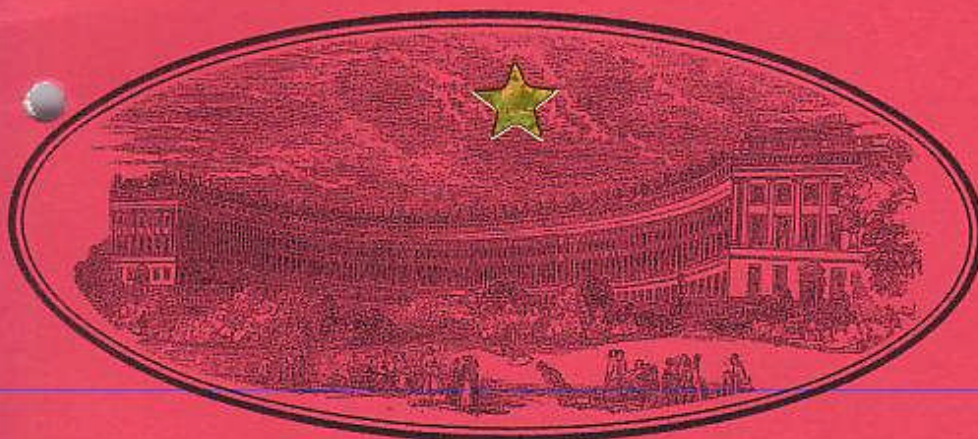


THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY  
**NEWSLETTER**

ISSUE NUMBER 49

WINTER 2002



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FOR 5TH JANUARY 2003*

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Residents and Members,

It will not be long until Bath regains its status as a proper spa. The Council hopes that this will produce more longer-staying visitors, rather than those who spend only a few hours here. Let us hope that residents who can afford it will benefit from having such excellent new facilities for their health.

I hope that you will make a point of supporting those businesses that have advertised with us, and please tell them that you saw their details in this publication.

My thanks to those who have contributed to the Newsletter, and season's greetings to all readers.

Our next issue is planned for Spring 2003, so I look forward to hearing from you if you have comments or points that you would like to air.

Stephen Conlin, No.29.

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*Published by the Royal Crescent Society*

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**Chairman's Notes:** *Stephen Little, No. 22 Royal Crescent, Bath BA1 2LT.*

Our application to the Land Registry for title to the Lawn and its boundaries has been successful, subject to our finding a satisfactory method of holding title on behalf of owners and occupiers. We have to tread a fine line between ensuring that we qualify for the Lottery Fund grant and safeguard the rights of use of the Lawn for property owners. The legal niceties of our circumstances, in that the title has to be held by trustees on behalf of members, are a further complication. We are therefore taking legal advice on the best way to organise all this, and on the exact status of the rights and obligations contained in the original deeds to the thirty houses. As we are anxious to keep freeholders fully informed of developments, we shall shortly be distributing the first of a series of up-dates on the situation.

I have recently received two consultation documents from B&NES Planning Services about the design, management and maintenance of the Public Realm - all streets, parks and other public areas throughout B&NES - and a Public Art Strategy. The first sets out objectives for future strategy and action, and I was pleased to note that it includes recognition that boundaries between public and private space should be appropriate for the character of the area and maintained to a high standard. It also states the intention under 'Paving and Surfaces' to provide surfaces appropriate to the location, and to keep materials looking at their best. We shall remind B&NES of this commitment when seeking their help in organising the logistics of the Railings Restoration and to press for the re-instatement of the stone on the southern pavement, and repairs to the cobbled road surface.

The second concerns the inclusion of art works in public places, again throughout B&NES. The use of the word 'contemporary' in this context makes me apprehensive. Let us hope that any public art which appears in Bath is consistent with the Georgian setting.

These documents, revised in the light of comments from a wide range of individuals and organisations, will be available in due course from B&NES Planning Services, and on the B&NES website: [www.bathnes.gov.uk](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk)

Please support the Festive Dinner on January 5th 2003, details on page 10, which the Royal Crescent Hotel kindly allows us to host at well below their usual rates. The Hotel has recently changed hands, and we look forward to maintaining the close relationship between the Society and the



The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations has held a meeting with the MP Don Foster to discuss the problems with tour buses. A survey by the Council has shown that eighteen buses are in use in the summer months, and twelve in use in the winter.

