

AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Registered charity 270930

Newsletter 166 31 March 2021

Website: www.alha.org.uk

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

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

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Material for Newsletter 167 by 24 June 2021 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,
Flat 1 Chartley, 22 The Avenue, Bristol BS9 1PE
roblawr1944@googlemail.com
Other news, comments, and changes of contact details to
newsletter editor and membership secretary,
5 Parrys Grove, Bristol BS9 1TT
wm.evans@btopenworld.com

ALHA NEWS



HISTORY DOESN'T MIX WITH FACEBOOK! – OR DOES IT?

Veronica Bowerman writes: Have you got the right ingredients to make it happen?

- Enthusiasm
- Sense of humour
- Some social media skills

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN LOCAL HISTORY OR ARCHAEOLOGY OR SIMILAR?

ALHA is an established charity that helps to promote local events and publications and we are looking for an additional volunteer to join our enthusiastic Facebook team, ideally someone who can encourage more people to get involved in history and promote our events and those of our members in a way that will appeal to young and old alike. This would suit a person who is looking for an online volunteering opportunity that will be of interest to them. The main thing is to make things interesting and encourage others that history and archaeology is to be enjoyed.

IF you have a passion for old buildings – or new ones and love passing that passion onto others...

IF you are familiar with social media or are looking for something that reflects your interests, which is not too taxing, or perhaps to add to your CV? Help will be available for any additional Facebook training, if needed.

IF you can give us some (but not all) of your time, effort, and enthusiasm to help others connect with what is ‘out there’ – this can include diverse exhibitions about photography, art, architecture, archaeology, literature, talks, walks, in fact just about anything that we think our members, old or young will be interested in...

Please get in contact for more information. We are a very friendly bunch and would love to hear from you! avonlocalhistoryandarchaeology@gmail.com

GRANTS

The committee has agreed a grant of £500 to Gloucestershire County History Trust towards its work on **West Littleton** for the planned volume XIV of the *Victoria County History of Gloucestershire*, as described in ALHA e-update 28 February 2021.

The committee has allocated up to £200 for **digitisation of rare books** relevant to the history of this area. It is likely that any payments for this purpose will be made to ALHA member **Bristol Record Society**, which is commissioning digitisation from Bristol University.

TRUSTEESHIPS

With not all the present members of the committee being in good health, and with several trustees carrying out more than one role, the committee is looking to recruit some new trustees.

ACTIVITIES

The committee considers it is too early to make plans to resume normal activities, but hopes to rearrange the planned local history day if the speakers are amenable and a suitable venue can be booked. The summer walks team is tentatively contemplating a shortened programme, perhaps of three walks, towards the end of the summer. A decision has yet to be made on whether to undertake a revision of the *Walks, Talks & Visits* list, and when to publish it. The committee has agreed in principle that the publications subcommittee should start work on a new edition of the *Avon local history handbook* published by ALHA in 1979.

BUDGET 2021-2022 AND MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

ALHA's new year commences 1 April 2021. Because of the uncertainties mentioned above, the committee has not been able to draw up a budget for the year starting 1 April 2021 with much certainty, but cash in hand is such that there is no need to increase subscriptions. **An application form for renewal of membership accompanies this newsletter.**

MEETINGS ONLINE

ALHA members **Bitton Parish Local History Group** <http://www.bittonhistory.org.uk/> and **South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group** <https://www.facebook.com/SGMRG/> are among the growing list of ALHA member groups and societies holding meetings or delivering talks online.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

PUBLIC LIBRARIES REOPENING - BRISTOL

Kate Murray writes: 'From Monday 8 March we are reopening 7 of Bristol's libraries for a Call and Collect service. There are different arrangements for Central Library and the 6 branch libraries.

