



Nelson demands Hardy's attention  
just when the newsletter has arrived

## AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

5 Parrys Grove  
Bristol BS9 1TT  
Tel, ans and fax 0117 968  
4979

[wm.evans@btopenworld.com](mailto:wm.evans@btopenworld.com)



Website: [www.alha.org.uk](http://www.alha.org.uk)

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

e-update 31 October 2019

### CONTENTS

#### ALHA items

Roger Angerson  
AGM 2019  
*The Local Historian*  
Grants panel  
ALHA past and future

#### Events and sources

Aircraft in Yate  
Severn estuary archaeology  
South Glos land drainage  
Romancing the gibbet

#### Books etc noticed

Chew Valley hoard  
Weston super mare Playhouse

#### John Pullin

Tricky  
Bristol A-Z  
NW Bristol place names

#### Commentary

Libra, Bitcoin and tokens  
Why education?  
Census and Malthus

#### Quote

Benedetto Croce

#### Can you help?

*The lark ascending* at Shire  
Romanesque sculpture, Gloucestershire

### ALHA ITEMS

#### FROM THE ALHA COMMITTEE

#### Roger Angerson

Members of the ALHA committee entertained Roger Angerson, retiring as president and as member of the ALHA committee finance its inception, and Judith to lunch at the Priory, **Portbury**, on 24 September 2019. Photograph by ALHA secretary Catherine Dixon: left to right Jenny Scherr, former trustee and editor of *Avon Past*; Bob Lawrence; Lucy Hamid; Judith Angerson; Dr Jonathan Harlow; Olive Woolcott; Roger Angerson; and the treasurer.



#### Annual general meeting and Joe Bettley lecture 2019

ALHA's annual general meeting was held at the St Michael's Centre, **Stoke Gifford**, 5 October 2019. Change to a Saturday afternoon, and to a venue with modern facilities, did not result in many more members attending. The annual report for 2018-2019 was approved. The accounts were received and the examiner thanked. The committee was re-elected, except for Roger Angerson (**Frenchay Tuckett Society**), standing down after more than 40 years of

service to ALHA. Tributes were paid and thanks expressed to Roger, to ALHA's volunteers (Isla Kouassi-Khan, Lesley Bowman, Dr Jonathan Harlow and Mike Leigh), and to Dr Joe Bettey, who is leaving the area. The Joe Bettey lecture was delivered by Dr Madge Dresser, now of the University of Bristol, and titled *Landscapes of slavery - some new reflections on investigating Bristol and the wider Atlantic slave economy*. An attempt at a summary will be printed in the 31 December 2019 *Newsletter* no. 161.

### ***The Local Historian***

ALHA's copies of *The Local Historian* are being transferred from Dr Harlow to Ian Chard as part of ALHA's archive. Members of ALHA and its member groups and societies are welcome to consult by appointment, 0117 958 3468, [ian.chard@talktalk.net](mailto:ian.chard@talktalk.net), but issues more than 3 years old can be read and downloaded free from the BALH website, <https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>

### **ALHA GRANTS PANEL**

Mike Leigh (**Knowle & Totterdown LHS**) has been co-opted on to the small panel that considers applications for grants and makes recommendations to the ALHA committee.

### **ALHA – CHANGES AND THE FUTURE**

Roger Angerson's standing down from the committee of ALHA, of which he has been president for many years, prompts consideration of changes ALHA has undergone since its inception.

Much is still the same: ALHA still consists of local groups and societies, plus individual members, and it continues with many of the activities it started with: a speakers list, a newsletter, a local history day, summer walks and small grants. Member groups still provide the same core activities; talks, social events, local research projects, small publications, field trips, and visits.

Within that overall picture of business as usual, there have been some noticeable changes:

- The number of group members has risen from 38 in 1975 to 96 today.
- Some groups have ceased to meet, and new ones have formed.
- When the Avon Archaeological Council folded, ALHA extended its name and remit to include archaeology as well as local history.
- Publications have changed. After 16 issues, *Avon Past* ceased in 1993; an ALHA *Local history handbook* was published, but has not been updated. ALHA no longer publishes larger books, such as that on Clifton probate inventories.
- When the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association ceased to produce its series of small booklets on local history topics, ALHA began its own series, for the whole ALHA area.
- Communications have gone partly digital. ALHA has a website. The newsletter is no longer cut on a stencil and hand-duplicated, but is printed commercially from .pdfs sent online by the editor, and monthly updates between newsletters tell those members who use e-mail what is going on. Accounts and membership records are kept in electronic formats. Speakers are more likely to use a digital projector than a carousel of slides, and may use a microphone or hearing loop.
- Leadership of ALHA has shifted from academics to amateurs.

