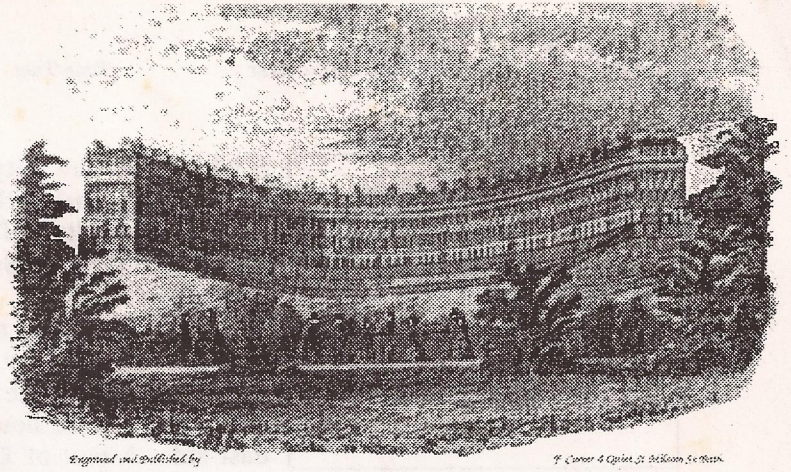


The Royal Crescent Society Newsletter



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Issue 10

December 1988

Our Chairman Reports

by Air Chief Marshal
Sir John Barraclough

It has been a busy three months since our last newsletter and these notes cover some of the more immediate matters that have occupied your committee.

Hotel plan rejected

The West Bromwich-based Pember-ton Hotels' application to convert Nos 21/22 into a hotel was rejected by the Council. There was an excellent response from residents and others, including our MP, Ward Councillors, St James's and Green Park Associations and, most valuably, The Bath Preservation Trust and the Bath Society. If it goes to appeal, another major effort will be called for. We have kept an eye on other applications without needing to react.

New Federation ?

We have been in touch with our national and local elected representatives, with the City and County Councils, and with kindred groups and organisations. A federation of Residents' Associations has been mooted. Your committee is in favour subject only to restraining any bureaucratic growth and agreement about the aims. In the face of perverse rulings from the Secretary of State, Nicholas Ridley, there is every reason to band together in any

way that may be helpful in the future.

Law and order

Our community policeman PC 500 Mr Jefferies has been to see me and is keen to get to know residents. The instructive Home Office pamphlet on crime prevention is now available to anyone who gets in touch with PC Jefferies (or the Duty Officer) on Bath 444343.

Traffic and lawn matters

Now that the County Council has 'sealed' the coach prohibition order I have written to Captain Francis Burne to thank him and his committee for the successful outcome of their invaluable work.

Regrettably we did not get the promised consultation on the Festival Opening or Sport Goofy events. We have remonstrated (and provoked some corrective action) and will be looking for greater rectitude from the organisers next year.

Railing Repairs

We have repaired the railings around the eastern gate and have put similar work in hand for the western one, where the damage is worse than it looks. There is no doubt that the main culprits are the young people in No 26 who clamber over the railings at that point. But we have had an excellent response from Mrs Way, the overseer of that property, and I am am fairly confident that we can contain this problem in the future.

The railings at the eastern extremity have been renovated and the City Council has responded to our representations with similar work shortly

to be put in hand at the western end.

Poor pavements

The Council has also met our requests about paving stones and first aid repairs have eliminated the worst of the hazards. We are pondering the long-term solution.

Charitable Events

Your committee has taken a first, and favourable, look at the possibility of lending the lawn for one or two deserving causes next summer. I will report further at our AGM.

Good order

I would like to draw attention to the admirable work of Mr Brian Lewis of the City Cleansing Department who looks after the Crescent and adjacent areas. It must be a lonely job which he does admirably in all weathers: so please give him a greeting when next you see him at work on our behalf.

Newsletter

Thanks go to our editor, Dr Monica Baly, for keeping the frequency of the Newsletter on target, and especial mention must be made of the great help we are getting from Mr John Walker of No 10 in its layout,

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The Building of the Royal Crescent

by Monica Baly

The site was acquired under an indenture dated 20 December 1766 whereby Sir Benet Garrard, subject to a yearly rent of £220, conveyed to John Wood and Thomas Brock of Chester 19 acres of meadow or pasture ground in the parish of Walcot. This land was called the Hayes Furlong and Hayes Lower Furlong bounded on the north by the road from Walcot to Weston, on the west by the Town Common and on the south by a line drawn in range with the fronts of the houses in Brock Street. Wood agreed to build within 10 years 'good stone messuages or houses and to construct streets in connection therewith.'

