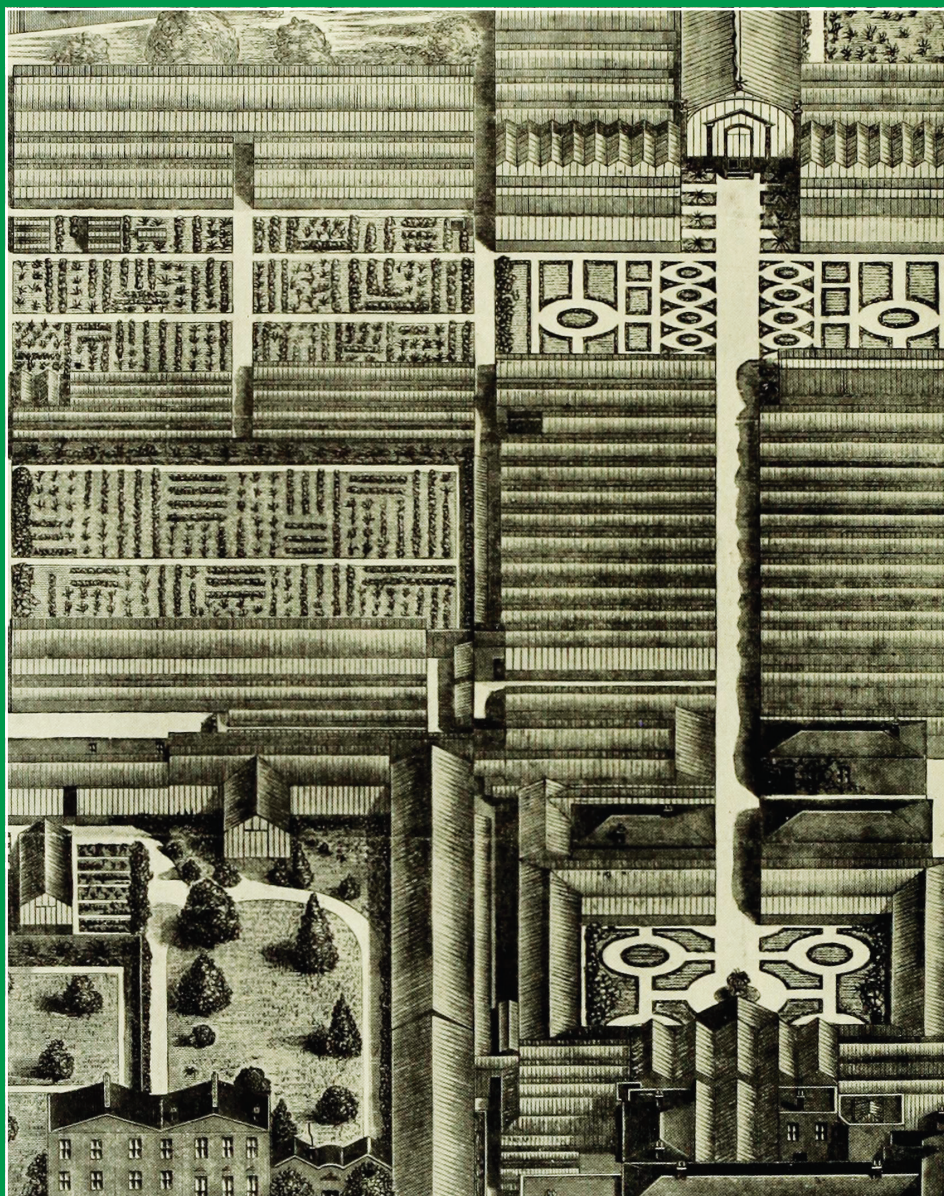


Local History News

Number 154 February 2025

www.balh.org.uk



Magazine of the British Association for Local History

AWARDS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS

- *To encourage research and publication*

One or more certificates may be awarded each year for a published **article** 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 Heather Falvey the Reviews Editor for review or listing. All relevant material sent to the Reviews Editor is automatically considered, and a shortlist prepared for the Awards Panel.

- *To recognise outstanding individual contributions*

Up to six awards may be made each year to publicly honour local historians of all ages who have made outstanding and significant voluntary contributions to the subject. The awards will embrace as wide a spectrum of activity as possible. Nominations and references must be submitted between 1 July and 31 December on the form available from our website at **www.balh.org.uk/awards**, where further details can also be found.

- *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.

The next awards will be presented at the BALH AGM in 2025

BALH Reviews Editor	British Association for Local History Awards
Dr Heather Falvey	c/o Paul Dryburgh
119 Winton Drive	The National Archives
Croxley Green	Kew
Rickmansworth WD3 3QS	Richmond TW9 4DU

Front cover

A plan of Veitch & Sons' original Chelsea nursery opened in 1853 (from *Hortus Veitchii*, 1906). The family's Exeter branch provided the plants for the garden at Larkbeare House – see page 10.

Local History News

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

BALH

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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 at www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian-contributors.

Local History News relies on material – articles, news, pictures, advice, questions etc – from local societies and individual local historians. We also welcome your newsletters and other 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 – we can also list larger events such as conferences at the BALH website and in the BALH e-newsletter. *Local History News* is normally mailed at the end of February, May, August and November, with these copy deadlines respectively: 3 January, 1 April, 1 July, 1 October.

The BALH Reviews Editor is Dr Heather Falvey; if you have a newly published work, either as an individual or a society, please send a copy for listing and possible review to her at the address given below. Be sure to include all relevant details such as price and where to purchase.

Important contacts

News and article proposals: editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

Newsletters/regular publications: please send digitally if possible, to editor.lhn@balh.org.uk and to reviews.editor@balh.org.uk, otherwise by post to Dr Heather Falvey, 119 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth WD3 3QS.

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All other enquiries: email admin@balh.org.uk, write to BALH Registered Office, c/o Moore Insight, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield S1 2EX, or call 01625 664524

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Membership matters

Inside back cover

Publish and be gonged!

Alan Crosby

I've been doing the paperwork for the British Association for Local History Publications Awards 2025. Though that sounds like a chore, it is actually a pleasure. I write to the editors of the journals and newsletters and bulletins in which the winning papers and articles were published, telling them the news of their success and asking for contact details for the authors. I write to them in turn, and one of the real joys in all this is the enthusiastic response of editors and authors.

Each year we receive numerous local and county society journals, newsletters, bulletins and other publications, for listing in the 'Recent publications in local history' section at the back of *The Local Historian*. In the year 2024 this amounted to about 480 publications in total. All the individual papers in these are considered as part of the shortlisting, which means that each year there are at least 2,000 from which to choose two shortlists of eight articles each – one for long articles and one for short papers. Because the papers are not submitted to a competition, but are automatically included in the original shortlisting procedure (done by Heather Falvey, our Reviews Editor), the editors and authors are not forewarned, so the news is entirely unanticipated. It brings surprise and delight!

The scheme has been running since 1999. During that quarter century, including this year's awards (not yet public), some 206 papers have been recognised in this way, from no fewer than 67 different publications. The intention throughout has been to recognise and publicise the often outstanding work that is published in such journals and does not achieve a wider circulation. The awards also highlight the crucial importance to local history of the rich variety of local and county publications which are all too frequently overlooked and rarely appear in bibliographies or lists of secondary sources.

A quick check on my list of winners showed which journals have appeared several times. The journal which has appeared most often is *Warwickshire History*, with 12 award-winning articles since 1999, followed by *Saffron Walden Historical Journal* (eight); journals from Hackney, Durham and Huddersfield, plus *Scottish Local History*, have had seven articles each featured. Five more (Halifax, East Yorkshire, Devon,

Hampshire and Suffolk) had five winners each. In principle it should be easier for a county journal to find material, simply because the catchment is so much larger and more varied. *Warwickshire History* has been distinctive throughout, because it has a tradition of publishing only three or four long and substantial articles per issue, and little else apart from a regular appendix which lists recent accession to Warwickshire record offices. This has been a long-standing editorial practice and indeed, the editorship was long-standing too: Bob Bearman recently retired as editor after 42 years! Warwickshire, furthermore, is a 'good' county for local history research, because it has such a wealth of sites and sources from different periods, as well as the great cities of Birmingham and Coventry which give so much opportunity for research on a multitude of topics.

All of this makes the achievement of the local history societies in Saffron Walden, Huddersfield and Halifax seem even more remarkable. The last of these was a characteristic Victorian foundation (the Halifax Antiquarian Society) which has survived into the 21st century and publishes a weighty annual volumes, likewise benefitting from an editor (Dr John Hargreaves) who held that position for many years. The Huddersfield society and its journal editors have followed a rather different policy: there is higher proportion of shorter articles and an eclectic mix of subjects – the journal is the only one I've come across which included an article about the Sex Pistols.

Saffron Walden is of course a much smaller place, but it has a very thriving arts, culture and heritage scene and the local history society is well meshed into community and civic life. The journal is lively and is able to draw upon the researches of members in a range of surrounding villages. Again, the role of the editor has been crucial: the now-retired Jackie Cooper set a very high standard and was instrumental in developing the journal's winning combination of authority, accessibility and variety over a long period. So, dear reader, if you are a journal editor your task is to make sure that your publication appears in the lists next year!

*Please remember to send your society journals to reviews.
editor@balh.org.uk and editor.lhn@balh.org.uk*

BALH member survey

Jane Golding

As part of our undertaking to ensure BALH is ready to support local history in Britain for the next ten years, we are defining our vision, our mission and our values. We are seeking guidance from members as we finalise the statement, particularly checking that it:

- aligns with what members believe BALH stands for and who BALH represents
- is a clear reflection of the role and direction of BALH.

The statement is not intended to replace existing documents such as the constitution, strategies or policies.

The survey is available online at www.balh.org.uk/survey2025 and is open to all BALH members.

The survey has eight questions, and it should take under ten minutes to complete.

Responses are collected anonymously. Collated results will be shared only with BALH Trustees for the purpose of revising the vision, mission and values statement. Survey responses will then be deleted.

The final version will be put to BALH members for adoption at the AGM on 22 May 2025.

The survey closes Friday 14 March 2025. Thank you to everyone for their time and views.

An initial draft of the following statement was prepared by BALH Officers with the help of BALH Trustees and has been further developed with the assistance of external colleagues.

BALH: Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Local history enriches lives

Mission

We are the national voice for local history and local historians in Britain, our mission is to:

- Provide support, inspiration and empowerment to local historians of all levels, ages, backgrounds and interests, whether they work individually or collectively.
- Foster a vibrant and diverse community of local historians who share their passion, knowledge and skills with each other and the wider public.
- Advance local history that is engaging,

compelling and evolving and that draws on both traditional and emerging methods, sources and technologies.

- Promote public education, knowledge, understanding and awareness through the study of local history and its connections to national and global contexts.

Values

Passion: Our passion for local history is at the heart of what we do and drives our mission to inspire, support and empower others.

People: We believe that local history is for everyone and aim to create a welcoming space for all. We appreciate opportunities that foster growth and learning and enhance social interaction.

Partnerships: We look for ways to work productively and collaboratively with others sharing our values and treat our partnerships, contractors, volunteers and the broader historical community with fairness and respect, recognising the advantages that effective collaboration brings.

Goals

We will:

- **Serve:** Support local historians and societies by providing practical resources, training and opportunities for collaboration. Helping them adapt to ever changing technological advances, funding models, and accessibility of services.
- **Inspire:** Foster greater public engagement with local history by creating inclusive programmes and resources that celebrate diverse perspectives and challenge stereotypes.
- **Advocate:** Expand BALH's network to advocate for local history's value and ensure under-represented voices are included. Call out for investment, engagement and support.
- **Innovate:** Encourage innovation in local history by supporting interdisciplinary research, digital tools, and high-quality scholarship while maintaining best practices and standards.
- **Sustain:** Embed sustainability into BALH's operations and promote eco-friendly practices among local history societies through practical resources and guidance.

All About That Place 2024

Jude Rhodes

Family and local historians across the UK and internationally were treated to an excellent ten days of all things related to the history of a place with the All About That Place event which ran from Friday 27 September to Sunday 6 October 2024. The event was organised and presented through the Society of Genealogists, supported by BALH and the Society for One-Place Studies, with a wide variety of professional and amateur historians delivering short, 10–15 minute talks each relating to a place.

With a choice of 130 talks to choose from there was a topic of interest for everyone; fortunately, most of these talks have been made available on YouTube for the next few months. This is a huge benefit as it was impossible to choose what to watch live during the ten-day period. The opportunity to revisit a talk or catch up on a missed talk is very worthwhile. Find out more and listen here: www.sog.org.uk/all-about-that-place-2024/

To assist in choosing talks the event is divided into daily themes:

- Day 1, **Introductions**: During the introductory day BALH Outreach Team members Joe Saunders, David Cant, Tim Hamilton and Jude Rhodes discussed past articles from *Local History News* and *The Local Historian* to explain how these examples can be used and adapted for individual research of a place. Catch up with the discussion here: www.balh.org.uk/JUH201
- Day 2, **Health and Medicine**, which included talks on buildings and institutions in a place.
- Day 3, **Military and War**, covered memorials, trench maps and naval links and included migration through evacuation.
- Day 4, **Leisure and Entertainment**: Pubs, postcards and 1930s architecture were covered.
- Day 5, **Town and Country**, had talks discussing occupations, education and the City of London and Irish field names.
- Day 6, **Innovation**, brought history inventions from electricity and railways into the 21st century with AI and contrasting historic maps with modern mapping.
- Day 7, **Politics and Rights**, covered local tax records, women and Chartism and reformatory schools.

- Day 8, **Tools** to assist in research with How-to History, Historic Towns Trust and the use of mind mapping.
- Day 9, **Collections and Archives**, discussed chancery records for property history, archives in Scotland and Independent school archives.
- Day 10, **Sharing Your Findings**, brought stories of houses, diaries and Victoria's Cohort.

The event was supplemented with talks from the US and Canada in the Pacific Edition through the week.

Below are some of the talks that really stood out in relation to local history and place.

‘Where do you think you are?’, Dave Annal

An introduction to the administrative units of England and Wales, how they impacted our ancestors' lives and how understanding more about them can help us to track down relevant records.

Using a hierarchy of where we actually are puts a place into context in relation to the building, street, town, county, country, continent. For counties it is necessary for the researcher to consider boundaries changes and subdivisions; this is required when searching legal records. For records of taxation the lower administrative unit of hundreds (wapentakes, lathes, rapes, wards, cantrefs) needs to be understood and for court records, including wills, the hierarchy of provincial, diocesan, archdeaconry and peculiar courts. The administrative unit of a parish has three institutions, the ancient parish, the ecclesiastical for registers of baptism, marriage and burial and the civil secular institution covering poor law records.

This was an excellent guide to understanding where to locate records through administrative units.

