

# THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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*Issue No 39*

*Spring 1999*

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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – ALL RESIDENTS WELCOME – 26 APRIL 1999 AT 7.15PM IN THE ROYAL CRESCENT HOTEL**

All residents of the Royal Crescent and Friends of the Society are cordially invited to the Annual General Meeting of the Society which, will be held as above (by kind co-operation of the General Manager of the Hotel). Our Ward Councillors have also been invited.

The event is, of course, free and all who attend are welcome to speak on any issue affecting life in the Crescent or its environment. Only paid-up Members are permitted to vote: Membership Forms will be available at the meeting and will be sent out with the formal Meeting Calling Notice.

After the meeting there is another opportunity to meet your Councillors and neighbours: wine and the Hotel's delicious canapés will be served and (payable) reservations can be made for these on the advance copies of the Membership Forms.

The Committee very much hopes you will be able to come. If you can participate, even better, but if you just listen you will learn more about the setting of your home, your neighbours and about things happening here which affect you.

### CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I hope I and Members, may be forgiven, after 10 years of restraint, for smiling broadly and raising our glasses to the cessation of further traffic damage to this great Crescent and a major reduction in nearby historic streets as well. It is a great reward and no little pride that Brock Street and Marlborough Buildings share so significantly in our success, with three of the bus operators, at least 80% of the bus traffic, no longer using those streets.

We applaud those in Brock Street who are now campaigning for the fourth operator to follow suit and to stop using Brock and Upper Church Streets. They have a difficult fight, given the very few vehicles the Bath Bus Company has, compared with the comparatively high (up to 100 a day) number of vehicles Brock Street is now spared. At the same time it is a little disappointing that the Marlborough Lane and Buildings Residents' Association February Newsletter makes no mention of the improvement, harking back only to their as yet unfulfilled predictions of "chaos of tourist buses, cars and other traffic turning or reversing to leave the Crescent". I fervently hope and believe that this will not happen: two weeks after closure there is no sign of it.

The Circus also benefits: most buses now use only one third of it, between Bennett Street and Gay Street, instead of the two thirds between Bennett Street and Brock Street. This small but important improvement has been acknowledged.

The only disgraceful aspect of the whole saga has been the behaviour of the bus operators and their contempt for the taxpayer and the heritage. This was typified by their final reaction to the closure. Having, for ten years fought tooth and nail every proposal to limit the damaging impact of their operations, refused to adhere to agreements, caused not only hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage to the road but more thousands to be spent on a Public Inquiry, sent hundreds of empty or near-empty buses through the streets, having ruined the ambience, after all this, what did they say as the barriers went up? The Bath Chronicle reported – unchallenged – on 26<sup>th</sup> January:

“Bus operators say that the change has not been a major problem for them and people will still get to see the Royal Crescent”..... !

Our and the Council's success here must set the precedent for campaigns to save these and other streets. But it will require sustained and hard work by Residents' groups there as it did here.

Meanwhile in our restored tranquility all that remains to complete the saga is replacement of the current temporary barrier with permanent arrangements. As reported on another page David Brain's inspired concept for this fulfilled all the aims of the Society, the Bath Preservation Trust and the Council's professionals and was adopted immediately. He leaves a fine legacy for us and future generations. We look forward to its installation by the Council's target date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 1999.

The list of those who did so much to achieve the closure is too long to record but outstanding must be our President who kicked the whole campaign off and sustained it with wise input, Councillor Maureen Wheadon who got the "Access Only" idea up and running and Councillor David Hawkins who pushed and shoved to get it through – with a little

help from his friends here! (As he was kind enough to acknowledge in the recent "Blueprint", the Kingsmead Ward Conservative Bulletin).

As members will see formally from the AGM Calling Notice, this will be the last Chairman's Notes I shall write. The success of the bus campaign brings my eight year tenure of the Chairman's post to a timely end. It is an appropriate juncture for a change of leadership and no-one should stay in office too long. The Society will benefit from fresh – but able, informed and enthusiastic – blood. I commend to you Stephen Little, currently our Treasurer, who ever since coming onto the Committee, has been more than a right-hand man to me. Without him our showing at the Inquiry last year would have had considerably less impact and his willingness, interest and initiative in taking on all sorts of other unheralded tasks are more than commendable. President will propose and I will second him as Chairman at the AGM. I hope you will endorse this proposal and give him the excellent support you have given me, in dealing with the tasks lying ahead – which President outlined in the last issue. I will of course be happy to advise on any topic if called upon. The well-being of the Crescent is too important to me not to wish to continue to help if needed.

