

# THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY Newsletter



Issue No. 14

Spring 1990

## What the future holds

Our Chairman Sir John Barraclough notes the decisions at the Annual General Meeting

**T**HE AGM was moderately well attended and the key items on the accounts and committee membership were agreed. The composition of the committee for the current year is shown elsewhere, but individual changes were the election of Mr Graham Wadsworth (No 3) and the resignation of Miss Gill Eschele (No 29), to whom our thanks were extended for her painstaking work as our Remembrancer in maintaining records of the residents and society members.

**T**HE SUBSCRIPTION of £5 having been agreed, further discus-

sion in committee led us to delay an increase in the Lawn Fund subscription until next year. We judged that we could hold the line for this year but that an inevitable increase next year should be based on better forecast expenditure figures than are currently available. Furthermore there seems some room for rationalisation between the two funds. More news on the committee's deliberations in next winter's newsletter.

**T**RAFFIC DAMAGE, following our representations, has been given serious consideration by Bath and

Avon Councils; with site surveys, test drillings and the like. However, a definitive response cannot be expected until the dust has settled on the re-organisation of local Government finance. So with Avon Council 'capped' it seems likely that we are in for another year of 'make and mend'. A consultants' report on city centre traffic, commissioned jointly by Bath and Avon, is due to be published in the next two months and your committee intends to return to the attack around that time. Meanwhile our Ward Councillors, who joined us at the end of the AGM, have pledged support for any realistic measures to alleviate traffic/pollution damage to the Crescent.

**C**ARD-PARKING in the Crescent was also discussed at the AGM. Broadly speaking the City Council is opposed to this Avon proposal. The committee will keep it under review but the interests of residents as between car owners, garage owners, non-car owners etc, are so diverse that we are unlikely to be able to represent a consensus beyond obvious points of safety and conservation.

**T**ALKING BUSES, following last year's campaign, should be significantly muted by this summer. Three lines of defence have been mounted:

- Better distribution of the speakers around the buses (being tried out in co-operation with the operators).

- Application for a Bye-Law restraining the noise level (already with the Home Office).

- An amendment to the Control of Pollution Act aimed, in the longer term, to include noise from mobile sources.

Given these promised alleviations, the weight of the coach traffic still remains a major concern as we have several times represented to both Bath and Avon. This will be a central part of our next salvo at the time of the city-centre traffic report. Meanwhile, if things go to plan, we should be spared the worst of last year's aggravation.

**M**R MICHAEL DAW, Vice-Chairman, will once again be liaising with the Festival Opening Night Committee and endeavouring to keep the organisers' and residents' interests in line. He has obtained some advance information which is printed elsewhere in this newsletter and further details will probably come round as a flyer. Meanwhile we have had helpful talks with the Police about ensuring access through Brock Street for emergency services. Members will know that we are designated as a 'No Drinking In Public' area and the Police will be enforcing that prohibition among the crowd on festival opening night. So any residents wanting to watch events from outside with a glass in their hands should take care to stay between the railings of their front door thresholds: that area is deemed to be within the curtilage of the house and therefore outside the prohibited zone.

**C**OMMUNITY POLICING arrangements are now changed and we no longer have a single designated policeman. Instead, Sgt Ephgrave heads a section of three constables who will do their best, individually or collectively, to help us with policing matters. Trespass being a civil, rather than a criminal, offence police assis-



*When the scaffolding goes up to corset your house, then your troubles are likely to begin*



## Trials of restoration

Major-General Charles West details some of the unexpected problems

As everyone in The Royal Crescent must know, Nos 13 and 14 endured an unpleasant summer corseted in scaffolding in order to make major repairs to the roof, chimneys, stonework, interior shafts and drainpipes. Generally, things went well but we learnt some lessons from our ordeal, which I put down for the benefit of residents who may face a similar experience.

We got one thing right from the start. We designated our property agent to handle the project. He arranged surveys, dealt with Council officials then, after competitive bidding, chose the contractor, handled the finances and the piles of paperwork and saw the project through to the end. Our agent was our 'point' man throughout and communicated with the company's boss.

