Matches and Dispatches by Gill Bowden, and the result (which included one in absentia vote) was a closely contested win for the Ostlers House, Pickwick (next to the 'Hare and Hounds').

The actual votes cast were:

Ostlers House: 19; Osborne House: 14; New House in Cleevedale Road: 3

The Executive Committee will shortly discuss the design of a suitable certificate and it is hoped that a formal presentation will be made at a future meeting of the Society.

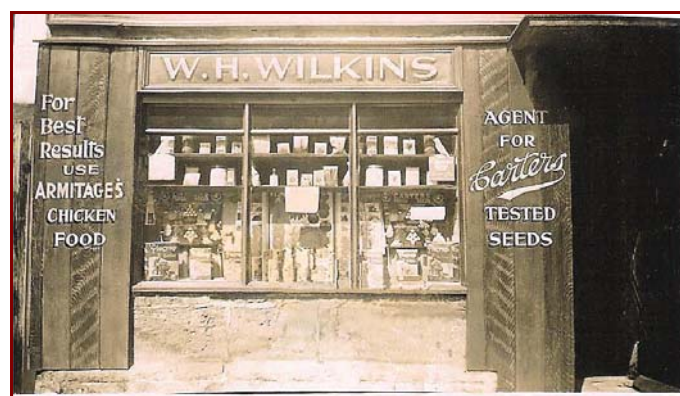
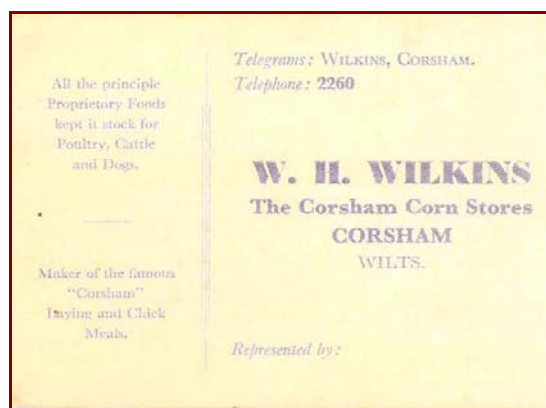


## Wilkins' Corn Store

*"Wilkins' Corn Store" stood next door to the Town Hall, where "Golden Delicious House" now stands. Walter's son Tony tells us what it was like to live there.*

Walter 'Wally' Henry Wilkins was born on 31st January 1901 in Box, the son of William Wilkins. The family originated from Lacock. His grandfather Henry, moved to Box in the 1840's, around the time of the construction of Brunel's Box Tunnel. Henry married Caroline Hancock of Box in 1849, their son William was born in 1873 and married Hester Annie Osborne in 1900. Wally grew up in Box, and attended school there. On leaving school he joined The Wiltshire Farmers of Bradford on Avon. In 1922, with the experience he had gained working at Wiltshire Farmers, he decided to set up his own business. He found premises at 67 High St, Corsham and started 'The Corsham Corn Stores', selling corn, seeds, poultry feed and animal feed as well as pet foods. (The Salvation Army had previously used 67 High St as a Citadel, and part of the building was used as a 'soup kitchen' during WW1.)

Wally's business flourished, as he made deliveries to local farms, smallholdings, and customers on his motor bike and sidecar. In 1931 Wally married Margarita 'Rita' Olive Brown and they set up home at 55 Priory Street. Rita disliked the motorbike and sidecar, and so the first Trojan pick-up truck was purchased. This was particularly well suited for the purpose, with its high floor being useful for loading and unloading heavy sacks, and it became Wally's trademark. The Trojan was very basic, chain driven, with solid tyres, a hand starter, and a two-stroke engine situated under the driving seat. It had an absolute maximum speed of 37mph (if you were lucky!). It was also very noisy; it was often said that you could hear Wally long before you could see him.