‘Revisiting 17 Bruce Street’, Helen Tovey

An introduction to ‘slow-time genealogy’, a method to help researchers learn more about an ancestor's life by taking the time to revisit and retrace records and research.

Noting a gap in a timeline covering the childhood years of her ancestor John, Helen

focused on his early years. Taking 17 Bruce Street, Stirling where he was born and lived as a child before the First World War, Helen looked into the neighbours and the contemporary local street with building construction taking place in urban expansion and the nearby railway. By researching the time period through the eyes of a child, Helen identified toy shops, the Co-op shops and the busy harbour, demonstrating how a child would live in the developing social history of the time with the introduction of gas lights, electricity, water supplies and early cars along with the sounds of horses, railways and the chatter of the neighbours and shopkeepers.

A thoroughly enjoyable step back into the life of a child through local history.

'Fisherton Street, Gateway to Salisbury', Gemma Ward

For a fascinating microhistory of a place look no further than Fisherton Street in Salisbury, where Gemma took us on a journey through the history of the street with the inns, shops and trades over time.

Regulated by the county town of Devizes, rather than Salisbury, the alehouses and inns in Fisherton Street followed licensing regulations which were less stringent than those of Salisbury, and thus flourished. The Sun Inn, for example, had the freedom to run a theatre pit and a circus.

By the late 18th century six malthouses were on Fisherton Street and by the late 19th century the street was thriving with a variety of shops and a builder contractor, brick and tile maker, indicating the growth of a prospering town. Many of these buildings are listed, with the original facades concealed; a beautiful art nouveau facade has now been revealed for all to enjoy, and a 16th-century timber-framed building remains behind a more modern one.

The low-lying surrounding land was liable to flooding and Fisherton Street was flooded in 1883; inns lost stocks of alcohol and shopkeepers were rescued, providing an insight into the local landscape and its influence.

Taking one street and meticulously examining the maps and records creates a backdrop of history through a one-place study.

'The mystery of Manor Farm House', Nick Barratt

House histories are a staple of family and local history – using available sources Nick researched the house where his grandmother grew up and has started to unpick a story of illegitimacy.

A photograph alludes to a place overseas where unmarried mothers visited and probably where the baby was born; she was brought up by a foster family and her grandmother, and the adults appear to be somewhat disconnected but linked by an isolated farmhouse in Norfolk. Why did the individuals come across this property and were they trying to 'hide' the child?

Using leases, the census returns and the Valuation Office survey field book for research provided names of the owner and occupants, creating links to the stages in the child's life and who she lived with.

The research of a house history provided clues to the life and circumstances of the child which otherwise would remain untold; the full mystery remains unsolved at the moment.

I will be audacious and add one of my own talks to this list.

'Planning application unfolds a wealth of history', Jude Rhodes

I noticed a date stone of 1682 on a substantially built barn in a style not typical of the other barns in the surrounding fields, and took a close look. The barn is within the Yorkshire Dales National Park who govern planning applications for the area.

A speculative search on the Historic England website and the National Heritage List for England did not provide results for the barn as being a protected building; however, a general web search gave a result for a planning application for change of use. Included in the application to the Yorkshire Dales National Park was a historic building report: this detailed the location, geography and topography surrounding the barn, including the strip lynchet system still visible.

The Duke of Devonshire had ordered his land to be assessed resulting in the Peirce Survey of 1603 which identified three fields in the vicinity of the barn; the survey listed the newly found freeholders including the head of the family who had the barn built in a style to reflect his new status. The planning report provides sufficient information to build a family tree from the mid-17th to mid-19th century, 200 years of local and family history coming together through a planning application, a useful addition to general research.

Jude Rhodes has a special interest in family and local history in the Yorkshire Dales. She is an AGRA associate and member of the BALH Outreach Committee.

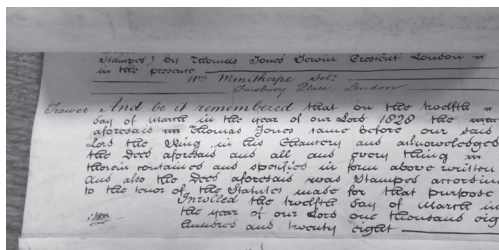
The National Archives' Charitable Trust Deeds Project

Dr Charlotte Smith

The National Archives at Kew is home to circa 71,500 copies of charitable trust deeds, which were enrolled in the Close Rolls of Chancery (record series C 54) between 1736 and 1903. A newly completed cataloguing project means that these records can now, for the first time, be identified using the online catalogue. This article sets out what these records are, how they can be located within the online catalogue and some of the ways in which the project to catalogue them has opened up new and improved possibilities for their use by local historians.

A trust deed, sometimes referred to as an indenture because of the wavy edge cut between different copies of the original deed (as a way of guarding against fraudulent copies, because only the indentured edges of the originals would match), or as a declaration of trust, is the legal document by which legal title to some form of property is conveyed to a person or persons (the trustees) on the condition that it should be used in a particular way for the benefit of others (the beneficiaries). A charitable trust is a trust which is created for the public benefit – specifically for the advancement of religion or education, for the relief of poverty, or for some other purpose beneficial to the public interest.

It is because charitable trusts are designed to benefit specific purposes for the wider public benefit, as opposed to the personal interests of named beneficiaries, that they are found enrolled in the Chancery Close Rolls. They tie up property potentially for eternity and lack directly interested beneficiaries to ensure that the trust funds are used appropriately and that the trustees comply with the conditions upon which they hold the trust property. They are, then, susceptible to misuse or use for fraudulent purposes. For this reason, they are subjected to a higher level of scrutiny and oversight than other forms of trust. Thus, under the Mortmain and Charitable Uses Act 1736, Parliament required that all conveyances of property for charitable purposes had to



An example of a charitable trust deed enrolled in C 54.

be executed by deed and enrolled within six months. It is these enrolled copies which we find in the Close Rolls.

It is easy to overlook or dismiss these deeds. Working with them is not necessarily an attractive proposition. Like other Chancery documents, they consist of parchment membranes sewn together, end to end, and rolled in the manner of a giant loo roll. They can be grubby, may tax your palaeographical skills and it sometimes feels like the deed you want is always at the far end of the roll. They are, in addition, the embodiment of many of the worst traits of formal legal documents – drafted by lawyers who give every appearance of having been paid by the word, and of being more concerned with verbiage than sense. Further, until recently the task of identifying deeds of interest could only be undertaken on site at The National Archives. Since they were not identifiable in the online catalogue, recourse had to be had to physical indexes arranged alphabetically by place.

Now, though, thanks to the work done to catalogue them, you can use the online catalogue to search within record series C 54 for the charitable trust deeds of your heart's desires. This not only makes the task of finding individual deeds easier and more convenient, but also opens up a whole range of more sophisticated searches and research possibilities. Within record series C 54, you can still search by place – by parish and/or county. You can limit your search by date of enrolment, which is usually (but not always)

quite soon after the execution of the deed. You can search for specific charitable purposes, such as relief of poverty or education, perhaps in combination with a location or date range, or for particular charitable objects, such as churches, schools or libraries. The possibilities are almost endless, and the metadata yielded by the catalogue opens up a whole realm of opportunities for data visualisation and mapping, which have the potential greatly to enrich local histories. For despite their forbiddingly dry and technical form, these charitable trust deeds are a cornucopia of information about all sorts of interesting things.

They provide us, for example, with a wonderfully revealing record of the people creating and supporting charities, the people who benefitted, and the trustees whom they appointed to administer the trust property. So, for instance, in at least one deed enrolled in 1828–9 (C 54/10530/4), the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists detailed what appears to have been their entire male membership – providing names, addresses, trade or profession, and information which enables us to determine whether or not an individual was literate.

The deeds tell us, too, about the property which was placed into trust. This can tell us much about the history of land use in general and about specific pieces of land in particular. We can, for example, trace the evolution of the purposes for which trust land was used, the changing fortunes of different religious bodies and changing fashions in charitable concern and giving. Relatedly, these deeds

also allow us to see changing behaviours in terms of the types of property being placed into trust – for example, the shift from land to shares or money. This supports us to begin to interrogate different phases in the history of particular charitable institutions – for example the move from building schools to providing endowments for the maintenance of those schools and salaries for their masters.

By telling us who those executing deeds were, and what property they gave, the deeds also help us to understand the types of people engaged in charitable giving, and sometimes their directly expressed motivations and circumstances. Seeing what they gave can be as revealing as names and titles. Only certain types of people were in a position to gift land, for example, while more would have been able to gift money or shares. Similarly, the nature of the shares given might be revealing of the trade or standing of the donor. Taking such information together with that relating to the purposes for which property was given, we have, in these trust deeds, a significant insight into the demography and economic circumstances and social and other concerns of any place and its people.

Beyond this, some of the potential uses of enrolled charitable trust deeds might surprise you. You can, for example, use these deeds for the purposes for which they were originally enrolled, that is to understand whether historic trust property is being used today in ways which are consistent with the purposes for which it was given, and to act on that understanding. But you can also use them, somewhat unexpectedly, to understand local experiences of technological change. Using keyword searches for ‘railway’ or ‘canal’, for instance, you can unpick the land exchanges and agreements by which railways and canals extended their infrastructure into new areas. They are, then, despite their dubious physical charms and admittedly forbidding legal form, a fabulous resource for anyone interested in tracing the shifting experiences and dynamics of communities, people and places through history and in understanding the ways in which local histories and identities intersect with or reflect wider national histories or narratives.

The Close Rolls can be found via discovery. nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3614
Dr Charlotte Smith is modern legal records specialist at TNA.

Name	Residence	Profession
1. Morgan David	Warrington	Minister
2. Thomas Morris	Edinburgh	Farmer & by Mark
3. William Jones	Derby	Farmer & by Mark
4. William Jones	Derby	Farmer & by Mark
5. Geo. Rice	Chapel House	Leguer
6. Henry Edmunds	Lyth' grove	Mason
7. Henry Jones	Lyth' grove	Farmer
8. Edmund Mathias	Sanbyrnes	Farmer
9. John Williams	Wendwell	Farmer & by Mark
10. William Williams	Good down	Collier & by Mark
31		
11. William Thomas	Hatfield Gate	Gatekeeper & by Mark
12. John Karry	Warrington	Pharmacia
13. Henry Jones	Warrington	Minister
14. Thomas Evans	Derby	Farmer
15. William David	Warrington	Preacher

C 54/10530/4: Charitable trust deed for Welsh Calvinistic Methodists (1828–9).

Gardens have history too

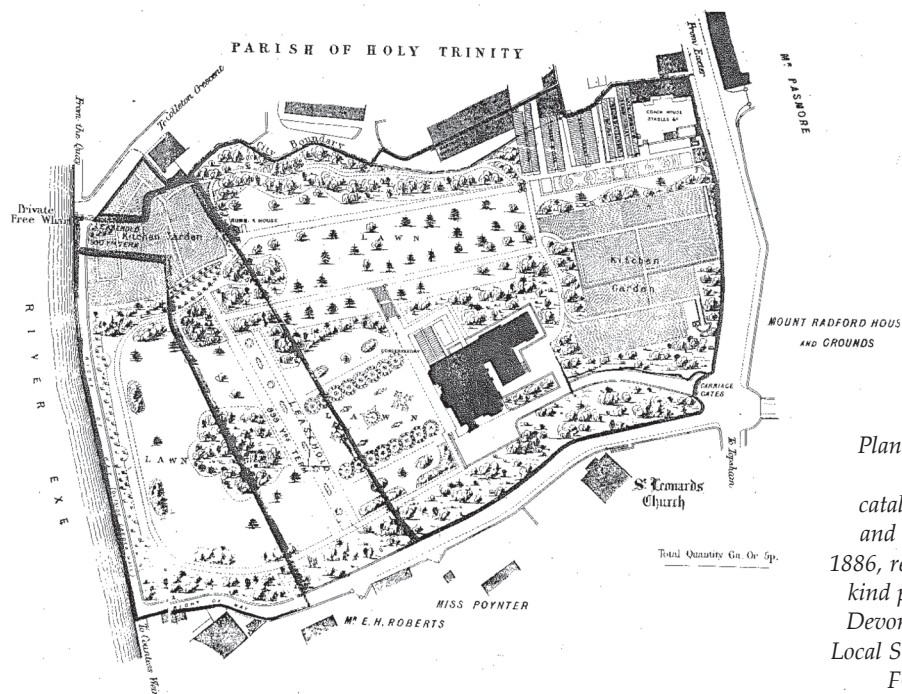
Dianne Long

It was Corinne Fowler's talk back in October 2024, 'Local country walks through colonial Britain', and reading her book that has prompted me to urge local historians not to forget the treasure trove that is garden history. Local history and garden history are entwined, and both are influenced and impacted by national and international affairs.

Corinne mentioned the colonial links of Stratton Park in Hampshire, bought by the founder of Barings Bank Sir Francis Baring in 1801, and the adjacent Northington Grange, the home of his son Alexander, who had developed the firm's business in America which financed the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The American business was intimately connected with cotton, sugar and the slave trade, and its profits helped both father and son to develop their estates including their extensive gardens. Sir Francis engaged the foremost landscape gardener of the day, Humphry Repton, to advise on re-landscaping.

Nearly a century earlier the Baring dynasty in the UK was begun in Exeter when Johann

(John) Baring (1697–1748) arrived from Bremen in 1717 as an apprentice to a wool merchant, at a time when Devon and Norfolk were the foremost wool-producing counties exporting around the world. John established a wool business, married Elizabeth Vowler, daughter of a wealthy Exeter tea and coffee merchant, and developed a house and garden just outside the city walls alongside his manufactory with its tenter grounds where the cloth was pegged out to dry. Part of his estate 150 years later was bought by John Charles Bowring (1821–1893), a China merchant, whose father Sir John Bowring (1792–1872), one-time governor of Hong Kong (1854–59), had been a neighbour of the Barings. John Charles built Larkbeare House in the early 1860s and commissioned Veitch, probably the foremost family of nurserymen and designers of the day, to design and lay out the gardens. As well as plants including exotics from the Veitchs' plant hunters, the gardens incorporated a two-storey hexagonal belvedere or summerhouse from the earlier garden possibly built for John Baring's wife Elizabeth in the



Plan of Larkbeare House, sale catalogue, houses and land, Exeter, 1886, reproduced by kind permission of Devon Archives & Local Studies, DHC FOR/B/6/1/76



Summerhouse at Larkbeare, 'Extracts', 1831–1961, Exeter: St Leonard Parish, DHC 1862A/PW/114 no. 185.

mid 18th century. It had views over the Exeter canal and quay towards the hills beyond. Three gardens have unveiled a wealthy inter-connected history.