Central Library Services from Central Library will be by appointment only. To arrange a time to collect a book reservation or to enquire about borrowing books through our Call and Collect service (see below for details) please contact: Telephone: 0117 9037250; Email: lending.library@bristol.gov.uk

'Central Library phone lines will be open **Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 10am-4pm** from Monday 8 March. We ask that you do not make a special trip to the library to return books you have borrowed unless you have an appointment for collection. All current loans have been extended until at least **4 May 2021** and overdue charges have been suspended until further notice. Any returned books we do receive will be quarantined for at least 3 days before being taken off your library account. There is currently no public access to Central Library – services will be provided at the door. The following services are not available at this time: browsing; public computers; photocopying and printing; wifi; study space; public toilets; reference service; viewing the electoral register **Branch libraries** The 6 branches are **Bishopston, Fishponds, Henbury, Henleaze, Marksbury Road and Stockwood**. The opening hours at these libraries will be 11am-3pm on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. There is no public access to the libraries – services will be provided at the door. There's no need to make an appointment at the branches for Call and Collect (though you do need to ring or email ahead for this service), returns, reservation collection and book bundles. **Library services** In order to provide a safe and Covid-secure service for you and for our staff, services are limited to the following:

Call and Collect

- At all 7 libraries
- Call or email the library you wish to collect your books from (see contact details below) to ask for up to 5 adult items and up to 8 items for under 18s, per library card
- For Central Library collection, we'll arrange a time for you to pick up your books. For the branch libraries, we'll telephone or email you back to let you know when your items are ready to collect
- If you tell us what type of books you like to read (favourite authors, genres, subject areas), and how many you'd like, we can make selections for you
- We will issue the items to your library account and put them in a washable and reusable bag
- You can leave any items you don't want to take home

Book bundles

- Available at the 6 branch libraries
- You can pick up a 'lucky dip' selection of books to borrow that have been preselected by our experienced library teams
- There'll be a variety of popular categories for both adults and children

Returns

- At all 7 libraries, but for Central Library please only return items if you have a collection booked
- If you just want to return your items at the branch libraries, it's easy. There'll usually be a place for you to leave your returns near the door of the library
- We'll quarantine your returns, and they'll be removed from your account 4 days later
- Don't worry about overdue charges for the quarantine period – we'll make sure you're not charged for those days

Reservations collection

- At all 7 libraries
- You can make reservations online at www.librarieswest.org.uk or using the LibrariesWest app, or call an open library (contact numbers below)
- If you're collecting the items from a Bristol Library, this is a free service
- We'll let you know when your request is ready for collection, either by phone or by your usual notification method (email, text message or post). For collections from Central Library, you'll need to talk to us (or email us) to book an appointment time
- Reservations might take a little longer to arrive than usual – not all libraries are open and van services are reduced

Help with your library account

- We'd really encourage you to ring or email any open library if you have any queries about your loans, reservations, charges and any other library account details, so there's no need to visit the library if you don't have to.
- Please do not visit the library unless you are coming to collect or return books (and you need an appointment for Central Library).

‘Your loans We realise that it hasn't always been easy over the past year to keep track of the due dates on your library loans, and it hasn't always been possible to get to a library to return your loans. If you're a Bristol Libraries member, for any items you borrowed from a Bristol library after 1 March 2020 (last year), we've automatically extended their due date up to 4 May 2021 or beyond, so you don't have to worry about them for the time being. If you are ever concerned about your loans, please do check your account (at www.librarieswest.org.uk or using the LibrariesWest app) or ring any of the open libraries during opening hours and we'll be happy to help. **Library contact details**

Library	Email	Telephone
Bishopston Library	bishopston.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 3576220
Central Library	lending.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9037250
Fishponds Library	fishponds.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9038560
Henbury Library	henbury.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9038522
Henleaze Library	henleaze.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9038541
Marksbury Road Library	marksburyrd.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9038574
Stockwood Library	stockwood.library@bristol.gov.uk	0117 9038546

Your contact details If you'd like to receive library updates by email in the future, either:

- visit www.librarieswest.org.uk and log in to your account (you'll need your library card number and PIN), where you can add or change your email address,
- email bristol.library.service@bristol.gov.uk, asking us to add your email address to your account, or
- ring any open library (contact numbers above).

‘Online services We are continuing to offer extensive online services, including eBooks, eAudio, eComics and online magazines and newspapers (see www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries). We will also be continuing with our online events: children's story times and quizzes; author events; a new virtual book club, a virtual Lego club and the Bristol Libraries podcast.

