

# THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY Newsletter

Carreras Concert Reviewed

Issue No.20

Summer 1992

## Hear Our Song

Acting Chairman Dr Monica Baly explains  
the background to the Carreras concert

**W**e all regret the illness of the chairman, Michael Daw, and we wish him a speedy recovery and a return to the chairmanship into which he has put so much work.

The main event of the quarter has undoubtedly been the José Carreras Concert (see Review p.6). Although it went without incident and gave pleasure to over 15,000 people, some 10,000 of whom were Bathonians, it did not give pleasure to all residents. Some people thought that it was an unwarranted dis-

turbance and that there had been insufficient consultation. This is sad for it is painful to arouse antagonism. Time for making a decision was unfortunately short on this occasion, but to ensure that democracy not only prevails but is seen to prevail, the Committee intends holding an Extraordinary Meeting in the Autumn to obtain a consensus view on policy for the lawn in the future.

On an ideal summer evening most people enjoyed the concert. Ninety-four members took up their offer of

tickets. The Treasurer has gained over £6,000 towards the Ha-ha restoration which means that the project may be able to go ahead soon. A restored Ha-ha would go some way towards securing the privacy of the lawn. It is perhaps ironic that we had to use the lawn for a commercial enterprise in order to secure it, but this has happened before. In 1974, when the Royal Crescent Society took over the administration of the Lawn Fund, its first task was to restore the railings and gates which were in a state of disrepair. We were fortunate in getting a generous grant from the Historic Buildings Commission but at the end of the day we were £1,000 short and the building firm was clamouring for payment. Fortunately, a film company arrived with a request for our co-operation and the use of the Lawn. Thanks to astute bargaining by the chairman, Mr R.A.C Forrester, our needed £1,000 (1974 prices) was forthcoming and we were able to finish paying our account. As a result the railings were restored, the gates closed, and once again, subscribing members had keys, the grass was restored and peace reigned. The film, *Joseph Andrews*, was not memorable but many residents enjoyed taking part as extras.

**A**s we look back it is perhaps worth recalling the events that led up to the José Carreras Concert. In late January we learned that the city was planning a concert on the lawn in Victoria Park in co-operation with International Management Group, the firm who had organised the Salisbury Spire Concert.

It was understood that the Society would be offered £1,000 as compensation for any disturbance. The Society was in no position to protest as the concert was to be on public ground, and, indeed it would have been churlish to do so as it was a prestige event and important to the City. Objections from the Royal Crescent would have brought condemnation from the press and would have created that unfortunate 'elitist' image.

**I**n February a different complexion was put on the matter when the promoters suggested having the stage on the Crescent Lawn. At the time it was far from clear what the proposals entailed. The Committee discussed the matter; one member was adamant that on no account should we trade the lawn for money. Other members, weighing the reaction of the City and the very special nature of the event, thought that the matter should be explored further. The Chairman was assiduous in his researches with the elusive I.M.G and he contacted Salisbury to get the reaction there, but it was not until the end of February that we felt that we had something positive to put to the members. On 7th March a three page flyer was sent to all members. From the outset it was made clear that the Society would only be able to speak on behalf of the members. The Flyer provoked little response and in the middle of March a newsletter, personally addressed, was sent to every resident, as far as we could ascertain names and addresses, this stated the

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years ago. Today, with an adjacent public park lawn intrusion occurs on a scale not envisaged in the C18th, however, it is hoped that the restoration of the Ha-ha will go some way to cutting down this complaint, besides reinstating its original proportions.

**LAWN FUND SUBSCRIPTION**

A whole house...£25 a year.

A large Flat or Maisonette...£15 a year.

A small Flat (one floor, one house)...£7 a year.

In the 1950s it looks as if the charge was £10 a house so the subscription rate has not kept pace with inflation.

Subscriptions should be sent to:

Ian Nesbitt Esq., Treasurer, 3 Royal Crescent.

☆☆☆

Congratulations to Diana Bourdon Smith on her picture 'Crescent Gardens' and to Karen Mills (Mrs Bill Wallis) on her portrait of Barnaby Walker in the Bath Society of Artists Annual Exhibition in the Victoria Art Gallery.

Best wishes to Major General Charles West for a speedy recovery after his recent operation and to Christine Nesbitt after her hip replacement.

*The Royal Crescent Society Newsletter is published three times a year.  
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Design & Printing: John Walker  
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## Snapshots



*Journalists invaded our lawn and demonstrators gathered outside the Royal Crescent Hotel for the meeting of European finance ministers, including Norman Lamont (above). And the Daily Telegraph reported that Nos 21 and 22 were on the market for around £975,000 and £900,000 respectively (below).*



## Exploring the hidden delights of The Crescent

by  
Christopher Woodward

**I**t seems that one can never run out of architectural delights to discover on Royal Crescent. The more one explores the mews on Crescent Lane, the more one discovers about life in the Georgian spa and the individual talents that prospered behind the uniform sweep of the facades.

