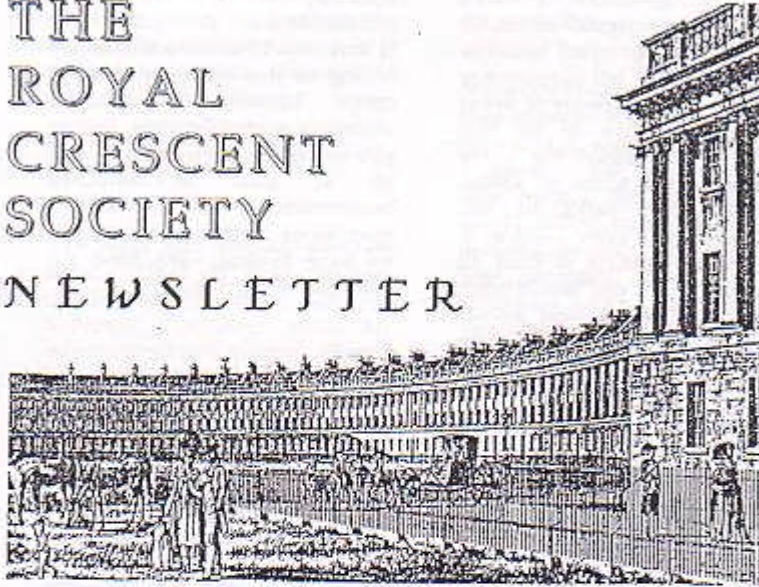


The Royal Crescent Society Winter Newsletter

THE  
ROYAL  
CRESCENT  
SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER



Issue No 29

Winter 1995

### Chairman's Notes

First of all, your Committee joins with me in wishing all Members and their families and friends in the Crescent a most enjoyable Festive Season and a splendid New Year. 1996 will kick off to a very jolly start with our Festive Dinner at the Royal Crescent Hotel on January 4th; tickets are selling very well and you will find a reminder about it elsewhere in the Newsletter if you have not already replied to the original note.

This issue reflects a wide range of activity affecting our homes here. The Crescent and our fine City

continues to be sources of great interest world-wide, featuring in the National and local media on a regular basis. This is neither remarkable nor novel, but at least amusing when new enthusiasts suddenly discover what many of us have cherished and recognised for a long time. To me such re-discoveries are also a delight because they reinforce my own reactions that the qualities I enjoy here never pall - even after almost 30 years of residence. No matter how many times I look at the great sweeping curve of the building, or the wide expanse of virtual countryside in front of it or watch the lively groups of

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admiring (walking) tourists brightening up a rainy afternoon with their colourful clothes, or see attentive school children filling out their questionnaires, or artists painting yet another picture, I seldom fail to count my blessings for the pleasure of living here. And when to all this sensual joy is added the sheer practicalities of access to shops, theatre, schools, parks, air, rail and bus travel - even London is under two hours, it is hard to think where else one would wish to make one's permanent home. (Oh, and yes, I am practising to be an Estate Agent).

Not everything is sweetness and light of course, and balancing all that are the dreadful buses and the appalling delay by City Officials to implement the wishes of elected councillor and hence their paymasters. One would hope that formal and public accusations of their unprofessional conduct might be a spur to constructive and speedy action. The evidence of this issue's report on the subject shows that life in Bath is not like that. That local Government here is going through massive change with the advent of Bath and North-East Somerset and the demise of Bath City Council, is only an excuse for inaction and delay. Councils are only management organisations and all organisations have always been subject to change - even Julius Caesar's cohorts complained about it. But management is about managing change and about keeping the organisation functioning

The evidence of our experience on the bus problem, on other outstanding correspondence with both City and County officials and comments from our Councillors, is that the 1995 incumbents are failing in this key management role. Meanwhile responsible citizens are left frustrated, but, as you will see, undeterred; we can be at least as effective bureaucratically and in other ways open to us as those with whom we have to deal. We have no intention of "giving up".

