



Corsham Spotlight

Magazine of the Corsham Civic Society

Winter 2023

<http://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk>

December 2023, Vol. 20, Issue 3

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Contributions to Spotlight are very welcome. Please contact the editor, editor.corshamspotlight@gmail.com




Corsham Civic Society
 60TH ANNIVERSARY 1963 - 2023
 For news and events, see: www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk

Below: Brand new map of Corsham created by local artist Susie Brooks ~ now available for free at Corsham Town Hall



Officers and Committee Members:

President

Anne Lock

Tel: 01249 716086

Chair

John Maloney

Tel: 01249 715159

Secretary

Cath Maloney

Tel: 01249 715159

Acting Treasurer

Chris Johnson

07817 880287

Membership Secretary

Michael Rumsey

Tel: 01249 715741

Social Organiser

Vacant

Programme Organiser

Pat Whalley

Tel: 07570 946725

Planning Chair

John Maloney

Tel: 01249 715159

Spotlight Editor

John Maloney

Tel: 01249 715159

Proof Editor

Cath Maloney

Tel: 01249 715159

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editor.corshamspotlight
@gmail.com*

From the Chair

Well, this is my last message as Chairman ~ it's been a short interlude since last year's AGM at which I agreed to stand in for Michael Rumsey [who had not been well] until now when I have felt I had to 'retire' due to ill-health and other commitments. The situation is now reversed in that Michael - as had been foreseen - will be standing in as Acting Chairman until the forthcoming AGM next May.

One of my 'other commitments' is the book *Pickwick, A Place in Time* [with co-author Tony Clark] which has been re-formatted by Tim Jollands [Visiting Research Fellow at Bath Spa University who with his wife, Beverly, runs Weavern Books] and Tim [our consultant] will be seeking quotes for printing. Added to which, I have articles due to appear in *London Archaeologist* and *British Archaeology* in the next few weeks. My last contribution as Chairman for *Corsham & Box Matters* has recently been published.

Also, this is my last issue as editor: Jujhar Garcha [p. 3] takes over and once again there is 'synergy' at work here, in that Jujhar was formally editor in 2015/16 ~ I wish him all the best and the support that I have enjoyed from Michael Rumsey.

Another former editor [albeit very briefly], Stuart Boydell, has been elected a Fellow of the Society of Arts [FRSA] and is to be congratulated: I was a Fellow for many years and enjoyed attending some excellent lectures in John Adam Street London, WC2 ~ some notable Fellows have included Charles Dickens, Benjamin Franklin, William Hogarth, Karl Marx, Marie Curie, Adam Smith, Stephen Hawking, David Attenborough and Tim Berners-Lee. I let my fellowship lapse when I moved to Corsham as was the case with my fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries.

It has been of immeasurable assistance to me to have the services of a very experienced Proof Editor, Cath, who will also be retiring ~ very many thanks, you saved me from some grievous errors!

Regarding the most recent issue of *Spotlight*, Michael Rumsey commented "excellent issue", as did others in a similar vein:

Sharon Thomas, Head of Community CTC, wrote ~ *Spotlight has been an excellent read under your tenure. You've set the bar very high for the next editor!*

* *The recently published map on the cover is by Susie Brooks and has a useful directory of the businesses in central Corsham [it was funded by Corsham Town Council]*

Article continues next page...

Dorothy Treasure, Principal Buildings Historian, Wiltshire Buildings Record ~ *It's an excellent newsletter, and we will copy some of the articles to go in our files.*

Miranda Eden [daughter-in-law of the former editor Robin Eden: *Ever since you have been editor it's been fantastic!*

Merv Tyte, CCS member ~ *"I couldn't put down the latest issue ..!"*

All these and other such comments about previous issues have been much appreciated and, in particular, as has Michael Rumsey's unstinting support and help. I have also much appreciated Corsham Print for their excellent service and support.

From the outset, as editor I intended to extend the range of coverage and articles in the magazine and hoped by those means to broaden its interest and attract new members, including some younger ones. I have every confidence that Jujhar will continue that process and wish him every success.

Talking of changes, the Executive Committee has been working on a revision of the society's constitution, something that is recommended by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations [NCVO] at regular intervals. It will be circulated for consideration and comment prior to being presented at the next AGM in May.

When I went to Middlewick House to drop off the last issue of *Spotlight*, Nick Mason came to the door and asked if I had any ideas about how Corsham businesses might be promoted at the next Middlewick House Open Garden days and thereafter. I made a few suggestions and he put me in touch with Jennie Shaw, The Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust Director, and a colleague, Barbara. We met and had a good discussion about possibilities and approaches which Jennie will consider with Nick and then come back with proposals.

The Peacock Arts Trail [p. 21] reminded me of the many talented people in the Corsham area!

It just remains for me to wish you all happiness and joy over Christmas and good health and prosperity in the New Year!



Membership matters

We've now come to that time of the year when Members who pay their subscriptions yearly are invited to renew theirs ready for 2024. Those paying yearly will find a letter addressed to them stapled to this magazine which informs them of 3 ways to pay the 2024 subs. You can pay cash, by cheque (made payable to Corsham Civic Society) or by bank transfer details are to be found below.

For online banking our account is with Lloyds Bank Plc.
Sort code: 30 91 99. A/C no: 01265754.

Whichever payment choice you make would you be kind enough to ensure to complete the slip at the bottom of the letter and return to me with either cash, cheque or the date you made the bank transfer, the latter helps our Treasurer to know where the money has come from. Thank you in advance for your help in this matter. Good wishes.

Members' Annual Lunch 2024

The Committee are pleased to report that the Annual Corsham Civic Society lunch 2024 will be held on Friday, February 23rd, 12.30 for 1pm. The venue this time will be at '**Amore**', the Italian restaurant in Pickwick Road opposite to the Mansion House. The menu is included with this magazine together with the order form for either 2 or 3 courses of your choice. Alexander and his staff are looking forward to seeing us on the 23rd and we look forward to having a most enjoyable meal together. Please complete the form showing your choices for each course, and return to me with payment, again with either cash, cheque (made payable to Corsham Civic Society) or by bank transfer, details which appear above in Membership matters, this enables '**Amore**' to prepare the requisite number of dishes so that the service will be prompt.

N.B. Please note, if you don't find a letter stapled to your magazine, don't panic, you are either a Life Member or have already paid your subscription for 2024. Also, if you wish to pay for 2 years, just double up the subscription amount and that will save a letter in December 2024!

Michael Rumsey - Membership Secretary

Introducing the new 'Spotlight' Editor

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Jujhar Singh Garcha as the Editor of the Society's magazine 'Spotlight' as from January 1st 2024 in succession to John Maloney who has done sterling work during the last few years.

Jujhar arrived in Corsham with his sister Yasmin and their parents when he was 3 years old. They had taken over the newsagent, well known in the High Street as 'Barnett Bros' a name which they retained. Jujhar attended Corsham Primary followed by 7 years at the Corsham School. He then enrolled as a student at King's College, part of the University of London, to study 'War Studies & Philosophy'. He now lives and works in London with a post at Paramount as 'Channel Editor' with over 50 channels to oversee. He recently was awarded a National Council for Training Journalists Diploma which will enable him to pursue further a career in journalism.

Jujhar edited a set of 'Spotlights' while doing his 'A' Levels which showed the Committee 'here was a future Editor when we need one' and now that time has come and Jujhar has so kindly offered to take on this role for the next few years, thank you Jujhar, we are indebted to you for stepping again into this role as Editor, our good wishes go with you.



Above: Jujhar Garcha

Michael Rumsey

A tribute to the outgoing editor

I have known John since moving to Corsham some 8 years ago and we have become very good friends. I thought I would begin this tribute by asking John about his background and what he regards as some of the highlights of his life.

He was born in West London of Irish parents and has always been a regular visitor to his parents' birthplaces in Co. Mayo, West of Ireland. He attended Southall Grammar Technical School and went on to Birmingham University where he studied Ancient & Medieval History. There he had the opportunity to experience archaeology on a wonderful research dig in the Orkneys ~ it was a seminal experience and decided him that he wanted to make archaeology his career.

He considers himself most fortunate to have met Cath at Birmingham University and they married in the year they graduated [1972] and moved to London to a flat overlooking Richmond Bridge. They quite soon got jobs in the newly formed Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London.

John worked on some extraordinary sites including the 'Guildhall' amphitheatre, the remains of which were discovered under Guildhall Yard and were preserved in the new Corporation of London building adjacent to the site.

In 1986, he was appointed Principal Archaeological Excavations Officer (City of London), Museum of London. Among the highlights of his career there was his visit to Japan and being awarded the Freedom of the City of London for services to its archaeology [*Spotlight* Summer issue pps. 36-39].

In 1988, having previously been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries, he was presented to Queen Elizabeth II on her visit to its home in Burlington House, Piccadilly. [*Fellows are elected in accordance with our 1751 Royal Charter on the basis that they are 'excelling in the knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other nations' etc*].

Throughout his career John has written numerous publications as set out in a Wikipedia entry ~

<https://independent.academia.edu/JohnMaloney26/CurriculumVitae>.

John's contribution to many of the needs associated with the Corsham Civic Society and other organisations such as Corsham Town Council and the Pickwick Association have been commendable in many respects.

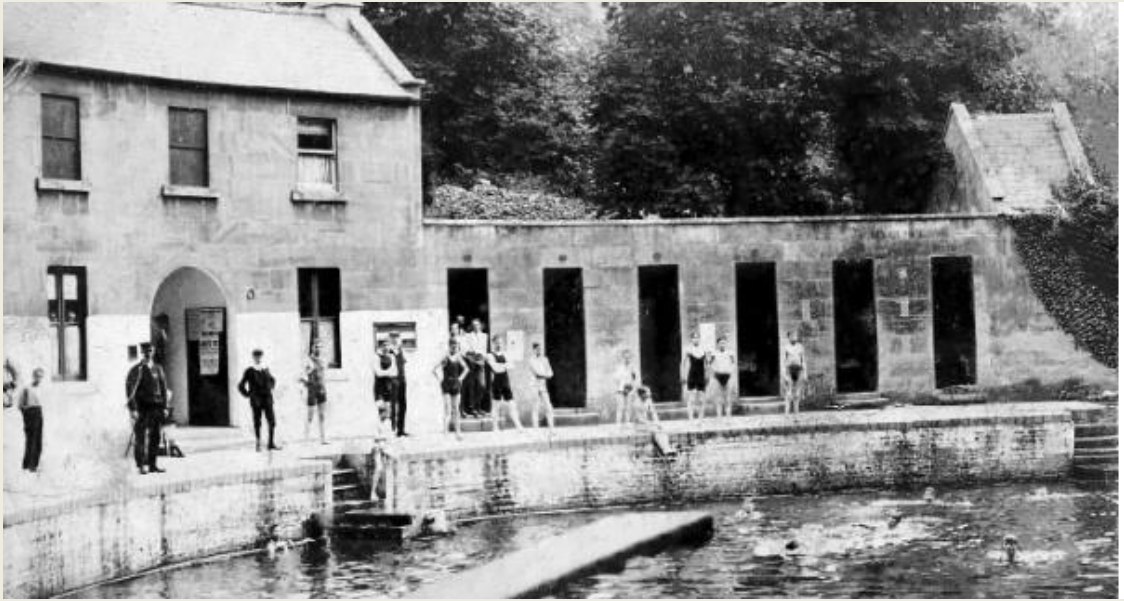
It has been and continues to be an honour and a privilege to know John and to recognise and highlight the efforts he has made towards bettering the local community. I have enjoyed working with John and making a contribution to the Spotlight Magazine and especially so during his period of being the editor. I look forward to reading his book *Pickwick, A place in time* and of course having a signed copy!

