



Corsham Spotlight

Journal of the Corsham Civic Society
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The 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

Corsham at Christmas 2016



A large crowd gathered outside the Town Hall and The Flemish Weaver for the Corsham Carol Service

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From the Chairman

If it's not too late, welcome to 2017 and the Society's full programme, as shown on the back page of this edition. For the first time, in a number of years, we had a Society talk at the Pound Arts Centre in January, moving the annual lunch to February 24th, this, we hope, will become a regular pattern for future years. Again, we thank Negley Harte for the 2017 programme of talks and proposed visits, such a variety of topics to be enjoyed.

On a sad note, at the January meeting, we remembered the life and work of Sally Fletcher who passed away in December 2016 at the age of 72 years. Sally had been an active member of the Society and had served for a number of years as Secretary, her loss to the community in Corsham and the surrounding area will indeed be great. Further tributes to Sally appear on pages 3-5.

At the February Executive Committee meeting Pat Whalley announced that she would be retiring from the committee at May's AGM. May I take this opportunity of thanking Pat for nearly 40 years work for the Society taking on, at various times, the role as Secretary (twice), committee member, editor of 'Spotlight' and an active participant in the planning of the Heritage Open Days. A few years ago we made Pat an Honorary Vice President of the Society, a reward justly deserved, so now all that it remains for me to do is again to say, Pat, thank so much for all your hard work over the years, your smile, witty comments and a thorough knowledge of how things work will certainly be missed at the bi-monthly committee meetings.

Thinking ahead to May's Annual General meeting on Friday, the 19th at the Town Hall commencing at 7.15pm, we will be looking for new members of the Executive Committee, so if you are interested in joining that body of people, do let me know in advance. I am quite willing to stand again as Chairman for the next 12 months, but I shall definitely be retiring from that post in May 2018 as I will have completed 9 years in that post and I think it's time for me to take a rest and let someone else head up this Society and lead it forward for the next few years.

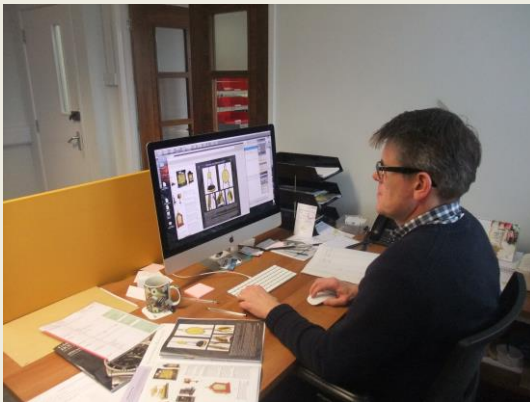
Membership News

We extend a warm welcome to Annette Scott and Dale Harger who have recently joined the Society.

Contributions to Spotlight are very welcome. Please contact the new editor, John Maloney, at: johnmaloney2003@aol.com

Corsham Print 2017

It's Thursday afternoon, February 9th and I have just returned from a most interesting and informative visit to our 'Spotlight' magazine printers, Corsham Print. Chris Perry and David Kilmurray, the joint owners, took time out to explain how the printing business has changed since 2006 when the first article about their company and its forebears appeared in 'Spotlight'. Today, the company has 11 employees, including Chris & David, and with business growing they've had to embrace new technology and invest substantial sums of money in new equipment to keep ahead of their rivals. Their business emanates from an area of approx.: 25-30 mile radius of Corsham and they are able to print leaflets, brochures, magazines, like ours, banner type posters, catalogues and soft back books etc. No job is too small or too large for them to tackle. In some instances they can receive an urgent short run order in the morning and have it ready for collection by the end of the day.



Corsham Print employ two types of printing process, Digital and Offset. The 'Spotlight' magazine is printed digitally and a digital printer is used for short runs of between 500 and 1,000 copies and 2,000 sheets an hour can be produced. The design work, once approved, is passed directly to the machine and it's printed with very little human assistance. Offset printing is used where the print run is for a 1,000 copies plus and their largest run was for 250,000 impressions. The offset machine can print up to 15,000 sheets an hour, and during my visit, I was able to watch this very large machine in action, most impressive indeed. On another machine, booklets are collated, guillotined and stapled into the finished article. The oddest printing job they've completed was for the M.O.D. and was the escape manual for submariners on waterproof paper!

We, the Corsham Civic Society, are greatly indebted to Chris and David for their continuing support in printing our 'Spotlight' magazine free of charge, which we all greatly appreciate, thank you Corsham Print from us all.

Michael Rumsey

A tribute to Sally Fletcher, 16th August 1944 – 27th December 2016

All the details below were provided by Sally's brother, Nick, to whom the CCS extends its commiserations and expresses its grateful thanks.

Sally's career encompassed:

1970 ~ Chatham House (Institute of International Affairs).

1971 – 1984 ~ Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, Administrative Trainee, then Principal.

