



Corsham Spotlight

Magazine of the Corsham Civic Society
<http://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk>

Spring 2024
April 2024, Vol. 21, Issue 1

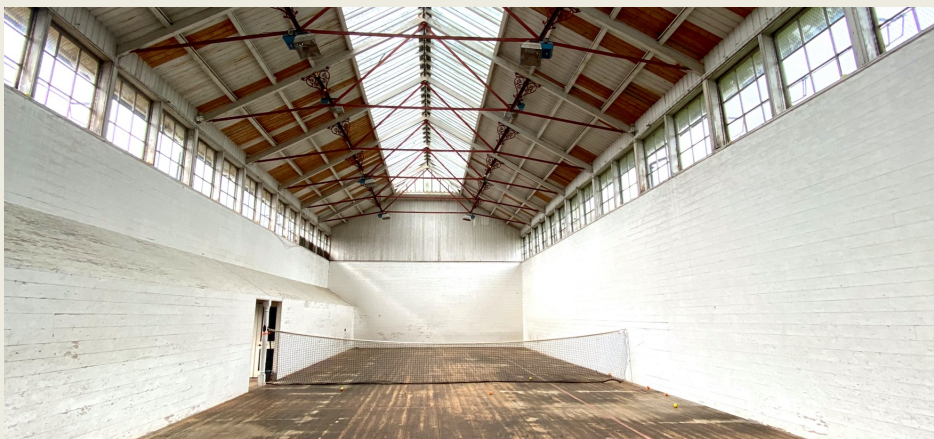
Contents

From the Chair	1
Society Lunch	2
Pickwick, A place in time	3
Future of Hartham Park	5
Woodchester Mansion	8
Adam Calkin	9
Teaching in the Falklands	10
GWR Box Tunnel	11
Sweet Pea Kitchen	13
Box Store Opening	15
Spotlight Retrospective	16
In Memoriam	17
Planning Round-up	19
Did You Know	21
Invitations/Memberships	22

*Contributions to
Spotlight are very
welcome. Please
contact the editor at:
garchajujar@gmail.com*



Stické Tennis: Hartham Park houses one of the three playable courts in the world (pictures courtesy of Larry St Croix)



Officers and Committee Members:

President

Anne Lock

Tel: 01249 716086

Chair

Michael Rumsey

Tel: 01249 715741

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

Jujhar Garcha

Tel: 07915 534794

Proof Editor

Edward Barrett

Tel: 07565 612408

From the Chair

A month on from our Society lunch at *Amore* I can look at a wide range of flowering plants and shrubs in my garden and think, thank goodness that spring has arrived. I don't think I can remember such a wet winter period as we've experienced.

With a New Year we welcome a new editor for our magazine *Spotlight*, Jujhar Garcha, and we look forward to the magazines he will edit in this year and other years to follow.

At the same time, I must on your behalf, thank John Maloney for his years as editor and for his chairing of the Society for the last two years. I look forward to seeing you all at our AGM on May 10th so until then my good wishes to you all.

Michael Rumsey
Acting Chairman

P.S. Wiltshire Council granted permission for the old Lloyds Bank to become a boutique hotel-restaurant which is great news for the High Street (see page 20).

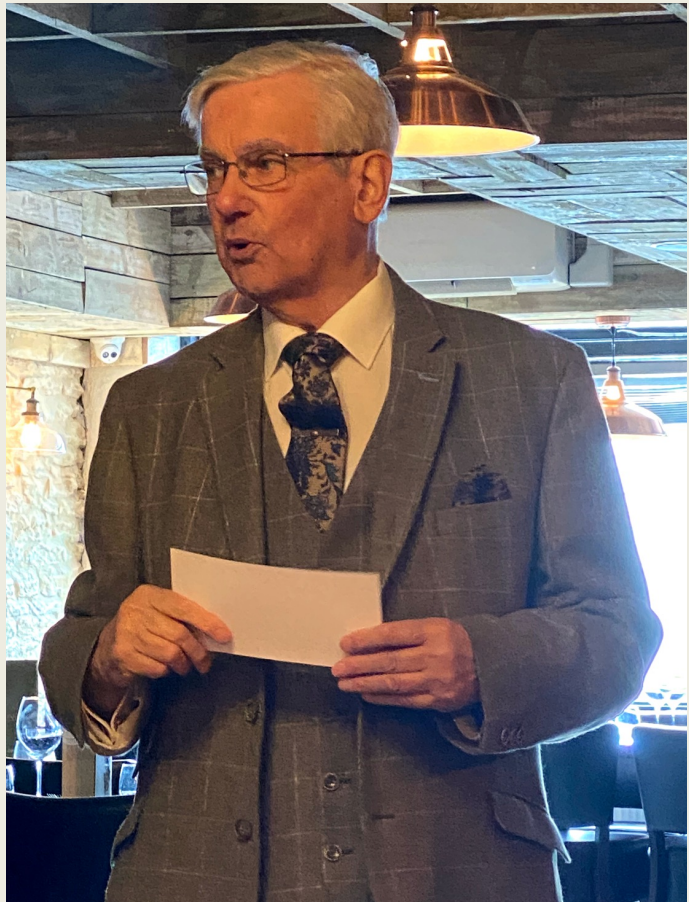
The Society's February 2024 Lunch

By 1pm on Friday 23rd February, 35 members and friends had gathered at *Amore*, the Italian restaurant on Pickwick Road ready to start the first of three courses.

