

# The Regional Historian

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The plaque on the recently restored Anti-Slavery Arch at Paganhill near Stroud, Gloucestershire

**Shipwrecked West Indians in Stapleton Prison 1796-1798...The  
Bristol Guildhall...Bristol's University Women 1911-1928, Letters  
Events, Reviews...and more!**

**RHC**  
REGIONAL HISTORY CENTRE



University of the  
West of England

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## Editorial

Welcome to this bumper edition of the *Regional Historian*. The striking plaque reproduced on our cover comes from the newly reconstructed Antislavery arch at Stroud, whose surprising history is told inside. Its story combines two themes, which feature largely in this issue: the richness of the South West's built environment; and the way global history informs this region's history.

Joe Bettey's article on St. Thomas's Church, Bristol and Trevor Pearce's piece on the Bristol Guildhall, afford us new insights about old buildings. Their research relates well to the focus of our forthcoming annual conference next July 10<sup>th</sup> on "A Sense of Place: Identity and the Built Environment in the South West", details of which can be found on the back cover. John Penny's investigation of West Indian prisoners at Stapleton Prison (now part of Blackberry Hill Hospital in Bristol) in the 1790's encompasses both our themes, as he uncovers the international story behind a local landmark.

The theme of 'the global in the local' has much preoccupied the Regional History Centre this year. The Bristol City Museum has commissioned the RHC to report on Bristol's ethnic diversity since 1850 as part of its new plans for a Museum of Bristol Life. Our feature on Black History Month in Bristol grew in part from that research. The RHC's growing institutional links with Gloucestershire and Wiltshire are evidenced in the articles by Carrie Smith, Neil Wynn and Peter Fleming. We are also pleased to include Brenda Bargett's piece on Bristol University's Association of University Women and RHC colleagues have provided reviews of an exciting array of books and CD-ROMs.

The Regional History Centre would like to thank our former editor Dr. Katherine Holden for all her good work in the past. Katherine is going on to other things at UWE, and we have endeavoured here to keep up the high standard she has set. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Madge Dresser



St. Thomas's Church, Bristol <http://www.davenapistar.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/victoria2pics.htm>

## St Thomas's Church, Bristol: From Medieval Splendour to Classical Elegance

by Joseph Bettey

There were 18 parish churches crowded in and around the walls of medieval Bristol. Churchwardens' accounts and other sources show that these churches continued to be well-maintained throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, in spite of the destruction of so many furnishings of great beauty and value during all the upheavals of the Reformation. Nonetheless, four churches were completely demolished and rebuilt during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were St Michael, Christ Church, St Nicholas and St Thomas. It is difficult to believe that all four were in such a precarious state that total demolition and rebuilding was required. It seems probable that churchwardens and congregations were influenced by a desire to have a modern building in the latest fashion. In particular, the practice of renting seats meant that a smaller chancel and a larger nave with galleries providing room for more pews or would greatly increase the church's income. This also meant that more of the congregation could see and hear the preacher, highly desirable when long sermons formed such an important part of the services. It illustrates the way in which attitudes have changed; that in the

18<sup>th</sup> century congregations were willing to spend large sums of money in order to have a new church in contemporary style, but two centuries later, congregations would go to any expense in order to preserve a medieval building.

The influence of all these factors can be seen in the demolition and rebuilding of St Thomas's church in 1789-93. The church had been founded at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to serve the growing population in the industrial suburbs south of the river Avon. It was originally dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury who was murdered in 1170, but when during the Reformation the veneration of Thomas Becket was forbidden, the dedication was changed to St Thomas the Apostle. Throughout the Middle Ages the area around the church was occupied by cloth-workers, craftsmen, retailers, mariners and merchants, including the wealthy Canynges family. The bequests and endowments made to the church meant that by the end of the Middle Ages the original Norman church had been rebuilt and furnished in the grandest style.

The church consisted of a nave and chancel of equal height, with north and south aisles, each with a chapel at its east end. The tower was situated at the west end of the north aisle with arches into the aisle and into the nave, like the tower of St Mary Redcliffe. The whole church measured 138 feet from the west door to the high altar, and was almost 60 feet wide. The Bristol surgeon and historian, William Barrett, writing in 1780 shortly before the church was demolished, said that it was second only to St Mary Redcliffe in the excellence of its architecture and the splendour of its furnishings.

No detailed illustrations of the medieval church have been found, but on Jacob Millerd's plan of Bristol dated 1673 St Thomas's church is depicted with a small cupola or lantern over the chancel arch, having large windows to throw light on the rood screen which divided the nave from the chancel. Evidence of the earliest church survives in a piece of late 12<sup>th</sup>-century stonework with chevron moulding which is now built into the tower. Some finely-carved roof bosses, as well as the surviving tower, also indicate the quality of the late-medieval architecture which was destroyed in 1789. The wealth of the church and the opulence of its medieval furnishings are evident from two pairs of 13<sup>th</sup>-century candlesticks which belong to the church and are now in Bristol City Museum. They were made in Limoges, and the copper base is richly inlaid with enamel and decorated in bright colours. Further evidence is provided by an early 15<sup>th</sup>-century illuminated bible which was made

for use in the church, and by some pages of an illuminated and highly-coloured missal which was used on the high altar of the church. The pages of the missal survive because they were later used to bind some churchwardens' accounts of 1559-62; these are now in the Bristol Record Office.

A remarkable feature of St Thomas's church is the amount of documentary material which survives. From the Middle Ages there are numerous wills giving details of the gifts to the church and requests for burial within its walls, deeds of properties belonging to the church, and details of the four chantries founded within it. Many more sources survive from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These include the parish registers from 1552, churchwardens' accounts from 1543, rentals of church property, lists of tolls collected at the market held just outside the church, and information about the demolition and replacement of the church.

The well-endowed chantries and generous bequests to the church meant that by the end of the Middle Ages it was served by at least six priests, and that the interior was filled with statues, lights, plate, carved screens and richly-coloured wall-paintings. The churchwardens' accounts show the effect of all the Reformation changes, the destruction of many of its furnishings, the suppression of the chantries and the confiscation of the valuable silver-ware belonging to the church.

In spite of these losses, St Thomas's church remained a wealthy institution, and throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the churchwardens' accounts show continual expenditure on the fabric and on the furnishings and equipment for the church. The area around the church remained busy and prosperous with numerous inns, a variety of trades and industries and all the activities of the dockside. Writing in 1710 the vicar remarked that he could not hold services in the church on Thursdays because of the large cattle market held in the surrounding streets which hindered people getting to the church. The taverns and lodging houses near the church provided accommodation for sailors, and in 1786 it was in the *Seven Stars* inn which still exists beside the church that the young clergyman, Thomas Clarkson, collected much of the evidence about the barbarous trade in slaves which eventually led to its abolition.

The expenditure on the furnishings of the church during the 18<sup>th</sup> century gives an indication of its wealth. In 1716 a splendid altar and elaborately-carved reredos was purchased from William

Killigrew, joiner, at a cost of £170. A new organ was purchased in 1728 from John Harris of London. The cost of the organ and its carved case was £360. In 1740 a three-decker pulpit was purchased, and in 1755 the churchwardens made an agreement with two local carpenters, Joseph Llewellyn and John Harris, for a complete set of large oak pews and for a new oak floor throughout the church. The pews were to be made 'after the same manner as in Christ Church in the same city'.

In view of this lavish expenditure on the fabric and furnishings of the church, and the fact that the church did not lack for money, nor were the churchwardens neglectful of their duties, the events of 1786-89 are a great puzzle. The mystery is the more impenetrable because for this period the churchwardens' accounts do not survive. In 1786 routine repairs to the church were said to reveal serious faults in the structure, and three parishioners were called to report on the condition of the building. The principal expert was James Allen, an architect and carver, who lived close to the church in St Thomas' Street. Little is known about him except that he was involved in various building projects in Bristol and Clifton during the 1780s and 1790s. Like many other architects and builders, he was made bankrupt by the rapid collapse in property prices and building work which followed the outbreak of war against France in 1793.

Allen was joined by James West, a mason, and by Edward Stock, a carpenter. The three men produced a dramatic report, declaring that there were major faults in the structure, the roof was unsound, the walls were unstable, and that the whole building was in a dangerous condition. They recommended that it should be taken down without delay. In view of the fact that the building had apparently been well maintained during the previous decades, it is tempting to suggest that these three experts had exaggerated the problems in an attempt to secure work for themselves. There is no evidence to suggest that this suspicion is justified, and the churchwardens and parishioners clearly took the report seriously and apparently without any objections. In fact the parish acted with great speed and urgency. Scaffolding was placed around the church and in February 1789 the building was closed for services. A meeting of the parish vestry then decided, again without objections, that the whole church should be demolished, and that James Allen should be commissioned to draw up plans for a new building. In June 1789 Allen's plans were approved, and it was estimated that the new church would cost £5000. Early in 1790 the vestry obtained a private Act of Parliament enabling the necessary money to be raised

by loans, parish rates and the appropriation of parish funds including the tolls collected at the weekly market. During 1791 the old church was demolished, except for the tower which was said to be in a reasonable condition. The materials were sold by auction, although the furnishings of the old church were retained. The progress of the new building can be followed in detail from the surviving accounts. They include numerous payments to James Allen, Edward Stock and James West for their work, as well as references to the work of other masons and carpenters and to the employment of smiths, glaziers, carvers and paviors. Work proceeded rapidly. The foundation stone of the new church was laid in July 1792, and on 21 December 1793 the first service could be held. Work continued for several years thereafter, and by 1796 it appears that £5855 3s 11d had been spent. The rebuilding accounts continue until 1825, recording the repayment of loans and mortgages.

Since the church was closely surrounded by other buildings, Allen designed a plain exterior with rendered walls. Only at the east end did he provide more elaborate decoration with a carved pediment. The medieval tower was retained, and the demolition of buildings at the west end now gives a view which was not intended by the architect. The interior is designed in a classical style typical of the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church of England. It is evidently designed for preaching, with a small chancel and prominent pulpit. The square pillars with plain shafts and Tuscan capitals support a vaulted ceiling, the arches resting on cherubs with folded wings.

Many of the fine furnishings from the old church were retained, and provide much interest for the visitor. The striking altar-piece and reredos of 1716 is especially notable, with high-quality wood carving. This is the finest reredos in Bristol. Originally the panels were filled with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Ten Commandments, but these were replaced in 1907 with paintings of Biblical scenes by Fritz von Kamptz of Clifton. Other furnishings include the west gallery, the organ and organ case, the carved pulpit of 1740, the royal arms of Charles I and a Jacobean sword rest for the Mayor's ceremonial sword.

St Thomas's church survived the bombing during the Second World War, although many nearby churches were destroyed or extensively damaged. After the war few residents remained in the vicinity of the church, and in 1979 it was finally closed. In 1988 it was invested in the Churches Conservation Trust. After considerable

repair and restoration, it is hoped soon to open the church for visitors. It is well-worth visiting.

*Sources*

The records of St Thomas's Church are now in the Bristol Record Office.

Other information can be found in the following:

*Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Transactions*, 27, 1904, 340-51

R.W. Keen, *The Story of a Bristol Church*, 1986

T.P. Wadley, ed., *Abstracts of Wills*, 1886

C.F.W. Denning, *The Eighteenth-Century Architecture of Bristol*, 1923

W. Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bristol*, 1952

M.J. Crossley-Evans, 'The Church of England and the City of Bristol', in Peter Harris, ed., *Post-War Bristol 1945-1965*, Bristol Historical Association, 2000, 49-92

*J.H. Bettey*



## Pictures in Focus: the Bristol Guildhall

By Trevor Pearce

In 1841 Bristol Town Council decided pull down and rebuild the medieval Guildhall, in the heart of the old city. For centuries it had been a highly visible focus of civic life: it contained the Law Courts, which bore tangible witness to Bristol's proudly held county status, and the Lord Mayor's chambers. It had also been host to the city's most prestigious public meetings and to rumbustious election nominations. The new Guildhall was to be designed by the City Surveyor R. S. Pope and as a major civic

building was inevitably an important statement of Bristolian identity, or at least of one version of it. It was to be amongst the earliest contributions made to the cityscape by the new, (partly, and selectively) elected council which replaced the old closed Corporation as a result of the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act.

