



Issue No. 94

Spring 2021

GUARDIAN ANGEL

NEWS FROM BRADFORD ON AVON PRESERVATION TRUST

Notes from the Chair

It's too cold to go to the allotment for long today: I just managed to get a couple of rows of early potatoes in, and prepared the way for another raised bed. There is an awful lot of work, including digging, to get to a 'no digging' garden. After it all, before the pen hits the paper for this, I am sitting watching the birds around the bird feeders.

As an ex-trainspotter (you have to make lots of lists and then underline things), I noted down the birds seen in just 30 minutes. A robin, goldfinches, house sparrows, jackdaws, a pair of blackbirds, a pair of siskins on their way north, a pair of blackcaps, a wood pigeon, blue tits, great tits, starlings, dunnocks, a male greenfinch, a pair of doves and a greater spotted woodpecker. Given the current situation, I may become a bit of a twitcher, I just won't have to underline the numbers.

What's going on in Bradford on Avon? I hope you have all had your first shot in the arm. My appointment at a leisure centre in Melksham was a perfect example of the NHS just getting on with the job. Volunteers, from the Bradford Community Emergency Volunteers, directed me to park then guided me to the room where it was all happening; and a young woman from the Royal

Navy gave me the jab, exactly on time. Thanks to her, to Bradford CEVs – and a huge thank you to the NHS.

One busy Bradford organisation is The Hub, where record numbers of food parcels are being delivered. Co-ordinator Avril Clarke was recently presented with the Sainsbury's Shining Light Award by the Deputy Mayor for all her work there. Avril would like to say thank you to everybody who contributed cash, food and toys at Christmas. Bradford has been very generous since The Hub opened, but business is, unfortunately, booming – so please keep it coming.

There is news from the railway station footbridge canopy group. Corrugated iron, which can be curved to exactly match the original, has been sourced in Italy, and agreement has been reached on using a type of wood for the side panels – which at the moment are constructed from rods which connected pointwork to a signal box. We are waiting for fire safety checks on the wood and then we can send all the very detailed plans to Wiltshire for planning permission. So it's fingers crossed for now, and we'll be collecting funds soon.

I can also reveal that the Bradford on Avon Flower and Produce Show will be back this year, on Sunday 5

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September. I have already challenged Annette Seekings to the marmalade and jam, and Vernon Burchill to the heaviest tomato competition. Schedules for the show will be printed very soon, and will also be available online via the Town Council website so there's no excuse for not taking part. Not such good news is that the wonderful Secret Gardens will not be open again this year – that does mean, though, that you have a whole year extra to get the garden in tip-top shape for 2022.

Lorry Watch is starting again in April. Stephanie Ridout has handed over the co-ordination baton to Cllr Mike Roberts, so if you would like to do your bit to keep huge lorries out of town contact him on mroberts88@sky.com

Adrian Dark, a special man in our community and author of two brilliant books, *An Eye For Detail* and the very lovely *Bradford Façades*, has been suffering with Alzheimer's disease for some years and is now in a care home after a spell in hospital. His daughter Emily has been in touch to say that she and her nine-year-old son, Adrian's grandson, Reuben, are walking the outer circle of The Bradford on Avon Walking Wheel to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Society. They are tackling the 22-mile route over a few weekends – and completed the stretch from Hilperton to Dundas Aqueduct over the weekend of 20/21 March. If you would like to sponsor their fundraising effort, please get in touch with Emily on 01225 309359 or email emilymccumiskey@hotmail.co.uk

As far as Trust business is concerned, we held our AGM via Zoom on 10 February. I am happy to report that we had a quorum and all members of the Council of Management were present. Additionally, we were fortunate to have our president, Robert Floyd, join us. The minutes of the 2019 AGM were unanimously approved as were the Annual Report and Accounts. David Cowles, Brian Elliott and Rosie MacGregor were re-elected to the Council of Management. Robert Floyd said how impressed he was with how much the Trust had achieved, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic.

There was some discussion around the Wiltshire Council Local Plan. Rosie MacGregor summed up the Trust's objections: (1) the loss of the allotments as an important amenity and the impact this would have on conservation at Woolley; (2) the problems with the Cemetery Lane site in terms of harm to the conservation area and lack of access; (3) the impact of the proposed development of the old golf course on the river corridor, in addition to the huge issues around land contamination. Rosie and the Planning Committee were thanked for all their hard work over the year.

Our next AGM is scheduled for 8 December. By then, hopefully, life will be back to some form of normality and we will be able to have it in the Priory Barn along with some minced pies and mulled wine!

The Local Plan 'consultation' has been and gone. All local authorities have been set government targets for

housebuilding, and Wiltshire's is divided among all the towns and villages in the county. Bradford has got off fairly lightly: we have to come up with 80 more houses in the next 10 or 12 years. Wiltshire planners had identified three possible areas in town – all greenfield sites that would be very easy for builders to develop. But the Preservation Trust, the Town Council and Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon agree that this is not the answer, as we really do not want any more of our green spaces concreted over. In this year alone, 10 or 12 units of accommodation have been given planning permission, so it doesn't take a lot of thought to work out that we will be able to reach our target by building on brownfield sites, infilling, and dividing large buildings into smaller units. Now we have to convince the county council to take that message back to persuade the government. Any ideas?

