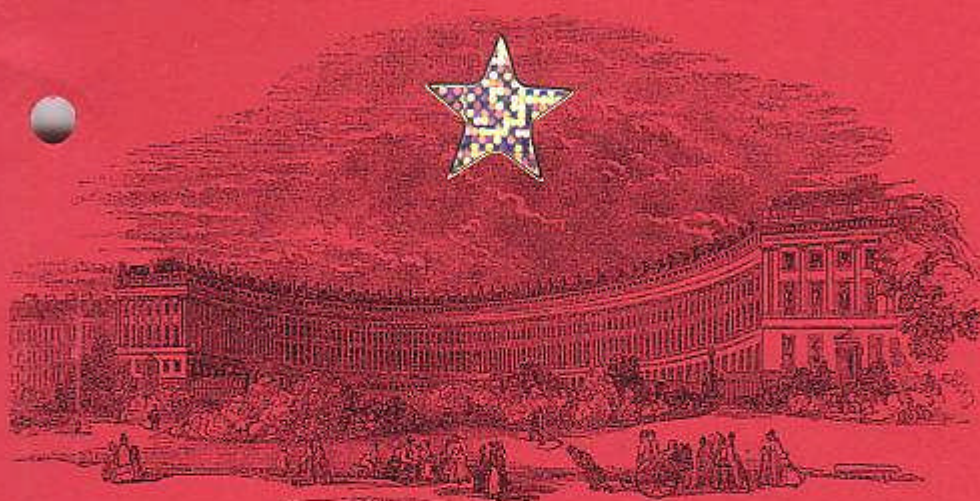


THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY  
**NEWSLETTER**

ISSUE NUMBER 46

WINTER 2001



IN THIS ISSUE:

*LADY BARRACLOUGH - AN OBITUARY*

*CHAIRMAN'S NOTES ● PICKWICK IN BATH  
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ● CHRISTMAS CEREMONIES  
CHRISTMAS PUDDING RECIPE ● TRAMS FOR BATH  
● CHRISTMASSES PAST IN BATH ●  
FESTIVE DINNER INVITATION FOR 6TH JANUARY 2002  
● RESIDENTS' NEWS AND VIEWS ●*

The two issues which are currently the main concern of the Society are the restoration of the Railings and Ha-ha, made possible by the promised Heritage Lottery Fund grant, and the B.&N.E.S. proposal to enact a new byelaw to govern events in Royal Victoria Park. Both of these matters are currently on hold.

It appears that B.&N.E.S. is in no hurry to process the proposed so-called 'model' byelaw, which carries exemption from noise control for Council-approved events. When the time comes for objection to this exemption we shall do so, as will our neighbouring residents' associations for the Circus Area and Marlborough Lane/ Buildings. The Council had agreed with us that the exemption for religious services, even if not having Council approval, should be removed from the byelaw. A recent newspaper story which reported that census returns were including Jedi Knights as a religion (!) reminded us why we had argued for this alteration.

The Heritage Lottery Fund had agreed, as part of the much larger grant to improve the Park, to fund three-quarters of the cost of restoration, leaving us to raise the remaining quarter - an ambitious but achievable target. As reported in the last newsletter, they have had second thoughts on this. With the support of B.&N.E.S. and English Heritage, we are busy trying to persuade them to have third thoughts, but a letter to H.L.F. has not yet elicited a reply other than a postcard acknowledgement. This letter pointed out that the project could not proceed without the grant, and that consequently the entire Royal Victoria Park grant was in jeopardy because of the terms laid down by H.L.F. at the time of the contract.

Meanwhile outside fund-raising is suspended until the picture is clearer, and it is felt that this will be more effective once work is seen to start. But we still need your support for internal fund-raising events, so bring plenty of cash with you to the Festive Dinner for the raffle - details on page 14.

The Federation of Bath Residents' Associations has suggested that we should write to B.&N.E.S. with our views on the Milsom Street changes and the bus gate. Would you please let me have any comments and views which could be passed on to the Council. I look forward to hearing from you.

No. 22 Royal Crescent, Bath BA1 2LT. Telephone (01225) 310180.

## Lady (Maureen) Barraclough *thoughts of a friend*



On September 25th 2001 we lost Maureen, Lady Barraclough to an illness long and bravely borne. She was the dear wife of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough, President of our Society.

Just for a moment join me and close your eyes and imagine, as I do, that tiny, elegant figure moving along the walk of the Royal Crescent: Lady (Maureen) Barraclough. Then, stretch your imagination and see that same tiny figure roaring up to you in a cloud of dust astride a huge motorcycle, the same Maureen as a despatch rider, a wartime member of the distinguished Women's Voluntary Yeomanry. She was subsequently promoted to the difficult and responsible position of cypher officer in Cairo. This was a lady of many parts.

Maureen was born in 1913 in Ireland, one of nine children of a large and distinguished family with a connection to Saint Oliver Plunkett, one of Ireland's greatest martyrs. As a small girl she developed, as was expected in such a family, an early interest in horses, an interest that developed into a lifetime love affair. Her family was justly proud of its Saint Oliver Plunkett relationship, and Maureen remained a loyal and devout Catholic throughout her long and very busy life.

There were so many facets to Maureen's life, both her personal characteristics and accomplishments, that it is difficult to enumerate them all: country-woman, horsewoman, military despatch rider, cypher expert, journalist, 'mature (art) student' (in her sixties, no less), art specialist, linguist, author (in her eighties). And there are others, even more important: full-time

Service wife, mother, and life-partner to a husband who rose to the very peak of his profession to become an Air Chief Marshal and Vice Chief of Defence Staff for the nation's entire armed services.

There can be few professions in which the wife of a senior leader plays such a key rôle as does the spouse of an officer in the Services. It is an extremely demanding rôle, where one is 'on duty' twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Maureen lived that rôle with enormous distinction. She was, of course, Sir John's official hostess, but, even more importantly, she was his trusted, ever-discreet aide and confidante, as well as his indispensable and invaluable link to his subordinate officers and men, and, even more importantly, to their families.