John will be sorely missed as Chairman of the Corsham Civic Society and most certainly as editor of the Spotlight magazine.

Wishing John and his family best wishes for the future.

Larry St Croix

A Georgian lido in Bath – The Cleveland Pools



Above: 1910

Below: Heritage Open Day - Sunday 10th September 2023



Built in 1815, the Grade II-listed Cleveland Pools is the UK's oldest public outdoor swimming pool. The country's many revamped lidos were mainly built in the 1920s and 30s, so are 'whippersnappers' compared with this one. Hidden from general view, the pools (there are two – a main 25m pool and a children's splash pool) are set within a walled garden and reached via an unassuming footpath between two houses on a quiet residential street. The feeling of otherworldliness is enhanced by a caretaker's cottage and changing cubicles shaped like Bath's Royal Crescent in miniature, and the pools' lagoon-like position along the River Avon ~ <https://www.clevelandpools.org.uk/>.

Article continues next page...



Left: aerial view of Cleveland Pools in its sylvan setting

A book – *Swimming Through History, The Cleveland Pools Bath* - about the remarkable history of the Pools is available to buy from the Cleveland Pools Trust. It is a fully researched history with plentiful illustrations and produced on high-quality paper. The price is £18.00 and proceeds will benefit the Trust. To purchase your copy, contact Linda Watts via linda@clevelandpools.org.uk.

Built within Jane Austen's lifetime, the site first opened as a river-fed pool and was used throughout the Victorian era. The halcyon days of the lido were in the 1970s, but competition from the indoor Bath Sports and Leisure Centre led to the closure of Cleveland Pools in 1984. It became a trout farm and then a private residence.

By 2003 it was unoccupied and the pools were put up for sale by Bath and North East Somerset Council which led to the formation of the Cleveland Pools Trust to rescue them for public swimming once again. Since 2014 a series of grants from the National Heritage Lottery Fund has led to the restoration and opening of the pools.

In late September on the Heritage Opening Day the unheated-for-now pool water was a brisk 18°C but, in the sunshine, it felt like being back in summer. The changing room doors, painted a dapper seaweedy blue, flipped open and shut as people bobbed in and out of the water. Children huddled under the hot, outdoor showers. Non-swimmers gather in what was once the ladies' plunge pool to view a small exhibition. And the sound of splashing, laughter and conversation echoed throughout just as they would have done 200 years earlier.

Cold Water Swimming

Cleveland Pools Trust is dedicated to the health and wellbeing of the community. As more people are becoming aware of the physical and mental benefits of cold water swimming, they want to encourage as many members of the community as possible to try it for themselves. From September to April 2024, Cleveland Pools will be unheated, and the water temperature will be allowed to gradually fall in line with the seasons. Thereafter the inclusion of the Water Source Heat Pump will provide all of the heat for the pool.

Earlier this year Cleveland Pools was one of the winners of the prestigious European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards. Their regeneration was just one of 30 projects to be honoured as an 'outstanding heritage achievement'.

Compiled by John Maloney from The Cleveland Pools website

Remembrance Sunday, Corsham

As ever there was a good turnout at the Remembrance Day parade in Corsham including senior staff of the armed forces and Corsham Town Councillors, past and present.

Corsham Civic Society's Edward Barrett was the Parade Commander for the ceremony as the President of the Corsham Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Edward's background is 32 years in the army starting as a Fusilier (private), aged 17, in the Royal Fusiliers in 1960 ~ he trained and lived in the Tower of London! He saw service abroad in Cyprus (2 x 6 month UN tours), in Germany (3 x 2 year tours) and in Hong Kong (2 tours totalling 5 years, commanding Chinese troops and running the army's Mule Troop).

The rest was in the UK including 2 years as an outward bound instructor in North Wales, 6 months in Northern Ireland (long before the Good Friday Agreement!), 15 months at the army's Staff College, 4 years in the port and maritime world and a wonderful holiday in the South Atlantic in 1982!

His three jobs, as a Lt Col, were 18 months as the Corps Recruiting Officer in Aldershot, then two and a half years as the Commander Transport and Movements for London District with responsibility for the MOD and all units inside the M25, working in Horseguards (during the James Hewitt period!) and, finally, two years at the Regular Commissions Board at Westbury selecting potential officer candidates to be trained at Sandhurst, before retiring in 1992. So, a very varied and at times quite exciting career.



Remembrance Day gathering at Corsham War Memorial, Sunday 12th November 2023 ~ Edward is facing the memorial [photo. Courtesy of Julian Carosi]

John Maloney

Goldney Red Cross service medals



Above: medals associated with the Goldney family, given to the society by a benefactor [see his letter on next page]. The two medals in the inset mention [middle and bottom], respectively, Katherine Goldney and Lady Goldney

Article continues next page...

91 Tellcroft Close,
Corsham,
Wiltshire
SN13 9JQ

Dear Mr. Rumsey,

Thank you for taking my recent call.

Some 65 or more years ago I was acquainted with Miss Katherine L. Goldney.

From the mid-1950s my mother let rooms to older ladies our large house; I suppose today it would be called assisted living. For many years Miss Goldney resided in my parent's house in Camberley, Surrey. I was unaware of her heritage but she was always treated with deference by our family. In the 70s my parents moved to another house in Camberley and Miss Goldney was again accommodated. Into her mid 90's; her mind pin sharp but with failing health, she reluctantly decamped and went into a nursing home, giving her portable possessions to my mother. My mother continued to visit Miss Goldney until she passed early in 1976 and is buried in St Peters Church, Frimley; not too far from where she lived with her father, Frederick Hastings Goldney, who was active in Camberley and living in Prior Place. A road nearby to the where the house once stood has been named after him. Without a male heir her father was supported by Miss Goldney until his death in the late 1940s.

I was a young teenager when Miss Goldney first came to our house and my interests were focused elsewhere. I knew she came from a Quaker family and this certainly showed in her day-to-day routine. I believe Empress Eugénie, the exiled last French Emperor's consort who lived in nearby Farnborough, Hampshire (died 1920) had been her friend. (That was a long time before we arrived on the scene)

I am into my 80s and, as discussed, have in my possession several medallions that belonged to Miss Goldney relating to the Goldney family service in the WW1 hospitals in the Corsham area. They are not intrinsically valuable but I wondered if these items would be of local interest; if so, I have enclosed these and I would like them to be returned to Corsham/Pickwick.

I have seen an article that Pat Whalley wrote and it mentioned a letter written by Miss K L Goldney from Camberley. I am sure the letter would have come from my parent's house address.

Yours sincerely

Above: a recent interesting letter from JD to Michael Rumsey about the medals on the previous page. The society is very grateful to JD for taking the trouble to send us the letter and the medals.

With thanks to Michael Rumsey who has suggested that the medals and letter be offered to Chippenham Museum

'The Codmother', Post Office Lane, Corsham

At the 'Codmother', Alex and his mother produce the most wonderful 'Fish & Chips' and other delicacies which have pleased many people in the area. Open Tuesday to Saturday, 11.30 to 1.30pm and 4.30pm to 9pm, their thin crisp battered fish is superb and if you fancy a little Chilli Squid, that's on the menu too. You'll be greeted with a smile and served quickly, special orders can be phoned in on 01249 712989 and pensioners can enjoy a wonderful Cod and chips for just £7.30, and if you like 'mushy peas' they're available too, so why not try their latest eatery, it will be well worth it.

Michael Rumsey - a frequent customer!



From a visitor

Having a browse in the lovely town of Corsham I came across two young men eating delicious looking fish and chips. I went a little further and saw two ladies sitting on a bench eating similarly packed fish and chips which again looked delicious. I had no intention of having lunch but the ladies assured me that they tasted as delicious as they looked!

I eventually found the shop after asking a man with a dog who also endorsed The Codmother.

Beautifully clean little shop with seating while you waited. I took my *Pensioners Portion* of cod and chips back to my car to eat and it was as expected. Piping hot, beautiful fresh cod in a superb batter and plenty of well-cooked chips.

I can thoroughly recommend The Codmother. They have an extensive menu to suit all. [courtesy of Tripadvisor]



Edward Barrett's father, George Flew

Michael Rumsey's talk about steam engines made me think of my step-father, George Philip Flew. My mother left my birth-father when I was four and I inherited George as a step-father at seven. Sadly, I only had him for 20 years. But his work ethic and attitude to life have rubbed off well. He was a fascinating man.

George was born in 1913. On leaving school he spent three years becoming a thoroughly competent electrical and mechanical engineer and lathe operator, car mechanic and welder. He was also a Thames river policeman!

He joined the RAF in 1934 [**Below, right**]. He trained as a pilot and later as a flying instructor. In 1940 he was posted to the Air Training Group in Rhodesia. There he taught youngsters to be pilots in a wide variety of planes. The ATG trained 75,000 pilots including thousands from the Dominions. He returned to the UK in 1942 and as a Wing Commander became the president of various Air Crew Selection Boards. He was demobilised in 1946.

He immediately commenced medical training. He married my mother in June 1950 and qualified as a doctor in 1951 and then spent a year as a houseman. In 1952, George mortgaged himself to the hilt and bought a large house in the village of Burnham, Buckinghamshire and set up as a GP.

The plot was huge with an orchard and a large tract of land which he cultivated. Later he built a large deep litter chicken shed, where he established a workshop to turn out widgets on a lathe. The veg plot saved money and the lathe earned money - in those days a doctor in single practice earned just a small amount per patient per year.

We had a traction engine or steam roller at the side of the house throughout our 10 years in Burnham. Whenever possible, George would be out in a boiler-suit, covered in soot and grease, renovating the fire boxes and boilers of the mighty machines.

George was involved in numerous activities. He was a part time surgeon at the local hospital and became the MO for the Bucks British Red Cross and the MO of the NHS reserve first-aid emergency team.

