



Corsham Spotlight

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

Corsham High Street roof ~ spectacular discoveries



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From the Editor

It was all change at the AGM on 18th May.

The retiring Chairman, Michael Rumsey, presented his report to the members, thanking his executive committee colleagues for the past year's work and in particular those retiring: Joan MacIver (Social Organiser), Victoria Blake (Secretary) and Dr Negley Harte (Programme Organiser). It was widely recognised that a debt of gratitude was owed to Michael for his nine years as Chairman and his sterling contribution to the society in so many ways, not least the numerous articles that he has contributed to *Spotlight*.

Some of the on the executive officer's positions have been filled: Pat Whalley (assisted by he husband Eric Mahy), Programme Organiser, and Larry St Croix, Planning Chair (who some months ago, by mutual arrangement, took over from Margaret Smith – to whom, many thanks for her contribution) and Cath Maloney, Secretary. The positions of Chair and Social Organiser remain vacant ~ expressions of interest in rather of those positions would be welcomed. Meanwhile, the committee is grateful that Michael has agreed to act as Vice Chair.

The chairman provided an overview of the events held by the society over the past year, the excellent talks arranged by Dr. Negley Harte, the visits and the successful social events. Spotlight magazine continues to be widely received by both the membership and members of the public through the internet, though a large number of magazines of the last issue still have to be collected. The society's website has been improved and has been viewed 34,307 times in 2018 up to 9th May (the figure was 9,524 for 2017). The contract for Revolution Arts, who maintain the website, has been renewed for two years.

Over the last year, the society has seen been involved in a number of significant developments: for instance, under Margaret Smith renewed effort with respect to reviewing planning applications and making submissions to Corsham Town Council and Wiltshire Council ~ in that regard Larry St Croix has made a notable contribution in summarising comments in tabular form and taking good quality photographs to illustrate the key points made. The initiative of the society in agreeing to take the lead in the Corsham High Street Project (pps. 2-3), working in collaboration with Wiltshire Buildings Record, has resulted in a successful project launch, the award of a Corsham Area Board grant of £4000 (pps. 3-4) and a great deal of positive publicity.

John Maloney

Corsham High Street Project launch a resounding success!

(with acknowledgements to the Wiltshire Buildings Record website)

The launch was on April 12th held in the upper chamber of Corsham Town Hall – where there are excellent views of the High Street - attended by nearly 60 members of the public with numerous others having sent apologies but confirming their interest. Those attending included town councillors and officers. There were short speeches welcoming and supporting the project by representatives of the Corsham Civic Society, Wiltshire Buildings Record and the former Corsham Area Heritage group.

David Clarke, an eminent buildings' historian, co-author of *Burford: Buildings and People in a Cotswold Town* and Secretary of The Oxfordshire Buildings Record, was the guest speaker and spoke about the highly relevant aspects of that project to the Corsham High Street Project [CHSP].



John Maloney, Project Facilitator and Corsham Civic Society representative, introduced the proceedings and began: *Honorary Chairman, Julian Orbach (editor of the forthcoming updated edition of the Wiltshire volume of the Buildings of England), sends his apologies as - because of a long-standing prior engagement - he cannot be here this evening. He also sends his very best wishes for the project and asked me to say the following words on his behalf: 'Sir Nikolaus Pevsner said in 1963 'Corsham has no match in Wiltshire for wealth of good houses. There are in fact no bad ones, and there are a few of really high merit'. He meant in particular the High Street, as at that date Corsham had barely begun to expand'.*

John noted that in order for a funding application to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) it needed to demonstrate that sufficient owners/tenants in the High Street were prepared to allow access for recording to make the project viable and he was pleased to report that there already has been a very good response from owners of High Street buildings to informal soundings about agreeing access to their properties for recording.

Article continues next page...

He made a point of stating that internal recording of buildings would be undertaken and managed strictly as agreed beforehand with owners and the aim was to record only internal features of historic significance: modern alterations and additions were not of interest and would not be noted. He stressed that in every sense it is intended that such work is non-intrusive. Thomas Brakspear, a local resident and specialist in historic buildings, who kindly agreed to be a Patron of the project, spoke of his experiences moving to Corsham and made the amusing and valid point that owners shouldn't be concerned about the tidiness of their houses as CHSP members would be mainly intent on getting into their attics!

John noted that the project committee would ensure that every owner taking part will be provided with a free illustrated copy of their building's report and acknowledgement in the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre archives and, ultimately, the published book.

He mentioned that little more than a decade ago, the Corsham Civic Society successfully completed the HLF funded project for the restoration of the late 19th century Mayo Memorial which was erected in memory of Charles Mayo, a notable benefactor to the town. Colleagues on the CHSP committee were involved and so the society has a good track record with HLF. It was encouraging that on that very day work had begun on one of the oldest known buildings in the High Street which was having its roof 'raised' and repaired!



Speakers panel from left: John Maloney (standing), Michael Rumsey, Dorothy Treasure, guest speaker David Cark, Peter Tapscott and Tom Brakspear

The speakers came together as a panel and a good 'question and answer' session ensued and discussion continued informally over refreshments.

Dorothy Treasure, Principal Buildings Historian, Wiltshire Buildings Record

Corsham Area Board [CAB] grant awarded to CHSP

On 31st May, the CAB met to consider a CHSP application for £4000 of capital funding for a variety of equipment required for the project. On the agenda for the meeting the CHSP was described as 'this exciting heritage project' and later [in *Our Community Matters*] 'with the potential to be one of the most interesting and significant projects ever to be undertaken in Corsham' ~ <http://corsham.ourcommunitymatters.org.uk/news/4000-for-corsham-high-street-project/>!

Article continues next page...

An illustrated presentation about the project was made by Larry St Croix (a member of the CHSP committee) which was well received. The application was agreed unanimously and Cllr Phillip Whalley, in commending it, remarked that he thought 'the project would help to foster a sense of place'.

