

ALHA



AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Registered charity 270930

Newsletter 176

30 September 2023

**Material for printed Newsletter 177 by 12 noon
Friday 15 December 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 and changes of contact
details to newsletter editor and membership
secretary, 5 Parrys Grove, Bristol BS9 1TT
wm.evans@btopenworld.com



Image: Upton Cheyney United Reformed Church

ALHA NEWS

Annual general meeting
Annual lecture
Committee business
ALHA booklet: Cossham Hospital
Hidden gems (VB)
Facebook (VB)
Handel Cossham local history day 2024

GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

Community ownership fund (AC)
Brian Austin
Speakers list addition for 2024
Brass Tracks (RD)

SOURCES AND EVENTS

Bristol Record Society digitisations (KT)
BRS uploads to *Wikimedia* (KT)
Clergy directory before *Crockford*
Winterbourne Medieval Barn (LH)

REVIEWS (Edited by Dr J Harlow)

Civil war sieges
The Regional Historian 4
B&GAS Transactions 140
The Local Historian 53.3

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Upton Cheyney URC chapel
Peter Fleming book
B&AFHS Journal 193
Bristol rail lines and stations
Medieval church decoration
Newspaper reporter memoir

RESPONSES

Accident in history (JS)
Ritual (JS)

COMMENTARY

Debt
Nonconformist chapels
Railway hotels

QUOTE

Irene Vallejo

CAN YOU HELP?

Tracing enquiry

ALHA NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND LECTURE

ALHA's annual general meeting will be held at **2.15pm on Tuesday 17 October 2013** at the Apostle Room, **Clifton Cathedral**, off Pembroke Road, Bristol BS8 3BX. **Notice of the meeting and papers accompany this newsletter.** After the meeting Dinah Moore, author of ALHA booklet no. 36, will give the annual lecture, titled *Edward Long Fox, radical and mental health pioneer*.

ALHA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Review of ALHA: Trustee Veronica Bowerman has completed her review of ALHA, which the committee will use to review progress annually.

Student volunteers: Trustee Veronica Bowerman has been discussing with University of Bristol's placements and partnership co-ordinator how the supply of student volunteers can be continued. It is hoped that informal arrangements, within ALHA's bureaucratic capabilities, can be negotiated.

NEW ALHA BOOKLET: COSSHAM HOSPITAL

A flyer for ALHA's latest booklet, with a discount for early orders, accompanies this newsletter.

ALHA FACEBOOK – HIDDEN GEMS PROJECT

Veronica Bowerman writes: ALHA knows that there are many hidden historic gems around the former Avon area just waiting to be highlighted. If you would like to send in some text - not more than 200 words - accompanied by a couple of photos taken by you relating to something of this nature we will be pleased to consider it for the ALHA Facebook page. Entries should be sent to us as follows:

Subject: Hidden Gems Project

Email: facebook@alha.org.uk

ALHA FACEBOOK – THE BENEFITS

Veronica Bowerman writes: Since 2016 ALHA has had a Facebook page and now has more than 1,000 followers. We wondered if you had recently viewed it. If not, and you are curious, here is the link: <https://www.facebook.com/AvonLocalHistoryandArchaeology>

We have also recently noticed that a high proportion of ALHA's archaeological and family history group members have a Facebook presence. It would be a great help if they, or any other group members who have a facebook presence, could tell about its benefits to help other members.

Just a few short bullet points would be great and should be emailed as follows:

Subject: The Benefits of Facebook

Email address: facebook@alha.org.uk

This Facebook team email can address also be used for other Facebook items with the subject stated.

HANDEL COSSHAM CONFERENCE 2024

ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** and ALHA are organising a local history day or conference devoted to Handel Cossham, to mark the 200th anniversary of his birth. The event will be held on **Saturday 13 April 2024 at Turnberries community centre, Thornbury**, and the format will be similar to that of an ALHA local history day. More details and booking arrangements will appear in the next ALHA Newsletter, and on the ALHA and B&GAS websites. If you might be interested in helping in any capacity, please contact wm.evans@btopenworld.com or johnregstevens@outlook.com .

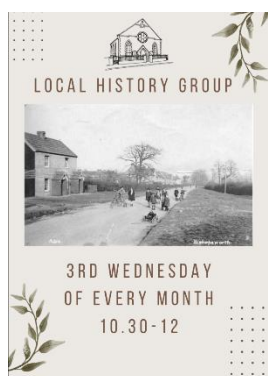
GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

BRIAN AUSTIN

ALHA member **Weston super Mare branch of Bristol & Avon Family History Society** reports the death on 14 September of Brian Austin, long active in local and family history in **Weston super Mare**. In 2020 the British Association for Local History recognised his work with one of its achievement awards, for reasons given at <https://www.balh.org.uk/resources-awards-balh-annual-awards-recipients-2020> . Tributes appear on ALHA's facebook page.

COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND

Alison Catlin draws attention to the Community Ownership fund. 'It's one of government's lesser-known funding programmes and allows local groups to take control of local assets at risk of being lost to the community. It's been



used to support pubs, community centres, football grounds and arts centres, amongst other things. Groups can bid for grants up to £2m and the current window closes on **11 October 2023.**' Details at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus> . The fund has been running since 2021. One of the case studies detailed in the prospectus is ALHA member **Zion Bristol at Bedminster Down**, who have converted a former Methodist chapel to a community hub including a café, hall and room for hire and a centre for a range of community activities. [*Image, Zion Bristol*]. Although the purpose of the fund is to make possible the retention of community assets, it has been used in many places to help conserve buildings of historic or architectural interest or importance that might otherwise have been lost. Alison Catlin, Museums and

Heritage Officer, South Gloucestershire Council, 01454 865835, mornings Tuesdays – Fridays.

PRESENTERS DIRECTORY – FOR 2024

ALHA individual member Richard Stride appears in ALHA's 2023 presenters directory. The next edition, or an insert updating the list, will not appear until April 2024 at the earliest, but in the mean time RS invites bookings for his 2024 guided walks:

Date	Day	Time	Tour
March 16	Saturday	Morning	The Abbey of St. Augustine & Bristol Cathedral
April 25	Thursday	Evening	English Civil War Bristol
May 16	Thursday	Evening	Medieval Bristol
June 13	Thursday	Evening	Blaise Castle
July 11	Thursday	Evening	Westbury-on-Trym
Sept 21	Saturday	Morning	Sneyd Park, Stoke Bishop, and the Stride family

RS charges £7.00 per head, Spaces are limited to 20 per tour. Each tour lasts approximately 90 minutes. If you would like to find out more, to reserve a place, or to be added to the mailing list for future tours, please email RS at stridethroughhistory@gmail.com

BRASS TRACKS

Richard Dyson writes: ALHA member **Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society** has published a new book of trails. Titled **Brass Tracks**, it contains maps and full directions for five walks and one family-friendly cycle route connecting all the known sites associated with the brass and copper industries in the valleys of the Avon and the Chew. The walks vary in length from 1½ to 6 miles and include **Keynsham, Saltford, the Chew valley and Conham**, where the local industry was first established. The cycle trail runs from **Locksbrook in Bath**, along the Railway Path to **Warmley**, where William Champion built his factory.

As well as the directions, maps and plenty of photographs the book includes a history of the local brass and copper industry, plus information on the mill owners and the skilled workers who made the bowls and pans.

When the industry started, many men were recruited from continental Europe. They moved here with their families and settled; the local surnames of Ollis and Fray come from these immigrants. To help those pursuing family history, the book includes details of all the brass workers that the Society could find records of.

The book is dedicated to the late Joan Day, who spent much of her life researching the Bristol brass industry and who led the campaign to save the **Saltford Brass Mill**. Joan was a prominent member of **Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society** and remembered it in her will.

All the work of researching the walks and compiling the history was done by a small group of K&SLHS members, with a major contribution from Tony Coverdale, chair of the **Saltford Brass Mill Project**. Our aim was to help local people to discover this important part of our past and I think in *Brass Tracks* we have succeeded. I am grateful to all those who have helped to put it together.

The book has 96pp, A5, wire-bound so that it opens flat for outdoor use. It is available at £10.00 per copy from the Society at books@keysalthist.org.uk or telephone 0117 986 4453.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

BRISTOL RECORD SOCIETY DIGITISED SOURCES

BRS secretary Dr Kath Thompson draws attention to sources digitised by ALHA member Bristol Record Society since February 2023. They include (summary descriptions by KT):

- Michael Adler, 'The Jews of Bristol in pre-expulsion days', *Transactions, Jewish Historical Society of England*, 12 (1931 for 1928-1931) pp. 117-86. This remains the most detailed account of the Jewish community of medieval Bristol. <https://archive.org/details/adler-jews-of-bristol>
- John Eden (ed.), *A Pious Meditation, composed in the seventeenth century, by John Whitson, Alderman of the City of Bristol to which is subjoined some account of the author by the late Mr. George Symes Catcott, with additional memoirs collected by the present editor* (Bristol, 1829). A key source for one of Bristol's most famous mayors and the founder of Red Maids' School. <https://archive.org/details/whitson-pious-meditation>
- John Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol, and the Stranger's Guide through its Streets and Neighbourhood* (Bristol, 1824), xxvi pp + 376 pp. <https://archive.org/details/evans-chronological-outline-of-the-history-of-bristol>
- Reginald James Fletcher, *A History of Bristol Cathedral: gathered from documents in the possession of the dean and chapter* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1932), 80 pp. A short official history of the cathedral, written by the Canon Residentiary and Keeper of the Manuscripts. BRS e-published this in tribute to Dr Jon Cannon (medieval art / architectural historian of Bristol), who died earlier this year. <https://archive.org/details/fletcher-history-of-bristol-cathedral>
- E. A. Lewis (ed.), *The Welsh Port Books (1550-1603)* (Cymmrodorion Record Series, No. XII, London, 1927) While not specifically about Bristol, this volume is relevant to the city and its trade, given how closely connected south Wales was to Bristol during the early modern period. <https://archive.org/details/welsh-port-books-1550-1603>
- Philp & Evans, *The New Bristol Guide for 1842* (Bristol, Philp & Evans, 1842). An early tourist guidebook to Bristol, including information about how the city saw itself and the priorities of visitors. BRS dedicated this e-

