

# Corsham Spotlight

March 2009

Volume 7, Issue 1

*Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society*



## Individual Highlights:

Editorial	1
Review	2
School Award	3
Building Award	3
Local Lives	3
Neale family	3
Mayo project	4
Telephones	5
'Clutterbucks'	6
History Group	7
Telephone Box	8
TIC Display	8
'Friends of TIC'	9
Burlington bunker	10
Afternoon talks	10
Garden of Remembrance	11

11

## Editorial

This month, March is the anniversary of the birth of Daniel Clutterbuck. You will find his story in the centre pages of the magazine. Particularly interesting, not only because of his being at the 'Charge of the Light Brigade', but also because there has been some discussion of late as to whether the Flemish Buildings actually housed 'Flemish' weavers. This story does not prove who lived in 'our local houses' and we may never be able to do so, but does much to show that Flemish families did come to this area, (The Clutterbucks are an example) and were closely associated with Chippenham, Bradford on Avon and Corsham.

Car Parking in Corsham – you may have already heard of the proposals to change some of the car parking arrangements in Corsham. If not- they are as follows: - Station Rd – No waiting at any time for the length of the cricket field; junctions at Arnolds Mead/Newlands Rd & Arnolds Mead /Meriton Avenue – no waiting at any time; junction where High St meets Newlands Road and Bences Lane – no waiting at any time; junction off Newlands Rd into the Laggar where it meets Orchard Rd/Bences Lane – no waiting at any time. In response to these proposals the CCs view is that these suggestions are welcome, and in the case of Station Rd, it might be beneficial to extend the no waiting area down as far as the entrance to Williams Grove. We also recommended that further thought be given to additional car parking provision, maybe by extending the Springfield Car Parking facility, and of course the removal of the current 20p cost of parking for the first hour in the current car parks.

**Editor's retirement.** It is with some regret, that I announce my decision to retire from the post of Editor. I have undertaken the task for about ten years, the last five being helped by Eric Mahy, who does wonders turning the text into the glossy publication



we have today. We shall produce the next 2 issues (July and November) to take us to the end of the year, by which time I hope someone will have come forward to take the on the task. Please see inside for details of how we currently operate, but that is not to say it needs to be the same in the future. Please come forward with your ideas, we shall be pleased to have you on board.

*Pat Whalley*



## Review

We were pleased to welcome Paul Riches to our October meeting, his subject was the researching of Military Family History, and he gave us a wealth of information on how to search the internet, and paper records. It is certain that we shall hear more of the success of people tracing their family history after this enlightening talk.

In November our own Chairman, Les Davis, gave us a very entertaining and informative evening, with the story of Tramways in Corsham. These were the tramlines that were specifically laid down for the movement of stone in the area, and were surprisingly extensive. An innovation that relieved the burden of the ponies underground, and speeded up the process of delivering stone to the stone wharf at Corsham Station. There were even some local members of older years who could remember them!

Our New Years Social evening at the Town Hall was a great success we were entertained by a singing group from Chippenham – the “End of the Track” male voice choir, and Wyndham & Michael provided us with examples of howlers from children’s school work, and from the ladies who write for their local churches - i.e. “Next week there will be try outs for the choir. They need all the help they can get”!

Early in February we had our New Year meal at the Flemish Weaver. At least we had had time to get over the excesses of Christmas, and were able to enjoy good food and good company without straining the waistlines. Our thanks to Joan Maciver for organising the event for us.

In February, our Treasurer, Michael Rumsey, talked to us of Mr John Fowler, and the Steam Plough Works at Leeds. A little further afield we might think, than our local area, but John was a local man, born at Beanacre, and living at Elm Grove (Gastard House), he attended school in Corsham. He was an innovative engineer, whose work resulted in many changes to farming methods in the UK. The name of John Fowler and his products are considered to be some of the finest steam driven engines ever made in Britain and used the world over. Another local man to be proud of.



*The 'Balance Plough' in operation in the 1860's*



## SCHOOL AWARDS – ENGLISH

Ron Smith judged the Civic Society English Prize at Corsham Primary School as usual, but unfortunately Prize Giving was on Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup> when he was abroad. As a result the prize was presented on his behalf by our Treasurer, Michael Rumsey. He also purchased the prize and presented it to James Hayward for "The Forest". A small consolation prize was given unofficially to Zach Rush for his original approach.

