Remembering Mary Rudge:
Bristol’s Victorian Chess Champion

Bristol’s new museum…. Little Wales beyond the Severn…. The killing of Henry Murray…. Sir Richard Berkeley…. Woodtaking and customary practice in Wiltshire…. Bath and the Keppel affair…. John Thelwall’s grave…. PLUS News, Reviews and Letters

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The first international women's chess tournament, held in London in 1897. Bristol's Mary Rudge won the event.
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In this edition of the Regional Historian you’ll find a typically diverse and interesting selection of articles. Along with news of UWE’s exciting Immigrants and Minorities project, and a call for UWE to write pioneering history of Bristol ethnic minorities, and a call for the new museum of Bristol to make the most of the current public appetite for history, there are articles here covering everything from the political career of the Tudor magistrates, Sir Richard Berkeley, to the no less remarkable sporting career of nineteenth century Bristol chess champion, Mary Rudge. Two articles look at some of the less familiar historical issues of urban ethnicity and remind us of the enormous impact cultural diversity has had upon the development of the ‘second city’, first Tudor citizens who discovered themselves in ‘Little Wales beyond the Severn’, and then some of their seventeenth century successors who clashed tragically with Portuguese sailors at a Marsh Street inn in 1630. Elsewhere we find an eighteenth century J P dispensing summary justice and exercising the finer arts of social arbitration as he mediates in cases of wood-dealing in rural Wiltshire, while in Bath we find a Town Clerk in hot water with the townfolk over his impertinent attitude to the people’s favourite, Admiral Keppel, and the last resting place of a prominent reformer falling slowly into disrepair. We like to think it’s a pretty good mix. But if you feel it doesn’t quite match some of your own historical interests, why not write us an article? We seek to cover all periods of history and our regional interest is in the South Western counties of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset and Devon. All contributions to the Regional Historian are considered for publication, but you might like to contact the editor in advance at steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk. You’ll find details of the copy date for RH14 on P4.

UWE to write pioneering history of Bristol ethnic minorities

UWE’s School of History has been awarded £120,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of a £3.3 million project called ‘England’s Past for Everyone’, co-ordinated by the University of London’s Victoria County History Project, writes Peter Fleming. UWE’s contribution will be a history of immigration in Bristol from medieval times to the end of the twentieth century, provisionally titled ‘Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in Bristol £1000 - 2000’. This will focus on the themes of ethnic diversity and civic identity. Nine other volumes dealing with histories of other localities are planned throughout the country, but the Bristol project is the only one to look at ethnicity.

The two-year project will begin in June 2005, and will be led by Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming of UWE’s Regional History Centre. An expert on medieval England’s Jewish community, Joe Hillaby, will produce a chapter on Jews and other ethnic minorities in Bristol before 1300. As part of the project, an interactive website will be set up to encourage input from members of the public.

The researchers are looking forward to receiving information and oral histories from the public, and are looking for volunteers to help research and document the findings. They are hoping to chart the relationship between Bristol’s majority population and those from ethnic minority groups during the past millennium to find out what coping strategies the different groups used to survive, and to consider the way in which Bristol’s particular experience has been shaped by national and global factors.

The Regional Historian will carry regular reports on the progress of the project, and the project team can be contacted through the Regional History Centre website.
Subscriptions to the Regional Historian

As many of you will have noticed, the Regional Historian has not only taken on a more professional design in recent editions, but it has also grown in size. Since its first publication, the RH has been produced and posted without charge to all its readers. But the mailing list for the RH has almost doubled over the last two years and it looks set to continue to grow. This is all very pleasing (!) but the cost is no longer supportable from the modest budget of the Regional History Centre. To safeguard the journal's future development and to ensure that we can continue producing it in the current format then, it has become necessary to introduce a small subscription charge.

Subscriptions will take effect from issue 14 (Autumn 2005) at a cost of just £10.00 per annum. Your subscription will include associate membership of the Regional History Centre, entitling you to discounts on future day conferences and workshops. We hope very much that you've enjoyed receiving free copies of the RH and that you'll want to continue receiving it in the future. If so, please fill out the form in the back of this RH and return it to us here at the Centre.

Deadline for contributions for Regional Historian 14

We welcome short notices, letters and articles of approximately 3000 words for publication in the Regional Historian. Please submit all copy for consideration for RH14, as a microsoft word e-mail attachment if possible, by Friday 23rd September 2005. Copy should be sent to the editor, steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk.

Port Histories annual conference 2005

This year’s RHC day conference takes place on September 17th 2005. Under the title Port Histories, the conference looks at the social, cultural and economic life of port communities in British history and seeks to draw parallels and contrasts between the lived experience of people in maritime towns across the country and across the ages. You'll find a booking form in this edition of RH and full details of the conference at http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/Regionalstory/story/index.htm. And if you'd like to be kept up to date with developments, you can mail steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk and ask to be added to the e-mailing list.

Regional historians on tour!

Three members of UWE’s Regional History Centre (left to right: Dr Raingard Eser, Dr Steve Poole and doctoral student James Lee) travelled to Athens in October to take part in the Seventh International Conference on Urban History, organised by the European Association of Urban Historians. With the conference taking as its theme, ‘The European City in Comparative Perspective’, the UWE team were part of a panel chaired by Raingard and Dr Joachim Elbach on urban stability and civic liberties in the early modern city. Using Bristol as a focus, Steve’s paper considered the impact of adomestic trials on civic consciousness while James’s looked at the role of oath taking and oath breaking. Raingard explored attitudes in other English towns towards migrants from the low countries, and their fellow participants in a very international panel contributed case studies of Gorlitz, Lubeck, Leipzig, Bern, Lyon and the small Austrian towns of Zwettl and Scheibbs. The collected papers will all be appearing in a future edition of Urban History.

An appeal for help

The Dyhram Park Wartime Residential Nursery, 1939 - 1945 (formerly the Canonbury Nursery)

Can anyone help this RH reader?

I am undertaking research on behalf of the National Trust into the Dyhram Park wartime nursery, organised and financed by Lady Islington. If any reader has any information about the nursery, its staff, or its residents, please contact Hyla Holden at 9 Eden Villas, Larkhall, Bath, tel 01225 333409.

Studying for an MA in history at UWE

Did you know that you can study the history of the South West region for a Masters degree at UWE? MA programmes begin every October, classes are taught in the evenings, and applications are welcomed from students from both the UK and overseas. For more information please contact raingard.esser@uwe.ac.uk
The Museum of Bristol and its public

Madge Dresser

The Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery is a much-loved Bristol institution containing collections of national status alongside local treasures. But though its visitors often linger at Ernst Board's grand 1930 painting of Some Who Have Made Bristol Famous, the museum as a whole does not focus on the city's own history. Certainly, the lives of ordinary Bristolians have yet to be represented and as a buoyant property market rewrites the city's topography, there is a real need to historicise Bristol's urban spaces.

A new Museum of Bristol, scheduled to open in 2008 on the site of the present Industrial Museum, aims to fill these gaps. The proposed museum has the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the City Council. The HLF awarded £833,000 in February 2004 to develop plans for this major new attraction with match funding from Bristol City Council. They have pledged a further £10.27 million towards the project and a bid to release these funds will be submitted to the Lottery in June 2005. This ambitious project aims to 'engage, inform and delight visitors by providing a place where they can learn and be inspired by the stories that can be told through Bristol's collection of objects, paintings and historical documents.'

One of the main challenges for this project is to inspire rather than bore its public. It must exploit the possibilities afforded by new technology in order to make visually attractive and engaging exhibits. It must reach out to constituencies who have felt excluded from the world of museums and galleries.

But precisely who are these constituencies?

Part of the answer at least surfaced at a 'History Away Day' the BBC organized for invited historians and Radio 4 producers. Fleming. Having served 1000-2000, with Peter Perinnig. Having served as historical consultant to the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery on a number of initiatives since 1997, she is currently a member on the steering committee for the projected Museum of Bristol.

*Madge Dresser is principal lecturer in History at UWE and author of Savery Observed (2005).
*Formerly a Co-Director of the Regional History Centre, she is now leading the Lottery-funded project on the History of Ethnic Minorities in Bristol, 1000-2000, with Peter Perinnig. Having served as historical consultant to the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery on a number of initiatives since 1997, she is currently a member on the steering committee for the projected Museum of Bristol.*
Little Wales Beyond the Severn? The Welsh in Early Tudor Bristol

Peter Fleming

There is a considerable Welsh presence in contemporary Bristol: Welsh accents are often to be heard in the city's streets, and that presence has doubtless grown since the building of the two Severn bridges. This is by no means a modern phenomenon, however, and in this article, Peter Fleming explores the experiences of the Welsh in Bristol during the reign of the first Welsh king of England, Henry VII.

In Bristol, if nowhere else, Amегino Vespucci's right to be regarded as the godfather of America, the man who lent his name to the 'new' continent, is hotly contested by relations between Welsh and English in Bristol were not always harmonious. In 1492 Henry VII's Council was told that the mayor had attempted to arrest one Ysaw ap Roger, a tailor who had taken sanctuary in St Augustine's abbey, from where he led a criminal gang, whose most notorious exploit was a robbery at Westbury parish church. However, given the levels of violence and lawlessness recorded in later medieval judicial proceedings, these incidents do not necessarily demonstrate any antagonism between the two ethnic groups. Rather, the overwhelming weight of evidence suggests that Welsh and English in early Tudor Bristol traded together, were parties to each other's property arrangements, and often intermarried. This is all the more surprising given how the century began.

Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion, erupting in 1492, made a great impact on Bristol's commercial and political life. The town was a major base for military operations against rebel forces, its garrison housed rebel prisoners, and it had to cope with deserters from the English armies and also, probably, with loyalist Welsh refugees. These ap Meryks, a Meryks, Ameryks, or Meryks, in early Tudor Bristol would have had no trouble finding other Bristolians of Welsh ancestry, at least to judge by the century began.

