AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

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Material for Newsletter 173 by 12 noon 15 December 2022 please:

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Details of events to website manager
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Other news, comments and changes of contact details to newsletter editor and membership secretary, 5 Parrys Grove, Bristol BS9 1TT
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Website: http://www.alha.org.uk
Events:
http://www.alha.org.uk/events.html
Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/AvonLocalHistoryandArchaeology

ALHA NEWS

LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2022

A booking form for the 2022 local history day, at **St Michael's Hall, Stoke Gifford, on Saturday 22 October 2022,** accompanies this Newsletter**.**

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, ALHA's 2022 annual general meeting will be held at the close of the local history day. Formal notice and papers accompany this Newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

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

CALL FOR PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS – HANDEL COSSHAM

March 2024 marks the bi-centenary of the birth of the notable **Bristol, Thornbury, Yate and Bath** Victorian Handel Cossham (1824-1890). **ALHA** and ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** are planning jointly to organise a day or half-day conference to mark the event. Topics might include Cossham's family background and business life, his many religious and philanthropic activities, the geology of the south Gloucestershire coalfield, the architecture of Cossham hospital, Cossham hospital memories, and the place of the Cossham hospital in the modern NHS. We should be very glad to receive suggestions for speakers on these subjects, or for other topics which might be covered; for offers or suggestions for the venue for the event; and to hear from anyone able to help with prior administration or on the day (likely to be a Saturday in March or April 2024). Please contact wm.evans@btopenworld.com or johnregstevens@outlook.com

ALHA BOOKLETS – A NEW VENTURE

Nearly all the booklets ALHA has published so far, edited by Dr Jonathan Harlow, have run to about 40 pages containing some 15,000 words of text. ALHA's publications team is considering whether ALHA might also publish shorter texts, perhaps under the series title ALHA Occasional Papers, or something similar.

MEMBER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

THE BRISTOL MEDICO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Peter Carpenter writes: ALHA member **The Bristol Medico-Historical Society** is drawing to a close after over 35 years. It was founded in 1986 by Prof John Clamp with Mr Michael Wilson the first secretary. It met 4 evenings a year as a small welcoming group of doctors who shared a mutual interest in medical history. It was similar to the existing Bristol Medico Chirurgical Society (of whom most were already members) in having a sit down meal, followed by talks. However all members were required to give at least one talk on Medical History. As a result most evenings were made up of two talks each lasting 20 -25 minutes - not too intimidating for novice speakers.

The group was successful and had 40 - 50 members, many of whom had retired and several were able to talk about medical events that they had been involved in [and give the unofficial stories]. As several academics discovered, many of our members could give first hand evidence for their research. The proceedings of each president's tenure were published as a book.

The Society is now on its ninth president and has published 8 sets of proceedings. It has gone through many changes - it met in **Frenchay** Hospital, then in Trinity Church in **Henleaze**, before moving to the Create Centre. During COVID we moved to being on Zoom.

Michael Wilson was succeeded by Dr Jonathan Bird as Secretary who passed the baton to me in 2003 on becoming President. The Proceedings were first edited by Simon McMinn, and after his death by Prof Paul Goddard who did a sterling job in picking up the reins. With his support many of the more recent papers were also published in the *West of England Medical Journal* operated by the Bristol Med Chi. We helped host two national conferences in Bristol for the British Society for the History of Medicine.

We have had over 200 talks on a wide range of topics, Several were personal experiences such as 'Experiences as a Japanese P.O.W.', 'The Bombing of the Bristol Children's Hospital', 'Running a flying doctor service in Lesotho'; 'The First Junior Doctors strike'. Others were art related: 'Shakespeare and Medicine'; 'Leonardo DaVinci's anatomical drawings'; 'Sir Francis Bacon'. Some were histories of procedures: 'A History of the management of Emphysema,' 'A History of Caesarian Section'. 'History of M.R.I.' And of course many were of doctors: Elizabeth Blackwell; Dr Thomas of Gloucester; The Revd Harold Burden; Eliza Dunbar. Several of the talks have been associated with longer publications elsewhere.

