



## AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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### ALHA ITEMS

#### ALHA LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2019 – GETTING ABOUT

Preparations are now well in hand for ALHA's 2019 local history day will be **transport**, broadly interpreted, under the title *Getting About*. **Thornbury Leisure Centre, Saturday 27 April 2019. A flyer with booking from accompanys this update.**

#### PETER WRIGHT

*Trevor Bowen of Nailsea & District LHS writes:* It is with a sense of loss that we report the death of Peter Wright, Committee Member of **Nailsea & District Local History Society** for 35 years, serving as Secretary and then as Editor of '*Pennant*' (the twice yearly journal which ran to 50 issues). During this time, and latterly as Publications Advisor, Peter wrote a number of books and is best remembered for those that recorded **Nailsea** and surrounding villages during both World Wars, the evacuees and 'the fallen'. Fielding local history enquiries on the website, he invariably went the 'extra mile' in supplying information or on occasion meeting up with visitors researching their **Nailsea** connections. Without his constant flow of suggestions and promptings, N&DHS acknowledges that it might not be in the strong position it is today, 43 years on.

## ITEMS FOR MEMBER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

### WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOUR LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY SUCCESSFUL?

*At a recent **Hanham Local History Society** meeting ALHA trustee Veronica Bowerman asked what made the Society so successful. Here is the subsequent feedback kindly provided by their Secretary, Roy Crew, which VB offers in the hope that it may help other societies if they are looking for ideas to stimulate membership.*

‘Hanham Local History Society <http://hanhamhistory.blogspot.com/> was started in 1987. One of the main drivers was that the names of the WW2 people that were lost were not on our war memorial. The early members of our society had the names added and also produced several publications, the main one being in 1988 *Hanham our Home (1920-1940)* which is now out of print.

‘The society flourished for a number of years but with people getting older by about 2005 when I joined there were only about eight people at the meetings.

‘Because numbers were small, we decided to stimulate interest by having a public *Hanham History* slide show. I advertised the show in the free press and local notice boards etc. It must have worked because we had some 300 people turn up! We had to turn some away and re-run the show several weeks later.

‘It was soon after the show that our chairman, Roger Windsor, joined the society and the membership slowly grew and has been stable for about five years. Our average meeting attendance is about 50, but we have had as many as 67. We charge ourselves £1.50 subs, this covers the hire of the room, speakers, catering and admin expenses.

‘We meet on the second and third Wednesdays of the month, exceptions being, June-August when it’s once a month. In December the only meeting is our Christmas meal and one meeting in January our AGM.

‘Every other meeting, we have guest speaker; other meetings include films (often those produced by 1st Take <https://www.1st-take.com/> who produce history DVDs and are based in Yate), talks mainly by Roger, slide shows, and each year we usually have a history quiz and a “show and tell”. In September we have a local trip out, or a history walk around the area.

‘All of our members are retired. We have considered changing to evening meetings but many would be reluctant to attend in dark winter months. Our speakers are selected mainly from the ALHA booklet, but we also get recommendations and suggestions from others. Our member responsible for choosing the speakers does an excellent job and manages to satisfy most people.

‘We do not have trustees or hold committee meetings. Roger and myself get together to sort the programme. We have regular help from a fantastic support team, there are a group of ladies that look after the catering, an excellent minute taker, and others that help in many ways. One of our members is a Latin scholar who can read and translate old documents. However, a large number of our members do not play any active role, but just want to come along and be entertained, meet people and have tea or coffee and a biscuit.

‘Each year we try and complete a project. In 2018 we raised money to replace the broken gravestone of our local hero John Chiddy. We held a dedication service around the stone, bringing together 13 Chiddy descendants.

‘I hope these few jottings may interest and be of use to other societies.’

Note from ALHA: We hope this article will promote discussion from other Member Societies. We look forward to hearing from you if you would like to comment.

## INSURANCES FOR LOCAL HISTORY GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

*The treasurer writes:* From an insurance point of view, local history groups and societies are low risk. Attenders are not likely to suffer injury, loss or damage from sitting listening to (or sleeping through) a talk, drinking tea, or visiting sites of archaeological or historic interest. For most groups the obvious risks will be of scalding by spilt hot water; electric shock from faulty display equipment; injury from tripping over electric leads; and loss of books and papers through fire, damp or theft.

Most groups reduce these risks by common sense precautions: handling hot water carefully; regularly checking electrical equipment for worn insulation and loose connections; laying mats over electric cables crossing the floor; arranging secure storage; engaging only known or reputable bus companies; and doing simple risk assessments before visits or field work. These are not matters of health and safety paranoia but basic common sense. Unless a group occupies premises, it will not be exposed to occupier's liability. Now that smoking is outlawed in public buildings, the risk of fire and associated injury is greatly reduced.