Dr Peter Fleming

is Principal Lecturer and

Associate Head of the

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first of Glyndŵr’s followers to be executed, Grwn ap Tudur: on 26 September 1400 the sheriff was ordered to display the quarter on the town gates facing Wales. He anticipated that Anglo-Welsh relations along the border might turn sour, and in October the sheriff was ordered to proclaim that, while North Wales may have risen, the South Welsh were still loyal, and so should be allowed to go about their business unmolested. Nevertheless, Grwn ap Tudur’s decomposing quarter would have been a constant reminder of Welsh ‘treachery’. What really seems to have alarmed the Crown, however, was the prospect of not ethnic clashes in Bristol, but of tedious collaboration between English and Welsh. In August 1402 a royal commission of enquiry into treaties within the town was given a remit that specified both groups as potential traitors. Relations between Welsh and English seem to have returned to normal soon after the rebellion passed its zenith in 1408. In 1412/13 a Web Fleetor held civic office in Bristol, possibly for the first time, but if we are to assume that the name of one of the bailiffs for that year (and sheriff in 1415/6), David Rudder, was an Anglicisation of Dafydd ap Rhydderch.

If the story of the Welsh in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Bristol is one largely of harmony and assimilation, then it is interesting to compare it with the experiences of the town’s Irish population, at least as recorded in its company of merchants from Portugal. From the 1430s to the 1540s, as the English were facing serious issues as well as maintaining their lordship of Ireland, Bristol faced discrimination: they were banned from membership of the common council and from some craft guilds, and Irish apprentices were charged higher fees for completing their training. To judge by their family names, these Irish were not Gaelic, and probably not even from among the old Anglo-Irish, but instead originated from the ‘new’ English, who had recently settled in Dublin and the other English towns along the east coast. Hence, they would have been English speakers and, at least from this distance, it is hard to imagine what distinguished them. Aides, perhaps, from a sort of Exeter-like Irish posse of men born in Welcome and probably not very likely to have been Welsh as their first language and, when they opened their mouths, would doubtless have been immediately identifiable. Yet this does not seem to have been a major problem for their hosts. This raises interesting questions about contemporary conceptions of race and ethnicity. Perhaps, in later medieval England’s multi-lingual culture (English, Latin, French), language was not the major determinant of national identity it often is today. Perhaps, while Ireland and its peoples, of whatever ethnicity, were regarded as irredeemably ‘foreign’, Wales, after two centuries of English rule, was already being melded into England in English minds.

The man who’d have blood for his supper

The man who’d have blood for his supper: the killing of Henry Murray

Steve Poole

If the maintenance of order on the streets of early nineteenth-century Bristol was never a simple matter, the constantly shifting presence of large visiting communities of seafarers Europeans cannot have made it any easier. With inns, lodging houses, streets and quays frequently awash with colourfully vibrant but unsanitary sights and sounds, social tensions and conflicts between host and ‘outlandish’ communities were rarely far beneath the surface. Often the detail of these cultural tensions went unrecorded but, as Steve Poole shows here, papers from a coroner’s inquest kept at the Bristol Record Office, bring them vividly back to life.

The seven and a half-inch blade that felled Henry Murray entered his body with such force that it nearly broke his rib-cage. Penetrating just below the left shoulder-blade, it resulted in a massive arterial wound, and left a great deal of blood on the pavement. By the time his companions had carried him to the infirmary, Henry Murray had bled to death.

It was 9.30pm on an early autumn evening in 1810 and Bristol’s Marsh Street was busy with men and women either entering or leaving the many cheap lodging houses and inns that lined each side of the road. There was no shortage of witnesses to the street brawl that claimed Murray’s life, and the perpetrator, still clutching his bloody dagger, was quickly caught. But although the case is hardly remarkable for its complexity, it nevertheless offers a tantalising glimpse of some of the tensions to be found in cosmopolitan ports like Bristol at this time.

Bristol’s streets had played host to a rich and diverse community of temporary visitors from overseas for centuries. Though it is easy to perceive the true character of the cramped streets and alleys closest to the quay, and Marsh Street, at the heart of Bristol’s Irish migrant community, as exceptional. But of course, the drinking dens of Marsh Street and its vicinity were not used by Irishmen alone, but by seafarers from a range of European and transatlantic ports. The Portuguese, sometimes called Britain’s ‘oldest allies’, were just one example.

Portuguese sailors were a common sight on Bristol’s streets in these years and they enjoyed unusual public sympathy. Lord Wellington has defended Portugal, asserted Felix Palley’s Bristol Journal (journal, and it urged Bristolians to contribute to the national relief fund for its ‘brave and injured’ citizens. The conduct and condition of the Portuguese afforded to Englishmen the best opportunity of connecting all that is amiable and all that is great’, it declared, and was quick to publicise the loyal background of contributors like Mary Walker, a patriotic seller of oranges outside the Exchange, who reportedly donated 5 hard-earned shillings to the cause. It was one of these victims of Napoleon’s oppression, a 23 year old seaman named Johan Deanso, that killed Henry Murray.
Arriving in Bristol on a brig from Whithaven, Murray was an American seaman who had recently taken lodgings in Marsh Street. Enmity between ‘local’ and ‘foreign’ seamen was characteristically high however, and a poor reflection of the international solidarity promoted in the press. The British public image cannot have been much enhanced for instance, by the popular characterisation of two Englishmen, parted in the pillory for attempted sodomy at Bristol six months earlier, as ‘signor and signora’. In these years, notwithstanding the ‘united front’ against Napoleon, Catholicism, otherness and effeminacy were closely associated repertoires of public prejudice.

‘Some had painted their faces white; others had blacked their upper lips to disguise themselves’. 

Murray apparently believed that a Portuguese sailor had insulted and punched him as he walked along the quay on September 30th, and by October 4th he was out for revenge. Private ethnic vendettas of this kind were not unusual. As one lawyer put it in a London courtroom just five weeks earlier, ‘the American sailors and the Portuguese sailors are always fighting’. Entering the Hope and Anchor in Marsh Street with a shipmate, two Bristol Irishmen, and three girls of the town, Murray demanded to know whether the landlady, Elizabeth Watkins, was harbouring any ‘bloody foreigners’ for he was determined to have blood for his supper that night. Perhaps he already knew that a party of Portuguese sailors had tried to book a private room there that morning and been refused by Mrs Watkins. Either way, the Portuguese having returned that evening seeming to use the public bar instead, Mrs Watkins readily told Murray about them and served him with dinner.

The American, Irish and English arrivals went straight upstairs in search of their quarry. Murray seemed agitated and wouldn’t sit down but ‘walked about poking a pipe’. When another party of Portuguese sailors arrived, he pointed them out and joked loudly, ‘Here come some Greeks’ (that is, an unintelligible body of indeterminate foreigners). According to one of Murray’s friends, the newcomers responded by ‘sputtering about the room, shouting, threatening themselves and others and from side to side seeming to be in a common enough complaint about Portuguese sailors who were frequently represented as men who ‘sputtered’ and ‘shoved’ Englishmen in the street.

According to two witnesses on this occasion however, some had painted their faces white, and others ‘had blacked their upper lips to disguise themselves’. Matters came to a head when Murray’s shipmate Johnson began arguing with one of the girls and a Portuguese seaman threatened to hit him if he struck her. Murray intervened, saying that Johnson was ‘only a boy’ and as he would fight the foreigner in his stead. Punches were thrown but the affray was broken up by the landlady and the foreign seamen retreated downstairs. 

When the English and Irishmen followed a few minutes later, they were met at the foot of the stairs by ‘ten or twelve Portuguese sailors with their jackets off and thrown across the left arm with their hands in their bosoms or in their breeches pockets’. Murray appears to have run to his lodgings just down the street to raise some reinforcements, else, as he told a room-mate, ‘we shall be beat by a parcel of foreigners’. He then returned to the crowd gathered outside the Hope and Anchor. The parties fell upon one another and several witnesses reported seeing Johnson take a beating. Murray picked out Deanto and thromped him several times. According to a black servant he left him with the tune by Deanto fist tried to save himself by shouting ‘that he was not a Spaniard’, but it turned little favour with Mrs Watkins. It was then that Deanto produced a knife and stabbed his assailant to death.

Brandingish the weapon again as the crowd fell back, Deanto shouted ‘stand off, stand off’, then ran to another Marsh Street inn, the Ship. But he was pursued and the bloody knife wrestled from his grasp. Three Englishmen marched him to bridewell and left him with the burney. Asked what he was doing walking the streets with such a dagger in his possession, he answered simply ‘that it was his Country fashion’.

The coroner’s inquest that sat on Murray’s body the following day examined witnesses for eight hours but needed little time at the end to record a verdict of wilful murder.
Sir Richard Berkeley, a harasser of smugglers at home and a schemer at court, was arguably one of the most politically astute and owners of the Elizabethan age. Here, Tony Nott profiles the complex political and diplomatic career of the first builder of Stoke House.

Driving northwards out of Bristol on the M32, one cannot fail to be impressed by the imposing sight of the newly renovated Stoke House. Although extensively remodelled over the centuries, its architectural heritage remains intact, offering a glimpse into the political and social landscape of the 16th century.

Richard Berkeley was a member of a cadet branch of one of the most prestigious families in Gloucestershire – the Berkeley family of Berkeley Castle. Although his branch had left the main stem in the 14th century, Lord Berkeley was still his most obvious political patron if Richard wished to play a major role in county politics. His own family background almost certainly gave him a desire for a career not just in county society but in the more elevated circle of the royal court. His father, Sir John Berkeley (1530-1546) had gained the favour of Thomas Cromwell, becoming the King’s standard-bearer in 1539 with a pardon of 800 serjeants while his uncle Maurice had become a gentleman usher of the Privy Chamber in 1541. Unfortunately, Sir John’s career came to a premature end when he was killed in an accident in a naval engagement against the French in June 1545.

