

CRESCENT SOCIETY *Newsletter*



Issue No. 28

Summer 1995

Chairman's Notes

Your Committee was much encouraged to receive wide endorsement for its actions over the past year and to be re-elected almost *in toto* at a very constructive AGM in April which broke all attendance records. Many excellent new moves were proposed by Members and the feeling that we are all in broad accord on the major issues - traffic, maintenance, commercialisation,

etc. was very strong. The main decisions of the AGM are reflected in various articles in this Newsletter, and the full Minutes will, as usual be available to any Member in time for AGM 1996. The Bath & County Club considerably improved its buffet this year and many Members, including several for whom this was their first AGM, took advantage of the occasion to make

their presence felt and to meet fellow residents in the warm and co-operative atmosphere. Long may such enthusiasm continue.

The AGM approved some minor administrative amendments to the Constitution, which whilst preserving the democratic process of election to the Committee, removed some irksome serving-time restraints. The full Constitution, as amended, is published in this Newsletter.

It was with some considerable regret that the Society took leave of its stalwart Vice-Chairman, Dr. Len Fisher, after 4 years very valuable service. The AGM most warmly and unanimously endorsed a sincere Vote of Thanks for all the time and expertise he has expended for Members' benefit. It was with some relief that Members learned that he will continue to arrange the physical production of the Newsletter, and we are all grateful for that.

The open-topped bus campaign again united the AGM in its fierce opposition to this unnecessary and damaging traffic. A fuller report is elsewhere in this issue, but for the first time Members voiced their

preparedness to escalate the temper of the campaign to a physical level since the bureaucratic process continued to drag. "No more Mr. Nice-guy" was voted as the new order of the day, and your Committee is pursuing the directives given.

Your new/re-elected Committee has plenty on its plate for the coming year. Without making excuses, it is important for Members to understand that all who serve do so willingly, but voluntarily. Work and family commitments invariably have to take first place in Committee Members' scheduling of time and therefore progress on some Society Matters is necessarily slower than a full-time paid organisation would accomplish. This is not a whinge, merely a statement of fact. The support of all Members - tacit or overt - is a great boost to Committee Members and is much valued. Responses to letters, suggestions and offers of help are even more splendid. I wish all Members a happy, peaceful and successful Summer.

Michael Daw
Chairman R.C.S. ☐

Open Topped Buses

Following the very strong expressions of outrage by your Committee over the failure of Bath and Avon Councils to make any progress on the July 1994 all-party decision to ban the damaging buses from the Crescent, Councillors sprang into action in the run up to the May Local Government Election. In particular Councillor David Hawkins and Councillor Maureen Wheadon reported progress at our 1995 AGM, and Councillor Hawkins has since held specific meetings with the relevant City Officials responsible for the next actions. So far this has still to bear real fruit and we shall soon again have to raise the profile of the matter. Meanwhile the incidence of buses has increased and the Voluntary Agreement (limiting the total to 9 per hour, with flexibilities at self-declared peak periods) appears to have been set aside.

The very well attended AGM endorsed the Committee's actions so far, but directed that the time for politeness was fast evaporating. A proposal to get the message of damage over more vividly to a wider audience, especially tourists themselves, was approved unanimously. This is being

and details will be communicated separately. (As this Newsletter has a wide circulation, it would be unwise to reveal the details here and risk dampening the impact of the action).

Meanwhile, the current Director of Highways Transport Engineering has issued an assurance that there is no chance of the ban being "lost" in the transfer of authority from Avon to Bath & NE Somerset; a specific Budget Item is in place to fund the cost of the action.

Media coverage of the subject has been extensive. The local press gave prominence to your concerns over the delays above and this and most Letters to the Editor in the Bath Chronicle have been written in a tone of acceptance that the ban will happen. A notable exception was published in May, after our Chairman appeared briefly in "The Goldring Audit" on TV Channel 4, in April. The writer clearly did not understand the issues involved and harked back to the old and discredited argument that we are all rich snobs who hate all tourists! He was roundly rebutted by Mr. John Walker of No 10 who covered all the relevant points so well that Chairman decided further replies

was unnecessary - despite the personal attack in the first letter.