publication to Hannah Lowrey, Head of Special Collections, University of Bristol (1969-2023), who died earlier this year. <https://archive.org/details/new-bristol-guide-for-1842>

○ [T. Richard Robinson], *The Sieges of Bristol during the Civil War* (Bristol: Clifton Committee for Promoting the Higher Education of Women, 1868), viii pp. + 49 pp. Useful primarily for historiographical reasons, having been superseded by later scholarship. It is interesting, however, both for its author and, possibly more, its publishers. <https://archive.org/details/robinson-sieges-of-bristol/page/n1/mode/2up>

○ [Samborne], *The Poetic Guide to Clifton, Bristol, and Neighbourhood; with Historical Notes, Legends, and Tales* (Bristol: C. T. Jefferies, printer, 1859). Published by a Somerset gentleman. Apart from two copies in Bristol central library, the only library copy in the UK appears to be one held by the British Library. <https://archive.org/details/poetic-guide-to-clifton>

WIKIMEDIA / WIKIPEDIA SOURCES

Dr Kath Thompson writes: Since 2020 **Bristol Record Society** has been digitising / e-publishing some high-resolution visual sources - such as the Millerd Map (1728), the 18th century Buck prospects of **Bristol** and the Pocock prints. Those images have now been uploaded to *Wikimedia* as well. This increases the images' accessibility and makes them easier to use in *Wikipedia* pages. In many cases we have now inserted the images into relevant *Wikipedia* pages, as well as editing the pages where necessary. Examples include:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Square,_Bristol and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolzey_Court .

BRS has also uploaded to *Wikimedia* high-resolution copies of images from regular books. Examples include an engraving of the *Great Western* Steamship (taken from *The New Bristol Guide for 1842*) and a print of the now-destroyed early nineteenth century monument to John Whitson (taken from Eden's *Pious Meditation*). These images have also been added to relevant Wikipedia pages, such as the ones for the *SS Great Western* and John Whitson.

CLERGY DIRECTORY

A new website under construction offers a database of English and Welsh clergy from the reformation to when *The Clergy List* and *Crockford's* started publishing in 1845: <https://theclergydatabase.org.uk/> . The database is searchable, but a preliminary look suggests that searchers have to choose from an alphabetical list of locations.

WINTERBOURNE MEDIEVAL BARN ORCHARD HARVEST DAY

Louise Harrison writes: **Sunday 8 October, 11am - 4pm.** 'Celebrate our Heritage - the skill of the medieval craftsmen who built the Barn, along with British orchards, crafts, skills, music and dance. <http://www.winterbournebarn.org.uk/events/>

A full programme of different activities throughout the day, including ferret-racing, Winterbourne Down Border Morris, Frampton Shantymen, Bygonz minstrels, 5678 Dance school, historic River Severn salmon & eel fisheries exhibition, Chicken Charmer Farmer walkabout characters, artisan craft stalls and displays, kids' crafts, face-painting, coconut shy activities, and more. Excellent local available all day and the Barn bar and cafe. A great day out for all ages. Well-behaved dogs welcome on a lead. Adult £5, child (3-16) £1. Pay on the gate or booked online in advance to avoid queues. FREE car parking at Winterbourne Academy (High Street, BS36 1JL) with FREE shuttle bus to and from the Barn all day,' it says. Winterbourne Medieval Barn, Church Lane, **Winterbourne**, South Glos BS36 1SE.

REVIEWS

by Dr Jonathan Harlow except where stated; * indicates a review that has appeared in e-updates since the last printed newsletter.

* ***'Cannon played from the Great Fort'; Sieges in the Severn Valley during the English Civil War*** by Richard Israel, Helion & Co, *Century of the Soldier 1618-1721* series no.64, 2021, 165 pp, pb, fully illustrated, £25.

