

# PROCEEDINGS

## OF THE

### HISTORY OF BATH RESEARCH GROUP



No: 3

2014-15

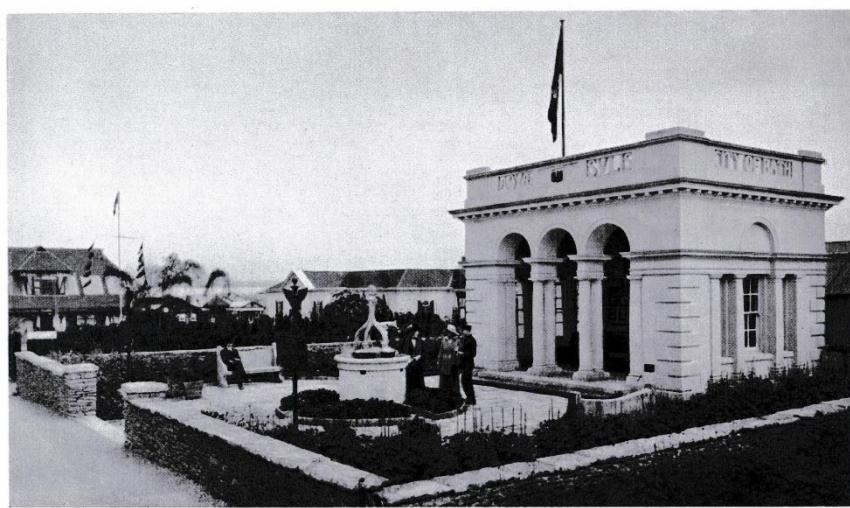
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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third edition of our “Proceedings” covering meetings from September 2014 through to June 2015.

It was ninety years ago in 1925 that the British Empire Exhibition closed at the end of its two year run at Wembley Park in North London. It showcased the wealth of the Empire ranging from the vast pavilions of Australia and Canada thorough the exotic architecture of those of Burma, Ceylon and India, to a recreation of a West African village. All were populated by the peoples of the countries involved who introduced to many of those lucky enough to visit the exhibition, their first taste of the foods and culture of those far off countries.



A. T. Taylor,

The adjacent photograph shows the stone pavilion that was Bath City Council’s more classical offering “set in a little garden of Bath grown flowers”, that was very fitting as following closure, it was brought back to Bath in 1926 and now resides in the Botanical Gardens in Royal Victoria Park, surrounded by Bath grown flowers.

## MEETING REPORTS

## THE CLEVELAND POOLS

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Dr. Linda Watts

Notes Dr. Linda Watts

The Cleveland Pleasure Baths (now known as the Cleveland Pools) are the oldest outdoor public swimming pool or lido in the UK and they are thus an important illustration of the history of organised swimming.

The whole crescent of the main Pool buildings is original.

A central two storey cottage is flanked symmetrically on either side by wings of six changing cubicles. The cottage is one room deep, the front and rear walls curve with the crescent. The slate roof is original and other details are original such as the cast iron range and a cast iron hob grate in an upper room. There is a central arched opening leading from the entrance pathway to the main pool, with indications that bathing tickets were issued in the lobby within the opening. The main pool was emptied for a technical assessment



in 2010 and an ingenious original sluice for the incoming river water could be seen, plus it was confirmed that two springs came up from the base of the pool.

The Pools site is located on the river Avon. The access is from Hampton Row – it is ten minutes' walk from Sydney Gardens. The site would have had trees and planting to reflect taste in the Romantic era. It is on the banks of the river and separated from the river by a low bank. It is hidden away now and when it was opened it would have been very secluded, on undeveloped land yet within a relatively short distance from the hubbub of the fashionable city.

## The Spa in decline and the growth of sea bathing

By 1815 mixed bathing in the spa was not respectable – it was associated with perceptions of rowdy and scandalous behaviour. The spa baths had been very crowded and hectic and the ‘season’ was noted for the appearance of itinerant rogues, vagabonds and petty criminals. Fashionable society was more likely to use other spas, for example those at Cheltenham. So the first subscribers desired not only to use the Baths facilities but also to use relatively private and sedate facilities.

The late 18<sup>th</sup> century saw medical opinion tending to focus on sea bathing and on the benefits of cold water bathing, including open air cold water baths. Physicians considered that cold water bathing was particularly helpful for chronic conditions such as gout and arthritis and for improving fertility in men. Weymouth and Lyme Regis were the closest sea bathing resorts to Bath. Bathing activities were of course limited to those with sufficient resources and leisure time.

## **The Duke of Cleveland**

William Vane, the Duke of Cleveland, had inherited the Bathwick Estate in 1808 through an indirect line of descent, with the major land holdings being in north east England. In 1809 William Bourne, a speculative developer, was granted a lease by the Duke. The lease was a form of ‘gentleman’s agreement’, never formalised, relating to the land in the Bathwick area by the river. The original intention was speculative – to build houses on the site in the context of the proposed new town to the east of the city centre. The Baths were on the very eastern edge of the Estate and would have been adjacent to the significant planned development to the east of Sydney Gardens that in the event did not proceed, due to the economic impacts of the Napoleonic Wars. The Baths were constructed adjacent to the marl pits. These are pits by the river where a mix of lime and earth had been dug out for use in improving soil texture and productivity – this was useful in an area that was characterised by small market garden plots. The pits filled with water and effectively became popular mud baths. Locals in Bath resorted to these after nude bathing in the river was forbidden by the Bathwick Water Act of 1801. Nude river bathing was popular for men in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but safety became an important consideration as there were regular newspaper stories of accidental drowning associated with bathing in rivers and lakes.

## **Napoleonic Wars**

The Wars had started in 1803 – the prolonged period of war was massively expensive and towns and cities including Bath were required to contribute levies that caused significant financial strain. The wider impact put a stop to building development and bankruptcy was common for speculative builders and banks. Two of Bath’s banks ‘went broke,’ and buildings in the city stood unfinished. The plans for extensive new development in the Bathwick area never came to fruition.

## **Opening of the Baths in 1815**

The subscription list for the Baths opened in 1815, to gauge interest and to raise funds. The Bath Weekly Chronicle on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1815 stated that a subscription book had been opened for the purpose, at Messrs. James Evill and Son’s, and Messrs Bourne and Austin’s, Market-place, and at the Kingston Pump room.

Non swimmers were accommodated in the subscription arrangements. The subscription list was composed of males – provision for separate female swimming was created later in 1827. There were around 85 original subscribers. The fee was one or two guineas – one guinea for younger men. Or ‘gratis’ if services were provided – an example is John Pinch the Elder who provided his architectural services. The subscription list shows that the subscribers were predominantly from the developing middle class. Professions ranging from medicine to engraving and music are represented plus many significant traders having shop premises. A significant proportion were involved in running the city including the Mayor.

## **Examples of the original subscribers**

**Gye Frederick** .Printer and bookseller initially with the family business. Instrumental in the relaunch of the very popular and notorious Vauxhall Gardens in London in 1822. Maintained links with this area after moving to London and stood as general election candidate for Chippenham, elected unopposed in 1826.

**Loder J.** Musician – one of a musical family involved with providing music for the Theatre Royal in Bath.

**Moger G.** Banker - a private bank was established in Union Street, Bath, in 1815. Dore, Smith, Moger & Evans from 1815, also known as Bath City Bank. Smith & Moger in 1822, Smith, Moger & Evans in 1825, Moger & Son in 1834. Moger solicitors in Bath share the same family name and indications are that there is a line of descent from George Moger.

**Deare James** Frame maker, carver and gilder, Son of John Deare who framed some pictures for Gainsborough.

**Hume Spry Joseph.** Physician - published ‘Practical Treatise on the Bath Waters’ in 1822 advocating the use of bath waters for health benefits. Later to practise at the Bailbrook Asylum located in Bailbrook House, originally established as an asylum by his uncle.

Henry Goodridge Architect - work includes the Cleveland Bridge at Bathwick then the Corridor where he was the architect and developer. Designed the Cleveland Bridge and Beckford's Tower.

John, William and Henry Stothert, George Stothert junior. George Stothert founded an ironmongery business in Bath in 1785. By 1796 Stothert had been supplying Abraham Derby II with castings for his iron foundry at Coalbrookdale. By the turn of the century they were making ornamental ironwork, cast iron footbridges, agricultural machinery, and even exporting to New York. By 1815 there was a separate iron foundry, and in 1836, Henry Stothert, son of the founder, set up his works in Bristol.

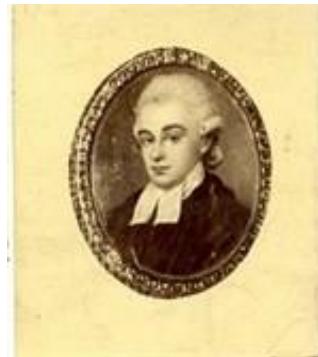
Charles Philott. (Mayor) born abt 1746, son of the Archdeacon of Bath, Charles Philott was a banker and developer, who had led the fundraising campaign in Bath to support the war against the French. Mayor for the third time in 1814/15.

The baths afforded both relaxation and privacy to an identifiable group to conduct their business at a time when they were contending with social turbulence and challenge.

### Post Napoleonic Wars

In 1827 Newport, the builder and developer, went bankrupt - this led to the transfer of the Baths to the Reverend Race Godfrey. An immediate change was provision for women's bathing – a ladies pool with a perpetual shower bath. The Reverend was a Methodist minister whose vision was that education and exercise were invaluable for young people. So the Baths' users changed very significantly as a social group and were to change again with wider use in the Victorian period.

