



Corsham Spotlight

Journal of the Corsham Civic Society

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Autumn 2019

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*Contributions to
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The Pickwick Capers presents three Pickwickian dandies, Stuart Davis, Larry St. Croix and David Taylor (Pickwick Association Chairman) see page 7 ~ photo. courtesy of Larry. St. Croix)

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From the Chair

As a small boy I was fascinated when older friends and relations said, 'Time flies, you know!' I always felt, as a child, that this was a silly comment, but now, as I'm in my mid-seventies, I totally believe what they said, 'Time, does certainly fly by!' Where has 2019 gone and now what will 2020 bring for us all, currently, nobody knows that totally, thank goodness.

The Society has had another busy year and it looks as though next year, according to the new programme, will be just as busy. Our programme of meetings, organised by Pat Whalley, has been varied in content and most interesting so our grateful thanks go to Pat. John Holmes and John Maloney, the organisers of the Beckford Tower and Roman Baths visits, need our grateful thanks, two visits that were much enjoyed by all those who attended. The programme for 2020 contains a wide variety of speakers and currently, the Committee are looking at various ideas for Summer visits which we will announce in the New Year.

My thanks also go to Jeevan Garcha of Barnett Brothers, in the High Street, the keeper of the 'Spotlight' magazine box where members can pop in and collect their magazines and also to Edward Barrett, who with his dog, walk around Corsham and Neston delivering the remaining magazine copies to members, to both of you, very many thanks for your contribution to the smooth running of the Society.

Finally, it's that time of year when you will find a letter, inside the latest edition of Spotlight, reminding members of subscription renewals and also information regarding the Society's February lunch. Do please renew your subs promptly, your help in this matter is greatly appreciated.

And lastly, may I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

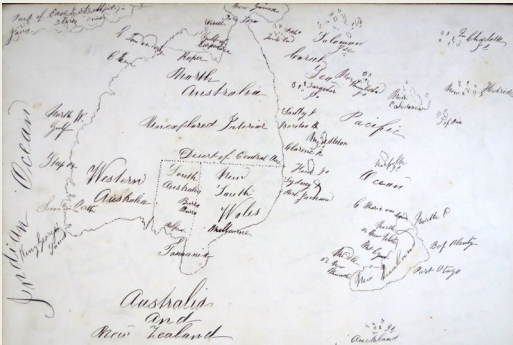
Michael Rumsey

***With all best wishes for this festive season from
the Officers and Executive Committee members***

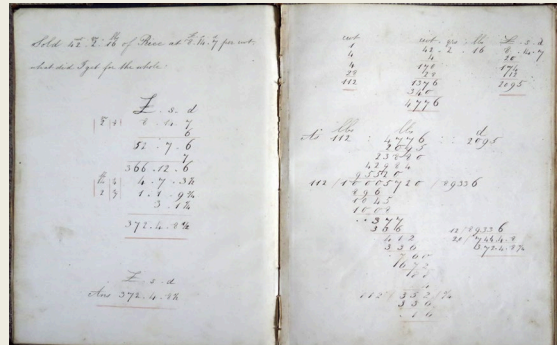


'Corsham School' and 'Corsham School'

The Spring 2019 issue of *Spotlight* contained an interesting article on two exercise books kept by a boy at 'Corsham School' in 1860 and 1861 which had recently been sent by his grandson to 'Corsham School', where these rare Victorian survivals have been found of interest. But the 'Corsham School' of 2019 has nothing whatsoever to do with the 'Corsham School' of 1860. This potential source of confusion needs to be clarified before a mis-conception of the educational history of Corsham takes hold.



1860s hand drawn map of Africa exercise



1860s arithmetical calculation exercise

At the Civic Society meeting in November 2018 which discussed the educational development of Corsham (reported in *Spotlight*, Autumn 2018 briefly by Pat Whalley) I talked about what I called the 'education revolution' in the town in the nineteenth century, and specifically between 1839 when the state for the first time began to provide some financing for a school in Corsham and 1892 when elementary education became both free and compulsory.

The first of the new schools was the British School - 'British' meant non-conformist - opened in 1839, as a plaque on the eastern outside wall still testifies (now the lecture room of the Pound Arts Centre where the Civic Society holds its meetings). It provided for 150 children. This was followed in 1858 by the National School at Pickwick - 'National' meant Church of England - for 220 children. (The building is now the Catholic Church). There was also the National School for Girls which had somehow taken over the Methuen Free School founded in 1816, and which contained provision for 94 girls. From 1861 there was also the National School at Neston providing for 150 children, extended to accommodate another 60 children in 1885 (still a primary school), and from 1873 there was the National School at Chapel Knapp, that is to say Gastard (now a private house) providing for 180 children.