The AGM passed a Formal Resolution (reprinted below)

which was conveyed by Councillor Maureen Wheadon to Avon County Council and is now recorded in their official record. □

Resolution

"That, noting with indignation and deep concern the complete lack of substantive progress on both its own 1993 Petition and Councillors' July 1994 direction to Officials to save the Royal Crescent from further heavy Traffic damage by making it Access Only, the Royal Crescent Society calls on City and County Councils to take immediate action and to progress it to completion as a matter of continuing urgency." □

Valete et Gratia

Since the last Newsletter, The Crescent has lost two stalwart supporters. In their very different ways, each has contributed significantly to the life and to the cause of enhancing the Crescent. Everyone who knew them will miss them.

Simon Coombe has been General Manager of the Royal Crescent Hotel for nearly six years. In that time, he has created and maintained a most genial and healthy relationship with the Society and its aims. In particular, he has seconded Mrs Jenny Hardisty to your Committee - her contribution, initiative and hard

work is much valued. He has also supported the fight to ban the damaging Open-topped Buses and graced our annual Dinners with his and his charming wife Jill's presences. We wish them both well in their new private venture - a 3 star country hotel in the Cotswolds, about which we hope to include a separate note sometime.

Christopher Woodward, the lively and outstandingly successful Curator of The Building of Bath Museum and long-time Member of our Ha Ha Committee has now left his eyrie atop No. 1, and taken up the even more prestigious post of

Asst. Curator of the Sir John Sloane Museum in London. We shall miss his urbane erudition, his enthusiasm and his joie de vivre. He did sterling work on both the main and Ha Ha Committees and

we wish him further good fortune in this further step up on what is sure to be a glittering career. (We hope he is not totally besotted with the delights the Metropolis can offer a young man!). □

The 1995/6 Committee

At the AGM 1995, your Committee for the current year was elected as follows:

Chairman	Mr Michael Daw
Vice-Chairman	Mr Tim Forrester
Treasurer	Mr Simon Crowe
Secretary	Mrs Veronique Oswald
Editor	Mrs Caroline Carrier
Remembrancer	Mr John Meddins

Members

Mrs Mickie Kersley
Mr Ian Woodhouse
Mr Bill Oswald
Cdr Roy Titchen

Mrs Jenny Hardisty (co-opted from the Royal Crescent Hotel)

We also continue to enjoy the support of the Bath Preservation Trust, reflected in the co-option on the Committee of Sir Christopher Curwen, KCMG, and of the Bath Society. We are reciprocal Members of both

The Society's Constitution

(As amended at the 1995 Annual General Meeting)

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.

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 No 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 £5. 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

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 be Members or Friends respectively.

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, 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

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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 desire 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 alteration of the rules;

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 of 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 general meetings a chairman shall be elected to preside, and he shall have 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. That the Committee of the Society, other than the Officers, be limited to six. Casual vacancies arising in the course of the year to 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.

5th April 1995. □

The Society moves funds

The low Bank Base Rates over the past few years have been good for borrowers. However the Society, as an investor of funds, has not benefited. Our money has remained with the Bristol & West Building Society (where it was first placed) and it has thus not been earning a very good rate of interest recently. Our status as a "Society" does not qualify us for rates as good as those enjoyed by private individual investors.

As announced and accepted at this year's AGM, your Committee has therefore now decided to move

our funds so as to obtain a more competitive rate. After some professional research, your Treasurer, Mr Simon Crowe, established that the Nationwide Building Society's "Business Investor" account was open to us, offered the most competitive rates and had the bonus of free banking in return for a low number of transactions (a condition we fulfil in normal circumstances anyway).

All the Society's Funds have now been so moved and this will be reflected in the Accounts to be rendered at the 1996 AGM. □

Festival Opening Ceremonies

There were a lot of people in the park, stalls selling doughnuts, hamburgers, chips, candles and refreshment tents - a village fete atmosphere.

The Kapsovár military band playing in front of the stage was reminiscent of past days of splendid spectacular Festival Opening nights which we all enjoyed and entertained for.

