



Corsham Spotlight

Journal of the Corsham Civic Society
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Contents

From the Chairman	1
Civic Society Bookcase	2
The Methuen Arms	3
The Priors	4
The Methuen School	5
Sporting Times in 1950/60s Corsham	9
South Street - Poem	11
Saxon Wiltshire	12
Magna Carta	13
Train Station Update	15
Corsham's New Butcher	16
The Brunel Shed	
Corsham Walking Festival	
Competition	18

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

111 Years of Public Buses to Corsham Closing in April 2016

On the 24th April, the 231 bus service operated by First Bus, will be withdrawn according to our latest information. The original bus service was started by the Bath Tramways Company in 1905 and for many years three services ran through Corsham from Bath to Chippenham and one travelled further to Calne. Service 46 took the route through Box and Corsham moving on to Chippenham then on to Calne and for this service special low deck buses were used because of the low railway bridge just outside of Calne by the Black Dog Halt. Service 46A came through Box, but travelled along the Devizes road, in the village, turning left at the Horse and Jockey to Hawthorn, then along Park Lane and into Corsham and onwards, through the High Street, to Chippenham. Service 50B was from Corsham, through Neston to the Ridge and back.

Bath Tramways were succeeded on the route between Bath, Corsham and Chippenham by various named companies finally ending up with First Bus. I understand the Faresaver X31 service will be taking the route originally taken by the 231 service which ensures most parts of Corsham will be serviced with a daily bus service.

Michael Rumsey



The photos show the original 1905 bus and buses from the 1950s in Pickwick Road.

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From the Chairman

2016 seems to be a year of important anniversaries in our town and the surrounding area. The Methuen School, in South Place, celebrates its 200th anniversary and you will find several articles in this edition by former pupils. On June 30th, those of us who can be considered as 'railway historians' will note that it's the 175th anniversary of the first train through Corsham and Box Tunnel from London to Bristol Temple Meads. I don't think the modern day 'Great Western' trains will be celebrating this date, but I shall try to be at Box to take at least one photograph of a HST powering through on its way to Bath and Bristol. I think of July edition of Spotlight will have a little more information on that subject.

Our current 'Spotlight' Editors, Jujhar Garcha and Tom Cole have volunteered to produce this issue and the July edition and John Maloney is following them as the Editor. John and his wife joined the Society last year and I am sure he will write a little more about himself in the November edition.

John has now joined the Executive Committee but I sorry to say that Jane Browning will be leaving the committee at the Annual General Meeting in May. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Jane for all her work as a committee member as well as being 'Spotlight' editor for four years. Her work has been much appreciated over the years and we shall miss her attendance at meetings very much.

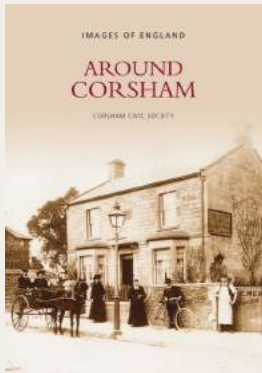
This September sees the Society's participation in the Heritage Open Days, a national event organized by the National Trust and English Heritage. We hope to organize a number of free events between Thursday, September 8th and Saturday, September 10th so please study the July edition of Spotlight for further details.

I have recently signed a new contract with Revolution Arts for the continuing maintenance of our well kept website www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk. This new contract is for two years and Michael Wilkinson and Nicholas Keyworth will be again in charge of the website on the behalf of Revolution Arts.

Michael Rumsey

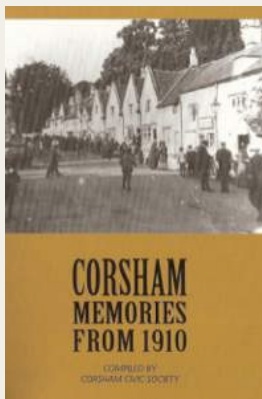
Civic Society Bookcase

There are a number of books about Corsham and our area, some out of print, others still available. The CCS has published three books over recent years:



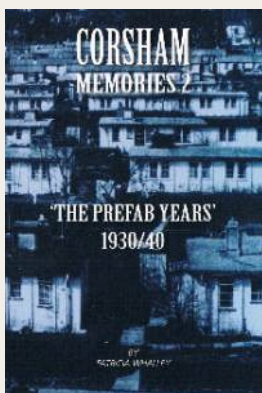
Around Corsham compiled by Anne Lock, our President, depicts archive photographs of our town, and many stories of the great and the good of Corsham's past.

Available from Corsham Book Shop or members of the CCS Committee. Price: £12.95.



