THE LOCAL HISTORIAN

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The editorial voice has been silent of late, not because I’ve stopped having thoughts and opinions but because, even with the expansion of The Local Historian, space is still precious, and you would no doubt prefer an article or more reviews to my meanderings. Looking back, the increasing size of TLH has been a major liberating factor in its development. Until November 2004 most issues had 64 pages (occasionally a longer issue allowed for a particularly substantial article). From the beginning of 2005 it increased to 72 pages, in 2008 to 80 pages, and in 2009 to 88.

This has allowed much more scope and flexibility. Not only is it possible to publish more articles, but also a better mix of longer and shorter contributions is feasible (as this present issue exemplifies). We have greatly increased the number of reviews in each issue (though even so it is necessary to have plenty more on the on-line reviews section of the BALH website, and Evelyn Lord does heroic work in drawing together round-up style reviews which cover a couple of dozen publications each). But the expansion of the journal has also allowed the development of debate and discussion, an element which had rarely been included hitherto. Serious and continuing consideration of the future of local history—its structures, rationale and philosophies—is an important dimension to the work of the British Association for Local History, and The Local Historian is a suitable medium for airing these questions.

Eleven years ago the now-famous article by George and Yanina Sheeran, ‘Reconstructing local history’, was published in TLH. In November 2009, to mark its tenth anniversary, the authors contributed another stimulating and challenging article, ‘No longer the 1948 Show’. Since the appearance of the latter I have been surprised, and pleased, by the reaction to it. There has been a great deal of interest in what the article has to say, and even among its not inconsiderable number of critics the almost universal reaction has been that it has ‘set people thinking’. That can’t be a bad thing. It has also prompted a number of readers to construct substantial contributions of their own, picking up key points and discussing them at some length.

One aspect of these which I have relished is that they include some very witty asides and clever verbal dexterities—I have laughed aloud at some of the wry observations, and to be entertained by what could otherwise be so solemn and sobering is an unexpected bonus. My editorial view is that contributions to debate are always welcome, and that the debate does not have to be confined to the future of the subject and all those great issues of age, gender, class, objectives, outcomes and philosophies. It can also be about practical questions and the better (or, alternatively, the less satisfactory) ways of tackling research, writing and publication. In this context I welcomed the piece by Michael Faraday (pp.60-61), concerning the publishing of editions of historical documents, which follows on from a point made in a recent review.

Debate is one ‘theme’ of this issue. The other is war and the experience of the Home Front as, by accident rather than design, two full articles and a series of book reviews came together. The First World War is now disappearing from human recollection,
and the Second World War is slipping inexorably into ancient memory. But interest in both among local and family historians seems to grow as first-hand experience vanishes (a phenomenon which is of course far from unique to the theme of war and conflict). In August and September 1914 we will commemorate, rather than celebrate, the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War and the 75th anniversary of that of its successor. This will usher in four years of anniversaries, all with their special and terrible resonances—1915 Gallipoli, 1916 The Somme, 1917 Vimy Ridge and Passchaendale … these and a multitude of other hauntingly-evocative names will ring in our ears, grainy footage of jerkily-moving men will be shown, and across the land the war memorials will be circled in red. And many more articles on aspects of the war will be researched and written.

While military historians have looked at those who went and those who never returned, many local historians have been investigating the experience of the people left behind. In recent years The Local Historian has included articles on war memorials and commemoration in Sussex and Ulster; Great War military tribunals in Wiltshire and Warwickshire; military gravestones in Essex; the Home Front in the Second World War; the Channel Islands under German occupation; the 1942 wartime census; military requisitioning in Cromarty, 1943; and the Women’s Land Army in Craven 1939-1945. The range and subject and place is testimony to the enduring interest of the two conflicts, and also to the sense that understanding and interpreting the local experience can immeasurably enrich and enhance the wider picture. As with so much else, the story of Britain in both World Wars was once described in the history books using generalised, ‘top down’ terms (more or less implying that ‘local’ means ‘national broken up into small pieces’). Now the perspective is being reversed: to a considerable extent, the national experience is seen as the composite of innumerable local ones. Of course, there was an immensely strong and powerful national framework of laws, policies and directives, as well as the unfolding events of war itself, but its impact was far from uniform, and local case-studies provide vital evidence from which to build up a more complete and reliable view.

In this issue of TLH we have two more case studies to add to our list. The Women’s Land Army in the Second World War is now a familiar topic, but Bonnie White investigates instead its First World War predecessor, looking at the experience of Devon and recounting the struggles of its organisers and the recruits. The authorities, faced with completely unprecedented circumstances, created the WLA in 1916 and in doing so not only made a material contribution to agricultural management in the second half of the war, but also provided an invaluable example for those in charge 23 years later to follow. Chris Sladen analyses the impact of victory in 1945 upon the people of Swindon, showing how they celebrated—whether or not according to official directives—and highlighting the clear discrepancies between the mythologised view of VE and VJ Day, and the reality on the ground in a large provincial town. And we review no fewer than five books which look, from the perspective of diarists or analysts, upon the day-to-day experience of life during the Second World War. From the journal of a bad-tempered and irritable solicitor in Worthing, to a controversial book on the wartime Channel Islands, these reveal the diversity of emotional and practical responses to war. As the reviewer Peter Searby says, they ‘add subtlety to the account … of a patriotic nation united against fascism’.
Themes in local history

**Immigrant communities and British local history**

**DAVID KILLINGRAY**

In early July 2009 an important conference met at Leicester University to examine the state of 'Local history in Britain after Hoskins'. It reflected on what had happened following the work of W.G. Hoskins, who not only held the chair of English local history at Leicester from 1965 to 1968 but also wrote seminal studies such as *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955), and *Local History in England* (1959). A first version of this paper was read to the conference. 'Read' is not quite the correct verb; rather it was, in my usual style, a lecture based on notes. As a rule I leave the opening sentence or two until the last minute when I have had a chance to assess the audience and gauge what might strike an appropriate note. Two things struck me about the conference and the audience, which I included in my opening remarks. The first was the food on offer in the university refectory. It was markedly different from that which would have been provided in Hoskins’s day, forty or fifty years ago. There was pasta and curry which, as with Chinese food, are now common fare (it is reported that chicken tikka masala is Britain’s favourite meal). Our diet and preferences for food have changed as a result of globalisation and the presence of relatively new immigrant communities in Britain. My second point was to state that, as far as I could judge, the scholarly community of local historians today remained very similar that of fifty years before: overwhelmingly white and middle-aged. Although three papers at the conference dealt with immigrant communities, hardly any participants came from non-European ethnic communities, an absence worth mentioning and pondering.

Britain's history has continually been influenced by phases of immigration from overseas. This paper focuses on the period since the sixteenth century, but particularly on the most recent movements of overseas immigration and settlement in the second half of the twentieth. Hoskins did not mention immigrants in most of his books; he had a nostalgic view of the past, and he disliked and largely ignored the developments of the twentieth century. It would be harsh to blame him for the neglect of the recent period by local historians, but it is clear that relatively little is written on contemporary local history, despite the post-1950 decades witnessing some of the most dramatic changes to the urban and rural face of Britain. It is not difficult to agree with Alan Crosby’s comment, recently echoed by the Sheerans, that ‘the history of ethnic minorities and migration is a subject which local historians have tended to avoid’.¹ Leicester itself now has a population with more than 40 per cent ethnic minorities, and it is predicted that in a decade or so it will have become a ‘plural city’ with a majority population of ‘non-European origin’. In 2007 the school population of the city of Leicester was 54 percent ethnic minority background, due to the higher birth rates among ethnic minorities. By contrast, but staying with Hoskins, in 2007 Exeter, the city of his birth and affection, had an ethnic minority population of 2.4 per cent (the figure for England was 9.1 percent).²

Despite these impressive statistics, this is an aspect of local history (perhaps primarily ‘urban local history’) that has been largely ignored. Hoskins, in his *Local History in*
England, did not deem it a ‘theme’ that local historians ‘ought to bear in mind’, although later in the same text he stated categorically that ‘history is about people’. And those who have written books to instruct local historians have similarly bypassed the topic, although it is clear that sizeable immigration of foreign communities has had a significant impact on inter-communal relations, the economy of certain areas, as well as local cultural, religious, and political affairs. One recent, but rare, example of a study that focuses on immigrant ethnic minorities is Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming’s volume on Bristol in the period 1000-2001.

Patterns and impact of immigration and settlement

In the period from the sixteenth century to 1750, several waves of immigrants entered south-east and eastern England from the Low Countries and France as economic migrants and as religious refugees. Most of the immigrants settled in towns—Sandwich, Canterbury, and Maidstone in Kent; Colchester and Halstead in Essex; and also Norwich, Portsmouth, Southampton, and London. In the smaller towns these ‘strangers’ constituted a significant numerical and economic minority, initially often huddled together for ‘mutual protection’ with their own churches and institutions which provided a degree of practical help. For example, in Sandwich in the 1570s Flemish cloth workers involved in the ‘New Draperies’ formed 53 per cent of the town’s population. In Norwich the c.5000 ‘strangers’, who formed over 40 per cent of the population of 11,000 in 1576, rebuilt the whole area of the city north of the river Wensum devastated by fire in 1507, leaving their mark on townscape, churches, and schools. Similarly, Colchester had its ‘Dutch quarter’, the aliens being 20 per cent of the town’s population in the 1580s. The economic and social contribution of these ‘strangers’ has been extensively debated. The consensus is that their economic impact was considerable, to be seen not only in the revived fortunes of textile production but also in market gardening, the manufacture of glass and iron, of Delftware and glazed tiles, and book-printing, while culturally book-owning was also stimulated. And immigrants in, for example, Colchester and Norwich, played a major role in taking responsibility for the fiscal affairs of the town. Yungblut argues that ‘the contribution of aliens to economic development in Elizabethan England was substantial and many-faceted; the introduction of new methods, by disseminating technical knowledge ‘made them a critical and valuable resource’. Inevitably the presence of so many aliens led to social and economic grievances, but European immigrants, being white and co-religionists, often integrated reasonably speedily although in certain towns they remained a substantial and distinctive minority for many decades.

In this same period of two hundred years, as Britain’s overseas trade and colonial empire expanded, there was in this country a small but growing population of African origin and descent. This distinctive minority was drawn either directly from Africa or, much more significantly, from slave and free blacks coming from the Americas. They came to Britain as seamen, servants, and artisans. Very few British records refer to black people as ‘slaves’, although ownership of some form is often indicated, reflecting the prevailing system of labour relations between ‘masters’ and employees whether they were black or white. Black people were mainly concentrated in the major ports involved with Atlantic commerce: London, Liverpool, and, to a lesser extent Bristol. Contemporary assessments exaggerated the number of black people present in mid-eighteenth century Britain; recent research suggests no more than a total of 10,000, half in London, many being in Westminster, and half scattered in every county of the provinces. By the early-twentieth century the black population of Britain was probably still no more than 10,000, mainly concentrated in
London and Liverpool, but with new communities formed in Bute Town, Cardiff, and Adeni Arab and Somali settlers in South Shields. The largest body of immigrants to Britain came from Ireland, a long-standing source of itinerant and foreign labour. In the 1841 census there were already over 400,000 Irish-born inhabitants of Britain, the ‘Great Famine’ of the late 1840s doubling that number by 1861. Even before the famine, areas of cities and towns had their ‘Little Irelands’, for example the notorious Caribee Island in Wolverhampton; the area of Manchester described by Engels in 1844; St Giles in London and the neighbouring Camden area of Agar Town which Dickens called ‘a suburban Connemara’; and the Scotland and Vauxhall wards of Liverpool, although none of these areas was exclusively Irish. Irish settlement in Britain was mainly an urban phenomenon, and by the end of the nineteenth century had ‘created enduring religious and political communities’. In the 1851 census 22.3 percent of Liverpool’s population was Irish-born and although this percentage declined thereafter, many immigrants from across the Irish Sea continued to choose to live in voluntary cohesive ‘ethnic communities’, often areas of high-density, low-standard housing, and multiple occupancy. Living close to co-religionists was important, as was inter-marriage, and a society of Irish pubs and clubs. Irish immigration and settlement in Britain, unlike that of most other migrant groups, has not been ignored by local historians. Likewise, the rich world of Jewish immigration and settlement in Britain has not wanted for historians. The greatest influx of Jews came in the late-nineteenth century as people fled pogroms in Tsarist Russia, and later in the 1930s in response to Nazi persecution in Germany. The majority of Jews settled in London, a smaller number in Manchester. Italian immigrants, from the 1830s onwards, settled primarily in London and Manchester, forming ‘Little Italys’ shaped by language, Roman Catholic traditions, close kinship patterns, and occupations such as street-vending, ice cream-selling, catering, and tailoring. During and after the Second World War, Poles and Ukrainians, mainly men, came to Britain, victims of the conflict.

The largest migration of people into Britain occurred in the years after 1950. The first small movement came in the period of post-war reconstruction when Britain required additional labour. Immigrants came from Italy, many of them men who settled in Bedfordshire, and also from the Anglophone Caribbean. A further movement came in the late 1950s and 1960s with immigrants from south Asia, larger numbers being spurred to move by the threat of the restrictive Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. Despite that Act, and further legislation, immigrants continued to come from the Caribbean, the Asian sub-continent, and also from Africa. At the same time many Britons continued to emigrate, a process made easier by the terms of the European Union’s system of free labour movement which also allowed increasing numbers of Europeans to live and work in Britain. Writing in 2004, the demographers Coleman and Rowthorn stated that ‘relative to population, apart from a few short-lived episodes, the scale of immigration is now much greater than during any period since the Anglo-Saxon and Danish invasions of the first millennium’. And such demographic emigration has a cultural and linguistic impact on local economy and society, for example in Jersey where in 2001 there were 6000 Portuguese-speaking people, largely from Madeira, who totalled 6 per cent of the population.

The result has been, in the past forty years, the growth of ethnic diversity and pluralism in many British cities and towns. The majority of African Caribbean people by the 1990s had settled in south-east England (66.3 per cent), mainly in Greater London (58.2 per cent), certain areas having large concentrations of black people. Asian immigrants, principally from the Indian sub-continent, settled in areas of west
London, such as Harrow and Brent; in the Midland cities of Leicester and
Birmingham; and in the northern textile towns of Bradford, Oldham, Burnley, and
Blackburn. There is considerable diversity within Asian immigrant communities; for
example, the majority of settlers in Leicester, expelled as families from East Africa in
the early 1970s, were Hindu in religion, many of them speaking English; settlers in
Bradford were predominantly Muslims from Pakistan and Bangladesh; Muslims from
Bangladesh also predominated in Oldham and the Brick Lane area of East London;
and the north-east Kent town of Gravesend attracted Sikhs who, in the 1990s, made
up 9 per cent of the total population.

As with earlier patterns of immigrant settlement, there was a tendency for new
arrivals to congregate closely in areas with people of similar background. In the old
cotton town of Oldham, Bangladeshi immigrants, many from peasant backgrounds,
settled in the areas of Westwood and Glodwick. The movement of white people out of
the area, part of the natural flow from inner city areas to peripheral and suburban
areas, was speeded up by the influx of foreigners. Shops opened to cater for the
specific needs of the new settlers, and as churches fell empty they were sold, some
becoming mosques. In certain urban areas the religious landscape was greatly
altered. East African Asian settlement in the Belgrave area north of Leicester city
centre increased from the 1970s. Many immigrants were skilled workers, spoke
English, were prepared to buy and maintain relatively cheap housing stock, and to live
in an area increasingly marked out by self-segregation. By the late 1990s people of
Asian origin constituted either a majority or nearly half the population of four wards.
This was reflected in local shops catering for local demand in foodstuffs, clothes, and
cultural artefacts, with Asian-owned textile manufacturing, and also by religious
buildings—mandirs, mosques, and gurdwaras. The area is rich with a culture of sounds,
smells, and colourful hues markedly different from that which had prevailed when it
had a predominantly white working-class population forty years earlier.

Among the more recent Asian immigrant communities in Britain are Koreans who
number c.24,000 permanent residents. Of these, about 20,000 have congregated in
the suburb of New Malden, part of the borough of Kingston-upon-Thames. The
reason for this is that the Korean-owned Samsung Electronic UK Division is based in
New Malden and the European headquarters is at nearby Chertsey. A further reason
may be that the South Korean ambassador has his residence in the area. Currently
New Malden has at least 15 Korean restaurants and cafes, large Korean churches, and
an Anglo-Korean Institute, and Kingston-upon-Thames now has an annual Korean
Festival. Other movements of migration into Britain since 2004 have involved people
from eastern Europe, either as seasonal workers or as economic migrants seeking a
higher standard of living within the boundaries of the expanded European Union.
Migrant labour has been attracted to areas to fill vacancies shunned by indigenous
workers. Migration ‘pinch-points’ included Boston in Lincolnshire, which in 2008
had the largest percentage of migrants outside London, with 65 different languages
reportedly being spoken; the Arun Valley in Sussex; and Langport in Somerset.
Polish migrants constituted 1 in 12 of the population of Bournemouth in 2008; there
were local Polish shops, newspapers, the ‘Poland United’ football club, and growing
Roman Catholic congregations served by Polish priests.

Writing the local history of recent immigrant communities
As noted, the history of recent migrant communities in Britain has been shunned by
most local historians, apart from a few whose work rarely reaches a wider readership.
By and large the field has been left to geographers, sociologists, demographers, race relations specialists, and the handful of people who take an interest in the history of minority populations in Britain. Conversely, although local history is a popular subject it seems not to be recognised by members of immigrant communities themselves, especially those from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, who regard it as not 'their' history. This does not mean, however, that they are not interested in their own communal local history, a local history from within. Their life experience has often been very different from that of members of the white host community: it is about being uprooted, travelling overseas, settling in a new land, interacting with a new culture, facing rebuffs and hostility from people of a different colour, and struggles to find work and accommodation, and to gain an education. For many earlier-generation migrants from the Caribbean, Britain was a temporary place of settlement from where earnings would be remitted home. Ambition and personal history dictated a mental map of the past and future which was not in fixed on Europe. That, of course, has changed for those who have permanently settled, and for second, third and fourth generation descendants, and will continue to do so. Social mobility also means that as the black middle-class grows in number their aspirations and ambitions parallel those of white people. It would be interesting to know if surveys have been done on the number of people of African and Asian origin and descent who visit British historical sites and go for days out to stately homes and castles.

Many white local historians continue to be averse to working on the twentieth century itself and, following in Hoskins's footsteps, often entertain a nostalgia for 'the reconstruction of the age-old, self-contained community which has so largely disintegrated under the impact of recent change'. The communities of immigrants created in the last fifty years are a fundamental part of Britain's history, but for some they represent a very unsettling presence which poses imagined threats. Historians in the broad sense, interested in the process of change (which is what history is about) are unnerved by the very changes they should be studying. From another point of view, there is no separate 'black' or 'Asian' history. Obviously specific aspects of the past can be treated separately. This has always been done, as with the history of the working classes, women, children, file-makers, agriculture labourers, and so on, but always with the firm intention of integrating that group of people or area of study into a better understanding of Britain's past, whether at local, regional, or national level. Black history only exists as a component part of a broader British history.

Many of the recently-formed immigrant communities in Britain have brought important changes to our towns, pervasively influencing inter-communal relations, local economies, culture and politics, areas of study crying out not to be ignored by local historians. There is much research to be done and valuable insights to be drawn from this area of our neglected communal history. But it does demand that local historians adopt different approaches and also acquire new skills in order to excavate unfamiliar layers of knowledge. First of all, this task will require a degree of reliance upon other disciplines, particularly those of sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers, drawing on the skills of those who have been fairly consistent in analysing the history and contemporary nature of immigrant communities. Secondly, this needs to be accompanied by an understanding and sensitivity towards people, and cultures, who often view enquiry by outsiders with a degree of suspicion. For example, and for rather obvious reasons, women historians are best placed to talk to women in many of the communities of South Asian origin. Thirdly, given the urgency to capture the history of immigrant communities before it is lost, perhaps that history is best explored by historians who come from the immigrant
communities themselves and who already possess the necessary cultural and linguistic knowledge as well as privileged access. An example of study less accessible to outsiders is local politics, which in certain large immigrant minorities may exclude members of the host communities, not necessarily by intent but because discourse is conducted in another language and decisions made in places such as the gurdwara or the mosque where relatively few non-Asian people go.33 In some cities, Leicester being an obvious example, the white 'host' community is about to be outnumbered by descendants of newcomers, which in itself poses a challenge.

Fourthly, a substantial part of the immigrant story, and not only that of people drawn from predominantly peasant backgrounds, is an oral history. That needs to be collected, transcribed (with accompanying translation into English), and deposited in relevant institutions such as county and city record offices and local libraries. Those institutions also have the task to collect materials generated by and about immigrant communities, and that in turn requires those offices to have staff conversant with the respective cultures and languages. The picture across the country is patchy. The Leicestershire Record Office, for example, has a major Ugandan Asian archive,34 while Lancashire has been seeking to develop links with ethnic minority communities. The urgent task is to collect sources from immigrant communities, including vernacular language material, a vast task for cash-strapped public libraries and local archives. For black people there is the Black Cultural Archives in south London, and the many public libraries, especially in areas with large numbers of black residents, which observe Black History Month in October. And staff within these institutions of deposit also need to have an acute eye not merely for sources that enable a present history to be written, but to continually add sources, year by year, so that future historians will be able to write a different history in time to come. A major problem remains in that sources vital for analysing and reconstituting the history of recent immigrant communities are closed—for example the census returns for the past one hundred years. The kind of work undertaken on nineteenth-century migrant communities using census data to reveal place of birth, occupation, family structure, or gender profiles, is currently not possible. To marry that data to oral evidence from, say, the 'Windrush' generation or Ugandan Asian immigration, would be a coup indeed.35

Most local historians are unaware of, or have shown little interest in, the published history of non-European immigrant communities. How many, for example, regularly scan the pages of a journal such as Immigrants and Minorities? Equally, those who write history within the immigrant communities ignore or perhaps know nothing about English local history. How can peoples within those communities be encouraged to think outside their own boxes of 'England-Jamaica', or 'Oldham-Punjab'? How can they be persuaded to own that they are also part of English local history? A mutual process of education has to take place: for the constituency of local historians and their societies to embrace the idea that immigrants are part of their agenda, and for members of the immigrant communities to acknowledge that they genuinely belong to the history of English localities. Local historians have largely marginalised modern immigrant communities, but there is also fault with much that is written from within those communities, for it tends to be celebratory, uncritical, and affirming. The best critical and analytical skills of English local history are required in order to write the best history of immigrant communities.

There are rich sources to be found and mined within Britain's immigrant communities,36 what Karin Barber, writing of Africa, has called the 'tin trunk literati': papers in boxes under beds, old diaries on shelves, various records of black churches
and mosques, accounts of remittances sent to Africa, and memoirs of the migratory and settlement experience. One of my tasks in the last two years has been transcribing the diaries of Thomas Brem Wilson, a Gold Coast businessman who settled in Britain in 1901. The diaries are intermittent and cover the years 1899-1925. Although many entries are brief, often single lines and containing many names, my knowledge of the history of West Africa and of the black diaspora in Britain, helped by the skills acquired in local history, along with oral evidence from family members, has enabled me to piece together the commercial, social, religious, political, cultural networks, and the marital life inhabited by this minor, but interesting, man in the early decades of the twentieth century. Similar approaches allying ‘macro-historical’ knowledge with British local history has also helped to shed new light on the significant Pan-African Conference that met in London in July 1900.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by offering some words of caution to local historians intent on studying the recent immigrant experience. First, this requires a well-founded knowledge of the culture, history, and the historiography, of the places from where new immigrant communities have come. Local historians need to understand and to be sensitive to race, religion, and identity—not only the obvious differences of skin colour, but also the many divisions and fractures that beset new immigrant communities at most times. Such sensitivity should alert historians to the language that they employ, and terminology, of course, is subject to change. A good rule, in whatever situation, is to use the terms that people apply to themselves. There is also the conflict between the cultural norms of early twenty-first century British secular society, resting on hard-won legal freedoms and liberties, and the world views of certain immigrants that seriously contest these values, most obviously in relation to the primacy of religious faith and the role of women. It would be false, I think, to believe that the short-term outcome for our current plural society will be cultural integration, however desirable that might appeal to official thinking. Whatever, the twenty-first century offers challenges different from those Britain has faced before. And as such it should provide much to stimulate both the local historian as well as those who wish to write on a larger canvas.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Trish Roberts, The diversity of Leicester: a demographic profile (Leicester Shire Research, May 2008)

3 W.G. Hoskins, Local History in England (Longman, 1959) pp.2 and 105; Hoskins’s book, which ran to three editions, was initially reviewed in the American Historical Review, Geographical Journal, Agricultural History Review, English Historical Review, Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique, The Local Historian, Oxoniensia, and the Cambridge Review, a reasonable cover which surely would not have dismayed the author.

4 Alan Rogers, This Was Their World: approaches to local history (BBC, 1972), W.B. Stephens, Sources for English Local History (Manchester UP, 1973), and Kate Tiller, English Local History: an introduction (Alan Sutton, 1992), do not mention overseas migration to Britain or ethnic minorities, while J.D. Marshall, The Tyranny of the Discrete: a discussion of the problems of local history in England (Scolar Press, 1997) only briefly mentions emigration from England. Most
recently John Beckett, Writing Local History (Manchester UP, 2007) offers a page on ‘cultural identity’ (pp.138-139) but fails to mention the challenges presented to local historians by modern immigrant communities. However, see ‘Immigration’ in the dictionary section, and ‘African-Caribbean genealogy’ and ‘South Asian genealogy’, in the ‘Family History’ section, of David Hey, Oxford Companion to Family and Local History (Oxford UP, 2008) pp.438-440, 26-33 and 33-38 respectively.

5 Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, Bristol, Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001 (Phillimore, 2007), a volume in the Victoria County History ‘England’s Past for Everyone’ series

6 Laura Hunt Yungblut, ‘Strangers Settled Here Among Us’: policies, perceptions and the presence of aliens in Elizabethan England (Routledge, 1996) pp.29-30; also Marcel Backhouse, The Flemish and Walloon Communities at Sandwich During the Reign of Elizabeth I (1561-1603) (Koninglijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, Brussel, 1995) p.28

7 Nigel Goose and Lieu Luu (eds), Immigrants in Tudor and early Stuart England (Sussex Academic Press, 2005) p.20

8 Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (eds), Norfolk since 1550 (Hambledon, 2004) pp.40-45 and 221-28


10 Lieu Luu, Immigrants and the Industries of London 1500-1700 (Ashgate, 2005)


12 Yungblut, ‘Strangers Settled Here Among Us’, p.113

13 Raingard Esser, ‘“They obey all magistrates and all good laws … and we thinkke our cittie happie to enjoye them”: migrants and urban stability in early modern English towns’, Urban History vol.34 no.1 (2007) pp.64-75. In the 1620s the Dutch population of Colchester numbered 1,535, 14 per cent of the total population.

14 See Kathleen Chater, Untold Histories: Black people in England and Wales during the period of the British slave trade c.1660-1807 (Manchester UP, 2009), an important revisionist study.


16 On the Irish see Roger Swift (ed), Irish Migrants in Britain 1815-1914: a documentary history (Cork UP, 2002); Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), The Irish in the Victorian City (Croom Helm, 1985), the essays in their The Irish in Victorian Britain: the local dimension (Four Courts Press, 1999) and in their Irish identities in Victorian Britain (Routledge, forthcoming). For local and regional studies see, for example, John Belchem, Irish, Catholic and South (Liverpool UP, 2007) which, unlike many studies, also looks at the period 1918-1939, and Sharon Lambert, Irish women in Lancashire 1922-1960: their story (Centre for NW Regional Studies, University of Liverpool, 2001).


21 See Ian R.G. Spencer, British Immigration Policy since 1939: the making of multi-racial Britain (Routledge, 1997)


24 See Mary Chamberlain (ed), Caribbean Migration, globalised identities (London, 1998); D. Coleman and J. Salt, Ethnicity in the 1991 Census: vol.1 Demographic characteristics of the ethnic minority populations (HMSO, 1996)

25 Simon Ross Valentine, Minorities in Bradford, UK (Background paper for Centre of Migration Policy & Society, University of Oxford), available www: compas.ox.ac.uk/...Bradford%20Background%20Paper%20050

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29. These statements rely on newspaper reports and also evidence from the Department of Communities and Local Government. An earlier migration of Poles, predominantly men, occurred during the Second World War. In 2008 40 per cent of London’s population was foreign-born; the average for the rest of the country was 9 per cent. See *Guardian* for maps of the immigrants in London 21 January 2005: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/jan/21/britishidentity.race/print and for the United Kingdom 23 January 2006: http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jan/23/britishidentity.features118/print.


31. Philip Styles, of Birmingham University, reviewing Hoskins’ *Local History in England* in the *English Historical Review* vol.76 (1961) p.190. See Hoskins, *Local History in England* where, referring to the sixteenth century, he writes: ‘at a bad time, a time like our own of a great social revolution in which much that was good was swept away, year after year, indiscriminately with the bad’ (p.15), and his discounting the value of sources relating to the period 1917-39 (p.32). Towns, wrote Hoskins, are ‘a true society of men, women, and children’ (p.12), but in his view clearly not in the period in which he was writing when new immigrant communities were being formed in Britain.


33. e.g., in Gravesend in the mid-1980s the *gurdwara* became ‘the political arena for communal strife’: see Helwig, *Sikhs in England*.