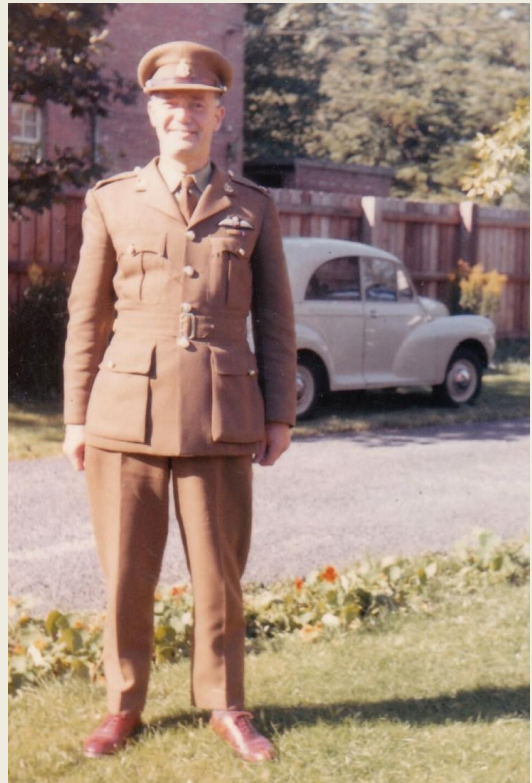
He was also involved in civil defence and with the local scouts and guides. In 1956, the government changed the 1952 NHS prescription charge from one shilling per prescription to one shilling per item. George was selected to explain this on national television.



Having taken on a partner, George took a break in 1961 and became a ship's doctor for one trip aboard the Stirling Castle. On the trip to Cape Town he had to perform an emergency appendectomy on a crew member while at sea. The islanders of Tristan da Cunha had been evacuated to Cape Town due the serious volcanic activity. The Stirling Castle transported the 264 islanders back to the UK. They stayed at Calshot, opposite Southampton. He was on the islanders' committee until their repatriation in 1963.

On passing my driving test, George gave me his old Riley. Six months later, I crashed it. When he found out I had written off his beloved car, he was apoplectic. This doctor was so angry he never enquired if I was injured – I was not. Later he gave me another old car. It was very heavy with appalling brakes and kept breaking down.

In 1962, George sold up and left General Practice. In late 1962, he joined the army as a major in the RAMC and was sent to Belize as the garrison MO for six months which he enjoyed. On his return, he was posted as regimental MO in Catterick, and sometime surgeon at the Catterick Military Hospital.



Above: George and a cabin cruiser ~ **Right:** George as a major in the RAMC

On leaving Catterick in 1965, they bought a house in Henley. George then became the MO for the Army Apprentices College at Chepstow. In his spare time, he built a small cabin cruiser. He had his first heart attack whilst there. But he could not slow down.

With news of a new posting, I asked him for a loan for another car. George lent me £200 which had to be repaid, and I bought a super little mini-van. But when I handed him the first £100, he refused it saying my attempt to re-pay was sufficient. Mother made him take the money.

In late 1966, my sister, who was in the US, decided to visit our birth-father – last seen in 1946. It was decided I join her. George contacted an old RAF chum and I was soon on an RAF flight to Fredericton in New Brunswick, half the distance to Los Angeles. George paid for civilian flights to Chicago and on to Los Angeles and for the complete return flight.

Article continues next page...

He retired from the army in 1967 and they moved into their house in Henley. He became a Medical Officer of Health in Reading.

My sister got married in Spring 1969 and George was delighted to give her away. We got married in the Autumn, so George saw off both his step-children in one year. He took a great shine to Meralynn and she to him but being in Germany we saw little of him except for a weekend in January 1970. Sadly, George died in February 1970, at home in Henley, one day before his 57th birthday, of a second and massive heart attack, just four months after we married.

I learned much from him. He had achieved much in his life but was never boastful. He would get frantic at politicians on the television but never had a bad word for neighbours and acquaintances. He was a charming man with a wonderful sense of humour and all the females fell for him. We used to argue furiously as I was growing up, but he was always there when I needed him. He was a very good father and great role model. I miss him.

Edward Barrett

Larry St. Croix's background and interest in ICM photography

Educated at the Royal College of Art s a Master of Art (MA RCA) in Furniture Design and Technology which included the fascinating study of Psychology of Perception: how the human mind reacts to shape, form, colour and light, both in the domestic and commercial environments and how they impact upon emotions.

I became a university Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, then consultant in design, project management/innovation & design, training, product liability, and consumer law. I was a Visiting lecturer in China, USA, Canada, France, Brazil and Columbia.

Sir Winston Churchill Fellowship (Legal Advisory Services – Canada and USA). West Midlands Regional Secretary and Chairman.

I have been a past member and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA); Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (ACI Arb), British Standards Institute (BSI), Confederation of British Industry Trade (CBI) Association Forum (codes of practice).

Photography has always been of interest to me and has played an important part of my personal life and career. During August 2022 I attended a workshop about Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) under the guidance of the professional photographer Shona Perkins. The experience was emotionally exciting and invigorating in every respect and I became hooked on the subject of ICM and developed an appetite to learn more and to put into practice my learned experience.

Article continues next page...

Photography is an art form and Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) photography provides an opportunity to create revealing and visually expressive abstract* imagery, displaying a range of colours, shapes and forms that convey meaningful and emotional satisfaction enjoyed by the creator and the observer. Learning about the subject and practice of ICM not only provides me with a new dimension of photography it also enhances my thinking and a connection with music as well as the process of considering or reasoning.

The process of thinking includes being analytical, divergent, critical and creative. These skills help us to understand the world around us, think critically, make logical choices and develop our own values and beliefs. ICM is a similar process in that it allows us to be investigative, develop different directions, be expressive and expand our imagination.

I am particularly interested in the integration of light, shape, colour and movement to create variations of photographic artistic values relating to aesthetics and emotional responses.

If I was to redefine the initials ICM in another context it would be: Inspirational, Captivating and Mesmerising.

I often think about a quote made by the famous photographer Andre Kertesz "You don't see the things you photograph, you feel them". This is one of the reasons why I enjoy creating my images and displaying them within an interior setting in order to create a feeling of integration and relationship between art and environment.

Colour is visual and has properties of lightness, vividness and hue. Music has auditory properties such as tempo, pitch, timbre and rhythm. For some people music has colour with faster music in the major mode generally associated with more saturated, lighter, yellower colours, whereas slower music in the minor mode is associated with more de-saturated (greyer), darker, bluer colours.

My photography often makes me think about music and has even inspired me to compose a piece of music entitled 'Thinking (Steinway Piano) Larry St Croix' which is on YouTube ~

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5U2gg7R2uk&t=13s> . The opening scene is standing on Elie Beach, East Fife, Scotland, with my wife Muriel, with a distant view of our daughter Christina, our grandson Grayson and Piper the Labrador dog. The photograph is intended to capture the feeling of space and the freshness of the air, together with the love we feel for our family and the memories we all have of which we often talk and think about.

**Abstract art is art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead use shapes, colours and forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect ~ Wassily Kandinsky*

Larry's ICM photographs were exhibited in Willows [Spotlight magazine, Summer 2023, pps.10-13] as part of the Peacock Arts Trail

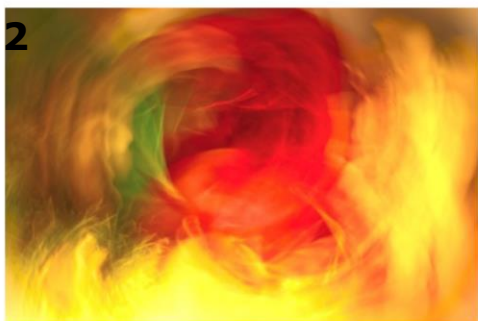
*Article and all the montages that follow by **Larry St Croix***

Article continues next page...

1



2



3



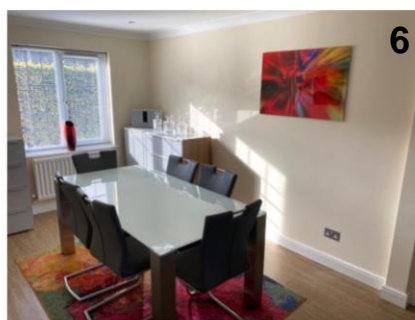
4



5



6



- 1:** still life photo of autumnal plants [Middlewick Lane, Corsham]
2: an intentional camera movement [ICM] photo. of the above
3: image printed onto aluminium with gloss finish ~ hanging in a client's dining/kitchen
4: photo. of three silk scarves
5: an ICM of the above
6: dining interior with image mounted on aluminium
 * *This and all the following nmontages by Larry St. Croix*

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



Above: Combination of seascapes, created with the aid of light sources and plant life [images 7&8, photographed at Westonbirt Arboretum]

Article continues next page...

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



1. Zoom burst of flowers
- 2, 3 & 4: light source and ICM
5. Westwood bluebells, Wiltshire [created by CIM]
6. Westwood bluebells, Wiltshire
7. seascape North Cornwall
8. lightsource and rotational IVM

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



Range of images including sunset, tree bark from Westonbirt Arboretum floral art and ICM creation of pumpkins (dining area interior)



- 1: Scottish seascape
- 2: light source and ICM created with horizontal wave movement
- 3: Devon sea waves and rocks used as wall decoration
- 4: light source and ICM created with rotational wave movement
- 5: terracotta pots with photo. created with subtle rotational movement
- 6: Gallery 56, Corsham exhibition showing a range of images mounted onto aluminium (gloss and matte finish)
- 7: Seascape North Cornwall
- 8: Atlantic storm, North Cornwall

The Peacock Arts Trail [PAT] ~ celebrating the arts in North West Wiltshire

This year marked 10 years since the Trail began and the organisers looked forward to bringing the usual splash of colour and inspiration to Corsham and the surrounding towns and villages. The 2023 free festival took place from Saturday 7th to Sunday 15th October and was a corker of a year! The open studios event is based in Corsham and reached out to Chippenham, Box, Melksham, Holt, Atworth and many other villages. Those contributing included sculptors, textile artists, painters, photographers, jewellery makers and carpenters et al [<https://www.peacockartstrail.co.uk/exhibitors-2023>] ~ there was something for everyone. One of those taking part was **Hermione Skrine** of Priory Street. Hermione's **Artist Statement** for PAT was *I paint directly from life, looking for colour, rhythm and movement. Although mostly figurative, there will be abstract work as well* [see collage on next page].



When Hermione was young, she drew continually and then disappointed her parents by choosing to study Fashion Design at St Martins - partly because she didn't know whose style to paint in (!) - and there she produced quite a lot of fashion illustrations. Hermione has illustrated several books including *Alana the Angry Alligator* and *Jemima Christmas: the latter was written by William Essex and published by Thingley Press, Corsham.*

*As well as 'open house' for PAT, Hermoine held a Private View for friends which was a nice occasion ~ thanks to Hermione and her husband, John, for their hospitality. **Above:** some of those attending the Private View and also, **Right,** with Hermione in the foreground*



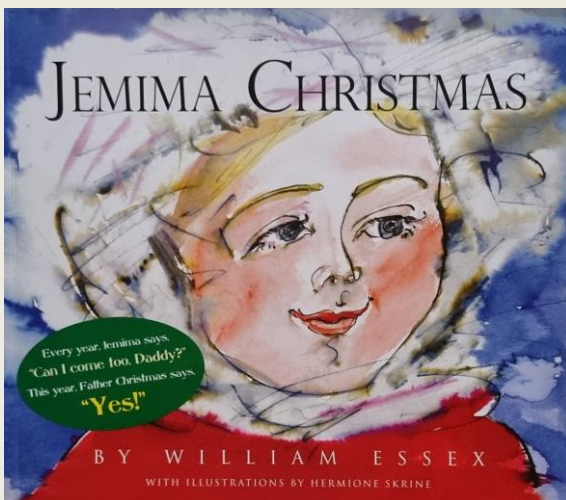
Above: photographs by John Maloney

Article continues next page...



