

# PROCEEDINGS

## OF THE HISTORY OF BATH RESEARCH GROUP



No: 10

2021-22

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### EDITORIAL

All those living or visiting Bath in 2021/2 will be aware of the prolonged closure of the 'Cleveland' Bridge, as well as hopefully the triumphal re-opening of the 'Cleveland' Pools, of which there is an update in these *Proceedings* on page 22. So why 'Cleveland'? The answer is the landowner: **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Cleveland alias William Henry Vane (1766-1842)**.

William Henry Vane was the son of Henry Vane, 2nd Earl of Darlington whose maternal grandfather was Charles FitzRoy, the 2nd Duke of Cleveland. He was a Whig Member of Parliament for Totnes from 1788 to 1790 and for Winchelsea from 1790 to 1792. The latter year he succeeded his father in the earldom and took his seat in the House of Lords and also succeeded his father as Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, a post he held until his death.



However, for us his pivot year is 1810 when he successfully laid claim to the Pulteney Estate in Bath after the Countess of Bath died in 1808. In 1827 he was created Marquess of Cleveland, a revival of the Cleveland title held by his ancestors and in 1833 he was made Baron Raby, of Raby Castle in the County Palatine of Durham, and Duke of Cleveland.

# MEETING REPORTS

## AN UNUSUAL WAR MEMORIAL

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021      Virtual  
Speaker                                      Stephen Bird  
Abstract                                      Stephen Bird/Nigel Pollard

*The subject of this talk came about when the author came across the Mary's Walk memorials behind a new retail and housing development on Lower Bristol Road, Bath, in May 2020 during one of his hourlong walks for exercise permitted by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The mention on one of them of the First World War 1<sup>st</sup> South African Infantry Regiment caught his eye - it was his grandfather's unit that he had known little about until 2014-15 when researching for a book he was writing about his service in the First World War. The unusual occurrence of a memorial to an unknown soldier of his grandfather's unit, and the suggestion that two men from Bath had served in that regiment, prompted him to investigate further.*

The Second World War Bath Blitz and Roseberry Road air-raid shelter memorial (left) and the First World War headstone (right), at Mary's Walk, Roseberry Road, Bath, as it appeared from June 2019 to April 2021. The river Avon can be seen on the very right. (Photo: Stephen Bird).



### Background.

On 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019, in a moving ceremony at Roseberry Road, Bath, an impressive new memorial was unveiled to commemorate the 417 citizens killed in the Good Friday raid of 1941 and the Bath Blitz raids of April 1942. The project was the longtime ambition of local resident Chris Kilminster who raised funds for it and worked with developers RGB Group, Deeley Freed and Legal & General to create the memorial and the Mary's Walk garden in which it sits. He deserves great credit for his initiative, patience and persistence in seeing the project through to completion. His knowledge of the Bath Blitz is encyclopædic.

The memorial also records the tragic deaths of 28 out of 31 people in an air raid shelter that had stood on the same spot and which took a direct hit. Among those in the shelter were five of Mr. Kilminster's relatives, including his seven-year-old sister Mary, who was killed. The garden where the memorial stands is named Mary's Walk in her memory.

At the same ceremony, a much smaller memorial commemorating two Bath-born men who served with the South African forces in the First World War was unveiled. The Bath Stone slab had been found nearby during undergrowth clearance from a former Dairy Crest depot in advance of the same development work. Before becoming a depot, the area had been the back gardens of houses in Roseberry Place on Lower Bristol Road, which were demolished in the 1950s. The developers passed the stone to Chris Kilminster to be cared for and it was thought appropriate to exhibit it alongside the Bath Blitz memorial at Mary's Walk.

While researching the background to this stone, Chris was given the names of two men from Bath, Paul Geoffrey Arnold and William Henry Batt, who had served with the South African forces in the First World War. He was told that they died together on the Somme in 1918 shortly before the end of the conflict and this was commemorated on an engraved steel plate bolted to the headstone's face. At the unveiling of the memorials in June 2019, Chris was interviewed by Richard Wyatt for The Bath Newseum (<https://bathnewseum.com/2019/06/27/>) and appealed for anyone with more information about the two men to come forward.

The First World War headstone.

The stone is installed at an inclined angle, close to the Bath Blitz memorial. It bears the inscription A SOLDIER | OF THE GREAT WAR | 1ST REGT. SOUTH AFRICAN INF. in three rows across its top. Below this, a large serified cross is incised into the stone's surface, with a two-line inscription KNOWN UNTO GOD | 1914-1918 below the cross. The cross and lower inscription are now obscured beneath the steel plate, around which the stone has been painted grey.

Suspended beneath the engraved plate is a silver British War Medal, the medal awarded to all ranks who served between 5<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. The ribbon attached to it appears to be that of the France and Germany Star, awarded to all ranks who served in those countries between 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 and 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945.



The headstone with the steel plate attached to it. Delville Wood and Passchendaele have been mis-spelt. (Photo: Stephen Bird).

The words on the stone KNOWN UNTO GOD, now hidden from view, indicate that, if the stone were intended as a memorial, the deceased's identity would have been unknown. There is no evidence that the stone was intended to commemorate either of the men named on the plate attached to it and it should be made clear that this was not the intention in creating the memorial. The stone was simply used as an opportunity to mark the deaths of two local men, Paul Arnold and William Batt.

When the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was made aware of the stone's discovery and its use as a memorial to Paul Arnold and William Batt, it commented that it had no record of either Arnold or Batt being killed in 1918 and that there were no un-named South African soldiers from the First World War buried in the UK. The CWGC said that the most likely explanation for the stone was that it was a test piece produced by a mason's yard to show its proficiency when pitching for a commission from the then Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) to produce military headstones. By the end of the First World War, hundreds of thousands of headstones were needed and masons' yards across the country were invited to submit specimen pieces to demonstrate that they had the skill to meet the IWGC's exacting standards. Whether successful or unsuccessful, test pieces were recycled to avoid later confusion, but this one clearly survived and was not the first the CWGC had come across. (The Imperial War Graves Commission was renamed Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960).

The stone is of the same dimensions as all military headstones, being 15" (38cm) wide and 3" (7.6cm) deep. The standard height of such stones was 30" (76cm); 23" (58.5cm) of this stone is visible above ground. Military headstones were required to conform to these dimensions and to a design by the leading architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens. They were mostly carved in Portland Stone or, occasionally, in Hopton Wood or Red Locharbriggs stone, and the profile of the official design was softened by its distinctive rounded top. By contrast, the stone at Mary's Walk appears to be of Bath Stone and its lettering lacks the characteristic crispness of the Lutyens design still visible on headstones that have stood for almost a century nearby in Twerton, St. James's and Locksbrook cemeteries. The abrasions around the slab's edges reflect the fact that it was not found in a primary context and, as a rejected testpiece, it must have been moved around, possibly many times, in the intervening decades. It is flat-topped and, at some point, it may have been sawn down to make it rectilinear.

First World War headstones were incised with the national emblem or regimental badge of the deceased. In the case of the South African Infantry, this was a springbok's head in a roundel which was also used on its cap badges. The fact that this motif is missing from the stone is further evidence that it is incomplete and that it was never destined to mark a soldier's grave.

With ready sources of oolitic limestone nearby, there would have been no shortage of monumental masons in the Bath area when the IWGC was awarding contracts to produce military headstones after the First World War. The 1921 Bath Directory lists 332 masons in and around the city. Delivering a IWGC contract would have required a well-established business capable of ordering and handling large amounts of Portland Stone to deliver the number of headstones required, and contracts may have been awarded to more than one company.

The main local business to secure IWGC contracts for making military headstones for cemeteries in and around Bath was Messrs. B. Turvey & Sons. Of the 205 First World War memorials in Bath cemeteries, 122 (60%) are in Locksbrook Cemetery, for which Turvey & Sons had the contract. The firm's yard had been at Locksbrook Memorial Works, Locksbrook Place, since 1896, less than 200 metres from the cemetery's gates. The yard, now The Marble Works of Bath, is also only a short distance from where the test piece was found on the other side of the River Avon, then accessible from there only via the Twerton Bridge footbridge. This bridge survives alongside the 1980 Windsor Road bridge.

The First World War test-piece headstone at Mary's Walk did not meet IWGC's specification and would not have secured a contract for its maker. How it ended up on the site of the Dairy Crest depot may never be known. It may have been kept by the mason who made it, or discarded as was required. At some point, it vanished from view and remained lost until it was re-found a century later. The 1921 Bath Directory does not record a stonemason amongst the residents of the Roseberry Road houses which preceded the Dairy Crest depot.

#### The South African Brigade in the First World War.

In 1915, Great Britain appealed to its Empire to send troops to Europe to help in the fight against Germany. Under its constitution, South Africa could not send troops beyond its own borders and immediate neighbouring territories, so a new overseas expeditionary force, the South African Brigade, was created which would serve as part of the British Army. The Brigade mustered at Potchefstroom 75 miles southwest of Johannesburg. It consisted of four infantry regiments, five heavy artillery batteries, a general hospital, a field ambulance unit and a signal company to be attached to the Royal Engineers.

Eighty-five per cent of the soldiers recruited to the Brigade were of British blood. Like eighteen-year-old 3713 Infantryman Alan Bird, who enlisted in August 1915, many of them had been born in Britain and were keen to go back to Europe to defend their homeland. By contrast, Afrikaners were initially not keen to fight against Germany, which had helped them in their war against the British some years earlier.

In the autumn of 1915, the South African Brigade sailed to England and set up base at Bordon in Hampshire. The first few months of 1916 were spent campaigning in Egypt until, in April, the Brigade returned to Europe. By June 1916, it was on the Western Front in north-eastern France, where it was attached to the 9<sup>th</sup> Scottish Division. It saw bitter action in the Somme offensive of 1916 at Delville Wood and the Butte de Warlencourt, at Arras and Cambrai in 1917 and resisting the German Spring Offensive on the River Lys in 1918.

In the autumn of 1916, after the momentous events surrounding the Battle of Delville Wood, the South African Government asked the novelist John Buchan, then a staff officer serving in France, to compile the official account of the South African Brigade in the First World War. This was published in 1920 by Nelson & Sons as *The History of the South African Forces in France*. It offered a highly detailed account of the action seen by the different units of the Brigade and is still an essential source book for researchers of the subject. The book was republished in 2015 by The Naval & Military Press Ltd.

The two Bath-born soldiers.

The CWGC's records of war graves in Bath show that 205 servicemen who died between 1914 and 1919 were buried in nine different cemeteries in Bath, more than half of them in Locksbrook Cemetery. Paul Arnold and William Batt are not listed among them. There is a smattering of men from Canadian and Australian units, and one Belgian, but none from a South African unit.

That Paul Arnold and William Batt existed is not in dispute; both were indeed from Bath. But their absence from four sets of records – the CWGC records of war dead, the South Africa War Graves Project, Bath Death Records and Bath Burial Index – indicates that they did not die in the First World War, they did not die in Bath and they were not buried in Bath. Nor are they named on the main Bath war memorial beside the gates to Royal Avenue.

It is unfortunate that, in the course of his research, Chris Kilminster was told that the two men must have been lost without trace on the Western Front in the final months of the war and that their deaths had not been recorded. It cannot have helped that about sixty per cent of First World War army service records were destroyed when the Army Records Centre at Arnside Street, Walbrook, south London, was destroyed by fire during a German air raid in 1940. This means that gaps in the two men's service records may never be filled although, fortunately, some records have survived in the South African Defence Force archives.

Enquiries made of on-line archives by the writer (see 'Sources' section below) have shed some light on the pre-war and post-war lives of the two men, and the results of these enquiries are set out below. Inevitably, our knowledge of them is incomplete, although their discharge certificates give us some personal details such as height, complexion, hair colour and eye colour. Paul Arnold's preliminary medical assessment in 1916 recorded 'birthmark left thigh', 'small growth front abdomen' and 'mole top right buttock'; in wartime, such details could be the only way to identify a body. We may have intimate details like this, but we still do not know what either man looked like as no photographs of them have yet come to light.

## 8875 Paul Geoffrey Arnold.

Paul Arnold was born on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1890 at 10 Bathwick Street in the registration sub-district of Bathwick, Bath. He was the third of five children born to Maurice and Edith Arnold. The Register of Births records Maurice as being a brewer. The Arnold family had been brewers and landowners in the village of Wickwar in Gloucestershire since 1800, where the Queen Anne-style early 18<sup>th</sup> century Hill House, now grade II listed, was the long-time family home. The family's ties with Wickwar were strong and, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1890, Paul was baptised at Holy Trinity Church there. Maurice's older brother and Paul's uncle, John Hubert Arnold, lived for almost all his life at Hill House until his death in 1940.

Electoral records show that by 1895 Maurice Arnold and his family were living at 168 Anerley Road, Penge, in south London. Paul's younger brother Anthony was born there in 1897 and the family was still there at the time of the 1901 Census, by which time Paul was 11 years old.

In 1903 the family sailed on the Natal Line ship *Umtali* from London to Durban on South Africa's east coast. There is no evidence in ships' inbound passenger lists or in the 1911 Census that they returned to England. Emigration in 1903 was, most likely, a career for move for Maurice who is later recorded as 'General Manager, S. African Breweries'. The family lived at 'Bekeni', Pentrich, in the town of Pietermaritzburg about 50 miles inland from Durban.

Paul's military record shows that he served in the South African military in 1914-15 before being discharged so he could join the new South African Brigade and go to fight in Europe. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1916 he enlisted in the Brigade's 2<sup>nd</sup> (Natal & Free State) Infantry Regiment at Potchefstroom, giving his profession as 'farmer'. The bulk of the Brigade had sailed to England the previous autumn and was already again at sea en route to campaign in Egypt. Paul embarked for England at Cape Town on or around 28<sup>th</sup> February 1916.

