



## Future meetings

All meetings take place in the Combe Down Primary School Hall in Summer Lane, BA2 5JX. Doors open at 7pm for a prompt start at 7.30pm. Members £1, non-members £3. All tickets on the door.

### January 2019

No meeting

### Wednesday 13 February

*The Titfield Thunderbolt*

Simon Castens will be telling us about this glorious Ealing comedy of 1953 which had many of its film locations along the old railway between Midford and Camerton.

### Wednesday 20 March

*Mediaeval Bath*

Steve Pratt takes us around early Bath, much of which was swept away by the developments of the Georgian era and later.

## Recent meetings

### Southstoke walk

Our summer excursion in July to Southstoke came right on the day the rains arrived after a six week drought...but we were lucky. It rained just before the start and then the sun came out again! Bob and Judy Parfitt led us from their house on Old Midford Road back over the hill towards the village, crossing a possible Iron Age fort with ditches and terraces. We then continued to the village for a tour of the old Tithe Barn and Horse Mill by owner Charles Hignett and a visit to the Church. The end of a very interesting walk but still

time to see yet another magnificent mediaeval building in Southstoke, the newly reopened Packhorse pub, and sit in the garden with a drink in the sun.



CDHS at the Southstoke Tithe Barn

### Nelson in Bath

David Stubbs, a Mayor of Bath guide, took us all over the city in his talk on the many visits by Horatio Nelson and his family and friends. Horatio came for treatment for the malaria that he caught on service in the Caribbean and later the eye and arm injuries suffered at various maritime battles. His wife Fanny lodged regularly in Bath while Nelson was at sea and continued to visit Nelson's father Edmund who convalesced here, even after her marriage to Nelson ended, and right up to Edmund's death.

Nelson never returned to Bath after he met and began his affair with Lady Emma Hamilton in Naples after the Battle of the Nile but it is thought that Emma may have come to live in Bath at 6 Edward Street for a time after Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar. A token of Nelson still resides in the BRLSI archive in Queen Square; a small phial containing some of the rum used to preserve his body for the return to Britain and burial in St Paul's Cathedral in 1806.

### Equal in everything? Women, work and WWI

In a very entertaining talk in October by Stuart Burroughs from Bath Museum of Work we heard about the contribution of women in Bath to the war effort in 1914-1918 and the early movement towards female equality in the workplace. Around 50% of the workforce in Britain in 1917/18 was female and heavily involved in munitions manufacture, farming and food production. The sheer scale of the military expansion that took place together with the loss of manpower meant that the workforce had to be supplemented by women.

Bath might seem a touch too genteel for a war effort but given the long association with the spa, there was a particular focus on healthcare and also war-related manufacture with for example cabinet makers becoming involved in the production of aircraft. Women's importance at the time was recognised and although suffrage for women was achieved soon after WW1, the campaign for equality with men in areas like pay has taken longer to attain and still continues.

## Stothert & Pitt and the Titanic

Fifty or so members and visitors came to the School Hall in November to listen to Bryan Chalker deliver a talk postponed from earlier in the year. He brought with him part of his large and fascinating collection of S&P memorabilia - including photos of the factory site and their products around the world from cranes to mini submarines.

Bryan is a great advocate of Bath's manufacturing heritage, now largely disappeared, and he promotes it at every opportunity. It is a shame that the excellence of S&P engineering was eventually driven out by competition and it would be wonderful if some funding was available to secure more of it in public spaces rather than in Bryan's garage!

