

Local History News

Number 112 Summer 2014

www.balh.co.uk



AWARDS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS

- *To encourage research and publication*

One or more certificates may be awarded each year for published work presenting sound original research in well-written form. To be eligible a piece of work, of any length, must appear in a journal, newsletter or similar publication produced by a local voluntary body, which is sent to Dr Sarah Rose the Reviews Editor for review or listing. All relevant material sent to the Reviews Editor is automatically considered, and a short-list prepared for the Awards Panel.

- *To recognise other kinds of personal achievement*

Up to six awards may be made each year as a means of publicly honouring local historians who have made outstanding and significant **voluntary** contributions to the subject in their own areas. The purpose of this award is to identify and publicise good practice in whatever form it appears. Nominations must be made on the form available from the Awards Secretary, on our website at www.balh.co.uk/awards.php or in the August issue of *Local History News*

- *To encourage societies to share information locally*

An annual award for newsletters used by local societies to correspond with their members and other interested readers. Newsletters can be of any length, published at any regular interval, in any style, by any printing method. The contents, and the clarity of communication, are the key factors rather than the glossiness of production. All newsletters sent to the Reviews Editor will be considered for this award, the final decision for which lies with the Publications Committee of the BALH.

Awards are presented at the Local History Day each June

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Cover Picture

*Detail from pardon granted to Sir William Sharnington by Edward VI, February 1550.
See article Lacock Unlocked, p 11.*

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

REGISTERED CHARITY 285467

www.balh.co.uk

The British Association for Local History (BALH) was created in 1982 as the successor to earlier organisations which had supported the study of local history over previous decades. Its purpose is

**to encourage and assist the study of local history throughout Great Britain
as an academic discipline and as a rewarding leisure pursuit
for both individuals and groups.**

To achieve this the Association

- serves as the national body representing local and regional historians
- hosts Local History Day, an annual event open to all, with discussions, presentation of awards, AGM, and a specially commissioned lecture based on current research
- publishes the prestigious quarterly journal *The Local Historian* which includes regular features on themes, sources, websites, and a copious reviews section
- produces a quarterly members' magazine *Local History News* reporting on up to date developments and examples of best practice from around the country
- makes annual awards to individuals who have made a significant contribution to local history; for excellence in research and publication; and for an outstanding local society newsletter
- organises guided visits to places of relevant interest, often not easily accessible otherwise
- collaborates with other organisations to arrange conferences and similar events around the country
- provides a website for information and links
- publishes specialist handbooks.

The Association is an unincorporated registered charity, governed by an elected Council with three advisory committees dealing with publications, education and events. It is financed by its members. Subscriptions are for a calendar year but may be started at any time; new members receive the material already issued during the year.

Individual	£30.00
Student on a full- or part-time course in local history	£25.00
Local society or group	£65.00
Institutions	£38.00
Overseas	£42.50
School	£25.00

(Libraries subscribing to *The Local Historian* via agents are treated as Institutional members)

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Captain Mainwaring in Thetford (photo Alan Crosby) see p 33.

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How to contribute

The success of the Association in supporting and promoting local history throughout the country depends very much on contributions made by members, readers, and all those interested and concerned.

Material published in *The Local Historian* is written by a wide variety of people from many different backgrounds. Offers and suggestions for articles are welcomed, and the editor, Alan Crosby, is always pleased to discuss ideas for contributions and to advise on their preparation. 'Notes for contributors' is available on request, and can be found on our website. Dr Alan Crosby, 77 Wellington St, Preston PR1 8TQ

Local History News relies on material - articles, news, pictures, questions etc - from local societies and individual local historians. Please put BALH PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne DE6 5WH on the mailing list for your society newsletter and similar regular publications. Information about local initiatives is particularly welcome, and we are always keen to publish items that give examples of best practice, illustrating the diversity and vitality of local history. Readers' comments and queries allow our members to share their knowledge and enthusiasm. If there is a specific event you wish us to mention please allow plenty of time ahead of the date. The mailings are normally sent out at the end of January, April, July and October.

The BALH Reviews Editor is Dr Sarah Rose, Department of History, Bowland College, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YT. If you have a newly published work, either as an individual or a society, please send her a copy for listing and possible review.

**mail@balh.co.uk is the email address
for all parts of the Association,
messages are forwarded promptly to the right person**

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Seaweed

Alan Crosby

In June I was brought a small present by Mrs Crosby, who had been on a short trip to Northern Ireland and had visited the Antrim coast. It was in a white paper bag with quite a strong smell, so I opened it gingerly and there was a tangled mat of blackish brown dried-but-still-flexible seaweed, with a white dusting of salt. Knowing my love of food and cooking, and my eclectic gastronomic tastes, she had unerringly hit upon the sort of present which would really appeal to me (though not necessarily, I suppose, to everybody).

This was **dulse**, or **palmaria palmata** if we are not using the vernacular, or **duileasc** in Irish and **duileasg** in Scottish Gaelic (hence the 'English' name). It was purchased in Ballycastle, which is generally acknowledged to be the centre of the international dulse trade, and was in the preferred form, namely dried and in pieces small enough to chew. I had never had dulse before, though in fact it is extremely common in its wild state, since most rocky beaches in Western Britain are festooned with the stuff (it's also popular in Iceland, northern New England and the Maritime Provinces of Canada).

It's delicious – well, I think so anyway. Slightly gelatinous, slightly crunchy, slightly chewy, very salty and tasting like you're eating a distillation of the flavours and scents of a wonderful rockpool. I became an instant addict (it's also said to be highly nutritious, but I'm not greatly bothered about that). I find that you can order dulse on-line (predictably, it's not available in Preston) so I might be doing so quite soon.

At the same time I'll probably order (though probably from a different supplier) quantities of **laver** (aka laverbread) from the Gower or the shores of Carmarthenshire or Pembrokeshire. I've loved laver for many a long year and on our not infrequent visits to South Wales we have headed for fishmongers or butchers in Fishguard or nearby towns and stocked up

(though it's readily bought from Tesco in Haverfordwest, where the deep spinachy green-black semi-puree is ladled out of large plastic tubs. Lovely with lamb, delicious with shellfish, a great pasta sauce ... it was my favourite seaweed until its Ulster rival appeared on the scene.

I'm fascinated by these local delicacies, which are true and genuine. So much cookery history is very dodgy indeed, and 'local' specialities are all too easily invented or—historically much worse—spurious explanations of their origins are concocted and then become accepted truths, though without a shred of evidence. I am reminded of a book of *Old Lake District Recipes* which is in my collections. It talks about how local foods go back to the Vikings and then prints a recipe for 'A Traditional Tomato Soup from Coniston'. Hmmm.

But there's something else about eating seaweed. Laver is washed and boiled and that's it. Dulse is simply washed and dried (ideally in the hot sunshine of Ulster). They are not processed or refined, not improved, and do not undergo complicated transformations. Of course you can find recipes which use them (especially laver, made into little cakes with oatmeal and fried with bacon, or enlivened with a good dash of sharp citrus juice, but even these are hardly over-elaborate or challenging).

These are not only genuine local foods, but they are of extraordinary antiquity. To eat, let us say, laver with steamed or lightly boiled shellfish is to eat something that would have been entirely familiar to our distant ancestors, five thousand years ago or more. Even better, to gather them off the rocks yourself, to go hunter-gathering albeit for nothing more aggressive than some mussels and seaweed, can be a very emotional and satisfying experience. Food history is now a recognised sub-discipline, but the local history of food is barely touched upon. Start with seaweed, perhaps, and move forward slowly through ten thousand years?

Researching the Country House, Estate and Community during the Great War

Allen Warren

The Great War was the first such conflict that directly affected every man, woman and child in Britain and huge numbers across the Empire. It also has a continuing impact as the great flood of interest in its anniversary demonstrates. Among historians it generates considerable continuing argument about its causes and the nature of the societies that could drift so catastrophically into war, where, why and how it was fought by British forces from Chile to Iran, from East Africa to the Pacific. Historians also discuss its consequences at home, both in Britain and across the Empire; examining particular impacts and assessing its significance. Art, music and literature were no less affected.

For the local historian, the task is daunting faced with such a global conflict and vast secondary literature. The following resources are available to those interested in localities in which the country house was still prominent in the social and geographical landscape. The first step is to establish the social and political context in relation to a particular locality or interest. Secondary literature, Google and Wikipedia are invaluable, as are local history collections in branch and county libraries. Many introductory texts are available quite cheaply through the second hand book website ABE. Local librarians and archivists are an invaluable source, especially those in the larger libraries and in County Record Offices (CROs).

Other sources invaluable in setting the context for a particular locality are:

The 1911 census, now open and online, enables the historian to situate precisely the householders in the locality and their families. The young men who fought might well have been living in that household three years before. Similarly the census tells us who their neighbours were.

Local newspapers, often held in libraries and record offices, give an enormous amount of contextual detail about life in the local community before and during the conflict. Often very local news is contained on the same page each week and so the task is not as large as might be feared. You also learn a great deal that is not simply local about the impact of the war. Did you know for instance that the Boy Scouts provided a coast watching service along the east coast for considerable periods at the beginning of the War?

Researchers often do not give enough initial time to learning about this social, political and cultural context as they are keen to get to the core of their particular interest, but it is time well spent. Although predominantly an urban society, vast tracts of Britain remained dominated in 1914 by the traditional landed classes, their houses and estates, along with all the communal activity around them. What follows are research resources that enable the historian to follow their particular interest.

Landed family and estate records. These are private records, but many have been deposited in local record offices. Some remain in family hands and may be available for consultation. Historic estate records are most frequently deposited; more modern estate and family records are more unpredictable in their location. Remember that landed families are 'dynasties' and that husbands, wives, sons, daughters and cousins had a shared experience of war. Burke's Peerage and/or the aristocratic genealogical websites help to establish those relationships.

For non-governmental holdings of archives in relation to individuals, families, businesses, charities etc see The National Archives website and follow the leads to ARCHON [for Repositories] and NRA [National Register of

Archives for individuals, families, businesses, charities etc].

Similarly the country house and estate was a micro-community and so these records may contain material relating to domestic and estate servants, tenant farmers and local tradesmen.

Parish Records. These are an important source, most often located in CROs Offices or Diocesan Record Offices [they are often now combined]. Not only do they contain details within the Parish Registers, but they also often include details of services, the administration and finances of the church and some of its activities. You may be lucky enough to find parish magazines have survived. In many rural areas local charities were administered under the parochial system and provide a particular insight. Often the local landed family played a prominent part in church life.

School Records. Many village schools were essentially Church of England Schools with the manager being the local vicar. They will often contain the school's Register, the head teacher's Report Book, and the Punishment book. They provide insight into rural home life during the war. Again these will often be in the CRO. Some may still remain with the school. Local Education Authorities were a result of the 1902 Education Act and so County Council records will contain material on both parish [elementary] schools and secondary or trade schools in the area. Some areas will also have independent schools within their boundaries.

Other Denominations. Many rural areas had a significant non-conformist or Roman Catholic presence with their own churches, schools and social lives. Again, CROs may contain surviving material. Individual churches may retain records or have handed them to another church body. Often photographic evidence can help as many chapels have disappeared.

Employment. In areas dominated by the country house and estate, agriculture remained the predominant employer. Local newspapers contain a lot of information about the conditions of farming, and estate records will also help. Do not forget that quarrying, mining and forestry were significant in some areas and there are important allied trades supporting rural life. Local trade directories can often help here.

Poverty and Health. These were the responsibility of Poor Law Unions, each centred on an



*Army buses at Castle Howard
© Castle Howard Estate*

area usually broader than an individual parish or estate. Records are often held in CROs. The landed and gentry families were often members of these bodies. The role of local doctors and the nursing service was often important, especially in terms of schools and the health of children. Food shortages also became a significant issue towards the end of the war with school children gathering free food, such as blackberries at harvest time.

