



## A peek at the past.

This newsletter doesn't so much have a picture of Clevedon's development, as it does a look into the past. This is Walton Road as it was in the 1860s, a carefully composed shot, with a man looking as though he had just stepped out of the gateway of one of the 'Orchard Cottages' terrace.



He is, in fact, holding on to the gate in order to keep himself still for what would have been a rather lengthy exposure time. Slow emulsions on glass plates meant exposures of multiple seconds rather than part seconds. You can see from the blurring of the treetops that there was a wind blowing and the topmost branches were moving fairly well.

This is another of the photographs taken by – we think – the eldest son of the Godwin family who were living at that time in 'The Arches' a magnificent house in the Italianate style situated in the Fir Woods. All that is left of it now is the coach house and mews still standing in what was the lower part of the walled garden. The upper part of the garden that held a tennis court has been incorporated into Ash Grove.



## Chairman's Report

Speaking to a number of people who are actively involved with running various voluntary groups, it is amazing to hear of the amount of surveys that are circulated, that hard pressed volunteers are expected to complete. Isn't it time that the powers-to-be offered positive help to the volunteer sector instead of just talking about it!

Jumping down from the high horse, I'd better mention this year's Christmas Party, all of which will be revealed - or not - on the night of Thursday 11 December. Tickets are £5 which include the normal drinks and nibbles. Thanks go to Jean Hannaford for, once again, doing the food; to the two Brian's for organising the drinks and of course to Hazel Pedder for sorting the entertainment and also the excellent range of speakers for the coming year.

The Environment Group's autumn clean-up and bulb planting proved to be a great success, with Clevedon Rotary Yeo lending a hand and many passers-by expressing positive comments on the work being done. This year they knew who we were, thanks to 'Clevedon Civic Society Flak Jackets'. Thanks go to all who helped. I would like to see an even bigger effort being made next spring, with more local groups of all ages being mobilized into the Clevedon Clean-up Blitz.

I'm sure we are all thoroughly fed up with all the doom and gloom regarding the economy, however there does appear to be some positive notes filtering through the haze, one hopes that there may be a glimmer of hope on the Pier Hotel front, it would be wonderful if a satisfactory solution can be found for that now sad but once proud building, situated in what must be Clevedon's most iconic site.

Rob Campbell

## Conservation & Planning Group Report

The *Credit Crunch* is beginning to bite in Clevedon, as anticipated in my last Newsletter Report.

The planning application by Spring Residential Ltd. for the Clevedon Hall Estate has been withdrawn, so we are back to square one on this development, with no design brief and no plan.

The Royal Pier Hotel Development Ltd. has been taken into receivership, probably accelerated by the issue of the 'Urgent Works Notice' by North Somerset District Council, so it is now up to the Council to carry out the necessary and urgent repairs to make the building weatherproof, as it is likely to remain in its present condition for the foreseeable future. The effect of the liquidation of the Company is unclear and we shall have to wait to see the actions of the appointed Receivers.

Tesco have produced another consultation brochure containing very limited information on their proposals. The position of the proposed store has been amended, but retaining the petrol filling station on its current site. The new store has a floor area of 6,800 sq. metres, which is some 75% larger than the existing. We are very concerned at the damage this size of store, selling a wide range of goods other than food, will have on Clevedon's retail areas, apart from that on its residential neighbours.



The new planning regulations, which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October with little fanfare, could have a drastic effect on neighbourly relations. Certain extensions to the rear of homes and to enlarged roof spaces have become *permitted developments*, with no notice or consultation with neighbours or the planners necessary. We are not aware of our Planners interpretation of the new regulations as yet, but trust clarification will be forthcoming.

With this Newsletter you should receive the Programme Card giving details of lectures for 2009, at both the General Meetings and those of the History Group. These are interesting and informative and well worth attending, so please make a note in your next year's diary and try to come along, you will not regret it.

**Bryan Osborne      Group Chairman**

## **History Group Report**

The autumn season got off to a wonderful start, when Stuart Peachey had us spell-bound with his talk about 17<sup>th</sup> Century Farming. He brought that period back to life in a unique way and he had a number of the group and guests taking notes as well as eating his very tasty apples!

As a group we are going to man a stall at the St. Nicholas Fayre again this year, but it has been decided that a change to our wares is necessary. Due to the fact that the weather has forced us to cancel for the last two years, (we prefer not to get wet but for books it's a disaster), so this year we will be selling cakes, pickles, jams etc, it may also be fun to do a small raffle. All donations will be gratefully received, and of course, it's more fun to man the table than to buy, so please come along and support the group and show the flag for the Society.