Finally, your Committee is in urgent need of a new Treasurer and would be grateful for a volunteer please. The separate article gives the background.®

### Open-Topped Buses

Bath City Council continues to procrastinate over the actions given to them by Avon County Council to come up with ways and means of implementing the bus ban for the Crescent as directed by Councillors of all three political parties at the Ad Hoc meeting in July 1994. As reported in the last Newsletter Councillor David Hawkins stirred matters up at Election times in May, and further promises etc., were made. Still nothing happened.

Accordingly Chairman wrote to Head of Paid Service, Bath City Council (the virtual replacement post for the previous Chief Executive Office), in very strong terms. The letter rehearsed the sequence of non-events since July 1994 and said that the failure of officials to act on the directions of

the elected representatives was tantamount to a deliberate and conscious attempt to frustrate the democratic process. As such it is called into question the need to consider disciplinary action against the officers responsible. The letter was copied to Councillors.

The reply was another delaying tactic. Head of Paid Services decided that the letter constituted a Formal Complaint about his own officers and as such should be investigated by the Head of another Department, in this case the City Solicitor. On further enquiry he also declined to speed up the subject of the complaint (means of implementing the ban) until the investigation of the complaint was done - which he promised would happen 'shortly'. We are still waiting, a further two months on.

Meanwhile, some of the officials concerned seem to have taken things into their own hands - at last - and have arranged a meeting to discuss the matter yet again with your Committee. We shall continue to press our points through this bureaucratic morass; compromise is not the order of the day.

Meanwhile a helpful feature on the subject appeared in the Travel Section of the Daily Telegraph (November 4th), and various articles in that paper and the Times show that other cities are also suffering from the 1980's legislation deregulating public transport, which opened the gate for the open-topped buses

everywhere. Oxford and other places are beginning to voice their concerns, though we were already aware of the private worries.

Regency Tours continue to be the only operator with a wider view. Members will recall their proposal to take the Crescent of their route if the other operator would follow suit - which they declined to do. Regency have now proposed changes to the permitted waiting times down at the Main pick-up points near Orange Grove whose effect would be to reduce the numbers of buses which sometimes go around merely to satisfy the published timetable. Whilst your Committee welcomes this in principle, it is not, of course, the final answer of a complete ban or of making the Crescent 'Access Only'.

The Residents' Association in the Circus has been re-vitalised and we wish them well. They are achieving good publicity in their similar fight against the buses but your Committee has not joined forces with them. As the AGMs have endorsed, our situation is unique, our campaign is (though too slow) well-advanced and solutions are within our grasp. Theirs is barely off the ground and, if allied with ours, can only make matters more complicated, thus providing officials with even more excuse for delay.

On an apparently separate front, our MP Don Foster responded to the last Newsletter by writing to Avon's Director of highways and Engineering about the general bus problem in Bath. The Director's

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reply mentioned almost as an aside that he was investigating a possible weight restriction on the Crescent as a means of "reducing the number of buses". Again we await his response to our request for a proper definition of what this means and have made clear that we continue to seek a full ban. Our MP is being kept informed as he kindly asked to be.

Finally (if only this were true!) the more vivid action on this topic called for at the AGM has regrettably been delayed for lack of time and resources; it is still planned however. ☺

### Pollution Hot-Line For Buses

Some members may already be aware that the RAC has recently started campaigning to target polluting vehicles as lorries, buses and vans are responsible for more than 90% of vehicle black smoke and in a recent RAC spot check survey these belching polluters were identified as the number one environmental concern for motorists.

The RAC are urging members of the public to report offending vehicles to their "Vehicle Inspectorate Polluters" Hotline on: 0117 953 1924.

The following details, or as many of them as possible should be given:

- date, time and place the vehicle was spotted;
- name of the vehicles operator (e.g. Badgerline, City Tours, Regency);
- your name and address (details will be kept in confidence).

The Vehicle Inspectorate will investigate each reported case: in some instances a company can have its operating licence rescinded until it cleans up its act.

One member has already phoned up and reported a Regency Tours Bus and was not asked for her name and address, so all members are encouraged to continue reporting the offending buses in the Crescent and around Bath. This sort of pressure can all help our campaign to get rid of the buses from the Crescent. ☺

### Neighbourhood Watch

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, at the last AGM the subject of Neighbourhood Watch was raised by a resident. It was pointed out that one of the advantages of being in a scheme was that certain Insurance Companies offered discounts on their premiums.