Despite all the changes and events we were still keen to remain a friendly and close group that welcomed amateur interest in medical history. We had some talks by medical students but despite all efforts we did not manage to attract a younger or non-medical membership in quantity. Last year we were excited to discover that was a Bristol Medical Student History society but that has quickly collapsed as the organisers moved on. As a result we brought in external speakers but as it was clear that we were reaching a point with under 20 active members when we would have to have a different society in the future, without meals and with few, if any, members speaking, I proposed that the Society closes and the membership have agreed. We are having a final 4 hour event at the Create Centre on the 1 October.

We still have a few Foundation members. I have had many differing memories - the constant juggling of booked meals with who turned up expecting to eat! The speaker who cancelled his hour long talk at 2 hours notice. Possibly my greatest memory, other than the support and camaraderie of the group, was a Talk given by Prof Alan Winfield on Grey Walter of the Burden and his 'tortoises'. These were the first autonomous robots, and Alan had replicated them to operate in the Millennium Exhibition at the Millennium Dome as a celebration of historical achievement. He brought one to show and showed us the videos of the tortoises on YouTube (look up 'Grey Walter tortoises'). Ray Cooper, who worked with Grey Walter came to the meeting and to Alan's delight was able to give the backstory to the videos and Grey Walter and his work within the Burden. Peter Carpenter, Secretary; Current President Dr Mike Davidson; Current Treasurer Dr Michael Whitfield.

SECONDHAND BOOK SALES

ALHA member **Pilning and Severn Beach History Group** offers other ALHA member groups and societies help with selling secondhand books with local history content. Secretary is Mrs Janet Maurice, 26 Church Street, Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 9HS, janetsmaurice@googlemail.com, 0779 1730933.

SANDI SHALLCROSS

The Trustees of **Thornbury & District Heritage Trust** have announced the death of their colleague Sandi Shallcross, who for many years Sandi was been a driving force behind Thornbury & District Museum. A sad loss.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

SEAMEN'S PENSIONS

In 1747 Thomas Rothley was appointed as receiver to run the port of **Bristol**. He recorded how much each seaman paid towards his pension (the Seamen's Hospital Fund) when his ship left port. Main sources in **Bristol Archives** are NPM/B123 and SMV 9/2/1/13. Rothley's accounts, previously transcribed and put on compact disc, have been transcribed by volunteers and augmented with further data from archival sources to produce an index of Bristol shipping from 1748 to 1795. The index lists each ship, its destination, captain and muster roll number, covering over 10,000 individual voyages. **Bristol Archives** will be putting the fully searchable and cross-referenced index online.

COLSTON HALL / BEACON ARCHIVE

Bristol Archives has put online a catalogue of the **Bristol** Beacon archive. This includes the Charles H. Lockier collection. Lockier was a **Bristol** impresario who staged classical and popular music at the Colston Hall between the 1920s to the 1960s. He collected the programmes, advertisements, and newspaper clippings from his shows. 'Through his collection we can track the radical changes in popular music over the first half of the 20th century. He's responsible for bringing acts like Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Dusty Springfield, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones to **Bristol**,' it says. [Image from flickr] More at https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/blog/shining-a-light-on-the-bristol-beacon-archive/ and https://www.bristoljazzandbluesfest.com/golden-era-jazz-colston-hall-1950s-1970s/

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY RECORDS

The National Archives has put online via *Ancestry* some 90,000 land girls' index cards: https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62020/ and https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/womens-land-army-index-cards-online-at-ancestry/ .

NEW SPEAKER

FOLLIES

Jonathan Holt offers talks on follies, in the sense of unusual buildings. The next edition of ALHA's catalogue or directory of presenters is not due out until next year, so in the mean time here is some information he has supplied. 'The area is full of these curious buildings which can take many forms – towers, summer houses, grottoes, shell houses, eyecatchers, mock ruins, temples, hermitages, obelisks, pagodas, rustic seats…the list goes on. The stories behind them are many and various – built out of passion, megalomania, artistry, showing off one's wealth or to keep up with or block out one's neighbours. Many follies are tucked away in private grounds and rarely seen by the public. I have gained exclusive access to these follies and taken some stunning photographs to accompany my talk which normally lasts up to one hour. For nearly 30 years I have been talking and writing on the subject of architectural follies, including as Editor of *Follies* the organ of the Folly Fellowship, a charity dedicated to their preservation and enjoyment. See what we do at www.follies.org.uk. My published books include *Somerset Follies* (Akeman Press 2007) and *The Follies of Bristol and Gloucestershire* (2014 & 2015) published in two parts by the Folly Fellowship.' Jonathan Holt, jonathanholt3@gmail.com; 0730 528 6464.