[Paul's younger brother Anthony had also enlisted in the same regiment. His service number, 6145, suggests that he did so earlier than Paul (service number 8875) and probably in 1915 before the South African Brigade sailed for England. If this is correct, he may have seen action in Egypt before transferring to the Western Front in 1916. War Office records show that Anthony was killed on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1916.]

Paul Arnold saw two extended periods of service on the Western Front. The first started on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1916 when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment was sent to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. He probably saw action in the South African Brigade's most famous action of the First World War, its heroic defence of Delville Wood in July 1916. Paul survived it and continued to serve in France. His military record shows that from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1917 he was paid an extra shilling a day for being a Lewis Gunner. On 12<sup>th</sup> April he received a shrapnel wound in his right thigh, probably during a failed attack at Fampoux during the Battle of Arras. He was treated at Étaples in northern France before being transferred on 19<sup>th</sup> April to Southwark Military Hospital, East Dulwich. He was discharged on 18<sup>th</sup> May and rejoined his unit in France on 12<sup>th</sup> June.

On 29<sup>th</sup> September 1917, Paul again received gunshot wounds, this time to the face and neck. He was treated at Boulogne, then on the hospital ship *Princess Elizabeth* and then at Dulwich Grove Military Hospital in October and at Southwark Military Hospital in November. He was discharged from hospital on 24<sup>th</sup> November and returned to his unit, but was soon declared to be 'ineffective'. In December 1917 Paul was returned to England as 'unfit for further service in France'.

Paul had an extended period of furlough in England from December 1917 to February 1918, during which he was entitled to wear two 'wounded stripes'. He was eventually considered medically unfit for further active service and was discharged on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1918 at the South African Brigade's base at Bordon, Hampshire. He held the rank of Lance Corporal from March 1917 until his discharge, when he was awarded the Silver War Badge.

Paul's discharge certificate described him as 27 years old, 5' 11" tall, of fresh complexion, with blue eyes and dark hair. His trade was again given as 'farmer'. His military character was 'Very Good' and he was commended as 'a very reliable man in every way & strongly recommended for employment.' Paul had two blemishes on his record; on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1916 he forfeited a day's pay for being absent between 9am and 10pm; and on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1916 he was deprived of two days' pay for 'improper conduct on parade'.

The discharge certificate shows that, while Paul had been wounded, it had not been fatal and he did not die. The document points to a life after the war, for which there is plenty of evidence.

Initially, the family's home of 'Bekeni, Pentrich, Pietermaritzburg' was given as Paul's intended place of residence on his discharge form, but this was crossed out and replaced with 'Hill House, Wickwar', the long-time Arnold family home in Gloucestershire. Being discharged in England while his immediate family was in South Africa, the home of his uncle, John Hubert Arnold, was the obvious place to convalesce.

Three years after his discharge, Paul started a career as a civil servant in the Colonial Forestry Service. Maritime passenger lists between 1921 and 1935 show that he made numerous voyages on ships of the Elder Dempster Line between England and ports in Ghana, then known as the Gold Coast of West Africa. On passenger lists he described himself as either 'civil servant' or 'forestry officer'. In 1923, Paul sailed to Durban, probably to visit his family in Pietermaritzburg. Until 1925, he gave his home address as 'Hill House, Wickwar, Gloucestershire', after which he moved to Oxford, possibly because in 1924 the Institute of Forestry had been established at the university as a centre of excellence for the study of forestry.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1926 Paul Arnold married Eileen May Ryan (b.16<sup>th</sup> May 1896 in Brighton, Sussex) at St. Martin's Church, Bladon, just north of Oxford. After this, the couple lived at The Beeches, Eileen's home in Bladon. The marriage register recorded him as 'Forest Officer, Gold Coast'. Oxford remained their home until 1932.

Shipping passenger lists show that Eileen accompanied Paul on at least four of his visits to Ghana between 1926 and 1935. Paul may still have had ties with Bath because in 1933, whilst still a civil servant, he gave his address as 1 Brunswick Place in the city. Two years later, on what appears to have been his final voyage as a civil servant, he gave his address as 10 Craven Hill, Lancaster Gate, W2 (London).

The 1939 England and Wales Register shows that Paul and Eileen were now back in Bath, living in a flat at 9 Camden Crescent with Paul's unmarried sisters, Brenda and Phyllis (both recorded as 'incapacitated'). Brenda and Phyllis had returned to England in April 1929 on the Union Castle ship, *Glengorm Castle*.

Paul died suddenly at home on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1940, aged 50, after much suffering according to a press report. He was cremated on 8<sup>th</sup> November at Arnos Vale, Bristol, and his ashes were interred the same day in the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church, Wickwar.

At some point after Paul's death, his widow Eileen moved to Lindfield, Haywards Heath in Sussex, twelve miles north of Brighton, her birthplace. She died there on 6th January 1973.

None of the records consulted to date indicate that Paul and Eileen had any children.

Paul Arnold's discharge certificate, issued on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1918. (British Army World War I Pension Records 1914-1920).

## 6342 William Henry Batt.

William Batt was born on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1874 at 15 Johnstone Street, on the south west side of Laura Place, Bath. He was the second of four children born to William Robert and Eliza Batt. His father was an upholsterer's foreman, his mother a lodging-house keeper. William was baptised at St. Mary's Church, Bathwick, on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1874. Census returns show that the family lived at a succession of addresses in Bathwick; in 1871, before William's birth, his parents had lived in Pulteney Street before moving to Johnstone Street.

Bath Death Records show that William's mother Eliza died, aged 32, in the final quarter of 1881. At some point the family moved to Larkhall and, on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1883, his father re-married to Marion Forster of Winsley at St. Saviour's Church. By 1891, William senior was a 'brewer traveller' and the family was living at 5 Sydney Wharf, Bath. The Census that year recorded 16-year-old William junior's occupation as 'Learning Telegraphy'. Two years later, Postal Appointment Records show that he started work as a telephonist in Bath.

At some point in the 1890s, William and maybe the whole Batt family, emigrated to South Africa, although evidence for this has not been found in shipping passenger lists. The Bucknall Steamship Co. Ltd passenger lists record a William Batt arriving back in England from 'Cape ports' on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1910 on its ship *Fort Salisbury*. He returned to Algoa Bay, Port Elizabeth, three months later, arriving there on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1910. It is not known whether this was father or son, or someone else altogether.

A single reference on William's final discharge pay notification in 1919 suggests that in the 1890s the family lived at Vogelfontein, about 70 miles west of Kimberley in the Northern Cape. William's military record refers to service at Langberg (incorrectly spelt Langbey) in 1897, probably in the Bechuanaland Field Force raised that year to quell a revolt in the Langberg Mountains to the west of Vogelfontein. The same document also mentions William's service as a Sapper and a Lance Corporal in 'South West Africa 1914-1915' in the South African Field Telegraph & Postal Corps. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 1915 he was discharged from this unit; the incomplete discharge document records his next of kin as 'Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Postmaster's Office, Pt Elizabeth', probably a reference to his father.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 1915, William enlisted in the South African Signal Company, one of the units of the new South African Brigade, with the rank of Sapper. The company was assembled at Potchefstroom under the command of the Engineer-in-Chief of the South African Post Office, along with many skilled men recruited from that organisation. At 41, William was beyond normal recruitment age but, as a telegraphist, he had specialist skills to offer.

The Signal Company sailed to England on the Union Castle ship *Kenilworth Castle*, arriving at Bordon in Hampshire on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1915. Whilst the Brigade's infantry regiments went to campaign in Egypt, its Signal Company went for specialist training at the Signal Service Training Centre in and around Woburn, Bedfordshire. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1916 the Signal Company, with William amongst its complement, landed in France where it served for the rest of the war creating, maintaining and repairing military communications networks on the Western Front.

William's discharge certificate records two injuries: scars on his left forehead and on his right wrist. Other documents show that he was wounded twice, but do not record which injury was received on which occasion. On 28<sup>th</sup> January 1917 he was treated in a field hospital, then in a general hospital in Rouen, the only recorded condition being 'debility'. On 11<sup>th</sup> February he was invalided on the hospital ship *Aberdonian* back to England, where he spent 24 days recuperating at the South African Military Hospital in Richmond Park. He was discharged from hospital on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1917.



On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1917, William was given leave to marry Eva Muriel Forthomme (née Stannard) at St. Martin's parish church, Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire. It is possible that they met while Batt was based at Woburn just five miles to the east, where Eva may have been employed in a civilian capacity.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1917, William rejoined the Signal Company at Abbeville in France. What happened next is not recorded in his military record but, on 4<sup>th</sup> November, he was returned to base as 'ineffective' and, on 29<sup>th</sup> November, was classified by a Medical Board as 'unfit for service in France'. He returned to England on 10<sup>th</sup> December. After a few weeks of furlough, William was discharged at Bordon on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1918. He was now 43 years old and recorded as being 5' 11" tall, of fresh complexion with brown hair and brown eyes. His military character was described as 'very good' and he was commended as 'a very reliable man in every way.'

William Batt's discharge certificate shows that, while he had been wounded, it had not been fatal and he did not die. The document points to a life after the war, for which there is plenty of evidence.

On his discharge certificate, William's trade was given as 'telegraphist' and his intended place of residence as 'Post Office, Port Elizabeth, C.P.' (Cape Province). A partially obscured record card in the South African Defence Force Archives gives his next-of-kin as 'Father, Mr W\_\_\_\_\_, c/o Post \_\_\_\_\_, U of \_\_\_\_\_' suggesting that his parents, or at least his father, were still living in Port Elizabeth.

On the reverse of his discharge certificate, however, William's next-of-kin is given as his wife, Mrs. E. Batt of 68 Simpson Road, Fenny Stratford. An undated entry on an army casualty form in 1917 placed Eva at '22 Malmesbury Road, Chippenham, Wilts, c/o Mrs Dann', William's older sister Jessie.

The form contains the following information:

- Title:** V.V.6.X. 1023 Proceedings on Discharge
- No.:** 6342
- Army Rank:** Napper
- Name:** Batt, William Henry
- Corps:** SOUTH AFRICAN INFANTRY Signal Coy. R.C.
- Date of discharge:** 6<sup>th</sup> February 1918
- Place of discharge:** Bordon
- Physical Description:**
  - Age: 43 years
  - Height: 5 feet 11 inches
  - Complexion: Fresh
  - Eyes: Brown
  - Hair: Brown
  - Trade: Telegraphist
  - Intended place of residence: Port Elizabeth
- Military character:** Very Good
- Character awarded:** A very reliable man in every way

William Batt's discharge certificate, issued on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1918. (British Army World War I)

The warrant for William's final army pay was issued on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1919 and was quoted at Imperial (ie British) and Union (ie South African) rates. On it, the address of 'c/o Post Master, Vogelfontein' was deleted and 'Post Master's Office Port Elizabeth' entered.

William's injuries may have brought his military service to an end, but it seems that he still had work to return to in Port Elizabeth. The city had led the way in the development of telegraphy in South Africa, with the country's first telephone exchange opening there in 1882. A brand-new exchange was to be built onto the city's post office after the war ended.

William and Eva started a family soon after their move to South Africa. Heather Mary was born on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and Jessie Emily in 1920 or 1921.

On 9<sup>th</sup> June 1933, William (59), Eva (48) and their daughters Heather (14) and Jessie (12) arrived at Southampton from Cape Town on the Union Castle ship *Garth Castle*. William's occupation was not recorded on the passenger list, but their address was given as '46 Malmesbury Road, Chippenham, Wilts'. According to the 1911 Census, William's older sister, Mrs. Jessie Emily Dann, after whom he had named

his younger daughter, lived at 22 Malmesbury Road in Chippenham; they were still there in 1917 when Eva is recorded as living with them. It is not known whether Jessie and her husband Alfred still lived at no.22 or had moved to no.46 Malmesbury Road but, either way, the trip in 1933 must surely have been to visit Jessie. This may have been because of her ill-health; she died in March the following year, aged 63.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1938, William (63, now 'civil servant clerk - retired'), Eva (52), Heather (19) and Jessie (17, 'typist') again arrived at Southampton from Cape Town, this time on the Union Castle ship *Llandoverly Castle*, to live at 97 Gordon Road, Carshalton-on-Hill, Surrey. It is possible that, with war again on the horizon, the family had decided to come home. The 1939 England and Wales Register records William and Eva at this address. Strangely, one version of the Register has two redacted (blacked-out) lines, while another version includes a line with Heather's name and details and only one redacted line, presumably where Jessie's name and details may have been. On the second version Heather's surname Batt has been over-written in blue ink with 'Peacock', although marriage records show that she did not marry John B Peacock until 1941.

At some point, William and Eva moved to 18 St. Mark's Hill, Surbiton. They gave this address on their next - and final - recorded sea voyage when they returned to South Africa with Jessie on the Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Scotland*. They arrived in Durban on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1946.

Heather did not travel with them. In September 1941 she had married John B Peacock in the Surrey Mid-Eastern registration district, which included Carshalton where the Batt family lived. Within a few years they had divorced and, in April 1949, John Peacock married Doreen E Hooper in the same registration district. In 1954, Eva's death certificate recorded Heather as a divorcee.

In their retirement, William and Eva Batt lived at 23a Burnside Road, Tambers Kloof, Cape Town. William had a South African General Post Office pension. On 9<sup>th</sup> May 1949, aged 75, he died in Groot Schuur Hospital of myocardial degeneration and failure. He was cremated the following day and his ashes interred at Maitland Cemetery in Cape Town.

