



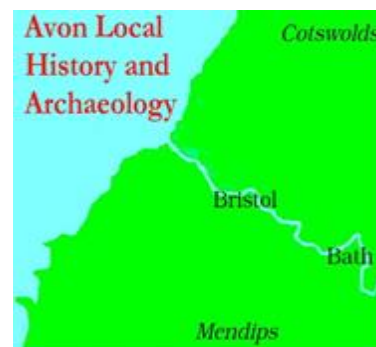
Hannah More gives thought to her lottery numbers

AVON LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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e-update 31 July 2021

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ALHA ITEMS

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Individual ALHA member and volunteer Mike Leigh has started work on a new edition of ALHA's *Walks, Talks & Visits* list, previously edited by the late Sandy Tebbutt, with a view to distributing it to ALHA group and society members in April 2022. Investigations continue regarding the proposal to update and replace ALHA's website. The publications team continues work on a new ALHA booklet. A small amount of spare cash has been added to investment.

DOWNEND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Farewell to longstanding ALHA member **Downend Local History Society**, which has closed after 50 years. 'The recent 18 months has been difficult for us,' writes *Downend LHS*

treasurer Charles Ashley. 'Our membership has progressively declined over recent years and now our long-serving chairman John Thompson has been forced to retire. We have been unable to attract a replacement and so have now sadly admitted that we have reached the end of the road.' **Downend** was one of the founder members of ALHA, and supplied officers of ALHA including Peris Jones, who chaired the ALHA committee for several years. Its publications in the 1980s and 1990s, including those by Peris and by Reg Howlett, were excellent and still of use.

EVENTS AND SOURCES

BIRNBECK PIER, WESTON-SUPER-MARE – A BRIEF OVERVIEW



taken in March 2021
by Eddie R Hancock

It was in the 1840s the first signs of a Pier, a bridge to the Island, appeared. A suspension bridge akin to the Clifton Gorge bridge with twin stone towers. Financial issues meant it was never completed. The elements played their part in its removal, and they have continued through time as they are doing right now.

In 1864 the foundation stone was laid for what was the beginnings of what we find today, but not all of it. Only structures today that we see from 5 June 1867 the day it opened are the Pier Masters cottage, the turnstiles and gates, toll lodge and the bridge to the island.

That was from the pen of Eugenius Birch, Britain's most prolific designer of Piers, writes Peter Lander, Archivist for the **Birnbeck Regeneration Trust**.

Why build a Pier away from the centre of town is a fair enough question. Easily understood once explained. It's the range of the tide. But its location also created further issues.

The Pier has gone through many changes:

- 15 June 1867 - the first of the ferries, *Heather Belle*, opened a service connecting **Birnbeck** to Cardiff. Services ran to both sides of the estuary, being disrupted only by the war years. The final service, on 19 October 1979, was a cruise provided by the *Balmoral*.

- A place of entertainment.
- A secret site for weapon developments.
- A motor museum and banquets in Victorian attire.
- Launching of acting careers via amateur dramatics.
- Featured on TV and films; most recently, twice in 2021.
- Transit point for many celebrities.
- The historical home of the RNLI. An organisation that will hopefully soon return.

For further information: <https://birnbeckregenerationtrust.org.uk/book-a-talk>

ANDY KING

The death is reported of Andy King, retired senior curator of social, industrial and maritime history at M Shed, and previously in charge of **Bristol** Industrial Museum. AK's works included conservation of the tugs *Mayflower* and *John King*, the fireboat *Pyronaut*, the city docks cranes, the harbour railway and its rolling stock, and the Lodekka. He helped produce the community play *Up the Feeder, down the Mouth* (2001). His written work on the harbourside area included *The port of Bristol* (Tempus 2003). AK enthused volunteers and helped and collaborated with many others. His joint publications included *Bristol's Floating Harbour: the first 200 years* (Redcliffe, 2009) with Peter Malpass.