It was a most enjoyable meal, prepared and cooked by two chefs and served efficiently by our waiters. At the conclusion of our meal, I proposed the loyal toast to His Majesty the King followed by a second toast to all members past and present. Larry St. Croix took many photographs six of which appear opposite.

On behalf of the Society, I wish to thank the staff at *Amore* and their manager, Alexander, for a most enjoyable lunchtime meal and we look forward to returning next year.

Michael Rumsey



Publication of *Pickwick, A place in time*

The 2023 Spring issue of Spotlight (pps. 31-34) featured a preview of *Pickwick, A place in time* including a few of the many illustrations and a complimentary letter from Queen Camilla that compose the book.

Tony Clark and I (who have lived in Pickwick for many years) researched and wrote the book over the last 3+ years and are pleased to report that it has been sent for printing and should be available by the time this issue of Spotlight has been published.

It comprises 111 pages and 321 images (including many maps) and will be in a landscape format with hardcovers. We are intending that it be sold by Corsham bookshop. If you would like to register your interest, please contact me: johnmaloney2003@aol.com

It has been quite time a consuming undertaking but an enjoyable one and we are pleased with the result and grateful to Tim Jollands (Weavern Books, who lives in Corsham) who has guided it through formatting and setting, some editing and advised about the selection of a printer.



Left: Extract from the 1955 Ordnance Survey Map

Below: From left to right, 41-45 Pickwick



As well as a historical review and a wealth of maps and plans, it contains sections on Pickwick People and Particularly Pickwick which reviews the variety of guises in which the name 'Pickwick' has been used, e.g., Pickwick – The musical, Pickwick Records, Crocus Pickwick, Pickwickian syndrome etc., etc.

We have noted the connection of Pickwick Motors and a superb 1935 MG SA Tourer car to a sensational murder and suicide that took place in 1940! Tom Brakspear has contributed a notable Introduction and informative Observations and there is a section dedicated to Management of the Conservation Area, once more topical given the proposed developments along the Bath Road.

This is the only book we know specifically dealing in detail with the historic village of Pickwick - the former home for many years of the present Queen, Camilla - who has written an appreciation that features in the book.

John Maloney

Preview Endorsements

Pickwick is one of Wiltshire's most delightful and pretty villages and a pleasure to visit, even for non-residents. I do congratulate John Maloney and everyone who has researched the annals of its history to produce such a lovely book. Bravo!

Mrs Sarah Troughton, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire

What a terrific book. Painstakingly researched, but remaining both readable and informative, and accompanied with so many fascinating illustrations. It can only bring added pleasure to living here in Pickwick and might hopefully encourage other towns and villages to look more closely at their own environments and history.

Nick Mason, CBE, drummer, founder member of Pink Floyd



Pickwick Road: Looking towards the Hare & Hounds



No. 12 Pickwick: Thos. Bullock, Corsham, clock showing a pastoral scene



HARTHAM | PARK

NEW OWNERS – NEW VISION

FUTUREPROOFED FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



The Hodge Commercial Lending team was delighted to support real estate investor client, Lucent Halo Limited, providing a £5.1m investment to support with the acquisition of Hartham Park, an impressive Grade II listed mansion.

Hartham Park is a Georgian manor house built in 1795, located in Wiltshire just north of the town of Corsham. The former country house estate is set in 49.6 acres and has most recently been used as serviced office accommodation. There is approximately 68,000sq ft of accommodation in total, with 70 individual office units and seven private meeting/event spaces across the impressive mansion house, coach house, stables and modern office/reception building.

The exciting times ahead will consist of various investment and development phases with the first being to upgrade the office spaces, including kitchens and breakout areas. Research has begun for a high-tech state of the art conferencing facilities for up to 400 people with onsite hosting and facilities teams. This development will include a dedicated and uncontended 5GB fibre optic upload and download internet speeds.



The main house is being upgraded and weddings will be hosted from late May 2024. The Ceremonies room has been given a joyous make-over and will be licensed for marriages. The first Wedding Fayre took place in March which was well attended and supported by local wedding suppliers.

There will be heritage inspired upgrades/refurbishments to the main house including various function rooms such as the ballroom and library with the latter being used for a place to sit and relax. In addition, the Garden Cottage is being restored to its former glory and the Gate Cottage is presently undergoing restoration work with several additional updates planned for the very near future.

As part of the infrastructure an onsite ecological treatment plant will be developed for Hartham's waste. There will also be additional EV chargers installed plus improvements to accessways as well as physical building works to roofs, walls, etc.

Investment in conference and event spaces will see multiple linked event spaces with audience cameras and a 3m screen. There will also be a new board room in the Manor House which will include: a 98" inch screen and audience cameras, international teleconferencing, full climate control, top of the range digital whiteboarding, a soundproof and dedicated soundstage.

Not forgetting the importance of leisure facilities with plans to provide a swimming pool, outdoor tennis courts, and to protect and enhance the famous Stické tennis court.



Stické tennis was invented by the Royal Artillery in the 1870s as similar to racquets and providing good exercise without the heavy outlay incidental to the construction of a racquets court.

In 1904, the Stické Tennis Court was added to the grounds to the north-west of Hartham Park. Today there are only three courts playable throughout the world, with one at Hartham where there is an enthusiastic and active Stické Tennis Club, at Knightshayes in Devon and a further court that is presently used for badminton in Shimla La, Himachal Pradesh within the grounds of the then Viceroy of India's Summer Palace.



