

STREET

THE STREET SOCIETY
www.streetsoociety.org

AUTUMN 2014

Chairman

Barbara Cowell

01458 443397

Chairman's Letter

Dear Members

I am very pleased to take up the position of Chairman of The Street Society and I am looking forward to an interesting and productive year. There are some exciting projects planned for Street and we will keep you up-dated. Best wishes for the festive season ahead and I hope to see you at our Christmas event.

Barbara Cowell

Christmas Entertainment, Afternoon Tea and Raffle

Come and celebrate the festive season with other members of the society at Street Mission Church in Vestry Road on Sunday 7th December between 2.30pm and 5.00pm for afternoon tea and to enjoy a performance by local choir [Street Sings](#). There will also be a raffle with generously donated prizes

Tickets are available at a cost of £6.00 per head.

They will be on sale at the November meeting or alternatively contact Catherine Atkins on 01458 443055.



From Shoes To Film

[Neil Clarke](#), a member of the society and a former C&J Clark employee and local photographer will give a talk on his experiences in life.

The meeting takes place at the Methodist Church Hall, Leigh Road, STREET, BA16 0HA on Tuesday 27th January starting at 7.30pm.

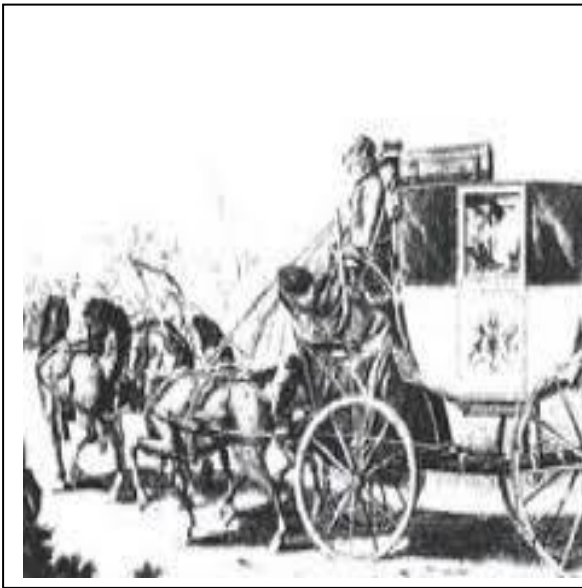


The History of the Post Office in Street and Glastonbury

On February 24th Alan Cotton will give a talk on the History of the Post Office in Street and Glastonbury



The Street Society AGM 2014



The Street Society AGM was held at the Methodist Church Hall Street on 23 September.

Nina Swift stepped down from her role as the Society's Chairman, a position to which she has brought distinction for the last 7 years and Barbara Cowell was nominated and installed as the new Chairman. Nina's work on behalf of the Society received an appreciative round of applause and she was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

After the business of the AGM concluded, our colourful speaker, Martin Horler arrived to present his talk on the role of the Royal Mail Guard wearing the splendid 18th century livery of red ceremonial jacket, breeches, boots and gold braided beaver top hat. He was announced by a rendition of "Clear The Way" from the post horn which would have been instantly recognisable to the populace, heralding the imminent arrival of the horse-drawn mail coach in an era when not only was the coach king, but there was real danger of being killed or injured by horses. The mail coach needed to be sufficiently heavy to

withstand bad weather and poor road conditions and was therefore as lethal as any of today's road vehicles. The horn also alerted coaching inns to prepare a fresh team of 4 horses for a speedy changeover. Ostlers at inns all along the mail coach route were expected to make the change over in three minutes.

Up to the 18th century letters had been sent on foot or carried on horseback which took 38 hours to get from Bristol to London. In the late 18th century, John Palmer, whose family owned Bath and Bristol Theatres Royal, encountered difficulties in securely sending scripts or contracts to London and complained to the Post Office about the slowness of mail delivery. He proposed a system of mail delivery by horse-drawn coach, with swift changes of horses every 10 miles allowing a high average speed at a sustainable brisk trot and with increased security for the mail. Post offices not being in existence until the 1840s so mail destined for London was the 'Up' Mail and mail for other destinations was the 'Down' mail.

