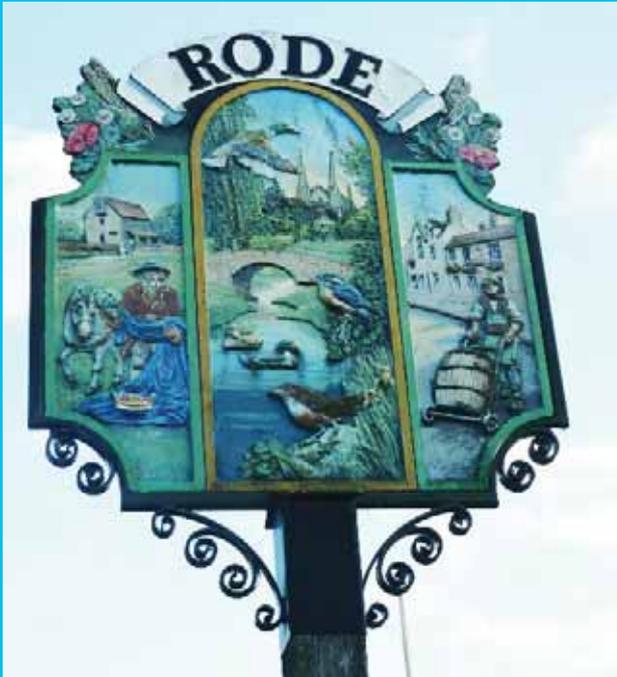




Trowbridge Civic Society NEWSLETTER

Summer 2015



Recent Meetings



In this issue:

The Long Way Home - Bel Mooney

Benjamin's Predecessors - Friends of Trowbridge Park

Member of Wiltshire Building Record, ASHTAV and BALH

Registered Charity Number 276765

Website: www.trowbridgescivicsociety.org.uk



Pitman House - page 7



An impression of the new development on the Peter Black site



The old Bowyers site after demolition

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

The welcome news that the development on the Peter Black site has been approved has been tempered by news that the old Bowyers site is again up for sale. Let us hope that this site will not remain derelict for as long as the Peter Black site has.

Two articles this issue deal with shops in the past. The first part of John Allford's excellent account of a walk home past many shops that have now disappeared is on page 5 and the concluding part will appear in the next issue. If you would like to add your memories and photos please get in touch.

Roger Newman has found out more about the Benjamin store in Silver Street. This story seems to run and run. Again, if you bought an instrument here or have memories of other interesting businesses in Trowbridge we would be pleased to hear them and use them in a future issue.

Bel Mooney is the Trowbridge Connection this issue. Her words are taken from her own website. I particularly remember her because she wrote a lovely essay for an Oxfam book of biographies about her English teacher at the High School, Dennis Boulding. I remember him well and if you were taught by him it is well worth looking out her loving account of being taught by him.

The quiz returns in this issue. The grandparents amongst you might be interested to know that around the town are over 20 play areas looked after by the council. I shall be surprised if any of you are able to work out where they all are!

Don't forget that we are always looking for articles and photographs to go in the newsletter.

TROWBRIDGE CIVIC SOCIETY INFORMATION

- President: Kenneth Rogers
- Vice Presidents: Michael Marshman;
Wende Maunder;
Mary Pearce;
Norman Rogers
- Chairman: Glyn Bridges, 4 Alma Street, Trowbridge. Tel 755784
- Vice Chairman: Margaret Howard, 52 Avenue Road, Trowbridge. Tel 764691
- Hon Secretary: Celia Russell, 18 Churchlands, North Bradley. Tel 754668
- Hon Treasurer: Janet Carpenter, 2 Chepston Place Trowbridge. Tel 752770
- Membership Secretary: Diana Ingram, 27a Church Lane, North Bradley. Tel 776100 dianakbradley3@talktalk.net
- Committee members: Sue Glover; Kevin Hartley; Jonathan Hawkes
- Newsletter: Jennifer & Peter Collier Tel 761270
Sue and Kevin Eames;
Glyn Bridges;
Paul Lamb.
pcollier@blueyonder.co.uk
- Photographic Recorder: Kevin Hartley
- Web Site: Jonathan Hawkes