Our numbers continue to grow, which is very rewarding for both Jane and I, but I think we could squeeze a few more into the hall, so everyone please have a word with friends and family and invite new folk to come along, we all enjoy it and I'm sure they will too.

Finally a request for help; does anyone know any descendants of Charles James Gibson. He was the Pier Master from 1921 to 1945, when he died suddenly in his office, aged 65. It is hoped that we can build an interesting display, about both his Navy days and his time on the Pier, which could then be donated to the Pier in his honour.

**Rob Campbell      Group Chairman**

## **Footpath Group Report**

The group has been very active and numbers arriving at each walk have been very pleasing. Leaders have also been more than willing to come forward with suggestions, resulting in much discussion and organisation. We have been following quite a few routes out of town, therefore some of our future walks will involve revisiting trails within Clevedon in order to check upon local footpaths and lanes etc.

## Clevedon Civic Society Autumn 2008



During July we followed a circular walk in the Congresbury / Wrington area. August saw us on a fascinating 'History Trail' from Clifton Down to Seamills and towards the end of the month the group gathered for a Charity Walk in aid of Migraine Action. This was a conservation trail around Clevedon, first put together by Jane Lilly in 1975. She very kindly updated it for the purpose of the day and as a result we raised £80.

Walks in September took us on a five mile trek in and around the town and later in the month the group travelled to Bristol by bus, for a walk around the Cumberland Basin area and the Harbour-side.

It has been a packed programme of events which continues through to the end of the year. All walks are advertised in the local press and on the Civic Society website. Contact telephone numbers are always available for further information. New walkers are very welcome to join the group that generally meets twice each month.

Jean Hannaford      Group Chairman.

## Our Environment Group

### 1 The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Project.

An application to has been submitted to Yansec for funding the proposed railings (approx. 0.8m high) around the soft perimeter of the large plane tree in Queen Square. It is anticipated that if funding is provided installation may proceed in the first quarter of 2009.

### 2 Tidy-up and bulb planting on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October.

Some twenty stalwarts including members of the Footpath Group, and The Rotary Club of Clevedon Yeo turned out to comprehensively tidy up the foreshore opposite the The Little Harp and the temporary car park across the road. Some 12 bags of rubbish were collected and more than 20 tyres were rescued from the bushes !

North Somerset Council provided plastic bags and pickers and later removed the rubbish. Approximately 1000 bulbs were planted in Salthouse Fields behind the seats on the embankment. We look forward to a great display in the Spring.

### 3 Land Yeo Friends

A brochure detailing the work of the Land Yeo Friends has been produced and will be available to members at forthcoming public meetings.

### 4 Re-cycling Plastic Bottles

A plastic bottle re-cycling bank is now open at the car park adjacent to the old Kwik Save building (just behind the Crab Apple pub).

Mike Graham      Group Chairman



## Talks for the winter season

### Global warming

We have made a good start on the talks for this season. In September we had an interesting talk on Global Warming with suggestions as to things we could do to lower the carbon footprint. Although solar panels can be expensive to install their usefulness becomes obvious from the first. Not only can they supply heated water but can also help with the electricity bill. An interesting and thought producing talk with many of the points well explained and illustrated.

## Talk to Civic Society, Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2008

### Mr Brian Amesbury

*'What did you do in the War – lad?'*

Brian, a lifelong Bristolian, recounted his personal experiences of the war years in Bristol. As a young boy growing up in Bristol it was full of nostalgia, humour and pathos, delivered with the timing of a professional.

In a city where 2000 citizens were killed in air raids it was enlightening to hear that the young Brian was allowed the freedom to go out in the evenings unaccompanied to visit friends. How many parents would feel as secure today? Or was it just that the scale of the risk in the 1940s was too much to contemplate?

Both Brians parents died in their 'prime' directly as a result of comparatively minor medical conditions, an outcome that would be unthinkable today. Yes, we have a lot to be thankful for.

The talk was laced with humour. I particularly liked the reference to his father asking the young Brian to accompany him outside to see the newly introduced blackout!

I am sure that we can look forward to a return trip for Brian before too long

Alan Cotton.

## A follow on from

### Local boy makes good – or bad.

You may recall that a few years back we had a couple of articles in the newsletter about George James Caple, who, at the age of 17 undertook to provide Clevedon with a weekly paper.

