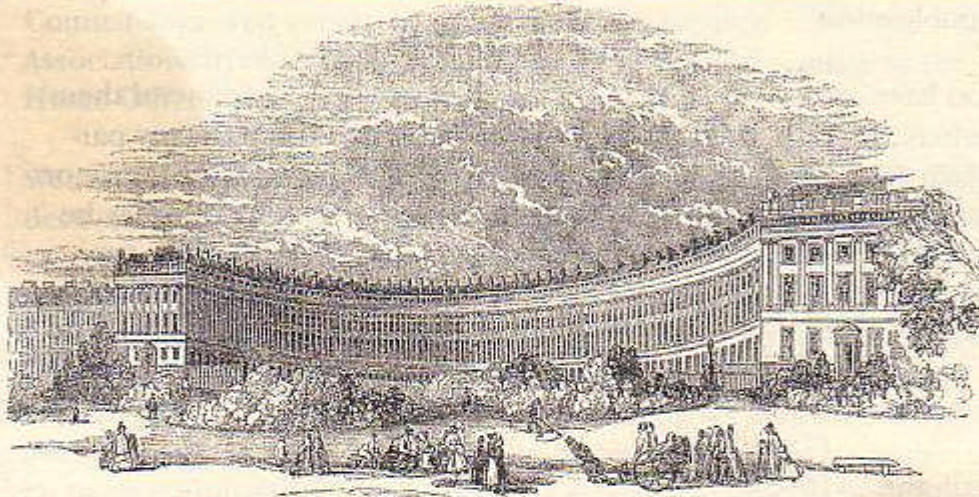


THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 45

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Residents and Members,

I hope that you enjoy this issue. Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome, be they ideas for articles or fully written pieces, and may be supplied in manuscript, typed or on disk. If you have any old or new photographs of immediate local interest, please submit them for publication.

If you have any favourite books about Bath, please recommend them to others, whether they are in or out of print. Do you have any particularly interesting architectural or interior features in your house or flat, such as plasterwork details or wooden mouldings? They may be drawn or photographed for the Newsletter, allowing others to see them, and the information could help your neighbours to restore their properties.

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Published by the Royal Crescent Society

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Chairman's Notes

I wrote in the last issue about the attempt by the Residents' Associations adjacent to Royal Victoria Park to dissuade the Council from supporting the 'model' byelaw to replace existing byelaws controlling noise nuisance in Parks. We were partially successful, as the Council agreed to remove the exemption for religious services, but we remain concerned that there would still be exemption for Council-approved events. We shall therefore support the other Associations in objecting formally when the Council applies to the Home Office to enact the new byelaw.

We recently learnt that the Heritage Lottery Fund had reversed its decision to include the restoration of the Lawn railings and Ha-ha in its grant to B.&N.E.S. for the works to Royal Victoria Park. We are sure that B.&N.E.S. will be as concerned as we are about this, as H.L.F. has stated that the whole of the R. V. Park grant is conditional on the restoration being completed. Your Committee met shortly after receiving this bombshell, and is exploring various avenues to persuade H.L.F. to reconsider, as the restoration cannot be undertaken to an enduring standard without a substantial grant. I hope you will agree that the Lawn itself has been kept in good shape this summer as a result of our measures to monitor its maintenance more closely. We expect a sudden influx of Lawn Fund contributions from those who have overlooked their obligations!

Treasurer's Notes

Unfortunately Mr. Roberts has stepped down as the Society's Treasurer due to difficulties because he is not a full-time resident in the Royal Crescent. It was kind of him to make an effort to help the Society. For the moment I have been co-opted as the Treasurer by the Committee and will be able to carry the duties on for a short while. This is not a long-term or permanent solution, so I would really be grateful if anyone could help the Society by fulfilling the role as Treasurer. On a different note, Stephen and I were married in Bath on the 25th August and would very much like to thank all the people in the Crescent who sent us presents and cards.