1975 – 1977 ~ Cabinet Office (on secondment from MOD), Officer in Intelligence Assessment

Sally, born in Shipley in Yorkshire, then aged 7 moved to Far Headingley in Leeds where she did her 'O', 'A' and 'S' levels before going on to University College London to achieve a First in Modern Languages and Literature. Sally, whilst waiting to take her Civil Service exams, attended the London School of Economics and completed an MSc in International Relations. She then entered the MOD. Some 10 years ago, shortly after arriving in Corsham, Sally was diagnosed with a rare and untreatable condition called scleroderma. Very few people knew of this. She smiled a lot and always put a positive face on all she did. Her happiness, resilience and determination stemmed from her own character and from her Buddhism which she practised in a fairly personal and private way.

Sally moved to Corsham from South Wales in 2006 and over the following ten years she joined various local organisations and groups. Amongst these are: Corsham Twinning Association; Transition Community Corsham, aka Transcoco; Corsham Town Council's Neighbourhood Planning Group; Wiltshire Pilates; Corsham Ramblers Group; Corsham Civic Society; and two more that have now ceased to function: Campus Operations Board and the Corsham Community Area Network. It was fitting that in 2014 Sally won the Corsham Community Award; there follows her updated nomination:

Corsham Community Area Partnership

"The key word is Community. Sally was very much part of her community, involved in the community and prepared to give of her time for her community. The Area Partnership was about representing community issues and concerns and encouraging groups and individuals to bring their interests and skills together to do something about them. Sally brought her own interests and skills to the Partnership Steering Group as Wiltshire Council sought closer engagement with its community areas and with the volunteer sector.

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Sally championed personal interests in Environment and Culture and channeled career skills that were developed and honed at a very different level to the group which relied heavily on the personal credibility and experience of a few key people. Sally demonstrated that credibility in her depth of research, her method, her process and considered approach, her attention to detail and her ability to translate complex into practical.



Sally Fletcher being presented with the Corsham Community Award by Cllr. Ruth Hopkinson

She liked evidence and was prepared to search for evidence, present that evidence and utilise that evidence. Most of all she was a 'do-er', she had time that she was able to give and she chose to direct that in 'doing' for a wider cause. At a practical level she was heavily involved in consultations over plans to develop the community campus, in transport and recycling issues and projects, the authoring and editing of a Community Plan and much more. She was supportive and encouraging and just generally really nice to work with – even when I was chided for long sentences and excessive use of commas. She was though also about balance and she enjoyed her own time, her garden renovation project, her exercise and calming techniques, her reading and her singing – the singing was important – one thing that she always protected from the demands of yet another meeting."

Kevin Gaskin, Corsham Community Area Network Co-ordinator.

"Sally joined the Corsham Civic Society in 2007 and very soon afterward became its Secretary. A post she held until 2011. Her skills honed previously as a civil servant, were invaluable to the organisation, and she promoted many new ideas and changes which remain in place today. Her cheerful demeanour and commitment to meeting deadlines and goals, which is so necessary in this type of voluntary work, were exceptional, and whilst having moved on to other projects, she always remained a very supportive member of the Society."

Pat Whalley

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"Sally was a remarkable person. She gave so freely of her own time for the benefit of others, and was particularly passionate about protecting the heritage and environment of Corsham whilst also planning for its future. Sally joined the Town Council's Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group in September 2014 and soon volunteered to lead on the topic of heritage. She put her considerable research, policy and organisational skills to good use, making huge steps towards producing robust and effective proposals that will make Corsham an even greater place for future generations, and invested a great deal of time and effort in understanding the town and what makes it so special. In fact, through her recent research Sally had begun to uncover historical features about Corsham that have gone unrecognised for years, mentoring and supporting a student from Bath Spa University in the process.

Heritage and the Neighbourhood Plan aside, Sally was a willing contributor to all aspects of Corsham life and we will miss her dearly. She was skilled at bringing people together to 'get the job done'; something that was evident from the vast number of projects and organisations she was a major part of in the town and, in recognition of this, she was awarded a Corsham Town Council Community Award for Volunteering in 2014. Sally is a great loss to Corsham."

Cllr Ruth Hopkinson, Chair of Corsham Town Council



Corsham Wanderers, Xmas 2012 ~ Sally is fifth from the left front row

Exploring Wiltshire's Parish Churches

I've always enjoyed visiting parish churches while travelling around the UK and having spent 35 years working in Church of England primary schools, there was always a parish church attached which was visited frequently by the pupils and staff. Wiltshire itself has 375 parish churches within its borders and they are within 2 dioceses, that of Bristol and Salisbury. Twenty-one of those churches are in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust which means they are rarely used for services but remain open for visitors. Of the 354 others, 119 are grade 1 listed and a further 133 at grade 2*, these include St. Bartholomew's Corsham, St. Andrew's Chippenham and St. Mary's Calne. Building styles go from Norman, as seen at St. Christopher's in Ditteridge, through Early English, as seen at Sherston and continuing into the Decorated period which we can enjoy in a visit to Edington church, a fine building both inside and outside. Finally we move on to the Perpendicular period and here the 15th century has left us some wonderful structures including notable examples such as St. Mary the Virgin, Steeple Ashton, St. Sampson at Cricklade and St. Mary's, Calne. Churches also range in size from the smallest in Wiltshire at Fifield Bavant, St. Martin's, to one of the largest at St. Mary's Wilton, one of two grade 1 listed Victorian churches in the county, the other being at Sutton Veny.