Our thanks to both Ron and Michael.

## BUILDING AWARD 2008

The Society nomination for 2008 was 'The Pound'. Members and local people are delighted with the outcome of this restoration project, which maintains the buildings original features, whilst adapting the building for modern use. The Certificate was presented to Mr Steve Wheeler, Chair of the Pound Arts Trust.

## THE POST OF EDITOR OF 'SPOTLIGHT'

A voluntary, part time post. Currently we produce three Newsletters a year, (March, July, and November) and have a copy date for each issue of six weeks. Two weeks for collating, co-ordinating and writing pieces for the magazine. Two weeks for producing the graphics, layout and editing, and a further two weeks to Corsham Print for printing. We then label for distribution.

Applicant needs only to be conversant with the use of Microsoft Word. If you are familiar with all of these tasks, then production could be achieved by one person only.

An applicant may feel it necessary to reduce the number of issues, and/or the time scales. All ideas can be considered.

The current editor will be happy to help/advise in the initial stages of takeover.

Please help if you can, it would be a pity to lose such an asset.

*Pat Whalley*

## LOCAL LIVES

More updates since the July 2008 issue.

THE PICTOR FAMILY –

*Joe James gave us his recollection of the children of the family living at the 'Wilderness' at the bottom of Station Rd. They were regular customers at HR James Ironmonger's shop in the High Street.*

William, Emma and Dorothy (Joan) - William was a quiet little man and one suspected perhaps had a slight mental weakness. Emma appeared to be the organiser, and it must have been after her death that Joan moved into Arnold House.

## THE NEALE FAMILY

*Another snippet from Joe on the Neale family –*

"In 1822 an argument arose between Sir Harry Neale and John Cobbett Neale of Yate, regarding the purchase of the Chalfield Estates by Sir Harry. Lady Neale joined in the quarrel, and conceived a strong aversion to the family. She adopted a godson, a man of French parentage to whom she left the bulk of her estate. He dissipated her fortune and was found lying fatally wounded in the Champs Elysee. The mystery was never unravelled".





## THE MAYO PROJECT DRAWS TO A CLOSE

The Society's project to restore Corsham's Mayo Memorial is drawing to a close. The final pieces are being inserted into the jigsaw. As far as the originally-required "deliverables" are concerned, only the erection of the Information Board remains.

The Video Record, on a DVD, was completed in November. Copies are available from the writer. 6,500 copies of the Interpretive Leaflet were collected from the printers during January. Approaching 6,000 of these will be distributed using Royal Mail's Door-to-Door service to all households with SN13 9 and SN13 0 postcodes over the course of the next couple of months. The balance will be handed out at local events. Some are presently lodged at the Corsham TIC. All copies are available free-of-charge.

The "Project Completion Celebratory Party" – a clear requirement of our 'contract' with the Heritage Lottery Fund – was held at Arnold House during the evening of Wednesday, 28th January. Almost 30 persons attended, all of which had been actively and personally involved in the Project. This was an excellent turn-out, reflecting well on the very purpose of the Project, which was, of course, not only to restore an edifice but also remind/inform everyone why it came to be erected in the first place. With so many people present, your Project Manager felt it appropriate to identify each person present to his/her fellow attendees, and to explain what they, as individuals had contributed. Not everyone present knew everyone else, so this proved to be the ideal 'ice-breaker'.

Those present were able to view the DVD running on the TIC's equipment, also view the mini 'Mayo Exhibition' which had been retained for the occasion - and collect/takeaway their own copies of both the Interpretive Leaflet and the commemorative edition of 'Spotlight on Mayo', first published in November 2007 and now viewable on the Society's website, [www.corsham-civic-society.co.uk](http://www.corsham-civic-society.co.uk), the decision having recently been taken to offer the publication free-of-charge to the general public.

Meanwhile work on purchasing and arranging the erecting the Information Board adjacent to the Memorial continues as a joint exercise between the writer and Peter Biggins, Corsham's Deputy Town Clerk. It is hoped that the Board will be in place by the end of March.

That leaves only the website dedicated to the memory of C T Mayo to be completed. It was not an original requirement. Rather it was the result of the conversion of some originally-assigned funding which became surplus to requirements – and a successful 'negotiation' between yours truly and the Project's HLF 'case officer'. Progress is well in hand – with a test website already having been created and populated with relevant information (and visible to those who know where to find it!)

