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**AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

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### ALHA ITEMS

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS 2020-2021

Many thanks to all who have paid this year's subscriptions, and a double thank you to those who, deliberately or inadvertently, have paid twice or added something extra and have asked ALHA to treat it as a donation.

The committee has not met since the last update, owing to the coronavirus restrictions, but offers some thoughts below on whether, and if so, how, local groups and societies might consider emerging from lockdown.

## EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN

One elementary lesson from the work of our area's public health pioneers like William Budd is that a simple and obvious way to stop an infectious disease spreading is to reduce contact between people, especially between those known to carry the virus and those who have not had it. As the government eases restrictions on movement and gatherings, we ought to expect that that will be a principle guiding decisions on which activities or which sectors of the community should be allowed to return to what was normal before lockdown.

The standard activity of the average local history group or society in our area is a meeting, usually in public premises, where a speaker gives a talk. The occasion may be accompanied by refreshments, but will always involve people socialising, gossiping, washing up and so on. There may be a sale or a raffle. All these activities involve close contact, especially where attenders are greeted or checked in, attenders sit next to each other, and the speaker, who may be trying to be heard at the back of a hall, faces them.

It would not be realistic to expect the government to put meetings of local history groups and societies towards the front of the queue for being released from lockdown. Unlike cafes, pubs, hairdressers, nail bars, holiday accommodation and commercial sport and exercise venues, local history groups add little to the gross national product, so the government is not likely to give them any priority. From a more humane point of view, the average age of members, and their propensity to have other medical conditions, puts local history people at higher than average risk. So it is not surprising that amongst ALHA committee members, some are looking for ways of seeing how groups and societies might resume activities, whereas others urge caution. No one wants to add to the body count.

Many local history groups and societies hold meetings and arrange talks in community premises that are hired by several different sorts of users. A village hall or a community centre could host a playgroup followed by slimmers followed by knitters followed by the Women's Institute or Townswomen's Guild followed by keep fitters followed by a local history group. The government has issued guidance which may be relevant to some such venues: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>. It says,

'People meeting in a club or group context at a community centre should be encouraged to socially distance from anyone they do not live with or who is not in their support bubble.

In general, people are being advised to only:

- meet indoors in groups of up to 2 households
- meet outdoors in a group of no more than 2 households (including your support bubble) or in a group of up to 6 people from different households.

Community facilities should therefore not facilitate large gatherings or celebrations.'

Whilst one of the more distasteful aspects of the lockdown has been the special pleading, greed, self-centredness, irresponsibility and lack of social conscience of commercial, sporting and religious interests demanding exemption from distancing, one of the more positive aspects has been the way in which other groups, from hospitals to supermarkets, from bus operators to public libraries, and from care homes to greengrocers, have thought up practical ways of reducing the risk of transmission while still operating a service to the public. Is there anything in any of those measures that local history groups could consider adopting or adapting in order to bring forward the prohibitions on gatherings, or getting round the prohibitions by using other methods?

One expedient used by some groups, and by organisations such as Bristol City Museum, the British Library and The National Archives is to put a talk online using an

application such as *Zoom*. A disadvantage will be that not all members of a group will be online, and of those that are, not all may be confident about using an unfamiliar medium. But if you disable yourself by choosing not to use a social facility, you cannot reasonably complain about not receiving what that facility offers. If your group is thinking of using *Zoom*, there is advice from Berkshire Family History Society at <https://berksfhs.org/zoom-meeting-instructions/>.

Another way might be to record a talk on compact disc or tape and circulate it among the group. If that is considered to risk transmitting infection, can we learn from measures public libraries have been adopting since some of them re-opened?

Personal protection equipment in the form of a transparent visor are worn by medical and social care people and those delivering money to banks, but there seems no reason in principle why a speaker could not wear a visor while delivering a talk, which ought to protect the front row of the audience from droplets and aerosols carrying the virus of the week. Or the risk could be reduced by attenders not sitting in the front few rows. If a visor makes it difficult for people to hear, groups might consider asking the speaker to wear an amplifier of the sort that many groups and societies routinely ask speakers to use. Putting the speaker behind a perspex screen might not help, but it would be cheap and simple, as well as a good use of lockdown time, to knock one up to protect whoever takes the gate money.