Subscription Rates: Single £6, Joint £10, Corporate £30
New members welcome - please contact Membership Secretary
Deadline for next issue - August 28th

Forthcoming Events

- 30th June - Guided walk round Corsham
 - 24th - 26th July - Magna Carta Celebrations
 - 11th August - Trip to Romsey and Mottisfont
 - 12th September - Heritage Open Day
 - 20th October - Fires in Trowbridge - Andrew Jones - Haden Room, United Church 7.30 pm
 - 17th November - Public Lecture "Magna Carta - Respite Proscipe" - Angela Milroy
- 2016
- 12th January - New Year Social with quiz - Town Hall - 7.30 pm
 - 15th March - AGM and Talk - Haden Room, United Church 7.15 pm

From the Chairman

Glyn Bridges

It is a great pity that the development of the Bowyer site is not to go ahead but we will, hopefully, soon see work begin on the Peter Black site. As this site is the most prominent we can be thankful that it will eventually be improved with new buildings.

Having photographed and recorded the various items of heritage street furniture that the Civic Society and the Town Council would wish to be retained which included all the cast iron street signs, it was extremely disappointing to discover that the INNOX ROAD sign had been recently sold on ebay for £25.44. It was purchased by a local collector. Yes, there are collectors for this kind of thing. I hope to make a statement at the next County Council meeting and will let you know the result.

Planning Matters

Sue and Kevin Eames

We are certainly living in interesting times with regard to planning matters.

Work on clearing the disused factory buildings from the former Bowyer's site started at the end of last year in preparation for the development of an eight-screen, 1,400 seat Cineworld cinema, Morrisons store, six restaurants and a pub and as recently as 3/6/2015 The Wiltshire Times stated that *despite concerns growing over Morrisons pulling out of the new £46m Innox Riverside development at the former Bowyers site in Trowbridge, the grocer has told developers it still expects to build.* However, last week we learnt that Morrisons have decided to put the former Bowyer's site on the market again, and it has been listed on the website of a firm of commercial property and planning consultants, with July 6th as the closing date for offers. The listing says that the site has the potential for a range of uses with *planning permission for a mixed use scheme including foodstore.* We await developments.

Another exciting piece of news is that permission has been given for the development of four retail units with associated car parking, highway works and landscaping, plus the construction of a cycle and footbridge across the river Biss on the former Peter Black toiletries Factory, Cradle Bridge. Twenty eight conditions were stated with the approval including the submission of a tree protection plan, an archaeological investigation, surface water run-off management plans to avoid flooding, the provision of permanent bat roosts, and the obligation to remedy and monitor any unexpected contamination. Another condition states that work must be begun before the expiry of three years. I am sure we all hope to see signs of the demolition of existing buildings well before this cut-off point, in fact a.s.a.p.

A plan to change the use of part of the ground floor of 31, Roundstone Street (Chic o Land Express) to a dwelling unit has been approved. The Civic Society was concerned about possible harm being caused to the historical asset but we have been assured that the shop front will retain its current design and profile, while the window will be brought into line with the neighbouring shop fronts. However, we had also suggested that the whole area would be enhanced, if a better-designed frontage and signage were possible, to fit more appropriately with the quality of Rodney House, and the trompe l'oeil feature opposite but the planning committee do not seem to have taken this into account.

An application has been submitted to convert the existing stable block at the rear of Rosefield House, Polebarn Road to form two residential units. Ken Rogers thinks that the stable block is next to a former clothier's workshop but there did not seem to be a satisfactory D and A statement or anything dealing with the historical or heritage significance of this adjacent building. The Civic Society expressed concern about the application and there is now a revised Heritage statement and a D and A statement taking our comments on board. The proposals are much more detailed with regard to the historical fabric but don't say much about the earlier use as a clothier's workshop; perhaps there is little trace left as the building was used as a store and knocked about quite a bit. The present owners, Shanley's, have a good reputation for making sympathetic use of historic buildings. The target date for a decision on the new plans is 8th of July.

If you would like to look at or comment on other applications of interest visit the Civic Society web-page.