These paragraphs briefly consider the exterior of the new building – its style, decoration and setting – in a historical context. If the Perpendicular Gothic style alone is insufficiently redolent of the city's long history and of its Christian associations, the point is driven home by the decoration of the façade. This bears the coats of arms of renowned men from Bristol's past such as Cabot and Penn, and six statues – two former Recorders of the city, two icons of the mercantile philanthropic ideal which was so important to the city elite's self-image, namely Whitson and Colston, Edward III, the monarch who granted the Corporation Charter in 1373, and the current monarch, Victoria. Despite the fact that the gothic revival was then in full swing and paradoxically, thoroughly contemporary, we are certainly not left with an impression of a new, democratic, modern council attempting to put behind it the elitism, partiality and incompetence that the unreformed Corporation represented to many inhabitants and outsiders alike.

Rather, we may think of civic pride, and particularly pride in Bristol's heritage: impressions consistent with a concept of civic virtue which was rooted in Bristol's mercantile past. The design of the Guildhall seems to suggest that this was not the province of the old Corporation alone: perhaps unsurprising in view of a pronounced degree of continuity between membership of the old body and the new. Comparison of this civic building and, for example, the town halls of Bristol's commercial rival Liverpool and the rapidly expanding Leeds, both built a few years later, suggests however that civic pride can take varying forms, and points up the significance of style: on the one hand pride in commerce and the past conveyed by the thoroughly English Perpendicular; on the other hand, it may be suggested, the confidence, assertiveness and cultural respectability represented by neo-Classicism (which interestingly was also employed in many of Bristol's public and semi-public buildings including the Bank of England branch which stands next to the Guildhall, and which was built at about the same time).

Significant also is the situation of the Guildhall in the street. This was dictated in part by the available site, but nevertheless, how might the Guildhall have been intended to appear to the ordinary Bristolian, to whom it would have been the exemplification of justice and the law, and perhaps of Bristol

government itself? Only a visit – which fortunately we are able to make – can begin to give us any real idea of this, and by standing in the street opposite, we can sense the presence of the building in the street, and the sense of importance, significance, even awe which the central oriel in particular might have conveyed – presumably intentionally. This would have been perhaps strengthened by the setting which the authorities chose, in that traffic was banned from the narrow street. Those who produced the building did not intend that the law – or the city of Bristol – should be taken lightly.

**Suggested Reading:**

Dana Arnold, *Reading Architectural History: An Annotated Anthology* (London: Routledge, 2002)

Graham Bush, *Bristol and its Municipal Government, 1820-1851* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1976)

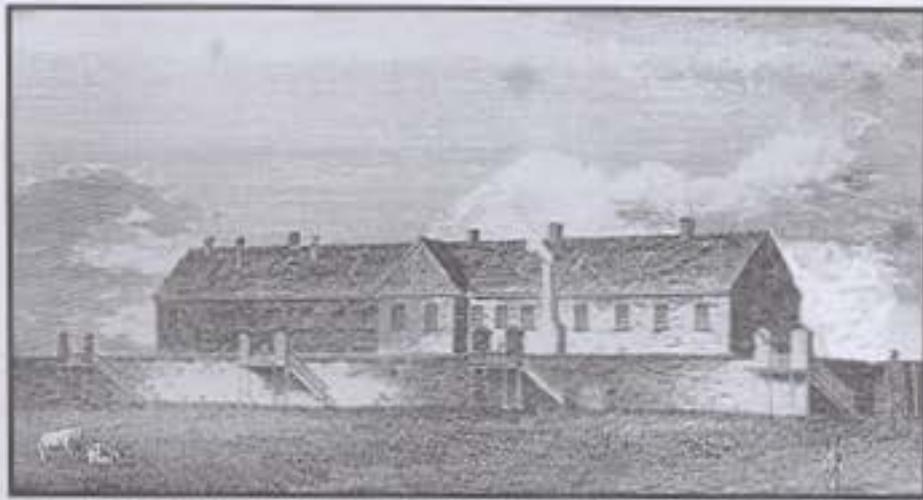
Clare Crick, *Victorian Buildings in Bristol*, (Bristol: Bristol and West Building Society, 1975)

John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century* (Bristol: Kingsmead Reprints ( 1970)

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**The Shipwrecked West Indians in Stapleton Prison,  
Bristol  
1796 to 1798**

by John Penny MA



Stapleton prison, early nineteenth century

#### INTRODUCTION

On February 2nd 1793 France declared war on Britain, the resulting Revolutionary War lasting until the Treaty of Amiens, signed on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1802, brought a short lived and uneasy peace between the warring nations. At first Britain pursued fairly limited aims, believing that the conflict would be of a fairly short duration, and one of these was gaining colonies at the expense of France. Consequently French possessions in the West Indies were seen as fair game and in January 1794, Lieutenant General Sir Charles Grey's 7000 troops, after a six week voyage, reached the British possession of Barbados. Despite their small numbers they at once attacked the nearby French islands, and as a result of brilliant co-operation between Grey and Vice-Admiral Sir John Jervis, by the end of May had overcome all resistance in Martinique, St.Lucia and Guadeloupe.

However, the real campaign had scarcely begun, as almost immediately the victors were simultaneously assailed by reinforcements from France, which had evaded the loose British blockade, and a Negro and Mulatto rising in the captured territories brought about by the French Republic's shrewd renunciation of

slavery in their West Indian territories on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1794. Nevertheless, it was yellow fever rather than any other cause which robbed Britain of her West Indian conquests, for within a few months the disease had destroyed 12,000 of her finest troops and reduced the survivors to trembling skeletons. All of this transpired quickly to remove the British of much of their newly conquered territory, and following French-encouraged insurgency they were forced to evacuate St.Lucia in June 1795 and Guadeloupe in December of the same year, although Martinique was retained by Britain until the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.

In the meanwhile, French reinforcements kept slipping through the blockade, with 6000 troops reaching Guadeloupe in January 1796, while shortly after rebellions started in British possessions in the Windward Islands, enthusiastically supported by the French. The revolt on Grenada, which began in March 1795, involved not only the Negro inhabitants, but also native Caribs and many of the French residents, and resulted in the governor and leading inhabitants being murdered, and British authority being confined the town of St.George's, while following a Carib rising on St.Vincent the garrison was reduced to holding just the capital, Kingstown.

#### THE WEST INDIES TASK FORCE

New expeditions to the West Indies were delayed by a lack of men and equipment in the Autumn of 1795, but in November of that year General Sir Ralph Abercromby was at last ordered to make his way there, and consequently on December 8<sup>th</sup>, in company with Rear Admiral Sir Hugh Christian, he set out from Spithead with a fleet of about 200 ships carrying the army of some 15,000 men. Unfortunately, almost immediately this task force ran into such "contrary and tremendous gales of wind and heavy seas" that many in the convoy were eventually forced to turn for home, with the result that from this expedition only about 6000 men succeeded in crossing the Atlantic. The first of the stragglers from the fleet arrived back in Milford Haven, Falmouth and Plymouth, while Abercromby and Christian, together with nine men of war and about 48 transports, eventually limped into Portsmouth on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1796, although a further 20 or so ships, all heavy sailers, were unable to drop anchor until the following day.

In spite of the terrible conditions experienced aboard these ships, the vast majority of the troops returned to England were in a healthier state than could reasonably be expected, and after a short

rest on the Isle of Wight were reinforced and ready to embark once again for the West Indies. However, the same could not be said for their ships, for these had been subjected to such violent gales and heavy seas for so long that many of them were unfit for further service until large scale repairs had been undertaken. Consequently, in order to carry the force of 9000 men that had been assembled, it was necessary to obtain additional transports and to allocate alternative warships to the new task force under Rear Admiral Christian, which was ordered to sail as soon as weather permitted.

Embarkation was quickly completed and the convoy, accompanied by the *Canada* (Captain George Brown) a 74 gun third rater, started out from Spithead on February 10<sup>th</sup> together with Admiral Gardner's squadron which was to escort them down the English Channel. Unfortunately, the fleet immediately ran into such strong south-westerly winds that the outward bound vessels were driven back, and it was not until the 15<sup>th</sup> that General Abercromby aboard the 38 gun frigate *Arethusa* (Captain Thomas Wolley), was at last able to leave the Isle of Wight and begin his journey to the Leeward Islands.

The *Arethusa* was a fast sailer and when, on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1796, she anchored in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, Abercromby found two men of war, *La Picque* and *Charon*, with four East India ships and about 90 transports, victuallers, storeships and merchantmen, the more successful part of the troubled first convoy, enthusiastically awaiting his arrival. These vessels had arrived around March 10<sup>th</sup> carrying over 6000 men who were then able to join the 4000 rangers and French royalist troops already assembled on the island. By contrast, the *Canada*, with 109 of its convoy still in sight, was still at sea at the end of March, and it was not until April 2<sup>nd</sup> that they finally joined up with the rest of the British task force in Carlisle Bay.

#### OPERATIONS IN THE WEST INDIES

Abercromby decided to start his campaign with an attack on the Dutch settlements of Demerara and Barbice, and on April 15<sup>th</sup> a detached a body of troops set sail, arriving off the enemy coast on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and accepting their surrender the following day. This was quickly followed by three landings on St.Lucia, which although nominally back in French hands was in open revolt, some 2000 ex-slaves having taken the opportunity of the conflict between Britain and France to make a bid for complete independence. The first troops were put ashore at Longueville's Bay on April 26<sup>th</sup>, with a

second landing at Choc Bay on the 27<sup>th</sup>, followed by the third at Anse La Raye on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Some hard fighting then ensued, but on May 24<sup>th</sup> General Abercromby and Rear Admiral Christian were able to take the island's surrender on behalf of the British government. The subjugation of St.Lucia having been accomplished, Abercromby's men then moved on to restore order and evict French troops and their volunteer allies from the British possessions of St.Vincent and Grenada, this task being completed by June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1796.

### PRISONERS OF WAR

The Articles of Capitulation for St.Lucia dealt at some length with the matter of prisoners of war, and these stated the forces of the French Republic who defended the island should be allowed to march out of the fort of Morne Fortune complete with their arms and baggage, and with drums beating and colours flying, after which they were expected to surrender their arms, although the officers were allowed to retain their swords and the volunteers serving with the French forces, their knapsacks. They were all to be treated as prisoners of war and to retain this status until exchanged and sent back to France, while the officers would be allowed to either take their wives and children with them, or to dispose of them as they pleased. After the garrison had left the fort they were to occupy houses in its neighbourhood until vessels became available to receive them.

Under the terms of surrender signed on St.Vincent on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1796 it was ordained that although the rebellious Negro slaves were to return to their respective proprietors, the French troops from the garrison were to march out with all the honours of war and become prisoners, with their officers retaining their private effects. It was also made clear that although those rebels who had committed murder, or burnt houses or estates, were to be subjected to the judgement of the laws of the island, all others were to be pardoned for having departed from their allegiance to the King.

Finally, after Granada had been retaken it was agreed that the French military forces, but not including any person not formerly free, should become prisoners of war, and remain as such until exchanged. The garrison of each post would be allowed to march out with the honours of war, after which they were to lay down their arms and be taken to a convenient place pending embarkation. In addition, the officers were permitted to retain their swords, and both officers and men their baggage.

As a result of the operations on St.Lucia, St.Vincent and Granada about 3000 prisoners of war were taken, 2000 of these on St.Lucia, over 700 on St.Vincent and at least 180 on Grenada, and included among these were two black Generals, one of whom was the famous Marinier who had on several occasions defeated the British, both on St.Lucia and on St.Vincent where he finally surrendered to Abercromby and Wolley. Although the vast majority of these were the free Black and Mulatto volunteers who had proved such tenacious opponents, a number of Europeans from the French Republican Army were also mixed in with them. All the captured troops, and most of the officers and their families were eventually secured aboard the transports moored in St.Lucia's Choc Bay, before being taken across the North Atlantic to Admiralty prisons in various parts of England. However, Rear Admiral Harvey, was concerned at the possible suffering that the prisoners might endure, and in September issued orders to the agents for prisoners of war on Martinique and St.Lucia to purchase such clothing as they might need in order "to screen them from the inclemency of the weather during their passage to England", an act of kindness for which he was "highly appraised" by a surprisingly tender hearted Admiralty.