Shops encourage physical distancing by devices like one-way systems, queuing, markers on the floor, bouncers at the entrance, and so on. It is difficult to see how such measures could apply to a social gathering, but if the venue is large enough, some physical distancing could be achieved by how the chairs are placed. If wedding venues are permitted to operate with up to 30 people present, there seems no reason in principle why a local history group could not function similarly. If the venue has limited space, one response could be to limit the number of attenders. Organisers of coach trips and visits to historic buildings will be used to handling bookings and keeping the numbers within the capacity set by the coach proprietor or the venue. If a talk is overbooked, it can be repeated.

Some museums and galleries, including the National Gallery and some National Trust properties, control the flow of attenders by issuing timed tickets, and in the case of the Holburne museum at **Bath**, by channelling visitors into a one-way system like Ikea. It is difficult to see how that could usefully be applied to local history group meetings, but it could work for an exhibition or display of local history or archaeology material or a book sale. More ideas? Or is caution to be the watchword? It seems likely that what will determine whether local history groups resume their activities will not be whatever the government advises or encourages (assuming it is understandable and coherent, which the guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities> is not), but what risks individual organisers and attenders are prepared to take.

## EVENTS AND SOURCES

### SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AT HOME

For information about online resources for local history in **South Gloucestershire**, see <https://heritage-hub.gloucestershire.gov.uk/summer-2020/south-gloucestershire/at-home>

### MUSEUMS REOPENING

**Holburne Museum, Bath**, reopened 5 July 2020 with a one-way system: <https://www.holburne.org/>.

## Aerospace Bristol

will re-open on **Saturday 1 August 2020**. The museum will then be open **Wednesday to Sunday from 10am to 4pm**. Tickets are available to [book now](#) at [aerospacebristol.org](http://aerospacebristol.org). All visits must be booked in advance and numbers are strictly limited to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. Aerospace Bristol has been certified by *Visit Britain* as 'Good to go'. Measures to keep visitors safe are [here](#).

**Frenchay Village Museum** are offering a free series of social distanced free walking tours around Frenchay, booking essential. See the museum Facebook page.



**Avon Valley Railway** buffet at **Bitton** is open **every day between 10am and 3pm** offering a range of snacks and refreshments. Inside seating remains closed but distanced picnic benches outside are available. The Corona Survival Fund is at £14,000. If you wish to donate, you can do so at <https://bit.ly/2J1zNOD>.

**Bristol City Council museums** remain closed, but **MShed's** café is open **Thursdays to Sundays noon to 9pm**: <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/opening-times/>. There is a survey about reopening at [https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/survey-taken/?sm=SntSQM1Eqt53NU15fqWrZiWv\\_2FD81q2M6LDeuA8cjZF\\_2FB8g00NTJFsfclQqh0LtDoOH4IhZRS1SzsAAY7fRh7NQTCzBbhYY\\_2BL0Oi54bIMTg\\_3D](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/survey-taken/?sm=SntSQM1Eqt53NU15fqWrZiWv_2FD81q2M6LDeuA8cjZF_2FB8g00NTJFsfclQqh0LtDoOH4IhZRS1SzsAAY7fRh7NQTCzBbhYY_2BL0Oi54bIMTg_3D).

## LIBRARIES REOPENING

**The British Library** reopened 22 July 2020 for existing readers: [https://www.bl.uk/whats-on?utm\\_campaign=75808\\_Phase1AnnouncementMktgAll\\_Reopening\\_20200701&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=The%20British%20Library&dm\\_i=5JXV,1MHS,6VGS,62A7,1#](https://www.bl.uk/whats-on?utm_campaign=75808_Phase1AnnouncementMktgAll_Reopening_20200701&utm_medium=email&utm_source=The%20British%20Library&dm_i=5JXV,1MHS,6VGS,62A7,1#) for opening hours and other information. Booking required.

**Bristol City Council** is opening libraries for different purposes and subject to various conditions from various dates: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/coronavirus-library-information>. **Central, Henbury, Fishponds and Stockwood** have limited opening. All libraries are closed 31 August.

Some **South Gloucestershire Council** libraries reopened 6 July 2020 but only with booked appointments: <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/libraries/changes-to-library-services-during-covid19/>

In Bath & NE Somerset, **Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton** libraries reopened 6 July 2020, from 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, subject to restrictions, including no browsing: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/library-and-information-services>.

