

Widcombe magazine

SPRING - SUMMER 2021

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Widcombe magazine

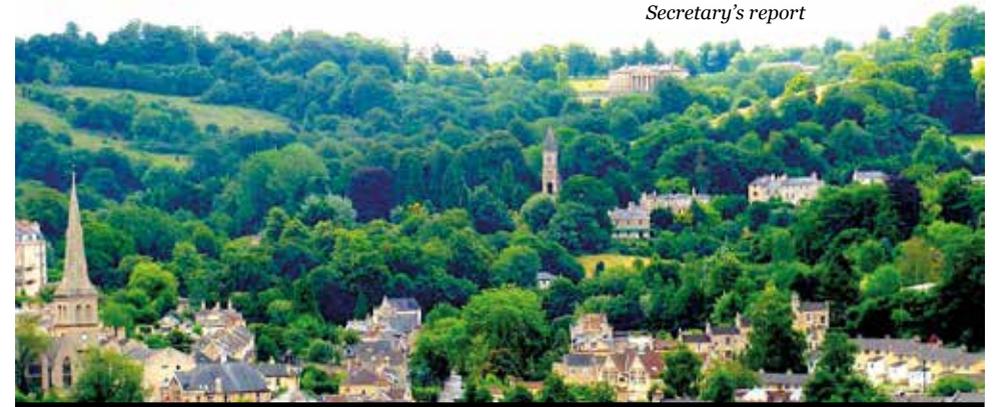
SPRING - SUMMER 2021

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EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor Colette Hill | Design Ralph Allen Press | Advertising Ann Ashworth
Publisher Jeremy Boss | Published by the Widcombe Association

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As we go to print life is at last starting to return to nearer to normal. We can look forward to summer with anticipation as our shops, restaurants and pubs reopen and we think again of sharing time with family and friends in wonderful Widcombe.

The last 14 months have been hard and of course Widcombe and Bath have not been immune from the ravages of the pandemic. I just wanted to pause and reflect and think of those who have lost family and friends, those who have been suffering from illness or whose livelihoods have been adversely affected.

We have so much to be grateful for here in Widcombe. Our local medical services and businesses stepped up to ensure we received medical advice, were able to buy essential goods and are now getting our vaccines. As I have said before, community has never been so important. Widcombe businesses, friends and neighbours have supported each other through the dark times. We now need to carry that spirit forward as we emerge into living with Covid, supporting our local businesses and community that we know are so important in our lives. You will see in this issue details of events the WA is planning over the coming months as national guidelines and Covid-secure measures allow.

The magazine celebrates everything about Widcombe and we hope you enjoy reading it. It is only possible with the support and hard work of all our Widcombe Association members and volunteers. We are particularly pleased about the prospect of a new Dolemeads Residents Association as a new sub-group of the WA. This often-overlooked area of Widcombe features several times in this issue. Also, the work should be under way on transforming the subway under the A36 with the fabulous design voted on by residents in 2019. There have been delays and hurdles to overcome and it is thanks to the persistence of Helen Peter and her team that this is finally now coming to fruition.

I would also like to thank Colette Hill for stepping up to be our editor. Any feedback on the magazine is welcome, please email magazine@widcombeassociation.org.uk.

I am biased, but Widcombe is a fabulous place to live in, work or visit. We have beautiful countryside on the doorstep, amazing history and special architecture all within the World Heritage Site. But people make a place special and we are lucky to have a vibrant Widcombe community. The amenities of the City are but a short step over the river. How lucky we are. I can't think of a better place to have been in lockdown or to be emerging from it. But it is not just me that thinks this. Widcombe was mentioned last year in the Times as a top place to live and just recently Widcombe was identified as the most desirable neighbourhood in Bath by Somerset Live / Zoopla. Truly a special place 'Where the City meets the Countryside'. ■ *Jeremy Boss, Chair of the Widcombe Association*



Driving through reform

Since the heady days of 2016 when the Rossiter Road scheme was finally completed, the Council has been very active in introducing new transport policies and proposals, most of which will have some impact on Widcombe. Whether you think they are likely to be beneficial or harmful to daily life, these schemes are being introduced to reduce traffic and improve the quality of the urban environment.

Breathing easier

The most radical scheme has been the Clean Air Zone, introduced in March this year. It is the first such scheme in England outside London. Drawn around the City Centre but capturing all the principal roads coming into Bath, the most polluting vehicles are charged for entering it. Private cars are exempt: this issue of exemptions was debated prior to the introduction of the scheme, but the Council believes that the air quality targets can be met without charges on the highest polluting cars. The effectiveness of these measure is especially important for people living along the Pulteney Road (A36) through Widcombe, and for Widcombe Primary School.

Walk it, bike it

Another City-wide initiative is Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, measures to be introduced to prevent drivers taking short cuts through residential areas. Entry Hill on the edge of Widcombe is one candidate, and there are a number of possibilities within Widcombe. Closely linked to Low Traffic Neighbourhoods is the Active Travel Routes proposal where roads are identified for conversion to cycling and walking with vehicles limited to access

only. One such proposal is North Road which would be closed to through traffic to provide a safe cycling and walking route to the university. Consultation is under way and early signs are that the idea has not been well received by residents. Widcombe Hill has been suggested as an alternative route. An early informal consultation with residents on Widcombe Hill indicated significant numbers both for and against the idea.



New permit area for Lyncombe

One success has been the long-standing campaign by residents in Greenway Lane, Lyncombe Vale Road, Lyncombe Vale, Rosemount Lane and Perrymead to restrict random parking by drivers from outside the area. Following a survey conducted by the Widcombe Association in 2018 on behalf of the Council to canvass residents on a proposed Residents Parking Zone, the Council has started formal procedures to introduce a zone covering these roads.

Bridge closure

Cleveland Bridge will be closed for repairs for some seven months for essential repairs. This will have significant impact across the City as drivers seek alternative routes. Initially traffic across the bridge will be controlled by traffic signals, but as the works get fully under way the bridge will be closed for all except cyclists, pedestrians and emergency vehicles. The closure of the bridge is likely to affect the volume of traffic through Widcombe but the precise impact is difficult to assess. Full closure is expected to be until mid-August, 2021. Details of the designated diversions for vehicles can be found on the B&NES website. ■ *Michael Wrigley*

Greening Widcombe

In response to the Council's ambition to make B&NES carbon neutral by 2030, Go Green Widcombe has launched a solar panel bulk purchase project to manage the cost and encourage residents to increase their use of renewable energy.

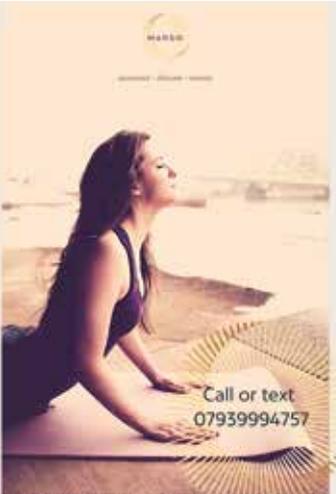
In 2019 the Council reported that just three per cent of homes in B&NES had solar panels installed. To achieve the Council's 2030 target, that figure must rise to fifty per cent. Go Green Widcombe's own survey suggests that just 45 homes in Widcombe have solar panels. To ensure half the houses in our area have solar panels by 2030, we need some hundred new installations each year until that date. But how?

