

ALHA



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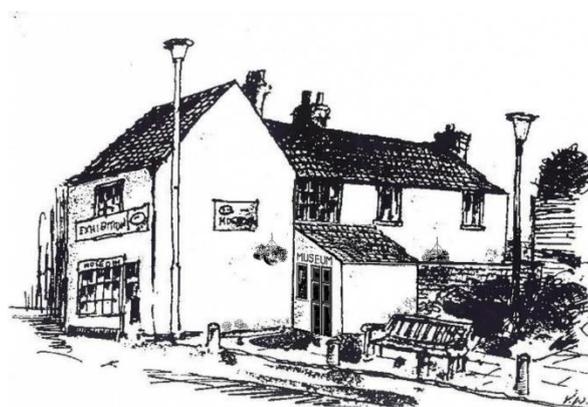
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ALHA NEWS

NEW MEMBER – BATH & BRISTOL NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Welcome to new ALHA member **Bath & Bristol Numismatic Society**, a small group interested in coins, tokens, medals and similar artefacts across many centuries, and the history, whether national or local, associated with them. The group seeks speakers for future meetings, ideally related to **Bath and Bristol** history; and offers help to ALHA members in identifying coins, tokens and medallions, including ancient pieces. Website at <https://bathandbristol-ns.org.uk> ; contact adrian@bathandbristol-ns.org.uk .

NEW WEBSITE MANAGER

Tina Lane, who designed ALHA's new website, has stood down. The committee welcomes as her successor volunteer Ruth MacRae, whose career has been in theatre management and ticketing, and has much experience of information technology applications and operational management.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

In June ALHA's committee met in person as distinct from online for the first time since the coronavirus restrictions on gatherings were introduced. A further meeting in person is planned for September, reverting to meetings online over the winter.

GRANT – HISTORIC TOWNS TRUST MAP OF BATH

The ALHA committee has accepted an application from ALHA member **History of Bath Research Group** for a grant towards its proposed map of historic **Bath**, to be published by the Historic Towns Trust. In 2019 ALHA made a grant of £1,000 towards a similar map for **Bristol**. The committee has pledged a similar amount, conditional on the rest of the money required being raised and the project proceeding to completion. A piece by John Ennor below under **Events and sources** gives more information about the proposal. A leaflet about the project and appealing for funds accompanies this newsletter.

DIRECTORY OF PRESENTERS

ALHA has sent copies of the 2022 speakers list, edited by Mike Leigh, to all those member groups and societies that have paid their subscriptions for 2022-2023. Mike has done work on the next edition, planned for early 2023, and is being helped by Jennifer Muller on design and layout, steered by the committee. Adding indexes of speakers and topics has been suggested: if you think this would be helpful, please let any of the committee know. Please also tell any member of the committee of any speaker you think ought to be added to ALHA's directory.

BOOKLETS

ALHA booklets continue to sell, albeit more slowly than before the virus restrictions. A review of Dr Jonathan Harlow's booklet on trade at the port of **Bristol** in the late 17th century is at <https://www.bgas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2022-review-Harlow-Trade2607-JS-rev.pdf> and a review of Dr Michael Whitfield's booklet on Susannah Morgan is at <https://www.bgas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Michael-Whitfield.-Susanna-Morgan.pdf>. Copies of all ALHA publications can be ordered off the ALHA website, or from the treasurer.

LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2022

The committee approved in principle revised arrangements for the 2022 local history day, now hoped to be held at **St Michael's Hall, Stoke Gifford, on Saturday 22 October 2022**. The overall topic chosen is housing, widely interpreted, and a range of possible speakers will be approached. Anyone offering a talk or presentation is invited to contact the chairman Bob Lawrence on roblawr1944@googlemail.com or Ian Chard at ian.chard@talktalk.net .

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

In the hope of encouraging more people to attend, and perhaps even to volunteer to join ALHA's executive committee or otherwise to help spread the workload, the committee hopes to arrange for ALHA's 2022 annual general meeting to be held at some time during the local history day. Formal notice is intended to be given with the end of September Newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Many thanks to all who have paid their subscriptions for 2022-2023.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

EARL ALEXANDER OF HILLSBOROUGH (1885-1965)

A blue plaque has been erected in **Barton Hill, Bristol** to commemorate Albert Victor Alexander, co-operative movement worker, Labour politician and minister of defence 1946-1951. He was born in **Weston super mare** but lived in **Barton Hill** between 1886 and 1903. He was MP for Sheffield, hence his title of Earl Alexander of Hillsborough. ODNB entry at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30368> .