There have also been changes in the external local history scene.

- Local history is no longer taught as a main subject in local universities (of which there was only one in 1975), nor is it a major subject of research in them. That is part of a wider tendency to pay more attention in education generally to science, technology, engineering and mathematics at the expense of the humanities.

- Family history has more people interested and active. **Bristol & Avon Family History Society**, with over 1000 individuals, is ALHA's largest group member. Much family history feeds into local history, and vice versa, and both benefit.
- There are more programmes on television promulgating or using local history and archaeology.
- Local authorities' attitudes to local history have changed. Public library and record services have been cut. Museums continue, with fewer staff. Local history still feeds into planning policies involving conservation, and is taken into account (or ignored or overridden) in decisions on some planning applications. Some new building requires archaeological investigation first, and there are now commercial companies that do the work. But local history is now seen as part of heritage and a vague concept of culture, and in that capacity is valued as a driver, not of social cohesion, social education or civic pride, but of the local economy, in promoting tourism and attracting visitors' spending, with the ultimate aim of generating employment.

If we look ahead, options for ALHA include:

- Continue as before, taking care not to duplicate or compete with local groups and societies.
- Extend into other activities: Lobbying? Education? Consultancy? Replacing local authority services? Bigger and different publications?
- Wind up, as has happened in Kent, where the corresponding organisation has disbanded because no-one was willing to fill key posts.

What do you think?

## EVENTS AND SOURCES

### AIRCRAFT IN YATE

To mark the 80th anniversary of the beginning of WW2 **Yate Heritage Centre** commemorates the history of aircraft manufacture in **Yate** from the erection of the WW1 Aircraft Repair Depot to the aeroplane gun turrets used in WW2. The exhibition shows parts of the Hendy Aircraft Collection including historic models and photographs from Ian Long and the Henderson family. Basil Henderson was Parnall's designer in the late 1930s. Parnalls moved to **Yate** from the Coliseum site in Park Row, **Bristol**. **Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, closing 4.30pm 2 November 2019. Yate Heritage Centre**, Church Road, Yate, BS37 5BG. Tel: 01454 862200, <http://www.yateheritage.co.uk/visit/exhibitions.htm>

### ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SEVERN ESTUARY

Conference **9.50am-5pm Sunday 10 November 2019, Royal Hotel, 1 South Parade, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1JP**

Speakers include:

- Alex Brown (Wessex Archaeology) on investigating the early prehistoric landscape deep under **Weston-super-Mare**
- Vince Simmonds (AC Archaeology) on the excavations of the Iron Age and Roman site at **Banwell**
- Bruce Eaton and Simon Flaherty (Wessex Archaeology) on the excavation of a rare Romano-British pottery production site at **Congresbury**
- Cat Lodge (North Somerset Council) on the latest work on **Worlebury** hillfort
- Vince Russett on conflict and co-operation on **Northmarsh** before enclosure
- Craig Lambert (Southampton University) on the fascinating documentary evidence for **River Severn trade** in the 16th and 17th centuries
- John Morgan (Manchester University) on working with **tides and floods on the lower Severn** in the 16th and 17th centuries

Cost £11. Includes morning and afternoon tea/coffee, but lunch not included. Tickets from eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/archaeology-of-the-severn-estuary-tickets-71081036293>. If you can't purchase online, email [richard.brunning@swheritage.org.uk](mailto:richard.brunning@swheritage.org.uk)

## **SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE LAND DRAINAGE**

*Rose Hewlett writes: The records of the Gloucestershire Court of Sewers, 1583-1642 will be published by ALHA member **Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** in September 2020 as part of its *Gloucestershire Record Series*.*

Sewers, in this instance, means watercourses. Courts of sewers held jurisdiction over sea defence and land drainage mechanisms on low-lying coastal land around the country. Survival of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century records is very patchy, and confined almost exclusively to the east coast, therefore those of Gloucestershire's court are a rarity. The records, which primarily cover an area between **Slimbridge** and **Shirehampton**, are valuable for a number of reasons, and my edited transcription should prove useful to a range of amateur and professional researchers.