Government and Politics. County Councils, popularly elected, were established for the first time in England in 1888, replacing the old system of government through the magistrates. But magistrates, many from local landed, service or professional families, remained a very strong contingent on the council, often providing the chairman. Similarly the War extended the direct intervention of the state to aid the war effort – recruiting, supply of horses and raw materials from timber to acorns. Many of these temporary civilian roles were undertaken by members of the landed families in rural areas.

Parliamentary politics was suspended for the duration of the war, but there had been two, highly contested, general elections in 1910 and a very significant general election in December 1918. Descriptions of these elections in local newspapers give a very good picture of the political nature of the locality with vigorous debate between Liberal and Unionist candidates. In some cases candidates and/or members were from local landed families.

Conflict, Injury and Death. Recreating the pattern of enlistment, service, injury and death in a particular locality is a pain-staking process. The compensation is that military service records held in the National Archives at Kew are extra-ordinarily rich as are materials held at the Imperial War Museum. The websites of both are extremely useful. Local regimental museums and regimental associations can also have vivid archival and photographic holdings as well as other artefacts.

Recreation and Family Life. Local sport for boys and young men was important before the war, but was decimated, though quickly re-established after 1918. Women played a much more significant part in keeping 'the home fires burning' as did those of non-military age. The range of material here is eclectic and vast, but surprising in what it reveals.

Bibliography of British and Irish History: this valuable subscription, web-based, service cites detailed references for published books and articles in many subject areas. There is a useful keyword search facility. It may be possible to gain free access via universities (or, possibly, other institutions).

Dr Allen Warren is now an honorary research fellow of the University of York, having previously been Head of the History Department and Provost of Vanbrugh College. Before retirement he was also co-founder and co-chairman with Dr Christopher Ridgway, Curator at Castle Howard, of the Yorkshire Country House Partnership that is mounting a series of exhibitions exploring the impact of war on Yorkshire country houses and their communities: www.ychp.org.uk.

Study day on 'Industry in Kent during the First World War'

At Willesborough Windmill (see below) on Saturday 8 March a keen group from **Ashford Archaeological and History Society** and the **WEA** met for a programme of talks on the industrial history of Kent. Topics covered were the manufacture of motorcycles, the mysterious port of Richborough and a European Rail Link 1916-1922, 'the Chemical Garden of England' which examined the copperas industry, and the associations of the area with early aircraft production. The day ended with a tour of the windmill, originally constructed in 1869 and restored in 1991. www.ashfordacrhist.org



Great War Cumbria 2014

The significant and diverse contributions of Cumberland, Westmorland and Northern Lancashire to the First World War will be explored at the Great War Cumbria 2014 Conference on the 28 September 2014, hosted by the Western Front Association Cumbria Branch and Hesketh Local History Group.

One vital contribution was at the industrial complex that made cordite in the Eastrigg/Gretna/Longtown area. Established in 1915, it employed upwards of 16,600 people and a whole new town was established to house them.

The manufacture of ships, submarines and airships, together with munitions produced at Barrow in Furness was essential to the war effort. In the western areas of the region there were supplies of haematite iron ore, and in the northern 'Lake District' at Carrock Mine wolfram was extracted. This latter material was so important an ingredient for armoured steel, plating in ships and other armaments that troops were posted at the mine for security.

Full details can be found at
www.greatwarcumbria.co.uk



A champion of local history

Jane Howells

As well as undertaking her own research and writing, and producing three volumes for the Southampton Records Series, Dr Cheryl Butler has inspired and managed two major projects, both of which earned Heritage Lottery Fund grants. Not only did these involve other volunteers learning new skills, but they also proved extremely popular with the public who enjoyed the diverse ways in which the results were shared. Cheryl is someone who believes that local history is relevant and interesting to everyone, and finding innovative ways of getting people involved is one of her great strengths.



Local History Day June 2014: Cheryl Butler with Professor David Hey, President of BALH

Inspired by good history teachers at school, including one who had the imagination to set an A level project on 16th century Southampton, her interest developed in various directions. At university she studied history and drama, and subsequently wrote her PhD thesis on the Southampton Book of Fines (now available as SRS volumes 2007 - 2010). Since 1990 she has worked for Eastleigh Borough Council, and in 2005 was appointed

Head of Culture, holding strategic responsibility for Arts Development, Tourism and Heritage. Against this busy professional life, she has found time and energy for an impressive amount of voluntary work that promotes the importance of local history in the community.

Cheryl was one of the first Blue Badge Guides in the city, and a founder member of the Southampton Tourist Guides Association. She is writer/director with the Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre Company which she was instrumental in establishing in 1988. This amateur group writes, produces and performs theatre on the history of Southampton in the sites where the events took place. One example of many is a supper theatre version of 'The Ship Titanic' in the hotel where many of the passengers stayed prior joining the ship for its ill-fated voyage in 1912.

In 2006/7 the Diaper Heritage Association was launched, and awarded HLF funding to stage an exhibition, 'Fisherman, Ferryman, Sailor, Spy – the Diapers of Itchen Ferry', a book *We Only Wore Shoes on a Sunday*, events programme, website, commissions for plays, music performances and an oral history project. On the surface this is family history on a large scale – the resulting family tree has 10,000 entries dating back to the 1430s, and 30 oral life histories have been recorded. But it went so much



further by locating the family in the very deprived area of Southampton where they lived, and exploring how their lives related to the maritime history of the city.

The objective of the second HLF project was to identify and record inhabitants of Tudor Southampton. Cheryl chaired the Tudor Revels Consortium that brought together the knowledge and enthusiasm of local history societies, schools and churches, with the University of Southampton and the City Council. They have developed a free searchable database which has become an important source for historians of the period. Some 20 researchers received training in palaeography skills and the use of

archives. You can read about some of the many highlights of the programme in Cheryl's article about Tudor Revels, on p 17 in this issue of *LHN*.

Cheryl Butler is a passionate advocate for local history; people discover how enjoyable and exciting it is when they came across the results of her commitment. Her skills as a manager, an innovative interpreter and a very effective communicator, have been instrumental in increasing community engagement with local history in Southampton.

With thanks to Cheryl Butler, Gloria Tack, Julie Barker and Anna Welch.

Alan Dodge

Alan Dodge, who died in March, achieved three marks of distinction of a successful local historian; published author, accomplished lecturer and a founder member and inspiring chairman of a local history society. Born in Ditton Kent in 1938, he was a botanist by profession, and enjoyed a successful career as a lecturer at the University of Bath.

Making a home for his family in Freshford, where he lived for over 45 years he became a dedicated parishioner, holding down many positions on local councils and committees, (including Freshford and District Local History Society) and serving a wide range of projects to improve life in the village. His history of the parish, *Freshford: The History of a Somerset Village*, published in 2000, caused considerable local interest and earned widespread praise. His easy and lucid prose style was underpinned by an extensive knowledge of his subject set in the wider context of English history. This was followed, in 2011, by *Ditton: History of a Kentish Village*, that drew similar appreciation and acclaim. Sandwiched between these publications he wrote historical notes for the parish magazine of the joint benefice of which Freshford is a part. These were published in 2012 as *From Turnpike Gates to Christmas Waits*, and exemplify Alan's love of village life, the history underpinning it, and his enthusiasm and delight in sharing this. Over many years he lectured extensively in Somerset and Wiltshire and he was regarded as a popular and

engaging speaker. He was also an accomplished musician and combined this with his passion for village history in performing with his wife, Margaret, West Gallery music of village choir and orchestra associated with Thomas Hardy. He was the go-to-person for interpreting and researching manuscript music books from church or chapel that survive in small numbers in local archives, and on several occasions I have been amused and delighted as he sight-read and then hummed tunes (quietly) in the search room by way of explanation.

As a committed Christian the church was an important part of Alan's life. He was organist in Freshford Church for over 40 years; his vicar has estimated that he had played at around at 20,000 services. For evidence



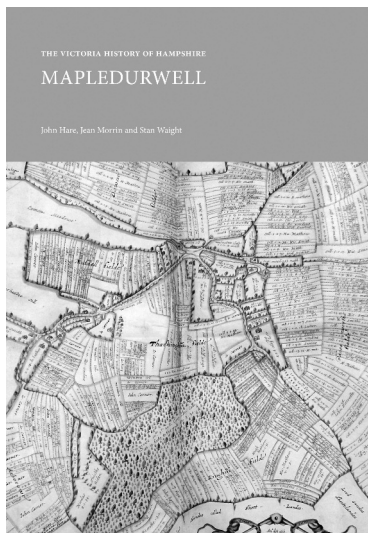
of the affection, love and respect in which he was held, one need look no further than his funeral, when around 200 people squeezed into St Peter's Freshford, with many left outside in the churchyard, to pay their last respects to a truly remarkable man who touched so many lives through his infectious enthusiasm for and commitment to the past and present of his home patch.

Steve Hobbs

*St Peter's church, Freshford by Brian Robert Marshall
(detail) www.geograph.org.uk*

VCH Shorts: a new publication venture

Jessica Davies



It is said by some that the best things come in small packages. We at the Victoria County History are particularly excited about the new VCH Shorts series of publications which may be slim in

length but do not skimp on detail. This series of parish and urban histories, produced in paperback, aims to bring local research to publication as swiftly as possible, and to inspire readers to get involved with VCH ventures in their own localities. The initial idea grew out of *The Victoria County History 1899-2012: A Diamond Jubilee Celebration* experimental publication which was published

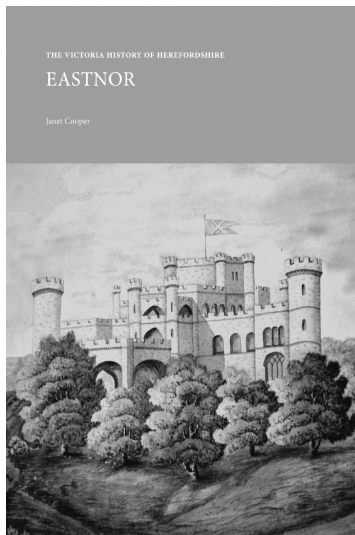
in 2012 as part of the Diamond Jubilee year and to mark the rededication of our red books to HM Queen Elizabeth II. Unlike other VCH publications the production of this title was entirely in-house with our colleagues in the School of Advanced Study's publications team working collaboratively with us every step of the way.

Feedback from this venture was positive and we felt that there definitely was an audience for these kinds of titles. Counties would also be able to use these publications to show what they do to potential donors.

So in 2013 we continued this work and published the first of the series, *Mapledurwell* (Hampshire), which looked again at a parish last covered in 1911 by the VCH. A team of volunteers undertook research under the guidance of Dr Jean Morrin and the resulting publication was very much a collective effort.

Later in the same year *Eastnor* (Herefordshire) was published and launched at Eastnor castle, home to much of the archived material the volunteers had reviewed as part of their research work. Again an experienced academic, this time Dr Janet Cooper, oversaw the Herefordshire-based project.

Both of these publications have been very successful with positive reviews and *Mapledurwell* selling out its first print run. We are currently working on titles in Essex and Middlesex with more titles currently in the initial planning stage. Copies can be purchased directly from the county or via the School of Advanced Study's website www.sas.ac.uk and more information about the series can be found on at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk.



Lacock Unlocked

Ally McConnell

Lacock Unlocked is a Heritage Lottery funded project based at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham. The focus of the project is on the Lacock archive, which was housed at Lacock Abbey until the 1990s when it was deposited with the History Centre. A decision by the owner to sell the collection led to the HLF bid to purchase the archive and keep it in its place of deposit.

