

ALHA



AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Registered charity 270930

Newsletter 178

31 March 2024

**Material for printed Newsletter 179 by 12 noon
Saturday 22 June 2024 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



Brislington tram depot, 1900

*image in public domain, via Wikimedia Commons,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brislington_Tram_Depot,_Bristol,_1900.jpg*

*In the 1901 strike, the subject of a new booklet noticed
below, strikebreakers were bedded in the depot.*

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ALHA NEWS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions are now due. [An application form to renew membership accompanies this newsletter.](#) Subscription rates are not changed.

ALHA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Preparations for the **local history day** on Handel Cossham, being organised jointly with ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**, continue. [More details and a booking form under EVENTS AND SOURCES, below.](#)

The committee has offered a **grant** of £400 to ALHA member **Whitchurch Local History Society** towards the cost of reprinting some of that Society's out-of-print booklets.

The committee has made a **grant** of £138 to FACE, a youth and community charity, for training towards an oral history project in **Filton** to be managed by ALHA individual member Billy Davis. Further grants may be considered after clarification of how some aspects of the project are to be managed.

ALHA member **The Gordano Society** has now completed its project for the restoration and refurbishment of Lorymer's Park, **Portishead**, towards which AHA gave a **grant**.

Following the Charity Commission's recommendation that charities should adopt a **policy on social media use**, the committee has asked a small group of trustees to draft a possible policy. More on that under GROUPS AND SOCIETIES below.

Following discussions about engaging student volunteers with University of Bristol, which requires organisations with whom its students volunteer to have a **health and safety policy**, the committee have adopted a short and simple policy statement.

That has prompted the committee to take stock of ALHA's policies generally, and to draw up a programme for reviewing all of them. First up is likely to be ALHA's **grants policy**, which has not been reviewed for several years.

The committee again deferred consideration of the treasurer's request that trustees review ALHA's finances and financial forecasts.

The committee has agreed that ALHA should join Publishers Licensing Services, a mutual that collects royalties on photocopying of books. This will enable ALHA to receive some royalties for copying from *Avon Past*, *Quest* and ALHA booklets.

GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

PRESENTERS DIRECTORY – FOR 2024

In order to keep costs down, the 2024 edition will be in the form of a supplement to the 2023 edition. It is hoped to issue a 2024 supplement to groups and societies once they have paid their subscription for 2024-2025.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

As noted above under ALHA COMMITTEE BUSINESS, the Charity Commission recommends <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-social-media/charities-and-social-media> that a charity should have a policy on its use of social media. If such a policy is considered desirable for charities, perhaps the same considerations apply also to local history and archaeology groups and societies that are not charities.

The first question for a group or society to ask is whether it should use social media at all. Some manage well enough without, as we all did before the internet. Some object to social media as a device for delivering and selling advertising, and for harvesting and selling users' personal data in morally objectionable ways. Some will deplore social media companies' unwillingness to control or prevent use of their media for illegal or immoral purposes, or in ways that have undesirable social results, especially for children and those open to fraudulent manipulation. Others will see social media as a way for a group or society to communicate with its members, for its members to communicate with each other, and for the group to communicate with the public, the last being an important consideration for registered charities: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-benefit-running-a-charity-pb2>

If a group decides it will use social media, the next question is what social media it will use. Many local history groups, including ALHA, have a facebook page. What about Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, Pinterest (much used for images of historic buildings, and for historic images) and so on?

What specific policies should be considered? An obvious one is that a group or society's social media should be used only for the purposes of the group or society, and not for members' private purposes, especially if those purposes are commercial or political. This is important for charities, because of the legal rule that a charity's activities must be wholly charitable, otherwise the society's charitable status could be jeopardised.