REVIEWS by Dr Jonathan Harlow unless otherwise said.

Dr Edward Long Fox - Radical and Mental Health Pioneer by Dinah Moore, ALHA books no.36 (2022), 45pp, b&w illustr, ISBN 978 1 911592 36 , reviewed by Peter Cullimore.

Dr Edward Long Fox was a key figure in the history of psychiatric medicine. He transformed attitudes towards mental illness and its treatment in early nineteenth century asylums. Dr Fox was a Quaker who believed so-called "lunatics" were curable and deserved kindness and respect, not the barbarous cruelty that was standard in Georgian "madhouses". He designed and built his own state-of-the-art institution at **Brislington**, putting these values into practice. Instead of being locked up and chained like wild beasts, patients were housed in comfortable, clean and spacious conditions.

Long Fox should be as well known today as, for example, Jenner, Davy or Hannah More. This timely short biography by Dinah Moore is a reminder of his crucial role as a mental health pioneer. She points out that Fox's medical reputation was harmed among contemporaries by his radical political beliefs and activism in **Bristol**.

Moore relates how, newly arrived in the city as a young doctor from Cornwall, he soon caused a local stir with his support for the revolutionaries in France. He spoke at public meetings alongside firebrands like the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

The book is a plain and clear account of Fox's eventful life, in a timeline form. The author starts with his birth into a Quaker family of Falmouth in 1761, and finishes with his Quaker burial at **Brislington** in 1835. His father Joseph was a surgeon and apothecary. The episodic narrative takes us first to Edward's medical studies and degree at Edinburgh University, followed by an extraordinary stay in Paris. His father sent him there to make restitution for some wartime privateering at sea. Joseph had invested in two ships which seized a couple of French merchant vessels. Fox senior's Quaker conscience meant returning his share of the profits to France.

In 1786 the young doctor took over a lucrative medical practice in **Bristol** and gained a post at the Infirmary. Moore contrasts Dr Fox's high status in medicine with notoriety as a campaigner for radical causes. His anti-establishment views saw him labelled a Jacobin, deliberately inciting local unrest. This impression was strengthened by the **Bristol Bridge** massacre in 1793. Eleven protestors against rising bridge tolls were killed, and many others wounded, by militiamen firing into the crowd. Fox chaired a public meeting to demand justice and an official inquiry. When this was refused, he set up his own tribunal to gather evidence.

The author's linear style does work in general. She outlines a varied career in the order it unfolded. However, as a consequence, the achievement for which Fox is remembered most, **Brislington House**, barely gets a mention until halfway through. A preface emphasising his importance as a mental health pioneer would help.

Dr Fox's new private asylum cost him a massive £35,000. It opened in 1806, with the 60 to 70 patients housed in separate buildings according to their social class and gender. They were largely fee-paying gentry. The reception was overwhelmingly favourable, and **Brislington House** became a role model for national reform and regulation.

The book also provides glimpses of Dr Fox's family life. He fathered 23 children and lived with his second wife and family in the asylum. Moore has one striking anecdote about Dr Fox almost being drowned by a group of his patients. They dragged him to a pond in the grounds, and were about to immerse him when the doctor cleverly suggested they shout three cheers first. The patients duly obliged, so alerted staff to the rescue!

Even in retirement Fox was still a bold entrepreneur. There is a description of his final grand venture – a therapeutic spa, built on **Knightstone Island** in **Weston-Super-Mare**. He purchased the site in 1830 and developed a lavish complex, with hot and cold baths and a seawater swimming pool. Public access included some patients from **Brislington House**, as the spa helped turn Weston into a popular resort.