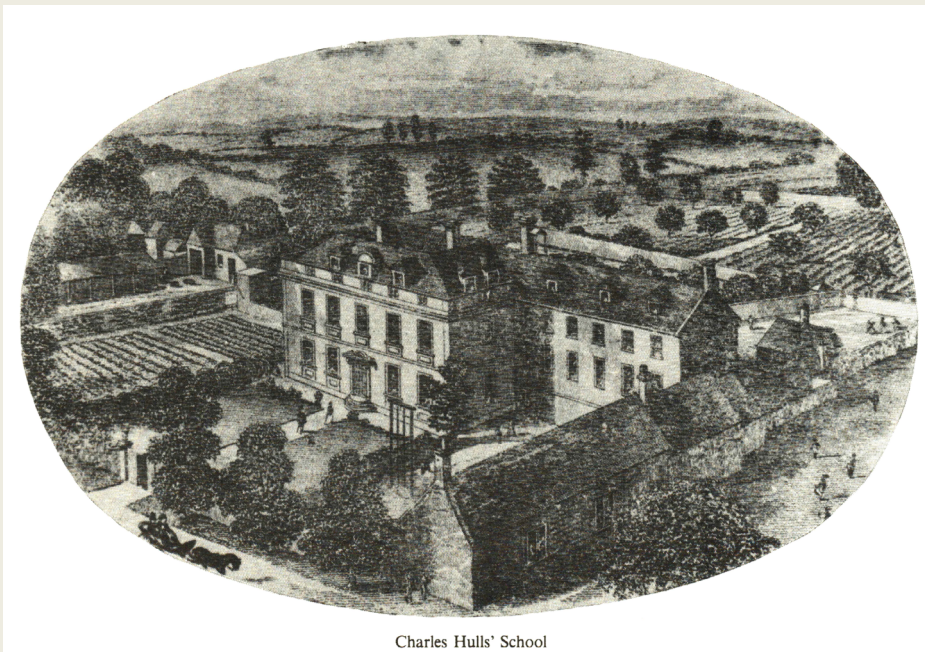
The fifty years after 1839 thus saw the provision of no less than 854 places for the education of children. There were seasonal fluctuations in attendance and 1d. a week was not easily afforded by all, and so capacity was not always filled, and doubtless there were many children not highly susceptible to education. But the provision of as many as 854 places for a new system of education at a time when the population of Corsham was slightly declining to the total of 3,390 people counted in the 1871 census was a quite remarkable change before the system was made free and compulsory in 1892 and then substantially removed from religious control in 1893.

In 1893 the directly elected Corsham School Board came into existence under the provisions of the 1870 Education Act and built the large 'Corsham Elementary School' – one of the early works of the great local Corsham architect and antiquary, Harold Brakspear, later Sir Harold – and the building served the community well for many decades. It was built next to the British School of 1839, and both buildings were together elegantly transformed into the present highly successful Pound Arts Centre early in the present century.

The elected Corsham School Board did not last so long. It was abolished in 1902 and its functions attached to Wiltshire County Council, when the new system of local government came to assume responsibility for education, a responsibility it still maintains. The 'CSB' is remembered only by the archaeological evidence of the elegant monogram above the entrance and the distinctive dating on the elegant rain-water-heads.

In addition to these schools in the evolving state system there were various types of schooling provided by individuals in a traditionally unregulated way by 'dames' or curates or others who took pupils. There are numbers of teenage boys in the census returns of 1841 and 1851 recorded as 'scholars'. It has to be remembered that the 1841 census was the first conducted by the distribution of forms to be filled in by the head of every household in the country. Most of them of course were men, but women heads of households were not unusual. As early as 1841 universal literacy among heads of households could be assumed. This is a remarkable fact. Britain was the first country in which such a high degree of literacy was recognised.

The most prominent school conducted by private enterprise in Victorian Corsham was that conducted by Charles Hulls in the Mansion House. The Mansion House was built in 1723 – see the splendid datestone - by a very rich clothier who hoped to establish a dynasty. Robert Neale's last surviving grandson died in 1774, leaving two daughters who both married rich men; neither lived in Corsham, and neither had children. There was to be no Neale dynasty. The elegant Mansion House sank in the nineteenth century to being let.



Charles Hulls' School

For several Victorian decades it was Corsham School who were the tenants. Corsham School was a private enterprise establishment, profit-making, entirely unregulated, uninspected, unfettered by any state control, not even a limited company. It was owned and run by the Headmaster. Charles Hulls was evidently a benevolent figure, well-known in the town for his vigorous contributions to its communal and musical life, as so well recounted by Ernest Hird. But we can know little about him, or about the school he ran. No records, no sources; the historian is denied entry.

The school is caught only in the manuscript decennial census returns for Corsham between 1841 and 1871; we can see the names of the teenage boys who were boarders at the school. The boarders were a minority of the pupils; we do not know their numbers. The school is caught in the burgeoning publication of directories for the County of Wiltshire during the Victorian period. They were published irregularly and not annually and not always up to date. But we can see that the school is not mentioned in *Kelly's Directory* in 1848; it is listed in directories up to 1880; it is no longer mentioned in *Kelly's Directory* in 1889. The school lasted for a generation, and ended in the 1880s.

We know a little more about it from the splendid diaries of the young Herbert Spackman, son of the family who ran the biggest of the many fine shops in Corsham High Street in the Victorian period. Young Herbert, born in 1864, first went to the British School, like his brothers, but their parents wanted something a cut above and so they paid for them to go to the Corsham School in the 1870s, where besides their enthusiasm for music, they learnt book-keeping, shorthand and French, skills to help them be educated members of the expanding commercial middle class. They aspired to be superior to the sons of simple agricultural labourers and the sons of rough stone-workers remaining at the British School. Look at the certificate of achievement at Corsham School proudly kept by Herbert Spackman. Nothing like this was obtainable from the British School on the other side of the cricket pitch.

