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## Newsletter 177/2 e-update 29 February 2024

**Material for printed Newsletter 178 by 12  
noon 22 March 2024 please:**

Magazines and books to reviews editor  
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Details of events to website manager

[webmaster@ALHA.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@ALHA.org.uk)

Other news, comments, responses to  
comments, new work, and changes of contact  
details to newsletter editor and membership  
secretary, 5 Parrys Grove, Bristol BS9 1TT

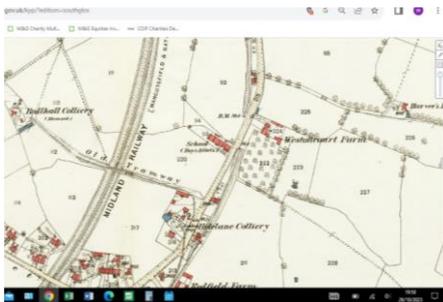
[wm.evans@btopenworld.com](mailto:wm.evans@btopenworld.com)

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

Events: <http://www.alha.org.uk/events.html>

Facebook:

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



*Oldland Common British School [Image: Know  
Your Place*

The British School at **Oldland Common** (now Redfield Edge) was supported by Handel Cossham, the subject of the local history day being organised jointly by ALHA and Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society **Saturday 13 April 2024** at Turnberrie's community centre, **Thornbury**.

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## ALHA NEWS

### **NEW ALHA BOOKLET – ALDERMAN PROCTOR**

ALHA's new booklet, no.41, is titled *Alderman Thomas Proctor and the Fertiliser Trade in Bristol*. It is by Brian Vincent, emeritus professor of chemistry at Bristol University, who also wrote *Chemistry in Bristol into the Early 20th Century*; *The Herapaths of Bristol - a Medical and Scientific Dynasty*; *The Butlers & the Coal-Tar Distillery at Crew's Hole*; and *The Pass Family and the Smelting Industry in Bristol*.

Proctor's business was making fertilisers, but he is also noted for having given Elmdale on the Promenade in **Clifton** to the city council as a residence for the mayor, for donating the drinking fountain at the top of Bridge Valley Road, and for funding much of the restoration of St Mary **Redcliffe**.

An order form with a small discount for purchases before 30 April 2024 accompanies this e-update.

### **ALHA BOOKLET NO.36 – EDWARD LONG FOX**

Centrally held stocks of Dinah Moore's ALHA booklet no.36, *Dr Edward Long Fox, radical and mental health pioneer* are sold out, but many copies have been placed on sale or return. If you wish to purchase a copy, could you please check with the treasurer before sending money or placing an order.

### **ALHA DIRECTORY OF PRESENTERS**

Work continues on the 2024 edition of the speakers list, which will be issued as a supplement to the directory issued to member groups and societies in 2024. As the 2024 edition will not be issued until after 1 April 2024, there is still time to nominate new speakers to be included in the list. Any member of the ALHA committee will be happy to receive recommendations.

## GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

### **YATE & DISTRICT HERITAGE CENTRE**

*Leah Collier writes:* Tate Town Council has a temporary paid vacancy for an Operations Officer at **Yate Heritage Centre**. A link to our website for more information is below. It's a great opportunity for anyone wanting to gain experience in culture sector operations and modernisation, as this role will support to implementation of the "Vision," the new business plan for Tate Heritage Centre. [Work With Us - Yate Town Council](#)

In January we also launched a new service "Relaxed Museum" for people that may benefit from an informal museum experience, such as those with dementia, autism, and other neurodiverse conditions, with their supportive people. Below is the poster for the sessions in February and general marketing that's not time-specific. We are looking for visitors and volunteers, so please can you share this information with anyone who might benefit from it. [Yate Heritage Centre launches 'Relaxed Museum' - Yate Town Council](#)

Leah Collier, Community Projects Manager, Yate Town Council,  
[LCollier@yatetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:LCollier@yatetowncouncil.gov.uk); [www.yatetowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.yatetowncouncil.gov.uk)

### **WECA SMALL EVENTS GRANTS**

*Alison Catlin draws attention to* a small community events fund from the West of England Combined authority. 'The small amount of funding available (grants between £7k and £20k) is aimed at place-based community organisations and / or those that represent a particular group of people with a shared cultural identity. This can include town or parish councils, community interest groups, regional representative groups, charities, voluntary sector entities and other similar bodies who will be running things like parades, carnivals, festivals, seasonal events or place based music or food festivals and similar. The deadline is **19 April 2024** but WECA are taking applications in and assessing as they arise.'

