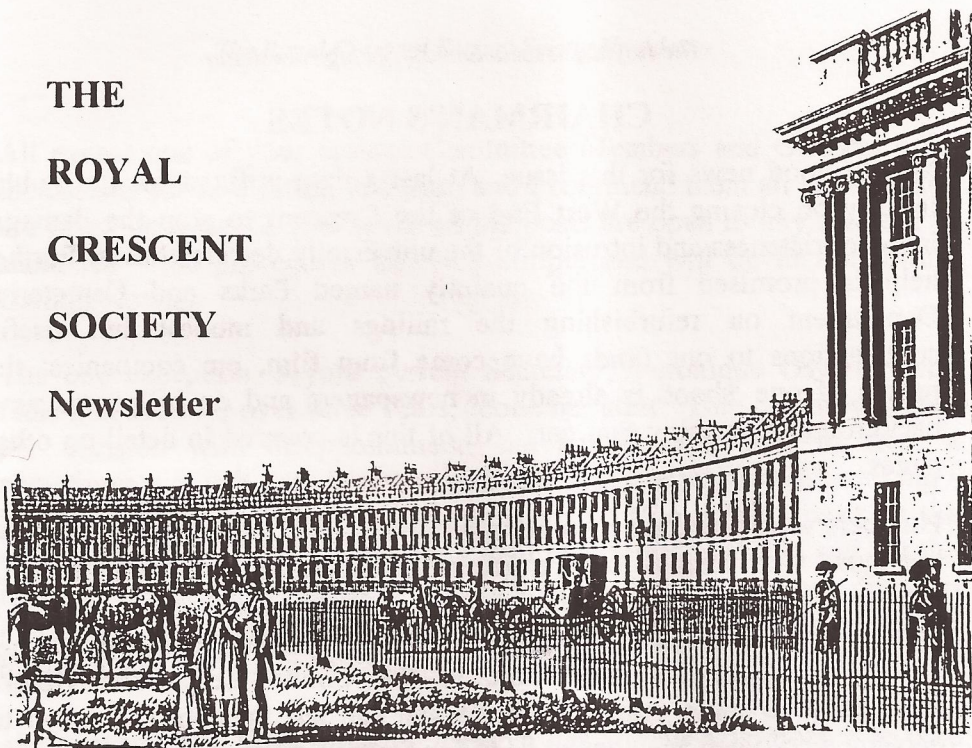


**THE
ROYAL
CRESCENT
SOCIETY**
Newsletter



Issue No 36

Spring 1998

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday 27 April 1998 at 7.15pm at
The Royal Crescent Hotel

ALL RESIDENTS are cordially invited to the 1998 Annual General Meeting of this Society, to participate in the discussion of matters affecting our daily lives here and to meet our local Councillors. The Society's Committee for the coming year will also be elected (only Members having a vote - it is easy and cheap to join, 107 residents already have, by calling Treasurer Stephen Little at No. 22 on Bath 310180). Formal Calling Notices will be distributed to all residents shortly, and there will be an opportunity to socialise afterwards enjoying wine provided by the Society and the Hotel's renowned canapes. All residents are encouraged to come along, to at least listen, and to hopefully take part.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mainly good news for this issue. At last a date is fixed for the Public Inquiry on closing the West End of the Crescent to stop the damage, inappropriateness and intrusion of the universally detested buses. Further help is promised from the quaintly named Parks and Cemeteries Department on refurbishing the railings and modest but useful contributions to our funds have come from film, etc companies; the results of one 'shoot' is already in newspapers and on billboards as a background to a shiny Fiat car. All of this is covered in detail on other pages.

Numbers were rather disappointingly down for this year's Festive Dinner, but those who went enjoyed a generally jolly evening. John Carrier's report on the dinner graces another page in his inimitable style. It was a great pleasure to honour one of the Committee's unsung heroines and her husband. Jenny Hardisty came to the Committee as the Hotel's representative some years ago, but when she left the job, she asked to become a co-opted Member so as to see through the restoration of the Ha Ha, a project dear to her heart, even though she does not of course live here. Your Committee was only too keen to keep her. She has done sterling work ever since and it was high time this was recognised in however small a way.

On the subject of festivities, on your behalf I received Christmas Cards from our MP Don Foster and Chairman of B&NES David Hawkins.

