

Local History News

Number 159 May 2026

www.balh.org.uk



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.

BALH Reviews Editor	BALH Awards
Dr Heather Falvey	Fountain Precinct
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Front cover

Liverpool in the 1840s (detail from 'Vue générale de Liverpool, published in Paris) – see page 16.

Local History News

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FOR LOCAL HISTORY

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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.

Important contacts

News and article proposals for *Local History News*: editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

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Membership matters

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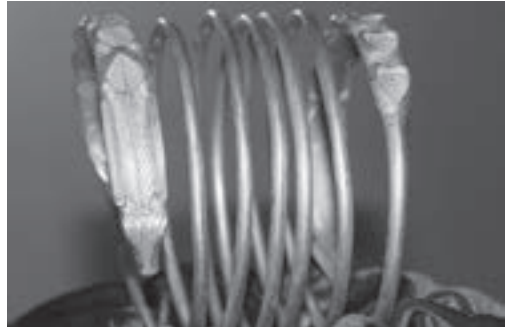
All that glisters... is prehistoric

Alan Crosby

While we were in Bucharest before Christmas last year, we visited Muzeul Național de Istorie a României, the National History Museum of Romania. The building is huge – it is the old post office headquarters built in the 1890s – and at the moment it's being restored and renovated and much of it is closed off. However, we were fortunate enough to see the two permanent exhibitions. The first was the Roman sculpture display, comprising a large collection of tombstones, memorial tablets and funerary statues drawn from all across present-day Romania. They are given an impressive sense of context by a replica of Trajan's Column in Rome, which was erected to commemorate the conquest of Dacia, most of which was in modern Romania.

Downstairs from the Sculpture Gallery was the Historic Treasury, a large quiet room with subdued lighting containing over 3,000 objects which – no surprise here – constitutes the country's historic treasure. And that was simply breathtaking. The display covers over 5,000 years, going from prehistory to the early 20th century. The first section, the prehistoric, was unlike anything I'd ever seen before. Beautifully displayed and labelled in Romanian and English was an astonishing collection of gold objects. We were almost alone in the room, so there were no crowds or crushes, no noise and bustle, and I could gaze uninterrupted.

Some of the gold work was 5,000 years old and it revealed exquisitely beautiful craftsmanship. I remember particularly a willow leaf made from gold that was paper thin and marked with the veins of the leaf. I am not sure what it was used for, and the label did nothing to enlighten me, but it was obviously a decoration of some sort. Absolutely magnificent workmanship was likewise demonstrated by a necklace (a term which is a serious understatement) of 148 long hexagonal gold beads (about 1.5 cm), creating a piece of jewellery like something from the 1920s, but 4,000 years old. And gold cups worked in thin sheet gold, arrowheads modelled in gold and sensational armbands of lengths of gold tubing coiled like springs, and torcs (as we would call them in Britain), great in size and weight, clearly unwearable except on the rarest occasions. There



2,000-year-old Dacian gold (photo: Cristian Chirita).

were clasps and brooches worked of garnets and gold, and stylised model animals. The range and quality were extraordinary.

What also interested me was a way into the local history of pre-Roman Dacia. Just as we are used to seeing pottery (for example) which can be identified as being from a particular place because of its style or the material used to make it – East Anglia or Devon or Leicestershire – so the Dacian gold work has local styles and local characteristics, identifiable by archaeological activity that's been going on sporadically since the early 19th century. A map showed the regional distributions of gold objects, plotting the local history of 4,000 years ago and carrying on into the Roman period.

The material from the millennia before Christ was of such quality and sophistication, and so indicative of a wealthy society, that one of my companions doubted its authenticity. It has to be admitted that the designs deteriorated as we approached the modern era. The medieval gold was good, but that from the 19th and early 20th centuries was horrible – ugly, large, vulgar, ostentatious. The crown jewels made for Romania's imported royal family (the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty) were the sort of thing that, as they say, you wouldn't give house room, except for the diamonds, but the exquisite beauty of the ancient gold and its historical associations were enchanting. If I ever get out to Bucharest again, I'll be going to the museum to spend some more time marvelling at the survival of that wonderful craftsmanship, and at the imagination of its creators all those years ago.

AWARDS



FOR RESEARCH & PUBLICATION

SHORT ARTICLES

Joint first

- **Gina Bridgeland**, 'Bradford City of Culture 1870: The Great Horton Art Treasures and Industrial Exhibition', *The Bradford Antiquary. The Journal of the Bradford Historical and Antiquarian Society*, 85 (2024), pp.100–111.
- **Michael Pearson**, 'Domestic medicine in the Yorkshire Dales (1620–1850)', *North Craven Heritage Trust Journal* (2025), pp.2–5.

Joint third

- **Christine Davies**, 'Unity tools: an intriguing case of recent industrial history in Carmarthenshire', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary. The Transactions of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society*, 60 (2024), pp.166–71.

BALH Awards for Local Historians 2025–6

- **John Isherwood**, 'The Land Settlement Association and Little Park, Abbots Ann', *Look Back at Andover. Journal of the Andover History and Archaeology Society*, 4(6) (September 2025), pp.545–51.

LONG ARTICLES

- **Phoebe Merrick**, 'Wellow in the early years of World War 2', *Hampshire Studies: Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society*, vol. 79 (2024), pp.213–25.
- **Clare Greener**, 'Returning servicemen and the growth of smallholdings in the 1920s', *The Devon Historian: Journal of the Devon History Society*, 95 (2025), pp.14–27.
- **Susan McGuire**, 'Nursing in the 1946 smallpox outbreak in Liverpool', *Liverpool History*, 23 (2024), pp.87–103.
- **Sam Dobson**, 'Malcolm Sargent in Rutland', *Rutland Record (journal of the Rutland Local History & Record Society)*, 44 (2024), pp.176–87.

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

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

AWARDS



Winner of BALH's Newsletter award, to be presented at the 2026 AGM
HEANOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

According to its website, 'founded in 1968, the **Heanor and District Local History Society** is a vibrant community of people with an interest in the history and heritage of our town. Membership (including many who no longer live in the area) is around 150 individuals'. The area covered by the Society is wide and varied. As well as Heanor itself, an old Derbyshire hilltop market town mentioned in Domesday Book, it includes several other communities, such as Aldercar, Codnor, Langley Mill, Marpool, Shipley and Smalley.

Nine times a year, every month from September to May, an A4-size newsletter (most often of eight pages) is distributed to members, either by email or post (the latter for a higher membership subscription). In addition to short contributions and news items, each issue carries several long and informative articles on local topics, such as buildings, streets, people or events in the area. For example, the January 2025 issue included an article about Granada TV's live transmissions of international wrestling matches direct from Heanor Community Centre in the 1980s. During 2025 there were several articles about different aspects travel in the area, such as: David Cox's description of what the journey would have been like on the first Trent bus to run from Heanor to Derby, in August 1920, and Brian Key's article 'The A610 from city centre to Peak Park gateway', which follows the route of the A610 from Nottingham to Ambergate, noting the many changes to the original route that have been made over the years.

One striking feature of these newsletters is the number of extracts from oral histories gathered over the years, some originating in

BALH Society Newsletter Award 2025–6

a recent oral history project, some taken from letters or written memoirs, and others stored on cassette tapes. Thus in the May 2025 issue there are the memories of Alan Turner (b.1946) of Derby Road, Heanor, in the 1950s and 60s, and in the November 2025 issue Bernard Godwin (b.1940) describes working for Heanor UDC for 18 years from 1958 and the next article outlines his subsequent career as manager of the Empire Cinema.

Each issue of this full-colour, illustrated newsletter provides summaries of talks given to the Society, information about forthcoming talks and reports of history events in the locality. The editor is Clive Booth, the Society's chairman, and although he provides some of the items in each issue, there are always several other contributors. The H&DLHS Newsletter is not only interesting but also fun.

Dr Heather Falvey, Reviews Editor

Society's website: www.heanorhistory.org.uk



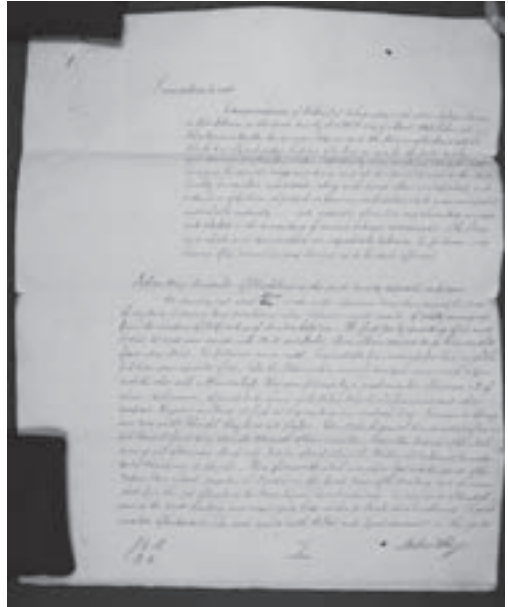
Witnessing the weavers' rising

David Gordon Scott & Joseph Cozens

We are two historians researching the 1826 'Lancashire Rising'. This significant historical event saw the mobilisation of thousands of people across Pennine Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire in late April and early May 1826 focused on the destruction of power looms. Over 1,100 power looms were broken in Lancashire alone during these April days. Although some of the protestors carried pikes and small hammers, the crowd were largely unarmed, and the protests were disciplined and highly targeted on the looms. The property destruction arose in the context of the very real fear of mass starvation and the long-term threat of the power looms to the handloom weavers' way of life. While the local authorities had some sympathy for the weavers' plight, there was little tolerance of social disorder, and the loom breakers were met with the full force of the law. The bravado, verbal abuse and throwing of stones by the machine breakers was met with sabres, bullets and bayonets of the military.

There is, though, a paradox when it comes to the 1826 weavers uprising – it is an event that is both known but also unknown. In some ways the rising is *known*. Often referred to in the past as the 'power loom riots', it was one of the most well-reported events in 1826 in both the local and national press. In the 200 years since it happened, accounts of the four-day protests have featured in newspapers, history books and journal articles. References to the protests even featured in a children book and a film – *Lancashire Pride* – funded by local mill owners in the early 1950s.¹ Some of this coverage has been little more than propaganda, whereas too much of the discussion has been either overly brief or judgemental, dismissing the events as vandalism, senseless violence and ignorance.² The way the story of the protests has been told was, until recently, almost exclusively framed from the perspective of those in authority.

So, at the same time, the rising is *not known*.³ Despite some notable exceptions – we are thinking here in particular of the writings of David Walsh⁴ – the actual meanings, context and motivations underscoring the uprising have been almost entirely lost from public memory. When framed exclusively as 'riots',



Deposition of John Kay (Constable) vs James Chambers taken before Charles Whitaker (JP) and John Fowden Hindle jr (JP) at the Sessions Room, Blackburn, 22 May 1826 (TNA PL 27/10 part 1).

the voices of ordinary people were silenced and state violence rendered invisible.⁵ Even five years ago, when one of us began researching and commemorating this event in Pennine Lancashire, knowledge and understanding of the events among local heritage groups, sites and societies was exceptionally limited.

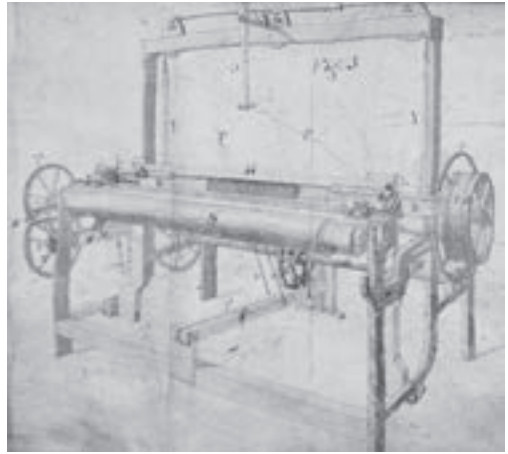
Our research has uncovered that in the existing records held at The National Archives and elsewhere there are contesting and contradictory accounts of what happened during those April days of 1826 in Pennine Lancashire.⁶ Yes, there is some consensus about the route the weavers took and destruction of the looms at the mills and factories. There is also consensus that a serious incident took place at Chatterton on the third day of the rising. But even here, a recent re-examination of the coroners' inquest into one of the deaths reveals that the testimonies of witnesses are inconsistent.⁷ There is no one single voice or viewpoint of what happened. There are, as indicated above, different ways of framing what happened (such as 'popular rising' or

'riot'). Witnessing the weavers' rising is complex and as historians we have a choice of which voices, language and account we emphasise.

