

Corsham Spotlight

Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society

November 2012
Volume 9 Issue 3

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Editorial

You will find a number of inserts to this issue. Please do look at the flyer from Dominik Sky. He has offered to write a song for the Civic Society to celebrate our 50th anniversary next year, to be performed at our concert in June 2013, if he receives a number of commissions from our members.

I first heard about the school log of Pickwick School (Page 8) at the joint conference of the Wiltshire Record Society and Wiltshire Local History Forum on 21st October to celebrate the former's 75th anniversary. Ivor Slocombe had come across this log book some time ago and kindly agreed to provide an article for us. Some of the surnames of the children mentioned are those of families still in the area.

I'm sure you will wish to know that we sent our best wishes to Kathy and Wyndham Thomas on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary on Saturday 3rd November. They have both contributed much to the Society over the years.

Finally, you may be interested to learn that the magazine *Wiltshire Life* picked up on the article in the November 2011 issue of *Spotlight* on John Hanning Speke, the explorer, printing it in their November issue.

Finally, I wish you all a Happy Christmas.

Jane Browning



Photo: M Rumsey

The interior of Hartham Chapel on Heritage Open Days before the visitors arrived. Michael Mace, once a choirboy then organ blower at the Chapel, attended, his first visit since 1959.

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Maureen Ainsley
Ethel Barker
Ethel Gardner
S.C. Gray
Peter and Felicity Hurlow-Jones
Averil and Ron Newell

Judith Pavy
Sue Pethybridge
Hazel Self
Paul Thatcher
Chris Ward

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

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Christmas message from the Chairman

Dear Friends,

On reading my last Christmas message, I realise how time has flown by. What a year it has been: a superbly organised Diamond Jubilee for Her Majesty the Queen followed by the wonderful Olympic and Paralympic Games. For us too, the Corsham Civic Society has enjoyed a most successful year. The range and interest of the talks organised most ably by our colleague Negley Harte have been, in my opinion, of the highest order. We also enjoyed a most interesting evening visit to Hilmarton in July, which was well attended.

The Heritage Open Days held this September were attended by over 300 people. The Society continues to be grateful to Corsham Town Council for their continuing financial support of this 4-day event. I would like to extend the Society's grateful thanks to all those who contributed, in any way, in making the HODS weekend such a memorable one.

We now look forward to 2013, a special year for the Society, our Golden Jubilee. The programme of meetings and events are again most exciting and I commend them to you hoping you will be able to attend all of them throughout the year. When the Society was formed in 1963, little did those founding members think about 50 years hence, but here we are, 50 years old and still, like Topsy, growing in strength. Our membership is 160 strong and rising. We look forward to the growth continuing.

Finally, all that it remains for me to say, is to wish you the compliments of the season and a very Happy New Year.

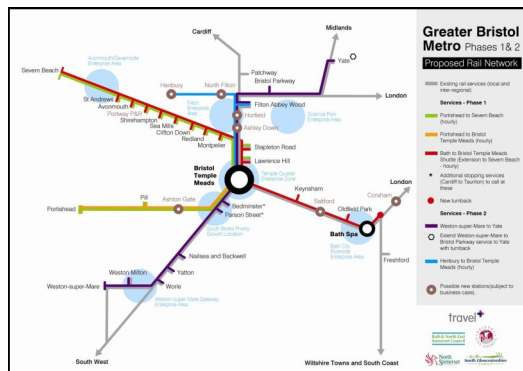
Michael Rumsey



Corsham Station Campaign Update

The three "Ps" - Patience, Persistence and Perseverance - were suggested as a slogan at a 1986 meeting of the Station Campaign Committee! If you study the proposed Bristol Metro map taken from the West of England Partnership's response to the Great Western Franchise Consultation 2012, (see below) you will see that Corsham appears as a small brown dot. I am so glad I attended all those Avon, the Bath, Bristol and South Gloucestershire Public Transport Meetings! At the moment, Cllr. Richard Gamble is concentrating his efforts on the Melksham rail service having won funding for improvements, but we need to remind him how important it is to include references to Corsham Station within any Wiltshire responses. Our MP, Duncan Hames, recently received a response from the Minister, who confirmed that whilst the franchising programme was paused at present, there was nothing in the draft Great Western Franchise Agreement to prevent the running of a service between Bristol and Oxford. PPP!