Above: an example of Hermione's fashion drawings

Below: Hermione's illustrations from *Jemima Christmas*



Hermione welcomes commissions for portraits in oil or pastel: she avoids working from photographs so does require sittings.

Article continues next page...



Above: a selection of Hermoine's art (courtesy of Peacock Arts Trail) ~ collage by John Maloney

Local antiques 1

The portrait is of Paul M Stewart Crawford, Born: 1776, d.5 May 1847; MD Edin (1795), LRCP (1796); Marriage: Caroline à Court on 20 November 1817 in Wells, Somerset; a native of Ireland, and a doctor of medicine of Edinburgh of 24th June, 1795 (D.M.I. de Anginâ Pectoris); was admitted a Licentiate of the College of Physicians 16th February, 1796. He practised during many years at Bath, and in 1807 was appointed physician to the Bath United hospital, an office which he resigned in 1819. He died in the Circus, Bath, 5th May, 1847.



Above title (obscured) on a metal plate ~ *Dr. Stewart Crawford MD; Physician to the Bath city Infirmary & Dispensary*

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Local antiques 2 ~ blunderbuss and hunting horn

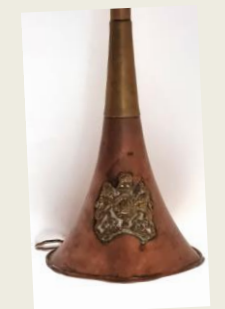
Blunderbuss [the name derives from *donderbus* (Dutch) meaning 'thunder gun']

Right, an excellent [probably] early 18th century brass-barrelled flintlock blunderbuss with folding spring bayonet, made by Spencer who was an English London-based gunmaker.

Its main features are a three-stage barrel flared at the muzzle; octagonal breech becoming round, decorated with scrolling foliage and stamped with a London proof and barrel smith's mark and on the decorated tang. It has a plain, signed lock, is full-stocked in walnut and has brass mounts including a plain butt-plate secured with iron tacks. Also, there are a simple brass trigger guard and turned brass ramrod pipes plus wooden rammer. It is 30¼" overall with a bell mouth. Its cocking and firing actions work perfectly. After 1770, they began to be produced with a spring bayonet which this example has. Overall, it is a scarce example of an early blunderbuss.

These weapons were used by sailors when boarding ships during attacks or repelling enemy crews attacking their vessels. A typical British mail coach would have a single postal employee on board, armed with a blunderbuss and a pair of pistols. They were also used by householders, though neither of those types would have had bayonets. **Left**, a coach horn of copper and copper alloy, probably late 19th or early 20th century. It is inscribed *Dieu et mon droit* ['God and my right'] and *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ['shamed be whoever thinks ill of it']

– the latter was used on the Royal Coat of Arms, **[right]** and has been featured on British coins, sparingly, but consistently over the years.



Local antiques 3

THE CHIPPENHAM PENNY POST

PENNY POST SUB-OFFICE or FIFTH CLAUSE OFFICE

CORSHAM

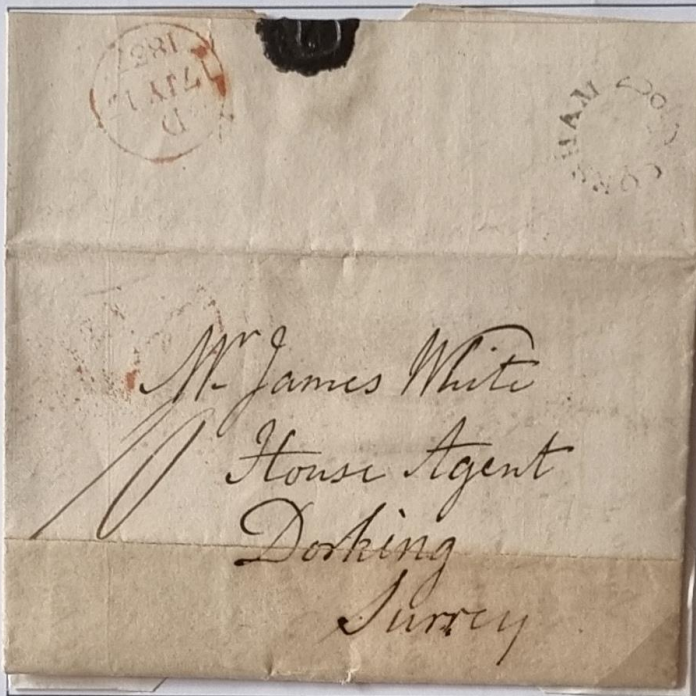
A small market town three miles south-west of Chippenham.

Although provincial Penny Posts were initially set up in 1793 they were not considered to be economic. However under the Fifth Clause of the 1801 Postage Act the Postmaster General was empowered to collect or deliver to places which were not post towns, and to concentrate on connecting villages with their post town in a more flexible manner. The Corsham Fifth Clause Post between Chippenham and Corsham was opened in February 1803 at a penny a letter each way.

The Fifth Clause was a purely local arrangement and the charges had to be paid by the inhabitants so that outward local charges had to be prepaid and not included with the General Post charge in the manuscript figures on the face of the letter.

However from about 1808 -1811 the popularity of Fifth Clause Posts waned and they were gradually replaced by the Penny Post.

It is not clear what happened to the Corsham Fifth Clause Post but possibly it was incorporated into the Chippenham Penny Post although no numeral has been allocated, perhaps it was the "unknown No. 7". The only handstamp used by Corsham during this period was the "Fleuron" mark. R M Willcocks in his book on England's Postal History states that such marks were used by Penny Post sub-offices and G F Oxley says that such handstamps were used by local receiving offices.



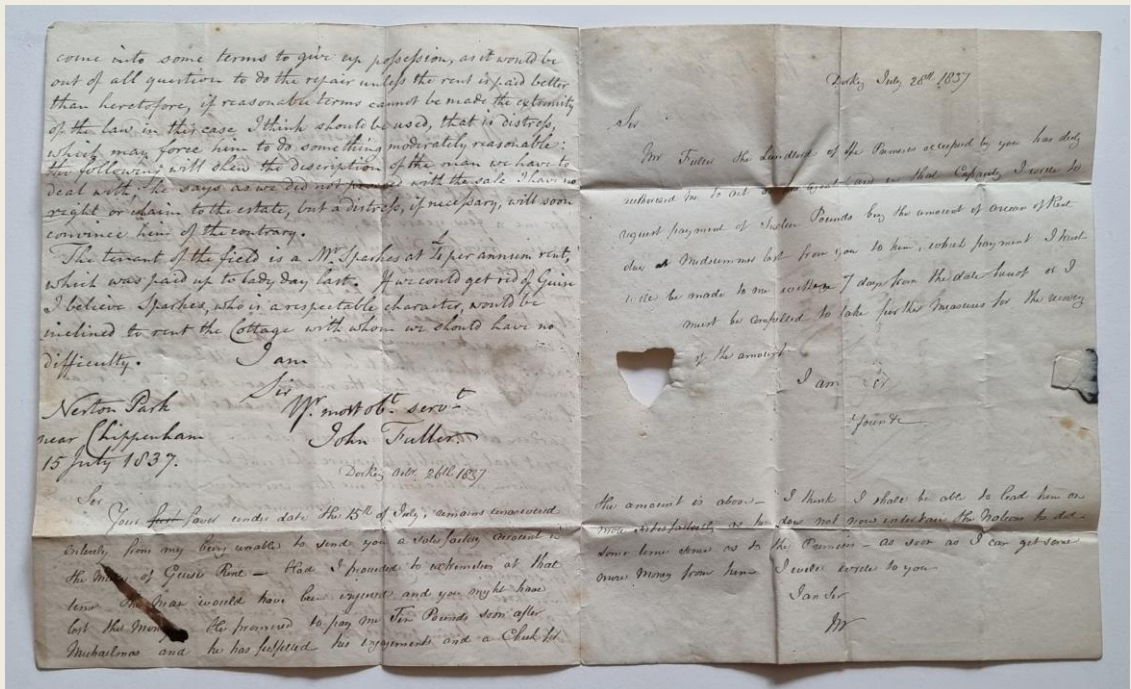
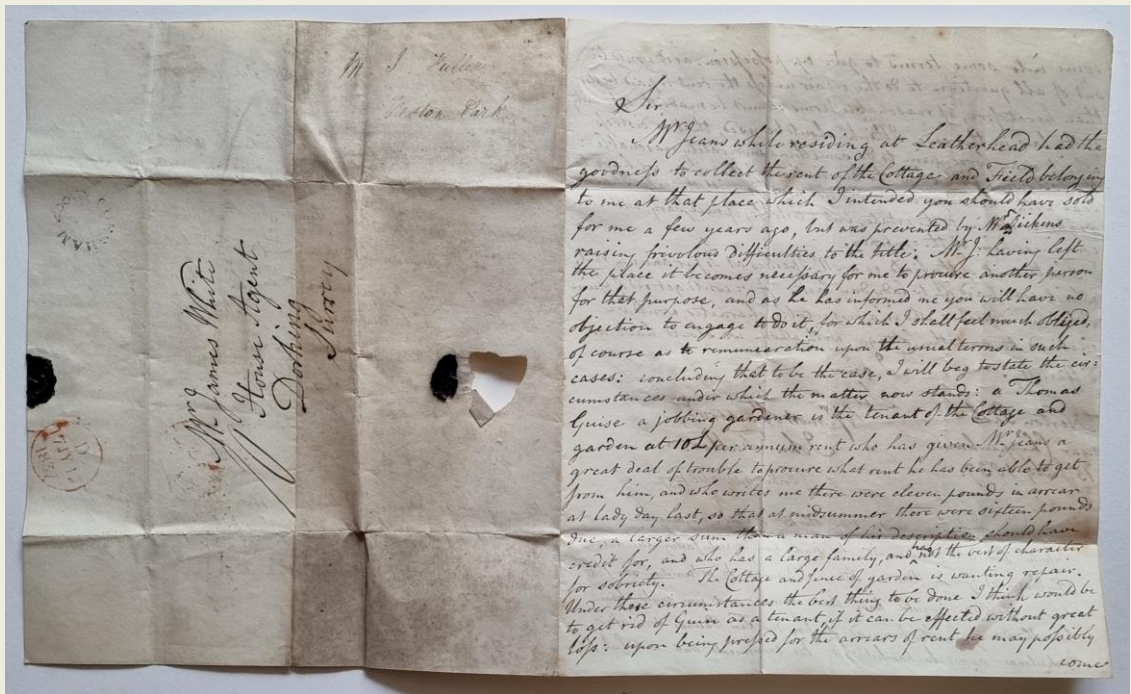
July 15th 1837 Entire from Neston Park, near Corsham to Dorking, Surrey with the Corsham "Fleuron" handstamp used either **instead of a receiving house numeral** or as a **Fifth Clause mark**.