Many groups have rules about the content that will be allowed on their social media pages: nothing illegal, racist, offensive and so on. That leads to the question whether a group should monitor or filter everything that goes on to its social media outlets, or allows anyone to post anything they like. A small group of ALHA trustees, assisted from time to time by volunteers, controls and edits everything that goes into ALHA's facebook pages, just as ALHA controls and edits content on its website and in its newsletters. Some societies have different levels of control for different purposes: some pages may be open to the public, some accessible to members only but not controlled, some fully monitored and edited. ALHA member **Bristol & Avon Family History Society**, whose facebook group has over 4,000 members, is currently reviewing its practices in that regard. One consideration is the risk of claims for defamation or breach of copyright, for which few groups or societies have insurance, and which small groups will not be able to afford.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES GREEN PLEDGE PROJECT

Alison Catlin draws attention to Gloucestershire Archives' two-year Green Pledge Project to share the county's environmental legacy and drive forward climate action. 'Please find out more by visiting our project page and subscribe for updates of our events, news of old and new archive, and podcast releases at <https://heritage-hub.gloucestershire.gov.uk/july-2023/gloucestershire-archives-and-friends/take-the-green-pledge>

We invite you to be part of this journey. We would love to hear your insights about what should be included in the project. Please complete our short questionnaire, <https://forms.office.com/e/zRzyzz5fd7>

The project includes:

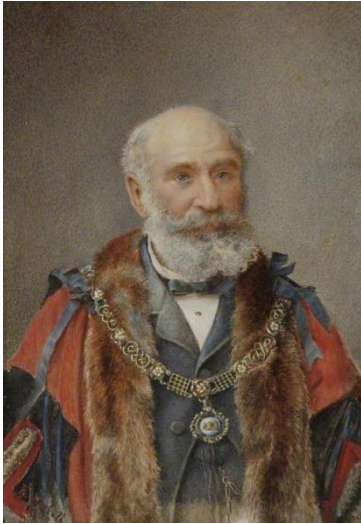
- Archive-inspired, sustainability-themed events and exhibitions
- Collecting contemporary interviews with people who are dedicated to addressing the climate crisis and nature loss.
- Actively looking for environmental stories from communities across Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

- Welcoming new environmental archives such as meeting minutes, newspaper clippings, video files, leaflets, nature surveys.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Christina Wheeler, Project Manager at Christina.Wheeler@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

HANDEL COSSHAM LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2024



ALHA member **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society** and ALHA are organising a 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. **A booking form accompanies this newsletter.**

If you might be interested in helping in any capacity, please contact wm.evans@btopenworld.com or johnregstevens@outlook.com.

[Image, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath]

CALL FOR PAPERS - WEST OF ENGLAND AND SOUTH WALES WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK CONFERENCE

The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network holds its annual conference in Bath on Saturday 12 October 2024. The title is *Women and Fashion: A Historical Perspective*. 'We invite papers on any aspect of the history of Women and Fashion. Fashion covers not only clothes, costume, cosmetics and beauty trends, but applies to both material and immaterial things, such as decorative arts, architectural styles, interior design, literature, entertainment, travel and culture. Topics could include, but are not limited to:-

- How did women influence fashion/trends/styles – as designers, producers, models, sales women, consumers, etc?
- How were women influenced by fashion/trends/styles?
- How did women use fashion as a form of self-expression?
- Trend setters: how were fashions disseminated and received? Who started them and how? How were women involved/affected?
- A focus on an object or set of objects (designed by, used by, or somehow connected with women/women's assumed sphere).
- Fashion in print – magazines, newspaper pages.
- Gender and fashion (eg fashion as reinforcing/challenging stereotypes).
- The life/work of individual women eg as makers of fashion (eg Coco Chanel); consumers and leaders of fashion including celebrity culture (e.g. Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire); as designers/artists (eg Gertrude Jekyll, garden designer).
- Fashion as experienced by commoners and aristocrats, rich and poor (eg sumptuary laws, court fashions, sweated industries & labour conditions, access to fashion/trends).
- Fashion as feminist protest (eg the rational dress movement) or as an expression of a specific identity (eg migrant populations).