RHUBARB TAVERN, BARTON HILL, BRISTOL

David Evans draws attention to Bristol planning application 21/00322/f, The Rhubarb Tavern, Queen Anne Road, Barton Hill. 'While the pub has all the appearance of a late Victorian (c1880) building, it is in fact an Elizabethan garden lodge, similar to the Red Lodge in Park Row. The building is locally listed and was once listed. Although the building is noted in Leach's recent volume [Roger Leech, *The town house in medieval and early modern Bristol*, English Heritage 2014, 242-245; photographs of rear elevation and 1672 chimneypiece at p.244 Ed.], no detailed survey as yet exists.

'The current application does not include a heritage statement referring to council Policy DM31 which includes a requirement for planning applications to be accompanied by a Heritage Statement that addresses the impact of the proposed development on heritage assets, including archaeological features. Currently and quite rightly the current objection lies around the amenity value of the pub, but wonder, if you have not already done so you and your members might wish to comment on its heritage value.'



Comments can be made online via <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/comment-on-a-planning-application>

KNOW YOUR PLACE – GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Kate Maisey writes: Explore Your Neighbourhood with Know Your Place is an online training session offered by Gloucestershire Archives, **11 August 2021, 1pm to 2pm**, free. Booking essential, via <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/gloucestershire-archives-events/gloucestershire-archives-events/training-events-explore-your-neighbourhood-with-know-your-place/>

VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY - SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Latest from the Gloucestershire County History Trust is at <https://www.vchglosacademy.org/vol14.html> . As a by-product of the work on **Sodbury**, transcriptions include: **Sodbury area** Tudor wills; **Acton Turville** probate inventories; **Little Sodbury** probate inventories; **Old Sodbury** probate inventories; **Little Sodbury** Window Tax Assessment 1762.

The Trust's latest newsletter is at <https://www.vchglosacademy.org/newsletters/VCHnews15.pdf>, and includes items on a rector of **Dodington**, and on an antiquary active in **West Littleton**.

BRISTOL LIBRARIES

Kate Murray writes: We now have 23 libraries across Bristol open for browsing, borrowing and computer use, as well as many of our other usual services, and we're working on getting the other four libraries open as soon as we can. We are looking forward to welcoming you back to our libraries, and want to reassure you that libraries will continue to offer a number of measures to keep staff and customers safe. Our opening hours have returned to usual and are listed below.

Please do not visit the library if:

- You've had coronavirus symptoms in the past 10 days
- a member of your household has had coronavirus symptoms in the past 10 days
- you've been in contact with someone who's had coronavirus symptoms in the past 10 days

There will still be safety measures in place, including screens at staff desks to minimise contact between staff and our customers. Our staff will continue to wear masks and remain at a distance where possible. Hand sanitiser units will also be available for you to use in key locations around each library. Visitors are still encouraged to wear masks to protect library staff and other library users, but there will be no restrictions on time spent in the library, and no requirement to book computers in advance.

NHS Test and Trace

If you visit a library, you can still check in using the QR code and the NHS COVID-19 app (you will find these displayed at the entrances of the libraries) or use the simple form available to give us your contact details, to support NHS Test and Trace. Any contact information you give us will be kept securely and destroyed after 21 days.

Library Events and Activities

Library events are hoped to restart after the school summer holidays from September.

Library Room Hire

All library meeting rooms remain closed and you will not be able to book a library as a venue until 6 September 2021. We will be accepting advance bookings from **16 August**. This may be subject to change at short notice if guidance about the local public health situation changes.

Central Library

Bristol Central Library is open for browsing, computers, some study space and photocopying, and the children's library is fully open. All our services are currently on the ground floor as **our first floor remains temporarily closed for accessibility and evacuation work. The public toilets and accessible toilet remain closed.**