Stratton Park estate has since been broken up with only the grand Doric portico of the old mansion remaining to tower over a modern house. Northington Grange is now in the custodianship of English Heritage and the home of Grange Opera. Larkbeare House has been owned by Devon County Council since it was sold on the death of John Charles Bowrings, for many years serving as the judges' lodges, currently as the county registration service, but it is on the market.

Garden history might seem to be rather niche; in reality it is a rich area to explore that encompasses so many disciplines. The term 'garden' tends to be used as the shorthand for a designed landscape, which is any area of land that has been deliberately designed to have some aesthetic appeal even if it also has other purposes. It might be a small town garden or a grand estate covering hundreds sometimes thousands of acres, a cemetery, a productive walled garden, a commercial or industrial site, a town square or a public park. Many such landscapes are a palimpsest with layers of history, some extant and others hidden or only evident in the record or through archaeology.

They can reveal a wealth of social, family, business, cultural and economic history. In the course of my own research, I have delved into turnpikes, railways, canals, steam engines, art, literature, leisure pursuits, agricultural practices, tourists' journals, architecture, old technology, genealogy and business records, not to mention politics and religion and many more areas that I never thought might be pertinent to the design and use of a designed landscape.

The interest in a particular site may lie in its design, the people who owned or worked it, its iconography or even its association with a particular event. A single building like a gate lodge or a so-called folly (most likely a building with a particular purpose but ornamented for its aesthetic effect in the landscape) can give access to a cornucopia of stories.

In addition to employing all usual research techniques, walking the site is crucial wherever possible – a critical eye can reveal things the records might not and raise questions records might help to answer. Above all one gets a feeling for the place, its context and those that walked there before. As warmer weather might take you visiting to other towns, country houses or in walking in your local area, take a look and consider what the landscape might be telling you about its history.

Garden history does not need to be a solitary path; there are 36 county gardens trusts (CGTs) in England and for Wales the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust with nine branches, together with sister organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland. All are independent charities with The Gardens Trust as the national charity which has a statutory consultee role in planning for all sites registered by Historic England, i.e. those considered most important in a national or even international context. All CGTs, to varying degree, are working to elucidate, promote and conserve the history and significance of the designed landscapes in their area. Their research has uncovered unknown sites, people and stories. They have talks, visits and sometimes study days. Take a look at your local, neighbouring or any other CGT to see how their work might link with yours. You can find a list here thegardenstrust.org/support-us/find-local-cgts/. The Gardens Trust too, like BALH, has a series of online talks thegardenstrust.org/gt-events/

Dr Dianne Long is chair of conservation at Devon Gardens Trust and editor of its journal. With thanks to South West Heritage Trust.

The origins of the Yorkshire Museum – a Regency story

Steve Barrett

Have you ever wondered why the Grecian style building in York's Museum Gardens is called the Yorkshire Museum and not the York Museum? This is the story...

If you stray into the gardens you will come across the very impressive Yorkshire Museum, a Classical-style building that was completed only in 1830 – recent in York terms. A drawing by N. W. Whittock in that year showed a group of elegant Regency folk, with the backdrop of the ruined abbey of St Mary's.

How did all this come to be? It seems that a cave, discovered in 1821 in Kirkdale, North Yorkshire, was full of the bones of elephants, rhinos, hippos, hyenas and elks. This was an amazing find in so unlikely a place. The cave had been investigated by Professor William Buckland of Oxford University. One

of the earliest visitors was a York man, Colonel William Salmond, an amateur geologist, whose wife was a notable figure in Catherine Cappe's and Faith Gray's group of pioneering radical women who made such a difference to the quality of life for the poor of Regency York. It was to be William Salmond who took the noted professional geologist William Smith to Kirkdale to show him the cave, encrusted as it was in stalactites which had been mixed in with the bones. Salmond then persuaded other York gentlemen to get involved in finding out more. The bones of the animals found were not native to Britain as far as anyone knew. The finds were, in short, incredible. Elephants and rhinos roaming the North Yorkshire moors? Yet the bones were absolute proof of their presence.



*'The New Museum, with Part of the Ruins of St. Mary's Abbey York', 1829, N. Whittock.
(York Museums Trust)*

In those days of the late 18th and early 19th century, geologists still sought to 'harmonise' two very different accounts of earth's history: the geology of stratified rocks such as those found in the cave, and the Bible with its story of the origin of the earth. The cave, Professor Buckland deduced, had been a den for hyenas – 'relics of the deluge' and the bones were the remains of the animals they had scavenged.

The find had a major impact on intellectual society in York. The proposal to build a museum and school of the arts was first suggested by the editor of the short-lived *Yorkshire Observer*. York was dwindling as a centre of business at that time. The industrial revolution had led to the mushrooming of small towns like Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham into large cities and new societies were springing up all the time. Birmingham notably had its Lunar Society headed by James Watt, Matthew Boulton and Joseph Priestley.

The York middle classes felt it was time for them to become a presence too – hence the formation of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society. The first meeting of the YPS took place on 7 December 1822 between William Salmond and two other York men, James Atkinson and Anthony Thorpe, at Atkinson's house on Lendal or Upper Coney Street. A prospectus was published, and the story began. One thing was evident – that the Society was to be non-exclusive. It was to throw its membership open to all classes. The Society subscription was to be kept as low as possible. William Salmond was the first geologist to explore and map the site of the Kirkdale cave. His colleague Anthony Thorpe was a legal man and a partner to William Gray of Gray's Court and Jonathan Gray, William's son, who became the first treasurer of the Society. Other notable members were prominent York Regency figures: Sir William Strickland and the Reverend Charles Wellbeloved, who had founded the York Subscription library in 1794. James Atkinson – a surgeon by profession at York County Hospital – was a fit and active contributor to the YPS even at the age of 80.

A leading light to emerge from the small group of men who formed the Society in 1822 was William Vernon, son of the Archbishop of York. Surprisingly Vernon was not encouraged to join the clergy – in fact he was sent away at the age of 12 to sea as a midshipman during the Napoleonic Wars. He served much of his time in the West Indies. After his return from war

to become the vicar of Bolton Percy, Vernon devoted much of his time to chemistry and the YPS.

In 1823 the home of the YPS was set up in Low Ousegate, adjoining the 'new' Ouse bridge. It was seen as 'good, cheap and permanent accommodation' and remained the home of the YPS for seven years. By 1830 the YPS membership exceeded the Leeds and Manchester Societies with more than 500 members. The room in Low Ousegate began to be filled with artefacts donated from all over the country. As the exhibits increased, by March 1824, Vernon was suggesting the possibility of building a new tailor-made home for the exhibitions. There was an amusing anecdote that the rooms in Low Ousegate were so cramped and full of artefacts that visitors often had to lie flat on their backs to look at some of the specimens on display as they had to be positioned anywhere there was space!

Vernon reckoned that the sum of £3,000 should enable the opportunity to 'raise a building' to become a lecture hall and museum. A site was chosen called Manor Shore close to the river and on land occupied only by St Mary's Abbey, which lay in ruins. John Kenrick, another member, described the area as a 'most forlorn and desolate' place – the ruins of the abbey constantly being ransacked for its stones to reuse for building materials. The fundraising exceeded all expectations, £4,500 being donated almost immediately by the leading members of York Regency society. A London architect, William Wilkins, was hired to design it with another York resident, architect Richard Hay Sharp, supporting. Eventually the ground for the building was approved by the City of York council and the government – on condition that the remainder of the purchased land be made into a 'botanic gardens' for public use and scientific purposes. The annual rent was £1/0s/8d. The Archbishop of York, Vernon's father, laid the foundation stone of the Yorkshire Museum in 1827. And so began the gardens too, which officially opened on 2 of February 1830.

Further reading: A. D. Orange, *Philosophers and Provincials 1822-1844*; S. Shields, *From Cave to Cosmos: A history of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society* by Sarah Shields.

Steve Barrett is a local historian and committee member of York and District Family History Society.

The List and Index Society

Heather Falvey

The List and Index Society (L&IS) publishes editions and calendars (summaries) of historical records, and also occasional monographs. The society's website explains that when Sir Geoffrey Elton and others founded the Society in 1965, its aim was to publish and distribute 'photographic copies of unprinted lists and indexes kept in the Public Record Office, London [now The National Archives, Kew], and of other unprinted guides and aids to the use of public archives in the British Isles', so that historians from outside London could find out what was available before visiting those archives. This function has now been replaced by TNA's (excellent) online catalogue Discovery, so the style the L&IS's output has changed. It now serves historians by publishing texts, editions and tabulations of historical manuscripts, which include national and regional records, and also local records that have more than local interest (of which more below).

In 2024 the society published four volumes, covering diverse subjects. *Early Records of Newport, Shropshire, c.1150–c.1650*, edited by Judith Everard, relates to a specific place, but gathers together some 500 items spread between a number of archives. It is an impressive work of scholarship. The other three are calendars of records held at TNA and are relevant to many areas of the country. *Pardon Rolls of Henry VII, 1485–1509*, edited by Hannes Kleineke, calendars the general pardons issued by Henry VII, which provide information on individuals of all ranks of society, their social status and places of residence. *Justices of the Peace of the Reign of Henry VII, 1485–1509*, edited by Jonathan Mackman, provides details of all the surviving commissions of the peace issued in Henry VII's reign, updating and amplifying the lists previously published in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls. The Enrolled Customs Accounts (E 356, E 372, E364)*, Part 13, edited by Stuart Jenks, continues a long-running series of accounts which 'contain virtually unbroken records of the amounts of wool, wool fells and hides exported from England (from 1278), cloth exports, ... wine imports and movements of general merchandise (from 1347)' and carry on into the 16th century. They are sources for national, regional and local trade.

From a personal point of view, it is pleasing to see so that the L&IS has published many medieval and early modern records, such as *Star Chamber Reports BL Harley Ms 2143*, edited by Krista Kesselring, which provides a transcription of an early 17th-century manuscript volume of notes taken from the now missing order and decree books of the Court of Star Chamber. But the society has also published many recent records, such as *British Farm Surveys, 1941 to 1943*, edited by Oliver Finnegan, Catherine Glover and Richard W. Hoyle, and the key to S.W. Roskill's official history, *The War at Sea, 1939–45*, which enables historians to identify the records Roskill drew on in his history.

The L&IS is now including in its publication programme occasional volumes of more local interest. It is 'evolving a model in which the sponsor (which may be a local history society) or editor of the volume would undertake to take a supply of the published volume for local sale to ensure that it is available locally. [It] would also welcome a grant in aid towards [...] costs'. It would supply editorial advice and even lay out the text, if required. The Society is not setting itself up in competition with county record societies but is aiming to give 'historians in counties without one the means to publish texts'. It would not publish volumes of entirely local interest but rather material that may be useful to a range of historians, or volumes where the contents 'straddle county boundaries or draw on materials from different parts of the country'. The Society emphasises that it is not 'moving away from our role as a national publisher of broadly national resources: rather we are offering a new service to the historical community', in addition to its more usual publications.

Membership of the L&IS costs £5 per year, and members are entitled to purchase volumes at a discount, normally 33%; so, for example, *Justices of the Peace of the Reign of Henry VII, 1485–1509* costs £29 for L&IS members and £43.28 for non-members. The Society welcomes proposals for future volumes. For details of all the Society's volumes, membership and publishing plans, see www.listandindexsociety.org.uk

A Georgian book club... and an accidental author

Chris Fozzard

Local history research is the reason I became an accidental author. I first became interested in the property in which I live a few years ago, not long after I moved in. Dating from the late 17th century and surviving as a Grade II* listed building, now divided into flats, it has been home to some prominent families down the ages. I was curious to know who had inhabited the same space as me, and that's as far as it went initially. In the event, I gathered so much data that a book emerged: *A Short History of Newton Hall, Chester*.

One intriguing reference I came across, giving rise to my second book, was to the 'The Chester Book Club, 1824' and a single meeting that took place that year. There were 13 members, whose names – mostly salutations and surnames – were stated, and little more.

For my work to be coherent and complete I needed to identify all those Newton Hall families and all those book club members. I used a plethora of sources and often found the information I sought in unexpected places. For example, the Parker family, who occupied the hall in the early 19th century would have eluded me completely had I not come across a publication entitled *Monumental Descriptions of Cheshire Folk in other Counties* in my local library. It includes a reference to a tablet in Lichfield Cathedral commemorating Elizabeth Parker of Newton Hall, Chester. This thread enabled me to build a detailed picture of the whole family, among them Sir William Parker, a much vaunted and highly decorated naval admiral.

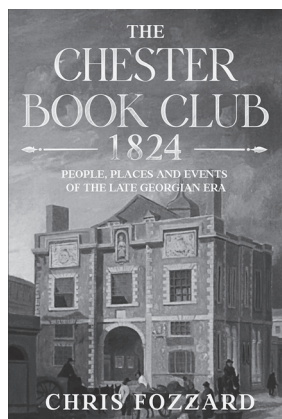
At times I had to challenge my own assumptions. I had scant information to work on in the case of book club member 'Mrs Glynne'. In the source material she was linked to Hawarden in north-east Wales, where the Glynnes, I then found out, were the main landowners for many generations. Their genealogy was well documented, but where

within it was this Mrs Glynne? To reach an accurate determination, I needed to recognise that 'Mrs' was then used as term of reverence as well as an indicator of marital status and look across a broad timeframe. Mrs Anne Glynne, whom I sought, remained single all her life and was mentioned fleetingly in a newspaper report of her great-nephew's coming of age celebrations in 1828. She was then in her late seventies and the last survivor of an otherwise extinguished generation.

In pursuing other leads I felt I was being rewarded for persistence, not that the research was ever a chore. In one case, a living descendant had posted information of relevance to me online. I contacted him, initially for verification and to respect his copyright. This led to an introduction to a cousin who held a wealth of family memorabilia, including a beautiful portrait of a book club member which now features in my book. I also probed wills – often available through genealogy websites – relating to many of my subjects. The looping cursive script, mostly bereft of punctuation, looks indecipherable at first but a little effort soon pays off. It was through this medium that I was able to make connections between book club members and the transatlantic slave trade. There were some fascinating legacies too, including an itemised book collection and an original Rubens, which hung casually over a Chester fireplace. One book club member even inherited precious artefacts that had once belonged to Dr Johnson.

Of course, I had to be disciplined in the way I captured the data so that it was readily transposed onto the written page. Writing, after all, is a form of curation and an important means of sharing the stories we are privileged to unearth.

Chris Fozzard is a local historian and writer based in Chester. His two works to date are *A Short History of Newton Hall, Chester* (2022) and *The Chester Book Club, 1824* (2024).



Transcribing workhouse records from Calderdale

Peter Lord

In February 2024, an ambitious project was started to transcribe detail from three of the Calderdale workhouses for which West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) hold records. These transcriptions are detailed on **Calderdale Family History Society's** online database, available to society members and indexed on the society website, www.cfhswb.com, under the Research/Transcription Index, available to everyone.