The trial mail coach run from 'The Nails' in Bristol to London took only 16 hours, halving the previous time taken on horseback, a remarkable speed for that era, but Palmer managed to cut the time down even further. The first regular mail coach route was established from Bristol to London, via Bath in 1784, as was the first mail coach service from major cities with every coach leaving at exactly 8pm and being monitored all the way. In recognition of Palmer's achievement, the mail coach to Bristol was always given precedence and was the first to leave London.

When the first coaches began to transport letters the time reduced considerably. The Royal Mail coaches had room for some passengers and these places were much sought after. Although more expensive the mail coach was much faster than the ordinary road coaches and also carried an armed guard as a defense against footpads and highwaymen who lay in wait for the coach in the hope of rich pickings from the money folded inside letters.

All sorts of mail went from inns around the city of London, Inns had a contracts to supply horses for the mail coaches. The Job Master, Hobson, had the most horses and operated a system which appeared to give customers their pick of horses when in fact there was only one choice: Hobson required his customers to choose the horse in the stall nearest to the door in order to prevent the best horses from being over-used, which led to the term “Hobson’s choice”.

A famous [coaching inn](#) called the *Swan With Two Necks* once stood at the junction of Gresham Street from where the mail coach to Exeter would leave each evening. Mail bags were kept in the locked boot of the coach under the feet of the guard for whom it was instant dismissal if the boot was left unlocked.

Turnpike trusts were set up with powers to collect road [tolls](#) for maintaining the principal roads. By the mid 19th century, over 1,000 trusts administered and took tolls at thousands of miles of turnpike road. Speed was the essence for the royal mail and mail coaches were exempt from tolls. On hearing the warning blast from the post horn, the turnpike gate would be opened for the mail coach to drive on through without stopping.

Mail coach guards were employees of the Post Office (the only ones on the coaches). They sat outside, on top of the coach, armed with a [blunderbuss](#) and a

brace of pistols to safeguard the mails. Those riding outside risked death in winter weather. Guards showed a heroic dedication and commitment to their role as guardians of the mail, even unto their last breath.

As well as an exceptionally fascinating talk from a real character, the Street Society’s members were able to see the artifacts associated with Martin Horler’s extensive research. From the splendid uniform to the guard’s lamp, the blunderbuss, flintlock pistol and cutlass with which the guard would protect the Royal Mail, to the repertoire of post horn calls which used to be a regular and meaningful part of everyday life. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the average person would not have gone a single day without hearing the familiar signal of the post horn associated with the postal system and the delivery of the mail.

Angela Southern

Thank you Angela for such a detailed report!



Handing Over the Reins!

It's Tuesday 23rd September 2014, and at 7.31 pm (precisely!) the London to Exeter (via Bath) Royal Mail coach - the 'Upper Exeter', known locally as the 'Street Society' - clatters into Street, its arrival announced with spirit and urgency on his long copper horn by scarlet-liveried guard Martin Horler. Coachman Nina Swift brings the headers and wheelers skilfully to a steaming stand, before alighting from her open box seat for the final time and leaving the horses in the care of the ostlers, who are already gathering in the Methodist Church Hall. This marks the end of an eventful stage on a long journey for the Street Society: Nina is about to hand over the reins to her successor coachman, Barbara Cowell, to take the Street Society forward.

And what a stage it's been! For the past seven years Nina has driven the *Street Society* with enthusiasm, imagination, purpose, and a sense of fun, ably assisted throughout by a hard-working team of committee members. Nina's commitment both to Street and to the *Street Society* is untiring, and she has never lost an opportunity to promote the interests of each, through the spoken and printed word and her engaging presence, often in full campaigning mode! The *Street Society* will miss its regular coachman, leading from the front in all weathers, but we will continue to enjoy her company as a fellow passenger travelling with us inside the coach.