OLD YATE HERITAGE TRAIL

David Hardill writes: 'Yate Town Council has produced a heritage trail for **Station Road, Yate**. It's been a really good way of engaging with local businesses and producing a linear display along the road. It is comprised of A2 A-frames displays and A3 window displays, intended to be displayed from June to August 2022.' Copies from Yate Town Council, Poole Court, Yate, BS37 5PP, 01454866506; poster and images downloadable from <https://yatetowncouncil.gov.uk/yate/venues/heritage-centre/old-yate-heritage-trail>

A NEW HISTORICAL MAP OF BATH

John Ennor writes: The Historic Towns Trust, working with local historians, has published a number of beautifully coloured and informative maps of some of Britain's most famous historic towns and cities, not least **Bristol**.

Working together, The Historic Towns Trust, **The History of Bath Research Group**, The Victoria Art Gallery and a number of recognised, published, local historians are undertaking a project to create another multicoloured, layered map, overlaid on an Ordnance Survey map, to show the major periods of development of the World Heritage Site of the city of **Bath**.

The city collections are rich in maps from the 17th century onwards, but each is, of course, of its own time. Local historians have also produced detailed maps and plans of various specific areas of the city. For example, there is detailed mapping of the Spa quarter as it has changed over the centuries. This work was done when the new Spa was built but is only known through a very limited local publication. Other pieces

of work appear in pamphlets, the journal of the Friends of the Survey of Old Bath and some are solely in the Council archives. The project will merge some of these and overlay them on an Ordnance Survey Land Ranger size map.

Recent excavations of parts of Roman **Bath** make the old 'Roman Bath' commercial map outdated and more is now known of the development of the Spa. That said, there is still a large gap of published information relating to the middle of the 17th century.

In 1641 the Council conducted a survey of its properties and those of St John's hospital and by subtraction identified those that were owned by freeholders. There is a written list of the findings but with no map although it does relate to the outstanding collection of historic Deeds in the archive which have been recognised as being of outstanding national importance.

A group of local historians, over many years, have read all the Deeds and have abstracted the site measurements so allowing them to construct a map of the city in 1641 accurate to a few inches. This map will be published for the first time on the reverse of the new Historic Towns map.

There is also a map of the late 17th century which has a border of illustrations of some of the famous boarding houses which began to grow up around the Spa and these sites will be identified on the main map.

It is hoped also to show some of the bomb sites from the 1942 blitz and the major areas of demolition in the infamous 'Sack of Bath' redevelopments of the 1960s.

The Victoria Art Gallery in **Bath** holds the City's collection of images of the City including over 1,000 watercolours, some dating back to the late 17th century and showing large stretches of the city wall. They provide an extraordinary insight into the changing appearance of the city as it grew to meet the demands of the tens of thousands of fashionable visitors coming to the Spa in The Season.

Most of the earliest images are fragile and rarely shown but a selection will be reproduced on the reverse of the new map. There are also images of the earliest Pump Rooms, of the lost medieval bridge and the ferries and of the Pulteney Bridge before it suffered considerable alteration. All the important buildings will have a gazetteer type of entry.

It is believed that this map will be invaluable for educational purposes in schools and in the about to be opened Clore Learning Centre in the city, as well as giving pleasure and new information to those interested in **Bath** or simply in attractively illustrated maps. It will be sold as a folding map similar in style to an Ordnance Survey map in local bookshops and other outlets and despite the considerable work required to bring together such a large body of information, described as 'an embarrassment of riches' by the Historic Towns Trust, it is hoped to reach publication early next year.

In order to finance the publication of this map the **History of Bath Research Group** need to raise the necessary funds and have launched an appeal. ALHA have generously agreed to make a substantial donation and we are asking readers of this newsletter to consider making a contribution. A copy of our appeal leaflet which gives full details is included with this month's newsletter and we offer our grateful thanks to anyone who is able to support us.

