

Corsham Spotlight

March 2010
Volume 8, Issue 1

Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society

Editorial

I take over the editorship of Spotlight with some trepidation. Pat Whalley did a sterling job and developed our magazine into a publication of which we can all be proud. So I start the new decade grappling with computer technology and with having to decide what articles to include and what to leave for a future edition.

The heavy snows we had in January produced some beautiful scenes for capture on camera. The Corsham area is most attractive, but a covering of snow enhanced its natural beauty. My thanks go to Martin Cadwgan for allowing the use of this picture to commemorate the event. It shows the Mayo monument after its restoration, complete with its notice board which was funded by Corsham Town Council.

We are delighted to see that the views of many of the people of Corsham are taken into account by the planning authorities. Last year saw the possibility of the Porch Surgery being moved to the Rudloe area. This has sensibly been resolved by the building of extra rooms at the present surgery in Beechfield Road, and so the service remains central to the people who need it. The proposal to erect five sets of traffic lights along the A4 has been abandoned, thanks largely to the involvement of the Pickwick Residents Association. The revised proposals, which include traffic lights at Fiveways, the Leafy Lane/Bradford Road junction, and a larger roundabout at the Park Lane junction with the A4, with the junction into Academy Drive changing from a mini-roundabout to a normal T-junction, just shows what changes can be made to the benefit of all when there is local input.

A Civic Society planning sub-committee meets every three weeks to review and comment on the planning applications. Planning applications can be easily viewed at the Town Hall, or on line. The weightier tomes from Wiltshire Council on, for example, Wiltshire 2026 and the Waste Management sites are always available in the Library. I do encourage you all to keep an eye on planning matters. It is always useful to receive comments from members, who may know specific sites better than us.

We are extremely pleased that Mr. and Mrs. Little have decided to take on the Methuen Arms. We had written to the owners last year regarding the state of the building and are delighted to see that it will be given a renovation.

I have been asked to remind you that membership subscriptions are now due.

I make no apology for including a couple of requests for volunteers to help at the Almshouses and the Churchyard. These are important parts of Corsham's heritage and, like so many aspects of life, could not continue without volunteer help.

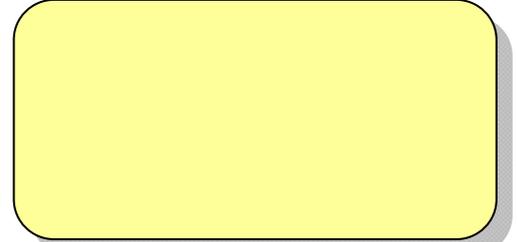
Finally, I wish to thank Corsham Print for their continued sponsorship of the Society by donating the printing of this magazine. I recently attended the Wessex Muster of Civic Societies (see article on page 4) and it was clear that many societies were rather envious of the fine quality of Spotlight, both for the content and, especially, for the printing.

Jane Browning



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Mayo monument Photo: M. Cadwgan



Review

Since the last edition of Spotlight was issued in November the subjects that have needed the Society's attention have been: the planning application by the Trustees of the Almshouses for an additional building within the grounds of the Almshouses; Wiltshire 2026, the Council's view of what Wiltshire will look like in 2026; the proposed waste management sites; the successor to the Civic Trust and whether we should join and the state of the Methuen Arms. All this in addition to the need to attend the Area Boards, comment on all planning applications presented to the Council, keeping the Corsham station campaign alive, the Building Awards, arranging our Social evening in January and the usual proceedings of the Society. The plans for the new building at the Almshouses were not acceptable by the Council and a resubmission was asked for. We await the revised plans, which will determine our response. The latest planning application that is causing some dissention is the exit route for lorries carrying huge blocks of stone from the proposed opening of the Park Lane Quarry. At the time of going to print we do not know the decision. What a pity we don't have a Railway Station, to allow transportation by rail!

Ela Palmer, Director of ASTAV, gave a most timely insight into conservation issues in November 2009. It coincided with the news of the proposal by the Almshouse Trustees to build another accommodation block within the grounds of the Almshouses.

Our annual social gathering took place in January in the Town Hall. It was well attended and we welcomed back *The End of the Track*. A photo competition was held of the committee members. I can hardly call it a baby photo competition as some of photos showed 6/7 year olds. Our esteemed chairman Michael was tickled pink that people confused the photos of himself and Negley. I'm not sure who was the most pleased!