A flurry of activity, and it's 7.35 pm (precisely!). The waybill has been signed, the horses have been changed

(no more than four minutes allowed), and guard Martin Horler has sounded 'Hold your horses!' on his horn to alert all concerned that we are about to resume our journey. Coachman Barbara Cowell is now at the reins and all seats on board the coach are occupied. It remains only for the guard to blow the warning notes for 'Clear the road!' and the Street Society is off once again at a fast trot...

Chris Hughes, 24th September 2014

Thank you Chris, and as you requested I've reproduced it exactly to your orders!

Our October meeting

"WHO PULLED THE PLUG OUT" - A TALK BY CHRIS HILL

Our speaker, member Chis Hill, is a local man who grew up in Somerset and went to school in Street. He has taken a special interest in the floods of 2012 and compiled a dossier of photographs and information. In the intervening period since the winter of 2012/13 a 70-page limited edition book 'Who Pulled the Plug Out' has metamorphosed from Chris Hill's many photographs and the observations from local people who throughout their lives on the Somerset levels had never experienced such extremes of rain and flooding.

Although the floods of 2013 were even worse than those of the previous year, the time which had elapsed since the devastating floods of 2012 had allowed Chris Hill the time to study, evaluate and assemble the material he had gathered during his expeditions by kayak over fences, past tree-tops, over fields, across the mystery world created by the deluge. Navigating with care by

knowledge of the landscape and local landmarks such as Glastonbury Tor and Burrow Bridge enabled our intrepid adventurer to explore the new lakeland world where in imagination, the mortally wounded King Arthur drifted across the mystery waterworld to his last resting place in Avalon.

The cover pictures of Chris Hill's book clearly illustrate the extent of the flooding at Huish Drove, leading from Frog Lane to Huish Episcopi, over the River Parrett at Black Bridge. The signpost only just managed to keep its head above the water! A picture of Chris Hill at the same spot in drier times is proof that the water level was over 6 feet deep. On the inside cover, a photograph by Mendip Gliding Club shows a landscape inundated by the water which obliterated Somerset's green and pleasant land and drove people from their homes for many months. Further emotive photographs show the rising water levels, particularly the Brue which filled to the extent that there was no room to float a kayak under the bridge in November 2012. A unique shot of Glastonbury Tor reflected in the flooded landscape continued the theme, compared with a photograph taken on a normal summer's day 8 months later.

Taking his camera every time he ventured out, Chris captured the flooding from his unique perspective, not only around Glastonbury and Street, but also Mulcheney, North Curry, Burrowbridge and Langport where the waters crept ominously close to the main street and sandbags were readied to try to repel the invasion. Muchelney was 'much' in the news and the focus of national attention when it became cut off by the floods and the sight of the Burnham Area Rescue Boat gained fame in the media for its 'Missions to Mulcheney'.

Whole communities suffered severely in the flooding of 2012/13. The lives of

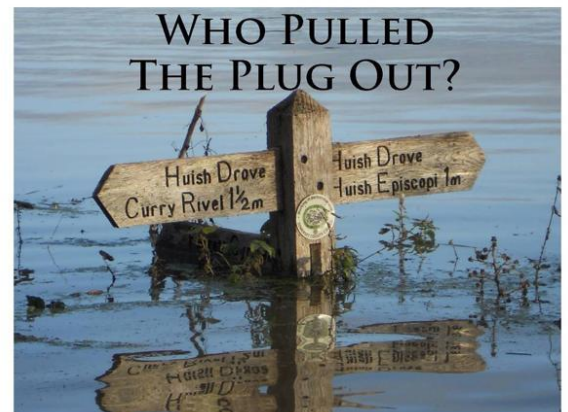
home-owners, farmers and local businesses were all affected by the waters. The flooding was significantly worse in 2013/14 indicating that severe weather events could continue to occur. Again last winter, farmers struggled to care for livestock and land. Others battled to get to work and it cost them considerably more in time, money and anxiety, with the dread of leaving home and returning to find their homes invaded by floodwater.

As we once again approach winter, after a drier summer and the works carried out by the environment agency and other authorities, the hope is that the season ahead will be less dramatic and traumatic than those of 2012 and 2013!

Angela Southern

Again many thanks Angela!

