

The Regional Historian

The Newsletter of the Regional History Centre, at the UWE, Bristol



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

<http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/regionalhistory>

*The first international women's chess tournament, held in London in 1897.
Bristol's Mary Rudge won the event.*

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Editorial and News Round-up

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 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 magnate, 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 nineteenth century successors who clashed tragically with Portuguese sailors at a Marsh Street inn in 1810. Elsewhere we find an eighteenth century JP dispensing summary justice and exercising the finer arts of social arbitration as he mediates in cases of wood-stealing in rural Wiltshire, while in Bath we find a Town Clerk in hot water with the townsfolk over his imperious 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 c1000 – 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.

Partnership with the VCH in Wiltshire

In addition to the Immigrants and Minorities project, UWE has also been making great progress with its association with the VCH in Wiltshire. County editor *Virginia Bainbridge* explains: The successful conclusion of negotiations to incorporate the Victoria County History of Wiltshire into UWE HLSS represents a major achievement for the future of public history. This important local history research project came to the attention of Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, through their RHC activities. The VCH team consists of Douglas Crowley, County Editor, and Virginia Bainbridge, Assistant Editor, whose appointment was made possible through UWE funding. The VCH was started in 1899 and dedicated to Queen Victoria. It aims to provide a history of each parish and town in England from original sources. So far about half the country has been covered. Groups of parish histories are published together in volumes and are now also available at www.Englandpast.net and www.british-history.ac.uk. The VCH is an invaluable resource for local and family historians and for academic researchers.

Douglas and Virginia are currently completing the last few histories for volume XVIII in the Wiltshire series, covering Cricklade and surrounding parishes. Virginia and Peter Fleming have also applied for AHRB funding for a three-year project on the history of Chippenham 1800 – 2000. This will involve UWE academics and local history groups and will be modelled on a similar VCH Wiltshire project on the village of Codford. Part of this research, 'Travelling through Codford' is available at www.historyfootsteps.net together with UWE's 'Bristol Slavery Trail'. VCH Wiltshire has its own website at www.wiltshirepast.net.

Incorporation into UWE has been a major boost to VCH Wiltshire, enabling the completion of volume XVIII and the start of volume XIX, to be centred on Longleat. With further funding for the last few volumes, it is now a real possibility that the County series will be completed.

News from the RHC on-line team

Women and Philanthropy in Bristol, 1870 - 1920

We are pleased to announce that we will be making the results of this long-running RHC project available to a wider audience by the end of the summer. There will be two main forms of data attached to the Regional History Centre Website at <http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/Regionhistory/index.htm>. The first will be in the shape of interactive web pages giving biographical information and images of some of the key women in Bristol philanthropic networks.

The second will be a searchable database containing information on a much larger number of women philanthropists in Bristol. Users will be able to search the database under categories such as career, religion, education, family, politics,

interests and organisational affiliations. We hope these resources will be a useful addition to the RHC site and that local historians may be able to supply us with additional information in order to expand this resource still further. If you can help please contact June.Hannam@uwe.ac.uk or Moira.Martin@uwe.ac.uk

As well as storing downloadable versions of past issues of the *RH*, the Centre's webpages also host a diary page for forthcoming talks, workshops, conferences and other activities run by record offices and history societies around the region. If you'd like us to post news of any events you are organising on these pages, please e-mail us and we'll be glad to include them.

Editorial and News Round-up

Seminar series 2004-5

The Regional History Centre launched a new fortnightly research seminar series in October 2005, with papers covering every period in the region's history and confirming the Centre's growing interest in all the counties of the South West. Speakers were Moira Martin (women's philanthropic networks in Bristol), Peter Fleming (civic historiographies in Bristol and Coventry), Carl Griffin (popular protest and the politics of timber in Wiltshire and Dorset), Michael Hicks (medieval landholdings in Southern England), Steve Poole (disorderly houses in London and the South West), Richard Williams (street violence in 18th century Exeter), Joanne Parker (the Victorians and King Alfred in Somerset), and George Scott (civil defence planning at Bath in 1964). If you'd like to be kept informed about next year's seminar programme, why not join our growing e-mail contact list? Send a message to steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk, and we'll add you to it.

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/Regionhistory/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.

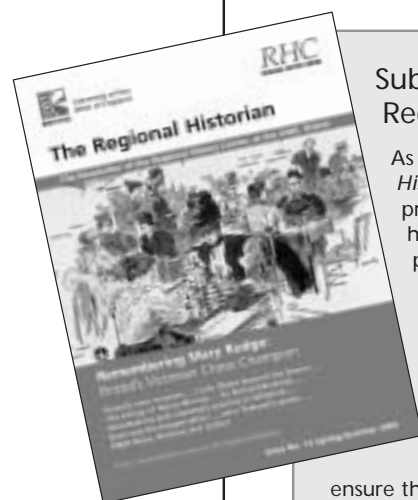
Subscriptions to the Regional Historian

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.



Regional historians on tour!



Photo: Joachim Eibach

Three members of UWE's Regional History Centre (left to right: Dr Raingard Esser, 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 Eibach on urban stability and civic liberties in the early modern city. Using Bristol as a focus, Steve's paper considered the impact of sodomy 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 Goerlitz, 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*.

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 you can study either full time (one year) or part time (two years). Two compulsory modules in techniques and approaches for writing and researching history are complemented each year by a variable range of option modules, and you will also write an 18,000 word dissertation on a topic of your choice. Many of our MA students choose a regional subject for their dissertation and make full use of the excellent archive materials kept in the libraries and record offices of the south western counties. We are recruiting now for 2005-6. If you would like more information about studying for a History MA at UWE, please drop a line to raingard.esser@uwe.ac.uk

An appeal for help

The Dyrham Park Wartime Residential Nursery, 1939 - 1945 (formerly the Canonbuty Nursery)

Can anyone help this RH reader?

I am undertaking research on behalf of the National Trust into the Dyrham 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.

The Museum of Bristol

Madge Dresser is principal lecturer in History at UWE and author of Slavery Obscured (2001). 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 Fleming. 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.

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 Ernest 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 £853,000 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 in Bristol last April 26th. There, Clare McGinn, (Editor, Radio and Music-Factual, Bristol) gave a fascinating presentation on History and the public. Based on a recent BBC survey that focused (for what appears to have been the first time) on potential audiences for BBC history programmes, it became clear that there did exist a core audience already avid for history. This core of mainly but not exclusively, older people were themselves divisible into two subgroups: the erudite elite of highly-educated and proactive 'truth seekers' and the more populist 'enthusiasts'

i.e. the sealed knot participants, the family historians, the industrial archaeology buffs, the stately homes visitors etc who often were very knowledgeable indeed about their own particular historical interest.

Over and above this loyal core (estimated to be less than 8 million of the UK population) we were told, there existed a second group of some 24 million souls who might be persuaded to take an interest in history programmes. These 'Persuadables' were a varied lot-characterised in the survey as 'generalists', 'drama queens' and 'jugglers'. The 'generalists' were the largest sub-group; a largely male cohort who wanted factually-based *entertainment* which related to the world around them. The 'drama queens' were a mainly female audience who would take an interest in history so long as it was packaged in a great story with characters for whom they could root. This was the lot who would listen to a historical drama or docu-drama but who, unlike the 'generalists' were less interested in factually based programmes. The 'jugglers' comprised a third sub-group, more evenly distributed between both sexes whose 'members' liked news-style or dramatic presentations of history, particularly those that helped them fill in (socially embarrassing) gaps in their historical knowledge in a painless way.

'One of the main challenges for this project is to inspire rather than bore its public'.

Now, the rest of the UK population was categorised as harder to enthuse about history. Younger and largely less well-educated than the 'Core group' or the 'Persuadables', this 'hard to reach' audience saw the past as largely boring and irrelevant. This group might be tempted by highly entertaining, and undemanding formats which appeared at first sight at least to be present-oriented. 'History by stealth' it was ventured, was perhaps the only way to get this group to engage at all with anything vaguely historical.

The discussion that ensued after the presentation was both heart-felt and reflective. There was a consensus that one could not cater for these different groups

with the same programming strategy. 'Dumbing down' could dampen the enthusiasm and devalue the expertise of both core audiences and programme providers; yet catering exclusively to the core group would not only exclude the bulk of the population but also impede the search for more creative and imaginative ways of approaching a subject. The only answer seemed to be to offer a range of programmes variously targeted at each of the respective constituencies.

'generalists, drama-queens and jugglers'.

What might those leading the Museum of Bristol learn from all this? Certainly one main insight is that the bid for social inclusivity must not replace intellectual substance. Both goals must somehow be accommodated. *Historians* as well as curators must combine their energies to provide the latest most up to date insights into the city's history. The new Museum must exploit its contacts with universities as well as with the wider community when determining the content of its exhibitions and when framing its narratives of the city's past. There are scholars around the world researching into Bristol's history and we need to enlist them into the service of this exciting project.

If those less interested in History might be briefly entranced by a short video dramatisation of say, an eighteenth century sailor recounting a voyage, the 'truth seeker' and 'the generalist' both might relish the fact that this video was based on an *actual* account which was available in a nearby case with the former reading with sustained interest a label explaining the provenance of the log book and related documents. The 'enthusiast' might find the artifacts of naval life the most gripping complement to the video whereas the 'drama queen' might be sufficiently engaged by the story to pursue the other stories of sea captains, women pirates and shipbuilders presented in the same installation.

If a section on 'Bristol and the Blitz' might best woo young audiences with evocative music sound effects and interactive quizzes, the 'Core audiences' and some of the

'Persuadables' might well find the accounts of black market activity and racial tension during the war stimulating and thought provoking. And of course, these groupings are mere conceptual constructs, not hermetically sealed realities. An object or document might capture the imagination of a 'hard to reach'; and a multi-media display delight a 'truth seeker'. At the 1999 Slavery Exhibition in Bristol, a detailed eighteenth-century map of Africa was studied by Afro-Caribbean school children and academic historians with apparently equal interest. But no matter how superficial the take of a particular member of the public, the richness of the exhibition depends on the depth and scope of the research that underpins it.

So, social inclusivity AND careful historical scholarship; community consultation AND cutting-edge research; visual flair AND intellectual stimulation, celebration AND provocation.

The Museum of Bristol must pursue inclusivity with style and verve, but it must also ensure substance. It must do so by building in formal mechanisms for academics to interact with artists, curators and planners. The public deserves no less.

Little Wales Beyond the Severn?

Dr Peter Fleming is Principal Lecturer and Associate Head of the School of History at the University of the West of England. He is a past co-director of the Regional History Centre.

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, Amerigo 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 the champions of Richard Amerik, the Bristol customs official through whose hands John Cabot received his pension from Henry VII after returning from the 1497 voyage to Newfoundland.¹ Had contemporaries opted for 'Vespuccia', this debate would never have got off the ground, and naming the continent 'the Land of the Wasps' would doubtless have been thought positively providential by some White Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the North. But this was not to be. The form of his name that most conveniently fits the 'American Godfather' theory conceals a real point of interest regarding the Bristol customs official, for he started out being called Richard ap Meryk, and if not born in Wales, was most certainly of Welsh descent. So, if his proponents are correct (which I doubt: naming your new-found continent after the customer who handed over your pension is rather like naming your first-born after the registrar of births), America was named after a Welshman. Richard ap Meryk may have been related to either or both Richard Ameryk, importing Spanish iron through Bristol in 1437, or Richard ap Meryk, merchant and mercer of Taunton, pardoned in 1472.

