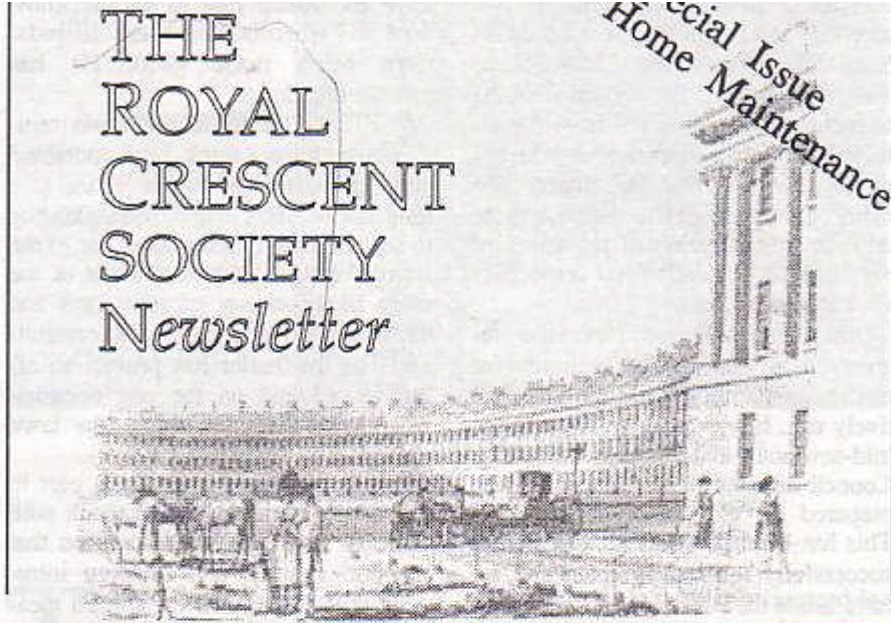


# THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY Newsletter

Special Issue  
Home Maintenance



Issue No. 15

Winter 1990

## Heading for victory

Our Chairman Sir John Barraclough provides a front-line report

**I**T HAS BEEN a busy summer for your Committee. Much has been afoot, most of it positive, but as always much has yet to be brought to conclusion. I can only report in relative shorthand.

Our campaign (and that of the Circus and Widcombe Associations among others) against tourist bus nuisance brought some significant improvements. Firstly, a diffused speaker system in the buses, then broadcast commentaries were stopped altogether in The Crescent and Circus; finally police intervention restrained them from stop-

ping on the double yellow lines at either end of The Crescent. These moves have given us a much more tolerable noise regime, but the 'weight of traffic' factor remains and other areas of residential Bath are still suffering from the broadcast commentaries.

The law offers no restraint on the routing or frequency of these tourist buses; but as a result of the indignant campaigning of residents there have been meetings (which I have attended to represent our views) with our MP, Chris Patten, councillors and officials.

The upshot after much valuable dis-

discussion is that there are to be two meetings between the Secretaries of State for Environment (Chris Patten) and of Transport: the second meeting to include representatives from the affected residents' associations which I or the Vice-Chairman will attend. The main objective being to secure a more realistic interpretation of the terms of the 1985 De-regulation Act (especially routing and frequency).

Out of all this the issue has re-emerged as to where the authority for traffic regulation should most effectively rest. It was ceded to Avon in the mid-seventies but recently the City Council directed that a case should be prepared for it to revert to the City. This has been tried before, but always successfully resisted by Avon and we have asked the Bath Federation of Residents' Associations to take a view of its merits and if in favour to consider mounting a broad campaign in support.

As the need for restraint on tourism, and balancing heritage conservation with commercial and residential interests gathers way at national level, there are grounds for cautious optimism about achieving our aims. There are certainly immediate grounds for appreciation of the collective and individual efforts that have been made in our local campaign. Especially, thanks are due to our very busy MP, to councillors and to Council officers who have given much time to these difficult problems.

