

Local History News

Number 157 November 2025

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Magazine of the British Association for Local History

AWARDS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS

- *To encourage research and publication*
One or more certificates may be awarded each year for a published **article** presenting sound original research in well-written form. To be eligible a piece of work, of any length, must appear in a journal, newsletter or similar publication produced by a local voluntary body, which is sent to Heather Falvey the Reviews Editor for review or listing. All relevant material sent to the Reviews Editor is automatically considered, and a shortlist prepared for the Awards Panel.
- *To recognise outstanding individual contributions*
Up to six awards may be made each year to publicly honour local historians of all ages who have made outstanding and significant voluntary contributions to the subject. The awards will embrace as wide a spectrum of activity as possible. Nominations and references must be submitted between 1 July and 31 December on the form available from our website at www.balh.org.uk/awards, where further details can also be found.
- *To encourage societies to share information locally*
An annual award for newsletters used by local societies to correspond with their members and other interested readers. Newsletters can be of any length, published at any regular interval, in any style, by any printing method. The contents, and the clarity of communication, are the key factors rather than the glossiness of production. All newsletters sent to the Reviews Editor will be considered for this award, the final decision for which lies with the Publications Committee of the BALH.

The next awards will be presented at the BALH AGM in 2025

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Front cover

Blendworth church in Hampshire – see page 6. (Photo: Amanda Davey)

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How to contribute

The success of the Association in supporting and promoting local history throughout the country depends very much on contributions made by members, readers, and all those interested and concerned.

Material published in *The Local Historian* is written by a wide variety of people from many different backgrounds. Offers and suggestions for articles are welcomed, and the editor, Alan Crosby, is always pleased to discuss ideas for contributions and to advise on their preparation. 'Notes for contributors' is available on request, and can be found on our website at www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian-contributors.

Local History News relies on material – articles, news, pictures, advice, questions etc – from local societies and individual local historians. We also welcome your newsletters and other regular publications. Information about local initiatives is particularly welcome, and we are always keen to publish items that give examples of best practice, illustrating the diversity and vitality of local history. Readers' comments and queries allow our members to share their knowledge and enthusiasm. If there is a specific event you wish us to mention please allow plenty of time ahead of the date – we can also list larger events such as conferences at the BALH website and in the BALH e-newsletter. *Local History News* is normally mailed at the end of February, May, August and November, with these copy deadlines respectively: 3 January, 1 April, 1 July, 1 October.

The BALH Reviews Editor is Dr Heather Falvey; if you have a newly published work, either as an individual or a society, please send a copy for listing and possible review to her at the address given below. Be sure to include all relevant details such as price and where to purchase.

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Looking both ways across the Channel is a big deal

Alan Crosby

A couple of years ago we had a long weekend in northern France with friends, staying about half an hour's drive from the Calais terminal of the Channel Tunnel. It was a wild and windy autumn, and at the coast the waves in La Manche were impressively large. We went to Wimereux, north of Boulogne, and wandered through its streets of Art Deco buildings and Belle Époque villas and hotels. Wonderful! And we went to Le Touquet and marvelled at the opulent residences of wealthy Parisians scattered through leafy suburbs; we marvelled no less at the vast and magnificent open-air produce market, full of provisions of a quality and colour and freshness that we can only dream about.

The previous rains had cleared the air, so that the visibility and distant views were remarkable. From the white cliffs of the Pas de Calais, the white cliffs of Dover seemed almost near enough to be touched. Even with my less than brilliant eyesight it was possible to distinguish individual buildings on the Kent coast. It really made me realise, as I had never fully realised before, just how tempting it must have been to Julius Caesar, or the Emperor Claudius, or Napoleon Bonaparte, when they stood in the same locality and looked across that narrow stretch of water to an apparently conquerable land.

This year we went to Kent with different friends, staying in Deal. At night in the far distance, I could surely see a twinkling of lights on the French coast. How many English kings, lodging in Dover Castle or similar, had seen that same view and thought 'Fair stands the wind for France'? Seeing the narrow seas in that way was a revealing history lesson in itself. The following day we went to Richborough, near Sandwich. Kentish readers will forgive me, I hope, when I confess that I had never been there either. Such an evocative site, with the great upstanding walls of one of the late-Roman 'Forts of the Saxon Shore', within which are the footings of the gigantic triumphal arch which had been erected as



A modern imagining of the Romans' triumphal arch at Richborough.

(Image: English Heritage/Simon Edwards)

the 'gateway to Britannia' after the Claudian conquest in 43AD. That must have been an astonishing sight; indeed, that is one of the places where I would be sorely tempted to build a full-size replica, if I were in charge.

Today from Richborough, on its low but prominent hill, you look over reclaimed marshland, with pylons, railways, roads, industrial areas and other visual detritus of the 20th and 21st centuries, but once, 2,000 years ago, the sea lapped at its foot, and the wide bay was much wider.

Down on the shore is Ebbsfleet, the landing place of St Augustine in 597, making his way to Canterbury on the papal mission to convert the kingdom of Kent to Christianity. A century and a half earlier, it is said to have been the place where the Anglo-Saxon invaders, under the command of the celebrated Terrible Twosome, Hengist and Horsa, made landfall. So many seminal events in our national history in one specific place – but of course, this is also local history, in a fascinating corner of Kent with an exceptionally rich heritage. And that

local history has interacted for millennia with the local history of the Pas de Calais and of the Boulonnais, and continues to do so, linked by the umbilical cord of the Channel Tunnel.

Seeing one from the other, and vice versa, was a way to put it all into perspective... familiar to local inhabitants, but new to me as a first-time visitor. It made sense of the

geopolitics of the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, and indeed of the Napoleonic Wars and the Second World War. During that conflict my father was in the Royal Marines, and for a time was stationed at Deal, from which France is clearly visible. He knew full well the geopolitics of intervisibility, and he was a tiny part of the local history of Deal.

AWARDS



BALH Awards

Hugh Pihlens: 'Mr Hungerford History'

Congratulations to BALH Outstanding Individual Contribution award winner Dr Hugh Pihlens

Now known locally as 'Mr Hungerford History', Dr Pihlens moved to Hungerford, Berkshire in 1973 on joining the local GP practice. He became senior partner of the practice in 1980.

In 1979 he founded the **Hungerford Historical Association (HHA)** and has been a mainstay of the association and its chairman on 11 occasions. It remains a thriving association of nearly 200 members that meets 10 times a year to hear local and national speakers on a wide variety of historical subjects.

In 2009, Hugh started to develop an online resource of historical information about Hungerford and its surroundings. This has grown into a 1700-page 'Virtual Museum' that is accessed over 30,000 times a year by people from all over the world. He continues to maintain and add to the Museum, while battling with the nightmares of changing software standards.

In 2019, he motivated a group of volunteers from HHA to commence a five-year project to refurbish Littlecote Roman Villa and its Orpheus mosaic. During this project, he has led working parties and sought funds to return the site to the state it was following the original restoration in the 1970s. The villa site is now visited by scores of people every month.



To nominate someone for next year's BALH Outstanding Individual Contributions awards, visit www.balh.org.uk/resources-balh-annual-awards (deadline 31 December).

Rabbit holes and turnips: exploring South Downs church history

Amanda Davey

A recommendation to 'take walks' after an injury in 2013 culminated in a plan to visit the churches in the South Downs National Park, as that sounded more interesting than the local uneven ground. My thinking was that they would give access to footpaths. My husband's thinking was more specifically about the churches, but he humoured me.

It didn't take long for the penny to drop that each one of the churches we were visiting was different, in the style, the shape, the age and multiple other ways. Having drawn up our list (273+) of churches, chapels and ruins, we had some lovely and unexpected walks ahead of us. But of course, we soon did less walking and marvelled at the dedication of the communities in way-out rural spaces in keeping these buildings going. Or the madness of Victorian philanthropists with egos larger than the congregations' pockets, landing them with fine edifices they could never pay for.

As a lifelong research addict I started digging into the books available and found a terrible truth very quickly. Each and every book written on churches in the National Park, or in the individual counties before the founding of the Park, cherry-picked the ones to photograph and cover. Plus, they used a bewildering amount of jargon, some of which I still don't fully understand.

Six months after we started, it became apparent that we needed to create our own book to fill in the gaps. The marvellous *Thousand Best Churches* by Simon Jenkins had accompanied my late husband (also a Simon) across the country visiting the churches that Jenkins and his cohort of helpers had included. No county can be dealt with in detail for such a large area and what we found was that we were visiting absolute beauties that only Nikolas Pevsner (and Ian Nairn) had included, but their entries were short, sharing space with other buildings in their villages.

Our first plan was to have photographs and short mini histories. We were building a greeting card business and starting to publish

our own books as well, so it fitted in.

Along came lockdown and brainfog slowed progress. Thankfully we had finished taking the photographs the year before. Online data growth became a game-changer. The tithe maps held by The National Archives were made available through The Genealogist, to my utter joy providing a missing source of information for the book. Looking at the original maps was just not tenable for so large an area, beautiful maps that they can be. As a one-time map curator trained on old maps, it had been hard but suddenly both the maps and the apportionments that accompany them had become available.

Tithe maps were the result of the unhappy circumstances following the end of the Napoleonic wars and the return of the agricultural workers-cum-soldiers to a difficult economy and a still-feudal society. Payment to the church and all involved had remained 'in kind' with massive barns needed for the rectors and patrons to hold the tithe payments. This was an increasing problem in years of poor harvest. In 1836 unrest led to the Tithe Commutation Act, where parishes were mapped and field parcels numbered, with parcel name, size, use, owner and occupier usually given. Studying the maps without checking the apportionments can be misleading, depending on how they were drawn. One copy was for the Tithe Commissioners (now at The National Archives), one for the parish church and one for the bishop and diocese. The government's were largely lacking embellishment.

At first it was fun to have a chance to see how things looked in that big watershed era of church and economic history. Slowly, curiosity about the rectors/vicars/curates involved took over. At first the challenge was to name them. But then that got difficult as some of the lords of the manor were clergy without livings, and unravelling that opened up the beginnings of genuinely hundreds of rabbit holes (273+ of them). The further I dug, the more fascinating and yet unexpected it all became. I was like

Owslebury, Hampshire.
(Photo: Amanda Davey)



a sniffer dog having to extract sense out of a drug den! The trails widened and narrowed, petering out or expanding, but all the time the focus was on the churches or chapels involved. I never did get to the bottom of nonconformist evolution, for example, hiding in the end behind an analogy of minestrone soup that included blending to thicken the stock.

I will give four examples; some relate to the fun of research and all to the bizarre effects on the congregants who must have been having to deal with it all. Three are from Hampshire and one in Sussex.

Blendworth in Hampshire has two church sites; one is a demolished ancient one and the other a fancy Victorian one (*pictured on the front cover of this issue*), a couple of miles to the west. The tithe map still showed the old church in use. Digging into the story of the new build led to a complex story and triggered the only map that I drew other than the one of the site numbers. Two aspirant families that had a tradition of intermarrying didn't quite have enough money to buy a park, so they began buying property and then further buying more to create a park area between them. A thorn in their side was that the rectory was right in the middle, a fine building with its own pleasure

grounds, shown on the tithe. This did not fit the vision.

The old church was a bit small and crumbly, so they made a different plan. If they built a new and larger church and rectory, maybe the rector would agree to move. The old churchyard remained the burial ground and was eventually demolished in the 1950s. In among all this, one of the original manor houses for the park was demolished, and the now 'old' rectory next to the new church has taken its manorial name.

Owslebury, again in Hampshire, was a parish with the moated Marwell Manor and priory of the Bishops of Winchester. The village church is a late-ish 14th-century building, arguably not previously needed due to the presence of a manorial chapel. Marwell Wildlife is also in the parish and had been another manor. One of the bishops came from that manor and saw to it that his family benefited from his position. In c.1908 the Victoria County History (VCH) published an exceptionally confusing and confused assessment of what had been going on in 'Marwell Manor'. This has been the subject of a very helpful paper by the Hampshire Field Club, pointing out a sobering fact. The research for that 1908 entry

had been undertaken only in London, in spite of the fact that it was known that more answers would be in the archives of the Oxbridge college that had been gifted the land following the Dissolution. Thankfully, Hampshire's VCH is being updated, although it will be a while before they get to East Hampshire.

And now a sinner, then on to a saint.

At the time of the tithe map in **East Meon**, another Hampshire village, the rector was Rev Thomas Cooke Kemp. Out of the deplorable characters that I found, he is probably the one with the most wide-reaching impact. He was appointed to his multiple incumbencies in 1826 and rapidly inspired a flurry of nonconformist chapel communities being established as a result of being unpopular.

