



# Corsham Spotlight

Journal of the Corsham Civic Society

<http://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk>

**SPRING 2015**

March 2015, Volume 12 Issue 1

## Contents

Fifty Years Ago ...	1
And in 2015 ...	2
Corsham's Walking Festival	3
The Goldney Family and Beechfield House	4
Reviews	5
100 Years Ago	8
Springfield Community Campus Update	9
The Logan Manuscript	10

## Fifty Years Ago ...

On 4 January 1965, Corsham Station closed – we have been without it for half a century. The station had been in existence for 124 years: it opened in June 1841, less than a mile from the eastern entrance to Box Tunnel, when the Chippenham-to-Bath section of the Great Western Railway opened. The closure was part of the infamous 'Beeching Cuts'.

*The Beeching Report*, published in March 1963, was indeed controversial. At the time, the British railway network was making heavy losses, and road transport costs were falling. Beeching recognised that, because of the high fixed costs (stations, signalling and track) involved in running railways, they functioned best for long-distance, high-density services rather than for local, stopping, passenger services. His initial proposal was to close 5,000 miles of track and cut trains by 68 million miles per year.

**Corsham Civic Society welcomes new members. Join us to enjoy talks on local subjects, trips to interesting places and the company of local people interested in both the history and future of this lovely Wiltshire town. For membership contact Jean Beech on 01249 713833**

Where Corsham Station used to be. In preparation for the electrification of the line, the much-decayed foot bridge has been taken down, while the Pound Pill to Prospect bridge (carrying the B3353) in the distance is subject to alterations.



**Officers and Committee Members:****President**

Mrs. Anne Lock,  
Tel: 01225 810357

**Chairman**

Mr. Michael Rumsey,  
Tel: 01249 715741

**Secretary**

Victoria Blake,  
Tel: 01249 716286

**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**

Margaret Smith,  
Tel: 01249 715459

Jane Browning  
Tel: 01249 716013

Pat Whalley  
01249 713618

**Contributions to  
Spotlight are very  
welcome: please  
contact the Editor,  
David Gibbons, on  
01249 712212 or at  
[davidagibbons@me.com](mailto:davidagibbons@me.com)**

The British railway system had reached its zenith just before the First World War, with 23,440 route miles of track. But gradually road transport – cars, buses and lorries – began to whittle away at the economics of the railways, together with bungled political and administrative decisions. The demands of the Second World War came as a reprieve, but this was temporary, and the system emerged in a worn-down condition and with a lack of investment. By the 1960s, motor transport, and the beginning of motorways, appeared to many as the solution to Britain's communications problems.

In the event, more than 4,000 miles of track were closed, and some 3,000 stations in the decade following the report (25% of the route miles and 50% of the stations). Corsham was one such station.

**And in 2015 ...**

Some background first: in January 2014 (almost 28 years after the Civic Society formed a subcommittee to campaign for the reopening of our Station) a short update was presented to the Town Council – it was felt important that they understood the implications/importance of a Government announcement, in December 2013, of its support for the construction of a new railway line from Bedford to Cambridge, an addition to the already proposed East–West Rail Project, completing the creation of a London–Cambridge–Oxford rail-linked high-tech triangle. That same January 2014, our MP, Duncan Hames, received a response from Stephen Hammond, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Transport, in which he said that 'should the West of England Partnership succeed in introducing an additional local service between Bristol and Bath, it would be possible to extend one service an hour to Corsham, with a turnback at Chippenham ...' The Minister continued: 'I recognise that you have been a long-standing supporter of a new station at Corsham ... we are always happy to provide guidance and advice to local authorities should they so wish ...' By September 2014, Duncan had brought together a group of ten MPs, all with constituencies bordering the line, to lobby for the reintroduction of a Bristol–Oxford rail service. A joint letter was sent to the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin, requesting his support for its reintroduction, and they later met him to press their case. More recently it has been confirmed that the rail infrastructure around Bath could accommodate a local service to Chippenham and a service to Oxford, the latter being a longer-term aim.