The main aim of Neighbourhood Watch is to reduce the opportunities for crime and to make it more difficult for the would be criminal or vandal to act. It relies on the exchange of information between the Police and Residents and does not expect an individual to risk personal

- registration number and a description of the vehicle (e.g.

injury by confronting potential criminals.

Ian Woodhouse has discussed the possibility of setting up a scheme with the local Community Affairs Office at Bath Police Station. Premium discounts can be enjoyed but both the Police and Insurance Companies like to see that the scheme is effectively operating and it is suggested that initially say 50% of the residents should be actively participating in the watch with a view to increasing this proportion as the scheme becomes more established.

The local Community Affairs Officer is prepared to give a presentation early in the New Year provided that there is a sufficient proportion of residents who are interested and all residents will be canvassed by post shortly. In the meantime, it would be useful to gauge the interest of the members of the Society.

Any interested residents can contact Ian on Bath 337380. ☺

### Treasurer: Your Society Need You

Congratulations were in order this summer to our Treasurer Simon Crowe and his wife Claire

continue the wide range of duties he had taken on under the general title of Treasurer, Simon felt it best to resign. This decision came at rather short notice to your Committee and your Vice-Chairman Tim Forester at No. 12 has very kindly stepped temporarily into the breach until a permanent replacement can be found. He will undertake the accounting side of the Treasurer's work and other duties such as custody and issue of Lawn Gate keys will be managed by Bill Oswald at No. 28A.

There is therefore a vacancy for the permanent post of Treasurer and your Committee (and especially Tim Forester!) urgently ask for a volunteer please. If you would like to help with this important work, or would like to hear more about what is involved before considering, please call your Chairman Michael Daw on Bath 315529 or Tim Forester on Bath 463512 (daytime), 332086 (evening).

Meanwhile we wish Simon and Claire well in their new home and express our thanks for the good work Simon did whilst he was Treasurer; in particular for moving our bank accounts etc. to our advantage and for his contribution in the assembly and production of the very important Bus Survey Report two years



played in this area. The "musicians" made no use of the bandstand itself, except as a backdrop - they performed on a stage erected for the purpose. Their immediate audience was casual, transitory and small (maximum 200) and had the option of dropping out. The 150 residents in the Crescent had no such option; even through closed windows the noise was loud enough to drown normal television sound levels for those trying to share the VJ Day broadcast from Buckingham Place that day.

Councillor David Hawkins did much valuable work to try and stop the event and to warn residents, providing details of who to complain to. Those who tried such avenues got short shrift. The Society has also written to the City Council. Two months later, no reply has been received. It seems likely that such events might recur on a six or seven weekly basis next season.

### Filming In The Crescent

The Crescent continue to attract advertisers and other film-makers as a prestige backdrop for up-market products and period stories. On most occasions those involved are quite willing to make a voluntary donation to the Society's funds if nicely asked. As they are only too well aware, in any other place they would expect to be charged and to pay, a handsome "location fee". To make a small donation - usually

petty cash to them but very acceptable to us - is easy. But they have to be asked and some escape your Committee's net. As mentioned in the last Newsletter two companies were involved recently; those responsible for "The Hollow Reed" did contribute, those for the small advertising event in June promised to but did not.

### Ha Ha Restoration

Our architects are in touch with the National Heritage Lottery Fund with a view to a formal application for funds to get on with this project. It has been held up for too long by Bath City Council's failure to act on its promise of some years ago to consider funding an archaeological dig which would establish the original 18th Century profile of the wall and ditch. Your Committee hopes its own initiative will get the project off the ground! (Or into it.....).

### Laser Advertising

Some editions of the Observer newspaper carried a follow-up story to the news that the dome of St Paul's Cathedral in London had been used as a screen for a laser projected image advertising a chocolate bar. In the consequent spirit of 'nothing is sacred' the Observer sought our reactions to the idea of a similar use of the Crescent - for hard cash to the Society or to individuals. Reaction

in mind the diversity of views in the Crescent, your Chairman's response (which had to be instant, no time for reflection or consultation) was a cautious, probably not because of the difficulty of getting a consensus, though of course funds are always useful'. At the time of going to press no more has been heard, but after the use of the system in the Abbey Churchyard and the City Centre for Christmas, perhaps we should all "watch this space".



