

Corsham Spotlight

Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society

July 2012
Volume 10 Issue 2

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Contributions to Spotlight are welcome.
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*www.Corsham-Civic –
Society.co.uk*

Editorial

Looking back at the last issue of Spotlight I notice that I started my editorial noting the exceptionally dry state of the ground and the need of rain to make the crops grow. Perhaps I was tempting fate. There has been so much rain that many crops have been waterlogged and the slugs have had a field day. I will have to think twice before referring to the weather in the future!

This edition of Spotlight is issued on the day of the opening ceremony of the London Olympics. I imagine that it may well not be read by some until the Olympics are over, though I hope it may fill a few minutes of people's time between events. We also managed to arrange our summer trip to Hilmarton church for today. But we hope to return home in time to see the Great British team parade in front of the Queen.

The Queen's Jubilee was celebrated in Corsham by the holding of a fête at Springfield Recreation Ground. There were also smaller events in the area, such as the one shown in this photograph taken in the High Street.

We are very pleased that Pat Mosdall has agreed to become the Society's secretary. Welcome on board, Pat.

Next year will be the Civic Society's 50th anniversary. We aim to celebrate our achievement in several ways, details of which will be available later this year. If anyone has thoughts on events that we could hold our programme organiser, Negley Harte, would be pleased to hear from you on 01249 713529.

Jane Browning



Jubilee street party in the High Street.
Photo: R. Truelove

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Ann Hovells	Caroline Baker
Victor & Beryl Howlett	David Pollard
Tony Holley	Jez Griffiths
Joy Riley	Sheila Cottell

Patron
Lord Methuen

Officers
President

Mrs. Anne Lock.
Tel: 01225 810357

Chairman

Mr. Michael Rumsey,
Tel: 01249 715741

Hon Secretary

Mrs. Pat Mosdall
Tel: 01249 701020

Treasurer

Mr. Roger Truelove,
Tel: 01249 712709

Membership Secretary

Mrs. Jean Beech,
Tel: 01249 713833

Social Organiser

Mrs. Joan Maciver,
Tel: 01225 812225

Programme Organiser

Dr. Negley Harte,
Tel: 01249 713529

Plans Chairman

Mr. Michael Burton,
Tel: 01249 715159

Review

In February, Stephen Hobbs, archivist at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham, told us the latest in their bid for lottery money for the purchase of the Lacock Archives. The bid has progressed through the first round, with much more work required for the second round. As there is to be an update on the bid position whilst this edition of Spotlight is in press, I will report back in the next issue.

Our March talk by Negley Harte took us on a tour of Corsham buildings based upon the dates marked upon them. Corsham is well-endowed with such date stones, a vernacular tradition of sculpture associated with the stone trade. Negley started with dates on rainwater heads, including seven heads on Gastard church which are dated 1912, four or five gothic rainwater heads on Neston school dated 1861 and those on the elementary school, at the boy's entrance, which are dated 1895.

The Old Plough at Neston, now a private home, has a date stone of 1644. Often the dates were accompanied by the initials of the builder or owners. Two dates on the Methuen Arms show NN 1650 and SW 1742. There are many dates in buildings in Pickwick and South Street and a fine THAP 1876 date at the top of Priory Street, the THAP standing for Thomas Henry Allen Poynder. There seems to be a gap of date stones between 1745 and 1823, except for the Town Hall.

The dry arch in the Corsham estate has dates of 1895 and 1915, among others. The bridge is a mile away from the Town Hall which was a Red Cross Hospital during the First World War. It is thought many of the dates were carved by recuperating soldiers who were encouraged to go for walks in the grounds of Corsham Court.

"Eleven thousand years of self sufficiency: the story of cultivation" was our April talk by Peter Thoday, well-known for his television programmes on gardens. His talk took us back to pre-Christian times. He described the different stages in the development of plant cultivation; from protection of the wild populations of plants from predators such as birds, mammals and insects,

Irrigation and translocation, such as scattering seeds on the surface of the soil. It has been established from charred and carbonised pollen grains that there were seven main areas in the world which developed independently as regards to agriculture; the Fertile Crescent in the Near East, China, the Indus valley, the Middle East, northern USA, Mexico and two areas in South America.

Man took advantage of natural mutations. For example, some seeds became absurdly large. These were harvested and saved, rather than eaten, to be sown the following season. This became an intellectual and value judgement on which seeds to keep. Bread wheat is a natural hybrid between two wild plant genera. This was the first hybrid of any significance.

