



## Autumn/winter programme

### Sept 19 Combe Down in wartime

We want to collect your memories of living through the Second World War. If you are too young, please ask your family and friends if they remember what it was like. Come prepared with your written memories to read out and if you have a gas mask, ration book, identity card or any photographs please bring them along. We already have some memories which we will read out and some photographs to show. This evening could be the beginning of a new project like Remembering Village Shops.

### Oct 17 My House – Combe Down Old Vicarage

Sophie Pandit will tell us the story of The Old Vicarage and the trials of many vicars living in the house. See page 3 for the story of the Dreadful Combe Down Accident.

### Nov 14 Phillip Nowell, Master Mason to George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria

a talk by our President Richard Irving. He will trace the career of local boy Phillip Nowell from apprentice stone mason to renowned sculptor and supplier of stone to the gentry – and royals.

### Dec 19 Christmas Social

A change from our annual quiz, we will host a gathering of members with refreshments, puzzles and challenges! More details later.

Jan – no meeting

**Feb 20 Ralph Allen and his seat at Prior Park**  
a talk by Dr Amy Frost

**Mar 20 The ecology of Tucking Mill** a talk by Eleanor Phillips from Wessex Water

**Apr 17 My family - pepping up the fat in my blood for a fiver'** a talk by Andrew Bosenquet

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

## Reports on meetings

Simon Burrows

### May 16 'The Rat Hole' Combe Down's Railway Tunnel

At our May meeting Tim Lunt took us on an historical journey through the development of the railway network in Somerset (and beyond), and its association with the industries which gave it life. Very well researched and full of illustrations Tim's talk included the history of our own tunnel and some hair-raising stories about suffocation on the footplate, close shaves and, runaway trains. Tim showed how rail travel is not only now disproportionately more expensive but slower! This didn't prevent many railway enthusiasts joining us for the evening which more than 60 attended.

### June 20 The Jews of Bath and Bristol

In June Alex Schlesinger, Chairman of the Friends of Bath Jewish Burial Ground, shared some of his remarkable knowledge, speaking for more than an hour in detail, date perfect, without a single note. We saw how the fortunes of the small Jewish community in Bristol was so closely linked to the prosperity and development of the city as a whole, and how the tiny community in Bath in previous times has left its mark from prayer boxes in doorways to beautifully carved Hebrew in Bath Abbey.

### July 18 Bath Stone Quarries

The July meeting saw Derek Hawkins give one of the most interesting talks I've listened to on stone quarrying. Living in Combe Down it is perhaps sometimes easy to forget that stone was quarried in other places too and Derek had any number of illustrations to prove this point! He gave a very lucid explanation of how the stone was quarried and removed with many period photographs showing the hierarchy of quarrymen at work – what dangerous and demanding work it was too.. Strange to think of all that going on under our feet for so long – and so important to research, record and remember the blood, sweat and tears that went into it.

## News from the Stone Legacy Trust

Richard Read

We have good news for everyone interested in the new Combe Down Stone Legacy Centre. Work is starting on the demolition of most of the old Ralph Allen Yard in preparation for the building project, part of which will be our new Centre. This will inevitably mean some disruption on Combe Road and Rock Hall Lane but the developers have assured us and all of those residents most immediately local to the project site that they will endeavour to keep this to the minimum. The developers will also produce a newsletter which will detail the project timescale, and there will be an information board to show plans and progress.

Meanwhile, we have formalised the Stone Legacy Trust, registered it as a limited company and our application for charitable status has recently been accepted. Now we can work on the details of how the Centre will present the story of Combe Down stone and the people associated with it. Our aim is to preserve the inspiring story of stone mining, its significance in the building of Bath and the people who were involved. We want to present this in modern and innovative ways. There is also plenty to say about the stabilisation project, and about stone as a contemporary building material and how it can contribute to the economy and efficiency demanded by our modern age.

It will also give the village a friendly meeting place for local groups and organisations.

We want your ideas and your help in realising this vision. We will send out a more detailed update to all local residents in September, and hold a public meeting in the early autumn, but meantime, if you have any ideas or feedback please don't hesitate to call Rosemary (833301) or Richard (830957).

### Behind the scenes

Your committee has been busy planning to update our village trail and create four more trails featuring Ralph Allen, William Smith, Phillip



Computer visualisation of the Stone Legacy Centre

Nowell and Harry Patch. These are intended to start from the new Centre and we are hoping to finance them with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We have laboured long over our application and will know in October whether we have been successful.

We are also working with the Building of Bath, Bath at Work and Postal museums, together with the National Trust Prior Park Garden to create a Ralph Allen guide encompassing their collections and of course stone quarrying on Combe Down.

The committee has also started to catalogue our now quite large collection of documents, books and artefacts with guidance from the archivist of Bath Abbey, and the Guildhall. We want to make our complete archive available through the Centre to help us meet our aim to inform and educate.

### Legacy from Malcolm Aylett

We were very touched and delighted to learn that Malcolm bequeathed us £750 in his will which we will use in due course to commemorate his long and selfless work in securing the history of our village.