CHSP is grateful to the four Wiltshire councillors who comprise the board: Cllr Brian Matthew (Box and Colerne), Cllr Ruth Hopkinson (Corsham Pickwick), Cllr Phillip Whalley (Corsham Town) and Cllr Ben Anderson (Corsham Without and Box Hill). CHSP is also grateful to Richard Rogers, (Community Area Manager, Wiltshire Council for his help and advice.

The £4000 CAB award plus the £2500 from the former Corsham Area Heritage - dedicated to the project through Corsham Civic Society (CCS) - and the £1050 it was agreed be made available to support the project at the last CCS Executive Committee meeting, makes funds available currently totalling £7550 and that the project is near to meeting its 'matching funding' target of £8000 for its Heritage Lottery Fund grant application of £80,000 [to be applied for in two tranches of £40,000]. Just £450 to find!

The HLF application has been registered and a full draft prepared and can be formally submitted once given its 'matched funding' target being achieved and the completion of supporting documentation, principally concerning an arrangement with local schools to provide an educational legacy.

No. 11 High Street (Corsham Opticians) ~ spectacular discoveries!

On the very day that that the CHSP was being launched, re-roofing works were starting at No 11 High Street. I had heard in advance about the works during the course of an eye test there [!] and asked Cilla Hubbard [the owner] if the CHSP/Wiltshire Buildings Record might have a 'watching brief' on the works, to which she readily agreed. Similarly, the roofing company owner, Ian Nurden, was helpful from the outset.

Since then there have been significant and exciting results from investigations by our collaborators, Wiltshire Buildings Record, at No 11 High Street [Corsham Opticians] and also by Helen Winton [Historic England & CHSP] and Tom Brakspear [owner & CHSP Patron] at The Porch [No. 33] ~ recording at both properties being promoted by CHSP in accordance with Heritage Lottery Funds [HLF] which mean that CHSP cannot be directly involved until its grant application to HLF is approved.

Reading a recent email from Dorothy Treasure, Principal Buildings Historian, Wiltshire Buildings Record about the WBR's investigation at No. 11, her excitement was palpable:

The first evidence for a medieval building [in Corsham]!!!! It has a smoke-blackened roof truss of a type I've never seen before! It has a threaded ridge purlin which is clearly of 16th century date, and probably much earlier.

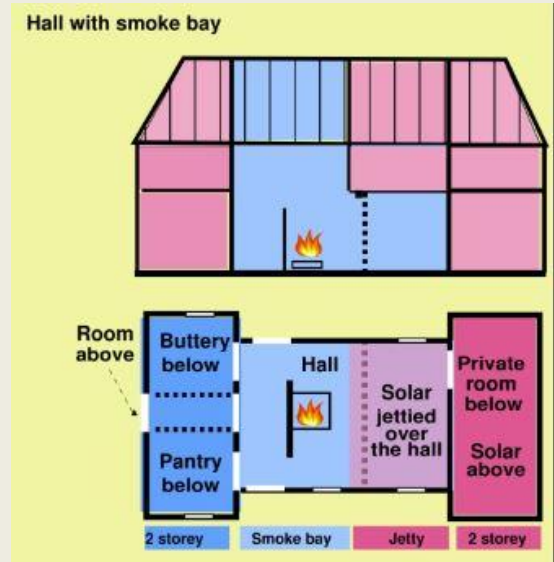
Following on from the email, Dorothy showed me around No. 11 together with Julian Orbach [CHSP Hon. Chair.] and, indeed, we were impressed by the smoke blackened 'threaded' purlin and associated timbers.

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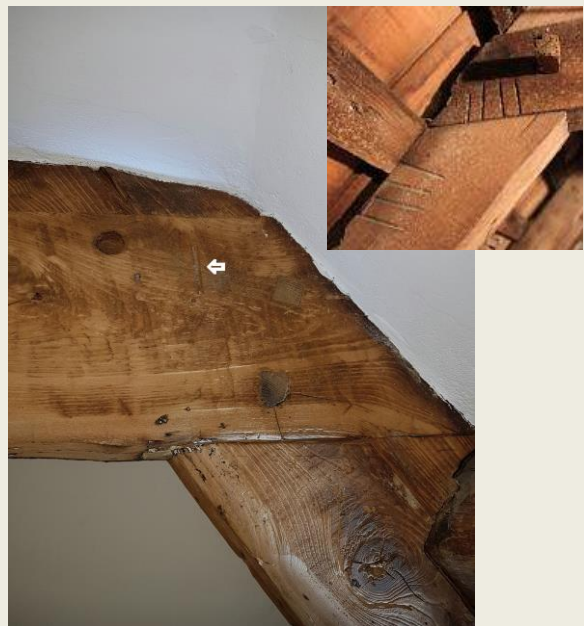
Above ~ No 11 High Street smoke blackened (not burnt) roof truss and threaded purlin

Right ~ reconstruction of a hall house with a smoke bay which is vented through the roof

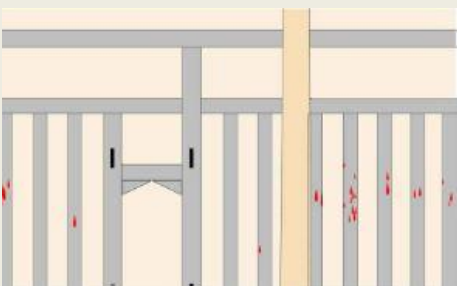


I asked about carpenter's marks - we then looked and found one that appeared quite convincing ~ it's an apparently carefully incised Roman **I** with overline and underline. But as the adjoining timber was barely visible before disappearing into the ceiling we didn't see a 'partner' for it.

Right: incised Roman **I** indicated by arrow. Insert is an example from elsewhere of an incised pair of **I I**'s.



Dorothy pointed out two candle/taper shaped indentations in a main beam in the first floor living room which are thought to be to guard the building against lightning and more specifically fire - <http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/page101.html>. They are known as *apotropaic* marks, supposedly having the power, in general, to avert evil influences or bad luck.



Above: Arrows indicate two candle/taper shaped burn marks.

Left: drawn example of numerous burn marks from a building elsewhere.

Article continues next page...

