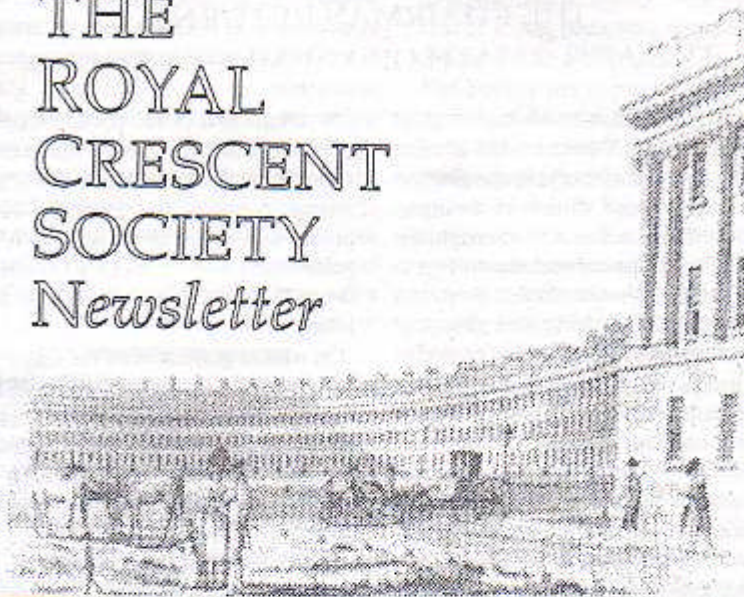


THE
ROYAL
CRESCENT
SOCIETY
Newsletter



Issue No. 21

Winter 1992/3

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THE CHAIRMAN RETURNS THE AFTERMATH OF A SUMMER OF SONG

Members will, I am sure, share my great admiration for, and thanks to, Dr. Monica Baly for so ably and willingly discharging the exceptionally onerous duties of chairman last year at short notice and through the turmoil of the Carreras event, the run up to it and the aftermath. Committee members too pulled out the stops and gave up much of their free time, often at awkward hours, to ensure that members interests were served as well as possible in difficult circumstances and in face of some dissent. We owe them our gratitude and they would wish me to acknowledge the several kind messages of appreciation that some members have expressed, coupled with this I must warmly thank publicity the many calls, notes and cards which speeded and helped materially my present restoration to full health.

The last Newsletter covered the event comprehensively but the voices of dissent and the arrival of our solicitor's formal report on the status of the lawn and the residents rights and duties necessitated a Special General Meeting, to which traceable non-members were invited. A further report appears elsewhere in this issue but suffice to say here that the meeting did give the Society, through its Committee, a clear mandate for future action and policy. Further detailed updates of this will be given on this at the Annual General Meeting which is planned for 29th April.

Meanwhile we have heard that the organisers of the Carreras Concert wish to engage Dame Kiri Te Kanawa for a concert in the Royal Victoria Park in September. They have not yet sought permission for the use of the lawn, and in view of the need for them to obtain permission from every resident, they may well seek to confine the event to

the public area of the park in front of the Crescent. This of course, will present the residents with the worst case; all the visual inconvenience of the event but very little power with which to control its nature or peripheral effect or to extract much needed funds for the ha-ha project and other matters.

On a more general note the City Council's Director of Leisure and Tourism has obtained Council approval for his policy that there should be a maximum of two such events in the front of the Crescent a year on adjacent nights to maximise the use of the arena. These would be a Light Classical Concert on a Saturday evening at reasonable prices and a more expensive event on the lines of the Carreras concert on the Sunday. The policy prohibits any other sort of event as inappropriate to the setting. The Committee was able to endorse this policy on the basis of the helpful responses to the Questionnaire sent to all members in September.

Turning to other matters, pressure from the society and others has forced the Avon County Council to reduce the previously heavy Resident's Annual Parking Permit from nearly £200 to £50. This will run concurrently with a proposed extension of area for Card and Residents Parking to include the Crescent. The necessary order has been advertised on lamp post and by Council leaflet. On the basis that members expressed no consensus view on the extension about a year ago, when the higher rate would have applied, the Committee has refrained from comment on the present proposal. No date for the implementation of the scheme has yet been approved.

At the same time congratulations are due

to Mr Christopher Woodward, for focussing attention on the extension of the towaway scheme to cars parked for over 2 hours in parking bays. This causes no obstruction which was the initial *raison d'être* of the towaway scheme, and Mr Woodward's logic and protest have caused the practice to be dropped. Although not raised in the media it seemed unjust that the 'Fixed' Penalty for such offences of £20, could for a period, and on an apparently random basis, have been raised by 500% to nearly £120, plus, of course, the massive inconvenience.