Go Green Widcombe has contacted other communities that have launched solar panel bulk purchase schemes and is using their experience to select an MCS certified installer who will offer greatly reduced installation prices, provided we can get the first six householders involved. Participants should be looking for around 4kW or more of power generation. Roofs facing anywhere between east, south and west can be worth considering for solar power. For further information and to get involved, please email ggwidcombe@gmail.com. ■ Steve Cross



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Unsung heroes

Three local residents have been meeting to litterpick in Widcombe every Saturday since December. Isabel Clarke is a secretary at banking and wealth management company Investec. Cosmo Born is a freelance gardener as well as working for Parks and Gardens UK. Malcolm Roger works full time in the blood testing lab at Southmead Hospital. The trio met through St Marks Community Garden and found they shared a common interest in cleaning up their local area. To help them on their way, Investec provided the equipment under its Sustainable Volunteering initiative.

Isabel Clarke explained: 'It's been such a positive experience. To meet up every Saturday, do something completely different from our nine to five lives, pick up litter around the area and chat to one another about our week, current affairs, families, the past, the future and everything – it is so therapeutic.'

Cosmo Born added: 'locals and visitors pass by and thank us and stop for a chat. People buy us coffees or give us treats. It just makes it super worthwhile and is just the best way ever to start the weekend!'

Both Cosmo and Malcolm do other voluntary work in and around Bath, helping in Lyncombe Hill Fields and St Marks Community Garden. Cosmo, a successful Marathon runner and keen sportsman, also volunteers with the extremely helpful and energetic Good Gym Group.

Malcolm said: 'we can all do something. I was born with Achondroplasia, which means my arms and legs and height are shorter than average and I have a few other difficulties. But I don't allow it to hold me back. I have met lots of interesting people through volunteering, which I thoroughly recommend.'



Widcombe News

Transforming Lyncombe Hill Fields

In September 2020, the Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields (FLHF) acquired a licence from the Council to manage Lyncombe Hill Fields. In 1938, the City Council acquired what was then grazing land, five fields adding up to ten acres, as public open space. Today, the site is more 'open' than ever before.

Notwithstanding lockdown, our wonderful team of volunteers (including Duke of Edinburgh students from Beechen Cliff and Hayesfield schools), working 'Behind the Scenes' and 'On Stage' in the fields, have clocked up over 800 hours of transformational activity since the launch of FLHF in October – a truly remarkable achievement.

'Behind the Scenes', volunteers have created a logo; designed and set up a website, www.friendsoflyncombehillfields.co.uk, as well as Facebook and Instagram feeds. Volunteers have designed a map of the fields which can be seen at two entrances and an information board at the main Greenway Lane entrance.

'On Stage' in the Fields, volunteers gravelled the main paths with 18 tons of recycled stone. They planted and mulched a Tiny Forest



Mulching the tiny forest



Spring comes to the fields

of 580 trees which will be nurtured over two to three years until it is self-sustaining. They created a dell for younger children, clearing it of rubbish, and hedging it with 300 saplings. Named the Cope, the dell has benches, stepping stones (tree trunks) and timber for dens. Fairy doors coming up?

We have completed our first mow of the meadows; installed seven benches and erected bird and bat boxes - some already with residents. 'Bug-ingham Palace', a boxed woodstack, is under construction. The newly formed Flora and Fauna Group and Bird Group are undertaking surveys. Further mowing, raking and hay making will be carried out and an (already oversubscribed) scything workshop has been scheduled. Further workshops will be arranged when possible.

All work carried out by FLHF is in line with our mission which is 'to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the land and maintain its wild nature whilst safeguarding public access.'

FLHF would like to extend its appreciation to Bathscape, the Widcombe Association, four other local associations and a growing number of individuals and organisations for their support without which they would not have been able to accomplish so much in such a short time.

Please come to see us! FLHF welcomes all visitors from near and far, to experience the joys of our hilltop haven ■ *Anita Breeze*

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Dolemeads Triangle community garden

A neglected piece of land in Widcombe's Dolemeads Estate, overlooked by Brunel's historic railway viaduct, is set to be transformed into The Dolemeads TRIANGLE Community Garden.

It was a children's playground until 2020 when the land managers, Curo, replaced the play equipment with pea gravel, making it irresistible to the local cat population. It's a 15-metre fenced triangle that is a literal waste of space but has bags of potential.

By last summer, the lockdown community cheer was fast disappearing. Residents

agreed that rescuing the space would be a great way to build on the community spirit that had been so reassuring in the first lockdown.

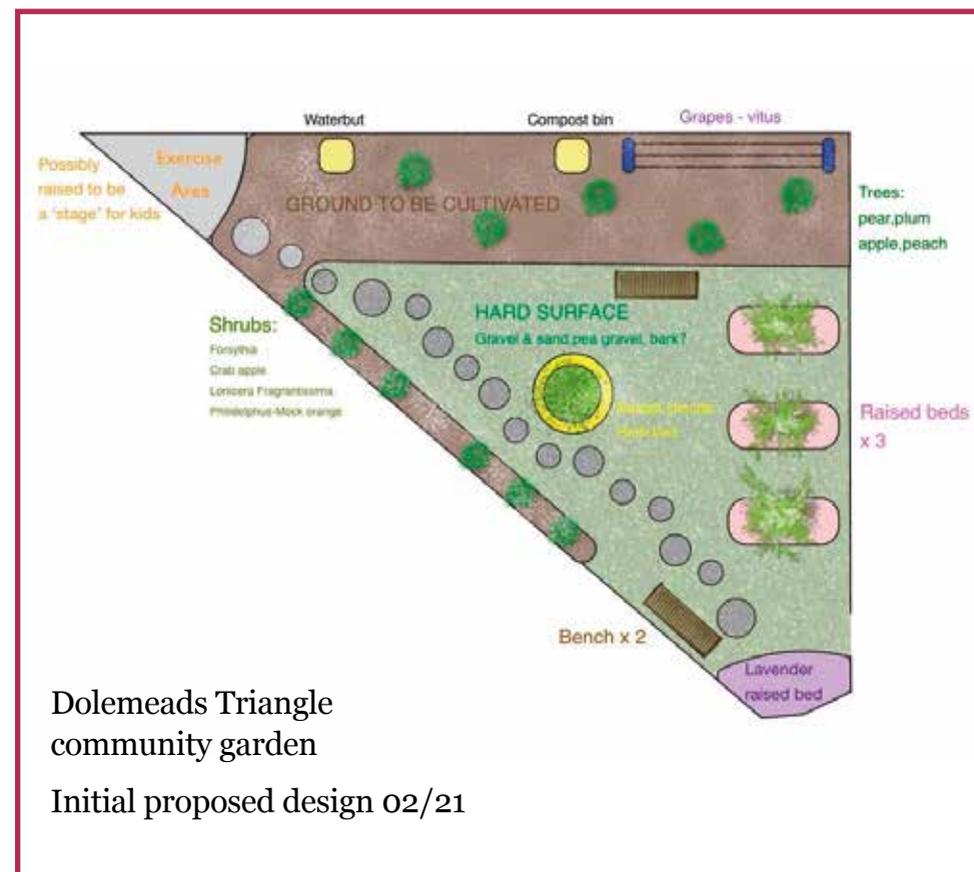
Excelsior Street, Archway and Broadway residents came up with ideas for the space: a place to grow food, socialise, be with nature, family and promote health and wellbeing. As suggestions ranged from scooter park, vegetable patch, sensory garden, etc, finding a solution that meant everyone would enjoy the space and have ownership, took careful thought.

The residents' design saviour was Phil, a retired horticulturalist and resident of Excelsior Street who took on creating the design. Fruit trees - apple, pear, peach, plum - will sit in the rear space which Curo will cultivate in preparation for planting. Phil loves yellow, so we have Forsythia, Lonicera Fragrantissima and Philadelphus - mock orange, all along one side. There will be raised herb beds for residents to use and a lavender bed at the triangle point next to the entrance gate. Three large raised beds will be used to grow produce and there will be edible grape vines against the rear side wooden fence - weather permitting!