William's death certificate recorded him as 'retired cashier / General Post Office'. His passing is also mentioned in a death notice in the Cape Town Archives. Eva survived him by five years but died at sea on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1954 on board the Portuguese passenger liner and cargo ship MV Moçambique, approaching the Mozambiquan port of Beira. Her death certificate indicates that her daughter Jessie was on board with her and identified the body shortly after death occurred.

**Conclusion.**

The intention to commemorate the service of soldiers thought to have died in defence of their country is honourable, and it is incomprehensible as to why Chris Kilminster was inadvertently misled about the fate of Paul Arnold and William Batt. He went to a great deal of trouble to create the memorial in good faith that the information he had been given was correct.

FORM OF INFORMATION OF A DEATH. R.M.D. 2  
 AANGIFTE VAN 'N STERFGEVAL.  
 (Act No. 11 of 1923.—Wet No. 11 van 1923.)  
 WARNING—This certificate for public statements publicly made on the name of those for primary.  
 WAARSKUWING—Die sêrlê vir publieke verklaarings moet sêrlê, is die sêrlê as in die sêrlê van sêrlê.  
 DECEASED—DOORLEDE.  
 1. Christian names and surname: William Henry Batt  
 Voornames en familie-naam  
 2. (a) Name of parent or guardian (if deceased was under the age of 18)  
 (b) Naam van ouer of voogd (as overlede was onder die ouderdom van tien jaar oud)  
 3. Place of residence of number\*  
 4. Age: 75 years  
 5. Sex: Male  
 6. Marital status: Single  
 7. Whether single, married, divorced, widower, or widow  
 8. Occupation: Retired cashier General Post Office  
 9. Profession or dependent of profession: General Post Office  
 10. Date of death: 9 May 1949  
 11. Place of death: Groot Schuur Hospital, Observatory, Cape Town  
 12. Usual place of residence: Burnside Road, Tambers Kloof, Cape Town  
 13. Intended place of burial: Maitland Cemetery, Cape Town  
 14. Cause of death: Myocardial degeneration and failure  
 15. Duration of illness or of last illness: 14 days  
 16. Name of medical practitioner: B. Chetty  
 17. Original signature (see mark): B. Chetty  
 18. Qualification: Medical Practitioner  
 19. Address: 17 Bop Street, Cape Town  
 20. Signature of informant: B. Chetty  
 21. Address of informant: 17 Bop Street, Cape Town  
 22. Date of issue: 10 May 1949  
 23. Signature of Registrar: [Signature]  
 24. Address of Registrar: [Address]

William Batt's death certificate, dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 1949. (Cape Province, South Africa, Civil Deaths 1895-1972).

To fully understand the First World War memorial at Mary's Walk, it is necessary to disassociate the incised stone itself from the engraved plate attached to it. The two are unrelated, despite having the First World War South African forces in common.

The engraved memorial to Paul Arnold and William Batt that was bolted to the 'headstone' contained several inaccuracies. A couple were minor: Bath birth records indicate that Arnold was born in 1890, not 1891; Batt was born in 1874, not 1875, although some records do mistakenly give 1875. Neither Arnold nor Batt served in the 1<sup>st</sup> South African Infantry Regiment; Arnold served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment and Batt in the South African Signal Company. Neither enlisted in 1914; Batt joined up in September 1915 and Arnold in January 1916. More importantly, neither man died in 1918 and, as shown above, plenty of evidence records their post-war lives.

Paul Arnold and William Batt did have quite a lot in common. Both were born in Bathwick, although they were born 16 years apart and were therefore unlikely to have known each other. Both emigrated with their parents to South Africa before the First World War and served in that country's military in 1914-1915 before joining the new South African Brigade to help in the defence of their homeland. In 1916 to 1917 they served in different roles in different units of the Brigade, neither of them the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, before being wounded and invalided back to England.

Both Arnold and Batt were discharged on medical grounds at the South African Brigade's HQ at Bordon, Hampshire, coincidentally both in February 1918. They would both have been awarded the British War Medal and the Victory Medal for their service. Although the South African Brigade served as part of the British Army, the reverse of the Victory Medal awarded to its soldiers bore the legend in English and Dutch, 'The Great War for Civilisation: De Grote Oorlog voor de Beschaving 1914-1919.' [Afrikaans did not become an official language until 1922].

After the war, Paul Arnold became a civil servant and worked in the Colonial Forestry Service in the 1920s and 1930s, making numerous working visits to Ghana in West Africa. In the late 1930s he retired with his wife Eileen to a flat at 9 Camden Crescent, Bath. He died there in 1940, was cremated at Arnos Vale in Bristol and his ashes were interred in the churchyard at his family's home village of Wickwar in Gloucestershire.

After the war, William Batt returned to South Africa and worked for at least twenty years in the country's postal service. He returned to England with his wife Eva and daughters in 1933 to visit his sister Jessie in Chippenham and again in 1939 to stay for the duration of the Second World War. He returned to South Africa in 1946 to live out his retirement there and died in Cape Town in 1949.

## Epilogue

As Covid-19 restrictions eased in April 2021, I had the privilege of meeting Chris Kilminster at Mary's Walk to hear the remarkable story of his family's tragic losses in the air-raid shelter during the Bath Blitz of April 1942 and his decades-long campaign to have a memorial created to these momentous events. I shared with him the information I had found about Paul Arnold and William Batt since hearing his appeal for more information about them. In the light of this new evidence, Chris has had a new memorial plaque attached to the First World War headstone.



The new plaque attached to the First World War memorial stone at Mary's Walk, Bath.

## Acknowledgements.

I am grateful to Henry Brown, Stuart Burroughs, Georges Forthomme, Chris Kilminster, Richard Meunier, David Odgers and Dr. Michael Rowe for their advice while preparing this paper.

## Sources.

Although not pertinent to this paper, Andrew Swift's excellent book, *All Roads Lead to France: Bath and The Great War* (2005, Akeman Press), gives a detailed account of Bath's associations with the First World War.

The first accounts of the Mary's Walk memorials were online reports:

December 2017: *The Story of Mary's Walk at Roseberry Place, Bath*, RGB Group Blog.

February 2019: *First World War headstone discovered lying in the undergrowth in Bath*, Elise Britten and Alex Ross, Somerset Live online.

March 2019: *The Story behind the First World War headstone found hidden in the Bath undergrowth*, (Elise Britten, Somerset Live online.

June 2019: *Bath Blitz memorial unveiled on site of WW2 explosion*, BBC online.

June 2019: *The tragic story behind Mary's Garden*, Richard Wyatt, The Bath Newseum.

John Buchan's *The History of the South African Forces in France* (1920, Nelson & Sons Ltd; republished 2015, Naval & Military Press Ltd), is the definitive account of the South African Brigade's participation in the First World War. It was written while the action was fresh in the minds of the many people Buchan interviewed and when the official records were available for him to consult. Its level of detail makes it possible to track with confidence the movements and actions of the different units of the Brigade. I have also drawn on research undertaken for my book about my grandfather, *Alan Bird (1897-1969) & The Great War 1914-1918* (2016, unpublished).

Online military archives, census records and birth, marriage and death records, along with many other sources have been extensively consulted and are included in the list of sources below. Given the associations of Paul Arnold and William Batt with Africa, shipping line passenger lists have been vital in tracing their movements.

On-line sources, archives and websites consulted have included:

ancestors.co.za ancestry.co.uk

ancestrylibraryedition.co.uk

Andrews Newspaper Index Cards 1790-1976

Arnold, Perrett & Co. Ltd (breweryhistory.com)

Bath Birth Marriages & Deaths (bmd.org.uk)

Bath Burial Index (batharchives.co.uk/bath-burial-index)

Bath Historical Directories (bathhistoricaldirectories.org.uk)

Bath Record Office, Bath & North East Somerset Council (batharchives.co.uk)

British Army WWI Service Records 1914-1920 (forces-war-records.co.uk)

British Postal Service Appointment Books 1737-1969 (postalheritage.org.uk)

Cape Estates Deaths Notice Index 1834-1951, Ancestors South Africa ([ancestors.co.za](http://ancestors.co.za))  
Cape Province, South Africa, Civil Deaths 1895-1972 ([ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com))  
Cape Town, South Africa, Maitland Cemetery Records 1888-1959 ([ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com))  
Commonwealth War Grave Commission ([cwgc.org/find-records](http://cwgc.org/find-records))  
England and Wales Civil Registration Birth Index 1837-1915 ([ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk))  
England and Wales Register 1939 ([ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk))  
England, Wales & Scotland Census returns 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911  
([ukcensusonline.com](http://ukcensusonline.com))  
English Parish Registers Online ([dustydocs.com](http://dustydocs.com)) [forces-war-records.co.uk](http://forces-war-records.co.uk)  
  
Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1913  
Gloucestershire, England, Church of England Burials 1813-1988  
([gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives](http://gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives))  
[greatwar.co.uk](http://greatwar.co.uk) [greatwarforum.org](http://greatwarforum.org)  
  
In Flanders Fields Museum, Ieper/Ypres ([inlandersfields.be](http://inlandersfields.be)) London,  
England, Electoral Registers, 1832-1965 [longlongtrail.co.uk](http://longlongtrail.co.uk) [myheritage.com](http://myheritage.com)  
  
Oxfordshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1930  
Passenger Lists Leaving UK 1890-1960 ([findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk))  
*Port Elizabeth of Yore: the postal service* ([thecasualobserver.co.za](http://thecasualobserver.co.za))  
Somerset, England, Church of England Baptisms 1813-1914 ([ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com))  
Somerset, England, Marriage Registers, Bonds and Allegations 1754-1914  
(ancestry library edition)  
South Africa National Defence Force Information Systems Division Documentation Centre  
([defenceweb.co.za](http://defenceweb.co.za))  
South Africa War Graves Project ([southafricawar Graves.org](http://southafricawar Graves.org))  
The National Archives, Kew ([nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk))  
*The story behind the First World War headstone found hidden in Bath undergrowth*  
([somersetlive.co.uk/news/history/story-behind-first-world-war-2608480](http://somersetlive.co.uk/news/history/story-behind-first-world-war-2608480))  
*The Story of Mary's Walk at Roseberry Place, Bath*  
([rgbgroupblog.wordpress.com](http://rgbgroupblog.wordpress.com))  
*The tragic story behind Mary's Walk* ([bathnewseum.com/2019/06/07](http://bathnewseum.com/2019/06/07))  
<https://bathnewseum.com/2019/06/27/>  
UK and Ireland Incoming Passenger Lists 1878-1960 / Outward Passenger Lists 1890-1960  
([ancestry.com](http://ancestry.com))  
Western Cape Archives and Records Service, Cape Town, South Africa  
([www.westerncape.gov.za/cape-archives](http://www.westerncape.gov.za/cape-archives)) [wickwarparishcouncil.co.uk](http://wickwarparishcouncil.co.uk)

## FONTEYN IN BATH

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Virtual

Speaker

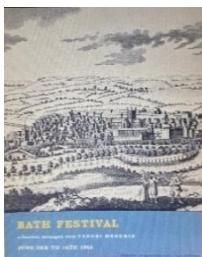
Rosemary Harden

Summary by

Nigel Pollard/Rosemary Harden

The speaker for this talk is the current Manger and ‘dress curator’ for the Fashion Museum in Bath, one of the world’s great museum collections of fashionable dress.

While holding some key pieces from fashion history at the Fashion Museum, from mantuas to mini-skirts, one of the real treasures of the collection, and the subject of this talk, is a group of mid-20th century couture clothes that belonged to ballerina Margot Fonteyn.



However, before turning to fashion history, there is also a theatre history, for in 1964, while at the height of her fame, she took part in a gala performance at the Bath Theatre Royal. This took place during the 1964 Bath Festival which at the time was under the direction of Yehudi Menuhin. Amongst a remarkable programme of works by world class musicians, a standout event was the above-mentioned Gala performance which was advertised in the programme as follows:

***“Tuesday 9 June. 7.30 PM. Theatre Royal. Western Theatre Ballet with Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, Yehudi Menuhin, Cleo Laine, Johnny Dankworth and his Ensemble. Programme to include World Premieres of Divertimento (music by Bartok) and of Lysistrata through the Ages (Darrell/Dankworth)”.***



The adjacent photograph shows Menuhin, Fonteyn and Nureyev in *Divertimento*, 8 June 1964 on the stage of the Theatre Royal, costumed and ready to perform. It was Menuhin’s idea that Fonteyn & Nureyev should perform a duet at the Bath Festival. Kenneth MacMillan agreed to choregraph the dance, and Barry Kay to do the design, while Menuhin himself played the music, Bartok’s *Sonata for Solo Violin*.

Fonteyn and Nureyev had flown in from Rome for just two nights, rehearsing on the Monday for the performance on the Tuesday. They stayed at the Lansdown Grove Hotel, and maybe should have dined there, for following the rehearsal they instead dined, in the words of the ballet photographer Keith Money who was part of the party, at ‘some frightful old run-down café somewhere on the “wrong” side of the city’.

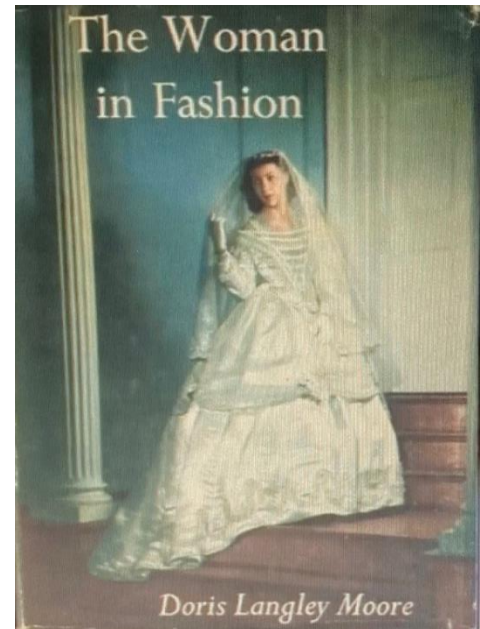
Historically, worse was to follow, as on returning to their hotel news had broken that Margot’s husband Roberto de Arias, a Panamanian politician had been shot in Panama City and was in a critical condition. Eventually, and across a broken telephone line to Panama City, the connection dropping in and out, she learned that Tito, as her husband was always called, was as well as could be expected and she made the decision to stay in Bath to dance *Divertimento* the next day. Margot Fonteyn was a woman of the theatre, and the show must go on.