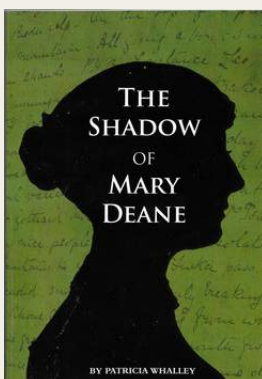
Corsham Memories from 1910 is a collection of interviews with local people who were born between 1910 and the 1940s. The Society feels it is important to record as much as we can of the town's past and the way people lived.

Available from Corsham Book shop, the Tourist Information office. Price £9.99.



Corsham Memories II "The Prefab Years 1930/40" a record of interviews with local people who came to live in Corsham as a result of WWII. Covering the 30/40/50's austerity years when food was in the forefront of most peoples minds!

Available from Corsham Bookshop, the Tourist Information Office, or members of the CCS Committee. Price: £9.99.



The Shadow of Mary Deane contains a diary commentary of life in Box, Bath, and the surrounding area during the late 19th Century, and particularly between 1915-1917. The diaries were discovered locally, and one of our member's, Pat Whalley, has researched the family to produce a picture of this Victorian Gentlewoman, her friends and associates in the village.

Available at Corsham Bookshop, and the Tourist Information office. Price £12.00.

The Methuen Arms

A glimpse into the past history of this building may not be known to many, particularly those new to our area, so bear with us if you have heard the story before!

In Tudor times this was the site of an impressive house, known as Winters Court, and in 1463 it was owned by the 'Nott family'. It became a public house in 1608 and was established as the Red Lion Inn. At some time the proprietor was one Christopher Knott. He was probably a descendant of the original family, but if so he was perhaps not as stalwart a being as his predecessors, for he was renowned for "illegally selling ale to all and sundry, and encouraging drunkenness." On other occasions he was acquitted of fighting a customer – John Coryn of Wraxall, but was fined 9d for injuring Thomas Little. In 1613 he was arrested for playing cards on the Sabbath, and later, for selling spiced bread with Widow Keynes – this lady was described as a 'night walker'.

There is an ancient 'chequers sign' visible on the doorway on the Lacock Rd side of the building. This is believed to be a sign of Roman origin that may have referred to a game, similar to draughts, which was played on the premises. But the sign was later associated with a money table, and could have been used at Inns, to show they were willing to 'exchange money' (exchequer originally meant a kind of chessboard).

Edward Nott bequeathed the building to his sister Elizabeth Webber in 1732, who in turn left it to her daughter Christian. There is apparently a record of possible alterations to the building high up on the old wing that borders Lacock Rd. Here is carved the initials "N.N. I.N. 1650", and "CW 1749". The 'N' would stand for Nott, and the CW would be appropriate to the Webber family. It was in 1799 that Christian died, and the ownership passed into the Methuen family, the building was then renamed 'The Methuen Arms'. In Victorian times, it was a Coaching Inn with stabling for 40 horses.

In living memory we know that the Duke of Edinburgh played skittles and darts at the 'Methuen', with the locals and his compatriots from the Royal Arthur Petty Officer Training School in Westwells. He was also 'courting' Princess Elizabeth at this time, and is known to have asked his Commanding Officer for leave to go to London so that he could propose!

Sources: Tales of old Inns - Collins 1939, Corsham Facts & Folklore – Pat Whalley, & Around Corsham – Corsham Civic Society.



The Nott Room



The Methuen Arms Hotel

The Priory, Corsham

The Priory, now known as Heywood House School, in Priory Street

The town once belonged to the kings of the day and was therefore known as a Royal Manor. Surrounded by forests, the Saxon kings came here to hunt deer. Corsham is recorded as having a great 'Palace', and it was here that Ethelred the Unready became ill, and had to return to London in 1015.

But there was another parcel of land, which belonged to the church and was known as the 'Rectory Manor'. When William the Conqueror came to the throne, he rewarded many of his followers with land and privileges. Here he gave Corsham Church and its lands to his favourite Abbey, St Stephens at Caen, in Normandy. This was later transferred to the Abbey of Marmoutier. By 1240, the Royal Manor was in the hands of Richard Plantagenet, and it is reputed that whilst he was in residence at Corsham, the Monks of Marmoutier decided to cross the Channel to see what sort of property they had in this parish. They arrived, led by Prior Gilbert, and took up residence at the Priory. (Priory Street.) The house became the nearest thing to a monastery. The foundations of earlier buildings are known to be on the site, and the pond remains. It is significant that many monasteries had ponds where the brothers would breed fish for the table. However, the monks suddenly left the site, we know not when, perhaps because they did not like our weather!

