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• Fire in Newcastle upon Tyne 1720-1870
• Childcare and careers in postwar Oxfordshire
• Piety and charity in four Surrey parishes 1480-1580
• Poor relief in 17th century Westbury-on-Trym
• An appraisal of record office on-line catalogues
• Books on the history of Wales • Record society publications

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Recent publications in local history

1
Introduction

The phenomenon of fires has long attracted the interest of local historians, with the production of a number of studies of individual fires and their impact, and broader studies of the chronology, regional distribution and economic consequences of fires. However, as far back as 1989, Frost and Jones criticised studies that treated fires ‘as local events, in an episodic and descriptive fashion’, and lamented the absence of broad comparative investigations. Most studies of fires by local historians have concentrated on their economic impact, their implications for town building or rebuilding, or the related issue of their role in policy innovation because of attempted preventative measures. Further studies have examined the history of firefighting technology, and provided more general accounts of the development of fire prevention and fire services, and their relationship to urban governance. Others have explored the indirect role of the fire hazard in relation to business history, and specifically development and change within the insurance industry. So, while there have been some generic studies, many of these have not been concerned with urban fires per se, but have used the fire hazard or experience of fires as a vehicle to explore other substantive issues. Frost and Jones and Jones et al remain as the key starting points for generic studies of the urban fire phenomenon, their work being based squarely on the fires themselves.

However, urban localities differ in their experiences of most phenomena, including fires, and they differ precisely because they possess different geographical, morphological, economic, political, and social structures. Thus, while there are obvious dangers in extrapolating from one or a few events, there is much to learn from the detailed study of one locality. This paper examines a large number of cases in Newcastle upon Tyne in an attempt to draw out some broader implications of urban fires, albeit in a localised context. In so doing the paper hopes to make a contribution to several of the debates relating to the wider context of fires in the early modern town. Just how serious was the threat from fire? What was the trajectory of change over a period of rapid urban growth? What were the main fire risks and how were they dealt with? How did fire-fighting and preventative measures develop over the period and what was the policy reaction of the urban authorities in relation to this specific hazard?

The data

A database of fires in Newcastle upon Tyne from the 1720s through to 1870 was compiled from four complementary sources. Foremost among these were several volumes compiled in the 1830s by two noted local historians, John Sykes and Moses Aaron Richardson, recording on an annual basis significant events in the city and...
surrounding area. From 1837 the annual publication of the proceedings of Newcastle Corporation also contains a record of important events within the city, including serious fires. These sources were cross-checked for omissions with two local newspapers, the *Newcastle Courant*, first published in 1711 and the *Newcastle Journal*, available from 1832. It must be stressed that the database consists of ‘serious’ fires only, these being defined as fires resulting either in destruction of property or loss of life. This means that the fires discussed here represent a very small proportion of the total fires in Newcastle at this time, the majority of which were very small. For example, between November 1863 and December 1867 a total of 54 fires were reported but of these only 14 met the definition of ‘serious’.

Typical of the non-serious fires (but providing an example of the type of reporting upon which this study is based) was an incident on 1 June 1858: ‘At about one o’clock in the morning a fire was discovered in a shop in Nuns’ Street kept by Mr. Forbes, a newsvendor. Fortunately, an inspector of police and a number of his men were immediately on the spot, and these, assisted by the people of the vicinity, got the fire under control without the assistance of the engines’. In the period 1720-1870 there were 168 fires which met the ‘serious’ criteria as defined above, slightly more than one per year. Ostensibly, therefore, fires may be interpreted as a somewhat less than constantly threatening hazard—which completely contradicts the way in which they were typically portrayed, as ‘an ever present menace’ and a ‘devouring element’. The fear of fire was probably more prevalent than the actual experience of such an event.

There is debate among urban historians about the numerical significance of fires and their trajectory of change. Frost and Jones demonstrate that the number of serious urban fires reduced significantly during the nineteenth century, while Borsay notes ‘after the 1760s is it clear that a sharp and permanent decline set in’. Changes in building materials, as brick, stone and tile replaced wood and thatch, are cited as the principal cause of decline. However, these studies are primarily concerned with the residential components of urban space and the materials of which these were constructed. In a port city with a growing industrial base, the threat of fire was far from being confined to the domestic sphere alone. To establish the seriousness of the threat from fire in Newcastle upon Tyne it is therefore desirable to examine fires in relation to different types of land use, an important parameter that previous studies have rarely examined on a systematic basis.

Table 1 Serious fires in Newcastle (1720-1870) classified by land use type of initial outbreak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land use</th>
<th>Number of fires</th>
<th>% of total fires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public houses, hotels</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouses</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factories</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stables</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ships</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>168</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows the occurrence of serious fires by the type of land use of the initial outbreak. A surprising feature is the tiny proportion of fires that began in ships. Given the predominance of wooden ships in this period and the fact that Newcastle was one of England’s leading commercial ports and, furthermore, one that specialised in the export of coal, a highly combustible material, a much greater number of ship fires might have been expected. But these data relate only to fires occurring within the Newcastle urban area and therefore only include ships berthed at the Newcastle quayside or adjacent moorings. There were a number of ship fires elsewhere along the River Tyne which do illustrate the potential hazards: for example, that in the Fly of Ely on 4 July 1817 when gas from ‘fresh coals’ caused an explosion and fire when reaching ignited candles in the master’s cabin.15 Nevertheless, the number of fires affecting shipping was still unexpectedly low. Significantly, in the mid-eighteenth century the Newcastle Corporation and Trinity House had ‘obtained finance from maritime traffic on the River Tyne and thought it wise to have fire protection’,16 but this practice soon fell into abeyance, possibly because of the relative rarity of ship fires.

It is clear from Table 1 that fires in residential premises were less significant than outbreaks in other forms of land use. The highest proportion of fires occurred in manufacturing premises, whether factories or smaller workshops. This prompts some reflections on the phenomenon of what Frost and Jones term the ‘fire gap’ which emerged in the nineteenth century, defined as the ‘divergence between the increasing urban population and the falling absolute number of fires’,17 and therefore based on the relationship between population growth, house-building rates and the incidence of fire. In many towns the frequency of fires did decrease, despite a significant increase in population and residential area, but in Newcastle upon Tyne the number actually increased and no discernible ‘fire gap’ emerged (figure 1). Although the number and proportion of fires in domestic premises did decline in relation to population increase, fires in other building types increased significantly. The contrast with the findings of Frost and Jones is partially accounted for by the rather different
definitions of ‘serious fire’, for they are concerned with what they call ‘major fire
shocks’, affecting large numbers of buildings and substantial areas. These are
primarily defined in terms of fires affecting residential property and severity is
measured by the number of dwellings destroyed. However, fires that destroyed just
one building—for example, a factory or warehouse—could have major economic and
social impact. Although there were no fatalities, a fire in February 1863 at the
premises of Messrs J. and E. Richardson, tanners in Newgate Street, Newcastle,
caused £30,000 worth of damage (equivalent to almost £2 million today) and resulted
in over 100 workpeople being unemployed for a considerable period.\(^{18}\)

Towns with different functional characteristics and different urban morphologies may
therefore be expected to show different trajectories of change. Frost and Jones
attribute the emergence of the fire gap to two main processes—the use of less
flammable materials in new building or reconstruction, and reductions in urban
density. Celia Fiennes had commented on the prevalence of stone and brick building
in Newcastle in the late-seventeenth century,\(^ {19}\) but urban fires were frequent in the
eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Even in a period of fast-growing use of
tile, brick and stone, the number of fires did not significantly diminish. But
Newcastle remained an extremely high density town with limited outward urban
expansion,\(^ {20}\) and one with a very distinctive urban morphology,\(^ {21}\) described by a
contemporary as being ‘built in an awkward, crowded and inconvenient manner’.\(^ {22}\)
Calculations suggest that in 1746 the area within the medieval walls still accounted
for three-quarters of the built up area of the town (56.2 hectares of a total of 74.5
hectares) and, of ten regional centres, Newcastle had one of the lowest amounts of
open garden space per head of population within the urban curtilage (14.7 square
metres per resident compared with 31.8 square metres in Ipswich and 55.2 in
Colchester).\(^ {23}\) In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries workshops,
factories, warehouses and offices invaded the urban core. Furthermore, the nature of
many industrial and proto-industrial activities was extremely hazardous.

Fires in Newcastle were more likely to be winter events—42 per cent occurred
between November and February inclusive, and before the early nineteenth century
the proportion was much higher. Of the ‘non-serious fires’ recorded between
November 1863 and December 1867, 57 per cent also occurred in these winter
months. But this also varied according to the function of the building. Domestic
property was the most likely to experience winter fires (with 61 per cent occurring in
the winter months), doubtless because of the combined effects of the careless use of
fireplaces and chimneys that possibly had not been swept and the greater use of
unprotected candles in the darker evenings and mornings. Workshops may have
been subject similar circumstances, although the proportion of winter fires was
somewhat less, at 45 per cent. In larger factories, winter fires accounted for 37 per
cent, only marginally more than would be expected from an even distribution across
the seasons.

If the pattern of variation by season was not entirely clear-cut, the temporal pattern
certainly was. Fire, or more correctly the discovery of fire, was a night-time
phenomenon: 61 per cent occurred between ten o’clock at night and five o’clock in
the morning with a further 18 per cent occurring in the evening hours from six to
ten o’clock. The widespread use of unprotected candles as a means of illumination
was undoubtedly a factor here, as illustrated by an incident at a malting in Hornsby’s
Chare, next to Butcher’s Bank in January 1760. The fire ‘burnt with great violence
for five hours and was due to a workman taking an uncovered candle amongst a large
store of flax in the building’.\(^ {24}\)
The main fire risks

Every fire has a specific initial cause but the incidence, risk and consequences of fires depend upon other factors which frequently combine. The Commissioners into the State of Large Towns noted of Newcastle in 1845 that ‘The prevailing causes of fires arise from accidents, negligence, and by the improper introduction of timber too near flues and chimneys’. But unsafe practices were common, especially in the small workshops, as in February 1847 when a clerk, Nicholas Moody, and a labourer, John Bowman, attempted to seal a carboy of turpentine by candlelight at a wholesale chemists in Sandhill. Both men died in the ensuing conflagration and £1200 worth of damage was caused. Well-intentioned actions might exacerbate the danger. In March 1861 at the premises of Mr Grierson, gutta-percha boot and shoe maker, a pan of naphtha and other ingredients boiled over, fell on the fire and ignited. Two apprentices attempted to take the pan outside but upset it on the stairs causing the fire to spread further in the four-storey building. Both apprentices and Grierson himself were severely burnt but two occupants of the upper storeys were killed. A gas explosion led to the tragic death of Mrs Walker of Buckingham Street on 26 February 1853. Her husband committed the classic error of using a lighted candle when searching for the source of a gas leak in their provision shop. The explosion virtually destroyed the premises and blew his wife into the street.

Poor maintenance, or its complete absence, was another significant cause of fires. This was especially the case with the neglect of chimneys: thus, at a glass house in The Close in December 1764, due to the ‘foulness of the chimney … some of the sparks got in between the tiles, setting fire to the roof’. Even significant buildings were affected by poor maintenance resulting, for example, in the dramatic events and severe damage to All Saints church on 9 November 1828: ‘When the congregation assembled … there was a great deal of smoke in the church, and it increased so much during the sermon, that many of the congregation were obliged to go out. The church being warmed by a stove, it was found that the upright flue … had been filled with soot, and this having ignited, had heated the iron flue red hot … as this passed near one of the main timbers of the roof, and separated from it only by lime, the beam had caught fire’. That problems arising from poor maintenance of chimneys persisted is highlighted by the fact that it was thought necessary in the Town Improvement Act of 1865 to make provision for fines of 10s in cases where ‘omission, neglect, or carelessness’ had led to chimneys taking fire. Hazardous industrial processes were a further significant cause of fires, as exemplified by the substantial fire of 24 July 1750 which caused £10,000 worth of damage in The Close near the old Tyne Bridge. The fire began in a cellar ‘made use of for a warehouse, situated on the side of a river where the buildings stood extremely crowded together, and without any wharf or quay between them and the water which made all approach for assistance more difficult and dangerous’. The merchant’s cellar adjoined a brewhouse where the copper was located next to the wall and ‘the partition being but a few inches thick, the bricks were so intensely heated by the flames of the furnace then at work, that some combustible goods, placed against the heated wall, took fire’. Ten dwellings and a number of warehouses ‘with abundance of goods and furniture were entirely consumed before eight o’clock the next morning’.

Hazardous industrial processes were a further significant cause of fires, as on 8 March 1858, at the St Lawrence ropeworks of Messrs T & W Smith. This started in a large open cauldron in which the ‘tarring’ of the yarn was carried out, and it destroyed the boiler house, the capstan house and yarn store and several hundred tons of yarn and
twine with damage of over £2000. One of the most severe fires originating from poor maintenance allied to unsafe practices took place on 31 May 1839 at John Atkinson’s prestigious coachworks in Pilgrim Street. A fire beneath a chimney flue, used in the manufacturing of springs for the carriages, had been burning continuously for nearly a month. This resulted in a wooden beam becoming overheated, the source of the fire. It was not discovered until one o’clock in the morning when flames burst out into the street. Despite the arrival of two fire engines, for a further half-hour nothing was done as no water could be obtained from the two nearest sources in Pilgrim Street and Erick Street. The fire spread to Fenwick’s dye house, Vine Court and Erick Street and ‘every house in the neighbourhood was deserted; beds, bedding and furniture of all descriptions were piled together in the middle of Pilgrim Street’. Atkinson’s loss alone was computed at over £20,000.

Although in itself not a direct cause of fires, a factor which greatly exacerbated many outbreaks was the inappropriate storage of materials, especially the juxtaposition of highly combustible materials in the same or an adjacent storage facility. A fire broke out in the early morning of 21 June 1863 in the warehouse of Messrs Taylor Gibson and Co, wholesale druggists, which was full of combustible articles including oils, brimstone, rice, sago, oats, glue, gum and acids. It rapidly spread to an adjacent drapery establishment, extending from Grainger Street to the Bigg Market, causing extensive damage. At the end of the previous century the casual storage of combustible and dangerous materials was evidenced by the fire on 28 August 1799 at Mr Bulman’s warehouse on the Side, which destroyed most of his stock. The outcome could have been far worse as a quantity of gunpowder was stored in an upper warehouse, but two volunteers bravely removed this to safekeeping in St. Nicholas’ church. In October 1724 there had been no such good fortune as, in precisely the same premises, a barrel of gunpowder exploded killing 12 people and injuring nearly one hundred more. The indiscriminate sharing of space by potentially dangerous neighbours continued for many years, as for example in 1813 in a yard opposite the Cross House in Westgate Street. A fire started in a paper-hanging manufactory on the upper floor of the building, spread to a coach-making workshop on the second floor and from thence to the stable and warehouses of R. Pearson, drysalter, on the ground floor. On a larger scale, the juxtaposition of factories whose processes required fairly continuous fires and those that produced highly inflammable material, was bound to have severe repercussions. A fire at the Angus coach manufactory in Bigg Market in January 1830 lasted over six hours, spreading quickly to Hardcastle’s floor-cloth factory on the west side of St. John’s Lane, several warehouses and a number of dwellings in that street. In the absence of effective planning controls and the necessary separation of dangerous land uses and activities, the impact of fires was bound to be severe.

Although many fires in the period under review would appear to have been preventable from our perspective, one frequent cause, arson, was as common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as it is today. The windmill on the Castle Leazes, Gallowgate was destroyed by fire on 5 November 1756, ‘supposedly by incendiaries’, but the date might be significant. That this was probably not an isolated event is evidenced by the fact that the Corporation offered a 20 guinea reward ‘for the apprehension of the offender or offenders’. More common was the threatened or actual use of fire as a means of extortion. The mysterious blaze which completely destroyed Mr Barber’s house at Summer-hill in March 1773 was sinister in that there had been no domestic fires laid in the house for some time and Barber had received two threatening letters ‘demanding him to place money upon his garden wall. A reward of £110, and his majesty’s pardon, were offered, but without
effect’. But reasons other than pecuniary gain may have been responsible for the incident on the Town Moor on 26 June 1803, when three tents were deliberately burnt down, possibly to encourage ‘undesirables’ to move on from temporary accommodation. A series of deliberate fires targeting public houses early in 1838 also appears to have been motivated by resentment or revenge, although the possibility of pyromania could not be ruled out. So numerous were occurrences of a similar description about this period, that public opinion attributed them to ‘incendiarism’. A few years later, further incidents were reported at the Golden Lion Inn, Bigg Market, and at the Bird in the Bush, the fourth time in a few years that the latter had been a target. Bogus insurance claims were also a motive for arson, as with the fire in Leipschitz’s pawnbroking shop in High Buckingham Street. The greater proportion of the property was destroyed but ‘in consequence of very suspicious circumstances the tenants of the property—Lavine and Selig Leipschitz—were apprehended on a charge of arson and the former committed for trial’.

**Efforts towards fire prevention**

In common with other municipal areas Newcastle did not possess its own fire service for most of the period of study. In 1751 the corporation had jointly purchased, with Trinity House, two fire engines in London, and on 4 January these ‘were played off on the Sandhill … with great applause’, but there is no further reference to these machines and instead the insurance companies were mainly responsible for fire protection. The Newcastle Fire Office was opened in 1783, ‘for the assurance of houses, buildings, goods, wares, and merchandizes, from loss or damage by fire’ with provision for a fire-fighting service. In 1827 this firm had three fire engines kept at a station in the Manors, while the North British insurance company had a fire engine in Bell’s Court, the Sun one in Hillgate, and the Royal Exchange one in Prince’s Street. A further engine was maintained by the military at the barracks on the Town Moor and at least five were kept by individual manufacturers in the city. The various appliances appear to have been used communally, at least on occasion: thus, the fire at Messrs Forster & Co.’s sugar house in The Close in September 1786 was attended by ‘all the fire engines kept in the town’. Similarly, the fire in Mosley Street at Miss Rudd’s millinery store on 28 January 1813, ‘by the timely arrival of the Newcastle and Royal Exchange fire-office engines, and the great exertions of the men belonging to the same, was happily extinguished’. In February 1823 a fire at a lead manufactory in Gallowgate was extinguished within three hours by the engines from the Newcastle Fire Office and the barracks.

Despite this apparent level of co-operation, the issue of adequate fire fighting facilities came to the fore in 1837 when Councillor Mitchell proposed the formation of a fire brigade for the borough, with the superintendent of police as its head and members recruited from the ranks of the police. The claim that this would distract the police from their primary duties was rebuffed on the grounds that such an arrangement worked well in Glasgow and Liverpool. But an opponent of the plan, Councillor Plews, insinuated that ‘the proposers of the scheme wanted to saddle the council with the expense, in order to relieve themselves’, implying a connection between Mitchell’s party and the fire insurance companies. Mitchell’s case was strengthened in the following year by the huge fire at Atkinson’s coach manufactory in Pilgrim Street. An extensive report of the fire was produced by the Watch Committee, although it focused almost exclusively on the specific problems of water supply experienced during this fire rather than on the overall adequacy of fire-fighting provision within the borough. Not until 1846 was the matter considered again by the Council.
At that time, despite an increase of population to over 80,000 from 43,000 in 1821, the number of fire-fighting appliances remained at about twelve, but more important than the number of engines available was the manner of their operation. The Commissioners on the Inquiry into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts considered that ‘Though a proper force of working engines assemble with alacrity, and are efficiently worked in cases of fire ... the Committee think the system generally capable of much improvement’. The apparent co-operation noted earlier was also queried, it being noted that the firemen, ‘when employed at fires, refused to attend to directions ... unless coming through the medium of an agent ... of the office to whom the engine belongs’. Although the Newcastle upon Tyne Improvement Act of 1846 authorised the Council to ‘purchase or provide ... engines for extinguishing fire ... and to employ a proper number of persons to act as firemen’, it was over twenty years before the Corporation exercised these powers and formed a municipal fire service, despite the issue being raised frequently by the reformist town councillors. The problem of who was to pay for such a service remained the persistent objection. Alderman Dunn proposed that the insurance companies should contribute to the cost of a permanent brigade but they responded that, as only half of the properties in Newcastle were insured, they could not ‘be expected to contribute by means of annual subscriptions more than one half of the annual cost’. A subscription fund was started and by 6 May 1846 stood at £675 per annum of promised contributions. The purchase of a corporation fire engine was proposed—‘almost every corporate town of any importance had either a fire brigade or an engine belonging to the Corporation’—but Sir John Fife asserted that ‘the Council should not take upon itself an expense which had previously been borne by the fire offices’ and that ‘there would no doubt be murmurs out of doors if the inhabitants were saddled with an additional rate for the purchase of a fire brigade’. Mr Hall claimed that the Watch Committee Report ‘contained no argument to induce the Council to take upon themselves the establishment of a fire brigade’, and a significant proportion of the councillors remained happy enough to leave the responsibility for fire-fighting to the fire insurance companies. Even when a fire engine was offered to the Council by the manufacturers Merryweather’s of London at the reduced price of £180 (the engine had been on display at the annual meeting of the Royal Agricultural Association in Newcastle) the matter was referred to the Finance Committee which in essence meant that it was shelved.

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, commentaries on Newcastle fires make more frequent reference to the problem of water supply, which was described in 1845 as ‘most defective’. The number of fire plugs increased from 135 in the 1820s to 490 in the 1840s, but these were only of use as access points if water was actually being conveyed along the city’s pipes, something by no means guaranteed. The failings of the water supply were amply demonstrated in 1839 during the fire at Atkinson’s coach-building works in Pilgrim Street when ‘for more than half-an-hour there was little or no water in the pipes’. The Lamp and Watch Committee’s inquiry revealed a lack of co-ordination between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ sources of supply into the city and between the several turncocks whose responsibility it was to control access. Subsequently, ‘an arrangement was made for all three turncocks to reside close to the Newcastle Fire Engine Establishment; so that in case of alarm they can be brought on the spot as soon as the engines’. But problems of a reliable flow of water remained. On 22 July 1858 at Dunn’s Ropery near Byker fire broke out in a hemp warehouse: ‘Newcastle fire engine was on the spot in a short space of time but their efforts were unavailing for some time ... water had to be obtained from a pond in Mr Dunn’s field ... as the supply in the standing pipes was very deficient’. Then just over a year later,
in Morrison’s Court off the Groat market, ‘considerable delay took place before a quantity of water could be poured on the burning building and when the supply became sufficiently powerful it was obvious the flames could not be extinguished before the building itself had been reduced to a skeleton’.71

During the 1840s and early 1850s, therefore, the debates on Newcastle’s fire-fighting capacity largely concerned either the adequacy of the water supply or the desirability of establishing a municipal fire brigade, with its own engine. The latter was again debated on 20 September 1854, when Councillor Hunter moved that ‘a special committee be appointed to consider and report upon the expediency of establishing and maintaining a fire brigade’.72 This was just two weeks before the Great Fire of 6 October 1854, the ‘most appalling catastrophe which probably ever occurred in the sister towns of Newcastle and Gateshead’. The fire began in a worsted factory in Hillgate, Gateshead (ironically, a replacement building for one destroyed by fire in October 1850). An adjacent warehouse then caught fire. It contained 200 tons of iron, 800 tons of lead, 170 tons of manganese, 130 tons of nitrate of soda, about 3000 tons of brimstone, 480 tons of guano, 10 tons of alum, 5 tons of arsenic, 30 tons of copperas, ½ tons of naphtha and 740 tons of salt.73 Shortly after three o’clock in the morning there was a huge explosion, which scattered burning debris, including brimstone, across to Sandhill and the Newcastle quayside and started a whole series of further fires in the tightly packed buildings (see illustration on front cover). The homes of over 800 families were destroyed,74 53 people were killed, and over 180 injured were detained in the Newcastle and Gateshead hospitals. Many more suffered minor injuries. The total damage was estimated at over £1 million.75 Six ‘chares’ (alleyways) at the junction of Sandhill and the Quay were destroyed, giving an opportunity for a complete redesign of this locality (figure 2) with the prevention of the spread of fire being an essential requirement.76 Public sympathy and support was immediate, with over £11,000 being subscribed to the relief fund, yet the event did little to change the overall perspective of the majority of Newcastle Town Council. Indeed, there was an unsavoury debate on the propriety of using the relief fund to pay the workmen engaged to extinguish the fire.77 The council majority concluded

2 The Sandhill area of Newcastle, (left) before the great fire of 1854 and (right) replanned after the fire
that while they 'fully acknowledged the desirableness of an efficient fire brigade, they are however of the opinion that the formation of the same should not be undertaken by the council'. However, in September 1855 the council did authorise the purchase for £50 of two mobile fire escapes designed to assist the rescue of people from the upper floors of multi-storey buildings.

Newcastle citizens considered this to be no more than a feeble gesture and demanded a public meeting on the fire prevention issue. The Guild Hall meeting on 31 October 1859 was followed by a petition demanding 'additional measures to be taken for the speedy extinction of fire' and reminding the council that they possessed the necessary powers to form and maintain a fire brigade. As usual, the council listened politely then referred the matter to the Watch Committee, which perversely recommended the council 'to refrain distinctly from incurring any responsibility in seeking to prevent fire ... but that the labours of any brigade ... should be exclusively confined to the extinction of fire'. Its report proposed that the Fire Insurance Office's offer to transfer their engines to the corporation be accepted, a new engine be purchased, and the services of the 22 firemen employed by the Newcastle and North British Insurance Companies be retained at their present salaries. In addition, it was proposed that twenty police constables and four inspectors be selected to augment this force and form a brigade of 46 men. The estimated cost was £200-£300 with £100 per annum for maintenance.

Two traditional hard-line opponents of municipalisation vehemently opposed the proposal, claiming that it 'not only saddled the corporation with a great outlay, but with a great responsibility', and arguing that responsibility for fire-fighting should remain with the fire insurance companies. Councillor Harle mounted an impassioned defence, pointing out that only one-sixth of the property in the city was insured, that they were entirely reliant on the public spiritedness of the two main insurance companies, and that 'Newcastle was now in a worse position in regard to extinguishing fires than it was fifty years ago. There were fewer engines in the town'. The proposal was deferred, and the only tangible result was a weak compromise involving an investigation of the willingness of the insurance companies to continue some financial support.

But within a few years the council's hand was forced, ironically as a result of its own activities in a different arena. The Town Improvement Committee approved street improvements at the Manors, involving the purchase of the fire station which was owned by the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company. The latter were glad to sell this property and offered to give their fire engine and apparatus to the council as a gift. The Watch Committee recommended acceptance and, despite a rearguard effort from Councillor Gregson who grumbled that 'this was only an attempt on the part of the North British Insurance Company to exonerate themselves from the expense', Alderman Ridley's proposal that the offer be accepted was passed with a large majority. Within the year, the council also purchased a new steam fire engine at a cost of £650 and two hand engines to improve the water pressure when fighting fires. Newcastle finally had a municipal fire brigade.

Conclusion

This paper challenges the proposition that British provincial towns witnessed the emergence of a 'fire gap' in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries arguing instead that, at least in the case of Newcastle upon Tyne, high building densities and the rapid growth of commercial activities exacerbated the common fire risks to
produce an increase in the number of fires. Nevertheless, for most people during the century and a half from 1720 the fear of fire was probably greater than the actual experience of such an event. The risk of fire was greatest in commercial and industrial premises where, for much of the period, dangerous storage regimes, lack of maintenance and careless work practices abounded. Despite this, the council remained extremely reluctant to accept any responsibility for the prevention and fighting of fires, being content to let this remain with the insurance companies. The prevalent view that this was no business of the council remained until the Great Fire of 1854 but even then, and despite growing public pressure, the formation of a municipal brigade was only undertaken reluctantly when the council had little choice in the matter because the insurance companies chose to rid themselves of the responsibility.

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Women’s experiences of combining childcare and careers in postwar Oxfordshire, c.1940–1990

ANGELA DAVIS

Introduction

This article explores how the increasing participation of women in paid employment, one of the most important social developments in postwar Britain, was experienced in Oxfordshire, with its particular culture and traditions; employment patterns; housing, services and amenities; and local figures and groups. Through its consideration of the lives of working mothers in the county, the article demonstrates how a local study enables an in-depth consideration of the way national trends were experienced in different types of localities and communities, offering a new perspective on existing historical accounts.

Britain during the second half of the twentieth century witnessed significant social, economic and demographic change. Growing numbers of women entered the workforce and geographical mobility led them to live further from their families. At the 1951 census about one in six of all British mothers of dependent children were employed. This rose to 26 per cent, 39 per cent and 47 per cent in the 1961, 1971 and 1981 censuses respectively. In Britain in 1971 there were nearly 590,000 mothers of pre-school children in paid employment. For every 1000 mothers with young children, 187 were employed. Of these mothers with under-fives about 176,000 were employed over 30 hours a week, effectively full-time work. Factors accounting for this rise in the number of married women workers included full employment, an end to marriage bars, the lower age at marriage and the declining birth rate, which reduced the amount of time most women spent raising children. Coupled with the growing affluence seen in the 1950s—as real incomes rose and unemployment remained low—the security the welfare state brought meant that families were living lives without precedent. The extensive house-building that took place after the war—both private and council-built—meant that more families were realising their ambitions to live in a home of their own, often on new estates on the outskirts of both old urban areas and villages. In consequence both men and women were encouraged to engage with their homes and families in new ways and domesticity was celebrated.