Something I hope we can work on with the county in a very positive way is the restoration of the paving on the top half of the lovely little footpath that goes from the top end of Church Street to Barton Orchard. It was due to have some work done recently, laying more asphalt over the damaged surface – but we have asked Wiltshire's highways department if it would be possible to reinstate the proper paving rather than adding more asphalt. The contractors are coming back to Wiltshire with a price for the job: fingers crossed!

At last, we have sorted out the main door of The Granary, which is in a terrible state of disrepair. The building, like The Tithe Barn, is Grade I listed so we had to discuss the solution with the conservation officer and we are going to repair it in a similar way to the huge Tithe Barn doors.

Now, time for a shameless plug: I am here as a direct result of responding to an ad for help at a festival in Bath in 1973. I became part of The Bath Arts Workshop, whose working philosophy was that anyone can pretty well do whatever they want and get support doing it – the only proviso being that you had to work with The Natural Theatre Company. That's a relationship that continues to this day, and now a huge 50th anniversary book, *Bath Arts Workshop: Counterculture in the 1970s*, is about to be published. I will be having a word with Ex Libris about stocking a few copies. I'm also absolutely delighted that the Town Council has engaged the Naturals to come and 'Unlock Bradford on Avon' in May. Details of how to get involved are on the council's website – it'll be a laugh, which we do really need after the past year!

This time last year I wrote about my New Year's resolution. I hadn't given much thought to it this year and I discussed the matter with the person on the till at the Co-Op. She hadn't made one either, but said she would think of one for me. I'd not quite reached the door, awkwardly carrying everything, including a bottle of wine, when she called out: "Drink more wine". So that's it. Cheers!

John Potter, Chairman

Planning Matters

Rosie MacGregor, chair of the Trust's Planning Committee, reports on latest decisions, provides an update – and issues an invitation...

We continue to comment where appropriate on all applications for planning permission, listed building and advertisement consent submitted to Wiltshire Council. While we may object to inappropriate development we are supportive of high quality design that preserves the historic built environment.

Our objections may often be disregarded – but not always. We are pleased that, on many occasions, not only have applications been refused but the refusal by Wiltshire has been upheld on appeal.

Such was the case recently with an application for Change of Use at Fairfield Piggeries, Bradford Leigh, from agriculture to a mixed use including light industrial, storage and distribution together with changes to the access, parking and a site office.

The Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal. His judgement concluded that the development would amount to inappropriate development, which would by definition be harmful to the Green Belt. He judged that the works amounted to a rebuild and not a re-use of the existing buildings and that the provision of 113

vehicle parking spaces and 30 covered cycle spaces would encroach into the countryside and fail to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

We frequently receive comments from our members, as well as members of the public, about unauthorised works. We refer these to Wiltshire Council's Enforcement Team if we agree. We have had success in securing the removal of various harmful alterations and works. One such case was at the Grade II listed Mount Pleasant Centre, where a plethora of unauthorised parking signs had been installed in the car park and plastered over the building. These have since been removed.

Very often people don't want to be seen to inform on their neighbours and ask us to draw it to the county council's attention on their behalf. We understand this, as no one wants to be seen as unneighbourly and sometimes there can be repercussions. There are few things worse than prolonged neighbour disputes.

We hope once life returns to normal we will be able to circulate our lovely *Design Guide* widely to ensure that there is a greater understanding of the importance of the historic environment.

Christ Church Community Project

Members will have read the articles in *Guardian Angel* Nos 92 and 93 about the importance of this Grade II* listed building, the fine architectural details within the building and the history of the clock on the spire.

I represent the Preservation Trust on the Christ Church Community Project Working Group and am particularly keen to see the fine wall paintings, which include the depiction of angels, fully restored and the church clock back in working order. Historic England is also seeking to secure the restoration of these wall paintings and Salisbury Diocese will need to take account of their views as part of the proposals.

I understand that fundraising will commence soon and contributions will be sought from various charities and from the National Lottery. I will be suggesting that the Trust makes a donation, as we did with Holy Trinity, specifically for the works to the wall paintings and the



The wall paintings at Christ Church are in need of restoration clock. Trust member Dorna Daw has been busy making preserves as part of her fundraising campaign and has already raised £200 to go towards restoring the clock. I purchased three jars – including one of clementine and another of pomelo – which I am reliably informed by my husband and son are delicious. I don't like marmalade but what a great initiative!

Succession planning: it could be you ...

The Preservation Trust Planning Committee has been much depleted by the tragic loss of such expert stalwarts as Edward Rooth, Vernon Gibbs and most recently Barbara Humble – whose obituary is on page 13 – added to which one long-standing member has recently resigned.

We are looking for new members to join the committee, ideally but not exclusively those with experience in architecture, historic building conservation, surveying, art and design, or town planning. However, anyone with a good eye for detail and an interest in preserving the

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historic fabric of our lovely town would be welcome to join us.

We meet approximately once a month in the Priory Barn (and by other means during the pandemic) to consider current applications made to Wiltshire Council and discuss other relevant issues. I currently chair the meetings and report back to Wiltshire Council, Bradford on Avon Town Council and our own Council of Management. I've been carrying out this role since 2015 and would welcome someone else taking over in due course, perhaps by shadowing what I do at present. Although the role is quite demanding, it is also immensely rewarding (although not in a monetary sense because it is entirely voluntary!). The Committee Chair must by necessity be a member of the Council of Management and whoever succeeds me would need to take on that added responsibility.