After the mention of him – (the youthful founder of our local newspaper) - in our weekly paper a few weeks back we thought that our readers might like to peruse this extract from the Bristol Mercury and Daily Post of 4<sup>th</sup> November 1885.

It was sent to us by a descendant of 'George James' in Australia. What would we do now-a-days without the World Wide Web:-

(You may remember that he vanished from Clevedon and found his way to New York where he either bigamously married, or maybe just co-habited before the pair went on to Australia where he died around 1915.)

## Meeting of creditors.

A meeting of the creditors of George James Caple, of Clevedon, printer and newspaper publisher, was held yesterday at the offices of the Official Receiver, Corn Street. Mr A H Hooper, chief clerk to the Official Receiver, presided; Mr Inskip appeared for the creditors. The statement of affairs presented showed that the liabilities to the creditors amounted to £519 18s 4d, liabilities partly secured £330 6s 4d, the estimate value of securities being £127 14s 8d, leaving £202 11s 8d to rank for dividend, showing a total indebtedness of £722 10s. The assets consisted of book debts, good £127 5s 7d; doubtful and bad, estimated to produce £10; stock in trade £10; furniture £50; other property £600; total £643 5s 7d. Preferential claims £7 4s 6d; reduced that total to £636 1s 1d; which showed a surplus of assets over liabilities. Mr Hooper said the item, other property £600, was the value of the goodwill and plant of the *Clevedon Mercury*, which the debtor published. That sum however, was entirely his estimate, and no valuation had been made by any independent person. The debtor in answer to the official questions, stated that he commenced business 25 years ago with £50 capital, and he attributed his failure to losses in trade and building speculation. Mr Hooper observed that there was no deficiency, but there was a judgement against the debtor which could not be met. There was a proposal to submit a scheme of arrangement to the creditors. Mr Inskip remarked that having regard to the nature of the property it was desirable to make a scheme of arrangement, and the debtor had signed a proposal that the property divisible amongst his creditors should be vested in a trustee. He observed that there were several persons anxious to negotiate for the purchase, and the sale could be managed better privately than with an open bankruptcy. The debtor of course would have the opportunity of repurchasing the estate if he desired. The resolution was passed, and Mr J Hudson Smith was appointed trustee.

## The Civic Society public meetings for 2009

8 January		"Weston Pier."
12 February	Robin Prytherch	"The Common Buzzard In North Somerset."
12 March	James Bond	"The Knights Templar"
9 April	Gary Gowans	"Stately Homes of Britain"
14 May	AGM & Derek Lilly	"A Small Game Safari"
June, July, August		Summer break.
10 September	Melanie Durston	"Greener footprints"
8 October	Roy Gallop	"Lost Ports & Harbours of the Bristol Channel"
12 November	David Bowring	"Countryside For All"
10 December		Christmas Party & speaker.

A nice variety of speakers and talks, that hopefully, will please all tastes. We can look forward to 2009 with a programme that should have something to suit all members of the society no matter what their main interests are.

## The Local History Group Programme 2009

Here is the 2009 programme of talks for the Local History Group for the coming year. It promises to be an interesting one. We have the return of some previous speakers and some new ones as well. Taken altogether we have some intriguing titles and it suggests that once again Rob Campbell has produced a few wonders for us from his magic tophat.

15 January	Phil Curme	Caporetto to the Piave The Clevedon Connection
19 February	Ross Robson	One of the last big sailing ships
19 March	Paul Barnett	Purton Ships Graveyard
16 April	WC&P Group	WC&P Railway
21 May	Pat Hase	A hunt for Edwin Long RA
18 June	Peter Skrine	Clevedon: A 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Literary Excursion
16 July	John Penny	RAF in the West Country & Summer Supper
17 September	John Crockford-Hawley	Potty Parsons
15 October	Rob Campbell	Brave Rescues
19 November		Group event & Christmas Supper

All Society members are welcome to attend any of these talks with no obligation to become full time History Group members. If you see an interesting talk just drop in for the evening. We are in general a happy crowd and our 'break time' American Suppers always go down well, giving members a chance to chat as we eat.

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### *Unusual isn't in it.*

I was looking in one of my innumerable reference books for a quotation recently and came upon the entry.

