

**AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND
ARCHAEOLOGY**
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UPDATE

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From: William Evans

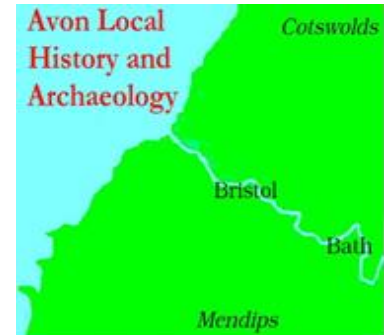
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ALHA ITEMS

Subscriptions

Many thanks to all who have paid their 2018-2019 subscriptions. Early payment helps ALHA's cashflow considerably. A copy of Sandy Tebbutt's latest edition of the *Walks, Talks and Visits* booklet has been sent to those groups and societies that have paid their subscription.

ALHA local history day 2018 talks

In the past ALHA has tried to include in the June *Newsletter* summaries of the talks and presentations delivered at the local history day. This year the committee hopes instead to post on the ALHA website full copies of the speakers' texts, with some of their illustrations.

ALHA summer walks 2018

The walk round **Langford** planned for **Sunday 12 August 2018 has been cancelled**. The full programme of walks is on the ALHA website, <http://www.alha.org.uk/>

ALHA BOOKLETS – STOCK

The following ALHA booklets, edited by Dr Jonathan Harlow, have sold out. Copies may be available from the author of the booklet or from Bristol Archives.

4 *Cooks Folly and Dr Goodeve*

9 *Microscopists*

13 and 14 *Felt Hatting*

19 *Davies the medical officer of health*

Stocks of the following booklets are low. If you would like a copy or copies, you may wish to place your order now, before the title is sold out:

5 *Bristol dock company*

17 *Bristol politics in the age of Peel*

21 *Herapaths*

23 *Kalendars*

25 *Victorian model farms*

26 *Richard Smith the surgeon*

EVENTS, SOURCES, PROJECTS

Latest from **Weston museum** at <http://westonmuseum.org.uk> , including volunteering opportunities.

Acton Court events programme is at actoncourt.com. Bookings now being taken.

LIFE IN THE ASYLUM CAPTURED ON PAPER

Glenside Hospital Museum is showing its historic collection of drawings, photographs, and artefacts relating to mental health care in Bristol, with a series of experimental drawing workshops, open to all, **29 May - 8 June 2018, 11am-6pm weekdays, 12 - 4pm Sat & Sun**, in the **City Vestibules**, Bristol City Hall, at the front of the building, looking out onto College Green, BS1 5TR. (**Park Street entrance**). For workshop timetable and booking go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/captured-on-paper-drawing-workshop-tickets-44981262166>

Stella Man writes: Glenside Hospital Museum's perceptive documentary drawings by Denis Reed (ARCA, RWA), artist and patient at Bristol Mental Hospital, speak volumes of what life was like in this psychiatric hospital in the 1950s, shortly after the NHS had taken over its management. Each of his beautiful A4 line drawings of patients - sleeping, shaving, bathing, walking, talking - retain a startling power. The Victorians had placed a value on occupation as a treatment, and wherever possible, patients previously would have been given a job to do within the hospital community. This was not considered appropriate for the new establishment, and this lack of occupation is illustrated by Reed's drawings.

On display will be a selection of photographs and artefacts to give insight into the hospital at that time. Doctors faced with ever increasing pressures to find solutions to mental illness developed many experimental cures, such as leucotomy, electroconvulsive therapy, and insulin therapy. Although still relatively little is known about the brain, it is now recognized that many of these treatments, while they may in some part have seemed to help the patient, for the most part were extremely primitive. History however is a powerful reminder that what is considered progress at the time, in hindsight may not be. While less physical intervention is currently used, in the future some of the drugs prescribed today may be considered equally primitive.