Food and refreshments will always be in need and the existing café (Sweetpea Kitchen) and restaurant space will be expanded both for the interior and exterior with extended opening times (see article in this edition of Spotlight about the Sweetpea Kitchen).

On behalf of all members of the Corsham Civic Society we wish that the future of Hartham Park estate will be hugely successful and enjoyed by all who will be associated with the business functions or just simply visiting to enjoy the surroundings and facilities and perhaps a morning brunch, lunch, or afternoon tea.

Larry St Croix



Woodchester Mansion

We started our 2024 programme with the most interesting story of Woodchester Mansion, situated in Gloucester. Our speaker, Liz Goddard, is a long-standing member of staff who cares for the building and ensures it does not fall into disrepair. That is the usual stance for any Trust maintaining a Grade I listed building, but this is a little different in that several families tried, without success, to build and hold the estate within their financial means.

Woodchester Mansion is known to have had many owners, but in 1564 it was held by one George Huntley who by 1610 had built a hunting lodge and created a deer park. But the expense of creating the deer park was, it seems, too much and he sold the estate.

In 1631 the family of Sir Robert Ducie bought the mansion and parklands with the intention of building a grand country house. Extensions and adaptations to the hunting lodge finally produced a formal building in 1750 named Spring Park, worthy of a visit by the Prince of Wales and George III. Other changes continued to be made, until in 1840 the 2nd Earl Ducie was advised that any further proposals for expansion and repairs were in fact, beyond his means.

The estate was sold again to a wealthy merchant, William Leigh. This gentleman had recently converted to Catholicism, and the architecture of the time was a Gothic revival. Anxious to put his mark on the house, he engaged Augustus Pugin to draw up plans to reflect this new fashion.

Unfortunately, Pugin became ill, and William turned to Charles Hansom (brother of the designer of the hansom cab). This did not work out either and, in 1857, William turned to the less experienced architect Benjamin Bucknell.

This young man turned his attention to the study of Gothic revival architecture, and Woodchester Mansion became his masterpiece. However, it was never completed.

In 1873 when William Leigh died, all work stopped and in 1938 the granddaughters of Leigh sold the estate. After several short-term attempts to utilise the space, the building was abandoned to the elements.

The house was eventually taken on by Stroud District Council, who has leased it to the Woodchester Mansion Trust. The visitor is shown an interesting example of an empty shell, but with all the internal structural finishings of vaulted pillars, archways, fireplaces in mid-air, all the makings of a fine house. The sad result of uncompleted dreams, but for us a fascinating insight into a magnificent building suspended in time.

The National Trust is now the owner/caretaker of a beautiful park and surrounding area, where one has the opportunity for walks and discovery around the lake and woodlands. One of the many gems of the British Isles, and well worth a visit. By Pat Whalley.



The Art of Interior Decoration

Adam Calkin is a Corsham resident with a particular artistic talent which I feel is worthy of sharing with the readers of the Spotlight magazine.

Adam has been a decorative artist for 40 years or more and was trained as a painter and decorator and became what is known as a specialist decorator inclusive of wood-graining, marbling, murals, and tromp l'oeil, etc.

Both Adam and his team have travelled the globe practicing these arts and in addition he designs wallpapers, fabrics and tiles for various companies including his own tile company.

Adam has recently acquired access to a studio space based at Willows/Gallery 56 on Corsham High Street and you would be welcomed to meet with Adam either by visiting the shop/studio or by appointment.

Current projects include re-painting 14 circa. 18th century armorial banners for English Heritage; a commission to design a carved and gilt rococo chimney piece for a client based near Bath; a house in Virginia U.S.A (decorative and flat painted); a villa in St Tropez (decorative and flat painted).

One of the ongoing long running projects is decorating many houses on a Cornish coastal estate (decorative and flat painted).

Contact details:

Tel: 07860 779489

Email: info@adamcalkin.com

Instagram: adamcalkin

Larry St Croix



Above: Armorial banner work (re-painting).

Left: Designing and painting a wall decoration for a bathroom.

Teaching in the Falkland Islands

On Friday March 22nd the assembled company of members and visitors were treated to a fascinating talk on 'Teaching in the Falkland Islands' by Wendy Reynolds, my former Deputy.

Wendy had taught with me in a rural primary school in Mid Devon and after my retirement in 2000, she acted as the Head Teacher until the appointment of my successor. In 2004 she spotted an advertisement by the Falkland Islands Government who required a teacher who would be able to travel around East & West Falkland often teaching just one pupil for two weeks because they lived in isolated areas.

If you look at the triptych of a scene in West Falkland, an example of 'Applique' which Wendy enjoys producing, you see the farmhouse, the family home of Matthew whom Wendy taught from the ages of 5 to 11 years old. Matthew later progressed to Stanley, the island's capital, for his secondary education then on to the UK for further education and university. Matthew's mother farms an area of 15,000 acres with 5,500 sheep which she manages on her own with help when it comes to shearing time.



Above: Before take-off!



Right: Triptych

Wendy thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of educating children in such isolated areas and after 12 years retired to live in Stanley, helping out as a supply teacher when necessary. Wendy now lives in East Devon but keeps in touch with a good number of her former pupils and their parents. Not only did we see the activities the children were doing each day but also photos of the social side of living on West Falkland.