M/s "10" being the charge (over 120 miles) to Dorking. The Fifth Clause 1d charge would have been collected when the letter was posted.

Above: 1837 letter from Neston Park to Dorking

Article continues next page...

Early letter from Neston Park



Above: contents of the 1837 letter from John Fuller, Neston Park: with thanks to Paul Kefford for drawing this to my attention

Feature article

Hapsden Hall and Villa Ventorum [reconstructed Roman villa]

A few weeks ago I had the good fortune to be gifted an overnight stay at The Newt, a country estate near Castle Cary, Somerset. The Newt primarily comprises a fine Georgian house, Hapsden Hall, magnificent gardens and woodlands and has the distinction of featuring the only reconstructed Roman villa in the UK. The 2000 acre estate is owned by a South African hotelier named Karen Roos and her telecom billionaire husband, Koos Bekker, and the couple's first property restoration, Babylonstoren, an 18th-century estate in the wine region outside Cape Town, is regarded as outstanding.

Built in 1687 by William Player, Hapsden Hall was enlarged and altered substantially a century later by its new owner, Henry Hobhouse. The estate remained in the Hobhouse family for some 230 years, gaining fame latterly as the home and garden of garden designer Penelope Hobhouse and then, in the 2000s, for a celebrated experiment in colour-themed plantings in the Walled Garden by the Canadian couple Nori and Sandra Pope.

Before Karen and Roos could start construction, they also had to ensure that approximately 2-3000 endangered newts would be protected. In honour of the effort made to protect the small amphibian, they renamed the estate from Hadspen Hall to The Newt.

Hapsden Hall is a Grade II* Country House, mostly dating to the 18th century. It was built with the local Cary stone; it has a hipped Welsh slate roof behind parapets and well-formed stone chimney stacks. Originally a solid "U"-plan, it has 19th and 20th century extensions. It was sold to the Hobhouse family [who still own it] in 1785. During succeeding centuries it underwent alterations and improvements, for instance: the ceilings of the front rooms were raised during 1786-87 together with other works and there were major alterations and additions to the rear in 1828, 1886 and 1909 – all 'good quality work of each period'.



Above: The frontage of Hapsden Hall

Article continues next page...



Above: Hadspen House: a principal drawing room



Above: General view of Hadspen House [**Left** ~ the back of the house], and the gardens including the Parabola [**Centre Right**] and part of the estate [tree lined areas top and to the right]

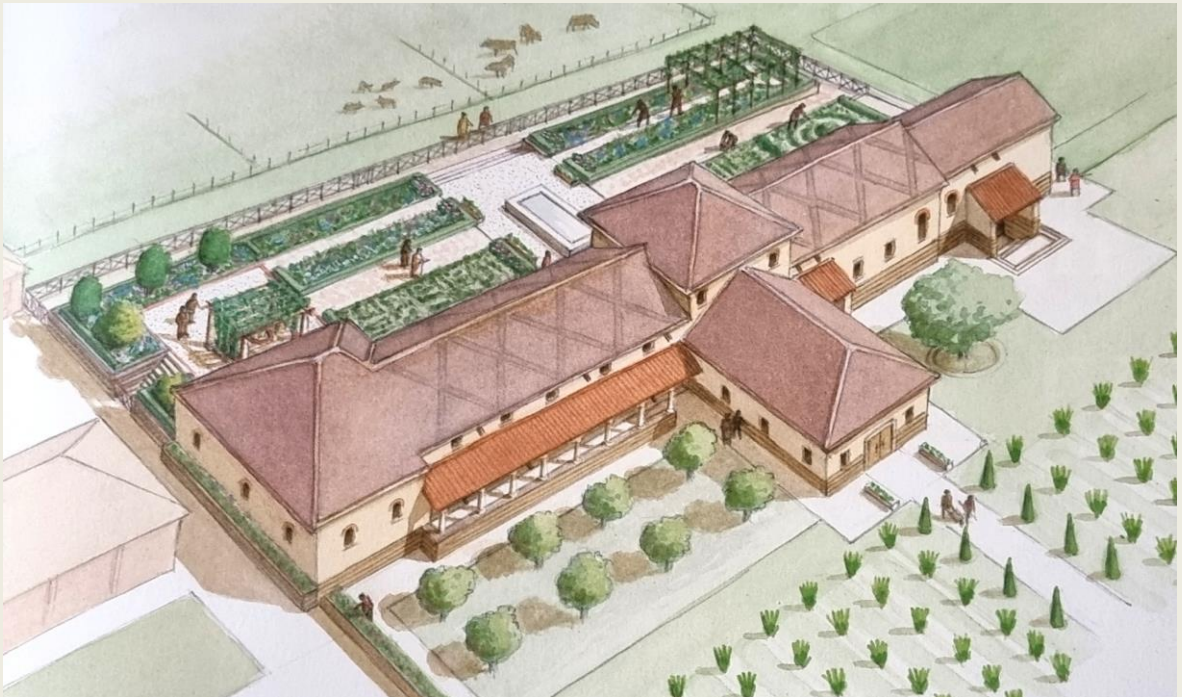
As well as the 23-bedroom 'boutique' hotel (with rooms in the Georgian house, as well as the stables and granary), there are a spa, gym and restaurants, cider press and cellar. The grounds are a 'showstopper' with a Baroque maze, Victorian fragrance garden, cottage garden, nurseries and the parabola walled garden with 9ft walls and 267 varieties of apple trees. The latter enclosed by beautiful honeycomb-coloured Cary stone walls from the Hadspen Quarry.

In 1834, the foundations of an 'ancient building' were discovered. Further investigations in 1966 and 1968-70 (by T. M. Staples and Crystal M. Bennett under the auspices of the Pendragon Society) revealed the remains of a Roman villa with mosaic floors, painted wall plaster and a number of what appeared to be living rooms. Since then, there have been investigations by Oxford Archaeology (2015) and Wessex Archaeology (2019) whose excavations were undertaken as part of the planning process. Meanwhile, in 2017, Southwest Archaeological Trust were retained as archaeological consultants. Some indications of pre-Roman activity were recorded, including evidence of a heavily disturbed Iron Age settlement.

Most of the villa buildings dated from the mid-3rd century onwards although there were indications of earlier buildings. The interpretation is that a modest villa was constructed in the mid-late 2nd century and replaced in large part by a rather grander structure in the mid-3rd century.

The Reconstructed Villa of the Winds [Villa Ventorum]

What was the impetus to do something never before successfully achieved in this country? Koos Bekker says that the existence of the foundations of a Roman estate on their property made him and his wife wonder what it would have been like to enter the house as a guest in its heyday? A problem was that no villa of any scale had ever been reconstructed in the UK. So, having assembled a team to work on the project, they flew to Europe, notably to Pompeii and Herculaneum, and in England they “probed” the sites of most major Roman investigations. Bearing in mind the remains discovered on the site itself, they and their [by then] extensive team of experts set about creating a reconstruction. The archaeological consultants, South West Heritage Trust, made outline proposals and the civic society’s old friends, Stonewood Design, architects [Corsham], led by founder Nicola du Pisane, drew up designs for the villa and museum in July 2018.



Above: Reconstruction of Villa Ventorum from the book of the same name

Below: the outside of the museum [photo. By John Maloney]



Article continues next page...



Above: inside one of several sections in the museum in which are preserved some of the remains from the archaeological investigations on the site

The various seasons of archaeological investigations revealed that the main Roman building included a series of domestic rooms including living rooms, reception/dining rooms and a kitchen. At the southern end of the block was a suite of interconnected rooms forming a classic bathhouse with an *apodyterium* [changing room], *tepidarium* [warm room], *caldarium* [hot bath] and *frigidarium* [cold plunge pool]. The most northerly structure on the site was a rectangular building divided into four rooms [one of which was possibly a dining room] ~ this building may have been a guest wing.

In the reconstruction floors are made of different materials from rammed earth to shaped flagstones bonded with a distinctive pink Roman mortar (*opus signinum*), fired clay tiles laid in herringbone patterns (*opus spicatum*) and split stones laid in geometric patterns (*opus sectile*) and, of course, mosaic reconstructions.

Visitors to the villa are also impressed by the painted plaster walls: there are specially commissioned wall and ceiling paintings based on colours and designs of wall plaster fragments found on the site and on typical Roman examples elsewhere. Perhaps one of the most impressive achievements of the reconstruction is the creation of a fully functioning hypocaust system [beyond the main block].

Unexpectedly, excavations uncovered part of a cemetery that contained the remains of at least 20 babies and six adults, men and women mostly above the age of 45 [radiocarbon dated to c. 350AD].

Artefacts found included over 10,000 sherds of pottery, ranging in date from the 5th century BC to the 5th century AD which included red glossy highly prized Samian table wares, fine wares and imported amphorae for holding wine. More than 50 copper alloy coins were found and other artefacts included a 4th-century crossbow brooch. In the later stages of the villa's use, several of the domestic rooms were taken over for industrial purposes: a corn dryer was erected in the changing room of the bathhouse and tanks or vats for brewing or dyeing cloth were located elsewhere. The villa appears to have been abandoned in the early 5th century.

Article continues next page...



Above: the Villa Ventorum building and gardens ~ photographs. and collage by John Maloney

Article continues next page...

The extent of the work and care undertaken at The Newt is extraordinary. At all levels of the project, the attention to detail is quite exemplary: from the refurbished hotel and magnificent gardens to the reconstructed villa and its outbuildings and garden. An extensive team of experts was brought together which is instanced by the fresco specialists from Florence to create the walls and ceilings in the villa.

It is particularly fitting that the Roman villa has been reconstructed within an English country estate: Roman villas were luxurious farmhouses and in England they could be said to be the original country houses. They sat within an estate that was organised to produce wealth mainly from the land. The villa itself provided relatively luxurious accommodation for the owner, their family, and the reception of guests. The similarity to an English country house lies in the standards of architecture, decoration, furniture, comfort and organisation.

It is so unusual to find such a passion for delivering projects and everyone I spoke with was very proud of what has been achieved within a setting that allows for the general public to enjoy and interact with while also being able to deliver a stunning, albeit rather exclusive, hotel for guests. I had a wonderful stay and the dedication, professionalism and kindness of the staff was exceptional.