He was accused of inappropriate behaviour with a maid, which he was found not guilty of but required to pay costs, which doesn't imply innocence to me. In 1830 came the Swing Riots, where rural communities struggling with bad harvests and high rents, as well as intransigent landlords and some clergy, blew up in frustration and violent swarms of pitchfork-holding agricultural workers desperate to feed their families rampaged across the lanes and fields. The then rector of Selborne was nearly lynched – I think he must have been a friend of Kemp's, and they came from a similar mindset.

Not long after these riots were quelled and several had been transported to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), Rev Kemp got into hot water over turnips. Turnips were a staple crop for feeding livestock. His reverence got it into his head that any turnips fed to stock *in situ* could be added to his rights for tithes, in spite of the fact that it seems that these were split from the main crop, so that this was patently an act of greed.

The ensuing outcry from parishioners then upset their landlords and all sorts of toing and froing took place, culminating in the Tithing of Turnips Act in 1835. This was a significant moment in a troubled era and part of the pressure that hatched the Tithe Commutation Act the following year, which triggered the mapping upon which I've spent so many happy moments digging into the stories that it has enabled (with the help of on and offline resources).

To make it clear that saintliness also occurs in incumbents, there is also the tale of Parson Darby in East Sussex's **East Dean** not far



East Dean, East Sussex. (Photo: Amanda Davey)

from the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head. Rev Jonathan Darby was another of multiple incumbencies, but this time in poorer rural parishes. He was active in the early 18th century, when smuggling and ship-wreckers were rife. Over the years he had to bury a high number of victims of drowning. Grieving the loss of two children and latterly of his wife, he had decided that enough was enough. This was a time when temperatures were lower than they are now, as Britain was in the Little Ice Age.

The wreckers would use donkeys with small lanterns dipping up and down on the clifftops to pretend to be ships, which in the fog-prone English Channel was a murderous act. Parson Darby found a cave in the chalk – these were days when the rate of retreat was so slow that caves could form – and he decorated it with furnishings and candles and on foggy nights would take himself and light a strong lamp in the cave, acting as an early lighthouse. His position was approximately 'below' where the Belle Tout lighthouse would be built one hundred years after his death, but considerably further south than the chalk edge we know these days. He is buried in the churchyard and his stone is a lichen-clad* memorial to the 'friend of sailors'.

* Please don't contemplate cleaning lichens off memorials or other stone, however well intentioned, as it can cause far more damage to do so than the lichens will ever do. It is their symbiotic relationship that holds everything together.

In their Landscape: The churches, chapels and ruined places of worship in the South Downs National Park was published on 24 October 2025 and is available from www.tiliapublishinguk.co.uk for £28.50 plus postage in the UK, ISBN 978-0-993396-52-6.

Drystone walls in Conistone

Beverley Rymer

One of the intended outcomes of the drystone wall survey at Asby, led by Dr David Johnson, a landscape archaeologist, and reported by Carol Dougherty in LHN 151, Spring 2024, was to act as a catalyst for future wall surveys by other historical or archaeological groups. With this in mind, during 2024 the **Upper Wharfedale Heritage Group** (UWHG) conducted a survey of drystone walls in part of the parish of Conistone in Upper Wharfedale, with David Johnson again providing leadership and with the same methodologies and tools as those used at Asby.

One intention was to test the application of the Asby typology in a different area but also members were to be trained in the techniques of a Level 2 survey (defined by Historic England as a survey which provides a basic description and interpretative record of an archaeological monument or landscape as a result of field survey). They were also encouraged to undertake documentary research on the rich archive material and maps relating to historical events and enclosure in the township.

An initial training day on landscape interpretation, survey tools and drystone wall features was followed by days in the field measuring, analysing and recording 45 walls in detail, noting features such as geological composition (millstone grit or limestone), location, cross profile, plan form and wall furniture such as stiles and gate stoops.

David Johnson has presented the findings of the survey in a recent publication, providing an accessible introduction to the subject of drystone walls and relating this survey to those done previously in other regions. The book sets out the determining features of each of the walls surveyed and compares them with walls studied elsewhere, drawing out points of difference and similarity. One chapter provides a fascinating analysis of the documentary evidence as it relates to the walls in the parish and is reflected in the field patterns of the survey area, providing a historical perspective on the development of the landscape in the township and enabling much more precise dating of some walls.

He finds that there are close parallels between Asby and Conistone walls and that the



Asby typology of four wall types can also be applied in Conistone. All the Conistone survey walls could be ascribed to a type and hence a general chronological period, but he notes that not all walls conform fully to the features of one type. An example in both surveys is that walls built and documented as Enclosure Act walls do not always conform to the height and width stipulations laid down in the relevant Acts of Parliament, possibly because gangs of labourers were employed to meet the tight timescales set and there was no central supervision of their construction so local practice prevailed. Some walls were built to reflect the lie of the land or the purpose for which the land was used. So a nuanced approach must be used in assigning walls to particular periods.

Finally David Johnson and the group held a well-attended community event at which Professor Angus Winchester reflected on his own work on drystone walls in other regions and David summarised the Conistone findings. This succeeded in engaging the local community in the historical interest to be found in drystone walls and encouraged appreciation of them as elements of the landscape to be conserved and valued. Maurice White, UWHG chair, also contributed his thoughts on the project's success, commenting on the enjoyment and improved understanding of UWHG members. It is hoped that other groups might be encouraged to undertake similar studies.

Beverley Rymer is a committee member of the UWHG and contributed to the survey. Drystone Walls in Conistone Township, Upper Wharfedale can be obtained from the UWHG, www.uwhg.org.uk

Women who chaired parish councils in the late Victorian era

Roger Ottewill

In her groundbreaking study of women in local government between 1865 and 1914, entitled *Ladies Elect*, which was published in 1987, Patricia Hollis makes the point that while most people know 'that women acquired the parliamentary vote in 1918' very few are aware that for the previous 50 years a small number of pioneers had been engaged in public life at local level. The main purpose of her work was to raise awareness of the contribution of these women to the activities of various types of public body, from school boards to boards of guardians and from rural district councils to parish councils. As she explains, for much of this period there was 'a tangle of authorities and agencies, each with different boundaries, different electorates, different qualifications



*St Leonard's, Sherfield-on-Loddon.
(Photo: Colin Bates)*



*The grave of councillor Agnes Barker at
St Leonard's. (Photo: Wertypop)*

for office, different voting procedures, and different rating powers'. Parish councils were added to this mix in 1894, under the provisions of the Local Government Act of that year. With respect to women it prescribed that those who held appropriate property qualifications could not only vote but also stand for election. This applied to married as well as unmarried women. However, under section 43 of the Act, husbands and wives could 'not both be qualified in respect of the same property'. In her book Hollis gives particular attention to the civil parishes of Norfolk. She points out that in 1894 about 20 women were elected to the newly established parish councils in the county.

For the situation in the country as whole, 'Ignota' states in an article published in the *Westminster Review* of October 1898 that 'in a previous paper the writer spoke of about 200 women being engaged as parish councillors in England and Wales, it would appear unfortunately to be the fact that only a much smaller number are so engaged at the present time... Of the women who are or have been parish councillors, eight or nine have been elected chairmen by their respective councils, and three are so acting at the present time'. Both Hollis and 'Ignota' highlight the fact that the initial enthusiasm soon waned. Nonetheless,

The Green, Sherfield



the participation of women in local politics marked an important stage in their progress towards full equality with men.

Of the dozen or so women who successfully stood for election in Hampshire, one who stands out is Agnes Barker of Sherfield-on-Loddon, a parish in the north of the county close to the border with Berkshire. This is because, following her election, she was chosen by her fellow councillors to chair the parish council. An article about her, giving details of her family background and marriage to the Rev Alfred Gresley Barker, who was vicar of Sherfield-on-Loddon between 1865 and 1875, and an assessment of her term of office as chair has been submitted for possible publication in *Hampshire Studies*. Some of the issues the parish council faced, such as the administration of charities, footpaths and misuse of the village green by gypsies and bird catchers are discussed. It is noteworthy that regarding the latter the minutes make reference to the 'discordant noises and filthy language' of the gypsies and the fact that the activities of the bird catchers were not 'conducive to good morals among the youth of the parish who congregated around them' (Hampshire Archives and Local Studies ref: 11M88PX1). Although Alice was only chair for a couple of years, thereafter she was a powerful advocate for the involvement of women as elective members of local authorities. In addition, both

she and her husband did much to improve the lot of those who lived and worked in Sherfield-on-Loddon.

Having studied Mrs Barker it would be intriguing to find out more about her contemporaries. So far only one other of the eight or nine mentioned by 'Ignota' has been identified. This is Harriet McIlquham of Staverton in Gloucestershire. In newspaper obituaries published at the time of her death in January 1910, reference is made to her 'life of social service' and the wide variety of public bodies with which she was involved, including the fact that 'she was the first chairman of Staverton Parish Council and acted as returning officer for the second Parish Council election'. As well as 'her strenuous advocacy of women's suffrage she was a tireless worker for the emancipation of her sex in all domains, notably in the domain of local government' (*Gloucestershire Echo*, 24 January 1910).

Should readers be aware of any other women who served as the first chairs of their parish councils, it would be much appreciated if they could pass on details to me (email rogerottewill@btinternet.com). If sufficient information is forthcoming it is hoped, in due course, to write a piece about these trailblazing women, comparing and contrasting their backgrounds, personalities and experiences. Needless to say, all contributions will be gratefully received and duly acknowledged.

Local history's role in studying early modern English hand-knitting

Lesley A. O'Connell Edwards

I am a knitting historian and a former local studies librarian. Much of my research has focused on hand-knitted wool stockings in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean period. Such stockings became an increasingly important wardrobe essential in 16th-century England and were worn by everyone by the end of the century. It has been estimated that each person wore out at least two pairs a year, which made knitting a small but significant source of income for many. However, as hand-knitting was not a structured industry, with a regulatory body, there is no nationwide evidence for it and it has been little studied. Most of the sources for knitting history are ones that relate to a specific geographical area, which means local history has an important role in developing the understanding of the subject of knitting history. The amount of detail provided in such sources is very variable: most provide only a little information and are a single snapshot in time, not linked to anything else; occasionally though a source produces much more, including numerical data; and very rarely two or more sources touch on the same area.

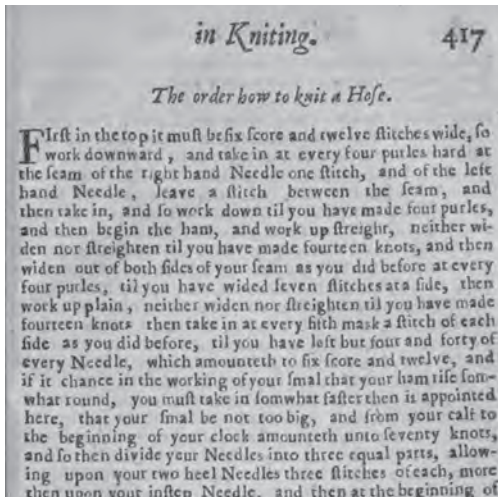
My initial researches over two decades ago drew on a wide range of disparate sources to paint a nationwide picture of working hand-knitters. Over the years I became aware that there was a lot of material concerning knitting in Elizabethan Norwich, and my dissertation for my MSc in English Local History at Oxford University enabled me to produce a detailed socioeconomic study of stocking knitting in Elizabethan Norwich, especially in the 1570s and 1580s. This included both easily accessible printed material, such as the 1570 Norwich Census of the Poor, or Tingley's *Records of the City of Norwich*; and original documents in archives, such as inventories, household accounts, Norwich city's aulnage accounts and in the State Papers. My reconstructions of the extant wool stockings dated to the 16th century in the then Museum of London, which are all very plain, confirmed

that knitting these did not require much skill.

My more recent research has continued to focus on knitted stockings in Norwich and in nearby Great Yarmouth, and has just been published in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*. It was initially sparked by a comment in Thomas Wilson's *The State of England 1600*. He made a passing reference to children in Norwich between the ages of six and ten knitting fine jersey stockings, which were then sold in London, and also in France and other countries. Jersey stockings were the finest type of knitted wool stockings, and are recorded across England. By the 1570s Norwich was noted for its fine stockings: even Elizabeth I had some.

I delved deeper and found that this was one of those rare instances when there were other documents of the period that also provided information on this topic, enabling a fuller picture to be painted. Some of those records supplied numerical data, including the papers of Norfolk JP Sir Nathaniel Bacon, which recorded 400 tod of the 'finer sort' of wool being sent to Yarmouth by the Strangers in Norwich (who were emigrés from the Low Countries) to be made into fine stockings in 1608. (One tod was typically 28 lbs.)