Perhaps it is difficult to appreciate this as one walks down the lane today. Less than ten of the mews date from the 18th century though the bustle of the garages is a neat twist of tradition: in the 19th century many mews separated from the houses on the Crescent to become commercial coaching stables

and in turn these became commercial motor garages.

The builders of Georgian Bath paid scant attention to the backs of the terraces or their service streets but Crescent Lane is an exception: John Wood the Younger laid it out with care as it was an integral part of his plan for the 'Upper Town'. It lay between the Crescent and the triangle of land set aside for a new parish church for Walcot which would have faced down Rivers Street but was not built until the 1870s. Wood legally bound the men who leased plots on Royal Crescent to pave the lane and to ensure that any mews that were built fanned out in an even line and stood no higher than 30 feet. He also insisted that the walls facing the Crescent were faced in ashlar - ie smooth, dressed stone rather than rubble - and were acceptably designed. It is telling that Wood showed such unusual concern for Mews Development.

He did not insist that the men who

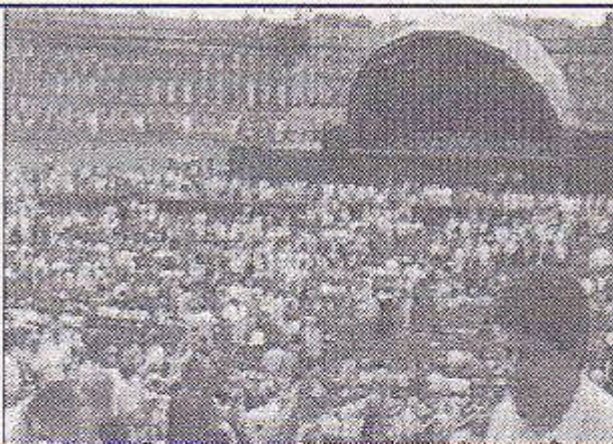
*Continued on page 9. ♣*



*The coach-house at No 13 looks like a Greek temple from the garden view, left, but has a simpler elevation from its Crescent Lane entrance, right.*

## José Carreras: 'The extraordinary be

15,000 people crowded into the specially built arena to hear the renowned Spanish tenor sing favourite arias on a balmy summer's evening in The Royal Crescent.



## Pity about the packaging

Dr Malcolm Hill gives an expert opinion on National Music Day's star event

**T**he audience to sit in the open air Gardens, listening to singers accompanied by a hand-picked orchestra of generous proportions for Bath, the whole enriched by the brief effect of fireworks overhead. . .'

Ever since 1787 when Benjamin Milgrove, the local toyman of 4 Bond Street, produced his pastoral *Acastro*, Bath has irregularly hosted many such outdoor events.

At this year's concert, *Carreras In The Royal Crescent*, the soloists were so superb that all that remained to criticize was the packaging. The demon-

strable integrity of soloists and conductor only heightened the artistic problems that they encountered with the chorus, orchestra and lighting effects.

From the very opening of Rossini's *Silken Ladder* overture, Elio Boncompagni carved the clearest of beats. Yet despite his best efforts, the orchestra was generally unable to coordinate its wind section, offering instead some very suspect intonation, especially from piccolo, first clarinet, first desk of horns, and also the outer strings.

In opera houses, the relationship between the vocal technique of soloists and chorus is heeded: was it then wise

## The Crescent. This incredible frame.'

to dissociate these even more by placing top-ranking soloists alongside an under-rehearsed local choir? The conductor was musically forced to drown the amateurish chorus who did not bear comparison with the soloists' clear diction and near-perfect intonation.

The running order of the programme unfortunately made Carreras appear to be the traditional warm-up-the-audience subsidiary character heralding the entrance of the diva. After Stefania Toczyska's somewhat cautious opening in Donizetti's *La Favorita*, she was soon communicating fluently in a voice not typical of Slavonic vocal production.

Demonstrating perfectly controlled long phrases, especially in the sweetly



*José Carreras listens hard to the sound during afternoon rehearsals.*

mellifluous *Printemps qui commence* by Saint-Saens, Miss Toczyska generally refrained from offering her loudest thirty per cent. Even when she approached this volume, as in the *Caval-*

*leria Rusticana* duo, the amplification was drastically cut within a single beat, killing both line and climactic structure. Her *Carmen* solo, while spirited, lacked eroticism, but with Carreras in the ensuing duo the music's sexual chemistry was ignited. Miss Toczyska



Michael Daw

*Members of the Society enjoying and applauding Carreras's singing.*

was, perhaps, not the perfect foil for Carreras: their vocal qualities are so very different - her voice dramatically robust, his darkly lyrical; hers fiery, his subtly restrained.

