

# The Regional Historian

The Newsletter of the Regional History Centre  
at the University of the West of England, Bristol

Issue No 7

Summer 2001

## EDITORIAL

This bumper edition of the *Regional Historian* is four pages longer than usual, and even then it was difficult to fit everything in, so my apologies if anything really important was left out. The number of notices, conference reports and reviews all testify to the healthy condition of historical study of and within our region.

In line with the stronger emphasis now placed on research by the Regional History Centre, mentioned in our last editorial, we have included more historical analysis and debate which I hope may stimulate others to send us contributions. Launching a new series, 'documents in context', Peter Fleming's analysis of a 15<sup>th</sup> century Bristol ordinance concerning Aliens in Bristol gives us fascinating insights into the underlying agenda for this document in which he speculates on who these people might have been and why they were unwelcome. There are uncomfortable parallels here with our own intolerance towards asylum seekers and economic migrants today. Equally, Steve Poole's discussion of a nineteenth century engraving of the Reform dinner, held on Brandon Hill in 1832, warns us against seeing this as an objective record of the event, but rather regards it as reflection of the political and cultural position of the artist and his patrons.

Finally, *The Regional Historian* has never been afraid of provoking debate about public history. I hope we will get some responses to Madge Dresser's call to allow historians and archivists time to research their subjects properly and to be more wary of the current buzz-words 'accessibility' and 'inclusivity' which drive the release of public funds today.

### Contents

* Madge Dresser,	Opening Out the Archive	p 2
* June Hannam,	The Blathwayte Diaries	p 4
* John Penny,	King Coals' Final Victim	p 5
* Peter Fleming,	Document in Context	p 10
* Kath Holden,	Web News	p 14
* Steve Poole,	Picture in Focus	p 17
* Book, Play and Journal Reviews		p 19
* Conference Reports		p 27
* Regional News, Conferences and Events		p 31
* Local History Society Programmes		p 36

This edition of *The Regional Historian* is edited by Kath Holden

## OPENING OUT THE ARCHIVE: FUNDING HISTORY FOR THE WIDER PUBLIC

Madge Dresser

'Accessibility' is the button increasingly pressured academics, curators and archivists must press if they wish to get their hands on public funds. Is this a 'good thing'? Or is it just one more step in the dumbing down of our national culture?

When this call to disseminate academic research is delivered to museums, archives and universities along with redundancy notices, and dirigiste calls to rationalize working practices, it can engender bitterness and resistance. Curators whose workloads have been increased by the loss of specialist colleagues will not be inclined to search out new audiences to inspire. Librarians exhausted by servicing expanding computer facilities in a building where there are few new books and where the lifts don't work simply won't have the energy to guide a diffident young pupil attempting a school project on history.

Some government officers (at both local and central levels) tend to see curators and librarians; archivists and historians as privileged expensive creatures who have had it cushy for far too long. Well, for the most part they *are* privileged in terms of their 'cultural capital'. It *is* true that their undoubted education and expertise should be more widely shared, especially as new technology opens up undreamed of opportunities for them to do so. But for the most part, those expected to 'deliver' the new inclusivity are professionals who love their subject and want the time and resources to 'do' it *properly*. Leaving aside the fact that many of these professionals, particularly in the lower grades, are dreadfully poorly paid—especially in the libraries—they are also increasingly *time-poor*. Even in the universities, increasing numbers of PhD's are on temporary contracts and could make more by working as managers at Macdonald's.

Now asking such conscientious people to be less inward-looking in more and more exacting circumstances can be destructively counter-productive. I recently heard one historian complain truculently that the only way to get one's local history research financed these days was to 'do something on ethnic minorities'. In truth, the history of ethnic minorities in Britain is for the most part notoriously under-researched so his remark was a stupidly misguided attempt to scapegoat. Yet his rant contained a half-truth. Certain groups can become 'fashionable' to fund, for limited periods, before being returned to financial obscurity, as they always are once their novelty value has ceased to excite official interest. Inclusivity is a many splendoured thing.

First rate research needs time and repose. The best history is that which neither plays safe or tows a line. The best history is nuanced and embraces the contradictions and countercurrents of human relations. It is this sort of history which must inform the more popular materials currently so desired by funding bodies. Central and Local authorities need to ensure libraries, archivists and local historians are properly supported so they can research thoroughly without having to make a spurious case that they can do twice the job with half the staff,. It is for the most part a nonsense to think that corporate sponsors are going to jump in to fund a project once Government has 'primed the pump' with a capital grant.

History fests, such as the event in Bristol this Spring which attracted some 15,000 people, attests to the popularity of local history. Certainly there is much expertise and

commitment on the part of amateur local researchers and family historians which professionals ignore at their peril. Yet uninformed by academic rigour, popular history can descend into nostalgia or insularity. Good scholarship is not the enemy of accessibility, it is essential to it.

Of course, many people still feel diffident about using a library or visiting a museum. For their part, curators, librarians and their colleagues in the universities and archives need to be more welcoming and user-friendly. Many provincial museums, including Bristol, are pioneering imaginative new schemes to broaden their appeal in an increasingly visual age. It is not easy negotiating the path between stuffy elitism, and fatuous oversimplification. Sadly, many funding bodies are better at funding hardware and buildings than guides and actors who can make exhibitions come alive for new audiences. How many museums have taken the trouble, as Bristol did, to interview their own front-of-house and cleaning staff for their views on a then forthcoming exhibition on Bristol and the slave trade. There, in response to some of the concerns expressed by front-of-house staff, the Museum hired in two experienced local people, (including an Afro-Caribbean community activist) for two training sessions to help address the staff's concerns. The result was not only a happier and more welcoming front of house staff presence, but some useful suggestions from them to management about the staging of the exhibition.

There are some other exciting innovative things happening here and there. The British Academy has just funded a scheme to excavate slave plantations in the British Caribbean (including the Pinney plantation in Nevis) which includes provision for a small team of black British school kids of Caribbean origin to visit the digs and for Caribbean archivists to have some of their documents conserved. Yet, generally speaking, it's much easier for historians to get a year to write a book, than a year to devise a web site or write popular materials or make a television programme. The financing of Glen Jordan's innovative history resource centre for the mixed-race community of Cardiff's Tiger Bay has been up until recently, a real struggle. The new technology is providing really exciting possibilities for disseminating historical material. But that material has to be of the highest quality. Accessibility and inclusivity must be built on solid foundations.

#### **The Bristol Historical Resources CD**

The Bristol Historical Resources CD is a significant ensemble of easily accessed historical resources. This collection of primary sources, visual material and statistical information provides a major contribution for all interested in Bristol's history. This is no narrow approach as its range of historical topics and material is extensive, with political, social, cultural and economic history, all receiving close attention. Furthermore, the BHR CD has been carefully designed as a practical aid which will be invaluable to researchers, teachers and students alike. The BHR CD is explicitly designed to encourage awareness and conscious application of methodology, the implications of this approach to history will extend far beyond the immediate boundaries of the city. In particular, the CD demonstrates how computers, and Information Technology in general, can be used to achieve historical analysis, though here the subject is clearly defined by its local, urban and regional context. The emphasis on Bristol and its region is clearly demonstrated by the numerous and varied essays provided by its contributors **To order a copy contact The Regional History Centre or visit our web page <http://historycd.uwe.ac.uk/>**

## FILMING FOR THE HISTORY TRAIL: THE BLATHWAYT DIARIES AND SUFFRAGETTES IN BATHEASTON

June Hannam

When I was asked to take part in a television programme on the Blathwayt family of Batheaston and their involvement in the suffragette movement I had no idea how much work this would entail. First of all I had to think differently about how to get their story across in a visual medium, in a way that would capture the attention of non history specialists but at the same time make some valid points about researching suffrage history. Fortunately I was able to use some stunning locations – Dyrham Park where the diaries of Mary and Emily Blathwayt, which form the connecting thread throughout the programme, are kept; Eagle House in Batheaston where the family lived and the Colston Hall where Bristol suffragettes hid in the organ and disrupted a Cabinet member's meeting in 1909. The suffragette movement was always full of incident and so it was relatively easy to develop a narrative structure of events which could form a dramatic and coherent story.

So far so good, but then came the process of filming. This took four long days, from 8.30 in the morning until well after 6pm and entailed rushing round the countryside with three very young men always talking into mobile phones. When I asked what to wear I was told to be 'streamlined- smart but casual'. Filming could be extremely tedious, with hours spent getting camera angles and lighting right while I endlessly turned over pages of photographs. The director also had to be reminded that it was time to stop and eat! Speaking to the camera was terrifying to begin with, especially when I had to repeat what I'd already said several times. After a while though I became less cautious and began to sound a bit over the top as I pointed towards Eagle House and exclaimed that I could almost see Annie Kenney in the window!

The highlight for me, however, was meeting two women in their eighties who, when Eagle House was sold, had rescued photographs of suffragettes taken by Col. Linley Blathwayt. They had also picked up a number of metal plaques used to mark trees planted by suffragettes in the grounds of the house. It was fascinating to see these unique sources and the two sisters, who had known the Blathwayts, kept us spellbound all afternoon with stories of the village and of the family.

Overall it was hard work – and sometimes boring – but I gained a valuable insight into how programmes are made. I now look out for shots of feet walking, 'noddies' and 'long views' when I'm watching television and I have a greater sympathy with talking heads who in the past have seemed a bit too 'effusive'. I do think that this has given me an opportunity to communicate my research to a wider audience who will know very little about women's history. I hope, if nothing else, that it will make people more aware of the rich variety of political activities that women engaged in even in the smallest of provincial villages.

**Note: This TV series, to be broadcast next year, will feature six half hour documentaries on less familiar aspects of the region's historical past. Those taking part also include Peter Fleming and Keith Dockray, who will be exploring the importance of the Battle of Nibley Green, (see p 28) and Steve Poole, whose contribution focuses on the execution of three incendiaries at the scene of their crime at Kenn, Somerset in 1830.**

**KING COAL'S FINAL VICTIM**  
**A reconstruction of the events surrounding the**  
**last fatal accident in a Bristol colliery – August 1932**

**John Penny**

It often comes as a surprise to people when they first visit Bristol to be told that between the First and Second World Wars coal mining was still being carried out within the city boundary, and that it was not until the early 1960's that the last mine in adjoining South Gloucestershire finally closed. Today little can be seen of these enterprises, but the fact remains that between 1952 and 1963 there was an experimental drift mine operating at Harry Stoke, within a kilometer of the University of the West of England's Coldharbour Lane Campus, while the abandoned shaft of Deep Pit, at 410 yards once reputed to have been the deepest mine in the country, is located at Clay Hill, just 1½ kilometers S.S.E. of the St.Matthias Campus.

Although coal extraction has been undertaken locally since at least 1223, when it is mentioned in the Great Pipe Roll, the area's full potential was not fully realised until the second half of the nineteenth century when Handel Cossham, a local self-taught geologist with considerable business acumen, undertook a systematic investigation of the geological structure of the northern edge of the Kingswood anticline. His discovery of hitherto unknown coal seams, and his subsequent success in reaching them through deep shafts, brought him a personal fortune and extended the life of some of the existing coal mines in inner Bristol well into the twentieth century.

The collieries of North Bristol and South Gloucestershire reached their peak in 1879, when there were 21 at work, but by the turn of the century the national contraction in the demand for coal had caused production in the region to decrease, bringing the number of mines in operation down to 11, while after World War One loss of export markets and competition from fuel oil ensured that by 1920 only five remained. Of these, the underground interconnected Speedwell and Deep Pit, the winding shafts of which were only about 600 metres apart and known collectively as the Kingswood Collieries, were the only ones in North Bristol, the other three being located over the border in South Gloucestershire. By 1950, however, all the deep mines were gone, the first to cease production being Hanham, which closed in 1926, and Deep Pit where winding had stopped by 1930. They were followed in 1936 by Speedwell and the Parkfield colliery, near Pucklechurch, and finally Frog Lane, at Coalpit Heath, which carried on until 1949 when rising water levels caused by the abandonment of Parkfield finally forced the pumps at the last deep mine in the area to give up the unequal struggle.