Anne Lock



Review

In July we had a splendid outing to Hilmarton, linked to Corsham by the Poynder family. It was a beautiful evening and the local history society had very kindly arranged to show us around both the church and the village. Richard Broadhead and Geoff Proctor, along with Richard's wife, looked after us very well. The village is off the main Calne to Lynham road, so is not one you would normally pass through. But it is delightful and well worth a slight deviation.



Memorial to William Henry Poynder "of Hilmarton and Hartham Park"

At our September meeting James Methuen-Cambell told us how the main collection was put together by his forebear Sir Paul Methuen (1672 - 1757). Sir Paul had attended a Jesuit school in Paris, a rather unusual step as the family were not Catholic, but his father wanted him to have a rounded education. At the age of 20 he stood in for his father as an envoy in Portugal when his father had to

return to England. It was whilst he was in Spain in 1715 that he purchased his first large painting —the central square of Mexico City painted in 1695 by Cristobal de Villalpando, which hangs in the Library at Corsham Court. Sir Paul became a distinguished diplomat, and was made Knight of the Bath in 1725. He bought 34 Grosvenor Street, London to provide room to hang his paintings. He purchased mostly contemporary 17th and early 18th century pieces, generally buying paintings that were more sombre than decorative and which were considered as "noble", the intention being to give people subjects on which to think deeply rather than just an attractive picture to look at.

Sir Paul chose his god-son and cousin as his heir and young Paul Methuen bought Corsham House, as it was then called, in 1745 and the idea of a gallery was conceived to house the large collection. The Picture Gallery was added after Sir Paul's death. It is designed as a triple cube, 72 feet in length. The pictures are hung symmetrically and generally all the large pictures have remained where they were first hung.

Eighty paintings remain of the 220 bought by Sir Paul. Some were sold to pay for the rebuilding of the North front of Corsham Court between 1846 - 1849 and some sold to pay death duties. The other paintings at the Court were mostly inherited in the mid-nineteenth century by the marriage of Frederick Methuen, later the second baron, to Horatio, only child of the noted collector Reverend John Sanford (1777-1855).

In October we had a full house for Alan Macrae's reminiscences of his time working underground as an RAF officer from 1989 until 1994. His duties included Health and Safety Officer and Radiation Officer and he was able to give an insight into the life of those who spent their entire working day underground. Conditions below ground, with constant temperature and humidity, are good for storing goods, particularly ammunition and explosives. He regaled us with stories of the CD1 fan, some 160 inches in diameter, which provided 4 complete air changes a day, generating winds up to 30mph.

The meeting was also used to launch Pat Whalley's latest book *Corsham Memories Part II The Pre-fab Years 1930-40*. Copies were presented to those whose stories appear in the book.

Jane Browning



The almshouses at Hilmarton in the "Poynder" style, although designed by Henry Weaver, Poynder's land agent.

The Life and Work of the Rev. Wilbert Vere Awdry (1911 – 1997)

On Saturday August 11th this year, in the presence of his sisters Veronica and Hilary and their children, Christopher Awdry unveiled a commemorative plaque to his father, the clergyman and writer the Rev. Wilbert Vere Awdry, at Lorne House, Box. Wilbert Awdry had lived at Lorne House, named 'Journey's End' by his father, the Rev. Vere Awdry, from 1920 until 1928. This delightful memorial to Wilbert shows 'Thomas the Tank Engine', one of the many engines he created while writing his 26 books for children.



The Awdry family at the unveiling of the commemorative plaque to W. V. Awdry at Lorne House, Box.

Wilbert Vere Awdry was born on 15th June 1911, at Ampfield Vicarage, near Romsey, Hampshire, to Vere and Lucy Awdry. Vere Awdry was one of 14 children of Sir John Awdry of Notton House, Lacock and though he commenced work as a solicitor he trained at Chichester Theological College and was ordained in 1886. In 1887 he married his first wife, Margaret Mann, while serving as a Curate at North Bradley but tragedy struck the following year when Margaret died while giving birth to Hildred, who later died in 1891 of convulsions. Vere then married Mary Mann, cousin of Margaret and in 1892 Bridget was born, followed by Carol Edward in 1894.

