



ALHA

AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Newsletter e-update
28 February 2023

Registered charity 270930

**Material for printed Newsletter 174 by 12
noon Friday 24 March 2023 please:**

Magazines and books to reviews editor
Hardings Cottage, Swan Lane, Winterbourne
BS36 1RJ

jonathan.harlow@uwe.ac.uk

Details of events to website manager
webmaster@ALHA.org.uk

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

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

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

Facebook:

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

QUOTE

William Faulkner

THE EVENTS LIST

is on the ALHA website

ALHA NEWS

Presenters directory
New booklet proposed
Bristol trade in the 17th century

EVENTS AND SOURCES

Yate gardens, parks, commons
Women and the natural world
Rupert street car park, Bristol

GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

Zoom updates
B&GAS trusteeships
Cyber attacks
Presenters directory - ALHA NEWS above

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Occupations in C15 Somerset
Yatton past and present
Bristol Times index 2021, 2022
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More types of history (DO)
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COMMENTARY

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Rivers misbehaving

CAN YOU HELP?

Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological
Society trusteeships
Leigh woods quarries

ALHA NEWS

ALHA PRESENTERS DIRECTORY

Work continues on the updating of ALHA's speakers list for issue to member groups and societies that have paid their subscription after 1 April 2023 for the coming year. It is not too late to suggest new speakers or presenters or walk leaders for inclusion.

Practice has been to print the speakers list / presenters directory to reduce the risk of list being copied to groups who are not members of ALHA, do not buy a copy, and so do not help pay for its production. At its March 2023 meeting the ALHA committee will be asked whether the directory should be issued as a pdf to those groups that ask for it in digital form rather than on paper. To help assess likely demand for pdfs, could those groups who would prefer a pdf please tell the treasurer, wm.evans@btopenworld.com .

ALHA BOOKLETS – NEW PROPOSAL

The publications team, much missing Bob Lawrence, have approved a proposal for a new ALHA booklet, on the WW1 remount depot at **Shirehampton**, for publication later in the year.

ALHA BOOKLETS – STOCK

Not many copies remain of ALHA booklet no. 33, by Dr Jonathan Harlow on Bristol's trade in the 17th century, so if you would like a copy, now might be a good time to buy, either from the treasurer or via the ALHA website,

<https://www.alha.org.uk/category/publications/booklets> .

EVENTS AND SOURCES

YATE PARKS AND GARDENS



Yate parks and gardens is an exhibition at **Yate & District Heritage Centre**. 'Discover the parks and gardens of the **Yate** area from medieval times to the present day. The **Yate** area boasted some fine landscaped gardens in the 19th century. Find out the role of gardens in the lives of ordinary people during the 20th century. Historic artefacts from past decades,' it says. **Yate & District Heritage Centre, Church Road, Yate, BS37 5BG**, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 10.00am to 4.00pm and Saturdays 10.00am to 3.00pm **until Thursday 9 March 2023**. [*Yate common: image Yate Town Council*]

CALL FOR PAPERS – WOMEN AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Jane Askew writes: **West of England and South Wales Women’s History Network** calls for papers for its 30th annual conference on *Women and the Natural World: historical perspectives on nature, climate and environmental change*, **Saturday 30 September 2023** at Exeter Central Library.

The conference will offer a broad perspective on women and the environment over time. Themes could include women’s historical involvement in:

- Environmental and natural sciences
- Conservation and eco-activism by individuals and in campaigning organisations seeking to protect nature and biodiversity.
- Weather forecasting and climate change
- Rescue and recovery work following environmental events such as floods, earthquakes, volcanoes and hurricanes
- Land management practices e.g. enclosures
- Gardens and allotments,
- Parks and garden cities
- Farming, gardening and agricultural work
- Botanical and zoological films, photography and illustration

Papers should be of not more than 20 minutes. Suggestions for presentations in film or other non-standard formats will be considered. Please send an abstract of up to 300 words to katherineuna.holden@gmail.com by **Friday 26 May 2023**.

RUPERT STREET CAR PARK, BRISTOL

The Twentieth Century Society, which campaigns for the preservation of what it regards as architecturally outstanding buildings, is campaigning to stop the demolition of the multi-story car park (R Jelinek-Karl, 1959) in **Bristol’s** Rupert Street. It was the first UK multi-deck car park with a continuous spiral ramp integral to the parking deck. [*Image Know Your Place*].

More detail, images and statistics at

<https://c20society.org.uk/news/end-of-the-ramp-or-green-future-for-innovative-bristol-carpark>



GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

ZOOM UPDATES

Groups and societies that use Zoom for online talks or other events may wish to note that Zoom has changed its updates policy: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360059429231-9-month-release-window> .