Sounds of drums heralded the much publicised Conga through the Park, two girls danced ahead of the drums and a few behind,

further down the avenue two men on stilts wearing colourful feather bird costumes could be seen.

From the Crescent it was not possible to see or hear the children singing, one could only see them at the back of the stage joyfully releasing their energy after their performance. The singing was followed by the burning of the Angel - in questionable taste - and a very enjoyable fireworks display.

The candle display in the Royal Crescent was disappointing. The

Circus doing better. Crowds of people milled around until the late hours. Sadly there was nothing to see or hear, no madrigals which were such a joy in the past and a

fitting end to the evening.
Sadly the Festival Opening Ceremonies have lost their way.
No signature. f

Moment of Glory?

Panic stations. Chairman away. Secretary asked to respond (on television) to press release she's never actually seen. Calls husband for support.

Such was the scene last March when BBC TV West urgently sought comment from the Society to dilatoriness by the Council to continuing damage to Crescent by open toppers. Meeting of Highways Committee scheduled for following day. Breakfast television programme in prospect.

Most fortunately TV reporter proves good friend of Society (well broken in by Chairman). Sillier remarks wisely ignored,

couple of passable soundbite retained for 'blink of the eye' interview.

Husband dutifully records said interview for absent Chairman. Delivers three-hour video tape clearly marked. Awaits well deserved pat on back at AGM a few days later. Subsequently transpires Chairman played through tape twice (six hours, right?) to no avail. Wife/secretary, unknowingly, had over-recorded favourite soap.

Such is fame.

W. Oswald,
28a The Royal Crescent. □

Crescent News

The White House comes to the Crescent

A distinguished resident, Major General Charles West, US Army (Retd.), served President Nixon in

Washington as part of his career. He enthralled an attentive audience at the Bath & Countv

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Club recently, when he delivered a talk this time entitled "Inside the White House". His own experiences were fleshed out with pithy anecdotes and much colour

from his researches with White House Staff of the time. The General summed up the late President as a "brilliant strategist - who never forgave a slight".

Cable

Residents can soon expect the first general approach from United Artists about the laying of the main TV etc. cable for the Crescent. UA have undertaken to incur the minimum disruption to our Grade I Listed setting, and it is most unlikely that the road or pavements will be disturbed. This policy reflects the strong representations made by your

Committee. UA have various other ideas about how to fulfil their Statutory obligations to provide the main Cable (into which those who want the service will then be able to tap), and they will be discussing these with residents in due course - possibly at a Public Meeting.

Filming in the Crescent

Many locations in and around Bath were used in early May for the filming of a Channel 4 TV and general release film "The Hollow Reed". The Location Manager claimed to have sent a letter about a week before the event to all residents in the Crescent, but to have had not a single response. This was no doubt because the letter gave no indication that the Crescent would be affected, except for a car being filmed driving into Brock Street. In fact, as the lady eventually exposed under a polite grilling by our Chairman, Crescent parking spaces were to be coned

off from outside No. 1 to No. 5, traffic through the Crescent would be intermittently interrupted, etc., etc.. In the event - and as is quite usual in such enterprises - the disruption had rather more impact. Also as is quite usual, the lady agreed to make a contribution to Society funds, in recognition of the work and expense the Society undertakes to conserve the setting being used for the film.

A similar but smaller advertising shoot in June, was also approached by Chairman and a further promise of a contribution elicited.

Bath, Somerset - it's Official!

Bath City Council has announced that it is now OK once again to use Somerset as the County address after the city's name, in place of the much disliked Avon, provided that the Postcode is also quoted. This is one consequence of Local Government Re-organisation which will be welcomed by many - especially those who never changed over anyway! The Royal Mail has also confirmed the acceptability of Somerset - plus postcode. The logic of the change stems from Parliament's March decision that "for ceremonial purposes" the new Local Government area of "Bath & North East Somerset" will be part of Somerset again, even though it does NOT form part of the administrative County of Somerset, which is governed from Taunton.

(Source: Bath City News, June 1995).

