



Diego Rivera, *Stamping the Newsletter*,
Detroit Institute

AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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UPDATE

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From: William Evans

5 Parrys Grove

Bristol BS9 1TT

Tel, ans and fax 0117 968

4979

wm.evans@btopenworld.com



Website: www.alha.org.uk Bob Lawrence, Flat 1 Chartley, 22 The Avenue, Bristol BS9 1PE,
lawrence.chartley@btinternet.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AvonLocalHistoryandArchaeology>

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ALHA ITEMS

Subscriptions

Many thanks to all who have paid their 2018-2019 subscriptions. Early payment helps ALHA's cashflow considerably. A copy of Sandy Tebbutt's latest edition of the *Walks, Talks and Visits* booklet has been sent to those groups and societies that have paid their subscription.

ALHA local history day 2018 talks

Full copies of the speakers' texts, with some of their illustrations, have been posted on the ALHA website.

ALHA summer walks 2018

The walk round **Langford** planned for **Sunday 12 August 2018** has been cancelled and a walk at **Portishead** substituted. The full programme of walks is on the ALHA website,

<http://www.alha.org.uk/>

ALHA grants

See item on **COUNTY BRIDGE STONE, KEYNSHAM**, below.

EVENTS, SOURCES, PROJECTS

COUNTY BRIDGE STONE, KEYNSHAM

Further to ALHA member **Keynsham & Salford LHS's** appeal for contributions towards the cost of installing the County Bridge Stone in Keynsham park as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the flood of 1968, *Richard Dyson writes*: 'I am pleased to be able to say that, following a last minute effort by the contractors, the County Bridge Stone has been positioned and the flood memorial completed for the opening ceremony, which was on 10 July.'



ALHA made a grant of £200 towards the project.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES is holding an open day **Sunday 2 September 2018, 10 to 4.** <https://heritage-hub.gloucestershire.gov.uk/summer-2018>


GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES ACCESSIONS


Kate Maisey writes: 'In January 2018 we began producing regular monthly 'News' reports and blogs to highlight new material received into the archives and recent cataloguing work. This included producing a complete listing of new accessions. Feedback from the first 6 months has been encouraging so we are going to continue with this approach. So, this is a reminder that the best way of knowing what new material we have received, and any new catalogues which have been produced, is to subscribe to the Gloucestershire Archives blog <https://gloucestershirearchives.wordpress.com/> and to look at the News section regularly.'

Kate Maisey Archives Development Manager

Gloucestershire Archives kate.maisey@gloucestershire.gov.uk Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester, GL1 3DW, 01452 425297

Latest from **WESTON MUSEUM** at <http://westonmuseum.org.uk> , including volunteering opportunities.

 **Pensford**
- A series of walks in and around Pensford



More Information:
A downloadable version of each booklet and links to more information about Pensford and surrounding areas are available on the Publow with Pensford Parish Council website <http://www.publow-with-pensford-pc.gov.uk/pc/>

Pick up a copy from:

- Pensford Post Office
- The Hiners' Coffee Shop
- The Rising Sun
- The George & Dragon
- The Travellers Rest
- The Pig

ACTON COURT events programme is at actoncourt.com. Bookings now being taken.

PENSFORD LHG WALKS BOOKLETS

Hilary Cox writes that ALHA member **Pensford LHG** 'has launched 3 heritage walks booklets, coinciding with the village events marking the 50 years since the Great Flood. I enclose a copy of the poster promoting them. Through the winter a team of us worked hard to produce these walks, with emphasis on local history. Walk 1, in and around the village of Pensford itself, covers very little distance and is packed with points of interest. Walks 2 and 3, circular to Stanton Drew and to Woollard, are more



conventional walks. The booklets are available in Pensford - the 3 pubs, the post office and the Miners' coffee shop. It is also available online via Pensford Parish Council website, to download as an app. which can then be used instead of a hardcopy: <http://www.publow:with-pensford-pc.gov.uk/pc/parish-walks/>

HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY

BBC4 is showing repeats of its 2013 series *Archaeology: a secret history*. The programmes are about how archaeology developed from an amateur hobby into a professional practice that has elements of scientific discipline. The first programme on 22 July began by proposing Helen the mother of the emperor Constantine as the first archaeologist, because the church claimed she had gone to Jerusalem and dug up pieces of the cross and nails used in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, plus his tunic, now displayed in Trier every so often, like the Turin shroud, for adoration by the trusting. The presenter then touched on Cyriac of Ancona, John Leland, William Camden, John Aubrey, cabinets of curiosities, Bishop Ussher, John Frere and others, and ended in the Neander valley. Subsequent programmes will no doubt give a minute or two to William Stukeley, Mary Anning, Heinrich Schliemann, Arthur Evans, Piltdown Man, Gertrude Bell, Amelia Edwards, Mortimer Wheeler, Jacquetta Hawkes, carbon dating, magnetometry, aerial survey and LiDAR. The presentation is elementary and straightforward without hyperventilation, and apart from the pointless, unnecessary and irrelevant music there was not much in the first programme to induce apoplexy in anyone other than hardline catholics and biblical fundamentalists. Nothing about our area in the first programme, though John Aubrey, associated mainly with Wiltshire and Avebury and credited with the first measured surveys, had a connection with **Bristol**: his grandmother married John Whitson, founder of the **Red Maids**, and it is from Aubrey that we get the account of how Whitson died. If you are interested not so much in what archaeological investigations tell us about the past, but rather in how archaeology evolved and how each discovery introduced new techniques or helped refine and revise existing ones, the series may be worth watching. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0109jnw>

ROBERT SOUTHEY

On 18 June 2018 ALHA member **Bristol Civic Society** unveiled a plaque at **Kingsdown** Parade to commemorate Robert Southey. RS was born in Wine Street in 1774 (hence the post-war brick office block called Southey House, where there is an earlier plaque). His early schooldays were spent on St Michael's Hill. Professor Robin Bailey of UWE produced evidence that 87 Kingsdown Parade had been Southey's matrimonial home. <https://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/robert-southey/> For a biography of RS, including his educational experiences in Bristol and his involvement with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth and subsequent developments, see ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26056>

COMMENTARY

Financing public entertainments

Bristol's stately pleasure dome (forthcoming) is back in the news. Mayor Marvin has called another pause for thought whether to site the Arenal to the north of city instead of on the old cattle market site at **Temple Meads**. There is a choice between financing methods as well as between sites, because

whereas the Temple Meads project would be the city council's, that at **Patchway** would (?) be promoted or steered by the landowner, a Malaysian-owned commercial company. Details of how the city council and the private company would finance their shares of the cost of their projects will be commercially confidential, and complicated so as to divert profits into low-tax jurisdictions, but if they were to follow the simplest and most transparent pattern, both the council and the private company would get huge government grants and borrow the rest, which they would repay over time with interest once the arena earns income and its operator, if solvent, is able to pay rent.

Financial models usually succeed if interest rates are low, if the sums work out, and if the public is willing to pay the charges to attend events. As with other businesses, the model fails if the operator puts on shows the public does not want to see, or charges prices the public is not prepared to pay. If the demand is not there, the venture goes bust. That happened with the **Clifton Rocks Railway**, and with London's millennium dome. A similar thing happened with **Bristol's second Colston Hall**. The first one was built by a private not-for-profit company. When it burned down in 1898, the second one was paid for by insurance moneys, but unlike the **Hippodrome** the company could not make ends meet during WW1, and sold out to the city council in 1919. What stands in Colston Street today was funded originally by shareholders, some of whom had philanthropic motives, others commercial, but the subsequent financial history is a multi-palimpsest of fire insurance payouts (more than one), ratepayers' rates, government and Arts Council grants, ticket sales, and donations from specialist trusts and the public.

Not every public entertainment venue in our area has been similarly financed. **Bristol's Theatre Royal** was funded in the first place by subscriptions, in exchange for which the subscribers were given a silver token which enabled them to attend performances free. In its early years the Theatre Royal had no debt. The risk the promoters ran was that the public might not pay to attend performances. They must have guessed that the theatre would be popular, otherwise they would not have risked their money. They guessed right, probably encouraged by the success of the theatre in **Bath**. In 1942 a trust was formed to acquire the Bristol theatre, and funding was obtained from the Arts Council in 1946. The subsequent financial history of the theatre, however, has been of municipal and government subsidy, municipal cuts, and most recently a huge multi-£million refurbishment funded by trust handouts, donations and government grants.