No 1 was leased to Thomas Brock (Wood's trustee) and built in 1769 as a model. Several sub-leases were then granted by Wood and Brock to building tradesmen. There were clauses to ensure that the standard of building was high and that the front elevation was to Wood's design and 'Shall not after the same is built and finished at any time or times afterward be ever altered or varied.'

The builders in turn paid Wood a ground rent and they then put up and decorated the house behind the facade to their own design or they entered into an agreement with a client. The agreement for No 14 demonstrates how this was done and why there are so many variations on a theme:

An agreement between Sam

Kirkham of the City of Bath Somerset and the Hon Charles Hamilton of Painshill in the County of Surrey, 21 June 1773.

'All that messuage now erecting and building by Kirkham with gardens situate next but one to the centre house on the east side. A rent of £180 to be paid quarterly with a lease of 7 years to be extended to 99 years.'

The tenant agrees 'to keep the roof covering, the lead pipes and main walls together in good repair, to ensure that the chimneys carry smoke, soft water is to be conveyed inside the house into a proper apartment and into a proper lead cistern to receive the same as a reservoir and will keep the drains and sewer in a good state to prevent any nuisance or offensive smells.'

The builder (Kirkham) agrees at his cost 'to make and perfectly finish in a masterly and workmanlike manner the several articles, matters and things specified:

The ceilings in the Great Parlour to be ornamented, a glass door to be made leading to the garden and the Necessary. The closets in the Great Parlour to be removed. Stair door to be made, architraves to be ordered, mouldings to be carved. The ceiling to be ornamented, the mouldings and cornice to be deepened, partition to be removed.

There is to be a proper walk of 10 feet to be built in the north end of the garden and a seat with a column centre(illeg.) The garden to be properly levelled. A proper Necessary House in the garden with a leaden cistern on the top of it to hold at least a hogshead of water and the whole Necessary to be made in the nature of a water closet and the well thereof to be very deep. Also a Necessary under it for servants

and a large sink trap to them and carried into the main sewer well drained with ashlar stone laid in mortar...'

Locks are to be put on all doors, fastenings on windows, shutters, hooks etc., also iron bars on the Garrett windows. Knockers on the front door, scrapers in proper places, a lamp and iron. Handsome Bath grates in all the best rooms (except the dining room to be supplied by Hamilton.)

Kirkham is to fit up the kitchen in the proper manner with the best fire grate, stew holes, copper racks, dressers and shelves, an iron bar on the outside windows and scullery in like manner,

Housekeeper's room to be completed with dressers, shelves, drawers etc. Servant's hall to be partitioned off with ladders and shelves. All lead troughs and Dutch tiles shall be put up at the expense of Charles Hamilton.

Kirkham is to sink a proper well and fix it to a lead pump and to enclose the space under the footway leading to the street door. He is to keep the water out of the vaults and the wine cellar.

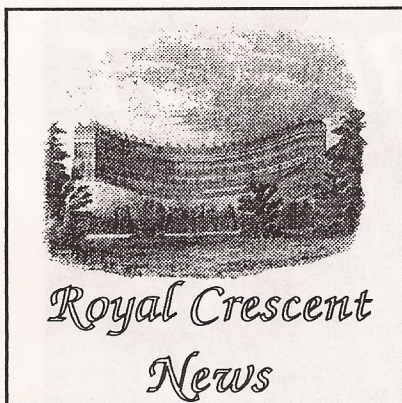
The house is to be painted in the best white paint, the doors dark brown and the best materials are to be used. ♦

☛ continued from Page 1

printing and reproduction. We are indeed grateful to them both.

Christmas thanks

There should be about twenty of us at the Bath and County Club for our Society's Christmas Dinner, which we hope will prove popular and become an annual fixture. For those who won't be there I take this opportunity of thanking you for your support in 1988 and, in looking forward to its continuance in 1989, send best wishes from the committee to all our members for Christmas and the New Year. ♦



PRIZE BASEMENTS. Result of the 1988 competition for the best basement garden was:

1st Mr and Mrs Wilks, No 20.

2nd Mr and Mrs Richards and family, No 4.

3rd Mr Le Corre, No 24.

Highly commended: Mr Thornton, No 3.

The judges commented that the standard of the gardens was very high.

HOTEL WORK. The Manager of the Royal Crescent Hotel, Mr M. J. Cavilla, extends his apologies for any inconvenience caused by the work entailed in strengthening the vaults which run under the road in front of the hotel.

NEW ROOF. The synthetic roof at No 23 that was the subject of controversy some years ago is being replaced.

