

Widcombe magazine

SPRING - SUMMER 2017

WHAT'S ON
NEWS & VIEWS



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but elusive

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Widcombe magazine

SPRING - SUMMER 2017

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PUBLISHED BY THE WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

www.widcombeassociation.org.uk
magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk

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Prior Park, the Seat of Ralph Allen, Esq. 1750 copper engraving – Bath in Time – Bath Central Library



EDITORIAL TEAM

Publisher Jeremy Boss | Editor Liz Jeffreys | Design Ralph Allen Press
Advertising Ann Ashworth

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Editor's Letter

This year marks the 250th Anniversary of the start of the building of the Royal Crescent and as Bath celebrates the architect John Wood the Younger, we've turned our attention closer to home. Ralph Allen was an entrepreneur and businessman whose quarries on Combe Down supplied much of the stone that built the 18th century city. Our cover shows the well-known print of his railway linking the quarries with the river and inside you can read about what building the railway meant for Widcombe.

Timothy Richards has an international reputation as an architectural model maker and his current exhibition at No 1 Royal Crescent tells the story of Classical architecture from Rome to 18th century Bath and beyond. He is the subject of our Working in Widcombe feature.

Plus, our regular contributors are back to

keep you informed and entertained, and we preview a new crime novel set in 18th century Bath. We're sure you'll recognise many local references.

Widcombe has its serious concerns too, of course, and we will keep you up to date with those that affect us all whether crossing roads safely and parking, or building developments nearby.

And lastly, sadly, it is time to say farewell to Paddy Doyle, the magazine's former editor who nurtured and developed this magazine from its early days as a newsletter. Paddy has been a great support as I've taken over the reins but always made it clear he wanted to retire now and we hope he leaves, assured the magazine is in good hands and that it remains informative, entertaining and an essential part of Widcombe life. ■

Liz Jeffreys, Editor



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A Trader's View

We continue to celebrate the diversity of shops that we find on Widcombe Parade. It's hard to believe we have approaching forty establishments from which to purchase, amongst other things, kitchens, stoves, curtains, pictures and flowers; rent property; go to the dentist or hairdresser; and take a pet to the vets. But others can possibly go unnoticed. Moon, for example, provides the complete home design and build service; Sunhouse, which nestles just behind The White Hart and which produces product design for world renowned companies, and the recently opened Gin Distillery and Herbal Apothecary at the bottom of Prior Park Road. All bring interest and variety and add to the community spirit which lies at the heart of Widcombe. ■ *Simon Brown*

New chairs for St Matthew's mark the beginning of renovations

A great big thank you from everyone at St Matt's and the church family of Widcombe Parish to the Widcombe Association, for its generous donation towards new chairs. Those who remember the old chairs will see that these are a great improvement.

Plans are moving ahead for a complete refit of St Matt's and the architects have just been appointed who will be helping to realise the church's vision to make it a real blessing to the community. Artists' impressions of the plans to transform the building will be available to see soon.

These are exciting times at St Matt's and St Thomas a Becket. The church family continues to grow and it has recently been

Farewell Lennie

As Las, the familiar Parade landmark of Lennies Café closed just before Xmas. This was a bit of a shock for all those locals who had come to rely on this institution, for the café had become our refuge. Every day the whirling dervish of Lenny would not only fuel us with coffee, rolls and panini but also with good humour.

In year-round Bermuda shorts, T-shirt and clogs Lennie would hail his regulars from the door, quizzing those who entered the café with banter and a smile. Generous portions were also a trademark. On hot days the tables outside would be bustling, bringing life to our street and what a community should be. We will miss you Lennie and your great assistant, Rob. You ran a great show.

The great news is we now have a deli where the tradition of good food and community continues. ■ *Timothy Richards*



announced that a full-time curate will soon be joining the Rev Tim to work alongside him in the parish..

If you would like to find out more about what's happening at either of our churches, please visit our website www.widcombe.church. ■ *Blessings, Rev Tim.*

The Finishing Touch

A digitally produced picture by Thurston Smith, who attends the Action on Hearing Loss Day Centre, has been awarded a Special Commendation in an open competition by The Holburne Museum to finish Sir Thomas Lawrence's well-known unfinished sketch of Arthur Atherley.

Thurston, who has been going to the Day Centre for over 15 years, is a talented artist in his own right and takes part in a lot of events and exhibitions. His prize was a painting and drawing set.

Thurston's winning work and with his award.



Sustainable Widcombe?

In January 2016 the Widcombe Association organised an event to consider ways to further improve Widcombe following completion of the new road scheme and a small team, led by Ian Gilchrist, was subsequently set up to look at how Widcombe might be made more sustainable.

The team started by defining a set of 'life needs' which every community needs, each in turn requiring a set of 'sub-needs'. For example, at the top of the list came 'Food' and within it 'buying food to cook', 'growing food', 'foraging for food', and 'restaurants or

takeaways'. The complete set of 'needs' included 'Shelter', 'Keeping Warm', 'Electricity', 'Water', 'Getting Around', 'Health', and 'Education'.

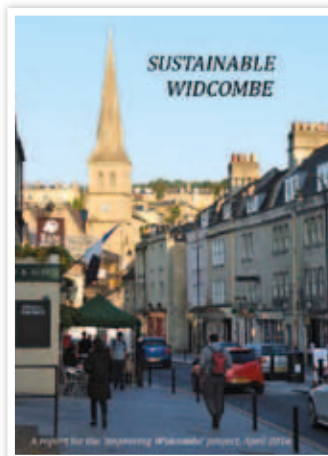
The next step was to consider whether these 'needs' were met in Widcombe in a sustainable way – defined as being supplied within 20 minutes walking distance (about 1 mile or 1.5 km) of Widcombe Parade. Conveniently for Widcombe it does of course have all the resources of Bath city centre within reach, which means that quite a few 'needs' are conveniently met!

The last part of the review looked at those 'needs' which are not met or only partly met. So, for the need to grow our own food, for example, the team looked at improving the availability of allotments for those whose gardens are not big, creating and running a 'Garden-share' scheme where people who have but don't need a large garden can share it with others, and seeking out plots of public land which might be brought into cultivation.

The Report, which contains 45 recommendations, will be available to download on the Widcombe Association website:

www.widcombeassociation.org.uk

Team members: Cllr Ian Gilchrist, Stewart Owen, Marie Youngman, Tim Williamson and Dr David Goode (advisor).





A ferry across the Mersey... Widcombe Junior School Choir goes on tour

Widcombe Junior School choir are planning an exciting trip to Liverpool this summer where they will be performing concerts in the two cathedrals - the Anglican Cathedral which is the world's biggest cathedral and the Metropolitan Cathedral. The school has a close and successful relationship with Bath Abbey and the Schools' Singing Programme which is helping to prepare the children for the trip. But there'll be time for some

sightseeing too and they'll visit the Tate Art Gallery, the Beatles Museum and take a ferry across the Mersey.

About forty children from across the whole school will be going, many of whom haven't been away from home before. The children are raising money for the trip through cake sales and talent competitions and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Widcombe Association for its generous donation of £250.