In my travels around the county, visiting churches, I've been accompanied by my friend Mollie, who patiently reads out the descriptions of the church as written by Nikolaus Pevsner or by Brian Woodruffe in the book entitled 'Parish Churches of Wiltshire: a guide' published by the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust. An Ordnance Survey map is also essential as some churches are often hidden from view along country lanes or situated at the end of a rough track as at St. Peter's, Blackland, on the outskirts of Calne. Over the last 10 years we have visited between 80 and 90 churches and in most cases they have been open for viewing, those that are locked, for security reasons, can be viewed by contacting the Churchwarden and arranging a visit at an appropriate time. We recently did this to see the interiors of 3 churches on one morning, those at Charlton, Hankerton and Minety. To have a personal guided tour was most helpful and various points of interest were photographed and documented for future use in the talks I give.

Once you have located the church building, you are always hopeful that it will be unlocked. For security reasons many parish churches remain locked, but a telephone call in advance of a visit can be most helpful. Some buildings look quite plain and perhaps uninteresting from the outside, but once inside you discover hidden gems. For example, when visiting recently All Saints church at Oaksey, once inside you are captivated by the early 15th century wall paintings which were deliberately painted over in lime wash in 1547 and not discovered until 1933; they are truly wonderful to see and currently the church is raising money to restore them.

Alternatively you can visit St. Peter's at Clyffe Pypard and discover the tombstone to Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in the churchyard and inside you will find the 18ft high monument to Thomas Spackman who died in 1786 and is buried there. Born in the village he became a master carpenter, made his fortune and donated money for the education of poor children in his home village. The sculpture, by the Royal mason John Devall is superb and would grace any abbey or cathedral, but it's here, in Clyffe Pypard for all to see.



Wiltshire also contains two parish churches that are unique in England for they not only have a west tower but a central tower with a spire. The 3rd such church is to be found in Ormskirk, Lancashire, but Purton St. Mary's has the best example followed by Wanborough St. Andrew's. The churchyard at Purton has a fine tapered chest tomb for Nevil Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal for 46 years and during that time he was at odds with John Harrison who made his wonderful time pieces to determine longitude. Purton church is certainly a building to visit and is always open.



All Saints Church, Oaksey ~ 15th century wall paintings

On my recent visits to parish churches in North Wiltshire last Autumn, I was privileged to be granted access to the Base Chapel at MOD Lyneham, formerly RAF Lyneham. It is now the home for the R.E.M.E, the Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers and the Chaplain, the Rev. Stephen Thatcher, showed me around this unique place of worship. When the R.E.M.E base closed at Bordon in Hampshire, all the fittings, stained glass windows etc, were brought and installed at Lyneham.



Amongst the items at Lyneham is the wonderful oil painting by David Shepherd, the renowned railway and wild animal artist, entitled 'Christ on the Battlefield'. It measures 18ft long by 15ft high and is probably worth £500,000+. To view this painting was certainly for me a most moving moment and though the building is not a parish church in one sense, it is the church, a place of worship, for those who live and work on the base.

My visits to parish churches continue again this year and only yesterday, I spent some time, with my friend Mollie, viewing the glorious Edington Priory Church of St. Mary, an excellent example of an English Parish Church.

Michael Rumsey

What's Corsham Town Council for! Councillor Ruth Hopkinson, Chairman of the Town Council; David Martin, Chief Executive; and Councillor Philip Whalley, Corsham Town Ward ~ notes of the talk on 27th January 2017

Michael Rumsey started the proceedings with a tribute to Sally Fletcher who had been the secretary of the Corsham Civic Society [CCS] for some years. Then he introduced Ruth Hopkinson [RH], Phil Whalley [PW] and David Martin [DM] of Corsham Town Council [CTC].



David Martin is top left; Phillip Whalley is front row first from left; Anne Lock (CCS) is second row second from left and Ruth Hopkinson is second row fourth from left

RH introduced the talk by stating that the objective of CTC was to make Corsham a place where people wanted to be and that the CTC is non-political and has 20 town councillors.

DM then stated some key facts about the history of the town council. The first parish council election was in 1894 and there were 15 seats (there are 20 now) for a population of 4000, or 1 in 100 of the population (today it's 1 in 650 of the population). England has 80,000 councillors and spends about £1billion p.a. Corsham now has a population of 13,000, has 5 wards and has a budget of £750,000 p.a.