The AGM has for many years been held at the Bath & County Club. This year, after due consideration of costs and standards and in response to the courteous overtures of the Hotel, the venue has been moved there. Not only is this closer to home, but General Manager Ross Stevenson has offered the room free and allowed the Society to bring its own wine: thanks to Vice Chairman in advance for organising this. For a very modest charge of £6.50 those who wish can stay after the AGM proper, to enjoy the Hotel's well-known and delicious finger-buffet. Your Committee very much hopes you will be able to come to both parts of the event.

All except one of your current Committee Members and Officers offer themselves for re-election this year, and I commend them all to you: they are listed on page 22. However all the posts are open to any resident to stand for - the procedures are very simple and will be in the formal Calling Notice.

The one exception is your current Secretary, Veronique Oswald, who feels that she has, over three years, 'done her stint'. One can only accept her decision with disappointment: she has worked hard to steer a sometimes difficult path between verbatim and summary minute taking - besides making important contributions to the Committee's work at the same time. The Society owes her a debt of gratitude for this and for the immaculate organisation and conduct of AGMs notwithstanding an extremely demanding family, business and social life. Happily her husband Bill will carry on.

Very fortunately, Miss Michelle Morgan has already volunteered to take on the Secretaryship and is in post, pending formal election at the AGM. She is most welcome especially at very short notice.

The last Newsletter drew much favourable comment and special thanks are due to your editor Caroline Carrier who was faced with a dreadful amount of extra work and complication, finding and dealing with what turned out to be a rather unhelpful replacement for the former arrangements. Caroline has also done exceptionally well to find a new, local facility which not only promises to be much more convenient, but potentially a little cheaper: Treasurer Stephen Little has expressed approval!

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

Michael Daw
10 Royal Crescent

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Our Spring Newsletter covers many topics old and new. We commend to you the AGM as a meeting place for general discussion of all matters of concern to us all most especially the buses.

Sadly we shall lose Mrs Dulcie Morel and of course little Rudi from No 27. We wish Dulcie well and happy in her new home and will greatly miss her staunch forthrightness and fighting spirit.

We welcome Michelle Morgan as our new secretary and Michelle has written a fascinating item on the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath of which she is Director.

Lesley Brain has initiated a series of profiles of Royal Crescent Residents which will be most intriguing.

I hope you will enjoy this 36th Newsletter and perhaps contribute to the next.

Caroline Carrier
5 Royal Crescent

THE BUSES - ACTION TIME APPROACHES

Taking up the story following the report in the last Newsletter, the most significant event is the formal announcement of a date for the long-awaited Public Inquiry. This will be held on 1st June 1998 in the Guildhall, Bath.

This information came in two ways, first in answer to a question put to County Engineer by Councillor Cox, and relayed by our Councillor David Hawkins, and secondly in the form of a 'round-robin' standard notification from B&NES Legal staff which is required to be sent out to all interested parties as part of the formal Public Inquiry process.

Whether this 'result' stemmed from the critical letter of complaint we sent to Chief Executive John Everitt (reprinted in the last Newsletter) and any hastening of action he may have set in motion is not clear. He has still not had either the wit to claim credit for so doing, nor the courtesy to reply formally himself or get County Engineer to do so (as the latter promised in his evening telephone call, also reported last issue). Even publication of parts of our letter in the Chronicle (independently and unprompted by Mrs Vivienne Rae-Ellis of the Circus) seemed not to shame Mr Everitt. In the next day's issue (in relation to another matter) he wrote:

".... this Council is committed to providing quality, value for money services that are accessible, responsive and relevant".

".... our duty of accountability".

".... I think that we (are) constantly striving to improve the quality of Council services for the people who use them..."

All one can say is that our parsnips remain unbattered. Your Committee decided not to waste further time pursuing the last 11 months of Council Officers' incompetence and failure, but to move forward on the hard-won ground of the Public Inquiry date.

The next move in the game will be for the Council to write to all parties who have so far registered an interest in the matter, inviting written submissions and/or requests to make oral presentations. We shall of course be pursuing receipt of this letter, just in case it too should mysteriously be "overlooked".

Besides its normal business, which takes four or five meetings a year, your Committee is now meeting in special sessions to plan and organise the Society's approach to the Inquiry and to task Members and our other supporters with ways to help. Special fliers etc., will keep everyone informed.