Light And Airy

Widcombe Choir meets in the new, light, airy and warm Widcombe Social Club and the music we make there is light, bright, airy and warm. We meet every Monday in term time at 7.30pm. Our choir is for anyone and everyone and we tackle a range of songs from difficult classical stuff to easier bits of folk and blues, to cathartic chants. A lot of us don't consider ourselves particularly musical and we're living proof that anybody can sing in a choir if they want to.

There are currently over thirty regulars and some - though not all - step out in public several times a year at various events in Widcombe. Our next event is 8.30pm on Friday 19 May at Party in the City May on the opening night of Bath Festival. We'll be singing along with other local acts and you'll find us in the light and airy warmth of the Widcombe Social Club.

So why not come and sing with us?

The first session is free.

For further details and clips of us singing, go to: www.groupspaces.com/widcombechoir.

Energy Efficient Widcombe



It has been a busy start to the year for Energy Efficient Widcombe. With support from the Widcombe Association, we were successful in securing grants for two projects for the coming year. First, we received funding from Bath and West Community Energy to carry out ten residential energy audits in the Widcombe area. The ten places on offer were rapidly taken up once advertised through the Widcombe Association, and the team have been working hard to complete thermal imaging while the weather remains cold. We have covered a good range of houses, ranging from listed Georgian townhouses to 1970s flats. We will also work with these households to provide energy and appliance monitoring, and advice on lighting and insulation. Second, we have received a grant from Awards for All (funded by the Lottery) to work with Ralph Allen School on a project that will involve workshops, visits and an energy audit.

The project will culminate in a special event where the participating pupils will share what they've learnt with other students both from Ralph Allen and other local schools. ■
Amy Lunt, Coordinator



The Widcombe Calendar is making a come-back and we need your photographs

Due to popular demand the Widcombe Calendar is coming back in 2018. We need your photographs showing Widcombe all year round, but particularly spring and summer as these were in short supply last time.

Photographs should be in, of or from Widcombe, should be landscape format and between 1-5MB.

A photographic competition will launch in May. Full details (including where you should send your images) will be on the Widcombe Association website shortly www.widcombeassociation.org.uk or contact Helen Peter at hpeterwidcombe@gmail.com

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Widcombe News



Widcombe Social Club

It's hard to believe that the Widcombe Social Club celebrated its first anniversary in April. Since opening the club has hosted wedding receptions, birthday and anniversary parties and celebrations galore.

In the coming months the club will be welcoming Bath Comedy Festival, Bath Soul Club, B-side the A-side DJ team, Party in the City, WSC Party nights and more. It continues to be popular for dance classes, yoga, Pilates, mother and baby groups, Bath Gaming Group and regular community activities. See upcoming events and the daily timetable on the website and on the notice boards in the foyer.

And if you are planning any celebrations or events do speak to Alex, the club manager, about what facilities the WSC can offer. The light and modern Wharf Room on the first floor is a great space for parties and events. There have been improvements to the ambience of the ground floor Waterside Bar which is open every day from 10:00am for coffees, teas, beer, wine and light refreshments, making it an ideal place for informal meetings or to catch up with friends.

Don't forget the WSC is open to everyone, though membership gives benefits including discounted bar prices. We look forward to welcoming you soon.
www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk ■

STREETSCAPE

Sort Our Subway - Update

The council met in March to decide whether the current subway under the gyratory at the bottom of the Wells Road should be replaced by a surface crossing. It was confirmed that £225,000 was earmarked for the works but Councillor Clarke said no final decision could be made at this time. The Panel therefore decided that the following research should be undertaken 1. To explore a crossing to the east of the gyratory across the A36, just beyond the bypass and linked with signalling at Widcombe. 2. Investigate pollution levels in this area. 3. Explore other cities' experiences of underpasses. Councillor Clarke and Mr Peacock were invited to attend the next SOS meeting at the end of March.

Graffiti Watch

We are delighted to have been able to work co-operatively with the council and Western Power in removing the graffiti on the wall of the electricity substation, along the river by the Travelodge. Marcus Frank from the council, Helen Peter, Stewart Owen and Claire Biss cleaned the wall over a couple of weeks and repainted it with anti-graffiti glaze. We understand Network Rail have now undertaken to clean the railway bridge. We appreciate the council's support in enhancing this area for residents and visitors alike.

Anyone happy to help with further similar projects is welcome to contact Helen on 01225 334936 or hpeterwidcombe@gmail.com



Council News

In February we received notification that £40,000 ear-marked for Rossiter Road is included in the Council budget for the coming year; hopefully this will be used to put right some of the deficiencies.

The traffic calming measure proposed for lower Widcombe Hill has passed through final consultation and there is also the possibility of installing a pedestrian crossing in Prior Park Road.

Parking issues in Lyncombe Vale and Perrymead are still on the active list. The six-month review period ends in April and we hope to have more news then. The Council's area-wide parking review will be ending at the same time and will be looked at closely.

Planning issues relating to the South Quays site and across the Lower Bristol Road, at the former Pickfords site, continue to move forward.

The gull-nest/egg eradication programme that ran last year is to be repeated again this year during the nesting season and will be offered free of charge to all residents of Widcombe (and other) wards.

For further information on this or any other Council matter, please feel free to contact either councillor, ian_gilchrist@bathnes.gov.uk or jasper_becker@bathnes.gov.uk ■
Ian Gilchrist

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We are ranked amongst the most indebted and heavily taxed nations in the world and B&NES is having to find £47m cuts. Yet there are a few shafts of sunlight in Widcombe: council tax rise is below the rate of inflation and spending is as follows: Highways capital maintenance on Pultney Avenue, Pultney Gardens and Pultney Grove £23,000; Greenway Lane traffic calming £35,700; Brougham Hayes junction improvements £20,000; Prior Park Road - Rossiter Road washup £15,000; Beechen Cliff Woodland spaces improvements £439,000 (2016-2018).

The proposal to relocate Bath Central Library is of concern to many and I have received a lot of correspondence about this. The next step is a two-year consultation period. In the meantime, before taking a position, it might be worth visiting Keynsham to see how a similar scheme has been working there. ■ *Jasper Becker*

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Getting the Balance Right

As residents of Widcombe we want to make it a better place to live and work. The Widcombe Association exists to help focus some of these efforts. There is a great deal to celebrate. For the first time this magazine will be delivered, free, to most households in Widcombe. We are reaching out because together we can achieve so much more.

Our volunteer-run events add a real vibrancy. Whether you want to go to the Opera in the magnificent gardens of Widcombe Manor, walk, cycle, sing or learn about plants there is something for everyone. Many other groups run events in Widcombe so there is a lot going on: Mummers, Chinese lion dances, comedy or jazz.

Improving Widcombe can be trickier. Welcoming change for the better whilst protecting the best of what we have. We have fantastic historic buildings and green spaces so close to the City centre, in an area of outstanding natural beauty and within the World Heritage site. Championed by the WA you should see improvements for example extra trees planted, new improved signage, lights on Halfpenny bridge and safety hand rails at the bottom of Lyncombe Hill.