For any aspiring gentleman, an adequate income was a necessity and unfortunately Richard in 1552 inherited only five main manors well scattered throughout the county: Stoke Gifford, Kingsweston, and Reddington. Although initially modest, it seems to have provided a foundation for Richard’s later financial liquidity possibly because of the marriage, because in 1559 Richard extended the Stoke Gifford estate and the property of Elizabeth the latter for assault with intent to murder: see t18100919-32. Another Londoner, Thomas Davis, was stabbed during a fight with Portuguese seamen in August 1810, and a third, John Douglas, in October 1811. In the latter two cases, the accused Portuguese were both acquitted. In January and April 1813 however, two Portuguese seamen, Antonio Cordova and Juan Baptista Perez, were separately and capitally convicted for stabbing English sailors on the streets of London, the former for murder, the latter for assault with intent to murder: see 1B101034-33 & 1B101045-53. For Mason’s case see 1B101034-33.

The house that Berkeley built: Stoke House and its park in the late 17th century as drawn by Johannes Kip for Sir Robert Atkyns’s The Ancient And Present State of Gloucestershire (1712).

Photo: Tony Nott

Sir Richard Berkeley: An Elizabethan Career

Tony Nott

Sir Richard Berkeley, a harasser of smugglers at home and a schemer at court, was arguably one of the most politically astute landowners of the Elizabethan age. Here, Tony Nott profiles the complex political and diplomatic career of the first builder of Stoke House.

Driving northwards out of Bristol on the M32, one cannot fail to be impressed by the imposing sight of the newly renovated Stoke House. Although extensively remodelled since it was first built in the 16th century by Richard Berkeley (1533-1604), it still stands as a monument to the political ambition of this 16th century gentleman of ancient lineage but initially modest means.

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A cannon being fired “brake all to pieces, and standing himself at the recoile ... to Portsmouth where he died. Thus ended any hopes that the young Richard may have had of an easy entry into court circles.

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Sir Richard Berkeley

Tony Nott

is a retired teacher. He is currently a freelance lecturer and researcher in local history. His latest published work, which he co-edited with Joan Heeler, is Wills Convocation Act Books 1599-1603, volumes 90 & 91 in the Somerset Record Society Series.

It would be wrong to suggest that the historical mingling of nations on Bristol’s quays was always more productive of antagonism than multi-cultural integration, and UWE’s current Immigrants and Minorities research initiative will surely turn up plenty of evidence to prove it. Today indeed, Bristol celebrates its historic trading links with Portugal’s own second city, through a twinning arrangement with Porto. But, the trial of Johan Desanto and the records of the inquest that preceded it are valuable for the rare and fascinating insight they offer us of some of the social tensions underlying daily life on the streets and quays of plebeian Bristol.

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Burleigh felt that Richard would be useful to him as part of his network of clients and so disregarded any slurs on Richard’s reputation. His confidence was not misplaced and the newly knighted Sir Richard, was to remain loyal to the Queen for the rest of his life. The Geld connection soon proved advantageous and for the rest of the 1570s Sir Richard received a number of local commissions from the Privy Council to investigate various matters in the port of Bristol. It is possible that he was also given a commission to investigate trade matters abroad in 1580. His new relationship with the Gelds however did not stop him from keeping links with more conservatively religious families in Gloucestershire and Warwickshire who were important in local politics. His son Henry and daughter Elizabeth married into the important Throgmorton family and his daughter Mary married a Hungerford.

By the mid 1580s it would have seemed to most observers that Sir Richard’s career could not develop any further. He was now in his mid fifties and his activities were steady local but Burleigh nevertheless still considered him as a useful servant and by the late 1580s Sir Richard, now a widower, was regularly visiting London for consultations on local affairs with Burleigh at Ely House.

It was then that he made the important step of becoming one of the gentleman members of the Privy Chamber with direct access to the Queen. The means to pay for...and now regularly waited on the Queen who honoured him with a visit to Rendcombe on her summer progress in September 1592. Besides success, the 1590s also brought family strains. His son Henry had become a disappointment to Sir Richard. He was obviously not possessed of his father’s energy and ability and his behaviour may have been embarrassing to his father especially when contrasted with that of Thomas Rowe, Sir Richard’s new stepson, destined to become a celebrated traveller, diplomat and friend of the poet John Donne. One possibility is that Henry may have embraced the Catholic faith of his wife which could have been politically embarrassing for his father had he come to London. Whatever the reason, his father refused permission for him to come. In 1592, Henry decided to try to flee the country and was detained in Southampton. On being brought back to London, he was interrogated by the Privy Council who found him to be possessed of a “very melancholy humour” and sent him back to his father with the friendly advice to “bear a milde hand over him...for the better prevention of mischief likely to ensue”; it could have been that Henry was suffering from a depressive illness possibly brought on by his father’s refusal to let him live in London.

Whatever the state of his mental health, Henry was to play no further part in Sir Richard’s life and from then on Henry’s son, Richard, became his heir and the focus of his grandfather’s life. The Berkeley/Rowe alliance was sealed by the marriage in 1598 between the younger Richard and Mary Rowe, widow of Robert Rowe the daughter of Sir Richard’s second wife Eleanor. Elizabeth Throgmorton was also an embarrassment to her father when in 1599 her adherence to the catholic faith came to the notice of the Privy Council and she was separated from her children and placed under house arrest.

Despite these family problems, Sir Richard was still considered by the Privy Council to be a “safe pair of hands” and was entrusted with various difficult tasks. In 1596 he was made Lieutenant of the Tower of London where he was part of the group who interrogated the Jesuit John Gerard. Gerard revealed in his autobiography that Sir Richard, with his catholic sympathies, found the task of dealing with a controversy between the English Jesuit and his Brethren to be “very distasteful and it was dear from his correspondence with Robert Cecil that he was glad to be relieved of his post in 1597.[
The surviving notebooks of eighteenth century magistrates can often be used by historians to investigate the extent to which customary culture was constrained and regulated by law. Wood-gathering may have been essential to the economy of the rural poor, but it remained theft in the eyes of the law. Carl Griffin opens the notebook of William Hunt of West Lavington in Wiltshire and finds it was a crime that kept the magistrate peculiarly busy.

The period between the mid seventeenth-century and the mid eighteenth-century witnessed a dramatic redefining of property rights and the nature of the commodity wood belonging to commoners. The rural poor surrounding the gathering of wood for fuel increasingly came into conflict with the rulers of rural England.

Whilst wood taking had been carefully rationed by manorial customs and village by-laws from as early as the seventh-century with later Yorkist and Tudor legislation reflecting Naval fears that wood was being wasted, it was not until a Statute of 1663 (15 Charles II c.2 ‘An Act for the punishment of unlawful cutting or stealing or spoiling of wood and underwood’) came into operation that the law made provision for the first time, to, firstly, issue warrants against suspected wood-takers, and, secondly, to prosecute the taking of wood in all contexts.

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the forests of the Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire borders which were both more densely populated than other English forests and also more chronically pauperised. These disputes were motivated both by attempts to restrict common-pasture rights and the more general loss of common of exchequer, thirteenth and housebote through enclosure, increased restrictions over how rights could be exercised, the increasing cost of ‘licences’ to exercise use-rights and the general erosion of the value of such rights. The most common way in which these disputes were played out was not through overt protests, but rather through the day-to-day taking of wood regardless of such restrictions and, so it would seem, the Statute of 1663. This taking of wood was, therefore, imbued with a political edge. It was not simply a matter of taking fuel but rather an attempt by virtue of practice to imbue their claims with the air of legitimacy. As such, it is important to note that even such supposedly ‘everyday’ practices could be minor epiphanies of resistance, though the law regarded such acts as thefts rather than acts of a malicious nature.

The protest element in wood-taking was recognised by a further Statute enacted under Charles II which separated malicious damage to timber trees from the lesser ‘offences’ of wood-dealing, but it was not until the passing of the so-called ‘Black Act’ in 1723 that malicious intent was effectively legislated for. This Act, which in a single piece of ambiguously worded legislation made capital offences of the many acts of rural protest thereby creating more capital offences overnight than any other European country had in their entire histories. If invoked, a person now found guilty of having cut down a tree ‘planted in any avenue, or growing in any garden, orchard or plantation’ was liable to be hung. 

Before the 1766 legislation, the law regarding the taking of timber only recognised the difference between timber trees and non-timber trees, indeed it was not until then that the taking of dead wood was unambiguously criminalized. This strengthening of the law was, in a sense, only partial in that it was a move toward offering a range of differing punishments depending upon the use-value of the timber taken, and whilst this list of trees was expanded seven years later it still did not encompass underwood, hedgwood, hollies, thorns, or orchard trees which were instead punished by a 40/- Fine or a month’s hard labour.

It is clear therefore that the legislature between the mid-seventeenth-century and the mid-eighteenth-century constantly sought to redefine the relationship between those with capital and those without, shifting from a self-regulating rural England which rationed access to the ‘accidental’ boundaries of nature through manorial courts, to a rural England where the commodity was the universal language and was enforced and upheld through the twin pillars of the market and the law. In practice though it remains unclear as to how these new tools were actually used by both ‘victims’ of timber-taking and magistrates let alone whether the criminalisation of customary practices actually led to a shift in plebian practices, drawing them into fuel markets.

Whilst all major studies of crime and criminality in eighteenth-century England make reference to wood-dealing it would appear that it was no more common place than other acquisitive crimes. However, it is clear that a total reliance hitherto upon the systematic series of quarter sessions and assize records totally masks the scale of the number of cases which the judicial system dealt with. Indeed, relatively few cases of wood-taking ever reached the higher courts. For instance, of the 37 cases presented to the Epiphany, Easter and Midsummer Hampshire Assizes in 1769 only two were related to wood-taking and neither of these were cases actually tried by the quarter sessions but rather sentences of six months were imposed outside of the sessions.

In a sense, this is not that surprising as the 1766 legislation was invoked, the quarter sessions would only ever deal with third offences, whilst if the Statute of 1663 was used the quarter sessions would, in all probability, not try any cases of wood-taking. As such, part of the problem in attempting to offer a more detailed, more nuanced understanding is the fact that until 1822 petty convictions for wood theft were not returned to the Quarter Sessions. The only possible way in which we can analyse the usage and impact of the shift in legislation is through justices’ papers, which are both very rare and rarely systematic. The notebook kept by Wiltshire magistrate William Hunt is a notable exception. 

