



AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

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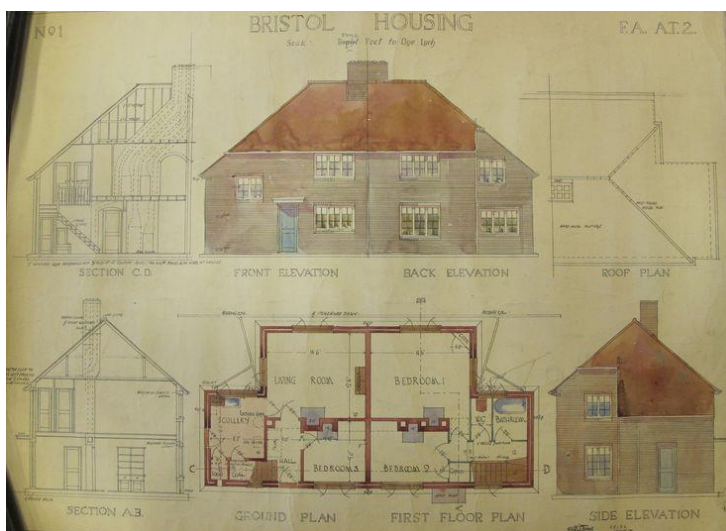
**Material for printed Newsletter 174 by 12 noon
23 March 2023 please:**

Magazines and books to reviews editor
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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
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ALHA NEWS

Bob Lawrence

Local history day 2022 – talks summaries

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- Victorian housing
- House histories
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- Hillfields

Local history day 2023

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CAN YOU HELP?

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ALHA NEWS

BOB LAWRENCE

ALHA's committee is saddened by the death, on 5 December 2022, of Bob Lawrence, who had chaired the committee until shortly before he died after a long series of illnesses. Tributes and messages of sympathy have been received. Bob's contributions to ALHA and to family and local history generally were massive and over a long period. A librarian by profession, he was a member of ALHA's committees' panels on publications, grants and events. His tolerant and relaxed style, his willingness to help enquirers, his capacity for hard work, his leadership of the charity, and his work for the causes of local history and family history in general, will be greatly missed.

LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2022

ALHA's 2022 local history day was held at St Michael's Hall, **Stoke Gifford**, on Saturday 22 October 2022. **David Hardwick**, Chartered Building Surveyor, gave the first talk of the day on the recording of details of building, providing background in the foundation of the practice in heritage management [Summary by JM]. His talk focussed on: 1) the purpose of recording; 2) key issues and 3) how one physically records a building.

The purpose of building recording

DH suggested three main reasons to record a building:



- To understand the history of the building (interpretation)
- For conservation intervention
- To document buildings that may be lost through demolition or neglect

Such reasons can be prompted by a change in use, maintenance, extension, repair or rebuilding. He stressed the importance of recording as a continuous process; not everything is discovered immediately. [Image Apac Ltd].

Key Issues

Building recording was made almost a legal requirement in 1994 thanks to Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 15, which complemented guidance given by PPG 16 - Archaeology and Planning, published in 1990 by the Department of the Environment. PPG 15 is a statement of government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings and other elements of the historic environment. It specifically recommends that programmes of recording should be put in place in the case of alteration or demolition of older buildings.

PPG 15 guidance was replaced by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment in 2010. PPS 5 further specifies that buildings are 'heritage assets' like other standing archaeology.

When the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect in 2012, there were further developments on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Recording a Building

DH recommended Historic Building Conservation RICS Guidance Note, 1st ed, by The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, as a reference.

Building recording is carried out at four different levels, with a level 1 building recording as the most basic, and level 4 being the most intensive. He listed ten steps that can be included in the process of recording.

- 1) First there is the investigation into the physical fabric to work out the stratigraphy and phasing of the building.
- 2) Measured surveys and drawings of a building plan can highlight the difference phases of a building. For instance, the thickness of the walls can show different periods of building. These drawings show phases more clearly than photographs can do.
- 3) Photography is an important step, however. Photo surveys can be put together to create a complete image. Rectified photography can be used to draw over and create a detailed drawing to scale.
- 4) Photogrammetry
- 5) Laser scanning
- 6) Lidar data
- 7) Drones
- 8) Building info modelling (BIM)
- 9) Written analysis
- 10) Dissemination and deposition of records – which become valuable as historic records of housing as of other buildings.

Peter Malpass: *Housing the people in Victorian Bristol*

PM said his talk would say much of what is in chapter 6 of his book of that title. A show of hands suggested that a quarter of those present live in a Victorian house.

There were few house types in Victorian **Bristol**. There were many builders, but they built to a standard plan. A watercolour of a street in the 1820s shows houses in a continuous row, with narrow frontages, basements, and more than two storeys. They were terraced in the sense of joined together, but that term ought strictly to be applied to runs of uniform buildings, which many victorian terraces were not.