**C**ARRIAGEWAY and railing repairs have, as I forecast in our last newsletter, remained in abeyance. It was pointless to press this matter while Avon wrestled with its major charge-capping. I have reminded the Director of Highways of our forbear-

ance and asked him to let me know how and when he sees these dilapidations being made good. He has promised to do so.

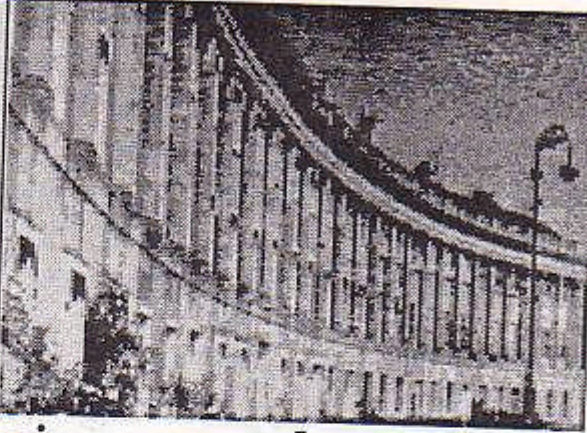
**A**FTER a turbulent start, lawn intrusions have, I think, been contained at an encouragingly low level and in a long hot summer it has been pleasing to see residents making more use of the lawn. We have looked at some of the more likely causes of intrusions and discussed further measures in committee. The loudhailer has proved an effective aid and on the one occasion when we called the police, the lawn was quickly cleared.

Foreign students also play a part in this trespass and we are in touch with some of the language schools on that account. Loutish and drunken intrusions will always call for special measures but happily there have been few such instances this year. The experience of this season has been promising and we hope to build on it for the future.

**T**HE ha-ha, beloved of 18th Century country house landscape gardeners, is a feature of special interest in our urban setting, where it marks the limit of our lawn. Your Committee has been giving thought to its restoration and preliminary soundings are encouraging on the financial and practical aspects.

We have sought guidance from the National Trust and now await further advice from the Architectural and Building department of our University. Your Committee feel that restoration of the ha-ha walls is a conservation responsibility in which we should take the lead. In addition to those aspects,  
*☛ Continued on page 10*

*Who would wish to be cursed for not looking after part of the nation's heritage?*



## Managing your house

Bill Wallis offers some advice on the business of looking after your home

**T**HE ROYAL CRESCENT is a terrace; so, in a sense, it is one great, long building, divided vertically and horizontally by party walls and floors into a warren of dwelling units as madly different from one another as are the backsides of each individual house.

A dozen years ago there were fewer small units in the terrace. Rented apartments outnumbered leaseholds and the maintenance of the fabric of individual houses would have fallen to landlords and freeholders. The rare long leaseholder would have had to come to some ad hoc arrangement with the neighbours as and when the need arose. In an atmosphere of gracefully decaying gentility a dozen years ago, one muddled along.

But the yearning to be a Crescent dweller revived along with the new smart tourist industry, and, over the last decade, more and more flats and

maisonettes were craftily insinuated into the noble terrace, to be sold as long leaseholds. The average age of inhabitants decreased, property values went up, and soon apartment owners had some incentive to find an inexpensive but efficient way of protecting the value of their individual apartments by ensuring that the fabric of the whole house was kept in good repair. Oh, and of course one would not wish to be cursed by posterity for allowing part of the nation's heritage to fall down.

Under the guidance of local solicitors, who charged keenly for their not always expert services, maintenance and management companies were formed - so if *you* now live in a house divided into flats, most of which are leasehold, then the chances are you will already have an interest in a Management Company. If you don't, perhaps you should think about forming one - or, if your house isn't divided in-

to flats, you need not go on reading this unless you care to know how the other half contrives to live next door.