Hunt lived at West Lavington on the northern fringes of the immense, and largely uncultivated, Salisbury Plain, and acted as magistrate in the division comprised of its theory. If not in practice, the Hundreds of Swarborough, and Potterne and Cannings. In his magisterial duties Hunt meticulously recorded every case in which he acted summarily between 1744 and 1749, though it does not explicitly state that in all cases Hunt acted as a single justice. In total, Hunt made adjudications on 358 separate occasions, and as Critical, the editor of Hunt’s notebook, suggests it was those acquisitive acts that had once been accepted as common rights that made up the vast majority of all cases in which Hunt had to act including wood-taking and poaching. Other acquisitive acts ranged from the relatively common - rubbing fields, gardens and orchards - to the rather more obscure, including the theft of well chains, flints and penukses, some of which were obviously consumed within the household with other stolen goods, presumably disposed of either through urban fencemakers or the many higglers that traversed rural England.

"The most common way in which these disputes were played out was not through overt protests, but rather through the day-to-day taking of wood."

Hunt also had to deal with many cases involving poor law disputes, either in relation to non-relief of paupers, the refusal of individuals to support their families, settlement disputes or bastardy. Exile occurred only through selling liquor without a licence, fraud, failure to pay wages, poor rates and tithes; leaving service; abuse of character; swearing and cursing; failing to obey the Sabbath; and, detaining goods all occasionally required Hunt’s jurisdiction, as did failures to obey his summons and false accusations. But other than for acquisitive crimes, Hunt was most frequently called upon to judge upon cases which involved some element of protest: most commonly, assault (of which, excluding sexual assault, Hunt adjudicated in 80 cases), malicious damage to windows and water bays, and, more unusually, cases of ‘pissing’ in a hat and throwing bricks down a chimney. Of all these acts it was the taking of wood which kept Hunt busiest: of the 358 cases 95 (26.5%) involved the taking of wood or hedge and fence-breaking. In the vast majority of these cases no reference was made to the quantity of wood taken, though in all cases of shrouding it was stated that only one tree had been shrouded, whilst occasionally advertises other than ‘same’ and ‘quantities’ were deployed. For instance, on 28 January 1745 Hunt granted a conviction warrant against two West Lavington labourers for cutting and carrying away one stump belonging to the Earl of Abingdon (172) for which they were fined seven shillings each, whilst on 5 December 1746 a Wedhampton labourer was fined five shillings and bound to recognizances of £10 for carrying away ‘large’ quantities of hedgwood belonging to a yeoman of the same parish (371).

Wood-taking could take a wide variety of different forms, though in 43 cases Hunt simply noted that the defendants were charged with stealing ‘wood’. The shrouding of maine trees oaks, ashes, elms and four cases involving unnamed tress was common as was the cutting of willow sets. In a sense the taking of already processed wood was relatively rare with only seven cases involving the taking of planks or hurdles from fences; two cases involving the taking of stitches; and two cases saw timber. Clerical codes if the motive for wood-takers rarely extended their activities to taking processed timber and indeed in almost all cases their actions to taking wood straight from hedges, copses and woodlands. It is worth noting though the vague phrase ‘wood dealing’ could possibly cover not only thefts from woods and hedges but also thefts from sheds of others’ fuel supplies.

As already noted, the area around West Lavington, in a sense was not particularly well wooded and this meant that many parishes suffered an imbalance between supply and demand. Moreover, being removed from the coast and distant from the towns of Marlborough, Salisbury, Warminster and Westbury meant...
that coals were expensive, and as such during the winter the need to somehow procure fuel was potentially chronic. It is not surprising therefore that the seasonality of the cases brought before Hunt matches that found by Timothy Shakesheff for nineteenth-century Herefordshire, thereby demonstrating that the taking of wood was motivated primarily by the need to heat labouring dwellings (see figure 1). However, the concentration in the work of Shakesheff and others upon the use of quarter sessions records for analysing the seasonality of specific crimes has resulted in a rather distorted picture, as the date of the sessions or the date of the commitment of the defendant has been used as a proxy for the date of the offence rather than analyzing individual indictments. Moreover, the relative paucity of cases tried before the quarter sessions means that it is impossible to make any conclusions about short-term fluctuations in crime rates. Detailed and extensive magistrates’ notes however allow for a much more sustained and detailed analysis. For instance, in December 1746 Hunt dealt with ten cases of wood-taking alone, a rate far higher than any of the other years which the notebook covers, whilst the figures relating to the summer months suggests that wood-taking was even less of a problem to magistrates at that time of year than an analysis of quarter sessions records suggests.

Figure 1: Seasonality of wood-stealing cases brought before Justice Hunt, Wiltshire, 1744-49.

In 73% of cases men were the sole defendants, whilst women were the sole defendants in only 19% of cases, with a further 6% involving both men and women. In the final 2% of cases the gender was not mentioned. Clearly, if 96% of wood taking cases involved men and only 2% women, we have been rather hasty in assuming the role of women in subsistence-related activities remained static both over time and between different areas. Whilst Hunt did not record the ages of the defendants, it would appear that people at all stages of the life cycle took wood. For instance, in February 1745 Hunt prosecuted widow Betty Draper of Market Lavington by the sum of one shilling (366) whilst in May 1744 the sons of Robert Lane along with William Wilson the younger of Market Lavington were fined five shillings each (99). Two of the major groupings of wood takers were collective of often unrelated young men and collectives of young women, though, unsurprisingly, the former grouping was far more frequent. There is some evidence to suggest that women acting without the assistance of men were treated more leniently by Hunt. In April 1746 a search warrant was issued against the female labourers of Urftont who, when they came before Hunt, were pronounced guilty but in regard to their great poverty and their promises of not offending in the like again (322). Even in a case where two female woodmovers of Market Lavington not only cut down a plum tree but also obtained a quantity of mustard seed – clearly an act of plant mining (see Griffin, forthcoming) where the Black Act could have been involved – the punishment was five shillings for damages (447). Hunt, to some extent, adjusted the fines levied according to circumstances, though the fifteen shilling fine made against West Lavington labour William George for stealing saws (228) despite his willingly confessing suggests Hunt was either occasionally inconsistent, perhaps due to pressure from the prosecutor, or that this policy was only de facto one even in Hunt’s own mind.

By far the most common punishment was the levying of a crown fine (21 cases), followed by eight cases of a half crown fine, though in several cases fines of other amounts between one shilling and fifteen shillings were handed down. Few and far between were the occasions when the defendants were acquitted (in all cases for a lack of evidence) indeed, nobody was found not guilty on the evidence provided. Some defendants thought found guilty were either pardoned, as in the case of the Urftont female labourers, respited, or excused by Hunt, in one case of willow shredding because it ‘appeared so frivolous’ (273). More importantly, not one case was passed on to a higher court and only one person was committed to the Bridewell for a second offence. It is clear therefore, that, as O’Rialla has suggested, in every case of wood-taking Hunt used the Statute of 1663 rather than any of the more recently passed legislation.

‘The nature of wood as commodity was constantly being tested by both the poor and landowners with Hunt acting as arbitrator’.

As such, in the mid-eighteenth-century every case of wood-taking that was tried at the quarter sessions represented the peak of a very deep iceberg. Whilst many cases could have been sent to the higher courts, Hunt’s notebook clearly demonstrates the importance, as Peter King has recently noted, of the single magistrate acting as an arbitrator. Hunt’s discretion and his willingness to find defendants guilty but then only levying a small fine meant that prosecutors could avoid the potentially lengthy delay of waiting for the sessions and the costs of the prosecution whilst the county did not have to meet the costs of securing the defendant(s) in custody and the parish the potential expense of keeping the defendant’s family relieved. Indeed, five cases of wood-taking were ‘agreed’ without the need to appear before Hunt, and in a further four cases the defendants were forgiven by the complainants without Hunt having to adjudicate.

What does Hunt’s notebook tell us about the process of commodification in the English countryside? Simply put, through the lens of wood-taking, the key tenets of E.P. Thompson’s concept of the ‘moral economy’ can be applied to wood-taking in eighteenth-century West Lavington. Here was a ‘particular historical formation’, a downland community defined by the shared practices and values associated with pastoralism and subject to the anxieties of an agrarian capitalism that was becoming increasingly intense but still uneven in its local scope. The taking of wood was deeply embedded in the life of West Lavington as an illegal practice, as were E.P. Thompson’s food riots, but whilst the law may have offered potential clear guidance, landowners, farmers and Justice Hunt were part of a complex practices of disapproval combined with the customary practices and beliefs of the poor regarding the ownership and allowable usages of wood – to the extent that a profound countryside moral economy existed in relation to wood. Indeed, it is worth considering, in light of Roger Wells’ recent identification of a comrond moral economy in the south-west wherein issues of access to land were paramount, whether natural resources represented the most profound and important moral economy of all.
**A ‘silly, ridiculous Jack in Office’: Bath’s Town Clerk and the Keppel Affair of 1779**

Trevor Fawcett

Admiral Keppel’s trial for cowardice in 1779 made him one of the most talked-about naval figures of the age. The political ramifications of his recovery and reinstatement as a popular Whig hero are well-known, much less familiar however, is the enormous impact the affair had upon Georgian Bath. Trevor Fawcett probes the local angle.

By late 1778, with the American War going badly, Lord North’s administration was increasingly under fire from its political foes, the Rockingham Whigs. Its decision to court-martial the popular Admiral Keppel only made matters worse. The charge that Keppel had failed properly to engage a French fleet, brought by Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, was both ill-founded and blatantly political. For Palliser sat on Lord Sandwich’s Board of Admiralty which the Whig opposition, of whom Keppel was an active member, was constantly harrying. The ensuing five-week-long court-martial, held at Portsmouth and attended by many Whig leaders, gripped the nation’s imagination and was reported in every detail by the press; the Bath Chronicle and Bath Journal not excepted.

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“When did it misrepresent the celebration as a riotous occasion and claim that it was all got up by a set of ‘patriotic banditti’?”

