



Registered Charity Reg No. 1116550

THE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.combedownheritage.org.uk

Newsletter No 9. February 2007

DIARY DATES FOR 2007

Weds 28th Feb - Kirsten Elliott will tell us about "Local Pubs, past and present".

Weds 21st Mar – AGM and Paul De'Ath "Combe Down in Camera", some Old Post Cards of Bath.

Weds 25th Apr - Roger Ransome, bat expert for the mines project, will tell us about "The Bats of Combe Down". We plan outings to the Claverton Pump and the Butcombe Brewery in the Spring.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Combe Down Junior School Weds 21st March at 7.00 for 7.30 pm. Please put any nominations for the Committee in writing to the Secretary with your signature and that of the Seconder. Agendas and the minutes of previous general meetings will be available then and are also in the Information Centre. Please let us know of any matters you would like discussed at the meeting. This will be followed by Paul De'Ath's talk "Combe Down in Camera".



The Hadley Arms

On Wednesday 28th February

Kirsten Elliott will describe the history of local pubs. The three books on the pubs of Bath which she and Andrew Smith have published are a comprehensive mine of information, essential reading for all serious students of drinking and of local history. We will of course be particularly interested in what she tells us about Combe Down's eight establishments.

HERITAGE SOCIETY WINS A LOTTERY GRANT

Under the Lottery 'Awards4All' scheme for local projects, we have received £2,800 towards our Outreach Project. This will be spent on our work in communicating with members and others, especially with schools and young persons. We have a growing body of historical material which needs careful archiving. We value a large collection of 35mm slides, many collected by the late Peter Addison, author of 'Around Combe Down', and increasing numbers of photographs, all of which will be professionally scanned to enable their use in publications and for digital projection. The grant will also be used for meeting venues and projection costs, a display board, brochures, promotion, handouts & maps and for new publications such as 'I Remember Tucking Mill' by Stanley Wicks, a guide to the Jewish Burial Ground and work on William Smith.



If you received this newsletter by post it means we have not your email address. Please email it to - m.aylett@homecall.co.uk – and copied to - j_briggs@tiscali.co.uk

THE DECEMBER MEETING

If you hold a meeting just before Xmas in a pub, what do you expect? What was billed as a light-hearted social evening at the Hadley Arms lived up to expectations. At times a hilarious **ASK THE EXPERTS**' team made sometimes inaccurate but always amusing guesses about a great variety of objects brought by members. The "experts" consisted of visiting antique expert from London Road Alex Schlesinger (Alex is Chair of the Friends of the Jewish Cemetery), Bob Whitaker (Chair of Bath's Archaeological Society) and local lads David Carr and our own Phil Bishop. Resplendent in bow ties (particularly the Question Master, your Secretary, in a bright red spotted one), they were a grand addition to the village's winter festivals.

A HERITAGE CENTRE & FUTURE PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MINES

A further Planning Application will be made in the Spring for the 'mitigation of the loss of archaeology'. This includes the recording and display of the mining history and artefacts, collected and photographed by the site archaeologists since 2003. Important meetings are at present being held to reconsider where the 'Interpretative centre' might be and a local Centre, possibly at Ralph Allen Yard is a possibility. Your Committee has burned much midnight oil putting together a proposal for refurbishing RAY as a 'Community Heritage Centre'. This could combine a heritage display with meeting facilities for the village and space to be rented out in order to make it financial sustainable. Come to the February meeting and hear about this

OUR DISPLAY AT THE 'BATH AT WORK' MUSEUM

The Museum plans a 'Landscapes and Livelihoods' display demonstrating local distinctiveness; Bath wards and parishes will contribute. We will describe Combe Down and plan photos of a drung, an underground scene in the mines and Firs Field as it is today.

THE DRUNG TO MOUNT PLEASANT

A fence was put up alongside the rugby pitch in the autumn but some local residents would prefer the old stone wall to be rebuilt. The Society agrees with them.