In 1895, the family moved to Ampfield where Vere had been offered a living. He was a popular incumbent and was much concerned, among other things, with the welfare of children in the parish. Two further tragedies struck the Awdry family when 8-year-old Bridget died of appendicitis in 1900 and in 1908, Mary, her mother, died of cancer. Carol Edward was then 14 and he and his father grew very close together. Vere was understandably grief stricken and withdrew from any parish activities. His niece, Edith Simeon, came to the Awdry home as housekeeper and during this time a close friend of hers, Lucy Bury, daughter of a Darjeeling tea planter, often visited the Vicarage and she got on well with Vere. They married in 1909.

Much happier with his family situation, Vere picked up his many activities and Wilbert was born in June 1911. Brian Sibley, in his biography on Wilbert, describes where his name came from, "It was by combining the names of William and Herbert, Vere's favourite brothers, that he got the name "Wilbert", with which he later christened his son".



The Awdry family in the 1950s

Wilbert became very close to his half-brother Carol who, on the outbreak of War in August 1914, enlisted as an officer but just 13 days later, on 27th August, he was killed in action during the retreat from Mons. Despite the birth of a brother for Wilbert, George, in 1916, Vere found the memories of Carol at Ampfield too difficult, so he decided to retire and return to his native Wiltshire. The Awdry family came to Box in 1917 having for a short time lived at Middlewick, Corsham, when Vere served as Chaplain to the Hartham Estate chapel.

Their first house in Box was 'The Wilderness', then in February 1919 they moved to 'Townend' and finally to 'Lorne Villa' in 1920, which they renamed as 'Journey's End'.

This house was journey's end for Vere as 8 years later he died there. For young Wilbert, 'Journey's End' was only 200 yards from the road bridge of the A4 crossing the Great Western's London to Bristol route which emerged from Box Tunnel with a great flourish. In those days a banking engine was retained at Box to bank all the heavy freight trains through the tunnel and

Wilbert, George and their father, Vere, took great interest in all the railway activities so close to their home. Vere Awdry was indeed a photographer of railway engines and I have some copies of his pictures taken in the 1920s taken in and around Box Station and Box Wharf, by the tunnel. The sound of the trains being banked through the valley at Box and the rushing of the express trains from the tunnel must have inspired Wilbert to think about railways when his son Christopher later requested a bedtime story.

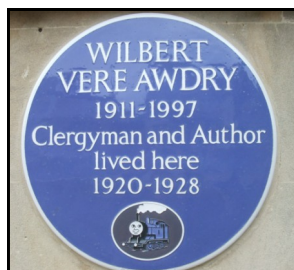
In the meantime Wilbert was educated at Dauntsey's School, West Lavington, St. Peter's Hall, Oxford and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, where he gained his diploma in theology in 1933. For three years he taught at St. George's School, Jerusalem and was ordained in the Anglican priesthood in 1936. In 1938 he married Margaret Wale. In 1940 he became curate at St. Nicholas Church, King's Norton, Birmingham and stayed there throughout the war until 1946. He subsequently served as Rector of Elsworth with Knapwell in Cambridgeshire and as Vicar of Emneth, Norfolk, before retiring and moving to Rodborough, Stroud, where he lived until his death in 1997.

A fine memorial stained glass window by Alfred Fisher (1998) is to be found in the Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Rodborough. This window was commissioned and donated to the Church by Wilbert Awdry. Veronica Chambers, Wilbert's daughter, has kindly passed on to me the notes made by Alfred Fisher regarding this window. He says, "the left side base picture is "a depiction of the family at the time the stories were written, a stylised rendering rather than the exact portraits. The fact that Wilbert is seen with an open book is entirely symbolic, a way of introducing the books without which the window would be incomplete". At the base of the right hand side is the cameo of Thomas. "Thomas is seen being put in the shed for the last time while a shadowy figure of a clergyman in a cloth cap starts to close the door. Thomas has a mixed expression of sadness on the one hand and pleasure at what has gone before. The moon above confirms that this is the end of the day, the end of an era". Alfred Fisher also designed and made the plaque at Lorne House in Box.



Part of the memorial window at St Mary Magdelene, Rodborough with Thomas the tank engine at bottom right.