A management company tries to ensure that, for example, the first floor apartment is protected from the overflowing internal gutters that threaten to engulf the entire third floor; that basement dwellers are never struck down by falling baluster fragments; and that the maintenance of the garden wall is properly apportioned - among other things. On acquiring an apartment in a house where a management company operates, a purchaser will be required, as part of the transaction, to become a shareholder in the company and, automatically, a director who has a voice in determining which parts of the whole building are common responsibility and which individual.

To some people, fresh from living in seclusion and detachment, this aspect of communal dwelling can be onerous and irritating. There's the annual maintenance contribution to be decided; and then the whole building must be insured - arriving at a proper estimate of the cost of rebuilding a house in this unique terrace is the responsibility of the management committee, and the subject of lengthy discussions over the years. What is the cost of replacing the irreplaceable? Insurance companies are happy to leave us guessing.

But, in all seriousness, if individual dwellers fail to combine to preserve the fabric of these Crescent houses.

then, when the sharp-suits seek planning permission for a change use to hotels come along, their contention that only big business millionaires can afford to keep the Crescent standing will carry some weight.

Finally, in some situations where a house or pair of houses is divided into leasehold flats, it is possible that the freehold may come up for sale. Under the Landlords and Tenants Act of 1988 the vendor of the freehold is obliged to offer it at the going market price, over the heads of other potential purchasers, to the leaseholders, or directors of an existing management company.

It is almost invariably to the advantage of the company to purchase, if humanly possible, that freehold.

Obviously a company may be run relatively cheaply, using the available expertise and resources of the directors, or rather more grandly and expensively by employing agents and property managers.

In any case, it is essential to have the annually audited accounts returned to Companies House with the utmost efficiency - after all, nobody would wish a hard-won freehold, through dereliction to revert to the Crown, and then have to be bought back. The Crescent is already 'Royal'. ♦

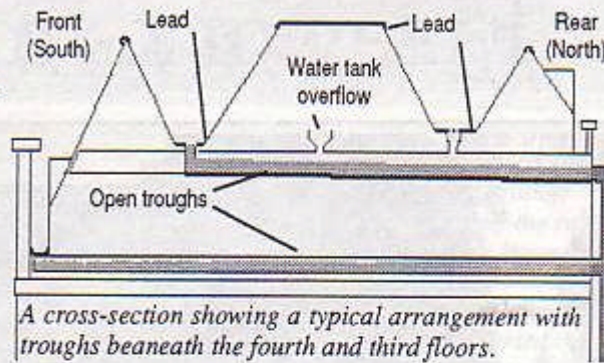
\*\*\*\*\*  
*Overheard on the corner of The Crescent by Major-General Charles West:*

American, showing visitors around: 'Here it is. The Royal Semi-Circle!'

f

# Dealing with the internal gutters

by Roy Titchen



**W**INTER is with us again and with it the attendant problems of snow and ice. Residents, especially those living on the upper floors will need no reminding of the winter hazards of living in the Royal Crescent.

The root of the problem goes back to John Wood the younger and his desire to avoid putting rainwater downpipes on the front of the houses. Rainwater from the roof at the front and intermediate gulleys is taken through the house to the rear in lead lined open wooden troughs.

The problems start when rainwater cannot run away from the trough exits and it spills out over the side of the trough through the ceilings below. The main reasons for blockage are

- Leaves
- Birds' nests
- Ice
- Gradual build-up of silt

What can be done to prepare for the winter? At this stage of the year you should

- Identify the location of the rainwater troughs, their entrances, exits and access points.

- Purchase some salt.

- Clean out silt, leaves etc from the troughs, paying particular attention to the entrances and exits.

- Check the ball-cock operated valves of any gravity tanks located in the roof space for leakage.

This last item is particularly important, since many of the tank overflows discharge into the rainwater troughs.

The rear of most of the Royal Crescent houses face north. It is the combination of low temperature and chill North winds which set up the conditions for the initial freeze.

