

# Corsham Spotlight

Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society

March 2012  
Volume 10 Issue 1

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## Editorial

As I write this, spring is with us after a very mild winter. But we need rainfall. The ground is so very dry and crops will need rain to make them productive.

I could not let the bicentenary of Charles Dickens' birth pass unnoticed by Corsham, with his association with Pickwick. An article on page 4 discusses this connection.

I include a tribute to committee member Ian Storey, who died in November at Page 11. He was well-known throughout Corsham and his local knowledge will be sadly missed.

In the last issue of Spotlight I explained that due to lack of space in that issue I would include more about the Heritage Open Days 2011 this time around.

About 270 tickets were issued for the five different venues. All events were well supported and some "sold out" extremely quickly. The approximate breakdown of figures were: Corsham Cellars 24, Rudloe Stoneworks 60, Historical Walks 50, Talk 100, and Chapel Plaister 35. The two guided walks around Corsham were particularly interesting as approval had been given to look around the Mansion House. This was particularly sought as Wiltshire Council were in the process of selling it and it was thought it would be well worth a look prior to it moving into private ownership. So it was proved. Negley Harte has provided an article, on page 6, of the interesting graffiti on the stone surround to the front door in the shape of the growth marks of the children. I have also included, at page 8, my take on the tour of Rudloe Stoneworks.

I offer a slight challenge. Page 10 includes copies of photos taken in 1949 which are annotated "Reconstruction of High Street, Corsham". Can anyone identify where the last photo was taken? I have the originals if anyone would like to view them.

Corsham Print continue to support us by printing Spotlight. I am always impressed by the quality of the printing. It certainly makes the effort that I and contributing authors make worthwhile. So, thank you, Corsham Print.

*Jane Browning*

Contributions to Spotlight are welcome.  
Please contact Jane Browning (Editor) on 01249 716013 or at [janebrowning6@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:janebrowning6@hotmail.co.uk)

### We're on the Web!

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

## New members

A warm welcome to the following new members:

John Brown from Minehead and  
Alison Yeatman

**Patron**  
**Lord Methuen**

**Officers**  
**President**

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

**Chairman**

Mr. Michael Rumsey,  
91 Tellcroft Close,  
Corsham.  
Tel: 01249 715741

**Hon Sec**

Vacant

**Minuting Secretary**

Mrs. Pat Mosdall  
37 Silman Close,  
Corsham  
Tel: 01249 701020

**Treasurer**

Mr. Roger Truelove,  
61 Station Road,  
Corsham.  
Tel: 01249 712709

**Membership Secretary**

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

**Social Organiser**

Mrs. Joan Maciver,  
15 Moor Park,  
Corsham.  
Tel: 01225 812225

**Programme Organiser**

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

**Plans Chairman**

Mr. Michael Burton,  
79 High Street,  
Corsham.  
Tel: 01249 715159

## From the Chairman

Currently, I am feeling like Lord Kitchener in his famous poster illustration 'Your Country needs YOU!' I will make one change to that wording which should now read 'Your Society needs YOU!'

Our Executive Committee is at its smallest size for some years – we number just 6 people plus Pat Mosdall as Minuting Secretary and Anne Lock, our President, who is a non Executive Member. We cannot continue to function as a lively and outward-looking Society with such a small committee. We are actively working towards holding a Gardens Open Day in June and, hopefully, another successful set of Heritage Open Days in September, but we cannot effectively plan and complete this work unless more members volunteer to join the main committee or the sub committees for those specific events.

You will have noted from this edition of 'Spotlight', we still don't have a Society Secretary, which means that mainly communications go unanswered because we just do not have the manpower to do everything. I therefore appeal to all members to think carefully about the future. If you wish the Corsham Civic Society to enter its 50<sup>th</sup> year in 2013 as a vibrant group of people, then do please do something about it. Please contact me on 01249 715741 or 07767 371485 or [michael.rumsey@btinternet.com](mailto:michael.rumsey@btinternet.com) and offer your services. We will be delighted to welcome you on board.

Thank you.