This year we also lose John Meddins from the Committee as he is leaving the Crescent. This is a very significant loss – of his sound business sense and reality and of his professional expertise and thoroughness. His wise counsel and hard work will be much missed and I hope you join me in wishing him well.

Happily the rest of your Committee are standing for re-election. I commend them all to you. No meeting passes without constructive input from each one. They make up an excellent team, and each takes on the various – often tedious - tasks willingly and effectively. I recommend them all to you for re-election.

I look forward to seeing as many residents and members as possible at this year's AGM.

Michael Daw

## NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members,

Spring arrives with a wonderful peace in the Crescent. No more buses and pollution, and much less traffic altogether!

We have been part of a triumph in the history of the Crescent and our Chairman Michael Daw and many other people over the years have worked to make this possible.

I draw attention to the Annual General Meeting on April 26<sup>th</sup>. More especially because it will be sadly the last one chaired by our Chairman Michael Daw to whom we should all be eternally grateful for so many arduous years of service to our Community. It is so good to know that Mike will be there to give us his advice and support.

We have news from Simon and Clare Crowe in Singapore and a recipe from Michelle Morgan, and of course we welcome Laurence Beere the new Manager at the Hotel.

We thank Lesley Brain for initiating her series of Royal Crescent Personalities for the Newsletter and wish Lesley and David well in their new home in Cornwall. We welcome another interesting piece from our Friend Mr Jenkins of Brock Street.

We look forward to welcoming newcomers to the Royal Crescent Society.

Please enjoy this 39<sup>th</sup> Newsletter.

Caroline Carrier  
5 Royal Crescent

## ~~THE BUSES~~ THE BARRIERS!

### The Event

The last Newsletter included the Council's letter promising to implement their decision to close the West end of the Crescent on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 1999.

We all kept our fingers crossed, but Councillor David Hawkins was more pro-active. He badgered officials right up to the magic date and as a result it actually happened. At 11am on the very day, workmen (who had started toiling earlier) put the last red and white barrier board in place and the road was closed.

Ten years of slog, disappointment, triumph, setback, negotiation, writing and debate had finally come to an end, with a victory for conservation over the combined forces of arrogant, contemptuous commercialism and greed.

Residents rubbed their eyes in disbelief. Champagne was opened (Councillor Hawkins even kindly brought his own!) and commemorative photographs were taken. BBCtv graced the occasion with two news reports and congratulatory letters flowed in. The saga was over at last.

### The Structure

The same day – with even more commendable speed – Council officials called a meeting to decide the design of the permanent closure structure. Chairman and resident David Brain attended for the Society and the meeting also included Dr Peter Woodward for the Bath Preservation Trust, David McLaughlin the Council's Built Heritage Senior Officer and representatives from Marlborough Lane and Buildings Residents' Association.



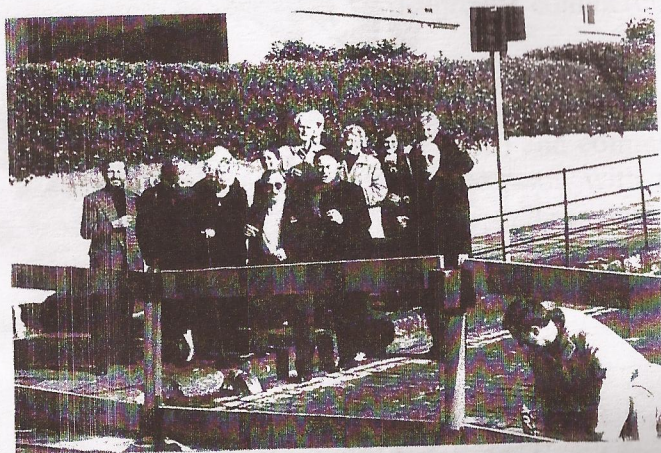
Here's to conservation! Councillor Hawkins and residents celebrate – February 15<sup>th</sup> 1999.



It was all worth it! Chairman Michael Daws enjoys the sign of achievement!



**Victory at Last – the real thing!**



**A serious moment: now we believe it's really happening.  
Residents and Councillor Hawkins, as the road is closed.  
February 15<sup>th</sup> 1999.**

The officials stated that their twin aims were to agree the design that day (so that it could be built by 31<sup>st</sup> March) and to achieve a quality of design which attuned with the sensitivity and importance of the site. David Brain proposed that it should – as far as possible – look as though it had always been there, consonant with traffic safety considerations. Dr Woodward proposed that the design solution should not be over-engineered and should be easily reversible. Both these proposals were readily agreed.