February saw us enjoying a deserved break from the frenetic pace of life that had surrounded the submission of the plans for the new build at the Almshouses by enjoying our annual dinner at Guyers House. There were 29 members in attendance and we very much enjoyed ourselves in lovely surroundings.

Our chairman saw us into the New Year's lecture programme with a talk on trains of Wiltshire. The auditorium at The Pound was packed, one visitor coming from as far away as Heathrow. Michael has been interested in trains since very young and is full of facts and figures. It was a very entertaining talk and he has kindly distilled some aspects of his talk into an article which follows immediately after this review.

Jane Browning



Guyers House

Railways of Wiltshire

Let me start off by asking just 3 questions!

1. How many major railway companies built lines through Wiltshire?
2. How many stations were opened in the county?
3. How many stations are open now?

The answers are 3, 92 and 14. That is to say, 3 railway companies built lines through Wiltshire, the largest being the Great Western Railway. The second largest undertaking was the London & South Western Railway and the third line, quite minor really, was the Midland and South Western Junction Railway which ran from Cheltenham to Andover via Cirencester, Swindon, Marlborough, Savernake and Ludgershall. That line closed in September 1961 through lack of traffic, but during the two World Wars it was heavily used with trains travelling from the Midlands mainly to the army camps on Salisbury Plain and to the port of Southampton.

The main Great Western line opened for business throughout the 118 miles from London to Bristol on the 30th June 1841, when Box Tunnel was fully completed. Until that point, coaches transferred the passengers between Bath and Chippenham in the few months leading to that day when Thomas Harvey, with Daniel Gooch, the GWR's Locomotive Superintendent, brought the first train through Corsham Station. Our station finally closed, following the Beeching Report, on 4th January 1965, the goods depot having closed two years previously. The London & South Western Railway was centred on the City of Salisbury and first arrived there from Southampton, then later it was connected through to London and onward, via Wilton & Tisbury, to Exeter, Plymouth and Cornwall.

Brunel designed a brilliant railway between London and Bristol and the whole line was virtually flat except in 2 places, and those were in Wiltshire – Dauntsey bank and Box Tunnel were both on gradients of 1 in a 100. For years a



banking engine was employed at Box to assist goods trains through the tunnel, but this was stopped in 1919 when more powerful engines were available.

Corsham was a very busy station, sending away thousands of tons of stone over the years. During the Second World War tens of thousands of tons of ammunition from the Central Ammunition Depot, which was situated next to Box Tunnel, was sent out on trains bound for various ports in Southern England. The station buildings were quite simple in design with the booking office, station master's office etc. on the level with the road and footbridge, while on the platforms two simple shelters gave the waiting passengers some protection against the elements and speeding through trains. Box had a much finer Brunel designed stone built structure and Chippenham still retains its Brunel-designed main building, now, of course, a fully listed structure. The four gateposts, which are still in position at Chippenham station, are made from broad gauge rails (Barlow designed), and these two are listed structures. Bradford on Avon is by far the most complete Brunel designed structure built in 1851, but unfortunately the town had to wait until 1857 before the rails and trains arrived!!



Display with engines representing the three railway companies which had lines running through Wiltshire

Photo: M. Rumsey

Dilton Marsh Halt had the privilege of having a poem written about it by Sir John Betjeman. When the halt was rebuilt a few years ago, a copy of the poem was placed in a frame for display on the platform and this was unveiled by Sir John's daughter, Candid Lycett-Green. Forty years ago, at Dilton Marsh, if you required to buy a ticket, you needed to walk to the 6th house up the hill and purchase said ticket from Mrs Roberts, can you imagine that happening today? Wiltshire also boasted having four sets of towns/villages with two stations in each – these were Swindon, Marlborough, Savernake and Salisbury. Marlborough and Savernake also rejoiced in having their stations named High Level and Low Level, something similar to those at Wolverhampton.

During the 169 years that our county has had railways running through its environs, there have been only 7 noted accidents, the most serious being at Salisbury LSWR station in July 1906 when 24 passengers and 2 crew were killed because the train approached the station at too high a speed causing the engine and coaches to be derailed and crashing into another train. Thingley Junction saw two accidents, one in November 1875, when one train ran through a red signal and crashed into a passing train causing the guard to be killed and 12 passengers injured. Virtually the same thing happened again at the junction in January 1907, but on this occasion, no one was killed or seriously injured. Box Tunnel has only seen one accident and that happened on September 16th 1893, when engine no: 3021 Wigmore Castle, broke its front axle, thus derailing the engine and coaches, but no one was injured and the engine, together with other members of that class, were rebuilt as 4-2-2's, one of the most beautiful looking engines Swindon Works ever produced.