Five years old was not seen as too early to be working in Tudor times. The historical record has anecdotal evidence of children knitting, but there are also two 16th-century sources which provide quantitative age data on child knitters. The 1570 Norwich Census of the Poor lists 75 knitters under the age of 21, 29 of whom were between the ages of six and ten. The poor were those deemed in need of some assistance in supporting themselves, although they were generally expected to work; there would also have been others of the lower classes knitting in Norwich whose families would have been deemed able to support themselves. Other evidence of child knitters occurs in a similar survey of the poor made in Ipswich in 1597, where 35 under the age of 21 were either



The earliest-known printed knitting pattern – for knitting stockings – appears in Natura Exenterata, 1655.

knitters or learning to knit, 12 of whom fall into this age bracket.

However, among the most detailed of these sources were the port books for Yarmouth for 1600–01 and 1601–02 which give full details of cargos being exported, who was exporting them and (usually) the destination of the stockings; the books for 1601–1602 also give customs-assessed values and the duty paid. Port books are a very underused resource in local history, in part because so few have been transcribed and published: one exception is those for King’s Lynn between 1610 and 1614. The books were introduced with the reform of the customs system under Elizabeth I, and port officials were supposed to record all items being exported in a cargo, by whom, the destination and the amount of duty paid by the exporter. Each port did this on annual basis, sending the resultant books to the central government in London. Not many books have survived and by no means all those from the later 16th and early 17th century record all the information. Historians consider that the true extent of trade in these is under-recorded; items were smuggled and merchants did not declare their cargos, either in full or in part. Even so, these books show pattern(s) of trade and give a sense of the volume.

The only stockings listed as being exported from Yarmouth in both years are described as ‘corse jersey knitt’: to us this seems an oxymoron given jersey stockings were fine, but in fact ‘coarse’ has changed its meaning

over the centuries, and in this period it meant ordinary, common quality or usual. Over the two years, 4,814 pairs are recorded as being exported. The books listed who was exporting the stockings, the number of pairs in a cargo and their destination (which was the Low Countries for the vast majority of the pairs). There are 15 traders recorded in 1600–01, and 12 in 1601–02, of whom only four and three respectively were Englishmen; the remainder were from the ‘stranger’ population. The books show that some were clearly small traders, and that for most exporters, stockings were only one item in their cargos.

The fact that traders are named in the port books means that it is possible to search for them in other documents, and understand more of their background. It has proved possible to link nearly half to Norwich, where they could have acquired the stockings they exported. Indices of freemen and city officials exist for Norwich which record native-born Englishmen. Other records list the ‘strangers’, including lay subsidy rolls and (incoming) customs accounts; in addition Frank Meeres’ *The Welcome Stranger* is a very useful resource.

Although jersey stockings are mentioned briefly in other sources, these records provide unique details about their trade and production. The stockings cease to be just an item of clothing mentioned in inventories and similar sources, and become part of an economic process, adding their story to that of early modern England. Local history research and the work of local historians is a vital part of this expansion of our understanding of these hand-knitted items.

Further reading:

- Meeres, Frank, *The Welcome Stranger*. Poppyland, 2018.
- Metters, G. Alan, *The King’s Lynn Port Books 1610–1614*. Norfolk Record Society v.73, 2009.
- O’Connell Edwards, Lesley, ‘The trade in knitted jersey stockings and their creation by child knitters in Norwich and Yarmouth around 1600’, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, v.19, 2025, pp.164–86.

Lesley has published a number of articles on early modern knitting, including in Textile History (v.41.1, v.52 and v.53.1). A version of her master’s dissertation is freely available to download from the Knitting in Early Modern Europe website (<https://kemersearch.com/publications>).

Local history society publications: a 20-year review

Michael Jones

As series editor of publications by **Norwell Parish Heritage Group** (NPHG), I am taking this opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the group over the last 20 years. The inspiration to form a group interested in the history and heritage of Norwell came from a WEA course on local history led by Rodney Cousins in 2004 and the village's participation in The Festival of the Beck in 2005.

Subsequent conversations in Norwell indicated an enthusiasm to continue exploring its own long and rather unusual history and NPHG was formed. The moment was propitious. In 1997 the Southwell Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) formally established, with the aid of Heritage Lottery money, a project to study the history and architecture of every Anglican church in the diocese of Southwell (now Southwell and Nottingham). I was invited to contribute the entry on Norwell in 2002. Because Norwell was then part of a benefice of four parishes (Norwell, Caunton, Cromwell and Ossington) I rather recklessly suggested that with the help of others, I would coordinate the entries for each of them (the results are available at <https://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk>).

At much the same time, I had also realised that the major documentary source for the history of the medieval collegiate church of St Mary, Southwell, of whom three prebendaries were the landlords of Norwell, had never been edited despite its importance, so I formed another team of academic colleagues to help complete the task. It took us until 2018 for *The White Book* (Liber Albus) of Southwell (published by the Pipe Roll Society) to appear. But in the interim the wealth of information it contained on medieval Norwell (never previously seriously studied) as well as extensive village records from the Reformation onwards deposited in Nottinghamshire Archives became available to members of NPHG (parish registers, wills, inventories, leases, the Town Book...).

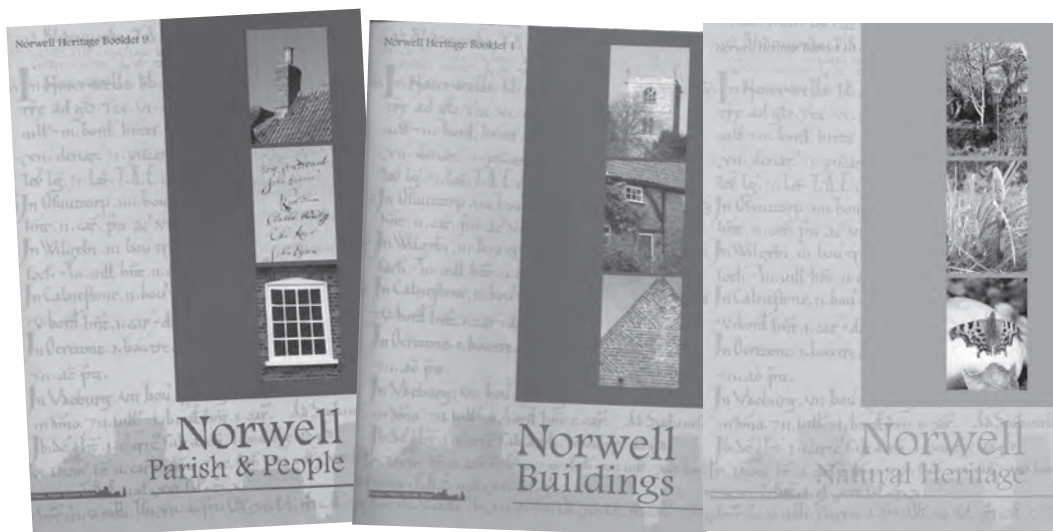
In 2006 a successful application was made to

the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to investigate and publish NPHG's findings on our parish. We wanted to discover what had happened here in the past and how this had shaped the community we lived in at the beginning of the 21st century with a view to leaving a record for future generations. Rather than a single chronological account, it was decided that the approach would be thematic and collaborative. Initially five booklets were produced in 2009 on important aspects of that story: *Norwell Buildings* (reprinted 2013), which quickly engaged many parishioners as well as members of NPHG in collecting material, and also profited from generous help from English Heritage to carry out pioneering tree ring studies of the oldest timber-frame houses; *Norwell Farms*, treating the major preoccupation of most inhabitants down to the mid 20th century; *Norwell Mills* and *Norwell Trades*, both of them inextricably associated with supporting agriculture; and *Norwell Schools* which had educated generations of village children. We also produced four trail leaflets and an education pack for Norwell Church of England Primary School on 'Norwell in Wartime', as part of our obligations under the terms of the HLF grant of £24,970.

We were also permitted to use any profit from the sale of those first five booklets to fund



Norwell in the 1880s.



Some of the Norwell Parish Heritage Group's publications.

additional ones. Hence a further four had been added to the series by 2020: *Willoughby by Norwell Deserted Village* (2012), about a process which took over four centuries, *Norwell Church and Chapel* (2013), and *Norwell Parish and People* (2020). Two specially bound memorial books with details on all those who served and fell in the Great War were placed in St Laurence's church and the village hall. A DVD 'A Walk through Norwell' from east to west and back again, based on postcards from the 1930s, was produced in 2012, thanks to the technical skills of Leila Becker. For the booklets, we received some funding from **Nottinghamshire Local History Association** for which we are deeply grateful. Other benefactors are acknowledged in individual booklets, but none of them could have been produced without the resources of Nottinghamshire Archives.

Nearly 20 years have now elapsed since the start of a project which, like Topsy, grew. When we began previous published work on Norwell was meagre in extent. In Michael Brook's comprehensive *A Nottinghamshire Bibliography: Publications on Nottinghamshire History before 1998* (Thoroton Society, Record Series, vol. 42, 2002) there were nine entries for Norwell, one more than for Cromwell, but for Ossington there were 13, Caunton 17 and Laxton 47! For Norwell Woodhouse, Brook bleakly states, 'No printed material was found.' Of the nine items for Norwell only two are likely to have been known to some villagers, John Goodwin's *Memories of Norwell* (1984, 42 pp.) and Wallace Smith's pamphlet *The Enclosure of Norwell*

(1968, 10 pp.), a chapter from his 'Studies in the Evolution of Norwell' (Retford, Eaton Hall College of Education, 1967, typescript, 126 pp.), the first modern study of the village. It easily replaces the brief account of the village and its church prepared for a visit by the **Thoroton Society** as long ago as 1931 (T. M. Blagg, 'Norwell', *Trans. Thoroton Soc.*, 35 (1931), 20–35).

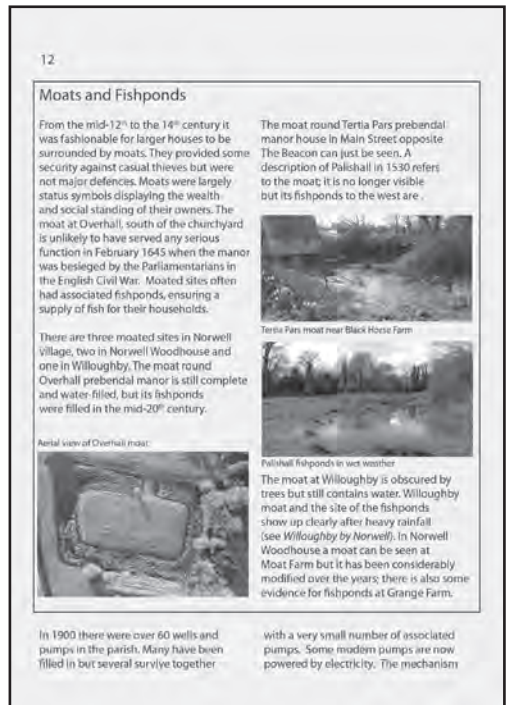
Since the 1930s other work had been done, but it remained in typescript. A short, amateurishly typed and anonymous 'Norwell and its history' (45 pp.), probably dating from the early 1950s, came to light among papers acquired by the late David Garnett. The author had used some standard accounts but also consulted archival material containing useful nuggets of information. But the most complete account, apart from that of Wallace Smith (d. 2005), is Guy Hemingway's *A History of Norwell* (1983, 162 pp.), a mine of information, much of it from the late 18th century onwards derived from a comprehensive consultation of local newspapers. Frustratingly, in some chapters of the copies consulted the details of footnote references are missing from the actual text. Hemingway (d. 1986), an engineer by profession but a lifelong indefatigable local historian, lived in the Old Rectory, Cromwell. Surviving to a ripe old age (86), he produced in his later years a truly impressive output of local village histories (Cromwell, Carlton, Sutton, Norwell...) as well as studying various aspects of Newark's history. All reflect the critical care he took to verify and document his sources, ensuring the lasting

value of his work. Most can be consulted at Newark Library or Nottinghamshire Archives. We have drawn extensively over the years from this body of work, as well as that of Wallace Smith, in our Heritage Booklets.

Several articles (cited in full in the relevant booklets) have also been published recently concerning Norwell prebendaries, relations with the Minster and other aspects of village history in the county's main historical journal, *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, and elsewhere, while a general one 'Out and about in Norwell' appeared nationally in *The Historian*, Number 108, Winter 2010, 29–31.