Later occupation has been difficult to establish, and we leap forward to the period of the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid 16th century when we learn of one William Stump who bought the ruined Malmesbury Abbey for £1,516. 15s.2d. William was a clothier and apparently filled the Abbey with looms. The link to Corsham? It was the descendant of this William, another clothier, who in 1750 erected the present building on this site and lived there for many years. The Street was then known as 'Stump's Lane', and became Priory Street at the turn of the century. Sir Harold Brakspear came to the house in 1892, a young man, with his parents. In 1940 the Air Ministry requisitioned it, and members of the Women's Royal Air Force were billeted there. The building was then later adapted to the school premises we know today.

One other interesting snippet of information – within the grounds of the Priory, adjacent to the street, is a low building, with a bell at the top. This building has severally acted as a morgue, a greengrocers store, and a fire station. At the sound of the bell, the volunteer firemen would down their tools and race to the site in order to catch the horse, fix it to the tender, and get to the blazing fire! Were they ever in time to avert catastrophe I wonder! Isn't it interesting to discover how many different lives some of the buildings in our town have had?

Sources: This information is taken from a paper by Joe James, our late beloved local historian, dated 1999. He quoted his sources as – Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, List of Buildings NWDC, W.A.M by Sir Harold Brakspear, White papers – Devizes Museum, Corsham Court publications, and Wilts Archives.

Pat Whalley



The Methuen School

Michael Rumsey

In 1816, money was given by Paul Cobb Methuen (1752-1816) for the building of a 3-roomed school for the education of 'poor children'. That building, in South Place, Corsham celebrates its 200th birthday this year and is still being used for education purposes by Wiltshire College, though the building itself still belongs to the Corsham Court estate. Ten poor children had been educated by the Master of the Hungerford Almshouses, but Edward Hasted, Master of the Almshouses between 1807 and 1812, refused to continue the teaching of children so it is suggested P.C. Methuen decided to build and endow a school to help poor children of the parish gain an education.

Paul Cobb Methuen died on the 15th September 1816, and is buried in North Wraxall Parish Church, so we are not sure if he ever saw the completed building. He had been, during his lifetime, an M.P and High Sheriff of Wiltshire. His son, Paul Methuen, became the first Lord Methuen in 1838.

The school remained independent until merged with the larger establishment built on the south side of the cricket field to the designs of Sir Harold Brakspear in the mid 1890's.



This school room for the instruction of poor children was erected by P.C. Methuen, A.D. 1816



In Pevsner's book on Wiltshire buildings, the tomb is described as follows: 'A large white Grecian sarcophagus in the Methuen family chapel on the north side of the church.'

On the 5th September 1949 my father enrolled me into the school and paid 3/9 for a week's school dinners to Mrs Booy, who helped with the clerical side for the Headmistress. My long term friends Edwin Brown and Paul Smith also started on that day and we remained in Corsham schools until 1960/61 and we are still great friends today, Edwin still living in Corsham while Paul resides in Carlisle.

Miss Weekes was our first teacher, a tall lady always dressed in black that either cycled or walked daily from Biddestone. She was born in Australia and came to the UK in 1914 and spent her teaching career at the Methuen School finally retiring on July 25th 1952. Miss Brett taught the middle infant years while the redoubtable Miss Hawkes was the Headmistress and taught or frightened the oldest infants! School dinners were taken in the Sunday schoolroom of the Methodist Church and involved a crocodile of children being guided across two roads and upon reaching the schoolroom we were served our lunches by Mrs Mower and her colleagues. Mrs Mower was a delightful lady who ensured we were well fed, even if the meat was occasionally a little tough. The Mansion House building was also used for classrooms and Mrs Stiles was the resident teacher there until January 1952. The Methodist Hall was also used for occasional assemblies but not on November 9th 1950 due to heavy rain, according to the school logbook.

I remember Miss Weekes organized May Pole dancing on May 1st, and on that day in 1950, the whole school turned out to take part at 11am, though, according to the logbook, it was rather windy. Music and Movement broadcasts were started in September 1950 and these were used each week by the classes, but it did involve the movement of desks and chairs to enable the physical activity required by the broadcast. During the M & M broadcast on the 6th February 1952 just after 11am, there was an interruption when John Snagg, the Senior BBC announcer, gave the information that the King, George VI, had passed away peacefully. On Friday, February 15th 1952, the whole class listened to the funeral service for King George on a large radio, lent to the school by George Dunnings (who lived opposite), quite a solemn occasion. Exciting times were often had when the fire siren was sounded, the fire station being opposite to the school, so we were allowed out to watch the arrival of the firemen on their bicycles and the departure of the engine with the bell ringing furiously. We also went on walks too. Miss Hawkes once took us on a nature walk to the lake in Corsham Park and on another occasion we visited Corsham Court to see the peacocks, a glorious sight for us all.