1. The records are extremely rich in personal names, including men and women from all social standings — the county's leading figures, other gentry and landowners, tenant farmers, smallholders and peasants — sometimes it is possible to trace generational relationships through land ownership/tenancy, and deaths are occasionally recorded.
2. The records provide details of the tithings in which people lived, and sometimes the names of their farms or houses.
3. The records are very rich in topographical features, and many of those mentioned still survive in some form today, even if it is simply the name of a road.
4. The records reflect changing attitudes to authority and taxation, particularly during the 1630s.
5. The landscape and coastline of the **Gloucestershire Levels** was very different to that of the east coast fens, and therefore the records offer another perspective on sea defence and land drainage
6. Specifications for sea walls provide an insight into how the low-lying land was defended against tidal flood in the hostile environment of the Severn Sea, which has the second highest tidal range in the world and is prone to south-westerly gales.
7. The records reflect different attitudes towards tidal flood, and the resilience of communities to inundation.

## **ROMANCING THE GIBBET AT AVONMOUTH**

*Steve Poole writes: UWE's Regional History Centre will be taking part in this year's *Being Human Festival*, Britain's biggest annual showcase for research in the humanities. One of the events is an artistic/historical collaboration between Prof Steve Poole and the poet Ralph Hoyte of immersive media specialists, Satsymph.*

### **What's the story?**

Each event explores a single public execution in the Georgian South West. Each of them was exceptional because it involved hanging convicts not at the usual place but on a makeshift gallows at the scene of their crime and/or consigning the executed body to a gibbet cage, as an awful warning to passers-by for many years afterwards. This practice was intended to leave an indelible mark on the collective memory of the disorderly and sometimes remote communities in which it was staged.



### Why are we interested in it?

We ask the question: how strong are the shared community memories of these events today, handed down over the years in the places where they occurred? How much of what is known or believed locally about these executions today has its roots in myth and legend and how much in historical fact? Can we understand them better by using emotional tools in addition to historical evidence? How do we know what we know and how does it make us feel?

We have researched and produced two new execution stories (Chipping Camden and Avonmouth) and built immersive audio sound installations at all four. These can be downloaded as smartphone apps and will take the user on a poetic walk around the landscape of the original crime scene. Our four 2019 events have been tailor-made for performance as



close to the original locations of each execution as possible. We will be using both historical evidence and imaginative poetic interpretation in each performance, reflecting the different ways in which 'knowledge' and memory have been crafted and

passed down over the centuries. In fact, many of these remarkable executions inspired poetic interpretation at the time.

Each event will begin with a short talk outlining the facts and contexts of the case, followed by a spoken word poetic performance. Finally we will invite the audience to don headphones and try out a specially created walking trail taster, laid out around the event venue and containing samples from the full app trail.

The **Avonmouth** event will be on **15 November 2019 at 7pm at Avonmouth Community Centre**, 257 Avonmouth Road, Avonmouth Village, Bristol BS11 and is titled *The lay of the two deadly brothers*.

#### **The programme details, dates, times, booking etc**

Our four events are listed here in the Festival online programme:

<https://beinghumanfestival.org/?s=gibbet> Click the titles for more info on each one and links to Eventbrite booking pages. Everything is FREE, but we do ask you to book a ticket so that we know many to cater for. Any questions? Just drop me a line [steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk)

### BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS NOTICED

Gareth Williams, 'The Chew Valley hoard,' colour-illustrated article in *British Archaeology* November-December 2019, 14-19, describes the finds and discusses their significance. A commentary by Mike Pitts, *ibid.*, 20-21, is critical of the finders, the media and the Portable Antiquities Scheme; and regrets that there was delay in getting a response from a finds liaison officer.

Samantha Bell, *A history and celebration of the Playhouse, Weston-super-mare*, Redcliffe Press 2019, £12.50. Out of stock according to the publisher's website, but you should be able to get a copy from the Playhouse theatre box office



<https://www.parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/Playhouse-Theatre/Home> or **Weston Museum**,  
<https://www.westonmuseum.org/visit-us/>

Steve Tomlin, *At least we turn up: the biography of John Pullin*, Amberley 2019, pb 192pp, £13.99, <https://www.amberley-books.com/at-least-we-turn-up.html>. **Aust** rugby footballer.