For those unfamiliar with the Public Inquiry process, it is important to realise that it is the Council which must prosecute or defend the case for closure of one end of the Crescent and deal with the formally presented objections by the Bus Companies. We will be the leading supporters of the case, presenting our own arguments, and we may need to use, or seek, legal help to do this, either to tease out the legislative minutiae (though the Council should cope with this) and/or to speak with us. We shall also be alerting all those who can speak on our side, who have been so helpful over the years. We shall also call on the help of residents in various ways e.g. further bus surveys, letter campaigns, petitions, etc. Members will be kept closely informed.

So far the Society's campaign has enjoyed the active, although in some cases silent, support of all residents. The Committee has neither received nor heard of any dissent from the general conduct of the Society's case. AGMs have regularly endorsed the Committee's actions. However one supporting resident's determined and very helpful activities has unearthed letters from two residents to the Council, in opposition to the closure. In a population of well over 100 this is to be expected, but it re-inforces the need for the majority to act even more strongly.

IMAGERY

Pictures of the Crescent continue to be used for a wide range of promotional purposes. There seem to be two principle aims. First to symbolise the entire City and second to symbolise quality and style. John Wood might be pleased with both, but former Chairman Cdr Roy Titchen suggests we might try to boost our funds by tackling all who profit from pictures of our homes, perhaps even going so far as to take out a copyright! This could be a topic for discussion at an AGM, and some recent examples re-illustrate the point.

Taking quality first. A local estate agent has used the whole Crescent as its banner logo for many years; British Gas recently used it as background for one of its service vans; not to be outdone SWEB have recently shot some footage; Fiat's recent still shoot is now decorating hoardings and newspapers nationwide (we did get contributions for the last two). The latest to join in is local building contractor Ernest Ireland, who to celebrate 100 years of operations sought a "lively and positive representation of the company's heritage and a portrayal of the quality values in our work, etc.." Their solution was to commission a watercolour of the "daily activity of yesteryear in the Royal Crescent." They chose the prestigious local artist Jake Sutton, whose work has graced Royal Mail stamps, Bath Festival posters, and hangs in the House of Commons and the Victoria and Albert Museum. The firm's Divisional Director Alec Stuart said the image achieved the aim "admirably" and that the firm would cherish it for the next 100 years.

Using the Crescent as a symbol for the City goes back many years. British Rail buffs may recall a beautiful poster entitled simply 'Bath' and comprising a photograph taken along the wall of the Crescent from outside No 9 with the pink roses (which still flourish) in the foreground on an iron mesh grid (since removed). More recently, both our MP and the Chairman of B&NES used the Crescent for their Christmas cards. Don Foster's was the more curious: the Crescent was on the front and the Palace of Westminster on the back. However quality didn't quite obtain, or perhaps an eye-catching joke was intended. The picture of Big Ben came around the fold of the card, therefore on the front and seemed to be part of the Crescent. And we thought we were grand enough already! David Hawkins' card was more charming and more charmingly justified. "I wanted something which universally symbolised Bath and my Ward," he said. "What possibly better picture could I have than the most prestigious place in both?" Who are mere residents to disagree?

THE ROYAL CRESCENT HA-HA - A PROGRESS REPORT

After the second exploratory dig last summer by Wessex Archaeology (reported in Newsletter No: 34), and since the ha-ha ditch lies in that part of the Royal Victoria Park owned by the local Council, your Committee decided that it was now appropriate to seek their co-operation. We were particularly anxious to establish contact with representatives of the Parks and Cemeteries Department and the Development and Environmental Services on the basis of Wessex's two Reports. Contact having been made we were most fortunate in engaging the interest and co-operation of both Glen Humphreys who has special interest and responsibility for the Royal Victoria Park, and Bob Sides the B&NES Archaeologist. Two meetings with these representatives have now taken place with the full support and valuable participation of the Bath Preservation Trust (Sir Christopher Curwen KCMG and Mrs Gillian Sladen, of the Gardens Committee).

At the first meeting we began by explaining our objectives and our progress so far. Bob Sides then highlighted the Reports' finding that both deliberate and natural in-filling of the ditch part of the ha-ha had taken place quite soon after the original construction of the ha-ha in 1760; the present profile of the ditch has thus existed virtually unchanged for the past 150-200 years. He also pointed out that the current attitude of the main conservation bodies to restoration is to adopt an "as found" policy. For several reasons he thought it might be both unwise and undesirable to dig out the ditch to its original depth. He also stated that it was essential to involve English Heritage in the project, and as he is in close contact with them would raise the subject at their next monthly meeting.