So, for the future, how will things progress? The 14 stations still open are, Chippenham, Swindon, Avoncliff Halt, Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury, Dilton Marsh Halt, Warminster, Salisbury, Dean, Tisbury, Pewsey, Great Bedwyn and Melksham (with only 2 trains stopping each day). Will Corsham ever have a station again, well I certainly hope so and hopefully, so do many other people in the area.

Bibliography:

Wiltshire Railways by Colin G. Maggs, published by Halsgrove.

Wiltshire Railway Stations by Mike Oakley, published by the Dovecote

Michael Rumsey



A Phoenix Rises from the Ashes of the Civic Trust

Jane wrote an excellent piece for the last edition of Spotlight. I will begin this submission by making the bridge between Jane's article and where things stand today.

The Civic Trust (CT) went into administration in April 2009. The Corsham Civic Society had been affiliated to it since its inception in 1963. However, the annual fees from almost 750 civic societies had not been enough to keep it afloat. It had become reliant upon funding from other sources – including that of central government. That had become its Achilles Heel. The funding dried up – and so did the Civic Trust. It fell from grace, leaving many people disappointed at the prospect of having no 'independent' voice to lobby on their behalf. A void was left.

I stepped the Civic Societies Initiative (CSI). Initially comprising Trustees of the old CT together with one of its employees, Ian Harvey, it found itself being encouraged to 'do something to help the civic society movement to re-establish itself'. Amongst others, the National Trust was prepared to help. It seconded its Director of Strategy and External Affairs, Tony Burton, for a year, to lead a consultation exercise across the 'movement' to ascertain what all those individuals actually wanted, and were prepared to support, in a replacement organisation. The CSI was born – and provided with funding and resources for the one year that was deemed necessary.

I had been involved with the core of the CT since attending a 'Pathfinder' training course under its sponsorship in 2002. More recently, I had been attending the quarterly meetings of its 'National Committee of Civic Societies', as a 'regional chairman under training' for something that might become known as the 'Inner South West Regional Association of Civic Societies' – it being long-understood that having a regional grouping of civic societies which encompassed the whole of the central government's South West Region would simply not work. Better to split it into an 'Inner SW' and 'Outer SW', it was thought. The previous 'South West RA' would become the 'Outer SW RA' and I would initiate the formation of the 'Inner SW RA'. Just as we were about to press the 'go button', the administrators came walking in!

It was, therefore, natural that I should become caught up in the work of the CSI. I have worked closely with Tony and Ian over the last 9 months. I have attended 2 of their 14 'Consultation Forums', one at Bath and one at Exeter, and organised an inaugural meeting of a potential local 'CSI Cluster' at Bath on 16 November 2009. It attracted 22 attendees from a total of 12 civic societies/trusts, all within the geographical area of South Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Bath and Bristol. Tony Burton attended. In December, I also attended a 'branding session' held in London at the headquarters of the leading company in the field, Dragon Rouge, near Paddington Station.

Since November many things have happened. The results are contained in the latest edition of the CSI's 'Initiative Bulletin', just published. It declares the decisions that have been made, and the proposals which are being firmly recommended by the central team for adoption before the year's funding runs out, i.e. May 2010.

There has been a lot to do to get us to this situation. Decisions on banking arrangements and the finalising of the launch venue were the last to be made. The matter of a title for the new organisation and its 'branding' were settled before these, as well as ones relating to the funding mechanism. Likewise the details of the governance of the organisation.

The release of all this information in one place is an immense step for the civic society movement. I commend the Bulletin to you. Those of you who get into its details will find that there is one (thankfully) small role for me to play in bringing this whole start-up process to a conclusion. I will leave you to discover it. Suffice it to say, I will be working with some pretty exulted company.

There is another activity in which I have more recently immersed myself under this umbrella. Starting from that meeting in Bath at which the possibility of establishing a local 'CSI Cluster' was first mooted, I have been working with two others – Paul Myers of Midsomer Norton and John Peverley of Frome – to set up what we are calling the 'Wessex Civic Society Network'. Its gatherings will be called 'Musters'. They will be held quarterly.

The first Muster took place in Midsomer Norton on Saturday, 6 March 2010, this included participation in a programme of talks and workshops at the Town Hall, a sandwich lunch and a guided tour of Midsomer Norton by members of its Civic Society. It was well-attended. We even had Bryan Chalker, Chair of B&NES, drop in for lunch.