Paul, Edwin and I left the Methuen School in July 1952, Paul & I going to the Regis School, while Edwin stayed at the Council School until we all met again at the Secondary Modern School in 1956. Miss Hawkes and Miss Brett retired on 31st October 1952 and the school finally closed for the Infants on 11th March 1953 when the children, staff and school equipment was transferred to the main school across the cricket field. The building didn't remain empty for too long for once the Secondary Modern School was established in 1955, some classes were sent to the Methuen School because of the shortage of accommodation in the main school. Art, under the supervision of Mr Speck and Miss Orde-Smith was one subject taught there, the other being Technical Drawing led by Ernest Weller. The building is now used by the Wiltshire College for various purposes, art still being one of them.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to find any photographs of children or their activities in the Methuen School, if anyone knows of any photos the Civic Society would be delighted to view them. Two Society members, Margaret Shewring and Pat Whalley, have been kind enough to jot down their memories of their times at the Methuen School. Margaret joined her older sister Lorna when she was 4 years old at the school in 1937. Her memories are as follows:

Margaret Shewring

Miss Weekes lived in Biddestone and walked to the school and home each day. She wore a long black apron to prevent the chalk spoiling her clothes. After lunch we had a nap on a wooden board in the classroom. Miss Weekes took us for walks to the gardens of Corsham Court and when we reached the Georgian Bath House we were told this was the 'Fairies House' and we had to be very quiet. We walked in pairs, holding hands.

During the winter a fire was lit in the large fireplace in the classroom. The space around the fireplace was surrounded with a large fireguard and Mrs Dunning, who lived opposite the school, attended the fire each day. Miss Brett taught the 2nd class and was a lovely teacher. She read us some lovely stories and sometimes we made figures with plasticine relating to the stories. Miss Hawkes taught the 3rd class and she was very strict and always dressed in black. One day each week we would listen to the radio where the speaker was Miss Ann Driver who gave us music and movement exercises to do, which we all enjoyed.

Each day pupils had a small bottle of milk (1/3 pint) that was drunk with a straw. For those pupils who stayed at school during lunch time, red and white check cloths were placed on the desks, then enamel plates were taken from the cupboard, these were provided for the children who had brought sandwiches. Prior to lunchtime, we sang:

'Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything'

Pat Whalley

I was born in 1941, so was due to go to the 'Infants school', as it was called locally, in 1945. But I believe that as I was born in November, I could not start in the winter term beginning September because I was not yet 5 yrs. old. However, I did join after Easter 1946.

What a revelation it was! I was an only child, and had been brought up for my first 5 years by Mother, and because of the war, numerous Aunts. My cousins were also girls, so imagine my alarm at having to mix with several boisterous boys!

Pat aged 4 or 5



Article continues next page...

However the teachers were all female - Miss Weekes, lived in a little-thatched cottage at the side of the duck pond at Biddestone, and I think she walked to Corsham every day. She wore black from head to toe, including a long black skirt. But she was a kindly person, who helped the first years in their introduction to the school regime. Miss Brett took the 6 year olds, I don't remember much about my year with her, but then there was the indomitable Headmistress Miss Hawkes. I believe she lived at The Cleeve. A short, stoutish lady, with wire-rimmed glasses, her hair in a bun and a ruler in her hand for discipline. Each small classroom had a pot-bellied stove in the middle, where during the winter months wet macks and coats were steamed ready for home-time. We were given a 3rd pint of milk for elevenses, and after lunch, the first years had to have a sleep on low benches with slatted boards.

I was not too happy the first few days; I don't expect that I was the only one. My mother delivered me to school, and returned me after lunch, and I must have reported that I did not like the afternoon 'nap', because within a couple of days one of my great aunts had knitted me a small woollen doll, it was two shades of pink. The face, arms and legs were a lighter hue than the top, skirt, and hat. This doll was a lifesaver to me; it comforted me during the first couple of terms, until I adjusted to the new rules and regulations. The next hurdle was Miss Hawkes. A domineering disciplinarian, she had a liking for striking you on the hand or the legs with the ruler. I wrote left-handed, which of course was totally forbidden, so I did get many a reprimand for that. Needless to say, the ruler did not teach me to write with my right hand, I am left-handed to this day.

I seem to recall nature walks in the park, when the weather allowed, and the Maypole with all the ribbons, and the children trying to learn to dance in formation. Games in the playground, those really low forms to jump on and off, and horrible coarse matting on which to do handstands! As for the educational benefit, I believe they were each good teachers, and dedicated to their cause. They provided us with good basic learning to take us on to the 'Big School'. This was where the 'Pound' is now, and took children from 7 to 11 preparing them for the 11+.

Corsham was of course a much smaller town at this time - population approx. 8000. It was a closer-knit community then than we have now. But we can consider ourselves fortunate that we still have excellent educational facilities here, even if of a different format, change is inevitable. But I shall still look on my first school years with fondness.