Corsham School was, of course, for boys; the boarders and the day-scholars were all boys. Charles Hulls around the middle of the century set up a separate establishment for girls (or perhaps took over an existing girls school) at Claremont, a good half a mile away on the road to



Herbert Spackman certificate in elementary French
Gastard. Originally a private house, Claremont (now an old people's care home) flowered into the 'Claremont College for Young Ladies', offering on 'moderate terms' various 'accomplishments', music and French certainly, also dancing, domestic economy and drawing. It aimed at a separate sphere to the masculine aims of the Corsham School.

Claremont Ladies College survived Charles Hull's presumed retirement in the 1880s. It continued to flourish under the joint Principalship of the formidable Miss Tennant and Miss Rigden from 1891 to 1913 and indeed beyond. It is interesting to wonder why the demand for feminine middle class aspirations continued until a brave new post-first-world war world, while in Corsham the aspirations of the male middle class appear to come to an end with the closure of the Corsham School in the 1880s. No other independent secondary school (to use later terminology) was established in the town.

Meanwhile, the various schools of the Victorian revolution in education continued as 'elementary schools', taking all pupils of both sexes from five to fifteen. In 1955 the Corsham Secondary Modern School was opened, taking in boys and girls from the age of eleven, leaving the other schools to become 'primary schools' with pupils aged five to eleven. This new school became Corsham Comprehensive School in 1972, with new purpose-built accommodation, subsequently much expanded as it grew beyond a Comprehensive School into a flourishing 'Academy'.

When it became a Comprehensive School it took the name 'Corsham School'. This was evidently a quite appropriate name. But the Corsham School of today cannot claim, and it would not want to claim, any sort of continuity or descent from the Corsham School of the nineteenth-century.

It does not charge fees; it does not separate boys and girls into separate spheres; it does not inculcate middle-class commercial attitudes. The ethos is quite different. Look at the exercise books of the 1860s with its exercises in handwriting and cartouches and its careful workings in simple interest and compound interest. The old exercise books, innocently sent to 'Corsham School' belong to a different world. If displayed in the new sixth-form centre at the present School they will be seriously confusing, misleading and misplaced.

If displayed anywhere, as they surely deserve to be, these evocative exercise books perhaps ought to find a place back in the Mansion House, now the 'Digital Mansion', which claims to have an educational purpose. Charles Hulls deserves to be properly remembered; Robert Neale, the eighteenth-century clothier would surely be pleased; and the egalitarian ethos of the present Corsham School would not be confusingly compromised.



The 1723 Mansion House with recently added modern extension and re-branded *Corsham Digital Mansion* ~ photo. John Maloney

Dr. Negley Harte

Dr Negley Harte is the former Programme Organiser of the Corsham Civic Society, now an Hon. Vice-President. He is a former Chairman of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. He lives in the house in Stokes Road where the teenage Herbert Spackman often caroused with his friend Ernest Lanham, son of the station-master of Corsham, who lived there in the late 19th century. In the early 20th century it was lived in by Miss Tennant and Miss Rigden, until they got their friend Sir Harold Brakspear to build them a cosy modernised house next door in 1934.

Corsham Primary School 'interaction'

During 18th-20th October, the *StoryTown Corsham* festival held a series of events in a variety of venues celebrating Corsham's rich, creative heritage and tale-telling. I was invited by Marnie Forbes Eldridge [who has acted, directed, written, produced and run workshops and training in theatre and drama for over 20 years] to be 'interviewed' by a Year 5 class at Corsham Primary School [Anne Love who has long lived in Corsham High Street was 'interviewed' by another class]. The intention was to give the children the opportunity of asking questions about our backgrounds and experiences and provide an interaction which would result in them writing stories stimulated by – but not limited to! – our responses.

I was asked many questions about my childhood memories and career in archaeology and one of those stories was about a very singular skeleton that had been excavated in a City of London burial ground: it was found to have a human tooth impact embedded in a thoracic [neck] vertebra!! The cemetery in which the burial had taken place was known to have been used by the first Bethlem [Bedlam] Hospital, the first to specialise in the care and control of those considered to be insane ~ *And in that place be found many men that be fallen out of their wit* (William Gregory, Lord Mayor of London, c. 1450). It would appear that an inmate attacked another by biting their neck with such ferocity that the assailant's tooth was left embedded in the vertebra. Not only that, it was clear that the attacked man survived because his bone grew up around the tooth and secured it in place. You can anticipate that this story set some of the children's imaginations running riot and the stories based on it that they wrote involved werewolves, time travel and extra-terrestrials, just to mention some main 'themes'. There were some well-written stories with impressive use of language but I have featured two which particularly appealed to me despite certain limitations.

There follows verbatim excerpts from one of the stories entitled, somewhat inevitably, THE TEETH IN THE NECK!!!
On a darck and dredfull night MR Maloney and a few of his frends went out. They were all acceollogests and all of them were digging around a grayard of a horsplall. They found something you will never find. I want to know if you have ever seen this? The final darck and scaray thing it is the most dredfull thing ever A TOOTH IN A NECK!!! For that is one of the weirdest he has ever seen in his life. So all that has happened in his life is just crasiness he had a weird and scarcity life [somewhat of an exaggeration!].

John Maloney

Mr Maloney an elderly man was an architect. He ate only steak and chips. One day Mr Maloney went out to find ~~find~~ ^{find} remains of an artefact like bones but instead he found a rotting square packet. The next day he found remains of an old warship. He found a machine gun, a table, a painting, a rusty long sword and a shield. What will happen next?