The officials proposed a row of bollards, using replicas of those at the end of Alfred Street near the Assembly Rooms. Although the date of these was uncertain, it was unanimously agreed that they were of the right scale and elegance. One of the existing ones would be taken up, a cast made and new ones produced for the Crescent. They will be placed 1.5 metres apart, with one or more central ones being removable by the Emergency Services as is common elsewhere in the City.

Much debate ensued on what pavement structure should be created to support the new bollards, until David Brain proposed an elegant solution which was, with a subtle embellishment by David McLaughlin, much applauded and adopted.

The concept is to lay a new kerb joining the two existing kerbs at either side of the opening, and then to gradually raise the level of the existing cobbles (setts) to meet the top of the new kerb. Thus the Crescent road surface will appear to be undisturbed, continuous and original, but clearly separate from the Marlborough Buildings road surface. The embellishment is to include two or three lines of larger setts in the pattern of a footway, just inside the new kerb stones. Again a continuity of level, texture and material. (A possible precedent for this embellishment can be seen, partially exposed, at the South West corner of Catharine Place just by the kerb corner adjacent to the Bridge Club.

Finally, officials had noted that the cobbled surface of the Crescent continues in a straight shape out to Marlborough Buildings. Between this and the widely curved North West corner of the Park the (large triangular) surface is tarmac. This could mean that the junction had originally been rectangular, but had later been curved to make the turn easier. Officials undertook to try, if the project budget permitted, to pave this area with setts. This would of course be a major environmental improvement. Longer-term they will consider researching the history of the curve/corner and restoring the original shape of the railings and park if justified and affordable.

A very satisfactory meeting indeed: very ably and constructively conducted by the officials: Mr Keith Marsh, Area Traffic Engineer, helped by Mr Gary Peacock, Senior Project Manager, Engineering Consultancy.

### **Street Signage**

It was wonderful to see a permanent sign go up at the Circus end of Brock Street: "Royal Crescent closed to through traffic" and, initially, opposite No 1: "Road Ahead Closed", until it was replaced with the permanent cul de sac (pictorial) sign David Brain's request for this post to be combined with the one for the Card Parking was apparently not possible.

The Council's policy here is to keep signage to an absolute minimum and only to augment it if traffic experience dictates the need. Already a large sign opposite Marlborough Buildings has been dispensed with and others may go too: this all enhances the environment.

### **The Impacts**

Of course the most immediate impact in the Crescent itself, besides the cessation of damage, has been the restoration of a standard of peace and tranquility not experienced for twenty years, when in the 1970s (later banned) coaches began to proliferate. Many residents, bemused by the hordes of buses had perhaps not fully realised how much other traffic used the road as a "rat-run", usually at high speed and noisily. This too has stopped and the number of vehicles whose drivers fail to see the cul de sac sign and confidently whizz through, only to have to turn back diminishes daily. They are, principally cars; commercial vehicle drivers seem more alert to the signs.

Three of the bus operators have chosen the Council's preferred (and the Society's forecast) new route. That is from Bennett Street, round one third of the Circus to Gay Street, round Queen Square, along the Upper Bristol Road, up Marlborough Lane and (as before) through Royal Avenue, etc. So Marlborough Buildings, Brock Street and the Circus all benefit from the closure, though Marlborough Lane will if this new route persists, suffer from an increase in bus traffic. The fourth operator, Bath Bus Company, is initially still using Brock Street and now going up Upper Church Street, around the back of the Crescent and down Marlborough Buildings to Royal Avenue. It remains to be seen whether this deeply unattractive and awkward route is kept; it seems unlikely. Brock Street and Upper Church Street residents have already begun their campaign to change it. The Bath Bus Company has only six vehicles.

Finally an unexpected beneficiary has been the Hotel's jolly, dapper and courteous Senior Doorman, Sean. No longer is he screamed at, cajoled and otherwise begged by bus passengers, to behave – as he puts it "like a performing bloody monkey" and to doff his top hat. It's not as though most of those using the buses were amongst those most likely to be potential guests!

## THE LAWN

As President noted in the last issue, we held a meeting with Mr David Littlewood, of B&NES Council's Chief Horticultural Officer, with a view to formalising the rather informal arrangements under which the Council deals with the Lawn grass for us.