Sporting Times in Corsham in the 1950's & 1960's

Paul Smith, a Corsham resident for many years now living in Carlisle, has sent a set of photographs of cricket and football teams of the 1950's and 60's with the players names into the bargain.

This is the Pickwick Cricket Club team photograph taken on the Recreation Ground in Bath on July 4th, 1953. Pickwick scored 121 for 6 wickets declared, J. Long and Sons, Bath builders all out for 75. Ernie Smith, Paul's father was the captain and scored 23 before being run out, though he took 3 wickets for 37 runs. The team members are:



Back row: not known, Sid Cook, not known, Pete Woodcock, Pete Kercher, not known.
Front row: Pete White, Jimmy Francis, Ernie Smith (Capt.), Ken Pearce, Reg Smith, the scorer (name not known). The small boy in the background is Paul Smith himself!

Pickwick Cricket team a little later in 1953 or 1954. Those in the photograph are:

Back row: Fred Lilley, Charlie Hooper, Peter White, not known, Pete Woodcock.

Middle row: Pete Kercher, Dave Unwin, Ken Pearce, Ernie Smith (Capt.) Jimmy Francis, not known.

Front row: a young Don Smith (Ernie Smith's son) & Trevor Bates the scorer.



If anyone can identify any of the 'not known' people in these photographs, please let us know.

Now we move on to football teams from the same era. These photographs are also from the Paul Smith collection.



This photograph shows the Corsham Regis School football team in the late 1950's with Don Smith standing to the right of the teacher. Can anyone recognise other members of the team?



This is an earlier photograph of the Corsham Regis football team probably taken in 1955 with their teacher, the very popular R.H. (Pop) Shepherd. Those in the photograph are:

Back row: Barry Lane, Chris Moores, Mr Shepherd, John Hill, Paul Smith.

Middle row: Leslie Crowder, Bob Laws, Roger Herrington, Gareth Thomas, Ivor Davis.

Front row: Michael Harris, Knowles and Richard Brooks.



Corsham Secondary Modern School's Over 15's Football Team. In 1960/61.

Back row: Chris Moores, Paul Smith, Paul/Roy Evans, R. Milne, Clifford Pearce, Stephen May, R. Whitlock, Alan Younger.

Front Row: S. Barbrook, R. Mitchell, Roger Couzens (capt) Glyn Middle, M. Wood.

My school friend Paul Smith & I started school together in 1949 and stayed in the same class until we finally left school the Corsham Secondary Modern School in July 1961 at the age of 16. Paul has not only sent the magazine some interesting sporting photographs of the past but has also penned this poem which I hope you will enjoy.

Michael Rumsey

South Street

I moved to Corsham when I was four,
a number 3 was on the door.
The house seemed large to a small curly haired boy,
but Ann would be there to play with a toy.

Grandpa was coming to live with us too,
in grey woolly waistcoat with a large mint or two.
The grandfather clock ticked loudly for all,
day and night it chimed from the hall.

The passers by running down the steep hill,
a train to catch you could hear the shrill.
My sister was skipping outside with a friend
or playing hop-scotch until Mum called.

Dad was at work in the Stone Masons yard,
I would run at lunchtime to find him,
The man on the saw or working the crane
would loudly announce my coming.

The beautiful fields at the back of the house
a seasonal larder of dreams,
We wandered in peace, played lovely games,
to the sound of the mighty steam trains.

But the Station has gone, the Stone Yard is closed
and the Station Hotel stands no longer.
The fields have been built on with rows of brick houses
to replace cows and haystacks from yonder.

But memory remains, green fields and trains,
and Dad in his Stone Yard still carving,
The time is on pause and I'm full of applause,
my evidence – 'life's memory shavings'!

By Paul Smith, September 2015



Paul at Melrose in 2015

CORS-HAMM?

The Landscape of Saxon Wiltshire

Dr. Simon Draper came to talk to the Corsham Civic Society on the 18th March about the landscape of Saxon Wiltshire. It was the subject on which he had some years ago written his PhD thesis at Durham, though he was himself a Wiltshire lad by origin, brought up in Holt. He was now the Assistant Editor of the *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*, and also Editor of the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*. But he maintained his interest in the History of Wiltshire.

He gave a fascinating talk on the Saxonisation of Wiltshire, using mainly place-name evidence rather than archaeology. He brought out the significance of place named –stoke and –wick. He distinguished between places called –ham (enclosure or settlement) and places called –hamm (meaning river of water meadow). He said that he thought Corsham was a –hamm not a –ham.