In 1943 young Christopher Awdry had a bout of measles and to amuse him and satisfy his thirst for stories Wilbert embarked on the first of his railway stories about Edward, Gordon and Henry, with Thomas appearing a little later. In the 26 books that Wilbert created in his lifetime many engines of all shapes and sizes appear. One of my favourite books is that entitled 'Small Railway Engines' and in the chapter called 'Tit for Tat' we meet the two clergyman, the Fat one and the Thin one. When looking at the illustrations for that chapter it's easy to identify the Thin Clergyman as Wilbert himself, while the Fat Clergyman is based on the Rev. Teddy Boston, a dedicated steam enthusiast, who lived at Cadeby Rectory, Leicestershire. I had the great pleasure of knowing both Teddy and Wilbert quite well and I can imagine having the two of them together would have been one of the funniest events ever, as they were both such great storytellers.



Plaque at Lorne House, Box

When you next pass 'Lorne House' in Box, do stop and view the lovely plaque that the current owners of this bed and breakfast establishment, Fran & Mike Ralli, have inset on the wall. I am indeed grateful to them for their kind invitation to attend of unveiling ceremony back in August and to members of the Awdry family, Veronica Chambers, Hilary Fortman and their brother Christopher, for allowing me access to material used in connection with this article.

Michael Rumsey

Corsham Quarry Tramways

Much has been written about Corsham's stone quarries and their subsequent role in WWI and WWII, for example in excellent books such as Derek Hawkin's "Bath Stone Quarries" and in Nick McCamley's "Secret Underground Cities" and "Second World War Secret Bunkers". There has even been a video history of Bath Stone quarrying called "Deep and Dusty". Less research, however, has been carried out on the relatively extensive quarry tramway system that linked six local quarries (Park Lane, Eastlays, Monks Park, Ridge, Spring and Hudswell) with the Great Western Railway near to the site of Corsham Station.

The system was initially authorised by the Board of Trade in 1876, used a gauge of 2ft 5 1/2 inches, and eventually consisted of five branch lines. Although small diesels were sometimes used in later years in the quarries and their yards, the tramway links down to the stone yards on the Great Western Railway were usually worked by horse and gravity. By the Second World War the tramway had largely fallen into disuse and much of the track was lifted in the 1940s.



Some documentary and photographic evidence still exists. The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham holds copies of the original Board of Trade Orders and plans and sections and has Ordnance Survey Maps for 1891, 1901 and 1921 which allow us to see the exact routes of the tramway and its evolution. There is also a reasonable catalogue of photographs showing the tramway sidings operating in quarry yards and at its terminus down on the GWR, but photographs of the tramway and trolleys operating between these locations are much rarer. Sadly, having

personally walked virtually the entire network in recent years, it is evident that very little physical evidence remains out on the ground apart from one or two embankments, a rare and isolated piece of rail and some decaying tramway trolleys at Monks Park Quarry (and even these may have never been used out on the tramway system but only for bringing stone up from underground). In most places it is almost impossible to work out that any tramway existed at all.



It is my intention to collate any remaining evidence before it is finally lost and ultimately I hope to produce a booklet on the subject. I am particularly keen to discover any photographs of the tramway operating between the quarries and the main line railway because one of the themes of the booklet will be to use "then" and "now" photographs so that people can go and explore the accessible remains of the tramway system for themselves. I have already received invaluable information from local quarry historian David Pollard, and Geoff Knapp who lived next to the tramway at Great Lypiatt Farm, but if anyone else has any knowledge or photographs of the tramway system do please give me a call on 01249 712248 or email me at phil@thewhalleys1.plus.com

Philip Whalley

PS. A separate thought. Wouldn't it be wonderful if one of the abandoned stone trolleys at Monks Park Quarry could be restored and then placed in front of the proposed Corsham Community Centre loaded with large blocks of locally quarried stone? This would make an impressive feature and also provide a reminder of the importance of the quarries in our town's history. Now that three quarries have re-opened it might even presage the future.



Monks Chapel - celebrating 350 years

This summer the Congregation celebrated 350 years since the Quakers built Monks Chapel. Its situation was such that it was outside a radius of five miles from the borough of Chippenham, to conform to the 'Five Mile Act' passed by Parliament in that same year 1662. It was one of laws, that sought to enforce conformity to the established Church of England and to expel any who did not conform. It forbade clergymen from living within five miles of a parish from which they had been expelled, unless they swore an oath never to resist the king or attempt to alter the



Flower arrangement by Margaret Shewring

government of Church or State. The Chapel and its cemetery is called Monks because the ground on which it is built was given by a Mr. Monk who lived in a farmhouse nearby.

