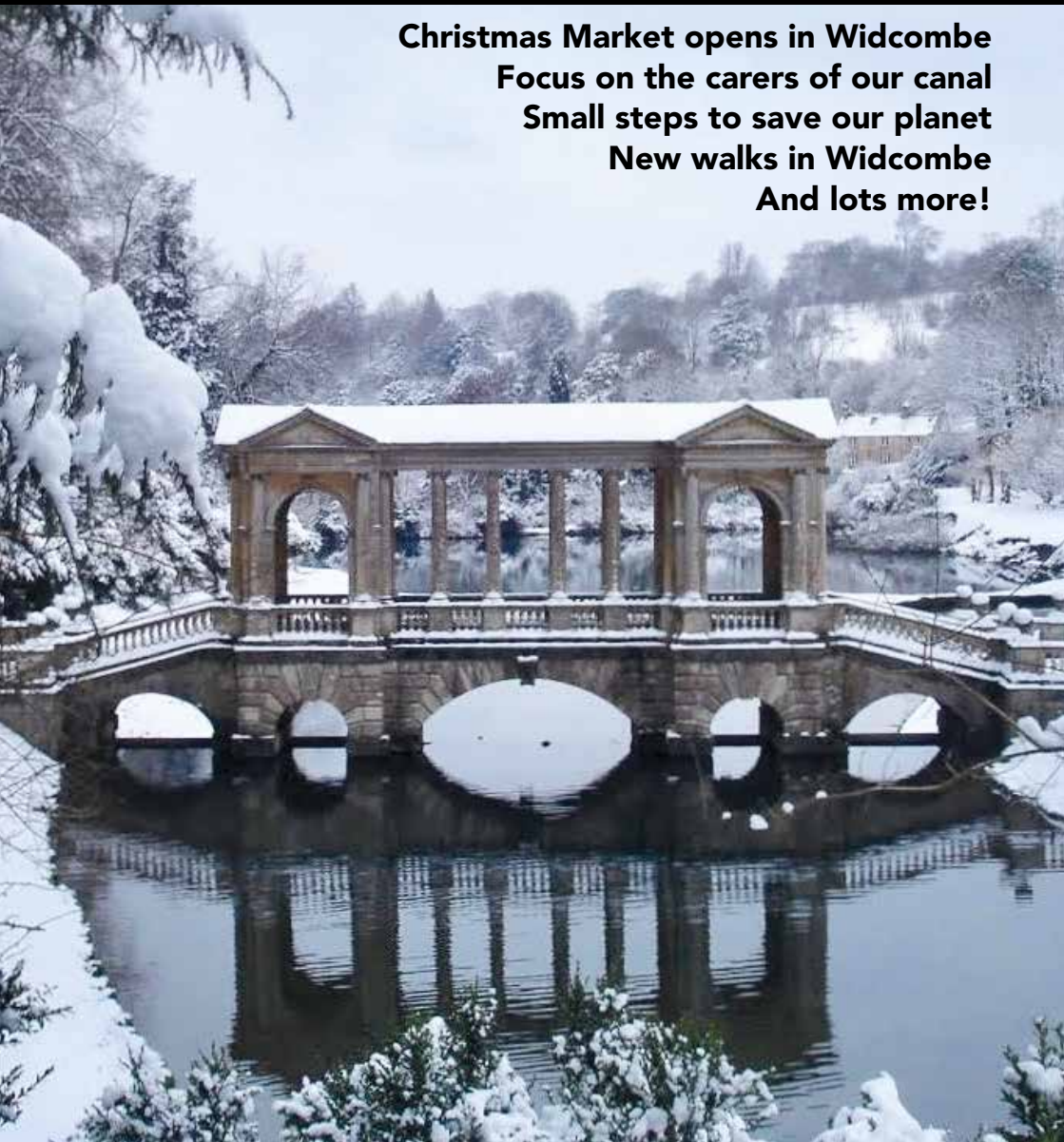


AUTUMN - WINTER 2022

Widcombe magazine

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NEWS & VIEWS

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Focus on the carers of our canal
Small steps to save our planet
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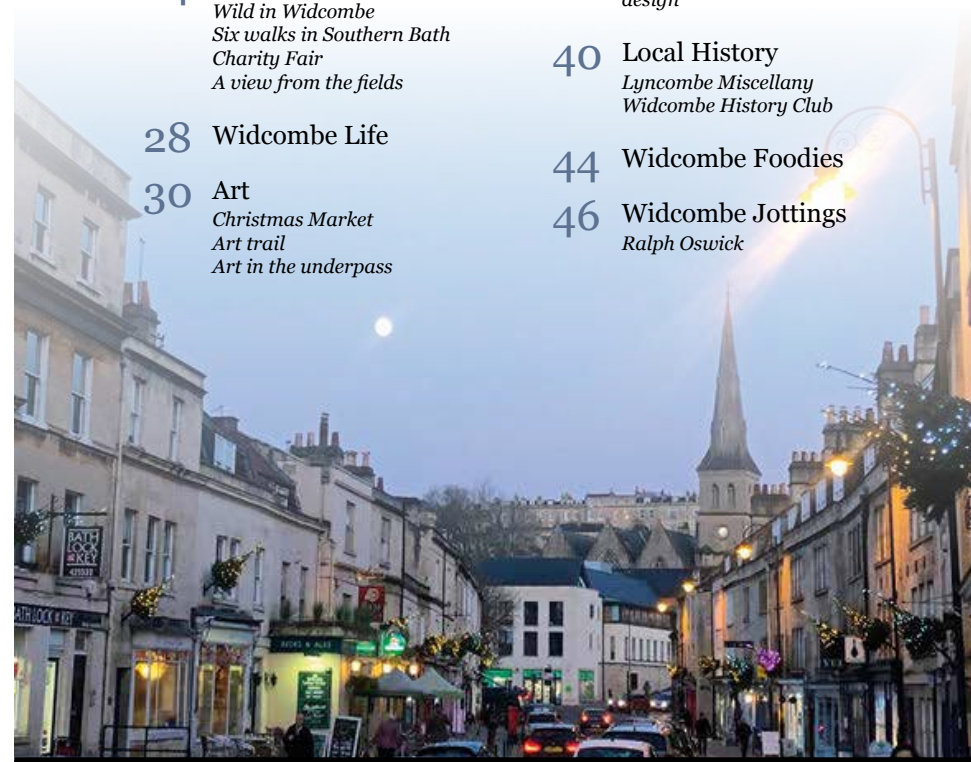
Autumn - Winter 2022

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Chair's column

It feels like some normality is at last returning to life in Widcombe: it has been great to see many of you at our events and in our streets, socially distanced of course. But I am also mindful that Covid levels remain high and that many people are still taking a cautious approach, especially to gathering indoors.

That's why, after careful thought and to be as inclusive as possible, we held our AGM virtually in October. We will continue with a hybrid working mode for the time being, some virtual meetings but also some physical events where it is safe. Face-to-face includes the Widcombe Christmas Market and the garden talks. More on our events and activities in this issue.

The magazine will have dropped through your door as the UK hosts the COP26 Climate Change Conference and the world's spotlight is on this vital topic. B&NES has declared a climate emergency and every time you turn on the TV there are more climate-themed programmes like the excellent Earthshot. Hence the sustainability theme running through this issue. Working together as a community, doing the small things while thinking bigger, we can all make a real difference.