Library opening hours

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Central	9.30-5	9.30-7	9.30-5	9.30-7	9.30-5	10-5	1-5
Bedminster	10-7	Closed	10-7	10-5	10-5	10-5	Closed
Bishopston	1-7	Closed	11-5	11-5	11-5	11-5	Closed
Bishopsworth	10-5	Closed	11-5	Closed	10-5	11-5	Closed
Clifton	10-2	1-5	Closed	1-5	10-2	1-5	Closed
Filwood	11-5	Closed	11-5	Closed	11-5	10-2	Closed
Fishponds	10-5	10-5	Closed	11-7	10-5	10-5	Closed
Henbury	11-5	Closed	11-7	Closed	11-5	11-5	Closed
Henleaze	11-5	11-5	1-7	11-5	1-7	10-5	Closed
Hillfields	Closed	10-5	10-5	Closed	Closed	11-5	Closed
Horfield	11-5	11-5	Closed	10-5	Closed	10-5	Closed
Junction 3	1-7	11-5	1-7	Closed	11-5	10-5	Closed
Knowle	1-5	11-5	Closed	11-7	11-5	10-5	Closed
Marksbury Rd	Closed	10-5	Closed	10-5	Closed	11-5	Closed
Redland	Closed	11-5	11-7	11-5	11-5	11-5	Closed
St George	3-7	10-2	1-5	10-2	1-5	11-5	Closed
Sea Mills	10-2	10-2	1-5	1-5	10-3	10-3	Closed
Shirehampton	1-5	Closed	1-5	10-2	1-5	10-2	Closed
Southmead	Closed	11-5	11-5	Closed	1-5	11-5	Closed
Stockwood	1-5	1-5	10-2	1-5	10-2	11-5	Closed
Westbury	2-7	11-4	11-4	11-4	11-4	11-4	Closed
Whitchurch	1-5	10-2	1-5	Closed	1-5	10-2	Closed
Wick Road	Closed	10-5	10-5	Closed	10-5	11-5	Closed

Library amnesty

We are holding an amnesty from **19 July to 31 October** for all library items that have been “lost” at home. Please return anything you have to your nearest Bristol Library and we will waive any outstanding charges and any replacement charges. The amnesty is for Bristol items only or borrowed through Bristol libraries.

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 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 – [bristollibraries](https://www.instagram.com/bristollibraries)

Further information can be found on our website www.bristol.gov.uk/libraries-archives/coronavirus-library-information

BRISTOL ARCHIVES

Bristol Archives searchroom is open **Tuesdays – Fridays, 9.30am – 4.30pm**. Visits must be pre-booked. <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives/>

GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHIVES

New visiting arrangements are now in force, including an Archives and Records Association archives card, booking an appointment, ordering documents online (the catalogue is

integrated with the appointment system and 3 days notice is required), and a limit of 10 documents. More at <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/plan-your-visit/preparing-to-visit/>

BATH ARCHIVES

Opening as stated in ALHA e-update 31 May 2021, but there is a limit of one person per visit, and you must register with address and other contact details:

<https://www.batharchives.co.uk/visit>

SOMERSET HERITAGE CENTRE

Opening as previously stated. Booking required, and a South West Heritage readers ticket, for which evidence of identity is required: <https://swheritage.org.uk/somerset-archives/visit/somerset-heritage-centre/>

BRIDGING HISTORIES

'Bridging Histories is an initiative of the We Are Bristol History Commission and University of Bristol, together with 91 Ways [the number refers to the number of languages spoken in Bristol – Ed.], Bristol Archives, the Legacy Steering Group, One Bristol Curriculum, Rising Arts Agency, University of the West of England, Bristol Beacon, Bristol Mayor's Office, London Mayor's Office and many more partners in Bristol and beyond. We are funded by the ESRC Impact Accelerator Awards, UKRI Citizen Science, London Mayor's Office and University of Bristol.' Members of the public are invited to participate in one or more of a number of strands, which include family history, street history, and public monuments. More at <https://www.bridginghistories.com/>

WINTERBOURNE MEDIEVAL BARN

Louise Harrison writes: **Winterbourne Medieval Barn** has fully re-opened after a very long closure owing to building work and then Covid-19. The Trust has a range of community events planned for the summer, with skills workshops, live performances, talks, nature walks, tours, and activities for young children. Full details can be found on the Winterbourne Barn website: www.winterbournebarn.org.uk

For the moment everything has to be pre-booked online, and will be managed in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines.