Alison Catlin, Museums and Heritage Officer, South Gloucestershire Council, 01454 865835; Mornings Tuesday – Friday.

More at <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/employment-skills/community-support-fund/>

## **EVENTS AND SOURCES**

### **HANDEL COSSHAM CONFERENCE / LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2024**

Booking is open for the conference-cum-local history day being organised jointly between ALHA and ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**. The date is **Saturday 13 April 2024**, and the venue is Turnberrie's community centre, **Thornbury**, the birthplace of Handel Cossham (the town, that is). **More details and a booking form accompany this update.**

### **EXHIBITION: HANDEL COSSHAM: THORNBURY'S MAN OF SUBSTANCE**

This exhibition runs on **Tuesdays and Fridays 1-4pm and Saturdays 10am to 4pm, to 23 April 2024. Thornbury & District Museum**. Entry is free.

'The exhibition tells the story of Handel Cossham, born in **Thornbury** High Street exactly 200 years ago. Son of a joiner and builder, instead of following in his father's footsteps, he became a clerk in a colliery and taught himself about the geology of the local coalfields. He went on to become a leading colliery owner in this area and one of the West Country's major employers. He was also a lay preacher, a temperance advocate, an educationalist, a politician, and a public benefactor. It was estimated that 50,000 people were present at the cemetery or lined the route to his funeral.

Handel Cossham never forgot his native town. In 1862 he paid for the setting up of a British School at Gillingstool in **Thornbury** and in 1888 he gifted the former Wesleyan Chapel building to the people of **Thornbury** for use as a public hall, now the Cossham Hall, next to the museum. The exhibition includes the story of the Cossham Hall.' More at

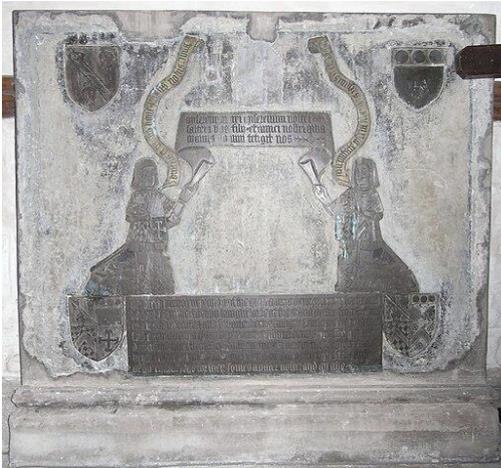
[www.thornburymuseum.org.uk/](http://www.thornburymuseum.org.uk/) . **Thornbury & District Museum**, Chapel Street, Thornbury, BS35 2BJ

## MONUMENTAL BRASSES

*Stephen Freeth writes:* An annual prize of £350 has been instituted by the Monumental Brass Society in memory of Jonathan Ali (1969-2019), a distinguished journalist and member of the Society.

It is offered to the author or authors of the best piece of work on monumental brasses or incised slabs published in a book, journal or online publication over the past three years. Essays on wider topics, but dealing principally with brasses and incised slabs will also be considered. The winner will be invited to submit a possible article to the Society's

*Transactions.*



The submissions will be judged by a panel of three judges applying the criteria of originality, significance, rigour and readability. The approximate length of submissions should be in the range of 6,000 to 15,000 words, so we are inviting proposals of essays, not entire books. Applications are welcome from individuals on their own behalf or on behalf of others, and from representatives of organisations. The judges themselves may make nominations.

The closing date for the first round of submissions will be **31 March 2024**.

For further information, see the Society's website: [www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/publications-resources/jonathan-ali-essay-prize](http://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/publications-resources/jonathan-ali-essay-prize) . Submissions are to be sent to: [ali-prize@mbs-brasses.co.uk](mailto:ali-prize@mbs-brasses.co.uk)

[Image, Denys family monument, **Olveston**, *Lobsterthermidor* at *en.wikipedia.*, CC0, via *Wikimedia Commons*]

## ELIZABETH HARBUTT

Several readers, and others, have commented on or asked about the striking portrait [*image below next page, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath*] that is being used to advertise the local history day on Handel Cossham being organised by ALHA and **Bristol & Gloucestershire**