Life in the Services can be satisfying and glamorous, but at times difficult, frustrating, taxing. There are those never-ending station transfers, house moves, school changes, old friendships to rekindle and cherish, new associations to activate and develop, new and ever-changing climes, inadequate support and lack of understanding from government, challenging professional problems and situations, and politics. And the ever-present and all-important need to look after and care for subordinates and their families, all of whom have their own problems, for the solutions to which they look up to their commander and his wife. The 'Colonel's Lady', as Kipling put it, becomes their own Family Officer. Maureen took every posting, every event, every hurdle with patience, aplomb, enthusiasm, great good cheer, fortitude, and a never-failing sense of humour.

Maureen was a rare listener, one who never learned to gossip. One could tell her something or ask for help in confidence with full knowledge that it would never go any further. But she never forgot. She never failed later to inquire, quietly and solicitously, "How is so-and-so? I do hope that things are now better. Let me know if I can help." That alone made her a nest of friends and admirers.

As she and Sir John over time rose to the top of the defence establishment, Maureen took on increasingly important and difficult tasks. For example, when John became Commandant of the prestigious Royal College of Defence Studies (R.C.D.S.) in London's Belgravia, she became diplomat and

unofficial chief of protocol at the College. There she worked with successive classes of rigorously selected senior officers of all the Services, diplomats, and high-ranking officers from foreign nations as they honed their skills in both national and world-wide strategy and diplomacy. They were the very cream of personnel from the Navy, Army, R.A.F. and foreign services, and a host of allied nations, all selected for the R.C.D.S. course with an eye to their becoming top-rankers. Never once did Maureen falter in her 'duties' as diplomat, counsellor, hostess, linguist and common-sense adviser. Here her natural breeding, her on-the-job training, her born intelligence, her social graces and her elegant *mien* were all put into action for the benefit of her country. And when Sir John went on to become Vice Chief of Defence Staff she famously carried on this work at the very top level.

One of Maureen's greatest feats waited to bear fruit when she was in her eighties, itself a remarkable achievement. This was the publication of her splendid work *Sovereigns and Soldiers on Horseback*, subtitled, *Bronze Equestrian Monuments from Ancient Rome to Our Times*. In it the author drew upon her knowledge about three subjects on which she was an expert: art, horses, and heroes. She knew her art, in this particular field, accurate horse sculpture; she knew her horses, here her great military steeds; and she knew her heroes, the last easily understandable, when one remembers that she spent her life among them. This sort of book, whilst appealing to the reader at large, really is a work of artistic and intellectual interest and importance; it may never top the weekly best-seller list of popular books, may never inspire a Hollywood extravaganza, but it will ever serve as a valuable and important research source for artists and art and military historians.

If I may so intrude, pray let me tell a little personal story about Maureen. One day, not many years ago, my wife commented, "I was just talking to Maureen out in the street. You know, she's absolutely remarkable. Here she was, returning home from the market laden with carrier bags, yet she was more beautifully turned out than most women would be to go to a dinner party or the theatre!"

So, our elegant and stately old Crescent Village has lost one of its most elegant, most talented, most accomplished, and loveliest ladies. Maureen will be painfully missed by all of us here. We all share her daughter Moy's and husband John's pride in her and we share in their great sorrow at her all-too-early departure.

### Ten, Fifteen Years Ago from past Newsletters

**Fifteen** years ago the Traffic Committee of the Royal Crescent Society was beginning its campaign to rid the Crescent of coaches and buses. A special issue of the *Newsletter* appeared on 15th January 1986. Lord Mancroft tabled a question in the House of Lords, residents were encouraged to write to the Rt. Hon. Chris Patten, the local M.P., and to Bath City Council, then part of Avon.

The objections to the coaches ran as follows:

**pollution** - they ruin the view from the lawn where residents like to relax  
**privacy** - double-decker coaches mean that passengers can look straight into the houses

**damage** - coaches cause vibration and wear.

A survey showed that at its worst there were twenty-five buses and coaches an hour using the Crescent. The *Newsletter* proper appeared in February 1986 and detailed the activities of the Traffic Committee. Avon County Council and Bath City Council were to produce a report on the problem. This was described as the first positive move in five years.

**Ten** years ago a planned article about the bombing of Bath in 1942 was postponed because of the conflict in the Gulf. The Chairman, Sir John Barraclough, said that we had had more than our fill of war and violence, so the article would appear at a later date. Sir John mentioned in his Chairman's Report that the coaches issue persisted and that it was part of a national problem caused by the 1985 Deregulation Act. Sir John also referred to the need for extensive works on the railings of the Upper Lawn. The stepping of the retaining wall into which the railings are set was suggested to have been caused by the vibration of the heavy traffic, but this did not accord with the opinion of the Avon County Engineer.

A letter from the Director of Property and Engineering Services of Bath City Council stressed that residents should be vigilant when utility operatives are working in the Crescent - this would ensure that the finish of the work would be satisfactory.

A letter from the Rt. Hon. Chris Patten M.P. was published, sympathising with residents' 'exceptionally unpleasant problem' in the form of coach tra-

That Bath is being strangled by the internal combustion engine is clear to anyone who spends time in the city. Apart from the unpleasant effects of diesel exhaust expelled at road junctions, e.g. at the top of Broad Street, there are real concerns about the damage to stone caused by Diesel PM10 emissions, which penetrate the beneath the surface of our buildings and cause them to peel (see Newsletter Issue No.43, Winter 2000). Road traffic produces more pollution than all industry and power stations combined.

The electricity which drives a tram system comes from power stations whose pollution is away from centres of population. Compare this with car and bus pollution that is combusted and emitted at 'pram' level. The PM10s which we all breathe at busy junctions evade the body's defences and enter the lungs. Road traffic produces several other carcinogenic pollutants. There are 200 hundred power stations but 30 million vehicles. It is easier to control the power stations than to regulate car use. After cutting down British Railways' lines in the early 1960's, Dr. Beeching talked about road traffic, saying that if ownership ever became excessive, car use would have to be restricted by law. The nearest we have had to any such intervention has been the narrowing of certain streets and roads to make driving less easy.

The bus is the cheapest system of public transport available for a city such as Bath. However the flexibility of service is also a weakness, in that the bus has to fit in with other traffic, except where there are special lanes. Buses have a poor image and are justifiably viewed as unreliable in areas where heavy traffic may hinder adherence to the timetable. Trams are expensive to install because of the dedicated track, wires and rolling stock, but this is a strength where congestion is the problem, as trams have clear priority.