The purpose and responsibilities for Corsham (and villages) are based on the following precepts:

1. Improve economic, social and environmental well-being
2. Manage facilities and services
3. Manage finance, for which it has an administrative team which puts 15,000 items through the accounts
4. Governance - through the committee and council (some 70 meetings per annum)
5. Reception and general enquiries (eg even about UFOs!)
6. Street-naming (CCS have had an input into this)
7. Grant-giving – 20-30 groups p.a. are supported
8. Lettings of the town hall eg. weddings, functions, community events etc.

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9. Planning Applications: meetings are held every 3 weeks and the CCS has an input into this [see p. 18]. A Strategic Plan was adopted in 2013 and the council has tried to have more influence through the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan
10. Training and Development Plan
11. Emergency Plan: this is updated every 6 months and a Flood plan is currently being worked on.

RH then explained that there are three standing committees, two of which directly affect those at the meeting:

Properties and Amenities

- There are 130 allotments which have a huge waiting list. The charge is £40 p.a. per allotment.
- The town council owns Arnold House which includes 2 residential flats but these don't cover the cost of keeping up the listed building.
- Public recreation areas – the council works with WCC and Corsham Youth Council.
- There are a number of capital projects eg. cemetery, playground, and some of the churchyards eg. maintaining war memorials, memorial gardens (opposite the old post office).
- Town Hall – the upkeep costs are huge
- Mobile CCTV
- Toilets: maintenance costs taken over from WCC when they discontinued their upkeep
- Maintaining the look of the town (gardens etc)
- Railway station
- Working with Wiltshire Council Highways and Transport – funding is matched for improving the town eg. bus shelters, cycle routes

Community Services

CTC have a Creative Strategy to make Corsham a cultural hub and to this end have:

- placed a commemorative plaque about the WW1 hospital in the town hall
- given a grant to The Pound Arts Centre with whom they have joint ventures
- circulated a newsletter inviting suggestions for improvements and ideas (they are trying to open up the town council to proposals though there were disappointingly few suggestions)
- for health and well-being, a defibrillator has been located in the town hall; public toilets are being maintained; community awards were launched in 2011 as a way of saying thank you to all those who do voluntary work for Corsham
- organised events eg. street fairs (for instance, a new food festival is to take place on 17th June) and the town hall works closely with the MOD, Bath Spa University and Corsham Digital Institute

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- free car parking has been instituted (the town council together with Martingate pays for lost revenue)
- a marketing plan for tourism has been instigated
- promoted the Twinning Association
- organise the Corsham Youth Council and associated activities: representatives from each of the schools meet for consultation on anything that has an impact on them eg. transport.

PW reported on:

Localism ~ town councils are well-placed to meet this need and are keen to do so. The 2011 Act gave power to local councils and CTC is planning its Strategic Neighbourhood Plan. The Planning Committee is a full committee and is advisory but has some real weight eg. the Peacock Road application for 50 houses to which 100 local residents objected and overturned the Wiltshire Council planning officers recommendation.

The CCs Chairman thanked Ruth, David and Phil for their interesting and enjoyable talk and then invited questions from the audience.

The following questions were raised by the audience:

1. What are the plans for Arnold House? RH answered that a viability plan that CTC carried out howed that it did had not meet any of its aims and it was expensive to maintain (it could cost be up to 10% of its budget). They are looking at other uses for it but are definitely not asset-stripping.
2. What is the population of Corsham? DM answered that in 2011 it was 13,000. Since then Rudloe has moved to Box but there has been some increase elsewhere.
3. What is the council's involvement with the Mansion House site and Digital Corsham. PW answered that the planning application by WC came up recently and was not supported by Corsham. WC are now going to re-jig the application. RH then explained that this was part of a wider Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Plan. For the encouragement of growth, Corsham is identified as a potential digital industries hub, much of which is centred on the MOD and a number of small, local enterprises. Wiltshire Council and other stakeholders have to more closely define what the Mansion House is to be used for.
4. Parking – there isn't enough. DM answered that there is plenty of long-stay parking but people just don't want to pay.

RH, DM and PW are clearly very committed to and enthusiastic about Corsham - to keeping its history, character and beauty, its prosperity, its sense of community and all the things that make Corsham a lively and enjoyable place to be in.

Cath Maloney

The Head Family

When the Head family emigrated into Corsham, all the way from many earlier generations a few miles down the road in Box, they came en-masse and they brought their Bath Stone yard with them. My paternal great-grandfather, James was born in 1841 in Box Hill, in the very year that the Box Tunnel opened, where his father had a flourishing stone contracting business in a yard next to the family's house. James and his wife Sarah had 7 surviving children, who all went to Box School until they were old enough to join him in the family business, which he inherited on the death of his father. As the business prospered towards the end of the 19th century, and certainly by the time of the 1881 census, James bought a bigger yard at the bottom of South Street in Corsham and they moved to a house in Paul Street. The story goes that the oldest son Albert ran away to sea, but all the other sons moved with their father to Corsham.