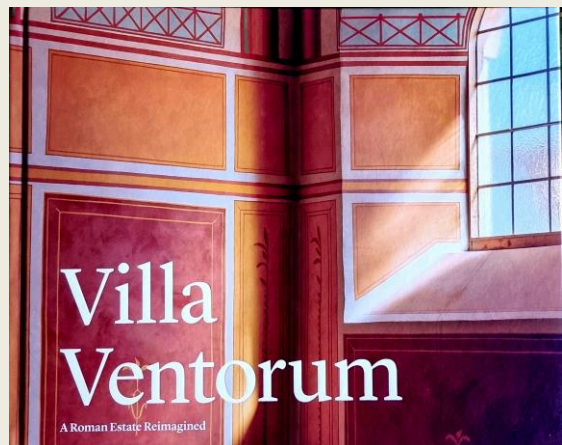
Opposite, the book, *Villa Ventorum ~ a Roman estate Reimagined* is 240 pages long, very well illustrated and costs £48: it is a detailed account of the story of this unusual project.

Rather than day tickets, annual membership is open to everyone, offering unlimited access to the garden, restaurants and attractions for up to six occasions over a 12 month period.

Thanks to Ric Weeks [Visitor Attractions Exhibitions Manager] for meeting me and explaining aspects of the villa and museum; Nicola du Pisane [Stonewood Design] and all the courteous and helpful staff that I met at The Newt.



Above: a 're-enactor', as they are termed in 'living' museums, who did a charming job of role-playing a Roman member of the villa household.



John Maloney

Corsham Almshouses

The Schoolroom at the Almshouses was closed for essential repair works last autumn and re-opened on 9th September, just in time for the Corsham Street Fair and the Heritage Open Days.

Extensive work was needed to replace the lintels in the Schoolroom, which had decayed beyond repair (see collage of photographs on next page). This was a complex operation, from gaining all of the relevant permissions, to delivering the end result. It was also necessary to re-point the exterior walls of the building, in order to prevent water ingress. In total the renovations cost in excess of £120,000, none of which is publicly funded. Feedback on the renovated Schoolroom has been overwhelmingly positive.

Following on the success of the Heritage Open Days (for which many thanks are due to Anne Lock for her help and forbearance), the Almshouses hosted the very successful Peacock Arts Trail in October.

The Charity's trustees are always looking for new volunteers, as guides, trustees or gardeners. If you think you could help, please email info@corshamalmshouses.org.uk.

The £120k came from the charity's reserves. As background, when the major renovations took place at the turn of this century, apparently there were no funds in the coffers, and so loans and a couple of low value grants were used. We paid off a twenty year loan from Wiltshire County Council earlier this year. So the trustees took care to put reserves in place to prevent such a recurrence. Obviously this spend has now considerably diminished those. Our income comes mainly from the maintenance contributions (rent, by another name, but at far lower rates than market ones) from the residents. We get a small amount from donations, and events such as the Arts Trail, plus the sale of Susie Brooks' prints etc.

Our donations link is <https://justgiving.com/ladymargarethungerford>

Janet Battersby

Well done the Trustees for funding and organising these essential remedial works ~ Editor



Above: Collage of views of damage and repairs in Corsham Almshouses

Article continues next page...

Heritage Open Days 2023

The National Trust have been organizing Heritage Open Days for some years. This year 'Creativity' was the theme and they recently reported that this year, between 8-17th September, a total of 5,282 free events were on offer around England, contributing a total of £8.9m to local economies.

Here in Corsham, over two hundred visits to five venues were organised - Delicious House, The Pound, Lady Margaret Schoolroom, Monks Chapel and Chapel Plaister. As a result of new guidance from the National Trust we met with Barry Cox, Chair of Corsham's Walking Festival Committee, whose rambling knowledge and experience proved invaluable - a Risk Assessment for a ramble is not for the faint hearted. Two rambles were planned, one of seven miles, the other of three, the first linking three Chapels, the second just two. Over the HODS weekends, visitor opportunities at each venue were successfully planned around the predicted rambling timings, whilst on the first Saturday Jane Cox was to be found with her Corsham Tapestry display at The Pound, introducing the project, raising interest and engaging with the flow of families throughout the day. Midweek opportunities were provided to visit three venues, Delicious House, Monks Chapel and the Schoolroom - in the first of which our visitors not only received a warm and enthusiastic welcome but coffee and pastries into the bargain!



None of the above would have been possible without the volunteers at each venue who kindly gave of their time and happily answered the many questions asked by their visitors and sincere thanks are due to them; Barry Cox and his fellow ramblers for keeping spirits high through sunshine and lashing rain; Larry St. Croix for the venue photographs required for the NT website registrations and last but not least, the Town Council for their Grant which enabled us to commission the HODS leaflets from Corsham Print which were then distributed widely across Wiltshire.

Dear All

Notwithstanding the weather conditions today and the number of walkers we attracted. I believe the three Rambles we put on were well received and appreciated by all those that attended.

Our Rambles were an integral part of the Corsham Civic Society HODS event and many thanks to the walk leaders for stepping forward to make this all happen.

I can just imagine the amount of effort that Anne put into making this all work and it was a pleasure to support another local Community Group.

Attached are some photos from today's Three Chapel Ramble please use them to promote the event and future ones.

Anne, thanks for the hot drink and cake which was well received by all today.

Regards, Barry

The HODs were (in my opinion) a huge success.

We saw a LOT of people at the Almshouses, and a few of those I spoke to had done the 'circuit'. Some had also travelled quite a way. Cllr. Gareth Ward

Anne Lock

The old shop sign is saved

For the last issue [pps. 27-28] Ali Warren wrote about the uncovering of the sign [below] at No. 17 High Street, by the builder Rob Shillaker who has been refurbishing the premises for Corsham Print. It has now been taken to my storage unit near Chippenham [thanks, Rob] and will be offered to Chippenham Museum.



John Maloney

Corsham's start to Christmas



Above: photographs by Julian Carosi/Mr Corsham ~ collage by John Maloney

Article continues next page...

Pickwick buildings research legacy

Whilst researching *Pickwick - Conservation Area Appraisal* and *Pickwick, A Place in Time ~ The Story of a Wiltshire Village*, I have commissioned several reports about notable buildings in Pickwick from the excellent Wiltshire Buildings Record. I regard these as part of 'my Pickwick legacy' as they have been uploaded to <https://www.pickwickassociation.org.uk/discover> [the Pickwick Association website] for other researchers and anyone who may be interested.

The titles are:

No. 12 Pickwick [plus associated reports]

The Masons in Corsham

Hare & Hounds

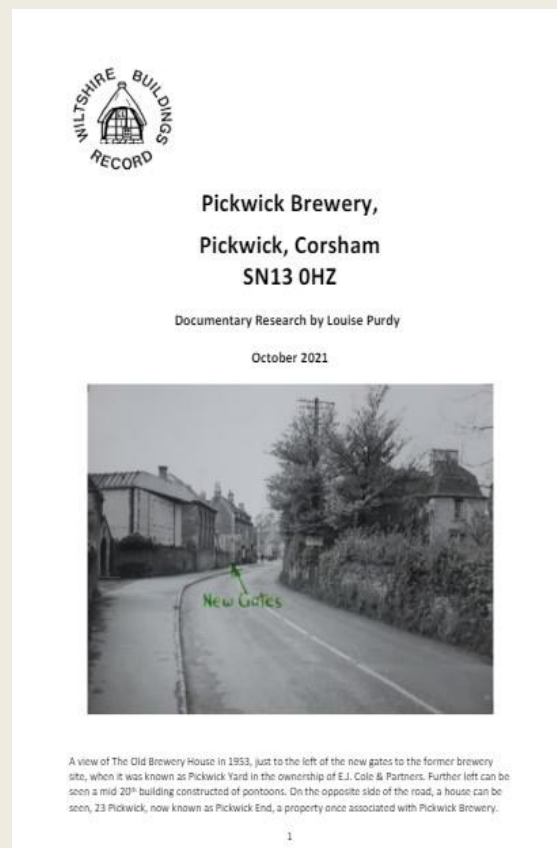
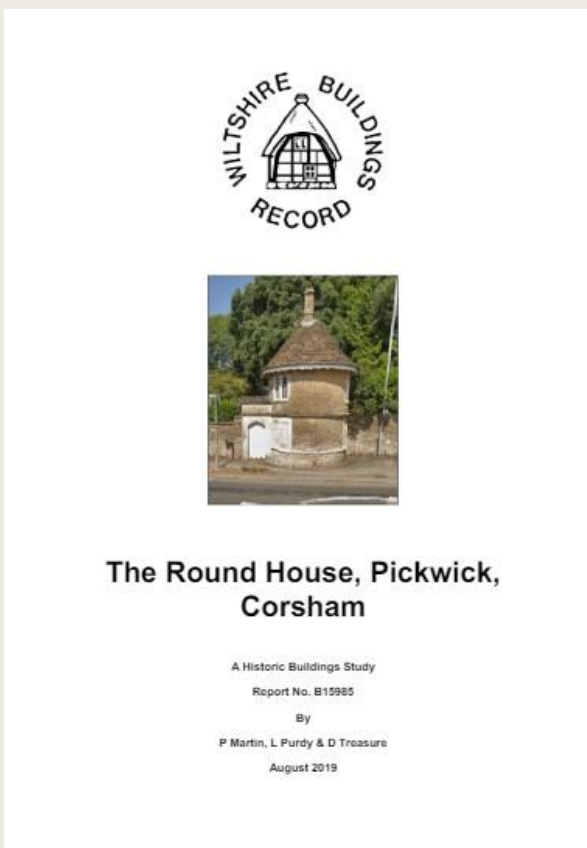
Quaker Meeting House and Burial Ground

Masonic Hall

The Roundhouse

Pickwick Brewery [plus associated reports]

Pickwick Manor



Above; front covers of two of the reports in the Pickwick 'legacy'

John Maloney

Oh what a tangled web we weave



Above: frosted cobwebs on a hedge in Pickwick a week ago

Below: the past revisited: Pickwickians gathered in 2019 at Bowood House for a 'Murder Mystery' evening



DINING OUT REVIEWS

The Royal Crescent Hotel, Spa & Restaurant, No.16 The Royal Crescent, Bath BA1 2LS

The hotel is located centrally in the famous crescent and has an imposing Georgian Palladian façade [see below]. I enjoyed a very nice *Autumn Menu* two course lunch for £27 in its Montagu's Mews Restaurant, Bar and Dining Terrace area. The terrace overlooks beautiful secluded gardens [see next page]. There is an *All Day Dining* menu comprising Breakfast, a set two or three course Lunch and traditional Afternoon Tea [which looked splendid], and an exquisite A la Carte or six-course Tasting Menu for the evening ~ <https://www.royalcrescent.co.uk/dining/>. Built between 1767 and 1775 and designed by John Wood the Younger, The Crescent remains to this day one of the greatest pieces of Georgian architecture in the UK.