#### THE CONVOY HOME

Some 103 vessels were to make the journey back to England in a convoy escorted by the elderly Ganges (Captain Robert McDouall) a 74 gun third rater, and the 44 gun frigate Charon (Captain J.Stephenson), the fleet leaving Choc Bay on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1796, en-route for St.Kitts where they arrived on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Here the vessels took on extra supplies of food and water and the Ganges picked up General Marinier, before they all finally set sail for Britain on July 29<sup>th</sup>. It was an uneventful, if slow voyage, and on September 8<sup>th</sup> with 103 sail still in sight the Ganges was to be found about 1000 miles east of Newfoundland, while by the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and with 92 ships still visible, she was nearing the southern tip of Ireland. About this time some vessels began to split from the convoy and one, the Superb, a fast sailer, put into Plymouth on the 24<sup>th</sup>, while about 30 others changed course to take them up St.George's Channel directly to Liverpool and other north-western ports. The remaining 70 vessels made for Crookhaven Bay, behind Mizen Head in County Cork, where they anchored on September 26<sup>th</sup> 1796, and after replenishing their supplies of fresh food and water set out on October 1<sup>st</sup> for Portsmouth, their ultimate destination.

To begin with all went well, but the weather quickly deteriorated and on the 5<sup>th</sup>, when the Ganges attempted to lead the fleet between the Isles of Scilly and Land's End, stormy showers and a south-south-westerly wind prevented 30 of the vessels from getting round to the Lizard, giving the Captain MacDouall no option but to remain with them until conditions improved. As a result, some of the 33 vessels which made it into the English Channel put in at Plymouth, while the Charon escorted others to their anchorage at Spithead, where, the following day, she was finally joined by the Ganges and a number of other transports.

### THE WRECK OF THE LONDON

The bad weather, which continued for several days with mainly south-westerly winds and stormy showers, also caused a few of the east bound vessels to be driven up into the mouth of the Bristol Channel, and on the evening of October 7<sup>th</sup> a transport from the Ganges convoy, carrying French prisoners and troops, put into Ilfracombe leaking badly. The following night the weather was even worse and in Plymouth it was reported that around midnight "there was the most tremendous storm of wind, thunder and lightning and hail, ever witnessed in this part of the country. The gale was from the south-west and violent for nearly two hours".

The atrocious conditions existing over much of the South-West England may well have been the final nail in the coffin of one of the last stragglers from the Ganges convoy, for at about 8.30 pm on the 9<sup>th</sup> the London of London, a 300 ton transport commanded by William Robertson, which had on board mostly black French prisoners, attempted to enter Ilfracombe harbour during a violent gale. However, the unfortunate vessel was driven on the rocks near the entrance to the pier, and by daybreak had been dashed to pieces. At the time it was said that the sad accident had been caused by a lack of skill on the part of the pilot, "as the wind was blowing directly fair for the harbour", and although local seamen made valiant efforts to save the passengers and crew, the *Exeter Flying Post* subsequently reported that about 50 prisoners had been drowned, and those that got on shore "exhibited a shocking spectacle".

The *Lloyds Register* lists a ship called London with Robertson as its master in 1795, and as it is not to be found in subsequent editions this can only refer to the transport lost at Ilfracombe. Although she had been built at Shoreham back in 1764 the London, owned by James Mather, was still described as in good condition in 1795,

having been thoroughly re-fitted in 1788 and had a new deck put in the following year. During the previous few years she had made voyages to Honduras, where British wood-cutters exploiting the valuable mahogany had established themselves in nominally Spanish territory, but exactly when she was hired by the Admiralty is unclear as so many vessels at that time bore the name London, and the Transport Board's "Register of Information as to Ships" only exists from 1796, with four different London's being mentioned in the first three months of that year! It is just possible that she entered Admiralty service in late 1795 and was one of the transports that made it to the West Indies on the first attempt. Alternatively, she might possibly be the London which, on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1796, arrived at Portsmouth from Southampton in the company of seven other transports, for although her tonnage is given as 333 no London of that size appears in the Lloyds Registers of 1795, 96 or 97.

#### STAPLETON PRISON

Once the survivors from the London were safely ashore, the Navy's Transport Board handed over responsibility for them to the Commissioners of Sick, Wounded and Prisoners. Consequently, on October 27<sup>th</sup> they sent a letter regarding the unhappy little band to Richard Allard, the civilian Agent-Contractor at the Admiralty Prison at Stapleton, near Bristol, and this read, "we acquaint you for your guidance that we have given directions to Mr Smith, Agent for Sick and Wounded at Biddeford to have a small vessel for the purpose of carrying between thirty and forty French prisoners from Ilfracombe, where they now are, to Bristol, and as they are chiefly, if not all, natives of the West Indies, we direct you to take care that they suffer as little as possible from the coldness of the season".

The Admiralty's insistence that special arrangements be made to ensure that their West Indian captives were provided with extra warmth gave poor Mr Allard additional problems he could have well done without. Stapleton, it seems, had not originally been considered as a destination for any from the men from the Ganges convoy, as prior to 1800 it possessed just one accommodation block, some 256 feet long and 45 feet wide, and although its two floors were partitioned lengthways, this still only provided four separate narrow rooms. Although prisoners of various nationalities had been constantly coming and going since the first 550 Revolutionary War captives had been transferred to Stapleton in June 1793, within three years the jail was suffering from serious overcrowding, in spite of a large scale repatriation having been

carried out in December 1795. This situation was brought about mainly by Allard being forced to receive a group of 700 French prisoners from Kinsale, in Ireland, the arrival of which, on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1796, caused him to protest to his Admiralty masters.

Nevertheless, except the London's survivors he did, and *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* told its readers that on Saturday December 3<sup>rd</sup> 1796 "between thirty and forty Maroon prisoners from the West Indies were escorted by a troop of horse through this city to the prison at Stapleton". It is interesting that the paper called them "Maroons", as this was the term used to describe escaped slaves who had over the years established their own communities on various West Indian Islands. The original Maroons (from *cimarrones*, the Spanish for mountaineers) had run away from their owners when the British took Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, and in the interior mountains succeeded in maintaining their freedom and independence until 1796.

On December 4<sup>th</sup> the captives' personal details were written in the prison's General Entry Book and the 31 of them, all described as having been taken on St.Vincent and Grenada, were allocated numbers between 2681 and 2711. This relatively small intake was made up of 2710 and 2711, Colonel Commandant Heurmaux of Fort Charlotte, St.Vincent, and his wife, four French soldiers, 2681 Dumat; 2682 Lara; 2690 Charles; and 2706 Biardelle; 11 West Indian Mulattos, 2683 De Grave; 2685 La Combe; 2689 Oycuse; 2691 Balai; 2692 Joseph; 2694 Victor; 2701 Pierre; 2703 La Lainte; 2704 Baboud; 2702 Pepierre; and 2708 Boureau; and 14 African Negroes, 2684 Sauchagrave; 2686 La Virtue; 2687 Hela; 2688 Felis; 2693 Dominique; 2695 Paschal; 2696 Lesperance; 2697 Andee; 2698 Jaques; 2699 Lindau; 2700 Timothee; 2702 Michael; 2705 Pierre; and 2709 Cadeaux.

The General Entry Book had a column to describe the "Quality" of the prisoners, in which was given their rank, profession or trade, and in this the Negroes and Mulattos were all described as "slaves" although it should be understood that this was a job description rather than their legal status, slavery in effect having been stopped in the British Isles by Lord Mansfield's court ruling of 1772. [*n.b. recent scholars have argued that the 1772 ruling left slave status ambiguous, ruling only that slaves in England could not be forcibly repatriated abroad—ed.*] Of the original 31 survivors from the London, the French Colonel and his wife left on parole on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1796, to enter into gentile captivity in the company of

other French officers and their families at Chippenham, while two of the French soldiers died in the prison hospital, 2706 Biradelle on February 15<sup>th</sup> 1797 and 2681 Dumat on April 3<sup>rd</sup> of the same year. The same fate also befell two Mulattos, 2694 Victor who passed away on December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1796 and 2701 Pierre on January 15<sup>th</sup> 1798.

### REPATRIATION

As a result of the Cartel, the written agreement between Britain and French Republic which regulated the treatment of prisoners, throughout the conflict large groups of prisoners of war were regularly repatriated to France, either as sick or dying men, or in exchange for certain classes of British troops and seamen in French hands. The specially hired small brigs or schooners which plied between the two countries were therefore known as cartel boats, and prior to sailing the master of each had to obtain Admiralty approval, while the white flag of truce itself was sent directly from London. The prisoners from Stapleton were normally marched, or taken by wagon if invalids, around the outskirts of the city, across the Downs, and down to the Lamplighters Hall, an inn which still exists at Shirehampton, where they rested prior to being taken across the Avon on the ferry to Pill, from where the cartel boats usually sailed for France.

As those arriving on the London had surrendered under Articles of Capitulation which required them to be repatriated to France, their incarceration, suffered on scanty rations in the unhealthy and overcrowded atmosphere of Stapleton Prison, was therefore relatively short. Consequently, the first two of these, 2697 Andee and 2700 Timothee, both Negroes and probably quite sickly, were discharged on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1797 and put aboard the Nancy cartel boat, which Captain Lewis had recently brought over from Swansea, and whose next port of call was to be La Rochelle in France. The remaining group of 23 who had been saved from the wreck of the London, by then comprising the two surviving French soldiers, 12 Negroes and 9 Mulattos, were finally released on January 19<sup>th</sup> 1798 and embarked on the 160 ton Smallbridge, a vessel which on January 7<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Clements at Plymouth had ordered Captain Jackson to sail for King Road, at the mouth of the Bristol Avon, its final destination being recorded in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal as the French port of Brest, in Brittany.

Although parts of the old Stapleton Prison still exist in the present day Blackberry Hill Hospital complex at Fishponds, in Bristol, and a certain amount of its documentation survives in the Public Record

Office, at Kew, at this time we know nothing of the fate of the London survivors after their return to France, so perhaps the next step should be for another historian to examine the contents of the French Military Archive, to discover if any of them ever did return to their homes and families in the West Indies where, in 1803, Napoleon reinstated slavery.

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### **Pictures in Focus: Anti-Slavery and the Arch**

**by Anne Mackintosh**

The architecturally magnificent Archway at Paganhill near Stroud now stands isolated in the footpath, but when erected by Henry Wyatt, the new owner of Farmhill Park, it was the triumphal entrance to his carriage drive. The adjoining Lodge House is still lived in though not by the gatekeeper! And the fine wrought iron gates now hang at Dodington House.

The year 1833 was part of a period of tumultuous local politics. In 1832 Stroud had been created an electoral division with the right to send one M.P. to Parliament. The local clothiers, holding strong Whig loyalties, were happy to attack the neighbouring Tory landowners on an issue about which many undoubtedly felt strongly. The issue of slavery was one which could divide the parties locally as the Codrington family, of Dodington, owned a West Indian island. But to many the issue was as much a moral one. It was at Ebley Chapel that the Stroud Anti-Slavery

Association was established. The strong religious influence is reflected in the fact that five clergymen, including Benjamin Parsons of Ebley Chapel, joined Quakers and millowners such as John Figgins Marling, the tenant of Ebley mill, in signing a torrent of resolutions. The example of Ebley was followed by others in the Stroud area.

In reply the West India planters were believed to have hired a Peter Borthwick who held disputations in a public room at the White Hart Inn, near the Cross at Stroud. Whether he actually encouraged debate at these two meetings is unclear. He certainly prompted a series of pamphlets seeking to answer his arguments.