Summer Outing: Great Chalfield Manor

It was September 11th, a day that was to become indelibly etched in the memory of all Americans, and of the world. Most of us nonetheless decided to tear ourselves away from our television screens and seek the solace of Great Chalfield Manor nestling peacefully in the Wiltshire countryside.

There we were welcomed by our guide Margaret and taken on a private tour behind the scenes of this charming manor house of warm Cotswold stone rebuilt by Thomas Tropnell in 1465-1480. [Come to think of it, that would have made it an already ancient building by the time the John Woods began to make their mark in Bath.]

The house eventually passed to Robert Fuller whose family, Robert and Patsy Floyd, still occupy and manage it today. The Fullers gradually furnished and decorated the interior, collecting fine pieces and designs that were compatible with Tropnell's house. The result is truly magnificent.

Each of us probably retains their own memory of Great Chalfield Manor. For me it is the three stone 'looking-masks' high up on the walls of the truly stunning Great Hall: a bishop with mitre facing a crownless king with asses' ears - a reference apparently to disputes between church and state - and a laughing face. Each afforded an excellent view of the goings-on down below and one can readily imagine a jealous wife in her bedchamber keeping a close watch on her husband's antics as the feasting carried on long into the evening. [OK, ladies, I admit it could just have been the other way around!] After the tour was over we returned once more to the aforementioned Hall to do some feasting and drinking of our own thanks to Patsy Floyd, who really made us feel welcome in her delightful home.

As we finally departed into the night we all felt, I think, that those few hours where we remained suspended in the past and were able to forget the present had refreshed our spirits. Great Chalfield Manor, if it wasn't already, had become very close to our hearts.

Royal Crescent Residents: Colonel Champion

In the later eighteenth century a Colonel Champion lived in Number Twenty-nine, The Royal Crescent. He prospered in the service of the East India Company, and one unkind wit said that the Colonel had 'enjoyed a good shake of the pagoda tree.' Certainly the eighteenth-century decoration still visible in Number Twenty-nine is of high quality, and the house has a particularly large saloon on the first floor with a plasterwork ceiling to match. This was the setting for Mrs. Champion's Wednesday at-homes, which were attended by the finest of Bath society.

Further research shows that the Colonel has a remarkable memorial in Bath Abbey. It is situated just above where the prayerbooks are kept, near the West Door. The inscription reads as follows, in modern spelling.

COLONEL ALEXANDER CHAMPION

died March 15th, 1793.

His Memory remains

*Not less adorned, exalted, and endeared by domestic Virtues
than by Professional Ability.*

*He rose, in the course of 20 years active service in India,
to the CHIEF COMMAND of the Company's Troops in BENGAL:*

*And in the various Situations wherein he held That Honor
his Zeal, his Courage, and Success were ever tempered by Humanity.*

In private Life, those who best knew him, best can speak

The Esteem which was borne him testifies his Worth.

He was in manners plain, open and unaffected:

Possessing a Sincerity of Soul,

Heightened by Benevolence, and enlarged by hospitality.

*This Monument, on the Tablet of which
her Gratitude, Respect, and Affection are with Truth inscribed
was erected by his Widow, FRANCES CHAMPION.*

Books about Bath: William Lowndes' The Royal Crescent in Bath

There are not many terraces in the country which can claim to be the subject of an entire book, but then The Royal Crescent is in so many ways exceptional. Established residents will know this book well, but it is now some twenty years since it first appeared, so it deserves an airing for more recent arrivals.

Lowndes' book is called *The Royal Crescent in Bath* and subtitled *A Fragment of English Life*. The publisher was the Redcliffe Press Ltd. and the ISBN number is 0 905459 34 2. I bought my copy from a secondhand bookshop in Margaret's Buildings and it is now well-thumbed as bedtime reading by my guests.

The book describes how The Crescent came to be built, and how the land once stretched down before it to the river. Lowndes brings life to the names of many residents, often conveying the true nature of eighteenth-century Bath and the importance of gambling. After all, this was how Beau Nash earned most of his income.