She gave the performance and the Bath Weekly Chronicle found it: “... the artistic summit of the whole festival... the movement matched the sad, meandering music to the last nuance, the final half-tone. But it was the complete entity of the two which drew magic out of the mime and music”. The audience agreed, and Fonteyn and Nureyev danced the whole performance again as an encore.

Dame Margot Fonteyn spent just over a day in Bath in the summer of 1964: but the events of those fateful 24 hours changed her life forever. Tito did survive, but remained severely disabled, requiring constant care, for the rest of his life. And it was Fonteyn who took on the role, a new role for her, of principal care-giver.

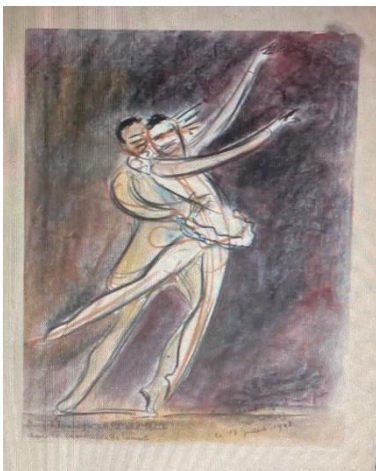
Returning to the history of fashion, it was intriguingly during the 1960s too that Fonteyn forged the quiet connection with Bath, which has continued to this day and was all to do with the author of a book by Doris Langley Moore entitled 'The Woman in Fashion' published in 1949.

Mrs Langley Moore was one of the early pioneering figures in establishing fashion as a subject worthy of study. She always called herself The Collector and she wrote about her collection in this book, published in 1949, in the introduction calling for the establishment of a museum of fashion. This was the collection that she donated to the City of Bath and who together with Bath City Council, founded the Museum of Costume, Bath in 1963. The Museum of Costume was re-named the Fashion Museum in 2007. She also used her connections with people in the world of theatre and ballet to model her original costumes...and hence the connection with Margot Fonteyn who was the most generous donor, gifting dresses, tailored garments, shoes, and hats to the Mrs Langley Moore. All those pieces are still here in Bath and have formed the centre pieces of many displays at the Museum from the 1960s to the present day.



Born Peggy Hookham in Reigate in Surrey in 1919 Margot Fonteyn is widely regarded as the greatest British ballerina of her generation, but tributes to the ballerina after her death in 1991, noted: "... she also behaved beautifully on the other side of the footlights...It was always a faultless performance, on and off stage."

Fonteyn was Britain's home-grown star ballerina, groomed by Ninette de Valois through the later 1930s as part of her vision to create a national ballet company. By the 1940s the Sadler's Wells Ballet was established, and Margot was the company's prima ballerina.



After touring through the war years and headlining at the re-opening of Covent Garden in 1946, Fonteyn took a leave of absence from Sadler's Wells and went to Paris in 1948, to dance with Roland Petit the young French choreographer. While Margot was only in Paris briefly her visit had a lasting effect on her off-stage wardrobe for it was during this time Petit introduced her to Christian Dior. Fonteyn describes how Christian Dior Paris lent her an evening gown: "...I had never felt so elegant in my life". It was the start of an enduring relationship between the Ballerina and the Couturier.

< Drawing of Fonteyn as Agatha the cat woman in *Les Demoiselles de la Nuit*, ca.1948.



< SUIT 'Daisy', 1947

This suit was Margot's first Dior, from the Spring-Summer 1947 collection. She wrote: "The Maison Dior decided to take me under its wing, and I bought one of the first season's outfits. It was called Daisy. ...". Christian Dior had unveiled his first haute couture collection on 12 February 1947, calling it the 'Corolle' line, featuring full skirts - like the petals, or corolla, of flowers. Margot was in the right place at the right time. Dior's collection was christened 'The New Look', after a comment by Carmel Snow, editor in chief of Harper's Bazaar; it remains one of the most famous moments in fashion history.

COAT 'Goemon', 1947 >

This is Fonteyn's coat from Dior's second collection. It's called 'Goemon', and has that distinctive New Look silhouette. You can see this coat on display at the Fashion Museum.



'Goemon' and 'Daisy' were most likely 'model' or sample garments. Fonteyn writes: "I was lucky enough to be more or less the same size as of one of his favourite models, and at the end of each season I was able to buy model dresses made on her". However, she was also a regular client at Christian Dior from this date onwards, records showing that the ballerina ordered a style called 'Fadette', for example, in November 1948, which cost 50,000 Francs. Madame Miniassian was her vendeuse, and her client number 88727.

As well as tailored daywear Fonteyn chose Dior evening dresses at this date; probably also 'models', as they don't feature in the Client Books in the Dior archives.



One, called 'Marigny', from the Spring-Summer 1949 collection, she wore during the Sadler's Wells Ballet tour to North America in 1949 which *The Washington Post* noted: "Miss Fonteyn possesses incidentally the most enviable wardrobe" and went on to describe 'Marigny' in detail, which the ballerina wore to an after-theatre supper at the British embassy.

Margot married Roberto de Arias, a Panamanian politician, in Paris in February 1955, wearing a silver-grey silk taffeta dress from Dior's Haute Couture Autumn-Winter 1954 collection, the H-line, and a head-dress with turquoise feathers. Fonteyn flew to Paris from London on the morning of her wedding, going straight to the Hotel Plaza-Athenée where, she wrote: "My Dior friends, Suzanne Luling and Yvonne Miniassian, were ready with my clothes".





Christian Dior Paris had become Margot Fonteyn's couturier of choice, by the late 1940s. Fonteyn here wears her Dior suit 'Daisy', as she is being fitted with hats by British milliner Madame Vernier. The photograph is by Elsbeth Juda who with her husband Hans ran The Ambassador magazine, a key press and marketing medium for Britain's fashion and textiles industries, then struggling to re-assert exports following the Second World War. The image was pre-publicity for the Sadler's Wells tour of North America in autumn 1949 and the enterprise was driven by Britain's post-war need to earn money through export, principally through ticket sales; but it also offered a unique opportunity to promote British fashion.



The tour was announced in The Ambassador; and it was Hans Juda who was credited with the idea that: "... these dancers would make good export mannequins...". Juda proposed his scheme, and successfully persuaded the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers [the INCSOC], the group of the leading London couturiers.

The four principal ballerinas of the Sadler's Wells Company - Margot Fonteyn, Moira Shearer, Beryl Grey and Pamela May - would each be supplied with travel and late evening clothes by the INCSOC designers. The ballerinas were to be ambassadors for British fashion, at publicity events during the tour. Michael Sherard was selected to supply travel clothes for Margot Fonteyn. The scheme was widely reported throughout the British press: "Her dresses at informal parties and receptions will be a show window for Britain".



< Margot Fonteyn wears Bianca Mosca, 1949  
(Photo: Vogue/Cecil Beaton)

Fonteyn embarked for New York, with her issue luggage, by Papworth Industries of Cambridge. But she chose her own clothes, wearing her favourite Hardy Amies suit, along with a finely plaited straw hat by Christian Dior Paris.

Margot Fonteyn wears Hardy Amies, 1949 >  
(Photo: Getty Images)





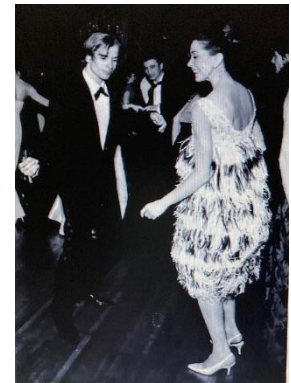
In 1961, Soviet dancer Rudolf Nureyev defected to the West. Ninette de Valois, still the leading force in British ballet - decided that Nureyev and Fonteyn should dance together. She was 42: he was 24.

They opened in Giselle at Covent Garden in February 1962 to rapturous reviews. Nureyev famously kneeled to kiss Fonteyn's hand, as she gave him a single rose plucked from the bouquets thrown on stage. It was: "A gesture that un-be known to anyone at the time heralded a new ballet boom for Britain". Fonteyn and Nureyev were box-office gold, hailed as the greatest partnership in modern classical ballet, and treated as rock stars wherever they went.

The ballerina needed a new costumier for this new identity. She chose Yves Saint Laurent, who had opened his own couture house in 1961, marrying the traditions of couture with a modern sensibility and outlook.



The ostrich feather shift dress, seen here on right as Margot parties with Nureyev at a New York nightclub in 1965, had a second part, a loose three-quarter length, light-as-a-feather, feather coat seen here on the left.



Fonteyn's look changed dramatically during the mid-1960s. She embraced new styles, including shift dresses and the new mini-skirt length, often in avant-garde materials for Saint Laurent's sophisticated up-to-the-minute sexy look.



A second Yves Saint Laurent dress from 1965> Fonteyn is shown here with legendary ballerina Tamara Karsavina, together with a sketch of the zig-zag sequin dress she is wearing.



The sketch is part of the archives at the Fashion Museum, a hint at the richness of the museum archives, the treasures to be discovered and connections to be made.

The final word must go to the luminous Margot Fonteyn. In the image below, taken by her brother Felix in the late 1940s, with that huge bouquet of flowers, in her Christian Dior straw hat, she is surely the embodiment of the off-stage ballerina.

Dame Margot Fonteyn, prima ballerina assoluta, gave countless performances occupying many roles throughout her 40-year career. But perhaps the greatest role that she performed was that of the most famous British ballerina of her generation. She created that character through the way that she chose to present herself off stage; and a key element in sustaining that performance was through her love of fashion and choice of clothes. It is perhaps testimony to that love that she had the generosity and forethought to gift her fabulous clothes to the Fashion Museum, so that the Gala Performance of the ballerina's life continues to this day.



## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRLSI COLLECTIONS FROM THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ONWARDS

Monday 8<sup>TH</sup> November 2021      VIRTUAL  
Speaker                                  Liz Vincent  
Abstract                                  Nigel Pollard

When Hastings Elwin came to Bath in 1820, while finding the city's 'amusements and entertainments' as good as those of the Capital itself, he bemoaned the lack of any, more 'enlightened pursuits' such as literary establishments or a philosophical society.

While there had been some attempts in the past, all had failed although 'The Bath & West of England Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures and Commerce', founded in 1777, has by focusing purely on Agriculture, lasted through to the present day as the 'Bath & West Agricultural Society' (BWAS), now based at Shepton Mallet.

Of the others, the first 'Bath Philosophical Society (1779-1787), followed by a second (1798-1805) both failed, as did a third (1816-).



**Bust of Elwin,  
BRLSI Collections**

(Photo: EM Vincent)

### The Bath Literary and Scientific Institution (BLSI)

In 1819, a local physician, Dr Edward Barlow, circulated the local press inviting interest in a library, reading room, botanical garden, museum of natural history, a cabinet of coins and medals, a hall for lectures and a gallery to exhibit paintings and sculpture. While this had produced some interest, it was the fire in the lower Assembly Rooms in December 1820, that left just an empty shell, which focused minds. A Dr Henry Wood, now wrote to the building owner Lord Manvers, suggesting that the burned down Assembly Rooms be replaced; to contain a library, reading room, museum, lecture theatre and botanical garden. Lord Manvers, with the help of Hastings Elwin, was then persuaded to rebuild the rooms accordingly.

Lord Manvers then granted a 40year lease of the building for which a Committee of Friends was formed to raise monies and formally establish a Literary and Scientific Institution.

By 1 December 1823, the Duke of York and Duke of Clarence were patrons and the Mayor of Bath was included as a Vice-president.

The first meeting of the BLSI was on the 19 January 1824 at Mr Upham's library. Hastings Elwin was in the Chair and the President was the marquis of Lansdowne. The £4000 raised by share ownership (including the brothers JS and PB Duncan and, interestingly, four women - the Misses Prime, S Prime, Wright and Lady Keane) was used to buy books for the library and the rest invested to pay the rent.

In meetings between March and December 1824 at Mr Besant's, with Hastings Elwin in the Chair, the Bye-Laws and Regulations and sub-committees were drawn up by Dr Barlow, Mr Conolly and Mr PB Duncan. Mr David drew up a catalogue of books to be purchased - £500 was agreed and a further £400 later in the year. At the end of that year, Mr Upham was appointed Keeper of the library; Sir George Gibbes gave an estimate for fitting out a laboratory and Mr Cuff was appointed Experimental Chemist.

From the start of the Institution people offered artefacts and books, some of which are now recognised as being of national, even international, importance; for instance the Moore Collection of fossil fish, reptiles and geological specimens. Glass cases were purchased for £40, the laboratory set up and casts of Apollo and Laocoon were donated by JS and PB Duncan. Casts of The Uffizi Wrestlers, listening Slave, Apollino and Venus de Milo were donated by Hastings Elwin, as were four ceiling paintings by Anrea Casali.

The new building was opened in 1824 and the first formal meeting of the BLSI was held on 19 January 1825, at the end of which it was proposed that a bust of Mr Elwin, executed by Sir Francis Legatt Chantrey, be placed in the library to acknowledge his work in the formation of the Institution.