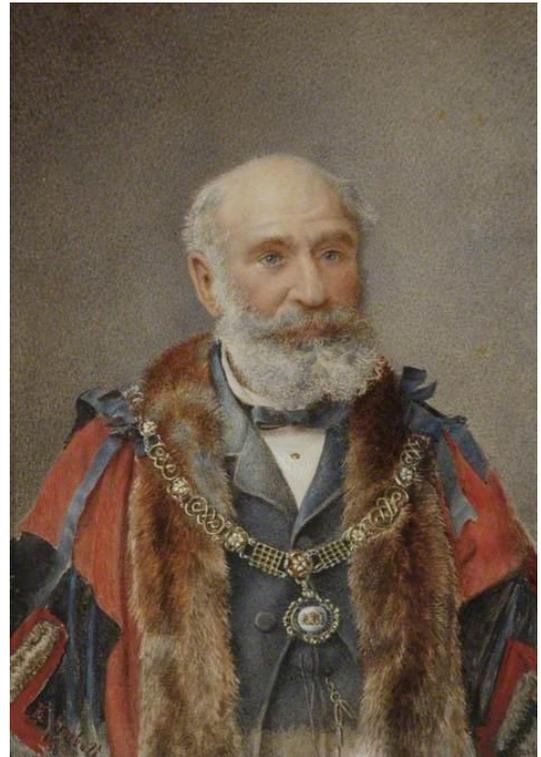
**Archaeological Society** for **Saturday 13 April 2024** at Turnberries' community centre,

**Thornbury**. The portrait, of HC as mayor of **Bath** and wearing his mayoral robe and chain, is held by the Victoria Art Gallery, **Bath**, BATVG:P:1900.49. The artist was Elizabeth Cambridge Harbutt, wife of William Harbutt (1844-1921). WH was head of the **Bath School of Art and Design** from 1874 until he fell out with the committee in 1877, and then opened his own private art academy in the same street. He wanted his students to be able to sculpt with a material that was cheap, re-usable and easy to work. He invented plasticine about 1897 and

manufactured it, first in Alfred Street and Milsom Street in **Bath**, and from 1900 at **Bathampton**. It won a gold medal at an exhibition in **Weston-super-mare** in 1899. Nick Park used it for Wallace and Gromit.

The painting of HC, in oils on canvas, was done in 1890, the year HC died. HC had been mayor from 1882 to 1885, so it seems unlikely that the painting was done during his period of office. Could it have been commissioned after HC died as a memorial? Perhaps by the Harbutt family, who shared Cossham's liberal politics though not his congregationalism? It was not presented to **Bath** corporation until 1900.

Rarely noticed nowadays, 'Bessie' Cambridge Harbutt was well-known in her own day for portraits, especially miniatures. She exhibited at the Royal Academy. In 1887 Queen Victoria commissioned her to paint portraits of Prince Albert and herself (the queen, that is), which were hung at Frogmore, Windsor and are now held by the Victoria Art Gallery, **Bath**. Bessie is in a family photograph in the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for her husband. She died in 1930 aged 84 and is buried, alongside her husband, in the churchyard of St Nicholas **Bathampton**. More at [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/183306334/elizabeth\\_harbutt](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/183306334/elizabeth_harbutt)



### LOCAL HISTORY SHORT FILMS

Darren Jones, MP for **Bristol North-west**, has 'created a collection of seven short films to tell stories rooted in local history to discuss issues that are pertinent to constituents today.' They will be shown at the Orpheus, Northumbria Drive, **Henleaze**, **6pm to 7pm Thursday 14 March 2024**. 'For **Westbury on Trym** and **Henleaze**, the film looks at the history of education for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, with the Royal School for the Blind in **Henleaze** and Grace House at St Christopher's school in **Westbury Park**.' Tickets are free, but must be booked via <https://www.darren-jones.co.uk/events> .

### ORAL HISTORY PODCASTS

Between 2021 and 2023 **east Bristol's** local radio station BCfm recorded oral history interviews for M Shed, part of Bristol Museums, in partnership with the University of the West of England. 28 of them, divided into MEDIA, LEISURE, IDENTITY and YOUTH, can be heard in the form of podcasts under the title Bristol for the record at <https://www.bcfmradio.com/podcast/bristol-for-the-record> .