Keep up to date with the latest online goings-on via: Twitter – [@BristolLibrary](https://twitter.com/BristolLibrary); Facebook – [Bristol Libraries](https://www.facebook.com/BristolLibraries); Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/bristollibraries/>

SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE LIBRARIES

Latest is at <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/libraries/changes-to-library-services-during-covid19/> . Click and collect is available at **Cadbury Heath, Downend, Emersons Green, Filton, Hanham, Kingswood, Patchway, Staple Hill, Thornbury, Winterbourne and Yate**. To book slots see: sglibraries.eventbrite.com . You can

- Order up to 6 items per person to collect at a pre-booked time of your choice
- Complete a [Click and Collect webform](#) for the library you will collect from,
- Select a collection date & time and answer a few questions, or
- call 01454 865022 Monday to Friday 10am – 4pm, Saturday 9:30am – 12pm to speak to a member of library staff.

Computers can be used at **Kingswood** library only. **Bradley Stoke** library is closed along with the leisure centre.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES

Gloucestershire Archives hopes to reopen The Heritage Hub **12 April 2021**.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES – INKS

TNA blogs include one on how it preserves records written in oak gall ink:

https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/galling-ink-how-the-national-archives-preserves-millions-of-documents-written-in-iron-gall-ink/?utm_source=emailmarketing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=weekly_mailer_11_march_2021&utm_content=2021-03-11

COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY ONLINE

Clare Corkill of the Council for British Archaeology writes: ‘If you are involved in leading a voluntary or community archaeological group, CBA’s online discussions could help your group adapt to the challenges of the new normal. Facilitated by CBA staff, the friendly and informal lunchtime sessions are designed to help group organisers share ideas and pool experiences.

‘The sessions follow online networking meetings in September 2020 and will in more depth look at topics that organisers have told us are important. All sessions are open to people involved in running groups for adults or for young people. These opportunities are supported by Historic England’s Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund.

‘All sessions will run from 12.15 to 1.15pm. Places are limited. Please register for the event via the CBA website. The session topics are:

Wednesday 14 April 2021 *From Find to Mind: Creative responses to archaeology* hosted by Neil Redfern and Claire Corkill

This session is about using creative approaches to broaden engagement and to inspire new and existing audiences. Moving beyond traditional approaches to archaeology can provide an opportunity to help people move from passive audience member to active participant, with opportunities to share thoughts, feelings, ideas and questions in a range of different ways. Using tools such as art and crafts, storytelling and poetry we can help people connect with archaeology and tell the stories of their places both past and present. Introducing these methods doesn’t have to be costly or challenging, and including what may be a small creative element in your project can have big results. During this conversation there will be opportunities to ask questions and share your thoughts, ideas and experiences.

Wednesday 19 May *Attracting younger members – 25-45 year olds* hosted by Neil Redfern and Jo Kirton. More information to follow.

Wednesday 16 June *Using the Casework hub* hosted by Catherine Bell and Alison Edwards
The CBA have a statutory role within the planning system; we are consulted on applications for the partial or total demolition of listed buildings. This forms the basis of our casework. We co-ordinate a casework database of all the applications we are consulted on across England and Wales, on behalf of the national amenity societies. The casework database is publicly accessible online. If you are interested in seeing what Listed Building Consent applications are happening in your area, perhaps on behalf of a local history society, or regional CBA group, then we will be looking at how you could make use of the casework database. We will also explain a bit about the CBA's archaeological approach towards listed building casework and our priorities for comment.'

CENSUS – THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Blog about the census at <http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/making-the-census-happen/>

STOKE LODGE, BRISTOL, ADULT EDUCATION

John Stevens writes: 'Stoke Lodge's summer term courses open for booking from **Monday 22 March 2021**. Details at <https://www.bristolcourses.com/>. History courses include eight classes on the reigns of George I and George II (1714-1760), which will include Bonnie Prince Charlie's rebellion and the Seven Years War with France. The first Thursday afternoon class will be on **22 April 2021 at 1.15 pm**. Stoke Lodge will remain closed for the first half of term and then, depending on the public health situation and the wishes of tutors and students, may re-open on 7 June. With an eight week course, all sessions will be online.

