



Where can we see the spirit of reading?

AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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ALHA ITEMS

ALHA LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2019 – GETTING ABOUT

The theme for ALHA's 2019 local history day will be **transport**, broadly interpreted.

Our area, past and present, has been shaped by transport. By boats, because we have a coastline and navigable rivers that facilitated trade and communication: along the coast, up the Severn and its tributaries, to Ireland, Iceland, France, Spain, Portugal, America, the Caribbean, the Baltic. That led to seafaring, ships, including the SSGB, shipbuilding and its financing, and the wealth of many commercial families. Roads started with ridgeways and tracks, then roman roads, carriers' routes, turnpikes, town streets, by-passes, motorways and their engineering. Canals carried stone, coal, agricultural produce, manufactured goods. Railways made links to London, Exeter, Gloucester, south Wales, the midlands and beyond. For centuries transport depended on the horse and all sorts of things connected with it, not least the agriculture that produced its fodder, and those who cleaned up behind it. It also depended on people, thousands of them, not just the likes of Macadam, Charles Dundas, IKB, William Taylor, Holman Fred Stephens, George White. There were builders of vehicles, carts, wagons, private and stage coaches (and their coaching inns), cars, lorries, aircraft, trams, buses, ambulances, fire engines, bikes (both sorts), balloons, many made locally. Transport generated architecture. People travelled for trade and business, to see relations, to get to and from work and school, for leisure and for tourism. Transport dominated some areas: **Filton, Patchway, Brislington, Temple Meads, St Philip's, Lulsgate**. In WW1 **Shirehampton** specialised. Who paid for it all? Who initiated the ideas? What did people think of the new forms of transport? What work did the employees do? How come trade unions and the domination of the T&GWU? There was a colour bar on the buses. What about modern developments? Buchanan's **Bath**? Bristol's inner and outer circuit roads? A Bristol metro? Guided transport? The Portishead branch? The Avon ring road? Anton Bantock Way?

ALHA's events subcommittee thanks those who have submitted proposals, and invites further proposals for talks or presentations on or connected with any aspect of the theme: maximum 500 words, please, to Peter Fleming, Peter.Fleming@uwe.ac.uk; Bob Lawrence, lawrence.chartley@btinternet.com ; or Bill Evans, wm.evans@btopenworld.com.

ALHA LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2019 – VENUE

UWE is not willing to offer ALHA the same venue and facilities as for the past two local history days. Negotiations are continuing.

ALHA BOOKS – SURGEON SMITH

The first printing of ALHA books no.26, Michael Whitfield's *Richard Smith: Bristol surgeon and medical collector 1772-1843*, sold out, but further copies have been printed and are now available again. You can order a stock of small Christmas presents from the treasurer or via the ALHA website, which lists all the ALHA titles.

EVENTS AND SOURCES



GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES EVOKE REMINISCENCE PROJECT

Kate O'Keefe writes: As part of its *For the Record** transformation project, the Heritage Lottery Fund has funded Gloucestershire Archives to run the *EVOKE* reminiscence project for two years until January 2020. Nostalgia and technology come together in this project, which uses iPads to spark memories and stories at friendly get-togethers running across Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. Designed to be fun and easy to use - even for people wary of new technologies - the *EVOKE* sessions use the award-winning *House of Memories* app developed by Liverpool Museums.

The team at Gloucestershire Archives spent weeks carefully selecting photographs, audio clips and films from their collections to build their *House of Memories*. Each image and sound has been chosen to 'ring a bell' with older residents and provide local colour from every part of Gloucestershire. The archivists had to resist the urge to interpret the images with a lot of supporting text: the advice from the experts in Liverpool was that 'less is more' and the pictures need to speak directly to people with no need for explanation.

Whilst some people can initially be scared of the iPads (many have never used one before), after a while they usually feel confident enough to navigate their way around. *House of Memories* was designed in consultation with people living with dementia and the people who care for them, so it is friendly, robust and straightforward to use.