Here in Corsham, the Society's Station Campaign has welcomed an invitation to join the newly-formed TransWilts CIC (Community Interest Company). Melksham Station's passenger numbers continue to rise and have far outstripped their first year target – indeed they have all but hit the passenger figures for Year 3! Paul Johnson, as Chairman of TransWilts, has since met Ruth Hopkinson, Chairman, and Peter Pearson, Vice Chair, of the Town Council. He has also produced an overall plan that could take the Corsham proposal through Network Rail's GRIP process (see last year's Autumn issue of *Spotlight*) – an intricate and detailed system by which any rail proposal is minutely assessed from every angle.

In the meantime, Wiltshire Council have tasked their Consultants, Atkins, to produce an Economic Feasibility Study to GRIP Stage 1. It is intended that



the Atkins Study will build upon the one produced by Wiltshire County Council in 1999/2000, which led to the successful bid for Rail Passenger Partnership funding – a funding stream that was subsequently curtailed UK wide. It is worth noting that in Hampshire their scheme to reopen Chandler's Ford Station continued because Hampshire were prepared to shoulder the £2m cost of their station's construction. As a result, in good faith the Strategic Rail Authority kept to their side of the bargain, funding the service and staffing of the station for three years. That service has proved very successful – as we believe investment in a reopened Corsham Station would also be.

Anne Lock



Last summer, you may remember, filming took place in the High Street for two TV productions. **The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: The Ties that Bind** (Hat Trick Productions), was broadcast in September and included this interesting crane shot (top left). **Poldark**, left, began its run on BBC1 on 8 March. This new version of the tale is seen to be rather racier than the 1975–7 adaptation, so don't be diverted from spotting our High Street!

## Corsham's Walking Festival

Book now to take your pick of 22 guided walks during Corsham's first weekend *Walking Festival* on 12–14 June. Building on the success of a one-day event last year, for 2015 an enthusiastic group of volunteers (generously supported by local businesses and community grants) has put together a wide-ranging programme spread over three days. It will run alongside the Pound Arts Summer Festival, and this time includes two evening buffets and entertainment at the Almshouses and the Pound.

The Corsham Walking Festival programme has a strong local flavour and opens up some fascinating opportunities to learn more about local history and heritage in the fresh air, in the company of experts and enthusiasts.

For example, if you enjoyed a Civic Society talk on local geology, you might relish the *Corsham Rocks* or the *Rocks in Box* walks, both graded 'Easy' (there are three grades: Easy, Moderate and Challenging). Guided by an expert geologist, they will provide an excellent chance to get up close to see rock strata and fossils in situ and admire their transformation into beautiful building materials and historic houses. Other themed walks feature the history of stone working – you might be tempted to head off to the *Hidden Quarries of Box* or to stroll along the Ridge in search of *Corsham's Quarry Tramways*.

There's lots of variety this year, with all ages and abilities catered for – including free walks for children, a 'doggie walk' and a singing walk around Corsham Park complete with accompanying minstrel. There's a butterfly and wildlife walk taking in Hazelbury Common and Neston churchyard. The Civic Society's chairman, Michael Rumsey, will be joining the walk entitled *God's Wonderful Railway: Brunel and Box Tunnel* to add an historical dimension to one of the many walks featuring wonderful views of Wiltshire's rolling countryside.

A more detailed description of all events can be found on [www.corshamforwalking.org](http://www.corshamforwalking.org) but look out for the colourful festival brochure in a library or arts centre or village hall near you. Places are limited, so early booking is recommended.