The result was most encouraging. Mr Littlewood, with his long experience and expertise understood the matter quickly and undertook to produce a Draft Specification for the Council's work. As the Managers of the Lawn Fund, (since it was formally handed over in the mid 1970s to the Society from solicitors who had managed it since the 19<sup>th</sup> century) the Society would be able to vet the Draft Specification.

The approved draft would then form the basis of an Invitation to Tender and subsequent issue (with our agreement) of a contract for the future work. All the formalities would be handled by the Council's Parks Team. We would merely monitor – and pay up! This would be a much more satisfactory arrangement than the present ones where Council staff choose when to cut, etc.

The specification will include: frequency of cutting, levels, collection of cut grass, trimming of edges, (regular) treatment of the grass, rubbish collection, etc.

Regrettably Mr Littlewood has not, so far, produced the specification and your Committee is having to pursue him so as to get the better system in place in time for the impending growing season. A further update will be provided at the AGM.

## ROYAL CRESCENT HA-HA AND RAILINGS

Now that the question of the open top tour buses and through traffic in the Royal Crescent can, to a large extent, be laid to rest, the next major project to concentrate on is the renovation of the ha-ha, the railings and their stone bases.

During site meetings your Chairman and Gus Astley (B&NES Built Heritage) discussed the design of the railing supports and the gates. The railing supports should, of course, all be to the original design, and all be the same. This is definitely not the case at present. The gates should, when closed, blend into the railings so as to be almost invisible. At the present the single gates do not pose problems on this score, but the central double gates are a real eye-sore and need to be considerably improved. To this end Gus Astley was able to advise of design companies whose past work has been of an acceptably high standard.

These companies have been contacted, site meetings taken place and quotations received. As I write Peter Carey of Donald Insall Associates is drawing up designs for both the railing supports, and an improved double gate. As soon as these are to hand the Applications for Building Consents can then be submitted in respect of both the Ha-Ha and the Railings. This is the next hurdle to be surmounted!

Jenny Hardisty

## **THE ROYAL CRESCENT HOTEL**

I am delighted to be able to make my first contribution to The Royal Crescent Society Newsletter and would like to say that it has been a pleasure to meet with you all during the first few months of my time as General Manager at the Royal Crescent Hotel.

On behalf of the hotel in January, it was with much pride that I visited New York in order to accept the Travel and Leisure Magazine's Best Classic Hotel 1998 award. During my visit I also took time to visit a few agencies in order to primarily promote the hotel and of course the beautiful City of Bath.

The Royal Crescent Club is now gathering strength and we have already achieved our full complement of Founder Members. Stephanie Macdonald has now left the hotel to pursue further career opportunities and we are grateful to her for the work she put into forming the initial Club membership and events. Our newly appointed Royal Crescent Club Administrator is Helen Griffith, who has worked at the Royal Crescent for the past seven years and I know that you will join me in wishing Helen success in her new position.

The Bath House continues to receive many positive comments with a variety of quality press acknowledgements. There will be some subtle decorative changes taking place to Pimpernel's this year and the Brasserie will offer a variety of menus for Bathonians to sample.

### **Afternoon Tea for Crescent Residents - Exclusive**

It is also worth noting that, by making a pre-booking, the Dower House is open to Crescent residents for full afternoon tea. With the advent of Spring not too far away, you will no doubt be interested to learn that we will be further developing the garden and I am sure you and all our guests will also enjoy taking drinks or dining in this beautiful tranquil spot.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for making me feel so welcome during my initial few weeks at the hotel. My family are settling well into Bath life – my wife Helen expects twins in June and therefore with four children under 3, by July, I may be looking a little exhausted – I do hope you will forgive me if I initially pass by without recognising you!

kindest regards for the Summer season.

Laurence Beere  
General Manager

## **THE RAILINGS AGAIN!**

At 2.30am on the night of the 17/18 January we were awakened by a loud crash and the wailing of three police cars in this corner of the Crescent.

We went to the window and in brilliant moonlight together with the police car searchlights we saw that yet again our precious railings were smashed and a car stood just below on the lawn.

The policemen ran very fast into the darkness and very quickly returned with the driver with his hands above his head (as in the best thriller film!). He was then questioned and one of the police cars drove him away.

The car stood there and was approached fairly gingerly by the remaining policemen who did not enter it and then a fire engine came to the scene and waited.

The next morning the car had vanished and all that was left to be seen was the damage.

A very wet afternoon that day and our ever stalwart Chairman Mike Daw and equally stalwart Treasurer Stephen Little were to be seen braving the awful weather – smoothing the grass and taking away some loose ironwork. They were somewhat inhibited by inquiring ladies!