**North Parade in the 1830s**, by R. Woodruffe  
Victoria Art Gallery



**Map of Terrace Walk 1886**  
Bath Record Office

The first curator was William Lonsdale who accepted and curated further collections from local people including Caleb Hillier Parry and Lord James O'Brian's collection of more than 200 specimens of Ice Age fauna. Minerals and fossils belonging to the BWAS were also deposited as well as Bath Antiquities by the Bath Corporation.

In 1830, William IV, formally the Duke of Clarence, conferred royal patronage on the Institution which was continued by Queen Victoria when she ascended the throne in 1837.

Two notable women members were Anne Walbank Buckland and Adela Breton. Both of whom left valuable collections to the Institution.



**Artefacts from the Collection of Adela Breton**  
photo by Matt Williams



**Charles Moore's fossil Collection 1865, himself in the foreground**  
photo by Matt Williams

A proposal to open a new independent city museum was proposed but ruled out by Lord Manvers in 1853, but several proprietors suggested going ahead and the BLSI did so regardless. It was helped by Frederick Field who deposited his mineral collection and Charles Moore who deposited his 'noble geological collection' in 1854.

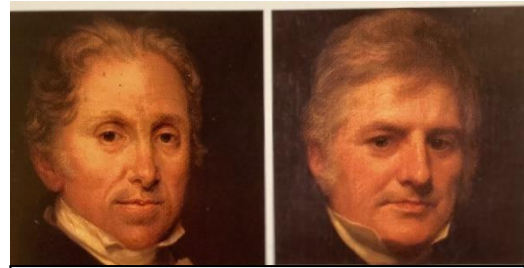
Charles Moore's collection included 32 plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs, more than 2700 large specimens and one million small fossils, including a number of type specimens.

The museum was extended, and Moore started arranging specimens in newly bought cabinets, all being completed by 1862.

At the AGM in 1858 it had been decided to launch an appeal to buy the building from Lord Manvers which with the generosity of some members together with a loan from the local MP for Bath, the purchase was completed in January 1859. The debt was liquidated by 1875 and the adjacent land sold to the Bath Corporation with public subscription, the following year.

In 1866 the 'Duncan Memorial Fund' was established in memory of the aforementioned great benefactors

John Shute Duncan and Philip Bury Duncan which provided £24 per annum in interest to buy books of 'high and lasting value'. A brass plaque and paintings of the two brothers being donated by John's daughter Agnes.



**John Shute (L) and Philip Bury (R)  
The Duncan Brothers**

BRLSI Collection, Victoria Art Gallery

During the early years of the twentieth century, before the outbreak of war in 1914, the finances of the BRLSI were again in poor shape and as before some members paid off the deficit. However, after the war, while the collection had been cleaned and £700 raised for repair works, great change was imminent.

Ever since the introduction of electric trams to the streets of Bath in 1904, concern had been made with regard to the damaging effects they could have on the building foundations, and with modern transport requirements becoming more and more a concern, in 1915 the Council had already instigated designs for the redevelopment of the city centre. It was therefore in 1925, one hundred years after the hosting its first meeting in its new building, that the said building was now under sentence of demolition to be replaced by a new road layout; The Council in return buying 16-18 Queen Square for the Institution.

The Council bought the town houses 16-18 in 1930, converted them into one building and a museum (The Moore Room) was built on to the back. The Institution moved in in 1932. Dr FS Wallis, curator at the Bristol Museum, transferred the geological collection to the newly built Moore Room which was formally declared open by the Mayor on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1932.



**The BRLSI at 16-18 Queen Square 2018**

Photo EM Vincent

## OLD PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CLEVELAND POOLS AND AN UPDATE ON RESTORATION

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022

St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

Speaker

Sally Helvey

Abstract

Nigel Pollard/CP Website



*"How the newly restored Cleveland Pools could look, by Ben Holmes".*

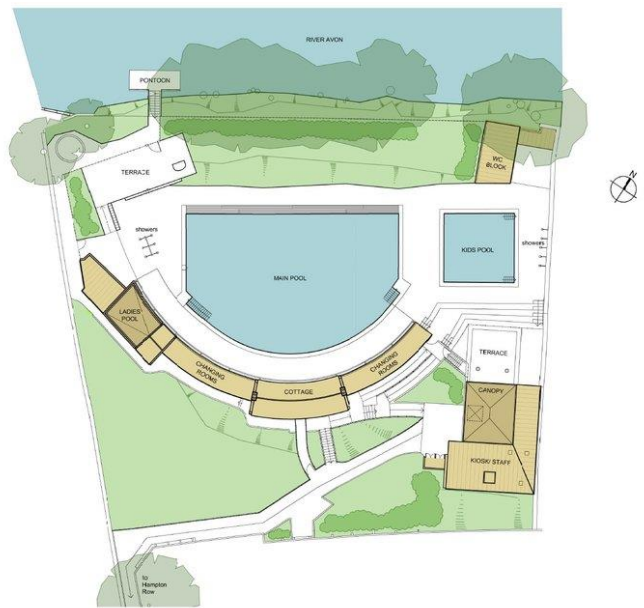
As can be seen from the above image a great deal of progress has been made in the restoration ideas for the Pools since our last talk in September 2014.

Foremost has been the 'Concept design' which included:

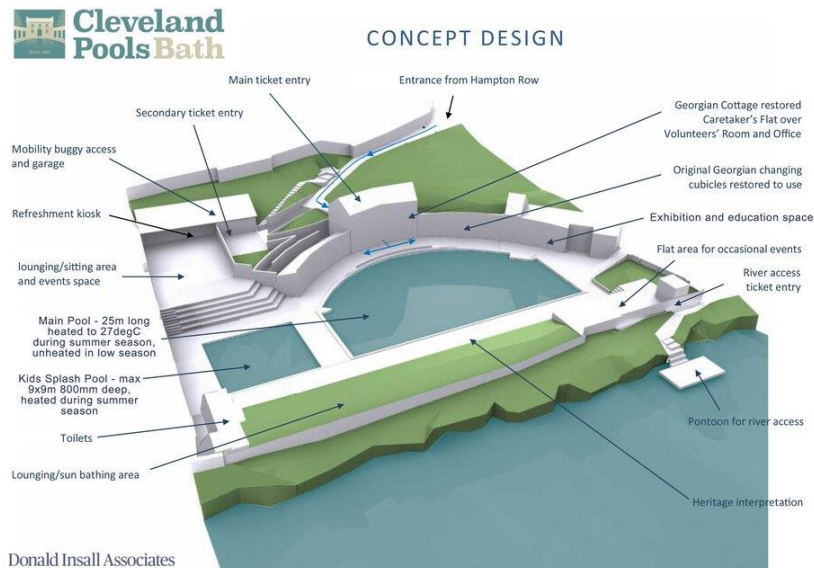
- Restoration of two pools – a public, open-air swimming pool for adults and competent swimmers and a smaller, shallower pool for children
- Restoration of the largely unaltered grade II listed buildings. Central cottage restored for the main entrance and pay point, first floor to become a caretaker's flat
- Lounging/sitting area with shelter from sun or rain
- New toilets and showers
- Refreshment kiosk

- New river pontoon to access by boat services to Pulteney Bridge
- A green travel plan to promote arrival by walking, cycling and local bus
- Improved disabled access including an electric buggy to manage the steep entry slope
- Heritage exhibition & learning space within the site
- Schools education programmes

and the potential for off season cold water swimming.



At the time of this meeting, the smaller pool had been built and the main pool had been cleared and good progress was being made with filling around the pool following the installation of drainage and pool filtration pipework.



The crescent restoration works had progressed well, and Youngs Roofing had completed their job on the curved slate roofs. The pool plantroom now had a roof on, and plinths had been cast to allow the plant machinery to be installed. To the rear of the crescent too, the incoming water, electric and BT services into the site have been installed. These are all now connected and backfilled with stone which again, should reduce the amount of mud now being walked out of the site. Stonework is also progressing well predominately to the ladies pool area which has now been rebuilt. Internally we've also been installing services within the cottage for future power and lighting; and carrying out cosmetic repairs to the existing stonework.

[www.clevelandpools.org.uk/restoration](http://www.clevelandpools.org.uk/restoration)

## THE ARCHWAY PROJECT - ROMAN BATH'S NEW LEARNING CENTRE

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022

The Roman Bath Clore Learning Centre, York Street

Speaker

Stephen Clews & Lindsey Bradley

Abstract & Images

Nigel Pollard/Fielden Clegg Bradley Studios/Robert Cole



This much anticipated visit to the new 'Roman Bath's Learning Centre' was hosted by Lindsey Bradley of Bath & North East Somerset Council who directed us all up to their largest new teaching areas on the top floor in which Stephen Clews gave us an illustrated talk on the local history of the site and its development from a Chapel through to a boiler house and laundry to its latest reincarnation as a learning centre for school children, and others visiting the adjacent Roman Baths.

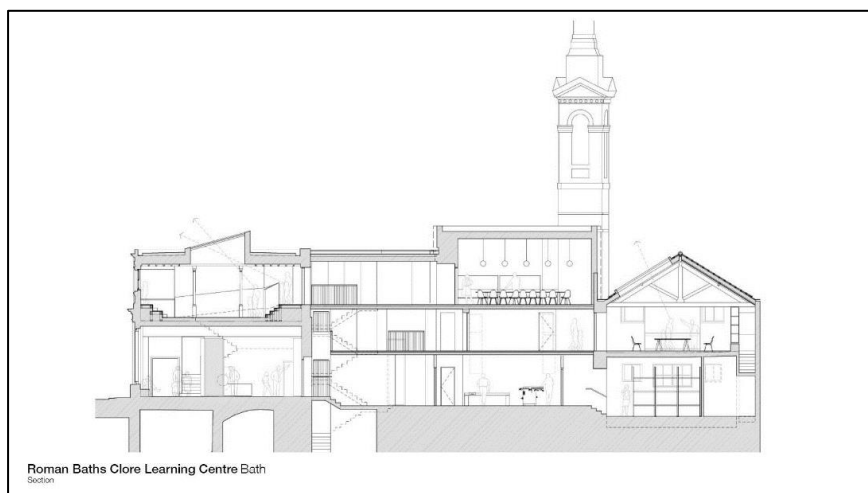
The new centre has been designed by the internationally renowned, Bath based design practice Fielden, Clegg Bradley whose design statement is quoted below. It was funded primarily by the Clore Foundation and the National Lottery.

"Set at the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the city of Bath, The Roman Baths and Pump Room is a site of international historical and archaeological significance and attracts over one million visitors each year.

However, dedicated learning space was limited to a single room set in the most congested part of the museum. Our scheme provides a new Clore Learning Centre and publicly accessible Bath World Heritage Centre within a neighbouring group of nineteenth-century buildings. These new spaces connect to The Roman Baths through a vaulted undercroft beneath the street at the Roman ground level.



The scheme unlocks the historic spaces by navigating changes in level between three different buildings and across a complex archaeological site. Two generous learning spaces are recovered from the shells of the nineteenth-century fabric, and supported by the essential ancillary functions previously lacking : a generous cloakroom, dedicated WCs, offices and a lunchroom."



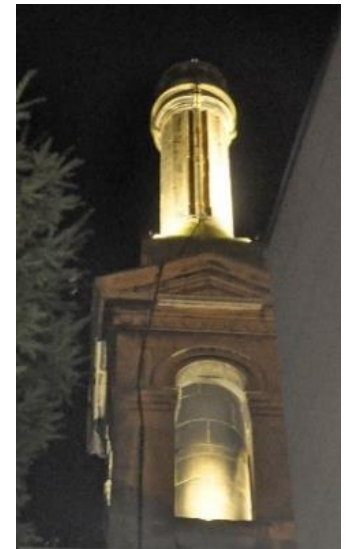
"Beneath the city streets, meticulously planned, ramped walkways navigate a way across and through standing archaeology in a part of the site that has been opened to public access for the first time. Part of the undercroft provides a third learning space where, immersed in Bath's archaeological and historical past, children can try archaeology for themselves."





“ By scraping away modern layers of plaster and plasterboard, the industrial character of the old boilerhouse has been revealed.”

Soot-blackened walls are left on view and, against this rugged backdrop, new insertions are drawn from a palette of simple, robust materials with unfinished steel for stairs and balustrades, oak for treads and room linings, bare lime plaster for new walls.”





## A LONG MINUET AS DANCED IN BATH

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022

St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

Speaker

Michael Rowe

Abstract

Michael Rowe

Arguably the most famous and best loved of the 18<sup>th</sup> century prints of Bath the Long Minuet created by Henry Bunbury in 1787 still amuses visitors to the Assembly Rooms.

The recent discovery of watercolour drawings purporting to be Bunbury's original sketches from life prompted a new look at it and further research into it's creation and the identities of the dancers.



The Victoria Art Gallery in Bath has a copy, given by a member of the History of Bath Research Group, annotated with names for 18 of the 20 dancers.

New research indicates that 12 of the names appear in the Bath Chronicle as 'arrivals' for the 1786-87 season.

Included amongst those is the name J Lewis whose name also appears written onto the print as the son of the person who wrote the names along the bottom of the print.

The dancers include the Mayor and Mayoress of Bath, Lord and Lady North and Miss North and Lady Guilford. Miss Vine and Miss Dyke appear as does Mrs Sapte who with her husband lived in Royal Crescent.

French bankers of great influence are Rudolf Ferdinand Grand, Anthony Aubert, Stephen Tessiers and Monsiuer Perregaux and the wife of Lewis Teissiers is also named.

There was a great influx of French people of influence after the visit of the French Ambassador in 1786 and over 3,000 French people were here in the years after the revolution.

The significance of some of the named French dancers is that they were bankers and financiers involved in the settling of the enormous debts of the Prince of Wales, later King George IV.