## ARCHIVES REOPENING

**The National Archives** at Kew reopened 21 July 2020, with a booking system: [https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/coronavirus-update/?utm\\_source=emailmarketing&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=reopening\\_announcement&utm\\_content=2020-07-06](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/coronavirus-update/?utm_source=emailmarketing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=reopening_announcement&utm_content=2020-07-06).

**Bristol Archives** remains closed and will not reopen until **Tuesday 8 September 2020**, provisionally: <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives/opening-times/>

**Somerset Heritage Centre** opens 4 August 2020 Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays only; appointments must be booked and documents ordered in advance. Numbers are limited to 6 at a time, and the sessions are 10am to 1 pm and 2 to 4.30 only. There are other conditions: <https://swheritage.org.uk/archives-reopening-information/>.

**Gloucestershire Heritage Hub** plans to open 4 August 2020, but only with prior booking, with numbers restricted (12 research spaces, 2 for microfilm users), and subject to conditions. <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/>

**Bath Archives** remains closed until further notice: <https://www.batharchives.co.uk/opening-hours>. Bath Record Office, Guildhall, High Street, Bath, BA1 5AW, Email: archives@bathnes.gov.uk, 01225 477421.

**Brunel institute** is now open Tuesdays to Fridays and the first two Saturdays of the month, 10.30 to 4.30. Identification required. <https://www.ssgreatbritain.org/your-visit/opening-times> 0117 926 0680.

### **VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY – WEST LITTLETON**

John Chandler and Simon Draper are starting work on **West Littleton** for the projected volume 14 of the *VCH Gloucestershire*. More, and some sharp images, at <https://www.vchglosacademy.org/newsletters/VCHnews13.pdf>.

Draft texts for **Chipping Sodbury** and **Old Sodbury** are at <https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/gloucestershire/yate-and-district>

## **BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS NOTICED**

Larry Bennett, *Portishead radio: a friendly voice on many a dark night*, £9.99; self-published; from <https://portisheadradio.godaddysites.com/> for £14.99 including p&p. 'Portishead Radio was the world's largest long range maritime radio communications station. Originally located at a site in Devizes, Wiltshire in 1920, the transmitters were relocated to **Portishead**, near Bristol, shortly after the receiving station was moved to Highbridge, Somerset during the 1920s. The station, originally operated by the British Post Office, provided vital communication links both to and from ships at sea, using Wireless Telegraphy (Morse code), Radiotelephony, and latterly, Radiotelex. The developmental and war years are recounted in detail, as well as the rise (and eventual fall) of commercial maritime radio traffic over 80 years of service. The aeronautical and leisure markets are recalled, as well as other services provided by the station. The station closed in 2000, as satellite technology became the preferred method of ship-to-shore communication. This book gives both a technical and social history of the station; how it worked, what it was like to work there, and fondly recalls many of the stories and characters who became part of the station's charm,' it says.

Mark Steeds and Roger Ball, *From Wulfstan to Colston: severing the sinews of slavery in Bristol*, Bristol Radical History Group 2020 £14.00; <https://www.tangentbooks.co.uk/shop/new-from-wulfstan-to-colston-severing-the-sinews-of-slavery-in-bristol>

The above is drawn on by Andrew Swift in 'The tale of Thomas Clarkson,' article in 191 *The Bristol Magazine*, summer 2020, 64-65.



Jane Lilly, *Farms, folk and famous people: histories of Clevedon*. Clevedon Community Press 2020, 160 pages, 45 b/w plates, ISBN 978-0-9935666-4-6, £6.95

<https://www.clevedoncommunitybookshop.coop/clevedon-community-press/> 'Three essays feature local farms and another focuses on 1820s development in Hill Road. Folk dance and song in Clevedon is revealed as well as the work of a local pottery. The Lawn School is researched, the leader among many boarding schools here. There is a Clevedon connection with Admiral Lord Nelson's family. Eminent writer Jan Morris, and her brothers, were born here. Their mother inaugurated the Curzon cinema organ, locally made. Derek Lilly rounds the book off with tales of his childhood between the Wars, illustrated with photographs from his brother Tom,' it says.