In 1690, after the Quakers had used the chapel for some years, they sold it to the Independents and in that year the gallery was added. Between 1972-80 the Chapel was renovated but retained most of its original features so that none of the old world charm has been lost.



Celebration on 24th June

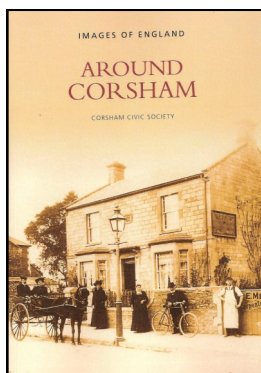
The 350th Anniversary was celebrated this June with a 4 day flower festival and a service on Sunday 24th led by Revd. David Grosch-Miller, the United Reformed South Western Synod Moderator. The chapel collaborated with the church of St. John the Baptist, Gastard who also celebrated their 100 years centenary with a flower festival and both congregations served teas to visitors at Monks Chapel.

On 26th August a birch tree was planted in Monks Chapel cemetery to celebrate 350 years of continuous worship, although the exact dates are unknown as all the Chapel's records were stored in Spackman's grocery store and were unfortunately lost in the fire in 1849.



Rev. Roy Fowler and Geoff Knapp look on while Rev. Jim Hawkins plants a birch tree.

Pat Britton



Ideas for Christmas presents

The Civic Society's *Images of England: Around Corsham* has been reprinted and is available either from the Civic Society or from the Corsham Bookshop. Price £12.99.



Pat Whalley's new book *Corsham Memories Part II The Pre-fab Years 1930-40* is also available from the Corsham Bookshop. Price £9.99.

Corsham Pickwick National School Logbooks

In the 19th century head teachers were required to keep a logbook in which significant items affecting the school were recorded. Some wrote at great length and others only the minimum but all the logbooks have very interesting and sometimes surprising entries.

When I first looked at the logbooks for Corsham Pickwick school, I was intrigued to find a section of the book covering the years 1863 to 1865 sealed up. The pages had been pierced and a tape threaded through and then sealed with sealing wax.



Photo from Wiltshire Community History web-site
Pickwick School about 1907

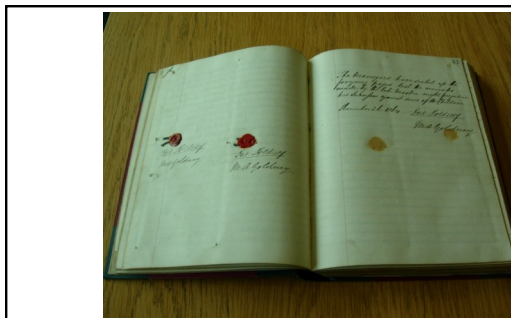
On the next page was the entry: 'The Managers have sealed up the foregoing pages lest the remarks made by the late master might prejudice his successor against some of the children'.

I consulted the archivist and he agreed that, as it was over a hundred years ago and in the interests of historical research, we would be justified in breaking the seal. He got out his scissors, cut the tape and revealed a story which was reminiscent of Dickens' Dotheboys Hall.

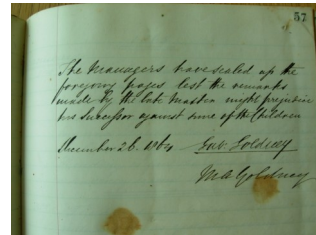
The school was run by Thomas Vincent and his wife Elizabeth. It was clear that they hated the school, disliked the children and were disillusioned with teaching

in general. They used corporal punishment at the slightest excuse and, quite unusually for logbooks, recorded comments about individual children.

Several boys were particularly singled out. 'Commenced this week by giving William Fido a sound flogging for his impudence'. Jacob Hancock was said to have exhibited a most rebellious spirit which was attributed to over indulgence at home. Stephen Hancock (perhaps Jacob's brother) was guilty of leading some of the juniors away from the school for the whole afternoon. He was in trouble again for bad behaviour during arithmetic 'which made the Master very angry'.



