



## Programme 2011

May 18 'Ralph Allen: food and life style' by Rosemary Simmons with a surprise taster! Progress on the Firs Field Shaft Head wall reconstruction will also be reported.

June 15 Talk by Pat Hase 'Family history: let's make a start'

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

## Phillip Nowell



In *Combe Down History*, one of the earliest histories of the village authored by the Townswomen's Guild in 1965, there is reference to a portrait of King William IV which used to hang in Rock Hall, Rock Hall Lane. No-one to our knowledge ever recalls seeing this picture and the story has until now

remained something of a mystery. Rock Hall had been built originally by Samuel Nowell, one of the prominent quarrymasters on the Down, in the early 1800s.

The old house we see today (that part of the the building nearest to Rock Hall Lane) was built in 1830 by his son, Philip Nowell at about the time the quarry there ceased working. Philip had by then become the leading Bath Stone mason in the country, having recently supervised the rebuilding of Windsor Castle. Although also engaged in many other prestigious projects in London and the provinces, it was his work on the royal palace which remained his most important legacy.

Last year it came to light that a portrait of Philip Nowell was sold at auction in Nottingham. The painting depicted a rather portly middle-aged

gentleman seated before a landscape featuring Windsor Castle. The figure could easily be mistaken for King William, who is said to have conferred a knighthood on Philip Nowell for his work on the Castle. Is this a case of a mystery solved?

Dick Irving

Also - the Nowells were Baptists. In the old Baptist Burial Ground at the bottom of Lyncombe Hill in Widcombe is the tombstone of Sarah Nowell of Rock Hall, niece of Philip Nowell. We visited the cemetery on a recent Open Day but found that the inscription is now barely readable.

## Farewell and many thanks to Mary Stacey

The meeting on 23 March was the last in her official capacity for Mary Stacey, as she retired from B&NES at the end of March after 10 years managing the Mines Stabilisation Project on behalf of the Council. During that time she became very well known to all of us with her attention to detail and desire to do the job properly. In particular she was a great defender of the Heritage aspects of the project and the legacy it would leave behind and we will miss her staunch support. At a small party held to mark her departure, Rosemary Simmons thanked her for the enthusiasm that ran through everything she did, and on behalf of CDHS presented her with a framed print of the 1839 sketch *Combe Down Church & Parsonage* and a bouquet of flowers.



## Interpretation Centre Trust approved by residents

At the meeting on 23 March at the Primary School, Chaired by Jeff Manning, details emerged of the volunteer Trust Board members who were appointed by a panel of three - Jeff Manning, City Alderman and former CD councillor, Mary Stacey, Project Leader of the Stone Mines Project and David Dunkerley, formerly Chair of the Combe Down Stone Mines Community Association.

The members who were approved by residents present at the meeting are - Dr David Carr, Rosemary Simmons, Richard Read, David Morris, and Jack Steenstra. We are pleased to say that since the meeting Emma Teale has also joined the committee. More details were revealed of the development, which will reach the highest standards for Environmentally Sustainability. There are one or two houses in Bath that approach these standards - one of these is in Combe Down - but there is no development of a number of houses anywhere near this standard in the Bath and North East Somerset area. A planning application is likely to be submitted in May.

The committee has met twice and has elected as its officers: Richard Read, Chairman; Martin Coulson, Secretary and Jack Steenstra, Treasurer.

The key priorities now are to formalise the structure of the Trust, to develop a communications strategy and to open discussions on the internal design of the Centre with the developer. For the first a name is needed, and the Trustees have decided on Combe Down Stone Legacy Trust, clear and hopefully self-explanatory, a bit boring you might say, but it does enable things to get going, and once more is known about the capabilities of the Centre a search for a more exciting name for it can begin.

The objectives for the Trust have also been agreed:

1. To run a visitor centre that explores and presents the story of Combe Down, and the influence of stone in its development from prehistory to the present day, making it accessible and understandable by all ages and levels of education.
2. To provide a village resource centre for the use of Combe Down residents for meetings, lectures and leisure activities.

The Trustees have requested a meeting with the developers, Cox Developments, and are awaiting

their response. They will continue to keep us informed as this exciting project takes shape.

## The Victorian lamp post

Full marks to Councillors Roger Symonds and Cherry Beath whose local funding effected the restoration of this lamppost in Victoria Place. The suggestion for this restoration at a secluded site came originally from the Heritage Society but it needed the willing co-operation of the wall's owner, the reinstatement of an electricity supply and the organisation and funding from the Councillors.