We also seek to influence B&NES and work with our ward councillors. B&NES cabinet members and officials have been in Widcombe a lot recently and we appreciate their time. But I have to say we



Photo: David Goode

remain disappointed that B&NES has not responded or taken forward the work to fix snagging problems after the Rossiter Road scheme or taken forward improvement ideas, especially at the junction in front of the White Hart. We will continue to push B&NES for action in these areas especially as we know there is some money for this in next year's budget.

On planning, there are major changes round the corner impacting on Widcombe including the Bath Quays, Beechen Cliff School master plan, re-development of Bath Rugby at the REC and, as I write this, a new consultation about a cable car to Foxhill. We will keep a close eye on these and seek to share what we find out.

Finding the right balance is not always easy and there is never a single 'right' answer but we will look objectively at changes and provide the best information we can find for people to make their own judgments.

I would also like to welcome two new committee members, Alan Langton and Hilary Furlonger. Our thanks go to those leaving, Liz Littlewood, who has been an exemplary Secretary for six years and Murray Jones who represented our traders.

So whether you are reading this magazine for the first time or a seasoned WA member I hope you will join us in our aim of improving Widcombe and helping to make it even more vibrant. ■ *Jeremy Boss, Chair, Widcombe Association*

Cycle Store

After nearly two years of discussion, the planned cycle store to serve widcombewest residents and users of the St Mark's Community Centre is nearing fruition.

Thanks to grants from B&NES and the Widcombe Association works will start on Saturday 25 March, with volunteers from Good Gym and Buro Happold Engineers joining locals to level the ground and set out foundation pads. Local architect Alex Sykes, who is leading the project, has developed a design based on a deck that sails over the existing gravestones, respecting the location whilst keeping costs to the minimum.

On 8 April, it is hoped to construct the deck from lengths of timber, in a true community volunteer venture: lunch and refreshments will be provided to any willing workers who take part. Anyone who can assist – particularly those with building or carpentry skills – would be warmly welcomed.

We are also looking for the loan of tools, wheelbarrows, gardening gloves...

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Garry Manning (garry@manning-partnership.co.uk) who is co-ordinating the volunteer effort.



Community Centre

The St Mark's Community Centre is now two years into its new constitution with a committed Board of Trustees. The key maintenance tasks have been identified and essential work, mainly to the stonework, continues. St Mark's has been the home of two charities for over 20 years, providing a venue for the highly regarded Acorns Pre-School and award winning Zenith Youth Theatre. However, the trustees would like to engage with other local groups so as to give it that 'community feel'. Widcombewest are planning a consultation event on 24 May and would welcome feedback from across Widcombe on how to achieve this.

Alexandra Park Friends Need Your Help

If you've a spare Saturday morning why not come and help keep the park looking spruce. Volunteers meet on the first Saturday of every month at 9.30am (near the toilet block) to pick up litter and do small maintenance jobs. New volunteers are always welcome and the morning usually finishes with a sociable chat over fresh coffee and biscuits. Future dates are 6 May, 3 June and 1 July. Do bring gardening gloves but all other equipment is provided.

And if you're interested in knowing more about what's going on in the park and future developments, please come to the

Annual Public Meeting on
8 June

at 7pm in the Bowls Club.

For more details,
see the website

www.alexandraparkbath.org

*Volunteers of all ages help
plant bulbs in Alexandra Park*

What's On

HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE COMING MONTHS

Open Garden Event 9 July

A very informal opportunity to take a peek into neighbours' gardens and share ideas about what can be done in our small urban outdoor spaces. Stroll around the locality, glass of Prosecco in hand, chat to neighbours about all things horticultural and put the world to rights generally.

Go to: info@widcombewest.uk.

Community Barbecue 23 July

Always a great success, with last year over 50 people of all ages enjoying a lovely balmy evening in the gardens of St Mark's Community Centre. Newcomers are warmly welcomed. We also hold a raffle, the proceeds of which will go towards funding more of our events. We all contribute by donating prizes, supplying barbecues and of course lots of lovely food and drink

Go to: info@widcombewest.uk.

Widcombe Junior School Choir

Widcombe Social Club
19 May 6.30pm

Come and hear Widcombe Junior School Choir as part of Party in the City on 19 May. This is a special performance before the children go on a tour to Liverpool in June.

The Magdalen Chapel Holloway

Friday 26 May
7.30pm

Concert of medieval & early renaissance music "Cantore al Liuto", with Simone Sorini & Claudia Viviani

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tony@seegers.fsnet.co.uk

Saturday 8 July
7.30pm

Summer Concert with The Chandos Singers
www.chandossingers.co.uk

Saturday 15 July –
Sunday 16 July

Magdalen Chapel Festival Weekend
www.magdalenchapelbath.co.uk

Saturday 9 September
11.00am – 2.00pm

Sunday 10 September
2.00pm – 5.00pm

Heritage Open Weekend - Exhibition
"The History of The Magdalen Chapel"

You will be welcome.



Photo: David Goode



Photo: David Goode

DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW THIS SPRING

The Widcombe Art Trail

13-14 May

For more details see Art pages.

www.widcombeartrail.com



Bath Comedy Festival

1-17 April various venues in the city
Widcombe events from Friday 7 – Monday 17 April

"There's something for everybody, from baby buggy to zimmer frame, says Festival Director, Nick Steel, of this year's Bath Comedy Festival. Widcombe remains the spiritual home of the Festival with a host of acts at the Widcombe Social Club and The Ring O Bells.

See Entertainment pages for selected highlights

Opera

Rigoletto

Widcombe Manor, Church Lane

Friday 16 June and Saturday 17 June

Matinee Sunday 18 June

More information on Entertainment pages

Picnics

Friday 30 June

Midsummer Picnic at the Palladian Bridge, Prior Park, NT (a WA Event)

6.00pm – 9.00pm

For more details see Entertainment pages

Sunday 2 July

Picnic in the Park

(Alexandra Park Friends)

There will be food and drink to buy or bring your own picnic and enjoy live music and fun activities such as fancy dress, face painting, the dog show, a tug-o-war and much more.

For more details, see the website
www.alexandraparkbath.org



The Blues Others entertain at Picnic in the Park

Jessica Palmer Artist & Illustrator
www.jessicapalmerart.com



Come over for a cuppa on the Art Trail

Interview

All that Jazz

Jeremy Boss in conversation with jazz musician and archivist, Joe Spibey

I called in to see the man known around here simply as Jazz Joe. He has lived on a quiet backwater in Gordon Road, Widcombe for over 20 years. It's a far cry from his youth in the 1960s, when he began his career in music studying at Ealing School of Art and where fellow students included Keith Richards and Pete Townsend.

Joe started out playing trumpet then changed to base guitar, playing soul, and rhythm and blues before settling on the double base and the music he has loved playing for nearly 50 years – jazz, especially Dixie Land Swing.

He became a professional musician and joined the soul & blues band Fulsom Stilwell, playing in venues across London and touring Germany and Austria. During the 1970s he formed his first band, String Jam, going on a nationwide tour with folk singer Ralph McTell. But it wasn't always glamorous and not always to full houses. "I remember a time when the band was the house band at a well-known Chinese restaurant. It was good regular work for a musician, playing six to seven nights a week, but we had to play whenever there were guests and carry on playing until everyone had left - even if the only diners were a romantic couple sitting in the corner!"



