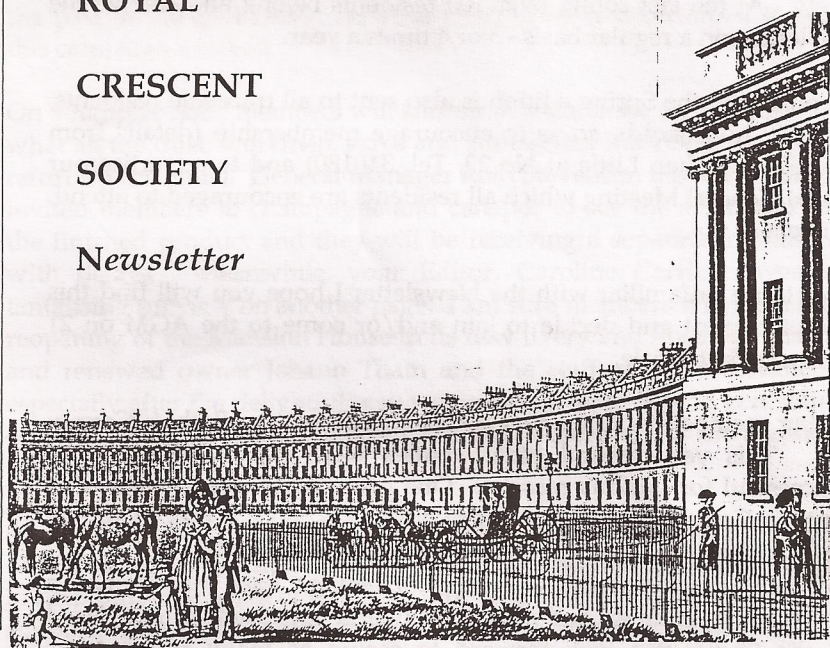


THE
ROYAL
CRESCENT
SOCIETY
Newsletter



Issue No 33
1997

Spring

Annual General Meeting
Monday 21 April 1997
At 7.15pm at
Bath & County Club
Queen Square

ALL RESIDENTS are cordially invited to the 1997 Annual General Meeting of this Society, to participate in the discussion of matters affecting our daily lives here, to meet our local Councillors and our Community Policeman. The Society's Committee for the coming year will also be elected (only members having a vote). Formal calling notices are being distributed to all residents separately.

Chairman's Notes

Normally Newsletters are one of the 'perks' of membership of this Society. At the last count, over 100 residents belong and receive the Newsletters on a regular basis - 3 or 4 times a year.

Exceptionally, the Spring edition is also sent to all traceable residents, some 120 households, so as to encourage membership (details from Treasurer, Stephen Little at No 22, Tel. 310180) and to advertise our Annual General Meeting which all residents are encouraged to attend, members or not.

So for those unfamiliar with the Newsletter I hope you will find this issue of interest and decide to join and/or come to the AGM on 21 April - see first article.

Existing members will see that we shall still use the Bath & County Club. This year several other venues were explored but found unsuccessful for various reasons. One change has been made: this year your Committee decided not to offer food, since it was becoming over-priced and unpopular. The bar, at very reasonable prices, will however be open before and after the meeting. Last year we had a near record attendance and a very lively and constructive meeting. I and the Committee look forward to seeing as many residents as possible this year too.

Turning to more general matters, our main campaign literally rumbles on. The proposal to close the West end of the Crescent has again been frustrated by Officials' delays and bus operators' commercial greed. It was also not helped, without a last minute appeal, by too many residents sitting back and failing to take a simple action - writing a letter - as the Committee asked them to do (see full report on another page). There will be many opportunities later this year to redress this, but I cannot emphasise too strongly that it is individual letters, approaches, etc, at particular times which maintain and boost the pressure on the Council. Your Committee will always lead - that is what it is for - but I do urge all residents and members please to be prepared to respond more readily when asked, on an issue on which we have been unanimous for so long and at so many AGMs. The length of the campaign is of course a disgraceful reflection on the

inefficiency of the democratic process through which we have to work. But we live in the real world and have to deal with what we have. The main principle guiding all our actions is never to give up and to make clear that we will not go away. This approach has paid dividends in the past on other matters and your Committee is determined to see this campaign succeed.