One of my jobs was to extend the invitations to those who might be interested in attending. 66 invitations to named individuals went out, across 40 societies located in an area encompassed by: - Tewkesbury in the N, Newent in the NW, Stow-on-the-Wold in the NE, Swindon & Amesbury in the E, Crewkerne in the SW, Salisbury in the SE, Bournemouth in the S, and all points in between (I know. I've e-mailed all of them!)

Peter Tapscott



Corsham Primary Schools Art Award 2009

This year as usual, all local primary schools were invited to participate in the Civic Society Award for Art – the theme was “Things that Move in Water”.

Two schools took part. They were Corsham Primary School who as always submitted work of a very high standard and this year we welcomed Heywood School who presented an attractive range of work on the subject.

Our judge Geoffrey Williams – Glover, really had his work cut out to decide on the winners but after careful deliberation, these were his results:-

1st – Evie Hurstwood – Year 3, Corsham Primary School

2nd – Rebecca Ousby – Heywood School

3rd – Martha Stringer – Year 4, Corsham Primary School

It was decided to give a special prize to Sophia Gardner of Heywood School for a splendid fish tile.

At an Awards Assembly held in Corsham Primary School on 24th November the prize winning children received their awards from our Chairman Michael Rumsey. Also present were Geoffrey Williams-Glover and Kathy Thomas (Art Co-ordinator).

Many thanks are due to Mrs Fiona Allen, Head teacher and also to Rebecca Palmer and Helen Creighton, the teachers with responsibility for Art at the two participating schools.

A very special thank you also goes to Steve Hible of Right Angle Framing who is always ready and willing to frame the prize-winning picture and donate it to the Civic Society for presentation. We are extremely grateful to Steve and Geoffrey for their most generous contribution to this Award.

I have really enjoyed my Role as Co-ordinator of Art for the Civic Society over the last 3-4 years. As a former teacher it is always a great pleasure and privilege to go into schools and see children at work. However, after several years of this pleasant task, I think it is time to hand over to someone else. We're very fortunate here in Corsham to have many delightful children and excellent schools and I'm sure that whoever takes over this role will enjoy it as much as I have done. I would be very happy to brief and guide my successor.

Kathy Thomas



Chairman Michael Rumsey with Evie Hurstwood and Martha Stringer, prize winners from Corsham Primary School

Keep your home warm – and save money!

Did you know that you can get big savings on the cost of insulating your home? A government-supported scheme, aimed at reducing carbon emissions, means you can now get loft and cavity wall insulation at subsidised prices. With loft insulation from £149 and cavity wall insulation for £129, the average home should recover its costs through reduced energy bills within the first year, and go on making savings of around £300 every year afterwards. For some people, such as the over 70s and those in receipt of qualifying benefits, the insulation could be free! Both home owners and private tenants can benefit from the scheme, provided your home is suitable for this type of insulation.

Transcoco, a local environmental group, has teamed up with the Energy Saving Trust to promote the scheme to local people. All you have to do is call the Energy Saving Trust on a free number, 0800 512 012, to check if you are eligible and to arrange a free, no-obligation survey. The survey and installation will be carried out by Domestic and General, an established insulation installer who has been providing energy efficient solutions in the local area for 25 years.

So if you'd like to stay warm – and save money – why not give the Energy Saving Trust a call?



LOCAL LIVES - The Parkinson Family.

We are extremely grateful to Margaret Stocker of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, who contacted the Society with the interesting story of the Parkinson Family, and their link with WWI Hospital at Corsham.

For several years when researching my father's family in the 1990's I puzzled over a photograph of a house called 'Dunsford' in Corsham Wiltshire. At this time I was living in Kent, and my father, born in 1912 in the south London area had not been to this house since the 1920's, but he did have memories of visiting with his mother, to see his grandmother and great aunts and uncle, Percival Parkinson.



Dunsford, Prospect

In 1997 I made a trip to Corsham, to research the Parkinson family who had come to live in Bath in the 1850's, and at last I found the house. I must thank Marjorie Eagles for her help, and the introduction to Tom and Muriel Burnard who then lived at 'Dunsford' No.9 Prospect.

Percy George Parkinson and his twin brother Frances Russell Parkinson were born in 1856 in Bath, to George Thomas and Elizabeth. George Thomas was a surgeon dentist, who had come from Norwood, and the family lived for a number of years at Batheaston, before eventually living at 28 The Circus, Bath.