The biggest change of all was in the Stone Age, when the land was tilled. Forty square metres of land was needed to provide a decent crop and the ard was invented, a plough-like implement in which the share is dragged through the soil. This meant a huge increase of energy available. This led to the seed drill being invented in Egypt, resulting in seeds being sown in lines at a constant depth, vastly increasing the ratio of crop yield. Care of individual plants was known about 2500 BC, with evidence of frankincense grown in containers in order to be able to transport them.

The AGM was held in May and was well attended. Most members attending stayed on afterwards to partake of the cheese, biscuits and wine, ably provided by Joan and her team.

Jane Browning

Heritage Open Days 2012



Organised by the
in association with the
financial support from

Corsham Civic Society
Heritage Open Days National Partnership
Corsham Town Council

September 2012				
Date	Day/time	Venue		Ticket information
6th	Thursday 5 – 6 pm	St. Bartholomew's Church, Corsham.	Guided Talk: 'History, Archaeology and Stained Glass of this Church' by Celia James.	Required. Limited to 25.
7th	Friday 2 – 3.30 pm	Meet in St. Bartholomew's Church car park	Guided walk around Corsham led by Dr. Negley Harte.	Required. Limited to 25.
7th	Friday 7.30 pm	Corsham Town Hall	Illustrated talk by Nick McCamley 'Saving Britain's Art Treasures before the beginning of World War II'.	Required. Limited to 125.
8th	Saturday 2 – 3.30 pm	Meet in St. Bartholomew's Church car park	Guided walk around Corsham led by Dr. Negley Harte.	Required. Limited to 25.
8th	Saturday 5 – 6 pm	St. Bartholomew's Church, Corsham.	Guided Talk: 'History, Archaeology and Stained Glass of this Church' by Celia James.	Required. Limited to 25.
8th	Saturday 2 – 4.30 pm	St. Christopher's Church, Ditteridge	Parish church open for viewing.	
9th	Sunday 2 – 4.30 pm	St. Christopher's Church, Ditteridge	Parish church open for viewing.	
9th	Sunday 2 – 4.30 pm	Hartham Chapel, Hartham Lane, Corsham	Hartham Estate Chapel open for viewing.	
<p>FREE tickets and location details available from</p> <p>Corsham Heritage & Information Centre, Arnold House, High Street from August 18th. Open 10am to 4pm weekdays. Tel: 01249 714660.</p> <p>Car Parking is available in the town centre and at other venues.</p>				

Hartham Chapel

The Hartham Park estate chapel will be open as part of the Heritage Open Days Event, which is being organised by the Corsham Civic Society by the kindness of the Trustees of the Chapel. It will be open to be public on the afternoon of the 9th September 2012 between 2 and 4.30pm.

It is rather a remarkable building, quite as large as many parish churches, built in 1862 as the private chapel for the Hartham Park estate. Hartham is part of the parish of Corsham, but not of the manor of Corsham, and has a rather separate history. Its history is intertwined between two houses, Hartham House and Hartham Park (two different houses, but often confused). By 1862 Hartham House had been pulled down and the Hartham Park estate was being expensively aggrandised by members of the Poynder family.

Little has been written about the Poynders. They originated as lime-burners in south London in the late eighteenth century. They became enormously rich in the early nineteenth century as builders of parts of the rapidly expanding metropolis, first in south London and the City and then in Holloway, in north London. When Thomas Poynder died in 1837, probate was valued at £370,000, one of the biggest fortunes of the first half of the nineteenth century (multiply by say 10,000, and recall that death duties or income tax had yet to be invented).



Hartham Chapel

Photo: J. Browning

In 1813 Thomas Poynder had bought the village of Hilmarton, Wiltshire as his country estate. By 1850 his grandson, Thomas Henry Allen Poynder, found this estate not quite grand enough, so he leased the Hartham Park estate from the Methuen family and then he bought it in 1855. He set about the expensive building works by encasing the 1790 James Wyatt house in Victorian extensions, building new stables and including his THAP initials with his distinctive monogram. These were prominently placed on various cottages and farms in Hartham, Pickwick and Biddestone.