There are clearly some areas of Norwell's evolution which would repay further exploration by NPHG. The Second World War and the remarkable social, economic, cultural and technological transformations that gathered pace in its aftermath have been touched on in most booklets but only superficially. There is also some unfinished business: completion of an edition of the Town Book and associated documents which over the years members of NPHG have diligently transcribed. However with *Norwell Natural Heritage* (2025), covering geological as well as historical epochs, we think it is an appropriate time to bring the series of ten booklets to a conclusion. Some reviewers have kindly commented that the booklets provide a model of how to do a 'village history' and Norwell is certainly now better served than almost any other Nottinghamshire village apart from Laxton. Perhaps in a future generation some later inhabitants of the parish will take up the baton again. If so, they will enjoy, as we have, the excitement and satisfaction of discovering more about the place where they live, those who have gone before them and the evolution of its physical environment over the centuries.

Finally, as series editor, I would like to thank most sincerely all those who have contributed in any way to our booklets, far too many to mention



A page from Norwell Natural Heritage, the group's latest publication.

individually here, except for two. First, our graphic designer, Sue Sinclair, who designed the template and the conventions which have served us so successfully throughout and set the texts so accurately for our various printers that proof-reading has been a pleasure. Secondly, Elizabeth Jones, who has acted as secretary (with different mandates) and a tireless ambassador and fund raiser for NPHG ever since its formation, as well as being the sole author of *Natural Heritage*, lead author or coordinator of *Trades, Schools, Great War* and *Parish and People*, co-author of *Willoughby by Norwell* and *Church and Chapel* and a firm but ever constructively critical reader of whatever I have written, without whom this series would never have existed.

Local History News provides your opportunity to:

- **announce** your society's news
- **inform** the wider history community about your research projects
- **share** your advice and experience on different aspects of running a local history society or conducting research
- **tell** readers about useful resources
- **ask** questions that other societies may have answers for

We welcome your news items, short reports and features. Please send items or proposals to editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

A heritage trail in ‘the cloud’: how does that work?

Mary Hollingsworth

Many local history groups and societies run heritage walks and the **Kirton in Lindsey Society** in North Lincolnshire is no exception. Such walks are often popular but it is noticeable that the participants are predominantly ‘of a certain age’. It seems that the traditional walks and talk are not appealing to younger generations, particularly families, yet when you talk to them, they are keen to know about the history of their area. So how do we square this circle? We believe that modern technology can come to the rescue.

The Society had always wanted to upgrade the current heritage walk and we were thinking along traditional lines until a community member came along with the idea of using QR codes at strategic points around the town to access the information which would be held online. We liked the idea but quickly found the number and variety of permissions we would need to place small boards/plaques on listed buildings, private houses, street furniture and in conservation areas was totally daunting. As it was, it took six months to get listed building consent for one board on the railings of a building in the Market Place (a conservation area).

Research

Talking to the team at the local museum and the council heritage officer, we were able to get suggestions of people we could talk to who would help us with ideas. By doing this we found, to our great delight, that everything could be done using website development and GPS mapping so we didn’t need a physical infrastructure. All people would need to do the trail would be a mobile phone. As 95 per cent of the eligible UK population owns a smartphone, this seemed like a pretty inclusive idea. It was also likely to appeal to a younger audience.

The information required to build the trail was already in the Society’s possession as we have an extensive archive so research could



Grandad and granddaughter sharing the information.

begin to decide what to include and, therefore, the route of the trail. Kirton in Lindsey is an ancient town with links back to the Romans (and before) so the task was not what to include but what to leave out! We chose 21 points of interest (POIs) which spanned from Anglo-Saxon times to the 20th century.

Finally, we had a good idea of what we wanted – a heritage trail which was self-guiding and, at each POI, had spoken narrative, words and pictures to bring alive the story. It would start and finish in the ancient Market Place where there would be a board with a QR code and website info to mark the start of the trail. Everything else was ‘in the cloud’ with navigation being done by GPS on a virtual map using a smartphone or tablet. It would be possible to do the whole trail or dip into it at any point so that people could do it in their own way in their own time. We also had a title: The Kirton in Lindsey Time Travellers Trail. Probably not the most original but it said what it was!

Funding

Now we faced the next hurdle; the Society did not have the expertise to do this. It meant finding a company that could do it for us and that meant costs. We are only a small society so

knew then that we would have to apply for a grant. Fortunately, North Lincolnshire Council has a grants team who manage a number of community grants and our project fitted their criteria. This would be our target for funding.

Meanwhile, we had the small problem of finding suitable development companies who could take the project on. This proved more difficult than expected and some of the figures quoted to us meant that we may have to rethink, or even abandon, the idea. That was until we discovered Resolution (a digital development company based in nearby Scunthorpe). They understood immediately what we were trying to do, said it was relatively straightforward, and widened our ideas further on what could be achieved. Bingo! Just what we wanted: a company with a positive outlook and a 'can do' attitude. They also quoted a price of £7,500 which we felt was both reasonable and achievable.

So, a grant of £5,500 was applied for and local fundraising and the Society's own contribution raised a further £2,000 to act as match funding. By this time we had been working on the idea for at least 18 months (including making sure the proposed route was fully accessible). Most of the first drafts of the POIs had been written and suitable pictures sourced. We were ready to go as soon as we heard about the grant.

Development

It was September 2024 when we finally knew we had been successful. Now it was over to Resolution to make it happen! The original estimate had been 12 weeks but the timing of going into the autumn/winter period caused delays as they wanted to take photographs and drone footage to create videos during good weather. The plan was to have a spoken narrative for each POI, written words and photographs to fully bring out the history of the item. Also, old photographs meant that some POIs could be illustrated using 'then and now' sliders. It was all designed to be as engaging and interesting as possible to really get people excited about what they were seeing.

The navigation proved a little more challenging than Resolution expected but, after several attempts, the trail includes a map showing the person where they are walking in real time and a notification when they have reached the POI.



The owner of the fish and chip shop proudly showing his son the start board on his railings.

By spring 2025 we were ready to test it. Several volunteers came forward including the local Brownie group who loved it and gave us the confidence that we had created something that would appeal to a younger audience.

Going 'live'

Feedback from all the volunteers required a few more tweaks and then, on 2 June, the trail was officially launched.

The start board is simple and just gives people the basic information about the trail and how to get started. People can either scan the QR code or, if they prefer, can type in the web address.

This takes you straight to the start of the trail; just follow the instructions and away you go!

In addition to the start board there are posters around the town, on social media sites and in local community magazines so people can get onto the site without having to start in the Market Place.

The whole trail takes about an hour and goes down and back up the slope of the Lincoln Edge on which Kirton in Lindsey is built. Who said Lincolnshire is flat?!

With that in mind, we recognised that not everyone would be able to navigate the hill so the information for all the POIs is also available

Local History News

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www.balh.org.uk

Supplement

THE BALH DYMOND LECTURE 2025

Online • Thursday 11 December • 7pm • Members free • Non-members £5

'Heads — you lose!'

Working for the railways in Britain before 1939



The Railway Work, Life & Death project is a joint initiative between the University of Portsmouth, the National Railway Museum (NRM) and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick (MRC). They're also working with other institutions including The National Archives and the RMT union. They are making it easier to find out about railway worker accidents in Britain and Ireland from the late 1880s to 1939. The project is providing data about who was involved, what they were doing on the railways, what happened to them and why. Although today most people don't realise it, working on the railways 100 years ago was incredibly dangerous, with hundreds killed and tens of thousands injured each year.

Since 2021 BALH has been running an annual lecture each winter, welcoming distinguished academics to share their research with us. This is now a highlight of our annual calendar for both members and the wider public to enjoy. We are delighted to announce that our 2025 lecture is being given by Dr Mike Esbester of the University of Portsmouth and the Railway Work, Life & Death project (for more details see page 30 of this issue of *Local History News*).

We are incredibly excited to welcome members and the public to this fascinating talk. The lecture will be held via Zoom at 7pm on Thursday 11 December. The event will be free for BALH members with a small £5 charge for non-members (reduced for members of our member societies).

SEE WWW.BALH.ORG.UK/DYMOND2025

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR PLACE

BALH VIRTUAL EVENTS FOR AUTUMN 2025

Free to BALH members • Non-members £5

Church Going: A stonemason's guide to the churches of the British Isles **Tuesday 18 November 2025 7–8pm**

Join master stonemason Andrew Ziminski for an illuminating journey through Britain's medieval churches – revealing the hidden stories, artistry and architecture that shape our shared past.

Master stonemason Andrew Ziminski has worked on the greatest cathedrals in the land from Salisbury to St Paul's. His main area of expertise however is the repair of medieval churches. He says knowing a church is a key to the past that unlocks our shared history.

In his talk he will reveal their fascinating histories, artworks, features and furnishings, from flying buttresses to rood screens, lychgates and chancels.

His bestselling book, *Church Going*, is a handbook to Britain's glorious medieval parish churches and has become a phenomenon, described by Sir Tony Robinson as 'joyous and illuminating'.

Andrew Ziminski is a stonemason, church conservator and author living and working in Frome, Somerset. He has four decades of experience working on some of the greatest cathedrals and churches in Britain, including the tower of Salisbury Cathedral and the dome of St Paul's in London. He is a SPAB William Morris Craft Fellow, a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and conservation advisor to the Salisbury Diocesan advisory committee for the care of churches. He is the author of *The Stonemason: A History of Building Britain*.

www.balh.org.uk/balh-events

British Association for Local History Conference

The Local History of the Yorkshire Dales

Save the date! Saturday 2 May 2026, 10am–4pm

Grassington Devonshire Institute, Grassington, North Yorkshire

£8 (BALH members) £10 (non-members), includes refreshments but not lunch

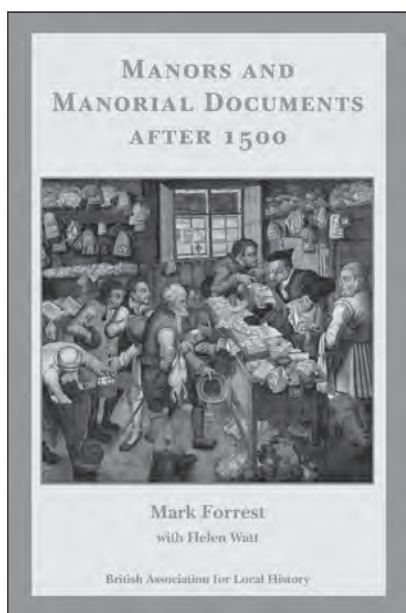


The British Association for Local History is delighted to present this one-day conference on the local history of the Yorkshire Dales. The conference will include five presentations on a range of topics, including the Washburn Assemblage, the lives of Marie Hartley and Joan Ingleby, the history of a dales barn and more. The speakers will include:

- Jude Rhodes, incoming Chair of the BALH Outreach Committee and AGRA associate
- Sally Robinson, Washburn Heritage Centre
- Esther Rutter, acclaimed author and PhD student

Further details to be confirmed. Booking will be available on the BALH website soon.

LATEST TITLE FROM BALH



Manors and Manorial Documents after 1500

Mark Forrest, with Helen Watt

Manorial documents are an under-used source for local history. They offer a wealth of information about farming practices, village customs, inheritance, crime and local government, essential to understanding past communities. This comprehensive 95-page guide to post-medieval manors details how they were managed and presents illustrated examples of administrative documents – custumals, accounts, surveys and maps – as well as the court rolls and books that record the court in session. It includes case studies of how they may be used, a bibliography and a glossary.

£8 to BALH members, £10 to non-members.

March 2022 ISBN: 978-0-948140-06-8

ORDER THROUGH OUR WEBSITE

www.balh.org.uk/shop/shop-local-history-books

WOULD YOUR ORGANISATION BE INTERESTED IN SELLING BALH PUBLICATIONS?

One of the core aims of BALH has always been to assist its members by publishing handbooks and other useful information on local history topics. We currently have in print books about internet sites, handwriting, dates and times, manorial records and teaching local history, and these are available for anyone to purchase through our website. We are keen that these should also be available for sale in archive offices, museums, and through member societies, and we are prepared to offer copies, if ordered in multiples of five or more, at a generous discount for resale. If your organisation would be interested in selling BALH publications please contact John Chandler, chair of the Publications Committee, for further information: jh.chandler@hotmail.com.

BALH Awards for Local Historians

OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The purpose of this award is to honour publicly local historians of all ages who have made outstanding and significant voluntary contributions to the subject in their own areas and more widely. Such contributions might include raising awareness of the subject or developing innovative ways of collecting and disseminating research into local history. It is intended that the awards should embrace as wide a spectrum of activity in local history as possible.

The most important thing the recipients have in common is their enthusiasm for local history and their ability and inclination to share this with others.

