

AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

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Material for Newsletter 162 by 20 March 2020 please
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ALHA NEWS

ROGER ANGERSON

On 24 September 2019 at the Priory, **Portbury**, members of the ALHA committee entertained to lunch Roger Angerson, retiring as president and as member of the ALHA committee finance its inception, and Judith. 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 BETTEY 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, accessible and efficiently run facilities, resulted in some more members attending, but not many. 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-Kan, 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*. MD outlined her current research into the ways in which involvement in the slave trade has shaped our area, not just the landscape and its buildings but also the economy. MD adopted a transatlantic approach, drawing on accounts and other archival documents, archaeology and genealogy as well as local history in Britain and abroad. With its depth of local history, **Bristol** is a useful laboratory. MD looked particularly at the iron industry, textiles, brass founding and manufacture, coal, and finance.

Iron

A family involved in iron goods was the Foleys of Witley Court in Worcestershire. The Foleys had interests in the Forest of Dean, Shropshire and the colonies. Their business expanded by supplying Cromwell's army, and later the royal navy. The Foleys married into **Bristol** families such as the Guthries, mercers and grocers whose family networks provided capital for the ironfounding businesses and had a presence in Bristol. The iron industry was linked early with the slave trade, because iron bars were used as currency, and in shackles, collars and chains. One collar is marked DEVEREUX, BRISTOL. Ships captains could take slaves in payment, or as servants, and could sell them back in Bristol.

Bristol's relations with America during the American civil war were ambiguous. Many people continued to oppose and condemn slavery, but acknowledged that Bristol had trading links with the American south, through cotton and export of iron goods, obscuring the connection with slavery. The importance of iron exports is shown in Tredegar Iron Works, now a museum in Virginia. The works was founded by Richmond businessmen who hired Rhys Davies, a Welshman who brought workers from Tredegar in south Wales and who had family connections with Bristol. At the cutting edge of technology, the works produced most of the armaments used in the civil war and supplied the confederacy. Another Welsh company involved was the Cambria Iron Company. The Harfords were active in Bristol and south Wales, and invested in south Wales iron works through Harford, Partridge & Co.

Textiles

Bristol imported cotton and exported textiles to the American south, and also to west Africa. Like metal manufactures, the textile industry depended on the slave trade.

Brassfounding

Brass manufacture started in Bristol with Abraham Darby about 1702. The site of his brass battery mill is now under **Easton** library by the M32. The former Millpond primary school was named after the pond that impounded water to power the mill. Darby had quaker partners, including people from Dudley in Worcestershire, the Netherlands and Wales, so his businesses had international connections. When he moved to Ironbridge Darby continued his interest in producing brass. Brass required coke, which was made from coal, which had to be mined. Coal was supplied from mines in the north Somerset and south Gloucestershire coalfield, including **Bedminster and Kingswood**. Brass making also needed water power, so Darby's businesses moved to **Keynsham** and along the **Chew valley**, and to places in Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. At **Warmley** William Champion established mills, with works at **Bitton** and **Kelston**. Bristol brass went into iron goods. An example of how brassfounding had effects on the local landscape was Warmley, the windmill of whose factory still stands and is part of **Kingswood Heritage Museum**. MD considered the museum represents William Champion mainly as an innovator, and does not tell much about his slavery connections. The gothic features in the grounds of Warmley House were connected to slavery-related industries. One investor in Champion's Warmley works was Norborne Berkeley. When Champion went bankrupt (which MD considered was not his fault), Berkeley needed another source of income and was made governor of Virginia, whose capital was at Williamsburg. Virginia was a slave colony. At **Saltford** a large brass battery mill was established. The mills produced wire, which was used for pins for dressmaking and fashion items. They also made goods for the Atlantic slave trade, including manillas, examples of which are displayed at the mill. Manillas were used as currency for trade, including the sale of slaves. The works also exported guinea bowls, which were used by the west Africa slave trader warlords for cooking and for evaporating salt. Copper in sheet form was used to sheath ships, and ships had copper nails to reduce corrosion. The sugar plantations used copper boilers, which were exported from Britain. Copper also went into felt hat making at **Frampton Cotterell**. So the **Saltford** mills were connected with the transatlantic slave economy.

Coal

The **Kingswood** coalfield produced coal used in the making of iron and brass. Many of the coal miners were self-employed, working in harsh conditions and for low profits. Independent and assertive, they rioted against tolls on roads transporting their product. The press depicted them as black savages, likening them to Africans. The two groups shared several characteristics: the way they were perceived by other people; both did manual work; both connection with slave industries; both had links with Methodism; both were targets of repressive legislation. Vagrancy powers were used against both miners and emancipated slaves: the authorities saw both as unruly labour requiring control. The difference was that the Kingswood miners were free; the slaves were not.