Oxfordshire shared in this national transformation. The county had an estimated population of 635,500 at the end of the twentieth century, with around 140,000 living in Oxford. The nineteenth century had seen a decline in the power of agriculture in Oxfordshire, as in the country at large, and it continued to decrease in the twentieth century. Agriculture employed 20.2 per cent of the county’s workforce in 1901 but, with the mechanisation of many farming processes, the proportion had declined to only 1.7 per cent by 2001. During the second half of the twentieth century changes in employment opportunities, population size and service provision accelerated. In Oxford, there was a surge of council-house building at Rose Hill and Barton to try to meet the demand for housing. Most council and private house-building was located in extensions to existing towns and villages, but Berinsfield, an entirely new village, was built by the local authority in 1958. Traditional industries
declined, motor transport grew and the postwar welfare state became a major employer, particularly in the health services. There were important differences between the experiences of the urban and rural localities, but they also shared some significant similarities. The decline in agriculture and domestic service affected employment opportunities for men and women. The growth of industry, which ran parallel to this transition, created many new jobs for the population of the towns in which these industries were located, but also for the surrounding countryside. The motor industry, the nexus of which was the works at Cowley, grew dramatically during the interwar years and it was estimated that around 3,000 ex-agricultural workers were employed there by 1936. Women became involved as workers at Cowley most conspicuously during the Second World War, but were also part of the workforce before and after the war. These trends continued throughout the postwar decades and by the early 1970s only 6,116 males were employed in agriculture while in contrast the motor industry employed 28,500 people.

Linked to the changes brought about by these new employment patterns was that of population mobility. The decline of jobs located where people lived, as in agriculture, together with improved transport and communications which meant people no longer needed to live where they worked, broke down many of the old communities, both urban and rural, and created new ones. Government planning policy, both local and national, exacerbated these trends. Some communities were judged suitable for development, such as Benson (which was classified as an expanding village in the late-1950s), while others shared the fate of St Ebbe’s in inner city Oxford, demolished as a slum clearance area in the 1960s. Not all the changes were negative. The general availability of amenities such as water, sewerage, gas and electricity increased. Health and welfare services developed. The better wages available in the new industries and the improved living conditions that new housing brought benefited many people. The communities that developed could never replicate the old, but after initial periods of dislocation they did mature and began to provide support for their members. However, these alterations were not without their consequences. While transport brought improved access to facilities and employment outside the local area, the services and job opportunities on offer within a village or district often declined. As populations became more mobile, family members lived further apart. These changes also had notable consequences for traditional patterns of employment and childrearing. Work was often further away and families less likely to be on hand to help with childcare.

In consequence, women in Oxfordshire, as in the country more widely, were faced with new questions about how to manage the care of young children. The question of whether married women should work outside the home was, according to Carol Dyhouse, ‘one of the vexed social issues of the 1950s’. At the same time as the numbers of women in the labour force began to grow there was a focus on domesticity and the home in the context of postwar reconstruction. Mother-centred theories of psychoanalysis were in the ascendency in the years after the Second World War. John Bowlby developed the hypothesis of ‘maternal deprivation’, which stressed the damaging effects upon the mental health of children when the mother-child relationship was broken. Such views were deeply influential and determined the provision of state childcare, or rather the lack of it, on offer to women at this time. Writing in the early 1980s, Berry Mayall and Pat Petrie stated that ‘The influence of John Bowlby became important in public utterances in the early 1950s. Policy-makers accepted his view that a child should not be parted from his mother at all until he was three, and after this only for short periods of the day’. Indeed, comparing
childcare in Britain and other European countries in the postwar period Vicky Randall notes that public sector provision in Britain ‘has been sensationaly low’.17

 Provision in Oxfordshire was also lower than in the country as a whole. During most of the period under review there were only three day nurseries in operation, two in Oxford (in Botley Road in the west of the city and Florence Park in the east) and one in Banbury, which together provided 95 places for a potential population of about 40,000 children—about two places per 1,000 children.18 These figures also highlight variations in provision within the county. Day care in Oxfordshire was heavily concentrated in Oxford, although less than one-third of the county’s population lived there.19 The prevailing attitude within local government in Oxfordshire was that ‘children were better off at home with mother’. The medical officer of health for the county, M.J. Pleydell, who was responsible for the provision of Oxfordshire’s day nurseries, stated in his annual report for 1966 that ‘attendances under the age of 2½ are discouraged’.20 In addition, only half-day attendance was available in Oxfordshire’s nursery schools and classes during the period. This limitation did not usually allow women to go back to work, and when such schools and classes were used it was in tandem with another form of childcare. Moreover in the late 1970s Oxfordshire County Council gained notoriety for its decision to close all nursery schools and classes.21

 Both national and local government absolved themselves from providing pre-school services by claiming there was little demand for them. Rates of employment among mothers were low in Oxfordshire. The ‘Oxford Preschool Research Project’, conducted in the 1970s, found that while the county had a comparatively high proportion of pre-school children (84 per thousand of the population), it had the lowest proportion of mothers with children under five working more than 30 hours a week: 17.9 per cent compared with 31.3 per cent in the country as a whole.22 Nevertheless, while some Oxfordshire women may have refrained from work though choice or because economic circumstances meant they did not need to, there were women working in the county, as this article will demonstrate.

 Its aim, therefore, to examine how Oxfordshire women managed to combine childcare with paid work in the decades after the Second World War, how their strategies changed over time, and the particular features of the Oxfordshire environment that affected their ability to do so. Back in 1995 Elizabeth Roberts noted, in her study of women in postwar Lancashire, that more historical work was needed in order to explore and account for the similarities and differences in women’s lives in different places.23 While further studies have been undertaken, there are still significant gaps.24 By demonstrating the importance of living in Oxfordshire on women’s work and family lives, I hope this article adds to our existing knowledge of women, work and family in postwar Britain and will encourage further local studies on the subject.

**Methodology**

The article is based on a group of about 150 oral history interviews conducted by the author with Oxfordshire women who were raising their families between the 1940s and the 1980s. Oral history is a methodology that can provide objective information about women’s lives, but also reveals their thoughts and feelings through the subjectivity of their accounts. It enabled me to examine how women review their experiences in the light of later developments in their own lives and the changing attitudes towards women that occurred over the course of the century. While all the
women lived in Oxfordshire when their children were growing up, the range of communities was specifically chosen to enable a comparison of local experiences. They were the villages of Benson and Ewelme in south Oxfordshire; the Wychwood villages in west Oxfordshire; the 24 square miles near Banbury in north Oxfordshire covered by the *Country Planning* (1944) survey; Oxford city centre; the contrasting suburbs of Cowley and Florence Park in east Oxford, and North Oxford and Summertown in north Oxford; and the market town of Thame. In addition a group of graduates of Oxford University (who had continued to live in Oxfordshire when they raised their families in the years that followed) were interviewed. The aim was to construct a sample that ranged in age from their fifties to their nineties (two generations are represented in the sample), represented both middle and working classes, and included a variety of educational backgrounds (from minimum-age school leavers to graduates), to see how locality, education and class influenced women's experiences. Interviewees were principally found through community groups, social clubs and by women recommending other women to me. In her history of Oxfordshire children's health and wellbeing, Kate Field argues that this 'snowballing', where each respondent gives the name of another person to participate, is a particularly appropriate method for finding elderly respondents to a local study because it helps secure the trust of interviewees through being 'recommended' to them by their friends. The interviews were semi-structured, following the model described by Penny Summerfield, and were typically between one and two hours long.

The remainder of this article therefore focuses on four different strategies which Oxfordshire women used to combine work and family: state-provided day-care in the form of day nurseries; private individuals found outside the family—nannies, au pairs and childminders; family and friends; and part-time work.

**Day nurseries**

Few of the interviewees recalled state-provided (or indeed privately-run) nurseries being available. In 1953, when there were only three day nurseries in the county, the medical officer of health fleshed out the priorities of attendance, stating the service was aimed at 'children whose parents are in employment and who cannot make alternative arrangements for their care during the day. In addition, special cases are given consideration when both parents are not employed, e.g. illness of the mother or unusual social circumstances'. This limited provision reflected the national situation. As Celia Briar has noted, childcare provision by local government to help working mothers was very much the exception. Subsidised places were only available where families were in some way 'unsatisfactory': where the mother was 'obliged' to work because she was unmarried, widowed or separated; where she was incapable of taking proper care of the children; or where the home conditions were unsuitable from a health point of view. Faith had come to Oxford to undertake graduate studies in the late 1960s. She worked in a shop after her only daughter was born in 1971, because her husband had left when the baby was six weeks old. She was living in Jericho, at that time one of Oxford’s working-class areas. Theoretically, as a lone mother she should have met the criteria for a place at one of the county’s day nurseries. However Faith said, 'there weren’t many facilities ... for small children so that women could work. There was one ... nursery on the Botley Road. But it was always full and there was a long waiting list'.
The association of day nurseries with single working mothers also meant that they carried a stigma. For example Fiona, who was born in 1941 and grew up near Croydon, attended a day nursery just after the war when her mother had a new baby. Her father was away in the forces at this time. She said, ‘we were sent off to day nursery, which we weren’t supposed to be at because it was supposed to be for working mothers. And we were there for about a fortnight I think and we picked up whooping cough, and so we were terribly ill. And I can remember that quite vividly too’. It is interesting that Fiona both remembered attending the nursery and associated it with acquiring a bad illness—it was not a nice place. Hope lived in Cowley with her husband, a schoolteacher, and their three children born between 1955 and 1960. She worked part time. Hope was keen to stress that her children went to a nursery school, not a day nursery. She said: ‘It was a nursery school, it wasn’t day nursery, which was basically a sort of child minding system’. Day nursery provision was limited in Oxfordshire for a number of reasons. As already noted, the local authority did not want to encourage their use as it believed young children were better off with their mothers, but nationally provision tended to be lower in rural and more affluent counties and Oxfordshire was both. This meant that women in Oxfordshire, such as Faith, who would have liked such a service, found that it was lacking. However, because of the stigma attached to day nurseries it is probable that many women would not have thought about using them even if they had been provided.

Nannies, au pairs and childminders

Privately organised forms of childcare such as nannies, au pairs and childminders were spoken about more positively. In their study of working mothers Simon Yudkin and Anthea Holme noted the ‘great preponderance of individual over group care’. In Oxfordshire, nannies, au pairs and childminders were all used to provide this individual care. While none of the Oxfordshire interviewees employed a resident nanny, some had nannies who looked after their children on a daily basis. Unlike a childminder, who looked after children in her own home, a nanny worked in the home of her employer. Nannies traditionally enjoyed a higher status. As Lucy Delap notes, they had been ‘an upper-class institution’. Alexa, a university lecturer, was originally from the United States and had moved to Oxford to undertake graduate studies. She had originally wanted her daughter, born in 1993, to attend a nursery, but as there were no places available she looked for a nanny. Alexa said she was subsequently pleased because it enabled her daughter to grow up seeing normal ‘womanly’ things and that the nanny was a ‘substitute me’. Indeed, it is interesting that some women felt their nannies may have been better suited to caring for small children than they were. Anna’s three children were born between 1967 and 1973. She was a doctor and her husband an academic. Discussing her nanny, Anna said that she ‘was lovely, very sensible and I learnt a lot from her. She was just very commonsensical and I mean ... the area that I didn’t really know about with children [was] the whole area of play. ... Knowing what kind of things children like to do and how to entertain them’. But the relationship was not always easy to negotiate. Tasha initially shared childcare with a friend when her first daughter was born in the early 1970s. She then used a childminder for her daughter before employing a nanny after her second child was born in 1975. While she had been happy with her childminder, she felt her nanny was too ‘old school’ which led to a degree of conflict between them: ‘Nan used to wind me up ... [she said] “Have you left enough milk for my baby?”’ I mean she was calling him “my baby”’.41
Nannies were also too expensive for many parents. In her study of graduate women and work published in the mid-1960s Constance Arregger wrote: ‘As a cheaper substitute for a nanny, the au pair girl is rather more commonly found nowadays’.42 For many middle-class mothers of Oxford (and particularly north Oxford), au pairs were the most popular form of childcare.43 Their prevalence was encouraged by Oxford’s status as a famous university city which attracted young, foreign, female workers. For example Phoebe, who had employed a series of eight au pairs to care for her five children born between 1948 and 1957, said it was easy to find an au pair in Oxford ‘because they wanted to come to the language schools’.44 Indeed the medical officer of health for Oxford complained about Oxford’s attraction to young, female domestic workers who were filling up beds in the city’s mother and baby hostel.45 Au pairs were of course not limited to Oxford. Delap has argued that au pairs filled a gap left by the decline of traditional forms of domestic service.46 Their numbers rose from an estimated 17,000 a year in the 1950s to many tens of thousands in the late 1960s and early 1970s.47

Hannah had three children in the 1950s and worked throughout her children’s upbringing. She explained that after her first daughter was born she ‘took six weeks off and went back into the Physiology Department, but was subject to considerable pressure and criticism from close colleagues ... who thought it was wicked of me to go back to work if I had a baby daughter’. She said the way she and her husband managed was by having ‘au pair girls living in’.48 It is interesting that while discussing her childcare arrangements, Hannah mentioned the hostility she faced from her colleagues. Perhaps because of this critical climate, and the subsequent feelings of guilt it encouraged, interviewees displayed some uncertainty in their attitude towards au pairs. Phoebe was born in 1921 in Northern Ireland; her parents ran a private school. She studied medicine at Oxford and later practised as a psychiatrist. She was married to a research scientist and they had five children in the late 1940s and 1950s. Of her eight au pairs she recalled that she enjoyed living with all but two. Nonetheless she thought that ‘it comes apart when you give an untrained au pair too much responsibility leave them too long alone with the children’.49 It is also noteworthy that Hannah and Phoebe were both familiar with the work of John Bowlby and said it caused them some anxiety.50

Therefore while au pairs could be a useful source of childcare they did not entirely remove the dilemmas families faced. Indeed some women recalled au pairs as being an additional burden and felt responsible for looking after them. Michelle had been born and brought up in Oxford, in an academic family. She joked that she ‘had a French au pair girl who was absolutely hopeless [laughing] and didn’t understand any English and it was all very traumatic’.51 Moreover although au pairs were clearly popular with middle-class mothers in Oxfordshire they were not an option for their working-class counterparts.

Childminders, though, were a popular low-cost form of childcare. Minders looked after other people’s children at the same time as their own and in their own homes and as a result their pay and conditions were poor.52 The numbers of registered childminders increased rapidly. Nationally registered childminders took just 0.5 children in every thousand in 1949 but 11.3 in 1968.53 In Oxfordshire the figures mirrored these national trends. In 1949 there were no minders registered,54 but in 1970 there were 109.55 Supporters of childminders argued that they used the valuable experience and common sense they had gained from bringing up their own children and offered the ‘one-to-one’ relationship so lauded by child psychologists such as Bowlby.56
Reflecting these views, interviewees who used childminders said they liked the intimacy they offered. Faith had to return to work after her daughter was born in 1971 as she was the only wage earner. As noted above, she had been unable to secure a day nursery place and instead found a childminder. When asked if it was hard to leave the baby she replied: ‘No, it was actually easy, because the childminder was so lovely, she was absolutely wonderful’. Cynthia was one of the younger women interviewed. She was born in 1957 and grew up in Kettering. After graduating, she had become a child psychologist and employed a childminder after her daughter was born in 1993. She thought her childminder was brilliant: ‘[my daughter] was always terribly happy to go and it did feel like, yeah, [my childminder] was part of the family so there was never any problem’. However there were also negative portrayals of childminders during these years—raising the old spectre of baby farming. Karen remembered her distress at watching ‘a kind of play documentary’ in the late 1960s about a ‘terrible childminder who had babies stacked along the couch in rows’. When the programme was shown Karen had started leaving her baby with a neighbour who minded for her so she could continue studying. She recalled how the programme ‘made me feel dreadful’.

Being able to find a childminder in the first place was also dependent upon where in the county women lived. Explaining why she did not return to work until her three children, born in the late 1960s and early 1970s, were of school age, Louisa told me it would have been impossible to find someone to look after her children as she lived in a village on the outskirts of Oxford with no transport. She said, ‘it was just jolly difficult to find anyone to look after them. Because we lived out someone would have had to have got a car, I don’t think they would have cycled, I can’t see childminders cycling up Boar’s Hill’.

Family and friends

If women could not find or afford to pay someone to look after their children, how else did they care for them? More than two-thirds of the children of the working mothers surveyed by Simon Yudkin and Anthea Holme were cared for by private individuals. Fathers rarely provided childcare, but grandmothers were a popular mother-substitute, with other relatives, friends and neighbours also being used. There were, however, notable differences based on class, educational background and locality, and these were reflected in Oxfordshire. For example the graduates of Somerville College had moved from the areas in which they had grown up to attend Oxford University. In consequence few of them lived near their families, so family-based care was not generally an option. This contrasted sharply with the circumstances of working-class women living in traditional urban and rural communities, where there was often a wide family support network. Madge was born in Shipton-under-Wychwood in 1918 and grew up there before moving to the neighbouring village of Milton-under-Wychwood when she married in 1939. She described how she relied on many members of her kin to look after her five children:

I had a friend ... and she was the one who looked after [my children], and then she went on holiday and my sister had them, they had quite a different variety of mothers to look after them. And then I had others who I was friendly with. I had a great aunt who was living next to me and she used to take them out in a pram for a walk, oh yes I had quite a lot of help.

It is also significant that friends and relatives were interchangeable in Madge’s discussion of the aid she received. However, while contemporary commentators
expected working-class women’s mothers would help them with childcare. Madge’s mother was notably absent from the list of her children’s ‘mothers’. Madge explained that her mother had told her, ‘they’re my children, I can get on with it’. Ethel only lived a few minutes’ walk away from her parents in Benson, but recalled with some resentment how her mother ‘wouldn’t baby-sit for me’ when she was raising her children born in 1938 and 1948. Her mother said, ‘she’d had her six, and she said she’d had to look after them’. Women’s accounts of their mother’s involvement in childcare also indicate change over time. While several women recalled their grandmothers providing childcare so that their mothers could work when they were growing up in the 1940s (the war was of course significant here), they said their mothers did not provide this service for them. However, many reported that they provided childcare for their own daughters at the end of the century. Demographic issues may account for this difference. Women who were raising their families in the 1960s and 1970s were marrying and having their children at younger ages than was the case before or has occurred since. Hence, many of their mothers were still of working age when they became grandmothers, at a time when employment opportunities for women were increasing. Perhaps in consequence their mothers played a limited role—either by choice, because they did not want to be involved in caring for small children again, or of necessity, because they were too busy to do so.

Moreover, while middle-class mothers may not have had family support, they did recall how friends and neighbours helped with childcare. Jill graduated from Oxford in the late 1950s and met her husband while they were both undertaking graduate studies. They continued to live and work in the city after their two children were born in 1966 and 1970. Discussing how she combined her work with having children she explained that it was difficult, because ‘I didn’t have parents close, my mother as I said was abroad and my husband’s parents lived ... in the north of Scotland, so they weren’t available either, but I did have good friends’. Indeed, she said she shared childcare with a colleague’s wife enabling them both to work part time: ‘we used to swap babies’. Jill was not alone in making such arrangements. Tasha been an undergraduate at Somerville and then did a DPhil in physics. Her then husband (the couple later divorced) was also a physicist at Oxford University. Jill’s first daughter was born in 1972, while she was working as a researcher in the university. Like Jill, Tasha explained that she ‘swapped with a friend who lived round the corner. She was starting work again. And I had her baby while she had mine’.

Part-time work

However, ‘swapping babies’ could only be successfully accomplished if women worked part time, and part-time work was the most common way for Oxfordshire women to combine work and family throughout the period 1940-1990. Indeed Louisa said hers was the ‘part-time generation’. However, while part-time work was popular among women of all class and educational backgrounds, the type of work they performed was very different. Domestic work and shop work were the most common jobs amongst working-class women, although there were also women employed in factories and offices. Local circumstances were important in determining whether women worked or not and if so the type of work. There could be specific opportunities in a neighbourhood or village—for example the car works in Cowley or the honey factory in Ewelme. However, such a dominant local employer could lead to difficulties if it shed staff, relocated or closed, and not all women were looking for factory work. While census statistics have shown that the number of female agricultural workers was in sharp decline over the first half of the century, it was clear
from the interviews with Oxfordshire farmers’ wives that they were still engaged in agriculture. However, women in rural areas also found that they were hampered through limited employment opportunities. Women’s involvement in paid work was lower in rural areas and the quality and the pay and conditions of work were poorer.

For example Mavis, who was born in Crowmarsh in 1930, later moving to Ewelme after she married and had her children between 1956 and 1967, said:

I used to think sometimes I wouldn’t have minded doing a little something different, in the village it wasn’t easy, I mean I didn’t have a car, and if you wanted to do anything you had to get on your bike and go and cycle, and then you had to get back for the children, so it wasn’t that easy, you know. But if I’d been in a town near to shops and things I’d of probably gone to a shop for a little while and done it that way.

Among middle-class women the most popular career was teaching. Women often retrained as teachers after they had their children because they thought it was a family-friendly profession. There was little social disapproval of women teachers because teaching was constructed as a female occupation. Indeed, married women teachers were being urged to return to the profession.

School working hours and holidays meant that difficulties in providing childcare, at least for school-age children, were reduced. Olive, a Jericho resident, who returned to teaching when her youngest child started school, recalled that the only day time she was not available at home when they were was on staff inset days, when her eldest daughter baby-sat her younger brother. Ingrid, who lived in Headington when her two children were born in the early 1960s, worked part time before they were of school age and then returned full time afterwards. She said she was ‘very lucky’ to be a teacher, explaining that it ‘made life easy’ because there were no problems in collecting her children at the end of the day and she was also at home during school holidays. Bertha and her family were living in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell when her children were young. She had returned to part-time teaching in the late 1960s when her children were school age. She felt that working part time had enabled her to combine her work and home commitments, but added, ‘I don’t think I’d be able to cope full time, I really don’t. I don’t know how these mums do it’.

Part-time work was also common in medicine, the only other profession where women were employed in large numbers. The case of medicine also clearly demonstrates how significant locality, and local personalities, could be for women’s ability to combine their working and family lives. When Phoebe had her first baby in 1948 she found it difficult to continue her medical career because training placements had to be full time. She explained: ‘I looked for a part-time job when I had my baby and there was nothing, so I went as a part-time nurse to the Warneford [Hospital] where I just sat around in a white coat and sometimes tidied a cupboard’. However improvements occurred, with Oxfordshire’s female medics benefitting from the pioneering work of Rosemary Rue. In 1965 Rue had become assistant senior medical officer for the Oxford region. A mother herself, she was conscious of the difficulties that women faced. She therefore provided funding for various units within the United Oxford Hospitals to take on women doctors for part-time training. The scheme, which began in Oxford in 1966, later spread around the country. The women who benefited from it became known as ‘Rosemary’s babies’. Anna was one of the first women to benefit from the scheme after her first baby was born in 1967. She explained:

I knew I was going to go back to work and it took a year and a bit because there was another girl, a contemporary of mine qualified at the same time
already had two children. And she and I were trying to negotiate to do a job share ... We asked for it, but there was nothing much we could do. I think all the negotiation was being done on our behalf by the medical school and the consultants ... and the GMC [General Medical Council] eventually agreed.81

It also became easier for women in medicine to work part time after their training. Jane’s three children were born in the mid-1970s and she worked in dermatology. She said she never had to resign from her post, taking the maximum maternity leave with each child. When asked how she managed to combine her job with raising a family she said: ‘I had a wonderful contract. I worked two half days a week’.82 She continued by explaining that ‘I was lucky to be in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire was pioneering the idea of mums going back to work, regular medical doctors going back to work, and they more or less let you do what you wanted to do’.83 Whether women were able to pursue medical careers on a part-time basis was therefore dependent on where they lived. Oxfordshire’s women doctors were fortunate to have benefitted from the presence of Rosemary Rue.

Conclusions

Through an analysis of a group of oral history interviews with Oxfordshire women this article has explored how the social changes seen in postwar Britain, and particularly the growth of employment among married women, affected the lives of women in Oxfordshire, but it has also examined how the specific features of the Oxfordshire environment determined their experiences. It supports the findings of existing studies of women’s work in the postwar years by demonstrating the lack of state assistance for women workers and women’s reliance on private solutions, particularly the support of family and friends and part-time work. However, the importance of locality has been often been understated in these earlier analyses. In contrast, using Oxfordshire as a local case study, this article has revealed the extent to which the local area in which women lived also shaped the choices available to them. For example the limited number of day nurseries in Oxfordshire meant that local authority childcare was not available to women in the county as it may have been in areas where provision was much higher, such as London. Oxfordshire women had to find private arrangements for the care of their young children. The attraction of Oxford to young, female workers meant that personal care in the form of au pairs was readily available and this became a popular mode of childcare for the city’s middle-class residents, with childminders and nannies also being used.

While there were class divisions in the use of family in the provision of childcare, working-class and middle-class women alike found friends to be an important source of support. However, these informal systems also depended upon the availability of part-time work in the area. The article has also emphasised the significant role that could be played by local personalities, such as Rosemary Rue. Her pioneering approach meant that part-time work and training was available to Oxfordshire women who wanted to practice medicine in the 1960s and 1970s—a situation that was not applicable to women nationwide. Finally, it has shown that even within the county there were further divisions which were influential in determining Oxfordshire women’s experiences. For instance childcare and transport were more readily available for women in Oxford than in rural areas and as such it was easier for them to work outside home. By focusing on this group of women living in Oxfordshire, this article has therefore been able to reveal the importance of where women lived in shaping their ability to combine paid work with raising their children.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This article was written during a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship. I am grateful to the British Academy for their generous support.


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15. John Bowlby, Child care and the growth of love (Penguin, 1974) 13


18. Bridget Bryant, Miriam Harris and Dee Newton, Children and minds (Grant McIntyre, 1980) 29


20. Bodleian Library, Oxford [BL]: Oxfordshire County Council, Annual report of the health and welfare services for the year 1966

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24. Since 1995 there have been studies on women from different parts of the United Kingdom: for example Lynn Abrams, Myth and materiality in a woman’s world: Shetland 1800-2000 (Manchester University Press, 2005); Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon, Deborah Simonton and Eileen Yeo (eds), Gender in Scottish history since 1700 (Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Deirdre Beddoe, Out of the shadows: a history of women in twentieth-century Wales (University of Wales Press, 2000); Leanne McCormick, Regulating sexuality: women in twelfth century Northern Ireland (Manchester University Press, 2009). However the English regions have not received the same level of attention.


26. To preserve the anonymity of the interviewees pseudonyms have been used. Interviewees are referenced by identifying codes. The codes are formed of the first two letters of the locality from which the interviewee came and an identifying number: BA = 24 square miles of north Oxfordshire near Banbury covered by the 1944 Country Planning survey; BE = Benson; CO = Cowley and Florence Park; EW = Ewelme; NO = North Oxford and Summertown; OX = Oxford city centre; SO = graduates of Somerville College; TH = Thame; and WY = Wychwood villages. Recordings and transcripts are held by the author.

27. The group of graduates of Somerville College, Oxford were found through the college’s alumni association.

28. Interviewees were asked to give their class of origin.


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31. BL: Oxfordshire County Council, Annual report on the County health services: Part II report of the County Medical Officer by T. Anderson, 1953
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34 Faith, SO12, 9-10
35 Fiona, BE10, 1
36 Hope, CO11, 23
37 Simon Yudkin and Anthea Holme, Working mothers and their children (Sphere, 1969) 57-60
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39 Alexa, SO13, 4
40 Anna, NO13, 10-11
41 Tasha, SO14, 19
42 Constance E. Arregger, Graduate women and work (Oriel Press, 1966) 93
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44 Phoebe, SO8, 4
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68 Louisa, SO5, 5
69 Tania, EW8, 13; Lily EW6, 7
72 Mavis, EW10, 15
74 ibid., 258
75 Olive, OX6, 21-22
76 Ingrid, SO11, 11-12. It is notable that when Ingrid first returned to full-time teaching she also had an au pair.
77 Bertha, EW11, 11
78 Arregger found that medicine and dentistry accounted for about 16 per cent of the employed graduates she surveyed with 31 per cent of these working part time: Arregger, Graduate women and work, 13
79 Phoebe, SO8, 3
81 Anna, NO13, 10-11
82 Jane, NO17, 10
83 ibid., 11

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Introduction

During the past forty years one of the most extensively researched and publicly debated topics in English social history has concerned the true nature of popular and community belief in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Questions have been asked, and variously answered, concerning the impact of the official changes in religious adherence, observance and liturgy which were imposed by successive monarchs and their ecclesiastical and secular administrators from the beginning of the 1530s to the advent of civil war in the early 1640s. Some historians have challenged the notion of the inevitability of progress towards an established Anglican Church, arguing that the personal beliefs of the people did not necessarily accord with the official espousal of a particular version of the Christian faith. Swift changes imposed by statute did not inevitably match the sometimes hesitant, frequently half-hearted and often confused processes which took place at parish and community level. Individual clergy did not invariably follow the party line, which would have meant switching allegiance as required and overriding the pangs and qualms of their own conscience. They, and individual parishioners (who are almost always much harder to interrogate in the historical sources) had their own perspectives on what they were told to do, though most wisely chose to keep quiet about it and thus their voices are lost to history.