*Michael Rumsey*

## Review

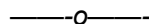
Our Annual Dinner was held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January this year at Guyers House where some 40 members and friends attended. Everyone was warmly welcomed before we moved through to the bar for pre-dinner drinks, where the cosy ambiance of the room - a converted stable - soon encouraged a hubbub of noisy conversations!

Dinner was served in the Ballroom and Neil Glasspool, the Manager, ensured that everything ran very smoothly. The food was excellent and well presented; also, the waiting staff were very attentive and efficient throughout the evening.

As Michael Rumsey was unable to attend the function due to illness, Negley Harte proposed the Loyal Toast which everyone agreed was an appropriate way to start the Jubilee Year.

Overall, the evening was a huge success.

*Joan Maciver*



At our meeting in February Stephen Hobbs, activist at the Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre, gave an overview of "The Lacock Archives". These have been deposited at the History Centre for some 20 years and the owner is now wishing to sell them. Archives are the leading source of historical evidence. The archives of Lacock Abbey and the families which owned it form a unique collection for the history of the local area. It contains over 100 boxes

of archives, arising from the lives and work of the Talbot, Davenport and Feilding families and their estates, from the 12th-20th centuries. It includes estate records, personal papers, naval records, and material relating to the East India Company, amongst others.

Any large estate or family archive is a complex jigsaw puzzle – the pieces of it interlink and cannot be removed without affecting the meaning and value of the whole. It is therefore vital that the collection can be kept intact. It is also vital for ease of research that it remains publicly accessible. As a result the History Centre are seeking to buy the collection. They are the preferred buyer, but need to raise a substantial sum of money. They have applied for a Heritage Lottery Fund Heritage Grant and have passed the first round. Further work is now required prior to final submission of their bid. They will know in November this year if they have been successful.

*Jane Browning*

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## Springfield Corsham Community Campus: Update

The next significant stage in developing a community campus for Corsham will be this Spring when the Community Operations Board (COB) submits a planning application. Wiltshire Council Cabinet has now given the go-ahead for the first three campus projects, and Corsham is leading the way. The date when the new campus may be in use is now put at 2014 (but site preparation and building work will be phased to ensure that the Community Centre will not close until new facilities become available).

Some of you may have seen a public presentation in mid-January, when a road show visited Biddestone, Box, Corsham, Colerne and Lacock to give people an idea of what the new building (attached to a refurbished Leisure Centre) will look like.

After the planning application, the next phase will be for the COB members to work with the project architects and Wiltshire Council's project managers on developing the design in detail and looking into how the campus will be managed. Quite a challenge as the new campus will provide access to enhanced leisure facilities, a range of council services, the library, a cafe, a crèche, as well as a range of rooms for meetings and functions.

The Civic Society will continue to use its e-mail list to alert members to new dates or developments. You can also find out more in these ways:

[www.springfieldccc.com](http://www.springfieldccc.com) (a recently launched site where you read updates and leave comments)

Wiltshire Council's website (where notes of COB meetings are posted)

(<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityandliving/communitycampuses/corshamcommunitycampus.htm>)

Allan Bosely, COB chair, provides progress reports (and meeting notes) for Corsham Area Board meetings and for the Corsham Town Council Newsletter.

*Sally Fletcher*

### Gift Aid

HMRC have advised we are unable to claim Gift Aid against membership fees. It is rather difficult to explain but it revolves around the "benefit" that members receive opposed to non members: because members pay a reduced entrance fee to our monthly meetings the subscription for members would need to be raised significantly in order for the Society to claim Gift Aid. As a result we have decided not to proceed with this. Our thanks to treasurer Roger for pursuing this complex subject.

## Charles Dickens, Pickwick and the 'Pickwick Papers'

As we remember the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Charles Dickens, we also think of his second book that he wrote, namely, 'Pickwick Papers' and its association with our Pickwick.

