



THE ROYAL CRESCENT SOCIETY  
**NEWSLETTER**

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## Contents

Chairman's Notes.....	page 2
Obituaries.....	page 3
Crescent Lawn Company .....	pages 6 – 9
Urban Gulls.....	page 9
Festive Dinner.....	page 12
Summer Barbecue.....	page 12

## **Chairman's Notes**

After two editions of a joint Royal Crescent Society/Crescent Lawn Company Newsletter, this edition now reverts to being published solely under the Society's banner. However the Company has contributed a section in which you can read about the excellent progress which has been made towards completion of the second phase of the Ha-ha and Railings Restoration project. Well done to those who have brought the completion of the restoration project at last within sight.

Also included is a letter to freeholders from the Crescent Lawn Company outlining the changes in personnel for the management of the Company. I would like to take this opportunity, on leaving the board, to thank the many residents, past and present, and others who have helped over the last ten or so years to get the Company this far.

The major steps along the way have been the agreement of B&NES and the Heritage Lottery Fund to ally the project to the much larger Royal Victoria Park refurbishment, the appeal for funds in 2000 for funds to complement the HLF grant, the acquisition of the title to the Lawn, Ha-ha and Railings, the creation of the Company as required by the Land Registry to hold the title, the negotiations with Three Tenors Concert which enabled the raising of the original funding target, the long-winded dealings with B&NES and HLF over the legal and practical aspects of the project, the appointment of Rhys Brookes as design consultant, the completion of the Ha-ha restoration, and now the raising of sufficient extra funds to enable a start on the Railings with confidence that they can be completed.

Great disappointment was felt when it emerged, as a result of the detailed examination during the tender process, that the figure originally thought to be sufficient for both phases of the restoration was a long way short of what was needed to complete it to an appropriate standard. However the sterling efforts of the current fundraising team have enabled us to put that disappointment behind us, and we can look forward not only to completion next year, but also to future maintenance being put on a sound financial basis.

At the Society's AGM last April, it was agreed to arrange an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss and explore the desirability and practicality of merging the Royal Crescent Society with the Crescent Lawn

Company. The Committee would like to know your views on this topic, and whether you feel an EGM should be arranged in the near future, or whether it is better to wait until the Restoration project is completed.

You will no doubt be aware of the problems caused throughout Bath by the increase in the gull population. The background to the Council's efforts to tackle this nuisance is included in this issue, as the Council wishes to be able to gain access where necessary to the roofs of privately owned buildings, in addition to the publicly-owned buildings where the measures mentioned have been implemented. I hope to be able to report to the Council that most freeholders are willing to allow access where required during the next breeding season.

During this year, the Crescent has lost two of its longstanding residents, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough and General Charles West. Full obituaries, penned by Michael Daw, follow below.

*Stephen Little,*

Chairman.

**Air Chief Marshal  
Sir John Barraclough  
KCB, CBE, DFC, AFC, FRAeS  
RCS Chairman 1988 –1991,  
First President 1991-2004**



Sir John in 1995 about to embark in a Tornado

As most residents will be aware, Sir John passed away just a week after his 90th birthday in May of this year. As many will also recall from previous issues of the Newsletter and, for some, from personal experience, his long period of inspiring service to the Society did not end when he retired as its President in 2004. He remained a great source of wisdom, sage advice and ideas even in his last weeks and continued his long-

established financial generosity to Crescent causes right up to and including the very last day of his life.

As all the principal national newspapers have recorded, he was in all senses a great man of our time, whom it was an honour to know and consult. His large funeral in Bath Abbey and at the Guildhall Banqueting Room afterwards was attended by Her Majesty's Personal Representative in the form of his successor to the post of Gentleman Usher to the Sword of State, as well as other distinguished national, local and Royal Air Force figures. A service of Thanksgiving to celebrate his life and work was held at St.Clement Dane's Church in London in early October.

His long, devoted and distinguished service to the Crown and to defence affairs, which has been recorded thoroughly in the press, was noteworthy for his innate qualities of courage, innovation and leadership. His sharp intellect, his persuasive charm and his light touch invariably produced results of great benefit and his dry wit enlivened any event or activity in which he took part. But he also used his physical stature to grace any occasion with imposing gravitas when the occasion required it. He deployed all these skills to the Crescent's advantage, particularly in his very effective dealings with public officials and especially at the two Public Inquiries into the damaging open-top bus traffic and the proposal for a second hotel, both of which were won to the Crescent's advantage.