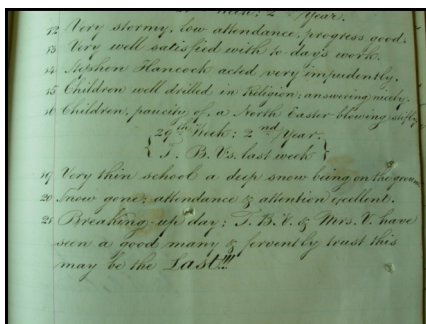
The sealed log book



The explanation as to why the log book was sealed.

The girls fared no better. Mary Hayward, for displaying a more than usual degree of stupidity during the arithmetic lesson, was given a severe beating by Mrs Vincent. A few months later she got another flogging for spoiling her copy book and saying 'she did not care'. Jan Bath was reprimanded for displaying a very proud spirit while Elizabeth Lyne and Emma Stokes were in trouble on account of 'their envious and jealous disposition'. Later it was reported that 'a sad and tormenting spirit was exhibiting itself in Elizabeth'.

Several girls tried to be fashionable by wearing hoops under their skirts (like a crinoline) which was against the school rules. One of them, Mary Josham, was made a public example, she being considered the ringleader. Mrs Vincent also tried 'to convey to the girls a sense of their foolishness in the dressing off their poor frail bodies to such a ridiculous extent' by giving a lesson



The last entries in the log book,
December 1865

on the snail, which carries all its wealth on its back.

Mrs Vincent seems to have had what might be described as 'a touch of Mrs Squeers'. Nothing escaped her notice as John Hancock found out. He was flogged for swearing during the dinner hour when 'he no doubt thought he should not be heard – however Mrs V overheard him!'. Despite her obvious shortcomings, Mrs Vincent was loyally supported by her husband: 'Mrs V usually so patient, painstaking and energetic, expressed herself as much discouraged on account of the stupidity exhibited by the 2nd class in Notation after all the labour she has spent upon them.'

The school was not achieving very well and, as the time of the school inspection approached, the Head became quite nervous. 'Mind very uneasy fearing that when the day of trial comes the majority of the children will fail, as they appear to heartily love anything but their lessons'. As expected, the inspectors' report was somewhat critical, on which the Head made the sardonic comment 'What a blessed thing it is to have these little deficiencies pointed out!'

The Vincents left the school at the end of December 1865. Their last entry in the logbook was 'Breaking up day. T.B.V. and Mrs V. have seen a good many and fervently trust this may be the LAST'.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office at Chippenham holds three Corsham Pickwick logbooks covering the periods 1863-1887, 1887-1920 and 1920-1922. Anyone looking at the history of the school, or of Corsham more generally, will certainly find a great deal of interest in these records.

Ivor Slocombe

Dreadnought 2013 - Suffragette Pilgrimage Anniversary

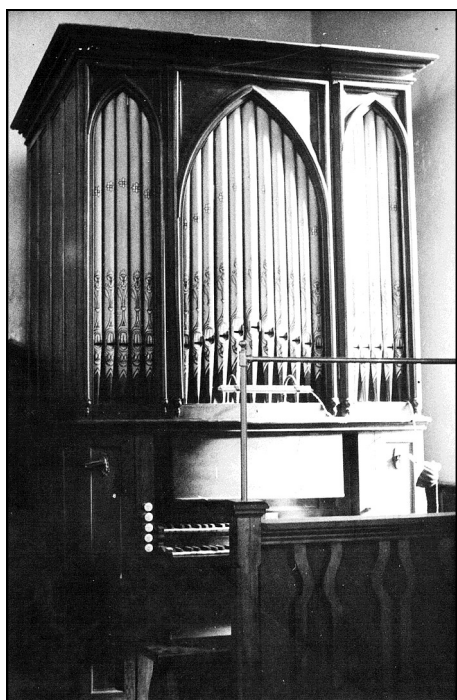
When checking the text of "Around Corsham" prior to a new edition being produced, I noticed the date on photographs depicting the arrival in Corsham of the Lands End to London Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage - 16th July 1913. Chatting with Andrea Garrihy later it fired our imaginations and we thought it should be celebrated. Some months later she presented me with a wonderful collection of literature and memorabilia. Subsequently I found Chippenham Museum had similar plans and heard of a group of Devon ladies whose intention is to re-enact the walk. They have gained funding to enable them to commission a play, to be performed in each of the towns along the original route. I wrote to them and heard that Corsham had not been identified, although it was the only town in Wiltshire to greet them kindly. In Bath and Calne stones flew and they escaped with police protection, whilst in Chippenham they were pelted with eggs and rotten fruit!