In 2016, a dedicated band of Widcombe Association members developed a Sustainable Widcombe blueprint – a wide-ranging review that identified 45 areas for action. The report is available at <http://www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sustainable-Widcombe-FINAL.pdf>. This issue of your magazine picks up several of the themes: the continued impact of road traffic on Widcombe, promoting walking, the problem of garden bonfires and air pollution, and green energy.



We would love to hear your ideas about how we can take forward Sustainable Widcombe and how you would like to help. It seems to me that being community-minded, looking out for your neighbours and supporting local businesses is as important as ever.

Thank you to everyone who helps make Widcombe a more vibrant place to live, work or visit. I can't think of a better ending than Love Widcombe: Stay Safe : Support Local.

■ *Jeremy Boss, Chair of the Widcombe Association*



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Widcombe's burning issue



As WA Chair I get regular emails and calls about the issue of bonfires in Widcombe. Large fires with plumes of smoke billowing over homes and fields are all too common. In this time of respiratory disease and climate emergency I am calling on residents and businesses to work to avoid lighting fires in other than exceptional circumstances and to find better ways to deal with garden waste. More advice from <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/pollution/bonfires>

Bonfires - more than just a lot of hot air!

Seeing the balloons float gracefully over Bath on a clear morning reminds me of Mary Poppins singing 'Let's go fly a kite, up through the atmosphere, up where the air is clear'. We all love fresh clean pure air.

Smoke does great damage to the lungs. There are three really bad things in smoke. Lumps of black soot damage the delicate cells trying to keep the lungs clean rather like a black rock dropping on a delicate sea anemone. Ring-shaped molecules slot into the spirals of DNA like toast into a toaster, breaking the genetic code and causing cancer. The worst are the very reactive chemicals forged in the heart of the flames - so small that they cross through the lungs, enter the blood and can lodge in the brain and heart. Hence the rise in heart attacks after a spike in air pollution.

Bonfires generate a particularly dangerous form of smoke because the material burnt is so diverse, the moisture content is high, and the smoke is not lifted away by a chimney. Wood biomass smoke contains toxic compounds such as aromatic phenol derivatives, ketones, alcohols, aldehydes, fatty acids, and carboxylic acids. We know that US firefighters exposed to woodland fires have markedly increased rates of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease. People in India who cook in a confined space on wood fires develop airway disease. In the UK, Asthma UK reports a 20% increase in calls to their helpline over the period of bonfire night. And, of course, in autumn and winter, hedgehogs hibernating under a bonfire are burnt alive.

Bath has an established system for collecting garden waste. Some people grumble, but the vast majority of garden owners use this system and pay for it. There are also private waste removal companies, so everyone with a garden should be able to generate compost or have their waste taken away.

■ *Rory Shaw, respiratory consultant*

Reuse and recycle garden waste

The National Trust avoids open fires where possible. The exception in Bath is the incineration of diseased plant material to control outbreaks. We monitor and test for new diseases in our plant collections so we can respond to any infections early and keep incineration to a minimum. Best practice for alternatives could include chipping woody material, creating so-called dead hedges with brash, composting material, and dressing shrub beds with wood chip as a soil conditioner.

■ *Tom Boden, NT General Manager Bath*

Widcombe and the public realm

What is the public realm?

The public realm is the public space in urban areas outside buildings. It includes streets and squares, footpaths and green spaces. The public realm has to be organised to enable the movement of vehicles and pedestrians; it provides the spaces where people can meet and socialise; and it is the setting for buildings. When people comment on the attractiveness of places, they are referring both to the buildings and the quality of the public realm. Frequently these functions are in conflict, with the demands for movement dominating other uses of the public realm.

How does this apply to Widcombe?

Widcombe contains attractive buildings from different periods, not just Georgian (and a few pre-Georgian), but Victorian, Edwardian and the later twentieth century.



The junction of Rossiter Road and Pulteney Road – dubbed Widcombe Forest for its plethora of black poles.

Widcombe is also a focal point for several important routes into and across Bath. This brings conflict between the quality of the environment for local people and the intrusions from traffic and the associated infrastructure. The Rossiter Road project to remove through-traffic from Widcombe Parade was one attempt promoted by the local community to address the imbalance between the quality of the public realm and the demand for movement.

The problem

The Rossiter Road project was a major intervention, but it did not solve all the conflicts. It can be argued that traffic still dominates the area within and around Widcombe Parade. In seeking to control vehicles, the actions of those responsible for the management of traffic can impact badly on the environment, not just in the principal spaces like the Parade, but on all streets. The accumulation of major and minor interventions has degraded the public realm. If you look around Widcombe you can see examples of excessive road signing and dominant road markings. Attempts to modify vehicle speeds are minimal and largely ineffective.

How can this be improved?

B&NES has the principal responsibility both for the quality of the public realm and for the management of traffic. In many ways, it has made significant progress in addressing these issues. In 2010 it published a Public Realm Strategy for the city centre. This was followed in 2015 by a Pattern Book for the Public Realm, a palette of materials and street furniture to ensure consistency and high quality. However, the

guidelines should be applicable across the whole of the World Heritage Site and Conservation Area, not just within the city centre.

The Government has endorsed an approach to street design that places the quality of the local environment above the tyranny of traditional traffic management. It encourages local authorities to use discretion in designs for traffic and to apply less stringent engineering design criteria. The quality of design is paramount and should be reflected in how changes to the public realm are made. The Council's recent initiative to create Liveable Neighbourhoods provides the opportunity to apply a new approach to the design of major changes to the public realm. Care and attention to detail should be taken in all interventions, however small.

■ Michael Wrigley



Poorly painted yellow line at the junction of Southcot Place and Lyncombe Hill (narrow conservation area lines should have been applied).

Challenging plans

We continue to keep an eye on all planning applications within Widcombe and Lyncombe, and to comment where we believe the impact of a proposed development might be inappropriate or may have undesirable impacts on our neighbourhood – and in some cases on the wider Bath area. However, there is the underlying anxiety that our rights as residents to do so may soon be removed. Should the government's proposals to reform the planning system proceed as drafted under Robert Jenrick, they will severely limit the role of B&NES in the assessment and determination of planning proposals once land has been identified as suitable for development.

We shall have to wait to see how Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, proceeds.

Meanwhile our overriding objective has been to safeguard the character of Widcombe and Lyncombe. We made representations to B&NES at the beginning of the year in response to its Local Plan Partial Update consultation. It is gratifying to see that it is taking on board our concerns over the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the effect these can and have had on the streets already affected. The calculations did not previously take account of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) which also adds to the imbalance of permanent and transient residents in an area. The way of measuring the number of HMOs and PBSAs in a locality has also been more logically expressed.

Not all our objections are successful, of course, and there have been several cases recently in which the Council's rejection of proposals for new PBSA developments on brownfield sites have been overturned on appeal to the Secretary of State. The Partial Update of the Local Plan should strengthen the Council's objective of focusing new PBSAs on the university campuses.

■ Jan Shepley

St Mark's Community Centre is buzzing

The last two years have been challenging for all of us; the trustees of St Mark's Community Centre are no exception. The centre had to shut for seven months, with the award-winning Acorns pre-school closing its doors, and regular dance classes, dog training club and theatre school cancelled. Grants from B&NES funded essential maintenance, including repairs to the Victorian stonework and removal of diseased and over-mature trees from the well-loved garden.