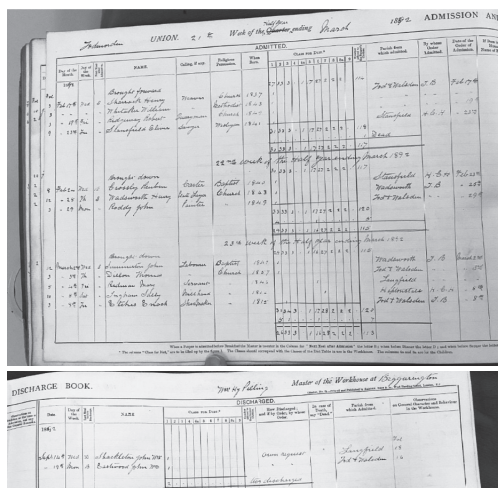
These are widely varied sets of information, depending on both the workhouse itself and the time period when the records were kept. One would have thought that there would have been a standard format for all workhouses in an area, but clearly each workhouse had its own ideas and even then those ideas developed and changed over time.

The three workhouses covered are :-

- Todmorden from 1880 to 1924, but with gaps in that timescale due to books being lost
- Halifax, Ovenden from 1756 to 1838
- Halifax, Gibbet Street, the largest of the three, from 1871 to 1918.

Due to the wide range of methods used to record admissions and discharges from workhouse to workhouse, and over time, the transcription team had to devise a standard format to hold the data, which means that there are often fields on the database that have no information. To aid the researcher, those 'blank' fields are not displayed, which means that the field titles of data that is held may vary from record to record.

This article will look at each of the workhouses to explain what is presented in the database. Some of the formats used by the workhouse officials are so complex that we have had to summarise parts of the information and, in a small minority of cases, not transcribe it at all. This is generally for multiple admissions and discharges shown on a single entry or minor pieces of information such as dietary requirements for individuals. Because of this, we recommend that, when you find entries of interest to you, you contact the relevant WYAS

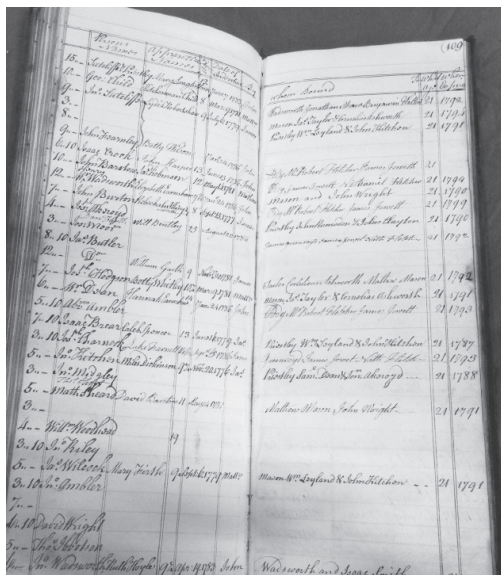


Typical examples of the admission and discharge pages for Todmorden.

office and ask to see the original page. Every record holds the WYAS document reference needed, so it is a simple task to find the correct document. If you are unable to go personally to either Halifax or Wakefield, you can request a copy of the page concerned from WYAS, but there may be a charge for this.

Todmorden Workhouse – 14244 records

Todmorden's books contained a double page for each week of the year, with admissions on the left-hand page and discharges on the right. All entries have been transcribed, which means that, if a person was a habitual resident at a workhouse, then there will be multiple entries in the database. Also, as discharges were shown separately, there will be a record of each discharge. This means that there can be many records for one individual, so the best thing to do, once you have found a person of interest, is to go to the workhouse database and enter just the surname, forename and the relevant workhouse and all entries for that person will be listed. By sorting them into date sequence, it is easy to see the movements in and out of the workhouse.



A typical page from Ovenden showing apprenticeship details.

In a similar way, by entering just the surname, other members of the family will be displayed and selection by admission date will group together families who came and went together. Care should be taken here, though as, for many families, parents came and went at different times from their children.

Many of the principles described here are applicable to the other two workhouses, so the descriptions for Ovenden and Gibbet Street will focus on the individual differences.

Ovenden Workhouse, Halifax – 2424 records

This workhouse has the most diverse sets of information because it holds records from much earlier than the other two, when record-keeping was far more haphazard and there were no pre-printed pages to use. As an early workhouse, it has relatively few entries.

In addition, it is the only workhouse that holds details of apprenticeships that were offered to residents, so younger men (they were always men) can be traced in their early days for more information than is usual.

The methods of obtaining information about admissions and discharges here are similar to those at Todmorden, with an additional classification of ‘in situ’ rather than admission.

This classification is used where it is clear from the entry that it was made at the start of a book and that the person concerned was already resident. This means that it is likely

that there will have been an earlier entry for the same person for an admission, but from an earlier book. Also, some books were fashioned by being a list of current residents on that month, which means that a person’s name could be recorded in the same book multiple times, because they were resident for many months.

Here we have made a single entry, where possible, with an admission date, a discharge date and the date range – in years – that they were resident.

For books where only a single entry was made for an admission but there were many of these due to the person going in and out of the workhouse, it would have been too time consuming a task to have married these up, but it can be done, effectively, by using the same name and workhouse on the online database, which will group all the entries for that person together.

Gibbet Street Workhouse, Halifax – 48,739 records

This is by far and away the largest workhouse, as can be seen by the number of records that we have transcribed. Also, because it holds records over a long period of time there are many different styles of book, which posed a challenge to our transcription team and to how we presented the data.

In the early days, a simple book was kept with relatively little information for each entry. However, as time progressed, the books changed to be much larger and to contain multiple admissions and discharges for an individual all on the same row. Such a page is shown overleaf.

However, this is not the end of the story, because, once a book (which listed residents alphabetically) was deemed to be full, a new book was started. The new book often listed people who were already there, with the admission date which was prior to the start date of the book.

All these entries can be seen together by keying her name into the database. However, in the case of people with multiple admissions, the format of the data records did not allow multiple dates to be entered on a single record, nor did we want to have as many as six records from a single line in the book, so, for these types of records, a first admission date and a final discharge date are shown, together with the date range (in years) that the entry covered.

[illegible]

On this page, you can see that, although the majority of entries are for just one admission and discharge, some have more and Catherine Clarkson (halfway down the page) is shown as having five admissions and discharges over a three-year period, plus a final admission date of 23/5/1888.

In later books, the number of entries is also shown.

This type of book was used for a number of years – from 1878 to 1903 – and was covered by five books. This means that a long-term resident is capable of being shown a number of times from consecutive books.

From 1904 the system reverted to a single entry for each admission and in the example pictured below it can be seen that the same person is entered on a number of occasions.

It is difficult to know whether James C. Brown actually left and returned (sometimes this happened to avoid a particular day of the week) or if the officials were recording him in a similar way to earlier methods. The first seems more likely.

By looking on the database, it can be seen that he is shown as an admission 314 times between 1903 and 1918, his last recorded discharge being in 1919. It is quite possible that he continued after that period in later books which are not available to us. Incidentally, later records show that his full name was Charles James and this can be determined by using the 'starts with' option on selection and keying James C. Indeed, using 'starts with' and just keying James shows a further seven entries, starting in 1891, so this poor man was associated with the workhouse for at least 28 years. However, from the last book, 1914 to 1918, we can see that he gives his address as a series of lodging houses, which implies that he was possibly only using the workhouse as a source of meals – who knows?

This final book has an extra column which gives the home address from where the resident came, which clearly adds to the information available.

This project has been very challenging and the team we have are to be commended for the sticking power and ingenuity with which they have conducted their efforts. As we progressed, we had many (nearly all!) constructive comments on how we could improve the final results. We hope that this description will help you navigate what is a complex set of data.

Our search coordinator – search@cfhsweb.com – is available for advice on aspects of this that you may find useful.

Peter Lord is the project's coordinator at Calderdale Family History Society.

[illegible]

James C. Brown is shown on this page five times, each time being readmitted on the same day as he had previously been discharged. Entries for him continue on subsequent pages.

Local History News

NUMBER 154 FEBRUARY 2025

www.balh.org.uk

Supplement

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Online only: via Zoom (link will be provided to members)

Thursday 22 May 2025, 7pm)

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2024, and matters arising
3. Report from the Chair of Trustees
4. To consider the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024
5. Charitable Incorporated Organisation status
6. To elect Members of the Board of Trustees: Sophie Anstee de Mas, Dr John Chandler, Morgan Ditchburn, Dr Jane Golding, Dr Daniella Gonzalez, Tim Hamilton, Dr Tim Lomas, Dr Jonathan Mackman, Joe Saunders, Lisbet Sherlock, Dr Jack Southern, Julia Tubman, Dr Martin Watts, Dr Adrian Webb, Laura Yeoman
7. To elect a new Chair
8. To elect the Officers of the Board of Trustees
9. Independent Examiners of the Association's Accounts
10. Membership Report and Subscriptions
11. Vision and Mission
12. Any Other Business notified by 1 May 2025

The AGM business will be followed by a talk 'Writing the Local History of the British Civil Wars' by BALH President Professor Jackie Eales.

Please note that the full AGM Minutes (item 2 above) and the Annual Report and Accounts (item 4 above) will be available on request from 1 May from BALH Head Office (address below).

Nomination forms (item 5 above) are available from BALH Head Office. Completed nomination forms should be returned to the BALH Chair at BALH Head Office no later than 1 May 2024. Matters of any other business (item 11 above) must also be received in writing by email or post by 1 May 2024.

BALH Head Office, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield. S1 2EX, 01625 664524, admin@balh.org.uk

The draft Trustees' Report for 2023 (item 4) is printed here (overleaf).

British Association for Local History

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING • Thursday 16 May 2024, 7pm (via Zoom)

MINUTES

[The President, Professor Caroline Barron, welcomed attendees and chaired the Meeting]

Apologies for Absence: Were received from Dr Jack Southern and Helen Watt. A total of 127 members attended the Annual General Meeting.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 18 May 2023: Following online distribution, the minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting were agreed as a true record. In the remote vote there were 45 votes in favour and 15 abstentions.

Chairman's Report: Dr Paul Dryburgh reported that the year in review has again been active across a number of fronts. Local historians are now comfortable navigating archives remotely and in person while digital technology increasingly facilitates research and dissemination. Nevertheless, the value of face-to-face conversations and research with original records remains high, and we are now seeing an increasing number of in-person conferences and seminars, including plans for our own.

Publications: The proposed multi-author volume on *Using Archives* is now well underway with plans to publish around the turn of 2024/2025. The Publications Committee has now made progress with a number of other titles, notably *Starting Afresh: Migration in Britain* and a republication of Nick Barratt's *House History* moving towards development. We are also exploring ebooks within our programme. The website has developed into a forum for individuals and societies and is showcasing several new resources. The e-newsletter (published roughly bi-monthly) grew exponentially to include a wide range of news and short research features for members.

Edited, respectively, by Dr Alan Crosby and Andrew Chapman, with Dr Heather Falvey acting as Reviews Editor, our two flagship quarterly publications, *The Local Historian* and *Local History News*, remain central to the work of BALH, providing articles and information on local history across Britain, and offering a source of inspiration and guidance for best practice in local history research, as well as a series of well-regarded awards. There has been a slight change in the publication schedule in order better to align with the membership renewals.

Digital engagement: Digital still drives the Association's regular engagement. The Digital Team (Digital Manager, Paul Carter; Digital Content Strategy Coordinator, Dr Megan Kelleher; Digital Content Coordinator, Catherine Warr) are now at the forefront of producing and delivering local history content online. This includes online discussion and news across social media platforms and a variety of skills webinars including 'Archiving Your Local History Collection' (with Dr Ellie Pridgeon) (March). Series 3 of our *Local History Matters* podcast featured four episodes on Global Mobilities, Using Archaeology and Material Culture in Local History Research, the historical representation of women in 18th-century Wales, and War Dead Remembrance in Nottinghamshire. There have also been several collaborative online events: webinars on 'The Importance of Place in Local History' (Else Churchill), in collaboration with the Society of Genealogists; 'Investigating Institutions' with the Society for One Place Studies; and the second annual, four-lecture programme with the Historic Towns Trust (January–April), where topics included the history of Swansea, the Layers of London web resource, Mapping Urban Britain: a Scottish perspective, and the Historic Town of Beverley. Another programme of these collaborative lectures took place successfully in March and April 2024 and we are already planning for 2025. Digital events are delivered at discounted rates for individual members (often at no charge) and members of member societies. The Association has also run its second annual Local History Photographer of the Year and Young Local History Photographer 2023 competitions, encouraging submissions of photographs on local history topics and short captions that convey a personal and local meaning.

Education: The collaboration with Pharos Tutors to produce an online course in local history has been repeated with our Vice Chair Joe Saunders taking the lead. Our partnership with the Historical Association to devise, develop and deliver a Teacher Fellowship scheme has now come to fruition. New teaching resources have been created by the teacher fellows; these are accessible on the Association's website and constitute around a dozen case studies for primary and secondary history teachers across England and Wales.

Events: Stephen Miller, our Outreach Coordinator, has been working to streamline the management of our diversifying offer across publications, in-person events and online programme. Although we did not host a regional conference in this year several are scheduled for 2024/5 in Somerset (12 October – Maps and Buildings), Lincolnshire (21 September – Revealing Primary Sources) and the Home Counties. However, the Association has established a regular presence at local and regional conferences and general meetings, this year notably in Huddersfield, Manchester, Hertfordshire, Devon and Somerset.

Our third annual Winter Lecture, scheduled for 14 December, dedicated to the memory of the Association's former Vice Chair and Vice President, Professor David Dymond, had to be cancelled due to unforeseen personal circumstances. However, Professor Fiona Edmonds (Lancaster University) delivered her well-attended Lecture in March 2024 on 'Northumbrian institutions reconsidered: three upland communities in medieval Britain'. The 2024 Lecture will be delivered by Dr Craig Lambert and Dr John McAleer of the University of Southampton on 5 December, entitled 'English merchant shipping and early modern maritime communities, c. 1588-c. 1765'.

Local History Live: In September the Association held an innovative event, 'Local History Live'. Broadcasting from The National Archives, and despite some severe technical issues outside our control, the programme brought together a collection of pre-recorded lectures (on Railway Accidents, Using the 1921 Census for Local History, Devon in the 1920s and the Local History Context to Female Parliamentary Representation in the Interwar Period), panel discussions on the Local History in the Digital World and the Future of Local History (how we diversify local history and broaden the audience base), and a segment where members were able to question our local history supreme Dr Alan Crosby on a wide range of topics. Our annual awards were also announced, and the recipients' varied achievements introduced, as were the winners of our collaborative 20s Streets competition – a local history short story collaboration with The National Archives – which included a school history club from Oakhill in Lancashire.