## DICK KNIGHT

ALHA's committee was saddened that Dick Knight of Castle Farm, **Marshfield** has died, at the age of 92. He was not an individual member of ALHA, but he did much for local history and archaeology in our area. In the 1960s he learned that the longhouse on his farm was of particular historic interest, and started a museum of artefacts from late antiquity and medieval items found on his farm. But perhaps more long-lasting was his initiative regarding the Codrington archives. *David Smith, formerly county archivist for Gloucestershire County Council, writes:* 'His most important contribution to local history was the preservation intact of the English Estate [they had overseas, including Caribbean, estates as well, Ed.] archives of the Codrington family of **Dodington** Park. In the summer of 1980 Sir Simon Codrington was in urgent need of cash to settle his divorce proceedings and gave notice to sell the family archive by auction in September. Dick Knight bought the papers by means of a bank loan and kept them safe until a public appeal raised the funds to buy them for the County Archive at the end of 1981.' Some idea of the extent of the archive can be glimpsed from the Gloucestershire Archives online catalogue at

[https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/search/all:records/0\\_50/all/score\\_desc/codrington](https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/search/all:records/0_50/all/score_desc/codrington)

## WRITING HISTORY WORKSHOP

*ALHA individual member Mike Manson writes:* In partnership with *Satellite of Love* I'm running a workshop on writing history. If you have a project - fiction/non fiction - that has an historical slant this might be for you.

The workshop will help participants:

- Consider how they might move their project forward
- Widen their scope for research
- Consider possible routes to publication

Although this workshop is aimed primarily at non-fiction writers, it will also be of use to those writing historical fiction.

Venue: **John Sebastian Lightship, Bathurst Basin, Bristol, Saturday 13 April 2024.**

<https://solpoetry.org.uk/making-history-a-workshop-aimed-at-those-interested-in-historical-writing>

[Mike Manson](mailto:mike@mikemanson.co.uk), 92 Sefton Park Road, St Andrews, Bristol BS7 9AL, M: 07504 505 980;

[www.mikemanson.co.uk](http://www.mikemanson.co.uk); Twitter: [@mansonmike](https://twitter.com/mansonmike) [@Brizmiz](https://twitter.com/Brizmiz)

## BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Julie Johns, 'If Only Walls Could Talk: the First Hundred and Fifty Years of the White Hart, Bitton and the Mystery of the George Inn' at <https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/White-Hart.pdf> .

Mary Miles, ed *The Letterbook of Graffin Prankard*, **Bristol Record Society** volume 77, 2024, 212pp, ISBN 978-0-901538-46-8, pdf free, hb £15, to members of BRS.

Graffin Prankard was a Somerton maltster's son who became an international trader and a member of **Bristol's** Society of Merchant Venturers. MM has edited transcripts of his letterbook of 1712-1718, and letters from his cousin Andrew Hare 1711-1728. They give information about the prices of commodities traded, and how they coped with currency fluctuations. Hare's letters show how debtors were dealt with or got away with it. Like Thomas Speed (BRS vol.63, 2011), Prankard was a quaker. He was in partnership at one time with Abraham Darby of Coalbrookdale, with whom he corresponded about business matters.

## RESPONSES

### **Bath tannery**

*John N writes:* The piece in ALHA newsletter e-update for 31 January 2024 mentions an early 19th century tannery in **Bathwick**. As **Bathwick** was developed and marketed as a rather upmarket residential area, the stink of a tannery would not have been acceptable, so there would not have been a tannery there. There was a tanyard in **Lambridge**, just up the road, and downwind from **Bathwick**.

## COMMENTARY

### **Visitors' impressions**

Diaries, letters and other documents recording visitors' impressions of a place are a useful local history source.

For **Bristol**, Joe Bettey helpfully collected a selection in his *Bristol observed – visitors'*



*impressions of the city from Domesday to the blitz* (Redcliffe 1986). He includes excerpts from John Leland, John Evelyn, Samuel Pepys [image John Hayls, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons], Daniel Defoe, Thomas Clarkson, William Cobbett, and many less well-known writers whose comments might otherwise be difficult to track down.

Is there a similar publication for **Bath**, or for other places in our area? **Bath's** could start with *The ruin* from the *Exeter Book*, unless you think that does not necessarily refer to **Bath**.

Visitors' comments can boost a place's reputation. For a town or village to be mentioned in, say, Pepys's diary is definitely a feather in the local history cap. Elizabeth I's reputed but undocumented compliment to Mary **Redcliffe** as 'the fairest, goodliest and most

famous parish church in all England' will have gone down well locally at the time, and is still quoted with approval. Visitors may have noticed buildings or other things that have not survived; they may have experienced events of which there is no other trace. Visitors may also be regarded as impartial, uninfluenced by local patriotism or sentiment: if the oral tradition is of quiet contentment, but a visitor describes the place as dilapidated, decrepit, dull and dispirited, we may incline to take notice of the latter. Or should we give such comments as much credence as we would give a 'review' in *Trip Advisor*?