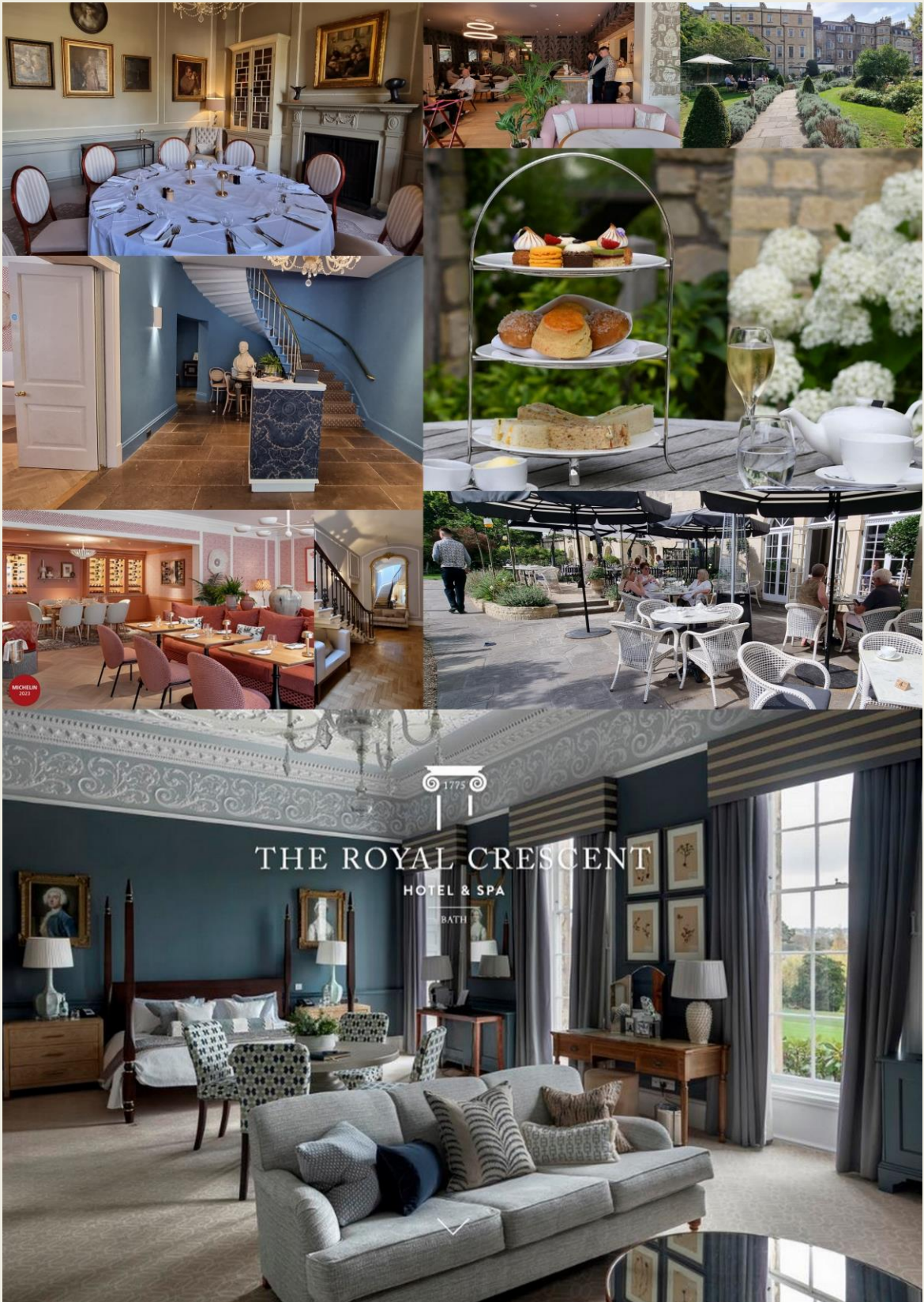
The interior is also fine with a range of beautiful rooms containing paintings and antiques. Unsurprisingly, it is in great demand for costume dramas, for instance *Persuasion* [2007] and more recently [2020] *Bridgerton*.



Below: I was served by an 'old' Corsham friend with the fine name, Kieron Xavier Devenney Blockley



Article continues next page...



Above: photographs from The Royal Crescent Hotel website, collage by John Maloney

Beechfield Country House Hotel and Restaurant, Beanacre, near Melksham, SN12 7PU



Above: the front of the main house with a corridor linking to former coach houses

A fine four AA Red Star country house hotel, near Lacock. Beechfield was built in 1878 for a local gentleman farmer named Richard Keevil, whose initials are carved in the pediment over the bay window on the left of the building. It remained an impressive family home for ninety years, until it was converted into a hotel in the late 1960s with the word "House" added to its name ~ not to be confused with the Pickwick house of that name.

There is an outdoor heated pool and open fires provide a warm, cosy welcome. The grounds are beautiful and worth exploring. I had a delicious dinner of chicken ballontine and the traditional afternoon tea and Sunday roast are recommended. The staff are friendly and efficient.

Right: Daisy Hartley, one of the excellent staff, who is another 'old' Corsham friend and formerly of the Rudloe Arms. Daisy makes a great negroni and alerted me to the most recent archaeological work on the adjacent Beanacre site reported in the Summer issue pps. 29-30.



John Maloney



Above: photographs from the Beechfield House website ~ collage by John Maloney

The village of Box loses its last butcher

On Sunday, November 5th, David Hill, the butcher in the Market Place, Box, will close the shop for the last time thus ending 68 year's service of father and son, Jim & David Hill.

David's father began business as one of the butchers in Box in 1955 when he took over the business from the Abrams family which was situated next to the Chequers public house in the Market Place. Jim took over the current premises and David joined him as a trainee in 1970 and later the business was known, as it was, until November 5th, as R.J. Hill & Son. Jim retired in 2000 and since then David has worked hard to create a business which has serviced customers from the parish of Box and the surrounding area. His hand made burgers and his well known 'Box Hill Bangers' have been popular for years alongside side other types of meat and poultry. Christmas has been a busy time for David with a great deal of extra work needing an additional butcher which helped things to move along smoothly. In his last week of business David made 300 burgers and 300 Box Hill Bangers which were ordered by the organisers of the Colerne Bonfire event as David said, he wanted 'To go out with a BANG!!', which he did.



I have known David since he was 8 years old and for all the years I lived on Box Hill his cheerful smile and attitude made visiting R.J.Hill & Son so enjoyable. I shall miss our Thursday morning chats, when I visit Box for the Community Café at the Methodist Church, before purchasing various joints of meat and sausages for the following week. I sincerely hope that David & Gloria will now enjoy their retirement and for once David won't be worrying if he hasn't ordered enough turkeys for Christmas. Thank you David for your 53 years service to the community in Box.

Michael Rumsey

TO BATH VIA CORSHAM: ROADS AND TRAVELLERS

[Summary of a lecture to Corsham Civic Society 24 Nov 2023]

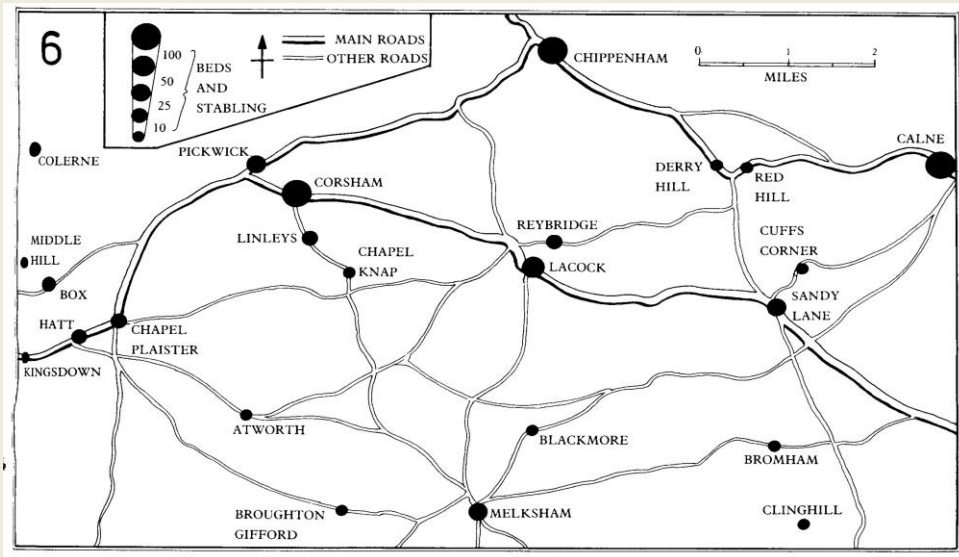
The obvious place for anyone to begin, when thinking about Corsham's roads, is the straight line which forms the southern parish boundary, marking the course of the Roman road between London and Bath. Most of it is not on any right of way, so I don't know how much is visible on the ground today. But its line through Neston Park has been studied over the centuries by antiquarians and archaeological trespassers – in the 1950s its agger or embankment could still be traced, 2-feet high and 45-feet wide. Roads like this were just the principal routes of an empire-wide communications system, and ours is in fact recorded in a document probably of the 3rd century AD, the Antonine Itinerary. Bath was perhaps not the main destination – it was not a major administrative centre like Cirencester or Dorchester – many road users were heading to or from Wales via a perilous Severn crossing.

In some ways our stretch of road is unusual, not least because it has continued as a boundary – but interestingly not as a road – over so many centuries right up to the present. Why it stopped being a road seems to be bound up with a great linear earthwork of the Saxon period, since it forms the missing link joining the East and West Wansdyke. Where East Wansdyke ends, at Morgans Hill near Devizes, the dyke was built over the road, effectively ending long distance travel along it. But the agger of the road was built up to maintain its significance as a boundary, between two Romanised native tribes, perhaps, and then dividing Wessex from Mercia.

An attempt in the 1950s to find the line of its medieval replacement suggested that it ran from Lacock through Gastard and Neston to Chapel Plaister, where it may have crossed a pilgrim route coming down from Malmesbury via Allington and Corsham to Joseph of Arimathea's chapel at Glastonbury. We know that one of the earliest travel writers, John Leland, came this way in 1542. Leland was researching for a map, but most early map-makers omitted roads, right up to the 1670s, and the beginning of the stagecoach era.

The first stagecoach between Bristol and London, almost certainly via Bath and therefore passing somewhere near Corsham, is recorded in 1657, and a pattern seems to have developed of a three-day coach operating twice a week, later joined by a two-day 'flying' coach (travelling at the same speed but with more stops and continuing longer) three times a week in summer. The early coaches crossed the downs, coming (westwards) via Heddington and Sandy Lane down to Lacock and presumably through Corsham to Pickwick, then off towards Fiveways and Kingsdown. This way of travelling remained pretty much the same until about 1750, when there was a big shake-up.

Article continues next page...



Above: Guest beds and stabling in the Corsham area in 1685 (*Wilts Archaeological Magazine*, vol. 84 (1991), p. 91).