And that leaves only the writing of the 'Project Completion Report' and the submission of the Final Account to the Heritage Lottery Fund. We lodged our application for funding in April 2006. The job should be complete by the third anniversary of that date. Hurray!

*Peter Tapscott, Project Manager, Mayo Memorial Restoration Project*

A View up the High Street  
from the top of the Mayo  
Memorial



## THE TELEPHONE COMES TO CORSHAM

The National Telephone Exchange Co Ltd (NTC) opened the first Corsham Telephone Exchange at no. 8 Paul Street. The conditions of tenure were a 21year lease from 25th March 1905, at an annual rent of £16.10s. 0d. for the building. The front room of the house was converted into the actual exchange, manned by an operator. Another telephone was made available for public use in the lobby, near the front door.

The exchange was opened for public use on 3rd October 1905. It was manually operated using 'Magnetophone Hand Restoring Indicators'. This was the type where a hand generator was part of the subscriber's equipment. To call the operator, it was necessary to turn the hand generator, hence the term – RING UP. The operator would then set up the call as required, and then, to terminate the call it was necessary to turn the handle again, hence the term RING OFF.

Corsham came under the Bristol District and seventeen subscribers first appeared in the NTC directory dated January 1906. At this time many call offices were inside, often in shops, where proprietors offered the facility as a service to their customers and as an attraction to new ones.

### Corsham Subscribers were listed as follows:-

#### Public Call Offices

J Barnes	Stationer	High Street.
National Tel Co.		8 Paul Street.

#### Private Subscribers

Barton W.	Land Agent	Corsham Estate Office
Besant WH.	Butcher	High Street
Brakspear H.	Architect.	High Street
Butt. Alf.	Tailor/Breeches Maker	
Carter F.	Builder	Stokes Road
Corsham Quarrying Co.		Quarry owners.
Fuller GP.	JP.	Neston Park
Fuller JMF.	MP.	The Jaggards
Gane PJ.	Land agent	Pickwick
Goldney Sir John T.		Monks Park
Poynder Sir John Dickson		Hartham Park
Poynder Sir John Dickson		Estate Agents Office
Spackman Lewin		High Street
Spackman & Son	Drapers/Grocers	High Street
Yockney & Co		Quarry owners.

Telephone Exchange  
at no. 8 Paul Street



'Candlestick'  
Telephone circa  
1905



On 1 January 1912, the Post Office (GPO) took over the telephone systems of the NTC, and by the 3rd March 1922 there were 53 subscribers, with 60 telephone sets connected.

On 30 September 1936 the exchange became automatic with a Unit Automatic Exchange (UAX), and moved to a new purpose built building in Alexander Terrace. By this time there were 277 subscribers and 335 sets connected.

By 1956 subscribers could dial directly – 999 - for emergency services, and the speaking clock.

Between April 1971 and March 1972, more advances had been made and the exchange was replaced to Subscriber Trunk Dialling. (STD). International subscriber dialling (ISD) did not reach us until 1980/1981.

*Tony Wilkins*

*Thank you Tony. What a long way we have come in 100 years. I wonder how many subscribers there are in Corsham now – not counting mobile phones! Ed.*



## THE CLUTTERBUCK FAMILY

*Lt Daniel Clutterbuck, present at the Charge of the Light Brigade, and buried in Corsham's St Bart's Churchyard, was born in March 1828, so it seemed an appropriate time to visit his family history.*

The Clutterbuck family came originally from Flemish Clothiers who left Flanders during the persecution, and since the days of Thomas Clutterbuck, (then written as 'Cloorebooke' or 'Clacterbooke') who was Sheriff of Gloucester in 1536, they held a prominent position in the counties of Somerset and Gloucester.

A later family descendant – Thomas, born circa 1799, was an officer in the Royal Horse Guards, his wife Henrietta, daughter of the celebrated financier David Ricardo of Gatcombe Park, M.P. They were married at St Georges, Hanover Square in 1814. The family lived at Hardenhuish House, Chippenham, and were described by William Gaskell, in his book on Wiltshire Leaders – 1906, as "The Clutterbuck family of Hardenhuish Park, Lords of the Manor of Hardenhuish, and Patrons of the Church". They had 7 children, 2 boys – Edmund and Daniel, and 5 girls – Ellen, Elizabeth, Emma, Alice and Fanny. (All of them born at Hardenhuish or in Bath between 1817 and 1829).