During lockdown, the trustees opened the garden at weekends for local people seeking a peaceful green space to 'take a moment'. This proved very successful and encouraged some new friendships to form. The garden club thrived and is looking at further planting to replace the felled trees.

The centre has re-opened and regular patrons are back: the Acorns pre-school is busier than ever, the Curtis School of Dance is offering a wide selection of classes and Zenith Youth Theatre group is auditioning for its next production, the gripping tale of Sweeney Todd. ■ *Tanya Ross*



Seeing double

B&NES has reviewed its approach to listed building consent in light of the climate emergency and the beneficiaries of this new approach include Chris and Alison Born whose Grade II Regency home on Widcombe Hill was fitted with secondary glazing in late summer.

'Listed Building consent is still required, of course,' says Alison Born. 'But the council is more sympathetic than it would once have been. The decision is usually made by the planning officer rather than having to go to the committee, and this helps speed up the process.'

The system, which is also likely to be approved for use in Grade I buildings, uses framed sheets of Plexiglass painted the same colour as the existing windows and fixed with magnetic strips. Sashes can be raised and lowered as before, and shutters are unaffected. The suppliers claim the system reduces heat loss by up to 70 per cent and the Borns report they can now barely hear the traffic on Widcombe Hill.

Further guidance for retrofitting existing buildings has been developed by B&NES which expects the guidance to be adopted early in 2022. ■ *Colette Hill*

Up on the roof

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In recent months, we've been encouraging householders in Widcombe to consider getting involved in a Solar Panel Bulk Purchase scheme. There are two potential routes.

One is the WECA/Solar Together scheme coordinated by local authorities and for which the closing date for registration was 27 September.

The second is set up with IDDEA (based in Westbury, Wiltshire), which has run similar schemes across the region, including Frome and Marshfield. Savings of 15% or higher are available for bulk purchase and several households in Bath have signed up. IDDEA can also offer battery storage and it will install Solar Panels on Listed Buildings (provided the project has the necessary approvals). A presentation by IDDEA is available on the Go Green Widcombe website. To sign up or for more information, email info@iddea.co.uk.

If you have general questions about the Solar PV bulk purchase schemes or would like to get involved with Go Green Widcombe, email ggwidcombe@gmail.com. ■ *Steve Cross*



Happy Birthday MÚS!

MÚS was seven in October. Owner Tim Sellick had spent 20 years working in London and Paris and wanted to do something different and near his Widcombe home. The café, which opens at 7.30am for the early risers, is best known for its wonderful coffee sourced locally from Extract Coffee Roasters in Bristol.



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Reduce, re-use, recycle

Bath is one of the UK's top recyclers and recycles a whole range of items from food to electrical appliances. Dave Wood, cabinet member for neighbourhood services, would love us to do better still – that is recycle more and avoid putting anything in recycling that might contaminate the load. Here are his top tips:

1. Do rinse out cans and bottles but there is no need to go to the trouble of putting them in the dishwasher.
2. If you don't yet recycle food waste, please do. Left in the black bins it creates damaging methane. You can use an ordinary plastic bag rather than bothering with a recyclable one as all the bags go to general waste once they are decanted.
3. Do recycle good quality clothing; however, cheaply produced fast fashion is hard to recycle even if it's still pretty new. Torn fabric and smaller pieces cannot be used.
4. Do recycle tins but don't flatten flimsy drinks cans.
5. Don't put present wrapping in paper recycling as the quality is too poor. Do recycle magazines and brown paper (which you could also use to wrap your Christmas presents).
6. Do remove the sticky tape from cardboard boxes and fold them flat.
7. Don't put used nappies and tissues in recycling – they are not recyclable and are a health hazard.
8. Don't put black plastic or plastic film from trays and pots in your recycling – nor clingfilm or crisp wrappers, hard plastic or polystyrene.
9. Do recycle batteries and small electricals: put them in separate plastic bags at the top of the box.
10. Do recycle foil but make sure it is foil first: if you scrunch it up and it stays scrunched it's foil; if it opens out again, it's plastic.



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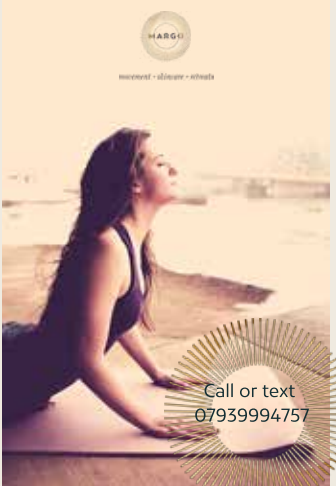
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Widcombe People

A life by the water

Most people who live and work in Widcombe know Nigel Huggins by sight, at least. Nigel has been Widcombe's trusted lock keeper since 1988 when he followed in the footsteps of his stepfather who was affectionately known as Jock the Lock.

Nigel was born and raised in Odd Down until he was fifteen, when he moved with his mother, brother, and sister to the lock keeper's cottage on the canal. Although he now lives further away, he still comes back every weekday to look after the locks, paths, and verges from Widcombe to Bathwick and he delights in seeing the towpath used by families, dog-walkers, joggers and cyclists. 'I try to maintain this stretch as a park where people from the city can relax. Families picnic here in the summer. Anglers come. It's an important amenity for Bath as a whole.'



Nigel Huggins

Working for the Canal & River Trust, Nigel Huggins plays a vital role in ensuring the efficacy of the Bath flight, regulating water levels in the turning pools and at Deep Lock (which is particularly complex because



The canal at Widcombe



of its exceptional depth), unblocking the temperamental sluices, repairing, restoring, and replacing exhausted parts of the cast-iron gates, such as the mitres and pinions. It was Nigel who laid the towpath on what was once an often-muddy grass verge.

The job is not always a joy. As well as the litter some people drop on their way through, there are the dog faeces. 'I've lost count of the number of times I've had to clean up after taking the strimmer to the long grass.'

And the best thing: 'the friendliness of the locals. The kids say hi on their way to school. Dog walkers stop for a chat.'

Widcombe was lucky during lockdown: until 2020, Nigel might be called upon to work anywhere from Hanham to Pewsey. During Covid, when he could no longer travel far, he concentrated on the Bath Flight and Widcombe has been the clear beneficiary – as has the city as a whole, with this wonderful oasis so close to its centre, a boon to locals, Bath residents and tourists alike.

A little help from friends

More and more people volunteer locally for the Canal and River Trust. The group of mainly retired people – civil engineers, pilots, civil servants, 'all sorts' they tell me – paint locks, prune overhanging trees, cut back nettles and Himalayan balsam, remove obstacles in the water and build fences. They laid the cobbles at Bathwick Bridge and they help visiting boaters through the locks. Volunteer Pete Healey has been a team-member for seven years. 'Back then, there were maybe ten of us. We're some thirty now. And we can do more since we secured funding for our two work boats, with support from B&NES and the Widcombe Association. It's a beautiful place to work. We see heron, cormorants, kingfishers, ducks, moorhen, families of swans.'

His regret is that not everyone appreciates the magic of the place. 'There is an annoying level of indifference to our commonly shared environment. Trolleys are abandoned near the supermarkets. Plastic is dumped in the water. It collects at various points, and we bag it up and bring it back to Widcombe where the council collects it.'