Many people still vividly remember scenes of local life shown in the photos, from the catastrophic floods in the '40s to the ploughing contests of the '60s, and are happy to share their stories and memories over a cup of tea in an informal, friendly group chat. Other images show things like an old £1 note, or a row of Austin 1100 police cars from the late 1960s. Conversations start to flow as people respond to these blasts from the past and are prompted to remember events from their own younger years.

An old photograph of a young couple jiving prompts memories of teenage dancehall triumphs and disasters, and conversations branch out in all kinds of unexpected directions: having a 'stocking seam' drawn expertly on (your leg) by a talented friend; the difficulties of looking after stiffened petticoats; the horrified reactions of parents on first hearing or (even worse) seeing Elvis.



Feedback from the 6-month pilot period has been positive, with some people downloading *House of Memories* to use on their devices at home. Younger family members (grandchildren, for instance) who have no problems with the technology can engage with their older relatives in a new way, and find out things they never knew about them. As one person put it: ‘*Grandma’s on the iPad! My grandchildren will be impressed. It will be me staring at the screen all the time from now on!*’

**For the Record* aims to: ‘...secure rich collections for future generations, preserve the ongoing story of how we live, and pave the way for better access that will continue into the future. It has 3 elements: a Heritage Hub that supports people to document, care for, interpret and celebrate their personal and shared history; digital preservation work; and new strongrooms.’

ROMANS IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

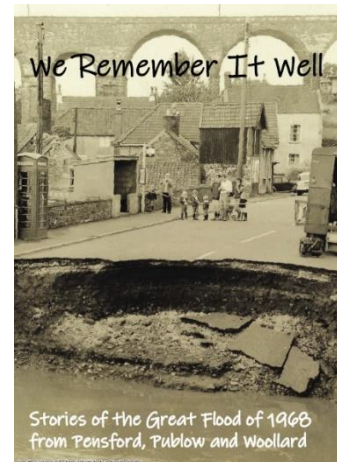
Tony Roberts writes that Archaeoscan will report its work at the **Doynton** and **Hanging Hill** Roman sites excavated by Archaeoscan over recent years, and give an opportunity to view the artefacts that have been recovered, at a conference on **Saturday 9 February 2019**. ‘We will also place these sites in a wider context and also have presentations on associated subjects. These include the Roman presence in South Gloucestershire, contemporary coin hoard finds and small finds in the region, Roman building material used in the construction of our buildings along with the associated local kiln sites, and an examination of other Roman sites recently uncovered in the area. These presentations will be given by local and regional experts. A selection of the artefacts recovered on the site will be on display throughout the day. The conference will be held at the **village hall in Slimbridge**, Gloucestershire, GL2 7DF from **10am-5pm**. The cost will be £25 per person. Free parking is available at the venue. Tea/coffee will be available for a small donation. There are a couple of local pubs (within 5 minutes drive) that serve food at lunchtime or you can bring your own lunch to eat in the side room to the presentation hall. Places are limited for this event and booking is essential.’ You can reserve your place now by email to archeoscan@hotmail.co.uk



More, including images of finds, at <http://www.archeoscan.com/previous-excavations/>

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

ALHA member **Pensford LHS** has produced a new book about **Pensford**, *We remember it well: stories of the Great Flood of 1968 from Pensford, Publow and Woollard*. *Hilary Cox writes*: The contents are structured around 30 or so stories of people who were affected and/or involved in the devastating flood. Alongside these stories are photographs, letters and poems. The editors have tried to honour the memories of the contributors, and this has influenced the whole publishing process. The A4 book, priced £5.00, was launched at Pensford Christmas Fair at the village Memorial Hall on 17 November 2018. It is now available to buy at Pensford Post Office and at the Miners' Coffee Shop. Anyone who would like to make an enquiry or might be interested in buying a copy but unable to get to Pensford, please email: ppw.publishing@gmail.com



SS Great Britain comes home, DVD from BBC archive film, 52 minutes, £14.95, Kingfisher Productions. From the SSGB museum shop, or from Kingfisher, PO Box 110, Cullompton, Devon EX15 9AZ, 0333 121 0707 or via their website <https://railwayvideo.com/docs/Kingfisherwinter2018webedition.pdf>

Maurice Fells, *The little book of Somerset*, The History Press, 2018, various formats <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/publication/the-little-book-of-somerset/9780750987998/> Includes passages about **Portishead** and Fred Wetherley, the Wurzels, **Paulton** and Purnell's (and Robert Maxwell), **Clevedon** and elsewhere.

COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES

Computing

Roy McIntyre writes: I found the item in *Newsletter 156* about American imports very interesting.

Computing came to Bristol about 1957. There is something about that in the highly recommended Aerospace Museum in **Filton**. To begin with, there was a separation between engineering and commercial computing with different machines being chosen to meet those needs. For engineering, the two divisions of the Bristol Aeroplane Company each purchased that year (or possibly late 1956) an English Electric DEUCE computer.

Primitive though the DEUCE would seem now, it allowed a step change in engineering from calculations done by hand. Those of us who wrote the first computer programmes had to use machine code and understand how and where all the data was stored inside the computer. In the Engine Division, by then a separate company, Bristol Siddeley Engines, the DEUCE was replaced, perhaps around 1964, with an English Electric KDF9.

As your article said, by 1972, American computers had taken over (from the likes of English Electric), in what was now part of Rolls Royce. Back in 1957, few of us could have imagined how the technology would develop in the succeeding decades.

Ethics committees for museums?

Readers may have come across ethics committees in the context of a university or the national health service. In a university an ethics committee will vet proposals for research, checking whether any aspect of the proposed research is morally objectionable. Ethics committees often get involved where the proposed research will involve human or animal subjects. The sorts of question that may be asked will be to do with whether the people the subject of the research have given informed consent; or whether the research will involve inflicting pain or other harm on people or other sentient animals; or whether it will involve deceiving people about what they will undergo, or not making them aware that



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they are being used as research subjects. In the NHS an ethics committee will be similarly involved in medical research, but it may also look at issues to do with the artificial prolonging or shortening of life. In some trusts the ethics committee's remit may extend to questions about choosing priorities, allocating resources, or rationing treatment, because there is not enough money or other resources for all patients who need or would benefit from treatment or care.

In museums ethical considerations have not featured much until recently. Museums are regarded either as a good thing, in which case nothing they do is considered morally questionable; or as empirical, almost scientific, institutions, impartially collecting, conserving and displaying examples of the past, to which activity moral considerations are not considered relevant.

For some time those attitudes have been questioned in the case of artworks looted from Jewish families by the Nazis. Over the last few years other claims for repatriation have been put forward. The grounds for the challenges seem to fall into four or five categories:

1. Claims of theft. Many museum collections contain artefacts that were spoils of war or supposed imperial entitlement, or were simply stolen. Art galleries have long been challenged about works stolen from Jewish owners by Nazis. Much of the Louvre was stocked with Napoleonic loot, though the gilded bronze horses were returned to the Venetians – whose predecessors had removed them after sacking Constantinople.
2. Claims of misappropriation of the national patrimony. The British Museum's Elgin marbles were lawfully purchased, not stolen, but Greek governments have demanded their return on the ground that, however they were acquired, they ought not to have been removed from their historic place of origin. France has recently agreed to repatriate some Benin artefacts. Easter Island carvings are currently under discussion.
3. Claims of cultural misappropriation. As so much archaeology involves items related to rituals or other practices following death, it is not surprising that they feature in museum collections.

Some people object to their ancestors' remains being displayed to satisfy western curiosity. Curators may dismiss such sensitivities as superstition, irrational fetish or post-colonial revenge, but the claim is about rights, and so involves moral judgments.

4. Tainted donations. As central government policies slash public spending, some local authorities have turned their museums over to trusts or similar bodies in the hope that such organisations will be better able to attract large-scale donations from wealthy companies and individuals. In some instances donation from wealthy individuals funded the foundation of the museum in the first place. All such wealth will have been taken off other people, but some is more morally tainted than others. Whatever football teams may sell in the way of advertising and publicity in exchange for cash disguised as sponsorship, nowadays we would expect a museum to reject a gift known to derive from slavery, human trafficking or other form of exploitation. The Tate gallery no longer accepts sponsorship from BP, following pressure from environmental and ecological lobbies. It is an ethical issue whether a museum should accept large gifts from business owners or politicians whose wealth has come from morally questionable sources.
5. Crass insensitivity. It will be difficult to beat the Museum of Somerset's advertising in 2014 of a 'WW1 fun day' aimed at children.