For Corsham the most significant change was that the coaches now abandoned the downland road, which involved a hazardous break-neck descent from Bowden Hill, and chose instead routes through either Calne and Chippenham or Devizes and Melksham. So now roughly half the coaching traffic by-passed Corsham altogether and the other half approached Corsham parish from Chippenham, as far as the Cross Keys. But here things became a bit complicated because, as well as the existing turnpike roads to Lacock, Pickwick and over Kingsdown, a new turnpike was made which passed near Hartham, went round by Rudloe and then down the hill through Box. Only in 1829, when the trusts amalgamated, was the present line of the A4 established.



Above: Detail from a map of Corsham roads dated 1770 in the Wilts & Swindon History Centre (WSA 135/65H), showing old and new turnpike roads near the Cross Keys Pickwick is

Article continues next page...

Meanwhile there was a rapid increase in demand for coach travel between Bath and London – not only coaches, but other forms of wheeled transport – post-chaises, diligences, balloon coaches. From 1784 mail coaches were on the road too, setting the standard for speed and efficiency. The Napoleonic wars, which massively inflated fodder prices for the coach horses, dented this progress, but after 1815 the great flowering of coaching traffic began, reaching its apogee during the 1830s.

At the peak of stagecoach travelling, in 1834, it was estimated that 1,472 passengers a week travelled between London and Bath, but not always in great comfort. In 1836 the going was so cold one night that two outside passengers from Bath were frozen to death and a third died later. The horses suffered too. In 1826, going downhill to Bathford, one of the four horses, 'fell, and on the course of a minute, after three loud groans, breathed his last.' There were innovations too – in 1827 an entrepreneur, Goldsworthy Gurney, began operating steam-driven coaches all the way from London to Bath – though the venture was quite short-lived.



Above: The 'Emerald' stagecoach plying between London, Bath and Bristol in the 1830s (painting by Charles Cooper Henderson).

One of these 1830s stagecoach passengers was a certain Isambard Kingdom Brunel, travelling between London and Bristol on business for the Great Western Railway. And it was the efforts of him and his company that brought coaching on the Bath road, including through Corsham, to a fairly abrupt end when the railway opened in 1841. The railways killed the stagecoach trade. At first the coaches were attached to the train and made the whole journey, continuing by road from Paddington with their passengers to central London. But pretty soon the only stagecoaches were in remote areas where railways had not yet penetrated, or as feeders to and from railway stations, often run by hotels for their guests.

John Chandler

Editor ~ the society is grateful to John for this prompt and admirable summary of his excellent talk just a few weeks ago

Planning matters

Local

During September-November there were the usual applications for minor Listed Building works, demolitions and extensions, tree pruning, replacement structures, etc.

More major matters concerned ~

Local Plan comments by the Pickwick Association

1. We note that sites 3-4 are adjacent to the Rural Green Buffer in the Neighbourhood Plan. We would stress that if development is to be permitted on these sites it should be adjacent to existing development and respect the Neighbourhood Plan Rural Buffer.
2. We note Pickwick Paddock (Site 1) has been removed from consideration and are surprised and fully support this due to the impact on heritage that cannot be mitigated.
3. Ex local authority land in Corsham (including garages) should be considered for development as it would be more sustainable and provide affordable housing rather than the executive housing seen to date.
4. Health Capacity Gap identified and accordingly there is no infrastructure for development - the old Health Clinic should be considered as part of the solution.
5. We question whether further development in Corsham should be permitted at all until Corsham Station is reopened, given that Katherine Park was only given permission on the basis that there would be a station.
6. The Lypiatt Centre, if it were to become surplus to MOD requirements, would potentially provide a site for healthcare/affordable housing."

The Hartham Park estate

[Right] has been sold having been put on the market by Strutt & Parker with a guide price of £8 million: it is anticipated that it is likely to have been bought by a hotel consortium.



Article continues next page...

Park Lane [land beside Manor Barn], Pickwick Many of you will have received the notice of a public consultation regarding the potential development of the field adjacent to Manor Barn in Pickwick, quite a small, 'tight' site. The public consultation was worthy of the name, unlike the one for the Bath Road care home proposal in 2021 which was conducted post the planning application! The consultation was held in The Methuen Arms on 21st November. There were five display boards that I considered to be quite clear and there were three people associated with the scheme on hand to elucidate and discuss matters. The developer is Longacre, whose business is very much based in Bath and the South West of England. Feedback forms were provided and although the consultation period has now finished the display boards can still be viewed at ~ http://www.parklanedev.com/23104_U04_001_Consultation%20Boards_web.pdf.

The proposal is for 8 three or five-bed houses with 20 [!] parking spaces; the houses having stone hoods to doorways and dressed stone window surrounds; the building material will be coursed rubble stone ragwork with dressed stone quoins and string courses. The developers and their team had looked closely at local building types in formulating their 'emerging' design.



Above: a sketch elevation of the scheme facing the Bath Road.

While some reservations were expressed at the consultation about certain aspects and apparently contradictory elements of the scheme, generally, there were acknowledgments that the development team " have put some effort into it"

13 High Street

Several people continue to ask me about the status of the proposals as previously reported and so I recently contacted Andrew Hall for an update: his response was: *We had asked for a conditional planning permission, under which some technical details re the heat pumps could be agreed while the build was underway. You will remember that the building will be Fossil Free (ie no gas). But we are being forced to get to the bottom of everything now before planning can be granted.*

In memoriam ~ Norman Duckworth

A Life Member of the Society, Norman was born in Enfield, North London in November 1931, sharing an Essex childhood with his cousin. He gained a place at Leyton County High School in October 1944, completing his studies in four years before moving to Horticultural College where he gained his Diploma. In 1953 he met a budding cellist, June, and they were married in August 1955. Three sons were born in Essex, but in 1960 Norman secured a teaching post in Corsham where, once he had found a suitable home, the family joined him and two further sons were born.

Music, both classical and jazz, photography (he had his own dark room), social history, beekeeping and gardening were his main interests - so a greenhouse was considered essential. At Purleigh Road he had to be inventive and erected one on the roof of his garage - accessed via the landing window. Due to the experiments included in his lessons he was affectionately known to many as 'Professor Whizz-Bang'; whilst also known for the accuracy of his aim with a blackboard rubber!

In 1974 they secured the tenancy of the Warden's House, overlooking the cricket ground, where he transformed the overgrown plot into a garden with croquet lawn. He also returned to academia and gained a Degree in Botany. At the height of the Cold War Norman joined the Royal Signals Corps, spending many an evening alone in a cold bunker on Lansdown, Bath. Both being teachers, all the family have happy memories of long, relaxed holidays spent camping with the family's VW camper van as their hub.

In 1984 Norman took voluntary redundancy, he and June taking over the dry cleaners in Pickwick Road, whereupon they expanded the business to include local crafts, window blinds and costume hire. Eventually, as their boys left to make their own way in the world, it was time for them to leave the Warden's House. A cottage was purchased in Chapel Knapp where they lived happily for forty years, visited by an ever growing family of seven grandchildren and eventually, four great grandchildren, all bringing much joy to their lives.

Moving to Broadmead in 2017 it was just months later, in March 2018, that June died. However, Norman was philosophical and continued to gain pleasure from his gardening, attending concerts in London and Yorkshire and even setting off on a solo holiday to Madeira. In November 2019, Norman himself suffered a serious stroke, rallied and returned to his Broadmead home - his family having modified it in readiness for a return in a wheelchair. There he continued to enjoy listening to Radio 3 - with the odd break for Radio 4's "Have I Got News For You" or perhaps Lee Mack. Society members last met with him in February when he attended the Society's New Year lunch at the Methuen Arms. Animated, there he spoke of his memories of the Society's vigorous planning battle, a decade ago, to save the Almshouse gardens from development - English Heritage at that time unprepared to defend 'the setting' of an historic building - a stance that has now changed.

Article continues next page...

At 91, Norman delighted in daily visits from members of his family but it was his son Oli who, on the 15th September, found him unresponsive when he called in as usual at 9.30pm. Rushed to the RUH, Norman passed away peacefully on the 18th without regaining consciousness, leaving his family to mourn and reflect on a life well-lived.

Anne Lock

Gareth Warren

Ali Warren's husband died recently and on behalf of the Executive Committee I offer our condolences. Ali said *we moved to Corsham as part of his service with the RAF Police and that he came to love the town and our place in it.*



John Maloney

The passing of one of England's greatest footballers, Sir Bobby Charlton

Sadly, in October this year, we lost one of our greatest footballers, Sir Bobby Charlton at the age of 86 years. Robert Charlton was born in Ashington, Northumberland, on the 11th October 1937 just 2 years after his brother, Jack Charlton.

Their mother, Elizabeth, 'Cissie', as she was known, was a member of the Milburn family and her 4 brothers and their cousin Jackie all became professional footballers, so it was in Bobby Charlton's blood to follow the family into the game. Bobby Charlton joined Manchester United and played for the first time in 1956 and he was one of the team's survivors at the Munich Air disaster of February 1958.



Bobby played for England many times including for 4 World Cups scoring goals which helped the team move into the 1966 final against West Germany. In total he scored 49 goals for England and 758 for Manchester United before retiring in 1973. He managed Preston North End for 2 years in 1973/4 and joined the Manchester United board in 1984. His brother Jack, in the meantime, played for Leeds United and was also in the team for the 1966 World Cup final and ended his footballing career managing the Republic of Ireland team between 1986 – 1996.

Bobby Charlton has been called 'one of the greatest footballers ever to have graced the football pitch'. It is hoped that young players of today could become such footballing legends.

Corsham has provided the nation with 2 Test Match cricketers and hopefully there are young people standing in the wings to do that in the field of football.

Thank you Sir Bobby Charlton for providing us with such enjoyment watching playbacks of the games you played for MUFC and England.

Michael Rumsey



Above: An acer tree in Pickwick in all its autumnal glory [John Maloney]



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CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY TALKS 2024

All meetings are at the Pound arts centre (telephone 01249 701628) at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated. Members £2, Non-Members £5. Guests are very welcome. Please be aware that these events are subject to last minute changes beyond the control of the CCS.

- 26th Jan** Lis Davenport **Woodchester Manor, Glos.**
- 23rd Feb** **ANNUAL LUNCH at Amore, Pickwick Road, Corsham**
- 22nd Feb** Wendy Reynolds **Teaching in the Falklands Islands**
- 26th April** Charlotte D'Acre **Ancient woodland Inventory**
- 17th May** **AGM followed by a social gathering at Corsham Town Hall**
- 28th June** David Dawson [Director, Wiltshire Museums] **The making of the kingdom of Wessex**
- 26th July** tba
- ?? Aug** **Summer event tba**
- 27th Sept** Peter Davenport [The Bathford Society] **Batheaston By-pass**
- 25th Oct** Rosie McNamara [author] **Boxfields**
- ?? Nov** tba

- ***Please note that the Programme may be subject to changes***
- ***For more information email corshamcivicsociety@gmail.com or see the website www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk***

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