The family attended the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Pickwick Road and it was there, when they were children, that my grandfather, George, met his future wife Florence, when they passed notes to each other hidden inside their hymn books! Florence must have also had stone dust running in her veins as her father Henry John Lucas started work in the Bath Stone Firms as an office boy when he left school, working his way up to be Managing Director of the Yockney and



Hartham Park Stone Company, whose offices were on the Pickwick Road.

Henry had a great talent for figures and became a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and a Fellow of the Incorporated Secretaries Association. He also spoke Esperanto fluently and was very clever at shorthand, giving lessons at Pitman's College in the evenings and somehow also finding the time to be a lay preacher at the Wesleyan Chapel.

When he was 19 he married a lady called Sarah Cox whose parents had a coal business in Shirehampton and c. 1878 they bought a house on the Bath Road in Pickwick, which is now an antique dealers. Sarah was delighted with the house, until the day that they employed a gardener to dig over the garden, only to discover that it was full of human skulls and other remains. They'd had no idea that it had once been a Quaker Burial Ground! Sarah absolutely refused to live there and it was sold, and they moved to a house opposite the Flemish buildings in the High Street, "near the horse trough", which I think is likely to be Number 71, near the Mayo Memorial.

Florence, my grandmother, was born in 1879 and trained to be a teacher at the Claremont College near Gastard, worked in the Corsham Infants School and obtained her certificate to be a head teacher at the age of 21 in 1900. She married my grandfather, George that November in the Wesleyan Chapel and then joked that instead of being a Head Mistress, she'd become Mistress Head! They first lived at the bottom of South Street, near the Head Stone Yard where my Aunt Winifred was born in 1902.



The business won stone work contracts in London, including I believe work on Southwark Cathedral and so George and his young family moved to Stockwell to supervise it. They returned to Corsham with another daughter Elsie, who had been born in London, built Grove Villas and they later settled in Home Lea, at the very top of South Street (Number 1), in 1907. Another daughter, Dorothy arrived in 1909 and then my father, David, very much a late arrival, in 1922.

Article continues next page...



Home Lea at the time had a huge garden, stables for 2 horses and a long field that ran right down to the bottom of South Street behind all the houses. There are family memories of keeping pigs, chickens and haymaking in the field. The family had a grey pony called Kitty and every morning she pulled the carts of stone in the yard, but in the afternoons my grandmother would harness her up to a little 'governess cart' and take her daughters out for rides around the countryside and up to Hartham Park. Sometimes they went to Bath, but the pony was frightened of the trams and the wheels would get stuck in the tram lines, so they would leave the pony at a farmhouse which stood on the crossroads at Bathford and go on by tram.

In 1914 the war came and the men in the stone yard were called up, the stone trade slackened and no houses were being built. The yard struggled on with just the older men. My grandfather's calling-up papers arrived, but at his medical they found his heart was too weak to fight and he was made exempt. However he got a job in the ammunition factory of Stothert and Pitts in Bath and as he was on the Town Council at the time he offered to resign. However, the council excused his attendance and they also suspended further elections until after the war was over, so all the councillors kept their seats. The family history says he was one of the founders of the Corsham Bowls Club around 1909 and after the war there's a record of him supervising the building of Corsham's War Memorial in 1921.

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There are so many other stories and branches of the family that I'm still fitting the jigsaw together and always on the hunt for new pieces of it. To end this article though, here are some snapshots, which might trigger some other memories. There's Ernest Head who married Gertie Smith from South Street and then lived, I think, in Broadmead on the way to Gastard. Ernest was evidently a well known cricketer playing for Corsham, although he's not mentioned in the history page of the Club's website, but the story I've had passed down is that a gate to the Cricket Ground on Station Road was given in his memory.

One of my grandfather's brothers was Edwin, although he was always known as Ted, who married Jinny Greenman from Box. They lived in Hastings Road and had 3 daughters. One daughter was Edith who was a piano teacher and died in 1980 aged 81 years old. Nora, ran a sweet shop in the High Street next to Spackmans the Grocers and the third daughter, Georgie, married Donald Gale of Priory Street and then lived in The Tynings.

Another brother of my grandfather's generation was Charlie who specialised in the masonry around windows and arches. He was married to Rose who was the School Teacher at St Mary's Church School in Broughton Gifford. They lived in Hastings Road and she opened her own school, The Lyndhurst Private School for Boys and Girls, in Grove Road, where she became my Dad's first teacher.

So the Head Count is a big one, over 75 ancestors known to me already back to the early 1700s and there must be links over all that time with so many other Corsham families. Families with names such as Sanger, Vezey, Tiley, Rate, Dancey, Dolman, Greenman, Bradfield, Light, Bateman, Baker and of course, my Grandmother's family, Lucas.

