

THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue No 41

Winter 1999

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Following the success of our Hallowe'en Party, our thanks are due both to those who donated items for the auction and raffle, and to the organising Social Committee for their efforts. They certainly succeeded in persuading those present to enter into the spirit of the evening, with a variety of gruesome masks in evidence. The Treasurer reports that the event was a financial as well as social success, but reminds me that we still have a lot of fundraising to do to meet the cost of the Railings restoration.

Our next fundraiser will be the annual Festive Dinner on 6 January. To mark the Millennium we intend to widen the scope of this regular event to include guests from surrounding areas, which we hope will have the happy side effect of increasing the benefit to the Railings Fund. To ensure this we may need to be more commercial in the pricing of tickets, etc – prepare to dig deep!

The first season of lawn maintenance contracted out, but still supervised by the Council Parks department is nearing an end, and may not have been to everyone's satisfaction. Your views would be welcomed so that we can make a concerted approach to ensure that next year's maintenance sticks closely to the agreed specification.

Our membership of FBRA (the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations) means that the Society, though principally involved with issues peculiar to the Crescent and its immediate neighbourhood, is also concerned with matters of wider relevance to the City of Bath. For instance we have recently been asked by FBRA for the Society's comments on residents' parking in Bath so that the Federation can forward a representative opinion to B&NES on a difficult subject which the Council is currently grappling with. If you have any feelings on local issues such as this, please convey them to a committee member so that we can remain in touch with members' views when replying to such questions.

We have learnt from FBRA that this may be the last year of B&NES grants to residents' associations. Though not enormous, these have helped us to remain solvent on low subscriptions in spite of costs such as the production of this newsletter. In their absence it may be necessary for the Treasurer to propose a small increase in subscriptions at the next AGM.

On behalf of the committee, I wish to take this opportunity to extend to you our best wishes for Christmas, next year and the next thousand years. We look forward to seeing as many as possible of you at the Festive Dinner.

Stephen Little
22 Royal Crescent

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Members

Winter is now here and since we last went to press we have enjoyed two brilliant social occasions in our calendar.

The very enjoyable visit to Downside Abbey on 28 August and the hugely successful Hallowe'en Party at the Royal Crescent Hotel are recorded on other pages and I do hope to see you all at the Royal Crescent Society Dinner on 6 January 2000.

We welcome newcomers to the Crescent at No 20, No 25 and No 27 and congratulate Simon and Clare Crowe on the birth of a new daughter Charlotte.

We look forward to a forthcoming book in February by our Treasurer Michelle Morgan entitled "100 Treasures".

So Crescent business continues and thank you to everyone who contributed to this Newsletter.

A very Happy Christmas and Happy New Year.

Caroline Carrier
No 5 Royal Crescent

THE ROYAL CRESCENT HOTEL

It is taking me some time to come to terms with the fact that a year of my life has already passed by in this beautiful City. During the Summer I have become more familiar with local faces and I certainly no longer feel like the new boy, as several more appointments have been made at our property.

Sharon Love joined in August as the Front of House Manager; she has a fine pedigree as General Manager at a variety of properties in the South West and will be a great asset to the hotel. Nicholas Chambers, whom many of you have known over the years, has recently moved on to pursue his career in London. I am sure you would like to join me in wishing him every success in his progress within the industry. He has recently been appointed as Assistant Front of House Manager at The Landmark, London. Kirsten Cox is our new Head Housekeeper and takes over from Jane Stride who took early retirement, to spend more time with her family. We wished Jane au revoir with much sadness – but with copious gifts and champagne. Jane had been with us for 16 years.

As Christmas draws near we prepare for receiving our guests for the Christmas programme. Although we are not hosting a Millennium party, there will be a supper for our Club members and our accommodation is being steadily reserved by visitors to Bath for the millennium festivities. We hope that many of you will find an excuse to come in over the festive season for lunch, dinner or simply for tea.

We were very proud to receive further recognition for the hotel earlier year when the RAC awarded the hotel its Blue Ribbon award for service excellence. The accomplishment of so many accolades this year will be the platform for our continued success into the new millennium. The year 2000 will also mark a special occasion in the life of the hotel as we celebrate our 21st Birthday. To mark this event there will be a variety

of dining and other leisure pursuits throughout the year, for residents and non-residents to participate in and enjoy.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of everyone at the Royal Crescent Hotel to wish you all the very best for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I look forward to meeting you in the next millennium.....