Papers should be of not more than 20 minutes in length. Suggestions for presentations in film or other non-standard formats will be considered. Please send an abstract of up to 300 words to Lucienne Boyce (lucienneboyce@gmail.com) by Friday 24 May 2024.'

CLOCKING OFF

Clocking off is an exhibition at **Yate & District Heritage Centre**, about local works clubs. 'The history of our local social clubs including the legendary Newman's Social Club, Jackson's Hanson's and the Miner's Institute in **Coalpit Heath**. Until **27 April 2024**.

Yate Heritage Centre, Church Road, **Yate**, BS37 5BG. Tel: 01454 862200.



HELEN REID

The death is reported of Elisabeth Marleyn, *Western Daily Press* journalist and local and social history author, who wrote under the name of Helen Reid. Her local history books included *Bristol & Co: the story of Bristol's long running businesses 1710 to the present day* (Redcliffe 1987); *Bristol blitz: the untold story* (Redcliffe 1988); *A chronicle of Bristol and Hotwells* (Redcliffe 1992); *Go home and do the washing!* (Broadcast Books 2000); *On the waterfront: the Hotwells story* (2002, with Sue Stops); *Bristol under siege: surviving the wartime blitz* (Redcliffe 2005), *Life in victorian Bristol* (2005), and *Bristol: the growing city* (Redcliffe). She contributed to *Bristol between the wars* (Redcliffe 1984), and *Muddling through: Bristol in the fifties* (Redcliffe 1998). Tributes at <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/western-daily-press-saturday/20240316/282205130867396>

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Kath Thompson writes: **Bristol Record Society's** digital publications editor, Evan Jones, has created a new section on the Society's [website](#), called Stories...from the Archives This will feature short articles about **Bristol's** history based on archival finds. We hope to use these stories to show how historians make discoveries and to highlight the important of records and archives to historical research. These stories will be in a less formal style than traditional academic articles and will concentrate more on the investigative process.

The first story is about Bewell's Cross, which some of you may recognise as the lost boundary marker that once stood at the top of **St Michael's Hill**. It was the site of Bristol's gallows from the middle ages until 1820. In [Locating Bewell's cross](#) Dr Jones identifies the exact position of this lost monument and considers the role of the cross in the 'reality theatre' of public executions.

Dr Kathleen Thompson FSA, FRHistSoc, Honorary Secretary, Bristol Record Society
<https://bristolrecordsociety.org>

BRISTOL LEGACY FOUNDATION

Bristol Legacy Foundation has constituted itself as separate from Black Southwest Network, of which it was previously part. It launched at M Shed on 15 March 2024. More about it at <https://www.blacksouthwestnetwork.org/bristol-legacy-foundation> . 'The purpose of the Bristol Legacy Foundation is to provide advice and strategic direction to Bristol City Council and other key stakeholders in the city concerning the legacy of the Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans (TTEA) and to deliver associated projects and programmes, specifically:

1. A permanent and unchanging site(s) of commemoration:

1. Of scale
2. Immersive
3. Of high artistic quality (commissioned by a panel from open and solicited submissions)

4. Representative of the brilliance and resilience of the people we are remembering, rather than the violence that was done to them.

2. A museum or story-house which explores the lives, histories and futures of the peoples affected by this genocide which needs to be ever-changing and self-renewing, but which should start with:

1. Stories and truths of the civilisations of African peoples before the growth of enslavement and colonisation
2. Stories of enslavement and resistance
3. Stories of the struggle for abolition
4. Stories of the processes by which European Societies enabled these crimes to be carried out, and the long-lasting consequences of this.
5. Stories of resistance, uprising and survival after the abolitions of enslavement and the institution of slavery.
6. The structural injustices that maintained the power of the enslavers after the abolition of the institution of slavery.
7. The resilience and resurgence of communities in Africa, the Caribbean and across the world since 1900.
8. The ongoing legacies of suppression and injustice which confronted the post-war Caribbean and African generation and generations of migrants to the UK ever since. The present day resistance, agency and creativity of British Black communities today and in the future.'