Charles Dickens first visited Bath in 1835, as a young newspaper reporter while following the tour of England of Lord John Russell, leader of the Whig Party who later became Prime Minister in the 1840's. Dickens stayed at the 'Saracen's Head' at the bottom of Broad Street. The name of 'Pickwick' was to be seen in Bath at that time on the sides of coaches belonging to Eleazer Pickwick (1749-1837), the owner of a well-known coaching business. Eleazer Pickwick was quite a prominent citizen of the city as he was elected Mayor in 1826.

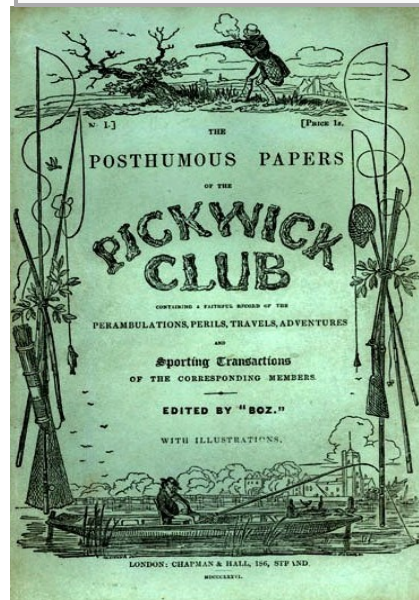
The village of Pickwick has important connections in the relation to 'coaching'. The public house 'The Hare & Hounds' was well known as a staging inn for the London to Bath coaches. On the journey from Bath to London, after accomplishing the climb from Box to Rudloe, the horses were ready to be changed at Pickwick, some 9 miles from Bath. In the reverse direction the 'Hare & Hounds' was the last staging post stop.

At some time in the latter part of the eighteenth century or the early part of the nineteenth century a baby boy was found on a doorstep in Pickwick and was given two names, Moses, after the Old Testament prophet found in the bulrushes, and secondly, Pickwick, after the village where he was found. Moses Pickwick later became landlord of the 'Hare & Hounds' and a coach proprietor. It is probable that Dickens saw the name of 'Pickwick' on coaches belonging to both gentlemen, Eleazer and Moses Pickwick, and chose the surname for his lead character in 'Pickwick Papers', which also satirised the social life in Bath. It was first published in 1837. It is rumoured that Dickens stayed at the 'Hare & Hounds', whether this is true or not is difficult to ascertain, but it is certainly a nice thought that such a famous writer as Charles Dickens may have stayed in Pickwick on his way from London to Exeter to visit relations.

Dickens visited Bath on a number of occasions to stay with his close friend, Walter Savage Lander, who resided at 35, St. James' Square. Bronze plaques outside this house show the once famous occupants.

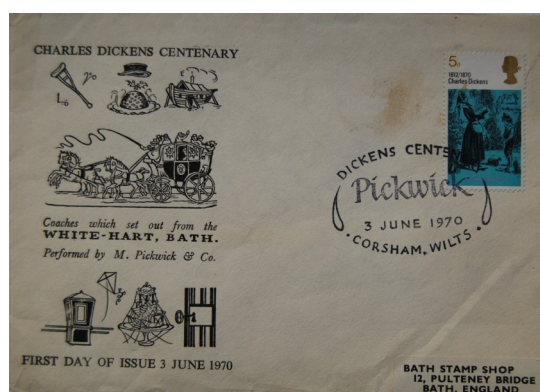
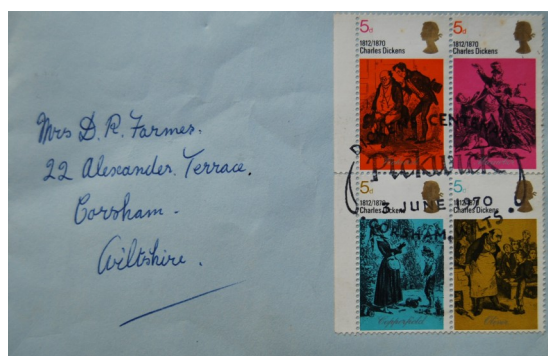
On the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1970 the Royal Mail issued a set of 4 stamps to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens. For that day a special First Day Cover was issued on the theme of 'Pickwick and Dickens' and these could be posted in a special post box at Corsham Post Office and each envelope received a unique hand franking as shown in the two illustrations.