The image shows the cover picture for the new map, the Stuart Guildhall and Wade's Passage before



demolition and the Abbey before the major alterations of 1833; reproduced by kind permission of Victoria Art Gallery.

PS GREAT WESTERN

The **SS Great Britain Trust** is planning to build a replica of IKB's paddle steamer *Great Western* in Albion Yard, **Bristol**. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has made an initial grant of £600,000 towards the £20m project. The plan is to



conserve the grade II listed dock, to maintain a working dry dock, and to reinstate the original clock tower. The centrepiece will be a full-size version of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's first ship, the paddle steamer *Great Western*, built in **Bristol** as the world's first transatlantic ocean liner. [Image National Maritime Museum, Greenwich]. The new addition will not only create a striking visual presence evoking the city's role in pioneering global ocean travel, but will share stories of migration, with inclusion and access a priority, connecting historic stories with contemporary

experiences. Tourism is calculated to bring at least £8.1 million into the West of England economy every year, and to provide 189 new jobs and educational opportunities. More at <https://www.ssgreatbritain.org/albion-dockyard-project/>

THORNBURY & DISTRICT MUSEUM

Thornbury and District Heritage Trust has issued the following statement.

We are being asked about the future of our lovely local museum at 4 Chapel Street, **Thornbury**, founded in 1986. After more than two years of uncertainty, due to Covid and the closure of both the Armstrong Hall complex and the High Street, the future of the museum is now seriously under threat.

What is the current situation?

The museum could be left without a home, endangering the museum's entire collection and its service to the community. The tenancy agreement with the Armstrong Hall Trust (AHT) expires in November 2023 and it may or may not be possible to extend it, even assuming the site is still available for lease. The AHT has shown its preference for sale of the entire Armstrong Hall complex to finance a new facility, currently anticipated to be at Turnberrie's.

Museum trustees have been exploring a number of options which could provide the necessary components for a replacement and viable museum and heritage facility and service. However, **Thornbury** has few public buildings with any available space which might be of use, and as a charity, the overriding problem is the cost of renting elsewhere. Entry to the museum is free to all. We are an entirely volunteer run organisation, depending on valuable grant funding from both our local councils and the modest income we can generate ourselves. With every other property and space in **Thornbury** being used for more profitable enterprises, there is currently no prospect of an affordable alternative site being found.

What is needed to run a museum?

A museum's primary responsibility is to preserve, conserve and share its collection for the public benefit. This requires display space, storage space for items not on display, office space, work space and a place where volunteers can interact with the public. Ideally, these would all be located under the same roof, but could be split between different sites.

Why have we been so popular and well thought of up to now?

Firstly, visitors and volunteers love the museum in spite of its small and awkward size.

We have been able to maintain regularly changing exhibitions, permanent key displays, talks and guided walks for public enjoyment and education as well as outreach support for local schools and groups. We



respond to numerous questions from both local and distant enquirers, especially about family research, and the museum is still an enduring tourist attraction in **Thornbury**.

Visitors are welcomed by a team of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers, mainly retired people, all contributing to running the museum. Local residents and more distant visitors are happy to share their own photographs and local history stories, enriching the heritage record.

Other benefits to the local community are the museum's contribution to wellbeing and mentalhealth. We provide an important and worthwhile opportunity for volunteers as a venue awayfrom personal problems and stresses, as well as for diverse visiting groups of adults and young people.

We also offer opportunities for younger volunteers to gain experience in museum work and services, building confidence and relationships, often leading to entry into further education and employment fields.

What else do we do?

Volunteers undertake local historical research and regularly publish books, booklets and leaflets, and prepare presentations for the public. A museum supported group undertakes important archaeological research around the local district. The museum's service extends beyond the walls of 4 Chapel Street which is the operationalbase for organising all our outreach activities outlined above. The Thornbury Heritage Trail was installed as a permanent feature in the town for the Millennium and this is maintained and supported by the museum.

The museum also supports local historical resources and hosts several websites – *Thornbury Roots*, *Tytherington Roots* and *Thornbury Grammar School* - all of which are explored by researchers both local and worldwide. We encourage and facilitate community involvement in local history and heritage, providing further local interaction and contributing to the local volunteer network.