The Bath Blitz April 1942 by Frank Sumsion

**Sent in by Jaqueline Burrowes who found it on
www.wartimememories.co.uk/southwest.html on the Bath Blitz site under the Teens section.**

On the evening of 25th April, 1942 at the tender age of 16, I attended a dance at the Avenue Hall (Church Rooms) at Combe Down, Bath. My sister and several of my relations were there also. At about 11 30 pm the organiser said the dance must end as an air raid was taking place on the city of Bath. We left the dance hall and hurried to the home of our cousin, "Wilcox the Baker," at Combe Road, Combe Down, where we sheltered in the basement until the end of the first raid, even there, some two miles from the city centre, the noise was terrifying in its intensity. The raid lasted about an hour and we stayed with our cousin for another hour or so before my sister and I decided to walk to our home at 18 Upper Bloomfield Road, Odd Down, as quickly as possible as we knew our parents would be worried.

We were proceeding along Bradford Road between Fox Hill and Entry Hill when the second raid started, from memory I believe it was close to 3 30 am. There were no houses at Fox Hill at that time, just fields belonging to Springfield Farm and we had a clear view over the city towards Lansdown. We could clearly see the huge glow and smoke billowing to the sky from the fires already burning from the first raid. As the raid started the planes came in very low, it seemed almost above our heads and were diving down over the city.

In previous months we had watched the raids on Bristol many times from the top of Rush Hill, where we could clearly see the fires and explosions as they were taking place, but this was a new experience for us, very frightening and very close. We watched, spell bound, for sometime and then as far as I recall we ran all the way home. Our parents were very relieved to see us; they were sheltering in the smallest room in the house which was a coal cellar between the larder and the living

room. Being inside the cellar gave us the protection of two walls either side. We had two near misses; one bomb hit Colborne Road close to the Wansdyke Inn about 100 yards away and another hit Ballantyne and Rudds Garage, in Upper Wellsway, again about a 100 yards away. The only damage to our house was a few cracked windows, front door being jammed and the back door being blown open.

Early the following morning I went with my employer (who had a lorry) into Bath, too see if we could help. The damage was horrific, the civil defence and fire brigade were doing everything they could. There were hosepipes everywhere. My clearest memories are of the devastation at the Bear Flat, Oldfield Park and Green Park, and the ruins of the churches also stand out in my memory. St James Church was being used as a mortuary, parties of civil defence workers were combing the buildings looking for survivors and we heard of several success stories during the day where people had been pulled from the wreckage of their homes. Sad stories kept emerging of tragedies where whole families had been killed, and the loss of life of the Civil Defence workers killed by a direct hit on an air raid shelter opposite the Old Scala Cinema in Oldfield Park.

We helped a dentist, Mr Butcher, recover some of his equipment from the basement of his property at Green Park where they were also looking for survivors and were then told to clear the area because of the danger of collapsing buildings. I can remember old tramlines sticking out from the ground close to the Midland Station at Green Park. The trams had been taken out of service a couple of years previously, if I remember correctly. My memory of things that happened during the rest of the day is vague, but I remember making several trips to the countryside, taking people in my employer's lorry. Here they found refuge wherever they could in case the bombers returned at night time. We were without gas and water, I cannot remember if the electricity was affected.

I was at home with my family when the bombers returned after midnight on the night of the 26th. If anything the noise seemed louder than ever. Although we had a Morrison shelter in our living room, which served as a table for the duration of the war, my father thought having the two walls either side of us was the safest place in the house. We spent the duration of the raid (about an hour it seemed) in the coal cellar again. There was a smell of burning. This turned out to be soot that had shaken from the chimney (had we been in the Morrison shelter the soot would have covered us), we were lucky that we only had the clearing of this to tend to in the morning.

The next day we again used the lorry to take people to places such as Dunkerton, Combe Hay and Peasedown. Once there they were taken in by the local people, to shelter and rest during following days. Jim Hunt, my employer, at that time had relatives at Trowbridge and we decided to take their offer of shelter during the night of the 27th. We slept on the floor of the Liberal Club in Trowbridge that night and returned home the following day as the bombers had not returned.