This is a comprehensive study of sieges from Gloucester in 1643 to Worcester in 1646 including the two sieges of **Bristol**: perhaps underestimating its strategic importance to the Royalists in 1645: not just money and munitions but also the first base for the Welsh and Irish recruits on whom Charles increasingly relied.

The author gives full attention to the military techniques – siegeworks, mining, gunnery and storming; perhaps too little to the cultural background. To storm a city when it refused to surrender conventionally meant allowing the successful troops to sack and pillage. But in England the generals were not the professionals of the 30 Years War and so were far more sensitive to the concerns of the townsfolk, more inclined to surrender early, as happened in both Bristol sieges.

A pricey book for its size, but worth it if you want a detailed discussion and comparison of the military factors.

****The Regional Historian 4*** (2023), UWE Regional History Centre

The region covered is a wide South-West, but nine of the ten articles here are **Bristol**-related. Bananas, Banks, Bars, Baths [*more below: Ed.*], Broadmead and Drains are all addressed, with the careers of some enterprising fellows including 'a cunning man' (in effect, witch doctor) who flourished – despite all legal efforts to suppress him – in the early 19th century. An article I look forward to following up on the ground is by Professor Richard Coates on 11 **Bristol** pub names. And there is an engaging account of the lively community local history project in **Downend**. 75 A4 pages, fully illustrated and very worthwhile: why not join the Regional History Centre (£12) and make sure of the next (and on-line access to the previous issues)?

****Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions 140*** (2022)

At over 350 pages, this is one stout issue. Eight of the articles are archaeological, and of these five are from Cotswold Archaeology (and a substantial volume on *The Archaeology of the South Wales Gas Pipeline* well reviewed here), so well done them! Six deal with Roman occupation, with earlier or later development. I am not an archaeologist but it looks as though none transforms, though all add to, our understanding of the historic area. There is the usual delay in publication: the archaeological work involved was done from 2015 to 2020, average 2017 or six years before circulation here. However there is the usual survey of recent archaeological work.

On the non-archaeological side, President Michael Hare accounts for the survival of 17th-century chancel fittings at St Mary's, Deerhurst. Clive Burgess re-examines the life and benefactions of William Cannynge with Richard Whittington as comparison; omitting however the most salient difference – Cannynge had no cat. It is very good to see Joe Bettey still at work: here on the cultivation of teasels in **South Gloucestershire**, used to raise the nap on cloth right through to the 19th century. And John Stevens discusses the narrow Liberal electoral victory in **Bristol** South in 1910: a gentlemanly contest turning more on local issues and personalities than on the national agenda.

There are substantial reviews, including one by Joe Bettey on John Bryant's *Excavations at Minster House, Bristol, 1992* (see Newsletter 171); and one on Peter Malpass's *Housing the People in Victorian Bristol* (Newsletter 170). Also of our area is Richard Israel's *Cannon Played from the Great Fort: Sieges in the Severn Valley in the English Civil War* (Helion & Co. 2021); and *Bath & Wells Ordinations 1465-1526*

edited by Robert Dunning for the Somerset Record Society. No less than three of our own ALHA “excellent series of booklets” are favourably reviewed – nos 33-35; and also *The Forest of Dean Miners’ Riot of 1831* by Chris Fisher, a Bristol Radical History booklet – I always like to see a book fair where their scarlet sits near to our gold covers.

The obituaries include a handsome tribute to Dr Martin Crossley Evans.

***The Local Historian 53.3** (July 2023) contains only one article relating to the ALHA region; ‘The gentry of Somerset and the Dissolution of the monasteries’ by Simon Lambe. The author demonstrates that the local gentry were not typically able to acquire ex-monastic land on particularly favourable terms – that was for courtiers and politicians at the centre – but often had the benefit of first-hand knowledge of the lands in question, often through previous leasings or administrative arrangements, so they knew what the land was worth.

A curious claim is often repeated: that apart from making good investments, the local gentry were driven by a determination ‘to block the progress of outsiders within the county’. This claim is made several times and is included as a key factor in the conclusion. Yet there seemed to be no evidence for it. The only reference is to an article dealing with the Tudor *nobility* on a national basis. What one wants is any examples of Somerset gentry buying land at a disadvantageous price in order to outbid some ‘outsider’; but examples there are none.

One tends to assume that gentry were more interested in acquiring land that neighboured their own than in remoter holdings; and it would have been interesting to see how many of the acquisitions here fitted this pattern.

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

David Noble, ‘The URC Chapel at Upton Cheyney’, <https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/URC-Upton-Cheyney.pdf>. This is an excerpt from his book *Chapels and Churches in Bitton Parish*. Topical, as the former Congregationalist chapel closes this month. More under COMMENTARY, below.