He was established as a freeman of Bristol, and an associate of the powerful Canynges family, by 1478. In his property deals he was accompanied by Henry and Thomas a Meryk. In 1486, the year after Henry Tudor's accession, he became a Bristol collector of customs, a post he held until 1498, not without controversy: he seems to have been involved in faction fighting within the town, and made frequent appearances before the Exchequer court, accused of fraud and corruption, and was twice pardoned (in 1495 and 1499) for these alleged malpractices. The culmination of his career came in 1503, with

his appointment as a sheriff of Bristol. He died in office the following year. His daughter, Joan, married the Bristol serjeant-at-law John Brook (d1522), and their magnificent brass is in St Mary Redcliffe.² As we have seen, Richard was not the only ap Meryk in early Tudor Bristol, and there was also a Robert a Meryk, a Philip ap Meryk, weaver, and a Treheyron a Meryk, while a John ap Meryk was stabbed to death in 1490.³

'The presence of a Welshman on the throne of England would not have harmed the prospects of Welshmen seeking fortune and office in Bristol'.

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 evidence of family names. Of course, using personal names as evidence of ethnicity is fraught with difficulty: for one thing, an English citizen named 'Fleming' may have no greater link with Flanders than a liking for Stella Artois. However, one need only look to south Pembrokeshire, 'Little England beyond Wales', to see how long lasting can be the cultural impact of population movements in the distant past. Names can also change, mutating into forms more acceptable - perhaps more pronounceable - to the host community: hence, Richard described himself in his pardon of 1495 as Richard Meryk of Bristol, merchant, alias a Meryk, alias ap Meryk, and in his 1499 pardon as Richard Amerik.⁴

Richard was not the most prominent Welshman in early Tudor Bristol. That distinction must go to Henry Vaughn, described by Professor Ralph Griffiths as the town's 'most successful and respected merchant'. Henry Vaughn was bailiff in 1469/70, sheriff in 1479/80, mayor in 1483/4, 1485/6, and 1493/4, constable of the Bristol staple in 1491, and MP in 1487 and 1497.⁵ The Vaughns had links with Aberystwyth, St David's and Cardiff, but a branch of the family had been established in Bristol since at least 1405, interestingly, at the height of Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion. Other members of

the clan to hold high office in Bristol were the two John Vaughns, bailiffs in 1483/4 and 1498/9, who may have been Henry's son and grandson. Thomas Vaughn, bailiff in 1496/7, may have been Henry's brother, or the son of another John Vaughn who died in 1491/2, while Richard, bailiff in 1493/4, and William Vaughn, bailiff in 1515/6, may have been brothers.⁶ According to local chronicles, in 1527 Richard Vaughn was murdered by William Herbert as he was returning from the duck hunting and wrestling bouts staged in the Marsh for the mayor's entertainment.

Detail from the tomb of Thomas White, a fifteenth century Welsh merchant (d. 1482),



in St Mary's Church, Tenby.

Herbert escaped. His attack may have been in revenge for the execution of one of his ancestors in Bristol after the Wars of the Roses battle of Edgecote in 1469, when

Henry Vaughn was bailiff.⁷ Henry Vaughn doubtless used his position to open doors for his prolific family, but he may have done the same for other Welshmen: from the 1480s until the 1530s Greffiith, Jony, ap Howell, Morgan, ap Rhys, Walshe and Williams make frequent appearances among Bristol's bailiffs, sheriffs and mayors. The presence of a Welshman on the throne of England would not have harmed the prospects of Welshmen seeking fortune and office in Bristol, and at the start of his reign at least, Henry Tudor made much of his Welsh lineage, but the rise of Henry Vaughn predates Bosworth: the Welsh were clearly not reliant on royal patronage.

What really seems to have alarmed the Crown was the prospect, not of ethnic clashes, but of seditious collaboration'.

As the murders of Richard Vaughn and John ap Meryk suggest, 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 Yeuan 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.⁸ However, given the levels of violence and lawlessness recorded in later medieval judicial proceedings, these incidents do not necessarily demonstrate any particular underlying 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 1400, made a great impact on Bristol's commercial and political life. The town was a major base for military operations against rebel forces, its gaol housed rebel prisoners, and it had to cope with deserters from the English armies and also, probably, with loyalist Welsh refugees.⁹ From the outset of rebellion the Crown was well aware of Bristol's strategic importance. The town had the doubtful privilege of receiving a quarter of one of the

Little Wales Beyond the Severn? continued

first of Glyndŵr's followers to be executed, Gronw ap Tudur: on 26 September 1400 the sheriff was ordered to display the quarter on the town gates facing Wales.¹⁰ Henry IV 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.¹¹ Nevertheless, Gronw 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 not of ethnic clashes in Bristol, but of seditious collaboration between English and Welsh. In August 1402 a royal commission of enquiry into treasons within the town was given a remit that specified both groups as potential traitors.¹² Relations between Welsh and English seem to have returned to normal soon after the rebellion passed its zenith in 1408. In 1411/12 a Welshman held high civic office in Bristol, possibly for the first time, that is if we are to assume that the name of one of the bailiffs for that year (and sheriff in 1419/20), David Ruddok, 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 the mid-fifteenth century. From the 1430s to the 1450s, as the English were facing serious problems maintaining their lordship of Ireland, Bristol Irish 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.¹³ 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, aside, perhaps, from accent, from their Bristol-born neighbours. On the other hand, the likes of the ap Meryks, ap Howells, ap Rhydderchs, ap Iorwerths, and ap Rhydes very probably had 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 elided into England in English minds.

1. I. Wilson, *The Columbus Myth* (Simon & Schuster, London, 1991), pp. 151-70.
2. *Calendar of Patent Rolls (CPR), 1485-1494*, p. 33; *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1494-1509*, nos. 121-3, 195-7; National Archives (NA), E122/176/10, 20/10-11, E159/270, 271 passim, C1/231/24, 64/181, Bristol Record Office (BRO), AC/D1/76, 86-7, 90a-b, 93a-b, 95, 101a, 110.
3. NA CP40/924, 57, KB9/391, 96-7, C1/49/44, STAC 2/1.
4. *CPR, 1494-1509*, pp. 43, 171.
5. Details of civic office are taken from J. Latimer, 'The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar: its list of civic officers collated with contemporary legal MSS', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 26, pp. 130-7; *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, ed. L. T. Smith, Camden Society (1872), BRO 04720/1 (Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar).
6. NA PROB 11/9/9, 11/38, 13/24, 22/22; C1/126/50, 406/6, 452/29, 33, 530/12-14, 586/50, 587/6, 7a-b; C67/48, 23.
7. See P. Fleming, 'Murder, alchemy and the Wars of the Roses', in the last issue of *The Regional Historian* and idem, *Bristol During the Wars of the Roses* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 2005), pp. 15-7.
8. P. Fleming, 'Sanctuary and authority in Pre-Reformation Bristol', in *Historic Churches and Church Life in Bristol*, ed. J.H. Bettey (Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 2001), pp. 74-5.
9. *CPR, 1401-5*, pp. 292, 434.
10. *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 359.
11. *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 555.
12. *CPR, 1401-5*, p. 135.
13. P. Fleming, 'Telling tales of oligarchy in the late medieval town', in *Revolution and Consumption in Late Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Boydell, Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 182-4.

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

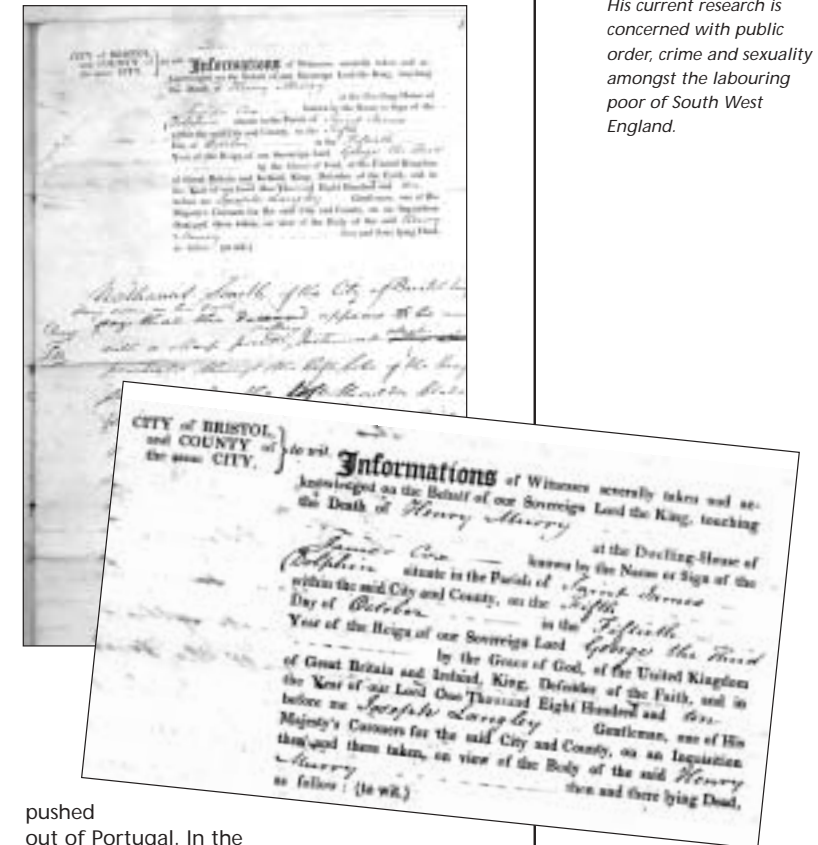
If the maintenance of order on the streets of early nineteenth century Bristol was never a simple matter, the constantly shifting presence of large visiting communities of seafaring Europeans cannot have made it any easier. With inns, lodging houses, streets and quays frequently awash with colourfully vibrant but uncustomary 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 coroners 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 punctured a lung, pierced his heart, 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.¹

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. This was particularly true of the cramped streets and alleys closest to the quay, and Marsh Street, at the heart of Bristol's Irish migrant enclave, was no exception. 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.

At the time of Murray's death in 1810, Britain was deeply embroiled in the war against Napoleon, and Wellington's forces were ejecting the French from the Iberian peninsula. By 1809, Napoleon had been



pushed out of Portugal. In the language of government and loyalist propaganda, the 'liberated' Portuguese were frequently represented as heroic fighters against French oppression, and Bristolian merchants already enjoyed strong trading ties with Lisbon and Opporto. Consequently, 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 Farley's Bristol 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 afford to Englishmen the best opportunity of connecting all that is amiable and all that is great', it declared, and was quick to publicise the lowly background of contributors like Mary Walker, a patriotic seller of oranges outside the Exchange, who reportedly donated 5 hard-earned shillings to the cause.² It was one of these victims of Napoleonic oppression, a 23-year old seaman named Johan Desanto, that killed Henry Murray.

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A page from the Coroners' inquest into the death of Henry Murray (reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Record Office).



Arriving in Bristol on a brig from Whitehaven, 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 Iberian public image cannot have been much enhanced for instance, by the popular characterisation of two Englishmen, pelted in the pillory for attempted sodomy at Bristol six months earlier, as 'signor and signora'.³ 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 alone on 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'.⁴ 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 to use the public bar instead, Mrs Watkins readily told Murray about them and served him with drink.⁵

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 smoking 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).⁶ According to one of Murray's

friends, the newcomers responded by 'strutting about the room, shoving themselves and others about from side to side'. This was a common enough complaint about Portuguese sailors who were frequently represented as men who 'strutted' and 'shoved' Englishmen in the street.⁷ According to two witnesses on this occasion however, some had painted their faces white, and others 'had blacked their upper lips to disguise themselves'.⁸ 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 so 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 Desanto and thumped him several times. According to a black seaman standing close by, Desanto first tried to save himself by shouting 'that he was not a Spaniard', but it carried little favour with Murray.¹⁰ It was then that Desanto produced a knife and stabbed his assailant to death.