What is at risk in 2022 and 2023?

If the museum is forced to close, the entire heritage record of **Thornbury** and the surrounding area could no longer be available to the community. An important local collection of artefacts, documents and photographs would be lost to the local area, possibly relocated to more distant museums or even dispersed to any home which would take them.

We have worked hard to achieve and maintain Accredited Museum status, awarded by Arts Council England for reaching a high nationally recognised standard. This is due for reappraisal and renewal at the end of 2023, close to the date when our lease could expire. Without a viable plan to continue a sustainable museum service in suitable premises, furtherAccreditation will be unattainable. It could mean the end of Thornbury and District Museum after more than 35 years.

The property at 4 Chapel Street, as a non-residential building, can continue to be used as a museum with normal routine repairs for as long as the AHT is willing to continue the lease. If the current building is lost, Thornbury and District Heritage Trust would endeavour to continue preserving local heritage, but this would be extremely difficult. Loss of the premises with no replacement would result in

the dispersal of our unique historical items without which local heritage is much more difficult to conserve and share.

What can we do now to save the museum and our local heritage?

We are making the details of our predicament public and we appeal to local residents, businesses and organisations to show their support for the museum and help save it.

Please talk to your friends, put your support in writing, contact your local Thornbury Town and South Glos councillors, and most importantly, let us know your thoughts too.

If anyone has any ideas which might help, or can offer help or expertise, please do get in touch. Email to enquiries@thornburymuseum.org.uk or write to Thornbury & District Museum, c/o The Town Hall, 35 High Street, Thornbury BS35 2AR Telephone: 01454 857774

REVIEWS by Dr Jonathan Harlow unless otherwise said.

Excavations at Minster House, Bristol, 1992: from abbey cellarium and prior's lodging to cathedral prebendal house John Bryant (BA British Series 669, 2021, 139 pages, ill. £?)

The subtitle says much: a history from the 15th to the 19th century has to be in part religious as well as architectural. This is an account of the intensive excavations in 1992 – 30 years ago but good to have. This non-archaeologist reviewer recommends the illustrations which make up most of the Introduction.

Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society 139 (2021)

This very substantial (400+ pages) and up-to-date volume is a feast. Archaeology predominates in the articles (10 out of 15) plus the invaluable 'Review'. I am no archaeologist but I think it would be fair to say that none of the articles alters our view of the early history of this region. They considerably add to it; but I was left wondering when someone might undertake a survey of the whole region from Bronze Age to Norman Conquest.

I was taken by Steve Grudgings' examination of the detailed accounts of mineworkers (including one woman) at Norborne Berkeley's **Lodgeside** Coalworks in 1748-9, as paid by 'the cartload'. Also Chris Sullivan digging into Charles Bathurst's pioneering, and painstaking, archaeology at the Lydney Park Roman Temple. John Stevens continues his invaluable research on **Bristol's** civic politics 1847-1867. Among the 'Notes & Queries' it is good to see the name of Joe Bettey, on puritan clergy in Elizabethan **Bristol**.

The reviews are worth the money in themselves and reverse the proportions, more history than archaeology. But there are some archaeological surveys, extensive in time if not space: Tom Moore on Iron Age Bagendon; Alistair Marshall on Iron Age & Roman and Anglo Norman Guiting Power (3 books); and Peter Davenport on Roman-British **Bath**. Then Roger & Pamela Leech edit an exploration of the early colonial Caribbean – almost a part of **Bristol's** history. John Simpson has a study of *Managing Poverty* in Cheltenham 1831-52, ie across the 1834 Poor Law Act. Rose Hewlett's edition of *The Gloucestershire Court of Sewers 1583-1642* rates over 3 pages of favourable review. Bristol Record Society vols 72 (*The Bristol Poll Book for 1852* ed John Stevens) and 73 (*The Register of Recognisances 1333-1594* ed Susan Scott) likewise get good reviews. Among others it is good to see reviews by Peter Fleming (Robert Patterson, *Robert* [1st] *Earl of Gloucester*, Martin Crossley Evans (John Briggs, *Tyndale Baptist Church*), and our own William Evans (Andrew Adonis, *Ernest Bevin*).