### *The Pickwick Papers*



Original cover issued in 1836

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)





I was asked by the late Ian Storey to gather material together and create this article. Shortly after Ian's death I received a number of items including the First Day Covers, for which I am greatly indebted to Mrs Helen Storey and family.

Michael Rumsey

References used:-

Special articles from the 'Gazette & Herald' and 'Wiltshire Times'.  
Information on Eleazer Pickwick from the 'Guild of One-Name Studies'.

Information on the 'Saracen's Head' from Somerset – Pubs & Inns with a literary connection.'



"The Two Wellers" a piece of Dickens memorabilia



## Corsham Railway Station Update and the Wiltshire Core Strategy

Since the Rail Summit at Bristol, organised by the West of England Partnership and referred to in my last Update, there have been three further meetings on the Great Western Franchise Consultation, all organised by TravelWatch SW. Both Chairman and Secretary, Chris Irwin and Gordon Edwards respectively, have worked tirelessly in their efforts to ensure the entire South West is dealt as fair a hand as possible, even if electrification offers greater benefits to the northern part of the region than it does, at present, to the south. They have attempted to provide the "hooks" on which representatives of local transport authorities, and campaign groups, may hang their pet scheme or infrastructure improvement. The early years of any franchise are bound to be fraught for the Operator as infrastructure improvements get underway. Yet a further meeting, organised on this occasion by Passenger Focus, is to take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> March next, just ten days prior to the deadline for responses of 30<sup>th</sup> March. If any of you wish to read/respond to the Consultation, both information and questions can be downloaded from the DfT website. Alternatively just type "Great Western Franchise Consultation" into the Google search engine.

A healthy number responded to the interim Core Strategy Consultation in 2011, many relating to Para. 5.7.5 : *"The bus network in the area lacks connectivity and there is currently no railway station. This creates reliance on the car to travel to work, yet highway capacity in and around Corsham is poor.*

***Reopening the railway station could be a significant boost to local business but it is unrealistic to consider that this will occur within the plan period to 2026"***. It appears that wording has been changed, but the documentation is in Corsham Library, and 2<sup>nd</sup> April is the deadline for responses! Sadly page 14 of the Wiltshire Compact 2011 has not been followed - *The Wiltshire Compact public sector partners undertake to.....give consultees enough information and time to respond... a standard period of 12 weeks!* The original introduction was also misleading stating that "comments on the CHANGES to the Strategy were required" but this WC have now had to withdraw as it is **the entire document**, with 18 Topic Papers which is open to comment. Sufficient reading matter to take one until September to read and digest! We note yet again that Showell is identified for employment **for Chippenham**, whilst being within the parish boundaries of Corsham and Lacock, yet Corsham continues to be described as not in need of further strategic development. You may recall a designation of employment for Cepen Park North, which NWDC were eventually persuaded by developers to change to residential – far more profitable (for them) and leaving Chippenham in search of a replacement area. But should Corsham, with all its brownfield MOD land, be called upon to give up Grade 1 agricultural land at Showell as a result? The Society will again object and we trust that you, as members, would agree with that response. Following hours/weeks of study and dissemination, I think Jane Browning, Sally Fletcher and I will be in dire need of a good, relaxing, break this Easter.

Anne Lock

## Measuring the Heights of the Neale Family at the Mansion House, Corsham, 1722-51

The first 'mansion house' to be built in Corsham by a rich and successful clothier in the last great boom of the broadcloth and/or medley cloth industry in the first half of the eighteenth century was the 'Mansion House', as it was called at the time, and as it has been called ever since. Earlier successful clothiers had re-built or re-fronted their timber-framed houses with ashlar stone and sash windows, perhaps Venetian windows - smartening their houses up, but this was the first completely newly-built mansion house to proclaim the wealth and status of the clothier and his family. It was built with dispatch and with great expense in the years 1721-23.