Brandishing the weapon again as the crowd fell back, Desanto 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 turnkey. Asked what he was doing walking the streets with such a dagger in his possession, he answered simply 'that it was his Country fashion'.¹¹

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



A Marsh Street inn c.1820. Lying parallel to the quay and surrounded by warehousing, inns and cheap lodgings, the street had become closely associated with the city's Irish enclave by the time of Murray's death. (reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Public Library).

against Desanto.¹² The suspect was committed to Newgate gaol and tried the following Spring when, surprisingly perhaps, he was cleared of Murray's murder. For this, he had to thank the attorney general and city Recorder, Sir Vicary Gibbs. The Recorder's unpopularity amongst Bristol's labouring poor had been heightened in 1810 not only by the leading part he played in government efforts to silence and imprison the radical MP, sir Francis Burdett, but by his vice presidency of the city's oppressive Society for the Prevention of Vice. As a man who had been attacked and insulted by a Bristol crowd at the opening of the previous year's assize, Gibbs was in no mood now for the protestations of Murray's disreputable comrades. He consequently spent much of the trial barracking witnesses and accused the *Hope & Anchor's* landlady of embellishing her evidence in a vain attempt to make her disorderly establishment appear respectable.

More pertinently however, as Gibbs was undoubtedly aware, not a single Portuguese

witness had been examined by the coroner in October when the case against Desanto was constructed. Nor was it possible now because they had all long since gone back to sea. It was only at his trial therefore that Desanto was able to establish for the first time that he had not actually been at the inn prior to the stabbing. He had spent the evening elsewhere with the family of an Irish sailor named Malone, and simply had the misfortune to be walking back with them past the *Hope & Anchor* to his own lodgings when Murray emerged onto the pavement looking for a fight. Gibbs therefore instructed the jury that since no malice or motive can have moved Desanto to attack a man he had clearly never previously met, a charge of murder could not stand. Convicted instead of manslaughter in his own self-defence, Desanto was returned to Newgate for six months only and then released.¹³

'Do not heave stones at me - give me English play!'

As Bob Shoemaker has argued, although street culture was anything but polite, it had become unusual by the end of the eighteenth century for Englishmen to carry weapons. The most unacceptable levels of street violence had therefore become popularly associated with 'foreigners and social outcasts'¹⁴. Certainly, the Portuguese were strongly associated with knife-carrying; indeed their reputation preceded them. In fact, a strikingly similar case to Desanto's had come before the London courts a few weeks before the Marsh Street affray, when a sailor named Jones lost his life during a brawl with Portuguese seamen at Wapping. When three Portuguese mariners threw rocks at him and Jones retorted, 'do not heave stones at me; give me English play', he was asking them to fight 'fairly' and without weapons. Within minutes however, Jones had been stabbed in the belly, causing the deep wound from which he later died. Like Desanto, the defendant was convicted of manslaughter and gaoled for a year. Following a number of other cases in the capital during these years, the reputation of Portuguese seamen for knife-work became so firmly established that in 1814 an Englishman arrested for petty theft by two London watchmen 'swore if he got clear he would act Portuguese fashion with us'.¹⁵



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 Opporto. 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.

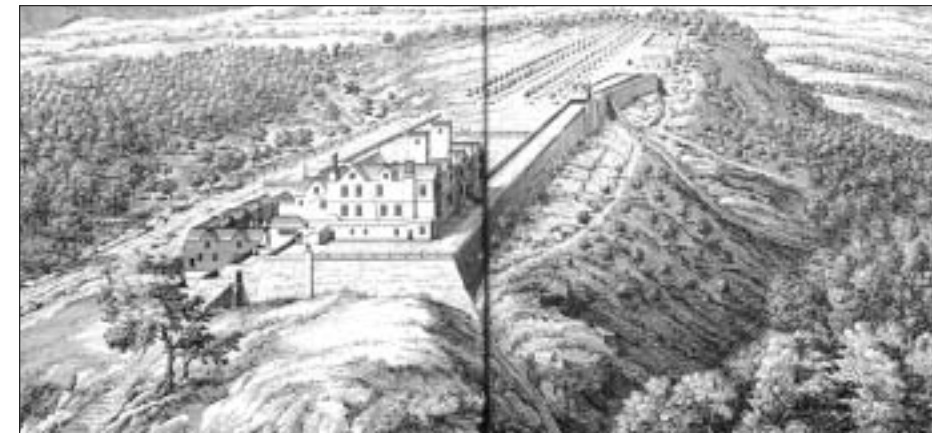
- ¹ Bristol Record Office (BRO), Coroners inquest into the death of Henry Murray, *Quarter Sessions Papers, QJS/P/271*, information of Nathaniel Smith, surgeon, 5 October 1810.
- ² Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal* (FFBJ) 27 April 1811, 25 May 1811
- ³ *FFBJ*, 5 May 1810.
- ⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26 April 2005), September 1810, trial of Emanuel Joseph, t18100919-32
- ⁵ *FFBJ*, 20 April 1811; BRO Coroners inquest, informations of Elizabeth Watkins and John Johnson.
- ⁶ BRO Coroners' inquest, information of John Johnson. The slang use of the term 'Greeks' in this context may be found in M. Harris (ed.), *The 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London, 1994 edition)
- ⁷ Such language is a feature, for example, in evidence offered in a number of cases heard at the Old Bailey in 1810-11. See footnote xv below for full references.
- ⁸ BRO Coroners inquest, information of John Johnson, Patrick Sullivan and Henry Towley. *Bristol Gazette*, 25 April 1811.
- ⁹ BRO Coroners inquest, information of Henry Towley
- ¹⁰ BRO Coroners inquest, information of Patrick Sullivan. *FFBJ*, 13 October 1810.
- ¹¹ *Bristol Gazette* 25 April 1811. The account of the trial given in *FFBJ* (20 April 1811) is more cursory.
- ¹² Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth Century England* (London, 2004), p.174.
- ¹³ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, 26 April 2005), September 1810, trial of Emanuel Joseph, t18100919-32. Another Londoner, Thomas Davis, was stabbed during a fight with Portuguese seamen in December 1810, and a third, John Douglas, in October 1811. In the latter two cases, the accused Portuguese were both acquitted. In January and April 1811 however, two Portuguese seamen, Antonio Cordosa and Juan Baptista Peniza, 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 t18110109-31 & t18110403-53. For Mason's case see t18141026-34.



Sir Richard Berkeley

Sir Richard Berkeley: An Elizabethan Career

Tony Nott



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, 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 (1531-1604), it still stands as a monument to the political ambition of this 16th century gentlemen of ancient lineage but initially modest means.

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 (1510-1545) had gained the favour of Thomas Cromwell, becoming the King's standard-bearer in 1539 with a pension of £40 per annum 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. A cannon being fired "brake all to pieces, and standing himself at the recoile of the same, one piece not so much as haulf the quarter of a hazel nut shell, strake him besides the pappe and out at toppe of the sholder." Sir John was taken back to Portsmouth where he died. Thus ended any hopes that the young Richard may have had of an easy entry into court circles.

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 Rockhampton in the south, Uley in the centre and Marsden in the north east. A marriage that would bring him some much-needed cash was a necessity and at some time during the mid 1550s he married Elizabeth Rede daughter of William Rede of Bristol. Little is known of Rede except for some property transactions which show him to have been a man of means.

An entry into county government for Richard was relatively assured because of his name and family connections but the Rede marriage brought him connections within the City of Bristol that became useful in his early career. There was certainly some improvement in financial liquidity possibly because of the marriage, because in 1559 Richard extended the Stoke Gifford estate

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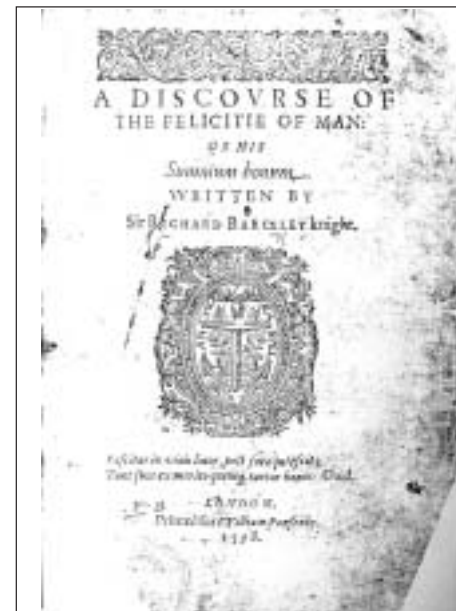


southwards towards Bristol by buying from Nicholas Thorne land in Stapleton, Horfield and Barton which had belonged to the dissolved St Bartholomew's Hospital and followed this up in 1564 with the purchase of the manor of Stapleton from his uncle Sir Walter Denys of Syston. Leland had commented in 1546 that the manor house at Stoke Gifford was in a dilapidated condition so Richard was able, after 1564, to concentrate on building a new house much grander than that at Stoke Gifford and the massive plinth on which the house was built still exists today as a monument to his ambition. The building was partly financed by the sale of the manors of Rockhampton, Uley and Kingsweston between the years 1566 and 1571.

Having established himself at the extreme southern edge of the county, it was essential if he were to play an important part in county politics that he had a base in the prosperous north of the county as well. From his father he had inherited the small manor of Marsden and in 1564 he bought the reversion of the neighbouring manors of Rendcombe and Calmsdon from Sir Humphrey Stafford, leasing them from his cousin Roger Lygon in 1566. His public life commenced when he became a county JP in 1562 and sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1565. His involvement with Bristol also began at this time. As sheriff he sat on a commission with the mayor to inquire into the extent of corruption and smuggling in Bristol and Gloucestershire. His family life was also prospering with the birth of his son and heir Henry c 1560 and all seemed set fair. Then in 1568 things began to go wrong.

Richard's patron Lord Henry Berkeley had become involved in a dangerous political game when he secretly supported his brother-in-law the Duke of Norfolk's plan to marry the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, the heir to the English crown who had recently fled from Scotland and was in custody in the north of England. Lord Henry and his relations the Denys and Lygon families, who were also involved, were very conservative in matters of religion and although confessing adherence to the Church of England secretly favoured the old religion. If the various informers are to be believed, this group, including Richard, plotted to raise troops in support of Norfolk. One hostile witness later claimed that Richard himself assaulted the

High Sheriff of Gloucestershire at the 1569 assizes and was forced to flee to Italy. Whatever the truth of these rumours, it soon became evident to Richard that if he was to pursue a successful career at court as his father had done, he would need a new patron, because the disgrace and execution of the Duke of Norfolk in 1572 had eroded any political influence that Richard's patron Lord Berkeley might have had.



The title page to Berkeley's *The Felicity of Man* (1598): a 'homespun and amateurish work'?

A further blow came in 1573 when Lord Berkeley finally rejected a double marriage alliance between his family and that of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the current royal favourite which Richard had advised him to accept. Lord Berkeley's absence from home when Queen Elizabeth visited Berkeley Castle in 1574 finally destroyed any influence he might have had at court. By that time however, Richard, a political realist, had sought another patron, William Cecil Lord Burleigh the Lord Treasurer, who was instrumental in securing a knighthood for him in 1574.