In 1934 Wally & Rita's son Anthony was born and the Trojan was used for picnics and sometimes for camping. In 1939 Wally decided it was time to update his Trojan, and this later model had pneumatic tyres and an electrically operated starter, but it was still quite noisy! This year of 1939 also saw the beginning of World War II, and this was to have a deep effect on the Corsham Corn Stores. Because of food rationing people had the option of having a small supply of eggs or having chicken meal to feed poultry and have their own supply of eggs. Wally was kept very busy supplying meal to an ever-growing number of customers who were keeping a few chickens in their back gardens. (He also sold packets of Karswood Poultry Spice – said to increase egg production!) In the early days of the war he also worked part-time at Box Mill (now Peter Gabriel's Studio). However, in 1943 Wally was called to service in the army. The Trojan



was laid up, and wooden blocks were placed under the axles. It was stored in a garage behind the Royal Oak public house for the rest of the war. Wally made arrangements with the long established firm of Sainsbury's Corn Millers at Town Bridge, Trowbridge to take over his delivery round and he went off to Colchester barracks to do his basic training, leaving Rita to take care of their young son and the business.

Wally was initially posted with the Pioneer Corps to Prestatyn, North Wales; but for Rita managing the shop and having all the heavy sacks to lift was proving too much, and Wally was posted back to Corsham, billeted at the Army Camp at Woodlands at the top of Priory St off the A4.

This convenient arrangement enabled Wally to carry on his duties at the Central Ammunition Depot (CAD) and when he was off duty he was able to help out at the Stores. Later he moved from CAD to cookhouse duties, a move that stood him in good stead, as the family came to delight in his delicious sponge cakes after the war. He was demobbed in November 1945 and once again the Trojan was on the road and normal service resumed. In the early 1950's the shop was refurbished and the counter was moved nearer to the front of the shop which made it more convenient for customers and staff. It also gave more storage space at the rear. One of the many customers to keep the business busy was the Bath Academy of Art at Corsham Court.

In the late 1950's early 60's the old Trojan was becoming unpopular. With the increase in road traffic its lack of speed meant that, although the road ahead was clear, there was usually a long queue of vehicles behind it! So the old workhorse had to be traded in for a smart grey Standard 8 pick-up. Rita was now selling cut flowers purchased from Gaisford's Nurseries in Colerne. Wally was a keen gardener and produced a wide range of vegetables. He loved his greenhouse, and was always happy producing lovely plants and flowers from it.

Wally and Rita were regular churchgoers at St Bartholomew's, where Wally was a Sidesman.

In 1963 ill health forced his retirement and it was decided to sell the business. The Stores were kept running, with the help of Mrs Margaret Currant, Mrs Gingell and his son, until it was eventually sold in late 1963. Wally continued his prowess with his plants in the greenhouse, and spent many happy hours there. He died at home on 20th July 1981 aged 80 years. Rita remained at Priory Street for several years, before moving to Hungerford House. She died on 7th February 1993, aged 88 years.

Anthony Wilkins

*Thank you Tony for sharing this story of your father's shop. Does anyone remember it? If so, please write and tell me. I can recall it very well; we bought our chicken feed, and cat and dog food from there. I can still visualise the shop and smell the particular odour it had. Ed.*

#### THE PRICE OF BURIAL. Extracts from Mr Bertie Osborne's Working Ledger.

Aug 22 1933. Mr Bone. Hartham		
Elm coffin, electro fittings and shroud		£ 6. 17s 6d
Motor hearse £2.5s. 0d. 2 cars @ 17/6		£ 4. 0s 0d
4 bearers @ 6/- burial fees £1.5s .0d		£ 2. 9s. 0d
24 memorial cards 10/6		£ 10s 6d
Attendance		£ 15.0d
<b>Total</b>		<b>£14.12s .0d</b>
April 10 1937 Mr Laney ?		
Elm coffin, electro fittings, lining, shroud and delivery to Hartham Park		£ 7.15s.0d
Hearse & 2 coaches		£ 4. 4s.0d.
Four bearers, burial fees & Attendance		£ 3.18s.6d
Memorial cards, removing memorial/add inscription		£3.13s.6d
Fee, cleaning memorial, fixing		£4.10s.0d.
<b>Total</b>		<b>£ 23.18s.0d.</b>
14. June 1940 Mr Clare Spackman		
Plain oak coffin, brass fittings		£ 12.12s.0d.
Linings, shroud and delivery		£ 1. 5s.0d.
Burial fees including Knell		£ 4. 9s.0d
Motor hearse and driver		£ 3 0s.0d.
Four cars, four drivers		£ 4.10s.0d.
Management & attendance		£ 1. 1s. 0d
Sundries		£ 4s.6d.
<b>Total</b>		<b>£ 27. 1s.6d.</b>