As members of the aristocratic families of their day it was the custom for the eldest son to inherit the title/ property and the second son went into the military.

Edmund was born 8 August, 1824; educated at Eton and at Christ Church, Oxford, B.A., J.P. and D.L..He was Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1854; and died 9 February, 1861. Married at Esher, 3 March, 1851, to Louisa Maria, 2nd daughter of John William Spicer, of Esher Place, Surrey, J.P., D.L.; she died August, 1882.

So it was Daniel, the second son, born 15 March 1828, after receiving an Eton education, joined the 8th Royal Irish Hussars on 22nd December 1846. In February 1850 he was made a Lieutenant, and on 15th May 1854, he embarked the HT Echunga for the Crimea. It was in October of that year he was wounded in the right foot by a shell fragment, during the Charge of the Light Brigade. In December 1854 he was elevated to the rank of Captain. He received the Crimea Medal from Queen Victoria in May 1885, and he retired from the Army that year. He attended the First Balaclava banquet in October 1875, and was present at the Officer Survivors dinners in 1892 and 1893. He retired from the Army in 1855.

*Charge of the Light Brigade by Richard Caton Woodville (1825-1855)*



*Half a league half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred:  
'Forward, the Light  
Brigade!  
Charge for the guns' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.....*

Daniel married Sophia Spicer, in October 1855. (Another daughter of John William Spicer JP. of Esher Place, Surrey, who later lived at Spye Park, Nr Chippenham). No record of where the newly weds lived at that time has been identified, He later became a Justice of the Peace for Wiltshire and served as Chairman of the Petty Sessions Bench held at Corsham.

Kelly's directory of 1889 describes DH Clutterbuck JP., living at Monks Park House.

When Daniel died in 1906 they were listed as living Middlewick House, Pickwick. He is buried in St Bartholomew's





churchyard, Corsham.

The children of this union were born between 1856 and 1874, 3 sons – Hugh, Philip and Edmund, and 5 girls – Alice, Margaret, Emma, Katherine, and twins - Lilian and Margaret. Five of the eight were born either at Kington St Michael or at Bath, so we know they must have lived somewhere in the area during this period, perhaps they were in Corsham by that time.

Inevitably Hugh and Edmund joined the Army; Hugh was to become a Colonel in the 1st Volunteer.

Battalion Prince Albert's Somerset Light Infantry. He also interested himself in the Commerce of the day, as a Director of Bath & Chippenham (old Bank) of the Union of London & Smith's Bank; and a Director of Bath Tramway's Ltd. Hugh was also a magistrate for Wiltshire and Somerset, and a friend, and neighbour of Sir John Dickson Poynder MP for North Wilts; to whom he gave his support on the Free Trade question. Hugh and his wife produced 5 girls, a boy – also Hugh, who died in Mesopotamia in 1916, where he was a 2nd Lieutenant, 7th Gurkha Rifles.

Edmund, became a Captain in the 4th Hussars, Boer War.

Little is known of Philip, but that he died in London aged 39.

None of the daughters married, and two of them became nuns. Emma went to the Carmelite Order, and Katherine, who first worked in shelters for the homeless and the soup kitchens of London, and later as a Church of England Sister of Mercy in Western Australia, where she pioneered the 'cottage home' system of child care and, after 'retirement' she set about providing homes for part- Aboriginal children. The children's homes she established exist to this day.

A family firmly fixed in 500 years of the history of the south west of England, all of them, aware of their position in life, took measures to serve their country and the local populace in whatever way best suited their abilities. Corsham should be proud to have an association with such a family.

*Pat Whalley/Joyce Taylor*

## **CORSHAM HISTORY GROUP**

'Why is there no history of Corsham?' is a question often asked in Corsham. It was asked in a particularly pointed way at the last committee meeting of the Corsham Civic Society, and the committee thought something should be done. It was suggested that there should be Corsham History Group to investigate the matter.

The Corsham History Group has held its first preliminary meeting. It was agreed that the point of the Group was not to listen to lectures about the Aztecs or the Greeks, or even about the history of wool or of quarrying. It was agreed that the aim should be to encourage co-operative research into the history of Corsham, and to produce the results of such historical research in interesting publishable form.