The news from Portsmouth reached Bath at 6 a.m. on Friday 12 February 1779, delivered by seamen to the Royal Crescent house of C.C. Crespinny, Receiver-General for the Admiralty but a fervent Keppel supporter. As the word spread and the church bells began a joyous peal, the Corporation flag was raised on the tower of the Abbey Church on to follow suit. Already there was general expectation that the city would ‘illuminate’ with a celebratory display of lights that same evening, yet the magistrates hesitated before giving assent, partly it seems from political scruple, partly from fear of disorder.

But at least the Town Clerk knew where his duty lay. Professing outrage at the flying of the Corporation flag without proper authorisation and on a non-royal occasion, he complained to the Archdeacon, demanded explanations from the various churchwardens, and had the flag hauled down and the bells silenced. It was a futile gesture, as well as foolishly, given the city’s excited mood. The Abbey at once retaliated by holding a Union Jack and a flag of St George, and that evening the illumination, clearly in preparation for days by the pro-Keppel faction, made a splendid show.

Many buildings exhibited lamps and transparencies with naval themes, and though Bath’s new Guildhall was not illuminated, Council members showed some partisanship by meeting to toast Keppel’s success. Crespinny’s house in Royal Crescent was bedecked with lights, but the Town Clerk’s, only three doors away remained dark and was lucky in the circumstances to avoid broken windows. Elsewhere the ‘names of Sir Hugh Palliser’ and a certain lawyer were written on pieces of paper and unanimously condemned to the Corporation (i.e. the chamberpot).

The lawyer in question, Town Clerk since 1776, was John Jefferys. Settled in Bath by c.1740 and taking advantage of Bath’s urban growth, he soon built up a strong legal practice in land deals, mortgages, loans and investments. Not only did this bring him considerable business with private developers such as Richard Marchant (a fellow Quaker) and the younger John Wood, his expertise also recommended him to the Corporation. As early as 1748 he is found busy about the city’s water rentals and in surveying city property; and under Lewis Clutterbuck (Town Clerk 1757-76) he seems to have acted as part-time deputy. When in 1776 (having pointedly deserted the Quakers for the Church of England) he succeeded as full Town Clerk he must have understood perfectly how the Corporation worked. Meanwhile, through nonconforming operations and attorney’s work, he had become a rich man, held land, occupied a prestigious house, and lived in comfort.

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11. This Act allowed for the summary punishment before a single magistrate: up to a £20 fine or between six and twelve months imprisonment for ‘wilfully cut or break down, bark, burn, pluck up, top, top, chop, or otherwise deface, damage, spoil, or destroy or carry away any timber tree’. A second such offense free the fine or gaol sentence increased, whilst a third offense was punishable by seven years transportation.
12. 13 Geo III c.53 and 9 Geo III c.44. A further statute added that if the offence was committed by night, an offender could be transported for 7 years as the crime was then a felony 4 Geo III c.36.
much the Town Clerk had done on his behalf—‘taking the trouble...of serving the Office of Chamberlain for him [in 1776-7] and now that of Mayor, for both of which Mr. Crook allows himself utterly ignorant and incapable’.

There may have been some truth in it. Although he had served on Council for twenty-five years, Crook, an apothecary, seems not to have been cut out for...merchant James Ferry, had been overwhelmed by his duties and imprudently trusted the city financial affairs to deputies. The trouble was that by electing its Mayor and other key executive officers for quite short terms and mainly on grounds of seniority, the Corporation’s competence varied from year to year. Moreover, any Mayor depended heavily on the advice and professional skills of the Guildhall’s éminence grise, the Town Clerk. If he came under public scrutiny, as Jefferys did in 1779, so did the ways of the Corporation.

Despite pressure to reveal the authorship of the now notorious letter to the Morning Post, the Corporation said nothing, but neither did they leap to the Town Clerk’s defence. When in mid-March Keppel himself visited Bath on his triumphant progress, the celebrations broke out anew with bells, the firing of cannon, acclamations, and another illumination at which several hundred people accompanied an effigy of Jefferys (represented as half-Quaker, half-lawyer, and labelled ’John the Scrub’) and tossed it onto a bonfire in front of the Royal Crescent to loud hisses and groans. And there was further ridicule of ’John the Scrub’ in popular ditties and in a mock playbill for The Mayor of Bath and The Double Dealer directed by ’Black Jack’. More serious, however, was the accusation that the Corporation had allowed its Town Clerk’s ’Vanity and Avarice...Insolence and Tyranny’ far too much scope:

The most alarming circumstance of all is...the amazing ascendancy he has gained over the Corporation...[and] the implicit faith, passive obedience, and non-resistance, of the majority of them; at the rate that matters go on, we may in a short time reasonably expect the Mayor reduced to a mere Casul Marturum, and the two justices [to] little or no better than Non-entities...[while] the whole body taken together deserves a second time [the first occasion being during Ralph Allen’s dominance in the early 1760s] the appellation of THE ONE-HEADED CORPORATION.

All this was separately corroborated in a contemporary Bath weekly, Salmon’s Mercury, which over many months from November 1778 to July 1779 exposed all Jefferys’ dealings with linen draper Tobias Salmon and his printer son John Salmon, whom Jefferys had prosecuted for libel and obliged to serve a three-month gaol sentence. Here little is spared in the damning account of Jefferys’ confrontational style (even over a private conveyancing issue), his ’tyranny’ over the Corporation, his usurpation of powers, and his abysmal reputation among his fellow lawyers and former Quaker brethren.

Nevertheless the record of Council meetings in 1779 fails to mention any official rebuke to Jefferys or any obvious curb on his activities. He was soon at work again...went out of his way to praise Jefferys as an incorruptibly honest Town Clerk, knowledgeable in law and moderate in fees.

There are no more accusations of his lording it over the Corporation and he continued actively in post until his retirement in 1800.
The burial fields around St Swithin's Church at the top of Walcot Street in Bath contain some pretty impressive mortal remains. There's Fanny Burney for instance, and Jane Austen's dad. And Sir Edward Berry, one of Nelson's captains, a veteran of the Nile and Trafalgar. These three eminent visitors to Bath all have more in common than approximation in death however, for their monuments are also the subject of expensive recent facelifts.

This is money well spent of course. Funeral monuments are the furniture of memory and mourning, markers that remind us not only of human mortality but of the impetus to lend the past a character and make history personal. But celebrity is a fluid state and its attribution is sometimes contentious.

It's easy to reflect upon the irony of all this if you stand for a moment on an overgrown concrete path on the south side of the mortuary chapel. It's to be an epitaph not only to a man but to language itself and to the abstractions of liberty. Heady stuff? Here's a sample:

"In his utterances Englishmen experienced the full beauty and energy of their native speech. His oratorical powers were only surpassed by his devoted zeal and unflinching efforts to promote the best liberties of his fellow men."

Thelwall never forgot, he owed his liberty not just to the logic of his case but to the unparalleled eloquence of his defence attorney, Thomas Erskine. He died in 1825, three years after the revolution in France, at the age of 31, leaving his name on a mortgage, and his neck once again in the struggle for the suffrage, his footsteps dogged by Home Office spies and informers. Had he not been such a public figure, we might not remember much about John Thelwall. But celebrity is a fluid state and its attribution is sometimes contentious.

If any readers are interested in helping to conserve Thelwall's monument, please contact the Regional History Centre, UWE.
resorted to firearms to foil a cynical conspiracy to impress him into the Navy in 1797, he may even have ended up on the Agamemnon with Captain Berry of the Nile. But instead, he befriended fellow wordsmiths Coleridge and Wordsworth and attached himself to them at Alfoxton to write literary poetry.

Thelwall spent the rest of his life in pursuit of his two greatest passions, the English language and political justice, convinced throughout that the key to the latter lay in mastering the art of oratory by lecturing on its historical origins and arguing its place as an agent of change. This is why Thelwall was in Bath. Mid-way through a course of eight evening lectures at the Literary Institution, his weakening heart gave way and he died quietly in his bed. The previous evening he had closed by tracing the history of political oratory from classical Rome to its finest hour – the defence performance of Thomas Erskine in 1794. On his last night on earth then, with what the local press called ‘a copiousness of historical illustration which we cannot attempt to follow’, he was still paying his dues.

The fact that historical memory was clearly so important to Thelwall only makes the neglect of his own ‘memorial’ more poignant. As custom dictates, its inscription begins with the somewhat ironic phrase, ‘To the memory of John Thelwall’. At the time of his death, the Bath Journal believed he had ‘made himself distinguished on occasions which will form the subject of History’. The Treason trials of 1794 were certainly fixed in the historical memory of English radicals. The acquittal of the twelve Corresponding Society members had been marked by commemorative junquets in the Golden Lion tavern in Smithfield every November 5th until 1833. The principal defendants were re-united annually at these events until, by 1829 there were only three of them left alive, Thomas Hardy (the society’s secretary and founder), John Richter, and Thelwall. Richter died in the summer of 1830, his last public utterance a speech in support of the second French Revolution, an event which ensured that ‘I shall die happy’.

‘Beyond the realms of rhetoric and oratory, Liberty was no more obviously secure than it had ever been’. Hardy and Thelwall both lived to see the Great Reform Act pass into law and for both of them it was a matter of the deepest historical significance. Sharing a platform for the reformist National Political Union with Sir Francis Burdett in 1831, Thelwall recalled his own prosecution for ‘advocating that very cause which our patriot king and his enlightened ministers were at present doing their utmost to carry to a successful consummation’, while in 1832 Hardy wrote to Lafayette in Paris, of the ‘revolution that has taken place in this country – for revolution it is. The King and his ministers have now turned reformers! They are guilty of the very same crime which it is for which parliamentary reformers in 1794 were charged with high treason’. Promulgating the memory of 1794 was crucial to both of them and the Whig reformers of 1832 took the Jacobin legacy to their hearts. This is more than may be said for their attitude to the future Chartist, Lovett and Cleave, who were booed and jeered when they tried to move a universal suffragist amendment at the very same NPU meeting that had welcomed Thelwall.