Finance and insurance

In the 17th century banking and insurance developed in this area because of the slave trade. Ships needed insurance. Manufacturing involving fire required fire insurance. Slavery fed into the commercial revolution as well as the industrial revolution, and helped provide its infrastructure.

Methodology

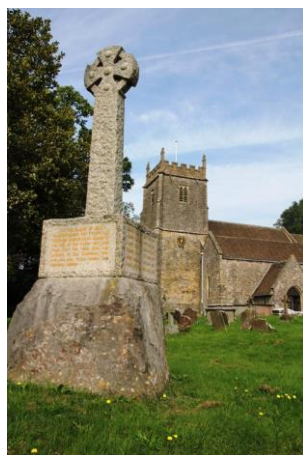
MD suggested that work in this area requires looking at local records, but putting them into a global and transatlantic context, probing behind the records and using public history to make connections. Oral sources are also important.

Current implications

Young black people in this area are concerned about how to commemorate slavery. Their feelings are very visceral. Slavery did not end in 1834. The slave owners got compensation, the slaves got nothing. The owners reinvested their compensation in railways, sugar, cotton, clothing and metals, and helped fuel Bristol's industrial expansion. In the West Indies, money left the economy as the plantation owners moved to Britain and built themselves country houses. There was no capital left for infrastructure such as roads or schools. By the 1930s there was starvation, and the authorities feared unrest. The findings of the Moyne Commission into living conditions were suppressed. Hence emigration in the 1940s and 1950s to the UK, and a sense of alienation. We need to involve children in this history and show that we understand, and help them understand, the historical connections.

NEW ALHA MEMBER – TYTHERINGTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Welcome aboard to ALHA's latest member, **Tytherington Local History Group**, which has 20 members.



Contact is Robert Jenkins, School House, Itchington Road, **Tytherington** GL12 8QE, 01454 416 802, tytheringtonroots@outlook.com. *RJ writes: 'Tytherington* is a small village in South Gloucestershire north of Bristol just off the A38. It has a history based on cloth making, agriculture and quarrying. Our Local History Group was established during the 1980s, led by a retired HM Inspector of Schools, the late Allan Baddeley MA. Villagers held regular meetings to explore the history of **Tytherington** which culminated in the production of a meticulously researched booklet *Tytherington in the past*. The group, which still includes some founder members, has continued to meet regularly and whilst increasingly inviting outside speakers to contribute on various topics we have tried to keep topics related to the village and local area. In the last few years we have developed a website at <http://www.tytheringtonroots.co.uk/> It gives a glimpse of **Tytherington** in the past and is an archive for various documents, maps, and photographs. It has attracted interest from Tytheringtonians across

the globe!'

FROM THE ALHA COMMITTEE

- The committee is grateful to Bob Lawrence (Bristol & Avon Family History Society) for agreeing to **chair ALHA's committee**, Roger Angerson having stood down.
- The events team is considering possible venues for ALHA's **2020 annual general meeting**, the date of which has not yet been fixed. Considerations include ease of access, including by public transport and preferably with car parking; adequate seating; audio-visual facilities; accessible lavatories; efficient organisation; and ability to serve refreshments. The venue of the last annual

general meeting, St Michael's centre, **Stoke Gifford**, scored on many points, but the hiring fee is steep. Venues under consideration include St James's priory, Broadmead baptist church and The New Room, all in **Broadmead, Bristol**. Any ALHA member group or society interested in hosting the annual general meeting and the lecture that customarily follows it, or able to recommend a venue, please contact the secretary.

- Arrangements for the **2020 local history day** are not yet concluded, but preliminary indications are that the date will be **Saturday 2 May**, and the venue the St Michael's centre in **Stoke Gifford**. As the event will not be advertised until arrangements have been firmed up, let's pencil the date in diaries now.
- Sandy Tebbutt has started work on the 2020 edition of ALHA's *Walks, Talks and Visits list*, which will include several new names. If you would like to suggest more names for inclusion, do contact her at sandytebbutt@hotmail.com
- ALHA's latest **booklet**, *Resident hospital apothecaries in georgian Bristol*, by Michael Whitfield, is now available, and an order form accompanies this newsletter. If you would like to take copies of ALHA books for resale or on sale and return, do contact the treasurer.
- The committee has agreed to pledge, subject to a number of conditions, a **grant** of up to £1,000 towards a project by Historic Towns Trust to produce a **historic map of Bristol**. This is intended to update the atlas produced by MD Lobel and EM Carus Wilson (Scolar Press, 1975), now out of print but viewable and downloadable in portable document format at <http://www.historictownsatlas.org.uk/atlas/volume-ii/atlas-historic-towns-volume-2/bristol>. If this grant is made, it will be by far the largest ALHA has ever awarded. The project needs to raise about £14,000, and funds are being sought from a number of sources. If not enough money is raised for the project to go ahead, or if other conditions are not met, ALHA's commitment will not be called upon. If you want to contribute, the local contacts are Peter.Fleming@uwe.ac.uk , helen.fulton@bristol.ac.uk and roberthjones@blueyonder.co.uk

