

ALHA



# AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Newsletter e-update  
31 May 2023

Registered charity 270930

**Material for printed Newsletter 175 by 12  
noon Sunday 25 June 2023 please:**

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

[jonathan.harlow@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:jonathan.harlow@uwe.ac.uk)

Details of events to website manager

[webmaster@ALHA.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:wm.evans@btopenworld.com)

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

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

Facebook:

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



[Image, Kingswood Heritage Museum}

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## ALHA NEWS

### **ALHA SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Many thanks to all who have paid their 2023-24 subscriptions promptly. Prompt payment helps ALHA's cashflow, and helps keep the subscription down.

### **ALHA PRESENTERS DIRECTORY**

The 2023 edition of ALHA's directory of presenters, with a new design by Jennifer Muller and building on and expanding the previous edition by Mike Leigh, is now ready for those ALHA member groups and societies that have paid their 2023-2024 subscription. A copy on paper will be posted to those groups that have so requested once the directory has been printed; others receive a copy in portable document format as an attachment to an e-mail.

### **ALHA GRANTS**

The local walks leaflets produced by ALHA member **Bitton Parish History Group** with the help of a grant from ALHA for about a third of the cost, have now been published. More below under **GROUPS AND SOCIETIES**.

### **ALHA BOOKLETS**

ALHA's latest booklet, edited by Dr Jonathan Harlow, is nearly ready to go to the printers.

### **ALHA'S FIRST SUMMER WALK SINCE COVID**

*Jan Packer writes:* Our first walk was a visit to **Kingswood Museum**. The number of people who turned up was disappointing. Perhaps ALHA members prefer the guided walks? Please do let us know.

We started our tour in a relaxed way over a cuppa in their café area with curator and guide, Alan Bryant, sharing a lot of background of the museum's history. After, as Alan led us through the museum's rooms, fascinating fact after fascinating fact unravelled. I was particularly impressed by the number of interactive displays and use of technology that is significantly different from what they had on offer when we visited in 2012. I particularly appreciated the display of games and toys which looked as if it had been collected direct from my childhood home. Anyone else remember *Tell Me Why* and *Flounders*?

No doubt about it, this museum has not stood idle these last 10 years.

I shall go back to spend more time looking at some of the wonderful old photographs they've inherited from donors some of which have a more wide-ranging "Bristol" appeal.

If you have child-care duty days coming over the summer and are looking for somewhere to go, give **Kingswood Heritage Museum** a try. Parking is easy and there's a bus stop right outside. <https://www.kingswoodmuseum.org.uk/>

## **EVENTS AND SOURCES**

### **SANHS PROCEEDINGS**

ALHA member **Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society** has put online all its *Proceedings* since 1851, with a consolidated index: <https://sanhs.org/digital-proceedings/>

### **BEAGLE 2 EXHIBITION AT AEROSPACE BRISTOL**

*Journey to Mars* is a small exhibition at ALHA member **Aerospace Bristol** showing (next to Concorde) artefacts from the Beagle 2 element of the European Space Agency's *Mars Express* project in 200, plus Luke Jerram's *Mars*. The project was the idea of **Kingswood**-born Professor Colin Pillinger. Team leader at the launch was ALHA individual member Terry Ransome, now of **Nailsea**. Exhibition runs until **5 June 2023**.

<https://aerospacebristol.org/journey-to-mars>

### **SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 8 – 17 September 2023**

*Alison Catlin writes:* **Heritage Open Days 2023** is a national scheme that runs for ten consecutive days from 8 to 17 September 2023 offering insight into our heritage. There are lots of different things you can do as long as your event is free and accessible to all. You can organise a walk or a talk. You can open your doors for as much or as little of this time as you want; you can pick just one weekend, one day or even one hour.

This year we will again be supporting South Gloucestershire Heritage Open Days 2023 through a listing on the South Gloucestershire Council web site and through our social media platforms. If you would like us to include your event in our listing, please complete the form at <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Up6wZK2HvkaX0tlt0G861Aft0Ux6HeJBnZMYVjuWzDdUQ1o1Tjg5UFQ1U0ZDUjRNEpaVUhaOFhBNS4u> by **5pm Monday 12 June**.

You can register details for the same event on different days and times on one form. If you have different events over the Heritage Open Days period, please submit them on separate forms. If you would like to include an up-to-date photograph of your venue, please email this directly to me at [alison.catlin@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:alison.catlin@southglos.gov.uk).