Another story, which doesn't spare my sensitivities ~ 'elderly' [I was asked my age], 'architect' [not quite right] and 'he ate only steak and chips' which was based on a story about my father!

The Pickwick Capers

For the second year running, Corsham celebrated the art of creative storytelling and writing with the Corsham StoryTown festival (*Spotlight*, Summer 2019, p19). During the weekend of October 18th-20th there was a full programme of events at various venues involving local community groups, schools, businesses and residents. StoryTown is Corsham Town Council's response to requests for a local literary festival and has the enthusiastic support of Bath Spa University and thanks to the success of the festival last year with over 30 events, Corsham has been designated one of three towns in the South West to spearhead the national Paper Nations campaign promoting creative writing for all. One of the main organiser's, Cllr Neville Farmer [a writer, director, producer and composer], urged that the Pickwick Association and Corsham Regis Primary Academy [CPRA] school get together and came up with a title for the event, '*Pickwick Capers*'. He once more collaborated with Marnie Forbes Eldridge [who has acted, directed, written, produced and run workshops and training in theatre and drama for over 20 years and who coached the CPRA children].

The *Pickwick Capers* was conceived of as a 'music hall' type performance based on the Dickens connection with the area as featured in his book *The Pickwick Papers*. It was about the identity of Pickwick, based on the sharing of stories, performance and the promotion of local talents. Various excerpts from *The Pickwick Papers* were included in enactments, songs, readings and quotes. *Capers* was held at 1pm on Friday 18th October in the splendid and appropriate Victorian setting of the Masonic Hall building in Pickwick. The CPRA children enacted the discovery of a foundling on the outskirts of Pickwick in the 18th century who was named Moses Pickwick, a name that was used by future generations of a family which developed a major coaching company between London and Bath. The children enacted other scenes to do with Pickwick District School run by a husband and wife in the 1860s 'who hated the school and disliked the children' (*Spotlight*, Spring 2019, pps 2-4). A highlight of the event was the children's singing of 'If I ruled the world' from the 1960s musical, *Pickwick*.



Above: London to Bath coach print



Right: some of the *Pickwick Capers* audience ~ photo. by Tony Clark

The adults took part in enactments, readings and sang raucous drinking songs (the drunken sailor in the sea shanty of that name provided a starring part for Larry St. Croix whose visualisation of the role was uncanny).

The number of people attending *Pickwick Capers* was gratifyingly swelled by parents, friends and relatives of the children. The event was hailed a success by the audience, including some local councillors (see closing remarks on the next page).

Article continues next page...

An additional benefit was being given the opportunity of viewing the fine and ornate Masonic Hall (see next page). As well as it being intended that the event be enjoyable, jolly, amusing and informative, there was the aim that it help the local community to appreciate all the more the area that we live in and engage with all those – young, old and in-between – who live in it. The Pickwick Association intend that it should just be the start of other such events in the years to come!

Extracts from closing remarks and thank you(s) at the end of the inaugural performance of “The Pickwick Capers” by David Taylor [Chair, Pickwick Association]

“Pickwick – I was inspired by the name. What an array of characters came into my sphere.....if you explore the fascinating collection of houses, the coach house and old buildings – a whole history pops up”..... And hasn't it – just?!! With this quote from the *Pickwick Capers*, David Taylor addressed the tightly packed room in the Masonic Hall building on an afternoon as the curtain came down on the contribution of the Pickwick Association [PA] and Corsham Regis Primary Academy school [CRPA] to the StoryTown Corsham project. David went on to say:

“I'd like to think that Charles Dickens would be proud of the way we have responded to the entreaty to “*EXPLORE*” (Pickwick). And to “*FIND THE HISTORY THAT POPS UP*”. What history, what characters, what fun, what a wonderfully rewarding afternoon! Certainly for the players – and I hope for the audience. I hope you felt part of our celebration.

This event would not have taken place without a number of really significant creative inputs and the harnessing of those to some practical applications. It started with an inspiration – Neville Farmer's original idea of linking – from the “*array of characters that came into his sphere*” CRPA with the ‘Old Farts’ of PA.....to come together inside the ‘StoryTown’ envelope. For us all to reflect, to learn and to celebrate together the charms and uniqueness of Pickwick – features, still here today, as they were in 1835 and perhaps made an impression on Dickens when as a young journalist he passed through on his way to and from Bath !!

But Neville then went further and converted his “inspiration” into today's practical celebration of it when he “*engaged*” Corsham Town Council, Pickwick Association and Corsham Regis Primary Academy – and also, by the way, somehow procured our amazing wardrobe.

John Maloney – a critical & creative role – produced the scripts (many alliterations, right up until the day before!!) from *Papers* that form the basis for our entertainment. He and Cath are also deserving of our thanks for providing their home as the venue for some (very!) lively and (very!) Pickwickian (if you were listening carefully!!) rehearsals. There was certainly Whiskey in the Jar – and thank you both so much for sharing it!

Collaboration with CRPA has been nothing less than joyful. I so much hope that you young people think so too? The idea? Inspirational! We are all in awe of the ability of these – very young – people to join in with us.....and TO GET IT!!

Article continues next page...

The fun of Dickens, the meaning of his first work. You've all performed amazingly. By the look of you you've enjoyed the experience too? I so much hope that you too will remember "*....the characters that came into your sphere*" And that you will have been inspired to "*explore the HISTORY that pops up*".