*'Dog Whipper' A minor church officer of the days when sheepdogs, turn-spits and others accompanied their masters to church. His job was to keep order amongst the canine congregation, to eject the badly behaved and to exclude troublesome dogs generally.*

This throws an odd light upon the conduct of church services in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when they were, it seems, supplied with an official whip and also dog tongs. The job ceased to be in the late 1700s to early 1800s, although it seems that even as late as 1856 a John Pickard was appointed as 'dog whipper' in Exeter Cathedral. Probably purely as an honorific and symbolic fulfilment as surely in the staid Victorian days no dogs would have been allowed into churches.

### How about a little puzzle?

In this square you can find 18 words of 6 or more letters. A 9 letter word can be found there - the clue to it being. *Supported or helped with financial aid.*

Nouns and plurals are included; each word must use the letter D and all of the words in the list can be found in the 1998 New Oxford dictionary of English - edited by Judy Pearsall.

Go on then, roll up your sleeves and have a go at it. And test your word power. The answer list can be found further on in this newsletter.



S	R	O
E	D	N
P	S	O

### Have you visited the Pier this summer?

If you haven't, why haven't you? We don't appreciate what we have on our own doorstep do we. It is the only surviving Victorian example left and folk come from far and wide to have a look at it. Yet we take it for granted.

Season tickets can be had and this would mean a considerable saving for locals, they would be able to have a stroll out to the end and back as many times as they wished, all year round.

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## Random Roving Past its 'Sell-by' date?

I was rather amused the other day; I had been working on a PowerPoint slide-show about Wells Cathedral. It is a place of which I am – maybe – inordinately fond. I had just loaded into the slide page a picture of the massive stonework of the arch supporting the three figures of the crucifixion scene.

My mind went to a report that I had seen in our weekly paper, it stated that a local school needed the classrooms rebuilding “Because they had come to the end of their useful life.” They must have been all of 20 years old? Built with modern techniques, using up to date materials styled by top line architects, and could not last more than 20 years?



It takes some believing – yet here is a cathedral

built around 800 years ago, by masons who had no modern aids, poor tools by today's standards, no computer systems to call up CAD help, and with calculus that verged on the primitive. What a pity that some of those folk could not be whisked up to today's world to teach some of the secrets of their craft to the holders of their profession in the present day. I know that critics can say:

“But maintenance is continually carried out” To that I can only reply “Maintenance yes – but not rebuilding”

I was down there again on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October to get a few more pictures to finish the presentation and noticed a group rehearsing in the Nave. “Ha”, I thought “Another of these acting things is going to be put on instead of a proper sermon. What sort of rubbish is happening in our churches today? Now it is even creeping into our Cathedral Church in Somersetshire”

Then I paused, after all what did Jesus himself do? He preached in parables that his hearers could understand. In this way he put his message over. Maybe they should try to get some Christian ‘rappers’ also. It would perhaps help to persuade a change of thought and deeds, rather than the generally destructive attitude that so many ‘rappers’ seem to take.

### Puzzle answers.

DONORS, DOSSER, DRONES, DROOPS, NODOSE, NOOSED, PERNOD, PONDER, PONDERS, RESPOND, RESPONDS, RODEOS, RONDOS, SNORED, SPENDS, SPONSORED, SPOONED, SPORED,

Did you get them all?

 **The Royal British Legion Clevedon Branch**  
Chairman: John Hulse Tel. 878448  
A warm welcome awaits anyone who would like to attend our meetings, to help in anyway, or just to meet up with old friends & comrades. We meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm at the Community Centre. The RBL is now open to all, you do not need to have served.

## Second childhood? Or is it early senile decay.

I remarked to another of those waiting patiently as he stood by my side with camera ready. "I think it must be a form of madness, half an hour of waiting for 15 or 20 seconds of nostalgia" What were we doing? We were amongst a gathering of perhaps 6 or 8 folk waiting for the arrival of the preserved steam locomotive Battle of Britain Class, 'Tangmere' to see it storm through the railway station at Yatton and career down the line towards us as we stood by the farm crossing in Horsecastle.




It meant getting there early to find the best place from which to take your pictures. A place where no-one could intrude to spoil your shot by standing in front and blocking your view point. If

the sun is not out the best place is to the north of the line. There is a better angle because you look across two tracks. If the sun shines then in that position it glares straight into the lens. In that case you want the south side gateway. There you get a siding line to give you a slight angle but you have to take a more distant shot. Anxious looking at watches, the time is getting close, 'Is she overdue?' we ask one another. 'Is she running OK?' remembering the occasion a few weeks back when another loco had trouble connecting the vacuum brakes at Temple Meads. No there she comes, distant smoke hanging in the air because the morning is a little damp, charging down the line towards us. Then with a swoosh of noise - she goes past and into the distance, leaving us with the smell and the satisfaction - until the next time.