#### Friday 12 June

Walk 1201: In and around the Historic Town of Corsham  
Walk 1202: Corsham Rocks!  
Walk 1203: Sing for your Supper

#### Saturday 13 June

Walk 1301: Rivers, Combes, Hills and Far Away  
Walk 1302: Fields, Mills and History  
Walk 1303: Explorer and Medieval Pilgrims  
Walk 1304: Court and Capability

Walk 1305: Hidden Quarries  
Walk 1306: Barnados Tot's Toddle  
Walk 1307: God's Wonderful Railway: Brunel and Box Tunnel  
Walk 1308: Walkies!  
PAC1 Sculpture Trail  
Walk 1309: Children's Treasure Hunt Walk  
Walk 1310: Wildflower Walk  
Walk 1311: Corsham Inner History and Heritage Walk  
Walk 1312: In and around the Historic Town of Corsham (see also Walk 1201)

#### Sunday 14 June

Walk 1401: Hidden Valleys, Woods and Panoramas  
Walk 1402: Fields, Mills and History  
Walk 1403: Hidden Quarries  
Walk 1404: Rocks in Box  
Walk 1405: Corsham Quarry Tramways  
Walk 1406: Butterfly and Wildlife Walk  
Walk 1407: Corsham Inner History and Heritage Walk – Short

*Sally Fletcher*

## The Goldney Family and Beechfield House

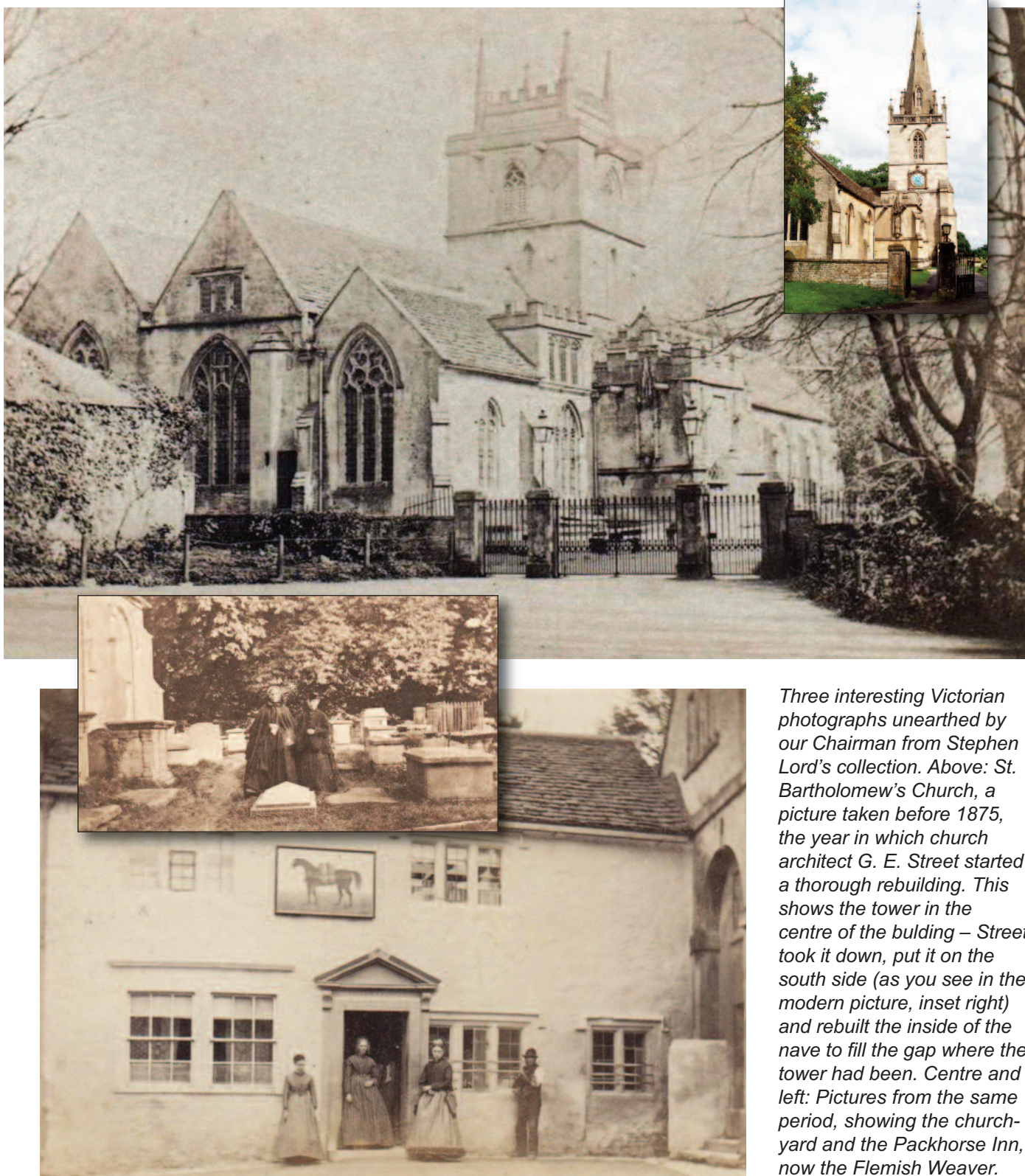
Who were the Goldneys? If we go back to a document entitled *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509–1558*, we learn that Henry (born before 1517), was the son of a wealthy farmer and clothier named Nicholas Afternewell. The will of Nicholas was apparently proved in 1538, but it did not specify the ages or seniority of his children, which seems to have caused a family rift – it resulted in Henry suing his mother and her new husband in 1539 for the loss of some 240 acres of land at Chippenham and Langley, of which he had been named as his father's heir.