At the launch it was announced that 'the BLF has begun the formal process for acquiring the B Bond Warehouse for a storyhouse dedicated to the lives of Bristol's African Heritage Communities, and the legacy of Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans (TTEA) within the city.' B Bond at present houses Bristol Archives, other departments of the city council, and the Create Centre.

REVIEW by Dr Jonathan Harlow

The Local Historian 54.1 (Feb 2024) has article by Peter Cullimore: 'Thomas Rennison and his Grand Pleasure Bath: a maverick Midland entrepreneur in Georgian Bristol'.

Thomas Rennison fled bankruptcy in Birmingham to set up as a thread-maker in **Bristol** around 1742. The thread-making was not a success, but his open-air swimming bath in **Montpelier** (then outside Bristol City boundaries), was, together with The Old England pub alongside. (The pub is still doing well today.) The bath was a success in attracting swimmers – right through to 1916; but never financially. Indeed Thomas Rennison's claim to be a 'maverick' seems to rest primarily on his lifelong inability to make enough profit to pay off the money he borrowed.

Rennison's bath was one of several in the 18th century to feature swimming, or at least plunging, rather than 'taking the waters', as the author shows. And it survived long, despite a continuing and mostly losing battle with dirt and slime. A Loxton sketch of about 1900 shows that it was a very decent size (and does not show the dirt). Nothing is said about life guards, which would be mandatory today; but there do not appear to have been any serious accidents.

The early pages deal with Rennison's family and move to **Bristol**, together with material about Birmingham/Bristol manufacturers and links in the first half of the eighteenth century. Then it is pretty solid (liquid?) bath. An instructive read.

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Alan Spree, *The Bath postcard collection*, Amberley 2023; pb, 96pp, ISBN 9781398116061, £15.99.

Bristol & Avon Family History Society Journal no. 195, March 2024. Jane Bambury having stood down as editor, this issue was put together by B&AFHS's secretary and membership secretary. B&AFHS's research room no longer subscribes to *FindMyPast* or the 1921 census; both are available in **Bristol Archives**. An article of local history interest is by Stephen Bumstead on his eighteenth century ancestor John Harwood, a **Bristol** house carpenter, and the family dispute over his Will. Of general interest is a piece on the B&AFHS facebook group. There are proposals to allay concerns about privacy and other sensitivities and risks.

Keynsham & Saltford LHS, *Brass tracks*, A5 pb, wirebound, 96pp, colour, £10. 'This new guide to the Brass Industry in the **Avon valley** and the **Chew valley** combines detailed trail guides that include maps and full directions with a history of this almost forgotten industry. It includes:

- 5 walking trails, varying in length from 1½ miles to 6 miles
- One family-friendly cycle trail
- A gazetteer with details of all the industrial sites referred to
- A history of the **Bristol** brass and copper industry
- Descriptions of the owners and managers behind the industry
- Details of the brass-workers, with information on all the individuals we know about,' it says.

More at <https://keysalthist.org.uk/newbook.htm>

Robin Askew, *The west's greatest rock shows 1963-1978*, Bristol Books 2024, 'This anecdote-rich book whisks you through 15 eventful years of rock when the biggest names in the world performed at The Colston Hall, The Granary, the Corn Exchange, [**Bristol**], the Pavilion, **Bath** and the Pilton Pop Festival,' it says. Mentions the first UK outdoor pop riot (not in our area).

Rob Whitfield, *Trouble on the trams*, **Bristol Radical History Group** 2024, 40pp, pb, ISBN: 978-1-911522-73-7. RW 'recounts how the drivers and conductors fought back when nearly one hundred of their number were dismissed in 1901.' <https://www.brh.org.uk/site/pamphleteer/trouble-on-the-trams/> . The image of **Brislington** tram depot on page 1 above was taken in 1900.