Laurence Beere
General Manager

BATH FILM FESTIVAL

Of all the festivals in this festive city, one of the least known, but most enjoyable, is the Bath Film Festival which runs every year from late October into early November to enliven that damp and sometimes depressing time when Summer has gone and Winter has yet to arrive.

You may wonder why, with three cinemas and as many vast multiplexes only ten miles away, Bath would need to celebrate film. But the ABC and the Robbins, like the multiplexes, only offer a choice between the latest Hollywood blockbuster and the latest Hollywood blockbuster. The Little Theatre does show foreign and art-house movies among more usual fare, yet its choice is, inevitably, limited.

And it is here that the Film Festival comes to the aid of those tired of a diet of movies that offer nothing meaty, merely glossy nonsense and computer-generated special effects. This year it screened 29 films that would not otherwise have been seen in the city, showing adventurous work from Iran, India, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Denmark, Germany, the Czech Republic, Lebanon, and even Britain.

The range on offer was wide. I especially enjoyed Deepa Mehta's *Earth*, an engaging, warm, and colourful drama. Concerning the effects on a Parsee family of the conflict between Hindus and Muslims that followed

the partition of India, as seen through the eyes of a young girl, its theme of terrible violence erupting among people who had previously lived in harmony with one another remains topical and timely.

There was something on offer for most tastes: Larry Clark's violent, drug-fuelled road movie *Another Day in Paradise*, containing a superbly nervy performance from James Woods (though my attention did occasionally wander to wonder exactly *what* Melanie Griffiths had done to her lips, which now resemble over-inflated tyres); Bernardo Bertolucci's gentle, music-filled romance, *Besieged*, and Japanese director Kore-Eda Hirokazu's affecting *Afterlife*, which raised the intriguing question, if you could, after death, retain one memory of your life, what would it be?

Special events this year included animation workshops for children, a special centenary celebration of the acting and directing of Charles Laughton, and a rare screening of Alfred Hitchcock's silent film *Blackmail* with piano accompaniment. There was also an afternoon and evening devoted to the theremin, an early Russian electronic instrument. You don't have to touch the theremin to play it, you simply wave your hands over it, and it has often been used to conjure otherworldly effects in science-fiction films. (Lovers of strange instruments may like to investigate the French composer Charles Koechlin's *Seven Stars' Symphony*, the third movement of which is dedicated to Greta Garbo and features the equally odd Ondes Martenot.)

The Bath Film Festival is a modest affair. Most of its screenings are in the slightly scruffy, small lecture theatre at the Royal Photographic Society. Celebrities do not, as a rule, make personal appearances, although director Mike Hodges did turn up this year to introduce his bleak and seedy movie, *Croupier*. There are no fireworks to announce its opening. But if you missed it, do keep an eye open for it next year, for it does provide a welcome and infrequent opportunity to enjoy close at hand some of the best films currently being made.

Barbara Walker –
No 10 Royal Crescent

THE SUMMER OUTING 28 AUGUST 1999

When I thought of a visit to Downside Abbey I did hope that the weather would hold – it was just a day of late Summer perfection – warm glorious sunshine.

On arrival and seeing such a good turnout of Royal Crescent people strolling and talking in the garden on a carpet of Emerald Green grass was very satisfying.

Bill Oswald who organised the day introduced us to Father Dunstan who then escorted us across the road and into the Abbey.



Father Dunstan

As we entered we saw a magnificent sight looking through to the Nave and Sanctuary.

Father Dunstan spoke of its history and then took us on a tour of the many small Chapels which seemed to tell of a delight of short stories against the beautiful stained glass windows.

Father Dunstan referred to St Oliver Plunkett born in 1629, martyred at Tyburn in 1681 and buried in Downside Abbey, and is a forebear of our Honorary President's Wife – Lady Maureen Barraclough.