To conclude her talk we were able to see photos of life in Stanley plus the flora and fauna of these fascinating islands in the South Atlantic 8,000 miles from the UK. Thank you, Wendy, for a fascinating talk.

Michael Rumsey

Great Western Banking Engines for Box Tunnel

When surveying for a new railway in the 19th century Surveyors, like Brunel, tried to find the flattest route possible. When finding a route for the Great Western's mainline between London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meads, Brunel found that between London and Swindon the line would be 1 in 660, virtually flat. In fact, it was called the 'billiard table' route for many years.

On leaving Swindon the line progressed through Wootton Bassett and then the Dauntsey incline at a 1 in 100 which took the line into the flatter lands bordering the River Avon. Once the line came through Corsham, 100 miles from Paddington, another obstacle appeared, Box Hill. It was necessary to build a tunnel 3,212 yards long connecting Corsham with Box on another incline of 1 in a 100. Once through Box, the line follows the Avon River to Bristol, but five more tunnels needed to be built before reaching Temple Meads.

For trains going from Corsham to Bath, the downhill route through the tunnel was no problem, but going in the other direction climbing through a tunnel that length on that incline did present a problem. This was solved by building 'banking engines' who would push the train, particularly freight trains, through the tunnel to Corsham station then return to Box on the other line.

Swindon Works under the direction of Daniel Gooch, built a set of banking engines, all broad gauge, which were stationed at Box and they even had names: 'Avalanche', 'Bitbon', 'Jago' and 'Plato.' Illustrations of the banking engines can be found below.



This is an artist's impression of Box station in 1848. In the background is the first engine shed, a stone-built structure, with one of the banking engines outside. The station, on the left was a temporary wooden building, the permanent stone building appeared in the 1840s.

Picture courtesy of the artist Sean Bolan, and the owner of the picture, John Froud, who kindly gave me so much information for the article.



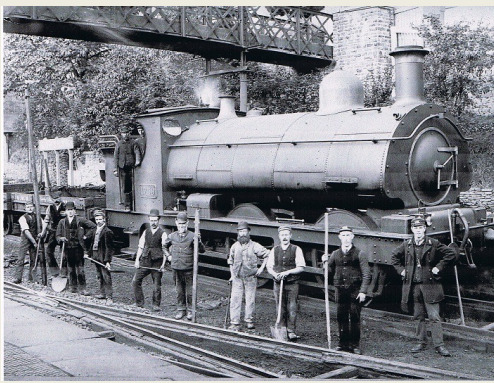
A wonderful picture showing Box station, the banking engine with crew and various platelayers and station staff. The photo we think was taken in 1880 because in 1884 the GWR built a footbridge for passengers to cross the railway lines safely.

Unfortunately, some years before, several passengers were killed crossing the line as they didn't know another train was approaching on its way to Bristol.

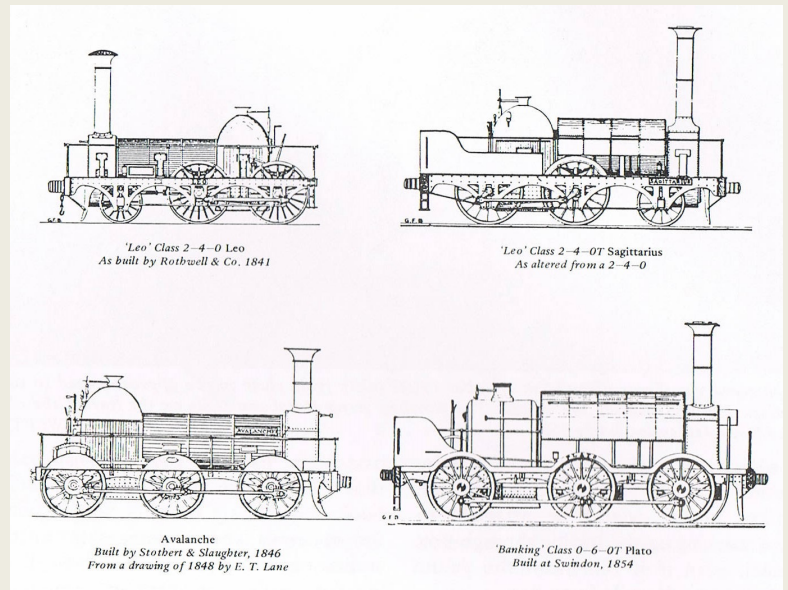
Once the standard gauge rail was laid between Bristol and London in 1876, the broad gauge engines disappeared, and standard gauge tanks took their place. The banking of freight trains through the long tunnel was most important, nobody wished to get stuck inside for very long. Once more powerful engines became available in the 1920s, banking tanks were no longer needed, and the former engine shed was demolished in the mid 1930s.

Freight trains still come through Corsham, mainly at night, long trains of container wagons or quarry stone hauled by Class 66 engines, very powerful indeed. The 1st comes through at 10pm with others at intervals through the night.

Michael Rumsey



A later banking engine which was also used for shunting goods traffic at Corsham and Box station. The engine was built at Swindon Works as a saddle tank in November 1892, converted to a pannier tank in 1911 and scrapped in 1946. Various staff gathered for this photo in 1893.



This illustration shows the four classes of broad gauge banking engines Swindon Works built for use on the Box & Sapperton inclines. Illustration courtesy of John Froud.