EVENTS AND SOURCES

WINTERBOURNE MEDIEVAL BARN TRUST

Sue Parsons, chair of ALHA member Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust, writes: 'Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust has been fortunate to be selected as one of the good causes for the next year by the Co-op. This means that any Co-op Member living within 15 miles of **Winterbourne** can nominate us as their preferred charity, and the Co-op will donate 1% of all expenditure on Co-op branded goods to the Trust. We would be really grateful if you could circulate this information and encourage your volunteers to support. If people are not already Members it costs £1 to join and they will receive other benefits from Membership.' A link to the page with sign up details is [Co-op Local Community Fund - Learning at Winterbourne Medieval Barn](#), which also explains how the money raised will be spent. Sue Parsons, Chair, **Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust**, <https://www.winterbournebarn.org.uk/>



WESTBURY ON TRYM VILLAGE HALL

Bob Lawrence writes: ALHA's Executive Committee meets quarterly at the village hall in **Westbury on Trym**, and its deliberations are overlooked by portrait sketches of Henry St Vincent Ames and his wife Charlotte Henrietta. They lived at Cote House on the Downs, on the same site where the St Monica Home now stands, and came from one of the wealthiest families in nineteenth-century Bristol.

The hall was opened in 1869, so celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2019. On 25 November there was a reception, attended by Peaches Golding, Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, and a celebratory cake and buffet. The anniversary was also marked by the replacement of some of the old windows in the main hall with new ones of modern design. Although the hall is now in good shape and well-used, it fell into disrepair about 50 years ago, and many of those attending had been involved in its restoration, both by raising funds and also giving practical help.



The hall was the gift to the village by Henry St Vincent Ames and two of his brothers – Reginald and Alfred. The Ames family arrived in **Bristol** in about 1700 from the Evercreech area, and made their money as merchants and bankers, later becoming privateers and owners of West Indies plantations, some of them in partnership with the Pinney family. When slavery was abolished in the 1830s, George Henry Ames received over £60,000 from the British government in compensation, some in respect of their slaves on St Vincent, after whom one of the sons was named. Carl Tantum, great-great grandson of George Henry Ames, was present at the event.

One can only speculate what George Henry Ames and his sons would have thought of the idea of the guest of honour at this celebration being the first black woman British Lord Lieutenant. It was talked about informally, but not mentioned in the speeches.

More about the village hall at <http://www.wotvillagehall.org/history.html>. Photo of the event at https://issuu.com/keynshamvoice/docs/henleaze_dec_2019new

WILLS

Bob Lawrence writes: For the family and social historian, wills can provide a wealth of information about individuals and the lives they led. They can reveal relationships, property owned, and the way money was passed between generations. They can tell you where someone lived, and even the names of the executors and witnesses can bring surprises.

Probate is the right to administer the estate of a deceased person and dispose of the proceeds. Since 1858, probate has been granted by special civil courts, although since most applications for probate are a fairly routine matter, the actual process is quite straightforward and carried out by civil servants, who in my experience are very helpful and compassionate. Records of grants are publicly available to anyone as soon as probate has been granted, and can now be traced and ordered online at www.gov.uk/search-will-probate. The documents, including a copy of the will and the grant of probate, are then made available as pdf files for you to download. The cost of has recently been reduced from £10 to £1.50, and the rise in demand has resulted in a delay of several weeks before they become available.

Before 1858, wills were proved in courts of the Church of England, and the position is more complicated. For most people, with only a small amount of money and property, their will would be proved by the court of their local diocese. So, wills proved in **Bristol** are now in **Bristol Archives**, and wills proved in the **Diocese of Gloucester** are at **Gloucestershire Archives**. Unfortunately, most of the **Somerset** wills were lost in the blitz when the records were housed in Exeter. A list of the **Bristol** wills can be seen on the Bristol Archives website, but you have to visit to see them. The Gloucester wills are available on the Ancestry family history website, which can be used in most public libraries free of charge if you don't have your own subscription.

If a deceased person was wealthy, they probably held property in more than one diocese, and so their will was proved in the highest probate court – the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, usually abbreviated to PCC. These too can be found on the Ancestry website, but can also be downloaded from The National Archives website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ for £3.50.