As some Zoom updates are mandatory and automatic, this could mean that if users have not updated to the latest version, they may not be let in. If that is so, users who have not updated may find there is a delay while Zoom updates their version. That could delay starting meetings, or cause some attenders to miss the start of a meeting while their version of Zoom is updated. It would be a sensible precaution to check for Zoom updates well before a meeting is launched or an attender logs in, so as to allow time for any new updates to be downloaded and installed.

BRISTOL & GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** seeks three new trustees: please see below under **Can you help?**

GROUP AND SOCIETY WEBSITES: CYBER ATTACK

Member groups and societies that operate websites may wish to note that GCHQ is offering support to small organisations including charities in arranging protection against cyber attack. Brief details at <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/information/funded-cyber-essentials-programme> . For those groups favouring a less drastic approach the government's National Cyber Security Centre offers guidance, a newsletter, warnings and updates at no charge. There is a guide specifically for small charities at <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/charity> much of which is basic common sense, but the section on protection from malware may be useful to many.

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Edward Ashford and Philip Ashford, 'Fifteenth century Somerset: the Common Pleas indices as a source for understanding occupational distributions,' *The Local Historian* vol.53 no.1, January 2023, 13-18. Assumes that the frequency of occupations of parties in court proceedings reflected their frequency in the population at large. Covers north and north-east Somerset, with references eg to carriers in **Bedminster**. Not much local detail or analysis, but gives a link to a University of Houston database and tells how to search it.

Yatton past and present no.4 (2022) marked ALHA member **Yatton LHS's** 40th anniversary. *Jill Riddle (Hon Sec, YLHS) writes:*

This (number 4 in the series) appeared in autumn 2022 and has almost completely sold out already. Articles cover: the effects of the coming of the railway to **Yatton**; local residents of note; interesting properties and businesses; as well as updates from some local groups and societies.

There had been a gap of 7 years since publication of the previous edition in the series, so the Society was well pleased with the excellent response to its new book.

If you are interested in obtaining any of these publications please ring 01934 838902 for more details of availability. Alternatively send an enquiry via <https://yattonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk/contact/> .

Mike Oakley, ed, *Indexes to Bristol Times 2021 and 2022*, mro6085@virginmedia.com

Nick Hand ed., *St Philip's Marsh, Bristol: the story of place*, The Letterpress Collective, 2023, Centrespace, 6 Leonard Lane, Bristol BS1 1EA;

<https://www.departmentofsmallworks.co.uk/shop>

Britain's lost masterpieces is a series of BBC4 programmes in which works in local art collections identified by ArtUK are cleaned up, restored and reattributed, usually in an upward direction. Episode 2 in series 4, from 2019, repeated on 6 February 2023, dealt with two paintings in Birmingham art gallery. One, a rural scene thought to be by Thomas Gainsborough, who worked in **Bath** 1759 to 1774, was reattributed to the **Bath** genre artist Thomas Barker. Several of Gainsborough's swagger portraits can be seen at the Holburne Museum; works by Barker are in the **Victoria Art Gallery**. The programme includes information and **Bath** images relating to Gainsborough, but not much about Barker:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000b1gs> until 6 March 2023.

Bridging the gap: how the Severn Bridge was built repeats on BBC4 on **Wednesday 1 March**



2023 a programme first aired in 2016.

[Image of the opening ceremony from Getty].

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0803m60> . The programme will be available on the iplayer for a month or so.

Sheila McClure, ed., *Letters from Chefoo – Constance Douthwaite's Life in China 1887-1896*; Little Knoll Press 2019, ISBN: 9781916484603, Paperback with 66 illustrations. A collection of edited and transcribed letters by an Open Brethren woman from a **Redland** family, who went as a missionary to China. Much social history information about the family, the Brethren and their local connections, who included Georg Müller, who comes across as a dictatorial character. The index includes 16 pages of individuals' surnames, which may be of interest to medical, social and family historians. References to Dr John Lindsay Maclean of **Widcombe** and Dr Baedeker of **Weston super mare**, and the bells on the trams along Whiteladies Road. Those interested in local evangelism will wish to follow up Ellen Walker of **Puxton**, Brethren activity at **Hawkesbury Upton**, and other 'local evangelical meetings.'

RESPONSES

Different sorts of history

Derek O writes: The piece about different sorts of history in ALHA newsletter e-update 31 January 2023 was right to add 'history as education' to the categories of history identified by Prof Bloxham, but it could have added more:

- History as publicity, as in business histories commissioned by a firm, particularly to mark an anniversary or other event;
- History as special pleading, as in memoirs, especially those of politicians and others in public life who have misdemeanours to defend or spin or opponents to criticise;
- History as professional attack, much used by academics; and by politicians who have scores to settle;
- History as imposture, eg to justify invasion of a neighbouring country, or to rewrite a narrative to suit the party in power;
- History as rehabilitation, much used by academics when they cannot think of anything worth writing about but need a publication for their research excellence framework submission.

