

The Story of Weston Village

**A BACAS
excursion in
June 2011**

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The excursion to Weston Village near Bath took place on the sun-drenched evening of 29th June. As the tour guide had just been taken ill, the author stepped in after frenetic last minute research. He incidentally enjoyed the experience and, judging by the numbers of questions afterwards, most of the attendees must have been listening. The tour dwelt upon Weston's history, its architecture and anecdotes concerning some interesting Weston events and citizens.

From its Saxon origins, Weston appeared to prosper greatly being owned in part by a powerful Norman baron and the Bishop of Bath. The clerics gained complete control under the See of Bath and Wells after AD1100 but the suppression of the monasteries saw it transferred to the Crown. It was sold in the late 17th Century to various landowners and became part of Bath in 1951, a change not always to the benefit of the village ratepayers but of great benefit to the infrastructure.

Weston, the village of the seven streams, thrived in the 15th and 16th Centuries based on the wool trade, but declined thereafter. It was partially saved by the diligence of the Weston laundresses. Blessed by copious supplies of clean water, it became the laundry of Georgian and Victorian Bath. The less than overtaxed menfolk seem to have gratefully accepted the situation and aided by the existence of 9 licensed premises, one for every 216 of the total population, ensured that the village acquired a fearsome reputation for hard drinking. It had, until 1966, the smallest pub in England (*see Figure 1*). The Globe was presided over by 21 stone Septimus Smith as its last licensee. The Globe was essentially a corridor and Septimus wearing the till round his waist dominated the premises.

There are some architectural gems and buildings of note. The Manor House was a resplendent Georgian building of the early 18th Century which replaced a decrepit Tudor mansion. It was never lived in by the Lord of the Manor and now survives in a mutilated form in the grounds of the Royal United Hospital. The earliest buildings to survive date from the 16th Century and many survive together with 'laundry' cottages of the late 18th Century and early 19th Century. Post 1951, when Bath absorbed Weston, houses of a very mediocre standard enveloped the core of the old village. One beautiful old farmhouse together with a tithe barn was demolished by the Council at midnight to thwart local objections.

Weston lies in a bowl surrounded on three sides by steep hills. The streams, which are mainly fed by springs from Lansdown, all join the Locks Brook before meeting the Avon. This stream until recent times was open as it flowed through the High Street. Whenever there was a severe downpour the Locks Brook would quickly rise and flood the village. At least one man drowned in a flood and it was put to other uses such as dragging a 'fallen woman' in it by a rope. It was culverted under the High Street in the late 1950s but still the waters defeated it. It was finally tamed in 1994 by a massive culvert which it is claimed will prevent further floods – or will it?

Figure 1
The Globe at Weston Village.