'I am also hoping to give a four-hour day course on **26 June 2021** entitled "Britain's Road to Democracy", which will deal with the political background to the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867 and 1884 and the granting of the vote to women in and after 1918. This will include some reference to the riots of 1831 and to Mr Berkeley's campaign for the ballot and possibly to suffragette activities in **Bristol**. If the situation continues to improve, this will probably be at Stoke Lodge, with people bringing their own lunches. Again, booking opens on **Monday 22 March 2021**.'

Stoke Lodge Adult Learning Centre Shirehampton Road, Bristol, BS9 1BN; e-mail: StokeLodge@bristol.gov.uk Tel: 0117 903 8844

REVIEWS by Dr Jonathan Harlow unless otherwise said.

No new books to review. *Johannes Kip: The Gloucestershire Engravings*, edited by Dr Anthea Jones, noticed below, is to be reviewed in the next Newsletter.

The Local Historian **51 1** (Jan 2021) has no articles or reviews of Avon interest. But the article on 'The SOE training centre at Wall Hall during the Second World War: fact or fiction' by J Silver and M-F Weiner is a very interesting exercise in the business of trying to uncover secret operations which were from the first surrounded by mis- and dis-information. (NB You are *not* recommended to attempt any such thing for the last 50 years without clearance.)

Likewise no Avon interest in *Local History News* **138**.

B&AFHS Journal **183** (March 2021) has Bob Lawrence's invaluable feature 'On the Internet' noting, *inter alia*, the revamping of the Bristol Archives on-line catalogue and two useful websites curated by Peter Insole: *The Floating Harbour* bit.ly/BAFHS272 and *Bristol Homes for Heroes* bit.ly/BAFHS273. There is also a rather good article (including proper references) on 'Joseph Bell & Son, Stained Glass Artists of Bristol' by Alan Bambury. The firm flourished from 1840 into the 1950s, and has left several pieces of work in Bristol (as well as a large collection at the Victoria & Albert Museum).

The *BAAS Bulletin* **88** (Winter/Spring 2021) has fine colour illustrations but the interesting articles are un-referenced. There is a full and handsome tribute to Reg Jackson.

If you are aware of a new publication that warrants review, please draw it to Dr Harlow's attention. If you or your organisation has published a new book, do send Dr Harlow a review copy, preferably before publication.

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Anthea Jones, ed., *Johannes Kip, the Gloucestershire engravings*, Hobnob Press (www.hobnobpress.co.uk) in association with Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust (www.gglt.org), 2021, largeformat, casebound, 174pp, illustrated, with introduction, maps, bibliography and index; foreword by Dr Nicholas Kingsley. ISBN 978-1-906978-99-0, £20.

'Kip was the draughtsman and engraver of sixty-four prints commissioned in the early eighteenth century by Sir Robert Atkyns for *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire*.

This book contains high-quality reproductions of all the engravings with a short commentary on each, and has pointers to the details and to the history of the house and the family, including many colour and black and white illustrations. It offers a remarkable contribution to the history of the county, to knowledge of the gardens, which in many cases still reflect Kip's engravings, to the unique history of many of the houses which survive three hundred years later, and to the riches of the Gloucestershire countryside,' it says. From selected booksellers, local and online, from the editor anthea.evelyn@gmail.com, publisher john@hobnobpress.co.uk or the Trust janegundry@gmail.com

Colin Thomas, *State snooping: spooks, cops and double agents*, Bristol Radical History Group 2021. 40pp, ISBN: 978-1-911522-57-7, £3 including p&p in the UK. Not clear how much is local. <https://www.brh.org.uk/site/pamphleteer/state-snooping/>

Mike Manson, *Manson's Bristol miscellany: searching for the soul of the city*, volume 1, Bristol Books and Tangent Books 2021, hb, colour and illustr., 160pp. 'Michael Manson takes you on a search to find the soul of the city where he has lived for more than 45 years. The *Bristol Miscellany* began as a compendium of random facts and has grown into a treasure trove of tales from the city's rich and diverse history; from hidden rivers, medieval walls and public protests to links with slavery, prisons, and the treatment of mental illness. It's a literary 'curiosity shop' of bitesize pieces of interest from Bristol's past, from Britain's first woman doctor to Bristol Cars,' it says. Who ordered the unicorns? etc. <https://www.bristolbooks.org/shop/mansons-bristol-miscellany>.