Darryl W Bullock, 'A remarkable pioneer,' article in *The Bristol Magazine*, 191, summer 2020, 42-44. Account of the life of Laura Maud Dillon, who worked at Stoke Park hospital, **Stoke Gifford**, then at a central **Bristol** garage; underwent gender reassignment surgery; retrained, as Laurence Michael Dillon, as a physician and surgeon; was hounded by the press and fled to India, where as Lobzang Jivaka he died as a Buddhist monk.

Emma Byron and Trevor Houghton, *Steps against war: resistance to World War 1 in Bedminster*, Bristol Radical History Group 2020, £7. About **Bedminster**'s conscientious objectors, who were not just individuals but a network. More at <https://www.brh.org.uk/site/pamphleteer/steps-against-war/>.

## COMMENTARY

### Labelling the past

The words we use to talk about the past say a lot about our attitudes to it. Once upon a time anything from years long gone was 'old.' In elevated circles in the late 15th century 'ancient' was used, with implicit reference to history: the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Hebrews, Romans, Britons; later came *And did those feet in ancient time...?*, and later the Ancient Monuments Act. During the 16th century someone invented the word 'antique,' and a trader applied it to secondhand tat, importing a touch of exclusiveness: *antiquus* was one of the Latin words for 'old,' and only the wealthy and educated or their children knew much Latin. The word ending hinted at French (and so superior) cultural taste, which the common people were considered to lack, and subtly suggested knowledge of the French language, which also was the preserve of the socially superior and which most people could not buy.

For donkeys years the past was something most people were thankful to have got shot of. At some time someone decided there was money to be made from nostalgia, so we got words like 'bygone' and the toe-curling 'yesteryear.' What was old-fashioned or out of date was repackaged as 'vintage.' What were secondhand cars became 'used' or 'pre-owned.' An old banger is 'classic.' Some junk is 'pre-loved.' Secondhand domestic appliances are 'reconditioned.'

'Historic' seems to have come in quite late, towards the latter half of the eighteenth century. The full title of the National Trust, founded in 1895, was originally 'The National Trust for the Preservation of Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty.' Listed buildings are those on a list first drawn up under the Town & Country Planning Act 1947 of buildings 'of special architectural or historic interest.' Local authorities now keep a 'historic environment record.' Various government departments were merged into what is now 'Historic England.'

That is strange, first because 'Historic England' is a business name of what is in law the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England; and second, because it is a reversion to the word 'historic.' Until 2015 HE was EH, English Heritage, created under the National Heritage Act 1983. 'Heritage,' a comparative latecomer, is now the market leader. We now have heritage tomatoes, heritage carrots and heritage apples, 'heritage' being shorthand for 'what growers and supermarkets no longer find as profitable as modern varieties, even though it tastes better.' 'Heritage' is now endemic, but without the statistics, the press conferences, and guidance that can have been written only by committees. 'Heritage' appears in the job titles of some local authority employees, including some who have responsibilities (but not necessarily money) regarding museums. Economists now prate of a 'heritage industry.' This seems to be part of a recognition that the politicians, abetted by the mass media, have so devalued and disparaged culture that those concerned with the past have resorted to repackaging themselves as part of the economy. A similar shift can be seen with the arts rebranding themselves as 'creative industries.' The heritage is no longer valued in its own right, or because it informs or educates or makes us think or, as bishop Monk would have put it, elevates the mind, but because it supports tourism and so boosts the local economy (or can be passed off as substituting for the lack of it).

Other countries have a different slant. In France and Italy what the past has left is called the 'patrimony,' connoting an asset, and inheritance, that people no longer with us have passed down, and something of local civic and patriotic pride, at any rate in France. The patrimony is part of every citizen's *patria*, one's native land, and is part of one's local and national identity. In Wales the comparable of EH is Cadw, which is not an acronym but modern Welsh for 'keeping,' 'preserving,' 'protecting,' 'looking after.' So whereas in France, Italy and England traces of the past are things people inherit, passively, in Wales they are things people look after, keep, safeguard, preserve, and protect - actively.