Reverend Race Godfrey >



### Victorian Era – stunts and spectacle

A number of schools used the pools for annual swimming events or more regular swimming. The Bath Boating Station organised very popular regattas and there were joint events that became increasingly popular with bigger and bigger crowds looking on. The Baths are 200 yards upstream from the Boating Station. A Captain Evans was now in charge of the Baths, possibly as Godfrey's tenant. He would have himself hoisted above the pool to dive into 7ft of water wearing a tall hat 'to protect his head!' Captain Evans also attracted crowds to the regattas. He was an entertainer and an expert in the art of escapology – a 'Houdini'. He would be thrown into the river 'helplessly' bound in chains and then after a long interval he would appear on the bank dressed in a change of clothes and reading a newspaper. There are newspaper articles about him jumping into the pool through flaming hoops and other stunts.

He was also renowned for 'skydiving' – from every bridge on the Avon in the bath area. His highest ambition was to dive off the Bristol Suspension Bridge when the tide was full. Bristol City Council as it was then, took a different view as they considered it to be suicidal and they had no wish to be associated with it. Evans taught swimming at the Pools (Baths as they were known) for over twenty five years. But he was not a real naval Captain.

Captain Evans – a recent sketch >



### Bath Corporation Takes Over

In 1898/9 The Baths closed due to the liquidation of the current owners (the Bath College Company of Grosvenor Place) – this marked the end of private ownership. The corporation allocated some funds for improvements – an equal amount to the funds allocated to the Spa. The usage of the Cleveland Baths by local people was very significant. In the summer of 1908, 45000 people used the baths and at times they were seriously overcrowded. The first resident Superintendent appointed by the Corporation was Samuel Inkerman Bailey, who had been a diver with the Royal Navy and had served on the Royal Yacht.

The popularity of Lidos from the 1930s onwards promoted the popular use of the Pools in the summer season every year, but later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, indoor leisure centres with heated pools were the new trend. In Bath the use of the outdoor pools declined after the new sports centre opened. The Pools closed and were reinstated for a season in 1984-5 during refurbishment of the Sports Centre then closed altogether and used as a trout farm for a period.

### **The restoration project**

The Cleveland Pools Trust was set up in 2005 in a period when the council had put the Pools site on the open market for sale. The main purpose of the Cleveland Pools Trust is now to drive forward a significant HLF funded national project - the restoration for the public use of the only surviving Georgian open air public swimming facility in the UK. Raising matched funding is a significant objective. There is wide public support for the restoration project partly promoted by the thousands of Bath's residents who swam at the Cleveland Pools in their youth.

Visit the website <http://www.clevelandpools.org.uk/>

## THE MUSIC OF GEORGIAN BATH

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2014      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Dr Matthew Spring

## **Summary by Dr Matthew Spring**

For much of the Georgian period Bath was central to the nation's cultural development in bringing together a fabulous concentration of activity into a vibrant, fashionable and convenient environment. It was assessable not just to the rich, but also the burgeoning gentry classes. Under Nash's rules Bath life had its own code of manners that transcended normal social barriers, and was welcoming and easily negotiated by both sexes. The buildings of Bath reflect the city's past activities and many of its historic interior and exterior spaces were designed with music in mind: gardens, assemblies, balls, and chapels were all places that were important for social interaction facilitated by and through music. Bath gave women in particular a degree of social freedom and mobility they were too often denied in London with its many male-only clubs and societies. This is important if we consider that domestic music-making was dominated by women.



## **Comforts of Bath: 'Concert at the Upper Rooms'**

BATVG : PD : 2000.6 Print

Rowlandson, Thomas - 1798

As the leading spa town in Britain (if not the first), Bath had the unique position of being both on the international circuit as a musical venue, arguably second only to London, and in having a vibrant musical life of its own geared to the genteel amusements and diversions of the ‘season’. Within the Georgian period the city could boast a body of resident musicians, some of international repute and foreign birth, who provided music teaching, compositions, and performances for the many overlapping circles of musical activity that were created by the season and the townspeople. The circles centred on the several assembly rooms for concerts and balls; pump rooms, baths, walks and gardens for exercise and health; the theatres for Lenten oratorios, pre-concert music, and songs and incidental music within dramatic performances; the abbey, churches, and chapels both private and non-conformist for religion; and the several pleasure gardens for outside entertainment.

These city musicians could provide musical expertise and all the materials of music to service a population that rose to over 30,000 during the period. Much of the population only stayed for a relatively short periods, but it was moneyed and expected musical entertainment. On top of this activity most leading musicians of the age resident for any length of time in England (Handel, Straube, Arne, Geminiani, Fischer, Abel, J. C. Bach, Salomon, Cramer, Storage, Tenducci, Janiewicz, Hayes {father and son}, Dibdin, Dussek) visited Bath, most to perform, some doing so frequently. Famous musicians visiting more briefly from abroad (Haydn, Dragonetti, Marin, Paganini, Liszt etc.), visited Bath as part of international concert life.

There are two features of the music in Bath in the Georgian era that mark it out from other centres including London. One is the number and range of concert type activity in close proximity - all within easy walking distance. The other is the early professionalisation of the music provision. This meant that the societies and clubs that did allow amateur involvement in music making, often alongside professionals, were slower to develop than elsewhere. Bath was also a centre of music teaching where amateurs could gain access of leading teachers. Overall Georgian Bath was an extraordinarily musical place.

Beau Nash arrived in 1704 and his taking up the role of Master of Ceremonies in 1708 marks a real turning point as he set about formulating the Rules of Decorum and their enforcement that were at the heart of the town's success in drawing visitors. He effectively 'removed' the city from England – giving the attractions of going abroad without having to leave the country, and setting himself up as social monarch. His rules seem fairly

bland - he banned swords, and ladies boots at balls, - but they served to ensure that upper and middle classes would interact on an egalitarian basis. One of his first acts as Master was to raise funds for a 'Music Subscription' for the purpose of paying a professional band of three players and installing them for morning concerts in the new Pump Rooms that had opened 1706. This band grew steadily during the following decades and is still there today, as the longest continuously active ensemble in the world and, celebrating its 300 anniversary in 2005.

The first purpose-built assembly rooms were constructed in 1708 on the Terraced Walks, near the Abbey and river. These rooms remained until 1820, and were referred to as 'Harrison's' or after 1745 as 'Simpsons'. When the New Assembly Rooms were built in 1771 they became known as the 'Old' or 'Lower Rooms'. These rooms had attached grounds and 'walks' by the river, which were also used for music. In the years up to 1714 many of the elements were put in place for the city to become the country's leading resort for the remainder of the century.

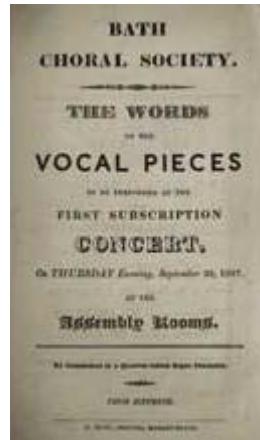


Harrison's Gardens and walks  
BATVG : PD : 1926.17 Watercolour  
Lansdown, Henry Venn - c. 1855

The first phase of Bath's great expansion around 1730 produced a number of public buildings including Royal Mineral Hospital and a set of Assembly Rooms 1729 (also known as Wiltshire's, Mrs Lovelace's and Gyde's) built opposite Simpson's.

The second building phase produced a new theatre (the Orchard Street, opened 1750), and theatres always included much music and often a 'concert' before the evening's dramatic proceedings began. The theatre secured a royal patent in 1768 - around the time the third and greatest expansion of Bath occurred under John Wood the Younger producing the great buildings - the New Pump Rooms, the Royal Crescent, the Circus and the New Assembly Rooms designed 1769.

By 1780 Bath's main entertainment venues were in place, the first purpose-built Pleasure Gardens in the form of the Spring Gardens (and later Sydney Gardens), a Royal Theatre, two sets of Assembly Rooms offering balls and concerts on separate nights, an Abbey and an increasing number of fashionable churches and chapels that featured music, an emerging Catch Club and numerous inns, taverns and coffee houses which also served as music venues. Much of this music was available year round but during the season (late September to March) public entertainment was available on most nights other than Sunday, on which days music was at hand in the service of public worship. In theory the different forms of music provision dovetailed to allow maximum scope for musicians and promoters. In practice after Nash's death there were incessant squabbles and problems in juggling events, musicians and audiences. The music provision altered in the first decades of the nineteenth-century to allow for new forms of musical participation in the form of Bath Choral Society 1819, and the Music festivals centred on the Abbey and Freemason's Hall, and in the changed nature of balls and subscription concerts.



Many of those who visited Bath did so in part to gain access to the means to further their own musical skills and experience, through expertise that was not easily available outside of London. This much is clear from biographies and diaries from the time. In catering for the luxury trade Bath could provide instruments and music for sale or hire, and a range of expert teachers. A considerable amount of music was published in Bath, especially in the second half of the century, and more was brought down from London on a weekly basis, and the circulating

libraries included music, which could be borrowed for fixed terms. Instruments were sold in Bath, guitars and harps in particular. Johannes Zumpe, the inventor of the square piano's guitars were to be found at Gill's pastry shop in Wade's passage, and advertised in Bath as maker of the guitar and a new instrument called the 'Amantor'(viola d'amore) There were other instrument-makers in eighteenth-century Bath, among them: John Holland, organ builder; John Morris, violin-maker; Benjamin Milgrove, brass instrument maker; Edward Boehman, pianoforte maker. Among the many music shop owners in Georgian Bath the most notable were Thomas Underhill from the 1740s, followed by Benjamin Milgrove in the 1760s, then Linterns in the 1780s and later Andrew and John David Loder in the early nineteenth-century.

Many musicians combined the three activities of composing, performing and teaching. Herschel, Linley senior and Rauzzini certainly did all this and we know quite a bit about how musicians in Bath, developed and operated their teaching practices and how they altered over time. Eighteenth-century musicians typically would teach a wide range of instruments and singing, indeed strove sometimes had to learn exotic instruments their pupils wished to play. Herschel for instance also taught the guitar – along with keyboard, singing, cello oboe and violin – and would travel some distance to visit wealthy pupils. However by the early nineteenth-century and the rise of romantic virtuosity a greater degree of specialisation was the norm. Together with singing and the ever-popular guitar and harp tuition, lessons on the piano were increasingly being called for.