### The Royal Crescent Lawn

The notices on the Railings have been augmented by additional ones facing the Lawn and at each end of the curve. Whether it is their impact or because of the tropical and enervating temperatures this summer, invasions by football players this year have been markedly reduced. Even so, some residents remain very concerned, and look forward to completion of the Ha Ha restoration (see previous note) as the long term solution. Your Committee is also looking into the impact and usefulness of recent new legislation about trespass; this is so new that it is proving difficult to find a knowledgeable expert and there is no case history as yet. Members will be kept informed.



### Little Green Boxes - Recycling

Residents have over the years spasmodically joined the green

movement by recycling their household waste at the various bins provided around the city and by putting suitable stuff out on the various weekly collection days. This has all been made much easier by this summer's delivery to all households of well-designed 'little green boxes' in which to put the material and by the regularisation of collections to every Tuesday morning. This has led to an increase in material put out which must be good for the environment.

There is of course another and potentially more interesting impact. Since the collectable material includes glass, metals etc., the more canny early morning observers who pass these boxes on a regular basis no doubt derive some amusement from analysing the contents and making various deductions about the occupants of the houses. The Times and beer cans mean intellectual paupers? Champagne and the Sun mean carefree lottery winners? Ribena and Kit-e-Kat mean sober pet-freaks? Think up your own combinations as this year's Christmas trivia game!



### Last Booking Date Looms for Our Festive Dinner

Annually growing numbers prove the popularity of the Festive Dinner, and your Committee has decided on a further event this season. By special arrangement with The Royal Crescent Hotel, the cost will be the usual Luncheon price of



£18.50 (the same as last year) instead of £30.00, and will be held on Thursday 4th January 1996 at 8:00pm. Pre-dinner drinks will be served in the Dower House Drawing Room from 7.15pm. Orders for wine will be taken during your pre-dinner drinks, with House Wine at £12.65. You may supply your own wine to be drunk with your meal (no corkage charge), but please bring your bottle on 3rd January clearly labelled with your name, so that it can be decanted/chilled/opened to breathe in good time, and placed on your table in readiness. The hotel can offer a choice of menu, the second being a vegetarian menu. Please choose one or the other, but do not "mix and match".

### MENU A

Salmon marinated in a  
Chablis and soft herb dressing

-000-

Fine slices of Pheasant on  
Rosti Potatoes, Braised Red  
Cabbage and Roast Shallots

-000-

Individual Christmas  
Pudding with Rum Sabayon

### MENU B (Vegetarian)

Broccoli Soup with Stilton  
Glaze

-000-

Lasagne of Leek, Courgette  
and Pimento, glazed with a  
Mustard Sauce

-000-

Individual Christmas  
Pudding with Rum Sabayon

-000-

Coffee and Mince Pies

To make your reservation, please complete the slip attached to the original note sent to all members and return it, together with a cheque for the appropriate amount made payable to "The Royal Crescent Hotel" and hand it into the hotel marked "For the attention of Jenny Hardisty".

Please ensure you reply before Christmas to give the hotel time to draw up a table plan. If you wish to sit with particular friends please indicate their names and the hotel will do their best to

## Prior Notice

As everyone knows, Prior Park College (former home of entrepreneur Ralph Allen) was badly damaged by fire a few years ago.

Happily it has now been most beautifully restored and the school bursar would be happy to show a small party of RCS members around - not something you could normally expect to do, unless of course you had a child there (like Bruno and Rosanna Lupieri at No: 27).

Incidentally you would also have the opportunity to admire from a distance the lovely Palladian bridge in the National Trust gardens below the house, which was itself resorted by our very own David Brain at No: 30.

The visit would have to be arranged in the school holidays so we are probably talking about next Easter time.

Please let me know whether in principle you would be interested in going. ☺

Bill Oswald  
No: 28A

## The Bath Society Events

The Bath Society with which we enjoy a "mutual membership" and to which we are indebted for its major support in many of our campaigns, has advised us of

some interesting lectures in 1996 to which all are welcome at £2.00. All are held at their splendid Meeting Room above Green Park Station at 7:30pm.