I do not think I was the only person taken aback by this. I pointed out that it was generally accepted that the English Place-Name Society volume XVI on *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* (1939) was quite clear: Corsham had its origin in being the –ham, the settlement, of Corsa, a Saxon chap, about whom admittedly nothing whatever was known. And, given that Corsham conspicuously lacks a river, how could it be named after a meadow?

Simon Draper calmly demolished what I thought was a devastating critique. The *Place-Names of Wiltshire* volume of 1939, he said, was quite out of date, and there had been much scholarly debate about –ham and –hamm since then. Chippenham was probably a –hamm, since the river Avon afforded it evident water meadows. But Corsham, lacking a river, had many springs and many opportunities for the fertility of meadows to be created in the forest, despite the lack of a river. These meadows could have been distinctive enough to give rise to the name.

Simon drove back to Gloucestershire; I went home to have another drink. I am wondering: can he be right? I rather think he might be.

Dr. Negley Harte



A few of the
Saxon items
found in
Wiltshire

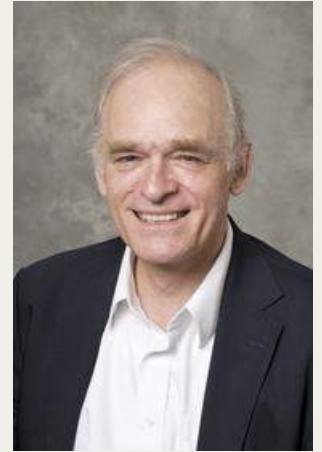


Magna Carta: Origins and Outcomes

Originally it was planned that professor of medieval history David d'Avray would enlighten us with a talk on Magna Carta to coincide with its 800th anniversary, yet being occupied at the time it was postponed until February this year. This was really a blessing rather than a curse, however, as the 1216 charter could be said to be more important than the original 1215 version, or even the later 1225 edition.

David and his colleagues have not been short of work over the past year giving similar talks of this nature. Magna Carta, or the 'Great Charter', was agreed by King John of England at Runnymede, near Windsor, on 15th June 1215.

The 1215 charter anniversary has been slightly exaggerated, yet no matter its effectiveness (or lack thereof) it is an invaluable source showing Britain and its pervasive bureaucracy at that time. It displays the complicated governmental systems of the era with its interwoven Saxon and Norman influences, creating a more complicated picture in comparison to other contemporary countries' systems.



David d'Avray FBA

The charter originated due to simultaneous, strained relations with the king, his barons and the Church - which is discussed in more detail on the next page. In 1213, a party of rebel barons met with Archbishop Stephen Langton and the papal legate to air their grievances against the king. They urged John to agree to confirm the coronation charter issued by King Henry I which had promised to abolish 'all the evil customs by which the kingdom of England has been unjustly oppressed'. The dispute escalated in early May 1215 when the king refused to meet the barons' demands. Many renounced their oaths of allegiance to him and their capture of the City of London that same month was a turning point in their campaign. John by now had no option but to negotiate and settle with them.

Aggrieved by the manner in which Magna Carta was to be enforced, John sent messengers to the Pope in the summer requesting that the charter be annulled. In turn, the barons refused to surrender London until the charter had been implemented.



The four surviving copies were brought together for an exhibit in the British Library

Pope Innocent III was alarmed by the charter's terms, and issued a papal bull describing it as 'illegal, unjust, harmful to royal rights and shameful to the English people', and declaring the charter 'null and void of all validity forever'. Civil war soon broke out between King John and his barons. Magna Carta was effectively dead, but it gained new life in the early years of the reign of the next king, Henry III. In 1216 a revised version of Magna Carta was issued in order to regain the support of the barons. Regarded as the foundation of democracy in England, the charter's terms only truly applied to a small proportion of the population.

Article continues next page...

Historians have tended in the past to focus on the significance of structures and revolutions, but by the late 1980s things had changed. Singular momentous occasions like the end of Apartheid and the collapse of the USSR signified the importance of narrative history. The Magna Carta's fate could have been decided by such a singular event, the death of King John.

Should John have survived the First Baron's War, where the disaffected barons aided by French forces made war on the king, the Magna Carta would have been lost no matter the result. Had he won the war it would've been torn up, and should France have won, Louis (an absolutist) would certainly not have allowed any limitations on his monarchy. When John died however, the people rallied against the barons and French with a new, less terrible, king. His death at such a time then almost supersedes the significance of the Magna Carta itself.

To many, most chiefly Northern barons, John was a detestable man who would sell their marriages and tax to the point of annoyance, such acts went further than greed and were deliberate attempts to antagonise them. His name continues to live on in infamy.