34. For further details contact the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE18 2AH or recordoffice@leics.gov.uk.

35. The ‘Empire Windrush’ brought the first large group of post-war Caribbean migrants, predominantly men, to Britain in June 1948. Ugandan Asians, British passport holders of Indian origin settled in East Africa, were expelled from Uganda at short notice in 1972. Nearly 30,000 arrived in Britain and the Uganda Resettlement Board encouraged them to settle away from existing centres of Asian settlement.

36. For example, P. Virdee and J. Samra, *Coming to Coventry* (The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, 2007), drawing on a project to gather the stories of South Asian settlers in the city during the 1940s-1960s; more than 60 people were interviewed and over 600 photographs were gathered.


38. I am grateful to members of the Brem-Wilson family for letting me read and transcribe the diaries, and also for providing other relevant correspondence. Copies of the diaries, when editing is complete, will be deposited in appropriate archives and libraries. Plans are in hand to publish papers on Brem Wilson, and on early pan-Africanism.

39. e.g., in 1974 when Anthony Sutcliffe and Roger Smith wrote their *History of Birmingham, vol. III: Birmingham 1939-1970* (Oxford UP, 1974) they included a chapter entitled ‘The Impact of Coloured Immigration’. Perhaps then, but certainly today, the term ‘coloured’ would be inappropriate, and the tenure of their chapter implying that non-European immigrants created ‘problems’ would be unacceptable. This does not mean that historians should not exercise critical judgements, but those judgements need to be founded on firm evidence.

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Sowing the seeds of patriotism?
The Women’s Land Army in Devon, 1916–1918

BONNIE WHITE

Introduction

According to the 1911 occupational census, approximately 5000 women were employed in agriculture in Devon, a figure that included farmers’ wives, daughters, and other female relatives. During the First World War this number changed, as an increasing number of women found work with the Women’s Land Army [WLA]. Historians have argued that the WLA was a patriotic construct, and that these women were enticed by powerful appeals to patriotism and service, connecting their employment to preconceived notions about female patriotism. The image of the Land Girl patriotically serving her country still carries weight and provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the WLA as a national organisation. The problem with this approach, however, is that it fails to take into consideration the beleaguered formation of the Land Army, and how its late development forced it to compete with other more attractive employment opportunities for women, such as the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. It also glosses over the nuances of individual experiences—the day-to-day work performed by Land Girls, and how they communicated their experiences, were connected to farm life, the farmer they worked for, and the tasks they were paid to do. This study seeks to add an additional layer to our understanding of the WLA by looking at women’s attitudes to their work and lives at a county level. The value of a county focus is that it allows a shift away from grand generalisations into the crucial dimensions of local structures and experiences. In 1914 Devon was the largest agricultural county in the south-west and, despite competition from other industries, agriculture remained the largest employer. As more and more men enlisted, either voluntarily or by conscription, women were called upon to assist farmers in feeding the nation. While calls to patriotism and service propelled many women to join the Land Army, not all who volunteered for agricultural work stayed through training, and for those women who were placed on farms, not all remained. The decision to work for, and remain with, the Land Army was influenced as much by personal, familial, and economic positions as it was by calls to service.

In recent years a number of books have been published on women’s war work, but scholars were slow to give extensive attention to the question of patriotism and the motivations for entering the labour force. Among the most important works to appear in the past decade are those of Angela Woollacott, Susan Grayzel, and Janet Watson. Woollacott’s examination of female munitions workers during the war concludes that many women were conscious of the important part they played in the war effort, and were inspired by the patriotic cause of the war. While patriotism was not their only inspiration, there was a tangible connection between munitions work and defeating the enemy. Grayzel, on the other hand, argues that, from the outbreak of the conflict, wartime propaganda insisted that women were instrumental for
victory and encouraged those who were able to ‘do their bit’, all the while reinforcing
the separate domain of the home front and women’s work as limited, patriotic service
to the nation. She asserts, however, that women’s experiences varied and often
diverged sharply from the images presented in propaganda—not all women enjoyed
war work and not all women supported the war. Watson likewise recognises a
spectrum of attitudes about male and female participation in war work, and argues
that while some articulated a clear sense of patriotism, others saw the work as an
opportunity for improved wages and living conditions. Although both Grayzel and
Watson note the importance of class and family status in women’s experiences,
Watson furthers the argument, by adding that while men and women of the middle
classes tended to view their contributions in terms of war service, the working classes
tended to view their war work as work. Watson rightly notes that patriotism as an
organising category was highly nuanced, continually redefined, and open to
interpretation; the goal here is to apply this caution to our investigation of the WLA
and what factors may have induced women to take up farm work.2

Women occupy an important niche in the history of the First World War, but the
Women’s Land Army has received less attention than other wartime organisations
and has received less critical attention than its Second World War counterpart, due to
the lack of source material. Interviews conducted by the Imperial War Museum in the
1970s provide an important starting point, but represent a particular group of
women. Most of the women interviewed were young in 1914-1918, between sixteen
and twenty years old, and generally reported positive experiences. Records produced
by the Food Production Department [FPD] also contain useful information about the
administration of the Land Army, but little about the women’s experiences. Here I
draw upon a variety of sources, including government reports, the records of wartime
committees, union papers, newspapers, books, journals, personal correspondence,
and interviews. Since my primary focus is to understand and evaluate wartime
experiences, I do not conflate opinions offered during the war with the better-known
retrospective accounts recorded long after the war ended. While both are an
important part of the narrative, time and changing priorities have undoubtedly
altered perceptions and therefore provide only a partial accounting.

We must also be careful to distinguish between women’s attitudes about the war and
their feelings about other aspects of their lives during the war years, particularly their
war work. The war provided new opportunities and for many women opened their
lives to a plethora of new experiences and challenges. How they understood their
experiences and how they responded to the challenges presented by their new work
opportunities is of primary interest here.

Early recruitment

Women were hardly new members of the agricultural labour force when the Women’s
Land Army was formed in 1917. Farming was, however, a traditionally male
enterprise and women’s work was largely confined to the house, garden, or the
tending of animals. Organisations such as the National Political League (NPL) and
the Women’s Farm and Garden Union (WFGU) attempted to increase the number of
women employed in agricultural work both before and during the war, but were
largely unsuccessful. The NPL suffered from low placement and had difficulty
attracting women to farm work and the WFGU had implemented experimental
training courses in 1915, but did little to reduce the prejudice of farmers and the
public.3 The organisers of the WLA were aware of the divisiveness of agricultural
work and public expectations regarding women’s involvement in farming. Organisers had two options: they could try to change public attitudes, or they could bypass them by presenting the Land Army as a patriotic wartime organisation where respectable, educated women worked the land, but in a supporting role.

They chose the latter. In the autumn of 1915 the Board of Agriculture launched a national propaganda campaign to bring more women to the land and in 1916 formed Women’s War Agricultural Committees in each county. The WWACs were to work with the County War Agricultural Committees, created in 1915, and existing women’s organisations, and were responsible for placing women on local farms, tracking their training progress, and reporting on the women’s behaviour. The WWACs were encouraged to look for young, strong, healthy and educated women who loved animals and the outdoors. They were also to be of good moral character and ready to accept the physical and psychological discomforts of long days, hard work, and low wages. Early recruits were carefully selected and well-trained, to demonstrate women’s potential and to leave a favourable impression on the farming community.

Early volunteerism and the introduction of conscription in 1916 meant that the need for women labourers was growing as the war progressed. To ease the labour crisis the Board of Agriculture drafted plans for a Land Army of female recruits. Early canvasses conducted by the Women’s War Service Committee in August 1916 determined that a total of 2472 women in Devon were available to work on the land. However, a report from Devon County Council noted that the ‘response from women and farmers was not encouraging and that lists gathered by the Women’s War Agricultural Committees do not reflect the actual attitudes of the people of Devon’. Part of the problem was that the response from women did not encourage confidence. Susan Grayzel notes that since the WLA generally attracted single women from the middle classes, many had to be persuaded of the need for their employment. Women were also aware of other employment opportunities where the work was less arduous, which helps to explain the overall decline in the number of women in agriculture in the years prior to the war, and the difficulties in bringing women to the land. Reports from Plymouth and Exeter, Devon’s largest urban centres, revealed that women were sceptical that they would be of any use on a farm, while others feared that women would be expected ‘to work for less than they would offer a man’ (and wages for agriculture were hardly competitive). One woman felt that ‘it is utterly wrong to start women on the land unless they are thoroughly aware of conditions’. Hard work for low pay did little to encourage women into farm work. In Devon’s smaller parishes, many women did not want to leave home to contribute to the war effort, but they were willing to do light work in their own communities.

To determine the extent of opposition to or support for the Land Army, in the spring of 1917 Alice Mildmay, president of the Women’s War Service Committee for Devon, held demonstrations to show how effective women could be on the land. Appealing to the women’s patriotism, they were reminded that they were holding the ‘thin line of the Home Front’ until more women answered the call to service. Agricultural demonstrations were held on Saturdays at locations around the county, and were intended to showcase women’s abilities in non-traditional areas of work, including the spreading of manure and driving horses. While hundreds of people journeyed to see the competitions, the response from women was less than favourable. In the small towns of north Devon those women who were interested in agricultural work were...
already employed part-time on local farms and showed little interest in formally joining the Land Army. Many complained about lengthy work terms and placement on farms away from their homes. Terms of work for the Land Army indicated a mandatory training period of four to six weeks for women who had little to no agricultural experience and, once trained, women had to commit to six months of working the land and could not leave their post without the consent of the Village Registrar or the WWAC. Rather than committing to joining the WLA, they enlisted as part-time workers to assist local farmers. In reality, there was little change from the pre-war employment structure; it was common practice for farmers to employ local women at peak times and during the fruit-growing season. The only change was that the names of women interested in part-time work were left with the Village Registrar and their work placement was overseen by the WWAC. The problem was that the village registrars were only a first step: they gathered the names of interested women, collected applications for the Land Army, and relayed correspondence between Land Girls and the WWAC. Thus, they were not responsible for the Land Girls, but rather served as a coordinating body. It was important to induce women to work and to press for formal registration with the WLA.

A committee was established in late-1916 to address concerns from the farmers and encourage greater acceptance of female workers. This was not an easy task, and opinions from farmers indicated that there was considerable resistance to employing women full-time. In the decades prior to the war the agricultural labour force in Devon had been greatly reduced and become more specialised to suit the needs of individual farmers. Apart from a smaller skilled labour force, farmers relied on sons and family for the daily operation of the farm. Although farmers generally accepted the patriotic presentation of the WLA, their acceptance of patriotism as a motivating factor did not come without criticism and farmers’ unions across the county expressed concerns about the Land Army’s call to patriotic service. When Alice Mildmay spoke at the Totnes farmers meeting she assured farmers that ‘If a woman went to work on a farm it would be more for patriotism than because it was necessary to do so to earn a living’. Mildmay’s assurances to the farmers that women were motivated by a sense of duty to their nation fits nicely with our existing understanding of the WLA. While farmers appreciated the dedication of the organisers, and the women’s willingness to come forward, the difficulty was that organisers themselves understood little about the business of farming and the training provided was inadequate. Proof of the latter was unintentionally presented at the agricultural demonstrations. The women who participated were from the Seale Haynes Agricultural College and though some demonstrated exceptional skill, during the competitions several had trouble ploughing in different soil conditions and experienced difficulty running a team of horses with which they were unfamiliar. A farmer from Stoke Fleming was convinced that women ‘would not even be able to hoe potatoes for dinner, and to expect a woman to use a plough is ridiculous’, and at the Dartmouth meeting one farmer was stubborn in his belief that one twelve-year-old boy was the equivalent of two women workers. While women workers could be helpful, the Dartmouth and District Farmers’ Union petitioned the education authorities to allow children over the age of twelve to leave school for the duration of the war, rather than employ women, or at the very least, to employ women only in conjunction with school-age boys.

However, the agricultural community was not united on the issue of replacement labour. Women were capable of performing heavy manual labour in munitions factories and had been assisting farmers on the land long before the outbreak of the war. Prior to 1914, 246 women worked as agricultural labourers in Devon and many
farmers’ wives and daughters took part in farm activities, particularly during harvest time. Women were able to perform jobs such as haying, harvesting fruits and vegetables, and feeding animals, and rural women may have been able to drive heavy farm equipment and run a team of horses. Further, the physical labour performed by women on a daily basis in the home was completely ignored by some male workers and employers. Conversely, many women would not have been able to do heavy lifting, such as putting wheels on wagons, lifting sacks of potatoes, or castrating bullocks which required considerable upper body strength. As Deborah Thom argues, male workers and supervisors often treated women who entered the industrial workforce with suspicion and contempt, and the agricultural industry was no more favourable to women workers.

But the belief that women were inadequate as labourers was a view most likely to be held by members of the gentry. Rural women from the working classes may have worked on a farm or participated in the operation of a farm on some level during their lives, but this was certainly not a role performed by women of a higher social status and so it is not surprising that ‘farmers’, and the term is employed liberally here, from these social groups would have considered women unfit for farm work, and in some cases this would have been true. Some of Devon’s farmers were thus motivated by gender presumptions and the dictates of tradition, rather than by arguments based on rational efficiency. A further reason why some farmers were reluctant to employ women was that the larger estate farms generally employed a permanent male labour force, as well as casual labourers during peak periods. The reluctance of some farmers to employ women had as much to do with self-interest—protecting the productivity and profitability of their farms—as with the perceived quality of replacement labourers. Although farmers accepted the patriotic impetus of the Land Army, many worried that patriotism would not be enough to sustain women through the difficulties of agricultural work. Because there was no shortage of male

1. Members of the Women’s Land Army operate an Ipswich-made three-furrow plough with a tractor during the First World War
   (Imperial War Museum image no. Q 54602)
labourers in Devon until late 1915, and the extent of the shortages was not manifest until early 1916, the use of alternative labour had not been a major source of concern.20

The Women’s Land Army

Despite hesitation from women and the disinclination of some farmers to use them in agriculture, the WLA was established in January 1917 to provide a trained permanent source of labour. ‘Doing one’s bit’ was the clarion call of the WLA, and the government relied on the spirit of volunteerism to bring women to the land. On 14 April 1917 the Women’s Selection National Service and the Women’s Branch, a branch of the Food Production Department established in 1917 to appeal to women to join a mobile land army, advertised in The Times for 10,000 strong, healthy women to work as milkmaids on farms in England, Scotland, and Wales.21 At the same time, Alice Mildmay began a campaign to encourage support for the WLA in Devon. In April 1917 the following article appeared in the Salcombe Gazette:

A large and daily increasing number of women in Devon are enrolling for the duration of the war as National Service Volunteers, in the Women’s Land Army. I firmly believe that women will realise the immense opportunity endeavour open to them on the land and will rise to the emergency and if agriculturists will equally patriotically come forward with offers to train them, then agriculture will come triumphantly out of the crisis in which it finds itself at present and the increased production of food which is absolutely vital to the attainment of ultimate and complete victory in this supreme struggle for right and humanity will be ensured.22

No training was promised, but the women might receive instruction. Initially the programme allowed for a wage of 15s a week, a uniform, and a free rail ticket. There was a rush to join in the spring of 1917 with some 30,000 women responding to the call, but in the autumn and winter the number of those enlisting dropped considerably.23 Gill Clarke argues that during the initial surge women were responding to the patriotic call of the Land Army.24 It is difficult to judge why so many women came forward in the spring of 1917—although 30,000 seems an impressive number, it merits further consideration. It is derived from the number of women who filled out applications and returned them to post offices and employment exchanges. It does not mean that 30,000 women actually joined the WLA. In fact, by the end of July 1917 only 2000 additional women had been placed on farms, with another 2200 in training centres.25 In October 1917 the Women’s Branch expressed concern that the Land Army was unable to compete with the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, which enjoyed considerable popularity and had already absorbed a large number of potential recruits, particularly from the middle classes.26 To help the Land Army better compete for recruits the Devon WWAC indicated that changes were needed in three areas: the recruiting and selection process, training and work expectations, and the strict code of behaviour that was enforced by the WWAC and welfare officers.

Recruiting and selection

The question of why women pursued agricultural work was of considerable interest to recruiters and organisers during the war. If they wanted to increase the number of volunteers, they had to understand what motivated women to choose the WLA.
Reports from the WWAC in Devon reflect attitudes throughout the country: women had to be offered incentives beyond patriotism, and a love of animals and the outdoors. By the end of 1917, the Women's Branch recognised that its criteria were too restrictive and that some added inducements were required to bring women to the land. Among the new incentives were better housing, higher wages, greater access to entertainment and leisure activities, opportunities for advancement, and when possible, placement close to home. Selection procedures were also simplified. References were checked quickly and interviewers focused on recruiting women who were prepared for the rigours of farm work. Age preferences were also lowered, from 21 to 18, and parental consent was deemed unnecessary. To avoid competition for women workers an agreement was made to combine the Forage Department of the War Office, the Timber Supply Department of the Board of Trade, and the Forestry Department of the Board of Agriculture into one Land Army. This meant that women could move between the various sections to find work that suited them best. Women could also escape the monotony of farm work by supplementing it with work elsewhere during the winter months. These changes were intended to improve work conditions and hopefully to attract respectable workers to the Land Army.

Recruiters and organisers recognised the complexities of motivations for seeking work in agriculture and made changes to recruiting strategies based on the women's personal experiences and expectations. Reducing waiting times, shortening the application process, and adding incentives to attract women to the Land Army did not deny their patriotism, but suggests that patriotism offered only a partial explanation for why women chose the Land Army above other wartime work. The WLA was one of a number of options available to women interested in working for patriotic reasons, and the Women's Branch understood that agricultural employment involved demanding physical work and lacked the celebrity of other organisations. It is therefore not surprising that appealing to the women's patriotism alone was not always enough to persuade them to enlist.

Training and work expectations

Once women were accepted into the Land Army, the next major tasks were training and work placement. This was a continuing source of concern because most women were recruited from urban areas and, even with six weeks' training, had little practical experience in farming. Farmers often had to spend weeks retraining and, because Devon farms were small (generally less than 250 acres) farmers relied on horsepower and body strength, rather than the machinery on which the women may have been trained. Retraining was labour-intensive and tended to focus on specific tasks that the farmer needed, such as haying, weeding, or spreading manure, rather than animal care.

However, posters distributed by the Food Production Department appealed to 'a girl's love of animals and the outdoors', and training focused on the proper use of farm equipment, the care of young animals, and horse-work. Many girls cited working with animals as their main reason for joining the WLA. Once they were placed on the farms, however, animal care was merely one of a number of tasks they were expected to do. Some Land Girls complained that the work was not what they expected, and either wanted to be transferred to another division, or to be released from the Land Army to find other employment. Mary Lees worked on several farms in Devon and although she enjoyed being in the country, she never really became acclimatised to the work. She was responsible for looking after 2000 sheep on a
Dartmoor farm and also assisted in training the new girls who were dispatched from
the training centres. After several attempts to train a new group, she complained to
the welfare officer that she ‘couldn’t do a damn thing with them’. Lees grew
increasingly frustrated with the girls’ insubordination and lack of work ethic, and
asked to be released from her contract. Release requests had to be approved by the
Women’s Branch and in the meantime she called her father to come and take her
home, effectively abandoning her post.29

Appealing to the parents was a common way for girls to get out of the Land Army,
since many mothers and fathers were sympathetic to their dislike of farm work.
Others took an alternative route and sought release by retroactively claiming that
they were under 18 and not eligible for service. Such was the case for Mary Tatuses
who, after completing her training in Dorset, was sent to south Devon to work on a
dairy farm. After complaining several times to the welfare officer that the hours of
work were ‘diminishing’ her health she claimed that she was only seventeen. The
Women’s Branch had little choice but to release her from her contract.30

There was a discrepancy between the work performed in the training centres and the
realities of farm life. Reports from the Devon WWAC to Meriel Talbot, director of the
Women’s Branch, indicated that changes to the training process were needed;
specifically, women entering agricultural employment had to be fully informed of
work expectations and conditions. Throughout the summer of 1917 the number of
women on Devon farms fluctuated. In May 187 women were registered as employed
full-time on local farms, but the number dropped to 138 in July before rising slightly
to 141 in August. Perhaps more revealing was that there were very few women waiting
for placement—in May there were ten but this dropped to two in July and August.31
Pamela Horn has suggested that the women of Devon refused to work until more
farmers’ sons gave themselves over for military service, directly connecting women’s
work on the land to a display of their patriotism.32 The reduction in numbers can also
be explained in part by a change in farming practices. The switch from livestock to
crops, known as the ‘plough campaign’, was mandated by the Board of Agriculture in
1916 and intensified the workload of agricultural workers.33 E. Avery, a trained
ploughwoman, worked a farm outside Totnes and although she did not mind the
early mornings, isolation, or unpleasant jobs, the intensity of the plough campaign
proved to be an insurmountable challenge. When her parents arrived to take her
home, her father complained to the foreman that such work was ‘too heavy’ and
‘certainly too much for a woman’.34 An article produced by the Women’s Branch
appeared in the *Journal of the Board of Agriculture* and acknowledged that there were
simply some jobs that women were unable to perform effectively, regardless of their
training. While women were particularly skilled at milking and caring for young
animals and many showed skill in thatching and tractor-driving, heavy, manual work
‘without variety or change, tends to weary her physically and mentally’. This may
have accounted for some of the trouble faced by the Land Army.35

Also important was that, once a woman was trained and accepted as a farm labourer,
there remained the question of billeting, which was in short supply. Cottages in
Devon were often in a state of disrepair and Land Girls had to be billeted in private
homes, near the farms where they would work, or boarded on the farm.36 Billets were
intended to meet the basic need of providing shelter, not to replicate the comforts of
home, and in many instances the accommodation was less than satisfactory for the
girls. The WWAC recorded numerous complaints about insanitary living conditions
and in at least one case a woman was left with no other choice but to live in a room in
the barn.37 Such conditions were unequivocally opposed by the Women’s Service
Committee, and resulted in women leaving those farms and returning to a nearby training depot where they received benefits and care while awaiting a new post. Some of these women never returned to farm work. Thus, most farms in Devon employed just a few women. Whereas in other counties women were billeted in country houses or in hostels, in Devon most country homes were used as temporary hospitals and there were few hostels. The logistics of accommodations slowed down the placement process and in the meantime some women found employment elsewhere.

The WLA was hastily planned and implemented and time was needed to make adjustments based on the practical application of female labour on the land. Horn’s suggestion that the women’s actions were patriotic over-generalises the attitudes and beliefs of those women who participated in the Land Army, and blaming farmers for the problems encountered by organisers in the early stages of the Land Army’s development ignores the many factors that influenced the employment of women in agriculture.

**Code of behaviour**

One feature that has received little attention from scholars is the code of behaviour enforced throughout the war. In Devon welfare officers and representatives of the WWAC closely supervised the women’s conduct, both at work and during their leisure time. Meriel Talbot was concerned that recruits upheld the good name of the Land Army, but until 1918 there was no single set of guidelines that could be applied routinely and consistently across the country. Instead, each county was responsible to determine its own procedures. In Devon the ‘Code of Behaviour’ included proper uniform maintenance, working the hours indicated by the farmer, keeping living quarters in good condition, performing the tasks requested without complaint, respecting curfews, and ‘general good behaviour’. Most infractions consisted of breaking curfew, refusing to perform certain tasks, and showing up for work late. In a few instances farmers complained that the girls ‘could not be controlled’ and that their conduct was ‘inappropriate’. The Land Army called women to the open countryside where they could improve their health and general well-being, but some women joined to escape the watchful eyes of their parents. E.A. Campbell joined to spite her mother, who wanted her to remain at home to help take care of the younger children. Stationed in north Devon, however, Campbell struggled with the solitude of farm work and the demands of farm life. On several occasions the farmer in charge reported her to the WWAC for breaking curfew, tardiness, and refusing to dispose of a dead pig. After several reprimands by the WWAC for unacceptable conduct, the deputy controller for Devon determined that she was not suited for farm work and released her from her contract.

Such cases diverged from the propaganda surrounding the WLA, which presented an image of happy, healthy Land Girls surrounded by children and young animals, singing and dancing as they carried out their work on the sunny fields of England. Once the Land Army offered incentives beyond service to the nation, and once recruiting expanded beyond the ideal candidates of early 1917, conflict emerged between individual motives for joining and the image presented to the public. This is most clearly seen in the increased number of reports relating to recruitment and reprimands for misconduct between the County Executives and the Women’s Branch throughout 1918. Inspectors were sent to farms in England, Wales, and Scotland to inquire what could be done to resolve discipline problems and encourage a better work ethic among Land Girls. In several counties, including Devon, farmers expressed their opinions that increased authority on the part of office workers would
not be enough to turn ‘a possible slacker into a willing worker’. While farmers generally accepted that a clearer statement of the rules was advisable from the organisation’s perspective, they preferred to take in Land Girls on a trial basis. Those who did not wish to work would be sent home or back to the training depots, and those who were up to the challenge of farm life would be kept on. The farmers believed that this was the only way to circumvent the challenge of employing women who enlisted for agricultural work, but had no intention of working. In Devon, several farmers requested disciplinary powers and, to avoid further conflicts with the WWAC, to cease farm inspections altogether.\(^{45}\) In other words, responsibility for the women would be transferred from the FPD to individual farmers.

In July 1918 the Food Production Department issued a circular regarding the welfare of Land Girls and charges of misconduct. Several reports from the WWACs indicate a desire to impose military style discipline on the WLA. Much debate on the issue took place through correspondence, but the FPD determined that such action was impractical and undesirable. The expansion of the Land Army in 1918 meant that ‘young women of all classes and occupations’ were ‘attracted to the work in various ways—some by the call of their country to service—some by the desire for fresh air and country conditions—some from the spirit of adventure—and some again from restlessness and a vague desire for change’. Although called an ‘army’, workers were employed by private individuals, not the state, and worked singly, not as a cohesive unit. In this way, the WLA could not meaningfully be compared with such organisations as the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. Imposing military-style discipline would only usurp the image the organisers worked so hard to maintain. As an organising body the FPD had two primary responsibilities. The first was to ensure the welfare of the women who joined the Land Army, a responsibility it was not willing to

2. A member of the Women’s Land Army farming potatoes using horse-drawn machinery during the First World War
   (Imperial War Museum image no. Q 30655)
turn over entirely to farmers. The second, quite separate, responsibility was to the public ‘in securing the right behaviours’ from workers. Rather than being subject to military discipline, Land Girls had to be enticed to follow the rules. Proper incentives, including welfare officers befriending the women and establishing a relationship of trust, were needed to ensure that the hard work and service expected from the Land Army was delivered.46

Motives and retrospect

During the First World War thousands of women joined the agricultural labour force. Many excelled at their jobs, while others struggled with the isolation, loneliness, and fatigue that challenged even the most dedicated workers. These daily challenges have been overshadowed by the popular perception that the women joined the WLA because they felt they had to serve their country and contribute something meaningful to the war effort. Caroline Playne’s history of the war notes that ‘It became almost a disgrace to be found at home, it required some justifying explanation. It was up to you to show that you were a patriotic worker all the time’.47

Certainly, many Land Girls felt that way. Olive Hockin’s personal account of her time in Devon stressed that the women who worked the land were prepared to do their bit in spite of the drawbacks, and ready to face the inevitable daily fatigue—the long tedious hours in heat and cold, the paralyzing monotony and mental stagnation—with the same cheerful stoicism with which her brother faces the incomparably greater discomforts (not to mention the dangers) of life in the trenches … Above all, every girl who come in to take a share of the work not only provides her contribution to the country’s needs—gaining for herself in the process increased health, strength, and a permanent and invaluable practical training—but she tends also to lighten the weight of labour for those who are already overburdened.48

However, Hockin, an educated woman, did not provide an entirely positive picture of her work on the land. She often wrote about her experience critically: the hours of work were too long, wages for women workers were unequal to those of their male counterparts, the mental and physical toll on her body was exacting, and she was insulted by the perception that the educated urban woman was weak and incapable of farm work. Hockin joined the WLA because she wanted to serve her country, but the war never plays a central part in her account, other than as the reason for her employment in agriculture. As her story, and the war, progressed she came to sympathise with the desperate state of the farmers and their need for skilled workers and indicated that ‘until the work is lightened or the hours lessened, the farm-worker must find his interests solely in his work or cease to be interested in anything’. She does not mention the end of the war, but rather concludes with a plea – if the war has changed anything, let it be that ‘women, even if weak and inexperienced, can, with energy and determination and teaching, carry on’.49 Patriotism was undoubtedly a motivating factor in her decision to join the Land Army, but the tone and parameters of her experiences on the land suggest that she felt she had something to prove to herself and others about the accepted limitations of women’s employment more broadly.

Thus far I have said much about how women responded to the challenges of agricultural work and how those challenges resulted in fundamental changes to the structure and objectives of the WLA during the war. In light of these points I have argued that women’s motives for joining the Land Army were more complex than previously assumed by historians. Much of what we know about their experience is
based on interviews conducted by the Imperial War Museum in the 1970s—and who better to comment on their motivations and experiences than those who participated in the Land Army between 1917 and 1920? The problem, however, is that many of these women did not indicate their motives for joining the WLA. M. Harrold only stated that she joined the WLA half way through the war and most of the interview focused on training, wages, and accommodation. Likewise, Rosa Freedman only provided details regarding her employment, but not why she decided to join the WLA. Others recall having joined due to family obligations, or to escape domestic service. Beatrice Gilbert noted that she left domestic service to join the WLA, but says little else about her choice to work on the land, while E. Airey indicated that she and her sister joined together, but gave little information about the reason other than she thought she would ‘do my bit’ on the land. Apart from quoting a popular wartime slogan, no other information was provided.