Thanks to the efforts of the volunteers whose work complements Nigel Huggins' expertise, most people wandering along the towpath only see the magical charm of this very special place. ■ *Colette Hill*



*Volunteers
Andy Hughes
(left)
and Andrew
Marriott*



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Wild in Widcombe

Take a stroll through Widcombe on a sunny day and you may well hear the mewing call of a buzzard high in the sky. This is one of our larger birds of prey. Circling on outstretched wings it catches the warm air of a thermal and gradually drifts out of view. It seems to have the freedom of the skies. Several may fly in close proximity, often harried by crows and gulls which give warning cries as soon as a large predator appears. The buzzards are local birds, with territories in Widcombe which they know in great detail.

One visits our garden where it sits in our tall lime tree, watching all around. I am convinced it is hunting squirrels, which immediately take cover, clinging spread-eagled as flat as a pancake under a large branch until danger passes. In June, buzzards fly low over rooftops in the city centre; the gulls nesting there immediately give chase. I suspect buzzards are well aware when young gulls have hatched, but I have yet to see one taken.



Buzzard on the lookout for a rabbit
Photo credit: David Goode



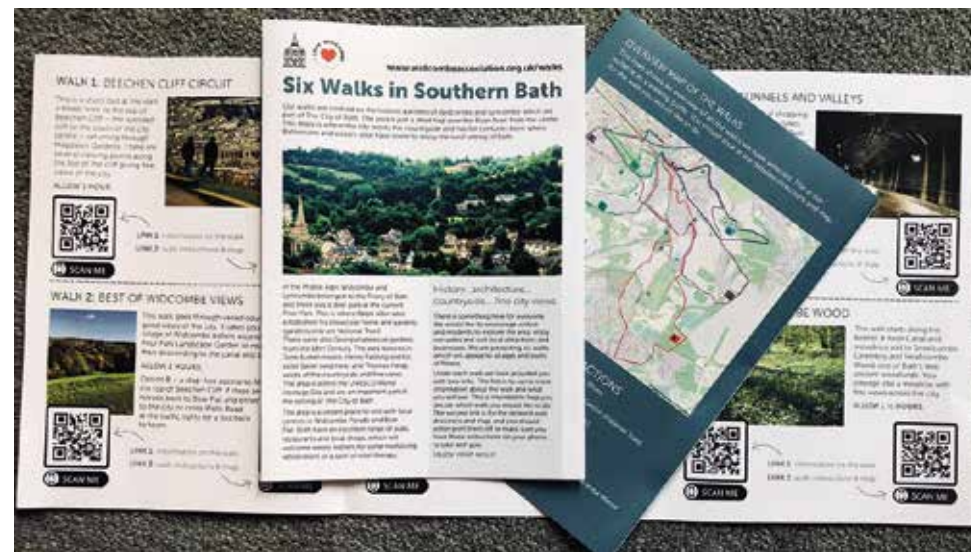
Peregrine falcon plucking a pigeon on the church

One of the most delightful things about buzzards is the spring display flight of a breeding pair. The birds cavort about the sky diving, rolling and tumbling together. Once seen, it is never forgotten.

We have several other birds of prey living on our patch. Kestrels are regularly seen hunting on Lyncombe Hill Fields. They are easily recognised as the only bird that regularly quarters the ground by hovering. They then drop down to catch a beetle, grasshopper, or vole. Mowing and scything provide a great feast.

Another, less welcome, raptor is the sparrow hawk. Yes, they are magnificent when seen up close, but that may mean close to your garden bird feeder. In my garden they speed through like a rocket, taking any unfortunate bird as they go. Fortunately they are infrequent visitors.

I hear peregrine falcons almost every day from my garden. A pair has nested on St John's Church every year since 2006 producing a total of 34 young. They have adapted to urban life very successfully, using the lights of the city to catch their prey by night. Birds caught on migration include some unexpected species such as corncrake, and black-necked grebe. Peregrine falcons are certainly one of the highlights of Bath. Red kites could well be next. ■ David Goode



Six Walks in Southern Bath

The Widcombe Association has mapped out six walks in the area, offering something for everyone: beautiful countryside, industrial heritage, surprising history, fine architecture, and magnificent views. The walks, designed to appeal to all ages and levels of fitness, start and finish at Bath Spa Station, though you can of course start anywhere on the route and combine routes.

Full details can be found at www.widcombeassociation.org.uk/walks. Under each walk there are two links: the first is to information about the walk and what you will see, the second to detailed directions.

However you use the walks we hope you enjoy discovering more about the area, the path network, and some hidden gems along the way. ■ Mary Young

Charity Fair

Local charities will be holding their annual fair at the Widcombe Social Club on Saturday 27 November from 10am to 3pm. The Fair, established 45 years ago, is a great chance to browse and buy treasures unearthed and created by the charities, including the Cleveland Pools Trust, Friends of Bath Life Group, Research Institute for The Care of Older People, Achieve together Educational Day Services, Wheels for All Bath and West, Genesis Trust, The Urban Gardener and The Peggy Dodd Centre. ■ Heidi Sperring



Out & About

A View from the field

Hola Widcombe! Autumnal greetings from the three of us to all of you!

I'm personally humbled (and a bit proud) that instead of asking whether we're llamas or alpacas, the question most often asked these days by you wonderful, highly intelligent Widcomberonians is 'which one is Zippy?' The reply on the tip of my tongue would naturally be: 'The most handsome one, of course,' but, however true that assertion is, I have to live with the other two and they can get quite snippy when challenged – especially Bungle who considers himself a bit of an influencer when it comes to looks. Also, his is the biggest nose to put out of joint (but don't tell him I said that).

On a different note, we were shocked and extremely sad to hear of the tragic and (in our opinion) unnecessary death in August of our compadre, Geronimo.

The worldwide alpaca community is a close-knit one. There are around 45,000 registered alpacas in the UK and many alpaca owners are in touch with each other to share news and information. Geronimo's herd is not far from here, so as you can imagine, Geronimo's story is one very close to our hearts.

Geronimo was killed because DEFRA said he had bovine TB – a disease which affects cattle, camelids, goats, deer, and badgers. Every year in the UK, thousands of cattle are culled on farms and badgers are slaughtered in the name of bTB control. Several thousand alpacas over the last few years have also been slaughtered in the UK because they have tested 'positive' for the disease. But at post mortem, many have been found not to have



had the disease after all.

-We hope you can share with us the wish for a positive outcome from Geronimo's death –

species-specific testing which can more accurately detect bTB in camelids and a commitment from DEFRA to enter into discussion with camelid (and cattle) farmers to end an unnecessary and ineffective policy to slaughter animals first and ask questions later. ■ Zippy



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Widcombe Life



Dan Lyons on the sell-out local history talk



Caroline Davies and Ros Hicks share their wisdom on creating a cutting garden.



Gathering in the garden at St Mark's. (see page 12)



An evening of Handel, Puccini, and Mozart with Maria Danishvar in the splendid setting of the American Museum.



Another sell-out garden visit, this time Janet and Marc Berlin's oasis in Wingfield. (see page 35)



Finding treasures on the Art Trail.



Volunteers gather to celebrate all they have achieved in Lyncombe Fields.