‘Successive winter frosts have worked away at the surface of the stone to desabilise the lettering’. When Hardy died in October 1832, Thelwall was the last surviving veteran of the trials, and the only guest of honour at the Golden Lion commemoration a month later. ‘I am the last man... and ‘said that perhaps this would be the last occasion on which he would ever address that assembly’. In this, he was right. Thelwall delivered his final great public oration over Hardy’s grave in London to a crowd 20-40,000 strong. ‘Apparently under the influence of... of the last of my associates and perhaps the time is not distant when a similar close shall be put to my existence also’.

But it was Thelwall’s misfortune not only to be the sole surviving veteran of 1794, but to die quietly and obscurely on the provincial lecture circuit rather than in the capital. His funeral, unnoticed by either the national or local press, was recorded only in the burial records of St Swithin’s Church. It seems unlikely there was anybody there who knew him, nobody to invoke his memory with ‘strong and excited feelings’ as his casket was lowered, and certainly no crowds of mourners. Thelwall would not perhaps have wanted a hero’s farewell. Beyond the realms of political oratory, before the 19th century, if one believed he eulogised were no more obviously secure than they had ever been. Even as the earth settled on his grave, six Tolpuddle farm labourers were awaiting trial and transportation in Dorchester for forming a trades union, and in Bath the newswander John Cogswell and his wife were awaiting trial for selling Richard Carlile’s un stamped radical newspapers. Cogswell, who regarded himself as a ‘constinent republican’, had emerged from a six month prison sentence for exactly the same offence in October 1833. Opening a new shop in Chandos Buildings, he returned to selling titles like the Gauntlet, Cosmopolite, Reformer, the Destructive and the Poor Man’s Guardian, but was re-arrested in March. At the assize, he received another six months and his wife was fined.

Thelwall’s grave remained unmarked for seven months. Then, thanks to the efforts of his widow and some friends in London, the present memorial was paid for and mounted in place. It was originally intended as a temporary marker, to be replaced by a handsome ‘mural monument’ by public subscription at a later date. But it never happened. Thelwall would probably not have welcomed material flamboyance as a signifier for memory in any case. At Hardy’s funeral four months earlier, he had urged mourners to understand that his was ‘not a grave to demand pompous monument or colossal effigies, for Hardy’s monument should be memory itself’.

Which leaves us with a conundrum. Thelwall’s headstone will soon require restoration if it is to continue prompting memory in the future. Its inscribed words will fade and fall. Thelwall himself belied words of little consequence until animated by oratorical oratory, which is precisely why he devoted his life in equal measure to politics, eloquence and poetry. The purpose of commemoration, he might tell us, is to inspire action and without it, we may as well surrender all such sites of memory to neglect. One has only to restore some of the obscure names adorning the commemorative plaques placed on Bath’s buildings a century ago to be reminded that celebrity is a historical phenomenon. But perhaps Thelwall deserves better than this. In an advanced liberal...
Mary Rudge: Bristol’s World Chess Champion

John Richards

She was “the leading lady player of the world” and “scorned throughout the length and breadth of the land” in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The pinnacle of her career was winning the first international women’s chess tournament in 1897, but she lived a life of genteel poverty and died almost forgotten. John Richards uncovers the extraordinary career of Mary Rudge and argues the case for a blue plaque to mark her achievements.

Mary Rudge was born in Leominster on the 6th February 1842 to Henry and Eliza Rudge. Henry was a surgeon and “very fond of chess and played a fairly strong game, though he never took part in public chess. He taught the moves to his elder daughters, and they in turn taught Miss Mary.”

Making much of an impact on the chess world. When John Burt wrote his history of the Bristol Chess Club in 1883, Mary ... brief mentions. If she had been recognized as a leading woman player at this time then Burt would surely have recorded it.

Mary Rudge was in Leominster on the 6th February 1842 to Henry and Eliza Rudge. Henry was a surgeon and “very fond of chess and played a fairly strong game, though he never took part in public chess. He taught the moves to his elder daughters, and they in turn taught Miss Mary.”

The arrival of Henry’s sisters must have caused a major upheaval in his life and, in particular, a need for new accommodation. Before 1876, Henry does not appear in the residents’ lists. In 1876-77, he was living at Walmer Villa, 48 Wellington Park, Clifton. This house may have been owned by St John’s, because when he moved to become curate of another church, St Thomas, Bristol, in 1876, he also moved house to 8 Burlington Buildings (now Burlington Road) Clifton. Perhaps Henry’s new post at St Thomas still did not bring in enough money because the Ridges had a new plan. The following year they took over the new Luscombe House Preparatory School on Redland Green; Henry became the schoolmaster and we can assume his sisters helped with the teaching. The school was described as providing “high class education for boys, 7-11. Efficient masters providing a thorough grounding for public schools.” The venture may have started successfully because Henry gave up his curate’s post in 1881, but by 1885 things were going wrong. In January, the school was advertising for pupils, but by August it seems the school closed and the Ridges left.

Henry moved to become curate at North Meols, near Southport, but Mary stayed in Bristol. What happened immediately after the school closure is not clear. Mary did not appear in two matches that autumn that she would normally have played in. But she eventually reappeared on the chess scene and this time she quickly began to make a real impact. This is all the more remarkable
as she was already 45 years old. On 12th March 1887 she played on board six for Bristol against Bath at the Imperial Hotel, Bristol, and she got a draw against Mr W EHill. At the beginning of 1888, Rudge played and won on board six for Bristol & Clifton against City Chess & Draughts Club, and then drew with Backhouse in a simultaneous display on 1st March. The following year Mary must have really made the men sit up and take notice as she won the challenge cup of Bristol & Clifton Chess Club.

Mary was in dire financial straits. “Our readers will be sorry to hear that Miss M. Rudge, of Clifton, is at present in very depressed pecuniary circumstances; so much so that she has felt obliged (though most reluctantly) to give her consent to an appeal being made on her behalf. We are sure English chessplayers will not allow one of their best lady players to remain in actual, though it is to be hoped only temporary, want, and contributions for its relief, however small, will be thankfully received by the Rev. C.E. Ranken, St Ronan’s, Malvern, and acknowledged by him privately to the donors.”

Perhaps the school venture had wiped out any funds or legacy that had once existed. Mary was reduced to relying on a form of charity, as she became a companion to various ladies. The most important of these ladies was Mrs FF Rowland, who lived at Clontarf, near Dublin, and also Kingstown. Friderische Rowland was a significant figure in late nineteenth-century chess, both as a problemist and, with her husband, Thomas B Rowland, as a chess journalist and writer of chess books. And so Mary started alternating between living in Bristol and Ireland.

By September 1889, Mary was living in Clontarf where, possibly inspired by Mrs Rowland, she composed and published a chess problem (in the Contraf Parochial Magazine). She also gave a simultaneous display - she won all six games - and it is possible that she was the first woman in the world to perform a "simul". By November Mary was being hailed as "the leading lady player in the world".

The following year, 1897, the first international women’s chess tournament was held at the Ladies’ Club in London. Twenty players entered. Two rounds per day were played, with a time limit of twenty moves in one hour. Some expressed concern that the event would be too taxing for the ladies. It is likely that Mary was urged to enter and her supporters may have raised money to enable her to stay for a couple of weeks in London. If so, it was worthwhile as Mary sailed through the event undefeated with eighteen wins and one draw.

The British Chess Magazine commented her play was marked by a lack of risk taking and published only highlights of her games, but they did confirm the status of the event. “Rudge in capital form, ... displayed those qualities of steadiness and tenacity for which she is renowned. ... Her play was marked throughout by care, exactitude and patience. Someone said of her, ‘She doesn’t seem to care so much to win a game as to make her opponent lose it.’ She risked nothing, she never indulged in fireworks for the purpose of startling the gallery; if she got a Pawn she killed it and won, if she got a piece she killed it and won, if she got a ‘grasp’ she killed it and won. Not that she always outplayed her opponents in the openings, or even in the mid-games, for the reverse was sometimes the case; but risking nothing she always managed to hold her game together, and then in the end her experience as a tournament player and her skill in end positions came in with powerful effect.”

Mary Rudge at the first international women's chess tournament in London, 1897. After eighteen wins and a single draw, she won the event together with prize money totalling £60 (picture: author's collection)

Mary’s health deteriorated sometime in the next few years. Her sister Caroline died in 1900 leaving her on her own. In 1912, there was a new appeal for funds. The Cork Weekly News published the following announcement by Mrs FF Rowland:

At the age of 55, Mary had reached the pinnacle of her career. It is certain that the £60 prize money was also very welcome. Afterwards it was back to the more mundane life of playing in Bristol and Dublin.

In 1899 Mary played against the men’s world champion, Emanuel Lasker, in a simultaneous display at the Imperial Hotel. Lasker was unable to finish all the games in the time available and Mary’s was one of those unfinished. Mrs Rowland described how Lasker had been winning but made a mistake. He grandly conceded defeat in this game when it was unfinished; he would be lost with best play. She continued to play for Bristol and for Gloucestershire. The following year, Mary was playing in Dublin “with great success.”

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Mary Rudge at the first international women's chess tournament in London, 1897. After eighteen wins and a single draw, she won the event together with prize money totalling £60 (picture: author's collection)
“Miss Mary Rudge is the daughter of the late Dr Rudge, and after his death she resided with her brother, who kept a school; but since his decease she is quite unprovided for, her sisters are also dead, and she is without any income of any kind. She lived as companion with various ladies, and was for some years resident with Mrs Rowland, both at Clonterford and Kingstown. Whilst at Clonterford, she played in the Clonterford team in the Armstrong Cup matches, and proved a tough opponent, drawing with J. Howard Parnell and winning many a fine game. She was also engaged at the DBC to teach and play in the afternoons. At the Ladies International Congress, London, she took first prize (£160), making the fine score of 19 in 20, the maximum (18 from 19, in fact). Miss Rudge held the Champion Cup of the Bristol Chess Club, prior to Messrs H. Cole and J.U. Beamish. Miss Rudge is now quite helpless from rheumatism and is seeking admission into a home or (if possible) the Dublin Hospital for Incurables. A fund is being collected for present expenses, pending her admission, and chessplayers are asked to help — either by influence or money. Donations may be sent to Mrs Rowland, 3 Lorenzo Terrace, Bray, Co. Wicklow, or to Mrs Talboys, 20 Southfield Park, Cotham, Bristol.”