Thanks are due also to our hosts at this wonderfully atmospheric, iconic venue [the Masonic Hall building]. Our experiment would not have been the same anywhere else.

Who have I failed to mention?..... Ah – Marnie Eldridge Forbes! Quite simply – inspirational (that word again!), decisive, visionary and funny – and just so bloody EFFECTIVE!!. This would - no **could** - not have happened without you. We've loved it, the school have and the audience have too. Thank you.!

Pickwick Capers – performers

Pickwick Association and others:

Kate Bradbury, Martin Cadwgan, Hilary Cadwgan, Stuart Davis, Hugh Foreman, Marnie Forbes Eldridge, Cath Maloney, John Maloney, Larry St. Croix, Muriel St. Croix, David Taylor, Dianna Taylor, Anthea White, Carrie Woodward

Corsham Regis Primary Academy



Collage of photos. (by John Maloney) of the Masonic Hall, Pickwick ~ the *Pickwick Capers* was performed in the adjoining dining room [previously a pre-cast hostel purchased from the MoD in 1963]

John Maloney

The Methuen Arms 'outbuilding' restored!

After representations by Cllr. Ruth Hopkinson and myself and the assiduous work of Caroline Ridgewell [Senior Conservation Officer, Wiltshire Council], the Methuen Arms' outbuilding has been re-roofed appropriate to how it was before the roof tiles were stolen some years ago. I had suggested that due to its singular features it formerly might have been a 'Blind House' ie a lock-up ~ <https://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk/.../Spotlight-Summer-20...>

Its a great result!



Above: the roof as it was for many years after the stone tiles were stolen

Below: the Blind House at Box



(Photos. John Maloney)

John Maloney



Above: new roof viewed from the High Street Car Park access road

Below: new roof viewed from the Methuen Arms garden ~ there is a former blocked in doorway in the middle of the wall



Summer daze

On 26th May, Catherine Eden held an open day in her splendid walled garden (right) at The Garden House, off Middlewick Lane. Miranda Eden (her daughter-in-law) noted that £600+ was raised and split between two charities: Young Dementia UK and a Cheshire Home in Zambia (run by Sr. Stella of the Presentation Nuns who used to be based in Corsham attached to St. Patrick's Church, Bath Road).

Catherine is a remarkable lady - now in her one hundredth year (and will feature in an article next year) - and has been opening her garden, which was formerly part of Pickwick End (the fine country house at 23 Pickwick), for more than 30 years.



Photo. courtesy of Miranda Eden)

On 27th July, the Pickwick Association [PA] held its annual cream tea party in Lucy and Tom Brakspear's glorious garden setting (see photos. below). The brainchild of the then Association secretary Lorraine Vaun-Davis, this event, now in its sixth consecutive year, continues to gain in popularity, with attendances growing steadily upwards. It was lovely to see Lorraine back among us for the afternoon, having made the trip from her new home in South Somerset. Almost £700 was raised. For a fuller report ~ <https://www.pickwickassociation.org.uk/cream-tea-at-the-manor-review/>



(Photos. and collage by John Maloney)

Article continues next page...

On 3rd & 4th August, there was an open garden weekend at Middlewick House, the home of Nick and Annette Lynton Mason. Over 2000 people attended and an extraordinary £40,000+ was raised for The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust and Wiltshire Air Ambulance.

Visitors enjoyed strolling through the beautiful gardens, browsing

numerous stalls, seeing the menagerie of animals, and Nick's collection of classic cars. They also had the opportunity to climb The Wiltshire Outdoor Learning Team's wall, watch CPR demonstrations and, of course, tuck into a selection of cakes and food from the barbeque.



On 4th August, a barbeque was held at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Bath Road, which was open to all denominations. It also provided an opportunity to celebrate Father John's 80th birthday and his very well-earned retirement to County Cork. Welcome Father Michael Fountaine, the new parish priest.



(Photos. and collage by John Maloney)

Prettying of Pickwick

The Pickwick Association's team, led by Cath Maloney, has been presented with a *Level 1 – Establishing Award 2019* by The Royal Horticultural Society and South West in Bloom for *Corsham – Prettying of Pickwick*.

John Maloney

Corsham Civic Society [CCS] outings

Since the last issue the society has had a number of interesting outings

Beckford's Tower (8th August)

The tour was introduced in front of the tower by Dr Amy Frost, who gave a fascinating account of William Beckford's life and his project to build the Italianate 'retreat', housing books and treasures he had accumulated on his Grand Tour of Europe in 1780/1.



William Beckford left England in 1785 and entered a period of exile that would last a decade. Having been one of the most celebrated members of 18th century society, for the rest of his life he would be a social outcast. The reason for this exile was the exposure of his relationship with William 'Kitty' Courtenay, the heir to Powderham Castle in Devon. For Beckford, the exposure of this homosexual relationship threatened not just social exile, but the risk of imprisonment and execution. In Beckford's lifetime the only way to escape the threat of arrest was to escape the country. Exile from England, and more importantly from his home at Fonthill in Wiltshire, had a powerful impact on the rest of Beckford's life. His time spent in exile influenced everything from the evolution of Fonthill Abbey and its landscape in the 1790s, to the creation of his retreat from society in Bath at Lansdown Tower (more commonly known as Beckford's Tower).