### ***Residents' Parking***

Dorothy Miley is the new Council officer responsible for parking matters.

### ***Graffiti***

Graffiti is still a problem for several Bath Residents' Associations. It is worth reporting incidents to the Council Hotline, as persistence may be rewarded. The Gravel Walk has recently been cleaned thanks to the efforts of local residents who found the many marks to be an eye-sore.

If you have anything to report, please use the following channels:

Action Line telephone (01225) 394041

E-mail: [action\\_line@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:action_line@bathnes.gov.uk)

### ***Vaults***

Interim papers about the Council's survey of the state of vaults beneath the city's streets have been released, with a full report expected in April 2003.

### ***Council Arts***

The Council has asked the public for suggestions to improve the public realm. The following is a summary of their intentions and the means by which they could be carried out. The deadline for a response has recently passed, but good ideas are probably always of interest.

The Council has adopted a strategy that aims to improve the quality of the public realm, 'Life in the Public Realm'. The Public Art Policy and Strategy is part of this. The Council believes that including good quality work by artists in the public realm can contribute significantly to improving the quality of our built and natural environments.

The Council will actively encourage developers to include good quality public art in all major capital development schemes and will include it in all of its own major capital development schemes. Including the work of



artists in the creation and regeneration of the public realm is usually referred to as Public Art. This is not an art form in itself: it comes about where an artist's skill, vision and creativity have been used to enhance the quality of a particular site. Public art should say something about a particular site, its history, special qualities or the people who inhabit it.

Public art has one consistent quality: it is specific to the site and relates to the context of that site. Other than that it can take as many forms as artists have ways of working. It can also vary in terms of expression. For example it could be humorous, beautiful, arresting, monumental, subtle, intricate, challenging or comforting.

Currently there are very few examples of contemporary public art in this area, but there are ideas for commissioning new work. The internationally renowned artist Vong Phaophanit has designed a water installation for Bath Street. It involves piping hot water under the cobbled street and sporadically jetting the water through hundreds of small holes up into the street. This will create the illusion of a temporary mist of water and steam just above the level of the street and pavement.

The Council believes that including original, well-made, locally distinctive art in the public realm contributes significantly to improving the quality of our public spaces. However, public art can also have other benefits:

-adding value

external developers and the Council have to consider their plans in the light of regional competition. A new shopping centre, industrial estate, school or housing development has to have something that will make it more attractive than others. Adding good quality, distinctive features created by artists can be a very cost-efficient way of achieving this.

-visitors

public art can also be a visitor attraction. In a World Heritage site such as Bath it can broaden the range of cultural attractions available and so attract a broader range of visitors. The Council will include artists in the design teams for Western Riverside, Southgate and Walcot Street.

Penelope Tollitt, Senior Urban Designer, Planning Services,  
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Trim Street, Bath BA1 2DP  
Tel: 01225 477526 Email: [penelope\\_tollitt@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:penelope_tollitt@bathnes.gov.uk)

## The recent history of Bath Spa

Geological investigations of Bath Hot Springs commenced in 1978 following the discovery of the amoeba *Naegleria fowleri* in the thermal water installations of the Spa and at a time when the south wall of the Grand Pump Room was undergoing repair. The presence of the amoeba resulted in the closure of the Hot Bath, the Cross Bath and the drinking fountain in the Pump Room. The King's Bath had already been closed in order to deal with the structural problems relating to the Pump Room.

At the time when these untoward events took place, there was very little information as to the nature of the ground beneath the bed of the King's Spring. This spring and, to a lesser extent, the Cross Bath Spring, have always deposited some sand and silt as they emerged at the surface. Such alluvial deposits were shown to come from the Lower Lias Clay which forms the floor of the Avon Valley at Bath. The hot springs of this region issue at or near the margin of the Upper Carboniferous rocks of the concealed Bristol and Somerset Coal-field.

For the first time since prehistory, the entire output of the thermal springs of Bath was now running to waste. A plan was drawn up for drilling the bed of the King's Spring in order to ascertain its geological structure and to test the quality of the rising thermal water at depth before it made contact with any contaminated material within or around the spring basin.

