



ALHA

AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Newsletter e-update
31 May 2022

Registered charity 270930

**Material for printed Newsletter 171 by 12
noon 23 June 2022 please:**

Magazines and books to reviews editor
Hardings Cottage, Swan Lane, Winterbourne
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jonathan.harlow@uwe.ac.uk

Details of events to website manager
ALHAWebmaster@gmail.com (Please note
new email address)

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

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

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

Facebook:

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

ALHA NEWS

subscriptions
webmaster vacancy

EVENTS AND SOURCES

Yate 1952-2022 exhibition

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

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Wedgwood and abolition
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B&GAS *Transactions* 139

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CAN YOU HELP?

Penn Hill House, Bath
ALHA webmaster vacancy

QUOTE

Sylvia Plath

EVENTS LIST

is on the website

ALHA NEWS

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Many thanks to all member groups and societies and individual members who have paid their subscriptions. And an additional thank you to those who have added a donation to ALHA. Early receipt of subscriptions helps ALHA's cashflow considerably. Application forms are downloadable from the website.

NEW ALHA WEBSITE MANAGER NEEDED

Since the summer of 2021 the Webmaster team of ALHA have been beavering away with Community Sites to update and improve the ALHA website.

The revamped website was finally launched in April 2022.

If you have not yet had a chance to look at it, please do so now at

<https://www.alha.org.uk/>

With the new website now launched, ALHA needs a new manager to keep it up to date, adding details of new local history events, newsletters, new publications, and other information. The new site uses WordPress, but no previous experience is required apart from a general ability to use computers. Support and training will be given by members of the current team, who are unable to continue taking full responsibility.

If you would like to offer your help, please contact Bob Lawrence at Chairman@ALHA.org.uk for further information.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

YATE EXHIBITION

David Hardill writes: On **Friday 3 June 2022 Yate Heritage Centre** are holding a special event for the Platinum Jubilee on the Green outside the Heritage Centre. There will be entertainment throughout the day and St Mary's will provide jubilee themed lunch boxes. **In St Mary's church there will be an exhibition of Yate's transformation from 1952-2022.** This will have a collection of photographs from Yate over the various decades and information on how our town has changed. There will also be an audio-visual exhibition of TV from the 1950s until today, with clips from Muffin the Mule, Bagpuss, Peppa Pig and Number Jacks.

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Louise Ryland-Epton, 'A contrary view of workhouses: **Westbury on Trym 1800-1834**', *The Local Historian* vol 52 no.2, April 2022, 154-164.

Art that made us is a series on BBC2. It aims to show how works of art from times past have helped shape British society. Episode 5, *Consumers and conscience*, broadcast 5 May 2022, dealt with the 18th century. It contended that trade and empire funded and encouraged a

flourishing of the arts, but also roused awareness of colonialism's less savoury aspects. A short examination of Josiah Wedgwood depicted his business strategies and his later espousal of the movement for the abolition of the trade in enslaved people. From that was traced the removal of the Edward Colston statue from **Bristol's** centre, with contemporary footage. Available for a year at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0bvgvth/art-that-made-us-series-1-5-consumers-and-conscience>

Me, myself, I: artists' self-portraits is an exhibition at the Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, now impressively refurbished and reopened (café may still be under the builders). In the main hall are contemporary artists' self-portraits in various media; the side galleries show self-portraits by earlier artists from Hogarth to date. Included are the self-portraits by **Bristol's** Edward Bird [Image right, BCMAG] and Rolinda Sharples from **Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery**. Until 19 June 2022.