The founding members of the Group include a high-powered core of six members of the committee of the Civic Society – Les Davis, the Chairman, Sally Fletcher, the Secretary, Michael Rumsey, the Treasurer, Wyndham Thomas, the former Chairman, and his wife Kathy Thomas, and Negley Harte, who is succeeding Wyndham as the Society's Programme Organiser. Joining these six were two well-known Corsham personalities with an interest in the history of the town, Christine Reid and Ron Smith.

The Group's initial activities will be discussed at the Civic Society's general meeting on the 27th March. It is hoped that as many members again will emerge to join the group. We think we need at least a good dozen members, perhaps a dozen and a half. We are keen to have people engaged on their own research into aspects of the town's history, as well as those willing to research into gaps the Group which the Group will itself identify.

We shall have occasional meetings rather than regular ones, provisionally agreed to normally be on Monday afternoons. We have secured the enthusiastic blessing of the Editor of the Victoria County History of Wiltshire – from which great project the Hundred of Chippenham is so far conspicuously absent – and of the new Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.

The Group agreed that Dr. Negley Harte should be their Chairman. Now a resident of Corsham, Dr. Harte taught economic and social history for thirty-nine years at University College London, and knows his way around the historical world. He has a special interest in local history and in the history of textiles and of clothing.

All interested should please contact him at: N.Harte@ucl.ac.uk, or at St Aldhelm's Cottage, 5 Stokes Road, Corsham, Wilts. SN13 9AA.

Dr Negley Harte



## K6 – RED TELEPHONE BOX, SOUTH PLACE.

Corsham Town Council have asked for the Societies help to get the old style red telephone box 'listed'. Many of these boxes are being replaced, and this one in particular makes a colourful addition to the street scene.

A case has to be made of course, on a many paged application form, and so some research has been undertaken as to its history. With the help of 'local knowledge', it has been established that the Telephone box was established at this spot - circa 1940. It was placed at that time, right next to the site of the current fire station (the barn at the rear of the Methuen Arms). Maurice Hancock, retired fire chief at Corsham, tells us that this was common practise, before the advent of the mobile phone. People would call the fire brigade from that telephone box, and when the men arrived to take out the appliance, the caller was there to direct them and give them details of the emergency.

We will keep you updated on progress.

Pat Whalley



Telephone Box, K6 - Outside old Fire Station, South Place.

## CIVIC SOCIETY DISPLAYS AT THE TOURIST INFORMATION AND HERITAGE CENTRE

One of the requirements of the Heritage Lottery Grant which enabled the Civic Society to renovate the Mayo Memorial was that we should keep a photographic record of the project. Initially, a modest presentation about the Mayo family (and Charles Mayo in particular) was mounted in the CCS glass case at the TIC and then a more comprehensive display of photographs and original drawings was exhibited in the Town Hall & St Bart's Church during the Heritage Open Days in September 2007. This, in turn, was transferred to Arnold House (TIC) and has been progressively updated to include the cleaning of the Mayo Memorial Plaque on the porch of the Parish Church and the installation of the commemorative plaque that records the details of the monument's restoration.

Apart from tidying up a few matters (and giving more Mayo Presentations to local societies), the project has been completed and it is now time to organise a new Civic Society Exhibition at the TIC. The chosen theme 'Behind Shop Windows – *Corsham High Street Past and Present*' focuses on a relatively small number of prominent premises in the High Street (numbers 1-5; 28; 70; and *The Methuen Arms*) and illustrates the main stages of their development by displaying appropriate photographs and artefacts. The title of the exhibition was inspired by the shop (*E.S. Electrical*) at 70 High Street, whose windows do, in fact, hide the remains of the former *Poor House* - parts of which are still preserved in the rooms to the rear of the premises.

**Chippenham Museum** has kindly loaned a selection of historic objects for our display and we are indebted to Paul Connell and Mike Stone (Museum Director) for their cooperation and generosity. Paul Connell (Assistant Director), in particular, has been most helpful and is currently researching material for an exhibition about **Corsham's History and Folklore** which will be mounted at Chippenham Museum in November. Some of you have probably seen posters (*Your Town Needs You*) asking for contributions for this project. Please contact Paul on 01249 705020 (email: [heritage@chippenham.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@chippenham.gov.uk)) if you have any suitable material – or ideas. Both Paul and Mike will be talking to us (on March 27th and April 24th, respectively – please note exchange of dates) so there will opportunities to chat with them here as well.