After all this time what still amazes me is that with all the loss of life and the devastation that surrounded us, how seemingly quickly things returned to normal. Perhaps it's because of the passing of time and the innocence of youth.

1942, Bath was the target in a reprisal for the RAF bombing of Lübeck. During two nights and the following morning at the end of April, many hundreds of high explosive bombs and countless incendiary devices were dropped. The official figures show that around 900 buildings were completely destroyed and around 12,500 buildings were damaged during these raids. Over 400 people were killed, many of them women and children.



Blitzed houses in Beechen Cliff Road

(David –I presume we can copy this from the web site??)

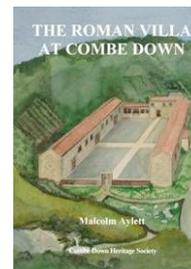
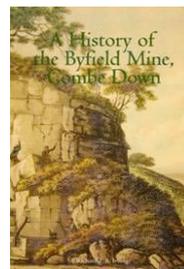
PUBLICATIONS All publications are available at Society meetings or from the Secretary.

A History of the Byfield Mine by Dick Irving, £9.95.

The Roman Villa at Combe Down by Dr Malcolm Aylett, £4.95.

Heritage Trail leaflet, 50p

CD of Buildings Past & Present - a donation



OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society: Gill Sheppard, 10 Teewell Hill, Staple Hill BS16 5PA, gsandg.sheppard@btopenworld.com

Widcombe and Lyncombe History Study Group welcomes non-members to its meetings at 7.30.pm usually on Thursdays. For further information and to join, contact Margaret Burrows on 480749 or Fay Briddon on 310127.

Bathwick Local History Society has meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month and welcomes non-members.

Contact Sheila Edwards on 463902 or 460389.

South Stoke Local History Group welcomes new members. Contact Sylvia Williams on 832921.

Weston Local History Society welcomes visitors and charge £1 for non-members at their monthly lectures. Membership is £5 or £8.50 a couple. Contact Prue Brice on 315342, 6 Westwood Gardens, Weston BA1 4EJ.

The Bath & Cammerton Archaeological Society is active in many areas around Bath. Contact Ceri Lambdin on 761026.

OUR CONTACTS: Chair: Rosemary Simmons 833301, <rosyprint@care4free.net>

Secretary (& to the Friends of the Jewish Burial Ground) Malcolm Aylett 833681, 13, Williamstowe, BA2 5EJ, <m.aylett@homecall.co.uk>



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE. RATES ARE GIVEN BELOW AND ANY DONATIONS ARE MOST WELCOME ... BUT - MEMBERS RENEWING MEMBERSHIP DON'T NEED TO USE A NEW FORM.

Leave the sum with your name in an envelope at the Information Centre or direct to the Membership Secretary, Jane Briggs, Longridge, Summer Lane, Combe Down, BA2 7EU. Cheques payable to Combe Down Heritage Society. If you received this newsletter by post it means we have not your email address. Please email it to - m.aylett@homecall.co.uk - copied to - j_briggs@tiscali.co.uk

COMBE DOWN HERITAGE SOCIETY NEW MEMBER FORM

I apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31st March 2008. I agree to my details being held on computer for the duration of my membership.

<i>First name:</i>	<i>Surname:</i>
<i>Address:</i>	<i>Phone Number:</i>
<i>Post Code</i>	<i>Email address:</i>
<i>Ages of children</i>	
<i>Subscriptions for the year to 31/3/07</i>	
Regular: £3.00, Student: £1.00, Family: £7.00	£.....
Optional donation to the Society's funds	£.....
Total amount paid	£.....
<i>If you pay Income Tax (or PAYE), please sign here so that the Society can claim back your tax.</i>	
<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
Applications (cheque or cash) may be left at the Stone Mines Information Centre or to the Membership Secretary, Jane Briggs, Longridge, Summer Lane, Combe Down.	