Councillor Alison Born has been involved throughout and is helping take the project to the next level. After that it will be down

to the residents to find ways of fundraising for the garden (any suggestions welcomed!). Widcombe Association and Beverley Wallis are supporting the project and Newmans joinery is donating toward the raised beds.

This is a really exciting project and will provide an important legacy for a long-overlooked part of Widcombe. It's a walk-through for so many local people but too often seen as a place that doesn't deserve respect with a recent spate of graffiti defacing the area. The residents are also in conversation with the schools to see how they can be involved in their wider community. It is well documented that green areas have benefits for mental and physical well-being so we are all looking forward to a green oasis alongside the red brick ■ Rachel Meyrick



Dolemeads Triangle community garden

Initial proposed design 02/21

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Widcombe People

Brian Streicher - a lifetime in Widcombe

Being involved in the WA has some unexpected bonuses and this is the story of one encounter with lifetime Widcombe resident Brian Streicher. His invitation came out of the blue, but intrigued, I wandered up to his home in Perrymead.

Brian contacted the Widcombe Association as he had some old photos of Widcombe he wanted to share. His brother was a plasterer and worked on the restoration of Ralph Allen's Cottages in the 1970s and the 1980s development at Claverton Buildings (now the surgery and offices). He took some wonderful photographs before and after the works. (see page 43).

An Austrian by background, Brian came to Bath in 1941 when his family was bombed out of London. He had been in an underground shelter with his mother and when they emerged in the morning Brian (aged 3) asked 'What have we done with the house mum?'

The family were first rehoused in Twerton but soon moved to Excelsior Street in Dolemeads. The area was plagued by floods (see page 44), water often lapping up to the front door. Brian recalls that the smell stayed for weeks; but they cleared up and carried on. He also recalls that several of the local lads were pigeon fanciers: they collected the eggs from the railway arches and bridges – still a pigeon haven today. For one young lad this ended in calamity when he fell into the river and drowned.

At the end of his national service, Brian trained as a barber, serving his apprenticeship at Bells Hairdressers in Southgate Street, before establishing Brian's Barbers in Oldfield Park. He was to run this business for 31 years.

After his marriage, he and his wife set up home at 9 Lyncombe Hill. Then the young couple



were offered a maisonette at 1 Perrymead Court to rent for the princely sum of five pounds a month. The house had been empty for a long time, the windows were broken and the rooms full of desiccated leaves. A few years on the tenants were offered the opportunity to buy their flats: Brian paid £9,000 for his maisonette (the complete house of seven flats totalled £34,000). He stayed for 48 years.

Perrymead Court (formally Perrymead Villa) has an illustrious history. The eighteenth century Italian castrato Venanzio Rauzzini lived here. You can still sense the grandeur of the rooms and imagine impromptu musical performances and parties. Today, Rauzzini's wine cellar forms part of Brian's bedroom.

As well as a famous singer, Rauzzini was a composer and he led the Bath Concerts from 1780 to 1810. The Concerts were held each year over the peak winter season and formed a key part of high society events for the affluent visitors coming to take the waters and for the social scene. Austrian composer Joseph Haydn stayed with Rauzzini when he visited Bath in 1794. Afterwards, he wrote: 'I lived at the house of Herr Rauzzini, a Musicus who is very famous, and who in his time was one

of the greatest singers. He is a very nice and hospitable man. His summer house, where I stayed, is situated on a rise in the middle of a most beautiful neighbourhood, from which you can see the whole City.' While at Perrymead, Haydn saw a monument erected to the memory of Rauzzini's much loved dog Turk. As a parting gift he set the inscription 'Turk was a faithful dog' to music as a canon.

Brian is a talented guitar player and was in several bands. He and his old mate Lester told me tales of hi-jinks and scrapes in the rock and roll years. Brian was involved with the folk club held in Rosie's Ring o' Bells. They were offered a young American artist to perform for the sum of £9. This was about double the price for local talent so they refused

the offer. Paul Simon never made it to Widcombe!

Brian has moved now as he found the stairs difficult and to be nearer his family. He enjoyed his life-long association with Widcombe and was sad to leave. The flat has been sold and, with an asking price of £375,000, Brian was pleased by the return on his speculative investment of 48 years ago. ■ Interview by *Jeremy Boss*



Venanzio Rauzzini



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Wild in Widcombe

One of the most profound effects of lockdown has been the realisation that nature is all around us. It was particularly striking during the first lockdown in early spring last year when we experienced the sudden dramatic effect of silence. Here in Widcombe, background noise ceased. Despite our proximity to the city it was eerily quiet, with hardly any road traffic and fewer trains. But the birds still sang and their song became magnified in the stillness. People asked me why the birds sounded so loud!

I made a recording of the dawn chorus in Widcombe on International Dawn Chorus Day on 3rd May. It was a remarkable event. Instead of the usual twenty or thirty minutes of strident song, the birds kept up their performance for well over an hour. You can still hear it on the Bath Natural History Society website bathnats.org.uk/international-dawn-chorus-day-3-may-2020/. Twenty-four different species were recorded that morning, fortunately not all at the same time. Sometimes it was a cacophony of blackbirds, robins and wrens, at others song-thrushes and blackcaps dominated the chorus. Intermittently there were fluty notes of a nuthatch, bill clapping of herons, and at times the deep croak of a raven from its nest nearby. I even caught the soft tinkling voices of goldcrests, our smallest British bird. The recording was broadcast on



our local Bath radio *Imperial Voice* which prompted many people to get in touch asking for a commentary to identify the individual species, which I was happy to provide.

Lockdown has meant getting to know our local patch in intimate detail. We have certainly done that, exploring every conceivable path within walking distance of home. It has also meant that we have got to know many local residents who appreciate the landscape and ecology on our doorstep. Some have been making the most of these strange times getting close to nature in a very positive way. Local people have taken on the management of Lyncombe Hill Fields to encourage nature and make the fields more accessible (see page 12). The volunteers are doing a grand job.



Have you noticed how the media have latched onto the value of links with nature during the pandemic? Programmes on health and wellbeing are recognising the therapeutic value of the natural world. We are so lucky to live in such beautiful surroundings. River, canal, meadows and woods; what more could you want? ■ *David Goode*

A wander with friends

For many people, a positive of the year of lockdown has been discovering our own neighbourhoods and enjoying the wonderful countryside right here on our doorstep. In Widcombe we are fortunate to have an abundance of footpaths and, although greater footfall has created some issues, increased visitor numbers are a cause for celebration. According to Joe McSorley, area ranger for the Bath Skyline, there may have double the number of walkers on the Skyline during the last year, many of whom don't generally visit the countryside. The Skyline, with its incredible views and its children's play area have been a blessing for so many during such a difficult period.



Inevitably, there have been challenges. With social distancing, paths have become wider and the ground has compacted in places, but the National Trust is delighted to see so many people out and about and making the most of the land it tends. So what can we do to protect our paths and keep ourselves safe? The Skyline Team says sticking to the path is important, stepping aside to let people pass at a safe distance. They urge picnickers to take their litter home with them. But, most of all, they want us to continue to enjoy being outdoors and engaging with nature.

One way to keep up the walking habit is to join a walking group and Widcombe has its own – the Widcombe Wayfarers, who walk on the second Wednesday of every month, setting off from Widcombe Parade. Numbers are limited but it is a simple matter to book a place online. For details of forthcoming walks, see <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events> ■ *Sian Lewis*

Walkabout

A small band of Widcombe Association members has spent the last few months researching a series of local walks around Widcombe and Lyncombe. These will include detailed route descriptions and information about points of interest along the way.

The objective is not just to encourage Widcombe and Lyncombe residents to explore the area but to entice residents from across the city and visitors to cross the river, explore the lanes, fields and views and visit the local shops and eateries.

The walks will be published on the WA website soon ■ *Mary Young*



Out & About

A View from the field

Hola Widcombe! So good to be with you all, once again.