One of these, perhaps with some hyperbole, suggested that Stroud had been "agitated by strifes and questions to a degree almost unparalleled in its history". Certainly when the election of December 1832 was held the issue of slavery played a significant part in the final speeches by the candidates. About 5000 crammed the space in front of the Royal George Inn. Scaffolding of a neighbouring unfinished building served as the hustings. The successful candidate, W.H.Hyett, of Painswick House, promised to vote for the abolition of slavery but feared the anarchy that might occur if emancipation was immediate and unconditional. After the speeches the Anti-Slavery Society used the opportunity to question the candidates.

The Society kept up the pressure on Hyett by sending him, as M.P., a petition urging immediate and entire abolition of slavery without compensation. This proposal was too radical for the new Whig government; in 1834 the Emancipation Act paid the slave owners £20 million. However Henry Wyatt was sufficiently delighted to erect the Arch at the entrance to his carriage drive.

Inscribed "Erected to commemorate the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies the first of August AD MDCCCXXXIV" it is unique as the only monument of this size in Britain to this great event that had taken so many years to achieve.

In the 1950s a new road was built for a housing estate and secondary school on the site of Henry Wyatt's house. The symbolic importance of the Arch was sufficient for Archway School to be named after it and suggestions about removal to be firmly rejected. In 1961/2 Stroud Urban District Council spent over £1000 renovating it, much of the money being donated.

By 2000 the stonework of the Arch had deteriorated, and there were suggestions to move the Arch, perhaps to the Stratford Park or to central Stroud. After The Stroud News and Journal made it one of their Millenium Projects, a local group raised funding of £24,144 from the Local Heritage Initiative, Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council and The Langtree Trust. The Arch was repaired to a high conservation standard by Nicholas Quayle of Tetbury using specialist architect Annie Page of Andrew Townsend Architects of Faringdon. New hard landscaping is under way to enhance the setting of the grade II listed Arch and a bronze plaque will be erected on the wall next to the Arch.

Archway School is closely involved in the project and studies on both the history of slavery and contemporary slavery have been incorporated into the syllabus. Each year a group of students travel to Geneva to attend presentations and deliver speeches at the United Nations. They continue to put pressure on the Government to do more to tackle modern-day slavery. A play entitled 'Freedom's Arch' was written and performed by a local drama group, The Football Poets, working with local schools. A leaflet and an anti-slavery website featuring the Arch are currently at the design stage. The Anti-Slavery Arch Group is made up of representatives of Stroud Preservation Trust, Archway School, Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council, and Churches Together.

Even now, as we approach the 21st century, the spirit of Wyatt and the other "warm friends" in Stroud to the abolition of Negro slavery deserves to be honoured and appreciated.

*A leaflet on the arch is available from Stroud Tourist Information Centre, The Subscription Rooms, Stroud . Telephone 01453 760960.*

## **Bristol's Black History Month: a personal perspective**

**by Madge Dresser**

Did Black history month in Bristol (October 2003) actually *mean* anything? And if so, to whom? It certainly was lively, with a wide range of meetings, launches, workshops, concerts and exhibitions filling the October calendar. But what did it signify beyond a civic gesture towards political correctness?

The three events I attended convinced me, something important *was* going on. Issues were raised at all three venues which posed crucial questions not only for Bristolians of African descent but for Bristol's sense of its civic self. Indeed they touched at the very heart of History itself.

I came to the first event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, after one of my PhD students, Edson Burton casually mentioned he was heading a panel debating the existence of Black History at the new Black Development Agency Centre in Lawrence Hill. Family obligations obliged me to come late and leave early, but for the hour and a half I was able to stay, I learned a great deal. I had come in part to support the event, in part to hear an old acquaintance, Hakim Adi (of Middlesex University), whose work as co-founder of the Black and Asian Studies Association and as editor of its newsletter I have long admired. Given that Hakim was a Marxist, and that other panel members came from very different ideological places, it promised to be an interesting encounter.

Jendayi Serwah (of the Afrikan History at the John Lynch African Education at the Mill in Bristol) would probably describe herself as inspired by the teachings of Marcus Garvey, and for her it is white racism not class struggle which is at the root of most oppression. Other speakers included Valerie Bernard, head of Behavioural Sciences at Newbold College (a Seventh day Adventist College near London founded in 1901). Her position as an academic, an evangelical Christian and a parent informed her insights about the crucial need for children to have positive historical role models. Jalal Nurridin of the Last Poets group, an African American poet credited for being a founding father of Rap, offered an evocative stream-of-consciousness series of remarks which every so often contained a phrase or poetic image which neatly captured a poetic truth about History and the nature of oppression. Edson Burton, the

chair, is himself a poet and an historian. His soon to be completed dissertation is on the long-standing relationship between the Church of England and Afro-Caribbeans in post-war Britain, so it came as no surprise when he asked the panel about the importance of critical method in historical studies. The audience of about 70 was made up almost entirely of people of African descent, a testament to the importance the issue of Black History has for Black Bristolians. The contributions were as varied as the philosophical positions of the individual panelists and the debate afterwards probed some painful areas in thoughtful if diverse ways. The negative impact which slavery's erasure of Black historical continuities has had on the self-image of young Black people today was a matter of real concern. So too were the tensions between celebrating Black achievement and presenting a History which could withstand critical scrutiny.

The issues raised at this event re-surfaced in the more heated discussion engendered at the debate staged by the Bristol Equalities Unit, which I chaired at the Create Centre on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. Provocatively and perhaps unhelpfully entitled 'The Positive aspects of Slavery' the panel featured the *Voice* journalist Tony Sewell whose article on the Legacy of Slavery argued for a more celebratory view of Slavery's cultural legacy—the jazz, blues and Creole culture in general which were by-products of the oppressive slave regimes. The *Independent's* columnist, the London broadcaster Yasmin Alibhai Brown, immediately rounded on Sewell accusing him of siding with those revisionist historians such as Niall Ferguson who were recasting and indeed sanitising the British Empire's impact on the world. Wende Went of the Bristol Race Forum who was also at the panel asked Sewell to justify himself while Paul Stephenson likened the Slave Trade to the Holocaust and said it was negative aspects which deserved the most attention.

The audience was at first upset with Sewell. Some, adherents of a more racially-oriented school of History, argued for an 'Afrikan-centered' view of History. They were suspicious of overly rationalist approaches, seeing academic method as a tool used by privileged white academics and their collaborators to demean Black achievement. They wanted to feature positive Black role models in History for their children.

Sewell, whom I felt had been wrongly accused of soft-peddling the destructive impact of slavery on Black people, rounded on those who championed an Afrikan-centered version of History. He was particularly impatient with the assertion that ancient Egyptian civilization was wholly African and that African kings and queens should be a main focus of historical attention. But

many Black parents there favoured a more celebratory view of African history. They had seen the destructive effects of low self-esteem on their children whose exposure to a white-centered History made them feel marginalised and who were then left vulnerable to the allure of pop culture with its 'gangsta rap' values of aggressive masculinity—itsself, in my view, a distorted legacy of enslavement.

I thought Tony Sewell was courageous for rejecting the racial essentialism and bad methodology of the African History School, but insensitive for characterising it as 'therapy masquerading as History'. The pain of historical exclusion is very real and must be addressed. It impacts on the mental well being of young Black Britons. But celebration must, in my view, be countered by a respect for evidence and recognition that history and motives are complicated.

I raised the case of Edward Colston to illustrate the point. The uncritical adulation of Edward Colston as a benefactor seems to have been replaced in some circles by a characterisation of the man as a simple monster, now that his slave-trading interests have been made more widely known (by historians such as myself). But for me the real point about Colston was that he was both benefactor and oppressor, he was, a real person—contradictory and complicated, making choices in a particular historical circumstance. That doesn't excuse as some would argue his slave-trading, but it needs to be acknowledged, if only to underline how messy history is, just like life today. One Black parent in the audience said in response that she wanted to know *all* the facts about Colston so that she could weigh the arguments and decide the matter *for herself*. And that to me was an encouraging end to an often fractious debate.

The atmosphere could not have been more different from that prevailing at the launch of the Malcolm X Elders' oral history booklet and video, 'Many Rivers to Cross'. This project grew out of a desire for the elders, mainly women, to communicate to their grandchildren and great grandchildren and to the city at large the difficulties they had to face as migrants to Bristol from the Caribbean in the late 1950's early 1960's. Included in the video is archive footage from the Caribbean and Britain which adds a wonderful dimension to the already powerful oral testimony of the elders themselves. Directed by the elders with assistance from the Bristol Community Education unit (including Mandy Kidd and video maker Cluna Donnelly) this exercise was, in my view, an empowering success.

Of course I would say that, wouldn't I. After all, the pamphlet was funded by UWE's School of History, and it could be countered with some justice that it was not a wholly black-directed project. But it seemed to me that this project used technical and critical methods to aid and not suppress the expression of Black History. Everything was done in a democratic and consultative way and everyone at the Centre seems happy about the outcome. The launch at St. Agnes Church attracted around 200 people, mainly friends and relatives of the elders themselves. It was a happy occasion and it struck me that people from a wide range of ages, races and religions—Christian, Muslim and Jew, Black Brown and White older and younger had worked together to a positive end.

Indeed, the indefatigable elders have more plans afoot for further history videos and pamphlets, and the schools in the regions will benefit from the materials they produce. But I do recognise that the Elders' Oral History Project does not confront all the real challenges posed by Black History Month.

There is a real dilemma about how to address the pain and the injustice suffered by Black People through new interpretations of the past. Can the intellectual tools of the elite be employed on behalf of the oppressed or should these tools be thrown away as tainted relics? In particular, how does academic history—with its emphasis on critical method, its respect for empirical evidence and its insistence that different interpretations are possible but must be rationally justified—relate to a wider public? How can the past be popularised without being prostituted?

Is Black History only for Black People? Doesn't that view simply perpetuate its ghettoisation? Yet if its findings are to be communicated to a wider audience and to be integrated into the History of Britain itself, won't its emphasis and integrity be compromised? And what of the young of this country? Is MTV to be their only window onto the world? How can we ensure a knowledge of the past inspires as well as informs them? And how can we ensure this knowledge is inclusive as well as thought-provoking? These are the challenges, which this year's Black History Month has raised. They are challenges, which should engage us all. *Madge Dresser*

## **Bristol Association of University Women: The Early Years (1911 - 1928)**

**by Brenda Bardgett**

In 1911 a group of women graduates took the important step of forming the first branch in Bristol of the British Federation of University Women. The Bristol Association of University Women, as it was called, continued its activities until 1993, but it was in its formative years that significant progress was made in the fields of education, medicine and social work. Women's abilities were at last beginning to be recognised and equality with men in the workplace becoming a possibility.

The decision to form a Bristol branch of the British Federation of University Women was taken at a meeting held in "the small hall" of Bristol University on February 1st, 1911. The formation of this branch had been urged by the existing Cambridge branch, and this first meeting was summoned on the initiative of the Society of Old Newnham Students in Bristol. The Chair was taken by Dr. Geraldine Hodgson and the meeting was addressed by Dr. Ida Smedley, Honorary Secretary of the British Federation, which had formed in 1907.

The Federation had originated in Manchester. Its aims then were: "to promote women's work on public bodies, to work for the removal of sex disabilities, to facilitate the inter-communication and co-operation of university women, and to afford opportunity for the expression of a united opinion by university women on subjects of special interest to them".

Already this had resulted in the appointment of a woman as one of the Medical Inspectors of Schools, and representations were being made to encourage the appointment of women to posts in Manchester Infirmary. In higher education, post-graduate work and junior posts were open to women at the newer universities but there was prejudice against appointing women to the senior posts which would give them sufficient time and opportunity for research.

When the Bristol Association was founded there were twenty-six women present at the first meeting. A week later the first Committee meeting was held and it was decided that the Committee should consist of ten members, two representatives of Oxford, two

of Cambridge, two of London, two of Bristol and two graduates of other universities.

The first President was Miss Staveley (Oxon.) and the first Secretary Miss (Cantab.) First names were not used. Meetings at this time were held at Clifton Hill House (of which Miss Staveley was Warden) at 5 p.m., and the business of the meeting was conducted over tea. There were no speakers.