Despite some evident degree of strain (at the beginning and end of the concert), Carreras's occasional examples of lighter tones vanished into the whoosh of the amplifier, while his loudest notes nearly caused peaking: his working dynamic range was wider than the engineers had predicted. No faults were to be detected in Carreras's effortless dark tone, even when the highest *tessitura* was over-amplified during the octaves in Mascagni's duo. ■

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The richness of his nasal tones when amplified created a pseudo-Pavarotti effect, losing much of its essential range of emotion.

But who could not like his gentleness, generosity and openness? The *Granada* encore, despite being a lightweight work, was one of the highlights of the evening. Only a master can give such a lesser piece eminence; or was the success conditioned by the suggestive deep purple light which bathed soloist, scaffolding and dome? Fortunately, Cardillo's *Core 'ngrato* was performed without Caruso's sob but the placing of microphones on every desk of the orchestra gave the impression that pre-war 'authenticity' was being attempted, with all the instruments accorded equal dynamic status.

Throughout the evening the sound-system emulated a two-dimensional effect with no depth of sound and, with the exception of Tosti's *Marechiaro*, the system's bass range was consistently set at too puny a level. At the opening of Donizetti's *Una furtiva lagrime* brutal electrical amplification of the bassoon evoked the wrong mood. The system was at its most amusing when projecting the pit-a-pat of Verdi's anvil and when creating the aural illusion that Carreras's dynamic power equalled that of single harp notes. During Part One, loudspeakers noisily hissed even when not driven, after the interval sudden deathly hushes between phrases suggested electronic editing - all one could hear then was the attempted slaying of marauding

mosquitoes, spoilt for choice.

Frequent light-changes in the dome during a single number only led to distraction (but when the conductor was bathed in green the orchestra seemed to take more notice), Carreras' superb communication with the audience was slightly impaired by his chameleon green-to-pink face. A lack of feedback from the audience to the stage hindered the best efforts of all the performers, who were not assisted by insecure stage management during the second half. Needless diversion came with the sky-pointing searchlights, flashing in time with the percussion; their over-use diluted the impact of the brief fireworks displayed in the gathering dusk.

Those unwilling to spend £5 on the official and glossy programme (which included a picture entitled 'Putney (sic) Bridge and River Avon' and named members of the chorus but not of the orchestra) had probably been subjected to the media's hype that 'nine encores will be performed'. The qualified applause at the end of Part Two (after the fifth - and last - encore) certainly suggested that much more was still expected.

In general, the whole event was unfair to the soloists and their conductor, Boncompagni. The final impression was of the inadequate lighting at the western exit which caused problems with protruding tree-roots and curbsteps. ○

*Dr Malcolm Hill is Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music.*

☛ *Continued from page 5.*

leased the thirty plots built mews - that depended on the individual circumstances of the builder or the occupier who bought the completed house from him. In London, a coach was an essential part of a worthy family's equipage but this etiquette did not apply in Bath where visitors relied on chairs to travel about the town. Hence some of the residents of the Royal Crescent did not need to spend the money on a mews and left the plots empty. Unfortunately, many of these gaps on Crescent Lane have been filled in with modern structures that John Wood would probably not have greatly appreciated.

Another difference between London and Bath was the status of the town gardens. In the cramped, smoky capital these were small and generally paved but in the more spacious spa they were larger and more prestigious, stocked with novel plants brought from abroad and embellished with trellises and garden seats - as can be seen in the restored town garden at 4 The Circus. These were places to assemble and converse or to rest from the exhausting pursuit of leisure and relaxation.

A feature of the finest gardens was often a decorative screen wall backing onto the coach house. These concealed the clutter and clatter and acted as an eye-catching architectural feature and a theatrical backdrop to the garden scene. The contrast between these and the simple, utilitarian elevations facing the road underlines Bath's character as a place of show. Very few of them sur-

vive in London and the sequence on Royal Crescent is by far the finest in Bath and probably in Britain.

The variety of designs is another example of the way individual delight can be found behind uniform Palladian facades. A choice few of these eye-catching 'follies' are the Gothic screen at No 18, the splendid pavilion in the style of Thomas Baldwin at No 19 and the classical temple at No 13.

This last example is happily being restored by the Royal Crescent Hotel. The builder of the house was Richard Parker, a carpenter, and he might well have been given the design for the screen wall by John Wood - it is very much in his style.

There may well have been a garden seat in the portico for visitors to rest and look back down the long garden. Behind the sham facade of the pavilion lay the less delightful stables and rooms to service the house and a courtyard leading to the wooden gates.

The yard was paved with 'pennant' setts, a sandstone brought by barge from Bristol and hard enough to stand up to wheels and hooves though at the cost of an almighty clatter. One wing is roofed in Cotswold stone slates, a local material. These rugged slates are a very rare survival in Bath: they once covered most of the city - including the rear slopes of Royal Crescent houses - but have nearly all been replaced by smoother Cornish and Welsh slate.