The 2nd engine shed, which replaced the original stone building. It was demolished in the 1930s



Our night-time freight trains through Corsham are now hauled by these powerful Class 66 diesel electric engines. Freight trains between 1,000 and 2,000 tons regularly come through Corsham. Photo taken in Bradford on Avon and courtesy of Matt Anderson.

Culinary Delights at Hartham Park



It is exciting to note that Hartham Park has recently acquired new owners and is planning a new future. An integral part of the future is the services and provisions offered by a local family catering business known as Sweetpea Kitchen.

I am most fortunate to have had several opportunities to sample the delightful food that is on offer within the surroundings of a historic building, a comfortable and relaxed environment. My personal favourite is the brunch (Full English) which I particularly enjoy when I invite friends to visit the Sweetpea Kitchen. If it is the first visit for a friend, I often include a walkabout around the grounds and a visit to the Stické tennis court.

So, let's meet the owners/family of the Sweetpea Kitchen:

Clive Jackson-Wilding, father of the family and one of the directors has always had a passion for cooking and from an early age he would spend most of his time baking. As a trained patisserie chef Clive loves the delicate art and precision of desserts. When not in the kitchen Clive loves gardening, during the summer months you'll catch him watering the plants or wandering around and observing what nature has to offer.

Helen Jackson-Wilding, mother of the family and a director, is the sales and figures expert which stems from her experience as a medical rep and of course when Clive and their son Ed spend anything Helen's first question is 'How much did it cost?' Outside of the business responsibilities Helen likes relaxing at home with a good chic-flick or out and about with Lilly the dog.

Ed Jackson-Wilding, the youngest member of the family, joined the team aged 13 when his mother and father agreed that it was time for Ed to earn some money. Initially working as a pots and pans washer, Ed eventually rose to become one of the directors. Away from work Ed enjoys the thrilling sport of surfing on the Cornish coast with a dream to one day live in Cornwall.

Last but not least, there is a very important member of the family who is Lilly the golden Labrador with whom the family have experienced many happy and fun memories that have put smiles on faces. You might even be lucky and find Lilly wandering about Hartham Park and it is worth mentioning dogs are welcome.



Sweetpea Kitchen has a relatively simple vision of 'Delivering delicious handmade food to be enjoyed in the present and future.' To enable this, they ensure all their meat, eggs and milk are free-range and locally sourced including the tea and coffee.

As the Jackson-Wilding family developed so did the company, which was founded in 2003, with both daughter Abi and son Ed earning their pocket money by washing up or helping at events. Even grandparents Mac and Faye were involved in the process, helping to drop off business lunches pretty much every day (when they weren't touring Europe with their caravan).

The business started off working from home and then in 2012 the first ever kitchen unit was created on Bowden Hill, Lacock. Weddings, school lunches and business meetings were all catered for.

During this period there were many highlights including being on the banks of the River Thames catering for an international kayaking festival or making food to be included in TV shows such as, Agatha Raisin.

In 2018 the big leap was taken with a move to Hartham Park. Originally catering solely for the members on site, in 2021 it was decided to open the café to all. As we move into spring and summer be sure to look out for the following:

Afternoon Teas: With spring fast approaching afternoon teas will be coming back more information to follow.

Desserts: Serving desserts and ice cream in the café to enjoy post meal.

Evenings: The potential of hosting dining evenings looms in the café once a month. Each will be a theme and held on either a Friday or Saturday evening. For example, a pie evening. Booking would be essential for these.

Courtyard Area: With summer around the corner the outside courtyard area will be getting some improvements which could include a complete overhaul making it a much more welcoming and attractive area to sit outside – a nice thought for a sunny day!

Weekly Specials: The specials board will be making a comeback with different dishes.

Weddings: The Sweetpea Kitchen is excited to be partnering with Hartham Park to transform the grounds into an amazing wedding venue.

You can keep up to date on the future of the Sweetpea Kitchen by following them on Instagram @sweetpea_catering or head to their website: www.sweetpeacatering.co.uk.

Don't hesitate to indulge in the experience that awaits you.

Larry St Croix

Box Store Opening

Box has again got a mini superstore which opened on Wednesday, January 10th to much acclaim. The original building, which was extended much later on, was opened in 1925 by the Bath Co-operative Society and remained open until it was closed and the building taken over by McColls. Two years ago the shop closed again until the inside was completely stripped and brought up to standard by its new owner Sugeshan Jegasothy.

The Chair of Box Parish Council, Tim Walton, performed the opening by cutting a green ribbon and everybody passed through the doors to see how things look now. All new shelving with many popular lines were inspected by the crowd of visitors. We wish Sugeshan good luck with his venture and hope the people of Box use it again.

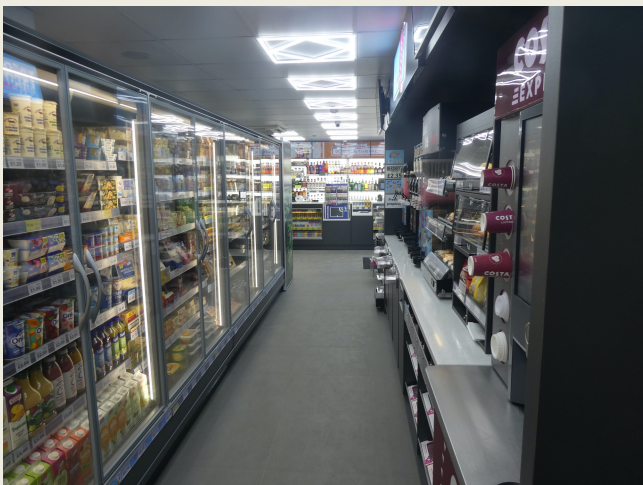
Michael Rumsey



Grand Opening: Sugeshan and his wife with the Chairman of Box Parish Council.