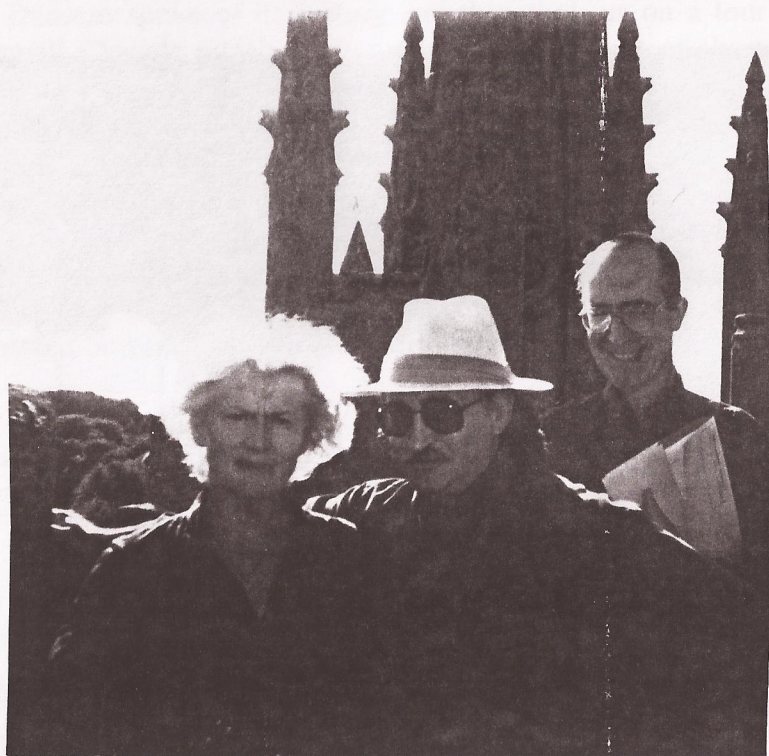
Father Dunstan then took us up to the Tower for the most magnificent views across Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

On the return down into the Abbey we walked through to have tea which was tastily composed of cream scones and jam, sandwiches and delicious home-made Victoria sponge.

Much talking and laughter amongst us in the sunlit room – I proposed a vote of thanks to Bill Oswald for working to make the day so memorable. He then proposed a vote of thanks to Father Dunstan who then invited us to Vespers which truly captured the ambience of Downside Abbey.

John Carrier
No 5 Royal Crescent





HALLOWE'EN, 31 OCTOBER ROYAL CRESCENT HOTEL

I seem to always write about the weather in these reports. But it makes such a difference to find such a mild evening for our Hallowe'en Party.

The response was truly wonderful with many people arriving in black with the most outstanding masks. One would have felt that they had all crossed St Marks Square in Venice.

I set the room with orange and black balloons, bats and large spiders hanging in cobwebs with a spooky CD of screams etc in a darkened room with orange lit table lamps.

People were greeted on arrival with a large champagne cocktail which gave the room a huge buzz of excitement – the evening continued with canapés and more champagne.

Our Chairman Stephen Little introduced Sir John Barraclough our President to hold the Auction with his endearing delivery of charming words.

We then moved to the raffle which gave great movement to the room as people collected their prizes.

Next the prizes for the best male and female masks – these were judged by Mickie Kersley and Caroline Carrier and both winners won a bottle of champagne.

Mickie Kersley put this idea to the social committee in August and after three meetings I think that we pulled off a happy and sociable evening.

We must also thank the Manager of the Royal Crescent Hotel for the room and the help of his attentive staff.

John Carrier
No 5 Royal Crescent

**'Hallowe'en Party
Royal Crescent Hotel'**



'Winners of the Best Masks'



SNIPPETS/EAVESDROPPINGS

The Barriers

The work was completed in the forecast time of 4 weeks and general opinion seems to be that the bollards are very handsome and appropriate. Certainly there was careful attention to detail – for example the delightful new “foot” at the end of the pavement railings.

The Council's Built Heritage Officers were not entirely happy with the pointing of the mortar between the setts (cobble). They would have preferred it to be deeper. However the Highway Engineers insisted that this could be a hazard for pedestrians. Wonderfully, the former tarmac triangle has been relaid with setts and, as intended, the whole thing looks as though it might always have been there.