We were fortunate that we obtained the services of a widely respected lo-

cal contractor experienced in work on eighteenth century buildings, who had a reputation for quality work which he must maintain. Only a few years ago a shoddy, patchwork job had been done to the roof of No 13 and 14 and we now paid dearly for that penny-wise cowboy work. As with most things in life, you get what you pay for and while our work was expensive, a first rate job has been done that will stand for years to come.

But we tripped up over the scaffolding. While the firm erected sturdy scaffolding, their workers were impertinent and insolent and made our lives miserable. They intimidated the ladies living alone with requests - nay, demands - for tea, coffee, and cold drinks and their language made even this old soldier's ears burn. They insulted ladies in the street, trampled on flowers and bushes in the garden, left gates and doors open and threw their

food packages wherever they pleased.

Before work starts residents should sit down with their agents and make it clear that certain standards of decent behaviour will be required of workmen. These should be written into the contract. A few items for inclusion are:

- No radios on the site.
- No unnecessary shouting, cat-calling or foul language.
- No discarding of food or drink packages on the premises.
- No requests of the residents for food or drink.
- No use of The Royal Crescent lawn.
- No putting of motorbikes on the pavement.
- No storage of construction materials on the pavement.
- No leaving of construction material on scaffolding outside windows.
- No work before 8.00 am.

Constant vigilance is required to ensure that workmen tidy up at the close of each day's work. Here, that was not done and, one Friday night during a storm, food wrappers blocked a drain, forcing floods of water into our stairwells. On another occasion rolls of heavy, expensive lead were left on the pavement. On the Saturday night a group of Bath gentlemen, moved by a strong civic sense of order and co-operation, decided to remove it. The police were called and, in the ensuing *melée*, a policeman was driven down by the

crooks. If the materials had been made secure, this would not have happened.

If work is to be done on chimneys, fireplace openings in *all* flats, including neighbouring flats, must be made secure. Many of these chimney ducts 'grew'd like Topsy' and a neighbour's flat received unwelcome piles of dust from one of our chimneys. Before a fireplace is sealed, gas and electric fires must be protected.

When work is in progress, care must be taken to keep flats, windows and doors secured at all times. The security factor is obvious, but the beautiful Bath stone cre-

ates enormous amounts of dust and it will get through even locked windows.

It can, of course, be oppressive to keep windows closed in the summer, but it is not wise to open windows near scaffolding.

Does all this apply to everyone in The Royal Crescent? If they think not, a number may be in for a rude shock.

As I walk my little dog along the ha-ha, I cannot but look at the magnificent structure. What I see of the condition of the roofs shocks me.

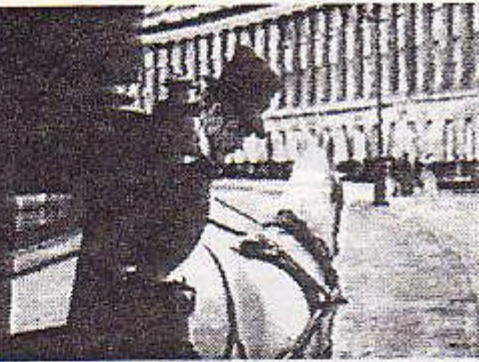
Admittedly, I am not a trained surveyor, but as a US academy graduate, I am an engineer and even my untrained eye tells me that half The Royal Crescent roofs need some attention and five or six are crying out for intensive care.

So set this article aside in a safe place, you may need it sooner than you think. ❖

## 'Half the Royal Crescent roofs need some attention'

# How the Victorians lived

by  
Dr Monica E. Baly



While we are used to attempts by film companies to recapture life in the late eighteenth century in Bath, little attention is given to life in the mid-nineteenth century. But because of the availability of census returns and other archive material, it is easier to reconstruct the life of that period, and visualise who lived here before us.