Ribbon Cutting: Councillor Tim Walton opens the mini superstore.

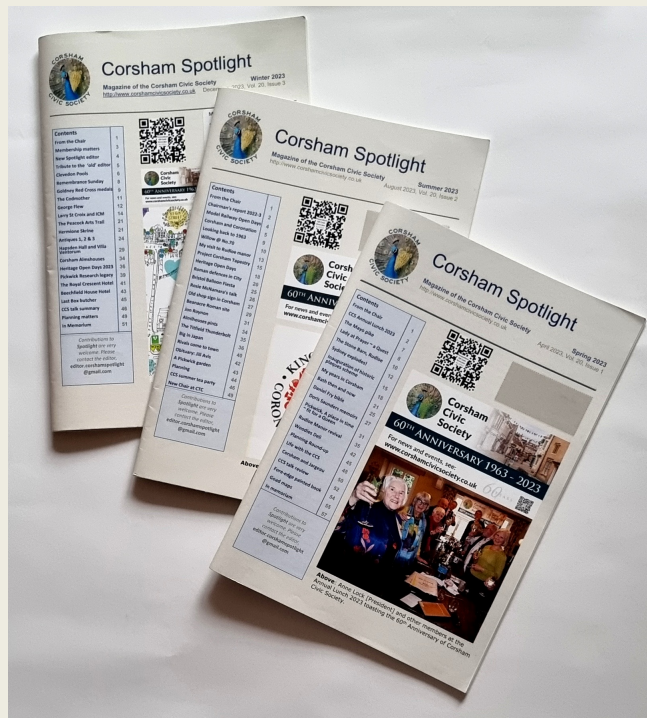


Inside: First look inside the shop.



New Owner: Sugeshan behind the counter.

Society's 60th Anniversary Retrospective



2023 was the 60th anniversary of Corsham Civic Society which was celebrated in the bumper Spring, Summer and Autumn issues (above).

The 60th anniversary annual lunch featured in the Spring issue, as well as a preview of the soon to be published book, *Pickwick, A place in time* (for which Queen Camilla sent a letter of appreciation). Also, there were articles about the inauguration of the CCS historic plaques scheme and the Corsham Tapestry project visit to Tewkesbury.

The Summer issue covered the Chairman's AGM report, Corsham's coronation celebrations, a look back to 1963 (when CCS was founded) and the important Roman discoveries at Beanacre.

The Winter issue covered Heritage Open Days events in and around Corsham, the Peacock Arts Trail, the Corsham Almshouses repairs, Hapsden Hall and the Villa Ventorum and two restaurant reviews. All in all, there was considerable variety in coverage throughout the year.

John Maloney

In Memoriam

Brian Gibbs

It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Brian Gibbs in February. We extend our condolences to Margaret and the family.

Brian had been a long-standing member of the Society and had helped us considerably when we first thought of bringing the Society into the computer age, by starting a website and helping us with the Spotlight magazine.

His family though were his most important consideration together with Margaret his wife, they had two children and four granddaughters, and in more recent years, they were thrilled to become great grandparents to another two children, all of which must have kept them busy.

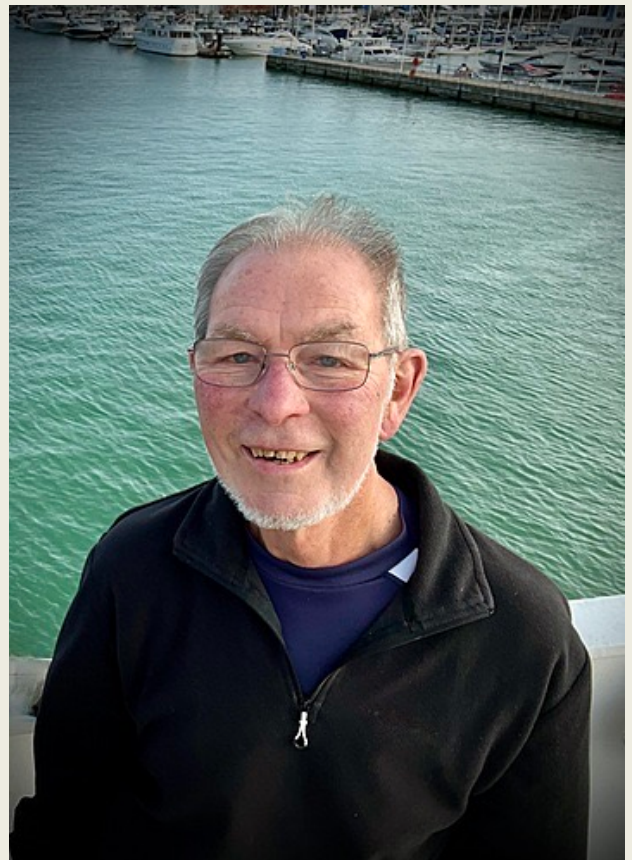
Brian spent most of his career as an Electronics Engineer with the MOD but when time allowed for his many other interests including walking, running, geocaching, potholing and caving, homebrewing, photography and astronomy. Brian, it seems, had much to do.

