

THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY Newsletter

Issue No.23

Summer 1993

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES - Our New Vice President

These notes have over the years tended to become a list of actions taken by your Committee and have, consequently become overlong. So this time I shall be brief by concentrating on just one very significant event. The other details will be found as separate items elsewhere in the Newsletter.

I am very pleased to be able to inform members that, subject to ratification at the next AGM, your Committee has been honoured to offer the new position of Honorary Vice President to The Right Honourable the Earl of Stockton. His Lordship has graciously accepted the post and has already begun to take a very active and informed interest in our principal campaign - that against the Tourist Buses. This is a matter he very clearly understands and which is close to his personal interests as the adopted Conservative Candidate for Euro - MP for

the Bristol and Bath Area. In his activities on our behalf, Lord Stockton has undertaken to build on the very helpful work undertaken several years ago by the late Lord Mancroft, whose actions in the Upper House set off our campaign against the single-decker coaches to such a flying start and a totally successful conclusion. I am sure I may speak for all members when I extend a most warm and grateful welcome to our new Vice-President and to his support for our very important campaign.

The Society's thanks are due in no small measure already to our Avon County Councillor Maurcen Wheadon for the vigorous support she already gives to our campaign and other matters, that she arranged the introduction to Lord Stockton. That this happy event should have flowed from it puts us further in her debt.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1993

This years AGM was held as usual in the Bath and County Club near Queen Square, on April 29th. Well over 40 Members attended and we were graced also by the early presence of Mr Hitt, Bath City Council's Horticultural advisor for the traditional presentation of the Society's modest prizes for the Best Basement Gardens, and by the later presences of our Avon County Councillor Mrs Maureen Wheadon and our Bath City Councillor Mr David Hawkins. Apologies for non-attendance came from almost a dozen Members and other City Councillors.

Business was conducted with a fair degree of despatch, but not without some heat. Intense discussion centred on the continuing saga over the use of the Lawn in relation to both last and this year's concerts. The decisions on this matter have already been conveyed to members in the Chairman's letter of 30th April 1993. This letter also covered the other principal topic, the situation and planned actions in the campaign against Tourist Buses.

The meeting also satisfactorily covered without serious dissention, the sort of AGM matters common to any organisation. The Accounts, as audited were approved and, in an unusual, but time saving procedure, members approved the Committee's recommendation that the very lengthy Minutes of the last AGM and the Special General meeting of last Autumn not be read; copies had been made available before and during the Meeting and were passed nem con. All action matters were addressed in the Reports by various Officers.

The incumbents of the Posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Editor and Remembrancer were re-elected unopposed, as were 3 Committee members. There was only one candidate for each of the Posts of Treasurer

and Secretary and these were duly elected. There were more candidates than Posts for the remaining Committee seats and an election was held, with clear results.

Thus your Committee for 1993/94 is:

Officers	House	Tel
Chairman: Michael Daw	10	315529
Vice-Chairman: Dr Len Fisher	29	424341
Treasurer: Simon Crowe	5	483830
Secretary: Veronique Oswald	28a	421790
Editor: Dr Monica Baly	19	424736
Remembrancer: John Meddins	29	331656

Committee Members

Christopher Woodward	1	481650
Cdr Roy Titchen	10	424085
Mrs Annabel Trechman	5	310441
Mrs Jenny Hardisty	Hotel	319090

Co-opted Member

Peter Greening		
Bath Preservation Trust		338727

Finally, for this brief report, Chairman paid sincere and well deserved tributes to the hard working and super efficient outgoing Secretary, Shirley Parker and to the instant and burdensome assumption of the Chairmanship last year by Dr Monica Baly, presenting each with a bouquet of flowers. He also thanked on behalf of Members the outgoing Treasurer Ian Nesbitt for his essential and accurate work, and Dr Peter Woodward of the Bath Preservation Trust for all his sage advice and support. Votes of Thanks were also passed for our outgoing Auditor Brian Richards and for Chairman's efforts on the Buses. The evening concluded with drinks and refreshments in the Club's Member's Lounge.

IN THE NEWS

In the Spring '93 Newsletter, Chairman drew attention to the amount of media attention being devoted to the Crescent and suggested that this could be used to benefit our Constitutional Objective. Well, the coverage hasn't diminished. If anything it seems to have increased, with several front page stories in the Evening Chronicle, (Bath) Evening Post and inside stories in these and the Western Daily Press, plus interviews on BBC Local Radio and GWR.

Not all the coverage has presented us, as a group, in a particularly favourable light.

Our efforts to 'protect and preserve' almost inevitably lead us to be objecting about something and hence to be seen as a somewhat negative group.

Your Committee is concerned about this and does its best to counter it. Certainly it is good to report that almost without exception, the local media is scrupulously accurate in its reporting, and getting down verbatim most of the quotes it is given (though not always complete). Unfortunately most of the public at large tend to read only the broad headlines and not to take in the fine print of the stories.