Geoff Flook, *The fire party*, <https://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Fire-Party.pdf> , an account of the fatal accident at **Golden Valley** colliery, **Bitton**, in 1882.

Peter Cullimore, 'Thomas Rennison and his grand pleasure bath: a maverick Midland entrepreneur in Georgian Bristol', *The Local Historian* Vol 54, No 1, February 2024, 41-55.

RESPONSES

Peggy Stenbridge writes: It was interesting to read the Review of Latimer's *Annals* in Newsletter 175, with the warning advice to check the author's sources.

When I began to research the history of the Goldney family and the **Clifton** estate, I relied on the *Annals* and on Russell Mortimer's more informative thesis on early Quakerism. I did then follow the unchecked statements about the Clerk's likely motivation for imposing fines on certain Quaker merchants.

But there is another interesting statement relating to Thomas Goldney's payment for houses he had built in the city, which I also used in my own thesis and on p.8 of **Bristol Record Society** volume 49:

"£50 of the purchase price of £200 was allowed him ... 'in discharge of a promise to be kind to him on the payment of a fine for not serving as a Common Councillman' "

The reference to the houses I had found and used from the Miles papers in the **Bristol Archives** (then the Bristol Record Office); the detailed quotation was from R.S. Mortimer's thesis.

I have been very fortunate with more access to and study of primary source material, have learned lessons, and become well aware of the need for careful referencing and interpretation.

Unfortunately this latter has not always been carried out, and the Review advice concerning Latimer is often still relevant for writers and researchers.

The Roman origin of Avon and the survival of Roman culture in the South West into the fifth and sixth centuries CE

David R Evans writes: The last two ALHA newsletters [e-update 177/1, 31 January 2024, **From villa to manor?** and 177/2, 28 February 2024, **Saxons**] have noted the end of 'Roman' Britain. I take the opportunity to outline my version of events.

The area still known for many purposes as Avon is usually thought of as the result of various administrative and boundary changes over the last 50 years or so. However recent research suggests that the core of the area has its origins in a sub-Roman enclave. In modern administrative terms it could be considered as part of Wales. The period after the end of Roman Britain, however 'end' is defined, is a complex and historically controversial issue (see for example Faulkner 2001 and Dark 2002). Rather than Rome leaving Britain, Britain left Rome. The movement of troops out of Britain by the British claimant to the empire Constantine II in 407CE to relink Britain to the empire precipitated the change to an independent Britain. The letter from the emperor Honorius in 410CE telling the Britons to defend themselves was not addressed to the central authorities but to the regional governments.

To define further the controversy of the period we can ask, Was St Patrick born in **Banwell** in North Somerset or Benwell in Cumbria? Was there a battle at **Dyrham** in CE577? And even if there was, did it make any difference? These are typical questions, but there are few answers. Even the names of the ethnic groups around at the time are not agreed. I recently read of a fantasy book in which King Arthur met a Welsh noble: no real surprise, as Arthur was a "Welsh" noble.

It is generally agreed that what is now Avon eventually formed a part of the Saxon kingdom of Mercia. The parish of **Marshfield** may be so named because it was on the border (march) between Mercia and Wessex. While this was certainly the case by about c700CE (and perhaps as early as 642CE), it need not have been so earlier. In the earlier period Avon was believed to have formed part of a subkingdom of Mercia called the land of the Hwicca(s). These people, perhaps Anglian rather than Saxon, infiltrated Gloucestershire and Worcestershire via the Thames valley by at least CE500, but the Hwiccan connection may be later.

Using the term "Saxon" to denote the invaders and "British" to denote the successors of Roman Britain, we can examine the threads which weave a pattern of surviving Britons in Avon. Perhaps it is best to dismiss the two least useful pieces of information first: they are first King Arthur and the battle of Mount Badon; and second the battle of **Dyrham**. While it appears highly likely that a warlord did win a series of

battles, perhaps all in the west country, one of which may have been at **Bath** (Mount Badon), the status of and political organisation of the region cannot be gleaned from this. The information about the battle of **Dyrham** CE 577 derives from a very late source, which was intended to justify the ownership of the towns of **Bath**, Cirencester and Gloucester. The best we can say is that there may have been a battle in CE 577 and it may even have been at **Dyrham**, but there is no evidence to show that the political landscape was changed.