Nominations may be made by anyone who feels they recognise such a contribution, using the form on our website at www.balh.org.uk/awards. Nominations are considered by the Awards Panel made up of experienced local historians who are members of the Association's Board of Trustees or one of its advisory committees. Up to six awards are made annually. Awards certificates are normally presented at the BALH AGM in the summer.

The nominator is responsible for submitting the nomination form and for ensuring that the two referees each complete the reference form available on the website (if necessary, please ask for a paper copy). References each require 300–500 words in support of the nomination outlining how, in the experience of the referee, the nominated local historian deserves this recognition. If not submitting online, those three forms should arrive together by post to British Association for Local History Awards c/o Moore Insight, St James House, Vicar Lane, Sheffield S1 2EX or by email to admin@balh.org.uk by **31 December**. Please do not send any additional material.

If you have not received an acknowledgement within three weeks please contact the BALH Office admin@balh.org.uk

BALH INSURANCE FOR LOCAL SOCIETIES

Insurance cover is provided for societies within the BALH Society annual membership subscription fee. Subscriptions are valid for one calendar year (1st Jan – 31st Dec) and need to be renewed each year to continue a society's insurance cover. The policy covers these types of activities:

- Meetings, walks, talks, AGMs/conferences with less than 150 attendees • Visits/trips to places of interest
- Collections of local archive material • Photographing places of interest for recording purposes
- Having a stand at a fair or arranging small-scale publicity displays • Research
- Other non-manual activities of a history society

A fact sheet about the policy and the full policy schedule are available to download here:

www.balh.org.uk/resources-balh-insurance-for-local-societies

as a menu on the website and each can be accessed separately. This version includes videos of each POI so that the reader knows which building is being explained. We have nicknamed this ‘the sofa trail’ as it can be done on any device anywhere in the world.

Wider appeal

Although Kirton in Lindsey is small for a town (population < 4,000) it has wide reach as, since before the Second World War, there has been a military site for both RAF and the Army on the edge of the town. This means that thousands of people have passed through while on military service and many have fond memories of their time here. Add to this the local people who have moved away and the Kirton diaspora is large. The sofa trail will appeal to them (wherever they are now) and we have already had very positive feedback from residents of the USA, Canada and South Africa (to name just a few) saying how it has brought back good memories.

The local academy school is interested too in using it in their curriculum and we are hoping to work with them in the coming academic year. It could provide an important research tool for anyone wanting to find out more about the local history.

At the time of writing (just two months after launch) Google Analytics has registered 460 new users and nearly 8,000 ‘events’ i.e. accessing specific pages. There are also reports of families and small groups of people wandering around the town gathered around a mobile phone and looking at a POI. Looks like we have created a success.

Have a go for yourselves – just type in <https://kiltt.quest>



Listening to the spoken narrative.



Building in longevity

So often with small-scale local projects they only last while a keen person or group is running them or until the funding runs out and then they fade away or fail to get maintained. We have tried to build a greater longevity into this project in that Resolution will host the trail for the first year for free and then the Town Council has agreed to host it on their website after that. This means there will always be someone whose job it is to keep it up to date and make sure it is working correctly. The overhead is tiny – just a little bit of time occasionally. Access to the website is free so there are no administration costs relating to money or maintenance.

So, have we achieved our objectives? We think so but only time will tell. The trail has generated a lot of interest and excitement with the constant feedback refrain being ‘that was fascinating, I didn’t know there was so much to find out’. As a tool for spreading greater understanding and, hopefully, appreciation of our heritage, early indications are good.

It is an approach that almost anyone could take to create a history trail and I’m sure that what we have done is not unique. It requires a knowledgeable group to create the content, a digital development partner who shares the vision and a bit of cash to bring it all together.

Mary Hollingsworth is chair of the Kirton in Lindsey Society. For more information about the Society go to: www.thekirtoninlindsseysociety.org.uk. Resolution can be contacted via <https://res.digital>

Building Local History Hub

Matthew Harper-Duffy

I've been a primary school teacher for nine years, and throughout that time I've always felt local history had huge untapped potential. Our planning was solid, but I wanted it to be more than that: richer, more connected to the communities around us and more rooted in the places where children actually live. The problem was that I didn't know where to start. I lacked confidence in my own knowledge beyond the classroom and, like many teachers, I didn't have easy access to the kind of external expertise that could bring local stories to life.

In other areas of the curriculum, support structures exist to help teachers deepen and share their practice. Maths hubs run by the NCETM, for example, bring teachers together to discuss challenges, share resources and work collaboratively to improve teaching. Local working parties in computing have done the same, giving teachers space to talk honestly about what works and what doesn't in real classrooms. These sessions are often described as the most valuable professional development we do. They are practical, teacher led and rooted in reality.

It seemed obvious that local history needed something similar. So, in my home city of Brighton and Hove, I began to think seriously about how we might create a collaborative space for teachers to support one another in planning, teaching and celebrating local history.

The idea was exciting, but I quickly realised how out of my depth I felt. Heritage was not a sector I knew anything about, and setting something up in that world felt like leaping into the unknown. My breakthrough came when I started connecting with museum and archive outreach officers. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Many told me that what I was proposing fitted perfectly with their job descriptions: they were actively looking for ways to work with schools more closely, and here was a model that would make that collaboration straightforward and purposeful.

It also dawned on me that this should not just be a Brighton project. If a small working party could make a difference locally, then a national network could transform how schools approach local history altogether. Teachers and heritage

professionals could collaborate across regions, share resources and ideas, and celebrate local stories on a much larger scale. That realisation was the seed from which Local History Hub grew. It is a teacher-led initiative designed to connect schools, heritage organisations and local authorities to make local history more accessible, hands-on and community-rooted.

One of the most important ideas we want to challenge is the tendency to treat local history as a one-off topic in the curriculum, often tucked away in a single term of Key Stage 2. The hubs encourage schools to think differently. Local history can, and should, run through primary education as a golden thread, woven into geography, art, English and PSHE, and used as a springboard for enquiry in many other areas. Children build a far deeper understanding of place and identity when local stories are not confined to one isolated unit but explored repeatedly and in different contexts.

Today, Local History Hub is in a very different place from where it started. We now have five pilot hubs in Cardiff, Derby, Blackburn with Darwen, Cheshire West and Chester, and Brighton. The ambition is to grow to 25 by September 2026. Each hub brings together teachers and heritage professionals to co-design curriculum-linked learning, run oral history projects and plan events like Local History Day. Perhaps most importantly, they are creating sustained relationships between schools and their local heritage sector, ensuring that collaboration does not stop after a single project or workshop.

It is still early days, but already we are seeing the difference this approach can make. Our pilot hubs have held their first meetings, and the enthusiasm is clear: schools and heritage organisations are coming together to give local history the focus and respect it deserves. The next step is to build on this momentum, grow the network and continue working towards a future where every child in the UK has the chance to understand and celebrate the history of the place they call home.

Matthew Harper-Duffy is founder and director of Local History Hub, www.localhistoryhub.org.uk

Mini AATP 2025: All About That Place

Jude Rhodes

Following the extremely successful All About That Place (AATP) events in 2023 and 2024 this year a Mini AATP took place from 24 September to 3 October covering 10 days.

AATP started as a joint venture with the Society of Genealogists (SOG), the Society of One Place Studies (SOPS) and the British Association for Local History (BALH) to mark the 10-year anniversary of SOPS; this is the rationale behind ten days of ten-minute talks. In 2024 ProjectKin became a supporter, hosting international live talks throughout the event.

The Mini AATP took place to keep the momentum going while having a break from the full programme. The mini format introduced some new ten-minute talks from SOPS including:

- Conscientious objection in WW1: a case study by Janet Barrie
- The development of seaside resorts and the coming of the railways by Mick Warner
- District nurses in your place by Jude Rhodes
- Dr Joseph Stevens (1818–1899) by Julie Muirhead
- Zooming in on a one-place study by Ann Simcock
- Crofters on the march! by Jane Harris

On the final day, 3 October, the mini event was wrapped up with Barbara Tien from Project Kin and I discussing local history.

I talked about my involvement in AATP, which is a highlight of my year, and how I am invested through my work with BALH, SOG, SOPS and ProjectKin; this provides a unique partnership for communities to come together celebrating family and local history.

I describe this as a formula:

Family history + Local history =
Social history + a place = AATP

I am a qualified genealogist but refer to myself as a family historian because my passion is placing people and families in their local history. Local history gives the identity of

a place; the landscape, culture, migration and provides the backdrop for the people and the communities in that place; AATP captures this perfectly and reflects the fabulous one-place studies with the SOPS.

I said to Barbara at ProjectKin that a one place can be a building, a structure, a street, a village or a town. A street is a manageable study as it has a finite number of buildings and families; I have realised that my own village study is a much bigger piece of work than I envisaged when I started to collect research documents. However, I have a study of seven streets which has more potential to be completed.

I am tempted to study a packhorse bridge of personal interest; this would be at the heart of local history considering the evolution of the bridge on the route and the decline in use as well as who travelled across the bridge for trade and the local residents as a means to connect with another place. This would create a social history though a bridge but someone interested in vernacular architecture could approach a bridge study with consideration of the building materials and construction reflecting the local area.

ProjectKin provides a global outlook with a platform for a global community. A topic Barbara covered came with a question 'Where were your ancestors?'; this brought responses from New Zealand, the US, Canada and Australia looking at places in a global context with temporal studies. AATP covers themes and topics for all to enjoy and to take part in.

We are excited for, and looking forward to, AATP 2026. Join in the fun!

See Jude Rhodes (BALH) and Barbara Tien (ProjectKin) in conversation at <https://projectkin.substack.com/p/aatp25-learning-about-local-history>. More details of this year's contributions can be found at www.one-place-studies.org/all-about-that-place-2025-days-1-to-5 and www.one-place-studies.org/all-about-that-place-2025-days-6-to-10

News round-up

With thanks to Sophie Anstee de Mas, Georgia Brown, John Chandler, Heather Falvey, Jean Kelly, Richard Owen, Joe Saunders, Janet Seaton

The Alan Ball Award is a long-standing and prestigious award for local history publications, administered by the **Library Services Trust and CILIP Local Studies Group**. It is open to all heritage and community organisations, and individuals who have self-published. Submissions are welcome from local history societies and community history projects. There are three categories: best hard-copy publication, e-publication, and best community publication in either category. The publication needs to have appeared between January and December 2025. The deadline for submission is end of January 2026. More information and how to submit your nomination can be found via www.balh.org.uk/GVW224

The third annual Northleach local history exhibition was held at the Old Prison on the Fosseway in Northleach, Gloucestershire, from 9 to 12 October. As in the past two years it brought together the Friends of the Cotswolds Trust, the Town Council, the Town Trust, the Sly Trust, the **Northleach Historical Society**, Northleach School, the Sherborne Archive and Chedworth Roman Villa. Display tables included the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War as seen from Northleach; deer hunting in the 17th century at Lodge Park, now a National Trust property; the discovery at the Chedworth Roman Villa of a fifth-century mosaic and the Villa's growing international significance; the carts and wagons collection at the Old Prison, and its surviving prison cells; and the pubs of Northleach, both past and present. The long-term plan is a Cotswolds history museum and archive in Northleach – a project perhaps for the 800th anniversary of the 1227 Northleach Market Charter in 2027.

A new book by Sue Berry and Adrian Webb, *Royalists in the West of England, 1655–1657*, showcases around 5,000 records kept by Thomas Dunn as well as British Library holdings of copy letterbooks containing correspondence with deputies in the western counties. Further details available at www.somersetshistory.com.



A postcard from the 1904 Bradford exhibition.

Archaeologists from the **University of Bradford** have uncovered the remains of the city's long-forgotten 1904 exhibition in Lister Park, which once drew more than two million visitors to celebrate Bradford's industrial might. The dig has revealed foundations of a temporary concert hall and a reconstructed Somali village, where 57 people from the Horn of Africa lived and performed for visitors in an event typical of the colonial-era world fairs. Among the artefacts found was a pre-1903 bottle of Garton's HP Sauce, helping to map the exhibition's layout. Led by Prof Chris Gaffney, the project aims to rediscover this 'lost period' in Bradford's history. Working with the University of Leeds and the Somali Village charity, the team plans to digitise photographs and memorabilia to create virtual reconstructions of the once-celebrated fair.