Ethics committees do not deliver simple solutions. Answers to moral questions will vary depending on whether one applies Aristotelian notions of justice, virtue ethics, Kantian duties, consequentialist utilitarianism or pragmatism. But at least examination from ethical viewpoints of what museums do may reduce the risk of obloquy, which no public institution these days can afford to ignore, and of international friction, which affects us all.

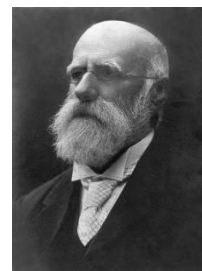
Free trade or protection?

Free trade, in the sense of the removal of duties and other restrictions on the import of goods and services, is a big political issue in many countries. Free trade within a single market and a customs union are bedrocks of the European Union. One argument for the UK leaving the EU is that home industries, particularly new ones and ones related to defence, ought to be protected from foreign competition. Protection is now a matter of policy in the USA, to garner votes. China and the EU have retaliated. There are worries that if international trade reduces, the prosperity of all will suffer.

Free trade and restrictions on trade have been relevant to the history of our area. When wool was England's most important export, Edward III required all export sales to be through staples, of which the market in Bristol's **Temple** was one. That was done to make tax collection easier, but one local consequence was prosperity for **St Thomas's**, and later for the cloth industry south of Bristol bridge.

The English colonies were obliged not to import goods except from Britain, and not to export except to Britain, and in British ships. Bristol merchants and ship owners took advantage, and Bristol expanded as an international port. Even as late as the 1760s, when **Stoke Gifford's** Norborne Berkeley was governor of Virginia, the colony had little in the way of manufacturing industry: pots and pans in colonial Williamsburg were more likely to have been made up the **Severn** or the **Chew** than the Shenandoah or the Chesapeake. Hence the squeals of financial pain from **Bristol** in the run up to and during the American war of independence, when shipping and imports were disrupted.

From before the seventeenth century the English corn laws protected landowners and farmers who grew grain. If domestic prices fell, the duty on imports rose. That deterred imports, and that increased demand and so pushed up prices, and profits too. In the early 19th century the corn laws came under attack, especially by those who lived on bread, which was most of the working population. Bristol had an interest in the corn laws, because it had long been an importing port. So when free trade advocates in the 1830s campaigned against the corn laws, Richard Cobden and John Bright attracted large and interested audiences in Bristol, who paid 2s each for tickets for meetings, one of which in 1844 filled the new public rooms in Broadmead. Prominent among their supporters was the earl of Ducie of Tortworth. Not until the Irish famine and untold suffering, emigration and death, were the



corn laws repealed in 1846. (More about the local politics of free trade in Bristol in ALHA booklet no.17, *Bristol politics in the age of Peel*, by John Stevens).

A golden age for free trade ensued. Not only were customs duties removed or reduced, but the courts applied, upheld and extended laissez faire principles, especially in contract and constitutional disputes. Some historians see that as contributing to the prosperity in the Victorian era of **Bristol** and, to a lesser extent, **Bath**, because of the diversity of their local economies.

In the 1860s the American civil war disrupted shipping, and **Barton Hill's** cotton manufacture suffered. Cheaper imports from Japan and India finished the industry off. The depression in English agriculture from the 1870s onwards, which had considerable impact in our area, was in part attributed to imports of grain from America and the Baltic at prices with which local farmers could not compete. By about 1900 some politicians were calling for protection in the shape of tariff reform, with Birmingham's Joseph Chamberlain leading the way. By then, Bristol's trade had been overtaken by Liverpool, where dock dues were cheaper.