Many of the characters Lowndes describes are famous, or their stories well known, such as that of Sheridan and Elizabeth Linley, but it is the less familiar visitor who stands out. One such was Marie Thérèse Louise de Savoie Carignon, Princesse de Lamballe. As a friend and lady-in-waiting to Queen Marie Antoinette she brings a breath of the *ancien régime* and its excesses to No.1 The Royal Crescent, where she lodged in 1786:

'She was abnormally sensitive; if she suffered the slightest shock, she would collapse into a faint that often lasted for two hours. The smell of violets made her disastrously ill, and the sight of shellfish, even in a painting, sent her into a nervous fit. She seems to have had more allergies than personal names and titles...'

She died horribly at the hands of the mob during the French

In the early nineteenth century an Irish cleric resided in No.1 for three years. Like the Princesse de Lamballe, he needed extra space for his name and titles, being known as the Honourable and Reverend James St. Leger, Rector of Castletown Roche, Co. Cork.

Whilst No.1 might have been free of gambling for at least those three years, the same could not have been said of No.8, about which Lowndes tells a story involving another French aristocrat. In 1778 the household consisted of Jean Baptiste, Vicomte du Barré, his wife and sister, and an Irish Jacobite, Captain Rice. Their income seems to have come from fleecing at cards the guests whom they invited to extravagant parties in the house. Following a quarrel over £650 won from a neighbour living at No.29, the two men fought a duel with firearms on Claverton Down. The Vicomte was killed; Rice was tried, acquitted and fled the country.

As a contrast with the colourful if perilous life of the professional gambler, Mrs Edward Montagu, 1720-1800, was a frequent visitor to Bath. She favoured intelligent conversation and had an aversion to the cards. Known as 'the Queen of the Blue Stockings', she was in many ways a thoroughly enlightened and generous lady and a kind host. Lowndes describes some actions through which she comes across as quite a modern person. Of Bath she once wrote:

'I think the Crescent is the pleasantest situation, as well as the most beautiful in its form, of anything I ever beheld. To my great mortification there was not a house to be got there when I came...'

Eventually Mrs Montagu found the house she wanted and was able to write:

'I have now got an admirable good house in the Crescent. I have a charming prospect from all my windows, a pretty garden. and everything so pleasant and convenient.'

Some Spas of Britain: recent developments

There seems to be a growing sense of excitement in Bath that the city will soon regain its status as a proper spa. Unlike the Millennium Dome, the Spa will have a function and most likely attract visitors without the need for huge publicity. By chance I met a Russian family in the city who asked where they could bathe in the mineral waters. They were very disappointed that there was no establishment available. All I could do was point them in the the direction of the Leisure Centre. If anything, I believe the new facility will be over-subscribed.

It seems that the early 1960's marked the end of our natural health resorts. Although the National Health Service uses hydrotherapy, medical science appears reluctant to acknowledge the benefit of mineral waters other than their warmth. Some hydrotherapy units use heated mains water, even though a mineral source may be nearby.

The most significant economic question about the Spa is the effect on the local economy. Our problem is the three-to-four-hour coach visitor. We need fewer low-spending coach-trippers and more of the overnight visitors. People who come to use a spa are much more likely to stay overnight or longer.

Other spas in Britain are planning for a renaissance of their facilities. Harrogate in Yorkshire has some eighty-eight mineral springs in its area, among them chalybeate (iron) springs and the famously intense sulphurous source. A small glass of the latter tastes like *drinking* heavily salted, somewhat old, boiled eggs. It is traditionally recommended for cleaning the blood. Malvern water is also sulphurous, but the writer has no experience of the waters there. Harrogate water was 'discovered' in the 1570's, but the town is primarily a Victorian creation.

The Turkish Baths in Harrogate have survived and are undergoing refurbishment, due to reopen in mid-October 2001. They form only a small part of the huge Royal Baths complex, most of which was turned into a conference centre from 1964 onwards.