Although absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, distribution maps of finds such as brooches and pottery can give a good indication of the core territory of a particular user group. The number of dated artefacts of his period in the general Avon area is not large, but what we have points to an absence of Saxon material. This is especially true if, as seems likely, hanging bowls are British and not Saxon in manufacture. This puts an apparently anomalous hanging bowl escutcheon (side disc) from **Bath** into the British sphere. Until recently there were in Avon no known sunken floored buildings, a Saxon type fossil if ever there were one, but we now have one, or at least that is what it appears to be, except that the associated pottery is British. A good case can be made for **West Wansdyke** (running through North Somerset and B&NES) marking the southern, rather than the northern, boundary of a territory: whether that territory should be called British or Saxon is another matter.

The crucial evidence supporting a British enclave comes from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* Chapter 2: "Augustine, with the assistance of King Ethelbert, drew together to a conference the bishops or doctors, of the next province of the Britons, at a place which is to this day called Augustine's Ac that is, Augustine's Oak, on the borders of the Wiccii and West Saxons; and began by brotherly admonitions to persuade them, that preserving Catholic unity with him".

The conference took place in 602 or 603CE, clearly in a place where the British bishops felt safe, on the border between two other groups who may have been hostile to each other, and not far from their own lands. A number of places have been suggested for the meeting, most of which could meet the criteria of being on the borders of the Wicci and the West Saxons, although "the next province of the Britons" is often ignored. One place, which is often favoured, is **Aust**, on the border between the two tribes, and it is on the end of the former Severn ferry. However if we accept this, we accept that Avon had disappeared as a British administrative unit. It has been argued recently (Eagles, 2002) that a much more likely site would be near Stroud, outside the current area of Avon, but a position which would allow the southern Cotswolds and thus Avon to be the next province of the Britons.

While until recently South Gloucestershire was considered as devoid of Roman villas, there are now known a considerable number, at least some of which, such as that at Lower Woods **Hawkesbury Upton**, had late mosaics (in this case with a rare name REG built in); and that at **Badminton** (seemingly one of five) which had occupation after 400CE. There must be a case for a reassessment of the examples at **King's Weston and Brislington in Bristol**. Small towns at **Hall End** (South Gloucestershire), **Sea Mills (Bristol)** and **Gatcombe** (North Somerset) are also possible sites for continuity. I may be unfair to **Sea Mills** which has some characteristics of a 'town'.

What may be the crucial evidence for survival of Roman culture and possibly even ecclesiastical administration may come from the probably destroyed Chapel of St Jordan which lay just to the north of **Bristol** Cathedral on College Green. Its dedication to one of the colleges of Augustine and the rather limited map evidence may indicate that the building was a Roman style building not unlike that at Escomb in County Durham.

Recent excavations by the National Trust at Chedworth villa have shown the villa was still functioning and a mosaic was laid about 600CE, a sure sign of Romanitas. The publication of an update to archaeology

of Roman **Bath** provides further information. Although the Baths themselves went out of use and the temple of Sulis abandoned and perhaps demolished around 400CE when paganism was officially proscribed, the Baths, no longer used for bathing, were intensely used, perhaps like the contemporary site of Wroxeter, as a market. Added to this is the finding at **Bath** of a penannular brooch of Irish type dating to 450-550CE. If **Bath** was abandoned by 577CE, what exactly did the victors of **Dyrham** occupy?

In conclusion I hope I have demonstrated that one of the successor states to Roman Britain was Post-Roman Avon.

This article is based on material published in *Archaeology* issue 9 (August 2005) published by South Gloucestershire Council, and has been expanded to add material from the successor authorities to Avon.