Bath's old electric tram service replaced an earlier horse-drawn system and ran from 1904 until 1939. Using a combination of single- and double-decked cars, the destinations served were Weston, Newton St. Loe, Bathford, Combe Down, Twerton and Oldfield Park. The depôt and power station were in Walcot Street, a site currently being redeveloped for residential and retail use.

The current campaign to reintroduce trams is well-thought-out. The routes are arranged to avoid the major Georgian streets. A circle is envisaged running from the railway station via the possibly rebuilt Southgate Centre,

coach park, Kingsmead Square, Theatre Royal, Union Street, Terrace Walk (near the Empire) and back to the station. Lines would join this circle from ten suburban starting points. The nearest route to the Royal Crescent would be that from Lansdown Park and Ride following the road down into town. No routes are currently envisaged along Julian Road or on the Upper Bristol Road east of Windsor Bridge Road. The proposed system is more extensive than the old twentieth-century one, reaching the University and other areas built since 1939. As to the appearance of the proposed trams, the system is called LR55 and is intended to have minimal impact on Bath's streets. The weight of the cars being under 80 tons, the load is spread evenly enough so that sewers and water, gas and electricity services do not have to be diverted. The issue of vaults under the streets would have to be fully investigated along the routes finally authorised. The need for overhead wires and certain unavoidable poles is plainly a concern in a city such as Bath. The LR55 system is apparently much lighter and less intrusive than anything seen in old photographs of British cities, where the rolling stock was once described as 'an Edwardian conservatory clanking around on a motorised coal truck'. Likewise it need not resemble Continental super-trams.

No exact model of a Bath tram of the twenty-first century has yet been produced, as the proposers naturally do not want to be tied to the appearance of one make of vehicle at this stage. When considering the visual impact of a tram system, we need to weigh it with all the parked cars in the streets: they are much more of a problem in Bath than all the paraphernalia of a tram system.

Bath and North East Somerset Council has commissioned a £68,000 study to give it an overview of the sort of transport needs of the area for the next twenty years. The Council has specified that trams must be considered. The Royal United Hospital and the University of Bath have expressed their strong support for a tram network and it appears that a growing number of councillors is coming around to supporting the idea; with each Council report the feeling is growing that this could be made to work. If trams don't work for Bath, what will?

Web site [www.bathtram.demon.co.uk](http://www.bathtram.demon.co.uk)

Ring (01225) 335974 for details of 'Trams for Bath'

*Stephen Conlin, based on the above website*



## Environmental Issues

From *Thumbprint*, the newsletter of **envolve**  
Green Park Station, Bath BA1 1JB. [www.envolveco.uk](http://www.envolveco.uk)  
Telephone 787910  
email: [office@envolveco.uk](mailto:office@envolveco.uk)

### **Bus Gates**

No-one living in the Bath area will be unaware of the debate over the city centre bus gates, and the restriction of movement across the city of private motor vehicles. There are pros and cons to the argument: '*pedestrian priority for shoppers*' and '*too many trips made by car*' are countered by '*cars are necessary*', '*don't damage the local economy*', and '*alternative forms of transport aren't up to the job*'.

Alongside public consultation, a Monitoring Group set up by the Council, is looking at sixteen different indicators to assess their impact - including congestion, bus times, pedestrians, air quality and retail turnover. However, results from the first quarter have proved inconclusive. The Council was already measuring Bath air quality before the *City Initiative on Transport and the Environment - CITE* - as it is obliged to draw up a local strategy. This requires particular gases to be measured across the area, and to be below certain levels by 2003. Public consultation indicates that most of central Bath should be included in this management area. If you would like to know more, **envolve** has a consultation pack you can read.

Comments may be left at **envolve** or made direct to the Council. For the bus gates issue, contact the *CITE* team, for air quality contact Environmental Health, both at Trimbridge House, Trim Street, Bath BA1 2DP.

### **Real Bath Breakfast**

The *Hand in Hand* award was launched by the South West of England Regional Development Agency in June in Weston-super-Mare. **envolve's** *Real Bath Breakfast* initiative was chosen as a showcase example of how business, the environment and the local economy can all gain by encouraging local purchasing.

The *Real Bath Breakfast* was launched last year and is awarded to local tourist businesses which source ingredients from local producers.

Kathy James, Sustainable Tourism Officer at **envolve**, compared the number of miles the *Real Bath Breakfast* ingredients could travel: 95 against 2050 for ingredients off the supermarket shelves. One local business, serving around 20,000 breakfasts, is now investing over £22,000 within the local economy.

The food is fresher, usually with fewer chemicals, and with less packaging going to landfill sites. In addition, since their involvement with the scheme, businesses have reported return visits and personal recommendations, lower energy bills, and ensuing cost savings through reduction in waste.

### *Old Computers*

Every year thousands of businesses change their computer equipment, disposing of perfectly good but now obsolete hardware. In response to increasing pressure to recycle and in order to reduce pressure on landfill, a pilot scheme is being developed by a local recycling company and **envolve**, to see how many computers are offered for recycling, and what the cost may be. The company will reuse the equipment where possible, recycling parts in to other machines, and will only dispose of parts that cannot be reused elsewhere. This scheme is available only to businesses and is not suitable for personal computers. Please telephone the Business Team (01225) 787922.

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BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

## ×CONTAMINATED LAND×

### Information request

Do you know of any land in the Bath and North East Somerset area that may be contaminated and threatening the following:

HUMANS - WATER - ANIMALS - PLANTS - ARCHAEOLOGY - BUILDINGS ?

If you have any information, please contact the Council's Contaminated Land Officer, Rebecca Twigg, at Environmental and Consumer Services, 9 - 10 Bath Street, Bath BA1 1SN. Telephone (01225) 477550. Fax (01225) 477596. Email [rebecca\\_twigg@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:rebecca_twigg@bathnes.gov.uk)

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## Environmental notes from the Council

### Swap It

[www.swapitbathnes.org](http://www.swapitbathnes.org)

There's no such thing as junk - only things that haven't found the right person! Do you have things lurking in your attic, or hiding in the basement? Find them a new home, somewhere to be useful, and perhaps swap them for something that you may find useful too.

*Swap It* is the new website for the people of B.&N.E.S., designed for those of you who don't want just to throw things away. The idea is that you can give away items, swap them or exchange them for help or a job that you need doing. Have a look at the website for more details of how it works. It's free to use.