The original contract for the house and stables of No 19 was between John Wood and John Jefferys, gentleman, in 1771. John Jefferys appears to have paid the rates until 1803, but because there was no census return, we know nothing about his household. In 1804, the property appears to have been sold to Elizabeth Walmesley who paid the rates. I make this deduction because in 1840, when the rate book gives us both the name of the rate-payer and the owners, she is listed as both. The Walmesley family appears to have owned the house until nearly the end of the century. Elizabeth ceased paying rates in 1840, so she probably died.

In 1841, we have a census return. No 19 and the coach house were occu-

*The Victorians' values and their way of life in the Crescent with servants, including coachmen and grooms, can be reconstructed from the extensive archive material available.*

pied by William Foskett, aged 75 years and 'of independent means', his wife Charlotte, aged 60, and his unmarried daughter Charlotte, aged 35 years. Also living in the house were four young servants. By the census return of 1851, William seems to have died and his wife Charlotte, now aged 75 years (sic) is the 'head of the house', which she occupies with her unmarried daughter and five servants: a housekeeper, a cook, a lady's maid, a butler and a housemaid. These are living-in servants, but the garden is quite large, so there was surely a part-time gardener and probably a groom who lived out. The census of 1841 gives one third of Bath's working population as being engaged in domestic service.

By the return of 1861, it seems that Mrs Foskett has died and the daughter Charlotte is now 'head' and listed as a 'landowner' and is then living with a cousin, Edward Wayne, an undergrad-

# The Advantages of

**I**t was decided at the Annual General Meeting that, for financial convenience, the subscription year should run from May 1. Subscriptions for 1990 are now due. Last year the General Fund for the Society showed a deficit and it was decided to raise the subscription to £5 a year. But please see the Chairman's Notes on the Lawn Fund element and the need for its increase next time round.

The Lawn Fund Annual Subscription is:

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

Payments to the Lawn Fund and the Society can be combined. For example, a resident in a single flat wishing to join the Society and to pay the Lawn Fund subscription should make a cheque payable to The Royal Crescent Society and Lawn Fund for £12 and send it to the Treasurer, Mr Ian Nesbitt, 3 The Royal Crescent. Please include your name and address and tell Mr Nesbitt if you need a key to the lawn. It is hoped that keyholders will make use of the lawn.

The Royal Crescent Society was formed in 1973 to act as a forum for residents, to preserve the Crescent and its environs and to resist its exploitation as a backdrop for all manner of commercial enterprises.

The Society manages the maintenance of the Crescent lawn, railings, gates and notices, and through persuasion has helped to clear the sky-line of unsightly TV arrays and encourage the use of roof-space aerials. It inaugurated the Basement Garden Competition which has had a marked effect on the basements. In 1982 it gave its support to the Theatre Royal and its name is on the Roll of Honour. Then, in 1987, the Society, after a long and costly campaign culminating in a question being asked in the House of Lords, succeeded in getting long-distance coaches banned from the Crescent. In 1989, the Society was largely instrumental in preventing more houses in the Crescent being turned into a hotel. Now the Society is battling to silence the talking buses and restrict the overall weight of traffic.

In December 1766, part of the Hayes Lower Furlong, which became the Royal Crescent lawn, was left by John Wood, 'his heirs and assigns' as an open space as far as the ha-ha for the benefit of residents of the Royal Crescent and is, as it were, the green cushion on which the sublime architecture sits.

We know to our cost that if the railings are not kept in repair and the gates locked, the lawn becomes like Hampstead Heath. Before the restoration in 1975 the lawn was criss-

# Society Membership



*The Crescent in its rundown state between the World Wars, before there was a Society dedicated to preserving it. Enlargements, left, show the poor state of the railings and the curious chimney, one of three, then at the front of No 30.*

crossed with paths and was a public picnic ground - and this was before the phenomenal rise in tourism.

