



## Spring 2012 programme

**Feb 22 'Ralph Allen's romantic haven in Claverton'** A talk by Dr Cathryn Spence, Head of Communications and Research at the American Museum in Britain. There will be a collection in aid of the restoration of Ralph Allen's mausoleum.

### March 21 Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM will commence at 7.30pm with reports from the Chair, acting-Secretary and Treasurer. The Officers and Committee will then be elected and we look forward to receiving nominations from any members not currently on the Committee who would like to serve. Nominations should have a seconder, be signed, and sent in writing to the Chair, Rosemary Simmons, on or before 7 Feb. The AGM will also be asked to ratify the election by the Committee of our President Professor Dick Irving. Members wishing to add to the agenda are asked to do so before 7 Feb by contacting the Chair.

### Papermaking at De Montalt Mill

The AGM will be followed with a talk by Rosemary Simmons on papermaking at De Montalt Mill.

### April 18 Combe Down bats – an update.

A talk by Dr Roger Ransome about what the new bat habitats and entrances are designed to achieve, and how are the bat populations faring now?

*Talks are at the Combe Down Primary School, Summer Lane, 7.00pm for refreshments and a prompt start at 7.30.*

## Reports on meetings

### September 2011 Name that Face

Members were shown photographs from the Society's archive of groups involved in various sports and were asked to put names to each face. The groups were cricket, rugby and football, darts and skittles and finally some photographs which were a mystery. Members were extremely good at recognising youthful friends and most faces now have a name. The evening threw up some interesting information about the Church Army

## Dr Malcolm Aylett

Members will be saddened to hear that Malcolm Aylett died on Saturday 14 January. He had a heart attack following a knee operation. Malcolm was Secretary of both the CDHS and the Friends of the Jewish Burial Ground and performed both roles with great relish combining them with many other interests. His most recent appearance for



the CDHS was as quizmaster at our Quiz in December shortly before he travelled to India with his family to spend Christmas there. Malcolm was a founder member of the CDHS and it is largely due to his hard work and drive that the Society thrives today. We shall miss him very greatly and our thoughts are with Sheila and his family.

The funeral is at Haycombe Cemetery; Thursday 26 January. A short Humanist ceremony will be held at the chapel by the gates at 2.30pm, followed by the interment near by. Friends are welcome.

Social Club (the Scout Hut is on the site now) and the Combe Down Youth Club.

### October 2011 Stone Legacy Centre

In October we were lucky enough to have Stuart Burroughs, Director of the Museum of Bath at Work, to moderate our discussion and workshop about the Centre and how it might be used. Dick Irving kicked the evening off with a reminder of the background, reminding us for how long the acquisition of a centre in the village had been a

key objective, firstly of the Heritage Group, and then the Heritage Society when formed in 2004.

Richard Read summarised the current plan for the Centre, including the granting of some significant space below ground for artefact and archive storage, and then Stuart gave us his own thoughts. He pointed out that all the other communities with an interest in their heritage that he knew of would bite the hand off anyone offering such an asset and, although sympathetic with those who were worried that the Centre will be too small, felt that could be an advantage in the early years.

Several themes emerged. The perception of museums and visitor centres is changing, they are no longer static collections of objects but hubs from which activities start. They are the starting point to explore the landscape in terms of geology, industrial history, social history and ecology. They are the conduit for information generated by the community and the focus of community life. Small premises are easier to manage sustainably long term and must be flexible, stimulate the imagination and incorporate high tech and low tech.

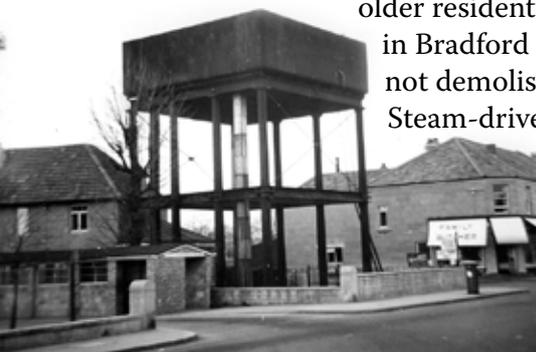
**November 2011 Combe Down Water Works**

Richard Read and David Bishop gave an update on the research they have been carrying out into the Combe Down Water Works. Phil Bishop provided personal recollections of his family’s involvement with the company.