Perhaps less known is that Joe is a huge cinema fan, especially of those Hollywood classics featuring jazz music. For many years he dealt in movie memorabilia, amassing a large collection before downsizing



to Widcombe. He is the man behind jazzonfilm.com, a treasure trove of all things jazz and film, and recognised as a leading jazz archivist is called on to speak regularly. He was for several years Chair of the Bath Film Society.

Some 20 years ago Joe wanted to move out of London but he near enough to get back easily for work and he and his wife, Sue, settled in Bath – halfway between London and Sue's parents in Devon. Today, an established figure on the Bath Jazz scene, he plays with several bands and his own 'Joe's Jazz Jumpers', and under the banner 'swingstreetwest' draws on the wealth of local talent to play at parties and events. For nine years Joe organised the regular Jazz at the Ring o Bells and played at every Widcombe Rising.

Our conversation draws to a close and I ask him to tell me something about himself few people know. He was, he says, the only bass player to dismiss one Keith Moon from his school jazz band for his rock inclinations. But the fact he was supposed to have said "Keith, you'll never get anywhere playing that rubbish" is an urban myth!

swingstreetwest.co.uk

Jazz at the Ring o Bells plays the last Sunday in every month.

**You can hear
Joe's Jazz Jumpers on 30 April
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If you want to keep regular Jazz at the Ring o Bells please support these monthly events!

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Out & About

Wild in Widcombe

Wildlife watchers in Widcombe have been surprised and greatly entertained by otters which have turned up in so many places over recent months, often in broad daylight. There have been many sightings along the river from Churchill Bridge to the rugby ground, and along the canal where people have watched them fishing at close quarters. I have received lots of reports, from people full of excitement. One day, crossing the Halfpenny Bridge, I overheard a young woman on her mobile phone telling a friend, "I've just seen an otter". Apparently it was only five minutes away, so I was off hot-footing it to where she had seen it swimming in the mill stream by Prior Park Buildings. Sadly it was nowhere to be seen. But others had watched it sitting on the bank eating a fish. Perhaps it was the same one reported in the Chronicle as an unusual visitor to Prior Park Garden last November.

I suspect the otters are attracted by the large number of north American crayfish that live in our ponds and streams. I'm told that over 800 crayfish were trapped last year in



Photo: David Goode

the mill stream, substantially fewer than in previous years.

Our local herons seem to be doing well. The small heronry in the grounds of Widcombe Manor has about eight nests and they were sitting tight on eggs by the end of February. One bird is well known to Widcombe folk as the resident heron that catches fish along the canal. Many people marvel at his tameness. He has perfected the art of catching fish as they are swept through the leaking lock gates. So engrossed is he in this task that he barely notices people passing by, unless there is a dog on the loose when he is off in a flurry of wings and legs.

Kingfishers too seem to be getting tamer. One that fishes the mill stream can often be seen perched on the railings and only flies when you are a few yards away, only to land again a little further on. Others sit for their photo on the balustrade of the Palladian Bridge in Prior Park Garden.

I'm looking forward to the new guidebook for the Skyline Walk to be launched this spring. It has lots of detail about local history and ecological features, from meadow ants to orchids and old man's beard. Meanwhile the Widcombe Association is working on plans to create some attractive wildflower patches near Widcombe Parade and I'm still hoping to see my first Widcombe otter. ■ *David Goode*



A view from the field

Hola a todos!! Zippy here once again with all the hot news from your local Widcombe alpacas. And what news!

Since I last wrote, we've had wind and rain and snow; wind and sunshine; sunshine and fluff; sunshine with rain; and sunshine with rain and snow. Really, every day in Widcombe is different – unlike our homeland, Peru, which is always cold, except when it's really, really hot, and always sunny and very dry, except when it's raining. No wonder you all talk constantly about the weather. Why wouldn't you? It's SO interesting!

Jorge, Bungle and I are looking forward to a diary full of exciting local events in the next couple of months. These include shearing. As you know, alpaca fleece is superior in every way to all other fleeces – extremely soft, warm and hypoallergenic (unlike sheep fleece, alpaca contains no irritating lanolin). Our ovine friends are understandably envious of our superior offering – and quite often they will



Photo: George Walcot

pretend to be alpacas to get attention they really don't deserve.

To ensure the shearer isn't bamboozled into shearing more than three true alpacas, we have our own (professional, tall, highly paid, handsome) shearer, and the sheep have their own also (who is less of all the above). The alpaca shearer simply hums a well-known Peruvian folk tune and asks the alpaca to repeat it. As everyone knows, sheep are tone deaf and completely unable to perform this simple task. Alpacas, on the other hand, can, and do, hum in harmony. After three, lads.....

With apologies to Martin, our lovely (tall, handsome and very professional) sheep shearer.

The Scent of Lavender

A day ride to Somerset Lavender Farm on Saturday 22 July is just one of a packed programme of trips planned this summer by Widcombe's cycling group, the 'Wobblers'. Closer to home there are evening and Sunday morning rides, including to Newton Park Farm Shop



Photo: Judith Green, Somerset Lavender

(Sunday 25 June), the Jolly Sailor Saltford, (Thursday 13 July) and the Electric Bear Brewery (Friday 18 August).

But if your bike has been lurking in the back of a shed, and you've not cycled for a while, why not bring it down to a bike check-over session on Saturday 20 May at 10.30am on Widcombe Parade. Miracles aren't promised but you'll be told if your bike is roadworthy and given help with checking tyres, brakes and oiling chains.

Cycling is more popular than ever. There is a wonderful choice of level, largely traffic-free paths out of Widcombe into the countryside and exploring them by bike is a great way to breathe in the fresh air and discover new places.

For more information see: widcombeassociation.org.uk/events

Art

DISCOVER SOMETHING NEW THIS SPRING

The Widcombe Art Trail 13-14 May 2017

2017 is the Art Trail's eleventh year and it is bigger and better than ever. While some exhibitors have been involved since the beginning, many others are new to the Trail this year, bringing even more variety to the enticing array of artworks on show. For many of its hundreds of visitors, the Widcombe Art Trail is an annual pilgrimage, a chance to support our local artists and makers, as well as to explore hidden corners of Widcombe, or to show off the glories of our lovely corner of Bath to friends. And every year the number of new visitors increases with the event itself. So enjoy an artistic adventure on your doorstep in Widcombe. Who knows – you might discover something new this spring.

Wherever you visit you will have a warm welcome and an opportunity to discuss the wide range of works on offer with the artists themselves, who may well turn out to be familiar faces. The Art Trail will take you to all corners of Widcombe, one of Bath's hidden gems with its wonderful



Linda O'Gorman is one of several new artists exhibiting this year.

Paintings in mixed media of Bath, Cornwall, France and Venice.

architecture, gardens and countryside views. With the city centre and station just over Halfpenny Bridge access is easy for your visitors and friends across town.

For those coming by car, let them know that the nearest large car parks are at Southgate, Avon Street and the Cricket Ground. Widcombe has various possibilities for street parking (unrestricted on Sundays). Perrymead and Widcombe Hill (above Tynning End) offer unrestricted parking at all times.