Following the removal of the floor of the King's Bath, archaeological investigations revealed the mode of construction of the Roman Reservoir. For the most part the Roman walls are founded on the Lower Lias Clay but where this was not possible, as for example in the channel where the thermal water drained away to the river, the foundations were supported on wooden piles caulked with puddled clay.

The water issuing from the trial boreholes in the King's Spring gave temperatures up to 46.5°C. Tests carried out at the Pathology Laboratory of the Royal United Hospital at Bath showed no amoeba in the water. Oxidation of the thermal water produces the characteristic orange-brown stain which can be seen on the stone basin of the Pump Room Fountain. Once oxidation has been completed, the thermal water becomes a potential medium for the growth of the amoeba. Therefore the new Pump Room Fountain has been designed for continuous flow, unused thermal water being immediately drained away to waste. The sinking of the shallow trial



boreholes in the basin of the King's Spring provided evidence of the temperature, 46.5°C, and pressure of the thermal water. The natural ground level of the King's Spring shows that the basin is situated on the alluvial plain of the River Avon and must therefore have been liable to inundation by the Avon at times of flood.

By building a massive lead-lined masonry enclosure with piled and puddled foundations, the Romans effectively isolated the top of the spring pipe from the flood waters of the river.

Following the end of Roman occupation, the buildings of the baths at *Ae Sulis* collapsed. The destruction of the strong, well-founded structure enclosing the King's Spring is something of a mystery as there is nothing to suggest that subsidence of the foundations of the Roman Reservoir took place, though the foundations of the adjacent Roman Temple do show some evidence of movement. Many of the masses of brickwork were very large and the debris, partly buried by alluvial deposits, partly protruding above the surface of the flood plain, was invaded by the rising thermal water.

With the exception of Wood's Hot Bath, the baths erected in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries were mainly situated above the hot springs, but some, such as the Kingston Baths in the nineteenth century made use of thermal water which had leaked away through the layer of broken and collapsed Roman masonry. These conditions prevailed almost unchanged until the end of the nineteenth century when Major C.E. Davis undertook the task of excavating the Roman baths.

It became evident that there was no way in which an acceptable method of extracting sediment-free thermal water could be devised using vertical boreholes sunk in the floor of the King's Spring. Any attempt at extracting thermal water by means of boreholes would therefore have to 'prove the water' at depth in some structurally stable medium, and recover it without the aid of a filtration plant or special linings requiring frequent cleaning.

#### *The Sports Centre Borehole, 1982*

The possibility of using thermal water to supply the swimming bath at the Sports Centre was considered by Bath City Council. It also appears likely that the Sports Centre Borehole is situated on the same fault system. It seemed reasonable to hope that the water at the Sports Centre would have



a temperature in excess of 26.6°C, this being the temperature required for the baths. A very strong flow of thermal water was encountered but the maximum temperature recorded in this hole was 21°C, a disappointing figure, being about 5.5°C lower than that required for supplying the swimming baths. The slightly brackish or saline taste of the water from the Sports Centre Borehole renders it useless for drinking.

#### *The Stall Street Inclined Borehole, 1983*

At the time of the closure of the Spa facilities in 1978, it had already been recognised by the City Engineer that the existing arrangements for pumping and distributing the thermal water from the King's Spring were unsatisfactory. The occurrence of the amoeba in the spring basin and thermal installations, notably in the high level storage tank in Swallow Street, now showed that there was also a danger to public health through oxidation of stored water.