The Long Way Home - Stallard Street and Fore Street in the 1950s

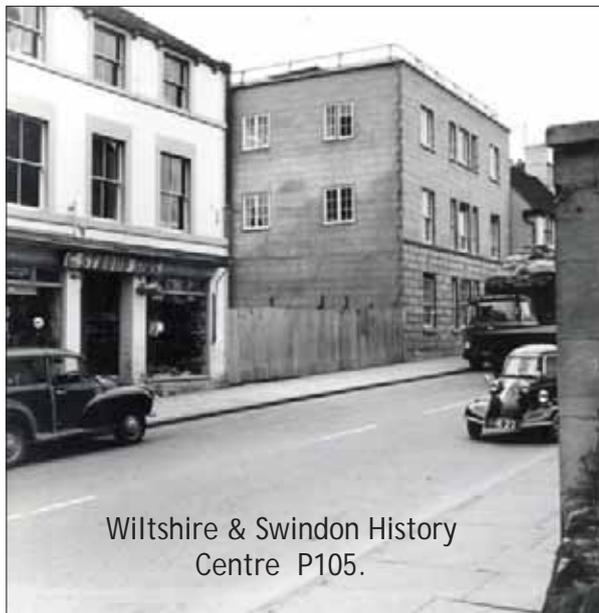
Part 1

John Allford

[Please note that the photographs that accompany this article are of various dates, not necessarily of the 1950s. They are intended to give a general idea of the roads in the past.]

The final bell at five minutes to four stirred up more activity than any which had been shown in the previous six hours. About 350 boys of all shapes and sizes spilled into Wingfield Road, some on bicycles but most on foot, the days of the school run lay long in the future. Most turned right towards the town carrying, they firmly believed, far too much in their bags, not only homework, but also PE kit and other accoutrements, football boots and cricket bats depending on the season. Some miscreants had been left behind for disciplinary reasons: idleness as well as deliberately forgetting swimming kit, particularly in May when the pool temperature hovered about 58.

In retrospect the walk to Trinity



Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre P105.

Church, passing the Stallards Inn and the Bell was remarkably orderly. Opposite the Church the buses left at four, which meant that the walk down Wingfield Road would have had to be brisk and at four fifteen, which would have meant a leisurely amble. Once or twice a week the acquisitive urge, or mere curiosity, took some into the town where a later bus left just before five. Once over the railway bridge we passed the Rose and Crown. The landlord was Bill Lovesey, who as captain, I think, displayed his footballing skills when the Town team were playing at home on the Frome Road ground.

Just over the bridge, opposite Bridge House, there was, I think, an old 'wet fish' counter but it seems not to have survived after the mid-fifties. Of much more interest was Stroud Sims bicycle and model shop. The right-hand window was given over to model railways and model aeroplanes. The display aircraft could be modelled from balsa wood; those actually meant for flight came in bigger kits to be powered by minute petrol engines also on display. In the other window was a display of bicycles of a serious sporting design. Past Foli-days, the chemists, was Vic Holland's Fruit and Flower shop. Most of the flowers on display came, I think from West Ashton.



Hiscock and Pickernells, a fairly large confectioners and tobacconists, stood opposite on the corner of Bythesea Road and had the reputation of selling the cheapest cigarettes in the town at 6d for 4. Next door was Reg Smith's shop which, at the time, seemed to cater for all the recreational needs of the town. Reg, I was told, had played league football for Portsmouth but the informant added that he was perhaps too much of a gentleman to succeed in the relatively passionate encounters of the post-war years. He