Yellow lines inside the bollards await experience and establishment of any real need. So far parking there does seem spasmodic rather than persistent.

“Spin-Off”

Mrs Vivienne Rae-Ellis of the Circus generously and kindly noted that closure of the Crescent has markedly reduced traffic in the Circus. This is not just buses using less of it, but other vehicles too. This is excellent news.

Devon in Somerset?

Excavations in the front courtyard of No 2 exposed, for all to see, a rich red earth soil, more typical of South Devon than North East Somerset. Whether this is a natural – but very localised phenomenon or some special infilling is a puzzle. Is there a geologist in the Crescent?

Double Deep Blitz

No 2 was one of the two houses demolished in the infamous “Baedeker” raids during WWII, (the other being No 17). It was restored (by the Council, we believe) to perfection outside, but inside is another story. Each floor was made identical, with concrete floors, a central well and staircase and non-Georgian rooms. The aim seems to have been to provide the maximum number of housing “units”, rather than restore period room proportions etc. No doubt priorities were different in the immediate post-war period. However, we hear that during recent examinations, a double-depth basement has been discovered. That is another level below the normal basement/courtyard. Unfortunately it is filled with blitz debris and it is not known whether this will be excavated.

Tip-Top Architects

London's famous Soho House Club and its nearer country annex, trendy Babington House, in Frome, employed the award winning architect Simon Morray-Jones for their refurbishments. He has also been engaged on a house in the Crescent. Observant residents may have glimpsed subtly lit statuary in the first floor windows.

The “Indie” Thing

More and more houses divided into flats are finding that an “Independent” management company is the better way of running the common parts, disputes, insurance, etc. West of England Management Company Limited now runs, as Secretary, etc, several houses.

Filming

The Society's funds have benefitted considerably over the years from donations squeezed out of film etc companies who have used the Crescent for advertising, main films and videos. This revenue has been facilitated by our excellent relationships with the Bath Film Office, established in 1995. Now a new commissioner, Maggie Ainley, has taken on the job (in October), filling the gap left by Richard Angell's departure, and beating 40 other candidates to the post.

Bath and Wiltshire may also benefit from the creation of the "Wessex Film and Media Office" headed by Sarah Eastel, who brought *Pride and Prejudice* to Lacock.

"The Last Word in Elegance"

- or so the brochure says. House of Bath, recently established in the former Evans and Owen building below Alfred Street was reported in an earlier Newsletter for their less than stunning "Royal Crescent Chaise Longue". Now they market a "Royal Crescent Ottoman". A resistible gift at £249.95.

Lawn-in Norman

Storms over the recent John Major memoirs just mentioned the crisis meeting of European Finance Ministers in Bath in September 1992 at which there was a strong belief that Germany should devalue the D-mark or cut interest rates.

The book fails to mention that the meeting took place at the Royal Crescent Hotel - with a photo on a fenced-off piece of our Lawn, which the Cabinet Office, the Police and the Hotel denied doing....!! Apparently despite Norman Lamont's filibustering discussions, discussions were cut short by the fact of a previous booking for the Hotel's Conference Room!

Millennium Picture

September 12th saw a fine gathering of Crescent and Marlborough Building residents on the Crescent Lawn for one of the admirable series of Bath Chronicle Millennium pictures. Covering almost all of Bath Neighbourhoods, the Chronicle team - on an open-topped bus, no less! - took a nice shot, featured in the paper a few weeks later. It was nice to join with our neighbours for this event.



Roll-Up! Roll-Up! The Crescent is For Sale

Early October saw an unprecedented number of Crescent properties for sale. Ranging from one Garden Flat at £375,000 to a "two-courtyard" flat at £250,000 prices ranged over a narrow but high spectrum. No news yet, though, of any takers.....

Railings and Ha Ha Projects

Progress on these projects has been delayed, though Jenny Hardisty had a bizarre experience when taking photographs of the railings in their present state. Finding herself marooned inside the railings she sought succour from the bollard erectors! They rose to the challenge magnificently, putting up a mini-pyramid of ladders and ropes, helping her over the whole thing (some ten feet in the air) and – with one bound – she was free! After the cheering had died down Jenny was forced to admit “I’ve done some funny things in my time, but never anything like this – and so public, too!”