This is the cover of Chris' book - ring Nina on 443881 if you would like one of the few copies left (an excellent Xmas gift!)



A VIEW OF THE DEVASTATING FLOODS OF 2012



CHRIS HILL

News about Merriman Park



Our neglected park is in need of some tender loving care and has now been handed back to its original owners.

Mendip District Council returned ownership of Merriman Park to Street Parish Council, which hopes to restore what used to be the village's crown jewel to its former glory.

Bob Smith, chairman of the parish council said: "We look forward to taking it over, we have plans but nothing will happen overnight.

"The main thing is we are taking it over and we plan to maintain it at the current standard but hopefully a higher standard.

"We now have a list of things we hope to do over the next few years."

The parish council is holding a meeting with residents to prioritise the list of improvements.

(see box below for details)

Mendip has also said it is happy with the transfer.

A spokeswoman said: "Following a detailed discussion at its Corporate Asset Management Group, Mendip District Council was happy to agree to the request that ownership of Merriman Park is transferred to Street Parish Council so that it can work with local communities to improve it over time. The transfer contains various covenants that make sure the land will continue to be used only as a public park in the future, and we are delighted that the parish council will further enhance the park as a credit to Street."

Six major improvements are now set to be made in the next three years by the parish council, including repairing the wire boundary fence, repainting the entrance gates and railings around the war memorial, the renovation of the existing seats and providing an edged pathway between the existing path and the war memorial.

The plans also include the renovation of the war memorial as well as a new memorial for Street people who have died in conflict since the First World War, and the provision of history boards explaining why the facility is called Merriman Park and the developments in the village since it was built.

The long-term plan, spread over ten to 15 years, will include the renovations of the bandstand, including a new roof, the renovation or replacement of the seating area near the bandstand, new planted areas to be cared for by the community, and a new play feature.

Merriman Park was created in 1923 and was originally a focal point for leisure activities in Street.

There was a covered bandstand which was regularly used for concerts together with a seating area.

In the local government reorganisation of 1974, ownership of the park was transferred from Street Urban District Council to the newly formed council of Mendip. No financial payment was made to the people of Street.

This piece was taken from an article in the Central Somerset Gazette

There will be a public meeting to discuss Merriman Park on Tuesday 25th November, 2014 at 7pm at Street Parish Rooms, 6 Leigh Road (entrance opposite Crispin Community Centre). All residents and community groups in Street are invited to attend a public meeting to discuss the future of the park and to form a group chaired by a Parish Councillor. The council needs to know what you want from your park. Come and share your views.

News from The Wells Civic Society

All of the Society's Wednesday evening meetings are held in the Conference Room at Wells Museum, Cathedral Green and begin at 7.30pm. Visitors are very welcome.

10 December 2014: Apple Xmas!

An evening of cider tasting and celebration with Orchard Pig.

Special Guest: The Rt Revd Peter Hancock, Bishop of Bath and Wells

14 January 2015: Annual General Meeting

followed by speaker (to be confirmed)

11 February 2015: Democracy and Community Action

Mel Usher, Leader, Frome Town Council and Cllr Peter MacFadyen

11 March 2015: Investing in young readers and writers

Siobhan Goodwin and representatives of Wells Bookworms, with local writer

and illustrator, Rebecca Gryspeerdt.

8 April 2105: Public Art in Wells

Local artists lead a discussion about the role of public art in the community and our legacy for the future of Wells

13 May 2015: The role of the Bishop's Barn in Wells - past, present and future

10 June 2015: Celebrating the characters of Wells and the Civic Society's commemorative plaques.

Clare Blackmore, Wells Journal & Wells Civic Society

News from Frome Civic Society

All talks are at Frome Assembly Rooms at 2.30 except for the AGM at 2 o/c

Saturday 29 November

Jerry Sampson is a buildings archaeologist who has worked for thirty years on conservation of historic buildings - including the cathedrals of Wells and Salisbury and the abbeys of Bath and

Glastonbury. From his talk, **The Medieval Benchends of Somerset**, we will learn about the designs of the county's amazing heritage of woodcarvings that date back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Saturday 13 December

A lighter pre-Christmas event. **Bob and Gill Berry** from Devizes will talk about and sing **Traditional Songs and Music from Wiltshire and**

Somerset. The Berrys have been performing together at clubs and festivals since 1983 and help to organise the Chippenham Folk Festival.