The Historic Buildings Conservation Committee is separate from the Planning Committee, although members of the HBCC are usually also members of both. It was extremely difficult to find anyone to Chair the HBCC after the position became vacant. There was a vacancy for well over a year and after desperate attempts to find a successor, ideally an architect, I reluctantly accepted the role.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Planning Committee or taking on the role of chairing either committee, please email me care of hello@bradfordheritage.co.uk We can then meet, socially distanced, to discuss exactly what's involved.

I look forward to hearing from you. *Rosie MacGregor*

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Not just any old iron

Roger Clark turns his attention to a too-often overlooked feature of the town’s street scene: the work of the iron founders that flourished in Bradford on Avon through the 19th and 20th centuries

While plenty of attention has been given to the preservation of many aspects of the built environment of Bradford on Avon, and even to plants, one of the most threatened features of its heritage is also one of the most neglected when it comes to preservation.

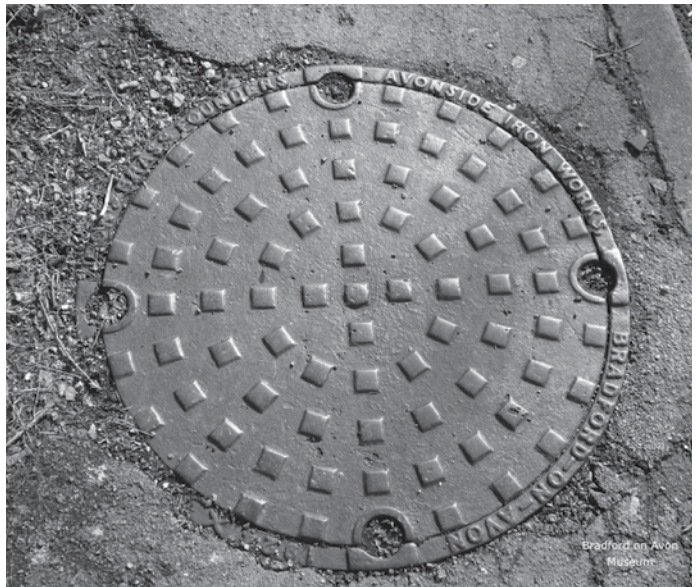
The work of Bradford’s iron founders seems to be very vulnerable: cast iron gas lamp posts and stanchions of factory buildings have disappeared mainly without trace – and, of course, railings were removed in vast quantities during World War II. What can still be seen in almost every street of the old centre of the town are mainly to be found underfoot: water stop valve and fire hydrant covers, manhole covers and the gully gratings in the gutters. Most of them proudly carry the name of their maker and of the town, yet little concern seems to have been raised as they disappear.

Three firms have been involved in casting articles in iron and in brass. The ‘Old Established’ Trowbridge Road Foundry is the only one with significant remains today, especially the base of its once architectural chimney. William Coles was working here as engineer and millwright at least by 1822 and he was even expanding by taking over a foundry in St Philip’s in Bristol when he died in 1856.

The business was taken over by George Milsom, son of a local blacksmith, who continued to expand it, making and selling a wide variety of articles, even advertising steam engines. On Milsom’s retirement in 1889 he was succeeded by Berkley Uncles, whose family took the engineering and foundry works right up to the 1960s.



Henry Crisp & Sons produced gratings and manhole covers at the Avonside Iron Works in Bridge Street



The other two firms of founders and engineers were both in Bridge Street. Thomas and Henry Martin came from Rode, Somerset. Millwrights, engineers, fitters and iron founders, they were followed by John in the next generation. Their premises stood where are the present library car park and the buildings that later became Lailey’s smithy, now Ton Boon Temple and Bridge Tea Rooms. Cast-iron posts that bear Henry Martin’s name surround Ham Green in Holt and are listed structures.



Gully grating, above, and stop valve cover, right, produced at the Uncles foundry in Trowbridge Road

Further down Bridge Street, next to the river and on the site of Dible & Roy’s shop were the Avonside Iron Works of Henry Crisp & Sons, who derived from a Bradford family that had included butchers and publicans. Outside the old Urban District

Council's area there are a few items from Bradford founders, but the Rural District Council and Wiltshire County Council purchased gully gratings from Wilton & Bush of Bitton, between Bath and Bristol. Winsley and Limpley Stoke were supplied with water from the Bath City Water Works at Combe Down and their stop valve covers can still be seen in the village streets.

Gully gratings have a habit of being replaced without warning by Wiltshire Council and its contractors, while manhole covers, bearing the names of Bradford builders as well as ironfounders, are replaced by the water company, installing in their place the ubiquitous products of the French company Pont-à-Musson (PAM). A group at the top of Wine Street all went in one purge. The drive for installing water meters lies behind the loss of many Bradford-made stop valve covers, as they are usually discarded and replaced with an undistinguished version in plastic.

Bradford on Avon Museum has tried to preserve some of these things when they have been uprooted and they are on display there. The Museum narrowly missed the only George Milsom gully grating when it was removed from Church Street many years ago; it was found at the Wiltshire County Council yard in Melksham, but then vanished again.