This brief guide has only considered the local situation, and has ignored the position of peculiar jurisdictions and the role of the archdiocese of York and other complications. Wills can vary in length and legibility, and how easy it is to determine what they actually say. Generally, the more recent a will, the

easier it is to read and understand. From early in the twentieth century, the records are in typescript, and so very easy to read.

RECORD OFFICE STOCKTAKING CLOSURE DATES

Bristol Archives will be closed for its annual stocktaking **Tuesday 21 to Friday 31 January 2020**.

They say they will still answer enquiries by e-mail during this period.

<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives/contact-bristol-archives/>

Somerset Heritage Centre's annual closed period will run from **Monday 20 January 2020 to Friday 31 January 2020** inclusive. New opening hours will begin on **Tuesday 4 February 2020**. They will be:

Tuesday to Friday

Opening hours 10.00 am – 5.00 pm; Document productions 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Saturday Opening (usually the second Saturday in the month)

Opening hours 9.00 am – 1.00 pm. Documents must be ordered **in advance** by 12 noon on the preceding Friday. Up to 12 documents per person may be ordered. It may not be possible to order further documents during Saturday opening. <https://swheritage.org.uk/somerset-archives/visit/somerset-heritage-centre/>

REVIEWS by Dr Jonathan Harlow unless otherwise said

A-Z of Bristol: places – people – history Cynthia Stiles, Amberley 2019 pb 96pp, colour illustr, £13.49. *Review by W Evans*

This book is one of a series: **Bath** has already had the treatment (Peter Kilby, 2019). It consists of 56 short essays on places and objects in **Bristol**, in alphabetical order, with at least one topic for each letter of the alphabet. Each is illustrated by either a recent colour photograph or a detail from a reproduction of an older print.

This format presents difficulties: (1) Not all topics warrant equal treatment: is Thunderbolt Square of interest equal to Cabot? (2) Readers will disagree over the choice of topics: does Herbert Ashman warrant inclusion, but not **Arnos Vale** cemetery, **Ashton Gate** stadium or **Avonmouth** docks? (3) Some letters strain to find a representative. Zed Alley is fair enough, if only for lack of competition, but X gets represented by xenon, on the tenuous ground that the gas is used medically to cool babies deprived of oxygen at birth so as to reduce the chances of brain damage, and the technique was proposed by a Bristol neuroscientist. The Seven Stars gets in, but under T, because its landlord was called Thompson. Ingenious, but some of it smacks of straining and artificiality.

The text is mostly accurate and informative. The style is light and engaging. Some of the historical propositions are questionable: to say that **Castle Street** was not replaced for traffic reasons is to miss most of the story. The illustrations are apt. A lot of thought and care has gone into the modern photographs, taken by the author and her daughter, which are apt to the text, skilfully composed, and in many cases taken from original viewpoints and angles. Only one, the first in the book, does not quite come off: it depicts the Greek revival architectural detail of the **Broadmead** Arcade with clarity, but marred by shadows and parked cars. Or was the metaphor intentional?

There is no index or references to sources, so the book will not be of much use to local historians, but it is a pleasant, undemanding read, and might be a sensible gift to someone not yet hooked on local history or with an as yet unstimulated interest in the city. Perhaps the author could be persuaded to write her take on Bristol's history more generally, untrammelled by the straitjacket of the A to Z or 50 buildings formats.

A House, a Street, a Neighbourhood: 10-13 Guinea Street 1718-2018 Lois & Peter Madden (unpriced, contact maddenp1@cardiff.ac.uk).

This booklet is very much a labour of love, nicely produced on some 56 A4 pages (unpaginated) with lots of good pictures. It traces a block of houses in Guinea Street, **Redcliff**, from their origin in two buildings put up by Captain Ernest Sanders, a slave-trading merchant, in 1718. (The authors reckon to correct Ison and Leach who had one or three original buildings.) In fact it goes back a bit earlier, to the area and the street. Neighbourhood links are made not only with slaving but with piracy, pubs, hospitals and industry. Fortunately the buildings survived not only the blitz but also Bristol's post-war planning which is widely credited with more damage than the Luftwaffe; and are still private homes to this day. The authors have not engaged with primary sources, but they have made good use of all the relevant secondary work, and this work can be recommended as just what it is meant to be: a memorial of three centuries of occupation and occupations.

[*Rumour has it that one of the Guinea Street houses will star in David Olusoga's next series of A house through time, due to air on BBC4 from January 2020. More at ALHA Newsletter 160 and source there cited. Ed.]*

Bristol & Avon FHS Journal 178 (December 2019) As well as the usual Internet update, Bob Lawrence has an article on the **Bristol** Parish Registers, now on Ancestry. (NB This is Bristol Diocese not City.) And a letter, which is really a little article, from Pat Lindegarde, obviously still active though no long a regular columnist. Good collection of book reviews, tending to tell you more about content than quality.