To accompany the free exhibition there will be a series of one hour, £5 per person, experimental drawing workshops, no experience necessary and open to all. Supported by Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, Bristol City Council Imagination Fund and the Association of Independent Museums Pilgrims Trust Fund, the exhibition is designed to broaden the public's understanding of mental health and inspire the creative process. Glenside Hospital Museum is unique, based in the Grade II listed Victorian asylum church within the grounds of Bristol's 1861 to 1994 psychiatric hospital now the University of the West of England's Health and Social Care Campus on Blackberry Hill, BS16 1DD. In addition to the story of the psychiatric hospital, Glenside Hospital Museum also contains exhibits on the First World War when the building became Beaufort War Hospital from 1915-1919, treating just under 30,000 wounded soldiers, and giving inspiration to the artist Sir Stanley Spencer who worked there as an orderly. The collection deals also with the history of the Stoke Park Colony of learning disability hospitals started by Harold Nelson Burden. The museum is full of objects, photographs, drawings and information collected from the former hospitals. The exhibits are compelling and provide an opportunity to examine the care provided in the past for people with mental illness and learning disabilities, and to consider our own health needs. www.glensidemuseum.org.uk

WEA HISTORY WORKSHOPS BRISTOL

The Workers Educational Association offers workshops:

History in a Tin: What's its value? Saturday 9 June 10am – 1pm, 7 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QH <https://enrolonline.wea.org.uk/Online/2017/CourseInfo.aspx?r=C3529320>

Historical Textiles, Thursday 28 June 10am – 3.30pm, 7 York Court, Wilder Street, Bristol BS2 8QH <https://enrolonline.wea.org.uk/Online/2017/CourseInfo.aspx?r=C3529441>

More information about all 'Discover' workshops here: <https://www.wea.org.uk/south-west/learn-us/discover-month-june-2018>. Fees, but concessions apply for those receiving certain income-related benefits. Kate Tatlow, WEA, 0117 916 6500. KTatlow@wea.org.uk

SOUTHMEAD HOSPITAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Another fascinating display of photographs and other material on the wall at Southmead, well worth a detour on the long trek to gate 36: particularly of the hospital during WW1, including a reminder that the earliest ambulances were horse-drawn: no blue lights, no noise except from the horse (or the patient). Some of the images are at <https://www.nbt.nhs.uk/about-us/news-media/gallery/first-world-war>

COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES

How much to preserve?

Marjorie Freeman writes: The piece in the April 2018 update about whether the Clifton Rocks railway should be restored to its original condition raises difficult questions. Another example of the problem arose at John Wesley's New Room in Bristol's Horsefair in 2004. The New Room wanted to remove ugly and uncomfortable pews that had been installed when the Room was remodelled in 1929. That was opposed by Bristol City Council's planning department, the Ancient Monuments Society, English Heritage and the Methodist church hierarchy on the ground that the pews were part of the history of the premises, so should be preserved in situ. Whilst I can understand the reasons for preserving recent works at the Clifton Rocks railway, to adopt a rule that we must not remove alterations that have been made to a building since it was first erected would produce some odd results if it was applied in all cases. We are not saying, are we, that repairs to wartime bomb damage should not be

removed because that would obliterate traces of the war? Or that slums should be preserved because to demolish them would be to destroy our heritage? Surely we have to accept that needed change can take place, even if that means removing what was there before? And if it is decided that artefacts should be preserved, cannot that be done in a museum rather than where they were originally installed?

Mike Perry writes: The Commentary piece about whether the Clifton Rocks Railway should be restored to its original working order ducks the issue, because it takes for granted that it would cost too much and the railway could not be solvent as a going concern. Typical attitude for a treasurer to take. But suppose a benefactor – another George Newnes or another George White, or some affluent philanthropist – offered enough money to pay for full restoration and to set up a fund that would cover future maintenance and underwrite losses, would the decision be different? Of course it would. The historic interest of the use of the tunnel in wartime and by the BBC is not in the physical works but in how the tunnel was used, and that is well recorded. Any artefacts that deserve keeping could go into a museum. To keep the wartime brickwork on site would deprive the rest of us of an unusual piece of transport engineering, a visitor attraction, and the occasional bit of fun. If money was no object, I know where I'd put it.

As in government, so in religion

In his presentation to ALHA's 2018 local history day Dr Jonathan Harlow put forward the idea that between about 1630 and 1690 the unity of the English state crumbled alongside, and in parallel with, uniformity in matters of religion, and he showed how those changes worked out, in step with each other, in our area.