Sir John thoroughly enjoyed his time here and his contributions to its well-being have brought significant and lasting benefits to it, its residents and to the city of which it is an icon.

### **General Charles West, US Army (Retd).**

Charles West moved into the Crescent in the mid-1980s and soon established himself as a great supporter of everything the Society stood for and tried to do to conserve and protect the Crescent. He brought with him a great enthusiasm for all things British and a huge respect for the Royal Family, decorating his home here with a very fine collection of local, National and Royal memorabilia, paintings and engravings. He was a very warm and engaging man, always ready to recount some fascinating anecdote from his distinguished 40-year career in the US Army and his experience at very senior levels in the US Department of Defense.

During his military training in 1939 he was awarded the prestigious cadet medal of the Star of the West. He then saw active service in three wars: against the Japanese in the Pacific Theatre from 1943 to 1946 where he was ADC to General MacArthur, twice in Korea until 1957 and as a Lt.-Colonel in South Vietnam. He then became President Nixon's Chief of the Safeguard Missile Support Group – the project which became a bargaining chip with the then USSR, leading to the famous Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. He was awarded many high-level military decorations by his own country for his valiant service, plus the French Croix de Guerre and the Philippine Legion of Honour.

He retired from active duty in late 1970 but, as a Brigadier General, continued to serve with the US Army staff until his final retirement to his home in Wilton, Connecticut, USA, in 1978. There he founded the Company of Military Historians and dealt in antiques, before moving to Bath, remaining here until his death in June of this year.

As well as his active interest in Crescent affairs, he became a staunch member of the Bath & County Club and took an active part in its events, introducing an annual Thanksgiving Dinner, a new tie and presenting two fine portraits of H.M. The Queen and H.M. The Queen Mother. When, the day after 9/11, the Guards played his National Anthem outside Buckingham Palace, he stood proudly to attention as he watched and wrote a letter of appreciation to Her Majesty.

In his later years here he suffered several bouts of debilitating illnesses, but refused to let them get the better of him, remaining cheerful, realistic and kindly to everyone he met. As his determinedly independent lifestyle began to be less easily sustainable, he was unstintingly helped by his close neighbours Ian and Lesley Woodhouse and by his nearby legal representatives. Towards the end, when he had to be taken into care at St Martin's Hospital, he made it very clear that there was to be "no fuss" when he passed on and consequently there was a only a very private cremation locally.

Charles's jolly, stylish and urbane presence is being much missed in the Crescent and elsewhere in Bath; he was a real and substantive 'character' in every meaning of the word, deservedly respected by all.

## Letter to all Freeholders of the Royal Crescent

14<sup>th</sup> September, 2008

I am writing to inform you of the new management board for the Crescent Lawn Company following the election of new directors at the Annual General Meeting and the resignation of Stephen Little from his post as chairman and director of the CLC earlier this year.

The board has asked that **Colin Clarkson-Short** take on the role of Chairman of the Crescent Lawn Company and be responsible for driving the remaining fundraising for the railings restoration.

**Tim Forester** will be responsible for managing the railings restoration programme.

**Brian Richards** will take on the responsibility for Finance.

**Robert Thorpe** will become the Marketing Director and will actively promote our achievements in restoring the railings.

**Jenny Hardisty** will continue in her role as Company Secretary.

**Andrew Owens and Michael Daw** will complete the board of directors.

Administration support and financial management will be carried out by **Mari Baghurst**, Andrew Owens' secretary.

The registered office and company address will change to **No 8 Royal Crescent, Bath, BA1 2LR.**

I should be grateful if you would forward this letter as appropriate to all lessees and tenants in your property.

With Kind Regards

Jenny Hardisty  
Secretary, Crescent Lawn Company

# **Railings Restoration Programme**

## **Project Objective**

The Crescent Lawn Company has embarked on a major repair project of the Royal Crescent railings. The railings are in a very advanced state of deterioration and pose potential Health & Safety concerns. As such, they have been placed on the English Heritage 2008 “At Risk Register”. It was originally intended to complete the restoration along with that of the Ha-ha wall and the surrounding pavement area during 2007 through a project funded through a combination of residents’ fund-raising and Bath Preservation Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund grants. However, the railings were found to be in a much worse condition than previously thought and could not proceed to the original project, timescale and funding. The Ha-ha wall was nevertheless restored and recent fund-raising by the residents has now enabled the railings restoration to proceed. The restoration will return the railings and the surrounding pavement to a standard in keeping with their status as Grade 1 Listed in the World Heritage City of Bath where they will be a benefit to the city’s tourist economy and to the nation as a whole. The railings are an integral element of the Royal Crescent which is a national icon constantly featured in films, advertisements and UK travel promotions. The techniques used in the railings repair have been approved by English Heritage and are setting a benchmark for future work elsewhere. The famous explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes has lent his name in support of the project.