On the point of the restored depth of ditch, after lengthy discussion, it was decided that after replacing the lost stone courses at the top of the wall, the ditch should be dug out so as to expose an overall height of wall of 1.33 metres. This policy would then be in line with both historical accuracy, and modern practical and public safety considerations.

Glen Humphreys explained that the Royal Victoria Park is Listed Grade II, and designated as a Park of National Importance. A great deal of restoration has already taken place in the park (as I am sure you all will be aware) with the replacement of railings, recreating the small lake, and replanting of trees and shrubs. The proposed restoration of our ha-ha therefore falls in very neatly with their own plans. His department was applying for Heritage Lottery funds to continue work in the park. Subject to the project being undertaken as a formal partnership between the Royal Crescent Society and the Council, then upon receipt of these funds, the Heritage Lottery Fund would provide 75% of the entire cost of restoring the ha-ha and ditch, leaving the Royal Crescent Society to find the balance. On behalf of the Royal Crescent Society Michael Daw, as Chairman, welcomed the proposal and agreed that this would be the best course of action in principle. This agreement was subsequently approved by your Committee. Estimates of the cost of our 25% share show it to be well within the scope of the Ha-ha Restoration Fund, leaving a core for subsequent maintenance.

At the second meeting Bob Sides reported on his meeting with English Heritage. He said that they had expressed interest and saw no objection in principle, they would of course defer formal approval until they saw the detailed proposal. As expected, it was unlikely that they could be relied upon for funding.

Glen Humphreys had been in contact with the Heritage Lottery Fund who see no reason why the Royal Crescent Society should not enter into a partnership with B&NES for funding the project. There would need to be some form of legal document to cover the partnership.

The next steps are to obtain further quotations from appropriate builders and in due course to apply for Listed Building Consent, etc. Your Committee is still hopeful that the work may be tackled this summer.

Jenny Hardisty
Secretary to the Ha-Ha Committee

TREASURER'S NOTES

Lawn Fund subscriptions for 1998 are now set, as agreed at last year's AGM, at £14 for a small flat, £30 for a large flat or maisonette, and £40 for a whole house. These rates are, in real terms, well below the previous rates when originally set in the 70's, but will help to boost the Lawn Fund to a level where it can not only keep pace with the rising cost of maintenance, but also help towards our share of the major expenditure needed on the railings with the Council.

Your Committee feels that a proper restoration of the railings and their stone bases is called for, rather than a patch-up job, but investigation of likely costs has revealed that the sum required is way beyond our current means. However there is light at the end of the tunnel, since as we hoped the partnership promised by the Council for the ha-ha restoration out of lottery funds is being offered for the railings. This will still leave us with a substantial sum to find, and it will be important that we are seen to be helping ourselves before approaching other possible sources. Fundraising will start in a major way later this year.

In my notes in the last issue, gremlins changed the word 'now' to 'not' in the paragraph about the ha-ha, which should have stated that the Ha-ha Fund does now appear sufficient to meet its purpose, as the Council has agreed to give 75% of the restoration costs from its National Heritage Lottery funding. The 25% which this leaves us to find is affordable from the Fund at its current level.

Our application for charitable status was rejected, we had anticipated that we might fail at the first attempt, but while the Charity Commission was fully prepared to consider a further application if we amended our constitution, they felt unable to give any guidance as to what changes would be acceptable. This option will therefore not be pursued for the time being as it is hoped that any application to grant-giving trusts will be made in conjunction with the Bath Preservation Trust. Our application for a Council grant (from Council funds) for the lawn and railings also

fell at the first hurdle, mainly because the relevant department had a very low budget to cover all the applications made to it.

Now for the good news. Two recent filming sessions in the Crescent for Fiat and Southern Electric adverts resulted in a four-figure boost to the Lawn Fund. And for the first time for several years, February passed without any vehicles crashing through the railings!

I would like to repeat my plea from the last issue to keep us informed of any departing or arriving residents, so that we can get in touch with potential members and not waste newsletters and reminders vainly seeking departed residents. Talking of reminders, I trust that you will all pay your membership fees (now £6 single, £10 double, £15 triple) and Lawn Fund subscriptions promptly, and obviate the need for a round of prompting letters later in the year.