It was, however, during the final years of working at Speedwell Colliery that an act of bravery took place which at the time touched the hearts of thousands of local people. The drama started at about 8 p.m. on the night of Sunday August 21<sup>st</sup> 1932, when Jack Emery, a colliery fireman who was the overman of the mine's No.5 District, descended the 380 yard deep shaft to check things over before the men of the night shift came in, this being the first inspection made in the district since the pit had finished work on the Friday. He is then known to have met up with Isaac Kendall and Frank Plummer at the station at about 10.45 p.m., where he instructed them to clear up any dirt in the district's

bottom level, before moving up the coal face to the top level, clearing away anything else they might find as they went.

All proceeded normally for the next four hours, and the two men had completed work in the lower level by 3 a.m., but shortly after the situation began to change dramatically, for as they moved on to a point about 20 yards up the face, which was only about two and a half feet in height, they began to feel the effects of bad air. Unfortunately, unlike the fireman, they normally had no need of a flame safety lamp so were unaware of what was affecting them until they became so impaired by the gas that they in fact proceeded up the face before finally collapsing in the waste against the rib of coal which formed the higher side of the district. Kendall and Plummer were now trapped in a disused working in the west heading, more than a mile from the bottom of the pit shaft.

Jack Emery was next seen at about 4.30 a.m. on the Monday morning going in towards No.5 district to start his inspection prior to the arrival of the day shift, but his movements in the 5½ hour period after about 11 p.m. when he left his two colleagues, remain a mystery to this day. Nevertheless, it was subsequently ascertained that when Emery re-entered the district and found the men collapsed he picked up the unconscious Kendall and carried him several yards to safety, then started back for Plummer, but before reaching the gas laden area again collapsed and died.

The day-shift fireman came down the pit at 6 a.m. that morning, but upon failing to meet his night-shift opposite number, was told by the other night-shift fireman that Emery, Kendall and Plummer were still at their workplace. Alerted to a possible problem, a number of the day-shift workers made straight for the No.5 District, arriving there at about 7 a.m., and upon hearing groaning coming from behind the higher side pack, immediately began pulling stones out of the pack. Fortunately, it was not long before they reached Isaac Kendall, who was quickly dragged out, revived, brought to the surface, and after further treatment, taken to his home nearby in Speedwell.

While the frantic work to revive Kendall was still going on underground, word was sent to the colliery manager, Daniel Jones, who immediately put the emergency plan into operation, and prepared to descend into the pit to lead the search for the two men still missing. Nevertheless, it was the day-shift fireman who was the next person to reach No.5 District, arriving there about 8 a.m., and although by great efforts he succeeded in recovering Jack Emery's body, which was soon brought to the surface, it was quite impossible to reach Frank Plummer who was trapped, but whose groans could clearly be heard.

By 10.45 a.m. the local doctor, the young Cyril Bernard who had answered the emergency call to the mine, Daniel Jones, Alderman Charles Gill, the local Miner's Agent and Mr.F.M.Sidall, His Majesty's Inspector of Mines for the area, had all penetrated deep into the workings, some 2850 feet from the surface. The gas, however, proved to be an almost impassable barrier, the pit's ventilation being too weak to remove it, giving Jones no choice but to send an urgent message to the Somerset Mines Rescue Centre at Midsomer Norton, from where Mr.Senior and his assistant rushed with equipment, including five sets of Siebe-Gorman & Co.'s "Proto" compressed oxygen breathing apparatus, arriving at Speedwell at about 3 p.m.

Three members of the rescue team Wesley Wilcox, Frederick Woodruff and Bert Needs, immediately donned the gas fighting helmets, and although they forced their way far enough into the working to hear Plummer breathing, were still unable to reach him as a fall of coal and rock some six yards long had occurred.

The three of them then worked frantically to dig through the rubble and eventually succeeded in pulling the trapped man clear some ten hours after he had first become entombed. He was then removed to a safe place where Mr.Senior and his assistant, with several others, pumped oxygen into him from a reviving apparatus and as Plummer's body was very cold after his long exposure, his rescuers also rubbed him until his respiration was working properly. The rescue operation finally came to an end at about 4.45 p.m. when Frank Plummer's inert body was brought to the surface and rushed by St.John Ambulance to the Bristol General Hospital, where it was late evening before he regained consciousness. Following an analysis, it was later discovered that there was only 8.1 per cent oxygen in the samples of air taken in the waste, and at the time it was considered a wonder that the man ever recovered.

Alderman Gill subsequently received a large number of congratulatory comments on Jack Emery's bravery, a man who left behind a widow, Eliza Jane, and three children, and when he visited Frank Plummer in hospital the sick man especially asked him to express to the grieving relatives his heartfelt gratitude for the fireman's actions. Plummer, a Bedminster man with a wife and five children, was still seriously ill and Gill reported that he would for some time be dependent on money received under the Workman's Compensation Act, but that would amount to only a half of his normal weekly wage. As for Emery's family, Gill proposed to set up a special fund to cover their needs.



**Crowds outside Speedwell Colliery August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1932**

Not surprisingly, Jack Emery's funeral was a magnificent affair and thousands of people gathered for about an hour and a half before the cortege left the family home at 43 Chester Park Road, Fishponds, with crowds lining both sides of Lodge Causeway. The nearby Morley Congregational Chapel, where Emery regularly attended, was full to overflowing and when the funeral procession eventually moved down over the Causeway about 50 miners, in fact most of the night shift with which the man had worked, followed behind. Large crowds were also present at Greenbank Cemetery where the coffin was covered in floral tributes.



**Jack Emery's cortege outside his home at 43 Chester Park Road, Fishponds.**

At the Inquest, which was held on September 15<sup>th</sup> before the Mr.A.E.Baker, the Bristol Coroner, it was announced that 43 year old John William Emery had died as a result of the inhalation of gas, probably fire damp, and on behalf of the colliery owners, Mr.F.E. Metcalfe added that "Emery had lost his life through trying to rescue two men whose lives were saved. If he had not gone into a place where he courted death to start to get out one of the men he would probably have been alive today. The management feel his loss very deeply".

Alderman Gill was also given the opportunity to praise the part played in the rescue by Mr.E.Wherrett, while the official report on the accident published later concluded by saying that great courage and perseverance had been shown by those engaged in the work of rescue, and that the treatment of the survivors had been so well carried out as to earn the commendation from the doctor who attended the men. Nevertheless, it was felt that there were a number of features in the accident which called for comment.

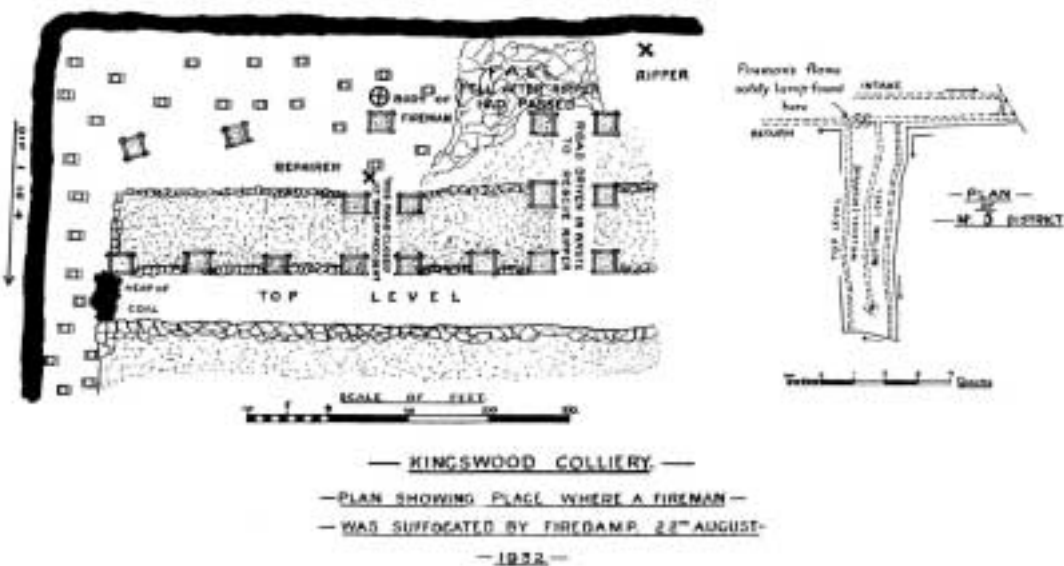
"The deceased fireman passed the men in the district without making any report of his inspection, while the evidence at the inquest made it quite clear that he had not visited the men during the shift, and also that it was a common practice of his not to visit them during the shift. With regard to the first count there is evidence that the fireman did go into the bottom level of the district before he sent the two men in, but what he did beyond



this is not known. For the second, it is quite certain that he made no inspection of the places during the shift. If he had done so any time before about 3.0 a.m., he would have certainly found the gas and saved his own life”.

“The seam is not a gassy one, but gas is found occasionally in small quantities. On the Friday before the accident the men had been short of tubs and had built up their coal at the road head in such a manner as practically to block up the road, which was the airway, so that although the fan was running, steadily over the week-end, the air in the higher side of the district must have been almost dead. This, combined with the fact that the normal air current, was only sufficient to keep the places clear with a little to spare, fully accounts for the presence of the gas and also for the failure of the air current to disperse the gas after the accident”.

“The building up of the coal face so as to block up the airway shows a want of discipline among the face men, and the neglect to send for the rescue apparatus and for the manager immediately the accident was discovered, shows a want of initiative among those actually on the spot at the time. The accident was discovered about 8 a.m., but it was not until the manager arrived in the district about three hours later that he learnt anything about the accident, and at once sent for the apparatus and the rescue men”.



Although there certainly was evidence of sloppy practice having crept into the operation of the mine, this was probably due to the fact that it was obvious to everybody concerned that the management was considering ending production at Speedwell. It therefore came as no surprise when it was announced that the colliery would close for good on December 24<sup>th</sup>, Daniel Jones stating the reason being difficulties in penetrating to a new seam, following the discovery of serious faults in the Kingswood Great Vein. It had been hoped that two new tunnels might be driven down to the new seam below the existing workings, but it this was found to be impossible.

In spite of the fact that the mine seemed to be a lost cause, Alderman Charles Gill and the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Alderman J.T.Wise, embarked on an ambitious rescue plan and persuaded the directors of the East Bristol Collieries Ltd. to relent. Consequently, operations were resumed on December 27<sup>th</sup> and the £3000 subsequently raised by public

subscription enabled at least 50 per cent of the miners to return to work. Nevertheless, although a new shaft was driven and a new seam worked, the financial problems continued and the period January 1933 to January 1936 saw a loss of £20,000. This, coupled with a demand by the remaining 310 miners for more wages, was the final nail in Speedwell's coffin and sadly on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1936 the "Bristol Evening Post" reported that the pit manager, David Sharp, had been in consultation with the Inspector of Mines for the area, and that all production in the last remaining coal mine in Bristol had ceased.

Today little can be seen at the site of the old Speedwell Colliery to indicate that coal was ever mined there, but hopefully the monumental inscriptions to be found on Grave 39, Plot Green RR, in nearby Greenbank Cemetery will remain for many years to remind passers by of the terrible toll in human life that for many years was taken for granted as a price that had to be paid to fuel industry and transport, and to heat the nation's homes.



#### Sources

*Annual Report of the Inspector of Mines 1936*: Public Record Office POWE 7/66.

*Bristol Evening Post* and *Western Daily Press*: August, September and December 1932 and April 1936.

Cossons, Neil & Buchanan, Angus, *Industrial Archaeology of the Bristol Region*, (Newton Abbot, 1969).

Cornwell, John, *Collieries of Kingswood and South Gloucestershire*, (Cowbridge,

**Urn on Jack Emery's grave: "With sympathy from his fellow workers at Speedwell Colliery".**

## DOCUMENTS IN CONTEXT

### *A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY BRISTOL ORDINANCE CONCERNING ALIENS*

**Peter Fleming**

This is the first in an occasional series in which a document relating to the history of Bristol and its region is reproduced and discussed. The aim is to provide discussion points, not to provide the last word on the issues raised. If you have a document that you would like to discuss - or would like discussed - please let us know.

