



## 2016 spring programme

All meetings take place in the Combe Down Primary School Hall in Summer Lane. Doors open at 7pm for a prompt start at 7.30pm.

Members £1, Non-members £3.

### Wed 10 February

*The dark side of Bath – the city's criminal past*

Kirsten Elliott, local author and founder of Bath Walks, will tell us about crime and vice in Bath during the 18th century

### Wed 16 March

*The schools of Combe Down*

A talk by Jill Woodhead about how schools have come and gone in Combe Down over the years

### Wed 27 April

*The legacy of the Somerset & Dorset Railway*

A talk by Mike Beale, a director of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the closure of the S&D

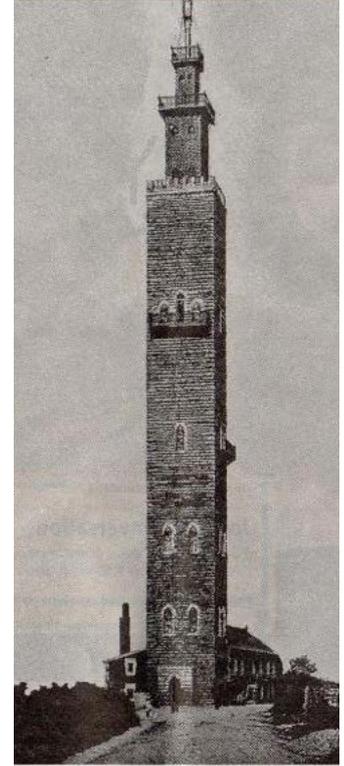
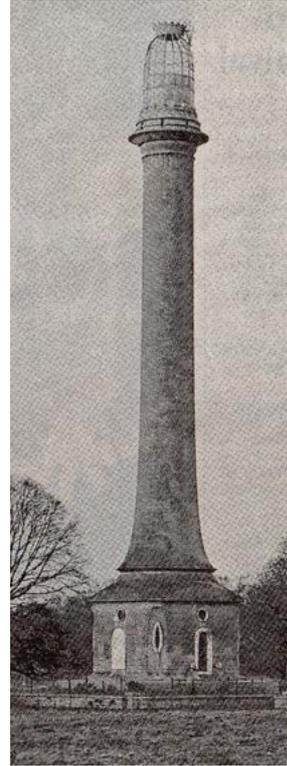
## Reports on meetings

### October: the two towers

Dennis Chedgy, in his inimitable style, told us how John Turner, a wealthy builder in Faulkland, fell out with his new neighbour Baron Hilton who had taken over the Joliffe estate at Ammerdown with its great 150 foot column. Turner, to spite the Baron, decided he would build a tower and that it would be 20 feet taller than Ammerdown. However, construction bankrupted Turner who then died of pneumonia in 1894. The sad irony was that his estate, including Turner's tower, was bought up by Baron Hilton. It rapidly became unsafe and was reduced in height at various times until final demolition in 1968. The Ammerdown Column remains and we heard how the internal staircase had once been climbed by a cow!

### November: the mills of Lyncombe and Widcombe

Tony Coverdale of Saltford Brass Mill brought us his wide knowledge of water mills with a detailed account of the different technologies used for



Ammerdown and Turner's towers

propulsion and the chronology of all the mills in the two valleys at Lyncombe and Widcombe. Some were in existence at the time of Domesday and continued at various sites through to the final mill closure in the early 20th century. These mills ground flour but the water power was also used by John Wicksteed who became famous in the 1700s for his 'Wicksteed Machine'. Powered by a small water wheel on the Lyn stream it engraved stone seals and cameos for visitors to the Bagatelle pleasure garden at the foot of Ralph Allen's Drive.

### December: xmas do

There were lots of party games on offer at the 2015 Christmas Extravaganza at the School Hall - Skittles. Jenga. Quoits, Mega-Draughts, The Captain's Mistress, 'Pin the Urn on Ralph Allen's Pillar', Smack the Rat to name but a few. We were also honoured by a rare audience with Gypsy Rose, the local Greendown Mystique and Fortune Teller. Many learnt their fate that evening and we hope that it does not come too soon!