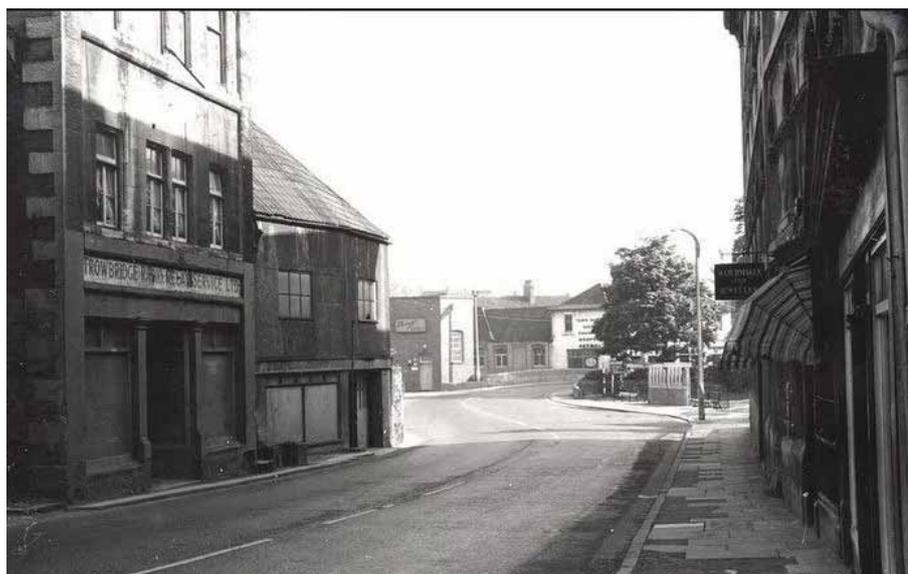
was a qualified tennis coach and was, I think, employed at various secondary schools in the area.

On the other side of Stallard Street was a rather grey drab-looking shop, the name Radio Rentals springs to mind but it never seemed very busy. Moving towards the Town Bridge, Bowyers had a small retail shop flanked on one side by a small watch and jewellery business run by Peter Eburne and on the other, Holloways, who had a motor cycle showroom (I



think). One of the odd things about the doorway was a mosaic 'WHS' set into the threshold. Is it possible that W H Smith once had a shop or branch there?

The town bridge bus stop, opposite the war-damaged, corrugated roofed pub 'The Bear', was probably the busiest in the town; it served Bowyers and the cloth factories on each side of the bridge. The Town Bridge Garage had a Vauxhall showroom and sold National Benzole at 4/11 a gallon and seems to have been too busy to attract any hungry pigeons. On the other side of the road was Sainsbury's animal feed mill and, immediately next door, Sainsbury's grocery shop. It was



a 'high class' establishment, characterised by the smell of coffee wafting through the open door. The Customs and Excise bonded warehouse was on Wicker Hill proper and was (I think) used by Ushers to store stocks of spirits and fortified wine. Next door was the Dinky, selling mostly fancy cakes and sweets. Barclay's Bank is one of the few businesses whose location has remained unchanged. The GPO, once, next door presumably moved to the current Roundstone site to allow quicker and easier access to the tills. Frederick Tranter's tobacconists' shop was a

place of pilgrimage for many adolescent boys. There were cigars, pipes and cigarettes from all over the world, fragrant Gitaines from France, the unfortunately named Lucky Strikes from the USA and the downright misleading Texans from Rhodesia.

Photographs courtesy of Trowbridge Postcards & Ephemera on Flickr.

Trowbridge Connections 2 Part 3 - Christopher Benjamin's predecessors

Roger Newman

The Benjamin story perhaps starts at 60 Fore Street a few years before 1848 when Francis Henry Hallett, aged in his early 20s, commenced business as a watchmaker. Francis had been born 1819 in Lyme Regis but had probably met his wife Annie, who had been born in Melksham in 1831, after his move to Trowbridge. In 1860 his business passed to John Gray who later moved to 15 Fore Street starting a long line of watch makers and jewellers, including Thomas Colborne (1913 to 1970), Alfred Chilcott (1970 to 1998).

Francis Hallett moved next door in 1860 to 61 Fore Street to start a new business, a Piano