Writers in Edinburgh are invited to take part in the 2025 William Anderson Memorial Local History Writing Competition, this time themed around the Edinburgh 900 project (marking the city's 900th anniversary in 2024). Essays of up to 2,000 words are invited on the city's history and heritage by the end of December – further details via www.balh.org.uk/BKR221

Keen canoeist Adam Taylor has been exploring the islands and salt marshes of the Medway estuary and has put together a short presentation about his research, drawing on archival sources. It can be watched at <https://youtu.be/zUqTaXL4TfE>

Historic Buildings & Places has published key takeaways from its first Recognising Seaside Heritage Symposium, held in June at London's Charterhouse, where nearly 100 heritage professionals gathered to discuss how to protect Britain's coastal landmarks amid climate change and economic pressure. Speakers highlighted the particular vulnerability of seaside assets such as Blackpool's historic piers – only one of which is listed due to the high cost of maintaining structures exposed to the sea. Despite the challenges, case studies from around the country showed how restoring heritage sites can drive pride, regeneration and community use: Blackpool's Grade II* Winter Gardens is now a busy public venue after council-led restoration; Folkestone's Leas Lift has been revived as an accessible, revenue-supported historic transport link; projects in Southport and Great Yarmouth are preserving threatened Victorian architecture for modern use; and Portsmouth's Hilsea Lido is being saved through Levelling Up funding. Delegates also debated how to make the case for seaside heritage in the era of rising sea levels, attract new audiences to resort towns and challenge negative stereotypes about the British seaside.

John Corry, a 19th-century antiquarian from Armagh, has been honoured with a blue plaque recognising his impact on local history and archaeology. Corry, born in 1805, initially managed the family woollen business before dedicating his life to the preservation of Armagh's heritage. He established a private museum on Market Street, amassing a significant collection of artefacts, including a notable late Bronze Age gold ornament. Corry's extensive research and documentation of local sites, such as the Bishop's Court at Mullynure, continue to be valued by historians for their detail and accuracy.

Ironbridge Gorge's historic museums and buildings are being safeguarded for future generations after the National Trust secured a £9 million government grant to assume responsibility for the site from spring 2026. The transfer will cover 10 museums, 35 listed buildings and scheduled monuments, and around 400,000 objects currently managed by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, helping to preserve a UNESCO-listed heritage site often dubbed the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution'.

Spaces, Places and Belonging

Are you a community group with a passion for heritage? Or a museum, library, gallery or archive with a bold idea for community-led research – but you need funding and support to bring your ideas to life?

The Spaces, Places and Belonging Community Hub is here to help. Led by The National Archives, this new UK-wide programme will offer grants, training and digital tools to help you explore, share and celebrate your community's stories.

Whether you're just starting out or ready to further develop the work already happening, you can apply for:

- Seed Corn Grants – small grants to help you get started. Whether you're testing an idea, building local partnerships or exploring your community's heritage for the first time, this funding is designed to help you take those first steps.
- Skills Bursaries – helping individuals to build confidence and learn new skills. From research and storytelling to digital tools and community engagement, these bursaries are here to help you develop in the heritage sphere.
- Project Grants – larger collaborative grants to help you deliver a fully co-curated, community-focused heritage project. Whether it's an exhibition, oral history collection, digital archive or something completely new, this funding can help you make it happen.

Plus, by applying to these schemes, you'll gain access to resources and training as a permanent digital platform to share resources, learning and best practice.

For further details, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/community-hub. A launch webinar recording is available online via <https://www.balh.org.uk/URY218>.

Next summer, archaeologists will embark on a new excavation at Strata Florida, a significant Cistercian monastery in Wales, with the aim of uncovering insights into the region's medieval past. The focus of this dig will be a long-lost mill and its associated water system, crucial elements within the monastery's precincts. The project, organized by the Strata Florida Trust in collaboration with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, builds on two decades of research that have already revealed important structures dating back to the 10th century.

A rare 13th-century hair styling tool known as a gravoire has been acquired by National Museums Scotland (NMS) after its discovery during an excavation at Eilean Donan Castle in the Highlands. The gravoire, made from red deer antler and featuring a carved figure, is unique not only because it is the first of its kind found in Scotland but also due to its construction with local materials rather than the usual ivory. The discovery comes as part of a larger collection of medieval items that includes objects like brooches, dress pins, and crucibles, illustrating the site's historical role in metalworking. This assemblage is regarded by NMS researchers as one of the most significant collections of medieval metalwork in the UK.



St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society reports in its August newsletter on the St Albans' Historic Alleyways Project, which has created a mural in the city depicting a man-at-arms from the Wars of the Roses. The aim is to examine the intersection of public history, urban conservation and street art, showing how the latter can 'mediate historical narratives'.

Yorkshire-based **Cottingham Local History Society's** latest *Journal* (Volume 43) contains an interesting essay by Peter McClure on the impact of the Reformation on the naming of children in the village in the 16th and 17th centuries. The issue also contains an index to previous journals from 2021 onwards.

Online news

Ancestry.co.uk has collaborated with Suffolk Archives to release full-colour, high-quality digital images of parish registers from across the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The records will also be available for free at The Hold in Ipswich and at Suffolk Community Libraries.

TheGenealogist.co.uk has added 'Lloyd George Domesday' records for Sussex, bringing together the Valuation Office Survey field books and georeferenced historical maps. The site has also recently added more than 900,000 parish records from Waterford, Ireland.

New additions at the **National Library of Scotland** map website (maps.nls.uk) include 190 early maps of Scotland and the whole of Great Britain from the 1540–1888 timespan, plus additional OS maps for Ireland from 1856 to 1900.

In November **ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk** will be adding returns of the Napier Commission into Highland crofting life in the 1880s.

Publisher and local historian Bob Trubshaw has launched a new local history website, **The Vale of Belvoir Chronicle**, at www.hoap.co.uk/chronicle, currently featuring around 20 chronologically organised articles relating to this area crossing Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

VCH Dorset and Westmorland

Dorset, like a number of other counties, has received very little attention from the Victoria County History over the years. The most recent volume (3), an edition of Domesday Book, was published as long ago as 1968. Now, on the initiative of Dr Mark Forrest, a trust is being established to research and write the first of a projected series of topographical volumes. This will cover the nine rural parishes and two small towns – Corfe Castle and Swanage – that make up Rowbarrow and Hasler hundreds in Purbeck. The research will be undertaken by volunteers and local experts, and overseen, as all VCH projects are, by the Institute of Historical Research. A scoping report for the Purbeck volume has been prepared and work is beginning on pilot parishes. It is hoped to publish also a separate history of Corfe Castle, based on the research for the VCH red book. This is one of four new VCH projects, and more information can be found at: www.balh.org.uk/BJN219

Meanwhile the first volume of the Victoria County History ‘big red book’ for Westmorland has been published, providing a detailed parish-by-parish history of the 13 former civil parishes in the Lonsdale ward of the historic county. Edited by Dr Sarah Rose and Professor Angus Winchester, the book is the 250th volume in the nationwide VCH series. It was launched during a celebration at Lunesdale Hall in Kirkby Lonsdale organised by the Cumbria County History Trust – a charity which aims to produce definitive histories of all 348 parishes in Cumbria.

Langport and District History Society has unveiled the third and final in its series of interpretation boards commemorating the Somerset town’s most famous citizen, Walter Bagehot (1826–1877). It took place on Saturday 18 October 2025 at the iconic Great Bow Wharf warehouse by the River Parrett and Great Bow Bridge, the site that symbolises Langport’s mercantile history, and the vital river trade which was dominated for many decades by the Bagehot and Stuckey families. The illustrated interpretation board was unveiled by Philip Snowden, chair of the Warehouse Trust, which runs Great Bow Wharf, and explains the historic significance of the warehouse and Wharf site. (*See pictures, back cover.*)

Huddersfield Local History Society launched a new publication by David Griffiths this month, *Huddersfield’s Art & Crafts Houses: from Edgar Wood to the 1930s*. David comments: ‘The pioneering architect Edgar Wood is celebrated for his work in Lindley and Birkby, including Lindley Clock Tower, Banney Royd and Briarcourt. Less well known, however, are the local architects he influenced, directly or indirectly, and the local Arts & Crafts network of which he was an important part.’ As well as telling this story, the book illustrated the best houses of the period, area by area.

The deadline for applications for the **Geoffrey Bond and Thoroton Society** Research Awards has been extended to 31 December 2025. They are open to individuals or groups undertaking research on the history and archaeology of Nottinghamshire. Awards can be used to support research including the acquisition of research resources or travel expenses. Details: www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/bond-awards.htm

Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society is looking to recruit a number of volunteers for its editorial and committee roles. These include honorary co-editors of the society’s Transactions and of the Leicestershire Historian, and an hon. membership secretary – in all cases contact Elizabeth.tingle@dmu.ac.uk to express interest or for further information.

LAHS awards four annual dissertation prizes for extended projects that focus on the archaeology and/or history of Leicestershire and/or Rutland, aimed at undergraduates and postgraduates. See <https://lahs.org.uk/grants/dissertation-prizes>

The **Society of Antiquaries’** Collections & Research Day – a hybrid event – will be hosted in conjunction with Spalding Gentlemen’s Society on 1 December. Further details at www.sal.org.uk/event/crd-25

In memoriam

Gloucestershire has lost one of its most distinguished local historians this autumn, with the death of **Dr Anthea Jones** on 20 September, a few weeks before her 90th birthday. A gifted teacher, Anthea had been head of history and director of studies at Cheltenham Ladies' College, before she spent a long and productive retirement immersed in her county's history and topography. She wrote masterly histories of Tewkesbury, Cheltenham and the Cotswolds, edited Gloucestershire meeting-house certificates, initiated an online database of the 1909 Inland Revenue valuation for the county, and produced a study of the Gloucestershire engravings of Johannes Kip. On a wider stage she wrote the classic *A Thousand Years of the English Parish*, and editions of the travellers Thomas Baskerville and John Walker. She was an authority on garden history too, and was contemplating a study of apple orchards when her years caught up with her. Her insightful intellect, enthusiasm and curiosity never left her, and conversation with her about history or current affairs, right up to her final days, was always a delight. *John Chandler*

The Centre for Midlands History and Cultures has announced the death of **Dr Marie Rowlands**, who was a long-standing supporter as well as one of the longest-serving members of the Catholic Record Society. Dr Rowlands was the first head of the history department at Newman University, working there from 1968 to 1989, as well as being a research fellow there from 2000 on and an honorary research fellow at the University of Wolverhampton.

Brackley Historical Society is the latest (84th) member society to join the **Oxfordshire Local History Association**, albeit from just over the border in Northants. The OLHA reports that more than 2,000 people visited the River and Rowing Museum in Henley for its final weekend of opening in September (see LHN155). The trustees of the museum hope that the 6,000 holdings will find a new home in due course.

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society (NEDIAS) reports that the Arkwright Society has secured £1.3m in development funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore and reimagine Cromford Mills in Matlock. The NEDIAS August *Newsletter* also discusses a fire at Medlock Mill in Manchester this summer, leaving the abandoned building in ruins.

Avon Local History & Archaeology's September newsletter reports that **Barton Hill History Group** has reluctantly decided to close its website and communicate through its Facebook page instead, partly due to that being the main point of contact with the public. Has your society made a similar decision to focus on Facebook? Please contact editor.lhn@balh.org.uk if so.

Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society is hosting a webinar by Tony Harding on 'Photographic old buildings (and other things!)' on 20 November, in which he will share some tips and tricks on creative techniques and approaches.

Scottish Local History Forum has launched a new online presence at the newsletter/blog platform Substack: <https://slhf.substack.com>. The group's Clish-Clash e-newsletter continues to be a mine of useful information about events, publications and other resources, not only relating to Scotland: www.slhf.org/newsletter

The **British Association for Victorian Studies** will hold its next annual conference in Liverpool, 27–29 July, at the Centre for Modern and Contemporary History. Further details via www.balh.org.uk/XAQ223

Pembroke & Monkton Local History Society has launched a project to recognise and celebrate the historical contributions of local women – particularly Princess Nest, Isabel de Clare and Margaret Beaufort – in the hope of creating a related statue and arts trail. A meeting was due to be held in early November with local sculptor Harriet Addyman presenting.



As part of the commemorations for the 200th anniversary of public railways, **The National Archives** is showcasing relevant records such as the accident register for the North Eastern Railway Company – see www.balh.org.uk/JMV220. This year's BALH Dymond Lecture is also on the dangers of working for the railways – see page 30. Meanwhile **Historic England** has published a railway heritage special edition of *Historic England Research Magazine* as part of the Railway 200 celebrations – it can be downloaded at <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/>

Shaping Societies, Improving Lives: the Impact of Archives and Historical Research is the theme of next year's History and Archives in Practice event, to be held at the University of Sheffield on 16 April. The event is a collaboration between The National Archives, the Institute of Historical Research and the Royal Historical Society.