Did similar correlations occur at other times? Here are some possible examples. (1) In late antiquity, when the roman empire was divided into east and west, with capitals in Rome and, from 330, Constantinople, the church also split into the eastern orthodox, based in one capital, and the catholic, based in the other, though it was not until 1054 that the pope and the patriarch got round to excommunicating each other. (2) In medieval England there was one church and one state; Henry VIII glued them together. In the 17th century came the parallel breakdowns explained by Dr Harlow. (3) In 18th century England the intellectual authority of the established church faded along with the governmental authority of the monarch: as the monarch became constitutional only, the church also declined into ceremonial impotence. Both alike contrived to keep their inherited wealth and social prestige, and the fiction that they had far more power and authority than they actually had. (4) In Victorian England the rise of liberalism, with its emphasis on freedoms, including free trade, coincided with more freedom and diversity of religious belief and practice. As Bob Lawrence observed in his 2018 local history day talk, one suburban area with a population of not many more than 10,000 had 18 churches with different religious doctrines, forms of church government, orders of worship, codes of behaviour, social class of congregation, and architectural styles of building varying widely within the two main genres of neogothic and neoclassical. (5) In the 20th century the decline in church attendance or membership was paralleled by the decline in membership of political parties. (6) Over the same period surveys suggest that more people held religious beliefs than were members of churches, and more people held political views than joined political parties. Both propositions are true today.

Are there other simultaneous likenesses and correlations between what was going on in government and what was going on in religious practice? If so, there ought to be local evidence.

It is 50 years this month since the student-led riots and occupations in Paris. Their consequences included national strikes, a general election, and various political, social and educational reforms. One was the division of large universities into smaller ones. In 1968 there was also student unrest in America, Germany, Mexico, and Czechoslovakia, and in the UK: students occupied university buildings in London, Essex and elsewhere, and even in **Bristol**, the pretext for which was demands for students to have more say in the running of the university.

There is a local history of student unrest. Bristol Polytechnic was not involved in 1968: it was not designated until 1969 and did not receive its first students until 1970, and there is no evidence that students in its predecessor institutions, Bristol College of Commerce, Bristol Technical College, and the SW College of Art, were inspired by events in Paris to ape their French counterparts. Perhaps that was because various reforms were in the pipeline in the UK anyway. The Family Law Reform Act 1969, which changed the grounds for divorce, also reduced the age of majority from 21 to 18. That gave people of student age the right to vote in subsequent elections, and it undermined the notion that a university was in loco parentis to its students, a concept that had implied not just a duty of care but also a relationship of authority and subservience.

In the late 1960s, as now, the position of students in UK universities differed depending on whether the institution derived its constitution from a charter (as with the universities of **Bath and Bristol**) or from Act of parliament (as with Bristol Polytechnic, later UWE, and Bath College of Higher Education, later Bath Spa university). In most charter universities such as Bristol University the students were legally members of the university, though they had little or no representation on its governing bodies. The student union was part of the university, and its clubs, societies and other activities were often presided over by a member of the academic staff as president or treasurer. In Bristol Polytechnic from the outset students were represented by election on the board of governors and the academic board, but the student union was a self-governing organisation separate from the institution and the institution was not responsible for it: the student union was registered as a separate charity, employed its own staff, bought its own beer, arranged its own insurances, engaged its own solicitors (for liquor licensing and the annual beer contract) and so on.

In both Bristol University and UWE student politics was a minority interest: only political activists or those eyeing a political career engaged in student union work or stood for student union office. Some student unions campaigned about issues external to the institution, such as apartheid in South Africa. Student unions occasionally generated discontent and protest, the pretext not always being the same as the underlying cause. At UWE for example, protests about refectory prices were really about the level of student financial support. The causes of protest changed from time to time. At UWE in the 1980s a cause was lack of student accommodation; in the 1990s, tuition fees and the level of student finances. In Bristol University protests have been about the political views of a lecturer, or the level of rents in student accommodation, or the nature of the university's investments, or the amount of teaching or tuition that students receive. Action sometimes took the form of demonstrations and occupations of university premises.