The successful bid to purchase the archive included some funding to catalogue the collection and promote it, using the local community as volunteers and working with other communities to make the collection accessible and available to the local public and, through the online catalogue, the rest of the world. The bid also included money to work with Wiltshire College to create a mobile phone App for use in Lacock, and for a web designer to create a project website. This will include a community archive and we hope to maintain this for at least ten years, started by staff and volunteers at the History Centre along with input from the web designer, and continued by volunteers.

It was decided that the bid to HLF would also include some money for the Education Officer's time to work with local schools on the Lacock collection, conservators' time and resources to repair and package the material, and also employing a full time project archivist (myself) to catalogue the collection and manage the cataloguing and indexing volunteers. Other members of staff have also been involved with managing different parts of the project, such as the Archives and Local Studies manager with the website, the Principal Archivist with the App and managing remote indexers, and a member of staff overseeing digitising volunteers.

I started my role in June 2013 and am now working with about 25 volunteers, all of whom come into the History Centre once a week or

once a fortnight to list the boxes, input the lists onto the database and number the documents. With so many volunteers on board, we have been able to make the lists really detailed which we hope will increase the accessibility of the catalogue especially in its online presence, where people interested in local and family history can search for names and be more likely to find them. The remote indexers have been working through the manorial documents transcribing the court books and creating a vast index of names, which will again be of great help to researchers. Before I started, some volunteers helped with digitisation of some of the documents to be transcribed and indexed, and the U3A group based in Devizes have been coming in to the History Centre to do an initial list of all the boxes (and, in many cases, bundling large quantities of loose documents, which has been exceedingly helpful for the listing that I manage) for over 13 years.

The range of volunteers on board means that we can make use of a variety of skills: some will be researching and writing content for the website, some using palaeography skills to list and index documents, one French lady is always happy to translate or summarise documents in French, those with good computer skills are working with the database, and so on. Volunteers get involved for many reasons but a common one is to develop or maintain certain skills, so the diversity of opportunities for this project means we have been able to attract a lot of interested people who can bring different knowledge bases to the cataloguing process.

A year on from the start, we have completed the listing of well over half of the 120 boxes. Those are all on the database and are now in the process of being numbered within their bundles. In a few months we will be closing the collection to properly sort and package it, so we are hoping that at least most of the listing and numbering will be complete by then. I

have been calendaring the 25 boxes of deeds and this is now complete – we will be about to start sorting and bundling those to be catalogued properly.

The archive itself is varied. Most of the records concern the Lacock estate, household, families and the owners of the abbey, and we have deeds, manorial documents, accounts, correspondence, photographs, plans, newspaper cuttings, research notes and many other documents which tell us about the estate and how it was formed and managed, about the households and families who were involved. They tell us about Lacock businesses and what the owners of the estate did. The accounts in particular are extremely detailed and numerous, and give a good indication of the wealth of the owners and the jobs that the local community did. There is not much material on William Henry Fox Talbot, probably the most well-known owner of Lacock, as most of his correspondence has ended up with private owners or is housed at the British Library or the Science Museum (Fox Talbot was a pioneer of photography and based his business at Lacock).

We also have a large amount of material on related families, particularly the Davenport family who came from Shropshire. Henry Davenport was at one time a deputy governor in the East India Company (in the early 18th

century) and we have a lot of material on the East India Company as well as his personal papers and those of his ancestors. The quantity of material on Shropshire and the Davenports has allowed Shropshire Archives and the History Centre to work together on an E-volunteering programme whereby Shropshire volunteers transcribe and index some of the Lacock collection that refers to the Davenports. This will lead to a more coherent catalogue as the Shropshire volunteers' familiarity with names and places greatly helps with the indexing.

The project has been very exciting to work on due to the range of material in the collection and the many little projects we have been able to do using the different skills of volunteers and staff. There really is something for everyone and as a member of staff coming in to the project from outside, it has been wonderful to be immersed in Lacock and be involved with it and everybody who has a passion for Lacock and the Lacock archive. We have been able to achieve a lot already and, as the website starts to gather momentum and we start to look forward to the community archive, an exhibition and the sorting and packaging of the collection, there promises to be more exciting times ahead for Lacock Unlocked.

See front cover image of this issue of LHN

Resources for Community Heritage Groups: Building and Enriching Shared Heritages

The School of History at the University of Leicester has recently produced a series of free online guides for community groups and individuals who are involved in local history and heritage projects. They cover a range of topics, including writing grant applications, finding and interpreting historical records, recording oral history, working with schools, recruiting volunteers, cataloguing material, and much else besides.

The guides are based on a series of workshops provided by the University in 2013 for groups across the East Midlands, and many of the topics were requested by the students themselves. They are now available for anyone to use as free downloads from the website

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/history/outreach/besh/>

*** We would be very pleased to hear from any BALH members who make use of these resources, and would be prepared to share their experience with others. Please get in touch: mail@balh.co.uk ***

Historical Directories

Simon Dixon

The University of Leicester launched the Historical Directories website in 2003 as part of a Lottery funded project to digitise a selection of the University's collection of local trade directories. Where there were gaps in our own holdings, content was sourced from local studies services across England and Wales. The result was that, for the first time, 675 trade directories became freely available online. Under the terms of the lottery funding, the University was required to provide access to the digitised directories for three years from the end of the project. The original website proved a great deal more durable than this, and has been a popular resource among local and family historians for more a decade.

Just over a year ago, it became apparent that the software and the technical infrastructure on which the site was running had become obsolete and could not be maintained indefinitely. A number of options for keeping the content freely available were explored, and the most viable and sustainable solution was to incorporate Historical Directories into the University Library's broader Special Collections Online resource. This was originally created to host content on the history of Leicestershire as My Leicestershire History, and has since been expanded to include primary source material on Leicester's recent industrial history (Manufacturing Pasts).

Users of the earlier site will notice a number of changes to the service, which we are continuing to work to improve. As part of the migration project all of the original image files were sent to TownsWeb Archiving where they were re-processed in order to improve the accuracy of the machine readable text that enables the directories to be searched. The new system allows users to download many of the directories as complete PDF files, rather than as individual pages as on the previous website. We are hoping that we will be able to improve this

so that the majority can be downloaded in full. The re-use rights for the directories have been changed to a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial license, enabling anyone who would like to make the volumes available elsewhere can do so in accordance with the published terms of use.

A help page offering advice on searching and providing answers to some of the more frequently asked questions about the new site can be accessed from the navigation bar at the top of the screen. We would welcome feedback from members of BALH on the service and are trying to make improvements wherever



possible. We are often asked whether we have plans to add new directories to the site. There are no such plans at present, but we would be very happy to hear from anyone who would like to reuse the existing content and can supply copies of the files if requested.

specialcollections@le.ac.uk
0116 252 2056

University of Leicester, Special Collections
Online – <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk>

Historical Directories of England and Wales –
<http://www.historicaldirectories.org>

Gaps in our knowledge:

Simon Fowler struggles while researching drysalters

Perhaps I am being naïve here, but I am always amazed about how little we have researched the past. There's been lots of research in certain fields of course, but whole areas have either been neglected or just not studied at all.

Take drysalting and related trades, for example. I became interest in the topic after being commissioned to write a business history of one of the oldest drysalters still trading. I was surprised to discover how little has been written on them. There's just one article on an eighteenth century drysalter and two company histories listed in the Bibliography of British and Irish History.

Drysalters were dealers in a range of chemical products. *Notes and Queries* was once asked:

'A very dear and beautiful friend of mine has just married a gentleman who is called a 'drysalter' and I am very much concerned to think the dear girl has only married a seller of salt meat. I have, however, just heard that in reality he is a merchant of high standing, who deals in less vulgar articles.'

She was reassured that: 'Many a drysalter is a man of substance, and sometimes he is a millionaire, his wealth being acquired from dealing in saline substances, drugs, dry-stuffs, and even pickles and sauces.' By 'saline substances' the editor meant chemicals.

Without the products they bought and sold Victorian and even modern lives would be much poorer. A staple of many drysalters' trade was shellac, the shells of tiny beetles, which was imported from India and used in a variety of trades, not just the making of gramophone records but also in varnish and even in food coverings. The centre of the shellac trade was in Mincing Lane in the City of London, but no trace of this trade, which was once considerable, remains.

Or gum – not chewing gum – but gums used in food processing and a range of other trades – with evocative names like Gum Senegal, Agar Agar and Tragacanth. Such gums largely come from North Africa and the Middle East and even now seem deeply exotic.

In all honesty it is a difficult and complex subject to get one's head around, particular if like me you gave up chemistry after O-Levels.

And there are surprisingly few records. For the most part drysalters were small and when they folded or were taken over, their records were thrown away. Some no doubt remain with the companies themselves if they are still trading. The National Register of Archives has details of a dozen deposits – mainly account books – but nothing substantial and almost nothing post-war. But this lack of original material supports the old adage that our knowledge of the past must be based on the surviving archives.

And yet if you persevere there is material in newspapers and official records, such as the

London Gazette, although at times researchers may feel like palaeontologists reconstructing dinosaurs from fossils.

So without the archival records any research will be patchy, but that should be no reason for historians, both academic and amateur, not to try.

Simon Fowler is a professional history researcher, writer and tutor.

[ps illustration just for show, it is a Chemist and Druggist (1818) not a drysalter. Ed]



Local history and the Gascon Rolls

Gill Draper

'Torturing him with hunger': John Rose of Greenwich, servant and mariner of the king, in the Gascon Rolls.

The Gascon Rolls project has recently been revitalised by new funding and can be freely used by independent scholars (<http://www.gasconrolls.org/en/>). Access via a university or other institution is not required, and BALH aims to keep its members abreast of such websites and databases, in particular the opportunities they offer for local historical research.

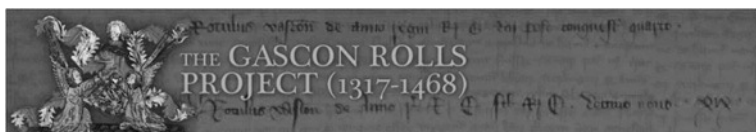
There will be a full calendar in English of all the rolls from 1317 to 1468, together with high-quality digital images of each membrane (TNA C 61). The website is also intended to demonstrate the current quality and future capacities of digital editing, and would therefore be useful to look at in advance if you are attending the County Societies Symposium on 13 September 2014. There is more on this subject on the helpful home page of the website which, *bien sûr*, we should all read before beginning our research (click the 'fr' tab to read the whole thing in French if you wish).

In the usual fashion, further tabs lead to the meat of this website: 'About' takes us to the Plantagenet government of the English monarchs as dukes of Aquitaine in south-west France between 1154 and 1453, and the Historical Introduction describes the nature and content of the rolls themselves, which were essentially enrolments of royal letters, mandates, directions, etc, under the privy or great seals. The Introduction makes clear not only

their importance for further study of the Hundred Years War but also their utility for local history: for example, charters of town foundations and records of trade in wine, wool, grain, spices and other high-value goods. There are letters of attorney and of array, pardons, safe conducts, grants of exemptions to churches and priors, and much more. For this reason, the formulary of the poet Thomas Hoccleve, who was a privy seal clerk, contains long sections copied from these rolls as exemplars (Dr Philip Morgan). Under Research Tools, there is a helpful glossary and a newly-created downloadable map of medieval Aquitaine, important if you want, say, to know the exact location of places with which merchants were trading.

Most important for starting research are the indexes, which in due course, according to the editorial guidelines, will cover people, places and subjects. At the moment there is no sign of subjects, but it will no doubt be done once the website is completed (the calendar for some years is still to be added, although all the images are there). Even without the subject index it is still possible to search the whole website for every instance of a term, such as pilgrim.