*Continued on page 6*



## Reviews

In November last year, Jim Ball gave us a highly informed talk on the state of the world forests, highlighting the perils we face as the 'Earth's lungs' are remorselessly stripped away. Then in February this year Michael Rumsey completed his very pleasant ramble through the parish churches of Wiltshire, taking us to twenty very interesting buildings, before ending at our own St. Bartholomew's and the fascinating images below.



Three interesting Victorian photographs unearthed by our Chairman from Stephen Lord's collection. Above: St. Bartholomew's Church, a picture taken before 1875, the year in which church architect G. E. Street started a thorough rebuilding. This shows the tower in the centre of the building – Street took it down, put it on the south side (as you see in the modern picture, inset right) and rebuilt the inside of the nave to fill the gap where the tower had been. Centre and left: Pictures from the same period, showing the churchyard and the Packhorse Inn, now the Flemish Weaver.



From September 1549, Henry's surname was identified as being changed to Goldney, and it has been used by his descendants ever since.

Many of the Goldney family are known to have come from the Bristol area. Thomas Goldney I (1620–94) was the first of three generations each named Thomas. He became a very successful merchant and played a part in the activities of the newly formed 'Society of Friends', or Quakers, in the city. There is a Goldney House at Clifton, Bristol, and also a Goldney Avenue and Goldney Road.

Some of the family had already spread as far as Chippenham, where they had set up as clothiers in the town. Henry Goldney had been a Member of Parliament for Chippenham and in 1553 was appointed as the first Bailiff of Chippenham. (Goldney Avenue in Chippenham is named after him). In 1558, he bought a forty-year lease on the manor house at Rowde. This was indeed a wealthy and powerful local family.



Research into the intervening years 1600–1800 is difficult. From 1617 to 1790, there had been a succession of Gabriel Goldneys, probably first sons of the line, but it is difficult to confirm the facts. From the nineteenth century, however, it is easier to establish the accomplishments of the family.

Sir Gabriel Goldney (1813–1900) was created '1st Baronet of Beechfield, Corsham and Bradenstoke Abbey' in 1880. He had married Mary Anne Alexander of Corsham in 1839, and it is believed that he acquired Beechfield House in Corsham in the mid-1800s. There were four children, Mary, Gabriel Prior, Frederick and John. As a landowner, financier and banker, he was able to purchase Sheldon Manor in 1854 and Bradenstoke Abbey in 1863 from Frederick Methuen, 2nd Baronet. He also owned land at Monks Park, which he leased for quarrying. Pickwick District School (now St Patrick's Church) was also built for Sir Gabriel, and its design was

*Above: Sir Gabriel Goldney as depicted in Vanity Fair in 1872. Below: Beechfield House today.*



exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1857.\* First elected as an MP in 1865, he was a Director of the North Wilts Bank and Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire in 1869. He was also a Freemason and Grand Warden of England.