By the time you read this edition of *Spotlight*, Behind Shop Windows will be up-and-running. Do take this opportunity to explore local history with us – and to view those antiquated medicine bottles, tins and adverts that will awaken memories of days-gone-by!

Wyndham Thomas





## THE 'FRIENDS OF THE TIC' IS BORN

A small working group has come together to consider how a 'Friends of the Corsham TIC' organisation might be brought into existence. The background is as follows:

The TIC was saved from closure in the summer of 2006, thanks to the combined efforts of the CCS and the Corsham Chamber of Commerce – and a petition of 800+ signatures.

It survives with the aid of 'outside funding'. Presently this comes from one source – NWDC. As it happens, the NWDC comes to an end before this particular line of funding does. However, the soon-to-be-established Wiltshire Council has agreed to pick-up the commitment – and to extend it for a further 6 months maximum.

The NWDC grant amounts to £35k pa. (The TIC used to cost the public purse £55k pa. The difference arises from the increased emphasis on sound business practices adopted by the body that now operates the TIC – the Corsham Area Development Trust, CADT.) With the Wiltshire Council's 'extension', existing funding will run out April 2010.

Additional line(s) of funding will be required if the facility is to be maintained – but where from?

Playing the 'improving the tourism economy' card through a commitment to inbound tourism activities is unlikely to yield sufficient funding - or necessarily succeed at all. 'Locals' with a direct interest in the tourism/leisure industries might well support an approach to national funding agencies with these as their core interests. However, not many 'locals' fall into this category.

The TIC does far more than offer a service to the tourism/leisure sectors. It is upon these other services that attention will have to be concentrated in the search for most of the required ongoing funding. Funding will need to be sought on the basis of the TIC 'meeting community need'.

There was talk of a 'Friends of the Corsham TIC' organisation during the early days. It is now essential that such an organisation comes into existence.

The working group that has been addressing these matters is drawn from a variety of local interests. Its starting point has been exactly what it is that the TIC contributes to the local community. Its conclusions are as follows:

The TIC routinely offers a wide range of goods and services to the direct benefit of the local community.

(If any of you are unsure about what these are, the group urges you to spend a short time in the TIC, to witness what goes on there. National Express bookings are made, local events are booked, bus timetables are requested and provided, advice is dispensed to locals regarding places for them and their house-guests to visit, books are sold, local knowledge about the area's history is offered, souvenirs are sold, seasonal goods, e.g. charity Christmas cards, are sold, school visits occur, a Heritage Centre is maintained and projected, exhibitions are mounted, historians make visits, etc., etc.)

Business is brisk and increasing. The group understands that general sales are up, costs are down, footfall is significantly up, accommodation bookings (measured in terms of 'bed-nights') are significantly up (July 2008's were 6x those of July 2007), National Express coach service bookings are dramatically up and are increasing with each passing month.

Total customer contact (footfall + 'phone calls + e-mails) are currently running at 15,500 per annum.

Total accommodation bookings are currently running at 300 bed-nights per annum.

It is self-evident that Corsham needs and values the facilities that the Corsham TIC offers.

It seems likely that having a 'Friends' organisation will help the CADT in its search for ongoing funding. It is in no position to find and secure that funding simply by itself – and time is not on Corsham's side.

The group has been investigating what form a 'Friends' organisation might take. In time – hopefully a short one – it will have some ideas to share with others. Certainly it cannot expect (and neither does it plan) to 'go it alone'. It appreciates that there is a need to draw others to the cause. Watch this space!

## OBITUARY – Muriel Burnard

We must express our sadness at the death of Muriel Burnard. She and her husband Tom were long standing members of the CCS, and it was Tom who took many of the photographs of Corsham which now comprises a large number of our collection.