The genesis of this paper was a desire to know more about the progress and process of religious change in four parishes in north-west Surrey and the need to find at least some evidence for the religious attitudes and beliefs of local people. In my case, and I suspect that of quite a few other local historians, this was prompted by reading the works of the great debaters: I devoured The Stripping of the Altars and The Voices of Morebath, Eamon Duffy’s blessed pair of sirens, and found myself fascinated not only with the minutiae of the lives of the individuals and communities which he described but also with the brilliance of his demonstration that the reality of the local experience could, and so often did, diverge dramatically from the generalised abstraction of the national story. That came as no surprise, for one of the fundamental points about local history is that it uncovers and reveals the degree of diversity between regions, counties, communities and places in the past. But Duffy’s beautifully written books shone new light on my awareness of that fact and encouraged me to begin my own investigation. At the same time, the work of Diarmaid MacCulloch offered a somewhat different perspective, though likewise one which places ordinary people centre-stage. He suggests that there is a tendency to present the Reformation solely in terms of a handful of significant males, principally Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Loyola, Cranmer, Henry VIII and a number of popes, which...
distorts the picture because it downplays the importance of the ordinary folk. He argues that Protestantism succeeded so widely because its message could ‘seize the imaginations of enough people to overcome the power and success of the old church structures’. This view draws our attention to the remarkable achievement of English Protestantism, in moving from obscurity at the end of the 1520s to a deeply-entrenched authority only forty years later, by which time it had a gained dominant position as the genuinely-espoused faith of the majority of the English people. I was working on a new edition of a history of the four parishes, so I took the opportunity to undertake more detailed research on their individual and collective faith from the reign of Edward IV to that of Elizabeth I, trying to tease out evidence for piety and charity and to measure their willingness to conform.

Religious change during the period from the 1480s to the 1640s is still widely expressed in fairly simple terms. Reduced to its barest minimum, this narrative states that fifteenth and early sixteenth century Catholicism was discredited, falling into popular disfavour and contempt as the monastic ideal was ever more tarnished and the decadence and over-worldliness of the episcopal and parochial systems became increasingly conspicuous. The circumstances were thus propitious for the reception of radical Protestant ideas from Germany which, by coinciding with the king’s marital problems, produced a political and theological shift in favour of a break with Rome, the personal ascendancy of the king as head of a new national church, the dissolution of the monasteries as the logical sequel, and the end of Catholic England. That, in turn, gave way to a more extreme and destructively iconoclastic version of Protestantism in the relatively brief reign of Edward VI, followed by the fierce counter-attack of Catholicism under Mary, characterised by the restoration of many of the forms and tangible symbols of the revived Catholic faith, and accompanied by the burning of almost 300 Protestants. The early part of the reign of Elizabeth I saw a middle of the road compromise settlement, approved by parliament in 1559, in which the restored Church of England combined mildly Protestant-inspired theology with mildly Catholic-derived liturgy. That ‘broad church’ was in turn beset by internal dissent as the Puritan wing emerged in the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign, becoming a vigorous theological and political force in the reigns of her successors James I and Charles I and eventually, during the turbulence of the 1640s, triumphing as the dominant element in English society. This sequential approach, used in many introductory works and often forming the framework of analysis by local historians, essentially argues that the religious history of the English nation was that of its rulers and of the elite in Church and society.

That relatively clear narrative has been widely challenged, and not only by those sympathetically inclined to Catholicism. For example, it is now generally accepted that the late-medieval Catholic Church was more dynamic, expansionist and flexible than earlier assessments allowed, with heightened architectural ambition and in many areas retaining the loyalty of the flock. It can be argued that the Protestant Reformation progressed more slowly and hesitantly, without penetrating deep into the affections of the people until well into Elizabeth’s reign; that during and immediately after the Reformation there was a high degree of continuing attachment to and active support for the Catholic church; and that the Marian restoration of Catholicism was more pragmatic and potentially more effective than had previously been acknowledged. The survival of Catholicism after 1558, as a solid force rather than a residual anachronism or aberration, is readily accepted—although that is perhaps more apparent to those of us working in north-west England where it remained the faith of the majority in most of Lancashire at least, but this alternative
version would imply that for many others adherence to the Church of England was never as wholehearted as might be supposed.

The local dimension is clearly crucial. None of these changes was encountered evenly across the country—in other words, that local circumstances and local idiosyncrasies of personality, economy and society in individual communities made a material difference to the rate at which these official changes were accepted, and also to the depth and strength of that acceptance. Factors such as geographical distance from London, Canterbury, Windsor or York, the personality of the diocesan bishop, the assiduousness of local ecclesiastical officials, and the zeal of individual parish priests all played their part. Regional and local variations further confuse and complicate the story. The more we take the local circumstances into account, the more the picture changes from photographic precision to bewildering abstraction. What held good for Morebath did not necessarily hold good for Manchester; the experience of Reading might well be radically different from that of Rotherham. We lose the clarity which was one of the advantages of the ‘official’ view, and instead encounter blurring and fuzziness. While more realistic, that is a less comfortable position.

Local historians who want to investigate the subject in this period should therefore perhaps start from the official view, accepting this as a contextual framework, but should anticipate that the experience of their individual community or district could well have diverged from that top-driven sequence of events and phases. We should try to elucidate the local circumstance, and that of course requires us to investigate the primary sources for our own area, to determine the extent to which our chosen patch reflected the ‘official’ experience. Therein lies a challenge. Inevitably, Duffy and other historians have used as case-studies those parishes which are particularly well documented, for without that they could not readily have developed their arguments and arrived at their conclusions. In particular, churchwardens’ accounts have been used as a crucial source for establishing the physical, liturgical and social impact of change in the parish church which was the focus of every community—the introduction of new prayer books, the removal of statuary, the curtailing of particular festivals and feast days, the stripping of the very altars themselves. But what we can we do if we have no such source—can we even begin to sketch a picture of what happened in those changeable and uncertain times?

My four parishes were frustratingly poorly documented. None has either parish registers or churchwardens’ accounts until the Commonwealth period, there are no episcopal visitation returns until the late 1580s, and documentary sources of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries are rather rare. How, therefore, can any information be obtained about the religious feelings of ordinary people in those communities at the time? One answer, inevitably, is by using probate records. Fortunately these four parishes, which were in the archdeaconry of Surrey and the diocese of Winchester, do have substantial numbers of surviving wills from the 1480s onwards (that is not always the case—for example, in north-west England probate records are rare before the 1540s), but the use of wills as an indicator of religious belief is one of the most contentious areas in the whole field of ‘grassroots faith studies’ covering the Reformation period and long afterwards. Quite a few historians in the past fifty years have optimistically seen the religious preambles, the expressions of faith which form the testament of the document, as a key indicator of genuine faith, arguing that variations in the forms of words and phrases used provide reliable evidence for religious adherence. Others, more prudently, draw attention to a contrary and less confident interpretation which states that such expressions are variously merely formulaic, or highly susceptible to the need to express a ‘proper’
view (that is, one which conformed with current ideology), or are simply a suitable form of words expressed by the writer of the will, not the testator ... or, indeed, a combination of these elements. That argument indicates that we cannot ascribe any special value to such preambles. On the other hand, the specific details of bequests, and indeed some of the nuances of phrasing, do potentially give valuable circumstantial and supportive evidence of certain dimensions to religious belief. And, after all, if we have no other source we must perforce rely on the less than perfect evidence which probate records afford.

1 The four parishes of the study area (Alan Crosby)

The case-study

The four ancient parishes in the case-study are Byfleet, Horsell, Pyrford and Woking, which in 1933 were united to form the urban district (since 1974 the borough) of Woking and now constitute by far the largest town in Surrey with a population of just over 100,000. Until the mid-nineteenth century, and in startling contrast to its present-day condition, this was a poor and relatively remote area, though only 25 miles from London. Like much of Surrey it was agriculturally somewhat underdeveloped, with roughly one-third of the total area occupied by sandy heathland and common waste, and it had no substantial settlement—the largest of the four parishes, Woking, had a population of less than 2000 in 1801, and the large village or tiny town of Woking had only about 350 people in the early eighteenth century. The parish churches were commensurately modest, that at Pyrford being typical of the smallest category of Surrey churches, with an unaisled nave and a box-like chancel almost as large as the nave itself (see figure 2). These churches were—insofar as we have any documentary evidence—poorly-endowed and with furnishing and decoration which were, even by the standards of rural Surrey, unambitious and unostentatious. The most reliable evidence for this comes from the 1553 inventories of the king’s commissioners, which show that none of the four could compare with
The goods of Woking St Peter

- A pix of silver – viij oz
- Four chalices parcel gilte thirti ownces
- Iij alter clothes of velvat and silke
- Iij aulter clothes of lynnen
- IX vestimentes
- Ij coope of velvate
- A surplice and four rochettes
- A desk cloth
- Ij canype clothes
- Ij crosse clothes
- A cros staffe
- V towels
- A red silk cloth quilted
- A canype of silke
- Iij tunacles and iij altes
- A crose of copper
- A senser
- Ij water pootes
- V candelstyckes
- A latton bason and an ewere
- A crosse cloth
- Viij streemars and banners
- A font cloth
- Ij braunches of yron for taperes
- V gret bells in the stepull
- Iij littell small bells
- A saunce bell
- A paire of orgaynes

All wiche is commytted to the custodye of Nicholas Slade John Senacle Harry Wattes and Arthur Birkett in the sixte yere of the raigne of our said soveraigne lord

The goods of Pyrford St Nicholas

- I j challice of tynn
- I j pxyn of latyn
- I j corporis with ij casis of silke
- Ij krewites of tyn
- Ij candillstickes of brasse
- Ij aullter clothes of lockaram
- Iij towelles of lockaram
- Ij surplus ij sackring belles
- Ij belles in the steple of jc di
- I j vestement
- Ij crossis of brasse with one banner clothe
- Ij cloothes to kever the font
- J coope of silke

All wiche is commytted to the custody of John Gilbertt William Moerer William Snosner John Fynswun the vjth of October in the vjth yere of the reign of owre sovereign Lord

Table 1 Church goods at Woking and Pyrford 1553
(after Daniel-Tysson 1869)

I analysed a total of 182 wills from the period 1485-1579. Of these only five were proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Another eight wills were proved at the Consistory Court in Winchester. This rather low proportion of wills proved in...
higher courts—only thirteen of 182—is probably a reflection of the comparative lack of wealth in the area and, in particular, the almost complete absence of high status residents. With only three exceptions, none of the wills belonged to individuals above the social level of yeoman. Two of the exceptions were clergy, while the third was Sir Richard Weston of Sutton in Woking, one of the most prominent of the king’s courtiers in the 1520s. Weston had used his abundant wealth and influence to build himself Sutton Place, at the southern end of the parish of Woking, one of the most ambitious and architecturally innovative houses anywhere in England in the early sixteenth century. He was, by a very long way, the exception to the general rule that this was not an area of celebrity residents (which also contrasts sharply with its present condition). As we will see, Weston’s will had significant omissions which reflect the dramatic tragedy which befell his family in the middle of Henry’s reign.

A total of 182 wills might seem a decent number for analysis, but they are spread over almost a century and the average is only 1.8 wills per year. The Archdeaconry of Surrey probate series is particularly incomplete, and across the county as a whole there are major sequences of years when no, or almost no, wills are to be found. The gaps in the series occur throughout my period, and there is no way of overcoming the problem: original wills and register copies are both missing for, inter alia, much of the period from 1492 to 1520, and several key years in the 1530s and 1540s. In good years, there are up to nineteen wills per year in this area, and if we exclude the numerous missing years the annual average rises to roughly four, which is better but not much. To try to present any statistical conclusions from such patchy and imperfect sequences would be futile, and indeed highly misleading. Instead, I looked at the different elements within the wills which related to religion (defined fairly broadly) and sought to draw non-statistical conclusions—to identify trends, highlight the progress of religious change through the disappearance or appearance of key elements, and consider the wording of the preambles in the context of the already mentioned grave doubts about their real implications.

We know little in detail of the religious complexion of West Surrey in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but its geographical location was clearly a potentially significant factor in the speed with which changes of official policy were adopted. It was in the powerful diocese of Winchester, and it straddled the key route between Winchester and London via the bishop’s favoured castle-cum-palace at Farnham and his metropolitan residence in Southwark, passing through the county town of Guildford. To the north was the great main road leading out from London to the West Country via Staines, Bagshot and Basingstoke. Windsor lay only a few miles beyond the county boundary. In principle, therefore, religious changes should have been implemented rapidly, because of the proximity of vigilant authority. Joan Dils, in her forthcoming edition of the churchwardens’ account of Reading St Lawrence, has noted how the geographical circumstances of that parish meant that, for example, new forms of the prayer book were purchased almost immediately after the relevant royal directive was issued. On the other hand Daniel Defoe, writing in the early eighteenth century, memorably said of Woking that it was ‘a private country market-town, so out of all road, or thorough-fare … that ’tis very little heard of in England’, suggesting an obscurity and perceived remoteness which might contradict the view of instant access to change and immediate susceptibility to pressure.

One of the most conspicuous public signs of religious belief in the region was the incidence of burnings under Mary. Of the 288 reliably attested deaths in England and Wales, almost 50 per cent took place in the diocese of London, and another 30 per cent in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester and Chichester. Bishops Edmund
Bonner of London and George Day of Chichester were notorious to contemporaries as being especially zealous in their use of burning. In contrast, Stephen Gardiner of Winchester, though a strongly conservative traditionalist, was deeply reluctant to execute heretics in this way, and the few who died in that diocese suffered under his successor, John White. No martyrs came from West Surrey—in marked contrast to, for example, the Weald of Kent and Sussex, where many villages and small towns had at least one—but whether that was because people in West Surrey were less enthusiastically or overtly Protestant or because the bishop was unwilling to create martyrs is perhaps an unanswerable question. So we have to rely on fragments of evidence from probate records to even glimpse aspects of individual faith in the period. None of what follows is in any way unexpected—Woking and its neighbouring parishes provide no surprises—but the wills give a modest insight into the local picture.

Bequests to the cathedral and monastic houses

One immediate conclusion of the research was that much of the overt religious provision in the wills amounted to no more than token gestures towards the Church. The almost invariably standardised wording, and the equally unvarying sums of money, emphasise that it was de rigueur to include reference to certain causes but the inescapable conclusion is that no special sentiment was usually attached to them. The most conspicuous example is the giving of small sums of money to what was usually termed 'the mother church of Winchester'. Until the 1540s this provision was found in almost every will, and the sums were small—twopence, fourpence or sixpence, with twopence by far the most frequent. There is some limited evidence—subjective rather than statistically sound—to suggest that by the mid-1530s this provision was not as automatic as hitherto, and by 1570 it was abandoned. The purely token nature of these bequests is hardly unexpected—almost none of the testators would ever have seen the cathedral or have thought about it in any personal sense, and the inclusion of these small sums is undoubtedly a consequence of the role of the local clergy in the will-making process. My calculation was that over the period of almost a century, from the 182 wills analysed, the total sum of £1 3s 5d was given to Winchester cathedral by testators in the Woking area. Even if we allow for lost wills, the amount remains small. This was comparatively distant Surrey, but comparably low levels of giving were commonplace among testators in Hampshire itself—again, the token nature is evident. Yet repeated across the diocese as a whole, parish by parish and year by year, the sums would in fact add up. The decline and disappearance of these small amounts, if multiplied by all the parishes in Surrey, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight, constituted a significant loss of income to the cathedral, and was perhaps a contributory factor in the slow decay of the church which is attested in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Less routine, and more carefully considered, were bequests to religious houses. While none of the four parishes had a medieval religious house within its boundaries, there were three in the vicinity which were potentially a special object of devotion, affection or patronage. Much the largest was the rich and influential Benedictine abbey at Chertsey, four miles to the north, which was founded in the seventh century, only a generation after the conversion. Chertsey abbey was a major local landowner, exercised a powerful influence across north-west Surrey as a whole, and was patronised by royalty and nobility. It is not mentioned by any of the testators. They ignored it, perhaps because it was so wealthy that testators felt it needed no more help, or (and this is mere speculation) maybe because even today Woking arguably
has little to do with Chertsey. Though only a few miles apart, they have few mutual concerns, and the area has closer associations with Guildford to the south. Did such intangible and unwritten understandings affect the practicalities of will-making in the early modern period?

The Dominican friary at Guildford, in characteristic fashion, received extensive support from the more prosperous merchants of that flourishing centre of the cloth trade. As an urban foundation it, like most friaries in England, was especially associated with those town interests, but it also held land in the parish of Woking. There it was remembered by two testators. Adam Ryley or Ridley of Woking, a substantial yeoman with trading interests who died in 1486, left 6s 8d to the friary—but he also gave 16s 8d to the repair of three local bridges, and left £10 to support his son John with an exhibition at Oxford, sums which put the bequest to the friary in perspective. The other testator whose will refers to the friary was Henry Roke, who died in 1535. He was chaplain to Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Place and ordained an elaborate funeral for himself at the friary, including a choir to sing, many priests in attendance, and other ceremony. Neither of these two testators could really be regarded as representative in terms of social standing.\textsuperscript{12}

In contrast, the third religious house, Newark Priory, was the only one which attracted wider favour from the yeomen of the district. The reason seems clear—the priory, the substantial and evocative ruins of which still stand in the water meadows beside the River Wey, was within sight of Pyrford church, just over the parish boundary in the parish of Ripley, and it held extensive lands in the four parishes. Indeed, its foundation in 1220 was made possible by the transfer of a secular college of canons from Woking itself, the distant successors of a monastic community which had been established there as a daughter house of Peterborough sometime in the mid-seventh century. Newark had very close connections, social, administrative and spiritual, with the four parishes and its greater popularity is not therefore

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{church_of_st_nicholas_pyrford.png}
\caption{The church of St Nicholas, Pyrford, from the north-east}
\end{figure}

\textit{(Victoria County History of Surrey vol.3, 1911)}
unexpected. Thus, in 1532 Edward Gybbs of Byfleet left 3s 4d to the priory and in 1536, only months before its dissolution, the exceptionally pious Hugh Dyddlesden of Pyrford left 20s in return for prayers for his soul and the souls of all Christian people. But what is most striking, perhaps, is the infrequency with which any religious houses appear in these wills. There is a strong impression that, unless (as with Hugh Dyddlesden) you lived within sight and sound of the monastery or (like Adam Ridley and Henry Roke) you had close connections with Guildford and its friary, the monastic system did not impinge on your consciousness to any significant extent.

**Personal attachment to the parish church**

On the other hand, parish churches were quite clearly central in people’s thoughts, and there was very strong personal attachment not only to the church itself but also to individual elements within its plan or furnishing. In many instances other parish churches also came to mind at the time when the will was being made. Some yeoman families appear to have regarded themselves as minor patrons of churches across a wider area, singling out for special mention and special favour churches with which their extended family had connections, or in whose parishes they themselves owned land. This has particular significance. We are accustomed to the idea of gentry and aristocratic patronage, but comparable actions on the part of the more prosperous yeomen can be interpreted as a public demonstration of their own social aspiration and a way of cementing their increasingly evident status as ‘parish gentry’. Thus, in 1537 Thomas Norwood of Horsell left ‘to the three churches, that is to say Horsell, Woking and Bisley, three torches, price of every torch five shillings’. His family held property in each of the three parishes concerned. Similarly, Margaret Stynt of Godalming, down in south-west Surrey, belonged to a family with property scattered widely across the district. In 1538 she not only left substantial sums to Godalming church, but also a ring to the church at Wonersh south of Guildford, her best ring to Ockham church, and another ring to be given to the cross in Woking church. It is possible not only to see therein a modest form of the patronage exercised by those higher up the social scale, but also to recognise that, in terms of social religion, the parish church was the obvious focus of the ambitions of testators. This impression is reinforced after 1540, when multiple giving of this sort becomes less frequent but is superseded by a correspondingly greater use of highly personal terminology. The rapid increase in the use of phrases such as ‘to be buried in my churchyard’ or ‘for the reparations of my parish church’ betokens a strong personal identification with place, a notion that the parish church was linked with individuals by a strong tie which, when woven with the ties of other individuals, represented a powerful force linking the community itself more tightly together.

This sense of identification with the church and its activities is of course reflected in wills by donations and gifts of all sorts. Until the 1560s virtually every testator made some sort of bequest to the church, and until the late 1540s most identified elements of church life or the church furnishings which were to receive their particular favour. Sums of money were normally given to the church in general or, less often, to the high altar—for reasons which remain unclear, the popularity of giving to the high altar seems to have risen sharply in the early 1530s. Most such sums were probably destined for general funds, though occasionally a testator specified that the money was for fabric repairs. The most common sums are twopence, the classic ‘token value’ of the time, or a shilling either as money or as a sheep (two of the wills making it clear that these were regarded as equivalent in value). Sometimes goods of other sorts were given—a cow, a bushel of rye, two sheep—but the degree of
standardisation is considerable and there is little doubt that giving such a bequest was regarded as a more or less automatic procedure once a certain level of material prosperity had been reached.

More interesting, therefore, are the personal bequests made for more carefully defined purposes. The torches given by Thomas Norwood were one such, but there were other possibilities. In 1525 John Myllust left 6s 8d to the high altar of Horsell parish church ‘to buy altar cloths and such things as be necessary therefore’, while in 1545, just before all such things were swept into the dustbin of history, Gilbert Rowlyngson of Woking left money ‘to buy a diaper cloth’, a fine damask linen covering, for the altar. In these circumstances we can understand how giving to a monastic house was less attractive than making a bequest to a local church. The testators surely conceived that for all time hence, every time that the altar was used for the sacrament, their cloth would be spread upon it. They would derive many benefits—a feeling of satisfaction in their short remaining lifetime, a welcome push towards heaven, the knowledge that they would always be in touch (in a literal sense) with the holiest part of the church and its most sacred ceremonies and, maybe, the sense that all the people who observed the same would know who had given the cloth and would remember the donor in prayers. When in 1537 Thomas Norwood of Horsell left twenty pence to buy a hearse cloth, a similar set of considerations may have been to the fore—at the funerals of all ordinary parishioners thereafter his hearse cloth would be used, his name and his gift would be prominent in people’s awareness and prayers, and his place in this small rural community commemorated in perpetuity. But can we see similar thinking in the following instance, where rich and opulent gifts were made, or should we instead identify social, public, perhaps even political thinking? In 1539-1540 Sir Richard Weston of Sutton Place built a small chantry chapel on the south-west side of the town church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity in Guildford, intending it as his burial place and that of other members of his family. This was a church of greater prestige than Woking St Peter, his ‘official’ parish church. Weston’s will of 1541 left to the church of the Holy Trinity, whether from his existing private chapel at Sutton Place or from the new chantry itself is not clear, ‘my best cope and my best vestment of gold and my best altar cloth of cloth of gold and crimson velvet’. Was this genuine piety or a public display of appropriate magnificence … or perhaps both, for those ambitions were not mutually exclusive?

Devotion to saints

A particularly personal form of giving involved donations to the lights which burned on the altars or before the statues of saints. The medieval church was subdivided into numerous small compartments, each with its own purpose, dedication or sense of place and each with its adherents. The overarching devotion to the parish church as an entity was supported and reinforced in many minds by the choice of a saint, an altar or a chapel with a profound personal connection. Duffy notes that donations to lights were much the most common form of specific personal religious bequest, and that wills provide the only reliable evidence for such attachment. This is certainly true in the study area: all the churches had lights, and the wills give named evidence for four at Blyfleat, eleven at Horsell, six at Pyrford and six at Woking. The standard ones are found in each—of course, St Mary or the Blessed Virgin, but also St Cross (perhaps because of its associations with the diocese) and the Rood but, as Table 2 shows, others are named. There is useful evidence of local specialisms, maybe even parochial cults, most notably at Horsell where the second most popular light was that...
before St James the Apostle and several testators asked to be buried at the church of
St James the Apostle even though its actual dedication was to St Mary the Virgin.
Horsell wills were much more likely to include references to lights than those of the
other three parishes, perhaps pointing to local variations in the observance of faith
even within a small geographical area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dedication of light</th>
<th>Byfleet</th>
<th>Horsell</th>
<th>Pyrford</th>
<th>Woking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blessed Virgin/St Mary/Our Lady</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corpus Christi</td>
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<td>Devotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Holy] Rood</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>St Bartholomew</td>
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<td>St Christopher</td>
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<td>[St] Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Erasmus</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St James [the Apostle]</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>St John the Baptist</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Mary of Pity</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Mildred</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Nicholas</td>
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<td>St Swithin</td>
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<td>unnamed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 References to lights in wills 1485-1550

It is also undoubtedly significant that the average sum given to lights was
substantially greater than that to the church in general. Only a few testators,
presumably the lowest ranking in terms of wealth, left token sums of money. Instead,
a sheep or a lamb (this time not with an alternative monetary equivalent) was much
the most common, and others left, for example, two rings, or a bullock, or a quarter
of wheat, or two tapers each of one pound weight of wax, or a heifer and four sheep.
There is a clear sense that these bequests were much more personal and specific, not
as blandly anonymous as a couple of pennies. They were careful, considered and
intimate, and this surely reflects the attitudes towards the lights themselves. But
lights were the earliest casualty of the Reformation. References to them in wills
should have disappeared when they were forbidden by Cranmer's injunctions of
1538. In fact, a couple of bequests were made after that date: John Hardwyn left 6s
8d to the rood light at Byfleet in 1540, and in 1546 William Wheeler left a shilling to
the same light, implying that in that parish at least the implementation of the
changes was being undertaken with considerable reluctance. It is probably significant,
though, that they did not make a come-back after July 1553. In this area at least, the
reinvented, and perhaps more streamlined or directed Catholicism of Mary's reign,
did not apparently restore in the popular imagination or the reality of monetary
bequests those lights before saints and altars which had been so prominent in the thoughts of local people in her father’s time. The restoration of such elements would have been very easy and straightforward, so something had changed, something which might—had the queen lived longer and the restored Church had more chance to define itself—have produced a new and perhaps uniquely English Catholicism. This is speculation of course, but such evidence does not stand alone.

Funeral arrangements and commemoration

The more prosperous testators, those of higher status within the community, made provision for their funeral arrangements and for the commemoration of their souls and those of their family. In this district such provisions are relatively rare and there is a very close connection between them and other indicators of greater material wealth and higher social place. They could be quite modest. In 1538, for example, Joan Purdom, a widow of Woking, left a noble to pay for ‘my curate’ to accompany her body from her house to the church, a touching gesture towards a funeral otherwise of a little distinction—though the pronoun is important evidence for the personalising of links between institution and individual. Three years earlier Richard Aylward of Woking, carpenter, had perhaps not entirely trusted the resources of his own estate. He enjoined his executors to do ‘what they thought best’ at his burial and his month’s mind, the thirtieth day after the burial when special masses were held for the souls of the departed. In 1536 Hugh Dyddlesden of Pyrford was more certain about his arrangements, requiring that he had ‘at my burying and at my month day three score masses’ and also leaving money from rents of land to ensure that he had forty years’ worth of obits, or commemorative masses for his soul. He, uniquely among these wills, also left money to provide a gravestone. A comparable care is shown by Thomas Norwood of Horsell in 1537, who desired to have ‘sung for my soul and all Christian souls three trentals of masses [a series of three times thirty requiem masses] at my burial and at my month’s mind and at other times convenient. Also that I will have an honest priest sing for my soul and all Christian souls one half year’. The proliferation of such provisions in wills from the mid-fifteenth century onwards was in large measure responsible for the emergence of a new class of itinerant unbeneficed priests on short term paid contracts, subsisting on a portfolio of such employment.

A different sort of long-term commemoration is indicated by Richard Barton of Woking, who in 1536 requested to be prayed for in the bederoll for ever. This was a list of the names of those who had left money for prayers, a document which was read out in full on special occasions when the congregation were required to offers prayers for all those so named. Duffy points out that such a process, and such a tangible commemoration in the form of a document, fixed the departed in community consciousness and also guaranteed to the living family of the deceased that their place in the social structure would be identified and highlighted. It was a means of cementing an individual and a family in the past, present and future of the community as a whole and as such it had a special resonance which went way beyond the straightforwardly religious element of the commemoration. He notes the example of Bristol All Saints, where the bederoll extended to 150 folio pages and had to be divided into chunks, read out on consecutive occasions. In Woking this was not of course a problem, but Barton left a shilling a year from the rent of his land at Jacks Wood for the purpose. Every time I drive down the busy, noisy A320 from Woking to Guildford, though what is still known as Poor Jacks Wood, I think of this man who, almost half a millennium ago, hoped though in vain that the land would provide the means for his perpetual commemoration.
The most public, ostentatious and lavish funeral arrangements were, not unexpectedly, those of Sir Richard Weston in 1542. His will was detailed and specific, combining in a classic structure the forms of pious observance, elaborate ceremonial, socially-essential charity towards the poor, and highly personal ambition of his class and period: ‘I bequeath at the day of my burial to every poor man and woman that shall be there present fourpence, and to every poor child twopence; item, at my month’s mind likewise to be done; also I bequeath to 24 poor men to bear torches at my burial, 24 gowns of black cloth, and 24s in money for their labour, the torches to be given and to remain in the said church of the Trinity; also I will that there may be said immediately after my decease 15 trentals of masses for my soul, my father’s soul, my mother’s soul and all my friends’ souls, for the execution of which mine executors to get as many priests as they can to the which they shall give eightpence a piece for their labours’. Conspicuously absent from this list, though, is any mention of prayers for the soul of his dead son. Francis Weston, the heir to Sutton, who was one of the six men executed in May 1536 on charges of having committed adultery with Queen Anne Boleyn. His father, making his will five years later, avoided any reference to his dead and disgraced son. The will is politically and socially perfect, its religious elements a model of their kind. We cannot claim that such a will reflects the real feelings and real thoughts of a man who had so recently trodden so close to the abyss, and only survived by the sacrifice of his son and by expunging him from his public memory? Wills are not necessarily truthful documents—to regard them as reliable expressions of individual faith is hazardous indeed.