It is a notable house, constructed on the then edge of the small market town of Corsham, grandly facing the important London to Bath road, a significant coaching road long before it was turnpiked. The house is oddly overlooked by Pevsner. 'Corsham has no match in Wiltshire for wealth of good houses, and there are a few of really high merit', wrote Pevsner. He noted the adjoining 'The Grove', the handsome mansion house that was next to be built, in 1737, along the coaching road to the east, strikingly facing north up Corsham's High Street. But Pevsner's eye failed to be caught by the Mansion House, rather down at heel by then, but evidently a house of distinction. The Neale family came to believe that Hawksmoor had designed it, or at least had a hand in it; there is not a shred of evidence for this, but on the visual evidence it is not totally implausible.



The doorway of the Mansion House in Corsham, unaltered from when it was built in 1721-22.



The datestone on the carriage-house attached to the Mansion House recording its completion in 1723 by Robert and Sarah Neale.

The Mansion House was built on two acres of land acquired in 1721 by Robert Neale from his father-in-law William Arnold; the land had cost £100, but it is not clear if this is what William Arnold paid for it before his death in 1719, or whether Robert Neale bought it for this sum from his father-in-law's estate. At all events, the grand new house was speedily built in two years at a cost of £2,100. The completion was marked by the elegant datestone on the carriage-house with the initials of Robert and Sarah Neale and the date 1723.

On the stone surround of the front door there are some interesting graffiti recording the heights of the growing children of the Neale dynasty, as the family were evidently regarding themselves. (See photos on opposite page.) At the top 'RN' is recorded in 1722 – presumably the date the family moved in – at 6 feet and 1 inch. Immediately under him is 'EH', who must be his daughter-in-law Elizabeth, at over 5 feet 10 inches, and

then another 'RH' in 1732 at 5 feet 9 inches. The elder Robert Neale (1682-1733) was 40 years of age in 1722; his wife Sarah Neale, *nee* Arnold (1679-1745), was three years older, and she does not figure in these measured recordings. The second 'RH' was presumably his son Robert Neale (1706-76), aged 28 in 1732, and not to be married to Elizabeth Smith until 1735.

Presumably, the height of the son Robert is recorded aged 28 in 1732, perhaps when he returned home from working in London; after his father died the following year, he must have taken over the business and the house, getting married himself two years later, and having his mother continuing to live in the house along with his wife and their own growing family.

The recording of the growing family is difficult to interpret. The main initials recorded are 'RN' and 'EN', but they refer to more than two people. The three generations of the Neale dynasty in Corsham were led

confusingly by three successive Robert Neales. And there were two Elizabeth Neales, a mother and a daughter. Besides the first and the second Robert Neales already referred to, there was a third – grandson of the first and son of the second. He was born in Corsham in 1736, and, like his grandfather, died young in 1774, before he was 40. His father lived for two more years, dying aged 70 in 1776. It is this Robert Neale, the third, who is recorded at 4 feet 3 inches aged 10 in 1746 (RNEAL) and 5 feet 3 inches in 1751 aged 15.

The second Robert Neale married Elizabeth Smith, heiress to her brother John Smith of Shaw House, between Corsham and Melksham, and Shaw House was inherited by the Neales in 1757; the second and third Robert Neales are subsequently as often referred to as 'of Shaw House' and as 'of Corsham'. Robert the second and Elizabeth had a daughter Elizabeth, evidently a much-loved daughter who lived for the fourteen years from 1743 to 1757. This is the girl 'EN' recorded at 3 feet 5 inches in 1746 aged 3, at 4 feet 1 inch aged 7 in 1750, and 4 feet 3 inches in 1751 aged 8.

Robert the second had two other children between the surviving Robert and the short-lived Elizabeth; there were twins, Thomas and William, born in 1738, and who did not live long enough to reach measurability, William dying soon after Thomas as babies. Robert the second himself had four brothers, only one of whom lived to maturity. William (1708-22) and Thomas (1712-28) both died aged 14, and George (1714-15) aged only one. James (1709-34) lived to be 25, itself quite an achievement in the smallpox-ridden 1730s, sadly dying after being set up with Littlecote Farm near Hilmarton, and soon after receiving affectionate bequests from his father – '£500, the best riding horse, bridle and saddle and my best pair of pistols and my silver-hilted sword and scarlet cloake and my watch'. Yet, puzzlingly, there is no 'JN' carved into the doorway. The dynasty is recorded in terms of eldest sons and a daughter.