Another land girl, M. Hodgson, explained that the women of the Land Army had an important job to do and with the men off at war, it was up to the women to do their part. She seemed to be motivated, at least in part, by a sense of duty but also noted that, much as she disliked the work, she had little choice in the matter. Due to the economic hardships created by the war, Hodgson, who was from a middle-class family, entered the workforce to help her family. Although she was always aware of the war, she ‘didn’t dwell on it. The war was always in the background, but it was hardly noticeable to me’. Hodgson noted that her war work was not what she expected: ‘It was very different from what you saw on the posters. I rarely saw soldiers in uniform and there were very few men around at all. Most often only older gentlemen in the nearby towns’. Like many middle-class women of the Land Army, she entered the work force because of the war, but patriotism alone did not bring her to the land—she and her sister did not enter the workforce until the family’s economic circumstances demanded it. The work was gruelling and unforgiving and her efforts were not always appreciated or recognised by her employer, but the money she earned contributed to her family’s care and eased their financial difficulties.

Most accounts focused on work or personal needs, with little mention of the war itself or even their contribution to the war effort. Farm work took its toll and many stayed for the money, for themselves and to send home to help their families, or for new work experiences outside the home. Lilian Miles of Exeter was seventeen when she joined the Land Army. She and her friends saw posters calling for workers and decided to enlist. When asked why, she said: ‘Well, I think we really came because we thought we were going to get big money, which we were very disappointed over’. Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield rightly point out that throughout the war, ‘women were rumoured to be earning fantastically high wages’. Even though such rumours were quickly dispelled, the camaraderie of a shared work experience with close friends was enough to convince some women to endure the experience, even if only for a short while. Mary Bale’s work with the WLA in Devon provided her the chance to no longer be ‘a parasite, but an active worker’. Her accounts focused on the daily activities of farm life:

I started work at 5:30am milking, tending to the sheep and general work on the field. I was paid eighteen shillings a week and another if I worked on Sunday. It cost fourteen shillings a week for room and board—so much for making money. I sent a couple of shillings home and I bought myself a treat at the end of the week. We worked hard and made our own way.

Bale’s motivations for working on the land were complex. Her complaint that they did not earn much money suggests that her motivation was not entirely financial but,
like Hodgson, she did feel a sense of responsibility to her family. She also took pride in her work, noting that it was difficult, but rewarding. Her motivation was not entirely financial or necessarily patriotic; she worked on the land because of the way it made her feel.

The work was very hard for some women, and neither patriotism nor pay was enough to keep them on the land. J.M. Winter argues that although propaganda images suggest that women resolutely supported the war, their attitudes were as diverse as their experiences. Mary Lees was one of the first women to work on the land in Devon. After nine months she had had enough: ‘I was there to work, not to dilly dally. But the work was hard and the farmers needed more men. Farm labour was absolute hell and in the end the money wasn’t enough, so I went home’. The image of the patriotic Land Girl serving her country was imposed by the press and government, to avoid any notion that acceptable gender behaviour was being transgressed. Janet Watson argues that the Board of Agriculture made a powerful appeal to women to serve ‘your Country just like the Soldiers and Sailors, though in a different way’; the ‘language of essential service was used to outweigh the stolid work associations of heavy farm labour’ and to ‘overcome the perceived social danger of women performing work traditionally associated with men’. If the Land Girl’s contribution was seen as service to the nation, the distinction between how men and women exercised their patriotism was not clouded and war service within this framework did not represent undesired social change.

Conclusion

The classic view of the Land Army is that the women who joined did so enthusiastically and left only when they were no longer needed. Women’s actions and the way that they described their experiences do not, however, wholly support this view. While many were proud of their role and revelled in the rewards of agricultural life, for others the isolation, demanding work conditions, and watchful eyes of the WWAC were unbearable. Some remained on the land for the duration of the war and volunteered again during the Second World War, while others lasted only a few weeks or months before returning home or pursuing employment opportunities elsewhere. These observations do not suggest that the women who participated in the Land Army were unpatriotic. Rather, conditions in Devon were difficult. Farm machinery was in limited use due to the small size and irregular shape of farms, and the decline of the agricultural industry in the decades prior to the war meant that the county’s agricultural labour force had been reduced and tailored to the specific needs of the farmers. Farmers relied on a small group of skilled men with the physical and mental fortitude to get the job done.

As such, Devon’s farmers were slow to accept alternative labour sources and resented the impracticalities of employing the semi-trained women of the Land Army. Women in Devon also struggled with answering the patriotic call of the Land Army. For those already employed in agriculture there was no need formally to join; for others, work conditions and the terms of employment were simply unappealing. The Devon WWAC, the Women’s Branch, and the Food Production Department recognized that patriotism was not enough to bring women to the land, and encouraged organisers and recruits to make the necessary changes and offer the necessary incentives to increase the number of Land Army volunteers. The WLA was envisioned as a patriotic organisation—a skilled and permanent labour force that would assist farmers in increasing domestic food production and sustaining Britain’s war effort—
but the image of patriotic self-sacrifice was produced and used by organisers and the press to mobilise women and contain the potential social threat that women performing men’s work presented to a nation already in a state of transition. The truth was that women’s attitudes towards the Land Army and their motivations for joining were as diverse as their experiences. In light of these circumstances, viewing the WLA within a purely patriotic framework is dangerous and ignores the plethora of factors that influenced its development, management, and ultimately, its success.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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14 DRO, 1262M/L141 Letter from the Women’s War Agriculture Committee, Devon, 17 May 1917
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18 ibid.; WN 1 Jan 1916: ‘Women and Farm Work’ and 27 Jul 1916 ‘Women’s Land Army: Launceston’
20 Dartmouth & South Hams Chronicle 17 Mar 1916; the use of school children could be troublesome and although they were used on the land throughout the war there were strict regulations in place regarding their employment. Western Morning News 6 Jul 1915; North Devon Herald 5 Oct 1916; Women’s County Farm Labour Committee 29 Jan 1917
21 See WG 27 Jan 1916; Thom, Nice girls and rude girls, pp.26-29, 28; Teignmouth Post 27 Oct 1916
22 DRO 1262M/O/LD/144 ‘Labour on the land’ 1 Oct 1914, and ‘Voluntary recruitment for Devon’ 18 May 1915
23 The Times 7 Apr 1917, p.3; see also TNA NATS 1/1308 ‘10,000 women wanted for farm work’.
24 National Service Department recruiting poster
26 W.E. Shewell-Cooper, Land girl: a handbook for the Women’s Land Army (1942) pp.8-9
27 Clarke, The Women’s Land Army: a portrait, p.20
28 See also TNA NATS 1/1303 Letter to Prothero, meeting of Food Production Department, Women’s Branch 4 May 1917
29 TNA MAF 80/4998 Devon War Agricultural Committee 29 Jan 1917
30 TNA MAF 42/8 ‘Report for the Food Production Department for the period up to 1 June 1918’, June 1918, pp.10-12
31 There was machinery on the land in Devon, but considerably less than in other areas of England (a deficiency particularly evident in north Devon). This was because Devon farms
had increasingly converted to livestock, farms were small, and approximately 85 per cent of all horses in the county were used for agriculture: DRO Fortescue of Castle Hill 1262M/L126 ‘Changes to Devon farming, 1850-1900’, pamphlet outlining changing needs of farmers in the second half of the 19th century (Nov 1900); see also E.J.T. Collins, ‘The age of machinery’, in G.E. Mingay (ed), *The Victorian countryside* vol.1 (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p.295. 29 Imperial War Museum [IWM] Sound Department [SD] 3078/1: Mary Lees (tape recorded interview, 1974) 30 DRO 1262M/141 Letter Mildmay to Talbot, Devonsshire WWAC 17 Aug 1917; TNA MAF48/2 Board of Agriculture and Fisheries report from Women’s Branch Sep 1917 31 DRO 1262M/L140 Labour Officer’s reports for w/e 25 May 1917, w/e 27 Jul 1917 and w/e 31 Aug 1917 32 Horn, *Rural life in England*, pp.81-82, 72-86, 136 33 Peter Dewey, *War and progress* (Longman, 1997) p.210; Avner Offer, *The First World War: an agrarian interpretation* (Oxford UP, 1991) p.94; DRO 1262M/L113 Board of Agriculture report of speech by Mr. Prothero 18 Jan 1917. The plough campaign meant that farmers had to increased the percentage of arable land. With the number of men and horses dwindling, the Board of Agriculture recommended that they rely more heavily on farm machinery, which until 1917 was in short supply. To help address the shortage the government purchased tractors from the United States, but these were still in the experimental stages and unsuited to ploughing older pastures. This made working conditions especially difficult, even for skilled ploughmen: DRO 1262M/L139 Report of the Devon War Agricultural Committee, 4 June 1917 34 DRO, 1262M/L141 E. Avery to O.S. Hepburn 5 Oct 1918 35 TNA, MAF 59/2: ‘Women in agriculture during war-time’, *Journal of the Board of Agriculture* vol.25 (Oct 1917) p.802 36 Horn, *Rural life in England*, p.128. New housing schemes for Devon were initiated in 1906 after the Liberals won a landslide victory, taking ten of thirteen Devon seats. However, housing plans for Exeter, and Devon generally, were downgraded in 1910; DRO Barnstaple Borough Council, 2654-4 Housing reports 7 May 1906 and 9 May 1910 37 DRO 1262M/L144 Women’s War Agricultural Committee, Devon, Report on Billeting 16 Apr 1918 38 Reports from the Labour Officer indicate that once a woman returned to the training centres, few returned to local farms. The reports do not indicate whether they left farm work altogether, or if they went to another county, but it is certain that after autumn 1917 few women awaited placement on Devon farms: DRO Fortescue of Castle Hill, 1262M/L140 Labour officers reports 6 Jan 1918, 17 Apr 1918. 39 DRO, Fortescue of Castle Hill 3248A/13 Letter from Mr. Holly to Lord Fortescue 5 Feb 1915 40 Shewell-Cooper, *Land girl*, pp.10-11 41 DRO 1262M/L138 Rules for members of the Land Army in Devonshire WWAC, 29 Aug 1917 42 TNA NATS 1/1308 ‘The green armlet’, National Service: a story of today, pp.1-8 43 DRO 1262M/L142 Recruiting in Devonshire, Selection of Recruits, Confidential Draft, 15 Jan 1918; and County Executive, conduct and misdemeanours, prepared by the WWAC, Devonshire, 29 May 1918. 44 TNA MAF 42/8 ‘God speed the plough and the woman who drives it’, National Service, Women’s Land Army, poster 1918; see also Clarke, *The women’s land army: a portrait*, pp.46-49 45 TNA, MAF 42/8 Food Production Department, Women’s Branch, confidential report from travelling inspectors 7 Jun 1918; letter Hepburn to Talbot, 31 May 1918 46 ibid., memo on information for welfare officers, FPD 3 Jul 1918 47 Caroline Playne, *Society at war* (Allen & Unwin, 1930) p.137 48 Olive Hockin, *Two girls on the land* (E. Arnold, 1918) p.iii. 49 ibid., p.158 50 IWM Department of Documents [DD] 86/20/1 Papers of Mrs. Harrold, no date; IWM DD P360 Rosa Freeman Feb 1978; IWM SD 3076/1 Beatrice Gilbert 1977 interview by BBC; IWM DD P360 M. Bale, no date; IWM DD 81/9/1 E. Airey, no date 51 IWM DD 94/27/1 Papers of Miss M. Hodgson 3 Dec 1917 52 ibid., see also IWM SD 3076/1 Beatrice Gilbert 1977 53 Totnes Times 26 Oct 1918, p.6; *Express and Echo* 23 Sep 1918, WN 26 Jul 1918 and 2 Mar 1918 54 Quoted in Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the cage: women’s experiences in two world wars* (Routledge, 1987) p.57 55 ibid., p.57-58 56 IWM DD P360 Mary Bale 1977 interview transcript 57 Winter, *The experience of World War I*, p.176 58 IWM SD 3076/1 Mary Lees 1974 interview by IWM 59 Watson, *Fighting different wars*, pp.117-118

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‘In rejoicing, let us preserve decorum’: victory celebrations in Swindon, 1945

CHRIS SLADEN

Introduction

As anniversaries of key events of World War II come round, familiar images and stories appear in the press, on TV and radio. In 2005 there was heavy use of such images during national and local events to commemorate the ‘Victory’ months of May and August 1945, and the publication of a number of histories, both academic and popular, some of which are referred to in this essay. Few authors, though, could emulate the cookery writer Marguerite Patten, who in 2005 produced a revised edition of her Victory Cookbook, first published in 1945 (and, in 2010, played her part in events to ‘celebrate’ the 70th anniversary of food rationing).

Today’s media can draw upon a rich store of archive material as well as interviews with the inevitably decreasing number of survivors from 1945. Well-worn images from the press and cinema newsreels are revived, and popular songs of the 1940s aired (in 2009 another veteran, Dame Vera Lynn, enjoyed a brief return to the charts 70 years on from the outbreak of war). Many scenes from the summer of 1945 have become familiar to those far too young to remember VE Day, VJ Day, and the events surrounding them: the royal family on the balcony of Buckingham Palace; the young princesses mingling incognito (almost) with the crowds in London’s West end; street parties, flags and bunting, bonfires and alfresco dancing. The great majority of such images are of London.

This essay, however, draws on written and oral recollection of celebrations in Swindon, then a largely industrial town with a peacetime population of around 50,000, comparing them with those in London and elsewhere. How were the celebrations viewed by Swindonians at the time and how have they since been remembered? Were there significant differences between the treatment of VE Day in May, and VJ Day in August? How did the 1945 celebrations compare with what happened in 1918? Even in this one town, were there differences between neighbourhoods and social classes? And what do Swindonians recall about the reasons underlying the celebrations: was it a ‘chance to make things different’ or to ‘get back to normal’? Bearing in mind that a dramatic general election fell between them, did Swindonians think, in 1945—or do they now think—that the VE Day and VJ Day celebrations marked a watershed, ushering in a New Jerusalem? Or are they more inclined to agree with Anthony Howard, writing eight years after the war ended: ‘Far from introducing a “social revolution” the overwhelming Labour victory of 1945 brought about the greatest restoration of traditional social values since 1660’.

Before the railway age, Swindon was a small market town on a low hill between the Thames valley and the Wiltshire Downs. In 1840, when Brunel mapped the route of his Great Western Railway and its new engineering works, he placed them a mile or so north of this hill. The Victorian industrial town grew up around the works and until 1900 the two settlements were administratively separate. Even in 1945 they were still commonly referred to as 'Old' and 'New' Swindon (or Old Town and New Town). A 1960s study concluded that 'The simplest way of expressing it is probably to
say that Old Swindon means salaries and security and New Swindon wages and worries. In 1945, middle class Old Town consisted of Victorian town houses and 1930s’ detached or semi-detached villas, with the kind of shops and services associated with a small market town—indeed, a weekly cattle market was still held. New Town had small neighbourhoods of nineteenth and early-twentieth century terraced housing centred on workplaces (notably, of course, the GWR works), and the mix of chain stores and small corner shops common to manufacturing towns.

**How Swindon heard the news**

Much media coverage of 'Victory' anniversaries gives the impression that the end of the war was a single clear-cut event, which all British civilians heard about at the same time. In reality, the process dragged out over several days: ‘There was nothing neat and tidy about the end of the war’, one perceptive BBC correspondent pointed out, ‘The idea of a single, jubilant communal VE Day ... is a distortion of history; at the very least there was a VE Week’. Matters were even less clear-cut for those who had been actively engaged in the fighting: ‘Governments must of necessity draw a line across the calendar and ordain a VE-Day ... and a VJ Day ... But for many participants such lines were of limited personal significance’, wrote one who had returned from PoW camp in 1945.

On Friday 4 May, German forces in north-west Europe surrendered at Montgomery’s HQ on Lüneburg Heath. Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun had died five days earlier, and nominal leadership fell to Admiral Doenitz. Three days later, on Monday 7 May, the German supreme command surrendered at Rheims. Churchill, Truman and Stalin had previously agreed that news of Germany’s surrender should be broadcast simultaneously in all the Allied capitals, and Stalin now insisted that victory in Europe could not be proclaimed until the unconditional surrender of German forces on the eastern front had been formally accepted by Marshal Zhukov in Berlin; he proposed that the announcement be made at 00.01 on Wednesday 9 May. In this continuing uncertainty, Churchill’s formal announcement of Germany’s unconditional surrender was not made to the Commons until Tuesday afternoon. By Monday lunchtime, however, news had been picked up from German radio by the BBC and some afternoon local newspapers. In Swindon, as in many other provincial towns, the impression that the country was ‘at peace’ arrived piecemeal. This lack of a defining moment, and the failure to ring church bells as promised (they had been silent since 1939, save for the occasion in 1942 when they rang to celebrate victory at El Alamein) caused disappointment and resentment: ‘The victory had come haltingly’, notes the historian Juliet Gardiner, ‘peace with a whimper’.

Plans for victory celebrations had, however, been under way since early spring. In Swindon the local newspaper, the *Evening Advertiser*, had been reporting speculation about Hitler’s fate and the likely end of hostilities since April—on 18 April it carried a news item about the tax implications of any gifts that firms might offer employees for what was by then already dubbed ‘Victory in Europe’ or ‘VE Day’. By 1 May the *Advertiser* had advice from the Ministry of Food about opening hours for food wholesalers and retailers on the expected public holiday (it also reported that 5000 tons of Australian currants had been landed in Britain, ready for celebratory cake-making). Three days later, the licensing authorities announced that Swindon’s public houses would be allowed to open for an extra hour, to 11 pm, on VE Day, on payment of a five shilling licence fee. A number of pubs in Swindon and the surrounding villages had remained open until 10.30 pm through wartime summers.
for the benefit of late-working farm labourers; on VE Day any nominal 'closing time' proved less important than the shortage of drink.

On Saturday 5 May the Advertiser was able to offer no more specific news than that German resistance was reduced to 'pockets' including Saxony, Dresden, Czechoslovakia, Norway and the Atlantic ports, but the imminence of an announcement was plainly signalled by news that floodlights had been placed in readiness around Swindon’s parish church. On 7 May the continuing delay in issuing a formal announcement of the surrender meant that the Advertiser, on sale during the early afternoon, was caught on the hop: its jumbo-sized headline, ‘BRITAIN REJOICES … the utter defeat of Nazi Germany’, did not appear until the following day. On Monday morning reluctant schoolchildren set off as usual. Some 60 years on, one of them recalled that

‘Over that week-end … we waited for the end to be officially announced … all day Sunday we wondered about going to school next day, but we had to go. We girls from Even Swindon School went to Westcott Place for Domestic Science. We set off and registered … but we sat around and talked all day with the teacher joining in. At about three o’clock … we were allowed to go home; we had still not been told the war was officially over. At the end of Westcott Street was … the “Gardener’s Arms” and the lady there was hanging flags from the bedroom window. We shouted up to her, “Is it over?” and she said “Yes, Mr Churchill will make a speech tonight; you will have some days off school”.

Party time
Throughout the war Swindonians had received news from the BBC Home Service bulletins. At 7.40 on the Monday evening the BBC confirmed, albeit without much
ceremony and with some continuing ambiguity, that Tuesday was to be ‘treated as Victory in Europe Day’ and should be ‘regarded as a holiday’. By then, bunting and flags, many of them in storage since the 1937 coronation, were already flying across Swindon streets, and party plans were under way. One (now centenarian) resident of Rodbourne, a residential area just north of the GWR works, recalls bonfires being lit that evening, one of which set fire to the asphalt path, and at least one piano being taken out of a house for an impromptu street party. The Rodbourne Arms, she also recalls, did take advantage of the extra hour’s licence, although during the war it had commonly opened only a few hours each day because of the shortage of beer.

Another Swindonian writes about the celebrations in Westcott Place, close to the town centre, where a piano had been produced but proved inadequate. She hurried home and fetched a piano accordion, returning to the party to ‘belt out all the well known songs of the day. Oh, it was great fun, everyone releasing all their happiness and emotions’. The following afternoon Churchill’s speech to the Commons was broadcast at 3 pm. Street parties became more widespread and better-organised. Swindon housewives had, I was told, ‘worked miracles’ with rationed foodstuffs: ‘jelly made with “pop” from Winnings [corner] shop and gelatine. Someone boiled parsnips, mashed them and flavoured them with banana flavouring for sandwiches …’ Bonfires were again lit, many of them topped with effigies of Hitler, yet more pianos are said to have been dragged into the street, together with other musical instruments, ‘saucepans and tin baths— anything to create a noise’. Food, and the ingenious devices used to supplement rations, are part of the stock in trade of wartime memoirists, many of whom mention the variety of food provided for VE Day parties. Vere Hodgson, for instance, whose wartime diaries were published under the telling title Few Eggs and No Oranges, detailed the eclectic fare enjoyed by workers at a welfare office in west London: ‘Tinned grapefruit. Salad. Tongue. Tin of crayfish—and a Plum Pudding. All of us had been saving these viands up for a long time’.

The Evening Advertiser had taken the BBC’s hint about holidays and did not appear on Wednesday 9 May, although many railwaymen and others worked as usual. The first account of the celebrations (‘Swindon Celebrated with Dancing and Singing’) was therefore in Thursday’s paper, illustrated with photographs of the first organised parties in Avening Street, Westcott Place, Norton Grove and Harding Street. Similar parties continued throughout the week, many of them attended by the mayor, Alderman Charles Macpherson, and his wife Phyllis. She was understandably unsure of the exact number of parties they attended, but thought it was around 240:

‘Some stand out for a particular reason, you know. On the first occasion I remember a man—he must have been my husband’s age—came out and recognised him; I think they were in the [First World War] army together. That first [party] was in Westcott Place … and the food was what people had in the store cupboard. [Then] there was one in one of the streets in Gorse Hill, two of the ladies in their enthusiasm arrived both with cups of tea for us and I remember one of them went in my lap’.

Similar parties were reported each day in the Advertiser until Thursday 17 May. Many had the mayor and mayoress in attendance until eventually, Mrs Macpherson says, she had to beg that no more Spam sandwiches be offered her. Other guests of honour included returning prisoners of war, some of whom had been captured at Dunkirk in 1940. Swindon schools held their own parties. That at Pinehurst Junior School (serving a large residential area of north Swindon) was probably typical, involving races, football, dancing and community singing as well as tea. Children at
such parties were commonly presented with a gift of cash, ranging from sixpence to two shillings. The Advertiser's VE Day editorial had included an admonition, 'In rejoicing let us preserve decorum' and the paper's coverage of the celebrations, printed on 10 May, claimed that although 'There was singing and dancing in almost every street [and] music of varying degrees of discord', there was relatively little drunkenness or rowdy behaviour: 'The hour's extension granted to licensed houses was fully appreciated without being abused', unsurprisingly in view of the shortage of liquor. The piano-accordion player, her talents in demand at several evening parties, claims she 'never saw anyone drunk or disorderly and causing any trouble, only people having a great time'.

As well as the shortage of alcohol, poor weather helped to keep parties cool. Some were hastily reconvened under cover: one on Swindon's eastern boundary was shifted into an aircraft hangar at Vickers Armstrong's South Marston works. The official thanksgiving service on Sunday 13 May was similarly marred by rain. In the circumstances it is therefore not surprising to find the Advertiser, on 12 May, reporting that just one case of assault from the VE Day celebrations had appeared in the local magistrates' court. The raucous scenes which feature in books by Gardiner and others, with cosmopolitan crowds surging through London and other large cities seeking excitement and sexual encounter, seem unlikely to have been repeated in a town the size of Swindon. The 'parties and groups of revellers producing lively and happy go lucky scenes', reported in the paper, sound notably less boisterous than those experienced in London.

The greatest excitement seems to have been caused by the groups of dancers on Regent Street (the town's main shopping centre) who prevented vehicles from getting through—music for the dancing was provided not by live performers but by the loudspeakers of a radio and electrical shop). The palest echo of the bacchanalia seen in central London was recalled by Phyllis Macpherson who met Elsie Murray-John, wife of Swindon's long-serving town clerk, in Westlecott Road, a quiet residential area of Old Town. Mrs. Murray-John reportedly exclaimed that 'For two pins I'd climb that lamp post' and, Mrs Macpherson claims, 'she would have done if we hadn't pulled her back. I said we couldn't have it getting into the papers, "Town Clerk's wife up a lamp post": they'd have said we were all over the top with drink!' Another possible reason for the relatively restrained public festivities is the strong non-conformist element in the population of Swindon, dating from nineteenth-century immigration from Wales.

Juliet Gardiner's book, and other works by, for example, Martin Gilbert, include many accounts of the street parties and other public celebrations which provided the best pictures for the press and the cinema newsreels. But the ambiguity as to exactly when the war was going to end meant that for many people work went on as usual. Among Juliet Gardiner's contributors were a farm labourer who spent VE Day drilling turnips and a housewife who preferred spring-cleaning to any showy form of celebration. Shop, hospital and transport workers were unlikely to have taken even one whole day's holiday. Public transport ran in all major towns, even if occasionally interrupted (as in Swindon's Regent Street); the crowds could hardly have got to central London otherwise. For Swindonians the most potent symbol of war's end, the sounding of the deep-throated GWR works hooter on the morning of 8 May (it had sounded only for air raids during the war) also meant that some, at least, of the railwaymen and women were being summoned to work.

Swindon's schools, like those in other towns, were closed, but by no means every family chose to join communal celebrations. Aged 12, I went with my parents on the
bus to Swindon’s north-west frontier, where we picnicked in open fields beyond the electricity generating station. Elsewhere, one contributor to a 1995 anthology confessed that he spent VE Day working for his higher school certificate, adding ‘I do not remember anything of local street parties and the like’. And the essayist Robert Lynd wrote in the News Chronicle on 7 May that ‘I prefer to celebrate peace by remaining peaceful’, though adding that he intended to light a small bonfire in the back garden to burn the waistcoat he had worn throughout the war. Even in London, as a sombre counterpoint to the impromptu jazz-playing of Humphrey Lyttleton (who produced his trumpet in St. James’s Park) Tom Driberg noted: ‘Here and there, in sheltering darkness … lonely, living ghosts—a repatriated prisoner, dazed by the garish clamour and by the sudden accessibility of women after years of celibacy; a young American … due for discharge, bitterly dreading his return to … the instability of civilian life’.

Unsurprisingly, such lack of outward celebration rarely features in contemporary press coverage or anniversary recollections. Nevertheless, festivities could grate with those who had family members still serving in Asia, where the war was then expected to continue for many months. In 2005 one veteran remembered that ‘It did irk some of us, all this talk of the war being over when the Japanese were there in Burma and showing very little sign of going’. Others might have agreed with the American ‘foster mother’ of two young English evacuees, who wrote to the girls’ natural mother back in England, ‘word has come in of the stopping of the fighting … I suppose there will be some wild celebrations in town tonight. The children get a holiday tomorrow and would like to go in town to see the celebrations, but I hardly think we shall’. Sixty years later one of the children added that ‘It would have seemed inappropriate for the family to celebrate in this way an event that had brought so much suffering and hardship to so many people’.

If the sounding of the GWR morning hooter signalled a return to normality, the floodlighting of public buildings is remembered as an exceptional sign that life in Swindon was moving out of the darkness of war into peace and lightness. The town might lack the variety of public buildings suitable for illumination to be found in cities such as Oxford, but the floodlit parish church, located on high ground of Old Swindon, could be seen from a large part of the town. The symbolism of light returning after darkness was powerful: ‘When the black-out was lifted it was marvellous’, one woman remembered; others recalled blackout screens being taken down and added to street party bonfires. In the floodlit churchyard of another small town, the conscientious objector Edward Blishen saw what he thought the ‘least ambiguous of all that [VE] night’s celebrations’: local children had discovered that, running between the ground-level floodlights and the church wall, they could cast immense shadows, ‘a curiously forceful measure of those five years of war in Europe … here were children for whom this was their very first experience of light used freely and without fear, in public, at night’.