Hearing those voices that have previously been silenced or ignored helps to make visible some of the contradictions within the existing archives and ultimately to destabilise the dominant ways of framing what happened as 'power loom riots'. Our work will result in new educational resources to be platformed by The National Archives and the Open University over the coming bicentennial year, including an interactive map based on the legal depositions and inquest.⁸

The main archival sources that help us to reconstruct the weavers' uprising were produced by local authorities in their attempts to quell the 'disorder'. Several magistrates – men of property with responsibility for maintaining law and order in their communities – wrote urgently to the home secretary, Sir Robert Peel, to warn him of impending trouble, to appeal for military support once the protests began and to keep him apprised of what was a rapidly developing situation. These letters have been preserved at The National Archives in the Home Office 'disturbance papers'.⁹ They reveal that local magistrates were attuned to the 'distressed condition' of the handloom weavers but were also highly uncertain of their ability to maintain order within communities simmering with discontent.

Alongside their official communications, magistrates also produced legal documents in preparation for the Lancashire assizes, where more than 60 prisoners would later stand trial. During the third day of protests (26 April), as the rising rumbled on, two local magistrates – John Fowden Hindle and Reverend Richard Noble – began this process at the Sessions Room in Blackburn where they took 'depositions' (oral testimonies recorded in writing and under oath) from seven men whom two days earlier had witnessed protests at the mills of John Haughton and Bannister, Eccles & Co. Their statements reveal the speed with which a crowd of 2,000, some armed with pikes and hammers, moved through the town of Blackburn and the determination of the 'great mob', who sought to enter factories and destroy machinery. While the property damage was extensive – gates were 'burst open', windows 'smashed', warps 'torn off yarn beams' and over 230 power looms 'demolished' – these early depositions also reveal the discipline of the protesters who (other



Specification of Invention submitted by William Horrocks (Cotton Manufacturer of Stockport, Cheshire) for a 'machine for the weaving of cotton and other goods by hand, steam, water or other power', 14 May 1805 (TNA C210/111).

than a few stones thrown at factory owner John Houghton) offered little in the way of interpersonal violence.

During and after the rising, magistrates continued to compile witness statements. In all, we have identified 128 depositions in the records of Lancashire's Palatinat Court.¹⁰ When transcribed these records comprise some 40,000 words of evidence. Most witnesses were either manufacturers who owned power looms or their employees (67 per cent) and others were constables or soldiers (21 per cent) sent to contain the protests; only a handful (12 per cent) were more 'neutral' witnesses with no obvious connections to either factories or law enforcement. As such, these testimonies are undoubtedly problematic and generally hostile to the 'rioters' whom their authors sought to prosecute. Nevertheless, by reading them closely and against the grain, the voices and mentalities of the impoverished handloom weavers and their supporters can be recovered.

On some occasions, witnesses recalled the words of protesters in their testimonies. One remembered seeing James Chambers in the White Bull pub holding a 'printer's hammer' and saying, 'I have been at White Ash and By God I've done my Duty to the Looms there today'. Later the same day, Chambers was spotted inside Eccles' factory. When confronted by the Constable of Blackburn, Chambers retorted, 'Must we be clam'd [starved] to death?' Elsewhere, George Heys identified himself to a witness as a 'captain'

and, pointing in the direction of Bacup, declared 'tomorrow [...] we shall break all the looms up that valley'. Others spoke of their 'orders' being to destroy machinery but no other property. All of which suggests significant planning, discipline and strong leadership.

The central involvement of women also comes through the testimonies. Ann Ingham, for one, was seen at Waterban with 'part of a loom in her hand with which she was breaking others'. Alice and Peggy Lord were said to have participated in the machine-breaking at Whitehead's mill (Rawtenstall) dressed in 'light spotted Bedgowns'. The stories of other women protestors have also been highlighted through our research. Even local historians hugely critical of the uprising¹¹ recognise the leading role that 'bare-headed women' (which referred to women without headwear) played in the rising in Rossendale. Other women strongly feature in accounts – the tragic tale of bystander Mary Hindle, transported to Australia after she was arrested whilst out looking for her daughter in Helmshore; and the eyewitness testimony of Betty Upton of Chatterton who vividly portrayed the horror, fear and helplessness of a bystander in the midst of excessive state violence. Finally, and most notably, Mary Simpson was said to have been egging on the crowd at Rostron's factory (Dearden Clough): 'Damn you lads, why don't you go up and break the dressing machines?' A few hours later she, along with five others, was shot dead by soldiers of the 60th Rifles under orders to use force to disperse the crowd at Aitkin's mill at Chatterton.

Our research disrupts the existing dominant narrative of what happened. In combination with our extensive research of the accounts in 1826 newspapers – which themselves give glimpses of just how chaotic and confusing things were during the rising and the inadequacy if not down-right immorality of actions of the governing authorities – our archival research is helping to bring the ordinary people involved to the forefront of attention. In utilising the testimonies and other evidence about the social and economic hardship people were facing in the spring of 1826, we now know much about *who* was involved, *what* happened and *why*.¹² The Open University and The National Archives' collaborative research is helping to raise awareness and transform understanding by shining a spotlight on a neglected but important struggle for worker rights and the desire to simply live a decent life in Lancashire 200 years ago.

Our next steps with the research are to publish an interactive map via The National Archives and Open Learn platforms. This will provide a forensically detailed mapping of the uprising and provide brief accounts of those involved. This will then be later accompanied by several lesson plans that will be suitable for adoption in secondary schools.¹³ Alongside this, we are also in talks with publishers about the publication of the legal depositions and the inquest testimonies. This will not only make them more accessible but also for the first time mean that the general reader (as well as specialist audiences such as fellow historians and heritage stakeholders, like museum curators) can draw extensively upon this evidence when telling the story of the rising in the future. In the immediate moment, this research is also informing the bicentennial commemorations of the uprising in 2026.¹⁴

David Gordon Scott works at The Open University. He is chair of the Weavers Uprising Bicentennial Committee, a registered charity founded in 2022 to raise wider awareness of the Lancashire rising. David was lead author of the National Lottery Heritage Fund bid 'Remembering and Commemorating the April 1826 Lancashire Weavers Uprising'.

Joseph Cozens is a social and political historian. He works as a records researcher at The National Archives. Joseph took his PhD at the University of Essex and specialises in 18th- and 19th-century British history, with a particular interest in popular protest, political reform and 'public order'.

Notes

1 BFI *Lancashire Pride* 1950 Documentary film <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-lancashire-pride-1950-online>

2 Bythell, D. (1969) *The Handloom Weavers*. CUP.

3 Scott, D. and Gilmore, J. (2025) 'The Battle for Interpretation', *Justice, Power and Resistance*, 9(1).

4 Walsh, D. (1994) 'The Lancashire Rising of 1826', *Albion* 26(4), pp.601–21.

5 Scott & Gilmore, 'The Battle'.

6 HO 40/19, Home Office Disturbance Papers, Jan–May 1826.

7 Scott D and Cozens, J. (2026) 'Doing History to Reshape Public Memory', *The Historian* (forthcoming, summer 2026).

8 See also Onek, G. Harris, L. and Scott, D. (2026) *Rise Up! An Educational Resource for Young People*. Open University.

9 HO 40/19.

10 PL 27/10, Palatinate of Lancaster: Crown Court Depositions, 1826–1835.

11 Newbiggin, T. (1868) *The History of the Forest of Rossendale*, Simpkin Marshal.

12 The Open University (2022) 'Rise Up! Raising awareness and transforming understandings of the 1826 weavers uprising', <https://societal-challenges.open.ac.uk/challenges/raising-awareness-and-transforming-understandings-of-the-weavers-uprising/363>

13 For primary school lesson plans see Onek, G. Harris, L. and Scott, D. (2026) *Rise Up!* Open University.

14 Weavers Uprising Bicentennial Committee (see '2026 Events' page), www.weavers-uprising.org.uk

Ten years of Malmesbury Voices

Bill Reed

Sir John Betjeman dubbed Malmesbury ‘Queen of Hilltop Towns’, and in March 2026 the *Sunday Times* voted it ‘the best place to live in the South West’. Its dense history is recorded in Athelstan Museum, named after the king whose memorial tomb is in Malmesbury Abbey, though his bones lie who knows where.

The Museum, chaired by Steve d’Arcy, is entirely volunteer run, and open six days a week. In 2015 the then chair, Sharon Nolan, asked me to undertake a ‘spoken memory’ project to record the memories of residents in the town and surrounding villages.

Ten years on, with the help of Peter Holland on the technical side and Janet Casselden in outreach, we are approaching 350 items in this collection, available free to Museum visitors. We are proud to have won awards from the BALH itself and from the Marsh Christian Trust in association with the British Museum.

Process

I was given an initial list of people who might be willing to record their memories. After a few cold calls I began to be put in touch with more and more people and the project has essentially progressed through personal recommendation. I now never cold call, and I always accept ‘No’ as an answer. In my opinion the reputation of the project would be damaged if I tried to press people.

I usually aim to record a maximum of 30 minutes in a sitting, preferably in the home of the person I am recording (this means that they have access to documents, photographs or mementos related to their topic, which adds to the interest). I transcribe this and produce a cleaned-up copy which is good to listen to. I then return to check for any necessary corrections, obtain a signed release form and send a final copy to Peter for upload to the collection. A copy of the transcript and audio is given to the person concerned for their own records – an aspect particularly appreciated by the many people who ‘always meant to write things down’..

I record in .wav format with Voice Record



The Voices screen in Athelstan Museum.

on my iPad, using wired microphones on a stand. I then transcribe, edit using Audacity and export to .mp3 format for the collection. All these versions are preserved. I aim for the best possible audio quality and I edit out hesitations, gaps, noises and repetitions to make the listening experience enjoyable (these flaws are however preserved in the original .wav version). I also edit myself out as far as I can. The nature of the Voice itself is of course a major attraction of the collection, exemplifying local ways of speaking and bringing back the sound of residents now gone – a rather poignant way of measuring the success of the project in meeting its objectives.

Content

At the outset I had no clear idea how long each item should be, what shape the collection would take or what the main topic categories would turn out to be. It has therefore developed organically, and now covers, among other headings, occupations, leisure, farming, life stories, carnival and (a favourite of mine) ‘residents remembered’. A rich seam, and one which the Museum was keen for me to record before it became too late, has been memories of the Malmesbury area during and shortly after WW2.

Individual items vary from under a minute up to ten minutes or so, but I always try to break them down into the shortest appropriate

length. Peter has designed a front screen which allows visitors to access items by category, by speaker's name or by typing in the topic. Items newly added are also directly accessible from the front screen.

Many people have remarked to me that they don't hear local accents in the street as they used to. In these recordings North Wiltshire accents, inflections, grammar and vocabulary take their natural place without being 'on show'. But equally, some familiar voices do not have a local accent. I am thinking for example of the engineer and Flying Monk historian Max Woosnam, or the shopkeeper, mayor and town crier Ken Silveston, or the postman Bob Browning: incomers who made their homes in Malmesbury. Their voices have a place here, for they are just as much a part of the fabric of the community as those from 'old Malmesbury' families such as centenarian Bette Richards or woodwork teacher and weaving loom maker Les Hinder.

I must add a note on authenticity. While many people have remarked that it is wonderful to have memories preserved in this way, others have said, 'But you're only recording what people tell you' or 'How do you know this is really history if it's just what people say?' My answer to this is twofold. Firstly, I don't use the expression 'oral history'. I am recording stories as people tell them. These accounts are usually only heard in their circle of family and friends, so it is a great privilege to hear them and be able to pass them on. They are 'spoken memories'.

But secondly: does that mean it doesn't matter if some facts are not accurately recounted? Well, in some cases it does matter. One story which kept cropping up was that of 'Cracker' Clark at Abbey Mill Farm in the 1960s. I collected a number of accounts of his roguery, including references to a court case; but I could not in good conscience pass on what I had been told without corroboration. With the help of the excellent Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham, I managed to track down the record of the magistrates' hearing and associated news reports. It turned out that everything I had been told was true, so I could confidently add this story to the collection. You will find a link to it below: 'A Case of Gross Exploitation'. A similar example was 'The True Story of the Murder of Harry Neal' which, once I had researched it with the support of his family, became a book.

Some stories

To provide a flavour, here are some extracts from the recordings. But while the text gives information, it cannot convey the individuality of the voice itself; to hear the following short clips in full, go to: www.athelstanmuseum.org.uk/our-collection/malmesbury-voices/

Max Woosnam reads what William of Malmesbury wrote about the monk Elmer, who attempted to fly from the Abbey tower. As William is quoting Elmer, there are three levels of Malmesbury Voice here:

'He was a man of good learning for those times, of mature age, and in his early youth had hazarded an attempt of singular temerity. He had, by some contrivance, fastened wings to his hands and feet, in order that, looking upon the fable as true, he might fly like Daedalus, and, collecting the air on the summit of a tower, had flown for more than the distance of a furlong ...