Car Fashion

James Bond-ish types (of both sexes) are flocking to buy the famous agent’s retro-style sports car. One well known resident bought one, showed it to a fellow Member of the Royal Crescent Club and she immediately rushed out and bought an exact copy. Now another prominent Officer of the Society has shown an interest. Soon they’ll be quite common.

Parking Permits

B&NES has plans to double the cost of Residents Parking Permits from £50 to £100, without a shred of justification, were quickly scotched by Councillors, besieged with objections by residents and the media. The increase approved was to £60 per annum, not unreasonable given the number of years it has remained static.

Michael Daw
No 10 Royal Crescent

Terrine de légumes aux trois couleurs **THREE-COLOURED VEGETABLE TERRINE**

You can use any vegetables you like in this recipe – broccoli, chicory, lettuce, celery, and so on. You can cook them in small individual moulds or ramekins instead of a terrine, and serve as a vegetable garnish with a main course.

Serves 10

1lb (500g) spinach
1lb (500g) cauliflower
1lb (500g) carrots
6 eggs
10 fl oz (300ml) double cream, whipped until thick
½ oz (15g) salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
½ teaspoon nutmeg

Cook each of the vegetables in boiling salted water separately. Strain them, squeeze out all the liquid and liquidise separately.

Beat 2 eggs into each vegetable and fold a third of the whipped cream into each. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg.

Butter a terrine and put in the vegetables in alternate layers. Cook in a bain-marie at gas mark 2, 300°F (150°C) for 1 hour. Allow to cool. Serve chilled or hot, as you like.

Veronique Oswald
No 28a Royal Crescent

CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

Overheard in the Crescent.....

"Now over there in the middle is the very expensive Royal Crescent Hotel, it is where all the world's foreign ministers bring their fancy women".

Looking at a group of Japanese tourists, a woman said *"Snap, snap, snap, it gets on your nerves. My doctor says that these cameras are full of radiation".*

"How do people in these high rooms put their electric light bulbs in their centre light?"

A pucker man with a group of friends *"Now this is the Royal Crescent, dreadfully over-rated I think".*

"My aunt told me that she did a lot of her courting up here during the War – we loved her because she always gave us kids plenty of chewing gum".

John Carrier
No 5 Royal Crescent

ELEGANT BATH HOME OUTSHONE BY A DOLL'S HOUSE

Sales Statistics

Phillips, Bath June 14

Number of Lots: 490

Number of Lots Sold: 95 per cent

Sale Total: £164,000

Buyer's premium: 15/10 per cent

BY ROLAND ARKELL

The single vendor sale is becoming something of a rarity on the UK auction scene so it was with some pleasure that the Bath branch of the Phillips saleroom network could offer in mid-June the contents (give or take the odd piece of family furniture) of 25 Royal Crescent in Bath, removed for the convenience of sale to the Old King Street salerooms.

The house (one of only half a dozen left in the Crescent yet to be converted into flats) had been the home of the late Mr Reggie Forrester – solicitor, cricket enthusiast and collector of ceramics and works of art – since the 1940s. A great majority of their property had been acquired at least two generations ago.

Jewel of his collection was certainly a mid-18th century Staffordshire saltglaze teapot made to a most unusual design. Camels and houses are a relative commonplace, but this vessel was of an octagonal form with a lion finial and a serpent handle and moulded to the side panels with exotic flora and fauna and a view of Admiral Edward Vernon standing against a view of Fort Chacre and (his finest hour) the Battle of Portobello.

It had sustained a crack to the body but the specialist trade, more than happy to tolerate minor damage to acquire such an obvious rarity, took it to £7,000 (estimate £1,000-£1,500).



Perhaps the choice entry among the Oriental porcelain was a set of eight 9½" (24cm) high Canton Qianlong porcelain figures of the Immortals decorated in polychrome enamels and raised on turquoise enamel bases.