One of the first challenges the branch took upon itself was the question of getting a woman to serve on Bristol Education Committee, especially a woman with a knowledge of secondary education. A "memorial" was sent to Bristol Education Committee, urging them to appoint such a woman and three of the members agreed to put their names forward for this position, but several months later no reply had been received from the Town Clerk.

Meanwhile the branch interested itself in the inspection of private schools, the political enfranchisement of women and the need for workers in East Bristol, particularly to do "energetic, personal work", a forerunner of today's social work. A Resolution on the appointment of women as doctors and higher officials in prisons was sent to the Secretary of the National Union of Women Workers. Some women graduates at this time were also testing the legality of the Law Society's refusal to admit women to its membership> There were posts in many fields to which women were denied entry.

In February 1915 a sub-committee was formed to press for a woman to serve on the Education Committee of Bristol City Council. It was decided to consult prominent members of the Education Committee privately, and this produced a favourable response.

A letter from the Manchester Association pointed out the opportunities available to women to study medicine in provincial medical schools and this led to the Bristol branch drawing women's attention to the facilities offered in Bristol.

In May 1915 thirty shillings was sent by the branch to the central fund for giving women technical training "to enable them to do men's work." This is the first rather oblique reference in the Minutes to the outbreak of the First World War.

Discussion in Committee at this time centred largely on the working

of "The Register". In May 1915 the national Federation had decided to compile a Register of university women offering themselves for National Service, i.e. willing to do men's work for the duration of the war. In June 1916 the Register joined with the Register of Professional Women being compiled by the Headmistresses Association, working in close collaboration with government departments. Ninety-eight posts were filled, mainly full-time, paid, doing Government work.

This provided the opportunity which women were seeking for more responsible positions. Bristol Association, however, had its doubts about the scheme, and after more discussion in Committee it was decided that the members of the branch were "too busy to undertake definite war-work." After the working of the Federation Register had been explained to members a Resolution was proposed and carried that "in connection with the Register and the principle adopted in supplying women substitutes for men's posts of equal pay for equal work...the branch would like the Executive not to insist on equal pay when the work was of definite war service."

In September 1916 the Register was handed over to the Board of Trade, but this proved unsuccessful, and later the administration of the Register was returned to the Federation. A Secretary and Registrar was appointed to take charge of it. This was the first time that the Federation had its own office and a full-time officer. Thus the Register played a very important part in the establishment of the Federation with an office and a paid official, both of which continued after the abandonment of the Register in 1921.

At a general meeting held in Bristol in February 1916, "in the beautiful library of Colston's Girls' School", a report was given of a conference on Economy and National Education, to which the former Secretary, Miss Garaway, had been invited as a delegate. The Minute book solemnly recorded: "This is the first public recognition of the Federation in Bristol".

At this time there was an average of twenty-five members at meetings. They discussed openings for women in various careers, including police and patrol work. There was a need for elementary school teachers, presumably as a result of conscription, and posts for women in boys' secondary schools were now possible, though not as headteachers. Not all the meetings were serious. In 1917 a programme of instrumental music was given. "Piano, violin and cello solos were provided, and a Ladies' Trio was much enjoyed."

A letter was received from Bath in March 1917, suggesting that a branch of the Federation be formed there which would be affiliated to the Bristol branch, but the Bath Association was not in fact formed until 1957. The great flu epidemic of 1918 caused the postponement of a meeting and the Committee discussed the possibility of closing the branch "as it was inadequately supported", but fortunately no action was taken. The British Federation at that time had about 1,000 members. It continued to take an interest in various aspects of education and women's rights, but many of the battles had been won. The Franchise Act of 1918 and the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1920 were two major victories for women. They now had the right to vote at the age of 30 and to sit in the House of Commons, practise as solicitors and barristers, and act as magistrates and jurors. In 1925 women were eligible to sit the examinations for the Administrative grade of the Civil Service, but it was not until 1928 that they obtained the right to vote at 21.

A major step forward had been the founding of the International Federation of University Women in 1919. An International Fellowship Endowment Fund was formed which was to be the basis of B.F.U.W.'s international scholarship award scheme. Local Associations were asked to make contributions to this fund as well as to the fund for acquiring 15th century Crosby Hall in London as a national headquarters and International Hall of Residence for women graduates.

In 1928 the Federation Executive suggested that each branch association should give £21 to the Endowment Fund as a 21st birthday present, the Federation having been formed in 1907. The raising of this sum, the equivalent of several hundred pounds today, presented some problems. It was decided to raise the money in Bristol by means of a lecture to which the public would be admitted, paying for admission. Three distinguished women were approached: the actress Sybil Thorndike and the authoresses Sheila Kaye-Smith and Rose Macaulay. All declined the invitation to speak. It was then decided to approach in turn George Bernard Shaw, G.K. Chesterton, Arnold Bennett, Hugh Walpole and failing these, Rebecca West. Unfortunately we do not have the letters received from these, now legendary, writers but it would seem that all declined. One of the Bristol members who was going on a visit to Rumania then offered to collect there some embroideries which could be sold to raise the necessary £21. Later in the minutes it is recorded that the sale of the Rumanian embroideries raised £3. 7s 9d. The Secretary at that point allowed herself an exclamation

mark.

The Bristol branch continued to meet regularly with recurring problems of recruitment and financial viability. Throughout the records runs the theme of how to attract new members, how to survive financially and whether or not to extend membership to non-graduates. Associate members were admitted in 1924. "These women, while not graduates of any university, were conspicuous for their devotion to the aims of the Federation." They were what we would now call Honorary Members, since they joined by invitation and without subscription. Previous Presidents were recalled for service on the Committee and the impression is given that for the greater part of its life the Bristol Association survived with enthusiasm but also with difficulty. The small number of women graduates in the past and the difficulty of attracting them in any large numbers to the Association were always a stumbling block to expansion. Throughout the years the branch maintained close links with Bristol University, at times holding its meetings on University premises and having local professors and lecturers amongst its speakers and members.

The branch changed its name in 1985 to the Bristol Association of Graduate Women. Shortly afterwards the British Federation of University Women changed its name to the British Federation of Women Graduates. It was felt that the term "university women" sounded exclusive and the move was designed to encourage membership from graduates of institutions other than universities, such as Polytechnics, but in 1993 many of these became universities themselves. In December 1993 it was regretfully decided to disband the Bristol Association. It re-formed in 1994 as "Athene", an Association for Women Graduates in Bristol but no longer affiliated to the British Federation.

Sources: J.H. Sondheimer, *The Official History of the British Federation of University Women, 1907 - 1957* (Out of print)  
Minute Books of Bristol Association of University Women, held at Bristol Record Office ([www.bristol-city.gov.uk/recordoffice](http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk/recordoffice))

To find out more about "Athene", please contact the Membership Secretary, Peggy Osborn, tel. 0117 9684615

*Brenda Bardgett is a graduate of the University of Bristol*

## The Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire

by Carrie Smith

Among the first volumes produced by the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* was a general volume for Gloucestershire, published in 1907. It included articles on religious, social, and economic history, industry, agriculture, and sports. No further work on the county took place until 1958, when Gloucestershire County Council agreed to finance the research and writing in association with the Institute of Historical Research, a funding model pioneered in Wiltshire ten years earlier. From 1960 until the mid 1990s the county council employed a staff of two to produce the *History* of the county; in 1996 Cheltenham and Gloucestershire College of Higher Education, since 2001 the University of Gloucestershire, joined the county council as a funding partner and took over the employment of the staff. Under this new arrangement we give part of our time to university activities which include teaching. Our office within the Gloucestershire Record Office gives us easy access to the main archive of primary source material, and the University provides ICT equipment and other support including the preparation of maps for the volumes.

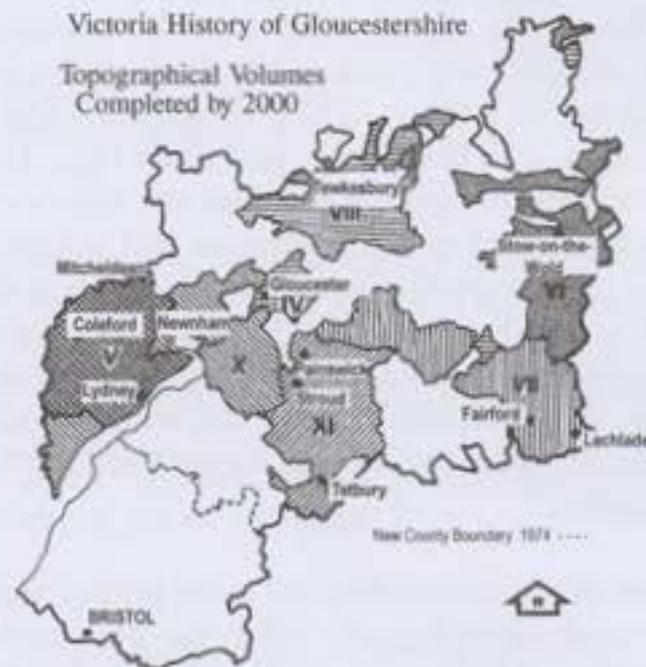
Since 1960, the Gloucestershire VCH has published eight 'big red books', containing the histories of over 140 parishes and towns in the county, including the city of Gloucester (Volume IV). Most of these were produced by Dr Nicholas Herbert, who worked for the VCH from 1970 until his retirement in 2003, and Dr John Juřica, who has been in post since 1973. Given that it takes 4–6 months to research and draft the history of a small rural parish – excluding other activities and university-related work – the regular production of these volumes is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of Dr Herbert and Dr Juřica. The most recently published volume, covering the Northleach area of the Cotswolds, was published in 2001, and work is well under way on Volume XII, which will cover Newent and north-west Gloucestershire.

While most of our manuscript and some printed sources are held at the Gloucestershire Record Office, the two collections of printed material we use most are the Gloucestershire Collection in Gloucester library and the University Archive at Francis Close Hall in Cheltenham, where the library of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society is held. The research for

each parish or town also necessitates research in the British Library, the Public Record Office, and the library of the Institute of Historical Research, and sometimes other county record offices and repositories like Lambeth Palace Library and archives in private collections. While the expansion of catalogues and indexes on the Internet makes it much easier to plan our research and locate useful sources it may, perversely, increase the amount of research time needed for each parish by alerting us to previously unknown sources.

In addition to producing standard VCH volumes, we now promote and present our research in other forms. These include our website, <http://www.gloucestershirepast.net>, where images and draft text are mounted, and we are developing a programme of paperback reprints of selected VCH texts: Stroud, Tewkesbury, and Tetbury, for example, are under consideration. The number and scope of our outreach activities increase yearly. Ensuring that these additional activities do not adversely impact on our publication schedule requires careful management, but we know that those impressive red volumes which planners, archaeologists, family and local historians, house historians, and other researchers value so greatly must continue to appear at regular intervals and that their production must lie at the heart of our work in the county.

*Carrie Smith is County Editor, Victoria History of Gloucestershire*



## **Local and Regional History at the University of Gloucestershire**

by Neil Wynn and Carrie Smith

Like the University of the West of England, the University of Gloucestershire sees itself as firmly embedded in, and serving, its local community. Naturally this means that the History department is committed to increasing the existing provision of local and regional history studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and to building links with the wider historical community in Gloucestershire.

The Gloucestershire VCH, whose staff contribute to University teaching, is the obvious interface between the academic institution and the community at large. The VCH is used by thousands of people with a leisure interest in local or family history; its staff undertake outreach work in connection with their VCH research, maintain a website where information is provided to anyone with access to the Internet, and are in regular contact with many local history groups and societies. The local history course taught by Carrie Smith is designed to appeal not only to students with an academic interest in history, but also to those wishing to enter the historical and heritage professions – archivists, librarians, and museum curators, for example. Integral to the course are sessions in local libraries and archives whose staff tease out for the students some of the problematic issues surrounding access, conservation, and cataloguing. Students are introduced to original documents and encouraged to develop rigorous critical skills in evaluating their usefulness and reliability.