Next day we learnt that blackened timbers and remnants of a smoke bay had been recorded were recorded in No 33 by Helen Winton and Tom Brakspear.

More recently, Dorothy has reported further about No. 11 High Street ~ *This represents a typical 3-bay dwelling probably of the second half of the 16th century, with a short smoke bay at the north end, main living hall in the middle, and possibly a service room to the south. In the 17th century the building was extended to the north and encased in stone, before being extended again probably around 1800, hence the steps up at first floor level. These are rough dates, and we will try to refine them for the final report. Also, it is exciting that we have found indications of a timber-framed phase.*

Both the discoveries at No. 11 and No. 33 High Street demonstrate the potential of investigating/recording/researching buildings in Corsham. CHSP and WBR are looking forward to many such other opportunities, for instance, investigative works to the frontage of No. 44 High Street.

CHSP and WBR would like to record their most grateful thanks to Cilla Hubbard [the owner of Corsham Opticians] who could not have been more helpful and also to the roofing company owner, Ian Nurden, and his men who were most obliging in informing Larry St Croix of opportunities to photograph features of potential interest/significance.

John Maloney

Corsham Neighbourhood Plan ~ update June 2018

In 2014, the Town Council made the decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for Corsham. It came into being out of a desire to have more say in Corsham's future. As we all know, Corsham has witnessed substantial growth in recent years, with the town already having exceeded its estimated need for housing until 2026. For many of these developments, the local community has had little influence on their scale, design or location. The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity for the voice of the local community to be heard when planning future development in the Corsham area.

Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities, introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood Plans become part of the Local Plan and the policies within them are then used to shape where development goes and what it looks like. The Town Council believed a Plan was important to protect and enhance what is important to us all locally.

A Steering Group was formed comprising councillors and interested members of the community and a number of events were held throughout the Corsham area to find out what issues were important to local people. Those issues were captured in a number of topic areas: Business and Economy, Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Heritage, Housing, Lifelong Learning and Transport.

Article continues next page...

After a huge amount of research and work, including canvassing the views of individuals and interest groups and the involvement of consultants, a Draft Plan was created and, in autumn last year, was presented to the community for their comments. By this stage, the Plan was in three parts:



Part 1 – the Core Policy Document, featuring policies linked to the topic areas; Part 2 – the Corsham Design Guide, which seeks to ensure that where development takes place it is in keeping, not just with Corsham as a whole but with its immediate surroundings as well, and Part 3 – the Batscape Strategy, which sets out to influence and enhance any development of Corsham by protecting important bat habitats within the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The comments, over 200 of them, collected during the first consultation period were all considered and many resulted in changes to the Plan before it was submitted to Wiltshire Council who then ran another six-week public consultation.

Comments from the consultation will be passed to an Independent Examiner, who will consider the representations and recommend whether Corsham's Neighbourhood Plan should be put to a community referendum.

Cllr Steve Abbott, Chairman of the Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, says, "We hope that we now have a Plan which the people of Corsham feel they can support; a Plan which can help to guide and shape any further development until 2026. With the Examiner now appointed by Wiltshire Council we wait to hear whether any modifications are recommended to the Plan before it can proceed to referendum." It is hoped that the referendum will take place later this year, and will be well publicised. All electors in the parish will be asked to vote on the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan, and over 50% of those who vote must vote Yes for the Plan to be approved and adopted.

To read the draft Plan, or for more information, visit the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan website: www.corshamneighbourhoodplan.co.uk. If you have any questions, please contact Kirsty Gilby, Corsham Town Council's Planning and Events Officer, on 01249 702130 or email kgilby@corsham.gov.uk.

Methuen Arms – County Winner of the National Pub & Bar Awards

The Methuen Arms management and staff are delighted to have been named the County Winner of the National Pub & Bar Awards [photo from left to right: Lucy Smart (waitress), Becky Evans (receptionist), Ashley Harlow (Manager), Leigh Evans (Head Chef), Sally Davey (waitress) and Dulcie Turner (Bar Supervisor)].

Manager Ashley Harlow (known to the locals as Ash) states "It's a fantastic achievement for us and all our staff, and is, of course, shared with all our wonderful customers."

When Ash and his partner Abi took over the management of the Methuen Arms (owned by Butcombe Brewery) the initial

Plans were to refurbish the whole environment/interiors as well as redeveloping accommodation facilities of five bedrooms all of which are designed to be in-keeping with the age of the building. The future plans include adding a further four to six bedrooms in one of the outer buildings presently being used for storage.

The past history of the Methuen Arms building indicates that in Tudor times this was the site of an impressive house, known as Winter's Court, and in 1463 the Nott family, including a Bailiff of Corsham, owned it. It became a public house in 1608, and was established as the Red Lion Inn.

Edward Nott bequeathed the building to his sister Elizabeth Webber in 1732, who in turn left it to her daughter Christian. In 1799, Christian died and the ownership passed into the Methuen family and the building was then renamed 'The Methuen Arms'. In Victorian times, it was a coaching Inn with stabling for 40 horses.

In living memory it is known 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. It is interesting to note that a 'Pathe News' clip entitled 'The Royal Romance 1947' can be observed on the internet (YouTube ~ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrS9yxp5PWA>, from 2.22 onwards) showing the Methuen Arms and locals being interviewed.

Larry St Croix



Article continues next page...

Methuen Arms ~ a 'folly', lock-up or what?

For some years, a single storey Cotswold stone structure at the end of the garden area of The Methuen Arms has had an abandoned and forlorn aspect. The Cotswold stone roof tiles having been stolen, the roof truss was draped in vivid blue plastic sheeting which emphasised the structure's disreputable appearance as it too deteriorated.

It is clear that it had been strongly built with some architectural refinements eg well-formed large quoins (masonry blocks placed at the corner of two walls, arranged to provide strengthening) and, apparently, a well-carved stone lintel above a doorway (in the East wall) that was subsequently blocked in.

Likewise the north and west walls are sturdily built, however, the south wall is evidently a relatively modern replacement, a mixture of masonry of different sizes with a wooden lintel and door frame. In the north wall is a small aperture. The structure is quite small being approx. 9'6" [2.9m] square and 5' [1.5m] high.