When the air temperature falls to zero and there is a sustained cold wind from a northerly direction:

- Ensure that the heating on the top floors is on and left running overnight when it will be coldest.

- At the onset of snow or sleet, salt the troughs and their entrances and exits in order to prevent freezing.

- Keep the outlets free from a build-up of slush.

Under extreme conditions, the cold draughts from the north, which enter through the trough outlets, may cause fresh water pipes beneath floors to freeze. The pipes at risk should obvi-

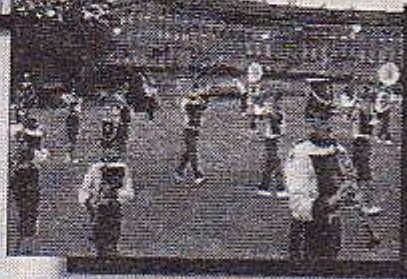
*Continued on page 8*

# Fireworks and a b

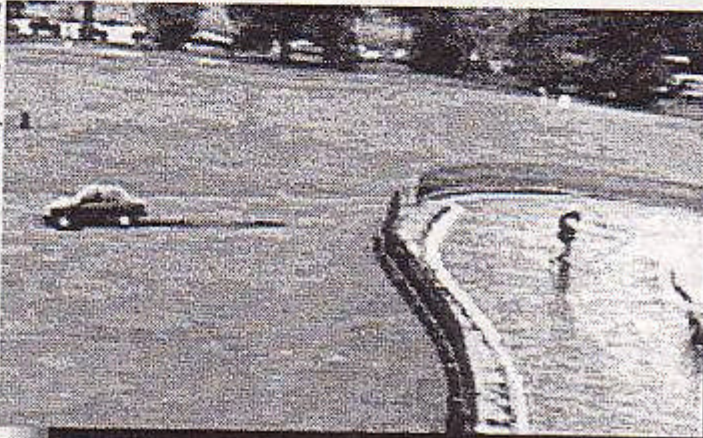


## Festive Memories

*Above and right, a firework display against the backdrop of The Royal Crescent marked the finale of this year's opening of the Bath Festival, with entertainment that included street theatre and marching bands.*



*The crashed car abandoned in the middle of the lawn. See story on opposite page.*



John Walker

# anger in The Crescent



*The twisted wreckage of the iron railings torn away by the car can be seen jammed against its front door, left, before Committee members carried them to safety. (Photograph by Annabel Trechmann.)*

## Car crash rips away railings

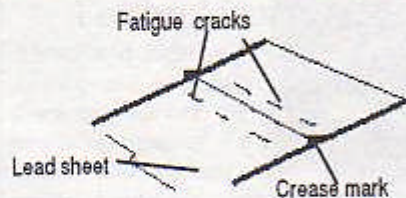
**A**FTER a high speed police chase through Bath, a car being driven by a joy-rider crashed through our railings opposite No 1 on the evening of Sunday, October 7. The car hit the pavement, leapt into the air and, carrying sections of the ironwork with it, nose-dived into the ground, ploughing deep furrows in the turf before stopping part way across the lawn. Miraculously, the driver and his companions were not hurt badly enough to prevent their escape from the police. But the dented and bloodstained windscreen bore witness to the force, at least, of the driver's concussion. Surprisingly, too, despite the hour of the

incident - around 11.15 pm - no resident appears to have seen or heard it. The car, an Austin Montego saloon, had been rented from Avis by a visitor to Bath, who left the City the same day. The joy-rider had shaken off the police pursuit just before the crash and has not been traced. A police spokesman at the new Bristol Control Room declined to define the vigour with which he and his companions would be further pursued. The Vice-Chairman and Treasurer rescued the broken railings and cleared the lawn of broken glass and metal. Repair of the damaged railings is currently the subject of negotiations <

Continued from page 5

ously be lagged and the draughts reduced to a minimum by judicious blocking off of 75 per cent of the exit area. Take care that this does not affect the rainwater flow. Lead plays a very important part in keeping our roofs watertight. It is used for covering flat surfaces, lining rainwater troughs and flashing, which keeps water out at the edges.

In many of our houses, the lead you see today is likely to have been in place since The Crescent was built. The primary causes of damage to lead are carelessness, such as walking across it in inappropriate shoes or



dropping sharp, heavy objects such as TV aerial masts, and fatigue.

The lead on our roofs is subjected to changes in temperature and where it is laid in long lengths, these changes give rise to a considerable change in length. Since the lead is unlikely to be able to move freely, the expansion may cause a crease across it, probably near the middle of a length.

The constant cycling may cause fatigue cracks close to the crease. These cracks are not always easy to find, but if the lead is pressed down as it is drying out after a shower, water can be seen emerging. Frost will, of course, rapidly exacerbate any cracks.

Flat sections of lead-covered roof are quite satisfactory provided that the wa-

ter can run off them. If the water stops flowing and the level builds up there is danger that the water may overflow the edges of the lead beneath the bottom row of slates or flow back between overlapping sections of lead by capillary action.

It is therefore essential to keep flat sections of roof free from accumulations of debris and the entrances to the rainwater troughs and hoppers free from silt.

Another area for leaks is the sealing between the roofs and the dividing walls between the houses. Modern practice would be to use a lead flashing cut into the walls, and where this is intact, no rain should enter. In many cases, however, sealing has been affected by a cement fillet covered with a mastic. The ultra-violet content of the sun's rays will quickly destroy the waterproof qualities of the mastic and in time as the cement fillet dries out cracks will appear. The situation will be made worse if the capping stones are missing or not in good condition. The only long term solution is to cover cracks by flashing.

Once the location of a leak has been established, itself sometimes quite difficult, repair using modern materials is relatively simple. There are now available several self-adhesive aluminium foil-backed weatherproof sealing strips. Provided that the instructions are followed carefully and the appropriate primer is used to seal the surfaces, these sealing strips are easy to use. The most readily available is Evo stick Flashband. Being foil-backed, the repair will not be attacked by ultra violet light and hence should last long time. ✧



# Grants :- How to get them and what they cover

by  
Dr Monica Baly

**T**HE CITY OF BATH is designated a 'World Heritage Site' by UNESCO and protecting it is a matter for mankind as a whole. Local authorities are required to define areas of special historic or architectural interest as conservation areas, which, in Bath, covers approximately 60 per cent of the city - with, of course, The Royal Crescent as an important element.

Since 1955, in order to assist owners to repair their properties Bath has operated a Town Scheme in partnership with central government and now English Heritage.

The intention of the Town Scheme grants is to encourage owners and lessees to carry out more comprehensive repairs than would have been possible without a grant and to ensure a quality of work which will guarantee the survival of individual buildings and the character of the Bath conservation area.

Grants are at the discretion of the Bath City Council and English Heritage, who reserve the right to establish priorities and decide which buildings are eligible. Each application is consid-

ered individually but the following are generally eligible:

○Comprehensive structural repair of walls and roofs including ashlar, cornices and other mouldings, parapets, copings and chimneys, roof trusses, concealed gutters etc; repointing and stone cleaning associated with stone repairs.

○Roof tiling and slating, lead and cast iron gutters and downpipes.

○Eradication of dry rot, wet rot and infestation and consequential repairs including the remedying of water damage and redecoration in appropriate cases.

○Repair of significant architectural features including door cases, door hoods, ironwork etc.

Major repair work of an essential structural nature will always take priority. However, because properly controlled cleaning is an important part of stone maintenance this may qualify for a grant where it needs to be carried out in conjunction with structural repairs.

The rate of the grant is 40 per cent of the cost of eligible repairs and associated professional fees and VAT (if appropriate) shared equally with English Heritage and Bath City Council, the balance being met by the applicant.