Neighbourhood Watch

The 1995 AGM approved investigation of setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme for the Crescent. Ian Woodhouse has

taken the lead and has made initial enquiries with the Police. Further discussions need to be held, Coordinators appointed and a Neighbourhood Watch Meeting held, to which all residents will be invited; the Police Community Affairs Officer and probably our nice "local Bobby" PC Alan Hale, will attend to show a video and explain the scheme. More news later. As the resident who suggested the scheme at the AGM pointed out, such schemes are not only beneficial in themselves, but attract from some Home Insurance Companies, considerable discounts.

Welcome to the Crescent

We welcome all those who have moved into the Royal Crescent recently and hope that existing Members will encourage them to join the Society and contribute to the Lawn Fund.

In particular we welcome the new General Manager of the Royal Crescent Hotel, Mr. Ross Stevenson, whose last appointment was with the same parent Company, Norfolk Capital Hotels Ltd., (County Hotels), at their Briggens House Hotel, Hertfordshire. We look forward to continuing good relationships

Congratulations

Most residents will have been pleased to see Councillor David Hawkins re-elected as one of our Ward Councillors; he has always supported Society campaigns very effectively and regularly attends our AGMs. We also welcome new Councillor Gerry Curran (LD), and offer our congratulations to them both.

Concerts

There have been no further proposals for Concerts in front of the Crescent. This year's major event is of course an Opera, etc., event on the Recreation Ground in connection with the European Youth Olympics. Meanwhile most of those few residents who, in the past, voiced their objections to use of the Lawn for such events, recently re-affirmed that opposition in writing, when asked for their current views by the Committee. One such resident did not reply to the Chairman's letter.

In a related development your Committee is looking into a reported proposal to have some form of Pop music event centred on the Royal Victoria Park and other Bandstands, mentioned in the local press as we go to Press ourselves.

Railing Maintenance

Our President Sir John Barraclough proposed at the AGM a form of self-help to smarten up the Lawn Railings. He had in mind each house taking on one or two sections and giving them a coat of paint. General enthusiasm was expressed about this idea, but concerns were expressed about the need for prior preparation, repairs, consistency of standards, co-ordination of timing, type of paint, etc., etc.. Many constructive suggestions were made and the Committee was directed to examine and pursue the matter - including a comparison with the actual cost of a professional job.

Discounts at BPT

As reciprocal members of the Bath Preservation Trust, the Society holds two Membership cards, entitling the bearer to a 10% discount at the Trust's shop in No. 1. A card may be borrowed by any paid-up Member from Simon Crowe, our Treasurer at No. 5.

RESIDENTIAL BATH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"It's actually eighteenth century speculative building". The casual visitor to No. 1, Royal Crescent, the Georgian house in Bath furnished in contemporary style, now a museum run by the Bath Preservation Trust, is usually astounded at this information about Royal Crescent, John Wood the Younger's acknowledged masterpiece. A further shock registers if told how Jane Austen heartily disliked Bath. Indeed many visitors arrive with preconceived ideas about this European Heritage city, often based on literary references in writers as diverse as Fielding, Smollett, Sheridan and Charles Dickens. Mr. Pickwick, on visiting the Assembly Rooms accompanied by the M.C. Mr. Bantam, was admonished that in Bath ladies were neither old nor fat. Modern visitors should judge for themselves!

The two Woods, father and son, constructed houses purpose-built for accommodating families who came down to Bath from London for the "season". Local owners, such as Dr. William Oliver, of Mineral Water Hospital and Bath Oliver fame, let out their properties without actually living

there themselves. Such a Georgian house was often one room wide and two rooms deep, dining room and parlour on ground level drawing room and second parlour on first floor, bedrooms on second floor, with servants' quarters in the attic. Below street level the kitchen and cellars reposed in the basement, steps from the street leading to the "Area", by which the servants entered. When Mr. Pickwick's servant Sam Weller has a letter delivered to his master's lodgings in Royal Crescent, the messenger is instructed to ring the "airy bell", as he certainly would not be welcomed at the front door.