## A Peep at the Past

### 'Bertie Osborne'

*As we reported in our March Issue 2007 we had been given an Archive in the form of a 'Work Ledger', covering 1865 – 72, belonging to Mr William Osborne, father of 'Bertie', who was a Stone Mason, and had founded the family building firm. Joe James now gives us a snapshot of Bertie and his life in Corsham.*

The last in a long line of master builders, Bert supervised the firm's prosperity before, during, and after WW11. A 1930's photograph shows a staff of thirty-seven grouped around the firm's lorry.

But Bert had many strings to his bow. An accomplished cellist, his two daughters Madeline and Muriel were also musicians. Many an evening at 'Osborne House' (1 Station Rd) echoed to the music of the family and friends, reminiscent of the "musical soirees" so beloved by the Victorians.

Bert also had a darker side. He was an Undertaker. Solemn corteges were often headed by this dark stately figure in his shining top hat. His face was mask like, and perfectly matched to the occasion. To those of a frivolous nature this was pure theatre.

You see we knew him as an actor. Bert was never very far from "dramatics" at the Town Hall. His workmen stored, repaired and transported the scenery. Bert could embellish any part he was called upon to play, from a rumbustuous pantomime dame to the icy hauteur of a judge.

His talent sometimes caused a conflict of interests. During the 1930's a local play production was an event. A small 'pit' orchestra enlivened the intervals. Equally demanding was Bert's contribution to the music, as was his presence on stage immediately afterwards. A solution was found, by erecting a folding screen to conceal Bert from the audience, whilst he played during the interval. Just before 'curtain up' a deft leap on to the side of the stage, and Bert would dissolve into the curtains, all but unnoticed and ready for the next act.

All went well, until one night, someone pushed the heavy screen which went over with a resounding 'thwack' – just missing the lady in seat no.16, row A, to reveal Bert bewigged, made up, and in full costume, sawing away at his cello with all the fortitude of the professional!!

In a century of master builders who served the town – Bertie's contribution was indeed unique.

*Joe James*

## Dicketts House

Since our July issue of Spotlight, when we asked if anyone knew more about this house, more information has come to light, thanks to one of our members – Audrey Brown. Who tells us that in the 1970/80's a Joan and Arthur Evans lived at the house, he and his father before him were stone masons, and the family were active at Corsham Gospel Hall in Station Rd.

They had 3 children – Tim, ? , and Ruth who it is believed now lives at Odd Down in Bath.

## Snippet's from Herbert Spackman's Scrapbooks. (Circa 1880 – 1895)

*From New Zealand Times April 1897*

"GOSSIP"

"She is determined to be a musician, but cannot decide whether to make a speciality of the violin or piano"

"Has she no positive predilection for either?"

"Oh yes; but some of her friends think she looks better standing, and others that sitting is more becoming to her!"





## Civic Trust Campaign - Every Action Counts, Doesn't it?

*Something to think about? Ed.*

In a recent poll that appeared on the BBC news in July 2007, it was found that of more than 2000 adults questioned, 56% believed that scientists were still questioning the advent of climate change. Further there was a feeling amongst respondents that the stories were being exaggerated to make money! This struck me on both a personal and professional level. On a personal level I found the results of the survey depressing. The latest report of the International Panel on Climate Change couldn't have been more unequivocal: they found that it was now very likely that human activities are causing global warming. The reason why the climate change message is not penetrating as it should is not fully understood but these findings should be deeply worrying to government.