He also loved being in contact with people far and wide through the 'radio ham' community. A pastime which must give one great insight into how other people in the world community live. Was this the forerunner to Facebook I wonder?

We shall miss this quiet and gentle man.

Pat Whalley

Donations in memory of Brian to Wiltshire Air Ambulance and The Henry Allen Trust can be made online at: www.ajbfunerals.co.uk.



Paul Thomas

Box loses a good friend.

On Tuesday, April 2nd, 2024, the people in Box were much saddened by the passing of a very supportive and active member of the community in the form of Rear Admiral Paul Thomas CB.

Paul, with his wife Ros, had lived in the village for a number of years following his retirement from the Royal Navy in 1998. In his 35 years in the Royal Navy Paul had seen many changes and his time in submarines was followed by posts which were concerned with standards and safety in nuclear engineering.

Once retired Paul became Chairman of the RSSB, the Rail Safety & Standards Board, in 2008. His previous experience stood him good stead for this role. One day he had a great thrill of riding in the cab of a high-speed train between Paddington and Cardiff and he noted in the Severn Tunnel four blue aspect signals which inform the train driver he has reached the base of the tunnel after which the line rises steeply back to the surface. On UK railways you have red, green, orange and yellow signal lights but these four are the only blue ones on the whole rail network.

Paul listed ballooning, cycling and walking among his interests, but he was also a great enthusiast of railways both full size and model size. Both of us shared a great interest in both areas of railways and we swapped various rail magazines each month. On January 20th this year Paul, with two friends from Box, visited my model railway layout and the pure joy of this experience is shown in the accompanying photograph.

In the Box community Paul was managing editor of the monthly Parish Magazine, Chairman of the Selwyn Hall Committee, an active member of the Gentlemen's Interest Group (G.I.G.) and hard-working member of St. Christopher's Parish Church in Ditteridge.

Personally, I shall miss Paul very much, we spent many happy hours chatting about village and railway news and many other items of interest. Paul gave much to the village of Box and the village will remember him kindly.

Michael Rumsey

Donations in memory of Paul to Dorothy House Hospice Care, Winsley, and The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity can be made online at:
www.ajbfunerals.co.uk



Planning Round-up

Land North of Bath Road

Many Pickwick residents received a flyer from a company called Origin3 regarding a proposal to build housing on the site 'Land North of Bath Road, Corsham' – the infamous 'Gladman Field' opposite the Catholic Church.

Cath and I visited the recent public consultation display in the Springfield Centre on Monday, 25th March 25. It was organised by Origin3, a planning and urban design group, not a developer. While the previous applicant's permission lapsed over issues relating to the Bath Stone mine below the site, Origin3 says new, unrelated developers have a "sustainable solution" to prevent damage to the operation. Detailed planning permission was granted for the redevelopment of the land, which sits near the junction with Bradford Road, seven years ago.

This would include 150 new homes alongside public open space, a children's play area, and a new roundabout on the A4. This followed a lengthy planning row between Wiltshire Council and former applicants Gladman Developments Ltd. But residents remain concerned about the impact of a housing development on the mine, as well as increased traffic and the loss of green space in the area.

Tony Clark, of The Pickwick Association, says the group will need to see the plans before commenting but added that they will "almost certainly" oppose the development. He added: "There's no need for building on this particular site, there's a lot of opposition to it." These latest plans are currently being finalised ahead of a potential planning application this spring.

It's important to note that NO PLANNING APPLICATION has yet been made – this is merely a box ticking exercise on behalf of a potential developer to satisfy Wiltshire Council that, in the event that they eventually make a formal planning application, there has been appropriate 'community involvement'.

It is worth noting that the the emerging 'Local Plan for Corsham' precludes development here on this site and designates new sites for housing on the other side of the town. When I pointed this out to the representative of Origin3 he responded they thought this was a better site!

Manor Barn, Pickwick

When I raised the lack of progress on this site and other concerns in February with Helen Belcher (the newish Chair of the town council and Lib Dem Wiltshire Councillor for Corsham Pickwick) about this site, she responded that she'd had a conversation with the enforcement officer who had visited the site to discuss a couple of potential breaches.

The conclusion was that there was one technical breach over tree work but that this was not practically enforceable. The size of the building conforms with the application, but seems exaggerated at the moment because (a) winter means little leaf cover and (b) the roof isn't finished and the bright colours of the tarpaulin really stand out. She also raised an issue with the new gate blocking the right of way which is being investigated.

She also expressed her view over the proposed zinc roof which hasn't been well received by local people, but Helen hasn't heard anything since. She noted that the owner is aware of the growing strength of feeling in the neighbourhood.

13 High Street, Corsham

Planning permission has been granted for the former Lloyds Bank site at No. 13 High Street to be redeveloped into a 'boutique' hotel with its own restaurant and bar. The Grade II listed building dates to the early 18th century. Over the last 2+ years, I have been in contact with Andrew Hall (who owns the Martingate Centre) and it is a scheme supported in principle and featured in various issues of Spotlight (including a guided tour by Hall of a CCS group).

Andrew told me recently that there were quite a few planning conditions and that he would use heat pumps (rather than fossil fuels) as he wants to demonstrate how listed buildings can survive the NetZero age. A single-story kitchen extension will be added to the rear of the south-west wing of the building. The application states that the hotel will provide new high-quality visitor accommodation in Corsham and will provide job and training opportunities for residents.

It would be very good to see this building back after the 7 years since the former bank closed.