I'm happy to share our family research so far, and I'm still digging, especially working on the story of Corsham's stone mining heritage and of course my own family's minor, but fascinating part in it, with so many other families, including the development with the Gibbons family of Strenic stone, still seen today around Corsham.

I'd love to help tell all their stories. Do email me at martinhead@me.com if you know any!

Martin Head



Corsham Walking Festival returns for its fourth year, 2017, already a firm fixture for all who love the great outdoors and enjoy Walking Festivals. Whatever your walking ability or interest, this event offers walks that will tempt you.

The Walking Group have planned 18 walks over the three days of the Festival, many of them themed. All the walks will be described in detail on the Festival website, www.corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk which will be updated in March to promote the 2017 programme of walks. Places will be limited and many walks fill up quickly so advanced booking is strongly advised via our website above.

We have several new walks; some unique with a visit to Hartham House and the lovely Weavertown Valley and beyond; plus the opportunity to visit a nature reserve not normally open to the public. Back by popular demand are several of our favourites, so there is something there for everyone; quarrying, railways and tramways, rocks and folly's, wildflowers and a peaceful mindfulness walk encouraging us to reconnect to ourselves in the beautiful surroundings of Corsham Court.



Bring the family and friends and join either the Children's Treasure Hunt or the new Corsham Quest. An optional Saturday evening's entertainment with music, brain teasing quiz and buffet is also planned. Free parking at the Springfield Community Campus throughout the Festival.

Hope to see you there, but do book early to avoid disappointment.

Booking opens on the 3 April. See www.corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk for more details.

Barry Cox, Publicity Coordinator

Corsham Civic Society planning group

The group, valiantly run for some time by Margaret Smith, has recently gained a new lease of life by the addition of Larry St. Croix and John Maloney. The meetings are held every third week, two days before town council meets to consider the submissions for the Corsham area as notified by Wiltshire Council. The town council can only make recommendations to Wiltshire Council, which is the planning authority. The group vets the pink lists of planning applications produced by Corsham Town Council and meets at the town hall to view the display of written details and drawings for each application and discuss them. If necessary, sites are visited and a photographic record made. If there are objections, written submissions are made to Wiltshire Council and the members of the group may attend the town council planning meetings to present specific comments relating to any one or more of the applications. The following are some of the major applications that the group has considered during the last 9 months ~

The former Gladman site on the Bath Road, Pickwick [opposite St. Patrick Catholic Church]: the group met with representatives of Redrow housebuilders last May and questioned them closely about various aspects of their proposals. Since then we have been keeping an eye on developments and liaising with the Pickwick Association which has taken a lead in pursuing the details of scheme. They have sought advice from a specialist environmental and ecological law firm and the outcome is that a robust, authoritative legal document has been lodged with the council.

La Piccola Italia, 21 Pickwick Road: a submission was made objecting to the new timber clad frontage for which planning permission had not been obtained [it's in the Corsham Conservation Area] and subsequently a Wiltshire Council Enforcement visited the site and has now received a retrospective planning application which will be considered by the town council.

Mansion House, Pickwick Road: this development has caused considerable local concern due to the proposed replacement of the old library building with a taller concrete and glazed structure which is considered to blight the setting of the 1721 building. The planning group raised various points and questions of information including archaeological considerations.

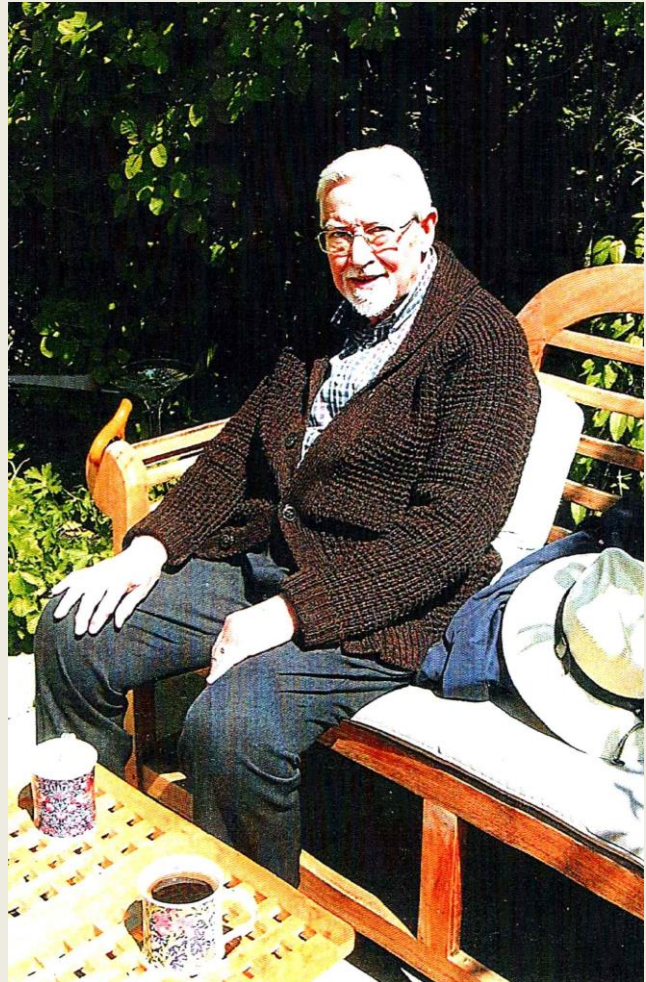
CCS are setting a working party involving members of the planning group to draft a consultation document about street signs and frontages in Corsham.