Membership of the B&GAS is £20. This volume makes it good value. And B&GAS Newsletter 90 (March 2022) has a warm obituary of Martin Crossley Evans.

***The Local Historian* 52.2** (April 2022)

Louise Ryland-Epton 'A contrary view of workhouses: Westbury-on-Trym 1800-1834' is a valuable account of a parish work-house before the Poor Law Amendment Act. And lo! Westbury was exemplary in careful and humane management. As usual there are references to Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. Let them cease. Dickens's own experience was before the Amendment Act but purports to be a critique of a regime after. And Dickens was an inventive novelist, not a social historian.

Of the books reviewed, I most wanted to read *Faith Hope and Charity: English neighbourhoods 1500-1640*, for goodneighbourliness seems to me part of an enduring English ethos. *The Material Fall of Roman Britain 300-520 CE* by Robin Fleming is obviously a valuable survey, albeit less comprehensive spatially than the title suggests. No-one with an interest in the subject will want to miss Nicholas Orme's *Going to Church in Medieval England*: 'a wonderful book.'

***History & Heritage Matters* 20** (May 2022) **Nailsea, Backwell, Tickenham & Wraxall.**

The first referenced article has been put together *post mortem* by the Editor. It is an account of the career of 'William Morgan – Mines Bailiff and Manager' by Martin Bodman. There is a last extract from Margaret Thomas' thesis, explaining how the **Nailsea** enclosures were paid for. Later there seems to have been a printing bloop as Trevor Bowen's article on the railway engine *Iron Duke* segues into an article on a farm. Finally a very brief article sketches the scrap between Hannah More and the Rector of **Chelvey**, William Shaw, who found her subversive.

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Bristol & Avon Family History Society *Journal* 188, March 2022. Much taken up with internal and annual general meeting business as the Society emerges from virus restrictions and faces a shortage of volunteers, but contains articles of local history interest including one on William Parfitt (1824-1909), a master mariner with **Bristol** connections, and one on the **Bristol** bank official Charles Paul (1793-1857). The *Journal's* cover has a photograph of Bank Chambers, Langport, headquarters of Stuckey's bank, severe and modest in style compared with its later premises in **Bristol**. An unusual article is Jane Bambury's 'Lady teachers and their private schools of **Knowle**,' a personal memoir, expanded with family history investigation, throwing light on an under-researched segment of education. A useful feature of the *Journal* is its summaries of talks given to Society and branch meetings. As often, the articles disclose family history investigation techniques that local history investigators may also find helpful.

Michael Manson, *Manson's Bristol miscellany, searching for the soul of the city, no. 2*, Bristol Books 2022, hb £20. <https://www.bristolbooks.org/shop/mansons-bristol-miscellany-vol2>

David Olusoga and Melanie Backe-Hansen, *A house through time*, Picador hb 2020, paperback 2021, £10.99. A general synopsis of the BBC series, dealing with archival sources and the different types of house in different periods. Many references to **Bristol**, including the house in Guinea Street, **Redcliff**, featured in the television series. Selective but apt illustrations.

THE LARK ASCENDING

BBC4 12 June repeated again Diana Rigg's 2012 programme on Ralph Vaughan Williams's *The lark ascending*, composed in **Kingsweston** House and premiered in **Shirehampton** public hall in the original

violin and piano version in 1920. Some shots of the exteriors and interiors of **Kingsweston** House and **Shirehampton** public hall, and a full performance of the original version. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b019c9t9> until 10 July 2022.

The programme paid due credit to the violinist Marie Hall (1884-1956), who worked with Vaughan Williams on the composition and gave the first performance in **Shirehampton**. It did not mention her **Bristol** connection, which was crucial to her career. According to an autobiographical piece MH wrote for the *English Illustrated Review* in 1908, reproduced at <https://www.violinist.com/blog/Mle/20122/13199/> [image ditto], MH was 'discovered' while her parents were living at **Clifton**; after a concert in **Bristol** (Colston Hall?) by the Czech violinist Jan Kubelik (1880-1940) she introduced herself to him, as a result of which he arranged for her to study in Prague; and her first public concert was in **Bristol** (Anyone know when? where?). This implies that the statement in her Wikipedia entry that she was discovered when busking on the streets of **Bristol** is false - though she had busked in Newcastle on Tyne at the age of 10.