In the final decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the development of toyshops into 'repositories – forerunners of modern 'department store' was taking place. On the abandoned assembly rooms on the west side of Terrace walk (Wiltshire's) William Glover and J. L. Newman expanded their toyshop enterprise (based not only on toys but on variety of fancy goods – snuff boxes, jewellery, spectacles, etc.), in include musical instruments among other things from the disused Wiltshire's Assembly Rooms. Then Glover's showrooms moved to first 39 and then 40 Milson Street presenting 'one of the finest displays of manufactures In the whole country' including a range of musical instruments (even church organs). In the early nineteenth-century, like a modern music retail shop, instruments could be hired or bought, a range of music was available for purchase, and premises were hireable for practice or performance. John David Loder combined his career as a violist (leader of the Theatre Royal Orchestra), and as a publisher based at his repository at 46 Milson Street until his removal to London before 1840. He was head of a remarkable musical dynasty that stretched across to America and the Empire, and produced the well-known *General and Comprehensive Instruction Book for the Violin* (1814) in Bath. Andrew Loder, uncle of John David, was another Bath music composer, publisher and musician, operating from his warehouse at 4 Orange Grove (1820-26). Bath was acknowledged as cheaper than London and it may well have been that tuition and musical hardware – music and instruments, etc. could be obtained at a lesser cost, when compared to London but without compromising quality.



2015 will see a celebration of the Loder Family in Bath with a conference in October 2015 at the Hoburne Museum, recordings works by Edward James Loder, exhibitions and performances of the works by members of the Loder family.

## SMALLCOMBE CEMETERY

Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2015      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

Speaker

Alistair Cowen - Friends of St Mary's Churchyards

Abstract

Alistair Cowen

It was decided to briefly cover the history of Smallcombe and concentrate more on the recent successful Lottery application and the improvements that will result. The Lottery are providing £48.6k and £20k was raised from other sources including the Council. The principle object of the Friends has been to make all graves accessible and to enhance their existing special character of the cemetery.

There are two graveyards generally known as Smallcombe. St Mary the Virgin was laid out in 1855 and opened in 1856. It is owned by the Church but has been closed to new burials since 1988 except where plots have been reserved or space exists in family graves. The Chapel was designed by Thomas Fuller who went on to design the parliamentary buildings in Ottawa and became the Chief Architect to the Canadian Government.



Smallcombe Vale cemetery is adjoining and separated by a wall which runs from the entrance up to the wall bordering Smallcombe Wood. The land was bought by the Bathwick Burial Board and a line of stones separates the Anglican from Nonconformist burials. The Chapel was designed by Henry Edmond Goodridge. Both cemeteries are currently maintained by the Council although this was almost entirely limited to mowing once a month for six months. At the request of the Friends and to encourage wild flowers, no cutting now takes place until the end of June with a further cut in November.



At St Mary the Virgin there were over 5000 burials and 2000 memorials. In Smallcombe Vale some 2000 burials. A recent analysis carried out by Dr Philip Bendall of the occupations of those buried showed up the contrast between the life expectancy of the professional classes and the degree to which they were remembered by memorials or in the case of many of the poor, none at all. Dr Bendall in cooperation with the Bathwick Local History Society has recorded all of the inscriptions at both cemeteries together with maps and biographies where known. This information can be obtained at the Bath Record Office at the Guildhall.



The memorials provide us with a store of information of both nationally and locally known figures. The first burial was John Strut Brown shown as a naturalist but in modern terms a taxidermist. There are several military graves the most senior burial being that of Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Astley Callaghan who died in 1920 and whose public funeral took place both in London and Bath. There is also the remarkable Lt Colonel John Maitland Hardymon who was the youngest Colonel in the Army having won both the DSO and MC killed in 1918 and buried in France. His monument which includes other members of the family was recently restored with money raised

from various sources by Sheila Edwards of the Bathwick Local History Society. George Fosbery's VC was won on the NW Frontier in 1863 and he is buried with his wife and brother. He died in Bath in 1907. The impressive Hales family memorial commemorating Major General Hales and his two sons killed in the Great War was recently restored by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at the request of the Friends. The CWGC are responsible for a further six graves.

Other burials include Frederick Weatherly QC who wrote a remarkable number of lyrics including Danny Boy and Roses of Picardy and Herbert and Cynthia Asquith, he being the son of the Prime Minister. Major Davis who supervised the excavation of the Roman Baths and built the Empire Hotel is commemorated by a Saxon cross similar to that discovered during the excavation. Thomas Montgomerie FRS buried in 1878 joined the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India and appointed to the Kashmir Survey during which time he named K2 or Mount Godwin-Austen. There is the memorial to the Houseman family and such local interest as Moses Pickwick great grandson of the Moses Pickwick found abandoned as a baby at Pickwick, Corsham and baptised with the name of the place of his birth. Four memorials are listed Grade 2.

As a part of the improvements there will be information boards at the entrances and for those with smart phones it will be possible by accessing the QR codes to learn considerably more about the history and natural history of the cemeteries. Individual graves of interest, probably up to twenty, will have a plaque with a brief description but with greater detail available using QR.

Our application to the Lottery was in the Heritage category so it was important not only to emphasise and explain the history and natural history that is available but also how it can be communicated to a greater number of people. Key to this has been the cooperation with the National Trust whose Skyline Walk website which attracts roughly 11000 enquiries but not all of whom wish to complete the full walk. As an alternative a diversion through Smallcombe Wood and down through the cemetery will benefit both the NT and the Friends.

Before this can happen it is necessary to repair the wall particularly in the vicinity of where a stile will be installed between the wood and cemetery. Other parts of the wall vary between sections in good condition and where a complete collapse has taken place. The current route used by dog walkers below where the stile will be situated needs to be made safe but otherwise the paths are in satisfactory condition.

The Friends applied to the Lottery to restore many of the crosses laid flat in recent years. This would have added greatly to the appearance and atmosphere but was turned down on the grounds that, desirable as this may be, it did not add to the heritage value. A small amount has been allocated to restore a very limited number. Those graves where the plinths for the crosses are level and stable can be restored for £100. A project for the future and perhaps a possibility for sponsorship..

The whole of Smallcombe Vale is a conservation area and any removal or trimming of trees requires permission. Together with the Trees and Woodlands department of the Council a limited number of trees were identified as needing to be removed due to age, proximity to the Chapel, overcrowding or being detrimental to monuments. Many graves cannot be reached due to low hanging branches and undergrowth. We have the authority to remove these up to a height of 2.5m in order to make graves accessible.

The laurel that has become very overgrown particularly along the dividing wall will be cut back to form a hedge which is likely to have been the original intention. Laurel has no benefit for nature and opening up these areas will encourage the spread of wild flowers. The Friends are receiving advice on the management of the natural environment from the Bath Natural History Society who are carrying out surveys which so far indicate a greater biodiversity than might normally be expected.

Unfortunately the Chapel is privately owned and therefore cannot be considered for a grant from the Lottery. It is regrettable that the present owner who paid the extraordinary amount of £70k has neglected to maintain the property in spite of a covenant to do so by the Church Commissioners. Meetings have recently been arranged with the owner, his architect and representatives from the Council. It would appear that the Council are prepared to insist on repairs being carried out whatever the outcome of the owner's planning application may be. His architect expressed the view that the condition of the building could deteriorate very rapidly if nothing is done soon. The success of the Lottery bid does appear to have highlighted the need for action and the Friends will continue to push for a satisfactory outcome.



Anyone wishing to be kept up to date with progress is invited to become a Friend of St Mary's Churchyards (£5.00 p.a.) and will receive a regular newsletter. Kindly email [alastaircowan@uwclub.net](mailto:alastaircowan@uwclub.net)

# DIARY OF A WARTIME DOCTOR IN BATH AND CHIPPENHAM

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2015      St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

**Speaker** Dr Ruth Skrine

**Abstract** Dr Ruth Skrine



The subject of this talk was the diary of Ruth's mother, Dr Joan Hickson, who qualified as a doctor from University College Hospital London. Although she kept a diary all her life the writing only came alive after the Bath Blitz and lost its fire at the end of the war. Ruth has therefore edited the book, *Carry on Coping* - pub. Ex Libris Press\*, to cover the years 1942-1945.



Joan was married to a GP and they lived in Chippenham. The couple ran their surgery from the house they built for the purpose which they called Green Gables.



As well as helping with surgeries, especially when her husband was called out to deliver a baby or to attend some accident, the author worked in schools and at home in her speciality of ophthalmology. For short periods she also acted as locum in a village practice, keeping it together so that the young doctor who had been called away to the war would have a living to return to when he was demobilised. Two mornings each week, for many years, she drove into Bath to work at the Bath Eye Infirmary. This work was unpaid until the introduction of the NHS in 1948.

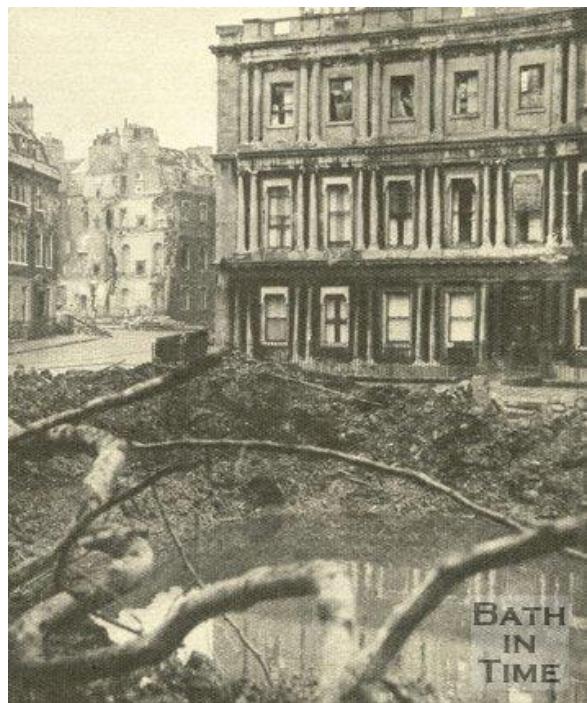
## The Bath Eye Infirmary, Belvedere >

c. Bath in Time - Bath Central Library  
(Donated by the son of surgeon Mr Richard Colley)  
Image Reference: 37107. Collection Reference: F22 / 1 >



The book opens with a detailed description of driving round Bath the day after the bombing. She describes her journey street by street, driving over glass and debris. It took her two and a half hours to reach the Eye Infirmary where she found blood on the steps. The house was acting as a first aid station and matron was coping with rows of wounded patients. During the subsequent days she returned to help clear up the mess. She also came into Bath whenever she could with her husband Eric to help their medical friends living in the Circus whose houses had been badly damaged.