Bristol's Hippodrome, designed by theatre architect Frank Matcham for the impresario Oswald Stoll and opened in 1912, was a private commercial venture from the start. It survived WW1 and WW2 both operationally and financially. In spite of destruction by fire in 1948 of part of its unusually large stage, it has continued in private commercial ownership. Other venues, eg **the Empire, Prince's**, were successful for a time but are now part of local history.

Unlike in Italy and Germany, where it is not uncommon for a municipality to own the local stadium (and for local clubs to share it), football venues in Bristol have also been privately financed, at least in part and in theory. The **Memorial Ground in Horfield** was donated by Frank Cowlin the builder, and the first stands were paid for by public subscription, as a memorial to the 300 or so local players killed in WW1: <https://memorialgroundbristol.wordpress.com/history/>. Both of Bristol's larger association football clubs soon became private commercial concerns, funded most of the time by shares bought by directors who had made money doing something useful like making double glazing or running a dairy. They take the profits, if any, when the club is successful, and use the losses to reduce the tax bill for their other enterprises. Thus taxpayers in effect subsidise them. Insolvencies have also resulted in the clubs being funded by unpaid creditors, many of them local.

The financial future of the arena project remains as murky as the future of the city council's finances. Local history precedents suggest that popular entertainments can work financially, but even a whiff of arty culture will need public subsidy, and popular taste is as changeable as the weather.

Clevedon market hall

The former market hall in Alexandra Road, **Clevedon**, is one of the most visually distinctive in Britain, and in our area its design is unique. Built in 1869, it was designed by the **Weston-super-mare** architect Hans Price (Born in **Langford**, trained in Liverpool, practised in Weston, mainly as architect to the Piggott estates). Rectangular in plan, its ground floor was originally open-sided. Huge angle-braced timber posts support three tiers of pyramidal slate roofs, separated by clerestories. On top is a square clock tower, and a louvred lantern for ventilation.



If HP did not dream up the design from scratch, where did he get the idea from? One architectural historian (Foyle, 2011) describes the building as pagoda-like, but that does not seem quite right. Pagodas, like the one in Kew Gardens, usually have tiers of roofs with eaves, not one vast one; their roofs are usually shallow; and the roofs generally curve up at the corners, as in the forbidden city in Beijing:

<http://www.7wonders.org/images/asia/china/forbidden-city/forbidden-city.jpg> The overall visual effect is nothing like what HP achieved at Clevedon.

A less unlikely model may have been some of the timber stave churches in Norway, which have huge steep roofs and deep angular profiles. <https://herangtunet.com/the-experience/experience-summer-activities-norway/stave-churches/> So far as is known, HP did not visit any of them, and he may not even have known that they existed.

A more likely source, given the purpose of the Clevedon building, is the French town market hall, of which Les Halles in Paris was the largest and most famous example. But other towns, even some quite small ones, had open-sided market halls with huge deep steep roofs. One, at Le Faouet in Brittany, which is dated to the sixteenth century but with a documentary reference of 1452, has been conserved and still hosts a market two days a week:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Halles_du_Faouët#/media/File:Le_Faouet,_les_halles_du_17%C3%A8me_si%C3%A8cle.jpg The style, or remnants of it, can be seen also in market buildings in a number of other French and Flemish towns.

It is not known whether HP knew of those structures, but there are hints of French and Flemish gothic in some of HP's **Weston-super-mare** buildings, at any rate in those where his employers or clients did not constrain his freedom of design, so I would like to suggest – provisionally until documentary or other evidence comes to light – that the design of **Clevedon**'s market hall may have been derived from the early modern French food market building, of which that at Le Faouet might well have been known to HP.

CAN YOU HELP?

Weston museum Volunteering opportunities at <http://westonmuseum.org/volunteer/>