There were seven children, four girls and the twin boys. In the 1880's George retired and moved away. The two sons joined the Army in 1877, Percy in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and Frank in the Welch Regiment. Three of the unmarried daughters remained in Bath.

Whilst stationed in Ireland, Percy married Frances Fyers. There were four children, Gladys, (1885) Irene, (1886) Esme (1887) & Claude (1889). The family home was at Bathwick, at 9 Dunsford Place. Frances died while Claude was a baby, and their aunt Jane brought them up.



The family in uniform

Claude joined the Royal Artillery in 1915 and served with his father, uncle and sisters in the 1st W.W. Irene at Corsham, (British Red Cross records show her rank- VAD Nurse and Quartermaster, Enrolled 26.10 1914, Discharged 21.7.1919). Gladys served at Netley and then in Egypt, Esme served in Mesopotamia.

Claude seems to have acquired 'Dunsford' in Corsham on his marriage in 1915. Percy may have come to live with them after the war, for he stayed on at the house when Claude and his family emigrated to New Zealand in 1925. Percy lived at Dunsford until his death in 1940 and he and his sister Jane are buried at Corsham.

In the late 1990's I corresponded with Claude's daughter Diana, and before her death in 2001 she sent me a number of photo albums of the 1st WW years. These were taken by the nursing sisters overseas, and the men on the "Front" in France. Most of these fascinating albums are now in the Imperial War Museum, but I have kept the ones with many photographs of the family at "Dunsford", Lypiatt Farm, Dicketts Farm and Batheaston Post Office.

Margaret Stocker.



Corsham Station Campaign



The new Wiltshire Council promised to be different, and as a result of our June campaign a budget of £100,000 was announced at an Area Board Meeting, although it swiftly disappeared from view - made available for the purchase of land for a car park and bus/taxi rank adjacent to Melksham Station! Wiltshire Council we understand now need to make a £50,000 contribution to enable an upgraded rail service to be reinstated between Swindon and Westbury. But what of Corsham? Our Open Day last November in a Martingate shop (by kind permission of owner Bill

Hall) coincided with bucketing rain and gale force winds - visitors were minimal and we were only able to gather a total of 25 completed postcards to accompany our response to Network Rail's Consultation on their Route Utilisation Strategy! Those of you who visited the Town Hall to see the WC display on the Core Strategy to 2026 may also have reacted critically to their consultant's wickedly downbeat assessment of our town, which included the statement that there was no hope of the station reopening before 2026! However, their overall view has been challenged by the Town Council, Civic Society and Transition Corsham, and the comment as regards our station has now been substantially supplanted by the announcement of the electrification of the Great Western line. The other day DfT confirmed that electrification would change the whole ball game. In addition, Cllr. Richard Gamble, the Portfolio Holder for Public Transport, a colleague of Cllr Tonge, is determined to try and gain improvements to both the bus and rail network – although our concern remains that persuasion will be needed to gain a meaningful financial contribution towards the funding of rail improvements – something which is necessary if the industry is to take Wiltshire's aspirations seriously. Cllr.Tonge was keen I should arrange a meeting with his colleague, and this I did, including in the invitation Peter Blackburn (Station campaign), Allan Bosley (Chairman, Corsham Town Council) and Adam Walton (Transition Corsham Transport Group). We met with Cllr. Gamble, Cllr.Peter Davis and David Phillips, WC Rail Officer to discuss the way forward, with a view to preparing an informed response in readiness for the new Rail Utilisation Strategy GW Electrification, which it is anticipated they will consult upon in 2011. The 2009 RUS proposed a new Bristol Temple Meads to Chippenham service, but was unsupportive of the Bath/Chippenham leg. It is this, with the possibility of that service linking to Swindon, with its fourth platform, on which we need to focus. Austerity lies ahead, but it is as well to remember that congestion is predicted to cost the Bristol economy £600m. p.a. by 2014! You may not be surprised that vehicle speeds in Bristol are the slowest of any Core City, averaging 15 mph and at peak periods 21% of journey time is spent stationary! As for the election, we may do well to listen out at interviews to hear where each party will seek to make savings. Also a good question to ask when candidates come calling at your door! Chris Irwin, Chair of TravelwatchSW, reported to the SW Select Committee that the most recent Regional Funding Allocation for Transport failed to take account of policy for sustainable transport, health, transition to a low carbon economy and the SW had the worst congestion, most expensive train fares, worst access to bus travel and greatest disparity of access to transport facilities. Powerful arguments for investment in local rail, rather than distributor roads.

