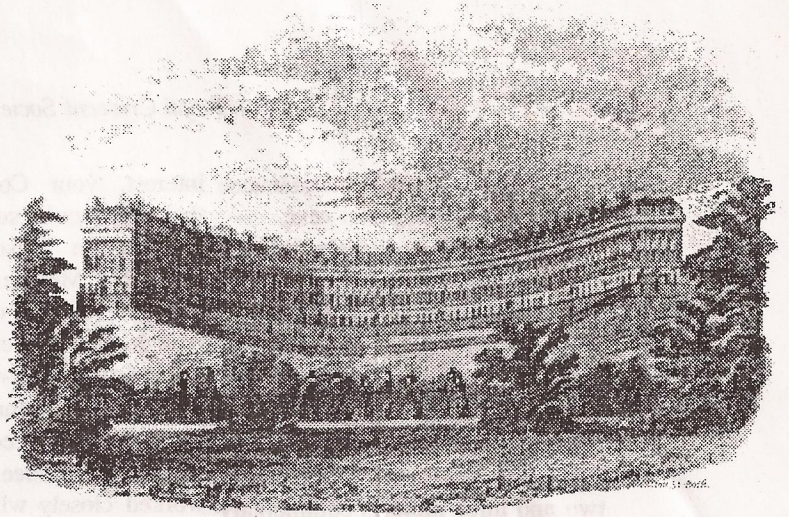


The Royal Crescent Society Newsletter



Issue 12

August 1989

Hotel appeal dismissed!

Our Chairman Sir John Barraclough reports on the Inspector's decision and other important Committee actions

IT HAS been a busy quarter with the Appeal by Pemberton Hotels being the demanding focus for your committee's efforts; efforts which have been happily rewarded. I enlarge below on some aspects of this important subject and the Editor gives a full report of the proceedings overleaf. But there are other important matters.

Hotel Appeal

The Inspector's heartening decision to dismiss the hotel appeal is just to hand. It is gratifying to see so many of the objections that were advanced on behalf of the residents spelt-out in the rationale of his judgement. This was an excellent defensive combined-operation and, on behalf of the Society, your Committee is most grateful for the support we received from various quarters not forgetting those of our sister organisations from the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations who saw the wider threat to Georgian Bath.

Your Committee lobbied and worked hard in this cause, often late into the night, and there was a most helpful exchange of views and meeting of minds with the influential Bath Preservation Trust and The Bath Society. We also greatly appreciated and valued the

close interest and support of our MP, Mr Chris Patten, and Councillor Mr D. Hawkins of our Ward. Our combined team hit hard at the appellant's key contentions, on which the Editor reports more fully overleaf; although, with becoming modesty, she underplays the part that her historical research played in putting the QC to flight with his canard that our houses were never intended as more than temporary lodgings from which to marry off (ugly) daughters in the Georgian era. Most valuably, also, Mr John Walker who, though not a member of The Society often figures in our affairs, refuted some of the appellant's claims in a very telling way.

Annual General Meeting

There was a fair turn-out for the AGM and those unable to attend may wish to know that the Meeting tacitly endorsed the general sweep of the Committee's activities and did not redirect us. We welcomed Mr Ian Nesbit to the Committee vice Mrs Morrell who retired on time with a vote of appreciation.

The possibility of using the Crescent Lawn for a charitable function was given an airing and, while one or two promising fund-raising ideas were mooted, a consensus has yet to emerge from the membership.

The project will be kept on the agenda.

Road and Railings

As previously reported, the structural deterioration through traffic wear is a matter for great concern. We have had an on-site meeting with Mr Froggatt (Head of Property and Engineering - City Council) before our next step which may involve commissioning an independent survey. Meanwhile we have invited the Avon County Engineer (Mr Bill Lee) to join us in a seminar/discussion in the autumn on the broad subject of 'Traffic and Bath' (*Quo Vadis Aquae Sulis*, perhaps?).

The Director of Property and Engineering Services has now written to confirm the following action:

- Minor interim patching of pavement and carriageway in matching Pennant stone or setts, respectively, to be put in hand currently.

- British Telecom to be urged to improve the quality of its reinstatement work on the pavement.

- Advice to be sought from the County Highways Laboratory on the long-term improvement of the carriageway and the re-instatement of the railings and plinth.

- Footways to be included, subject to County Council approval, in

a three-year phased maintenance programme starting next year.

We wait to hear further and will report in due course.