John and Larry have been asked to meet with Corsham Print who own 17-19 Pickwick Road about the possibility of getting grants to maintain those Listed Buildings.

John Maloney

Review of 'From my Hospital Bed' and 'Verse Diaries' by Wyndham Thomas

As a resident of the RUH in Bath for nearly seven weeks in early January 2016 former music research fellow, Wyndham Thomas, turned to writing his own verse in what is now split into two collections. In his editorial to 'From my Hospital Bed' he explains how he turned to writing in lieu of reading in order to account for the various "mood-swings, stresses, anxieties, and elatedness" that come with a hospital sentence. The preface to 'Verse Diaries' explains his choice of a literary diary, instead of the currently conventional photographic diary whereby one simply has to press record on their smartphone, in an attempt to more accurately evoke the



memory. Speaking of the "smells of canals, streets and fields", he tries to express the essence of consciousness (what philosophers call the qualia or sensation of perceived experience) an endeavour to which he always rises to a terrific extent. His account from the hospital bed begins despondently. 'This is not me' portrays the fallen man, a "shadow" of his once great mighty self. In complete despair, he questions what has changed in him to "accelerate the descent from artistic heights to plateaux of indifference?" Still, even if his musical heart has "decayed", a "glorious future" is hoped for in an unforeseen, uplifting ending. The next poem as one may see just from the title, 'Squaring the Circle', implies struggling with the impossible – this time in trying to "reconcile distress, compassion, and self-preservation?" However, his 'Balloons over Bath' and 'Hymn', both representations of the pastoral idyll from the comfort of a hospital bed, juxtapose these poems of existential despair.

The “hilly boundary” of Bath outside his window, “like a magical garden” full of “exotic” and “rare” fruit, provides a natural escape to the mechanical operating room and hospital in general. Nevertheless, this Eden is not completely innocent. Sinister connotations loom over as the healthy fruit float into the sky and “vanish over the horizon”, never to return. The author soon dedicates a poem to the team who aided his recovery in the heartening poem ‘Dermatology’, where their ability to make him feel “more friend than patient” and “gratefully” at ease is commended. He finishes his collection with a triptych describing in detail the decision, operation and recovery he underwent, and a short parable concerning a solitary gardener.

Like his memories from his hospital bedside, the ‘Verse Diaries’ offers a similar collection of poetic musings on a range of subjects. He goes from discussing travelling to Italy and Spain, to his faith, death and disgust of modern football to name a few. On writing about travels to sites of “commercial contentment” (‘Coach Tours’), he captures the hectic, fast-moving atmosphere between different historic places and the inevitable exhaustion that comes with it. A few of the poems were written during what was described as an idyllic week at the Grand Hotel San Michele in Calabria, which the harmonious imagery undoubtedly conveys. This peaceful state is, however, occasionally under threat as depicted in the satirical ‘Some People!’ The Spirituals inspired ‘Relics’, and traditional nursery rhyme styled ‘Wine’ illustrates the diverse forms the author will utilise in order to deliver his message, be it a slight scepticism of the Catholic veneration of icons and their reputed miraculous powers – or the truly miraculous healing powers of Spain’s most famous wines.

The diary contains more musings on old age and the hospital visits that accompanies it. ‘Retirement’ was entered in the Wiltshire County Library Poetry Competition a decade ago, although highly commended, the quite serious poem was ironically placed in the ‘Humorous Verse’ category. One past forgotten poem entitled ‘Caring’ proves to be, along with those discussing the passing of his parents, some of the more poignant pieces exposing where his true loves lie. His partner and carer Kathy, whose watercolours add further artistic merit to the publication, helps him make the transition from the reluctant ‘victim’, to a grateful recipient of loving care. The diary is completed with ‘The Saga of Percy – the Mayo Pike’, an interesting read particularly for members of the Civic Society as it recounts the events that led a 145-year-old stuffed pike being donated to us and ending its journey on a shelf in the Methuen Arms.

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If you would like to learn more about Thomas' life and times, in and out of hospital, both books are available from the Corsham Bookshop for a donation of £5 each or from Michael Rumsey (01249 715741). Donations for 'Verse Diaries' have gone to the Civic Society, while Wyndham Thomas is giving donations for 'From my Hospital Bed' to the 'Friends of the Royal United Hospital'.