Andrew Swift, ‘Riding the rails,’ 226 *The Bristol Magazine* September 2023, 42-43. An attack on the Beeching cuts and a plea for reopening local lines and stations, but also includes brief information on opening and closing of local lines and stations, and photographs of **St Anne’s Park, Pill** and **Ashley Hill** stations about 1910.

Former ALHA trustee Professor Peter Fleming’s *Time, Space and Power in Later Medieval Bristol* was published electronically by ALHA member **Bristol Record Society** in February 2023. BRS secretary Dr Kath Thompson says the book is now being professionally published by the Yorkist History Trust. ‘The print edition has been copyedited and indexed, and includes the images Peter intended. The revised title will be *Late Medieval Bristol: Time, Space and Power*. The book should be out before the end of 2023 and will cost £25 (post free in UK, £10 for overseas orders). The book will contain a List of Subscribers for those who pre-order the book by 10 October 2023. Please ask the BRS secretary,

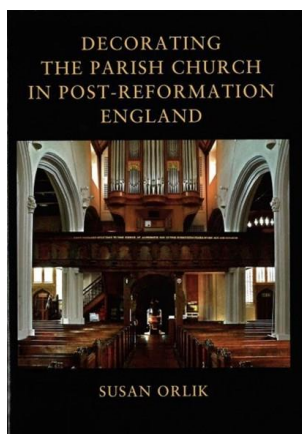
bristolrecordsociety@gmail.com if you would like a copy of the order form.’

[Image, Bristol City Council]



Bristol & Avon Family History Society *Journal* 193, September 2013. Much concerned with internal B&AFHS business, including a new constitution designed to respond to declining membership numbers and, one suspects,

fewer members volunteering to undertake operational roles. Articles of local history interest include one by Jane Bambury about [Anne Victoria] Gwendolen Wills (1872-1949), granddaughter of Henry Overton Wills II. After nursing in London, GW lived at Long Reach House between **Keynsham** and **Saltford**, and was active in local politics and much else. Also of local government interest is an article by Ann Pople about her uncle Vic Pople, a much respected member of Avon County Council 1973-1977 and lord mayor of **Bristol** 1980. Places mentioned include **Charlton**, **Henbury**, **Shirehampton**, **Patchway** and **Lawrence Weston**. Two other articles contain details of the lives of two mariners, one in the royal, one in the merchant navy, with local connections.



Susan Orlik, *Decorating the parish church in post-Reformation England: material culture, community and identity in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1560-1640*, Shaun Tyas £35.00. ISBN 978-1-915774-03-3. Available by emailing: shaun@shauntyas.myzen.co.uk. Based on PhD research into the three counties named; Dorset was in the diocese of **Bristol** from 1538 to 1883. Includes examination of interior fittings of St John's on the wall in **Bristol**, and there are other references to the diocese generally.

Nigel Heath, *Newspapers and PR: a media life*, Amazon Books, 2023, pb, £8.99; <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Newspapers-PR-Mr-Nigel-Heath/dp/B0CD115ZSN>. NH was a reporter for the *South Avon Mercury* (which once reported an Avon County

Council decision as the exact opposite of what was decided) and *Bristol Evening Post*.

RESPONSES

ACCIDENT IN HISTORY

A piece in ALHA Newsletter 175 suggested that in the past of our area, most historically significant events were the result of intentional action, not accident. *John Stevens responds*: ... As to local history, let us remember that Edward Colston was a childless bachelor who could well have dissipated his wealth in his later years and died penniless. Had he done so, rather than signally remembering his native city, he would have been forgotten. There would have been no statue, to be toppled in May 2020 amid national and international publicity. [*Colston's benefactions were the result of his deliberate decision, not accident. That he could have decided not to make them, and that subsequent aspects of Bristol's history would then have been different, does not make them accidental.* Ed.]

PUBLIC CEREMONIAL

A piece in ALHA newsletter e-update 31 May 2023 noted the dwindling of ceremonial and ritual in our area, compared with the anachronistic and embarrassing coronation extravaganza. David Evans responded in ALHA newsletter e-update 31 August 2023. *John Stevens responds further*: ...It is difficult to see why Mr David Evans finds Edmund Burke "amusing" (whilst seemingly taking William Morris seriously) or the relevance of Burke's views on slavery, save that it currently seems *de rigeur* to mention it in any discussion of **Bristol** history.

The views of DE and the editor about tradition do not coincide. DE sees it as "invented" and it cannot be denied that this is the case with many relatively superficial traditions. The clansmen at Culloden, for example, probably wore a rather dull plaid, colourful tartans only being devised by Sir Walter Scott and friends three quarters of a century later. Instances could be multiplied.

Important national traditions, however, often grow organically over decades or centuries, at some undefined moment finding a place in the hearts and minds of the people, The editor was surely correct to point (if with disapproval) to the antiquity of the sacred and ceremonial parts of the Coronation Service.

