

ALHA



AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Newsletter e-update
30 November 2022

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**Material for printed Newsletter 173 by 12
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Magazines and books to reviews editor
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Details of events to website manager

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Other news, comments, responses to
comments, new work, and changes of contact
details to newsletter editor and membership
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Website: <http://www.alha.org.uk>

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

Facebook:

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



Birnbeck pier, Weston super mare

[Image ITV]

ALHA NEWS

New booklet: Bath dispensaries
Bob Lawrence stands down

EVENTS AND SOURCES

Local studies toolkit
Heritage at risk register
Census competition
Delftware
Bristol central library consultation

NEWS FROM GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

Stoke Bishop – new history planned
Trevor Bowen
Village halls and community centres

NEW WALK LEADERS

Richard Stride
Vale of Berkeley railway

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Friendly Societies in Bitton
The escape of Charles II
John Warwell, mystery man of Goldney
grotto

COMMENTARY

Butchers' and grocers' politics (JS)
What might have been
Qatar and the 1910 election (JS)
Novels of record

QUOTE

EVENTS LIST
is on the
ALHA website

ALHA NEWS

NEW ALHA BOOKLET - BATH

ALHA's latest booklet, edited by Dr Jonathan Harlow, is Michael Whitfield's prize-winning *The Bath dispensaries: health-care for the poor before the NHS*. A flyer and order form accompanies this newsletter update. There is a small discount for orders before 30 November 2022. This is ALHA's first booklet relating to **Bath**.

BOB LAWRENCE

Bob Lawrence, who has represented **Bristol & Avon Family History Society** on ALHA's executive committee for many years and has chaired the committee for some years, has decided to stand down from that role on health grounds. The committee would like to express its thanks and sympathy to Bob, whose contribution to ALHA has been enormous. Much to the committee's relief, Bob will continue as a trustee.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

LOCAL STUDIES TOOLKIT

The Local Studies Group of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, a professional organisation for librarians, has developed an online toolkit for local studies. Just short of 50 sections deal with subjects such as who uses local studies collections; what relationships local studies collections and their librarians can have with others interested in the subject, eg community groups; and how local studies activities can be planned and organised. A section on resources deals with collections policy, book stock, maps & plans, oral history, photographs & other visual material, newspapers, ephemera, directories, digital preservation, archives, subscription websites, indexes & transcriptions, and general web-based resources. The guide aims to take account of changes in circumstances since the coronavirus. The toolkit is intended for professional librarians, but contains much that could be of interest to local history people generally. There is, for example, a section on copyright (illustrated by a copyright symbol attached to a fused time bomb). The guide can be read and downloaded at <https://lslibrarians.wordpress.com/toolkit/>

HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER

Historic England published on 10 November 2022 the 2022 edition of its register of heritage assets considered to be at risk. There are over 4,900 entries. Of those in our area, the main ones of note include:

Bath: the footbridge north of Sydney Gardens (IKB, 1840-1841), a new entry; Beckford's tower, **Lansdown**, (Goodridge 1826-1827) and **Lansdown** cemetery; King Edward's school, Bond Street (1752); The Priory, **Hinton Charterhouse** (early 13th century); and the scheduled monuments at **Camerton** (prehistoric, Britanno-Roman and medieval).

Bristol: Kingsley Hall, **Old Market** (1706); lodges at Napier Miles Road, **Kingsweston** (Mylne 1763); north entrance lock swing bridge, **Cumberland basin** (IKB 1844); stair turret at **Inns Court** vicarage (15th century) [Image, Historic England]; landscape park at **Brislington** House.

North Somerset: **Ashton Court** (various dates); Elms colliery (Middle Engine Pit), **Nailsea** (early 19th century); Birnbeck pier, **Weston super mare**; St George's **Easton in Gordano** (C14, C15); St Mary **Portbury** (C12).