On a professional level, the results of the poll make me realise the uphill struggle of engaging with the public on this issue. My professional involvement stems from my role at the Civic Trust to manage their Every Action Counts campaign. This campaign envisages using the great networks established through voluntary sector organisations such as the Civic Trust to disseminate information and encourage and enable everyday environmental actions from amongst its members. The hope is that through such campaigns more and more people will be encouraged to think about what it means to live within the planet's resources and to change nuances of behaviour towards sustainable, one planet living. No small task but the Every Action Counts campaign champions the taking of small actions by everyday folk that will ultimately have profound effects on reducing man-made green house gas emissions.

To better understand the interaction between my involvement with Every Actions Counts and Civic Societies, I have been reading a selection of the 2007 newsletters from the vast array produced by Civic Trust affiliated societies and amenity groups. I was interested to see whether Civic Societies and groups were thinking about climate change issues, and whether the results of the poll were reflected through Civic Society's coverage.

From the numerous newsletters that I have thus far read, two articles struck me. I picked out these two in particular as they represented the depth to which some Civic Society members are talking, writing and thinking about these issues. They also span the climate change spectrum and encompass the issues at the root of the Every Action Counts campaign. I hope the authors won't mind if I mention them.

One was an informed and informative article which appeared in the Otter Valley Association newsletter for July 2007 written by Norman Crossland entitled "Climate Change and its Effects on the South West". This article gave a very good summary of the scientific background, causes and effects associated with climate change. A clear and concisely informative piece of writing. The article ended with notification for members that the Association is arranging forthcoming events to raise awareness of climate change, including a screening of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient truth". This article clearly demonstrates one of the objectives of the Every Action Counts campaign - raising awareness.

The second was an article that appeared in The Ipswich Society Newsletter for April 2007 written by Mike Brain. The article was entitled 'A Change in the Weather' and presented the reader with the ethical questions that arise out of climate change and other associated issues. Those are the behavioural choices facing us: whether we choose to take individual responsibility, collective responsibility or chose to drop out of responsibility all together? Is this not at the very heart of civic society's debate itself? Again it is very much at the hub of Every Action Counts. It may also go some way to explaining the results of the poll; that is the interplay between personal responsibility and denial of truth. If the truth is too difficult, is it easier to drop out of taking responsibility altogether? And if it is responsibility that we need to take, how do we go about encouraging the sceptical 56% to take it?

This brings me back round to Every Action Counts. If it is about taking personal and collective responsibility, then here is a ready made tool that can be used to encourage such degrees of action. Should Civic Societies be interested in encouraging members to effect change; to take personal responsibility that leads to collective responsibility that leads to change, to lead the way? My response to this is yes, Civic Societies should be at the forefront; part of the vanguard of change.

There are three facets to Every Action Counts.

First there is a website to be found at [www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk). When a society signs up to the Every Action Counts website there are opportunities for publishing and networking amongst other community action groups, tips and general advice and an evaluator as to how much progress your group is making in respect of reducing its carbon emissions.

There is the appointment of Community Champions. Those prepared to champion Every Action Counts and become



the voice piece and conduit for change amongst their group. In order to develop engagement and delivery with the group, two days free training and a range of tools are provided.

And finally there are the 5 Every Action Counts themes around which change is hung. They are:-

- 1) Energy and climate change;
- 2) Resource minimisation and recycling;
- 3) Transport and travelling wisely;
- 4) Caring for where you live; and
- 5) Ethical and local shopping.

To list just a few examples of how Every Action Counts from among Civic Societies, as previously mentioned, The Otter Valley Association is screening Al Gore's zeitgeist movie! The Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association has signed up to the "Founding Statement on Sustainability" which starts "Our lives, our communities and our society should be sustainable for generations to come". The Weald of Kent Protection Society prints their newsletter on 100% recycled paper. Hilary Porter, Chair of the Leatherhead Civic Society is a Community Champion. And we at the Civic Trust have signed up to the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change which includes recognising the need for urgent action at all levels and adopting public plans to reduce carbon emissions.