Bob Browning was a regular entrant in Malmesbury Carnival:

This was when there was bustards had been reintroduced onto Salisbury Plain, the Wiltshire bird, and I thought, well Wiltshire birds are back, let's make some bustards ...

Bette Richards worked in a grocery shop during WW2:

The troops were in Charlton Park... and we had to be so careful going to work, in case these tanks were coming up or down Holloway Hill, and you had to get out of the way quick, or else you'd be knocked over by them.

The fire engine was still horse-drawn when Les Hinder was a child:



Bob Browning's carnival bustards.



Ken Silveston, town crier at the Market Cross.

1926, I think it must have been... one day the Malmesbury fire engine came galloping down Bristol Street through towards Hyam, where they had ricks on fire. The fire engine was pulled by horses, and quite a sight...

Ken Silveston served as town crier:

'Oyez... Oyez... Oyez... His Worship the Mayor and Councillors of Malmesbury, England's oldest borough, in the beautiful county of Wiltshire, bid a warm welcome to all our guests and visitors. Tarry a while in our town! We wish you a safe journey. God save the Queen!

For 'A Case of Gross Exploitation' and other stories, see this link to Flying Monk Radio: www.flyingmonkcommunityprojects.com/malmesbury-voices-collection.html

My Ten-Minute Talk with the voices of workers at Linolite, Malmesbury's light fittings factory, is on this page: www.balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks

Impact and outreach

This is where 'mission creep' set in, but in a good way. My original intention was simply to make the recordings available in the Museum. Indeed, we soon had visitors coming in to 'listen to Grandma' or to hear the latest

additions. But very soon I was asked to bring these stories out of the Museum and present them to local groups: Rotarians, Women's Institutes, Probus. A spin-off talk on Wiltshire dialect became inevitable. I now have a dozen or so of these talks, which bring in donations to the Museum. The Covid period led me to develop presentations on Zoom. Janet began to use extracts in her talks to groups and in the Children's History Club. Our local community radio – Flying Monk Radio – gives me a spot several times a year to talk about the latest developments. Our community newspaper *The Malmesbury Jackdaw* hosts a column with the same aims and has just published five articles reviewing the whole project. BBC Wiltshire Radio gave me a weekly slot to present extracts over a period of nine months. The Linolite project resulted in a renewed contact with the factory's founder's descendants and a generous donation. Certain topics lent themselves to books, which the Museum has published. Overall, there is a positive financial impact and we have created opportunities to promote the Museum more widely.

Related publications, available from the Athelstan Museum shop:

- *You're One of Us Now*: the story of Malmesbury's secret radar factory
- *The True story of the Murder of Harry Neal*
- *Linolite – the Inside Story*: Malmesbury's light fittings factory, in the words of its employees

The *Malmesbury Jackdaw* is at <https://themalmesburyjackdaw.com>



Flying Monk Radio website screenshot.

How to publish for posterity

Megan Taylor

Local history societies produce a remarkable range of publications: journals, booklets, newsletters, excavation reports, transcriptions and one-place studies. Together, these capture knowledge that may exist nowhere else. Yet too often this work becomes hard to find once print runs sell out, websites change or copies are dispersed beyond the local area.

Futureproofing publications does not have to require specialist skills or large budgets. A few simple steps can make a significant difference, helping ensure that local research remains accessible to readers for decades to come.

Local history publications are used not only by society members, but also by family historians, students, independent researchers and academics. Clear, discoverable publishing allows this wider audience to find, cite and build upon local research. It also strengthens the visibility and reputation of societies, supporting new memberships and potential partnerships.

Making work available in more than one format is particularly important. Print editions remain highly valued and should continue to be produced where possible. However, relying solely on print can mean valuable research becomes unavailable once copies sell out, limiting its long-term reach and impact.

For substantial publications, such as books or major report series, using an ISBN is a simple but highly effective step. An ISBN allows publications to be listed in library catalogues, bookshops and online discovery systems, making them far easier to find and reference.

Even shorter items benefit from clear identification and good metadata. Titles, dates, author names and the name of the publishing society should appear clearly within the publication itself. These details are essential for cataloguing and citation, and help ensure that publications can still be understood when encountered outside their original context.

Maintaining basic publication information does not have to be complicated. A simple record of what has been published, when and in what format can be invaluable. This supports stock management, makes it easier to respond to enquiries and ensures continuity as committee roles change over time.

Including a contact email, website address or society name against each publication also helps future readers trace the society responsible, even many years after publication.

Where possible, making digital versions of publications available alongside print can help protect against out-of-print issues and significantly widen readership. Digital access allows libraries worldwide to make local history publications available to both academic and public users, often far beyond the society's immediate geographic area.

This wider availability benefits societies as well as readers. Local studies are frequently of international interest – particularly for researchers studying migration, industry or religious and cultural communities – and digital access enables this work to be discovered and used globally, while print copies can continue to be sold alongside. Clear identification, thoughtful format choices and consideration of access beyond print all help safeguard local history research for the future.

Some societies may also find it helpful to talk informally with publishing professionals or organisations experienced in heritage publishing, even if only to run ideas past someone or sense-check plans. This does not mean handing over control or changing how a society works. At its best, this kind of conversation is about sharing experience and learning from others who understand how publications are discovered, catalogued and preserved.

Transparent, advice-led collaboration can help societies make confident decisions about where to focus their time and resources, ensuring that their publications are accessible both now and in the future. Whether working independently or with occasional external guidance, the aim is the same: to ensure that the knowledge created by local historians remains findable, usable and valued by readers locally and worldwide for generations to come.

If you would like some advice or a discussion around your society publication goals, please get in touch with our BALH Publishing Committee via: editor.lhn@balh.org.uk

Megan Taylor is partnerships manager at Boydell and Brewer, www.boydellandbrewer.com

Editing Latham: a publishing journey

Phoebe Merrick

In his article about the Celebrating Hampshire History project (LHN 156, August 2025), Barry Shurlock was kind enough to mention my contribution as editor of John Latham's notes, now published as *Collections of a History of Romsey, Hampshire* by **Romsey Local History Society**. Dr John Latham moved from Kent to Romsey in 1795 and spent many hours in the next 25 years copying documents relevant to the history of the town, but he never pulled them together into a narrative.

His notes ended up in the British Library and some 50 years ago the local history society bought a microfilm copy of them, from which the late Pat Genge and I worked. Pat typed up the English part of the notes, which was in itself a considerable task, but she omitted the Latin and the footnotes.

Pat did not read Latin and Latham's transcription of medieval Latin documents was flawed. I am not sure whether his Latin was poor or, more likely, he could not transcribe what he saw. I ended up going back to the original documents that he had copied and working from them. I delegated some of the work to a member of our society who has been one of the best medieval Latinists in Hampshire. Unfortunately I did not give her a clear deadline and the project was seriously delayed in consequence.

To give him his due, Latham footnoted his work, but making notes for himself, he abbreviated their titles and other identifying material. I therefore had to identify the work to which Latham alluded in any footnote before I could check it. Not infrequently I could find the source of Latham's footnotes, but not necessarily the same edition, which affected the page numbers. It took about 18 months to go through Latham's seven volumes of notes and identify and check the footnotes, as the volumes I needed to consult were scattered far and wide across England and Scotland.

Once I had assembled English versions of all the text and full details of the references, with the exception of one or two I could not trace, I then reordered the material into related sections.

On checking the web, I found that

Derbyshire County Record Office had a series of letters Latham had written to a friend after coming to Romsey and I added them in as an appendix. They included the story of the mayor of Winchester attending church in the cathedral but no one was available to preach a sermon, and when the mayor was ready to leave, his attendants were all at the pub as they had not expected him so soon.

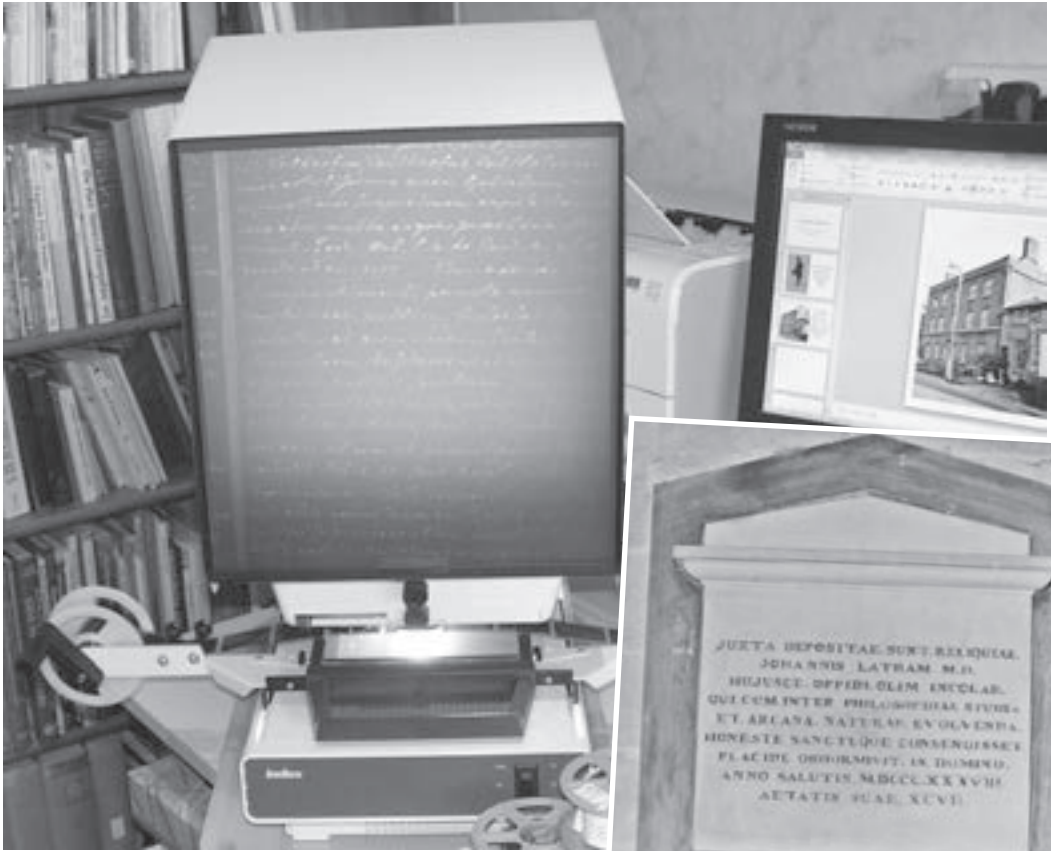
Having prepared the work on A4 pages, I decided that Royal would be a nice size. It lies between A4 and A5. Unfortunately it was not possible to do a simple transfer of page size of one page to another. Incidentally, the printers were most helpful giving me margin sizes and other essential layout specifications.

This meant the index had to be compiled afresh and part of it is seriously flawed, which I did not realise at the time. I was working to a deadline: in retrospect I should have delayed the publication date and spent more time on the index. The reason for the planned date of publication was that it coincided with the town's arts festival.

Possibly wrongly, I settled on hard-bound volumes and with a short print run, this made each rather expensive. I wanted to produce something that would have a heritage element to it.

There are legal requirements to attend to in publishing a book, no matter how modest. A copy has to be sent to the British Library's Legal Deposit Office in Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, as a legal deposit. You have to send a copy to the British Library's Legal Deposit Office in Boston Spa. There are five other copyright libraries which have the right to ask for copies of your work. Should they want them, you will be told and given the address in Edinburgh to which they have to be sent. More details are available at www.bl.uk/services/legal-deposit.

You need to assign an ISBN (International Standard Book Number) to your publication. It is worth purchasing a number so that the book can be made available worldwide. In the UK, numbers are made available via www.nielsenisbnstore.com. An ISBN consists of 13 digits made up of a number unique to each publisher, an identifier for the publication,



Editing in progress when the microfilm of the original material, bought from the British Library, was used to correct the material. Inset: he memorial plaque to Dr John Latham in Romsey Abbey church.



a national code and the last digit provides parity. Incidentally, your printer will have no difficulty in reproducing your ISBN as a barcode so that it can be scanned. If your publication is part of a series, it will need an ISSN number.

Although not obligatory, books are much more useful if they come with an index. There is plenty of advice on the web on ways to tackle this task (see also the article on this subject in LHN 151). In addition a bibliography will be invaluable for those who follow in your footsteps, and don't forget a list of abbreviations that you have used. A list of illustrations is also to be recommended and for those using Word, the software provides a format for captions. (See the tab headed 'References'.)

Get someone pedantic to proofread the material. If you do this before you send it to the printer, you can then convert the work into PDF, format which is what printers prefer and

it should not need further correction. Talk to the printer early on about layout before you commit yourself: I have found them to be very helpful.

All these steps seems like an additional load on the editor, but it is worthwhile as it makes the work universally and perpetually available, and who knows who will want to study your efforts in a hundred years' time?

