

## Paper summaries

### Peter Fleming: 'Politics, Society and Culture in William Worcestre's Bristol'

Worcestre's Bristol was among fifteenth-century England's most important towns. We know a good deal about its history in this period, partly through Worcestre's own notes, but also through immensely rare and valuable sources like the *Mayor of Bristol's Kalendar*, begun by Robert Ricart, the town clerk, just a year or so before Worcestre's famous visit, as well as the extant records of local government (the *Little* and *Great Red Book*, for example), fine collections of local title deeds, and wills. Using such materials, Professor Fleming discusses Bristol's internal politics and its national role during the Wars of the Roses, both of which were at times violent and deeply troubled, and its social structure, including the relationship between the craft guilds and religious fraternities and the governing body of the mayor and common council, the role of women, and the differences between the tiny number of rich and the mass of the poor. While Bristol was of great importance politically, it was also a cultural hub, with well-provided parish churches, the important St Augustine's Abbey (now the Cathedral) nearby, and a particularly strong tradition of vernacular literature. All will be explored in this illustrated talk.

### Frances Neale: 'In the *steppys* of William Worcestre: the man and his methods'

Archaeologists and local historians have mined William Worcestre's notebooks for his eyewitness descriptions, analysed them and puzzled over them – but how did he actually go about making this remarkable record? This paper will examine his methods, from counting and measuring to his ability to strike up conversations with those he met. Examples will mostly be from Bristol, but some from further afield.

### Nicholas Orme: 'William Worcester and the Discovery of England'

William Worcester was born in Bristol six hundred years ago in 1415. During a career of many years as secretary to Sir John Fastolf, he developed wide topographical and historical interests which he followed up after his retirement, travelling across southern England in 1478-80 and compiling notes that form one of the earliest surviving antiquarian collections. They cover a vast range of topics: geography, sea-routes, roads, bridges, buildings (many of which he measured), history, manuscripts,

saints, and people. The paper will examine William's life, place him in historical context, and consider why he gathered so much information.

### Roger Leech: 'Town Houses in William Worcestre's Bristol'

This paper will explore the streetscape of William Worcestre's Bristol – the thoughts that may have come to mind as William perambulated the streets that he so carefully measured for posterity, but which were so commonplace in contemporary thinking that they were scarcely worth recording. The forms of houses in late 15<sup>th</sup> century Bristol, discussed in English Heritage's recently published study of medieval and early modern Bristol houses, will be shown to have been part of the fabric of later medieval urban life in England more generally.

### Jan Broadway: 'The Afterlife of William Worcestre'

Although William Worcestre (Botoner) was included in John Bale's index of British writers and his manuscripts were used by antiquaries such as Thomas Allen and Sir Henry Spelman, he attracted comparatively little attention in the three centuries after his death. This paper will explore the reasons for this neglect and contrast it with the far greater interest taken in Worcestre's Midlands contemporary John Rous. The paper will also consider the circumstances surrounding James Dallaway's eventual publication of the itinerary of Bristol in the nineteenth century.



Please detach and send payment (by cheque, payable to Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, or by bank transfer to Barclays Bank Bristol, sort code 20 13 34, account 30204250, B&GAS) to

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## Timetable:

10.00 Tea/Coffee

10.25 – 10.30 Introduction

10.30 Professor Peter Fleming (University of the West of England): *'Politics, Society and Culture in William Worcestre's Bristol'*

11.15 Frances Neale (former archivist, Wells Cathedral): *'In the steppys of William Worcestre: the man and his methods'*

12.00 – 12.15 Break

12.15 Professor Nicholas Orme (University of Exeter): *'William Worcester and the Discovery of England'*

1.00 Questions

1.15 Lunch

2.15 Professor Roger Leech (University of Southampton): *'Town Houses in William Worcester's Bristol'*

3.00 Dr Jan Broadway (General Secretary B&GAS): *'The Afterlife of William Worcester'*

3.45 Questions and discussion

4.15 Summary

4.45 Close

Cost **£20** (£15 for members of B&GAS and students)

As numbers are limited to 80, early booking is recommended. Please use the booking form overleaf. Directions to the venue and information about public transport and parking will be sent in advance of the conference to those who have booked.

The Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

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## William Worcestre 1415-2015: the Legacy of an Early English Topographer



M Shed, Princes Wharf,  
Bristol BS1 4RN

Saturday 31 October 2015

10.00am – 5.00pm

This conference will celebrate the major contribution that William Worcester made to early topography, and particularly to the study of late medieval Bristol. His *Itineraries*, ed. J.H. Harvey and excluding Bristol, appeared in 1969 and his *Topography of Bristol*, ed. F. Neale, was published by Bristol Record Society in 2000. A number of papers from leading speakers in the field will look at the society, culture and landscape that existed in Bristol in Worcester's time and at his contribution to English topography.

**The conference will be held at M Shed in the heart of Bristol's historic harbour and there will be a chance to look at the museum displays during conference breaks.**