Tricky (Adrian Thaws), *Hell is round the corner*, autobiography of the **Knowle West** musician, Bonnier Books 31 October 2019, hb £20, but £15.99 from Waterstones. Signing at Foyles, Cabot Circus, **Tuesday 29 October** 2019 1pm - 2:30pm.

Cynthia Stiles, *A-Z of Bristol: places – people – history*. Amberley 2019, pb 96pp, 100 colour illustrations, £14.99, but £11.24 off the website <https://www.amberley-books.com/discover-books/local-history/area/somerset-bristol-bath.html>

Richard Coates, *Place names and history in north west Bristol*, £9 from the author at Centre for Linguistics, UWE, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY.

## COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES

### Tokens

facebook's Libra project is intended to rival Bitcoin. Reports that PayPal, Visa, Mastercard and e-bay have withdrawn from the project might prompt local history people to muse about substitutes for currency, of which Bristol pounds <https://bristolpound.org/> is a lively local example. Bristol pounds were devised, as in Totnes and elsewhere, to try to keep money within the locality. They are not legal tender but a sort of token. Bristol city museum has a collection of tokens, the core of which was donated in the 1920s by the widow of a director of the Imperial tobacco company, <http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/narratives.php?irn=8789>. The museum displays one issued by Powell Ricketts and Filer, soap boilers who later became glassmakers in Church Lane, **Redcliffe**.

Local tokens have been used for all sorts of purposes. Some were of no exchange value but aimed to advertise a business, like a trade card. Some were tickets, such as for admission to turnpikes in parts of our area, to theatres in **Bristol and Bath**, and to gardens in **Bath**. Like book tokens and gift cards, some tokens were pre-paid, confining the recipient to one class of product or one shop or chain. Bitcoins are different in that they are intended to be substitutes, without national boundaries, for national currencies. Bristol pounds also substitute for national currency, but locally. What part have tokens of that sort played in our area?

Shortages of coin occurred because the government did not mint enough coins to meet demand, or because the coins in circulation were not of sufficiently small denomination to be usable for small transactions. In 1404 the commons petitioned the king (Henry IV) to 'make some remedy in the mischief among poor people occasioned by the want of small coinage and by their use of foreign money and tokens of lead.' As elsewhere, this has happened in **Bristol** on a number of occasions, for different reasons, but especially during periods of financial disruption occasioned by war or civil collapse.

During the reign of Elizabeth there was yet another shortage of small change and, as in other towns, **Bristol** merchants issued their own tokens, made of lead. The mint also issued lead and copper tokens. In 1587 a butcher called Christopher Gallaway was fined £5 for counterfeiting tokens: a sort of metacriminality? In 1594 the mayor and aldermen were required to call in all the private tokens that had been issued without authority, and ordered that no tokens that had been issued without licence should be current in the city. Historians have inferred that the crown had granted the corporation a licence to issue tokens, but it could

mean that the corporation had taken it upon itself to license traders to issue tokens, and was being told off. Either way, the order implies that there had been a shortage of coin that tokens were intended to remedy. **Bristol** tokens had CB (Civitas Bristolliae, city of Bristol) on the reverse.

There were big issues of tokens in the 17th century, particularly from 1648 to 1679. That period covered both the commonwealth and the reign of Charles II. Farthing tokens were issued in **Bristol**, with the date and CB on the reverse; examples are in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Perhaps no coins were minted during that period, but it is difficult to see why, though during the commonwealth the king's head was understandably not available. In the early 1690s the government revalued the currency, which took much of the existing coinage out of circulation, and there was a shortage of small change. One result was the foundation of the Bank of England, with authority to issue notes. Another was the making and circulation of tokens.