The songs include songs about love, work, mischief and even murder.

FSLs Publications will be on sale

Saturday 10 January

Kay Ross is a buildings historian who has curated several exhibitions, including some on eighteenth century gardens. In her talk, **Bath's Pleasure Gardens**, she will tell us about Bath at its heyday as a smart and fashionable spa. The Pleasure Gardens and Walks provided diverse and often unusual entertainments for fashionable visitors.

Saturday 24 January

Shirley Hodgson has worked with children all her working life. She became interested in the story of children who were sent to Canada between 1860 and 1960. This led her to research the subject of children in reformatories and industrial schools in Victorian times. Her talk, **Wandering and Begging: How our Victorian Ancestors dealt with the Problem of Vagrant Children**, will look at the background of this social issue and about the social reformer, Mary Carpenter of Bristol.

Saturday 7 February

The Ashworth Memorial Lecture **Richard Kay** is Director of Pictures at Lawrences, the auctioneers based at Crewkerne. He has worked at Sotheby's and will give a talk - **The Auctioneer's Ten Commandments: Experiences of Working in an Auction House for the last**

27 Years - about his work. The Society met him on its visit to the auction rooms at Crewkerne in April 2013.

Saturday 21 February

Ian Caskie was brought up in Liverpool where he watched arrivals and departures of the ocean liners. His enthusiasm for big ships stayed with him throughout his career as a teacher. He has been a Visitor Services volunteer with the Great Britain Trust in Bristol and his talk will be about **SS Great Britain - from Launch to Relaunch.**

Saturday 7 March

Ian Pearson is a member of the Society, has been a professional archivist and an Anglican parish priest. He has been working in the Bath Abbey archives, and especially the records of the Bath Court of Quarter Sessions. These form the material for his talk, **“Before the Bench”:**

The Work of the Bath JPs in the Early Victorian Period. Information about petty criminals sheds enormous light on the world of humble people who do not otherwise feature in historical records.

Saturday 28 March

The lecture will be preceded by the Society’s Annual General Meeting, which will start at 2pm.

Jean Lowe, Jennie O’Kane and members of the Local Villages History Group led by **Joyce Jefferson** have been working on the history of Mendip villages since the 1990s. In their talk, **How We Learnt to Create a Popular Village History and did it Our Way**, they describe and illustrate how they have approached the past of each village studied - Stoke St Michael, Leigh-on-Mendip and Holcombe.

Another neighbouring group which runs an interesting programme of events is

The Mendip Society (mendipsociety.org.uk or phone **Bob Rischmiller** on 01934 820575)

The society has a range of local walks planned.

News from Civic Voice

[Civic Voice](#) is the national body set up in 2010 as an umbrella group for local societies promoting civic pride all over Britain. A campaign is growing around the government's current proposals to loosen the planning process in favour of developers.

(The Street Society Society has not yet joined Civic Voice.) Civic Sense is the online newsletter published monthly by Civic Voice, with links to civic societies around the country and what they are doing.)



Responding to the announcement on 14th October from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport that the Government has formally approved the restructuring of English Heritage, Freddie Gick, Chair of Civic Voice said:

“We welcome the government’s decision to support English Heritage’s proposals to safeguard our National Heritage Collection. Heritage-related tourism contributes over £20bn per annum to the national economy and is a key factor in our ongoing economic recovery.

‘Giving the new organisation additional freedom as a charity provides an opportunity for innovation and creativity in generating new sources of income. Though we had concerns about some of the assumptions in the English Heritage business plan when originally proposed, we are confident that English Heritage management and trustees will have carefully considered every aspect of the proposal in great detail.’

English Heritage will be awarded nearly £90 million over the next few years to invest in the National Heritage Collection of 420 historic sites, monuments and collections in its care. This will support the plan to transfer management of the Collection to a new charity, licensed by English Heritage’s governing body, The English Heritage Commission.