Despite numerous accusations about his "treasonous" activities in 1568 which were sent to Burleigh at this time by men who resented his adoption of Richard as a client,



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 Cecils for the rest of his life. The Cecil 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 friendship with the Cecils 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.

'The massive plinth on which the house was built still exists today as a monument to his ambition'.

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 mostly local but Burleigh nevertheless still considered him as a useful servant and by the later 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 a prolonged presence in London was achieved by his second marriage c. 1590 to Eleanor Rowe, widow of Robert Rowe the son of the late Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas Rowe, which brought him an estate at Leyton in Essex, a London residence and connections with the London commercial elite – the Rowes were related to Sir Thomas Gresham the founder of the Royal Exchange. In 1590 he was made by the Queen, a member of the Council of Wales 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, diplomatist 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 the daughter of Sir Richard's second wife Eleanor. Elizabeth Throgmorton was also an embarrassment to her father when in 1593 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 torture that Gerard was subjected to very distasteful and it was clear from his correspondence with Robert Cecil that he was glad to be relieved of his post in 1597.



At the age of nearly 70 in March 1600, Sir Richard undertook his most sensitive political assignment, that of the supervision of the disgraced Earl of Essex in Essex House. He was obviously very assiduous in his duties for court gossip observed: "Sir Richard Berkeley has so straight a charge to be ever with him and observe his doings, that it is a question which holds the other prisoner." His four months careful guardianship of Essex and his constant communication with Secretary Robert Cecil paid dividends when in 1601 he was made Deputy Lieutenant of Gloucestershire but he was disappointed at not being made Vice Chamberlain at Court. At Christmas 1603, the rift with his erstwhile patron was finally healed when both elderly men spent Christmas together at Berkeley Castle and it was no coincidence that Sir Richard was elected as one of the MPs for Gloucestershire in the 1604 Parliament. He took his seat in March 1604 but soon became ill and died in April 1604.

*'Bear a milde hand over him ...
for the better prevention of
mischief likely to ensue...*

Sir Richard Berkeley's career shows how a skilful selection of the right patron could bring about advancement. His energy, ability and loyalty were recognised by the Cecils as being valuable despite any reservations they might have had about his religious sensitivities. His humanity was often expressed in his care about what happened to his faithful servants and in his care of the prisoners in his charge. He was also a well-educated man. In 1598 his *The Felicity of Man*, recently described as a 'homespun and amateurish' work of philosophy and religion, was published by William Ponsonby, the publisher of Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser. Its anecdotal style and accessibility made it so popular that two more editions were published in the next 25 years, both of which are in Wells Cathedral Library. Sir Richard like many busy ambitious men wrote in his book that the happy life was achieved by having "a quiet life and meane estate, voide of worldly cares", an aspiration that he did not pursue in his own life.

Besides his other qualities, Sir Richard also learned to be tactful and deferent and in the dangerous world of Tudor politics to keep his mind to himself. His epitaph is fitting, he probably composed it himself: "Though all men may desire to know my name and face, yet no man may desire to know my mind. If anyone wishes to know who I am, reply I know not, but let that man be advised to know himself"; a salutary warning for anyone researching Sir Richard's career.

Selected sources

Details of Sir Richard Berkeley's estates are in the Gloucester Record Office in the Beaufort papers D 2700, and in the Patent Rolls Series in the Public Record Office. His surviving correspondence may be found in Historical Manuscripts Commission Salisbury Papers Vols. 1 & 2 and in *The Calendar of the Correspondence of the Smyth Family of Ashton Court 1548-1642*, Bristol Record Society Vol. XXXV. A short biography of Sir Richard can be found in John Smyth's *Lives of the Berkeleys*, Vol. 1. Details of Sir Richard's public life appear in the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* and in the *Acts of the Privy Council*. A critical account of Sir Richard's book "*The Felicity of Man*" may be found in *The Dictionary of Seventeenth Century British Philosophers* ed Andrew Pyle, Bristol 2000, pp 55-56.

Wood-taking and customary practice

Wood-taking and customary practice: William Hunt's Justices Notebook, 1744-49

Carl Griffin



William Hunt's home territory. West Lavington and surrounding area from Andrews and Dury's map of Wiltshire (1773).

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 in rural England. The needs of a commercialising agriculture well-represented in the legislature to clearly demarcate ownership of the natural world and the concomitant increase in momentum of the enclosure movement meant that the customary practices of the rural poor surrounding the gathering of wood for fuel increasingly came into conflict with the rulers of rural England.¹

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,² 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 and destroyers of young trees') that powers were given to, firstly, issue warrants against suspected wood-takers, and, secondly, to prosecute the taking of wood in all contexts.³ This statute, as Bob Bushaway has suggested, represented a major departure from manorial customs, effectively shifting responsibilities away from manorial and forest courts to magistrates who were empowered to apprehend 'all and every person or persons they shall suspect, having or carrying, or any ways conveying, any burthern or bundles of wood, underwood, poles, or young trees, or bark or bast of trees, or any gates, stiles, posts, pales, rails, or hedgewood, broom or furze'. A first offence under this Statute was punishable by a 10/- fine, plus damages, whilst a second offence led to a month's incarceration with hard labour.⁴

As with all legislation, whilst it responded to a perceived universal need, it was enacted in reaction to earlier localised enclosure disputes, not least in the villages adjoining

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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.⁵ These disputes were motivated both by attempts to restrict common-pasture rights and the more general loss of common of est'overs, firebote and housebote through enclosure, increased restrictions over how rights could be exercised, the increasing cost of 'licenses' to exercise use-rights and the general erosion of the *value* of such rights.⁶ 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 'offence' of wood-stealing,⁷ 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 penal codes. 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.⁸

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.⁹ This strengthening of the law was, in a sense, only partial in that it was a move towards 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, hedgewood, hollies, thorns, or orchard trees which were instead punished by a 40/- fine or a month's hard labour.¹⁰

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' bounties 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 plebeian practices, drawing them into fuel markets.

Whilst all major studies of crime and criminality in eighteenth-century England make reference to wood-stealing 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.¹¹ 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 Quarter Sessions in 1789 only two related to wood-taking and neither of these were cases were 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 if 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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 in theory, if not in practice, the Hundreds of Swanborough, and Potterne and Cannings.¹⁵ In his magisterial duties Hunt meticulous 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 Crittal, 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.¹⁶ Other acquisitive acts ranged from the relatively common – robbing fields, gardens and orchards – to the rather more obscure, including the theft of well chains, flints and perukes, some of which were obviously consumed within the household with other stolen goods presumably disposed of either through urban fences 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. Excise evasion, most commonly through selling liquor without a license; 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.¹⁷

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 adverbs other than 'some' 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 (171) 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 hedgewood belonging to a yeoman of the same parish (371).

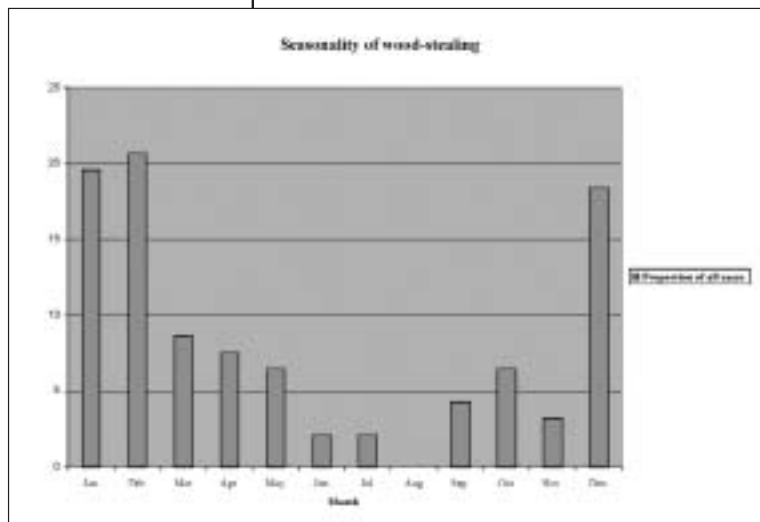
Wood-taking could take a wide variety of different forms, though in 43 cases Hunt simply noted that the defendants were charged with stealing 'wood'. The shrouding of maiden trees (elms, ashes, oaks and four cases involving unnamed trees) was common as was the cutting of willow setts. Conversely, the taking of already processed wood was relatively rare with only seven cases involving the taking of pails or hurdles from fences; two cases involving the taking of knitches; and two cases sawn timber. Clearly, whilst necessity was the motive, wood-takers rarely extended their activities to taking processed timber and instead almost always confined their actions to taking wood straight from hedges, copses and woodlands. It is worth noting though the vague phrase 'wood stealing' could possibly cover not only thefts from woods and hedges but also thefts from sheds of others' fuel supplies.¹⁸

As already noted, the area around West Lavington 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 analysing 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.¹⁹ 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 80% of wood taking cases involved men and only 25% 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 (166) 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 collectives of often unrelated young men and collectives of young women, though, perhaps 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 three female labourers of Urchfont who, when they came before Hunt, were pardoned 'out of regard of their great poverty and their promises of not offending in the like again' (322). Even in a case where two female brick-makers of Market Lavington not only cut down a plum tree but also destroyed a quantity of mustard seed – clearly an act of plant maiming (see Griffin, forthcoming) where the Black Act could have been invoked – the punishment was five shillings for damages (447).²⁰ Hunt, to some extent, adjusted the fines levied according to circumstances, though the fifteen shilling fine made against West Lavington labourer William Gough for stealing willow setts (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 though found guilty were either pardoned, as in the case of the Urchfont female labourers; respited; or excused by Hunt, in one case of willow shrouding because it '[a]ppeared 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 Crittal has suggested, in every case of wood-taking Hunt used the Statute of 1663 rather than any of the more recently passed legislation.²¹

'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.²² 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 capitalism – the commodity and the law – were never a given but were always being contested at a variety of different levels. Whilst Hunt was ready to prosecute and in the vast majority of cases found in favour of the prosecutor, he

also sometimes occasionally questioned the status of timber as commodity: the shrouding of a willow was deemed too 'frivolous' (273) to concern the law, whilst, presumably, other cases were presented to and subsequently thrown out by Hunt. As such, the nature of wood as commodity was constantly being tested by both the poor and farmers and landowners with Hunt acting as arbitrator. Similarly, even though the law between 1744 and 1749 could be used to prosecute the takers of fallen timber there is no evidence to suggest that Hunt prosecuted anyone for such an act. As Bushaway has suggested, fallen timber was the 'flotsam and jetsam' of the countryside and was deemed to be a customary windfall.²³

The concept of the commodity necessitates that everybody pays the same price for the same good, and therefore the system of fines should mirror this offering a proportionate punishment according to the value of the property 'stolen'. In practice though, it is clear that Hunt's fines were levied not in relation to the value of timber taken, but rather to the circumstances of the individual. Whilst such a brief analysis does not fully permit the 'moral' dimensions of this important aspect of English law as practiced and the practices of the poor, it would appear that to some extent E.P. Thompson's concept of the 'moral economy' can be applied to wood-taking in eighteenth-century West Lavington.²⁴ Here was a 'particular historical formation', a downland community defined by the shared practices and values associated with pastoralism and subjected to the vicissitudes of an agrarian capitalism that was becoming increasingly intensive but still uneven in its local scope. The taking of wood was clearly defined in the context of West Lavington as an illegal practice, as too were E.P. Thompson's food riots, but whilst the law may have offered potentially clear guidance, landowners, farmers and Justice Hunt's complex practices of discretion combined with the customary practices and beliefs of the poor regarding the ownership and allowable usages of wood suggest 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 cornland moral economy in the south-east wherein issues of access to land were paramount, whether natural resources represented the most profound and important moral economy of all.²⁵



As a prominent landowner, Hunt had a well-developed sense of his own historical identity. This is his bookplate. (Reproduced from Wiltshire Notes & Queries, Volume 2, 1896-98)



'A silly, ridiculous Jack in Office'

'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 re-instatement 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.¹ Many naval colleagues testified in Keppel's favour and in the end he won his case with ease, was acquitted with honour, and found himself an instant hero. Celebrations erupted throughout the country, while North, Sandwich and Palliser were vilified for bringing the prosecution and had their houses ransacked by rioters.