The lamp post restored - and (above) as previously behind a wall

## A canal milestone at Tucking Mill

A member of the Somerset Coal Canal Society reports in their magazine the find of the 1½ mile marker held in the National Waterways Museum at Gloucester. The plate was mounted on a post, which has subsequently been moved, and marked the distance from the beginning of the canal at Dundas Wharf. Only 11 of the original 21 milestones survive, three complete with cast-iron plate, and only one of these is in its original place. Three other iron plates survive separately from their stones.



We are grateful to Derek Hunt for permission to publish this picture.



## Paper from De Montalt Mill

A member has drawn our attention to Turner's painting, 'Off Margate: a steamship in rough weather', a watercolour. A description says that it was painted in the 1830s, probably on one of his many trips to Margate. There is a group of seascape sketches of the same size as the Margate work dated to the late 1820s/1830s. The paper was made by George Steart at De Montalt Mill, Combe Down, Bath and Turner used batches of Steart's paper.



## Do you remember Robert Scurlock?

He was a pupil at Combe Down Senior School during the 1930s. He lives in Arizona and wants to know if anyone has a photo of the Headmaster Wallace Brown and the English teacher Miss Hetty Tanner. Can you help? Please let Rosemary know (833301).

## Reports on meetings

### History of the Theatre Royal

On 16 March our talk was something of a surprise to many! In order to secure a date in Jane Tapley's very busy calendar we postponed Rosemary Simmons' talk on food in Ralph Allen's day and were treated to a detailed and finely presented. "Risen from the ashes - the history of the Theatre Royal". The theatre's many incarnations and disasters were illustrated ending with the huge amount of restoration work done to bring it up to the standard we enjoy today.

Jane Tapley lives in Bath and lectures regularly to theatre-going societies, the National Trust, historical and Fine Arts groups Her subjects include Jane Austen, the Greek and Roman theatre, the history of theatre in general, pantomime, Georgian Bath, and the festive food

and customs of the Georgians and Victorians.

Jane has been the Special Events Organiser at the Theatre Royal Bath for twenty years and interviews visiting actors, writers, and directors. She is an author and researcher of theatre programme and is also a Blue Badge Guide/Lecturer, a Home Economist and Theatrical Landlady!

### Burrow Hill Cider Farm Excursion

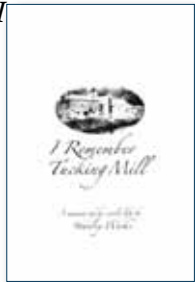
Some 30 members had a most enjoyable visit to Burrow Hill Cider Farm and Cider Brandy Distillery on 14 April. The cider apple trees were in bloom; chickens and a handsome turkey wandered around the old farm buildings as we were greeted by the owner, Julian Temperley. The tour started with a sample of Kingston Black apple apéritif - two more samples of the stronger apple brandy came later in the tour. We were shown the cider presses and storage vats, the distillery with its old French stills, and finally the bonded warehouse of apple brandy, a stimulating experience. We ended in the shop where members bought cider and all its derivatives. A short journey on the coach took us to The Brown & Forrest Smokery, near Langport, for lunch. A very satisfying outing.



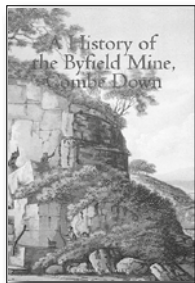
## Publications



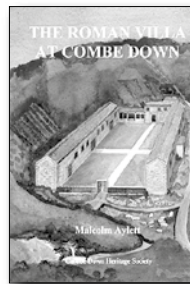
*Remembering Village Shops* by Richard Read, £15



*Remember Tucking Mill* by Stanley Wicks, £6.



*A History of the Byfield Mine* by Professor Richard Irving, £9.95.



*The Roman Villa at Combe Down* by Dr Malcolm Aylett, £4.95.

*William Smith's Venture in Stone Quarrying* by Richard Irving, is now published on the Society's website [www.combedownheritage.org.uk](http://www.combedownheritage.org.uk).

Heritage Trail leaflet by Richard Irving and Rosemary Simmons, 50p  
 CD of Combe Down Past and Present - available to members only, free, but a donation is expected.

All publications are available at meetings and are also from Rosemary Simmons (details below).

## Contacts

Chair Rosemary Simmons ☎833301  
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Secretary (and of the Friends of the Jewish Burial Ground) Malcolm Aylett ☎833681,  
 13 Williamstowe BA2 5EJ [m.aylett@homecall.co.uk](mailto:m.aylett@homecall.co.uk)

## Renewing your subscription

Subscriptions for the year became due in March. If you know of members who have not received this newsletter, it might be because they have inadvertently not paid their subscription.

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

## Membership application for new members

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

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_

I apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31 March 2012 and I agree to my details being held on computer for the duration of my membership

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership options - please tick as required:  
 Standard  £5 Concession £3  Family £12   
 I am sending an additional £  as a donation to the society

Total amount paid

Ages of children (if family membership)

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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