

# Corsham Spotlight

April, 2003

Volume 1, Issue 1

*Newsletter of the Corsham Civic Society*

## Editorial

Welcome to our new-look newsletter! We hope you will like it. There are some miracles that computers can perform!

It is intended to issue a total of four 'letters' each year, in order to keep you aware of the activities of the Society, and if there is anything in which you would like to be involved, please let us know. There is lots to be done, and we would very much appreciate your input.

If you are reading this as a non-member, please obtain a copy of our programme from the Corsham Tourist Information Office, for details of our monthly meetings and membership forms. Come and join us.



## Heritage Open Days 2003 – Progress so far.

This project – first announced in the January newsletter, is beginning to take shape. Peter Tapscott is acting as Project Co-ordinator and reports as follows:-

- A provisional list of "attractions" has been compiled. These include properties, guided walks, craft displays and other events. Owners/event organisers/partners are being approached to determine the precise extent/nature of their contribution. These include the Corsham Town Council, Corsham Court, The Almshouses, Corsham School, Castlefields Developments, The Royal Oak, and Corsham TIC and Heritage Centre.
- We intend to embrace the Civic Trust's key theme for this years HODS, which is "The Family".
- A "Working Group" of volunteers has been established and will hold it's second meeting in April.
- Formal registration for our participation (to the Civic Trust) is underway. The application must be submitted by 1 May 2003.
- Local publicity has already commenced – you may have noticed a mention in the Chippenham News on 7 February. Please note that we have now appointed a Publicity Officer from within our membership. Welcome Eric!
- We have made contact with various bodies who need to be aware of the event – NWDC (car parking), WCC (highways), Corsham Police, and the AA regarding traffic management and signage.
- One particular offer of assistance is very much appreciated. James Methuen-Campbell has very kindly offered the use of South Avenue for parking. We are hopeful we shall need every "spot" of it, such will be the "draw we exert on the good people of the area."

Anyone wishing to learn more of this exciting event should contact Peter on 01249 714453 or e-mail [peter@charlwoodroad.freemove.co.uk](mailto:peter@charlwoodroad.freemove.co.uk)

**HODS is scheduled for Friday 12 – Monday 15 September 2003 incl.**



## Pathfinders Development Scheme

As reported in the January newsletter, Peter Tapscott, the chairman of our Plans Committee, has recently attended the Civic Trust's Pathfinder Development scheme, held in Coventry.

There were three modules in September, November, and February. It is understood there is to be a review meeting next September, when the delegates will be invited to share their experiences in progressing their individual projects, as defined over the three weekend modules.

Module two was all about Urban Design. Delegates were required to conduct an urban design study on an area served by their Society. Peter focused his study on Stokes Road.

The study addressed traffic, industrial, and residential usage. The fact that one of the two major businesses in the road had recently closed, with the site now being 'up for sale' added a special piquancy to the exercise! Peter's work on the assignment brought him into contact with certain representatives of the local authority,

with some real issues upon which to focus.

This also proved useful to Peter when he took part in the annual meeting of the Corsham Local Transport plan Working Group, held on 19 February, as one of the Society's two invited attendees.

This was the first course of its type undertaken by the Civic Trust. All participants – delegates and Civic Trust staff – rated it a huge success. So much so, that the Civic Trust wishes the delegates to be recognised throughout the Civic Society movement and to act as "promoters" for future interest in a training course which is focused on this specific collection of topics.

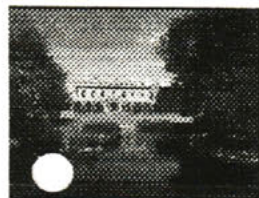
Peter reports that we will shortly receive authorisation from the Civic Trust to embed the term "Civic Trust Pathfinder Society" (or some such) in our letterhead and in the banner of our Newsletter.

### Elizabeth Hayes

We are extremely sorry to hear of the recent illness of Elizabeth Hayes, a present and long serving member of the Executive Committee. Many of you will have met Elizabeth at our regular Friday evening meetings. Like us, you will have found her to be immensely personable, amusing, sharp witted and knowledgeable about local matters. Elizabeth, until late last year you were an ever-present member of our committee and we are missing you. We offer you our sincere Best Wishes for a speedy recovery, and hope to see you soon.



Guyers House



Hartham House



## Where do you live ?

Have you ever thought about the name of the street or road in which you live, how did it get its name ? Does it commemorate a famous national or local person, or event ?

There is of course, lots of evidence of well known local people.

