



ARNOLD'S NEWS

The Newsletter of Corsham Area Heritage

Autumn 2014



PUTTING THE CAMPUS DISPLAY SPACE TO GOOD USE

Corsham's Springfield Campus opened to the public on 7 Aug 2014. We instantly viewed the prominently-sited "exhibition space" as an opportunity not to be missed. Its three walls define the Foyer, a free-format area equipped with casual chairs through which, at present, every user of the Campus must pass, en route to their facility-of-choice - including the café. The footfall is both large and varied, age- and interest-wise. As a display space for CAH, it complements Arnold House nicely. It's light, bright and well-lit. It has well-designed hanging facilities - you just need to make sure things are straight!

CAH does not lack material around which to build new displays. Our volume of documentation has increased steadily over the years - and recently we have been archiving it to disc for the dual purposes of i) being able to lodge the hardcopies at Chippenham's Wiltshire Record Office and, ii) having the ability to manipulate the images to suit any future display opportunity that might come our way. The Campus gave us the opportunity to exploit this "forward thinking". We chose "Quarrying in the Corsham Area" to launch our display presence at the Campus.



We needed outside help in only two respects. CAH has many friends - now was the time to ask them for assistance. Two came instantly to our aid. We needed a number of purpose-made "frame/mount assemblies" and we needed the facility to output A3 images on to high-quality paper. Steve at Right Angle Picture Framing donated the former. Chris and Dave at Corsham Print donated the latter. We're very pleased with the result - it's stunning. We hope you like it.

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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 Commemorates: THE WW1 CONCERT - by Pat Whalley

The term “in concert” aptly described the coming together of many people and organisations in Corsham during the evening of Saturday, 18th October, to bring the story of the 1914-18 war into sharp focus for an expectant audience at the Corsham School. The Concert had been a long time in preparation and enjoyed the financial support of the Town Council, against an application submitted by Corsham Area Heritage.



CAH and the Ad Hoc Theatre Company produced the event and were assisted by the singers of the Corsham Choral Society, together with those of Gita's Choir from Rudloe and the 'Lingmara' and 'Find Your Voice' community choirs of Chippenham and Box. The programme recalled aspects of the War in music, poetry and in letters and diary entries. The latter related not only to men on the field of battle, but also to men and families at home. Photographs supplied by the Corsham Civic Society showed Corsham and its war effort, and, with songs from the period, a picture emerged of life both at home and at the Front. Corsham School contributed with wonderful posters, life-size portraits of servicemen and large poppies used to decorate the Hall.

In true Corsham fashion, the audience responded with enthusiasm and delight, and a thoroughly good time was had by all.

FUTURE DISPLAYS - by Peter Tapscott

Corsham Area Heritage cannot claim entitlement to the exclusive use of the display space at Springfield Campus. The space does, however, deserve to be well-used. We are working with the Campus Team to ensure this. A “blank canvas” is what it is. A set of “blank walls” is what it should never be.

Following our first (Quarrying) display, we have others planned. A Schedule has been established - covering our contributions and those of others. CAH has the role of Facilitator in this, beginning with us arranging for the Bath Royal Literary & Scientific Institution ('BRLSI') to mount its “Bath and the Nile Explorers” exhibition at the Campus during 2015, once in January, and again in June - the latter to coincide with Corsham's 2015 Walking Festival. One of its walks will visit the John Hanning Speke (one of those explorers) monument in Neston Park. Joined-up thinking, or what?

WANTED: A DOCUMENT CONTROLLER - by Peter Tapscott

Corsham Area Heritage has an ever-increasing collection of documents. We need to know what we have - otherwise there is little point in having it / adding to it. We have the means of displaying it and of 'committing' it to the Public Record - being, in our case, the Archive Section at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham. CAH needs someone to take charge of the management of this whole process. If you have an interest in Corsham's heritage, and you think you can help, please contact our Secretary, Sandra Cholerton, c/o Arnold House, 31 High St., Corsham.

HENRY WILLIAM BULL - Stonemason and WW1 Hero, 1883-1918 - by Pat Whalley

Corsham Area Heritage has recently received documents relating to a Corsham man, Henry Bull, who served and died in WW1. Mr Richard Stephens and his wife - a descendant of the family, and now living in Bradford on Avon - were anxious to safeguard the documents and believed they should come to Corsham for retention. We are very pleased to make them a part of Corsham's WW1 history.