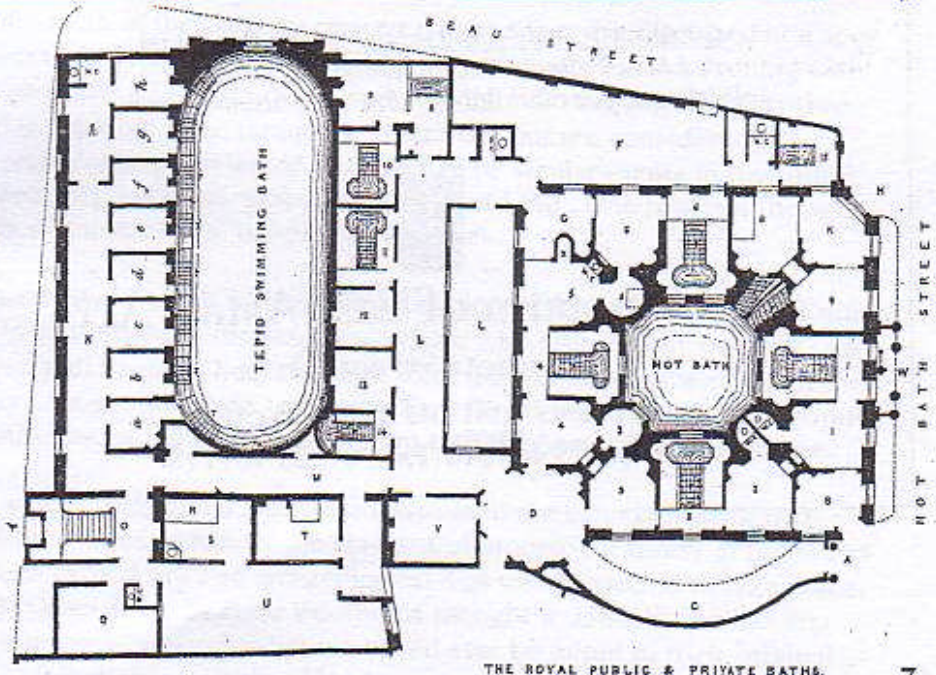
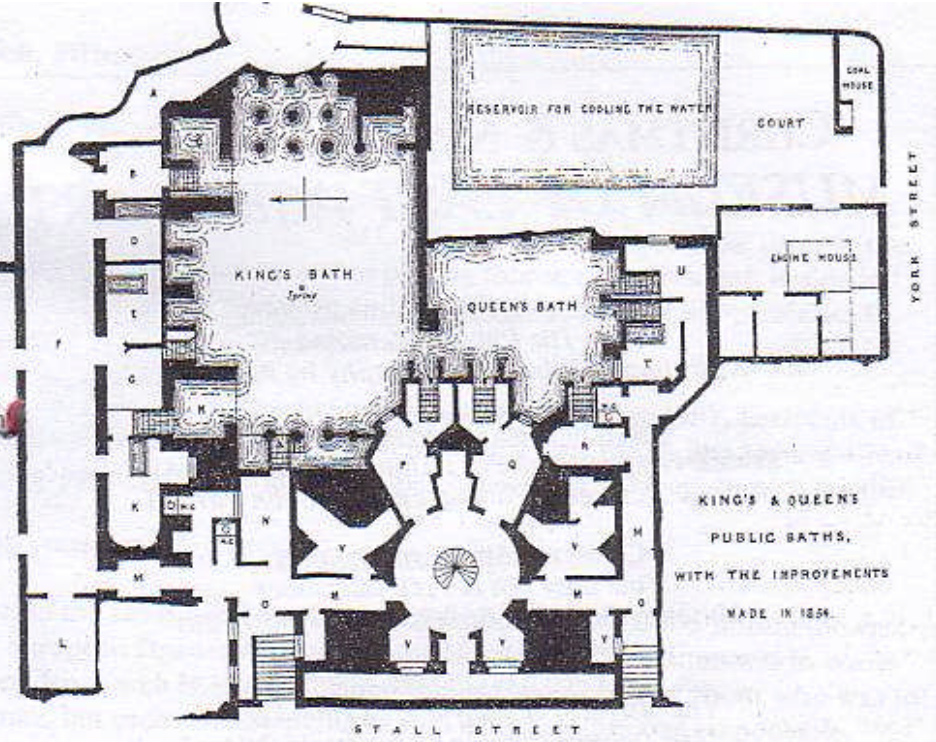
Recovery of the thermal water by tapping it at depth beneath the King's Spring raised a number of geological and practical problems and several methods were considered in the light of the available information. An inclined borehole sited near the Pump Room offered the best hope of success. An inclination of 32° relative to the vertical was adopted in order to pass beneath the estimated position of the bottom of the gravel-filled spring pipe and to ensure penetration of the hard rocks within the limits of the fissure belt. Drilling of the Stall Street Inclined Borehole commenced in April 1983 and it is from here that water has been extracted to date.