<https://www.rwa.org.uk/products/me-myself-i-artists-self-portraits>



Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society *Transactions* 139 (2021, published 2022, still being distributed). Includes articles on Britanno-Roman enclosures at **Winterbourne**, excavated 2018; the medieval use of the nave of St James's priory, **Bristol**; Norborne Berkeley's Lodgeside coal works near **Fishponds**; **Bristol** politics in the age of Palmerston; and puritan clergy in Elizabethan **Bristol**. There are reviews of Peter Davenport's *Roman Bath: a new history and archaeology of Aquae Sulis* (History Press 2021); of John Stevens's *The Bristol poll book for 1852* (Bristol Record Society vol. 72, 2020); Susan Scott's *Orphans, widows and guardians in medieval and early modern Bristol: the register of recognizances 1333-1594* (Bristol Record Society vol. 73, 2020); Anthea Jones's *Johannes Kip: the Gloucestershire engravings* (Hobnob Press 2021); Helen Doe's *SS Great Britain, Brunel's ship, her voyages, passengers and crew* (Amberley 2019); John Briggs's *Open to God, open for all: the history of Tyndale Baptist church, Bristol 1868-2018* (Tyndale Baptist church and the Baptist Historical Society 2018); Andrew Adonis's *Ernest Bevin, Labour's Churchill* (Biteback, 2020); and Mark Glancy's *Cary Grant, the making of a Hollywood legend* (Oxford UP 2020). A review should appear in the next ALHA Newsletter.

COMMENTARY

Shadowlands

In *Shadowlands: a journey through lost Britain* (Faber & Faber 2022) Matthew Green describes, analyses and speculates about what remains of eight human settlements that are no more. They include Skara Brae on Orkney, overwhelmed – and preserved – by wind-blown sand; Dunwich and Old Winchelsea, both now under the North Sea; and Capel Celyn in north Wales, flooded to make a reservoir to serve Liverpool.

None of the sites MG examines is in our area. Do we have similar places? The former county of Avon does not have anything comparable with Skara Brae, but there are traces of prehistoric people – people who lived long ago, that is – not least on **Mendip** where, one suspects, further sites may come to light. Whatever may have been the origin or purpose of the stones at **Stanton Drew**, and however wacky William Stukeley was in misattributing them to druids, they are evidence of human presence and activity, now lost. [Image <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/542261611368768001/>]

The British and their Roman oppressors have left traces, most spectacularly in **Bath**. Stretches of Roman roads have been identified: the Fosseway, the via Julia and so on. Lines of other routes have been conjectured, some corroborated by occasional finds. Remains of villas can be seen across our area, including **Lawrence Weston, Brislington, Keynsham, Yatton** and **Cromhall**. It is not unreasonable to guess that a villa may have existed every 15 miles or so – even closer at **Wellow** – and year by year archaeological finds hint at more.

We do not have a host of lost medieval whole villages like those in the midlands of England or Wharram Percy in Yorkshire, but at least one comparable has been identified, at



Woodwick near **Freshford**, and there are clusters of abandoned settlements of various sizes in the **North Marsh**, of which the one at **Crooks Marsh** in **Hallen** is the best known. Mick Aston thought that the model farm at **Norton Hawkfield** overlay a settlement, and there are plenty of examples of shrunken settlements, eg at **Hinton**.

There are many traces of other things, not just settlements, that no longer exist: the remains of quays at **Sea Mills, Redwick and New Passage**; religious establishments in **Bristol, Bath and Keynsham**; several railway routes such as that from **Bristol to Bath** via **Staple Hill** and **Mangotsfield, Clevedon to Yatton**, the Strawberry Line from **Yatton** through **Winscombe** to Wells; **the Somerset and Dorset**; the **Bristol & North Somerset**. Lesley Ross and her collaborators' *Before the lake* (Harptrees History Society 2004) tells what was there before Bristol Waterworks impounded the **Chew**.

It is difficult to nail the reason why 'lost' places are so fascinating. Is it the element of mystery? Or something to do with superstitious reverence for the dead? Or do they appeal to our sense of loss, of a wistful hankering after what we know cannot be recovered? The reasons must be emotional rather than rational. In one sense every place is in different ways

what MG calls a shadowland. Where I live must once have been land in its natural state; it became part of a neolithic burial site; then farmland, first as open fields, later enclosed; part of an ecclesiastical estate, then a private one; later, part of the grounds of a large house; more recently, a school playing field; now houses, with street lamps and a bus stop. Every building that now exists must have been preceded by something else. Every inch of our area has its past, its shadowlands. It's called local history.