South Gloucestershire: Whitfield tabernacle, **Kingswood** (1741); Somerset monument, **Hawkesbury** (Vulliamy 1846); Keeper's lodge, Badminton park, **Hawkesbury** (Wright 1750); Brandy Bottom colliery, **Pucklechurch** (C19); Parts of **Thornbury** castle (various dates); Oxwick farmhouse and coach house, **Wickwar** (1772); St Andrew **Cromhall** (C12); St Mary **Yate**.



The whole list is at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/har-2022-registers/> or <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/findings/>. The index is searchable. A resume of new developments in 2022 in our area is at <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/south-west/heritage-at-risk-2022/>, including some reports of successful restorations.

1920s CENSUS COMPETITION

Katherine Bugos from TNA writes: I'm getting in touch to let you know about a local history competition we at The National Archives are running in conjunction with the British Association for Local History, which I thought might be of interest to your members. The competition is part of our ongoing 20sStreets campaign in conjunction with the 1921 census, and we invite groups or individuals to submit local history stories that capture the imagination and show what local history is all about. The story must have a link to the 1920s and relate to the areas covered by the 1921 Census of England & Wales (England, Wales, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands), but the rest is open to interpretation.

Prizes include premium subscriptions to *FindMyPast* for individuals, or specially tailored local history sessions with The National Archives experts for groups. The competition is open until 31 January 2023, and more information can be found at

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20s-people/20sstreets-local-history-competition>.

Katherine Bugos | Media Assistant, The National Archives, 020 8392 5277;
nationalarchives.gov.uk ; Twitter: @UkNatArcMed .

DELFTWARE CONFERENCE

Emily Roy writes: We are pleased to share details of a two-day international symposium on delftware taking place in **Bristol** in February 2023, which may be of interest to Avon Local History & Archaeology newsletter readers, and others in your network. The symposium is

the culmination of a two-year research project and major redisplay of the delftware collection at Bristol Museum. Part of the new display highlights the major significance of **Brislington** as a delftware production centre, so the symposium may be of special interest to members of the **Brislington** Conservation and History Society. Emily Roy, Project Curator, Applied Art, Bristol Culture & Creative Industries, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Queens Road, Bristol BS8 1RL, Emily.Roy@bristol.gov.uk

Jane Askew writes: **International Symposium: Digging for Delftware
Bristol, 27th and 28th February 2023**

Comprising over 2000 pieces, **Bristol** Museum has one of the largest and most important collections of delftware in the UK. For over 100 years, **Bristol** was a leading manufacturer of delftware, producing objects that were exported across the globe.

Bristol Museum has been working for two years on a project funded by Arts Council England to research and re-display its collection of English delftware.

In celebration of the project, this two-day symposium will bring together specialists



from around the world. They will share insights into delftware from **Bristol** and beyond and explore the latest international research in the field of delftware studies.

There will also be an opportunity to visit the new displays and to see a selection of objects from our reserve collection.

Speakers

Experts include Karin Walton, Matthew Winterbottom, Dr Ian Betts, Dr Caroline McCaffrey-Howarth, Peter Francis, Femke Diercks, Roger Massey, David

Dawson, Dr Oliver Kent and Amanda Lange. [Image antiquepottery.co.uk]

Venue

Day 1: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Queens Rd, Bristol, BS8 1RL

Day 2: M Shed, Princes Wharf, Wapping Rd, Bristol, BS1 4RN

For the full programme and to purchase tickets:

[Digging for Delftware, an international symposium - Bristol Museums](#)

Discounted tickets available for students and concessions. Tickets can be booked for one or both days. For more information, please contact Amber Turner,

amber.turner@bristol.gov.uk

BRISTOL CENTRAL LIBRARY CONSULTATION

Bristol City Council has announced consultation on budget cuts. Included is the future of the building that houses **Bristol's central library**, including the local studies section. Details are not on the City Council's website pages for the central library but within the budget consultation at <https://www.ask.bristol.gov.uk/budget-2023-24> . The consultation closes at midnight on **23 December 2022**. The consultation is in the form of a smartsurvey at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget-2023-24/> . Proposals regarding the library service in the short to medium term are in section 2. Local media report that one proposal being floated is the removal of the central library to a different but still central site. The existing building, part of which is already occupied by Bristol Cathedral School, would presumably be sold with the aim of realising a substantial capital sum.