Mental health remains the Cinderella of NHS funding today. If psychiatric treatment had been less neglected over time, Edward Long Fox might still be a widely famous name. This well researched booklet will help raise his profile.

The History & Antiquities of the City of Bristol William Barrett, 1789

Barrett's has a fair claim to be the first history of **Bristol** which was written to be published. It attracted some 600 subscribers – and a deal of criticism and mockery.

Much of the criticism and mockery was directed at Barrett's uncritical belief in the authenticity of Chatterton's *Rowley* writings, despite Chatterton's continued refusal to display the alleged originals. This was not only a weakness in itself, but it had Barrett taking the Rowley texts as valid sources for **Bristol** history. Thus, although my facsimile edition (Alan Sutton, 1982, about £25 today) praises 'such wonderful pieces as the illustration facing page 196 – Bristol Castle in 1138', the texts on which these reconstructions are based include Rowley. And of course it is not merely that Barrett believed that Chatterton's Rowley existed: he also accepted that Rowley was a well-informed and truthful reporter.

Dr Joseph Bettey's account* focuses mainly on the Chatterton delusion, but also supplies a good deal of background information about Barrett himself.

The gullibility over Chatterton may obscure some of Barrett's other weaknesses as an historian. His account of **Bristol** – *Caer Brito* yet – as an ancient pre-Roman and Roman city was almost entirely wishful thinking: it should have been, so surely it was. Similarly, as Bettey notes, Barrett was happily convinced that a coin of Pope Sixtus IV showed Bristol Bridge rather than the Roman one which Sixtus himself built.

More generally, Barrett gave sources for quotes, but hardly ever for any other parts of his account.

Barrett's history is very biased in favour of the Right, the Establishment. Thus, (p 227) he denounces the 'oppressive tax' levied under Parliamentary occupation in 1643, which produced 'many acts of oppression'; and regrets that 'an association of some of the principal inhabitants' was betrayed by 'some tattling females'. But no such aspersions are cast on the two years of Royalist occupation, though it was more heavily taxed. And the slave trade is mentioned only in one sentence of a long eulogy of **Bristol**'s trade, with a parenthesis: 'a trade now much complained of.' (p 186)

Barrett's surviving merit also reveals this bias. Most of the second half of the book is given over to a minute account of the patrons, ministers, monuments and donations of every church in the city: monuments especially useful for those since rebuilt. But only for every Anglican church. **Bristol** was still a home to long-standing Baptist and Independent churches, a Unitarian church for over a century and two long-standing Quaker meeting houses. But none of these belong in Barrett's record. Methodism is not mentioned and Wesley does not rate an entry in the roll of **Bristol**'s famous citizens. For that matter, William Penn is only mentioned in passing, in the paragraph on the Admiral. Colston gets over a page of adulation, noting trade to the East Indies without so much as a mention of the Royal Africa Company (p 655).

Lastly, Barrett publishes a full list of subscribers – fair enough – but there is no index. (If you access it on-line, you can of course search: https://archive.org/details/historyantiquiti00barr .

If I had been a subscriber, I should likely have regretted it.

** The First Historians of Bristol: William Barrett & Samuel Seyer,* Bristol Branch of the Historical Association No 108, 2003.)

Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery **(**Bristol Books, 56 pages, fully illustrated in colour, £11.95 from Bristol Museums Shop)

A team of writers and editors has got together to produce this fine source book for schools. It is intelligently organized by topic and balances accounts of the slave trade as a whole with material on **Bristol**'s role in it. It is comprehensive, though perhaps might have included some financial accounts of slave trading voyages which are available in Bristol Archives. It is presented as a good balance of images and text, well produced by Bristol Books. And despite the intended audience of schoolchildren, it does not oversimplify or pull punches.

Bristol is long overdue its own Museum of Slavery. Liverpool has one and even the Bank of England Museum is running an exhibition on 'Slavery and the Bank' (till 28 April 2023). This fine production could well serve as a starting point.