S Little
22 Royal Crescent

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Following the note in the last Newsletter informing members and residents that we were making one final attempt to assess the level of interest in a Scheme, regrettably we have to report that the level of interest shown was such that your Committee has decided not to pursue this topic further for the time being.

Ian Woodhouse
14 Royal Crescent

SNIPPETS

Going, Going.....

As we go to press a much-hyped auction is about to take place of 3 floors of one house in the Crescent. They are in No 19 and have not been altered much since just after WWII, when the house was divided into 5 flats as part of the Council's plan to ease the lack of accommodation in the City. Whilst the conversion was pretty unimaginative by today's more sensitive standards parts of the properties retain some of the original Georgian features. Much work needs to be done to restore and realise the full potential; we wish the new owners well in their task - which as others have found here, can be difficult, but ultimately hugely rewarding. We also hear that two separate floors of No. 13/14, ground and courtyard and currently being marketed.

Gone

Currently with these sales two other longstanding families of another house, No.3, have sold and are leaving (in one case have left) the Crescent for pastures old and new. We understand that the new owners of the 2 flats will be leading the splendid construction and perhaps operation of the new Bath Spa facility. We bid them welcome and hope that their new base will provide a stylish solace from the hectic pace of the project, which will benefit Bath so much. Meanwhile another departure is noted on another page.

Recovery

Her many acquaintances will have been relieved to hear of the recovery from serious illness of a redoubtable Crescent character, Mrs Garden. A great survivor, Mrs G. is also a great participator - she makes a lot of effort to attend and support every Society function. She was very disappointed to miss the Society's Dinner and was grateful for the flowers the Society sent whilst she was in Hospital. We all look forward to her return to most of her former activities.

Bloomin' Balloons - Not!

An extra-ordinary proposal to tether a 25-seater basket suspended from a very large balloon over the allotments in Marlborough Lane was, to the relief of green-fingered residents and others, thrown out by Councillors. That sounds a simple story. The whole saga was rather different. Firstly the organisers were very economical with the truth and failed to reveal the whole impact of the plot (no pun intended!). 35 allotment holders would have been dispossessed and forced to abandon the years of work put in to make their plots productive. They would have been re-sited to useless sites elsewhere. The proposal was against the spirit of an international agreement calling for a better quality of human life adopted by B&NES. The aesthetic effect on the Georgian landscape and the intrusive impact on nearby homes was understated - or not addressed at all. All these points and more were vividly made by Barbara Walker in a spirited letter to the Chronicle and concurrent letters to all those in a position to influence the decision. Congratulations to her and her hard work - she won!

Festival Festivities - 1

As we go to press we understand that the usual arrangements will apply for this year's Bath Festival Opening Night on 15 May, that is road closure, car passes for residents and guests, etc. Your Committee will send out the usual flier nearer the time. Meanwhile the Festivals Trust has given a preview of the evening. At 6pm there will be a procession, followed by 'Celebrations in the Park'. This will include local schoolchildren dancing, Flamenco dancers, a contemporary string quartet and a group called Jazz Jamaica, followed by fireworks on the Golf Course. Again we are asked to light the free candles in our windows at dusk.

Festival Festivities - 3

Number 3? No, your writer can count! This refers to the third Bite festival, planned this year for July 13-27. Details are sketchy at this stage, but are likely to involve use of the Park on the lines of last year. More details in the next issue.

Requiem for the Lost Children of the 20th Century

Since the report in the last newsletter about a proposed children's event in the park to commemorate the holocaust etc in the year 2000, there has been no material development, except that the proposal was linked in a press report to a wider scheme being worked on by B&NES for July 1999. Your Committee will watch and report further.

Outings and Innings

After the great success of the lovely summer evening outing to Iford Manor last year, so kindly and beautifully organised by David and Lesley Brain, it is hoped that a similar event may happen this year. David Brain has suggested Belcombe Court, Bradford on Avon as a possible venue for 1998.

The Royal Crescent Hotel has again kindly offered its facilities for a Summer Party - in its park if weather permits, but otherwise indoors. Watch this space for more details of both events.

CELEBRATIONS

On a warm Spring afternoon last January a tall familiar figure stood leaning against the railings outside No 28, "just making sure that no one pinches that parking space".