Please ensure that you also register your event on the National Heritage Open Days website to obtain national advertising and promotional materials. You can find out about how to organise and register your Heritage Open Days through the national scheme at <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/organising> and there are hints and tips to plan your own publicity to maximise the number of people visiting your event.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions. I work part time, mornings on Tuesday – Friday. **Alison Catlin**, Museums and Heritage Officer, South Gloucestershire Council, 01454 865835

## JON CANNON

Jon Cannon, medieval historian and Keeper of the Fabric at **Bristol** cathedral, died 4 May 2013 after a long illness. He taught courses at Bristol University on medieval architecture and art. He published academic and other books, particularly on English cathedrals, and presented a BBC programme *How to Build a Cathedral*. He was particularly engrossed in Bristol cathedral, organising a conference which resulted in *The Medieval Art, Architecture and History of Bristol Cathedral* (Boydell & Brewer 2011. With Professor Nicholas Orme JC



edited *Westbury on Trym: monastery, minster and college* (**Bristol Record Society** vol.62, 2010).

## STUKELEY 300 BOOKINGS OPEN

*A reminder from John Richards that there will be a celebration in **Stanton Drew** on the weekend of 22-23 July 2023, of the 300th anniversary of the visit of the celebrated antiquarian, William Stukeley.*

***Bookings are now open for the guided tours and the symposium.***

**Stanton Drew** is the site of the most important stone circles in England, after Stonehenge and Avebury. There are three circles, of which the Great Circle is second only to Avebury in size, and a cove of three stones in the village.

William Stukeley was the leading antiquarian of the eighteenth century, and the first to perform a rigorous study of Avebury and Stonehenge. He visited **Stanton Drew** just the once, on the 23rd July 1723, but in that short time he produced a detailed plan, made several accurate drawings, and wrote an account that was to bring Stanton Drew to national prominence.

On **Saturday 22nd July** there will be a symposium of talks on William Stukeley, and the archaeology of **Stanton Drew**, given by leading academics and archaeologists. Tickets are on sale now. £25 for attendance in person (just a few left); £15 for streaming by *Zoom*.

See <https://stukeley300.org.uk/stukeley-300-symposium/>.

On **Sunday 23rd July 2023**, the exact 300th anniversary, there will be a day of events in the village, including guided tours of the stones and an exhibition. The tours will start at 10:30,

12:00, 12:30, 13:00, 13:30, 14:30, 15:00, 15:30, 16:00, 16:30, 17:00. Tours are free, a donation is invited. See <https://stukeley300.org.uk/guided-tours/>.

The events are being organised by **Stukeley 300**, a group with representatives from **Stanton Drew Parish Council, Bristol and Avon Archaeological Society, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Bath and Counties Archaeological Society**, and English Heritage. For further information, see <https://stukeley300.org.uk> or email [info@stukeley300.org.uk](mailto:info@stukeley300.org.uk).

[Photo (cropped) by Stevekeiretsu, [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).]

## LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ONLINE

*The Libraries West team write:* **Our digital newspaper service is changing from Friday 19 May.** Digital newspapers will be moving from the Press Reader (Libby) service to BorrowBox.

All you will need to do to access digital newspapers on BorrowBox is to install the BorrowBox app on to your device (if you don't already have it) or click on <https://www.borrowbox.com/librarieswest/> to use the website, then log on with your library membership number and PIN. If you need a PIN reminder click on [https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/client/en\\_GB/default](https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/client/en_GB/default), then click on 'Log in' and 'Forgot my PIN'.

If you already use BorrowBox, you will need to be connected to the internet to see digital newspapers for the first time, as your device will need to synchronise to enable the digital newspapers tab to appear.

Our contract with the current provider has come to an end, and we have entered into a new contract with BorrowBox. Although the new collection is smaller it is more targeted and includes more local and regional titles, including *Exeter Express & Echo, Frome Standard, Plymouth Herald, Somerset Guardian, Wells Journal & Western Gazette*. If you have any queries about the new service please email us at [librarieswest@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:librarieswest@somerset.gov.uk).

## BRISTOL & AVON FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY FAMILY HISTORY FAIR 2023

*Geoff Gardiner writes:* **Family History Fair 2023** will be held on **Saturday 23 September 2023** at **B.A.W.A. Leisure Centre, 589 Southmead Road, Filton, Bristol BS34 7RG 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** Free Entry for All. Help and advice from family history societies, archives offices and other local and national organisations. New and second-hand books, postcards, old maps, family history cds and more from commercial exhibitors. Free talks and presentations. For more details see the B&AFHS website [www.bafhs.org.uk](http://www.bafhs.org.uk) or facebook at [facebook.com/bristolandavonfhs](https://facebook.com/bristolandavonfhs).

## GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

### BARTON HILL HISTORY GROUP

Welcome back to **Barton Hill History Group**, one of ALHA's earliest and most active members, rejoining ALHA after some years.

## **BITTON PARISH HISTORY GROUP WALKS LEAFLETS**

With a grant contribution from ALHA, **Bitton Parish History Group** has published its walks leaflets. *Mike Gates writes:* 'Visitors and locals alike can now enjoy free detailed tour maps that take them on a journey through local villages' most significant historical landmarks. The walks are self-guided, allowing individuals to take their time and explore the area at their own pace. There are separate maps for **Bitton**, **Oldland Common** and **Willsbridge**. Each walk comes with an easy-to-read illustrated map that guides visitors through the historic sights of the area. The maps also include step-by-step directions, photos, and background information, making it easy for visitors to navigate the walks and learn more about the history of the villages. Accessibility details are clearly indicated on each map. ... Visit **Bitton Parish History Group's** website to download the self-guided walk maps:

<https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/walks/> , or collect any of the maps (free) from any of the following: • **Bitton** Station, Avon Valley Railway, Bath Rd, BS30 6HD 10am – 4.30pm on our normal operating days • **Cadbury Heath** Library, School Rd, Barrs Court, BS30 8EN Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 10am to 5pm, Saturday: 9.30am to 12.30pm • **Kingswood Heritage Museum**, Tower Lane, Warmley, BS30 8XT Tuesday, Saturday, Sunday – 14:00 – 17:00 • St Mary's Church, Church Road, **Bitton**, BS30 6LJ April to early October from about 9am to 6pm • **Willsbridge Mill Community Refresh**, **Willsbridge**, BS30 6EX Monday, Thursday & Friday 10:30am - 2:30pm Saturday and Sunday 10:30am - 3:30pm Printing costs of the leaflets were shared between Bitton Parish Council, ALHA and Bitton Parish History Group. Graphic design was provided by Rainbow Press, **Kingswood**.'

## **BATH CENTRE, NATIONAL TRUST**

The **Bath Centre, National Trust**, a voluntary group supporting The National Trust in the **Bath** area, has ceased to meet, and is being wound up.

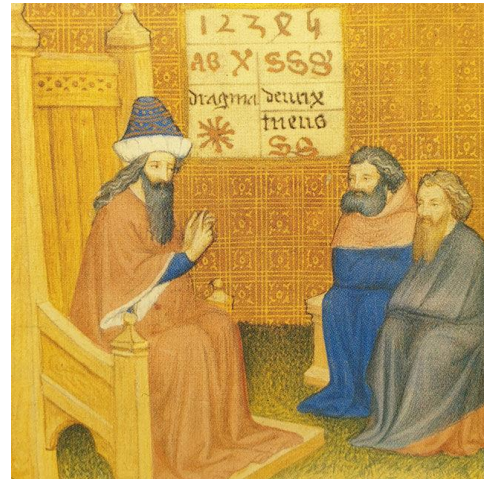
## **BOOKS ETC NOTICED**

Kirsten Elliott, 'Spirit of Bristol', 222 *The Bristol Magazine* May 2023, 42-43. A short article about Emily Hilda Young, whose 'Radstowe' novels were set in a thinly-disguised **Clifton**: she lived at 2 Saville Place 1902 to 1917. The article is accompanied by a photograph of a tram at **Whiteladies Gate**, full of detail, with a run of single-storey shops where Clifton Down shopping centre now adds joy to **Bristol's** architecture.

Bill Laws and others, 'Safe and sound: how to digitise your society's archive,' 147 *Local History News* Spring 2023, 10-11. A collection of suggestions. Compare Jane Tozer's piece in ALHA newsletter e-update 31 October 2016 recounting how former ALHA member **Filton Community History Group** arranged to transfer its archive to Gloucestershire Archives.