The Local Historian 49.4 (October 2019) has no articles of direct Avon interest but two which may help the historian: Jayne Carroll & Susan Kilby with 'Preparing the Ground: finding minor landscape names in medieval documents'; and Marion Hardy on 'The importance of Midsummer Day 1700' when stranger vagrants became the responsibility of parish constables under the Poor Laws. There is also a favourable review of *Dissenters' Meeting-House Certificates and Registrations for Bristol & Gloucestershire* edited by Anthea Jones (Gloucestershire Record Series 32 BGAS 2018). And a very enthusiastic review of the *A New Dictionary of English Field-Names* by Paul Cavill: 'should be on every local historian's reference shelf' says Editor Alan Crosby.

BGAS Newsletter 85 (September 2019) invites views on what that society should be offering – apparently only from members at this stage, but there may be a wider consultation later. An interesting article on the links of archaeology with agriculture by Henry Webber. And an enticing review of a little booklet by Professor Nicholas Orme *Walter Map of Westbury: Scholar, cleric, courtier, humourist writer*. Humourist sounds good for 12-13th century, and dying on 1 April is not bad for enders. You can get it from the church of Sts Mary, Peter & Paul of Westbury-on-Severn for £2.

History & Heritage Matters 16 (November 2019) continues the admirable practice of a local history society as producer not merely consumer (**Nailsea, Backwell, Tickenham & Wraxall LHS**). Extracts from **Tickenham** Council Minutes and **Nailsea** Poorhouse accounts; reminiscences of the saving of the site of Middle Engine Pit; of cider making; of **Backwell** Lake aka Bucklands Pool; and the second part of an article (and, bless it, with references) on the death of a miner in Farler's Coal Pit in 1860 – body never recovered. This is how local history societies ought to be.

Bristol University: conception to foundation, CS Knighton, ed., Bristol Record Society vol. 71 (2019); hb, lix plus 508pp., with a compact disc, 16 b&w illustr, £25 + postage to non-members. *Review by W Evans*.

This is an edited collection of documents detailing how University College Bristol was created in 1876 and became the chartered University of Bristol in 1909. They consist mostly of correspondence between the participants in the action, and minutes of meetings of relevant organisations and their committees. Most are held in the Special Collections of Bristol University, or by Bristol Archives (where the Society of Merchant Venturers has deposited relevant records). Other collections contributing include those of Bristol Central Library, Clifton College and The National Archives. Among other educational institutions are Bristol Baptist College, Oxford colleges and other universities (but not Birmingham, which declined to co-operate). An accompanying compact disc records oral reminiscences.

CSK's introduction explains the narrative and its contexts – educational and political, local and national. It picks out a number of themes such as how UCB originated, and which individuals drove the idea; how UCB was organised and financed; how the idea of university status emerged, developed and was achieved; and how the Society of Merchant Venturers saw UCB and the move towards university status as a threat to its Technical College, and as a liberal, nonconformist, non-religious institution. CSK explains how the SMV opposed UCB; did its best to thwart it; obstructed attempts by Bristol City Council and its Technical Education Committee to broker, if not co-operation, at least demarcation of subjects; was outmanoeuvred by UCB and its supporters; and had to be content with minority representation on the new university's governing body. A pervasive theme is networking, and how the various participants lobbied connections to advance their cause.

One or two surprises, at any rate for me: that the push towards university status came from a professor of chemistry, acting without authority and leading to formation of a pressure group separate from UCB; that George White refused to support the campaign; that the Labour party was at first antagonistic to the emerging university, considering it not relevant to the needs of working men, and likely to take council funding that would be better applied in other ways; that we still do not know exactly what motivated Henry Overton Wills to pledge the

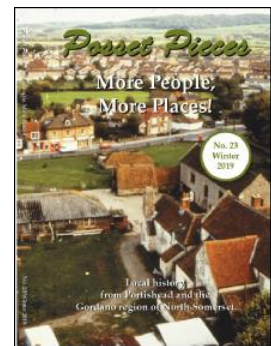
£100,000 that was critical to the acquisition of university status; and that, contrary to local legend, his pledge was not the only balance-tipping issue.

CSK says that the volume is offered as a contribution to the larger task of a comprehensive study of the University: to date historians have dealt with only parts of it or with periods of its past. Dr Knighton is too modest: his introduction alone is a massive and masterly addition to the historiography and stands as a valuable work of history in its own right. The selection of documents is apt (apart perhaps from showing the Technical Instruction Committee's role through officials' letters rather than through the minutes: with such a wealth of source material and the constraints of publication the question is what to leave out). The analyses and explanations are lucid and penetrating, and the index (with its own introductory guide) is a model. We are indebted to the editor and BRS for a volume of such excellence and importance.