The name 'Dreadnought' was chosen originally by Mrs. Pankhurst. In Devon a press release has been drafted and a website is under construction, ready for the SW launch in early 2013. Corsham has secured its place; the group will arrive on Monday 15th July, staying overnight before going on to Chippenham. They will perform their play here and also participate in whatever celebrations are planned. The Town Hall has been booked; a small group has been formed to carry out further research; we are considering an exhibition in the Heritage Centre of photographs, reminiscences of relatives of those who participated back in 1913; copy newspaper articles, etc. Jane Browning has found a postcard in her family archives of the ladies arriving in Box and Jan Tapscott recalls hearing her grandmother was involved in the Suffrage March. I shall be meeting Anthony Welch, the Cluster Head of Corsham Junior Schools, to discuss with him how best to involve children. Please ring Jane or me if you wish to contribute in any way.

Anne Lock

Fifty years of Church Organ playing!

On Sunday November 18th 2012, at the Box Methodist Church, I celebrated my 50th anniversary of playing the organ for Church services and other events. Please don't ask me how many hymns I may have played during the last 50 years, I have no idea, but I'm sure it runs into many thousands. It all started off when I was 13 years old and placed on the organ seat at the Methodist Church on Box Hill, which is situated just a few yards from the Quarryman's Arms. My instructions from my father were as follows: 'Well son, you've been learning the piano for 5 years, now try the organ, we need an organist for the Sunday School in 4 weeks time as Margaret Ettles is leaving to get married'. For the next 4 weeks I spent hours mastering the two manuals of the organ not really sure if I was getting the right sound. I chose 2 hymns from the Methodist Sunday School hymn book, numbers 607 and 608 and prayed I wouldn't make any mistakes. I was extremely nervous that first Sunday I played. I'm sure there were far more wrong notes than correct ones and I certainly didn't touch the foot pedals.



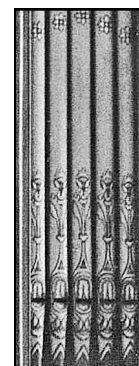
The only known photograph of Box Hill organ

As the weeks passed, my range of hymns to play increased and for the next 5 years I played on a Sunday morning. In 1962, Mrs Ellen Head, who had been the organist for the Sunday evening services for many years, decided to retire and I took over and for the next 5 years, until the Church closed on November 12th 1967, I played for every evening service and special occasion. The organ was a most interesting instrument. The brass plate, above the keyboard, stated it was built by 'Flight & Robson, Organ Makers to His Majesty'. We all supposed that it was built during the reign of either George IV or William IV, looking at the design and layout. Sweetlands of Bath tuned it once a year and it was a delight to play having a lovely swell box, but a short straight pedal board which could be annoying at times, that's when you ran out of notes to play on the lower or upper registers of a normal pedal range. The organ itself had arrived in 1914 from a large house in Bath and the whole pedal board could be disconnected and pushed in flush to the casework. The organ was electrically blown, though, if the electric failed, as it did more than once in thunderstorms, an air supply

could be created by hand pumping a lever at the back of the casework.

In November 1967, the Box Hill and Kingsdown Methodist Churches closed down and were later sold and the congregations transferred to the larger Church in Box which is situated by the main A4 as you pass through the village. The Box Hill organ was sold to an organ builder in South Wales. He created a new organ which was erected at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Calne. Unfortunately, vandals broke into the Church one night and destroyed the organ by lighting a fire beneath it. Other ranks of the Box Hill pipes ended up in a rebuilt organ at Oswestry Methodist Church, Shropshire.

The Box organ is a single manual instrument with, originally, 7 stops. It is thought to have been built in the 1850s and has a fine mahogany case with just over 400 pipes. Both the keyboard and the original straight pedal board were on rollers so they could be pushed back flush to the casework. In 1986 the organ was rebuilt with an extra stop being installed and a full 32 note concave pedal board with electric action being fitted, leaving the rest of the organ's action as tracker.