Miss Marie Hall, who is about to tour in America and Canada.

Jack Shoulder, *A history of Pride in Bristol*, <https://www.balh.org.uk/blog-a-history-of-pride-in-bristol-2022-06-05>; a blog excerpt recounting the origins of lesbian and gay marches in **Bristol**: the first one in England took place 50 years ago, the first one in **Bristol** in 1977.

RESPONSES

Shadowlands – a correction

Bob Lawrence points out that Old Winchelsea, mentioned in the piece in e-update 31 May 2022, is under the English Channel, not the North Sea. The end result is much the same.

COMMENTARY

Henry Edmund Goodridge

A piece in ALHA *Newsletter* 168 about Cleveland Bridge in **Bath** mentioned its designer, Henry Edmund Goodridge. So did a piece in newsletter e-update of 31 May 2022 about one-way systems, which referred to **Bath's** Eastern Dispensary, which HEG designed. HEG is known to and recognised by architectural historians: he has an entry in HM Colvin's *A biographical dictionary of British architects 1600-1840* (ed 3, 1995, Yale UP), and a short entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37468?rskey=pdWJ3u&result=1>. Bryan Little mentioned him in his *The building of Bath* (Collins 1947), and he is recognised by Michael Forsyth in his *Bath* in the Pevsner architectural guides series (Penguin 2003). I would like to suggest that local historians may not have accorded to HEG the recognition that his work and its surviving influence on **Bath** warrant.

HEG was the son of a local builder, who had connections beyond the city. HEG designed buildings for his father. Thomas Telford the engineer suggested to HEG's father that he get his son articled to an architect, and HEG was trained by the **Bath** corporation architect James Lowder.

About 1820 HEG set up his own practice in **Bath**. He also acted as surveyor to the Great Western Railway in the **Bath** area, so he may have known IKB. His first major building was Argyle chapel (1821). Other early schemes included the Bazaar in Quiet Street (1824-1825) and the Corridor (1825), one of the earliest shopping arcades outside London.

HEG's most prominent commission was Beckford's tower on **Lansdown**. William Beckford organised a competition to select a designer. London architects competed. Philippa Bishop suggested that WB was so angered by his conflict with Wyatt at Fonthill that he wanted a young architect who would obey instructions, and Michael Forsyth takes a similar view. HEG presented to Beckford designs in several styles (saxon, romanesque, castellated) which Beckford rejected before settling on the neoclassical mixture that was built.

HEG's other buildings in **Bath** can be grouped into (1) places of worship, including Argyle chapel, Holy Trinity **Combe Down** (1832-1835), Percy chapel in Charlotte Street (1834); (2) public and communal buildings and other structures such as Cleveland bridge and its tollhouses (1827-1829), the Bazaar, the Corridor and the Corridor rooms (1833), the Eastern Dispensary (1845), and the Royal and Argyle hotels in Manvers Street; and (3) private houses, including terraces at Woodland Place (1826), Woodhill Place, Cleveland Place (1827-1830), a series of villas in **Bathwick** and **Widcombe** from 1829 to 1848, and the west wing (bombed 1942) and an additional storey at Prior Park.

Designs that never got built included a domed cathedral that would have risen (loomed?) behind the mansion at Prior Park (which the roman catholic church had bought in 1829, the year of catholic emancipation); and a colossal column in Laura Place that would have commemorated the passing of the Reform Act in 1832: HEG's watercolour architect's impression is in the Victoria Art Gallery, **Bath**. (HEG had designed the column commemorating admiral Hood at Butleigh (Hood's birthplace) in 1831).

In terms of architectural style, HEG's buildings can be grouped into (1) neoclassical, some baroque, some Greek revival such as Cleveland bridge; (2) neogothic, including Holy Trinity **Combe Down**; and (3) Italianate, such as Montebello (1828, before HEG's visit to Italy; later Bathwick Grange), Casa Bianca and La Casetta (1846) and Fiesole (1846-1848).