Although the Museum is keen to collect examples that



Some items bear the names of Bradford builders, rather than the foundries that manufactured them – as in this example of an inspection cover, installed by W Selfe & Son

it does not already have, its small space is very limited. It is much to be preferred that these pieces of Bradford's heritage are preserved in situ wherever possible.

● More information on Bradford's iron founders and their products can be found on the Museum's website: www.bradfordonavonmuseum.co.uk

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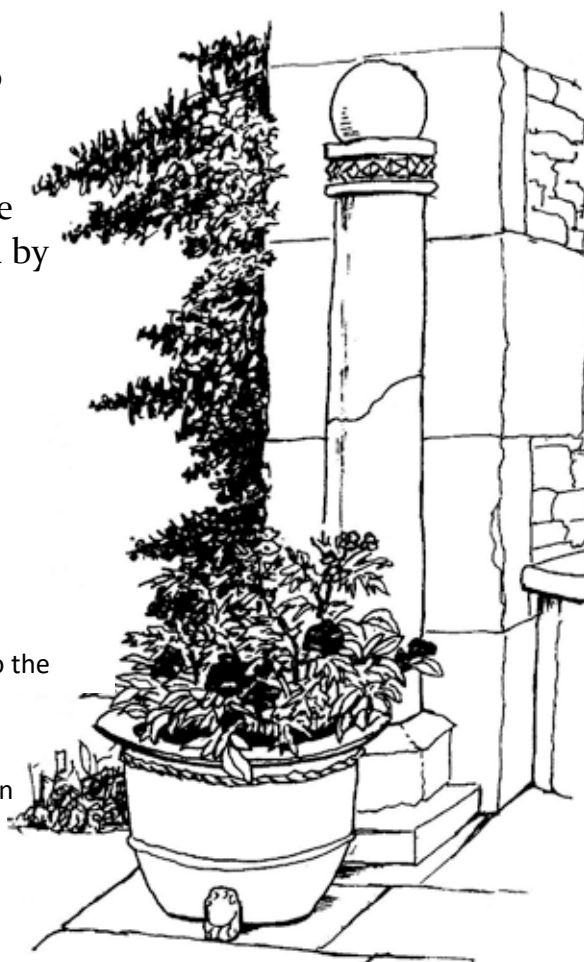
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Anyone for tennis?

Dr Trevor Turpin, chair of Bath Industrial Heritage Trust, tells the extraordinary story of how the Museum of Bath at Work survived the wrecker's ball

'People don't want to live in such houses and nor should they.'

In 1972 I lived in New King Street in Bath and had objected to the City Council's plan to demolish St Ann's Place just along the street. The Labour councillor for Kingsmead (and coincidentally my sometime maths lecturer), called round and explained that on public health grounds he supported clearance of these Georgian workers' cottages.

This was around the time when, to use that old chestnut, Bath's planners were finishing off what the Baedeker raids had started. They employed the twin excuses of public health and the proposed Buchanan Tunnel under the centre of Bath, to further their aspirations of sweeping away anything but the 'jewels in the crown' of Bath's Georgian architecture. The tunnel plan itself blighted the two portal locations: it provided a fig leaf behind which the planners could have their wicked ways. St Ann's Place seemingly had no chance, since it fitted both categories! However a wind of change blew, it was saved, listed Grade II in 1975 and restored in 1985.

The Bath Preservation Trust was formed in 1934 to combat an east-west road through Bath. Encouraged by their success, the Trust began other initiatives for preserving the city but was distracted by World War II and the reconstruction of much of Georgian Bath. However, in 1960 the council published its City Development Plan – shorthand for Clearance and Urban Renewal. Its relentless pursuit of this aim, regardless of Listed Building status, took many by surprise. The Preservation Trust was now fighting a rearguard action against a voracious council. The targets were the city's artisans' homes built at the same time and of the same new stone as the 'set piece' Georgian terraces.

The Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust, formed in 1959, had immediately involved itself fighting the demolition of similar artisans' homes in Tory and nearby. It's interesting to reflect that 'cottages' in both Tory¹ and St Ann's Place, now all listed and restored, sell for around £300,000. The listing for St Ann's Place includes the telling phrase 'part of a notable survival of artisanal housing'. It only survives due to the abandonment of the tunnel. And despite the intentions of the planners.

No such fortune was granted to another clearance area in Bath: Lampard's Buildings, Ballance and Morford Streets, in Lansdown. They were all deemed unfit for habitation and scheduled for demolition. We can suspect that it would have gone unnoticed if it hadn't been for the publication of *Vanishing Bath* by Peter and Ruth Coard in

1971-3, and *The Sack of Bath* by Adam Fergusson in 1973. John Betjeman wrote a few lines for Fergusson:

*Goodbye to old Bath. We who loved you are sorry
They've carted you off by developer's lorry.*

This fuss led the Department of the Environment to get involved and in 1974 a halt was called to the wanton destruction.

A row of Lampard's Buildings was built in Victorian times as some of the first council housing in Britain. But that didn't arrest the onward progression of the wrecker's ball until they came across an 18th century Real (Royal/Réal) Tennis Court. Argument ensued between those who realised its rarity – the only one built prior to the 19th century, apart from those at Hampton Court and Merton Street, Oxford – and the City Architect, who opined that "the needs of history would be better served by putting up a plaque"! It was spot-listed Grade II in July 1973. The rest of Morford Street went, with only facades saved on the west side.