The blog has short and pithy pieces by eminent scholars, and each roll has a helpful and interesting introduction. The one for 1325 by Malcolm Vale is an overview of the Gascon business in that year and the preparations for war, including the recruitment of soldiers and sailors, many of them criminals who had previously been pardoned. Vale noted that 'the social range of those indicted and pardoned appears to be largely confined to peasants and



labourers, but tradesmen, artisans, the occasional clerk and chaplain, and one knight's son, appear in the lists'. Because trade, piracy and war feature in the rolls, individuals from the maritime counties of England from Northumberland to East Anglia, Essex, Kent and Sussex and right round to the West Country are heavily represented in the entries and indexes. Where individuals are known to those working on the Project from other primary sources, or from secondary sources, links and references have been made. However there is great potential for local historians to give further suggestions about the identity of others, using the Contact Us tab (information from Philip Morgan, speaking on 'London, Londoners and the Gascon Rolls: some sample entries' at the Medieval and Tudor London Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 27 May 2014).

There will be many possibilities for local historians' own research, for example, on occupations, whether directly given, as spicer, mariner, clerk, etc, or as by-names such as William Brekebot. The breaking of boats for the re-use of parts was a notable activity in large and small ports around the coast, and the kind of material in the Gascon Rolls has many possibilities for use in conjunction with the calendared Patent and Close Rolls, as well as customs accounts and naval records. There is a large and recent literature on maritime and port history at a local and regional level, and the availability of the Rolls in this form will promote further research.

The trials and travails of John Rose, tortured with hunger, derived from the detention of his ship *le Michel* of London which was laden with wine and other merchandise of various merchants, landed at Bordeaux in 1321, and was then illegally detained. The full story, as it were, is on C61/33: 328, but the calendared version gives access to it for students and others who do not read medieval Latin, as well as providing links to other parts of the story and characters in it, such as a merchant for whom Rose was transporting wine. Digital editions can do as much, and more, than paper ones, although we might note that a limited-edition hardback version in a series of volumes is planned, with the perhaps-significant comment that 'it is hoped that publication in this manner will ensure the long-term preservation and availability of the edition'!

Contd from page 19

Recent members' questionnaire:

Several members felt that BALH could have a higher profile in some regions and local communities - including having a regional sub-structure. Some also wanted better links with heritage groups, writing articles in local journals, better press coverage, advertising and encouraging a more varied balance of interests on the BALH committees.

One area that most members expressed strong support for was BALH playing an active role in consultations such as government surveys. This was accompanied by comments such as 'a higher profile in government and the media is essential for survival and growth' or 'BALH has the skills and wide knowledge that are invaluable in putting forward the views of local historians across the country'.

Overall BALH's individual members felt it gave real value for money. Inevitably there was some concern about future membership costs but 99% respondees gave very positive endorsements with reasons such as 'it enables local societies to feel represented in national action' or 'it is the best quality authoritative source of information for local historians' or 'its quality is higher than most comparable organisations'.

The Trustees are obviously pleased with these endorsements but want to consider all the suggestions for improvement. We are also aware that by no means all members responded, and we welcome continued feedback and ideas for future development and improvement.

Many thanks for these responses so far and we look forward to continual feedback on our services.

Tim Lomas is Chair of BALH

The People Project: a digital window into the past

Cheryl Butler

A little over two years ago a group of volunteer researchers formulated a plan for a research project, the aim and scope of which would normally be the purview of a university – of course we had not actually considered that at the time! Our aim had been to raise the profile of the history and heritage of Southampton, particularly its wealth of original documents, in our eyes an untapped and under-utilized resource. The outcome and legacy of the project, called **The Tudor Revels**, was to provide an open source resource for historians both amateur and professional, a database that brought together every mention of an individual we could find in the town records covering the period 1485-1603, and known as The People Project. The Tudor period had been focused on because there were a range of original documents, but what we felt were a manageable number within our two year framework. The documents were in English and several of the key documents had already been transcribed by The Southampton Records Society which made the project more available to new researchers.

We hoped to capture around 5000 people, we imagined there would be a predominance of men, we assumed that it would be of interest to genealogists, to those studying the topography of the town, the study of crafts. Now we have come to the end of our funded work which was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and are reflecting on what has been achieved and indeed what still needs to be done. Currently there are over 11,000 entries, culled from hundreds of documents: the personal such as wills and inventories, to the civic, stewards' books, port records, and the criminal, magistrates courts, court leet, piepowder and Bishops Consistory. However we still have dozens of records as yet un-touched, thankfully a core of researchers are committed to carrying on the work until the survey of documents held in Southampton are complete.

As expected family historians have already found the resource a boon and we regularly receive emails from genealogists from all over the UK and from the United States. Southampton being a port and a trading centre has always been a magnet for 'foreigners and aliens'. In the true spirit of local historians as much as we share our data with them, we in return get additional data back to add to the biographies of 'our people'. Our project began as others were also starting to utilise the new digital tools to collate similar large scale data. We have made a connection with the England's Immigrants 1330-1550 led by the University of York and the National Archives, which is mapping overseas immigrants who came to live in England. By cross referencing the database we can enhance both projects, our data not only shows we have Italian, French, Dutch, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, Welsh people living in the town but has also highlighted trends such as the Dutch/Germans having a focus in the brewing and gunnery trades; the Portuguese trading in woad. On occasion more



unusual travellers visited Southampton and are caught fleetingly by the town scribes. In 1590 John Battane, Matthias Perrus and Michael Vorent, Hungarian gentlemen, arrived with letters enabling them to collect money to help repay the ransoms that were raised to release them from Turkish captivity. One of those tan-

talizing encounters which is begging for more research!

The Overland Trade project which is examining the Southampton Brokage Books has created a picture over time, from the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries, about the overland trade of the town, the merchants, the carters, the goods carried, the routes taken, the taxes paid. By putting the carters names into The People project database, we are able to show what other work the carters undertook;

transporting dung that had gathered by the town gates, picking up stones and wood being used to fortify the town when it was threatened by possible invasion. We can provide a more rounded view of how much they worked, what they were paid, did they have men working for them, what parish they lived in. Sometimes there are little insights into their lives such as John Carter of Bannisters Court who in 1539 provided two fat geese valued 14d and one fat capon, 16d, for the Bishop of Winchester's banquet that the town provided when the bishop visited Calshot.

And what of the women? Many are still invisible, we know they lived through their children, or by mention as the wives of certain men. We briefly glimpse Elizabeth Lyster, the sixteen year old daughter of Sir Richard Lyster, as the town guns are fired for her wedding to Richard Blount in 1526-7, and we know she was still alive twenty years later when her father left her a silver cup in his will. Or Margaret Pinner who was richly rewarded in 1568, given 31s for making the bottom of a purse that had been purchased in London and was to hold £40, a gift for the visiting Elizabeth I. What has been a delight and a surprise however were the number of strong, forceful women who have appeared as we have pieced their stories together, from a mention here, a note there. Women such as the Four Maries: Mary Janvarin, Mary Elzie, Mary Dingley and Mary Waterton. Mary J twice married, her first husband lost to plague, left the Star Inn [which still survives today] by her father, bribed a Venetian official to save her son from execution as a pirate; Mary E who could, apparently cure the French pox, Mary D daughter of a town mayor, who had a scandalous affair with her husband's friend and business partner and was accused of being a witch, Mary W, wife of the town clerk who was accused of 'incontinent life of her body' and making her husband a cuckold. Having a colourful life certainly helps raise your profile in the records.

The richness of The People Project has been its success in uncovering forgotten lives of ordinary people; the disabled like Deaf Robert, Lame Basill and Blind Peter. Or the poor like John Fox, born in France, but who made his life in England working as a dauber, mixing clay, cow hair and lime to make walls for houses and who ended his life in 1536 as one of the town's thirteen official beggars, given a tin badge and a collection bag to collect alms.

The project has reached its aim of creating a free database but this has opened up a whole

new project on how that data can be used. Currently a range of talks is available from the background of how to conceive and deliver a project like The People Project, to topics from defence, privateering, women and work, crime and punishment, strangers and aliens but this is just the tip of a very large iceberg that the project has created. What we hope is that others will plunder the resource and by doing so help us to achieve the recognition for those archives so painstakingly recorded by men who only had quills and ink [and yes we do know how much the John Mille, town clerk, paid for his!] which through new technology is now laid before a new generation for their study and their delight.

The People Project
www.tudorreveals.co.uk
www.englandsimmigrants.com
www.overlandtrade.org

BALH's new Reviews Editor

Born and raised in Yorkshire, I studied for a degree in history at Lancaster University, followed by an MA in Museum Studies at Newcastle University. I then returned to Lancaster to undertake a PhD in medieval history and have lived here ever since. My thesis, completed in 2010, examines landed society in the honour of Pontefract between 1086 and 1509. It concludes that the honour survived as a meaningful socio-political entity for its lords and leading tenants alike.

Since then I have taught at Lancaster and Manchester Metropolitan Universities, as well as working on a variety of research projects. In 2012 I updated and digitized the Manorial Documents Register for Lancashire on behalf of The National Archives. However, the project I have been most involved with over the past four years has been the Victoria County History of Cumbria, for which I worked as Volunteer Co-ordinator and then as Assistant Editor.

It was through my involvement with the VCH that I became more familiar with the work of BALH. I was delighted to be given the opportunity to serve as Reviews Editor for *The Local Historian* and look forward to enacting my new role.

Sarah Rose

BALH: are we heading in the right direction? The views of individual members

Tim Lomas

This article summarises the views of individual members as reflected in the recent questionnaire. 202 people completed it either in hard copy or, in a few cases, electronically. The respondees ranged widely with roughly a quarter being recent members and a similar number with over 20 years membership. 8 stated that they had been members 'since the beginning'.

A fuller analysis will be added to the website but it may be useful to provide some highlights. The second part of this survey will look at the views of societies and will appear in the next edition of *LHN*.

BALH is conscious of its membership profile with 90% of the respondees to this survey categorising themselves in the 55+ age range. Although not an automatic inference, this may partly explain why many want to retain hard-copy forms of communication and oppose a completely electronic-based structure. 87% made no use of social media currently and 97% expressed no intention of using it in the foreseeable future. Over half, however, felt that they would be willing to pay using electronic means. BALH trustees will respect this viewpoint whilst also embracing the new technology including social media for those who wish.

The most striking result of the survey was the high levels of satisfaction expressed by members for its services. This was particularly the case for *The Local Historian* and *Local History News* where over 95% felt that they were excellent or at least good. Similar rates of satisfaction were expressed for others services such as occasional publications, the website, conferences, visits, Local History Day and Awards although there were fewer responses reflecting the reach of these different services.

The analysis of reasons for the satisfaction included the quality of articles, the reviews and the summary of content of journals in *The Local Historian* and the interest and variety in *Local History News*. There were a few negative comments which BALH is aware of and taking steps to address, such as the preponderance of 19th century articles, the regional distortion, and a lack of space for issues such as the economic and organisational changes affecting the local history world.

As many members will be aware, BALH is working hard to improve its website and several members commented on the current one including its chunky feel and difficult navigation. In terms of Local History Day and Awards, perhaps not surprisingly, those able to attend felt that this was a most enjoyable and rewarding event but some commented on the location and a few wondered whether the selection of Award winners actually picked up all those who fully merited one.

There was little appetite for ending any existing services although there were a few suggestions for new ones including:

establishing a scheme so that individuals could apply for approved status as a local history speaker or class teacher;

providing more help for archival research and resources;

negotiating a reduced fee for access to other websites.

continued on p 16

End of an era: not just yet

Eric Miller

The Local History Society at Leckhampton, on the outskirts of Cheltenham, was formed 22 years ago. With about 80 members, attendance at meetings ranges between 30 and 50, which includes a number of visitors, especially when there is a talk on a truly local subject. Its finances are sound, and thanks to the sale of publications a comfortable reserve fund has been built up. From this over £2000 has been donated to appropriate causes, for example to encourage history teaching at the two local primary schools and to support a privately run museum dedicated to the First World War.