Trade was necessarily restricted before, during and immediately after the two world wars. The government channelled resources first into armaments, then into recovery and reconstruction. Building was controlled by licensing in order to thwart how a free market would have directed building materials. Industries were nationalised. Rationing did not end until 1953. By the 1980s free trade was back in vogue again, this time with monopolies, cartels and trade union restrictive practices the targets, depending on which party was in power. Over some 20 years, most of our area's large-scale manufacturers and raw material suppliers were driven out of their markets. Only aircraft, chocolate and tobacco survived, as financial services became dominant and reshaped how we live and the places we live in. Kraft's mendacious and morally offensive removal of work from **Somerdale** to Poland was the result of free trade. The protection versus free trade battle is not over yet. Aardman has taken precautionary action. Watch this space.

Greek revival

Local historians sometimes try to explain why cultural changes took place. Clothing fashions, eating and shopping habits, popular music, religious practices, literature – all undergo changes, some nationwide, others local. Fashion, eg in clothing, hairstyles and popular music, often involves imitation. But why do people imitate each other? Why and how did the original change occur that other people imitated? Someone must have started it, somewhere.

Some changes in architectural style can be attributed to technology: invention of concrete, the round arch, the pointed arch, the steel girder, float glass – all made new styles possible. Other changes were financially driven: brick is cheaper than stone; unplasticised polyvinyl chloride outlasts wood; fibreboard and plastics need less skill than masonry, wood or metal.

Other changes are harder to explain. Take Greek revival, the use of styles and motifs copying originals from ancient Greece, that in the early 19th century was regarded as all in the best possible affluent and educated taste. Examples in our area include the interior of Leigh Court in **Abbots Leigh** (architect Thomas Hopper, 1814); **Bath's** freemasons' hall, later a friends' meeting house (William Wilkins 1817-1819); part of **Bath's** Argyle chapel (1821); **Bristol** Philosophical and Literary Institution, later the freemasons' hall (Charles Robert Cockerell 1821-1823, who invented the term Greek revival some years later); **St George's Brandon Hill** (1821-1823) and Bristol's council house (now a register office) in **Corn Street** (1823-1827, both Robert Smirke); the Corridor in **Bath** (1825), Beckford's tower, **Lansdown** (1825-1826), and **Cleveland Bridge**, Bath (1827, it says), (all by Henry Edward Goodrich); and St Mary on **the Quay, Bristol** (Richard Shackleton Pope, 1839).



One explanation is that in the 1750s the Society of Dilettanti (of which Norborne Berkeley of **Stoke Gifford** was a member) sent James Stuart and Nicholas Revett to survey and measure architectural ruins in Greece. They published their results in *The antiquities of Athens* in 1762, 1789, 1794, 1816 and 1830. Architects copied their examples, which got into pattern books for building and even for ironwork and furniture.

Another explanation is that the adoption of Greek revival was political. Neoclassical palladian style had been adopted by English whig aristocrats and other wealthy landowners. The style was mostly Roman, and symbolised power and empire. Roman styles, however, were adopted by non-

conformists: early quaker and independent meeting houses and baptist and methodist chapels were simplified examples of ancient classical, not gothic, models. **Bedminster**'s Zion congregational chapel (1828-1830) is Bristol's most striking if late example. David Dawson has updated *South Gloucestershire Nonconformist Chapels Heritage Trail*, previously published as a booklet, but now in .pdf form at: <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/heritage-walks-and-trails/>. Roman styles were adopted in post-revolutionary France (eg liberty caps, Napoleon's admiration for Julius Caesar, and Jacques Louis David's historical paintings). Roman vocabulary and styles were adopted in post-revolution America (palladian villas and capitols, constitutional institutions like the senate, statues of politicians and generals in unlikely togas). So by about 1810 Roman style had come to be linked with revolution, radicals, nonconformity, democracy and the lower orders. Architects whose clients did not want to be associated with any of that, but were not keen on gothic, cast about for other models, and Greek revival offered an alternative: classically respectable, associated with power and exclusive educated culture, and all this at a time when there was sympathy in England for Greek efforts to throw off Ottoman rule: Byromania went viral with his death in 1824. **Bath** and **Bristol** were not immune.