Pure pre-Reformation forms of commemoration naturally enough disappear at the end of the 1540s, though even in 1550 one Byleet will refers to masses for the dead, contrary to Cranmer’s injunctions of the previous year. But in the summer of 1553 Catholicism was restored, and logically we might expect that the wording of the wills as employed in the 1520s and 1530s would re-emerge. It does not. Of the 25 wills which survive from Mary’s reign only one, right at the very end, returns to the old formula. In his will made on 2 May 1558, but proved on 18 December, a month after
the death of the queen, John Ynwood of Woking asked for ‘five masses and twenty shillings of money given at my burial to poor folks, and in the like mind to have done at my month mind, that is to say five masses and twenty shillings to be distribute among poor folks to pay for my soul and all Christian souls’. In the absence of references to the mass and to funeral arrangements of the traditional sort, we may have further evidence that the newly-restored Catholic Church differed materially from its recently-proscribed predecessor. A further potential explanation is that the willmakers of the four parishes—and especially, perhaps, the vicar of Woking—were being ultra-cautious in the language which they employed in setting out these documents. And a third possibility is that in this area Protestant beliefs had really taken root, and that masses for the dead, like lights before statues, were no longer regarded with enthusiasm by ordinary people. What is clear is that nothing is clear.

**Charity and benevolence**

Charity was a Christian duty and obligation, but in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries it was an entirely optional element of will-making. Poorer testators rarely made any provision for charitable gifts, and only the wealthy or the particularly committed seem to have been interested in the notion. Even wealthier testators normally emphasised charity only in terms of gifts to the poor at burial and month’s mind, though the sums involved, as the examples quoted indicate, could in fact be substantial. In this area charity—in its wider sense of contributions to the common weal—was not only rare before the 1540s, but was exclusively devoted to purely practical purposes, namely roads and bridges. In each instance it possible to see a vicarious self-interest at work. When in 1485 John Hillier of Sythwood in Horsell left twelvapence for the repair of the highway between Horsell and Sythwood, we see a very narrow focus to his giving, and we might well wonder why he did not spend that shilling in his lifetime and derive some personal benefit. We might also doubt the real value of the instruction issued fifty years later by his relative, William Hillier of Horsell, that his wife was to ‘hire a man for a day to mend the road at Knaphill’. So this charity was directed at infrastructure, not at the disadvantaged of the community. Such bequests continue, though less commonly: in 1560, for example, William Skeyte of Woking left no less than 10s for the repair of Town Street from the cross to the churchyard gate’.

The first references to giving to the poor, apart from the distribution of largesse at funerals, do not appear until the mid-1540s, even though legislation in 1536 had required all parishes to provide a poor box for charitable contributions to the relief of poverty. In 1549 Cranmer’s injunctions, which banned all ‘blind devotions’ or masses for the dead and other manifestations of the worship of souls, required that the money should instead be given to the poor box for charitable purposes, and urged local clergy to encourage this. Such instructions were based on the knowledge that the clergy were prominent in the making and phrasing of wills and thus had a powerful influence over the provisions of bequests. Between 1549 and 1551 a few testators did follow the injunction, giving very modest sums (usually fourpence) but after 1551 and until 1559 none of the 32 wills which survive makes any reference to the poor. There is no evidence to suggest that there was any great sympathy either with the principle of poor relief or the notion that such charitable bequests should be made as an integral part of the process of leaving a will.

Then, under the Elizabethan settlement of 1559, Cranmer’s injunctions were restored and strengthened and giving to the poor reappears as a standard element in wills. From 1559 to 1579 some 75 per cent of the 44 wills include bequests to the
poor, most of them the small token sums of fourpence, sixpence or a shilling. Indeed, there is a remarkable similarity between the sums formerly given to the cathedral church and those now given to poor relief. It bears the unmistakable imprint of a gesture, a token, not a heartfelt and personally espoused cause. Only occasionally does a more personal note creep in, as with Edward Draper of Woking (1561) who left a penny each to twelve poor children; or Edward Matthew of Woking (1573) who gave ‘to Wills the poor man my russet hose’; or Richard Maggot, the unfortunately-named servant of the vicar of Woking, whose 1572 will includes gifts of money to 23 individuals whose given titles (such as Father, Mother, Widow and Old) imply that they were poor but respectable householders. It is perhaps significant that from 1560 onwards an increasing number of testators make no religious or charitable provisions at all. Their wills are entirely self and family centred, they function on a purely worldly plane, and the needs of the community and the expressions of a wider faith disappear altogether.

The evidence of religious preambles

And that leads to the most contentious and debatable aspect of these wills, their religious preamble and expressions of faith. Duffy argues convincingly that two key factors greatly diminish the value of these as an identifier of true belief. The first is that most wills were written not by the testator but by a clerk of some description, and that such writers of wills tended—demonstrably so—to lift whole phrases from existing sources such as the prayer book, the bible or previous wills known to, or written by, themselves. In other words, the stock formulaic phrases cannot be taken as reflecting, except in the most general way, the beliefs of the testator. The second, to which Duffy draws particular attention, is that from 1532 onwards wills were constructed and published in a highly-politicised, extremely turbulent and often physically dangerous world of religious turmoil and upheaval. It is, he suggests, impossible to accept that the makers of wills, and those who wrote them out, could blithely ignore the inherent dangers of going against a prevailing official dogma, and could risk drawing overt attention to non-conformist and heretical views. Especially after 1547, wills must surely, in most circumstances, reflect the safe ground. Duffy thus disagrees fundamentally with those who have analysed wills for precisely the purpose of finding evidence of Catholicism or quasi-Calvinist Protestantism. Wills are simply too unreliable to be used as the measure of religious belief in a period of dramatic and traumatic change and upheaval, and while it is sometimes possible to be quite certain about the beliefs of an individual, it is not possible to aggregate the evidence in terms of whole communities.

In the parish of Woking this argument is particularly pertinent because the vicar, Richard West, was instituted to the living in 1538 and held it without interruption until his death in 1573. He thus oversaw the religious life of his small community through the latter stages of the Henrician creation of the Church of England, the Edwardian enforcement of an extreme iconoclastic Protestantism, the Marian restoration of Catholicism, and the Elizabethan imposition of a more moderate middle of the road Protestant faith. It was clearly in the direct and immediate personal interest of this vicar of Bray that his flock should not tend to the extremes. His writing of wills—and we know that he was actively involved in this—produced documents which were bland, uncontentious and anodyne, perfectly suiting his clear agenda to ensure his own survival and not to rock the boat. He hedged his bets for 35 years, toeing the line and upsetting nobody. The wills of Woking people reflect that caution.
Typical pre-Reformation preambles are those of John Myllust of Horsell in 1525 ('I bequeath my soul to almighty God, to his blessed mother our lady Saint Mary, and to all the holy company of heaven') or Joan Herdwen of Byfleet in 1529 ('I bequeath and commend my soul to almighty God and to his blessed mother Mary the Virgin and to all the saints of heaven'). Such standardised phrases tell us nothing in detail and they continue into Edward’s reign. Even in 1550 Richard Wythewell of Pyrford used precisely the same phrase as John Myllust a quarter of a century earlier. But ambiguities are numerous and sometimes so marked as to cast major doubt upon the use of the will preamble. William Wheeler of Byfleet (1546) simply noted that ‘I bequeath my soul to almighty God and my body to Christian burial’, a phrase which would be seen by some as incontrovertibly Protestant in the absence of references to Mary and the saints. But he goes on to order five masses on the day of his burial and five at his month’s mind, so clearly that interpretation of the preamble is diametrically opposite to the reality. The most explicit reference to the new Protestantism in Edward’s reign comes in the will of William Hone of Horsell (1551) and it is worth quoting the date in full to emphasise its painful political correctness: ‘In the name of God amen, the year of our lord 1551 and the 15th day of the month of September in the fourth year of the reign of our sovereign lord Edward the 6th by the grace of God king in England, France and Ireland, defender of the faith and of the Church of England and Ireland the supreme head’. But his religious statement highlights the fusion of the old and new in its borrowing from the earlier forms of words ('I bequeath my soul to almighty god my maker and redeemer, and to all the holy company of heaven') and it is very telling that this man, who surely was a Protestant, makes his wife sole executrix and instructs her to perform the task ‘for the health of my soul’, a purely Catholic phrase used in countless pre-Reformation wills.

There is thus no clear or definable break even during Edward’s reign, and the increased frequency of the older Catholic form which is found in the period from 1554 to 1559 must represent a more open re-emergence of a latent traditionalism. It was, after, much less than a decade since such forms were still entirely acceptable. But it is important to note that significant numbers of local wills in Mary’s reign did not make reference to the holy company or Our Lady. What should we make of them: were they overtly Protestant, or concealing Catholicism, or maybe just confused and uncertain? We will never know. But we have to remember that although the Church was restored in 1553, it was a different Church. Catholicism was not the same. It was without monasteries, it was in churches stripped of much of their decoration and with many of the key symbols of the old faith gone. Despite Duffy’s optimistic perception of the church in the diocese of Canterbury at this time, and despite Stephen Gardiner’s powerful role as bishop of Winchester in forcing the pace of the restoration, wills from the Woking area do not speak of turning the clock back. Not a single saint other than Mary is mentioned, not a single vestment, furnishing or piece of plate is referred to, and while Duffy emphasises the vigour and confidence of Marian Catholicism, the very hazardous evidence of wills from these four parishes speaks of a more reticent, more approachable, perhaps less ritualistic church. Or is it simply that the evidence itself is so skewed, deliberately or unconsciously, to give a non-committal form, that we cannot use it to arrive at any such general conclusions?

Of one thing we can be sure. Any hint of Catholicism disappears at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign. The last will to be made in this area using explicitly Catholic phrases was that of Annis Page of Horsell in the first month of 1559, leaving her soul to almighty god, Saint Mary, and all the saints in heaven. Thereafter silence falls upon almost 1200 years of the old faith in West Surrey and not until the mid-nineteenth century did public Catholic worship reappear. Instead, the local clergy
responded with alacrity to the latest set of instructions from Canterbury and the wording of wills does begin to alter sharply. Cranmer’s prayer book, the forms of services and the English Bible provided the raw material for the religious phrasing of the new generation of wills. At Horsell in the 1560s almost all wills use the same standard phrase, complete with repetition of spelling quirks, as the vicar oversaw the preparation of the documents: ‘I commend my soul to almighty God my maker and redeemer, through whose death and passion I trust to be an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven’. At Byfleet and Woking the wording was often more elaborate, as in the case of Robert Hardwyn of Byfleet (1572) whose will, as well as being dated ‘after the computation of the Church of England’, uses the beautiful rolling phrases of the mid-century English texts. He bequeaths his ‘soul to Almighty God, my maker, trusting to be redeemed and saved by the merits, death, passion and precious blood shedding of his dear son my only saviour Jesus Christ and my body to be buried in the parish church yard of Byfleet aforesaid when so ever it shall please god to call me unto his mercy and out of this transitory world’.

Conclusions

In this review of the religious and charitable perceptions of the people of four West Surrey parishes between the reigns of Edward IV and his great-grandchildren, I have tried to show that wills, for all their manifold imperfections, ambiguities and contradictions, do provide us with valuable and tantalising information. Their import will always be the subject of heated debate because, in essence, we can never really know the truth as to why certain phrases were used and not others, or why certain testators chose to make bequests of one sort and others to follow a different path. But in the area which I studied they are all that we have. There is no other source. There are undercurrents about which we know nothing and here, as in so much historical research, the surviving documentary evidence is manifestly very incomplete. The testators are clearly not representative of society as a whole, since they are so few, and thus only an elite within the community is represented here.

Nevertheless, these probate records give us precious fragments of evidence and reveal to us, in a way which we can interpret cautiously but with a degree of confidence, something of the human context—the perceptions of individuals and the meaning of community. They tell us of the lights in parish churches and the devotion they inspired, and perhaps hint at local patronal cults. They reveal evidence of the parish gentry in their role as leaders of the community, and of the standardised token giving which was markedly different from the heartfelt personal bequests. They suggest that in one of the four parishes, Byfleet, conservative traditionalism survived into the late 1540s while in the others change may have come more rapidly. The wills indicate that in Mary’s reign Catholicism did return, in a low key way and perhaps without popular enthusiasm, but that some key features of the pre-1534 faith failed to re-emerge. And they show that from 1559, at least in the formal sense, the Reformation had unquestionably achieved complete success. They also show, not unexpectedly, that the parish clergy were not only crucial in the determining the effectiveness of change itself, but also shaped the very evidence with which we can judge that process. No statistics, no abstract conclusions, can alter the fact that wills reflect human emotions, aspirations, verdicts and contexts, and that is ultimately how they should be regarded. Who could fail to see that when confronted by the will of Thomas Thorley of Pyrford, written in 1533, who knew that charity begins at home when he remembered his wife Maud with affection: ‘she to have yereley a stone of woll for to knytte to her owne hoses’?
Acknowledgments

The greater part of this work was undertaken at the Surrey History Centre in Woking, using the microfilm copies of the Archdeaconry of Surrey wills (the originals being housed at the London Metropolitan Archives). I again thank the staff of the SHC for their unfailing support and encouragement. Other research was carried out at the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester and there, too, the staff were most helpful. The project was originally intended not only to provide some material for my book on Woking but also to be the basis of a paper which was given at a day school entitled ‘Private Lives, Public Places’, held by the Oxford University Department of Continuing Education in November 2003. It was in honour of my dear friend Joan Dils, and I especially want to thank Joan for her close interest in the subject and in this paper, which is dedicated to her. During the intervening period I reworked some of the content and gave a version at a lecture in Sevenoaks in June 2011. After that I discussed the paper extensively with Joan and with our mutual friend the ecclesiastical historian Diana Wood, who died suddenly and quite without warning in July 2012. Diana’s contribution, and her loss, are here acknowledged with great sadness.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (Yale University Press, 1992); *The voices of Morebath: Reformation and rebellion in an English village* (Yale University Press, 2001); ‘Hearing voices: on writing the history of Reformation Morebath’, *The Local Historian* vol.36 no.1 (February 2006) 4-16
4 J.R. Daniel-Tysson, *Inventories of the goods and ornaments in the churches of Surrey in the reign of King Edward VI* (Wyman, 1869); also published in *Surrey Archaeological Collections* vol.4 (1869) 1-189
5 Another five PCC wills belong to people who lived elsewhere but held land in the area—these I ignored. The Canterbury wills were those of John Norwode of Woking (1498), Sir Richard Weston of Sutton (1542), Richard Harwyn of Byfleet (1553), John Grove of Woking (1573) and Robert Stansted of Woking (1574).
6 The Winchester wills were those of Henry Roke of Sutton (1555), William Homme of Horsell (1551), Robert Taylor of Horsell (1565), Anthony Worthington of Horsell (1563), Edward Matthews of Woking (1573), Robert Hardwyn of Byfleet (1573), John Isam of Horsell (1573) and Margaret Stansted of Woking (1578). In addition one Winchester will could not be traced, one was an uninformative administration bond, and one was an inventory only.
7 The records are held at London Metropolitan Archives among the collection for the Archdeaconry of Surrey. These include Act Books (reference DW/PA/07/001-006 covering 1480-1541 and 1559-1560) and original wills (reference DW/PA/05 covering 1534-1857). The Act Book for 1541-1545 is in the British Library (MS 24925) although it does not include any testator from the four parishes. The wills and Act Books, including the BL volume, have been microfilmed and are available in that form at the Surrey History Centre. In addition, Surrey has a very fine set of will abstracts, published and also available on-line (see http://www.origins.net/help/aboutNWI-surwills-reg.aspx#14).
8 Joan Dils (ed), *The churchwardens’ accounts of St Lawrence, Reading 1498-1570* 2 vols.(Berkshire Record Society vols.19 and 20, forthcoming Spring 2013)
10 All spelling in the quotations from wills has been modernised from the original.
12 Individual wills are not referenced: all are in the Archdeaconry of Surrey series except those listed (above) which were proved at Canterbury or Winchester.
13 Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, 146-147
14 Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, 335-337

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A compassionate community? Poor relief in Westbury-on-Trym 1656–1698

Michael Heery

This article examines the operation of the Old Poor Law during the second half of the seventeenth century in the parish of Westbury-on-Trym, taking account of the differing views of historians in order to review ideas about how the system was managed and to compare their general findings with the specific local evidence. Westbury-on-Trym has been within the city of Bristol since 1904 but during the period in question was a large rural parish of 5232 acres. The parish was largely agricultural, serving its neighbour Bristol—in the first decade of the eighteenth century Sir Robert Atkyns stated that the area ‘consists most of rich Pasture’, and calculated that there were 140 dwellings and 650 inhabitants. Alicia Percival questions the precision of those figures, stating that they were probably rounded up or down. In Westbury-on-Trym in 1697 there were 119 ratepayers supporting the parish poor. If a multiplier of 4.5 persons per household is applied to this figure it provides a tentative population of 535, of course excluding the parish paupers and their dependents and those exempt from paying the poor rate. L.A. Botelho’s study of parish records relating to seventeenth century Cratfield in Suffolk found that, in addition to those in receipt of poor relief, ‘Another 15% were marginally poor, surviving by makeshift strategies on the very edge of self-sufficiency and collecting occasional gifts from the parish’. In Westbury-on-Trym forty individuals received relief in 1698, some of whom had dependents. If, like Cratfield, seventeenth century Westbury-on-Trym had a further group of people neither receiving relief nor paying the poor rate the parish population figure would certainly rise above 600 people, so Atkyns was probably not far wrong. In 1779 Samuel Rudder estimated that the parish population had risen to ‘upwards of 900’.

The parish was divided into three tithings which, for the purposes of poor relief, were managed separately. These tithings were called Stoke Bishop, Shirehampton and Westbury (the last-named having the parish church and almshouses) and each was centred upon a settlement of the same name. Shirehampton also had maritime connections, being situated at the mouth of the River Avon, where many ships anchored to await piloting up the river to the port of Bristol. Atkyns wrote of Shirehampton that ‘Both King-road and Hung-road, two eminent stations for shipping, lie within the precincts of this Tithing’. Accordingly, among the probate inventories of Shirehampton are those of mariners. Before the Reformation the parish of Westbury-on-Trym had considerable ecclesiastical significance—it is a much older settlement than Bristol—and the parish church is large and distinguished, while parts of the nearby fifteenth-century college still survive (see illustration on back cover).

This article is primarily based upon the evidence of the Westbury-on-Trym parish poor book which covers the years 1656 to 1698 and was transcribed in 1910 by the incumbent H.J. Wilkins, an accomplished local historian who also transcribed the excellent parish registers. The parish registers were among those selected by E.A.
Wrigley and R.S. Schofield for their work on the population history of England. The poor book is arranged as follows. Every Easter the ratepayers of the three tithings were assessed for their contribution to each tithing, and their overseers of the poor for the forthcoming year were chosen by the parish community. The overseers of each tithing also presented to their fellow parishioners the record of their disbursements to the poor people of the parish during the previous year. Thus, the poor book comprises three series of accounts, reflecting the subdivision into three tithings. The records of payments to the poor were always divided into two parts: firstly, those regular payments to individuals who in effect received a pension from the parish; and, secondly, a list of one-off or ‘casual’ payments that could cover a very wide range of needs. Paul Slack states that this arrangement was common elsewhere: ‘Some paupers received a weekly pension, agreed once a year, usually at Easter. Others were granted relief for shorter periods of time, when ill or unemployed or simply ‘poor’: these were termed ‘casual’, ‘extraordinary’, or ‘discretionary’ payments. In general overseers tried to confine regular payments to the impotent … the old, especially widows, and occasionally women and children, if somehow disabled’.

The 42 years covered by the transcribed poor book contain a mass of information about the parish community. The long lists of rate-payers (109 people across the parish in 1656—see figure 1—rising to 119 at the end of the century) and their assessments are an indicator of wealth and social status. For example, in 1660 various members of the Wasborow family paid proportionate poor rates on incomes of £90 3s 0d, £17 5s 0d, £15 5s 0d and £3 1s 0d respectively, indicating a wide range of prosperity within the members of one extended family. The overseers assessed all parishioners to establish their contributions to the poor rate. In 1656 this was done ‘according to the valuacion of every mans land or living at the rate of three half pence a pound’. By 1697 two rates had been established, according to ability to pay, one at 6d in the pound and one at 3d in the pound. The rating process was complex and subject to annual negotiation at vestry meetings in the parish church.

1 Example of a page from the parish poor book showing part of the list of ratepayers in 1656 (Bristol Record Office BRO P.HTW/OP/1/6: photograph copyright Catherine Gallacher).
The occasional refusal to pay signals that not all the parish acted in a spirit of harmony: for example in 1659 the overseer Richard Street claimed eleven shillings from the parish ‘for money I cannot gather [from] William Hicks, Widdow Weare, Widdow Creed’. It would be wrong to assume that the parish divided neatly into those who paid for relief and those who received it. As will be seen, some individuals did spend a long time on relief, but others went on relief when their circumstances changed, for example because of injury or being widowed. The appointment of the overseers of the poor also provides information about the social status of many people, including wealthy women. For example, in 1696 Lady Yeaman was due to serve as overseer but instead nominated a substitute. Oxley maintains that very little is known from other parishes of the incidence of appointing a deputy overseer.

The great quantity of data relating to the recipients of relief provides information about charity, poverty and social relationships within the parish. Indeed, the poor book can be used as evidence for social and administrative change during the period in question. The work of the overseers in Westbury-on-Trym conforms closely to the patterns described by David Hey: ‘Such officers were elected about Easter-time and their names were then submitted to the Justices of the Peace for approval. A man who refused to serve was fined, for this was a role expected to be performed by rotation. The overseer received no payment for this work, nor any recompense for loss of earnings. He was empowered to raise taxes (‘assessments’ or ‘rates’) in order to meet demands for poor relief. He had to submit his accounts at the end of his year of office for the approval of the vestry meeting and was himself expected to pay for anything that was not allowed by that meeting’. This was the classic pattern of the Old Poor Law as it operated from 1601 until the late eighteenth century. Although details of legislation and practice changed over time, including some changes during the later seventeenth century, for almost three hundred years it provided a largely consistent means by which poverty was relieved in England. It remained a parish-centred system until the growth of population and increased migration, among other factors, prompted its replacement by the New Poor Law of 1834.

It is important to try to understand the motivations of those who operated the system and paid for poor relief, as well as to consider how the money was spent and who received it. The two sides of this relationship were very closely linked. Thus, the overseers of the poor in Westbury-on-Trym are themselves listed among the ratepayers for their own tithing. Mostly the overseers enjoyed income levels above the average for the parish, as Wrightson and Levine found for the Essex village of Terling. In some rare cases people paying the poor rate had relatives in receipt of relief or passed from being payers to recipients. Thus, Jerome Cuff was assessed for the poor rate at the substantial sum of £24 3s 0d in 1656 and, like his brother Thomas, continued to be a ratepayer for several years. However, by 1675 Jerome was in receipt of relief and was buried at the expense of the parish in 1679. In 1684 his wife was described as ‘Mrs Cuff, a poore widow’ and was given 5s parish relief. She too was buried on the parish, in 1694.

In this article some quantitative analysis is matched with instances of relief followed from year to year throughout the period covered, to illustrate the ongoing support received by some parishioners. These two approaches, together with the use of individual examples, provide insight into the management of poor relief in the parish. A number of modern historians have been interested in both the wider ideological motivations and the practical management of relief by those in power within the parish. There is agreement that poverty increased in England during the second half of the seventeenth century—Wrightson, for example, states that
‘contemporaries ... were struck most forcibly by the very visible evidence of the increase in poverty ... By the mid seventeenth century the poor were no longer the destitute victims of misfortune or old age, but a substantial proportion of the population living in constant danger of destitution, many of them full-time wage labourers’.17 As a result there was an inevitable growth in the provision of poor relief. One striking feature of the Westbury poor book is the increasing expenditure on relief between 1656 and 1698. There was a 9 per cent increase in the number of ratepayers in this period but the annual amount of money provided by them across the three tithings rose from £16 1s 6d in 1656 to £88 9s in 1698, an increase of 552 per cent. Extraordinary though this figure seems, it is in fact in line with findings elsewhere. J.A. Sharpe, for example, observes that ‘Richard Gough of Myddle noted in 1700 that he had “heard my father say that the first year that he was married (which was about the year 1633) he paid only four pence to the poor, and now I pay almost twenty shillings per annum”’.18 Slack’s analysis of poor relief across England concludes that ‘Expenditure on the poor increased, perhaps with an initial leap in mid-century, and then more certainly and gradually over the last decades of the seventeenth century’.19 The overall pattern recorded in Westbury is in line with evidence from elsewhere, such as Norwich and York.20

The size of an annual pension varied from parish to parish. Although Pamela Sharpe found in the Devon village of Colyton that ‘In 1682/3 an average of £2 6s 0d was paid for each person’, which was very close to the figure for of £2 6s 6d for Westbury-on-Trym in the same year, these figures seem more generous than those for some other parts of England, particularly in the North.21 However, the pensions themselves always varied in size quite considerably, from less than £1 to over £8. No explanation is given in the overseers’ accounts for these variations, though presumably they took account of individual need. Figures for the Westbury tithing demonstrate the rise in expenditure of both pensions and one-off payments over the forty-two years in question. In the five years from 1657 to 1661 £47 2s was spent on pensions and £21 10s on one-off payments. By the five years from 1694 to 1698 these figures had increased to £103 and £44 5s. While total payments increased, the relative proportion spent on the two kinds of relief hardly changes over the period of the poor book, in contrast to Hindle’s finding that ‘In some parishes, occasional relief grew to the extent that it actually came to dwarf the pension bill’.22

The role and conduct of overseers of the poor has attracted some controversy. Overseers were typically substantial parishioners who had to have the trust of their neighbours.23 For one year they assumed responsibility for spending sizeable sums of the latter’s money. It is important to appreciate the scale of this work. As W.B. Stephens states, ‘it must be emphasized how important in the history of local government was the administration of poor relief. Indeed in most places this activity was the most important civil function of the parish’.24 Sharpe endorses this point: ‘From the mid-seventeenth century the poor rate became the most regular and familiar form of taxation in England, and the administration of the poor law and the related problem of settlement became the most consistent concern of parish and local government’.25 H.J. Wilkins describes the overseers of the poor as ‘careful guardians of the parish’.26 It is likely, therefore, that they were more significant than any other parish officer: their work involved the most money and they had direct contact with many other parishioners, some of whom were wholly dependent upon their decisions.

In The Parish Chest, his classic work on parish records, W.E. Tate depicted many overseers as unsympathetic to the poor, with ‘instances of frequent stony humanity,
with occasional bestial cruelty’. He maintained that the justices of the peace often tried to ameliorate this cruelty of the overseers, as they ‘were available as a sort of court of appeal against a refusal of relief by some stony-hearted parish officer’. Keith Wrightson developed this rather crude view of overseers into a more sophisticated model, whereby the growth of poverty in early modern English parishes was matched by the growth of social polarisation. He argued that in the seventeenth century a significant divide opened up between the poor and their parish superiors, often marked by changing religious and social practices: ‘In such communities, the coupling of generosity in relief with the demand for social conformity to new canons of respectability and the badging of the poor [via a Parliamentary Act of 1697] enshrined and symbolized the social transition of the age’. He concludes that by the 1690s this polarisation ‘was everywhere an inescapable fact’.

Other historians have taken a rather different view of the work of the overseers. A.L. Beier, for example, detects a softening of attitudes towards parish paupers from about 1650, while David Hey appears sympathetic to the difficulties they faced: ‘The overseer had the face to face responsibility of deciding the merits of appeals for poor relief. He had to temper mercy with the knowledge that the ratepayers of the parish would demand an explanation of his expenditure’. Steve Hindle concurs, arguing that overseers had to strike a balance between fairness and severity and quoting the seventeenth century John Downname as warning that ‘too much care and scrupulosity’ turned overseers into magistrates who were ‘so busy examining the poore about their estate and desert that they can find no leisure to open their purse or relieve their wantes’. There is also evidence that the overseers could show genuine concern for their charges. Thomas found that “The account books often reveal genuine understanding of humanitarian needs—a fact not emphasised enough in studies of poor law administration”, and Paul Slack suggests that the diary of Thomas Turner of East Hoathly, Sussex, shows him to have been ‘extraordinarily conscientious’ in the exercise of his duties as overseer of the poor.