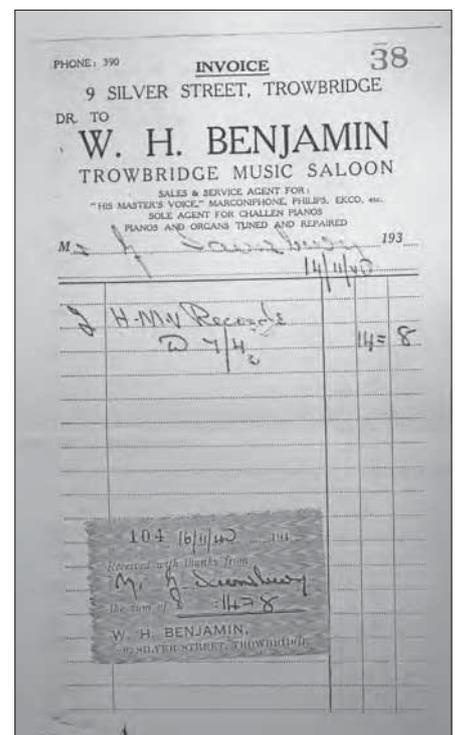
Forte and Music Saloon with an organ manufactory at Longfield House where he lived. He kept a large stock of piano forte as well as an assortment of harmoniums and both English and foreign concertinas. He had an agreement with Mr H Millington, a pupil of Jules Benedict of London, to provide tuition at either their home or at the Saloon in Fore Street. This existed until 1866 when he moved his musical business completely to Longfield House and Henry Millington took over Francis Hallett's business at 61 Fore Street. As well as selling music from his large stock, Henry provided quadrille pianists and bands. Henry, who was organist for 43 years at St James Parish Church, described himself as a Professor of Music and the business as 'late Mr Hallett'. He offered piano tuning quarterly as far away as Melksham.

In 1877 the Gayton brothers sold the premises to Emma Cogswell, who immediately sold the premises to Henry Millington, her brother-in-law. Now owning the premises, Henry took the opportunity, as the business was apparently prospering, of rebuilding the frontage. He closed in September 1878, moving across the road to 19 Fore Street, to enable the front of the saloon to be rebuilt with large attractively curved windows. Henry moved back to Fore Street in January 1879. (By 1881 Henry was living at Avon View House, The Down, where he died 2nd September 1911).

By 1907 Henry was 67 years old and assistance in the shop came from his brother William Herbert born 1855, an eminent violinist who acted as manager and piano tuner and his son, Harry Cogswell born 1873. Harry died 1943 and is buried in Trowbridge Cemetery. William lived at 32 St George's Terrace in Stallard Street and offered music tuition from his home from 1907 until he died in 1939. Ernest Charles, the eldest son of Henry obviously was musically inclined, for although claiming to provide tuition, he took over the shop when his father died in 1911. Henry's son Arthur Raphael lived at 4 Wingfield Road and called himself Teacher of Music. Ernest died in 1924 and, with none of the brothers wishing to continue the business, executors took control until July 1925 when the business was sold to Mr H Veale of 10 Innox Road and William Herbert Benjamin who took premises at 51 Church Street calling it The Trowbridge Saloon. These premises were demolished to enable the Knees-owned Central Garage to have vehicular access from Church Street.

After just one year the partnership moved to larger premises at 9 Silver Street which had been lived in by Isaac Pitman and where in September 1926 they opened, retaining the name Trowbridge Music Saloon. Mr Veale appears to have left the partnership in 1933 (died?) and William Benjamin continued on his own. The building was purchased in 1939 by outfitters Wilkins and Darling and they rebuilt the building in 1939 naming it Pitman House. The business probably closed for a while reopening on 2nd September 1939 with the business renamed W H Benjamin. He was agent for HMV vinyl records and Marconiphone, EXCO music players and radios as well as selling Challen pianos. He tuned and repaired pianos and organs but the business was less reliant on the sale of musical instruments as it was in the days of Henry Millington. When William died in September 1956, Christopher took over the business with the help of his mother and renamed it again, Trowbridge Music Saloon, its old name.

Christopher's heart was not in retailing as he desired to follow his career as an actor. He wished to sell the business and it was taken over by Raymond Graham in 1960 under the name of W H Benjamin! It was changed again to Trowbridge Music Saloon in 1966 !! Raymond retired in 1987 after the clothing shop Hodges, who now owned the building, refused to renew the lease. After remaining empty for 18 months, the shop opened as Hill House Hammond insurance brokers, breaking, after over 140 years, the chain of music shops.



Corporate Member: **The Trowbridge Museum**
 Welcome to new members: **Mr and Mrs D Drewett and Mr and Mrs Cavill.**

Friends of Trowbridge Park

The following is taken from the Friends of Trowbridge Park website

Since December 2013, Friends of Trowbridge Park have been having one-to-one conversations with various visitors, supporters of Trowbridge Town Park and experts, and as a result have developed a number of ideas and suggestions to transform the Park for the benefit of both local residents and visitors.