Sight-seeing Buses

I don't need to spell out the appalling aggravation from the sight-seeing buses. We are now getting up to 60 double-decker buses a day through the Crescent, with between two and three minutes commentary at either end. This amounts to about three hours of amplified prattle outside our, necessarily open, windows with a static discharge of diesel fumes to match. This is an intolerable imposition on us ratepayers and I have written to Avon County Council, the Licensing Authority, (with appropriate copy addresses) protesting strongly and calling for urgent action to alleviate this grave nuisance. However, I fear this is likely to come back to the 'tourism-above-all' faction of the City Council and we are almost certainly going to have yet another fight on our hands - but you will wish to know that we have fired the first shot.

Lawn Intrusions

Lawn intrusions have been at a lower level than in some previous years and this is gratifying in a long hot summer although there is plenty of time yet for trouble. The Vice-Chairman and I, together and separately, have dispersed footballing groups, and the workmen from No 18, although troublesome, have been effectively restrained. 'The condition of privacy' has been maintained. Our appreciation is due to the Secretary and Mrs Morrell for very courageously taking on a group of trespassers recently, but I must re-iterate my earlier counsel that ladies should prudently stand well back from these situations.

At a lower level of intrusion, the lawn will need selective weed-killing treatment - especially after this long dry spell. We are in touch with the Parks and Gardens Department for advice and help. It will cost money.

Affiliations

In view of the natural affinity of

interest, your Committee agreed that we should support The Bath Preservation Trust by taking out Corporate Membership. As a further development of that theme we have invited Dr Peter Woodward (a Trustee, and Vice-Chairman of the Architectural Committee) to join us as a non-voting co-opted member of the Committee. Dr Woodward worked closely with us in the Appeal Hearing and I am pleased to report that he and the Trust have readily agreed.

There have been several requests for 'distant membership' from past members. We think this should be welcomed and are considering it in terms of establishing subscribing, but non-voting, 'Friends of the Royal Crescent Society'. If anyone objects would you please let the Secretary know. ❖

What happened at the Appeal

by
Monica Baly

THE appeal by Pemberton Hotels and Resorts for change of use from Residential to Hotel use at 21 & 22 Royal Crescent, Bath was heard on June 28 & 29 at the Guildhall before Mr P. J. Macdonald the Inspector for the Department of the Environment. The previous application had been turned down by Bath City Council and Pemberton Hotels were now asking the Department of the Environment to reverse the decision.

Pemberton Hotels were represented by Mr M. Harrison Q.C. who explained that his clients wishes to convert the two houses into a five star luxury hotel with 20 self-contained units, car parking in the rear and access through Malborough Buildings. There would be no alteration to the facade and the main features would be retained.

The proposal had been refused because

1. It would detract from the residential character of the Crescent.
2. It would involve the loss of residential accommodation.

The appellants sought to demolish these arguments by pointing out that there would be no visual change, no conference facilities and no material increase in the number of people parking cars. Visitors to the hotel and deliveries would be directed to the rear.

On the subject of the loss of residential accommodation Mr Harrison argued that the alternative was the use of the houses as either a single unit or as flats. Their survey showed that flats made up much of the Bath property market which was increasing and there was an over-supply (sic). Flats in the Royal Crescent are at the top end of the market and they would have no effect on the Council's waiting list. On the other hand, Bath needed hotels and it was the government's policy to attract tourism. Bath, it was argued, needed visitors who would stay longer.

Other speakers and experts on behalf of Pemberton Hotels made many of the same points. Great emphasis was made on the fact that there was already a hotel and a museum in the Crescent and that there would be garage space for 20 cars at the rear. Having argued that the Royal Crescent Hotel created a precedent, it was argued that this hotel would not because no other pair of houses had sufficient garage space at the rear.

On behalf of the Bath City Council the appellant's case was rebutted by Miss A.R. Brookes, the solicitor, the Surveyor, Mr M. R. Hartley, and the architect, Mr J. Elliott. It was pointed out that the Royal Crescent was the most important Crescent in Europe, that car parks in gardens were totally unacceptable, that Bath was just acquiring another 450 hotel beds, that a hotel would increase the traffic problem in the Royal Crescent and create a precedent. The Bath City Council

was determined to resist the spread of offices at the expense of homes; even the loss of one house was important, and, even if it was 'the top of the market' it had a knock on effect. Mr Elliott said that both houses were of high quality, though No 21 had been altered in the C19th, but some of the proposals for alterations and the siting of bathrooms were quite unacceptable.