Even so, it makes sense to insure against what residual legal liabilities remain, and against the unknown unknowns, especially if insurance can be got cheaply from insurers who recognise local history groups as low risk rather than a gullible opportunity. One such policy comes with membership of the British Association for Local History. Details of the cover are at <https://www.balh.org.uk/membership/balh-insurance-for-local-societies> . The cost is £75 a year for public liability cover, and that includes BALH's quarterly *Local History News* and the *Local Historian*, which are good sources of ideas. ALHA, and some of the larger societies that are members of ALHA, have been so insured for many years. ALHA has never had to make a claim, but the existence of the cover has given reassurance to trustees and protection against personal liability. Recommended.

## EVENTS AND SOURCES

### SOUTH WALES AND WEST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE 2019

ALHA member **Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society** will be hosting this event on **Saturday 6 April 2019 at Saltford Hall, Wedmore Road, Saltford BS31 3BY**, registration opening at 9.15am. £20 per delegate, to include lunch and hot drinks. Speakers include Geoff Wallis of the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust: *'In Circles: Restoration Work on Brunel's Swivel Bridge at the Bristol Docks'*; Eric Lyons, of Risca Industrial History Museum: *'The Black Vein Explosion of 1860 and the Miners' Graveyard'*, and BIAS member Eric Miles of the Avon Valley Railway: *'Sentinel - The Rise and Restoration of a steam shunter from Keynsham's Somerdale Works.'* There is an option of concluding the day with a visit, either to **Saltford Brass Mill** (subject to weather; numbers limited); **Kingswood Museum**, for which there will be a small admission charge; the **Avon Valley Railway**; or industrial **Keynsham** (a walking tour led by Mike Bone.) **Full details of the day's schedule are included in the booking form attached.**

### THE LEGACY OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE PROJECT

*Jane Marley writes:* The HLF funded project *Inspiring Women* has put its project resources on the South Gloucestershire Council website: <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/inspiring-women-legacy-first-world-war-south-gloucestershire/> On the web site you can find the following useful learning materials:

- a listing of almost 50 nominated South Gloucestershire women

- a searchable listing of almost 50 nominated South Gloucestershire women
- a presentation of almost 50 inspiring women you can download and use to teach/share with your group with including useful facts about pertinent legislation and women's achievements
- learning links to other resources
- South Gloucestershire libraries recommended reading lists for adults and young people
- a learning resources: Women's Equality game for age 11+ and adults
- a schedule for the exhibition touring libraries available for booking after 22.7.2019

### **GLOUCESTERSHIRE HERITAGE HUB**

Congratulations to Heather Forbes and her team on completion of the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub project, opened by the princess royal 8 January 2019. Pictures of everyone happy and smiling at <https://heritage-hub.gloucestershire.gov.uk/winter-201819>.

### **NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND LOCAL MAPS**

Readers will be familiar with the map bases used in *Know Your Place*. Another source of maps is the **National Library of Scotland**, whose map images include English ones. The NLS site <https://maps.nls.uk/> provides several features that KYP does not, such as 1:10560 (6in to the mile) OS mapping from the 1950s and 1960s, aerial photography, geo-referenced maps, and an index of all the place names on the 1900 6in to the mile OS maps. The NLS recently posted on its website nearly 9000 English and Welsh 6in maps dating from the 1950s and 1960s, with a searchable map grid. For **Wraxall**, for example, go to <https://maps.nls.uk/view/189241488>.

The NLS is consulting the public on what it should plan to make available over the next 5 years. The survey is at <https://survey.progressivepartnership.co.uk/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=154685719286>.

### **BRISTOL ARCHIVES**

EXHIBITION: [Ten Centuries of Records](#) until **24 May 2019**.

### **BOOKS ETC NOTICED**

Not published yet, but Peter Malpass has a book coming out soon on **Victorian Bristol**.

Stephen Dowle, *Bristol: a portrait 1970-82*, Amberley 2019, £15.99 pb, 130 illustrations. This is a reissue of a book by the same author and with the same title published in 2016. Dr Harlow reviewed it in *ALHA Newsletter* 148.