'Why 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 express to the Royal Crescent house of C.C. Crespigny, Receiver-General for the Admiralty but a fervent Keppel supporter.² 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 the instruction of churchwarden Richard Atwood. This encouraged the other parish churches 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 street 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 foolhardy, given the city's excited mood. The Abbey at once retaliated by hoisting 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. Crespigny'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 Jordan (i.e. the chamberpot)'.³

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,⁴ his expertise also recommended him to the Corporation. As early as 1748-9 we find him busy about the city's water rentals and in surveying city property,⁴ and under Lewis Clutterbuck (Town Clerk 1757-76) he seems to have acted as part-time deputy.⁵ 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 moneylending operations and attorney's work, he had become a rich man, held land, occupied a prestigious house, and lived in comfort.⁶

Trevor Fawcett is a former editor of Bath History and a founder of the History of Bath Research Group. His most recent publications, Bath Administer'd (2001) and Bath Commercialis'd (2002) are published by Ruton Press.

¹ M. Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996); J. Chapman and S. Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment and Landscape in Southern England* (Tempus, Stroud, 2001). For considerations of wood-taking see: B. Bushaway, 'From Custom to Crime: Wood-Gathering in Eighteenth and early Nineteenth-Century England: A Focus for Conflict in Hampshire, Wiltshire and the South', in J. Rule (ed.) *Outside the Law: Studies in Crime and Order 1650-1850* (Exeter University Press, Exeter, 1982), pp. 65-101; T. Shakesheff, 'Wood and Crop Theft in Rural Herefordshire, 1800-60', *Rural History*, 13 (2002), pp. 1-18.

² K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (Allen Lane, London, 1983), p.198.

³ E. Crittall, *The Justicing Notebook of William Hunt 1744-1749* (Wiltshire Record Society, Devizes, 1982), p.15.

⁴ Bushaway, *op. cit.*, 77-78.

⁵ R. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1989), pp.98, 101-2, 262-3.

⁶ Bushaway, *op. cit.*, pp.74-5; Manning, *op. cit.*, p.270.

⁷ Bushaway, *op. cit.*, p.79.

⁸ E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Act* (Allen Lane, London, 1975) p.23; L. Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law and its Administration from 1750: Volume I* Stevens and Son, London, 1948).

⁹ This Act allowed for the summary punishment before a single magistrate by up to a £20 fine or between six and twelve months imprisonment for 'wilfully cut or break down, bark, burn, pluck up, lop, top, crop, or otherwise deface, damage, spoil or destroy or carry away any Timber tree'. A second such offence the fine or gaol sentence increased, whilst a third offence was punishable by seven years transportation.

¹⁰ 13 Geo III c.33 and 9 Geo. III c.41. 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: 6 George III c.36.

¹¹ For the reliance upon easily quantifiable and comparable judicial sources see: J. Innes and J. Styles, 'The crime wave: recent writing on crime and criminal justice in eighteenth-century England', in A. Wilson (ed.) *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993), pp.203-4.

¹² Hampshire Quarter Sessions Calendars, all sessions 1789, Hampshire County Record Office Q9/1/436-9.

¹³ Shakesheff, *op. cit.*, pp.14-5.

¹⁴ Wiltshire County Record Office A1/1/19. All

subsequent references to Hunt's notebook relate to Crittall's edited version.

¹⁵ Crittall, *op. cit.*, p.4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14. These figures do not relate to the number of *separate cases* which Hunt presided over, rather the total number of times on which Hunt had to adjudicate, this is an important distinction as it clearly indicates what took up Hunt's time as well as the relative amount of the different types of civil and criminal business he had to preside over.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, various cases.

¹⁸ An analysis of the less comprehensive from more detailed justices' papers from the Jervoise estate records from Herriard in Hampshire shows that wood thefts were frequently of already felled timber either stacked and awaiting being carted or from wood sheds: Hampshire County Record Office 44M69/G3/various.

¹⁹ Shakesheff, *op. cit.*, p.4.

²⁰ C. Griffin, 'The Many Place(s) of Trees in Rural Society: or, the strange case of 'Plant Maiming' in Eighteenth-Century England', forthcoming.

²¹ Crittall, *op. cit.*, p.15.

²² P. King, 'The Summary Courts and Social Relations in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present* 183 (2004), pp.125-172.

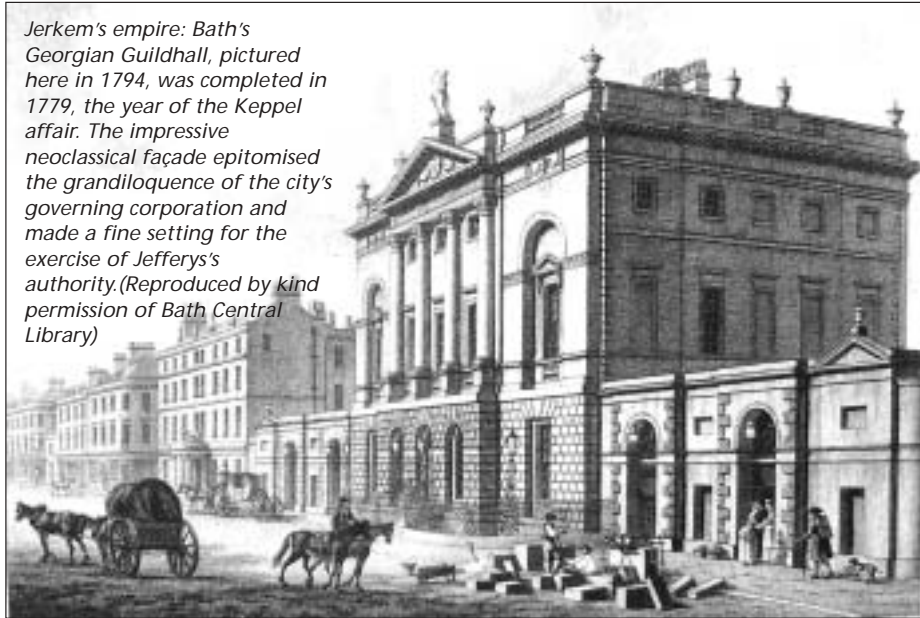
²³ Bushaway, *op. cit.*, p.101, n.1.

²⁴ E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50 (1971), pp. 76-136; *Idem.*, 'The Moral Economy Reviewed', in *Idem.*, *Customs in Common* (Penguin, London, 1992), pp.242-3.

²⁵ R. Wells, 'The Moral Economy of the English Countryside', in A. Randall and A. Charlesworth (eds.) *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 209-272.



Jerkem's empire: Bath's Georgian Guildhall, pictured here in 1794, was completed in 1779, the year of the Keppel affair. The impressive neoclassical façade epitomised the grandiloquence of the city's governing corporation and made a fine setting for the exercise of Jefferys's authority. (Reproduced by kind permission of Bath Central Library)



The Keppel celebration put all this - and his role within the Corporation - under an unwelcome spotlight.

The Bath press led the personal criticism directed against him. In opposing the festivities Jefferys had acted like an officious, impertinent fool, 'a silly ridiculous Jack in Office' with a freak in his head, a 'blockhead... absurd enough to suppose that public rejoicings for the Honour of the Navy of England... and the King's own Admiral, should be considered an insult to the King'. And along with this came nastier insinuations about his Anglican conversion, claiming he had been christened out of expediency - 'more from interest than principle, and that he was not a servant of God but of Mammon'.

An affair that was the talk of Bath ('from the Barber's Boy up to the profound Politician') now reached a wider audience through a letter printed in the London *Morning Post* of 17 February. This purported to be a statement of facts signed by the Mayor of Bath and two Justices, and witnessed by Jefferys as Town Clerk, and while it offered some explanation for the Corporation's, and Jefferys's, actions on the day of the illumination, it contained obvious inaccuracies and in any case seemed a curious

way for the Bath authorities to justify themselves. Why a letter to the London rather than the Bath press? Why was the Mayor's name spelled wrongly? Why the need for the Town Clerk to witness the account? Why did it misrepresent the Bath celebration as a riotous occasion and claim that it was all got up by a set of 'patriotic banditti'? People smelled a rat. Had Jefferys dreamed up the letter himself?

'Jefferys's effigy was tossed onto a bonfire in front of the Royal Crescent to loud hisses and groans'.

This notion was far from absurd, judging from the opinions being ventilated in the Bath newspapers. One ironic contribution suggested that to save further dispute within the Corporation the Mayor and J.P.s should simply hand over their powers to 'our most excellent Town Clerk' whose extreme modesty would surely not stop him filling three offices at once. A letter from 'Justice' ostensibly defending Jefferys hinted that something of the sort had taken place already, and that the friends of the current Mayor, Simon Crook, were well aware how

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 the onerous post of Chamberlain (the city's financial officer) or the role of decisive Mayor. The current Chamberlain too, the ex-silk merchant James Ferry, had been overwhelmed by his duties and imprudently trusted the city financial affairs to deputies.⁷ 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 triumphal 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 Caput Mortuum, 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 CORPORATION⁸.

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's 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's 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 on municipal business, including the time-consuming and costly Chancery case against St Michael's parish that the Corporation was currently fighting. Yet perhaps he had been chastened. In 1782 the astute Henry Harington, a councilman himself, went out of his way to praise Jefferys as an incorruptibly honest Town Clerk, knowledgeable in law and moderate in fees.⁹ There are no more accusations of his lording it over the Corporation and he continued actively in post until his retirement in 1800.



Sites of memory and neglect

Sites of memory and neglect: John Thelwall and the art of dying quietly.

Steve Poole

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 leave behind a good impression. Like statues, they're memorials not just to past times but to the individuals whose words and deeds still 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 in front of the inscribed stone that marks burial plot 1002. Since 1834, successive winter frosts have worked away at the surface of the stone to destabilise the lettering, but at the moment it remains perfectly legible. It appears 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'*. And here's where he parts company with Burney, Austen and Berry, though he lived through the same turbulent times as they. For he cannot afford a facelift himself and there are no crowds of heritage-hunters beating a path to his

headstone to pay their respects or organise a whip round. He is John Thelwall.