Small Grants scheme: As a look ahead, Dr Dryburgh announced the establishment of a new Small Grants scheme, aimed at member societies, with funding available for publications, events and a potentially wide range of other activities. The scheme will be announced on the website and in *Local History News* and he encouraged representatives of member societies to apply if they have suitable small projects. The scheme would be trialled for one year in the hope it could become a more permanent fixture.

Annual Report and Accounts for 2023: the outgoing Treasurer, Dr Iain Taylor, and the incoming Treasurer, Sophie Anstee de Mas, introduced the financial statement for the year ending 31 December 2023 (pre-circulated): 2023 proved to be another challenging year. Nevertheless, it was a year of substantial progress and investment into new areas of operation, in particular our digital offer to members and the new Teacher Fellowships, both of which proved to be extremely popular.

While our expenditure did slightly increase this past year, by 0.7%, this was largely due to the £7,000 invested in the Teacher Fellowships scheme and the increased staff and technology costs resulting from our webinar series and other digital rollouts. This left the Association with a net trading loss of around £18,000. However, the board of trustees have taken key actions to ensure that we are in a much stronger position this time next year. The end of the teacher fellowship scheme and the revisions to subscriptions are expected to generate around £18,000 in income. On top of the savings being made from less printing and posting, this should lead BALH to break even in 2024. We are also in the process of un-restricting some of our restricted funds, totalling around £2,000, to further boost our organisational cash position, which currently is sitting at a very healthy £175,379. Dr Taylor noted that it is crucial we keep expenditure under control, and to monitor how subscription income holds up (and how many choose the digital option).

These headline figures, the trustees feel, justify two key areas of expenditure projected for the upcoming year. Firstly, as voted on by members in last year's AGM, we will be converting to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). This will cost in the region of £5,000–£7,000, and the Treasurer noted all that the first steps have now been made to start this process, and we have reached out to a law firm who will be able to help us with this transition. Secondly, our board of trustees have voted and agreed to run a pilot grant programme. We have agreed on an initial funding pot of £5,000 to help determine the desire for this fund and any potential success that may come from it.

A question from the floor asked why the Association is going through a solicitor to become a CIO; other charities have done this themselves, and there is a lot of information on how to do this on the Charity Commission website. Dr Taylor responded that this is a serious matter which demands a solution that is not do-it-yourself, and he has recommended a law firm with whom he has successfully work with before.

The annual report and accounts were accepted and agreed by the meeting, there having been 56 votes for approval in the remote vote and 4 abstentions. The President warmly thanked Dr Taylor for his service as treasurer over the past four years. She also welcomed Miss Anstee de Mas.

Trustees of the Association

Trustees: Sophie Anstee de Mas, Dr John Chandler, Dr Paul Dryburgh, Dr Jane Golding, Dr Daniella Gonzalez, Tim Hamilton, Dr Tim Lomas, Dr Jonathan Mackman, Susan Moore, Joe Saunders, Lisbet Sherlock, Dr Jack Southern, Dr Iain Taylor, Julia Tubman, Dr Adrian Webb, Laura Yeoman. Proposed Sharon O'Connor, seconded Dr Mark Forrest

The Chair noted that both Dr Jonathan Mackman and Susan Moore had agreed to return to the Board as having completed their one-year break as trustees. They have long been valued voices and counsellors, and Dr Mackman has continued to manage membership matters, helping to oversee the rise in subscriptions and the move to digital membership. Dr Dryburgh also noted that Professor David Killingray is standing down as a trustee at the end of his term. He paid warm tribute to Professor Killingray's contribution to the Association, having stepped in as Chair before lockdown and having always provided the wisest of counsel and encouragement.

The members of the board of trustees were elected en bloc with the noted change: 58 approvals, 1 non-approval and 1 abstention. In the remote vote a query had been raised that the treasurer ought to have accountancy qualifications or relevant experience. While accepting the point, Dr Dryburgh noted that there had been a call through *Local History News*, social media and among the trustees and committee members. No one had come forward. Given Dr Taylor's desire to resign at the end of 2023, and given Miss Anstee de Mas's work as a grants and funding manager at The National Archives where she deals with budgets in access of the Association's assets, the trustees unanimously accepted her nomination should be put forward to the membership. Moreover, the Association works closely with our asset managers at Moore Insight and the Annual Report and Financial Statement are subject to annual audit; this year's audit was more rigorous than in previous years.

Another question in the remote vote related to who had been nominated – all 17 of those listed as trustees – and does one have a choice? In response Dr Dryburgh noted that it is standard Association practice within the Constitution that all trustees who wish to stand for re-election and remain within their six-year term can stand again and can be elected en bloc. This is not a competitive process. Potential new trustees are identified by current trustees and approaches on social media and through the publications, but can be freely nominated by the membership – call for nominations go out in *Local History News* with a closing date. Dr Dryburgh reiterated an appeal made for representatives of member societies to come forward.

Election of Officers of the Association: Dr Paul Dryburgh, Chair; Dr Jane Golding and Joe Saunders, Vice Chairs; Sophie Anstee de Mas, Treasurer; Dr John Chandler, Chair of Publishing Committee; Joe Saunders, Chair of Outreach Committee; Dr Jonathan Mackman, Membership Secretary. Proposed, Anita Jays, Dr Iain Taylor; seconded, Dr Andrew Walker.

Independent examiners of the Association's accounts: Dr Taylor proposed that Moore South LLP be appointed independent examiners of the Association's accounts. Seconded Anita Jays.

President of the Association: Professor Barron announced her decision to stand down as President after eight years of service. She further announced that her successor will be Professor Jackie Eales, Professor Emerita of Early Modern History at Canterbury Christ Church University, and a former President of the Historical Association. The Chair offered his sincere thanks to Professor Barron for her service, counsel and energy in the role. He warmly welcomed Professor Eales and looked forward to working with her. Professor Eales noted how supportive and visible Professor Barron had been as President. She expressed her honour in being elected and looked forward to meeting members.

Membership Report and subscriptions: Dr Jonathan Mackman, Membership Secretary, reported through the Chair that membership towards the end of 2023 stood at 2,165 across all categories, a drop of around 5% on the number at the end of 2022, which was in line with expectations at the last AGM. The majority of this change was in the individual membership categories, with the number of member societies being slightly up on the previous year, continuing a recovery from losses during the pandemic. In the current economic climate that represented a reasonably good position.

The Trustees calculated that an increase to subscription rates in 2024 (the first for many years) was unavoidable, but to balance this it was also decided to fast-track proposals to introduce new digital-only membership categories, allowing members to choose to avoid the increase in return for receiving digital versions of LHN and TLH, rather than hard copies, thus cutting printing and postage costs. Around a quarter of individual members and almost a third of society members are now digital, and when combined with student memberships, which were switched automatically, this now represents around 550 members in total.

Although 2024 has seen the usual attrition rate with renewals of around 10%, membership as at 1 May this year is roughly the same as at this point last year, at 1,989. This is clearly lower than the high point reached in 2022, but we can, of course, expect new members to continue joining through the year. However, we do need to redouble our efforts to attract new members, particularly amongst students, which is always the most changeable category, and libraries subscribing to the journals, which have reduced substantially over recent years.

Vision and Mission: The Chair reported that during the year under review, a project to examine the Association's Vision and Mission has been launched. Led by Dr Jane Golding (Vice Chair), this has involved drafting both a vision and mission statement for approval by trustees and underpinned by two collaborative workshops with trustees and external partners in cognate organisations (Historical Association, Institute for Historical Research, Federation of Family History societies etc.) to explore why we do what we do, for whom, and how we might work better with others and bring more diverse voices into our organisation and the local history world. The work is ongoing and the intention is to present a new Vision and Mission statement to the AGM in 2025. Dr Dryburgh noted that the intention is to assess what the Association does and the purpose behind its many functions; this is not necessarily going to result in dramatic changes, it is more about positioning the Association better within the landscape of similar organisations and institutions, diversifying what we do, where necessary, and serving *all* local historians and local history as an advocacy body.

Any other business: There were no further matters of business.

Showing off Hampshire history

Barry Shurlock

The galloping digital age coupled with Covid has diminished enthusiasm for getting together. And yet most people recognise the value of meeting others with like interests, if only for gossip and human contact. Thus, last year the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society (HFC), which has been masterminding events in the county since 1885, put a call out to its 100 or so local groups with an interest in history and heritage.

Under the title 'Showcasing Hampshire History' they chose to do so in September during the week of Heritage Open Days (HOD) organised by the Hampshire History Trust, and the response was very encouraging – an exhibition and a day of talks was attended by more than 200 people, who could be seen poring over publications and discussing projects in hand.

It was held in the Elizabeth II Court and the Ashburton Room of the headquarters of the Hampshire County Council (HCC) in Winchester, which has a strong historical legacy. It was hereabouts in the city of Alfred the Great – arguably the first *Rex anglorum* – that William the Conqueror came to wear his crown, after Westminster, and to build a cathedral, a castle and a palace. No prizes for the HCC address: 'The Castle'!

Ashburton also is a name to be reckoned with, as Alexander Baring (1774–1848), 1st Lord Ashburton – owner of an estate in north Hampshire and a villa on the coast – put the family bank on the map in 1803 by arranging the finance for Napoleon to sell Louisiana to the Americans. Also, the HOD movement can boast a Hampshire link, as it was in 1992 in the town of Gosport, dripping with military heritage, that it all started in the country (though there is a polite dispute with Berwick-upon-Tweed).

At the event 14 groups exhibited their wares, including local history groups from Alresford, Bitterne, Micheldever, Petersfield, Romsey, Eastleigh, Titchfield and the Worthys. There were also exhibits by Hampshire Archives Trust, Hampshire Genealogical Society and Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society. Publishers on show included the 'New'

Victoria County History of Hampshire, the Southampton Record Series and *Southern History*.

A day-long programme of short talks with come-and-go attendance was held alongside the exhibits. Dr Cheryl Butler FRHS, who is on the BALH Outreach Committee, spoke on the exciting story of William Ghost, an Elizabethan mariner, lodging housekeeper and privateer from Southampton, who travelled the New World, clashed with the Spanish and worked for disreputable merchants. Erica Wheeler, author of *The Little Book of Hampshire* (The History Press) and editor of *Worthy History*, spoke about her research for the new book, full of nuggets of history – quirky, unusual, little-known stories about the characters, the landscapes and events in the county, many originally discovered by local history groups.

Other talks included one by professional genealogist Fiona Ranger, who ranged over sources from personal ephemera to official documents, with the catchphrase: 'You never know what you might dig up!' And Romsey historian Phoebe Merrick demonstrated what can be achieved by focusing on a local newspaper over the short period – in this case 1939–45 and the Second World War.

Above all, the Showcasing event provided opportunities for individual local historians to network and share experiences. The huge range of publications and other products on show demonstrated, if need be, that local history in Hampshire is in good heart.



Elizabeth II Court at Hampshire County Council HQ in Winchester. (Photo: Barry Shurlock)

News round-up

*With thanks to John Chandler, Heather Falvey, Roy Jones, Geoff Philpotts,
Bob Ricketts, Paul Smith, Nigel Tringham*

Around 1,600 organisations and individuals responded to the government's consultation about new proposals for the **retention of wills** (see LHN 151, p.21), intended to save around £4.5m a year. The government has now agreed not to destroy original wills. Justice minister Sarah Sackman said that the originals 'will remain in storage, and – on request – are available for all to access'. The full report on the consultation is available via www.gov.uk/government/consultations/storage-and-retention-of-original-will-documents

The construction of the Dogger Bank Wind Farm at **Holderness** in the East Riding of Yorkshire has led to archaeological finds from prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon times. The findings can be explored online through an interactive map – see www.balh.org.uk/PMG202

A local historian in **Bulwell**, Nottinghamshire has been researching and digitising a collection of 18 boxes of old photographs of the town which he was given five years ago to save them from being thrown away. Paul Turton has started to share the images through his 'Bulwell TV' channel at www.youtube.com/@paulturton9755

Archaeologists have found more than 120 bodies in a narrow shaft near **Leicester Cathedral** – they appear to date from the early 12th century and form one of the largest pit burials ever found in Britain. Mathew Morris from Leicester University said, 'Their bones show no signs of violence – which leaves us with two alternative reasons for these deaths: starvation or pestilence.'

History in the Making is a programme funded by Historic England to enable under-represented young people in Bradford to explore and celebrate their hidden histories, as part of Bradford's 2025 UK City of Culture status. For full details of the city's events, see bradford2025.co.uk

An 'incredible' ancient sword has been found in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in an undisclosed rural location near **Canterbury**, Kent. The sword, inscribed with runes and with silver and gold hilt, was buried with a gold pendant. Twelve burials from the fifth and sixth centuries have been excavated at the site, but there may be as many as 200 more. The finds will eventually be displayed at Folkestone Museum.

Historic England has announced that in 2024, 265 historic places were added to its National Heritage List – a celebration of 17 of these can be found online at historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/listed-in-2024

A major restructuring at **English Heritage** is expected to lead to as many as 200 redundancies, particularly among curatorial staff, according to a report in the *Guardian* just as LHN was going to press. It is also expected that cuts will mean 22 English Heritage sites will limit their opening hours and 21 will close for winter, the latter including Totnes Castle and Furness Abbey. The proposals are subject to consultation.



A second year of archaeological investigation (see LHN 149 p.20) at the site of the massacre of Glencoe has unearthed further finds informing the social history of the Clan MacDonald. Finds include French and German pottery, decorate knife handles, tobacco pipes and weaving loom weights. Meanwhile an archaeological quest for the lost site of Eddlewood Castle in South Lanarkshire has led to the discovery of a late medieval cobbled roadway, drainage and pottery sherds.
(Photo: Derek Alexander)

SOCIETIES



Alcester and District Local History Society in Warwickshire celebrated its 50th anniversary last autumn – a special edition of its *Local Past* journal appeared in December. Last year the society also took over running the Alcester Heritage Network community archive.

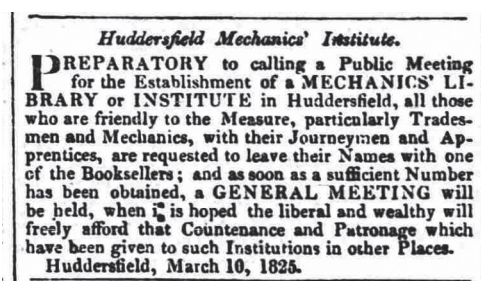
City of Dunfermline Medieval Heritage Group is a newly registered charity seeking to put Scotland's former capital 'back on the map' and ensure its built heritage is valued.

Leicester Archaeological and Historical Society will hold its 170th Anniversary History Fair at Oakham Castle on 5 July this year – further details will be announced at lahs.org.uk. The society's Public Heritage Fund has awarded a grant to the UK South Asian Digital Archive (uksada.co.uk), which aims to preserve and celebrate the heritage of these communities.