### What's in a name?

Well, quite a lot! Many of the roads and byways in the village have had their names changed over the years and houses too are often named as occupiers and fashions changed. We would like to build a record of this part of our history so if you have something to contribute we would be pleased to have it – previous name of your road and house,

when the changes took place and any related information. Send or give it to Simon Burrows at 157 Church Road, simon.burrows2@virgin.net.

## Can you help?

Do you know anything about the histories of Brierley House (The Peggy Dodd Centre) and Longwood House (The Bath Clinic)? Both institutions are hoping to write the history of these turn of the century houses but are finding difficulty in accessing the story of the houses and people associated with them. Brierley House is hoping to raise support for its programme of care for people with Alzheimer's and The Bath Clinic is to be refurbished. Please get in touch with Rosemary Simmons, 833301 or rosyprint@care4free.net.

## Progress on the two tunnels project

Walkers amongst you will have noticed that one of the footpaths from below the bluebell steps, off Summer Lane, has been temporarily closed to allow Sustrans to carry out work to open both the Combe Down railway tunnel and the viaduct to cyclists. The path will have reopened by the end of August.

Meanwhile it is worth a visit to see the extent of the work. It is still possible to walk down the Summer Lane steps to Tucking Mill along the upper path.



It is hoped that the finished cycle path will justify the uprooting of trees and shrubs and dumping of soil that is sadly evident.

For more information have a look at the Two Tunnels blog: <http://two-tunnels-bath.blogspot.co.uk>

## Dreadful accident

In early January 1842 the *Morning Post*, and copied by an Irish paper, the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Daily Commercial Advertiser*, carried the following story:

### Dreadful accident and extensive loss of life at Combe, Bath

We have this moment received the following letter:

Bath, Sunday, January 9  
To The Editor of The Morning Post.

*Sir – I am directed by the office to let you know that a tremendous and most singular occurrence has just taken place in the immediate neighbourhood of our city. Between four and five o'clock this evening, and when almost twilight, the entire surface of a very large piece of ground, more than seven acres, at Combe Down, gave way, owing to the workmen having conducted their excavations in a stone quarry far beneath an angle, or rather street, of that populous village, of which above eighteen houses, with its beautiful new church & schoolhouse &c., were thus completely undermined, and having been, by the instantaneous subsiding of their foundations, involved in ruin; and multitudes, in the buildings and accidentally on the spot, have perished.*

*Though late when I write, the various avenues in the outlets of the city are thronged with anxious thousands crowding towards the scene of desolation. The bells of the Abbey and other churches are ringing violently, and the authorities are hastening to Combe*

*to render what assistance they can to surviving sufferers. Nothing like truth can be obtained by this strange calamity. Report speaks of hundreds slain and mutilated.*

*This hurried account shall be speedily followed by a less confused detail of what has happened.*

*I am, sir, &c.*

*Archd. Sisson*

*Warden Office, 53 Milsom Street.*

The *Era* followed the story up later and published the following statement on 16 January.

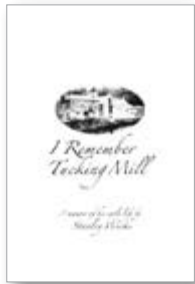
The Bath correspondent of The Times, writing on Tuesday evening, says 'There is no such paper as The Warden published here; there is no such number as 53 in Milsom-street; and every exertion has failed to make out whether in reality there is such a person as A. Sisson in existence. A personal visit, however, this day to Combe-down, a suburban village abutting upon the Roman Catholic Seminary, well known as Prior Park College, confirmed the statement that the whole matter was a hoax. "The beautiful new church, school-house, &c." are still standing and not a house presents the appearance of the slightest injury or decay. It is also needless to add that not a single life has been lost. The village has through the day been thronged by anxious inquirers, and the utmost indignation prevails against the miscreant who has been guilty of this mischievous and cruel fabrication.

From Sophie Pandit's history of the old vicarage (see Oct 17 meeting)

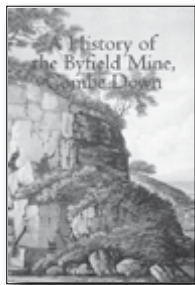
## Publications



*Remembering Village Shops* by Richard Read, £15



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



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

*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). Printed copies also available.



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

Heritage Trail leaflet

by Richard Irving and Rosemary Simmons, £1

CD of Combe Down Past and Present - available to members only, free, but a donation is expected.

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

## Contacts

**Chair** Rosemary Simmons ☎833301  
12 Greendown Place, Combe Down BA2 5DD  
[rosyprint@care4free.net](mailto:rosyprint@care4free.net)

**Secretary** Simon Burrows ☎833966  
Overland, 157 Church Road, Combe Down, BA2 5JH

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year become 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.

## 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(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Surname(s) \_\_\_\_\_

I/we apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31 March 2013 and I/we agree to my details being held on computer for the duration of my membership

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership options - please tick as required:

Standard £5  Concession £3  Family £12

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

Total amount paid

Ages of children (if family membership)

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.