Anne Lock

300 Year Old Jug

Ken Salter was born in Gastard, and is Corsham, born and bred. Always taking a keen interest in the life of the town. He recently told one of our members, Peter Tapscott, about a stone wear jug in his possession which was given to his mother in 1903 by Mrs Edwards of the house at Overmoor Farm Neston, for whom she used to 'do' on Saturday mornings as a schoolgirl, until she left school to start work proper. The jug is in good order, and has been in Ken's care for many years.

Ken and Peter took the jug to Chippenham Museum to have it appraised and Mike Stone, the curator, dated the jug as having been made during the period 1580-1680.

The jug is now on temporary loan to the Chippenham Museum and will be put on display. *Pat Whalley*



Ken Salter with his jug



Corsham Cellars

This is a wonderful tale of the conversion of the metaphorical swords into ploughshares. The site has been variously known as Eastlays, Pictor Monks, Eastern Monks and CAD sub depot 2.

Quarrying

The Pictors began quarrying the site in 1837. It was then called Pictor Monks Quarry and produced very good building and carving stone; the quarrymen earned a higher rate of pay than at some of the neighbouring mines. This was transported by tramway up the incline, across Park Lane to the east side of Rough Street, where it was gravity driven to the Corsham sidings. The stone was sent as far afield as Capetown and Saffron Walden.

Explosive times

Sometime in 1934 quarrying finished and purchasing of the site by the War Office began in 1936, and completed in 1937 by Compulsory Purchase from the Monks Park Estate (by using the Defence of the Realm Act, possibly for the first time in such circumstances). It was to be called the Central Arms Depot sub depot 2.

When the Royal Engineers first surveyed the quarry in 1934 in no way could they have thought that not only was this site ideal for the storage of munitions, but that its ultimate use would be for the storage of fine wines. For this site is huge, approximately one million square feet, bomb proof (some 100 feet below ground), therefore also vibration proof, with constant temperature and humidity – *what suits explosives suits wine*.

As there was only one slope shaft, two more access shafts were sunk. As clearance progressed it was found that the pillars had been badly “robbed” and needed replacing or “corsetting”. The roof was naturally badly faulted and also required reinforcing. The eastern reaches were abandoned owing to the wet conditions. In conjunction with this work land at Beanacre Halt was cleared for the necessary railway sidings.

During the clearance two men were killed in a roof fall, by this time many of the men were from the collieries, but following this accident it was thought advisable to leave the quarrymen to do the roof inspections.

As there was no area in which to “backfill”, all the spoil was deposited on the western and southern boundaries; because of these extensive surface workings it would have been impossible to camouflage it from the air. A decoy “Q” site was proposed to protect Thingly Junction (and by implication Eastlays); the site chosen was at Queensfield (Lacock) along the line of the old canal; but I have no information as to whether it was ever used.

Air conditioning was installed in 1939 and in 1940 the site became fully operational for the RAF and Royal Army Ordnance Corps. By 1944 it was holding some 45,000 tons of explosive.

In May 1944 three trucks, loaded with 500lb bombs, broke away in a slope shaft, in the process breaking through the blast doors, before scattering their loads. Incredibly, nobody appears to have been injured but one can imagine the feelings of those down below.

A very detailed history of these momentous times can be found in “*Secret Underground Cities*” by N.J.McCamley.

Exit the Military

After the war the site was slowly run down until it was “mothballed” in 1962. In 1972 the site was advertised for sale and purchased by EMF Farming Associates; and this, at least, ensured that it was reasonably secure from vandalism.

An eclectic mix of rumours and proposals arose as to the eventual use, including mushroom farming, storage of Avon tyres, production of flares, storage of wine and butter.

Cold war

In 1981, seemingly out of the blue, appeared Rusepalm Developments, the UK arm of Douvaine Investments, a Jersey registered company. **Doom City** had arrived with the slogan “stump up 2,000 quid and you will be saved from the universal rotisserie”. The chairman of Rusepalm was Maureen Whittart, a woman of such Walkyric demeanour that she terrified the BBC reporter who went down into the mine with her; likewise, judging from his speech in the Commons, our local M.P. Richard Needham (Hansard 11.05.91)

The proposal was to accommodate 10,000 people in luxuriously-equipped family units, and space for 3,000 cars if NEATLY parked. The Parish Council circumvented these proposals by rejecting them on planning grounds. On the other hand the Highways department was quite happy – one can only presume that the thought of 3,000 cars in one place was a jolly good idea!