Jorge, Bungle and I have discussed at length all the changes we've seen over the last year and more. We remember how things were last spring – and what a difference a year makes.

Actually, we spent an afternoon thinking very, very hard about this (and you can tell when Bungle is thinking very hard because his mouth falls wide open and you can see all his rather unattractive teeth), and concluded that actually there is not much difference at all. Last year, we grazed the field, snacked on hay and carrots and enjoyed all the waves and shouts we received over the wall from you lovely Widcombonians. This year, we've grazed the field, snacked on hay and carrots and.....well, you can guess the rest.

Jorge noted that, in lockdown, we spent less time than usual not winning the quizzes at the Widcombe Social Club. And Bungle concluded he has been required to gallop around the field less often in recognition of the Big Red Tourist Bus that drives past the field (I call it 'showing off' but Bungle can



get sulky, so I try and keep my thoughts to myself).

We ALL remembered the highlight of last year though – we were sheared outside, as usual – in a sudden thunderstorm. Alpacas (and sheep) need to be kept dry before and during shearing, so there was a great deal of running around with tarpaulins and large plastic bags to keep the rain off us and the fleeces dry.

We thought this was very funny – Jorge screamed throughout (he always does) – but he seemed to put more energy into last year's effort, so I expect the shearers went home with headaches. I wouldn't want to share a tent with a noisy, nervous alpaca and a pair of electric shears – would you? ■ *Zippy*

Pedal pushing

As we emerge again from lockdown, the new season of sociable rides beckons. If you have rediscovered cycling during lockdown, Widcombe Wobblers invites you to discover new routes among friends. The rides are short and invariably end up at a pub or café.

In recent years, several members have graduated to e-bikes. Sales of all bikes rose 60 per cent in 2020 as people sought alternative means of getting about. Sales of e-bikes increased 230 per cent. A little pedal assist makes the fear of hills disappear and

there are plenty of those around Bath. Don't listen to those who claim it's cheating! That's what they said when they first fitted gears on bicycles. E-bikes are the future for short urban journeys; commuting, visits to the shops, the school run are all so much easier, healthier and fun. So come on in and join the e-cycle revolution ■ *Tony Shield*



WIDCOMBE WOBBLERS CYCLE RIDES 2021

UPDATE

We look forward to seeing you on our rides. We will be using Widcombe Association's new online booking system as we have decided to limit numbers to 15 due to the current situation. To book please use this link: <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events>

JUNE

11th Friday 6.30pm

Evening cycle to the Riverside Inn, Saltford.

12 miles

19th Saturday 6.00pm

Evening cycle for a Midsummer Eve picnic at Long Barrow, Stoney Littleton.

13.5 miles

JULY

8th Thursday 6.30pm

Evening cycle round the canal circuit via the Wheelright's Pub, Monkton Combe.

12 miles

17th Saturday 10.00am CHALLENGE RIDE!

Day ride via Lavender Farm to Tuckers Grave Pub.

18 miles

AUG

7th Saturday 10.00pm CHALLENGE RIDE!

Day ride to the stone circle and the Druids' Arms, Stanton Drew

28.5 miles

26th Thursday 6.30pm

Evening cycle to the Church of St Catherine, St Catherines Valley followed by a meal stop at the Crown Pub.

5.5 miles

SEPT

11th Saturday 11.30am

Cycle to the Hare Brewery, Warmley.

17.6 miles



Meeting point: under the tree at the western end of Widcombe Parade. In the case of bad weather, please see our website for last minute changes.

<https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/3-events>

WSC IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Bath's best wharf-side arts centre, Widcombe Social Club, is now open, still Covid-secure, all safety measures carefully implemented.

Friday Night Social returns – the bar is open to everyone every Friday from 5.30pm, with free live music 6-8pm and a new bar food menu launching in June.

To be sure of a table on Friday nights please book by emailing info@widcombesocialclub.co.uk before 5.00pm each Thursday. Walk-ins are welcome, subject to availability.

Ticketed shows are upstairs every Friday from 8pm, including Bath Comedy's fortnightly comedy club nights, top quality Jazz and Folk from All Of The Above, and a regular Film Night.

Our popular DJ nights will be back from June on Saturday nights once or twice a month, brought to you by the team behind Transmission, Electric Dreams, Frug and Bath Soul Club.

We've also got plans to be open to all on other regular nights too!

Watch this space: www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk

NB you don't have to be a member to enjoy the Club! But members enjoy discounted drinks and tickets. Be the first to know about exciting developments by joining the mailing list.

Our rooms are once again available for hire, in line with the easing of regulations.

We're so pleased to be welcoming you back – see you soon!

Widcombe Social Club Widcombe Hill, Bath BA2 6AA

Enquiries: info@widcombesocialclub.co.uk

Tel: 01225 460 456 www.widcombesocialclub.co.uk

[facebook.com/widcombesocialclub](https://www.facebook.com/widcombesocialclub)

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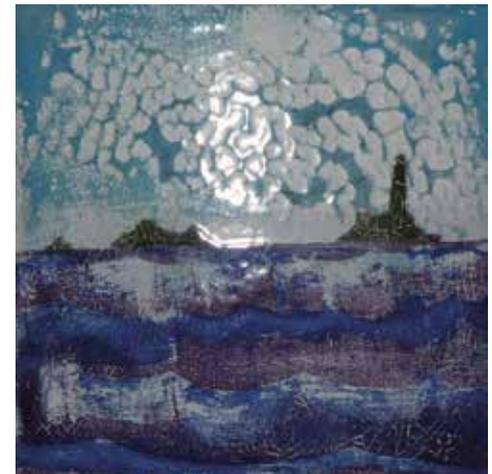
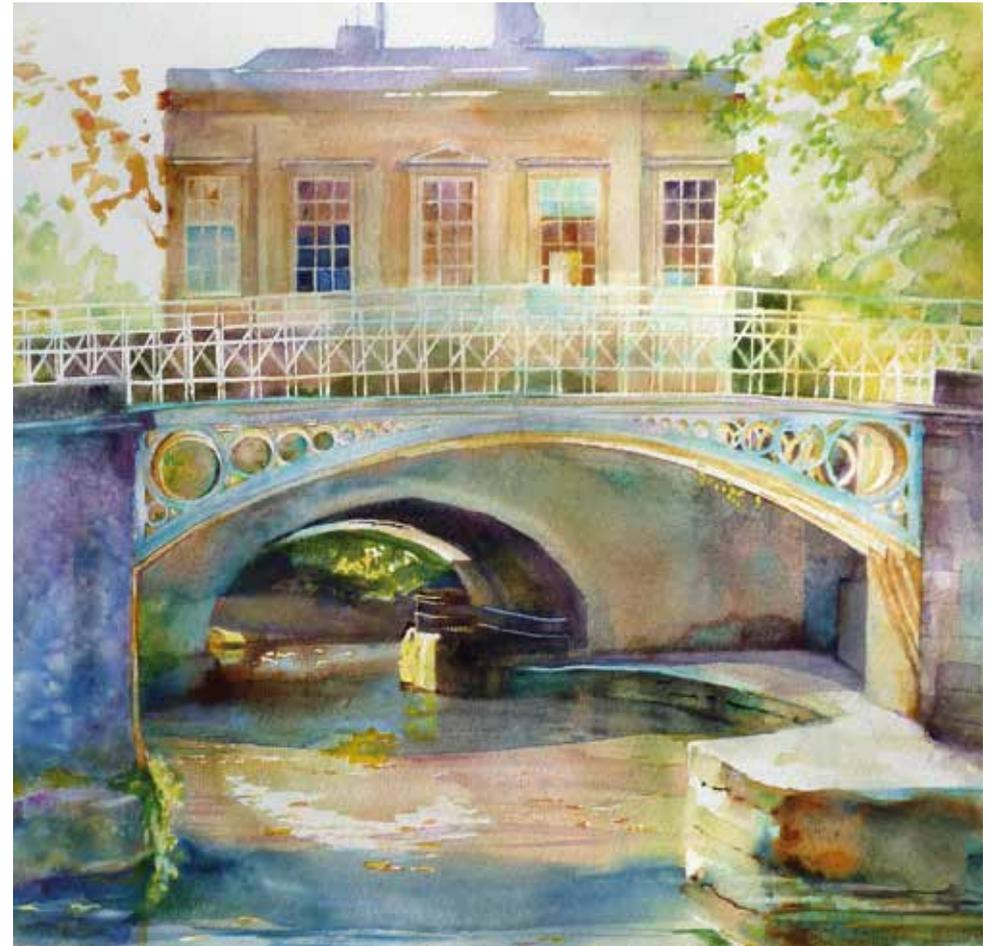
www.hshmotorgroup.co.uk

The Widcombe Art Trail is back!