The 2nd Baronet was Gabriel's eldest son, Gabriel Prior Goldney (1843–1925). He became a barrister, JP for Wiltshire and High Sheriff of the county in 1906. Unmarried, he resided at Derriads in Chippenham.

The title then passed to his brother, Frederick Hastings Goldney (1845–1940.) Married to Ethel Swayne of Wilton, the 3rd Baronet was a landowner, Freemason and author of *The History of Freemasonry in Wiltshire* (1880). He later became Mayor of Chippenham, High Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1908, and JP for Wiltshire and Surrey. He was married with five children, Katherine, Mary, Eveline, Lucy and Henry. He lived at both Beechfield House and in Camberley, Surrey.

His daughter Eveline, married Graham Dunsterville of Guyers House in 1912. The families had been close and attended Corsham Church together for Sunday services. Graham rejoined his regiment, the Devonshires, in 1914 and was killed in action in France in October 1914. His son Hugh was born at Guyers in December of that year. At Hugh's christening in February 1915 the two families, Dunstervilles and Goldneys, planted an avenue of walnut saplings, six each side, running from the rear of Pickwick village street, into Middlewick Lane and the Beechfield estate. Hugh tells us that when the site was developed for housing, most of the trees were felled, but two or three have Tree Preservation Orders and have survived.

A third son John Tankerville Goldney, (1846–1920) went abroad. He was Attorney General for the Leeward Islands and later became Chief Justice of Trinidad in 1893. In 1913, in his later years, he married Miss Alice Goldney.

The title finally passed to Frederick's only son, Henry Hastings (1886–1974). Married but with no children, Henry lived at Rowden House, Chippenham. He served in the Royal Engineers, and was awarded the Military Cross in 1917 for 'conspicuous gallantry under heavy fire'. He is buried at St. Bartholomew's, Corsham, with many members of his family.

The ladies of Sir Frederick's family took a significant part in the running of the Corsham Hospital at the Town Hall during the First World War. On the Memorial tablet in the Hall it lists Lady Goldney as Commandant, Alice Goldney as Assistant Commandant, and Nurses Katherine, Lucy and Marjorie Goldney. The *Wiltshire Times* of January 2000 tells us that one of the daughters was a district nurse, visiting the houses of the poorer residents in the vicinity and taking presents at Christmas time. Miss Goldney rode a 'sit-up-and-beg' bicycle and could often be seen riding one-handed while holding an umbrella aloft.

\* Department of the Environment Listed Buildings Document.

### Election, 150 Years Ago

The General Election of 1865, which resulted in the ministry of Lord John Russell, was the occasion of a riot in Chippenham. There were then two seats for the Chippenham constituency: Sir John Neeld (Conservative) was elected to one of them; the other was won by Sir Gabriel Goldney (also a Conservative). His defeat of the Liberal candidate (and sitting MP since 1859), William John Lysley (1791–1873), caused a riot, involving some five hundred people and the smashing of a number of windows. The Lysley family are commemorated by the Lysley Arms pub/restaurant in Pewsham, on the A4 not far from Bowood.



In 1948, Frederick's daughter Katherine Long Goldney and her brother Henry undertook to sell at auction a great deal of the Pickwick village estate as it stood at that time – it is believed to have been owned by the family since 1857. Most of the houses were tenanted, and some occupiers were able to buy their properties, but others may have been transferred to a new landlord. This included 26 houses or cottages, the Old Malthouse, village stores, the Old Brewery and Manor House Barn. The auction realised a value of £17,460 – quite a bit of property!