On a happier note, members will shortly be able to see for themselves what all the dust, workmen, skips and contractors have been doing to refurbish the Hotel. General Manager Ross Stevenson has very kindly invited members to champagne and canapés to see the splendour of the finished product and they will be receiving a separate invitation with details. Meanwhile, your Editor, Caroline Carrier, gives a tantalising preview on another page. I am sure members will wish the reopening of the Mansion House in its new livery and Ross Stevenson and renewed owner Johann Tham and the staff all good fortune - especially after the delightful way we were fed, watered and generally cosseted at our Festive Lunch in January - more detail on another page.

Another first for this edition is the introduction of advertising. This has two purposes. Firstly, to raise much needed funds and secondly, to help publicise some of the myriad of local traders who deserve our support. The extraordinary range of services available to us so close by is reflected in another article. We are fortunate indeed to live not only in an architectural masterpiece set in parkland, but to have almost all our whims and more basic needs within almost spittoon distance. By using these facilities on foot we help ourselves by exercising, the environment by not using vehicles and local business, much of which is distinctively entrepreneurial.

Fund-raising for the Lawn and Railings got a further small boost by the second Raffle at the Festive Lunch. The star prize of a very fine painting donated by our President Sir John Barraclough was withdrawn - to our potential benefit: Sir John intends to sell the painting at auction and very generously to donate the proceeds to the fund. This will be of much material help. Besides offering our thanks, I am sure members join with me in wishing him well for a full recovery from his tortuous hip-operation in January. Meanwhile, helping us to help ourselves, Treasurer and Vice-Chairman have proposed a variation on the last edition's ideas for improving the

Lawn Fund (see separate article) and your Committee will put this to the AGM together with a modest and also overdue proposal to increase the Membership Subscription.

Finally, the last issue had more than its fair share of gremlins - even an article poking fun at the Times for its mistakes suffered from three of them and a compliment to our hard-working Councillor David Hawkins who does so much for us, vanished altogether.

Notes from the Editor

Spring at last in the Crescent and with it the 33rd Newsletter.

A wide variety of matters to concern and interest us and for the first time we must welcome advertising from local traders - I would like to thank them for their most friendly enthusiasm and I hope that they too will gain from joining us.

The observant will have noticed a somewhat different appearance to this issue of the Newsletter. For many years now the Society has enjoyed and much appreciated the services of Dr Len Fisher and through him Bristol University, in the very low cost of production of the Newsletter. For this issue, Richard Otten has kindly (rashly?) volunteered his rather more close-at-hand facilities and Dr Fisher has with typical generosity of spirit agreed not only to this proposal but to remain as fallback if necessary. Members will wish to thank Dr Fisher most warmly and to wish Richard Otten and his team the best of luck.

Dr Leslie Jenkins from 16 Brock Street has once again contributed another fascinating article with a view of the past and we are always grateful for surprise items like this - indeed that is a hint for the rest of you!

I do hope you will enjoy this Newsletter.

Caroline Carrier
5 Royal Crescent

Buses - The Saga Continues

The last full issue of this Newsletter reported the publication of and set out in full the Traffic Order proposing closure of the West end of the Crescent. A Special Issue of the Newsletter distributed to all residents on 18 November asked for help, in the form of individual letters from residents to support a proposal.

By the closing date for representations a grand total of 9 residents had taken this action, out of some 120 living here and these are to be commended. Meanwhile, the silent - some may say apathetic and lazy or perhaps just forgetful - majority were reminded again in another Special Newsletter of the need to write in. Thankfully another 30 or so took action this time. This materially changed the balance of responses received by the Council from the original 2 - 1 against the proposal (they had had about 20 objections) to 2 - 1 in favour. Many of our letters demonstrated very careful thought and cogent and helpful argument.

This balance achieved two important aims. First it showed that a wide spread of individuals were concerned enough to take the time and trouble to write in. Secondly, it showed that this concern was current as opposed to the Society's other slightly hoary evidence, eg the 1994 Petition. In other words, the right climate was maintained and updated.

It did not - could not - of course, force the right decision. Despite earlier posturing, the Bus operators did make a formal objection on the grounds that closure would "stop local buses" from using the Crescent. That choice of words is of course careful and deliberate. The buses are only 'local' under the terms of the legislation and in the sense that they operate in one locality. They are not, as the phrase might suggest to those unfamiliar with the problem, local buses getting the general public from A to B, and therefore providing an essential Public Service.

The operators are the only potential objectors who are legally able to force a Public Inquiry and B&NES Officials jumped to the immediate conclusion that this was inevitable. However, Chairman pointed out that three further steps had to be taken before this was set in motion.