The concept of the divinity that hedges a King grew from, among many other things, the chaos which followed the end of the Roman empire in the west, the rise of successor states and later feuds between secular

rulers and the papacy. It was not, as the editor asserted, “given the chop” in 1649 for, as Jonathan Clark has demonstrated, divine right theory survived the eighteenth century, among Hanoverians as much as Jacobites. “DG” still appears on our coinage and millions worldwide watched the ancient ceremony (modified in England by the protestant reformation) on 6 May. They may have watched it uncomprehending but, among those of the anglosphere at least, it may have struck chords. It may even be that altar, throne and ensign will have more to do with the shaping of the world than internationalist, secular minded liberals can, or would like to, believe.

Lastly, as to heads of state, I cannot think of any state ancient or modern, theocratic or secular which has not had one of some sort.

COMMENTARY

Debt

Interest rates between 2009 and 2022 were unusually low. The recent increases remind us how much individuals, businesses and public authorities rely on debt nowadays.

Government borrowing increased in the eighteenth century and after, largely because of military and naval operations. Particularly expensive were the napoleonic wars; and later, WW1 and WW2. The government also borrowed heavily to pay for other things, such as the compensation in 1834 to ‘owners’ of enslaved and commodified people. That injection of cash did much to boost the local economies of **Bath and Bristol**, and helped fund ventures such as the Great Western Cotton Factory in **Barton Hill**, and the construction of railways.

Government borrowing has had indirect local effects. In 1793 when Britain went to war with France, the government raised money by issuing bonds at a high rate of interest. Those who had lent money to businesses, especially builders, called the loans in so as to buy government bonds offering a higher and guaranteed return. As a result many builders in **Clifton** and **Bath** went bankrupt, and building stopped for many years. The **Bristol Bridge** riots of 1793 may have been sparked off by the trustees’ decision not to stop taking tolls, but the underlying causes are more likely to have included unemployment and poverty.

In the eighteenth century most members of the aristocracy and other landowners borrowed heavily. Norborne Berkeley at **Stoke Gifford** borrowed to pay for his improvements to what later became his mother’s dower house, and to fund his investment in William Champion’s works at **Warmley**. Berkeley borrowed heavily from several sources, all at 4%. In March 1748 he borrowed £6,000 from the duke of Beaufort, on the security of a mortgage. As early as 1751 he borrowed £1,000 from Esplin, a local lender; by June 1752 he had borrowed £3000 from Gregory Bush, a **Bristol** apothecary who also lent money. In 1754 he was paying interest to his attorney Griffiths, and the following year some of Berkeley’s account entries for payments to Griffiths are in code. In November 1756 Berkeley gave Bush a bond for £6,000. In 1760 Berkeley was paying interest to a man called Jones; in the same year he borrowed £1,000 from a **Bristol** bank, possibly to pay off existing debts, but also £300 from his steward’s brother John Blandford, to whom Berkeley gave a bond. In September 1760 Berkeley owed £4,000 to a **Bristol** apothecary-turned lender called Berjew, but that might have been a loan replacing or consolidating earlier ones. By June 1761 he owed £3,000 to Berjew, and £1,000 to John Blandford. In 1765 Berkeley drew 2 bank bills for £1,000 each, and with them paid off £2,000 of Berjew’s. Because his steward’s accounts do not record all Berkeley’s private transactions, it is difficult to be sure whether a particular borrowing was a replacement for an old one, but the general impression is that apart from the £6,000 borrowed from the duke of Beaufort, at any one time Berkeley owed a similar amount to several creditors in total.

At **Badminton** the Somersets/Beauforts borrowed extravagantly and irresponsibly, partly to pay for their treasonable Jacobite activities, including payments to the pretender in France. When the fourth duke died in 1756 his estate was well over £100,000 in debt, and his executors had to sell land in Mayfair to pay off the debts.

In the nineteenth century most private housing in **Bath and Bristol** and in other places in our area was funded by borrowing. There were two sorts: builders borrowed in order to build; purchasers borrowed in order to buy. Building societies emerged and grew: Bristol & West became a national, not just local, institution. And not only housing: much commercial building, factories, shops, warehouses, offices and so on was funded by borrowing. Those practices have continued into the present day, and on an increasing scale.

For individuals at the less wealthy end of the spectrum, borrowing on the security of personal possessions expanded in the nineteenth century. Alderman Swaish, lord mayor of **Bristol** when WW1 broke out, lived at **Bitton** but owned a chain of pawnbrokers' shops in and around **Bristol**. 'Business as usual,' he insisted.