We look forward to welcoming many new visitors in the coming months, as well as our old friends who have not yet seen the transformation of the site following the building work of 2019-20. For most activities there is free parking on site, but for the biggest events we are pleased to be partnering with Winterbourne Academy to provide parking spaces at the school on Winterbourne High Street.

THE SWINGING SIXTIES

The Future is Here – the Swinging Sixties is an exhibition designed by Stella Man for the Ken Stradling Collection, 48 Park Row, Bristol, BS1 5LH. It will run to **Saturday 25 September, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 11.30 - 3pm.** 'Explore the futuristic atmosphere of the swinging sixties and the designs by women and men who devoted their lives to creating new and lively products to delight people in their homes. The 1960s were exciting times. The range of goods for the British home interior blossomed, emerging from the restrictions left over from the Second World War and embracing new materials and ideas. Ken Stradling was instrumental in bringing the latest contemporary designs in domestic ware and furniture to the Bristol Guild to inspire customers throughout the region,' it says. Entry £5.00 for up to two people/Free to Friends of the KSC.

Because of Covid-19 there is a booking system to limit the number of visitors in the gallery at any one time to six. Please book your tickets here through Art Tickets (no booking fees) <https://the-ken-stradling-collection.arttickets.org.uk>

NEW WORK

“IN GOOD SPIRITS”: A THIRD LIFE FOR AMELIA EDWARDS

Amelia Ann Blandford Edwards (1831-92) lived the last 28 years of her life in **Westbury on Trym in Bristol**, died in **Weston-super-Mare** and is buried beneath an obelisk in **Henbury** churchyard. She is known primarily as an explorer and egyptologist; her lesbian relationships have attracted interest in certain quarters.

Miss Edwards’s contribution to the tradition of the English ghost story has been relatively neglected. Not entirely, since *The Phantom Coach* (1864) has appeared in several anthologies, including *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories* (Michael Cox and RA Gilbert eds, 1986) and can also be found online: <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/PhanCoac.shtml> Like all her tales, it is told in the first person by a male narrator, in this case a young newly-wed anxious to return to his beloved but benighted on a wintry moor, who takes refuge with a scholarly recluse of somewhat unusual interests.



Another good story is *In the Confessional*, in which an English traveller comes upon a pretty village on the German-Swiss frontier. He meets a strange priest and dines at the local inn. Finding the innkeeper also to be the village clock repairer, with hundreds of timepieces on his premises, and being a light sleeper, the narrator decides to seek lodging elsewhere. He had better have endured a sleepless night.

Edwards does not stint on background detail, and this often adds something, artistically. The long description of snowbound moorland provides a suitable setting for the arrival of *The Phantom Coach*, whilst her account of the chocolate-box Swiss village and the slightly comic innkeeper point up all the more vividly the horror *In the Confessional*.

On occasion, however, the tales are too “padded.” In *Was it an Illusion?* an Inspector of Schools arrives at a remote northern village, where he stays with the squire, an old Oxford friend. The squire and his guest eventually uncover something suitably dreadful, but they have to clear much lakeside greenery to reach it; the reader must traverse a similar, if verbal, jungle. *The Four-Fifteen Express* likewise takes a long time to reach its (agreeably nasty) destination.

The Story of Salome, which has nothing to do with the biblical temptress, is by contrast essentially a love story. Edwards here breaks one of MR James’s cardinal rules: that the spirit should be malevolent. Perhaps for this reason, and despite some nice description of Venice in autumn, the story does not entirely work.

Miss Edwards is not in a league with MR James (1862-1936) or H Russell Wakefield (1888-1964), and receives no mention in HP Lovecraft’s *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1927) or in a recent survey of *Literary Bristol* (Marie Mulvey-Roberts ed, 2015). [Nor in David Carroll, *A literary tour of Gloucestershire and Bristol*, Alan Sutton 1994. Ed.] She is however worthy of a high place in the second division of the *genre* and her stories have been collected. The hard copy from Amazon may be prohibitively expensive, but they also

advertise a kindle edition, and there are good renditions of several of the tales on You Tube. Maybe a revival is under way.