We know that there are still incursions by unauthorised people on to the lawn, which is to some extent inevitable while the ha-ha is open and low. John Wood did not visualise the cult of sun-bathing. However, for much of the year we do look on to this magnificent sweep in peace and quiet-

ness. The price of this amenity is the Lawn Fund and eternal vigilance. If you are not a member of The Royal Crescent Society and have not paid your Lawn Fund subscription, please fill in the enclosed slip and send it to the Treasurer, Ian Nesbitt at No 3.

In supporting the Society you will also be indirectly helping the preservation of the beauty and amenity of our famed World-Heritage city. ❖

from  
page 5

uate from Cambridge, who is presumably away much of the time; again, five living-in servants are listed. Ten years later, Charlotte, now 69 years old, is living alone with four servants. The butler has gone, but the faithful housekeeper and cook, who have lived in the house since 1851, remain together with two new maids.

In 1880 Charlotte, then aged 75 years, must have died because the ratepayer becomes Ann Phipps, who appears on the census form of 1881

### There were eight live-in servants for a family of five

listed as 'the wife of an officer' and living with her three children under the age of 9 years and an unmarried cousin, Miss S. C. Wayne. Is this the sister of Edward, who stayed there 20 years before? This is interesting because the Fosketts were not the owners of the house, but the lease seems to have stayed within the family and with it some of the servants who have become family retainers. The cook and the housekeeper are the same and the housemaid, Emma Hales, now becomes the nurse, presumably for the children. But the interesting thing about this return is that for two adults and three small children there are now eight living-in servants: housekeeper, cook, lady's maid, nurse, three housemaids and a butler: again, there were probably other part-time employees

such as a gardener. We have not got the census returns for 1891 yet, but the Phipps family seems to have gone by 1889.

As I write in what John Wood called 'the garret', in what was probably the housekeeper Mrs Whatley's room, who, like me, lived in it for thirty years, I ponder what life was like then. Where did they all sleep? Was the front room in 'the garret' a dormitory for the housemaids and the nurse? Did the butler sleep in the basement? Did some sleep in the coach house? Where was the nursery? Who taught the children? Was Miss Wayne, aged 49 years, a poor relation who, rather like a Trollope character, helped with the children? And what became of her? What did eight servants do all day? Did the nurse-maid take the children on the Crescent lawn and meet other nursemaids? If the census returns so far studied are anything to go by, there must have been some hundred to one hundred and fifty servants living in the Crescent. Did they know one another?

Looking back over the long tenancy of Charlotte Foskett for forty years, one wonders what her life was like. In 1841, did she read aloud to Papa in the morning room? Was she content, or frustrated? Why did she remain unmarried? When she was the head of the house, what did she do in Bath? Was she engaged in charitable work, or did she have political leanings? Did she know her neighbours, and to what extent was the Crescent a community?

The census returns are a splendid, unwitting testimony to the social and economic life of the nineteenth century. As the century advances and afflu-



ence increases so do the number of servants. While the owners and ratepayers generally come from other parts of the country, the servants are mainly drawn from Somerset and Gloucester, and one wonders if, when they had a day off, they were able to get home. Another surprising feature is the large numbers of widows and unmarried women listed as 'head' of the household, highlighting the difference in the age of expectancy, the death rates higher for boys than girls, and the high emigration rates and the demands from the services for men.

No 19 for a long time seems to have been occupied by what we would call 'a nuclear family', but other returns tell a different story and show that the extended family was common. In 1861, in No 15, there were two sons-in-law, two daughters-in-law and a visitor living with Sarah Drinkwater, aged 75 and described as a 'Fundholder' from Ireland. There were also five living-in servants. While, for all we know, the extended family may have been temporary, it is perhaps as well that there was no poll tax in 1861. ♦  
*My thanks to David Kirk for first sending me the census returns for No 19.*

**Restoration Grants.** Your chairman and editor attended a seminar in the Guildhall on the arrangements for making joint grants of up to 40 per cent towards the cost of repairing selected historic buildings in the Bath conservation area. There will be an article on the subject in the next newsletter. Anyone contemplating such work should seek advice from the Department of Environmental Services, Abbey Chambers.