VJ Day: ‘more of an anti-climax’

During the 2005 anniversary celebrations, VJ Day attracted a good deal less attention than the end of the European war: the major national commemoration, with royalty present, took place between the two dates but plainly looked back to VE Day, rather than forward to VJ Day. This accurately reflected the importance accorded the original events in 1945, in Swindon and elsewhere. There are several reasons why VJ Day captured less attention among the public and the media, even though it could
more logically have been said to mark the ‘end of the war’. A repeated event, however significant, loses some of its gloss: ‘It was more of an anti-climax’, thought one Swindon woman, ‘because, you know [VE Day], that was the end of the war as we knew it, but the second was just sort of tidying up’, going on to suggest that the war in the Far East was ‘too far away to affect us at the time’.\textsuperscript{25} Throughout the war it had seemed natural to portray Germany as ‘the enemy’; German bombs were falling on British towns and cities; German (and Italian) prisoners of war were working on British farms; Germany was remembered as the arch-enemy of twenty years earlier. Victories of British and allied armies took place in North Africa and Europe; by contrast, news of the war against Japan was both less frequent and more often bad, epitomised by the loss of Singapore. One contemporary account concluded that ‘the war in South East Asia and the Pacific had been a distant nightmare … it had never gripped the popular imagination’.\textsuperscript{26}

Another obvious reason why fewer, and lower-key, events were held in Swindon on VJ Day (16 August) was that by then schools had broken up and families were on holiday. For many employees, the ‘holidays with pay’ legislation of 1938 now took effect.\textsuperscript{27} Although in London, crowds overran railway and bus stations from August Bank Holiday (at the beginning of the month) onwards, Swindon town centre was nearly as quiet as it had been during the GWR ‘Trip Weeks’ of the 1930s. At seaside resorts, holidaymakers were said to be sleeping three or four to a room, or on the beaches. Some Swindonians, when interviewed, thought that families had been glad of the opportunity to go on holiday, following years of seven days a week shift work in munitions factories. One, however, wrote that she ‘did not think people thought about taking holidays at that time; they were more concerned [about] getting their lives back to normal, and homes renovated’. Phyllis Macpherson’s husband had not been able to take a holiday that summer, although she and her daughter spent a week in London.\textsuperscript{28}
As with the European war, the Pacific war ended unexpectedly and with some confusion. After VE Day it had been thought that the Japanese could continue fighting for months, if not years. Charles Wheeler, like many others, assumed he would go to the Far East and the war would carry on. But the dropping of the atomic bombs on 6 and 9 August brought about Japanese surrender on Tuesday 14 August. Although the news was broadcast by the BBC at midnight, most Britons only learned the following morning that it was the start of a two-day VJ holiday. The realisation that peace had been achieved only by the use of this new weapon was perhaps another reason why celebrations were muted: ‘At least the whole thing was finished … But there was also the bomb and that … I think that made us feel a bit different’, wrote a London housewife.

Later in 1945, the newly-elected Labour MP Donald Bruce, making his maiden speech, recalled VJ Day parties in his constituency: ‘One could not help detecting a far greater restraint in celebrating the end of the war than would possibly have been anticipated six months before its actual end. The war ended … well under the shadow of the manner of its ending’. Nevertheless 15 and 16 August saw crowds again massing in central London, dancing to music from loud speakers, the traffic chaos worsened by the State opening of Parliament. One national newspaper reporter wrote that London ‘went crazy celebrating’, but another commentator thought the rejoicing ‘seemed to be rather subdued’ and overall the day ‘lacked the surge of spontaneous relief and joy that had erupted in May’.

In Swindon, the Evening Advertiser published the local authority’s plans for VJ celebrations on Tuesday 14 August: the mayor hoped the celebrations would be as spontaneous as those for VE Day with, ‘if possible, even more enthusiasm’. The Council would provide open-air dancing, admission to the Coate Water lido would be free, there would be a non-sectarian religious service, a parade and possibly a giant beacon on The Okus, an area of the Old Town clearly visible from most of the town. On 16 August the paper’s verdict was: ‘Plenty of fun, but crowds orderly’. Most shops had opened only in the morning, the ‘indefatigable Mayor and Mayoress … once more toured the town’, and flags and bunting were again common. Only two street parties were sighted on Wednesday 15 August, at Bessemer Road and (inevitably) Westcott Place. The next day more parties ‘sprang into being’, some ‘with monster cakes’. Although notice had been short, and the paper believed rations must be at an ‘irreducible minimum’, housewives were said to have ‘responded magnificently … laden tables appeared everywhere’. The weather was poor, with drizzle, and Swindonians’ spirits further dampened by the shortage of liquor: ‘The drink situation on VJ night was generally felt to be bad—queuing at bars lined six deep in those public houses which managed to remain open for any length of time’.

Those who were present at the Swindon events have fewer and less colourful memories of VJ Day than of VE Day: a typical response was ‘As far as I can remember, not so much fuss was made about VJ celebrations; fewer parties; VE was more organised’. But a different view comes from a local history of the Queens Park area of Swindon, lying between the old and new towns. Having recorded an impromptu VE Day party where ‘a good time was had by all’ in Beckhampton Street, the author writes that when Japan capitulated, some residents felt another party was called for, ‘organised on more formal and ambitious lines by a committee’, some time after VJ Day itself. The Advertiser report on this appeared on 6 September and mentions a mystery charabanc tour, followed by ice cream in the Presbyterian Hall, a variety show, and presentation of a bouquet to the mayoress and commemorative beakers to the children. Yet fifty years on, one resident of the area could recall only the VE Day party, not the supposedly grander and better-organised VJ Day event.
The end of the war against Japan had a greater significance for the considerable number of US servicemen still in Britain. For them the war in the Pacific had represented the most potent threat to their homeland. Just outside Swindon, at the Shrivenham American University (set up hastily after VE Day to occupy GIs left stranded in Europe) Japan’s surrender was announced just after midnight on 15 August and the students celebrated by ‘snake-dancing near the dormitories, building a huge bonfire behind the Post Theater [cinema] and by singing and dancing until dawn; classes were cancelled for the next day, and over the next weeks a number of ... students dropped out of their courses, hoping to make their way home’. Contemporary reports and pictures of VJ celebrations in London and Oxford show the boisterous contribution of GIs, on foot or in overloaded jeeps, although the shortage of liquor often restrained their exuberance. Yet, although American troops had been unmissable in Swindon from 1943 onwards, many of them welcomed into local homes, when asked if they remembered American guests at the town’s VJ Day parties the answers of Swindonians were all negative: ‘If it went on, I don’t remember it; it’s gone from my memory’; ‘I don’t remember [Americans] being involved at that time’; ‘I have no recollection of American troops attending street parties’.

Discussion

Records of the two victory celebrations in Swindon support Maureen Waller’s downbeat summing up: ‘After the nation had devoted all its energies … to waging total war for so long, there was a general feeling of lethargy’. It seems that the main emotion felt by the celebrants back in 1945 is remembered as one of simple relief that the fear of death and destruction had so quickly been lifted: ‘everyone would be back from the war, and nobody would get those awful telegrams’. It might be thought that fear of bombing was a less powerful motivator in Swindon than elsewhere: although the air raid alert had sounded more than 150 times, there were only a few raids on the town. A local historian calculates that a total of 104 bombs fell on Swindon, killing 51 people, destroying 50 homes, and damaging a further 1800. By comparison, more than ten times as many lives were lost in Coventry, whose population was less than four times greater. In a town the size of Swindon, however, even this relatively small number of random attacks and casualties could have an unsettling impact—the planes that devastated Coventry also regularly flew over Swindon. Although there were no V-weapon attacks on Swindon, its residents knew about their terrifying impact, for GWR train crews from the town travelled through the danger area each day.

One Swindon woman, who had been a schoolgirl at the end of the war, had no doubts about the principal emotion she and her contemporaries felt: ‘The fact that we could go to bed and sleep till morning without being awakened by the air raid siren and scrambling downstairs to shelter was such a relief. It was nice to feel it wasn’t going to happen’. Interviewed later, she explained how the fear of being bombed, rather than any specific incident, had altered the course of her life: aged 11, she was ‘scared stiff’ of going far from home to the more distant ‘big school’ because ‘my home was going to be bombed while I was out of it and I was going to be left an orphan. It was an absolute dread. So when I went to the interview for the exam, I said I didn’t want to go to the school, and my mum didn’t want me to go either, and I’ve always regretted it; of course, if I’d have gone to the grammar school … it would have been a big step up in life’.

Swindonians suggest a second key reason for celebration—the end of irksome restrictions. Chief among those was the ending of the blackout, hence the continual
emphasis in local press and oral testimony upon the floodlighting, bonfires and the reappearance of neon shop signs. ‘The black-out had been really strict, with air raid wardens watching for the teeniest scrap of light showing’, wrote the correspondent who was deprived of further education, while admitting that the regime had been softened for several months before VE Day (the so-called ‘dim-out’) when curtains rather than tar-paper shutters and the like could be used to obscure windows. The end of many other wartime restrictions, notably food rationing, was not in sight (food rationing finally ended in 1954) but the belief that such regulations would in due time be lifted, coupled with pride at the ingenuity with which street parties were provisioned, helped stoke up the party mood.

How did the 1945 celebrations compare with those at the end of the First World War? One of the few Swindonians able in the twenty-first century to recall November 1918 was the former mayoress, Phyllis Macpherson, in 1918 a 14-year-old pupil at The [Swindon Technical] College: ‘I remember the news coming through. Mr Burkhardt [principal] came in and told us we were all allowed out and instead of going straight home I remember we went down through the town and everyone was very excited. But I don’t remember any celebrations or anything like that’. This seems at odds with accounts of 11 November 1918 such as that of Graves and Hodge, who contrasted the modest ‘beanos’ enjoyed by troops in the trenches with what went on at home:

There, the lighter-hearted part of the population ran mad, the lead being taken by Dominion soldiers and airmen with their women friends. The constabulary in many towns had orders not to intervene in any scene of disorder whatever, unless fire or loss of life threatened. There were extraordinary scenes of joviality … Sexual affairs between perfect strangers took place promiscuously in parks, shop entrances and alley-ways.

Coverage of the Armistice in Swindon’s local paper, however, supports Mrs. Macpherson’s recollection of, at most, modest celebrations. The Advertiser understandably blew its own trumpet: ‘It was our great pleasure to be the means of first receiving the glorious news contained in the Premier’s statement [of 11 November] … Within a few minutes the flag was flying from our office and within an equally quick time our press was running and papers were sold like “wild-fire” … flags appeared on business premises throughout the town … the GWR works and all the schools were closed and a number of soldiers home from the front passing through the streets—a very animated appearance was visible’.

On the following day the paper carried reports on the thanksgiving service in the parish church, and patriotic speeches by local military commanders during a performance of the musical comedy ‘Betty’ at the town’s Empire Theatre, where the national anthems of Britain’s allies were also played—as would happen again in Swindon’s cinemas on VE Day (the manager of one cinema ordered the Soviet anthem to be replaced by the popular ‘Cossack Patrol’). There was, however, virtually nothing in the paper about any informal celebrations. As to riotous behaviour, on 14 November it was able to report that not a single case having been presented at the police court, Swindon ‘was to be congratulated on immunity from crime’. Five days later there was just one case: a man accused of stealing a five-shilling silver badge from a workmate.

Of course the weather in November would hardly have been conducive to street parties, although it seems not to have cooled the ardour of those observed in London and Oxford by Graves and Hodge. The vagaries of the food rationing system in 1918, less well organised and perceived as less equitable than during the Second
World War, may have been another factor: the temporary reduction in the price of margarine, reported in the Advertiser on 12 November, was unlikely to have brought much cheer to Phyllis Macpherson and her teenage companions. That same issue of the paper carried a report from Swindon butchers about the severe scarcity of rabbits (in 1939-1945 they would again form a welcome source of off-ration protein). It was alleged that all those trapped were being sent to London, where they fetched a higher price. On the following day came an ominous reference to the need for fresh vegetables to guard against influenza, although there is no suggestion that the epidemic, which would claim 150,000 lives in England and Wales, had yet made any serious impact on Swindon. Overall, therefore, 1918 appears to have been celebrated in Swindon with even more ‘decorum’ than 1945.

Looking forward, looking back and ‘class’

Is it possible to look behind the faded photographs of street parties and bonfires and deduce what, if anything, Swindonians thought underlay the 1945 celebrations? Popular memory clings to positive attributes of the war years. Prominent among them is the ‘myth of the blitz’, the feeling that throughout the war civilians remained united and selfless, with distinctions of class, region or wealth non-existent or deliberately put on one side. By contrast, the ‘myth’ implies, twenty-first century Britain is a divided, acquisitive and self-centred society, which needs to get back to the halcyon days of 1945: ‘The sense of common purpose and community that grew out of facing a common threat ... rapidly disappeared’, concludes one popular history. Some Swindonians share that view. A contributor to an anthology of wartime memories published in the town writes confidently that ‘A good thing about the war was, it made everyone come out of their shell, brought people together. The atmosphere was fantastic, everyone helping each other’.

3. One of several impromptu parties held in Westcott Place in May and August 1945 (courtesy of The Swindon Society)
But contemporary accounts and survivors’ memories disappoint when it comes to any glimpse of political or social drive underlying the 1945 events in Swindon. Nobody matched the sentiment voiced in a 2005 TV documentary: ‘My grandfather told me, “We had done a wonderful thing ... we have defeated evil”’. Phyllis Macpherson, when asked if she thought Swindonians had been hoping to ‘get back to normal’ or ‘look forward to change’, ducked the question: ‘I wouldn’t like to comment on that’. Another Swindonian, a teenage schoolboy in 1945, seems to have moved in phlegmatic circles: ‘We must have said, “Oh, it’s the end of the war is it? Oh, that’s good” – that’s about as far as it went’. Nothing suggests that Swindonians thought victory might provide an opportunity for major social change. On the other hand, neither is there evidence of the kind of pessimism voiced by Lord Reith, whose diary, the week before VE Day confesses, ‘I am dreading the victory celebrations and have no sort of heart for them. I am feeling absolutely rotten ... Everything is upside down. The undesirable are subsidised from birth to grave at our expense ... We who pay for it ... will soon be driven out of existence’.

Although the research for this essay was not directly linked to the 1945 general election, the fact that Swindon showed a dramatic swing to Labour, whose candidate Tom Reid gained the largest majority ever seen in the constituency, might seem to argue that there was indeed a ‘need for change’ mood in the electorate. The increase in Labour’s share of the vote was certainly impressive, transforming a slim Conservative majority of 2.4 per cent in 1935 to a Labour one of 24 per cent ten years later (Labour had briefly held the seat following a by-election in 1934). But statistics can mislead. In 1945 the sitting member, Sir Wavell Wakefield, opted to contest the safer seat of Marylebone (which he duly took). His replacement as Conservative candidate, Lt. Col. A.M. Gibb, was previously unknown in the constituency and was generally judged to have been gentlemanly but ineffectual during the campaign. By contrast, Tom Reid had been nursing the constituency for much of the war, contributing a regular column to the evening Advertiser on such topics as Britain’s war aims and foreign policy (he had been a civil servant in the Colonial Office).

If it is difficult to attach any firm political or philosophic themes to Swindon’s Victory celebrations, there remain one humdrum factor and one more significant social feature. The first, rarely mentioned in the national media coverage of 2005 and other anniversaries, was that a tradition of street parties was well established before the war, at the time of the 1935 silver jubilee and the 1937 coronation. Maureen Duffy’s 2001 book about the making of the ‘myth’ of Englishness highlights the importance of these 1930s events, and describes the 1945 parties (‘sing-songs, Knees up Mother Brown, the Conga and the Hokey Cokey’) as ‘the last of pre-war England’. Tom Harrisson, comparing Britain in the 1930s and 1950s, notes the importance both of the 1937 coronation parties and those of 1953, when the streets again became ‘close neighbourhood units’. He finds it difficult to categorise such events: ‘were they parties for parties’ sake, or a spontaneous demonstration of good will?’. But a throwaway line from Mass Observation’s ‘overheards’ from London’s East End in 1953—‘They don’t care so much up West. They don’t do it themselves. It’s done for them’—opens up the final issue, that of class. ‘Myths’ of the Second World War, such as that it ‘destroyed’ or at least submerged class in Britain, have been heavily qualified by historians, including Angus Calder who first coined, then qualified, the term ‘myth of the blitz’. Historians today are more likely to agree with David Cannadine: ‘Despite the wartime camaraderie, there were many who maintained that British society remained fundamentally divided between “us” and
“them” ... indeed, it seemed that the war merely drew attention to this basic division, and intensified it’.56

Although the local newspaper reports of Swindon street parties appear to cover the whole town, enthusiasm for this kind of event was concentrated in generally working-class and lower middle-class areas (the ‘communities’) of what was then commonly called ‘New Swindon’. When asked, Phyllis Macpherson said she could not remember any of the 200 or more parties she attended as mayoress having taken place in ‘Old Town’, where the Macphersons, the Murray-Johns and other civic leaders themselves lived. In fact a small number can be traced, one at Lethbridge Road School, in the heart of Old Swindon, the other in the sub-neighbourhood known as ‘Little London’, a working-class enclave on the north-facing slope of Old Town, overlooking the Queen’s Park area.

There were certainly parties in the newer northern suburbs to which, in the 1930s, a mix of professional, clerical and skilled manual workers had migrated. In general, however, the localities most likely to support street festivities of the kind pictured in the local press at the time, and in anniversary publications today, were those where families had lived and worked together for some decades. The Queen’s Park historian concludes that ‘the area ... housed a ‘community’ in the full sense of the word. Its 2000-plus population was remarkably united by bonds such as similar origins, the same employer ... shared pastimes and ... places of worship’.57 In 1945 residents of Queen’s Park and similar neighbourhoods also shared journeys to and from work, by bus, bicycle or on foot (often twice daily: many GWR and other workers ate their mid-day meal at home, summoned back for the afternoon by the works hooter). That historian might also have included visits to local shops as a shared activity and source of local news. Such ties did not bind the largely professional families of Old Town.

Overall, the celebrations of 1945 seem to have fulfilled the local paper’s plea for ‘decorum’. The fact that those who were there fail to recall the presence of US (or other Allied) troops, and the low recorded level of offences, indicate events were notably less colourful than those in the often-replayed newsreel coverage of central London. The ‘celebrations’ of November 1918 had, it seems, been even less rumbustious. The concentration of street parties in New Town neighbourhoods suggests that in Swindon class distinction had survived the six years of war, only briefly to be overlaid by the universal feeling of relief. Swindon’s example adds colour to the view of the historian Sonya Rose as to the ‘myth’ of wartime classlessness: ‘There was no one-size-fits-all Britishness, even when the people of Britain were at war’. And the recollection of Swindonians as to what they hoped might follow the Victory celebrations support David Kynaston who, when writing of the extent to which politicians, academics and others hoped or expected radical social or economic change to follow victory, concludes: ‘the probability is that most people were neither depressed nor ecstatic’.58 But such grey ambivalence would hardly provide material for the kind of anniversary celebrations enjoyed in 2005 or to be expected in future years.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

2 K. Hudson, An Awkward Size For a Town (David and Charles, 1967) p.15
3 C. Wheeler, Coming Home (BBC Radio 4) May 2005
4 M. Gilbert, The Day the War Ended (Harper Collins, 1995) p.408
5 J. Gardiner, Wartime Britain (Headline, 2004) p.566
During the war clocks were put forward 2 hours in summer (Double British Summer Time), 1 hour forward the rest of the year.

Two stops down the GWR main line the Bath & Wilts Chronicle sold ‘like wildfire’ with the news that the morrow would be VE Day: M. Brown, *The Day Peace Broke Out* (Sutton, 2005) p.74.

Private letter, Mrs J. Allen, Swindon (March 2005). Even (meaning ‘flat land’) Swindon is a neighbourhood close to the GWR.

Interview, Mrs. J. Murgatroyd, Swindon (March 2005).

Private letter, Mrs. Y. Plaum, Swindon, (May 2005)

Allen letter; interviews with D. Lacey and Mrs J. Allen, Swindon (July 2005)


Interview, Mrs. P. Macpherson, Swindon (July 2005); Mrs Macpherson (who has since died) celebrated her 100th birthday in 2004. Westcott Place and Gorse Hill were both close to the GWR works.

*Swindon Evening Advertiser* [EA] 10 May 1945; Plaum letter

In 1945, Swindon’s population, swelled by temporary workers, was around 60,000.

Macpherson interview, 2005; see the earlier explanation of Old Town and New Town.


Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, p.567

Gilbert, *Day War Ended*, pp.195-196


The Independent, 7 May 2005


Murgatroyd interview


T. Pocock, *The Dawn Came up Like Thunder* (1945), quoted in Waller, London 1945, p.316


Plaum letter; Macpherson interview

Wheeler, *Coming Home*

From Davies & Schweitzer, *Southwark at War* (c.1950) quoted in Waller, London 1945, p.313

Quoted in T. Dalyell’s obituary, *The Independent* 20 April 2005

Waller, London 1945, p.315

None of those interviewed remembered this beacon; perhaps poor weather prevented it being lit.

Plaum letter

K. Walter, *History of the Queen’s Park Community Area 4* (priv pub, 1995) p.9; the name Queen’s Park was not applied to this area until the 1950s, the eponymous park having been opened after the 1953 coronation.

As for Canadians, an RAF cadet, training at Winnipeg, later recalled how ‘mutted celebrations’ of VE Day had been ‘replaced by dancing in … the streets’ in August (Gilbert, *Day War Ended*, p.402).


‘An American sergeant was heard to say it was worse than Prohibition’ (Waller, *London 1945*, p.315)

Macpherson interview, Allen interview, Plaum letter

Waller, *London 1945*, p.318

Fred Wilkinson (Wakefield) VE Day, BBC2 TV, May 2005


Allen letter

Allen interview

Allen letter

Macpherson interview; characteristically, Mrs. Macpherson did remember queuing outside the town hall earlier in 1918 for a butter ration which turned out to be margarine.

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R. Miller, *VE Day, the People’s Story* (Tempus, 1995/2007) p.205

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Macpherson and Lacey interviews


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S. Rose, *Which People’s War?* (OUP, 2003) p.286 (her chapter on ‘Wartime Nation and Class’ cites popular suspicion that the middle classes had somehow ‘got away with it’ during the war); Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, p.9.

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Sources for local history

Petitioning for mercy in mid-nineteenth century Yorkshire

DICK HUNTER

This article examines petitions arising from convictions at Yorkshire courts in the mid-nineteenth-century. A case study explores support for Sarah Ann Hill, who in December 1851 was convicted of murdering her new-born child and sentenced to death. What do petitions reveal of her life, and how she related to family, employers and public authorities? What arguments were used to mitigate her sentence? What does her case suggest were factors contributing to a successful appeal, and what evidence was there of an organised campaign to save her life? How did the case inform debate on penal policy? In addition to petitions, sources used include calendars of felons, newspapers and Tasmanian convict records.

Introduction

Victor Gatrell and Paul Carter have drawn attention to thousands of criminal petitions deposited in The National Archives. Tied in bundles with ‘faded pink ribbons [and with] a couple of centuries ingrained dust and grime’ these petitions provide ‘much contextual information regarding local criminal events … and can yield detailed local background and details of local people’. While Gatrell has illustrated the role of petitioning within the judicial system, Carter notes that these petitions are rarely used as a source by local historians despite offering ‘uniquely significant information’. He explains how there was a right to petition the Crown for mercy by, or on behalf of, a convicted criminal whereby petitioners might plead ‘for the Crown to commute [substitute] a particular death sentence with transportation, or for a convict’s sentence of 14 years’ transportation to be reduced to a lesser number of years abroad, or a number of years imprisonment at home. Indeed any sentence or punishment could be reduced, and the petitions … range from pleas to reduce the death sentence to requests to reduce or make void money fines’.

There is an extensive historiography on the long tradition and importance of discretion in the judicial system, much of it relating to the eighteenth century. In the absence of an appeal court, petitions had an important role in legitimising the judicial system, demonstrating that ‘the harshness of English justice was tempered by mercy’. They increased to over 2000 annually by the late 1830s, rising to 25,000 a year by the late 1880s. Successful petitioners had roots and/or status in the community and, in the case of those petitioners sentenced, were able to demonstrate satisfactory behaviour after sentence, and call on others to witness it. Petitions were frequently expressed in deferential terms—a request for mercy. Some were signed by one or two people, others had multiple signatures, or marks. Many were from people of humble backgrounds similar to those they sought to help, citing ‘mitigating circumstances such as prisoners’ poverty, young/old age, sex, size of family, poor health (including mental health), their mother and/or father’s advanced age/ill health, and most often their own past good character’. Gatrell noted an increase in
successful appeals by mid-century which he attributed to a growing number of middling people, including lawyers, acting 'with growing confidence and familiarity with the process in which they were engaged'.

An example of a simple petition is that of James and Ellen Doolan of Malt Street, Leeds. In 1839 they, with local tradesmen, petitioned in support of their seventeen-year-old daughter Elizabeth, who had been convicted with three others of stealing three pairs of boots at Bradford fair, and sentenced to seven years transportation. Elizabeth had been honest and obedient, claimed her parents, and employed as a nursemaid, but had fallen into bad company. Her father had served as a soldier with the Fifth Dragoon Guards for nineteen years before being discharged with a fractured skull after being kicked by his horse, a mitigating factor as loss of work had undermined the household's financial stability and Elizabeth's income was needed. However, her gaol report contested the family's view of Elizabeth's reputation, noting she was dissolute and a prostitute, and had been convicted twice before. 'Nil' (that is, rejected) is scribbled across the petition, and she was subsequently transported on the convict ship *Surrey* to New South Wales. Prisoners themselves sometimes petitioned: for example, Joseph Wilkinson (46) from Halifax was convicted of cattle-stealing in March 1840 and sentenced to fifteen years' transportation. Added to his petition were the signatures of twelve character referees. Wilkinson claimed he could have proved his innocence had he had professional help in conducting his defence. However, his gaol report noted he was 'steady and sober but [an] indifferent character - has been suspected of stealing horses for sometime'.

The most serious offences were heard at assize courts, presided over by judges on circuit. York was in the Northern Circuit, one of six English circuits beyond London and Middlesex. In the mid-nineteenth century there were three sessions a year, in spring, summer and winter. These were social occasions, the assize judge processing from his official lodgings to court accompanied by an armed escort. A succession of widely reported trials lasted some days: 238 men and women were convicted of felonies at York assizes in 1847, 332 in 1848, 295 in 1849, 229 in 1850, and 200 in 1851, an average of 259 a year. Some convictions led to petitions for clemency, part of a judicial system 'whose very basis was the discretionary application or mitigation of penal pain'. The sentencing pattern, shown in table 1, suggests the death penalty was used sparingly, on average carried out only once a year, with many death sentences commuted, often to transportation for life. Indeed, over 100 were sentenced to transportation each year and this remained a frequently-used sentence. Nevertheless, it was effectively ended in 1857 (though not formally abolished until 1868). Imprisonment in Yorkshire itself is notable for the high number sent to Wakefield house of correction, where a larger prison was opened in 1847, and the concentration of population in west and south Yorkshire. Around 90 per cent of those convicted at York Assizes were male, though the proportion of females sentenced to Yorkshire prisons was greater than for females transported.

In 1851 the Home Office received petitions relating to 100 people convicted at Yorkshire courts, including York Assizes. These related to those convicted of a wide range of offences, including murder, rape, robbery with violence, larceny, theft of cattle and horses, riot, and breach of contract. Some offences are unusual, such as causing gunpowder to explode, or stealing a letter from the post office, and others are striking for their specificity, such as stealing hay, or setting fire to four stacks of barley. Table 2 shows petitions relating to Yorkshire courts that resulted in an altered sentence. Petitions relating to 21 per cent of individuals were, at least to some degree, successful.
Appeals on behalf of felons were sometimes initiated by prison–visiting magistrates. For example, Mary Rourke (30) had been sentenced with others in December 1850 to a year’s hard labour in Leeds house of correction for riot and assault on a policeman. After seven months the Leeds justice clerk wrote to the home secretary recommending her release due to ill-health: ‘she has one child with her in gaol and three others out of gaol in a most destitute and wretched condition’. He urged clemency, enclosing a supporting letter from the gaol surgeon. The appeal was successful and a free pardon was granted on medical grounds on 4 August 1851.7

Similarly, James Gittins (40) had been convicted of robbery in 1848, and sentenced to ten years’ transportation. Because of his poor health the sentence was served in Northallerton house of correction, where he worked as a nurse in the prison hospital. The governor subsequently wrote to the chairman of the visiting justices: ‘I believe if he could obtain his liberty he’d endeavour to get an honest living and thereby become a respectable member of society’. Again, the appeal was supported by the gaol surgeon, and the petty sessions chairman wrote to the home secretary recommending release for good conduct, and in recognition of the long period of imprisonment served. A free pardon was granted on 24 April 1851.8

Thomas Keefe (14) gained his freedom by a different route. He had been convicted in July 1849 of causing £300 damage by setting fire to four stacks of barley, property of John Robb, at Sowerby in the North Riding. He was sentenced to fifteen years’ transportation, but imprisoned in the juvenile prison at Parkhurst on the Isle of Wight. His father, Andrew Keefe, wrote in 1851 from Albany, New York State, stating he had left County Fermanagh, Ireland, in 1836 leaving behind fourteen-month old

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**Table 1  Gaol delivery summaries at York Assizes 1847-1851**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTENCE (including commuted sentences)</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
<th>% male</th>
<th>% female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>death</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for life</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 21 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 20 years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 18 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 15 years</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 14 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 12 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 10 years</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation for 7 years</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakefield prison</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northallerton House of Correction</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverley House of Correction</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leeds Borough House of Correction</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull House of Correction</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York City House of Correction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York Castle</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total numbers</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,153</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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...
Thomas. Andrew had enrolled in the British army the following year, and served during the 'Canadian troubles', later moving to New York. He could not trace his wife and child though he knew they had gone to Scotland. His wife had subsequently died and Thomas had thus been 'deprived of the fostering care of father and mother'. Andrew urged his son be allowed to emigrate and join him in New York for which he would pay cost of passage, and expenses, subsequently sending £2, and a passage order enabling Thomas to sail from Liverpool. In December 1851, after almost two and a half years behind bars, Thomas received a conditional pardon, subject to him quitting Britain.9

Table 2 Individuals convicted at Yorkshire courts: petitions received by the Home Office in 1851 where sentence was subsequently altered6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>convicted</th>
<th>sentence</th>
<th>crime</th>
<th>outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Dowse</td>
<td>10-12-50</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>assault</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Grey, John Hughes</td>
<td>10-02-51</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>stealing hay</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Gittins</td>
<td>09-12-48</td>
<td>TP 10 years</td>
<td>robbery</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Ann Hill</td>
<td>20-12-51</td>
<td>death</td>
<td>murder</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Hoyland</td>
<td>08-03-51</td>
<td>TP 10 years</td>
<td>cutting</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Keefe</td>
<td>11-07-49</td>
<td>TP 15 years</td>
<td>arson</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auguste Mauritz</td>
<td>12-07-50</td>
<td>TP 7 years</td>
<td>larceny</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Mullan</td>
<td>09-03-48</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>rape</td>
<td>asylum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Pilmore</td>
<td>03-01-49</td>
<td>TP 7 years</td>
<td>stealing shawl, petticoat, boots</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Rourke</td>
<td>10-12-50</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>riot</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Walker</td>
<td>07-03-50</td>
<td>TP 10 years</td>
<td>stealing boots</td>
<td>asylum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brown</td>
<td>03-03-49</td>
<td>TP 7 years</td>
<td>larceny</td>
<td>Parkhurst prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Barnett</td>
<td>09-09-51</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>hawking: no license</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fairthing</td>
<td>21-10-49</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>housebreaking</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. Fairburn</td>
<td>07-50</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>larceny</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliz. Graham</td>
<td>30-10-50</td>
<td>TP 7 years</td>
<td>larceny</td>
<td>asylum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary McLoughlan</td>
<td>10-50</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>assault</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Sheard</td>
<td>07-49</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>housebreaking</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Simpson</td>
<td>12-51</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>stealing rabbit</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Varley</td>
<td>10-11-51</td>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>breach of contract</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Wall</td>
<td>05-07-51</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>larceny</td>
<td>FP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
FP = free pardon: unconditional remission of the legal consequences of the offence or conviction.
CP = conditional pardon: introduced under the Criminal Justice Act, 1827, section 13.
TP = transportation
Pardons were only granted by the Crown, on advice from the Home Secretary.

