



## NEWSFLASH Ralph Allen Yard

The contract between the developers, 'Box Clever' and the present owners, the Homes and Community Agency, (previously English Partnerships) has been signed. The future plans for the Heritage Centre can now go forward.

## Programme for spring 2010

**17 March** following the AGM, a talk by Simon Wilshire, Chair of Monkton School Governors, on '*Monkton School in Combe Down*'.

**31 March** – all members are invited to a Grand Opening and private view of our exhibition at the Building of Bath Museum (see below).

**19 May and 16 June** – talks to be arranged

At the brief Annual General Meeting (**17 March**), agenda and reports will be distributed. We want new Committee members - can you contribute? Please put nominations in writing to the Secretary with your signature and that of the Seconder. Please let us know of any points you would like discussed at the meeting.

All talks are at Combe Down Primary School, Summer Lane. Refreshments are available at 7.00pm - meetings start at 7.30 sharp. Admission: members free, non-members £1

For all our meetings, do keep an eye on the notices in the village centre.

All the Society's publications are on sale at the meetings - details from the Chairman or Secretary.

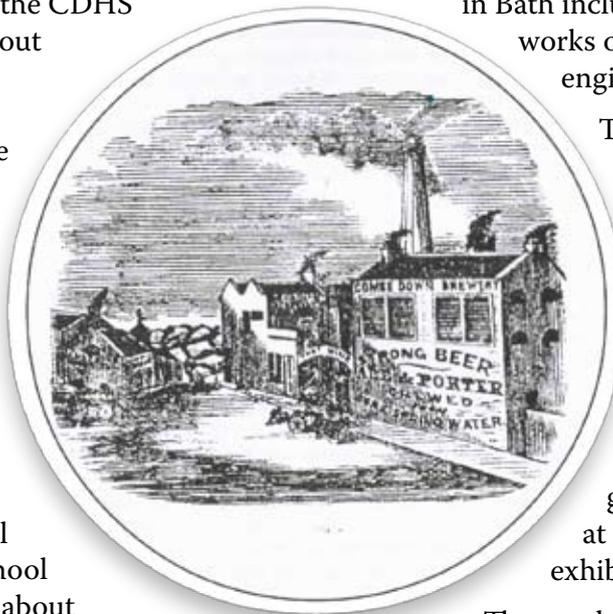
## Combe Down exhibition opening

Stuart Burroughs, Director of the Museum of Bath at Work, has invited the CDHS to put on an exhibition about Combe Down. The theme is how work formed the village and its effect on the residents.

It consists of 16 panels, the last five of which are devoted to the stabilisation and its ups and downs ending with The Legacy of the Public Art Projects and the Grand Celebration. There will also be personal stories, reminiscences, school photographs, sports, data about the miners and their families, accidents and former celebrations as well as our own publications.

The museum is housed in an interesting building from 1777 when it was a Real Tennis court. It now

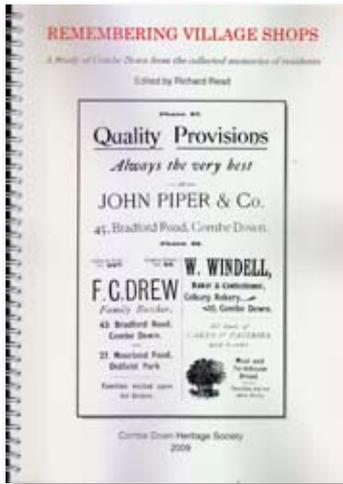
houses a wonderful collection about past industry in Bath including the reconstructed works of Mr Bowler's soft drinks and engineering company.



The exhibition will be formally opened at a Private Viewing on Wednesday 31 March, 6.30-8.30pm, at which drinks and nibbles will be served. Places will be limited but we will be hoping to be able to invite all our currently active members so that there is a good turnout from the Village at what will be "our community exhibition."

The good and great of Bath will be represented. Invitations to the private view will be available at the AGM on 17 March. Depending on the response we get, if you haven't yet been invited by then, and want to go, we will hope to add you to the list that evening.

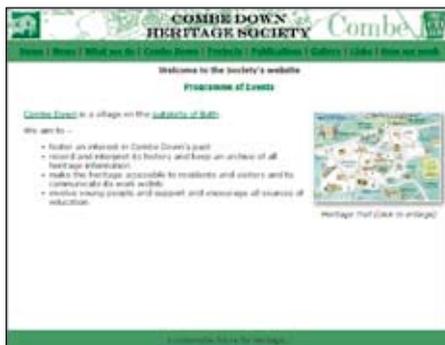
## Village shops



In November, Richard Read gave us a stunning sight of our new publication *Remembering Village Shops*, but only a small number were available for Christmas. They are now on sale (see 'Publications' back page), but there has been a heavy demand and you should

order your copy now. Normal price £15 but £12 to members from Rosemary Simmons on 01225 833301

## Our website



This has had a major overhaul – do enjoy browsing it again.

