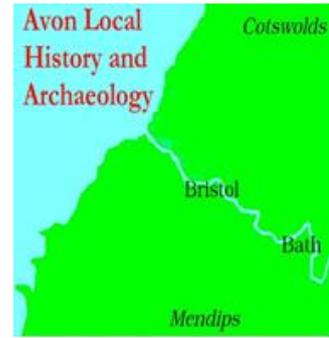




**AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND
ARCHAEOLOGY**
registered charity no. 270930

**NEWSLETTER ONLINE
UPDATE
31 July 2017**

From: William Evans
5 Parrys Grove
Bristol BS9 1TT
Tel, ans and fax 0117 968 4979
wm.evans@btopenworld.com



Website: www.alha.org.uk

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

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ALHA SUMMER WALKS PROGRAMME 2017

The last of the summer walks programme is below. No need to pre-book, but there will be a £2 fee payable on the day. If you have any queries please telephone the organiser, Mike Hooper, on 0117 9775512, or mobile: 07443 229499.

SUNDAY 13th AUGUST – CLEVEDON

Leader: Jane Lilly, historian and local resident

Walk: A short wander through the seaside resort's history, from medieval west end to Victorian pier

Meet at 1.45pm at the west end Salthouse car park (BS21 7TY) near the hotel gates on Old Church Road.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND JOE BETTEY LECTURE

ALHA's 2017 annual general meeting and Joe Bettey lecture will be at the **Friends' Meeting House, Beckspool Road, Frenchay on Wednesday 18 October 2017, starting at 7pm.** The lecturer will be Professor Helen Meller, formerly professor of history at Nottingham University and author of *Leisure and the changing city, 1870-1914*, which in spite of its general title is about the Bristol area. Her lecture is titled *How to live in the modern city: women's contribution in Bristol 1860s-1930s*. ALHA is grateful to

ALHA member **Frenchay Tuckett Society** for agreeing to host the event.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS OF MEMBER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

ALHA publishes on its website, and tries to keep up to date, a list of talks and other events arranged by ALHA member groups and societies. This does depend, however, on information being supplied by member groups and societies, so if you are now arranging your meetings for your next year, please send your list to ALHA's website manager, Bob Lawrence, Flat 1 Chartley, 22 The Avenue, Bristol BS9 1PE, lawrence@hazels.u-net.com

ALHA LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2018 – CALL FOR PAPERS

The theme for next year's local history day, probably again at UWE's Frenchay campus, and probably on Saturday 14 or 21 April, will be around **religion and change**, broadly interpreted. We hope to look at how religious beliefs changed, how religious organisations changed within themselves, and how those changes affected local people at large. Our area is rich in religions and their impact: two abbeys of historical importance; a battleground of the reformation and of the religious ferments on the 17th century, which both had political consequences; a hotbed of nonconformity in the 18th century, with Moravians, Unitarians, Baptists, Quakers, Independents and Methodists prominent, and driving political and social reforms in the following century. Sects (Lady Huntingdon's in Bath?) have come and gone. Religion declined in Victorian times, yet it was then that it was prominent in public life. Church buildings have dominated our towns and villages for centuries, but not all are still in use and the uses of some have changed. Wesley's new room has been revamped, but Whitfield's tabernacle is at risk. In the 20th century we have seen gurdwaras, mosques and other buildings to meet the needs of immigrant communities, while St Werburgh's is used for climbing, St Paul's for circus training, and St George's for concerts. Highbury chapel, originally Congregationalist, became Anglican. Some chapels, in villages as well as towns, are now flats. Topics could include the importance of religious beliefs and practices at various times; how they changed; and how they changed the lives of people, places, and politics. **ALHA invites proposals for talks, presentations and displays:** max 500 words please to Bob Lawrence, Flat 1 Chartley, 22 The Avenue, Bristol BS9 1PE, lawrence@hazels.u-net.com or William Evans, 5 Parrys Grove, Bristol BS9 1TT, 0117 968 4979, wm.evans@bopenworld.com

TREVOR FAWCETT

The death is reported of Trevor Fawcett, founder of ALHA member **The History of Bath Research Group**, and indefatigable researcher into and writer about the history of his city. Particularly enjoyable were his books on the social world of eighteenth century Bath, often drawing on newspaper advertisements and news items, all written with style, elegance and empathy as well as penetrating insight. He will be sadly missed.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