The working classes kept living in terraces until 1919. In the 1840s the middle classes started moving out into suburbs, first into standard terraces, but later into semi-detached houses, which had the advantages of side access, a different internal plan, rear access so that things like coal did not have to be brought through the house, and perhaps a back lane.

Semi-detacheds expanded living space by growing larger. Most of the middle class houses studied are in **Redland and Clifton**, but there were similar elsewhere in Bristol. Houses in East Street **St Pauls** fronted direct on to the pavement. Similar examples are in Woolcott Street, an unusual terrace from the 1850s. In Berkeley Street Lawrence Hill the houses have low pitched roofs behind a parapet. In Armoury Square Stapleton Road (1850s) small front gardens appear. Mount Pleasant terrace **Bedminster**, 1848, has



a small area in front of each house. In the true terraces there are raised pavements, eg at Royal York Crescent, Victoria Square, Vyvyan Terrace and Worcester Terrace, all in **Clifton**. Hampton Terrace has basements plus three storeys.

The 1848 Public Health Act required basements used for living to have daylight. A result can be seen in Fremantle Square **Cotham**. The kitchen was always in the basement.

By 1900 in **Horfield and Southville** houses had 16 foot frontages, wide bays, small front areas and no basements. Then came larger gardens, as in South Parade, Whiteladies Road.

Burlington Buildings, **Redland**, 1840s, shows the transition to the suburbs: large gardens in front, and an enclosed area as well. The front garden is the defining characteristic of the suburb.

Early semi-detacheds appear in **Clifton Hill**, with the front door in the middle facing outwards. Another example is Redland Hill House, originally semi-detached, about 1768. This was the rule until about 1828.

Large houses in **Clifton** such as Auckland House, Avonvale House (the SMV hall) were built and sold speculatively. Similarly with Cavenham House, Trenmore on **Clifton Down**, built very large by William Baker, 40 feet wide and 70 feet deep. Similarly with **Sneyd Park** Villa (a W Baker house) and Sneyd Park House. Some large houses proved too big for the market: there was no demand, so they were demolished.

Hebron Villa in Cheltenham Road (William Pope 1850s-1860s) is an example of the semi-detached emerging from the terrace. It had a side extension, set back. That allowed for a different internal arrangement of rooms and circulation space.

The bay window is Britain's gift to domestic architecture. [Image Ideal Hone]. Early bay windows were round, as at Hampton Road **Redland**. In Chertsey Road the service basement is getting higher, and the servants' rooms are put into a third storey. In Ashgrove Road there are two houses with the same design, one with a side extension. In Westfield Park there are semis, identically handed, with no back extensions. In Pembroke Road, 1870s, the houses are very wide, with no back extensions. The side extension may allow the front door to face the side.



In Apsley Road (Cosley 1867) a new standard form appears. The front room is next to the outside wall, not the party wall to the adjoining house. That reduced the risk of noise from the neighbours. The houses had a drawing room, a parlour, dining room, kitchen and a scullery on the ground floor, moved up from the basement. This was accommodated in a standard width of 30 feet.

In Elgin Park the houses, late 1860s, are a pared-down version of Apsley Road. There is no basement, and no upper storey, and no bathroom originally. In Alma Road, 1872, and Salisbury Road **Redland**, 1892, there is the same plan and elevation, within a frontage of 30 feet.

There were three generic house types. They can be traced back to the georgian town house, with narrow frontage and a basement kitchen. Then comes a square plan, with three storeys and a basement. Then a square plan with two storeys and no basement, and perhaps a cellar where the land falls back. In the 1850s the basement ceases to be lived in. Builders looked to the needs of aristocrats. Their houses were too big to serve as a model for most people. The salaried middle classes moved to the suburbs, but did not have the income to support large houses, so the semi-detached emerged from the terrace. The same house types were built by different builders. Victoria Square **Clifton** took 25 years to complete, with several builders, and had to be financed by the SMV. The big change was the movement from the terrace to the villa.

William Evans, deputising for Carline Gurney, who was indisposed: **House histories – problems and opportunities**

A house history asks 1. When was the house built, and by whom? 2. What alterations have been made to the original house? 3. Who has lived in the house, and what did they do? To answer those questions, we need 1. sources of information, and 2. tracing and investigation techniques. Both are common to local history, family history and house history.

Sources and techniques are explained in several books and websites, including Nick Barratt, *Tracing the history of your house*, (TNA); David Olusoga and Melanie Backe-Hansen, *A house through time*, (BBC); Melanie Backe-Hansen, *House histories: the secrets behind your front door*, and her website at

<http://www.house-historian.co.uk/>. WE summarised their different approaches, strengths and limitations: the first a list of sources, the second a comprehensive survey of the social history of housing, private and public, with few mentions of 10 Guinea Street **Redcliffe**, featured in the television series. He recommended the day or half day sessions or series of sessions offered at our local record offices.