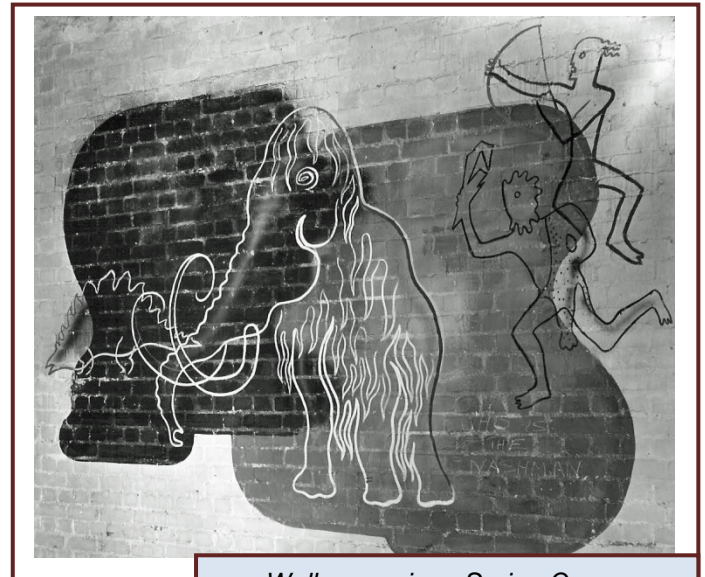


## THE BURLINGTON NUCLEAR BUNKER

On the 27 January, the Town Hall hosted an interesting presentation given by Jane Phimester, Oxford Archeology Research, who has been looking at this site and its historical significance, in collaboration with English Heritage and the Defence Estates.

Jane explained the layout of the underground complex, how the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) had occupied a part of the Spring Quarry site, for a period of just 2 years, and thereafter this became part of what is now known as the Burlington Bunker, which was established as an intended home for the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, and including the War Office, as well as some 4000 staff. These officers could survive for 30 days in the event of a nuclear attack. Every facility was provided, everything required for normal living, plus of course a Cabinet room, BBC Studio, large Telephone exchange, a hospital, a bakery and a Canteen to 'feed the troops'. This canteen was where Olga Lehmann had come in 1943 to paint extraordinary murals on the walls, presumably to add some decoration to the austere surroundings. Fortunately, the bunker never came into operation and that has also led to a remarkably high level of survival both of the structural fabric and historic artefacts.

Pat Whalley



*Wall engraving, Spring Quarry underground by Olga Lehman*

## AFTERNOON TALKS AT THE HISTORY CENTRE

One of the many excellent new facilities at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre in Chippenham is an Education Room. This allows the staff to offer an interesting programme of monthly talks covering many different aspects of history and archaeology in Wiltshire. The lectures are held on Thursdays at 2.15 pm, and there's a free car park.

Many of the talks aim to help people use the different types of records held in the Centre. The one I attended last year gave a helpful overview of sources for local historians, and there was plenty of opportunity to inspect material and ask questions.

To give a flavour of what's available, here are the titles of what's coming up in March and April:

- 12 March – Education Records - Claire Skinner, Principal Archivist, will talk about a range of archives that will help with local and family history.
- 26 March – Poor Law Records - Most people have pauper ancestors in their family tree, and Terry Bracher will demonstrate how these records can shed light on their lives.
- 2 April – Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire - Vanessa Clarke will help you discover more about what remains there are from the Anglo-Saxon period.
- 23 April - Wiltshire Militia and Yeomanry before 1918 - Robert Pearson will talk about how these local military forces evolved and what sort of archives the Centre holds on them.

Numbers are limited (between 25 and 35), so buy or reserve your ticket in advance (01249 705500). The cost per talk is £3, or £2 for concessions.

The History Centre's spanking new website ([www.wsch.eu](http://www.wsch.eu)) is well worth a visit.

It's going to allow them to offer much more on line than when it was just part of the County Council site.

Sally Fletcher



## OBITUARY – Joe James

Joe was born at 22 Station Road, Corsham, in 1915, son of Horace and Nettie James, who had taken on the family business - the ironmongery/hardware store at no. 5 High St. Joe went to the Corsham Primary School, and later to Chippenham Grammar School. When he left school he first worked as an apprentice printer and news reporter, but when he was about nineteen he left Corsham to work for a while in a London Repertory Theatre.

Already we can see the form his life was taking, Joe's mother had been accomplished singer, a pupil of Madame Clara Novello (Ivor Novello's mother), she had been urged to join an opera company, but had declined. Joe had obviously inherited her talent, and Michael Rumsey remembers his appearance in many of the Monkton Hill Church Gilbert and Sullivan productions under the direction of his aunt, Mrs King. He is always remembered for playing the role of the Duke of Plaza Torro in the Gondoliers. His humour was catching and the audiences rocked with delight as he teased the Duchess.



His news reporting also stood him in good stead, as we can testify from the many wonderful stories and writings he gave us on the history of Corsham in later years.