Please note that as many venues are private houses, there may be uneven surfaces and stairs making them unsuitable for wheelchairs and disabled visitors. Please phone individual venues for more information (see website for details).

www.widcombearttrail.com



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Events and Workshops

Workshops should be pre-booked.

Full details will be found at

www.widcombearttrail.com

**Widcombe C of E Junior School,
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Pottery Painting drop-in

Choose from a selection of crockery to paint (prices between £5 - £12 depending on object). Collection to be arranged for around a fortnight/month later. Younger children must be accompanied.

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Saturday 13 May 10.30pm – 12.00 pm
for children aged between 7 to 12 years old.

Workshop including bag decorating, canvas painting, pompom making, paperweight designing.

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Sunday 11am, 1pm, 3pm 'Learn to spin yarn using a drop spindle' suitable for all ages.

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The Uke Can't Be Serious Ukulele Band will be playing from time to time over the weekend.

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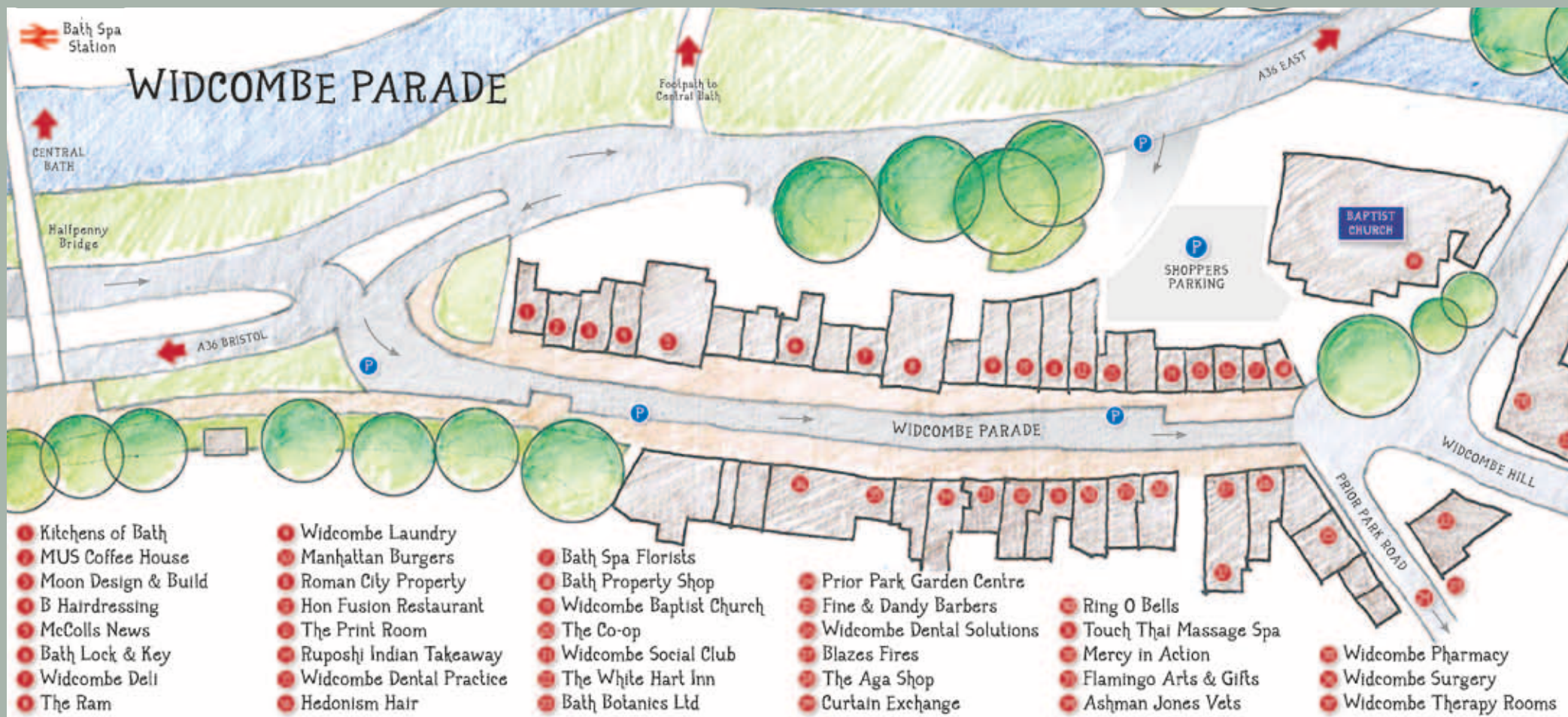
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www.widcombe.church



Working in Widcombe

Reinventing tradition: Timothy Richards, architectural model maker

Timothy Richards has been making architectural models in plaster since 1988 and for the past 11 years has had his workshop in an old Victorian school tucked away behind St Mark's Community Centre in Widcombe. It's a real Aladdin's cave with every corner filled with models of all shapes and sizes, from small busts of Churchill (a best-selling line) to architectural models of some of the world's iconic buildings.

His work is inspired by the souvenirs made famous in the Grand Tours of the 18th century and his workshop today is the only one in the world to use these old techniques. Create an intricate master from plans, old drawings and photographs; make a mould, then take the finest British gypsum plaster, add water and pour into the mould to create a strong, stable and durable model. But, of course, it's much more than that.

You can't help but be enthused as Tim talks about his love of beautiful buildings. Amongst many architects he gains inspiration from the designs of the sixteenth century Italian architect, Andrea Palladio, who drew on the classical design principles



Chiswick House, London

of ancient Rome. Classical re-invented if you like. Palladianism in turn provided the inspiration for the classical designs of the 18th century including many of the buildings in Bath.

For over 28 years Tim has undertaken major exhibitions in the UK and abroad. In 2008 he exhibited at the Royal Academy providing 19 models to celebrate Palladio's 500th anniversary shown alongside many of Palladio's original drawings. Exhibiting has led to the 'made to commission' side of his business. He makes bespoke models for all kinds of occasions from retirements and prizes in major competitions to providing gifts for foreign dignitaries. Several Lord Mayors of London have given models of the Mansion House to their important visitors. His biggest commission, however, was for a palace in the Middle East. It was seven metres long, three meters high and two meters deep and took over 3500 craftsman-hours to build with plaster, lead, bronze, gold and a computerised lighting system.



Churchill. One of a series of 23 influential people from history



Limited edition models on the workbench



All pushing the boundaries of his craft.

The bread and butter business though is his reinvention of the souvenir and his line of "Modern Souvenirs". About 400 are made each week and are sold in prestigious locations like the British Museum and the Pump Rooms. There is a big range of busts of famous Britons as well as bookends and architectural models. It is always changing - the newest addition is Oscar Wilde - although, unsurprisingly here in Bath, it is Sulis Minerva which is the big seller.

So does Tim have a favourite model? 'The last one I was paid for,' he says, smiling. He is passionate about his work, but after all, this is a working business. ■ *Jeremy Boss.*

Additional words Liz Jeffreys.