The Natural Theatre Company on tour in Widcombe Parade.

Art

Christmas Market

The Widcombe Christmas Market takes place on 13-14 November at Widcombe Social Club. Entry is free and the doors open at 10.30am on both days (closing 5pm on Saturday and 4pm on Sunday).

Around 40 exhibitors will be displaying their work, all of which will be available for sale, and there's plenty to choose from: ceramics, jewellery, textiles, paintings, prints, cards, candles, mosaics, glass and enamel work, and much more.

The market – whose main sponsor is new estate agent Peter Greator Unique Homes – is a great chance to do some early shopping in a relaxed and friendly environment while supporting local creatives and small businesses. To enable social distancing, routes will be marked round the event and stewards will be on hand.



Kate Marshall



Emma Taylor

On the art trail

Twenty-six artists exhibited at this year's Art Trail over the last weekend of August, attracting some 600 visitors to Widcombe Hill to explore the stalls in Widcombe Social Club, the Studio at the Natural Theatre Company, and the parish room at St Matthew's.

So many people helped to make the show a success in the shadow of Covid: Sidonie Bishop (Covid strategy), Elaine Taylor (finance), Liz Hughes (design), Rachel Ward (publicity), and Clare Furlonger (flyer and poster distribution). Local businesses The Curtain Exchange, MHA Monahans Wealth Management, Bikanos, and Widcombe Deli provided sponsorship and an army of volunteers helped with stewarding.

■ Pippa Wrigley



Design Vaults



Sally Harker

Come on down

The transformation of the pedestrian subway under the A36 was completed at the end of August and even if it isn't on your normal walking route to town, it is well worth the detour. The once dirty, dark, vandalised underpass, often flooded and regarded by many as a route to avoid, has undergone a complete make-over.

The council fixed the drainage and installed CCTV and mirrors. Local residents, spearheaded by the Widcombe Association's Helen Peter, raised funds for a delightful mural designed by local illustrator Sarah Ovens on the theme of where the city meets the countryside. Specialist artist Dan Wilson (www.decreate.co.uk) was brought in to translate Sarah's design onto the tunnel walls.

Today the underpass provides a delightful interlude on your journey to and from the city.



Before



West; local businesses Mayden, Buro Happold, Lord Architecture, Savills, and Crown Paints, as well as private individuals.

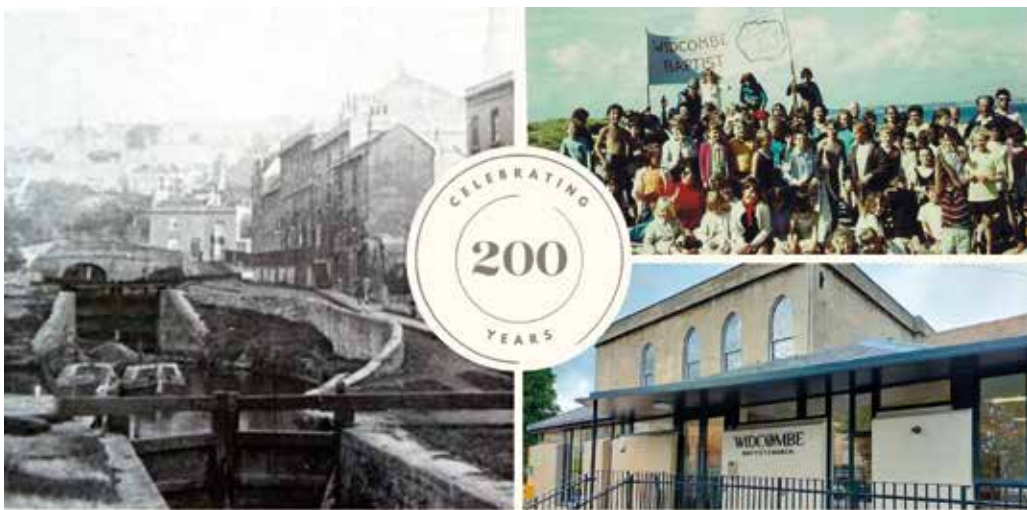
It really shows what a few dedicated people, supported by local communities, businesses and our council, can achieve working together to improve where we live for everyone. ■ Jeremy Boss, Chair, Widcombe Association



Work in progress



Finished Subway



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In the garden

Rooms with a view

The Saxon name Tynning is mostly found in north-east Somerset, especially around Bath; it may be used to name streets, woodlands, or farmsteads. The word is used for a place that is enclosed by a hedge (or a fence), and this precisely describes the sloping garden I visited in The Tynning in late summer.

The garden, hedged with pittosporum and viburnum, was restructured four years ago to create three distinct rooms demarcated with low curving yew hedging that leads the eye towards the panoramic view of Bath.



The broad terrace with its jewel-coloured planting is used for eating out and entertaining. It is planted up with Canna lilies, *Tropicana Black*, *Phasion*, and *Canna Wyoming*, which contrast beautifully with the gorgeous *Dahlia Arika* Zsaza, and sizzling *Echinacea Sombrero* Hot Coral. And to complete the look: *Imperata Cylindrica* and the brilliantly red spiked grass *Red Barron* (Japanese Blood grass).



From there, arched stone steps lead down to the pink garden - a circle of lawn with a curvaceous sculpture at its centre. Here, the vibrant *Salvia microphylla* Neon contrasts with plump silvery green *Sedum Hylotelephium 'Herbstfreude'*. *Heuchera Lime Marmalade* and *Paris* planted at the front of the border offset the graceful *Alchemilla mollis*. The look is completed by the backdrop hedge of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* Silver Queen.



The paved gravel path winds gracefully round the pink garden to the fruit garden where gooseberries, blackcurrants and raspberries grow among the blue and white planting. There are four young fruit trees here - *Laxton Superb* apple, *Prunus Pandora* cherry, *Prunus Oullins* Gage, and Old-Fashioned Greengage, and a small pond will be added over the winter months. *Hydrangea arborens* Annabel, the

buds of which open a sharp green guelder in July works beautifully well with Sweet Pea Aphrodite. The addition of *Cosmos binnatus* Sonata White and the sweet herb woodruff *Galium odoratum* (a valuable addition to any garden, particularly shaded areas) complete the look. Woodruff was originally grown for the fresh smell of its leaves. It can also be used as a medicinal herb or as a very pretty addition floating on the surface of a glass of white wine, especially so when the tiny white flowers are in abundance in late spring.



The end of the garden is marked with three multi-stemmed birches, and the garden then extends further thanks to the sedum roof over the owners' double garage.

The garden was entered in this year's Bath in



Bloom competition and not surprisingly won a Silver award. It gave me an overall sense of joy and wellbeing, a lovely place to spend a sunny summer afternoon. ■ Beverley Wallis

Gardening news in brief

In June the garden club visited Janet and Marc Berlin's magnificent gardens, nestled in the countryside on the edge of Wingfield in Wiltshire. The many rooms were festooned with glorious plants, many grown from the seeds Janet collects. In August, Janet came to the Widcombe Social Club to talk to us about collecting and growing seeds from your garden - our first meeting since lockdown last year. If you missed this event the Berlins' garden is open annually for the NGS.