What the land was used for, before the house was built, is usually more interesting than the history of the house, but more difficult, requiring some knowledge of legal history, palaeography, and Latin. There are books, and local record offices' courses are usually good value. But if you cannot decipher a medieval Latin document and cannot translate it, or do not recognise what sort of document it is, the quickest solution is to get some help, which may come free from an amateur, but from a professional will have to be paid for.

House histories are not just about documents: we can learn a lot from just looking, eg whether a house is Elizabethan, Stuart/Jacobean, Georgian, regency, Victorian, between the wars or modern. An elementary book on architectural history would be useful. Some houses give the date of construction over the door or inside. Examples include the former bishop's house in **Clifton** (1711), **Rangeworthy** Court (1664) and the Rhubarb Tavern in **Barton Hill**. But 1. The fact that a building contains an old feature does not mean that the feature was original or that the house is the same age as the feature: bits of buildings get cannibalised and recycled. 2. A date on rainwater goods may show the date the ironwork was manufactured, but the building may be later. There are examples in **Fishponds**. We can ask elderly neighbours who may even remember the house being built. WE gave an example in Westbury Park, the original configuration and use of which could not be deduced from documents.

Documents relevant to house history can be 1. private documents, eg title deeds, accounts, diaries, letters, some of which may be in public repositories, and 2. public records, usually created by public authorities, such as wills, planning permissions, building plans, newspaper adverts, census records, rating records, electoral rolls, directories. Both types have limitations and problems.

Title deeds used to be the basis of conveyancing. The deeds of a house will show successive owners and mortgagees. In addition there may be an abstract of title, a summary of deeds past, including those that relate to a larger area of land than just the house being transferred. Abstracts of title can go back many years. They were used by Peter Malpass in his ALHA booklet on Victorian **Redland**, and in looking at Victorian **Clifton, Horfield and Bedminster**. Using abstracts of title, PM worked out when each area was developed, and by which builder or landowner (who may not have been the same person). The same abstract may relate to all the houses that derive their title from a particular deed, so we can find out about one house by inference from its neighbours. Former council houses will have been built on an estate the land for which will have been assembled on a large scale.

Title deeds have limitations because of 1. The extension of compulsory registration of title on sale or mortgage, compulsory in Bristol from 1963; 2. Shortening of the length of ownership required to prove an owner's title; 3. Holding of title deeds by mortgagees such as banks and buildings societies, who may not be willing to give access; 4. Electronic conveyancing making title deeds irrelevant or not required. So deeds get destroyed.

Registration of title has advantages: 1. open access to the Land Registry, so anyone can get information about any property; 2. The Law Society, the solicitors' professional body, recommends that solicitors deposit unwanted deeds in local record offices, but not all do.

Public records are many and various. For a house history, the obvious one is the census, which tells not who owned the house, but who lived there on the census date. Limitations and pitfalls include: 1. much may have happened between censuses; 2. data are released only after 100 years; 3. no census in

1941, but there was a registration census in 1939, which gives some information; 4. 1931 census data are said to have been destroyed in the war; 5. not all census enumerators were accurate; 6. not everyone gave truthful replies to the enumerators; 7. census data have no plans, so there is scope for confusion; 8. local authorities can and do change house numbering.

Other sources of information compiled by government departments and public authorities include: 1. building plans – deposited under local building byelaws and then The (national) Building Regulations. Bristol and Bath are well served. 2. the 1910-1915 survey of land values, (the Lloyd George Survey), a preliminary to intended taxation of increases in land values. Records survive for Bristol and south Gloucestershire. Volunteers have transcribed the records for nearly all Gloucestershire parishes; a team is transcribing those for Bristol. The transcripts go onto a website run by Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. The data include not just properties and their owners, but measurements, valuations and a lot of other miscellaneous information thought relevant to valuation.

Directories are in public libraries, and simple to use. Problems include: 1. They are partial: only the large houses, the larger farmers and main tradespeople are listed. Agricultural workers' or miners' cottages do not get included. 2. They often repeat entries from one year to another, without checks whether entries are still true. 3. Some people overstated their social or economic status.

House histories can be expanded into local history in two ways: 1. Information about a house and its occupiers can be extended in any direction. Where did the occupiers work? What work? What other family did they have? What were their social, leisure, religious or political connections? Where did the family shop? What shops were in the area? Where were the local schools, park, bus stop, post office, library, doctor's, dentist's, cinema? With answers to those questions we can build up a picture of the house in its local context at various times. Most houses are and were part of a community. Those communities will have differed from place to place, and obviously the context of an isolated farm in north Somerset is different from that of a terraced house in Bristol or Bath. That context is part of the history of the house. 2. House histories together can help build up a history of a local community, cf the Cambridge University project regarding family histories.