Tim travels a lot taking hundreds of close-up photographs of the buildings he is to re-create and pacing out their dimensions. Back in the workshop he and a team of eight to ten craftsmen and women begin the process of building a model. Each has a particular area of skill from the intricate work involved carving the master to assembling the parts (a building may have several) to 'finishing' perhaps with gold leaf or lead. Some of the team, like John Marlor, have been with Tim for over 20 years.

Timothy Richards's architectural models currently feature in an exhibition at No 1 Royal Crescent illustrating the evolution of the architecture of Georgian Bath to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Royal Crescent. 'From Rome to the Royal Crescent' runs until 4 June.

On Tuesday 16 May Timothy Richards and Dr Amy Frost, Architectural Curator, will give a guided talk to accompany the exhibition. Full details on the WA website.

More information at www.timothyrichards.co.uk www.timothyrichardscommissions.com or www.modernsouvenir.com



The Pantheon, Rome, one of the most important buildings of classical architecture

Entertainment

Listen to Music while you picnic by the Palladian Bridge

Friday 30 June, 6.00pm – 9.00pm.

The Widcombe Association invites you to bring a picnic and listen to music in the grounds of Prior Park Landscape Garden, courtesy of the National Trust.

The gates will be open from 6.00pm and you can stroll round the gardens, picnic by the torch-lit lake and enjoy some musical entertainment from Prior Park College's 'Big Band', local choirs and the Bath Waits.



The entrance will be from Church Lane, Widcombe, only and there is no parking except for very limited disabled access. However parking is available at Prior Park Garden Centre until 10pm. Tickets available at the gate: £3 WA members/£5 non-members/children free (please note this is a private WA Event and NT membership cards will not be accepted). Bring rugs and chairs.

All proceeds from the evening will be donated to Prior Park Landscape Garden towards repairs to the dams between the two lakes. This is a fair weather event only – please see the WA website for updates in case of inclement weather.



Opera

Bath Opera's Touring Production of Verdi's tragic opera,

Rigoletto in the Grounds of Widcombe Manor, Church Lane, Widcombe

Friday 16 June
and Saturday 17 June

Matinee Sunday 18 June

Tickets are on sale for Widcombe Association Members until 16 April and thereafter for all.

Adults £35 plus booking fee £1.44;
Under 18s £20 plus booking fee 0.91p

More details and to book at www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/events.
For matinee performance see

Pleasure Garden Productions.

Bring a Picnic: Gates open at 4.30pm. Performance will start promptly at 7.30pm. No parking at the Manor although there is some disabled parking by prior arrangement.

Parking will be available at Prior Park Garden Centre.

Bath Comedy Festival at Widcombe

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WEDDING RECEPTION

16 April

Widcombe Social Club

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Plus, Arthur Smith and The Smithereens, Viv Groskop, Elf Lyons, David Mills and more.

More information and to book www.bathcomedy.com

Gardening

Tulip Fever

Beverly Wallis talks to the artist Sue Wales about the garden she shares with her husband, Richard, and about her love of tulips

When Sue and Richard Wales bought their property the garden already had 'good bones'. Previous owners had planted hedges to provide structure and created areas including an orchard and soft fruit area. Richard has continued to add to the structure, designing and helping build the water feature, for example, of which he is immensely proud. In addition new paths have been constructed and rose arches remodelled and extended to create more interest.

As an artist, Sue has approached planting in the same way she would a painting – thinking about colour, texture and structure, but adding scent to the composition. One of their favourite purchases was a couple of fragrant wisterias, 'Floribunda Alba'; another is the camellia-japonica 'Lavinia Maggi' with double white flowers, striped pink, which they've planted in hessian containers of ericaceous (acid) compost.

From spring until early summer, however,

it is the tulips which come into their own. Terracotta pots are planted up each Autumn to reveal complementary colours like the tulip 'Kingsblood' (a deep scarlet) with the wine red and silver grey leaves of *heuchera* 'Amethyst Mist', the feathery edged 'Par Black Parrot' with the pink, bronze and yellow leaved *heuchera* 'Marmalade', and the cream 'Tulipa Purissima' with wallflowers 'Persian Carpet Mix'.

In the garden itself hardy perennials such as rosemary, *euphorbia amygdaloides* 'purpurea' and *heuchera* form a backdrop for tulips and snowdrops, the colour flowing into late spring with the arrival of the purple iris 'Spot Starter' and yellow-striped Siberian iris 'White Amber'.

When the tulips have died down Sue replants them throughout the garden creating swathes of colour for the coming years. Many are used to under-plant species such as peonies and nepeta – a great way to add layering and contrasting texture.

Many of the plants have been given by friends and in some way become that person in her garden.

Sue admits that in her youth she didn't appreciate the value or joy of tulips. Today, they are a must, not only giving colour to the garden but adding to the colourful arrangements in her home.



Allotment Corner

The veg to flower ratio is shifting each year on my allotment to the point where I now have a dedicated flower cutting patch in place of a disappointing strawberry bed. Though it's always satisfying to harvest something edible for supper, I think you get even more of a thrill arriving home with a trug of fragrant blooms that you've grown from seed, knowing that you've pleased the bees and will delight your neighbours with enough to share.

I would encourage anyone with an unused corner of an allotment or garden to try growing flowers for cutting. They won't be treated with chemicals so they have a better scent and you can grow wilder more delicate varieties that don't travel well out of water.

At the beginning of the year you hunker down with a stash of seed catalogues or websites (higgledygarden.com is excellent) and a sense of optimism. I sow in early March in old punnets on sunny windowsills, pot on the seedlings, stick them outside under a cloche for a month or so, then into the allotment after danger of



frost has passed. Once your seedlings are under way you can prepare a sunny patch of ground, digging in some organic matter or compost.

Easy flowers to try are nigella, cornflowers, calendula ("Indian Prince" is a lovely variety), rudbeckia and scabious. Find room for some canes of sweet peas (they like lashings of manure) and it's always fun to have a few giant sunflowers. To give your allotment posies that rustic vibe, grow some fillers such as *ammi majus* (a bit like cow parsley) and *bupleurum* (acid-green and frothy.)

More next issue. ■ *Marigold Trowel*

Diary Dates

19 April 2017

WA Garden Club - Secret Garden Café, Prior Park Garden Centre 7.30pm.

Talk: Graham Nicholls on Gold medals, superb plants and running an alpine nursery
Tickets £3 members, £4 non-members

20 July 2017

Exclusive garden tour WA members only
2pm

Tour of Chinese Gardens

An inspirational one acre garden, divided into a series of Chinese rooms, with Chinese pavilions, gateways, statues and dragons.

Price TBA More information on WA website nearer the time.