Popular belief is that Bath declined in status from the early nineteenth century onwards, beginning with the Prince Regent's popularisation of Brighton. Dickens is commonly thought to have hinted at such a decline in his account of Mr. Pickwick's visit to Bath in the 1830s, though this is not really evidenced in the text. True, Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and the Dowlers take lodgings on the upper floors of a house in Royal Crescent, complete with a landlady Mrs. Craddock. However, the Crescent is suitably outraged when the hapless Mr.

flapping dressing gown after one of those famous front doors slams upon him.

What was the actuality? The Census returns for Bath from 1841 to 1891 would appear to supply an interesting answer. Taking Brock Street as an instance of residential Bath, and looking at one house in particular, one can form some conclusions. The street itself, built by the younger John Wood in 1767, links Royal Crescent with the Circus, the Gravel Walk - once the sedan chair route from the Crescent to the city - skirting the gardens of the houses on the southern side.

The cosmopolitan nature of the residents is immediately evident. From 1841 through to 1891, all parts of the country are represented, certainly not only London. The Empire gives back retired tea planters, Her Majesty's Army and Navy are to the fore, Dublin is clearly still part of the "United Kingdom", there is a Swiss lady's maid and a domestic servant born in South Africa but a "British subject". Absentee clerics include a Dean of Salisbury and Aaron Foster, vicar of Mudford, near Yeovil, in 1851. Quite the most staggering feature of the Census returns throughout this period is the proportion of males to females, the women outnumbering the men not just two to one but more often five to one - five men

to twenty-five women on a typical enumerator's sheet. Highly literate enumerators, too - impeccable handwriting, with the occasional pedantic insertion. Careful differentiation in servants' status butler, footman, lady's maid, parlour maid, kitchen maid, cook. How very different from many Somerset village returns for the same period, when few inhabitants had been born more than a mile or so from their current home, where male and female numbers were more or less equal, with the vicar often the only person from further afield, Bristol deserving that distinction.

Narrowing the vision from street to one house, at No. 16 every Census return shows a change of occupants. Notably, the inhabitants are of independent means - e.g. Elizabeth Hopkins, in 1851, fundholder, aged 72, of London; Catherine Harrison, in 1881, income from lands, houses and dividends, aged 73, from nearby Frome; Anne Pritchett, also in 1881, living on dividends from the Planet Investment Society, aged 17, from Oxfordshire. Most intriguing of all, in 1861 the head of the household is George Mason, aged 56, a "clergyman without care of souls", from Bradford, Yorkshire, married to 33-year-old Helen Mason, of "London Middlesex". Would Catherine Harrison one wonders have

agreed with Oscar Wilde's Lady Bracknell that land "gives one position but prevents one from keeping it up"? All the others preferred investments and would doubtless have received the formidable dowager's approval.

Each return shows a substantial proportion of servants to residents. In 1841 two servants looked after just three inhabitants; in 1881 four servants ministered yet again to three people. Domestic service appeared to attract country girls from the surrounding counties of Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Dorset, fewer servants coming from the city of Bath itself. In 1861 the Reverend George Mason brought butler and lady's maid from his native Yorkshire. Similarly, in 1881 Emma Pritchett, from Oxfordshire, Newland Coggs, brought a housemaid from Eynsham, in the same county.

Only at one time during the period does the house appear to have been divided rather than being occupied as the one unit for which John Wood had originally designed it. Two families, the Harrisons and the Pritchetts, shared the house in 1881. As only one cook, Anna Knott, is listed in the 1881 Census, she may perhaps have cooked for both families, especially if they were related, the kitchen being in the basement,

with a central staircase giving access to all floors.

Unlike Mr. Pickwick's house in the adjacent Royal Crescent (even the prestigious No. 1 in 1891), No. 16 does not appear to have been used as a rooming or lodging house. Apart from 1891, when Leicester Selby, a "Clerk in Holy Orders", aged 44, from Smethwick, is described as a "boarder", the 1841-1891 Census returns indicate that No. 16 never had more than seven inhabitants and never less than two servants. Contrary to popular belief, there were lodging houses on the southern side of the street, overlooking the Gravel Walk and Royal Victoria Park. The northern side - what Lady Bracknell would have termed the "unfashionable side" - with its less attractive view across the street is commonly thought to have produced the lodging houses. Not infrequent is a lodging house where the wife is the proprietress and the husband engaged in a lucrative trade such as furniture dealing. Amongst the guests in such houses are music and dancing teachers.