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COMMENTARY

Gentrification

It is not unreasonable to want to improve the environment we live in. A house or flat with modern conveniences is preferable to a primitive, dilapidated, mouldy, draughty, leaky and insanitary hovel. Unless you are into rewilding, a well-designed, well-kept and productive garden is preferable to a scruffy wilderness. A leafy suburb, intelligently laid out and looked after, is preferable to treeless, characterless slurb that may have been bombed in the war but, as Bill Bryson put it of the town I grew up in, not enough. Improving an area and its individual properties, especially houses and flats, is usually welcome. People's living conditions, health and well-being improve; houses are maintained, repaired and restored; the visual environment is more pleasant; property values rise. This is how towns have grown and survived. What's not to like?

From some perspectives, not everything. A stereotypical scenario is of a residential area that starts off new and attractive; over time, larger houses that were owner-occupied by one family get divided into flats; landlords do not do repairs; the houses become dilapidated; their values and rents fall; they become so cheap that they house people on low incomes who cannot afford anything elsewhere; that very fact attracts incomers with money and mortgages who buy the houses up, do them up, and push their values up. The purchasers may be yuppies or landlords, or just people who have more money than the people they replace. What was substandard housing for poorer people, but housing none the less, has become the preserve of the comparatively affluent. Gentrification has pushed out poorer people, and has destroyed their communities.

It would be interesting to examine where in our area gentrification, however we define it, has occurred. Obvious examples include mews in areas like **Clifton** and **Bath**, once accommodating horses (and the servants who looked after them?) but now converted into bijou residences. A different example is 10 Guinea Street, **Redcliffe, Bristol**, studied and explained by David Olusoga and his team in *A house through time* (Twenty-Two Television, BBC2 series 3, May and June 2020). That house went through the same

cycle as outlined in the paragraph above. Parts of **Southville, Windmill Hill, Clifton, Totterdown, Hotwells** and **Cliftonwood** in **Bristol**, and **Westmoreland** in **Bath**, might be similarly regarded.

Is gentrification confined to urban areas, and to older parts of large towns and cities in particular? A case could be made that gentrification has occurred in rural areas where what were agricultural workers' dwellings have been bought up by incomers, often from nearby urban areas, with consequences such as increases in the prices of houses, the pricing out of such low-wage workers as remain, and the conversion of villages into commuter accommodation, bereft of pub, post office, newsagent and bus.

What about council housing? Has the right to buy introduced under prime minister Thatcher resulted in gentrification of council estates? Or have the occupants simply changed from tenants to owner-occupiers, with everything else the same?

Valentine's day origins

Prince Albert was walking the corgis in Hyde Park, when who should he bump into but Rowland Hill.

'Hi, Rowly,' said the royal male. 'How are things at the Royal Mail?'

'Terrible,' groaned the inventor of the penny post. 'We bought this financial system to save writing everything down, but it made out that subpostmasters were filching money, which often turned out not to be true, so we're having to pay compensation, which will clean us out. We need lots of cash, quick.'

'Leave it to me,' said Albert. 'I'll have a word with the missus.'

Back at the palace, Albert mansplained the problem to Victoria. 'What you need,' she said, 'is something that will get lots of people to buy stamps. Something that most people are interested in.' 'Sex?' asked Albert.

'Not at this moment. Later, after the children have gone to bed. Oh, I see what you mean. Yes, sex will sell anything. Look at newspapers. And magazines.'

'Indeed I do,' admitted Alfred. 'Perhaps we could get everyone to post a letter to the object of their affections. Twentythree million, eightyfive thousand, five hundred and seventy nine at a penny a pop should generate ninety six thousand one hundred and eighty nine pounds eighteen shillings and threepence. Sorted.'

'Not quite. You'd have to choose a date when everyone is to post their letter. Not too near christmas or easter. Perhaps some obscure saint's day when nothing else is happening. Better ask the pope if there are any dates spare.'