### House in Order

No.3 Great Bedford Street, Bath, is a property which attracts great interest because it has been converted with consideration for the environment. The house is owned by Bath-based Mr. Willats' Charity. John Young, B.A.&E.S. Home Energy Conservation Officer said, 'It is very difficult to meet the Government's targets for energy efficiency in an area such as Bath where about a fifth of the housing was built before 1825 and there are so many listed buildings. This project demonstrates that you can save energy and cut your fuel bills even when your home is an historic building'.

The flats feature energy-saving techniques and materials that can be used in old and historic buildings without spoiling their character. These include:

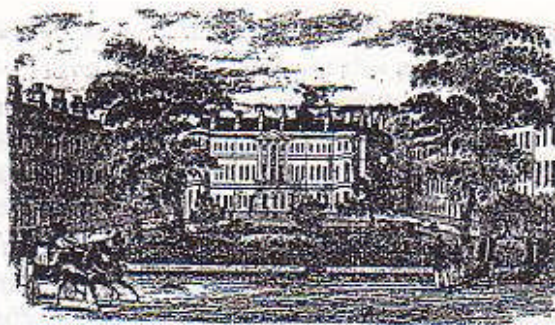
- insulation beneath stone flags and in wooden floors
- sash windows with shutters and concealed draught-proofing
- low-energy lighting controlled by movement and light sensors
- up-to-date boilers controlled by electronic programmers
- sunpipes to bring daylight into the top floor

The house has already been named as runner-up for environmental best practice in the *Green Apple Awards* organised by the Green Organisation with the support from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the *Municipal Journal*. No.3 Great Bedford Street is one of forty buildings throughout the world short-listed by the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors for the 'Building of the Year Award' 2001. It is also on a short-list of ten in the Building Efficiency category.

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## St. James's Square: *the building of Bath*

The development of St. James's Square began in March 1790. Sir Peter Rivers-Gay, Lord of the Manor of Walcot, who also owned other parts of the city with streets name after him, granted to Richard Hewlett and James Broom a ninety-nine years' building lease of some land to the north of the Royal Crescent.



This land consisted of orchards and gardens on a sloping site, which at the time were tenanted by various residents of the Crescent, among them Christopher Anstey. He was the author of the *New Bath Guide* and the plaque on Number Five Royal Crescent says that he lived there. Anstey's annoyance at being given notice to quit was given expression thus:

'Ye men of Bath, who stately mansions rear,  
To wait for tenants from the De'il knows where,  
Would you pursue a plan that cannot fail,  
Erect a Madhouse, and enlarge your Jail?'

To which came the riposte:

'Whilst crowds arrive, fast as our streets increase,  
And our Jail only proves an empty space,  
Whilst health and care here court the grave and gay,  
Madmen and fools alone will keep away.'

The lease was granted to Hewlett and Broom on condition that they agreed to lay out a sum of at £10,000 'in erecting buildings and finishing stone messuages', and they engaged John Palmer, architect of Lansdown Crescent and the interior of the Pump Room, to design the layout and elevations for a large residential square with four tributary streets. Building was begun as soon as the site could be cleared and most of the houses had been finished by 1794. By this date James Broom owned property in Marlborough Buildings, for at least part of which he was sub-architect.

Article reproduced from the Newsletter of the Marlborough Lane and Buildings Association, by kind permission of its Treasurer Adam Brunton.

Dickens, as is well known, stayed in No.35 St.James's Square from 1835. He must have absorbed much of the local colour and history, and put these to good use in the passages of the *Pickwick Papers* set in Bath.

None of Pickwick's companions had ever been to Bath. On the morning after their arrival, the Master of Ceremonies comes to meet them, a very dandified and ludicrous figure to whom Dickens gives the name Angelo Cyrus Bantam, and who appears to follow in the steps of Beau Nash.

Whilst walking about Pickwick decides that:

'Park Street was very much like the perpendicular streets a man sees in a dream, which he cannot get up for the life of him...'

Their first day ends with a ball in the Assembly Rooms, where Dickens sets the social scene, drawing caricatures of the various types to be found in Bath. The Master of Ceremonies points out:

'The élite of Ba-ath. Mr.Pickwick, do you see the lady in the gauze turban?'  
'The fat old lady?' inquired Mr.Pickwick, innocently.  
'Hush, my dear sir - nobody's fat or old in Ba-ath. That's the Dowager Lady Snuphanuph.'

Lady Snuphanuph was modelled on the Countess of Belmore (1755-1841). Lady Belmore lived in No. 17, The Royal Crescent for thirty years, and was indeed an important figure in the social life of Bath, presiding over balls held in the Assembly Rooms.

Pickwick goes on to play a bad hand at cards and his partner, Miss Bolo,

'...rose from the table considerably agitated, and went straight home, in a flood of tears, and a sedan-chair.'

Pickwick and his friends plan to stay at least two months in Bath and take the upper portion of a house in the Royal Crescent. This provides the setting for a farcical scene when at 3am on a stormy night the bearers of a lady passenger in a sedan-chair cannot rouse the staff. She and her husband have 'sub-let' rooms from Mr.Pickwick. The only resident who comes to the rescue ends up marooned on the doorstep in his nightshirt when the front

door blows shut behind him. Seeing several ladies approaching along the Crescent, he desperately tries to enter the sedan-chair. At this point the lady's husband sees what he takes to be the flight of his wife with a gentleman in night attire. The husband and the watchman then pursue the man twice round the Crescent. He eventually runs back into the house and barricades himself in his room, resolved to escape in the morning.

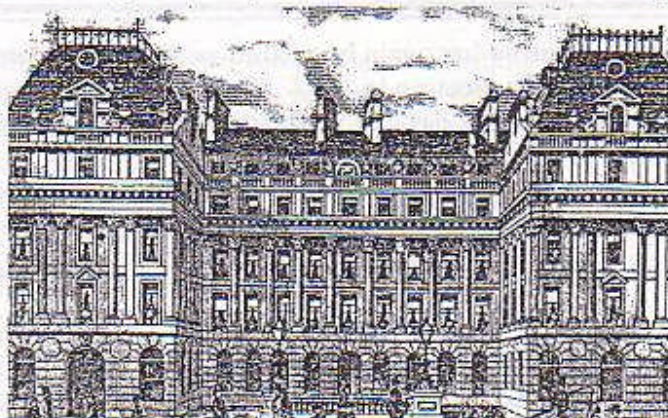
'The ill-starred gentleman who had been the unfortunate cause of the unusual noise and disturbance which alarmed the inhabitants of the Royal Crescent ...left the roof beneath which his friends still slumbered, bound he knew not whither.'