The bomb crater in the Circus, Bath, April 1942 >  
c. Bath in Time - Bath Central Library  
Image Reference: 52004. Collection Reference: Pamphlets



BATH  
IN  
TIME

Interspersed with these dramatic experiences she records the daily life of their medical household. Joan was a passionate women with strong views, including a dislike of the church. During the editing process Ruth added a preface where she tries to explain this antipathy. She also inserted a list of characters at the beginning of the book, and her sister added an epilogue to give a flavour of the author in old age. There are many footnotes to explain medical terms and family relationships together with places and incidents of national importance during the war. Difficulties met during the preparation of these footnotes were discussed, including the search to understand what was meant by 'plans for Chippenham to become a tank island.'

Three children and various family pets twine through the story. Family holidays, at a time of very little or no basic petrol, are described in some detail. Together with medical experiences there are many comments on the progress of the war. To quote from the back of the book;

*"We seem to be living in such extraordinary times and doing such extraordinary things that the random jottings of the doing of an ordinary middle-class family might be of interest, even if only to one's children."*

The blurb then goes on. 'As indeed they are, and not simply for her children.'



This middle class household was in a privileged position, with two maids and a full time gardener.

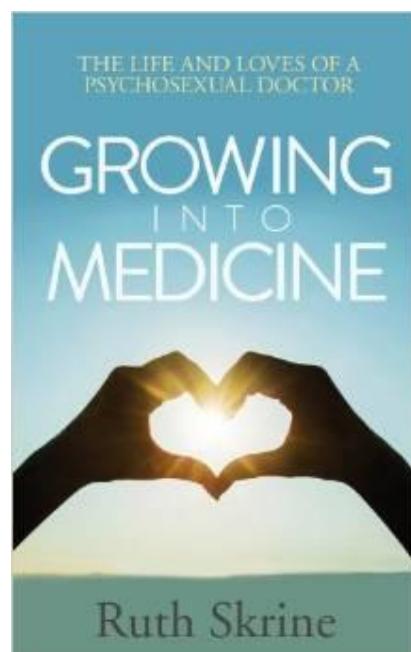
Despite her left wing political ideas Joan was very conscious of their position in the town. This led to a number of ethical dilemmas such as whether they should 'jump the queue' when getting the garden scythe sharpened; or whether such small services were an appropriate recompense from patients whom they had attended at all hours of the day and night for many years.

The cottage hospital in the town was run by the GPs with visits from consultants who came out from Bath to do outpatients, operating lists and home visits with any GP who wanted a second opinion. Joan was always keen to offer them food at whatever time of day or night they were in the town. But providing food in a time of rationing could be a problem. In one place she wrote that supper was rather strange as they had run out of everything. All she could produce was beans mashed with bacon and sardine patties – but the consultant ate it without complaint.

The speaker compared a small childhood incident recorded in her mother's diary with the account of the same event in her own memoir, *Growing into Medicine*, published in 2014\*. This raised the question of the reliability of memory, which was taken up by several members of the audience during the discussion. Another question of interest was whether priests went into the trenches during the First World War. Joan believed they did not but one member has evidence that they certainly did, and were very much appreciated by the troops.

In a time before e-mail or mobile phones the wireless and papers were the main sources of communication although loud speaker vans were sometimes used. Rumours were rife and the speaker read out a list of such rumours written on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1944. The last extract was taken from an entry three weeks later and consisted of a description of the garden, 'so freshly green,' with its many different flowers. The reading finished with the words ..."There is the feeling that each moment in this sunny English garden is almost too precious to bear and we ought not to be enjoying it so much on the eve of such frightful slaughter."

\* Books discussed by the Speaker:



## THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN BATH

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

Speaker

David Pearce

Abstract

David Pearce



Bath PSA Co-operative Society's main premises in Chelsea Buildings on the London Road. This shop would have stood between Snow Hill and the Esso garage on London Road. It had a Co-operative Hall on the top floor which could be accessed from Berkeley Street on Snow Hill.

Any history of co-operative societies invariably begins by acknowledging the contribution of 'The Rochdale Pioneers' who set up their food store in 1844. Whilst there were clearly earlier examples of other experiments in co-operation as a form of business enterprise (Robert Owen's New Lanark being the most obvious) the 28 Lancashire weavers who established their enterprise in Toad Lane, Rochdale are identified as the instigators of the modern movement. So successful was their society that by 1854 there were over 1000 local societies across the country all organised according to the principles set out by 'The Pioneers'.

By 1863 the number of local societies had grown to such an extent that they realised they could be even more successful if they created a mutually owned buying and wholesaling function and thus the powerful Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) was created and established in Manchester which is still the home of the movement today. In the same way as the local societies were owned and democratically controlled by their members so the CWS was owned and controlled by the many societies. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the CWS had regional depots (including Bristol), a small fleet of ocean going vessels, plantations and farms across the world and huge manufacturing operations.

News of the success of the nation's co-operative societies eventually reached Bath. The mining community in Radstock was an early adopter of the principles of co-operation and formed a society in 1868. Whilst the Somerset coalfield was more obviously fertile territory for the movement there was also some agitation amongst the growing proletariat in Bath and in 1861 Sir Isaac Pitman (the inventor of shorthand) helped to form The Good Intent Co-operative Society which set up in St Michael's Place. As the name implies his motivation was not unconnected with this belief in working class temperance and he (or his brother Henry who edited a national magazine called 'The Co-operator) is often credited with the introduction of the hyphen in co-operation to differentiate the word from the making of barrels! This was followed by another society called the 'Bath Equitable co-operative Society" which was established in Upper Borough Walls. In 1867 "The Bath Reformed Society" was created and the following year the "Bath City Industrial Co-operative Society" was registered and established in Monmouth Street. Unfortunately by 1870 all these societies had failed and "The Bath Equitable" had burned down!

Undaunted there was still pressure to create a new society in Bath. This time the energy came from Benjamin Colbourne a railway guard on the Midland Railway working out of Green Park. He had seen co-operatives work well in the Midlands and contacted the Guild of Co-operators for advice. He was fortunate in finding that another Bathonian, Hodgson Pratt had instigated the creation of the Guild and was happy to provide advice. By a further happy coincidence he contacted another son of the city, E. Vanisittart Neale who directed the Central Co-operative Board which organised speakers to explain the aims of co-operation. Keen to see a society in their home city, these two influential men gave Colbourne every encouragement and helped him realise his plans rapidly.

In November 1888 Colbourne got 25 like-minded enthusiasts together in St Peters Institute in Twerton who decided that the time had come to call a meeting of all those interested in forming a new society. It should be remembered that at this time Twerton- on- Avon was a parish outside Bath and would remain so until 1911. This was a rapidly growing working class area which includes streets we now know as Oldfield Park and population grew from about 3000 in 1851 to 11000 in 1901. Five days after the initial meeting a public meeting was called again in St Peters Institute. Addressed and encouraged by local woollen mill owner, Jonathan Carr and entertained by the Somerset and Dorset Railway Brass Band the meeting unanimously decided to form "The Bath and Twerton Co-operative Society" and elected a committee which included Benjamin Colbourne.



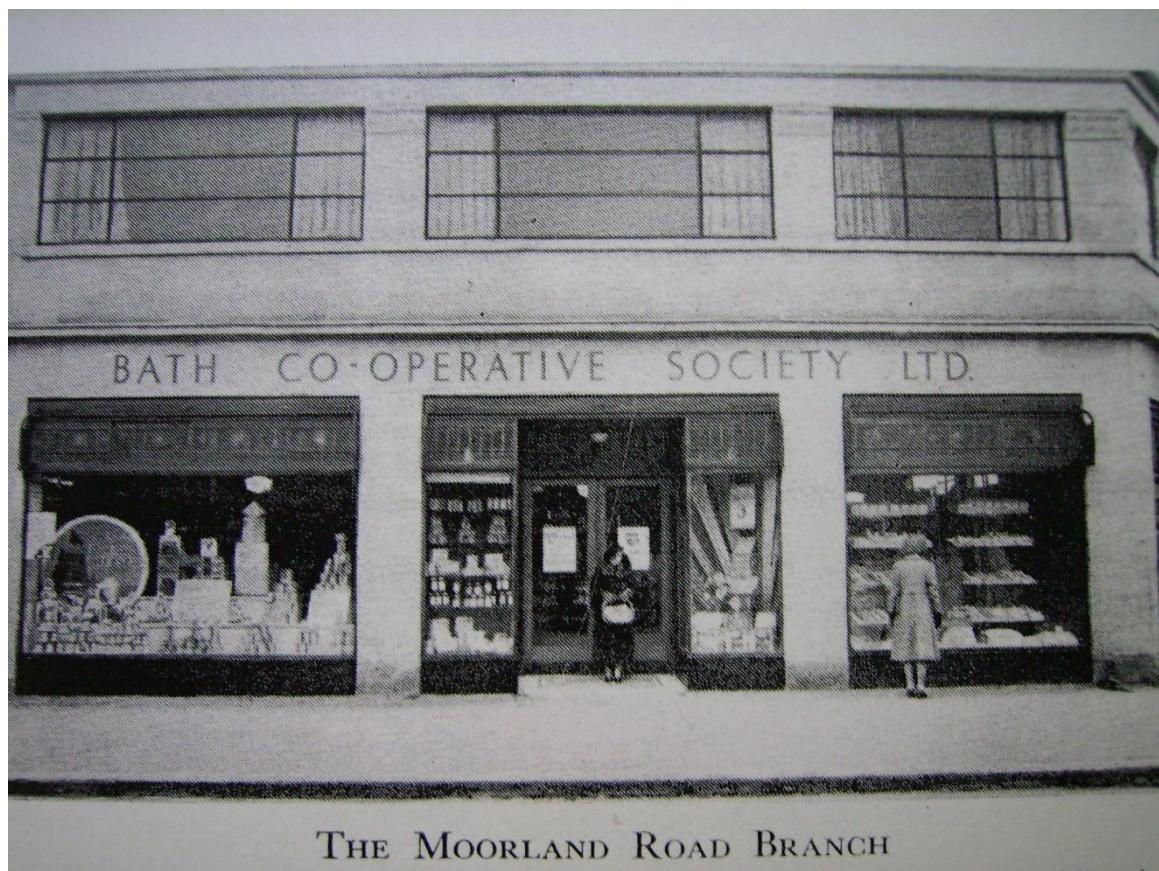
Twerton Co-operative Society's first working premises at 6, 7 and 8 St Peter's Terrace on the Lower Bristol Road. The earlier premises which they had to vacate was almost directly opposite in Victoria Buildings. The inaugural meeting was held at the institute behind St Peter's church in the background. The whole of the block used by the Co-op was demolished to facilitate road widening in the 1970s.