To cap all this estate improvement, he had the Chapel built in 1862, on the avenue to the house made from a route of the earlier London to Bath turnpike. The architect commissioned for this work was the distinguished Victorian architect Philip Hardwick (1792-1870), who may have designed the earlier extensions to the house. The house itself has no dates on it, but the later stables have dated rainwater heads with THAP and the monogram together with the date 1858. T.H.A. Poynder (1814-73) had studied at Oxford and was a barrister. The family money came from trade some three or four generations previously. Those in line were all called Thomas, though I have yet to work them all out. He was a Victorian gentleman who had his priorities right – first the house, then the stables and then the chapel.

Philip Hardwick, the architect, remains best known for his design of the Euston Arch, famously wantonly-destroyed in 1962 in the interests of 'modernism'. He also designed the warehouses in the London docks, and other London buildings such as Goldsmiths' Hall. By 1860 he was reducing his workload and handing over to his son, Philip Charles Hardwick (1822-92), who could be the real architect of the chapel.

The chapel is very elegantly designed. It was very well built, with no expense spared and is a remarkable relic of a prosperous estate of the 1860s, with stone-quarrying income. Nicholas Keyworth, the former Artistic Director of the Pound Arts Centre, which from time to time has organised concerts at the chapel, tells me that the acoustics are very good. The organ is most interesting.

The only changes since 1862 are the Nicholson memorial wall plaques (the Nicholsons bought the estate in 1920 from the Poynders). T.H.A. Poynder, despite all his evident estate-building efforts, had no children, and his heir in 1873 was his brother, W.H. Poynder, who also had no children. This amounted to estate building, with no dynastic planning. The heir in 1880 was the teenage son of their sister Sarah, who had died giving birth to her son, and who in 1884 inherited his father's brother's baronetcy, becoming Sir John Dickson Poynder.

The teenage millionaire aristocrat did not feel it necessary to remain a student at Oxford. He continued to expand the Hartham estate, putting his JDP initials (no monogram) on many new buildings in Corsham and Biddestone, expanding the shooting, fishing, golfing, cricket and tennis. Thus creating the estate a young High Sheriff of Wiltshire and MP for Chippenham should have, entertaining fellow politicians and even royalty.

There is no sign of John Dickson Poynder at the Chapel, however. When he was raised to peerage in 1910 he took the title Lord Islington and rejected Hartham. He went off to govern New Zealand and later to become a junior minister, but he never came back to Hartham. He is buried with his Poynder ancestors, not in the chapel at Hartham, but in the church at Hilmarton, where deep layers of leaves have to be kicked off their graves to see the inscriptions.

The Nicholsons, once famous for their gin, bought Hartham Park when it was sold up after the first world war, and more or less survived the second. For a time it was the Bath and Portland Stone Company's headquarters. Now it has had a remarkable revival as a successful 'business centre', with a huge car-park, agreeable common rooms, and many men and women keenly looking at computer screens.

Dr Negley Harte

Hilmarton



Hilmarton Church

o: M. Rumsey

On the 27th July the Corsham Civic Society is visiting Hilmarton, an easily neglected village north of Calne, which has close connections with Corsham that may have been generally forgotten about.

Hilmarton was bought in 1813 by Thomas Poynder, a rich London builder seeking a country estate and happy to find one that could provide building materials. He built quite a few improved cottages and proudly put his initials and the date on them. There is the school (1851) and the Almshouses (1878), and many other fine dated cottages designed by the Poynders' agent Henry Weaver. The Poynders paid for Weaver to rebuild the church tower in 1840 and for Street to restore much of the rest of the church in 1879.

In the 1850s the Poynders had sought a more imposing country estate in Hartham, as discussed in the previous article, but they obviously had a continuing affection for Hilmarton. In the church we can see many memorial plaques to them, and several generations of Poynders are buried in the churchyard, the most recent being Sir John Dickson Poynder, who after 1910 became Lord Islington.

The church is not usually open, but it was kindly opened for us in July 2012 by Richard Broadhead, one of the members of the very active Hilmarton History Society.

Dr Negley Harte

Sir Richard Blackmore 1654 - 1729 Poet, Physician and Writer

Sir Richard Blackmore was a once well-known but now obscure and forgotten poet, physician, and writer on religious and political matters. Blackmore made a name for himself as a prolific writer but a dull one, whose poetry 'could put lawyers to sleep.' Despite his critics, his work was admired by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Richard, the son of Roberte Blackmore, an attorney at law, was born somewhere to the south of Corsham, probably in Westrop, then known as Westrip, during the Commonwealth. An entry in the Corsham Parish Register shows he was born on 22 January 1654.