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### *I was thinking recently*

“That’s a change” you might say to yourself. I had just added some new members names to our Newsletter list of addresses and noticed that we now send out by hand-delivery 151 copies of our little journal, plus the 30 or so that are posted. Now this can’t happen without the aid of our happy band of helpers. As far as the editors job is concerned most of what I do is just waffle. I add the reports of our busy groups and fill the remaining space with any old thing that enters my head.

The hard part is done by the folk who get the ‘new baby’ printed, sorted out, packed into envelopes, and then after the public meeting at which members can pick theirs from the box, get the remainder out to the ‘postmen’ who put them through the letterboxes of those who get them delivered. I think that the behind the scenes work is rarely thought about, but without the helping hands it would be a prohibitive cost to produce our new ‘up-market’ newsletter.

We have had several kind comments about our production now that it is being made into a booklet rather than a stapled series of loose pages. The better quality paper certainly gives it the feeling of a magazine, albeit a small one. With the Civic Society emerging more into the limelight, a professional look to our ‘Message to the world’ helps to sustain our image.

### *And another thing.*

Writing about helping hands, are there any Civic Society members who have about three hours to spare a week or fortnight. Your help would be very much appreciated at the Heritage Centre. Opening times are 1.30 p.m. to 4 or 4.30 p.m. At the moment opening time is afternoons only but it is hoped that if enough volunteers can be found we could also open from 10.30am.

It is surprising the variety of visitors that look in, from old Clevedonians coming back on holiday, to people from Japan, Finland and the Scandinavian area, both South and North America, Australia and New Zealand, including from the latter a family from our namesake town there. There was even a rare visit from a lady from Ulaan Batar in Outer Mongolia. It is so easy to make new friends and chat about comparisons from their towns and villages to the ones they find in this country.

Why not take the opportunity and look in to see what it is like there, remember you are never too old for a new venture. Some Local History Group members know of a lady of 96 whose son started her off on the internet. So it is no good to say “Oh I am too old for anything like that”, if you are only in your 60s.



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## Meanwhile ‘Old Crotchety’ is as testy as ever.

### Are we the ‘Poor relations’

I regularly visit my sister who is in a nursing home in Nailsea. One of the things she likes to do is to sit in one of the lounges and look out at the cars going in and out of the big car park near the branch library

Some months back I noticed that the flagstones on the path by the window were buckled up and looked really dangerous because they were projecting over an inch above the levels of the path. Not just one stone but a few of them.

North Somerset Council had an instant solution. No, not a quick repair job but a traffic cone was placed nearby to warn folk of the possibility of tripping because of the exposed edge. It has been like that now for over 6 weeks. I beg to venture a guess that if this had been Weston-super-Mare rather than Nailsea the job would have been tackled in a very different way.



It is like our neighbour, Portishead, is finding out, with their trouble about the open air pool. It seems to set a riddle – **When is a trading loss not a trading loss? – When it’s in Weston and not another town**, appears to be the answer to that, as a reader pointed out in the local paper recently.

I am beginning to think more and more that the towns and villages in the North Somerset District Council area should be allowed to set their own ‘Parks and etc.’ rate to be spent as THEY would like it done rather than seeing it trickled away on spendthrift ideas and schemes that bring them in neither satisfaction or usefulness.

It would be interesting to know what proportion of the total sum is provided by Weston and what percentage is spent there. A friend of mine told me some years back that he and his wife could take a holiday in Portugal – flying out and back – for less than the cost of stopping in Weston for the same period of time. Maybe that has changed now but I doubt very much if there has been all that much of a change.

As it says in the bible “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?” (Jerimiah 13:23)

However – Crotchety or not I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and let us hope that the New Year will bring a breath of life into the present rather perilous financial situation that the world seems to have got itself into.

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.....✂

### Subscription Reminder

Please remember that subscriptions of £12 per member are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

**Payments please to the Membership Secretaries, John and Helen Bussell, at**

33 Tennyson Ave, Clevedon, BS21 7UJ - or at the meeting.

Name :- .....

Clevedon Civic Society Autumn 2008

Date :- .....