BOOKS etc NOTICED

Bob Sydes, 'Bristol Royal Infirmary', *British Archaeology* Jan/Feb 2020, 65. Explains the Council for British Archaeology's objection to demolition of the Hill Block ward, and calls for further evaluation of the seventeenth century sugar refinery, remains of which have been uncovered by excavation.

The Gordano Civic Society, *Posset Pieces*, no.23 (2019), 104 pp, illustrated. 26 more snippets from **Portishead**, edited by Sandy Tebbutt. Obtainable from her, 01275 843566, or via <https://www.gordanosociety.org.uk/pp.html>, £10.50 plus post and packing, or Carey's in **Portishead** High Street (there's a piece about Carey's building company).



Paul Breeden, *Stories of Bristol*, Tangent Books 2019, £11.99. www.storiesofBristol.co.uk; <https://www.tangentbooks.co.uk/>, Tangent Books, Unit 5.16, Paintworks, Bristol BS4 3EH 0117 972 0645, richard@tangentbooks.co.uk. 'We adopted a mission statement to 'publish interesting stuff' and provide quality books for the discerning punter. We do hope you enjoy perusing the witty, irreverent, radical and brilliant selection of books we have here,' it says.

James Wallis, *Difficult Histories & Positive Identities*, Cumberland Lodge 2019. <https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/sites/default/files/public/Difficult%20Histories%20%26%20Positive%20Identities%20report%20%28web%29.pdf> Edward Colston is one of the cases studied.

COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES

BRISTOL'S RADICAL TRADITIONS

Mention of anything radical (Spirit of independence? e-update 30 November 2019) was bound to draw a response from John Stevens: Your latest e-update raises the important question of **Bristol's** "radical tradition" (or lack thereof). But rather than simply categorising "radicalism" as political, religious or economic, should we not first consider what the word means?

To this correspondent, it has a distressingly Humpty-Dumpty-ish feel, often meaning whatever the speaker or writer wants it to mean. It is also frequently (although not as frequently as its cousin, "progressive") something of a weasel word, implying an assertion of moral superiority on the part of the user, or of those people or policies he approves [or she? *Ed.*].

The protean nature of "radicalism" is amply illustrated by the history of mid nineteenth century Bristol. Following its triumphs of 1829-33 - Catholic emancipation (a cause notably unpopular in the City), parliamentary reform and abolition - the first phase of Bristol radicalism ran into the sands and by the mid 1830s the Bristol Political Union, begun a few years previously with high hopes of uniting working and middle class aspirations, was no more.

Bristol, we are told, “slept through Chartism and did not get out of bed for free trade”. True as far as it goes but Chartists and free traders by no means always saw eye to eye. For many Chartists, the Anti-Corn Law League was an employers’ ramp, the cry of “Cheap Bread” being an excuse to lower wages. They would not have found the voting record of the ACLL leader John Bright, MP (a Rochdale carpet manufacturer) reassuring; he opposed, for example, Ashley’s (Shaftesbury’s) factory bills in the early 1840s. Around this time, an ACLL meeting in Bristol was hi-jacked by Chartists amid scenes of disorder and the Conservatives flirted with Chartism, *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal* opening its pages to Chartist attacks on Lord Melbourne’s high Whig government.

Free trade in Bristol meant not just grain but also sugar. Lord John Russell’s Whig government of 1847-52 equalised the duties on colonial and foreign sugar, much to the detriment of the Bristol sugar interest and those employed thereby. During the 1852 general election campaign, one of the successful Liberal candidates, W.H. Gore Langton, painted for voters a mouth-watering picture of the puddings and pies their wives and daughters had been able to make with cheaper sugar. The foreign sugar, however, was slave-grown, which suggests that, for electoral reasons if nothing else, free trade had trumped abolitionism in the pantheon of radical values.

We cannot address Bristol radicalism at this period without considering Langton’s colleague Henry Berkeley, member for the City between 1837 and his death in 1870. Berkeley’s enthusiasm for free trade extended to liquor and his efforts in Parliament made him a darling of the publicans. The Bristol Licensed Victuallers presented him with a testimonial. But those voting for him also included temperance zealots like the Quaker pin manufacturer Robert Charleton and the Mathews printing family. (The Liberals continued to have it both ways as far as drink was concerned, in Bristol and elsewhere, until Gladstone’s Licensing Act of 1872 lost them the support of the Trade.) Who were the true radicals here?