## ***A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY BRISTOL ORDINANCE CONCERNING ALIENS***

*Item, It is agreed, ordained and assented by Philip Mede, Mayor of Bristol, William Spencer, Sheriff, and all the Common Council of the said town at the council of Bristol held in the Guildhall of the said town the last day of May, in the year of the reign of King Edward the fourth after the conquest the second [1462], that for as much that divers and many of the crafts and occupations of weavers daily receive and put in occupation of the said craft strangers, aliens and others not born under the king's obeisance, and for their singular profit ...divers merchants and others to bring in to this town of Bristol people of divers countries not born under the king's obeisance but rebellious, which have been sold to them as it were heathen people, and through the continuance thereof in default of correction it hath caused that such strangers and aliens beeth greatly multiplied and increased within the town, and that the king's liege people born within this said town and other parties of this his realm be vagrants and unoccupied, and may not have their labour for their living, that therefor from this day forward no manner person of the craft of weavers within this town of Bristol set or put any such stranger or alien to work in the occupation of the said craft of weavers, nor in anything thereto belonging or pertaining [penalty of 6s. 8d. for infringements of the ordinance]. Provided always and except that this act stretch not to any person or persons that was or were made apprentice to any burghess within this said town of Bristol before the feast of Christmas last passed, and at that time they being in their apprenticeship.*

### ***Great Red Book of Bristol, ff. 130v-131r (spelling modernised)***

By 1462 England had experienced three years of civil strife between the Yorkist and Lancastrian branches of the extended royal family - the first part of what would become known as the 'Wars of the Roses'. Edward IV emerged triumphant from this struggle. Bristol at this time was among England's leading provincial port towns, with the production and export of cloth and the import of wine the most obvious foundations of its economy. Bristol's trade had suffered a serious blow with the loss of English possessions in France at the end of the Hundred Years' War. By 1453 all but Calais had returned to French rule. Most serious for Bristol, English territorial losses included the Gascon vineyards. South-west France was also an important market for Bristol cloth and a major exporter of woad, essential to the town's dyeing industry. The loss of France brought about a major short-term dislocation in Bristol's overseas trade. Trade with France continued, but it was now on the basis of dealing with an unfriendly power, rather than with subjects of the English king. By 1462 the great expansion in trade with Spain and Portugal was still in the future. Bristol's textile trade was also put under pressure by a mid-century trade slump and by increasing competition from London entrepreneurs and rural clothiers. While Bristol continued to be a significant centre of cloth dyeing and the buying and selling of textiles, its days as a major producer of raw cloth were numbered.

### **The Document**

This is one of the town ordinances recorded in The Great Red Book, so named from the red leather cover with which it was originally bound. The book was primarily a record of ordinances (town bye-laws) made by the mayor and common council, the governing body of later medieval Bristol. The book is part of the collection of the Bristol Record

Office. It has been published, in several volumes, by the Bristol Record Society, and the extract is based on the text as edited for the Society.

### **Interpretation**

The ordinance notes that weavers had been employing 'strangers, aliens and others not born under the king's obeisance' to such an extent that native Bristolians found themselves unemployed. While 'strangers' could refer to anyone who was not a burgher of Bristol, 'aliens' is more specific, and its meaning is amplified by the words following it: the target is clearly those who were not subject to the king of England - foreigners, in other words. Who such people might be was not always clear. Twenty-two years earlier, the Irish could be included as liable for a tax on aliens living in England, despite the king's claim to lordship over Ireland. Lordship was also claimed over Scotland and France, but Scots and French (all French, after 1453) were consistently treated as aliens: the crucial point here being loyalty - unless they could demonstrate otherwise, it was assumed that natives of lands ruled over by foreign kings were loyal to them, rather than to the king of England. However, aliens could acquire letters of denization, whereby they formally transferred their loyalty. Wales was well on its way to the assimilation into the English state achieved under Henry VIII in the 1530s, despite the revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and there seems to have been no question of the Welsh being treated as aliens, although the anti-Welsh legislation revived during the revolt remained on the statute book.

These aliens, we are told, were being brought over by merchants, for their own profit. The phrase, 'which have been sold to them as it were heathen people', suggests that these aliens were being bought and sold like slaves. While Bristol's involvement in the African slave trade to any significant degree was at least a century in the future, merchants trading with the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean would have been familiar with slavery. Whatever was meant by this phrase, we should probably be wrong to interpret it as meaning that Bristol merchants bought heathen slaves for sale as cheap labour to the weavers. Rather, it is probably a rhetorical device to express concern and disapproval of the practice of importing foreign labour. Given that this labour had to be transported, and that the merchants and others conveying it had to be recompensed, we are probably not discussing cheap, unskilled labour, of which there was an abundance in and around Bristol. However, even if skilled, once in Bristol they may have constituted a more malleable, less expensive source of skilled labour than their English counterparts in the same way that some modern migrant workers have to endure poorer conditions of employment than those with equal or inferior qualifications from within the host community. Alternatively, if these are experienced clothworkers, perhaps the issue here is not that they were undercutting native labour, but that they had superior skills to the natives, and were therefore in greater demand.

Where might these aliens have come from? They are described as 'rebellious', indicating that their allegiance is not just to another sovereign authority, but to one contested by the king of England. As indicated above, this actually covers most of England's neighbours, so doesn't help us too much in answering this question. If they were skilled clothworkers, one obvious possibility is that they came from Flanders, under the lordship of the duke of Burgundy. Flanders was the leading centre of cloth production in northern Europe, and the British Isles has played host to several waves of Flemings seeking enhanced economic opportunities or shelter from political turmoil or religious persecution. Flanders' economic decline had set in the fourteenth century, but Flemish migrants had

appeared in the British Isles long before that. Flemings were settled in Pembrokeshire, for example, as part of the Anglo-Norman conquest of South Wales. Fifteenth-century London had a significant Flemish community which was often the target of xenophobic violence. Bristol may have had its own equivalent, although there was little Bristol trade with Flanders, but more research is needed to clarify this point. Bristol certainly had significant Irish and Welsh communities. The aliens alluded to in the document are unlikely to be Welsh, but they might be Irish. Those Irish living outside the areas controlled by the English in Ireland - those literally living 'beyond the pale' - were often referred to as the 'rebel' Irish, irrespective of individuals' actual attitudes towards English rule, and so the use of the word 'rebellious' could be relevant here. Bristol burgesses of Irish origin suffered official discrimination in the 1450s, and this ordinance might perhaps be seen as another aspect of this policy. On the other hand, could 'rebellious' have been applied to the French, perhaps even to the Burgundians (nominally the duke of Burgundy owed allegiance to the king of France - which the king of England claimed to be)? The Burgundians' renunciation of their alliance with the English in the 1430s engendered bitter recriminations and violence against Flemings living in England.

As the product of a policy designed to protect the jobs of Bristolians, this document may be seen as the companion to an ordinance of the previous year. The 1461 ordinance of weavers observed that many weavers put their wives, daughters and maidservants to work at their looms, or hired them out to work at others', by the which many and divers of the king's liege people, likely men to do the king service in his wars and in the defence of this his land, and sufficiently learned in the said craft, go vagrant and unoccupied and may not have their labour to their living.

Therefore no weaver was to employ his daughters or maidservants in this capacity, or hire them out, and while weavers' wives could continue in their employment, subsequent generations of women were barred from practising the craft. Any weaver caught breaking this ordinance was to be fined 6s. 8d. for each offence. The king is unlikely to have depended overmuch on weavers to fight his wars, and the real problem which this ordinance sought to address was of course unemployment in the textile industry. The urge to protect male employment by discriminating against women has a long history.

The ordinance ends with the qualification that aliens who had already embarked upon apprenticeships under Bristol masters could continue in them. Once again, this clause does not suggest that the immigrants were all unskilled cheap labour, since apprenticeships cost money, and represented a considerable investment in training. A successful apprenticeship was also a route into full citizenship as a burgess. This was far from automatic, but through apprenticeship it was at least theoretically possible for aliens to enter the mainstream of elite Bristol society.

This 1462 ordinance is a fascinating document that raises many questions. Some of the issues it raises have resonance today, when foreign competition for British jobs, 'economic migrants' and the smuggling of asylum seekers are major news items.

### Further Reading:

*The Great Red Book of Bristol* was edited by E.W.W. Veale and published as vols. 2, 4, 8 & 16 of the Bristol Record Society. The best published study of medieval Bristol merchants remains E M Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers* (1st edn 1954, 2nd edn Methuen, London, 1967), which also contains useful essays on the cloth trade. D H Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (University of California Press, 1991) has an informative first chapter. For an illustrated introduction to later medieval Bristol, see P Fleming & K Costello, *Discovering Cabot's Bristol: Life in the Medieval and Tudor Town* (Redcliffe, Bristol, 1997). A good introduction to aliens in fifteenth-century England is provided by R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI* (Ernest Benn, London, 1981), chap. 8.

## WEB NEWS

### Kath Holden

It is worthwhile checking the BBC web site for information about the history of our region. From the main BBC history page <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/index.shtml>, searches on Bristol, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire threw up a number of pages which may be of interest to local historians. While the quality and depth of information they contain is variable, there are some useful overviews and many include contemporary quotations and illustrations (good for school projects). Here is a selection:

- Try <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive/mapping/bristol.shtml> for an illustrated tour of the city of Bristol, which should help you find out more about the its tradition of commerce.
- The programme on the Bristol Riots in the Radio Four 'Making History' series is at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive/makinghistory/ser2p2.shtml>
- In the BBC oral history archive you will find seven recordings from Somerset and Gloucestershire taken from the millenium project 'The Century Speaks'. This project gathered together the personal recollections of the twentieth century from 6,000 individuals of all ages and from all walks of life from throughout the country. Go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/community/oral/index.shtml>
- Illustrations and quotations from contemporary accounts of the Black Death in Bristol can be found at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society\\_economy/society/welfare/blackdeath/black\\_3.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_economy/society/welfare/blackdeath/black_3.shtml)
- An essay on the Civil War in the West by Dr John Wroughton is at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/englishcivilwar/west\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/englishcivilwar/west_01.shtml)
- Detailed information about the history of the village of Nunney in Somerset from the 'Making History' series can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/archive/makinghistory/ser2p8.shtml#top>

If you require further information about BBD History contact their Learning Link advisor for the South West, Rosie Cawl, BBC Learning Link Advisor, 22 Mackworth Road, Porthcawl, Bridgend, CF36 5BP. Tel/fax 01656 783458  
Email: [rosie.mere@bbc.co.uk](mailto:rosie.mere@bbc.co.uk)

**Gloucestershire Local History Website at <http://home.freeuk.com/gloshistory/>**

New on this site are two sets of guidelines for Local History Societies on the use of computers. These notes have been compiled by members of the Computer Group of the Gloucestershire Local History Committee and take the form of a series of questions and answers. They are aimed particularly at local historians who are considering using a computer or have just bought one and are looking to put it to work to help them with their projects. However, many topics should be of interest to more experienced computer users. The group plan to produce additional guide-lines dealing in more detail with some of the topics.

Another project featured on the site is '**The Gloucestershire 2000 Photographic Archive**'. All photographers are warmly invited to join in the creation of a collection of digital images which will provide future generations with a vivid picture of Gloucestershire and its people in the year 2000 (or 2001). For more information go to <http://home.freeuk.net/ray.wilson/photo2000/>

**Leckhampton Local History Society**

Leckhampton local history society now have website giving details of their activities and publications. You can view it at <http://www.geocities.com/llhsg153/>

**National Register Of Archives**

If you don't know where the records you want are held, one of the most useful sites for local historians is the **National Register of Archives**. You can access this at <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nra/nra2.htm>

You can search for records by Corporate Name, Personal Name, Family Name and Place Name. So for example, under the corporate search option it is possible to find the location of records of organisations based in Bristol or with Bristol in their title. Most of the records listed also have links to the archive where they are held so that you can check opening hours and access arrangements.