The Local Historian **52.3** (July 2022) has yet again no items of direct ALHA interest. But as one brang up in Datchet opposite Windsor Castle, I was please to find that David Lewis was not tempted by attempts on the part of John Casson & William Rubinstein to argue that the local knowledge displayed made a case for Sir Henry Neville rather than Shakespeare as the author of *Merry Wives of Windsor*. And I was delighted to be reminded of a good RSC production set in mid-20th century Datchet: Sir John at the Manor Hotel, and the two wives exchanging confidences under their dryers at the hairdressers.

By some pleasing false analogy, an article on 'Investigating the small ads' is set in a smaller font than the rest.

The accompanying ***Local History News*** **144** (Summer 2022) reminds us of some early **Bristol** flying records in Louise Clarke's 'The Aviation & Aerospace Archives Initiative' (and of the recent exhibition of Sir George White material at Bristol Archives).

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Bristol & Avon Family History Society Journal 189, September 2022. Much internal to B&AFHS (which invites suggestions for a new logo: any ideas to secretary@bafhs.org.uk), but contains interesting accounts of members' meetings; a programme of talks into January 2023; and Bob Lawrence's usual survey of the internet, which notes that *Ancestry* now has **Bristol Archives'** parish baptisms to 1921, marriages to 1937 and burials to 1994. Stephen Bumstead has a piece *They helped to build Bristol*. That, and articles by Lynnette Hammett and DP Lindegaard about their own families, deploy a variety of investigation techniques.

The blog page on the website of the British Society for the History of Medicine includes an item about the one-way system introduced by the **Bath** architect Henry Edmund Goodridge in his design for the Eastern Dispensary in **Bath**: https://bshm.org.uk/blog/

RESPONSES

History, Law and Politeness

John Stevens writes: Few would dissent from the comment (newsletter e-update, 31 August 2022, Commentary – **Local History Freedoms**) that historians should only be constrained by 'law and politeness', but these things are worth unpicking.

In England, historians are unlikely to incur the sanctions of the criminal law. Some democratic countries have laws criminalising Holocaust denial. Whilst there may be reason for this in (say) Germany or Austria, it would be a retrograde step here. David Irving *et al* have been academically refuted by many and we may, it is suggested, rely on good history to drive out bad without any criminal sanction.

As to the civil law, the English law of defamation is, in theory, among the strictest in the world. Words likely to bring a claimant into "hatred, ridicule or contempt" (the test adopted by the Courts) could in certain circumstances include an assertion that a historian has failed to heed significant source material. The judge can however award small or nominal damages only and/or penalise a successful claimant in costs in appropriate cases. The Defamation Act 2013 now requires proof of actual or probable serious loss or damage, and removed the presumption of a right to jury trial. Together with the non-availability of legal aid, these factors should prevent a plethora of actions, by historians or others.

As to politeness, historians are professionals and should be well able to disagree in a circumspect manner, using if you like the rapier rather than the bludgeon. Strenuous historical disputes (that between Butterfield and Namier, or Taylor and Trevor-Roper for example) have usually been conducted with courtesy, if sometimes with a fine and vigorous wit (the latter being all to the good).

Perhaps the risk for *local* historians, however, is not straying into discourtesy but, on the contrary, becoming too cosy. We in **the Avon area** are a small community. Most of us know each other. Many of us sit on committees together; acquaintances and friendships have been formed in this way. We pick each others' brains. It may be natural to blunt the edge of the knife when commenting on the work of fellow local historians, but we should not be afraid to mete out unambiguous criticism when it is due.

COMMENTARY

Public lavatories

The media report that lavatories on platforms 10 and 12 at **Bristol Temple Meads** station, blocked off many years ago by building works and then forgotten about (it says), have been restored and re-opened, albeit for women only: https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/station-toilets-uncovered-after-30-years-and-given-new-lease-of-life .

If local history people want to flush out the rise and fall of the public lavatory in different parts of our area, one question is when and why the idea of a public lavatory arose in the first place. There is evidence of what a later age would call toilet facilities inside, or within the curtilage of, medieval and early modern buildings of various sorts, including monasteries and castles, but not of outdoor jakes provided at public expense and available to all comers. The stereotypical image of a medieval or early modern town includes narrow streets, some with a gully down the middle, into which people tossed waste of all kinds. In **Bristol** an individual, Roger the Raker, was employed to collect such of the waste as did not end up in the rivers, and dispose of it. One assumes that many people relieved themselves in the open air.