He left Corsham for Westminster School reputedly at the age of 13. He entered St Edmund Hall, Oxford in 1668, took his BA degree on 4 April 1676, and proceeded to MA on 3 June 1676. He resided there for 13 years. His necessities compelled him to temporarily adopt the profession of schoolmaster which was considered an humiliation. With this fact his enemies frequently taunted him in later years:

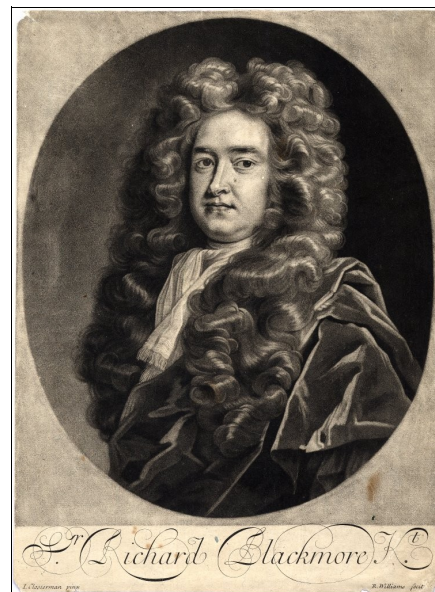
*By nature form'd, by want a pedant made
Blackmore at first set up the whipping trade
Next quack commenced, then fierce with pride he swore
That toothache, gripes and corns should be no more:
In vain his drugs as well as birch he tried,
His boys grew blockheads and his patients died.*

After abandoning schoolwork, Blackmore spent some time abroad. He visited France, Germany and the Low Countries, and took a Medical Degree at Padua. He returned to England and married Mary Adams in 1685 at St Paul's, Covent Garden, whose family connections aided him in winning a place in the Royal College of Physicians in 1687. He had trouble with the College, being censured for taking leave without permission and he strongly opposed the project for setting up a free dispensary for the poor in London. This opposition would be satirised by Sir Samuel Garth in *The Dispensary* in 1699. His residence was in Saddler's Hall, Cheapside, and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time a citizen was a term of reproach; his place of abode was another topic on which his adversaries took issue, in the absence of any other scandal. He became censor of the College in 1716; and was named an elect on 22 August 1716, which office he resigned on 22 October 1722.

In 1695 he had published 'Prince Arthur, an Heroick Poem in X Books', which reached a second edition in 1696, and a third in 1714, an enlarged edition in 12 books also appeared in 1696. So many editions was uncommon at the time, when literary curiosity was restricted to certain classes. The writer tells us that '*his work was written in such scant moments of leisure as his professional duties afforded*', and for the greatest part, in coffee houses, or in passing up and down the streets. Shortly after its publication, the poem, although some doubted this description, was attacked by one John Dennis in a criticism which Dr Johnson pronounced to be '*more tedious and disgusting than the work which he condemns*'. Far from resenting the attack Blackmore took occasion in a later work to praise Dennis as '*equal to Boileau in poetry and superior to him in abilities*'.

Having early on declared himself in favour of the revolution, King William, on March 18th 1697, knighted Blackmore, and chose him as one of his physicians extraordinary. On Queen Anne's accession, he was also appointed one of her physicians, in which office he continued for some time, but his services were dispensed when the Queen's children all died at an early age.

In 1705, with Anne on the throne and William dead, Blackmore wrote another epic, *Eliza: an Epic Poem in Ten Books*, on the plot by Rodrigo Lopez, the Portuguese physician, against Queen Elizabeth. Once more, the "epic" was current events, as it meant to denounce John Radcliffe, a Jacobite physician who was out of favour with Anne. Anne did not appear to take sufficient notice of the epic. Two occasional pieces



Sir Richard Blackmore Kt.
© British Museum

followed: *An advice to the poets: a poem occasioned by the wonderful success of her majesty's arms, under the conduct of the duke of Marlborough in Flanders* (1706) and *Instructions to Vander Beck* (1709). These courted favour with the Duke of Marlborough with some success.

In 1711, Blackmore produced *The Nature of Man*, a physiological/theological poem on climate and character (with the English climate being the best). This was a tune up for *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* in 1712, which was praised by John Dennis, Joseph Addison, and, later, Samuel Johnson, for its Miltonic tone. It ran to 16 editions, and of all his epics it was best received.

