



## 2015 summer programme

### Wednesday 17 June

19:30 in Combe Down Primary School, Summer Lane entrance. End about 21:00.

#### *Dundas and the Somerset Coal Canal*

A talk by Tim Wheeldon on the origins of the SCC at Dundas and its rebirth as the marina for the Bath and Dundas Canal Company.  
CDHS members £1; visitors £3.

### Thursday 18 June, afternoon

Excursion to WW2 anti-invasion defences at Hog Wood, Hinton Charterhouse with excavation and talk by Bristol University. Members and visitors £5 - see 'Down Memory Lane' below for details.

**July and August** - no meetings

## Reports on meetings

### February: Mike Chapman *The Old Fairs of Bath*

Mike Chapman discussed various ancient fairs that took place around Bath up to the last century, notably Lansdown Fair, a popular festival of sports and pastimes, including horse-races, foot-races, cudgel matches, jumping, wrestling and boxing, often painted by famous local artist Thomas Barker. There were some interesting photos of the Royal Bath and West Show being held on the slopes of Beechen Cliff above Bear Flat in 1877 when it was open fields. The Bath & West was for many years then held at Combe Down.

### March: Matthew Ward, Head Gardener of Prior Park Garden

Matthew has been involved with Prior Park Garden since it was acquired by the National Trust in 1993. He follows in the illustrious footsteps of Alexander Pope who designed the garden shown in the famous print of Ralph Allen's tramway and Capability Brown who created the landscape we know today.

Over the last 20 years, restoration of various garden features has taken place with the Cascade, Serpentine lake and Palladian bridge. Future

plans include bringing the Grotto and Gothic temple back to life together with more mundane requirements like the redevelopment of the tea room and repair of leaks in the ponds.

### April: Professor Dick Irving *William Smith in Combe Down*

Following the CDHS Annual General Meeting our President, Dick Irving, gave a talk on William Smith in Combe Down, which was subsequently made to the Geological Society in London at their recent '200 Years of Smith's Map' conference. He illustrated Smith's life in Combe Down with reference to the poems Smith had written about his time at Tucking Mill which he owned for nearly 20 years until his bankruptcy. We heard the story of his initial purchase of the Tucking Mill estate, his disastrous venture into stone quarrying and 'manufacture', and its ultimate failure and his eviction from the property. The poems, previously little known about, were written in his later life and reflect a strong sense of anger; and of confusion and deep loss about this period. This loss, and his love of Tucking Mill, was acknowledged in the last poem with the realisation that he could never return there.



### May: Visit to Ralph Allen CornerStone and CDHS archive

The May meeting was held at RAC where members and guests had the opportunity to see the William Smith exhibition over a glass of wine and then proceed down into the basement below where lies the CDHS Archive.

There is a growing collection of documentation and artefacts stored here which are being catalogued and referenced on the Modes computer

system under the management of Dave Bishop. He gave everyone a guided tour of the facilities together with a viewing of our large in-house genuine Bath stone pool left by the previous brewery owner who used it to steep his grains!

## William Smith exhibition

To complement his talk on William Smith, Dick Irving prepared an exhibition on William Smith's life that has been on show at Ralph Allen CornerStone during April and May. This year is significant as it marks the bi-centenary of the publication of the geological survey map of Britain by Smith in 1815 and which encapsulated all the discoveries he had made over his working life.

His first ideas about geological strata were developed as a surveyor in the Somerset coal field and during the construction of the Somerset Coal Canal. He then went on to buy Tucking Mill and live there periodically until 1819, famously in the house under the wood which doesn't have the memorial plaque! The geological map was developed as he worked around the country on survey business for clients giving him the opportunity to expand his knowledge.

However, Smith was always plagued by financial difficulties and around 1810 he went into partnership with Charles Connolly, owner of Midford Castle, and a local quarry owner John O'Neal in a bid to benefit from the access to London offered by the recently opened Kennet & Avon canal and the potential new markets for Bath stone. He opened a quarry above Summer Lane and built a tramway to Tucking Mill where he installed water-powered machinery for stone cutting.



But he was not destined to follow the success of Ralph Allen with another tramway almost a century before. Smith's Kingham quarry proved to have poor quality stone, the country was suffering economic depression from war with France and local quarry owners were unwilling to use Smith's new stone-cutting equipment for fear of 'luddite' disorder from men put out of work. To add to this bad luck his quarry owner partner O'Neal died suddenly leading to further reduction in turnover.

Failing to sell parts of his Tucking Mill estate to raise money, Smith had mortgaged his house to Connolly to fund the business. Connolly foreclosed in 1819 leaving Smith bankrupt and in the King's Bench debtors prison. His emotional state at the time can be gauged from his poems, the earliest of which may have been written while he was still incarcerated. The irony is that his dreams of prosperity from the new markets for Bath stone were realised only a few years later with the success of Combe Down quarrymaster and builder, Philip Nowell in the 1820s.

### William Smith Trail

Another CDHS trail leaflet is being prepared to guide visitors around the places of interest in William Smith's life in Combe Down that are shown in the exhibition. The walk will follow the route of the tramway linking his unsuccessful Kingham Quarry to Tucking Mill, returning to Combe Down through the Horsecombe Grove woods.

## Down memory lane: summer 1940

Seventy-five years ago, in the summer of 1940, Britain expected invasion by the Nazis who had by then captured most of Europe and were massed on the Channel coast following the rout of Allied forces at Dunkirk. As we know Winston Churchill determined "we shall never surrender" and construction of massive defensive works was initiated across the country to hinder any attack.