CLEAR SKYLINE. Thanks to efforts of the Society the skyline of the Crescent looks much clearer than it did some ten years ago. Nevertheless, there are still one or two unsightly aerials and residents may not know that roof space aerials are generally more effective, safer in storms and comparatively cheap.

Advice on the subject can be obtained from Mr Colmer, Top Street, Farrington Gurney (Telephone: 0761-52108), who has supplied aerials to a number of houses in the Crescent.

It is the policy of the Bath Preservation Society and the Bath Environmental Services (Policy and Conservation Section) that Schedule 1 buildings should not

be defaced by unsightly aerials or hanging wires. The same principle will apply to the coming satellite television and the positioning of dish aerials on the top of scheduled buildings.

HOUSE REPAIRS. The Edward James Foundation Trust acting through local representatives, Reid Lee, have now nearly completed the planned maintenance programme on the East and South elevations of No 30. In particular, this entails the replacement of many volutes which had either fallen or been removed earlier as dangerous, together with balusters and general repairs to the stone work.

The Foundation, which is a charitable Trust, is based at West Dean in Chichester, West Sussex where the former Mansion House was, in 1971, converted to a residential college for use as an advanced educational centre for conferences and the conservation of arts and crafts. Mr Edward James, who died in 1984, conveyed the Estate, amounting to 6,000 acres together with No 29 and No 30, to the Trust in 1964. (With acknowledgement to Mr Geoffrey Lee.)

TRUST REPORT. The latest report of the Bath Preservation Trust has much of interest to the residents of the Royal Crescent, particularly about the correct ratios for replacing glazing bars in Georgian windows. The Trust offers counsel and grants for restoration and is a fund of information on Georgian Bath. All lovers of Bath should read the report. The subscription to the Trust is only £4 a year.

ACTING SUCCESS. Congratulations to Mr Bill Wallis for his much acclaimed performance as Dr Ranke in Ibsen's A Doll's House at London's Riverside Theatre. We often enjoy seeing Bill on our television screens and spotting one of his many character voices on the radio. He is currently appearing as Cardinal Richelieu in The Three Muske-

teers at the Bristol Old Vic and we wish him every success.

COACH BAN. In October Avon Council agreed that the temporary ban on coaches in the Royal Crescent should be made permanent. They also agreed that talks should be held between Avon and the City Council about extending the ban to other areas. The permanent ban represents a triumph for the Society and its Traffic Committee, which spent many hours and much toil, preparing its evidence.

WELCOME. We welcome Mr and Mrs D. Bourdon-Smith to the refurbished coach house at the back of No 19.

OBITUARY. We are sorry to report the death of Mrs J. Petersson Helmer who lived at No 14 for a number of years. Mrs Petersson Helmer was a supporter of the Society and took an active interest in its activities.

Committee's House Responsibilities

It was decided at a committee meeting to allocate certain houses to individual committee members and give them responsibility for ensuring that the residents in those houses know of the activities of the Society. If there are any changes in your house, could you let your member know. We like to be able to welcome new residents.

Sir John Barraclough (Chairman, No 28) is responsible for Nos 1, 15 and 16.

Michael Daw (Vice-Chairman, No 10): Nos 9, 17, 20 and 26.

Annabel Trechmann (Secretary, No 5): Nos 4, 5, 6 and 22.

Rob Weston (Treasurer, No 5): Nos 2 and 3.

Monica Baly (No 19): Nos 19 and 24.

Dulcie Morrell (No 19): No 12.

Barbara Walker (No 10): Nos 10 and 11.

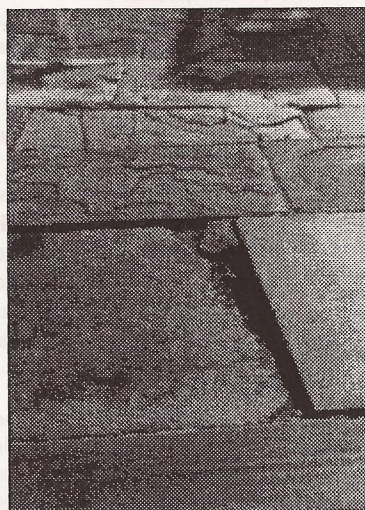
Bill Wallis (No 28): Nos 18, 27 and 28.

Gillian Eschele (No 29): Nos 7, 8, 13, 14, 21, 23, 25, 29, and 30, and keeping the list up-to-date.



Above, a repair outside No 1 - three uneven pieces of paving have been laid to replace one.