Blackmore ceased writing epics for a time after *Creation*. In 1722 he continued his religious themes with *Redemption*, an epic on the divinity of Jesus Christ designed to oppose and confute the Arians (as he called the Unitarians). The next year, he released another long epic, *Alfred*. The poem was ostensibly about King Alfred the Great, but like his earlier Arthurian epics, this one was political. It was dedicated to Prince Frederick, the eldest son of King George I, but the poem vanished without causing any comment from court or town.

Blackmore has come down in history, largely through the verse of Alexander Pope, as one avatar of Dulness, but, as a physician, he was quite forward thinking. He agreed with Sir Thomas Sydenham that observation and the physician's experience should take precedence over any Aristotelian ideals or hypothetical laws. He rejected Galen's humour theory as well. His papers included:

A Discourse on the Plague, with a prefatory account of Malignant Fevers, 8 vo. Lond. 1720.
 A Treatise on the Small Pox, and a Dissertation on the Modern Practice of Inoculation. 8vo. Lond. 1723.
 A Treatise on Consumptions and other Distempers belonging to the Breast and Lungs. 8vo. Lond. 1723.
 A Treatise on the Spleen and Vapours, or Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections; with three Discourses on the Nature and Cure of the Cholic, Melancholy and Palsy. 8vo. Lond. 1725.
 A Critical Dissertation on the Spleen. 8vo. Lond. 1725.
 Discourses on the Gout, Rheumatism, and King's Evil. 8vo. Lond. 1726.
 Dissertations on a Dropsy, Tympany, the Jaundice, Stone, and Diabetes. 8vo. Lond. 1727.

Blackmore was a poet, not by necessity, but by inclination; and wrote, not for a livelihood, but for fame, or, according to his own declaration "*to engage in poetry in the cause of virtue*". But Dryden, Pope, Dennis and some other professed poets of the day treated his performances with much contempt and ridicule. nevertheless, Addison and Johnston have bestowed some praise on him; and the latter has, with his usual acuteness and felicity, given a fairly discriminating critique on his writings, which were pretty numerous. Dr Johnson concludes his interesting memoir of Sir Richard, with the following observations:-

"As an author, he may claim honours of magnanimity. The incessant attacks of his enemies, whether serious or merry, are never discovered to have disturbed his quiet, or to have lessened his confidence in himself; they neither awed him to silence or to caution; they neither provoked him to petulance, nor depressed him to complaint. While the distributors of literary fame were endeavouring to depreciate or degrade him, he neither despised or defied them; wrote on, as he had written before, and never turned aside to quiet them by civility or repress them by confutation."

Blackmore retired in 1722 to live at Boxted. Essex. Dame Mary, his wife, died in 1727 at the age of 68. Richard died two years later, on 9 October 1729 and was buried alongside Mary on 16 October 1729 in the grounds of St Peters Church Boxted, within a few hundred yards of his house, Pond House, which still stands today. The church contains an elegant monument to Blackmore.

It is not thought Blackmore had children; the beneficiaries in his will are mainly nieces and nephews.

Jane Browning

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A topographical dictionary of England By Samuel Lewis p280
<http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/BiographyRecord.php?action=GET&bioid=33533>
 Wiltshire Notes and Queries Vol 1 1893-1895 Chapter 4 Quarterly Journal for September 1893
<http://munksroll.rcplondon.ac.uk/Biography/Details/429> 13 June 2012

The Celebration in Corsham of the Queen's Golden Jubilee 1837 – 1887.

- from a report taken from the 'Bath Herald & North Wilts Guardian dated June 25th 1887.

On Sunday 13th June, a jubilee sermon was preached by the Rev. F.J. Steward at the Baptist Chapel. Referring to Victoria's reign, he said there was much in her conduct to rouse the gratitude of her subjects.; her purity of life, the purity of her Court – not without blemish, but yet, with such temptations, such sorrows, and such a position, it was wonderful so little could be said against her. He dwelt upon her sympathy with others' grief, manifested in so many ways, her true womanly heart, and best of all the signs of true piety in her character. They must remember the individual share in this national morality, and that each citizen was personally responsible for the well being of his country, particularly at the present time, when the extension of the franchise gave to the people a voice in all matters affecting the nation.