Xmas Jenga : will it stay or will it go?

## Combe Down ladies in uniform

Here's a wonderful photograph owned by Mr Charlie Swift of Bradford Road. It shows his maternal great-aunt, Annie Willis (nee Ferris), in the WW1 uniform of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) which later became known as the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps.

The War Office had identified that a number of jobs which did not involve fighting were being carried out by men who could have been in battle. It was decided that women could do many of these jobs instead and that they could replace male soldiers in offices, canteens, transport roles, stores and army bases. By the end of the war in 1918, more than 50,000 women had joined the WAAC, some working in war zones in France, Belgium, Italy and Greece.



WAAC volunteers wore green or 'khaki' uniforms, including a small cap, khaki jacket and skirt. The skirt had to be no more than twelve inches from the ground. The WAAC exercised every day, taking part in Morris dancing and hockey to keep fit.

Does anyone out there have any more information about the WAAC in Combe Down?

Annie Willis in World War 1, picture owned by Charles Swift

## Mulberry Park

The development of the former Foxhill MoD site is proceeding with detailed planning permission for the first phase of 275 new homes in Mulberry Park approved unanimously by councillors in September 2015. This follows the outline permission given in February for the whole site with up to 700 new homes, community facilities and open spaces. Initial groundworks have begun near the Bradford Road entrance and building work will follow in the Spring.

The exhibition last year showed how the development would be a mix of one- and two-bed apartments, terraced houses, town houses, semi-detached and larger detached houses ranging



Mulberry Park view, with kind permission of Curo

from two to six bedrooms. 30% of the dwellings will be affordable housing. At its core will be a new primary school, nursery, community rooms and employment space together with retail space for cafes, restaurants and small shops. Access will be from a new roundabout on Bradford Road and through a wider Foxhill entry. The nos. 1 and 13 buses may be combined with more frequent services and there is even the vision of a cable car down to Bath!

Concerns have been expressed about the effects on traffic in the area from the additional population at Mulberry Park and the proposed Sulis Meadows development nearby. Time will tell but, with all the old MOD buildings now demolished, it is worth a visit to see the area completely open for the first time since the construction of Foxhill in the 1940s.

## Down memory lane: Belgian refugees come to Combe Down

Syrian refugees are in our minds at present but a century ago another country was on the move for similar reasons. Germany had invaded Belgium in August 1914 and what became known as 'The Rape of Belgium' invoked the sympathy of the world. Cities were burnt and civilians murdered leading to a massive exodus by the terrified population.

250,000 Belgian refugees arrived in Britain and the War Refugees Committee coordinated a large network of voluntary relief work. This involved over 2000 local committees, supported by the local authorities, across the country. For many, helping the refugees was their way of contributing to the wider war effort and countless charity initiatives and events were organised.

Bath was part of this movement and made its own arrangements for receiving refugees. Combe Down formed a committee which was presided over by the Reverend Sweetapple of Holy Trinity. On Thursday 5 November 1914 a public meeting was held to announce Prior Park Villa had been secured for the arrival of ten refugees on the following Monday. They were to be watched over by a Miss Ward and £130-140 (approx £14,000 today) was promised for their support. Sadly, no record of their stay in Combe Down or the names of the refugees seems to exist other than some general reports in the Bath Chronicle.

A Christmas Day 1914 dinner table collection across the parishes of Bath raised £97 16s 5d for the maintenance of the refugees and in February 1915, as 50 more brought the total that had come to Bath to 360, there were meetings to discuss whether house to house collections or a penny on the rates was the best approach for funding these new arrivals.