In 1940 Joe joined the RAF, and was posted to Biggin Hill, and from there had a tour of Africa, during which time he became Editor of the Forces newspaper "AF RAF" (African RAF). On his return to England he completed his service as a RAF photographer.

At home in Corsham once more, he joined the family business, and took a considerable interest in the life of the town. He was a member of the Corsham Dramatic Society, he produced many 'Gang Shows' for the Over 18's Group, chaired the Primary School Parent Teachers Association, was President of the Chamber of Commerce and District Secretary of Toc H.

Joe married in 1954, and he and his wife Valerie set up home in Station Road. They have two children Adrian and Julia.

Joe was a much admired and respected member of the town, above all he was quite a private and a gentle man, but one who was always willing to share his knowledge, and be of help whenever he could.

On a personal note, I have to say that Joe has been part of the Corsham scene all my life, I remember him working in the shop, I attended many of the Dramatic Societies productions, and took part in the 'Gang Shows'; over the last ten years he has been invaluable to me a source of information about the town and its inhabitants.

We miss him dreadfully.

*Editor*

## REMEMBERING CORSHAM'S GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Last year some of our Members expressed concerns about the state of the Garden of Remembrance, and action is now underway to bring about improvements.

According to our collective memory, the garden was established on land (at the junction of Station Road and Stokes Road) given to the town by Miss Tenant for a World War II memorial, and the resulting Garden of Remembrance with its Memorial Wall was formally opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in November 1947.

Members of the Civic Society Executive visited the site and came up with some ideas for enhancement. We put these suggestions to the Town Council, and the topic was discussed by the Amenities Committee in January.

The next step will be a joint site visit scheduled for mid –February. Civic Society representatives will meet with local councillors and council staff to agree what can be done to brighten up this spot and raise its profile through signage and local publicity.

In our letter we congratulated the Town Council and the British Legion for the care and attention that have gone into making the area around Corsham's War Memorial (on the Lacock Road) a credit to the town, and we hope there will soon be another worthy tribute to those whose names are commemorated in the Garden of Remembrance.

Watch that space ...

*Sally Fletcher*





# Corsham Civic Society

## Civic Society Officers

### President

Mrs Anne Lock  
Little Lypiatt Farm  
Rough St  
Corsham  
Tel: 01225 810357

### Chairman

Mr Les Davis  
16 Methuen Way  
Corsham  
Tel: 01249 712936

### Vice Chairman - Vacancy

### Hon Sec

Sally Fletcher,  
56 Brook Drive  
Corsham  
Tel: 01249 713048

### Treasurer

Mr Michael Rumsey  
91 Tellcroft Close  
Corsham  
Tel: 01249 715741

### Membership Secretary

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

### Programme Organiser

Dr Negley Harte  
St Aldhelm's Cottage  
Stokes Road, Corsham  
Tel: 01249 713529

### Plans Chairman

Mr Geoff Knapp,  
2 South Street  
Corsham  
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 2009

Date	Event
April 24 <sup>th</sup>	Mike Stone (Chippenham's Early Origins)
May 15 <sup>th</sup>	AGM (Followed by a talk by Dr Keith Robinson, C.E. of W. Council, providing an overview of the transition to the new unitary authority.) (St Aldhelm's Church Hall, 7 for 7.15pm)
June 19 <sup>th</sup>	David T Smith (Cricket in Corsham)
	Summer Walk – date to be confirmed
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	Dr Negley Harte (Who were the Flemish Weavers?)
August	No Open Meeting
	CCS Outing and BBQ (Dates to be confirmed)
September 25 <sup>th</sup>	Dinah Starkey (Two Tudor Gentlemen)
October 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Steve Flavin (Biddestone and Hartham in Postcards)
November 27 <sup>th</sup>	Ela Palmer (Director of ASHTAV) - (Issues in Conservation)
December	No Open Meeting
<b>2010</b>	
January 23rd	Celebration of the New Year – Social Gathering. Venue to be advised.

All meetings to be held at 8pm, at the Pound Arts Centre (unless otherwise stated).

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

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

### Corsham Civic Society

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

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

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

**Corsham Civic Society**  
**Arnold House**  
**31 High Street**  
**CORSHAM**  
**Wiltshire**  
**SN13 0EZ**

**Registered Charity No: 275321**

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

01249 713618