Caroline Carrier



## SNIPPETS

### Street Cleaning

Generally speaking we enjoy a well-swept street, so much so that for several years the Society has donated a small "Christmas Box" to the very cheerful – and appreciative – sweeper. (The practice was begun by Sir John Barraclough on a personal basis).

However there can be occasional lapses and, since the situation in other parts of the City has generated regular criticism, the Council has recently appointed a new "troubleshooter" for queries and comments. His name is David Hayes and he and his staff can be reached on Bath 394041 between 8am and 7pm, Mondays to Fridays.

### Christmas Cards

On behalf of the Society, the Chairman received Christmas Greetings cards from our MP Don Foster, Councillor David Hawkins, Mr Laurence Beere, General Manager and the Staff (who all signed individually, a very nice touch), of the Royal Crescent Hotel, and from Miss Lisa Goodson, Researcher for the BBC.

### Furniture

Some years ago a local craftsman designed and produced a wooden "double seater chair", or un-upholstered sofa, in an elegant curved shape which he christened the "Royal Crescent Chair". More recently a local firm has produced a replica Victorian chaise longue which their blurb entitles "The Royal Crescent Chaise Longue" and claims its shape to be "reminiscent of the Crescent's royal curves". Stretching imagination even further they also illustrate an upholstered blanket box with tall ends and market it as "The Guildhall window-seat" – "redolent of Bath's splendid Guildhall with its classical lines and curving scrolls". At £600 and £500 respectively there is sure to be a rush, so order now!

### New Environment Chief

The new B&NES Director of Development and Environmental Services is Mr Clive Thomas, replacing the redoubtable Mr Rob Mimmack, with whom the Society had a long and helpful relationship through his tenure of similar post in Bath City Council.

## THE SOCIETY'S FESTIVE DINNER

**JANUARY 5TH 1999**

Much thanks are due to Mrs Mickie Kersley for organising and to the Hotel for laying on, our Festive Dinner this year. Drinks in the Drawing Room set the tone and the beflowered Sheridan Room echoed to laughter, enjoyment and the appreciation of delicious food. Our guests were Sir Christopher and Lady Curwen, Councillor David and Mrs Hawkins and Ray and Mrs Newbigin, to all of whom residents owe a great deal for their work on the Crescent's behalf.

It was good to see these and other guests and Mr Laurence Beere, new General Manager and express our appreciation and welcome.

However, the number of Members was significantly lower this year, partly because of the horrendous flu epidemic. At 27 Members (out of about 100), your Committee will be considering next year what form any annual event should take. This will also be discussed at the AGM.

However a jolly time was certainly had by all this year – as John Carrier's inimitably styled report shows – and a splendid raffle, amiably conducted by Bill and Veronique Oswald and Caroline Carrier, raised nearly £80 for the Railings Fund.

## **The Dinner - A Happy Member Reports**

A warm dry evening as we made our way to the Royal Crescent Hotel for the Annual Dinner of the Royal Crescent Society.

Much talk and socialising awaited one as we went into the Hotel to be welcomed with a glass of wine in the delightful Drawing Room.

The New Manager Laurence Beere was there to greet us and then just after eight we were called to take our places for dinner. There our voices continued with much laughter and discussion as we sat down to a delicious dinner.

Our President Sir John Barraclough made a witty speech also covering the great success of the Bus Campaign which had now reached its peak.

Mike Daw our Chairman gave a final synopsis of the completion of the winning of the Bus Campaign and thanked our guests and all who had helped to achieve it.

This is also a triumph for Mike Daw who had worked fearlessly for so many years to achieve this and to preserve the fabric of the Crescent.

The evening was rounded off with Lady Barraclough drawing the raffle. We were all delighted that she drew a ticket for Sir John to have a day at the Races.

This caused great merriment amongst us all. The raffle always lifts the evening and furthers our enjoyment.

Our thanks to Bill and Veronique Oswald and Caroline Carrier for organising the raffle.

Special thanks to Mickie Kersley for arranging the dinner and some extra touches but who unfortunately through illness was unable to attend. She was greatly missed.

The evening came to an end as we said our goodbyes in front of the log fire in the hall and we stepped out into a beautiful moonlit Crescent.