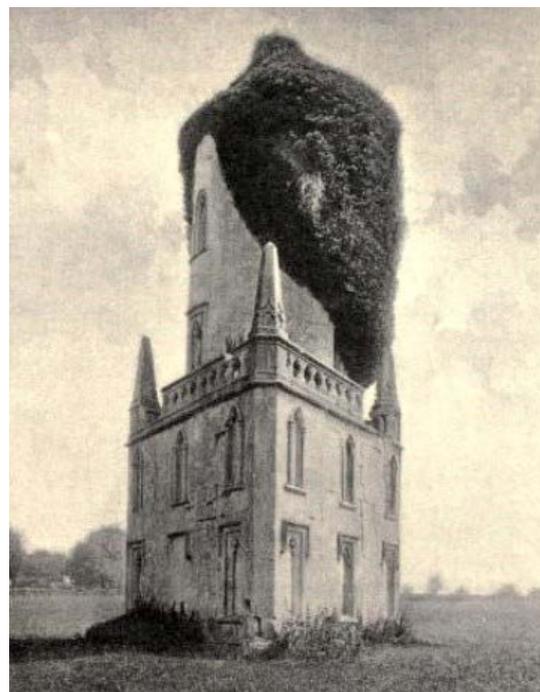
It was clear that finance for the growing number of refugees was becoming a problem. In September 1915, Combe Down was looking after 12 refugees and had spent £150 maintaining the house and residents from the start in November through to July. £180 had been raised on Combe Down and it was decided that no further refugees could be accommodated and economies had to be made. Combe Down had in fact been one of the most parsimonious parishes spending only 6 shillings per head per week against 12 and 15 shillings elsewhere. In July 1916 there were two remaining families of refugees living in cottages in Combe Down and after that nothing further is known. By that time there were probably few fresh arrivals and with work found for many they became self-supporting.

But the welcome in Britain came to a sudden end at the Armistice in 1918. Many Belgians had their employment terminated which left them with little option but to go home. The government offered free one-way tickets back to Belgium and the aim was to get them to leave the country as quickly as possible. Within 12 months of the war ending more than 90% had returned to Belgium.

## The towers of Combe Down - part 1

November's talk on The Two Towers highlighted the fashion common in the 18th and 19th centuries of building towers as memorials, garden features or simply follies. In those uncomplicated days before planning permission and green belts this was a favourite way of boasting to the neighbours about one's, often newly acquired, status or allegiances. Combe Down is not without its own selection of these architectural novelties.

On Monument Field, known in the old days as the 'Monny' and now used as a playing field by Prior Park College, a triangular building once stood supporting a circular tower with internal staircase. It was built as a monument to Ralph Allen after his death in 1764 by Bishop Warburton who was the husband of Mr Allen's niece Gertrude Tucker. She inherited the Prior Park estate after Ralph Allen's wife Elizabeth died in 1766 and Warburton



Ralph Allen's Memorial on Monument Field

certainly owed Allen a great deal in the way his personal life, wealth and career had developed. His construction seems to have used much of what already existed as a 16th century, or even earlier, gothic building with tower known as the Lodge that was already standing on the site and of which a drawing survives. By the late 19th century the tower was in a ruinous and dangerous condition and the monument was finally demolished in 1953.

More towers in the next newsletter.

## New public footpath

A new footpath has been designated by the Planning Inspector from Pope's Walk to North Road behind the houses on Trinity Road and Stonehouse Lane. It follows the fence along the south side of the ex-MoD Foxhill site and the west side of CD Rugby Ground to emerge opposite the end of Combe Road. The Council is soon expected to add this new path to the local authority footpath map.

## Pope's Walk

Pope's Walk, also known as Blind Lane, is being considered for 'improvements'. It is uncertain whether the improvements may mean a cycle

track or worse but there is a real danger that this ancient path down to Perrymead may lose its rustic charm and appeal. Local councillors should be contacted if you are concerned about this.

## Ralph Allen's pillars

No progress as yet on repairs to the damaged pillars. Council Officers have not been able to find a crane firm willing to do the lifting work required for fear of breaking the stone further. The top of the pillar needs to be lifted and moved back into place and there is other restorative work. Officers are seeking advice from Conservation Architects.

## Please follow us

Follow us on Facebook for news, updates and meeting information.

<https://www.facebook.com/CombeDownHeritageSociety>

We're also on Twitter, posting as @cdhsoc

Website: [www.combedownheritage.org.uk](http://www.combedownheritage.org.uk)




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## 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 2017 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.