Buxton in Derbyshire is the resort which bears closest comparison with Bath. It is a thermal spring, the water emerging at around 27 degrees centigrade. Its Roman name was *Aquae Arnemetiae*, 'the waters of the goddess of the grove'. It is thought that there was a Roman temple on the slope above the main source, but no masonry survives. Incorporated within the Old Hall Hotel is a large Tudor lodging house with a flying freehold over part of the Natural Baths.

Buxton boasts its own Crescent, though not called 'Royal'. Unlike the badly-abused Royal Crescent in Cheltenham, which has the bus station on its doorstep, Buxton has a beautifully-situated Grade-1-listed masterpiece by John Carr of York. The Fifth Duke of Devonshire was inspired by Bath to turn Buxton into a centre of architectural merit, and building lasted from 1779 to 1790. By contrast with our Crescent, Buxton's is semi-circular and consists of six houses and two end pavilions; it seems that these were always lodgings or hotels. The location is the reverse of Bath's, for Buxton's Crescent is in a hollow over the culverted River Wye, and the lawn slopes up from it: this provided a fashionable promenade in the town's hey-day.

There is a magnificent ball room of 1784 by Carr, incorporated within the facade of the east pavilion and reached by the Grand Staircase. For many years the Ball Room was used as the reference section of the town's library and the excessive weight of the bookshelves did no f

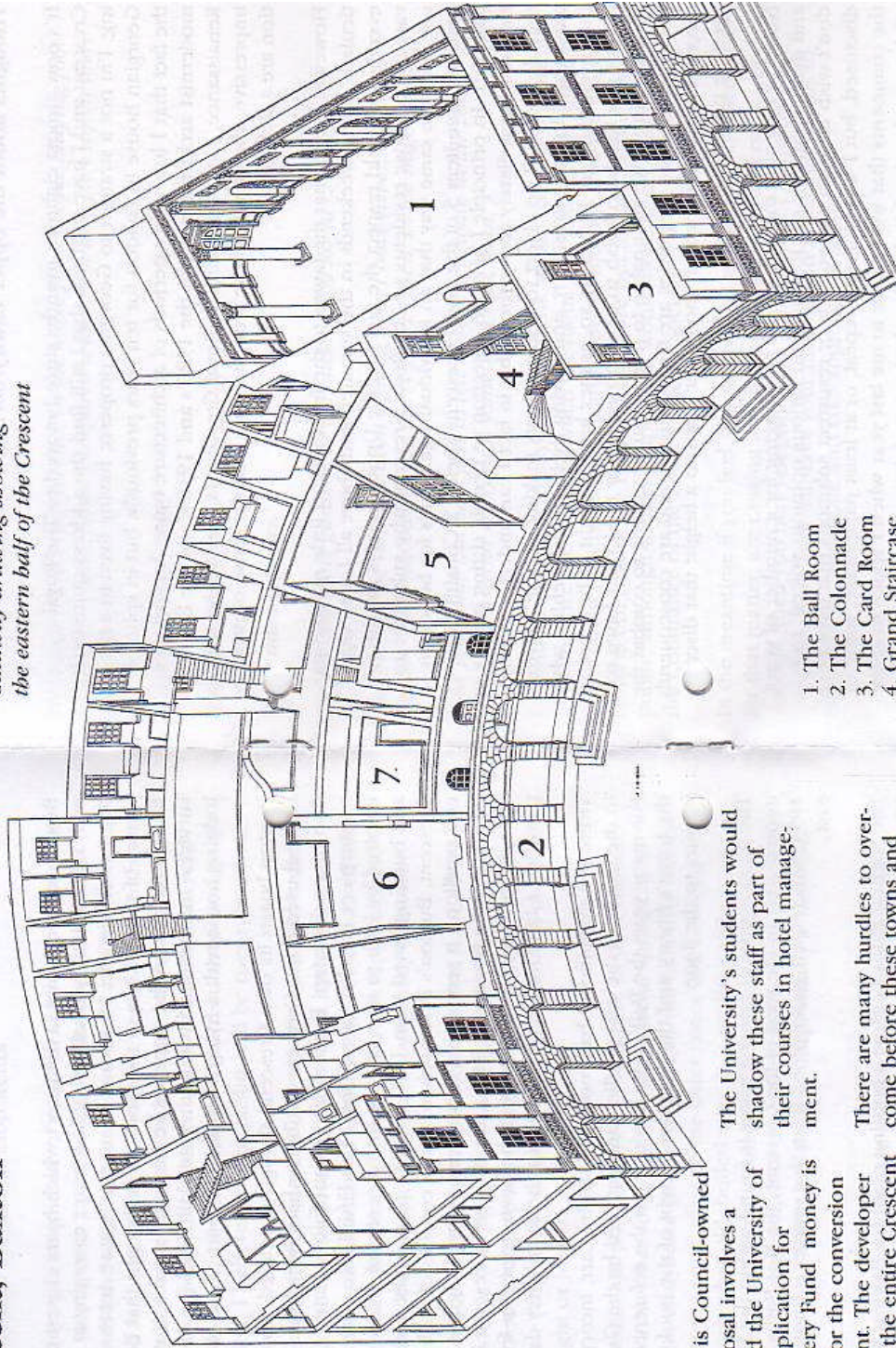
ours to the floor.