The Parade planters and the BT kiosk outside the White Hart won a gold in this year's Bath in Bloom competition. Many thanks go to Trudy Healey, Jeremy Boss,



Beverley Wallis

and Beverley Wallis for planting up and local businesses who help with watering including Fine and Dandy, White Hart, Ring o Bells, Widcombe Deli, Widcombe Pharmacy, and Anita Breeze. At least four local gardens won prizes too - one of which has been chosen as this edition's profile garden - great for Widcombe!

Beverley Wallis was invited by Bath in Bloom to give a fifteen-minute presentation as part of the City of Bath's entry for the RHS Southwest in Bloom regional competition. The aim was to showcase other aspects of community work in the city, highlighting improvements made in Widcombe for its residents, traders, and the community.

In the garden

Winter in the garden

At this time of year, it feels as though our gardens are going into silent hibernation. Little is going to happen over this period and work comes to a slow standstill that lasts until at least February. But for those who long to be out there with the plants and the soil and the scent of nature at work, there is still plenty to do.

- ❁ Plant tulips and lily bulbs in pots and beds. Consider a dedicated pot for the front door, tiered with tulips, daffodils, and crocus.
- ❁ Be sure of spring interest in the flowerbeds by adding wallflowers and forget-me-nots. Cut back the leaves of hellebores so their flowers can be seen in all their glory.
- ❁ Plant bare-root roses, shrubs, and trees to give them time to establish their root systems while things are quiet and there is plenty of rain.
- ❁ This is a good time to move things around - and that includes younger shrubs and trees as well as perennials.



❁ If you haven't done so yet, lift and divide perennials to make new plants for you or neighbours and friends. So many can be split – agapanthus, anemone, crocosmia, and ornamental grasses, to name but a few. You can also take root cuttings now of perennial poppies and phlox.

❁ Protect your vulnerable plants: prune roses to prevent wind rock. Wrap pots in bubble wrap so they don't crack and add a good layer of mulch. Raise pots onto pot-feet so they don't get waterlogged. Bring very tender plants inside. Lift and store dahlias or cover them with a generous layer of mushroom compost.

- ❁ You may find weeds persisting and this is a great time to eliminate them entirely – at least for now.
- ❁ If you are still mowing the lawn, keep the grass a little longer to prevent turf stress.
- ❁ Rake up fallen leaves. You can add them to the compost or make leaf mould by pouring them into garden sacks punctured with a fork and leaving them somewhere quiet and dark to decompose.
- ❁ Put out bird food and make sure your visitors have access to water.

■ *The Constant Gardener*



Talks 2022

Talks held at Widcombe Social Club.
WA members £3 non members £4 (on the door)

| | | |
|-------------|-------------------|--|
| 19 January | Gill Hazell | So you think you know Gladiolus! |
| 16 February | Christine Walkden | A special visit from GQT regular and gardening guru star of The One Show |
| 16 March | John Tucker | Wrong plant, wrong place. Regrets we've had a few! |
| 20 April | David Moon | Gardens of the rich and famous |

Bringing beauty to an area of decay

Seven years ago, more in desperation than optimism, Jane (a member of the Lower Wells Road Community Group) pushed a few nasturtium seeds in among the rubbish and straggling weeds on a old wall alongside the busy main road at Lower Wellsway. For so long she had lived with the sight of fly-tipping, ripped rubbish sacs, broken bottles, and drink cans. It was an embarrassing place to acknowledge as her neighbourhood and mortifying to see visitors picking their way through the debris.

From those first few seeds, gloriously vibrant flowers started to trail down the dank wall making their mark, making a difference. Compost and more plants were added and over the years Jane learned which plants could survive the very shallow soil and the heavy pollution. Wall flowers (of course!), campanula, primroses, erigeron (Spanish fleabane), hellebores, forget-me-nots and wild geraniums all did well. Erigeron gives continuity and is tough and determined to make a good show. Amazingly this narrow strip supports five miniature fruit trees – apples, cherry, pear, prunus.

Water retention is key. Bare patches lose water rapidly, so Jane keeps areas populated and avoids disturbing the thin soil so that all the bacteria and yeasts that help plants to root are preserved. Organic matter is laid on top and twice a year a seaweed fertiliser is added. Slugs and snails are removed to a leafy site nearby.

Ward councillors persuaded the local landlady to replace the piles of unsightly rubbish outside the flats with planters, furnished with small trees, flowers and herbs, including apple, fig, rose, bay, heuchera, sedums, poached egg plants, and Caryopteris.

Passers-by pause to admire the flowers and wonder at the sheer fertility of this miraculous sliver of nature. Anonymous donations have been left to add something of beauty to this improbable place. Wildlife



has returned, and you see bees, moths, and butterflies. A visiting frog was transported to a nearby pond for safety.

Jane has help from locals and they were delighted to win a Bath in Bloom silver-gilt award which is, as Jane says, the icing on the cake. Excitement is now growing in anticipation of the planting of spring bulbs in this amazing oasis of beauty in a previously hostile place. ■ *Beverley Wallis*

Christine Walkden comes to Widcombe

We are very excited that the One Show's resident gardening guru Christine Walkden has agreed to give a talk to the garden club on Wednesday 16 February.

Christine is a past presenter on BBC's Gardeners' World and of BBC series, Christine's Garden. She is a regular on Gardeners' Question Time and a past winner of the Garden Writers' Guild Radio Broadcasting Award. A keen photographer, Christine holds an extensive library of wildflower and garden slides from around the world, which she draws on to illustrate her talks.

Tickets will be available early in the New Year. ■ *Beverley Wallis*

Working Widcombe

Architects push for carbon neutral design

Widcombe's architects may be competitors, but they are as one on the need to address the climate emergency.

Mitchell Eley Gould's portfolio ranges from a school library and a waste transfer station to new build private homes. The practice has been working towards carbon neutrality for a long time and, according to partner Robert Mitchell, B&NES is becoming increasingly sympathetic to its approach. 'They have a difficult job,' says Mitchell, a specialist conservation architect. 'Bath is probably second only to Edinburgh in complexity, given its World Heritage status, the extent of the conservation area, and the number of Grade I and Grade II listed buildings. It requires a huge amount of care and sensitivity to get things right.'

The nine homes MEG is building at St Joseph's Court in Sladebrook Road will have air source heat pumps, mechanical ventilation and heat recovery and solar panels, as well as electric vehicle charging points. 'Everyone involved has the same objective,' says Gould – ourselves, the

environmental engineers, E3, landscape designers TO Studio and, of course, B&NES which owns the site.'

In designing his family home at Deep Lock, architect Jonathan Logsdon set the bar high for sustainability. The largely prefabricated timber-framed structure was built on a brownfield site. It is triple glazed, fitted with a micro heat and power unit, and has underfloor heating. Logsdon, whose portfolio ranges from a dance school and a coach-house conversion to the extension of private homes, is completing his training as a Passivhaus designer, focusing on occupant comfort and health as well as reducing energy use and carbon emissions. 'We need to futureproof our homes,' says Logsdon. 'Eighty per cent of the houses that will be around in 2050 have already been built. Retrofitting is a must.'

Logsdon is working with a client in Combe Down to improve the fabric of his 1930s home. One of the options on the table is triple glazing and a 24/7 ventilation system – as warmed air is extracted in the kitchen and bathrooms it heats the incoming air for the whole home. It could take twenty years to recover the cost of the system, but the environmental benefits are enormous. Logsdon is waiting to hear if his client will proceed.