First a report to Councillors had to be prepared and he pressed Officials that this must include all the representations received, not just the objections (as Avon disgracefully did some years ago in similar circumstances). Secondly, Councillors had to consider the report and confirm their intention to proceed and thirdly - given such confirmation - the Bus operators had to reaffirm their intention to fight.

Some sucking of teeth ensued, after which Officials decided to take the third step first and incorporate the Bus operators' responses into the report. The relayed operators' responses were again semantically significant; they "were not prepared to withdraw" their objection. In other words, that's what they had been asked.

Your Committee takes the view that a somewhat different response could have been encouraged had the question been differently posed. For example, on the lines of:

"This proposal has been debated for many years, you have had a good run, now you have against you all three political parties, the Bath Preservation Trust, The World Heritage Site Organisation of UNESCO, a 2 - 1 public response, one of your competitors and even the Marketing Manager of the Bath Tourism Bureau, besides the local newspaper. One of your competitors openly, and your former Managing Director privately, have admitted that taking the Crescent out of the Tours would cause you no insurmountable problems, operationally or financially. Forcing a Public Inquiry will cause extra public expense and further damage to this essential heritage site. Your Company is already in bad odour over disputes at Orange Grove. The Minister of Transport has directed and the Council has adopted a twelve point plan to institute more control over your general operations, because they are causing widespread concern. Do you not think in the light of all this and having made your point that you don't like the closure, that in the general public interest and as a worthy gesture which would improve your image and attract praise, you could now accept the closure?"

Perhaps this is too sophisticated, idealistic and naive an assessment; however, the die is now cast and the report is being prepared for the Transportation Sub-Committee on 18 April 1997 (postponed from 10 March by one week's influenza for one Official...). Your Committee will lobby to try to ensure that Councillors do decide to press on and not abandon the matter as too difficult.

All this means of course is that the £10,000 funding rapidly inserted in the 1996/1997 budget has now been lost and at a meeting in February Councillors approved that it be spent on another 1997/1998 project brought forward. They will also be asked to earmark a sum in the 1997/1998 budget for our closure, in the hope that, if a PI is decided on it goes the right way.

So, summing up, the timetable looks something like this.

Currently: Committee pressure on Officials to include all evidence in report.

About April 10 - Report to Councillors issued. Committee study and react, lobbying Councillors and considering need to speak during Public Access time at meeting if permissible.

April 18: Transportation Sub-Committee meets and decides whether to face up to PI or not; it may also be invited to decide on earmarking 1997/1998 funds.

During 97: Public Inquiry formally announced and Committee gathers support and representation to speak and write in.

Later in 97: Public Inquiry held.

Much later: PI Inspector issues decision.

Once the PI is announced - if Councillors go ahead - there will be an even stronger need for individual letters of support and volunteers to speak at it. These avenues are open to anyone and your Committee will coordinate and advise on the detail. It may also be necessary to

engage legal advice and the Society's Solicitor, Thomas Shepherd of Thrings & Long has already indicated his willingness to help.

Aux barricades!

Lawn Fund Contributions By Treasurer, Stephen Little

The 1996 AGM included discussion on the low level of the Lawn Fund, which is no longer keeping pace with current maintenance costs, and the need to build it up so that the railings could be renovated and painted. One suggestion made was that the present scale of £7 - £15 - £20 should be raised to £30 - £50 - £100, though some felt that this would be too drastic a rise and might be counter-productive if too many were put off contributing. It is however appropriate to reflect that these rates are much less than they would be if contributions had been index-linked when they were first set at current levels about 18 years ago. The Committee were given the task of making detailed proposals for this year's AGM and the first ideas were published in the last Newsletter.

The Committee has since reconsidered these first ideas and looked at various other figures. It eventually concluded that if contributions were linked to Council Tax, this would allow a scale with more graduations, which would be fairer. It had been hoped that linking it directly to the tax paid would automatically keep pace with rising costs and avoid the need for regular review. This proved to be not such a simple solution as it sounded, so a suggested scale is as follows:

Tax Band	A-D	E	F	G	H
Lawn Fund Contributions (Minimum!)	£10	£20	£30	£50	£100

Members will have the opportunity to discuss this proposal, and put forward any amendment, at the AGM on April 21st, when it is hoped that a realistic level of contributions can be established to apply from 1998 onwards. Meanwhile, *any* bright ideas to help restore the Lawn Fund to full health will be welcomed.