Paul Street & Methuen Avenue - the late Lord Paul Methuen

Fuller Avenue - from the Fuller family of Neston Park

+Charles Street & Dickens Avenue - ? Charles Dickens

Academy Drive - on the site of Beechfield House used by Bath Academy of Art.

Alexander Terrace- A local family who donated "the Golden Path" which ran from PO Lane to Alexander Terrace, so named because it commemorated their Golden Wedding Anniversary.

Arnolds Mead & Arnold House - William Arnold, wool merchant in the town.

Brakspear Drive - reknowned local architect, Harold Brakspear

Spackman Drive - once a well known musical family, and traders in the High Street.

+Broadmead and Brook Drive - ? does that derive from nearby Broadstone under which runs a brook?

Brunel Close - Isambard Kingdom Brunel, responsible for building Box Tunnel.

Churchill Way - late Prime Minister

Mayo Close - A local Vicar, who lived in Ivy House.

Meriton Avenue - Mr Merritt, a builder, built the houses in this Avenue.

Grove Road - built at the end of the field behind The Grove.

Dew Close - houses built on the site of Pound Farm, on Lypiatt Mead.. Mr Dew delivered milk in his pony and cart.

Nursery Gardens - so named because the land was a nursery and shop held by the Pritchard family.

Neale Court - Mr Neale had a 'Brushworks' in Pickwick Road.

Williams Grove - named after Councillor Mrs Williams, who did a great deal of work for the town.

Pound Pill - there was an animal pound at the far end of the cricket field, on the site of the bowling green.

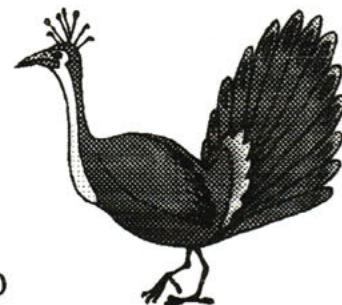
Then there are the names which record the quarry industry in the town -

Masons Way, Randall Court, Silman Close, Sumsions Drive, Pictor Close, Saunders Grove, Yockney Close, Eldridge Place, Troppell Close, Bethel Road. All of these, save the first, are names of men who owned and ran sections of quarries beneath our feet

Smiths Yard, a new entry to the street scene in the High Street - derived from the Smith family who owned the land and had a small shop where CMS is now located.

Some are obvious of course, Station Rd, South St, High St, Chestnut Grange - but where do you live ? Who or what is the street named after ? If you know of others, please let Pat Whalley know on 01249 713618, and we'll do a follow up next time.

+ conjecture - if incorrect please let us know.



Methuen Arms Hotel



# **VISIT TO LACKHAM MUSEUM AND GARDENS**

**11 June 2003**

**6.30pm – 8.30pm**

**Cost £2.50 each**

**Transport – car sharing**

## **Working with Others – Corsham School**

Our relationship with Corsham School has developed rapidly. One area of collaboration will extend into the future, being our participation in the Annual Prizegiving Scheme. Another two are more “project related”.

We approached the School in November to express an interest in awarding two annual prizes – one for the best entry in creative writing (The CCS English Award) and one for the best entry in visual art (The CCS Art Award). Each year there would be a different theme – but always Corsham related. The Society would work with the School to identify the theme and judge the winners.

We contributed £60 from the Society’s funds, as a once off payment towards two cups, and organised the donation of personal prizes to this years winners. These came from the Corsham Bookshop (English) and Right Angle Picture Framing (Art). We are very grateful for the support given to the School and ourselves by these two commercial enterprises. The two cups, along with those funded entirely by the School were presented to the worthy winners on the night of the inaugural Corsham School Annual Prizegiving held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

The two project related collaborations concern a) a website and b) the Schools potential participation in HODS 2003.

We see participation in the creation of our website as an excellent way of securing pupil interest in the activities and objectives of the Society. Edward James has kindly agreed to act as Consultant to the Business and Economics Dept of the School, with special regard to website creation and management and data- base construction. This will ensure that we maintain control over what is created on our behalf – and will provide a much needed opportunity for direct contact between our members and the pupils of the School. Thank you Edward, for being willing to share your expertise with the younger element of our community. Who knows we may be on the way to a “Young Corsham Civic Society”.

With regard to the possible pupil participation in HODS, we are exploring the possibility with Martin Williams and his staff of having members of the lower sixth involved in events which have a special appeal to the younger visitor. This may however, be difficult to achieve, bearing in mind that the HODS weekend occurs only one week after the start of the autumn term.

We will keep you updated.