We are also currently in correspondence with H M Treasury Press Office and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary over who, without asking, fenced off part of our lawn during the visit of the European Finance Ministers. Each has stated in writing that the other did it. We await developments. The District Police Commander has however, been most responsive to our criticisms over the muddle and the unwarned handling of temporary parking restrictions in the Crescent. In the future he will ensure that we are pre-advised.

The Society has continued to pursue the proposed Traffic Regulations Order which will limit the number of open topped buses. The current expectation is that the Director of Highways Engineering and Transport (D.H.E.T.) will present a further report to Councillors in time for their meeting in January which we hope to attend. The frequency of these noisy monsters has again been excessive and we will continue to press for reduction.

We are also supporting City Councillors in their bid to wring from Avon County those powers, especially traffic management, which could and should be more accountably discharged in the city. This policy derives from our long experience of having to deal with two authorities over a given matter.

though it must be acknowledged that Avon's D.H.E.T. has been very responsive to our concerns such as the ban on coaches.

The Society has enjoyed for many years a close and beneficial association with the Bath Reservation Trust and this has been particularly effected through the valuable contribution of Dr Peter Woodward as a co-opted committee member. We shall miss his wise counsel and erudition as he leaves this duty but look forward to welcoming an equally distinguished member of the Trust, Peter Greening. Mr Michael Briggs, Trust Chairman, has also kindly agreed that our membership of each other's shall be at no cost to either, a *quid pro quo* if ever there was one.

Readers will have noticed a change in the appearance of the Newsletter. This is because our publisher, John Walker, has felt unable to continue. This is a sad loss as the exceptionally high quality of the layout and its presentation and its many novel features were his creation and were much admired and appreciated. We shall miss his expert professional output and hope that one day he may feel able to take on the task again. We also wish him well in his continued recovery from major surgery. I know he much appreciated the card signed at the Christmas Dinner and the small gifts delivered on our behalf by Shirley Parker, our secretary.

The Christmas Dinner was again a jolly affair at the Royal Crescent Hotel with the maximum number that the room would hold squeezed in. Our thanks go to Simon Coombe and his staff for a very enjoyable evening which no one seemed willing to leave.

With my best wishes for a
Happy New Year

Michael Daw

THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL CRESCENT ON 14TH OCTOBER

The Society organised a Special General Meeting at the Bath County Club to give members and non-members an opportunity to discuss future policy on the use of the lawn. The need arose from the controversy that surrounded the Carreras concert and some complaints that people had not been fully consulted. The Society has 104 members (see the last page of the Summer issue), 40 members attended, 11 resident non-members and there were 13 apologies from members.

Result of the Questionnaire

Prior to the meeting every resident who could be traced had been sent a questionnaire. Seventy five people responded and the replies had been analysed. From the analysis and comments the consensus view was that the Carreras concert had been an enjoyable evening. Some indeed waxed lyrical while, at the other extreme, the questionnaire was rated as 'unbelievably vulgar'. On the question as to whether the event should be repeated there were a number of qualifications. While José Carreras was acceptable it was feared that the precedent might lead to a less desirable event, and, it was recognised, that posing as the arbiter of taste might lead to the accusation of elitism. Several people expressed the view that they would be happier if the event were at least partly for charity. One suggestion was that a percentage of the profit be donated to a charity in Bath sponsored by the Society.

The legal position on the lawn

A paper before the meeting set out the history of the lawn. Originally householders shared the cost of construction of communal facilities and of the permanent maintenance and upkeep of the lawn together with

the right to use the lawn. The lawn itself remained in the ownership of John Wood the Younger and it is probable that its freehold is owned by his descendants who would be difficult to trace.

The Royal Crescent Society took over the maintenance of the lawn from the defunct Lawn Fund in 1973 and has maintained it ever since. All freehold householders enjoy rights of unencumbered use over the lawn and those rights cannot effectively be lost.

Discussion of Resolutions

There were three resolutions before the meeting viz:

That the Committee of the Royal Crescent Society be empowered to negotiate on behalf of members with respect to any proposal put to it for the use of the Royal Crescent Lawn, it being understood that:-

1. only proposals judged by the Committee as being likely to be acceptable to the majority of members on the basis of the response to the Society's Questionnaire of 1st October will be considered.
2. all members will be consulted on any proposal, with the veto of any member being binding.
3. the Promoters of any proposal be advised that permission of all non-members is required by virtue of the legal position of the Lawn and it is the Promoters responsibility to obtain such permissions.