*Note: the new spa takes its water from a borehole near the Hot Bath and, thanks to the research described above, should bring only health to those who use the spring. There is still no firm date for the opening of the Bath Spa. The company Thermae Bath Spa is now recruiting actively for the opening and already has eight staff. Editor.*

Most of this article is based on chapter 6 of *Hot Springs of Bath*, edited by G.A.Kellaway, © 1991 Bath City Council. Chapter authors: S. Kilvington, P.G.Mann and D.C.Warhurst.

*The two plans opposite come from Baths and Mineral Waters of Bath by R. W. Falconer, 1857. Upper: this shows how the King's Bath appeared before the discovery of the Roman Great Bath and other parts of the complex. The Pump Room is to the left. The Queen's Bath took its water from the main spring. Abbey Place no longer exists. Lower: this shows the site of the new spa, upper left, occupied by a 'Tepid Swimming Bath'.*





# CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR AT THE MUSEUM OF EAST ASIAN ART

ON SHOW UNTIL 26TH JANUARY 2003

*Ming : The Chinese Renaissance*  
*Ink Meditations : Chinese Calligraphy by Paul Griffiths*

ON SHOW FROM 4TH FEBRUARY 2003

*Scales, Feathers and Fur : Animals in Chinese Art*  
*Gods & Monsters : Photographs by Colin Pantall*

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EVENINGS

*Thursday 5th & 12th December*  
*Museum Shop and Galleries open until 7pm*

CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

*The Museum & Shop will be closed from*  
*23rd December to 2nd January inclusive*

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## Ten, Fifteen Years Ago *from past Newsletters*

### Fifteen years ago

A long-awaited coach ban in the Royal Crescent had come into force for eighteen months from May 1987. This had led to a noticeable drop in the number of whistle-stop coaches passing through the Crescent. Residents were asked to note the name and telephone number of any unlicensed coaches that ignored the order.

The city centre parking scheme had begun in October 1987. Residents of the Crescent were asked in the Newsletter if they would like to have a residents' parking scheme and what they considered to be a fair price for this.

### Ten years ago

Part of the Lawn had been fenced off without consultation during the visit of European Finance Ministers to the Hotel. The Committee was in correspondence with H.M. Treasury and the local constabulary about who was to blame, but each of these parties stated that the other was responsible.

The aftermath of the Carreras concert on the Lawn was discussed at a special meeting of the Society. Some members remembered the evening with great pleasure. A questionnaire produced the following figures: fifty-three found it 'exciting', nine thought it 'tolerable', but ten considered it 'deplorable'. Forty-two would like there to be similar events in the future, fourteen said 'perhaps', while twenty-one said 'no'. One resident thought the questionnaire itself 'unbelievably vulgar'.

The meeting also dealt with the legal position of the Lawn. There was difficulty in administering the land when those who traditionally had access to it, namely all freehold householders, were not necessarily members of the Society. One proposal was to request Bath City Council to effect a compulsory purchase of the Lawn and to grant it to the Society on a long lease.

In an article Christopher Woodward explained the extensive work that would be needed to restore the Ha-ha. A photographic survey of the Ha-ha had been carried out and archaeological digs were expected to take place in 1988. Elsewhere, Dr. Peter Woodward thought it unlikely that the first floor window sills of other houses would ever be raised to their original level, to follow the example of No.1.

The Chairman and the Committee

of the Royal Crescent Society

look forward to meeting you at the Society's

✦ FESTIVE DINNER ✦

on Sunday 5th January 2003

✦ Pre-dinner drinks at 7.30 ✦

The Royal Crescent Hotel

Black Tie *optional*

£30 per person

Raffle - proceeds to the Railing and Ha-ha Restoration Appeal

✦

*The wine on arrival is by invitation of the Hotel.*

*Dinner is provided on generous terms and we are not charged corkage. The Society is grateful to the Hotel for its kind support of our activities.*

✦

Please book by 22nd December

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Please come forward with prizes for the raffle by getting in touch with:

Mrs. M. Kersley, No.20 Royal Crescent, telephone 424247,

or Mrs. M. Little, No.22 Royal Crescent, telephone 310180.