After entering to see the Scarlet and Crimson Drawing Rooms, with their rare pieces of original furniture, intrepid members of the CCS party ascended the stone spiral cantilevered stairs, a further climb of 53 steps up to the belvedere to admire the stunning panoramic views from this high point - 120ft - above the City of Bath.

Built between 1826 and 1827, Beckford's Tower was designed by Henry Edmund Goodridge and is an extraordinary building that was once home to one of the greatest collections of books, furniture and art in Georgian England.



The spiral staircase

Bath Roman Baths and Museum (6th September)

Despite details having been circulated to CCS members through the magazine and by emails well in advance, it was not until the week before the visit that the 20 people required for a discounted group booking was confirmed. In the event with others coming on the day, 24 people attended for a really enjoyable visit, consisting of a tour of the baths and museum in the morning and a 'hands on' session examining and being told about artefacts with a curator in the afternoon.

Founded in AD 75 by the Romans, the thermal baths were dedicated to the goddess Sulis Minerva, the conflation of the Roman goddess Minerva with a local Celtic deity Sulis, hence the Roman-British name for the town was Aquae Sulis. A fine gilt bronze head of the goddess survives and can be seen in the museum. In their day, the creation of the baths were an engineering feat. They are the best preserved ancient baths and temple complex in northern Europe and amongst the finest Roman remains in the country. At the heart of the designated UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bath, they are still fed by Britain's most famous hot-springs water.

After centuries of decay, the original baths were rediscovered through Victorian investigations and 20th century archaeological excavations during Queen Victoria's reign. The site has been excavated by archaeologists on a number of occasions and the museum displays many interesting objects from Victorian and recent digs.

The museum is well-planned and a good audio-guide with a choice of commentaries is included in the entrance price. This helps visitors to put the site into context, and to make sense of the different buildings you are seeing, which include original Roman features, buildings from the later Georgian heyday of Bath, and nineteenth-century additions, such as the terrace above the Roman Great Bath.

As John Holmes noted, *The handling session, with Collections Manager Susan Fox, proved to be a fascinating experience. All the items presented for handling were finds from the immediate area around the Roman Baths. They were distributed in date order from the most ancient prehistoric flint tools, through various periods of ornamented pottery up to a 19th century portable bullseye lantern. Some items of Roman work were too fragile to handle but were shown in their protective cases. Many of the exhibits had come to Bath as imports during the cosmopolitan period of Roman administration.*



Larry and Muriel St. Croix with reenactors ~ photo. By John Holmes

The museum visit ends with the chance to drink the spa waters. Once, Bath's health-conscious visitors queued up in the Pump Rooms for this opportunity. It's rather nasty and metallic-tasting, but taking a sip is all part of the Bath experience.

Recently, details were announced of an exciting new project: the transformation of historic buildings in Bath into a learning centre for the Roman Baths and a heritage centre for the city on a site on the corner of Swallow Street and York Street. This £5 million project, supported by £3.4m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, will also open up new areas of the Roman Baths to visitors, including a Roman laconicum (similar to a sauna) and a possible Roman exercise yard. With local community groups and schools from across the region, the project team will work on events, activities and sessions for school groups. The new facilities are due to open in 2020.



(Photos. and collage by John Maloney)

John Maloney

No. 67 High Street, Corsham

A group of Corsham Civic Society members interested in historic buildings had the privilege of a guided tour of this fascinating building on Thursday 17th October. A complex edifice incorporating a series of structures, in part, a former 19th century maltings and in the 20th century *The Corsham* [latterly *Wilkins*] *Corn Stores*. We were very impressed by the internal refurbishment: the minimal decoration is sympathetic to the many beams and areas of original stonework on display. The building had been gutted in the mid-1980s and was structurally in very poor condition when Stonewood Design took the decision to invest in its future: the flank walls had large cracks and were moving outwards and, alarmingly, the back wall was coming away from both flank walls.

Article continues next page...



Early 20th century view of the property frontage

In short, it was a prime candidate for Historic England's Buildings at Risk Register. The back wall has been very well consolidated and the flank walls have been supported by major RSJ structures, constructed independently of the main walls, ceiling etc., just tied in by metal pins and so not resulting in major impact on the structure, as Historic England recommend in such cases. New metal staircases and a new mezzanine look very well and have ensured that the building space can be maximised: at present there are 20 staff working there but there is capacity for 30. Daylight was a critical consideration for the work of the designer staff but Stonewood retained the existing window apertures and inserted 'Conservation Rooflights' for additional natural light.



The frontage

They chose stylish thin metal frames for the much needed new windows which maximise on the amount of light available to staff. The works were undertaken by a Corsham builder who played a part in the design.