Most infrastructure provided by local authorities has been funded by borrowing. The rationale is that it is not fair for the whole cost of major capital works that will be used for many years to be paid for by those ratepayers who happen to be around when the project begins: it is fairer that future residents who will benefit from the infrastructure should also pay a share. So a capital project is usually paid for by borrowing over the project's estimated life. Housing, schools, homes for elderly people, sewerage, docks, market buildings, leisure centres, courts, municipal offices, police stations, libraries and so on have been so funded. In 1842 the government created the Public Works Loan Board to facilitate borrowing by local authorities. Nowadays some three quarters of the £100 thousand million borrowed by local authorities has been borrowed via the PWLB. The rest has been raised by bonds issued in the money market, and, of recent years, by complicated financial instruments, some of which have led to insolvency or government-funded rescue.

One result of all this is that practically every building in our area, public or private, and nearly all the infrastructure that facilitates civilised living, has depended on borrowing. As has been observed in another context, in the midst of life we are in debt.

Nonconformist chapels

Upton Cheney's united reformed chapel (opened 1834) is the latest in our area to shut. Various reasons are given for these closures: fewer people holding religious beliefs; fewer attending places of worship; dissatisfaction with traditional forms of religious expression; people having difficulty reconciling religious practices and institutional behaviour with the teachings of the founder. Others are put off by reports of sexual abuse and failure to deal with it in the established and roman catholic churches, a problem that less authoritarian and non-celibate nonconformist denominations seem to have been free of, at any rate in our area.

Nonconformist chapels interest local historians. The buildings tend to be architecturally interesting: simpler and younger than most church of England buildings, and with different vernacular elements. In rural areas nearly all are plain and austere, which might reflect doctrinal beliefs or the poverty of the congregation. Urban areas had more money and more attenders (and more wealthy manufacturing donors?), so the architecture there tends to be more opulent, sometimes flamboyant, a bit pompous even, with neoclassical features. (**Westbury on Trym's** neogothic methodist church, which has a spire, is unusual but not unique). In both town and countryside the nonconformist chapel tends to be a large prominent building, an eye-catching feature of the street jumble. There were lots of them: **Bitton** parish alone had thirteen. Striking examples in our area include John Hare's chapel on Coronation Road by **Bedminster** Bridge; the unitarian and quaker meeting houses at **Frenchay**; the originally Irvingite chapel now used by roman catholics as St Mary on the Quay, **Bristol**; Buckingham baptist chapel in **Clifton**; Bristol's New Room in **Broadmead**; the countess of Huntingdon's chapel in **Bath**; and so on.

More important to local historians is the social role of nonconformist chapels. They embody dissatisfaction with the established church and religious authority. Following the precepts of Jesus of Nazareth, they reached out to people whom the established church ignored, despised or excluded, such as the **Kingswood** miners. The historian William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838—1903) reckoned that methodism saved England from revolution. Like most striking historical pronouncements, that exaggerates, but we can acknowledge that nonconformist denominations in our area, as elsewhere, educated, civilised, and in some cases reformed their members and adherents. With the social damage done by alcohol being of concern in the 18th and 19th centuries, baptists and Methodists, including Handel Cossham, advocated and practised total abstinence (More in Alan Clarke's ALHA booklet no. 30, *Taking the pledge*, copies available from the treasurer at £3.50 plus postage, and more about Handel Cossham at the local history day planned for **Saturday 13 April 2024**.) Nonconformity gave members the ability and confidence to speak in public, to be active in trade unions, and to participate in local government. To write histories of any part of our area without reference to nonconformity would be remiss; to write a history of **Kingswood** without reference to George Whitfield, John Cennick, the Wesleys and their legacies would be incompetent.

We may mourn the closing of local chapels, but if they no longer have the people and the money to continue, there is no point in trying to keep them alive artificially, and it is not desirable to let them fall into ruin, as looked to be the fate of Whitfield Tabernacle in **Kingswood** until its rescue: more at <https://thetabernaclekingswood.org/>. Better to put them to other community uses, as with Zion Bristol on **Bedminster Down**, or to a beneficial commercial use such as the former quaker meeting house in **Bath**, now a bookshop. As a last resort redundant chapels can be converted to housing, though some examples at **Temple Cloud, Clifton, Rudgeway** and **Redland** are considered by some to be a bit incongruous. Whether or not the buildings survive, we must recognise them and their people as part of our shared history.

Railway hotels

Impending demolition of **Bristol**'s former *Grosvenor* hotel, now a polluted traffic island at **Temple Meads**, might prompt local history people to wonder about railway hotels in our area. By 'railway hotel' I mean not a hotel or pub so named just because it was next to a railway, as at **Yatton** and **Wickwar**, but a hotel, purpose-built by a railway company, usually at or close to a terminus or main station, to accommodate travellers using the railway.