But local history enters into several of the other courses provided by the History department. Existing modules on the Archaeology of Roman Britain, An Introduction to Prehistory and Archaeology, and a new module on Medieval Archaeology all draw upon local regional artefacts and sites and make full use of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society's archive based in Francis Close Hall. A new module on radicalism in nineteenth century Gloucestershire is also being proposed, and the development of Public History will involve developing further the existing links with local museums, archives, and record offices. Modules in Heritage Management are also included in the History field where appropriate. A number of modules on British history include elements of local history within them, third-level students often undertake

dissertations based on local studies, and the majority of the students enrolled on the MA by research and PhD programmes focus on a local subject.

*Neil Wynn is Professor of American History and head of the School of Humanities at the University of Gloucestershire, Carrie Smith is Deputy Editor of the Gloucestershire Victoria County History Project which is now affiliated to the University of Gloucestershire*

## **The Victoria County History of Wiltshire and UWE: A New Partnership**

by Peter Fleming

For over a hundred years the Victoria County History of England (VCH) has been producing scholarly volumes on the histories of various English counties. Wiltshire has benefited from a number of these, but there is still much to do. Traditionally, VCH projects have been funded by collaborations between local councils and groups of fundraising trustees, but recently a new source of partnership has emerged in the shape of universities. One example of this is provided by the University of Gloucestershire (for which, see Carrie Smith's article elsewhere in this issue). The University of the West of England is another. Following negotiations with Wiltshire county and district councils, the Wiltshire VCH Committee and the Institute of Historical Research at London University (the home of the central VCH organisation), in January 2004 a new arrangement was agreed whereby UWE joined with the Wiltshire councils to fund and support further work on the Wiltshire VCH. The new agreement means that the staff of the Wiltshire VCH – editor, Dr Douglas Crowley and assistant editor, to be appointed soon – are members of UWE's History School. This agreement guarantees the continued survival of the Wiltshire VCH for at least the next five years, and promises a fruitful and – we hope – long-term future. Forthcoming Wiltshire publications include a history of Codford, produced as a paperback (written by Dr Carrie Smith), and a web-site (produced by Dr John Chandler), for both of which a publication date in 2005 is planned; and we hope that Volume XVIII in the VCH 'big red book' hardback series, containing histories of Ashton Keynes, Cricklade, Eisey, Latton, Leigh, Lydiard Millicent, Marston Meysey, Purton and Minety, will appear by 2007.

## Letters to the Editor

Nov. 2003

Dear Editor,

I've noted your web page regarding regional history in the West of England. I am researching a particular aspect of the woolen industry in the UK and how it pertains to the use of woolen broadcloth found in Native American art. After noting your web site, I'm hoping you might be able to help me.

Please note the attached pictures of a typical English broadcloth that we find in Native American art from the mid 1800's -1950's. Of particular interest are the unique "rainbow" selvedges found on these broadcloths. I am trying to determine how and why these rainbow selvedges were used and, more importantly, if these rainbow selvedge patterns can be traced to particular mills and/or manufacturing dates.

I've been after this for several years now and have queried several major museums and universities in the UK. So far, I've drawn an absolute complete blank. This, in itself, seems rather astounding to me, considering different selvedges we find in the period. It appears to have been a very common woolen practice but I can't seem to find any records or individuals with any knowledge of it.

Could you shed any light on this subject or perhaps recommend a wool historian or resource in this area?

Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,  
Tom Leonard

4145 E. 35th Place  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74135  
USA



## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

In a footnote to her article about Sarah Champion Fox's diary in the spring issue of *The Regional Historian* Madge Dresser states that Frenchay village '... is the site of a small local Quaker museum' I am writing this to correct that misleading description of us, as it was written without the writer having visited the museum. Without question we are small as we are sited in a cottage that was a lodge to Frenchay Park. However, we pack an awful lot into the four rooms at our disposal, and after spending an hour or so looking around, many visitors say they will have to return to see the rest of the exhibits! As for being "local" there is an element of truth in this as we are a museum celebrating the people of Frenchay. As this includes people like the Victorian social reformer Frederick Denison Maurice, who founded both the Working Men's College and Queens College in London, and Frederick Tuckett who founded the city of Dunedin in New Zealand, not to mention his nephew Frank Tuckett whose mapping of the Alps resulted in the King of Italy knighting him, the visitor will find many exhibits relating to the wider world. Closer to home, the museum also has a display about the Bristol Reform Bill Riots of 1831, as a number of Frenchay people were involved, and we have artefacts from the riots relating to one of them who was a Special Constable.

As for the description "Quaker", this is completely wrong. As many former Frenchay residents were Quakers, quite reasonably we have displays relating to them and their activities. The Fry family are an obvious example, although the section on their racing cars seems a far cry from their Quaker roots! However there is a section on Professor Golla, the first director of the Burden Neurological Institute, who prevailed upon the Diocesan authorities to build the Catholic church in the village, and Frederick Denison Maurice who

was firstly a Unitarian, and later an Anglican. We also have a study area where transcription of many local records can be viewed. These records range from parish magazines from 1889 onwards, the cricket club score books, school logbooks, to the parish registers for Frenchay and Winterbourne. We also have headstone details with layouts for family researchers trying to locate the graves of ancestors. We have one room that is always reserved for other organisations to use. Users to date have ranged from a wildlife group, through the local Mothers' Union, to an amateur dramatics society. Perhaps groups to which your readers belong might like to use the facility we offer to stage their own display? If you are interested please contact Alan Freke on 0117 957 0942. The museum is situated just inside Entrance "B" of Frenchay Hospital and is open Wednesdays 12.30 'til 4pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 2 'til 5pm. Admission is free.

Alan Freke  
Curator

For further information see the web site [www.frenchay.org/museum.html](http://www.frenchay.org/museum.html) To contact us our Email address is [frenchaymuseum@hotmail.com](mailto:frenchaymuseum@hotmail.com) or call Frenchay Village Museum 0117 9570942

*We take Alan Freke's points and by way of apology include in this issue some further information on the Frenchay Museum-eds.*



## THE FRENCHAY VILLAGE MUSEUM

The Museum sets out to reflect the rich heritage of the once non-conformist village of Frenchay. The Museum Building was built in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a lodge to Frenchay Park, one of the largest Georgian houses in the village. The building has been much modified over the years. In 1999 the latest changes were made to adapt it for use as a museum, and Winterbourne Parish Council adopted the scheme as a Millennium Project. The Frenchay Tuckett Society was formed in 1996 to care for a collection of Quaker artefacts donated to the village by descendants of the Tuckett family, a Quaker family who had lived here for 130 years. The Tuckett Collection is at the heart of the displays in the museum. It contains a wide variety of artefacts, paintings, mountaineering equipment, Quaker wedding certificates, journals, books, clothing and much more, revealing the fascinating life of many villagers. Frenchay's close links with its near neighbour Bristol are also much in evidence, with a unique display about Frenchay residents' part in the Bristol Riots of 1831, and a display of Bristol manufactured porcelain of the 1770s. The 19th century industrial period in the village's history is represented by a water turbine from one of three mills worked by the river Frome that runs through the village. The story of the village didn't stop with the decline in the non-conformist population, and many of the exhibits relate to the 20th Century.

Local Records are held in copy form and are available to all visitors in our study area. They include: local census 1841 - 1891, school registers, headmasters' logbooks, church and chapel baptism, marriage and burial records, headstones, Frenchay Cricket Club score books and team photographs, parish magazines from 1889, and books of photographs of local people. There is also a large collection of local photographs of Frenchay and many more relating to the civil parish of Winterbourne. The Village Museum is just one activity of the society. It also organises guided walks, publishes books, and presents an annual series of local history talks. The museum is situated close to Junction 1 of the M32 and Junction 19 of the M5, and is located just inside Entrance 'B' of Frenchay Hospital. Museum visitors may use hospital visitor parking spaces. Open Saturday and Sunday, 2pm - 5pm; Bank Holiday Monday, 2pm - 5pm; Wednesday, 12.30pm - 4pm. Parties at other times by arrangement. For more information about the activities of the society, or for membership information contact the Secretary, Frenchay Village Museum, Begbrook Park, Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1SZ, or Email [frenchaymuseum@hotmail.com](mailto:frenchaymuseum@hotmail.com).



## Book reviews

Mary –Ann Constantine, 'Combustible Matter': Iolo Morganwg and the Bristol Volcano, *University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies Research Paper no.21*, (Aberystwyth, 2003), ISBN 094753122X, 31 pp.

Iolo Morganwg, bard, poet, Welsh nationalist, stonemason, radical democrat and natural scientist, was a great eighteenth century polymath. In 1791, he interrupted one of his frequent commercial visits to Bristol to climb Brandon Hill and muse upon the origins of the Earth. For the hill, he decided, was not only an ancient celtic stronghold, but a dormant volcano. Bewitched, no doubt, by the convulsive political state of the world around him after the fall of the Bastille, Iolo's conception of the natural order had plenty of room for volcanic upheavals. As Roy Porter put it, the geological vision of the enlightenment invited the study of rock strata as 'an autobiography of great revolutions, decay and restoration'. However Romantic the idea of a Volcanic Brandon Hill it is – as any Bristolian knows – composed not of igneous rock but of red sandstone. Mary-Ann Constantine's fascinating foray into

Morganwg's mental universe argues that, accomplished scholar as he was, Iolo conceived the Brandon Hill 'volcano' – as well as the great cleft of the Avon Gorge – as poetic, historical and philosophical symbols of cataclysm and upheaval. An implacable opponent of the slave trade, he well understood its economic importance to Bristol and was quick to chastise the city's 'stupid' merchant elite for celebrating the recent defeat of Wilberforce's abolition bill. The pamphlet also reprints some rare Morganwg correspondence about Bristol and slavery, together with the full text of his Brandon Hill observations, an extremely welcome addition to the growing literature on symbolic topography.  
*Steve Poole, UWE*

John Sansom (ed.), *Public View: a Profile of the Royal West of England Academy* (Redcliffe Press, Bristol, 2002) ISBN 1900178044, 192 pp., £19.99

This accessibly written, beautifully designed and lavishly illustrated book profiles the RWA from its mid-nineteenth century beginnings to its ambitious programme for the future. As artistic taste fell under the control of the morally

regenerative middle class in early Victorian Britain, academies and viewing spaces for the visual arts were set up in a great many British cities, often forged in partnerships between local government and entrepreneurial industrialists. The status and moral quality of a nation's (or town's) art, it was believed, reflected the degree to which commercial success was informed by moral, theological and aesthetic sympathy. Relieved of its former aristocratic shackles, art had the power to heal social wounds, regenerate the soul and soothe the most savage breasts of the new working classes. Carlyle thought that, along with regular churchgoing and physical labour, it could even overcome the horrors of Chartism.

And this was the context for the founding of Bristol's RWA, from its first public exhibition at the Bristol Institution at the bottom of Park Street in 1845, to the opening of its own plush and Italianate premises at the top in 1858. The central dome, adorned with Walter Crane's bright but pompous neo-classical frescoes celebrating painting, sculpture, craftsmanship and architecture, perfectly set the tone for the enterprise. The school of art, established in 1851 (and

still going, via the association with UWE's faculty of Art, Media and Design), coincided with growing public enthusiasm for training in the arts and crafts after the Great Exhibition, and was progressive enough to admit women as well as men. The school was followed in 1899 by the establishment of the city's first permanent public art gallery, the acquisition of the municipal collection, and a second grand building project courtesy of industrial patronage from the tobacco lords, Wills and Co.

The great strength of this book lies in its bringing together of a number of expert contributors, including architectural historian Tim Mowl and the curator of the city collection, Sheena Stoddard, to piece together the historical contexts for a vital chapter in Bristol's civic 'story'. There are chapters on the Academy's first benefactress (and important Bristol painter), Ellen Sharples, the first exhibition, the design of the building, the development of the art school and gallery, the acquisition of the great Hogarth altarpiece from St Mary Redcliff, and on the patronage that oiled the wheels and made it all work. It is at times compromised by an uncritical relationship

between the editor and his subject (Sansom is a former president and current Friend of RWA, so not at all disinterested), and a few less photographs of current committee members looking pleased with themselves would have been welcome; nevertheless this is a worthwhile and very enjoyable book and warmly recommended to anyone with a curiosity about Victorian and Edwardian liberalism and its schemes for civic renewal.