### Lectures:

Tuesday 18th January: Dr Roger Rolls: Via Recta ad Vian Longam: Promoting Health in Stuart Bath.

Thursday 15th February: Tony Mitchell: William Bankes Kingston Lacy: Traveller and Collector.

Thursday 7th March: Member's Quarterly Meeting.

Thursday 21st March: Lynett Hood: John Fowler - The Inspirator and the Inspired.

### Book:

They also draw our attention to an interesting new book "Voice of 18th Century Bath" which is a anthology of contemporary text illustrating events, daily life and attitudes at Britain's leading Georgian Spa. The author is Trevor Fawcett, the well known local historian, and the publisher is Riton. The price is £9.99 - nice Christmas present! ☺

## The Royal Crescent I The Nineteenth Century

In the last issue Leslie Jenkin gave us an interesting picture of Brock Street in the C19. Analysis of the Royal Crescent gives a similar picture only,

course, the Crescent was rather more up-market in property values.

Until the census returns of 1841 we cannot be precise about who lived in each house in the Crescent except where we have literary evidence, for example the Linleys, Ansteys and the Thicknesses. In most cases the owner did not live in the house but leased it to tenants who generally paid the poor rate and it is from the rate book that we build up our picture. But tenants came and went, and irritating to the historian, changed houses and numbers at will.

The early ratepayers appear a prestigious group and included Lady Malpas (20) Lord Demontall (17), Lady Stephey (21) the Hon. John Lewis, Dean of Ossory (22), Lady Elizabeth Stanley (24) Lady Mary Stanley (27) the Hon. Charles Hamilton (14) and the Duke of York at (15) and a number of others who sound like the persona in a Sheridan play.

After 1841, however, with the census return it is possible to build a more accurate picture though we must remember that the enumerator's returns merely show the household on one particular night of the year. The returns 1841 - 1891 show a similar pattern to that found in Brock Street and are an unwitting testimony to the life of the upper classes in C19th Bath. Bath had become a Mecca for wealthy widows and spinsters. In 1871, out of the 30 houses no less than 15 were headed by a woman

whose 'occupation' was usually listed as 'Fundholder', 'Landowner' or 'Independent'. For Bath, as a whole, women over 60 years were the largest group. (1) This is at a time when in England as a whole the largest demographic group was below 20 years and the age of expectancy between 20 and 45 years depending on your social class and locality. (2) Apart from elderly women the 'Heads' in the Crescent are now, not the minor aristocracy, but the burgeoning middle class described by R.S. Neale as 'the socially mobile, agrarian, capitalist élite'. A number are still listed as 'Fundholders' or 'Independent' but now occupations include Army Officer, Naval Captain (½ pay!), Bengal Civil Servant, Physician and Magistrate. This is Bath, having declined as a fashionable Spa, now attracting the more sober-minded Society depicted by Jane Austen. As in Brock Street the birth place of the house holders is invariably outside Bath, often in the midlands and the north (where they probably had made their money). The servants on the other hand nearly all come from Somerset or Gloucester. As the century progresses the number of servants seem to rise, a concomitant of growing affluence during the industrial revolution and incidentally, a factor in the first wave of the emancipation of women movement.

This house, No: 19, has a fairly typical living pattern for the period. Originally owned by John Jefferys, John Wood's financial advisor and the Town Clerk (did

he keep the two functions separate?) in 1805 was sold to Elizabeth Walmesley and stayed in the Walmesley family until the end of the century but was let to tenants on long leases. Less than half the houses in the Crescent seem to have been owner occupied. 'A property owning democracy' was not a Victorian value.