Planning and heritage protection responsibilities will be taken on by a separate government funded body to be known as Historic England.

Gick finished by saying “Civic Voice enjoys an excellent working relationship with English Heritage. We wish the management and Trustees of English Heritage every success with this new challenge and we look forward to developing productive partnerships with both aspects of the new structure.”

Griff Rhys Jones, campaigner and Civic Voice President claimed that there is a crisis in civic engagement when he launched the manifesto of the civic movement at its annual convention in Canterbury on Friday 24 October.

Griff will said “We face a crisis of civic engagement. This is a symptom of the frustration people feel as power is taken away from communities and they are subject to tokenistic consultation. We need to give all citizens opportunities to actively shape the future of their and to give communities the powers they need to enable their town and city centres to prosper”.

To achieve “Localism for Real”, the Civic Voice manifesto calls on future Governments to:

- Make improving the quality of the public realm in our cities, towns and villages a priority
- Give all citizens opportunities to actively shape the future of their place
- Give local communities the powers they need to enable their town and city centres to prosper

Griff added “If the Government is serious about Localism, they have to listen to the concerns coming forward from civic groups, resident associations and local councils. The Civic Movement agree with the Government that getting the economy moving is essential, but the myriad of proposals coming forward are clearly not the answer.”

Chair of Civic Voice, Freddie Gick said: “We believe the manifesto, “Localism for Real” puts power back into the hands of communities. We look forward to debating this with politicians and communities over the next 6 months”.

The manifesto was available to download from the Civic Voice website on Friday 24th October at www.civicvoice.org.uk/manifesto.

News of The Street Society commitment to help at the Crispin Community Centre

- For new friends - walk across the road from the library towards Tesco's - it's on your right, Parish rooms are on your left

The Crispin Centre is an important part of our community. On the ground floor it houses the Citizens Advice Bureau Mendip Council information point, Probation Service, a large computer room for courses and access to our lovely community garden. Other courses and activities are held in the upstairs rooms; a lift is available .

No wonder The Street Society took on responsibility of manning the Coffee Lounge on Thursday mornings! It keeps us involved with our community.

Coffee is served from 10-12 Monday to Friday downstairs in the Crispin Centre and is available to all. We serve coffee , tea or hot chocolate and a packet of biscuits for 70p. Everything is supplied for the volunteers who make the refreshments, all a volunteer needs to do is turn up on their rota day just before 10.

We run on a four week rota . Currently we need the following:

- 1) **regular help to cover the first Thursday of the month** - so the time commitment here is two hours a month
- 2) Other friends to **help when there are 5 Thursdays in the month** - so the time commitment here is only about two hours on three Thursdays a year
- 3) And **people who are happy to go on a list to be contacted if any sudden gaps arrive** which the co-ordinator needs to fill- so the time commitment here is very little

Thank you Pauline Jones for this information

The co-ordinator, Anne Biley, is very keen to hear from any of you who can help. Please please phone her on **440023** to give her your details, so that The Street Society can continue to fulfil its commitment to ensure teas and coffees continue to be served on a Thursday at such a bargain price!

Your Contributions

Items for the newsletter are always welcome, as are suggestions for articles.

Please email them to: thestreetsociety@btinternet.com or post them to:

Street Society Newsletter Editor, Nina Swift, 4 Wessex Close Street BA16 0ES



The Street Society provides a wide and varied programme of speakers and events. If you have any suggestions for the future please put the details here. We REALLY need your ideas

Name of Speaker / Place to visit:

Details of the content / subject / activity / etc:

Details for the speaker / visit so we can make contact:

Your name and contact details in case we need more information:

Thank you for your idea

Please send to Barbara Cowell at 19 Brookfield Way, STREET, BA16 0UE or e-mail her at mgcowell@tiscali.co.uk

Barbara is hoping to give up the role of Events Co-ordinator so please if you think you can help to co-ordinate our programme let us know. The committee will offer support with ideas and contacts and Barbara is happy to show any willing volunteers the ropes!