As to the date of its erection, the structure is quite old as it features on an estate map of 1840 and, therefore, most likely predates the Victorian period. It is shown on the earliest Ordnance Survey map of Corsham in 1886 [both maps are on the top of the next page].



The Methuen Arms structure before the roof timbers were removed: East wall (facing) and south wall (on left)



The Methuen Arms structure: west wall

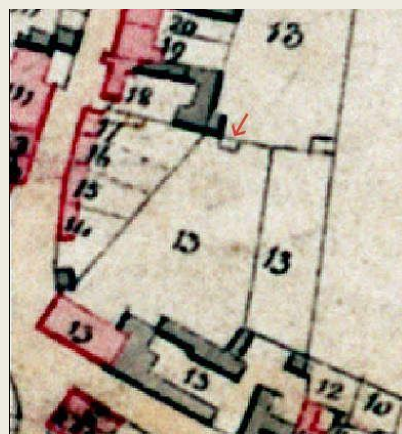
I have yet to come across any reference to the structure or its function and it is not included on the Historic England List for England [the official register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites in England including listed buildings etc.] However, the law provides that buildings and other structures that pre-date July 1948 and are within the curtilage of a listed building – an area of land around it – are to be treated as part of the listed building. The following extracts cover the principal points addressed in the listings text:

Inn, front range early C19, rear wing C18 and C17. Two storey rear wing to Lacock Road with centre arched doorway with raised imposts and keystone, and chequer pattern [apparently a sign of a tavern] to the pilasters. Second section is 2-storey with datestone 'N.N. I.N. 1650 CW 1742'. Range beyond is mostly C17, much altered. The inn is on the site of a house called Winter's Court held by Nott family [including a Bailiff] from C15 to 1732 when it passed to the Webber family. Purchased by P. Methuen 1779. House was an inn in 1608, recorded as the Red Lion in 1637 and was presumably rebuilt c1830.

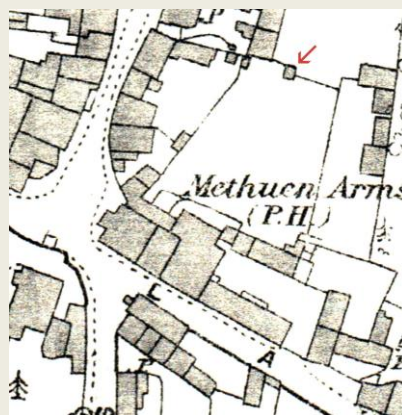
Outbuilding [to east of Inn], possibly stables and loft, C18. West front has 2 blocks of dove openings Rear wing behind, stone-tiled, linking to No 1 South Place, Lacock Road.

Stable range with loft over, C18 [all the above are Grade II]

As will be apparent from the above, at least from the 17th century there were many, quite large buildings on the site potentially providing a range of storage facilities. That being so, I doubt that the structure was built as an out-building since it was rather small and elaborate just for storage and, also, surely, would have been uneconomic. As for a gazebo, summer-house or pavilion, again its small size is against those uses and, in particular, the lack of proper window/s. It appears to be too utilitarian to be a 'folly' [most follies are a part of English garden and landscape design and are classical in form, and to do with symbolism or commemoration or, simply, are of extravagant or outlandish design.



1840 estate map ~ red arrow points to structure



1886 OS map ~ red arrow points to structure



The Methuen Arms buildings ranged along the Lacock Road and, insert, the 1650 & 1732 datestone

Given its shape, size and strong build, it struck me that it bore a resemblance to a lock-up. Village lock-ups are historic buildings that were used for the temporary detention of people mostly in rural parts of England and Wales.

Lock-ups were often used for the confinement of drunks who were usually released the next day or to hold people being brought before the local magistrate. A typical village lock-up is a small structure with a single door and a narrow slit window or opening [or none]. Most lock-ups feature a dome or spire shaped roof and are commonly built from brick, large stones or timber.

Village lock-ups acquired a range of local nicknames including blind-house [due to having no windows ~ the 18th century Lacock goal was so-called] bone-house, Bridewell, cage, jug, kitty, lobby, guard-house, round-house, tower and watch-house etc., etc. The earliest recorded lock-up type structure dates from the 13th century – the first reference to a lock-up as such dates to 1589 – and most fell out of use when police stations, with their own holding facilities were established [1839]. Nearly 300 lock-ups are currently recorded nationally with the highest concentration in Wiltshire and Somerset. In this area of Wiltshire there are a number of well known examples such as in Lacock, Box and Bradford-on-Avon etc. Indeed, in Corsham there was a gaol in the former Market Hall [which in 1882 was converted to become the Town Hall]: a plan of circa 1650 shows a court room and a 'dungeon'.

The majority of surviving village lock-ups date from the 18th and early 19th centuries when rural communities struggled to police thefts, burglaries, shootings, drunkenness, the obstruction of watchmen and the stealing of livestock. During this period many lock-ups were built as a temporary place of detention for local rogues and miscreants until they could be removed to a town. Small or tiny, most could barely accommodate one person, although often several detainees were locked up together.

What is not nearly so well known is that there were lock-ups 'attached' to public houses [it should also be noted that inns were not infrequently used as temporary courts eg in the aftermath of the failed rebellion Judge Jefferies used the George Inn, Norton St Philip as a courtroom] ~

At Reading, three rooms in a public house were devoted to the purposes of a lock-up, and the inn was kept by an old sergeant-at-mace John Howard found that many of the smaller gaols formed the rear of public houses, the gaoler being the publican.

[*Punishments of Former Days*, E.W. Pettifer, 1939]

John Howard was an 18th century prison reformer who visited several hundred prisons and wrote an influential book about his observations [*The State of the Prisons in England and Wales*, 1777]. In 1921 his name was adopted by the foremost organisation for Britain's biggest penal reform organisation, the Howard League for Penal Reform.