Phoebe Merrick has studied the local history of the southern Test valley in Hampshire for more than 50 years. She has had work published by the Romsey Local History Society, BALH and the Hampshire Field Club. She has an MPhil on medieval woollen cloth. Currently she is making an in-depth study of the Romney area in World War Two. Contact her via phoebe.merrick2@ntlworld.com.

If you need advice on your local history publication, contact the BALH publishing committee via editor. lhnl@balh.org.uk

An excursion to Liverpool in 1845: a previously unknown account

John Pinfold

In July 1845, an unnamed resident of Bristol undertook what he termed an 'Excursion' to Liverpool. He travelled by train, still something of a novelty as the line from Bristol to Birmingham had not long been open in its entirety, and then spent a week exploring the town through a series of walks. He wrote down what he saw in a bound notebook which he seems to have bought specifically for the purpose of recording his travels. Liverpool was his primary destination, but he subsequently visited Birkenhead and Chester, and the notebook also contains details of several further 'excursions' he made around the south-west of England.

Although he possessed a copy of one of the existing guidebooks to Liverpool – the evidence suggests that it was probably a recent edition of Thomas Kaye's *The Stranger in Liverpool* – his aim seems to have been to write a guidebook of his own, although whether it was intended for publication or was written simply for his own use or that of his family and friends is not clear. In any event, there is no evidence of any part of the volume having been published either at the time or since, and its history before it recently appeared in the catalogue of an antiquarian bookdealer in Yorkshire is entirely unknown, as is the name of its author. He was almost certainly a gentleman of independent means, and someone with a great interest in architecture and the built environment; and,

as someone from a port city which had been overtaken by Liverpool, he was also interested to view the railways and the docks which he saw as engines of the town's dramatic growth during the preceding decades.

My first task when I spotted this volume in the bookseller's catalogue was to ask for further information, especially concerning its provenance and authenticity. He kindly sent me images of several pages and also informed me that its previous owner had been unable to establish its date, other than being no earlier than the mid-1840s. From the handwriting, the spelling and the binding, it was clearly authentic, and a search through various contemporary accounts of Liverpool confirmed that it had never been published there in book form nor as a series of articles in the local press. A later search through the Bristol newspapers similarly drew a blank as did the catalogues of both the Bristol and Liverpool Record Offices. This made it a potentially exciting discovery and reinforced my decision to purchase it.

Nowhere in his narrative does the author explicitly state when he visited Liverpool, but there were clues in the text which eventually enabled me to pinpoint the exact date of his trip. His mention of the Liverpool Collegiate Institution, which opened in 1843, meant it could not be earlier than that, while his having travelled the entire way from Bristol by train pushed this date a year later to 1844,

Liverpool seen from the Mersey in 1839.



when the Bristol and Gloucester Railway was opened. None of Liverpool's docks constructed later than 1840 are specifically mentioned by name, the most notable lacuna being any obvious mention of the Albert Dock, which was officially opened by the Prince Consort in 1846 although it had been in use since early 1845.

Thus, a date sometime in 1844–5 was the most likely, and his notice of fully grown but not yet picked hops as he travelled through Worcestershire suggested a visit during July or August. The final and conclusive piece of evidence in the jigsaw was provided by visit he made to the Theatre Royal to see *The Honey Moon* by John Tobin, for during the whole of 1844–5 this was only performed once during the summer months at this theatre, on 22 July 1845, the fifth day of his excursion.

Before setting out on his series of walking tours around the city, the author states that Liverpool contained more than 160 churches and chapels – the actual number was somewhat less than this – and during his visit he managed to see 25 of them, of which only five of survive today, the remainder all having been demolished, some as long ago as the 1850s, others much more recently, mostly as a result of dwindling congregations, although the compulsory purchase of land for railway construction, city redevelopment plans, both pre- and post-war and the Blitz were also major contributors.

Other classes of buildings which caught his

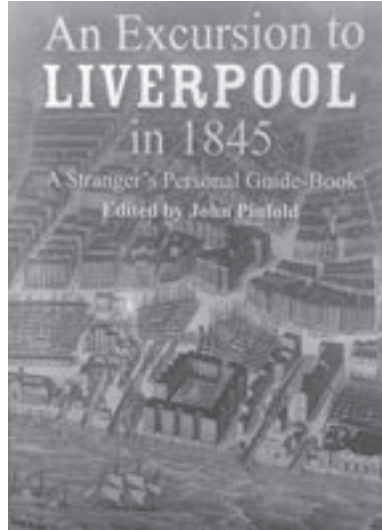
eye have fared even worse than the churches. He mentions seven market buildings, not one of which still stands today. Similarly, none of the seven places of entertainment mentioned now exist although a small part of the old Music Hall in Bold Street survives at the rear of the concert hall which superseded it.

Overall, depending on how you count them, with the exception of the docks and warehouses, slightly more than 70 individual buildings are mentioned in the text, of which only around 27 or 28 are still extant. Thus, to read the 'Excursion' or to follow in the author's footsteps is to see a Liverpool which to a large degree no longer exists.

Although the city's inhabitants are mostly missing from his narrative, the author does refer early on to the 'activity, energy [and] perseverance' of the merchant community

and the sense of 'haste and business' in the commercial quarter, and there are also some striking vignettes such as those of musicians on the ferries or the poor of Vauxhall ward taking their breakfast outdoors in the street. Perhaps he was simply more interested in architecture than in people, or he may have thought that as he was writing a guidebook to the town and not a social survey he did not need to say much about its inhabitants.

Early on in my reading of the manuscript it became clear that this rare outsider's view of Liverpool at a critical juncture in its history deserved making known to a wider audience, but it was also clear that it needed supplementing with additional images, contemporary maps and notes on the subsequent history of the buildings described as well a general introduction placing it in context and adding some of the features of the town the author missed during his visit. When I approached the **Liverpool History Society** with a proposal to publish it in this form I received an enthusiastic response, and the ensuing volume became available to both members of the Society and non-members in April this year. It is my hope that they will find it as interesting to read as I did to research it.



Rescuing a forgotten antiquary in the digital age

Jane Platt

Local people write the best local histories; just ask contributors to this magazine. We local historians understand our patch so well; we know its landscape and its people in our very bones. To that extent we resemble the early county history antiquaries who were the first historians to get out into the field and try to make sense of what they found. We have one particular advantage over them, though: we now know where to locate local historical sources and how to use them to the best advantage.

Some written resources are still hiding in plain sight. Reposing in archive boxes, unknown to the wider scholarly community and overlooked for centuries, some local histories are rarely read in their own right as crucial resources from the past. Because their tone and contents are thought to be unreadable, out of date or unsophisticated, they are wheeled out only occasionally, perhaps to add a splash of local colour in an article or talk, and were it not for local historians (who make the best detectives, possess the antennae to find and appreciate such documents and, crucially, are also disposed to give up the time necessary to transcribe them), they would be lost to scholarship.

The recently published (2025) *Thomas Machell's Collections Towards a History and Topography of Westmorland* is a case in point. Its publication by the **Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society (CWAAS)** in a three-volume edited transcription 327 years after Machell's death represents the first edition of his entire work on Westmorland. He had hoped for its publication by trusted colleagues, but this did not materialise. The uncollated and unedited content was placed in six volumes by his former student, William Nicolson, bishop of Carlisle 1702–18, and stored in the cathedral library until its removal to the Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle, in the late 20th century.

Machell (baptised 1657, died 1698), a younger son of a local gentry family, became



A proposed title page by Machell: 'These Armes with the Pedigrees adjoyned will make a pretty Booke.'

rector of Kirkby Thore in Westmorland after leaving The Queen's College, Oxford, where, as a fellow, he had begun his historical research. Although his childhood triggered a great love of Westmorland and its people, much of the impetus to research his native county at first hand came from his acquaintance with antiquaries at Oxford, where he became one of the group which created the first questionnaire to be used at parish level. Westmorland's great and good were generally unimpressed by Machell and his questionnaire. When many refused to help, Machell turned to lesser folk for the information he sought. Speaking with people whom he termed 'vulgar (possibly of slow apprehensions)' appealed to his fascination with vernacular speech and tradition while stimulating his interests in mechanics, horticulture, forestry, land boundaries and the weather. Local dialect, stories of strange happenings, accidents, ghosts and other manifestations of the occult became fundamental to his research.

Machell's peers in the north thought very little of this. His interest in oral history was considered old fashioned and, apart from

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Supplement

UPCOMING BALH EVENTS 2026

Thomas More and Suburban London: A View from the Outside

Wednesday 17 June • 7–8pm • Online • Free to BALH members

What does it change about our understanding of one of England's most controversial historical figures, Thomas More, if he was born not in fashionable wealthy Milk Street, but outside the stinking ditches of the London Wall, in Cripplegate Without?

Join historian Dr Joanne Paul as we explore the evidence for moving the plaque marking More's birthplace, drawn from research into her book *Thomas More: A Life and Death in Tudor England*. Joanne is an award-winning historian, broadcaster and writer with a passion for sharing her research on Renaissance and Tudor history. She is Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Sussex and the author of *The House of Dudley*, hailed as a 2022 Book of the Year.

Rebellion and protest across six centuries

Saturday 17 October • 10am–4pm • Digby Hall, Sherborne • £20 for BALH members

A one-day conference organised by BALH in association with Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries, exploring rebellion, protest and popular resistance from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. From medieval revolt to 20th-century industrial action, the programme brings together a distinguished panel of speakers to examine how ordinary people have challenged authority and expressed dissent. Topics range from the Peasants' Revolt in Somerset to the 'Wildcat' strikes of 1912, and from questions of heritage and memory to broader traditions of protest and resistance.

Speakers: Andrew Prescott; Tim Goodwin; Stephen M. Carter; Steve Poole; Karen Hunt

Full details: www.balh.org.uk/dorset26

Book now: www.balh.org.uk/events

THE BALH DYMOND LECTURE 2026

Online • Thursday 3 December • 7pm • Save the date!

We are delighted to announce that our speaker for the 2026 Dymond Lecture will be Dr Joan Heggie, whose specialism is the Registers of Deeds for the County of York, particularly relating to the role of women within property transfers. Her talk will be on the Deeds Registers, their particular use for local historians and for researching women and moving into a more focused look at research on evidence for mortgages in these records.

BOOKS PUBLISHED BY BALH



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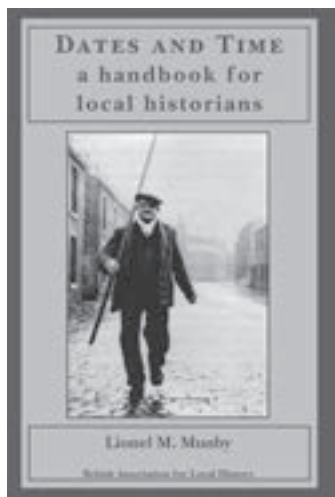
This 88-page practical guide covers handwriting from 1500 to 1700, illustrated with facsimiles and transcripts of more than 20 documents of types most frequently encountered by researchers.

It also offers advice on transcribing.

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

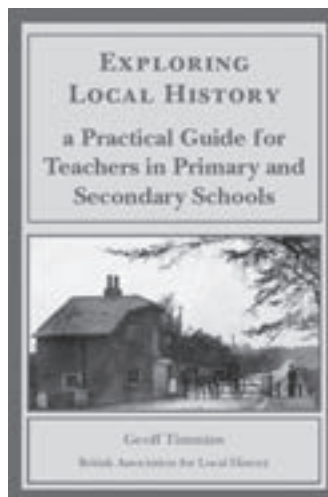
This comprehensive 95-page guide to post-medieval manors details how they were managed and presents illustrated examples of administrative documents as well as the court rolls and books that record the court in session.

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



An authoritative, concise guide to systems of recording time and dates exploring how time has been measured in the past. It covers regnal years, the Julian and Gregorian calendars and various religious dating systems.

£7 to BALH members, £9 to non-members

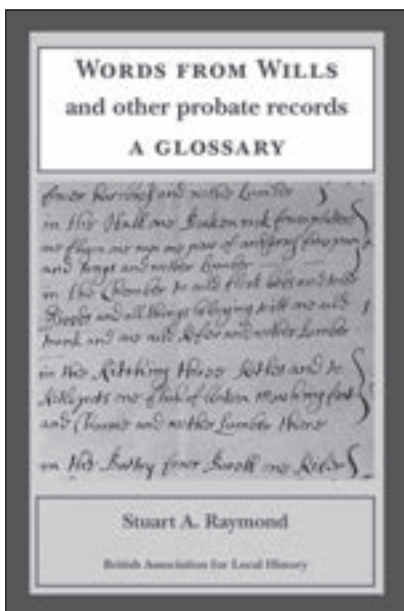


This 130-page paperback is full of detailed guidance and case studies to stimulate the interest of young people and develop key skills. It explains how a wealth of readily available sources can enrich understanding of local history.