The main source of mineral water is found within the Natural Baths, immediately to the west of the Crescent; the Hot Baths building of 1854, which used water piped from the source, is immediately to the east.

The Natural Baths became a bottling plant for Buxton Water in the 1960's, but the Hot Baths suffered a worse fate in the 1970's when the building became a shopping arcade. The Crescent has been in a deplorable state for some years, but there is a plan to reverse this decline.

escent, Buxton

Cutaway drawing showing the eastern half of the Crescent



lex is Council-owned proposal involves a and the University of application for lottery fund money is le for the conversion cent. The developer in the entire Crescent -quality hotel, operational basis and d by professionals.

The University's students would shadow these staff as part of their courses in hotel management.

There are many hurdles to overcome before these towns and cities can again work as spas: happily Bath seems to be in the forefront of this revival.

1. The Ball Room
2. The Colonnade
3. The Card Room
4. Grand Staircase
5. Interpretation area
6. First-floor hotel rooms
7. Ground-floor retail units

Thoughts about the Upper Lawn *from a new resident*

It's now almost eighteen months since I moved to The Royal Crescent and I have to admit that I still find the address quite exciting. I'm not a stranger to Georgian property, having lived in a flat in a Georgian house in London for ten years previously, but in spite of the fact that I love other periods of architecture more, for instance modernist architecture from the 1920's and 1930's and the English Renaissance, I still feel that The Royal Crescent is special: the scale is impressive, the quality of the workmanship and the sense of proportion are a delight.

However, I wish that the lawns to the front were a little quieter, particularly at the weekends in the summer, and above all I wish that everybody would respect the fact that the Upper Lawn is for the private use of those residents of The Royal Crescent who subscribe to use it, in the same way that an individual's garden is for her or his own use (see item 5 of the Royal Crescent Society's Constitution, page 12). In principle I have no objection to people sitting quietly on the area immediately above the ha-ha, in fact I can understand why they do so. But I do object to non-residents making a noise, playing games and lighting fires on it, and leaving their rubbish behind when they eventually go. Especially so, as they have no right to be there, do not pay for the rubbish to be removed or for the Upper Lawn to be maintained. We are unable to install double-glazing to combat the noise because the properties are Grade-I-listed, and are consequently forced to grow the grass on the Upper Lawn to a height that discourages the unwelcome.

Now I'm sure that this debate has been raging for a number of years, and many solutions put forward and various opinions voiced, so I don't wish to open old wounds or resurrect solutions that have been discussed, but I would like to repeat, or at least paraphrase, some of the comments that were made to me last year when I spoke to some of the people who felt that they had every right to be there:

If you don't want us here you should put a fence up along the top

You think there's a difference in the noise from people playing football on the Upper Lawn compared with when they play down there [in the Park]?'

'I pay my council tax.'

'Is it private property? What, all of it?'

'It's a mess anyway.'

'You all have big gardens at the back of The Royal Crescent.'

