

**AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND
ARCHAEOLOGY**
registered charity no. 270930

UPDATE

30 April 2018

From: William Evans

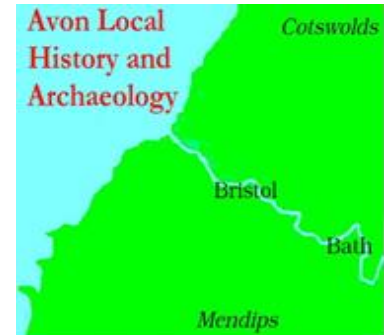
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ALHA ITEMS

ALHA LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2018

Many thanks to all who contributed towards making the 2018 local history day a success, not least Sandra Lewis for getting into the projector. Attendance was near 100. ALHA hopes to print summaries of the talks in the June *Newsletter*.

Assistance with planning, selecting topics and speakers, organising and generally helping to make things happen on the day for the 2019 event would be appreciated. If you would like to help, or would like to discuss possibilities, please contact the treasurer, Bob Lawrence or Peter Fleming.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Many thanks to all those members who have paid their subscriptions for 2018-2019, greatly helping ALHA's cashflow.

SPEAKERS LIST

Sandy Tebbutt has finished work on the 2018 edition of the *Walks, Talks & Visits* list, which has now been printed. The treasurer has sent a copy to those member groups and societies that have paid their subscription. If your group has paid its sub, but has not received the new edition, please tell ALHA's

treasurer. If your group has not paid its sub yet, please tell your group's treasurer.



Edward Burne-Jones, *The Garden Court*, BM&AG

EVENTS, SOURCES, PROJECTS

Gloucestershire Heritage Hub

Phase one is now open. Visitors can now consult documents in the new archive research room, and benefit from expert advice from volunteers of the Gloucestershire Family History Society. The hub's project space is also being tested out by community groups. There is a consultation on opening hours at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/hubopeninghours

The Heritage Hub website also links to it; <https://www.heritagehub.org.uk/>

A *Forgotten Landscape* project

Latest at <https://mailchi.mp/3c6ad482c7f7/9ra2vzxib8-1596833>

Immortalised project

Historic England has launched *Immortalised* to celebrate the nation's secret, forgotten and unknown memorials, writes *Jane Marley*. Historic England is about memorials that are well-loved by small groups or communities, but unknown nationally. In addition to murals and shrines, statues, inscriptions on benches and trees, they are also looking for rituals and activities attached to memorials. The public's stories and pictures will be recorded to form part of an exhibition in the autumn. To find out more and suggest a memorial:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/help-write-history/help-find-englands-secret-unknown-forgotten-memorials/>



Inspiring Women: The Legacy of the First World War in South Gloucestershire

Jane Marley writes: To celebrate the extension of franchise to women with the UK Representation of the People Act 1918, passed on 6th February 1918, we plan to create a list of local South Gloucestershire women who, through their life story, made an impact on local, national or international life. The list will recognise and represent the achievements of women in South Gloucestershire over the last 100 years. These stories will demonstrate legacy of the First World War which changed women's lives forever.

Nominate a South Gloucestershire Woman We invite you to nominate a woman who you feel has made an impact on local, national or international life in the last 100 years and has a connection with South Gloucestershire. For example, by contributing to a war effort, excelling in sport, making a mark as an artist or writer or working in the community. We will use a selection of these to create learning resources and exhibition which will tour South Gloucestershire.

Please apply for a nomination form from Museums and Heritage Officer, South Gloucestershire Council, e.mail: museums@southglos.gov.uk and submit the nomination form by 30 June 2018.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HERITAGE HUB

Phase I is now open. Visitors can now consult documents in the new archive research room, and benefit from expert advice from volunteers of the Gloucestershire Family History Society. The project space is also being tested out by community groups.

A consultation about Gloucestershire Heritage Hub's opening hours is now open at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/hubopeninghours. The Heritage Hub website also links to www.heritagehub.org.uk

PUBLICATIONS NOTICED

Jill Woodhead, *A Village of Schools*, Combe Down Heritage Society 2017. Looks at the schools on **Combe Down** between 1727 and 2000. Available from the Museum of Bath Stone, at the CornerStone, or online at the CDHS eShop : £6. <http://www.combedownheritage.org.uk>

COMMENTARY

How much to preserve?

Towards the end of her compendious history of the **Clifton** Rocks railway, reviewed by Chris Harlow in *ALHA Newsletter* 154, Maggie Shapland discusses whether the trust that looks after it should aim to restore it to its original working condition. She concludes that it should not.

From a financial point of view that conclusion is realistic. The railway opened in 1893, its £30,000 cost funded by a mixture of shares and debentures, with most of the money coming from George Newnes the publisher. It did not pay its way, and the company went into receivership in 1908. In 1912 the company was bought for £1,500 by George White's Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company. BTCC aimed to make the railway profitable by connecting it with tram routes top and bottom. That proved not viable either, not helped by the SMV's insistence that the railway serve the spa and its accompanying hotel. The railway closed in 1934. It seems unlikely that moderns would succeed where someone as astute, imaginative, energetic and cut-throat as GW could not make it pay. The huge cost of restoration (estimated in 1983 at £500,000), high maintenance and running costs, difficult access from the Portway, and low numbers of regular passengers mean that a restored railway would not be financially viable without massive subsidies from public funds, for which our elected representatives must have other priorities.

As MS points out, a stronger case for not attempting complete restoration is that it could not be done without removing most traces of the railway's post-1934 history, including its use by the BBC and as a wartime air raid shelter, and let us not forget the barrage balloons and the work done by volunteers since. If it is important to conserve traces of the past, then

we should consider whether to conserve significant traces of the past at different periods, not just the earliest.