☺ **DO YOU KNOW ABOUT** ☺

**Oxford University's Advanced Diploma in Local History via the Internet** run by the Department of Continuing Education. Further details are at [www.tall.ox.ac.uk/local](http://www.tall.ox.ac.uk/local) history or you can contact the internet Course Administrator, email: [ppcert@conted.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ppcert@conted.ox.ac.uk)

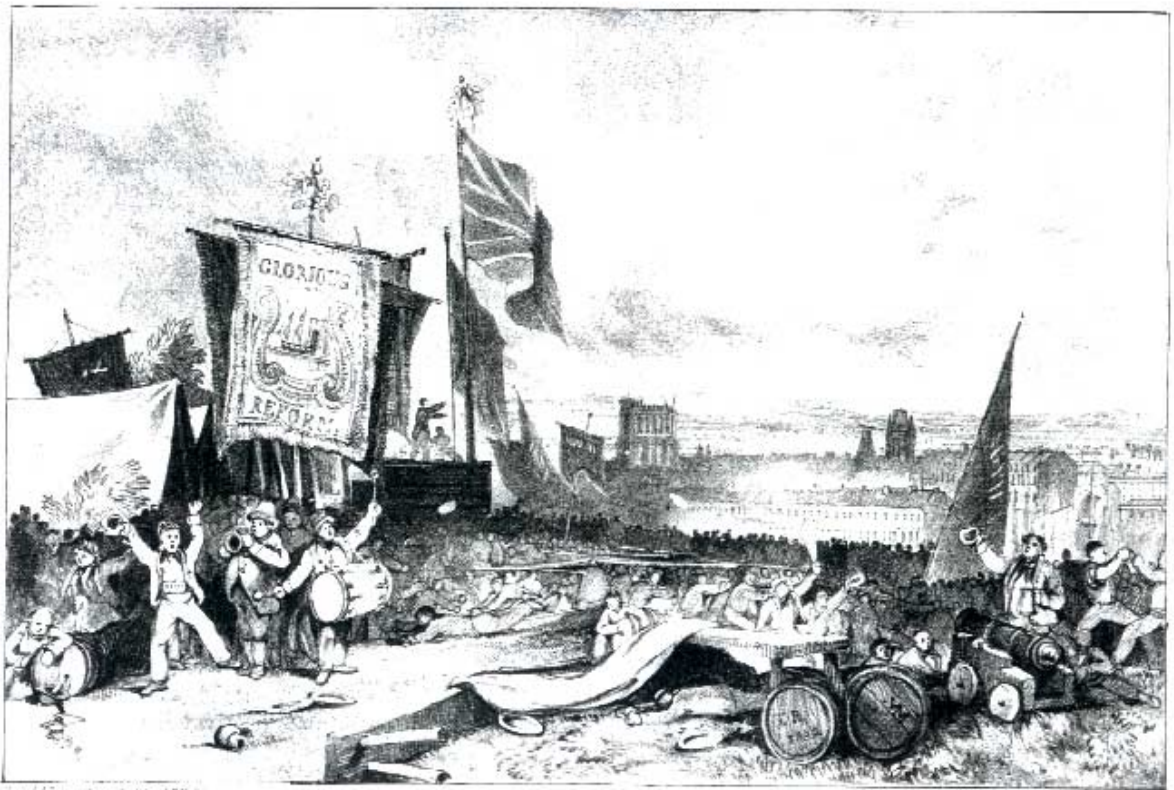
**The Arts And Humanities Data Service Online Guides**. You can find 'Digitising History: A Guide to Creating Digital Resources From Historical Documents' at [http://hds.essex.ac.uk/g2gp/digitising\\_history/index.asp](http://hds.essex.ac.uk/g2gp/digitising_history/index.asp)

**Please email details of your favourite local history web sites to** [Regional.History@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Regional.History@uwe.ac.uk)

STEVE POOLE

PICTURE IN FOCUS

W. J. Muller and T. L. S. Rowbotham,  
*The Grand Reform Dinner on Brandon Hill* (lithograph, 1832)



THE GREAT NATIONAL MEETING ON BRANDON HILL



## Picture in Focus:

W. J. Muller and T. L. S. Rowbotham,

*The Grand Reform Dinner on Brandon Hill* (lithograph, 1832)

Steve Poole

In the summer of 1832, Bristol artist William Muller followed an extensive series of paintings and sketches recording the previous year's Reform riots, with this interesting drawing of a Reform celebration. Unsurprisingly, it is not, given the contention surrounding the stormy passage of the Reform Act during 1832, a straightforward and objective record of events, but a representation of Muller's own political and cultural position – or rather, perhaps, the political and cultural position of his more conservative patrons.

What do we see in the print? A large crowd of Bristolians have gathered on the summit of Brandon Hill. Some tents have been erected and some benches and tables provided for food and drink. Somebody appears to be speaking from a central hustings surmounted by Union Jacks in the distance, but nobody seems to be listening. On the left a procession is marching towards us carrying a banner emblazoned with the slogan, 'Glorious Reform', topped by a small cap of liberty and a laurel wreath. At the front of the procession, a shouting man in ungainly posture and wearing a 'Reform' favour around his neck, waves his hat while two unrefined musicians make a racket on drum and trumpet. The 'musicians' look in different directions, suggesting neither one is paying very much attention to what the other is playing. To the left of them, a drunken man props himself up on a barrel and pours beer into his hat until it overflows onto the grass. In the centre a fight appears to be in progress. Men sprawl on the grass across overturned benches and tables, arms flail and punch and silver platters are being tossed into the air over their heads. To the right, more men lie under tables or clutch barrels of beer and one rough looking man, possibly a sailor, waves an enormous fitch of bacon in mock salute towards a man holding a beer tankard close to an abandoned cannon. To his right, two pugilists batter one another in an improptu boxing bout. Behind the chaos on the Hill, the once great city of Bristol, its mute churches dwarfed by the banners of Reform, slumbers under a troubled sky.

Conservative fears that the granting of the parliamentary franchise to 'respectable' middle class male householders would open the floodgates to plebeian democracy and mob rule were understandably strengthened by images like this one. Reform at Bristol, it would seem, was anything but 'Glorious'. In fact, Muller's image is very similar to his best-known picture of the previous year's Reform Riot itself, in which identikit drunken Bristolians either cavort or lie in an abandoned state beneath the statue of William III in the smoking ruins of Queen Square. Whilst the debauchery in the foreground of that picture was ironically presided over by the King who guaranteed British liberties by granting the Bill of rights in 1689, the debauchery on Brandon Hill is overlooked by the equally ironic emblem of the National flag.

So much for the sentiment behind the picture. But how accurately does it record actual events? The Reform Banquet on Brandon Hill did take place in August, 1832. Its organisers, middle class supporters of the victorious Whig candidates Protheroe and Baillie in the general election that followed the passing of the Reform Act, intended a

respectable and peaceful celebration. To ensure good order, they applied firstly for leave to hold the banquet at the new cattle market or on Durdham Down where fences could be erected and tickets checked as fee-paying guests arrived. But the Corporation, still smarting from the blame heaped upon it for the Autumn riots, refused permission. Sensing a political conspiracy, the reformers opted for Brandon Hill on the grounds that this was land granted in perpetuity to the people of Bristol in the sixteenth century and so beyond any right of the Corporation to deny them access.

Problems arose, however, when the organisers tried to restrict access themselves. Tickets were issued to 6,000 respectable tradesmen through local benefit societies at 2s 6d a head, tables set out on the grass overlooking the city, and 'barricadoes' erected around the perimeter to keep out the excluded. The enterprise was an unmitigated disaster. While the 6,000 ticket-holders waited patiently to be shown to their seats, a crowd of 14,000 uninvited extras overcame the barricadoes, occupied the ground and appropriated the feast. A party of grandees on the top two tables sat in sullen silence, it was reported in the press, while 'a number of men and women of a very low description took possession of the other tables and conducted themselves in a most disorderly manner. On the fourth or fifth table from the chairman, a woman was seen dancing...' Waiters were punched and a remonstrating tradesman was stabbed. In a masterstroke of dislocation, Protheroe made a hurried speech of thanks to the people around him, and abandoned his seat. Barrels of beer were rolled away towards the poor districts beside the Hotwells Road where a covered wagon full of puddings was also commandeered. The evening firework display went ahead as planned (without barricadoes) but it was no more successful. A number of respectable celebrants were systematically robbed and humiliated by the appearance of 'rabble' gangs who stole their hats and shoes.

Muller and Rowbotham's print, ostensibly a straightforward record of the 'Grand Reform Dinner on Brandon Hill', was intended as both an ironic comment on the disorder that took place on the day, and as a critical allegory of Reform sentiment generally. Conservative hostility to parliamentary reform was often expressed through linguistic play on the word 'reform'. The lower orders were certainly in need of reform, so the thinking ran, but it was their moral laxity rather than their voting rights that required attention. Equally problematic were their collective social habits. The meritocratic rhetoric of the middle classes was often deeply antagonistic to the whole ethos of urban crowds. In the crowd, individualism and reason were both lost, swallowed up in the bold anonymity and unpredictable madness of immoderate collective behaviour. So it was in the Reform riots of 1831, and so it was here on Brandon Hill in 1832

Looked upon from this perspective, the print allegorises collective plebeian coarseness with the apparent endorsement of their political allies, the parliamentary Whigs. Pugilism, drunkenness, disorder, wastefulness, theft, gluttony and even ungainliness are all vices on parade here, and the idea that such hoy-polloy should appropriate the banners of Reform, over-run the respectable celebrations of the middle classes and render impotent their platform speakers must have seemed to Muller too good an opportunity to overlook. Some care has been taken, it would seem, to emphasise the dangerous social combination of the crowd, particularly in the gestures of shared enterprise adopted by the tankard-swilling man on the right, and the man waving the flich of bacon, and by the corresponding figures of the drummer and his waving companion on the left. The wages of reform, Muller's powerful image argues, is social chaos, combination and the destruction of deference. What price Bristolian civic consensus now?

**Further reading:**

For more on Muller, including a useful survey of his Bristol Riots paintings, see F. Greenacre and S. Stoddard, *W. J. Muller, 1812-1845* (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, 1991). The best sources for the politics of the reform movement in Bristol are J. Caple, *The Bristol Riots of 1831 and Social Reform in Britain* (1990), and M. Harrison, *Crowds and History: Mass Phenomena in English Towns, 1790-1835* (1988), but see also S. Poole, 'To be a Bristolian: Civic identity and the social order, 1750-1850' in M. Dresser and P. Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (1996). For Brandon Hill and its symbolic political importance, see S. Poole, 'Till our liberties be secure: popular sovereignty and public space in Bristol, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 26, 1 (1999)

## BOOK AND PLAY REVIEWS

**Carl B Estabrook, *Urbane and rustic England: cultural ties and social spheres in the provinces 1660-1780*, Stanford University, 1999**

**Reviewed by Jonathan Harlow**

This book sets out to challenge the idea that provincial towns in the early modern period set the social and cultural tone of their rural hinterlands, and transmitted to them the values and life-styles developed in the urban renaissance. The case study is Bristol and its hinterland.

Unfortunately the author is short on background knowledge and understanding. A number of pre-existing practices or institutions are described as originating with or after the Restoration. His societies have little structure: the city is divided between burgesses and migrants, and the country between gentry in great houses and 'ordinary villagers'. On agricultural productivity and enclosure he does not seem even to appreciate just how ideosyncratic his views are. Central, and fatal, to his enterprise is his belief that 'of such-and-such' in formal descriptions was a statement of birthplace rather than of current abode. The large bibliography is misleading: the author is a hasty reader, and his citations or references should be not be taken at face value.

The methodology is dodgy. Having stated that 'all the villages within eleven miles of Bristol's own outer parishes are considered here to have been within the city's rural environs' he confines himself almost exclusively to the parishes which fell within the deanery of Bristol. This concentration is never acknowledged, let alone justified. And the author's use of the unexamined term 'villager' indicates that he is working within an implicit model of rusticity which excludes any urban influence by definition and so predetermines his conclusions.