We also made applications to B&NES Council for grants for lawn maintenance (as usual) and railings renovation (a new approach) offered the hope of easing the pressure on the Fund, but these hopes were dashed when the Environment Committee moved their own goalposts and rejected the applications on the grounds that our objects were maintenance projects. This was disappointing and puzzling, as the notes on criteria accompanying the application forms said that stewardship of Bath's heritage and environmental assets is a priority, and that typical projects include conservation of historic sites, structures and areas. We shall of course continue to urge the Council to give us some help, whether financial or practical, but clearly we must budget for receiving none.

Membership Subscriptions

Approval for a much more modest rise, in RCS Membership Subscriptions, is also sought. The proposal is to raise the subscription from £5 to £6, and at the same time introduce a discounted rate of £5 per person where there are two or more members in one household and they require only one copy of each newsletter. Since membership numbers as well as income are important to reinforce the Society's influence with the various bodies it deals with, it is hoped that all residents will treat their partners to membership, and persuade any non-members in their house to join. Current membership is at a record of over 100, and only a few houses are not represented.

The Ha Ha

Much more enthusiastic help on preparing our Application for Lottery funding has been given by Sir Christopher Curwen KCMG and the Gardening Committee of the Bath Preservation Trust. As we go to press an on-site meeting is imminent to flesh out some details. Meanwhile, our architect remains on board and is getting updates on earlier estimates for the work. Also our solicitor has asked the Council to accept that they have no objection to the project.

One decision has been made in Committee to simplify the Application. That is, to go forward to the National Heritage Lottery Fund on the basis of restoring the currently exposed wall plus a few inches. Apart from simplifying the bid this has many advantages. It avoids hassle

and delay with the local authority whose land we would interfere with by digging the ditch deeper. It removes their concerns about increased risk of personal injury (and the liability for it) to the inevitable wall-climbers. It enables firm costs to be established in advance without further physical work. It does away with the almost unresolvable debate hinted at in the last report as to how deep the ditch authentically should be. In any case the NHLF will send its own experts to assess and advise on this point; if they will only fund something deeper we can tackle that then. Meantime we can get the bid moving, and if the wall is restored only at its current height it will offer some deterrent to climbers in its refurbished and less climbable state. **STOP PRESS: At the onsite meeting, the above decision was tempered and several other proposals were made by the Trust. All of these will strengthen our application and fuller details will be given at the AGM.**

Royal Crescent Hotel

Mr Johann Tham and Mr Ross Stevenson for the Hotel Cliveden PLC invited. Sir John Barraclough President. Mr Michael Daw Chairman and Mrs Caroline Carrier Editor for the Royal Crescent Society to the Hotel on November 25 1996 at which Mr Tham outlined plans for the refurbishment of the Hotel. It was intended that the Hotel would be thoroughly upgraded to the very highest standard with more staff in every department and a more formal approach.

There would be a very discreet presence in the Crescent with no billboards etc. No public access through the Hotel to the garden would be allowed and no deliveries would be made at the front.

Mr Tham said that he expected that the Hotel would reopen in three months. There would be more staff areas at the back and the conservatory in the main house would come down. Air conditioning would be installed and there would be larger suites and fewer bedrooms.

Mr Tham was very well aware of the problems of the Royal Crescent Society in regard to the Crescent as he had owned the Hotel previously. He hoped that the Hotel and the Royal Crescent Society would continue to work together well in the future.

The Royal Crescent Society warmly endorse this view, welcoming Mr Tham back to the Crescent. They also responded happily to plans for restoration of the Hotel and of the former standards accordingly. Those present wished Mr Tham and his team good fortune in their endeavour on behalf of the Society.

An Anniversary Too Far

On Saturday 4 February 1995, a car pursued by the Police, crashed through the East end railings of the Crescent. On Friday 9 February 1996 it happened again. Residents, insurers and repairers can thus be forgiven for a deep feeling of déjà vu, when on Sunday 2 February 1997 yet another pursued car crashed through the Crescent railings, though this time at the West end, just to spread it around.