Following its forced cancellation in 2020, Widcombe's Art Trail is back on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 August.

Given Covid is still around, it will be a little different this year. Even if all restrictions are lifted, artists and visitors will feel happier in a Covid-safe environment. For this reason, the Art trail will be contained within three public venues, Widcombe Social Club, The Natural Theatre Company and St Matthew's Church. In effect, we will be creating an artists quarter at the bottom of Widcombe Hill.

The location, adjacent to Widcombe Parade, makes it easy for people shopping or visiting the pubs and cafés to pop in and see what Widcombe artists have to offer. There will be paintings, sculpture, crafts and jewellery. This is where you will find affordable art from aspiring artists depicting landscapes, seascapes as well as experimental art and abstracts. There will also be prints and cards and smaller items to buy as mementos of your time spent at this much anticipated event ■ *Pippa Wrigley*




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BATH'S LEADING STUDENT LETTING AGENT, ESTABLISHED OVER 30 YEARS AND WITH THE LARGEST STUDENT HOUSING PORTFOLIO IN THE CITY, WE WELCOME ENQUIRIES FROM LANDLORDS, PROSPECTIVE LANDLORDS AND TENANTS.

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www.romancity.co.uk

Art in the underpass

Following generous donations, and many delays, the underpass by the bus station is to be decorated with murals based on designs by local artist Sarah Ovens, on the theme *Welcome to Widcombe, where Bath City meets the countryside*. Sarah and her family having moved to Burundi, mural artist, Dan Wilson of Decreate.co.uk is to complete the project. Dan worked on the Oxford Canal Mural Project, where beautiful murals were designed and painted to discourage graffiti.



Dan will complete the design on one side, with additional elements on the opposite wall and up the ramps to enhance the experience of using the subway as well as to direct users to Widcombe, Bear Flat and the City. Donors include the Widcombe Association, Bear Flat



Residents Association, real estate company Savills, healthcare technology specialist Mayden, Lord Architecture, Engineering consultancy Buro-Happold, Crown Paints, B&NES and our ever supportive ward councillors.

Commenting on the project, Helen Peter of Widcombe Association said: 'We would especially like to thank B&NES engineer Dale Mynett, who has been supportive throughout. We are very grateful to all sponsors whose generosity will be rewarded by beautiful artwork befitting the entrance to a World Heritage City. However, funds are still needed and anyone wishing to contribute can email the Widcombe Association.'



Having a laugh

We've been busy over lockdown programming fantastic comedy and more, to take place at the Widcombe Social Club, The Bath Comedy Festival's spiritual home.

The fortnightly comedy club nights at WSC are now all year round (with some occasional exceptions) – three or more top notch acts in one night, with cabaret seating and affordable drinks, plus pre-show music and food available in the bar.

In addition, Bath Comedy is to stage a two-week Comedy Festival in the latter half of July, including several of the shows from the postponed 2020 Festival, featuring famous faces as well as up-and-coming stars of tomorrow.



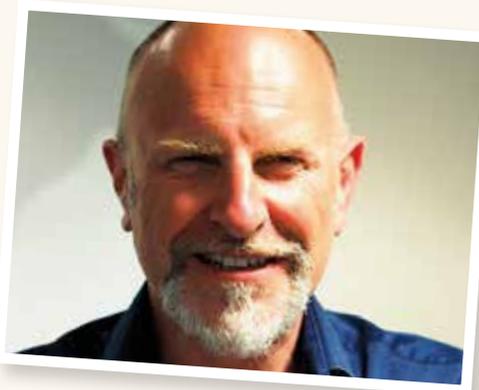
Geoff Norcott

The Fest will take place in several venues across town and highlights at WSC include Simon Evans, Geoff Norcott, Henning Wehn, Arthur Smith, Jen Brister, Phil Nichol and Ian Shaw. Bath Institute of Laughter is hosting some exciting workshops too.

Full details and online booking available at www.bathcomedy.com ■ Nick Steel



Henning Wehn



Simon Evans



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In the garden

5 Cambridge Place

The owners of this detached villa on the steep slope of Widcombe Hill have overhauled the garden and planted a profusion of spring bulbs including tulip Oscar - said to be a symbol of passionate love following a Persian Romeo and Juliet style legend. It is said that a sultan walked off a cliff after being falsely led to believe his beloved had died and these tulips grow wherever a drop of the sultan's blood fell. Other noted flowers are tulip *La Belle Époque*, *Greenland* and fritillary *Early fantasy*.

The honey-coloured walls surrounding the gardens are warmed by the spring sun providing gentle heat for the espaliers of damson, pear apple and plum. Their beautiful blossom explodes into bloom in a cascade of delicate froth.

Rare mutations of pink and white bluebells are dotted around the garden, early nectar for butterflies, bees and many other insects.



A tantalising glimpse through the gnarled branches of the espalier at the west of the garden, reveals the last great medieval abbey in England with its magnificent stained-glass windows. A truly a beautiful sight.

The house and gardens were designed around 1825 by John Pinch the Elder. Other notable works by Pinch are

Sydney Place and Raby Place in Bathwick, Prior Park Buildings, Norfolk Crescent and Cleveland Pools. He is also known to have designed, altered, and extended many properties on Bathwick Hill.

His drawings with his neat signature are found on leases or 'skins' indicating he was involved in the design of the buildings attributed to him. He was said to have been a careful capable and trustworthy man who loved his work. He died in 1827 at the age of 58 and is buried at St Mary's churchyard in Bathwick. ■

Beverley Wallis



Tulip Oscar

Filling up

The nineteenth-century drinking fountain and horse trough set into the wall at the lower end of Widcombe Hill is one of three in the Widcombe area. It is built of Bath stone and set into the retaining wall of a private garden. The natural spring water would have been welcomed by horses, cattle, dogs and their owners.

The first troughs were provided by charitable associations. The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association, founded in 1859, was responsible for over a thousand troughs in Britain and overseas. Early models were made of wood lined with zinc or iron. By the 1860s, the wood had been replaced with granite.

Public houses provided troughs for their patrons at a price – one is said to bear an inscription *All that water their horses here must pay a penny or have some beer*. Maps were provided for Hansom cabs showing free troughs, known as filling stations. In 1824 the RSPCA collaborated with the association to provide troughs where live animals were taken to market.