One suggestion being floated, at any rate by the media, is that the library could move to the former Debenhams building fronting Horsefair in **Broadmead**. A similar proposal has been made in Gloucester, where the former Debenhams store building has been bought by University of Gloucestershire, with a view to housing not just University functions but the local public library, similarly in an out of date building, though one not so architecturally distinguished as **Bristol's**. One possibility that canvassed in Gloucester is that the building could also contain the University of Gloucestershire's archives and special collections, and the library of ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**.

NEWS FROM GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

TREVOR BOWEN

ALHA member **Nailsea and District Local History Society** reports with great sadness the death of Trevor Bowen, a stalwart of that society for many years and which he chaired from 1995 to 2008. Trevor was an enthusiastic researcher. His publications included books on the history of **Nailsea** generally, its tannery, and its Methodist church, and he contributed to or jointly wrote and illustrated many other publications. He narrated N&DLHS's video of the history of the village. He contributed many articles to the society's journal *Pennant* (later, *History & Heritage Matters*), which he edited or helped with editing for many years. His address to ALHA's annual general meeting in 2009 on **Nailsea** glassworks was one of the best.

KEEPING WARM IN VILLAGE HALLS AND COMMUNITY CENTRES

The rise in the prices of fuels is reported to be hitting village halls and community centres hard. Government measures to help families with domestic fuel bills apply only to households, not to businesses or voluntary organisations, so suppliers are free to charge village halls and community centres what they like. Only a cynic would point out that village halls and community centres do not have votes. With fuel bills several times what they were, and with increases of hundreds if not thousands of pounds, concerns have been expressed that some village halls and volunteer-run community centres may have to close, though so far no closures or fears of closure have been reported in our area.

The issue affects those local history and archaeology groups and societies that meet or hold events in village halls or community centres. Before a decision is made to close a hall, those managing it will no doubt have looked at other options. One is to draw on reserves – that is what reserves are for – but that is not likely to be sustainable in the long term. Another might be to make savings, assuming that any can be found. Another is to increase income. Net revenue can be increased by fundraising, by undertaking new activities, or by increasing charges for activities and facilities, including the charges for hire of premises.

If a venue closes, what a local group or society that uses the venue can do will vary from place to place. One solution might be to find other premises, if any are available and affordable. If no alternatives exist, a solution might be to cease to meet, or to merge with another group or society. If another venue can be found, the cost of hiring may be higher.

Either way, it is not unreasonable for local groups and societies to expect to have to pay more for their accommodation.

STOKE BISHOP - PROPOSED NEW HISTORY

*Jenny Weeks, secretary of ALHA member **Stoke Bishop Local History Society**, draws attention to a new history planned for **Stoke Bishop**, to be written by Keith Shearer. Reminiscences, however trivial, and information about the past of the area are welcome. Jenny Weeks, 2a Druid Road, Stoke Bishop, BS9 1LH, jenny.weeks.mail@gmail.com; 0117 968 6010; or Keith Sheather, 12 Little Stoke Road, BS9 1HQ; sheather@blueyonder.co.uk; 0117 968 2170. Poster below under **CAN YOU HELP?***

NEW WALK LEADERS AND TALK PRESENTERS

Richard Stride will be a new name in ALHA's directory of presenters when the next edition appears next year. Born and bred in **Bristol**, he taught history and classical civilisation at **Bristol** Cathedral School for many years. He now offers guided tours of local historical sites, and teaches adults at **Stoke Lodge** on a range of historical topics. Areas of interest cover various aspects of the classical world as well as more modern periods such as the Wars of the Roses, 17th century England and the Napoleonic period. Anyone interested in his courses at **Stoke Lodge** can find them here: <https://www.bristolcourses.com/> and if you would like to find out more about his guided walks or discuss ideas for a presentation email him at stridethroughhistory@gmail.com . His current list of guided tours is:

Date	Day	Tour	availability
March 24	Friday	Bristol Cathedral	Available to book
April 20	Thursday	English Civil War Bristol	Available to book
May 11	Thursday	Lansdown battlefield 1643 (near Bath)	Available to book
June 15	Thursday	Medieval Bristol	Available to book
July 13	Thursday	Blaise castle	Available to book
August 31	Thursday	English Civil War Bristol	Available to book
September 23	Saturday	Medieval Redcliffe	Available to book
October 9	Monday	St Mary's Redcliffe	Available to book

VALE OF BERKELEY RAILWAY

Ian Raven writes: I would like to introduce the Vale of Berkeley Railway to you. The VoBR will be a new heritage railway created from the old branch line running from Sharpness Docks on the River Severn to Berkeley Road Station (now defunct) on the main Bristol - Birmingham line. The line was closed in 1964 and a team of enthusiasts are restoring it ready to run trains again.

We have given a number of talks to history societies on how the line came to be closed and the challenges we are facing on our route to restoring it. If you have guest speakers at your meetings and you feel your members would be interested in hearing about the history and our project please let me know and I will arrange a talk, illustrated with PowerPoint slides.

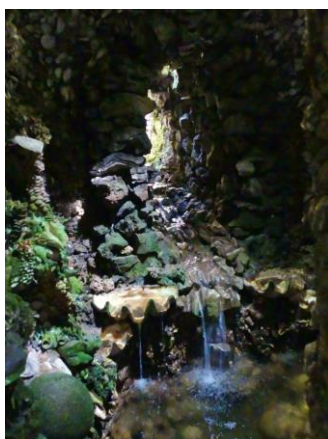
We are a registered charity and all our work is carried out thanks to donations; these are usually start at around £60.

Ian Raven, Talk Co-ordinator, The Vale of Berkeley Railway, The Engine Shed, Dock Road, Sharpness, GL13 9UD 01905 745103; 07973 257518. ian@imcron.co.uk

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Julie Johns, 'Friendly Societies in and around **Bitton** – Part 1: History and Poleheads,' <https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Friendly-Societies-Part-1.pdf>

Trevor Fisher, 'The challenges of researching Charles II's escape from Worcester,' 145 *Local History News* (Autumn 2022), 17-18. About original sources; indirectly relevant to **Abbots Leigh**, where C2 lodged in disguise on the way to Trent and escape to France in 1651.



PK Stembridge, 'John Warwell the mystery man of Goldney grotto,' 16 *GT (The Gardens Trust) News*, summer 2021, 22-25. How an appeal for information led to a response from a historian in Charleston, South Carolina, where Warwell worked for a time. [Image Bipfoto.]

COMMENTARY

The politics of butchers and grocers

John Stevens writes: In my introduction to an edition of the **Bristol** Poll Book for 1852 (Bristol Record Society, BRS 72, 2020), I remarked on the likely effect of economic issues on voters' preferences, suggesting that those on relatively low incomes might have feared a reversion to agricultural protection (the Corn Laws) and dearer bread under a Conservative government and thus significantly helped the return of two Liberal members, Henry Berkeley and Henry Gore Langton. I might perhaps have said more about the possible effect of such issues on particular groups of voters.

John Vincent's study of many poll books nationally, showed butchers tended to vote Conservative and grocers Liberal. Eric Hobsbawm suggested this was because the butchers were tied to the agricultural interest, whereas the grocers, frequently dealing in foreign produce, had a consequent preference for free trade.

This is not however reflected in the 1852 election in **Bristol**, where majorities of both groups were emphatically Liberal, albeit still more in the case of the grocers. Ignoring tiny numbers of split votes and Liberal plumpers, 59 butchers voted Liberal as against 39 Conservative, whilst grocers were Liberal by 166 to 61.

Among those directly associated with the corn trades, who might have been expected to be overwhelmingly Conservative, votes were evenly divided. Corn brokers were split at seven each; four corn merchants were Conservative and two Liberal; a corn agent and a corn meter each voted Liberal. The net result was thus a tie, at eleven votes each.

(The marked preference of dairymen and milkmen for the Liberals – thirty to nine – may perhaps be disregarded; it is suggested that most of these men simply kept a cow or two in their back yard and were thus not linked to a wider agricultural community anyway.)