### **Point of View: Thinking outside the Royal Box Crescent**

Imagine your house roof on the Crescent needing to be replaced, or the stairwell to be decorated, or the outside of the building painted. We all have experience of these events and in property such as the Crescent, we are all aware of the implications both regulatory and financial. However, imagine the people in the basement saying that the roof wasn't their concern, or the people on the top floor commenting that their windows were smaller and needed less paint. Of course no one takes these polarised positions. Each occupant within an individual house shares the cost of maintenance and repair, irrespective of the action required. In our case, two houses are partitioned in such a way that both are managed as one and all costs divided equally between all.

This 'house' view is common and recognises that each house is an individual unit that may comprise of several apartments, but it is the fabric of the unit that binds the apartments and that they all share responsibility for this jointly. The question we should now ask is whether the fabric stops at the boundary of each house or is the fabric the Crescent itself.

The many tourists and visitors who come to bask in its splendour see a single piece of architecture and not merely thirty Georgian houses joined to form a Crescent. We know that the organisations who base their marketing images on the Crescent value the image, even though they pay little or nothing for it. The image is so powerful that Renault didn't find the need to mention Bath, let alone the Crescent in their recent advertisements. The likes of 'Leather Chairs of Bath' merely take a photograph of their van parked on the Crescent - nothing more is needed.

It could be argued that we find ourselves strait-jacketed into thinking vertically into individual houses and not encouraged to think collectively and 'laterally' as a crescent. It could be argued that it is only horizontally as a crescent that we find common ground. The Society has long taken the collective viewpoint and works hard to promote it.

However, we know too well that the Council will adopt whatever viewpoint suits the time, but ultimately will merely view us financially and as individual apartments and houses. Can we do more? Should we do more?

We could tender collectively for certain works. For example, the decorating of the front of each house is extremely predictable and varies little

from house to house. We could endorse certain tradesmen and ensure that they quote for works at a group discount. We all need plumbers, electricians, decorators - why not share the good ones and avoid the others? We could even go as far as to share insurance providers and gain mutuality of benefit for all.

The economies of scale and scope are not about money but about sharing benefit. Some would argue that it's too much work, is impractical and would probably use that seasonal Dickensian phrase 'Bah! humbug', but they will have to do it themselves or pay someone to do it in any case. It could also help forge a consensus that is visible to all and helps further convey our case on other wider issues such as parking and the Lawn.

A friend from Canada recently visited and after seeing some aerial shots of the Crescent commented, "Wow, I see it now - you live in a perfect Crescent". Sometimes you have to go into blue skies to look down to see the obvious.

*Martyn Daniels*

## A. E. EADES

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Nordman or freshly-cut/ rooted, locally-grown*

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Telephone (01225) 317319.



The *Newsletter* was pleased from Mr. Clifford Henderson, a noted Sotheby's and Mallett's specialist in eighteenth-century antiques and porcelain. While staying in the Crescent with Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Jowett, he read the last Newsletter, Issue 48, Autumn 2002 and has identified the occasion of the photograph showing Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother arriving on the Lawn by helicopter. Major Bernard Cayzer had been presented to Her late Majesty, who had heard of his great contribution to Bath in spending a huge sum of money restoring Number 1 and then presenting it to the city. At the time of his purchase in 1968 the house was very run down and was occupied by four dentists. The Major asked, "Why don't you pop in?" In due course a telephone call was received from Clarence House and a visit was arranged with the Bath Preservation Trust. Her late Majesty spent half an hour viewing Number 1 and then took off again. It was certainly a flying visit.

Mr. Henderson was a regular visitor to Number 1 before it opened to the public in 1970 and donated the link extinguisher near the front door.

**Bath Books:** *Bath Commercialis'd: Shops, Trades and Market at the 18th-Century Spa*

The retail shops and the abundantly-supplied provisions market ranked among the major 'conveniences' of Georgian Bath. Like any other town it had its butchers, bakers and even candlestick makers. What set it apart was its trade in luxury commodities, hardly surpassed outside London itself. Countless temptations assailed the well-to-do and fashionable, from gorgeous silks, laced coats and modish bonnets to the mouthwatering displays in the confectioners' windows and the glitter of the celebrated 'toyshops', which more and more resembled showcases of British manufacturing skills.