Eventually the caravan slunk away, with their legal advisor Nicholas Fior being struck off by the Law Society, and it is alleged, leaving unpaid bills at the Harp and Crown, but taking the deposits of those who dreamed of a post-holocaust world. Then Collingwood International proposed an above ground conference centre and exhibition hall with below ground testing rooms for civil protection and safety equipment.

Filming

The site has been used as a filming location (in addition to the MOD archive) of which we have the names of the following: Fourth Arm BBC TV Series 1983 and Blakes Seven BBC TV Series 1978.

Current use



Photos courtesy of Corsham Cellars

This former Bathstone mine was acquired by Cert Octavian in 1989 and has been developed into the world's leading fine wine storage facility. This vast deep site, of some 30 acres, provides the ideal conditions of no natural light or vibration. The environment has been enhanced by a computer system that ensures a stable environment of 13-14 °C with a humidity between 75-80%. To avoid stale air there is a remarkable ventilation system requiring 9 foot propellers that drive fresh air into every corner of the facility through miles of ducting.

Around 85 people are employed on the site of whom 35 descend the 157 steps on a daily basis to attend to the 700,000 cases of fine wine. In addition to around 200 trade customers there are just over 2,000 private customers storing anything from a single bottle to thousands of cases in their individual portfolios. *The oldest bottle laid down is a 1791 Château Lafite-Rothschild.*

What a remarkable history for this site and what a wonderful completion.

Foot notes

March 1898 "Mr. G. Ward (Linen Draper) of the High Street was going through Rough Street, on his bicycle, and in crossing the tram line a trolley laden with stone passed across the road and Mr. Ward was thrown violently from his machine. Medical assistance was telegraphed for to Bath. Mr. Ward is in a precarious state". But we Corshamites are made of stern stuff as he was still trading in 1903!

I have added some details about these other two sites as it helps to explain the drainage problems of the eastern fringes and rounds off the details of the area.

Goodes Hill Mine Bath Stone Firms 1904

This is a very small mine to the east of Eastlays with one slope shaft. It has been suggested that part of the mine's function was to relieve extraction pressure on Eastlays. The shaft is stone lined and very well preserved but it is subject to continual flooding and although the stone is of good quality very little could have been extracted. The owner must have had high hopes for the mine as the facilities for banker masons and the engine house for the winding gear still exist and are well built.

Goodes Hill Reservoirs.

Immediately to the south of the Goodes Hill mine is a reservoir. As this is lying on greensand it most likely accounts for the flooding of the mine. The reservoir, built in 1988, is served by two bore holes, only the second, sunk in 1942, is active; formerly there was a water tower, which was taken down and moved to Chapmanslade. This bore hole has a depth of nearly 61 metres and a diameter of 250 mm, giving a capacity of 2.5 MI per day – no wonder it is wet down there!

Norman Duckworth



Buildings Award

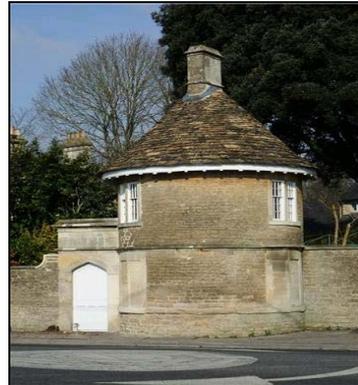
This scheme was introduced in 2007 with the aim of encouraging the visual enhancement of the area, promoting excellence in the treatment of historic buildings and in the construction of new building and encouraging sympathetic treatment of the setting of a building, including innovative use of a site and sympathetic use of landscaping and planting. The eligibility criteria is simple: buildings need to be located in the Corsham area and be deemed to make a worthwhile contribution to the visual enhancement of the street scene or landscape.

Members attending our October 2009 meeting voted for the building which they considered merited the award. First place was gained by the Round House, at the Park Lane junction with the A4. A large number of votes was also cast for Station Road Garage and it was decided to award a runners-up prize.

Our President, Anne Locke awarded the prizes at our social evening in January.



The winning team's presentation *Photo: J. Browning*



The Round House *Photo: M. Rumsey*



The runners- up's presentation *Photo: J. Browning*



Station Road Garage *Photo: M. Rumsey*

Nominations from members for the 2010 Buildings Award would be welcome by the end of September.