## Suffragettes in Bath

### *Suffragettes' Protest Meeting at Combe Down after a Sale*

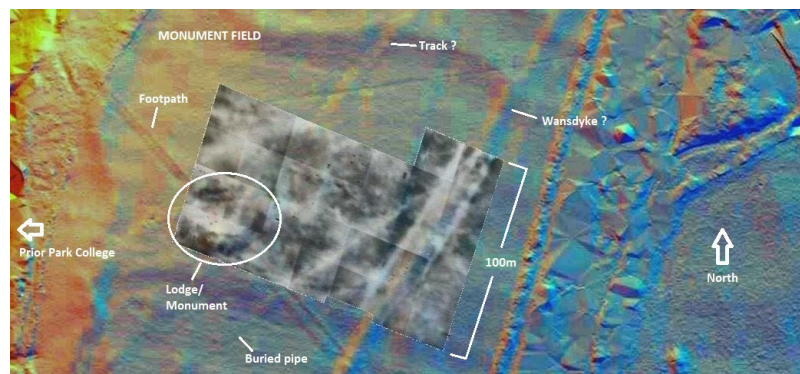


Four of the Mayor's Guides took us back with photos and reenactments to the years before WW1 when Eagle House in Batheaston was the centre for the Suffragettes in Bath and a base for their activities elsewhere. The resident Blathwayt family helped and supported many leading Suffragettes of the time including the Pankhursts, Annie Kenney and others in between their periods of incarceration for arson and vandalism to further the cause. We heard some graphic accounts of police brutality and the horrors of forced feeding during hunger strikes in prison.

An arboretum of 43 trees was planted at Eagle House at that time to celebrate the commitment of various Suffragette women but this was removed in the 1960s to make way for a housing estate. Only one of these trees now survives, a lone Austrian pine, to celebrate the role played by women from Bath in the fight for equality over a century ago.

## Archaeology on Monument Field

Monument Field at Prior Park has been giving up its secrets in a four day geophysics investigation during October involving Bath & Counties

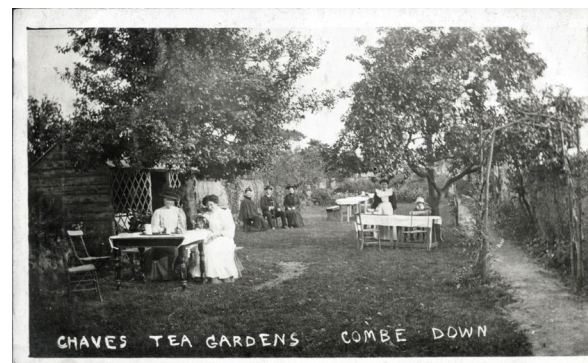


Archaeology Society (BACAS) and National Trust volunteers. A central area of the field was covered by resistivity and magnetometry to search for evidence of Ralph Allen's Monument, built circa 1766 by Bishop Warburton following Allen's death but sadly demolished due to its dangerous condition in 1953. The search was also for a 16<sup>th</sup> century, or even earlier, Gothic Lodge that had previously stood on the same site and seems to have formed part of the later monument. To take the story of the field back a further 1000 years or so, the possible route of the Wansdyke is shown on early maps passing across the field.

There was lots to find and a first look at the results is encouraging. The area where the Monument and Lodge are thought to have been show significantly in the data and the Wansdyke possibility matches up with a recent LIDAR survey of the area by the National Trust with the bank and a north-facing ditch clearly visible. LIDAR is a radar technology from the air which is used to show surface features on the ground when stripped of vegetation and can highlight archaeological evidence of this type. Further analysis of the results with ground profiles of the Wansdyke ditch may provide more detailed information.

## Chave's Tea Garden

A postcard from 1911 shows Chave's Tea Gardens in Combe Down. This establishment was most likely connected to Chave's Tea Gardens in



Englishcombe but were definitely also in Combe Down as there are a couple of advertisements in the 1911 Bath Chronicle.



## The tramways of Combe Down pt3

Combe Down is well known as a source of fine building stone but not for the Fuller's Earth which was mined in Horsecombe Vale from late Victorian times until the end of WW1. This bluish clay, dried and purified, was produced for its traditional use as an absorbent in the woollen industry as well as many other applications in oil, chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

George Dames and his brother Charles leased land from the Midford Castle estate in 1883 and opened a mine just below the Midford Road. From here they started to extract a 20 foot seam of fuller's earth that lay below the oolite, eventually resulting in underground workings extending for up to 20 acres. The earth could not be sold in its raw state so an elaborate system was set up to take the material down to the bottom of Horsecombe Vale and along the valley to Tucking Mill for final processing.