Disaster struck two days later when the good people of Twerton (who had provided 9 of the 12 recently elected committee members) expressed their extreme dissatisfaction at 'playing second fiddle to Bath'. The meeting was reconvened, the society rebadged "The Twerton Co-operative Society and the rules approved by the Registrar of Friendly Societies early in 1889.

The committee quickly recruited a young manager from Radstock and opened their first shop in Victoria Buildings. Sadly, the owner of the premises carried out some illegal alterations and neighbours were successful in closing the shop down. Fortunately, some retail premises opposite became available and the CWS stepped in with £1200 which allowed the committee to purchase their first real shop in 6,7 and 8 St Peter's Terrace.

Meanwhile, in Bath itself the urge to build a co-operative business within the City continued. In 1994 as Twerton opened the St Peter's Terrace premises some members of the congregation of The Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel in the Vineyards formed The Bath PSA Co-operative Society to serve the Walcot area. PSA stood for "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" and referred to groups organised by the (mainly non-conformist) churches intended to keep young men away from alcohol and other worldly distractions on the afternoon of each Sabbath. The largest store opened by this society was in Chelsea Buildings on the London Road.

For the next 30 years the two societies proceeded quite independently although Twerton was far more successful. Twerton opened shops in Lyndhurst Road, Claverton Street (Widcombe), Arlington Road and Augusta Terrace. By WW1 a coal depot had been opened on Midland Bridge Road, a Bakery in Melcombe Road and the first shops opened in Moorland Road, which was to become 'the co-operative capital of Bath'.



The first purpose built HQ of Bath Co-operative Society on the corner of Moorland Road and Shaftesbury Road. This building housed the society's offices and a meeting hall on the first floor. It remained the centre of co-operative activity until Westgate Buildings was opened in 1934.

In 1922 the two societies merged and although Twerton was about 10 times the size of Bath the new name adopted was "The Bath and Twerton Co-operative Society" - the name which had been rejected with such vehemence in 1888! The enlarged society grew and prospered. Shops were established across the City and outside its boundaries. There was still a need however for a large city centre department store and this now wealthy organisation searched for premises. The committee rejected some of the available premises like The Assembly Rooms and one side of Queens Square in favour a site at Westgate Buildings which required the demolition of some older buildings and the creation of a new modern emporium. In 1932 "Twerton" was dropped from the name and in 1934 a large city centre department store was opened in Westgate Buildings badged as "Bath Co-operative Society". This building was much admired for its modernity whilst retaining adherence to classical Georgian architecture,

By 1939 the Co-op was celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Bath and at this time half the population of Bath were members purchasing food, clothing, coal, insurance and funeral services from their society.

This pre and immediate post war period represented the high water mark for the Co-operative both locally and nationally. However, the fifties, sixties and seventies saw the growth of aggressive retail competition, the end of resale price maintenance, greater consumer affluence and a decline in notions of working class solidarity. The Co-operative movement found it difficult to combat these societal changes and the notion of the local Co-operative Society was reformed through amalgamation and eventually the creation of a national society called the Co-operative Group.

There are still co-operative stores in Bath but they are part of a national organisation and the days of conflict between co-operators based in Twerton and co-operators based in Bath seem long gone. However, the movement has survived and fought off the threats of demutualisation suffered by many of the nation's Building Societies during the Thatcher period and in a national rather than perhaps a local context remains true to the principles established by the Rochdale Pioneers over 170 years ago.



Bath Co-operative Society's new premises in Westgate Buildings opened in 1934. This large department store contained food, furniture and clothing departments as well as a bank, a restaurant and board room. It was sold off when the Co-operative Group decided to close all department stores.

## **“STUDENT SYMPOSIUM” - BATH SPA UNIVERSITY**

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2015**

**Museum of Bath at Work**

**Speakers:**

**Kate James, PhD student, Kevin Grieves, PhD student, Dr Jackie Collier**

### **❖ NEWTON PARK , 1946-1968: MEMORY AND PLACE’ - Kate James**

I research Newton Park, the main campus of Bath Spa University, a subject which has fascinated me since I began studying and first saw the estate in 2008. The first puzzle, back then, was why this amazing resource – a thousand years of English history – was so little used.

Enthusiastic to know more, during my final undergraduate year I began a voluntary role, looking at a collection of papers relating to the beginnings of Newton Park College, and dating from 1945. The college itself began in January 1946, with 45 women students, and has grown steadily since then, amalgamating with Bath’s other colleges of Higher Education – the Domestic Science College and the School of Art and eventually becoming Bath Spa University in 2005.

In these early stages, I also began a programme of oral history interviewing with former students and staff, which added life and colour to the more basic framework of the institutional documents. What emerged is a fascinating and complex narrative of twentieth century social history, which has broadened to encompass the history of each of our component colleges as well as the longer history of the Newton Park Estate itself, and much of this will be included in my final doctoral thesis, due for completion in around two to three years’ time.

Through the oral history interviewees, we have received many more contributions for what has become the university’s historical archive, ranging from photographs and letters to complete schemes of work, and as well as building the archive, these new additions have informed my research. The most exciting collection of documents from my perspective is the personal collection of Mary Dawson, the woman who was the first principal of Newton Park College, from its beginnings in 1946 until her retirement in 1968. I am delighted to tell you that she was ‘archivally minded’ and took pains to record the growth of the institution, gathering relevant and varied material which she collected in scrapbooks, folders and albums.

The gradual uncovering of the institution’s past has led to many discoveries. Several people mentioned that there had been a portrait of Miss Dawson, which was eventually discovered in the basement strongroom of Main House, along with several artefacts relating to the early years. They had been removed for various reasons in the past, but the attention we drew to them resulted in their reinstatement, to the particular delight of many, and particularly those from the early years, who had felt that their own memories were being swept away in the tide of change...

Oral history interviews have presented a deepening story, with many divergent opinions on the character of Mary Dawson, and her own papers present yet another series of impressions. In addition, the discovery and reformatting of cine films and reel to reel tapes has brought her to life – a thrilling bonus, and one of which most historians can only dream.

The longer history of the estate has been harder to trace. Two attempts have been made in the past, with small publications written in the 1950s by Professor Darlow Humphries, and in the 1980s by Professor Graham Davis. Both were involved with Newton Park – Humphries as a governor and Davis as history lecturer. Humphries working papers exist in the archive, and Graham has shared his papers with us for scanning (and of course I can speak to him directly) I have been able to reference both these historians, and also to reflect on their research methods, so different from todays. Humphries, for example, painstakingly wrote letters to all his contacts, retaining copies himself, so that we have the benefit of both sides of the correspondence. How much faster these things can be done today.



The Gatehouse at Newton Park. An inspirational setting for a History student. (Picture: Kate James)

Other material about Newton Park is being discovered and once alert to the details it is possible to patiently piece together multiple strands of information. Family connections have produced the family's Parliamentary and Coronation robes, as well as conversation with descendants of the Gore Langtons and scans of a wonderful photograph album from 1921.

Searches in the local and regional Record Offices have unearthed a wide range of documentary evidence, particularly the Bath Record Office, which has documents relating to the sale of the estate which I have researched for publication. But every type of research – primary, secondary, oral history testimony, conferences or even passing conversations – can produce results – for example, a chance conversation with a woman I sat beside on a train – an ex-student of Miss Dawson's – presented another opportunity to ask questions about life at the College. In fact it often seems as though the city is full of Newton Park alumni.

The modern story of Newton Park has not been told before, and it sheds new light on the era of the 1950s, often misunderstood as the time when women were forced back into the home after the freedoms of the Second World War. This myth of domesticity is far more nuanced of course (as is much in history) and my own research supports the view that the fifties were a decade of new choices, widening opportunities and women's expectations, as they took advantage of expansions in education and training. Following the passing of the 1944 Education Act, the country desperately needed teachers in large numbers. There was a chronic shortage of schoolteachers and we needed these young women's labour, their enthusiasm and their newly gained knowledge for the education of the next generation.