What can the Westbury poor book tell us of the attitude of the seventeenth-century overseers in that community? It is clearly difficult to ascertain the motivations of people who lived three hundred years ago. As Steve Hindle remarks, ‘the process by which need was identified … remains almost completely hidden from historical observation. Overseers heard oral complaints that have left little trace in the archive’. Much clearly depended on the personality of the individual overseer, and indeed the Westbury-on-Trym payments to the same individuals vary somewhat from year to year, probably reflecting the attitudes of individual overseers. On the other hand, overseers came into office each year within the context of familiar parish conventions: ‘their main duty was to keep running a system which had a momentum of its own and in which most problems could be solved by reference to past experience and precedent’. It was in everyone’s interest for the system to work effectively, year after year. In Westbury-on-Trym examples of such care and traditions can be found in numerous little narratives that colour the accounts. For example, in 1681 there are the following successive entries:

- to Joan Webb for tending goody Hoskings fower mths £02 00 00d
- paid for milk for goody Hoskings £00 10 00d
- paid for candels and sope for her £00 06 00d
- paid for coale and wood for her £00 04 00d
- paid for a bed pan and other necessaries £00 04 06d
- paid for buring of her £00 10 06d
In 1689 in Stoke Bishop tithing the overseer Nicholas Cox made thirteen separate payments to poorer parishioners for nursing ‘Fidler’s child’ and for the provision of shoes and clothes to the same child. This seems to indicate a continued concern for the child’s welfare throughout the year. It also allowed the parish to pass money to other poor parishioners in need of help, such as Sarah Pullin, who was one of two people paid to look after Fidler’s child. Indeed, Sarah Pullin was employed to look after a range of unfortunate parishioners over three decades. Another moving story can be found in 1697:

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave to Abigail Parker in her time of sickness</td>
<td>£0 03 00d</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave to Tom Playford in ye small pox</td>
<td>£0 08 00d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave to Abigail Parker for tending of Tom Playford</td>
<td>£0 05 00d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave to Abigail Parker in her childs small pox</td>
<td>£0 06 06d</td>
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Such vignettes imply a community that cared for and respected its poorer neighbours. Indeed the widespread use of terms such as ‘Goody’ and ‘Goodman’ for people on relief, and the occasional use of informal names such as Bess (for Elizabeth) Cook, suggest that they were still acknowledged and respected despite their poverty.

On the other hand, the overseers could be very harsh towards those who tried to move into the parish from elsewhere. Following the Settlement Act of 1662 those with passes were entitled to be paid a small sum (typically sixpence) before moving on. The pass meant that the traveller’s legal place of settlement parish accepted ultimate responsibility for them. Such cases abound in the Westbury poor book, but there are also instances where money was spent on removal of ‘cripples’ or others considered undesirable without them receiving any dole—in 1665, for example, a reference to expenditure ‘for carrying away of 3 Cripples’. Analysis of the accounts for Westbury
tithing shows that a high number of entries (10.8 per cent) recorded payment for the removal of migrants from the parish, a significant proportion of the total expenditure on casual relief. Botelho comments that in the Suffolk parish of Cratfield ‘the idle poor and vagrants, those travelling without a pass, were whipped and moved on, presumably to their home parish. Those travelling under a certificate were given food and a place to sleep for a single night before they too were removed—lest they linger and become a permanent drain upon the parish purse’.36

Yet other entries do reveal compassion for the migrant poor. Monetary relief given to distressed military personnel serves as a reminder of Bristol’s maritime history and its role as a port and transit centre. For example in 1681 the Westbury overseers recorded small sums ‘geaven to poore seamen with passes at sev[era]ll times’. In 1674 money was ‘geaven to 2 Seamen that was taken by the dutch’, while in 1691 relief was provided for ‘poore distressed souldiers, seamen and others’, and in 1687 and 1688 the wives and children of ‘distressed seamen’ were supported. Some parishioners were given temporary financial support to help them look after ex-military migrants. For example, in 1690 Ann Jones was paid ‘for two souldiers 3 shillings’ and in the same year ‘To Capt Davis for three sick souldiers 12s 06d’. The high incidence of such cases in 1690 was perhaps a consequence of the battle of the Boyne. In that year the parish overseers paid 12 shillings ‘to ye buriell of a souldier’. Migrant women who were pregnant sometimes received payments that were above the legal minimum. For example, in 1671 2s 6d was given ‘to a poore woeman that was great with child’. A further 15s 1d was then “spent about the Child that was borne under the hay mow and money I gave to the woeman’. Other occasional acts of kindness are recorded, as in 1660 when nine separate payments were made to an unidentified lame man over a period of weeks until he eventually moved on.

The use of the poor rate to remove migrants was related to its wider employment in legal business, both routine and in response to crime. For example, in 1661 there is an entry ‘For riding to the Justice for a warrant for Thomas Stephens being an intruder 2s 0d’. Such records are commonplace. Another example was in 1687: ‘payd for a Justice warrant and warning William Thomas out of the parish 1s 06d’. Occasionally, measures to deal with crime are detailed in the poor book accounts, as in 1666, ‘spent upon them that kept Christopher Smith in hold a night and day being taken with a hue and cry 3s 06d’; in 1688, ‘paide to John Cavill for bringing the whores to gaile’; and in 1689, ‘I gave to a poor man that was robbed 6d’.

A key question concerns what the poor rate was spent upon. Clearly a significant proportion of the annual rate was spent on pensions for poor parishioners, but there were numerous one-off payments. Occasionally the overseers used the money for seemingly dubious purposes, such as the 6s 6d ‘paid towards the publick bridges’ in 1684, the £1 10s was spent ‘upon the ringers the Coronation day’ in 1661, and the 11s 3d allocated ‘for ye Ringers and other expenses when ye King [William III] landed’ in 1691. However, such cases are rare and the money was generally spent on the parish poor and in ways that can be categorised. Larry Patriquin has divided the one-off payments that characterised the Old Poor Law into nine categories.37 Most of these proved applicable to the Westbury-on-Trym poor book, though some new categories have been added to suit the local data. For example, the poor book has little on bastardy expenses (though there are frequent entries relating to bastardy in the parish registers) so this term has been omitted. Likewise, the category of ‘In-kind’ benefits was too generalised so ‘clothing’ and ‘fuel’ have been used instead.
Patriquin includes the term ‘provision of work’ but states that this was insignificant before the arrival of workhouses during the eighteenth century. However, the Westbury poor book clearly shows that, if the term ‘work’ is more loosely defined, during the seventeenth century the parish regularly gave employment such as nursing and childcare to its poorer parishioners and so these two categories are included in the Westbury list. Other more specific terms added are ‘Schooling’ and ‘Removal’. The former compares with the practice of providing poor children with apprenticeships, both of which became more common as the seventeenth century progressed. The term ‘removal’ refers to those instances when the parish used poor relief to pay for judicial warrants that would enforce the removal of those not wanted there, for whatever reason. Patriquin includes this in ‘Administrative costs’. It can be seen from figure 3 that such administrative expenditure forms a significant category in the sample years from Westbury-on-Trym tithing, but it mostly covers such business as provision of a new book, or setting the rate and having it approved by a JP. The physical removal of ‘cripples’ and other unfortunates seems to be of such a different order as to merit a category of its own.

Paul Slack states that cash payments were the commonest as well as the easiest form of relief, and Patriquin echoes this, suggesting that they were ‘convenient for both overseers and recipients’. Clearly this was the case when parishioners received a pension, but what of the very numerous one-off payments? Despite the assertion of Oxley that distribution of relief in kind was ‘a rare phenomenon’, widespread research has demonstrated that many incidences of casual relief were not given as cash but in kind, either as goods or services. Indeed, Hindle insists that occasional payments were most commonly made in kind rather than cash. This tendency was driven by the desire of the overseers to target resources at specific needs and to avoid money being frittered away or spent in the alehouse. Figure 3 shows eleven categories that appeared in a sample of every fifth year from Westbury tithing, showing that a cash dole, although the largest category (26.6 per cent of the total) was just one of many ways in which relief was apportioned.

These various categories of casual relief need to be examined in more detail. Specific cash payments were typically given to old or disadvantaged parishioners but figure 1 shows that much medical help or nursing was provided not as a cash payment to the sick person but as a direct medical service paid for by the parish. In 1684, for example, 10s was ‘paid to a bonesetter for setting William Boure ribs. Bonesetters were sometimes hired by overseers to treat poor parishioners because they were cheaper than other medical practitioners. Many payments in the Westbury poor book relate to poor health and sickness: thus, in 1674 a surgeon was paid to tend

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<td>Cash payments</td>
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<td>Medical assistance</td>
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<td>Burial expenses</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<td>Bastardy expenses</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
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<td>In-kind benefits</td>
<td>Clothing</td>
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<td>Rent and housing</td>
<td>Rent</td>
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<td>Provision of work</td>
<td>Fuel</td>
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<td>Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Burial expenses</td>
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<td>Administration</td>
<td>Apprenticeships</td>
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<td>Schooling</td>
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<td>Removal of paupers</td>
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Table 1 Categories of one-off payments (Patriquin 2007 and Heery 2013)
Martha Hicks, and in 1690 £1 5s 6d was paid ‘to goody Bowry at severall times for her daughter to pay ye doctor’. Surgeons, doctors and bonesetters were hired for poor parishioners in ten different years between 1675 and 1697. At other times local parishioners were paid from the poor rate to tend their neighbours—examples include Elinor Cooke nursing Sarah Pullin in 1686 and Mary Fennell tending ‘Holdbrooke’s son’ in 1697. Hindle remarks that ‘The significance of medical relief in kind can only be properly understood if the definition of medical treatment is expanded to include a wide range of nursing and medical care ... More striking still is the tendency of parish officers to pay the poor to look after the poor’.43 This can be readily seen at Westbury-on-Trym, where there were numerous examples of such arrangements. For example, in 1680 Anne West received £2 14s for looking after Anne Draisy; in 1681 the pauper John Calee was paid for ‘keeping a child’; in 1687 Sarah Pullin, who was in receipt of relief herself, was paid ‘for attending William Smyth’; and in 1658 Thomas Faux was paid ‘towards keeping a child’.

Burial expenses appear regularly in the poor book. Patriquin describes these as covering 'shrouds, coffins, gravediggers, pallbearers, affidavits, minister's fees and the tolling of the bell'.44 In Westbury-on-Trym they could also include provision of food and drink for the mourners. For example, in 1696 some 6s was spent on ‘drink and Biskett for those y' carried her to ye grave’. But the hostility of the parish to outsiders was even present in death, as was evident in 1687 when the overseer was reluctant to spend parish money on the burial of a stranger who died from a fall while doing some work on a local house. The same attitude applied to those who became ill while visiting the parish. In 1681 money was spent 'for a Justices warrant and to ye tything man with others for the removing of Hester Edwards being very sick to Bedminster'. In 1660 the parish reluctantly paid 2s per week for 24 weeks to ‘the lame man ... since we were ordered by the Sessions’. On the other hand, in 1662 the overseers paid for the burial of an unknown ‘poore man,’ leaving open the question of just how severe the overseers were to strangers.
The payment of the rent of poor parishioners is found occasionally in the Westbury poor book, and entries for property repairs also occur. Thus in 1684 there are the following entries:

paid for mending Tho Tagg house 15s 02d
paid for mending Boure house 14s 06d
paid for mending Cooks house 06s 06d
paid for mending Pullins house 14s 10d

In 1680 repairs were carried out to the parish almshouse: ‘paid towards the Tiling of the Almshouse £2 10s’ and in 1691 Richard Holbrooke, Giles Humberstan and Edward Jotham were paid for ‘repayring ye almes house’. This was the home of some of the pensioners supported by the parish.

Provision of clothing for poor parishioners became more common in Westbury as the century progressed. Hindle states that ‘Clothing was always in demand for paupers, not least because it was so expensive relative to their income from the parish. The indigent wore what few garments they had until they either fell apart, or until they were sold off in direst need or after death’. An entry from 1691 is typical: ‘payd Towards ye buying a coate for Willm peacocks son £0 04 6’; another from 1693 is ‘for 2 shefts and a paere of Shooes for ye child at Goody Pullens and Stocking £0 04 11’. In 1695 the parish paid for ‘11 Ells of cloth for Parish Children £00 11s 00d’, while in 1694 an entry records payment ‘for Bread, Cheese, Coale for fireing for Mary Onion and Shoes for her child £00 09s’. The providing of shoes was common, as in 1695: ‘payd for a payre of stockings and shoos for Tho Wild £00 03 6d’.

Apprenticeships for the children of paupers also increase over the years, as the parish attempted to place such children in positions where they were no longer a charge to the poor rate. In 1660 the apprenticeship of Mary Chant was paid for by the parish; in 1697 a payment of 5s 3d was made to ‘Robert Fennell towards the apprentice of Tho Wades wench’, and in 1698 £4 was ‘Paide for the Binding of Henry Jayne apprentice to Mr. Martin’. The records also show occasional support for the schooling of poor children, as in 1660 when £1 5s 10d was received by ‘John Gee for to parrell Thomas Cas his son when he went to the free schools’.

Steve Hindle claims that there is ‘some evidence to suggest that women were the more significant beneficiaries of occasional relief and that this tendency grew more marked over time’, while Pamela Sharpe states that in the seventeenth century three times as many women received relief as men. She provides supporting evidence from Colyton, where the number of female recipients rose from 51 per cent in 1683 to 65 per cent in 1743, and suggests that ‘all the Devon parish accounts show a bias towards more women than men receiving relief’. The same imbalance is apparent among the recipients of pensions: of the 43 pensioners in the Westbury tithing sample population, 17 were men and 26 were women, which matches Hindle’s findings that pensioners were predominantly female and also that most of these were widows.

The provision of pensions would appear more straightforward than the complexities of casual relief. However, Hindle makes the important observation that single name entries in the records might hide other dependents who were also reliant on this relief. Indeed, this can be seen in the Westbury poor book where a widow’s name will often appear only after the death of her husband, since previously he alone would be listed as the beneficiary of the pension. Hindle also states that ‘the careers of some pensioners could be extremely long: five of those admitted to pensions in Gnosall in the 1670s and 1680s remained on the parish for between eleven and sixteen years.'
Anne Foster’s career in receipt of a pension in Whitchurch (Oxon) lasted 21 years. The Westbury-on-Trym poor book also has long-term pensioners. Sarah Pullin is a good example. She first appears in an entry for 1680. However, her husband appeared in 1678, when three shillings was ‘geaven to John Pullin since he was hurt’, a good illustration of how misfortune could put someone on relief. The following year his burial was paid by the parish and thereafter Sarah appears as a pensioner every year until 1714, a remarkable total of 34 years. Elizabeth Cook was another longstanding recipient of poor relief, being allowed casual relief in 1662, 1667 and 1672. It is significant that Elizabeth Cook received casual relief for almost a decade before becoming a pensioner, suggesting that the overseers tended to offer greater support those familiar to them. When she did finally receive a monthly pension she kept it for many years. The same sense of preparation is shown by a very interesting entry in 1686, when a payment of 12s was made to John Wasborow ‘before he came to monthly pay’, indicating that the parish regarded him as a pensioner-in-waiting; and indeed he did thereafter receive a regular monthly pension.

The Westbury-on-Trym poor book has a wealth of information about the management of poor relief in the second half of the seventeenth century. There is, however, a problem in scrutinising a document that comprises lists of payments, whereby the lists can come to seem routine and their contents static. But the detail of suffering and misfortune in those lists reminds us that poor relief was a process of human interaction. In the words of Steve Hindle, ‘Parish relief was, therefore, a process—indeed an often protracted process—of which the audited overseers’ disbursement is only the final record … The resources of the parish were not infinite, and overseers confronted with genuine cases of human misery must have found it extremely difficult to reconcile their legal obligation to relieve the impotent with their social responsibility not to overburden their fellow ratepayers’. The fact that some overseers spent more on poor relief than others points to the imprecise and personal nature of relief.

The payments to those favoured with a pension by the parish officers are interesting but relatively straightforward, whereas the records of casual relief are particularly revealing. To quote Hindle again, ‘casual payments disclose the extraordinary sensitivity of parish officers to the nature and scale of local misery. They also imply the effective flow of information between the indigent and the overseers, and perhaps even the degree of surveillance that was practised over the households of the poor. They suggest that overseers were prepared to go to very great lengths in satisfaction of the physical and material needs of the poor, providing a range of services which had expanded way beyond the simple concept of ‘relief’ envisaged by Elizabethan policy-makers’. The evidence from Westbury-on-Trym supports this statement.

Keith Wrightson argues that ‘in such communities, the coupling of generosity in relief with the demand for social conformity to new canons of respectability and the badging of the poor [via the ‘badging’ Act of 1697] enshrined and symbolized the social transition of the age’. To modern sensibilities the fact that from 1697 pensioners who were well known to their fellows were required to ‘take the patch’ and wear a symbolic ‘P’ on their clothes smacks of degrading discrimination. However, it is an inescapable fact that poor relief improved during the later years of the seventeenth century. Wrightson’s interpretation seems too ready to support his wider thesis about growing social polarisation. Not all parishes adopted the use of a badge for their paupers and we do not know how those villagers in Westbury-on-Trym who were benefiting from increased payments at the end of the 1690s might have
regarded the badge. There is, in fact, a growing consensus that the late-seventeenth century witnessed a developing sense of entitlement to relief that mitigated the discretionary powers of parish officers.\textsuperscript{54} Perhaps that was more important to the century witnessed a developing sense of entitlement to relief that mitigated the regard to the badge. There is, in fact, a growing consensus that the late-seventeenth century witnessed a developing sense of entitlement to relief that mitigated the discretionary powers of parish officers.\textsuperscript{54} Perhaps that was more important to the century witnessed a developing sense of entitlement to relief that mitigated the

In respect of the wider historical debate about the attitude of overseers towards their poorer neighbours, this article has favoured those who recognise the difficult task facing the overseers. The evidence from Westbury-on-Trym would appear to show the overseers to be conscientious in support of fellow parishioners who fell on hard times, but harsh towards some (though not all) outsiders who asked them for relief. Furthermore, the work of the overseers should be seen in the wider context of other parish philanthropy. For instance, it was common for the wills of parishioners to leave money for the poor, supplementing the poor rate. We should research the past with sensitivity towards our ancestors, who often endured hardships that we are very fortunate not to experience. It is also appropriate that as historians we view with sympathy those who struggled with very limited resources to alleviate the poverty in their midst.

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4 A page from the parish poor book showing the disbursements for 1669
(Bristol Record Office BRO P.HTW/OP/)

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Research in local history has been immensely assisted by the development of Access to Archives and of individual record office online catalogues. Documents can be found which would otherwise have been missed, and types of research can be conducted which would previously have been too time-consuming. Coverage is increasing all the time. We should all be grateful to those who have brought about this transformation. However, the character of different online catalogues varies considerably, and sometimes they are less helpful than might be expected. This note seeks to identify what ought to be best practice in record office online catalogues and to assess to what extent that is currently achieved. I suggest that five principles apply, as follows:

• Online catalogues should be simple to use.
• It should be possible to search in such a way that relevant documents can be pinpointed, and in particular to confine searches by date. The larger any catalogue is the more important this becomes.
• Search results should provide sufficient information to assess the relevance of each document, without having to click through to a further level for the basic information.
• It should be possible to see the record in context in the collection it belongs to, and in particular to be able to click through to the catalogue for that collection.
• Searches should identify all items containing the words searched for; documents should not be missed because of the way the data is structured.

A possible sixth principle, one which will become less important as coverage increases, is that there should be clear information about what the online catalogue contains, so that the user can judge whether it is the best approach to the subject and whether other finding aids need to be used too, such as Access to Archives and physical finding aids like card indexes and traditional hard-copy catalogues. There are of course other features which are good to have in an online catalogue, such as ability to search by subject, to print search results easily and to see images of documents (that being offered by at least 17 catalogues), but it seems to me that the five principles above are fundamental. Obviously the needs of different researchers vary greatly, and many searches (such as those for a rare surname) are adequately catered for by the most basic form of search, but often more is required.

The record office websites consulted for this note were those of 39 English counties and six English cities (Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Sheffield). Seven do not as yet have an online catalogue, which leaves 38, including five urban ones. Each covers one or more record offices and often local studies material, and six include museum collections (Dorset, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Suffolk). Many record offices have used off-the-peg software (26 use Calmview or its predecessor, DServe; at least one uses Adlib Information Systems), whereas others seem to have developed their own software.
My interest in this subject arose from seeking estate maps up to 1714, but in each catalogue I also searched for one parish or township (chosen at random), and the terms ‘stage coach’ and ‘carrier’, to test different types of search. The catalogues were consulted in October 2012, with some further work done in November, and this note does not take account of any subsequent changes.

Advice on contents

Almost all the record offices indicate that their online catalogue does not include every catalogued collection. Sometimes this is proclaimed very clearly but in other cases elliptically, by stating what is in the catalogue or that it is still being added to. From the information provided it seemed to me that those of Durham, Essex, Gloucestershire, London and the East Riding of Yorkshire include all catalogued collections. Five of the others indicate the percentage of records covered. Sometimes there is a useful list of what is included. Given that many online catalogues contain only a minority of a record office’s holdings, it is disappointing that so little advice is provided about alternative finding aids. Other online finding aids are of course covered, but only two record offices (Norfolk and Nottinghamshire) refer to card indexes or other hard-copy finding aids, and none provides any description of what is available, despite the value of such information when planning research. Archivists sometimes seem to be ashamed of card and slip indexes, and in some cases have made them harder to access before they have really been superseded.

More surprising is the paucity of references to Access to Archives (A2A), despite the effort and funds it has absorbed. Perhaps it suffers from ‘not invented here’ syndrome. Of the sites surveyed, 24 do not mention it at all (which is fair enough in the few cases where the record office’s own online catalogue is complete). Fourteen do refer to it, sometimes providing a link or saying what it contains, but only a few indicate clearly whether the researcher needs to search A2A in addition to the record office’s own catalogue. Cornwall, Cumbria, Shropshire, Surrey and Wiltshire pass this test; several others indicate only that their catalogue includes material not in A2A.

Ease of use

Much attention has clearly been paid to making online indexes as easy to use as possible. Almost all have something as simple to use as Google (though not always as effective, as explained below). Even ‘Advanced search’ is rarely alarming. Computer jargon is almost entirely absent (except in Bedfordshire’s advanced search), and so are unhelpful terms such as ‘keyword’ (found only in Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland) and ‘freetext’ (Bedfordshire); otherwise the self-explanatory term ‘Any text’ is universal.

‘Any text’ searches usually function as one would expect, finding only items containing all the words entered, but Suffolk finds items containing any of the words (e.g. for ‘railway station’ every reference to either ‘railway’ or ‘station’), and Bristol, Derbyshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, North Yorkshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire are unhelpfully set to (or default to) ‘Phrase’, so finding only items where the words appear next to each other in the same order, in some cases without this being apparent to the user. In Derbyshire, North Yorkshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and possibly others this problem can be corrected on the search screens, and in Suffolk on the advanced search screen, but in the other three cases it cannot: Bristol offers no means of doing so, and, while the others apparently do,
neither of them works (Norfolk searches for the phrase regardless of the setting; in Nottinghamshire re-setting from ‘Phrase’ to ‘All’ results in an error message).

Wiltshire has search boxes labelled ‘What’, ‘Where’, ‘Who’ and ‘When’, which return hardly any results, but does also have a simple ‘Any text’ search box. Gloucestershire’s advanced search is hidden under ‘Search the archives only’. Several catalogues (e.g. Northumberland and Oxfordshire) have an unreasonably low limit on the number of search results which can be seen—only 500 in the latter case. All but three catalogues offer a help page or search tips.

**Pinpointing documents**

Most online catalogues offer both ‘simple’ and ‘advanced’ searches, but what this means varies greatly, and some simple searches provide more options than advanced searches elsewhere. All offer a basic search in the form of a Google-type search box, either as a freestanding object or as the first in a series of search boxes. Almost all offer additional search boxes, either as a separate ‘Advanced search’ or in the same place.

Those additional search boxes almost always include reference, date and title of document. Often there are also search boxes for ‘Description’ text or the document’s level in the archival hierarchy, together with ‘Boolean’ options (determining whether searches yield items containing all the words entered, any of the words, or the words only as an exact phrase). Counties with more than one record office or museum often add searches by repository, and those including local studies collections provide searches by author. Several offer searches by type of material, either restricted to formats such as videos and films or, even more usefully, distinguishing different types of document, such as diaries or maps (Norfolk and Staffordshire). Durham and London make it possible to specify the type of organisation (e.g. business, charity, parish). Several offer searching by subject, place or personal name, using words set out in a list. That seems in virtually all cases to be very much a work in progress, but Dorset has a subject search which seems to work well. Only Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and (in practice) Wiltshire offer nothing more than a simple ‘Any text’ search, though in Lincolnshire search results can be refined by period and other categories.

As indicated above, most online catalogues allow the user to search by date, entering any combination of dates in a simple form, such as ‘1600-1700’, often with other date options too. In most of these cases the search results can also be sorted by date by clicking on the ‘Date’ heading. Of course some items have widely separated covering dates (e.g. a collection of deeds for a single property covering several centuries), and that also applies to many collections, but dates are still one of the most effective ways to narrow down a search. The catalogues which do not provide a simple search by date are Bedfordshire, Dorset, Durham, Lincolnshire, London, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Suffolk, West Sussex and Wiltshire. Bedfordshire achieves the same result in a more complicated way, which took me several attempts but does work; Bedfordshire, London and West Sussex make it possible to arrange search results by date or provide the results in date order, which can be as good as being able to search by date; and Lincolnshire, London and Shropshire allow searches within specified periods or refining of searches by period, which is good (when it works) but not as good. In Shropshire’s case it is not clear what periods are acceptable (so my attempt to search by date failed), and in London’s case only some of the specified periods work and the legacy of past cataloguing means that dates are often in the descriptive
fields rather than the date field and so are not picked up. That leaves Dorset, Durham, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire as providing no form of search by date at all (except in some of these cases for individual years). It seems to me extraordinary that archivists should have set up catalogues which cannot be searched by date. Unless that is remedied these catalogues will become more exasperating to users the larger they become.

Being able to search by reference is important because it enables searches within part of a record office’s holdings, usually by entering the reference for a collection followed by an asterisk and then entering words in other search boxes. In fact this is often the only way to find a document because a relevant word is in the name of the collection but not in the titles or descriptions at item level (for example in the case of parish records and London livery company records) and catalogues do not identify two or more words divided between collection and title or description fields. All the online catalogues offer searches by reference except Dorset, Essex, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire. Even better, Durham explicitly offers searches within collections. Several catalogues (e.g. Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire) make it possible to search among all the records relating to a specific parish.

Search results

The most common way of presenting search results is to provide reference, title and date in separate columns. The most frequent additions are level of document in archival hierarchy, name of collection, location of document (where more than one repository is covered) and images (where included). Durham and Lincolnshire do not show dates, and Durham, Gloucestershire (for quick searches) and Staffordshire do not display references.

The major problem is that the descriptions of documents are usually split between two fields, generally called ‘Title’ and ‘Description’, and nearly always only ‘Title’ is shown in the search results. International standards provide for these two fields, but they do not require a description field to be used in addition to a title. The split between two fields may make sense for modern records, where the item is frequently a file of papers, but this is much less so for older records which are more commonly described at the level of the individual document, such as a deed or letter. In practice, there is usually no consistency whatever in the division of information between the two fields. That is especially obvious in those few catalogues which include both title and description in search results. In addition, when only ‘Title’ is shown there is never any indication of whether clicking through to the full record will yield additional descriptive information or not, so any such information will either be missed or found only after much unproductive clicking.

If the descriptive information is split between fields and only ‘Title’ is shown in search results, the basic requirement is that the title provide a genuine summary of what the item contains. However, in practice the title is often a term almost entirely useless to the researcher, such as ‘Lease’, ‘Grant’ or ‘Letter’, or even ‘Note’, ‘General’ or ‘Bundle’. Frequently it is simply a place-name, so that the researcher interested in a place is confronted by a long list of search results all presenting only the place-name. Only Norfolk, Northumberland and Warwickshire seemed to me to have used the title field fairly consistently in an intelligent way, though some others have achieved an outcome as good or better by putting everything or virtually everything into the title field (Dorset, Surrey and Wiltshire). The only remaining problem in
some of these cases is that, unless the description breaks off in mid-sentence, it is not always clear whether only part of the description is shown.

Splitting the descriptive information between 'Title' and 'Description' would not matter so much if all catalogues displayed both of those fields in search results, as Cumbria, Kent, Lancashire, Shropshire and Surrey do. Omission of 'Description' seems to reflect the fact that the international standards make 'Title' but not 'Description' one of the compulsory fields, but there is nothing in those standards saying that only 'Title' should be shown. It is bizarre that so many record offices leave out the information most important to the researcher, while often including fields of far less interest. In some cases there seems to be an inexplicable determination to keep search results as short as possible. The examples just cited show that there is no reason why both 'Title' and 'Description' should not be shown.