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

ORDER THROUGH OUR WEBSITE
www.balh.org.uk/shop/shop-local-history-books

NEW BALH PUBLICATION FOR 2026



Words from Wills and other probate records: a glossary

Stuart A. Raymond

Latest in the BALH series of handbooks for local historians is *Words from Wills and other probate records: a glossary*, compiled by Stuart A. Raymond. This is a revised and enlarged edition of a work first published in 2004 by the Federation of Family History Societies, and brings together information gathered from the glossaries of the many published editions of probate records.

As every local historian is aware, wills and probate inventories are among the most precious and illuminating of all historical sources, opening a window on to the everyday lives and loves of early-modern people. But they do present certain difficulties. Once the researcher has mastered the palaeographical skills to be able to read them (for which we also have produced a handbook), there remains the problem of terminology used for unfamiliar or obsolete possessions, which is where our new handbook will prove an invaluable time-saver. BALH is most grateful to Stuart for revising his work and offering it to us to publish. The book is a paperback of 130 pages, uniform with our other handbooks.

If libraries, record offices and similar would like to stock copies of this, or other handbooks, for resale, please contact John Chandler via the BALH website for details of discounts for bulk orders.

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

ISBN: 978-0-948140-07-5

ORDER THROUGH OUR WEBSITE
www.balh.org.uk/shop/shop-local-history-books

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 BALH Awards, Fountain Precinct, Balm Green, Sheffield S1 2JA 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



Thomas Machell, elevation of Brough Castle.

findings on local heraldry, which were copied by later authors, his work languished until the formation of the CWAAS, a county history society formed in 1866. Nevertheless, although the first article in the first issue of the society's *Transactions*, published in 1874, bears the title 'The need of Antiquarian Research in Cumberland and Westmorland', Machell is not mentioned. In 1880, his entries in his parish register were deemed 'quaint'. In 1886, an article on his family described him as 'father of all Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquaries', referring, in effect, to his work on genealogy. This situation remained until 1963, when one of his six volumes of manuscript (relating only to the south of the county) was transcribed by Jane Ewbank and published by the Society as *Antiquary on Horseback*. Ewbank's work was conceivably inspired by the French *Annales* movement, which, in the mid-20th century focused its attention on regional history. Even so, professional historians of English regions continued to reduce Thomas Machell to a footnote, if they mentioned him at all, until 2012, when the historian Adam Fox published an article in the journal *Cultural and Social History* (9, pp. 329–47) based solely on Machell's understanding of Westmorland's popular practices. No longer was Machell considered 'quaint'; his interests had become fashionable.

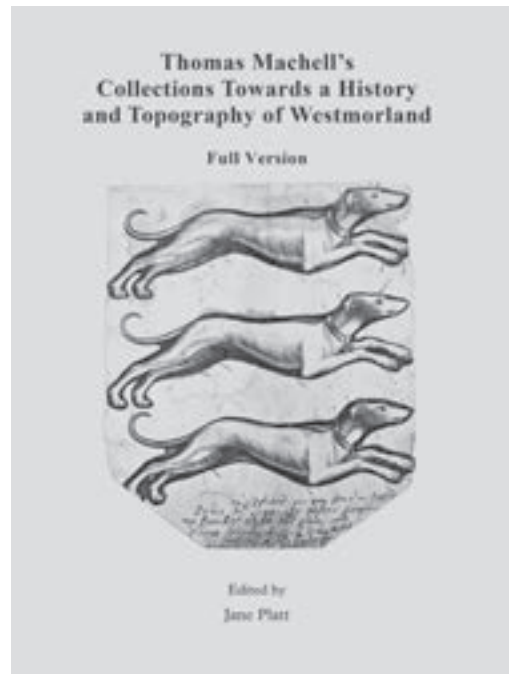
One of the main problems facing historians is Machell's frequently appalling handwriting. The challenge of reading his scribbled notes has deterred many would-be transcribers. In 2015, having retired, I decided to tackle the problem. Why on earth did I take on this monumental task? The mountaineer George Mallory was once asked why he was so determined to climb Mount Everest. His simple reply was, 'Because it's there.' This sums up my attitude over ten years ago, when it seemed odd to me that no historian had ever published a complete edition of such significant notes even though their importance had become widely accepted. But ignorance is bliss; week three of the project

found me sitting in the county archives in tears while peering at a passage about the town of Appleby which I could not even read, let alone transcribe: I had underestimated the huge difficulties that Machell's handwriting would present, particularly when much of the text had been overwritten, crossed through or interlineated. As the saying goes, raising a child requires a whole village of helpers, and, luckily, I had access to the enthusiasm and expertise of a wonderful group of local historians: friends and acquaintances who supported me in ways large and small, all the way through. They are gratefully acknowledged in the published edition.

Because of its length and the expense involved, just seven copies have been printed in hard copy as books proper. They have been presented to local libraries and research bodies. The best news is that, thanks to a legacy from a local lady, the work has been published by CWAAS online as a free electronic download and is fully searchable, either as a single large file or split into three separate books for easier downloading; see www.balh.org.uk/KFQ231.

Because of the work of local historians, one of the north of England's major antiquaries will now reach an audience he could never have envisaged.

Dr Jane Platt is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.



Fifty years of tourist guiding

Cheryl Butler

This year BALH member The Southampton Tourist Guides Association is celebrating its golden jubilee.

In 1976 there was a small ad in the *Southern Echo* promoting a series of lectures on local history, but when you arrived for the first talk it was revealed that the actual aim was to train the first Blue Badge tourist guides in the Southern Tourist Board area. The training covered local history and practical training for walking tours and coach tours. Blue Badge Guides were first seen as a new development for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and adopted as the national standard by regional tourist boards in 1969.

The Southampton Course was the first blue badge course for our region promoted by the Southern Tourist Board and Southampton City Council and led by the redoubtable Don Cross, who wrote the guiding handbook *Please Follow Me: The Tourist Guide's Handbook*. On the completion of the course the candidates decided to form their own local association, The Southampton Tourist Guides Association, also in 1976.

The first offering was a 1¾-hour tour around the medieval town and its amazing

underground vaults, offered free to visitors and locals, originally offered three times a week starting from the Bargate. It was possible to offer the tours for free thanks to a grant from the City Council, which also supplied marketing support. The popularity of those tours soon led to the programme to be extended and the Association soon realised they would need more members to facilitate not only the public walks programme but requests for school and educational walks, private walks and talks and other duties supporting the local tourist office at exhibitions and taking around the media. The Association took on the delivery of future training with the support of the City Council and the Tourist Board, the organisation involved in the examination and the provision of the coveted Blue Badge.

The Association also delivered CPD training and members developed new walks and organised specialist training for the delivery of tours to visitors with visual and physical challenges so that they could enjoy tours around the old town, which provided endorsements to their badges. Over its 50 years the Association has learnt new skills including courier training, a Hampshire endorsement course, tour planning, special training to deliver



tours for the Jane Austen 200th anniversary, the 40th anniversary of D-Day, the 40th of GI Brides, regional bus tours and Howard's Way Weekends, Millennium events, *Titanic* 90th and 100th anniversaries and more. On occasion we have done costumed tours and ghost walks, and we wrote a souvenir book based on the medieval walk and also a variety of trail leaflets covering different themes and tours around the suburbs. Southampton was also developing as a tourist destination over this period and guides were being used to provide meet-and-greet services for Southampton Airport and the Port of Southampton.

At the turn of the Millennium the delivery of guide training and the giving-out of badges saw a major change. The issuing of badges became the purview of a new organisation, the Institute of Tourist Guides, and the new organisation decided to introduce a new structure of badges: White Badge for guiding around buildings, Green Badge for walking tours and the Blue Badge being reserved for guiding and coach guiding over a wide region usually aligned with the Tourist Board areas (see LHN151 for more on training for badges). The number of tourist boards was reduced and Southern Tourist Board became the South East Board with a much wider geographical area. From 2002, when the new system was implemented, the Southampton Tourist Guides focused new training on the Green Badge.

The biggest challenge came with Covid-19. New guides who qualified ready for the 2018 season were still finding their feet when the pandemic hit. When it was safe to guide again, as for many guiding organisations, some senior guides decided to retire and the new guides had to 'find their feet' all over again. However, members still managed to deliver two White Badge training courses and a fixed-route Hidden History trail about early black history in 2020 and 2021. The last few years have been about anniversaries and developing new walks to commemorate Agincourt 600 in 2015, Mayflower 400 and Peartree 400 in 2020 (also impacted by Covid), Jane Austen 200 in 2017, the anniversary of the writer's death, and in 2025 Jane Austen 250, the anniversary of her birth. There are special walks and events planned for 2026 and the guides are looking forward to welcoming visitors and residents alike to enjoy the history and heritage of Southampton.

www.southamptontouristguides.co.uk

Ask BALH

Send your enquiries to: editor.

lhnl@balh.org.uk

Whose copyright?

We have a digital collection of historic photos originally held by the local library but donated to us. The photos are marked 'copyright of the photographer' but the photographer is unknown. The covering document records that they were given to the library 'for the use of the people of Bingley'.

We have received a request for access to the photos for personal research. We are hesitant to allow the researcher unrestricted access because of the copyright. We are considering somehow watermarking the photos or inviting him to access only on our premises, though these measures may be both awkward and unnecessary.

Have you any advice on how to handle copyright?

David Fox, Bingley Local Historical Society

LHN editor Andrew Chapman: First, the important caveat: I am not a lawyer.

If the copyright was claimed by the photographer, certainly they would still be in copyright until 70 years after their death. If they can't be identified, though, there's nobody to ask permission from. And one could argue that 'for the use of the people of Bingley' is effectively a licence for their use, at least by somebody local (but what does 'use' mean?).

If the access is for personal research – and not publication – then I can't see there would be any issue anyway: access is not the same as reproduction. In which case there seems no reason not to let them see the photos at least on your premises. If they take them away, though, what assurances do you have they are not going to reproduce them somewhere? You might want them to sign something to agree they won't do that. Or issue a statement of this kind...

BingleyLocalHistoricalSocietyprovidesaccess to images for private study and non-commercial research. The Society does not represent that it owns copyright in all images, and access does not include permission to reproduce, publish or share images. Responsibility for obtaining any necessary copyright permission for reuse rests with the user.



I'm sure in practice the copyright here is not going to be enforced by anyone, so like so many issues of this kind, it comes down to what level of risk one is willing to accept: it feels minimal here, but not non-existent. But certainly the key distinction is between access and reproduction.

How can we protect our work?

We are currently working on a research project about a local estate. We intend to write articles about our findings and there is an opportunity to engage with local stakeholders. There is even a possibility that we could produce a book, pamphlets etc and we will certainly post some of our research on our website.

We were hoping you could give us some advice/guidance on protecting the work that we produce which will be for our society. I am not sure how copyright etc would work as we are all volunteers as you can imagine, but research and writing on behalf of the society. We are keen to do the right thing, and all are keen to protect what we do.

- How can the society protect any articles written for the research project by way of copyright, and ensuring that other stakeholders potentially involved must give credit to the society if they refer to this work?
- How can the society protect any articles written by the research team on our website?
- How can the society protect research and writing undertaken from being passed off by another stakeholder?

Andrina Silcock, Wigan Local History and Heritage Society

AC: All written material is automatically in copyright in the UK, so there is no requirement for it to be registered anywhere (there are places, but some are scams to fleece creators of their money!). But of course you would want to draw attention to the copyright status – i.e. to state © Wigan Local History and Heritage Society wherever the material is published, and presumably to have a note along the lines of what would typically be used inside a book, e.g.:

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author/publisher, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

In the UK, material produced by an employee of a business is automatically copyright of the business. In your case, strictly speaking, the material would be copyright of whoever wrote it, i.e. the individual volunteers. But if you want to formalise copyright belonging to the society, you might want to ask your volunteers each to agree to a brief assignment statement, e.g.:

'The author assigns to the Society all present and future copyright in materials created for the Society.'

unless authors want to retain some rights, in which case you'd need a licence, such as...

The author grants to the Society a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide licence to use, reproduce, publish and distribute the submitted material in any format.

but then the copyright line shouldn't say © Wigan Local History and Heritage Society. You could still state that anyone wanting to reuse material should seek permission from the society, acting as a gatekeeper. (Note 'non-exclusive' – this enables the author to use the material still as an individual; you could insist on 'exclusive' so the society alone has control.)

Note that copyright is separate from 'moral rights', which preserve each author's entitlement to be acknowledged as the author of the material, even if not remaining the copyright holder.

I would personally add a note that people far too often worry about their material being 'exploited' when really what is more important is to get the material out into the world to share one's research. But certainly, a simple statement that reuse requires permission – and acknowledgement – always makes sense.

