



ARNOLD'S NEWS

The Newsletter of Corsham Area Heritage

Winter 2013-2014



THE CHANGING FACE OF ARNOLD'S NEWS

The Spring 2012 edition of Arnold's News carried a Front Page Story whose concluding sentence stated "*In future, you can expect the newsletter to have a greater emphasis on what we are doing to develop the Heritage Centre - and what can be seen there.*" This transition was held back by the need to achieve a better income-stream for the total business that is operated out of Arnold House. The Spring 2013 edition of Arnold's News made this clear.

This edition marks the end of that holding back. Issue 13 consists almost entirely of articles relating to the heritage / history of the Corsham Community Area - defined officially as the geographical area comprising Corsham, Box, Colerne and Lacock.

Over time, everything must change. From its beginning as "The Friends" in November 2009, our Heritage "Special Interest Group" has itself evolved - until it is now known quite simply as **Corsham Area Heritage**, having 70 members and its own distinct logo (see above). The range of the aspects of a heritage-nature that **Corsham Area Heritage** wishes to research and present to the public has been growing. The list has recently become truly daunting. The group's Management Committee decided that it needed to draw more "do-ers" into its fold - not necessarily as members of that Committee, but rather as a means of getting the real work done. A list of (hopefully) attractive "projects" was compiled and an Open Meeting convened for Tuesday, 14 January, starting at 2pm - with "Open" meaning that everyone is invited, whether they are members of CAH or not. The Open Meeting will be heavily publicised. We need it to be well attended. The Upstairs Room at the Royal Oak has been booked for the event. We'll let you know how things go.

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Corsham Area Heritage's primary purpose is to research, celebrate & present the heritage of the Corsham Area to the people who reside there and those who visit the Area, whether they are here visiting friends or exploring what the Area has to offer.

Corsham Area, as defined by Wiltshire Council, comprises Corsham, Box, Colerne & Lacock.

Corsham Families: THE BATLEY FAMILY - by Pat Whalley

The Batley family probably came to Corsham in the early 1880s. They were farmers. John Batley, originally from Suffolk, had farmed at Sheldon Manor, Chippenham for several years, before coming to Corsham to take on a farm at Pockeridge. The 1881 census shows the family residing at the Duke of Cumberland public house in Priory Street.



At this time John's family numbered ten, the parents and 8 children. Two more children were to follow, James in 1885 and Edith the following year. It was James who, having married in 1909, opened a dairy shop at the corner of High Street and Priory Street in about 1910.

In 1928 James changed course to run the dairy at Priory Farm at the far end of Priory Street, where it joins the A4. The vestiges of the Farm are still visible today. 'Batley's Skilling' (see page 4 of this edition) is the old milking parlour. 'Priory Farm House', separated by a yard and 'Snips', was the farmhouse.

Our picture shows milkmaid Joan Batley at the dairy in Pickwick in the 1930s. After James' death in 1948, daughter Joan (by then Mrs. Webb) carried on the dairying business, followed in turn by her daughter, Sonia, and her son, Paul.



Corsham Dairies eventually ceased trading but Sonia continued to run a B&B at the Old Parsonage, the new family home in Pickwick village, just along from the Farm. In the mid 1990s this was sold to a Melksham businessman and 100 years of Corsham family life for the Batleys came to an end.¹

¹ CCS's "Around Corsham" by Pat Whalley.

CAPTURING HISTORY - by Sandra Cholerton

I have been entering details of all the documents I can find around Arnold House into a searchable database of names and places. People visit Corsham because they have an historical local link, sometimes many generations ago. They come seeking traces of those links in modern Corsham. The database should help us to help them. If you have any old documents, please contact me through the TIC.

LYPIATT CAMP - by Pat Whalley

Corsham Area Heritage maintains the website www.corshamheritage.org.uk, to promote what it does and what the Corsham Area has to offer those who share our interest in local history. We post copies of this newsletter on the website. They contain contact details for CAH's Chairman. His telephone rang early one September morning. It was a Roy Green, calling from his home near Hungerford. He had lived on the Lypiatt Camp - as he then knew it - back in the 1950s.

Roy had a fascinating tale to tell (of which more in our next edition) and wanted to revisit the Camp, and other places hereabouts that he remembered from his youth. Arrangements were put in hand for Roy and his wife, and Peter and myself to visit the Camp, to have lunch at the Methuen and to conduct our two visitors around the town. Roy Zaman, the current Commandant at (what we now know as) the Cotswold Families Centre made himself available for the visit. He did us proud - see our photograph of Peter thanking Roy for his help on the day.)



The 20 acre site was once owned by Geoff Knapp of Great Lypiatt Farm, still opposite the present Centre. It was commandeered by the MOD before WWII to provide accommodation for those working underground as part of the war effort. In 1946 it became an army transit camp for military personnel leaving the UK.

Between 1956 and 1960 the site was used to accommodate military families returning from abroad and waiting to be allocated a private hiring. Accommodation was the somewhat basic 'prefab'. There were sleeping facilities and a galley kitchen, but meals were served at set times from a central cookhouse. There was a NAAFI on site and a cinema.

The NAAFI, cinema and cookhouse have now gone and there are new units for families. Some families are waiting for husbands to join them in a new UK married quarter. Some men are leaving the army and, with their families, are waiting to find a home to rent or buy. Some wives are estranged from their husbands. They need homes and stability for their children.

There is a school on site for small children. Assistance is available to families needing to adjust to life outside the MOD. The number of occupants varies enormously, depending on deployments abroad or simply the time of the year.

The site is now Tri Service. It is the only one of its kind in the UK. Corsham has been a garrison town for some 80 years (Army at Basil Hill, Navy at Royal Arthur and RAF at Rudloe Manor). It is good that there is such a facility on our doorstep, caring for the families of our servicemen.

BATLEY'S SKILLING

Have you ever wondered to what this sign relates - the one on the property on the A4 where Priory Street joins it? What exactly is - or was - a skilling? It is the old name for a milking parlour.



LUNCHTIME TALKS

These have become a key feature of what we do. We aim to have one every month, except the months of August and December - "1pm on the 4th Tuesday of the month" being our preferred timing. Predictability works best for us and for our supporters.

LTTs are free to members and £2 to non-members. Generally the venue is Arnold House - which means that pre-booking is essential. Space is limited. Capacity is set at 20.

September saw Kirsty Gray speak on Family Tree Tracing. October saw our own Sandra Cholerton telling us about her work recording all the heritage artefacts that have been accumulated in Arnold House over the years. Sandra had lots of them with her to show us. The November LTT brought Yeoman Shaun McCormack (see photo), telling us about his work guarding The Queen when she carries out her official duties.



Work on our 2014 programme is currently in hand, inclusive of a yet further attempt to fix the date for a talk by one of our local military men - last minute operational demands on him notwithstanding!

HERITAGE DISPLAYS

Conversion of the old Heritage Room and Wool Room into the Pictor Room and Made in Corsham shop was undertaken by CAH. In consequence, CAH is allowed to erect "Heritage Displays" on one wall of the Pictor Room.

The space is used to "showcase" different aspects of Corsham Area's heritage. Each new display is mounted for 4 to 8 weeks, to stimulate interest.

To date our displays have been:

- 50 Years of the Corsham Civic Society
- Corsham and the Suffragette Movement
- The Hungerford Almshouses & Schoolhouse
- Seasonal (heritage-themed) Photos of Corsham - by the Corsham Photographic Club

Our 2014 programme starts with a display of Corsham's shops, as they once were.



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