A FORGOTTEN LANDSCAPE PROJECT

Latest at <http://www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk/latest-news/>

KNOW YOUR PLACE WEST OF ENGLAND

KYP has issued a Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 learning pack for teachers: www.kyp.org.uk/learning-pack/ There is also a film: www.kypwest.org.uk

ACTON COURT

The Acton Court 2017 events programme is now at www.actoncourt.com . Acton Court will open to the public **until 13 August 2017, closed Mondays and Tuesdays**. You can also book a guided tour of the [House & Grounds](#). For further information, www.actoncourt.com or 01454 228 224.

YATTON LIBRARY

Yatton library closes for refurbishment **until about 14 August 2017**. <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/services/yatton-library/> For events at North Somerset libraries generally, see <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/leisure/libraries/libraryevents/events-libraries/>

KINGSWOOD HERITAGE MUSEUM

Kingswood Museum has an exhibition about **Staple Hill** starting 1 April 2017. Kingswood Heritage Museum, Tower Lane, Warmley, BS30 8XT: 0117 960 5664; e-mail kingswoodmuseum@gmail.com. Opening hours and other information at <http://www.kingswoodmuseum.org.uk/museum/forthcoming-events/>

BRITAIN ON FILM

Jemma Buckley writes: The Independent Cinema Office (ICO), in collaboration with the British Film Institute, presents ***Britain on Film on Tour*** - a series of archive film programmes from archives across the UK, available to the British public for the first time. After one of the largest pieces of film preservation and restoration ever undertaken, *Britain on Film on Tour* reveals new and unseen stories from as early as 1897.

ICO, a registered charity, aims to bring non-commercial films to audiences who may not normally have access to them. We would be happy to make these films **available to your history society to hire for just £20+VAT – a reduction to 80% of the commercial rate**.

You could use the film as part of your regular group programme, or as a special one-off event. We have no stipulation on whether audience are charged for admission, so you are welcome to screen the film for a fundraising event for general funds or a specific campaign. We would just encourage you to screen this film in a way that would genuinely benefit your organisation and its programme.

All films are available on DVD or Blu-Ray and come with FREE programme notes for audiences. We can put you in touch with speakers who have specific expertise on the films. The films are available for booking throughout 2017/18. More information on the tour can be viewed here: <http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/films/britainonfilm>

Jemma Buckley, Britain on Film on Tour - Project Manager, Independent Cinema Office
3rd Floor, Kenilworth House, 79-80 Margaret Street, London, W1W 8TA 020 7079 5950
Fax: 020 7636 7121 www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk



WESTON-SUPER-MARE MUSEUM

After refurbishment and updating, WsM museum reopens **Saturday 26 August**, with a Victorian family fun day. The free-entry museum will be open 7 days a week 10am – 5pm (closed 25-28 December, New Year's Day and 15-21 January).

STOKE LODGE (STOKE BISHOP, BRISTOL) ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

The Stoke Lodge adult education brochure is now available at www.bristolcourses.com/courses . Gordon Strong offers 10 lectures on *King Arthur: myth and man of Avalon*, Fridays 1pm-3, **starting 22 September**. ALHA individual member John Stevens offers courses on early Tudor England, George III and the loss of America, nineteenth century prime ministers, and European power politics 1815-70.

1 ROYAL CRESCENT, BATH

Bath Preservation Trust's museum has an exhibition of images of The Crescent, **until 19 November 2017**: <http://no1royalcrescent.org.uk/events/>

THE NEW ROOM, BROADMEAD, BRISTOL

The grade 1 listed New Room has reopened after impressive improvements partly funded by a £2.5m Heritage Lottery Fund grant. 'The New Room was originally built in 1739 and extended in 1748 by John Wesley at the outset of his work in creating a religious revival in Britain and America. Above the chapel are the Preachers' Rooms where John Wesley and other preachers could stay when in Bristol or en route to preaching engagements in the South West, Wales, and Ireland. For many years Charles Wesley, John's younger brother and the world's most influential hymnwriter, was based in Bristol. The New Room was also the starting point for many figures associated with the establishment of the Methodist movement in America. It is:

- the oldest Methodist building in the world
- one of the first places to offer free medical care in Britain
- the place where John Wesley stayed more than anywhere else
- the place where the Methodist system of educating and helping people in 'classes' originated
- the first chapel to be licensed for Methodist preaching
- the place from which Wesley spoke against the slave trade
- the location of many of the eighteenth century annual Conferences that determined the development of Methodism
- the place with most links to the development of Methodism in America
- the location of two Grade II listed statues, one of John Wesley and one of Charles Wesley
- the place which virtually all the key figures in early Methodism visited and where a significant number were for a time based.'



The new visitor facilities and revamped museum were opened by the duke of Gloucester, attended by the President of the Methodist Conference the Revd Loraine Mellor, Methodist Youth President Tim Annan, Lord Lieutenant of Bristol Peaches Golding, High Sheriff of Bristol Anthony Brown, and Lord Mayor Cllr Lesley Alexander. There is now a new three-storey building in the Horsefair courtyard. The ground floor has a café and shop; on levels 2 and 3 a multi-media lecture and education room for up to 60 people, an extensive resource library on Methodist history, an archives room and offices. A lift connects the floors. The old museum has been completely redesigned and augmented to reflect John Wesley's work in Bristol, in 18th century Britain, and around the world. There are audio guides. The interior of the chapel remains unchanged. Free entry, except for the museum, for which a charge is made, but that gets you in for a year. Highly recommended.

<http://www.newroombristol.org.uk/> More about chapels under CAN YOU HELP? below.

ROMAN BATHS BY TORCHLIGHT

If you would like to see **Bath**'s Roman baths in a new light, you can visit 'Every evening from 17 June to **31 August** (last entry 9.00pm). As darkness falls, the ruins of this vast Roman building are an awesome sight. By the light of flickering torches, you can walk on 2000 year old pavements, providing a truly magical atmosphere. With its steaming waters and Roman artefacts this is an unforgettable and unique experience', it says. Details at:

<https://www.romanbaths.co.uk/events/torchlit-summer-evenings>

More about the baths under COMMENTARY below.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DAY SCHOOLS, BRISTOL

Booking is now open for Bristol City Museum's next batch of archaeological day schools. Topics include local finds, the art and architecture of St Mary Redcliffe (repeated), dating (relative and absolute), and maritime archaeology. Details, costs and booking at

<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-on/art-architecture-st-mary-redcliffe/>

BOOKS ETC NOTICED

Martin Crossley Evans and Andrew Sulston, *A history of Wills Hall*, second edition, Wills Hall Association 2017, £12 + £2 p&p or collect from Wills Hall. Illustrated history of Bristol University's first purpose-built hall of residence for students. Contains material on the history of **Stoke Bishop** as well as of the university. <http://www.bristolsu.org.uk/groups/wills-hall/events/a-history-of-wills-hall>

BOOKS SOUGHT

Bill Martin, Secretary Lord Mayor's Chapel Trust and Vice-Chair of ALHA member Bristol & Avon Archaeological Society, bill_martin@talktalk.net, has a copy of C D Ross ed., *Cartulary of St Mark's Hospital, Bristol*, Bristol Record Society 1959, Vol 21, but would be grateful for other books about **St Mark's hospital, Bristol and the lord mayor's chapel**.

Irvine Gray, *Antiquaries of Gloucestershire and Bristol*, B&GAS 1981.

Irene Wyatt, ed., *Transportees from Gloucestershire to Australia 1783-1842*, Gloucestershire Record Series volume 1.

Brian Frith ed., *Bigland's Gloucestershire collections part 1 (A-C)*, GRS volume 2.

Brian Frith ed., *Bigland's Gloucestershire collections part 2 (D-M)*, GRS volume 3.

William Evans, treasurer, Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society,

wm.evans@btopenworld.com; 0117 968 4979

COMMENTARY

Agricultural shows

Summer brings agricultural shows. A topic for local history study? Elsewhere in Europe many seem to have emerged from local traditional fairs, but in the UK they originated in Scotland in the 18th century, which suggests they may have been a by-product of the inclosure movement. They spread in the early 19th century, and became

popular in Victorian times. The Empress of Blandings was a regular Edwardian competitor.