Churchyard Working Party

There will be a couple of people starting a Spring Clean in the Churchyard on Easter Monday, 5th April, from 11am to 4pm. The intended work includes digging out bramble roots, cutting back dead herbaceous plants and gathering up the fallen leaves. This work is a daunting prospect for a few people but with some more volunteers a great deal more work could be accomplished. Of course we would not expect everyone to work the whole time and would welcome anyone for just an hour or two. Although we have a few tools (spades, a fork and grass rake) kept in the Churchyard please bring your own secateurs and, of course, gardening gloves. I will try and arrange that we can make tea/coffee in Church.

Laurie Lewis



Lady Margaret Hungerford 17th Century Schoolroom and Almshouses

Are you looking for a really interesting outing for your family? Are you a member of a group who wants a more unusual outing? If so, why not visit our Almshouses and 17th Century Schoolroom in Corsham.

There is plenty to see in the Town: a visit to the High Street, with its fine buildings, shops and places to eat, and you can take a tour of the town, booked through the Corsham Tourist Information and Heritage Centre. You might even fit in a visit to Corsham Court. Our website, www.corshamalmshouses.org.uk gives full details of the Schoolroom and Almshouses. They are open from the beginning of April to the end of September: Tues/Wed 11.00am until 4.00pm; Fri/Sat 1.30pm until 4.00pm. Guided tours are offered or visitors can make their own tour aided by various information leaflets.

Group visits can be arranged during or outside these hours. Please contact the Group Organiser, Marian King, (Tel: 01249 713486). Volunteer guides will only be too pleased to take you on a tour of approx. 45 minutes.

We have a real need for MORE VOLUNTEER GUIDES. We are a friendly, sociable group (we recently enjoyed an excellent tea party in the Pound Arts Centre) who enjoy good relations with the Trustees. No experience is necessary or indeed specialist knowledge of the Almshouses as we have an informative INDUCTION PACK for newcomers, with plenty of supporting materials in the Almshouses, and provide opportunities for shadowing more experienced guides, with no set route for tours but left to individual preferences. Some guides are happy to man the desk, others to conduct small or group tours or to help behind the scenes. We also work a flexible rota system to fit in with individual availability.

If you have some spare time and are interested in buildings full of history, why not give Ron Smith a ring, (Tel: 01249 701255) as he organises the rotas and briefs new Volunteers? He would be delighted to hear from you and assure you of a warm welcome.

Peter King, Chairman of Volunteer Guides.

TIC Website knows What's On

The team at the Corsham Information & Heritage Centre has been applying some tweaks to its increasingly-accessed website. It now sports this attractive banner on every page generously contributed by local photography specialist, Joe McNeilage. It is, of course, the image of a Corsham that we all like to experience for ourselves and for our visitors.



The biggest change is a 'What's On' page which shows upcoming events over the next week and a half, on a continuously updated basis, running from Thursday through the following two weekends. The team now receives notification of these events from the various groups that organise them. It then takes responsibility for presenting them to the wider public via the website and the poster-sites it maintains around the town. It also e-mails them to its local accommodation-providers so that they can bring the events to the attention of their guests – perhaps resulting in those guests staying over for a couple more nights! The list does, after all, embrace two full weekends in the one 'hit'.

The Mayo Restoration Project is featured as one of an anticipated series of such 'projects'. This one carries the video record of the project as a YouTube clip.

Naturally there is a link to the Corsham Civic Society's own website – and much more.

Why not take a look for yourself on www.corshamheritage.org.uk?

Peter Tapscott



Corsham Civic Society

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.Corsham-Civic-Society.co.uk

FUTURE PROGRAMME

26 th March 2010	Sir Harold Brakspear 1870 – 1934: Local Architect and Antiquary by his grandson Tom Brakspear
23 rd April 2010	How Cloth was made in Wiltshire by Ken Rogers
14 th May 2010	AGM (Town Hall- 7 for 7.15pm)
18 th June 2010	Corsham and Geology by Dr. Eric Robinson
	CCS Walk (Date to be confirmed)
23 rd July 2010	Corsham and the Hungerfords by Guy Hungerford
August 2010	No Open Meeting - CCS Outing and/or BBQ (Dates to be confirmed)
24 th September 2010	Family History and English Surnames by Professor David Hey
22 nd October 2010	The Work of Corsham School by Martin Williams
26 th November 2010	An Evening of Carols and Christmas Songs: Secular Song and Dance or Devotional Anthems by Wyndham and Kathy Thomas
December 2010	No Open Meeting

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

Venues may change. Please check our notice board at "The Century".

Guests are very 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 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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Contributions to Spotlight are welcome.
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