How and when that became socially unacceptable, or at least sniffed at, is another question. It would be anachronistic to project nineteenth century concerns about infectious diseases back into former times, but some people seem to have made a connection early on between faeces and ill health. Another

possibility is that religious obsessions with sex (which do not appear in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth) led the church to discourage any display in public of dual-use parts of the human body.

Another question is when the idea formed of providing a lavatory for other people to use. In the mid 18th century when Norborne Berkeley was landscaping his grounds at **Stoke Gifford and Stapleton**, one of his items of expenditure was on a 'necessary house.' What that consisted of and where it was are not known. The fact that no archaeological remains have survived or been discovered (apart from patches of nettles?) suggests that it may have been a wooden shelter for an earth closet. Berkeley's accounts do not show whether he intended the necessary house for his own use as he laboured or lounged in his landscaping, or for the convenience of his workpeople (it would have been a steep climb uphill to the house, which would have taken time, and taken up working time), or for use by visitors to his parkland, but if there was a public element in that convenience, it may have been the earliest in our area.

Public lavatories seem to have become established and widespread, at any rate in **Bristol**, in the very late 19th century. We might have expected them to appear after the 1845 parliamentary report on **Bristol**'s public health, and the establishment of a health board in 1851, but work seems to have been concentrated on laying sewers and on improving privies in private houses. From the end of the 19th century, maps on *Know Your Place* show lavatories and urinals at various locations in the town. Was there a civic plan or strategy for public conveniences? Were there government guidelines (eg so many per thousand population)? Or were urinals sited where nuisances in the street were most frequent? Proximity to the city docks and alehouses might be one reason for building them. That the maps show many 'urinals' suggests that they were for men only. If so, was that because men were most likely to be the users? Or was there a policy, explicit or tacit, of discouraging women from being out and about?

The architecture of public conveniences is worth looking at. The ones in Woodland Road **Cotham** (1904, architect not known) were elaborately neoclassical. [Image from Flickr]. Some cast-iron museum pieces survive, notably on **Horfield Common** (circular) and the **top of Blackboy** (rectangular). Not made locally, they are said to follow French examples, termed vespasiennes after the roman emperor Vespasian, not because he invented them but because he taxed them. **Bristol**'s date from the 1880s. Another (circular) is in Mina Road park, **St Werburghs,** laid out 1884-1890. It is not known whether the different shapes were favoured by different political parties. Later, the city council put public lavatories in most parks and open spaces, including the **Downs**.

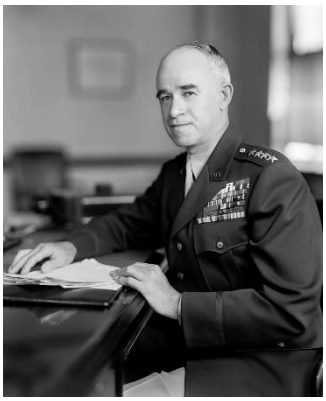
Bristol city council closed the Woodland Road lavatories in 2011, presumably to cut costs. Closures accelerated thereafter: in 2018 eighteen were shut, including the one in Mina Road Park. As in **South Gloucestershire**, policy seems now to encourage cafes, when open, to allow public use of their lavatories.

The afterlife of closed public lavatories might be worth a look. Woodland Road's reopened in 2012 as an art exhibition space. The one on **Sea Mills** Square in **Bristol** is now a community café, run largely with the help of volunteers. **Bath**'s Bog Island lavatory, underground near the Orange Grove, closed in the 1970s and was sold to some rugby players who converted it into a night club. **Westbury on Trym**'s, closed in 2019, was sold and remains empty. An application for planning permission for a two-storey commercial building awaits decision.

Monetising the dead

A private company proposes to open at Carentan in Normandy a tourist attraction, *Homage aux Héros*, recounting the D-day landings in 1944. A 1,000-seat theatre will move along a series of tableaux and audio-visual presentations: https://www.hommageauxheros.fr/ . The promoters of the €90m project expect it to attract 600,000 visitors a year, paying €28 each. The 30-acre site is inland from the Utah and Omaha beaches where the Americans landed, not where the British and Canadians disembarked, which may suggest what market the promoters have in mind.