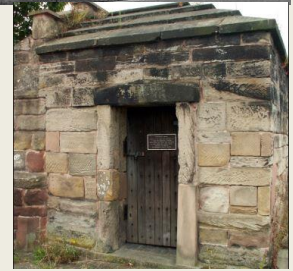
The Methuen Arms structure bears a resemblance to lock-ups that are known in Wiltshire and elsewhere ~ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Village_lock-up. Most are of the order of approx. 10' [3m] square with 5'-5'6" [1.5-1.75m] high walls. In general, in appearance, it resembles some of the known Wiltshire examples eg at Box, but the closest example I've come across was attached to the former White Lion Inn, Fordebridge, Stafford [see next page].

In Corsham, the former Market Hall dungeon was at the north end of the High Street which was the central meeting place. However at the south end of the High Street was The Red Lion at the junction with the main Lacock-Bath road and the Horsefair. The Red Lion was clearly a large establishment by the 18th century and had a reputation for being the focus of rumbustious behaviour as early as the 17th century' if not before!. Latterly it was a coaching inn with stabling for 40 horses. So it would appear likely that a lock-up on the site would have been needful and convenient.



Above: the former C17 White Lion pub and adjacent C18 lock-up, Stafford.

Right: frontage and close up of the lock-up



Certainly, the case for the structure having been a lock-up is not proven and I have only been able to undertake some basic research.

Dorothy Treasure [Principal Buildings Historian, Wiltshire Buildings Record] agreed that the structure was 'Certainly the right sort of size' for a lock-up but had reservations about its location and thinks that, on balance, it is more likely to have been an outbuilding.

Corsham Town Council, Wiltshire Council and Corsham Civic Society have all taken an interest in the structure and firmly believe that it should be restored. If it is a Georgian period pub lock-up it is a rare survival and should be prized and protected. Even if not, it is a somewhat unusual and in an architectural style that is striking.



The early C18 gazebo at Parkside, 36 High Street

To stabilise the structure and replace the roof would complete the fine work done recently in refurbishing The Methuen Arms and gardens and, in particular, the creation of a splendid vegetable garden around the structure.

Beyond the structure there is clear sight of the impressive Parkside gazebo [in the garden of 36 High Street] and formerly that and the structure made an pleasing pairing and should do so again if the right actions are taken.

If satisfactorily refurbished, it would merit other awards [see p. 8], this time for conservation and civic engagement, enhancing the sense of the history and pride in Corsham and it would be a credit to the owners, Butcombe Brewery.

My thanks to Pat Whalley and Dorothy Treasure for their helpful comments

John Maloney

Countryside Alliance Awards – Toby Haynes Family Butcher

The Countryside Alliance Awards, nicknamed the 'Rural Oscars', are now in their 13th year. Thousands of nominations have been submitted honouring the skills and produce, tradition, enterprise and the people who go the extra mile for their communities. It is exciting to note that Toby Haynes Family Butchers were announced as the Countryside Alliance's South West England Rural Oscars winner.

Toby Haynes Family Butchers established in 2015 is actually a family run butcher's shop based in Corsham and is one of the region's finest purveyors of quality fresh meats and pies. Toby himself heads up the team with wife Ali working hard keeping things in order behind the scenes. Having over 14 years' experience in the industry, Toby originally trained as a chef in catering college. As a third generation farmer, his interest in butchery was initially to give himself additional skills and to enhance his knowledge for becoming a chef. This quickly grew into a real interest and passion for the trade and he soon re-trained as a skilled butcher near the family farm in Highworth. Taking his apprenticeship in a local butchers, Toby forged himself a career with his goal being to own his own business one day.

The teams' commitment to their farming roots and growing up 'buying local' has ingrained determination to support and sell local produce wherever possible. Toby Haynes Family Butchers pledge to supply the highest quality at the most reasonable prices and invite you to take a look round our site. It's all about locally sourced great food, great taste, and traditional expertise.



[The Team: left to right: Marie Speed, Toby Haynes, Rob Mack and Joe Selman]

Larry St. Croix

Buses in Corsham

Corsham's connection with buses and coaches - public service vehicles - is historic. Echoing earlier days, long distance travellers still join the coach on the former Turnpike road, now the A4, in the vicinity of the former coaching inn, the Hare & Hounds.

Early 19th century buses were known as omnibuses. This was variously applied to horse drawn, then steam and engine propelled vehicles. Accurate or apocryphal, it was said that the term omnibus derived from a French shop which, displaying the name 'Omnes Omnibus' [a pun on the Latin words which mean 'all' and 'for all'], was a stopping place for buses.

It is recorded that masons and other workers on the railway and Box Tunnel travelled to work from their Corsham lodgings in special buses. During WWII commissioned buses brought aircraft parts from Filton for construction in Corsham's tunnels. Weekend leave express buses were provided for military and RAF personnel in Wiltshire camps.

Photographs of happier times show Corsham Church Choir enjoying charabanc outings. Charabancs were usually open topped vehicles, sometimes a smartened cart, either horse or engine driven, passengers sat along the sides, facing each other.

The early years of the 20th century saw the introduction of regular bus services. Bristol Tramways ran trams to Bathford where passengers transferred to buses for Corsham. Corsham residents of today fondly recall green buses being driven along the High Street in the 1950s. One person remembers military vehicles used as school buses connecting with Colerne during heavy snow.

Recent energy concerns are leading to buses driven by electricity or fuel cells. Road safety legislation has increased, as have statutes under which bus services operate, whether local authority managed or as franchises.

What part do buses play in 21st century life in Corsham? What makes a good bus service, what are the needs of passengers?

Safety, route and frequency are surely essential criteria for a good bus service. Cleanliness and comfort count. In order to run a bus service profitably, buses need passengers, whatever the means of payment. In order to attract a viable customer base, effective publicity in various media is vital.