### **Arts and crafts movement**

The Arts and Crafts movement is a label stuck on a group of late 19th and early 20th century artists and designers who extolled the merits of individual craftsmanship over mechanised mass-production: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/arts-and-crafts-an-introduction>. Some historians classify them as idealistic utopians asserting the value and freedom of individuals at a time when big businesses were enforcing conformity; or as social misfits wanting to revert to a past untainted by the industrial revolution; or as romantics with too much inherited wealth and a misguided nostalgia for the medieval; or as early socialists, but only if the workers did not use machines.

The movement got its name from the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, a group founded in London in 1887 under the artist and book illustrator Walter Crane (1845-1915), who in 1913 painted the lunettes in the stair well of the building of the Royal West of England Academy in **Cotham**, depicting painting, craftsmanship, architecture and sculpture. Early proponents of the movement were Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin. It is associated particularly with William Morris (1834-1896). They made things ranging from manually printed and hand-bound books, through handmade furniture and interior decoration (William Morris's wallpaper designs still sell), to hand-woven textiles. Whether they dispensed with servants and did everything for themselves is not recorded. Although building, apart from making bricks, had not then been industrialised, they also had ideas about architecture.

Of the nationally famous practitioners of the movement, only Crane is known to have worked in our area. The RWA commission was a one-off towards the end of his life. Nearest was Morris, who in 1861 set up a company with the pre-raphaelite artists Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and in 1890 established the Kelmscott Press, named after a manor house Morris owned in West Oxfordshire. Many of the group lived in or near London,

because that was where the money was and where the commissions came from. The National Trust now owns the Red House (Philip Webb, 1859) near Bexleyheath in Kent, the only house commissioned and lived in by Morris. It contains Arts and Crafts furniture and interior decoration, some by Morris himself.

That there are so few A&C connections with our area is all the more reason to identify A&C buildings and keep an eye on them. Four Bristol architects are associated with, or are considered to have been influenced by, the A&C movement: Edward Gabriel, Frederick Bligh Bond, Henry Dare Bryan and James Hart. Like most other architects, they also designed in many other styles, depending on the taste, if any, of the clients who commissioned and paid for them.

Gabriel designed many pubs, and gave them English vernacular touches, as in the (demolished) Garrick's Head on **Broad Quay, Bristol**; the Langton Court hotel in **St Anne's Park**; and the Cambridge Arms in Coldharbour Road, **Redland**. He also designed **Stoke Bishop** village hall; the New Inn on Gloucester Road, **Bishopston** (now Nailsea Electrical); E shed on **St Augustine's Reach**; Fuller's coach factory in St George's Road; the Bristol Royal Society for the Blind's school in **Henleaze** (these last two demolished); the telephone exchange off Baldwin Street; and the National Nautical School at **Portishead**.

Bryan designed the Western Congregational College at the top of **Cotham Road** (1905-1906). Opposite, Oatley & Lawrence's Homoeopathic Hospital (1920-1925) has elements of A&C style. Bryan also designed houses, including White House and Grange Fell (1901) in **Leigh Woods**: <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101248789-white-house-and-grange-fell-long-ashton#.XtPSszpKjIU> , and houses in Downs Park East in **Westbury Park/Henleaze**, and in **Sneyd Park**.

James Hart's work included shops in **Park Row, Bristol** and Princess Victoria Street, **Clifton**, and houses in Downs Park West, **Westbury Park/Henleaze**.

Bond is best known as architect, in various styles, of Cossham Memorial Hospital, **Kingswood**, parts of **Clifton** College, some Bristol University buildings and several



maintained schools. His A&C work can be seen in shops at Avonmouth Road, **Avonmouth**, and at **Shirehampton**. He was favoured by Philip Napier Miles (1865-1935) of **Kingsweston**, who commissioned Bond to design several buildings in **Shirehampton**, of which the public hall and library are best known. Bond at one time lived in Arundell Road,

**Weston-super-mare**. A freemason, theosophist, Rosicrucian, spiritualist, kabbalist, member of the society for psychical research and the ghost club – you get the idea – he was appointed in charge of archaeological excavations at Glastonbury abbey, where he claimed kabbalistic calculations and the ghost of a medieval monk told him where to excavate. The bishop sacked him in 1921.