The next few years must have been very difficult indeed. In 1918, Mary attempted to solve her financial problems when a cousin, James Barnett, died intestate. Mary claimed to be sole next of kin, but another Barrett claimed to be the grandson of the deceased’s uncle and hence sole heir. Mary’s claim appears to have failed.

Mary moved, at some point, to Truro and then to the British Home for Incurables, Streatham. She died in Guys Hospital, London, on 22 November 1919. The British Chess Magazine accorded her just three lines: “As we go to press we learn with great sorrow of the death, at Streatham last month, of Miss Mary Rudge, winner of the International Ladies’ Tournament in 1897.”

So how good a player was Mary Rudge? Although she was considered the best woman player in the world it is doubtful that she was all that strong. A reasonable indicator of her strength is that she played around boards 4 to 8 for both Bristol & Clifton and for Gloucestershire, and that she played in the second strongest section (Class III) of tournaments at a national level. So, relative to her male contemporaries, she was not as strong as a top female player of today, but this is not to belittle her achievements. She played chess at a time when women were not encouraged to play. In fact often positively discouraged. She also started at a late age for a chess player and had her greatest success at 55. In contrast, when the first official women’s world championship tournament was held, it was a 23 year old, Vera Menchik, who was victorious. By coincidence, the tournament was also in London, almost exactly thirty years after Mary’s triumph, and Vera won by a similar score: ten wins, one draw, no losses.

Mary deserves to be better recognised and remembered as a pioneer of women’s chess. A blue plaque in Bristol would be a good start, but we need to find a building to place it on. Her only definite address in Bristol, Lucombe House, no longer exists. Perhaps a good alternative would be the Imperial Hotel where she played on many occasions, and the venue for her near-win against Lasker. The Hotel is now named Canynge Hall and it is the home of the University of Bristol’s Department of Social Medicine.

Very few detailed records of Mary’s games seem to have survived and I have found just nine so far. They are the games against W. Berry (Birmingham, 1874), J. H. Blackburne (1883), Hanrit (1883), R. Fadden (bezo) (Bristol, 1885), Charles Drury (Dublin, 1889), W. Cook (Dublin, 1890), Louise Fagan (London, 1897), and Ernesto Lasker (1898). Doubtless more remain to be found in old newspapers and magazines and I would be happy to receive any that turn up.

Acknowledgments
Gerry Nichols provided a lot of assistance and information on the Rudges in Bristol. Several others have helped with information, including Harrie Grondijs, Christopher Ravilious, Mike Truran, and Edward Winter.
Every so often, a routine request for help from the media turns up something unexpected. UWE’s Regional History Centre was recently asked by Channel Five television for help with a forthcoming programme called Britain’s Finest Natural Wonders. In common with its forbears, Britain’s Finest Stately Homes and Britain’s Finest Ancient Monuments, the makers of this new addition to the heritage canon asked a panel of ‘experts’ to identify twelve contenders for the title. The list was subsequently whittled down to a ‘top ten’ by the votes of TV viewers and Radio Times readers, and the resulting programme will take us to each site in ascending order until, at the end, Britain’s Most Popular Natural Wonder is revealed. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the world famous limestone chasm of Cheddar Gorge is one of the places that made the top ten.

Cheddar is, of course, one of Britain’s biggest tourist attractions. More than half a million people visit the place every year, and four fifths of them pay good money to visit the gorge. In fact, its history as a tourist attraction is somewhat chequered. Although Henry of Huntingdon found his way to Cheddar cliffs as early as 1150 and declared them one of the four wonders of England, their attractions were slow to become apparent. In fact, their history as a tourist attraction is somewhat chequered.

Exciting though this may sound, a number of factors may be said to have influenced more polite visitors to keep away. To begin with, by Collinson’s time the Cheddar district was dreadfully poor. Although many gentlemen of sensibility had learned to look upon the ragged poor as an object of compassion, there were still many who found them too much to bear. The Cheddar village was isolated and remote, and the road to the town was narrow and unpaved. Indeed, travellers passed by the gorge in many places very narrow and scattered over with rude loose fragments of fallen rocks. The decline of the mining industry together with improvements in rural policing did much to spruce up the district’s image by the end of the nineteenth century, and the road to the Cheddar village was improved. However, the gorge had not always enjoyed such a positive image. In fact, its history as a tourist attraction is somewhat chequered.

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Learning to live with ‘natural wonders’: the forgotten history of Cheddar Gorge

Steve Poole

Until the present B3151 was cut through Cheddar village in 1827, it remained an isolated community. The new road directly connected Cheddar to Bristol for the first time, the economic benefits of which, its architects hoped, would be ‘the means of cultivating and cultivating the miners’. Not everyone saw the benefits however. One favoured diverting the road through the safer self-governing borough of Axbridge, for ‘upon production of the plan, a young man asked, who, in the name of all that is courageous, would venture upon a road cut through cheddar wood?’

A charabanc outing from Coleford about to set off for Cheddar, c.1920. One of the party remembers the impact as they drove through the Gorge. ‘Of course, in those days you’d never seen anything like it in your life. One old lady said, ‘stop it, stop it!' to the man driving and he said, ‘dare we learn to live with “natural wonders”?'

Popular conceptions like these will not have encouraged many tourists to make a close inspection of Cheddar cliffs. A rough road had been laid through the gorge itself some time previously, but in the mid nineteenth century it remained ‘addorned pass by carriage’. The newspaper press considered that the ‘loneliness, as well as the winding nature of the road, which prevents the view of objects approaching until they are very near, points out this spot as too favourable for the commission of crime’. Local banditti were imagined behind the rocks in every bend of the road, especially after a farmer named Baker was robbed and battered to death in the gorge in broad daylight as he made his way back from an upland flour mill in 1841.

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What all this helps to remind us of then, is that the attitude of the public to the ‘natural wonders’ of the British Isles has a less than straightforward history. The bank holiday crowds that make their way through Cheddar Gorge today to congregate amongst the ice-cream and tramkettles at the bottom of the gorge are a relatively modern phenomenon. Tourism, we might recall, has a fascinating history: something to think about perhaps next time you find yourself stuck in an Easter Monday traffic jam on the Mendip Hills.

Britain’s Finest Natural Wonders will be broadcast on Channel 5 at a later date.

A charabanc outing from Coleford about to set off for Cheddar, c.1920. One of the party remembers the impact as they drove through the Gorge. ‘Of course, in those days you’d never seen anything like it in your life. One old lady said, ‘stop it, stop it!’ to the man driving and he said, ‘dare we learn to live with “natural wonders”?’


1 John Collinson, The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset (1793), pp. 573-4.
3 The Times, 26 November 1841.
4 The Times, 6 November 1841.
5 The Times, 26 November 1841.
6 The Times, 14 July 1896, 26 December 1903, 26 December 1903, 6 February 1904, 23 July 1910.
Official and not Unofficial Stone Stories

Brian Edwards looks at recent books on Avebury and Stonehenge


Julian Richards is a highly respected archaeologist and widely appreciated presenter, and the majority that buy Stonehenge: a history in photographs will probably be very pleased with this well produced overview that provides them with a photographic spread covering the last 150 years. As a momento of a heritage visit it presents good value and on a broader basis many of the photographs will be of interest to those that have not seen them before, but in terms of being an official history what proves most interesting is what is not included.

Many of the photographs selected to represent this history are as expected: the earliest known, the first and others from the air, similarly turnstiles, the approach by road from the east in the 1930s, and Druids and festivals are featured in an accessible official history of the site for the first time. A photograph of the protest at the fencing of the monument in 1931 is also included, and there is an interesting sequence starting with an enigmatic shot of women sheltering under Stone 60 in 1938. The same stone is then shown a year later being shuttered in order to fill that particular hideaway with concrete, then the opposite page displays a third shot in the sequence of the resulting filled-in stone. Of the unexpected, seven photographs featuring graffiti, all but one of which were large and spread over five pages, more than remade and went beyond making a point. The book includes one particularly amusing photograph, taken by Les Wilson of Lelaba Oi Dinyis Laetoli of Tanzania amongst the stones at the winter solstice, but outstanding in quite another sense is an apotheosised mug-shot of Professor Richard Atkinson ‘in pensive mood’. Whilst Atkinson is of course important to the history of Stonehenge he is identified in a number of other photographs, and given the limitation on the total number of images in the book there are other inclusions that would have been preferable. What should have filled this page is immediately to hand, as the portrait overwhelms a photograph of the restoration in 1964.

This photographic history was an ideal opportunity for English Heritage to make the restoration story readily accessible and undated, but sadly whilst it does indeed feature, the extent and level of interference have not been made obvious. A sequence similar to those featuring Stone 60, could easily have been included. An example would be a staged sequence of the restoration of 1901, from which the height and protruding tonar of the former leaning stone came to dominate the site. Not only is this interesting from the viewpoint of public history, it is important to make such contrasts plain because Stonehenge’s time elapsing state and iconographic character was utterly transformed by the restorations, and unless made evident the public remain misled as to the historic state of the monument. In 1993, a local vicar stated that the future would remain confused about the past unless the restorations were made plain on an information plaque. A century on, and given the incredible range of photographs available to official sources, it is disappointing that more wasn’t made of this opportunity.

Prior to restoration Stonehenge had a wild roughness that visitors could feel: it was evident to even the casual Stonehenge visitor through the unevenness of the stone setting, the bumpiness of the soil, and the jaggedness around the footings. The site is now kept in trim and having robbed Stonehenge of its natural time honoured objectivity, the twentieth-century transformed it into a modern manufactured and manicured exhibition. The English Heritage photographic history does detract from this state, and this is perhaps the crux between official and unofficial histories. The former attempts to smooth and tuck away rough edges, whereas unofficial history exists because of them.