They in turn were often led and influenced by the generation of single women who had functioned against the backdrop of an earlier post-war period. Living through the losses and deprivations of First World War, the economic hardship of the 1920s and the establishing of the marriage bar in key professions, Mary Dawson was one such woman, and the primary source evidence of her own life strikingly demonstrates one woman's agency, choice and widening influence. She believed passionately in the education of the whole individual, and in the role of the teacher in the building of citizens and communities. She said that

'A teacher's college education is only the beginning of a life-long personal education, and cannot be isolated from the rest of life...by the very nature of her profession, she is, in a very small way, a leader of society...she is affecting the quality of the future when those children are grown up and can exercise power...she needs to be, at the same time, forward looking with her fingers on the pulse of a new emerging society, quick to see its growing points...'

Mary Dawson was a historian herself, and much of what we know about Newton Park's history today is largely due to her. Soon after the founding of the college, she began the process of research with the first students, and with Darlow Humphries himself. These documents have provided the starting points for all the investigation which has occurred since. During the 1950s and 60s, they had the opportunity to speak to those who had direct experience of the estate, who could remember details which have since been lost. Her own correspondence with one member of the family revealed just how little they themselves knew about the history of the estate, stating in one letter 'It is a pity more could not be found about the history of it after it was bought by the Langton family'.

When the college began, when Miss Dawson and her students faced the challenges of building a new community; the people of Bath supported them wholeheartedly. They were proud to say that they backed the city's higher education establishments, and to have a generation who would call Bath their alma mater. Today there are tensions around this relationship, even though so many thousands of students have contributed to life here over so many years.

The history of Bath is wonderfully rich, and with fascinating and enthralling events still to discover. The narrative of Newton Park is just one aspect of this rich history, and the estate which lies so close to the city of Bath has witnessed, and been part of, much that has occurred here.



Mary Dawson, Founding Principal of Newton Park College, circa 1940 (photographer unknown)

## ❖ 'THE NEWSPAPERS OF BATH AT THE TIME OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (1789-1802) - Kevin Grieves

The French Revolution placed a great deal of stress on the fabric of British society. While Britons initially greeted the problems facing the Bourbon dynasty with a degree of *schadenfreude*, the increasingly radical turn of events caused trepidation for many. This trepidation grew into outright fear with the growth of radical societies in Britain and the outbreak of war with the French Republic. In my research I use the Bath newspapers of the period as a lens through which I look at the ideals and concerns of their readers in this time of stress. These include a sense of unity, a patriotic attachment to the king and constitution, benevolence to those in need, and the flourishing of commerce. The Bath newspapers addressed all these issues while providing reassurances that the city and, by extension, the nation would endure.

Bath had two newspapers at the beginning of the French Revolution: Hooper and Keene's *Bath Journal* and Richard Cruttwell's *Bath Chronicle*. They were joined by two more titles on the same day in March 1792, but these soon merged into the *Bath Herald*, under the stewardship of William Meyler. These newspapers followed the template of the provincial press of the day. Published weekly, they comprised a single sheet of paper folded to create four pages. While advertisements formed the majority of the content, along with national and foreign news copied from the London newspapers, they also carried local news and notices. It is these that I use to evaluate the effects of the French Revolution on Bath society. To do so I explore a number of themes: the French in Bath, whether émigrés or prisoners of war; the celebration of royal anniversaries; the politics and prosecution of radicals and reformers; the resultant response of organised loyalism; the mobilisation and service of militiamen and armed volunteers; and the philanthropy of Bathonians at time of war.

The first tangible effect of the French Revolution experienced by Bath residents was the presence of émigrés fleeing the tumult across the Channel. These exiles were attracted to the city by its healing waters and its status as the premier resort in the nation. The latter brought a young French lady to the city where she became something of a celebrity. Madame Sisley was a minor noble who fled Paris in the early stages of the Revolution. Forced to find employment as a singer in order to support herself, her presence provided ample opportunity for the newspapers and its correspondents to contrast what they saw as the vices of revolutionary France with British virtues. One such virtue was the willingness to put aside sectarian concerns in the face of human suffering. This was the case with the national philanthropic endeavour to provide funds for the non-juring clergy who fled France following the September Massacres of 1792 and the more local charity shown to French prisoners of war who passed through the city. The Bath press played a large part in the former and reported the latter as part of its local news, demonstrating the generosity of the city's residents and visitors. As the French Revolution took a more radical turn and war broke out between Britain and France, the generosity shown to émigrés was tempered by the suspicion that there may be revolutionary agents within their numbers. The official notices regarding the implementation of the Aliens Act provided reassurance that the authorities were prepared to deal with this possibility. Similarly, the regular reports in the Bath press about the recapture of escaped French prisoners of war from Stapleton prison near Bristol also reassured their readers.

To what a miserable situation must many of the poor *Aristocrats* in France be reduced, when we see a young lady of Madame Sisley's manners and talents obliged to appear for her subsistence as a singer in publick. She has however done this country the honour of chusing it as her place of refuge, and as the theatre of her musical talents, instigated most certainly by the widely-extended fame of the humanity and liberality of its inhabitants. These virtues no doubt this elegant singer will find again realized in herself during her stay in England.

*Bath Chronicle* (1<sup>st</sup> December 1791).

Earlier in the eighteenth century, in the face of the threat of Jacobitism, supporters of the Hanoverian succession to promote annual celebrations of royal birthdays as well as other key dates such as the anniversary of the king's accession to the throne. While traditionally the commemoration of these anniversaries was the preserve of the local authorities, both civic and religious, these celebrations also enabled the proprietors of Bath's assembly rooms and pleasure gardens to stage dances and spectacular galas. With Britain at war against France, the celebration of these royal events became intimately linked with support for the continuation of the conflict to a satisfactory conclusion, and as such the celebrations took on a military tone. In essence, loyalist opinion considered opposition to war to be opposition to the monarchy. These regular celebrations of royal events provided a sense of continuity and assertive loyalism that reassured their readership in the face of the uncertainties of revolution and war.

*Bath Chronicle* (8<sup>th</sup> August 1793). >



While ostensibly loyalist, the Bath newspapers did occasionally carry content from reformers, particularly notices and letters, although these declined rapidly following the loyalist reaction to the growth of radical corresponding societies and the wide dissemination of the writings of Tom Paine. There then followed extensive reports of the trials of radicals in the West Country and beyond. Yet, even in this climate of hostility towards those who expressed radical or, in some cases, treasonous ideas, the people of Bath still showed their generosity by raising funds to redeem at least one person convicted of sedition.

Newspapers played a key role in the growth of the loyalist movement in the winter of 1792/3. The founding of the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers by John Reeves and their publication of notices in the London and provincial newspapers resulted in the establishment of hundreds of similar associations across the nation, Bath included. These associations followed suit in announcing themselves to the nation by placing notices in newspapers both local and metropolitan. While the associations provided an outlet for the gentry to demonstrate their loyalty, some members of the labouring classes also acted in concert to show their opposition to radicalism, as was the case of the Bath sedan chair carriers. The most prominent example of mass participation in such opposition was burning in effigy of Thomas Paine. This wave of public demonstrations of loyalty was no doubt fuelled by the reports that appeared in the press of similar grisly ceremonies happening elsewhere. This conservative reaction to radicals and reformers set the tone for the remainder of the revolution, particularly with the onset of war.

Friday last the effigy of Tom Paine was drawn on a sledge round the town and parish of Lacock, Wilts, and afterwards hung on a gibbet thirty feet high, and then burnt amidst the acclamations of an immense number of people who testified their love of the King and our glorious Constitution, by every mark of loyalty. The whole was conducted with the greatest good order, and every man's heart breathed "Destruction to the wretch that would dethrone his King, and ruin his country."—At Hemington, Atworth, Babington, Corsham, Trowbridge, Minchinhampton, Sherborne, Chagford, Milverton, Dunster, Stogumber, Cayford; and in short, in every town, and almost in every village, the indignation of our loyal countrymen has conspicuously appeared against this enemy to the government and constitution of Great-Britain. We are sorry our limits will not permit us to particularize the ceremony of execution at several of the above places, transmitted by our correspondents.

*Bath Chronicle* (10<sup>th</sup> January 1793).

With the nation facing the threat of invasion from abroad and insurrection at home, the authorities, both national and local, took steps to rejuvenate the county militias, which had remained dormant for some time. The Bath newspapers not only carried announcements of the ballots of local men for service in the militia, but also advertisements for insurance schemes, by which those who did not wish to serve could pay a premium which would entitle them to the funds required to pay for a substitute to take their place. Once the militias were raised, the Bath press kept the family and friends of the militiamen informed of their movements around the country,

as well as reporting on which militias would be stationed in Bath and its environs. With militiamen and other troops travelling around the nation, these reports provide an insight into an increasing awareness of the whole nation experienced by both soldiers and the public with whom they came into contact. While the militiamen did not serve in their home areas, the increased threat of invasion resulted in the establishment of various self-funded volunteer corps. The Bath newspapers once again played a role, carrying notices of these armed associations including lists of subscribers who donated money to cover their costs. The provincial press portrayed both militiamen and volunteers as professional and well-disciplined, and while it did report on the exceptions to this rule, their portrayal of these defenders of the nation would have provided reassurance to the newspaper's readership.

The outbreak of hostilities made a further call on the generosity of the people of Britain. Local dignitaries opened subscription books for the relief of the widows and orphans of those who fell in battle, placing notices in the press to encourage donations. Newspapers took a more central role in the collection and provision of flannel waistcoats to the soldiers serving in Flanders. Initially the organisers of the charity opened subscription books, but later they encouraged the nation, especially women, to make warm winter clothing for the troops. Such charitable works provided women with an active role in society, as was the case with the More sisters who raised funds to supply the Somerset militia with decent footwear. The war against France put a great strain on the economy of the nation, resulting in the establishment of a further national charitable cause, the voluntary contribution of funds to the government in order to maintain the defence of the nation.

GUILDFHALL, BATH, Nov. 19, 1793.

**A**T a Meeting of the Committee for the purpose of supplying the ARMY in Flanders with additional WARM CLOATHING,

Dr. FALCONER in the Chair:

RESOLVED, That Lewis Lloyd, esq; Major Hatton, and the Rev. Mr. Randolph, be added to the Committee.