The rest of the stay 'passed over without occurrence of anything material.' Dickens' treatment of Bath is very much of the period. As Bath failed to revive its fortunes in the nineteenth century, it was side-lined into a dull and respectable shadow of its eighteenth-century self, relieved by the occasional eccentric such as William Beckford. Dickens' attitude to Bath had certainly taken a turn for the worse when he wrote in a letter of 1869,

'The place looks to me like a cemetery, which the dead have succeeded in rising and taking. Having built streets of their old gravestones, they wander about, scantily trying to 'look alive'. A dead failure!'

The reign of Queen Victoria might have seen a revival in its fortunes; if the Queen had visited Bath, or if the Prince Consort had organised some great event here, who knows what might have been achieved for the city? Against this, Victorian economic success could have led to much rebuilding, perhaps even in the style of the Empire Hotel, and one such structure is surely more than enough.

*The Grand Pump Room Hotel of 1869. Such hotels were part of an attempt to establish a Continental-style spa resort. It was demolished in 1959.*



The Chairman and the Committee  
of the Royal Crescent Society  
look forward to meeting you at the Society's

## ✦ FESTIVE DINNER ✦

on Sunday 6th January 2002  
+Pre-dinner drinks at 7.30+

The Royal Crescent Hotel

Black Tie *optional* £27.50 per person

Raffle - proceeds to the Railing and Ha-ha Restoration Appeal  
Among the prizes in the raffle are:

■  
a week's accommodation in Chamonix

■  
a day for two at Bath races

Please come forward with prizes for the raffle by getting in touch with:

Mrs. M. Kersley, No.20 Royal Crescent, telephone 424247,

or Mrs. M. Little, No.22 Royal Crescent, telephone 310180.

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Bath Racecourse has again been kind enough to donate a day for two at the races for any meeting in 2002. Even if you don't win this, you may like to consider having a day out at Lansdown during next Flat racing season. Meetings in 2002 are on the following dates:-

April 30, May 7, 20, 31 (evening), June 16, 26 (evening), July 8, 14, 25,  
August 6, 18, 23 (evening), September 9, 30, October 1, 16.

Your Social Committee is considering organising a day in a private box in the summer. So that we can gauge support, please let us know if you think you may be interested, and whether you would prefer an evening or afternoon meeting.

## Christmas Ceremonies *Ricki Peacock*

There were always midwinter ceremonies, long before the birth of Christ. Peoples of the ancient world, especially in northern Europe, depended on the changing seasons, and in the cold, barren winter feared that the sun would never return. To encourage the sun to come back they lit bonfires and candles, and at the first signs of spring returning and the days growing longer they made merry with feasting.

In ancient Rome, Saturnalia lasted seven days and people decorated the houses with greenery and lit candles. Social life was turned upside down, the rich fed the poor and gave them presents, even wearing the slaves' caps - the origin of paper hats? - and the poor people ruled. Men dressed as women or animals, and women as men, a custom we continue in pantomime.

The early Christians chose the same time of year for their celebrations of the birth of Christ, which took the form of solemn masses. Gradually the public incorporated the old customs and the Church gave religious significance to the green decorations, the Yule log and the candles.

Although mainly seen in the country, the Yule log survived many centuries. It was lit with a brand left from the previous year's log, a symbol of the undying sun that would return in the spring. The Christians said it must be ash, the wood used for the fire when the baby Jesus was first washed and dressed. The shepherds made the fire with ash because it is the only wood which burns green without spluttering.

### *Feasting*

In the Middle Ages and Tudor times the Christmas feast became a happy holiday, celebrated in wealthy households with great splendour. Animals, which had to be killed anyway as there was not enough fodder in winter,





were salted, pickled or cured in smoke. Fruits picked in autumn were dried to be stored. Great pies were made with forcemeat layered with pieces of game birds and poultry, covered with hard-boiled egg yolks, dried fruit and spices. Later the meat was omitted and these became mince pies. Swans and peacocks were roasted and presented decked with their feathers 'endored' - painted with saffron in melted butter to give them a golden look.

A strong ale punch flavoured with nutmeg, honey and ginger was served, with pieces of toasted bread floating on top. The host would offer the bowl, saying, 'Waes hael' - 'Be well', and the guests would reply, 'Drink hael' - 'Drink and be well', the first to drink taking out a piece of toast and wishing the company good health.



The wassail bowl

Kings and nobles gave lavish gifts to their knights and staff, and they in turn gave presents to their tenants. Villagers enjoyed a rare holiday - the weather often made it impossible to work in the fields at that time! - and received gifts of ale, firewood or clothing. Their fare would have been simpler, gathered from their fields and the hedgerow, but if a pig had been killed in the autumn, there might be a smoked ham.

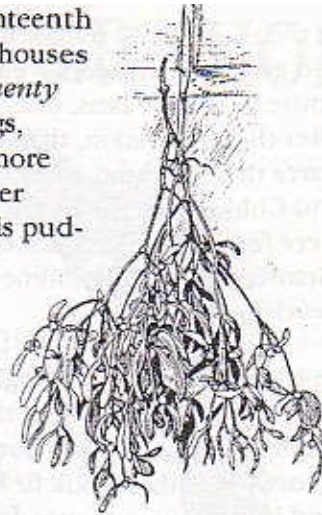
Turkeys were introduced into Britain about 1549, brought from the Americas. Before that, goose was probably the most popular bird. Turkeys were raised in Norfolk and walked to market, even in London, their feet protected by sacking boots or tar. The boar's head was popular, traditionally served with an apple in its mouth.



All this came to an end when the Puritans took power in the seventeenth

century. Parliament banned all festivities in 1644 and soldiers were posted to ensure it was an ordinary working day. No evergreen decorations were allowed and the mince pie was banned. In 1660 King Charles II was crowned and the laws revoked, but it took a long time for the festive season to regain its previous popularity.