John Carrier  
5 Royal Crescent

## **FIGURES IN THE CRESCENT**

Did you know that our local postman is called Pat? And that we have a community policeman called PC Bob Hope? [Fortunately Bob has a great sense of humour and, in any case, will have long since heard all the jokes about his name]. Bob's career involved a seemingly large change of direction in his mid-twenties. He had trained as a nurse in Manchester and moved down to Bath to take up a post at the RUH. At times his work involved close liaison with police officers and he was attracted to a service which built on his existing skills. Certainly the area is fortunate to have him as its local officer as he is that rare thing - a community Bobby [this is how he refers to himself] who lives in the area that he polices. The geographical area that he works is large, extending from here to the north west city boundary and including the RUH and Victoria Park.

Bob's local knowledge and links with the hospital and area's community are invaluable in his work. I asked him how he saw his role and he said that he is largely a point of contact for individuals, groups and institutions. He is there to advise, help and action. His work ranges from dealing with mere trivia through to serious incidents and part of the interest of the work lies in its variety. While he is linked to others there

15 such officers throughout Bath - Bob enjoys the flexibility and relative autonomy afforded by the responsibility he carries for 'his area'. Modestly, he described himself as a jack of all trades but he sees his job as being there to help those with questions. He says he may not have all the answers but is likely to know a man who does. He is certainly an approachable person as befits someone who takes care to cultivate links with local schools and has developed a strong neighbourhood watch scheme. He has some 30 co-ordinators with whom he keeps in contact through meetings and newsletters and he has taken the scheme from the low key to a prominent emphasis in the area. We talked about local crime - fortunately not a major problem locally with residents being nice, law-abiding people who are only occasionally the victims, not perpetrators, of crime - and agreed that, while it is impossible to measure the deterrent factor, it stands to reason that the presence of a uniformed policeman on the streets is bound to diminish minor crime and encourage better behaviour amongst the buoyant youth.

Bob does a lot of work with the hospital - work for which he is well qualified - and he finds this especially interesting. With his background and calm manner I can see how he would be just the man to have around at time of crisis or personal trauma. Certain words come to mind - kind, firm, lots of good common sense, a straight speaker, and, while he is modest, I would say he is a good communicator and listener. A real people person. Out of work he enjoys keeping fit. He is a qualified cricket coach with the English cricket board and works with the junior players at Lansdown C.C. at Combe Park. Perhaps as an antidote to so much people contact he takes pleasure in long walks. Later this year he is taking two weeks off to walk the Pembrokeshire coastal path. Both he and his wife love food and cooking - he has eaten at Lettonies which he thoroughly recommends - and their three children keep them busy.

If ever you need to contact him PC Bob Hope can be reached on 01225 842466/2470.

Lesley Brain  
30 Royal Crescent

## VALETE

It is with some regret that we learn of David and Lesley Brain's forthcoming departure from the Crescent. Notable figures in the Crescent and always supportive of the Society's aims and activities, they will be especially remembered for their beautifully organised and deliciously catered Summer Outings. That these could not have happened without the lustre of David's name as a renowned architect opening doors closed to others, is a 'given', but they added their hard work and style to provide joyous evenings.

Lesley's skills at so many things, but especially her witty and perceptive profiles of Crescent characters (another in this issue) will all be missed, though everyone will be glad she will no longer be buying raffle tickets. She always seemed to win the first prize! (Though to be fair she shared them round whenever possible, especially a lovely canal trip on the Hotel's launch).

David's lasting contribution to the Crescent, in the design of the permanent closure (described elsewhere) will ensure his memory persists - no other proposal combined elegance with practicality and 'rightness' so well.

We wish them both well in their new eyrie in the depths of Cornwall and hope the transition from 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian splendour to 21<sup>st</sup> century Japanese bliss goes as well as they plan.

## CAP OF YOUTH

The tape-recorder had been put away, the interview concluded. The 88-year-old Esther Spender had recorded well over an hour of her reminiscences, promising material for the family history records. However, her husband Arthur was not to be outdone. He too had a childhood story to tell, yet sadly it was not recorded on tape.

Aged eleven, he was sent up to Shropshire from North Petherton to stay with an aunt. He soon settled down, making friends with a local eleven-year-old Ernie Briscoe. Arthur bought a new ball in Woolworth's, priced sixpence. Where better to play than in the aunt's back garden, graced in the centre by a working well. The boys revelled in the sheer bounce of the new ball and the pace increased.

Then - disaster. The well cover was only halfway across the top and a spirited kick scored a goal - plumb down the well. Arthur was mortified. The ball was new and the well strictly out of bounds. Auntie was busy uncomfortably close at hand in the kitchen. Arthur took command.