ORDERED,

That Fifteen Hundred Pair of Flannel Socks be immediately made, in addition to Fifteen Hundred Pair before directed.

That Five Hundred Flannel Shirts be made, under the directions of the Committee, who will order patterns to be issued to those Ladies who may be inclined to lend their assistance.

That a sum not exceeding Fifty Pounds be expended in Worsted Gloves, under the direction of three Gentlemen of the Committee.

The Committee are happy to acknowledge the following liberal subscriptions towards the benevolent and patriotic purpose of affording every possible comfort to the Brave Defenders of their Country.

W. FALCONER.

*Bath Chronicle* (21<sup>st</sup> November 1793)

The Bath newspapers formed part of a national network that helped maintain stability of a nation under threat. While some newspapers had a clear reformist agenda, the vast majority, including the Bath press, did not. They provided links between capital and provinces, between town and country, and between organisations and individuals. These links enabled the dissemination of information and ideology, the flourishing of philanthropic causes, and improved awareness of a larger nation, albeit one that conformed to loyalist conceptions. The provincial press reassured their readers that the reported events in France would not be mirrored in Britain. They portrayed their local regions and the nation as whole as sufficiently strong ideologically, financially and militarily to be able to weather the storm.

A very numerous and respectable meeting was this day held at the Guildhall, Charles Phillott, esq; Mayor, in the chair; at which it was resolved, that a Military Association be immediately formed for the protection of this City and its vicinity; and a Committee was appointed to prepare a plan of enrollment, &c. for the approbation of another General Meeting to be held on Friday next at 11.—A handsome offer was made on the part of Mr. Dash, (by the Rev. Mr. Bowen) of the use of his riding-house for the purpose of exercise, and any other services that he could render the corps.

The performers of our theatre have formed themselves into a military corps, to act with the above association.

*Bath Chronicle* (26<sup>th</sup> April 1798)

The performers of our theatre have formed themselves into a military corps, to act with the above association.

❖ GENDER AND PHILANTHROPY IN EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND -  
Dr Jackie Collier

This final talk provided a brief overview of a thesis, which considered gender and philanthropy in early nineteenth-century England. The subject was inspired by the author's discovery of a set of documents created by Lady Isabella King, a single, Irish gentlewoman, which related to the establishment of a 'Protestant Nunnery' or asylum for distressed gentlewomen first at Bailbrook House near Bath and later at Cornwallis House in Clifton between 1815 and 1835. Key areas of investigation included the character of elite female philanthropy in an urban environment, Bath as an elite social space, the historical and literary context of the Protestant Nunnery and the nature of the distressed gentlewoman.

## VISIT: A GOTHIC JEWEL IN A SEA OF CLASSICISM

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2015

**Speaker** Dr Amy Frost

**Abstract** Dr Amy Frost

From the time of its construction in 1765 to today, the Gothic Revival architecture of the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel has stood out in a city dominated by interpretations of Classicism. It was commissioned and funded by Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707 - 1791) famous for her religious faith and promotion of Calvinistic Methodism in England and abroad. The Countess commissioned a series of chapels in fashionable towns in order to attract the higher ranks of 18th century society to Methodism. The first chapel was built in Brighton in 1761, then Bath in 1765 and Tunbridge Wells in 1769. By the time of her death in 1791 she had commissioned sixty-three chapels, fallen out with the Wesley Brothers and created The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.

Having visited Bath early in her marriage the Countess became a regular visitor to the city during the 1760s for her health. In 1764 she purchased a piece of land in The Vineyards and commissioned the building of the Gothic Revival chapel which was officially opened on 6 October

1765. Although the builder of the Chapel was most likely John Case who worked with her on other buildings, the actual architect of the building has yet to be discovered. Although her services 'conformed' to Church of England liturgy, the Countess favoured Non-Conformist worship placing emphasis on preaching, prayer and hymn singing. The design of the Chapel reflects this with the rectangular space providing the acoustics that would have enhanced its role as a 'preaching box'. The galleries of the chapel were altered on three occasions and in 1841 the School House was built by Bath architect George Phillips Manners. By 1922 the congregation was dwindling and the Chapel united with the Trinity Presbyterian Congregation, becoming the Trinity Presbyterian Church and later the Trinity United Reformed Church. The last worship in the building was held in 1981 and in 1984 Bath Preservation Trust purchased and restored the building to mark its 50th Anniversary.



The Gothic Revival style had developed out of garden buildings situated in landscapes for both their picturesque qualities and the historic associations the style could conjure in the viewer's mind. In the same year the Countess commissioned the Chapel in Bath Horace Walpole's Gothic creation at Strawberry Hill in Twickenham was completed, offering a new fashion for a style connected to British history in reaction to the foreignness of classicism. Following the Huntingdon Chapel a series of 18<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival buildings were constructed in Bath, including Bathwick Villa and All Saints Chapel on Lansdown. With the exception of a few remnants (such as the retaining wall from All Saints Chapel at the top of Park Street) most of the examples of 18<sup>th</sup> century Gothic in Bath have now been demolished or destroyed, leaving the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel to survive as a Gothic jewel in a sea of classicism.

## WALK: THE AVON RIVERSIDE BETWEEN BATHWICK AND KENSINGTON

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015

Leader Mike Chapman

Abstract Mike Chapman

Photos Robert Coles / Nigel Pollard



After 1727 when the Avon at Bath was made navigable, the river above the Town Weir (the head of the navigation) began to take on a different character from that below. The lower part, now connected with Bristol, became progressively the site of commerce and industry, whereas the upper part remained essentially rural despite the growth of trading activity in Walcot Street and the London Road. This particular stretch, running between Bathwick on the one side and the Kensington meadows on the other, therefore continued to develop as a significant leisure amenity accessible from the city.

Walking, angling and boating along the river had always been an informal but advantageous component of Bath's attractions as a resort, supplemented from the early 18th century onward by various commercial pleasure grounds in the neighbourhood which provided refreshments and entertainment, such as 'Spring Gardens' near Bathwick mill, or by 'Bathwick Villa' near the village. However, towards the end of the century, with the development of the Pulteney estate, these were quickly superseded by competition on a larger-scale, particularly by the Grosvenor Gardens Vauxhall established on the Kensington side in 1791 which sought specifically to exploit the attractions of the river.

This was an ambitious scheme promoted by the architect John Eveleigh and others as part of the development of Grosvenor Place which included a 20-acre pleasure ground beside the river, where spacious gravel walks were laid out between shrubberies, flower beds and greenhouses. In the centre of the gardens was an elegant Banqueting Hall or 'Saloon' to entertain upwards of 2,000 people with attached circular Orchestra or arena surrounded by viewing boxes. Elsewhere there were Bowling Greens, Swings, a Maze or Labyrinth, an Archery Green, and a 'Space for Fire Works', as well as 'an aviary, a temple with chimes, and cave, alcoves, etc.'

On the river, Pleasure Boats from the city plied between Pulteney Bridge (Eveleigh's Bathwick wharf) and the Gardens, where parties were accommodated with teas. There, rowing boats were available (at a shilling an hour) or, by taking a 'Free Ferry' across the river, walks could be taken along the meadows towards Bathampton or up to the newly-built Kennet & Avon Canal. Subscribers for walking in the gardens paid 7s.6d for the season; for bowling 3s.9d, and for angling 3s.0d (there was a Serpentine Canal or Fishpond adjoining the river). Also by the river was a Swimming Bath which Eveleigh's drawings show as a large rectangular pool with attached private dressing rooms and plunge-baths; swimming in the river was generally prohibited at this time, to prevent the risk of immodest behaviour among the less affluent. Although this was not the first 'swimming bath' in the district (there was a 'bathing canal' in the Bagatelle Gardens in Lyncombe for a brief period in the 1770s) it could claim to be the first architect-designed open-air lido. However, this was a cold bath for the use of gentlemen, it being then thought that the female constitution was best served by the warm mineral waters.



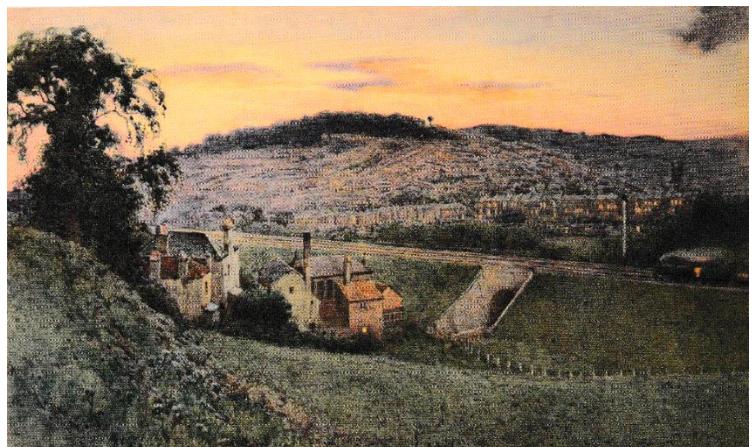
The gardens were an immediate success, although a slump in speculative building in Bath, combined with the outbreak of war with France in 1793, led to the collapse of the local banks and the bankruptcy of Eveleigh and other venturers. Nevertheless, there was continuing optimism in the scheme, and Eveleigh's interests were purchased by a new group of shareholders despite the worsening economic situation. However in 1812 it was eventually decided to abandon the scheme, by which time the gardens were 'in a ruinous and dilapidated state of decay' - a condition presumably brought about by Bath's first recorded flood disaster in 1809. On that occasion three houses were washed away with the loss of seven people and two horses in Bedford Street further downstream at the end of Kensington Meadows.