Many of the surviving troughs are filled with flowers and, in Widcombe, local donors have planted up this one too. ■ *Beverley Wallis*



Christine Walkden – stop press



Horticulturalist and plantswoman Christine Walkden will be coming to Bath to talk to the Widcombe Garden Club on 16 February 2022. Best known as a regular on the BBC Radio 4's Gardeners Question Time, Christine Walkden is resident gardening expert for BBC1's The One Show and has presented her own show, *Christine's Garden*, also on the BBC. Formerly a horticulturalist at Kew Botanic Gardens, she is a past winner of the Garden Writers' Guild Radio Broadcasting Award and has written a number of books. ■ *Beverley Wallis*

A zoom with a view

Garden Club members were delighted to meet again albeit via Zoom. Since late last year we have enjoyed talks by John Tucker, Marian McNeir, local beekeeper Ian Gilchrist, eminent urban ecologist David Goode and the Friends of Lyncombe Farm Fields. As well as members and residents of Bath, viewers came from further afield in the UK as well as Europe and America – one of the unexpected benefits of meeting online. ■ *Beverley Wallis*

In the garden

Gardening Notes

This is the busiest time for gardeners, but also the most exciting, as life returns to plants that have been dormant for months and are newly bursting with life.

For a riot of colour on a budget, now is a good time to produce your own plants from seed. Some of the traditional cottage garden flowers such as nasturtiums, marigolds and sunflowers are so easy to grow and so cheap from seed. These simple flowers are also wonderful sources of pollen for bees and other beneficial insects.

If you grow roses be prepared for an infestation of aphids - it's almost inevitable. However I prefer not to spray insecticide, but wait for the natural predators such as ladybirds, lacewings and blue tits to take care of them. Do apply a rose fertiliser if you haven't done so already, then a second application after the first flush of flowers has faded



to encourage further blooming. Regular deadheading of many of our border plants such as lupins, delphiniums, campanulas, phlox and geraniums will encourage them to produce many more flowers and extend their flowering season.

Our lawns take a battering during the winter months, and every time we mow the lawn we are taking nutrients away from the soil, and so we really need to give our lawns a little love. My preferred regime is to apply a half strength fertiliser in the spring, then again in the autumn, I never mow the lawn too short and regularly leave the cuttings on the grass. And I have learnt to appreciate daisies and speedwell.

Happy gardening! ■ *John Leach, Prior Park Garden Centre*



Talks and private tours 2021

Talks held at Widcombe Social Club.

WA members £3 non members £4 (on the door)

22 June	Private tour	1.6 acres of beautiful gardens at Wingfield, near Trowbridge
21 July	Andrew Cannell, head gardener, American Museum	American garden meets English landscape
18 August	Janet Berlin	Growing plants from seeds collected from your garden
September (date tbc)	Private tour	Hartley Farm, with market gardener Kate Collyns
15 September	Roz Hicks and Caroline Davis	Growing flowers to make a posy
20 October	Marcel Floyd of Floyds Climbers	Clematis and other climbers


Widcombe
 ST THOMAS & ST MATT'S

We're still here! Still church!

For more information regarding our services at St Thomas a Becket and St Matt's, please see our website for information

www.widcombe.church



Widcombe Foodies

The Larkhall brunchboard Sally Godfrey

Ingredients (Serves 2)

For the pancakes:

- 175g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 40g caster sugar
- 1 free-range egg
- 200ml milk

For the savoury options:

- 6 Larkhall Butchers Sausages with Black Pepper
- 8 rashers of Smoked Streaky Bacon

- 1 large ripe avocado
- 1 free-range egg
- A small bunch of fresh dill and parsley (optional)
- Upton Cheyney Chilli Co Sweet Chilli Sauce
- Dorset Sea Salt Co Oak Smoked Salt

To serve:

- The Bay Tree Food Co Jumbleberry Jam*
- Wilkin & Sons Tomato Ketchup*
- Maryland Farmhouse Salted Butter*
- Fresh fruit – I got blueberries, raspberries and strawberries
- Fresh bread or toast
- A bottle of bubbly (optional, of course!)



Before Covid Widcombe Community Choir carried out a survey of its Members. Here are some of the reasons why local people love to sing at this Choir:-

- The Best Bit about Mondays!
- Fun, friendly, good for body and soul
- A community, a good singing group
- Supportive, musical, enjoyable
- Sing and forget the rest of your worries

We are hoping to start meeting together again, in person, in September 2021 (all being well).

If you're interested, then you can join our email list via our section on the Widcombe Association website.

Mondays - from 7:30pm to 9:30pm
Upstairs at ...
Widcombe Social Club
Widcombe Hill, Bath BA2 6AA

Widcombe Choir is affiliated to the Widcombe Association
Visit: www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/project/the-widcombe-choir/

Widcombe Therapy Room

A beautiful, tranquil space located just behind Widcombe Parade.

Available at Widcombe Therapy Room

- Psychotherapy (with both qualified and trainee psychotherapists)
- Clinical Psychology
- Reflexology
- Holistic massage

Please see our website for contact details of therapists and contact them directly for appointments.

www.therapyroombath.co.uk

Therapists working from Widcombe Therapy Room are all accredited with and follow the codes of conduct of their professional bodies, including committing to the process of ongoing professional development and supervision. They hold their own insurance.

- 1 Preheat the oven to 80°C and start by making the pancakes – you can then keep them warm in the oven while you finish off the savoury bits. Beat all the pancake ingredients together with an electric mixer until you have a smooth, thick batter.
- 2 Pop a frying pan on a medium high heat with a little splash of sunflower oil to grease it, and let it get nice and hot. Add a big spoonful of pancake batter to the pan, let it spread out a little and cook underneath, and then when bubbles start to appear on the top, flip it over to cook the other side. You can do more than one pancake at a time if you keep them spaced apart, or you can play it safe and just do them individually if you prefer! Pop all the pancakes in the oven to keep warm.
- 3 Fry or grill the sausages and bacon (according to your own preference) until nicely crispy and browned. Meanwhile, cook the egg – bring a small pan of water to the boil, add the egg with a spoon, and

cook for about 5 ½ minutes if you want a runny yolk, longer if you prefer it solid. Once the timer goes, transfer the egg to a bowl of cold water.

- 4 Finally, halve the avocado (discarding the stone, but keeping the skins) and scoop out the flesh into a bowl. Roughly mash it – don't make it too smooth – with 1 tbsp sweet chilli sauce, a handful of chopped fresh parsley, and a generous pinch of smoked sea salt. Pop the smashed avo back into the avocado skins.
- 5 Once the egg is cool enough to handle, peel off the shell and cut the egg in half with a sharp knife, then lay each half on top of your prepared avocados. Sprinkle with a little fresh dill and some more smoked sea salt.
- 6 Finally, arrange your delicious brunch on a large board or serving platter, garnishing with plenty of fresh fruit, and serve with glasses of bubbly and condiments on the side. Cheers!

Widcombe on parade

After the shock of the first lockdown, the independent shops of Widcombe Parade rose to the challenge of surviving with their doors locked shut. But no one is saying the going was easy.

Home and lifestyle store Luca and Fig started up in March 2020, offering a select range of clothing, local pottery, jewellery and gifts. In retrospect it wasn't the best moment to launch a non-essential business: three days later, the first lockdown was announced. According to proprietor Luci Cassels it was 'a rollercoaster of emotions, really tough. All that positive energy brought to a halt. Just like that.'

Luci responded by going online, selling stock through design-led outlet trouva.com, then creating her own website lucaandfig.com. 'I have had orders from the USA, Brazil and Australia.'

Last year was up and down as lockdowns came and went. 'December was really good, really busy. I felt renewed belief in what I was doing. Then wallop – and all that Christmas stock!' Now, with her doors wide open, Luci is encouraged by the level of local



Tash sets out her stall

support as customers return; her online business will continue in parallel, something she might never have considered if Covid hadn't happened. 'Things are good again and the feeling of community is wonderful. The arrival of Larkhall Butchers, Bath Spa Florists selling fruit and veg, these things bring people to the street and it is good to be here.'