The condition of the paving stones in the Crescent is causing concern. The top picture shows the pavement outside No 4: a vista of uneven slabs, temporary repairs and broken paving. It will be a danger this winter, particularly to the elderly. Above, Rose Wallis provides scale to a severe drop in levels outside No 13. These photographs were taken after the Council carried out its repairs to what it considered the worst damage to the pavements.



Above, broken and disintegrating paving stones outside No 16. Right, the badly mortared setting of the PSV signpost at the western end of the Crescent. Is it temporary ?



**Photographs
by
Karen Wallis**

Who knows Harrison?

by John Walker

During the summer months there always seems to be a gaggle, and sometimes a giggle, of tourists standing outside the entrance to No 10, gazing at the plaque above the front door and asking the same question in a variety of accents:



'Who was Frederic Harrison?'

The plaque provides no answer, other than indicating that whoever he was, he lived a long time. Frederic Harrison died at No 10 on January 14, 1923 in his 92nd year, active to the last, vigorous, clear-minded and noted for his remarkable memory and wide-ranging knowledge.

A lawyer, journalist, literary critic, historian, novelist, playwright, teacher, religious activist and positivist, Frederic Harrison was an energetic and erudite Victorian, an influential figure in the life of his age.

Bath honoured him by making him a freeman of the city. On his 90th birthday, in his library at No 10, he was presented with a letter of congratulation signed by the Prime Minister and 89 other leading men of the day.

But his reputation did not long survive his death. Posterity consigned him unceremoniously to the rubbish-dump of history. It is doubtful if anyone, or anything, could now revive his fame. If he is remembered, it is as a footnote to the career of Matthew Arnold, who attacked his views in *Culture and Anarchy*.

Yet he influenced Beatrice Webb and the Fabians, and worked for the emergence of a third party, devoted to the interests of the working class-

es to break the cosy mould of British politics. He inspired the radical politics of the Fortnightly Review, one of the leading journals of his day, and gave his fullest support to the early struggles of trades unions.

His books were widely read, and admired for their style as well as their content. In 1925 Macmillan published two collections of his essays in its Miscellany series aimed at a popular audience - 'books selected for their intrinsic merit and importance', as the publisher's blurb put it.

My Miscellany edition of his *The Choice of Books* reveals that its essays were first published in 1886, reprinted the same year, and another ten times in the intervening 39 years.

Two years after his death there were at least 20 of his books in print, ranging from a four volume collection of essays - 'We cannot imagine any one reading Mr Harrison's essays without feeling himself braced and enlightened', said the *Westminster Gazette* - to biographies of Cromwell, William the Silent and Ruskin, and a reprint of his Rede Lecture at Cambridge University on Byzantine history.

Not one of Harrison's books is available now; nor do they seem to turn up in second-hand bookshops. I've looked for years without ever finding a copy of what was said to be his masterpiece, *Theopano: the Crusade of the Tenth Century*, a historical novel published in 1904.

Harrison settled in Bath as an old man, attracted by its 18th century associations, and arriving at No 10 in 1912, when he was 81. By then, rather like his friend George Saintsbury, the Royal Crescent's other long-lived and prolific literary critic who moved into rooms at No 1A in 1915, he was one of the last of that moribund species, the man of letters.

But he had long resisted becoming merely a contributor to the numerous bulky magazines of his day. His more active life was spent in London, where he was born in the heart

of City, the eldest son of a merchant who was rich enough to have as his country house Sutton Place, famous in more recent years as the home of that mean and cantankerous multimillionaire Paul Getty.

He lived with his parents until, at the age of 39, he married his cousin, Ethel, who died four years after their move to Bath. They had a daughter and four sons, the youngest of whom was to die in the First World War; it was an conflict which Harrison had foreseen, writing warnings of the dangers of German imperialism. Another son, Austin, wrote a memoir of his father which was published in 1926.

Frederic was a clever child, near the top of his class at school and winning a scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, where he spent seven years, the last two as a fellow of the college. For the next 15 years he was a barrister with, as he put it, 'little zest and no ambition'.

At university, Harrison had been converted to the doctrines of the controversial French philosopher Auguste Comte. Comte's positivism, with its reverence for humanity rather than worship of a deity, he regarded as a religion, and its social attitudes had the same galvanizing effect on the young of the 1860s as Herbert Marcuse's philosophy did on protesting students a hundred years later.

Harrison remained faithful to Comte's beliefs throughout his life, and, amid much acrimony, led a splinter group that broke from the main body of English positivists, founding in 1890 *The Positivist Review*, which expired soon after he did.

A man of great energy, Harrison worked as an examiner and, later, as a professor at the Council of Legal Education, served on Royal Commissions and was an alderman of the first London county council. He tried, unsuccessfully, to become an MP in 1886, as a supporter of Home Rule.