Nevertheless, a precedent had been set, and in 1815 a more modest scheme for 'Pleasure Baths' on the Bathwick side was set up on a piece of waste ground next to the river bank almost opposite the abandoned Grosvenor Baths. The 'Cleveland Baths' (named from the owner of Bathwick, the Duke of Cleveland) were also equipped with discreet 'Apartments for dressing, &c', and were initially connected with the river, 'where those who swim, and those who do not, will be alike accommodated'. The subscribers, mostly Bath businessmen paying a guinea for the season, included John Pinch the architect, who provided the crescent-shaped design for the baths free, a Mr. Goodridge (presumably Henry, the architect), and many members of the Stothert family. The baths evidently served as something of a gentleman's club which was enthusiastically supported

In the meantime, premises opposite in Grosvenor Place had been acquired by the Reverend Daniel Race Godfrey D.D. to establish a college 'for the Sons of Noblemen and Gentlemen'. To this he added 13 acres for cricket grounds out of the abandoned Grosvenor Gardens which, by the 1820s had been broken up into private gardens - the swimming bath being converted to a fishing lake connected to the river. Physical exercise was evidently an important part of the college curriculum, and in 1827 the Rev. Godfrey took the opportunity to purchase the Cleveland Baths when they became due for refurbishment. The Grosvenor College *Prospectus* was thereby able to announce that 'The tenant of the Cleveland Baths reserves the hour between twelve and one o'clock for the pupils of this College exclusively.' Nevertheless, it was during the Rev. Godfrey's long ownership of the Baths that this amenity came to be extended to the use of the public at large, and where the benefits of life-saving could be encouraged. . (See also Meeting Report - Page 2)

It was also about this time that easier access across this stretch of the river was provided by two novel cast-iron toll bridges, the first being the Cleveland bridge between Walcot and Bathwick in 1827. Soon after its completion, a small tea-garden with boating facilities was opened between the bridge and the Cleveland Baths in one of the plots by the river belonging to the area of private gardens known as 'Villa Fields' (named from the former pleasure ground). By the 1860s however, the Bathwick Boating Station (as it came to be called) had become so popular with local rowing clubs - this stretch of the river being suitable for rowing competitions - that boat-building facilities were provided, together with 'well laid out grounds, comprising lawn, tennis grounds, &c'. Two fine boating pavilions were added in 1887, and another in 1901.

The next to appear, further upstream, was the Grosvenor Footbridge, Bath's first suspension bridge, in 1830. This was designed and built in ornamental style by Thomas Shew Esqr., an amateur artist, to improve the value of his property at the end of Grosvenor Place (Grosvenor Villa, sometimes known as 'The Picture Gallery') by attracting walkers to the picturesque landscape around Bathampton and the canal, with access to the newly-opened Warminster Road. However, the situation on the opposite side was considerably altered in 1838 by the building of the Great Western Railway on a high embankment overlooking the bridge in the sharp bend in the river known as 'Pile Corner' (said to have been named from the piles used in the foundations of the railway embankment). As a result, this piece of ground became separated from the small farmstead to which it belonged, known as The Folly, on the slope above.



The Folly, Bathwick Samuel Poole (1870-1947)  
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Despite (or perhaps because of) its now hidden location between the railway and canal embankments, by the 1840s the Folly found profit in the traffic of passing walkers by opening a Tea Garden with Tavern and malthouse attached, and in 1862 was enlarged by converting the adjoining orchard to a pleasure ground called the Cremorne Pleasure Gardens, evidently in imitation of the original bohemian venue in Chelsea. New features included a Dance-floor, Bowling Alley, a large ornamental fountain fed by a local spring, arbour seats, and an out-door bar. On gala nights the gardens were brilliantly lit with coloured lamps. Although eventually purchased by the GWR in 1887, it continued in popularity for family outings under the name of the Grosvenor Brewery until WWII when damaged by a stray bomb.

One further enterprise finally appeared in the 1840s, on the Kensington side. Downstream from the former Grosvenor gardens the open meadows behind Kensington Place terminated at a strip of ground leading to the river at the rear of the Porter Butt tavern on the London Road, a successful coaching inn until the coming of the railways. In 1841 this strip, formerly used by the tavern for grazing horses, was advertised as a Pleasure Garden, featuring 'rowing matches', river Galas, fireworks, and a 'skittle ground' but, like the Grosvenor Gardens, this too suffered from flooding and was soon closed. Attempts to establish a leisure amenity on these low-lying

meadows were evidently doomed to failure, whilst those on the opposite side, situated on a steeper bank, were less prone to flooding and able to survive in some form or other. Since then, Kensington Meadows have only been used for sporting and festive events.

To visit these sites, the walk started at the Boating Station (now surrounded by the residential estate of Forester Road) which continues to flourish as a boat-hire business and popular riverside restaurant. Further along Rockcliffe Avenue, in Cleveland Row is the entrance to the Cleveland Baths which are at present undergoing restoration and may be better viewed from the opposite side of the river. Despite their abandonment in recent years, the baths are now recognised as the earliest surviving open-air lido in the country, and resources have been found to bring them back into popular use. In contrast, continuing along the canal, the attractions of the Folly gardens are now difficult to imagine. After WWII the site was merely allowed to fall into ruins, and the remaining fabric is now well hidden under dense vegetation, the only indication of its existence being its spring which oozes out over the public footpath below. Nevertheless, the route along the canal and the Grosvenor bridge has become even more popular with walkers (and cyclists) than in the past. The original suspension bridge was replaced in 1929 with the present ferro-concrete structure after it was freed from tolls, but the original piers and flood arches on Pile Corner still remain, as also the foundations of Bridge Cottage, the residence of a later bridge owner.



On the opposite side of the bridge, there is now little evidence of the site of the Grosvenor Vauxhall, part being covered by the 1960s Ringswell Gardens housing development, the rest thrown into the adjoining Kensington Meadow. Although the meadows still remain open, from the 1920s through to the 1960s they were progressively used for tipping by Bath Corporation (including debris from the 'blitz' in 1942) to raise them above flood level for use as playing fields, and now stand some ten feet above the riverside path on a bank revetted with fine Bath stone slabs. However, a triangular piece of ground below the bridge was left open to allow floodwaters to escape around Pile Corner. This area, now surrounded with Willows, still contains evidence of the fishing lake known as 'Grosvenor Pond', where it was said in the 1880s that 'Pike of extraordinary size have had their habitation'. Though filled in, the outlines of the pond are still visible, and even the dyke which connected the pond to the river can be identified, giving hope perhaps that even archaeological remains of the original swimming bath may yet be found.

Of the Porter Butt Pleasure Garden at the lower end of the meadows, nothing now remains. In 1880 this strip of ground was adopted as the tramcar depot for the city's new horse-drawn tram system, and in the early 20th century an additional acre was taken out of the meadow when the depot was enlarged for motor busses. This too has been extended in recent years for a supermarket carpark, and even the Porter Butt itself has been closed. From here the walk concluded by returning via Cleveland Bridge, now congested with traffic but still a striking reminder of the attractions of an earlier age.

**Mike Chapman**

## BOOK REVIEWS:

### PIERONI'S FOUNTAIN

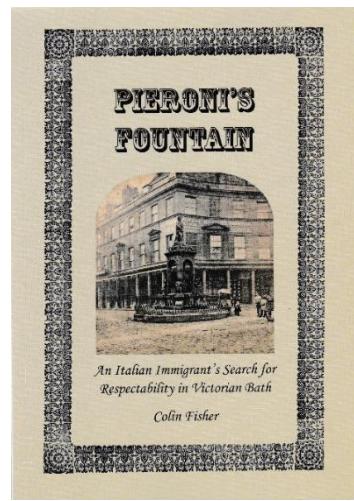
An Italian Immigrant's Search for Respectability in Victorian Bath

By Colin Fisher 2014

AKEMAN PRESS

ISBN: 978-0-9560989-6-2

£ 10



This excellent little book is a most enjoyable read as it tells a story behind an artefact of Bath that we all know, but much embellished by new research.

I am sure we all knew it in its former home in Stall Street, but how it got there and in all its various forms is indeed a fascinating story as is the biography of its foremost creator.

Signor Stefano Vallerio Pieroni was born in Tuscany in 1819 and migrated to England at the age of 18 to seek a living making plaster statuette. Arriving in London but settling in Bath he became both a Publican and an Art Dealer while doing his best to integrate into English Victorian Society.

However his acceptance in Bath society was not a qualified success and as a foreigner in Bath, one is immediately reminded of Whistler's painting of "The Foreign Bloke" in the Victoria Art Gallery, although the same gallery has surely to be reprimanded for apparently "losing", we are told, both of their recorded portraits of this actually known foreigner; As Oscar Wilde would have put it: "to lose one (relative) may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness".

Colin Fisher has certainly carried out some interesting and detailed research which put down in print some important facts surrounding a number of Bath monuments. However, it is a pity that we have as yet not found either of the above paintings of Pieroni himself. Some historical research, if not detective work still to be done!

Meantime, a very good read.

Talk by the Author to HBRG Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

### THE STORY OF ROMAN BATH

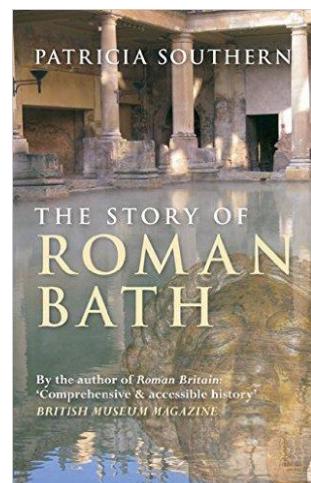
By Patricia Southern 2012

AMERLEY

£ 9.99

This excellent and very readable book, first published in 2012 is now available in paperback. It is about life in Bath during Roman times which was unlike any other town in Britain. Having no specific town status, it attracted all classes of people from soldiers on sick leave, Romans, Britons and women and slaves, who all came to visit the temple of Sulis-Minerva, the hot springs and the Great Bath and have all left their mark.

If you didn't buy the Hardcopy, then you should certainly buy this one.



Editor: Nigel Pollard - nigel.e.pollard@zen.co.uk

HBRG Web Site: [www.historyofbath.org.uk](http://www.historyofbath.org.uk)