Work must be carried out in accordance with a specification and schedule agreed by the City Council's Conservation Architects **before** work begins and must be carried out to the satisfaction of the Conservation Architects who, together with the officers of English Heritage, have the right to inspect the work in progress and on completion. Other conditions are worthy of note because when in the past they have not been complied with, this

☞ *Continued from page 9*

has led to the need for further repair in a short time - this is particularly true of roofs and lead work:

○ All existing sound chimney pots shall be re-used.

○ New chimney pots to match existing chimney pots precisely.

○ Existing sound natural Welsh slates shall be retained for re-use and new slates shall be natural Welsh slates of the same colour as the existing slates. Spanish slates are not acceptable.

○ Slates to be fixed with copper or approved non-ferrous nails. Galvanised ferrous nails are not acceptable.

○ Ridges and hips are to be edged-bedded Combe Down stone or Limpley Stoke base-bed stone.

○ New lead work shall be strictly in accordance with current Codes of practice and the recommendations of the Lead Development Association. All chases for leadwork are to be a minimum of 40mm deep.

Other conditions concern the submission of plans and specifications and the need for inspection before specific repairs or alterations start on site.

Anyone planning work should discuss their proposals as early as possible with the Conservation Architects. Their phone number is Bath 461111 extension 2583 or 2549. ✧

■ *These notes are compiled from the Bath Town Plan and Seminar held on the subject earlier this year. They have been overseen and amended by David McLaughlin, the City Conservation Architect, to whom the Society is grateful. Mr McLaughlin is always willing to give advice on the complex issues of the maintenance of The Royal Crescent.*

☞ *Chairman's report from page 2*

its restoration would undoubtedly contribute to the general notion of the privacy of the lawn which we are trying to promote through various other measures.

OTHER points of interest - and the list is not exhaustive - are:

• Lawn rehabilitation was deferred because of drought. We have asked for the grant to be renewed into next year.

• We have supported the Royal Crescent Hotel's application for the renovation of 13 Crescent Lane: no aesthetic objections and welcome relief from laundry and other trade deliveries at the front of the hotel.

• Most undesirably, TV aerials are sprouting on our roofline once more. there *are* alternatives - see page 11.

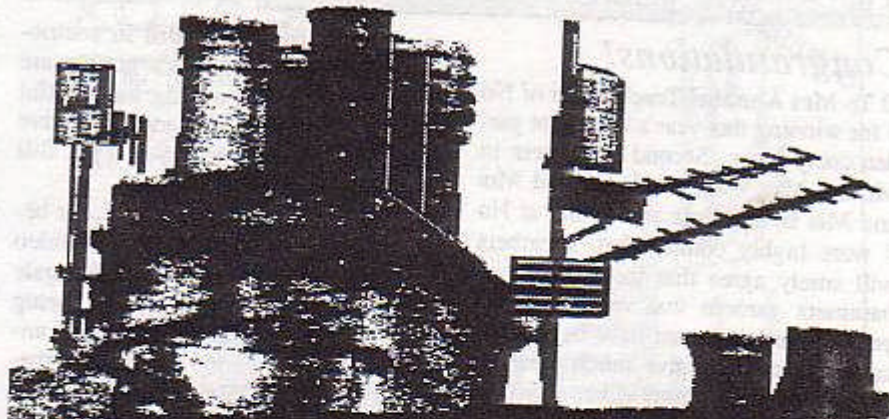
• The Bath Preservation Trust has an interesting programme of events. As corporate members we hold two tickets available to members of the Society. Further details from Dr Monica Baly, our Editor, who is also a senior BPT guide.

• We hope to hold our Society Christmas Dinner again this year. Expect a 'flyer' sometime in November.