Bus outside Corsham Town Hall in 1905

There are 3 main bus services in Corsham, plus school buses during term time ~

The Faresaver Town Bus 10 travels through the outer reaches of Corsham 15 times each weekday, 6 times on Saturday, stopping at the Porch surgery then Newlands Road. Last year a promising extension to this service was introduced - four morning journeys from Newlands Road along the A4 to Chippenham hospital and bus station, taking 13 minutes. Sadly, that was cancelled after a few months due to poor take up. Six months on, having just heard of it, people seek this service, keen to use it.

Faresaver Zig Zag 69 travels from Corsham 4 times, on Mondays to Saturdays, to Melksham, Bradford on Avon and Trowbridge and, vitally, villages between.

The Faresaver X31 is Corsham's main service. At 20 minute intervals in the day it travels from Chippenham to Bath, with 20 stops in Corsham.

The first passengers of the day travel to a place of work or learning, or to catch a train or connecting bus. Throughout the day passengers include parents with small children, the retired and those with disability. Assorted prams, wheel chairs and shopper trolleys are fitted in. Their journeys are for shopping, medical appointments or reassuring meetings with family or friends.

A definite air of camaraderie is evident. Friendly enquiries about health are made, the world is put to rights, useful local information is exchanged and then a skilful driver brings the bus close to the kerb. As shops close due to online shopping, these bus conversations replace the corner shop, contributing to community cohesiveness.

Firstbus runs the sparse evening and Sunday X31, bypassing Batheaston. Its irregular intervals mean that buses are easier to miss. Regular travellers from Batheaston include pupils attending Corsham School and its evening activities.

When the concessionary bus pass was introduced in 2007, a Health Visitor observed that the mental and physical health of formerly "shut in" patients had improved as they used the buses. This matters when demographic changes include growing numbers of very elderly people, some in retirement in 'a little place in a new area'. That idyllic old age may be blighted when driving or car ownership become impossible.

Poor publicity and prejudice deter bus use; a high proportion of people, including children*, when asked, do not know the number of their local bus. If more people used their local bus once a week they would benefit others and themselves. Good bus services and increased bus use help to combat pollution and overcrowding on the roads while bringing health and societal benefits.

Yvonne Le Gry

Sincere thanks to Corsham residents; the Head, staff and pupils of Regis Primary School; Corsham & Chippenham Library staff; John Hitchings, Bristol Transport Collection.*

High Fives' for the fifth Corsham Walking Festival

What a difference the weather makes!

Corsham's fifth, and most successful, annual Walking Festival took place over three fine walking days, 8th to 10th June, with 394 walkers registering for 27 walking events and 83 friends and family attending the Quiz and Supper evening. This year we had walkers coming from as far afield as Hammersmith and Fulham.

Cool cloudy starts to the three days of walking but by the end the sun was 'cracking the flagstones'. By now all our walkers will have recovered from the wonderful weekend and the boots and trainers will have been cleaned and re-proofed ready for their next outing along the byways and footpaths of our stunning countryside.

Town Council Chairman Cllr. Steve Abbott opened the Festival praising the efforts of the Festival Committee and the benefits of the great outdoors before saying farewell to the group of walkers departing on our first walk to Hartham Park.

Our sponsors, including Airbus Defence & Space, Hartham Park and BCH Camping, also attended the Opening Ceremony. Among other supporters present were several Corsham Town Councillors and staff, walkers from near and far, Transcoco, Cotswold Volunteer Wardens and Festival volunteers.

The Festival HQ was placed in the Corsham Community Campus, an ideal location to enable walkers to meet and relax both before and after their walk and also to see the variety of events and activities that Corsham has to offer. The majority of our walks started and finished in Corsham, however, several walks are start from nearby towns and villages enabling walkers to see areas further afield.

The aim of our Festival is to have a variety of walks to suit all ages and abilities and this year a "Fringe" set of free walks and activities were introduced including a Children's Treasure Hunt, Nordic Walking Taster, Mindfulness and the Peacock Walk - a walk with a difference (it had a quiz). Transcoco's new Festival walk showed sustainability and biodiversity in Corsham. Walkers enjoyed snack bars from Fair Trade Corsham and litter was picked while walking.

Many thanks to Matt Booker at Automattic Comics and Toys for donating prizes for the Children's Treasure Hunt and Peacock Walk - it seemed that the children spent more time choosing their prizes than they did on doing the walk!

Karen Christian of Chafing Thighs also provided a new aspect to the Festival with Nordic Walking Taster sessions and her introduction to Walk Yourself Fit, the latter being a bit of a challenge in the afternoon sun - but both sessions were well received and enjoyable.

Article continues next page...

The Festival Committee undertakes to refresh the walking programme each year, recognising that people have different reasons for coming to a Walking Festival. Again this year the programme included walks varying from about 1.5 miles up to 20 miles, some just walking for the pleasure of seeing different parts of our beautiful countryside, whilst others had a theme such as local and industrial history, wild flowers and a Mindfulness walk were walkers walked in silence through Corsham Court.

To provide such a variety of walks and informed talks we are most grateful for the time, effort and enthusiasm given by our walk leaders and experts that makes this Festival something special. Having such a rich variety of paths and byways to choose from in and around Corsham we do have the opportunity to provide something different each year whilst recognising the 'old favourites' still attract new walkers to our town and countryside.

Publicity for the Festival has been a key element in attracting walkers from far and wide. A detailed plan of advertising in local and national media was supplemented by focusing on social media outlets such as Facebook and a very informative Festival website to get the message out as far as possible. Looking forward, planning for the 2019 Festival will start again in October. We are always looking for new faces and helping hands so if you would like to get involved in any capacity please contact the Kevin Wilson our Chair Person at chair@corshamwalkingfestival.org

The Walking Festival was started in 2014 with the core objectives of getting local people walking and also attracting walkers from outside of the immediate area. We believe that again this year's Festival has continued to meet these objectives and the focus for the future remains to attract new walkers to this beautiful area, with some fine walking that deserves to be explored.

Do visit us at www.corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk

Barry Cox, Publicity Coordinator



The two photographs are of walkers at Box Hill Common with Michael Rumsey giving an insight into the works of Isambard Kingdom Brunel on the GWR Walk. The other is of the Wild Flower walking group in the vicinity of Hazelbury Manor having a detailed brief on the diversity of our limestone wild flower meadows by Viki Hess. Photographs by courtesy of David Wright and myself.