At about quarter to three a wedding car arrived and with much hustling and bustling five smartly dressed ladies of varying ages piled in.

A little while later the car returned. The minutes ticked by. The bride's father, mindful of our ever vigilant President overhead, for it was indeed he, brought up some refreshment of an appropriate nature.

Suddenly there was a commotion as bride, matron of honour and your's truly, who had been finishing off the rest of the bottle, emerged into the sunshine. A hand fluttered from behind a nearby window (Lady B, although suffering from bronchitis, was determined not to miss the fun). In we climbed and, as the car rounded the corner at No 1, we saw the Editor hurrying on foot to the church in Julian Road. (Sorry, Caroline, perhaps we should have given you a lift?)

To cut a long story short, the wedding service went off without a hitch and the guests strolled down to the Guildhall for the reception and supper in the 18thC Banqueting Room (all credit to B&NES for the venue). Dancing continued 'till the small hours and the happy couple finally departed for a secret location (not the Royal Crescent Hotel!), only to return for more feasting and present-opening the following day.

At the time of writing Charlotte and James are in Singapore and plan to complete their round the world trip in about two years' time!

Bill Oswald
28a Royal Crescent

COMMISERATIONS

Even if you didn't know her you must have seen her. Immaculately turned out in all weather, her little black poodle bounding off ahead.

Very little escaped this lady's attention. An unretrieved canine visiting card on the Lawn or a poorly swept corner of the Crescent. Goings-on at the band stand or an illicit football game. She was in there. Petite she may have been but her courage (some might say her foolhardiness) was prodigious.

By the time this Newsletter hits the street she will have gone. We will miss you dreadfully, Dulcie, you and little Rudi. And that stylish manner you brought to everything you did. Come back and see us soon!

FIGURES IN THE CRESCENT

People who live in the Crescent are a mixed and endlessly fascinating group - the stuff of a 'soap' opera perhaps. When we spoke Mike Daw defined two groups to me. There are those who adore the pace and take an active interest in it and those who see it as a place to rest their head. Mike is definitely in the first category. When he came to Bath in 1968 he was already in love with it and it is a love story that has continued with great passion. They say you only get out what you put in and there is no doubt that Mike has given a great deal to benefit that environment which means so much to him. Fortunately he is well qualified for such a task. For thirty or so years he was a career Civil Servant. As well as working locally and in London he has had postings to Scotland and two three year stints in Washington. At one stage he was responsible for the Navy's electronics facility spread over five sites and employing 1300 people from labourers to technicians and senior managers. He must have been skilled at handling people and paperwork with equal aplomb - all of which makes him an ideal Chairman of the Royal Crescent Society.

During the thirty years that he has been in Bath Mike has seen great changes. One thing that stands out is that Bath at that time was a place of filthy buildings. There is a general improvement in the fabric of those buildings throughout the city and certainly in the Crescent. When I asked him about changes amongst the residents he said that people were now more aware of the need for co-operative action and vigilance. The Society is now generally acknowledged as a major and effective vehicle for that action and this newsletter acts as an important reflection of that attitude. We talked a little about buses - how could we not? But I was much more interested to hear about Mike himself.

While he describes himself as a bureaucrat, or a retired bureaucrat, that doesn't quite do justice to all the varied facets of his interests. His family owned the largest iron casting foundries in the South West and included mangles as one of their major products. [Younger readers might need a little help to know what a mangle is!] So he has inherited a curiosity about how things work which isn't confined simply to machinery or systems. He loves the theatre enjoying both the interaction between performers and audience but also having a fascination for the mechanics of the production. He was involved in a production of Joseph and His Amazing Coat at Wells Cathedral which involved 200 young people. He is intrigued by the art of illusion generally and so architecture and interior design are great interests. Perhaps given another life he might have been a stage designer. Certainly his varied and usually long-standing friends have creative talents in common. Now that he is retired Mike plans to travel more and explore countries for their theatre, architecture and good food. He looks forward to another trip to New York, which he loves for its cosmopolitan buzz and exciting entertainment, to see the changes to 42nd Street.

I meet a lot of people in the course of my work. Many of them are successful wealthy and wise. Few of them are fortunate enough to be as justifiably happy as Mike.

Lesley Brain
No 30 Royal Crescent

WHY A MUSEUM OF EAST ASIAN ART IN BATH?