Free Trade v Protection was the dominant issue in 1852 but the strangeness of the above figures may be related to the particular circumstances of the election. Prime Minister Lord Derby's agricultural enthusiasm was waning, as he sought to extend the Conservative party's electoral base; his lieutenant, Benjamin Disraeli, had privately described protectionist policies as "dead and damned". No clear lead was therefore given and it was said, by contemporary newspapers and by subsequent historians (including that *doyen* of Conservative party chroniclers, Lord Blake) that candidates were protectionists in the counties and free traders in the boroughs. **Bristol's** unsuccessful Conservative candidate, Foster Alleyne McGeachy, proclaimed himself a free trader (except for sugar, understandably in this constituency) but confusingly also pledged himself to support in Parliament whatever a Derby government might propose.

The problem, as the Liberals gleefully pointed out, was that no one knew what Derby might propose and it is suggested that McGeachy's prevarications, and those of his leaders, failed both to reassure his natural supporters and to attract Liberals and floating voters to his banner.

What might have been

One of the more unusual local history books published in our area of recent years was Eugene Byrne's *Unbuilt Bristol: the city that might have been 1750-2025* (Redcliffe 2013). EB examined some 50 plans and proposals that apart from one were never implemented. The exception was for an inland surfing lake, which has been subsequently realised, albeit at **Easter Compton** instead of the site alongside the **Portway** as originally planned.

The reasons why the other 49 projects never materialised were as various as the ideas themselves. In some cases the reasons are not known (yet?); in many the reasons are disputed. They include changing economic conditions, failure to raise the necessary finance, behind-the-scenes influences, failure to get the necessary legal powers through parliament,

unrealistic over-optimism, and sheer madcap nuttiness. One chapter is headed 'football grounds.'

EB's book was about **Bristol** proposals that never made it. There is no reason why similar accounts could not be compiled for other places in our area. Urban areas tend to produce more ideas for change and development, because urban land is more valuable, so the potential profits are higher, so it is understandable that most of the candidates would be from **Bath** and the other large settlements, though rural areas have not been immune from ideas for change that never happened.

Obvious sources for such a survey will include newspaper reports, local authority minutes, planning applications, and publicity issued by pressure groups, commercial companies, and architects and other designers. Local politicians' memoirs, if published, might be another source.

One project mentioned by EB is the roman catholic pro-cathedral at the top of Jacob's Wells Road in **Bristol** designed by the **Bath** architect Henry Edmund Goodridge, who was the subject of a piece in *ALHA Newsletter* 171 of 30 June 2022. Goodridge's design never got built, because during construction his building started sliding down the hill, and another architect had to be commissioned to come up with a different design that would stay put. There are at least two other examples of a Goodridge non-event. Both were, or would have been, in **Bath**. One was for a cathedral with a dome that would have risen 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 on the edge of **Bathwick** that would have commemorated the passing of the Reform Act in 1832.

The history of the latter is strange. In 1805, in the epidemic of hero-worship that broke out after the battle of Trafalgar, it was proposed to erect in the centre of the square at the west end of Pulteney Street a column to commemorate the victory and death of the nation's favourite adulterous xenophobic psychopath. The column was under construction before local residents cottoned on to how tall it would be, and petitioned for work to stop. They must have succeeded. The plinth remained an uncolumbed stump for another 27 years. In 1832, following the passing of the Reform Act, a proposal was made for what was described as a pillar to be put on the empty plinth. Goodridge, who the previous year had designed the column to commemorate admiral Hood built at Butleigh, the admiral's birthplace, made a proposal. It is not clear whether Goodridge was commissioned to produce a design: he later was to design many buildings, and Cleveland bridge, for the Bathwick estate. Goodridge illustrated his design with a watercolour impression that is now in the Victoria Art Gallery, **Bath**. Over 30 metres high, the column would have towered over the Laura Place houses. It was never built.