Northamptonshire Record Society launched an initiative last year to 'offer a hands-on approach to using original documents for those who may have had little experience with the real thing'. A series of workshops were run with Northamptonshire Record Office, each looking

at a different type of records – these will now be evaluated to inform future projects.

Wickham History Society has just produced an updated edition of Bruce Tappenden's *A History of Wickham*, first published in 1996. The group has revised the original text where new information has become available, added a new chapter updating to 2024, and included an improved index and brief biography of the author, Wickham's last miller. Wickham has one of the largest surviving medieval village squares in the country, a traditional horse fair and buildings like Chesapeake Mill, where Bruce was the miller. www.wickhamhistory.org.uk



Huddersfield Local History Society will this year mark 200 years of technical education in the town (Huddersfield Scientific & Mechanics' Institute was established in 1825) – the society's autumn history day will mark this, as will events run by the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees College, which owe their origins to the Institute.

The **Heritage Alliance's** Heritage Day 2025 will take place on 5 March at the Tower of London, on the theme 'Heritage Creates'. Details: www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/heritage-day-2025/

Good ideas to borrow...

Lancashire Local History Federation's November newsletter has a useful report from a visually impaired member on how society events can be made more accessible. Chris Jenkins' key points after attending the group's Mourholme history weekend last year are:

- Clear fonts and pictures, using good ink.
- Good spacing between boards and exhibits, for people walking and wheeling.
- Tactile artefacts are always a bonus.
- Check hearing loops are working before talks.
- When using PowerPoint, briefly describe what is on the screen.
- If you have the chance, go and speak to someone with a disability before the event.

Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year with a conference on 8 March – topics for talks are expected to include female founding members, Somerset archaeology in the mid-19th century, brewing in Wiveliscombe and land drainage on the Somerset Levels – see sanhs.org

Wirral History and Heritage Association's Wirral History Fair 2025 will be held on Saturday 22 March at Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight. More than 60 organisations are expected to take part – see www.wirralhistory-andheritage.org.uk

Lymington and District Historical Society closed its programme of 2024 meetings with an illustrated talk by Marc Heighway on the hidden secrets of Beaulieu's wartime past. Little did most people realise that this historic village and beauty spot was set up not only as a defensible point but an actual trap to ensnare invading Nazis. Many of these defences are still there to see if one knows where to look. The society is considering research into the Swing Riots around the New Forest as well as contributing to the New VCH for Hampshire. Joint membership with **Milton Heritage Society** is now offered to members of LDHS.

Online news

Unlocking North East Jewish Heritage is a project to share stories from Jewish communities, using records sourced from Tyne & Wear Archives and other regional repositories. These can be explored online at <https://unejh.humap.site>

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales has launched the **Historical Boundaries of Wales** website at historical-boundaries-of-wales-rcahmw.hub.arcgis.com – this allows the public to explore various types of historical boundaries that existed in Wales in the 19th century. The ultimate aim is to map all the different types of boundaries that existed in Wales as far back as possible using a range of historical maps and archival documents.

The **Vernacular Architecture Group** has a new online database of aisled buildings – more than 2,500 sites from across England and Wales are listed, mostly halls and barns. It is hosted by the Archaeology Data Service – see www.balh.org.uk/PAQ204

Wessex Archaeology has created a new online library of its research publications: wessex-archaeologylibrary.org

The **Early British Census** project is extracting British and Irish census records from 1801 to 1831 (which only survive incompletely, although in total cover an estimated 500,000 households): <https://ebc.byu.edu/Home>

New digital resources from **Oxfordshire History Centre** include data from the Oxfordshire Field-Name Survey, a 1905 survey of Oxon roads and bridges, and collections of boundary maps from the county. They can be accessed via www.oxfordshirehistory.org.uk/public/maps_oxfordshire_free.htm

New at the National Library of Scotland website is the **Mills of Britain** project, mapping details of more than 15,000 mills across 18th and 19th-century Britain, compiled from a wide range of sources: maps.nls.uk/projects/mills-of-britain

TheGenealogist.co.uk has added 2.5 million parish records for Kent to its collections at www.thegenealogist.co.uk/coverage/parish-records/kent. Meanwhile Boston College Libraries has a digitised version of **John Norden's 1637 map of Kent**, which can be zoomed into for considerable detail. See www.balh.org.uk/ADU203

Avon Local History & Archaeology's Local History Day 2025, run in conjunction with **Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**, will take place on Saturday 31 May at Little Stoke Community Hall. The theme is 'Transport in Avon through the ages'. Details will be available via alha.org.uk in March. This year ALHA celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The newsletter of **Hertfordshire Association for Local History (HALH)** reports that its forerunner in the 1950s and 1960s collected data for Professor Harold Orton's Survey of English Dialects – this is now held in the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/2571). In October this year, HALH is teaming up with BALH and **Bedfordshire Local History Association** to stage a regional symposium – BALH will announce details in due course.

Anne Taylor and a team of researchers at **Upper Eden History Society** are recording the roles of women on the Darlington to Tebay and Kirkby Stephen to Clifton railway lines in advance of the bicentenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in September. They will publish a book later this year. If you can help with this research, please email at241@cam.ac.uk

London Topographical Society has announced its 2025 Ann Saunders Essay Prize, in honour of the society's former honorary editor. A prize of £1,000 is offered annually for an original and unpublished research essay on the topography, development or buildings of London in any period. The prize was awarded in 2023 to David Cotton for his essay 'The Lost Highway of Holloway' and in 2024 to Martin Rose for

'The Close on Tower Wharf', both of which will be published in the 2025 volume of the *London Topographical Record*. Submissions of up to 8,000 words (with an abstract of c.200 words) should be made by 1 April – see londontopsoc.org/about-us/ann-saunders-essay-prize

The latest edition of *Archives* (vol 58 no 2), the journal of the **British Records Association**, includes work on the changing perspectives on the brewing industry in the aftermath of the 20-year celebrations for the National Brewing Library, and information on the success of a narrative non-fiction podcast series. It is available via www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/toc/archives/current



The Dixton Archive, a collection of parish records that have been held in Monmouth Museum since 1985, is expected to be moved to **Herefordshire Archive** in order to provide better preservation facilities.

Public access to **Kendal Archive Centre** ended in October while the service considers options for the future of County Hall. An interim public service is available instead

Son et lumière for archive centenary

Bristol Archives recently hit on an unusual way to celebrate their centenary. Working with longstanding film-maker David Parker of Available Light Productions (who is based in the same building), and with the Bristol Youth Orchestra under director Tim Harrison, they staged a concert at Bristol Beacon on 1 December. The orchestra played a programme of west-country inspired pieces by Vaughan Williams and Holst, and the remarkable first symphony of Afro-American composer Florence Price, while footage of clips from films made about Bristol over the last century and preserved in the Archives was screened to the capacity audience. The two media were beautifully synchronized, and poignantly recalled the city's lost industries, wartime devastation and its more recent vibrant multiculturalism to wholly appropriate musical accompaniment.

RIP Bedfordshire Historical Record Society?

Bedfordshire Historical Record Society (BHRS) was established in 1912 as a focus for the study of Bedfordshire history. We have been publishing the results of research by members and non-members of the Society for more than one hundred years. Volumes include collections of well-researched articles, doctoral theses, monographs and transcriptions of original records relating to the county, each with a helpful introduction and detailed notes to assist the reader.

So far, we have published 98 volumes. Recent publications have been varied in themes and periods, including *The Bedford Diary of Leah Aynsley 1943–1946*, *The Turner Letters – Letters from Home: From Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire to St Andrews, New Brunswick, 1830–1845* and last year, *Bedfordshire Probate Inventories before 1660*. Our 99th volume, Peter Doyle's *Roman Catholicism in Bedfordshire*, will hit the shelves shortly. We have a further volume in preparation – the history and records of a Bedfordshire turnpike inn. We have developed a very successful partnership with publishers Boydell & Brewer, who supported our entry into ebooks; we have revamped and strengthened our website and digitised the full series of the *Bedfordshire Magazine* (a key source for local and family historians) for online access. We have safeguarded the Fowler collection of about 2,000 books and journals, left to the Society by its founder, Dr G.H. Fowler. After only being accessible to members for many years, it is now housed in the Library of the University of Northampton, making Dr Fowler's wide-ranging library available to all.

Sadly, despite our best efforts at innovation and marketing, like many record societies, BHRS has run out of momentum. We have struggled to recruit officers, particularly an honorary editor, and the pipeline of potential publications (which had been very strong until recently) has dried up. Maybe 99 or 100 volumes is about the limit for a small county, despite its rich history. I therefore regretfully announced at our AGM in September 2024 that we should start to plan for the Society's dissolution. The formal decision will be put to members later this year (and will require submissions to the Charity Commission and Companies House) but at this point dissolution looks inescapable. We now need to consider how best to preserve the Society's legacy.

Bob Ricketts, chair, BHRS

from the Herdwick Room in the local studies section of Kendal Library, available Weds to Fri, 10am to 4pm. Visitors need to book an appointment and request records at least 72 hours beforehand.

Surrey History Centre will hold an open day at its Woking site on Saturday 8 March, showcasing the archive's holdings and exploring how it connects with the local community. Book via customer.surreycc.gov.uk/surrey-heritage-upcoming-events

Accredited status has been granted to **Northamptonshire Archive Service** and Cardiff University Library by the UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee for the first time.

A former nuclear bunker in Belfast will become a new home for the **Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland** in around a year's time. The Northern Ireland Regional War Room was built in 1952, but has been little used.

Construction on the new **Cheshire Archives & Local Studies** site in Chester has begun, supported by the Lottery Heritage Fund. Keep an eye on developments at www.cheshireto-ryshared.org

Champney Treasure House, the revamped **East Riding Archives**, museum, art gallery and registry in Beverley, East Yorkshire, has reopened to the public – see www.eastridingculture.co.uk/champney-treasure-house-transformation/

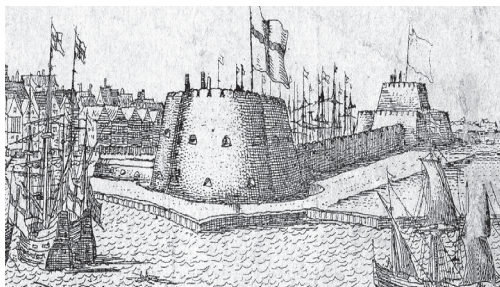
MUSEUMS



Durham Museum, in the redundant church of St Mary-le-Bow, has closed as a result of escalating costs, including major repairs needed to the roof. The Bow Trust, which operates the museum, is looking for a new home for its collections.

‘Streic! 84–85 Strike!’ is an exhibition at **National Museum Cardiff** exploring the Welsh contribution to the miners’ strike 40 years on. The exhibition – curated by a former miner – runs until 27 April.

Bentley Priory Museum in Stanmore, Greater London has secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to support a new heritage project and exhibition this year to mark the centenary of the Royal Observer Corps – the ROC had its HQ at the site. If you are interested in contributing, please contact collectionsproject@bentleypriorymuseum.org.uk. The Fund is also supporting a year-long celebration marking the 400th anniversary of **Worsbrough Mill** near Barnsley. A mural exploring the site’s history was unveiled at the end of January.



Work is expected to start on a new heritage attraction in Hull this year – plans have been submitted for the **South Blockhouse**, built on the orders of Henry VIII in the 1540s to defend the river. Most of the building was destroyed in 1864 but walls and earthworks remain. Further details at www.maritimehull.co.uk/projects/south-blockhouse

Banbury Museum & Gallery’s latest exhibition, on until 16 March, is ‘The Changing Face of Banbury’ – details: www.banburymuseum.org

Aberdeenshire Council has submitted plans for a new multi-million-pound **Museum of Aberdeenshire**, alongside a revamped Peterhead Library, at Arbutnot House in Peterhead. As well as presenting local history, the museum will have space for touring national exhibitions.

Plans are afoot to create a new local history museum for **Stratford-upon-Avon** – the driving force for the five-year plan is local resident David Austin, who has been inspired by the need to find a home for a model depicting the town’s canal basin around 1840, formerly in the home of its creator, the late Harry Cowan. Mr Austin is already in discussions with local organisations to find a temporary home to display the model.

EDUCATION



Details of spring seminars from the **Centre for Regional and Local History** and **Centre for Urban History** in Leicester can be found at le.ac.uk/english-local-history/news/events – on 13 March, Professor Ben Jervis will speak on ‘Almost Urban? Approaching the Archaeology of Small Town Life in Medieval England’.

‘Researching Place-Based Religious Histories Beyond the Parish Church’ is an online training event run by the **Institute of Historical Research** on 25 March. Details: www.history.ac.uk/events/researching-place-based-religious-histories-beyond-parish-church-1

This year’s Hoskins Day run by the **Friends of the Centre for English Local History** will be on Saturday 10 May, with Mark Gardiner, professor of archaeology at the University of Lincoln and a specialist in medieval buildings, as the keynote speaker. See: www.englishlocal-history.org/wp/2025/01/07/hoskins-day-2025/

UPCOMING BALH EVENTS IN 2025

BALH/Historic Towns Trust evening lectures 2025

Bradford in Transition in the 19th Century, with Ian Roberts: Tuesday 25 February, 7pm

Ripon, with Mick Stanley: Tuesday 25 March, 7pm

A City of Flows? Chester 400–1500, with Tom Pickles and Katherine Wilson: Tuesday 29 April, 7pm



Placing Jane

National Figures, Local Context

JANE AUSTEN 250 BALH
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

Saturday 3 May • 9:45am - 4:45pm, MAST Mayflower Studios, Southampton

BALH is delighted to present this conference as part of the Jane Austen 250 programme and Local and Community History Month. Featuring:

Jane Austen & Southampton: inspiration for Northanger Abbey & Sanditon? by Dr Cheryl Butler

Locating Pemberley: the Importance of Place in Jane Austen's Fiction by Dr Gillian Dow

Muddy Petticoats and Parasols: uncovering Jane Austen's experience of walking by Nicola Pritchard-Pink

The Nighttime Economy: the French Street Theatre & The Fitzhughs by Dr Cheryl Butler

Dramatizing Jane: Sarah Siddons, Austen's Favourite Actress by Jo Willet

Jane Austen & Character: an Actor's View by Angela Barlow

The MAD letter, the Austen Household Book, and the Royal Engagements Pocket Diary by Dr Cheryl Butler

Keeping Ladies Pocket Diaries in the age of Austen by Holly Day

Southampton and the wider world: the travels of William Ridding by Dr John McAleer

Following the conference there will be an optional private viewing of the 'A Very Respectable Company' exhibition at the SeaCity Museum, which includes items loaned from descendants' family archives, providing largely unseen material linked to Austen and her networks, including the Austen Family Household Book.