'In all the time that I've been coming here I have never, ever seen anyone from the houses use the (Upper) Lawn, so we might as well.'

'Did you come out here just to tell us this is private land? You should focus your energy on something else, man.'

I would like to finish by saying that I think we do have an opportunity to improve the situation when the ha-ha and railings are restored. There could for instance be clearer signs to indicate that the Upper Lawn is not part of the Park and therefore not for use by the general public, although the exact approach would need to be considered by the Committee of the Royal Crescent Society.

In the meantime if you feel that people in the Park, or anywhere else for that matter, are causing a disturbance - noise or otherwise - or damage, then you may telephone the Park Control Centre on Bath 336275, whose staff will take your message and refer the details to the police to investigate and take appropriate action.

Constitution of The Royal Crescent Society

1. The Society shall be called The Royal Crescent Society.
2. The objects of the Society shall be to preserve and enhance the amenities of the Royal Crescent and its surroundings and to promote the interests of members of the Society. The Society shall be a not-for-profit organisation.
3. The Society shall consist of ordinary members of not less than 18 years old who shall be:-
 - a. either owners of any part or parts of the property comprising Nos. 1 to 30 Royal Crescent, Bath or
 - b. occupiers of not less than six months continuous residence of any part or parts of Nos. 1 to 30 Royal Crescent.
4. Non-voting membership shall also be open to anyone interested in the objects of the Society, on payment of the appropriate Annual Subscription. Such members shall be called 'Friends of the Royal Crescent Society' and shall be entitled to receive the Newsletter and other papers issued to members and to attend the Society's functions.
5. The annual subscription for ordinary members shall be £8, or £12 for double membership (two people in the same household). The subscription for Life members shall be £50, or £75 for double membership. Life Members who move away from the Royal Crescent shall remain as Life Friends without further subscription. Subscription shall be due on the first day of May in any year. The annual subscription for Friends (Rule 4) shall cover at least the cost of production and distribution of the Newsletter and shall be set by the Committee as necessary, subject to confirmation of the following Annual General Meeting.
6. Members and Friends whose current subscriptions shall not have been paid before the 30th day of September in any year shall cease to

7. Any alteration to the rules shall be proposed by the Committee, but no such alteration shall take effect until the same has been proposed and confirmed at the Annual Meeting or a special general meeting convened for the purpose.

8. The Committee shall have the power to make bylaws for regulating the conduct and affairs of the Society provided the same are not inconsistent with these rules, and such bylaws shall be binding on all members.

9. A general meeting of the Society shall be held every year not later than the 30th April to transact the following business:-

- a. to receive and, if approved, to adopt a statement of the Society's accounts to the end of the preceding year;
- b. to consider and, if approved, sanction any duly proposed alteration to the rules;
- c. to appoint the Officers and other Members of the Committee. Nominees for Officers and Committee Members must be members of the Society and may only be proposed and seconded by members of the Society;
- d. to appoint an auditor or auditors;
- e. to deal with any special matter which the Committee desires to bring before the members and to receive suggestions from members for consideration by the Committee. Notice convening the general meeting shall be sent to the members not less than 21 days before the meeting, and shall specify the matters to be dealt with.

10. A special general meeting may be convened at any time by the Committee and shall be convened within 21 days from the receipt of a requisition in writing signed by not less than 15 members specifying the object of the meeting for any of the following purposes:-

- a. to consider and, if approved, sanction any duly proposed alter-

- b. to deal with any special matter which the Committee may desire to place before the members, including the expulsion of a member;
- c. to receive the resignation of the Committee or to remove any member or members from their office and to fill any vacancy or vacancies caused;
- d. to deal with any special matter which the members requiring the meeting may desire to place before the Society.

Notice convening a special general meeting shall be sent to the members not less than seven days before the meeting and shall specify the matters to be dealt with.

11. At Committee meetings and at general meetings a chairman shall be elected to preside, and he shall have a casting or additional vote in the event of an equality of votes. At Committee meetings three shall form a quorum. At general meetings fifteen shall form a quorum.