Bond's beliefs in the paranormal ought not to blind us to his merits as an architect. Whether his claims about the paranormal were fraudulent or the result of crackpot gullibility, his work at **Shirehampton** is of historical significance because, as Stephen E Hunt has shown, the house designs based on garden suburb principles at Passage Leaze,



**Shirehampton** were carried on, albeit in modified forms, into later housing estates at **Sea Mills, Hillfields, Knowle West, Southmead** and so on. The A&C movement's influence in **Bristol** warrants more investigation. A list of A&C buildings, and of buildings with A&C features, would be a good start.

## Mills



Shortages of flour, especially of strong flours, and the appearance on shop shelves of unfamiliar brands during the lockdown, might prompt local history people to ponder the significance of milling in the pasts of their areas. The topic could have many aspects: where mills were; who owned them and how ownerships changed; how they were powered (water, wind at **Felton and Clifton**, animals, tide at **Kingston Seymour**) and how the technologies altered; what they milled and what were their end products (flours, ground pulses, wool, minerals, paper, timber, sharp tools, snuff, plasticine?); and how they were converted to other uses: **Priston** mill, for example, producing flours in the 1980s, now does weddings.

For centuries mills must have been economically and socially vital. Bread was such an important staple that what happened at the corn mill must have affected everybody round about. There is plenty of archaeological evidence of milling in the Britanno-roman period, as outlined by Jinx Newley on the archaeology of bread at ALHA's 2013 local history day.

Once the wool trade became important, fulling mills gained in significance and value. When steam power became available, mills processed minerals, as at **Saltford** (where water power had long been used) and **Warmley**, and tobacco at **Stapleton**.

In the medieval and early modern periods the corn mill was vital to the manorial system. It must often have stood between starving and surviving. They were numerous: Domesday records about 380 in Somerset, of which at least 55 were in north or north-east Somerset; **Stanton Drew**, then a comparatively large settlement, seems to have had eight. Gloucestershire had about 265, of which at least 25 were in **south Gloucestershire**. The mill was soon cornered by the lord of the manor: all tenants had to use the lord's mill, and to pay for it (or be fined for grinding at home or elsewhere if detected), so the mill became a property asset, which could be leased for rent, as well as a means of exercising power over tenants. Depriving a tenant of access to the mill must have been a powerful lever. Mills were investments: **Keynsham** abbey at various times owned at least half a dozen mills on the Chew. **Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society's Journal** [https://www.b-i-a-s.org.uk/BIAS\\_journal.html](https://www.b-i-a-s.org.uk/BIAS_journal.html) contains a host of articles about mills on the main rivers in our area, and has an index.



There are plenty of unanswered questions. Why did **Stanton Drew** have so many? Or did the scribe mean 'Chew Valley?' What area did **Hinton Blewett's** serve? Where was **Abbots Leigh's** mill? We know one existed, and was on the way to **Failand**, because the manor court rolls mention a dispute about the miller at **Radford** being absent and overcharging. The flow of water there seems too weak to power a mill. The late Keith Gardner suggested it could have been a horizontal mill, where the power was increased and friction reduced by narrowing the water flow and directing it on to the extremity of a

horizontal wheel, but there is no archaeological or documentary evidence for that. It seems more likely that what came to be called the abbot's fishponds at **Radford** were formed to impound water to be released as and when the mill needed to be worked. The question remains unanswered.

Commercial milling took over as the manorial system crumbled. Mills powered the industrial revolution. Coal in our area made steam power economical. Mergers and takeovers resulted in corn milling being concentrated in a few businesses. As with sugar, some of them were importers, processors and wholesalers, giving the proprietors a vertical slice of the trade, which enabled them to anticipate price changes and manipulate the market. Proctor Baker on **Redcliff** wharf and Killigrew Wait on **Welsh back** in Bristol and at Gloucester docks are examples.

With larger ships and the development of docks at **Avonmouth**, grain millers moved their silos from the city docks. Local businesses were bought out by national firms such as Spillers (who started off in Bridgwater), Rank and Associated British Foods. Milling is now done by huge multinational conglomerates, many of them American-controlled. For an example of the diverse ramifications, see <https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Spillers> or <https://www.referenceforbusiness.com/history2/70/Ranks-Hovis-McDougall-Limited.html> or <https://www.adm.com/our-company/history#:~:text=Click%20here%20to%20download%20a%20timeline%20of%20ADM%27s,Gulf%20of%20Mexico.%201967%20Entered%20barge%20freight%20business.> Worth investigating.