Once the user clicks through to a second screen all the information about that item is usually displayed, generally including the title of the collection it belongs to, though with exceptions, as discussed below. In 17 out of 38 catalogues, the words searched for are highlighted, usually just on that second screen. Ease of navigation through search results varies greatly. In the worst cases it is possible to move through results pages only one or a few pages at a time and the screen returns to page 1 after any page giving further details has been looked at.

**Seeing the record in context**

Sometimes individual search results become meaningful only when seen in a wider context. For example, in Oxfordshire, where many items are described in terms such as 'Map, c.1804', it is often necessary to refer to the full catalogue to find what the item relates to (e.g. 'Road diversion at Chesterton'). The name of the collection often gives sufficient context, and in most counties is provided (sometimes with the other levels in the archival hierarchy), generally on the second screen giving the full information about each item. The exceptions are Bedfordshire, Essex, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Suffolk and Wiltshire. Whether this makes individual results incomprehensible then depends on the quality of the cataloguing and whether access is provided to the catalogue itself. In Essex, for example, despite direct access to the full catalogue not being available, it seems not to be a problem. On the other hand, in Suffolk, where not only is the title text not shown on the second screen if there is any description text, but there is also no indication of the collection and no way of finding out, the researcher has to make do with references to 'Map of the parish' or 'Plan of the existing almshouse' without knowing where they relate to.

The researcher sometimes needs to be able to consult the full catalogue of the collection to identify the item, and will often wish to do so anyway to find related material or to seek items which may be relevant even if the key words are not in the catalogue description; indeed, browsing catalogues is sometimes a better research strategy than searching for specific words. In most cases (33 out of 38) it is possible to click through to the catalogue itself, the exceptions being Bedfordshire, Essex, Northumberland, Suffolk and Wiltshire. In Northumberland, where access to catalogues is ostensibly available, the response is most often 'Too many records found'.

In at least fifteen cases the catalogue to which access is offered is not in the same format as a paper catalogue but is in a more hierarchical form with further clicks needed to move through the hierarchy. To some extent a balance has to be struck
between ease of navigation through the catalogue and ability to browse. A2A strikes this balance well and seems to me to provide a good model, showing the full record for an item in the context of the catalogue as a whole. In contrast, some online catalogues achieve neither objective, especially where only one level is shown at a time or where the layout is poor. It would be helpful if access was also provided to full catalogues similar to the paper copies, as in London.

**Identifying all relevant material**

Users should obviously be able to rely on online catalogues identifying all items which have the words entered in ‘Any text’ search boxes. The irony is that archivists have become ever more concerned to separate information about documents into hierarchical categories, scattering it across the collection, title and description fields, just at the time when online searching needs to be able to access all the information about an item at once. For two reasons this separation results in most online catalogues failing to identify all relevant items when more than one search word is used. The first is that online catalogues do not find items if one word is only in the record for the collection (e.g. the name of a parish) and one or more words are in the record for the item (e.g. ‘vestry minutes’). Whereas the user of a paper catalogue can see the context, the computer cannot. The remedy would be either to repeat some of the collection description in the title field for each document (which would contravene international standards ruling out duplication) or to enable ‘Any text’ searches to include the collection field.

The second and less obvious problem is that many online catalogues do not identify items if two or more search words are separated in title and description fields, despite the claim to be searching ‘Any text’. Almost all do pick up words either in the title field or in the description field, but many do not do so if one word is in each of those fields (e.g. ‘hearth tax’ and ‘Holborn’ in London). I found this flaw in the Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Hertfordshire, London, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire catalogues, but did not look for it in every county. By definition, none of the catalogues which identify items only if two or more words form an exact phrase identify words separated in different fields either. In some counties few items are likely to be affected, especially where nearly all descriptive information has been placed in the ‘Title’ field, whereas in others, notably London, it is a more serious problem. In several of the catalogues listed above the simple ‘Any text’ search fails the test of finding words in different fields, but ‘Any text’ within the advanced search passes it. However, London’s advanced search lacks an ‘Any text’ box, and in Norfolk ‘Any text’ in advanced search does not work in this respect either. In Hertfordshire, where ‘Any text’ in advanced search sometimes does not find words in the description field at all, the simple ‘Any text’ search does find words in more than one field. It hardly needs emphasising that catalogues which claim to be searching any text ought to do so.

By way of example, Warwickshire’s help notes advise the user not to search for Bubbenhall marriages simply by entering those words but to search first for Bubbenhall and then look for marriage registers among the results. The simple search for ‘Bubbenhall marriages’ does indeed identify neither the collection nor the item references for the registers (because the two words do not appear in the same field), but entering the same two words in ‘Any text’ in advanced search nevertheless yields a result for the collection as a whole, despite one of the words being in the title field and the other in the description field. It still fails to identify the individual items
because in these cases the two words are separated in the collection and title fields. In this example the researcher is likely to know that the items exist and to persist, but that will not always be so.

Conclusion
As indicated at the outset, online catalogues are enormously helpful. Even the least satisfactory provide something which was not available before. However, they vary significantly, and some fall down on fairly basic aspects, such as being able to confine searches by date, presenting search results in a helpful form and searching across fields. The least satisfactory from the point of view of archive users tend to be those established jointly with museums, whose priorities are clearly different. Fortunately, online catalogues are not only being enlarged all the time but also in many cases improved. Some flaws could be corrected relatively easily without any changes to the existing cataloguing, such as providing more helpful results screens, whereas others would be harder and more expensive to remedy because the problem lies more in the nature of that existing cataloguing. If this note encourages those responsible for online catalogues to examine best practice elsewhere and archive users to press for that best practice it will have served its purpose.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to Nicholas Kingsley for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article, and to Ruth MacLeod for information about off-the-peg software for catalogues. The views expressed are of course my own.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
1 A simple test is to take a place name, e.g. Putney, search for both ‘Putney deed’ and ‘deed Putney’ and compare the numbers of results.
2 In Suffolk the user has to choose a category such as ‘what’ or ‘where’, which yield different numbers of results, but it is often unclear which category should be used; searching by phrase seems to be impossible.
3 This aspect of Bedfordshire’s catalogue was not working at the time of writing.
4 International Standards for Archival Description (General) – ISAD(G), para 3.
5 ISAD(G), para 1.12.
6 At the time of writing, this seemed to work only for some items in Hampshire’s case.
7 ISAD(G), para 2.4.
8 In London, in addition, the crucial information about place is sometimes put in a fourth field, ‘Geographic area’, which is unsearchable.
9 Cumbria, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Northumberland and Oxfordshire do not have this problem.
10 In this example Warwickshire’s ‘PlaceCode’ system provides an alternative way of searching.

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The arrangement of this review of periodical articles of interest to local historians is chronological, although there are some articles which cross over centuries and labels, and so compromises have been made. Some trends that stand out in this year’s batch of articles are a growing interest in local politics in the medieval and early modern periods, and research into health and nutrition in the nineteenth century. An interest in the nutritional value of food in the past is perhaps not surprising, given that we are daily bombarded with dire warnings about obesity and eating a healthy diet. The aim of this annual review of papers published in history journals other than those directly related to local history is to encourage the reader to search more widely. In these days of austerity and financial hardship subscribing to even some of these journals is well beyond the pockets of most of us, but although public libraries are experiencing the same economic straits, and have had to cut back on their services and put up their charges, the articles should be available through inter-library loans. University libraries may well subscribe: if you are not affiliated to a university, it’s always worth seeing whether your nearest one allows access by local residents.

First I want to mention an article which, although written by a medievalist, is relevant to anyone writing any sort of history. In 2008 John Hatcher published *The Black Death*, which has been described as a work of *faction*. In January 2012, *History* published Hatcher’s spirited defence of this method of retelling history, in which he describes what amounts to his Damascene discovery of local history. Faction or *docudrama*, as it is also called, is a way of presenting history to non-historians that engages them in a jargon-free language and provides historical context in a non-threatening manner. Many of the articles in this review were, of course, written for specialist journals by specialists, and meant to be read by practising historians, and are not the easiest of reads, but are worth making the effort.

**Medieval**

The wool trade in early medieval Lincolnshire is the subject of an article by Rosamund Faith in *Economic History Review*. She shows that in the wake of Scandinavian incursions, peasant farmers on the Lincolnshire wolds raised sheep and marketed the wool through a network of river routes, presided over by elite merchants. The article includes case studies on the Lynn valley, and the Humber, Trent and Witham riparian routes. The borders of England and Scotland were a contested land, with raids by both sides, cattle rustling, crops burnt, and buildings damaged or destroyed. In ‘Ripon and the Scottish Raids, 1318-1322’ S. Werronen asks whether there was any substantial damage to Ripon Minster by the Scots, using architectural and archival evidence to conclude that the damage was limited. The period of raids discussed in this paper coincides with the start of the great cattle murrain in England and Wales, when 62 per cent of bovine animals perished. Philip Slavin examines the effect of the loss of protein and milk on the population, and considers whether this might have led to the weakening of the human immune system during the years leading up to the Black Death. Good papers stimulate more questions, and this is such a paper. How much meat did the peasant population of thirteenth century England and Wales consume? Was it enough in good years to boost immunity? If animal numbers dropped, did this release more land for arable crops, and fodder crops for human consumption?

Three medieval articles cover different aspects of local politics. C.D. Liddy explores the use of space and internal decoration in Coventry’s town hall (also known as St Mary’s Hall) in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and shows how the iconography of the tapestries added to the city’s civic status. An article by C.I. Hammer in *Historical Research* is based on a petition to Henry III from a group of Oxford townsmen, who described themselves as the ‘lesser
community’, against a group of powerful burgesses who had monopolised civic power in the city. Chris Dyer’s article on ‘Poverty and Relief in Late Medieval England’ discusses the institutions available to distribute poor relief, such as monasteries, bede houses, and colleges for poor men, as well as individual choices on giving alms, making loans, and the employment of children. He emphasises the importance of the village and parish in the distribution of relief, and the experimental and creative ways of doing this. This article should be read in conjunction with Keith Snell’s paper on ‘Belonging and community: understandings of ‘home’ and ‘friends’ and the English poor 1750-1850’. Based on the narratives of the poor taken from letters to parish relief officers, Snell concludes that the poor felt isolated from their communities. They knew where their parish of legal settlement was, but it did not feel like ‘home’, and they lacked friends both at home and further away. Both from the same stable, the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester, these complementary papers suggest that an article is needed which fills in the gap between the fifteenth century and 1750 and discusses whether the change from reliance on the home parish to alienation was the result of the Old Poor Law, or went deeper.

Pre-industrial early modern

The theme of local politics is examined through manorial court rolls by B. Waddell, ‘Governing England through manorial courts, 1552-1850’. For this article 113 court rolls from Yorkshire were used to look at the changing role of manorial officials and the courts. Two papers on shipping complement each other. S. Hipkin, in ‘The coastal metropolitan corn trade in the later seventeenth century’, shows one side of the east coast trade, using previously unexplored London port books to trace the origin of the coastal corn trade in the seventeenth-century. These show that most corn came to the capital from Essex and Kent, and that while the most important shipment in the early seventeenth century was of barley and malt for the brewing industry, in the second half of the century, this was outstripped by oats. P. Nash looks at trade from one east coast port, Scarborough between 1550 and 1750. During this period the maritime trade of the town went from depression to prosperity as more coal was exported from it. Another import from the east to the north was Christopher Shute, the puritan vicar of Giggleswick in Yorkshire, whose life and career are discussed by V. Spence. Religion is also the focus of Clive Field’s paper on ‘Counting Religion in England and Wales: The Long Eighteenth-Century’, which uses a synthesis of primary and secondary sources to produce estimates of the religious characteristics of the population at specific points between 1680 and 1840. He shows that adherents of the Church of England diminished, while dissent grew and Roman Catholicism kept pace with demographic growth and was stimulated by Irish immigrants.

D. Hitchcock discusses migration, vagrancy and justice in Warwickshire from 1670 to 1730. This is established on a case study of Grandborough, a parish which has a good set of constables’ accounts. The article argues that constables categorised travellers according to pragmatic criteria dependent on the amount of relief they would require before being sent on, so that pregnant women, the sick and vagabonds were treated worse than the able-bodied. Recently digitised apprentice registers and ancillary sources for Bristol and London have been used by C. Minns and P. Wallis to quantify the practice of apprenticeship in early modern England. With the aid of regression analysis they show that many apprentices never completed their apprenticeship. The intriguingly-titled ‘A Pair of Grass-Green Woollen Stockings: Clothing the Rural Poor in Seventeenth-Century Sussex’ by Danae Tankard uses many different local sources, including legal depositions on the theft of clothing, probate material and overseers’ accounts to glean descriptions of how the rural poor were dressed. These show that the clothing was functional, but wherever possible clothes, or at least additional trimmings, were kept for Sunday best.

Anyone embarking on research into marriage in the eighteenth century should read the comprehensive historiographical discussion in Emma Griffin’s paper which re-examines this theme. She argues that earlier challenges to accepted perceptions about marriage failed to take into account the effect of an economically stable environment, and cultural norms such as
the decline of parental control over marriage partner choice, and suggests that a combination of social and cultural changes led to marriages at a younger age. Finally two articles from Scotland: T.C. Smout revisits Scottish improvers and the diffusion of literature which introduced new ideas about agriculture and the use of land, so that although in 1700 Scotland lagged behind the rest of Europe, by 1760 improvement had had a significant impact. The theme of literature is continued in V. Dunstan's examination of book ownership in late eighteenth century Dumfriesshire. Local inventories are used to trace household libraries and their subject matter, and she considers where and how the books were purchased. Household libraries could contain between sixty and 270 eclectic volumes.

The industrial eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

The wider diffusion of books into the home enabled people such as Thomas Watson, a drystone-waller and Methodist preacher of Cumberland, to examine his life and times, and the changes in society through verse. J. Platt shows that although Watson never left his home village, he was aware of events outside it, and attempted to rationalise the changes that were occurring as industrialisation altered working places and patterns. One of the changes that Watson might have observed was the wholesale enclosure of common land and open fields during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Richard Hoyle discusses the enclosure of Preston Moor in 1833-1835, and the establishment of Moor Park, which he suggests is the oldest English municipal park. A re-examination of the evidence shows that originally the enclosed land was to be used as pasture for the horses of the town's freemen, and to encourage the building of a middle-class suburb, neither of which happened.

Health and nutrition are discussed in four papers. S.J. Taylor deals with a sensitive topic—the under-explored 'idiot children' of the late nineteenth-century—using as a case study two boys aged 6 and 7 admitted to the Northampton Lunatic Asylum, deemed 'idiots'. Their case notes show that the asylum attempted to cure them, but when they were released the community failed to reintegrate them. Another new area of study is physical disability in the past. C. James uses census returns to look at disability in Herefordshire from 1851 to 1911, asking whether the disabled were allowed to stay in their own homes, did they marry and were they employed. From a number of case studies the article concludes that the disabled were seen as full members of the local community, and 60 per cent of disabled men were in employment. The state of rural sanitation and its impact on health appears in K. Waddington's paper on sanitary conditions and images of health in rural Wales. It shows that the idealised images of rosy-cheeked healthy country folk were at odds with the reality of filthy and overcrowded conditions, which produced sickly children and ill health. Two papers on nutrition complete this quartet. Sara Horrell and D. Oxley discuss regional nutrition, stature and gender in the industrial revolution, focussing on the diets of the poor given in Sir Frederick Eden's *Survey of the Poor* of 1795, and the rural replies to the 1834 queries. In 1795 nutrition was related to the availability of common land, and in 1834 it was considered to be more dependent on women's employment, with a change from a 'healthy' diet of oatmeal bread, butter, milk and potatoes to one based on white bread, tea and sugar, the consequent reduction in essential vitamins seriously affecting the growth of children. Pamela Sharpe explains the short stature of the poor in terms of the health of children. Although this was associated with the living environment, she concludes that not only did poor diet lead to a short stature, but also that hard work done as a child inhibited growth.

Other environmental factors which affect growth included poor housing. P. Atkinson looks at family size and housing in the later nineteenth century in Bradford and Middlesbrough. He tests the hypothesis that the poor were trapped in slums because of their large families, and suggests that instead expectations and expenses encouraged family limitation. Maw, Wyke and Kidd present new data on mill location in Manchester during the period 1790-1850, showing that water transport played a key role in determining intra-urban factory and mill development. Canals and canal branches spread across the town, providing waterborne communication to the majority of mills and factories.
Crossover: the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

This is a chronological compromise, as many articles crossed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A.J. Arnold’s article on ‘Dependency, debt and shipbuilding in Palmer’s town’ traces the fortunes of the Jarrow shipbuilding company Palmer’s from its success in the 1880s to failure in 1933, a failure which helped to make the town synonymous with industrial decline and unemployment. Steven Caunce’s paper shows that an apparently archaic way of finding employment—the hiring fair—survived in the north of England until the 1950s. He examines the timing of the fairs in relation to local agricultural conditions, linking with work done by Ann Kussmaul on the early modern period. Also on a rural theme is N. Mansfield’s work on the Co-op in rural areas from 1870 to 1930. Using case studies from Shropshire, East Yorkshire and Berkshire he demonstrates that country squires encouraged their tenants to join the Co-operative Society. Keith Snell looks at another aspect of nineteenth and twentieth century life—the closure of churchyards and the opening of new cemeteries as the demand for burial space increased, and denominations and religions other than Christians wanted their areas in local cemeteries. Case studies based on Leicestershire and Rutland are set within the context of memory in rural communities.

Sickness and health across the centuries appear in the paper by B. Harris and his colleagues on the Hampshire Friendly Society. It uses the records of 5500 men who joined the society in the years 1824-1939, and examines trends in the seasonality of sickness, and the effect of age. It suggests that the relationship between age specific morbidity rates remained stable throughout the period. One question that could be asked about this and other friendly societies that survived into the twentieth century concerns the effect of old age pensions on membership, and of course for the later twentieth century the effect of the NHS on such societies. Finally in this crossover section comes perhaps the most interesting article of 2012. ‘Come All Ye and Bring Your Spades: England and Arbor Day, c.1880-1914’ by J. Hipperson. Arbor Day was a made-up tradition imported from America. It encouraged communities to plant trees collectively, with the use of rituals and songs. Once the trees were planted the community had to care for them, in an early form of ‘adopt-a-tree’. There is a detailed description, with photographs, of the 1910 Arbor Day in the new Letchworth Garden City.

Twentieth century

As the twenty-first century passes its first decade, more articles have appeared on the preceding century, remembered by most of us. This is ‘new’ history, which allows the use of methodologies which are different from those used to research earlier centuries. Oral history is employed by D. Palmer to examine the life-histories of migrants to the London Borough of Bexley from 1950 onwards. Migration also appears in J. Burckhardt’s article on migration into the Berkshire countryside from 1901 to 1951. This shows that the rural population of that county rose by 54 per cent in the first half of the twentieth century. As some people sought rural retreats, London remained the preferred option for others. L.E. Hewitt uses the Civic Survey of Greater London, taken from 1915-1919, to discuss the concerns of London’s planners. The survey included parts of the counties bordering London, and this article is essential reading for anyone working on suburbs and suburbia.

Rod Liddiard, an archaeologist, discusses the excavations and historical context of a Second World War defence landscape at Walberswick in Suffolk, constructed during the invasion scare of 1940. This is an essential article for anyone researching changes in the landscape during the war. The closure of the mines in the 1980s also changed the face of the landscape, and the miners’ strike of 1984-1985 changed local communities, and could be seen as a defining moment in post-war twentieth century history. James Phillip examines the strike in Scotland, focusing on local variables which accounted for the strength of the strike at the pithead, including the attitude of local authorities to the strike, the employment of women, and the pre-strike level of local employment.
The long view and a conclusion

Three articles take a long view of history. Peter Razzell uses evidence for infant mortality in London from 1538 to 1850 as a methodological study, and suggests that 20-40 per cent of infant burials were unrecorded. Leigh Shaw-Taylor follows the rise of agricultural capitalism and the decline of family farms from 1450 to 1850, using local case studies and data-sets from across England to challenge previous work on this theme. Craig Muldrew measures the contribution of spinning to household earnings and the national economy between 1550 and 1750. The article includes case studies on Cheshire, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire and Norfolk. Sharp-eyed readers will have noticed a significant omission from this review—there are no articles from the Agricultural History Review, usually a fruitful resource for local historians. So far I have not been able to access any issues for 2012. Any information about this publication would be welcome.

And finally, a comment on the titles of some of the articles and, in particular, the use of a ‘catch’ main title followed by a colon, and a sub-title which contains the actual information about the text. Nineteen of the articles in this review are presented in this way. Why? When I was course director of the Masters in Local History at the University of Cambridge, the head of the history faculty, Professor Quentin Skinner, would not accept dissertation titles which included a main and a sub-title. I agree with him. This is a superfluity of words, and all that is needed is a title which reflects the content of the article.

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J. Hatcher, ‘Fiction and history: the Black Death and beyond’, History (vol.97 no.1, January 2012) 3-21
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S. Werronen, ‘Ripon and the Scottish raids, 1318-1322’, Northern History (vol.49 no.2, September 2012) 174-184

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In October 2011 the Council of the University of Wales reaffirmed its commitment to support Welsh culture via Adduned Cymru, a pledge that among other things confirmed its commitment to promoting Welsh scholarship via the Cardiff-based University of Wales Press. Examples of their ‘Welsh History Text Books’ and scholarly ‘Studies in Welsh History’, received for review shortly afterwards, are treated (chronologically) below. Together, they illustrate the standards and benchmarks by which the historical experience of Wales is revealed, historical scholarship served, and the study of Welsh history encouraged. By supplanting the adage ‘for Wales see England’ they also provide essential historical background for local and regional studies at all levels. The monographs especially command attention among historians internationally as prime examples of the successful application of historical studies in a Welsh context. Most titles are also available for sale and distribution by the University of Chicago Press. The series editors of the ‘Studies in Welsh History’ are Ralph A. Griffiths, Chris Williams and Eryn M. White, so they have been responsible for the books by Kathryn Hurlock, John Davies and Andrew Edwards. The book by Hugh Thomas is the first volume in the ‘Welsh Text Books’ series, edited by the late Professor A. H. Dodd (1891-1975) and, like Davies’s volume, a reprint. Sue Bruley’s book is not one of a series but is an example of a new scholarly publication in paperback by the University of Wales Press. That is, effectively, what Hurlock’s book is also. The books by Davies and Edwards, on the other hand, are revamped (or perhaps insufficiently revamped) theses.


This fine scholarly study, which is based on the author’s similarly titled doctoral thesis (Aberystwyth, 2007) and her subsequent work on the Crusades and crusading in the Welsh annalistic chronicles (Lampeter, 2009) is offered as a unique and pioneering contribution to our understanding of the successive waves of crusading activity that occurred throughout Europe between the establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem by the First Crusaders in 1099 and its acknowledged fall in 1291, over a century after Saladin captured the city of Jerusalem. Taking a narrower focus in time and offering more local detail than Alan Macquarrie’s Scotland and the Crusades 1095-1560 (1985, 1997) or Evelyn Lord’s The Knights Templar in Britain (2000), Dr Hurlock draws on monastic chronicles, Welsh poetry and all available manuscript and printed sources to explore Welsh enthusiasm for the crusading movement during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. After carefully reviewing her sources, she assesses the influence of Archbishop Baldwin’s six-week preaching tour of Wales on crusader recruitment—a lucrative field that enables her to reassess the account by Gerald of Wales of Baldwin’s achievements and to highlight the scant attention accorded to the visit in the monastic chronicles kept in districts controlled by Welsh princes, although they feature prominently in those kept by Anglo-Norman abbots and lords. She considers military recruitment, participation, and overall support for military campaigns throughout Wales; demonstrates the varying opinions in different parts of the country and among various social classes; and produces a convincing and well documented account of the ways in which the English were able to use the Crusades as a means of cementing their political control over Wales. For although it may appear so with hindsight, this Anglo-Norman assimilation of Wales was not a steady one-way process. As Dr Hurlock confirms when citing the case of Rhys ap Gruffydd (d.1197) of Deheubarth, who belatedly declined to leave for the holy land with Richard I, Welsh dynastic rulers well
understood the importance of strategic defence and castle building as well as the personal dangers and patronage implications of 'taking the cross'. They also coveted the papal patronage accruing to those who did so and turned to canon law in their tussles with successive English kings and archbishops of Canterbury. Excellent use is made of the Slebech (Pembrokeshire) estate records as well as chronicles and the customary secondary sources, while the three appendices to the book—two listing Welsh participants and Marcher participants by name, date, rank, location of land, familial precedent, source and any supplementary notes; and one outlining the genealogies of the principal families—serve as an excellent research tool for regional and local historians. The patronage networks and estates mentioned in the book extended far beyond Wales and, for example, some of the dramatis personae can be identified again among the military orders in Ireland.

A HISTORY OF WALES 1485-1660 Hugh Thomas (University of Wales Press 2011 reprint vi+246pp ISBN 9780708324875) £22.95

Hugh Thomas's book, the first in the four-volume 'Welsh History Text Books' series, is a standard introductory text for students of the Tudor and Stuart eras in Wales, offering what Welsh History Review (1973) termed a 'sound exposition of the objectives, obligations and conditions of life of the various classes in the social hierarchy'. First published in 1972, revised in 1976, and regularly reprinted, its preface, introduction and bibliographic references remain firmly rooted in the historiography of the early 1970s, when its designated readers were 'sixth form pupils and students at Colleges of Education', the cohorts whom the author taught in Barry. It is thus weaker in its conceptual focus and comparative approach than subsequent publications in the field—for example Philip Jenkins, A History of Modern Wales 1536–1990 (1992); Geraint H. Jenkins, The Foundations of Modern Wales 1642–1780 (1987; 1993) or Lloyd Bowen, The Politics of the Principality: Wales c.1603–1642 (2007)—and is ripe for serious updating. Nevertheless, it is crammed with interesting detail and offers an eminently readable account of the features that distinguished Wales from England in the period. For example in the space of a few pages, chapter 9 introduces the reader to the principal Welsh landowners and landholding practices, the terms cytir (community-held land) and pridwerth (mortgage value).

The Tudor ascendancy, the transformative annexation of Wales to England by the Acts of Union in the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII, the Reformation, the Stuart accession, the Civil War and Commonwealth are all succinctly described and discussed from political, administrative, economic and social perspectives. Changes in the church, central and local government, courts of law and land and property tenure in Wales are highlighted and defined—although probably no longer well enough to satisfy a 2013 reader unfamiliar with the Bible, Christian sectarianism and the concepts of kingship and government prevalent in the period. A strong local dimension is in evidence throughout in the numerous illustrative snippets Thomas used to ground his study in secondary sources and locations familiar to his readers and their teachers. Tantalisingly, it is now difficult to trace many of his well-chosen quotations to their original documentary sources.

The introduction and conclusion are brief and the main text neatly presented in thirteen 20-page chapters, each with a reading guide. Six maps and sketches of cruck- and box-frame houses serve as illustrations. The glossary of terms is useful but too brief and the index accurate. The strength of this volume lies in its perceptive, locally illustrated and lucid study of the administrative, social, economic and cultural aspects of life in Tudor and Stuart Wales.


This book, the third in the ‘Studies in Welsh History’ series and now available for the first time in paperback, was the first meticulously researched and eruditely argued study of the impact on a town and its rapidly industrialising hinterland of a wealthy ‘Welsh’ landowning dynasty. Dr John Davies is the author of Hanes Cymru/A History of Wales (1993, 2007) and co-edited the
Encyclopaedia of Wales (2007). In this book, which is based on an impressive array of primary and secondary sources, he sets the Butes and their influence within a context of landed proprietorship, economic development, estate management and the rise of the industrial and working classes. It deserves a place on the bookshelves of political, economic, local and regional historians alike. The Crichton Stuarts, marquesses of Bute were, as Davies explains, primarily Scottish landed magnates with estates in Bedfordshire, Bute, Cambridgeshire, Dumfries and Durham as well as South Wales. However, it was in Glamorgan, where political, commercial and dynastic rivals threatened to undermine the vast revenue potential of their 20,000 acre estate, that they transformed the small port and contributory parliamentary borough of Cardiff into the coal metropolis that became the largest city in Wales. This stupendous growth was permitted and underpinned by private Acts of parliament sanctioning the local projects that provided the infrastructure and services associated with industrialisation and urbanization—roads, canals, docks, railways, harbours, bridges, gas, water and lighting—issues of immense complexity, more recently accorded separate in depth treatment by other scholars.

Taking the period from 1766, when the Stuarts of Bute acquired the Cardiff Castle estate through marriage, until 1947, when they gifted the castle to Cardiff Corporation, Davies examines the roles of the first three marquesses in the development of the city. The text is footnoted, accurately indexed, and presented as seven thematic chapters on the Bute family, the Cardiff Castle Estate, and the role of the Butes in Glamorgan politics and society, as agricultural, urban and industrial developers and improvers, and as managers of mineral wealth. The volume concludes with a detailed account of the making and development of Cardiff docks where, from the mid-1850s, expansion and renewal costs regularly outstripped revenues. From the 1850s also, the Bute influence over Cardiff Corporation and the parliamentary constituency gradually diminished. Davies mostly substantiates Martin Daunton's 1977 conclusions (in Coal Metropolis, Cardiff 1870-1914), that the development of Cardiff docks and railways was peripheral to the role of the Butes as major coalowners in the Cynon, Neath, Rhondda and Rhymney valleys and that their primary role within the Glamorgan coalfield was as landlords of commercial and residential properties and providers of transport facilities. The ship canal, Bute docks, Cardiff street-names, leases and maps testify to their dominance and their enormous impact on the landscape and local government. The bibliography is dated but thorough and worth consulting. Checks via Archive-Network-Wales soon provide the necessary updates on primary collections, for example the recatalogued Bute papers at the National Library of Wales, Glamorgan Archives and Cardiff Central Library.