No 13 is just one of a dozen mews on Crescent Lane that reward a closer look. ☺



## The Society's Constitution

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. Subscriptions 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 distri-

bution of the Newsletter and shall be set by the Committee as necessary, subject to confirmation of 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, to 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; the Officers of the Society may hold office, subject to re-election, for a period of five years after which they may not stand for re-election until after the next Annual Meeting. Nominees for Officers and Committee Members must be

members of the 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 or 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 at general meetings a chairman shall be elected to preside, and he shall have a 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, two of such members to stand down annually and not to be eligible for re-election for a further year. In the first instance the retiring members to be those with the longest service; thereafter retirement to be in rotation. 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.

*14th July 1992*

## Members of The Royal Crescent Society

The following is a list of financial members as at June 30th, 1992. There are now 102 ordinary members, 1 co-opted member, 1 corporate member and 4 friends. The potential is probably 115 registered residents. Could you please bring any errors or omissions to the attention of the Remembrancer, Dr. L.R. Fisher, No. 29 Royal Crescent (Phone: 424341).

Mr. G. Andrews 23	Mr. M. MacConnell 12
Dr. M. Baly 19	Mr. A. McCormish 17
Air Chief Marshal Sir John and Lady Barraclough 28	Miss S. McCullagh 27
Mrs. C.M. Beadman 29	Mr. J.F. Meddins 29
Mr. R. Belsey 29	Mr. I. Mercer 17
Mr. & Mrs. R. Berg 13	Mrs. J.E. Mitchell-Dunmore 26
Mr. & Mrs. R. Bourdon-Smith 19 RC Lane	Dr. L. Myers 27
Mr. & Mrs. A. Brownsword 6/7	Mr. & Mrs. I. Nesbitt 3
Mr. & Mrs. D. Cameron 23	Mr. & Mrs. T.H. Osborne 27
Mr. & Mrs. P. Dachowski 23	Mr. & Mrs. W.M. Oswald 28
Mr. B. Davies 19	Cdr. & Mrs. J. Parker 10
Mr. M. Daw 10	Mrs. N.J. Payne 20
Miss G. Eschle 29	Mr. & Mrs. J. Pickett 18
Dr. & Mrs. L. Fisher 29	Mr. & Mrs. W. Rawlins 11
Mr. & Mrs. T. Foster 12	Mr. & Mrs. R.B. Richards 4
Mr. & Mrs. R.A.C. Forrester 25	Miss J. Robbins 30
Mrs. A.R.B. Francis 5	Mr. & Mrs. W.G. Rodger 14
Mrs. E. Garden 5	Royal Crescent Hotel (Corporate Member)
Mr. & Mrs. W. Gealy 23	Dr. & Mrs. D. Sandilands 18
Mr. J. Glen-Waters 20	Mrs. L.A.M. Shaw 17
Mr. J. Glennie 30	Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Stevens 29
Mr. A.H. Gray 24	Mr. & Mrs. J.R. Stevens 30
Mrs. J. Hardisty 16	Mrs. P.M. Stone 17
Miss C. Hargreaves 14	Miss M. Teal 20
Mr. & Mrs. P. Hall 27	Mr. & Mrs. J. Thornton 3
Mr. M. Hough 5	Cdr. & Mrs. R. Titchen 10
Mr. A.H. Hughes 23	Mrs. E. Turner 19
Mrs. L. Hudson-Jessop 30	Mrs. A. Trechmann 5
Mr. & Mrs. P. Hutchinson 23	Mr. & Mrs. S.M.J. van Baale 23
Miss R.M. Kelloway 2	Mr. J. Vickery 20
Dr. & Mrs. G. Kersley 20	Mrs. E. Vining 8
Mr. D. Kirk 10	Mr. & Mrs. J.G.H. Wadsworth 3
Mr. & Mrs. C. Lang 19	Mrs. B.W. Walker 10
Miss E. Langmaid 27	Maj. Gen. C. West 14
	Mr. & Mrs. A.D. Whiting 18
	Mr. & Mrs. T.F. Wilks 20
	Mr. & Mrs. I. Woodhouse 14
	Mr. C. Woodward 1
	Dr. P. Woodward (Co-opted Committee Member) 1
	Lt. Col. & Mrs. J. Woollam 24
	Friends Of The Royal Crescent Society
	Mr. D.W.C. Smith
	Canon & Mrs. E. Cotter
	Mr. & Mrs. A. Clifford-Gibbs

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(!)

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Removers G.F.F.

Top Flat

FLATZ  
FORSTER/FORESTER  
+HWSR.....

Members do not pay Lawn Fund  
wh Funds subscribers are members