There was a financial crisis starting in 1793, precipitated by Britain going to war with France. Capital was sucked out of the market as people bought high interest bonds the government issued to finance the war. The government grabbed all the money it could lay hands on, and stopped minting coin (which would have required silver, for which the government had other uses). A shortage of cash resulted. Several Bristol traders issued tokens. By 1794 the silver coinage in circulation had become worn down, and as it was not replaced, there was much counterfeiting. In **Bristol** one Niblock, a draper, and one Bird, a tea dealer, were among at least six traders who issued their own halfpennies. During the Napoleonic war no copper coins were struck by the royal mint after 1807. In 1811-1814, as elsewhere, Bristol traders issued tokens. Some tokens were made in the brass mill at **Saltford** to substitute for the shortage of coin: Swansea Museum holds some copper ones issued by the Bristol Brass and Copper Company in 1811. In January 1815 the government declared silver tokens not to be lawful tender, but it was not until 1816 that new coinage was issued.

Nowadays we use tokens made of plastic, but with digital content, recorded and transmitted electronically. As banks try to cut costs and boost profits by discouraging customers from using coin and notes (as well as cheques, local branches and anything else that costs the banks money), will such user-unfriendliness result in more businesses, especially small ones, issuing their own tokens? Time to dust off the 1404 petition?

### **Education: why?**

Most people nowadays in our area, as in the rest of the UK, have been educated to a level higher than that received or attained by our ancestors. Most people who read this will have had great great grandparents and perhaps great grandparents who could not have done so. We accept as a fact of modern life that education, at least to secondary level, is universal and compulsory, and that higher education ought to be available to anyone who wants it and can cope with it.

How and why we reached that state is contested. Some regard education as a basic human right, and see progress towards better and more widespread education as the result of a struggle against the rich and powerful who regarded education, and much else, as their privilege, from which others should be excluded. Others reckon that as society became more complicated and reliant on technologies and skills, those in power needed an increasingly educated workforce in order to sustain and advance the prosperity of the powerful. Under the first view, education was a right that had to be won. Under the second view, education was something those in power had to dish out, in their own interests. Under the first view, education was (is?) grabbed from below; under the second view it was (is?) doled out from above.

It would be interesting to explore how far the history of education in our area bears out either or both of these views. One suspects a mixture of both. In medieval times what education there was seems to have been initiated by the church or within families, from a variety of motives. Either theory could be used to explain the emergence of charity schools, including the original grammar schools that now serve purposes different from those their founders intended. In the nineteenth century some politicians like Robert Lowe ('We must educate our masters') reckoned that as the franchise was extended, voters needed to be better informed and educated. Or was the growth of elementary education driven by the churches fighting for market share? Or by manufacturers and traders needing workers who could read, write, add up, and point a ship in approximately the intended direction? The question whether education should be instrumental for economic ends or for the individual's personal satisfaction or for some other reason persists today. That it is relevant to so many current political and social issues makes it a worthwhile topic for local history people to get stuck into.

### Census

The Office for National Statistics is piloting the 2021 census, though not in our area. Family historians and local history people will not need reminding how important census data are as sources of information. The data are mostly reliable. The 10-year intervals make it easy to spot changes. They allow enquirers to obtain facts they could not otherwise get; to make



comparisons between places and between census years; to detect trends; and thus to write histories.

The census was not invented for the benefit of family and local historians. In 1801 the aim was to provide information for government, for military and naval recruiting, and to work out whether Malthus (memorial in **Bath** abbey: image from <https://www.wessexarch.co.uk/news/finding-reverend-malthus-bath-abbey>) was right. Not until 1841 did the data include the nuggets of personal information that family historians love to mine. Since then census data have informed decisions and policies on taxation, housing, transport, education, health services, social policy and electoral boundaries.

The census has its faults and limitations. Enumerators can make mistakes. Transcribers may misread handwriting. Individuals can give false information, or may evade enumeration, from various motives. (But not in one north Somerset parish in 1891, when the butler made sure that the overnight presence of the lady of the house's young man was recorded). But compared with commercially produced lists such as post office and trade directories which reproduce entries year on year willy nilly, the census data are usually reliable. Few commercial surveys can claim 94% coverage.

So local and family history people were disquieted when in 2011 the government announced that it was considering discontinuing the census. One reason was cost. The government, hell-bent on austerity, demanded cuts from the ONS, like most other government departments and agencies, but all the main political parties wondered whether the costs were proportionate to the benefits. There was uneasiness about data protection at a



time when people were becoming more alert to, and sensitive about, unauthorised or inadvertent disclosure or hacking of personal details. The demographic information the census provides could now be obtained, with not perfect but good-enough-for-most-purposes accuracy, by other methods such as social surveys provided they are properly designed, sampled and carried out. Or the government could just buy the data from social media companies or certain foreign governments. In a fast-changing society a 10-year census is bound to be soon out of date. The census had also become politically contentious, because of questions about people's religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on, which raised issues that politicians of all parties preferred to duck in case expressing a view cost them votes.