However, beneath this seemingly rosy exterior the foundations have been shaky. Despite appeals, for some years no one had volunteered to replace the chairman, secretary or treasurer, and the committee as a whole was effectively a 'caretaker'. At the last AGM, in May 2013, an ultimatum was issued: if no one volunteered to fill the crucial rôles during the following 12 months, the society would have to be wound up.

The constitution lays down that in such an event any assets should be passed on to another organisation having similar objectives. The Cheltenham LHS seemed the obvious choice, and accordingly officials from the two societies met to discuss a possible future arrangement.

Transferring funds would have been straightforward, but there were other issues, such as where to house the society's substantial archive. The Gloucestershire Archives seemed the best recourse. Perhaps surprisingly, there was some doubt whether Cheltenham LHS, with over 300 members, could accommodate many new ones. Against this, it was uncertain how many Leckhamptonites (other than the twenty or so who were already members of both societies) would make the journey into town on a dark night!

I had been preparing to write an article in the society's newsletter under the heading 'Leckhampton LHS 1992-2014 – the end of an era?' when at the eleventh hour a rescuer came. A fairly new member, with extensive experience of committee work and deep local roots, was easing herself into retirement. She at first offered help of a general kind but has since agreed to take on the chairmanship. She also introduced me to a couple who had just moved with their young family into the Old Rectory and were keen to learn more about it and its setting. They in turn mentioned some like-minded friends who had gone to live in the Old Lodge below the manor house. When I mentioned the society's uncertain future, they protested that it couldn't be allowed to fold.

These five, plus two other new members keen to help, are now shadowing the present committee. They will bring new ideas and fresh vigour while three members of the old committee and the webmaster will remain to ensure continuity after the next AGM. So, it is not so much the end of an era as hopefully the beginning of a new one.

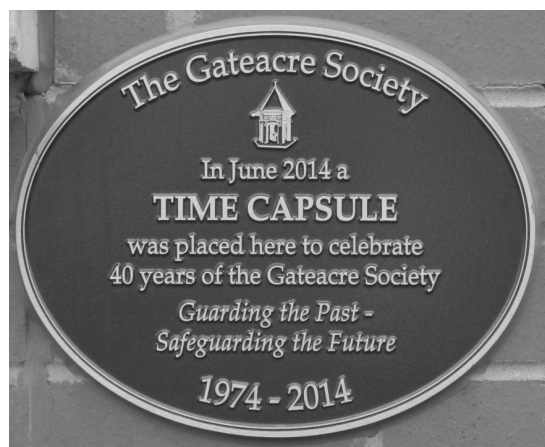
Our experience raises a wider issue, though. Traditional organisations of all kinds are finding it difficult to attract any new members, never mind the committee. As Probus Clubs amalgamate and Mothers' Union branches fold, I am tempted to speculate that one day someone will write a thesis along the lines of 'The Rise and Fall of Cultural Associations, 1880 – 2020'. The dates are open to debate, but it is a fact that fewer people are joining or offering to run societies such as ours. Nevertheless, people will always be curious about their locality's past. The means of satisfying that interest is evolving, and it would be instructive to hear about the experiences of other BALH members.

SOCIETIES



Barking & District Historical Society will be celebrating their 80th Anniversary, starting in the Autumn, with a season of special events and activities. This begins on Monday 1 September with the launch of a new booklet on an unknown local artist Frank Tingey, followed by a buffet and wine. On 3 November there will be a talk on 'The Glennys of Barking'. Further details can be found on their website www.barkinghistory.co.uk or by emailing barkinghistorical@hotmail.com

To mark their 40th Anniversary the **Gateacre Society** have created a Time Capsule which has been buried in the landscaped area of the new Aldi store at Gateacre Park Drive. The idea came from the discovery, during the demolition of the Gateacre Hall Hotel, of a time capsule from 1881. For the new one Society members were asked to contribute memories and mementoes, and also their thoughts on how Gateacre has changed between 1974 and 2014, and how they predict it will alter again in the next 40 yrs. www.gatsoc.org.uk



Twenty seasons of the **Abbots Langley Local History Society** have been marked with several notable events this summer, a special AGM in May, the local Carnival in June and an Archive Day in July. Four local historians began the group in 1994, and since the very first meeting the society has been very well supported in the area. In their *Journal* No 40, there is an article 'Every Picture Tells a Story', illustrated by a photograph (below) of an ordinary-looking street in 1908. The author challenges the reader to look at the image very carefully, and reveals what can be learned if you do that, and at the same time explore a number of familiar local history sources; a very well-worthwhile exercise. www.allhs.org.uk



Tickhill & District Local History Society was founded 10 years ago. It has grown from a small group of enthusiasts to an established group with about 170 members, that gives value and historical perspective to the local community as a whole. Amongst a wide variety of activities, the society has produced 17 Occasional Papers, and is looking forward to the forthcoming publication of their most ambitious project so far: a book *Tickhill – discover its past*. www.tickhillhistorysociety.org.uk

The **Association of Northumberland Local History Societies** is establishing a Dr Constance Fraser Memorial Lecture (see *LHN* 110 p 31 for a brief summary of Dr Fraser's contribution to the region's local history). The inaugural lecture will be given on 20 September, by Dr Max Adams of Newcastle University, on 'King Oswald's Northumbria'. www.anlhs.org.uk

A special day event and a tribute issue of *Lincolnshire Past and Present* have been arranged by the **Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology** in recognition of the contribution made by the late Hilary Healey to the life of Lincolnshire. Hilary was an archaeologist and teacher, an authority on many areas of the county's heritage, and was also an accomplished artist, poet and writer. www.slha.org.uk



One of Hilary Healey's evocative drawings of the Fens

'Snippets' from various sources, of the local newspaper over the decades is a very useful way of filling space in a society newsletter if members have failed to contribute the expected articles, and it often appears as a regular feature. **Christchurch History Society** have one such selection in their May 2014 issue, and this includes the prizes offered at Christchurch Summer Carnival 1935: some are 'one pint of milk every day for a week', 'a copy of the *Christchurch Times* every Saturday morning for a year', 'Three pints of Hamerton's ale or stout delivered each week for a month', 'one free peep through the famous Spotting Observatory on Mudeford Beach', 'one razor blade every week for 6 weeks (or in the case the winner should be a lady, two scrubbing brushes!*)'. www.historychristchurch.org.

*apologies – the editor's exclamation mark, couldn't resist it.

In the May 2014 issue of **Edmonton Hundred Historical Society's Newsletter** there is an article pointing out that many local cemeteries, including theirs, have small areas devoted to war graves of the First and Second World Wars, and other conflicts. Too often these are overlooked in the detailed examination of community war memorials, and in the general interest in visiting the striking cemeteries on mainland

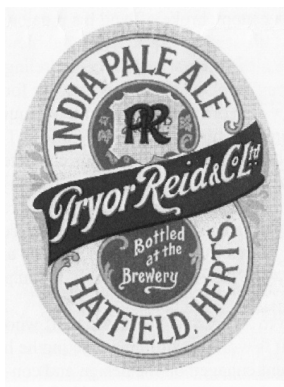
Europe. The author suggests that schools might take their pupils to local cemeteries to make effective links with national and global events. www.edmontonhundred.org.uk

As I have no doubt said before, I am a great fan of ephemera as a valuable local history resource. *The Blackcountryman* (Spring 2014) has, probably coincidentally, two articles that demonstrate examples of this. One is explicitly on the subject of sports meeting programmes, and after discussing the competitions, athletes, prizes and so on, adds three lines on 'advertisers and sponsors'. Secondly a detailed contribution about life in the County Commercial Secondary School comments 'the school magazine was well supported by local business advertising' and provides generous examples. This type of material shows useful confirmation of or additions to information found in more formal sources such as commercial directories. www.blackcountryhistorysociety.co.uk



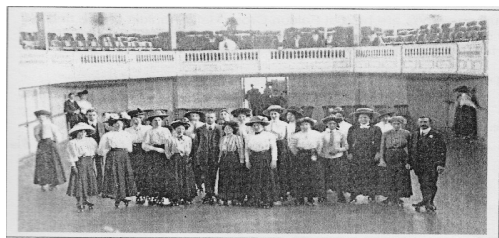
Hatfield Local History Society announce that a local brewer has been found to recreate ales produced by Pryor Reid brewery. Some recipes survive, and technical information has been extracted from the equipment listed amongst

Pryor Reid assets sold at auction in 1920. Ingredients, including the right water, are being sourced as close to the originals as possible. email hatfieldhistory@ntlworld.com



Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society can trace its foundation back to November 1888 when the Bedford Amateur Natural History Society was formed. As members' interests and the subjects of talks developed, it changed its name, in 1914, to the Bedford Natural History & Archaeological Society. In the 1920s there were some 170 members, increasing to over 200 by 1945. Then some difficulties arose when, in 1946, the Bedfordshire Natural History Society was established. The older group became the Bedford Archaeological Society, and many people belonged to both. A further name change reflected another adjustment of interests, in 1992 it became the Bedford Archaeological & Local History Society. The present identity came about in 2008 when there was a merger with the Bedford Society, which had been started in 1966 to focus on planning and conservation issues. After 125 years the society is flourishing, with over 100 members and a full programme of talks and outings. There is a conservation sub-committee to continue that thread of involvement. www.baalh.org.uk

Roller skating appears to have been a popular pastime in Edwardian times on the Isle of Wight. **Shanklin & District History Society** present the image below as their 'puzzle picture' for Spring 2014, and ask if anyone can identify the venue? www.shanklinhistory.web-plus.net



In 2010 **Formby Civic Society** made the decision to use Flickr as the method of making the 5,000+ images in their archive available to members and others. For a very reasonable cost, there is no limit to the number of images displayed, they can be grouped by subject, and a comments box is provided for visitors to add memories and suggestions. They have been very pleased with this system, have had over 750,000 individual views, and many favourable comments. www.flickr.com/photos/formbycivicsociety/



Wales: Last year a fire caused damage estimated at £5 million to the roof of the **National Library of Wales** in Aberystwyth. Now the Library has launched a three-year strategy for its future development. Its main objectives are to: Develop the conservation and digital preservation service for Wales' documentary heritage project; Develop a community partnership programme with partners in the public sector; and Lead a national debate on the potential for establishing a National Archive for Wales

Ireland: The **National Archives of Ireland** has released online the final batch of records from the soldiers' wills collection, <http://soldier-swills.nationalarchives.ie/search/sw/home.jsp>. These wills were made by non-commissioned soldiers who were encouraged by the army to make a will before leaving for active service. There is a small number of wills surviving for Irishmen who served in the British army in the late 19th century and during the South African wars of 1898-1902; however, the vast majority of the collection dates from the First World War.

In addition, the **National Archives of Ireland** has released 19th century census archives online. Census and related documents from the 19th century containing details of more than 600,000 people have been placed on three websites where they can be accessed free of charge.