The third Robert Neale had two daughters, aged three and one at the time of his death in 1774. The elder, Grace Elizabeth Neale, was baptised at St. George's, Hanover Square, in one of the most fashionable parts of London. She grew up to become Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Charlotte and companion to Princess Amelia. She married Admiral Sir Harry Burnard in 1795, who promptly changed his name to Neale. He has a huge obelisk in his memory overlooking the Solent erected by Queen Adelaide in 1840; Lady Neale lived on in Blackheath in great style to 1855. There were no children, and no further direct heirs. Corsham and the making of cloth and the money to be made from making cloth had been left well behind.

The Mansion House sank to being let out as a school; revived for some years as a gentleman's house by a lawyer who was a distant kinsman of the Neales in the years after 1891, it subsequently sank further into being a private hotel, and then fell into the dead hands of Wiltshire County Council. Down at heel it survives, the markings on the doorway recalling for us the vanity of once brave dynastic ambitions.

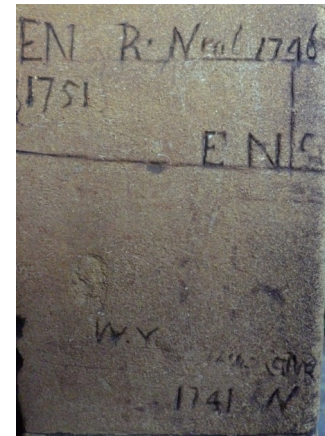
*Negley Harte*

#### Bibliography

Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Wiltshire* (1963, rev.ed 1975)  
J.A. Neale, *Charters and Records of Neales of Berkeley, Yate and Corsham* (1906)  
Hugh Wright, *The Story of Great Chalfield, 1553-1913* (2011)

#### Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the photography of James Methuen-Campbell, the careful study of which – in its enhanced form – will throw further light on the rather simplified account provided here.



A close-up of part of this measured recording.

The recording of the heights of the Neale family and their dates on the doorway of the Mansion House.



## Rudloe Stoneworks Ltd.

Two tours of Rudloe Stoneworks Ltd. took place as part of Heritage Open Days 2011. Paul Baker and his wife Jenny gave a fascinating insight into the work carried out and took us through the processes involved in their business. The product range was much larger than most visitors realised, including natural hand carved stone and the manufactured cast stone products.

The company was set up some 20 years ago at Box Hill, just outside of Corsham, on a small farm. It has 'organically' grown since then and makes a range of products from fireplaces to flag stones, mullion windows and sills, through to garden ornaments. Their comprehensive service also includes fitting grates and baskets for gas, coal or electric fires.



In the showroom at the start of the tour

For bespoke stone products large blocks of stone are obtained from local quarries, Hartham Park Quarry or Limpley Stoke for example, and are individually chosen specifically for the job in hand, such as a fireplace. The stone is cut on large stone saws and then goes to the mason's shop for their experienced stone masons to hand carve. Any waste is crushed and it is from this waste that many of the cast products are made. Cast stone is generally cheaper to buy compared to natural stone due primarily to less time required - remember that working with stone by hand is a time consuming process. As a bonus, the resulting product is more resilient than natural stone.

The whole process of cast stone is carried out 'in house' at Rudloe including the initial design, making of wooden masters, through to making rubber moulds. The product is then manufactured from a mixture of stone dust, aggregates and cement, is moved to a vibrating table which releases any air bubbles, and then goes into a temperature controlled room where an exothermic reaction takes place; the carbonates, water and cement react, releasing energy in the form of heat which cures the mixture itself overnight in a self-curing process.