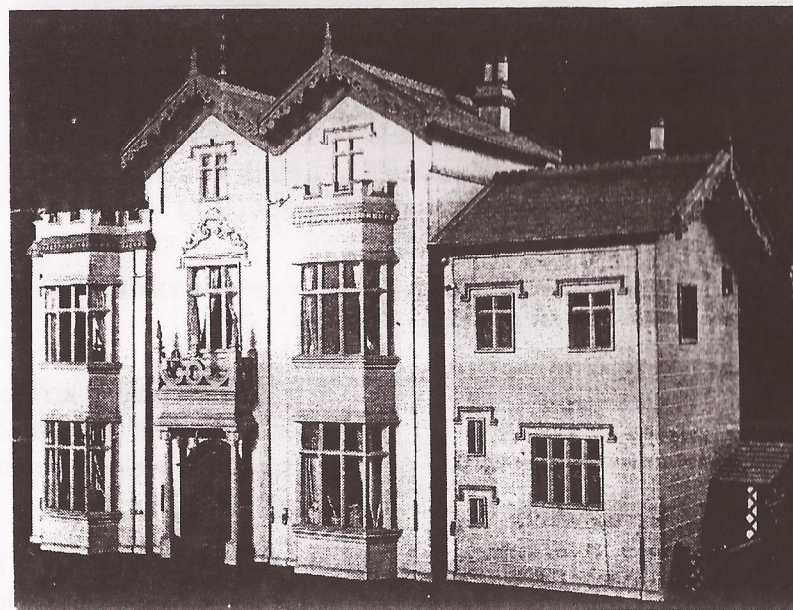
Unlike much of the Canton enamel and Chinese Export porcelain in the Forrester collection, the majority of this group had survived in good condition – sufficient to merit £4,000.

Two Edwardian Art Nouveau-style photograph frames excelled among the silver – 8x11" (20x28cm) double frame by William Hutton & Sons Ltd, 1903 embellished with blue and green enamels and a single frame with stylised shrub decoration and the inscription *For Auld Lang Syne*, Birmingham 1904, and probably a Liberty's production. Estimated at £400-500 and £200-300 respectively, both demonstrated the strength of this particular niche market, selling for £2,600 (UK silver dealer) and £1,200 (Italian trade).

The best of the period standards proved to be a George III mahogany chest-on-chest distinguished by a key pattern cornice and reeded canted corners, raised on ogee bracket feet. It made £3,600.

Number 25 Royal Crescent had been a fine place to live but perhaps the best furnished property in the Crescent was one which formed part of this catalogue: a Jacobean-style dolls' house built by a cabinetmaker in Crewkerne in the 1920s and given to Mrs Forrester when she was a teenager.

The illustration of the house gives some idea of its quality and decoration (some remarkable details such as the five painted glass panels to the bay window specially commissioned from Morris & Co were enough to merit £2,700) but of equal note were the furnishings which accompanied it. They were given their own miniature, 6" (15cm) high catalogue.



Few entries failed to improve upon estimate but how about a group of 18 miniature potted plants made in painted metal and housed in a variety of painted wooden containers by one Beatrice Hindley in the 1920s?

Hindley – who studied botany at Kew Gardens – is something of a darling among dolls' house collectors and well known for her attention to detail. Expected to bring around £200-300, this group were competed to no less than £2,800.

Also singled out for particular attention from the £14,000-totalling selection were a lot of comprising pieces of miniature leather bound luggage and cane ware baskets (£520); a Limoges coffee set among a lot of porcelain miniatures (£780) and a pair of hallmarked silver five-light candelabra with detachable branches, just 2¼" (6cm) high, dated 1925 (£420).

We welcome new residents to the Crescent:

| | |
|---|-------|
| Mr Anthony & Professor Brigitte Mitchell | No 20 |
| Mr C Price | No 25 |
| Ms S Toye | No 25 |
| Mr and Mrs Rogar Kreitman | No 27 |

'Sovereigns and Soldiers'

Lady Maureen Barraclough's eagerly awaited book has finally arrived. Entitled *Sovereigns and Soldiers on Horseback: bronze equestrian monuments from Ancient Rome to our times*, this will be welcome news to horse and history lovers alike.

Sovereigns and Soldiers is available from G Heywood Hill Ltd, 10 Curzon Street, London W1Y 7FJ (Tel: 020 7269 0647) @ £9.99, plus £2.50 p&p. why not order a copy for Christmas?