News round-up

With thanks to Heather Falvey, Anthe Harris-Fry, Stephen Hewett, Kate Kersey, Jean Morrin, Nigel Tringham, Bob Trubshaw

All About That Place is back: join the family and local history virtual event of the year, taking place from Wednesday 7 October to Friday 16 October, supported by BALH, the Society for One Place Studies and genealogy societies. Could you give a 10-minute pre-recorded talk? Showcase your research, skills, services or collections. Details here: sog.org.uk/all-about-that-place-call-for-speakers/

On 24 May this year it will be exactly 400 years since Charles I signed a contract with Cornelius Vermuyden to drain the Isle of Axholme and Hatfield Chase in northern Lincolnshire. The **Vermuyden400 Project** is a collaboration between local community groups and performers, North Lincolnshire Libraries and North Lincolnshire Museum, to coordinate a programme of events and activities to mark the anniversary. Full details, background reading and a regularly updated blog can be found at vermuyden400.org.uk. A public exhibition on the history, context and legacy of the drainage was opened on 27 March at the Rural Life Museum, Normanby Hall Country Park. A separate travelling exhibition will tour until May 2027.

Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership and Black Ark Media, with funding from Great Western Railway, have launched an **Oxfordshire Black History Map** highlighting 15 historic and cultural sites across eight railway stations to encourage



visitors to discover underrepresented local Black histories, promote cultural understanding and sustainable rail travel – available to view and download on the OxCRP website, www.oxfordshirecommunityrail.org

The **Gorton Together** project is looking for volunteers for this two-year heritage initiative to celebrate the social and community history of Gorton Central, formerly the town's community centre and Johnstone's Paint Factory. The project will collect oral histories, photographs, documents and artefacts to create a publicly accessible working-class heritage archive to be stored at Manchester Central Library with displays at Gorton Central. Contact Amanda Aitken, Amanda@hmhc.co.uk

Letters to the editor

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

I have written a short story which I want to turn into a short film about a coach journey from Dumfries to London in 1812. There are several stopovers on the way to refresh the horses, and I want to add a little of the history of the area at each stopover. I have identified old coaching inns that still exist at each stop. I write to you to ask your opinion on whether you think it possible to establish on film a short historical anecdote from a variety of local history groups.

The locations were Dumfries, Gretna, Brampton, Barnard Castle, Piercebridge, Darlington, Thirsk, Stamford Bridge, Doncaster, Lincoln, Grantham, Cambridge, London.
Trevor Watling, trevorlugano@gmail.com

Editor's note: Trevor has now been directed to the BALH directory of member societies. If you might be able to help him find local stories from the 1812 era along the route, please contact him.

Historic Buildings & Places is inviting submissions for the 2026 **Stephen Croad Prize**, which encourages new research and writing on historic buildings across the United Kingdom. Essays should document verifiable discoveries, whether on well-known sites or lesser-studied buildings, and submissions on building conservation and heritage crafts are also welcome. The winner will receive £600 and may have their essay considered for publication in the *Journal of Historic Buildings & Places*. The deadline for submissions is 31 May 2026. Details: hbap.org.uk/2026-stephen-croad-prize

TV show *The Repair Shop On the Road* has sent this message: 'We're currently seeking objects, artefacts or historic items with a strong community connection, items that hold memories for a group, school, club, festival or local tradition. We'd love to explore whether your society knows of any items that could benefit from restoration and be shared with a wider audience.' Contact Ayrton McGurgan via ayrton.mcgurgan@ricochet.co.uk if you can help.



Kent Archaeological Society welcomes applications to the Allen Grove Local History Fund, which was established from a legacy made to the Society by the late Allen Grove (1910–1990), a former president of the Society and curator of Maidstone Museum. The fund's objects are to promote research, preservation and enjoyment of local history in Kent. Applications for a wide range of local history projects are welcomed and encouraged from individuals, groups or societies. Grants will *not* be made for excavation, fieldwork or works of fiction. Application forms can be obtained from the Allen Grove Fund Secretary: Allengroveadmin@kentarchaeology.org.uk. The window for submitting applications is 1 June to 30 September 2026.

Hertfordshire Association for Local History's February 2026 *Newsletter* has useful information about recording and storing 'born digital' records (i.e those originally created in digital form – anything from Word documents to database or digital photographs). Along with Hertfordshire Archives, the Society is using software from Preservica (preservica.com).

The next volume of the **Staffordshire Record Society** – 4th series, volume XXIX – will be Jean Birrell's edition and translation of the *Alrewas Manor Court Tolls, 1259–1330*. Lying some six miles north-east of Lichfield, and partly bounded by the Rivers Tame and Trent, Alrewas was a manor of some 4,000 acres, owned in this period by the Somerville family. The run of court rolls for the manor is one of the best in the country, especially regarding their early survival and the lords being a knightly family rather than a noble or an institution.

Best known for her work on medieval forests, Birrell has translated the court roll entries, making them more accessible to present-day readers, although the original spellings of personal and place names have been retained. For further details and to join the Society, visit www.s-h-c.org.uk

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the **Liverpool History Society**. It is also the anniversary of other important cultural events in the history of the city, including 60 years since the visit of Bob Dylan to the Adelphi Hotel during his controversial 1966 tour of the UK. The society will be marking these with a special anniversary day at the Adelphi Hotel on 16 June – see liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk/25th-anniversary-celebrations/ for details.

The **Local Population Studies Society**, which will be closing down this year, is holding its final conference on 4 July. It will take place in Cambridge on the theme 'The microcosmic and the macroscopic in historical population studies'. Details: www.localpopulationstudies.org.uk/conference/

North East Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology Society (NEDIAS) is also celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Details of Society activities can be found at www.facebook.com/nediaschesterfield

Horley Local History Society's April newsletter has an article on the Festival of Britain, which opened 75 years ago this month.

Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell of **Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society** has compiled a list of 31 churches in the county with angel roofs, and welcomes support with checking the list is complete: b.chesterkadwell@btinternet.com

Bicester Local History Society (www.blhs.org.uk) in Oxfordshire is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Celebrations include social events and the publication of a new book about the origins of the town's street names.

Cumbria Local History Federation's *Bulletin* has reached the milestone of its 100th issue; an article tells the *Bulletin's* story. Another piece

celebrates the 50th anniversary of **Ambleside Oral History Group**.

This year's Hoskins Day, held by the **Friends of the Centre for English Local History**, will take place on Saturday 27 June in Room 101 of the Attenborough Building at the University of Leicester. The keynote presentation will be by Professor Robert Liddiard on the landscapes of coastal defence in the Second World War. Book via www.balh.org.uk/VAG234

Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society's March newsletter has an interesting piece on the role of south London in industry. It also reports that William Blake's house at 17 South Molton Street, Mayfair could become a cultural hub and education centre if landowner the Grosvenor Estate agrees to proposals by the William Blake Fellowship.

Online news

Midlands local historian Bob Trubshaw has put together a new website, **Rutland Village by Village**, available at www.hoap.co.uk/rutland. He has also compiled a gazetteer of East Midlands slate gravestone masons and engravers: www.hoap.co.uk/gazetteer_of_burgess's_engravers.pdf

ukhistorynews.com is a project launched this year to provide fortnightly round-ups of news and discoveries from the history and heritage sector, including news from museums around the country.

The **Itiner-e** website (<https://www.itiner-e.org>) is a digital atlas of ancient roads, particularly Roman, across the whole of Europe.

TheGenealogist.co.uk has recently added more than 77,000 Worcestershire parish records and more than a million court records (Chancery, Exchequer, Star Chamber, Court of Requests and Duchy of Lancaster), as well as adding new map layers from the 1940s to the 1970s to its Map Explorer tool.

Findmypast.co.uk has added more than 40,000 new baptism records for Northamptonshire, spanning 28 parishes.

Ancestry.co.uk has released a major collection of East Yorkshire parish records thanks to a partnership with East Riding Archives.

Fornland (www.fornland.com) is a free, non-commercial, open-access map that aggregates over a million cultural heritage sites across northern Europe – including the UK and Scandinavia – into one interface.

The **National Library of Scotland** (maps.nls.uk) has added 71 more 1:250,000-scale Ordnance Survey maps across Great Britain, mostly from 1901 to 1914; plus agricultural land classification maps of England and Wales, 1960–75. The NLS is also hosting the East Lothian Field Names Recording Project (maps.nls.uk/projects/field-names) in conjunction with East Lothian Antiquarians.

VCH Hampshire news

VCH Hampshire's latest book, *Herriard, Records of Life and Work in a Hampshire Village* by Alex Craven was published by Hobnob Press in December 2025. The Jervoise family have owned Herriard since the 17th century. Their amazing archive in Hampshire Record Office contains over 250,000 items. This rural parish thus becomes something extraordinary, permitting us to see life and work there in remarkable detail. Consequently *Herriard* can give us insights into less well-documented agricultural estates. The Jervoise family were assiduous record keepers and we are fortunate that these documents were never lost to fire, mould or rats.



Sara and John Jervoise hosted the launch of *Herriard* on Sunday 1 March at Herriard House, welcoming about 60 guests. Mark Page from VCH Oxford discussed the history of the VCH in England. Alex Craven then gave a fascinating illustrated talk about writing the book. In particular he described the sources he found the most interesting and informative.

Special *Herriard* sources include the daily workbooks which recorded the tasks of up to 30 labourers each morning and afternoon. Household accounts detailed the complex relationships between lord and farm workers. For example in 1599 Michael Moore agreed to reap, bind and haul 11 acres of wheat in the following harvest in return for one year's accommodation for himself and his family in Sir Richard Paulet's house and pasture for one cow and two pigs. He agreed to pay Paulet 10s. in rent for the year. At the same time, he agreed to undertake all thatching and hurdling for a year at the rate of 7d. a day, during which time his wife was also to prepare dinner for Paulet's servants and to tend the pigs until another person was found to take over the dairy work.

The Jervoise family also offered charity to poor parishioners. At Christmas 1800 George Jervoise supplied soup of beef, potatoes, rice and other vegetables. He calculated that 33 gallons would be required each week to supply 81 adults in Herriard with two pints each and 102 children with one pint each.

The book is for sale at £14.99 at the Willis Museum (Basingstoke), Hampshire Record Office (Winchester) or directly from VCHH by sending a message to contact@vchhampshire.org

Clish-Clash, the e-newsletter of the **Scottish Local History Forum**, reports that the forum has launched a presence on the Substack digital platform, slhf.substack.com, offering weekly updates and local history articles.

London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS) will hold its Local History Conference at Museum of London Docklands on 21 November, on the theme 'An Intelligent Interest: Learning and Education in London'. www.lamas.org.uk

Hornsey Historical Society has launched a new online bookshop at <https://hornseyhistorical.square.site>

The **Twentieth Century Society** has applied to Historic England for Grade II listing of the first and last triangulation pillars from the Retriangulation of Great Britain – the pillar at Cold Ashby, Northamptonshire, built 90 years ago, and the final observation at Thorny Gale, Cumbria (used on 4 June 1962) – arguing these modest concrete 'Hotine' obelisks, now obsolete in the GPS era, are culturally significant landmarks.

Entry to the **British Records Association's** 2026 Janette Harley Prize is now open and applications should be received by the BRA Secretary not later than 31 July 2026. The winning entry will be announced in January

2027. The prize, awarded in memory of Janette Harley (1951–2015), is intended to generate interest in archives and raise awareness of research and achievements in the world of archives. A prize of £500 will be awarded to individuals or organisations for the best/most original piece of work published in a monograph, journal or magazine, or otherwise made publicly available (such as a website or blog series), which has promoted ‘the preservation, understanding, accessibility or study of archives’, the aims of the BRA. Applications are welcomed from individuals, on their own behalf or on behalf of others, and from representatives of organisations. The prize will be available to anyone, including archivists, local historians, academics, genealogists and conservators. The judges are keen to receive more applications from local historians. Full details via www.balh.org.uk/BMK235



Kirkleatham Museum in Teesside will undergo a major redevelopment after securing £272,000 from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport and the Wolfson Foundation to modernise its permanent galleries around themes such as People and Place, Industry and Innovation and Heritage and Discovery, improve conservation, accessibility and displays – notably for the Saxon Princess collection – with construction and a planned reopening in 2027.

The **Cromwell Museum** in Huntingdon – saved from closure in 2014 and run by an independent trust since 2016 – has marked ten years as a charity, seen visitor numbers more than double to around 14,000, purchased a four-storey Grade II-listed building in the market square and is fundraising to expand.

The **Quaker Tapestry Museum** in Kendal, which shut last December after visitor income failed to keep pace with rising running costs, will reopen one day a week on Wednesdays from 6 May until the end of August with free admission, run by Kendal Quaker volunteers who hope to extend the opening beyond August.