Shows vary in their origins. The **North Somerset**, now held near **Wraxall**, started with ploughing demonstrations and competitions, as did the **Mid Somerset**. The **Bath & West** started in 1790 right in the

centre of town with a public exhibition of sheep in the yard behind the society's headquarters in Hetling House (Abbey Church House), **Bath**. Other shows started with large estate owners offering prizes for the best animal, cheese, butter and so on, as an incentive to get tenants to improve their output and so increase their profit, and so justify higher rents. Some shows started when farmers formed societies to exchange information, learn about the latest scientific advances, and find out about new practices and technologies, so as to improve their profitability. Cynics might regard the agricultural show as keeping the workers busy in the comparatively slack time before the hard work of harvest.

Agricultural shows differed in their hierarchies and organisation. Some small local ones were under the control of the squire, especially if he provided the money and the prizes. Larger ones were activities of agricultural societies, the biggest of which had organising committees and, in the case of the **Bath & West**, paid staff. Some were independent of the local landowner, and constituted themselves as unincorporated associations or companies.

Show grounds varied. Some were temporary, little more than fields made available for the occasion by the local landowner. When the **Bath & West's** sheep yard proved too small, they leased land in **Kingsmead Square** for an exhibition area, which was later used for demonstrations, which became show attractions. Even so, the Bath & West show (whose secretary from 1882 to 1919 was a Mr Plowman) moved around the region: it was at **Bath** in 1854, 1877, 1891, 1900, 1912, 1927, 1953 and 1960; at **Bristol** in 1864, 1874, 1886, 1906, 1921, 1931 and 1949. The society bought its permanent showground near **Shepton Mallet** in 1965. Through the 20th century the **North Somerset** show was held in the grounds of **Ashton Court**; the present field near **Wraxall and Flax Bourton** was acquired in 2002.

Some shows look as if they are, or are descended from, agricultural shows but are not. The South Gloucestershire show, held near **Westerleigh**, is run by a commercial company that traces its history all the way back to 2013, and markets the event to exhibitors as 'a showcase for lifestyle and leisure' and to the public as a series of entertainments with little discernible connection with agriculture. There will be sheep, it says, but they had better get out of the way of the motor bike stunts; there will be piglets, but they will be induced to race.

A local history of agricultural shows could look at where and how they originated; who the leading organisers and patrons were; how they were organised and financed; what categories of activity or product they displayed; what the competitive classes were and how they were judged; and how some changed from being mainly for country people to appeal to the wider public. The reasons for change could be probed, for example how the **North Somerset** show started with ploughing and expanded and diversified. The **Mid Somerset** started out of ploughing matches and demonstrations, was soon into cheese and butter, but by the 1870s it had become a predominantly cattle show. Had local farmers shifted out of corn into livestock because they feared lower grain prices because of foreign imports from Canada and the Ukraine? Or were there other reasons? A local history could also investigate the relative importance in shows of education, information, competition; efforts to attract attenders, eg entertainments; how agricultural societies acted as pressure groups and used shows as publicity; and how they operated in communities as social fora: a bit like markets, but not so frequent. Histories could try to trace what happened to former show grounds: some have reverted to farmland, others built on; at least one became a municipal park, but is still used for shows and travelling fairs. Worth a look.

Fire insurance and the built environment

At ALHA's 2017 local history day Peter Malpass, discussing **Bristol's Corn Street** area, observed that banks congregated in the commercial centre. They amalgamated sites and put up imposing buildings, in predominantly neoclassical or Italianate styles, to convey an impression of solidity and reliability. That altered the appearance and character of the street, and the results are visible today.