THE CHILDREN'S JUBILEE FESTIVITIES.

On Monday the youthful population of Corsham had a very enjoyable day at the Court at the kind invitation of Lord Methuen. The place of meeting was in Mr. Dinham's field, near Bences Lane, where they mustered 900 strong. Before starting the procession, the National Jubilee Hymn was sung and every child was presented with a medal.

Then, headed by the Chippenham Brass Band, the procession made its way through the town and down the Avenue, presenting an imposing sight, and reaching nearly the whole length of the High Street. The following schools were represented, each having its banner carried at the head :- the parish church schools, including Pickwick and Chapel Knapp, the Baptist Sunday schools, the Independents, the Wesleyans, Mrs. Milne's Ladies College and also the pupils of Mr. F.W. Joyner (Corsham School). On reaching the front of the Court, the procession divided, boys going one side and girls the other, and Lord Methuen accompanied by Lady Methuen, Colonel and Mrs. Cotton, Canon Awdry, and the Rev. R. Mayo appeared on the steps and briefly addressed them. The Rev. G. Linton (Vicar) thanked his lordship for his kindness, cheers for the Queen and Lord and Lady Methuen were given. Various amusements were provided, and tea was laid in the Riding School. Lord Methuen entertained the teachers in a tent after the children had been attended to. Hearty cheers were given for the Queen and Lord and Lady Methuen as the children were leaving.

GENERAL FESTIVITIES

The town presented a very gay appearance on Tuesday morning, flags and banners being displayed from nearly every house. Shortly after 11am a procession, composed of members of the Hearts of Oak, Patriots, Oddfellows and Wilts Friendly Societies, carrying their respective banners, and the members of the Corsham 'Gleaner' Lodge of Good Templars, headed by the Stratton St Margaret Brass Band, marched through the town to the parish church, where a special thanksgiving service was held, the members of the Choral society and Chapel Knapp Choir assisting the church choir in the singing. The Te Deum, which was sung on the occasion of the Choral Festival, was again given the National Anthem, Psalm xx, and hymns, 'All people that on earth do dwell', and 'O God our help in ages past', were sung, Canon Awdry assisting the vicar in the service. A short address was given by the vicar (Rev. G Linton).

After the service a procession was formed at the Town Hall, and proceeded to the cricket field, where the dinner was laid in a large marquee (220ft long and 40 wide).

There were 72 joints of meat, 42 of beef, 5 hams, 8 veal, 8 quarters of lamb, 9 mutton, everything in all 1,319 lbs.; 123 plum puddings were provided weighing 500lbs.

The following gentlemen acted on the 'dinner committee':- Messrs. Cannon, T. White, W.H. Bezant, S. Aust, R. Balch, J. Ayliffe, and Dr. Crisp, while the Rev. G. Linton and Messrs. C.T. Mayo & W.H. Bromley were useful members of the 'general committee'.



Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Service, Westminster Abbey, 21 June 1887 by William Ewart Lockhart
Wikipedia

Mr. Bezant supplied the meat, Messrs. Dinham and Flint the puddings, and Lord Methuen kindly gave a variety of salads. Beer etc was sent by Messrs. Kingsford (Lacock), Stevens (Pickwick), Little and Dawkins (Slaughterford), Cannon (Shaw) and Wadsworth (Devizes). Messrs. W.H. Bromley and Wakely superintended the fitting up and covering of the tables respectively, the sum of £175 was collected, including that subscribed to the children's tea. Nearly 1,400 partook of dinner, at which Mr. D.H. Clutterbuck presided, and in appropriate terms proposed the toast of the day, the health of the Queen, which was responded to with cheers and the National Anthem was sung.

In the afternoon the following sports took place:

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240 YARDS FLAT RACE (BOYS UNDER 15) – Hall 1, Joles 2, Emery 3.

120 YARDS (GIRLS UNDER 12) – S. Emery 1, C. Merrett 2, F. Gardner 3.

240 YARDS THREE LEGGED RACE (BOYS UNDER 16) – Hayward & Handley 1, Hemming & Lyne 2, Emery & Emery 3.

LONG JUMP - There were 10 entries for this event Messrs. E. & C. Spackman led off well and Mr. Bryant ran them close. Mr. Fletcher made the best jump, but took no prize, and Bryant in the final trial beat C. Spackman by ½ inch.