British Library: Just 2 per cent of the British Library's massive archive of print newspapers have been digitized. Now the Library is completing a seven-year programme costing £33 million to upgrade its news archive. Its aim is to expand the Library's definition of "news." Please see: <http://www.bl.uk/britishnewspapers>

Imperial War Museum: An online archive remembering the millions of people from Britain and the Commonwealth who served in World War One has gone live. Four-and-a-half million British army members are already included in the Lives of the First World War project. But for many entries there is little more information than their names. The Imperial War Museums (IWM) wants families to add their own photographs, stories and memories to build a 'permanent digital memorial'. See: <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/>

Royal Voluntary Service Archives: Ever wondered how to make a Chinese omelette on rations or why a 1950s WVS knitting work party would secretly make odd-sized socks? If so you can read the latest instalment of the Heritage Bulletin Blog, which will be the first in a series of posts entitled "Spinach and beet" on whimsical, amusing and interesting extracts and from the WVS Bulletin, the in-house volunteers' magazine published between 1938-1974. You can read the latest blog post at: <http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/hbblog>

The **Heritage Lottery Fund** is conducting research into alternative sources of finance available to the heritage sector. This will focus in particular on non-grant finance and social investment. If you are an organisations which has accessed non-grant finance or social investment funds, you are invited to contact New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) who are assembling a range of case studies. *Please contact Abigail.Rotheroe@thinkNPC. for further information.*

Funding is a problem for many archive services and one way of persuading governing bodies that archives are worth financing is to be able to demonstrate national recognition. Four services have just been awarded **accredited status** and it is hoped these will lead the way for the sector as a whole. Successful applicants announced in June were: **Lancashire Archives, Lincolnshire Archives, London Metropolitan Archives, and Special Collections, University of Bradford.**

UNESCO established the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme in 1992. Its objective is to ensure that the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hin-

drance. This year nine new inscriptions will join the 41 already listed on the UK register (one of several country-level programmes from around the world). Included in the awards for 2014 are the 130 Roman curse tablets from Bath - the earliest known surviving prayers to a deity in Britain. With First World War commemorations upon us, there is the first ever TV-style interviews in 1916 from the Hepworth Cinema Collection, featuring figures such as LloydGeorge. *To see all the inscriptions on the UK Register go to* http://www.unesco.org.uk/uk_memory_of_the_world_register

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

On 29 July, Jeff James will take up his post as the new CEO of The National Archives. Jeff was formerly Director of Operations and Services at The National Archives for nearly six years.

Work is progressing on **Discovery II**, the new platform for searching archival resources. This now incorporates A2A, Archon and the Manorial Documents Register. Feedback is sought from users.

Preparations are also under way for commercial scanning and digitisation of the **registers compiled nationally in 1939** in advance of the issue of identity cards. This is a complex project because of Data Protection implications and because of the format as well as the size of the registers. Further reports will be provided in due course.

TNA's First World War 100 programme launched late last year, with a series of digitisation launches taking place from January 2014, including: Three batches of unit war diaries (record series WO 95), over 1 million pages; Conscription appeals (MH 47); and Security Service files (KV 2).

Forthcoming releases include the service records of the Household Cavalry (WO 4000) and the rest of the first digitised batch of unit war diaries (of the Indian infantry regiments), which will be published in the autumn to coincide with the centenary of these troops arriving on the Western Front, accompanied by outreach activities with community groups.

Operation War Diary, TNA's crowdsourcing partnership project with IWM and Zooniverse

(Uni of Oxford), continues, with hundreds of unit war diaries now tagged. TNA is preparing to release the first dataset from the project, and is about to embark on a range of activities aimed at keeping the volunteer 'citizen historians' interested and engaged in the project. Volunteers are also being invited to help prepare another large batch of unit war diaries for digitisation (WO 95/1 – WO 95/571, WO 95/3949 – WO 95/4193 and WO 95/5500). These diaries will be unavailable in the reading rooms on a short-term basis while they are sorted, conserved, itemised and digitised.

NEWS FROM PRONI [PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND]

To mark the centenary of the First World War, Derry City Council's Archive and Genealogy Service and the Public Record Office (PRONI) have digitised the Londonderry War Memorial records which are now available to view online. These records contain details of soldiers from the city who fought and died during the First World War. For further information, see: <http://www.londonderrysentinel.co.uk/news/local-news/war-memorial-records-digitised-for-centenary-1-6121261>

Margaret O'Sullivan

A real treat!

The National Archives has held its first ever film competition, sponsored by the Friends of The National Archives. Designed to engage new audiences with records in an accessible and creative way, film-makers were offered documents relating to specific areas of history: class, disability, mental health, LGBT, Black and ethnic minority, and women. A selection of 10 documents was made (listed in the April 2014 issue of the Magazine of the Friends (p 19). 22 entries were submitted, and 10 short-listed. The judges were unanimous in their winner, and spent time discussing second place and three highly commended films. There are plans to distribute the films as widely as possible and encourage their use in schools and universities as discussion points. All five short films can be watched on the website at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/filmsonfilm. Highly recommended viewing. Ed.



The popularity of the 'Great British Bake-Off' has been reflected in activities at the **Museum of English Rural Life**. Their Victorian building was the home of the Palmer family, of Huntley & Palmer's biscuits; the company archive is in Reading University Library's Special Collections. A 'Biscuit Bake-Off' has been added to the attractions of the annual fete, and children attending Toddler Time at the museum have been bringing their favourite biscuits. Their blog contains 'biscuit recipe of the week'. Blogs.reading.ac.uk/merl/

A recent special event at **Beamish Museum**, Co Durham was the grand opening of the new pit pony stables. Visitors will be able to meet the ponies at their stables, find out how they were cared for and trained for their work underground, and learn about their invaluable contribution to our mining heritage. www.beamish.org.uk

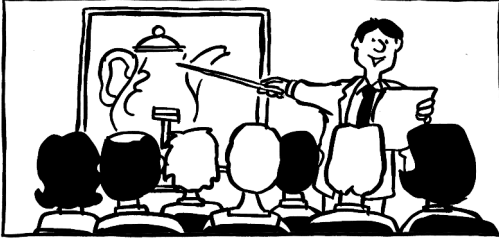


Heritage Open Days 2014

will take place throughout the country over the week-end of 11 – 14 September. This is often a very special opportunity of visit places not normally accessible to the public. Look out for local advertising for events near you or go to www.heritageopendays.org.uk

The main 2014 exhibition at the **British Schools Museum** marks the beginning of the First World War and tells the remarkable story of the 68 former pupils who lost their lives in the conflict. It brings the global conflict into a local context, exploring its effects on one small school in one small town. www.british-schoolsmuseum.org.uk

EDUCATION



Day schools at Canterbury Christ Church University in 2014-15

Have Fun with Old Handwriting

Saturday 4 October 2014

Strangers in Kent and East Sussex

Saturday 15 November 2014

The Last Place God Made: lives and landscape in the north Kent marshland

Saturday 14 March 2015

Tutor: Dr Gillian Draper. Each day school lasts from 10.30 to 4.30 and the fee is £29.50. For bookings, see www.canterbury.ac.uk/community-arts-education or tel. 01227 863451, or email education.communityarts@canterbury.ac.uk

University of Birmingham, Centre for West Midlands History: Dates for your diary: Saturday 18 October Black Country History Day, and Saturday 22 November Birmingham History Day. www.birmingham.ac.uk/cwmh

75 people are being trained under an HLF-supported programme 'Skills for the Future'. Two East Anglian museums have joined forces to offer a variety of apprenticeships, internships, taster courses and other placements to young people and those wanting a second career in a wide range of roles within the heritage sector and in traditional crafts. Already successful participants have progressed through the scheme and into permanent employment. AIM June 2014.

www.aim-museums.co.uk



heritage engineering

MA in English Local History and Family History

The Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its MA degree course in 2014/15. The staff have recently redesigned the MA to provide greater choice of optional modules and broaden its appeal to include more family history focused topics. It is still offered on a part-time or full-time basis. Students' dissertations can now be focused on how the history of a family can be related to wider historical questions and contexts. Students can also now choose a module in the History of the Family since 1500. This covers such themes such as genealogy, population history, the census, oral history, autobiography, historical occupations, personal mobility, surnames, Jewish and ethnic identities, colonial families, new work on genetics and origins, childhood and fostering, and class differences in historical familial experiences.

More details are available from the downloadable course brochure:

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/centres/elh/postgraduate>

If you are interested in studying at the Centre and would like more information, please contact Dr Andrew Hopper, the Admissions Tutor on ajh69@le.ac.uk

The Centre is also hosting a conference entitled 'Farmers, Consumers and Innovators' in memory of Joan Thirsk on 20 September 2014, about which details are available from:

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/centres/elh/documents/thirsk-conference-leaflet>

Pubs are amongst the most common and well-loved buildings in the country, but have recently been identified as 'a severely threatened building type' by English Heritage. A research team at the University of Leicester, combining the skills and interests of the School of Archaeology and Ancient History, and the Department of History of Art and Film are undertaking a project that 'will have an impact on public understanding of how the pubs of Leeds have developed, and the risks they face from conversion and redevelopment'. A second project, also funded by English Heritage, will focus on the pubs of Bristol. www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press-releases/2014/june/

BALH Awards 2014

FOR PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Cheryl Butler, Hampshire: for innovative interpretation and communication that has greatly increased community engagement with local history in Southampton

Ron Dale, Hertfordshire: for dedicated work researching, writing and publishing a village history with a new local history society at Stanstead Abbots

Alan Griffin, Warwickshire: for devoting energy and knowledge to history in Leamington Spa, and developing an enthusiastic local group

Randle Knight, Staffordshire: for over 45 years research and promotion of the history of Staffordshire, and of Primitive Methodism, at Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum, and the William Salt Library

FOR A SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Keyworth & District Local History Society

FOR RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

[winner] **Rebecca Probert**, 'Co-habitation and marriage among the Victorian poor in 'Notorious Neithrop' (*Cake and Cockhorse: journal of the Banbury Historical Society*, vol.19 no.1 Autumn 2012, pp.1-17)

Peter W. Robinson, 'Ale, beer and public house closures in the Halifax area 1635-2010' (*Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* new series vol.20 2012, pp.68-99)

Rachel Swallow, 'Landscape of power: Alford Castle' (*Cheshire History* no.52 2012-2013, pp.5-28)

John Torrance, 'Branscombe 1280-1340: an East Devon manor before the Black Death' (*The Devon Historian* no.81 2012, pp.67-80)

[short article winner] **Graham M. Clark**, 'Black Isle School Log Books 1875-1919: a statistical approach' (*Scottish Local History* no.86 Autumn 2013, pp.9-15)

Celia Cotton, 'Beating the bounds in Brentford' (*Brentford and Chiswick Local History Journal* no.22 2013, pp.7-22)

Hilary Marlow, 'The Caravan Mission to Village Children in Suffolk: the first Caravan Journey in 1893' (*Suffolk Review* new series no.59 Autumn 2012, pp.3-11)



Reflections on Local History Day 2014

Paul Anderton

Welcoming coffee, familiar faces and conversations with new acquaintances suggest that it's another day of meeting like minds. For denizens from north of Watford the day is long and somewhat expensive, so expectations run high. Once again, we are by no means disappointed. BALH is sufficiently bureaucratic to be effective, but informal enough to be friendly and embracing. The programme is well-balanced and timed to perfection, interestingly varied and delivered most conveniently next to Euston station. The Charity Centre is comfortable without being palatial.

Chris Webb opened proceedings with a delightfully illustrated elucidation of the process of inquiring into the past. He pulled no punches – it's hard grind, tediously repetitive, and takes time and money in substantial amounts. His account was of the projects by which paperwork of more than 15,000 legal disputes in church courts from the 14th to the 19th centuries have been catalogued and prepared for online searching. These are the 'cause' papers of the archdiocese of York, consisting largely of depositions, or witness statements, taken from defendants, plaintiffs and their armies of supporters and accusers accumulated for over 400 years.

The process of historical inquiry starts with the massive task of reading fragile sheets and rolls



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Chris Webb



summarising the contents, photographing every word and creating the software which allows wide ranging searches to be made online. Chris Webb noted with some relish the costs, the names of team workers, and illustrated the tasks, before explaining how local historians might acquire information of value. He chose London as an example – outside the York province and so a test case of the national importance of the project – and found 500 hits. To exemplify the kind of detail a historian might find he took what appeared to be a simple matter of a disputed will in the 1680s. Page after page concerning Mrs Elizabeth Smith took readers across the Atlantic, into domestic abuse of children, pub conversations overheard, shipboard meetings with a man long thought dead, and a score of other features of the daily life of an ordinary English family well below the level at which Samuel Pepys lived. Here the process of investigation reached the stage of interpretation – the making of history as opposed to the assemblage of information.