Marriage registers are used to show how seldom countryfolk married townfolk; but the analysis is based on the undeclared assumption that the parties are 'of this parish' unless otherwise stated. The value of probate inventories is used to compare the economic status of villagers with burgesses although they omit real property holdings, and without appreciating that a husbandman's working assets would be turning over far more slowly, and so earning much less, than a similar value for an artisan or trader. Bonds are taken as evidence of mistrust and usury, rather than as the necessary evidence of a bare loan or backups to a mortgage. Deeds and wills are not used at all, though they would provide valuable evidence of relationships and property dealings across the town-country frontier.

There are a number of statistical tables but one can have little confidence in the data, after reading that 'the greatest number of rooms to be found in a single rural home at any time during the entire period was nine and the probate record gives evidence of only one dwelling that large in the villages near Bristol'. John Moore's *Goods & Chattels*, listed in the Bibliography, tabulates over 30 non-gentry dwellings with more than 9 rooms in the Frampton Cottrell area alone.

There is selective but telling evidence on the glass walls which had urban clients hiring contractors from other towns rather than the countryside, while country clients might hire craftsmen from the other side of Bristol rather than the city itself. But the economic linkages are mainly considered from the Bristol end. It is one thing to show that the immediate hinterland was rather marginal to Bristol's economy – but how important was Bristol to it? The arbitrary restriction to Bristol deanery unfortunately excludes all the market towns, such as Thornbury, which one would want to bring into this analysis.

Representations of town and country in the written word are perceptively discussed. The writings of Mr Dyer well bring out that pastoral view of the countryside which town dwellers might cherish in the early romantic period; and those of Mr Caleb Dickinson the calculations of business opportunity in catering to such views. But these observations cannot sustain the view that the countryside was experiencing, and resenting, widespread suburbanisation in the eighteenth century.

Overall, this book raises an interesting question and comes up with some interesting material. But the flimsy foundations of relevant knowledge and understanding of the period, the lines of enquiry neglected, the confinement of the statistical portions of the enquiry to a restricted set of records readily available in the Bristol Record Office; and above all the failure to consider the nature and valid uses of the records used – all these mean that a serious study is still wanted.

**Mary R Ravenhill and Margery M Rowe, *Early Devon Maps* (Friends of Devon's Archives Occasional Publications Number 1, 2000) ISBN 1 85522 728 2, pp 58.**

**Reviewed by Kay Taylor, UWE**

This attractively presented volume provides a selection of twenty-six maps of lands and estates in Devon, chosen from over sixty drawn before 1700. The maps included have been selected not only because they are visually attractive but also because they are representative of the county as a whole. The location map at the beginning of the work is an essential guide to the position of each individual map within the county.

Each map is clearly identified in the same concise format: date, reference, title, surveyor, scale, size, materials and orientation. It is interesting to note how infrequently maps were orientated to the north in the sixteenth century. There was no standard expression of scale either, that for Exeter Castle being given as thirty paces to one inch, and for Crediton as sixteen perches to one inch. The accompanying description and comment has been well researched in all cases.

The maps are organised chronologically and, while this shows the progression in the map-maker's art it has resulted in the maps for individual towns being spread throughout the book. The seven maps of Exeter are at numbers 2, 6, 9, 14, 15, 19 and 20, and the two for Bridestowe at numbers 4 and 16. This is not a problem in a book of this size. However, as this is issued as a precursor to a more comprehensive work on Devon maps,

due to be published sometime after 2002, it might be helpful to have regard to location as well as date when organising a larger volume of material.

Maps and plans are valuable tools for historical research, with early examples often providing the only records of the rural landscape of the period. This admirable book brings together documents from several repositories into one volume. Devon's historians are very lucky to have access to such a useful publication – which other counties could do well to emulate.

**John Rogan (ed.), *Bristol Cathedral: History and Architecture* (Tempus Publishing, Stroud and Charleston (USA), 2000) ISBN 0-7524-1482-8 £14.99 paperback**

**Reviewed by Peter Fleming**

This is the latest volume in Tempus Publishing's well-produced and moderately priced series on archaeology and medieval history. Bristol Cathedral cannot compete in size with the great English cathedrals, but it makes up for this in its architectural and historical interest. The cathedral began life as the church of the Abbey of St Augustine's, founded by Robert Fitzharding, later Lord Berkeley, in 1140. The abbey followed the Victorine order, taking its name from the reformed Augustinian house of St Victor in Paris, and its brothers were canons not, strictly speaking, monks. The black-clad canons were priests, distinguished from their secular colleagues by their commitment to communal living, bound by monastic vows. Nothing seems to have survived from the very first campaign of building, but the extraordinary Romanesque chapter house and gateway are testimony to the opulence and vision of the later twelfth-century work, which was probably sponsored in part by Henry II. By the early sixteenth century the abbey owned considerable estates in the west of England, and was in the middle of a complete rebuilding, which had resulted in the replacement of the Norman central tower, east end and cloisters by gothic structures of great architectural importance. St Augustine's rebuilders pioneered the 'hall church', with the side aisles of equal height to the choir, thereby creating a marvellous sense of space.

This all came to a sudden end with the Dissolution. The abbey was among the last of the religious houses to be dissolved, lasting out until 1539. Three years later, the old abbey complex became the site for Bristol's new cathedral. Many of the abbey's former possessions had been lost, and the new diocese was a strange creation, squeezed between Bath and Wells and the new diocese of Gloucester, with Dorset thrown in to provide sufficient income for the bishop, dean and chapter. Equally strange was the appearance of the cathedral building itself. The last abbots had been in the process of rebuilding the Norman nave: whatever was standing in 1539 was simply demolished, leaving a truncated 'half church', looking more like a college chapel than a cathedral. The cathedral remained in this state until the 1860s, when work began on G E Street's magnificent neo-gothic nave. Unlike some of his lesser contemporaries, Street was careful to strike a balance between slavish imitation (he was no mean scholar of gothic architecture) and inappropriate innovation, and the result is probably fairly close to what the completed abbey would have looked like had not Henry VIII intervened, albeit with typical Victorian flourishes. The story of Bristol Diocese has been unspectacular for the most part, but punctuated by episodes of drama and violence. The cathedral precinct suffered much during the Civil War and under the Republic, as did some of its inhabitants: in 1643 the lead was stripped from the bishop's palace as Bishop Howell's wife was giving birth inside, with the result that she is supposed to have died of exposure and the bishop and his children were left homeless. The eighteenth century saw nothing

to compare with this, or with what was to follow. The Reform Riot of 1831 left the precinct in ruins, and the cathedral itself only narrowly escaped serious damage. Students of architecture from Pugin to Pevsner have had cause to remark upon Bristol Cathedral's qualities, the latter concluding that its fourteenth-century work 'is superior to anything else built in England and indeed in Europe at the same time'. Despite this, Pugin's comment of 1833, that, 'this cathedral has been generally overlooked', remains largely true. Three years after Pugin's assessment, Britton's major study of the cathedral redeemed it somewhat from obscurity, but since then successors to this work have been few and far between.

This volume, edited by Canon Rogan, the cathedral archivist, is therefore particularly welcome. The first three chapters tell the story of the cathedral from its origins as the church of St Augustine's Abbey to the present. The history of the abbey is deftly explored by J H Bettey. The next two chapters, by John Rogan himself, take us through the sometimes troubled history of the cathedral proper. The rest of the contributions discuss the architectural history, with Catherine Oakes of the University of Bristol and Alan Rome, the cathedral architect, dealing with the fabric, and John Rogan once again on the monuments and glass. The division between 'history' and 'architecture' does not always work. There is a good deal of repetition, since it is impossible to divorce the structural development of the building from its social, economic and political contexts. Some of this is inevitable, but a little more careful editing would have removed unnecessary duplication of material: the sufferings of Bishop Howell's family, for example, are described first in Rogan's section on the cathedral's history and once more in Rome's chapter on the architecture. Some of the historical sections could also have benefited from redrafting, since there are too many passages which are inelegant or obscure. Also, the attempt to place the cathedral's story in the context of political events is not always successful. For example, consideration of the 1831 rioters' attack on the precinct is preceded by three pages describing the national reform campaign and the events leading up to the riot: this story is well known, and could have been adequately summarised in a paragraph.

Overall, however, this is a fine volume. The contributions are well-informed, and Canon Rogan's sympathetic attitude to the changing character of the spiritual functions of the abbey/cathedral throughout its history speak of an author who has regularly experienced the building as a place of worship, rather than as just an object of study, tourist destination or venue for secular gatherings.

**ACH Wilson, 'Up the Feeder, Down the 'Mouth and Back Again', Directed by Gareth Machin and Heather Williams**

**Reviewed by Madge Dresser**

My family and I have just spent a delightful evening at the Bristol Industrial museum watching the revised version of 'Up the Feeder', ACH Wilson's celebration of Bristol dock workers in the 1960's and 70's. The performances were engaging, but the main stars of this cunningly staged show were the Docks themselves and the tanker *Belize* who sailed into the audience's view at appropriate moments. This feat was made possible by the museum's construction. Originally a warehouse, its huge sliding doors opened out onto the docks enabling the audience inside a wonderful view. The dock's venerable steam train also made a gloriously noisy appearance. The spectacle of train and ship against the city skyline made for some truly magic moments.

But was spectacle achieved at the expense of history? Was this hugely popular show, attracting many from outside the usual select coterie of theatre goers, popular precisely because it dished out a sanitised and therefore palatable view of Bristol's past? Certainly I heard one dissonant comment issuing from a young lad sitting behind me, who dismissed the evening as 'a bunch of stories strung together'. He had a point, as the play was based on the assiduous collecting of oral testimony from the dockers and auxiliary workers themselves. But in a sense, this did not invalidate the play, for what the play did do splendidly well was to evoke by way of its 'thick descriptions' of working practices, a whole world that has vanished. The use of archival film intercut with filmed simulations of a skipper guiding his ship up the Avon, was wonderfully done and conveyed more vividly than any academic tome could have done, a real sense of the difficulties seamen encountered on the Bristol run.

The play has also been faulted for its reportedly anti-union message. It's true that the lone union agitator was characterised by his mates as a lazy troublemaker, but this is no simple union-bashing piece. The same character was also given some shrewd observations to make about exploitation at work. Nor was he the only character to condemn the union hierarchy and city council as corruptly failing to protect their workers. But if the play's heart was certainly on the side of the workers, its message was muddled. Certainly it there was little advocacy of any political strategy outside that of a cynical and apathetic pragmatism. The subtext was that theft and subterfuge, unflinchingly 'documented' throughout the narrative, were justified by the poor pay and dreadful conditions the workers suffered. Yet the jocular tone with which these issues were addressed foreclosed any deeper consideration of them. Having said that, it is only fair to remind ourselves that this is a play not a polemical tract. Indeed it was a credit to the play's intellectual integrity that these issues were raised at all. At times however, the celebration of camaraderie seemed a bit too unproblematic. The appearance of two black dockers on the stage made me wish the author had also explored just how dockland culture (at once insular and cosmopolitan) treated those who were seen as even more 'foreign' than the 'bloody Welsh'. The two female characters, the prostitute and the publican, (marvellously played by Kate McNab and Heather Williams), were treated with respect and never threatened with violence. Was that *really* always the case?

Plays are not bound by the same scholarly constraints that apply to history books, yet they do shape, as Raphael Samuel observed, our popular perceptions of the past. 'Up the Feeder...' is celebratory rather than condescending; evocative rather than analytical. But it does convey an enthusiasm for the historical past. And that can't be a bad thing.

### **Book and Journal Reviews by John Loosely**

**Anthea Jones, *A Thousand Years of the English Parish*, (The Windrush Press, 2000) pp336, illustrated, ISBN 1 900624 50 8, £25.00.**

Anthea Jones is well known to local historians in Gloucestershire through her previous books on Tewkesbury and the Cotswolds. She has a reputation for thoroughly researching her subject and this time has spent 5 years studying the subject of English parishes before publishing this major work. Everyone is familiar with the parish in which they live but is the ecclesiastical parish the same as the civil parish, when were they formed and have they changed? These and many other questions are answered in this book.