A case study: Sarah Ann Hill

This case is selected to illustrate how petitions influenced the judicial process, and to reveal the life and circumstances of the convict. Most of what is known about the early life of Sarah Ann Hill emerges from petitions to Sir George Grey, Home Secretary, after sentence was imposed at York Assizes in December 1851. She was
born illegitimate, on ‘one of the public streets of Wakefield to Ann Birkin’ in (it was believed) 1827. Ann Birkin was on the road to Oulton, ‘the parish to which she belonged’, possibly in search of relief. When Sarah was almost one her mother secured a job as housekeeper to a parish clerk, and provided a small weekly maintenance allowance for Sarah to be left in the care of Ann Gill, mother of Joseph Gill, keeper of a disreputable beerhouse, the Blue Bell, 56 Kirkgate, Wakefield. Sarah was four when her mother married William Hill, a stone quarryman, who maintained Sarah until her mother’s death. William himself was killed at work soon afterwards.10

After the death of her mother and stepfather Sarah maintained herself winding bobbins for weavers and, later, as a domestic servant. Between jobs she lived at the Blue Bell, having no relatives with whom she could stay. From August 1850 to July 1851 she was in service to Mary Whitworth Auty (22), sister of Edwin (26), a wine and spirit merchant of 123 Mount Pleasant, Dewsbury, some four miles from Wakefield. This household of young people, including John Spraunce, a 22-year old servant, may have been a more genial home than the low life of the beerhouse with its potential for sexual exploitation. In autumn 1851 Sarah briefly returned to work for the Autys but was dismissed because of suspected pregnancy, returning to the Blue Bell, though she soon found domestic service with Mr Smith, a Wakefield wine and spirit merchant, until two weeks before her confinement when she returned yet again to the Blue Bell.11

When a railway worker opened an abandoned blue bonnet box at Wakefield Westgate station early on 20 October 1851 he was shocked to find a dead baby inside. An inquest at the Royal Oak heard statements from the police, railway workers, and a surgeon, Francis Horsfall, who had examined the baby, and a verdict of murder was found. A government reward of £25 was offered for information and evidence that led to a conviction for the crime. Police made several early arrests, but it was not until 2 November that they questioned and arrested Sarah at the Autys’ home in Dewsbury, where she had resumed employment. Five defendants appeared before Wakefield magistrates on 14 November, including Joseph Gill and his wife Ann, who kept the Blue Bell. Sarah had made statements to the Reverend Henry Jones, curate of Wakefield parish church, at the police station, and to the police themselves, alleging that Joseph Gill had killed the baby, whose father was William Scott, a commercial traveller. However, police and court regarded Sarah’s statements as inconsistent, and she alone was committed to York assizes for murder. Henry Jones was a reluctant witness at the subsequent trial, protesting at his role as ‘informer against the prisoner’.12

The trial jury was of course exclusively male and mainly from the gentry, with far higher status and better education than Sarah (25). Only two of the 115 defendants at the winter assizes were well-educated; Sarah was one of the 37 unable to read or write. On 20 December it took a little over half an hour to find her guilty of murder, and she was sentenced by Mr Baron Platt to be hanged on 10 January. The severity of the sentence failed to acknowledge the degree of understanding towards infanticide that had emerged in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though the last execution of a woman in England for the murder of her own infant had been two years earlier. Sarah was one of that category of young single women charged with infanticide, a common form of murder with ‘a high proportion [of] domestic servants charged with concealing their pregnancy, giving birth in secret and killing the infant almost immediately after delivery’. Members of the elite of both York and Wakefield petitioned for clemency—one petition was signed by York professional and trade interests including the city sheriff, the East Riding justice clerk, two Catholic priests,
and six traders (a boot and shoe maker, bacon-factor, tea-dealer, two glovers, and a bookseller and stationer). They argued, firstly, that in two recent cases of infanticide, mercy was exercised; secondly, that the case rested on circumstantial evidence, not entirely free from doubt; thirdly, that it was probably due to Sarah’s poverty that no witnesses were called in her defence; and, finally, if she had committed the offence ‘it was done amidst a fearful conflict of feeling, and an extremity of bodily suffering on her part [and this] divests it of … a deliberate act of malice’.13

Among the Wakefield petitions was one from a corn merchant, two surgeons, a newspaper editor, six ministers of religion, the West Riding county asylum chaplain, and James Taylor, headmaster of Wakefield Grammar School and evening lecturer at the parish church. Wakefield Watch Committee also sought for sentence to be commuted, James Whitham (the town clerk and prosecution attorney) supporting justices who had committed Sarah for trial. They cited Sarah’s former employers, the Autys, who spoke of her as an ‘honest and industrious’ domestic servant who had ‘conducted herself with propriety’. She had previously worked in a similar capacity for a Mr Batt of Horbury who also commended her. Sarah had been a useful member of society but at the Blue Bell (described by police as disreputable, and a resort of prostitutes) had been ‘surrounded by persons of bad character [and] may unfortunately been induced to commit a crime which she would otherwise have shrunk from and that if her life be spared she may still in some distant country and apart from wicked associates become a reformed character and a useful member of society’. Moreover, petitioners found it implausible that she could, ‘without assistance from someone who may have persuaded her to commit or participate in the crime’, have delivered the baby at two in the morning, murdered it, tied up the body, carried it 732 yards to the station, then walked six miles to Daw Green, near Dewsbury, where she was seen at nine in the morning. The final mitigating factor was Dr John Foster’s evidence that the baby may have died accidentally from a haemorrhage. However, the petitioners were disappointed to learn from Horatio Waddington, the Home Office permanent under-secretary, that their appeal had failed.14

C.H. Heaton, a Wakefield barrister who had sat in at the assize trial, wrote separately to Sir George Grey, the home secretary, arguing the case was not proved beyond doubt: ‘I have never before troubled the Home Secretary or interfered in any way with the course of the law, but I cannot in conscience remain silent … believing the prisoner ought to have been acquitted’. On receiving no reply Heaton wrote again, criticising the presiding judge. Meanwhile Charles Gilpin of the Anti Capital Punishment Society, based at 5 Bishopsgate Without in the City of London, added more predictable opposition to the sentence, asserting that ‘only one member of the Bench would assign this girl to the Gibbet’. By early January, with no response from Grey, Barnard Hague, the chairman of visiting magistrates at York Castle, wrote anxiously to York’s Liberal MP, Sir William Milner, at his London home, 75 Eaton Place. Grey had delayed a decision pending a report from the presiding judge which arrived on 5 January, offering no grounds for clemency. Following a visit from Wakefield Conservative MP George Sandars, pointing out that feeling in Wakefield was strongly in favour of commuting the sentence, Grey scribbled to Waddington that he found it ‘impossible … to act on such a suggestion. Facts in [the] petitions amount to nothing’.15

Subsequently, a high-level cross-party delegation comprising Milner, and Alderman George Leeman (lawyer, railway director and, later, lord mayor and MP for York) met Grey on 9 January, the day before execution, to urge him to exercise clemency. That evening Leeman telegraphed John Noble, York Castle governor, to report their
mission had failed, but the York press later reported that Milner’s wife had interceded and ‘got a neighbour - a person of high standing - to seek a further meeting with Grey’ which resulted in a week’s respite, and later reprieve. This decision was well received, the York Herald commenting that Sarah had been ‘convicted solely on circumstantial evidence ... when every day brings forth additional doubts in favour of her innocence’. Execution ‘would have been an act of gross cruelty and injustice, and a violation of every principle of religion and humanity’. However, according to the York Herald, some people were disappointed that, having travelled to York (and in some cases paid for lodgings) to witness the execution of a female—a rare event, the last being Ursula Lofthouse in 1835—they were denied that experience. And the Yorkshire Gazette scorned those ‘flying stationers’ who sold thousands of copies of Sarah’s ‘final words and confession’ on the streets of York on the morning of her supposed execution. Sarah Ann Hill was pardoned on condition she be transported for life.16

Thomas Sutton, York Castle chaplain, had also interceded on 9 January. He had viewed Sarah as guilty, but changed his mind: ‘After long period in fervent prayer I spoke to her with her brother and a female cousin. She was unaware of attempts being made for respite/pardon’. Sarah dictated a statement to Sutton, witnessed by matron Marsha Pashley, describing the circumstances of her child’s death: ‘I began to be ill about two o’clock in the morning - I called for Mrs Gill upstairs where I was sleeping - directly after she came upstairs the child was born - then Joseph came upstairs and I never saw anything of the child afterwards - I laid down across the bed for half an hour - I was during that time insensible - when Gill came back I asked where the child was and he said it was murdered - I remained in bed till half past five - I got up and got ready to go to Dewsbury - I did not take the box containing the child to the station - the female who took it I never saw before - I am guilty of knowing the child was murdered - I most solemnly declare I did not murder the child’. Sutton’s telegraphed appeal to the Home Office probably influenced Grey’s decision to approve a respite. While a strong believer in capital punishment Grey was also a deeply religious man, and the chaplain’s testimony (and the judgment he had reached about Sarah’s innocence) reinforced those many other appeals. At 6.30 on the evening of 9 January Grey’s secretary notified the chairman of York Castle visiting magistrates of the respite, and requested a detailed statement from the chaplain setting out the grounds for his opinion.17

The York Herald noted that a petition urging sentence be commuted was signed by more than a thousand York householders, and a memorial by 800 Wakefield householders was presented to Grey by Henry Jones and Alderman G.W. Harrison. Memorials (or petitions) were also adopted in other places. The large number of signatories to these appeals indicates that concern about the case extended well beyond local professionals, and middling members of society. Other appeals received by the Home Office included a memorial from the twelve jurors who had found her guilty at the assize trial. It was organised by George Seaman, the East Riding justice clerk, underlining how strongly he felt about the case. He later wrote to Grey, commenting that the reprieve had ‘given much satisfaction throughout the city’. On 13 January Sarah was moved to Millbank Prison, London, pending transportation. She left Woolwich on 17 March, one of 220 female convicts plus children, on the tall ship Sir Robert Seppings, arriving at Hobart, Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), on 7 July 1852. Logbooks suggest conditions were cramped and uncomfortable on convict ships, though there was bedding, adequate rations and a surgeon—Dr L.T. Cunningham—aboard. Three-quarters of the women consulted Cunningham, with one woman (and five children) dying on the voyage. Ian Donnachie’s analysis of ages,
occupations and experiences of 200 transported convict women from Britain to Australia between 1787 and 1852 suggests that the regime (at least by the end of this period) was reasonably humane. Sarah would have found many other women in their twenties—perhaps a third of those on board—and many with a similar background in domestic service. Boredom on the voyage was a problem. Elizabeth Fry had started the British Ladies Society for the Reformation of Female Prisoners to promote the welfare and self-worth of convict women, partly through activity. Crafts such as needlework (illustrated by the quilt made aboard The Rajah to Hobart in 1841) were encouraged, developing skills and pride, ‘proof that they have not neglected the Ladies kind admonitions of being industrious’.18

On arrival at Hobart Sarah was in good health, with ruddy complexion. She was a little over five feet, with black hair and hazel eyes, and a freckled heart on the upper lip of her large mouth. She went to the Brickfields, formerly a convict-hiring depot, now an overflow facility for arrivals. In little over a year she had married James Blowfield (38), once an army deserter, now a shoemaker, who had arrived on The Fairlie convict ship just five days before her. Sarah’s conduct was sufficiently good for her ticket-of-leave to be granted in 1858 (thus exempting her from public labour and allowing her to work within a prescribed area) and another conditional pardon was granted in 1860. She had seven children, four dying in infancy, and died herself from bronchitis in November 1867, aged 36, at her home, 162 Macquarie Street, Hobart.19

So, how do we assess the role of petitioning in the home secretary’s intervention in the case, and his decision to grant a conditional pardon? First, the number of petitions and memorials (at least ten, some with multiple signatures) is noteworthy, the cumulative appeals reflecting the breadth of support for a pardon. This increased pressure on Grey, with petitions prepared and lodged within three weeks of sentence. Second, the provenance of the petitions is significant in terms of geographical origin, from the convict’s borough (Wakefield) and assize city (York), and also the social class and status of petitioners. Many were from a judicial background, including those key Wakefield figures who committed her to trial; others were professional, religious and civic men of substance in their respective communities, including newspaper editors, and two MPs. Nonetheless, this substantial pressure did not convince the home secretary to intervene until very late in the judicial process. It may be assumed that Grey would not have commuted the death sentence but for the petitioning. This may be surprising, given that the presiding judge appeared out of step with prevailing attitudes towards sentencing for this particular crime but, ultimately, Grey may have judged the cost of alienating a swathe of Yorkshire political opinion was greater than that of allowing the law to take its course.

To what extent was there an organised campaign to save Sarah’s life? Many were aware of the case, with the magistrates’ hearing reported in the Wakefield and Leeds press, and the assize case reported at length in many Yorkshire papers, including those of York, Leeds and Wakefield. The Times also reported the trial at length, reflecting public interest and generating further attention nationally and locally. There were also opportunities for discussion at an informal level. For example, on 2 January the York MP Milner and Lord Lascelles, a member of the grand jury that convicted Sarah, were stewards at the York Charity Ball, in aid of the Friends of York County Hospital, at the Assembly Rooms in Blake Street. Petitions were submitted independently in the context of widespread public concern that either a miscarriage of justice had occurred or, if guilty, there were mitigating circumstances. While informal links between petitioners almost certainly existed, to identify an organised campaign requires evidence of collaboration. A number of petitions, such as those of
the Wakefield justices, did involve collective consideration of the case; and the East Riding justice clerk encouraged jurors to sign the appeal he had initiated, enabling them to display collective and individual magnanimity, and burnish their reputations. There was also joint action by Milner and Alderman Leeman, the city of York appealing to the Crown. While there is no evidence of direct contact between York and Wakefield petitioners, they would probably be aware of each other’s representations. National press coverage was sustained with The Times and The Observer reporting the reprieve, the latter commenting in a stinging leader: ‘Representations … made by the whole of the jury, the magistrates and municipal authorities of all parties [made it] quite impossible to allow the execution to take place. It is much to be wished … in these cases that anything calculated to throw a doubt upon them, or to afford mitigation of punishment, should be brought forward at the proper time, and not be allowed to transpire at the last moment only’.20

Opponents of the death penalty channelled local anger at the sentence imposed on Sarah Ann Hill. They galvanised their campaign by demonstrating how the law had lost touch with public opinion; for example, the York Herald reported a packed public meeting on 16 January 1852 in the Lecture Hall, Goodramgate, York, addressed by Alfred Hutchinson Dymond of London, who studded his speech with references to Hill’s case, along with the case of a woman some years earlier who had been convicted of murder at York, but was subsequently proved innocent and was now running a shop. The meeting unanimously agreed that steps be taken to prepare a petition to Parliament ‘praying for abolition of the death punishment’, a process the Herald promoted as its leader attested: ‘Religion, Morality and Expediency alike require the abolition of the vindictive system, and it is most earnestly to be desired that the wisdom and philanthropy of the legislature may speedily devise some other mode of punishment, more consistent with humanity, and more creditable to the enlightened age in which it is our high privilege to live’. Momentum was sustained and in 1856 the Society for Promoting the Abolition of Capital Punishment held a public meeting in London in support of a motion in the House of Commons by William Ewart MP to set up a select committee to inquire into capital punishment. Pressure from the Society was in part responsible for Sir George Grey’s subsequent creation of a Royal Commission on Capital Punishment (1864-1866) whose members included William Ewart, and Horatio Waddington of the Home Office. Several witnesses gave evidence to the Commission that juries were reluctant to convict women of killing their newborn child as long as the death sentence remained. This reluctance had been reinforced by local, county and national response to the Hill case.21

**Conclusions**

In the mid-nineteenth century a small but significant number of petitions were successful. For convicted felons this could make a huge difference to their future lives, but for some, such as Sarah Ann Hill, it was the difference between life and death itself. The language of petitions demonstrates how citizens (often the poor) related to the judicial system, and the arguments they deployed for more favourable and fairer treatment than courts had imposed. Relatives and friends tried to muster the best possible case, sometimes securing multiple signatures for petitions, yet the approach most likely to succeed was one that galvanised members of the upper classes, and middle-class professionals, including magistrates, who had the knowledge and the personal connections to promote and sustain a campaign and, if necessary, shame the authorities. However, given that Sarah Ann Hill came so close to execution, even elite support was no guarantee of success. Nevertheless, the nature
of her conviction, and the widespread protest it unleashed, gave momentum to the campaign for the abolition of capital punishment.

Whether successful or not, petitions are a rich source, exposing the lives of the poor and their influences. Moreover, they give insight into frequently unexplored relationships, such as how the law was contested, and in so doing offer a route into understanding ‘history from below’, inviting further local and regional study. The evidence in this article suggests that petitions might also be a useful source in exploring the nature and operation of local power structures.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Carol Butterill, Paul Carter, Ruth Paley, Edward Royle and Graham Saunders for valuable comments on a draft of this article; and to Richard Moody and students of Riccall WEA history class for their enthusiasm. Thanks to Fred Waller for Tasmanian sources, to Jim Butler and Gwendolen Whitaker of York Museums Trust; and to staff at City of York Archives and Local Studies; West Yorkshire Archives, Wakefield; Wakefield Local Studies; and The National Archives.

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10 Sarah Ann Hill petition bundle: TNA HO 18/323/3 [henceforth SAH].

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Tasmania archives: www.tas.gov.au/generic/convict-records-online: SAH convict number is 32864; CON 41/1/34 for conduct record; CON 15/1/7 for indent (pre-arrival information); and CON 19/1/10 for description. See Hobart Town Gazette 29 Oct 1853 for marriage details; death and funeral notice appear in Mercury [Hobart] 25 Nov 1867

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‘Clifford’s Tower and the new entrance to York Castle’, engraved by Thomas Allen and published in Nathaniel Whittock’s A New and Complete History of the County of York (1831)
‘No longer the 1948 show’: the problem for local history in the twenty-first century

WILLIAM EVANS

The discussion prompted by George and Yanina Sheeran in their article published in the November 2009 issue of The Local Historian raises many issues. I’d like to comment on three: the relationship of local history to the academy, to national history, and to post-modernism.

Local history and the academy

Local history interests us, and we do it and will continue to do it, whether or not the academy is interested in it or in us. Academic subjects go in and out of the curriculum, and approaches to them in and out of fashion. As Professor Clarke observed in his Revolution and rebellion (Cambridge UP, 1986 p.43) classical diplomatic history was once all the rage but, by the time he was writing, it was itself ‘a historical phenomenon’. What the academy chooses to concern itself with may be driven by extraneous and sometimes ephemeral considerations: ideological dogma (such as procrustean Marxism); current ethical concerns (thus, slavery and other forms of discrimination); financial incentives and sanctions (‘impact’); frames of reference or angles of critique (postmodernism); and so on. Local history people will continue to do local history, and to high professional standards, whether or not the academy professes interest or disdain, and whether or not the academy purports to validate what local historians do. Indeed, some local history might be produced in formats (such as graphic books, plays or exhibitions) which the academy may not be willing to validate; and if the academy no longer contains academics qualified to act as peers to review the work of those who do local history, it disqualifies itself from exercising that function with respect to our practice. If we are willing to submit some work to the academy for validation, we are free to do so, but we must not allow the academy to dictate what we study, how we go about it, or how we publish the results.

Local history and national history

Big Historians concern themselves with The Big Picture, and deal in abstractions and generalisations. But scratch the sweeping titles of their books and underneath you will often find local history. Namier’s The structure of politics at the accession of George III (Macmillan, 1929) purports to be about England as a whole, but in fact is based on Shropshire, five Cornwall boroughs, Harwich and Oxford. The method is to enunciate a structure, theory, narrative or other generalisation, and to support it with local sources as examples. No doubt publishers want the title to attract as wide a readership as possible, so Aunt Ada’s reminiscences about her acre and a cow get labelled The Crisis in British Agriculture 1900-1955. It ought to be an academic offence, as well as a false trade description, to over-stretch the title of a historical work.
That this sort of thing happens is due to the top-down method many professional historians use. Apart from sociology, history is the only evidence-based area of study that tolerates it. Other practices adopt an approach more akin to scientific method: first observe and record phenomena; then observe and record a lot more; when you have a decent mass of data, probe and analyse it to elicit principles, trends, themes, ideas or theories; if appropriate, formulate a hypothesis; then invite other people to test it by eliciting and examining more data; and if someone proves you wrong, you abandon or modify your hypothesis. In this way, knowledge is built up empirically, provisionally, and from below, not dreamed up and handed down from above. There is nothing revolutionary about this: a few years back the Open University and CUP latched on to the interest in family history and issued two texts on method: From family tree to family history and From family history to community history, and showed how small-scale work can be aggregated to produce a larger one. If that is how history were to be practised at large, standards of professional accuracy and precision would improve. After showing proficiency in local history, would-be pundits might be allowed to discard their L-plates, and even go on television.

Most local historians have come across local evidence that qualifies, contradicts, undermines or exposes as piffle some generalisation by a ‘professional’ national historian. The effects can be cumulative. Think how local studies undermined that stock-in-trade of the lazy generaliser, ‘The Industrial Revolution’. If the generalising had been grounded on widespread and detailed local work, a more nuanced concept would have emerged, and the slack broad-brush catchphrase would not have dominated history teaching so long or have misled so many people. If we want a justification for local history in the twenty-first century, it is that detailed local studies are the essential foundation without which reliable histories of larger areas, including nations, cannot honestly be written.

Local history and postmodernism

Like ‘classicism’ and ‘romanticism’, ‘postmodernism’ is an umbrella term. It covers a compendium of approaches, assumptions and techniques, not all of them intercoherent. Some are useful in local history: scepticism about sources; close attention to language and texts; a relativist approach to values and to concepts like objectivity and truth; a concern with power and its manifestations. But local history people have long known about and applied those practices: we interrogate and discount sources; we recognise the spin imparted by culture and its assumptions; and we are suspicious of power, if only because we know that most of the records we study were produced by or for people who possessed and used it. But we can do all that without the arcane vocabulary of postmodernism and its mind-numbing obscurantism. We had a word for people we disagree with long before postmodernists introduced us to the concept of jouissance.

Postmodernism can impinge on local history only so far. The same applies to other evidence-based disciplines. How would you react if your doctor or chemist were to dismiss or disparage the whole edifice of science and medicine? Why is there no post-modern accountancy? Why are critical studies relevant to law but not to trigonometry? Why is there post-modern architecture but not post-modern engineering? The answer is that postmodernism is not apt to practices based on empirical enquiry. It operates at a level of abstraction above, and over a geographical area wider than, the space occupied by local history, which by definition is concerned primarily with the empirical ascertainment of small-scale facts, events and other details in a limited geographical area, their analysis and interpretation, and
conclusions to be drawn from them. To apply much of postmodernism to local history would be to commit what philosophers call a category error: like reproaching a cabbage for lack of commitment.

Just as there is no call for a gendered history of turnpikes, it is difficult to see how a post-modern history of, say, a city would be distinguished from those already published: it might vary in approach or in selection of themes or in links with the national or international scene, and its language might vary from the irritating to the impenetrable, but otherwise it would be bound to cover the same ground (chronology, topography, events, people, activities, organisations, change, explanation), otherwise it would not be a local history. You could take a post-modern approach to the English civil war as a whole, but the smaller the area you confine the study of the civil war to, the more difficult it becomes to apply post-modern techniques to what may be only a few traces of a few events in a context that may not be satisfactorily reconstructible. If you come across a post-modern archaeologist, or a lacanian take on a town’s grain imports, do let us know.

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A suggestion not taken up: the debate over the word ‘amateur’ begins, in *The Amateur Historian* vol.1 no.2 (October-November 1952)
To pay or not to pay?

JIM O’NEIL with HEATHER BUTLER

This collaborative article by two Wirral-based tutors considers the future of ‘independent’ local history classes in adult education. In late 2004 Robert Howard wrote that ‘The loss of LSC funding may well be the best thing that has happened to local history in years, but only if local historians grasp the opportunity to take local history learning along new and exciting pathways to a brighter and more enriching future for participants from all sections of our wonderfully diverse society’.¹ At the time this struck me as rather over-optimistic and I could not see the cuts as good news, which led me to write further on the subject in 2005.² Some six years on, with further cuts in almost everything on the horizon from our new government, perhaps Robert’s view had a greater element of prescience than I realised. However, it could also recreate problems and divisions which had become historical issues themselves. As a tutor it is necessary to be aware of trends in the content and methods used in class (for example one pleasing trend I have noticed is that the sub-disciplines of local history and family history have been converging, at least at grassroots level), but the aim of this article is to consider from a personal perspective some possible changes in ‘leisure’ (non-accredited, non-employment-based) course provision.

In Wirral course providers currently include the WEA, Wirral Lifelong Learning Service (WLLS: the local authority provider), Birkenhead Sixth Form College, and the U3A. Another, the main subject of this short piece, is Wirral 3Ls (which does not stand ‘Lifelong Learning’ as you might expect but, much more adventurously, Leisure, Laughter & Learning for the over-50s). Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC) no longer offers local history, and many of its other leisure subjects have been scrapped or priced out of reach of most people. No doubt similar examples can be found in other areas. Government efforts over the last decade to increase employment opportunities for the 16-24 age group can only be applauded but they should be in addition to funding other courses and age groups, rather than replacing them. The WEA has always offered subsidised fees for learners, because it has access to central government funding.³ Subsidies available for people on benefits mean that both WLLS and WEA are very inclusive providers, which is good up to a point—but when courses are offered free of charge there seems an unconscious perception that ‘free’ = ‘worthless’. Attendance often becomes sporadic—one evening I had one learner out of twelve, because the others felt they could stay at home and watch football. Hmmm! This is despite the great emphasis placed, particularly by these providers, on the pursuit of learning through the completion of individual learning plans with learning goals, aims and objectives, all underpinned by learner achievement and satisfaction. Clearly these do not always accord with what the learners envisage as being necessary or worthwhile on a ‘leisure’ course.

Robert Howard suggested that we should see budget cuts as an opportunity to work towards independence. Easier said than done? Definitely, but if adult leisure courses are to survive something has to change, and we, the tutors and learners—and not government bean-counters—should be the ones driving that change. How do we do it? One possible pathway is to keep to the time-honoured infrastructure of provider-
based learning, which has a great deal to commend it, but without any reliance on
government or local authority funding. One excellent local example of this is Wirral
3Ls. This not-for-profit charity has a two-pronged approach—daytime leisure
courses and social activities all through the week and the year, mainly aimed at the
over-50s but with no age limits imposed.

They have been successful in applying for some capital and revenue grants in the
past but this is a very small proportion of the income; learners pay £12 per year
membership, which covers some of the overheads and three or four issues per year of
coloured newsletter, ‘Kaleidoscope’. They also pay £48 for each term of 20 hours
tuition. On an annual basis this works out at £2.60 per hour, which is compares very
favourably with other providers. Almost by definition this system of self-funding is
elitist: there are no concessions and certainly no free courses.

About five years ago, Wirral 3Ls carried out a complete internal assessment to
determine the impact of meeting LSC guidelines and thus becoming eligible for
funding, but the hoops to be jumped through and the restrictions imposed implied a
vast change in ethos, and this was rejected completely. Another possible constraint is
geography; even in an area as compact as Wirral it is impossible to reach all parts by
public transport and so, mainly for this reason, W3Ls considered going beyond their
current venues—one base and two outreach venues on the east side of Wirral—to
include another large outreach venue in West Wirral. Several of us were tasked with
visiting and reporting back on possible suitable locations, but in the end the cost and
logistics made this impractical.