Stephen Langton (archbishop of Canterbury 1207-1228) was also one of the most important figures in the history of Magna Carta as a famous scholar and leading figure in the Church. He was born around 1150 to an English family in rural Lincolnshire and was likely educated in his local cathedral school. The Pope called him to Rome and made him a cardinal, before arranging for him to be appointed archbishop of Canterbury. King John refused to accept the pope's choice of archbishop due to a combination of wanting to decide the appointment himself, as was the case with his predecessors, and moreover, Langton's belief that kings were by nature oppressive and likely to act with disregard to the law made him a natural enemy.



**Statue of Langton
from the exterior
of Canterbury
Cathedral**

The threat of excommunication and rebellion forced John to accept Langton's position. In 1215, Langton refused to give up command of Rochester castle to the king because John's demand had been made 'without judgement'. For this act John considered Langton 'a notorious and barefaced traitor', and suspected him of complicity with the rebel barons, a baseless accusation. Instead, Langton and his fellow bishops worked for a peaceful settlement - one that was to be enshrined in the original issue of Magna Carta in 1215.

It was during the years of Henry III's minority that Langton was to become the champion of Magna Carta. In 1225, Henry issued what was to be the definitive version of the Charter. Langton pronounced a broad sentence of excommunication in support of Magna Carta. Anyone, king or baron, would automatically be outlawed from the Church if they violated the Charter. Langton was instrumental in promoting and upholding the Charter and thus ensuring its survival.

Jujhar Garcha



**King John presenting
a church, painted
c. 1250-59 by Matthew
Paris in his 'Historia
Anglorum'**

Corsham Station Campaign Update

In a previous update I reported on the decision for the Society's Corsham Station Campaign to join TransWilts, now a registered Community Interest Company. Paul Johnson, its Chairman, was the first Chairman of the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership which no doubt accounted for the fact that four rail schemes were included within the final list of projects chosen for further study. Paul, alongside Graham Ellis and others have been exceptionally successful in promoting the improved Melksham rail service. As a result it was within reach of its fifth-year passenger target within two years of operation! Paul sees great possibilities for a reopened Wilton Station and is acting as an advisor to Wilton Town Council. Just recently Paul also met again with Corsham Town Council and the result was the following announcement:

"A huge step forward has been taken in the past month with the formation of a Corsham Town Team, with funding to commission a feasibility study, including train service options. The initial announcement by the Chair, Cllr. Peter Pearson, read as follows: I am delighted to announce the formation of a new team to take forward the aspirations of a new railway station and services for Corsham and surrounding areas. As Chairman of the new team, over the coming months I will be in regular contact with stakeholders to inform people of progress and seek information and support.

For further information there is a new website at: corshamrailwaystation.org/TransWilts, who are providing advice and support on 'rail speak', sources of expertise and the Network Rail processes. The key delivery element in opening any new station is the availability of a suitable train service. There is no possibility of the new high-speed electric services stopping at every local station. A regional train service is needed which connects local destinations into the high-speed network. Establishing which train service options can be realistically considered, with a sensible affordable business case, and in what timescale, are the next essential steps in delivering Corsham Station."

Paul Johnson suggests that if you have previously supported the Society's Corsham Station Campaign you can help now, as we want to create a "Friends of Corsham Station" group. The Friends will be advised of progress and can become involved with local events associated with Corsham Station. In the longer term it is thought the members of the group would morph into the 'station adoption and users group', as and when the Station becomes a reality. To join the group go to the TransWilts website at transwilts.org/tw/friends-area, (and be sure to pick "Corsham" as your "station of interest"). Your support will be much appreciated. That same interest and support is also required in the preparation of the terms of the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan. With the failure of the Core Strategy to provide any protection from developer's green field dreams, we need as wide an input to the Neighbourhood Plan process as it is possible to achieve.

Thank you, Anne Lock



Meet Corsham's New Butcher, Toby Haynes

Over the last 100 years Corsham has seen a number of well-established butcher shops come and go. Many of us remember the shops of Mr Ives, the Love family, Beszants, with their slaughterhouse, the Royal Wilts and the North West London Meat Company. In recent years the shop, now occupied by Toby Haynes, were the premises for Artingstalls and the Thomas family from Malmesbury. Toby Haynes has been in Corsham for the last 8 months and he's been kind enough to share with us how he came to choose Corsham for his new business.



Toby was born and educated in Highworth and on leaving school trained as a chef at the local college whilst working in the kitchens of the golf club. He

left being a chef when an opportunity came up at the local butchers to improve his skills and knowledge for his career, but he loved training as a butcher so much he never went back into being a chef! He then did his NVQ training in butchery at Andrew's Quality Meats in Highworth and stayed there for 8 years becoming shop manager in the end. After his time in the Andrew's shop he followed on by managing Michael Hart and Son in Cricklade for 4 years until, with his wife, they decided to look for their own shop and found it to be in Corsham High Street, our gain, Cricklade's loss.