The second speaker of the day, John Minnis, approached the historian's task from a different angle and also opened up a different era in British history, the inter-war years of the 20th century. His assertion was that successive waves of change in human activities are recognisable from evidence locked in the landscape. The motor car made its first

Bookstalls and displays



Alan Crosby introducing John Minnis

big impact at this time, so aspects of its varied effects on British society can be illuminated with reference to buildings.

Filling stations and garages took pride of place in his long sequence of illustrations. A conclusion he failed to draw was how dramatically his pictures, drawn virtually entirely from aerial views of southern England, demonstrated the enormous economic gulf between north and south in the 1930s. What he succeeded in imparting was the size of the task which local historians need to take up of extending the depth of his inquiries into each and every locality in the British Isles. The private motor car was indeed a massive agent of social change. He might also have drawn some lessons from the creation of the CPRE as a response to the rash of buildings serving the needs of early motorists.

Sandwiched in between two impressive presentations was the core of the day's purpose – the AGM and distribution of awards. Twelve individuals were honoured either for particular written works or for life times of effort devoted to the promotion of local history in its many manifestations. BALH is perhaps still too modest in its public acknowledgement of the importance of local historical investigations.

Next year it's Birmingham and by then it will be clearer as to the impact on local history of current financial policies pressurising county record offices. If there is one criticism of Dr Tim Lomas in his chairman's warm introduction to the day and report to the AGM it is that he focussed too much on the silver linings of BALH activities and not enough on the dark clouds hovering above. Still, we left in the golden glow of a day well spent.

All Local History Day photographs by Phoebe Merrick

Guided Visits 2014

YORK AND LEEDS

3 AND 4 SEPTEMBER

Visits are planned to York on Wednesday 3 September and to Leeds on Thursday 4 September. Each day will have two separate events. Each event will be self-contained but the timetable has been devised to enable participants to undertake all if they wish; there are frequent trains between York and Leeds, taking about half an hour.

In York we will be visiting The National Railway Museum Archive and the York Minster Library. On the following day in Leeds two visits are offered, with participants free to strike the balance between them. In the morning we will start at The Liddle Collection of WWI material, part of Leeds University Special Collections, in the Brotherton Library. At mid-day our visit to the Marks & Spencer Archive begins.

For full details please see *LHN* 111 p 30.

SOUTH DERBYSHIRE

SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER

This visit will go to The Magic Attic in Sharpe's Pottery at Swadlincote, an exceptional local resource base, run by an enthusiastic team of volunteers. Their innovative approach and high standards set an example to others.

Five miles from Swadlincote is the imposing grade 1 listed church of Staunton Harold (above right), part of the Ferrers estate, now cared for by the National Trust. It was built by Sir Robert Shirley in 1653 during the very disturbed times of the Protectorate. The church is largely unaltered and retains very fine features: box pews, wood panelling and chancel screen. The setting is magnificent beside the lake and within the rolling Leicestershire hills.

Further details *LHN* 111 p 31.

VISIT TO SOUTHWICK HOUSE AND THE OVERLORD EMBROIDERY 30 APRIL

The group from the Portchester Society and other members of the BALH met outside the MOD perimeter of the Southwick House estate now the home of the Military Police; 23 in all. Inside the house, we went into the Map Room which is dominated by the map of Southern England and Northern France; some 20 foot high. The carpenters from Chad Valley assembled it as a jigsaw and because they then knew the area for the invasion, were not allowed home for some months!



Our guide gave an extremely interesting talk on the background to the planning of DDay with many asides, especially on the deception plans. Most of the intricate planning took place in Southwick Fort, one of Palmerton's follies, and was linked to the house by phone. When any changes were needed the Wrens used drawing pins into the hardwood to position the ships etc. Members of SHAEF each had a caravan safely hidden in the surrounding woods.

The whole convoy had to negotiate the mined area before reaching the French shore. 160,000 men were to be landed on a 60 mile stretch of coast in 7,000 ships, the planning and the results were going to be crucial.

We went into the library where Eisenhower took the final decision after the postponement on June 5th. The weather forecast was again crucial and all Group Captain Staggs could say was, 'there was a reasonable chance of a window in the weather.' Eisenhower was left alone for some time before he, as supreme commander, gave the order. Mr Wood then presented the scenario of 'what if'. This gave us much food for thought as we adjourned to the Military Police museum and finally to The Golden Lion for lunch. The day was completed by a visit to the DDay Museum in Southsea and the Overlord Embroidery: a fitting end to see the pictorial illustration in fabric of what had been described to us earlier.

Jan Shephard

VISIT TO GLADSTONE'S LIBRARY, ST DENIOL'S CHURCH AND FLINTSHIRE RECORD OFFICE 24 MAY

Seventeen BALH members and friends met at Gladstone's Library in Hawarden. In a Grade I listed building designed by John Douglas (1830-1911) of Fordham, this is a residential library, built near the Glynne-Gladstone family's Hawarden Castle Estate to commemorate the 19th century British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98), who had established a small library 'for the pursuit of divine learning' there in 1894. Today Gladstone's Library (until 2009, called St Deiniol's) houses over 32,000 books and 250,000 items, and attracts visitors and users worldwide from all walks of life. It remains an important centre for historical and theological research and Victorian studies.

Full catalogues are available and searchable on-line. Our guide showed us the collections in situ in storage and on open shelves, after giving us a full account of Gladstone's life, the library's construction and history, and an opportunity to view the private chapel and time to browse among the memorabilia associated with Gladstone. We were able to squeeze in a timely visit to Hawarden War Memorial before the afternoon sessions.

Our second listed building was St Deiniol's Church - the parish church of Hawarden and

the Gladstones' family church. Financed largely by the Glynne-Gladstone family and church coffers boosted by royalties from coal, copper and traffic on the River Dee, we saw the work of the masters of Victorian Church restoration James Harrison (1814-1866) of Chester, Sir George Gilbert-Scott (1811-1878) and John Douglas (1830-1911) of Fordham, together with stained glass windows by Morris and Company, and by James Powell and Sons. Images are available at <http://imagingthe-bible.llgc.org.uk>. There has been a church on the site since the 6th century; the list of known rectors starts in 1182 and parts of the current building date to the 14th century.

Through the churchyard, we approached our third listed building of the day, the Old Rectory, a brick-built 18th century mansion, with later additions. Since 1956 it has been occupied by our hosts for the afternoon, Flintshire Record Office. Here we saw the storage and conservation facilities at first hand, and examined the selected original documents and digitized and microfilmed archives prepared by the staff. These included records of the Gladstone family which reinforced what we had learned earlier, and the service records of individual servicemen, whose names we had read on the War Memorial. The photographs, parish and census records displayed were representative of nearby Buckley, for many attendees were members of the Buckley Society. We were afforded plenty of time to ask questions, and the expertise and knowledge revealed by the staff in their responses impressed and assisted us throughout. This was a great opportunity to compare notes with fellow local historians and broaden horizons, acquaintances and knowledge. And yes, it was a sunny day throughout.

Maggie Escott

(right) most of the group in the Old Schools Quadrangle at the Bodleian Library



BALH Guided Visits

see also Supplement page 1

BOOKING: see the website www.balh.co.uk or contact BALH PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne DE6 5WH 01283 585947

The Events Committee would be delighted to hear of suggestions from members to help future planning of the Guided Visits programme.

VISIT TO THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD 30 JUNE

A relaxed stroll through Oxford on a fine summer's day preceded the visit to the Bodleian, one of the world's greatest research libraries.

Our splendid guide combined enthusiasm with expertise to give us an excellent tour of the iconic complex of buildings. Starting in the 15th century Divinity School, with its spectacular vaulting, we learned that this was the university's first teaching and examination hall. Above was the contemporary library built to house books donated by Duke Humfrey. This was later completely restored and 'Bodley's library' opened to scholars in 1602. Always for reference, even Charles I was refused permission to borrow a book.

We were shown both the 17th century galleried library and the original Duke Humfrey's library, which still maintains its wonderful late gothic feel.

Finally we visited the Radcliffe Camera designed by James Gibbs in the 1740s with its fabulous stonework interior and magnificent dome covered with baroque plasterwork. Underneath there is storage space for more than a million books.

Superlatives abounded on this trip, ably organised by Phoebe Merrick.

Ruth Newman

Billingshurst DVD reviewed

Sarah Rose

Billingshurst: The History of a West Sussex Village (DVD)

Charles Chatwin & the Billingshurst Local History Society

2013 DVD £10 Blue-Ray £13 (+ £1.50 postage) available from Charles Chatwin, Slinfold House, The Street, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 0RP.

Billingshurst in West Sussex is the focus of this 59 minute film, which has been produced by the Billingshurst Local History Society. Situated on Roman Stane Street, the village developed from a collection of isolated farmsteads in pre Norman times, with a church being built to serve the scattered community in c.1200. Moving forward in time, the economic impact of transport systems are discussed, including the coming of the Wey and Arun canal from 1787, and of the railway in 1859. Before its decommission in 2013, Billingshurst had the oldest working railway signal box on the network system. The viewer is treated to a glimpse inside the signal box, where old and new technology sat side by side.

Central to this history of Billingshurst is the village's buildings and their occupants. Consequently, a good part of this film focuses on local businesses, some of which have been in the hands of the same family for several generations. Among them were a boot menders, construction firm, and precision engineers. What has worked particularly well here is the fact that the current owners speak about the history of the business themselves. This welcome personal touch adds some personality to what could have become a dry institutional history. In the second half of the DVD the emphasis lies more on communal buildings (including a Women's Hall built in 1923 for the sole use of female residents) and local events, which brings the story of Billingshurst's community right up to date.



This was a good quality production, shot in high definition and based on a carefully thought-out storyboard. The narration was written and recorded by the film maker, with contributions from several local historians and residents. Although there are few references to documentary sources in the film, much use is made of numerous photographs and maps belonging to the Society and local residents, along with some very helpful graphics. These were particularly useful for illustrating the growth of the village and its various features, as well as the layout of individual buildings and how they have changed over time.

This film will be of interest, not only to those with a connection to Billingshurst, but to other Local History groups contemplating their own film and seeking a possible model.

Who do you think you are kidding?

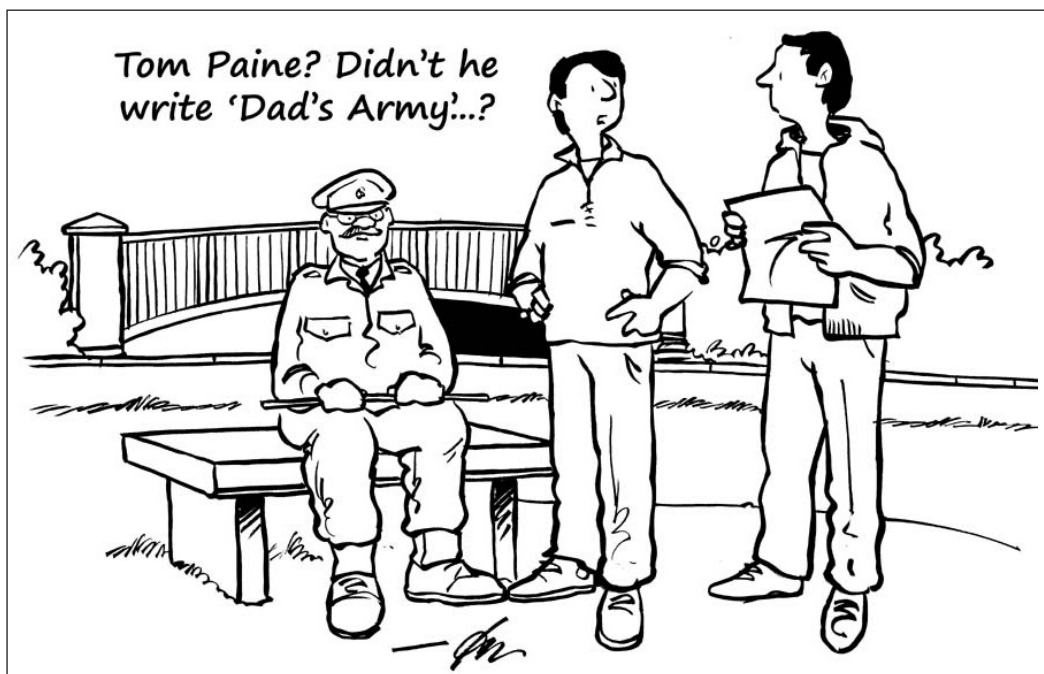
Alan Crosby

A long time ago I apparently wrote and published the history of Walmington-on-Sea, an attractive seaside town in Kent located somewhere between Dover and Sandwich. To be honest, that isn't strictly true. I actually wrote the history of Thetford in Norfolk, little realising that this was the place where, between 1968 and 1977, most of the outdoor scenes from 'Dad's Army' had been filmed. I suppose I should have been aware of this, but at the time nobody in Thetford, where I taught a series of local history classes in the early 1980s, thought it worthy of mention.