It is impossible, of course, to know how many possible learners are deterred by the
various barriers, but the W3Ls fee structure appears not to be a limitation. Enrolments have grown year on year for 15 years and this coming year is set to be
another record-breaker. In terms of local history, I took over a tiny class, just eight
learners, some eleven years ago, and this year the offer is eight classes, with
minimum of twelve learners each, shared among five tutors, covering local, national,
social and even world history. Recession? What recession?

Another similar organisation is the University of the Third Age (U3A), the national
organisation for people no longer in full time employment. It provides educational,
creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment, just as the Wirral 3Ls in
my local area. However, the U3A neither employs tutors per se nor offers classroom-
based coherent courses. Local U3As are learning cooperatives which draw upon the
knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide
interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership. The teachers learn
and the learners teach. The U3A approach to learning is 'learning for pleasure'.

A central Third Age Trust underpins the work of local U3As by providing educational and administrative support to their management committees and to individual
members, and it assists in the development of new U3As across the UK. The trust is
funded mainly by annual membership fees, with the occasional grant for specific
projects. Their advertised meetings during September and October 2010, with four
groups in different geographical areas of Wirral, include topics as diverse as 'Bees for
Development' and 'Royal Yacht Britannia', rather than coherent courses; they do
offer courses on-line but that is outside the scope of this article. It appears that the
U3A has been extremely successful in what it does, as a self-help social club run by its
members. Individual members arrange talks of local interest and arrange historical
visits but what about the educational success?
Another possibility is to move even further along the path to independence and set up a ‘house group’. The loss of local history at WMC became a gain for other providers; some students joined W3Ls classes, and probably also those run by other providers, and others decided to take matters into their own hands and create an independent ‘Wirral Local History Group’ run by my colleague Heather Butler.\(^6\) Heather’s classes have now run fairly successfully for three years, but the group has a changed dynamic. At the outset it was difficult to continue in the steps of an established local history tutor who had taught in a particular style for a considerable number of years. Heather’s mission as a local history tutor of this group has been to facilitate learning—present the facts and historical arguments, introduce local history resources locally and worldwide, and encourage personal and independent research. Indeed, she has been handed some remarkable pieces of work prepared by her learners. But what about the learners within this ‘house group’ setting who come along for the tea and biscuits? All our learners and students have different learning goals, objectives and learning styles and deserve the opportunity to seek out a different learning experience.

While the ‘home group’ setting offers the opportunity to continue some form of learning where none otherwise exists, it is difficult to find suitable venues for a reasonable cost—and how much do you charge and how do you organise the collection of the money? Learner commitment can be varied—we are all aware of problems encountered with summer courses—but a tutor alone cannot be expected to organise, advertise, receive payment and conduct a course. There needs to be a ‘middle-man’—an organiser, an employer, or a learning manager, in order to maintain a professional presence and outstanding reputation. This ‘home group’ setting may perhaps be a possibility, but Heather believes it can only work alongside other educational providers. Learners deserve the opportunity to choose what course and at what level they wish to study.

Tutors in this setting need to retain authority and standing as a professional. Heather writes that ‘Personally, there is a sense of feeling, despite your extensive course programme, commitment to personal learning and dedication, that you should not be asking people for money!’ This feeling does appear to be almost endemic in the voluntary sector—I openly admit to it myself—but a tutor should be paid a fair wage for a day’s work.

The danger of independence is of course that it could create a dichotomy between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’, in terms of who can afford to pay, attend and cover any additional costs of learning. Wirral has some of the most affluent and also the least affluent areas in the country and for thousands of people fees are a barrier. Some can afford to join a class or have the leisure time to do so, but only a fortunate minority will have both. Even for those providers who do offer concessions, such as WEA and WLLS, the structure of such concessions can be unclear, promoting uncertainty amongst tutors and learners alike. How we avoid such an unattractive situation, reminiscent of the great class divides of the Victorian era, is hard to see.

Perhaps there is room for both types of provision, ideally with some on-going semi-formal liaison between tutors. This is something that seems to have fallen by the wayside over the years. I attended a Saturday event in Manchester about two years ago and was paid a professional rate for teaching one session for other tutors, subconsciously using the U3A model. This was facilitated by the WEA and was an excellent day in every way, but in today’s economic climate I can’t envisage this being repeated. Wirral 3Ls have long since stopped tutor meetings as, rightly or wrongly, tutors wanted paying to attend and there simply was not the money available. On a
more informal unpaid basis I have attempted to meet with other tutors in convenient public houses in evenings, but this concept never really took off.

So where does that leave possible learners seeking local history classes at a convenient location and at an affordable price? Clearly the scene is changing and inevitably some people will lose and some will gain, but government perceptions need to change. We do not live in the Victorian era. Give people a chance to learn and support them when needed—yes, let’s say it—financially. Otherwise in the end it will be down to the learners to decide personally just how much continuing education is worth to them—or even if they can afford it at all.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Local History Magazine no.99 (Nov/Dec 2004): LSC = Learning and Skills Council
2 Local History Magazine no.101 (March/Apr 2005)
3 Personal experience as tutor for WEA over 18 years
4 Personal experience as tutor and tutor-representative for eleven continuous years
5 U3A website, September 2010, which has only been partly-updated since 2007
6 Wirral Champion, September 2010

ON-LINE LISTING

In addition to the many reviews which appear in every issue of The Local Historian, other books and publications are reviewed on-line on the BALH website. Please go to http://www.balh.co.uk/on-line-reviews.php to access these. The list below gives the titles and other details of the fifteen publications for which on-line reviews have been added in the last quarter.


ARTISTS ALONG THE OUSE 1880-1930 by Bridget Flanagan (published by the author, 68 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Huntingdon PE28 9AW 2010 vi + 106pp ISBN 0 9540824 3 5) [reviewed by Kay Parrott]


ROAD TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT IN GEORGIAN GLOUCESTERSHIRE. Illustrated by extracts from the Gloucester Journal newspaper 1722-1830 by Nicholas Herbert (Carreg Ltd 2009 292pp) [reviewed by Joan Tucker]


THE BRAUGHING OF VICTOR TOTT The visual and written memories of a country gentleman and A BRAUGHING COUNTRYMAN’S DIARY edited by Michael Tott (concept by Mike and Linda Tott Inc. Quebec, Canada 2010 163pp and 72pp no ISBN) sold as a set for £15, details of how to order from www.braughing.org.uk [reviewed by Peter Bysouth]

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRANK THORNTON BIRKINSHAW by Barbara Rudoe (Rudoe Press 2010 256pp ISBN 978 0 9564431 1 3) available from 62 Court House Road, London N12 7PJ [reviewed by Evelyn Lord]

Editions of historical documents and questions of accessibility

MICHAEL FARADAY

Recent reviews of editions of historical documents, including some of my own, have raised matters relating to ‘accessibility’ which warrant comment. The first is how best to deal with Latin text, given that knowledge of Latin is limited nowadays even among educated people. I have been told, authoritatively, that even history PhD students rarely know any Latin. Since some knowledge of Latin is necessary for learning palaeography—itself essential for reading any pre-1600 document—this implies a lack of professional apparatus akin to a doctor unable to take a blood-pressure. Reviewers, however, suggest that Latin texts should be translated into English and, because of the cost of printing, the Latin text should be omitted!

Since the reader of an edited document should not have to take the editor’s skills on trust—and since the reader himself may come to conclusions different from those of the editor—an editor’s primary duty is to ensure that he shows what is in the original document. Therefore, the Latin must be shown. His secondary duty is to explain it, which in the case of Latin text requires a translation or sufficient summary. For my own editions (such as *Bristol and Gloucestershire Lay Subsidy of 1523-1527* recently reviewed in this journal) I left the Latin text in full, extending (but identifying) all abbreviations and, apart from Christian names and Roman numerals, putting translations or extensive summaries in footnotes. This gives the reader all he needs to have—both the original and any editorial intervention—and saves space. There is no real excuse for a professional historian, even a would-be one, who specialises in periods before 1600, not knowing some medieval Latin, but for the enthusiastic non-specialist researcher both Latin and English versions would be helpful.

Is there anyone who cannot read the clock-face on Big Ben? Nevertheless, some people think that medieval currency in Roman numerals should not only be rendered in modern numerals but also in decimal pounds and pence rather than as ‘£sd’. Perhaps in a few years’ time they will want them converted into euros too? Such demands exhibit a profoundly unhistorical attitude to the materials being presented in an edition. Unconverted Roman numerals are necessary because some are incomplete and can be shown truthfully only as they appear, and not in some guessed-at modern numeric. If a number has been torn through and only ‘xv’ can be read, should the editor present this as ‘15’, when it could represent anything from 15 to 19? I have to confess that, against my better judgment, I once acceded to demands that I follow ‘house-style’ in adopting modern numerals for £sd. I was wrong.

The other question often raised is whether, in a ‘digital age’, printed editions of historical documents are redundant. Should not the documents be supplied only in facsimile and wholly unmediated by editorial intervention? While this has a superficial attraction, particularly for the scholar whose skills and knowledge are adequate to the task, and would certainly be very useful in addition to an edited text, it would on its own rarely meet the needs of the average reader.
Editions of historical documents are usually not mere transcriptions of clear, legible and ordered texts. All of my own published editions of Henrician and other taxes have required me, first, to find the relevant documents, often scattered, often in different classes, or even in different archives. The next step is to identify documents, dating them, ascribing them to particular places, even recognising what tax they relate to or discovering why each document was created in the first place. This is a necessary task, whatever the subject or nature of the documents being edited. Then all the fragments must be examined, to see of what other incomplete documents they properly form part. Then the correct order in which the folios or membranes of multi-part documents should appear must be established (for even documents which are not archived as separate fragments have sometimes been conserved in the wrong order). Regrettably, catalogues of archives, even at TNA, are not always error-free. When the transcription is complete, the editor has then to check what requires elucidation in footnotes. Since any printed edition, however close to a facsimile the editor wishes it to be, is in fact artificial, it has to be formatted in order to strike a balance between replicating the lay-out of the original and setting it out so that the reader may the better understand it. Captions, typefaces, indentations, and so on, all have to be considered. For most purposes the digital provision of an 'unmediated' text would be insufficient.

There is also a frequent suggestion that scholarly work itself should be confined to digital media. The pace of technical change in such media is such that vast efforts in digitising scholarship and records might have to be repeated every decade or so to convert them again to the latest vehicle. Each conversion exercise would be bigger and more expensive than the last; by reference to the dominant academic or political fad of the time libraries would decide not to convert a proportion of their holdings. Just such a fad led to the abandonment of Latin in our schools and universities. It would be a recipe for censorship of our History on a scale reminiscent of Orwell’s ‘1984’.

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A survey of articles in periodicals
2009-2010

EVELYN LORD

The aim of the annual survey of periodicals is to draw attention to articles of interest to local historians, published in journals that are not submitted for listing in The Local Historian. Some of these are national in scope, such as History, while others are specialist publications—the Agricultural History Review for example—and this year one regional journal, Northern History, is included. The survey is divided chronologically, with a short general section at the end. Time and space do not permit an examination of all journals likely to have articles of interest to local historians, and some which offered such papers in the past had no relevant articles in 2009-2010. The trend seems to be towards papers with an international or political bias; a sign of the times perhaps. If the readers of this article have suggestions for journal titles that can be explored for next year’s round up, I would be grateful to have them.

Medieval period

Ever since W.G. Hoskins drew attention to the use of lay subsidies as demographic and economic evidence, local historians have used these sources with varying results, which in turn has produced a voluminous historiography on the subject. Two of the articles on medieval England are concerned with towns, and one (by S. Rigby) uses lay subsidies for a discussion on the size of the urban population of small towns. The article includes a table with the numbers of taxpayers for 100 provincial towns between 1377 and 1524. The second article, by John S. Lee, takes a functional approach. He uses John Leland’s descriptions of small towns as evidence for their economic functions. Although he does not define ‘small’ he does classify types of markets, including those in decline. M. Bailey and M. Gardner both look at the division of land in medieval eastern England. Bailey reconstructs changes in field systems in medieval Suffolk, and Gardner argues that the parallel fields seen on the marshland between the Lincolnshire Fens and the Humber estuary, which appear on nineteenth-century maps, had their origin in the division of wetlands in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. P. Slavin uses 2700 manorial demesne accounts from Cambridgeshire, Essex, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and the Soke of Peterborough to look at goose-rearing and management from c1250-c1400. He discusses the role of geese in the medieval economy, and points out that they were more expensive to rear than other poultry, and therefore a higher return was expected.

The two final papers in the medieval section are on the gentry and religion. P. Latimer examines the assimilation into elite society of three Anglo-Scandinavian families living on the Furness peninsula, and shows how they became assimilated into the local aristocracy. V. Spence’s article on ‘late medieval piety to religious conformity’ is a case-study of the religious life of Kirby Malhamdale, an upland parish in the Yorkshire Dales.
Early modern

Like the Anglo-Scandinavians of Latimer’s paper, Sir Philip Musgrove needed to be reassimilated into polite society at the Restoration. C.S. Colman’s article covers the career of this Westmorland Royalist in the post-Restoration era. Sir Philip had been caught up in the politics of the seventeenth century. Others resorted to much more direct action. Kett’s Rebellion of 1549, that peculiarly Norfolk event, is given another airing by J. Whittle, who uses manor court records to identify at least 6000 people involved in the rebellion, showing that they were often substantial landholders. The rioters could be charged with felony, and although in the early modern period being found guilty could mean the death sentence, one aim of the courts was to make money for the Crown so that the sentences were often commuted to fines. K.J. Kesselring explores this aspect of felony in a series of local case studies from across the country. Star Chamber records are another source of evidence for public protest. They are used by B.A. McDonagh to find cases concerning the Yorkshire Wolds in the sixteenth century. Some 28 suits were discovered, all concerned with property rights. Litigation over property often resulted in maps of the contested area being drawn. W.D. Shannon describes an adversarial map, drawn in 1531 as evidence in a dispute over land in Lytham, Lancashire.

Famine and the standard of living in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are examined by R. Hoyle, J. Healey and W. Baer respectively. Hoyle argues that historians should pay more attention to the agrarian roots of famines in early modern England, and uses a case-study of East Lancashire 1622-1624 to develop his argument. He locates the origin of the famine in poor harvests and high prices (no surprise there!) and uses burial records, oat tithes and wheat and barley prices as evidence. Some comparative material would have enhanced this article, as this episode of hardship was not confined to Lancashire, and a definition of what constitutes a famine would have been useful. Also concentrating on Lancashire is J. Healey’s article on the development of poor relief in that county from c1598-1689. This starts from the false assumption that there have been few local studies on the operation of the Tudor Poor Law (read the literature, especially in The Amateur Historian and The Local Historian). The article concentrates on the Shuttleworth family, who were JPs during this period, and were charged with administering the Poor Law. It includes a list of the poor taken in various Lancashire hundreds. Harvest and grain prices were crucial to the standard of living. W. Baer looks at the standard of living in Stuart London using the 1638 Settlement of Tithes and rents, to arrive at speculative household budgets. The last paper in this section is also on London. Y.T. Tjondrowodje examines the growth of private baptisms in seventeenth century London, and why these became both popular and necessary.

The eighteenth century

The eighteenth century was a time of major change in industry, farming, communications and transport, and witnessed the beginning of a more humanitarian society and growing concern for the welfare of others. One strand of this, which came to fruition in the nineteenth century, was the abolition of slavery. An article in Slavery and Abolition by G. Plank describes the activities and journal of one of the first anti-slavery authors, John Woolman, a Quaker from New Jersey who, in an attempt to understand what it was like to be a slave, dressed in slave rags, and went barefoot round the country, staying in slave hovels. In 1772 he arrived in England. He spoke in London at the annual meeting of the Society of Friends, and then went barefoot
on his travels, ending up in Yorkshire, where he contracted smallpox. A significant part of the economy of Bristol was based on slavery. M. Dresser draws attention to this in ‘Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol’, which dwells particularly on the life of Edward Colston (1636-1721), merchant, philanthropist and slave owner. Another West Country man was George Boswell of Puddledown, an innovative farmer whose life and works are described by J. Bettey.

One change in the eighteenth century was a disenchantment with orthodox religion and the growth of dissent. The philosophy of dissent was propagated through Dissenting Academies, the alternative to the grammar or public school for the sons of dissenters. D.A. Reid examines the educational philanthropy taught as rhetoric in rational dissenting academies in Warrington, Manchester, Hackney and Exeter. Another element of eighteenth-century change was in transport and the development of turnpike trusts. D. Bogart examines the relationship of turnpike trusts and property income. Although this is written from a national viewpoint, it includes a case-study on Bedfordshire, based on W. Emmison’s work. A statistical warning can be attached to this article, but its conclusions on the contributions which turnpike trusts made to economic growth in England set up a model that can be tested on local evidence. Enclosure and turnpikes were part of this economic scene. B.A. McDonagh concentrates on the enclosing activities of four elite women in Northamptonshire. Enclosure altered the landscape, and in the eighteenth century the landscape was also altered to suit the needs of sportsmen. Two articles by J. Bevan and E.L. Jones are on the increasingly popular topic of foxhunting and blood sports. Bevan focuses on the East Midlands (prime hunting country) and Suffolk to explore the relationship of foxhunting and the landscape. She claims to challenge the work done by W.G. Hoskins on this, but fails to convince. The enclosed landscape and the hunts are not placed within a wider regional context—for example she does not note that part of the Soar Valley, one of her case study areas, was already heavily industrialised in the eighteenth century, as at Sileby (wrongly spelt in the article) and Mountsorrel. Jones assesses the effect of shooting on game preservation on the landscape, farming and the environment, with particular attention paid to the effects of game preservation on wild life.

The agricultural revolution was not confined to England, but was also of major importance in Scotland, as shown by M. Johnstone’s article on farm rents and improvements on six estates in East Lothian and Lanarkshire between 1630 and 1830. The penultimate article in this section carries on a theme which appeared in the last reviews round-up: livestock rustling in Wales. N. Woodward has moved on from sheep-stealing to study horse-stealing in Wales between 1730 and 1850. The article shows that this was a lucrative occupation, as without any form of identification, horses should be sold on quickly and were in great demand. The final article, by R.G. David, is on the whaling fleets of Whitehaven in Cumberland 1760-1791, redressing the lack of local studies on the smaller whaling ports of the eighteenth century.

The nineteenth century

Inevitably there are more articles on the nineteenth century than other periods, and equally inevitably many of these are on the operation of the Old and New Poor Laws. It is true that both left a wealth of information behind them, which entices historians, but many of the articles state the obvious and say nothing new. Work on the Poor Laws which challenges the orthodoxy, and suggests new avenues of research and
models to test, would be welcome. T. Nutt’s article is on illegitimacy and paternal financial responsibility, a hot topic today. It considers paternal responsibility through the operation of the bastardy clauses in the Old Poor Law, and examines how these changed after 1834, with special reference to the rate of recovery of expenses from erring fathers. A. Levene examines parish apprenticeships under the Old Poor Law in London, looking at patterns and motivations of the overseers. The article identifies 3000 children, tabling their ages and the occupations they went into. A. Negrine also looks at children, but has chosen a relatively under-explored topic, the treatment of sick children in the workhouse. This is a case-study of Leicester Workhouse, and shows that eventually the Leicester guardians moved sick children out to the Countesthorpe Cottage Homes, and did the best they could. Pauper letters addressed to the overseers of the poor have proved fruitful avenues of research. P.D. Jones uses pauper letters from the south of England to extract requests for clothing and the responses of the overseers. Individual paupers appear in S.A. Shave’s article on the lifecycles of eight individuals from Motcombe in Dorset, showing how they responded to poverty. Death came at the end of all. A. Hinde and M. Edgar look at the mortality of stone workers on the Isle on Purbeck in the nineteenth century, and conclude that their mortality rate was less than that of coal and mineral miners.

Keeping the poor out of mischief was one of the concerns of the authorities. Allotments were seen as one way of defusing disorder and keeping inhabitants out of the alehouse. It is no surprise that factory masters were willing to give up land to provide allotments for their workers. C. Leivers examines this in the context of five locations in Derbyshire—the textile areas of Cromford, Belper and Darley Abbey, and the coal and iron communities of Staveley and Clay Cross. The provision of reading rooms was seen as another way of persuading the community into the straight and narrow path to righteousness. C. King looks at the rise and decline of reading rooms in Norfolk, showing that these were bestowed upon the working class by the elite. Illustrations in this article show that although the reading room might have gone the buildings often remain in use.

Domestic service is another popular nineteenth century topic. S. Pooley discusses the relationship of class and gender in the context of domestic service in Lancaster, 1880-1914, while R. Gant uses census enumeration books to examine domestic service in the small market town of Crickhowell, 1851-1901. Domestic servants were an essential part of the wider local community. E. Royle looks at this community through the vicarage window as described in the nineteenth-century visitation returns for the diocese of York. A different type of local community, which developed rapidly in the nineteenth century, was the suburb. A. Skinner explores the people who helped to develop East Oxford, many of whom were from religious orders connected to the Oxford Movement. Quaker communities and kinship are described by P. Richardson, who uses the West Country Fox family as evidence to demonstrate the importance of kinship and network ties, which spread as far as North America. S. King looks at ‘love, religion and the making of marriage in early nineteenth century Lancashire’, using an autobiography and a series of love letters as evidence.

Dissenting religious communities appear in J. Few’s article on the Bible Christians in nineteenth-century North Devon, and a complementary article is by P. Locksley on ‘Millenarians in the Pennines, 1800-1830’, which includes a discussion on sects such as John Wroe’s virgins of Ashton-under-Lyne, and less well-known groups. Undoubtedly, John Shaw, a hardware factor from Wolverhampton, would have come across these as he travelled across the north of England selling his wares. His travels and journals are described in an article by A. Popp.
The twentieth century

There are four articles on the twentieth century, dealing with industrial pollution, social housing, leisure, and war time agriculture. B. Doyle’s very topical article on managing industrial pollution in Middlesbrough 1880-1940 identifies the sources of pollution, its impact on the local environment in terms of the quality of life, and public responses to this. M. Hollow’s article is on the Park Hill Estate in Sheffield, built between 1957 and 1961. This estate overlooks the city and was designed to provide an integrated environment of good quality dwellings and open spaces. In reality the result was the usual problems associated with large housing schemes. ‘The Battle of Butlins’ by J.P. Gruffuyd shows that in 1939 Billy Butlin agreed to a secret deal with the Admiralty to build a training camp near Pwlheili in North Wales, which would be transferred back to him for use as a holiday camp at the end of the war. Despite local opposition to it being turned into a holiday camp, Butlin won the day. The National Farm Survey has proved useful to local historians. D. Harvey and M. Riley take this one step further and suggest that the aim was to create a British National Farm and a national policy on agriculture. Oral history from Devon supplements the documentary and map evidence.

General

There are three articles that have no specific period but are of interest to local historians. The first of these by P. Razzell, C. Spence and M. Wollard harks back to the heady days of The Population History of England 1841-1871 and The Open University course DA301. It is an evaluation of the Bedfordshire burial registration 1538-1851, and concludes that variations in burial registration are mostly random events. Much more groundbreaking is an important article by K.D.M. Snell on the value to local and social historians of parish magazines. These are often rejected as evidence, although the magazines convey ideas about the parish community and how it operated not available elsewhere. Finally, there is an account of a travelling exhibition mounted by the Leicestershire Record Office: ‘Bringing It Home’ illustrated the story of slavery and its abolition as told through local records. This article is part of a number on the local legacies of slavery in Britain.

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Review article: five books about life during the Second World War

A SOLDIER IN BEDFORDSHIRE 1941-42 edited Patricia and Robert Malcolmson (Bedfordshire Record Society/Boydell vol.88 2009 xviii+194pp ISBN 978 0 85155 074 9) £35


In August 1939, weeks before the outbreak of the Second World War, Mass Observation, fruit of the new spirit of social enquiry in the 1930s, invited volunteers to compile diaries recording their daily lives during the coming crisis. Nearly 500 diaries resulted, kept now in the MO archive in the University of Sussex. Many are brief, their compilers having found a daily stint of words more demanding than they had imagined, but others are lengthy, giving us unrivalled detail of life seventy years ago. One of the best in the archive is Denis Argent’s journal, an incomparably rich record (totalling 500,000 words) of his first two years in military uniform (1940-42), served in South Wales and Bedfordshire. He continued to serve until the end of the war, but like some other MO diarists put his pen down in the middle of a sentence, on 25 May 1942.

Argent was 23 in 1940, a journalist in Kent, which helps to explain the fluent and mature quality of his utterance. Like many other young men in the 1930s (and many MO diarists) his opinions were of the Left; he might be described as a near-Communist, a reader of the Daily Worker and the fellow-travelling New Statesman, aiming for a higher purpose in life than convention offered, but held back from party membership by his independent spirit. Like many other socialists he was also a pacifist, a member of the Peace Pledge Union; and though when war came he accepted his conscription, he applied for and was granted non-combatant status, writing that ‘nothing in Christ’s teaching and example justifies participation in modern war’; he wished ‘to help lessen the suffering’.

Called up for service in the Non-Combatant Corps, he found himself languishing until he was given three weeks’ training for bomb disposal; he was then drafted to Bedfordshire in September 1941. Alas, his company of brainworkers and skilled craftsmen still lacked work that would fulfil their wish for usefulness, suffering instead the bullshit and the ‘hopeless muddle’ familiar to us in the army stories of Julian Maclaren Ross. Argent made the most of idle periods waiting for instructions. He pulled out a copy of Penguin New Writing from his pocket and sat by the roadside reading. Everybody in the section had fun with horseplay or on children’s swings in parks, and dragged out scrubbing the floor as long as possible to prevent being landed with a task even more irksome; fortunately, officers and NCOs were mostly indulgent, and turned a blind eye to sloppy marching.
In the first four months of 1942 Denis Argent read 75 books, 58 of them borrowed from the public library in Luton. He had intellectual conversations with friends, ‘a typical NCC speciality’, and convivial evenings in Bedford pubs. On Christmas Eve 1941 he and his friend Nobby went to a film called *Sis Hopkins* ‘because Bob Crosby’s band was in it and we were expecting to get some good jazz for our money. We were disappointed’ … but they found some mates ‘sitting in the corner of a crowded, noisy bar’ in the *Moulders Arms*, ‘surrounded by “dead men”, and singing loudly’; ‘by the time I’d sunk three pints I felt like joining in the singing … *Only a bird in a gilded cage* and other typical maudlin pub songs’. He listened to Beethoven, Dvorak and the Radio Rhythm Club on the billet wireless, and went to concerts given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, evacuated to Bedford. Denis Argent’s life is described with the concrete detail which in two or three centuries will show to our descendants that in one corner of Britain at least service might be less heroic than in a Biggin Hill Hurricane squadron or an ARP patrol in Rotherhithe during an air raid. But by the summer of 1942 Denis Argent was weary of his lack of usefulness, and had come to feel that pacifism in the face of the Nazi threat could not be justified. He signed up for active service, enrolled in the Signals, and eventually served in India and Burma.

Phyllis Walther, a London botany graduate whose interest in the natural world is apparent in her diary, was 35 in 1939, owning with her husband some Bloomsbury boarding houses for medical students. At the onset of war she moved with her infant son to Blandford (Dorset), where her family owned the local brewery, while her husband, a civil servant, stayed in London. Her MO diary extends from May 1941 to the end of July 1942 and is reproduced in its entirety by the Malcolmsons. While the Argent diary is packed with details of skiving and pleasure, Walther’s is a dense record of how she fitted her voluntary work with the Women’s Voluntary Services (WVS) into her family life and her employment at the local food office. Its activities—essentially an extension of the neighbourly habit which led Walther to help a friend to pick her fruit trees—assuaged the stresses and hardships of the Home Front. Like many places Blandford received evacuees and soldiers’ needy families following fathers from camp to camp, while the town’s natives had problems too. Walther disbursed clothes and furniture from the WVS store, a task involving a lot of gentle enquiry and negotiation, because need and greed had to be sifted. And she ‘went to a picnic rosehipping … they are not very nice to pick’; hips as a source of vitamin C replaced citrus fruit not imported in wartime. Perhaps her most arduous task was clearing the jumble of letters ignored by the ad hoc group in charge of the First Aid post: Walther’s diary touches here on one of those tangled disputes that mark small town life: in the interest of efficiency the Red Cross took over the First Aid post.

The Malcolmsons have edited these diaries almost faultlessly: detailing Walther’s life before and after her diary, identifying people and places with skill and punctiliousness, and explaining the war’s events with lavish footnoting—often drawing on newspapers in the British Library’s Colindale repository, demanding labour for a couple based in Ontario. Walther’s diary is reproduced in its entirety, but Argent’s is abbreviated, for no obvious good reason. The editors describe their cuts as considerable, comprising many of Argent’s comments on books, music, films, politics, the progress of the war, and the military routine imposed on him. No doubt there was room for judicious culling here, but for every past epoch the judgements of ordinary people on such matters are rarely revealed to us, and when they occur should be prized, not merely to enlighten the present generation for whom Home Front attitudes are remote enough, but also our descendants in three centuries for whom they will be as hard to penetrate as Jacobite minds are to us. Historians should take a long view. The editors are too modest about their diaries.
Worthing at War comprises lightly edited excerpts from the diary of C.F. Harriss (1882-1956), who retired to Sussex after working as a solicitor in Shropshire and Ely; the manuscript of the diary is in the record office in Chichester. A True Blue Tory who unquestioningly supported the war against the ‘Huns’, Harriss—although a healthy vigorous 57 in 1939—was determined to do nothing inconvenient in support of victory. He and his wife (they were childless) refused to take in evacuees and drove out the teacher billeted upon them by complaining that her visitors disturbed their routine by ringing the doorbell. Disliking the ‘Blackout Gestapo’ who detected chinks of light from his windows, he would not serve as an air raid warden or even as a firewatcher. Historians of male chauvinism will be interested in Harriss’s attacks on ‘women with painted lips, blackened eyebrows, [and] trousers … blowing tobacco smoke’. Those of us comfortable with British identity will be dismayed by descriptions of the Royal Scots Fusiliers playing ‘the savage instruments of their nation’ in Worthing; some of them even wore kilts, though most ‘were garbed as Christians’. A litany of shortages is prominent in the diary. ‘The bakers have stopped baking the small 2d loaves which suit our small need. We must now buy 3d ones and eat them sometimes very stale [and] no more cream cheese to furnish a modest supper!’