QUARTER MILE FLAT RACE (Men) - Bryant 1, Jones 2.

SACK RACE – E. Wootten 1., G. Lodge 2. A. Lyne 3.

ONE MILE BICYCLE RACE – Six entered for this race but at the very moment of commencement Messrs. Frankham, Carter & Dobson had a spill owing to the confined space, while Milsom, Hall & King had a good start. F. Carter picked up well however and very nearly secured second prize, H. King coming in a little before him. Milsom took the lead all the way.

TWO MILES BICYCLE RACE—The same competitors entered as for the last and a fairer start was made. At the 14th and last lap Carter shot ahead of Frankham, who rode well, and secured second prize. Milsom again took first. H. Hall was thrown from his machine on the last round through some foolish person getting on the course, but received no serious injury.

120 YARDS RACE (BOYS UNDER 12) - G. Ryall 1, F. Barton 2, F. Minett 3.

DISAPPOINTMENT WHEELBARROW RACE – G. Robbins 1, H. Hemmings 2, F. Mallard 3.

80 YARDS (GIRLS UNDER 8) - E. Harris 1, A. Hemmings 2 , A. Bowden 3.

HIGH JUMP – This was an interesting event, as W. Bryant and C. Spackman were well matched. C. Spackman eventually won.

TUG OF WAR—After some hard pulling Mr. J. Balls team secured first place, Mr. G. Emery's team second.

HALF MILE FLAT RACE – H. Sheppard 1, H. Hall 2.

DONKEY RACE - A. Archer 1, H. Smith 2.

Mrs. Clutterbuck gave away the prizes on the bandstand, and cheers were given for her at the close. Dancing to the strains of the band, and other amusements brought a very pleasant day to termination. The following gentlemen deserve mention for their efforts in connection with the sports:- Mr. John Brown, starter; Messrs. J. Crosse and Kinnier, judges; Mr. C. Osborne, referee; Mr. Lewin Spackman (clerk of the course).

The coming together of a town in celebration.

Pat Whalley.

Coronation Festivities, Box



This postcard is entitled 'Coronation Festivities, Box' and shows many children, some really quite young, sitting down at long tables laid out with a sumptuous spread.

I believe this took place at what was known as the Fête Field, where Bargates now stands. There is no date given, but based upon the dress and the fact that the postcard is what is known as "divided back", which was first introduced in 1902, these were probably to celebrate the coronation of George V, which took place on 22 June 1911.

Jane Browning

Steam through Box & Corsham

GWR engine no. 6024 'King Edward I' is shown in this excellent photograph by Jon Bowers steaming towards Brunel's Box Tunnel on Saturday, March 3rd 2012 on its way from Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington.



King Edward I approaching Box Tunnel from Middlehill Tunnel, Box.

Photo: J. Bowers.

6024 was built at Swindon Works in June 1930 and during its 32 years of service travelled 1,570,015 miles. It was withdrawn from service in June 1962 and sold to Woodhams Bros, Barry, South Wales from scrap. Fortunately, Mr Woodham did not consign this engine to the scrap heap, it just stood in the yard until rescued by enthusiasts and brought back to life. Since 1990 6024 has been travelling around various preserved lines and also has been doing excellent work on the main lines with special trains.

This photograph was taken in the field off Quarry Hill, just above the tunnel entrance. If you look carefully at the picture, you can just make out a diesel engine marshalled at the rear of the train, there to provide emergency power if needed, which it wasn't on this day.

I had the pleasure of hearing this engine powering the train through the cutting from the east end of the tunnel and blasting its whistle long and hard past the site of Corsham station. It would be nice to have a few more steam specials through Corsham again, wouldn't it!!

Michael Rumsey

Sixty Years Ago

This year we have celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and in July we shall see the opening of the Olympic Games in London, but let's just return to 1952, the year of the Queen's accession. There was one tragic event that year that will always remain in my memory, that of the Lynmouth Flood Disaster.

Eric Delderfield, the Devon born author, wrote a very moving account of what happened on the night of August 15th 1952 and I am pleased to own a copy of the book, which I have read several times now. The statistics of the disaster are quite enormous –

9 inches of rain fell in 24 hours
 an estimated 90 million tons of water fell on Exmoor
 120,000 tons of debris rushed down the valley
 93 houses and buildings were destroyed
 28 bridges were destroyed or badly damaged
 132 vehicles were destroyed
 34 people killed or missing
 £1,336,425 donated by people.