This book has some black-and-white illustrations and offers a panorama of eighteenth-century consumerism in full flood, with insights into an unusually wide range of businesses, crafts and occupations. Packed with fresh information and based on new research, it can be read straight through, casually dipped into, or used for quick reference. It is arranged in dictionary format and covers more than seventy different trades. The author Trevor Fawcett is a well-known local historian and former editor of *Bath History*. This paperback costs £8.00 and is recommended to Bath specialists. ISBN 0-9526326-3-2



### *Beneath the Surface: Revealing a lost interior*

When builders were refurbishing the principal room of the rear flat on the ground floor of Number 13, The Royal Crescent, they thought it would involve some refitting and tidying up before the decorators moved in. They were surprised to go through what seemed to be the wall and encounter another surface concealed behind it. When the 'false skin' was removed, a remarkable scheme of decorative plasterwork reliefs was revealed, covering all the walls.

It is not known when the plasterwork was hidden. The previous owner, Miss Irene Stevens, had no knowledge of what lay under the surface of her principal room. General West kindly arranged with the present owners for the Newsletter to have a glimpse of this interior. Mrs Gillian Sladen of the Bath Preservation Trust's Interiors Committee was also present.

Subsequent research, thanks to Geoffrey Beard, has revealed that the reliefs probably date from the 1770s and would have been supplied by William Collins, 1721-1793. His studio supplied many houses throughout England by catalogue. The work was particularly popular in Bath and York, and Fairfax House in York contains examples of his schemes. There is an unevenness of quality in Number 13: while some of the reliefs are finely worked, those by the windows are not so well executed. Paint analysis revealed fifteen decorative schemes, beginning with the paler colours associated with this period, but some later emerald green was also encountered. So when you next call in the builders, who knows what lies beneath the surface?





## *Beneath the Surface: Digging around the Crescent*

It is quite understandable that you might want a little more information from Channel Four's *Time Team*. We did after all dig up large sections of your front and back lawns and generally churned up rather a lot of mud whilst we were there. Luckily amidst this dirt and chaos we made some interesting discoveries. Whilst I must leave some suspense for the programme I am more than happy to give you a brief summary.

There were several reasons for *Time Team* to choose the lawn of the Royal Crescent and the triangle off Julian Road as archaeological targets that would have the potential to make an exciting programme. Initial interest arose after conversations with Rob Armour-Chelu of the Bath Archaeological Trust, who has worked with us on many of our programmes. He, along with his colleagues Peter Davenport and Marek Lewcun have been interested in the area's archaeology for several reasons.

Firstly, the Julian Road triangle had been the site of St Andrew's Church prior to its destruction in the Blitz. When this was built in the nineteenth century the architect noted discovering several stone coffins and bones which were potentially Roman. It therefore seemed likely that there may have been a Roman cemetery lining Julian Road.

Secondly, when the school across the road was built fifteen years ago, large quantities of finds typically associated with Roman religious sites were discovered. This suggested that there was potentially a small temple or mausoleum in the area.

Thirdly, some of the Bath Archaeological Trust archaeologists felt that there was evidence for a Roman road running across the corner of the triangle, presumably under the Crescent, and down the lawn. One argument was that this was the missing link of the then highly-important Fosse Way.

Fourthly, vague parch marks on the Lawn potentially indicated the presence of sub-surface structures. As the Lawn is known not to have been built on in recent history there was room to believe that these may have been the remains of Roman architecture.

Additionally, it is not often that archaeologists receive the opportunity to excavate in a World Heritage Site. The exciting possibility of discovering

what the clues were pointing to, especially within the beautiful surroundings of the Crescent and Park, made this an ideal project for the *Time Team* to undertake.

Of course non-intrusive speculation can sometimes be right. But sometimes it can be wrong or unproven, especially when one has only three days for careful excavation.

While not wishing to give too much away I can let you know that the archaeology was far from straightforward and provided a really exciting challenge, especially in the torrential rain that soaked us. And we were certainly in for some surprises. Luckily some of these were truly interesting, including walls, ditches, small finds and skeletons. Although we don't know the transmission date yet, it will certainly be shown on a Sunday sometime between early January and March 2003, and I suspect closer to the end of that period.

*Ewan Fletcher*