In discussing these resolutions an amendment was sought that the *'Royal Crescent takes all reasonable steps to inform all residents of the Royal Crescent of proposals for the use of the lawn by outside interests.'*

There was considerable discussion on this amendment but it was pointed out that le-

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gally the Society could not take responsibility for non-members and the point was covered in para 3 in which the Promoters were required by virtue of the legal position to obtain such permissions. During discussion it was stressed that there was always difficulty in finding the names of non-members.

On voting the amendment was lost and the original resolution upheld by 47 in favour, none against but with three abstentions.

The Way Forward

The meeting had before it three possible options for the Society in the future:-

A. To continue with the status quo unless the Society wishes to have better control to negotiate contracts or proceedings.

B. To acquire ownership of the Lawn by 'adverse possession'. If the Society became a limited company and continued to look after the lawn it could acquire title in 24 years.

C. Request the Bath City Council to compulsory purchase the lawn and grant it to the Society on a long leasehold. It was pointed out that the Council is very wary of using its Compulsory purchase powers and would be particularly so if residents were opposed.

The Committee recommended Option B.

After discussion this was amended to:-

'That the Committee be empowered to investigate Option B and put specific proposals to residents and as far as possible identify them.'

This was carried with only two abstentions.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm with the

chairman thanking everyone for attending and for their forthright expression of views.

The Committee will continue to work in the best interests of the Royal Crescent as a whole. - M.E.B.

Analysis of the Questionnaire sent to Residents on the use of the Lawn

A = Total. B=Members

C = Non-Members

	A	B	C
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1. How would you rate the impact of the Carreras concert ?

Exciting	53	45	8
Tolerable	9	9	0
Deplorable	10	4	6
Other (please specify)	6	5	1

2. Would you like there to be similar events in future ?

Yes	42	35	7
Maybe	14	13	1
No	21	15	6

2a If maybe :

Yes if less disruption	9	7	2
better seats	19	19	0
better hospitality	5	5	0
more revenue to Society funds	23	21	2

2b If Yes : How frequently ?

One per year	38	32	6
One every two years	9	9	0
Less frequently	5	3	2

3. Would you be prepared to assist in any organisation involving the Royal Crescent Society and/or residents ?

Yes	37	33	4
No	31	25	5

4. Would you like to see similar events in Victoria Park below the ha-ha with no use of the lawn ?

Yes	33	30	3
No	39	28	11

Replies received from members 61
from non-members 14

N.B. Not all respondents answered all the questions and some ticked more than one

ROYAL CRESCENT CHARACTERS

George Saintsbury

By Isabel Colegate

George Saintsbury came to live at No 1a Royal Crescent, in the house which contains the former kitchens and offices of No1, in 1915. He died there in 1933, but in style he was pre-eminently an Edwardian and a man of letters. The son of a Southampton dock superintendent, he was educated at Oxford and began his career as a schoolmaster, but after publishing some essays in the *Fornightly Review* he decided to earn his living as a professional critic. He became a noted champion of French literature and contributed over thirty articles on that subject to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but he also wrote a large number of introductions to popular editions of the English classics. He was a prolific literary journalist, writing for the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Saturday Review*, and in 1895 he became professor of English Literature at Edinburgh University. Books and essays on literary subjects continued to pour from his pen. He was immensely widely read, and his literary style was clear and eloquent. As a lecturer he was less clear. In fact, his obfuscations were so extreme that his students came to cherish them; one memorised the following sentence, pronounced in the course of a lecture: *"But while none, save these, of men living, had done, or could have done, such things, there was much here which - whether either could have done it or not - neither had done"*.

One of Saintsbury's Bath friends was another now largely forgotten literary man, Frederick Harrison, the Positivist philosopher, who came to live at Number 10 Royal Crescent in 1912, was given the honorary freedom of the city in 1921, and died in 1923 in his ninety second year. The two energetic and opinionated old men always treated each other with immense politeness. Saintsbury was younger than Harrison but looked older, for he had a long white beard and wore a black skull-cap. Harrison was a great campaigner for the rights of the Trades Unions and the propagation of the positivist philosophy as "the religion of humanism". His views must have been anathema to the High Church Tory Saintsbury, but perhaps the latter was as tolerant in personal relations as in literary criticism. He always said that he judged a book on its literary merits, regardless of what happened to be its subject. George Orwell, who disagreed profoundly with his politics, nevertheless thought that there was a sense of continuity about cultural life between 18 and 1930 - in spite of the disruption caused by the First World War - which accounted for the serenity with which Saintsbury "a real old crusted Tory and High Churchman, could be scrupulously fair to books written by men whose political and moral outlook he detested". Saintsbury's most influential book was probably his *Short History of English Literature*.

ture, but when he retired from Edinburgh and came to Bath he wrote "The professor ceasing, the reviewer revives", and it was in Bath that he wrote his three Scrap Books, medleys of essays on all sorts of subjects, from books to the names of racehorses, from sausages to red hair. He also produced his immensely popular Notes On A Cellar-Book, which brought him a new public and led to the founding of a club in his honour - a distinction not many literary critics could claim.