BOOKS AND OTHER ITEMS NOTICED

Cynthia Stiles, *Celebrating Bristol*, Amberley 2021, £15.99 or £14.39,
<https://www.amberley-books.com/celebrating-bristol.html>

Richard Latham, *Bristol City memories; the subs bench interviews*, Redcliffe 2021, colour, hb, £20, but £10 + £4 p&p via <http://www.bristolcitymemories.co.uk/> . Interviews with former players and others. More at <https://www.bcfco.uk/news/book-recalls-city-memories/> and <https://redcliffepress.co.uk/product/bristol-city-memories-the-subs-bench-interviews/>

Richard Kennett and Jane Hack, *Bristol and transatlantic slavery: origins, impact and legacy, a textbook for schools*. 'The project is a collaboration between teachers, academics and museum staff. We have all worked hard to do something very different. We tell a wider and deeper narrative of transatlantic slavery, across time and place. We've used objects from Bristol Museums and images from Bristol Archives to illustrate Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: origins, impact and legacy.

'We've been open to feedback from many people throughout (and we received a lot!). We hope this book might improve the teaching, and the understanding, of this key part of the story of our city and our country,' says <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/blog/teaching-bristols-history-transatlantic-slavery-textbook/>

The book is available from Bristol Museum's online shop at £11.95 at <https://shop.bristolmuseums.org.uk/collections/bristol-books/products/bristol-and-transatlantic-slavery-origins-impact-and-legacy> Schools and colleges can buy multiple copies at a special rate by contacting the museum's learning team at <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/contact-learning/>

Jan Broadway, *Wives of the Berkeleys: families and marriage in tudor and stuart England*, Xmera 2021, £8 including p&p. <http://www.xmera.co.uk/wives.html> . A counterbalance to John Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys* (Smyth 1567-1641) which was mostly about blokes. A witty title, up there with John Aubrey's reminiscences about Henry VIII's matrimonials and Suetonius's minibiographies of Calpurnia, Livia, Vipsania, Julia, Caesonia, Messalina, Agrippina, et ceterae.

Peggy Stembridge, 'John Warwell — the mystery man of Goldney grotto,' *GT* [Gardens Trust] *News*, Summer 2021, 22-25.

COMMENTARY AND RESPONSES

Monasteries as multinationals, and roads and bridges

Chris Willmore writes: In the last ALHA newsletter [No.167] you reported on Joe Bettey's comparison between monasteries and multinationals. A point well made. One feature of these extensive business interests had an impact that was not recovered from until the mid 1800s. Because their landholdings were widespread, and they had an interest in being able to gather in produce from those estates, monasteries had a considerable interest in road, and particularly bridge maintenance. With the ending of the monasteries, and dispersal of their landholdings, across the country, the funder of bridge repairs disappeared. And the burden

was disproportionate on the parishes who were expected to pick up the road repair bill. Bridges fell into disrepair and this became a serious problem.

By the Commonwealth, a century later, the position with bridge and road repair was so bad, the Commonwealth introduced highways legislation to impose repair obligations. It was swept away at the restoration, in a bonfire of legislation (watch out for a similar baby and bath water in the post Brexit bonfire of regulation) - and we only managed to get back to a reasonable system of area wide responsibility for road and bridge repair with the 1835 Highways Act. So, it took nigh on 300 years to get back to a comprehensive system of highway responsibility providing an infrastructure free at the point of use. (Turnpikes of course were an interim solution, with repair paid for by users, but at best only covered a fraction of roads and bridges).

Colston images and delayed action

John Moore writes: After reading the article about the Colston statue in the ALHA newsletter, a small note caught my eye while looking through Latimer: *The Annals of Bristol* - Volume 3 – 19th century.