The defences were largely static and made up of a series of inland anti-tank stop lines across the south of England together with coastal fortifications and beach landing obstructions. Thousands of miles of ditches, concrete gun emplacements, anti-tank obstacles, roadblocks etc were hastily built in a matter of months to supplement natural and pre-existing barriers such as rivers, canals and railway earthworks. Latterly it was decided that the use of linear defence lines would be ineffective against 'blitzkrieg' and the strategy turned to creating heavily-defended 'islands' with all-round defences.

Left: William Smith's house at Tucking Mill



Anti-tank ditch in Hog Wood

One of these stop lines was GHQ Stop Line Green, designed to protect Bristol, which passed to the east of Bath. Following existing obstructions from the south formed by the S&D railway line and the Wellow Brook, it crossed the high ground at Hinton Charterhouse to join another stop line along the K&A canal before continuing on north. Over this high ground by Hinton a four metre deep anti-tank ditch was dug and supplemented with other defences.

Thankfully no invasion took place, the defences were never tested and in the years since WW2 have been largely forgotten. A few pillboxes still survive and there are some concrete “dragon teeth” anti-tank blocks along the Wellow Brook but much has gone both locally and across the country. However in Hog Wood near Hinton Charterhouse one of the very few remaining complete sections of anti-tank ditch with associated trenches and pillboxes still survives.

The CDHS summer excursion on 18 June visits Hog Wood to see these remains and also to view excavations by a team from Bristol University, Dept of Archaeology. We will hear from them about their findings and how the defences were intended to perform under attack. En route we will also see the ruins of Hinton Priory (from the outside) and the Bath to Poole roman road.

The walk is about 2 miles, cost £5. Park at Homewood Park Hotel, Freshford BA2 7TB and meet at Abbey Lane entrance at 1:45pm. Lifts available with Simon Burrows, phone 833966.

## Other news

### Combe Down Tunnel Access

Access from the public footpath below Summer Lane directly on to the Two Tunnels path near the

tunnel entrance has finally been completed. A new gate has been installed by the Two Tunnels Group with help from the Cotswold Wardens and Monkton Combe Parish Council.

### Ralph Allen Drive entrance pillars

By the time you read this the two great pillars at the top of Ralph Allen Drive may have been repaired after suffering damage following the installation of the new mini-roundabout on North Road. Topped with giant urns they date from around 1740 and are Grade II listed. The layout of the road bollards for the roundabout made the turn too tight for large vehicles and resulted in the pillars being regularly hit.

Considerable lobbying of local councillors by among others, CDHS, the Bath Preservation Trust and the Georgian Society has forced reconfiguration of the roundabout which we hope will now solve the problem.



Pillars and roundabout under repair in May

### Union Chapel : 200 years old

Not only are we celebrating the bi-centenary of William Smith's map this year but also Union Chapel which opened in 1815, twenty years before Holy Trinity. It was founded by the Somerset Street Baptist and Argyle Street Congregational Churches in Bath who wanted to establish a place of worship on Combe Down to serve the growing population of the village. Union Chapel has always been independent of any denomination but is linked with churches nationwide through the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

A number of events are planned to mark the anniversary including a Thanksgiving Service & Reunion at 2.30pm on Sat 27 June, Flower Festival on Sat 11 July and Open Day(s) over Heritage Weekend in September.

See [www.unionchapelbath.org.uk](http://www.unionchapelbath.org.uk) for details.

### National Trust footpaths

Alex Hansen would like to thank everyone for their efforts and comments made directly to the National Trust regarding Monument Field access and local parking issues. Alex has met Tom Boden, NT manager, to put the situation into context and answer his questions on details about the field closure. The lease on Monument Field by Prior Park College is up for renewal soon and Tom has taken up these issues with them.

### CDHS meets Ralph Allen

The Society were remarkably honoured on the 19th of April in the year of our Lord 2015 when we had been most graciously invited to display our humble wares at the glorious World Heritage Day celebrations in the shadow of magnificent

Prior Park mansion. After luncheon the exceptionally distinguished and fabulously wealthy and handsome host, Mr. Ralph Allen (local stone tycoon and wannabe artiste with the Natural Theatre Company) visited our modest stall and 'commended our good works most highly'.

**Bath Industrial Heritage Day: 12 September**  
 CDHS are planning to attend Bath Industrial Heritage Day with a joint display with the Combe Down Stone Legacy Trust on Saturday 12 September. This event will publicise Ralph Allen CornerStone and tell the story of stone mining in Bath. Entry is free at Bath City Football Club's Twerton Park stadium between 10am and 4pm.

### Books for sale

Rosemary Simmons' book *Mr and Mrs Ralph Allen at home* examines the domestic lives of the wealthy at the time of Ralph Allen with recipes of the period as well as Rosemary's wonderful illustrations. The hardback book, price £9, is available from the Ralph Allen CornerStone bookshop.

We also have some copies of *Strata* by John Morton, 'The Remarkable Life Story of William Smith, the Father of English Geology' which follows Smith's life before and after his great contribution 200 years ago with the geological map of Britain. Also available from Ralph Allen CornerStone.



Mr Ralph Allen meets Rosemary Simmons and Mayor Cherry Beath

## New member application form

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

First name(s)

Surname(s)

I/we apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31 March 2016 and I/we 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

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

Total amount paid

Ages of children  
(if family membership)

*Gift Aid declaration for this and future donations*

*Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made by me today in the future*

*I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the Charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.*

Signed

Date

Payments by cheque, payable to 'Combe Down Heritage Society', or cash should be made to the Membership Secretary: Tim Lunt, 141 Church Road, Combe Down, Bath BA2 5JL Please ask for a Standing Order Form if you would rather pay direct.