The **UK Archive Sector Survey 2025** has published its results, based on 330 responses and organised by region – see www.balh.org.uk/HQX222

The **Archives and Records Association** has announced the winners of the 2025 ARA Excellence Awards. Overall nearly 2,000 votes were cast. The winners are:

- Record Keeper of the Year – Chloe Anderson-Wheatley, who oversees both the Falkland Islands Government's corporate records management service and the **Jane Cameron National Archives**.
- Record-Keeping Service of the Year – **Gloucestershire Archives**. The archive's staff training and work to tackle climate change were highlighted.
- Distinguished Service Awards were awarded to Sam Bartle (Digital Archives) at **East Riding Archives**, Shirley Jones (Archive Conservation) at **West Yorkshire Archive Service** and Linda Ramsay (Archive Conservation) at the **National Records of Scotland**.

Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives have reopened to the public after closure for almost a year to enable a move to the city's Town House. The archive is open from Tuesday to Friday each week. A new access guide can be found at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/AAGM/plan-your-visit/town-house-archives

Good ideas to borrow...

The **Forest of Dean LHS** has held a very successful schools' history competition (for years 4, 5 and 6) for the third year running. Children were invited to produce a piece of work that represented an element of local history in the form of a 3D model, digital submission (e.g. PowerPoint), video or written text. The winner in the video category – and the overall winner (gaining £100 for the school – individual prizes were £25) was Evie from Pillowell School with her video about the Forest of Dean. The judges particularly liked her presentation of a range of historic sites.

The winner in the 3D model category was Jasper from Parkend School for his model of the mine head gear structure on the A48 Lydney Docks roundabout and what it represents. The winner of the written category was Cole from Mitcheldean School for his account of the history of rewilding in the Forest of Dean. The judges felt this was a very interesting read and well presented. The winner of the digital category was Sophie from Parkend School for her presentation about the Princess Royal Colliery Expedition. As there were so many entries across the four categories, the society organised for the first time a 'Schools Day' open afternoon to display all the children's work. The society also organises an annual history quiz for local schools.

Suffragist's home opens to public

Moorside House, a Grade II-listed building in Altham, Accrington, steeped in history and once home to pioneering suffragist Lydia Ernestine Becker, opened its doors to the public for the first time in September as part of the national Heritage Open Days campaign. Moorside House is also set to feature in a brand new nine-book northern novel series.

The house was built around 1830 by Lydia Becker's father, Hannibal Leigh Becker.

Lydia Becker (1827–1890) was a pioneering British suffragist and early advocate for women's rights. She founded and edited the *Women's Suffrage Journal* from 1870 to 1890 and organised the first women's suffrage petition in 1866. Becker was also a passionate supporter of women's education and participation in science, regularly corresponding with notable figures such as Charles Darwin. Commemorations to Lydia can be found near the house including a plaque by the nearby canal bridge and in St James's Church in Altham, where her name is inscribed on the family gravestone.



Walsall Leather Museum is seeking support to enable it to stay in its original home and form at Littleton Street West, Walsall. The museum, which celebrates the town's world-renowned leather trade and the generations of working-class men and women whose skills shaped its history, is based in an original 1888 leather factory which provides an authentic context for the collection.

Walsall Council is currently considering plans to relocate or significantly alter the museum, potentially transforming it into a SEND education space for Walsall College. The museum is the last one left in Walsall after the closure of Walsall Museum in 2015 – Leather Museum staff report that 'There are no clear plans for what would happen to the collection or its interpretation, [or] how the artefacts, of which many are fragile and site-specific, would be protected.'

Walsall Council has said that a new premises will be purchased for the museum. A public consultation on the proposals this year showed 59 per cent of respondents were against the move and almost 6,500 people have signed a petition against it.

The chairman of **Sittingbourne Heritage Museum** in Kent is seeking information about the town's S.H. Brett & Son company. If you can help, please contact enquiries@sittingbourne-museum.co.uk



Workers at a machine rolling out confectionery at Terry's in 1950. (York Museums Trust)

Sugar, Skill & Shiftwork is a new community-led exhibition about York's confectionery workers, running at **York Castle Museum** until September next year. Nostalgia is a key theme throughout, reminding visitors of childhood treats. Workers items, uniforms, images, film and oral history create five themed rooms exploring York's confectionery industries. The exhibition has been supported by **York Oral History Society** who have provided access to their archives, allowing workers' voices to be heard in the museum.



Scottish Local History magazine (Autumn 2025 issue) reports on a collaborative cataloguing project between **Edinburgh Libraries** and the Old Edinburgh Club aimed at uncovering and digitally cataloguing the manuscript collections held in the Central Library's Edinburgh and Scottish Collection. These manuscripts, which reflect diverse aspects of Edinburgh's life and culture from the 17th century onwards, had previously remained largely inaccessible to researchers. A student on placement from Strathclyde University's Information & Library Studies Course played an active role in this process, contributing to the cataloguing work, gaining hands-on experience in archival research.

Letters to the editor

Send your letters to: editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

BNA and copyright

Further to the letter from Richard Dyson (LHN156, p.25), it is a great shame that the British Newspaper Archive not only claims copyright in the scans, but makes it prohibitive for small organisations such as ours to make use of its material, other than for private research.

In 2024 the BNA proposed to charge us £215+VAT for displaying one advertisement at a size of approximately 15mm by 18mm on one interpretation board in one location for 10 years. We declined, and transcribed it instead.

When it is such a rich and invaluable resource, it is frustrating not to be able to make greater use of the scans. Perhaps this is an issue that BALH could take up with them?

Janet Seaton, Langport & District History Society

Leek Bayeux Tapestry

This is an email letter sent to our Leek Staffordshire Moorlands MP, Dame Karen Bradley:

Just a short note to remind the powers that be that the Leek Embroidery Society duplicated the Bayeux Tapestry under the auspices of Elizabeth Wardle and was completed in 1886. Why take a chance of transporting and damaging the original from France when the British Museum can recommend people to go to Reading Museum, where the duplicate is displayed?

Roger Warrillow, Leek & District Civic Society

'Heads – you lose!' Working for the railways in Britain before 1939

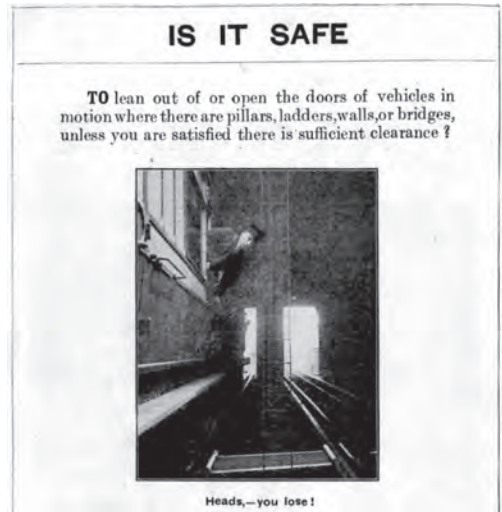
The BALH Dymond Lecture 2025

Since 2021 BALH has been running an annual lecture each winter, welcoming distinguished academics to share their research with us. This is now a highlight or our annual calendar for both members and the wider public to enjoy. We are delighted to announce that our 2025 lecture is being given by Dr Mike Esbester of the University of Portsmouth and the Railway Work, Life & Death project.

In 1924, the London, Midland and Scottish Railway published a warning to staff about some of the dangers they faced at work – including 'heads – you lose!'. Well might they have highlighted the risks of the job: that year alone 263 railway workers were to die on the job, and a staggering 21,098 were injured. But who were those workers, in 1924 and since the advent of the railways? How can we locate past railway employees – and ground them in the places where they lived, worked and played?

These questions are particularly timely, given 2025 is 'Railway 200', marking 200 years since the first steam-hauled passenger journey on the Stockton and Darlington Railway. One of its themes is 'celebrating railway people' – but where do we find those people? The very visible infrastructure and engineering achievements of the railways over the past 200 years have left their mark on the landscape and the cultural imagination – but the people needed to make the railways run have left less of a trace.

One way we can access at least some of those staff, and which is the focus of the lecture, is where they left a significant mark in the documentary record: via the accidents they had. These incidents were spread across Britain wherever there were railways – and as we shall discover, in places where there weren't railways, too. They give us an invaluable insight into ordinary people



in their places, offering us rich possibilities for contributing to and understanding local history.

As part of this bicentenary, Mike Esbester will introduce the Railway Work, Life & Death project, a collaboration exploring the working lives and accidents of British and Irish railway staff.

We will look at how the project can help understand the nature of railway work, as well as contribute to local history via the focus on particular places. Mike will highlight some of the local history work the project has been doing, and will warmly encourage you all to explore what the project offers you.

We are incredibly excited to welcome members and the public to this fascinating talk. The lecture will be held via Zoom at 7pm on Thursday 11 December. The event will be free for BALH members with a small charge for non-members (reduced for members of our member societies). Full information of the talk, including booking information, can be found on the BALH Events page: www.balh.org.uk/dymond2025

Book reviews

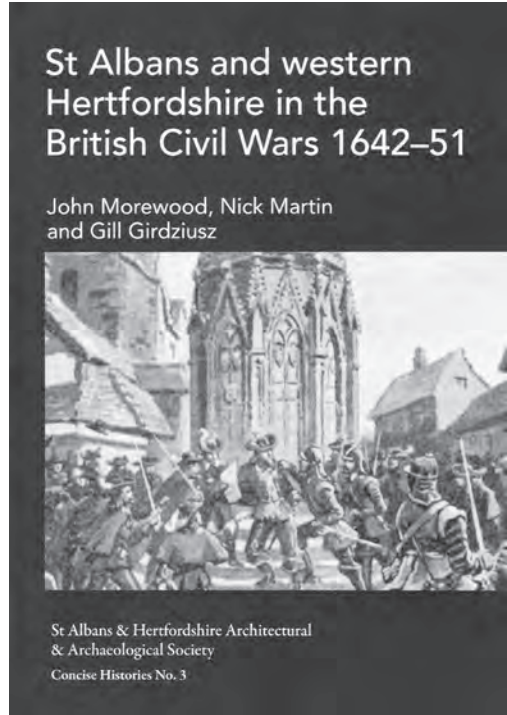
Heather Falvey

John Morewood, Nick Martin & Gill Girdziusz, *St Albans and Western Hertfordshire in the British Civil Wars 1642–51*, (St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society Concise Histories no. 3 2025 54pp ISBN: 978-0-901194-26-8) £8.00

This is the third in the SAHAAS's series of 'Concise Histories', the first two being on Lady Anne Bacon (d.1610) and St Michael's village (1700–1930). During the British Civil Wars, the St Albans area 'was of pivotal importance to Parliament due to its closeness to London'. After briefly summarising causes of discontent during the early years of Charles I's reign – financial, constitutional, political and religious – events in the area are outlined. Hertfordshire was within the parliamentarian Eastern Association, established in 1642. The king's supporters tended to be in the east of the county; in the west there were few, more were like Dr Cornelius Burges, vicar of Watford, who successfully encouraged his parishioners to help finance Parliament's war effort.

No major battles were fought in the county, nor did it suffer widespread physical destruction; however, its inhabitants were subject to high levels of taxation and were asked, and cajoled, to make loans and gifts to Parliament. Furthermore, local men were recruited to various garrisons, including Aylesbury, Reading and Newport Pagnell. Indeed, it is estimated that virtually every Hertfordshire male between 16 and 60 was in arms in the summer of 1644. This in turn affected the harvest, as did requisitioning wagons and purchasing horses by the army. Regarding religion, examples are given of clergy who were replaced by men who were pro-Parliament and anti-Laud, and of damage to church fabric, including the font in St Stephen's bearing graffiti dated 1643.

Needing to defend London, Parliament decided to fortify St Albans and so from summer 1642 the Earl of Essex's army's engineers commenced work, including constructing forts north of St Peter's church. In summer 1643 the fortifications needed to be strengthened: the



work is described in some detail and shown on a map (Appendix 1). St Albans became a parliamentarian headquarters. Thus, even when there was no fighting, garrisoning the area had an impact on the local population: anywhere between 6,000 and 20,000 troops had to be quartered and provided with food.

The effects of the shorter Second Civil War are summarised, including royalist prisoners being briefly housed in St Peter's. The town played a further role in national events when, in November 1648, the Army Council met in the choir of the Abbey church and debated such matters as the army's pay and Henry Ireton's *Remonstrance*, which was subsequently presented to Parliament and ultimately resulted in the vote for the king's trial. Somewhat ironically St Albans also played a part in the Restoration, hosting General Monk's army from 28 January 1660 for five days.