The project has provoked opposition. Different objectors have different reasons. Some are simply xenophobic, though one can sympathise with those who deplore Americana polluting French culture. Others, one suspects, do not want to be reminded of France's capitulation to nazi Germany, of the Vichy government, or of the fact that France was liberated, not by its own forces, but by British, American, Canadian and other troops, while what French resistance there was to German occupation was megaphoned by a French general from a safe distance in London. Others decry what they see as the disneyfication of history, which seems disrespectful of the dead. Another, related, objection, is to the idea of making money out of an event when so many people were killed. The argument, similar to that explored by Michael Sandel in *What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets* (Allen Lane 2012), is that there are some things it is just wrong, or inappropriate, or unfitting, to make money out of.



Will our area feature in the project? The D-day landings were planned from 1941 to 1944 by the US general Omar Bradley, who was based in **Clifton** College, which had been requisitioned for military purposes when the school evacuated to Bude: https://www.cliftoncollege.com/clifton-and-world-war-ii-evacuation-from-bristol-and-supporting-the-war-effort/ [Image *War is Hell*]

Whether or not Guthrie Road's part in Hitler's downfall will feature in the Carentan project, local history people might wish to ponder some of the arguments. Is it wrong in principle for a private commercial company to make money out of the dead? How would we feel if the **Arnos Vale** cemetery trust were to charge for admission? (To live visitors, that is). That cemetery was originally a private commercial concern, so what is the difference? One answer might be that if the entrance charges were to be applied to maintaining the cemetery and its memorials, that would be acceptable, but not if the money were to go to shareholders or financiers. It is the idea of people making a profit out of the dead that sticks in the craw.

Not every profiting from the dead is objectionable. History and archaeology are necessarily about the past, which includes 15 times more dead people than living ones. We do not object to museums, their employees, and visitors benefiting from the dead. Museums depend on archaeology, which is concerned with the dead, if only because artefacts associated with death, dead people, and their burial are what archaeologists have unearthed. In many cases those artefacts are the only route we have to aspects or parts of the past. But museums do not make a commercial profit out of the dead. Even the peripatetic Tutankhamun exhibition sends its net profits, after all the ten-percenters have taken their cuts, back to Egypt to support and maintain the heritage.

As to the argument that it is wrong to make an entertainment out of people being killed, how does that square with cinema, television and some stage dramas? If death and war are acceptable subjects for literature and visual arts (Homer's *Iliad*? Aeschylus's *Persians*? Picasso's *Guernica*? Half of Shakespeare?) and if it is acceptable for re-enactment societies to re-run the English civil war and more recent ones, why should a representation of the D-day landings not be acceptable? Again, it is the idea of private commercial profit that seems to mark the unacceptable.

Reception

A branch of history that has grown in recent years is reception studies. Reception is about how ideas, practices and artefacts get transmitted from one culture to another, and how they are absorbed, assimilated, adapted and developed in the culture that receives them. In England large-scale examples of reception include christianity, the reformation, renaissance art and literature, classical and gothic architecture, music and foods. Some would add television advertising, American films and situation comedies, nuclear armaments, haute couture, and jeans.

Historians tend to present the reception of cultural influences from abroad as a national or nation-wide phenomenon, but reception is relevant to the history of localities, for two reasons. First, a nation's reception of a practice is bound to be made up of the total of local receptions. London is not the only place where things happen. Second, cultural influences from abroad become part of the past of a locality. They may explain why some buildings look the way they do, which may affect how a place looks; why some trades are or were present; why some eating places offer foreign foods and styles of cooking; why different genres of music or dress or household decoration occur in different localities.

A recent example of a book about reception is Mary Beard's *Twelve Caesars* (Princeton 2021). Her book is not so much about the roman rulers of that name or title, as about how they have been portrayed in western art, including in places like **Horton** Court in south Gloucestershire. A local example is Sue Shephard's *From cod to callaloo: the story of Bristol through food and wine* (Redcliffe 2013).