Roger Leech: Completing and publishing a research project: the town house in medieval and early modern Bristol

RL explained how his book *The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol* (English Heritage 2014) arose out of an original idea to evaluate the urban archaeological resource in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Avon. Starting in 1979 with a Leverhulme Trust fellowship research grant, and working for the former Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, he examined the **Bristol** town house from about 1000 to 1800, during much of which time **Bristol** was England's second port and largest provincial city. A wealthy trading centre with economic and political links with London and abroad, its elite was able to know about changes in architectural fashion.

RL described how he investigated the main urban house types, hall houses and shop houses; what rooms they contained, how they were used, and how their layouts were altered. The study also looked at the phenomenon of the garden house, and at inns and warehouses, at houses in surrounding villages that later became suburbs, and related buildings in the Caribbean and the southern states of the USA. RL explained his use of surveys by the former Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, local archaeologists, and archival sources including probate inventories and collections of watercolours, plans, drawings and photographs. RL set his work in the context of a long line of investigations by or under the auspices of Historic England and its predecessors.

Peter Insole: 'Homes for Heroes' – Hillfields Estate, Bristol

Hillfields has the first Addison Act council houses built in **Bristol**. The design of these houses was the result of an architectural competition and went on to define the homes we see in many areas of **Bristol** from **Southmead** to **Knowle**.

After WW1 there was a shortage of housing, with demobbed soldiers returning to overcrowded and squalid conditions. Housing in most large towns having been built piecemeal by private property developers many years previously, much housing for working people and their families was unfit for habitation. Bristol City Council reckoned it needed 5,000 new houses, with basic amenities such as bath and indoor lavatory. Prime minister Lloyd George having announced that Britain should be a country 'fit for heroes to live in,' the government adopted principles enunciated by Ebenezer Howard, who called for garden cities, with no more than 12 houses to the acre, each with front and back gardens, and with fruit trees and vegetable plots.

The policy was implemented by the Housing Act 1919, piloted through parliament by the minister of health Christopher Addison. Local authorities were given grants to build housing on proof of need and approval of plans by the ministry. Bristol corporation had already bought land at **Fishponds** for a new garden suburb; other similar estates were planned at **Sea Mills, Knowle and Horfield**. With no experience of housebuilding, the corporation organised an architectural competition. Designs were to pay attention to the needs of the housewife. Of 39 entries, 10 were chosen in June 1919. At the government's request the city council created a demonstration area at Beechen Drive, Briar Way, Gorse Hill, Roseberry Road and Thicket Avenue Hillfields, which was visited by an international delegation in 1920.

The city council went on to build about 1,500 houses at Hillfields. Most were 3-bedroom, two-storey, semi-detached houses with gardens front and back. PI described the variations. They had hot running water, indoor lavatories and a bathroom. Many had a separate parlour and scullery. The first



houses to be occupied were on Briar Way, in 1920. The Geddes cuts in 1921 stopped building, which was resumed in 1924, and by 1930 the estate was more or less complete. Many of the residents marvelled at the accommodation compared with the conditions they had previously lived in.

The estate was provided with infant (1927) and junior (1929) schools, shops and a recreation ground. Sites were reserved for churches. A library did not open until 1939; a community centre was

opened in 1952, replacing an ex-army hut appropriated after WW2. The main employer locally was a cardboard box and paper bag factory. There was a jam factory on Woodwell Road.

Hillfields was the model for later council estates at **Sea Mills, Knowle, Horfield, Shirehampton, Southmead and St Annes**.

LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2023

Given the low attendance at the ALHA local history day 2022, the deficit of £460 incurred by the event, a sense that moving the event from April to October may have contributed, and with no prospect of being able to notice in this newsletter of an event in April 2023, the committee has decided not to hold a local history day in 2023.

HANDEL COSSHAM 2024

Work continues on the event to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Handel Cossham, planned jointly with ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** for 2024. Potential speakers have been identified, and the search is on for a date and a venue convenient to as many attenders as possible.

VACANCIES

The death of Bob Lawrence means that volunteers are needed to fill a number of roles filled by Bob, and for other activities. The roles include:

Publications: this involves reading texts submitted for publication and commenting on them to the editor, Dr Jonathan Harlow, and helping with proof reading. No meetings are involved: all communication is online. If you can help, please contact the editor, Jonathan.Harlow@uwe.ac.uk

The publications team would also be grateful for help in holding stocks of ALHA booklets, posting them to meet orders, and publicising them with local bookshops and other outlets. If you can help, please contact the treasurer, wm.evans@btopenworld.com

Grants: this involves scrutinising applications for grants from ALHA, and forming recommendations to Trustees on whether a grant should be made, and if so, on what conditions. No meetings are involved, and all communication is online. If you can help, please contact the treasurer, wm.evans@btopenworld.com, 0117 968 4979.