These sharply contrasting testaments demonstrate that most important in Home Front diaries is the revelation of human personality and how it moulded opinion. Everybody experienced blackouts, rationing and shortages: but attitudes varied from person to person, and diaries add subtlety to the account—truthful enough in epitome—of a patriotic nation united against fascism.

PETER SEARBY


This is a double labour of love by Peter Searby, and is produced to a high quality. His substantial introductory biography of Jack Overhill shows a man grounded in the working-class in a city that behaved as if it did not have a working class. Overhill’s photograph shows a young-looking man (he was an inspirational wild-swimmer), though he felt middle-aged. Marrying young, Jack and Jess had two children who became adults during the war. Searby covers Overhill’s upbringing in a rough working-class family in New Town, his libertarian character, his aspirations as a writer, his politics, and his contribution to radio documentaries in the 1960s.

In 1939, on the outbreak of war, Overhill scaled back his betting business and took up his old trade of shoe-repairing. The Overhills rented out their suburban home and moved to a tiny slum house in Cambridge’s New Town. He juggled shoe-mending with reading, correspondence, writing hopeless novels, studying for an extra-mural London degree, trips to London, and family life. He was a scrupulous conscientious objector, and refused posts in Civil Defence work, seeming almost aggrieved that local tribunals did not make him a martyr. Nevertheless, he was an asset to neighbours during air raids and was particularly kind towards old people. The diary provides an account of air raids, broken nights, and ordeals survived. The Overhills’ house had no cellar or garden (why didn’t they get an indoor Morrison shelter?) and in bad raids they went to communal shelters. Living on the edge of central Cambridge, the family was exposed to the polyglot mix of evacuees, Americans, Poles, and later on Italian POWs, who thronged the city. Vulgarity, dollar
power, and women on the loose depressed them, but any articulate and open-minded person would be cultivated by Jack.

Overhill read the left-wing press sceptically, being no joiner or activist. He was suspicious of propaganda and of the BBC, pessimistic about the war, negative about Churchill, and wrong in all his predictions! Overhill might be seen a twentieth-century Jude the Obscure, though he is more amusing than tragic. The Communist economist Maurice Dobb tutored Overhill’s degree studies for nothing. Students and dons having their shoes repaired or strolling by the river would get drawn into discussions, writers would be asked to read his hopeless novels, and figures like Bertrand Russell were fair game at public meetings.

Overhill is franker than many male diarists about family. The marriage seems halfway between companionate and an older ‘separate sphere’ type. Jess took up a job as an insurance agent in 1942 and it is clear he disliked this, though he admitted to being an erratic provider. Take Underhill’s telling comment on why Jess should not help the WVS in supporting air-raid victims: ‘I’ve talked it over with Jess; she has a home and family to see after, works for the Prudential, has now to do fire watching, all on poor food and under the stress and anxiety of wartime conditions – raids and the rest of it; no, she’s not undertaking to do work of that sort’. The diary is revealing about parenthood. Loving and careful parents, Jack and Jess supported their children into teacher-training, and later on their daughter’s chequered path to marriage. Despite wartime tribulations and Jack’s CO status, the family were aspiring and in modest social ascent.

Published Home Front diaries are enriching our view of places at war as well as of individual experience. The best-known diarists are women. Men’s diaries of the Home Front focus more on the political and operational aspects of war and often tell us what we learn elsewhere. Women diarists are more internalised and more revealing of the personal, the moral, and the social aspects of the war. They can change under our eyes like Nella Last or, like Vere Hodgson, simply surprise us with their daily experiences. However, this diary shows as much internal thoughtfulness as we can expect from 1940s’ man. We hear about Overhill’s self-scrutiny, his downs, and occasional private tearfulness. His diary is a fascinating read. It’s an unusual view of Cambridge and of the war, with strong value as a source for the history of working-class family life and of social change.

SALLY SOKOLOFF


Journalist and author Barry Turner has dipped his toes into the still-bitterly contested and much written-about waters of the Channel Islands occupation, where the local bookshops are already flooded with memoirs, diaries and popular texts relating to this subject. Among those readily available locally, both new and second-hand (this reviewer has 79 on her bookshelf, a medium-sized sample), only two properly academic texts have ever been published: The German Occupation of the Channel Islands by Charles Cruikshank (1975), and, more recently, the comprehensive The British Channel Islands under German Occupation 1940-1945 by Paul Sanders, published in 2005 (and incorrectly listed under ‘Saunders’ in Turner’s bibliography).

Turner’s publishers, Aurum Press, incorrectly claim that Outpost of Occupation is the first full-length history of the Occupation for fifteen years, something which has
caused embarrassment to Jersey War Tunnels (JWT), Jersey’s premier occupation museum, who had exclusive sales rights. The publishers also maintain that a new exhibition at JWT was timed to tie in with the book (although that exhibition was not directly related) and that it was published for the 55th anniversary of liberation (rather than 65th). They also assert that the book draws on newly-released documents in The National Archives, but these were afforded low impact in the text, which overall said little that Sanders had not already discussed. Thus, it was with a certain amount of scepticism that I read the book, especially given its hype in Jersey.

Like many popular books written by journalists, this is well-written and readable. However, I found that Turner is entirely uncritical of his sources, especially of recent oral testimony, upon which he drew heavily. There is, at times, a problematic lack of references (I stopped counting after 38 examples), and I was disconcerted to find silly errors, such as the claim that Guernsey’s occupation heroine, Marie Ozanne, was listed on ‘the Jersey memorial’, although in fact not one of the 23 occupation-related memorials in Jersey mentions her. Other mistakes include Turner’s assertion that the Islands’ ‘last military encounter had been during the Napoleonic war’, ignoring the huge sacrifice of a generation of Channel Island men who fought during 1914-1918. He also misspells the different patois of Sark (Serquiaise), Guernsey (Guernesiase) and Jersey (Jèrriais).

The lack of critical discussion of sources and over-reliance on non-contemporary oral testimony led to other problems with the book, such as a lack of dates for some events where they are crucial (different types of resistance, escapes from the islands); the claim that no formal protests were made over deportations of English-born islanders, the register of Jews, or the confiscation of radios, all showing a lack of diligence in examining the Jersey archives. While discussing horizontal collaboration, he gives unreferenced illegitimacy rates for the Channel Islands, with no mention that local men or foreign workers could have fathered the babies. He also makes unsubstantiated claims that conscientious objectors gave refuge to Russian slave workers.

The key contribution of the book is billed as revealing the post-Occupation witch-hunt for collaborators by intelligence officials from London. However, this occupies only 8 pages and reveals nothing not already discussed by Sanders. The key ‘new’ material is the revelations of the military blunders of the British, such as the botched commando raids of 1940, and the Churchill-Mountbatten plans to retake the islands in 1942, which would have resulted in the massive destruction and the deaths of many inhabitants. As Turner observes, the islands were protected from British military operations during the war because of Hitler’s paranoid over-fortification. I also found compelling his assessment of the reason for the post-war lack of glorification of the islands’ resistance heroes. These certainly are interesting additions to the ‘known’ history of the occupation.

Elsewhere in the book, the glut of published and unpublished diaries, memoirs and interviews made it easy for Turner to select ‘new’ material for publication. Nevertheless, despite the shortcomings listed here (and others which are not), the book is enjoyable and conveys very well the dual realities of occupation—simply surviving, and living side by side with the occupier—experienced by so few alive today and misunderstood by so many.

GILLY CARR
GILLY CARR is a Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Cambridge’s Institute of Continuing Education. She is currently writing three occupation-related volumes: Legacy of Occupation: Archaeology and Heritage in the Channel Islands; Materialities of Internment and, with Paul Sanders and Louise Willmot, Protest, Defiance and Resistance during the German Occupation of the Channel Islands.

PETER SEARBY taught for many years at Cambridge, where he was Fellow and Director of Studies in History at Fitzwilliam College; his most important publication was volume 3, 1750-1870 (1997) in the History of the University of Cambridge. He is now in his ninth decade, and increasingly interested in the first epoch of history he can recall—the Second World War.

SALLY SOKOLOFF lectures in history at the University of Northampton. Her research interests include oral history, and the Home Front, women and war.

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

Alan Crosby is editor of The Local Historian, associate lecturer at the University of Central Lancashire, and honorary research fellow of the universities of Lancaster and Liverpool. He has written extensively on the urban and landscape history of northern England.

Gillian Draper is associate lecturer at the University of Kent, and Events and Development Officer for the British Association for Local History. She has published widely on aspects of medieval Kent and the Cinque Ports.

Heather Falvey teaches palaeography and local history for the University of Cambridge’s Institute of Continuing Education and also Oxford University’s Department of Continuing Education. She is secretary of the Hertfordshire Record Society and has recently co-edited a volume of fifteenth century wills for the Suffolk Records Society.

Rosemary Horrox is a Fellow and Director of Studies in History at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. She has written on medieval Hull and Beverley, and is currently working on medieval Cambridge

Margaret Shepherd is an historical geographer and an emeritus fellow and former tutor of Wolfson College, Cambridge. She has worked extensively on North West England. From Hellgill to Bridge End: aspects of economic and social change in the Upper Eden Valley 1840-95 was published in 2003, and she is at present examining emigration from Cumbria.

Brian Short is Emeritus Professor of Historical Geography at the University of Sussex.

Kate Thompson was county archivist of Leicestershire and Hertfordshire, and is a vice-president of the British Association for Local History. She is specialist on the nineteenth-century Poor Law, and with Paul Carter wrote Sources for Local Historians (2005).

Kate Tiller is Reader Emerita in English Local History, University of Oxford, a Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford, and a Visiting Fellow in English Local History at the University of Leicester. She edited The Local Historian from 1983 to 1988.
HEXHAM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY Economy, society and government in a northern market town by Anna Rossiter (Hexham Local History Society 2010 294pp ISBN 978-0-9565078-1-5 pb) £15 printed to order

Anna Rossiter, for many years a leading member of the Hexham Local History Society, died much too young in 2007. This book, based on her MA dissertation awarded by the University of Newcastle in 1997, has been produced by the Society with the active assistance of her husband, Nick. The society has an excellent record of publications, and Hexham in the Seventeenth Century is not only a worthy addition to its list but also an important and welcome contribution to our understanding of small market towns in the early modern period. The Society decided to publish on a ‘print on demand’ basis, using the services of the on-line production company Blurb.com. Those wanting to purchase a copy (hardback or paperback) can use the Society’s website http://hexhamhistorian.org/pages/shop.php and click on links which allow direct ordering. This greatly reduces both the financial risk to the Society, and the potential cost of the book. The quality is good, although some of the illustrations have not reproduced well, and it is an approach to publishing which other local history societies might consider. Another innovation is that the entire book is also downloadable (for a charge) in pdf format.

It is no criticism to say that the book bears the hallmarks of a dissertation. I suspect that she been able to do so the author would have revised it quite extensively. In particular, there is a great deal about the technical aspects of her methodology, and very frequent explanations of the problems with the sources which, while valuable to a specialist, might be of less concern to the general reader. The very positive aspect of the genesis of the work is that it has exemplary referencing (Anna was trained as an archivist, so her use of sources and her identification of them is impressive), there is a comprehensive bibliography, and throughout the book an entirely praiseworthy and effective strategy of making comparisons—between Hexham and other small market towns which have been studied in depth; between Hexham and the nearest (all things are relative!) provincial capitals, Newcastle and Carlisle; and between Hexham and its great rural hinterland, much of it the ancient territorial unit of Hexhamshire. There is a deep sense of understanding about these relationships and linkages, and a constant reminder that towns and countryside had powerful symbiotic connections.

As Anna notes in her preliminary chapter, historians had tended to avoid the analysis of unincorporated market towns, perhaps because of a relative lack of primary sources in comparison with corporate places. In the fifteen years since she was working on her dissertation that deficiency has to some extent been rectified, but much of her argument remains valid. When analysing the town, its society and economy her main sources were manorial records, parish registers, probate records and the hearth tax. These have been exploited skillfully and in depth, with numerous statistical presentations (always wisely hedged with cautions) and extensive quotation from contemporary records. The structure of small town society is demonstrated not only by general conclusions but also by, for example, a valuable attempt to produce specific biographical evidence about minor officeholders and members of the Four and Twenty. Their relationship with Hexham’s manorial lords, and their place in the town’s commercial community, are important themes. The crucial importance of the leather industry and related trades, a feature so widespread in towns of this sort, is revealed by, among other sources, the excellent evidence of parish registers (in the last two decades of the century an occupation is stated for about 86 per cent of adult male burials, something to stir feelings of envy among those of us studying comparable places).

Hexham is a wonderful town, with an exceptionally long and varied history, a delightful character, a superb abbey and a beautiful setting amid the moors, hills and fine rivers of Tynedale. But, as Anna notes, like many such towns it had been neglected by serious
This excellent book fills a major gap: it is invaluable in helping us to understand a formative period in the history of Hexham, but it will also be of great interest to local and urban historians much more widely.

ALAN CROSBY


By their very nature, record societies do not, as a rule, commission volumes; rather, they rely on offers of suitably edited transcripts from historians, whether professional or amateur. Over twenty years ago Paul Pixton began researching the social context of the Pexton family in the area of Wrenbury (Cheshire); the project grew and, with the aid of several research assistants, transcripts of numerous relevant and related documents mounted up. Realising that such information might form a valuable database not only for family history but also local, and even micro-economic, history, the work was offered for publication to the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire.

Wrenbury was not a parish but a parochial chapelry, part of the ancient parish of Acton, an administrative fact not grasped by some inhabitants of the various villages and hamlets within the chapelry: several requested burial within ‘the parish church’ or ‘parish churchyard’ of Wrenbury. Unlike many such record society volumes which ‘simply’ publish the text of wills and/or inventories, the editor here has provided transcripts of all documents relating to the testamentary business of each of the 153 decedents. The sets of documents are arranged in chronological order of probate date and comprise, where applicable, a will or administration, an inventory, an inquisition post mortem, a probate account, interrogatories and/or depositions in any relevant testamentary dispute. Even more unusually, genealogical pedigree tables have also been drawn up for each decedent, incorporating information from the will itself, parish registers and other local documents. The pedigrees have been clearly laid out and annotated with further details. The inquisitions post mortem provide much additional background material, especially regarding landholding within the family. Testamentary disputes might arise for numerous reasons and accordingly those printed here shed light on various aspects early modern life, for example, the possibility of a forged will (Joane Crewe of Newhall, widow), or disputed legacies to a father’s cohabitee (James Barnett of Aston, yeoman). As Wrenbury was a rural chapelry comprising small villages and hamlets it is scarcely surprising that agriculture and animal husbandry dominate the legacies in the wills and the items valued in inventories: for example, Thomas Shrowbridge bequeathed his wife two kine called ‘Feelbowe and Benbowe’ and a calf with a white face, and to his daughter Mary a cow called ‘Fayerhead’. As might be expected, the wills also provide insights into family life and relationships: two sons of William Cooper each had an illegitimate child, to both of whom he left £10.

The introduction, which would have benefited from sub-headings, includes a description of the Wrenbury chapelry and an account of the leading gentry families in the chapelry, such as the Starkeys, the Cottons and the Whitneys. Table 1 summarises the number of the different types of document published in the volume and Table 2 provides an analysis of the decedents by village/hamlet. There is an explanation of the editorial methods employed, together with the complete transcript of a will and an inventory to demonstrate what has been omitted in the calendared version in the main text. An ‘Index of Decedents’ in alphabetical order of surname gives, among other details, the name, status/occupation and whether the personal estate was valued at more or less than £40 (supra or infra); the ‘Index of Wills’ gives the same information but in chronological order of probate. The 20-page glossary indicates, for example, that a Cheshire acre was more than double the size of a statute acre. The near-contemporary map of the chapelry is small and very poorly reproduced, even though crucial to the reader’s understanding of the area.
There is one major problem. For reasons that are not explained, in the inventories, although roman numerals have been converted to arabic, sums of money have not been standardised—for example, 40s is not rendered as £2. The numerical aspect of the inventories is therefore bizarre: thus, the total of no. 9 is given as £47 641s 324d (= £80 8s 0d). There is, however, a matter of much greater concern regarding the inventory values: many of them are just plain wrong. Having been alerted to the fact that three of the totals had been summed incorrectly (no. 9, for example, is actually £56 13s 5d), I decided to randomly check several others: out of 21 inventories checked, the editor’s total was wrong on 10 occasions. This means each inventory total needs to be checked—but it is impossible to see where the errors have arisen since the original roman numerals have not been given. I suspect that in some places the columns have slipped so that, for instance, pounds have become shillings, but I also wonder whether the roman numerals have been interpreted accurately. In many inventories, the editor has ‘corrected’ [sic] the original appraisers’ total: given the quality of his adding up, I am dubious about most of these instances, especially because, in my experience, early modern appraisers were generally fairly accurate in their calculations. To return to no. 9, the appraisers gave the total as £56 1s 10 [assuming that the figures have been transcribed accurately], which is incorrect by under 12s; the editor’s ‘corrected’ total was, however, incorrect by nearly £24. I fear that the general editor of the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire should have looked very carefully into the mouth of this particular gift horse and checked that what he saw actually added up.

HEATHER FALVEY


Nick Barratt is best known to family and local historians as the former presenter of the BBC’s ‘Who do you think you are?’ and as a popular lecturer. According to the blurb, this book, ‘takes you on a unique journey back in time, examining the houses, streets, communities and ways of life that shaped the world around us, and in particular the precise circumstances that made us who we are today … it shows you how to organise and shape your findings, and create your own personal archive using the latest technology and online resources, and how to add your store of knowledge to the emerging social networks that allow us to create a People’s Archive and tell the forgotten story of the past that never makes it into the textbooks’.

It is a curious mixture. The book will no doubt be bought by many family historians, although it is unclear how many of them will read it all the way through, but though it is a brave attempt to get family historians to ‘put the flesh on the bones’ of their ancestors it rather falls between two stools. There is a very basic index and no bibliography, reducing its chances of being regarded as a serious textbook, but at the same time it deals with some complex documents and is to be applauded for trying to make them more accessible. There are four sections: tracing your family tree; tracing your ancestral home; tracing the history of your area; and creating an online personal archive.

The book suffers from being outdated as soon as it was published. For example, the General Register Office has recently announced that it will no longer check details on certificate applications, and The Times Online is no longer free of charge. Other errors should have been corrected. There is no reference to the abolition of the metropolitan county councils in 1986, the end of funding for A2A (which means that no new records will be added), the fact that rate books may have been weeded, or that access to electoral registers is restricted.

The principal disappointment, however, is the lack of references to important sources. Overall there is a tendency to emphasise the treasures to be found in The National Archives at the expense of the equally rich material in local record offices. There are a number of glaring omissions and others which could be excused. Perhaps the greatest gap is any information on the extensive and wide-ranging types of documents to be found in quarter sessions records, principally the non-legal material; the term ‘quarter sessions’ does not appear in the index. For example, there is no mention of deposited plans for railways, canals and other major undertakings. Other sources that deserve a mention are the extensive series of plans made for
many towns after the 1848 Public Health Act, the records of the Commission for the New Towns, and ships’ logs.

There are also examples of information which might mislead inexperienced family historians. The terms ‘stepfather’ or ‘in-law’ were used very loosely in the past, rather than in the more strict way we would do so now. Gilbert Unions were relatively uncommon (only about a hundred, and some counties had none at all). Pre-1754 marriage registers did not always have many details, certainly not all those listed. There are errors in the International Genealogical Index which is seriously flawed as a source. The records of sewer commissioners are rare, certainly outside London.

Although many places to visit are described, there are some notable absentees—the National Trust’s workhouse at Southwell, Nottinghamshire, Big Pit Colliery Museum in Blaenavon, or the Hitchin British Schools. A serious website omission is that of the British Record Society, which publishes many record series, notably wills and inventories. There is also no mention of the online access to the Sun Insurance Company records for London, available through A2A.

On a more positive note, no typographical errors were found although some odd things have crept in. On page 76 it is assumed that for ‘paleontology’ one should read ‘paleography’, and this British reviewer objects to the American term newspaper ‘clippings’ instead of ‘cuttings’. And to be really pedantic, ‘compared to’ should be ‘compared with’. Chapter 8, ‘Tracking Ownership of the Ancestral Home’, is a brave attempt to explain the complex system of land transfer which many—if not most—people will find impenetrable. Even to someone reasonably au fait with the subject it was difficult to understand what was written.

Perhaps the most surprising part of the book is the last section, which reads rather like an advertisement for Arcalife, a Canadian company which enables people to leave personal details for their descendants. It sits oddly with the rest of the book but perhaps younger people will not find it so disconcerting. And yet despite these mild criticisms this is a book which should certainly be read by ‘serious’ family and local historians—and Nick Barratt’s reputation should ensure healthy sales.

KATE THOMPSON


As every reviewer will no doubt begin by saying, the richness and range of this collection is a glowing tribute to the influence—both as teacher and researcher—of its ‘only begetter’. It is impossible to itemise, let alone review, all 24 papers and even though it would be possible to list the seven broad categories into which they are divided, one of the delights of the book is the resonance between papers in different sections. Barbara Harvey’s paper on Westminster Abbey and Londoners opens the ‘Producers and Consumers’ group, but begins with the great religious ceremonies associated with the abbey. Carole Rawcliffe’s paper on the role of religion in the medieval hospital is located in the ‘Religious Life’ section but enters the subject via the material possessions of the hospitals. Readers interested in medieval women will find four papers (scattered across three sections) which speak directly to their interests, but women turn up in other papers as well, including Martha Carlin’s discussion of how non-élite London families were fed, where women appear not just as providers of food but as providers of an important part of the family income.

Of course readers will have their own favourites in this collection, but, as the above suggests, this is a book to be read from cover to cover, at least by medievalists. Its main focus, as one would expect given Caroline Barron’s own research interests, is on late-medieval and early-modern London, although there are forays further afield both temporally and geographically—most strikingly in Laura Wright’s paper on playground language which ventures into Opie territory. The excursion for delegates at the Harlaxton conference which produced most of these papers was to Barton on Humber (Lincolnshire) which accounts for
two brief papers prompted by memorial brasses in St Mary’s church there. The contributors’ desire to at least mention London, even if their main concerns are elsewhere, raises a question that lurks between the lines throughout this volume. How far is medieval London exceptional (as those of us working on provincial towns rather assume) or can it, in some respects, be cautiously taken as a paradigm of other urban centres in England, none of which can be discussed individually in anything like the breadth and depth on display here? Probably not all the contributors would agree on their answer, but there is no doubt that readers whose main interest is not London can read this collection with pleasure and profit. And if anyone does want to dip in more selectively it comes with an index—something which is increasingly rare in multi-authored volumes.

ROSEMARY HORROX


The publication of another of the ‘Big Red Books’ is always eagerly anticipated, and this volume sits well within the scholarly traditions of the VCH. The tenth for the historic county of Sussex, it is the second of three volumes covering the Rape of Arundel, one of the ancient north-south divisions into which Sussex was organised, and which form the primary units for the VCH volumes. This covers the south-eastern part of Arundel Rape, comprising Poling Hundred with twelve nineteenth-century parishes. Edited by Chris Lewis, it is the outcome of work by many authors, among them the late Professor Christopher Elrington, who died in August 2009 while it was at proof stage, and to whom it is dedicated.

The area stretches for seven miles along the coast and six miles inland along the lower Arun and onto the slope of the South Downs. It was a well-populated and densely-settled medieval hundred, well provided with churches and relatively rich in its agriculture. Today it is characterised more by its twentieth-century housing and suburban appearance, and the transition from one to the other is thoroughly explored. Thus, for the medieval settlement of Ferring, its ‘passage from village to suburb’ in the interwar years of the 1920s and 1930s and again in the 1950s and 1960s is traced. In 2001 those of pensionable age locally formed 53 per cent of the population compared with 21 per cent nationally—the famed ‘Costa Geriatrica’ is captured in Big Red Book format. By the 1990s East Preston was entirely built over for residential estates, often with gated and private roads. At Rustington the former aerodrome was converted into the Sea Estate in the 1920s with 300 detached houses, and a developing resort function which attracted, among others, Sir Hubert Parry, Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Flinders Petrie and J. Arthur Rank.

The volume covers the usual VCH themes within each parish: an introduction, followed by landownership, economic history, local government, religious history and education, each with sub-headings where appropriate and each traced from the earliest records to the beginning of the present century. The usual wealth of local detail is supplied to great effect and there are base maps for each parish which are very clear, based upon either a variety of scales of OS maps or, as at Kingston, where a 1759 map provides the basis or Lyminster where the 1837 tithe map is used, more local maps in the West Sussex Record Office. There is also a far more liberal use of photographs than in previous volumes, giving a less forbidding appearance than earlier VCH publications. Many are from the Edwardian period, offering delightful glimpses of a vanished village life. It is, however, rather a pity that while we have excellent photographs of the churches and chapels, the architectural plans of the churches, as used to great effect in other Sussex volumes, seem to be a lost art. And despite their more general use among many historians today, the IR58 Field Books relating to Lloyd George’s 1910 survey were not used, although they are available for this area at The National Archives.

For VCH aficionados there is much that is familiar—the careful tracing of manorial descents, the outline of landowner chronologies, the descriptions of surviving historical buildings. But changes have been incorporated—it was a surprise, for example, to see a reference to the use of Google! The 1891 on-line census was used, and in some places hectares are used as units of
land measurement. Unfortunately this was not done uniformly: in one section on horticulture in Angmering both forms were used in the same paragraph, an editorial oversight uncommon in such volumes. Rather charmingly, we are told that Littlehampton ‘became hip’ in 2007, when Thomas Heatherwick’s East Beach Café, with an extraordinary design which should have merited a photograph, was opened.

The longest entry deals with the town of Littlehampton itself. There is a very useful account of its topographical development, and a section dealing with the tensions arising from the growth of this seaside town at the expense of Arundel, further up the river. A certain social cachet had been observable in the nineteenth century, but that changed when in 1932 Billy Butlin converted a windmill, casino and surrounding land into an amusement park with dodgems and rollercoaster. Hugely popular with school outings and day-trippers, by 1934 Littlehampton was said to be suffering from ‘school treats, wayzgooses and bean-feasts’. An exhaustive list of trades and professions is supplied, culminating in the founding of Anita Roddick’s eastern-themed Bodyshop headquarters on the edge of town in 1976. So, here is another excellent VCH volume, which ends with an extensive and very helpful index of persons, places and subjects, stretching to more than 40 pages in its own right.

BRIAN SHORT


The lengthy title and subtitles of these two volumes set out clearly what they contain. They are essentially source books for future historical work on Faversham in Kent, a member of the Cinque Ports confederation, and as such are immensely useful. In her foreword Margaret Spufford draws attention to the ‘streams’ of history which students and researchers could choose to study from these volumes: one might almost say ‘waves’ or ‘tsunamis’, since there is so much material. Spufford herself succinctly explored the themes of overseas trade and royal connections but many others might be examined, not least by linking them further to the surveys of Faversham’s many surviving medieval and early modern buildings carried out by Sarah Pearson. Faversham has been well served by the printing of many of its records, both here and elsewhere. Now is surely the time for one or more people to take on the challenging task of writing a new history or new histories of the town, drawing on this work. They could make a start by reviewing the very full subject index and by comparing Faversham with other Kentish towns and Cinque Ports.

In their introduction the editors consider at some length the structure and binding of the town books—indeed, this analysis is more extensive than that of the contents themselves, perhaps taking the place of a fuller discussion of the reasons for the production and preservation of these records drawing upon an important but unpublished Kent PhD thesis by Justin Croft. Nevertheless, the volumes will allow historians to explore the distinctive literate culture of Faversham alongside that of the other members of the confederation and other ports, drawing parallels and contrasts between, say, their systems of government and civic ceremonies. The former is briefly considered, rather awkwardly, in appendix II).

The volumes are a well-produced and valuable contribution to urban history in general, and to the history of the Cinque Ports confederation in particular. The latter has been re-evaluated in several recent books, and these volumes provide another approach. Their special value lies in allowing readers to appreciate the nature and complexity of the records, opening them up for use by those who might not tackle the original records in Anglo-Norman and Latin (given in the footnotes). Furthermore, not only has the time-consuming work of transcription and translation been carried out, but the six appendices offer the reader many further primary sources including a tallage of 1327, a manorial tax imposed by the lord, the abbot of Faversham Abbey; a valuable assortment of fourteenth-century records such as pleas before the
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king, fines and powers of attorney; and listings of mayors, officers and inhabitants, and rectors between 1122 and 1662. The tallage is largely arranged by occupation, indicating very large numbers who supplied food and drink: bakers, brewsters, butchers and tipplers (ale-sellers or ale-house keepers), and others ‘crying and selling at windows’. The taverners, tanners, millers and fishermen were far fewer in number, but nevertheless the tallage makes an extraordinary quantitative contrast with other confederation ports which do not have this sort of contemporary evidence, such as Sandwich, New Romney and Rye. The number of food suppliers in Faversham is surely related to its main and significant economic function at this period—shipping grain from east Kent, particularly to London.