Earls Colne Heritage Museum in Essex – housed in a Grade II-listed Victorian water tower on the site of the former Atlas Works in the academically noted ‘most documented village in England’ – has been awarded £241,000 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to purchase, renovate and modernise the building, preserve and digitise its archives, and improve the visitor experience.

Worthing Museum and Art Gallery in West Sussex has reopened after a year-long closure to connect to the town’s low-carbon Worthing Heating Network and complete a major renovation.

Peterhead Prison Museum – which opened as a museum after the prison closed in 2013 – has shut ‘in its current format’ due to prolonged financial and operational pressures, with operators planning a public consultation on 27 May and hoping to reopen later this year.

The **Museum of Cambridge** has cut opening days from six to four (moving to Friday–Monday, plus Thursdays in school holidays) and reduced staffing by a third due to rising operational costs.

Good ideas to borrow...

Chadwell Heath Historical Society’s Winter newsletter reports on successfully using Reddit (a social media forum platform) to ask for help identifying photographs of unknown places. The site has a specific ‘subreddit’ for seeking help of this kind: www.reddit.com/r/wherewasthistaken (the example given was a 1960s photograph which turned out to be of a train ride on Clacton Pier).

Kidderminster Museum of Carpet saved

Having announced its permanent closure at the end of 2025 in the face of mounting financial pressures (as reported in LHN 158), this north Worcestershire Museum has recently received good news and will, from April 2026, be able to open two days a week, Saturdays and Tuesdays, between 10am and 2pm. The local community's support for the Museum was voiced extensively in the press and media (especially social media) and expressed when a record-breaking over 1200 people visited the Museum over the course of four 'one-off' Open Days in February 2026. As a result the local authority, Wyre Forest District Council, agreed to a grant of £50,000, to be paid over two years, to enable the Museum to refocus its activities and develop new audiences.



Entirely volunteer run and (until now) with no government funding, the Museum has established itself over the last 13 years as a showcase for the history and heritage of Kidderminster. Located in the Severn Valley and on the edge of the Black Country, the town's location made it an ideal place for a long-established textile industry to become – during the course of the Industrial Revolution – a centre par excellence for carpet weaving and other ancillary industries. The Museum celebrates that heritage by maintaining two full-size vintage power looms and two wooden hand looms in full working order. The looms are run by volunteers during Museum opening hours and textiles woven on them are sold in the gift shop. The Museum also has a nationally important textile design archive, which includes original art by designers such as C.F.A. Voysey and Lucienne Day, among others.

Readers of LHN are strongly encouraged to visit the Museum if they are in the region and/or to engage with it on social media, as potential future funding will be dependent on demonstrable support.

Walsall Council has bought 1-3 The Bridge, a central town centre building next to the Walsall Leather Skills Centre, and will relocate **Walsall Leather Museum** there, having closing the Littleton Street West site on 11 April.

Storm damage to the Grade II-listed Christ Church in **Maryport** has halted the long-delayed conversion into the town's maritime museum – work begun in 2023 and already pushed to late 2025 after contractor changes.

Thirty-six coins, dating from the late 1500s to the 1680s and found in 2023 by a student archaeologist hidden beneath the hearth of a ruined house linked to clan chief Alasdair Ruadh 'MacIain' MacDonald – one of those killed in the notorious 1692 Massacre of Glencoe – are to go on display at the redeveloped **Glencoe Folk Museum**, which is expected to reopen towards the end of this year.



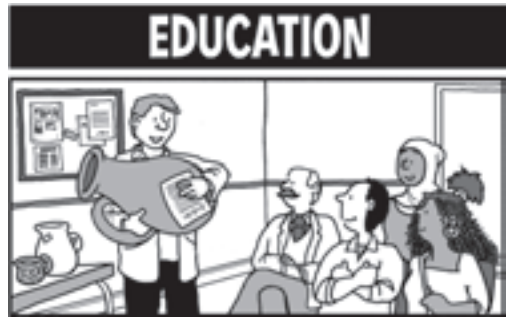
The **Archives and Records Association UK & Ireland (ARA)** has published new open-access guidelines to help the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector prepare their collections for the responsible use of artificial intelligence. *AI Preparedness Guidelines for Archivists* freely available to the sector via www.archives.org.uk/ai-preparedness-guidelines-for-archivists

The government's new vision for archives in England is now on the **The National Archives** website and available to read in full: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/our-archives-sector-role/the-governments-vision-for-archives-in-england/>

Nottinghamshire Archives has reduced public opening hours from 1 April – closing Fridays, cutting Tuesday hours and opening only one Saturday morning monthly. The change is intended to free up resources for a long-term programme to digitise its five million documents and meet a 556 per cent rise in online demand.

Dorset History Centre has been awarded an initial £603,777 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Past Lives, Future Proofed programme – as the first step toward a potential £3.8m grant – to expand its premises, preserve and digitise over 1,000 years of county archives (including court records back to 1709), improve public access, work with underrepresented communities, and safeguard digital assets during an 18month development phase.

Campaigners say the BBC's decision to restrict access to its **Written Archives Centre** – limiting the Caversham reading room to prior appointments on Wednesdays and Thursdays and ending on-request file vetting has made some research 'impossible'.



The **University of Reading** will expand excavations, research and public engagement at the 8th-century Cookham Abbey – already yielding finds such as a watermill and burials – after receiving a £249,755 lottery grant.

The **University of Northampton**, working with Northampton General Hospital's archive and the University of Toronto Mississauga, is asking families to help trace the lives and descendants of about 4,000 children treated at Northampton Infirmary between 1744 and 1801 to challenge assumptions that children rarely received hospital care before specialist institutions.

The 49th **Latin and Palaeography Summer School** will take place in the Priory Rooms, Birmingham, from 27 to 31 July. Details via www.balh.org.uk/XFN233

Centre for Midlands History and Cultures closes

The University of Birmingham has made the decision to close its research **Centre for Midlands History and Cultures**. The University issued the following statement:

Due to changes in staff, research specialisms, and resources, we have decided to close the Centre for Midlands History and Cultures. Although the Centre will no longer be in action, we remain committed to teaching Midlands History and engaging with the ongoing research in this area. In terms of teaching, we encourage our History undergraduate students to explore the history of Birmingham from their first year, through our People and Places module, and provide opportunities for them to follow such interests through the second-year Public History module and final-year dissertations.

To support and celebrate new research in Midlands history we will continue to be involved in the editing of Midlands History and will launch a new annual lecture. The 'Malcolm Dick OBE Annual Lecture in Midlands History' will provide an opportunity for those interested in research on the Midlands to come together.

The Friends organisation which supported the Centre for many years has also ceased. However, in order to explore support for a local history information exchange for the region, members have set up a new **West Midlands History Exchange** email list. To join, visit www.balh.org.uk/TZX232

Book reviews

Lynda Pidgeon, Heather Falvey & Andrew Chapman

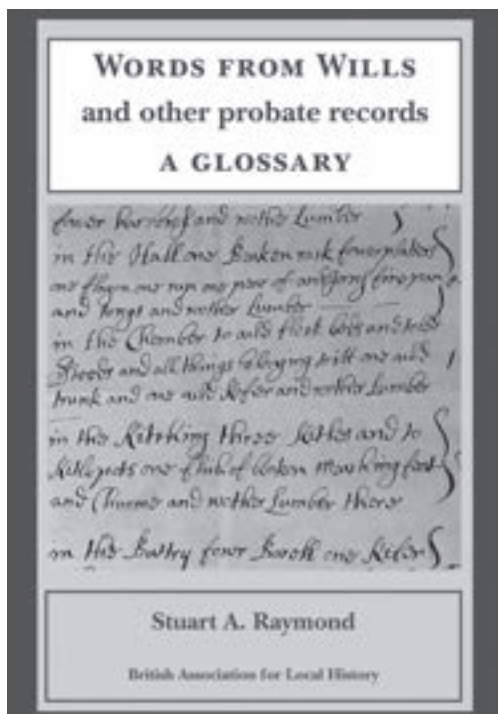
Stuart A. Raymond, *Words from Wills and Other Probate Records: A Glossary* (British Association of Local History, 2nd edition, 2025, 130pp, ISBN 9780948140075) £8 BALH members; £10 non-members (both plus p&p)

How to review a glossary? It is not something usually read cover to cover. The answer was simply to use it and see. I am probably not alone in having a variety of glossaries on my shelf. This book enabled me to remove one and think that a couple of others are probably not needed either. This has now become my first 'go to' glossary before any of the others and has not so far let me down.

The first test was a word I had been struggling to transcribe in an early 16th-century will: along with plate, jewels and money, the testator was bequeathing 'specialties', not something I had come across before, but I am more familiar with 15th-century wills. Had I got the transcription wrong? Was this common in the 16th-century? Or was it a Devonian expression? (The testator lived in a small village outside Exeter.) There it was in the glossary: 'Specialty, a sealed bond or obligation, often entered into as security for a loan or debt'. Not a Devon word, just a new one to me, and it made sense as the testator seems to have been a moneylender. The next query was a 'Fryse' coat; frieze seemed to be likely, and the description matched: 'thick coarse woollen cloth... used for outer garments'. It also helped to try and think with a Devon accent in mind, but this book can help with that too, because it gives regional expressions or words, such as 'Year Tub', a Tub with 'ears', i.e. handles, or 'Widge Beast', a horse, both from Devon.

Then there are the words you think you know, but can have another meaning. So 'wort' and 'wort pan': I would have thought of that all-year-round vegetable, which always found its way into pottage, the wort or cole-wort (curly kale). The definition here, though, is 'the infusion of malt which becomes beer...' and 'a pan used for drawing off the wort...', so context is useful for 'wort'.

I did end up flicking through the whole book when I realised there were regional words and



wondering what curiosities I might find. 'Wrathe – Rave (Yks)', not a dance with loud music but either 'Rails... attached to the side of a cart...' or 'The bar on a loom, fitted with teeth...'; or 'Frog: An oven fork or poker...' from Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. There are many more strange and unusual words to discover.

The glossary has been compiled from a number of probate glossaries – which is why you may be able to clear your shelf of a couple of volumes. There is also a useful bibliography listing books of wills and inventories for almost every English county. This glossary certainly deserves its place on the bookshelf; it is practical and fun to dip into. As Raymond points out, do check context, or you might find your testator at the wrong type of rave.

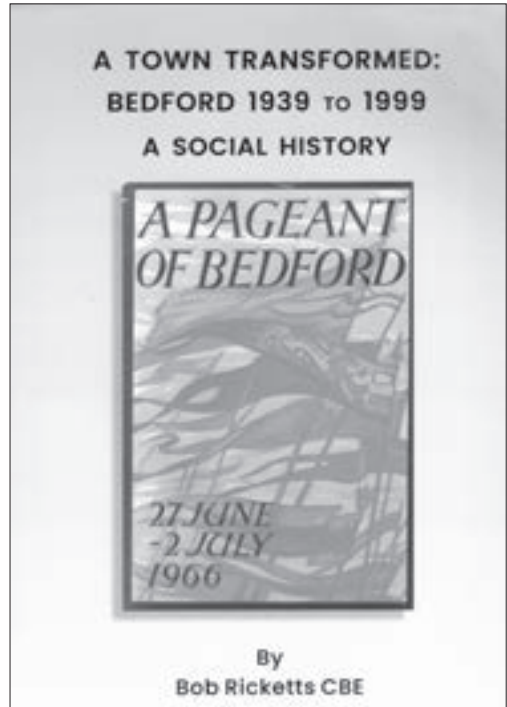
Lynda Pidgeon is a volunteer with *The Friends of Lydiard Park* (Swindon) and is currently managing a small group of volunteers on the '100 Wills Project', see www.friendsoflydiardpark.org.uk and www.thelydiardarchives.org.uk

Bob Ricketts, *A Town Transformed: Bedford 1939 to 1999, A Social History* (Bedford Architectural, Archaeological & Local History Society, 2026) £10 + £2 p&p, enquiries via baalhs.co.uk

In his introduction, Bob Ricketts argues that Bedford 'stands out from many towns by the scale of its transformation after the Second World War'. His 18 detailed chapters describe the changes that took place and 82 illustrations provide visual evidence. A major cause of that transformation was population growth. Census figures show that the population of Bedford and Kempston (urban) was 45,460 in 1921, 61,720 in 1951 and 97,260 in 2001, thus more than doubling in 80 years. Most of the increased population came from elsewhere in Britain but significant numbers came from overseas. Many of Bedford's major industries faced acute post-war labour shortages and the incomers from abroad helped to keep those industries going, such as the Stewartby brickworks. Many stayed in Bedford and thriving communities developed. Ricketts traces community relations through newspapers and council meeting reports. As the various ethnic groups did not always feel welcome, they created their own spaces. Ricketts draws on reminiscences to outline where they were and the facilities that they provided, and gives some short biographies.