So your Committee has two proposals in mind to help counter this rather negative image and will be canvassing opinions in due course. Meanwhile if you have any ideas about this topic, or if perhaps you think it doesn't matter, please let any of your Committee Members or Chairman know.

TOURIST BUSES

Our campaign has continued to fire on several fronts. Here is a summary at the time of going to press.

Access only Petition

103 residents enthusiastically signed the Petition on Avon County Council to "investigate urgently closure of the Royal Crescent to traffic, except for Residents' parking and access, as part of the phase II traffic calming measures for Bath City Centre". This action was agreed at the AGM as a means of focusing Council attention even more vividly on this Crescent. Council Officials' reaction was, predictably fairly negative. Two months after the Petition was presented to full Council, by our indefatigable Councillor Mrs Maureen Wheaden, a Report was presented to the Public Highways and Transport Committee merely listing all the difficulties which stood in the way of the action and proposing to defer any-

thing until the end of the 6 month trial of the Bus Voluntary Agreement.

Our Councillor shared our view that this was quite unsatisfactory. A clear, dated plan for action was required and the matter needed to be dealt with separately from the Voluntary Agreement; she very successfully represented these views at the Committee meeting and a lengthy debate followed.

The new Liberal Democrat Councillor for another area of Bath lent his strong support and Officials were told to think again and report back at the next (October) meeting.

The Chairman wrote to the Councillor, Mr Tom Ball thanking and encouraging him. Meanwhile the local press seized on a remark made almost jokingly by the Socialist Group Leader, to the effect that since the Crescent was so vulnerable and important then why not ban ALL traffic and pedestrianise it. Once again we were all over the

front pages and on the local radio, reacting to a suggestion that was not being investigated. Chairman took the view, already discussed in Committee, that yes, a complete traffic ban would be the right and inevitable solution - but not for several generations, when perhaps we are all no longer so dependent on the car; for now, and the foreseeable future, access was essential for Residents, but not for tourist buses. This message got good coverage and the episode helped to maintain the already high profile of this vital issue.

Monitoring exercise

Many thanks are due to the many members who gave up their time to monitor the actual incidents of buses in response to our Treasurer, Simon Crowe's note. The figures are being kept under wraps for the moment because this Newsletter has a wide distribu-

tion, but will provide good ammunition for the Council's Review at the end of the 6 month trial of the Voluntary Agreement. It may be necessary to do some more monitoring to be statistically credible and volunteering will again be welcome.

We contribute to National Debate

Alerted by the energetic Chairman or another residents' group (Macaulay Buildings) your Committee learned of a National Study by the Department of Transport into the operation of local bus services outside London and the impact of Deregulation. Chairman sent a longish letter to the Department outlining our position and the action we had been forced to take. He has been informed that although the study was mainly aimed at the bus industry our letter would be considered along with 135 other responses.

DAME KIRI TE KANAWA CONCERT

All residents were given details of the position about (non) - use of the Lawn in Chairman's letter of 19th July. By the time this Newsletter reaches members, your Committee hopes to have issued another more detailed note giving later information as it has been supplied by the Police and the Organisers nearer the event. Indeed the whole thing may be over by the time we are able to get this Newsletter to you. This report is therefore limited to background information.

The Organisers, International Management Group, IMG, have now told us that they decided not to use our Lawn on 2 grounds.

First, obtaining permission of each individual resident was seen as very difficult and, given the vigorous public and private objection of a small minority, perhaps impossible

for this year. (They do expect to return to the charge for next year's event, however).

Secondly, they say they had to cut the number of the cheapest seats (£20) by the 3000 seats they lost and so ticket sales did not go as quickly as for Carreras. They also decided that the principal of holding another concert on the Saturday night, of a lighter Classical nature, would detract sales from the main event. So, no 'Second concert' and no use of the Lawn (except for artistes, as guests of the hotel, getting to and from the stage).

Readers of the Evening Chronicle will have noted one resident's successful campaign to persuade the organisers to change their press advertisement which quoted the event as being "in" the Royal Crescent to "below" the Royal Crescent, some five months after they first appeared.

TRAVELLERS

The debate over whether or where to provide sites for the so-called "travellers" in Bath continues. Common-sense would pre-empt that to provide such a site in a Royal Park, immediately behind a grade II Listed building, in a Conservation Area, very close to a children's play area and obliterate well used public allotments in the process, was a non-starter. However Local government does not always follow such obvious guidelines.

On objection to Avon County Council, objecting to such a proposal, for a travellers site on land behind Marlborough Buildings, attracted 91 signatures. Chairman's cover letter drew attention to the unpleasant

experiences suffered by residents living near other sites in the City, the inadequacy of local resources to control the site effectively and the consequent risk of 'spillage' of the travellers' activities over a much wider area, and the risks of theft, litter and other anti-social behaviour, especially along the route from the site to the local Unemployment Offices etc..