(Reproduced by courtesy of The Bath Preservation Trust)

PLANNING REPORT:

18 Crescent Lane is a humble mews building built in the early 19th century and now a scruffy garage and warehouse. In June last year a public enquiry was held to decide its fate.

The owner proposed to demolish the mews and put up three smart townhouse in its place. The City Council granted planning permission but their decision was contested by the Bath Preservation Trust and English Heritage, with the support of the Royal Crescent Society. These 'objectors' argued that although Crescent Lane had fallen into neglect it was still worth preserving as its historic interest survived.

The Inspector sent down by the Department of the Environment upheld this view and refused permission to demolish the mews. This is excellent news but it is still hoped that the owner will put forward a more sympathetic scheme to restore and extend the sur-

HA-HA REPORT:

Sadly, little has happened to the ha-ha since the last report. We are still waiting for the archaeologists to arrive with their spades and set to work excavating the ditch below the wall. Until we know the results of this dig we cannot put a precise figure on the costs - and until we have a target we cannot begin to raise to raise funds.

Christopher Woodward

CITY OF BATH RECYCLING

Avon Friends of the Earth have been at the forefront of the development and operation of recycling for over 10 years and have been concerned to initiate recycling services which promote environmentally sound practices.

The kerbside collection of recyclable materials (paper, aluminium, rags, oil) is the bedrock of that service. It offers the opportunity for everyone in the community to do their part; not just those people with access to paper banks and can banks. To encourage people to drive to paper banks is likely to cause far more environmental damage than any benefits from recycling the paper deposited.

Bath City Council and Avon Friends of the Earth recognise the need to safeguard and develop the domestic collection of recyclable materials and have together established a 'not for profit' limited company, City of Bath Recycling, which has taken over from FoE's Freewheeling collection service. We aim to recycle as much of the domestic waste stream as is practicable. To achieve this aim, our service to the community will develop to include other materials, and as we proceed, your support will be essential. In order to make the service as efficient as possible please note the following:-

1. We start collecting at 9.00am so please ensure that items for collection are out by that time.
2. Please ensure that your items are easily seen and identifiable.
3. If you have tied your paper in bundles there is no need to also bag them up. It does not matter if the paper gets wet.
4. If you live in a block of flats with a central collection point please put your items out only on the morning of collection.
5. Unfortunately we are unable, currently, to collect card/cardboard.
6. It helps us if you use the service regularly. If you require a special collection for large quantities, please phone.
7. We are able to collect left-over textiles from jumble sales. Please phone to arrange.

City of Bath Recycling will be working closely with the City's Recycling Officer to ensure that Bath continues to lead the way in the development of recycling for environmental benefits.

City of Bath Recycling
The Old Yard
Radstock Road
Midsomer Norton BA3 2UG
Telephone : 0761 419405

Please leave the following items where they can be seen from the road :-

1. Newspapers and magazines secured so they cannot blow away.
2. Clothes and rags in bags to keep them dry. Material only please - no shoes, handbags or belts.
3. Aluminium foil and cans - Test cans with a magnet - aluminium is non-magnetic. Wash foil and cans and secure in bags.
4. Car batteries and sump oil in clean, gallon containers.

We collect all year round excluding Bank Holidays.

CRESCENT NEWS :

Mr & Mrs D Bourdon-Smith

Congratulations to Diana and Dick Bourdon-Smith who each have three pictures being exhibited in the Adam Gallery. There is an enchanting one by Diana called 'The Warwick Urn' which is an oil painting of part of their garden and the back of No 19 Crescent Lane as the wall joins No 18.

Mr John Walker

Members will be sorry to hear of the illness of John Walker who for several years has produced our Newsletter to such a high standard. Mr Walker underwent surgery in December and is now convalescing. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

Major General Charles West

We congratulate Charles West in making such a recovery from his surgery last summer.

Mr Crowe and Dr Millington

Have come to live in No5 Royal Crescent and we welcome them as members to the Society.

The Christmas Dinner

Forty-four members (the maximum the room would hold) gathered in the pleasant surroundings of the Royal Crescent Hotel on Thursday, 17th December, to exchange greetings and to enjoy the Christmas fare provided by the hotel. This occasion provided an opportunity for neighbours to meet, which, during the dreary winter months seems less likely to happen.

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