This event was the most dramatic of all three, with paramedics, three fire engines, breakdown vehicles and Police cars all with madly flashing lights, bells and sirens on the scene very quickly. The car, possibly a red Vauxhall Corsair, ended up below the Ha Ha, trailing broken railings in its wake. The occupants ran off and the car was removed at Police behest almost at once, unlike previous occasions when cars were left up-ended in the middle of the lawn like some surreal Festival sculpture. One suspects a hidden Police agenda may have prompted this speedy action. At least one resident rushed out to take action photographs only to find the camera empty of film! Your insurers will pay for the railing and stone repairs but your Committee is concerned at the impact this fourth crash (counting another in October 1990 when a resident reversed through the railings...) may have on policy premiums. Treasurer is holding his breath, and may have more information on this and/or the event later.

Bill Oswald continues to pursue the Council on the AGM 96 proposal to put a protective bollard at the East end and now perhaps the West end but so far without final result. Also Treasurer Stephen Little has asked our insurers to write to the Council in support of our campaign for closure of one end of the Crescent, on the grounds that three accidents caused by speeding cars using the Crescent as a getaway route is three too many.

A Mystery Solved

For many months after my move to 16 Brock Street in 1975 it was highly disconcerting to open the front door only to find a knot of people opposite staring intently across. Was I perhaps insufficiently attired? Recollections stirred of the superb Great Western Railway admonition at exits to their gentlemen's lavatories: "Please adjust your dress before leaving". However, I soon learnt that such indecorous attention lay not in my person but in the celebrated Gothic-style porch that is the main feature of No 16.

Three explanations are usually offered for such a striking departure from the younger John Wood's Palladian pattern. First, Charles Robertson's suggestion that No 16's porch is a later, possibly nineteenth century addition, rather in the mode of the Italianate three-storied porches at Nos 8/9 and No 14, the latter recently removed. A quick glance supports such a theory, the porch being uncomfortably close to the ground-floor window.

Second, it has been suggested that after Horace Walpole's visit to Bath in 1766 someone influenced by Walpole's "Strawberry Hill Gothick" commissioned No 16, producing sufficient hard cash to wean John Wood the Younger away from his conventional pattern. The No 16 deeds, unfortunately, date back only to 1891, the earlier documents apparently having been lost, hence it has not yet been possible to ascertain who was the first lessee, let alone any possible connection with Horace Walpole.

Third, there is Ison's authoritative theory that the No 16 porch is a "flight of fancy" stemming from the originally Gothic-style entrance to the Margaret Chapel directly opposite on the north side of Brock Street. The photograph in the 1948 edition of Ison's "The Georgian Buildings of Bath" clearly shows this Gothic entrance, rounded off during the last twenty years.

It now seems that Walter Ison was correct. Recent conversion work on the lower part of No 16 has revealed a matching Gothic window in the entrance lobby opening out from the hall, constructed to allow light from street level to reach the lower section of the main staircase. It is possible to stand in the entrance lobby (now a kitchen) and see at one

glance both the former entrance to the Margaret Chapel opposite and the charming small matching window. Further, a larger Gothic-style window exists at one stage further down, originally allowing some light to percolate into a larger downstairs room on the southern side of the house. Sadly, it has not proved possible to retain this window.

Evidence did exist that No 16's "porch for tall people" (Keith Dallimore) was actually part of the original 1767 structure. The fluting and finials on the exterior of the porch match exactly those on the handsome interior arch leading into the entrance lobby. However, as with economists, for every six architects there were at least seven different opinions! It was surprising that few architects ever asked to see what evidence actually lay inside the house.

Other interesting discoveries made during the recent conversion included a kitchen range of the period, now walled in. Doors and windows were revealed indicating that both Numbers 15 and 16 were at one time end-of-terrace houses, a position now enjoyed only by No 18. Presumably during the construction of Brock Street during 1767-68 each house in turn for a short time had this status.

One now wonders whether No 16 has more secrets to give up. Meantime the Mayor's guides stopping outside No 16 can supply a definitive explanation of the much-sketched and much-photographed Gothic porch.

Leslie Jenkins
16 Brock Street □

Well Over a 100 in Just Over a 100

Even long term residents may not have realised just how much our local services and shopping have burgeoned in recent years.

The nearness of the main city centre, major supermarkets, etc has long been celebrated in estates agents' prose. But this only touches on the sheer practical convenience of the Crescent as a 'machine for living' (which even Le Corbusier himself might have appreciated), generated by much closer facilities. Everything from antiques to zen, catering for all tastes, laid-backs to lonely hearts, tonsures to tyres, essentials to extravagance is very close - on foot. The following list embraces well over 100 facilities within a few hundred yards of the Crescent and

excludes Doctors and Dentists. If we have missed any do write in to your Editor. The categories are entirely arbitrary and the list does not extend beyond the Circus, St James Square or Morford Street - that is within what in the eighteenth century was known as "the Upper Town".