Fairs

Fairs are a subject local history people might find interesting. Few fairs have received local historians' detailed attention. An exception is St James's fair in **Bristol**, the subject of Joe Bettey's ALHA booklet no.16 (2014), *St James's fair, Bristol, 1137-1837* (copies still available from the treasurer, £4.18 including postage). That leaves a score or more fairs in our area unexamined. In the Somerset part of what became Avon there were fairs at **Backwell, Bath, Hinton Charterhouse, Clevedon, Keynsham, Langridge, Lyncombe, Midsomer Norton, Pensford, Portbury, Ubley, West Harptree, Weston in Gordano, Wraxall and Wrington**, and just outside the area at places like **Shipham**. In south Gloucestershire there were fairs at **Almondsbury, Chipping Sodbury, Frampton Cotterell, Hawkesbury, Marshfield, Milbury Heath, Pucklechurch, Redwick, Thornbury, Tockington, Tormarton, Tortworth, Wickwar** and **Winterbourne**, and just outside our area at **Berkeley, Newport, and Wotton under edge**.

Many of those places had a market as well as a fair. Apart from St James's, which was chartered by a mesne lord, Robert Fitzroy earl of Gloucester, nearly all fairs were chartered by the monarch. A fair differed from a market in several ways. A market was held once a week, a fair once a year. A market lasted no more than a day, but a fair could last for several days (much to the annoyance of local traders who resented incomers competing). A market was local, drawing buyers and sellers from its monopoly area, which was usually about 6 miles or so in radius. A fair was larger; attracted buyers and sellers (including wholesalers) and other attenders from further afield; and offered goods not available, or not available in quantity, in local markets. That may also help explain why fairs could last for several days: for sellers, attending a fair was an investment, and substantial sales might be needed to justify the expense. Some fairs were huge, such as St Bartholomew's (at Smithfield in London), Stourbridge (Cambridgeshire), St Giles and Weyhill (Hampshire) and St Ives (Huntingdon). Scarborough fair gave its name to a traditional ballad.

We do not know when some fairs of ancient origin began, but the start date for most fairs can be got from the charters that authorised them. The original charter rolls are in the National Archives, but there is a printed catalogue, so it is not difficult to look up when a fair started. What is less easy to trace is how successful each fair was, how it changed and developed, when it started to decline, and when it ceased to be held. In the case of St James's fair, that is known, and Dr Bettey explains why, but for other fairs the best we can do is to look for mentions in archived documents, and occasional references in books. One source is the diaries, surveys and accounts written by travellers such as Celia Fiennes, John

Leland, Daniel Defoe and JB Priestley; county histories such as those by Robert Atkyns (1768), Samuel Rudder (1779) and John Collinson; and descriptions of parts of counties such as that by Rutter for **north Somerset**. Thus in the case of **Backwell**, Collinson, published 1791, noted that the market was then no longer held but the fair was still going. In the case of **Congresbury** he noted what he called the market cross (**Congresbury** did not have a chartered market) and said that the fair was still held there 14 September.

Dr Betty's booklet is a mine of information on what went on in St James's and other fairs. St James's functions included trade, settlement of debts, networking, entertainment and crime. It would be interesting to trace how other fairs developed, changed and declined.



Why in England do the old charter fairs no longer function? Why have they been replaced, if at all, by single-product trade fairs and shows privately organised? [Image <https://365bristol.com/story/2017/09/06/north-street-bristol-summer-fair-2017/5344/>] Why have trade fairs continued to be important in some countries in mainland Europe, but not here? Why have some products like aircraft, military weapons and computer equipment developed their own fairs and shows, but not others? Have agricultural societies and their shows contributed to the decline of fairs? Why has the book trade made Frankfurt the centre for its book fairs? Why does our area no longer have any? Or do they operate under other guises?