The first Tucking Mill Pumping Station was constructed in 1881 as part of “Dr Parfitt’s waterworks.” A waterwheel, powered by the Whittaker Springs, pumped the water from the main springs into the elevated tank on Combe

Down, probably the same one that older residents remember in Bradford Road. It was not demolished until 1964.

Steam-driven pumps were installed in 1885 to free up the water from the Whittaker Springs for supplying to customers.



The water tower close to the present-day chip shop.

When Dr Parfitt died in 1887 the Bath & District High Level Waterworks Company was formed to upgrade and expand the operation. In 1890 the reservoir on Hampton Down was built to improve the supply, but in 1902 the company was put up for sale by auction. A new undertaking,

the Combe Down (Bath) and District Waterworks Company Limited, was formed to run it. The company also purchased the property and water rights of the Somersetshire Coal Canal and gave itself broad powers to expand. In 1904 the steam powered

pumps were replaced by gas engines, with the gas being produced on site. By the early 20s Combe Down Water Works was supplying all of the City of Bath south of the GWR, plus outlying areas from Englishcombe to Claverton, South Stoke to Hinton Charterhouse and Rode to Norton St Philip. A new reservoir was built at Hayeswood in 1927 to improve the supply to Limpley Stoke.

The Bishop family’s involvement began in 1898 when William George, Phil’s grandfather and David’s great grandfather joined the company as an “engineman” at Tucking Mill. He later became the Chief Inspector and was a valued member of the company. His sons Roland and Vernon also became employees, and Vernon later followed his father as Inspector and lived with his family in the company house, Trafalgar House in Combe Road.

In 1964, the Combe Down Water Works was taken over by Bath Corporation Waterworks, and integrated into the overall supply network. In 1974 the UK water industry was nationalised and the Wessex Water Authority formed to serve a population of around two million people living in Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset and Gloucestershire. In 1989 the UK water industry was privatised, and Wessex Water was formed to purchase the assets of the WWA. In turn, Wessex Water was taken over in 2002 by YTL Power International.

*The main sources of information for this research so far have been the Wessex Water archive at Sutton Poyntz in Dorset, to which access was provided by John Willows to whom we are very grateful, and the papers collected by the Bishop family, mainly William George, which are now being looked after by David Bishop.*

**December 2011 Annual Christmas Quiz**

The Hadley Arms again hosted the evening put together by Malcolm Aylett and Simon Burrows and run by the committee with the help of scorer



Roland, Vernon and William George Bishop outside Tucking Mill Pumping Station

Tom Burrows. A hard fought (but good natured) battle ensued with a mixture of questions on the village, Widcombe – and beyond! Half time was marked with each team identifying a selection of cheeses with a surprising degree of success, not to mention hunger. Well, it helped soak up the beer... All the teams were winners choosing from a range of prizes including a bouquet of chocolate, a brace of pheasants, and wine.

Around 20 members attended and we'd like to see more next year to make the work involved in putting the evening together even more worthwhile. Make a note now in your new diary for (probably) 12 December 2012!

## The stone legacy centre

An update on the Stone Legacy Trust from Richard Read, Chairman

Our highlight in December was the approval by the B&NES Development Control Committee by nine votes to two of the mixed-use housing development of Ralph Allen Yard, including the Stone Legacy Centre. This has been controversial, partly because approval was also required for the demolition of most of the existing building on the site, and because those residents living close by were concerned about the density of the new housing and its appearance. However the developers, Ian Cox Development Partners Ltd and their architects Hewitt Studios LLP, refined their plans to accommodate as much as they could of these concerns, and made additional modifications to improve the general environment around the Centre. The plans also propose the retention of the only remaining part of the malting vats and the original external stone wall running down Rock Hall Lane will be incorporated into the housing and the Centre.