Sunday 4 May • 11am • NB There will be very few Dates in this History: A theatrical guided walk for Jane Austen 250 • God's House Tower, Southampton

**Sunday 4 May • 2pm • Trafalgar Days Costumed Guided Walk for Jane Austen 250
Holywood Church, Southampton**

BALH Annual General Meeting 2025

Thursday 22 May • 7:00pm–8:30pm, Virtual

**Further details and all bookings via
www.balh.org.uk/events**

Update on BALH's move to CIO status

Paul Dryburgh

At the Association's annual general meeting in May 2023, members formally approved the proposal from our former treasurer, Dr Iain Taylor, that the Association should transfer from being an unincorporated charity to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). Since then, the officers have progressed this important legal and constitutional business in consultation with the Trustees and intend the CIO to be formed and formally registered this year. This is a brief update from the outgoing Chair on that progress in advance of more formal announcements in short order.

Key characteristics of the CIO

As members may be aware, the CIO is a relatively new legal structure under the Charities Act 2011 and is designed specifically for charities. The CIO has the benefits of legal personality and limited liability and is solely registered with and regulated by the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Its key characteristics are:

It is a legal entity in its own right and is capable of entering into contracts, acquiring land, being sued and suing in its own name.

CIO members have no liability to contribute towards its assets or any personal responsibility to settle any debts or liabilities if the CIO is wound up and there is not enough money to cover its debts unless they have agreed to make a specified contribution.

Any surpluses generated by the CIO will not be distributed to the CIO members but are instead used by the CIO for the purpose of achieving its objects.

There is generally no liability for the Trustees when entering into properly authorised contracts with third parties on behalf of the CIO because contracts will normally be entered into in the name of and on behalf of the CIO. But the potential liability of charity Trustees for breach of their fiduciary duties, if, for example, they undertake activities beyond the scope of the CIO's objects, exceed the specific authority given to them or breach their statutory duties,

for instance, in relation to health and safety, is unlimited.

It is registered as a CIO with the Charity Commission. The Register of Charities includes the public record of the details about the CIO. Each year the CIO must submit annual returns and copies of its accounts (regardless of its income) to the Charity Commission.

New constitution

During 2024 the Association contracted Anthony Collins Solicitors (Birmingham). They have worked with the Association's officers to produce a new draft constitution. The Charity Commission prefers that organisations use its model documents, so the existing constitution (last amended in 2018) has been adapted and only those amendments considered to be necessary have been made. Many of the specific powers in the current constitution will be rolled into the new document, and it is heartening to see how compliant the Association already is with many of the new and existing provisions in the draft constitution. Members should therefore see very little difference in how the Association is managed and the services we offer to them and the local history community. The constitution also retains the place of members at the core of making constitutional decisions through the annual general meeting and other general meetings where necessary.

Timetable

At the time of writing the draft constitution is being reviewed by the officers for presentation, amendment and ratification by the Trustees at our next meeting in February. Once agreed and ratified, the constitution will be shared with members electronically and through *Local History News*. At the AGM members will not be asked to vote on the specifics of the constitution but on whether they wish to be members of the new charity and agree to the transfer of its assets and liabilities on this basis. On the assumption members give their approval, the

Association will make a formal submission to the Charity Commission to constitute the new CIO. This can take around three months to complete. Once registered, we will need to apply to the Commission for its consent to the transfer of assets, which may take another three months. That implies a complete transfer around the end of 2025.

During the intervening period, the two bodies will operate concurrently with the same officers and body of trustees elected by members at the AGM. This means that we cannot dissolve and re-form at one meeting and are likely going to have to call an extraordinary general meeting of the unincorporated

charity later in the year. This will mark the formal dissolution of the current charity. An additional complication is the constitutional requirement for me to resign as Chair at the end of my six-year term as Trustee in May. As announced elsewhere in this issue, though, I am delighted to report that Dr Martin Watts has come forward and will be nominated by the Trustees as new Chair at the AGM in May. Please have a look at his profile (page 34). Although no longer an officer or trustee, I will work closely with Martin during this transfer period to offer all the support I can. I am sure you will all welcome Martin as warmly as you welcomed me.

Letters to the editor

Send your letters to: editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

Cemetery chapels

I was interested to read in LHN 153 about the narrow gap between chapel walls at North Petherton cemetery, to avoid any contact between the Anglican and Nonconformist portions. The same applies at Edgerton cemetery in Huddersfield, opened in 1855 by the Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners. Visually there are two Gothic chapels joined by an arch topped by a spire. But the vicar of Huddersfield, the Rev Bateman, supported by the Bishop of Ripon, insisted that if the two chapels were so 'united', neither he nor his curates would take burial services there, and a concealed gap was introduced to avoid this outcome.

Some years later, in 1863, and a few miles south of Huddersfield, the industrialist Joseph Hirst proposed to endow a church in the 'model village' of Wilshaw, which was largely his

creation. From the outside St Mary's Church seems symmetrical in plan, with a central tower, but this is because the church, Sunday school and vicarage are housed within the one building.

The Bishop threatened not to consecrate this unorthodox arrangement, but reputedly gave way after Hirst threatened to offer the church to the Methodists instead!

David Griffiths, Huddersfield LHS

Fenland albatross?

I have spent 70 years collecting material on my village in Cambridgeshire.

I have read, copied and scanned numerous photos and other items which I share online through the Internet Archive and via Fenland History on Facebook. But what will happen to them in the future?

The Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library already has most of the material. The County Archives say it is outside their collections policy. Cambridge University Library does not want them.

I know that many of you are facing the same issues: 'The executors say all the books are looking for new homes to go to. He is quite desperate to find a home for his huge collection.'

So can anybody suggest something to ensure that a lifetime's collection can continue to find a home when its owner passes away? Or shall we have a vast bonfire.

Mike Petty – see archive.org/details/seventy-years-of-collecting-cambridgeshire-2024



Edgerton Cemetery, Huddersfield. (Photo: Tim Green)

Book reviews

Sean O'Dell, Roger Ottewill, Heather Falvey

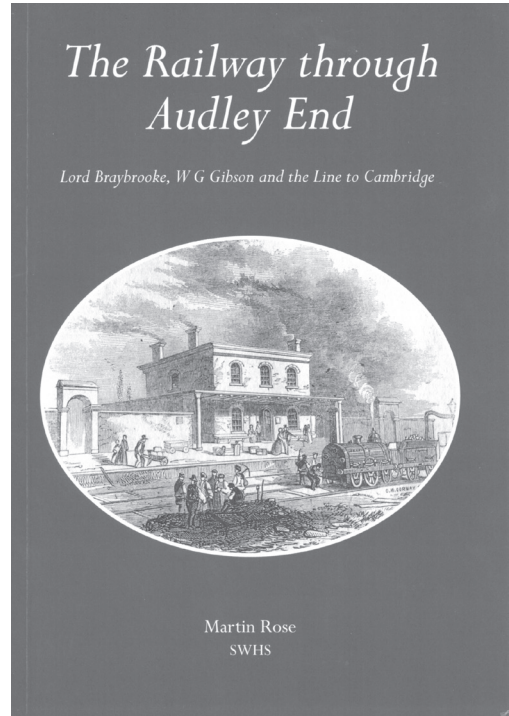
***The Railway through Audley End: Lord Braybrooke, W G Gibson and the Line to Cambridge* by Martin Rose (Saffron Walden Historical Society 2024 iv+64pp ISBN: 978-1-87366923-5) £6**

In their notable study *Transport in Britain: From Canal Lock to Gridlock* (2002), Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth observe that the initial development of the railways in Britain came about from the mid-18th century, with advancements in engineering catalysed by the rapid growth in production from the copper and coal mining industries in the north of England and the associated need for more efficient bulk cargo transport. The 'Age of the Railways', however, is observed by the author of this study to have really begun in 1830, with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

Most studies in this field, whether national, regional or indeed local, do generally agree that thenceforth the development of rail transport and travel in Britain was a process characterised by conflict and often stalemate, resulting from the differing interests and ideas of the government, the aristocracy and land owners, investors and speculators, engineers and, lastly, the rail users and those whose more modest properties and homes lay close to proposed railway lines and structures.

In this account of how and why the railway came to Audley End, just outside Saffron Walden, in the manner that it did as part of the Eastern Counties Railway, the author brings into sharp focus at a local level a clear example of the wider situation that was taking place in Britain at that time. In this case Richard Griffin, third Lord Braybrooke, was the aristocrat and landowner over whose estates at Audley End the railway would run and with whom all negotiations would, therefore, have to be made. By 1845 the line had been constructed and a station at Audley End was open.

There had been pressure to create a freight route along the valley of the River Cam through Saffron Walden since the late 18th



century, initially as proposals to extend the River Stort navigation from Bishop's Stortford through Cambridge. Despite favourable topography for such schemes, canal proposals brought the first Lord Braybrooke into conflict with Saffron Walden in much the same way as the railway proposals would do for his heir, the third baron.

The author discusses the proposals for railway constructions and routes in detail, and the various negotiations and means that were employed by all sides to advance their interests and agendas. In this narrative a balanced and objective view is given; the author reminds us not to interpret Braybrooke's motives too harshly, illustrating this by describing two groups of speculators 'talking loudly of public interest but promising their shareholders vast dividends' and 'proposing to lay a large, noisy smelly piece of industrial machinery' close to or through Walden, or through Braybrooke's park, laid out by Capability Brown in the 18th century.

Ultimately the railway was constructed, but in a way that suited Braybrooke as closely possible and in a manner that ensured he made a considerable profit.

This is a well-researched account, written in an accessible and engaging manner; it is comprehensively referenced with endnotes and contains helpful monochrome illustrations. It will provide a useful resource for local and regional historians and will appeal to a wider readership, particularly those interested in the development of Britain's railway network and its social, economic and political context.

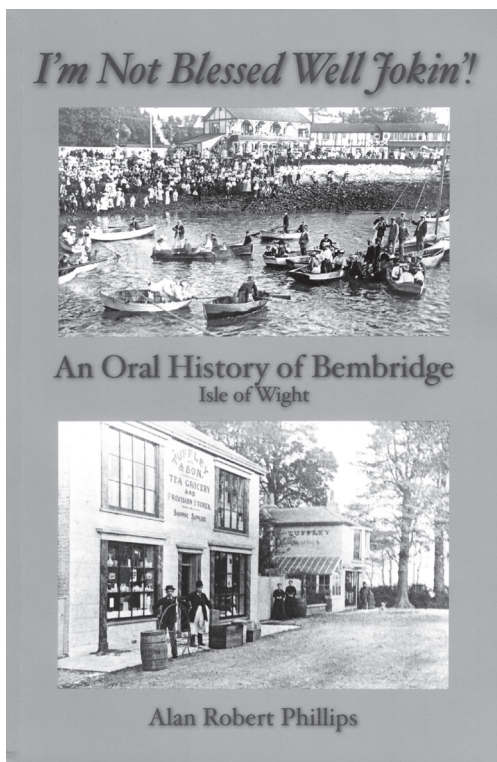
Dr Sean O'Dell is a retired senior lecturer in social history and contextual studies. His research interests include the history of East Anglian navigable waterways, and post-war tourism in the resort areas of north-east Essex.

***I'm not blessed well jokin'! An oral history of Bembridge, Isle of Wight* by Alan R Phillips (Countryside Books 2023 256pp ISBN: 978-1-846-744259) £12 + £3 p&p from bembridge-oral-history.wordpress.com**

Given its lengthy gestation period of nearly 50 years, this publication could be said to constitute a historical document in its own right. (Explanations for the delay are provided by the author in his introductory remarks.) For anyone interested in the history of Bembridge and aficionados of oral history, the resulting work is undoubtedly worth the wait. It is good example of what might be termed 'blended history', namely combining the spoken with the written and pictorial word. Regarding the latter, the text is profusely illustrated with many very evocative images, courtesy of the Bembridge Heritage photographic database.

The book consists primarily of the transcripts of interviews undertaken mainly in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. In total, there were 15 interviewees (eight women and seven men), most of whom had been born in Bembridge, the oldest in 1890 and the youngest in 1906, with some having lived there for the whole of their lives.

Unsurprisingly, given Bembridge's location, their occupations, such as fisherman, seaman and boat builder, were connected with the sea; three exceptions were gardener, carpenter and cab driver. Several short newspaper reports and extracts from an old



Bembridge WI scrapbook on various topics including the Bembridge lifeboat, fire safety in the village, the longevity of residents and the perils of fishing, complement the transcripts. There is also a chapter devoted to Mollie (or May) Downer, who was supposedly 'the last of the witches' of Bembridge and died during the 1840s.

While the contents of the interviewees' testimonies provide engrossing insights into life in Bembridge, mainly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, they do not necessarily make for easy reading. This is partly because of the anecdotal character of some of the material and a tendency for interviewees to jump from one topic to another. As Alan Phillips explains, his intention has been to enable 'old residents to speak for themselves' and 'not to provide any kind of formal, archival history of Bembridge'. However, the inclusion of a short introductory narrative highlighting some key events in Bembridge's history, such as the demise of smuggling, the coming of the railway and the construction of the harbour embankment would have been helpful.

Another useful addition would have been

the inclusion of a couple of maps. Firstly, a street plan dating from, say, 1900 and showing the locations mentioned, and secondly, a map of the eastern part of the Isle of Wight highlighting Bembridge in relation to places referred to by interviewees, such as St Helens, Brading, Ryde and Sandown.