A more serious split in the radical front occurred over the Crimean War. John Bright’s pacifism (“the Angel of Death has been abroad in the land”) was reflected by Charleton, who visited the Tsar in 1854 in the hope of averting hostilities. “Patriotic radicals”, by contrast, supported a war against Europe’s most repressive great power but raged against what they saw as the incompetence with which it was conducted, the product (to them) of aristocratic hegemony in government and the armed forces. These men, Berkeley and Langton among them, were instrumental in the replacement of Lord Aberdeen by Palmerston in early 1855, the pacifists mainly abstaining on the crucial vote. Who, again, were the real radicals?

Berkeley’s name is for ever associated with the (secret) ballot, motions for which he moved almost every year during his time in Parliament. What could be more radical? Should not every man be entitled to vote as his conscience (or Mr Berkeley) told him? Were not Tory and conservative Whig condemnations of the ballot as “unmanly” a mere smokescreen to keep the established order in the driving seat? And yet ... given the limited electorate, other radicals saw open voting as an essential safeguard to the non-voter; Berkeley was notably cool on franchise extension, holding that it would be worthless without the ballot. Some radicals even came to see Berkeley’s annual spats with his leaders, Palmerston and Russell, over the issue as mere shadow-boxing among the ruling class. (He was of course the son of a Lord.)

Radicals, in short, were (and are) not repositories of eternal truth, but politicians like any others, “displaying” (in the words of the late Maurice Cowling) “on the fragmented nature of God’s handiwork the only rational way of acting politically”. “Politically”, he added, “means in a way politicians can understand”.

ARCHAEOLOGY, BUT WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS

Archaeology, in the sense of the body of knowledge that archaeologists have produced, is haphazard, almost random. Similarly with when where and how archaeology has been practised. Whether a site has been investigated is often a matter of chance. At one time it depended on whether an amateur with disposable time and money decided to go digging. Sometimes an investigation has been prompted out of the blue by an unexpected find, or as an unforeseen by-product of ploughing, mining, digging a well, or drought. More recently a site may have been investigated only because a wish to develop or redevelop has triggered a planning permission condition requiring archaeological investigation before building starts. One result is that archaeological knowledge, at any rate in the UK, is scattered and incomplete, and archaeological activity has been piecemeal and uncoordinated. Another result is that the quality of archaeological knowledge varies: some is suspect or faulty, because investigators used methods that professionals now regard as unscientific and harmful, or interpreted results without the benefit of modern technologies. One consequence is that archaeologists spend (waste?) time arguing and speculating not just about what has been found, but about the gaps in between. And they make enormous claims on the basis of homoeopathically sparse evidence.

Given the Chinese government's policy of projecting and leveraging power abroad by investing in other countries, local archaeology people might wonder how a post-maoist regime would organise archaeology in the UK should the investment opportunity arise. The regime might prohibit archaeology altogether, on the ground that anything that happened before the party came to power is bad, dangerous, not correct, or irrelevant.

If the regime were to decide that archaeology has its uses and can continue, archaeology would be centrally planned and controlled. Unpermitted investigations would be banned. Proposals for projects would be ranked in order of priority. Metal detecting by individuals would be prohibited except under licence. Miscreants would be handed over to archaeologists for punishment, re-education and perhaps display. Something to be said for that?

Archaeological practice would be centrally controlled. The government would plant agents in investigation teams to report on deviance and deviants. Reports would be edited and corrected so as to comply with party dogma. Publication of results would be centrally controlled (but at least they might be published, and published soon after the investigation). That would result in two sorts of report: official ones, approved and perhaps published by the party, and unofficial ones, circulated clandestinely and occasionally leaked. Academics might find useful employment comparing the two. Repression would provoke revolution, the regime would be overthrown, and archaeology would revert to the playpen of neoliberal laissez faire. Could be fun.

Mummers

Boxing Day, and **Marshfield's** mummers will have mumed. They are not unique: examples abound from Cornwall to Lincolnshire, from Dorset (Thomas Hardy's *Return of the native*) to Yorkshire, and in mainland Europe. There was a cluster around **Bath: Widcombe, Weston and Bathampton**. The characters, usually 6 or 7 but 4 in Swansea, vary little from place to place. They often include Father Christmas, St George (or Robin Hood), a turkish knight, a doctor and a little boy. The action usually involves St George killing the turk, who is restored to life by the doctor. **Alveston's** version included the king of Egypt (who pays the doctor) and Little Johnny Jack (in **Keynsham**, Saucy Jack).