Morford Street, 1972: The Rose & Crown was the first to go (Dr Bernard Priest)

The Court was certainly destined for demolition - the Coards, writing in early 1973, said "there seems little hope of its survival". It was a fast moving time. According to its listing, it had been built in 1777 by Richard Scrase to a plan provided by the Earl of Pembroke, and "none of the fittings survive having been adapted for brewery use in c1830". This is actually incorrect, evidenced by both the high windows and the remains of a 'tambour' (angled) wall by the current entrance.

I was intrigued to know the connection of the Earl of Pembroke and several options present themselves. The best, although he died 28 years before construction, was

¹ Listed in 1963



The forlorn Tennis Court with attached 'Dressing Rooms', 1973

the 9th Earl, Henry Herbert (1693 -1749) who reputedly played tennis every day, built several mansions and monuments and took the waters in Bath in the winter of 1743. He was described as a 'pioneer vegetarian' but nearly died trying a diet of just beetroot and watercress! His son is not recorded as having interests beyond warmongering and mistresses so we can imagine that the 'plan' had been handed down. This is pure speculation...

1970s, when the Bath Arts Workshop had a plan for a Community Arts Centre.

Meanwhile, however, in 1968 an enlightened industrial designer, Russell Frears, who would purchase materials from Bowler's engineering and mineral water business in

TENNIS-COURT, BATH.
RICHARD SCRACE, Sen. begs leave to acquaint the Nobility and Gentry, that his **TENNIS-COURT** is now opened for play; where he hopes to have their countenance and support, as nothing has, nor shall be wanting to render it as compleat and agreeable as possible.—Particular attention will be had to keep the dressing-rooms and dresses well aired.

Bath Chronicle, 25 September 1777

It seems that the court was never a great success – Bathonians were not so keen on exercise as Scrase hoped – and within a year, he was seeking subscriptions to pay off his mortgage. The tennis court and adjacent riding school were for sale in 1800. Scrase had been the proprietor of the riding school since 1770 – also a victim of the planners in the 1970s and now occupied by 1974 Jaguar House.

In the event, the court changed use several times: as a Girls' Free School in 1816 (for 400 girls), as a malthouse (1835-1910) and as a furniture factory until the



Bowler's, Avon Street, 1969

ALSO TO BE SOLD,
THE TENNIS-COURT adjoining the Riding-house, which is allowed to be one of the completest Tennis-Courts in Europe, not only by its Improvements upon all other Courts, but to its adjoining the Riding-House, and the conveniences of different exercises for health and amusement. After it was opened about 20 years ago, it was taken by Mr. Hathway, who occupied the Court 19 years, till he accumulated a fortune. The present occupier is by no means a good player, but a good marker; very assiduous to his business and civil.
 For further particulars apply to J. Dash, at the Riding-School, Bath. (One Property) [5527]

Bath Chronicle, 5 June 1800



Moving in the Bowler machinery, 1977

One of Russell Frears' photos of Bowler's interior, 1968; inset, The Museum of Bath at Work



Avon Street, was alarmed to discover that the premises of this Victorian family business founded in 1872 by Jonathan Burdett Bowler were to be demolished to make way for – Avon Street car park. (Yes, the planners were still in thrall to the motor car.) Bowler's had never thrown anything away and Russell realised that this told the 'other' story of Bath behind the Georgian grand facades. He photographed the entire works, taking over a thousand photographs on 35mm film.

With some friends and supporters he vowed to rescue this historic resource but still had to purchase the contents, which were to be sold for scrap. After years of storage, including in Walcot Yard, the opportunity of the tennis court presented itself. In 1978, the Bath Industrial Heritage Trust was formed and set about establishing a museum to tell the story of the commercial world of Bath and the lives of the workers. Having the photographic record enabled a faithful reconstruction of the various workshops within Bowler's. And so the Museum of Bath at Work was born.

Apart from displays, the museum has a full programme of exhibitions including The Bath Arts Workshop's highly successful exhibition to celebrate 50 years of its presence in the city. It attracted nearly 5,000 people and is to return by popular demand in 2021. Come and see us! www.bath-at-work.org.uk

With thanks to Stuart Burroughs, Director, Museum of Bath at Work

Peter and Ruth Coard – Vanishing Bath 1973

Adam Fergusson – The Sack of Bath 1973



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Landscape Group: New trees for Hens' Orchard



Hens' Orchard in the snow earlier this year

During January and February, while observing Covid 19 rules, we managed to plant six new trees, all donated by Trust members or Friends of the Orchard. We also replaced one which had failed last year. There are now 38 trees in the orchard. After the planting, again observing the rules, we pruned the other trees. They're all looking quite healthy and we hope for a good harvest despite not being able to have a Wassail this year!

Last summer many of the trees produced a good crop but sadly, most of the apples disappeared, quite suddenly, before ripening. A bit of a mystery – but it's a community orchard and we can't prevent people taking the fruit. We can only hope there's not a repeat of that this year.

The Orchard is a popular place and passers-by often express their enjoyment and ask about its story. We're really pleased that Simon Relph's idea is literally bearing fruit.