Detail of pipe decoration of Box Hill organ



Playing the organ at Box Methodist Church

This rebuilding was funded by the Frederick G. Neate Organ Bequest, originally given to the Box Hill Church but passed to the Box Church on the amalgamation in 1967. In 2002 the organ was dismantled and taken piece by piece and rebuilt in the organ gallery newly created at the back of the Church. I remember helping to carry all 415 pipes, sides, blower mechanism etc, but the bellows, keyboard and main part of the works, weighing some 7 cwt, was hauled up a set of sloping ladders until being finally placed on its new cushioned base in the gallery where it is to be found today. Once the pipes were back in, the whole organ needed tuning ready for the first Sunday service in October 2002.

Though the stop specification for the Box Hill organ has long since disappeared, the Box organ specification is listed below.

Open Diapason 8ft	Dulciana 8ft
Stopped Diapason Bass 8ft	Twelfth
Stopped Diapason Treble 8ft	Flute 4ft
Principal 4ft	Fifteenth 2ft

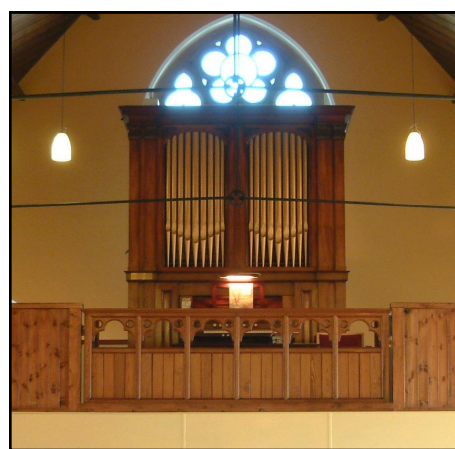
Pedals:

Bourdon 16ft	Gedack 8ft	Pedal to Great coupler.
Quint 5ft	Bass Flute 4ft	

I have no regrets in learning to play the organ, it's certainly the 'King of Instruments' in my book. I look forward to playing for a good number of years until my successor is found. Then I can sit back and listen to someone else's playing.

Anyone wishing to try the Box Methodist Church organ should first contact me on 01249 715741 or at michael.rumsey@btinternet.com

Michael Rumsey



Organ and gallery at Box Methodist Church

Dr. Burrowes honoured

One of the streets in the new housing development at Pound Mead has been named after Dr. Burrowes, who had served the local community for 62 years when he died last year. His widow, Mrs Nancy Burrowes, helped to unveil the road sign.

The 43-home scheme was shortlisted for the Local Authority Building Control excellence awards, which recognise excellence achieved through building standards.



Photo: M. Rumsey



Photo: M Rumsey

2013 (JUBILEE YEAR) PROGRAMME

Jan 18th	7.00 for 7.30 pm	Annual Dinner at Rudloe Hall Hotel
Feb 22nd	7.30 pm	“The Secret State: how Corsham would have Governed in the Country in World War III” Talk by Lord Hennessey, once a journalist and then a professor of history, now a member of the House of Lords, has written extensively on British Government and the constitution.
Mar 23rd	7.30 pm	“To Have and To Hold - History of Collecting and Collectors, with special emphasis on Chippenham and Corsham” Talk by Melissa Barnett, Curator of the Chippenham Museum.
Apr 26th	7.30 pm	“George Gay (1771-1833), Corsham Quarryman, Composer of Chapel Music and Organ Builder” Talk by Dr. Christopher Kent, formerly Head of Musicology at the University of Reading, a great expert on organ and organ music.
May 10th	7 00 for 7.15 pm	AGM at the Town Hall : followed by “Corsham in Words”
Jun 22nd	tba	“Corsham in Music” Concert in St. Bartholomew’s Church, Corsham.
Jul 19th	6.00 pm	Visit to the Victorian School at Sevington and Leigh Delamere church. Meet at Sevington at 6pm.
Sep 27th	7.30 pm	“The History of Stone Quarrying” Talk by David Pollard, the owner of the last working quarry in Corsham. He has spent many years studying the history of stone quarrying in the area.
Oct 25th	7.30 pm	“A S.E.X.Y. Talk - Submarine Engineering Across the Years Talk by Rear Adm. Thomas CB (Retd), a former naval officer of distinction now Chairman of the Rail Safety and Standards Board. He lives in Box.
Nov 29th	7.30 pm	“Some more Wiltshire Churches” Talk by Michael Rumsey, Chairman of the Corsham Civic Society and a retired primary school head-teacher.

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**