Of those people killed or missing, the youngest was just 3 months old, the oldest 78. Two people were from Australia on holiday, so too 8 other people on holiday from the UK. Within hours of the disaster happening, help poured in from the 3 services, the Army bulldozers and heavy lifting equipment doing such sterling work, plus the erection of Bailey bridges to enable vehicles to cross where other bridges had been destroyed. The Devon County Police, Fire and Ambulance services were fully stretched and appreciated the help given by the various voluntary services who appeared very quickly on the scene. Temporary housing was needed urgently for those who had lost their homes and all their belongings and caravans started to appear at nearby Lynton to help with this problem. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, visited the area to view the clearing up operations. I remember my parents gathering together various items of clothing no longer needed by them so my father could take it to the Salvation Army Citadel in Chippenham, which was acting as a collecting point for this area.

If you visit Lynmouth today it is hard to visualise the awfulness that occurred just 60 years ago in August 1952.

Michael Rumsey

Margery Lilian Eagles

Margery Eagles was born on 29th January 1918 at New Farm, Corsham (which is still owned by the family), her parents being Harry and Lilian Pocock. She had an older brother, Philip, and a younger sister, Joan.

Her education began at home, with a governess called Miss Boyce, and she then attended the Girls' High School, Trowbridge, which could easily be reached by railway as Lacock Halt was situated next to the farm. She walked there over three fields, and recalled leaving her wellington boots in the hedge ready for the walk back home.



Margery and John Eagles

In 1937 she joined the 30th Wiltshire Detachment of the British Red Cross, and during the war was mostly stationed at Donhead House and Corsham Court, convalescent homes for officers. She also did ARP work. She ended the war as Assistant Commandant.

She met Dr John Eagles in 1946 and were married in February 1947 - a bitter snowy winter - at Lacock Church. For the next 45 years Margery's principle role was supporting John. They always welcomed patients to their home when the surgery was not open and she helped with the cricketing teas, John playing opening bat

for Corsham. They had a large garden in which Margery grew many flowers for cutting which were used to supply some of the decorations for the very active Church Flower group and their flower festivals.

Retirement was enjoyed to the full, with holidays organised by the National Trust. Time was taken to stay in touch with both of their extended families, and visited Bath most weeks.

John died on April 12th 2012. Having reached the age of 90 she decided to move to Bybrook Nursing Home, where she remained remarkably cheerful and was always very pleased to see friends and relatives and to hear all the latest news.

Acknowledgment: the Weaver family

2012 PROGRAMME

Jan 20th	7.00 for 7.30 pm	Annual Dinner at Guyers House
Feb 24th	7.30 pm	“The Lacock Archives” Talk by Stephen Hobbs, Archivist at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.
Mar 30th	7.30 pm	“Dated Buildings in the Corsham Area” Talk by Dr. Negley Harte, Chairman of the Corsham History Group, Chairman of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, and President of the Wiltshire Record Society.
Apr 27th	7.30 pm	“After Eden: the Origin and Evolution of Cultivation and Cultivated Plants” Talk by Peter Thoday, well-known for his television programmes on gardens.
May 11th	7 00 for 7.15 pm	AGM at the Town Hall : with entertainment
June 23- 24		Corsham Open Gardens Weekend (Civic Day)
Jul 27th	6.00 pm	Visit to Hilmarton. There is a Poynder family link to both Hartham Park and Hilmarton. Park at the ‘The Duke’ & meet at the Church, tour the village and then enjoy a drink in the local pub.
Sep 28th	7.30 pm	“The acquisition of the Art Collection at Corsham Court” Talk by James Methuen-Campbell who is very knowledgeable about art and music.
Oct 26th	7.30 pm	“Corsham’s Secret Underground” Talk by Alan Macrae, a Wiltshire Councillor, who used to work underground.
Nov 23rd	7.30 pm	“The Great War and Wiltshire Soldiers” Talk by Richard Broadhead who has written several books about the 10,000 Wiltshire men who lost their lives in the first world war. He is also Chairman of the Hilmarton History Society.

All meetings to be held at the Pound Arts Centre, 01249 701628, unless otherwise stated.
Guests are very welcome. Members £2, Non-members £5, includes free tea or coffee or £1 off a glass of wine.

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.

**Corsham Civic Society
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