### **COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES**

#### **Cordeux's**

*Eileen Cole writes:* 'I was most interested to see Cordeux's coach on the flyer [for ALHA's local history day 2019] sent on by the **Clevedon Civic Society**, as my great grandfather was John Cordeux (photo), who founded this store. He ran a



private coach. My mother described being taken to her grandfather's shop in **Park Street, Bristol**, when she was a small girl (she was born in 1898) to buy hair ribbons, and getting a shiny farthing – at the end of each day's trading, all the change was taken to the bank, and replaced by new coinage – she always remembered looking at it in awe, as it looked just like a half-sovereign! Her story was that when her grandfather grew up, his father gave him 10 sovereigns to start him off in business. He bought haberdashery, and traded so well that he was able to return the money in time to let his younger brother have it. William also did well (as a jeweller) and eventually he had a large shop at the top of Park Street.'

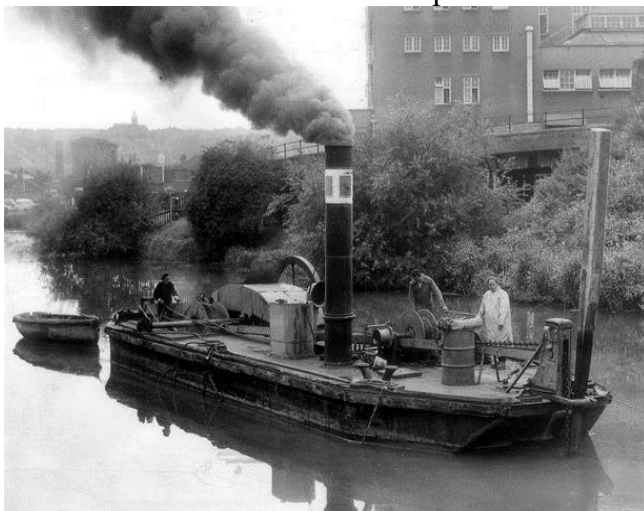
### **Bristol Drag Boat, Brunel's Lesser Vessel**

*Mike Prescott of Dorset Industrial Archaeological Society writes:* This little vessel could trace its design lineage back to Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It was built by The Bristol Iron Foundry, Cheese Lane, **Redcliffe, Bristol** in 1843 to clear mud from the base of the quay walls of the **Bristol Floating Harbour**, and operated from the mid 19th century onwards.

The Drag Boat, or DB6 as it was latterly known, was in constant use well into the late 1950s. Its sole purpose was to scrape or drag accumulated mud away from the base of the stone quay walls out towards the middle of the dock where it could be either scoured away on the outgoing tide or mechanically removed by the port's dredger fleet and dumped out in the Bristol Channel.

This coal fired, steam driven vessel relied on wrought iron chains and steel hawsers to move it around the dock. The main hull was iron, resembling a large, double ended punt, and accommodated the main machinery space. Steam was supplied from a single horizontal coal fired boiler, with smoke passing up a single vertical funnel. The boiler was set slightly askew within the hull to counterbalance the weight of the main engine.

Steam raised powered a single cylinder double acting, diagonally inclined steam engine, mounted within the hull on the port side towards the stern. Exhaust steam from the engine



was passed into the boiler flue and up the funnel, giving the boat a distinctive pulsing roar when in motion.

The engine's crankshaft carried a large diameter cast iron rimmed open spoked flywheel, the upper half of which projected well above the stern deck casing, again on the port side. From the same shaft and through a series of gears, power was transmitted to two separately controlled main chain winding drums. One of these was to drag the boat back out into the mainstream by a chain attached to the opposite bank or quay, and the other to

raise and lower the substantial pole mounted iron drag blade.

With a crew of three (driver, engine man/stoker and deckhand), the boat was driven or controlled by the driver in the open stern well. With the blade in the raised position the vessel's bow would be run up against the quay wall by means of a single steel wire hawser or bowline from the deck-mounted 2 cylinder steam winch.

When in position, the pole-mounted drag blade would be released and dropped into the mud beneath. When settled, the main engine and astern chain drum would be engaged, and the

vessel, together with the spoil behind the blade, was pulled away from the base of the quay and out into the mainstream. The blade was drawn by two fixed chains shackled to each end of the blade plate and attached amidships at deck level on each side of the hull. The lengths of these chains were manually set to suit the depth being dredged.

When sufficiently away from the wall, the blade was raised, again by the main engine via a chain which passed along a raised deck channel to the bow sheaves in the central wooden stem post, whereupon the deck winch pulled the vessel back to the quay wall and the process was then repeated again. The stern chain and bowline anchorages were progressively moved along the dockside by a crewman, and secured to mooring posts and bollards so as to position the bow and blade above the next area to be dredged or dragged.