If the name doesn't mean very much now, perhaps it's because the 'best liberties of his fellow men' were won long ago in distant battles of which we have since grown weary. Thelwall argued for universal suffrage at a time when to do so was not only unfashionable but downright dangerous. In 1794, as a platform speaker and pamphleteer for the London Corresponding Society, he had found himself in the dock of the Old Bailey with eleven other fledgling democrats, arraigned by the government for High Treason. Although platform oratory was not yet the highly developed popular art it would later become, Thelwall was not only a pioneer but reputedly one of the ablest mass communicators of the age. Government feared him less because of what he said than because of his ability to make it persuasive. To suggest, as they did, that a public campaign for the right of adult males to vote in parliamentary elections might undermine the constitution and endanger the life of the King may sound a little far-fetched to us. To the British government in the decade of the French Revolution however, it did not. Thelwall and his 'co-conspirators' were only acquitted of treason and spared a grisly public hanging because the trial jury refused to play ball with prosecuting counsel.

And as 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. Unbridled by prosecution, Thelwall's intoxication with the power of verbal expression continued to develop. No sooner was he out of jail than he returned to public speaking, risking his neck once again in the struggle for the suffrage, his footsteps dogged by Home Office spies and informers. Had he not



John Thelwall

Dr Steve Poole is Director of the Regional History Centre and still feels an irrational attachment to the Romantic enthusiasm of the English Jacobins.

If any readers are interested in helping to conserve Thelwall's monument, please contact the Regional History Centre, UWE.

John Thelwall at the time of his trial for High Treason in 1794 (Reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Public Library)

- ¹ In addition, two pamphlets on the court-martial came out at Bath in weekly numbers as it was in progress.
- ² The local repercussions of the Keppel acquittal can be followed in issues of *Bath Chronicle and Bath Journal* Feb-Mar 1779, usefully reprinted in *Letters, Extracts, &c. taken from the Bath News-Papers, &c. respecting the Conduct of Jeffery Jerk'em, Esquire (Bath?, 1779)*.
- ³ R.S.Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: a Social History* (London, 1981), 163-8.
- ⁴ Bath Chamberlain's Accounts (Bath Record Office) 6 Apr, 27 Aug and 6 Sep 1748, 5 Dec 1749.
- ⁵ Thus in 1765 it was Jefferys, not Clutterbuck, who prosecuted market forestallers on the Council's behalf (*Bath Chronicle* 18 Apr 1765). Later Clutterbuck had a second deputy in Councilman Thomas Harford and in 1775 had to apologise for allowing his deputies to inflate their importance by wearing gowns (*Bath Journal* 16 Oct 1775).
- ⁶ John Jefferys' personal accounts, covering 1762-90, are held at Somerset Record Office, DD/WLM/Box 1. He held a plot of the Rivers estate on Lansdown (shown on Bath Plan 47 in Bath Central Library) by which he later blocked an important road scheme.
- ⁷ For Ferry's incompetence see especially Scorpion's letter in *Bath Journal* 8 Mar 1779. Ferry, though, was one of the Corporation's more zealous Keppelites, displaying that allegiance in a spectacular private display at the illumination.
- ⁸ Introduction to *Letters, Extracts...* cited in note 2 above.
- ⁹ *Bath Anecdotes and Characters, by the Genius Loci* [Henry Harington] (London, 1782), 134-5.



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 liberatory 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 mastery of the former. He realised in other words, that words are weapons and the pen is mightier. In 1817, he was editing his own radical newspaper, the *Champion*. In 1831 he was doing his bit in the successful struggle for the Reform Bill. And in 1834, at the age of 68, he was still travelling the country, practicing 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.¹

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 History². 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 junkets in the Golden Lion tavern in Smithfield every November 5th until 1833. The principal defendants were reunited 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’³

‘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 (if crime it is) for which



John Thelwall's frost-damaged headstone at St Swithin's burial ground, Bath; a site of memory and neglect. (photo: Steve Poole)



parliamentary reformers in 1794 were charged with high treason.⁴ 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 Chartists, 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 destabilise 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. In an ‘emphatic’ speech, he ‘dwelt upon the history of the dangerous times when such attempts were made to extinguish the liberties of the people’ and ‘said that perhaps this would be the last occasion on which he would ever address that assembly’. In this, he was right⁵. 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 strong and excited feelings’, Thelwall held up to his audience an engraved memorial tablet recording the names of the 1794 trial jury picked out in gold against a purple background. Conflating one historic act of closure with another, he recalled Hardy’s first act of liberty on release from gaol – a first visit to the grave of his wife who died while he was still in captivity. Then he completed the circle: ‘My tears must here drop onto the grave of the last of my associates and perhaps the time is not distant when a similar close shall be put to my existence also’⁶.

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 Swithins 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 rhetoric and oratory after all, the liberties 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 news vendor John Cogswell and his wife were awaiting trial for selling Richard Carlile’s unstamped radical newspapers. Cogswell, who regarded himself as a ‘consistent 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 Mans Guardian*, but was re-arrested in March. At the assize, he received another six months and his wife was fined⁷.

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 put into 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 itself⁸.

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 flake and fall. Thelwall himself believed words of little consequence until animated by expressive oratory, which is precisely why he devoted his life in equal measures to politics, elocution 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 recite 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



democracy like our own, in which a universal franchise has produced an electorate that is largely indifferent to politics, wary of ideology and disdainful of rhetoric, John Thelwall might yet have something relevant to say to us.

Further reading on John Thelwall

Thelwall's best historian is certainly Greg Claeys, whose *The Politics of English Jacobinism: The Writings of John Thelwall* (Pennsylvania, 1995) provides an excellent annotated selection of Thelwall's political and rhetorical writings, but see also E. P. Thompson's last academic essay, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past & Present*, 142 (1994), which traces the post-1794 years in typically quirky style. For a solid analysis of Thelwall's contribution to political thought, see Iain Hampsher-Monk, 'John Thelwall and the eighteenth century radical response to political economy', *Historical Journal*, 34, 1 (1991). Fittingly enough however, the most prolific Thelwall scholar of recent years has been a professor of English, Michael Scrivenor. See his current monograph, *Seditious Allegories: John Thelwall and Jacobin Writing* (Pennsylvania, 2001), and a number of related essays, the most recent of which is 'John Thelwall and the Revolution of 1649' in T. Morton and N. Smith (eds.), *Radicalism in British Literary Culture, 1750 - 1830: From Revolution to Revolution* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 11 & 18 February 1834.

² *Bath Journal*, 24 February 1834.

³ *Times*, 7 November 1829, 23 August 1830.

⁴ *Times*, 6 December 1831, 19 October 1832.

⁵ *Times*, 6 November 1832.

⁶ *Times*, 20 October, 1832.

⁷ *Gauntlet*, 10 November 1833, *Bath Chronicle*, 21 March and 18 April 1834. Carlyle came to Bristol and Bath himself for eighteen days in January 1834 to lecture on 'political, domestic and individual economy' (socialism), and became embroiled in an acrimonious debate with a Christian lecturer, G. B. Orchard. The city press was unremittingly hostile. See his account in the *Gauntlet*, 5 and 12 January 1834.

⁸ *Times*, 20 October 1832.

Mary Rudge

Mary Rudge: Bristol's World Chess Champion

John Richards

She was "the leading lady player of the world"¹ and "known throughout the length and breadth of the land"² 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."⁴ Leominster was a small town and could not have provided much in the way of serious competition, so it is unsurprising that the first record of Mary playing chess is in a correspondence tournament in 1872.⁵ The first mention of over the board competition is in August 1874 when Mary played in Class II at the Meeting of the Counties' Chess Association, at Birmingham.⁶

Two months later Dr Rudge died, leaving Mary, 32, and her sister, Caroline, 41, to fend for themselves. Both women were unmarried and they went to live with their brother Henry in Bristol. Henry was 37, also unmarried, and had been a curate at St John Evangelist, Whiteladies Road, Clifton since 1870.⁷

Mary started playing chess seriously and, for her, the move to Bristol was particularly fortuitous. Bristol had a long chess history; the Bristol Chess Club was formed in 1829 or 1830 and is thought to be the first English club outside London. More importantly for this story, in 1872, the new Bristol and Clifton Chess Club Association voted to admit women: "During the year the vice-president proposed that ladies should be admitted to the Club as associates, at an annual subscription of 5s., which was agreed to. We believe that no members of the softer sex were admitted as subscribers, by any chess club in this country, prior to this date."⁸ Although Burt's claim is very doubtful – there are examples going back to the eighteenth century⁹ – Mary had ended up in a place that was going to give her the opportunity to play competitive chess.

The first mention of Mary in Bristol is in 1875 when she played Blackburne - who gave a blindfold simultaneous display against ten opponents. The following year she played in another blindfold simultaneous display given by Zukertort.¹⁰ At this stage Mary had not made much of an impact on the chess world. When John Burt wrote his history of the Bristol Chess Club in 1883, Mary was considered worth just two very brief mentions. If she had been recognized as a leading woman player at this time then Burt would surely have recorded it.

'Mary must have really made the men sit up and take notice'.

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 1878, 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 Luccombe House Preparatory School on Redland Green; Henry became the schoolmaster and we can assume his sisters helped with the teaching.¹¹ The school was described as providing "high class education for boys, 7-11. Efficient masters providing a thorough grounding for public schools."¹² 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 pupils¹³, but by August it seems the school closed and the Ridges left¹⁴.

Henry moved to become curate at North Meols¹⁵, 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 in¹⁶. 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

John Richards has been a chess player for over 40 years. He has been General Secretary and Chairman of the Bristol & District Chess League and the editor of the Bristol Chess Times. He used to manage the Bristol team in the national chess league. He is also a qualified chess arbiter. He has a day job as an IT project manager at the University of Bristol.



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 a Mr W E Hill. At the beginning of 1888, Rudge played and won on board six for Bristol & Clifton against City Chess & Draughts Club¹⁷, and then drew with Blackburne in a simultaneous display on 1st March.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ However, the very same month (June 1889), 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.'*²⁰

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. Frideswide 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 Clontarf Parochial Magazine)²¹. She also gave a simultaneous display - she won all six games²² - 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".²³

Meanwhile, brother Henry was still in

Lancashire. By 1889 he had moved a short distance to Church Town, Southport.²⁴ The same year he succeeded in getting a new post, as Curate and then Rector of St Mary, Newent, Gloucestershire.²⁵ It appears that Mary decided not, or was not invited, to move to Newent. In any case, Henry was destined not to enjoy his new post for long; he died in September 1891.

Over the next few years, Mary took part in various competitions, playing for Bristol & Clifton,²⁶ and for Gloucestershire,²⁷ and also moving to Dublin for several months at a time. She won the Ladies' Challenge Cup in Cambridge in 1890 and was third in Class II. By now, the British Chess Magazine could describe Mary as "known throughout the length and breadth of the land".²⁸

In 1896, Mary won Class II at the Southern Counties' tournament, at the Imperial Hotel. Mr Stevenson tied for first place, with a score of 6½. The latter beat Mary in their game, then waived his right to play off, giving Mary the first prize of £5.²⁹

'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.

*"Miss Mary Rudge, of Clifton, won her games in the eighteenth and final rounds of the International Chess Tournament, played in London, at the Ladies' Chess Club, on Saturday. Miss Rudge came out as first prize winner of £60, her full score being 18½ points."*³⁰



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)

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 kept it and won, if she got a piece she kept it and won, if she got a "grip" she kept it and won, if she got a winning position she kept 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."