*Steve Poole, UWE*

*Bath History, Volume IX*  
(Bath Archaeological Trust, 2002), ISBN 0948975652,  
184 pp., £8.99.

This excellent series of illustrated and paperback-quality journals continues here with another eclectic offering of essays on the city's history. They are arranged chronologically but the subject-matter is diverse. John Ede and Roland Symons explain the symbolism and imagery behind the heraldic devices in Bath Abbey and Chris Noble shares his MA research on the establishment of Bath's 'new' gaol in Grove Street as part of the city's planned expansion across Pultney Bridge into the Bathwick estate in the later eighteenth century. There are two interesting and very

divergent studies of contemporary diarists, Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys (1738-1817) and Edward Snell (1840s). Powys was one of that legion of polite, well-heeled and completely pointless women at the heart of Bath's perpetually shifting visiting company, and who came because they had very little else to do with themselves. In 1764, she turned up because 'a little Tour might be of service to my spirits, at that time very indifferent'. Fortunately, her predictable diet of dancing and gaming is punctuated here by her husband's catastrophic nosebleed and the hapless Duke of York being cat-called by some labouring oiks. Rather more interesting is the diary of Edward Snell, a young working engineer at Bath between 1835 (when he was 15) and 1842. Apprenticed at the Stothert ironworks, Snell offers some fascinating personal insights into the life and work of the city, all illustrated with his own amusing sketches of fellow workers and bits of machinery, a dissenting preacher in full flow at Bristol, and an epic cartoon of himself riding an elephant on a day out at the zoo. Snell would have enjoyed John Bellamy's 'British Model Gallery', a fairground exhibition of fantastically detailed cork and card models of

important British buildings (most notably William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey), displayed in Victoria Park in 1845, and profiled in Steven Blake's admirable short essay here. There are also pieces on John Pinch, one of Bath's many Georgian architects, the history of Bath University, and on one of the city's most famous artists, Walter Sickert. When not being investigated for London's 'Ripper' murders, Sickert is still remembered at Bath for his evocatively quiet and sympathetically coloured paintings of the city's streets. 'There never was such a place for rest and comfort and leisurely work', he once wrote. Perhaps Powys, Snell and Bellamy would agree.

*Steve Poole, UWE*

*The Paty Family: Makers of Eighteenth-Century Bristol* by Gordon Priest, (Bristol: Redcliffe Press 2003) ISBN 1 900178 54 0 £18-50

Georgian Bristol was central to what the historian Peter Borsay has called the 'urban renaissance', that time when cities of elegant squares and crescents, assembly rooms and theatres, emerged from the post-medieval squalor where rich and poor had previously jostled together in such an unseemly and familiar fashion. Of course,

there was still squalor, but if one had the money, one no longer had to suffer it in quite such close proximity.

This generously illustrated and handsomely produced book processes down the more genteel streets of eighteenth century Bristol. It seeks both to excavate and to celebrate the achievements of the Paty family, a family of stonemasons who branched out into interior design and architecture. These men whose family came from Somerset, did much to create the new elegant Bristol of the eighteenth century. Through painstaking archival research, Priest has established that the Patys consisted of two sets of fathers and sons who were all related to one another. There was James Paty and his son James. And there were two nephews Thomas and James as well as their sons, two of whom were named John and a third who was called William. They owned a set of inter-locking workshops and worked both individually and with one another.

Collectively, their lives spanned most of the eighteenth century. And if their dynasty did not long survive it, their considerable architectural achievements certainly did.

Priest is not claiming the Patys were geniuses, but he does think their contribution has been sometimes obscured and generally under-rated. It was they who were responsible in large part for some of the city's best-loved buildings, including the gothic Black Castle and Arnos Court, Clifton Hill House, Christchurch --with the inimitable quarterjacks on its clock, Redland Chapel, the Library in King Street, Hope and Portland Squares, and Blaise House. It was a Paty too who was responsible for the interior of Tyndall's Fort whose exquisite plasterwork is one of Bristol's most delicious treasures.

Priest, formerly a lecturer in Bristol University's late lamented Department of Architecture, is a true connoisseur. Aside from the many photographs of the actual buildings Priest attributes to the Patys, he also reproduces as a sort of appendix, a copybook belonging to the family. This last is set out with annotations accompanying each thumbnail picture of the monuments and architectural drawings the copybook contains.

Now it is this connoisseurship which is both the strength and the weakness of this book. There are fulsome and

extremely detailed descriptions of buildings in terms of their architectural features. Now sometimes this is revealing-for example when the photos of the King Street Library and a building on Unity Street show how the buildings have since been stripped of some important decorative features. Priest's passion in arguing for a re-valuation of Christchurch as a building of national importance is passionate and well informed.

But this wealth of detail sometimes gets in the way of the narrative. I am convinced by his argument that there simply isn't much in the way of evidence to tell us much about their private lives or individual characters. But I for one would have liked to have known a little less about the number of columns, pilasters and dado rails gracing the Patys' buildings and a little more about the social and political world in which they and their clients operated.

Nevertheless, this is a book which aficionados of architecture and lovers of Bristol's history will find a pleasure to have on their shelves. Not that plain shelves would seem very rewarding after feasting on the pictures of all those lovely Patyesque creations. Priest's homage is not only

useful and instructive, but a visual treat as well. *Madge Dresser, UWE*

Jane Tozer and Jackie Sims (eds) *Filton Voices* (Tempus Publishing Ltd, 2003), 128pp – 200+ illustrations, Paperback, £12-99.

This new volume in the Tempus oral history series forms part of the output of the Filton Community History Project. Community histories are most often associated with inner city or rural communities, but the Tempus series seems to be focusing as much on suburban areas (an earlier example being two suburbs of Gloucester, *Voices of Quedgely and Hardwick*, reviewed in the *Regional Historian*, No 10, Spring 2003).

Based on a wide range of personal reminiscences of older residents and workers, contributors tell of a quiet village surrounded by farms and open countryside displaced by industrial development, housing estates, and roads. A distressing memory for some residents was the building of the link road, a dual carriageway which 'carved up' Filton, destroying houses, playing fields and the Memorial Hall where all the main social functions in the old

village had been held. Their stories remind us of the far-reaching impact town planning decisions have on the lives of individuals and the importance of social and as well as geographical space in building a community identity. But while some residents look back nostalgically on a time when they felt a greater sense of safety and social cohesion, this is not simply a story of community disintegration. The editors have devoted a substantial portion of the book to workers' memories of the aircraft and automobile industry, whose rapid growth during the twentieth century was the most significant factor in changing the character of Filton. Many retired workers spoke with pride about their involvement in the development of Concorde and the space



programme, while the owner of Bristol Cars tells an unusual story of continuity over more than half a century during which the Bristol hallmark became and has remained a symbol of quality and craftsmanship. There are also some fascinating glimpses into social divisions within the organisation of the

aerospace industry which echo older class hierarchies. Staff at the Filton House head office described separate dining rooms for managers, executives and the board of directors, meals made from vegetables grown in the firm's own gardens and elegant front stairs which only VIPs were allowed to use, more reminiscent of a country house than a modern business.

The book is organised thematically into chapters with (in the main) fairly brief extracts from interviews describing the rural past, youth, education, leisure, war-time experiences and local industry, and some narrators' testimony appears in several different parts of the book. While this enables the reader to select area of particular interest, there are also disadvantages to this method of organisation. I found some of the longer extracts to be more informative and less anecdotal. More of these, together with brief biographical details of project participants would have given us a better understanding of each contributor's subjective experience and offered insights into why their memories might have been framed in particular ways.

I would also have welcomed a little more historical background on Filton's development over the twentieth century which might have offered a stronger context to the many lively and vivid personal anecdotes. These minor quibbles apart, the editors are to be congratulated on this collection which should be of great interest to Filton residents and the wider Bristol community.

*Kath Holden, UWE.*

John Lyes, *Bristol, 1920-1926* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 2003) ISSN 1362 7759 £3.00

This is the third in John Lyes's series of pamphlets chronicling early twentieth-century Bristol. The inspiration for this series was John Latimer's *Annals of Bristol*, covering the city's history from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. This pamphlet, like the previous two, displays the strengths and weaknesses of the Latimer annalistic approach: it is organised chronologically, so that after a brief overview it begins with January 1920 and the arrival of a sailing ship from Buenos Aires with a cargo of linseed and ends in December 1926 with local miners accepting their employers' pay offer; there is no analysis, instead we are presented with a succession of events, and there are no footnotes or references (although there is a very useful index). Such might fill the average academic historian with horror: it is certainly the sort of approach that would assure failure to an undergraduate history student. However, just as Latimer is widely acknowledged to be an indispensable guide to *what happened*, providing a factual basis from which

analysis can be generated, so too for Lyes. The lack of referencing in both is at times irritating for those who wish to go deeper – or even wish simply to check the accuracy of what is presented – but both annalists display a familiarity with their material which is reassuring. Anyone who has conducted the necessary detective work to check Latimer's sources will testify to his thoroughness and accuracy, and one suspects that much the same can be said of Lyes in his



use of local newspapers, council minutes and the like. So, to compare Lyes with Latimer is high praise indeed, and warranted. So, enquire within – and with confidence – to learn about financial scandals at Bristol City FC, charges of child abuse at Downend school, landslides and ships running aground in the Avon, miners' strikes, investigations into war crimes, crime waves and juvenile delinquency, as well as more positive news, of public baths and hospitals

being opened, weddings celebrated, statues erected, and the inevitable royal visits. Roll on January 1927!

*Peter Fleming, UWE*



Joseph Bettey, *The First Historians of Bristol: William Barrett and Samuel Seyer* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 2003) ISSN 1362 7759 £2.50

The reputations of Barrett and Seyer, the first to write full-scale histories of Bristol, present a stark contrast. Seyer's *Memoirs Historical and Topographical of Bristol*, published in two volumes in 1821 and 1823 to widespread acclaim, was the product of immense scholarship and, for its time, remarkably sophisticated historical judgement, and it is still admired and used as an important reference for the history of Bristol up to 1760. Barrett's *The History and Antiquities of the City*

*of Bristol*, published in the fateful year 1789, though equally the product of immense labour and scholarship, has fared far less well, and perhaps figures as often in the history of literary hoaxes as in urban historiography. For the unfortunate Barrett fell victim to the fantasies of the precocious fraudster Thomas Chatterton. Chatterton invented a fifteenth-century writer called Thomas Rowley, whose work, alongside a pile of other spoof manuscripts, seemed to provide Bristol with a uniquely detailed medieval historiography. Barrett was an enthusiastic and, one has to say, gullible, consumer of what to modern eyes seem obvious fabrications. Chatterton had been exposed long before publication of *History and Antiquities* but while Barrett expressed some reservations about the 'Rowley material', he still included it in his work. An excoriating review in *The Gentleman's Magazine* mercilessly exposed these flaws, and probably contributed to Barrett's death in October 1789. Thus the story of Bristol's first two historians is one of tragedy and triumph. Joe Bettey's inspired double biography falls definitely into the latter category. Thoroughly researched and elegantly written, it sets their lives

and achievements in their contemporary context and offers a balanced judgement, finding much to admire in Barrett and his work, despite the too evident faults. This is an essential study for anyone with an interest in Bristol's historiography, but it is also a compelling human story, which deserves to be appreciated by a broader readership.