## **Project Description**

Harrison Brookes Architects have drawn up the Specification and Schedule of Works for the project, and their Rhys Brookes will be the project architect. The renowned conservation experts, Ellis and Co, are the main contractor responsible for the general management of the works and for undertaking all physical aspects below the railings, including the repair, and reinstatement of the coping stones and their foundations. They will also be responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the specialist metal sub contractor, Iron Age Forge who will undertake the metal work above the coping stones. Their work will cover the stripping, cleaning, repair and decoration of the railings as well as their reinstatement. The railings will be removed in sections of around ten bays at a time starting from the west end working as far as the middle gates and then from the east end and again proceeding to the middle gates. This enables the middle gates to be precisely sized. The gates themselves have been designed by the award-winning conservation design company Donald Insall.

## **Timeline and Plan**

Physical work started on the 18th of August, immediately after special funding from English Heritage had been secured. It is estimated that each group of bays will take 2-3 months to complete and install. The projected completion date is September 2009.

## **Cost and Cash Flow**

The contract price is £292,290.31 (£225,789.30 plus VAT). Payments will be made to the contractor on a sectional completion basis at 97.5%. To date residents’ contributions have realised almost £200,000 and with the grant from English Heritage plus pending and

staged residents' contribution commitments, there remains a shortfall of only some £17,000. Active fund-raising for this amount now continues.

### **Project and Financial Management Team**

Head of Fundraising & Project Team - Colin Clarkson Short - 29 Royal Crescent, Bath  
CLC project Representative – Tim Forester CPA – 12 Royal Crescent, Bath  
Architect – Harrison Brookes (Rhys Brookes) – 9 Vicarage Street Frome  
Engineer – Integral Structural Designs – 3 Toll Bridge Studios, Toll Bridge Rd, Bath  
B&NES Highways Department – Andrew Moss  
Main Contractor – Ellis and Co (Ken Ellis)  
Iron-work subcontractor – Iron Age Forge (James Crossman)

## **The Railings – Fundraising Progress**

### **Progress Report 1**

**7<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

- 9 sections of railings have been removed from site and are in the workshops of Iron Age Forge. Each set of railings has been labeled and all of the palings (vertical elements) set out in sequence. The railings are being stripped of their paint by being placed in a furnace so that the paint is burnt off but the surface of the metal is not damaged. This allows us to accurately assess the condition of each piece of metal.
- The top rails which are generally in the best condition are being repaired first and then they will be returned to site to act as templates for the setting out of the stones which form the bases. The stone for the bases is still to be confirmed but currently we are looking at using Hartham Park which is quarried in Box and is a very high quality and durable stone suitable for use in ground conditions. Most of the more local Bath Stones are more susceptible to frost. Harrison Brookes and Ellis will be visiting the quarry (the mine) with the masons to select the particular blocks of stone (these are huge blocks about 2m x 1.5m x 1m) this will then be taken to Ellis's workshop where the block will be cut up to form the new copings.
- This first section of railings will be the most difficult as we are all still feeling our way and finding out where the problems lie. Unfortunately this is not run of the mill work and therefore there is a learning curve for all involved.

- The first sections of railings will be returned in about 8 weeks time (week commencing 3rd November 2008) when the next sections will be removed. This will continue until the central access gates have been reached. Work will then commence from the east end working back towards the access gates at approximately 10 sets at a time. The final piece of work will be the new access gates which will be sized to accommodate any fluctuations in the overall length of the works.

**Indicative Milestones (to be confirmed)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>2008</b>			
August	west start	18-Aug-08	work commenced
October	11 railings		
December	Double Gate		
<b>2009</b>			
January	east start		
February	12 railings		
April	24 railings		
June	36 railings		
August	Double Gate		
September	Complete		

Rhys Brookes  
Harrison Brookes Associates

**Information On The Gull Population In Bath**

Populations of urban gulls cause problems in many towns and cities in the UK. From March to mid-July each year they are present nesting on roof tops and rearing young. From small beginnings urban gull populations can grow at an alarming rate. Gulls begin breeding at 3-4 years old and can live up to 35 years.

In particular, they create mess by ripping open waste bags and spreading litter. Their faeces can block drains and is often splattered over surfaces. Gull faeces is highly alkaline and will erode car paintwork and other surfaces. Gulls will cause damage to the structure of buildings by tearing insulation, lagging and roofing material of buildings. Gulls are noisy creatures and especially noisy during courtship and chick rearing. In

an urban environment gulls will often make noise throughout the day and night.