Richard de Grijs, 'Roger of Hereford: the twelfth century astronomer who put Hereford on the map,' 53 (2) *The Local Historian*, April 2023, 98-111. Mainly about how the late twelfth century R of H helped the reception of Arabic learning into medieval English mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and astrology. Contains references to, and a picture from a Belgian manuscript of, Adelard of **Bath** (c.1080-1142/1152), who was part of the transmission. [Image Leiden University Libraries]



Julie Johns, 'A Partial History of Barry Hill House, Cherry Garden Road, Bitton BS30 6JQ' on the **Bitton Parish History Group** website, <https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Barry-Hill-House.pdf>



David Noble, *Places of worship in the villages of Oldland Common, North Common, Bitton, Upton Cheyney and Swineford*, **Bitton Parish History Group** 2023, 152 pp, pb crown quarto (7.44 x 9.68 in / 189 x 246 mm), colour. £12. To reserve a copy please email author at [noble440@btinternet.com](mailto:noble440@btinternet.com)

## RESPONSES

### Sheep

A piece in ALHA newsletter e-update 30 April 2023 suggested that local historians have not paid our sheep the attention they deserve. *Rita Lees, Marshfield & District Local History Society/Social History Group, responds:*

Your commentary alludes to the Church and its role in the wool trade. The Church was a major land owner, and through its monasteries owned huge flocks of sheep from the 12th century. The open field system enabled the grazing of sheep on the Cotswold hills and the Cotswold sheep became the most sought-after breed in the English wool trade.

Russett has pointed to the lack of evidence of an early wool trade in **Marshfield**, probably owing to the latter's concentration upon the growth of barley in the production of malt for the brewing industry. The first reference to a wool trade occurs in the 16th Century, when **Marshfield** set up a wool market in opposition to the one in **Bath**. At the time, **Bath** was experiencing an outbreak of the plague, but the aggrieved Bath wool merchants described the setting up as "uncharitable." The date is unknown but it could have been in 1575, when the plague was also severe in **Bristol** and the west. By this period, the Church had lost all

control over the wool trade, owing to the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. The next reference to the wool trade appears in the muster roll, *Men and Armour*, compiled in 1608. Of the 160 men listed, 12 men were involved in the wool trade, whilst 21 men worked as maltster, which bears out Russett's earlier supposition of barley being more important than wool.

The processing of wool was a home-based industry, and in 1725 **Marshfield** was noted for its "fine medley or mixed cloth, usually worn by the better class of people..." but after 1750, Beckinsale indicated a decline in the Gloucestershire home-based woollen industry. An entry in *The Universal British Trade Directory* for 1791 lists **Marshfield** as a clothing town but fails to include any named workers, unlike other trades at the time. The reasons for its decline appear to be overwhelmingly economic, with the factory system replacing the home-based industries. Weavers went on strike in the Stroudwater area, as they violently objected to the use of machinery and steam power. Many towns and villages could not compete, owing to the lack of a sufficient water source to power the steam engines, and **Marshfield** was one example. Villages in the Stroud valleys actually fared much better owing to the accessibility of their rapid streams. From 1807 there was also competition in the Cotswolds from the use of Spanish wool, which also caused depression of the wool trade and resulting poverty. Although Stroud flourished, the whole of the Cotswolds wool industry was eventually taken over by the improved technology and widespread use of powered mills in Yorkshire.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Signal and noise**

May 2023's local election results prompted the media to predict from them the outcomes of the next general election: unreasonably, because more people vote in parliamentary than in local authority elections, and there is research evidence that large numbers of people do not vote in general elections the same way as they last voted locally. Polling organisations who claim to predict the results of elections are not always accurate either. One exception is the statistician Nate (presumably short for Nathaniel) Silver. In 2008 NS accurately predicted the outcome of the USA presidential election in 49 out of 50 states, and in all 35 of the contested senate elections. In 2012 he did the same for every state in the US presidential election, while most newspapers and opinion poll organisations got the prediction wrong. NS repeated his success for the 2016 US election.

NS explained his method in *The signal and the noise* (Penguin 2012). The metaphor is from radio: a receiver is designed to distinguish between interference (noise) and the sound (signal) that is intended to be received. NS's method can be reduced to the proposition that you have more chance of getting a prediction right if you identify and concentrate on what is relevant and likely to influence the result, and ignore what is not: hardly a novel idea. There is of course more to it than that, one problem being how to recognise what is relevant in the first place, let alone how to recognise what is not relevant. Another problem is how to



recognise something that does not look relevant but may nevertheless influence what happens.

Those who research and write histories, including local history, have a similar problem, except that, like the oozlum bird, they look backwards rather than forwards. Both forecasters and historians have to select facts from masses of data, both have to select and disregard, and both try to find causes and consequences.