Essentials

- 2 Chemists
- 1 Post Office
- 1 real Butcher
- 1 late opening Mini-Market
- 1 24 hour General Store
- 2 Car Repairers
- 1 Tyre Supplier
- 1 Nursing Home
- 1 Letting Agency
- 1 Nearly New Clothes Shop
- 2 Hairdressing Salons
- 2 Business/Secretarial Services
- 2 Laundromats
- 1 Dry-Cleaner
- 2 Alteration/Tailoring Services
- 1 Domestic Appliance Store
- 2 Photocopying Services
- 1 Petrol Station
- 2 Fruit & Vegetable Shops
- 2 Car Showrooms
- 1 Second-Hand Shop
- 2 Builders & Decorators
- 3 Post Boxes

Opportunities

Several empty shops!

Extravagances

- 2 Antique Shops
- 1 Luxury Decor Shop
- 1 Party Caterer
- 3 Art Galleries
- 2 Delicatessens
- 1 Luxury Clothing Shop
- 4 Museum Shops
- 2 Five Star Restaurants
- 2 Four Star Hotels
- 1 Guest House
- 1 Taxi Service Base
- 2 Tea Shops/Cafes
- 1 Junk Shop
- 1 Lottery outlet
- 3 Scratch Card outlets
- 1 Car Valet
- 1 Flower Shop
- 1 Bistro
- 2 Small Restaurants
- 1 Pavillion Cafe

Boringnesses

- 1 Broadcast Monitoring Service
- 1 Chartered Surveyor
- 1 Conservation Engineer
- 1 Carton Manufacturer
- 1 Direct Marketing Group

Body & Soul

- 1 Art Bookshop
- 1 Health Food Shop
- 1 Charity Shop
- 4 Public Houses
- 1 Pet Needs Shop
- 1 Veterinary Practice
- 1 Bowling Green
- 6 Tennis Courts
- 1 Putting Green
- 1 Golf Course
- 1 Roman Catholic Church
- 1 Church of England Church
- 1 Relationship Guidance Service
- 1 Aviary
- 1 Park
- 2 Allotment Areas

Brain Food

- 3 Antique Bookshops
- 1 Research Insititute
- 1 Georgian Garden
- 4 Museums
- 1 Political Party Headquarters
- 1 Drawing Office
- 1 Primary School

Property and A "Cilly" Debate

Property movement in the Crescent tends to be sporadic. Some homes seem to change hands frequently whilst others come to market only on the demise of owners who love the place far too much to even consider moving away. As we go to press, national attention has been caught by the forthcoming (20 March) auction of the top two floors of No 30, plus the separate sale of the top floor of No 5. Two very different properties: the first huge and almost unchanged for many decades, the second more recently updated. The combination of these 'opportunities' in estate agent jargon plus the current refurbishment of the Hotel (see a separate article) generated an article in the Daily Telegraph (26 February) by a Mr Tom Rowland, their Property Correspondent. Two of his paragraphs bear repeating:

"...today the Royal Crescent is highly desirable, considered the summit of the city's Palladian achievement. Thirty years ago it was rotting. All but six of its houses were divided into flats of varying grottness and by 1968 No 1 had become a common lodging house and fallen into disrepair... Today converted flats sell at some £170,000 a floor."

Residents who lived in flats here in 1967 would no doubt take exception to Mr Rowland's suggestion that all of their homes were then to some extent "grotty". He is also none too accurate in his number of houses remaining as single units: today including No 1 and the Hotel, the number is about 11 and this was probably nearer the mark for the 60's too.

Mr Rowland also attempts to reopen the long dead 1989 first floor window-cill levels debate (the subject of articles in Issue 13 etc of this Newsletter) and is gratuitously unkind to the Bath Preservation Trust:

"Whoever buys the top of No 30 will have to negotiate with the planners, they will probably be very strict with the Preservation Trust backing them up. In their darker moments they may recall the fate of the Royal Crescent's windows. The honey coloured stone was hacked away by the Victorians to lengthen all the windows on the

principal floors of the facade. Today the only one that breaks the uniformity of the terrace is owned by the Bath Preservation Trust where the cills were put back to the original height. It is historically correct but looks out of kilter with all its neighbours, and it has to be said silly."