"Miss Mary Rudge has for long enjoyed the reputation of being the strongest lady chessplayer in the world, and the fact that she has carried off the first prize in the present tournament, thereby becoming

entitled to style herself lady chess champion of the world, is very satisfactory to her many friends."³¹

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 1898 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 available³² and Mary's was one of those unfinished. Mrs Rowland described how Lasker had been winning but made a mistake. He graciously conceded defeat in this game when it was unfinished at the call of time because he would be lost with best play.³³ She continued to play for Bristol and for Gloucestershire.³⁴ The following year, Mary was playing in Dublin "with great success".³⁵

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 F.F. Rowland:

*'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 Clontarf and Kingstown. Whilst at Clontarf, she played in the Clontarf 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 (£60), 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.J. Cole and F.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 Loretto Terrace, Bray, Co. Wicklow, or to Mrs Talboys, 20 Southfield Park, Cotham, Bristol.'*³⁶

The next few years must have been very difficult indeed. In 1918, Mary attempted to solve her financial problems when a cousin, James Barrett, 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.³⁷ Mary's claim appears to have failed.³⁸

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."*³⁹

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 II) of tournaments at regional and 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 21 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, Luccombe House, no longer exists.⁴⁰ 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. Blackburn (1875), Harsant (1883), R. Fedden (twice) (Bristol, 1885), Charles Drury (Dublin, 1889), W Cook (Dublin, 1890), Louisa Fagan (London, 1897), and Emanuel 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.

- 1 *Colombia Chess Chronicle*, 1 November 1889, pp 92-93, quoted in Winter, E, *Chess Note* 3281
- 2 *British Chess Magazine* (BCM), 1890, p264.
- 3 General Register Office, reference March 1842 Leominster XXVI/194. The date of birth is often given, erroneously, as 1845.
- 4 *BCM*, 1897, p289.
- 5 Personal e-mail from C.P.Ravilious, saying Tim Harding has record of Mary playing in the first correspondence tournament of *The Amateur Chess Magazine* (Ed James T.C.Chatto) which began in the summer of 1872.
- 6 Burt J, *The Bristol Chess Club*, 1883.
- 7 *Crockford's Clergy List*, 1889.
- 8 Burt, J, *op cit*.
- 9 *BCM*, 2004, p666.
- 10 Burt, J, *op cit*.
- 11 1881 Census, RG11, 2504 / 23, 39.
- 12 Web site: bristolinformation.co.uk/schools/
- 13 *Clifton Chronicle & Directory* (CCD), 14 January 1885.
- 14 *CCD*, Rev H Rudge is listed at Luccombe House up to 12 August 1885, but no one is listed at that address for the rest of the year.
- 15 *Clergy List* for 1886.
- 16 *CCD*, 18 November 1885. The two matches were an internal club match over twelve boards and an 8-board match against Oxford University.
- 17 *CCD*, 18 January 1888.
- 18 *BCM*, 1888, pp186-7.
- 19 *CCD*, 5 June 1889.
- 20 *BCM*, 1889, p231.
- 21 *CCD*, 11 September 1889.
- 22 *CCD*, 30 October 1889.
- 23 *Colombia Chess Chronicle*, *op cit*.
- 24 *Crockford's Clergy List*, 1889.
- 25 *Crockford's Clergy List*, 1890.
- 26 *BCM*, 1894, p48; *BCM*, 1895, pp 17, 68, 511.
- 27 *BCM* 1895, p220.
- 28 *BCM*, 1890, p264.
- 29 *BCM*, 1896, p389.
- 30 *CCD*, 7 July 1897.
- 31 *BCM*, 1897, p285-296.
- 32 *CCD*, 30 November 1898, gives the story of Lasker not finishing but does not mention Mary by name.
- 33 *Weekly Irish Times*, 14 January 1899.
- 34 *BCM*, 1898, p200.
- 35 *BCM*, 1899, p454.
- 36 Source: *American Chess Bulletin*, May 1912, page 112, quoted in Winter, E, *Chess Note* 3281.
- 37 *London Gazette*, 2 August 1918.
- 38 *London Gazette*, 8 November 1918.
- 39 *British Chess Magazine*, 1920, p13, quoted in Winter, E, *Chess Note* 3281.
- 40 Personal e-mail from G Nichols, 17 January 2004.

Learning to live with 'natural wonders'

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

Steve Poole

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 the proprietor, Lord Bath, to see Gough's and Cox's show caves as well. What the programme makers wanted from us was some historical data on the gorge's popularity. More than anything, and perhaps because some good archive footage was readily to hand, they wanted to hear about Edwardian holiday crowds, brimming charabancs of merrymakers, chuffing steam trains on the Cheddar Valley line and famous cheeses ripening in caves. This is, of course, one of the happy stories one can tell. But Cheddar's historic encounter with tourism is actually a good deal older than that and the gorge has not always enjoyed such a positive image. 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 catch on. This was partly because for many centuries prior to the conceptual invention of 'leisure time', Britain's wildest upland areas were more likely to be regarded as desolate and unproductive wastes than aesthetic pleasure grounds. Yet, even when the thirst for picturesque travel was at its height during the later eighteenth century, the best-known tourists constructed itineraries that went around or past the gorge rather than

through it. The omission is both odd and unfortunate. The view from the top of the cliffs permits some pretty unrivalled aesthetic pleasures; indeed, travellers could use the spot to identify landscapes fitting all three of the Romantic period's favourite 'ways of seeing': the beautiful, the picturesque and the sublime. Yet early travel guides did little to promote it. William Gilpin, for instance, barely noticed the gorge at all as he made his way through Somerset from Bath to the antiquarian gothic splendours of Wells cathedral.

How should we understand such apparent indifference? Somerset's first historian, John Collinson, was certainly impressed with the place when he put pen to paper in 1792. Its 'awful scenery' made it 'the most striking scene of its kind in Great Britain'; the 'winding passage' of the chasm 'in many places very narrow and scattered over with rude loose fragments of fallen rocks'¹. Exciting though this may sound, a number of factors may be said to have influenced politer 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 quaintly picturesque, the labouring classes around proto-industrial Cheddar had a less rustic reputation. The calamine miners for instance, struck Hannah and Martha More as 'savage and depraved... brutal in their natures and ferocious in their manners'. After having mud thrown at his carriage as he went through the village in 1789, their friend William Wilberforce willingly bankrolled their endeavours to 'civilise' the miners in Cheddar's fledgling Sunday schools. Yet whatever results their philanthropy may have produced, the people of Mendip continued to be represented not just as coarse, but as criminals too. 'Many were thieves' wrote Hannah More, 'all ignorant, profane and vicious beyond belief'. As late as the 1840s, a disappointed visiting cleric who had run the gauntlet of villagers trying to sell him wild flower seeds and mineral rocks, found 'some traces of former barbarism still in existence' not the least of which was the discovery of one ragged woman still living in a 'wild and squalid' cave².

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 civilising the miners'. Not everyone saw the benefits however. Some 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?'³

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 'seldom passed by carriages'. 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 1841⁴.

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 arrival of the Cheddar Valley railway in 1869 made public access a good deal easier. Additionally, the discovery of archaeological remains in Cox's and Gough's caves in the 1830s and 1890s created a more educational rationale for serious tourism. The cave systems, then as now, proved a far greater attraction than the gorge. In fact, visits to the cliffs had become even more hazardous by the early twentieth century because Walter Long, landowner on the western side, had sold them off to a rapacious company of mineral extractors. The destruction of the central area of the gorge by unrestricted quarrying was already underway in 1895, and by 1903 it was noted, 'a large surface of the cliff has been skinned, a steam crusher has been established and carting goes on briskly throughout the day'. Assuming they were not deafened by the steam crusher, visitors in these conditions were as likely to



be felled by avalanches. In 1906, about half a million tons of unstable rock fell into the gorge during storms on one winter's night, happily killing nobody but leaving boulders all over the road 'in picturesque confusion'. The accident strengthened calls for all quarrying to stop, and for the cliffs to be preserved for future generations but that was only achieved in 1910 when the National Trust bought out the mineral company⁵.

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 trinket shops at the southern end 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.

¹ John Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset* (1793), pp. 573-4.
² Quoted in V. Waite, 'Something must be done for Cheddar' in A. W. Coysh, E. J. Mason and V. Waite (eds), *The Mendips* (London 1954), pp. 95-104.
³ *The Times*, 26 November 1826
⁴ *The Times*, 6 November 1841
⁵ *The Times*, 16 July 1896, 26 December 1903, 6 February 1906, 23 July 1910.

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, 'What for missus?' She said, 'I don't like it down here, it isn't safe!' So he stopped the coach and she walked down...' Reprinted with permission from 'Coleford as t'were: Memories of Coleford, Somerset from 1900-45' (Coleford Oral History Group, 2000).

Book reviews

Official and not Unofficial Stone Stories

Brian Edwards looks at recent books on Avebury and Stonehenge

Julian Richards, *Stonehenge: A Photographic History*, (English Heritage August 2004), hardback 240pp £17.99. ISBN 1 85074 895 0

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 memento 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, some early 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 1901 is also included, and there is an interesting sequence starting with an enigmatic shot of women sheltering under Stone 60 in 1958. 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 reminded and went beyond making a point. The book includes one particularly amazing photograph, taken by Les Wilson of Lebaya Ol Dinyo 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 understood, 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 tenon 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 elapsed 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 1901, 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 not detract from this state, and this is perhaps the crux betwixt official and unofficial histories. The former attempts to smooth and tuck away rough edges, whereas unofficial history exists because of them.

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

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 offers 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 photographers. Beyond the obvious contrast regarding confrontation, in Worthington's book there are clothes-abandoned people dancing, bathing, and performing chores 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 smiley 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 as 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 John 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.

Mark Gillings and Joshua Pollard, *Avebury*, (Duckworth 2004), paperback 212pp, £16.99. ISBN 0 7156 3240 X

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 digs through to comprehensive website pages that include interim reports (<http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Avebury/>), 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 history of this site as it does an extension.

Rosamund Cleal and Joshua Pollard (editors), *Monuments and Material Culture: papers in honour of an Avebury archaeologist - Isobel Smith*, (Hobnob Press 2004) £25. ISBN 0 946418 19 5

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 Watson. Bruce Eagles and David Field also supply much insight in 'William Cunnington and the Long Barrows of the River Wylde'. Anyone interested by '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



by Rick Peterson with Josh Pollard and Mark Gillings: 'Destruction of the Avebury Monuments'.

Christopher Chippindale, *Stonehenge Complete*, (Thames and Hudson 2004), paperback 312 pp £12.95. ISBN 0 500 28467 9

First published in 1983, this new and expanded edition of this classic is worth every penny of the cover price.

Other Reviews

Tony Scrase, *Somerset Towns: Changing Fortunes, 800-1800* (Tempus, 2005) ISBN 0-7524-3423-3 £17.99

For those with a serious interest in the historical geography of the South West, and particularly of Wells, Tony Scrase needs no introduction, despite the fact that much of his work has been published as UWE working papers or journal articles. However, this, and his 1999 book, *Streets and Market Places in South West England: Encroachments and Improvements* (Edwin Mellen Press), should bring him a still wider audience. That book examined the development of streets and open spaces, with particular reference to Bath and Wells, and offered a critique of the common public-private space dichotomy. This book shifts the focus from that relatively 'micro' level to take in the urban development of an entire county, while at the same time drawing comparisons with other counties within and without the region. Over a period of a thousand years, Tony Scrase charts the contrasting fortunes of Somerset towns, drawing heavily on taxation records to do so. Somerset is an intriguing choice for such an exercise, since, while it has an unusually large number of towns - depending on one's definition of the term, an issue carefully explored in this work - none of these are of any great size: none of its largest - Taunton, Bath, Frome, Bridgwater, Shepton Mallet, Yeovil or Wells - would be classed as cities on any other basis than being cathedral towns, and are easily dwarfed by Bristol. The presence of the 'Metropolis of the West' is one of the factors considered as a possible explanation for this situation, and while it is concluded that Bristol probably has had an inhibiting effect on urban growth in the north of the county,

its influence further south is harder to measure. Landscape is another obvious factor given its due weight, but others, both less obvious and more thought-provoking, are suggested. The large number of royal manors may have been a factor in the proliferation of towns, as may the efforts at town foundation by local lords - including the bishops of Bath and Wells; trade cycles, war and natural disasters are also discussed. The story is complex, and this book demonstrates that urban development is often not a simple linear process: prosperity, and sometimes towns themselves, come and go. It also demonstrates the value of taking the long view. The dispersal of urban functions, and hence the nature of settlement in present-day Somerset, is attributed to developments before the Conquest: 'Ethelred II is probably largely responsible for the situation in Somerset', a factor probably not mentioned in current media discussion of the reasons for the recent Lib-Dem takeover of the county!