The Reverend Henry Bate Dudley is identified by comparison with a portrait as are Lord North and some of the others.

Matthew Pincent and Mons. Pengtecent are named but tracing them has proved difficult.

Mrs Bunbury and Richard Tyson, the Master of ceremonies are also shown.





Bunbury was known for recording what was in front of him rather than constructing scenarios for political purposes or out of personal vindictiveness. His satires are always gentle but none the less point up the changing fashions in behaviour and , in the case of *The Minuet*, the decay in standards of behaviour in public places from the extreme heights of manners as set down by the famous Beau Nash. Also revealed is the mixing of high society with people of wealth but lower social status at the time.

The print is seven feet long and led to a series of such elongated images several of which were on show at the Victoria Art Gallery at the time of writing. It has been suggested that they were the progenitors of the strip cartoon.



# MR PRIN'S JOURNEY TO BATH AND THE STORY OF THE BATH-ALKMAR BARREL ORGAN

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022

St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall

Speaker

Aletta Stevens and Chris Davies

Abstract

Nigel Pollard, with the help of Aletta Stevens' book 'The Remarkable Journey of Mr Prins', from which the following images have also been taken.

Most Bathonian's are aware of the 'twinning' of the Bath with the Dutch city of Alkmaar. What is less well known are the circumstances within the Second World War that brought it all about.

The Speakers, had unearthed an amazing story which is so detailed that for a true understanding of the events requires a read of Aletta Stevens's excellent book referenced at the end of this entry.

Timing was of the essence as it all seemed to happen so quickly: The German invasion - the Dutch armies surrender and the Government's capitulation and their Royal Family's flee to England - all within the month of May 1940.

Needless to say as this was happening thousands of Jews were also fleeing from their homes in the Netherlands as the Germans advanced and one of these was Eli Prins.



Eli was a part of a network of refuges that became close friends of which a small number become party to an escape from the Dutch port of IJmuiden to the safety of Lowestoft on the east coast of England from where he travelled to Bath.

The boat they travelled on was a fishing trawler called the 'De Jonge Jochem' whose skipper was Bertus von Loosen and had been chartered by a businessman called Alfred Goudsmit, who owned the De Bijenkorf department store in Amsterdam.

Others in this story include a motorcycling couple Ben and Frouk who partook of a hair-raising race against time from their home in Enschede on the border with Germany across the whole country to the coast where they joined with another couple Loe and Loes in an attempt to cross the channel in a rowing boat.

Starting off in a dinghy they found on the quayside at Velserbeek, they later found a rowing boat as they approached the open sea at Fort Island. Their hope was to be rescued by the UK's Royal Navy, but instead were picked up by Bertus von Loosen in the 'De Jonge Jochem'. Bertus, despite the stormy conditions and the concerns of his charterer, continued to pick up many more desperate evacuees in open boats before finally being spotted by the Lowestoft pilot who brought the now overcrowded boat safely to harbour. They were then all taken to London for official vetting etc.

Of those referred to above, the Goudsmits travelled on to the United States, Ben and Frouch got married following which Ben signed up as a resistance fighter and is sent to Porthcawl for training while Loe joins the army and is sent to Haverfordwest.

Skipper Bertus, whose wish is to return to Holland, is however disappointed as his boat and skills are much in demand and he and his trawler are directed to Fleetwood to help fish for the country's food supplies.



Eli Prins has an elder sister Rosa who back in the 1930's had come to London to learn English and had met and fallen in love with a Herbert Tobin, son of a Bath physician who had been studying at the London School of Economics. However finding no work, he followed Rosa back to Alkmaar where in 1936 they were married.

Still looking for work Herbert eventually got a job editing an English version of a Dutch current affairs journal based in Amsterdam with the promise, if subscribers reached a certain level, he could move to an office in London's Fleet Street. This duly happened in 1939 from where they were later evacuated to Bath where the couple set up home at 65 Great Pulteney Street and were to welcome Eli a year later in 1940.

How the family, and Eli in particular became so closely connected with their new home is an absorbing read that shows how they came to love both Bath and its people. Cultural and literary minded, Rosa had arrived with a grand piano, they became an important part of helping the city see through the worse times of the war up to and beyond the Bath Blitz.

Following the end of the war in 1945, a 'Help Holland' war charity was set up by leading Anglo-Dutch Companies such as Shell and Unilever which called on the countries Rotary Clubs to help raise funds and it was out of Bath's Rotary Club that the idea of twinning the city with Alkmaar was born. On the 26<sup>th</sup> March '45, at a special meeting of the Council of the Rotary Club of Bath, the City of Bath Alkmaar (Holland) Adoption Appeal Committee was set up in the presence of the Mayor of Bath as Honorary member of the Club. Another member was Mrs Rose Tobin, Eli's Prin's sister.

To help raise funds and further awareness, a barrel organ, or more accurately a barrel piano, was purchased for £25 from a Canon Wintle of Norwich. It was made by Pasquale & Co. of London between 1881 and 1910 and was painted in the Dutch colours with a typical Dutch landscape and an appeal slogan.

Bath's first 'Alkmaar Week' was scheduled in for the 23-28 July 1945 and while a number of Dutch dignitaries were expected from London, it was thought that to send an invitation to the Burgomaster of Alkmaar would be of great symbolic importance if it could be done. An invitation was duly sent, not without difficulty as there was still strict controls on both mail and personal travel between the UK and what was still under the jurisdiction of the liberating allied armies. However, this was achieved and Burgomaster Von Kinscot was contacted and did find his way to Bath; yet another story detailed in Aletta's book. However he arrived late and only due to his own ingenuity did he meet up with his hosts and get to the Pump Room Ball. This event was followed by an exchange visit of school children which was much enjoyed by all concerned and the relationship has grown considerably over the intervening years.



The historic barrel organ was donated to Alkmaar where it resides in the Town Hall from where, to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bath-Alkmaar Friendship in 2000, it was returned to Bath of a year to grace our own Guildhall.



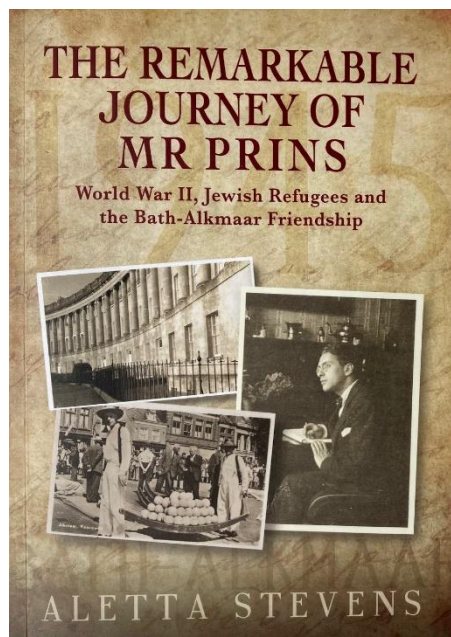
To learn of the continuing story of Mr Prim and how his family have continued their relationship with Bath to this day, the book below, from which the above images have all been taken, will help those interested to complete the journey.

#### ‘THE REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF MR PRINS’

Aletta Stevens

ISBN: 978-1-83952-138-6

£ 15.00



# WALK: HEDGEMEAD PARK - Postponed from 2020

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021

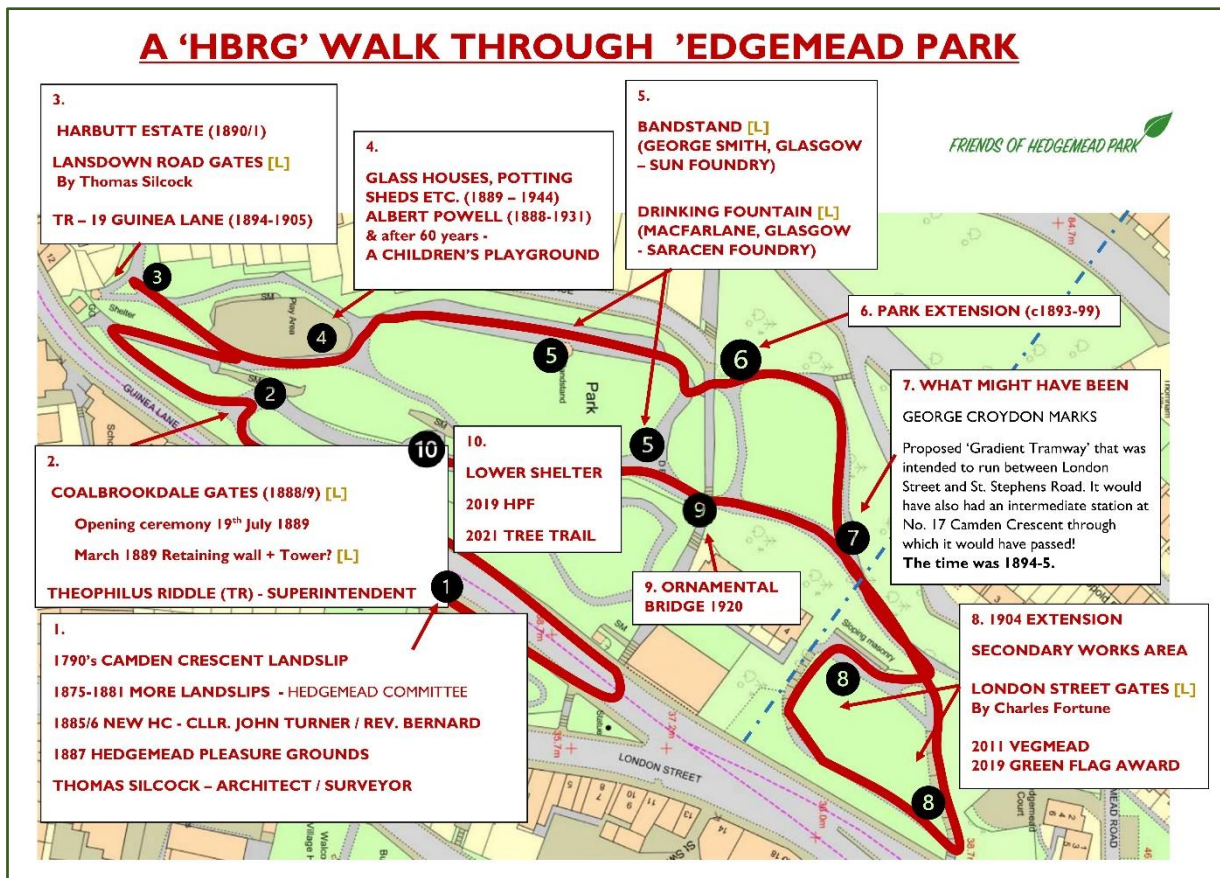
Meet at St Swithin's Church, Walcot

Leader:

Nigel Pollard

Report:

Nigel Pollard



This walk, postponed from the summer of 2020 due to the Covid 19 Pandemic, was in fact the first occasion that many members had met in person since the initial Government 'lock down' in March that year.

The Group met outside 'St Swithin's Church, as it was from here that in 1885 the Rev. Barnard helped lead the local residents and landowners to bring the Council to action. That action was required was well documented at the time and was to amend for the 1881 landslips and part clearances of the area opposite the church to be bought and turned into an open space, a 'Green Lung' as it was later termed, for the local population to enjoy.

Following a short introduction highlighting the above context with some images of both the results of the landslips and the drawn-up plans for the proposed park, the party crossed the road and entered the park through the 'Coalbrookdale Gates'. It was from these gates that the then Mayor Freeman, opened the Park in July 1889.



Original Plan for the Park by Thomas Silcock c. 1888.  
Victoria Art Gallery





Coalbrookdale Gate Pillars (*HE Listed*)

The ‘Coalbrookdale Gates’ so named as the two cast iron gate posts were one of the first items to be brought by the Council in 1888 at the cost of £17.13.6. These were the first of the Parks six *Historic England (HE)* listed structures to be seen.

The Group then moved on and up to view the grand retaining wall and battlement tower that were built to restrain the land from further slips and are repeated, in smaller scale throughout the park, and are indeed one of its main features.



Great Retaining Wall & Battlement Tower (*HE Listed*)



Lansdown Road Gates (*HE Listed*)

The Parks Superintendent Theophilus Riddle, having seen two proposed homes not materialise, was finally lodged at 19 Guinea Lane that was viewed from the walk on the way up to the now regarded main gate on Lansdown Road. This area formed part of the second phase of building in when the Harbutt Estate was bought in 1890/1.

The Gates were designed in house by Thomas Silcock.

The Party then moved back to the original main lawn area around which were to be found, not only two more of the listed structures, a band stand and drinking water fountain, but also a children’s playground first laid out in the late 1940’s on the site of the original extensive glasshouses and potting sheds, damaged beyond repair during the Bath Blitz.

It was from these glasshouses that up to the WW2 had supplied not only the park but also the Guildhall and Pump Roman. All looked after for most of the period by Theophilus Riddle and Albert Powell, the park keeper/foreman, both from the very beginnings in 1889 up to their respective retirements in 1927 and 1931.



The Children’s Playground on the site of original Glasshouse and Potting Sheds.



The Bandstand Lawn 1889

The Bandstand  
George Smith & Son  
Sun Foundry, Glasgow  
*(HE Listed)*



The Drinking Fountain  
Macfarlane & Co.  
Saracen Foundry, Glasgow  
*(HE Listed)*

Having circumnavigated the Bandstand Lawn the Party left what was the original 1889 section of the park to cross the ancient Drumway into the middle-stage development (1893-99). This necessitated a realignment of Lower Hedgemoor Road and is a less formal area, which has its own charm and is the coolest part of the park on a hot summers day.



The Middle Section 1893-99

This in turn leads to the final section of the Park Development of 1904.