What, then, are the conclusions? Dickens noted the "queer old ladies and decrepit old gentlemen" round the card tables and in the tea-room of the nearby Assembly Rooms, all dispensing scandal and gossip. Brock Street no doubt

However, much of the evidence suggests that it was not such a bad life. The house owners appeared to be comfortably off, the servants' quarters at the top of the house at least enjoyed superb views over the Gravel Walk towards the Mendips. Perhaps the final word

should be left with Dickens, who summed up the typical Bath day: "A very pleasant routine, with perhaps a tinge of sameness".

Contributed by Leslie Jenkins,
16, Brock Street,
Bath BA1 2LW. □

Notes from the Editor

I am grateful for the reception given to the Spring Newsletter in my absence at the AGM and once again for the help and interest shown in the production of the Summer issue. More contributions please!

The article on Residential Bath is of interest which although touching on Brock Street draws an immediate parallel with the Royal Crescent and seems a delightful insight into the domestic arrangements in the area.

I commend to you the Railings Restoration Appeal of our Sister Association at Catherine Place (north of Kings Circus).

Catherine Place was built 1770 - 1785 and the central area paved to serve as a collecting place for the Sedan Chairs of the day. In 1870 a garden was created in the centre and surrounded by railings and much enjoyed. Sadly the Catherine Place Railings were removed during World War II and later were replaced by a wire mesh

fence.

The cost of replacing the railings is £70,000 which is a formidable sum.

Unfortunately the Royal Crescent Society are unable to help as a body. All funds it has must be ingoing.

But privately - please could you help? Cheques to:-

Catherine Place Railings Restoration Appeal.

George McWatters,
Chairman of the Appeal
4, Rivers Street,
Bath. BA1 2PZ
01225 444406

or Bath Preservation Trust
1, Royal Crescent
Bath BA1 2LR

New ideas please for the next Newsletter

Caroline Carrier
5, Royal Crescent
Bath, Somerset
BA1 2LR. □

Sacred Cows - 2

In the last Newsletter, we re-published, with kind permission of the author and the Editor of "Perspectives" magazine, an article decrying the design of this Crescent. Not unexpectedly, this drew reactions from no less authority than Mr. Walter Ison, author of the definitive treatise "The Buildings of Bath" and from Dr. Tim Mowl, author of the biography of John Wood (and many other works). Again the Editor has kindly allowed us to reprint these items.

From Walter Ison

For his dismissive assessment of the younger Wood's masterpiece your contributor deserves not a pat on the back, but a pat on the head from the Sacred Cow, Bath's Royal Crescent, he so disparages in the November Issue. Robert Adam propagates the myth that the elder Wood was responsible for the conception which was spoilt in execution by the younger Wood. This is referred to by Timothy Mowl in his book *John Wood: Architect of Obsession* which claims that the writings of Tobias Smollett offer reliable evidence that the elder Wood did in fact conceive the Royal Crescent.

This conclusion is reached by quoting two passages from Smollett's "Essay on the External Use of Water" published in 1752 (two years before the elder Wood's death). Neither contains any direct reference to a projected building

but most probably refer to the elder Wood's abortive scheme for rebuilding the baths and pump room, and to Smollett's waiting "until that more magnificent scheme (in other words, The King's Circus on which the two Woods were then working) shall be carried into execution". To these early quotes is added the single word "Crescent" taken from "Humphrey Clinker". This was probably published in 1771 but most probably drafted in about 1766, when Smollett visited Bath, and when the younger Wood was completing the last houses in the Circus and acquiring the site for the Royal Crescent.

It seems possible that Smollett confused the elder Wood with his living son and namesake when he wrote that: "The same artist who planned the Circus has likewise projected a Crescent; when that is

Star, and those who are living 30 years hence, may, perhaps, see all the signs of the Zodiac in Architecture at Bath.

Perspectives Magazine
February 1995.

From Dr. Timothy Mowl

Crescent Opinion

Walter Ison (Letter February) has difficulty holding two concepts - strict Palladianism and wild antiquarian historicism - in his mind at once. Fortunately, John Wood the elder had no such difficulties.