Some of NS's methods are mathematical. Some of them involve concepts and techniques which include in the calculation what you think the result is going to be, which seems suspect (although many historians do the same). Some of the mathematics is not relevant to history, except perhaps in analysing large quantities of statistical data. Other aspects of NS's methods, eg Do not select only the evidence that supports your case, are little more than common sense, equally applicable to historical enquiry and to prediction. But much of NS's advice is useful and to the point, for both pollsters and local history people. It seems a strange coincidence that the same methods are used by both those who look forward and those who look back. Or is it just an example of the general proposition that in drawing conclusions from any mass of information, we need to select what is relevant to the question from what is not?

### **Constitutional ceremonial**

The coronation ceremony, with its echoes of feudalism, the last vestiges of which were legally abolished in 1660, and its claims to divine authority, that one would have thought had been given the chop in 1649, will have made many people ashamed to be British. Prince Louis will have had his sympathisers. The faux-medieval flummery, most of it of post-medieval invention, might lead local history people to ponder how much ceremonial survives locally.

Some local ceremonials are military, such as military regiments marching through **Bristol** with arms at the ready. Such events, advisedly granted as a permission though purporting to convey a right, are presumably also intended as a not-so-subtle reminder to the populace, however provoked by the conduct of those in power, not to get too uppity and try a repeat of 1831.

Other rituals, mostly civic ones, are less offensive, and are attached to the mayoralties in **Bath** and **Bristol**. **Bristol's** mayor-making followed a couple of days after the national ceremony:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/g10579/Agenda%20frontsheet%2009th-May-2023%2014.00%20Full%20Council.pdf?T=0> .The lord mayor or mayor still wears a robe and chain of office on formal civic occasions – sometimes even for visits to primary schools and other photo opportunities – and councillors don robes for some events such as formal

election of a mayor. In **Bristol** the lord mayor's state coach was in use until recently; now discreetly stored, it awaits public display along with the proclamation brake in M Shed or the transport museum that, unlike First buses, will not be long in coming:

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-and-mayor/councillors-and-the-lord-mayor/lord-mayor->

[of-bristol/role-and-duties-of-the-lord-mayor/the-history-of-the-lord-mayor#:~:text=Bristol%20is%20the%20only%20city%20outside%20London%20to,George%27s%20Road%20on%20a%20site%20behind%20City%20Hall](https://www.alha.org.uk/2018/07/20/role-and-duties-of-the-lord-mayor/the-history-of-the-lord-mayor#:~:text=Bristol%20is%20the%20only%20city%20outside%20London%20to,George%27s%20Road%20on%20a%20site%20behind%20City%20Hall) .

Bristol's lord mayor is still preceded at some events by a sword-bearer, a relic of a time when the mayor had power to order death. The symbol is incongruously retained, presumably as a threat of authority that no longer exists. The oddity of the survival was commented on in a piece in ALHA *Newsletter* 92 of 30 September 2002. Parading of the sword at religious services and university degree ceremonies corresponds to the carrying at the coronation by the lord president of the (Privy) Council of a sword of state. Whereas Ms Mordaunt is reported in the media to have trained and not to have trained, and to have taken and not to have taken analgesics, in order to hold the 3.6kg sword upright during the coronation ritual, some churches in Bristol thoughtfully provided sword rests, which can still be seen at Christ Church City, St Mark's on College Green, and St Werburgh's. Photographs in Bristol Archives show them in other places of worship too.

Ritual, involving non-standard actions, language and garb, survives also in churches, where its function seems to be to reinforce belief; in freemasonry, where its continuation begs explanation; in higher education, where its function is now nothing more than the observance of, or pretension to, tradition, perhaps with reminders of rank and status; and in the armed forces, where ceremonial seems to get further and further from operational reality.

### **QUOTE**

Amid the highly variegated landscape of museums in Britain, there is a growing awareness that they can no longer offer a singular, lofty, purportedly neutral view. Unless, that is, they are content to be understood as irrelevant to communities around them. Equally, since there is no such thing as a 'neutral' curatorial position, there is a realisation that museums should be more honest about their own intellectual processes, and more generous about sharing their power (that of amassing, keeping, selecting and displaying objects) with those outside their walls.

Charlotte Higgins, 'War has shown us – and Ukraine – how vital our museums are', *The Guardian* 27 May 2023.

### **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.**

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