Ernie was placed on sentry guard to ensure that Auntie was not looking. Arthur pushed aside the well cover, peering down to see the ball bobbing about on the surface many feet below. Still wearing his cap, he descended by means of the iron steps. It was an easy matter to retrieve the ball, less easy to retain his cap when ascending and precariously carrying the ball. With a spiteful plop his cap dropped down to the calm water below. Arthur had his priorities: the ball was his property, the cap the responsibility of others.

Meantime Ernie had been rather too zealous in keeping an eye on Auntie. She sensed being watched and left her kitchen. Arthur, now at the top of the well, realised the danger and fled, with ball, to hide from Auntie's wrath. Ernie was unaware of Arthur's emergence and his rapid retreat.

"Woe, alas! What! in our house?" Auntie and Ernie contemplated the cap floating on the murky water below. Arthur had found a watery grave in Shropshire far from his native wetlands in Somerset. Ernie wailed his way home while Auntie retreated to the house to seek or await help. Meantime a quivering Arthur watched from his hiding place.

Pangs of hunger eventually drove him out. A furore when his frightened face appeared before his aunt. Her action was decisive. Back to Somerset without delay. He was put on the train at Shrewsbury station with a sealed letter to give to his mother. Much shivering in anticipation while he sat supervised by the guard en route south.

Arthur handed the letter to his mother. She opened it immediately. "I am sending Arthur home as I don't think the Shropshire air agrees with him". Diplomacy indeed.

Leslie Jenkins  
16 Brock Street, Bath

## CRANBERRY BREAD

Cranberry bread is very popular during the Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays in America. It is often given as a present to friends. You can use either frozen or fresh cranberries depending on the season. If you are unable to buy cranberries, raspberries or blackberries make good substitutes. This recipe makes one loaf or 12 muffins.

- 2 cups of whole wheat flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup of sugar (this can be reduced to ¼ of cup)
- 2 tablespoons hot water
- 1 egg beaten
- 1 tablespoons butter, melted
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 cup cranberries
- ½ cup of nuts (optional)
- 3 tablespoons dried fruit peel or ginger (optional)

Mix flour, salt, baking powder and sugar, leaving a well in the centre. Dissolve baking soda in the water. Add it along with the egg, butter and juice to the flour mixture. Blend well and add the cranberries, fruit peel and nuts. Bake at 350°F or 175°C for about 1 hour (or until a skewer comes out clean) in a greased and floured loaf tin or muffin tins. Leave in the tin for 15-20 minutes and then turn out onto a wire rack to completely cool. (To make this more like a cake, use two eggs and 4 to 6T. butter.) This freezes and toasts very well.

The measurements in this are American. If you don't have American measuring cups you can use a medium size mug or roughly one cup equals 125 grams. The measurements don't have to be exact for this recipe to turn out.

Michelle Morgan  
22 Royal Crescent

**From our own correspondent – News from Singapore**  
*Simon Crowe (former Treasurer of the RC Society), his wife Clare and daughter Emily recently moved out to Singapore.*

We celebrated the first anniversary of our move to Singapore last week. It has been quite a year. Moving to this small island state has so far been an enjoyable experience but has not been without its frustrations!

Singapore came into being as an independent state in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew led the break-away from the Malaysian Federation. From that point on Singapore has not looked back and is now the envy of the ASEAN countries. Singapore caters very well for its diverse ethnic population. The expat community here is large: about 300,000 out of 3 million and well looked after. The standard of living is very high. They say that Singapore is Asia for beginners.

We have now settled into our apartment complete with air conditioning and swimming pool. The apartments have locals and expatriates in residence and this makes for a refreshing mix. Air conditioning is a godsend and we could not survive without it. The outside temperature is almost a constant 32°C with 95% humidity every day. It is like someone holding a hot wet towel over your whole body! The swimming pool is essential, as it is the most comfortable form of outdoor activity, especially for children.

The food in Singapore is excellent. The supermarkets are well stocked with familiar items. One can even buy Waitrose branded products here. There are numerous wet markets selling fresh produce and interesting local goodies. Restaurants are abundant and cater for all tastes. Eating out is generally cheap. At local hawker centers one can buy chilli crab and garlic prawns for a few dollars, or take a trip to little India and eat curry off banana leaves. At the other end of the spectrum there are world class Cantonese, Japanese (excellent sushi) and European restaurants. Wine and beer are about double the price of the UK but the heat prevents one from consuming too much, although it is still possible!