For Tash Nolan-Kemp at Bath Spa Florists, adapting fast was key to getting through such a difficult time. 'Within 12 hours of the first announcement, we were buying fruit and vegetables from the market in Bristol where



we buy our flowers. We delivered fruit and veg boxes to people who were shielding. We stocked toilet rolls as well as bread and eggs. Over time we adjusted our range and learned what does and doesn't sell in Widcombe. Here people like their potatoes scrubbed! They like the less obvious vegetables, like celeriac and aubergine. So long as people keep buying the fruit and veg, we will keep stocking it.'

Selling fruit and veg has been good for flower sales too: 'people stop outside, then see that we have the full range of flowers inside the shop. We keep our range seasonal so that it's affordable. In lockdown, people were buying themselves a few flowers along with their potatoes and onions. And they saw that we do the grander stuff for weddings, anniversaries and funerals. We have loved getting to know the local families who started to shop more locally to avoid the crowds. Long may that continue.'

Bath Spa Florists will have its fiftieth anniversary in 2024 and is planning a big celebration then.

At the Widcombe Deli, Jon and Nicky Ison were also quick to adjust to the arrival of the pandemic. John said: 'We did things like home delivery and take-aways. Furlough was a massive help and we were also awarded small grants which kept us on an even keel.'

Astonishingly, the Isons were even able to expand, opening their third deli in Abbey Green in early December. The property was transformed into Modiste for key scenes of Bridgerton and that really put the deli on the map. The Isons have made the most of the connection with the launch of their own brand of chocolate, coffee and tea under the Modiste name.

Expanding was also the solution at the White Hart where Jo Parson transformed the pub's first floor bedrooms into additional dining space. She had been thinking about doing something like that for a long time and lockdown spurred her to get on with it. The White Hart also offered sophisticated eat-

at-home menus and sales of these helped pay the bills as well as keeping the brand alive in people's minds.

The pub was able to keep all twenty of its staff. 'Furlough helped of course as did government grants and the rates rebate from B&NES.'



A hartfelt welcome

Widcombe's independent businesses did so much to adapt to the difficult market conditions imposed by the pandemic. Now they are ready to reap the rewards of pent up consumer demand.

John Ison speaks for everyone when he says: 'What this year has shown is that small independents are better placed to adapt and thrive in these situations. It's been a crazy year but not all bad, and we are cautiously optimistic about the months ahead.'

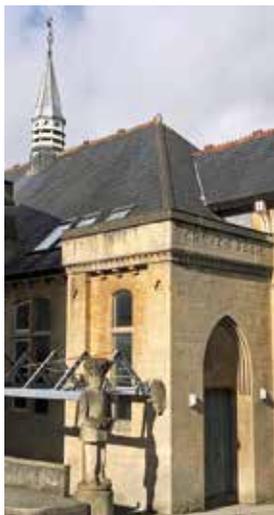


Business is brisk in Luca and Fig

Widcombe Institute:

A hidden treasure

Pedestrians accelerating down Widcombe Hill might not give a second glance to the Widcombe Institute, the home of the Natural Theatre. Apart from the unique carvings of assorted Natural Theatre characters, created by trainee masons from Bath College, and the occasional crew bus being loaded with exotic costumes and props bound for astonished audiences in distant lands, its modest nineteenth century building seems to offer little architectural interest.



Closer inspection however reveals a wealth of astonishingly skilled masonry, including some multicoloured go-faster stripes which are surely the result of an overindulgent liquid lunch at the White Hart. Being a former Sunday school, there are separate entrances for boys and girls. To place these symmetrically on a façade that abuts such a steep slope would be an architect's nightmare. Look carefully and you can see this was attained by slightly different arrangements of the gothic architraves above the doors.

After a peripatetic period using myriad premises, including an old mill with ridiculously low ceilings (no shows involving leaping could be rehearsed), a slimming clinic (potential plump customers still gasped their way up to my office a year after we moved in), a former contraceptive packing unit and even the as-yet unconverted upper floor of the Little Theatre Cinema (everything had to be winched up from the pavement by pulley) we managed to purchase the entire institute. Thank you, National Lottery and B&NES!

To the chagrin of delivery personnel, there's no big sign advertising the current occupants. In the same way that Toppings are unable to boldly announce their new premises in the Friends Meeting House, the heritage listing means that the beautifully carved institute signage must remain unsullied. All that is allowed is a modest brass plate next to the main entrance, which I dutifully polished on a weekly basis during my reign as Artistic Director

Inside, the building is a maze of interlocking rooms, including a spacious technical workshop in what was the original vicar's billiard room and boxing arena! When the Naturals first occupied the building, they were limited to operating from the basement. The main hall was used by Harvest Wholefoods as their warehouse. I'll admit it only now, but we used to creep up the rickety back staircase to steal chocolate soya drinks!

We added a mezzanine aided by huge support from many sources including the Widcombe Association. Thus, a vibrant community space was created, including a beautiful contemporary event and rehearsal studio. After a tantalising glimpse of the thousands of costumes ranked in the ground floor wardrobe, people are gobsmacked as they come up the stairs into this light-filled hall, with its semi-sprung dance floor and ultra-modern light fittings.

Although its use as a community hub has now been partially taken over by the wonderful new Widcombe Social Club and the upgrade of St Matthews's Church, the Institute is still a hot bed of creativity, bursting at the seams with theatre workshops for all ages, rehearsals galore, projects for disabled performers and of course as a base for the Naturals themselves.

They even claim to have made the building pay for itself, something I certainly never managed to do. After all, Brasso is quite expensive! ■ *Ralph Oswick*

Prior Park Cottages

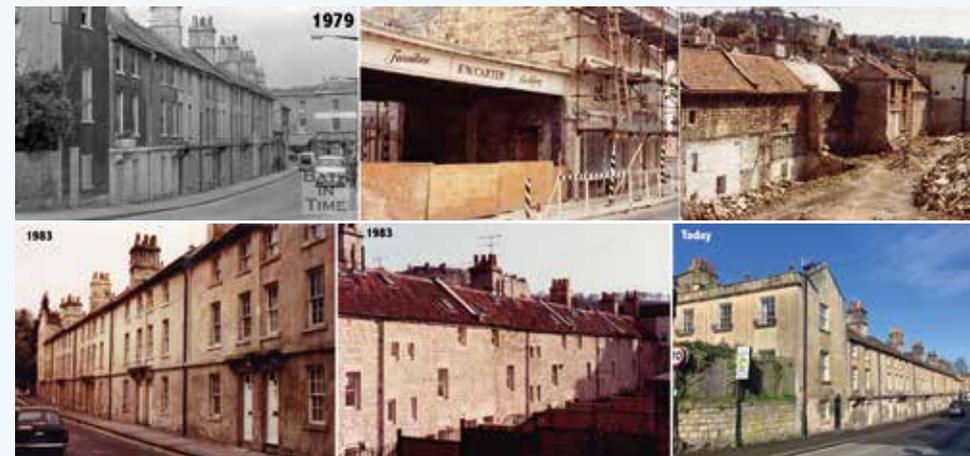
Most days I walk past the Georgian cottages at the junction of Prior Park Road with Widcombe Parade taking them for granted. In the 1970s they were scheduled for demolition to the widen road. But they were saved and instead restored.

Designed by John Wood (who designed The Royal Crescent, The Circus, Queen's Square and Prior Park), they are Grade II* listed and this is an exert from the official record:

Eleven terrace houses, including Priory Cottage. 1728-1740, restored 1983. For Ralph Allen, by John Wood the Elder. They are of considerable interest also as part of Ralph Allen's extensive quarrying business and were built, like Prior Park, to demonstrate the capabilities of Bath stone. Wood's design applied the principles of Palladian order to the hitherto-unexplored realm of workers' housing, and they marked the western approaches to Allen's domain. The houses are close to the wharf from which Allen shipped his stone, brought down from the quarries by rail on the line of the current Ralph Allen Drive. They thus formed part of an exceptional industrial landscape and are of very considerable significance as part of Ralph Allen's working landscape, as well as being early industrial houses of unusual architectural interest.