'There is a tendency to carry on business-as-usual while the legislation is playing catch-up,' says Robert Mitchell. 'We have specified multi-foiled insulation for interior walls, rainwater for cisterns, water-reducing taps, green roofs, but each small intervention carries a price tag and too often our proposals are watered down.'

Mark Lord of Lord Architecture reports an increase in climate-aware clients; he argues that listing policies are his constraint. 'With our Bath-based work focusing on the prime residential sector, including a number of Grade I and Grade II Listed Buildings, the opportunity for sustainable technology and output efficiency is often limited by the parameters set by policy.'



Robert Mitchell



Jonathan Logsdon



Mark Lord

'However, there are a few sustainable solutions for listed buildings, such as high specification contemporary glazing on new or replacement extensions, solar or photovoltaic panels for roof structures concealed from the public realm, and retrofit heritage glazing.'

The challenge, as ever, is cost. The profession is committed to ensuring carbon neutrality

by 2030 – in construction and materials and well as in buildings' use following completion. But building regulations have yet to catch up and – without further government intervention – it remains a challenge to persuade customers, both commercial and private, to spend the money required. ■ *Colette Hill*



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Local History

Lyncombe miscellany

When Lyncombe & Widcombe was granted by King Edgar to the Priory in 970AD, it was called 'Cliftune'. In the Domesday Book, the estate is called 'Lincome'. The manorial centre remained at Lyncombe into Elizabethan times.

Prior Park Road, Lyncombe Vale, and most of Oldfield Park were originally the sites of various nurseries and market gardens. These had been there for centuries. In a court case of 1656 concerned with tithes, there were enquiries about the produce being grown in the parish, which included: apples, pears, plums, cherries, asparagus, artichokes, gooseberries, raspberries, cabbages, carrots 'or other Garden fruit'.

The parish of Lyncombe & Widcombe originally extended from Twerton in the west, to Claverton in the east and Bathwick in the north. In 1856, it was split in two, the boundary running from the river up

Lyncombe Hill along Greenway Lane and then up Entry Hill to The Cross Keys. A parish marker still exists by the pub. In 1867, the parish of Lyncombe was split, with St Luke's becoming the parish church of South Lyncombe.

Lyncombe Vale was once the site of pleasure gardens. One at Bagatelle was the site from about 1737 of 'Wicksteed's machine' for making cameos. This lasted until the 1770s when, under new management, it was expanded to provide lodgings, the drinking of Lyncombe's spa water and a small boating canal. It lasted until the early 1780s. King James' Palace Gardens (now Lyncombe Court) existed from the mid-1700s until 1793 and, in addition to tea-drinking to the sound of horns and clarinets, held flower shows.

In 1737, Mr Charles Milsom, a cooper of Bath discovered a spring in what became the grounds of Lyncombe House. With the glint of fortune in his eyes, he commissioned John Wood to design a 'Duodecastyle Edifice' which would protect the spring and add a focal point to the paying visitors he hoped would come flocking to Lyncombe in the summer months as an alternative to the hot

springs in Bath. The spa waters were said to be magical, and a book was published, *An Inquiry into the Contents and Medicinal Virtues of Lincomb Spaw Water, near Bath*, to lure tourists to the site. In 1767 the house was made into an inoculation centre where people could go to be inoculated as a preventative against smallpox. The technique ('variolation') involved injecting smallpox scab material into the patient who then had a milder form of the disease and had to be kept isolated for up to four weeks.

Southcot House, Lyncombe Hill, was built around 1777 for John Evill, a successful Bath tradesman. The grounds extended down to Claverton Street by Gibb's mill. After his death in 1791, it passed to a brother. Then, after being leased, it was bought by Opie Smith who, like John Evill, was a prominent Baptist. The site was split up: in 1810 the lower part was made into the second Baptist Burial Ground and in 1820 two acres (0.8 ha) were sold to the builder of Southcot Place. In about 1825, it was leased to William Stothert who remained there until 1850.

In his 1898 history of the area, William Tyte reports that pay tables for workers were displayed in pubs. The weekly rates at the time were: masons, carpenters, joiners 20-21 shillings, painters and plasterers 17-18 shillings, and labourers 10-12 shillings. The annual rent for a property in Lyncombe Vale at that time was £12 for smaller properties and about £20 for larger ones.

Lyncombe had a zoo for five years until 1910. Headquartered at de Montalt Cottage in Rosemount Lane, the zoo housed kangaroos, wallabies, and finches in heated buildings. Once a kangaroo escaped and, pursued by the keeper on a bicycle, was eventually recaptured in Calton Road near the bottom of Lyncombe Hill.

Next time: Potted history of Holloway (contributions welcome – email colettehill@gmail.com)

Looking back

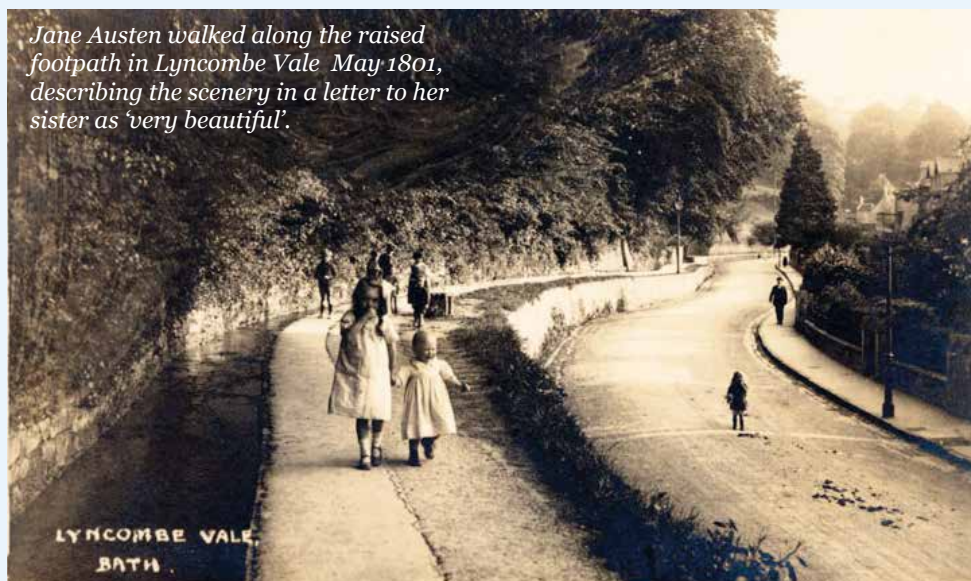
This winter sees the relaunch of the Widcombe History Club. While Widcombe doesn't have the Abbey, the Royal Baths, or the Assembly Rooms, it does nevertheless have a rich, varied and often rather surprising history. The History Club will explore, record, and share that history for the interest of residents and visitors alike. There are also plans for a programme of walks, talks and social events over the coming months.

Anyone with an interest in the past is warmly encouraged to get involved. You certainly don't need a degree in history – the only prerequisites are curiosity and enthusiasm. We are also looking for people with an interest in carrying out research and those who have stories to share about life in Widcombe – perhaps handed down through the generations. The spate of best-selling books on post-war Britain clearly shows that history needn't be ancient. If you have more recent stories to share, we would love to hear them.