Information from this book can be gleaned from Davies’s contributory chapter to David Cannadine’s Patricians, power and politics in nineteenth-century towns (1982). Even so, local historians still have much to gain from reading and dipping into the complete text which, despite its outmoded layout, remains a master of its genre and provides an excellent scholarly context and corrective for newer and narrower studies such as John Hutton’s three part Illustrated History of Cardiff Docks (2008).

THE WOMEN AND MEN OF 1926: the general strike and miners’ lockout in South Wales

This groundbreaking and meticulously researched study, first published in hardback in 2010, takes the history of the coalfield, general strike and lock and out beyond the traditional parameters of trade unionism, coalowners and the state, by offering a regionally-based gender-specific analysis of the impact of this industrial conflict on the individuals and communities most affected. Sue Bruley is senior lecturer in history at the University of Portsmouth, specialising in twentieth century British history and women’s history, and is the author of Women in Britain since 1900 (1999). Building upon her chapter on women in Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout: the Struggle for Dignity (2004) she brings her work to life though her effective use of oral testimony specific to South Wales. She chose that areas ‘as it was the largest and most militant coalfield at the time and has developed a rich historiography’, and also because
it was the ‘most cohesive’ on account of ‘its near mono-industrial base’. She concludes the book by suggesting comparable studies of other coalfields such as Nottinghamshire, with its ‘very different history ... of union activity and of wives in paid employment’.

The Rhondda Urban District Council minutes at Glamorgan Archives, the South Wales Coalfield Collection at the Richard Burton Archives, and the South Wales Miners’ Library’s oral history archive are the local mainstays of the book, to which Burley adds her own interviews with some of the children of 1926. She draws regularly on the work of her fellow contributions to the 2004 volume and the wealth of published research on the South Wales coalfield; but the expertise on the history of women, gender and family in the twentieth century is her own and she applies it well in her painstaking multi-faceted investigation. However, the distinctions she draws between gender (especially masculinity) and class seem fudged, and she concedes that ‘away from the public gaze, gender roles could by a good deal less rigid than many imagined’. So much then for the public patriarchs and domestic matriarchs (mammau) of the Rhondda. The roles of central and local government, party politics, the South Wales Miners’ Federation and their Lodges, female picketing, harassing of blacklegs, communal kitchens, and indoor and outdoor leisure activities are all addressed, and the emotional stigma of applying for poor relief and deductions made from out-relief when a child received free school meals is discussed and illustrated. Care is also taken to place the strike within the context of post-First World War industrial relations, politics, economic meltdown and social change. Almost inevitably the legacy of defeat in the 1926 is assessed and compared with the outcomes of the 1984 miners’ strike.

The text is prefaced by a map of the South Wales coalfield showing the main landscape features and the places mentioned. Other illustrations are few but apt, and the citations from oral and written testimony, frequent and informative. With the biographical appendix and index they bring a personal dimension to the book and place it in the local sphere. Burley could have expanded upon this. The introduction serves to justify her approach and methodology, giving a brief account of the background to and historiography of the 1926 general strike and the development of the South Wales coalfield. This is interesting and informative but it is too much to incorporate into one 16-page chapter, which becomes disjointed as the account moves from gender to history, historiography, geography and demography within the space of a few pages. The next four chapters are thematic, covering gender and family; collective eating and public authorities; having fun, getting by and outside help; and women, politics and pickets. Each draws on a wealth of sources and is broken down into short topical contributions, which makes for easy reading. The account of the gradual involvement of women in politics in The Valleys uses local newspapers and party publications effectively and is brought to life in accounts of the experiences of Elizabeth Andrews and Rose Davies. Chapter six, on defeat, aftermath and legacy, is excellent. It deals with far more than the crucial contribution of women in maintaining solidarity in the coalfield and should be essential reading for anyone with an interest in the period. A short final chapter has a brief résumé of the book that draws parallels with the catastrophic defeat of the miners in 1984-1985 and commends the coalfields as lucrative research grounds for gender historians.


This, the 32nd in the ‘Studies in Welsh History’ series, is regional as well as ‘national’ in focus and highly relevant outside Wales. Mentored by and dedicated to the late professor Duncan Tanner (1958-2010), it draws heavily—perhaps too heavily (see below)—on Dr Edwards’s doctoral thesis (Bangor, 2002) which exposed the fragility of support for the Labour Party during the second half of the twentieth century, notwithstanding their near monopoly of Welsh representation in 1966 and 1997. The region studied comprises the pre-1983 parliamentary constituencies of Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Conway, and Merioneth (that is, present-day Gwynedd and Anglesey) where between 1960 and 1974, the Conservative threat to Labour
increased and Plaid Cymru rapidly and successfully established itself as a key political player, largely at Labour’s expense.

Edwards, who was co-director of the Welsh Institute for Social and Cultural Affairs at Bangor from 2006 to 2010 and is currently director of Teaching and Learning for the College of Arts, Education and Humanities at Bangor University, delivers a shrewd reassessment of the extensive secondary literature available, albeit only up to 2002, which is a missed opportunity. The survey of the dominance of the Labour Party in the region after 1945 and the limitations of its appeal after 1960 is sound and eminently readable. Interesting parallels are drawn between the inter-war years, when the region’s Liberal MPs were unable to staunch the economic decay through government aid, and the failures of the Macmillan, Wilson and Heath governments to do any better ‘west of Bangor’. The importance of the Welsh language and Liberal-radical tradition are stressed throughout. Edwards rightly highlights the unpopularity of Labour’s decision to stage the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon in 1970 and the local vulnerability of MPs holding ministerial positions, even in the Welsh Office. Due attention is also paid to the importance of local elections and Plaid’s groundbreaking endeavours to end the stranglehold of independents on local councils both before and after their candidates, Dafydd Wigley and Dafydd Ellis Thomas, secured election for Caernarfonshire and Merioneth in 1974. Conwy, a perennial Lab-Con marginal, fell in 1970 to the bilingual Conservative broadcaster and journalist Wyn Roberts, a ‘Teflon Man’ who held it until 1997. Anglesey remained Labour until 1979 through Cledwyn Hughes, the longest serving of the triumvirate of ‘Wales first Labour second’ MPs this region returned in 1951. Hughes’s successor was a Conservative.

The sources accessed include a vast array of personal and party archives, party publications, government papers, newspapers, autobiographies and interviews granted by surviving candidates, MPs and their relations as well as party agents and constituency party members. Edwards uses them well and supplies excellent footnotes; but, even so, this reviewer could not help observing that more sources appear in the bibliography than can be traced to the index or text (for example, clear use is made of only nine of the seventeen interviews listed). The tables are another problem of thesis-transformation. Tables within the text are numbered but not otherwise listed. The statistics they present, undeniably useful though they are for inter-regional and inter-constituency comparisons, can be awkward to find. This is disconcerting for the reader, especially as tables naming candidates, their party and the votes accruing to them are conspicuously absent in this book. However, this is quibbling about opportunities missed to update an excellent regional study and a resource that offers far more than its title suggests and portends the author’s master-studies of Welsh devolution.

MAGGIE ESCOTT is an honorary research fellow of Swansea University and the History of Parliament, where she was a major contributor to The House of Commons, 1820-1832 edited by D.R. Fisher and published in 2009, in which she wrote the survey chapters on Wales and the on the procedure and business of the House. Her other publications include chapters and articles on the parliamentary representation of Cardiganshire and Gwent, the abolition of the Welsh judicature, Robert Owen, royal bounty grants to Huguenot refugees, the Berkshire parish of Binfield, migration and the Captain Swing Riots. A volume on the Swing Riot papers of William Robert Hall, for the Berkshire Record Society, is forthcoming.

Clevedon on the north Somerset coast was transformed during the nineteenth century from a small village into an elegant seaside resort. The population expanded from 334 in 1801 to nearly 6000 by 1901, and has continued to rise as road and rail links made it a popular dormitory town for Bristol. This dramatic growth is reflected in the substantial Victorian villas which spread across the hillside overlooking the sea and above the original settlement. The local Civic Society, formed in 1970, has now published nine books on the history of Clevedon. The major part of this most recent volume consists of a translation and commentary on four court rolls of the manor of Clevedon, dating from the fourteenth century, which are now in the British Library. The rolls which provide a detailed picture of the small agricultural community living in the coastal marshes, are reproduced in full, with a commentary. They range in date from 1321 to 1397, and the painstaking work involved in their translation and analysis is impressive. The book includes separate studies of features of fourteenth century society which emerge from the rolls, including population estimates, land use, place- and field-names, surnames, farming and the economic life of the community. One essay, complete with maps, relates the landscape revealed in the documents to the Clevedon tithe map of 1839. This is a thorough and commendable project which provides an excellent survey of the medieval manor.

The rest of the book consists of two essays on aspects of the nineteenth and twentieth century expansion of Clevedon. The first provides an illustrated account of the buildings and builders, and includes details of the construction of hotels, new churches, schools and shops. The earliest houses were planned according to strict rules laid down by the lords of the manor, the Elton family of Clevedon Court. No unsuitable shops or trades were allowed and there was careful regulation of sea-bathing and the use of bathing machines. The final essay considers the decorative bargeboards and finials which are such an attractive feature of many of the Victorian houses. They were produced by local builders and the variety and intricacy of the designs is remarkable. Since they have no listed protection they can easily be lost through decay or over-zealous repairs. Finials are especially liable to be cut off during work on roofs. Illustrations of the many different designs provide an invaluable record of the workmanship and ingenuity lavished upon these decorative features.

The book is well produced, although inevitably not all of the early photographs are very clear, and it would have been good to include an index. This is an admirable addition to the eight previous studies of Clevedon history published through the enthusiasm of the Civic Society during the past 40 years.

JOSEPH BETTEY


After Stephen Bull’s magisterial book ‘A general plague of madness’: the Civil Wars in Lancashire 1640-60 another work on the same subject might seem superfluous. However David Casserley’s account of ‘the brother-killing days’ in Lancashire offers a new perspective in that, while providing a general narrative of events, it primarily focuses on the Civil War experiences of the small market town of Bolton which was ‘the cock-pit of war’ in that unhappy county. Bolton was a bastion of Parliamentarianism throughout the internecine conflicts of the period, a steadfast allegiance chiefly determined by its fervent Puritanism. Not for nothing was the town known as ‘the Geneva of the North’. Alas, it paid a heavy price for its unshakeably loyalty to the godly cause, for it was attacked no less than three times by vengeful Royalist forces from inside and outside Lancashire.
The first assault occurred as early as 18 February 1643 when troops sent by the Earl of Derby, the royalist lord lieutenant of Lancashire, tried to storm Bolton’s makeshift defences. Typically, the Roundhead garrison was ‘at prayer in the parish church’ when the blow fell; however after fierce fighting it managed to repel its Cavalier assailants. Bolton suffered a second and even more determined attack on 28 March 1643, giving it less than six weeks to recover from the previous raid. This time the Cavalier onslaught was led by the Earl of Derby in person; but despite assaulting the town from three different directions he, too, had to admit defeat. A little over a year later, however, there was a fearful retribution, for in the third and final drive against Bolton on 28 May 1644 a formidable royalist army under the command of the unforgiving Prince Rupert appeared before its now more solid earthen walls. All the town’s strong bulwarks proved of no avail to the two thousand strong Roundhead defenders who were simply overwhelmed by Rupert’s superior forces (they outnumbered them by a ratio of almost three to one).

Not only was Bolton successfully stormed but a considerable number of its inhabitants were butchered in an orgy of uncontrollable violence which seems to have been unleashed by the cold-blooded murder of a captured royalist officer prior to the final offensive. Those townsfolk caught in the streets were either trodden to death under the horses’ hooves or else suffered physical mutilation by their riders’ swords and pistols. Others were dragged out of their homes and summarily dispatched. ‘Where is your Roundhead God now?’ Rupert’s victorious soldiers cried out with unrepentant glee at the end of that blood-stained day. Extensive looting also took place which was perhaps only to be expected of men spearheaded by ‘the Prince of Plunderland’. The cumulative effect of these three successive attacks on Bolton—especially taking into account the carnage of the final massacre—must have been considerable, since this urban community probably only numbered around 1500 people. Estimating the final tally of the Bolton slain is extremely difficult, but it may have been as high as half of the town’s total population. Even so, one telling entry in the Bolton parish register for 22 July 1644 conveys the human toll on this small Lancashire community—the posthumous birth of a boy whose widowed mother christened him ‘Ichabod’, a Jewish name which literally means ‘the glory is departed out of Israel’. There must have been many Bolton residents who likewise felt that the glory had gone from their town after suffering the horrors of the internecine strife that stalked the land.

David Casserley is to be congratulated for writing a brisk and gripping narrative of these tragic events. However his micro-study proves disappointing in a number of respects. For instance, he provides a list of those killed in the Bolton massacre, using the local parish records. Seventy-eight individuals are identified and one would like to know more about them. How old were they when falling foul of the Cavalier killing machine on 28 May 1644? Were they married or single men? These and other demographic details could have gleaned from the parochial records by employing the well-known techniques of family reconstitution. From Casserley’s list one gathers that one of the fallen was a gentleman and another an apprentice boy; but what was the social status of the remainder? Tax returns, quarter sessions documents and many other records might have been used to uncover this crucial information in order to shed light on the orders of society from which the Parliamentary rank and file were drawn in a county like Lancashire. Did they emanate from ‘the middling-sort of people’ or ‘the poorer sort’? Such detailed research would have greatly enhanced Casserley’s study, and taken our knowledge of our Civil War forebears to a new level.

As well as noting this missed opportunity to break new ground, this reviewer has to deplore the slapdash character of Casserley’s book. The author clearly needed a good editor before going into print. His text is full of incomplete sentences, spelling mistakes and typographical errors. To give but one example of this literary sloppiness: the list of those perishing in the Bolton massacre included as appendix 3 gives the date for this atrocity as 28 March 1644—in bold letters—whereas the actual date was 28 May 1644, which is correctly stated at the end of the roll of dead in an amendment hidden away in small print! Nor is any index provided to help the reader to find his or her way round the book. Such stylistic failures were thoroughly avoidable and detract from an otherwise worthwhile investigation of Bolton’s travails in ‘the killing time’.

JOHN SUTTON
REVIEWS

THE BRISTOL MICROSCOPISTS AND THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC OF 1849

Michael Whitfield (Avon Local History and Archaeology 2011 40pp no ISBN) £3.50 from ALHA Books, 43 Long Eaton Drive, Whitchurch Park, Bristol BS14 9AW

Cholera was one of the most significant public health and medical problems of the first half of the nineteenth century and Bristol, which had the reputation of being the third unhealthiest town in England in 1845, was particularly susceptible to the disease. The first onslaught of cholera was in 1832 and the second in 1849. This interesting booklet, with 17 illustrations, is written by Michael Whitfield who, in retirement, has devoted himself to research into the practice of medicine in the nineteenth-century city. He explains in some detail the establishment by five local doctors of the Bristol Microscopical Society in 1843, and sets out the Rules of the Society providing for the discussion of a subject of ‘microscopical’ interest at each monthly meeting. Whitfield emphasises the increasing importance of the microscope to science and medicine. When, therefore, the cholera epidemic struck Bristol in 1849 the Society was ready to make use of its microscopical skills in confronting this threat to public health.

Three doctors, Frederick Brittan, William Budd and Joseph Griffiths Swayne, worked on rice-water stools obtained from patients in the local cholera hospital. Brittan published his research results in the London Medical Gazette and Budd and Swayne theirs in The Lancet. Together, they also reported their discoveries in London newspapers and the local press. Basically, they argued that they in the stools of cholera patients they had identified microscopic and hitherto unknown fungoid bodies, linking those to the cholera itself. However, the association of their findings with cholera was disputed by the Cholera Sub-Committee of the College of Physicians in London, which possibly resented pioneering provincial discoveries bringing scientific medicine and new technology in the form of the microscope to bear in the fight against cholera. Whitfield concludes with a 10 page appendix and profiles of the three microscopists Brittan, Budd and Swayne. The booklet has the advantages of a short reading list but detailed sources of references. It will be invaluable to everyone interested in the history of provincial medicine in Victorian England.

GORDON H.H. GLASGOW


Radical politicians frequently praised the jury system as a bastion of English liberties but few historians have investigated in depth the role of the jury in coroners’ courts, where jury members were able to question such witnesses as were put before them and add riders to verdicts. The inquest jury, states Gordon Glasgow, ‘was the oracle of contemporary public opinion’. It provided ‘the only accessible forum in which to investigate suspicious deaths’. Glasgow is a retired coroner and in these two books he uses his legal knowledge and experience to interpret two kinds of suspicious death in early-Victorian England—deaths resulting from factory boiler explosions, and infanticide. Each investigation rests on the close study of significant local cases, and each is then related to wider issues, illustrating how local issues could influence national proceedings and how the national then set the framework within which localism was expected to operate. In other words, these books are about how local government worked in Victorian England.

The first book noticed here is about Preston, where Richard Palmer was coroner from 1799 until 1852. Conservative by temperament, he was locked into the Preston elite of mill-owners by class, career and the multiple local offices that he held. He ran his court in a way that offered little hope to those in the lower classes who looked to him for justice, as was demonstrated by his inquest into the deaths of four ‘Plug Plot’ rioters when the military fired on the crowd in 1842. So it was no surprise in 1848, following a boiler explosion at the Royal Sovereign Mill, that he directed the jury without much ado to return a verdict of accidental
death. Unlike steam boilers in ships, those in factories were not subject to inspection and yet accidents were both common and raised issues about safety at work which, in other matters of employment, had long been a concern of the factory movement, national legislation, and inspection. Palmer’s assumption—that if a boiler blew up that was the fault of the boilerman for running it at too high a pressure—was challenged a few weeks later when another explosion, killing seven people, occurred at the Brunswick Mill. This time evidence, which Palmer ignored, was produced to show that the boiler was defective and that the mill manager had been told by the owners to run the boiler at above safe limits. The public outrage which greeted the ‘accidental death’ verdict resulted in an appeal to the home secretary, and the attorney general sending the manager for trial at Liverpool Assizes on a charge of manslaughter. He was found guilty but the judge also implicated the factory owners. This represented a significant shift in the direction of the law, though one not finally accomplished until the Workmen’s Compensation Act of 1897.

The second book looks at several celebrated cases of death by arsenic poisoning in the 1840s, when the press whipped up the fear of an epidemic of infant and other deaths, largely perpetrated by women and often associated with claims from burial societies. Though this topic has already been the subject of several studies, Glasgow’s approach adds to our understanding by concentrating on three aspects of the cases: their place in the development of inquest and subsequent criminal trial procedures; their contribution to the emergence of the medical profession; and the role of local events in stimulating national legislative responses, in particular the Arsenic Act 1851. The four cases examined are the deaths of the Sandys children in Stockport (1840), the boy William Eccles in Bolton (1842), the Pimlett children in Runcorn (1846), and a series of cases in East Anglia which contributed to the belief that there was ‘a sisterhood of poisoners’, using arsenic as a means both of post-facto birth control and of getting rid of unwanted husbands, as well as (it was widely believed) profiting from the pay-outs from unregulated burial societies. The cases differed in part on account of the competence of the coroner. Coroners subject to control by the county magistrates were often reluctant to investigate child murders for fear of not having their expenses refunded from the rates. The Eccles case is dealt with in greatest detail, exemplifying the close co-operation between a borough coroner not worried about his expenses, a competent police surgeon, and a local analytical chemist. The case and subsequent trial at the Liverpool Assizes shows both the development of the adversarial style with the advocate replacing the judge as the one who questions the evidence, and the rise of the medical and scientific expert, witnessing not to the facts but to his understanding of them. These local studies are exemplary in that they are not only related to wider issues but they are set in the broader social context of the lives of the poor in the aftermath of the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and the depression of the ‘Hungry Forties’.

Both volumes are extremely readable in an intellectual sense, and are warmly recommended. What cannot be commended, however, is the presentation of the text. Setting aside a few proof-reading slips, the main problem is that the books appear to have been prepared with camera-ready A4 sheets, then reduced to A5 which makes the text uncomfortably small to read and the type-face of the references (some of which are quite long) almost impossible to decipher. The idea of the series is excellent—to make good research more accessible—but the editors would do well to reconsider the physical needs of their readers before they issue further works of this kind.

EDWARD ROYLE

WARRIORS AT HOME 1940-1942 Three Surrey Diarists edited by Patricia and Robert Malcolmson (Surrey Record Society vol.45 2012 240pp ISBN 978 0 902978 19 5) £25

‘The French are holding firm on the line of the Somme-Aisne … I pray God this is true … Went to Denbigh to give the cook the sack and to settle the vexed question of the Helper with a Japanese passport’ (Helen Lloyd’s diary, Thursday 6 June, 1940)

Home Front life has sometimes been cast as a matter of character, with optimists and pessimists living it differently. Helen Lloyd had the ‘Let’s get on with it’ temperament in
spades. The term ‘voluntary’ does scant justice to her work as a Women’s Voluntary Services (later the WRVS) Organiser. Leonard Adamson was another doer. A Saturday in September 1941 (a day off from his paid job in London) ran from 6 am to half past midnight and included two stints as voluntary warden at his Air Raid Precautions post, shopping and collecting information about food prices in Sutton, inspecting his allotment, mowing the lawn, attending a boxing match, fielding phone enquiries from other wardens, and writing up his diary. Adamson engaged with the progress of the war in his diary, as do many war diarists, bringing an intelligent mind to policies of protection and defence on the Home Front. He comes across as torn between deep commitment to the war effort and his self-image as a rugged individualist. Described as a loner by the editors, and evidently a very serious man with a rather repressed character, he was also a volunteer diarist for Mass Observation, retrospectively a great trove of information about the Home Front. This results in an interesting diary, but one that lacks intimacy.

The French of course did not hold firm. Lloyd reported what she heard on the radio, inflecting the news with her particular mix of patriotism and hope, tempered with realism. Her social circle of well-connected men busy with the war was also certain that Britain would see through the darkest hours. Her war diary is perhaps what we would expect of a public spirited upper-middle-class Englishwoman in Surrey. What do diaries give us that we don’t know by other means? We get to hear about the cook at Denbigh and the Helper with a Japanese passport. Denbigh was a hostel for boys at the sharp end of the evacuation system and a continuing headache for Lloyd. She was not deterred from opening another hostel, finding, equipping, and staffing it within a fortnight. The Helper revealed a reverse Madame Butterfly story. This is where diaries are unique. In this volume, Lloyd tells the most human stories and is the most engaging diarist; she had already tried her hand at fiction and biography. Her vantage point was rich. As the Centre Organiser for the WVS in Guildford Rural District with 40,000 people, she ran evacuation and billeting programmes that included hostels, dealt with emergencies such as the provisioning of servicemen just back from Dunkirk, bailed out neighbouring services when they couldn’t cope, and mobilised women volunteers for myriad tasks. Her powers of ‘persuasion’ in challenging sloppy work, nailing householders of all classes to accept evacuees, and dealing with awkward customers among the wartime newcomers to Surrey, sound formidable. She had the requisite telephone at home, a car and a fuel allowance, a house big enough to take in evacuees herself, and servants at least for the first half of the war.

The third diarist is introspective and has much less to say about the Home Front. Religious faith and disability mark out Viola Bawtree. Her timorous and ageing family, vaguely peace-loving Nonconformists, were of the ‘putting up with it’ temperament, devoted to self-protection and making the best of rationing. At times Viola was ashamed that they were doing so little with their big house and grounds. I suspect they would have been ‘persuaded’ to take evacuees if they had lived on Helen Lloyd’s patch! However, the German refugee who lived with them, apart from a period in internment, received a kindly response to his misfortunes: Mr Assenheim continued to live with the family after the war. Viola was deaf, lacking crucial information in moments of danger, and we perceive the vulnerability of disability in Home Front life. She recounts her efforts to contain her fears through prayer, to avoid annoying her family, and to manage the family dog Tigger who preferred outdoor freedom to the cellar during raids. The dusty corners of character are revealed by the war. Viola reflected on whether practising Christians would be preserved from bombs and injuries by God and so could safely forgo sheltering, Adamson that it was his duty rather than his inclination to hate Germans. Gentlewoman Lloyd owned up to bad-tempered rows when under pressure and used her diary to move on pragmatically.

All three diaries testify to the daily ordeal of living with air attack during Britain’s most dangerous years. Leafy suburbs and pretty Surrey villages were no sideshow to the London blitz. Adamson as an air raid warden probably lived closer to death than the others, though ironically his closest shave was with a V2 in 1944 when he was out walking with his wife. The diaries are introduced and edited very intelligently by Patricia and Robert Malcolmson. There are full historical contexts, linkages, and maps that will help local readers in Surrey. Full marks to Surrey Record Society as well for a well-produced local history of an era that is slipping from living memory.

SALLY SOKOLOFF

This is a detailed study of the methods adopted by the medieval cathedral priory of Norwich to source and supply food, drink and other materials to its monks and servants. The book examines a range of issues including consumption requirements, patterns of grain cultivation on the priory’s demesne lands, transportation, storage using barns and granaries, milling, baking and brewing, and poor relief through the provision of grain as alms. Slavin argues that although Norfolk was one of the most commercialised regions of medieval England, the priory made a deliberate and rational choice, based on economic, social and environmental factors, to generally isolate itself from the market.

Particular attention is given to grain production on the priory’s demesne lands. The priory retained direct management of its demesnes longer than many other institutions, not leasing out its last manor until 1431. Thereafter, the farmers of several manors were obliged to provide the priory with fixed amounts of grain in lieu of cash rents, ensuring a supply regardless of market fluctuations. Most of the priory’s grain purchases were made outside the market place, from local merchants, manorial tenants and other ecclesiastical institutions, in addition to the produce coming from its own estates. The impact of monetary and environmental factors on grain prices is examined, including periods of bad weather, famine, pestilence and warfare. It would have been interesting though, to see if years of harvest failure forced the priory to source supplies from further afield, or to pay significantly more for its grain. The ways in which the priory transported its produce changed markedly in the 1390s. Up to that date it priory had relied on manorial carters, either using the services that they were obliged to supply by custom, or by hiring their labour. The priory subsequently used its own ‘great boat’ to transport malt, fuel, stone and timber. The Benedictine priory had about sixty monks and 240 workers and lay brothers before the mid-fourteenth century, falling to 32 brothers and a hundred servants by the 1530s. Slavin notes that they ‘ate and drank in truly heroic quantities’, in marked contrast to the fare offered from the almoner’s soup kitchen, which is also explored.

This research uses a very large collection of primary sources. In addition to the accounts relating to Norwich Cathedral Priory’s obedientaries and the priory demesnes, a database of demesne accounts from England and Wales is drawn upon. Historians of more recent periods are often surprised by the detailed statistical data that can be drawn from such accounts, which Slavin describes as ‘a true paradise (or, perhaps, a ‘Klondike’) for the economic historian of the pre-industrial era’. The book is based on the author’s PhD thesis and at times reflects its academic origins, with for example the inclusion of no fewer than 45 tables within the text. This reviewer was surprised not to find references to other recent research on the purchasing strategies of Durham cathedral priory and the Cambridge colleges, examined in Miranda Threfall-Holmes, Monks and markets: Durham cathedral priory 1460-1520 (Oxford UP, 2005) and his own Cambridge and its economic region, 1450-1560, also published within the ‘Studies in Regional and Local History’ series. Nonetheless, this highly detailed study will be of particular value to readers with interests in medieval economic history, Norwich cathedral and its estates, or simply wanting to know more about how medieval monks organised their supplies of bread, ale and other provisions.

JOHN S. LEE


Anyone setting out to document the history of a local workhouse faces a number of challenges. Apart from covering the significant events in the life of the establishment, the work also needs to view the institution’s development within the evolving national context and, of course, to produce a readable and engaging account of the story which will be of interest not only to local
people but also to those further afield. James Gardner’s history of Brighton’s three workhouses makes a fair shot at tackling these demands. He makes extensive use of primary sources such extracts from local newspapers, files in the East Sussex Record Office, and material in The National Archives, particularly the correspondence between the central authorities and local poor relief administrators. Hearing stories in the own words of the individuals involved—notwithstanding the bias that these inevitably carry—adds useful colour to the text. For example, an 1863 letter of complaint from the dairywoman at the workhouse school at Warren Farm reveals that the responsibilities of this mundane-sounding post included:

‘the dairy, chimney twice a week, receive the children, salt down all meat, and doing the chief part of her washing, attend to the grate and chimney. Mornings up soon after 4 o’clock, at work two hours before the other officers are at work, and at work after theirs is done.’

As well as covering the main chronology of the workhouse itself, the book has good sections on topics such as the operation of the Charity Organisation Society in the town, and on the fate of Brighton’s paupers who emigrated to Canada. A nice selection of illustrations includes the striking 1923 image, used on the book’s cover, of male workhouse inmates hanging their caps over the workhouse wall to beg for coppers from passing race-goers.