The Museum of East Asian Art was established in 1993 by the endowment of Mr Brian McElney, a retired solicitor who practised in Hong Kong for over 35 years. It is a registered charity and received its full Museums and Gallery registration status in 1996.

The Georgian building that houses the Museum lends to the intimacy of the Collection of 1600 objects, which is predominantly based on Chinese ceramics and jades. There is also a small number of ceramics and lacquerware items from south-east Asia and Japan. Mr McElney was very much interested in the ethos of the scholar's studio. As a result of this there is a comprehensive collection of scholar's objects including bamboo carvings and natural wood sculpture. There are also fine examples of Chinese metalware and other decorative arts. The Collection has recently acquired a small collection of papercuts and popular prints with the aim of looking at the history of Chinese iconography.

Why put a Collection of this nature in Bath? This is a question that is regularly asked, and there are various answers. An obvious avenue for justifying the Museum's presence in Bath is through the trade links. During the 17th century oriental goods were being brought back to England. King Charles I is known to have owned two Chinese screens. By the 18th century Chinese ceramics became very fashionable in England, and demands were being made for more Western style and shapes of ceramics. This trend in turn influenced European ceramic production. Josiah Wedgwood was one such character influenced by the "Mysterious East" and opened a showroom in Bath in 1772. Bath was also at this time establishing itself as Britain's second main commercial centre after London, and wealthier families in Bath ordered Chinese porcelain services bearing their family's arms. The Museum is currently considering the purchase of pieces of armorial ceramics decorated with Bath arms. This interest in Chinese ceramics led to the demand of all types of Chinese goods being imported into Europe, such as silks, lacquers, wallpaper, furniture and enamelled metals.

In view of trade between Bath and China the Museum has been looking to develop links with other local museums. At the moment the Museum is working with the Building of Bath Museum on a joint venture supported by a project development grant of £20,000 from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. The Festival Promenade incorporates the expansion of an educational multi-media interface for accessing archived material. The aim is to reinforce the extensive links between the diverse subject matter from the two Museums. There will be a computer terminal at each of the Museums from which the public can access the Collections through a promenade (an important facet of 18th century life especially in Bath) along a specific route taken through the heart of Georgian Bath. The visitor will be able to scroll along the promenade with a mouse and click on characters to access various 18th century topics. These topics will cover such subjects as Georgian Culture, Historical Background, Interiors and so on. It seems to be an ideal opportunity for the Museum to become more involved with the community of Bath.

Apart from the linking the Collection to other museums, the Museum has a very active Education programme. In September the Museum employed a part-time Education Officer with support from the Area Museums Council and other generous donations. The Museum Collection, despite being non-European, fits very well into the National Curriculum under the non-western art section. The Collection also offers other opportunities to link into less apparent themes such as religion, different media and theatre.

In relation to the Education programme the Museum also has a handling collection of 200 objects dating from the Neolithic period to the 20th century. This educational tool is a unique feature of the Museum. It enables the visitor to experience history first hand. The aim of this part of the Collection is to try and break down the barrier of glass cases.

Children are far more likely to recall the texture of a pot or a piece of jade through touch. Once the visitor is stimulated then it is much easier to address objects in cases. With an accompanying audio tape eight pieces have also been selected from the Handling collection to allow the visually impaired community an independent visit to the Museum.

The Museum thus offers access to a wide ranging Collection. Its aim is to be seen as a resource for the local community, scholars, schoolchildren and the many leisure visitors to the City of Bath. Particular attention is given to the Museum's educational role with regular lectures, special exhibitions and other events, as well as new publications.

To conclude, Bath is the only entire city in the world designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. As China has one of the oldest civilisations it seems appropriate that the Museum should reside in Bath.

Michelle Morgan
22 Royal Crescent

**Museum of East Asian Art
12 Bennett Street
Bath**

Tel: 464640

**Mon - Sat 10.00am - 5.00pm
Sunday 12.00 - 5.00pm**

Adults £3.50

ROYAL CRESCENT DINNER

January 10th 1998

Royal Crescent Hotel

The Royal Crescent dinner was held on an almost Spring evening in January.

This year's highlight was the high standard of the dress of the ladies and gentlemen attending. "Tatler" could have done a delightful spread of our black tie suited male residents and the sparkle of the ladies dresses.