## Harry Patch on Firs Field?

You may know that a statue of Harry Patch on Firs Field is being considered. Your Committee takes the following view:

- We believe that a Plaque on Fonthill Cottage, Harry Patch's birthplace, would be the preferable memorial.
- There could be a place for an inscription either in the 'quiet area' associated with the War Memorial or perhaps in the grounds of the Primary School.
- The Committee is unanimous that a sculpture in Firs Field would be the wrong siting. Harry should be remembered of course but he did not wish to be given 'hero status' above the countless others who shared his experiences and views on war.

Other public art to recall the village's stone mining history is better placed on the Field.

## Jewish burial ground

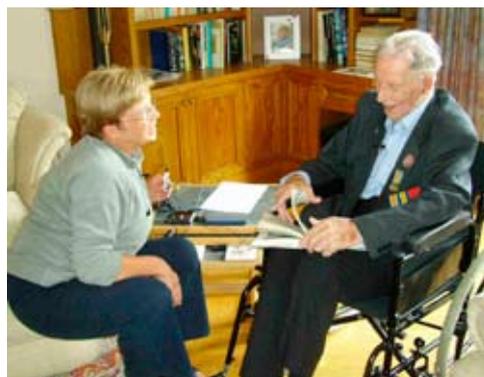


The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be at 6.30pm on Tuesday 13 April at 12 Greendown Place, We have made some progress in the restoration when we put a new roof on the Prayer House. The project

is complex, for instance, because we had the site 'Listed', all work plans have to be submitted to the Council Conservation Officer for his approval and in order to apply for the Lottery grant, we must have a detailed schedule of work including costings. Several professional volunteers are generously giving their time to help with this. The Secretary is always pleased to show visitors round. Do consider joining if you haven't already done so.

## The Stone Mines timeline

The Stone Mines Project are compiling a historical record for the planned website and the Society has been asked for a proposed timeline. Many pictures are being considered and these are just two examples.



## A letter from Canada

*We are pleased to include part of a letter from Sarah Gould (née Murray) who spent her childhood in Combe Down and now lives in Ottawa.*

I just discovered your wonderful website on Combe Down. It's a very cold and snowy day here near Ottawa, Canada and a perfect day to reminisce and look up one of my favorite places on earth. I've lived here in Canada for almost 50 years and occasionally go on 'Bing' maps at the bird's eye view to retrace the steps of my very happy childhood growing up on Combe Down. Of course, much of it has changed now, but I am still fascinated by the Roman occupation of it and what little is known. In your newsletters you talk about the Roman Villa and some burials. In Barry Cunliff's fascinating books on Bath archeology he mentions that there may have been a very significant Roman Imperial Estate on Combe Down also, I just looked at another site on this subject today and see this.

The home of one of these estate managers has been identified at Combe Down south of Bath where the villa produced an early-third century inscription which mentions the restoration by one of these estate managers of a building called a *principia* or headquarters probably of an imperial estate at Combe Down itself.

As a child growing up there, there wasn't a field, footpath or stone left unturned in the belief that there might be evidence of Romans or better still, the faeries my Mother told me lived in the fields behind us, the woods near the old railway line below or in Rainbow Woods.

My parents were two of the many grateful young couples who had both served in the RAF and who had been 'squatters' at the Charmy Down abandoned airbase and now the proud occupants of 24 Axbridge Road, Foxhill. After ten years of hardships beyond description, they along with me and two sisters, Marion and Jennifer, moved into what we thought was heaven on earth. It was a real home made of bright new Bath stone and not at all like the abandoned 'hut' we had just left. Mum had the red concrete floors gleaming in paste wax and was now cooking on real hob and not a primus. It was solid, dry and warm and had a front and back garden and a magical view down into Bath. It was on the very crest of the hill and it seemed that you could 'roll' all the way down from our back fence into the city below. It was the next to last house in the estate and truly was the best

location in all of Foxhill.