When Albert's cable arrived, the pope was in St Peter's square trying out a new steam-powered popemobile sent him by a Mr Brunel. The roman catholic church had canonised so many saints that the pope could not remember them all, so he kept an alphabetical list in his vestments. What with wars, floods, food prices rising, famines, hospital staff striking, trains cancelled, doctors' and dentists' appointments unobtainable, global warming, potholes, and the football season halfway through, saints were being overwhelmed with prayers from the faithful and hopeful. As he neared the end of the alphabet he despaired of finding a vacant saint or saint's day. St Zeno's day was too near easter; only eastern orthodox saints began with Y, and they would never do; the British could not pronounce names beginning with X; and he did not expect to get much joy out of St Werburgh. But under V he found Valentine, a third century martyr who had not done much since, perhaps because he was way down the directory. 'Will you allow your name to be associated with a British fundraising effort?' asked the pope. 'You won't have to do anything: just lend your name.' 'OK,' agreed St Valentine, and went back to polishing his halo. The pope got

a nuncio to text to Albert the name of St Valentine and his day, 14 February. He then resumed doing wheelies, handbrake turns and doughnuts with his new popemobile.

Victoria put on her best crown, grabbed a stout umbrella, and marched to the houses of parliament. Passing through security with painful use of the umbrella, she pushed into the commons chamber, where MPs were prating about the charge of the light brigade or the black hole of Calcutta or some such. The house was full. What a lot of male members, she thought.

Shoving the prime minister aside, Victoria rapped with her umbrella on the dispatch box. 'Listen up, people,' she bellowed. 'Before you leave this chamber you will have passed a law requiring every male out of short trousers to buy a stamp and post a letter or card to the object of his affections, to arrive on or by 14 February. Personal delivery is prohibited. Anonymity is allowed. There is to be no limit on how many cards a sender can send. Until the Act is passed, all the bars are closed. And there will be no prostate breaks.' By teatime the Wishful Thinking (Fantasies) Act, abbreviated in civil service speak to WTF, had passed both houses and received the royal OK. Some of the bishops were not happy, but came round when it was explained that sex could be involved, so the church of England could argue about it.

Albert faxed details of the WTF Act to all parts of the kingdom – or queendom as Victoria wanted it called, though the term never caught on. In Bristol the mayor was conveyed in the proclamation brake to the high cross, where he announced the new law, expressing the hope that the new requirement would bring joy to the opposite sex. That got up the noses of gays and lesbians, who said they did not fancy anyone of the opposite sex. There was a demonstration on College Green, at which some policemen said they were made to feel uncomfortable. So parliament passed an amendment to require all valentines, as the new cards were called, to be sent to anyone the sender liked. The courts were left to decide what should happen if a valentine was sent by or to a trans person who had not disclosed that they were trans, with or without pronouns.

The WTF Act having served its purpose by raising money for the post office, parliament repealed it the following year. But people continued to post valentines, and even today there are some who send them and some who hope to receive them. As with other national institutions such as christmas, easter, halloween, mothering Sunday, cricket and football, the phenomenon has become commercialised. Some chocolate manufacturers have made a mint. Florists and card makers have taken advantage of the sentimental, the lovelorn, the unrequited, and those who copy what other people do. On balance, the practice is considered fairly harmless. It adds a little to the gross national product, and is sometimes fun. Except when the sender's or the recipient's other half finds out.

CAN YOU HELP?

EARLY FOOTBALL

Stephen Barker writes: I am researching evidence of football prior to 1860. Having discovered some pre-modern references to football in Gloucestershire, I am interested to know of any further references to football in the Avon area. I am prepared to make a donation to your group/organisation if delving and digging is required. Stephen Barker, barker655@btinternet.com ; home: 01379 890197, mobile: 07936 031632, Bunny Hollow, Warrens Lane, Botesdale, Diss, Norfolk IP22 1BW .