This series of pictures, given to me by Brian Streicher whose brother was a plasterer working on the scheme, shows the award-winning restoration. The houses showcase the diversity of Widcombe with the famous architect building grand houses like Prior Park alongside those for local workers. Surely something we can learn from in modern Widcombe. ■ *Jeremy Boss*



Local History

Dolemeads miscellany

Dolemeads has undergone major changes since the original houses were built in the 1820s. The arrival of the railway, with works from 1836 until the opening in 1840, required the demolition of some of its homes for the viaduct. Then, in 1900, work started to build its red-brick houses as social housing and 1919-21, the semi-detached houses were built using Bath stone.

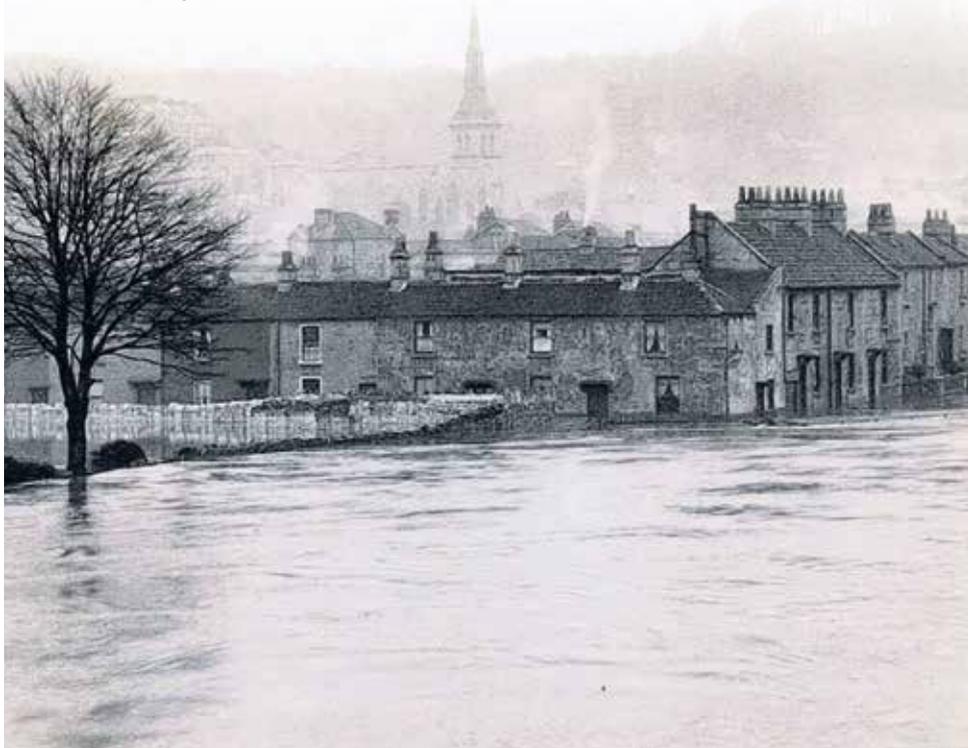
From its origins in the 1820s, the Dolemeads was subject to flooding and many times in the nineteenth century emergency funds were raised to help people living there. A proposal to divert the course of the Avon in 1825 was rejected because of the expense. In 1877 and again in 1896 other flood

prevention schemes were considered then abandoned. A severe flood in 1969 prompted the current scheme which was completed in 1974. The scheme has been very successful although heavy snow brought flooding back in February 2009 and November 2012.

On 12 April 1941, prior to the Bath Blitz a year later, bombs fell on Dolemeads destroying houses in Excelsior Street. Ten people, including babies, were killed.

Ferry Lane in Dolemeads did once lead to a ferry that connected with South Parade, where steps led from the river to the street. The ferry was superseded by North Parade Bridge, which opened in 1836 as a private venture and was a toll bridge until 1929.

Ralph Allen Drive and Prior Park Road are on land bought by Ralph Allen and on which he built his railway to move stone from his quarries at Combe Down to his wharf at Dolemeads.



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WA modernises



The Widcombe Association has introduced a new membership and events system to improve membership management and enable members to have more control over their details, register for events and make payments securely and easily.

It is really easy to join or renew your membership at <https://widcombe-association.whitefuse.net/pages/7-become-a-member-today>. It is still only £10 to join as a household. This site runs alongside our main website at www.widcombeassociation.org.uk.

Events are also publicised and tickets managed through the new sub site. One advantage is that there are no longer any payment fees when you buy tickets.

We will also need to transfer to a new direct debit supplier when memberships renew in January 2022. But the new system is a win-win-win as it is easier, more secure and less expensive than our old system.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the transfer to the new system, particularly Ann Ashworth, our membership secretary. Fortunately, this is something we only need to do every 10 years or so! Please bear with us with any teething issues and we will look forward to improving your membership experience as we develop the new system further.

A date for your diary.

After a successful event last year the Widcombe Christmas Market will be back again this year and is planned for 13-14 November 2021 at the Widcombe Social Club. The perfect opportunity to get those special Christmas gifts from local artisans.

Annual General Meeting

Last year our AGM in April was cancelled for obvious reasons. We were however able to hold a virtual AGM in October. Your main committee decided to defer the AGM again this year from April so that we can hopefully have an in-person event over the summer. Watch our website for details.

Secretary's report

The WA Committee has continued to meet monthly on Zoom and has found plenty to occupy it. I am sure we are all looking forward to the time when we can meet in person again.

Since the AGM in October we have welcomed two new co-opted members to the Committee: Colette Hill, who is now the Magazine editor, and Rachel Meyrick who represents the Dolemeads' residents group.

Some things have been delayed by the pandemic of course and there do seem to have been an unusually high number of Council surveys and consultations over the last few months. Wherever appropriate we have responded as an association, prompted members to make their comments, and provided details in Talking Points.

On the positive side we were pleased that the Christmas market was able to go ahead, the Widcombe Winter Windows brought some much needed cheer and the Widcombe Mummies were able to perform their traditional New Year's Day play – albeit in a slightly different format to usual. Thanks are also due to Beverley who has been organising Garden Club meetings on Zoom and these have proved popular. ■ *Mary Young*



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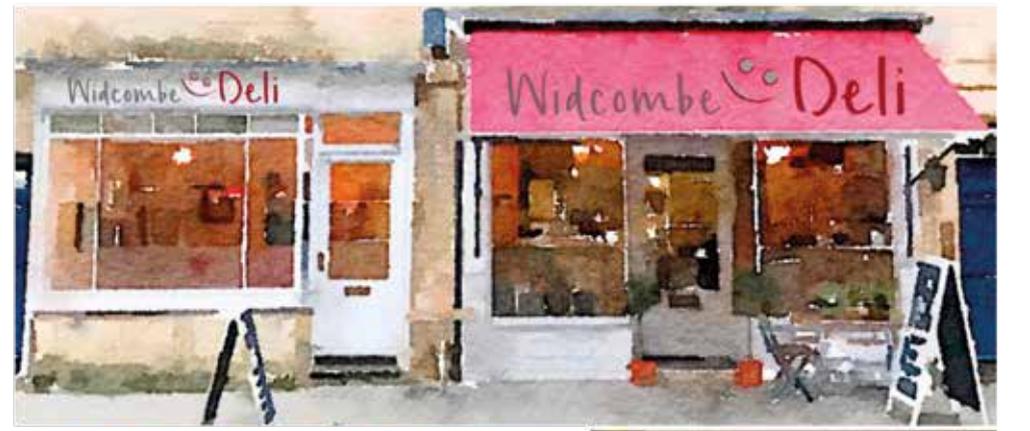


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