That has not always been the attitude of archaeologists or preservation pressure groups. For many years the presumption was that old buildings should be restored as far as possible to their original condition, and that more recent buildings should be removed to uncover earlier remains beneath. The practice was taken to an extreme conclusion in Rome, where in the area of the ancient forum at least three baroque churches of historical and architectural interest and importance and aesthetic value were demolished in order to expose what little remains beneath: in two cases the outline and foundations of temples dated to republican and imperial times. The knowledge of the earlier buildings thus obtained was considered to outweigh the loss of the baroque structures, even though the latter were just as much a part of the forum's past as the earlier temples.

Similar issues arise in the case of just about every old building in our area that has been altered, added to or adapted, especially in towns where space is scarce and land is more expensive, and so new buildings have been constructed on foundations of old ones and then altered and extended. Sometimes those changes have made possible the conservation of a building that would otherwise have been demolished or left to rot. Should the georgian extensions to **Ashton Court** or the victorian and edwardian alterations at **Dyrham House** be removed in the interests of returning the building to what it originally was or looked like? Should georgian and victorian additions to medieval churches be stripped out? Or should we accept, as in the case of the Clifton Rocks Railway, with what MS calls its 'layers of history,' that the post-original parts of a building can be worth conserving because of what they tell us about the past and the histories they help us tell?

Civilisations

Many readers will have been watching the BBC2 series *Civilisations*. The title is said to have been chosen (and made plural) deliberately to differentiate the series from that presented in 1969 by the art historian Kenneth Clark under the title *Civilisation* (singular). Both series narrate, analyse and enthuse over the emergence of art and its influence on cultures, but Clark presupposed that there was only one civilisation, that of the west; looked only at what would now be called fine art, mostly painting, sculpture and some architecture (Clark did devote one programme to the enlightenment, but only to explain its influence on art); and at art of European origin, concentrating on our inheritances from what he called the dark ages, the renaissance and the reformation, through styles and movements such as the baroque, neoclassicism, romanticism, impressionism and the moderns. *Civilisations* (plural), presented by three cultural historians (a woman, a Jew and a British African), looks at other civilisations as well, including those of China, the Indian subcontinent, the middle east, north Africa and south America, and earlier cultures in Africa, Australasia and the far east.

The BBC was right to draw the distinction. Clark's series - innovative, educational and stimulating at the time in the early days of colour television - now looks patrician, elitist, Europe-centred, and stuffy in a Sotheby's-friendly history-of-fine-art-for-those-who-can-afford-it sort of way. But both BBC series are open to criticism for projecting the idea that art is the distinguishing feature or main component of civilisation. Civilisation, or being civilised, is more than just being able to create, possess, look at, understand and appreciate a painting, piece of sculpture, building or other product of human skill. It includes the written and spoken word, music, drama and other forms of communication. Civilisation includes being able to live peaceably in a just, orderly and considerate society. It includes practices as well as tangible things. It includes ideas and values. Much of all that is the concern of social history, which is a component of much local history. Civilisation is not about stuff. It is

about how we treat each other and others, and for an understanding of that, local history is a good place to start enquiring.

Empire Windrush

A piece in Newsletter 150, March 2017, drew attention to the data protection principle that personal information relating to a living individual should not be retained for longer than is necessary for the purpose for which the information was obtained, and argued that that principle conflicted with the needs and wishes of local and family historians, who rely on recorded information about individuals being kept indefinitely. During April 2018 a serious issue has arisen nationally, because civil servants in the Home Office had destroyed the original landing records of people who came to this country in 1948 on the *Empire Windrush*, and now have difficulty providing evidence of their entry to the UK. Many of those people will have come to, or settled in, our area. So there is another reason why the data protection principle now set in UK law since 1998, ought to be amended. It is not just a matter of satisfying the inquisitiveness of historians. It is about basic human rights.

CAN YOU HELP?

Winterbourne Medieval Barn

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded **Winterbourne's** Medieval Barn a £936,600 grant towards a £1.76 million project to conserve and refurbish the historic barn and its adjacent buildings. The aim is to restore, refurbish and find new uses for the 14th Century Court Farm Barn, which is owned by South Gloucestershire Council and managed by ALHA member Winterbourne Medieval Barn Trust. 'A heritage education centre will be created to demonstrate the history of the barn and its architecture as well as information about the local area. Overall, the complex would provide flexible spaces for a variety of community, educational and commercial uses. The restoration and refurbishment will enable the Trust to offer many more events and activities throughout the year, including heritage and craft-themed events, craft workshops, guided tours, more musical and theatrical performances, and a brand new schools' programme. There will be new rentable workshops for creating traditional crafts and more space will be available for public and commercial hire, income from which will enable the Barn to operate on a sustainable basis.' Work is now continuing to raise the remaining money needed to ensure the project is fully funded. Anyone interested in donating to the project or joining the volunteering team should contact sue.parsons6@btinternet.com. For more information visit www.winterbournebarn.org.uk

Former Seamen's Institute Church on corner Prince Street and Queen Square, Bristol

Liam Trim at *Bath Chronicle* asks if anyone can give him any information about the above building. It is currently, and has been for some years, closed up. Liam is looking at the former King Edward School site on Broad Street, Bath, both sites having been or still being owned by Samuel Smith's Brewery. The Bath site had planning permission for flats, but nothing has happened so far. Liam Trim 01225 322284, liam.trim@trinitymirror.com