Events: this involves planning events such as the local history day and the annual general meeting and lecture. The work includes choosing topics, identifying speakers, arranging venues, publicity and ticketing, and helping on the day with reception, book sales and stewarding. All work before the event is done online. If you can help, please contact the sole remaining member of the events team, Ian Chard, ian.chard@talktalk.net

In addition, the committee would welcome help in other activities:

Summer walks: Mike Hooper hopes to arrange some walks in the summer of 2023, but would welcome help in identifying locations and walk leaders and arranging publicity. Mike is best contacted on 0117 977 5512.

Trusteeship: None of the above activities require membership of the ALHA committee, but anyone representing a member group or society or an individual member of ALHA is welcome to put forward their name. If you are interested, or can suggest others whom ALHA might approach, please contact the secretary, blackrockcf@hotmail.com

OUR WEBSITE IS THERE FOR YOU

ALHA's website team writes: It's been some months since we launched our new website. It has settled in very well and we've been receiving email requests to publicise events which we've been able to do. We hope you are pleased with the new Events list which we hope will bring visitors - and ultimately new members - to your doors.

Each Group has a page on the site and we'd welcome input on how you'd like to portray yourselves. There is currently little other than days and locations of meetings, a website link or contact details. The new website can give you so much more. While some of our members run superb websites themselves there are also some who have no internet presence. Whichever is the case, your Group entry page is yours to enhance.

Tell readers why your area is of interest: send in a pic of some of your noted buildings / locations and tell us why they're special; tell people when and where to find your meetings; publicise current projects /

exhibitions; advertise books you are promoting, although sadly we can't offer to market them. This can all be done with an introductory passage and a link to one of your own website pagesor we can put all the information as a more detailed page under your Group entry on our own site.

If this sounds like something you'd like to do but you're not sure where to start then get in touch on ALHAwebmaster@gmail.com and someone will get back to you to help you. If you can provide the basics (descriptions & photos) we can make it stand out on your dedicated Group web page and give it a great look.

Check your page right now on <https://www.alha.org.uk/groups/groups-a-z>

The Website Team

EVENTS AND SOURCES

CBA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS - BRISTOL MUSEUM

Congratulations to **Bristol City Museum**, winner of the Council for British Archaeology's Engagement and Participation Award and highly commended for the overall Outstanding Achievement Award.

'The Archaeological Achievement Awards are a showcase for the best in UK and the Republic of Ireland archaeology and a central event in the archaeological calendar. Established in 1976, they now encompass five Awards and an overall outstanding achievement award, celebrating every aspect of archaeology. The purpose of the Awards is to advance public education in the study and practice of archaeology in all its aspects in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and in particular by the granting of awards for excellence and/or initiative.'

Bristol Museum's awards were for its *Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology* programme, which ran from September 2021 to August 2022 and delivered 5 online lectures by experts. They reached 1496 people in 20 countries. 4 online courses were delivered by experts to 180 participants. An archaeology field course (online and in the field) was led by museum curators. The programme included guided walks led by staff to the archaeology and wildlife of **Blaise; Kings Weston** Roman villa family fun days; archaeology sessions for the under 5s; and the *Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology* day at the **Blaise** Museum and estate.

LIPPINCOTT AUST MAP

The Friends of Gloucestershire Archives have bought some maps for Gloucestershire Archives. One is a plan of an estate in Coat (now **Cote?**) and **Aust** belonging to Sir Henry Cann Lippincott Bt. circa 1810. It is described as 'large pen, ink graphite and watercolour estate plan on vellum of an estate near Westbury-on-Trim, several tables of explanation and reference, dust-soiled, stained and creased, laid on later card, 790 x 1380 mm, framed and glazed.' The purchases were supported by local history groups, with contributions from ALHA member **Olveston Parish History Society**.

1810 was the year Lippincott, son of the MP, whose main estate was in **Stoke Bishop, Bristol**, appeared at Gloucester assizes charged with raping a 17 year old young woman. Thanks to marriages and tobacco businesses, the family owned extensive tracts of land in **Westbury on Trym, Stoke Bishop, Littleton on Severn** and elsewhere. He died in 1829, having survived a duel on **Durdham Down** after insulting an attorney.

ONLINE MAP PROJECT

Ray Wilson writes: 'Fieldworkers can now use the OS 25inch (1:2500) maps from c.1870-1930, offline, on GPS smart phones. Free software is used display the maps and to create them (if not available to download

from the library of pre-built maps). Not only will your phone show the large scale historic map of the area but the GPS system will indicate your location on the map to an accuracy of 2-5 metres.

It has proved successful when used for 19th century industrial and transport sites in the Forest of Dean and on Cornish mining sites. However, the system is still under development and additional feedback will be greatly appreciated. Full details are at <https://coaley.net/maps1900> and single maps of specific areas will be willingly created for evaluation purposes on request [email maps@coaley.net].