Railway companies marketed their hotels as a convenience to passengers, but more likely they constructed them to attract people to use the railway, and to increase revenue and profits. The idea seems to have started with IKB, who had a hotel built in **Bristol** as part of his business plan. Travellers to America would come to **Bristol** on the GWR or the Bristol & Exeter Railway, then stay overnight at a GWR hotel before embarking on the SS *Great Britain*. IKB's hotel was not at **Temple Meads**, but in College Street behind where the council house was later built. The hotel lasted only so long as travel to America from **Bristol** by the SS *GB* was a possibility. It later housed turkish baths; more recently, part of **Bristol** city council's planning department:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1025085?section=comments-and-photos>

The *Grosvenor* was built in 1875. It had 70 bedrooms, and offered bed and breakfast for 8s 6d, which made it comparatively expensive. Its designer was Samuel Fripp. He was described as having been IKB's assistant, but what that meant is not clear. The hotel changed hands many times, and was killed off as a hotel by early 1970s road schemes which made it part of a traffic island or circulatory system. From 1989 the building was used to house homeless families: first by Bristol city council, later used by the English Churches Housing Group. It shut completely in 1998.

After working for IKB, Samuel Fripp, who is not listed in Howard Colvin's *Biographical dictionary of British architects* or the *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, obtained a post as **Bristol** corporation surveyor (whatever Fripp's merits as an architect, he was well connected), and seems to have developed an architect's practice. His other works in **Bristol** include the frame of the monument in the north transept of **Bristol** cathedral to abbot David (1833); the Bristol & Exeter Railway offices at **Temple Meads** – image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:B%26E_building.jpg; restoration of part of St James's church in **Broadmead** (1846); the plan for Victoria Street through **Temple** (from 1845); and the external design for the synagogue in Park Row (1871). His name is on plans for St John's National school by **Durdham Down** (1850), and of **St James's Barton** British school (1854). He was a churchwarden of St George's **Brandon Hill**, but it is not known whether he designed any work there.

One hotel that was intended to be a railway hotel but never made it, was the *Railway Hotel* at the **Lawford's Gate** end of Old Market in **Bristol**. It is said to have been built in 1869 for a wine merchant. The design, with a florid front corner, is attributed to WH Hawtin. The speculator expected either that the GWR main station would be moved, or that the Midland Railway station would be built nearby, but neither happened. The hotel was later renamed the *Palace*, later the *Gin Palace*.

The Midland Railway does not seem to have had a railway hotel in **Bristol**. It did not have one in **Bath** either, which is surprising, because even though **Green Park** station (originally called Queen Square) was not opened until 1870, **Bath** was still something of a resort and a commercial centre, and the station was on the Midland's route from the midlands to the south coast. In fact there are surprisingly few purpose-built hotels in **Bath**. The *Empire* on the **Orange Grove** was probably too far away from the stations to attract passengers, and may have been aimed a different clientele. Are there other railway hotels in our area? **Clutton?** **Hallatrow?**

QUOTE

Oblivion is unceasing and will swallow up everything in its path, unless we devote ourselves to keeping a record of what once was. Future generations have the right to demand the story of the past from us.

Irene Vallejo, tr Charlotte Whittle, *Papyrus*, Hodder & Stoughton 2022.

CAN YOU HELP?

TRACING ENQUIRY - JAMES VICTOR CECIL FUNNEL

My name is Giulio Bortolin, I am writing to you from Italy on behalf of the *Aerei Perduti Polesine* (lost planes of the Polesine area), an Association of which I am a member. Our group, made up of volunteers only, deals with historical research on the air war over northern Italy during the Second World War.

Aerei Perduti Polesine also deals with the excavation of downed aircraft and the possible recovery of missing pilots bodies, we are consultants for Northern Italy of the US Defense POW / MIA Accounting Agency. Our association collaborates with the War Museum located on the Po River, where testimonies and artifacts of the war along the main Italian river are collected, including many remains of aircraft recovered by us.

When we discover the wreckage of an aircraft, we try to find out any relatives/descendants of the crew members who are still alive. We do this in order to be able to reconstruct the history with more details, even personal, of the aviators and to be able to send some small parts of the aircraft to the family as a remembrance of their loved ones, all this absolutely free of charges.

In September 2017 our team performed the excavation and recovery of the remains of the Curtiss Kittyhawk MK IV aircraft, serial number FX703 piloted by Sergeant **James Victor Cecil Funnel** 250th Squadron Royal Air Force, shot down 2 December 1944 while attacking a railway between the cities of Ferrara and Rovigo in the northeast of Italy. James died on impact and is buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Padua.

I am writing to you because our association, in collaboration with the Italian local authorities, would like to place a memorial stone on the anniversary of his death, therefore we would like to get in touch with any of his relatives to be able to invite them to the ceremony and to get some more information about James.

giulio.bortolin@gmail.com .