12. The Committee of the Society, other than the Officers, shall be limited to six. Casual vacancies arising in the course of the year shall be filled by the Committee, subject to confirmation of the following Annual Meeting.

13. The most senior office of the society shall be the non-executive one of President; the remaining offices shall be those of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, plus any other Offices the Committee may find it necessary to create in order to prosecute its business, subject to confirmation at the following Annual Meeting. The Committee shall have power to co-opt members in a special position or who have special aptitudes, knowledge or experience, for the prosecution of Society business; such members may be drawn from outside the Royal Crescent where essential (Rule 3 need not apply). Such members may not form part of a quorum.

Engolve, partnerships for sustainability

The former Bath Environment Centre, started by volunteers seven years ago, has been relaunched as *Engolve*, with premises in Green Park Station. It has a staff of fifteen and draws on the experience of a wide number of volunteers, all aiming to help reduce the human impact on the environment.

The work of the organisation covers many issues, from the promotion of organic food to the need to reduce traffic from the 'school run'. Apparently we have 20% more cars on the road during term time. Parents drive their children to school because it's too dangerous to let them walk, partly because of all the traffic, and so the spiral develops.

However the organisation deals not only with domestic environmental issues, but also with substantial sectors, such as the construction industry. Its newsletter *Thumbprint* reports successes with local businesses, such as Ernest Ireland Construction, which on a building project in Swindon achieved a completely accident-free record and a 70% reduction in waste disposal costs.

The newsletter also provides information about leisure activities related to the environment, from the exact date of the next Bath Farmers' Market, through wildlife walks, to scientific lectures in the Bath area. There are news features about environmental sites throughout the South West, such as the Eden Project in Cornwall.

All in all, the organisation seems to have a sensible approach to the environment. *Engolve* works with business rather than preaching against it. The following are two schemes which seem worthy of mention.

Bath Share Car Club is now active and allows members to hire a car for a short time, for journeys that cannot be made by public transport. The aim is clearly to discourage car ownership amongst those of us who only rarely take to the roads. Booking is made through a call centre and members collect the key from a deposit box in the

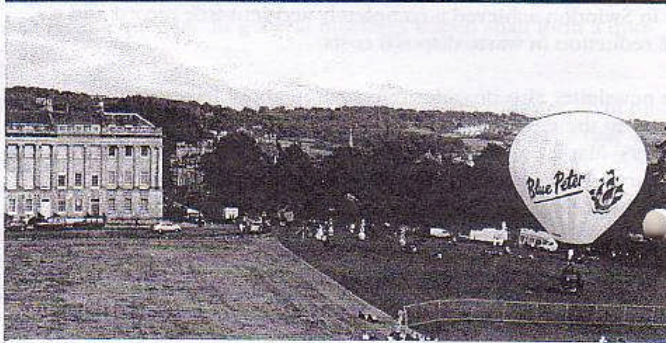
Broad Street car park. Plans include booking through the Internet and the provision of children's seats.

Share Car Club: (01225) 787925/ barrym@envolve.co.uk

Business Team advises companies in North Somerset on energy saving and reducing waste, promoting the competitive benefits of sustainable working practices. Free on-site reviews help to identify the main issues, while seminars, workshops and on-site training are also part of the service. A telephone help-line and newsletter provide continuing contact with the organisation.

Business Team: Gill Bryan (01225) 787922/ gillb@envolve.co.uk

Envolve,
Green Park Station,
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Blue Peter came to Bath in the spring and occupied half of the Lower Crescent Lawns for a day. There were various contraptions involved, including a motorised bathtub, which the presenters were supposed to have used to reach Bath! The balloon was a welcome site, residents having been deprived by the foot-and-mouth precautions of the spectacle of balloons floating over the city.



The marriage took place on 25th August at Bath Register Office of Mr. Stephen Little, Chairman of the Society and Miss Michelle Morgan, Treasurer of the Society. A reception was held at the Priory and the honeymoon was spent on Lake Como.