The Goldneys being a Quaker family, the men heavily involved with Freemasonry and reaching high office in that organisation, it has long been thought locally that the Masonic Hall in Pickwick was once a Quaker meeting house. However, a letter has recently come to light written by Katherine Goldney, living in Camberley, dated 7 November 1967, to her brother Harry (presumably Henry) in which she states:

'You are right ... Mr. Fry's daughter married a Mr. Matthews and they bought a house at the end of Pickwick village. It was a very appropriate place of abode, as Mrs. Matthews was a Quaker, and as you know Pickwick was originally a Quaker village, built by Quakers who also built the Meeting House at the village end. By the time our grandfather bought Beechfield and Pickwick, the Quaker inhabitants had died out, so as the Meeting House had not been consecrated he turned it into a club, for his male tenants in Pickwick, and paid for its gas and newspapers for the Club. All went well for several years until two men arrived and said they were executors of the former Quakers, and had orders to pull the Meeting House down and sell its contents. Our Grandfather told them he had turned it into the village club, and offered to buy it from them, but they refused. So he bought two of the original benches, and put them in his billiard room. The Meeting House was duly demolished.'

### 100 Years Ago

By February 1915 the submarine blockade of the British Isles has begun, and in that month also the BEF is engaged in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. The Western Front is relatively stabilised, with limited attacks by both sides, but in April the Germans begin to use poison gas. On the Eastern Front, the winter battle of Masuria is fought in February. Meanwhile hostilities are escalating in the Middle East, and, after failed naval attacks on the Dardanelles in February and March, the Gallipoli landings begin at the end of April. At sea, the Royal Navy has won the Battle of Dogger Bank in January. And in January a new gallantry award for officers has been instituted, the Military Cross – five Corsham men will earn this medal.



It has since been established that the Meeting House stood at 21 Pickwick. We would recognise the site now as being on the left-hand side at the entrance to Woodlands, where new houses were erected in 2013. The plot had been the garden of the large house opposite The Brewery, which is the residence of the Eden Family.

A further letter from Pickwick resident Robert Currey in 2003 discusses the same subject and says that the Masonic Lodge is actually on the site of the Goldney billiard room (which is borne out by the Listed Buildings record for Pickwick) and that a large 1836 map of Corsham shows the Quaker Meeting House to be at the Chippenham end of Pickwick village. Apparently there is a walled garden at the rear of the Masonic Lodge and 41 Pickwick next door, which is believed to have been a Quaker burial ground, but that is unverified.

Beechfield House was requisitioned by the army during the Second World War and was taken over by Bath Academy of Art in 1946. It is believed they remained in situ until 1986, when the Academy



returned to its home in Bath. The site then remained derelict until the mid-1990s when Gleeson Homes purchased the site to build Academy Drive as we know it today.

Sources: Miscellaneous papers held by Corsham Area Heritage, donor unknown. *The History of Paliament 1509–1558*, ed. S. Bindoff, 1982. *Wiltshire Times*, January 2000. Internet site of Robert Currey, local resident of Pickwick.

*Pat Whalley*

## Springfield Community Campus Update

Work on the new campus facility is nearing completion. To add to the library, climbing wall, café, community rooms and exhibition space opened last summer, the sports hall has now reopened following refurbishment after a flooding incident last summer. The two squash courts and the movement studio, also affected by the flooding, are currently being refurbished and are due to reopen in the coming weeks.

The final phase of the campus development includes the provision of more than fifty additional car-parking bays as well as disabled bays and minibus bays at the front of the campus. These spaces are becoming available in phases from mid- to late-March and will continue to be offered free-of-charge for campus users. The new entrance and main reception along with the refurbished dry changing facilities are scheduled for completion in early May, and the remainder of the enhanced facilities including the swimming pool, male and female wet changing facilities, new health suite, and the extended refurbished gym with spin studio are currently scheduled for completion this summer in time for the school holidays.