In the event in 2015 the proposal was dropped. Instead the government now says it is concentrating on improving the decennial census, so the 2021 census will go ahead, with more of it being done online. Something for local history and family history people to keep an eye on, if we think information about ourselves will be of interest to people in a hundred years' time.

## QUOTE

All history is contemporary history.

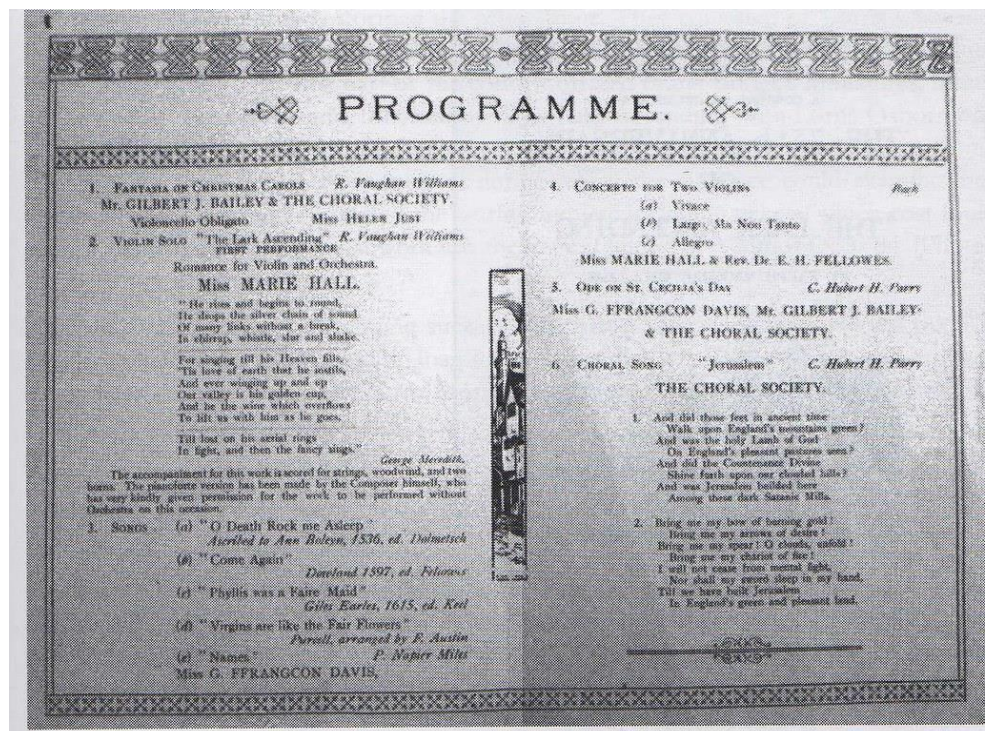
Benedetto Croce, *History as the Story of Liberty*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941

## CAN YOU HELP?

### *The lark ascending at Shirehampton*

*Ollie Matthews writes:* I am part of the research team for the *One Show* at OneTribeTV. Sometime next year we are looking to make a short video feature on Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. This will include the filming of a live performance at **Shirehampton Hall** in Bristol to mark the centenary of its premiere in 1920. I was wondering if you might be able to put me in touch with some historians local to the Bristol area who might be willing to appear in the video segment of the show to tell us a bit about the music piece.

[oliver.matthews@one-tribetv.co.uk](mailto:oliver.matthews@one-tribetv.co.uk), The Glass House, Charlcombe Lane, Lansdown, **Bath** BA1 5TT, 01225 469507.



The **Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland** (CRSBI) tries to record every piece of Romanesque stone carving in Britain and Ireland and to make it available its website [www.crsbi.ac.uk](http://www.crsbi.ac.uk). The website is used by academics for research and teaching, and by members of the public for a range of purposes. Recording of sites is done by volunteers and checked by experienced editors before being published on the website. CRSBI has recorded over half the estimated 5000 sites and is looking for new volunteers; Gloucestershire in particular has many sites that still need to be recorded. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact the project coordinator, John Wand, through the website.