Kate Nicholls

Landscape Group leader, kateboa38@gmail.com



Planting a Merton Glory cherry tree

A place to promenade, a place to play

Geoff Andrews recalls the particular charm of the Kennet and Avon Canal and its environs during the post-war years

Now it is a significant part of the local economy, but until it was rejuvenated in the 1980s the canal in Bradford on Avon was more a linear water park, principally for fishing and walking, and for kids all sorts of risky games, that usually involved getting wet, followed by chastisement at home.

For fishing, the canal was an undisturbed stretch of water from Hilperton to Bradford Wharf, and then on to Avoncliff where there was a stop lock for many years, just before the aqueduct. Before that section below Murhill failed it had continued for miles towards Dundas, the favourite destination for Sunday school outings in a horse-drawn narrowboat in the 1900s.

The water was full of perch, tench, pike, roach, occasionally eels (but not gudgeon), and weedy but almost crystal clear in sunlight. You could see the fish you were trying to catch and to judge by my results, they could apparently see me.

There were frequent club competitions from The Beehive towards Ladydown, with well over a hundred men (exclusively) drawing lots for their labelled pitch spaced every 10 yards for about a mile. Each pitch had been prepared by the canal bailiff, with the grass cut and the reeds removed. At the end of the day the winner was the person whose haul was heaviest, but there were probably also prizes for the best specimens.

The Sunday evening walk in the '50s was a local *passiegato*. As there was nothing else to do, many people on fine evenings took in part of the canal towpath in their walk. Everyone would be in Sunday best and all the men wearing their trilbies or caps and tipping them to other people they met (most of whom they would know). And gossiping.

In my time there was only one attempt (probably in about 1946-47) to get a boat through towards Bath. It was the first boat larger than a rowing boat I'd seen, and I thought it looked like Noah's Ark rather than the small narrowboat it probably was. It might have been *Meteor* which did make such a trip. If so, its journey was much slower than its name suggests as weed choked the waterway.

Wildlife along the canal was doing well in the neglect. Grass snakes were common on the banks, often slipping into the water and swimming for the other side as you approached. No doubt they were attracted by the plentiful frogs and tadpoles.

There were water voles too, rabbits in the banks, herons, adders, slow-worms and a lot of birds. No foxes though, and only on one occasion did I hear, rather than see, a badger, which I disturbed in the bank by Benjamin's Six Acre field, now part of the new wood. There were two

cuckoos in spring, one near Ladydown and one nearer the Wharf, which my brother provoked to come very close with his imitation of its call. Other natural life we took for granted, but I was particularly impressed by the glow worms on the banks near the Trowbridge Road bridge. In spring primroses and violets were everywhere, despite copious pickings for Easter or Mothering Sunday.

There was also a grisly side to the canal; it seems to have been the means which too many people chose for suicide. I was proud of a length of rope I had found until somebody told me it had been used to pull a body out of the water a few days before.

For no reason I know, at several points, near Ladydown and by the swing bridge, there were gates across the towpath: they may be still there. They were possibly intended to prevent straying livestock, but often in irrational places.

The pillboxes of the Stopline were a mixed blessing, having been used as toilets too often to be useful as a schoolboy camp. They were finished in time before the invasion threat grew, apparently, but they were never equipped with anything – unless their fittings had already disappeared before about 1946.

“Wildlife along the canal was doing well in the neglect. Grass snakes were common on the banks, often slipping into the water and swimming for the other side as you approached”

The one pillbox which was unsullied was the best one, overlooking the clay pit. This was the camp of the Black Hand Gang, a bunch of older boys. We regarded them as the local mafia and gave them a wide berth. A small-scale black market in food was allegedly operated out of the pillbox

There was also a strange derelict building almost next to the canal about 100 metres from the Trowbridge Road bridge. It was said to have been a bakery but for whom: passing boats? For us it was castle, fort, whatever we pleased.

At that time the earth dug out when the canal was built was still very evident in the fields at the bottom of Poulton Lane – and steep enough that we used to be able to roll down it.

In the stretch from Frome Road to Avoncliff, Grip wood was always a no go area (although it apparently belonged to a distant relative), but Beckyanny* wood was a favourite playground. It was much larger than now and



“In a hard winter we played on the ice”

completely overgrown, apart from the path that led to Avoncliff.

The rifle butts left from World War I were still in place beyond the withy beds that were cultivated for the blind basket maker in town. The other end of the butts was said to be in a field beyond Belcombe, but I never saw them.

For seemingly most of my childhood ‘Mr Green’, who lived near us in Southville Gardens, was employed on reroofing the Tithe Barn, reshaping thousands of stone tiles patiently. We’d call out to him when we were passing. I never saw anyone working with him, which probably accounts for the interminable time the work took.

In a hard winter we played on the ice, using pieces of wood and a lump of ice or a stone for knockabout ice hockey games, but I never saw anyone with skates.

Throughout the 1970s my father was chair of the local branch of the Kennet and Avon Trust and, with my mother, worked throughout his retirement on reclaiming the canal. Fortunately they both lived to see the job completed when the Queen officially reopened it in 1990 at Devizes – almost the last time my mother left the house.

* It is marked on maps as Beckyaddy, but to Bradfordians it was always Beckyanny wood.