Of recent years the sources of unrest in universities have shifted again. Protests have been sharpened by the government refashioning most students, who were always fee-payers, from grant-receivers into borrowers, and from beneficiaries into consumers wanting value for money. Student finance is now part of a wider contentious question about the funding of higher education generally. There is also disagreement about what the purposes of higher education are or ought to be, and in particular whether its prime purpose should be to satisfy the needs of the economy or particular interests within it, or to facilitate study irrespective of the economic value of the subject. Another, political, issue is academic freedom, in the sense of freedom from government control or influence on what is taught, studied or researched. Some of that is the result of the government, which supplies most of the funds of universities, wishing to have greater control over how public money is spent and to ensure that the government gets value for its money; other issues are tangled up in disputes about government policies regarding the role of higher education in the national economy. Another area of

dispute is over how far universities should be compelled to help implement government policies. One question concerns controls over immigration, the latter having implications for recruitment of both staff and students in all four universities in our area, and another is about incitement to terrorism, which has led to disputes about freedom of speech within institutions in our area. More recently changes to lecturers' pension arrangements in charter institutions led to a strike, which at one time was thought likely to impair students' degree prospects; and now students are protesting at the level of mental health services at **Bristol** University. As the '68ers would say, the struggle continues, but the causes of discontent are different.

Some historians see what happened in 1968 as an example of an outbreak of intergenerational conflict, sometimes not far under the surface. It is difficult to see confirmation of that in events at that time in our area. But what about our present situation? One view is that the comfortable financial position of many older people, many of whom have benefited from years of full employment, insurance, pensions, free education, health and social services, not forgetting free bus travel, and rising house prices, especially in **Bristol and Bath**, is resented by a younger generation at higher risk of unemployment, with little hope of buying a house, educated at a higher level than their parents but only at the price of lifelong debt, and with the prospect of many public services being cut back or charged for beyond their means. Historians might advise us to watch this space.

Clifton's other half

The popular perception of Victorian, Edwardian and pre-war **Clifton** is of a wealthy suburb, keen to distance itself from (the rest of) **Bristol**, its residents socially and economically superior, class-conscious and snobbish, epitomised by a notorious letter printed in a Bristol newspaper.

It is true that from the late eighteenth century many affluent individuals, their families and dependents moved out of the city to Clifton. Many had large houses built, of ample floor space, often in expensive materials, and in designs and styles of conspicuous consumption. In Clifton, not **Bedminster**, resided Elisha Robinson and many a Wills.

The perception of a homogeneous enclave (ghetto would not be the right word) of socially and economically privileged people ought to be qualified by at least three considerations.

First, by the sheer number of servants. In 1861 there were more than a million nationwide. Many of the wealthier Clifton families had several, and it was not uncommon for families well down the economic scale to employ one or two. That practice persisted into the twentieth century, and had not disappeared in the 1930s.

Second, by the number of lodging houses. So long as Clifton had spas, entrepreneurs built lodging houses, as in **Bath**, to accommodate visitors. After the spas declined, many lodging houses continued as such, accommodating a wide range of people, many of them workers on low incomes. An example is Buckingham Terrace opposite the student union building, where the 1861 census records almost every house let to lodgers, many of whom worked in Bristol: in the docks, in factories, or in the scores of other businesses in the city.

Third, by the rising population. That led to more houses being built, all the way to **Blackboy and Whiteladies Gate**, but it also led to the subdivision into smaller households of houses originally built for occupation by one affluent family. The same has happened of recent years in Bath, Bristol, and to some extent also in **Weston-super-mare**, a tendency exacerbated by not enough new houses being built to meet demand.

Clifton had a higher proportion and a greater concentration of well-off residents than other parts of Bristol, but its population was not all as wealthy or posh as is sometimes made out.

CAN YOU HELP?

Cinema usherettes

Eva Balogh, senior lecturer in visual culture, School of Art and Design, University of Portsmouth, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth PO1 2DJ, 02392 843833, eva.balogh@port.ac.uk wants to contact people who have worked as usherettes in cinemas. <http://www.port.ac.uk/school-of-art-and-design/staff/eva-balogh.html>

Weston museum Volunteering opportunities at <http://westonmuseum.org/volunteer/>