The authors express the hope that this brief study of St Albans and western Hertfordshire

in the Civil Wars 'will stimulate interest and lead to a future work of great depth as studies continue'. There certainly is much more to be written on the subject; perhaps they will take up their own challenge.

Derek Whitfield, *Winchester's Volunteers: The response to war in 1914 and 1915* (Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society, Hampshire Papers, series 2, no.12, 2024 40pp ISBN: 978-0-907473-26-8) £8 + £3p&p

As Derek Whitfield explains, this is a micro-history of the way in which the people of Winchester (Wintonians) voluntarily mobilised behind Britain's war effort; thus the period covered is from August 1914 to December 1915, that is, before the introduction of conscription in January 1916. Winchester provided the author with a manageable case study: several detailed documentary sources, both published and archival, and, of course, newspapers; plus, the city's population was comparatively small (23,500 in 1911) but had a broad demographic mix, ranging from the cathedral and Winchester College, through professionals, tradesmen and craftsmen, to slum-dwellers. There was little heavy industry, so there was 'a largely unpoliticised conservative working class'. Notably Winchester stood on one of the Army's major lines of communication to the Continent and so was never remote from the war.

Chapter 1 considers Winchester's response on the home front, such as billeting troops in locals' homes, housing refugees from Belgium, giving to charity and carrying out a wide range of war-related work. Two auxiliary Red Cross hospitals were set up in houses. Volunteers served food and refreshments to up to 1,000 men a day at the main railway station. Analysing Wintonians' mood, Whitfield concludes that there was a new sense of national unity and

argues that people were expected to, and did, behave appropriately in the new circumstances, questioning, for example, whether leisure pursuits like golf or football should be pursued when soldiers were dying for their country.

Chapter 2 looks at the extent to which Wintonians volunteered for military service in 1914, and why. Various tables analyse recruitment in Winchester (with the necessary caveats) by date, social class, street and age at enlistment. Recruitment rallies played an important part. Winchester College produced some volunteers (including Edward Tennant, nephew of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith's wife, Margot), but the majority were working class. Table 2.4 shows that the number of Wintonians volunteering early in the war (measured per 10,000 of the population) considerably exceeded the regional average and was almost the same as in southern Scotland, which had the highest number.

Chapter 3 discusses aspects of voluntarism in Winchester in 1915. In winter 1914–15 there was the specifically local issue of billeting some 16,000 troops from the mobilisation camps during particularly bad weather. The response demonstrated how effectively Wintonians could deal with ad hoc local demands. Rather differently, prominent Winchester women set up a Girls' Patriotic Welcome Club, which aimed to safeguard the virtue of local girls and also provide a comfortable refuge for families visiting soldiers. Thrift and willingness to economise also became important parts of the voluntary ethic. Whitfield argues that voluntarism remained a powerful driving force in Winchester in 1915 although it became more nuanced as citizens realised that the war would not be short.

This excellent publication, like others in HFCAS's series of 'Hampshire Papers', is fully referenced, has a comprehensive bibliography and many illustrations.



Books for review should be sent to: Dr Heather Falvey, 119 Winton Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth WD3 3QS – or contact her via reviews.editor@balh.org.uk

Who is looking at whom?

Alan Crosby

In July this year we went to New York for two days. My godson, the son of our oldest friends, was getting married in Brooklyn and we were invited to the wedding (which in the American tradition was spread over three days of festivities). Neither of us had ever been to New York, so this was a great opportunity to see the city as well to attend the social event of the year. We had been forewarned about the July climate. This was just as well, because it was 95 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade (35°C), and 80 per cent humidity, so air-conditioned sites had a particular appeal. That meant museums and galleries, of which of course there is no shortage in New York, and that was no hardship.

Among the highlights was the Frick Collection, an extraordinary and wonderful collection of masterpieces (mostly European) built up by the industrialist and financier Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919) and bequeathed to the public on his death, together with his great and opulent mansion opposite Central Park where the collection is now exhibited. Frick collected with exceptional discernment and knowledge, focusing on the late medieval period through to the 18th century, and the displaying of the pictures in his own house, rather than in a less personal gallery, adds to the experience.

We met some old friends at the Frick, although it was an unplanned reunion. I spotted them as soon as we walked into one of the rooms. There, on the wall facing me, were James Stanley, 7th earl of Derby, his wife Charlotte de la Trémoille and their daughter Henrietta. They weren't there in the flesh – after all, the earl was executed in 1651 – but they were old friends because I had used that very portrait (which is by van Dyck, court portraitist to Charles I) many times in my teaching. The Earls of Derby have been the greatest landowners and highest status family in Lancashire, from the end of the 14th century until the present day.

Over the years I have taught many courses about them, and have done a lot of work on the family and its estates. I have spent happy hours researching in the library at Knowsley



Hall and have participated in history events there. But in all that time I had never seen that celebrated portrait except in books and on websites, and I had not even known that it was at the Frick. So, meeting that old friend was a complete and happy surprise – a part of Lancashire's 17th-century history residing 3,500 miles away in Manhattan.

And lest I should think that this was a unique experiment, it happened again the following day. We visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and were awed by the sheer scale and richness of the collection and the numerous sub-sections into which it is divided. Another great room, another great Stanley portrait. This time it was a Lawrence painting of Eliza Farren, the beautiful

and gifted actress born in Cork, daughter of an apothecary, who for 20 years was the 'constant companion' of the (married) 12th earl of Derby. In 1797, on the death of his long-estranged wife. Eliza married him and as his second countess performed the role to perfection for 32 years. She, too, is an old friend, and here was the familiar (and superb) portrait, known from many history books and biographies

but never before seen by me in reality.

These people were significant players in national events, but were also deeply enmeshed in the local history of Lancashire and north-west England. They lie today with their ancestors in Ormskirk parish church, but I found them by serendipity on the walls of galleries across the Atlantic. How surprised and pleased I was... and how utterly astonished they would be!

BALH Outreach Team news

Joe Saunders

As usual BALH events have paused over the summer and we have now resumed this autumn with a range of online talks and an in-person event.

On 11 October we welcomed BALH members and others to Crossing Counties: Transport History in Herts, Beds and Bucks, a one-day conference exploring coaching inns, canals, airships, archaeology and buses. This was a rich journey through local transport history hosted by BALH in partnership with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire local history associations. Especial thanks to our trustee and Membership Secretary Jonathan Mackman for bringing this all together.

In October and November we have lined up a range of online talks of relevance to your local history studies including a talk tracing the Plunkett-Ernlé-Drax family of Dorset across 500 years and 18 generations, revealing their deep entanglement in the British sugar industry built on enslavement in Barbados and Jamaica; a talk on LiDAR and aerial prospection; and on a stonemason's sense of the history of the British Isles. These are all talks we are very excited to host. A huge thanks to our outreach volunteer and trustee Lisbet Sherlock for all her work organising these events, which are sure to appeal to local historians across the country.

In December we are pleased to be hosting our annual Dymond Lecture which will be given by Dr Mike Esbester of the Railway Work, Life & Death project. See elsewhere in this issue for more.

For more on our events for 2025-6 as they are announced see our website: www.balh.org.uk/balh-events

BALH attends as many events as we are able but we can only do so if we are aware of them. Please get in touch with our Outreach Coordinator if you are running an event and would like us to attend: outreach@balh.org.uk. We also have a stock of fliers and pencils which can be sent out. If you are interested in receiving some of these to give away then please also get in touch. With your help we can grow awareness of the association and promote local history.

The BALH blog continues to draw in excellent research as does our popular series of online 'Ten-Minute Talks'. BALH are always looking for new blogs, podcasts and videos so please get in touch if you would like to share your local history research with a wide audience. We continue to be especially looking to share ideas on 'doing' local history from researching to running a society. Get in touch with the Digital Team with your idea: digitalteam@balh.org.uk

We hope you enjoy the range of events and projects BALH are involved in, and what we work to share with you as members. The BALH Outreach team would love to arrange more talks, attend more events and run more projects but require volunteer assistance to do this. The Publishing team are also looking for assistance to help with their activities. If you would be interested in helping in any way, please do get in touch.

Readers can keep up to date with our activities via *Local History News*, the BALH website and e-newsletter.

BALH Outreach Chair Joe Saunders has now stepped down from this role, which is being taken up by Jude Rhodes.

Notes News Issues

The BALH team

On the BALH website

As well as articles here in *LHN* and in *The Local Historian*, BALH publishes a wide variety of fascinating articles at its blog, www.balh.org.uk/blog – and don't forget to watch our ten-minute talks at www.balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks. You can also listen to the Local History Matters podcast at www.balh.org.uk/podcast – in recent episodes, Jude Rhodes tells some stories from the Yorkshire Dales and Tim Hamilton talks about his work with the Black Country Living Museum.

Could BALH attend your event?

BALH attends as many events as possible but we can only do so if we are aware of them. Please get in touch with our Outreach Coordinator Stephen Miller if you are running an event and would like us to attend: outreach@balh.org.uk. We also have a stock of fliers and pencils which can be sent out. If you are interested in receiving some of these to give away then please also get in touch with Stephen. With your help we can grow awareness of the Association.

Helping local historians

BALH aims to advise and inspire local historians. To do this we share excellent research from which you can take encouragement, we inform you of events and new books and offer support in the process of doing your local history through our website,

publications and events. It is in this vein that we are asking readers to help us help others with their local history. You possess a wealth of knowledge about the practicalities of local history, whether this is researching, writing, giving talks, publishing, teaching, running societies and more.

Please do get in touch if you feel you can share some of your knowledge with us in either a short, written piece for *Local History News* (please send your proposal to Andrew Chapman, editor. lh@balh.org.uk), our blog and/or a recorded ten-minute talk (contact digital manager@balh.org.uk).

Ask BALH

Remember, if you have questions about local history research or any aspect of running a local history society, do send them to our 'Ask BALH' feature via editor.lh@balh.org.uk and we will aim to provide answers.

Next copy deadline

The next issue of *Local History News* will be out towards the end of February – please note the copy deadline for that issue (No. 158) is 5 January. If you wish to promote a society event here, it must not be before March – for earlier events, which we may be able to list at www.balh.org.uk/events, contact the BALH Digital Manager, digital.manager@balh.org.uk

New Outreach volunteers needed

BALH's Outreach Team requires new volunteers. This small team works remotely to help undertake the work of the Association and is a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the work of BALH. The role entails assisting with the organisation and running of events, education and other outreach activities. The role includes some capacity to influence the work of the Association.

The role can be what you make of it but will likely entail a couple of hours' work a month. Experience in a similar role is preferred but we are keen to hear from anyone passionate about local history and a knowledge of how to engage others.

Please contact outreach@balh.org.uk for further information.

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BALH

BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR LOCAL HISTORY

www.balh.org.uk

The British Association for Local History (BALH) was created in 1982 as the successor to earlier organisations which had supported the study of local history over previous decades. Its purpose is

**to encourage and assist the study of local history throughout Great Britain
as an academic discipline and as a rewarding leisure pursuit
for both individuals and groups.**

To achieve this the Association

- serves as the national body representing local and regional historians
- hosts Local History Day, an annual event open to all, with discussions and a specially commissioned lecture based on current research
- publishes the prestigious quarterly journal *The Local Historian*, which includes regular features on themes, sources, websites, and a copious reviews section
- produces a quarterly members' magazine *Local History News* reporting on up-to-date developments and examples of best practice from around the country
- makes annual awards to individuals who have made a significant contribution to local history; for excellence in research and publication; and for an outstanding local society newsletter
- organises guided visits to places of relevant interest, often not easily accessible otherwise
- collaborates with other organisations to arrange conferences and similar events around the country
- provides a website for information and links
- publishes specialist handbooks.

The Association is an unincorporated registered charity, governed by an elected Board of Trustees, with two advisory committees dealing with publishing and outreach. It is financed by its members. Subscriptions are for a calendar year but may be started at any time; new members receive the material already issued during the year.

Individual	£36
Digital (NEW) – journals as PDFs	£30
Student on a full- or part-time course in local history	£25
Local society or group	£90
Institutions	£45
Overseas	£51

Note: these are the new rates from 1 January 2024.

(Libraries subscribing to *The Local Historian* via agents are treated as Institutional members)

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Two unveilings. Above: Langport and District History Society has unveiled the third and final in its series of interpretation boards (inset, and see page 25). Pictured are Philip Snowden cutting the ribbon, with Barry Winetrobe (left) and Janet Seaton (right), from LDHS, authors of the board. Below: The unveiling of the start board for the new Kirton in Lindsey heritage trail (see page 17) by the local mayor.