### **Moving centres**

Newspaper pictures of abandoned, boarded up, derelict and vandalised town centres in other parts of the country prompt thoughts about centres in our area, and how and why they have changed. Most communities have a recognisable centre. In many countries such as Italy it is a square or similar public open space, but in England it is usually a knot of shops, perhaps at a junction of main roads and, in the case of larger settlements, with some public buildings. Not all places have centres: some linear villages, not always with Long as a place-name prefix, like **Abbots Leigh, Easter Compton and Tickenham**, do not, and if **Long Ashton** has a centre, opinions might differ about where that is. Some centres are noticeably defined: as you leave **Westbury on Trym** the business premises end and the private houses begin. In other places the centre is not so well demarcated: where would you say the centre of **Clutton** is, or where the boundaries of the centre of **Chipping Sodbury** are? In **Bristol** for centuries the centre was a precise point where two main streets crossed and the high cross was erected. In **Bath**, it was a short stretch of street around the guildhall; at **Pensford**, an area close to a bridge over a river.

Centres may last a long time, but are not necessarily permanent. They move, or rather people move the activities associated with a centre, for various reasons. Streets that are too narrow to cope with traffic or get congested lead proprietors to move their businesses elsewhere; similarly if buildings no longer meet the needs of their occupiers. Could that be why Bristol's shopping centre moved from **High Street to Castle Street**? At **Nailsea**, the centre seems to have shifted as the commercial activities people undertook changed to meet market demand and the availability of resources. Modern planned shopping centres, eg at **Yate**, do not always cause the centre to shift.

Population growth may cause a centre to move, if the old centre is too small to meet the needs of more people. Or a centre may move because of external events. At **Backwell** and **Winterbourne** the centre shifted from around the church to a main road some distance away, presumably to claw back passing trade. But that did not happen at **Thornbury**, where the

High Street continues to be the local focus, though Rudder reckoned that the construction of the turnpike, now the A38, damaged the town's trade.

Transport changes do not always cause a centre to move. The coming of the railway did not shift the centres of **Wickwar, Thornbury, Wrington or Radstock**: what shifted was businesses or facilities such as a livestock market, but the rest of the community's commercial and civic activity stayed put. IKB's locating Bristol's station at **Temple Meads** did not cause **Bristol**'s centre to migrate there: only the cattle market, which came from St Thomas, and later the mail sorting centre. Until the closing years of the 19th century, in Bristol what is now called The Centre was just a junction of main roads, a river crossing with a bottleneck bridge or two. Flat, and at the meeting of radial roads, it was a convenient place for George White to site his tram hub, and the name has stuck.

In an ancient settlement in our area we might expect the church to have been the focus of the early community, and for a centre to cluster round it. That does not seem to have been the case at **Thornbury, Abbots Leigh or Long Ashton**, where the church is at one end of the settlement, or at **Tickenham**, where the church was built on higher ground away from the houses which fringed the edge of the flood plain.

In some places the moving of a centre seems hard to explain. Why did **Hawkesbury** not grow, whereas **Hawkesbury Upton** did? Why did **Langridge**, apart from its now disused and derelict church, almost disappear altogether? Worth further enquiry.

### **A rose by any other name? Family names and titles in Bristol history**

*John Stevens writes:* Teaching nineteenth century political history to an adult education class, I recommended those who might find "doorstop" lives daunting to have recourse to the generally sound accounts in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB). Students were somewhat surprised to learn that the third Viscount Palmerston (family name Temple) is not to be found under the letter P, nor the third Marquess of Salisbury (family name Gascoyne-Cecil) under S.

Some will find the growing emphasis on family names happily modern and democratic. Others, however, will see it as an example of airbrushing history; because titles, particularly hereditary titles, mean little to us, we discount their importance to earlier generations and in the process demolish the landmarks by which past schoolchildren and lovers of history have navigated their way around the past. It can also be confusing; try referring to a prominent Tudor figure as "Howard" – which Howard do you mean? References to Earls of Norfolk, Suffolk and Surrey are a good deal more helpful. It does not, of course, do to be too dogmatic; few, for example, would think of Sir Anthony Eden as first Earl of Avon. Then there are those for whom family name and title are equally known; William Pitt the Elder or the first Earl of Chatham? Yer pays yer money and yer takes yer choice.