NEW WORK

SISTON ISOLATION HOSPITAL

Sue Hardiman writes: Isolation hospitals such as the Nightingales set up to help with the coronavirus pandemic are nothing new. Indeed, there were large establishments at **Ham Green** in north Somerset and **Novers Hill in Bristol**. There was another at **Vinney Green, Mangotsfield**. However, according to an early 20th century OS map of the **Kingswood** area there was also a small isolation hospital just off Tennis Court Road, near Siston Common. The site is now home to the Made for Ever youth centre. Enquiries amongst current residents and initial research drew a blank. However, after some digging in the archives and help from the **Kingswood Heritage Museum** a history of the hospital has emerged.

The Wellcome Institute has made its collection of Medical Officer of Health reports available online.¹ A search for 'MoH Kingswood' provided the annual reports for the early years of the 20th century and the hospital is mentioned in several of them. The 1900 handwritten report by C. Perrott contains a note in the margin. In this he states that since there is no sign of the area being included

in Bristol for the time being, there is a need for a locally based isolation hospital of about 18 beds. He explains that as many dwellings contain large families, lack of an isolation facility exacerbates transmission of illness during an epidemic.

He reasserts his case in the 1903 MoH report, saying that little had been done to arrange isolation facilities and suggests that perhaps a couple of isolated cottages could be rented in order to provide accommodation for the more serious of his scarlet fever and diphtheria cases. Matters came to a head in 1904 when Perrott reported a serious outbreak of smallpox in the area. As a result the **Kingswood** Urban District Council decided on 20 June to erect a temporary isolation hospital of potentially 8 beds. This was operational by July, and four patients were admitted. The building contained: 1 ward, matron's room, kitchen, bathroom, scullery, storeroom, WCs etc. The work was completed by Messrs. Humphries of Knightsbridge within 14 days of the outbreak. The overall cost of this smallpox outbreak (including the hospital) was £476 2s 8d. Furthermore, the 1908 MoH report contains a paragraph regarding the isolation hospital and confirms the details "Name and Situation – Smallpox Hospital, Fisher Lane: Total Beds available – 6: Number of Diseases currently treated – only smallpox."

In 1949, the *Bristol Observer* ran an interview with a William Tanner on the occasion of the hospital being given over to create a youth centre.² He recounted his time as caretaker of the premises – known locally as just 'the old hospital'. It was built for the care of patients with smallpox, and Tanner states that "cases were fortunately rare, and he was disturbed on comparatively few occasions by the arrivals of patients." The 1939 Register³ shows William living at the "Isolation Hospital, Tennis Court Road, Kingswood" with his wife Clara and sons William and Ronald. He had lived there for 40 years. The *Observer* article also includes a small black and white picture of the hospital – which apparently was red-roofed and partially made of corrugated iron.

One thing seems evident from a reading of the MoH reports – that they had clear idea of how to deal with outbreaks of disease and generally had mechanisms in place to deal with them. The MoHs knew their area and population well, and provided detailed statistics and information every year. They kept an eye on disease levels, and could track and trace outbreaks. I believe there is a lesson to governments going forward – that technical and expensive solutions are no substitute for detailed local knowledge in dealing with incidence of disease.

*With special thanks to Alan Bryant from the **Kingswood Heritage Museum, Warmley** for his help.*

1 https://search.wellcomelibrary.org/iii/encore/search/C__Smedical%20officer%20of%20health%20kingswood__Orightresult__U?lang=eng

2 *Bristol Observer*, Saturday 26 March 1949 – article courtesy of Alan Bryant, Kingswood Heritage Museum, Warmley

3 '1939 Register' at Find My Past - <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>

COMMENTARY

Smallholdings

On 1 April 1974 Avon county council inherited from Somerset and Gloucestershire county councils a number of smallholdings – to the bemusement of some urban elected members whose knowledge of farming was limited, even though their ancestors a few generations back will have included agricultural labourers or workers connected with farming.