Above: view towards the back of the building showing the RSJ support structure

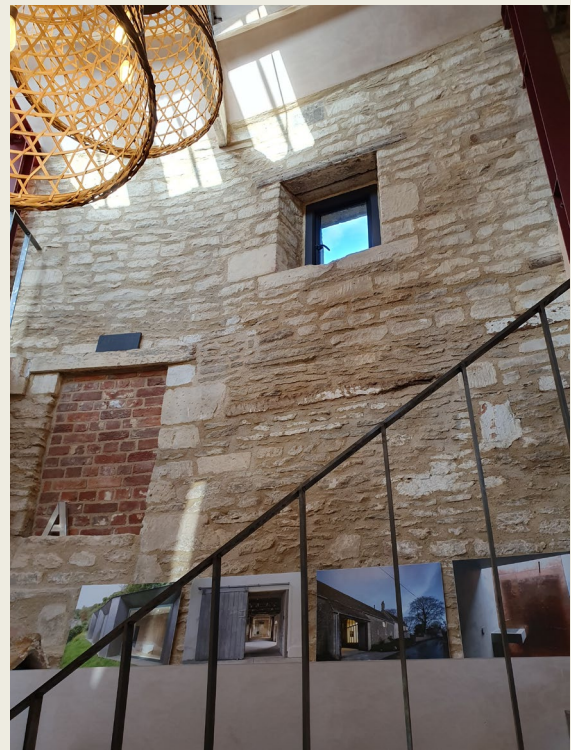


Above: members of the CCS being given an introduction to the project

A number of the main horizontal roof beams have biblical quotes on them eg 'Prepare to meet thy God' etc and these have been carefully retained as part of the history of the building ~ they were probably written by Salvation Army personnel who had used the building as a Citadel.



While we were there many schoolchildren, their parents and others, were looking in through the front window at the models of various of development schemes and the staff were happy to meet them, have them look around and answer their questions. Indeed, Stonewood are interested to have local groups use their front 'office facility' for community activities. The Deli at Corsham has been getting some good sized orders at lunchtime from the staff and this is a reflection of Stonewood's commitment to support local shops. The great amount of space available would undoubtedly have put off small business purchasers, never mind the major structural



issues and costly repair work involved but Stonewood saw the potential and have transformed the building most impressively. Overall, the rescue and refurbishment is an outstanding achievement and Corsham should be pleased and grateful to Stonewood ~ I write as a former heritage professional who worked for the Museum of London and English Heritage.

As we were going to print, Stonewood extended an 'open door' invitation on Wednesday 13th November, 5-7pm, to a cheese and wine event at their offices for Corsham people.

John Maloney

Current planning matters

STOP PRESS ~ Corsham Neighbourhood Plan: result of Referendum

The unofficial result of the poll was that there was overwhelming support for the Plan (subject to confirmation 2263 for, 162 against and 3 rejected ballot papers) and, therefore, Wiltshire Council can formally adopt it. Once adopted, developers will be required to take account of the objectives and policies set out in the Plan.' A very important result for Corsham's future!

Proposed Burlington Grange development (land north of Bath Road, Pickwick)

Three appeals were lodged by 'promoters' Gladman following Wiltshire Council's refusal to vary or endorse their submissions on the noise and vibration conditions (*Spotlight*, Autumn 2018, pps 21-22) and failure to respond to their application for certification that work had started on site. It was noted that the four-day Public Inquiry scheduled to hear Gladman's appeal is to commence on **Monday 14th January 2020**, in Wiltshire Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham and that it will be heard before a different Inspector from the one who was to have officiated at the postponed July hearing but withdrew due to illness.

As regards funding to meet the estimated 'up to £50,000' required for professional advice and representation at the Public Inquiry, David Taylor (Chairman of the Pickwick Residents Association) noted that the 'frontliners' (those whose properties front onto the proposed development site), having already invested substantially in defending their case, will need both moral and financial support for this key stage. Anyone interested in contributing or with ideas about fundraising, please contact the editor.

Plases demonstrate your support by attending the Public Inquiry!

Boundary Commission for England

Surprisingly, after previous resistance, The Commission formally agreed our proposals in the following terms ~

"78. We also received objections to the alignment of a division boundary along the A4, Bath Road from the Pickwick Association, local residents and Corsham Town Council. They argued that the historic Pickwick area stands astride the main road and that properties on both sides should be included in Corsham Pickwick division. The Pickwick Association proposed, in detail, a boundary to the south of the main road. Having regard to the character of the historic area, we accept the association's proposal as part of our final recommendations.

So, in that regard, the Pickwick Association regard this outcome with quiet satisfaction, a bureaucratic nonsense having been avoided. However, Neville Farmer, a Pickwick councillor has pointed out ~

"The new map respects our complaint that Pickwick was being split and so reunites the village, but the new boundaries still mean that one councillor gets all the town's facilities and another just gets residential. Bonkers."

Pickwick Conservation Area Appraisal

The full draft is currently undergoing peer review.

Sanders Paintings & Sculpture



I was born in Rugby, Warwickshire in 1959. I always showed a natural ability for painting so it seemed logical that I would pursue a career in art. After studying for a Fine Art Degree at Staffordshire University I moved to Norfolk where the light and space inspired me to paint a series of beach paintings which became sought after.

In my thirties I travelled to East Africa which influenced me to produce paintings and sculpture that were to become the main body of my work for the next 25 years.

In the late 1990s my association with Wrasse Records began and during this time I created many album covers for various singers and musicians including Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Femi Kuti. In 2007 Ikea reproduced 12 of my African paintings as prints which sold worldwide, instantly raising my international profile. In 2009 the Born Free Foundation commissioned a bronze sculpture of Elsa the Lioness co-signed by actress Virginia Mckenna to commemorate their 25th anniversary.

In 2013 I was invited to sculpt a series of figures by the Wedgwood Museum, inspired by the domestic employment children of the 1780s by Lady Elizabeth Templeton and this work continues today. More recently I produced a life size bronze sheep for the American clothing company Brook Brothers to stand outside their London Store during Fashion week 2014. The sculpture now stands in Madison Square Gardens.