He has clearly not bothered to research or is unaware of the deep expert thought and consideration which the Trust devoted to this subject before deciding to restore the architectural purity of their cill levels, or the cogent, reasoned and well-published factors which swayed the final decision. He also, to his discredit, ignores the influence which this physical action and the Trust's consistent policy have had on other Georgian restorations in the City. Examples abound in Gay Street, Queen Square, etc, where the cills have been restored to immense visual advantage.

In the Crescent all first floor flat or home-owners were canvassed as part of the 1989 debate, and were virtually unanimous that they preferred the lower cills, enabling seated vistas of the lawn and City beyond. A sort of compromise was reached for some houses whereby restoration of glazing bars was accepted where the lower sash incorporated nine small panes, the lowest three of which not only virtually replacing the missing stonework and permitting the vistas, but allowing all the new small panes to be of uniform and acceptable Georgian proportions. This was architecturally more correct than some much earlier glazing bar restorations in the Crescent which resulted in almost square small panes, more appropriate to buildings of far earlier origin.

Meanwhile, at the back of the Crescent as further evidence of property market liveliness, but missed by Mr Rowland, a proposal to build (or perhaps almost re-build) three small mews houses has been lodged with the planning authority, though whether if approved they would be built is uncertain.

DOGS

Now outnumbered by cats as household pets, child substitutes, animal companions, furry people, blood pressure lowerers, or just beautiful, affectionate and heart-warming creatures to share your life with, call

them what you will, dogs are striking back by staying in or getting into the news.

Firstly, no reply has been received by Chairman to the letter he published in the last Newsletter about the activities of one resident's dog on the Lawn. Secondly, although the Crescent already has circular beige warning notices on some lamp-posts about fines for dogs caught fouling the pavements, the new Council saw fit to put up some "Clear it up" stickers on some lamp-posts in the street recently. These so jarred with the charming lamp-post redecoration undertaken last year by SWEB and further proliferated the signage that they vanished almost as soon as they were put up. Clearly, the visually conscious took action into their hands.

More 18th Century Food Food of the Fops (Fop Food!)

Martha's Gingerbread Cakes

7oz/200g/1¾ cups plain (all purpose) flour
plus extra for dusting
½ tablespoonful ground ginger
½ tablespoonful grated nutmeg
2oz/50g/4 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon caraway seeds (optional)
4 fl oz/110g/1/3 cup black treacle
1 generous tablespoon brandy
Flaked almonds

Sift together the flour, ginger and nutmeg into a bowl. Rub in the butter until the mixture is like crumbs. Add the seeds if you are using them. Set the oven to heat to 350°F/180°C/Gas Mark 4 and put the opened treacle tin in the oven to warm. As soon as the treacle is liquid pour 4 fl oz/110g/1/3 cup into a measuring jug and stir in the brandy, keep stirring until it is blended in.

Slowly blend the warmed treacle mixture into the spiced flour. It will make a soft, sticky dough. Turn it on to a flat plate and leave it in a cool place until firm.

Dust a work surface or board lightly with flour. Roll out the dough not less than ¼ inch/5 mm thick and cut it into rounds with a 2 inch/5 cm round cutter. If the dough is difficult to cut neatly, roll the rough pieces into balls with your palms and press lightly to flatten. Arrange the biscuits on baking parchment on a baking sheet and top each one with an almond flake. Bake for 10 minutes, cool on the sheet until quite cold. Then store in an airtight tin.

The mixture might be easier to manage with half black treacle and half golden syrup.

From the Jane Austen Cookbook □

Neighbourhood Watch

After the debacle of the last NHW meeting, PC Alan Hale our Community Policeman, is being invited to give a short talk on the scheme and its possibilities at our Annual General Meeting. If insufficient members sign up for the scheme and volunteer to help to run it then the idea will be abandoned.

Crescent Cleaning

Mrs Dulcie Belin-Morel reports the important information that the B&NES Council's Contract with its road-cleaners stipulates that the Crescent is to be swept every day.

If you find this is not happening, or that litter is building up, call the Council on 446111 and ask for the Department dealing with Road-Sweeping and Cleansing. Mrs Morel not only found the Officials there very helpful and ready to take immediate action, but she has volunteered to act as 'Litter Monitor' whenever she can! After all, this is one of the few visible results of paying our Council Tax.

Royal Crescent Society Lunch Sunday January 5 1997

We made our way to the Royal Crescent Hotel on a very cold, cloudy morning with so many of us having fallen away because of the

dreaded 'flu'. As a child this lasted three days. This variety went on for weeks!