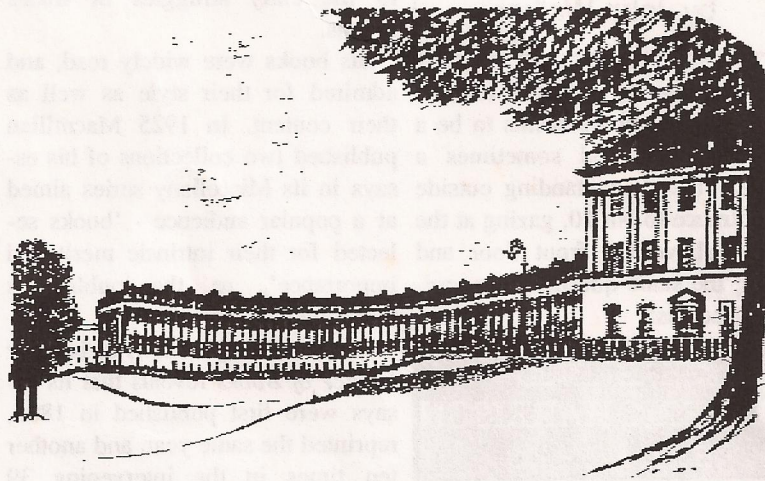
He read much and travelled widely, becoming a special correspondent for *The Times* in France in

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1877. By all accounts an inspiring teacher at the Working Men's College in London, he wrote and published unceasingly, editing *The New Calendar of Great Men*, a biographical encyclopedia of positivism, and even turning his hand to blank verse in a play entitled *Nicephorus, a tragedy*.

Yet, for his all achievements and prominence, his sense and sanity, he survives only as a forgotten name above the door of the house where he spent the last 11 years of his life. It isn't much of a memorial; but, at least, it is something, in the city and the Crescent that he came to love so well. ♦

The Royal Crescent Society



We Welcome Your Help

The Editor welcomes letters from residents, articles on aspects of life in the Royal Crescent, its pleasures and inconveniences and any information about original leases or past ownership of houses.

This autumn the editor started researching the City archives and the Reference Library for historical evidence about the Crescent. All help would be gratefully received.

Restoration

Articles on aspects of restoration would also be welcomed, as would maintenance advice, draughtproofing, and any other facet of living in the Royal Crescent. We hope to make the newsletter an important means of communication to residents.

By its very nature the Crescent attracts many problems, these can only be tackled if we know the wishes of residents, but of course, we can only speak for members.

All contributions to, or comments on, the newsletter should be addressed to: The Editor, Dr Monica E Baly, 19 Royal Crescent (Telephone: Bath 24736).

Published by the Royal Crescent Society.

The Royal Crescent Society was formed in 1973 as a residents' association 'to preserve and enhance the amenities of the Crescent'.

Something of its history will appear in a later newsletter, but its 'successes' include the restoration of the railings and gates, without which the lawn would have become a public area, the clearing of unsightly television aerials and wires from the facade, inaugurating the basement garden competition, supporting the restoration of the Theatre Royal (our name is on the Roll of Honour) and recently, and against all odds, getting all but City coaches banned from the Crescent.

Apart from that the Society represents the views of residents to the City and other organisations and acts as a watchdog when changes in use are contemplated.

Financing The Lawn Fund

The Royal Crescent Lawn was planned by John Wood as an integral part of the Crescent and in former times householders grazed their horses on the lawn. When the houses were all privately owned maintenance was simple and a firm of solicitors collected subscriptions.

In 1973, when the Royal Crescent Society was formed, the

Lawn Fund was in serious default and it was decided that the Society should become the agent for collecting and administering the fund.

The subscription rates are calculated to cover the cost of cutting the lawn (then roughly £300 a year, and now much more), insurance, maintenance of gates and railings and the ha-ha wall.

In 1975 the cost of repairing and painting the railing was £3,500; next time it will be much higher.

If you have not done so we hope that you will send your subscription to the Treasurer, Mr Robert Weston, 5 Royal Crescent.

The annual subscription rate is:

£20 for a whole house.
£15 for a flat across two houses or on two floors.
£7 for a single flat.

Subscriptions

The subscription to the Society is £3 a year, which includes the issue of three newsletters a year. Cheques for the Lawn Fund and the Society can be composite. For example, the resident in a single flat wishing to join the Society and pay the Lawn Fund subscription should make a cheque payable to The Royal Crescent Society and the Lawn Fund for £10 and send it to the Treasurer. Please include your address and tell the Treasurer if you need a key to the lawn.