A tramway, 300 yards long, was built down the incline from the mine to the valley bottom and was initially a gravity driven system. Fully laden trams dragged empties uphill by a connecting rope around a drum but a steam engine was installed around 1904 to power this operation. At the bottom of the slope a small mill ground the earth by means of steam-driven rollers circulating in a large cast iron bowl. The crushed earth was then mixed with water from Horsecombe Brook to form a slurry and passed almost a mile down

an earthenware pipe to Tucking Mill. Here the slurry lay in settling tanks to precipitate sand and stones before being dug out and dried in kilns to make fuller's earth powder. Product was then transported to customers by the Somersetshire Coal Canal until closure around 1900, and then by rail from the Midford goods siding.

The business had passed to Henry Garrett by 1887 who continued the production of approximately 15 tons per week until 1915 when he sold out to the Fuller's Earth Union. Little infrastructure investment had been made so the new owners found the mine and mills were very run down and this may have led to mining at Horsecombe Vale stopping by about 1920. Some improvements were made and production continued with raw fuller's earth from other mines at Combe Hay brought to the top of the tramway at Midford Road to be processed down to Tucking Mill via tramway and pipe as before.

Fuller's earth production dropped off during the 1930s and by 1945 Tucking Mill was only being used for storage with the tramway and grinding mill dismantled in the 1950s. Purchase of the Tucking Mill site by Wessex Water in 1978 resulted in demolition of all the mill buildings and settling tanks followed by excavation of the fishing lake/reservoir we see today.

See *The Fuller's Earth Mining Industry around Bath* by Neil Macmillen and Mike Chapman for further details.



There was a Henry Chave, dairyman, who lived in Priory House, Combe Down until 1914 who was likely to be involved with the business. Was Priory House an older name for The Priory, a house adjacent to Prior Park mansion? Does anyone know where Chave's was?

## Cine-film projectors

We are looking for 8mm and 16mm cine projectors for use in the CDHS archive. If you have any of this ancient technology lurking in a cupboard which you would like to donate please contact David Bishop at [davidbishop31@btinternet.com](mailto:davidbishop31@btinternet.com)

## Footpaths in Combe Down

Work is currently going on by BANES to finalise the 'definitive map and statement' for footpaths around Combe Down. Some of the paths used on National Trust land have not been formally accepted and it is important that residents make claim to using them on a regular basis so their existence can be secured for the future. The paths around the Combe Down allotments (between



Church Rd and Monkton Combe Sports Club) and surrounding land are also under discussion.

If you do walk regularly on any of the paths marked as A4 and A5 on the map and also around the allotment area, please email Alex Hansen at [alex@blueplanet.me.uk](mailto:alex@blueplanet.me.uk) to add your voice to the many people who are worried that public access may lapse.

## Fancy that!

In the 1730s Ralph Allen planted groups of Scotch firs across his estate on Combe Down using some to make pit props for the stone quarries. Firs Field acquired its name from being one of these pine groves and many crossbills used to nest there during their breeding season which is very early in the year, often in winter.

Crossbills are members of the finch family characterised by crossed beak tips, an adaptation that evolved to enable them to extract the seeds from pine cones. Firs Field provided a reliable source of food for these birds until the early 1800s when the trees were all felled for timber and the crossbills left the Down.

### News, updates and meeting information:

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

Facebook: [CombeDownHeritageSociety](https://www.facebook.com/CombeDownHeritageSociety)

Twitter: @cdhsoc



## New member application form

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

First name(s)

Surname(s)

I/we apply to become a member of the Combe Down Heritage Society until 31 March 2019. I/we agree to my details being held on computer for the duration of my membership and to receive communications from the Society by email and post.

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

## Membership options - please tick

Standard £5 ☐ Concession £3 ☐ Family £12 ☐

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

Total amount paid

Ages of children

(if family membership)

*Gift Aid declaration for this and future donations*

*Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made by me ☐ today ☐ in the future*

*I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the Charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.*

Signed

Date

Payments by cheque, payable to 'Combe Down Heritage Society', or cash should be made to the Membership Secretary: Tim Lunt, 141 Church Road, Combe Down, Bath BA2 5JL Please ask for a Standing Order Form if you would rather pay direct.