P. 378: “At the annual Colston festival, in November (1860), a proposal was started by Mr G W Franklyn , MP (mayor in 1841-42) for the erection in the city of a statue of the great philanthropist whose birth was then being celebrated. The expense was estimated at £500, towards which Mr Franklyn and another citizen offered £50 each. The proposition fell stillborn.”

So the physical actions of the 2021 crowds could be said to have been matched by the silent consensus of 1860.

Also on page 378: “In 1870, during the restoration of St Mary Redcliff, it was suggested that the great window in the north transept might be appropriately filled with a stained glass in memory of Colston. The proposal was received with coldness, but a sufficient sum was eventually obtained to carry it into effect.”

So do we presume that where the city fathers stood aside, the church stepped in 10 years later. Who will step up in 2031? We all know that ‘History repeats itself’.

Local History and National History

John Stevens writes: My purpose is to consider whether local historians need national history, and *vice versa*.

Historians of the nation can, depending on their specialist area, sometimes make do without the local. It is not necessary, for example, to a discussion of Henry VIII’s religious aims (“Catholicism without the Pope” or something more complex?). On the other hand, a masterpiece of largely local history like Eamon Duffy’s *Stripping of the Altars* (1992) – a book containing numerous **Bristol** references, not least to the former church of St Ewen – would make little sense without the author’s thorough grounding, displayed throughout the work, in the religious policies of Henry and his three successors on the throne.

It is pertinent to consider how each of us comes to local history. Some may arrive from the bottom up; the family historian, having exhausted his/her own kin (and possibly having exhausted numerous librarians and curators as well) might progress to other families, and thence to the history of the relevant locality. Others may start from the top and work down; an enthusiasm for, say, Victorian high politics might lead one to wonder what the electors of **Bristol** thought about it all and how they voted.

Either approach has its perils. To focus on rioting in **Bristol**, from the bridge riots of 1793 to the reform riots of 1831, may lead the historically uninitiated to see the city as uniquely disturbed, even dysfunctional. A valuable corrective may be found in the picture, drawn from many localities, of a wild and violent nation provided by Sir Ian Gilmour’s *Riot*,

Risings and Revolution (1992), subtitled “Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England”. Again, it is a commonplace in some circles that only 8% of the population were entitled to vote in **Bristol** before the Reform Act of 1832. Strictly, this is correct but it ignores the fact that 8% of the entire population represented probably one in three adult males, one of the more democratic borough electorates at the time.

The “top-down” approach is also risky. The politics of the 1840s and 1850s revolve, for some political historians, around the Conservative Party’s splitting into protectionist and free trade factions following Corn Law repeal in 1846. This is fine as far as it goes but the high political historian venturing into **Bristol** waters should cast aside pre-conceptions and recognise that the splits in **Bristol** Conservatism did not always mirror those in the national party, and also the complex of economic and political interests arising from the declining sugar trade and often stretching across party lines.

Bristol Water

The Competition and Markets Authority has decided to investigate the acquisition, reportedly for £400 million, of Bristol Water Holdings UK Ltd, with its subsidiary Bristol Water plc, by Pennon Group plc. Pennon owns South West Water, the water and sewerage company that serves Devon and Cornwall: <https://waterbriefing.org/home/regulation-and-legislation/item/18476-competition-and-markets-authority-launches-pennon-group-plc-bristol-water-holdings-uk-ltd-merger-inquiry>, but nothing yet on the CMA website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/competition-and-markets-authority>

Some historians trace Bristol Water’s beginning to 1696, with Richard Bury’s plan to pipe water from the Avon at **Hanham** into **Barton Hill, Bristol**, but when **Bristol** corporation acquired the venture in 1782, it let the works lapse, so there is no continuity between the 1696 venture and the present-day company. That was not formed until 1846. Its founders included Francis Fry, George Thomas the soap manufacturer, and William Budd.

From the outset it was a private company – contrast what happened in places like Birmingham and Plymouth, where the corporation took control and ownership of the water supply. The company’s three founders exemplify the motives that prompted the formation of the company: entrepreneurial investment, philanthropy, and a desire to improve the public health. The context was concern about diseases and death in the town, and the policy of the Society of Merchant Venturers to limit its water supplies to particular areas such as **Clifton** and its clientele. Bristol Water’s commencement was one of the most important events in the public health history of our area.