Mr Jeremy Edge on behalf of Norfolk Hotels maintained that another hotel must of necessity create parking and traffic problems. No 15 & 16 had been a hotel since 1949 before mass car ownership and the problem had grown. he admitted that 'with the best will in the world it was not always possible to persuade delivery vans to go the rear'. 'The Hotel', he admitted, 'does cause some local parking inconvenience', intensification by another operator would be undesirable on the grounds of further erosion of a local amenity.

The Bath Preservation Trust represented by Mr P. Greening, Vice-Chairman of the Trustees, and Dr Woodward, Vice-Chairman of the Architectural Committee, opposed the application on the grounds that the Trust is concerned with the preservation of Georgian Bath and that the houses in the Royal Crescent are of the highest quality and that any subdivision, provision of extra lavatories, bathrooms, lifts, fire escapes, fire doors, sound proofing and other alterations needed for a self-catering hotel would degrade the original interiors.

Major Crombie, for the Bath Society and the Trust reminded the Inspector that Bath was a World Heritage City to which the Royal Crescent made a notable contribution, it was of particular interest to visitors because it was lived in, as intended, by a variety of people, it was part of the fabric of history. As far as the parking problem was concerned Major Crombie expressed a cynical doubt that the affluent users of a five star hotel would be persuaded to arrive by the back door.

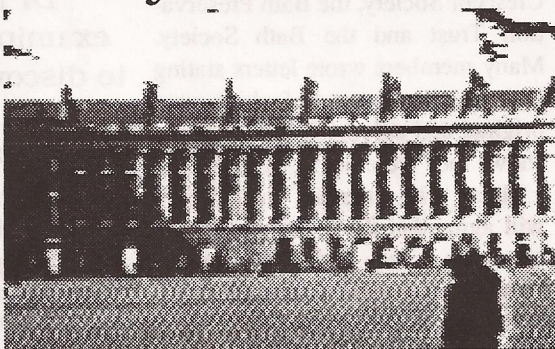
The case for the Royal Crescent

Battle to stay in character

Tom Rowland sees how the attractions of Georgian Bath could prove a mixed blessing

BATH is the only city in Britain which Unesco has graced with its "world heritage city" label. It attracts vast numbers of visitors each year, with 240,000 from overseas and huge numbers of day trippers.

As the season moves into top gear, there are real fears that the



The Society's fight was reported in The Daily Telegraph, above.

Society was put by Air Chief Marshal, Sir John Barraclough and the Vice-chairman, Mr M. Daw. They were supported by Mr J. Walker, an independent resident, who had supplied photographic evidence and who had monitored the queues of cars in Marlborough Buildings at the junction with Julian Road. Mr Harrison Q.C. had rebutted the change of character argument by saying that John Wood had built the Crescent as lodging houses. Dr Baly, quoting from the archives showed that the first ratepayers stayed for a number of years and many were titled.

Mr Daw corrected some of the factual evidence produced by the appellants and then concentrated on the fallacy that an entry through Marlborough Buildings would not exacerbate the already formidable traffic problem. Large vans would not have turning space and no mention had been made of where the staff would park. Moreover, hotel ownership changed, the Royal Crescent Hotel had had four changes in 15 years and promises made now would not hold for new owners.

Sir John Barraclough summed up the Royal Crescent Society's case by saying that the Society had a deep concern for Georgian Bath, and he thought that the residents were in a better position to know about the market for houses and flats in the Crescent than a firm from Birmingham doing a quick survey. The Royal Crescent was a vibrant and mixed community of

people, there was no difficulty in selling flats, nothing remained for long, houses and flats were well-maintained and he dispelled the notion that it was necessary for a firm from Birmingham, with money, to do a rescue operation on the decaying Crescent. Sir John then attacked the vagueness of the plan which was said to be 'illustrative', and the proposed internal changes that would breach the preservation guidelines.

Sir John ended by saying, 'May I say something about "character" because I feel it has been rather shallowly treated in our discussions. Local character, I contend comes from an amalgam and interaction of the aesthetic and the historic with the human lives and aspirations that come within that compass.

The greatest threat to the character of our Royal Crescent would be posed if the chief preoccupations of the majority of its population were to be hotel profits and losses, the job expectations of hotel employees and the concern of transient hotel guests about their personal comfort, coupled, perhaps, with a mild curiosity about the locality. Already, we are dangerously near that margin, Sir, and we urge you to dismiss this appeal.'

Since this report was written we have received the Inspector's report which dismisses the appeal by Pemberton Hotels. The reasons for this dismissal are in line with the objections set out by the Royal Crescent Society. Residents of the Royal

Crescent who opposed this change have reason to be grateful to the co-ordinated case put up by the Royal Crescent Society, the Bath Preservation Trust and the Bath Society. Many members wrote letters stating their objections some of which were original and colourful. The outcome shows they were not in vain.