How did county councils come to own farms? The answer is a mixture of history, ignorance, nostalgic sentiment, well-intentioned but misconceived politics, and wishful thinking. From about 1870 imports of food from abroad, whether from Britain's colonies or other countries, undercut the

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prices of most farm products, especially grains and meats. Farms became unprofitable, and big estates were broken up and sold, a process that went on well into the twentieth century with the sales of Leigh Court in **Abbots Leigh** and Ashton Court in **Long Ashton**. Farm workers left the land for jobs in towns, mostly in industries or public services. Instead of accepting the change as an economic fact of life, many politicians and landowners bemoaned what they saw as the decline of rural society and tried to attract workers back into farming by offering leases of small holdings of up to about 50 acres. 'Three acres and a cow' was one of Joseph Chamberlain's election slogans. In 1892 a Smallholdings Act and in 1908 a Smallholdings and Allotments Act gave county councils power to buy agricultural land and lease smallholdings to tenants. Between 1908 and 1914 county councils bought 200,000 acres and created 14,000 smallholdings.

WW1 took workers away from the land, except those whose employers successfully resisted conscription. The end of the war in 1918 raised the prospect of mass unemployment for the demobbed. The government promised to provide a smallholding for any demobilised serviceman who wanted one. The Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1919 gave effect to that promise. County councils bought another 250,000 acres and let smallholdings to 17,000 tenants. By 1925 county councils held 438,000 acres let to nearly 30,000 tenants. Somerset and Gloucestershire had their share.

In 1974 Avon county councillors, or at least the urban members, not unreasonably asked what smallholdings were for. They did not share the late Victorian alarm about the decline of rural society, which most urban councillors equated with no gas, no electricity, no mains water and no mains drainage, with the occasional outbreak of foot and mouth, fowl pest or swine fever. They concluded that smallholdings' purpose was to enable newcomers to farming to get experience before, if successful, moving on to larger farms, and if not successful, moving into some other means of livelihood.

Was that aim ever achieved? County council smallholdings declined, for several reasons. Some holdings were too small to be viable in modern conditions, in spite of heavy subsidies (which increased the value of the land to which they attached). Some councils saw an opportunity to raise a capital sum by selling a holding once a vacancy occurred, or to avoid the cost of buying a site for a council function such as a school by utilising land it already owned. Government restrictions on local authorities' capital expenditure exempted expenditure funded by the sale of land, so gave county councils an incentive to sell holdings. A supply of tenancies, and hence turnover, was further thwarted by the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 which enabled close relations of a deceased tenant to apply to succeed to the tenancy; and by the Agricultural Holdings Act 1984 which allowed a tenant who has reached 65 or become incapacitated to nominate a successor to the tenancy. The Agriculture Act 2020 has made further changes, one of them enabling farmers to retire earlier than 65. Thus many of the purposes of smallholdings, as originally and later conceived, have been thwarted. If you search for 'smallholdings' on the websites of North Somerset Council, Bath & NE Somerset Council or South Gloucestershire Council, you may draw a blank. A history of the changes in our area would be a useful project. It will all be in councils' minutes.

Pubs

The closing of many public houses of recent years has caused the media much anguish. Whilst teetotallers will not be bothered, and those who object to alcohol because of its social or medical consequences will welcome pub closures, the response from pub customers is one of regret. Whilst the licensed trade and its suppliers peddle the image of the cosy village pub with jovial locals in comfortable settles quietly supping real ale and conversing lucidly and intelligently about matters of the day, warmed by a real log fire beneath oak beams, and



unaccompanied by piped music, in reality few pubs offered such comforts, which may be one reason why they have declined.

Other reasons might include price competition from supermarkets; laws against drinking and driving; other entertainments such as television being more attractive and requiring less effort; taxes on alcohol; and in some cases pubs being associated with violence and other antisocial behaviour. Few regret the passing of one pub in **Westbury on Trym**, even if its replacement was an unwanted Tesco.