Visitors' impressions can have their limitations. As with any other source, they are bound to reflect the presuppositions, biases and prejudices of the writer. A diary, like Cicely Cardew's, may be intended for publication and its contents selected and processed accordingly. Diaries can be partial in the other sense, in that they give only a glimpse, a snapshot at a particular time, perhaps just one day, which may or may not have been typical and cannot have been comprehensive. John Evelyn mentioned **Bristol** sugar boiling, but there must have been much else going on that he did not mention.

Diarists tend to record not just what they happened to see, but only what interests them. Elizabeth Percy, duchess of Northumberland, visiting Stoke Park in **Stoke Gifford** in the mid 18th century, could have noted the fashionable serpentine landscaping, the architectural modifications to the mansion house, or its imposing position on the brow of an escarpment, but what struck her was the economical management of the grassland: 'It contains 500 Acre but as it is chiefly Eat by Cows Horses and Sheep there are only 8 Men employ'd in keeping it.' Richard Pococke, visiting the same estate in 1750 and 1764, was intrigued by its monuments. To John Wesley, taking a break from **Kingswood** miners in 1767, it was a reminder of human mortality.

## **Saxons**

The anglo-saxon period does not feature much in histories of our area, perhaps because there is so little source material. The *Anglo-saxon Chronicle* mentions the battle of **Dyrham** in 577, and an expedition from **Bristol** to Ireland, but there are few other documentary references to things happening around here. Apart from the battle of **Dyrham**, and the crowning of Edgar in **Bath** abbey in 973, most of the saxon action was elsewhere: Alfred lurked in Athelney and ruled from Winchester rather than **Bath**, Cnut chose Bosham rather than **Weston-super-mare** for his confrontation with the tide, Harold fought at Stamford and Hastings, and so on.

Most saxon buildings are thought to have been of wood, so have not survived. But the archaeological evidence for a saxon origin for **Bristol** has been set out in Bob Jones's *Bristol: an archaeological survey* (Oxbow 2018), with St Peter's in what is now **Castle Park** thought to be on the site of an earlier saxon church. (By the way, Mike Ponsford's argument that the original saxon settlement was outside the later city walls must surely be right: how else do you explain why **Old Market** is so called?). **Bath** is known to have been a saxon burgh and its abbey originally a saxon monastery. The sheer number of place names in our area

with saxon elements (eg endings in -ington, -worth, -ton, -wick, -bury, and so on) suggests that saxon influence in our area was pervasive, and must have been historically significant.

Local history people interested in the saxon period might look at *Ða Engliscan Gesiðas (The English Companions)*, a society that 'aims to bring together all those with an interest in the history, language and culture of Early England AD 450-100.' Its committee is called the Witan, its chairman ealdor, secretary gerefa, treasurer hordere; other officers are called thegns, one of whom is a Webb thegn. Its annual dinner is called a feast, and its annual general meeting is a folcgemot. At some events some attenders dress in anglo-saxon garb, which smacks of re-enactment societies. The English Companions' magazine, *Widrowinde (Bindweed)*, printed in **Bristol**, by the way) is a mixture of pieces about history, literature, archaeology, language, architecture, art, religion, folklore and material culture, colour illustrated. Pieces vary from the rigorously academic to the folksy, as well as the whimsical, the weird and the wacky, saved by light touch humour and self-awareness. Subscription (giel) is £25. More at <https://www.tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk/about-the-english-companions/>

## QUOTE

In the past decade or so, scientists' ability to extract information from material remains has grown exponentially. In some cases, such as the study of ancient climates, old techniques have been employed with new scope and precision. In others, procedures such as whole-genome DNA sequencing – once expensive and error-prone when applied to ancient samples – have become reliable and ubiquitous. We have brand new methods of dating, imaging and chemical analysis, which have allowed the detritus of antiquity – everything from teeth to shoes to ancient rubbish itself – to speak about the past as eloquently as any archive. Jacob Mikanowski, 'The new science of history: how technology is opening a 'treasure house' of knowledge about the past' (*The Guardian*, 20 February 2024).

## CAN YOU HELP?

### **YATE HERITAGE CENTRE**

There is a volunteering request from Yate Town Council under **GROUPS AND SOCIETIES**, above.

### **BITTON INDUSTRIES**

*Mike Gates, secretary of ALHA member **Bitton Parish History Group**, writes:* A reminder that David Noble has kindly offered to lead a new project in looking at local industries in the **Bitton, Willsbridge, Oldland and Oldland Common** and surrounding areas. If you worked locally in any of the local industries and would like to contribute with an article or memories about your experience, please either write and, if possible, send any photos to David.

Alternatively, he is willing to talk to you and then include your memories. David's email is noble440@btinternet.com and his mobile is 07706482327.