Similar points could be made about insurance companies. Because **Bristol** was an international port, and shipping was so important in the local economy, we might have expected medieval and early modern Bristolians to have been innovators and leaders in marine insurance. But to insure their vessels and cargoes Bristol merchants went to London or Amsterdam. When insurers did set up in Bristol, it was not for shipping, but for fire: the Bristol Crown Fire Office opened in 1718. Given the number of sugar boilers in Bristol, they might have been expected to insure with that company, but it seems they too insured in London, because in 1769 they formed a mutual, the New Bristol Fire Office, claiming they were being ripped off by London insurers. That may well have been true, because their action prompted London sugar boilers to form their own mutual, the New Fire Office (1782), which was successful and was later called the Phoenix. Another company, the Bristol Universal Fire Office, was set up in 1774 but, like Edmund Burke's representation of Bristol, lasted only a few years. In 1818 some of the members of the Bristol Crown left to form the Bristol Union Fire and Life Assurance Company. The Bristol Crown Fire Office merged with the Sun Fire Office in 1837. The Bristol Union and the New Bristol were merged into the Imperial, which in 1902 became part of the Alliance, which merged with the Sun in 1959 to form the Sun Alliance, later joined by the Phoenix and the Royal, hence the modern Royal Sun Alliance or RSA.

Those were the fire insurance companies that started in Bristol. Meanwhile, other

companies formed elsewhere opened branches in Bristol. The Liverpool, London and Globe and the London and Lancashire were both in Corn Street; Avon Insurance was in Broad Street, with North British and Mercantile; the Prudential (with its brand-brandishing terracotta-faced building) was in Clare Street. The Scottish Provident arrived in 1903, later moving to Wine Street. Many incomers were on a small scale: in 1890 over 60 insurance companies had offices, agencies or representatives in Bristol. In the 1970s, for reasons that are not clear and might be interesting to investigate, several insurance companies moved their head offices out of London to Bristol: Phoenix (**Redcliffe Hill**) 1972; Sun Life (**St James's Barton**); London Life (**Temple Meads**); Clerical, Medical and General (**Temple**). Later, as a result of globalisation and takeovers, many foreign-origin insurers came to Bristol, such as the French Société Generale, and the Canadian Sun Life. London Life came not from London England but from London Ontario, but by then was largely Australian-owned.

Insurance companies built, not just for their own occupation but to invest policyholders' premiums so as to be able to meet claims on policies and make profits. The reasoning was, and is, that insurers need reliable income in order to pay routine claims, and rents from commercial property provide a steady income stream, and one that can be increased, through periodic rent reviews, to keep pace with inflation. If properly looked after, land and buildings are not likely to fall in value. If need arises, they may be sold to produce capital gain, which can be reinvested or used to meet unexpectedly large claims. Bristol examples include the Spectrum building (Prudential) and Broad Quay House (Standard Life). Insurance companies have also funded shopping malls and other retail developments. Thus insurance companies have contributed to our local history by providing services, generating employment, and altering the fabric and the look of several areas of Bristol, not least the centre.

Land drainage and sea defences

The Environment Agency, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council are to bid for funds for a project to raise the seabanks along the Severn from **Avonmouth** to **Aust**:

<https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/newsroom/environment/improved-flood-defences-to-protect-homes-avonmouth-severnside-enterprise-area-and-create-80-hectares-of-wetland-habitat/>. The works are planned to start in 2018-2019 and to protect against flooding for 60 years (which presumably would not cover a 1-in-100 years event).

Two thirds of our area keeps its feet dry on well-drained limestones, or stands metres above sea level, but a third is flat, low-lying and prone to flood – until recently for up to five or six weeks a year. In the north marsh of Somerset what would nowadays be called the wetlands extended to **Uphill, Hutton, Locking, Banwell, Churchill, Congresbury** (to which the Yeo was tidal), **Wrington, Yatton, Chelvey, Brockley, Nailsea, Tickenham, Clevedon, Yatton, Kenn, Kingston Seymour, Wick St Lawrence and Puxton**. In the south Gloucestershire salt marsh they included **Hallen, Almondsbury, Olveston, Tockington, Aust, Northwick, Redwick, Elberton and Pilning**. As well as the annual inundations, there were serious floods in 1606, 1703, 1812 and 1981.