If you know anyone who might find this specialist tool of interest, please pass the website link on to them.'

A DATABASE OF LOCAL HISTORY ARTICLES?

In his review of ALHA member **Nailsea & District LHS's** *History & Heritage Matters*, below under REVIEWS, Dr Jonathan Harlow floats the idea of a database of local history articles in small journals.

ALHA's committee would be interested to know whether such a database, perhaps hosted on ALHA's website with access open to the public or to ALHA members only, would be useful. The presumption is that at present some journals are indexed, and some local public library catalogues include journal articles, but there is no comprehensive index of local history articles from small journals, so to track down what has been published about the past of a particular place or topic can be laborious, time-consuming, and not always successful.

Dr Harlow has not volunteered to compile such a database, so ALHA's committee would be interested to hear from anyone who might be willing to consider taking on such a task.

One method might be for one person to compile such a database, but that could take years. Another way might be to break the work down into manageable chunks and delegate. One individual or a small team might organise first the identification of relevant articles, and then the selection, extraction and formatting of information to go into the database. Much work that could contribute to that has already been done. For example, ALHA member **Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society** has indexed its *Journal* articles, which are searchable at <https://b-i-a-s.org.uk/bias-journal-index-2/>. **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society's** *Transactions* and **Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society's** *Proceedings* are indexed. B&GAS also publishes a consolidated index every 10 years, the next one due in 2023. The full index on its website is searchable: <https://www.bgas.org.uk/resources/bgas-resources/search-past-transactions>. The challenge would be to identify all the smaller journals in which relevant articles have appeared, to select and extract the information, and then to format it for the database. Could local groups and societies do that for their own publications or for publications relevant to their area?

One question for the managers of such a project would be how to structure the database, and what the fields for each record should be. Obvious ones include the date, author, title, journal, issue, and perhaps page numbers. Dr Harlow suggests places and people. But what about topics or subjects: Mining? Agriculture? Housing? Sport? Entertainment? Politics? (Clearly some overlaps). The list of possible topics could be infinite, whereas a database is not, nor is human patience or stamina. What should be included and what left out? Or should the database list only the titles of articles, leaving it to enquirers to refine their quests by using a search engine or reading the publications?

Another question is how the database should grow. One imagines that the team would add entries every so often, perhaps announcing on the ALHA website that a batch of data had been uploaded. Should local groups and societies be allowed to add and correct entries directly, or would it be advisable to control additions and alterations to the database through an editor?

ALHA's committee would welcome views.

REVIEWS

by Dr Jonathan Harlow unless otherwise said.

***Memoirs Historical & Topographical of Bristol and It's Neighbourhood from the Earliest period Down to the Present Time* Samuel Seyer 2 vols 1136 pages & 25 b&w plates, Bristol 1821-3.**

Modern facsimiles from BiblioLife; Forgotten Books; & HathiTrust Digital Library, University of California.

Memoirs was consciously produced as a successor to, and (tacitly) an improvement on, Barrett's *History & Antiquities* (see ALHA Newsletter 172); and the cumbersome title was devised to avoid overt competition. It is indeed a different work; with careful attention to original sources and no truck at all with Chatterton/Rowley. It did not go down to Seyer's 'present time': it stops in 1760, rather than give offence to persons still living over issues still in agitation: conveniently avoiding the American revolution and the abolition of the slave trade.

For Seyer, a history of **Bristol** means primarily a history of **Bristol** in the political affairs of the nation. Thus the chapters are formed as the succession of regimes and of reigns; the only exception to this is Chapter VII on 'Bristol Castle': itself a symbol of state dominance over the town. History from below this is not; and very seldom is there interest or information as to the inhabitants. **Bristol's** economic and mercantile history is ignored: there is nothing about the wine trade, the Society of Merchant Venturers, or the slave trade. Cabot gets in as an exercise in foreign policy: thereafter the Americas are invisible. But he also includes local events such as floods and frosts, such as had been recorded by previous chroniclers; and for no other apparent reason.

This is part of what Seyer sees as the business of history: the transmission of 'Authorities'. Thus there is a strong dependence on official records. Seyer makes intensive and extensive use of charters, and ecclesiastical and manorial records (especially those of Berkeley Castle). But he also drew on a surprisingly wide range of pamphlet literature, especially for the civil war period. He quoted accurately and at length from his sources, though the reader needs to bear in mind the point in his introduction: only double quotes mark *verbatim* extracts; and single quotes are used for his own summaries.

The plates are a good plus; but the list of them for both volumes is curiously set at the end of volume II and separated from the plates themselves by the list of subscribers. Seyer does not seem to acknowledge sources for these as carefully as he does for documents.