What was eventually built, but not until 1877, is the fountain that now spouts from the 1805 plinth. That was put there to commemorate, not an admiral or a constitutional event of national importance, but the centenary of the Bath and Western Counties Agricultural Society.

Novels of record

'Novel of record' is a term used by some literary critics to denote a work of fiction that describes the state of current society or aspects of it. The setting, and sometimes some of the characters, may be real as distinct from fictional. Examples of novels of record from the nineteenth century include Benjamin Disraeli's *Coningsby* (1844) and *Sybil* (1845), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854), and Anthony Trollope's *The way we live now* (1875). Of recent years such works have also been called 'state of the nation' novels. Recent examples include Martin Amis's *Money* (1984), Jonathan Coe's *Middle England* (2018) and his most recent *Bournville* (2022).

Authors of novels of record probably do not intend them to be categorised as works of history or as historical novels. But they are sometimes seen and used by historians as source material, as evidence, as traces of what life was like in the period in which the novel is set. They are seen as contemporary witnesses of at least the social setting.

As the phrase 'state of the nation' implies, most novels of record purport to describe conditions nation-wide. George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) could be read as an exception, because it is set in one provincial town; or readers could regard that as proxy for the nation as a whole. Many British state of the nation novels are set in London, a large town with serious social and environmental problems some 120 miles east of our area, a setting probably chosen by authors because of its disproportionate influence on the rest of the country.

There seems no reason in principle why a novel of record could not be written about a locality as distinct from the nation as a whole. A state of the city novel about **Bristol**, for example, could touch on its economic, social, environmental, transport, and political problems, its deficiencies in civic leadership and community relations, the malign effects of party politics, the disparities of wealth and poverty, and so on. Such a work might not interest present-day local history people, but might become a source for future local historians.

Qatar and the 1910 election

John Stevens writes: Recent controversy about the sale of alcohol at the World Cup in Qatar has brought to mind the general question of drink and the law and, more particularly, the parliamentary election of December 1910 in **Bristol South**.

Drink was a major issue at this election. For years Liberal governments, influenced especially by their non-conformist supporters, had sought to restrict licensing hours and a few years previously this had provoked the memorable response of the Bishop of St Asaph in the House of Lords: "Better England free than England sober!"

The sitting MP, the Methodist Sir Howell Davies, who in the event was returned by a narrow majority, was a keen temperance man and had voted regularly for restrictions in the previous parliament. He said little about the issue in his campaign speeches but perhaps surprisingly his challenger, the Anglo-Catholic Conservative James Thomas Francombe, was also a supporter of temperance. Francombe was regularly challenged at his public meetings

as to how this conviction squared with his support for the licensed trade. Francombe reasonably replied that he had never said a word against the publican but only against the drunkard.

More recently there have been inconsistencies. The Blair government, despite its solicitude for victims of domestic violence, appears not to have made the link with alcoholic over-indulgence, for they were behind the greatest relaxation of licensing law in recent times.


There are three possible approaches. One (perhaps particularly relevant when talking about English football fans) is that public order is the main consideration; on-site sales are banned at English matches, down to Vanarama National League level (effectively Division 5). Second, that the state also has the right (perhaps the duty) to interfere with private conduct in the interest of the weak and vulnerable. Thirdly, the libertarian approach that morality and restraint are matters for private judgment, which reaches the same end by a different route as the argument some (not all) Christians would advance, that state-enforced goodness is no goodness at all. It is not my intention here to judge between these approaches. If this piece has helped, in Dr Johnson's words, to clear minds of cant, it will have served its purpose.

[Copies of Alan Clarke's ALHA booklet no.30, *Taking the pledge: the temperance movement in Bristol, 1830-1914*, a little before the election referred to above, are still available from the treasurer, £4.15 post free. Ed.]

CAN YOU HELP?

Houses Shops Farms Fields Open spaces Roads Lanes Rivers Schools

We need YOUR



MEMORIES
(and those of your parents and grandparents)





of life in Stoke Bishop
for our new history book
by Keith Sheather


Funny, sad, serious, fact or legend
NOTHING IS TOO TRIVIAL!

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1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960

EVENTS DIARY

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

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