• And leaving the most important news till the last: a very warm welcome to Mr Peter Wilks (No 30) and Mrs Shirley Parker (No 10), who have agreed to join us as co-opted members of the Committee pending election at the AGM. ✧

#### LONDON COACH BAN

Westminster City Council has banned tourist coaches from more than 160 streets in London, after protests from local residents. Operators violating the ban can be fined up to £400.



From original photographs by Michael Daw

## Our Ugly Skyline

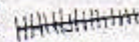


A few years or so ago, thanks to a campaign by the Society, The Royal Crescent skyline was almost clear of unsightly television aerials. Now they are creeping back, maybe because some residents have not appreciated the aesthetic harm aerials cause to the visual aspect of The Crescent as a whole. Aerials are also a danger to roofs and chimney stacks and are vulnerable to high winds, as some residents have found to their cost in recent years.

It is also dismaying to see hanging aerial cables and wires on the front of some houses. These are also unsightly and deface the facade of our Grade I listed buildings and, at the same time, damage the stone by friction and so let in water. Many residents have over-

come the problem by putting aerials in their roof-space. These are simple to install, comparatively cheap and very effective in terms of quality of picture. Mr Colmer of Farrington Gurney (Phone: 0761-52108) has done a number of houses in The Crescent and would be happy to advise. If you have exterior aerials, could you consider whether they could be replaced by roof-space systems?

It is also necessary to look at your roof and make sure there are no aerials, attached to chimney stacks, left by previous tenants. At least some of those visible in The Crescent are so old that they pre-date current TV transmission technology - that is, they



## Society Notes

### ***Congratulations!***

❑ To **Mrs Annabel Trechmann** of No 5 for winning this year's basement garden competition. Second prize went to Mr and Mrs Wilks at No 20 and Mrs and Mrs B. Richards and family at No 4 were highly commended. Members will surely agree that the standard of basement gardens was very high this year and judging must have been difficult. The gardens give much pleasure to residents and visitors alike.

❑ To **Michael Daw**, our Vice-Chairman, who recently took early retirement from a long Civil Service career. His duties in support of the Royal Navy took him from the West Country via Scotland to London and Washington DC, where he was the Navy's Senior Logistics Representative. In latter years he commuted daily from Bath to Whitehall as a mandarin under Michael Hesletine before taking command of the Navy's large electronics complex in nearby Corsham. Michael first moved to The Crescent in 1968 and has remained in - or in close touch - ever since. Like many residents, he has never lost his first flush of enthusiasm and love of the place and its setting.

❑ To **Karen Mills** for her engaging and so very charming show of paintings at the St James's Gallery, Margarets Buildings. Those who might not have known that Karen is the gifted wife of talented actor Bill Wallis, (aka Deputy Editor of the Newsletter) who entertains us so hugely on Saturday night radio, would certainly have been made aware of the partnership by her

marvellous likeness of Bill in somnolent mode. The children's groups are especially engaging among a delightful collection of still-life and figurative paintings. Which category you put Bill in is entirely up to you.

❑ To our Editor, **Monica Baly**, for being awarded a gold medal for her video presentation on Florence Nightingale in the United States last year and being named winner in the professional communications category of the international John Muir Film Festival.

❑ To **Sir John Barraclough**, our Chairman, for his last supersonic flight in a Tornado to mark his 52nd year in the 'lighter shade of blue', and the tribute paid to him by the Minister of State in the recent Defence Debate.

❑ To **Peter and Tricia Wilks** on the birth of their daughter Frances, now inhaling much fresher air thanks to Peter's onslaught against the buses stopping on the double yellow lines outside his flat at No 30.

\*\*\*\*\*

**ON** the evening of August 31, members of the Society enjoyed a delightful champagne party in the Drawing room of the Royal Crescent Hotel, by kind invitation of Mr Simon Coombe, the general manager. The Society is grateful to the hotel for providing this hospitality, which gives members the opportunity to meet and exchange views.

*Published by The Royal Crescent Society  
Editor: Dr Monica Baly  
Design, Layout & Printing: John Walker*