*Peter Fleming, UWE*

שנה	חודש	שם	תאריך	שם	שם	שם
1773	אדר	הרב	1773	הרב	הרב	הרב
1774	אדר	הרב	1774	הרב	הרב	הרב
1775	אדר	הרב	1775	הרב	הרב	הרב
1776	אדר	הרב	1776	הרב	הרב	הרב
1777	אדר	הרב	1777	הרב	הרב	הרב
1778	אדר	הרב	1778	הרב	הרב	הרב
1779	אדר	הרב	1779	הרב	הרב	הרב
1780	אדר	הרב	1780	הרב	הרב	הרב

### CDRom Reviews

*Bristol Hebrew Congregation:  
Electronic Archive*  
by Alan Tobias (2004)  
£20: order from alan@tobias@org.uk

Passers by on Bristol's Park Row may have wondered what goes on behind the wrought iron gates of the city's orthodox Jewish synagogue. Set back from the street, this tall grey Victorian stone building, rarely open to the public for reasons of security, has an air of mystery. It may not be the only synagogue in the city (there is a small Progressive liberal synagogue in Easton) but it is surely the more historic of the two. This new CD Rom produced by Alan Tobias, himself a member of the Park Row congregation, brings together new material along with some which can be found on the internet at <http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community/bri>. As such it opens a much-welcomed door on the history of the most well-established section of the organised Jewish community. Whilst some of the sources will be

mainly of interest to genealogists, there is much that tells us not only about aspects of the Jewish community in Bristol but about the history of Bristol as well.

Jews were in Bristol from early medieval times, the present day Queen Elizabeth Hospital was built on the site of the medieval Jewish cemetery, and the medieval Jewish community used to reside in the Broadmead area of Bristol, around where the Galleries shopping mall now stands. But after the expulsion of all England's Jews in 1290, Jews were barred from residing in the country until officially allowed to do so by Cromwell in 1656. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a small community of mainly German Jews, including the Jacobs family of Bristol blue glass fame. This originally much-despised group

grew to respectability by the late nineteenth century when Bristol elected one of the country's first Jewish Lord Mayors, Joseph Alexander. By the 1880's a larger and much poorer group from Russia and Poland were fleeing persecution and poverty and causing a furore in the British tabloid press reminiscent of the present-day coverage of 'bogus asylum seekers'. A small but significant minority of these Jews came to Bristol, swelling the city's Jewish population to around several hundred, with many contributing to the low paid boot and shoe and tailoring industries. The next influx of new Jews came from Nazi Germany in the late 1930's. There are today under 1000 Jews in the city, not all of whom are affiliated to either synagogue.

The CD Rom contains a potted history of the Jewish community in the city which those new to the subject will find useful, though readers should be aware that the history of the congregation should not be conflated with a more general the history of Jews in the city.

The archives contained in the CD Rom take us as far back as the 1820's, some five decades before the Park Row synagogue was built. Readers can see various selected images of birth and marriage records, pictures of tombstones from the city's two modern cemeteries, various details about the present Park Row synagogue and some records

of the congregation's wider cultural activities. My favourite documents include the programmes for the congregation's debating society in 1896, which showed an engaged and liberal approach to social issues and the wonderful interwar advertisements on the interwar fundraising programmes which are evidence, not only of Jewish businesses, but of cooperation with the wider non-Jewish community in Bristol.

Despite the patriarchal organisation of the synagogue service, women were always very active in the synagogue especially in philanthropic and cultural activities. The 1936 programme of the Jewish Literary and Drama Society pictured here features the name of Helen Strimer, later Helen Bloom, Bristol's second Jewish Lord Mayor in the 1960's.

The *Bristol Hebrew Congregation* CD Rom itself is generally easily navigable, though the menus are perhaps less streamlined than they might have been. It makes fragmentary and previously restricted documents available to a wider audience, and so whilst not to be taken as a definitive archive of Bristol Jewry, it offers an intriguing and most valuable introduction to the history of what is arguably, Bristol's oldest ethnic minority community.

*Madge Dresser, UWE*



John Bartlett & John Penny,  
*Fishponds, its Boundaries,  
Churches and Chapels*, CD Rom  
(2002), available from  
FishpondsLocal History Society  
jkp@flhs.freemove.co.uk

This CD is intended as Volume One of a series on the history of Fishponds. Its authors will be well known to anyone with an interest in Fishponds, or indeed of Bristol generally, and are stalwarts of the local history society. The title is in fact misleadingly modest: as the authors explain in their introduction, since 'Fishponds was ecclesiastically part of the vast and ancient parish of Stapleton until 1869, it was essential that we start our individual church histories with Holy Trinity, the parish church of Stapleton. Neither could we ignore the fact that Fishponds lay within the ancient Royal Forest of Kingswood, and the areas strong association with George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, and Nonconformism generally'. So, this CD is not a narrowly-conceived 'parochial' history, still less will be the entire project of which it is part. What Bartlett and Penny provide us with are, 'details of nearly 30 nonconformist churches and chapels established within the old Stapleton boundaries', together with very useful accounts of

Kingswood Forest and Chase, and shorter sketches of the administrative boundaries and the development of Bristol. This is accompanied by a series of historic maps of the area and illustrations of the various buildings described, and includes a useful glossary. The CD is easy to use. The places of worship are not confined to the Christian religion: there is, for example, an account of the Sikh Gurdwara in Eastville, and local cemeteries are also included. While these histories are not footnoted, the authors have clearly researched widely and deeply, with the result that this work appears to be a trustworthy and comprehensive history, which will doubtless stand as the definitive treatment of its subject. Future productions are planned to include accounts of Fishponds estates, large houses, personalities, industry and education, as well as social, economic and military history. When complete, this should be one of the most thorough surveys of any parish in the country, and the authors, and their society, are to be congratulated for their vision and energy.

*Peter Fleming, UWE*

## NOTICES

### **Stoke Bishop and Sneyd Park Local History Society**

**Friday 23 April 2004**

'Tyntesfield'

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2004**

'Bristol and the Civil War'

Enquires 01179681759

### **Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**

**Bristol section:**

**Monday 22 March 2004.** "The Villa of Papyri at Herculaneum" Robert L. Fowler, H.O. Wills Professor of Greek, Department of Classics and Ancient History, University of Bristol. The Apostle Room in the basement of Clifton Cathedral, Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol at 7.45 pm.

### **Marshfield and District Local History Society**

All talks take place in the Legion Hall at 7:30 pm

**15 March 2004**

'History of Municipal Water in the Bath Area'  
Graham Davis

**19 April 2004**

'History of Local Coal Mines'

Joan Day

**19 May 2004**

Visit to 'Bath at Work' Museum

Stuart Burroughs

**21 June 2004**

AGM

Enquiries: Graeme Blanchard 01225 891263

### **Ruskin College, Oxford: Public History Discussion Group**

**Saturday 24 April 2004**

'The Restoration of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals: heritage, history or tourism?' - Steve Mills

**Saturday 8 May 2004**

'Doing Public History' Dayschool

-for details see [www.ruskin.ac.uk/pub-history](http://www.ruskin.ac.uk/pub-history)

### **Ruskin College Public History cont'd.**

**Saturday 12 June 2004**

'British Vernacular Furniture: the cultural diversity of our regional traditions' Bill Cotton

All sessions at Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HE (near Gloucester Green bus station). We meet for coffee from 10:30 am and sessions start promptly at 11 am and finish by lunchtime. To be placed on our mailing list contact [edeeley@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:edeeley@ruskin.ac.uk)

### **Regional History Centre Seminars at UWE**

**Wednesday 24 March 2004 6pm**

'Empty Pulpits: the disruption of the Bristol parish ministry 1640-1660' by Jonathan Harlow (Avon Local History Association/UWE)

6pm St. Matthias Campus Room 9

**Wednesday 31 March 6pm**

'Did Britain's Involvement in the Slave Trade really end in 1808?' by Marika Sherwood (Institute of Commonwealth Studies)

6pm St. Matthias Campus Room 9

All welcome, admission free

### **Yatton Local History Society**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2004 8pm**

'Brean Down Fort'

Adrian Woodhall

Yatton Methodist Hall

£2.00 per meeting

enquiries-Marianne Pitman 01934 838801

## STROUD 70: THE CHANGING MILLS

A One-Day Conference, Saturday 12 June 2004

At Ebley Mill, Westward Road, Stroud

The Stroud valleys have numerous mills surviving from their centuries as a centre of woollen cloth manufacture. There is an exceptional variety of well-preserved mill buildings covering an unusually wide date range, on sites often dating back to the Middle Ages. These mills are very different in character to the northern cotton and worsted mills. There are differences within the West of England and even distinctions between the different valleys of the Stroud area. Given the welcome plans to restore the local canals this is an opportunity to assess the importance and the future of the local mills.

### Speakers:

Anthony Burton, author and television presenter, first came to the valleys 30 years ago when researching his book *Remains of a Revolution*. With it now re-issued he will introduce the conference, looking back at what he saw then.

Ian Mackintosh is a local historian who will trace the changing fortunes of Ebley Mill and explain the processes involved in woollen cloth manufacture.

Mike Williams wrote the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments study on the Manchester cotton mills. Now employed by English Heritage he is carrying out a survey of the West of England mills. His wide experience of mills across England makes him very well qualified to put the mills in context and assess their significance.

Professor Jennifer Tann published *Gloucestershire Woollen Mills* in 1967. It was a groundbreaking study of the local woollen industry and it remains essential reading to this day. Backed by more recent research, including work on Boulton and Watt, she will discuss the changing processes and relate the development of mill sites to them and to the vicissitudes of the industry.

Chris Smith is Assistant Director of the South West Region of English Heritage. He will sum up the day by explaining EH.'s stance on regeneration, its concern for adaptability in re-use and the challenge that the Cotswold Canals Project offers.

For information & application forms send s.a.e. to Ian Mackintosh, 6 Castle Villas, STROUD, GL5 2HP Or contact by email: [imack@btopenworld.com](mailto:imack@btopenworld.com) or download from [www.stroud-textile.org.uk](http://www.stroud-textile.org.uk)

WOMEN'S  
HISTORY  
NETWORK



Women Health and Welfare  
The West of England and South Wales Women's  
History Network  
10th Anniversary Conference  
26 June 2004

University of the West of England, HLSS Faculty, St Matthias  
Campus, Oldbury Court Road, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2JP

**Plenary Speaker: Maria Luddy,**

*'The Welfare of Unmarried Mothers in Ireland in the early Twentieth Century'*.

**Provisional list of other speakers and topics includes:**

**Pamela Dale:** *Interwar Mental Deficiency Services*

**Androniki Dialeti:** *Women's Health in Counter-Reformation Italy*

**Kath Holden:** *Single Carers Interwar England*

**Jane Howells:** *Nursing in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Salisbury*

**Carrie Howse:** *Rural District Nursing in Gloucestershire 1880-1925*

**Christi Keating Sumich:** *Women and Syphilis in Early Modern England*

**Moira Martin:** *Women and the English Poor Law*

**Emily Payne:** *Venereal Disease during the Great War*

**Kay Saunders and Julie Ustinoff:** *Bodily Perfection and Disability in Australia*

.....  
**Registration Form**

**Name**

**Address**

**Email**

**Tel**

**Registration (includes morning and afternoon tea and coffee)**

£10 high waged

£9 high waged members

£6 students/low waged

£5 students/low waged members

**Lunch** £10

**Please tick relevant boxes and add the two amounts together**

**I enclose a cheque for.....**

Dietary restrictions

Please let us know if you have a disability which will require assistance

Directions to the site are at <http://www.uwe.ac.uk/maps/Stmattsdirections.shtml>

Please make your cheque payable to **Southwest Women's History Network**  
and send it with this completed form to **Kath Holden** at the address above.

Email: [Katherine.Holden@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Katherine.Holden@uwe.ac.uk) (Tel 0117 344 4395)

Further information can also be obtained from:

**June Hannam**, email: [June.Hannam@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:June.Hannam@uwe.ac.uk)

**Fiona Reid**, email [freid1@glam.ac.uk](mailto:freid1@glam.ac.uk)

*REGIONAL HISTORY CENTRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE*

**‘A SENSE OF PLACE’:  
IDENTITY AND THE BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT IN  
SOUTHWEST ENGLAND”**



image courtesy of Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

**SATURDAY 10 JULY 2004**

**University of the West of England**

**St. Matthias Campus**

**10am-4pm**

**Call for papers: proposals of 250 words to be submitted by 1s<sup>t</sup> May 2004**  
**Contact:**  
[Madge.Dresser@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Madge.Dresser@uwe.ac.uk)