Since opening, the community exhibition space has proved very popular and has displayed a vibrant variety of local exhibitions. At present, we have a breastfeeding art exhibition, and the Wiltshire at War 'Call to Arms' exhibition, which launched at the campus at the end of February and will be with us until the end of March. Other upcoming exhibitions include a display by the Corsham School and local primary schools in July, which promises to be spectacular. There are currently some free spaces in the diary, so if you or your group is interested in showcasing something that represents you, or the local area, then please do get in touch.

Keep an eye out for what's coming up at the campus over Easter. There is a lot on offer for all the family to enjoy, including a chocolate hunt and quiz for chocoholics, and a 'Funny Bunny' story time in the library. Budding young athletes can enrol on a climbing-wall course or a football or basketball camp with our trained coaches. For further details on these or any of our other activities and events, please come in and browse our 'what's on' boards, or speak to any member of the campus team who will be pleased to advise you.

*Penny Bell, Community Engagement Officer,  
Wiltshire Council, March 2015*





### The Logan Manuscript

During the summer, the Society was delighted to accept the gift of a most interesting manuscript. It is a bulky 15-inch by 12-inch folder, bound with string, entitled *Corsham*. Within its blue covers is an account of the history of Corsham, written in the late 1940s by John Logan. It is very much a labour of love, carefully written out in longhand, with pictures, maps and diagrams.

The Logan family came to Corsham in 1941, living first in the prefabs and then in Arnold's Mead, later in the Flemish buildings. John was an engineer who worked for BAC. In 1948 or 1949 he became a schoolteacher, first at Chippenham Secondary Modern and then as headmaster at Biddestone School. His wife, Nellie, became well-known in Corsham for being a staunch socialist – she took part in the Aldermarston 'Ban the Bomb' marches and joined the protest at Greenham Common.

The manuscript has been generously donated by John Logan's son, Ian, who lives in London and runs a design company. It will be placed with the Corsham Civic Society records held at the Wiltshire Record office in Chippenham. The Logan family story can be found in *Corsham Memories 2: The Prefab Years*.



STREET - "DRAINS ARE  
WERED 9"



SITE OF  
THE MARKET.



HOUSES BUILT FOR WAR WORKERS





*Corsham as seen from the Bath Road in the 1940s; and, below, as it is today.*





## 2015 Programme

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

16 January	12.30 for 1.00	<b>Lunch</b> at the Methuen Arms
27 February	7.30 p.m.	<b>The Parish Churches of Wiltshire, Third and Final Part</b> by Michael Rumsey, retired Head Teacher and Chairman of Corsham Civic Society
27 March	7.30 p.m.	<b>The Building of Devizes Castle</b> by Tim Tatton-Brown, FSA, distinguished archaeological and architectural historian
24 April	7.30 p.m.	<b>The Wiltshire Museum, Devizes</b> by David Dawson, FSA, Director of the Museum
15 May		<b>Annual General Meeting</b> to be held at the Town Hall
26 June		<b>Summer Outing to the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes</b>
24 July	7.30 p.m.	<b>Dickens, Pickwick and <i>Pickwick Papers</i>: Novelist Speaks Out</b> by Stephen Jarvis, whose novel, <i>Death and Mr. Pickwick</i> , is published by Jonathan Cape in May
14 August		<b>Cream Tea</b> , members only, details to be announced
25 September	7.30 p.m.	<b>The Stonehenge Landscape</b> by Mark Bowden, who works for English Heritage (West)
23 October	7.30 p.m.	<b>The Turnpiking of the London-to-Bath Road, 1700–1850</b> , by Dr. Brenda Buchanan, former Editor of <i>Bath History</i>
27 November	7.30 p.m.	<b>Magna Carta: Origin and Outcome</b> by Professor David d'Avray, FBA, Professor of Medieval History at University College London

**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 and 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, 91 Tellcroft Drive, Corsham, SN13 9JQ, Wiltshire. Registered Charity No: 275321*