63 Pickwick Road, Corsham

The owner of 63 Pickwick Road, claims the council has refused to engage in a conversation after he was issued with an enforcement notice in February 2023 regarding the alterations made to his property. The alterations were made without planning permission and a retrospective application was rejected.

Mr Stephenson had previously been granted planning permission in 2009 for works including an extension and the replacement of the exterior render of the house. Although he finished the extension at the time, the rendering of the original home was delayed. For energy efficiency and to combat existing damp issues in the home, the front of the building was fitted with insulation prior to being rendered.

According to Wiltshire Council, the "additional layer means that the walls project further than the eaves of the roof and the coping stones on the verges."

The council added: "As a result of the vivid colouring, proportion and detailing, the dwelling stands out in the street scene and significantly harms the heritage assets and their setting by detracting from the dominant vernacular form."

Mr Stephenson applied for retrospective planning permission, but this was refused because the cladding was considered to be "highly unsympathetic" and harmful to the Corsham Conservation Area.

The owner decided to appeal both the refusal and the council's enforcement notice, but on 7th February, the Planning Inspectorate dismissed the appeals and ruled that the cladding should be removed within six months, as they had already considered the issues raised by the owner.

Solar Farms

The increased number of planning applications for Solar farms in Wiltshire, on former greenfield farming sites, has become a big issue in Wiltshire. The most notable cause celebre is the proposed Lime Down Solar Park (between Malmesbury and Sherston): proposals are for a huge 2,000-acre site on what is currently farmland.

If given the go-ahead, campaigners say it will be one of the biggest solar farms in Europe and will destroy their communities. Those behind the development say it would generate enough energy to power for 115,000 homes. Another one causing dismay is that proposed at Stanton Fitzwarren on the edge of Swindon. It appears that the Wiltshire countryside is being targeted for solar farms.

Stonehenge Tunnel

It was reported on 10th April, the National Highways (formerly the Highways Agency) has closed a section of the A360 in Wiltshire for three months for enabling power cables for the A303 Stonehenge tunnel project to be installed. The project needs an electricity supply for the tunnel construction and its operation afterwards. Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), working on behalf of National Highways, started work last week.

A section of the A360 has been closed to the south of the A303 between Longbarrow roundabout and The Avenue roundabout until mid-July this year. A revised application for the A303 Stonehenge Scheme was submitted by National Highways in 2022. The Secretary of State for the Department of Transport granted a Development Consent Order for the scheme on 14th July 2023.

John Maloney

With acknowledgments to the Pickwick Association and the Wiltshire Gazette & Herald.

Did You Know?

Did you know that North Wiltshire has its own Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra, founded in 1966, currently has 61 players led by Sara Stagg and conducted by Alex Arkwright. In their last concert held in St. Andrew's Parish Church, Chippenham, they performed a number of lovely pieces which included Saint-Saëns' Danse Macabre and they concluded the concert with his Organ Symphony, which for me was a great thrill.

Their next concert will be on Saturday, June 15th at 7.30pm when the programme will include works by Sibelius and Grieg. Further details can be found at their website: www.nwso.org.uk and tickets will be available from the Neeld Community Arts Centre, High Street, Chippenham. I'm very much looking forward to the June concert and at least the light evenings will be with us!

Michael Rumsey

Invitations

Our Annual Garden Party

For members and their partners, the Society's annual garden party will take place at the invitation of the Trustees of the Almshouses, on Saturday 17th August 2024 between 2.30p – 4.30pm. We do hope the weather will be kind to us, this is such a lovely setting in which to spend an afternoon to meet up with friends and make new ones!

In the unlikely event of rain, the venue will be moved to the Methodist Church Hall at Box. Same time, different venue. We have been welcomed there before and will be able to have an equally enjoyable afternoon.

The Committee would be grateful if you could donate cakes or offer of help on the day. Please contact Cath Maloney, our secretary, who would be delighted to receive your call.

Pat Whalley

Open House

You are warmly invited to join me at my home, 91, Tellcroft Close, Corsham, for afternoon tea and a wander around the garden. Keep free Saturday afternoon, June 15th, starting at 2.30pm until 5pm.

Donations of cakes etc and help would be much appreciated. Please give me a ring on 01249 715741 and tell me if you're hoping to attend. Let's hope the weather remains good for that day. Many thanks.

Michael Rumsey

Membership Matters

Thank you to all those members who pay their subscriptions yearly. By the beginning of March all subs were paid, either by cheque or by bank transfer, which is something new for us and much appreciated.

Thank you again for helping me and the treasurer keep our records straight.

Michael Rumsey – Membership Secretary

CORSHAM CIVIC SOCIETY TALKS 2024

All meetings are at the Pound Arts Centre (T: 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.

- 10th May **AGM** followed by a social gathering at Corsham Town Hall (7:15pm)
- 28th June David Dawson, Director, Wiltshire Museum
 The Making of the Kingdom Wessex
- 26th July Janet Battersby, Trustee
 The Lady Margaret Hungerford Almshouses
- 17th Aug **Garden Party** at the Almshouses (2:30pm-4:30pm)
 If wet event will be moved to Box Methodist Church (same time)
- 27th Sept Peter Davenport, The Bathford Society
 Batheaston By-pass
- 25th Oct Rosie McNamara, Author
 Boxfields
- 29th Nov John Tucker, Garden Consultant
 Giverny, A Garden Through the Eyes of Claude Monet

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