Above: Michael Sanders, *Walking the Dog*
Below: Jonathan Sanders, *River Avon Lacock*



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Eight years ago my wife Gillian and I took the decision to move from Bath to the lovely town of Corsham. Our children Ellen and Ed went to the local school where they both thrived. I started to look for studio space and finally after much searching found an old railway carriage at New Farm on the Lacock Road. Unfortunately 2014 saw an almost biblical flood of the Byde mill brook which caused water damage so I had to leave and set up a studio at home much to my wife's annoyance. I was then invited to a new space at New Farm, a converted pigsty called the "Pigs Palace"; however, after a short stay I gave in to my long time yearning for a gallery of my own, a place where I could not only produce work but sell it. No 3a Pickwick Road became available so I took the opportunity.



The Gallery is situated near The Methuen Arms due to that location we get a great deal of passing trade from the busy Pickwick Road. My smaller Sculptures are popular as gifts, although the more considered pieces like twin brother Michaels' and my own original paintings also cause a lot of interest, along with the cast bronze wildlife and figures.



Over the last few years I have sold a lot of my work online but having the Gallery enables me to see customers reaction but having the Gallery enables me to see customers reaction to my work first hand. I get a great response from local children to the window displays ,Hedgehogs and Hippos proving very popular. Next year I will be introducing new pieces and some different ideas, it hasn't been a year yet but the response has been fantastic, not only from local people but far and wide.

Jonny Sanders

PS Earlier in the year I bought a print of a painting, 'Boats at Blakeney' by Jonny's twin brother, Michael ~ it is a wonderfully fluid, evocative seascape (ed).

Remembrance



After my talk on the 25th October to the civic society, *Some aspects of the history of Pickwick and its buildings*, some members remarked how interesting they had found the content and, in particular, the photograph that I showed of the 1934 Somerset hunger march proceeding through Pickwick.



Corsham Remembrance Sunday parade marching from the Martingate Centre to St.Bartholomew's Church for a service on Sunday, 10th November. On armistice Day on the 11th, the Royal British Legion held a two minute silence in the Martingate Centre at 11am.



Keith and Maggie [suitably attired with a poppy bandana] of Bradford Road in Middlewick Lane on the 10th

John Maloney

Corsham – The Unsung Hero

a poem by Christiana Olomolaiye

*Steeped in History, Corsham lies
Dancing with one foot in the southern fringes of the Cotswold
Another foot in Wiltshire, yet a few miles just outside Bath
Corsham boasts of its heritage both past and present
Looking into the future with great pride.
What the Dickens is all this about Corsham you might ask
Indeed the StoryTown of Corsham has lots to offer
Roaming peacocks on the street with each feather set to write stories
Hear the sound of the Flemish weavers' looms from times past
Telling the story of Corsham unfolding
Feel inspiration of the Pickwick Papers from Moses Pickwick at the Hare and Hounds
See Poldark pinching into Corsham's heritage
In the face of the Cold War, London finds a home in the old quarries of Corsham
Ancient parts like Corsham Court, St Bartholomew's Church and indeed new estates like Katherine Park
Tell the story of Corsham still unfolding*

~ with thanks to Carrie Woodward for bringing this poem to my attention





CORSHAM Singers

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Saturday 14th December, 7pm



St. Bartholomew's Church, Corsham
Christmas Music by The Corsham Singers
Followed by Part 1 of Handel's Messiah
Mulled Wine and Mince Pies Available

TICKETS £10 on the door or in advance from Corsham Bookshop

Thursday, August 29, 2019
gazetteandherald.co.uk @willgazeite

Visitors are transported around Europe at the annual

Festival sends



Street entertainer John Maloney attracts a crowd (courtesy of gazetteandherald.co.uk) ~ evidently, I've been found out despite the cunning disguise!



An unsuitable sign (at the Hartham Lane turning) ~ hopefully, nothing to do with a medical condition!

CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY 2020

All meetings are at the Pound arts centre (telephone 01249 701628) at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated. Members £1, Non-Members £3. Guests are very welcome.

Jan 24th	Paul Martin, TV presenter, ' <i>My life in antiques</i> '
Feb 28th	LUNCH at The Methuen Arms
Mar 27th	Ian Craskie, <i>experience volunteer for SS Great Britain Trust, 'SS Great Britain'</i>
May 15th	AGM ~ a brief meeting followed by a social gathering with wine and cheese
June 26th	Hannah Severn Senior House Steward, ' <i>Life and works of Sir Richard Colt Hoare (Stourhead)</i> '
July 24nd	Wendy Reynolds, ' <i>Falkland Islands today</i> '
Aug TBC	VISIT
Sept 25th	John Maloney, Project Co-Ordinator, ' <i>Progress on the Corsham High Street Project</i> '
Oct 23rd	Edward Barrett, ex-Clerk to the Charter Trustees, ' <i>Mayors of Bath</i> '
Nov 20th	SOCIAL EVENING
Dec	No meeting

- ***Please note that the Programme may be subject to changes***
- ***NB new attendance fees***

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

MEMBERS' NEW YEAR LUNCH - 2020



On the 28th February 2020 at The Methuen Arms
12:30 for 1:00pm

Three choices of each of Starter, Main Course and Dessert.
Any two £21.00, all three £26.00. Including coffee & tea.

Menu details to be published when available.

For a booking form see the loose leaflet in your copy of Spotlight
or contact John Holmes on 01249 712628 or at johnbarryholmes@gmail.com