As Heritage Society members know, the site is where Ralph Allen's principal wooden crane was installed in the late 1720s to lift stone from the quarry face below onto his innovative railway. It is also the plot of land on which William Morrish and Thomas Hine built their malthouse when they expanded the Combe Down Brewery around 1857; and where Edward Selley and his son Victor ran their High Class Fish & Poultry Merchants from 1941 to 1972. Some of our members objected to the fact that the buildings that are the remains of the old malthouse will have to go, but conserving heritage is about much more than just protecting the built environment, and there will be a net

heritage gain through the opportunity to preserve and tell the whole story of Combe Down in the new Centre. The thread of history on the site will be used as a vibrant theme running through the whole story.

Over the next few months we will be working hard on a number of fronts. We are very close to finalising the Articles that will formally create the Trust company, and an application for charitable status will follow. We have to agree the internal design of the Centre with the architect, and define how it will be equipped. To help in these tasks the Trust would like input from as many individuals and groups as possible to bring in ideas on how the Centre might be used and therefore what is needed inside it. If you are not already signed up to our database of Centre Supporters please give your name and contact details, e-mail address if possible, to David Morris (tel: 837378 , e-mail [davidsmorris@hotmail.com](mailto:davidsmorris@hotmail.com)), or Richard Read (tel: 830957, e-mail: [richard@rral.co.uk](mailto:richard@rral.co.uk) ) and please get in touch with us if you have any thoughts on the subject. Then we will have to start planning how the Centre will be run.

Rosemary Simmons adds that the Heritage Society now has a huge challenge. We look forward to producing material for the new Centre in the form of publications, presentations, trails, games, handling collections, family history and talks.

Can you help make our archive accessible? Can you invent a game like Snakes and Ladders but in and out of shafts and tunnels? Tell us your favourite walk around Combe Down which shows the diversity of our ecology and we will turn it into a trail. Imagine walking a visitor around Combe Down to show them where Ralph Allen's cranes were sited – where would you go? Or sites of religious interest? These could all be trails with your help.

We want to develop our Family History Collection so that visitors can trace their ancestors. Can you guide us in setting it up so that it is user friendly? Or how do we make our recordings of local residents available?

Even if you don't have a special skill such as organising the family history archive, you may have a special interest (the various locations of the Post Office or Ralph Allen's railway, for example) which you would enjoy putting together for a publication or presentation. Please tell us how you could help.

## Progress on the jewish cemetery

The latest from Malcolm Aylett:

Recent funds from several sources now mean that we can get on with some of the restoration. Especially welcome is the £1,612 from our Councillors' funding for local projects.



The next task will be the conservation and restoration of the two table tombs seen as you enter the Cemetery. This is a major task involving the setting up of a crane to lift the top slabs off. The tombs have suffered much damage

over nearly two hundred years since they were built. The other, much more ambitious job will be to take off the wrought iron gates, stripping them down and repainting them. This needs doing professionally to keep out the rust.

The bad news is that neither the Lottery, nor the Rothschild Foundation, both of whom made initial encouraging noises, have given us the thumbs up for the substantial sum we need to restore the Prayer House. So the struggle for further funds continues.

## Renewing your subscription

Subscriptions for the year became 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 or give 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 2013 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  £5 Concession £3  Family £12

Total amount paid

Ages of children  
 (if family membership)

I am sending an additional £  as a donation to the society

If you pay Income tax please tick here and sign your name to authorise the society to reclaim your tax on this and future payments as Gift Aid

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Payments by cheque, payable to 'Combe Down Heritage Society', or cash should be made to the Membership Secretary: Jane Briggs, Longridge, Summer Lane, Combe Down, Bath BA2 7EU. Please ask for a Standing Order Form if you would rather pay direct from your Bank.

## Bath blitz



Do you recognise anybody in this picture of the Combe Down Rescue and Decontamination Party? Mrs Williams of the Bath Blitz Remembrance Group would like to invite you to the 70th anniversary held on Sunday 22 April at 3pm at the entrance Victoria Park at the memorial. A short service will remember all members of the voluntary services. As a grandchild or great grandchild perhaps you would like to remember a family member?

Mrs Williams organises the charity Supporting Disabled in Need which has just opened a shop at 199 Bradford Road (01225 830288). The 35 year-old charity enables disabled people and their carers to take short holidays in the South West.

Members renewing can do so now by standing order if preferred - please ask for a form. Subscription costs are shown below, but you do not need to fill in the application form, you can pay direct at the next meeting Please see Jane Briggs for all membership enquiries..