The drag boat was occasionally deployed in other areas of the dock complex, but was generally engaged in the lower harbour, clearing the perimeter of the Cumberland Basin and the approaches to the main entrance locks in the river Avon. The BD6 ceased operation in the early 1960s, but the engine together with other main components were saved. The substantial iron drag blade and the two half sections of the large diameter flywheel can be seen today on the quay alongside the *SS Great Britain* in the **Albion Dock in Bristol**. There is a detailed scale model of this vessel currently on public display at the **Underfall Yard at Hotwells** in Bristol.

### Reflections on the turnaround in France

*Jilly Jones writes:* It may not be necessary to inform the local history reader that the recent disorders in France have not been confined to the capital. According to some reports, the



unrest started in rural areas, where people who depend on cars, vans and lorries for day to day living, livelihood and survival, objected to rises in the price of fuels resulting from increases in duties imposed by government. Those increases were partly to curb imports and also to help reduce global warming. People from rural areas attended the earlier demonstrations in Paris, because that is where the government, the money and the media are.

Nowadays we tend to associate violent public protest with urban areas: **Bristol, St Paul's, Brixton, Toxteth, Tottenham, Soweto** and so on. But there has been plenty of popular disorder in the countryside too, even in early modern times. In our area some of it was vented against **St Augustine's abbey**, an early example of a business franchise. In 1310 villagers in **Abbots Leigh**, a manor held by the abbey, helped the sheriff of Somerset's officers break into a granary to enable corn to be threshed. It is inferred that abbot Knowle was trying to drive up the price of corn in order to help fund his building programme. In 1325 the villagers rioted. In 1452 men from abbey properties in **south Gloucestershire and north Somerset** broke into abbot Sutton's **Bristol** house and attacked him. The reasons are not known, but when for years on end the only thing that stood between most people and starvation was the outcome of the harvest, food, or the lack of it, would be a good bet, rather than disapproval of the abbot's latest theological exposition. Lack of food may have been behind riots in **Nailsea** in 1806.

On two occasions we might have expected violent protest in rural parts of our area, but it did not happen. One occasion was during the Swing riots in 1830, when agricultural labourers across the southern counties of England wrecked newly installed threshing machines and threatened farmers against introducing them. Why were there no Swing riots in our area? They occurred in Gloucestershire, but no further south than Tetbury. One possibility is that there were riots, but traces of them have not survived: unlikely, given the number of local newspapers and estate and judicial records. Another explanation might be that local farmers did not introduce machinery, whether because they had not heard about it,

could not afford it, did not understand it, preferred to stick to traditional methods, heeded what Captain Swing had done elsewhere and decided not to provoke him, or were too spaced out on the local product to care.

Another question is why there were no violent protests in our area during the agricultural depression that started in the 1870s. Were the local effects so gradual that people did not realise what was happening? Did farm workers move elsewhere to get work in order to survive? Did they adapt, as later in the early 20th century village blacksmiths shifted into vehicle maintenance, and horse and fodder dealers turned to selling petrol? Or was the agricultural depression only a fall in farm rents which hurt the pockets of landowners but not the bellies of labourers who saw no reason to riot against cheap imported foodstuffs? Or had the established church's teaching – Know Your Place, and Stay There – reinforced by Hannah More's popular tracts, cowed ordinary people into submissive deferential acceptance?

## Shopping

Few people manage to be self-sufficient. For day to day survival most of us, and our predecessors, have had to buy what we need. For most people, that has meant shopping. A history of shopping in our area ought to be popular, if only because shopping is something that most people have experienced and can claim to know something about. Investigation could start with markets: where they were, how they operated, why some survive but others have declined and most have disappeared. In towns, some markets got their own purpose-built halls (**Thornbury, Bath, Bristol, Clevedon, Midsomer Norton, Weston-super-mare, Radstock**), all of them of architectural distinction. Some towns had shopping arcades or corridors (**Bath, Bristol, Clifton**, though not as attractive or numerous as in Cardiff). They could be seen as the precursors of the modern weather-proofed shopping mall (**Cribbs Causeway**). Out-of-town supermarkets (Carrefour the first?) offered free car parking, congestion-free access and a wide range of goods under one roof. So did department stores (Cordeux's, Jolly's, Jones's, Baker & Baker). Another topic could be the village shop, contrary to popular belief a comparatively recent newcomer. Then there is the pedestrian shopping precinct: examples in our area include ones at **Thornbury, Weston super mare, Kingswood and Westbury-on-Trym**, the last named after the cinema demolished to provide its site. The others replaced older premises, many of them shops. Bristol's **Broadmead** is a special case, and not just because of size: did it replace bombed-out **Castle Street**, or was it something different? The political and social history of **Broadmead** is worth a study in itself. So would be the co-operative movement in **Bath, Bristol, Nailsea, Radstock** and elsewhere, not least because of its involvement in retailing.