Written by experienced local historians, these volumes begin with an epitome of the history of Faversham and Kent, starting before the Conquest. This includes a concise but welcome demolition of the ‘Jutish origin myth’ concerning Kent’s early medieval inhabitants, following recent work on this subject mainly by archaeologists. This chronological summary is carried through until the epilogue, which deals with the seventeenth-century town. Besides this, and the main body of records, there are also 31 maps and illustrations, a glossary, an extensive bibliography, and indexes of personal names, place names and subjects. Academic libraries, and even individuals, should take the opportunity to acquire copies of this limited run of the Town Books of Faversham as a long-term investment for local historical and urban research.

GILLIAN DRAPER


John Denton’s History of Cumberland was written at the beginning of the seventeenth century at a time of increasing antiquarian interest in the history of counties. The original manuscript no longer exists. Several later copies, not all of which are complete, differ from each other in some respects but are the only sources. This book is the result of careful research and analysis of the extant manuscripts. Angus Winchester’s 24-page introduction sets out the background to the project, with a survey of the manuscripts which analyses their content and emphasises the differences between, and omissions in, those and discusses the sources for Denton’s genealogical information. Winchester comments on Denton’s ‘attempted explanations’ of place-names and their meaning and concludes that most are wrong. The Place-names of Cumberland, Part II (1950) accepts as correct Denton’s description of Whitehaven, for example, as the ‘creek in the sea at the north end of a great bergh or hill … where there is a great rock or quarry of white hard stone’, but Winchester’s doubts centre on names where Gaelic and Celtic derivations are given—research during the last 25 years may have influenced his comments.

Denton’s ‘History of Cumberland’ is, in fact, more like a gazetteer. It is not a complete survey (‘there are substantial gaps and large areas are missing’) but he lists baronies, manors and townships. Some topographical and descriptive details are given, but these are comparatively rare. However, where they do occur they give a fascinating insight into the local topography and land use. At Millom ‘the stately parke [was] full of huge oakes and timber, woods and fallow deere’, while ‘Drigg had great store of oakes in the elder times … Mutch old blown wood [is] yet digged up out of mosses and wet ground there’. Nevertheless, Denton’s writing mainly focuses on the gentry and the families associated with each place, including early post-Conquest lordships. For example, in the Gilsland entry such information covers at least three pages (including extensive and informative footnotes) starting with Randolph Meschien’s (sic) gift of the barony to Hubbertus. Place-name meanings are included in almost all the entries.

Of the thirteen manuscript copies known to exist, Cumbria Archives were able to purchase two late-seventeenth century versions in 2008. Winchester concludes that the many transcribed copies in circulation in the seventeenth century probably derived from two versions of the original. Even the identity of the author comes under some scrutiny: ‘Nowhere … is the name of the author … stated’. The attribution to John Denton of Cardew emerges only in the later-
seventeenth century but a letter dated about 1600 supports the authorship of Denton and this has been generally accepted. In his preface, Winchester acknowledges the important work of the late David Mawson which contributed much to the research and early conclusions upon which this book has been founded. Unfortunately, the price of £50 may restrict readership but by his analytical yet accessible approach to the manuscripts and background as set out in his excellent introduction, and the publishing of Denton’s *History of Cumberland* in this edition, Angus Winchester has produced as near as possible to a definitive version of Denton’s text. The book will be appreciated by scholars and historians and anyone interested in a seventeenth-century view of Cumberland.

MARGARET SHEPHERD

**FAMILY HISTORY IN LANCASHIRE: ISSUES AND APPROACHES**  
*ed. Andrew Gritt*  

Disruptive change is a powerful and pessimistic assumption of many local histories of the century from 1750 to 1850. Physical environment, work, beliefs and attitudes, family life and households were all dislocated in the cause of economic development, most obviously in areas where urbanisation and large-scale industry took hold. Lancashire, experiencing modernisation early and intensively, has long been a focus of studies by leading historians. This useful and stimulating collection continues that tradition, exploring evidence of experiences during and after industrialisation at the fundamental level of family and household. The book brings together conference papers, originally delivered in 2006 at the Institute of Local and Family History at the University of Central Lancashire, by three historians (Michael Anderson, Elizabeth Roberts and Alan Crosby) who between 1971 and 1991 published influential work on families in industrial Lancashire. A fourth chapter, by Stephen Caunce on the evidence of autobiography and fiction for family history, has been added, while the editor, Andy Gritt, adds an introduction, an opening chapter on the value of family history, and a conclusion. He makes clear that his aim is not only to reflect recent views on the history of the family in industrial society, but also to identify common ground between grassroots family historians and academic practitioners, suggesting the potential advantages of joint working. He points to pooled data and intellectual overlap, stemming from use of the same sources, methods of data storage and analysis, and shared interest in experiences of family life which can be more fully understood through systematic, microhistorical research placed in a wider context.

Michael Anderson’s *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire*, published in 1971, remains a key study of the history of the family and of the impact of modernisation, and his substantial updated thoughts on it are an important part of this collection. The 1971 book demonstrated the sociological and quantitative approaches of the time, and used a sample of 1851 census returns for Preston, a rapidly developing textile factory town. The pessimistic view of changes to family life in this context was that previous traditional patterns of multi-generational extended households and wider supportive kin networks would be destroyed by migration to expanding towns, and by new opportunities for work and independent earning, including the young and women. Small, private, nuclear families and lone individuals, making their way in an uncertain world, would become the norm. Anderson’s original work importantly modified this view when he found that, far from familial ties collapsing and extended households disappearing, mid-nineteenth century Preston had co-residential households where collaborative behaviour enabled family members across generations to cope in the new circumstances. For example, older relatives might come to live in, providing childcare which allowed young parents to work in the mill. Anderson now asks how typical a response to change this proves to have been, in the light of subsequent local studies and large-scale use of 1851 and other censuses for other places. He finds the persistence (or re-invention?) of extended, co-resident households and reinforced kinship links in other textile areas, and possibly in other industrial places. England and Wales as a whole differed from this pattern, although some rural areas had higher levels of young adult males living at home, a phenomenon not explained here.
Anderson disagrees with Ruggles as to why families responded to change in this strengthened way, stressing economic as opposed to demographic forces or cultural changes. The notion of the family economy remains powerful, a point which could be reinforced in a rural context by reference to Barry Reay’s *Microhistories* (1996). Anderson is resistant to building a theory of deliberate family strategies, instead observing local cultures of mutually-advantageous behaviour which was necessarily short-term in character. As he concludes, ‘those who operate with the shortest term forethought are most likely to be those who have few resources, many obligations, few options, and whose past attempts at planning have been upset by a world they cannot control: which is remarkably like the lived experienced of most working class people in the mid-nineteenth century’. As Anderson and Gritt rightly note, since the 1970s emphasis has moved away from quantitative method and sociological theory, and from ideological ‘bottom up’ history, yet the questions and comparisons raised by Anderson mean that he is right in hoping that more local and family historians will make their own studies of family and household structures and life experiences, drawing on the framework of sources, methods and interpretations which are now well-established.

Elsewhere in the volume, Crosby revisits the rare working-class autobiography of Benjamin Shaw, and draws out the story of the Shaw family, moving from rural Yorkshire to Preston in the period 1790-1840. Here too the family held together, albeit with the household changing in its composition according to fluctuating circumstances. Among the many insights offered by the experience of one family is that into sexual behaviour, with pre-marital pregnancy and illegitimacy frequently encountered, the freedom of 15 to 25 year-olds recorded with no whiff of sin or censure. Caunce also tackles the potential of personal and non-institutional evidence, using an impressive array of autobiographies, novels and oral testimonies to discuss, entertainingly and rigorously, the tightrope between stereotypical caricature and flesh and blood experience, a dangerous balancing act for historians but overall worthwhile. Finally, Elizabeth Roberts takes the discussion forward in time to mature (and declining) industrial Lancashire with her chapter on working-class families and domestic economy, 1900-1970. Using 260 interviews from Barrow, Lancaster and Preston, she considered social, cultural and economic determinants of family behaviour and attitudes. Family economy faded as children stayed longer at school and as dependents in the household, family sizes reduced, and more women worked outside the home but typically on low wages. Roberts’s discussion of later-twentieth century findings is a valuable addition to her earlier much-admired accounts of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, seen especially from the woman’s point of view.

This book will be of interest to those concerned with their own and other people’s families in this key period for the experience of the British family. Its chapters provide a valuable update on developments in the field. There are some omissions. ‘Respectability’ is little mentioned, but loomed large in many Lancashire families, certainly from the mid-nineteenth century. The term ‘local history’ is largely eschewed. ‘Microhistory’ is often mentioned, but not explicitly defined—that should be rectified if it is to be a way to the shared studies that Gritt hopes for. This volume is strong on understanding the individual and personal perspectives on family life. Gritt is right in pointing to the need to put the family back in relationship to the public sphere, to welfare systems, schools, church and chapel. He also advocates developing contextualised biographies of ‘ordinary’ families over the last 200 years, a challenge that takes us beyond preoccupation just with the years of industrial revolution to a history of ‘modern’ families that stretches from 1750 to the present day.

KATE TILLER
RECENT PUBLICATIONS IN LOCAL HISTORY

Only books and pamphlets sent to the Reviews Editor are included in this list, which gives all publications received between 1 August and 1 November 2010. Most books are also reviewed in this or a future issue, or on the BALH website. Publishers should ensure that prices of publications are notified. When addresses are quoted prices usually include postage and packing. Other books should be obtainable through normal book-selling channels and retail prices are quoted. The Reviews Editor is Dr Evelyn Lord, Book Reviews, PO Box 649, Cambridge CB1 0JW. Please note that all opinions and comments expressed in reviews are those of the reviewer—they do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the British Association for Local History.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES

East


THE PAPERS OF NATHANIEL BACON OF STIFFKEY vol.5 1603-1607 ed. Victor Morgan, Elizabeth Rutledge and Barry Taylor (Norfolk Record Society vol.74 2010 ISBN 978 0 9556357 3 1) £18.50+£3.50 p&p from Hon. Secretary, NRS, 29 Cintra Road, Norwich NR1 4AE

London, Home Counties and South East

ARMADALE TO AQUILA The history of vehicle manufacturing in Hillingdon Tony Beadle (Panic Button Press 2010 ISBN 978 0 9566538 0 2) £14.95 from publisher, 55 Howlets Lane, Ruislip HA4 7SA

BIDDENDEN IN PICTURES Biddenden Local History Society (Biddenden LHS 2010 no ISBN) £8 inc. p&p from Mrs P. Stokes, Willow Cottage, Smarden Road, Biddenden, Ashford TN27 8JT cheques payable to P. Stokes

A BRAUGHING COUNTRYMAN’S DIARY and the Braughing of Victor Tott: the visual and written memories of a country gentleman Victor Tott (Braughing Local History Society 2010 no ISBN) sold as a set for £15.00: details of ordering from www.braughing.org.uk


THE 2nd BEDFORDS IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS 1914-1918 ed Martin Deacon (Bedfordshire Historical Record Society/Boydell 2010 ISBN 978 08511550 6 3) £25

DOVER IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR Terry Sutton and Derek Leach (Phillimore 2010 ISBN 978 1 86077 619 2) £18.99


THE DISCOVERY OF SUSSEX Peter Brandon (Phillimore 2010 ISBN 978 1 86077 616 8) £25

A HISTORY OF LUTON from Conquerors to Carnival Anne Alsopph (Phillimore 2010 ISBN 978 1 86077 621 2) £20


Midlands

ABEL BUCKLEY WIMPENNY The life and times of a nineteenth-century Hayfield mill manager, political activist and social reformer 1844-1905 John Crummet (New Mills LHS 2010 rev edn, no ISBN) £5 from Highgate House, Highgate Road, Hayfield, High Peak SK22 2JW

DID YOU KNOW THAT ... STAFFORDSHIRE Malthouse Press 2010 ISBN 978 1 907364 01 3) £6.50 from Timcocking@yahoo.com

North

THE CHALLENGE OF CHOLERA Proceedings of the Manchester Special Board of Health 1831-1833 ed Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire vol.145 2010 ISBN 978 0 902593 80 0) details of availability from Fiona Pogson, c/o Department of History, Liverpool Hope University, Hope Park, Liverpool L16 9JD

POCKLINGTON AT WAR Jim and Margaret Ainscough (Pocklington History 2010 no ISBN) £5 from jandmainscough@yahoo.co.uk or www.pocklingtonhistory.com


WHAT HAPPENED IN, and what happened to, Sunday Schools in Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire 1800-2000 Mary Whitehead (author 2010 ISBN 978 0 956299 0 6) £7.50+£1.30 p&p from mary@marywhitehead.wanadoo.co.uk tel. 0161 330 9164

South, South West

ABINGDON IN CONTEXT Small-town politics in early modern England 1547-1688 Manfred Brod (Fastprint Publishing 2010 ISBN 978 1 8442 6888 7)


HISTORY OF TEWKESBURY MUNICIPAL CEMETERY Anthony Shelsley and Michael English (Tewkesbury HS 2010 ISSN 1742 6030) details of price available from johnhistory@O2.co.uk or info@alisonsbookshop.co.uk


Wales

COLWYN BAY ACCREDITED The wartime experience Cindy Lowe (Bridge Books 2010 ISBN 978 1 84491 065 3) £9.99 details of availability from cindylowe.14@hotmail.com

Scotland

THE PRESTONPANS TAPESTRY 1745 created by Andrew Crummy, Dave Wilkie, Gillian Hart, Gordon Prestongrange and ‘The Stitchers’ (Burke’s Peercage and Gentry 2010 ISBN 978 085011 1224) £20

General


1940s and 1950s HOUSE EXPLAINED From blackout to sunlight Trevor Yorke (Countryside 2010 ISBN 978 1 84674 221 7) £6.99

GRAVESTONES. TOMBS AND MEMORIALS Trevor Yorke (Countryside 2010 ISBN 978 1 84674 202 6) £5.99

TIMBER FRAMED BUILDINGS EXPLAINED Trevor Yorke (Countryside 2010 ISBN 978 1 84674 220 0) £6.99

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND Adam Smyth (Cambridge UP 2010 ISBN 978 0 521 76172 7) £55


GREAT WAR LIVES A guide for family historians Paul Reed (Pen & Sword 2010 ISBN 978 1 84884 324 0) £19.99


PERSONAL COPY A memoir of the Sixties Ray Gosling (Five Leaves Publications 2010, ISBN 978 1 905512 98 0) £8.99 from info@fiveleaves.co.uk


RICHARD III and the Bosworth Campaign Peter Hammond (Pen & Sword 2010 ISBN 978 1 81844 15299) £19.99

SIR JOHN MACDONALD, Lord Kinsburgh Norman Macdonald (The Lumphanan 2010 ISBN 978 0 9566149 0 2) £7.99 from thelumphananpress@hotmail.com

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FRANK THORNTON BIRKINSHAW Barbara Rudoe (Rudoe Press 2010 ISBN 978 0 9564431 1 3) details from Barbara@rudoe.com

Electronic books on-line

Mabel Eden’s Diary www.edendiaries.co.uk

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS RECEIVED

The more substantial articles in these journals are noted below, but we do not give a full contents list. Most journals are listed alphabetically by geographical location, not title of publication; general journals are at the end of the list.

Acton Historian [Acton History Group] (no.50 November 2010) £3 from AHG Secretary, 30 Highland Avenue, Acton W3 6EU: Godfrey’s ghost; Dieter Radar, bookbinder; Keburcott House; From John
Bull to the Tabard; International Friendship League and Peace Haven

Look Back at Andover [Andover History & Archaeology Society] (vol.3 no.1 September 2010) £3+40p p&p from AHAS, c/o Mill Pound Cottage, Monxton, Andover SP11 8AW: the post-war development of Andover; chalk, chalk pits and limekilns; Andover Winemakers' Circle; local poems of Benjamin St uart Sanders; a postbox survey; Tyhurst and Edmund Parsons

Archive [Barningham Local History Group, North Yorkshire] (no.10 September 2010) The folks who live down the road; Newsham history; Who lived where in Barningham in 1838; 1841 census trail; house histories (no.11, October 2010, no.12, Nov/Dec 2010) All dressed up for the wedding 1930; What Barningham was worth in 1817; joiner George and co taker Coates £2.00 each from www.barninghamvillage.co.uk

Barking and District LHS Newsletter (Summer 2010) details from www.barkinghistory.co.uk: Some local heroes: Victoria Cross recipients; Barking and Dagenham's forgotten footballer: John O'Rourke; cricket in Dagenham; Dagenham, Monsterrat; the Barking Sewage Farm 1868

Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter (no.98 September 2010) £9 p.a. from newsletter@blha.org.uk: local history vs national history; Wargrave LHS make an exciting discovery

Berkshire Old and New [Berkshire Local History Association] (no.27 2010) £3 details from www.blha.org.uk: A window on Windsor’s medieval past; the town deeds; Woolley and its woods; Poor Law medical officers in Wantage Union; Irish in nineteenth-century Reading; Berkshire Bibliography 2010

The Bradford Antiquary [Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society] (3rd ser no.14 2010) £5 from duckettbob@yahoo.co.uk: Buck Wood: a prehistoric site; the incomparable Mr Sharpe: astronomer and mathematician; William Sorensy; Bradford fire brigade 1805-1940; Bradford brickmaking; the Manor House Pottery, Eccleshall; Land Humphreys: Bradford’s premier printers; Councillor Johnson: hero of the isolation hospital; Raw Nook Railway

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Newsletter (no.67 August 2010) from Elaine North, BGAS, 7 Parr Close, Churchdown GL3 1NH pdf copy from elaine_bgasnews@hotmail.com: Anglo-Saxon hall found in Cheltenham two years on the banks of Purton

Local History Records [Journal of the Bourne Society] (vol.63 May 2010) £5 from bournesociety@inbox.com: St Anne's College, Sanderstead; William Joseph Willett Bruce; Jessie Hall (1858-1914); Kenley’s Wimbledon Singles champion; Cane Hill Hospital; memories of the Battle of Britain; John Quittenden, builder 1849-1937; Beechwood Women’s Club

Cheshire History (no.50 2010-2011) £6 from Cheshire Record Office, Duke Street, Chester CH1

1RL: Genealogical etc extracts from diary of Sarah Savage of Wrenbury Wood, 1688-1695; Cheshire’s vanishing pinfolds; the life and times of Anna Maria Hunt of Mollington Hall (1771-1861); the portrait paintings of Catherine Harrison (1779-1807); Cheshire parks and gardens of Edward Kemp (1817-1891); the agrarian landscape in the era of high farming c 1870; life and work of William Shaw (1842-1926) of Mersey Mission to Seamen, Runcorn

History and Heritage [Cheshire West & Chester Council] (Winter 2010) free from Chester Community History & Heritage chb@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk: Chester’s coaching days, when Christmas was banned in Chester; Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) illustrator, artist and sculptor; newspapers from 100 years ago

Chew Valley Journal [Chew Valley Archaeological & Historical Society] (vol.30 2010) available from John Glover, Little Blackfield, Ballinger, Great Missenden HP16 9LL: The Grove, Chesham and the most powerful man in England; Blackwell Hill Farm; further archaeological investigations at Romano-British settlement, Valley Farm, Sarratt; new discoveries at Coleman’s Wood, Holmer Green; Lowndes Park, Chesham

Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society Newsletter (no.95 September 2010) details from www.ctlhs.org.uk: The Steed Hospital, Redcar; Guisborough’s first professional barber/hairdresser; Old Stockton

Cleveland History (no.98 2010) from valharrison@live.co.uk: Henry 1’s new men; the enigmatic Mr Harrison; Middlesbrough’s steel magnates and the Guild of Help

Cumbria Local History Federation Bulletin (no.54 Summer 2010) details from www.cumbrialocalhistory.org.uk

Dorking History [Dorking Local History Group] (2010) available from www.surreycommunity.info//dorkinglocalhistorygroup: Mary Anne Cubitt of Denbies; Baroness Wootton of Abinger; the Beufus family of Daisy Lodge; history of Highacre, Dorking; the baker, the publican and the horse thief; 1966 CS Gas used by the police for the first time in the UK

Droitwich History & Archaeology Society Newsletter (no.53 November 2010) 75p from ryasapden@ukgateway.net: 51 High Street: a merchant’s house revisited; We'll fight them on the beaches ... we’ll fight them in Vines Lane, mashers and flappers at the Hop Pole; changing face of Worcester; the parish of Martin Hussington

The Dunningite [Dunning Parish Historical Society] (no.73 Autumn 2010) £1.50 from The Old Schoolhouse, Newton of Pitcairns, Dunning PH2 0SL

Eastbourne Historian [Eastbourne Local History Society] (no.157 Autumn 2010) £1.50 from info@eastbournehistory.org.uk: Appeasement years: 1939, Eric Ravilious in the Arctic; how the Meads...
Forest of Dean Local History Society News  
(October 2010) details from www.foresfeofdeanhistory.org.uk: David Musset’s great-great-granddaughter visits the forest

FRAM Journal of the Framlingham & District Local History & Preservation Society (no.16 August 2010) from editor, 43 College Road, Framlingham IP13 9ER: Framlingham in the 1930s; Framlingham in the nineteenth century; Suffolk walled kitchen gardens; an investigation c1780-c1900 part 1

Friern Barnet Newsletter (no.42 September 2010) details from www.friernbarnethistory.org.uk: Palmisole Garage, the Marksmills; prefabs; the New Southgate Master Plan

Goring and Streatley Local History Society Journal (no.12 2010) from Janet Hurst, 6, Nun’s Acre, Goring, Reading RG8 9BE: (no.12 2010) from Janet Hurst, 6, Nun’s Acre, Goring, Reading RG8 9BE: from editor, 43 College Road, Framlingham IP13 9ER: Framlingham in the 1930s; Framlingham in the nineteenth century; Suffolk walled kitchen gardens; an investigation c1780-c1900 part 1

Hackney Terrier [Friends of Hackney Archives Newsletter] (no.86) from FHA, c/o Hackney Archives Dept., 43 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 5SQ

Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society Newsletter (no.54 Autumn 2010) details from www.fieldclub.hants.org.uk: The agricultural revolution; clarifying links between watermeadows and the sheep and corn system in the 17th and 18th centuries; the farm will attached to Manor Farm staddle barn, Broughton; Hampshire downslands; Upper Wyke Manor House; beautifying Hampshire roads between the wars; reconstructing the former landscapes of Martin; Odiam’s royal deer park

Harpenden & District Local History Society Newsletter (no.110 April 2010) No. 95 Prisoner of War Camp: Hertfordshire bridges; Charles William Pace 1792-1867

Herts Past & Present [Hertfordshire Association for Local History] (3rd ser no.16 Autumn 2010) £2.50 from Dr G. Gear, Nicholls Farmhouse, Lybury Lane, Redbourn AL3 7JH: Lydia Hope’s inventory of paintings and Charles I’s art collection; some of Hertfordshire’s special trees; the Great Bed of Ware; property ownership in twelve Hertfordshire parishes in the 19th century

Hexham Historian (no.20 October 2010) £6 from sales@robsomprint.co.uk: from Bilibo to Hexham; ‘This barbarous and irreligious county’; the history of Maiden Cross; Protestant dissent in Hexham; Hexham and the Royal Forestry Society

Hexham Local History Society Newsletter (no.58 Winter 2010) Border Library; Hexham Old Goal; lifelong learning in Newcastle; watching the fords at Hexham 1552

The Honeslaw Chronicle [Hounslow and District History Society] (Autumn 2010) £1 details from Andrea Cameron, 16 Orchard Avenue, Heston TW5 0DU: tour of the Inns of Court; organ-builders in Isleworth

Lincolnshire History & Archaeology (vol.42 2007) £21 from Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Jews’ Court, Steep Hill, Lincoln LN2 1LS: Sir Joseph Banks and the draining of the East, West and Wildmore Fens; Thomas Oldham of Saltfleetby; the Spalding Gentleman’s Society from 1889 to 1911; an a large fire engine; Ann Wagge: an Ilkeston witch?; Burton’s in Ilkeston

Lincolnshire Past & Present (no.80 Summer 2010) £1.60 from SLHA as above: early football in Lincolnshire; Methodism, Horncastle and the Kipling Family

Midland History (vol.35 no.2 Autumn 2010) details from www.maney.co.uk: A Radstock quarrel; the Court of Chivalry and the Irish peerage during Charles I’s personal rule; the role of cavour and the Priestley Riots in Birmingham Unitarian identity 1791-1815; the impact of James Loch, chief agent to the Marquis of Stafford, on the Lilleshall Estate, Shropshire; common lodging-houses in St Thomas’s Oxford 1841-1901; intersca council housing in Burton; ‘At the King’s pleasure’ : the testament of Cecily Neville

Recording Angels [newsletter of project to preserve Midlothian’s memorials] (no.3 2010) from Hon. Secretary, c/o Local Studies, Library Headquarters, 2 Clerk Street, Loanhead EH20 9DR: skeletons, cherubs and the Green Man

Pennant: the local history journal of Backwell, Nailsea, Tickenham and Wraxall (no.88) £4 from Nailsea and District LHS, PO Box 1089, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 2YP: Bass family; Treby family of Laurel Farm; extracts from 19th century newspapers; the Morgan family; Commander Evans’ father and his shipping connections; Rogers family; Vynes family and the Holy Trinity clock; Blackwell Reveals; tragedy at Farlers Pit; Southfield Church
Tyne & Tweed: journal of the Association of Northumberland Local History Societies (vol.64 October 2010) £4.50 from ANLHS, PO Box 423, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 9AZ: Tynemouth and North Shields Parliamentary Borough; an Ellingham schoolmaster; Tyne shipbuilding and ship repair; North East Coast Exhibition of 1929

News Reviews Research [Newsletter of Pinner Local History Society] (no.113 Autumn 2010) details from lanning44@aol.com: West House reopens; Harrow Would House and White Gate School; more Pinner shopkeepers

Poynton Historian [Poynton Local History Society] (no.3) £3 from PLHS, 24 Nickleby Road, Poynton SK12 1LE: Bella Seed’s reminiscences of growing up in Poynton; Jim Wainwright talks about changes in the 20th century; labour of love at the Anson Pit; A.V. Roe Woodford; how the Warren family became associated with Poynton

Rickmansworth Historical Society Newsletter (no.89 October 2010) £1 from Geoff Saul, 20 West Way, Rickmansworth WD3 7EN: the fire engine history; William Edmonds; vicars of Rickmansworth

Transactions of the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society (no.42 2009) details from P.O. Box 378, Scarborough YO12 4WS: a prehistoric square enclosure, Seamer Moor, Scarborough; beakerstones; archaeological excavations at Auborough Street and the Scarborough Marine Engineers site, Quay Street, Scarborough; public bequests by Scarborough testators 1364-1599; the Unitarian Church in Scarborough 1870-1908

Send & Ripley History Society Journal (vol.6 no.214 Sept/Oct 2010) details from www.sendandripleyhistorysociety.co.uk: 400-year history of Footbridge House, High Street, Ripley; more wartime memories; Grove Heath North; the Ripley Pals (vol.6 no.213 Nov./Dec. 2010) Our family lived in a double decker bus; James Jackman 1891-1967; the lychgate, St Mary the Virgin, Send; Romans in the South East


Thriplow Journal [The Thriplow Society] (vol.19/1 Summer 2010) details from Shirley Wittering, 24a Middle Street, Thriplow, Cambridge SG8 7RD: The Bungalow before electricity; elections of the past

Wandsworth Historical Society Newsletter (no.238 September 2010) Wandsworth Museum

Wandsworth Historian [journal of Wandsworth Historical Society] (no.90 Autumn 2010) £3 from agrobson@tiscali.co.uk: Jesse Rust and Son, vitreous mosaic manufacturers of Battersea; industrial Wandsworth in the late 17th century; the mysterious Smithwood Close oak tree; the wonders of Frame Food; the Arling & Hobnobs Great Fire

West Sussex History [journal of West Sussex Archives Society] (no.78 Autumn 2010) membership £13 pa details from wascom@btinternet.com: surveys of the honour of Arundel 1570; the Leoknor family; Elizabeth Rise comes alive (Petworth House archives); scandal and riot in early-19th century Worthing; Sister Joachim and world war One in Ooigem, France; the Hornung family of West Grinstead and their Mozambique estates

Open History [journal of the Open University History Society] (no.114 Winter 2010) £5 from OUHS, c/o 77 Marford Crescent, Sale M33 4DN: a study of the ‘Old Nichol’ and its redevelopment; study of the post-war reconstruction of Coventry city centre; Tottenham County School evacuees recall their salad days

William Barnes Society Newsletter (no.61 November 2010) details from Richard Burleigh, Oakside, Meadow Way, Lower Sea Lane, Charmouth DT6 6NS

Opposite: advertisement for the delights of Littlehampton, from the Ward Lock & Co. ‘Red Guide’ to Bognor Regis, Chichester and Selsey (undated but circa 1930)

Back cover: Littlehampton and the emergent ‘Costa Geriatrica’, from the Bartholomew’s half-inch map sheet 6 ‘Sussex’ published in 1947 [see Brian Short’s review of the latest VCH volume, pp.79-80]