Politically Seyer is clearly on the right. The civil war is a good test: royalists are always loyalists; parliamentarians are rebels. Dissenters are described as irrational or insane and treated with distaste, though again he gives good space to some of the literature on both sides. But you are never in doubt which side he is on.

Perhaps Seyer's main drawback as a historian is that he is concerned to relate what happened, but not curious about why it happened. Thus he is much more an annalist than an analyst. Nor is there any sign that he ever found anything to make him smile; and he never attempts to entertain his reader. (He was an anglican minister, as were so many pioneers in fields requiring leisurely study without great expense, but Sidney Smith will remind us that this did not entail flat sobriety.)

Dr Bettey (in *The First Historians of Bristol: William Barrett & Samuel Seyer* Bristol Branch of the Historical Association no.108 2003, p 21) pays due tribute to Seyer's *Memoirs* as 'the first really successful and detailed account of Bristol history'. With some qualification, fair enough. And up to 30 years ago one might still have recommended it to local historians as a compendium of full extracts from many sources.

But now all that and more is readily available on line, searchable yet while Seyer has no index. Perhaps only historiographers will want their own copies.

History & Heritage Matters 21 (November 2022) *The Local History Journal of Nailsea, Backwell, Tickenham & Wraxall*

Once again a tribute to **Nailsea & District LHS** as one of the few local history groups which is not merely a passive audience. The articles in a magazine like this fall into several categories: transcripts from primary sources; articles referenced, directly or indirectly, to primary sources; personal memoirs; reprints from published work; progress reports on ongoing work; talks and visits; and unreferenced essays. Any may be of interest to the reader and other local historians; but in my view only the first three qualify as history in their own right.

So here we have

- ‘Newspaper Cuttings’ – sadly weakened by the anonymity of the source;
- ‘Rock Farm Part 3’ by Dave Sowdon;
- ‘The Memoirs of John Perry’ and ‘**Nailsea**, the Village I Knew’ by Jack Hart (or is this a reprint? – source unspecified);
- ‘**Kingshill**’ reprint of work on enclosure by Dr Margaret Thomas, and a reprint of some mining photos of 1984 (& ‘Nailsea’ above?);
- Reports on the work of the Hannah More project, on visits to **Portbury** parish church, and on the Social Evening
- And NO unreferenced essays!

This issue came out before the death of Trevor Bowen, but is tacitly a tribute to his sustained contribution.

Dr Harlow adds: A thought prompted by the previous review: Could ALHA maintain a database of items from our member societies, falling within my first three categories, and listing the people or places concerned?

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Bristol & Avon Family History Society *Journal* 190, December 2022.

Printed before the death of Bob Lawrence, a vice-president and former chairman of B&AFHS as well as chairman of ALHA, this issue contains Bob’s usual, and last, contribution on the internet. He drew attention to the 1921 census being available on *Findmypast*; the Bristol Archives index to ships’ muster rolls; and **Bristol Record Society**’s compilation of data about voyages by **Bristol**-owned ships.

Noticeable in the B&AFHS *Journal* of late is the increasing numbers of references to DNA tests as part of family history investigations. RL mentioned an *Ancestry* DNA test which identified his granddaughter as a first cousin, which does not inspire confidence.

Articles of local history interest include one by Geoff Andrews on a Lancastrian who died in the siege of **Bristol** in 1326; one by Ann Pople and Clare Haywood on the Montague Hotel, **Kingsdown** (bonfire night riots, turtle soup, workplace deaths, the madrigal society, the Savages, litigation, a disastrous fire, theatrical digs, and a direct hit in the blitz: what more could local history people want?); and one by Robin White on ‘Signor Pietro Martini Ulrico, one of the finest euphonium players of his time.’

Repeated from the **Bitton Parish History Society** website is Julie Johns’s article on Mary Isabella Staton (1838-1918) who came – originally, as Buckingham palace would say – from **Willsbridge**. She was a prominent mountaineer. Did she know Francis Fox Tuckett of **Frenchay**?

COMMENTARY

Gone somewhere else

Local histories are often about change. Changes may involve removal of something or someone from one



place to another. People move house, families and businesses expand or contract and move to new premises, institutions move from one site to another. Wills went from **Bedminster** to **Hartcliffe**. Fry's went from central **Bristol** to **Somerdale**. Bristol's airport moved from **Filton** to **Whitchurch** to **Lulsgate**. Many schools have moved: King Edward's from central **Bath** to **Bathwick**; Bristol Grammar from **St Bartholomew's** to the **Gaunts** to **Tyndall's Park**; the Red Maids from **Denmark Street** to **Westbury on Trym**, **Kingswood** school to **Bath**; **Thornbury**

grammar school to **Alveston-Marlwood**, and so on. Sports clubs too: **Clifton** rugby club now plays at **Cribbs Causeway**; the relocations of **Bristol's** two larger association football clubs are well known.