## Let's light our candles for the Festival



The Opening Night Celebrations of the 1990 Bath International Festival, which opens on May 25, will include a major musical event in Royal Victoria Park below The Royal Crescent Lawn.

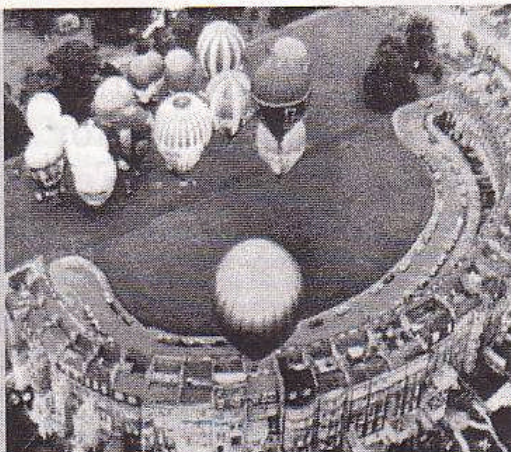
The organisers have been in close touch with your Committee and have given us advance information on the participants:

- Knights of Royal England Jousting.
- Royal Regiment of Wales Band.
- Bristol Unicorn Youth Band.
- RN Hornpipe and Cutlass Team.
- Bath Spa Band.
- A Jazz Band.

There will be the same well-controlled and high-quality firework display and, as approved at the AGM, the Society has given permission for the Madrigal Singers to be situated on our lawn, just inside the railings opposite the Hotel. The AGM agreed that this was an appropriate, very limited use of the lawn and would also ease congestion around No 1. The Society has requested the usual arrangements regarding car parking and programmes.

Last year the display of lighted candles in the windows of Crescent houses was very disappointing - only about

*Hot-air balloons will once again be seen over The Royal Crescent in May during the Bath Festival, taking off from the park, just below our lawn.*



half were lighted. Other nearby streets did better. Let us try and set the standard this year.

This part of the opening night and the fireworks will be on HTV.

During the Festival, several other events will take place near us:

- Royal Crescent Hotel, lunchtime and evening concerts.

- May 22-June 3, Funfair, Royal Victoria Park.

- May 27, RAC Classic Car Run in Royal Avenue. Details, J. Porter, 057-286273.

- May 28-June 1, Bath Balloon Festival, Royal Victoria Park, below our lawn.

- May 26-June 2, Children's Festival, Royal Victoria Park. Details, R. Cory, 448243.

- June 3, Kite Festival, Approach Golf Course.

- June 10, Bath Micro Car Rally, Royal Victoria Park.

- June 16, Bath Cycling Clubs Festival, Royal Victoria Park. ♦

#### Future events near the Crescent

- June 23-24, Grand Festival of Steam, Lansdown.

- August 8, British Airways Royal Polo International, Lansdown.

- August 16, Police charity Event, Royal Victoria Park.

- August 18, Barnardo's Roman Event, Royal Victoria Park.

- August 19, Triumph Sports Car Club Annual Concours, Royal Avenue. Details: Anthony New 0272-651286.

stance is not appropriate unless an intrusion degenerates into an affray or worse. This is of course a major restraint in coping with week-end intrusions on our lawn. Nevertheless, we will continue to do our best to contain that nuisance and our thanks are due to Major-General West (No 14) for his successful remonstrations with trespassers during the recent warm weather.