Villages in the area

We have some extremely nice villages around our area - we often pass through them on the way to somewhere else - but perhaps we should stop and take a closer look. Each one has had a part to play in our history. Time and again the same names are repeated, Hungerford, Long, Danvers, all familiar names to the reigning monarchs of the 13th -17th centuries, all vying for recognition and the intrigue that went on can only be imagined and yet often some small part of it was played out in our area.

Neston

It is difficult to establish the beginnings of Neston, it appears to have grown out of several hamlets or homesteads such as at The Ridge, Moor Green, Elley Green, Westwells, Corshamside, Lypiatt and others. Some names have Saxon origin – Liepgeat (a leap gate), a low gate in a fence at the edge of a forest which only deer are able to jump. Which leads us to believe the Forest of Melksham extended to Corsham's Lypiatt Road. Records from 1200 show that the name of Little Lypiatt Farm was 'Lepegate.' In the early 15th century it was part of land purchased by Tropnell, a wealthy local landowner. Alongside these are records from 1410 which show the occupation of Great Lypiatt Farm (Lypegate Farm) by the Bailiff to the Queen.

Neston Estate can be identified from 1373 as 'le Eyris' from the name of its owners the Eyres family. Later it was acquired by Tropnell and he had rebuilt the house before 1453. Ridge House and Ridge Farm are recorded from the 16th century identifying a succession of owners, one of which was William Bushnell who was appointed 'Coroner of Corsham' in 1643 and there is some conjecture about whether he could be linked to a mysterious package found in the chimneybreast of a cottage very close to Ridge Farm. The package contained a copy of a 'Petition to the King dated March 23rd 1641 and concerned the refusal of Charles 1 to allow his Parliament the authority to mobilise troops. The British Museum has revealed that some 2000 copies of this petition were printed but only 9 are known to exist today. Why and who hid the petition in a cottage in Neston is unknown. However, the area was certainly a hot bed of opinions during the Civil War, the Bushnells were Loyalists, as was James Long, Sherriff of Wiltshire, who held much local land and on the Parliamentarian side was Sir Edward Hungerford at Corsham House (Court). Cromwell's army had a barracks at Westwells.

At the other end of the village is Jaggards House, coming presumably from the name of the earliest owner and in 1657 one Richard Kingston was added to the existing property.

The Kingstons were another of the great property owners of the area for many years but finally got into financial difficulties and sold their local holdings, some to Pockeridge, part to Hazelbury and the main holding to the Fuller family.



Jaggards c. 1853-61 ~ once home to a notorious family of highwaymen in the 16th century

The family was finally granted the Neston Estate in 1802 'in fee for ever' and it was later that the mansion known as Neston Park was built as we see it today.

The village has some charming road names which might stop you in your tracks and say 'Why'? Goblins Pitt (possibly 'a meeting place'), Brockleaze, (Celtic word meaning badger hole), Pitts Corner and Pitts Croft (a pond or pool). Moor Barton (barley farm) and many other names associated with the names of the home owners.



The ecclesiastical parish of Neston was formed out of the parish of Corsham in the mid 19th century and was funded by Lord Methuen and G. P. Fuller

The delightful school was built in 1861, and the church in 1866. Neston is a pretty village, with an assortment of architecture, reflecting it's life through the years. Another little gem on our doorsteps.

Sources: *The Ways of Corsham* by John Poulsom; a newspaper article ~ date unknown.

Biddestone & Slaughterford

Biddestone is another Saxon settlement, owned by 'Alvanic the Saxon'. But by 1085, probably as a result of appropriation by the Normans, it was in the hands of Humphrey de L'Isle. There were two churches in Biddestone and Slaughterford, interestingly both were named St Nicholas. The two manors were identified separately until Tudor times but then in 1616 all the lands passed to one owner, Sir Gilbert Prynne of Allington, and in 1844 the two parishes were amalgamated. Biddestone was owned by many esteemed personages, not least the names that are familiar to us ~ Lord Hungerford circa 1500, and the Methuen family circa 1500 to 1850.

Cromwell is reputed to have set up a barracks near the Manor farmhouse during the Civil War but this is unverified.

The charm of the village lies particularly in its central village green, surrounded by mostly 2-3 storey buildings with Georgian facades. The pond was created in 1661 and has provided an idyllic setting for those willing to pause for a while and watch the world go by.



A Mapp of Wiltshire with its Hundreds 1673 by Richard Blome which shows Corsham, Slaughterford and Biddestone

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Cromwell is reputed to have set up a barracks near the Manor farmhouse during the Civil War but this is unverified.

The charm of the village [see right] lies particularly in its central village green, surrounded by mostly 2-3 storey buildings with Georgian facades. The pond was created in 1661 and has provided an idyllic setting for those willing to pause for a while and watch the world go by. The small 17th century cottage with a thatched roof, sitting at the edge of the duckpond was once the home of a schoolteacher, Miss Weekes, who walked or cycled to Corsham in the 1930-50's to teach the nursery class at the Methuen School. Naturally after all that exercise, she was slim - as well as tall - and a gentle caring soul with much to offer to her small charges.



The church has Saxon foundations but is mainly Norman and the local school was built on church land in the 1840's.

Slaughterford apparently derives from the old English 'slah-pom' meaning sloe/thorn bush and ford. Another explanation is 'Ford of Slates' referring to limestone stratum where tiles or slates were made. A Roman settlement was situated there and it is generally thought to be the site of King Alfred's victory over the Danes. Perhaps such a significant battle led to the name. Later, the Manor of Slaughterford was placed into the hands of the Priory of Monkton Farleigh, together with a courthouse and a mill. In 1391 we see the name Hungerford (Sir Thomas) who together with John Gore and John Marreys held the estate. After the Dissolution it was passed to Edward Seyour and then to Oliver Cromwell. The church is said to have been wrecked by Cromwell's troops and lay in ruins for 200 years. It was finally rebuilt in 1823.