The rise and decline of the local pub could be a useful topic for local history people to look into. Brewing was an important activity in medieval times, not least because local water supplies were often unreliable or polluted. Much brewing was done at home, by women, and if places in north Somerset were typical, there was strict manorial control. Church ales were a regular fundraiser for the parish church. Some church houses, as at **Abbots Leigh**, later became pubs. Documentary evidence, largely from legal controls on the sale of alcohol, varies from place to place. Alehouse licensing nation-wide began about 1551, which suggests that there was early recognition that there was a problem, and that government intervention was needed. Local registers of licences were required from 1773 until 1828, and from 1872 onwards. Gloucestershire Archives has few documents before 1872, when responsibility for licensing was transferred from quarter to petty sessions, but **Bristol's** registers go back to 1654. Since 2005 licensing has been the responsibility of local authorities and the magistrates are no longer involved. Has that made a difference locally?

Social attitudes to alcohol consumption have varied. Gin was recognised as a problem in the early eighteenth century, but when the government raised the excise duty to deter consumption there were riots and the tax was reduced and then withdrawn. As Alan Clarke explains in his ALHA booklet no.30, *Taking the pledge: the temperance movement in Bristol, 1830-1914*, nineteenth century temperance movements were prompted by a variety of philanthropic, religious and political emotions. Temperance raised questions about individual liberty, and social distinctions. That drunkenness was at times a problem in parts of this area seems likely from the sheer number of places where alcohol was sold. As Sue Stops has pointed out, in 1879 **Hotwells Road in Bristol** had 32 pubs, though not quite as many chapels: it would be misleading to suggest that Bristol's dockside was awash with sects and alcohol.

Local authorities now have to publish statements of their licensing policy. Bristol City Council's recent decision to restrict the number of licences granted in certain areas, <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/fear-new-pubs-clubs-bars-4309870> will not be the first occasion. In the 1880s the government decided to reduce the number of pubs. It set up a fund to compensate licensees for the loss of their licences. Not all the fund was used, so in 1890 the government diverted the money, dubbed 'whisky money,' to local authorities for assisting technical education or relieving rates, boosting investment in technical instruction. Bristol's Technical Instruction Committee, chaired by William Proctor Baker, decided to spread the money around schools and art and scientific institutions: £2,000 to Bristol University College; £2,000 to Bristol Grammar School; £1,000 to the school of art in the RWA building in Queens Road, and £500 to Redland High School for Girls. £1,350 a year went on scholarships at the Merchant Venturers' Technical College, and other money went on domestic science and art teaching.

Not all pubs have gone under. Some have survived through diversifying: sport on television, quizzes, pub games such as darts and cribbage replaced with gaming machines, and some have gone into food: in the hospitality trade the gastropub is now a recognised category. Plenty to look into.

CAN YOU HELP?

Sparke Evans Park Footbridge at Risk

Jeff Lucas writes: Sparke Evans Park footbridge is a small suspension bridge, built in 1933. It spans the river Avon between the park of that name in **St Philips** on the north bank and the Paintworks development in **Brislington** on the south bank. On a popular walking route away from the Bath Road, it forms a part of the Bristol cycling network, so it well used.

With its backdrop of trees and its elegant open latticework structure it is one of Bristol's loveliest bridges with a fascinating backstory. It is structurally sound but is suffering from decades of neglect. The latticework sides are disintegrating. The metal strip that forms the latticework is corroded and there are gaps and holes. It cannot be long before parts of it start to fall off. The edges of the corroded holes are sharp and would seriously injure anyone who grasped them to steady themselves.



Sparke Evans Park bridge is similar to Gaol Ferry bridge in **Southville**, designed a year earlier by the same firm — David Rowell and Co. of London. It was built by the local engineering firm of John Lysaght. It was a part of Bristol City Council's many job creation schemes during the depressions of the 1920s and 30s. Rowell's company began in 1855 as a fencing business. They diversified into iron frame buildings, and from 1903 to 1951 designed and made small elegant suspension bridges. Their building frames and bridges were supplied as a kit of parts which could be put together on site by unskilled labour. This made them popular for export to the colonies. The company was liquidated in 1970 but a few of their bridges still exist. Most are in Britain but there is one in the Falkland Islands, one in New Zealand and one in the Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia nicknamed the "Black Bridge," which is on a popular tourist trail.