Nevertheless, it was most cheering to be greeted by smiling waitresses with trays of Rosé Wine. Most uplifting to the spirit.

Talk followed and Raffle tickets sold until we took our appointed places with friends and neighbours to enjoy a delicious lunch.

Our Chairman, Michael Daw, gave his annual speech outlining the progress of the Society. We greatly appreciate his endless loyalty and the time he gives on the Society's behalf. One big thank you to him.

Mrs Kersley organised the Raffle with the help of her daughter and Lady Curwen drew the winning tickets. Presentations were made to the lucky winners.

Then coffee and a delightful plate of Petit Fours were served.

After lunch we said our Goodbyes and dispersed into the cold January afternoon walking through the garden into the foyer and the white doors closed behind us.

The Hotel was now closed for refurbishing by the new owners and another scene to be set.

One reflected that this was like the end of a René Clair film - one story told and another yet to begin.

We all wish the new management great success in 1997.

John Carrier
No 5 Royal Crescent □

1997 Events in Royal Victoria Park

Dates to remember - or avoid! - As officially notified by the Parks & Cemeteries Manager of B&NES Council are shown below. It may be significant that no mention is made of a major concert as part of the

BITE Festival which caused publicity a few months ago and was discussed in the last issue of this Newsletter.

- 16 - 26 April ~ Rogers' Fun Fair (usual site behind Marlborough Buildings)
- 3 - 5 May ~ Bath Spring Flower Show (as above)
- 11 May (Sunday) ~ Heritage Veteran & Vintage Motor Run, Royal Avenue
- 14 May - 1 June ~ Rogers' Fun Fair
- 16 May ~ BATH FESTIVAL OPENING NIGHT Prepare to light your free candles at dusk.
- 17 May ~ Childrens Dancing : Bandstand
- 18 May ~ Mendips Vintage & Classic Tour, Royal Avenue
- 24 & 25 May ~ Norwich Union RAC Classic Car Run, Royal Avenue
- 7 June ~ Edinburgh to Bath Georgian Classic Car Tour
- 8 June ~ Walk for Whales and Dolphins
- 22 June ~ City of Bath Air Training Corps, Annual Summer Fayre

Bath Spa

Thanks were received by Vice-Chairman from Paul Simons, Head of Economic Development and Tourism of B&NES Council, for those eighteen residents who returned or responded to the FBRA questionnaire about the Spa Subscription Scheme and hence offering support for the Council's bid for Millenium funds.

As reported in the local press the widespread local support contributed to the success of the Council's bid for some £6 million and

international interest is being shown in putting up the rest of the money required. Four architects teams have also been shortlisted for the design of the scheme - Nicholas Grimshaw, David Chipperfield, George Ferguson and local team Fielden Clegg. All have interesting and impressive pedigrees and records of achievement, and more details of these can be found in the Bath Chronicle of 25 February. **STOP PRESS :** Mr Grimshaw has been chosen.

Post-Christmas Etc Round-Up

Christmas cards for Members were received by Chairman from the Honourable Don Foster MP - a charming picture of the North Front of Westminster Abbey, and B&NES Councillor David Hawkins, the water-colour of the Crescent by Peter Bosanquet (mentioned in previous Newsletters).

The Crescent has long been host to writers and thinkers - George Saintsbury at No 1A, Christopher Anstey at No 5, Frederick Harrison at No 10 and Sir Isaac Pitman at No 11 and 17, and others. It is hopefully not stretching a point too far to suggest that this tradition has been modernised by concerned current residents enlivening the sometimes dull correspondence columns of the Bath Chronicle. David Brain started a chain reaction, indeed almost an avalanche, with his letter condemning the "Mickey Mouse" Georgian design of the recently completed Cavendish Lodge, engendering much sympathy amongst the visually literate classes. Dulcie Belin-Morel gave publicity to the failure of any of the media to note the vandalism in the even nearer Royal Victoria Park: the burning of the Bandstand and wrecking of the carved granite drinking fountain: this also engendered some reaction.

No longer a resident and thus not the subject of an obituary Alan Taylor died recently in Spain. A loveable rogue he is remembered with feeling by many residents, particularly the denizens of No 10 from where he once operated in the 80s. Besides dealing in antiques he hosted the ITV show "Mr & Mrs" before fleeing to the Iberian peninsula hotly pursued by the ungodly.

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