A great deal of excellent research has been carried out already. We will share the fruits of that work in as accessible a form as possible to ensure that the information is preserved for future generations.

To find out more and to get involved, contact danlyons1966@icloud.com. ■ Dan Lyons

Jane Austen walked along the raised footpath in Lyncombe Vale May 1801, describing the scenery in a letter to her sister as 'very beautiful'.



Local History

Widcombe Baptist Chapel celebrates 200 years

Widcombe Baptist Church meets in what was Ebenezer Chapel, built in Ebenezer Terrace in 1820 (but soon flooded, since Dolemeads was subject to frequent severe flooding in those days). The church opened in September 1821. The area was fast-growing and too many lived in the poorly-built homes for canal workers and (later) railway workers. The many pubs included Canal Tavern at the end of Ebenezer Terrace, later incorporated into the church building.

George Ingram, the first pastor of Ebenezer Chapel wrote two themed hymns for the laying of the foundation stone in April 1820, 'Christ the Corner-Stone' and 'Christ the Rock'. The hymns were sung again at the formal opening in September 1821.

A Hebrew word, Ebenezer means 'the Lord has helped us every step of the way'. It is taken from the Bible story in which the prophet Samuel sets up a stone memorial to remind the people of God's help. In 1821, the name expressed gratitude for the new chapel built in a difficult area, just outside city limits.

Various church groups used the premises until 1849 when a group of Baptists from Providence Chapel in the centre of Bath moved to meet there. What is now Widcombe Baptist Church has gathered in the building ever since.

A key distinctive of this new community was that it had no paid-for pews and all the seating was freely available to everyone. Sad as it is record, this was unusual among all denominations in Bath at the time, when a proportion of pews, or even all the seating, had to be privately paid for. The Baptists' desire not to charge was an expression of



their belief that God offers life freely, and this is still their key understanding. In one of the Old Testament stories, God calls out: 'Come all you who are thirsty. Come and drink the water I offer you. You who do not have any money, come... Come and buy wine and milk. You will not have to pay anything for it.' At the very end of the Bible the call is repeated: 'Come! Anyone who is thirsty should come. Anyone who wants to take the free gift of the water of life should do so.'

A second distinctive of the chapel is its ministry to children. When the Canal Tavern was incorporated into the building, it provided space for a Sunday School. This concern for small children continues to the present day. The current parents and toddlers group was started over 35 years ago, and some mothers bringing their toddlers today were themselves brought by their own parents.

Over the past year the chapel has been remodelled inside and across the front and side. In the curious providence of God, this building work also took place during a natural disaster – this time the horrors of covid. The coming year of celebration began with songs (Christ Alone, Cornerstone; Rock of Ages) that echo those founding hymns of 200 years ago. ■ *Sue Halliday*

MITCHELL
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“Opening up the walls to the courtyard and the street with the alterations to Widcombe Baptist Church has brought a new life and active frontage to a building that faced in the opposite direction when the Ebenezer Chapel was built in 1821”

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Widcombe Foodies

Chicken taka-tak

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- 2 tbsp mustard oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 130g onions, chopped
- 130g tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 2 tsp garam masala powder
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp kasoori methi powder (fenugreek)
- 130g green peppers, chopped
- 500g boneless chicken, cubed
- 120g butter
- 100g single cream
- 2 sprigs coriander, leaves picked

- 1 Pour mustard oil into a frying pan and place over a medium heat.
- 2 Add the cumin seeds and once they start to crackle, add the chopped onions and fry until lightly browned.



- 3 Add the chopped tomatoes and continue to simmer for 5-6 minutes or until the oil separates.
- 4 Add the red chilli powder, garam masala, cumin powder, kasoori methi, and chopped peppers; stir to combine.
- 5 Add the chicken and mix everything together. Reduce the flame to low and cover the pan. Simmer for 10-15 minutes or until the chicken pieces are cooked through.
- 6 Transfer to a serving bowl. Add butter and cream and garnish with chopped coriander leaves. Serve hot with butter naans or parathas.

■ Ashish Rawat, Ruposhi

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aashworth20@hotmail.com

Widcombe Jottings

Seven years ago, I found myself shopping in a florist's accoutrements warehouse for table decorations for our bonbon cabarets at Widcombe Social Club. You know, bad taste plastic flowers and glittery snowflakes, that sort of thing. As well as purchasing a vase in the shape of a giant lager glass, as an appropriate prop for mine host, I also bought a large glass globe with the idea of getting myself a goldfish.

And so it was I found myself cycling home from Prior Park Garden Centre with a plastic bag hanging from my handlebars containing a small, ugly goldfish. Why an ugly one? Well, stocks were low in my required size and this one looked lonely.

My route homewards entailed traversing the Royal Crescent. At least he'll know I'm living in a salubrious area I thought, as we bounced alarmingly along the cobbles.

I christened him Eric Gill after the famous sculptor and designer of the sans serif typeface. Someone expressed the hope that Eric's homelife would not reflect that of his notorious namesake. No chance. Eric has been in self-isolation since arriving at my residence and is happy making vaguely amorous advances to his own reflection.

Eric grew (and grew) into a handsome creature with an amazing lace-like tail which he wafts around behind him like a model on a catwalk displaying a gossamer gown.

Or at least, he did. After progressing from his modest round vase to an all bells and whistles eco dome, he grew so big I invested a fortune in one of those enormous aquariums based on a wooden cabinet. Filters, ultra-violet anti-bacterial lighting and even an engraved brass name plate (sans serif of course). A real piece of furniture to grace my contemporary river-view apartment.

Does he like it? No, he doesn't. Firstly, he freaked out when he encountered corners!

He kept getting stuck head down, unable to extricate himself. Then he developed a swim bladder problem, which gives him the wobbles. Google said administer frozen peas, which apparently relieves the pressure. I won't say how. But he still wobbles.

Now, he is displaying symptoms of tail rot. Yes, his diaphanous extension is looking very ragged and bruised. The water has tested negative for ammonia, nitrites, and nitrates that can lead to this affliction. Maybe he injured himself while escaping from one of those pesky corners. He doesn't seem concerned, but if it reaches his body he could end up in fishy heaven.

I phoned a friend and got quite emotional. Hysterical even. Mostly about the costly brass nameplate. Calm down he said, it's just a goldfish. If the worst happens, get a new one and call him Eric.

Medication is on the way. Fingers crossed that you won't see me negotiating the streets of Widcombe with a new plastic bag swinging from my handlebars any time soon.

■ *Ralph Oswick*



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We're thrilled to welcome new venue manager Lukasz to WSC, and are so pleased to be welcoming you back too – see you soon!

FRIDAY NIGHT SOCIAL IS BACK!

- The bar is open to everyone every Friday from 5pm
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Tables for groups on Friday nights can sometimes be reserved - please email info@widcombesocialclub.co.uk to enquire.

Ticketed shows are upstairs on Fridays from 8pm/8.30pm, including Bath Comedy's regular comedy club nights and top quality Jazz and Folk from All Of The Above. Regular Film Nights and other exciting entertainment is being planned.

Our popular DJ nights are back on Saturday nights once or twice a month, brought to you by the team behind Frug, Transmission, Electric Dreams 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 various sized rooms and flexible spaces are available to hire, please contact us to enquire about prices and availability.

Widcombe Social Club Widcombe Hill, Bath BA2 6AA

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