This and other site suggestions drew a total of several thousand signatures for Councillor Mrs Maureen Wheadon's campaign. Nevertheless none of the sites, including the one near us, has yet been formally rejected by the decision-makers.

Literally, watch this space !

BATH FESTIVAL OPENING NIGHT

Many residents represented to the Committee their disappointment at what most was the non-event of the Opening Night this year's Bath Festival. But starting on the plus side, the Car Pass system worked very well and the cost of the programmes donated from Society funds to the Festival's nominated charity.

However the main point of concern and criticism were passed on to the organisers, who did not respond to the letter, but did when pressed to our request the

following morning, to clear up the Lawn from the debris left by the large-scale invasion they had failed to control on the night. Let us hope that the new Festival Trust will do better.

Dissappointingly only about 50% of residents decided to support the event by putting the candles, provided by the Festival, in their windows and lighting them at dusk. (Your Committee heard that one householder actually returned the candles, without paying postage, to the Organisers).

WOMAD CONCERT

Our Committee did not, this year, make formal comment or objection in advance about the WOMAD concert in August. This was because, last year, it caused residents here no serious disturbance - unlike our neighbours in Marlborough Buildings and further up the Lansdown slopes.

We therefore felt it a little unfair to be made the butt of one of Pennington's very funny cartoons in the Evening Chronicle (7th August). As one has come to expect, the Editor saw our point and gave good prominence to Chairman's letter of correction a few days later.

MEETINGS

Your Committee has met once since the AGM and will meet again on September 30th. Do pass any matters you are concerned about to any Committee Member for discussion please.

Meanwhile, various Officers have been asked to other specific discussions:

The District Commander of Avon & Somerset Constabulary, Supt. Shipway invited Chairman and Cdr. Roy Titchen to discuss the street etc arrangements for Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Concert (details in a separate flier);

The organisers of the Concert asked to discuss the same matters - the only convenient time being 8.30 am.

Bath City Council's contractors,

Touche Ross, who are reporting on the feasibility, and need/benefit to the City, of Spa Baths invited the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations (which our former Chairman founded) to represent our views; Chairman participated;

The Architectural and Development Directors of Bath University invited Chairman to discuss an exiting computer initiative which could help us and the City; this will be the subject of a separate letter to Members.

A new 'interiors' magazine, "Privé", sought help with a planned feature on the Royal Crescent, its historical background; Chairman gave the London Editor an hour's interview.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY

In view of the number of issues in which the Royal Crescent Society is involved it is important that membership is kept at its high level. If you have not renewed your subscription to the Society please do so before the end of September. Cheques should be

made payable to the Royal Crescent Society and Lawn Fund and sent to:

*Simon Crowe,
The Treasurer,
5 Royal Crescent.*

Membership of the Society

Residents are invited to join or renew their membership of the Society which entitles them to participate in all of its affairs and activities and to receive our periodic Newsletters. The subscription for 1993 will be £5 per person. The modest revenue from this is needed to defray administration costs such

as printing and stationery; we also have to be ready to fund unexpected and special items such as legal costs of our successful opposition to the second hotel planning application of 1989. In accordance with the Constitution of the Society, subscriptions are due by the 1st May, but may be paid at the AGM.

Support the Lawn Fund

Residents are also invited to contribute to 'THE LAWN FUND'. This fund was established by the then residents in 1825 and is now administered by the Society to meet the costs of maintaining the railings, which will shortly require major repair and expendi-

ture, and the private lawn in front of the Crescent (which together form such an important counterpart to the magnificent architectural sweep of the houses) as specified in the original Deeds and Leases conveying the site of each house from John

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Wood to the first owners/developers in the 18th Century. These costs are shown in the Annual Accounts and Residents are invited to contribute in proportion to the scale of their own accommodation in the Crescent. Contributions also entitle residents to a key to the gates and access to the Lawn. The Committee hopes that all residents will feel

able to contribute to the fund. Current annual rates are:-

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|-----|
| a) | Average Flat | £7 |
| b) | Large Flat/Maisonette | £15 |
| c) | Whole House | £20 |

N.B. A 'Large Flat' extends laterally through two houses and a 'Maisonette' through two floors in a single house.

STOP PRESS

BUSES - BADGERLINE WOBBLER ?

When we go to press we have heard of two private conversations with Martin Curtis, Managing Director of the £250M Badgerline Bus Company, that he would see no commercial or practical difficulty in excluding this Crescent from his bus tours.

However he apparently has no intention of offering to do this, until forced to do so by the Traffic Management Authority - Avon County Council. As long as he can meet tourist preferences (as he sees them) to view the Crescent from 10 feet in the air (instead of from ground level as its designer in-

tended), he will continue to do so.