Rudloe use a unique process where detailing is etched upon the stone by dipping in a solution of hydrochloric acid. This dissolves the surface of the stone leaving the intricate details showing. A crane and stainless steel lifting gear is needed for this operation. The stone then goes through a neutralizing tank to clean off any residual acid.

Today Rudloe have a wide customer base; from local retail customers, through to nationwide house builders and including recently shipping some 300 square metres of local stone flooring to a celebrity in the USA. There are numerous styles of fireplaces, many named after local places of interest, such as Box Tunnel (built precisely at one fifteenth scale of the actual tunnel), the Hazelberry range, the Hartham, the Pickwick and the Sheldon. There are 300 original floor tiles from which casts are taken, an ever increasing range of different fires/stoves including log burning stoves, gas fires, gas stoves and gas baskets. (The company is HETAS qualified and Gas Safe registered for gas installation.)



Paul Baker showing some of the stone products to the group.





Group discussion

*Jane Browning*

Acknowledgement: Thank you to Jenny Baker who kindly checked through my article for correctness and provided the photographs.

At the time of the visit in September 2011 the recession was having an impact on Rudloe, as on all manufacturing companies. In order to maintain the viability of the company, they have continued to diversify, recently into woodland management and wood stores which have galvanised feet to prevent rotting. Five live stoves heat the whole building and help keep energy consumption under check as well as being a good advertisement for log burning stoves.

In summer 2011 Tetbury Stone became part of Rudloe and an old stone lathe came with the purchase which they hope to restore allowing the company to increase their range even further to include stone balustrades.

We are very grateful to Paul and Jenny for providing these tours. They made us very welcome and it was good to see the enthusiasm which Paul had for the business. It was interesting to see that the group I was with were surprised of the high quality and range of goods provided by a local firm, largely unknown to the local population.

## Neighbourhood Planning

England's planning system shapes new development all over the country, making sure it is positive for people, the economy and the environment. We are entering into a new era for planning. The Government is placing a renewed emphasis on planning at the local level because it believes that local people know best what local needs are and how they can be met. A key component of the new approach to planning is the Neighbourhood Plan. This new type of plan will mean that local communities will be able to come together to shape the future of their area.

Neighbourhood Plans provide a great opportunity for you to have more influence on how the places in which you live and work will change over time. Your local knowledge and your sense of what needs to be protected and what needs to change can really make a difference.



A few examples of things a Neighbourhood Plan might include are:

- the design of buildings
- transport and access (including issues around roads, cycling, walking and access for disabled people)
- the development of housing, including affordable housing
- protection of open spaces, allotments, sports pitches and the planting of trees
- protection of important buildings
- promotion of renewable energy projects.

Parish and town councils, where they exist, are the only bodies that can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan does not have to cover the whole area of the parish or town. It can also extend across parish boundaries.

The Council for the Protection for Rural England and the National Association of Local Councils have prepared a booklet to guide people through eight steps to take when preparing such a plan. Advice on Neighbourhood Planning and other aspects of planning can be found at <http://www.planninghelp.org.uk/>.

*Jane Browning*

## Corsham High Street 1949

In January 2012 the Society was contacted by Mrs Hilary Corke who, when looking through the photographs of her late father, came across a number annotated on the back with "Reconstruction of High Street, Corsham, for Wilts C.C. 1949". Her father was Mr S Harold A Abbott, 1915-1953, a civil engineer at Wiltshire County Council. Hilary thought the photographs should come back to where they belong so travelled to Corsham and passed them over to our safekeeping in our archives. I took her on a tour of Corsham and we were able to match the buildings in the photographs with the current scene.

I have included the photographs below – they are stamped on the reverse with "Ernest Ireland, Ltd, Civil Engineering Contractors, Lower Bristol Road, Bath". I have been unable to identify the location of the final photograph.

*Jane Browning*





## Ian Storey

Ian Storey joined the Civic Society committee in spring 2011. We welcomed him for his love of and commitment to Corsham. He was well-known in the town due to his position with the Chamber of Commerce, his work with the Martingate Centre and his successful efforts to save the Tourist Information Centre in 2006 through his campaigning with the Corsham Area Development Trust. Unfortunately we only had the benefit of his local knowledge and his enthusiasm for just a few months. He died in November last year.