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Obituary: Barbara Humble 3 August 1942-1 December 2020

Barbara was a long-standing member of the Trust and a greatly valued member of the Trust's Planning Committee whose acute eye for detail and good design will be greatly missed.

Barbara was born in Greenford, Middlesex, the elder of two sisters. As a child she was "clever, bossy and bright" and the family lived opposite a church where she loved the singing, which led to her later love of music. When at school the sisters would be taken up to the Festival Hall on the South Bank to the Saturday children's concerts. She did English, French and Law at A-level, and after leaving school joined the civil service and worked in the Public Trustee Office in Holborn. There was apparently someone in the office who grew tomatoes on the office window sill and sold them to his fellow workers in the building!

She always loved horse riding and rode out in Hyde Park and sometimes down in Elstree near the Pinewood Studios. She met Mac, her future husband, at a party in her early 20s. They married and moved to Bath when Mac became manager of the prestigious John Keil's antiques shop and lived firstly in Widcombe, where they became the proud parents of their son Matthew, then to Middle Stoke.

They launched their own business in the early '80s opposite the Canary Cafe in Queen Street, later moving to Bradford on Avon. Barbara's love of art, learned from Mac, developed into her great love and knowledge of mid-20th century British art. They then moved to Woolley Street to open the shop and Barbara would go with friends around France on buying trips.

Barbara loved food and was a wonderful cook. She also had an intrinsic sense of design and colour, and an insatiable appetite for exhibitions wherever she went, be it London or the provinces. She introduced me to the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester which is filled with all the artists she most loved. She also painted – my son Tom describes her paintings as being done by someone who had looked at and absorbed a myriad pictures; how I wish she had realised how good she was! She was a voracious reader and a good friend to many.

She loved horse racing and followed specific trainers and jockeys; she never placed a bet, however, but when watching one of her favourites on the Channel 4 racing slot, you would almost certainly have heard her if you happened to be passing her house, as she would stand up and roar at the television, shaking her fists and then punching the air if the horse came in first!

She was strong and uncompromising in her views and made it very apparent if she disagreed with you – at the same time, she was great company. I for one will miss her.

Julie Fleming-Williams



Mac and
Barbara
Humble

I first met Barbara and Mac when they moved to Widcombe Hill in Bath in the late 1960s, with Mac working in John Keil's antique shop in Quiet Street. However, when years later Barbara and Mac opened their own antique shop in Queen Street I saw lots more of both on their visits to Bradford to see Katherine and Elisabeth, founders of the Preservation Trust, at the China Hens antique shop. Years later when the 'Hens' retired to the Rope Walk, Barbara and Mac moved from their now home in Freshford into the vacant shop in Woolley Street.

Barbara quickly took an interest in the Preservation Trust, soon joining the Planning Committee, eventually becoming Chair. Barbara's strength was in thorough checking details of planning applications, often visiting the sites before commenting, and looking into the implications of Wiltshire planning policies.

As a founder member among a small group of friends the 'Bradford Deserves Better' members interested themselves in conservation in other country towns like Cirencester, and house restorations, most memorably the Landmark Trust's saving of Llwyn Celyin in Monmouthshire.

Years ago I started the town plaque scheme for the Trust. Barbara continued, it seemed for almost ever, to argue that my decision on green plaques was a mistake and instead thought blue plaques gave more gravitas and should be smaller.

Amazingly, it was only after many years that I suddenly became aware of Barbara's very serious interest in jump racing when we wandered on to the crowded picture dealers' stand at the Olympia Antiques Fair in London. We looked at a 19th century racehorse painting and Barbara said in a very loud voice: "If I was a betting person I wouldn't even put a pound on that old nag." Everybody around stopped talking!

Andrew Jenkins

Obituary: Anne O’Kane

Anne O’Kane, resident of Church Street, Bradford on Avon since 1982, passed away on 31 January 2021. Originally from the Nottinghamshire / Derbyshire border, living on her parents’ farm with her brother John, the young Anne Clarke moved to Bath in 1952 to study domestic science at the teacher training college. She became president of the Students’ Union and from all accounts, it was a great ‘party-time’ with the annual balls, fundraisers and many dinner parties.

A reference for Anne (aged 26) from the headmaster of her first teaching appointment, Locklease School, reads:

“Miss Clarke is a refined and polished person whose academic excellence has played an extremely beneficial and important part in building up the new Domestic Science Department. An efficient and capable teacher whose outstanding motivation of the girls in her first year at our school achieved a 100 per cent success rate in examination results. Miss Clarke proved to be most popular with the staff and pupils and we wish her well for her future progress.”

Anne married Bill O’Kane in 1959 and the happy couple set up home in Edington and started a successful property development company. Bill and Anne made a brilliant partnership both in their home life and at work, running successful property companies, one of which Anne continued to run until last year, letting out five factory units, an office block and numerous houses.

While she was passionate about the joys of business, she was also passionate about helping others less fortunate. Her projects included setting up a family hosting network for disadvantaged city children, giving them holidays in the Wiltshire countryside; organising and delivering Meals on Wheels in Melksham and Sutton Benger; being



Anne O’Kane

a volunteer care worker; becoming Chair of the Friends of Roundway, and co-ordinating adventure days for local disabled children.