One way systems

Responses to the coronavirus have varied. They have included isolation, voluntary and compulsory; voluntary and compulsory limits and prohibitions on gatherings; restrictions on and regulation of the use of public transport; encouragement and requirement to wear masks and other forms of personal protective equipment; washing and sanitising routines; development and distribution of vaccines; and so on. Retailers, many already encouraging customers to order goods online for local delivery by van, have expanded that practice; some ceased to accept notes and coin and require payment online or by use of contactless debit or credit cards; at times of shortage some have limited the number of items a purchaser can buy at one visit; and some have imposed one-way systems in shops to reduce the likelihood of physical contact and the risk of transmission of the virus.

One way systems are not new. We are familiar with them as regards road traffic, at any rate for vehicles. One way streets seem to have started in the early years of the seventeenth century because of traffic congestion in the narrow streets of the pre-fire City of London. They do not seem to have become used in the rest of London until the early 1960s. When did they appear in our area? **Bath and Bristol** seem the most likely places. As to one-way systems in retailing, a well-known example is in Ikea stores, where customers are directed to follow a route, not to reduce congestion or for health reasons, but to expose customers to all the good on offer in the store, not just those they came to look at or buy.

One way systems were imposed at most of the sites where coronavirus vaccines were offered by or on behalf of the NHS. This use of one way systems in a medical context has a local precedent. The Eastern Dispensary (now a restaurant) in **Bath** was built by a charity to dispense medicines to poor people. It was erected in 1845 near Cleveland bridge, and was designed by the **Bath** architect Henry Edmund Goodridge. [Image Historic England]. His design of the ground floor included waiting rooms with benches laid out so as to marshal attenders into an orderly



queue, so that they moved forward one by one, and the medical practitioners' consulting and dispensing rooms had separate in and out doors. The whole layout imposed a one-way system which imposed order on what might otherwise have been a melee, and also reduced the risk of infectious patients infecting others by returning through the waiting areas. It was widely regarded as a praiseworthy innovation.

It would be interesting to find out (1) whether the system was the idea of Goodridge or of the charity's managers or benefactors; the main donor was John Ellis, who may well have influenced design; (2) whether the layout was copied from elsewhere: perhaps not,

because *The Builder* magazine regarded it as new; (3) if the layout originated in **Bath**, whether it influenced the layout of other dispensaries.

The **Bristol** Dispensary had been founded in 1775. Its records from 1893, together with those of two other **Bristol** dispensaries – Clifton and Read – are in Bristol Archives under 33041/DIS. ALHA individual member and booklet author Michael Whitfield has written about them in his *The dispensaries: healthcare for the poor before the NHS: Britain's forgotten healthcare system* (AuthorHouse UK 2016), <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2016/august/the-dispensaries.html>

CAN YOU HELP?

ALHA webmaster needed

Please see appeal under **ALHA news**, page 1 above.

Penn Hill House, Bath

Nicola Pearce writes: I wonder if you have any information about Penn Hill House? [Oldfield School sixth form centre building, Ed.] I am struggling to find anything apart from architectural information. Can you point me in the right direction? I want more interesting information



that would appeal to students – things like who lived here, weird use of house etc. I haven't got a budget so it'll have to be free information! Nic Pearce, Librarian, Oldfield School, Kelston Road, Bath BA1 9AB, 01225 423552, N.Pearce@oldfieldschool.com

QUOTE

At this wharf there are no grand landings to speak of.

Sylvia Plath, *A winter ship* (1960).

EVENTS DIARY

Events notified to ALHA's website manager are listed on the ALHA website. If you want your event to be listed, please send details or a copy of your programme to the webmaster, contact details on page 1 top left (Please note changed e-mail address). Please notify any changes of regular venue or timing.

Because of the coronavirus, events may be cancelled at short notice. Some venues are continuing to impose restrictions or requirements. Links or directions to online events open to the public appear on ALHA's website.