Peter Fleming

Peter Fleming, *Bristol and the Wars of the Roses, 1451-1471* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 2005), ISSN 1362 7759, £3.00

Previously, in the splendid series of local history pamphlets published by the Bristol branch of the Historical Association, Peter Fleming has written about women in later medieval Bristol (pamphlet 103) and Bristol castle (110). Now he has turned his attention to the town's role in the Wars of the Roses (113), a subject on which he has unrivalled knowledge. Source material is sparse, unfortunately, but Fleming certainly makes the most of what there is, including hitherto unfamiliar evidence to be found in both the Bristol Record Office and the National Archives at Kew.

Traditionally, the first battle of St. Albans in May 1455 is regarded as the beginning of the Wars of the Roses. It was a Yorkist victory and, by then, several members of Bristol's ruling elite had already begun to show enthusiastic support for Richard of York (who held substantial estates nearby) and his mounting criticisms of Henry VI's Lancastrian government. When civil war erupted with a vengeance between 1459 and 1461, the Yorkists clearly recognised Bristol's strategic



importance and there are strong indications, too, of a powerful anti-government faction operating in the town. This is not too difficult to explain. Both the crown's financial demands in the 1450s and Bristol's worsening economic prospects (resulting, in part, from Lancastrian military 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 restoration to the throne without demur. Why? Perhaps Edward IV had promised more than he could deliver to Bristol's mercantile community; the king's preference for a Burgundian rather than French alliance hardly suited its best interests; and, most importantly, once Warwick the Kingmaker fell out with Edward in the later 1460s, his consistent championing of a pro-French policy (much more favourable to Bristol's trading interests) may well have proved pivotal in explaining the town's acquiescence in the short-lived reademption of Lancaster, in 1470/1. As a result, however, Bristol found itself at the centre of the Lancastrian regime's last gasp in 1471: a contingent from the town fought for Margaret of Anjou at Tewkesbury; Edward IV won the battle and regained his throne; and, perhaps, Bristol's political elite was fortunate not to suffer more than it did by way of retribution. Instead, the town received an early pardon in January 1472, maybe because of the 'good lordship' of the king's brother George Duke of Clarence. In the sense that the Wars of the Roses were dynastic struggles between the houses of

Lancaster and York, moreover, they were now at an end.

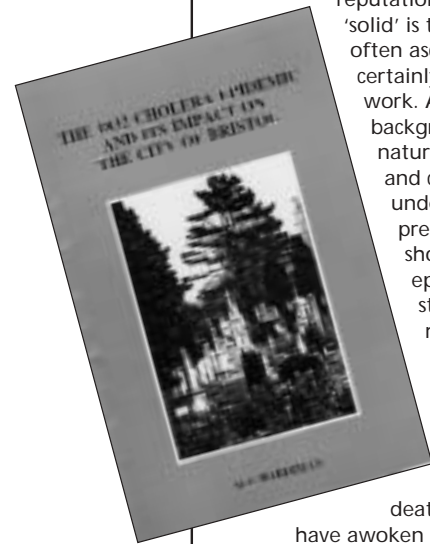
Throughout the wars, Peter Fleming concludes, the main determinant of Bristol's political behaviour had probably been economic; calculation rather than conscience had, as likely as not, explained why men reacted as they did to the turbulent events of these decades; and, in this, Bristolians seem to have been no different to most people in fifteenth-century England. He must surely be right.

Keith Dockray

Sue Hardiman, *The 1832 Cholera Epidemic and its Impact on the City of Bristol* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association Pamphlet, 2005) ISSN 1362 7759 £2.50

The European cholera epidemics were largely the product of empire. Soldiers and traders carried it from its Asian homelands. The disease reached England in 1831. Informed observers had tracked its progress across continental Europe, but being forewarned was not to be forearmed. The disease was not properly understood until much later in the century, and ignorance combined with the appalling state of public health - crucially with regard to water supplies and sewerage, the primary means of transmission, and particularly in working-class urban areas - left few defences. Bristol was especially vulnerable; it was, as one visitor noted in 1830, 'a vast and dirty city', its poor huddled into filthy hovels 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 lessons 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 Bristol was slow to respond, by the 1860s its public health reforms had made it a model for action in other cities, and the cholera outbreaks of that decade made relatively little impact.





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 debates 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 century: 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 1831-2 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 BS9 2DG; please add 35p postage for one pamphlet and 15p for each additional one.)

Peter Fleming

Barb Drummond, *The New Eden: An Introduction to Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol* (2005), available from the author, at PO Box 2460 Bristol BS3 9WP, £5 + SAE.

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 1831-2 (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 Anglicised version of the pioneer cemetery of Pere Lachaise in Paris, itself modelled on the English landscape garden, and which in 1813 inspired the comment, 'For the home of death has become the new Eden'. As Barb Drummond points out, high burial fees (as insisted upon by the Anglican Bishop Monk) meant that it was only from the 1850s, 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 poplars, 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 has been the subject of much controversy, and, prone to theft and vandalism of various kinds, it might be described as exhibiting faded 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 some of the profits from the sale of this pamphlet go towards this worthy cause.

Barb Drummond's introduction will prove invaluable to those tempted to explore this intriguing survival. In addition to its history, she provides a guide to the architecture and building materials of its tombs, and notices of some of the more notable individuals who found their last resting place there. Not everyone may think tomb architecture a particularly engaging subject, but one cannot fail to be diverted by passages on the



defensive measures taken against grave robbers (bodies were regularly snatched for medical dissection) and on oddities such as the tomb of Thomas Humpage, who died in 1938; he was an engineer, and his tomb is adorned with pipework, complete with bolts, faithfully rendered in stone. Another, that of a navy cook who died shortly after 1918, declares, 'We have whacked the Huns!' While Arnos Vale cannot compete with Highgate or Pere Lachaise for celebrity occupants - even its most famous burials would come some way behind Marx and Jim Morrison in any test of public recognition - it still has its share of memorials to the local great and good: Drs John Addington Symonds and William Budd (for whom, once again, see Sue Hardiman's pamphlet); Mary Carpenter and George Muller, social reformers, and, from a very different milieu, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the Bengali reformer and writer.

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 far less well known, however, than that of London and Liverpool. Helen Reid's book seeks to redress the balance by exploring in detail the ways in which Bristolians coped for almost a year with the constant air raids. Drawing on personal testimony written at the time in diaries, Mass Observation surveys or newspapers and on oral interviews recorded over fifty years later she provides graphic descriptions of the destruction of buildings, physical privations endured by the population and the varied emotional reactions of those affected. Photographs taken by the Bristol photo-journalist Jim Facey provide an added dimension to our understanding of the ways in which the Blitz was experienced. For the most part the chapters are organized chronologically, but two, 'Morale' and 'Heroes- and Cowards?', explore a particular theme. These are perhaps the most challenging parts of the book since they raise questions about the conventional wisdom that everyone pulled together during the Blitz and demonstrate that reactions varied from fear and

defeatism 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 lie in the wealth of detail about the 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

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 Bristol's history from the Middle Ages to his present. Those familiar with Latimer's works, or with the previous pamphlets in this series, will know what to expect: a chronological listing of events in the public life of the city. Thus, for January 1935 we have, successively, notices of the Medical Officer of Health's testimony on cancer deaths, the amount of unpaid overtime worked by Council clerical staff, the visit of the Belgian ambassador, a lecture given by Winston Churchill, and an incident in the County Court where the judge rebuked a female witness for not wearing a hat. There is no interpretation or discussion, just 'facts', unsorted, presented in the order in which they occurred. Now, there

are doubtless many, particularly professional historians, who deplore such an approach as an uncritical regurgitation of the 'mere dross of history'; but there are many others - probably outnumbering the doubters - who will find this pamphlet hugely enjoyable, and that enjoyment will result from the very 'deficiencies' just listed. Whether or not this is 'History', this work is stuffed full of intriguing anecdotal snippets. For instance, there is the meeting, at Redland in 1935, calling for the abolition of all blood 'sports', whose speakers were drowned out by the baying, catcalls and, finally, fireworks emanating from the pro-hunting lobby; in 1938 four shoplifters from Knowle West were convicted on the evidence of a detective constable who had improvised the forerunner to CCTV, in the form of an eight foot ladder and a spy hole the size of a sixpence bored into the wall of a Redcliffe Hill shop; and the licensee of the White Horse Hotel prosecuted for allowing bagatelle to be played on a Sunday. Given the period, there are also many local echoes of ominous events on the wider stage: Moseley's Fascist boot boys on the march, and the demagogue himself addressing the Bristol Round Table; Sir Stafford Cripps, MP for Bristol East, expelled from the Labour party for supporting the anti-war movement. As war loomed, Bristolians' reactions ranged from prayer to taking delivery of air raid shelters, but life - that is, what with hindsight looks like an endless cycle of trivia - went on: on 12 September 1939 the same Council meeting that noted the declaration of war and the measures taken by the Emergency Committee also noted with approval that the Prevention of Damage by Rabbits Act had received the royal assent. Whatever threats would be posed by the Luftwaffe in the years to come, at least the good people of Bristol would have the means to defend themselves against rodents.

Peter Fleming

Postbag

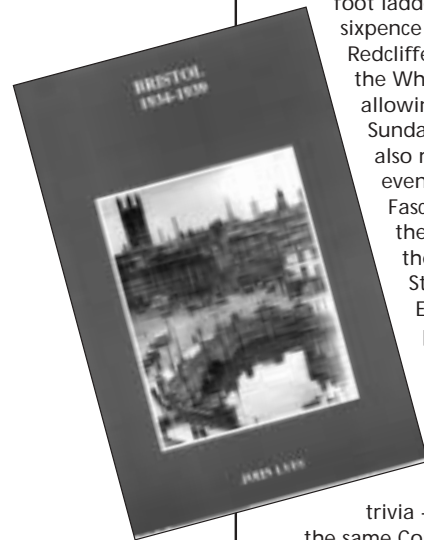
English broadcloth

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. Ken Rogers, the retired County Archivist is an expert on the West Country woollen industry and author of several books on it. I followed up the subject with him and found that he has seen no examples of the 'rainbow selvages' mentioned in Tom Leonard's letter in local weaving, and suggested that the cloth from this region was possibly too expensive for bulk-export. However, he is happy to help with further enquiries and may be contacted via the County Record Office.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Virginia Bainbridge
 Assistant Editor
 Victoria County History of Wiltshire
 University of the West of England



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