Pepys records he ate alone at Christmas. In the eighteenth century Christmas was not important, but in some houses a more elaborate meal was served on the day. *Fruменты* was made of boiled wheat beaten up with milk, eggs, dried fruit and spices. Over the years this became more solid and less like porridge, with fresh plums or later prunes. King George I had a favourite recipe for this pudding, which included suet, breadcrumbs and sugar.



### *Christmas symbols*

Decorations remained much the same for centuries. Evergreens provided welcome colour and plants such as holly, with its red berries, were even more cheerful. It was said to bring luck and prosperity, and Christians connected it to the Crown of Thorns. A legend tells how the original white berries were stained red by Christ's blood. Ivy was originally used because it was the badge of Bacchus, the god of feasting and drinking. Because of this, early Christians would not use it. Mistletoe, held sacred by the Druids, was also banned by the Church. The laurel or bay was much used and rosemary often bore winter flowers. One legend says that Mary dried the infant's clothes over a rosemary bush as they fled to Egypt and they became scented; another says that she dried her own cloak and the dye coloured the blue flowers. The Glastonbury thorn is said to have sprung from the walking staff of Joseph of Arimathea, and it flowers at Christmastide. Cuttings of this were planted in other sites and sprigs of the flowers were gathered.



*An Edwardian evocation of a Tudor Christmas*

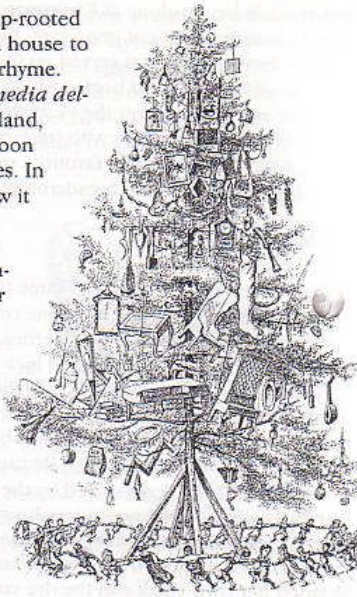
### *Traditions and decorations*

Early morris dancing and mummers' plays were banned by the Puritans, who deplored the gaudy costumes, loud music and often coarse behaviour.

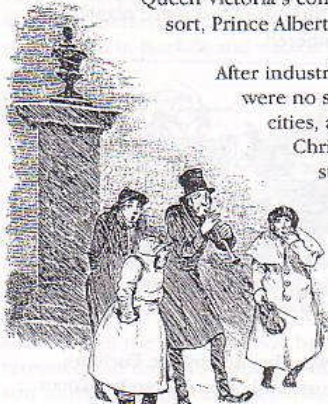
In the country old traditions were deep-rooted and groups of villagers would go from house to house to collect alms, often singing a rhyme. After the Restoration, the Italian *commedia dell'arte* theatre found a foothold in England, and Columbine, Harlequin and Pantaloon were featured in knock-about comedies. In Victorian times pantomime as we know it developed.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some people hung the tips of fir branches, often upside down, over doorways. Others took fir branches and bound them to wooden pyramids which had shelves holding fruit, nuts and sweets. Queen Charlotte, consort of King George I, had a yew tree decorated with sweets, fruits and toys, with wax candles. This custom was not generally practised until a newspaper published a picture of the Christmas tree at Windsor, introduced by

Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert.

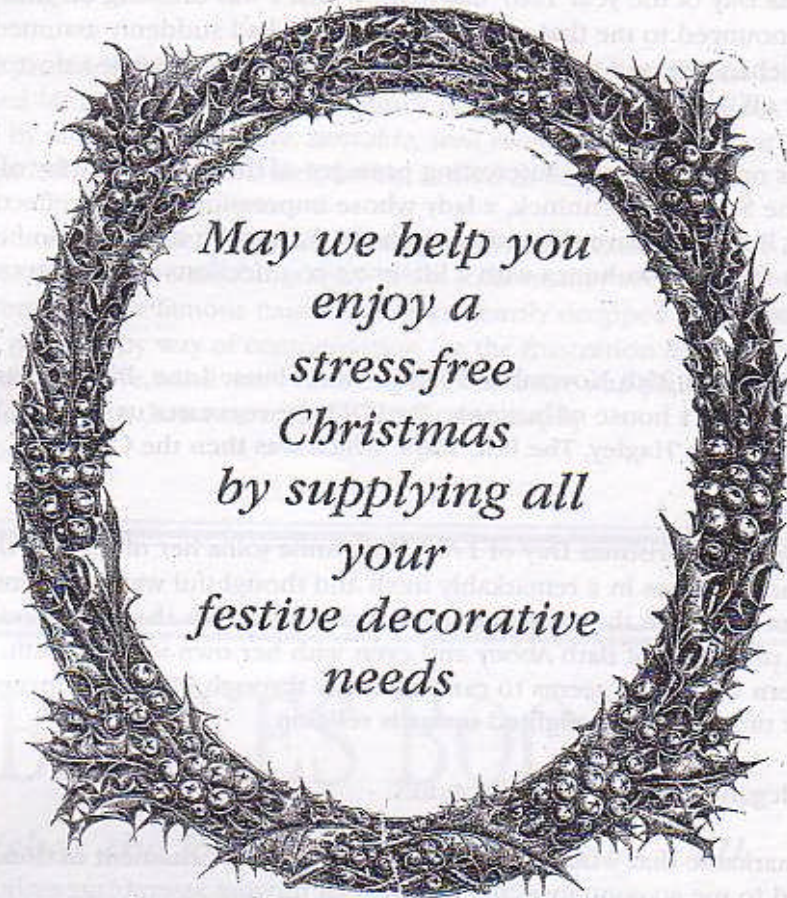


*An unusually large decorated Christmas tree of the Victorian period!*



After industrialisation there were no such traditions in the new towns and cities, and employers demanded work on all but Christmas Day itself. In Victorian times writers such as Charles Dickens recalled old times and Christmas cards and crackers became fashionable. The town 'waits' or watchmen walked around, checking locks and calling out the time. At Christmas, bands of them would sing carols and play Christmas music. Sometimes they would be invited into the houses of the wealthy to receive cakes, ale and mince pies.