What is your Society doing to combat climate change and raise awareness amongst its members? Is there an issue of civic responsibility within the Civic Society movement to be doing something? Or is it an issue for others?

Please write and tell me your views and for further information regarding Every Action Counts, please contact me, Emma Montlake at the Civic Trust, Monday to Wednesday on 020 7539 7904 or email me on [emontlake@civictrust.org.uk](mailto:emontlake@civictrust.org.uk)

*Emma Montlake. Civic Trust.*

## Visit to the New 'Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre'

As an extra to our published programme we were invited to visit the new centre which had recently transferred from the Trowbridge Records Office. There had long been a requirement for a new home for the 'records', and the staff who showed us round are obviously delighted with their new facility, as will be the general public. Several of our members cannot wait until the official opening date at end October, to start their research.

Home to the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, the County Local Studies Library, Archaeology and Museums Services, the building is light and airy, with plenty of computers and other technology for visitors to undertake their searches, photocopy and record their findings in absolute comfort. Old parish records, maps, photographs and numerous other documents are available for the asking. Resident archivists and conservators are among the staff available to give advice and guidance.

An absolutely excellent facility and one from which we shall be able to glean all kinds of information about our locality as the need arises.

If you have any interest in local history please pay them a visit. (Situated in Cocklebury Rd, Chippenham, just a little further on from the entrance to the Railway Station.)

Thank you especially to Michael and Helen for showing us around. We shall most certainly be back!



## Christmas in Corsham - 1920

*Joe James remembers a childhood Christmas.*

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, white stars 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 widows, 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 24th was probably the year's busiest twelve hours in the 1920's. Shoppers abounded, even as late as 8pm.

In those days 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 – this time the pronouncement was:

*"Mr HR James wishes to thank all 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 Road 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.

When the shop was closed 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*



## Corsham Civic Society

### Civic Society Officers

#### President

Mrs Anne Greenly

#### Chairman

Mr Wyndham Thomas,  
3 Mansion House Mews, Corsham  
Tel: 01249 701683

#### Vide Chairman

Mr Peter Tapscott,  
4 Charlwood Road, Corsham  
Tel: 01249 714453

#### Hon Sec

Ms Sally Fletcher,  
56 Brook Drive, Corsham  
Tel: 01249 713048

#### Treasurer

Dr John Harwood,  
25 Woodlands, Corsham, Wilts  
SN13 0D  
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#### Membership Secretary

Mrs Jean Beech,  
108 Brook Drive Corsham, Wilts  
Tel: 01249 713833

#### Programme Organiser

Mr Wyndham Thomas,

(See above)

#### Plans Chairman

Mr Geoff Knapp,  
2 South Street  
Corsham, Wilts  
Tel: 01249 712270

#### We're on the Web!

See us at:

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

### PROGRAMME FOR 2008

Date	Event
January 25th	New Year Social Evening.
February 22nd	Corsham Fire Service with Maurice Hancock
March 28th	Corsham Photographs with Paul Connell
April 25th	Karin Meek on Genealogy
May 16th	AGM at 7pm. Followed by Discussion & Social.
June	Summer Walk around Corsham ending at a local eatery.
June 20th	Glass Engraving with Sir Maurice Johnston
June 21 -28?	Corsham Festival
July 25th	The Story of Imber Village with Rex Sawyer
August 9th or 16th	BBQ
August	Outing
September	Heritage Open Days
September 26th	Wiltshire Readings and local stories by members
October 24th	Family Military History with Paul Riches
November 28th	Tramways in Corsham – Les Davis
December	No meeting
2009	
January 23rd	New Year Social Evening

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

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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.*

Contributions to Spotlight are welcome.  
Please contact Pat Whalley (Editor) on  
01249 713618

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