HEG lived in some of the houses he designed: Woodhill Place (1829), Montebello and Fiesole, where he lived for many years before his death. It would be unkind to suggest that if other architects followed HEG's example, they would benefit from experiencing for themselves the effects suffered by other people who have to live in, or work in or maintain what they designed.

HEG's contribution to **Bath** and its past comes partly from the sheer number of his buildings that have been socially, commercially and domestically important in the life of the city; partly because so many have survived, some as a result of adaptation from their original to new uses; and partly because his work links the palladian **Bath** of the Woods with the fast-growing victorian and now the modern city, but does so in such a way as to relate to earlier building and without causing visual offence. HEG was not the only architect who designed significant, useful and visually pleasing buildings in **Bath**, but he had great influence on the content and look of the modern city and how it has adapted to its changing environment.

Dial Houses

There are Dial Houses in various parts of England: in large towns such as Chester, Reading and Bedford; in smaller places such as Reepham and Brancaster in Norfolk, Bourton on the water in Gloucestershire, and Catcott and Wincanton in Somerset. In our area one is in **Westbury on Trym**; another in **Alveston**; and 'dial' is a place name element in **Barrow Gurney** and **Clevedon**.

Not all Dial Houses are old. The one in Chesham Bois is an arts and crafts building dated about 1910. But most Dial Houses are earlier, and some are, or get their name from being on the site of, houses of much earlier date.

Most Dial Houses are ones that have, or had, a sundial or clock on an outside wall. The older the building, the more likely it is that the dial was a sun dial and was on the south side. It is not known when or why builders or owners started putting sundials on their houses. In the case of houses the most likely reason is for decoration, or to fill what would otherwise be blank wall. In buildings where people worked, the clock is more likely to have been installed to encourage workers to turn up on time or to indicate the end of a shift or process, or just to assert control. In Victorian model farms a clock was often prominently sited so as to be visible from many parts of the operation, and to promote efficiency: prince Albert had a clock in his model farm at Windsor, and other landowners followed suit.

Not all Dial Houses necessarily get their name from a sundial or clock. Dial House in Manchester, now facaded, was at one time a telephone exchange, which might suggest to those readers whose memories go back before push-button telephones another possible derivation. Or was the building originally a factory and the clock was for timekeeping?

In place names, 'Dial' is sometimes unexplained. In **Barrow Gurney** there used to be a Dial quarry off the A38, now filled in, and a Dial Lane, a Dial Farm and a Dial Cottage: which one gave its name to the others? Was there a clock on a quarry or farm building to encourage the workers to keep to time?

Alveston's Dial House appears to have been part of, or joined on to, another building known as the Old House, which could mean that the Dial House may have been the later one.

There is a Dial Hill at **Clevedon**, and a Dial Hill Road and Dial Hill cottages. The hill, a prominent landmark, is a natural feature. Anyone know the derivation of its name?



A peculiar example is Dial House in **Westbury on Trym**, a tall building, squeezed on to a narrow plot, with a clock face painted on the south-facing wall. Oral tradition has it that the clock was painted to show the time when the occupant was jilted, to shame the jilter – the sort of legend that gives local history a bad name: a postcard of about 1900 [image] shows what looks like a real clock, which the painted clock presumably replaced. There is another question about the house: oral tradition says it was a toll house, but Chock Lane was not a main through route and there is no evidence that it was ever turnpiked. That in the nineteenth century it was

called Chalk Lane, and the remains of lime kilns, suggests industrial activity, so perhaps the clock was related to that.

Vestry halls

Shortage of housing, and the government's disinclination to do much about the root cause, has led to buildings that were not originally designed for people to live in being converted into houses or flats. The process is not new: nonconformist chapels from **Temple Cloud** to **Rudgeway** are now private houses; what was St John's school at the top of **Blackboy** in **Bristol** is now flats, having been social services offices before that; and in towns office blocks such as **Clifton** Heights and factories such as Wills's at **Hartcliffe**, Fry's at **Somerdale**, and the chocolate factory in **Greenbank** now contain flats; behind its façade Pitman's factory in **Bath** is being turned into residential accommodation. So we should not be surprised that the former **St Philip's** vestry hall in Pennywell Road, **Easton** in **Bristol**, is now flats.