Part I examines the foundations of the parish, the differences between parishes in the North and South of England and the development of the parochial system up to the time of the Civil War.

Part II looks at the varying conditions both financial and otherwise of the clergy through the ages and their changing social status. There is a very interesting section on the Queen Anne's Bounty, introduced in 1704 to help the poorer clergy who did not have the advantages of the wealthier livings. The difference in the wealth of parishes through tithes and glebe lands is graphically described. The history of the parsonage house is traced from the medieval period through the grand 18c. rectories to the 20c. modern vicarages and is followed by a chapter on the changes in the Victorian period, particularly the creation of new parishes in the expanding town and cities. The final chapter looks at the present and future role of the parish and Church of England and the author suggests changes which would ensure the continued relevance of the church to present day life.

This book is full of both black and white and colour illustrations, many from Gloucestershire and it will be of considerable interest to the many who are intrigued by the development of the parochial system over the last thousand years.

**Swindon Village Society – Swindon Village Collection V, 2000, pp84, illustrated, from Hazel Luxton 01242 232114.**

This annual collection of reminiscences and articles on the local history of Swindon Village is looked forward to, not only by the residents of the village, but by readers further afield. This fifth collection concentrates on Quat Goose Lane with articles on Swindon Hall Farm, The Grange and various cottages. Not only the buildings but the families who lived there are described including many first hand accounts of life since the early part of the last century. There is a major article on the Webb family starting at the beginning of the 1800s much of which is the result of research by Marlene Lyons now living in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. This collection is produced again to the usual high standard and illustrates the wealth of material waiting to be discovered in many communities in Gloucestershire.

***Cirencester Miscellany No. 4 - Cirencester Archaeological & Historical Society, 2000, pp32, ISBN 0 9527516 0 7, price £2.00 from David Viner, 8 Tower Street Cirencester GL7 1EF.***

Publications from this Society are always welcome, as they have appeared somewhat infrequently in the past. We are promised the next number later this year and if the standard and variety of articles in the present miscellany is maintained then it will be well worth getting.

The articles in Miscellany 4 start with a tribute to Joyce Barker to whom this volume is dedicated. Michael Oakeshott, who has carried out considerable research on South Cerney, writes on its early churches and Brian Hawkins, the author of *Taming the Phoenix: Cirencester of the Quakers 1642 – 1686*, writes of a biography of John Roberts who lived from 1621 to 1684 by his son Daniel which describes the early persecution of the Quakers. Margaret Wesley gives an account of the life of that Cirencester benefactor Rebecca Powell and there are short articles on an 18<sup>th</sup> century bellringer's chair,



Siddington Round House, and quarries in the Cirencester District. Finally two very different memories, the first of Cirencester Mop Fair by Fred Petrie and Cirencester Excavation Committee 1958-1997 by David Viner.

**Tom Fenton, *To Raise A Perfect Monument to Taste – the story behind the building of Holy Innocents Church, Highnam, Gloucestershire* (RJL Smith and Associates, 2001) pp40, illustrated, ISBN 1 872665 93 4.**

To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of this church, Tom Fenton, great grandson of the founder Thomas Gambier Parry, has written a fascinating account of the inspiration for and the building of this Victorian masterpiece. Using many original letters, drawings, notes and sketches together with Thomas Gambier Parry's diary the author tells of his early life and the tragic death in 1848 of his wife Isabella from tuberculosis when only thirty-two. Thomas Gambier Parry was determined to build a memorial to his wife and 3 children who had predeceased her and within 7 months wrote to the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol proposing the building of a school and church at Highnam. The following year work was underway and within 21 months the church was completed. Tom Fenton is able to trace progress from contemporary accounts of the laying of the foundation stone through to the consecration on 29 April 1851. A very moving story which comes to life through the many extracts from Thomas Gambier Parry's diary. The book contains many illustrations, which show some of the vivid and dramatic frescoes by the founder.

**Tewkesbury Historical Society Bulletin No. 10, 2001, pp70, illustrated.**

The Society publishes the Bulletin each year and therefore this one celebrates the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society. Bill Rennison, co-editor gives the history of the first 10 years of this dynamic and ever-expanding society. It is encouraging to see the results of research by many members recorded in this bulletin which ranges from Walton House and the Cartlands (yes, related to Barbara) to the Great Flood of 1947. Shorter articles cover Lower Lode Ferry, the Tewkesbury Token Issuers and an Antarctic Survivor – Tewkesbury's Polar Hero, the story of Raymond Edward Priestley who was with the northern party of Scott's second Antarctic Expedition. It is encouraging to see an article by a member of the younger generation, Coralie Merchant, who is an ex-student of Tewkesbury School and now studying at Cardiff University. She has written an interesting piece on Tewkesbury and the Abolition of the Slave Trade where she explores the work of the local activists for abolition and the vested interests of people like William Codrington, M.P. for Tewkesbury, whose family had extensive plantations in the West Indies.

***Cheltenham Local History Society Journal* 17, 2001, pp56, illustrated, ISSN 0265 3001.**

This annual journal contains a major work on Cheltenham High Street 1800-20 by Carolyn Greet. She has examined the changes in the numbering of properties in the High Street from the start of numbering prior to 1800 to revisions in 1807 and finally the numbers given in 1820. The High Street has been divided into 10 sections and each property given its number for each of the three dates where it can be identified together with the business/occupier during the period 1800-20. A description of each section and further details on the properties, occupiers and businesses give a comprehensive guide to

this major commercial thoroughfare for that period. Other articles are on William Jay a Regency architect, Cheltenham as it might have been: The Kursaal, The munificent friend of Israel – Jane Cook of Cheltenham 1775-1851 and Aspects of Medieval Cheltenham. Finally useful lists of recent books and articles on the history of Cheltenham and Cheltenham area accessions for 2000 in the Gloucestershire Record Office keep those interested in the history of this spa town up-to-date with the latest material.

***Charlton Kings Local History Society Bulletin* 45, 2001, pp34, illustrated, ISSN 0143 4616.**

One of the older local history societies in Gloucestershire, Charlton Kings has published a bulletin for many years, principally for members, but often containing items of interest to a wider audience. This bulletin contains many short articles and notes by members covering all periods from the middle ages through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and subjects from estates and buildings to people and institutions. Of particular interest is a history of Old Ham Farm and the Goodrich family by Mary Paget, the disbanding of the Charlton Kings Fire Brigade by Mary Southerton and the mystery benefactor, William Harrison by Jane Sale.

#### **Book and Pamphlet Reviews by Peter Fleming**

**Dr Brenda Buchanan (ed), *Bath History, Volume VIII* (Bath Archaeological Trust in collaboration with Millstream Books, November 2000), ISBN 0 948975 61 X.**

This well-established series, published biannually, provides a range of scholarly articles on the history of one of the West of England's most fascinating cities. It includes accounts of recent research on the city as well as articles of a wider historical interest, and aims to present these studies in a way which will be attractive to everyone with an interest in the city's past. Volume VIII contains articles ranging from Peter Davenport on the origins of the Roman settlement of Aquae Sulis, Mike Chapman and Elizabeth Holland on Bath's medieval development, a contribution by Brenda Buchanan on Lord Ligonier (d1770), a Bath MP, Mike Bone on Bath breweries, Graham Davis on Bath's Irish population, and William Hanna on Bath and the Crimean War. It is reasonably priced at £8.99 and contains numerous illustrations. For further details of the series, including back numbers, write to **Stephen Bird c/o Bath Archaeological Trust, The Pump Room, Stall Street, Bath BA1 1LZ.**

**John Penny, *All the News That's Fit to Print: A Short History of Bristol's Newspapers Since 1702*, Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 101 (2001), ISBN 1362 7759 £3.00.**

The latest Bristol HA pamphlet is a lively and comprehensive guide to what has been an important element in Bristol's economic, cultural and political history. In its Edwardian heyday the city could boast several weeklies and six daily newspapers. Despite its title, this useful account takes the story back to its beginnings in the seventeenth century. So much of the popular history of Bristol has been written through the medium of this HA pamphlet series. The previous issue, number 100, was a special on Post-War Bristol, 1945-1965 (ISBN 1362 7759, £6.99), with contributions on developments of the docks, shopping centre, public transport, the Church, the NHS, and higher education. Recent pamphlets have covered such diverse topics as Hannah More, the legal profession, ballooning, and the Blitz. **For further details, contact Peter Harris, 74 Bell Barn Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 2DG.**

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### **The Avon Local History Association Annual Local History Day UWE St Matthias Campus, Saturday 24 March 2001**

The theme of this one-day conference was the small town in the former Avon region. The papers took the form of an opening overview, three case studies, and an assessment of policy relating to the management of small towns. The overview was given by Tony Scrase, recently retired from the UWE's Faculty of the Built Environment. Tony discussed the various measures used to define 'small', and 'town', and the problems associated with their use. He also demonstrated how the distribution of small towns related to the regional influence of the biggest settlements, most notably Bristol and Bath, as well as the development of urban topography.

The three case studies, by Barbara Bowes on Pensford, Jane Lilly on Clevedon, and Judith Horsley on Marshfield, showed in detail how the interplay of local natural and economic and social factors influenced their development. Pensford grew up around a river crossing, but failed to capitalise upon the advantages of its natural position and supply of water power. On the other hand, Marshfield's early promise as a textile town was lost as its elevated position meant that it could not exploit water power, and when it was ignored by the nineteenth-century railway developers any remaining potential it may have had to become anything grander than a small town finally vanished. Clevedon, on the other hand, went from strength to strength as a resort town under the guiding hand of the Elton family, leaving us its old town and seafront as one of the region's most evocative remnants of the Victorian and Edwardian leisure industry. Finally, Dave Sutton's detailed exposition of planning and conservation policy, and the tactics necessary to make a difference to policy decisions, was highly informative but also a little disconcerting in the complexity it revealed. ALHA are once again to be congratulated on organising a successful and enjoyable conference that attracted a wide and varied audience.

**Peter Fleming**

### **Breaking New Ground: MA Local and Regional History Conference held at The Museum of Bath at Work, Julian Road, Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 2001.**

This was the fifth annual conference profiling the dissertation work of the MA Local and Regional History students, and the third time hosted by The Museum of Bath at Work. As part of their second year work students on the course are required to present a 30-minute presentation to the public. This provides them with an opportunity to communicate their own research. It is also the philosophy of the MA to give back something to the community from which the historic past is reconstructed.

After an initial welcome by Stuart Burroughs, curator of the museum, and Graham Davis, Course Director of the MA programme, the conference was given a light-hearted and entertaining start with Mac Hopkins-Clarke's paper, 'A struggle to survive: The Theatre Royal Bath, 1805-1900'. In addition to a brief outline history of the theatre, changing location, destruction by fire and financial problems, we were presented with a fascinating series of theatre programmes that represented the changing taste among the Bath public during the nineteenth-century. A convincing case was made that the double bills on offer foreshadowed the emergence of the Victorian Music Hall well before the 1860s. Celia Martin and Jane Ferentzi-Sheppard, leading lights of the Dorset Family History Society,

then presented a double-act, focussing on 'Emigration from the West Country, 1830-1860'. Using a professional power-point presentation, Celia examined emigration to Australia, identifying assisted passage, economic distress and the fears surrounding the New Poor Law, as key factors in the migration process. Jane took the subject of emigration from West Dorset to North America and showed that the process was much earlier than previous family histories had shown. Contacts across the world, established via the internet, and through collaboration with other scholars enabled fresh insights to be gained into the process of British emigration.