A Day in the Bristol Central Reference Library

John Stevens writes: The decision on the future of the **Bristol Central Library**, we are told (ALHA newsletter e-update 31 January 2023), should be taken free of "party politicking" and "unemotionally".

As to the first, many would agree. Has not party assumed too large a place in local government, and do we not rather need men and women with the interests of the City at heart? Others, recalling our recent experience with an Independent elected Mayor (2012-16) may demur and suggest that party, with all its shortcomings, is a necessary evil. The decision, however, cannot and should not be taken wholly "unemotionally". We humans are a combination of reason and emotion and when the reasoned arguments are finely balanced (as I believe are those surrounding the future of the library) emotion must play its part. Here is one patron's emotional response to the **Central Library**.

My haunt is the reference library upstairs. Lazily, I tend to eschew the grand sweep of the main staircase and walk to the lift at the end of the lending library. I may glance at the fiction shelves on the way or pause for tea at the reopened cafeteria. Then to the lift (the slowest in creation). To my right is the children's section, with its delightful pirate ship, and I briefly wish I was small again and could ascend to the crow's nest.

Arriving upstairs, I call at the desk and collect the obscure volumes which have been retrieved from the old library or the gallery upstairs and have been put by to await my return. Perhaps a word, *sotto voce*, with the librarian on duty. These informed and helpful and have helped many a local historian around a difficult corner.

I find a space, hopefully with a desk light that works, and take my place with my fellow patrons: EFL students, some obvious eccentrics, one or two down-and-outs. Occasionally I catch the eye of another serious researcher; we do not speak but raise

eyebrows in mutual recognition. It is a sort of freemasonry.

I am currently studying the voting habits of Victorian tradesmen and have before me the **Bristol** poll book for 1847, inscribed in copperplate with the original owner's name. It needs rebinding; I make a mental note to mention this at the desk.

Looking up occasionally, I enjoy the huge vault of the building, perhaps at its best on a fine mid-winter's day when the sun shows itself through the upper windows.

Just before closing time, a man comes along ringing a school bell and we begin to pack. But we shall return soon.

The above vision may strike chords with some. Others will cry "Away with it!" and yearn for an all-singing, all-dancing facility elsewhere, perhaps in the old Debenhams building. Not all the former will be party Conservatives (the recent petition was organised by a former local Lib-Dem MP), nor will all the latter be on the "progressive" side of politics. It is something that goes deeper, touching as it does the two eternal halves of human nature.

COMMENTARY

Museum finances

South Gloucestershire Council is reported to have earmarked up to £316,000 to write off some interest and capital repayments on a loan the council made to ALHA member **Bristol Aerospace Collection Trust** 'to avoid the risk of insolvency;' and to pay the Trust another £152,000 to help increase school visits to its museum, **Aerospace Bristol:**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-64651465.amp>

Local history people may have been wondering for some time how museums survive financially. Museums are not top priority for either central government or local authorities. Some political parties favour cutting public expenditure for most purposes, and the heritage and the arts are seen as soft targets because they do not produce many votes. Grants to special interest voluntary organisations do not rank for preference compared with, say, health services or education. Museums do not affect us personally or emotionally in the way that hospitals and schools do.

As with most problems, the past has got us where we are now. The present situation, and the route to it, will vary from one museum to another. Some museums began as small initiatives by enthusiastic volunteers. Some were started by, and may continue to be run by, local authorities, with a strong civic role. Some have had funding from individual or corporate donors. Some are run by professionals, others by volunteers, and some by a mix of both. Some museums specialise in a particular area, topic or type of artefact; others aim to collect and display a range of items, and some extend into anthropology. Some are funded, wholly or in part, by endowments; some by subscriptions; some by admission charges, selling services, tapping the lottery, begging sponsorship, or just begging.

Similarly varied are the purposes of museums. Some people see a museum as a quasi-religious nod to the past; or as an expression of local identity, not least where an industry, now gone, became a main employer; or as a memorial to a philanthropist; or as

entertainment; or as education. Even if the owner or managers of a museum consider that it has a particular purpose, that vision may not be shared by other people, including those who pay towards its operation. Sooner or later the debate boils down to a dispute between those who value the past and evidences of the past because they find them interesting in their own right, and those who take a more instrumental view, seeing museums as adjuncts to education, culture, entertainment or whatever.