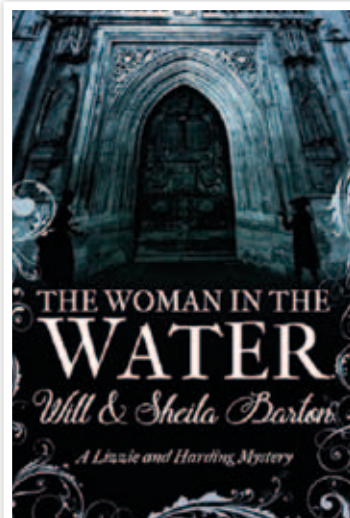
Books

A very local murder story

Ralph Allen's Wharf features in the opening chapter of a new crime novel set in 18th century Bath, where a workman loading stone onto a barge bound for Bristol sees something strange floating in the river. The story sees the Reverend Jonathan Harding, a clergyman from the Abbey, and a young serving girl, Lizzie Yeo embroiled in a mystery that starts on the day of Beau Nash's funeral and leads them through the brothels and drinking dens of Avon Street to the elegance of the Assembly Rooms and Bath's coffee houses. As events unfold they are taken again across the river to Widcombe and the final scenes at the top of Ralph Allen's railway.

The Woman in the Water is written by Widcombe authors Will and Sheila Barton and is their first jointly written book and first venture into crime fiction.

Readers will recognise many of Bath's iconic locations, some of which, like the old medieval Guildhall, have been swept away by time, but many more can still be visited today. "The lives of rich and poor, respectable and disreputable were



separated, then as now, by a thin divide," says Sheila. "We wanted to look behind the elegant facades of Bath's Georgian colonnades and crescents and deal with the realities of the society that built this beautiful city we live in."

The Woman in the Water by Will and Sheila Barton is published by Endeavour Press and is available from Amazon as a paperback or as a digital download or can be ordered from your local bookshop.



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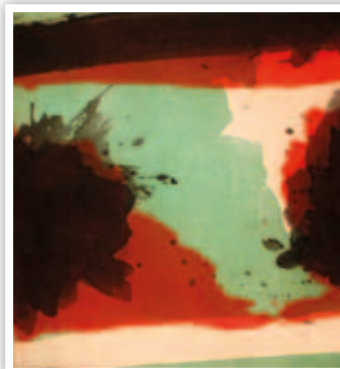


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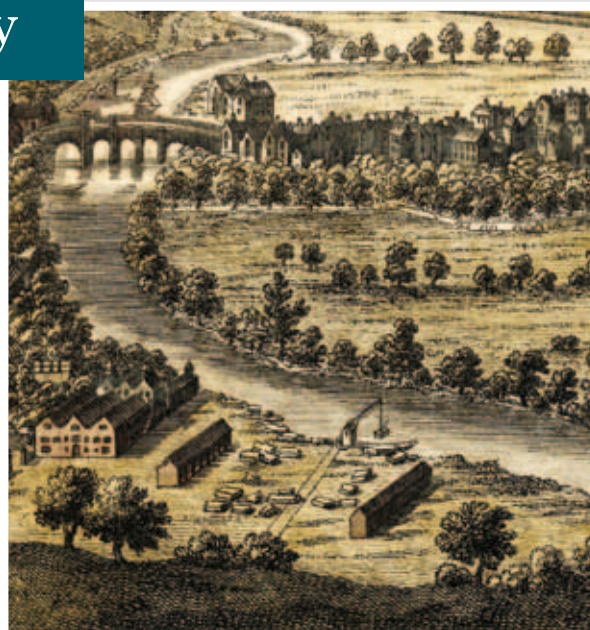
Local History

Ralph Allen's Railway

Prior Park Road and Ralph Allen Drive mark the course of a railway which existed from the 1730s to the 1760s. Ralph Allen had used the wealth accumulated from his reorganisation of the postal system to buy the mining rights of the Combe Down stone mines and by 1731 owned most of the land. He subsequently engaged an engineer, John Padmore, to build a crane to haul the stone blocks from the mines and to construct a railway to transport them to the wharves at Dolemeads.

To build the railway meant opening up the valley of Widcombe, buying the land that would allow the route down to the river. The railway had wooden rails and relied on gravity for the downward passage and horses to take the carriages back up to Combe Down.

Allen was known for his philanthropy and in 1729 had eleven houses built for his workers at Combe Down, whilst those built



*Padmore's Crane and Ralph Allen's Wharf – detail
Bath in Time – Bath Central Library*

for his workers in Widcombe at the bottom of Prior Park Road - and the public house opposite, the White Hart - still exist.

The start of the operation of the mines by Ralph Allen coincided with the development of Bath using local ashlar, with the architect John Wood the Elder as the main driving force. It was also helped by work to make the River Avon navigable allowing the stone to be transported in barges to Bristol. John Wood the Younger in his Description of Bath in 1765 has "The Beach, or Claverton Street, is now become the Hyde Park Corner of Bath for small ornaments in free stone". After Ralph Allen's death in 1764, the mining rights were leased to tenants and the equipment for handling the stone blocks disappeared. Ralph Allen Drive remained part of the Ralph Allen estate while Carriage Road (now Prior Park Road) gave access to the developments in Lyncombe Vale, such as King James's Palace Gardens and Lyncombe Spaw. ■ *Phil Bendall*

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Widcombe & Lyncombe Local History Society

History is all around us. Did you realise that this is one of the richest areas for historical research in Bath, stretching from Horsecombe Vale to Bear Flat, Lyncombe & Widcombe, St James Cemetery and Combe Down and Pulteney Road? We have the oldest church - St Thomas à Becket, Magdalen Chapel and the site of a Leper Hospital. Water is everywhere (well nearly), with local springs once feeding mills and even at one time supplying drinking water from Holloway to the old city. There are two crescents, although sadly the houses and shops along the river from the Old Bridge were destroyed in the frenzy known as the 'Sack of Bath'. Then there is Prior Park, a former 12th century hunting park, and its subsequent associations with

Ralph Allen and the stone quarries and the amazing railroad. In Lyncombe Vale there were 18th century pleasure grounds where people relaxed from the smoky city.

The Widcombe and Lyncombe Local History Society was set up in 1992 to research the area's past, record the present and build up an archive for the future. We have a yearly programme of talks and walks given and led by members and external speakers and we publish new research and present papers. Bath Record Office has an extensive collection of deeds, maps, directories and books and some of the results of our research can be found at the Widcombe Association website.

If you're interested in the history of the area do come and join us. Meetings are held in the Widcombe Baptist Church, usually on a Thursday. More information on the Widcombe Association website. ■ *Margaret Burrows*



PROGRAMME 2017

Thursday 15 June 6.30
Meet at Abbey Cemetery gates,
Prior Park Road
*Walk around upper Widcombe
via Blind Lane.*

Thursday 14 September 7.30
Widcombe Baptist Church Lower Hall
'How did visitors perceive Bath in the past?' and 'Widcombe and The Sack of Bath in the 1960s and 1970s'.
Guest speaker Stuart Burroughs, Curator of the Museum of Bath at Work, will show films of a visit to Bath to accompany his talk.

Thursday 14 December 7.30
Widcombe Baptist Church Lower Hall
Research Group Christmas meeting.
Share your research and reminiscences on Widcombe. Followed by wine and mince pies.

Any changes to meetings may be found on the Widcombe Association website:
www.widcombeassociation.org.uk
Further information about the Society's activities contact:
Margaret Burrows 01225 480749
or Ainley Wade 01225 462807.