In February this year the group held a consultation event, the "Walk in the Park". The main aim of the consultation event was to take a "snap shot" of the prevailing attitudes of residents and to measure the extent of their readiness and approval for the principles of a range of ideas and suggestions to develop the Park. "In a nut shell, our overall aim is to transform Trowbridge Park into a desirable destination for both local residents and tourist and to have an asset that is worth visiting from a visual, and safety perspective, providing visitors with a memorable and inspiring day out."

"The guiding principles and considerations for developing such ideas include:

- Better lighting throughout the park for an improved sense of safety & security.
- Improving the physical environment must work hand-in-hand with reducing anti-social behaviour.
- Reduce numbers of hiding places to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour.
- Although Trowbridge Park is mainly an urban environment, used amongst others by children, thus the necessity for safety, we should nevertheless strive to protect and create habitat for the wild-life.
- Bring the park into the 21st century through the use of modern technology providing information and education.
- Whenever possible, introduce diffused lighting for existing and new structures and thus extending the number of hours visitors are attracted to the park, especially during dark evenings.
- Art and culture should permeate the design of new structures and the re-development of existing structures. Functionality & creativity must work hand in hand.
- Make a connection with the history of Wiltshire in general, and the history of Trowbridge in particular.
- Introduce unique and creative ideas that would help visitors to feel both delight and inspiration."

The main ideas discussed at the consultation were:

1. Lake Remodelling
2. Community Lodge/Youth Picnic shelter
3. 4-seasons art installation plus "Art in the Park"
4. Enhancement of the Bandstand
5. Anti-Social Behaviour

The group also has plans for the seating area around the Kiosk and a Fitness Trail / Trim Trail.

Friends of Trowbridge Park (FoTP) have produced a 44-page report which is now available to receive via email only.

All Trowbridge residents wishing to receive a digital pdf copy of the report can do so by contacting Sharl Adabashi by email: sharliban@yahoo.com More news and photographs of the group's activities are also available on their Facebook page - see page11.

Community Tapestry

Margaret Howard

A Trowbridge community tapestry is being made by various community groups and individuals (of any age) under the guidance of Mel and Jacky (of Big Community Grow fame). It will commemorate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta.

It is a pictorial representation of our baronial town, centred around the River Biss. It will have small pictures of its landmarks, and images of things relevant to Trowbridge past or present, in fabric and thread, using any technique. I have made two little pieces, a cross stitch view of St James church and, on behalf of the Civic Society, a couple of stump work teasels.

Trowbridge Connections - Bel Mooney

"I was born in Liverpool in 1946, where home was a flat in a low-rise estate called The Green, on Queen's Drive, near Broadgreen Hospital, where I was born. I went to Northway Primary School and then passed the 11+ to go to Aigburth Vale Girls' High School. This was old-fashioned state education and it served me very well indeed. Then when I was 14 my world was turned upside down by a move to the South-West of England, to Trowbridge in Wiltshire. That's when my beloved, hardworking parents obtained their first mortgage, on a three bed-roomed semi. It was such a step up in the world! I went to the local girls' grammar school and tried to learn a new accent, in order to fit in. It wasn't easy. But maybe writers should never really fit in...

"When I left school I went to University College London, and in 1969 gained a first class honours degree in English Language and Literature. In 1968 I married my first husband, the broadcaster and writer Jonathan Dimbleby. When I graduated I expected to go back to Uni and do a PhD as invited by my department, but I was seduced down the primrose path of journalism. I am now a Fellow of UCL and hold honorary degrees from Bath University and Liverpool John Moores - so, if I wanted, could dip my toe into university life once more.



"My first job was on the now-legendary magazine NOVA, which was very exciting. I was Assistant to the Editor, then a feature writer, then contributing editor. After that I had a contract with the Telegraph Magazine, contributed to the Sunday Times, Guardian etc, and was a regular with the New Statesman, under the inspiring editorship of Anthony Howard. Later still I wrote columns variously in the Sunday Times, Cosmopolitan, the Listener and the Daily Mirror.