In 1871 the village had a population of 132 but by 1915 there were 2 farmhouses and 20 cottages with a dame school for about 10 children, two shops, a brewery and a paper manufacturers.

Yet another picturesque village [see right], often included in local walks and well worth a visit.



Pat Whalley

Source: *Biddestone Village History*

PS and there's more villages to come in future issues



Another Martingate Centre mural

In the last issue of Spotlight (p. 21) the appearance of two murals in the Martingate Centre were reported. They have been closely followed by yet another on the upper story of the front of the Co-op, again by artist Rob Cowan, with a nod in the direction of "Rousseau nature paintings" (Henri Rousseau was a post-Impressionist painter). As before, Bill Hall (assisted by his son, Andrew) commissioned the work and commented "The gable end roofs/chimneys mural is particularly clever and will look great when we take down the central canopy and it will be seen all the way down towards the High Street. It's a start in bringing together the design of the centre mall from the modern Coop at one end to the period High Street at the other. For future murals we are keen for local artist involvement based on a competition led by The Pound and if there is a bit of artistic controversy that may be no bad thing, but in this case I wanted a bit of risk limitation!"

General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR]

Martin Head [Corsham Institute] organised an online survey entitled *Your data, Your rights*, about issues concerned with personal data, followed up last week with a workshop at Hartham Hall which was very relevant and interesting ~ <https://www.corshaminstitute.org/ydyr/>. More about that important topic in a future issue.

Archives

- The society has been gifted archive material about the former Duke of Cumberland pub, Priory Street, researched by Victoria Houghton. The society is grateful to her and her daughter, Helena Thomas, and Jean Beech (Membership Secretary) who arranged contact.
- Anna Lamacraft was in contact with the Editor about a photograph of her late father, Eric Horlock, she had come across online in the Autumn 2017 issue. I was able to send her the photograph as she requested ~ her response was "Many thanks for your help - I am managing to piece together some history of my father".

STOP PRESS ~ proposed Burlington Grange development (Land north of Bath Road, Pickwick)

As reported in the Autumn 2017 and Spring 2018 issues of *Spotlight*, Conditions 22 and 23 in the Planning Inspector's report of May 2015 explicitly prohibits the start of any development until Wiltshire Council are satisfied that foundation designs will ensure that noise and vibration from quarrying beneath the site will not exceed the conditions' defined levels.

As we go to press the situation is that:

1. Gladman ("The Promoters") and their consultants submitted a series of reports etc., based on data from detailed tests as required by the condition. Although not yet published on the website, we are informed that Wiltshire Council's noise and vibration consultant is of the opinion that the data comprehensively fails to satisfy the conditions' stringent requirements.
2. The May 2015 outline consent will lapse unless these conditions are discharged before 8 September.
3. Gladman applied to vary the wording of the conditions - the planning officer refused. We understand that Gladman intend to appeal that decision.

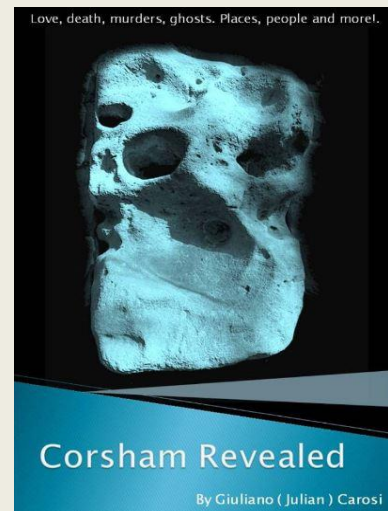
Meanwhile, Redrow ("The Developer") having invested heavily in obtaining consent for all of the Inspector's other conditions, having pushed on with arrogant site preparations eg removal of stone boundary walls, erection of (illegal) advertising hoardings, obtaining closure orders of the Public Right of Way across the field, hair-netting a tree (currently threatening its life), installing a newt-proof barrier around the perimeter of the site must sit and wait to see if "The Promoters" can bully *their* way through the regulations.

Given all the above, it's encouraging to see sheep are back in the field with it being used as it should be!

Book Review: *Corsham Revealed* by Giuliano (Julian) Carosi

We are very fortunate to have several books available on the history and the social background of the town of Corsham, and now we have an excellent addition, in this volume by Julian Carosi.

Many of you will be familiar with his name on Facebook, as 'Mr Corsham' and know that he has collected and shared many stories of the town for many years. But for those - and there are still many - who do not contribute to the Facebook 'ethic', this publication has given Julian the opportunity to put many of these stories into one place and we thoroughly recommend it as an interesting source of information on the town, its people, and its social history.



Like Julian, I was born in Corsham and remember thinking that nothing very much happened here! But these stories show how the townspeople have always contributed to the fabric and the social life of the place and created so many memories.

It is truly amazing how many interesting tales there are about Corsham (as I am sure may be said about any town), but such stories keep coming to light. Perhaps we have a wealth of researchers in the town or, perhaps, the availability of the internet contributes. What is surprising is that this relatively small town can consistently unearth such treasures. Long may it continue.

A truly interesting read Julian, thank you [book available at Corsham Bookshop, price £14.99]

Pat Whalley

CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY 2018

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.

- 29 Jun (Note that this is not the usual Friday)
Thomas Woodcock: *'Heraldry and the College of Arms'*
Thomas Woodcock, FSA, is Garter King of Arms
- 27 July Richard Hoyle: *'The Industrial Revolution in Chippenham'*
Professor Richard Hoyle is the former General Editor of the Victoria County History of England
- 28 Sept Dorothy Treasure: *'The houses of Corsham High Street'*
Dorothy Treasure is the Principal Building Historian of the Wiltshire Buildings Record
- 26 Oct TBA
- 30 Nov Michael Rumsey, Dr Negley Harte, John Maloney and others: *'The History of Education in Corsham'*
Michael Rumsey is a retired primary school head-teacher, Negley Harte is a retired university lecturer, John Maloney is a retired archaeologist

- Please note that the Programme may be subject to changes
- NB new attendance fees and tea/coffee costs

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