**C**HRISTMAS DINNER for members was held at the Lansdown Grove Hotel and voted a successful and happy venture, for which our thanks go to the organiser Mrs Barbara Walker. We will 'trail' the idea again in our winter issue and, given sufficient support, will hope to repeat the success. ♦

### OBITUARY

#### **Mrs Bertha Green**

WE ANNOUNCE with regret the death of Mrs Bertha Green of 19 The Royal Crescent, suddenly, but peacefully, at Clyde House on March 22. Mrs Green had lived in the Crescent for 13 years and before that for many years in the Circus and was a well-known and well-loved figure in the neighbourhood. A talented musician, Beth had been at one time a frequent accompanist for local recitals; it was Beth who gave me the recollections of the Crescent in its heyday of musical soirées and in the early days of the Festival. An active member of Christ Church in Julian Road and a member of the Mother's Union, Beth will be sorely missed. The Crescent will be poorer without her. *MEB.*

## FBRA NEWS

**T**HE Federation of Bath Residents Associations - FBRA for short - is an informal grouping of bodies representing residents in the principal Heritage areas of Bath who meet two or three times a year to discuss matters of common concern, exchange news and helpful ideas and encourage debate and action on a range of issues.

Besides our Society, membership currently includes Lansdown Crescent, Syon Hill Place, St James' Square, Catharine Place, The Circus, Circus Mews, Marlborough Buildings, and Green Park. The Society has received much support from FBRA and, in turn, has lent its support on other nearby planning matters. Space does not permit a full list of the matters discussed, but Vice-Chairman Michael Daw reported highlights at the AGM and will continue to keep members up-to-date with FBRA's activities.

### *Why not give us your views on life in the Crescent?*

ALTHOUGH the response to the newsletter has been favourable, there has been little active response or criticism. Are we all satisfied - or too polite? The Editor would welcome letters and article or comments on aspects of life in The Royal Crescent. It may be the finest sweep of Palladian domestic architecture in Europe, but living here has its penalties and we would like your views. If you require further copies of the newsletter, please telephone the Editor, Dr Monica E Baly at Bath 424736.

## Society News

**Officers and Committee.** The Committee, as confirmed at the Annual General Meeting is *Chairman:* Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough, No 28; *Vice-Chairman:* Mr Michael Daw, No 10; *Secretary:* Mrs Annabel Trechmann, No 5; *Treasurer:* Mr Ian Nesbitt, No 3; *Editor:* Dr Monica E. Baly, No 19; *Members:* Mrs Barbara Walker, No 10, Mr Bill Wallis, No 28, Mr Graham Wadsworth, No 3; *Co-opted Member:* Dr Peter Woodward.

**Basement Garden Competition.** Mr Stanley Hitt, Bath City Council's Horticultural Adviser, in presenting the awards to last year's winners in the competition, commented that in spite of the long, hot summer the standard was better than ever. This year Bath is making a great effort to win back the Britain in Bloom award, and one of the reasons it failed last year was the lack of residents' and company involvement. In the past, residents of The Royal Crescent have won City awards; this year the competition will be tougher than ever, but we hope to have a winner again. The basement gardens not only give pleasure and interest to the residents, they seem to be a constant source of admiration to visitors. We are grateful to the late Mr and Mrs Otley for inaugurating this competition.

**Window Glazing Bars.** There has been little response to Dr Peter Woodward's article in the Winter newsletter, 'To Restore or Not To Restore?'. However, with more and more houses putting back glazing bars, the question

is, should we have a drive to harmonise the whole Crescent? At the same time, the Bath Preservation Trust is carrying out a further study on the first floor window sills and the date at which they were lowered. If any resident on the *piano nobile* is willing for a representative of the Trust to inspect the window sills on the first floor, would they please let Dr Woodward (c/o No 1 The Royal Crescent), or the Editor know. This is merely to assist with research, and co-operation would be welcome.

**The Royal Crescent Hotel.** Following the takeover of Norfolk Hotels, The Royal Crescent Hotel is now part of the Queens Moat House group, which owns more than 200 hotels. We welcome Mr Simon Coombe as the new general manager, following the departure of Michael Cavilla whom we wish well in his new post. Mr Coombe was previously manager at Kent's Eastwell Manor Hotel and he plans to win the Automobile Association's red star for the hotel.

**The Royal British Legion Appeal**  
A total of £98.65 was collected in The Royal Crescent for the Poppy Appeal last November. Cmdr Wishart thanks the residents for their generosity in achieving this splendid result. ♦

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