"In 1974 Jonathan and I had Daniel, then in 1975 our second son Tom was stillborn, and in 1980 we had Kitty. At that time we moved to Bath and I began another career as a broadcaster, making programmes for radio and television. I also began to write fiction, starting with 'The Windsurf Boy' (1983) and then the first 'Kitty' book, 'I Don't Want To' (1985). In 2005 I began a new strand of my career, writing a weekly advice column for The Times, and in 2007 I took that column to The Daily Mail.

"In September 2007 I married the photographer Robin Allison-Smith. We live in Bath with our small white dog, a Maltese called Bonnie.

Letter to the Editor

A Litter Letter

I don't know about you, but litter annoys my wife and me. We hate to see it and it says to us that the more there is, the less people care about their environment. And the problem seems to be getting worse, as our local Council seems less active in collecting that which litter-louts drop. But Wiltshire Council is under a legal obligation to clear litter. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 clearly states:

"it shall be the duty of each local authority, as respects any relevant highway or relevant road for which it is responsible,... to ensure that the highway or road is, so far as is practicable, kept clean." (And a footpath or footway is a highway, legally.)

So, the duty is clear and it seems to me that members of the Trowbridge Civic Society can help the Council to observe the law by acting as Inspectors and reporting bad situations. You can report problem areas on-line by using

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets/roadshighwaysstreetcare/mywiltshirelogin.htm>. It is a long address but you can put it in your Favourites for later use. If you do not have email then you can ring 0800 232323. This still works. If you report something and nothing is done about it you can contact the Councillor in charge of refuse collection. He is Toby Sturgis. His email is toby.sturgis@wiltshire.gov.uk. If you do not have a computer, write to him at County Hall, BA14 8JN.

If enough of us act, we can keep Trowbridge clean, to complement our lovely Trowbridge in Bloom displays.

RECENT MEETINGS

VISIT ON 21st APRIL TO WILTSHIRE & SWINDON HISTORY CENTRE

Sue Glover

Fourteen members were greeted in the impressive entrance hall of the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre by Michael Marshman (who is a President and Founder Member of the Trowbridge Civic Society). Michael explained to us the reason why the Record Office was moved from Trowbridge. The Trowbridge building was condemned as being unfit to keep valuable historical documents in, the temperature and conditions were not correct. This then meant a new building had to be found. Various locations were looked at and eventually the present site was decided upon and as Swindon's Record Office had also been condemned, the two offices decided to join together to occupy the new purpose built building in Chippenham. The building work was started in 2005 and finished on time in 2006 at a cost of approximately £11 million. The building, together with housing the treasures and records of the County, is also used for educational purposes to involve the people of Wiltshire. Approximately 26,000 visitors a year from the local area and all over the world come to the building to find out mainly past family information.

We proceeded on our tour into an extremely large room with lots of reference books, registers plus computers and microfiche machines. This is where the public come to find out the relevant information they are researching. We moved on to the part of the building where the public are not usually allowed. The party entered into an air-lock room which maintains temperature at 14C in the storage rooms which we were being shown. There are seven storage rooms and here is where all sorts of the County artefacts are stored and over 3000 individuals and organisations have placed their records in the store for safe keeping.

On leaving the storage area, the group was taken by lift to another interesting part of the building - the conservator's laboratories. Here they repair and meticulously preserve items of historic interest. There is a photographic area also, which preserves the old photographs. Michael said that to help catalogue and look after all the items in the building there are 70/80 volunteers and also help from local 6th form students.

To conclude our tour we were taken into a large research room where Michael had laid out items of particular interest for us to see of Trowbridge. There were old maps of the whole town along with log books from local schools and photographs of bygone times.

The visit was so interesting that time passed very quickly and on leaving the building Glyn Bridges gave a vote of thanks to Michael on our behalf.

RODE VISIT

Celia Russell

On a pleasant May evening 18 Society members assembled outside St Lawrence Church, Rode. Having passed this church on too many occasions to count, I was especially pleased to get inside and have a look around. The present church is thought to date from the 15th century but signs of a smaller building were found during major renovation work in 1873. Mention was made of the "clypping ceremony" which is believed to pre-date Christianity and involves the parishioners creating a protective ring around the church to keep out evil and drive the devil away. Apparently this ritual still takes place annually!