Culturally Singapore is fascinating in its diversity and history. Each month there seems to be a different religious festival, which is celebrated with great passion by its followers. At the time of writing we are in the

midst of the Chinese lunar New Year celebrations – the year of the rabbit. During this period China town comes alive with street stalls selling a variety of unusual looking food. Stems of pussy willow and cherry blossom are sold in bundles and decorated with red and gold. It is an important time of year for visiting family.

The economy has been badly affected by the Asian crisis but this presents opportunities as well as problems. The housing market, which was very pricey, has been hit hard. Some properties are worth 60% of the peak price. New build has slowed but still continues in the public sector. One of the most remarkable responses to the downturn by the Singapore government was the announcement to cut by 10% all public workers pay. The ability to do this and not have a riot on its hands give some indication of how Singapore has been able to be so successful. The pound buys more Singapore dollars these days and Clare is doing her bit to boost the Singapore economy!

Cars are expensive here in Singapore – Sing \$120,000 (Pounds 42,000) for a basic Rover 400. They have a system of certificates and high taxes and duties, which keep the traffic down to manageable levels. They also have road pricing. The price of a car is high but Singapore has a very efficient public transport system and traffic jams are very rare. Home to office on a Friday night takes 15 minutes and no longer than any other day. The Singapore drivers are some of the best in Asia but the trick seems to be Mirror, Manoeuvre then Signal! If one indicates one's intentions too early then the gap is closed.

Generally, we have found our first year in Singapore to be an easy transition from life in the UK. However the frustrations are there and can well up into a sort of "culture shock" rage which is usually out of proportion to the incident. For example, Bath is a place where one can just "pop" to the shops or "potter" about. There is no such "popping or pottering" in Singapore. If one needs something then one has to drive to a mall or market, pay a parking charge and then forage for the item. Walking is possible but within 10 minutes one has broken into a sweat, which requires a shower or swim or both to effect a full recovery. Long live "pottering"!

Simon Crowe

## TREASURER'S NOTES

The Society's 1998 balance sheet, copies of which will be available at the AGM or by request from the Treasurer at No. 22, again shows our funds to be superficially healthy. However this is balanced by the prospect that a substantial sum will be required over the next year or so for the overdue restoration of the railings.

The General Fund has suffered from expenses in connection with last June's Public Inquiry into the closure of the west end of the Crescent, but I trust that all will agree that it was money well spent.

The Lawn Fund has benefited from two filming fees early last year, and from the fact that residents have readily accepted the doubling of Lawn Fund contributions agreed at the 1997 AGM. At this point I shall remind you that at the same time it was agreed to double them again for 1999, so that the contributions for this and subsequent years are £28 for a flat, £60 for a large flat or maisonette, and £80 for a whole house. These increases still stand below the rate of inflation since the figures were first set, so it is hoped that, with the large expenditure on the horizon, they will be accepted just as readily as last year's.

After skipping a year, we had our regular car-through-the-railings incident in January, which, though covered by insurance, will incur an excess payment. Let us hope that the closure of the Crescent will result in a drop in frequency of such occurrences.

The Ha-Ha Fund remains untouched in readiness for the restoration. The Society's contribution towards this will use up most of the sum reserved for that purpose.

The population of the Crescent is ever-changing, so I make my customary plea - if you know of any departures or arrivals, please notify them to the Treasurer or Secretary, so that newsletters and reminders are not wasted, and information on joining the Society can be given where appropriate.

S Little  
22 Royal Crescent

## OBITUARY

### R.A.C. (REGGIE) FORRESTER

Residents of long-standing will remember Reggie Forrester and be sorry to hear of his death in February. Besides living here for some forty years, with his wife Joan (who died last year), Reggie was a Member of and Selector for, the MCC, travelling to the West Indies as their representative for the West Indies Tour. As a local solicitor he administered the Lawn Fund for the Royal Crescent single-handedly (until it was formally taken over by the Society), and carefully maintained the original 19<sup>th</sup> century records, which are now in the hands of the current Chairman. Reggie was fierce and controversial in his view of how the Crescent should "be" and one of the Society's early Chairmen (1976-86) and during his tenure the first shots in the battle to ban single-deck coaches were fired, the Newsletter was initiated (against his initial reservations but with his subsequent rapid endorsement) and the foundation for good relations with John Tham in his first development of the Hotel, in 1978, instituted.

In recent years his stately appearances in the Crescent became less frequent as his health declined. Our sympathies go to his daughter Charlotte and the family.