Why was a town fifty miles from the sea chosen for this starring role? The answer is that Thetford in the mid-1960s was completely provincial, 'stuck in a time-warp' and little influenced by changing architectural trends. It was perfect, and easily converted into a wartime world of severe austerity and strict

regulation, its sleepy faded market town-cum-ancient borough quality matching the sense of place, of petty bureaucracy and minor bank managers. There were no large shops, concrete had not (yet) reared its ugly head, while the pale greys and pale yellows of the local bricks, the abundance of flint, and the occasional Edwardian bank or red-brick pub gave the authentic feel of a wartime south-east English seaside resort ... much more so than the mods-and-rockers and candy floss of the 1960s genuine article.

I've been to the town a couple of times this year. Things have changed. Just before my second visit, in May, I was staying overnight in a pub in another part of Norfolk, and the landlord asked the nature of my work. I explained that I was taking photographs for a book on the history of the county, and the next night I'd be in Thetford. 'Ah, Thetford', he said, 'that's



Dad's Army town' (he actually said it in broad Norfolk: 'Aaah, The'fuurd, 'ass Dad 'Zarmy toawn en'tut'). So now Thetford has become well-known—the sixth largest town in late Saxon England, briefly the seat of a bishop, a major centre of medieval monasticism, one of the most corrupt of all pre-1832 parliamentary boroughs, once the world's largest manufacturer of traction engines ... all is nothing compared with TV fame.

But that is intriguing, too, for that thoroughly enjoyable series was actually of relatively brief duration (only nine years) and the last episodes were broadcast almost forty years ago. Now, it has itself become part of entertainment history and is relabelled heritage. The events and phenomena it portrayed with such wit and humour were becoming history in the late 1960s, and the programme itself has acquired that iconic status (how could I not use the word!) four decades later. Its influence on the perceptions of the Home Front and the Home Guard, not in least in innumerable 're-enactments' and 'themed events' up and down the country, is profound. Indeed, it is probably now the accepted popular image of what actually happened.

And what of Thetford, or is it Walmington-on-Sea? For a legion of nostalgia-soaked fans, it's become a shrine. There's a Dad's Army Museum in the basement behind the fine large-ly-Edwardian Guildhall, there are Dad's Army heritage trails and guided tours, and Dad's Army information boards. I pondered on these matters as I walked down King Street. On my right was the fine but controversial statue of the town's most famous son, Tom Paine, author of *The Rights of Man* and political philosopher of the American and French Revolutions. I went down to the river, to the delightful cast-iron bridge of 1829. A solitary man in a peaked cap was sitting on a bench facing away from me. I took little notice but then became aware that he was a strange and uniform colour (in both senses of the word) and had not moved an inch. Captain Mainwaring sat there. It is a statue of an actor playing an imaginary character in a fictional series about a comedic version of real historical events.

Tom Paine or George Mainwaring: which is the more important Thetford figure? And where does reality end and imagination begin!

see photo on back cover

BALH TRUSTEE PROFILE

Interest in modern social history was prompted by an enthusiastic teacher - Michael Drake - as a young undergraduate in Belfast in the 1960s and, latterly, while studying with the Open University. After Voluntary Service Overseas in Sarawak I worked in community development, and adult education.

The excitement of historical research emerged when family papers relating to World War Two school evacuation procedures prompted interviews with former Liverpool evacuees for an OU oral history project.

I taught nineteenth century social history with the Workers' Educational Association in Yorkshire. Rex Russell, a Lincolnshire local historian and fellow tutor, was a mentor who encouraged students to research. Rex was born in 1916 in Hackney workhouse where his parents were master and matron, and I began to explore Hackney poor law union records. This led to writing articles for *The Local Historian* on public health, poverty, and survival strategies

in London, Yorkshire and Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Responding to an invitation to BALH members to join the Assembly, I volunteered for its education committee and presently coordinate BALH First World War centennial activity: developing collaborative activity – for example, with the University of London Institute of Commonwealth Studies – and commissioning themed research guidance articles for *Local History News*.

And I enjoy reading history. Recent favourites include Robert Bickers, *Empire Made Me: An Englishman Adrift in Shanghai*; and Lucy Riall, *Under the Volcano: Revolution in a Sicilian Town*. As reviews editor of *Family and Community History*, journal of the Family and Community Historical Research Society, I work with a great team of reviewers!

Other interests are Pennine walking, running with York Knavesmire Harriers, and listening to bluegrass music in my local pub.

Dick Hunter

Notes News Issues

Jane Howells

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of *Local History News*. The generous supply of articles means the 'news' sections are briefer than usual, but that is an advantage of the flexibility of this arrangement.

Subscription renewals

Last Autumn, in order to save on postage costs, renewal documents were sent out with the regular quarterly mailing. This process will be reviewed at the Management Committee meeting next month before a decision is made about renewals for 2015. PLEASE CHECK for further information next time you hear from us, by post or by email.

New BALH website

Very nearly there! When everything is tested and running smoothly, you will be able to pay your subscription, buy books and sign up for events online, as well as see all the facilities on the old website. The other main new feature will be the Members' Only area; further details to follow.

Help needed at Woking

BALH will be having a stand at the West Surrey Family History Fair and Open Day at Woking on Saturday 1 November 2014. There is an opportunity for one or two volunteers to help staff the stand and also display copies of a recent local history book they or their society have produced. Books on southern England are probably most likely to sell. This is a large Fair and there is free entry and parking. Our own Alan Crosby will be speaking on 'Sex and Sin in the Seventeenth Century'.

Details of the Fair or on
<http://www.wsfhs.org/pages/openday.php>

If you are interested in helping us please contact Gill Draper on
development.balh@btinternet.com

STOP PRESS:

Anglo-American Conference 3-4 July 2014 The Great War at Home

We are just back from two days of a hugely stimulating and enjoyable conference, with a very full programme that demonstrated how WW1 had an impact on communities around the world. Innovative ideas were explored in plenary lectures, and the panel sessions showcased local historical research at its best: from food to football, health and housing, munitions and mountains, and so much more. The full programme will remain on the website, www.anglo-american.history.ac.uk where you can read the paper abstracts. The plenary lectures will be published in due course. It may be that there are individual topics that relate to your area, do follow them up.

New Director at the Victoria County History

The Association would like to extend a warm welcome to Professor Richard Hoyle who takes up his post as Director and General Editor on 1 October. Currently he is Professor of Rural History at the University of Reading. We hope Professor Hoyle will contribute one of our regular VCH articles in *Local History News*.

Erratum

Electronic Sources: We'd like to apologise for the errors which appeared in the Electronic Sources glossary in *LHN* May 2014.

1. Https - this should read Hypertext transfer protocol secure.
2. Adobe Acrobat is the program which can be purchased to write and read PDFs. If you wish to only read PDFs it's possible to download a free program called Adobe Reader. Another program Nitro pro 9 has also be recommended to us for reading PDFs.

BALH Officers and Committees

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Dr Jane Howells (*Local History News* and website)

Events & Development Officer: Dr Gill Draper

Business Manager: Mrs Annmarie Jones **Finance Officer:** Mr Terry Clarke

Local History News

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Supplement

Events 2014

3-4 September **Guided Visit – Leeds and York.** (see p29).

Saturday 13 September **London.** County Societies Symposium 'Putting the message across'.

Saturday 27 September **Guided Visit – South Derbyshire.** (see p29)

Events 2015

16-18 April **London - Who Do You Think You Are? Live. BALH at Olympia**

6 June **Birmingham - Local History Day**

Possible Guided Visits for 2015

Birmingham new Library (5 June); People's Museum, Manchester; Old Basing House;
Guildhall Library and Drapers' Hall, London;
new Institute of Historical Research, their local history collections.

Further details will be available as soon as arrangements have been confirmed. Please get in touch if you would like to suggest a visit destination in your area. We are sure there must be interesting and exciting places we don't know about, so we need local members to tell us!

*Guided Visits are designed for small groups to visit less accessible places and collections; booking forms for these, and all other events, with full details and prices are available on our website or from **BALH(V) PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne, DE6 5WH.***

This information becomes available at intervals and a separate addressed envelope or label should be sent for each set of details required.

2015 BALH AWARDS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS:

Personal Achievement

Local historians who have made significant **voluntary** contributions to the subject in their own areas and more widely are publicly honoured by the BALH Awards for Personal Achievement. The purpose of these awards is to identify and publicise good practice in whatever form it appears, undertaken by those who are not professionally engaged in the subject.

Candidates may be nominated by anyone who feels they recognise such a contribution using the form printed opposite (also available on our website)*. Nominations are considered by the Awards Panel made up of experienced local historians who are members of the Association's Council or one of its advisory committees. Up to six awards are made annually.

Since the scheme began awards have been made to people active in all parts of the country, from Cornwall to Lanarkshire. By way of illustration, the following come from citations received in recent years:

- Long standing and wide ranging research into the lives of ordinary people, and leadership of a Landscape and Local History Group
- Extensive published work, and promotion of interest by conducting local courses
- Publications based on villagers' recollections, and collection of old and new photographs
- More than 20 years unassuming leadership of local museum
- Research and promotion of local history, using this to fundraise for charity, tirelessly carrying message of fascination of the subject
- Study of vernacular architecture, active in local society over many years
- Multidisciplinary, bridging gap between academics and local community
- Forty years investigation, research and publication in local history and archaeology

The 2015 Award Certificates will be presented in Birmingham on 6 June, during Local History Day. A profile of each award winner will be published in *Local History News* during the following year, to disseminate the good practice that has been recognised.

AWARDS FOR RESEARCH & PUBLICATION and FOR A SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
Please see inside front cover for further details

*Nominations for 2015 should reach the Awards Secretary by 31 December 2014.
Forms should be sent to BALH(A) 7 St Mark's Road, Salisbury SP1 3AY

If you have not received an acknowledgement within three weeks please contact the BALH Office.



AWARDS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS

NOMINATION FOR AN AWARD FOR PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT (SEE NOTES OPPOSITE)

Nominations must be made by completing this form and sending it to the Award Secretary (address below) by 31 December. Each year the winners will be invited to receive their certificates at Local History Day.

A. Person Nominated

Full name

Address

Email

B. Short Citation

In no more than twenty words, please say why you think this nominee should receive an award:

C. Extended Citation (overleaf)

Please provide a longer piece of no more than two hundred words about the nominee; this will be used during the selection process: both citations may be published to promote good practice in local history.

D. Nomination made by

Name

Address

Telephone: Day

Evening

E-mail

Appointment/position (if any)

BALH Member: Yes / No

Please also add the names, addresses, email and telephone numbers of two referees