If Ison re-reads the elder Wood's

"*Essay Towards a Description of Bath*" 1742-43, he will find that Wood believed, without, of course, a shred of evidence, that two Druidic temples once stood on the hillside north of the city. One he claimed was dedicated to the sun god Bel, the other to Onca the moon goddess. This is why, on the same northern hillside, the elder Wood "planned the Circus" and likewise "projected a Crescent".

Smollett wrote this testimony to a man he greatly admired in 1752, while the elder Wood was still alive and active, not in 1766 - long after the architect's death.

Perspectives Magazine
March 1995. □

Monthly Recycling Collections continue as usual

New recycling collection services are being expanded throughout Bath this summer. Until you receive a leaflet with details of the new service in your area, your recycling collections will continue on the same monthly collection day as over the last year. This summer, weekly Green Box collections will be

mini-recycling centres will be provided at large blocks of flats. It is not possible to deliver leaflets with the dates for existing monthly collections, which continue unchanged, before then.

If required, a diary of the collection dates for your road for the next few months can be sent to you. Contact Bath City Council on

Progress Report

Last year the new Green Box service was expanded to cover 14,000 households in Bath. The result was that the City of Bath Recycling collections recovered more than 2,900 tonnes of your waste over the year - an increase of 95% on the previous year.

Another 1,150 tonnes was recycled through Bath's other

recycling services, giving the City a total household waste recycling rate of just over 20% - one of the highest in the UK.

This summer the Green Box service will be expanded to cover the rest of Bath and mini recycling centres will be provided at all large blocks of flats.

Recycling Collections

Leave materials for monthly recycling collections where they can be easily seen from the road. They should be left close to the front of your property, such as by a wall or gateway.

Collections start at 8.30am. Pick up times can vary, so always leave out by that time.

(City of Bath Recycling - A partnership between Bath City Council and Avon Friends of the

For Further Advice

Contact Bath 477000 ext. 7124 or Bath 310845 (24-hour answer phone).

Department of Property and Engineering Services
Bath City Council
9 - 10, Bath Street
Bath BA1 1SN. ☐

Bagatelles

Cobbett in his "Rural Rides" has a lot to say about Bath "...the residence of an assembly of tax-eaters. These vermin shift about between London, Cheltenham, Bath,....: like those body-vermin of different sorts, that are found in different parts of the tormented carcass at different hours of the day and night, and in different degrees of hot and cold."

William Comyns Beaumont, an eccentric journalist on the *Daily Mail* in the early part of this century, seems to have had an even worse view of Bath. According to Beaumont, the Old Testament had been severely tampered with to hide the fact that the Holy Land was not Palestine, but the British Isles (and part of Scandinavia!). Edinburgh was Jerusalem, London was Damascus, and Lincoln was Antioch. Poor Bath was the Philistine city of Gath. At least we escaped Bristol's fate, which was to serve as both Sodom and Tarshish. On second thoughts, some recent history may suggest that Beaumont was right....

Our Philistine image may not be entirely merited, though. Bath was the site of the first provincial theatre, built in 1705.

James Boswell arrived in Bath on April 26th, 1776, staying at the Pelican Inn and visiting with Dr.

Johnson and the Thrales. Bath escaped Johnson's strictures - indeed, from his recorded comments, he does not seem to have noticed his surroundings at all. Perhaps we were fortunate. Of Bristol, Johnson commented "Describe it, Sir? - Why, it was so bad, that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!"

Of the Baths themselves, so much has been written in their praise, promotion and historical interest that a balancing opinion may be in order. Richard Burton (no, not that one), in the curious "Anatomy of Melancholy" (a book which Dr. Johnson said was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours earlier than he wished to rise) had plenty to say about the virtues of baths. In the chapter "Retention and Evacuation rectified" we find that "several cures he (Galen) hath performed.... by the use of bathes alone". We also find that "The Romanes had their public baths very sumptuous and stupend". When it comes to England, though: "We have many ruines of such bathes found in this iland, among those parietimes and rubbish of old Roman towns".

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