In his *Shirehampton sketches* (Bristol Books 2021) Richard Coates tracks down a number of things that used to be in **Shirehampton** but are now somewhere else there: not businesses or institutions, but things, artefacts. Three that he mentions are locomotives: one that worked in the mustard gas factory, another in the smelting works, and another that ran along the temporary track laid during the construction of the **Portway**. One is in use, one in a museum, and one under restoration.

A similar exercise could be done for any place in our area. **Bristol's** high cross got moved to Stourhead, as did the superstructure of St Edyth's well. Church furnishings seem particularly prone to being moved. Other exports from our area have gone all over the world: local metalwork will be found in southern states of America and in the Caribbean; brassware made in **Saltford** and **Warmley** will have been used to buy enslaved people in Africa for onward trafficking to the Atlantic colonies, if they survived.

Village hall histories

In 2014 the Charity Commission estimated that there are about 9,000 village halls and community centres in England, with a turnover of about £250 million. That must be a serious under-estimate: all the more serious if you take into account the value of volunteers' work. Village halls have been important to their local communities in the past as well as the present. Village hall histories could take several forms. One approach could chart the history of one village hall in one village from conception to the present (or from conception to closure). Another approach could examine halls in a number of villages, identify what they have in common, and explain why they differ: compare, contrast and explain. A wider study could look at regional similarities and variations: bars seem universal, but not every village hall has a skittle alley.

Village halls vary in their origins. Some started from a benefaction by a wealthy resident or other donor. Examples include **Abbots Leigh**, where the village hall was largely paid for by Yda Richardson in the 1920s; it is now run by the parish council. **Shirehampton's** public hall, designed by the architect Frederick Bligh Bond and opened in 1904, was commissioned and paid for by Philip Napier Miles of **King's Weston** house; it is now owned by **Bristol** city council and run by a community association. In **Westbury on Trym** the village hall, where the ALHA committee currently meets, was funded by Henry St Vincent Ames of the

banking family and opened in 1869; it is now owned by trustees and managed by volunteers. In some places the village hall was paid for by local fundraising, with hundreds of people contributing small amounts, perhaps over some years. In **Southmead** on the borders of **Filton** BAWA was started in 1942 by Stanley White to provide sick pay, sports and social facilities for employees of Bristol Aeroplane Company; other employers have since joined in. It now describes itself as “a ‘not-for-profit’ organisation offering healthcare and leisure services and facilities with the aim of promoting good health and wellbeing for our many thousands of members.”

Village halls vary in the uses to which they have been put. Most contain a large room with a stage useful for public meetings and performances, and a number of different size rooms. Except where the founder stipulated that there should be no sales of alcohol, most village halls have a bar. Some have games rooms, perhaps a snooker table, perhaps a skittle alley. Uses and structures may have changed over time: BAWA is an example. **Stanton Drew** village hall was built in 1877 as a venue for lectures; it is now owned and managed by trustees, whose name reflects its original purpose. **Marksbury** village hall was completely refashioned in 2019.

Some places have a village hall but in a different guise. Some are church halls. May some of them may have originally been church houses, built in medieval times either to house workers building the parish church or for hosting church-related events such as church ales? A piece in *ALHA Newsletter* 171 30 June 2022 was about vestry halls, such as that at **St Philips** in **Bristol**, and asked if there were any more in our area. Local authority community centres appeared in some places in the twentieth century. In some places the buildings of a closed school have been converted into village halls or community centres, eg at **Stoke Gifford** where ALHA has held annual general meetings and a local history day, and the Park Centre in **Kingswood**, once Avon’s largest primary school. In the coalfields some miners’ institutes became village halls. Thus at **Clutton** the first community building was an ex-army hut from **Weston Super Mare** erected at **Greensbrook** by the miners and villagers, supported by the YMCA and local fundraising. In the 1920s it was known as the Miners Welfare Hall. In 1933 a new hall was built on the present village hall site, for the miners of the village, funded by a levy on coal of a penny per ton and again with YMCA support. From 1965 the hall was managed by St John Ambulance and extended. In 1975 after involvement of the Charity Commission the premises were renamed **Clutton** Village Hall, the Miners Welfare stone on the front of the building commemorating the history. Was there a different history at **Pensford**? The stone on the Memorial Hall says it was opened by Acker Bilk in 1966. The Miners’ Welfare Institute building is now in private ownership.

QUOTE

History has remembered the kings and warriors, because they destroyed. Art has remembered the people, because they created.

William Morris, *The water of the wondrous isles*, 1897.

CAN YOU HELP?

For ways in which you can help ALHA continue, please see under ALHA NEWS above, page 1.

EVENTS DIARY

Events notified to ALHA’s website manager are listed on the ALHA website. Please send details or a copy of your programme to the webmaster, contact details on page 1 top right 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.