He also continues to make play of the fact that there is no dialogue with this Society or residents. In adopting this posture he overlooks that fact that we are the injured party, trying to defend a 220 year-old environment from his relatively recent intrusion and damage. He has failed to make any approach to us.

For a Public Company otherwise so careful and jealous of its public image, Mr Curtis does seem to have got these two elements of his Public Relations the wrong way round.

CRESCENT NEWS

Members will be sad to learn of Dr Kersley's death on 1st September in the Royal United Hospital. Dr Kersley had an accident in the home and sustained a fracture of femur and after making progress and putting a magnificent fight complications set in. He will be sorely missed.

There will be a Memorial service for Dr Kersley in the Abbey on the 4th October at 12 noon, and afterwards in the Guildhall.

We will publish an Obituary in the next issue.

Congratulations to Mr Simon Crowe and Clare Millington on their marriage in Bath on 4th September.

Long standing members of the Royal Crescent Society will join in wishing Canon Shane Cotter well after his triple by-pass operation. Canon and Mrs Bellita Cotter (previously Spenlove-Brown) lived in the Crescent No 27 & 28 and Canon Cotter will be remembered for his lively participation in the film Joseph Andrews.

THE IIA-IIA RESTORATION FUND

Is not dead, only sleepeth. There will be a report in the next issue.

THE ROYAL CRESCENT A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A portrait from the census return of 1891

No	Head of House	Status	Age	Occupation	Other Occupants etc.
1	Alan Bowker	Married	52	Proprietor of Boarding House	?? lodgers, wife and 2 servants
2	Frances K Conant	Widow	76	Own means	Brother JP, sister in law and 6 servants
3	Empty				
4	Emma Studd	Widow	58	Own means	6 servants
5	John H Sperling	Married	66	Own means	wife, w. daughter and 3 servants
6	Francis Buckhardt	Married	53	Own means	2 grown up daughters and 3 servants
7	George Micklethwaite	Single	66	Major (Ret) JP	Niece (age 23) and 5 servants
8	John Churchill	Single	74	Colonial Service (Ret)	Sister (age 73) and 3 servants
9	William Henderson	Married	67	Ret, Bengal Civil Service	Wife and 4 servants
10	Anthony Hammond	Married	67	JP for Somerset	Wife and 5 servants
11	Henry Mann	Single	71	Own means	sister (age 76) and 3 servants
12	Isaac Pitman	Married	78	Shorthand Pub. & Printer	Wife, 2 grown up sons and 3 servants
13	Catherine Milsop	Widow	57	Own means	3 grown up daughters and 4 servants
14	Charles Mackillop	Widower	66	Own means	married daughter (age 41), 3 grand children and 5 servants
15	John Stone	Married	72	Solicitor	Wife and 4 servants
16	William Braikenbridge	Married	73	JP for Somerset	Wife and 5 servants
17	Charles M Frith	Married	52	Manufacturer	2 grown daughters, 2 young sons, 10 servants inc 2 coachmen
18	Alexander Falconer	Single	64	Own means	2 servants
19	Rev. Edward Handley	Married	48	Rector of Northope	Wife, visitor and 9 servants
20	Percival Huth	Married	39	Own means	Wife, 2 daughters, 1 son and 4 servant
21	Hannah Offley	Widow	73	Own means	3 servant
22	Lucy Scott	Widow	80	Own means	2 daughters (age 63 & 58), 8 servant.
23	Ellen Peel	Single	67	Own means	3 servant
26	Empty				
27	Hon Mrs F Walsh	Widow	57	Own means	3 servant
28	Flora Bruère	Single	60	Own means	2 younger sisters and 7 servant
29	Oriana Fanning Laura Anderson (Lodger)	Widow	??	Own means	6 servants - one assumes that the head of the house was away and that the house is given over to her
30	Fanny Hawkins	Widow	49	Own means	4 teenage children and 4 servant

The census returns only give a picture of who was actually living in the Crescent on the night of the census of 1891. Some people may have been away and there may have been servants who were not living in; visitors are usually recorded as such so we assume that the rest were permanent. In spite of the reservations about reading too much into the return of one night a fairly clear portrait emerges, that of elderly residents living in the main with elderly relatives on their own means. The number of unmarried daughters or nieces living with relatives reads like Trollope and is a testimony to the position of women in the Victorian era. There were approximately 58 adults residing in the Crescent but they were supported by some 130 servants many of whom were young. Housemaids, lady's maids, parlour maids and nurse maids tended to be 20-30 years old though cooks and butlers were usually older, so in spite of the staid profile of the householders there must have been plenty of youthful activity and gossip in the Crescent. One wonders who used the lawns maybe the nursemaids to Charles Mackillop's grandchildren or the teenage children of Mrs Hawkins.

Maria F. B.