Peter Harris, our guide, explained the reason for two Anglican churches in the village. In 1824 Christ Church was built as at that time part of the village was in Wiltshire and part in Somerset and the part in Wiltshire was in the parish of North Bradley. Archdeacon Daubeney, vicar of North Bradley, was concerned that some of his parishioners were worshipping at St Lawrence rather than walk the four miles to North Bradley, hence he had Christ Church built. Christ Church was closed in 1995 and converted to a private residence. Boundary changes in 1937 united both parts of the village within Somerset.

From St Lawrence Church we went into the heart of the village where we were given brief histories of many of the properties and special mention was made of those built in the 1860's by a Rode builder, Edward Silcocks, whose trademark seemed to be stone "ears" on the window surrounds.

Of course, no visit to Rode could take place without mention being made of the famous murder at Rode Hill House (now called Langham House) and, of course, Mr Whicher.

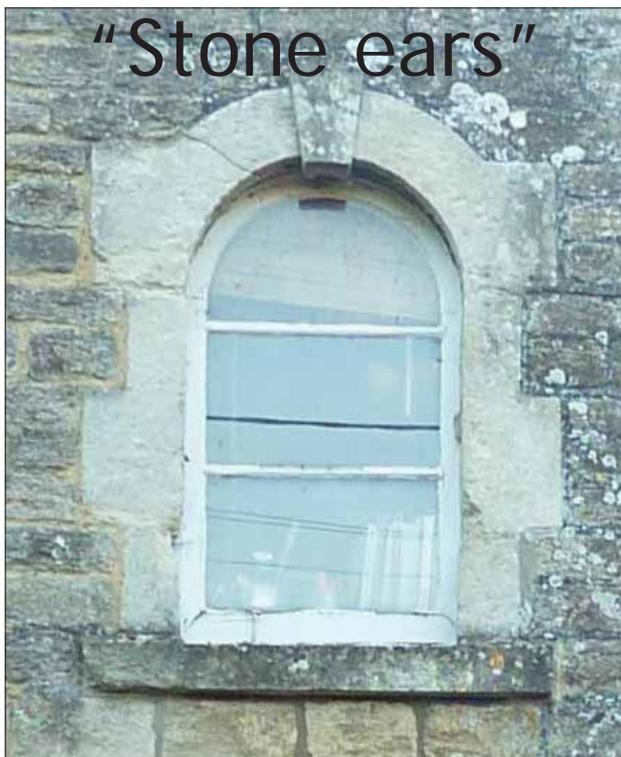
We are indebted to Peter Harris and the three villagers who assisted him, for a most informative and interesting evening.



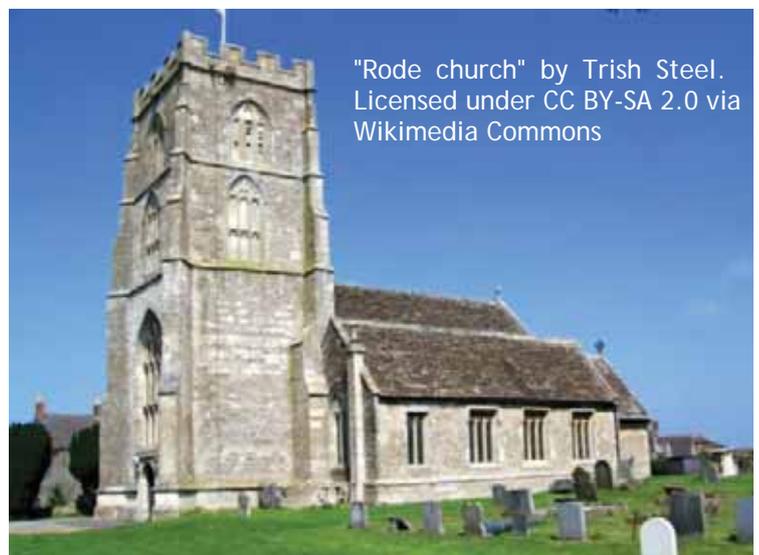
Facebook page of Friends of Trowbridge Park



Trowbridge Park bug house - a Friends project



Road became Rode in 1919



The Quiz - Play Areas

There are more than 20 play areas in the Trowbridge/Hilperton area. Here are 8. Do you know where these are? Send your answers to pcollier@blueyonder.co.uk. Answers in the next issue.