The birds are omnivorous. They are experts at robbing scraps intended for ducks and pigeons. However such scraps are snacks. There is no evidence to support the idea that gulls are attracted to towns because of the availability of waste food. Most of the gulls feeding takes place away from the colony where there is an abundance of good quality food to sustain both adults and chicks.

The tangible costs associated with gulls in an urban environment include: the cost of mess clearance, damage to structures and deterrent systems. The less tangible costs include: the effect on tourism, reduced use of shopping areas, and loss of sleep.

The urban gull population is not just a nuisance, but as colonies grow the financial impact on local economies will also grow.

The gulls present in Bath are Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*Larus fuscus*). In Bath, there are approximately three times as many Lesser Black-Backed gulls as there are Herring Gulls. Currently, both species are on the special list of pest species as determined by the Wildlife and Countryside Act . This Act makes provision for General Licences to enable 'authorised persons' to take or kill certain 'pest' species, their nests and eggs for the purposes of preserving air safety, conserving other species of wild bird and to preserve public health and safety.

The management of urban gull populations is not straightforward. Theoretically it is possible to proof buildings against gulls but this is, for many reasons, not effective in reducing the population. In Bath many buildings are 'gull proofed' with netting and wires.

To deter gulls settling and breeding a hawk is flown over the rooftops, twice a week, during three months prior to the start of the breeding season. Artificial distress calls are also played on the rooftops during this period. This is intended to unsettle the gulls as they prepare to nest.

The Council's Pest Control Service will carry out egg oiling. This prevents the eggs hatching. The incubation period is extended and by the time the gulls realise that the eggs will not hatch the season is already too

advanced for a second breeding attempt. This helps to ensure that the gulls stay somewhat calmer as they spend longer incubating the eggs and there are no chicks to rear, thereby avoiding aggression towards humans associated with this phase of the breeding cycle. Clutches of eggs can also be replaced with dummy eggs. This has the same affect as egg oiling.

Egg oiling or egg replacement is carried out by the Council's Pest Control Service on privately owned roofs for a charge. This is subject to there being safe access to the roof area. Both egg oiling and the use of dummy eggs are considered as long term strategies to reduce the number of gulls breeding.

Other methods of controlling gulls such as plastic birds of prey, streamers and smashing eggs do not work. Culling gulls by shooting presents many practical difficulties in terms of the laws relating to use of guns, trespass and health and safety.

This Council employs the services of an expert ornithologist (Peter Rock) to assess the status and numbers of roof-nesting gulls in Bath. This has been done annually since 1995. In 2007 the Bath breeding population was between 794 pairs. This represented a doubling of the population in only six years. However, the 2008 survey revealed a population size of 848 pairs which does represent a drop in the rate of growth. This reduction could be attributable to the interventions which the Council has been undertaking over a number years together with the recent demolition of the Southgate Shopping Centre which did represent a roosting site for the gulls.

Unless prevented by legislative changes, it is intended to continue the interventions to control and monitor the population of gulls on Bath in the future but it is unlikely that a simple solution to the problem created by gulls will be found.

### **Footnote**

Mention was made in the last newsletter of two white gulls who had appropriated part of the Lawn last Spring for their activities of doubtful propriety. They have recently been seen again, so in view of the problems outlined above, let us hope that romance does not blossom this time!

## **Festive Dinner 2009**

Committee members Julie Eyles and Michelle Little are currently engaged in arranging the details of our annual Festive Dinner to be held in early January. Details will be circulated to all residents as soon as a firm date and venue have been fixed. Circumstances have conspired to prevent us from celebrating the festive season together for the past two Januarys; social events such as this are important in maintaining the community spirit always so evident in the Crescent, and we urge you to support the resumption of this tradition.

## **Summer Barbecue Party**

The Society's annual Barbecue was once again hosted by Tim and Ros Forester in the garden of their house, as illustrated below. Our thanks are due to Tim and Ros and daughters Natalie and Stephanie for their considerable effort in ensuring a most enjoyable occasion.



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***\* The Newsletter is published by the Royal Crescent Society, 22 Royal Crescent, Bath, BA1 2LT and is sent to all residents, with an archive copy on the Society's website, [www.royalcrescent.com](http://www.royalcrescent.com) Communications proposed for inclusion in a future issue, or commenting on matters reported, should be submitted to Stephen Little at the same address.***