Of topical interest is the decline of clusters of shops, which the media lump together as 'the high street.' Their demise was attributed first to traffic congestion, then to parking restrictions, then supermarkets, then out-of-town shopping clusters, then the discounters, and most lately the internet. Changes in shopping had many different causes. One set of reasons is to do with population growth and its distribution; in the 1960s, for example, it was said that Boots (then a chemist's) and Marks & Spencers would not open a branch unless there was a captive market of at least a certain number of people and a particular demographic. Success in retailing has often depended on local wage levels and margins of disposable income, so the local inter-reaction of retailing and employment would be worth study, particularly in places like **Weston super mare** and **Thornbury**. Shopping has also been influenced by transport. Carriers' carts, which at first brought people to and from markets, were the only form of community transport that some villages had until the arrival of the bus and the train. Many

carriers' routes terminated at markets, eg one that the Harrills ran from the Bird in Hand at **Nailsea to St Thomas's market in Bristol**. What effects did a tram system have on shopping? Some supermarkets run or subsidise bus services to their doors. Car dwellers can carry bigger shopping loads than can a pedestrian. Placing an order and having it delivered was once what only the wealthy did, then it became aspirational and a mark of social class; more lately home deliveries have helped people with disabilities, the elderly and the remote, but in the internet age they have become more popular, especially with the busy, the internet-enclaved and the lazy. Plenty to investigate.

## **Influencers**

One objectionable denizen of the sector of the advertising industry known as social media is the influencer. Influencers are paid by suppliers of goods and services, or their publicity or advertising agents, to promote sales by recommending products without disclosing that they are agents for the advertiser. The rationale is that influencers have followers who will buy what their bellwether recommends.

Influencers are not a new phenomenon. Printed newspapers and magazines have long carried advertising disguised as consumer, housekeeping or fashion advice. Special interest magazines are notorious offenders, puffing the products of those who pay to advertise in the paper. Some mutually parasitic publications mark such material as advertising features or name the sponsor: others do not. The UK Competition and Markets Authority has at last noticed: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/competition-and-markets-authority>

Influencers have not been confined to the promotion of goods and services, but not all have been paid. Many social reformers, some of whom would nowadays be called campaigners, have been influencers in the sense that they have sought to change people's behaviour or opinions, but in so acting they have not done so as paid agents for undisclosed principals. Every large-scale historic change has been the result of individuals persuading others to change their opinions or behaviour, whether in religion, international relations, domestic politics, morals or social behaviour.

In our area examples of influencers who have had impact nationwide include the religious reformers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, eg William Tyndall, who had connections with **Iron Acton** and **Aust**; George Fox and his quaker colleagues active in **Bristol** in the seventeenth century; the Wesleys and George Whitefield active in **Kingswood, Bristol** and elsewhere in the eighteenth century; Ben Tillett and Ernest Bevin in **Bristol** in the twentieth. Hannah More, based at first in **Bristol** and later in **north Somerset**, was an influencer in education, religion, morals and politics.

There must be hundreds of others, all worth local history investigation. Individual influencers of the undeceitful sort have been particularly effective in localities, so have become parts of the histories of the area in which they were active. Local histories of our area looking at individuals whose influence brought about change would be interesting and useful projects.

## **CAN YOU HELP?**

### **BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE**

*Alex Bingham writes:* The BFI is launching its new *Britain on Film* crowdsourcing platform, and we are keen to spread the word among Britain's grass roots history-lovers and film-enthusiasts. We are hoping to enlist the help of local societies and heritage organisations to get the message out there.

As part of the legacy for the BFI's *Britain on Film* project we have created a bespoke crowdsourcing platform based on films within the *Britain on Film* map on BFI Player. Linking directly from the BFI Player <http://player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film> or via <http://contribute.bfi.org.uk>,



the crowdsourcing platform will encourage people to share their unique knowledge by 'pinning' locations to the online map.

In doing so, they will improve the accuracy and depth of the geo-tagging of films within the *Britain on Film* national collection, and will enhance our understanding of the films themselves, as well as charting the evolution of our towns and cities.

At this stage, we are focusing on engaging with grass roots groups such as local history societies, local museums and local archives. The platform will be populated and moderated by its users, so we are also hoping to create an online community of people who care about archive films and their local history. Please share this information about the platform with your members, and encourage them to use to the site. We should have a 'how to' guide ready for circulation in the next few days. [alexbingham.bfi@gmail.com](mailto:alexbingham.bfi@gmail.com).