During the last 8 months Toby, together with his team of staff, Marie and Robert, has built up a fantastic customer base ensuring specific customer requirements are catered for. Toby comments that he was lucky enough to be brought up on a farm and has strong beliefs when it comes to animal welfare and quality of life and he thinks that happy well looked after animals make for good eating! We wish Toby, with his staff, every success for the future.

The Brunel Shed

As part of an international organisation of Men's Sheds, one has been started for Corsham and the surrounding communities. Cllr Phil Whalley of Corsham Town started the initiative and handed it over to those who attended the first meeting at the venue. The club will be called The Brunel Shed and women are welcome to join as well as men. It will be a larger version of the typical garden shed and is an opportunity to socialise over tea or coffee, work on projects, share expertise, tools and resources. It is hoped that new members will soon feel at home and will find the Brunel Shed to be a safe, friendly and inclusive venue. The club has been offered the use of the Potley Community Centre and more information can be found at www.menssheds.org.uk or contact Barry Reed 01249 70132.

There have been several meetings to get this project launched. A committee has been formed, a constitution written and applications are being submitted for grants. Work benches and several tools have been offered and, with the help of the Council, will soon be in place. It is hoped that that the club will be up and running early in the New Year.

Humphry Barnikel



The Corsham Walking Festival

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: 17th -19th JUNE 2016

We are holding our second full Weekend Walking Festival on the above dates, and will be offering 17 walks to suit all abilities, including a short fully accessible wheelchair friendly walk, therefore suitable for all (carers free). We'll be offering new walks, tweaking some others, using a number of experts to talk about specialist subjects en route which proved so popular at our last festival, as well as having our expert walk leaders to guide you. There will be walks for a range of interests and abilities; quarrying, geology, railways, canals, natural history, singing, a Children's Free Treasure Hunt, another "Walkies" for dogs (and their owners) and a "Mindfulness" walk, as well as walks around our local villages; so we hope there is something for everyone. Many walks will start from the new Springfield Campus, which will be the Festival Headquarters for the weekend, with free parking. In town on the Saturday and Sunday, though we will start some walks from locations around the area to give a wider range. We just need the weather to be kind!

We will be holding a Saturday evening supper and Quiz at The Campus, to which all are invited, walkers and non-walkers; we're also holding an opening ceremony on the Friday to see the first walkers off. We'd love local clubs and groups to bring a team to our evening event and compete for "The Golden Boots" Award. We aim to make it fun.

We now have our own new website www.corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk which will have all the walk details on it; this will have all the information you need and walk descriptions. Brochures will be available from the start of April at the Town Hall, the TIC or for download via the website. Booking will start on 4th April via the Pound Box Office, or book directly via our website. In the meantime, do look at our website, there are many photos of last year's Festival and links to other local walking groups in our area, and before too long it will have the plans for 2016 on it.

Hope to see lots of you in June, it's a long way off, but something to look forward to whilst we await spring.

Julia Tyte, Publicity

Do you know where you can see these date plates in Corsham?



1) _____



2) _____



3) _____



4) _____



5) _____



6) _____



7) _____



8) _____



9) _____



10) _____



11) _____



12) _____



13) _____



14) _____

The answers will be revealed in the next issue of 'Spotlight'

CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY 2016

All meetings at the Pound Arts Centre (telephone 01249 701628) at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated. Members £2, Non-Members £5, this includes free tea or coffee or £1 off a glass of wine. Guests are very welcome.

29 Apr:	Michelle Donelan, MP MP for the Chippenham constituency 'My First Year in Parliament'
20 May:	AGM To be held at the Town Hall at 7.15pm.
24 June:	Summer Outing Chippenham Museum
22 July:	James Methuen-Campbell Author, Musicologist and Lord of the Manor of Corsham 'Trees in Our Midst'
Aug:	Summer Cream Tea (members only). Date to be announced.
30 Sept:	Julian Orbach Editor working on the 3 rd ed. of Pevsner's <i>Buildings of Wiltshire</i> 'The Buildings of Corsham'
5 Oct:	A guided tour of the Westonbirt Arboretum by our member Jim Ball, of Corsham and Rome. Tickets required.
28 Oct:	Dr. Virginia Bainbridge Former Editor of the <i>Victoria County History of Wiltshire</i> , and Director of the Wiltshire Manorial Records Project 'Governing Wiltshire: Almost a Thousand Years of Manorial Records, 1086-1922'
25 Nov:	Martin Head 'Director of Content, Corsham Institute' 'The Corsham Digital Hub'

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 historical interest, in Corsham and the surrounding countryside.

Corsham Civic Society, 91 Tellcroft Drive, Corsham, SN13 9JQ, Wiltshire. Registered Charity No: 275321