In 1841 the house was occupied by William Foskett of 'Independent' means aged 75, his wife Charlotte and an unmarried daughter, also Charlotte, aged 35 and with four young living-in servants. Ten years later William had died and the head was now Charlotte aged 75, her daughter still unmarried and five living-in servants. By 1861, mother has died and Charlotte is now head and listed as a 'Landowner' living here (on the night of the census) with her cousin Edward Wayne, a Cambridge undergraduate and four living-in servants. Like Catherine Harrison in Brock Street (see issue 28) Charlotte would not have agreed with Lady Bracknell that 'land gives one position but prevents one from keeping it up!'. By 1880 one assumes that Charlotte had died and the ratepayer is Ann Phipps 'wife of an officer' with three small children and a cousin, Miss C.C. Wayne. This looks as if the tenancy had passed within the family and that the servants have been handed on, because the cook and the house keeper are the same and the housemaid, Emma Hales, has become 'nurse' but there are now a total of eight living-in servants. This of course does not include people like

gardeners, who presumably lived out. In 1891 the head of the house was the Reverend Edward Hanley, aged 48, the Rector of Northorpe, who lived here with his wife and nine servants including two lady's maids, a butler and a footman. One can only assume that Edward had inherited wealth for even by Victorian and Trollope standards nine servants (living-in) for two people in a town house seems a little excessive.

Looking at the Crescent as a whole between 1841 and 91 households show a similar pattern. I like No. 10 where in 1871 the head was Anthony Hamond aged 47 years who lived there with three young nieces and seven servants. He is still living there in 1891, now a J.P. but married with a wife aged 43 years. The nieces have left and there are not only five servants. One wonders what happened to the nieces, did they marry, or did the new Mrs Hamond put her foot down?

At the other end of the Crescent poor Frances Silver, a widow at 35 years with seven young children had six servants including a governess and her neighbour Fanny Hawkins, a widow aged 45 with four children between the ages of four and fifteen had four servants. The Crescent was by no means childless.

Behind the enumerator's fading copyplate writing there must lie many untold stories. When they were not organising the servant how did all these women occupy

their time? Were they engaged in the many charity organisations in which Bath abounded? Were they conscious of the poverty around Avon Street? Were they shocked that in 1841 Bath returned to Parliament what the Bath Chronicle described as:

"Two disciples of revolution.... Hot bed of all that is wild, reckless and revolutionary in policies"

The two revolutionaries were of course J.R. Roebuck and Major General Palmer, both radicals.

Contrary to what we think the Crescent must have been a hive of activity in the C19th. In 1871 there were something like 150 living-in servants (see issue Summer 1993, page 8). Did these servants know one another? Was there a coterie of butlers? Did the nursemaids meet and gossip on the sacred lawn? Were there ever romances between the servants? The unhappy plight of the servants seems to be a constant concern to visitors to No: 1, but this is what E.P. Thompson calls 'the enormous condescension of posterity.' (3) At a time when nearly a third of the citizens of Bath were receiving help from the Poor Rate, getting into good domestic service was considered a reasonable aspiration. Servants in the Crescent were housed and fed and we know from the 1780 inventory at No: 14 that there, at least, the garrets were well furnished with carpets, curtains, mirrors, cupboards and goose feather beds and there was a special 'Necessary' in the garden which is something they would not have had in rural Somerset! Something else they would not

have had in the country was medical attention; we know from the hospital records that employers being subscribers were able to get medical care for their servants and we know from the admission books that servants did indeed receive care, though how much good it did is a moot point.

As I sit here in what was, presumably the house keepers, Jane Whatley's sitting room for 30 years and admire the view, I reflect that perhaps life for the servant class in the Crescent was not too bad. I feel sure Jane had an open fire.

- (1) R.S. Neale - "Bath A Social History 1680 - 1850", Routledge.
- (2) Edwin Chadwick 1842 - "The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population of Great Britain", reprinted Longman 1965.
- (3) E.P. Thompson 1963 - "The Making of the English Working Class", Pelican Books. ©

Monica E. Baly

### Notes From The Editor

Many thanks for the contributions to this Winter Newsletter.

We are all interested in the business and pleasure of the Crescent gossip! So please do not hesitate to send in your thoughts. Surely the Crescent was always a place of activity and Monica Baly

### The Royal Crescent 1

has written a charming study of life in the C19th.

Neighbourhood watch is an important feature this time and there are many other interesting items to digest.

It is never too soon to think about the Spring Newsletter so we look forward to hearing from you. ☺

Caroline Carrier