If the official book is an enthusiast’s account by a professional, then this next book could be considered a professional account by an enthusiast. Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion is a vibrant account propelled by a lively but easy read, and the subject tackled by Andy Worthington is one on which histories emanating from the site have remained silent.

Reading this book after focusing on the medium of photography, it was surprising how challenging this account is to the official history just through what is presented in the visual. Worthington’s written account could stand alone and offer very much more than its supporting illustrations, but that these books arise from opposing views is no more obvious than in the photographs. A comparison on this basis is further encouraged, as surprisingly the number of images included in support of the text of Celebration and Subversion are in excess of that included in the photographic history.

Evidently one of the differences behind the two sets of images, beyond the standpoint of each author and respective publishers, extends from the official professional and unofficial bystander nature of the photographer. Beyond the obvious contrast regarding confrontation, in Worthington’s book there are clothes-obsessed people dancing, bathing, and performing choruses seemingly unaware of the camera or the people around them. This draws attention to the stance of the photographs in the official history that, aside the smily women sheltering under stone 60, by comparison appear somewhat staged and posed. Worthington’s book includes many happy smiling people and spontaneous laughter, where in all the photographs included of festival gatherers in the official history it appears no one is smiling, and other than Morris dancers, two workers saying ‘cheese’, VIPs on walkabout and the Stone 60 women, it was only if there were few smiles about.

The history of celebration and subversion may not appeal to some sections of society, to whom I would say the story appears not at all dislocated when viewed from outside the barbed wire. This account also makes plain that there are two ingredients you will be unlikely to find in any official guide - a questioning attitude and an outside view of officialdom. To criticise this book would be like (ohn Mills complaining about the lager in J Lee Thompson’s Ice Cold in Alex (1958). A champagne Celebration it isn’t, but it is just what was required and proved memorably satisfying.


Gillings and Pollard, are two of the directors of the Negotiating Avebury Project who have done much to keep the public informed of their work from guided tours of the dips through to comprehensive website pages that include interim reports. (http://www.arch.oxon.ac.uk/Research/avebu ry), they also give talks in village and town halls, and publish accessible as well as learned texts. Their dedication to public history is reflected in Avebury, one of the particular plus points of which is the number of pages reflecting the history of the site matching the number dedicated to prehistory. This book incorporates evidence from recent research, but more importantly discusses traditional interpretations and resultant understandings in relation to the site. This book was written to be read by anyone, and it provides as good a start to the story of this site as it does an extension.


Amongst so many fascinating and useful papers in this book for broader interest, worth reading are ‘East of Avebury: ancient fields in a local context’ by Peter Fowler, and ‘Monuments that made the World: performing the henge’ by Aaron Field. Bruce Eagles and David Field also supply much insight in ‘William Cunnington and the Long Barrows of the River Wylye’. Anyone interested in ‘Changing Avebury’, as appeared in 3rd Stone 47 (2003) and reprinted in the previous edition of Regional Historian 12 (Autumn 2004), will be interested in a very good paper in this book.

Andy Worthington, Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion: An Alternative History, (June 2004), paperback 290pp £14.95. ISBN 1 872883 76 1

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importance and there are strong indications, too, of a powerful anti-government faction operating in the town. This is not difficult to explain. Both the... failures) were hardly likely to inspire loyalty to Lancaster; Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, a successful naval commander and increasingly prominent Yorkist, had lands in the vicinity; and there seems to have been no love lost between Bristol and Henry VI’s formidable queen, Margaret of Anjou.

Soon after seizing the throne in 1461, the new Yorkist king Edward IV visited Bristol, perhaps out of real gratitude for the town’s role in his success. Yet, within a decade, a significant proportion of its ruling elite had become implicated in mounting Lancastrian resistance and, apparently, accepted Henry VI’s... was, as one writer noted in 1833, ‘a vast and dirty city’, its poor huddled into filthy howels without access to clean water. The city’s two rivers, the Frome and the Avon, together with the Cut, were little better than open sewers. The first Bristol case was reported in July 1832 and the epidemic lasted until November. This was not to be the end, and cholera returned to Bristol’s streets intermittently, but as the century progressed lessears were learnt, thanks in part to the work of a Bristol doctor, William Budd, who argued the case nationally for clean water supplies and effective sewerage, and the severity of the attacks diminished. While there is no doubt that the 1860s’ public health reforms had made it a model for action in other cities, and the cholera outbreaks of that decade made relatively little impact.
deftuation to bravery and self-sacrifice. An interesting point is made that Mass Observation's special investigation team found that Bristol was suffering from poor morale and unimaginative leadership and that Bristolians were coping less well than other parts of the country. No satisfactory explanation for this was given.

The strength of the book lies in the wealth of detail about these different ways in which men and women experienced the Blitz and reacted to it, and in particular the psychological and social consequences of the bombing. I was less convinced by the use of the term siege and the comparisons made with Leningrad, since Bristolians were not cut off from food supplies or access to the outside world. It would have also been useful to have had further comparisons with other British cities and an analysis of how best to use different types of personal testimony. Nonetheless, this is an accessible book with plenty of interest for the general reader and for students. It provides a starting point for anyone interested in the way in which a local study can enhance our understanding of the relationship between war and social change and in particular the myths that have developed around the spirit of the Blitz.

June Hannam

Barb Drummond

Peter Fleming

Sue Hardiman’s pamphlet began life as a dissertation written as part of her MA degree at the University of the West of England. Dissertations, unfairly or not, may have the reputation of being dull and stodgy - 'solid' is the euphemistic epithet often ascribed to them - but this is certainly not the case with this work. After explaining the background, in terms of the nature of the disease, its origins and contemporary understanding, the author presents a vivid and at times shocking picture of the Bristol epidemic. There are several striking vignettes, such as the mob attacking the funeral procession of a cholera victim, believing that he was about to be buried alive (cholera, we are told, can induce a state hard to distinguish from death, from which some may have awoken in their graves). Against the general picture, there are grimly fascinating detailed accounts of cholera 'hot spots', such as St Peter's Hospital, the gaol, and St James Barton, whose annual fair was cancelled amid debate that reached as far as the Prime Minister. Good use is made of local newspapers of the period, together with a range of other documents. The Bristol experience is presented in the contexts of local initiatives - such as the establishment of Arnos Vale cemetery and the local board of health - as well as national and international developments. While it is a pity that a clearer indication of the scale of the 1832 mortality could not have been given, this is still a compelling and very useful account of this grim episode in Bristol's nineteenth-century history. It is also a work that inevitably suggests parallels with our present centenary of AIDS and when reading of the hysteria, ignorance and fatalism (middle-class altruists distributing prayer tracts rather than clean water or food to the afflicted poor) that attended the epidemic of 1832-3 it is impossible not to reflect upon modern attitudes towards HIV/AIDS.

(Bristol HA pamphlets can be purchased from Peter Harris, 74 Bell Barn Rd, Bristol BS8 8DG; please add 15p postage for one pamphlet and 15p for each additional one.)

Barb Drummond, The New Eden: An Introduction to Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol (2005), available from the author, at PO Box 2460 Bristol BS3 9WP. £3 + P&P

Arnos Vale owes its origins in part to the pressing necessities of nineteenth-century population growth and urbanisation; in short, the parish churchyards were full, and the death toll resulting from epidemics, such as the cholera of 1832-3 (see the review of Sue Hardiman's pamphlet in this issue) pushed the situation to crisis point. Arnos Vale was opened in 1839. However, it was also the product of changing fashion. It can be seen as an Anglican version of the pioneer cemetery of Pere Lachaise in Paris, itself modelled on the English landscape garden, and which in 1831 inspired the comment, 'For the home of death has become the new Eden'. As Barb Drummond points out, high burial fees (as instigated by the Anglican Bishop Monk) meant that it was only from the 1860s, when the bulk of the city's other burial sites were closed, that Arnos Vale began to develop into a necropolis on the scale of its French prototype, or, indeed, of Highgate. Increasing pressure on space inevitably changed its character, and the original conception, of tombs standing in splendid isolation beside sinuous paths winding between judiciously planted oaks and plane, was replaced by regimented graves and 'municipal planting'. As if in reaction to this, grave plots became increasingly 'suburban' in character, with tight little fences and trim, self-contained gardens. The cemetery today is a subject of much controversy, and, prone to theft and vandalism of various kinds, it might be described as exhibiting fading glory. Even so, it is still a peaceful enclave, and a haven for wildlife. Following its take over by Bristol City Council in 2003 a charitable trust was established to maintain and repair it, and, when the board of the profits from the sale of this pamphlet go towards this worthy cause.

Barb Drummond's introduction will prove invaluable to those whom I have earlier described as exhibiting fading glory. Even so, it is still a peaceful enclave, and a haven for wildlife. Following its take over by Bristol City Council in 2003 a charitable trust was established to maintain and repair it, and, when the board of the profits from the sale of this pamphlet go towards this worthy cause.

Peter Fleming

Helen Reid, Bristol Under Siege: Surviving the Wartime Blitz. (Bristol: Redcliffe Press 2005) ISBN 1 904537 25 1 £8.95

From June 1940 until April 1941 Bristol suffered from saturation bombing at regular intervals and was the fourth most bombed city in Britain. Bristol's Blitz is ... the conventional wisdom that everyone pulled together during the Blitz and demonstrate that reactions varied from fear and

John Lyes, Bristol, 1934-1939 (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association Pamphlet, 2004) ISSN 1362 7759 £3.00

This is the fifth in John Lyes' series of pamphlets chronicling events in Bristol from 1901 to 1939, inspired by the Victorian John Latimer's Annals, which charted events in the city. There is no interpretation or discussion, just 'facts', unsorted, presented in the order in which they occurred. Now, there

June Hannam

Peter Fleming
Postbag

English broadcloth

Dear Editor,

I read the letter printed in RH 11 about English Broadcloth with interest, having just moved to Trowbridge, a former cloth town in Wiltshire. I thought other readers might like to know that Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office contains many records of the cloth industry, including pattern books of samples. Trowbridge Museum has a working loom which reproduces the cloth and has just produced a video about it.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Virginia Bainbridge
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