Land drainage is historically significant. It has formed land, such as the warths at **Kenn, Kingston Seymour, Wick St Lawrence, Uphill, Chittening, Northwick and Aust**. It has defined or altered where the coastline is. By keeping out salt water it has changed the chemical and biological characteristics and capabilities of land, turning marsh into soil fit for grazing, meadow or even arable. It has made possible irrigation in summer. All that has changed farming practices and their consequential landscapes, and has influenced where settlements grew and how they functioned. Land drainage has had economic effects, facilitating food production, affording employments, adding to the stock of land. In

some places it has had transport effects, such as making **Weston-super-mare** more accessible from **Bristol**; and where bridges and sluices have allowed, making possible inland navigation: there are records of oral reminiscences of heavy goods being brought to **Tockington** by boat. Because land drainage creates wealth, landowners and farmers jostled for control of it; because it costs money, they squabbled over how expenditure should be apportioned and freeloaders thwarted. Land drainage required co-operation and co-ordination, so it had political implications.

One local history approach to land drainage might be to identify, date and attribute various works of drainage, river improvement, warth-making and sea defence. Another approach might be legal, starting with early documentary references to walls and drainage works, examining the roles of the monasteries, the landowners and the hundred and manor courts. The origins of commissioners of sewers would be worth investigating. Then comes Henry VIII's Bill of Sewers (1531), which made existing commissioners of sewers permanent and systematised their inspections, courts and fines. Legislation under Edward VI, Elizabeth I and Anne shows that land drainage was a continuing issue, at any rate to parliament, most of whose members were landowners. Inclosures could involve land drainage works, eg at **Kenn** moor. Sometimes the only solution to get over uncooperative minorities or ransom-demanders was local private legislation, eg the **Congresbury** Drainage Act 1819. The Land Drainage Act 1930 converted the commissioners of sewers into internal drainage boards within 47 catchments, one of which was the Bristol Avon. In 1948 came river boards, as much to do with fishing as with land drainage. Then the Water Resources Act 1963 which created 27 river authorities, and the Water Act 1973 which transferred their functions to regional water authorities such as Wessex and, after the

privatisation of water and sewerage services, the Environment Agency.

Another approach might be to look at how land drainage has changed the landscape, in terms of settlements and agricultural practices, the look, feel and atmosphere of a place. The historian could look at how developers have been forced to deal with surface water running off buildings and hard surfaces (the ponds at **UWE, Abbey Wood, Aztec West** and elsewhere in the Frome catchment are not ornamental or architects' sops to wildlife), and how local authorities have permitted or even encouraged housebuilding on land that only a few years ago would have been considered foolhardy to build on. The internationally-minded local historian could compare land drainage

What did the Romans make of Bath?

Visits to the Roman baths at Bath by torchlight are now on offer (More under EVENTS above). Surviving buildings and archaeological finds give a good idea of what the Romans (or their British forced labour?) built, and we can infer how some of the buildings were used. Guides include Patricia Southern, *The story of Roman Bath* (Amberley 2012), which draws heavily, to put it mildly, on Barry Cunliffe, *Roman Bath discovered* (Routledge 1971, 1984, The History Press 2000), but adds wider political, economic, social and military context. (It is also straightforward, is not too technical, and contains a witty pun.) But how did the Romans perceive the place? What did they think and feel about it? In the absence of explicit texts, archaeologists can only speculate, and many have done so, with more imagination than evidence. But drawing on what the Romans left and wrote about elsewhere, more cautious mortals can make some guesses.

Public baths were ubiquitous and important in Roman urban life. They were large buildings, prominent, and many were lavishly decorated inside. Most towns of any size had at least one set. They were places for social activity, a combination of leisure

practices in Gloucestershire and Somerset with those of 17th century Holland and ancient Egypt. Were the pharaohs and their workforces more informed, observant, ingenious, community-minded, efficient and effective than their north Somerset counterparts? (Not that one would wish to stereotype, or to regard Hannah More's perception of farmers as typical). As climate change causes sea levels to rise and extremes of weather to become more frequent, we can expect land drainage to become of topical as well as historical interest. The ecological and cost-benefit issues are ones our elected representatives will have to face, and some local history would be a good starting point.

centre, public house, beauty salon, exercise yard and meeting rooms. Open to most of the public, they were frequented by people across a range of social standings. So for britanno-roman Bath to have public baths was not unusual, surprising or any big deal. Nor was Aquae Sulis unique in having a supply of naturally hot water: whilst most town baths would have been wood-fired, several places in volcanic Italy, eg in the villa riviera of Baiae west of Naples, tapped natural hot springs. So for Bath to have natural hot baths, remarkable in chilly Britain, was in the context of the empire no big deal. Local coal was a curiosity bonus.