In the late 1940s Max Lock, a progressive planning consultant, was contracted by Bedford Borough Council to plan the town's physical development. His influential report – *Bedford By the River* (1952) – outlined what was needed: new housing estates, reduced congestion in principal streets, high-rise flats and development of the shopping area. Most of his key proposals were implemented eventually. Indeed Chapter 8 describes how Bedford dealt with its acute housing shortage with new planned neighbourhoods both outside and inside the town.

Bedford's economy changed rapidly. Its post-war industries included engineering and metalwork, food (e.g. Meltis new berry fruits) and drink, brickmaking, and defence (e.g. RAE Bedford – aeronautics research). Between 1960 and 2000 seven major employers closed

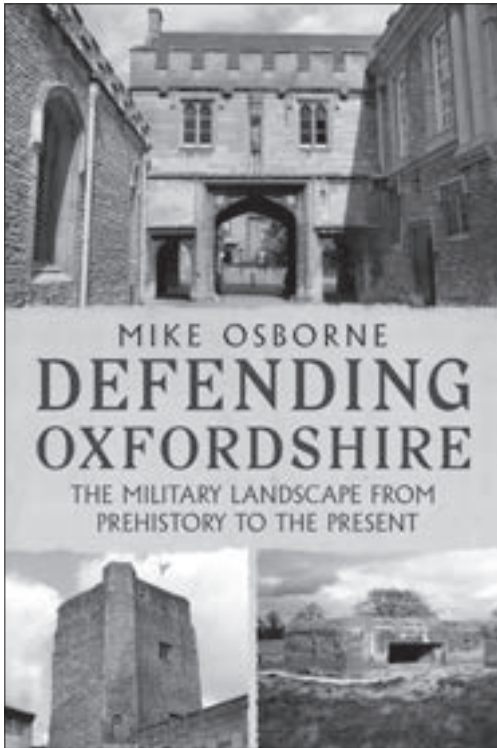


but there were some newcomers. Photographs show several huge works now gone. In 1965 a survey was undertaken of 5,043 women who shopped in Bedford, thus providing a unique snapshot of consumer behaviour before the growth of supermarkets, out-of town retail parks and competition from Milton Keynes. Shopping precincts began to be built in the 1960s, some in the town centre, others on the outskirts. Numerous High Street shops, now gone, are discussed and pictured.

Other chapters cover education, transport, local media, politics and protest, culture and 'Events, celebrations, visits & wild weather'. As well as sport clubs, 'Sport & leisure' records the restoration, in Spring 1978, of navigation of the River Ouse from King's Lynn to Bedford, but for pleasure rather than commercial boats. 'Entertainment' includes bingo, coffee/milk bars and Bedford's lively music scene. 'Faith in Bedford' describes its numerous places of worship of Christian and Eastern faiths.

Each chapter's sections have endnotes. A bibliography and indexes have been

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



provided. *Bedford 1939 to 1999* is densely packed with information, some drawn from oral histories. This methodology should be replicated elsewhere before similar memories are lost. *Heather Falvey*

Mike Osborne, *Defending Oxfordshire: The military landscape from prehistory to the present* (Fonthill Media 2025, 272pp, ISBN 9781781559147) £16.99

The subject of 'defence' perhaps conjures up images of Napoleonic forts or 20th-century emplacements in terms of infrastructure, or the history of local militias and regiments in terms of people. Certainly these subjects are all covered in this book (while bearing in mind its landlocked nature, so Napoleonic forts are not apparent here) – but *Defending Oxfordshire* refreshingly takes a much longer view, as much about invasion from within Britain as without. This means that it begins with prehistory – Bronze and Iron Age defences are plentiful, particularly across the Cotswolds and the Vale of the White Horse (though the latter was of course in Berkshire until the 1970s) – and continues through fortified Roman towns such as Alchester and

Saxon burhs, connecting with the deeper history of settlement, movement and control in the Thames Valley.

Chapter 2, 'Oxfordshire in the Middle Ages, 1050–1500' takes us into the age of Norman castles, the Anarchy (including sieges at Oxford and Wallingford) and baronial struggles, as well as encompassing moated and fortified manor houses, Oxford's city walls and defensive elements of ecclesiastical buildings too. The third chapter is anchored by the Civil War, given Oxford's importance as Charles I's base – but its 1500–1840 span also necessarily takes in local militias and the development of the regular army. Chapter 4, covering 'Victorian and Edwardian Oxfordshire, 1840–1914' then continues the emphasis on military units such as the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars Yeomanry and the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, as well as their infrastructure such as drill halls and barracks.

The two world wars have their own chapters as one would expect, with another covering the interwar years. With much of the county offering flat areas, the proliferation of airfields features; other subtopics include the role of Oxford University in WWI, military hospitals and the Home Guard. The role of the Thames as an anti-invasion line and the county's air bases as launch points for RAF and USAAF bombing operations are included.

A final chapter, 'The Cold War and Beyond, 1945–2020' takes the story into territory often neglected in county histories. For example, Osborne highlights Harwell and Culham and their contribution to Britain's nuclear development, and the county's many ROC bunkers.

The 13 appendices are of particular use for local historians: a series of lists of various defensive structure or settings, from prehistoric forts through medieval castles and strong houses, licences to crenellate, airfields, drill halls, barracks, locations of volunteer units and more. The book concludes with a bibliography and a reasonable if not extensive index.

In less than 300 pages, Osborne has provided a highly creditable survey of the long history of Oxfordshire's defensive structures and institutions – aided by many well-reproduced black and white illustrations of places featured in the text. *Andrew Chapman*

An report to the magistrates that still stands... and delivers

Alan Crosby

Today the main road from Blackburn to Bolton is a broad highway that sweeps across the moors in long straights and curves, with only one significant intermediate settlement – Belmont, whose very un-Lancastrian name hints at its own story. It was a planned mill village, developed from 1804 onwards in the middle of nowhere, because here a fast-flowing stream provided good potential for water power. The beautifully engineered road itself originated as a completely new turnpike, constructed on a new alignment following an Act of 1797. The route chosen sliced across wide open spaces, unencumbered by built-up areas or by the narrowness, twists and turns and steep gradients of the older roads between the two towns.

Much of the older road survives as a green lane or a narrow causeway across moorland, or as a track deep in the wooded valleys to the north, and somewhere along its course the incident I'm about to describe took place, almost 400 years ago. On 27 January 1634 a solitary traveller was riding south on that old road, which was then the main highway from Blackburn down to Bolton and thence to Manchester. He was William Tempest, the personal servant of John Bridgeman, bishop of Chester. Bridgeman was also the vicar of Wigan and the lord of the manor of Great Bolton and of the adjacent manor of Great Lever, where he had a house. He was thus a powerful figure wielding very considerable local power and authority. On that January day, Tempest was making for Turton, about three miles north of Bolton, on some sort of private business for the bishop. The quarter sessions petition from which the story is drawn says that he was travelling 'upon special occasion', but it does not elaborate... most mysterious.

About halfway from Blackburn, Tempest saw ahead of him on the high road three armed men, two with swords and cudgels, and the third carrying a bastinado (a heavy stick or baton, a cosh). How he was able

to see such detail is not made clear, but they were probably about 200 yards ahead. He held back and did not approach them, waiting until they were two fields' distance away, but at that point they turned and saw him. One of the men stood on top of a stone wall, apparently to see if Tempest was alone, and on that being confirmed they ran to meet him, weapons made ready. One tried to grab hold of his horse's bridle, but William was too quick and rode away, going to the nearby village of Entwistle to seek help. The men then continued towards Bolton, so when he left Entwistle he caught up with them again. Two were standing by the roadside, and when they saw him they pulled their swords. Fortunately for Tempest, some other people came along the way and the would-be robbers were scared off, one pretending to be asking the way to Bolton. William rode on, arrived

Just when things get a little exciting we always have to cut to a commercial break!



safely and later reported the incident to the magistrates.

Highway robbery was of course a widespread problem in the 17th and 18th centuries, but rarely do we have such a detailed and vivid personal account as this, especially from this comparatively early date. In my mind's eye I can picture the scene – the ne'er-do-well ruffians in the distance, awaiting their opportunity; the frightening threat as they rush towards him, brandishing swords; William's lucky escape; the second meeting by the roadside, again with drawn swords; the passers-by who saved the day. It's a like a short

episode in a film or an exciting happening in a period drama, in which (naturally) William Tempest is the hero.

But in the period drama we would know what William's business was and why he was going to Turton. What had the bishop commissioned him to do, or carry, or discuss, or negotiate, and with whom? And did the highwaymen in fact know that William would be using that road at that time? Was it all a conspiracy by the bishop's enemies (he certainly had a few of those). As so often, history does not tell us. Maybe the only answer is to write the period drama myself?

BALH Outreach Team news

Jude Rhodes

The BALH Outreach Team has now moved to a slightly different format with members of the team taking on roles within a subgroup. This change has mainly taken place for efficiency of the various tasks the team undertakes; these are very diverse, including identifying speakers, organisation of events, identifying educational activities and projects, and liaising with external bodies plus marketing opportunities.

There are three subgroups: Events, Education, Engagement. These are in the early stages of development and we look forward to sharing our work with you. The Outreach Team have worked tirelessly bridging the gap while we have had a vacancy for the new post of projects manager; this was advertised on the BALH website with a closing date of 5 May.

The BALH 'Local History around the Yorkshire Dales' conference on 2 May has proved to be very popular and the tickets sold out quickly; this suggests that a similar event would prove popular in the future. The BALH 'Rebellion and Protest Across Six Centuries' conference, in Sherborne, is open for booking tickets on the website. Also, a history day 'Maritime History Meets Local History' is open for bookings at www.swmaritime.org.uk/history-day-at-watchet-3rd-october-2026

Later in the year, in autumn, BALH will again be supporting the Society of

Genealogists' ten-day All About That Place event – do you have a ten-minute talk you would like to deliver to a large and varied online audience? Check out the website for further details and themes at <https://sog.org.uk/all-about-that-place-call-for-speakers/>.

We are always keen to hear about speakers for the BALH webinars and podcasts; please do get in touch with any suggestions at outreach@balh.org.uk. Audiences enjoy a wide variety of topics from niche to more general interest and from occupations to places and all time periods.

Would you be interested in having a BALH members' theme-based project to work on individually or collaboratively? This could run over a year to allow as much or as little participation as suits each member all based on a theme. If you want a distraction from your everyday work or if you want to delve into a different piece of research then contact outreach@balh.org.uk to show your interest; please mark the email 'Jude Projects'.

The Outreach Team enjoys having members from all over the UK. We currently have a shortage of members for Scotland, Northern Ireland, East Midlands, East Anglia and the North-East of England: would you like to have a chat about joining the Outreach Team? Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to find out more.

Until the next time, enjoy the webinars and delving into your research.

Notes News Issues

The BALH team

BALH has a new Head Office address

A postal redirection will be in place for six months to ensure continuity during the transition. However, we kindly ask members to update their records and use the new address for all future correspondence:

BALH Head Office, Fountain Precinct, Balm Green, Sheffield S1 2JA

admin@balh.org.uk

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. lhn@balh.org.uk), our blog and/or a recorded ten-minute talk (contact digital manager@balh.org.uk).

BALH publications: your group can benefit

We offer copies of BALH publications at a generous discount for resale by member societies, if ordered in multiples of five or more. We are keen that these should also be available for sale in archive offices and

museums. Please contact John Chandler, chair of the Publications Committee, for further information: jh.chandler@hotmail.com.

Special offer on BBIH

Last year BALH negotiated a discounted subscription rate to the *Bibliography of British and Irish History* (BBIH) for our members – this special offer has now returned for 2026, until the end of December, for only £50. BBIH is an indispensable aid to historical research. It will help you to quickly discover over 650,000 books, journal articles and chapters in edited collections published about British and Irish domestic and global histories from Roman Britain to the 21st century. You can search BBIH by place (village, town or county), by period and by theme. For further details of the BBIH/BALH discount, see www.balh.org.uk/bbih2026

Next copy deadline

The copy deadline for the August issue of *Local History News* (No. 160) is 6 July. Please send news, letters, articles and proposals to editor.lhn@balh.org.uk. Event announcements should be for large events only taking place from September onwards (for earlier ones, send details to the BALH website via digital manager@balh.org.uk).

A reminder: *Local History News* welcomes your newsletters, both as sources for news items here and for consideration in the annual BALH Newsletter Award: please send digitally if possible, to editor.lhn@balh.org.uk and to reviews.editor@balh.org.uk, otherwise by post to BALH Head Office, Fountain Precinct, Balm Green, Sheffield S1 2JA.

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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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Above: members of Romsey Local History Society in the basement of Romsey Town Hall (their headquarters) discussing a proposed publication – see page 14. Below: members of Southampton Tourist Guides Association marking the group's golden jubilee – see page 20.