Traces of influences received from abroad can be pervasive. The architectural styles of churches, chapels, large houses, and public buildings is an example. Neo-gothic churches and public buildings abound. So do neo-classical mansions and chapels, and whole townscapes as in **Bath**.

Reception also appears in local detail. We can examine renaissance styles of marble chimney pieces in **Bristol**'s Red House and in the café of **Bristol** city museum. We can trace the derivation of sculpture such as the three kings of Cologne on the facade of the chapel of what were Foster's almshouses at the top of **Bristol**'s Christmas Steps. We can ponder whether **Clevedon**'s former market hall derives from Norwegian stave churches. We can trace Hans Price's application of French motifs in his design for a newspaper office building in Waterloo Street, **Weston super Mare**. [Image Alder King].

There could be several reasons why external influences have had impacts in our area. One reason is colonisation and empire: people working abroad brought back ideas, artefacts and practices. **Bristol**'s growth as an international port brought in goods and ideas from elsewhere in coastal western Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean. Once **Bath** became a resort for the wealthy and fashionable, it received whatever they, and those catering to them, brought in. Our area contains major junctions of main roads and railway lines. Immigration and travel abroad will also have contributed. So might education and literacy, television and the internet.

Digitising and destroying

A piece about recreating the past appeared in ALHA newsletter update 31 August 2022, and one about replicas in museums in the update 30 November 2020. There is another form of replica those pieces did not mention. Many repositories now digitise records. They include The National Archives, Bristol Archives, ALHA members **Bristol Record Society, Bristol Historical Association, Bristol & Avon Family History Society, Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**, and even ALHA itself: some out of print ALHA booklets can now be read in portable document format on the ALHA website. Open access digital archives are growing: the Internet Archive https://archive.org/ , mentioned in Dr Harlow's review of Barrett's *Bristol* above; Google Books; Libral https://bahs.org.uk/LIBRAL/index.html (for agricultural history); the Archaeology Data Service https://www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/ (for archaeology); and so on.

Digitisers create digital copies of original documents for several reasons. One is to make a copy available should the original document be lost, stolen or destroyed, or become unreadable. Another is to reduce the risk of the original document deteriorating through being moved and handled by people who want only to read what it says. A third reason is to make the document available online, so as to increase and facilitate access to it: researchers do not then need to travel to be able to read the document, and the text becomes available to far more

readers than would be the case if they could inspect the original only in some American university or a vault in London.

Digitising usually involves photographing or scanning the original document. That takes time and costs money. The time and cost are low if the document is a single piece of paper. If the document consists of many pages, scanning is quick and cheap if the sheets can be fed automatically into the scanner, but dearer and more time-consuming if each page has to be fed manually into the scanner or posed for the camera. As a result, the cost of scanning a book can depend on whether the original book can be taken apart in order to be scanned. If other printed copies exist, the loss of one copy seems outweighed by the benefit. That may not always necessarily be so if the price of digitisation is destruction of the only original.

Attitudes to destruction of original books will vary. Many local history people will recoil instinctively at the prospect of a book being destroyed. We deplore the burning of books by the catholic church, Nazi Germany, and religious and political fanatics. Others will regard reluctance to destroy a book as a primitive fetish that rational users ought to disregard or overcome. Whatever view is taken, digitising that involves destroying a book ought not to be undertaken without due thought.

QUOTE

We are the continuers, we are the inheritors.

Virginia Woolf, *The waves* (1931)

CAN YOU HELP?

AVON STREET GAS WORKS, BRISTOL

Bristol University researchers have been looking into the history of the gas industry in Bristol. 'The next step of this project is to try and gather more personal stories. Did your father/grandfather work at the Gas Company? Do you have any historical photographs of the Avon St gasworks? Are there stories about the gasworks during the second world war? If so, we would like to hear these memories through our online survey: bit.ly/BAFHS312.' Dr James E Watts and Lena Ferriday, avon-street-project@bristol.ac.uk

UPTON CHEYNEY AND SWINEFORD CHAPELS

David Noble, of ALHA member **Bitton Parish History Group**, would be grateful for information about the chapels at **Upton Cheyney** and **Swineford**: noble440@btinternet.com .

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, or other reasons, 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.