That the Romans put 'Aquae' into the name they gave the place shows they regarded its waters as its distinguishing feature, which may mean that there was not much else there. They did not name the place after the local tribe, market, military camp or river. They also included in the place name the name of a local deity, not the emperor or whoever paid for the bath and temple buildings. In Roman religion every river and spring had its own deity, so there was nothing unusual about linking the waters with a local goddess. By and large the Romans tolerated foreign religions: abroad,

as part of a strategy of not giving the locals cause for revolt; and at home, because Roman society, especially Rome itself and the army, was cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic. Even Christianity, persecuted under Nero and Domitian, was eventually adopted by Constantine and became the imperial equivalent of the established church. One explanation for this unexpected toleration was that Roman religion was based on fear that the gods, all of them, needed to be propitiated and kept on side by ritual observances, including animal sacrifices. Dionysus, The Great Mother, Osiris, Isis, Mithras and Sul were not Roman or even Italian gods, but centuries before Pascal's wager it was considered prudent to propitiate them, just in case. So Sul got the usual recognition, hence the temple with its pediment and supposed image of a gorgon's head.

One supposition that can be rejected is that Bath's Roman baths were about public health, or that they were early precursors of Victorian baths and washhouses. The Romans pioneered sewers, but they bathed for personal comfort and for socialising. They would not have understood John Wesley's linking of cleanliness with godliness any more than they would have

understood his gospel of justification by faith or his preference for Arminianism over Calvinism. Roman baths, warm, steamy and frequented by lots of people, with crude sanitation, even less scientific knowledge, and no idea about disinfectants, must have incubated, nurtured and spread every virus and bacterium going. Crack architects and engineers, the Romans were lousy scientists.

The religious connections of the baths may well have been helped along by cure stories (the one about itchy pigs came centuries later): good for attracting health tourists, just as later religious houses attracted pilgrims, the gullible and the desperate with alternative facts about the healing powers of their saint's relics. (And not just religious establishments: Bristol's **Hotwell** was advertised as curing just about everything, and peddlers of patent medicines, cosmetics and alternative therapies continue the tradition.) The curse tablets, similar to those found at **Uley, Caerleon** and elsewhere, suggest that Sul could also be asked to wreak vengeance on thieves and get your stolen bath towel back. Bicycles had not then been invented.

CAN YOU HELP?

Richard Loxton seeks information about the **Hospital of St John Redciff**, Bristol. RL says he has Dr Joseph Betty's ALHA booklet *The Medieval friaries, hospitals & chapelries of Bristol*, and some information about the hospital and the sources at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/som/vol2/pp160-161>, but would like to know more. 'I am still researching but was John Farcey or Farceyn who founded the hospital a member of the Furneaux family? This is not central to any of my theories but the Furneaux referred to had connection to properties subsequently held by other families with links to the hospital and land it held which is now part of **Compton Martin**.' richardloxton861@gmail.com

Dave Hardill writes: '**Yate and District Heritage Centre** are proposing to undertake, with help from local history groups and museums, **a project on the history of chapels in South Gloucestershire** leading to a possible exhibition and/or flyer and/or updated booklet. It would be great if your group would like to be involved; please contact David Hardill at DHardill@yateheritage.co.uk or ring 01454-862200. It is hoped to have an inaugural

meeting to discuss in August, though your group could be involved by email only if that is preferable for you.’

From the July newsletter for the *South Gloucestershire in the First World War Project: 2014 – 2018*: Many of the **South Gloucestershire war memorials** now have further information about their names on the new War Memorial website. These can be accessed at the war memorial itself by using the QR code or by going directly to:

<https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/war-memorials> More volunteers are required for the research process; if anyone would like to join the team, contact Cherry Hubbard to discover which memorials still need work. Even if you have produced a book, or information is already on your website, it still needs to be extracted and put onto the project template before being uploaded to the project website. Cherry Hubbard, Project Engagement Officer South Gloucestershire Council, Cherry.hubbard@southglos.gov.uk MOB: 07966745516