Anne hosted many annual summer parties for the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust, as well as many wonderful parties, church summer fêtes, music gatherings, and charity fundraising events.

Anne leaves son Paul and daughter Anne-Marie, and five grandchildren, Henry, Alastair, Georgina, Oliver and Robert.

Youth is a gift of nature,
Age is a work of art,
Here we are celebrating almost 90 years of Miss Clarke,
Who 62 years ago became O’Kane,
Motivated the world around her, like a steam train,
Can you hear those immortal words,
“I think I can”, “I think I can”, “I think I can” ...
“I know I can”.

Rest in peace, Anne.

Paul Kane

Obituary: Freddie Walker

Freddie (Winifred) Walker, who passed away in December of last year at the age of 94, was a long-term member and supporter of the Preservation Trust and the work we do. We have just heard from her son Tim that she has left us a small legacy. We are incredibly grateful.

I knew Freddie well – an amazing woman and a real character with a lively personality and big heart. She loved the arts, music and architecture. Her late husband was also a member and an architect who wasn’t just knowledgeable about the historic environment but a modernist who recognised that there is also a place for good contemporary architecture in historic settings.

Freddie will be greatly missed by all who knew her and it

is wonderful that she has left us a legacy.

Freddie collected coffee cups and saucers and I remember once meeting her in an antique shop where we both wanted to buy the same cup and saucer. It matched the china that had once belonged to an aunt of mine and I particularly wanted it to remember my aunt – but so did Freddie! I could foresee an argument, but the dealer saved the day by saying he had another pair in the back room and all was well. Afterwards I joined her for tea in her lovely cottage in Sladesbrook where we laughed at our shared good fortune!

Rosie MacGregor

Book review

Bradford on Avon Probate Inventories 1550 – 1700 By Ivor Slocombe

An Act of 1529 required that the executors of a will should have an inventory made of the possessions of the deceased and the first surviving of these inventories for Bradford on Avon is dated 1552, hence the starting point for this survey. Why, you may wonder, should you be interested in such inventories, which are now some four or five hundred years old? A look in this little book will quickly show you several reasons why you should actually find it very interesting.

The book starts with an introduction in which Ivor Slocombe explains the nature of the inventories and how they were compiled. Two people went round the buildings held by the deceased. They would note what they found in the house room by room, listing clothes and portable artefacts; but the house might be part of a farm and they would also list the other buildings of the farm as well as the livestock and the farm equipment, or there might be a workshop attached with its machinery and tools. All this gives a vivid picture of how people in Bradford then lived. It also illustrates the wide range in the scale and value of households in and around the town. The most highly valued is a yeoman from Trowle whose establishment was valued in 1643 at £793 0s 9d; the most

modest is a glover whose chamber, furnishings and equipment were valued in 1610 at £2 18s 10d.

The inventories also show what rooms a house would contain (halls, parlours, chambers, kitchens and butteries) and they show what people kept in them. The importance of making and storing cheeses is striking: the farmers in particular tended to

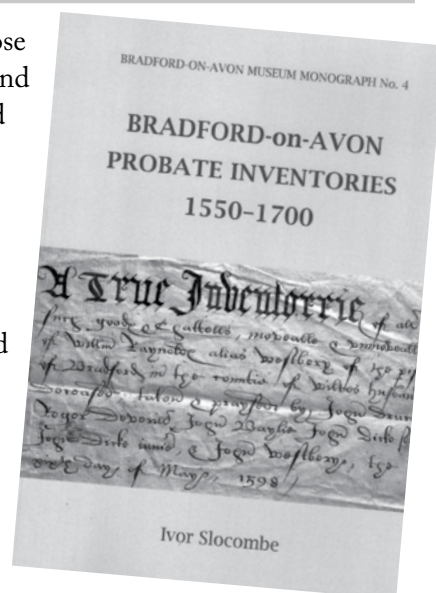
have white houses for making cheeses and many houses include cheese lofts. One yeoman is listed as having “one hundred and three score cheeses and 40lbs of butter” in his cheese loft. On the other hand, some things don’t change and lofts are also listed as containing old chests and other things no longer wanted: one loft is listed as containing, in addition to the inevitable cheeses, some “old metal”. Another inventory (this one not arranged by different rooms) includes £2 for “the goodwife’s apparel” but no clothing for the deceased husband – what had he worn?


This book also provides an excellent opportunity to enrich your vocabulary. What, for example is a “posnet”? (a small metal vessel with three feet), a “hangell”? (an iron rod over a fire, for pots to hang on), a “rudder beast”? (an ox kept for fattening), or a “trendle”? (a tub for making dough). The inventories are rich in exotic language and fortunately Ivor provides a glossary at the end of the book.

I understand from Ivor that he and Pam are well advanced in preparation of a history of Bradford on Avon between 1500 and 1700. That is something to look forward to and this book provides a fascinating prelude to it.

David Moss

Bradford on Avon Probate Inventories 1550 – 1700 by Ivor Slocombe (ISBN978-1-912020-12-6) is Bradford on Avon Museum Monograph No 4. Price £6, it can be obtained from Ex Libris bookshop in the Shambles (during lockdown, you can order from Ex Libris by telephoning 01225 863595 or emailing jim_exlibris@btinternet.com) or through Valerie Holden (phone 01225 869159 or email vjholden@gmail.com)





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