What are we to make of it? One view is that mumming is just a bit of seasonal fun, devised by and for simple folk, not to be taken seriously. Anachronism, miracle-working, satire and surrealism are part of the genre, which includes *The Goon Show* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

Another view is that the wide spread of the tradition and versions sharing common features point to ancient and primitive origins; and that the shredded paper costumes derive from leaves, suggestive of green men, fertility rites and pre-christian superstitions of the sort underlying wassailing, with which some performances are associated. That has led some theorists to speculate that mumming happened particularly in apple-growing areas, and became a core element in folk traditions. Other correlations might come to mind.

Others see the show as derived from medieval mystery plays (also involving a resurrection), distorted by oral tradition, ignorance and misunderstanding, and mangled by imagination, improvisation and ale. Another theory derives mumming from masques, of the sort sent up by Shakespeare in *A midsummer night's dream*.

Not so, say skeptics: there is no documentary evidence of mumming before about 1700. Most welsh 'traditions' were invented by Augusta Hall (nee Waddington, 1802-1896). Somerset carnivals derive not from medieval superstitions but from protestant commemoration of the thwarting of Guy Fawkes in 1605. Firing guns into orchards cannot pre-date firearms. Costumes made of shredded newsprint cannot predate newspapers.



Something for local history people to explore? A first step might be to draw up a comparative table of places, dates of performance, plots, characters, and lines.

QUOTE

How these curiosities would be quite forgot, did not such idle fellows as I am put them down. John Aubrey (1626–1697), *Lives of eminent men*.

EVENTS DIARY

Events notified to ALHA's website manager are listed below and on the ALHA website. If you want your event to be listed, please make sure that you send details or a copy of your programme to Bob Lawrence, contact details on page 1 top right.

Venues: Please let us know if any of these is no longer correct

Avon Gardens Trust: 01275 371398; **Visits** Non Members welcome Booking Essential: 01275 371398
Avonmouth Genealogy Group 7 pm Community Centre, Avonmouth Road, Bristol Mrs F J Andrews 0117 982 3435
Banwell Archaeological Society 7.30 Village Hall, Banwell 01934 632307
Bishopston, Horfield & Ashley Down LHS 7.30 Friends Meeting Ho, 300 Gloucester Rd, Horfield 0117 924 5226
Visitors £2
Bristol & Avon Archaeological Society 7.30 Clifton Cathedral, 50p, non-members £1 0117 951 9613
Bristol & Avon Family HS, Bath 7.30 BRLSI 16 Queen Square, Bath
Bristol & Avon Family HS, Bristol 7.30 BAWA Leisure Centre, Southmead Rd, Bristol
Bristol & Avon Family HS, Sodbury Vale 7.30 St Nicholas Family Centre, Chargrove, Yate BS37 4LG.
01454 882 192
Bristol & Gloucestershire AS, Bristol 7.45, Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral £1
Bristol Industrial Archaeological S Visits Details and bookings Maggie Shapland 0117 736653
Clutton History Group 8.00 Clutton Village Hall 01761 471 533 £3
Downend Local History Society 7.30 Lincombe Barn, Overndale Road, Downend, BS16 2RW
Frenchay Tuckett Society 7.30 Friends Meeting House, Beckspool Rd, Frenchay £2 0117 957 0942
Harptrees History Society 7.30 West Harptree Village Hall 01761 221 758 £2.50 **Visits** £3: 01761 221941
History of Bath Research Group 7.30 St Mary's Bathwick Church Hall 01225 859 427 (£2)
Kingswood History Society 7.30 Park Centre Room 4, High St, Kingswood 0117 983 4692 £2.50
Knowle & Totterdown LHS 7.30 Redcatch Community Centre, Redcatch Road 0117 977 5512
Marshfield & District LHS 7.30 Church Hall Marshfield £2 01225-891977
Nailsea & District LHS 7.30 Nailsea School non members £2 01275 463479
Olveston Parish HS 7.30 Methodist Church, The Street, Olveston 01454 202011 £2
Paulton History Group 7.30 Wesley Hall, Park Rd, Paulton 01761 412051 £2
Regional History Centre (UWE) Seminar 18:00 - 19:30 M Shed, Princes Wharf, Wapping Road, Bristol, Free
Stoke Bishop History Group 7.30 Stoke Bishop Village Hall BS9 1EX 0117 968 6010 Visitors £3
Weston-super-Mare Archaeological & NHS 7.00 for 7.30 Victoria Methodist Church Hall, Station Road, Weston-super-Mare. 01934 620 785 £2.00
Whitchurch LHS 7.30 Whitchurch United Reformed Church Visitors £3 01275 830 869
Winscombe & Sandford LH & AS 7.30 Community Centre, Sandford Road, Winscombe
Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust The barn is by the church, in Church Lane, Winterbourne 01454 775 008
Yatton LHS 8.00 Yatton Methodist Hall 01934 838 801