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**Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck: *Bath Visitors***

'Christmas Day of the year 1787 dawned...Whilst I was dressing on that day, it was announced to me that my mother's illness had suddenly assumed an alarming character and that my father had taken her, to consult a doctor, a long way off.'

So begins one of the more interesting passages of the autobiography of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, a lady whose impressions of and reflections on life at Bath are above the ordinary. She had an active mind and in her last years filled two volumes with a lifetime's recollections of much travel and discourse.

She was born on 25th November 1778 in Steel-House Lane, Birmingham, in her grandfather's house of business. By 1782 she reassures us that the family had moved to 'Hagley, The Five Ways, which was then the Clifton of Birmingham'.

Following that Christmas Day of 1787 Mary Anne joins her mother in Bath which she describes in a remarkably fresh and thoughtful way, sometimes seeking to reconcile the glittering social world, to which she has access, with the proximity of Bath Abbey and even with her own ideas of faith. This is a pattern which she seems to carry with her through life. Her conversation is at times heavily weighted towards religion.

Of the elegant crowd at Bath she writes:

'It is remarkable that while in each individual person ornament in dress appeared to me so contemptible, yet this vast moving assemblage only struck me with enchantment, like a bed of beautiful flowers; the whole scene became to me a thing - I thought not of persons composing it.'

The scene of the Quaker lady who entered the Pump Room to berate the company is told. She addressed them on the vanity and follies of the world and plainly went on too long, as is often the custom of such preachers. Eventually the unwilling audience grew restive and the Countess of Huntingdon - the propagator of Methodism - took it upon herself to deal with the intruder. Her ladyship addressed the Quaker with faintly approbatory words and accompanied her out of the Pump Room. The Countess immediately returned and resumed her seat, having thereby elegantly propelled the Quaker from the Pump Room.

Mary Anne's mother was a Quaker from a wealthy London family. Her mother's sister owned a house in the Royal Crescent, where she spent part of each spring.

Volume II provides the origin of the lady's unusual married name. In 1806 she married Mr. Lambert Schimmelpenninck of Berkeley Square, Bristol, described by another as '*sensible, amiable, well read, but not brilliant*'. He was descended from a noble Dutch family, settled in England.

She lived into her eighties and visited Bath on several occasions. There is a copy of her two-volume autobiography in the local history section of Bath Central Library. Some famous names are quite heavily dropped throughout, but this is perhaps by way of compensation for the frustration that a lady having such an active mind must have experienced: she was plainly capable of a great deal more than two volumes of autobiography.

*Stephen Conlin*

## BANKES BOOKS

*wishes the Royal Crescent Society well  
and sends Christmas and New Year  
greetings*



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### Message from the General Manager at The Royal Crescent Hotel

The Royal Crescent Hotel has played host to many Christmas house parties over the years and both myself and the team all have many treasured memories of our time in the industry. On speaking with Head Chef Steven Blake recently regarding preparations for our Christmas and New Year festivities, he regaled me with a tale that I could not resist re-telling! Imagine – I set the scene.

‘Twas New Year’s Eve and hotel guests were presented by the Sous Chef, with a magnificent ice carving with thunder flashes set around. As the clock struck twelve the thunder flashes created an awesome, glittering spectacle – surrounded by guests’ gasps of amazement and appreciation. As the light wisps of smoke rose to the high ceilings, the guests settled into their celebration...yet within ten minutes the returning pall of smoke had settled to guest-head level. Guests, coughing, spluttering and choking, departed the restaurant in a five-minute dash, regrettably with three guests losing their dinner on the way – this had to be the quickest New Year celebration, sixteen years ago at this prestigious five-star London hotel.’

Head Chef Steven Blake did comment that he has never been fond of over-dramatising the festivities since then and that simplicity is the

secret for success. I am sure you will enjoy the Twelfth Night dishes he is preparing for you once again this coming New Year, and he asked me to share with you his Christmas Pudding recipe.

### Christmas Pudding - for four people

#### Ingredients

3 oz Suet	1/2 oz Prunes (finely chopped)
3 oz Sultanas	1/4 oz Ground Almonds
3 oz Currants	Zest of 1 Orange
3 oz Raisins	Zest of 1 Lemon
3 Mixed Peel	1/2 cup of Rum
6 oz Grated Apple	1/2 cup of Brandy
3 oz Breadcrumbs (white)	1/2 cup of Sherry
1 1/2 oz Candied Ginger (finely chopped)	1 cup of Stout
1 oz Plain Flour	1 cup of Beer
1 oz Muscovado Sugar	1 Egg
	1/4 teaspoon Mixed Spice

#### Method

1. Mix dried fruits, grated apple, muscovado sugar, orange and lemon zest, ginger, ground almonds and breadcrumbs all together in a large mixing bowl.
2. Make a batter with the plain flour, rum, brandy, sherry, stout, beer and egg.
3. Pour the batter on to the dried fruits. Mix well and leave to set for 48 hours.
4. Put into the mould and cook in a steam cooker for 10 hours.

On behalf of everyone at The Royal Crescent Hotel, may I wish you all

*a Very Merry Christmas  
and Happy New Year!*

Kevin Poulter, General Manager





## Christmasses Past in Bath *Stephen Conlin*

At Christmas 1882 the Bath Chronicle reported that residents of the Workhouse had not been forgotten.

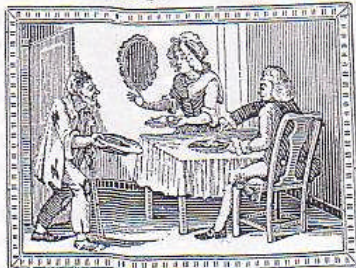
'Thanks to the kindly consideration of a number of benevolent ladies and gentlemen, the inmates had a pleasant time. Wards, chapel, schoolroom and dining hall were prettily adorned with evergreens, flowers, texts, banners etc. the clock at the main entrance was encircled with a broad band of moss bearing the reminder "Time flies".'

Presumably husbands and wives, separated when they entered the establishment, were allowed to meet on this occasion. The whole company was supplied with beef and plum pudding and presents were donated by better-off Bathonians: boxes of oranges, dolls and scrapbooks, books, toys. A packet of tea and sugar was given to each sick woman at the expense of the Misses Gordon. The Workhouse was occupied by 360 males, 300 females and 30 staff.