Henry was born in Yatton Keynell in 1883, and was living with his parents at Broadstone Cottages, Prospect, Corsham, at the time of the 1901 census. He was a stonemason. Between then and 1916, William Henry married Annie, and, at the outbreak of WW1, they were living in Trowbridge and had started a family. Henry enlisted in 1916 and served in France. He was wounded near Etaples on April 11th 1918, whilst bringing in a wounded comrade. He died at Etaples hospital six days later, and is buried in its cemetery. These are the bare facts.



The donated documents give a rather more personal insight into this story.

We have a copy of a letter that his best mate, Albert, wrote - on YMCA paper - to Henry (known as 'Harry' to his mates in France), dated 18th April 1918. Albert had helped to rescue the wounded comrade when Harry was shot. He states that he has just received Harry's letter, is sorry to hear that he has been gassed, and hopes that times will get better for him soon. Harry died the day before the letter was sent.

Albert was not one to forget his friend in arms. He wrote a second letter - one to Annie Bull, Henry's wife, on 5th November 1918, by which time he appears to be at home on leave, in South Wales.

He explains that he was her 'husband's pal' and that they were together when they attempted to rescue a colleague. It was while they were trying to lift the injured soldier that Harry "got a piece of shell, it was not a very big piece, but it was in a bad place, and worst luck, it caused trouble." Albert goes on to explain "Harry was the best chum I had, I will never get one like him again, everyone in the Battery had a good name for him. I always thought he was too good a sort to be killed. He always liked to talk about you, Mrs Bull, and the little ones. He loved his home and family I am sure."

What a lovely letter for a pal to write, and, whilst it must have been heart rending to Annie, it must have given her comfort to know that Henry had such a good friend.

WW1 RECRUITMENT OFFICE RE-ENACTMENT - by Pat Whalley

Did you visit the re-enactment of a Recruitment Office that was staged in the Town Hall on 19th August? If you did, you may have seen yourself on 'Points West' in the evening. Lots of people were attending, so I decided that I ought to do my bit for King and Country. It was a bit scary, but well organised.

We were given forms upon which to record our name, age, etc., then called in to be weighed, measured, and to have an eyesight test. They must be short of candidates - I was passed as fit for duty! At my final interview I was invited to pick which regiment I wanted to serve in. I chose the Cavalry! Well, it sounded exciting.....

Then I found out I had to supply my own horse, and was told to go back to the farm to get one - and be back within three weeks because by then I could be off to Flanders. Perhaps I should not have been so hasty - even for the King's shilling!

THE PASS IT ON PROJECT - by Peter Tapscott

If you are a relative newcomer to Corsham, you may not be aware that Alexander House - the rather imposing building in the middle of the High Street, next to Auto Bits - was once the Corsham Maternity Home. It was one of only two in Wiltshire between the 1920s and the 1950s, and was used to "set Corsham apart" in the Pass It On Project that Wiltshire Council has been undertaking during 2014.



Wiltshire Council has been using the services of an outside consultant, Dominic Campbell, to highlight what is special, heritage-wise, about the several different communities that exist across the county. Dominic has worked closely with the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, in Chippenham. CAH enjoys the support of its "Conservation & Museums Advisory Service (CMAS)". It was that group that urged Dominic to contact CAH - firstly to decide how the Corsham Area might be embraced by this initiative, and then to work collaboratively with us to unearth the stories of people living in the Area, and to present them to a wider audience.

It soon became clear that the Corsham Maternity Home afforded Corsham a degree of uniqueness where celebrating the happenings of the last half-century was concerned. Between Dominic and ourselves, an 'event' was conceived. It took place on 24 September. CAH's role was to arrange for all those who had been born at the Maternity Home - and that we could reach - to assemble there at 11 o'clock for a 'photo call'. (We count 61 such hearty souls on the attached official photograph.) Then to convey those who were willing to the Springfield Campus - for ongoing discussions, 'catch-up talk' and for some 'oral history recording'. We're pleased to report that a thoroughly good time was had by all.

Arnold's News is published by Corsham Area Heritage (www.corshamheritage.org.uk)
Printing donated by Corsham Print (www.corshamprint.co.uk)

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