The Later Section 1904

This area, centred by the Community led 'Vegmead' vegetable plot, leads down to the main road at the Margret's Hill / London Street junction where a further gate, designed by the new City Surveyor, Charles Fortune, completed the extent of the park.

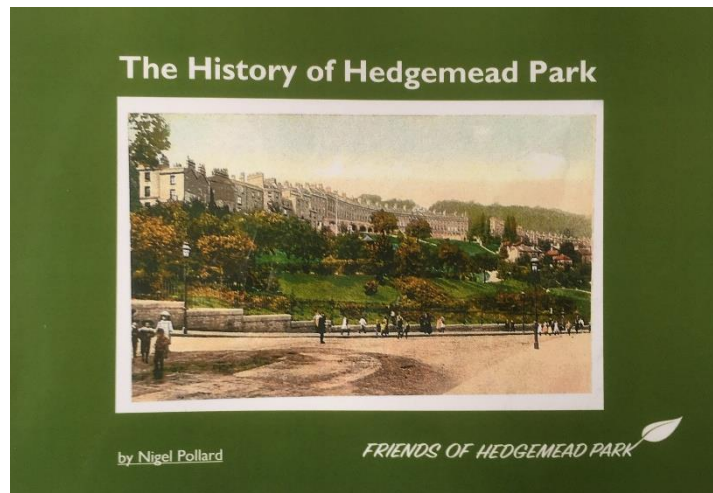


The London Street Gates (*HE Listed*)

On the way back to the Bandstand Lawn area, the Party was regaled with the story of a proposed, but never built, Gradient Tramway that was to start on London Street, travel 'through' the centre of Camden Crescent and finish on St. Stephen's Hill. The date 1894.

\*\*\*\*\*

For anyone interested in a more detailed history of Hedgemead Park, the *'Friends of Hedgemead Park'* have published a book, reviewed the *HBRG Proceedings No. 9*. ISBN 978-1-5272-8498-2 £15.99



## WALK: LIMPLEY STOKE AND FRESHFORD

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Meet at Church

Leader:

**Anne Jarrett** whose qualification for taking people round the villages is that her family has lived here for 400 years and that she is now the last one because her children have moved away.

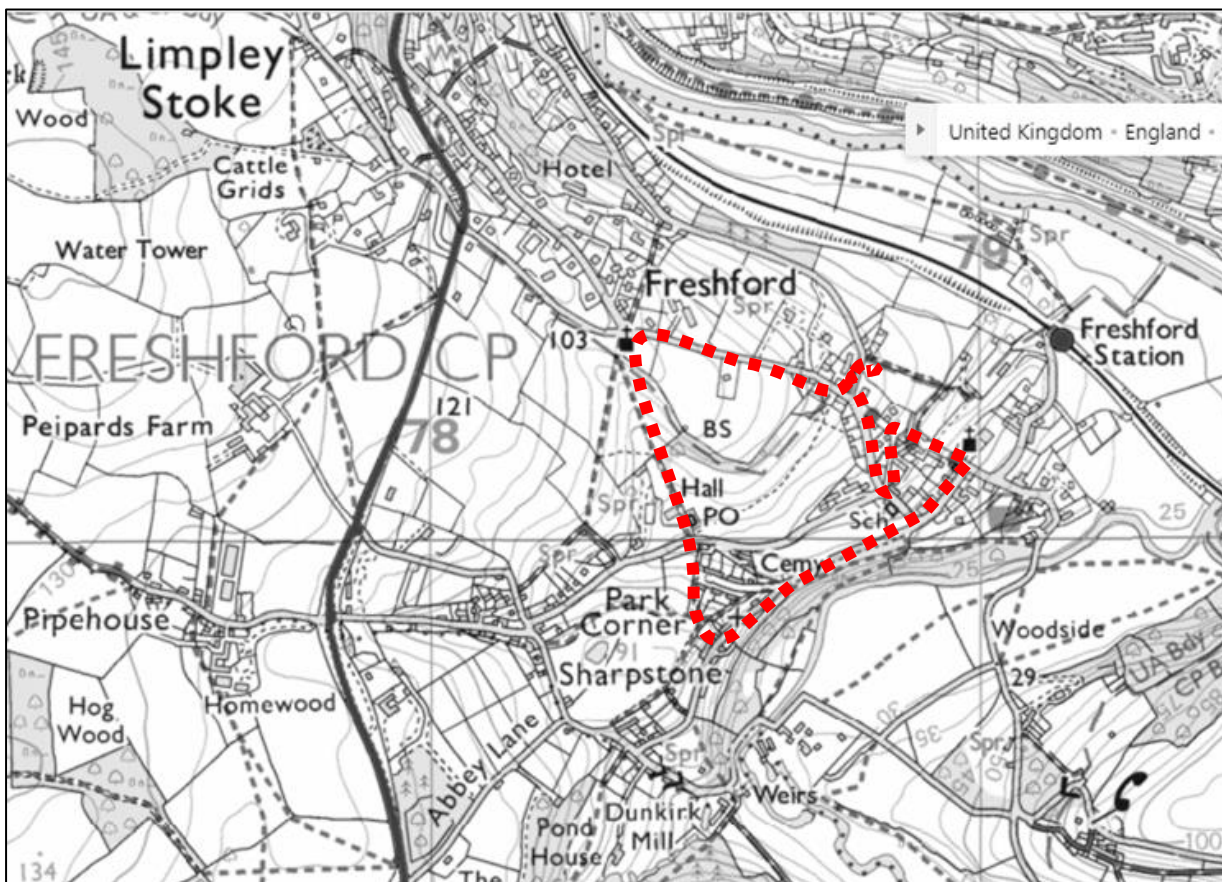
Report:

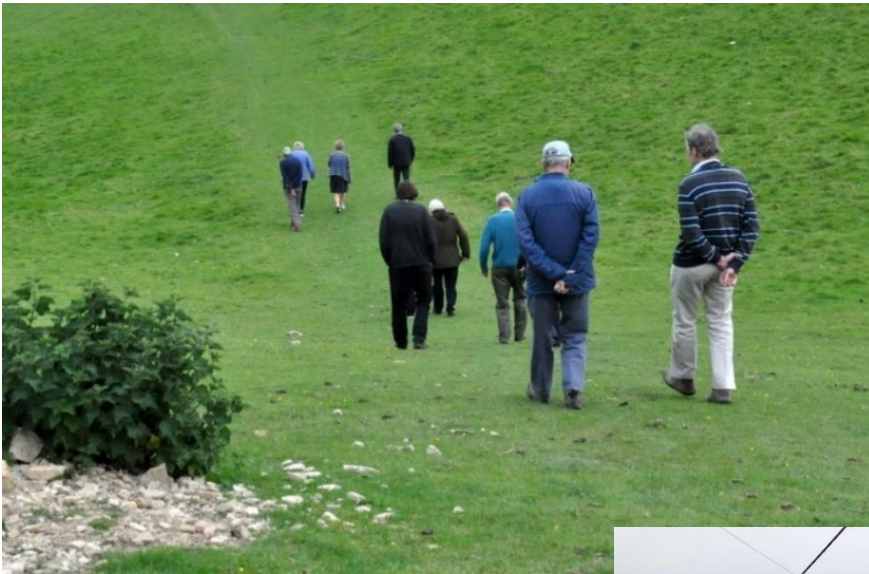
**Anne Jarrett / Nigel Pollard**

### A WALK FROM ST MARY'S LIMPLEY STOKE TO ST PETER'S FRESHFORD

We started in the Church and I talked about its thousand year history and we visited the ledger stones outside.

Using my fan I pointed out the direction of Hinton Priory from its beginning in 1228 to its demise in 1530. From there we looked at the brief history of Peipards Farm now owned by Dyson's son. Leading across to Woodwyck, the plague village around 1464 which led to its dereliction as people migrated to Freshford. Then looking at the mine which provides high quality stone fit for the building of Longleat in 1568, when it was built, to helping restore Windsor Castle after its fire. Lastly there were a few words about the beginning in 1811 and closure of the Baptist chapel in Middle Stoke in the 1970s.



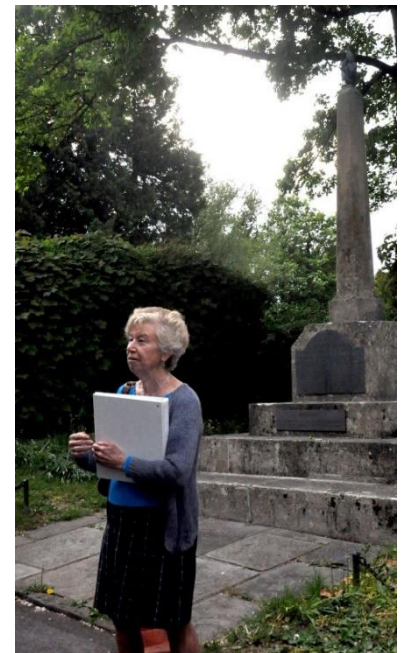


A steep walk across Churchfields took us to Park Corner, part of Freshford Village, where we looked at the poorhouse with its cruel history and the Georgian façade of Corner House.

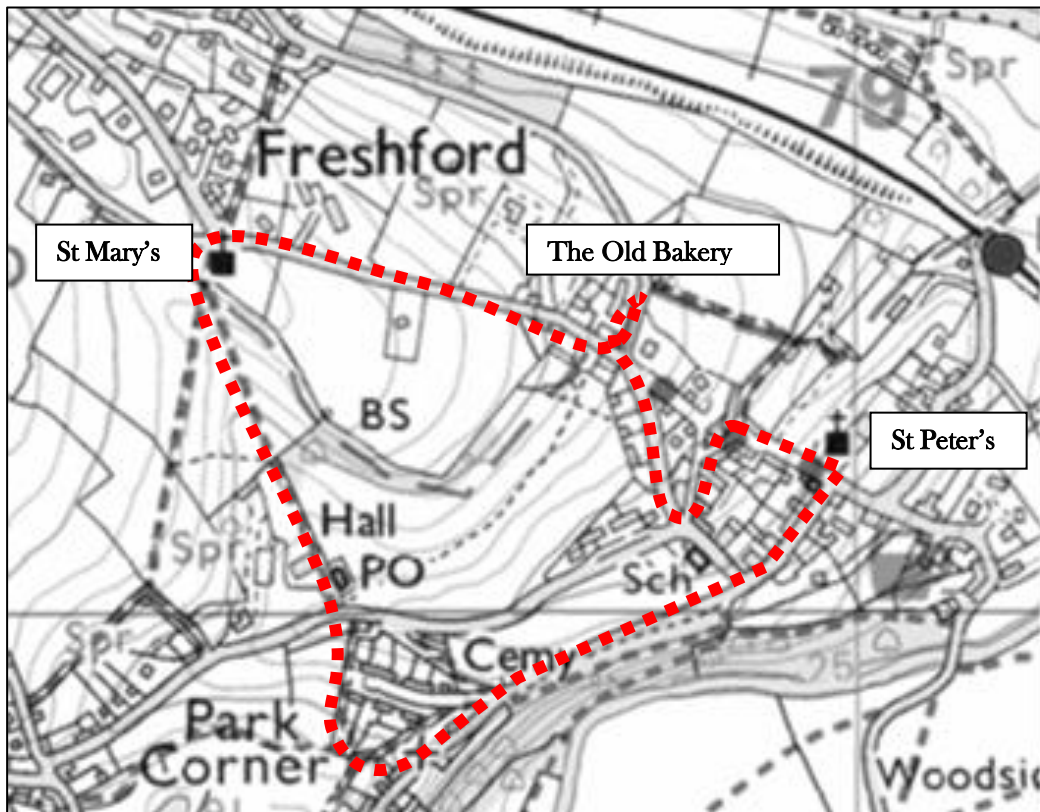
A short distance on I talked about the Wesleyan Chapel and John Wesley's visits. Down Shitten Lane now Rosemary Lane we could see Dunkirk Mill at the bottom.



Passing through Sharpstone, we stopped at the war memorial, where I mentioned the sad death of William Morris at the battle of the Somme in 1916 borrowed from the Freshford British Legion's research in 2018.



At the Old Bakery, we enjoyed a cup of tea and biscuits, while I talked about the frightening tale of my friend's children at Dunkirk Mill Cottage who were subjected to odd noises, curtains blowing and spirits leading to the Wells Cathedral Exorcist making a visit to quell the spirits so that the family could live in peace.