Jujhar Garcha


Book Preview

Identify the subjects of Andy Rose's atmospheric photographs and you could win £500 in a Corsham-wide treasure hunt that runs from March to October 2017. Whether you are a long-term resident or exploring this historic market town for the first time, *Corsham in Focus* will soon have you gripped as you track down architectural details, decorative ironwork, signs and inscriptions, all within a mile of Corsham's elegant town hall.

- Buy the book
- Identify the subjects
- Send in your answers on the form at the back of the book
- All will be revealed at a prize-giving ceremony at The Pound arts centre in November 2017
- 1st prize £500 donated by Hunter French







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CORSHAM IN FOCUS
A PHOTOGRAPHIC TREASURE HUNT



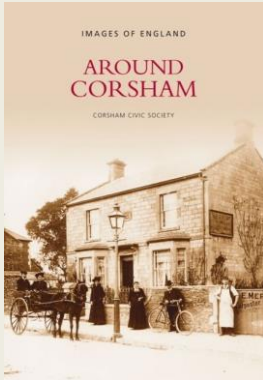
ANDY ROSE

A new pocket-sized book featuring B&W photographs of architectural details located within a mile of Corsham Town Hall will be published this month. It's in the form of a treasure hunt to identify the subjects of 100 photographs taken by local photographer Andy Rose and there is a £500 first prize. Corsham Civic Society is delighted to be listed as a patron and also that the book is to be launched on 24th March at The Pound Arts Centre prior to the next CCS talk, *Parish Churches in North Wiltshire* by Michael Rumsey (Chairman), which will start at 7.30pm. CCS members and guests are invited to the launch of the book-cum-treasure hunt, which takes place at 6.00pm, where copies of the book will be on sale for the first time. A selection of Andy's Rose's photographs taken for the book will also be on display.

Also, later this year Dr. Negley Harte's book on *Corsham in Detail* is due to be published and will be previewed in his talk on 24th November.

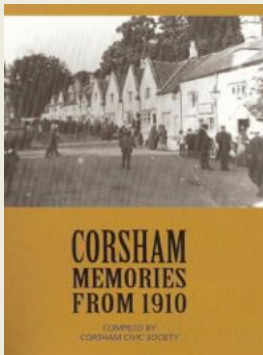
Civic Society Bookcase

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:



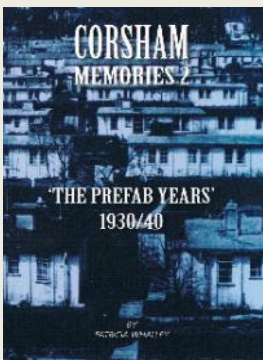
Around Corsham compiled by Anne Lock, our President, depicts archive photographs of our town, and many stories of the great and the good of Corsham's past.

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



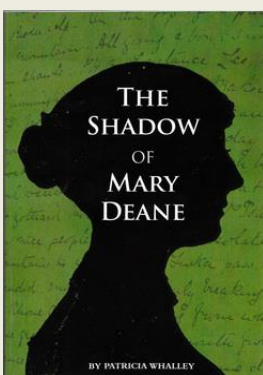
Corsham Memories from 1910 is a collection of interviews with local people who were born between 1910 and the 1940s. The Society feels it is important to record as much as we can of the town's past and the way people lived.

Available from Corsham Book shop and 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.

CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY 2017

All meetings are 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.

- 24 Mar. **'Parish Churches in North Wiltshire'**
Michael Rumsey, retired Head teacher and Chairman of the Corsham Civic Society
-
- 28 Apr. **'Travels with an Archaeologist'**
Dr. Richard Hodges is an archaeologist of great distinction, President of the American University in Rome and was born in Box
-
- 19 May **AGM** to be held in the Town Hall, 7.00 for 7.15pm (All welcome)
-
- 23 Jun. **'Hartham Park: Past, Present and Future'**
Jeffrey Thomas is Managing Director of the Hartham Park Business Centre
-
- 28 Jul. **'Putting the lipstick on the gorilla: Stained Glass Making'**
Mac McHugh is a stained glass designer of Corsham and Holt
-
- 29 Jul. **Visit** to the Wadworth Brewery in Devizes (Tickets required)
-
- 22 Sep. **'The History of Education in Corsham'**
Michael Rumsey, Dr. Negley Harte and others
-
- 27 Oct. **Visit** to Westonbirt Arboretum
-
- 24 Nov. **'Corsham in Detail'**
Dr. Negley Harte, retired university teacher, President of the Wiltshire Record Society and former Chairman of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural Society. He hopes that his book on the architectural details of Corsham will be finished.

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 Telford Drive, Corsham, SN13 9JQ, Wiltshire. Registered Charity No: 275321