Health

The Fit Club

Personal Trainer and Fitness Instructor Joe Taylor has recently opened The Fit Club in Widcombe Social Club. He tells us a bit about it.

Why The Fit Club?

The Fit Club is a programme of classes to get people moving in a fun and supportive group environment, to challenge them physically and mentally. It's as much about the discipline of doing it, although of course regular exercise will improve mobility, strength and general physical health.

What's involved in these classes?

The classes are high intensity and demanding and designed to burn body fat and sculpt muscle. We begin with a 10 minute warm-up to mobilise joints, increase heart rate and body temperature and get the mind focussed, before starting the main part of the class which is some kind of circuit training. This means different sorts of exercises

back to back for a minute each, then taking a short rest before repeating them. The exercises concentrate on different parts of the body; squats for example, strengthen the legs, pushing and pulling exercises focus on the arms and back and chest, whilst others improve heart rate and improve cardiovascular fitness. The classes then end with a few rounds of intense activity like sprinting on the spot for 20 seconds, followed by a short period of rest or active rest, such as standing still or gentle jogging on the spot.

We don't all want to burn body fat and sculpt muscle. How suitable is The Fit Club for older people?

The Fit Club is adaptable for all ages and abilities. There are many different types of classes lined up over the coming months including early mornings and classes for the over 60s.

The Fit Club currently runs on Tuesday@8.30pm Widcombe Social Club and Thursday@7.30pm The Natural Theatre Company.

More information from
hello@joetaylorfitness.com



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Simon Ewings APFS
Managing Director

Lady Margaret

Hello, Lady Margaret here. What, you thought I'd permanently retired to my villa in Corfu? Don't believe everything you hear over your skinny lattes in the Widcombe Deli.

No, having survived the iceberg lettuce crisis and the broccoli famine in the dark days of winter I'm now ready to spring forth as it were. Why, my Girl Guide Diary is positively bursting with appointments and social occasions to grace in my inimitable manner. So many fetes and garden parties to declare open! And a plethora of flower shows to judge. (My knowledge of ridge cucumbers and Victoria sponges is second to none).

Something rather unusual helped me through the colder months. Apart from lashings of mulled wine that is. Fans of my BBC Radio 4 programmes might recall my ditty about the reform of the House of Lords. One verse went thus:

My cousin Maude, a titled spinster

Travelled daily to Westminster.

Now at last we have convinced her

That she's lost her seat.

No more ermine in procession

Now she has a new obsession

Wouldn't miss a single session,

Bingo is her treat!

I know it's something normally favoured by the, ahem, lower classes, but like Cousin Maude, I've taken up bingo! Or rather I've taken up calling bingo. My sessions at the quirky Igloo venue under the Abbey Hotel have been going down a storm with the more sophisticated leisure seekers. And how gratifying to see so many of you Widcombites getting your eyes down. I'm not sure what the main attraction is, the

glittering prizes or my cut-glass diction.



Being a housey-housey virgin, I wasn't au fait with bingo lingo until someone supplied me with a full list of terms. I mean, I'd heard of Kelley's eye for the number one and two fat ladies for eighty eight. But number thirty dirty Gertie was new to me. As was number nine doctor's orders (a popular wartime laxative apparently). And it took me a while to work out number eighty Ghandi's breakfast (ate nothing).

Such fun, I'm sure you agree. Do join me for my next session! Details published in the better newspapers.



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Treasurer's Report

The Widcombe Association maintained a healthy financial position during 2016. In addition to profits from the various events, funds were held for the operation of Energy Efficient Widcombe, an endeavour that we are proud to support, as well as those for the Widcombe Choir. In addition, we are delighted to support the Widcombe Magazine, and pleased to help fund this benefit to the community.

The success of our events has allowed us to donate over £7500 to charities and local causes, including St Matthew's Organ Fund, Dorothy House, The Genesis Trust, Peggy Dodd Centre, Three Ways School and Read Around Bath.

We have been concerned as to how we might further allocate spare funds to benefit Widcombe. To that end we have formed a small Finance Sub-committee, which invites requests for support for local causes. Under this scheme we have already aided the renovation of St Matthew's Church with the purchase of new chairs for the building. Further proposals are under consideration. ■

Deborah Clements

Secretary's Notes

After six years as secretary, I shall be standing down at the end of April. I am delighted to say that that Alan Langton, who has previously served on the committee, has agreed to return and take over from me after the AGM. The website will be updated with his details after the AGM.

During my time on the committee I have learnt a lot about how the committee gets things done to ensure Widcombe remains a vibrant and attractive area of Bath! Over the six years, I have watched WA grow, flourish and expand thanks to the efforts of the committee, the many sub-groups that have been formed and those who volunteer to help out in all sorts of ways. Whatever your talents and interests, WA always welcomes volunteers to help with Events, join one of the Improving Widcombe groups, run our bookstall, etc – just contact a committee member if you would like to get involved.

We like to keep you abreast of what is happening via our monthly Talking Points, so, please, if you change your email address, or acquire one for the first time, or, indeed, decide you no longer want to receive our communications, do let us know. ■

Liz Littlewood

secretary@widcombeassociation.org.uk

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The Widcombe Association Annual General Meeting will be held on

Thursday 27 April 2017 at 7.30 pm
At Widcombe CofE Junior School

A short formal meeting including proposals for election of
Alan Langton (Secretary), Hilary Furlonger and re-election of
Ann Ashworth, Jan Shepley and Chris Rogers

Followed by presentations about community buildings in Widcombe - St
Matthew's, Widcombe Social Club, St Mark's

This is also a social occasion – wine and nibbles provided

**[Pre meeting 6.30pm to 7.30pm open to all: Curo will rerun their exhibition
on the South Bath Transport Options including a cable car]**

Members free. Guest tickets £3
(refunded if you join the WA on the night)

South Bath transport options consultation

A consultation will start as this magazine goes to press. It is clear that any cable car development would have a significant impact on Widcombe, its heritage setting, open countryside and for those homes which could be under or near any cable car route. We will inform all Widcombe residents on the consultation and we would urge residents of Widcombe to find out about the proposals and contribute to the consultation.

See www.widcombeassociation.org.uk for recent updates.

Curo have agreed to re-run their exhibition immediately preceding our AGM. This will be shortly before the consultation period closes. It will not provide any additional information or offer a debate. However, it will give residents one final opportunity to see the proposals and comment.

The WA Committee agreed to look

objectively but – unanimously – could see no practical way this scheme could be implemented without grave harm to Widcombe as a whole and to numerous residents. Therefore we oppose the notion that a cable car offers a viable solution for Widcombe or the City as whole. If you share this view please sign the petition against the cable car proposals at www.nocablecar4bath.org

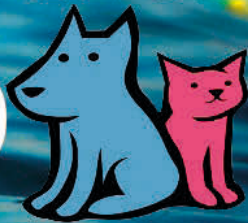
Notice from Curo: A series of public consultations events were held at the end of March about South Bath Transport Options. At the events a number of transport options for South Bath, which could help improve connectivity and tackle some of the city's wider issues such as congestion and air quality were on show – this included proposals for a cable car amongst other options. Details can still be found at www.southbathtransportoptions.co.uk and comments are invited online.

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