After coffee, Derek Baish gave us his paper on 'Pork, Philanthropy and Public Position: Thomas Harris of Calne'. Derek showed us the rise of a major business that dominated the town and argued that Thomas Harris was the driving force in the family business, borrowing ideas from America, and developing from a small shop into a sizeable factory of national significance. He then took an active part on local politics, church affairs and philanthropy, (he was mayor five times) and clearly its leading citizen. George Scott further enlivened the proceedings, shaking a rattle, blowing a whistle, and wearing a Fire Guard arm-band in introducing his talk, 'The Fire-bomb Fiasco in Wartime Bath'. George took us through the appalling tale of mismanagement and complacency that represented the inadequate preparations in Bath before the tragic 'Blitz' occurred in 1842.

During the lunch break, people had the chance to view the exhibition on the History of Bath Water, to take a tour of the museum, and to check out this year's MA dissertations on display. Ex-MA students were eager to see if the standards they had set were still being reached. They were genuinely reassured.

A change to the programme, on account of Bob Millard's illness, brought Graham Davis off the substitutes's bench to revisit his fascination with the 'plague spot of Victorian Bath'. His talk on 'The Avon Street lodging-house scandal' was introduced with images of slum conditions in late Victorian Britain that identified slum housing as a major social issue in the 1880s. The story involved a local clergyman, two boy tramps, an investigative journalist from London, a flurry of letters to the press, a public meeting, and the response of the Medical Officer of Health. The result was that the council passed new by-laws on the regulation of lodging-houses, against the evidence presented, to preserve the reputation of the city. The last session of the conference was led by Stuart Burroughs who opened up discussion following his personal thoughts on the role of museums, local history and the community. This proved a valuable exercise in sharing views about the future for museums, the nature of public history. A number of ideas were also forthcoming on potential new developments in the re-vamping of the MA programme in Local and Regional History.

**Graham Davis**

### **Richard III Society Study Day: The Berkeley Family in the Late Fifteenth Century, Swindon, 2 June 2001**

Organised by Keith Stenner, this one-day conference, held in 'Steam', the Swindon railway museum, focused on a particularly eventful episode in the long history of the Berkeley family of Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. The matters dealt with on this day culminated in March 1470 with the battle of Nibley Green, traditionally described as the last private battle fought on English soil. The speakers were Anton Bantock, who

explained the history of the Berkley family up to the late fifteenth century, Peter Fleming, who talked on the Berkeleys' links with Bristol and the cultural context of the battle, and Chris Scott, who gave a detailed analysis of the battle itself.

The Fitzharding lords of Berkeley - through indirect descent still represented at Berkeley Castle - trace their origins to the twelfth-century Robert Fitzharding, founder of St Augustine's Abbey, now Bristol Cathedral, who was granted the barony by his friend, Henry II, after it had been forfeited by the Berkeley family. Perhaps unusually for a man of such power and connections among the Anglo-Norman elite, Robert's origins lay with the Saxons: his grandfather, Eadnoth, had thrown in his lot with the Norman invaders, and thereby laid the foundations for his descendants' success.

The root of the conflict that would result in Nibley Green is to be found in arrangements made over 120 years earlier. By the fourteenth century the Berkeleys enjoyed an unrivalled position among the resident Gloucestershire nobility. In 1349 an entail was made settling some important Berkeley properties, including the castle itself, on the male line. This meant that any heiresses would be barred from inheriting these properties. For a while the family succeeded in producing male heirs, and so the question of the entail lay dormant, but when Thomas, tenth Lord Berkeley died in 1417, he left only a daughter, Elizabeth, wife of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick. His male heir was his nephew, James. Elizabeth's marriage to the earl of Warwick, one of England's leading magnates, was a considerable coup for Lord Thomas, and it seems that in order to make this brilliant match he had promised the earl not only his daughter's inheritance, but also those properties entailed upon the male line. If made good, this promise would have disinherited James. This in itself was storing up fuel for future conflagration, of course, but even more potentially inflammatory was the game of double dealing in which Thomas had been engaged, promising to potential fathers-in-law of his nephew that the terms of the 1349 entail would be respected, thereby making James a valuable commodity on the marriage market. James eventually married Isabel, the daughter of Sir John Bloet: a respectable, but hardly spectacular match, so perhaps suspicions of James Fitzharding's prospects were abroad, despite Lord Thomas's best efforts at duplicity.

Nor, it appears, did Lord Thomas's will exactly clarify matters. This is a brief document, dealing only with moveable goods and so giving no indication whatever of his intentions for the disposition of his estates. Perhaps that part of the document is missing; perhaps, believing mistakenly that he had already tied everything up in feoffments and other legal devices, he did not see the need for a last will concerning his lands; perhaps, approaching the end of his life in 1417, he was also entering senility, or was merely capricious.

The squabbling began almost immediately after Lord Thomas's death, and within five years this had escalated into outright violence, with the countess of Warwick laying siege to James, now Lord Berkeley, in Berkeley Castle in the summer of 1422. That her action should have coincided with the death of Henry V was no mere chance, for at almost every stage the fifteenth-century Berkeley dispute was influenced by events in the national political arena. To counter Beauchamp influence, James had secured the support of King Henry's brother, the duke of Gloucester, and the temporary hiatus in government which resulted from Henry's sudden death gave the countess her opportunity.

For the next twenty years the Berkeleys and their opponents played out a wearying game of legal proceedings, attempted arbitrations, and direct action. Then, in 1452, the stakes

were raised dramatically. Isabel, James Lord Berkeley's second wife, was captured and imprisoned in Gloucester Castle, where she died in mysterious circumstances. What had been a fairly ordinary dispute over property and inheritance may now have taken on the character of a blood feud. By now, one of the original protagonists had left the scene. Elizabeth, countess of Warwick had died shortly after laying siege to Berkeley Castle, and her place as the Berkeley's chief female opponent was taken by her daughter, Margaret, whose marriage to John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, brought another powerful magnate family into the conflict. By the eve of Nibley Green, the dispute, like some dysfunctional gene, had been transmitted to further generations. The barony was now held by William, the son of James, and his adversary was Thomas, Viscount Lisle, Margaret and John Talbot's grandson, recently entered into his title, a youth of nineteen years, and eager to prove himself.

Some knowledge of the national picture is vital to an understanding of the battle and its aftermath. In March 1470 the Yorkist King Edward IV was called to Lincolnshire to subdue a rebellion promoted by his erstwhile mainstay, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick the 'Kingmaker', and his own brother, the shifty George, duke of Clarence. Once again, a protagonist in the Berkeley dispute seized the opportunity presented by a crisis of central authority. We can be reasonably sure of this, but less so as to the identity of the protagonist. On the surface, as told by the Berkeleys' seventeenth-century chronicler (and steward of their lands) John Smyth, the story looks simple enough. On the 19th March Viscount Lisle, calculating that the royal authorities would be preoccupied with events in the north, issued a challenge to Lord Berkeley. He suggested single combat or, if Berkeley was too cowardly to risk his life in his own quarrel, they were to meet with their armies at a place and time to be agreed. Berkeley opted for the latter option, replying that they would meet the following morning at Nibley, midway between Berkeley Castle and the Lisle headquarters at Wotton-under-Edge, where his wife Margaret was awaiting the birth of their first child. On the 20th, the two sides fought as arranged, and Lisle was struck in the face by an arrow shot from the bow of a Forest of Dean archer called Black Will, and killed. The victorious Berkeley men then ransacked Wotton, causing Lisle's wife to miscarry, and thereby bringing the Talbot male line to an end.

This cannot be the whole - or indeed, the correct - story, however. As Chris Scott explained, there are serious problems with Smyth's version of events. Berkeley may have been able to muster as many as a thousand men in the night following Lisle's challenge; Lisle probably had half that number. Berkeley's army was made up of contingents from Bristol as well as the Forest of Dean, and may also have included foreign mercenaries. How could he possibly have raised this number so quickly at such short notice? Almost certainly, Berkeley was expecting some sort of challenge, and this raises the intriguing possibility that he had somehow incited Lisle to offer battle, knowing that he had the numerical advantage. In other words, Lisle walked into the trap that Berkeley had set. In the absence of central authority, it was Berkeley who was determined on settling old scores.

Berkeley may already have been sympathetic to the cause of Warwick and Clarence, but if he was not, Edward's displeasure at his Nibley adventure probably pushed him into their camp, and he was a supporter of the Readeption in 1470-71. Berkeley had to buy a royal pardon after Edward's defeat of Warwick, Clarence and the forces of the puppet King Henry VI at Barnet and Tewkesbury in 1471. The Berkeley dispute did not end

here: the claims of the female line passed to the Greys and the Dudleys, and it was not until 1609 that matters were finally settled, making this arguably the longest property dispute in English history.

Keith Stenner and the Richard III Society are to be congratulated for organising such a successful day school on this neglected but fascinating subject.

**For further reading** The major source for most modern accounts is J Smyth, *The Lives of the Berkeleys* ed. J Maclean, 3 vols. (Gloucester, 1883). The best account of the entire dispute remains J H Cooke, 'The great Berkeley law-suit of the 15th and 16th centuries. A chapter of Gloucestershire history', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, vol. 3 (1878-9), pp. 305-24. The beginnings are examined by A Sinclair, 'The great Berkeley law-suit revisited, 1417-39', *Southern History*, vol. 9 (1987), pp. 34-50.

**Peter Fleming**

## REGIONAL NEWS, EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **The Wells Royal Charter Anniversary**

On 7 September 1201, at Chinon, King John took time out from dealing with the revolt of the Lusignans in Poitou to issue a charter to Wells, at the other end of his dominions, and a world away from the political turmoil of Angevin France. The charter created Wells as a free borough (*liber burgus*), and its men and their heirs as free burgesses, enjoying trading and market privileges. There was nothing particularly remarkable in this: both John and his brother Richard recognised that the developing towns and trade of England could provide much needed income to the royal coffers, and so were keen to encourage urban expansion through the granting of charters that established or guaranteed trading and administrative privileges. The Wells charter was indeed quite limited compared to some others, since it made no mention of any administrative, juridical or political innovations, and for the most part merely confirmed existing trading privileges. Nonetheless, this was the first royal charter granted to the city, and as such has figured as something of a local Magna Carta, a point around which its inhabitants could rally in their struggle to establish and defend their liberties.

That, for much of the succeeding four centuries, that struggle was waged against the bishops of Bath and Wells, the very body that had granted Wells the privileges confirmed in 1201, comes as no surprise to those familiar with the urban history of later medieval England. Like the Angevin kings, the bishops did not grant these original privileges out of altruism. They held Wells as part of their feudal possessions, and so stood to benefit from the appreciation of this particular asset. Wells certainly appreciated during the Middle Ages, from insignificant rural market town it grew to a major regional centre of first the leather and then the cloth industries. As a result, Wells became a valuable source of episcopal revenue in the form of stallage (payments made for market stalls), rents and miscellaneous feudal dues.

King John probably saw his charter of 1201 as merely confirming the status quo. Far from offering a challenge to episcopal control of this thriving town, he would have seen it as giving royal approval to the bishops' claims to dominion as his tenants-in-chief and mesne lords of Wells. But this was not the perception of successive generations of Wells burgesses. For them, free borough status carried a more radical meaning. Surely, they

reasoned, *liber burgus* meant independence from episcopal control; as a royal borough, it was to the king directly, not to any intermediary, that they owed their obedience, just like the free burgesses of Bristol or Bridgwater. And royal lordship was usually far more arms length than that of local lords. Unsurprisingly, the bishops did not share that interpretation and, when decades of pushing and shoving at the boundaries of constraint erupted into conflict in the 1340s, nor did the Crown. As in so many tussles between urban communities and their ecclesiastical overlords, when it came to the crunch, the Crown sided with its clerical tenants-in-chief. The burgesses of Wells had to wait until the Reformation - until 1589 to be precise - before incorporation as a borough independent of episcopal control could be achieved. The significance of the 1201 charter in the story of the city's long march to freedom is demonstrated by the number of times the burgesses' petitions for its confirmation were granted by royal letters patent: letters of *inspeximus*, confirming the charter, were granted in 1290, 1377, 1399, 1424 and 1578.