In those days after the war there was such a pride of having a real house to live in. Axbridge Road was full of young families and their pride of occupying this street was so evident in the beautiful flower gardens at the front and their vegetable gardens in the back. They had waited so, so long for this. So, you can imagine finding Roman earrings on the bean stalks, Roman walls in the pansies and Roman wells in the spuds long with the dreaded, "Oh no, not another bloody roman grave", not being too welcome. It was all generally hastily covered up and little said lest the authorities come in and disrupt what they had waited so long for. The walls and well were in the back gardens of the numbers 46 and 44 of the four unit block where we lived and the large stone graves with multiple occupants were in the front raised gardens of the houses across the street.

I remember the men hastily placing the large stone coffin slabs back into place and removing cardboard boxes of the remains. I doubt that the authorities were ever aware and I often wonder if this prime crest of hill spot was where this significant Imperial Roman Estate might have been. I must admit that on my last nostalgic visit to Foxhill, I was saddened at the state of the street and surrounding fields. That pride of occupation was not evident anymore.

Although I now live in a lovely place on a beautiful World Heritage Site, the Rideau River which runs between the mighty St. Lawrence and the Ottawa Rivers, I am still a Combe Down girl at heart.

While walking Axbridge Road a few years ago, I wondered do they know how lucky they are to live in such a wonderfully historic setting and do they ever think about what wonders that may exist below their feet? I saw a rusted bedstead and other items in the field behind our house where only cows and surely the faeries once were. I was heartbroken.

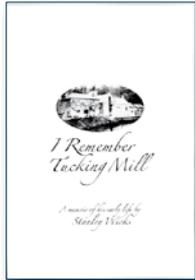
I must say that Harry Patch's funeral was broadcast here in Canada and our fellow Combe Downer got a well deserved and lovely send off. In his book, *The Last Fighting Tommy*, the Combe Down that I remember is very much like the Combe Down he describes. So little changed during that time between 1900 and 1960. Good old Harry brought Combe Down to the world just when I was beginning to think it was just a lovely place that few would ever know from my past.

## Publications

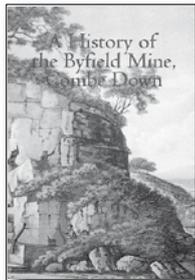
All publications are available at Society meetings and are available from the Chair or Secretary



*Remembering Village Shops* by Richard Read, normal price £15 but £12 to members

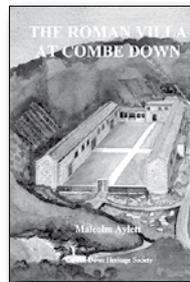


*I Remember Tucking Mill* by Stanley Wicks, £6.



*A History of the Byfield Mine* by Professor Richard Irving, £9.95.

*William Smith's Venture in Stone Quarrying* by Richard Irving, is now published on the Society's website [www.combedownheritage.org.uk](http://www.combedownheritage.org.uk). Printed copies also available.



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

Heritage Trail leaflet

by Richard Irving and Rosemary Simmons, 50p

CD of Combe Down Past and Present - available to members only, free, but a donation is expected.

All our publications are available at Society meetings and are also from Rosemary Simmons [rosyprint@care4free.net](mailto:rosyprint@care4free.net) 833301  
12 Greendown Place, Combe Down BA2 5DD

## Contacts

**Chair** Rosemary Simmons ☎833301  
[rosyprint@care4free.net](mailto:rosyprint@care4free.net)

**Secretary** (and of the Friends of the Jewish Burial Ground) Malcolm Aylett ☎833681,  
13 Williamstowe BA2 5EJ [m.aylett@homecall.co.uk](mailto:m.aylett@homecall.co.uk)

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year become due in March. If you know of members who have not received this newsletter, it might be because they have inadvertently not paid their subscription.

## Membership application for new members

If you are already a member, there is no need to fill this in - simply send your payment to Jane Briggs (see below)

First name _____		Surname _____	
I apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31 March 2011 and I agree to my details being held on computer for the duration of my membership			
Address _____		Postcode _____	Phone _____
		Email _____	
Membership options - please tick as required: Standard £3 <input type="checkbox"/> Student £1 <input type="checkbox"/> Family £7 <input type="checkbox"/>		Total amount enclosed <input type="text"/>	Ages of children (if family membership)
I am sending an additional £ <input type="text"/> as a donation to the society			
If you pay Income tax (PAYE) on any earnings, pension or investments, please sign here so we can reclaim the tax		Signed _____	Date _____

Payments (by cheque please, payable to 'Combe Down Heritage Society') should be sent to the Membership Secretary: Jane Briggs, Longridge, Summer Lane, Combe Down, Bath BA2 7EU.

Data protection Act. The Officers of the Society hold limited information for each member which is processed using personal computers. The Data Protection Act safeguards the protection against the misuse of such data.