Ian spent most of his working life in marketing and had a great passion for promoting local enterprise in Corsham. Ian was instrumental in establishing the Corsham Area Community Partnership – the forerunner of the present Corsham Community Area Network. He also helped to establish the Corsham Area Development Trust, when, in 2006, North Wilts District Council wanted to transfer the running of Corsham's Tourist Information and Heritage Centre into the hands of others.

Our chairman, Michael Rumsey, says of Ian "His work in keeping the Corsham Heritage and Information Centre open was legendary and we are hopeful the Centre will continue to remain open for many years to come as a tribute to Ian's foresight and hard work. His presence on the Corsham Civic Society Committee and also as a society member will be greatly missed."



Ian entering into the spirit on Civic Day

## Corsham Churches' Foodbank

The economic situation in the country has not left Corsham untouched. About a year ago Janet Clark realised there may be a need for a food bank in the town to provide short term help and encouraged the churches to take action. Gordon Toddhunter, a member on the ecumenical council, took up the challenge and investigated the need and how it could be met. John Johnson researched other Wiltshire foodbanks to come up with a format that would meet the needs of Corsham. It was found that agencies were referring Corsham residents in need to the Foodbank at Devizes and the Salvation Army in Chippenham, so it made sense to set up a facility in Corsham itself. The Baptist church was already providing an embryonic service in association with their Debt Counselling Service. A number of grants were received and the Foodbank was established, with the first parcels given out in May 2011.

The resulting Foodbank is the first time all the Corsham churches have acted together. All contribute both financially and practically. People are referred to the Foodbank by agencies such as the mental and discharge units of the National Health Service, Westlea, the Citizens Advice Bureau and New Highway, the Drug Rehabilitation Service. In fact, any agency can refer people to the Foodbank.

The Foodbank operates from St Aldhelms church hall, Pickwick Road. For obvious reasons, the food is mostly tinned, to prevent waste. "Sell by dates" are checked and boxes made up to provide sufficient food to provide three meals a day for a family, a couple or a single person for three days. Fresh food such as bread and milk cannot be stored so the Foodbank has an arrangement with the Co-op to provide these by voucher. Donations of food can be made at the bins provided in the Co-op, all the Corsham churches, the Ministry of Defence, Chippenham College and the police station. They can also be handed in at St. Aldhelms on Tuesdays between 10.00 and 11.30 and Saturdays from 10.30 to 12.30. Financial contributions are also welcome; Cafe Neston, for example is a consistent contributor.

John Johnson, stresses this is a non-judgemental service. They prefer people to approach them when in need rather than suffer.

*Jane Browning*



## 2012 PROGRAMME

Jan 20th	7.00 for 7.30 pm	<b>Annual Dinner at Guyers House</b>
Feb 24th	7.30 pm	<b>“The Lacock Archives”</b> Talk by Stephen Hobbs, Archivist at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.
Mar 30th	7.30 pm	<b>“Dated Buildings in the Corsham Area”</b> 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	<b>“After Eden: the Origin and Evolution of Cultivation and Cultivated Plants”</b> Talk by Peter Thoday, well-known for his television programmes on gardens.
May 11th	7.00 for 7.15 pm	<b>AGM at the Town Hall : with entertainment</b>
June 23-24		<b>Corsham Open Gardens Weekend (Civic Day)</b>
Jul 27th	6.00 pm	<b>Visit to Hilmarton.</b> 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	<b>“The acquisition of the Art Collection at Corsham Court”</b> Talk by James Methuen-Campbell who is very knowledgeable about art and music.
Oct 26th	7.30 pm	<b>“Corsham’s Secret Underground”</b> Talk by Alan Macrae, a Wiltshire Councillor, who used to work underground.
Nov 23rd	7.30 pm	<b>“The Great War and Wiltshire Soldiers”</b> 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  
Arnold House  
31 High Street  
CORSHAM

Wiltshire SN13 0EZ  
Registered Charity No: 275321