The City of Wells will be marking the eight-hundredth anniversary of the charter in a number of ways. There will be an exhibition about the charter and the life and times of King John in Wells Town Hall from the 5th to the 8th of September. Bath Spa University College is holding a day school on Wells, on Saturday 15 September, and William Smith, the archivist to Wells City Council, has written *Wells 1201-2001: Eight Hundred Years of Royal Charter* which is to appear as both a booklet, produced by Wells City Council, and as an article in the October edition of *Archives*, the journal of the British Records Association. Mr Smith's account is a thorough and scholarly piece of work, discussing the charter itself and explaining its context and significance. The booklet includes colour facsimiles of the 1201 charter and of an earlier episcopal charter, together with a transcript and translation of the former, and it is highly recommended to anyone with an interest in the history of Wells or of the constitutional development of English towns. **For details, contact William Smith at the City Record Office, Town Hall, Wells, Somerset BA5 2RB, tel. 01749 673091, fax 01749 673098, email [wsmith.wells.cc@virgin.net](mailto:wsmith.wells.cc@virgin.net)**  
**Peter Fleming**

**Wells 800 A Public Day School to celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of the Charter to Wells, Somerset by King John**

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2001, Wells Town Hall 9.00 – 4.30

Guest speakers:

Professor David Underdown, *The 1607 May Games*

Dr Elaine Chalus, *The 1765 Election*

Dr Paul Hyland, *Dr Claver Morris*

Mr Paul Fry, *Wells and the Railways*

Dr Carl Estabrook, *City & Cathedral in the 17<sup>th</sup> century*

Dr Perry Gauci, *Overview*

**Tickets: £30.00 to include lunch (during lunch the 1201 Charter will be available for viewing)**

**Contact: Dr Roberta Anderson, School of Historical & Cultural Studies, Bath Spa University College, BATH BA2 9BN Tel: 01225 875772**

**Cheques should be made payable to Wells 800**

\*\*\*\*\*



**Authority And Subversion: A Conference on Fifteenth-Century History, UWE, St Matthias Campus, 6 to 8 September, 2001**

The 'long fifteenth century' (c1370 to c1530) was a particularly turbulent period in English history. It witnessed six usurpations and the violent deaths of four kings, as well as the two greatest popular uprisings in English history. It was a time when many different kinds of authority were severely challenged, and contemporaries had a well-grounded fear of the subversion of the political, social and religious status quo.

The conference will explore these issues. It will feature a number of established scholars, such as Professor A J Pollard and Professor Michael Hicks, as well as those who have come to this area of history more recently, mainly completing and recently-completed PhD students. Bristol played an important part in the national events of the time, and a number of papers will address regional issues, including Dr Clive Burgess on Lollards in Bristol, Professor DeLloyd J Guth on Bristol smuggling, and James Lee on Bristol's relations with the Tudor crown. The conference will also include a guided tour of the medieval features of Bristol.

Places are available on a residential or non-residential basis, and concessions are available for those not in full-time academic employment.

**For further details, contact Dr Peter Fleming, UWE, School of History, St Matthias Campus, Oldbury Court Road, Bristol BS16 2JP, email [peter.fleming@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:peter.fleming@uwe.ac.uk)**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Saturday School 13 October 2001: Representing Bristol's Histories**

The Museum is currently hoping to create a new 'Museum of Bristol Life' in which the history of Bristol from Saxon times to the present day can be explored.

The question is, *which* history of Bristol?

How can the lives of ordinary Bristolians be best represented in a permanent exhibition?

Who precisely *are* Bristolians?

What about the cultural and artistic achievements of Bristol's elite?

How can the evolution of what was once Britain's second city be conveyed?

Do we want sentiment, celebration or critique?

The University of the West of England in collaboration with Bristol City Museum and Art Galleries plan to present a stimulating programme of historians and curators, writers and researchers who have all been invited to present their say on what the museum should include. Members of the public will be invited to have their say too.

**This event will be sponsored by the City Museum and UWE's Regional History Centre and will be held in central Bristol from 10-4 pm 13 October, venue to be announced.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Annual Local History Afternoon of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Local History Committee will take place on Saturday 6 October 2001 from 2 – 5 pm at Sir Thomas Rich’s School, Longlevens, Gloucester.**

The theme is “*The Happiest Days of their Life?* - education in Gloucestershire from medieval times to the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. There will be illustrated talks on *medieval literacy and education in Gloucestershire* by Professor Nicholas Orme of the University of Exeter and *schools for all – from charity schools to the 20<sup>th</sup> century* by James Turtle of the Gloucestershire Record Office. There will also be bookstalls and exhibitions by local history societies, many on schools in their area.

**Entry, including tea and biscuits £3.50 payable at the door.**

**Free to members of the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council**

**Doors open at 1.15pm**

**Further information from John Loosley, Stonehatch, Oakridge Lynch, Stroud, Glos GL6 7NR. Tel 01285 760460. E-mail [john@loosleyj.freeseve.co.uk](mailto:john@loosleyj.freeseve.co.uk).**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Radio Bristol are holding a Historyfest in Weston Super Mare on Sat September 8<sup>th</sup>.**

It will be a chance to find out more about the history of the area, with a host of stalls and special talks in the Winter Gardens. There are also a whole series of musical events around the town starting at 10 and finishing at 4.30. Entry is free, and any group that wants to be involved, or would like a stall should contact [vicki.klein@bbc.co.uk](mailto:vicki.klein@bbc.co.uk) tel **0117 9746701**. This is the second historyfest, the first was in Bristol this April at the Council House and proved an enormous success with over 15,000 people attending.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Call For Papers: Regional History Centre Seminars, 2001-2002**

The Regional History Centre will be holding a series of over the next academic year covering any aspect of the history of Bristol and its region, in any period. Papers should be 40-50 minutes in length. Seminars will normally be held on Thursdays but times and dates are negotiable. We can pay expenses.

\*\*\*\*\*

**'Discovering Bristol'**

Bristol City Council has been awarded £240,000 by the government's New Opportunities Fund for an innovative web-based project which will build on the popular exhibition 'A Respectable Trade : Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery' which was staged at the City Museum and Art Gallery in 1999. It will form an integral part of the Council's award-winning website, linking to other sites co-ordinated by the National Maritime Museum under the overall theme of 'Port Cities'. The 'Discovering Bristol' project represents a partnership between the City Council, academics, community groups and numerous organisations and institutions in the region - including UWE. It will build out from an electronic interactive version of the 'Respectable Trade' exhibition to encompass digitised sources reflecting related historical, maritime and cultural themes. The material will be aimed at a wide range of users. The Council believes the project will also provide a springboard for its Museums, Libraries and Archives services to continue to work with local partners to expand digitised sources and to make the wonderful resources held locally available to a much wider audience.

### **Family History Course**

Windmill Hill City Farm will be running a Family History Course which is OCN accredited at levels 1 and 2/3. The initial level 1 course will run for ten weeks and will enable anyone who is interested in tracing their family history to become familiar with the basic skills and techniques required to compile a family tree. Aspects covered will include using church registers, census returns and family archives. Prospective students will also learn how to read handwriting from the 17th to the 19th century and how to date old photographs. Learning the techniques of oral history will also be a component of level 1. Students will have the opportunity to advance onto level 2/3 when a study will be undertaken of selected family members in the context of local and national events of the time. Level 2/3 is an innovation in historical study because it brings together family, local and national history. Level 1 starts on Tuesday, 11th September 2001, at 9.30 to 11.30am, and will run for ten weeks at the farm.

**For further information ring Ann Oakley (Community Courses Organiser) 0117-9633255 or Andrea Button (Course Tutor) 0117-9563519 or alternatively call at Windmill Hill City Farm, Philip Street, Bedminster, Bristol.**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **West of England and South Wales Women's History Network Launch of the Feminist Archive Oral History Project**

The next meeting will be at **6pm at Trinity Road Library, Bristol**. It will be held jointly with the Feminist Archive who are launching a collection of Personal Histories of Second Wave Feminists who were active in the South West from the 1970s onwards. In-depth interviews with women who had made important contributions to the second wave of feminism were carried out by co-workers Ilona Singer and Viv Honeybourne. Seventeen histories were recorded on minidisk which have been archived for future researchers. They have also produced lengthy summaries of all the interviews, with many quotations in a 50 page booklet. Ilona and Viv will be available to talk about their experiences of doing the interviews and to answer questions. **For further details contact Kath Holden at the RHC. To find out more about the feminist archive visit their website at <http://www.femarch.mcmail.com/>**

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Women and Philanthropy in Bristol, 1870 – 1920**

Dr June Hannam and Dr Moira Martin have been awarded £4,630 by the British Academy to fund a research project on women's philanthropic work in Bristol in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are interested not only in women's charitable work, but the way in which this links to involvement in local and national political campaigns. Some work has already been undertaken using local sources to explore women's initiatives in the areas of health, housing, education and poverty, but the new funding will allow the researchers to examine sources located in archives outside Bristol, such as those of the National Union of Women Workers and also to purchase relevant microfilm collections, such as the Helen Blackburn collection at Girton College, Cambridge. Biographical details of women philanthropists, references to private papers or other information on sources would be very welcome.

**Please contact either June Hannam, School of History, UWE, on 0117 3444390, email [june.hannam@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:june.hannam@uwe.ac.uk) or Moira Martin, School of History, UWE, on 0117 3444389, email [moira.martin@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:moira.martin@uwe.ac.uk)**

## **LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY PROGRAMMES, AUTUMN 2001**

### **Dursley and Cam Society. All meetings at Dursley Town Hall, 7.30pm**

- \* Tuesday 11 September, Mr Russell Howes, 'Crime and Punishment in Gloucestershire'
- \* Tuesday 9 October, Mrs Hilary Lees, 'Small Churches of the Cotswolds'
- \* Tuesday 13 November, Mr David Elsbury, 'Christmas Magic Lantern Show'
- \* Tuesday 11 December, AGM followed by MR Lionel Jones, 'Local slides'

### **Forest of Dean Local History Society**

- \* Sat 8<sup>th</sup> September, Coach outing to Swindon Railway museum
- \* Sat 13<sup>th</sup> October, Coleford Community Centre, 2.30pm AGM followed by Mr Keith Underwood, 'The Cistercian Experience at Tintern'
- \* Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 3pm, Bell Vue Centre, Cinderford, Mr Ian Pope, 'Ross and Monmouth Railway'
- \* Sat 1<sup>st</sup> December, Coleford Community Centre, 3pm, Mr John Evans, 'The Last of the Iron Masters at the Forest of Dean'

### **Friends of Gloucestershire Archives Programme**

- \* Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August, Evening Visit to Hignam Church and Hignam Court Gardens  
Meet at the church at 6.30pm or the Gardens at 7.30pm
- \* Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October, Members Evening, Four friends will talk about their research.  
7.30pm at the Gloucestershire Record Office
- \* Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November, County Archivists's Lecture, by Nicholas Kingsley 3pm at the Gloucestershire Record Office



### **Bristol Museum and Art Gallery**

are holding an exhibition of watercolours from the Braikenridge collection showing nearly 200 drawings of Bristol collected by George Weare Braikenridge in the 1820s. Views include the docks, shops and back streets of the city as well as panoramas drawn from the surrounding hills. Artists include Samuel Jackson and James Johnson of the Bristol School

Sat 30 June - Monday 27 August 2001

City Museum and Art Gallery, Queen's Road,  
Bristol, BS8 1RL tel. 0117 922 3571

**Open every day 10am-5pm admission free**

### **THE REGIONAL HISTORIAN**

The RHC publishes this newsletter twice yearly, containing news, comment and articles. If you wish to contribute to the Newsletter, please send material by letter or on disk (preferably in word 6 or word 97) to:

**Dr Kath Holden Regional History Centre, University of the West of England,  
Bristol, St Matthias Campus**

**Oldbury Court Road BRISTOL BS16 2JP (Tel 0117 344 4395)**

**By fax to 0117 975 0402**

**By email to [Regional.History@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Regional.History@uwe.ac.uk) or [Katherine.Holden@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Katherine.Holden@uwe.ac.uk)**