On other occasions well-meaning Bathonians tried to improve the quality of life of the inmates:

'Mr. Wetherall of Twerton gave a magic lantern entertainment to the aged people, lunatics and children at the workhouse. The views comprised an interesting series of scripture subjects and some miscellaneous pictures. Misses Stedley, Jelly and Willis added to the enjoyment of the meeting by rendering some hymns and songs and instrumental music.'

The exclusion of those inmates of working age underlines the definition of the 'blameless poor' as opposed to the 'idle and profligate poor'. The

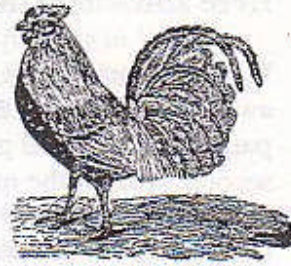


sick, the mentally disturbed and children were all classed as the former, and were therefore admitted to Mr. Wetherall and company's treat. In many workhouses the children lived in a separate wing, their dormitories being above the schoolroom.

Elsewhere in the city, tables would be decked with whatever their owners cared for. More than a century

before this Workhouse Christmas, a new fad had taken hold:

'A New Species of Luxury has taken place this winter here, chickens are fatted with chopd almonds & Raisins, & sold at 2 Guineas a Couple. The Pastry Cooks who have introduced this will get fortunes, as many are sold daily at that price...Well may Raisins be dear - where will extravagance end?'



It certainly makes today's corn-fed chicken seem less special, reading of this remarkable diet enjoyed by the fowl of eighteenth-century Bath. A lady, writing in the nineteenth century, summed up the luxurious retail opportunities of the city perhaps best of all:

'I could not conceive how it was possible to invent all the wants which here were professed to be supplied.'

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### Here and There in the Crescent: news and views from residents

❖ Congratulations to Dick and Diana Bourdon-Smith on winning an award in the *Times*' 'Back Garden of the Year' competition. Their beautiful patio-courtyard and garden with its eighteenth-century-style orangery took second prize in the medium-sized category. A photograph of the garden was featured in the *Times* on Saturday September 1st 2001. The article said, 'In Georgian Bath façades are everything. The Royal Crescent may be perfectly proportioned and symmetrical at the front, but the back is a real dog's breakfast. Nevertheless, the people in those fine houses wanted to be able to see further graceful façades from their back windows, and so the coach houses to the rear were also given fine façades.' It went on to describe how Mr. and Mrs. Bourdon-Smith developed their garden, praising the style of the layout and planting.

❖ Congratulations to Miss Linley Adams of No.27 Royal Crescent, three of whose sculptures were chosen for display in the Victoria and Albert Museum during the 25th annual show of the *Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*. The exhibition was opened by H.R.H. Princess Alexandra of Kent. The three figures were of a panther, in ash, an ermine, in ivory wood, and a tiger, in elm. This followed Miss Adams' previous success in the Royal Academy *Summer Exhibition*.

❖ After the west end of the Crescent was closed in February 1999, all open-top bus operators re-routed so as omit two thirds of the Circus and all of Brock Street and Upper Church Street. All, that is, except the Bath Bus Company, run by Martin Curtis, who was on the opposite side during the long campaign to rid the Crescent of up to 25 coaches per hour. The Bath Bus Company vehicles still come along Brock Street, stop illegally by the telephone kiosk and go along Upper Church Street, sometimes mounting the pavement on the west side. Residents there have presented a petition of more than a hundred signatures to the Council in order to get this 'Lone Ranger' stopped. Members of the Royal Crescent Society no doubt wish them well, but from experience judge it will be a long, hard fight.

❖ Parking for residents gets no easier, but sharp-eyed resident Ernest Jowett, while taking a constitutional in nearby St James's Square, was puzzled by cars bearing large cards showing that the vehicles belonged to

guests of the Royal Crescent Hotel. Now, as we all know, the Crescent - and the Hotel - are in Zone 1 for parking, and St. James's Square is in Zone 7. Normally zone boundaries are sacrosanct. Enquiries by Ernest Jowett and Mike Daw to the Parking Manager produced no answers, as letters were ignored.

Enquiries to Councillor Furse fared rather better. He produced part of the answer and also fired several telling questions at the senior Council official concerned. While these have also lain without an adequate response after several weeks, the partial answer was, or appeared to be, a fudge. It was claimed that the frontage of the Hotel's mews' building were just in Zone 7 and that was enough for an entitlement to park guests' cars there. The discussion is by no means over and Councillor Furse has promised further reaction. Watch this space, and those spaces!

It has been suggested that we should print a list of members and/or residents in the Newsletter, as has been done in the past. Your Committee felt that because of the number of organisations now eager to get hold of such information to add to their address lists, in order to flood us with junk mail, this was no longer appropriate. They also feared that publication might fall foul of the Data Protection Act. Should anyone receive mail which is wrongly addressed, this can be taken to no. 22, from where it will be delivered to the addressee, if known. To facilitate this, please keep us up-to-date with any arrivals or departures of which you are aware.

Letter to the Editor:

Sir I have been interested in the architecture of the mid- to late-eighteenth century for a number of years, and of increasing interest to me since moving to the Royal Crescent is the cuisine of the period, particularly the unusual. I have tried searching the web, as I believe it is called, in an effort to identify recipes of the great Antonin Carême, born 1784: unfortunately, without any success. I believe that M. Carême was apt to use unusual ingredients in his recipes, for instance kidneys in the pastry for sweet puddings, and I should be most interested to ascertain if he incorporated seagulls in any of his recipes, as I have access to a plentiful supply. Yours, etc.

Name and address supplied

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Residents and Members,

The Newsletter has received a good response to a request for items for inclusion in this issue. Many thanks to all those who have contributed. Please note that the Newsletter has been supported by several businesses and it would benefit us all if you mention that you saw their advertisements in this publication when you bring them your custom. If you notice any new businesses opening that may be prepared to advertise with us, please let me know.

Our next issue is due to appear in spring 2002 and I look forward to hearing from you: please send in any items, especially seasonal or topical articles and information. Would any one like to write about the Botanical Gardens, which should be reawakening at about that time?

Also please send in any news cuttings of particular interest to the Crescent that you may see in the Press, as others may have missed them.

Stephen Conlin, No.29.

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