Sparke Evans Park is a roughly rectangular tree-lined green oasis of seven acres. It was surrounded by a mainly residential area when the land was presented to the City Corporation in 1902 on condition that it was to be used as public pleasure grounds. The donor was a group of philanthropists headed by Peter Fabyan Sparke Evans (1826–1905), a partner in the nearby Avonside Tannery (on Feeder Road near **Barton Hill Bridge**, - long gone). Sparke Evans was a shrewd businessman but also a significant Bristol philanthropist. His family came from South Devon. He was taught the tanning business by his father. In the 1860s, with his father and brothers, he established tanneries at **St Philip's Marsh, at Wapping Wharf, and in Bedminster**. Evans was a deacon of Highbury Congregational Church, **Cotham**, and a member of the "Committee for Promoting the Better Housing of the Poor". His obituary in the *Western Daily Press* says he was "a gentleman who in a quiet way was given to many good works". The park that bears his name contains a rose garden which had a high reputation. It was said that plant diseases were kept at bay by the soot and fumes from the coal fired trains in **St Philip's Marsh** railway depot. On the west edge of the park are the remains of a shelter dating from 1925 with attractive wrought-iron pillars and decorative brackets. The Avon Walkway runs along the southern edge of the park.



A year ago I took up the condition of the bridge with the Bridges and Highways Structures Department of Bristol City Council. They are

aware of the problem, but with limited funds for the maintenance of all Bristol's bridges, they can deal only with problems of serious structural safety, so matters of cultural value hardly register. But even if they do recognise a problem that needs dealing with, the concern is that, at best, the sides will be replaced with the cheapest option eg sheet steel, which will become the usual blackboard for graffiti. At worst, the bridge will be closed for good.

We are on the brink of losing an important cultural and community asset for Bristol. I am in touch with sympathetic local councillors (and candidates) with regard to getting something done and I am currently working on an application for funds from the community infrastructure levy on planning permissions to restore and repair the bridge.

If members of ALHA have any ideas or information which might help, I would be very pleased if you would get in touch: jeff@redted.org.uk. Representations to the local councillors in the wards on each side of the river - **Brislington West and Lawrence Hill**, will also help.

BALH TEACHING INITIATIVE

Claire Kennan writes: The British Association for Local History is discussing with education experts at the University of Reading to develop a new education resource for local history, and is asking its members and member societies for your help and expertise. *Meanwhile Nearby...* is a resource intended to allow teachers to bring more local history into the classroom, by getting pupils to research (and then discuss in class) local history that was happening at the same time as the topics that they are studying in their taught curriculum. BALH is now teaming up with this project, to provide expertise and support for teachers across the country. To accomplish this, we are looking for volunteers from amongst our members to help to identify stories and locate resources which could be used to build a *Meanwhile Nearby...* resource.

A list of potential projects has been identified, and we are looking for contributions in areas, one of which is the impact of the industrial revolution in the Cotswolds. This resource will be hosted on BALH's new educational resources web section and used by teachers across the country. If you feel you might be able to help BALH in this new collaboration, please get in touch with Claire Kennan at digital@balh.org.uk. More information and example resources can be found at <https://meanwhileelsewhereinhistory.wordpress.com/meanwhile-nearby/>

QUOTE

Tremble had a secret. Underneath his dreary exterior, he was quite interesting. When his penchant for investigating the area's past was indulged, a light shone in his eyes and he became almost passionate, which is why his wife kept a stack of local history books on her bedside table.

Christopher Fowler (1953-), *Bryant & May on the loose*, 2009.

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 Bob Lawrence, contact details on page 1 top right (Please note his changed e-mail address). Please tell him of any changes of regular venue or timing. The list is not attached to this newsletter because most events have been cancelled or postponed, and not all changes may have been notified to Bob, so ALHA may not have full information.