That diversity makes it difficult to generalise when it comes to deciding how museums should be funded. Some aggregate information can be read on South West Museums Development's website at <https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/> . SWMD is, one suspects, a consortium of museum interests. It is hosted by **Bristol City museum** and is funded by Arts Council England and local authorities in the south west region. Its main job is to help museums obtain and maintain accreditation, which is key to opening a number of financial doors as well as setting professional and service standards. Each year for the past few years SWMD has collected and published aggregate statistics about museums in the region. Its annual report for 2022 is at <https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/south-west-annual-museum-survey-2022-reporting/> . Some financial information is at page 29 onwards. It looks incomplete, but for example, in 2021-2022:

- Over a third of southwest museums had turnover under £25,000;
- The median annual turnover was only £58,000;
- More than half charge for admission;
- But median admission income was only £15,000;
- Median public subsidy income was only £7,000.

The survey also gives nation-wide information for comparisons. The national figures are not encouraging either.

Rivers making local history

Newspapers report erosion of a river bank near **Totterdown** Bridge, apparently exposing electricity cables and suggesting risk of undermining riverside buildings:

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/developers-reassure-residents-south-bristol-8098238> .

We tend to think of rivers and other natural watercourses as permanent features of the landscape. Sometimes they overflow their banks, and flooding occurs: notably near **Keynsham**, in **Bedminster** and **Hotwells**, alongside the **Frome**, and during high tides along parts of the **Portway**. **Pill** has flood defences. There have been floods in **Bath**, and elsewhere. However disruptive, damaging and upsetting such flooding may be, it usually subsides in a short time. The river to the river bed returns, and the pattern of the earth is not much altered, if at all.

Rivers have done much to shape our environment and its landscapes. Rivers erode their banks, and they deposit sediment. If river erosion formed the **Avon** gorge, that must have happened over many years, but the results have been large-scale. The **Severn** has been

depositing bits of Wales and marcher counties in the Bristol channel for centuries, and that has shaped the contours of the channel. Tides and currents make the sedimentation changing and unpredictable, which may be one reason why our stretch of the channel has not become a leisure sailing centre. On a smaller scale the tidal lagoons at **Clevedon** and **Weston super mare** get filled with sediment and are cleared out every so often. In some places sedimentation has been used to reclaim land from the sea or river or to create dry land. Examples may include some of the warths along the south Gloucestershire coast.

A less obvious, and perhaps conjectural example, is the south end of the pre-medieval river **Frome**. The standard history is that the river turned left somewhere near where **Bristol's** St Stephen Street now is; that it flowed into the Avon near what is now Bristol bridge; and that it was diverted from that course by the digging in the 1240s of what is now **St Augustine's reach**. A modern theory, based on study and analysis of sedimentary layers of soil, is that the **Frome** originally flowed west of what later became **Canons' Marsh**. Similarly, sedimentation samples suggest that the course of the Avon itself was different from what it was in medieval times. The scientific methods and reasoning are explained, with maps, in Bob Jones's *Bristol: a worshipful town and famous city, an archaeological assessment* (Oxbow 2018).

If that theory is correct, it prompts further thoughts. One is that historians may need to rethink the pre-medieval and perhaps also some of the medieval history of that tract of the town. Another is that because so much of the low-lying land in our area is alluvial, sediment studies might usefully be applied elsewhere in our area, perhaps to test whether the courses of other lengths of rivers have changed by force of nature.

CAN YOU HELP?

BRISTOL & GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY TRUSTEESHIPS

Dr Graham Barton writes: ALHA member **Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** (BGAS) is seeking to recruit new Trustees to fill three crucial positions at the Society's annual general meeting on 29 April 2023. These are annual appointments. The posts are:

- * Honorary Treasurer
- * Meetings and Events Manager
- * Membership Manager

The time commitment expected to fulfil each of these roles varies, but in each case it is not expected to be excessive.

The Society's current Treasurer (William Evans - wm.evans@btopenworld.com) would be happy to discuss the Hon Treasurer's role with prospective candidates. The Hon General Secretary (Graham Barton - drgrahamibarton@aol.com) would be happy to do likewise in the case of the Meetings and Events Manager's and the Membership Manager's positions, and can supply role descriptions.

Further information on the nature of the Society's activities, its management structure, policies and charitable objectives are available on request. Its website is at <https://www.bgas.org.uk/> .

Applicants need not be BGAS members, but would be encouraged to join the Society, once they take up their new role.

Appointees will be joining an experienced, enthusiastic and co-ordinated group of Trustees, and support will be provided to enable the successful candidate(s) to settle into their new role.

LEIGH WOODS QUARRIES, ABBOTS LEIGH

An author writing about the **Avon gorge** has asked David Hardwick whether anyone knows what the three quarries on the **Leigh Woods** side were called. davidhardwick1@hotmail.com

QUOTE

The past is never dead. It's not even past. All of us labor in webs spun long before we were born, webs of heredity and environment, of desire and consequence, of history and eternity.

William Faulkner (1897-1962), *Requiem for a nun* (Random House 1951).

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 and the weather, 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.