The book is perhaps less successful in placing Brighton in the national context. The significance of town’s Local Act status, gained in 1810 and, unusually, retained until 1930, is little commented upon. The important idea of the ‘workhouse test’, Gardner seems to suggest, dates from the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 whereas it had evolved more than a century earlier. Brighton’s workhouse diet in 1820s and 1830s was one of the most generous in the country, yet he merely notes that its ‘poverty’ is demonstrated by the inclusion of gruel. He also recycles the oft-repeated claim that workhouse inmates were required to wear ‘prison style uniforms’ whereas the national regulations specified that the ‘clothing’ of inmates was to be made out of ‘such materials as the Board of Guardians may determine’ and ‘need not be uniform either in colour or materials’. Elsewhere, an 1857 illustration of a stable used to house tramps by one London workhouse is misidentified as an example of the ‘single cell’ system which was not introduced until the 1870s.

Curiously, the book makes no reference whatsoever to online resources in its notes or bibliography. Overall, though, this is a solid and welcome addition to the growing number of local workhouse studies.

PETER HIGGINBOTHAM

JUSTICE AND CONCILIATION IN A TUDOR CHURCH COURT: THE CONSTITORY COURT OF CHESTER, SEPTEMBER 1558–MARCH 1559 by E. Kate Jarman (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 2012 for 2009 vol.146 xlii+102pp ISBN 978 0 902593 81 7) £25+p&p from Dr Fiona Pogson, Department of Politics & History, Liverpool Hope University, Hope Park, Liverpool L16 9JD

Perhaps surprisingly, the range of matters dealt with by church courts was very wide. Consistory (bishops’) courts not only heard disciplinary causes [cases] brought by church officers concerning morality and religious observance—known as ‘office causes’, being brought ex officio—but also litigation suits brought by one lay party against another—known as ‘instance causes’, in which the role of the court was to settle disputes ‘ad instantium partium’ and to act as mediator and facilitate an out-of-court settlement. Instance causes were, in effect, the equivalent of civil suits but were heard in church courts because parties considered the dispute to have a moral aspect. The records transcribed here are depositions [statements] made by witnesses in instance causes. Admittedly less ‘juicy’ than depositions for regulative suits, they nevertheless reveal much about everyday life in the diocese in the mid-sixteenth century. The documents cover a short period of time (just six months)—the reason for this particular date selection is not explicitly stated—and although dating from a momentous period in the church’s history, covering the end of Mary’s reign and the beginning of Elizabeth’s, they reveal nothing of the turmoil of the time as they are unrelated to religious observance.
The first chapter of the introduction outlines the nature of these particular records and how earlier historians had used them. The second discusses the diocese of Chester in the reign of Mary. Established by Henry VIII in 1541 from the two archdeaconries of Richmond and Chester, this new diocese was the third largest in England and also covered parts of Wales. Chapter 3 describes not only the administration of church courts in general, but also of those in the Chester diocese in particular because, as a new creation, the Chester diocesan courts had a different structure from those elsewhere. Because the relative cost of bringing a lawsuit fell, there was a huge increase in litigation during the sixteenth century, and it is noteworthy that this increase occurred in church as well as civil courts. Historians have suggested that this had much to do with the general speed and flexibility of the church court system. Although these courts had limited powers of punishment—mainly public humiliation [penance] or spiritual censure—this did not discourage the bringing of suits, suggesting that it was their mediation and resolution that were prized. That the business of the Chester church courts doubled between 1544 and 1594 certainly suggests that litigants valued the services of those courts. The fourth chapter considers the Chester consistory court and its records, explaining the way in which depositions were taken: not in open court but individually and in confidence by the judge or a court-appointed examiner. Witnesses were questioned on articles submitted by the plaintiff and thus depositions by different people often followed a similar pattern. The fact that parts of the record are written in Latin illustrates very clearly that depositions were taken down in rough and then written up subsequently, with administrative details noted in Latin, including the questions posed by the examiner (these have been translated in the transcript). The nature of the record-keeping was such that the outcomes of suits were recorded in act books, which have not necessarily survived, so it is not easy to trace a suit to its end—indeed, the editor argues that it is likely that many instance causes were settled out of court after the various depositions had been heard. Chapter 5 discusses the different types of cause encountered: matrimonial suits, for example relating to degrees of consanguinity or the validity of ‘marriages’ of minors; testamentary suits, for example concerning the non-payment of legacies or the validity of a will; tithe causes, for example relating to the allocation of crops to the incumbent, or whether a particular crop was titheable; and defamation and slander, relating to the reinstatements of someone’s reputation.

Depositions form only a small part of the church court records but they are of great interest to local historians for they are recollections by friends or acquaintances concerning the matter at issue, whether the mental competence of a testator, the consanguinity or otherwise of a husband and wife, or the liability for tithes of a particular piece of land. As deponents came from a broad social spectrum, such records give ‘voice’ to people who might not be mentioned in any other documents from their locality. The editor notes that church court records survive (to a greater or lesser extent) for most of the English and Welsh dioceses, but that they are an under-used resource for at least three very practical reasons: many of them are in very poor state having been stored for centuries in unsuitable conditions; the record-keeping practice which created them was highly complex; and the documents are written partly, or even entirely, in Latin. Nevertheless, the intrepid local historian who ventures into such archives can be richly rewarded with insights into parish and community life rarely available in other sources. For this reason alone, the publication is to be welcomed. Furthermore, the introduction outlines, among other things, the workings of church courts and thus is an invaluable guide to such records.

HEATHER FALVEY
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 2012 and 1 November 2012. 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 LOYAL SUFFOLK HUSSARS The history of the Suffolk Yeomanry 1794-1967 Margaret Thomas and Nick Sign (Heiron & Co 2012 ISBN 978 1 908916 45 7) £29.95


THE WHIRLPOOL OF MISADVENTURES Letters of Robert Paston, First Earl of Yarmouth 1663-1679 ed. Jean Agnew (Norfolk Record Society vol.76 2012 ISBN 978 0 9556357 5 5) £18+£4 p&p from Hon. Secretary, Norfolk Record Society, 29 Cintra Road, Norwich NR1 4AE

London and the South East


CATS MEAT SQUARE Housing and public health in South St Pancras 1810-1910 Stephen W. Job (Camden History Society 2012 ISBN 978 0 904491 85 2) £6.50+£3 p&p from Publications Manager, Camden History Society, Flat 13, 13 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SH

PUBS OF WANDSWORTH Dorian Gerhold (Wandsworth Historical Society: paper no.23 2012 ISBN 978 0 905121 30 7) £4 from Wandsworth Historical Society, 119 Heythrop Street, London SW18 5BT or dgerhold@tiscali.co.uk

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING ESTATES IN BATTERSEA 1780-1914 Keith Bailey (Wandsworth Historical Society; paper no.24 ISBN 978 0 905121 31 4) £6 from Wandsworth Historical Society as above

HOGARTH’S HOUSE Val Bott (Scala Publishers Ltd. 2012 ISBN 978 1 85759 754 7) £6.95 from William Hogarth Trust, 25 Hartington Road, London W4 3TL

NEW BUNHILL FIELDS BURIAL GROUND, SOUTHWARK Excavations at Globe Academy 2008 Adrian Miles with Brian Connell (Museum of London Archaeology 2012 ISBN 978 1 907586 09 5) £15

OLD WEST HOATHLY John Ralph (West Hoathly Local History Project 2012 ISBN 978 0 9571205 0 1) details from J. Ralph, Upper Pendent, North Lane, West Hoathly, West Sussex RH19 4PP £29.50


SNIPPETS OF ASHWELL’S HISTORY David Short (Ashwell Education Services 2012 ISBN 978 0 903341 88 2) £4.50+£1 p&p from Mike Cherry, 75 Radnor Road, Twickenham TW1 4NB or m.jcherry@tiscali.co.uk

SPORT IN TWICKENHAM Murray Hedgcock (Borough of Twickenham LHS 2012 ISBN 978 0 903341 88 2) £4.50+£1 p&p from Mike Cherry, 75 Radnor Road, Twickenham TW1 4NB or m.jcherry@tiscali.co.uk

Midlands

BRITONS AND ANGLO-SAXONS Lincolnshire AD400-650 Thomas Green (Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology; Studies in the History of Lincolnshire vol.3 2012 ISBN 978 0 902668 25 6) £17.95+£4 p&p from Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Jews’ Court, Steep Hill, Lincoln LN2 1LS

PEOPLE AND PROPERTY IN MEDIEVAL STAMFORD edited Alan Rogers (Abramis Academic Publishing 2012 ISBN 978 1 84549 548 0) £25 from Uppingham Seminars in Development, 68 Whiting Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1NR (cheques payable to Alan Rogers)

FROM CATHOLIC DEVOTION TO PURITAN PIETY Responses to the Reformation in the Avon area 1530-1603 Joseph Betley (Avon Local History & Archaeology no.11 2012) £3.50 from Professor Peter Malpass, 6 Salisbury Road, Bristol BS6 7AW

SHAPWICK AND WINSCOMBE Contrasting communities in the Somerset landscape Mick Aston (Avon Local History & Archaeology no.12 2012) £3.50 as above

THE QUANTOCKS Peter Haggett (Point Walter Press 2012 ISBN 978 0 9573392 0 2) £20 from The Point Walter Press, 5 Tun Bridge Close, Chew Magna BS40 8SU

WHERE TOWN AND COUNTRY MEET The history of the Romsey Show Pat Goodwin and Barbara Barbridge (Lower Test Valley Archaeological Study Group 2012 ISBN 978 0 906921 38 8) details of availability from romseyhistory@ltvas.org.uk

Wales


General


TRACING YOUR MERCHANT NAVY ANCESTORS Simon Wills (Pen and Sword 2012 ISBN 978 1 84884 651 7) £12.99

VICTORIAN GOTHIC HOUSE STYLES Trevor Yorke (Countryside Books 2012 ISBN 978 1 84674 304 7) £7.95


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. It would be helpful if local societies could include a postal contact address as well as an email address.

Look Back at Andover (vol.3 no.3 September 2012) Andover History & Archaeology Society, £4 inc p&p from A&HAS, c/o Mill Pond Cottage, Monxton, Andover SP11 8AW: The charity trustees of Andover; John Luckman of Hatherden 1774-1844 schoolmaster and mosaic artist; early years of Andover War Memorial Hospital; memories of Andover’s law courts; the truth about Nelson’s cloak
Cake and Cockhorse (vol.19 no.1 Autumn 2012) Banbury Historical Society, available from Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park Road, Banbury OX16 2PQ; Co-habitation and marriage among the Victorian poor in ‘Notorious’ Nethrope; Astrop enclosure; winter tragedies in Chacombe and North Aston; the wandering Flute; Banbury lodging house keepers in Rotherham

Archive: newsletter of Barningham Local History Group (no. 28 October 2012) details from www.barninghamvillage.co.uk: The tragic trail of the Lodge family; field names; why Barningham didn’t get its railway; the duke’s godson: a loyal Whig and a very snappy dresser; stonemasons, chauffeur and a butler (no. 29 November 2012) The keeper’s story; fruitless search for the scullery maid’s baby; Kexith Hannah, a very shrewd lady; wells, buckets and cesspools; the circus rider who won Sussex’s heart; home brews and home-made teas; meeting the blacksmith, 67 years ago

Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society Newsletter (no.201 2012) details from Barbara.aplin@btinternet.com Snails, worms and dung

Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society Newsletter (no.89 April 2012) £10 p.a. details from www.ballhs.org.uk Bedford and the limpet mine; short histories of the Swan Hotel and Waterloo

Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service News (no.93 Autumn 2012) free from archive@bedford.gov.uk Patricia Bell 28 July 1926-12 September 2012; Bedfordshire Training Home for Girls 1879-1930

History in Bedfordshire (vol.6 no.1 Autumn 2012) details from www.bedfordshire-lha.org.uk Apsley Cherry-Garrard 1886-1919, The Zeebrugge Raid

Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter (no.104 September 2012) details from newsletter@blha.org.uk

Berkshire Old and New (no.29 2012) £3 from www.blha.org.uk Bucklebury Common; how Abington celebrated Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee; the Culham Court Estate; the establishment and organisation of civil defence operations in Berkshire.

The Blackcountryman (vol.45 no.4 Autumn 2012) Black Country Society £2.75 from watkinweb2@googlemail.com 50 years of painting in the Black Country; Black Country mining before the Industrial Revolution; Nash and Carder: two Stourbridge glassmakers in America; Yarrington’s Navigation; enemy aliens and suspect persons

The Glaven Historian: journal of the Blakeney Area Historical Society (no.13 2012) details from www.history-blakeney-arc.org.uk Morston 400 years ago; Alfred Magnus Culling (1883-1961); The Lively of the port of Cley; the quay at Cley; Ralph Gnevenway: more than a myth; the Dutchman and the ‘king’s broad scale’; embanking the north Norfolk coast; a shopkeeper of Cley in the 16th century; farming in Field Dalling 1610-1876; more on the Ramms of Cley

The Bradford Antiquary (3rd ser no.16 2012) Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society £3+£1 per issue available from duckettbob@yahoo.co.uk Elmet: what, when and where; John Booth and the Low Moor Luddite convection; Governing North Bierley 1880s style; Sequah: an American-Indian medicine-man in Bradford; a woman of conviction: Councillor Mrs Frances Smith; Royal Yorkshire Jubilee Exhibition, Saltaire 1887; ‘Mr Jackson at Cartwright’: A gentleman and a scholar; Fields of Bradford, printers; Alex Knightly, pioneer of the pictorial movement in photography

Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal (no.21 2012) £5 + p&p from Sales Department, 25 Hartington Road, Chiswick, London W4 5TL: The Airman’s Angel at Walls House; who lived at Hogarth’s House; the Clothing Club at St Nicholas Club, Chiswick; Jonathan Thomas Carr and his siblings; Chiswick schoolboys in Nazi Germany 1933; moving Burlington Lane, Chiswick Eyot and Oliver’s Eyot

Bridport History Society Newsletter (May 2012) £1 from W.M. Holden, 46 Norman Close, Bridport DT6 4ET Shipbuilding at Bridport Harbour

The Griffin: quarterly newsletter of the Chadderton Historical Society (no.62 August 2012) available from Mr M. Lawson, 18 Moreton Street, Chadderton OL9 0LP; Chadderton’s health in the late Victorian period (no.63 November 2012) War Memorial rededication

Cheltenham Local History Society Newsletter (no.74 November 2012) available on pdf from kbooth@dircon.co.uk Light the beacon!, What can we learn from lists and inventories

Cheshire History (no.52 2012-2013) Cheshire Local History Association, £7 from Cheshire Record office, Duke Street, Chester CH1 1RL: Landscape of power: Alford Castle; the surrender of the city of Deventer to Spain by Sir William Stanley of Hooton; a history of Tabley Old Hall; the breaking of John Pickering of Thelwall; the Chester branch of the Charity Organisation Society; almshouse to housing trust in Malpas

Chichester History: journal of the Chichester Local History Society from andrew.berriman@gmail.com Public responses to some art commissions at Chichester Cathedral 1955-2012; Del Quay Wharf Memories 1892-1920; William Blake in London, Felpham, Lavant and Chichester 1800-04; a boy’s Christmas in Chichester 1950s/60s; the Chichester novels of Victor Whitchurch 1904-29; Westhampton church; I-Mount Lane, Chichester; Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Programme, 1897

Journal of the Christchurch History Society (no.28 May 2012) £1 from info@historychristchurch.org.uk Creedy, Sgt Alex Logan’s story; smuggler’s outrage at the Square, Isleby; military activities near Hurst before 1542

Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society Newsletter (no.101 September 2012) details from www.ctlhs.org.uk Royal visit to Middlesbrough 29 October 1838
The Cranbrook Journal (no.23 2012) Cranbrook & District LHS: The rise and fall of Richard Guldeford; exploits of a non-nudist; 19th century emigration from Cranbrook; Cranbrook School in 1812; John Humphrey, millwright of Cranbrook; WW2 crash sites 2

The Devon Historian (no.81 2012) Devon History Society, details from www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk The boundaries of the borough of Bovey Tracey from Saxon times to the present; working class housing in Victorian Plymouth; the NHS at Plymouth House; the Reverend Stephen Weston, rector of Hempston Parvo, and the French Revolution; St George’s Chapel, Windsor and South Molton parsonage in the 16th century, Branscombe 1280-1340; an East Devon manor before the Black Death

Devon History News; newsletter of the Devon History Society (no.10 August 2012) details from www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk History and community (the Branscombe Project)

Droitwich History & Archaeology Society Newsletter (no.57 November 2012) 75p from C. Bowers, 9 Laurewood Close, Droitwich Spa WR9 7SF: A crooked rhyme; the removal of the C14 coffin lid from St Mary’s churchyard; fire at Droitwich 1906; the Skerrett family of Droitwich Spa; Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury

The Dunningite (no.81 Autumn 2012) Dunning Parish Historical Society, £1.50 from DPHS, The Old Schoolhouse, Newton of Pitcairns, Dunning PH2 0SL: Dunning’s Big Dig; the Forgotten Man; who was the female town crier?

Eastbourne Local Historian (no.165 Autumn 2012) Eastbourne LHS, £1.50 from www.eastbournehistory.org.uk Excet ages ago; a star is remembered; where was Prestice Street?

East Yorkshire Historian (vol.13 2012) East Yorkshire Local History Society, details from bracer@bracer.karoo.co.uk or rbarnard1@googlemail.com The growth and development of hospital nursing care in the two Hull workhouses c.1843-1936; Beverley Westwood Hospital: a history 1939-48; Edward Baines MP and family at Queen Victoria’s coronation; Dunnington and Grimston in the 17th century; late 19th century education reform; institutionalism and its effect on elementary schools in the East Riding c.1830-1880

EYLHS Newsletter (summer/autumn 2012) details from rbarnard1@googlemail.com Holidays at home: Londesborough 1935-1945; the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Hessle

Farham Past and Present (book 13 vol.7) £2+70p p&p from wendemp@aol.com The Titchfield-Cosham turnpike road; Titchfield Bonfire; Fareham’s buses; the Wallingdon Basin; the diary of Mrs M.A. Sims; a free library for Fareham; HMS Portschester Castle; where are the remains of James Lind 1716-1794; a market garden in Victorian Portschester; Johns Road Football Club; Fareham Isolation Hospital; William Price junior, founder of Prices School

Farnham & District Museum Society Journal (vol.16 no.7 September 2012) details from www.farnhammuseumsociety.org.uk Archaeological evaluation at 45 Castle Street, Farnham; local schools and colleges during the war years

The New Regard: journal of the Forest of Dean LHS (no.27 2013) £7 from suegs40@hotmail.com The Forest of Dean: differing perspectives on its ownership, purpose and use; Lord McNair’s nightmare: the Forestry Bill of 1981; Henry Cook and his wild garden; West Gloucestershire corn mills; the development of Horlicks malted milk and infant food; F.W. Harvey and the BBC; pageant, prayers and pins: how Foresters celebrated the coronation in 1953

Forest of Dean Local History Society News (October 2012) details from forestofdeanchistory.org.uk The W.F. Harvey legacy

FRAM: journal of the Framlingham & District Local History & Preservation Society (October 2012), available from the editor, 43 College Road, Framlingham IP13 9ER Aspects of Framlingham in the First World War, Framlingham in the nineteenth century

Friern Barnet Newsletter (no.30 September 2012) available from friernbarbethistory@hotmail.co.uk Fifty and still going strong; memories of 1962 (no.51 November 2012) Remember evening classes? Delivering the Christmas post; Gladdings the greengrocers; the Friern Hospital story; shooting pigeons, coal and firewood

Goring & Streatley Local History Society Journal (no.4 2012) available from gslhs@w-mark.demon.co.uk Collecting oral history; the modernisation of Goring church 1887-8; Square Gardner goes to sea; the Morrell estate wills; Goring Women’s Institute 1919-1924

Hampshire Studies: proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society (vol.67 2012) details from www.fieldclub.hants.org.uk Prehistoric Test side; West Quay Road carriageway site; Holocene environmental change and Roman floodplain management at Pilgrim’s School, Cathedral Close, Winchester; late Neolithic, Early Bronze Age occupation of Nethe Walford; Iron Age and Roman settlement at Basingstoke; prehistoric to post-medieval occupation at Dowel’s Farm; early medieval settlement, Hannington; documentary and archaeological evidence of Southampton’s leper hospital

Hatfield Local History Society Newsletter (no.85 June 2012) available from hatfieldhistory@ntlworld.com Royal Hatfield

Hayes and Harlington Local History Society Journal (vol.86 Autumn 2012) £1 from Mr J. Walters, 7 St Jerome’s Grove, Hayes UB3 2JP A short history of the Society

Herne Hill: magazine of the Herne Hill Society (no.212 Winter 2012) Bessemer 200th anniversary; Fred Karno: a tribute; Samuel Coleridge Taylor; prejudice at St Paul’s
Herts Past & Present (3rd ser no.20 Autumn 2012) Hertfordshire Association for Local History, £2.50 from Dr G. Gear, Nicholls Farmhouse, Lybury Lane, Redbourn AL3 7H Enclosure maps and awards; beginning letters from Hertfordshire journals living away from home; the manors of Watford; an introduction; ‘Tickets Please!’ survivals from 18th century Hertfordshire

Hexham Historian (no.22 August 2012), Hexham Local History Society, £6 from neil@robsonprint.co.uk Hexham’s leatherworking heritage; rebuilding Hexham Abbey House in the 1790s; the Irish gent and his strumpet; the story of Hercules Burleigh; history writing at Hexham in the 12th Century; the Green Man in Hexham Abbey

Hexham Local History Society Newsletter (no.64 Autumn 2012) details of availability from 01434 607746: Dukesfield smelters and carriers project


The Honeslaw Chronicle (Autumn 2012) Hounslow and District History Society: Chaplin’s girl; the Isleworth Bourne

Local History Review (vol.17 2012) Federation of Local History Societies/Conasachd na gCumann Staire Aitiula [Irish Republic] The Griffiths of Millicent, Co Clare; visitor accounts as sources for local history; Clane’s links to the Titanic; P. Gilbert, father of American band; the Ballincollig gunpowder factory; the 62 Reserve Infantry Battalion; Athy and district in the year of rebellion 1798; looking south, facing north—challenges for local history; reports from many individual societies


Smoke Screen (no.68 Autumn 2012) Letchampton LHS, 20 Collum End Rise, Leckhampton, Cheltenham GL53 0PB

Lincolnshire Past & Present (no.87 Spring 2012) £1.60 from Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Jews’ Court, Steep Hill, Lincoln LN2 1LS: Isabella Carve; a middle-class honeymoon of 1827; hoverington’s war memorial; the Mere Y Station; Kilingholme flying boat jetty; Dickens’ Lincolnshire

The Record (no.24 Spring 2012) London Colney History Society: Parsons and Broughall families; London Colney 1850-2000

Loughton and District Historical Society Newsletter (no.193 April-May 2012) 40p from www.loughtonhistoricalsociety.org.uk Lawrence of Arabia in Epping Forest

History & Heritage Matters (no.2) Nailsea & District LHS, £3 from Nailsea & District LHS, 15 Goss Close, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 2XB The Nailsea Engineer Volunteers; Buckwell Park; coal, salt and bricks; the tannery at Kingshill; Flux Burton medal mystery; the Nailsea Methodists

Northampton Industrial Archaeology Group Newsletter (no.124 Autumn 2012) available from newsletter@northants-iag.org.uk Northampton’s new bus station

Pinner Local History Society Newsletter (no.119 Autumn 2012) William Hough Robinson; Cannon Lane before the First World War

Rickmansworth Historical Society Newsletter (no.97 October 2012) £1.50 from Geoff Saul, 20 West Way, Rickmansworth WD3 7EN: Claude Graham Smith; bones in the car park; Mallet of the Bury; Rickmansworth mills; Olympics 1912; Rickmansworth from the Watford Observer Summer 1912

Scottish Local History (no.84 Autumn 2012) £20 p.a from Scottish Local History Forum, PO Box 103, 12 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1DD: the Shawfield Mansion of Glasgow; James Burns & Son of St Andrews: an eighteenth century business bankruptcy; hospital of Corrour Old Lodge; Glasgow’s Riverside Museum; the trades of Maryhill; the landing of King George IV and the Masters of Trinity House, Leith; Poor Law and its impact on Wemyss parish

Send & Ripley History Society Journal (vol.7 no.226 Sep/Oct 2012) details from www.sendandripleyhistorysociety.co.uk A repast and entertainment unique in the history of Ripley and Send; Ripley; the most famous cycling village in the world; Thomas Marriott Berridge, founder of the Ryde House School; Ripley (vol.7 no.227 Nov/Dec 2012) Ripley and Woking postal history; Woking Palace and Park project; a bloody cricket match in 1742

Stapleford and District Local History Society Newsletter (no.33 Autumn 2012) £1 from Barbara M. Brooke, 57 Westerlands, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 7JE: Ilkeston Advertiser 15 March 1935

Towcester and District Local History Society Newsletter (May 2012) details from tdllhs@mkheritage.co.uk The abandoned village of Descote

Borough of Twickenham Local History Society Newsletter (no.161 December 2012) available from johnsheaf@btinternet.com An architectural first for Whitton; the Peg Woffington Cottages, Teddington; the borough before the Bailey

Wandsworth Historian (no.94 Autumn 2012) Wandsworth Historical Society, £3 from Hilary Sims, 31 Hill Court, Putney Hill, London SW15 6BB The Usk Road V2 incident 1945; 50 years of archaeology in Wandsworth; Voltaire’s home in Wandsworth

Wanstead Historical Journal (no.74 Autumn 2012) £1.50 from Brian J. Page, Flat 82A, The Weavers’ House, New Wanstead, London E11 2SY: some wartime memories of the parade of shops along Hermon Hill; Wanstead’s Park Roman villa

Warwickshire History (vol.15 no.3 Summer 2012) Warwickshire Local History Society, available from h.woodland@ntlworld.com Was Bedford-on-Avon a town in the Middle Ages? Grimsby fishing apprenticeships and the Warwickshire Poor Law; George Matthews Bennett senior, bone-setter

Midland History (vol.37 no.2 Autumn 2012) available from www.maney.co.uk £32 p.a. The re-use of charters at Worcester; the third and final siege of Newark (1645-1646); continuity in the age of reform: freemen and the persistence of the old order in 19th-century Grimsby; female business ownership in Birmingham 1849-1901; sport, class and place; reputational damage: William Willington and the supposed enclosure of Barcheston


The Link: journal of the Wessex Newfoundland Society (no.90 September 2012) £10 p.a. details from wns@ikda.demon.co.uk Interesting facts about Titanic and icebergs

The William Barnes Society Newsletter (no.65 November 2012) available from R. Burleigh, Oakside, Meadow Way, Charmouth DT6 6NS William Barnes the gardener

**On-Line Reviews On The BalH Website: November 2012-January 2013**

In addition to the many reviews which appear in every issue of The Local Historian, other books and articles are reviewed on-line at 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 publications for which on-line reviews have been added in the last three months.


**HOGARTH’S HOUSE** by Val Bott (Scala Publishers 2012 ISBN 978 1 85759 754 7) £6.95 [reviewed by Ralph Dickson]

**THE THREE COUNTIES HOSPITAL**

**GASWORKS 1857–1952** by A.T. Marks (author 2012 no ISBN) £4 incl p&p from the author at 48 Mossbank Avenue, Luton, LU2 9HH [reviewed by Peter Bysouth]

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**Reviewers In This Issue**

Joseph Bettey was reader in local history at the University of Bristol and is the author of numerous books and articles on agricultural and landscape history, including Estates and the English Countryside.

Heather Falvey teaches local history for the continuing education departments of two universities. She is secretary of the Hertfordshire Record Society and is currently editing a volume of late eighteenth century recipes for that society. She has recently co-edited a volume of fifteenth century wills from the York archdiocese for the Richard III Society.

Gordon H.H. Glasgow was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and the University of Manchester. He was for many years a solicitor but also served as HM Coroner for Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens. Since his retirement he has undertaken extensive research into Victorian coronial history and the legal and social implications of particular cases. His most recent work, on Thomas Wakley, workhouses and the Poor Law 1834-1847, is reviewed below.

Peter Higginbotham is author of the website www.workhouses.org.uk, and of books such as The Workhouse Encyclopedia and Voices from the Workhouse. He is a regular contributor to radio and television programmes.

John S. Lee works in local government and is also a research associate at the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of York. He has published Cambridge and its economic region 1450-1560 (University of Hertfordshire Press, 2005) and a range of articles on medieval towns and marketing.

Edward Royle is emeritus professor of history at the University of York. His research field is modern British social history, with a particular interests in radical politics, religion, and his native county of Yorkshire. He is president of the Wesley Historical Society, current chairman of the Wesley Historical Society (Yorkshire) for whom he has just contributed to and edited a book on Yorkshire Methodism, a member of the York Archaeological Trust and until 2011 was history editor of the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal.

Sally Sokoloff is honorary lecturer in history at the University of Northampton.

John Sutton is a retired university history lecturer who still teaches on Cambridge University’s International Summer School programmes as well giving talks on P & O, Saga and Fred Olsen cruises.