Those who attended the enquiry will agree that the appellants put up a strong case with no expense spared. But our greatest thanks must go to our chairman and vice-chairman, both of whom are busy people, and who spent an inordinate amount of time visiting and taking advice from experts. Sir John is quoted in the report of the Inspector.

Preparing this appeal has cost money. If you have not paid your subscription to the Society and the Lawn Fund, could you check with page four of the April Newsletter. ❖

Who lived in your house?

Dr Monica Baly examines the archives to discover the residents and rates in the Crescent 200 years ago

We do not know for sure if the ratepayer lived in the house. But interestingly 15 of these ratepayers were the same ten years later in 1789, by which time the rates had actually gone down. There were bankruptcies in Bath and the building programme ran out of steam. George Burgess, Christopher Anstey, Mrs Elizabeth Tyndall, Edward Hoare and John Jefferies were among the first eight people paying rates eight years earlier in 1771. The rate was a quarterly one, from Lady Day to Midsummer.

No	Name	£ s d
1.	Henry Sanford Esq.	1 1 8
2.	Mrs Alicia Cartney	18 4
3.	George Burgess Esq.	15 0
4.	Christopher Anstey	15 0
5.	John Bathoe Esq.	15 0
6.	Wintroppe Baldwin Esq.	15 0
7.	Mrs Elizabeth Tyndall	15 0
8.	John Bennett Esq.	16 8
9.	Rev and Mrs Thos Sedgwick Whaley	16 8
10.	John Riddell Esq.	16 8
11.	Captain Henry Martin Esq.	16 8
12.	Rev Dr Edward Cooper	16 8
13.	John Charnock Esq.	16 8
14.	Hon Charles Hamilton Esq.	1 6 8
15.	Dr McGilchrist Esq.	1 3 4
16.	Oliver Esq.	1 6 8
17.	Mrs Victoria Kynaston	1 3 4
18.	Edward Hoare Esq.	15 0
19.	John Jefferies Esq.	16 8
20.	Lady Malpas	16 8
21.	Lady Stepney	16 8
22.	Hon John Lewes Dean of Ossory	16 8
23.	Dr Wm Watson	16 8
24.	Lady Isabella Stanley	16 8
25.	Colonel Hibbert	16 8
26.	Mrs Mary Cunliffe	16 8
27.	Lady Mary Stanley	16 8
28.	Philip Thickness Esq.	16 8
29.	Colonel Alexandra Champion	16 8
30.	Rt Hon Henry Grenville Esq.	1 1 8

Royal Crescent News

Changes at No 18

After some tribulation to neighbours No 18 has been entirely refurbished and restored with new glazing bars and maintaining the main original features of the C18th and C19th work. It will provide 5/6 new flats when the work, which has taken 10 months, is completed in September

Jam Tomorrow

In September Mr William Lee, Avon County Engineer, will give a talk on The Future of Traffic and Parking in Bath. The date and the venue will be announced later

Beautiful Boxes

Congratulations to Mr Le Corre of No 24 and Mr Wilks of No 20. Last year an American photographed some of the basement gardens in the Royal Crescent and now pictures of the window boxes in No 24 and No 20 appear in a delightful book *The Window Box* by Anne Halpen with photographs by Solomn Scolrick which we hope will be produced in England

Garden Parties

Our warm thanks for to Mr Cavilla and the staff of the Royal Crescent Hotel for organising two evening garden parties for members of the Royal Crescent Society in July. Members were shown the newly furbished old coach house premises which has been achieved by skilful restoration of the facade and the interior.

The editor would welcome letters, criticisms, suggestions and items of news. We would like to hear about changes of residency, of plans for restoration and any other information about living in the Royal Crescent.

If you require further copies of the newsletter to distribute to potential members please telephone the editor on Bath 24736 (424736 after August 25).

Obituary

Mr Ivo Peters

Members will have been sorry to hear of the death of Mr Ivo Peters of 30 Royal Crescent on June 7 after a long illness. Mr Peters was a well known photographer and railway enthusiast and the author of the most critically acclaimed and best selling railway book of all time *The Somerset and Dorset, an English Cross Country Railway*. Mr Peters was particularly devoted to the Somerset and Dorset which, alas, was closed in 1966, and his photography of this beautiful line was used as an award winning BBC documentary. Mr Peters is remembered as a distinguished resident in the street named after him near Sainsburys. His erstwhile neighbour in No 22 was Lady Noble who died in 1962 and who was the granddaughter of Isambard Kingdom Brunel.