Vestry halls were once numerous, at any rate outside our area. Many have survived, and as community buildings. Vestries can be regarded as the precursors of parish and parochial church councils. Non-statutory bodies, they were examples of unofficial assumption of power. They were supposed to be elected by parishioners to perform, or to arrange the performance of, various church functions, and also local civic business such as administering the pre-1834 poor law – managing the poor house and outdoor relief – appointing the village constable, maintaining the stocks, and repairing highways, for which parishes were responsible until 1835. In rural areas vestries usually consisted of the incumbent plus a selection of leading farmers or middling landowners in the

parish. At **Abbots Leigh**, as in many other parishes, the members were constant but the roles of overseer and surveyor circulated among them. Approved (and instructed?) by the squire or lord of the manor, they had a vested interest in controlling expenditure so as to keep the parish rate as low as possible. They usually met in the parish church vestry, hence their name. By the mid 19th century there were over 15,000 of them. Their civil (as distinct from religious) public functions were taken over by statutory bodies such as improvement commissioners, and were largely removed by the Local Government Act 1894.

Some vestries, particularly those that allowed themselves to be elected by public meeting, saw it as one of their functions to provide a building for public meetings and other gatherings, including social and indoor sports facilities. One vestry hall surviving is that for the parish of Holy Trinity St Philip in Pennywell Road, which some estate agents call **Easton** and others **Old Market**. It was built in 1853 on the site of a former workhouse; like many, its construction followed the Vestries Act 1850 which prohibited the holding of public meetings in churches. The date 1880 on the front façade relates to what amounted to a rebuilding: the building plans by Watkins & Son are in Bristol Archives. The style is distinguished: symmetrical and dignified with a neoclassical cornice and modillions and some masonry decoration. [Image Ocean estate agents]. To pay for the works the vestry borrowed £3,300 from the Prudential Assurance Company, mortgaging the poor rates as security.



After the building ceased to be used for poor law administration, it continued to be hired out for public meetings. ALHA individual member John Stevens draws attention to one in early 1902 when David Lloyd George, not yet prime minister, addressed a meeting protesting against Joseph Chamberlain's policies and the Boer war. Because a similar meeting in Birmingham town hall the previous month had occasioned a riot with one man killed and many injured, a large number of policemen surrounded the building, with over a hundred more hidden away in reserve; the fire brigade, hoses at the ready, guarded the entrance to protect the hall and the speakers; an attempt to storm the hall did not succeed.

The hall seems to have been closed for public use shortly afterwards, and the parish sold it off. It was used as a picture house by Ralph Pringle from 1908, and continued as a cinema under a number of names until 1954, after which it was occupied by various businesses. One was Breckman, Dolman and Rogers, who manufactured metal products such as turnstiles, and made Harry Dolman (1897-1977) wealthy. He chaired and funded Bristol City football club from 1949 to 1974, and apart from signing John Atyeo, is remembered in the Dolman stand. The hall was empty for some years before being made into flats. It would be interesting to know

- whether there were other vestry halls in our area;
- if there were, what they are now used for;
- if the Pennywell Road one was unique, why that was so.

QUOTE

History and historians now frequently perform the role to which sociology and sociologists once aspired: to narrate and contextualise the conflicts of the present.

William Davis, 'Sociology gone wrong', LRB Vol. 44 No. 11 · 9 June 2022

CAN YOU HELP?

POST-WW1 VISITS TO FRANCE

Liz Hughes says the photo right is of her grand aunts Mary Elsie Goss and Ellen Beatrice Goss, at the grave of her grand uncle Pte William Thomas Goss (36807) 3rd Worcestershire Regiment, at Heuvelland, West Flanders, Belgium. The photograph must have been taken before August 1920. LH asks how common was it for relatives to visit France directly after the war. Could her great aunts have gone as part of a sponsored trip with a charity in **Bristol**, with other bereaved families?

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[Article at <https://www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/visiting-and-revisiting-the-battlefields-1919-1938-by-prof-mark-connelly/>; church charities (St Barnabas Society, Salvation Army, Church Army) organised visits, but were any organised from our area? – Ed.]



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 right (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.

Links or directions to **online events open to the public** appear on ALHA's website, but now in a different format.