

'Champagne Charlie' Charles Fabian Ware (1935 -2015)



Charles Ware was one of the most flamboyant Crescent Residents and decades after he left the stories still remain of his parties and lifestyle. He was nicknamed "Champagne Charlie" by the News of the World in the heady early 1970s. He was also a man who played a leading role in regeneration of Islington in North London and later Bath. Out of the ashes of property bankruptcy he built a thriving

motor restoration business based on his love of the Morris Minor.

In the 1950s as a lecturer at the Slade school of art, he and his friends bought and restored a derelict terraced Georgian house in Islington. Over the next five years they renovated some 1,200 Islington properties and stimulated the market into Georgian property.

In the 1960s he moved to the Bath Academy of Art and fought to stop the Sack of Bath by developers who wanted to replace the old with the new. He restored and revived the Theatre Royal and on one occasion, Roxy Music gave a free gig as a personal thank you to him for guaranteeing the payments on their first van. He also renovated Kingsmead Square and the Cleveland Hotel in Great Pultney



Street and moved into number 10 on the Crescent, which he bought for £5,000 and set about renovating.

The property collapse in 1975 drove him into debt and bankruptcy but he cleared his debts within two years and got up to start again. He took night school classes in car maintenance and developed business in a small yard off the Lower Bristol Road into a mecca for Morris Minors. He established the Durable Car Company in Sri Lanka and passionately restored his favourite marque.

After a stroke in 2009 he retired from business.

The Royal Crescent Society website has some great stories about Charlie which are extracts are from "[By the Waters of the Sul](#)" by the Society's ex Chairman Edward Goring from his time as a columnist at the Bath Chronicle and are reproduced with his kind permission. Below is the first of these three stories. To read more : [Charles Fabian Ware](#)

The fuzz call on a rave up in the Royal Crescent

By any standards it was a remarkable party. By Bath standards it was an incredible party. Police looked in twice as deafening pop music echoed throughout the Royal Crescent, of all places, in the early hours. A chunk of ceiling collapsed as people danced non stop on a first floor lit only by strobe lighting from Juicy Lucy, a pop group from New York.



Charles Ware, a 35 year old art teacher turned London property developer, invited his friends, and their friends, to an all night rave up at 10, Royal Crescent, which he owns. More than 500 turned up.

Mr Ware didn't bat an eyelid. He had laid on 600 glasses and wine by the case. He won't know how many bottles were drunk until he gets the bill. He thinks they got through more than 300. "It quietened down after 3.30 am," he said next day, "but quite a few people stayed on. There's a very scruffy bloke still kipping in my kitchen. I had to have breakfast around him."

Bath party goers including the trendier architects and solicitors were outnumbered by Mr Ware's London friends who came down in force. The scene was straight out of swinging King's Road, Chelsea. There was a man wearing hot pants and knee socks and another in an Oz trial T shirt. There was a girl dressed for some reason as a drum majorette, a lone Hell's Angel, a lot of hippies and about 20 gate-crashes. In the attic a team of baby sitters sat with a team of babies.

There was no trouble. "The police called as a formality," said Mr Ware. "I'd notified them I was having a party and we did try to keep the noise down after their visits. They were quite happy about it." He tried to forestall complaints from neighbours by inviting them from all the other 29 houses in Royal Crescent. He had also removed the furniture and carpets. Apart from part of that ceiling the only damage was to quite a few of those 600 glasses. The party overflowed into the garden. "At dawn the garden looked like a scene from Fellini's Satyricon," said Mr Ware. "The sun was shining on a sea of broken crystal."

Mr Ware bought the house five years ago when he was a part time teacher at Bath Academy of Art and uses it for weekend visits. When he was doing it up he got a lot of fun out of rich American tourists who asked if they could see inside and gave him a tip. They thought he was a workman.

July, 1971.