Some prominent local figures present little problem. The Hon. Henry Berkeley, Whig MP for Bristol 1837-70 and tireless advocate of the secret ballot, was a son of the fifth Earl Berkeley, as were his brothers the Hons. Grantley and Granville Berkeley, both of whom sat for Gloucestershire seats. Their kinsman of the previous century, the colonial governor Norborne Berkeley, on the other hand, took the title Lord Botetort (the editor will know how this is pronounced).

Historians of the 1930s will recall Sir Thomas Inskip, barrister, evangelical churchman and scion of a **Bristol** legal family, as Minister for Co-ordination of Defence under Neville Chamberlain (an appointment famously compared by Winston Churchill to Caligula making his horse a Consul). To lawyers, however, his greatest fame came later, as Viscount Caldecote, under which title he was the only man to date to serve both as Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice. An earlier Lord Chancellor, Richard Bethell, born in

Bradford on Avon to a Bristolian father, became Lord Westbury. He had much to do with the first of many Acts dealing with Matrimonial Causes (1857) and with Land Registration (1862) and his *bon mots* were likened by some to those of Canon Sydney Smith.

Following his father's death in 1960, the second Viscount Stansgate fought a successful battle to disclaim his title and became Anthony Wedgwood Benn and later, as he moved leftwards, simply Tony Benn. The Conservative press periodically amused readers by reminding them of his earlier designation.



Some kept things simple. Benn's Labour colleague Michael Cocks became Baron Cocks of **Hartcliffe**. Lastly, Field Marshal "Bill" Slim, who led the Eighth Army in Burma, chose to become Viscount Slim of **Bishopston**, a tribute to his home district in a City which has, to its shame, so far failed to give him visible public honour.

### Where was the Frome?

It is well known that what is now **St Augustine's Reach in Bristol** is not on the line of the original course of the Frome. The present channel was dug in the 1240s when Henry III ordered the men of **Redcliff** to help with the digging. So what route did the Frome take before it was diverted?

For years the assumption was that the river skirted the city wall more or less along the line of what later became Baldwin Street, flowing into the Avon just below Bristol Bridge. A later proposal put the course of the river further south, along what later became King Street, entering the Avon near the site of the later Llandoger Trow.

The latest theory, based on an archaeological study of alluvial deposits, is that the Frome did not turn left but bore south-westwards across **Canons' Marsh**, and joined the Avon south of where the Lloyds Bank building now is. There is an explanation and maps in Allan Insole and Bob Jones's chapter 2 in the latter's *Bristol: a worshipful town and famous city – an archaeological assessment* (Oxbow) 2018, which includes references to the technical papers. The proposition is a theory, not proven fact, but it is based on empirical evidence.

If the surmise is correct, some local history implications come to mind:

1. Should we revise narratives of the medieval topography of the area between Baldwin Street and Queen Square? It would be difficult to answer with confidence until redevelopment allows further archaeological investigation.
2. The theory would explain why St Augustine's abbey collaborated in the digging of the Reach: not only did the project give Billeswick Enterprises direct access to deep water quays (and soft mud), but once the backfill had settled on the line of the old river bed, the abbey gained more pasture land, perhaps a bit squelchy, but close to the abbey and at no cost.
3. Alluvial and coastal deposits occur elsewhere in our area, which has an unusually high tide range. Could the archaeological method applied at **Canons' Marsh** yield information in other places along the coast or near the banks of the Avon and the Yeo where sedimentary deposits must have occurred?

### QUOTE

To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit.

William Blake, writing in the margin of a book by Joshua Reynolds.

## CAN YOU HELP?

### **Isolation hospital, Kingswood/Warmley**

*Sue Hardiman asks:* I don't know if you might be able to help with something I've been looking into lately? I saw on an old OS map of **Kingswood/Siston** that there was an "Isolation Hospital" on Tennis Court Road during the early part of the 20th century. No sign of it now – the site is occupied by the Made for Ever youth centre - and I cannot find anything about it online. Have you heard of it or know anyone who might? [hrdmnssn23@gmail.com](mailto:hrdmnssn23@gmail.com)