## WALK: GEORGIAN BOX

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022

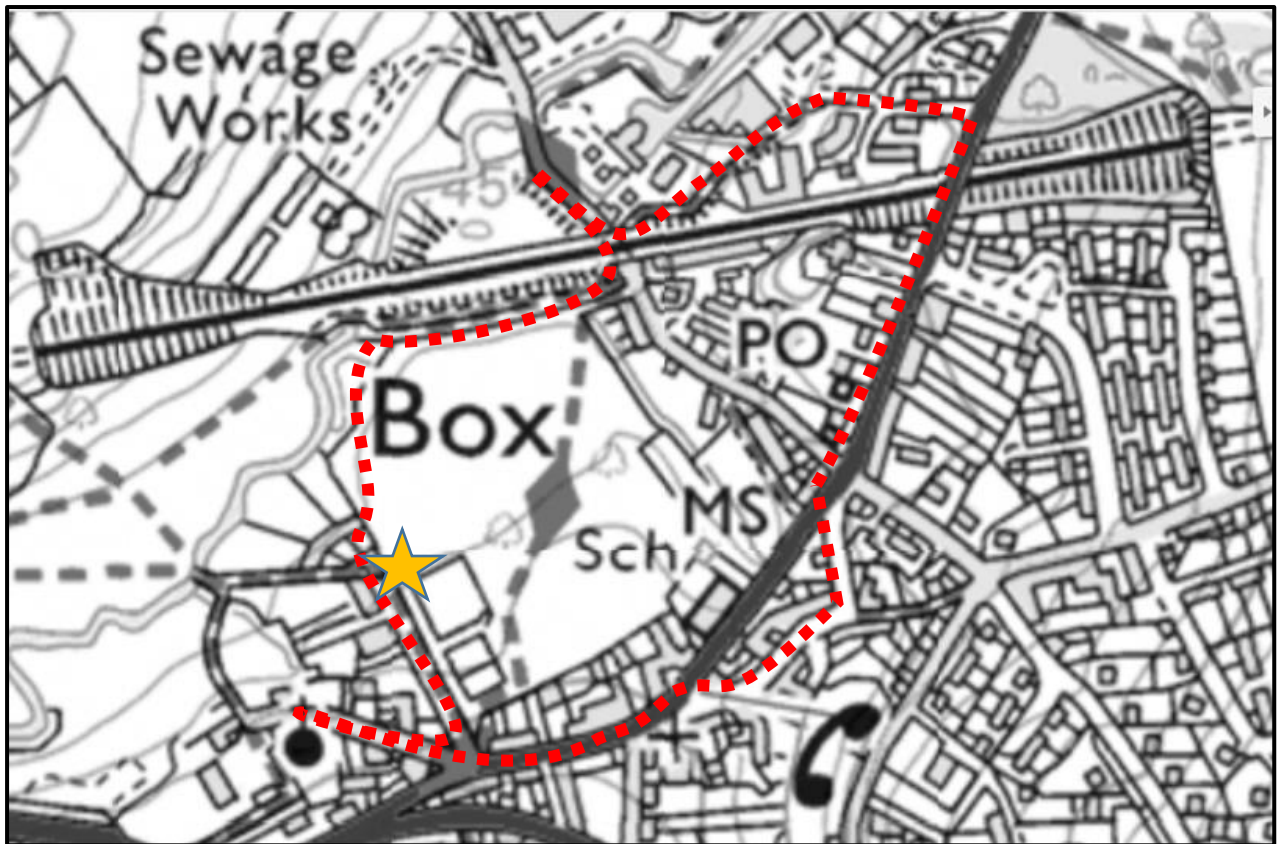
Meet at Selwyn Hall

Leader:

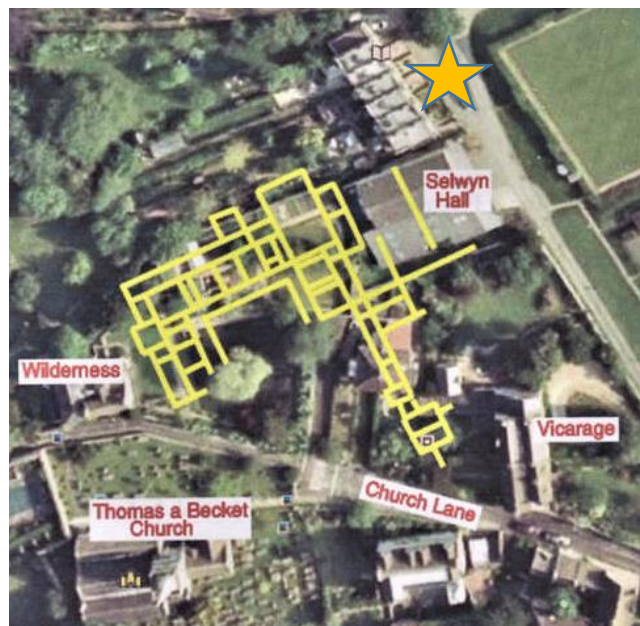
Alan Payne

Report:

Nigel Pollard (with help from: [www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk](http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk))



Although this walk had been entitled ‘Georgian Box’, our first stop was almost immediately, in front of the 1969 Selwyn Hall itself. However, while in itself of little interest, what was astounding was that underneath it had been found one of the largest Roman Villas in the South of England! Discovered in 1831 by the Rev. George Mullins, it was later formally excavated in 1902-3 by Sir Harold Brakspear the extent of which can be seen in the adjacent image. It has over 50 rooms, 20 of which have mosaic floors as illustrated below:



All now covered over and therefore with nothing on view, probably explains why so few people know about it.

Our next stop at the top of the road was the Parish Church of St Thomas a Beckett. The original Norman Church was extended in 1713 and renovated in 1896-8.

One of the most interesting parts of the Church, although its origin is rather obscure, is the Hazelbury Chapel. It probably dates from the end of the twelfth century and was originally built onto the earlier Church as a *Thomas Chapel* when the cult of St Thomas à Becket was very popular. It contains a tomb recess (below left) with its cusped arch which is of the end of the Romanesque period and shows Byzantine influence. This dates it after the third Crusade, and, allowing for the lapse of time needed for new ideas to infiltrate the country districts, the tomb was probably built around 1260. It may be that of Sampson Bigod II de la Boxe, who is thought to have died about that time.

The tomb had been demolished and plastered over but all the stones were found intact and the arch was re-assembled in 1896. It is now occupied by the effigy of Anthony Long of Ashley who died in 1578. It was placed here during the restoration works of 1896, having been found under the old three-decker pulpit for which it had been used as a support.



However, a particular interest of St Thomas's is the churchyard where there are an amazing 65 Grade II listed monuments.

These show us a lot about Georgian society in the village because 52 have been dated to the Georgian period.

The churchyard monuments reflect a sculptural trend towards Classicism in certain sectors of Box society and the names on the family tombs reflect the village gentry, who could demonstrate their status through their wealth in death. The monuments also show the extent of the stone industry and masons work in Box.

Compared to the High Victorian period missing are the ornate carvings of flowers and plants, representing rebirth, and winged angels, depicting the ascent to heaven. Certainly, there are no cherubs to be seen in the churchyard. This would have been considered vulgar in the Georgian period. The simplicity of the carvings is in contrast to the ornateness of several interior epitaphs in Box Church, where the wealthier families were honoured.





The years 1708 to 1729 saw possibly the most concentrated rebuilding of the centre of the village in the area around Box Church. The work in those twenty years was typically Georgian, although at the very commencement of the period; the inspiration came from two local individuals: the vicar, Rev George Miller (sometimes called Millard), and Dame Rachel Speke, the last of the Speke dynasty.

The background to this work, as explained by our leader Alan, showed just how much English society was moving at that time. George Louis, the Elector (ruler) of Hanover, Germany, had become the heir to the English throne by the Act of Settlement 1701 which bypassed about fifty closer candidates because they were Catholic even though he was only Queen Ann's second cousin. On a national level, this Act showed the power of Britain's Protestant country gentlemen in Parliament. On a local level, the changes were a precedent reflected in the expansion of local authority by the English gentry with an emphasis on self-determination, fear of foreigners and outsiders, and the belief that Elizabeth I's religious settlement should be the only one.

The first project devised by Rev Miller was a charity school in 1708. As well as being an entirely laudable project, there was also a financial benefit in that uneducated orphan children would no longer be a burden on the parish rates if they could find employment. With moral instruction through the *Catechism* (religious questions and answers), they might even become upstanding citizens. George extended the work by incentivising older children (*as think themselves too bigg to goe to school*) to become literate and to teach the younger ones. In return for this, they received payment of 5 shillings for each charity child who could sight-read a chapter in the Bible. It recompensed the older children for the loss of wages as labourers or farm workers.

Box Poorhouse (now called Springfield House) was begun in 1727 in response to an Act of Parliament of 1722 encouraging parishes to rent or own a workhouse for the poor.[21] For a century, the poor had been encouraged to work at home through the issue of materials (such as flax, hemp, wool, thread and iron) with which they could produce goods to be sold for their maintenance. Henceforth this relief was to be limited to those people actually lodging in the institution. The three-storey development was a bold and costly venture, a symbol of a self-supporting community, not unique in the area because Corsham converted four cottages for its poorhouse in 1728, but the scale and grandeur of Springfield House is still impressive today.



The intention behind the Poorhouse reflected the teachings of John Locke enabling inmates to make a meaningful contribution to society. When it opened, it included a workroom, kitchen, brew-house, washhouse, and a separate room for the Master. The workroom was primarily devoted to cloth-making and included twelve spinning wheels, two looms and two scribbling horses for combing the wool. Two hour-glasses were included in the workroom to ensure the inmates worked their full time. The kitchen prepared its own food with a meat block and cleaver, two saltboxes for preserving the food, and the usual kitchen utensils including a *rowling pin*. Malt beer was made in the brew-house with the mashing tub and stick.

Emerging back to the main road our walk continued past one of the villages earliest Pubs, The Queen's Head.

A property is marked on Francis Allen's map made in 1630 which appears to be on the site of the Queen's present property but there is no reference as to its use. The current building has been dated to early 1700s with extension in late 1700s and an old cellar door from the pub, no longer in use, has a date of 1709 still visible. But when did the building become a pub?

The Victualler's Recognizances for 1747 which lists hundreds of pubs in Chippenham and Calne, mentions several in Box but not the Queen's Head. However, a newspaper article from the Bath Chronicle in 1795 describes the Queen's Head as *a capital publick-house.... many years (nearly half a century) in occupation of MRS LEE*.

This suggests that Mr and Mrs Lee were the first owners of the Queen's Head, perhaps converting their home into a coaching inn in order to service the increased traffic that flowed through the village when the new London to Bristol Road was opened in 1761.

A key question related to which is which Queen is was named after? A previous sign featured two playing cards which gave little indication to the identity of the queen and both Elizabeth and Victoria have lent their faces in the past but documents suggest neither are correct. So, could the pub be named after George III's wife, Charlotte, who became Queen when she married George III in 1761, the year the London Road was opened? If so, it was probably rebuilt as a coaching inn to service passengers and horses travelling on the new London to Bath Road.



However, the current sign seems an excellent choice as we walk this walk in 2022, the year of our present Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee.



Right in the centre of the village stands the Manor House, rebuilt in about 1609 by Hugh Speke as a show house, the manifestation of his takeover of the manor of Box. It was a three-storey house built of stone and showed the owner's wealth. The house was built of *ashlar* blocks in order to impress, with a stone tiled roof and *gable ends*. There are several Tudor-style features: the main entrance doorway, a stone fireplace and fine oak spiral staircase. The new house had a *parlour* (family dining room), fireplaces on side walls rather than an open central fire, and glass at windows instead of shutters or parchment coverings. However, Hugh did not take up residence but let it out to his leading farming tenant.

At this point we crossed the road, the main A4, to continue down what is now a quiet lane, but used to be the main London Road until the railway was built and the new 'bypass' built to help access the workings for the Box Tunnel and other railway infrastructure.

This former main street also has, as would anticipated, some fine buildings and further down another old inn, only recently converted into a private dwelling, so reversing the history of the Queen's Head.



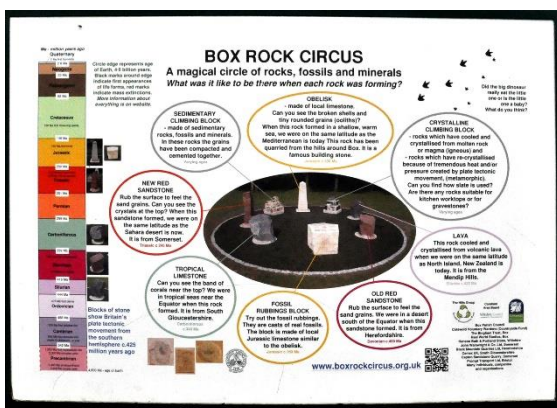
Veering to the left of the old inn, the old main road climbs back to re-join the A4, just up from which is a viewing area to admire the western portico of Brunel's Box Tunnel. On completion Box Tunnel, at 2,964 metres, was, the longest in the world and the wonder of the age.

For the village of Box, the coming of the railway in 1841 must have been the single-most dramatic event in its history. It altered the future of the village making it into an industrial area, causing the building of new roads and new hamlets called Box Hill and Quarry Hill, and creating a huge increase in population from 1,550 people in 1831 to 2,274 in 1841.



This fascinating walk, led by the most informed Allan, finished with a most surprising and interesting walk back to our starting point, as can be seen from the map at the beginning of this report.

It took us back across the A4 and down a narrow path to the By Brook from which a minor diversion took some of us to Box Mill, sometimes called 'Pinchin's Mill after its first owner of 1563. Its long history has seen it progress from a grain mill to a fulling mill, and since 1987, under the ownership of Peter Gabriel, to a state-of-the-art Recording Studio.



Eventually emerging from the river bank and skirting the local sports ground we came to our final item of interest - The Box Rock Circus - showing examples of all the local geology that have so fashioned this village and the surrounding environs of Bath.



Photos:  
Robert Coles & Nigel Pollard

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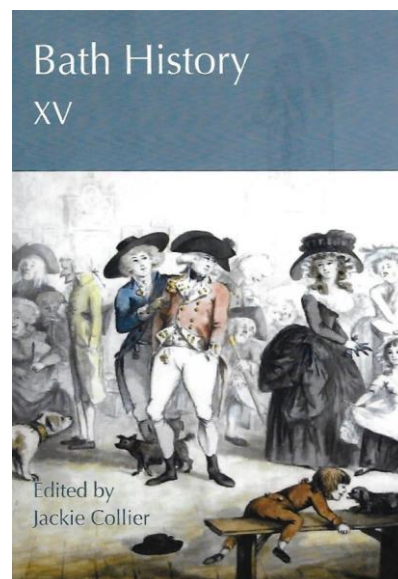
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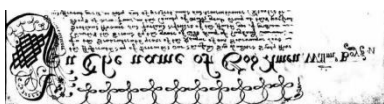
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