We arrived for glasses of wine and much chatter to anticipate the sight of the beautifully decorated large round tables laid for dinner with our names awaiting us.

Lighting was soft with flowers on each table - our enjoyment made happy sounds.

Sir John Barraclough struck the table with his silver handled cane for the loyal toast. (Unfortunately Lady Barraclough was unable to attend through illness).

Chairman Mike Daw gave his review of the past year closing with condolences regarding Mrs Garden's (No 5) health and there was much laughter over "Brussel sprouts".

Chatter lingered until quite late before we said our farewells.

Yet another year of our lives celebrated together as we look ahead at a lovely piece of empty lawn still sitting in the moonlight which we hope will continue to be free of footballers in 1998!

John Carrier
5 Royal Crescent

EARLY SPRING

March is being a perfect lamb so far, beware the late lion. While the Crescent is bathed in the balmy spring sunshine and the front area gardens are dotted with camellias giving us a grand show, look closer: the bugs are increasing. Without much cold this winter (my fuchsias, the half hardy ones already have flower buds, and are still outside!) Green fly, black fly, snails and slugs have built up good reserves and are now busily starting to breed ready to attack the summer flowers. While the blackbird sings its liquid song over the Crescent and the hen bird scratches the top soil from the plant containers, the bugs are breeding, so get your "green" sprays ready (soap and water discourages the green fly and washes the leaves as you spray). At the back, the gardens are still deep in damp, cold, winter with only some early shrubs flowering, the romantic garrya elliptica with its long silky tassels, daphne, viburnum, berberis, skimmia, forsythia, mahonia and magnolias but the paths and edges need tidying, clearing the dead leaves from the clutter of dark damp windy days.

Take a walk to the Botanical Gardens this spring, what a sight, with the old Magnolias giving a wonderful show and peeking out from the shady depths the hellebores alight with spring greens, pinks and purples, daffodil, narcissi and the fritillaries which will soon appear beneath the acers. We are so lucky in Bath to have had Victorians who with foresight and care started the Gardens which we now enjoy. Our parks department too has shown imagination bordering the roads leading into Bath with wide ribbons of daffodils on each side - like the rays of the sun radiating from Bath City Center.

But remember this is all man made - take a moment, shut your eyes imagine the real English spring out in the countryside primroses nestling beneath prickly briars away from the hungry sheep, catkins dancing in the breeze with clouds of pollen, the pussy willow silver and yellow amongst the hedges, clumps of gorse yellow in the sun and the trees and hedges beginning to get that gossamer veil of green with the tiny wild daffodil piercing through the grassy turf, no wonder primitive man worshipped the return of the sun; the first warmth on his back from spring sun in a sheltered dell. That is the real spring.

In our towns and cities we try to ape nature and make a pretty show but it is as our cities are a mere manmade artificial casing for the real thing, we must remember the Countryside is where the roots are. The real things of life happen there and are laced squarely, spring is so much more because winter has gone before, the cold winds, deep mud, driving rain - not to be sheltered from, but to be endured whilst working the land.

Annabel Trechman
5 Royal Crescent

YOUR COMMITTEE 1997-1998

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STOP PRESS II

Auction at the Crescent - March 27 1998

The refurbished Royal Crescent Hotel Sheridan Room (scene of our Dinner) buzzed with excitement as 90 or so interested parties attended Cobb Farr's Auction of parts of No 19 Royal Crescent.

The Group was a cross-section of serious bidders - about six - and "others". The cross-section extended to dress codes as well from the owners' open check shirt and jeans to brief-cased and suited "business men" through elegant ladies - all out for free wine and a bit of fun.

The Auctioneer (he of Marlborough Lane Garage Sale fame) was in his usual good form and tried to start the bidding for the ground and basement floors at £300,000. No takers! Eventually someone bid £200,000, it quickly went to £250,000 and finally struggled to £285,000, after many "sips of water" by the Auctioneer to allow rural bidders to reconsider. The guide price had been considerably less.

The second lot, the first floor he tried at £100,000, got a start at £90,000, winched it up in multiples of £500 to £140,000 and then by multiples of £1,000 to £149,000. The guide price was £130,000.

Cobb Farr should have been well pleased. Their office must have been virtually closed since the hotel teemed with their staff in their best, smiling and welcoming throng: in fact most of them were much better turned out than the prospective "buyers".

Our Roving Reporter.