Nonetheless, the book is full of local colour and offers a window on a way of life that has almost completely disappeared. It is history 'in the raw' and makes one realise how much has changed in a relatively short space of time, with respect to the upbringing and disciplining of children, their schooling, employment opportunities and occupational hazards and leisure pursuits. [RO]

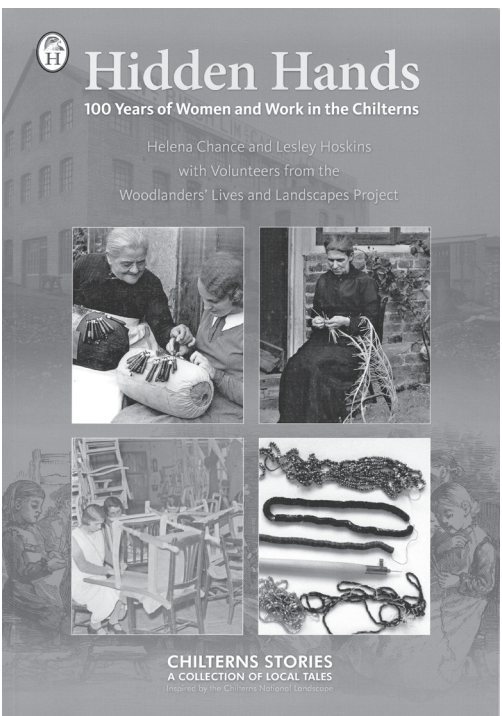
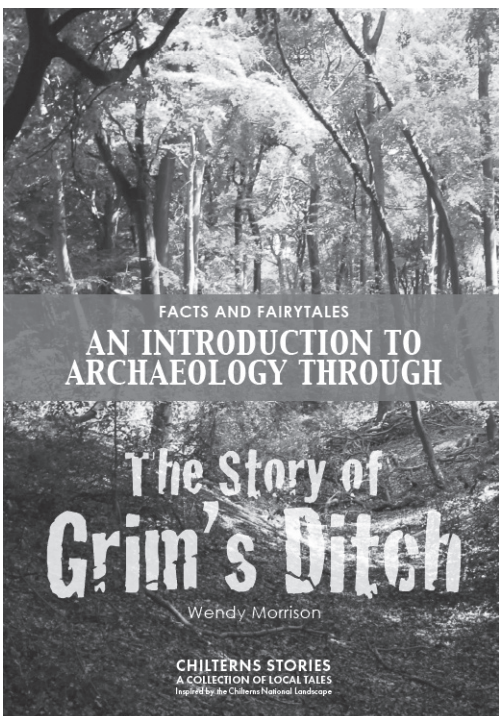
Wendy Morrison, *Facts and Fairytales: An Introduction to Archaeology through the Story of Grim's Ditch* (Chilterns National Landscape 2024 46pp ISBN: 978-1-3999-8572-7) £4.99 + postage

***Hidden Hands: 100 years of women and work in the Chilterns* by Helena Chance and Lesley Hoskins, with volunteers from the Woodlanders' Lives and Landscapes Project (Chilterns National Landscape 2024 62pp ISBN: 978-1-838-335892) £6.99 + postage**

The Chiltern Hills, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), are now officially known as the Chilterns National Landscape. Running across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, sections of this AONB are under pressure from (government-encouraged) developers, particularly HS2; but, as a result, funding has become available for exploring and recording the area's heritage. In 2019 the CNL team launched their project 'Chalk, Cherries and Chairs', funded primarily by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the HS2 Community and Environment Fund. This five-year landscape scheme was designed to 'celebrate, restore and improve the environmental and cultural heritage of the Central Chilterns'.

The project's activities were many and varied: some physical, such as restoring habitats, monitoring vulnerable species and increasing public access; others cultural, such as carrying out historical research and producing printed material to increase knowledge of the area. Two of the resulting books are quite different works of local history.

Facts and Fairytales: An Introduction to Archaeology through the Story of Grim's Ditch, by Wendy Morrison, is aimed at 12- to 16-year-olds.



Having briefly discussed the possible identities of 'Grim', after whom are named numerous ditches all over England, mostly on chalk geologies, Dr Morrison (the heritage and archaeology manager for the CNL) outlines the most likely dating of the ditches. Numerous theories have been put forward, many favouring the post-Roman period, but she explains that archaeology in the Chilterns has revealed that 'by the Late Bronze Age and into the Iron Age significant places in the landscape started to become the focus for the construction of large earthwork features'. Furthermore, Roman settlements in the area, which was important for crop-growing, were linked by road networks and routeways, some of which cut through the earthworks of Grim's Ditch.

Wendy then explains what archaeologists do – examine material evidence of the past, not only by digging but also using LiDAR, magnetometry, etc – but emphasises that they cannot explain *why* particular things were done in the past. The Chilterns' Grim's Ditch has been located, stretching some 18 km (12 miles) across the landscape between Bradenham and Berkhamsted, but its purpose can only be speculated upon. Members of the Chilterns Young Archaeologists' Club were asked to suggest its possible purpose: the published one is perfectly plausible but had not really been considered before. Surveys and new technologies continue to be used to try to locate more stretches of the 'Ditch'.

Some heritage crafts are enjoying a revival, others have almost died out. In *Hidden Hands: 100 years of women and work in the Chilterns*, Helena Chance and Lesley Hoskins, with volunteers from the 'Woodlanders' Lives and Landscapes' project, have investigated the working, domestic and social lives of those who laboured in four rural industries, or crafts, in the Chilterns from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. Firstly, 'Straw plaiting in Buckland' focuses on a craft that was concentrated in Herts, Beds, Bucks and Essex (and also Cornwall). Plait-schools were set up initially, but they died out as plait prices fell and formal education was enforced. Wages and living standards of plaiters are discussed. Secondly, 'The Buckinghamshire lacemaking revival at Great Hampden' considers the skills

of lacemakers, the decline of the industry, mostly due to factory-made lace, and its revival in several villages as philanthropic ventures, mostly instigated by well-to-do women; in Great Hampden the prime mover was Georgiana, Countess of Buckingham. Thirdly, the Chilterns area was well-known for chairmaking, particularly the town of High Wycombe: by 1877 about 150 chair factories and workshops were in the town and surrounding villages. As lacemaking and straw plaiting declined, women and girls took over caning and rushing chairs, skilled crafts that had traditionally been carried out by men and boys.

Caning is the art of weaving the seats and backs of chairs using cane from the stem of the rattan palm; rushing (or 'matting') involves weaving or twisting lengths of rush to create chair seats, a physically tougher and dirtier job. The lives of chairmaking women and girls are described, as is their important contribution to their household income. The working experiences of Alice Woodley and Nellie Beale, recorded in the late 1950s, are outlined. The fourth group of craftswomen are 'The entrepreneurial beading women of Holmer Green'. For most of the 19th century straw plaiting and lacemaking were the principal female crafts in Holmer Green, but by 1881 both industries were beginning to collapse, and some women, often daughters or younger sisters of lacemakers and plaiters, found work sewing beads on to net for the fashion industry. This 'fancywork' required considerable skills and there was high demand for such embellishments. From just before the First World War to the 1930s, 'tambour beading' became popular and was carried out in Holmer Green. Various illustrations show the beautiful clothes and collars produced. Sources for all four chapters include government reports, censuses, parish records, newspapers and oral histories. The numerous illustrations include contemporary photographs of the craftswomen (some posed, some 'natural'), examples of goods that they produced and drawings of the crafters at work. [HF]

For details of the CNL's projects, see <https://www.chilterns.org.uk/flagship-projects/chalk-cherries-chairs/>

Books for review should be sent to: Dr Heather Falvey, 119 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth WD3 3QS – or contact her via reviews.editor@balh.org.uk

Winning with twinning

Alan Crosby

For reasons not directly connected with local history, I was pondering the subject of twinning arrangements between towns and cities (and of course many villages) in this country and other countries. My city, Preston, is twinned with four places in Europe: Almelo, which is in the eastern Netherlands near the German border, 100 miles east of Utrecht, and which twinned in 1948; Nîmes in southern France (1955); Recklinghausen in the Ruhr (1956); and Kalisz, in central Poland (1989). The post-1945 spirit of European reconstruction and building bridges of friendship and harmony helps to explain the enthusiasm for the principle across Western Europe, and latterly beyond Europe into other continents.

In Preston's case the first, second and fourth twins had a history of textile production which befitted links with one of England's most important cotton towns. This was seen as their common ground, which in the case of Recklinghausen was that both places were heavily industrialised (though both were in decline). So the idea was that there should be at least something in common, even though (for example) unlike Nîmes, Preston does not have an intact Roman amphitheatre... or indeed any amphitheatre!

In the 1960s and 1970s we became accustomed to seeing the names of twin towns on the road signs which announced that you were now entering Norton, Sutton, Easton, Weston or wherever, 'Twinned with St Hilaire, France' or 'Kleinestadt, Germany'. Occasionally there would be a much more exotic connection, suggesting that the civic leaders were imbued with the spirit of ambition or perhaps oneupmanship. My sister and I were always intrigued when Dad drove through Rugeley in Staffordshire, on our eccentric route from Surrey to Manchester to visit my grandparents. Rugeley's signs proudly proclaimed that it was twinned with Western Springs, Illinois. How weird was that? The (extremely tedious) answer is that they were about the same size, and that Rugeley is about the same distance from Birmingham as Western Springs is from Chicago.

But for the true *cognoscenti*, the most



celebrated case was undoubtedly in the East Midlands. Whitwell is a tiny village or hamlet in Rutland, about two-thirds of the way from Stamford to Oakham on the A606. You can drive through it in 15 seconds, despite a modest hill and a sharpish bend. Many thousands of motorists, including the Crosbys, have delighted in the signs at the entrance to the village. Stamford is innovative with its twins (Vence, in Alpes-Maritimes in the south of France, and Kutná Hora in Czechia aka Czech Republic), while Oakham is twinned with Barmstedt in Schleswig-Holstein and, more improbably, Dodgeville, Wisconsin. But speeding along that beautiful road north of Rutland Water, the driver's eye would be caught by the sign: **WHITWELL Twinned with Paris. Mon dieu!**

It all started in 1980 as a joke, in connection with an outdoor toilet or *pissoir*, about which I will say no more, but somebody raised the question as to why Whitwell (population c.50) shouldn't be twinned... and facetiously, Paris was mentioned. Tongue in cheek, the parish council wrote to the mayor of Paris,

Jacques Chirac, asking to set up a twinning arrangement and stating that if no reply was received it would be assumed that Paris was in favour of the link.

No reply was received, and Whitwell declared itself to be twinned with the French capital. Paris, with Gallic solemnity, eventually refuted the claim, pointing out unimaginatively that it was already twinned with Rome – such folly, to turn down the chance to twin with the metropolis of Rutland.

Seeing twinning signs, I sometimes wonder if the two places have really done their homework. I can think of several British

towns where the signs proudly proclaim a link with, say, an idyllic-sounding town in France, which is doubtless full of delicious cheeses, charcuterie, a wonderful weekly market and elegant little shops, and I imagine the culture shock when the French delegation first comes to visit Grottington or Shabbyham. ‘Mon dieu, c’est vraiment horrible!’ And the vogue for twinning has subsided of late – Brexit and many other disharmonies have undermined the principle. But I still wonder if somewhere on the traffic-choked Boulevard Périphérique, there is a discreet sign which says **PARIS: jumelé avec Whitwell.**

BALH’s new Chair

Martin Watts

I’m Dr Martin Watts, and my first career was in the merchant navy, both afloat and ashore, and it was this early exposure to the people and places of the world that kindled my interest in history. Seeking to satisfy my curiosity, I pursued a part-time BA (Hons) degree with the Open University and Polytechnic of North London, followed by a part-time PhD in Modern History with the Open University. With over 30 years of experience teaching modern history at university, I have worked at Canterbury Christ Church University as a senior lecturer and principal research fellow, and I am an associate lecturer with the Open University. In addition to academic articles, I have written two books, *The Jewish Legion and the First World War* (Palgrave Macmillan 2004) and the *Royal Marines and the War at Sea 1939/45* (Amberley 2018).

For over 20 years I have been delivering history talks in person and virtually to a range of community, public, and private organisations throughout London and south-east England, with a particular focus on local history societies. I have a broad range of topics covering industrial, military, naval, political and social history across the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, including British, European and international contexts.

On many occasions I have undertaken bespoke research on specific local events



and history, and have always found this an excellent way of sharing knowledge and acquiring new perspectives from so many enthusiastic and knowledgeable audiences. More information is available through my website talkabouthistory.org

Notes News Issues

The BALH team

BALH Outreach Team news

Last year was a busy year for the BALH Outreach Team, culminating in our annual Dymond Lecture, held online on 5 December 2024. Professors John McAleer and Craig Lambert presented excellently on 'English merchant shipping and early modern maritime communities, c.1588–c.1765' with lots learnt by the audience.

In the first part of 2025, BALH has organised a new series of lectures with the Historic Towns Trust as well as other talks such as February's on heraldry. Our AGM in May will once again feature a lecture – see the agenda in the enclosed supplement. BALH is always looking to arrange more talks, attend more events and run more projects but requires volunteer assistance to do this. If you would be interested in helping, please do get in touch.

We attend as many events as we are able but we can only do so if we are aware of them. Please get in touch with our Outreach Coordinator Stephen Miller if you are running an event and would like us to attend: outreach@balh.org.uk. We also have a stock of fliers and pencils which can be sent out. If you are interested in receiving some of these to give away then please also get in touch with Stephen. With your help we can grow awareness of the Association.

The BALH blog continues to draw in excellent research as does our popular series of online 'Ten-Minute Talks'. BALH is always looking for new blogs and videos so please get in touch if you would like to share your local history research with a wide audience. We continue to be especially looking to share ideas on 'doing' local history from researching to running a society. Get in touch with the Digital Team with your idea: digitalteam@balh.org.uk

Readers can keep up to date with our activities via *Local History News*, the BALH website, www.balh.org.uk, and the e-newsletter.

Helping local historians

BALH aims to advise and inspire local historians. To do this we share excellent research from which you can take encouragement, we inform you of events and new books and offer support in the process of doing your local history through our website, publications and events. It is in this vein that we are asking readers to help us help others with their local history. You possess a wealth of knowledge about the practicalities of local history, whether this is researching, writing, giving talks, publishing, teaching, running societies and more.

Please do get in touch if you feel you can share some of your knowledge with us in either a short, written piece for *Local History News* (please send your proposal to Andrew Chapman, editor.lhn@balh.org.uk), our blog and/or a recorded ten-minute talk (contact Joe Saunders, joseph6.saunders@hotmail.com).

Ask BALH

Remember, if you have questions about local history research or any aspect of running a local history society, do send them to our 'Ask BALH' feature via editor.lhn@balh.org.uk and we will aim to provide answers. Look out for a potential 'Ask BALH' event next year, too!

Next copy deadline

The next issue of *Local History News* will be out around the end of May – please note the copy deadline for that issue (No. 155) is 1 April. If you wish to promote a society event here, it will need to take place not before late May – for earlier events, which we may be able to list at www.balh.org.uk/events, contact the BALH Digital Manager, digitalmanager@balh.org.uk

***Local History News* welcomes your news, articles and queries – editor.lhn@balh.org.uk**

On the BALH website: As well as articles here in *LHN* and in *The Local Historian*, BALH publishes a wide variety of fascinating articles at its blog, www.balh.org.uk/blog – and don't forget to watch the latest ten-minute talks at www.balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks and listen to the *Local History Matters* podcast at www.balh.org.uk/podcast

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BALH

BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

www.balh.org.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 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 Board of Trustees, with two advisory committees dealing with publishing and outreach. 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	£36
Digital (NEW) – journals as PDFs	£30
Student on a full- or part-time course in local history	£25
Local society or group	£90
Institutions	£45
Overseas	£51

Note: these are the new rates from 1 January 2024.

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

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Above: the proposed new Museum of Aberdeenshire and Peterhead Library complex (see page 25 – photo: Collective Architecture).

Below: scenes from Showcasing Hampshire History – the Southampton Record Series (left) with a satisfied customer; and Titchfield History Society displays its range of publications (see page 19 – photos: Barry Shurlock).