Over time the company expanded both its sources of supply and the geographical area and the number of people it served. By the 1970s it was respected for its competence, the quality and reliability of its supplies, and its managerial and operational efficiency. Its private company status protected it from the risks to which it would have been subject had it been a local authority undertaking vulnerable to the priorities and prejudices of political parties. When regional water authorities were created in 1974, Bristol Water continued as an independent company, but made arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination with Wessex Water Authority over activities such as billing, done from **Nailsea** and from 2001 by a joint company.

In 2006 Bristol Water was acquired by Agbar, a Spanish company which was part of the French company Suez, which in 2011 sold half, and control, to a Canadian infrastructure investor company, Capstone. In 2016 Capstone was bought by iCon, another infrastructure investor with interests in Canada, the USA and Europe. Icon is now reported to have sold Bristol Water to Pennon, a public company most of whose shares are owned by financial institutions. Pennon’s subsidiary South West Water, privatised in 1989, struggles even during wet summers to satisfy demand for water from the influx of holidaymakers and second home

owners in Devon and Cornwall. From being a local pioneer in water engineering and public health and an important local public institution, Bristol Water has become an asset, to be traded amongst multinational investors seeking financial advantage. The CMA investigation will be confined to questions of public interest from the competition point of view only.

Bristol pounds

The issuers of Bristol pounds have announced that they will not be usable after 30 September 2021: <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-pound-end-heres-what-5605703>. Before then, holders can exchange them for pounds sterling, or they can ask that their value be donated to Feeding Bristol, a charity dealing with food poverty in the city: <https://www.feedingbristol.org/about-1> . Some people might hold on to them as souvenirs, or because they have forgotten about them, in which case their value will be applied to a contactless card venture with similar aims that the organisers plan to launch to replace the Bristol pounds: <https://bristolpound.org/> .

So ends another episode in Bristol's financial history. Bristol pounds were first issued in 2012. They were a form of token, the long history of whose use in **Bristol** was kicked around in a piece in ALHA e-update 31 October 2019. Bristol pounds were devised, as in Totnes and elsewhere, to try to keep money within the locality. The idea was that Bristol pounds would be used mostly by individuals and small businesses and their local supply chains, but Firstbus accepted them, as did **Bristol** city council.

A history of Bristol pounds has yet to be written. It would be a useful, if difficult, project. How and why they began might be simple to find out and document, but how their use developed, who used them, what for, and how much, might be harder to ascertain without access to the company's records, which probably remain commercially confidential. One question is whether



Bristol pounds achieved their professed aim, to keep in Bristol profit created in Bristol; or whether, irrespective of their monetary effect, they brought home to people the fact that local small businesses depend for their survival on continued support from local people. Why Bristol pounds have ended might be easier to explain. One of the effects of the virus, in **Bristol** as elsewhere, was to discourage people from using coin and paper money, hence the big increase in electronic and contactless payments. As many of the participants were small businesses such as cafes and larger businesses such as public transport, both of which have been severely affected by the pandemic, it is not surprising that use declined. Bristol pounds [image from the company's website] ceased to circulate as paper money in August 2020. They were then converted into accounts with a credit union in **Bristol**. A move to a contactless form of payment is now planned.

Local history people may hope that the company's records get deposited in Bristol Archives so that questions that local history people might want to ask can be researched and answered. There could be problems with that. The company will no doubt want to keep hold of its records for its own purposes, at least until legal limitation periods for claims have expired. Making the records available to the public could raise data protection issues. Is the fact that a business or an individual was a user personal information which ought not to be disclosed or otherwise processed without the consent of the data subject? As with school records, long-term embargoes look likely.

QUOTE

That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But, it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it and think how different its course would have been. Pause, you who read this, and think for a long moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of that first link on that memorable day.

Charles Dickens, *Great expectations*, 1860-1861