**Warden's House &  
Almshouses**



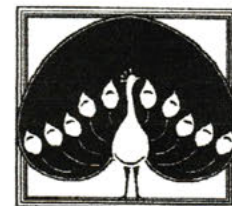
## Working with Others – Further Developments

As is evident elsewhere in this newsletter, we are already carrying through the commitment declared in the January edition to forge stronger links with other local organisations. We are especially pleased with the way in which our collaborations with the Corsham Photographic Society is developing, presently in support of the Corsham Festival, and, on a variety of fronts, with the Corsham School.

Additionally, as a result of reading of our intentions in the last Newsletter, we have received overtures from some organisations with whom we have never worked in the past, wishing to take us up on our initiative.

They too have reached the conclusion that working with each other is the best for the good of the individual club/society/community group. Having read the words, they were not content to wait to be approached. It's nice to be wanted!

We hope to have more to report on this in our next newsletter. As ever, however, we will need to be careful that we do not take on more than we can properly manage.



## Station Campaign

In the wake of the decision by the SRA to withdraw the Bristol to Oxford Service, Anne took part in a very successful meeting with the Minister, David Jamieson, for which she had prepared a dossier of Travel Statements to accompany a map of the area. On this she had indicated the start and finish of each journey to which the statements referred. The first illustrated a daily journey to Bristol via Chippenham – and forty minutes after leaving Neston the first traveller would return through Corsham, under Potley Bridge, en route to Bristol. Another daily journey was to Bristol University, which on a bad morning or evening could take up to two hours, and the third – a journey to MOD Filton Abbeywood. This last journey commences at 6.15 am, as to do otherwise means that for each  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour delay the journey lengthens by  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour as congestion build up. It also referred to the fact that staff had been promised Government money would be made available for the re-opening of Corsham Station! You will be interested to know that there were 666 responses to Anne's survey distributed at the end February, of which only one was averse to the project! 172 indicated they would make a daily journey, 250 – a weekly journey (or more frequent); and 224 monthly (or more frequent). Thank you to everyone who took the time and trouble to respond, and to those who passed copies of the Survey to their neighbours and friends who they knew would be interested.

More recently, Anne has attended two Cabinet Meetings at the WCC, seeking their support for a meeting with First Great Western to discuss inclusion in the merged Franchises of a suitable local service on which Corsham could depend, and that they support a request that the Rail Passenger Committee Western England should call the SRA to a hearing. Cabinet refused – because “they did not wish to upset the SRA”!

Anne remains concerned that far from “upsetting” the SRA (who were in breach of their Directions and Guidance) that body may now infer that Wiltshire lack the determination to go every step of the way in order to bring the Corsham project to a successful conclusion.

You may be interested to know that Oxford CC have had a Rail Development officer in post for a year. Of the 68 projects he has planned, one was to restore the track bed in order that the Bristol/Oxford/Bicester service could link once more with Bedford. An Oxford CC RPP bid for this had been accepted by the SRA in August 2002!



## **Towards Corsham Festival 2003**

February and March saw the Committee devoting considerable effort to define and plan the events which the Society will contribute towards the Programme of this years Corsham Festival.

They identified four separate items :-

- A Photographic Exhibition, in collaboration with the Corsham Photographic Society, depicting the changing face of Corsham. This will use digitised photographs (both old and new) which will be scanned into a computer. The two images will be allowed to "phase" from one to the other. The result will be incorporated into the Festival website for the duration of the festival. A "hung exhibition" is also envisaged.
- A presentation by author Nick McCamley of his book "Secret Underground Cities", a book which has particular relevance to Corsham and the surrounding area.
- A visit to Hartham House.
- Visits to Spring Quarry.

## **The Church Clock – St Bart's**

If you attended Lunch on the Lawn last year, or intend to go this year, the trip up into the bell tower is a must. A chance to see not only the bell ringing facilities, but also the church clock.

The story behind the clock is one of the love and loyalty of the churchgoers of the 1870's for their vicar William Mills Parry Pym, JBS.

Vicar Pym cared for his flock over a period of just 5 years (1868 –73), and such was the regard in which he was held by his parishioners, they erected the clock in the tower, a monument in the churchyard, and a brass plate on the south wall of the church as a lasting testimony to their esteem.

There are about forty one winding steps leading to the bellringers room in the tower. Here, enclosed within a large white cupboard are the workings of the church clock, with spring loaded gears, weights to control the chimes and a clock face which matches the external face; a wonderful example of clock making by T Hall & Son of Bristol (1873).

**23 MAY 2003**  
**OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
at the ALMSHOUSES  
Pound Pill  
At 7pm

Followed at 8pm  
**"All about Bats"**  
with Diana Scott of  
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust