

The BGAS Newsletter

Archaeology and history in Bristol and Gloucestershire

Established 21 April 1876

www.bgas.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 202014



BGAS members at Chedworth Roman Villa (story on page 7).
Image: Stephen Clews.

Also inside:

Lecture programme for Bristol and Gloucester
Forest of Dean schools history competition
Introducing our President and Membership Manager
Plus important notices, book reviews and more

Introduction by the editor

Welcome to the autumn edition of your newsletter, which this time includes some important news bearing on the continued viability of the Society in its present form, not least the impending retirement of Dr Graham Barton as General Secretary (see opposite). This will leave a serious gap to be filled, and on page 4 the Honorary Treasurer outlines more general challenges in relation to the management structure of the Society.

The need for these official notices means that some pages in this issue are rather text-heavy, but there are also some lighter items, for example a report of a recent BGAS visit to Chedworth Roman Villa and, on the centre pages, a very nice story about a schools history competition for primary school students, organised by the Forest of Dean Local History Society using money provided by BGAS. We also have pages introducing this year's President and our new Membership Manager, plus the usual pages of news and reviews. At the end of the newsletter, you will find the details of the forthcoming season of talks in Bristol and Gloucester. This has also been summarised on a handy card enclosed with the hard copy of this newsletter.



Speaking of which, we continue to mail physical copies of the newsletter to the great majority of members, while the list of those who have elected to receive only a PDF copy via email has shrunk somewhat over the last couple of years, meaning that the saving to the Society in postage costs has also declined. Do let me know if you are happy to help save costs by switching to email copies and I will add your name to my list.

Alan Clarke

**Note – copy date for the next newsletter is
31st January 2025**

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

(Established 21 April 1876, Registered Charity No. 202014. Website: www.bgas.org.uk)

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Passing on the torch

An important message from the Honorary General Secretary

Having served as the Society's Hon. General Secretary since 2018, I have reached a point in my life when I need to slow down, reduce my workload and find time to take more exercise. Regrettably, none of these goals are likely to be achieved if I continue as the BGAS Honorary General Secretary, and I therefore provided members who attended the Society's AGM in April with advance notice that I would not be standing for re-election as a Trustee when my current term of office expires next April. I still intend to take an active interest in the Society by continuing my involvement with the BGAS library and supporting the work of our various awards panels, so I will not be disappearing entirely.

My time as Honorary General Secretary has been a challenging but rewarding experience. It has coincided with a series of critical changes to the Society's governance arrangements and membership structures, both of which have been essential to enable BGAS to continue to operate effectively in a rapidly changing world. Having been closely involved with the successful introduction of these developments, it is now time for me to pass on the torch to my successor in the hope that he or she will carry these initiatives forward and enable BGAS to address the future challenges a society such as ours will inevitably face.

The Hon. Treasurer indicates overleaf the vacant roles which urgently need to be filled and the opportunities these offer to members who can contribute to the Society's activities. Some of these opportunities relate to vacant Trustee positions, but not all the tasks for which we are seeking volunteers call for this level of commitment. I would therefore urge anyone interested to contact the Hon. Treasurer to discuss how you might be able to assist. Please don't assume that we will be inundated with offers and hold back in the expectation that others will come forward who may be better suited to the vacant roles.

We appreciate that not everyone will be able to contribute their time or expertise to assist the Society, but it is also important to recognise that BGAS is likely to face serious difficulties if our latest call for assistance draws a blank. Should nobody come forward to help, it would simply be unrealistic to assume that a diminishing group of active members can continue to offer the full range of services BGAS has traditionally provided. The results of previous attempts to fill vacant posts by appeals to members have been generally disappointing and it would be remiss of me to hide the possibility that Trustees may need to take some difficult decisions if our latest appeal is unsuccessful. The Society's achievements as a member-led organisation, drawing on volunteers to manage our daily operations and deliver the services we provide has served BGAS well for 150 years, but the sustainability of this model is reliant on an adequate pool of members being available to resource its operation.

Graham Barton



Right: Graham speaking at the BGAS Annual General Meeting in April on the routes taken by Samian ware in the Roman period.

Vacancies – help needed

In order to function properly, the Society needs people to perform a number of roles.

Under the Society's Rules, some of those roles must be performed by Trustees; examples include the Honorary General Secretary and the Treasurer.

Trustees have adopted role descriptions for some other trustees, e.g. for managing data and the Society's websites, liaising with other organisations, and managing the Society's publications and membership records. At present, all those roles are filled.

Other trusteeships with specified roles are vacant, either because no-one was elected to them at the last annual general meeting, or because the trustee then elected has since stood down. They include managing the library, organising meetings and events, and recruiting and training trustees.

Those roles are being covered by existing Trustees doubling up. Thus the Honorary General Secretary also acts as library manager and chairs the library committee; the Chair of Trustees and the Treasurer deal with recruitment and training; while meetings and events have been covered by informal co-operation between whoever has organised the meeting, the Treasurer, and members who are not Trustees. At the last annual general meeting a Trustee was elected to manage co-ordination between the Bristol and Gloucester sections, but he resigned during the year. As a result, we have vacancies at present for Trustees to manage:

- Trustee recruitment and training

- co-ordination of the Bristol and Gloucester sections, and
- other meetings and events.

As both Dr Barton, the Honorary General Secretary, and Dr Blake, who is responsible for publications, will stand down at the 2025 annual general meeting, vacancies in those roles too will occur then; in the case of the Honorary General Secretary the vacancy could arise earlier if personal circumstances oblige him to stand down.

Apart from Trustee roles, that of Stockholder is vacant now that Mr Webb has moved away from the Society's area. So we need someone to manage the storage of back numbers of the Society's publications, which are held mostly in the Gloucester area, and to fulfil orders for purchases or replacements.

In the longer term, whether the Society will require to fill all the vacant posts will depend on the outcome of the review of the Society's governance promised for 2025. In the meantime it would be helpful to have the vacant roles filled, if only temporarily. Whatever the outcome of the governance review, the trusteeships of Honorary General Secretary and Publications Manager must be filled for the foreseeable future.

If you would like to volunteer for any of these roles, or if you can suggest someone else who might be interested, could you please contact the Treasurer in the first instance:

wm.evans@btopenworld.com

Tel: 0117 968 4979

The Treasurer also writes: In 2017, Barclays Bank changed the sort code for the Society's main account. The Society asked members who pay their subscriptions by bank standing order to amend their orders accordingly. Barclays have redirected payments to the old sort code, but have now given notice that they will not do so after 31 October 2024. If you pay your BGAS subscription by bank standing order, and if your order still sends payments to 20-23-42, could you please amend your order so that your subscription due 1 January 2025 is paid to 20-13-37.

The account name and the account number remain unchanged.

Introducing this year's President

When offered the presidency of our Society, I was both proud and humbled; proud, because we are after all only human; humbled at the thought of my many illustrious predecessors, a number of whom I have been privileged to know and work with, and in the face of the Society's distinguished past.

A former President once said that BGAS is above all a fellowship of like-minded people. I agree. Like many others, I have enjoyed this fellowship at evening meetings, on field trips and at residential meetings (the return of which latter is, by the way, much to be wished). Contacts have been made which I have found most useful in my research and a number of these have grown into friendships.

Next to this camaraderie, the glory of the Society is in its publications: the erudition of the *Transactions*, the newsletter which both informs and entertains, the specialist Gloucestershire Record Series and numerous fine monographs and occasional volumes. Happily, there is no sign of any falling off.

As we move towards our 150th anniversary in 2026, therefore, there is much to celebrate but we must not blind ourselves to the problems which we face. Whilst there is no lack of enthusiasm among us – I might instance the volunteer deliverers who have effected great savings in our postage costs – there does seem to be a reluctance to take on trusteeships and other senior posts. I am sure this does not show lack of necessary ability. Timidity, perhaps? At all events, it is sad because at the end of the day the members are, in fact if not in law, the trustees of the Society – trustees of the past and for the future. It would therefore be most refreshing if future appeals in this newsletter could at the very least give rise to enquiries as to what is involved in the post concerned.

If BGAS has an elephant in the room, it surely has "falling membership" inscribed on its trunk. When I joined in 2005, membership



was in excess of a thousand; it is now around 500 and whilst the trustees' (wise) decision to end institutional membership accounts for some of this, it by no means tells the whole story. The decline may be due to social changes over which we have no control and I have no magic bullet. What I can offer is a personal anecdote and a suggestion. My interest in archaeology is limited and it was not until I agreed to help a friend by delivering some copies of the *Transactions* in my neighbourhood that I realised, glancing at the contents page, that the Society also 'did' history. I thereupon became a member.

Many of our members are historians and many publications and meetings are of historical, rather than archaeological, interest. Our name, however, only reflects a half of what we do. Try googling local history societies in Bristol or Gloucestershire and you will find BGAS comes a long way down the list. Trustees ought to consider whether a change of name to reflect these historical aspects of our work might be to the Society's considerable advantage.

To make an end, may I wish everyone the very best of health and happiness and continued enjoyable and rewarding membership of BGAS.

John Stevens

BGAS Membership Manager



My name is Jenni Butterworth and I was elected membership manager for the Society in April 2024. In background, I'm an archaeologist (I studied at Bristol), and my business offers a variety of heritage consultancy services, including project coordination, quality assurance and conservation. Clients include Historic England, for whom I provide project assurance services for their grant-funding programme, and the European Archaeological Council, a network of organisations with statutory responsibility for heritage management in their respective countries. I'm also a committee member of the Society for Museum Archaeology. I live in east Bristol and am

passionate about the area's very interesting – and I think under-researched – history. Meeting other Society members with similar interests has been very enjoyable for me.

As members may know, the Society's trustees are currently working on a new system to manage its membership data. The existing system is a number of years old, and the refresh has two aims. Firstly, we wish to ensure that your information is being stored as efficiently and securely as possible. Secondly, the new system will support the Society to improve communication with its members, and offer you enhanced services in future. Through integration with the website and the development of a members area, the new system will provide better access to digital products, such as recent *Transactions*, and also the ability for members to manage their own records (but only if they wish to!). The system should be operational for the new membership year in 2025. More details will be provided soon, but please be reassured that the changeover will not require members to do anything different when they renew their membership for 2025. If you have any questions about your membership, you can reach me via the Honorary General Secretary or Membership Secretary.

Kirin of the Dobunni

Graham Barton writes: Readers may be interested to know that BGAS member Anne Buffoni has recently published her first historical novel, *Kirin of the Dobunni*. Anne's fictional tale is set in the early years of the first century and takes place against the background of a Gloucestershire landscape which will be familiar to many readers. This gripping story recounts the adventure of Kirin, a young boy, who sets out on a journey shaped by the secrets and beliefs of his people in the last days of Iron Age Britain.

Published by Crumps Barn Studio, £9.99.
ISBN 978-1-915067-35-7



Chedworth Roman Villa Centenary

As part of the celebrations to mark the centenary of the purchase of Chedworth Villa by the National Trust, a group of BGAS members were invited to visit the villa on 5 July 2024 to commemorate the important role our predecessors played in the acquisition of this important site. The group was led by our past President, David Smith, who was accompanied by twenty-four other BGAS members.

Following the end of the First World War, the third Earl of Eldon decided to dispose of the Stowell Park estate, on which Chedworth Roman villa was situated, and the property was put up for sale in 1923. A campaign to enable the National Trust to raise the funds



required to purchase the villa was led by distinguished local archaeologist and past BGAS President, Welbore St Clair Baddeley, who was well acquainted with Chedworth, having excavated at the villa itself and at the adjacent Romano-British temple site.

A nationwide appeal for public subscriptions was made through the *Times* newspaper, led by St Clair Baddeley, while BGAS spear-headed much of the local fund-raising efforts, soliciting contributions from its 650 members. The BGAS *Transactions* of 1925 (vol. 47, p. 448) records that £498 18s 6d was raised by members and friends, with the final sum needed to complete the purchase being pledged at the Society's summer meeting at Stow-on-the-Wold in August 1924.



BGAS and the National Trust's team at Chedworth Villa have continued our close association since this time. The Society has made frequent visits to the site over the years; aspects of the villa formed the theme for several of our Presidential addresses; and we have worked together on many other projects. We look forward to continuing this friendship for many years to come.

Graham Barton

Images courtesy of J Pimpernell.

Left: introduction to the site.

Above: the dining room floor

Below: the hypocaust (underfloor heating)



Forest of Dean schools

In his will, the late Dr John Juřica (1947-2020), who edited our Society's Transactions between 1995 and 2010, left a bequest of £1,000 to the Society. Rather than simply add his bequest to our General Fund, and given John's research interest in west Gloucestershire and the Forest of Dean, the Society's trustees offered this amount to the Forest of Dean Local History Society if they could suggest a suitable project - which they were able to do. That project has now completed its second year, and the FODLHS's Vice Chair, Sue Middleton, now reports on its progress.

Two Forest of Dean Local History Society (FODLHS) Committee members, Keith Walker (Newsletter Editor) and myself (Vice Chair) devised a Schools History Competition, inviting Primary School pupils in Key Stage 2 (Age 7-11) to submit entries focusing on an element of their local history in the Forest of Dean. The competition will be funded over five years, so that each year there will be £200 worth of prizes. This breaks down into four prizes of £25 for the pupil with the winning entry in each of four categories and then £100 for the school that the overall winner attends.

The Forest of Dean Local History Society is keen to help children learn about the rich his-

tory of our Forest. All sorts of creative skills were demonstrated by Key Stage 2 pupils who chose to take part in the competition. They could decide whether to create a 3D model, a PowerPoint presentation, a video or a piece of writing. The subject of their work varied as they created something that had some personal meaning for them, so it was fascinating to see a wide range of sites, stories and experiences represented across the entries.

The winning entry for the 3D model category was the 'New Fancy Colliery 1827' created by Lily of Yorkley School, who wins £25 for herself. The judges were impressed by the amount of detail provided in the model, the number of different structures and its aged appearance.

There were a lot of entries in this category and many of them must have taken hours and hours of dedicated construction time, so the judges also awarded 'Highly Commended' status to the Freemining Tunnel created by Willow of Parkend School and the Darkhill Ironworks model created by Finn of St White's.

In the PowerPoint category, the winner was Lyra of Parkend School, who had created a very detailed study of 'Mining, the miners and Pillowell Rec' and will receive £25.



Sue Middleton with Lily of Yorkley School and her winning entry in the 3D section, and (right) the first slide of Lyra's winning entry in the PowerPoint section.



history competition



This Darkhill Ironworks model by Finn of St White's was highly commended in the 3D category.

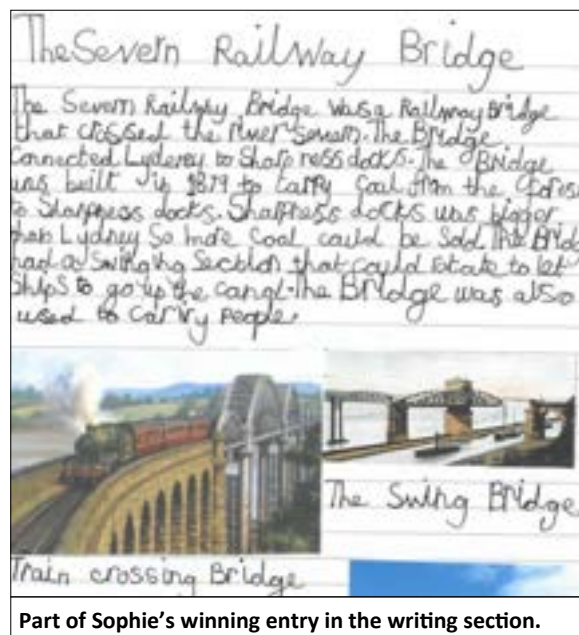
Our Freemining heritage also inspired a 'Highly Commended' entry in the Powerpoint category from Liam of Coalway Junior for his presentation about Hopewell Colliery.

The video category illustrated the skills of our film directors of the future and the winning entry was by Tilly of Parkend School, for her excellent video about the Dean Forest Railway, so she wins £25. The judges commented that the video was so good, Tilly might like to offer it to The Dean Forest Railway or to 'Visit Dean Wye' (the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Limited).

Parkend School also produced the winner in the Writing category, who was Sophie, receiving £25 for her piece about 'The Severn Railway Bridge'.

There were two entries that the FODLHS judges felt were outstanding in the amount of detailed research they showed, and they

could not choose between them, so Lyra and Tilly are joint winners of the overall competition this year. They are both from Parkend, so they have won £100 for their school.



Part of Sophie's winning entry in the writing section.

The judges were really pleased with all the entries as they show how much the children have learned about their local history and their ability to employ their creative skills to bring that to life. The children received oak leaf badges to recognise their hard work in creating their entries and these were colour coded, so Green was for 'Highly Commended', Yellow was for winning a category and Orange was for the Overall Winners.

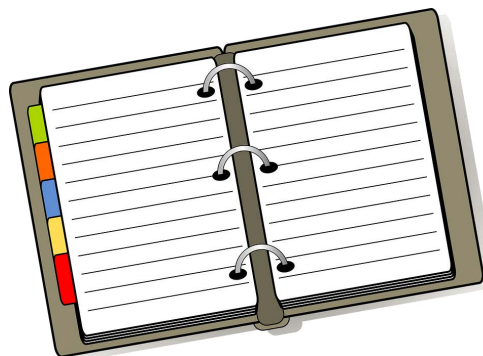


Sue with the Parkend School winners and teachers

For your diary

The Gloucester History Festival returns to Blackfriars Priory in September with a wide range of events. Full details can be found on the festival website:

<https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/autumn-2024/>



A reminder that the 2024 Deerhurst lecture will take place on 21 September when the speaker will be Professor Michelle Brown. Details can be found in the last BGAS newsletter, or on the Deerhurst website:

<https://deerhurstfriends.co.uk/>

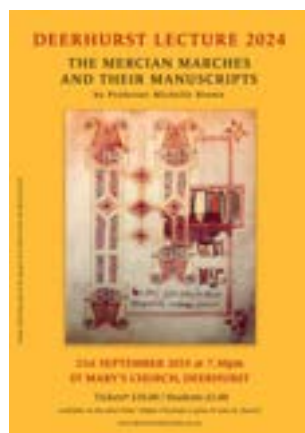
In South Gloucestershire, the Emersons Green audio tour, created by 15-year old student Lenni Langreiter, with support from South Gloucestershire and Emersons Green Councils, remains available until the end of September. Starting outside Emersons Green Library, the 90-minute circular route is brought alive through audio by scanning QR

codes to hear commentary and interviews. More details from the tour website:

emersonsgreenaudiotour.com

The Bristol Medico-historical Society are to hold a 'day for history' at the Wigwam, situated within the Red Lodge, Park Row, on Saturday 21 September, which, sadly, will be one of the last events held by this society. But hurry, as booking needs, in principle, to be done by 9 September. More details from:

bristolmedhist@gmail.com



Note that opening hours for the **BGAS library** will be reviewed in September and regular opening times for 2024/25 will be published on the BGAS website when details are available. Appointments to visit the collection can be made by e-mail at archives@glos.ac.uk or by telephone at 01242 714851.

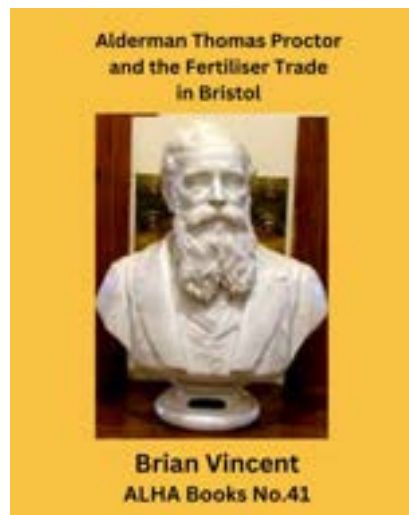
Free copies of Gloucester Journal. If any member wishes to acquire a run of the *Gloucester Journal*, approximately 1,900 editions covering the period 1841-1887 are looking for a new home. The set isn't complete and does take up quite a bit of space, but anyone interested is invited to contact Sarah Manson by e-mail at sarman4@btinternet.com for further details.

Book reviews

***Alderman Thomas Proctor and the Fertiliser Trade in Bristol*, Brian Vincent, Bristol: Avon Local History and Archaeology no 41, 2024. 41pp, numerous b/w ill. and family tree. Paperback, £3.50. [ISBN 978-1-911592-41-9]**

Thomas Proctor (1811-1876) was a Bristol businessman, politician and philanthropist, and as such his name richly deserves to be more widely known in the city. Brian Vincent's new booklet is therefore very much to be welcomed, not only for what he tells us about the man himself but also for his explanation of the business in which Proctor made his money. The firm of H & T Proctor was described in a local directory in 1842 as 'rag and bone merchants, preparers of bones for manure and glue manufacturers'. If this sounds like smelly and unpleasant work it might be better to think of it as a form of what would today be hailed as recycling of waste into a useful product for improving yields from farmland. The business was in the densely populated Cathay neighbourhood, close to St Mary Redcliffe church. The Prewett Street site had been used as a glass works and it is still possible to see the remains of what was originally a huge, brick built conical chimney (now a restaurant).

Young Thomas Proctor worked initially with his uncle, Henry Proctor, but from 1847 until his death he ran and built up the business, from which he accumulated a handsome fortune, valued at £100,000 when he died in 1876. This was a novel version of the 'rags to riches' story, converting waste into wealth. Proctor was among several men in the Victorian period who made a mark as a local politician without ever facing the electorate, for in 1853 he was made an alderman, chosen by the councillors rather than the wider public. He sat as a Conservative until retiring from the council shortly before his death. He is best remembered for giving his house to the



city to be used as the residence of the Mayor. (The old mansion house in Queen Square had been destroyed in the riots of 1831 and was never replaced). Elmdale House, on Canynge Road, had twenty-two rooms, making it one of the largest, if not the largest, of Clifton mansions. It was renamed the Mansion House and a succession of Mayors moved in, even as the widowed Mary Proctor continued to live there.

Thomas Proctor is also remembered for other charitable works, including the endowment of an elaborate drinking fountain at the top of Bridge Valley Road. This structure was more than just a source of water for thirsty people who had toiled up the hill from the river: it commemorated the 1861 agreement between the Council and the Society of Merchant Venturers to preserve the Downs for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of Bristol.

Brian Vincent has written a wide-ranging and thorough account of Thomas Proctor's various roles in Bristol. On the evidence presented in the booklet, Proctor was an all-round good person, a model citizen who made a lot of money in business and then put it to work for the benefit of others.

Peter Malpass

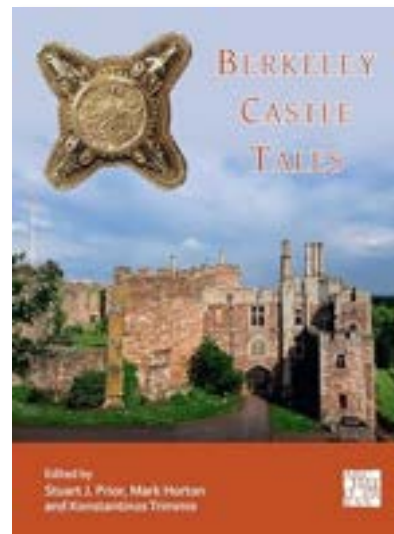
Book reviews (contd.)

***Berkeley Castle Tales*. Stuart J. Prior, Mark Horton and Konstantinos Trimmis (eds.), Oxford: Archaeopress Archaeology, 2023), Paperback, 187 pp., numerous figs., 27 plates, £38. ISBN 9781803275680 (paperback), 9781803275697 (digital).**

This unusually elaborate interim publication gives the reader the 'early outcome' of a report still in progress. The intended readers might be the generations of University of Bristol archaeology students who took part in the training excavation over 14 years from 2005 to 2019. Another potentially interested group are the people of Berkeley town who, in an admirable outreach scheme, became involved in the project. A wider readership will come from the archaeological and historical community, both professional and amateur, with an interest in Berkeley Castle, its associated religious buildings and the small town. The latter group will include specialists who will look forward to the considered conclusions of the completed report.

The project was focused on the land available between the castle and the town, which contains the site of the 9th-century minster. Beyond that area, the research considered the castle itself, the town, and the surrounding landscape. Ten authors have contributed, sometimes adopting a lighter style of presentation, suggested by the 'Tales' of the title, which carries over into the chapters with titles such as 'Tales from the Land' and 'Tales from the animals'. A number of contributors, however, present their work in quite technical language, with tables and lengthy bibliographies. Some readers will appreciate the explanation of research methods, appropriate to a project that served as a training course for students.

The chapters cover the main aspects of the work, beginning with the landscape setting, then the castle, followed by the excavations, described trench by trench. The more spe-



cialist reports deal with the pottery, the small finds, animal bones, and human bones. Finally, a concluding chapter indicates the main results. The research covers all periods. A possible Roman fort on the same site as the medieval town is discussed, though this period left only a few traces in the excavation. The early modern period is well represented, and the human bones are mainly of the 17th and early 18th century. The most important finds related to the pre-Conquest minster. Lengths of boundary ditches apparently forming a rectangular enclosure contained some fragmentary indications of buildings, and it is argued that the community was served by two churches. Pottery of the 9th to the 11th centuries demonstrated occupation from the minster period, and an aestel, a metal implement for turning book pages, reflected the site's religious functions.

Those who have prepared this preliminary introduction to the Berkeley project must be fully aware of the work still to be done, such as establishing a clearer account of the development of the historic landscape, and a better quality of mapping, for example of the town. The project engaged a wide range of specialists, but no historian. The absence of that expertise has resulted in imperfections, such as the lack of a proper discussion of the relationship between the minster and the town. These problems will hopefully be addressed in the final report.

Christopher Dyer

***An Early Iron Age Round House, Late Roman Villa and Roman Landscape at Millfields, Cam, Gloucestershire.* Nicholas Dawson and Steve Preston, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Monograph 53 (Reading, Thames Valley Archaeological Services 2024), 134pp, 20 figs, 78 plates, 17 tables. Paperback, £25, [ISBN 978-1-911228-75-2]**

This site, explored due to the construction of a housing estate, sits above the River Cam and was positioned on the valley slope with a further incline down to the river itself. This had resulted in waterlogging in Roman times with a wall of the villa on the incline above the river needing deep foundations. This may also be one of the reasons why the structure's foundations were not detected by the geophysical survey and therefore no evaluation trenches were positioned in the area, the villa's existence not being expected. The resulting high-water table is still a significant factor in the present and is seen in the images of the excavators kneeling behind pools of water.

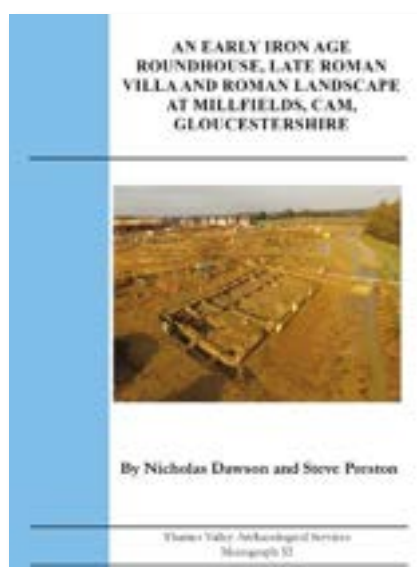
In the early Iron Age, a house with a perfect circle of post holes and unusually isolated was the only evidence of occupation before the fields and drove ways of the early and mid-Roman periods were laid out. The late Roman villa began life as a simple three roomed structure which was extended on the

north-east to six, and then the southern end was sub-divided to form a bath house. The house contained indicators of some sophistication with an elaborate hypocaust, decoratively painted wall plaster, a tiled roof and furniture including stone tops. However, signs of substantial wealth were lacking. The stock enclosures were remodelled, perhaps for gardens, and there appears to be a change of economy to more cereal-based agriculture including preparation of grain on site or close by. This appears to be related to the growing importance of Corinium and Glevum and their populations or even beyond. It is possible that the whole period from foundation to collapse and abandonment, followed by demolition and robbing of materials, might have been no more than a century.

It has been thought that the main concentrations of villa settlement in Gloucestershire were in the Cotswolds and Upper Thames Valley. However, the Cam site can be added to those others at the base of the Cotswold Escarpment: the substantial villa at Frocester occupied throughout the Roman period and the nearby contemporary structure of some pretension under St. Peter's church, discovered when it was demolished in the 1950s. Now we can include the ongoing excavation at Slimbridge in the Severn Valley which indicates a substantial settlement, perhaps related to the import/export of goods. A Roman road is proposed to run from this site crossing the Roman road from Sea Mills to Gloucester (now the A38) and in the direction of Cam. As the authors of the report observe, this density of Roman farms/villas/settlements is comparable with any others in the Gloucestershire area.

This report is well written with a substantial bibliography and especially well illustrated. The use of drone technology enables an overhead image to be manipulated to the same scale plan on the opposite page. It deserves to be seen as a significant contribution to our knowledge of the variety and status of villas in the area and in the wider landscape.

Tim Copeland



Book reviews (contd.)

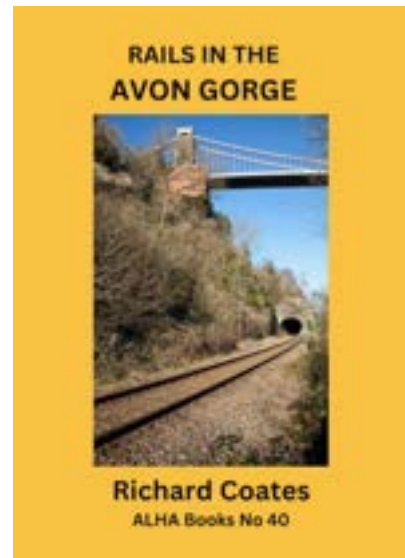
***Rails in the Avon Gorge.* Richard Coates. Bristol: Avon Local History & Archaeology no 40, 2023. 44 pp, 24 b/w ill. Paperback, £3.50. [ISBN: 978-1-911592-40-2]**

The Avon Gorge has long been regarded as a waterway, a geographical barrier to the urban sprawl of the city of Bristol, but it also provides access with a shipping thoroughfare between the Severn estuary and Bristol's docks. The Gorge is defined as the steep-sided three-mile stretch of the Avon between the New Cut Floating Harbour and a line joining the north-west flanks of Paradise Bottom and the valley of Old Sneed Park.

This is a concise volume running to just forty-four pages. As a small publication, its main function must be to raise interest in the subject for those who wish to indulge in further reading and research. The chronology is good, the various railways and tramways dealt with in order of their origins, from the Leigh Court tramway of 1814 to obscure modern interceptor tramways related to sewage disposal. It is astounding to learn that almost twenty railway schemes of varying success have operated in the Gorge.

The book contains a good range of illustrations, including three maps, although in my view the A5 format reduces the impact of many of the photographs, a good number of which are deserving of better presentation – the 1864 view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge (page 5) showing one of the railways used in its construction is a case in point.

It is to be expected that the better known local railways receive the most coverage. A substantial portion of the book, over a quarter, is devoted to the Bristol Port Railway & Pier Company, a 5½-mile line including stations at Hotwells, Sea Mills, Shirehampton



and Avonmouth, which obtained its Act of Parliament in 1862 and remains in operation as part of the Severn Beach line. The wartime use as an air raid shelter of the Portway tunnel on this line made for fascinating reading.

The most interesting coverage in my view was that accorded to the Clifton Rocks Railway, a funicular line in a tunnel which existed from 1893 to 1934 ('a penny to go up, a half-penny to come down'), illustrated by a wonderful photograph of its entrance on the rear cover. Probably the best known of the now defunct lines, the originally broad-gauge Portishead branch, which did not quite make it to a century of existence and succumbed to Dr Beeching in 1964, is not so well served by its illustrations, but one suspects that lack of space is an issue and the subject is easily followed up in more detailed books that already exist.

A useful little volume for introducing the subject and an ideal companion to take along on a railway exploration of the Gorge. The list of references is very impressive, giving some idea of the amount of research that is involved in such a work.

Mike Fenton

More book reviews can be found on the BGAS website.
See: <https://www.bgas.org.uk/publications/transactions-latest-reviews>

2024-25 Lectures - Bristol

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| <p>Monday 23 September 2024</p> <p>Cai Mason, 'A Romano-British settlement and the lost medieval hamlet of Wyck: Excavations at Wyck Beck Road and Fishpool Hill, 2021'</p> | <p><i>Excavations in advance of a large housing development near Cribbs Causeway, Bristol, led to the discovery of an extensive and previously unknown Romano-British settlement defined by an extensive field system. In another part of the site, a large stone-founded medieval hall house and associated buildings were uncovered. This formed part of the lost settlement of Wyck, and is provisionally dated to the 14th-15th century.</i></p> |
| <p>Monday 28 October 2024</p> <p>Trevor Scantlebury, 'Sir George White, Bart.'</p> | <p><i>Sir George White was a transport entrepreneur whose work encompassed buses, aircraft and much more. He was a pioneer of electric trams and founded the Bristol Aeroplane Company, which produced fighter aircraft used in the First World War. He was also closely involved with the Bristol Royal Infirmary, helping to clear its debts and creating the fund used to build the Edward VII wing, completed in 1912.</i></p> |
| <p>Monday 25 November 2024</p> <p>John Stevens, 'Caligula's Horse? The life and times of Sir Thomas Inskip, Viscount Caldecote'</p> | <p><i>From a prominent Bristol legal family, Sir Thomas Inskip served as MP for Bristol Central 1918-29 and later for Fareham, Hants. He held the post of Minister for Co-ordination of Defence at a crucial period in the 1930s and subsequently was the only man to have served, at different times, as both Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice of England.</i></p> |
| <p>Monday 27 January 2025</p> <p>Dr Lucy Cramp, University of Bristol. 'Tracing Ancient Diet in Britain through Preserved Molecules in Pottery'</p> | <p><i>Organic residue analysis involves extraction of preserved biomolecules absorbed into the fabric of pots, identifying molecular 'fingerprints' that can be related to the original contents. The recent application of this method to hundreds of pottery sherds from Britain has enabled new aspects of past dietary practices to be illuminated. This talk will give an overview of the field of organic residue analysis, with examples from the Bristol area and beyond that have illuminated our understanding of diet in the past.</i></p> |
| <p>Monday 24 February 2025</p> <p>Professor Richard Coates, UWE, 'Some local place names'</p> | <p><i>(No details yet available - refer to website for details)</i></p> |
| <p>Monday 24 March 2025</p> <p>Professor Brian Vincent, 'Alderman Thomas Proctor: A Victorian Industrialist and Benefactor in Bristol'</p> | <p><i>The fertiliser business run by the Proctor family in Bristol began in 1812 as a crushed bone supplier based in Redcliffe. It developed greatly during the Victorian era into a very successful company, under the leadership of Thomas Proctor (1811-1876) who embraced the emerging new technology of the time. Thomas Proctor also contributed greatly to the social and political life of Bristol, giving both his time and money to many causes.</i></p> |

Meetings take place on Mondays at 7.45 pm (refreshments available from 7.15) at the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, Bristol BS8 3BX. There is ample off-street parking at the venue, while the no. 8 bus from Temple Meads station and the city centre runs close by. There is no charge but a small donation to offset refreshment costs and speakers' expenses would be welcome.

2024-25 Lectures - Gloucester

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| <p>Monday 23 September 2024</p> <p>Sarah Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon monasticism in Gloucestershire'</p> <p><i>(Afternoon event at 2 pm in the Parliament Room)</i></p> | <p><i>Sarah Foot is dean of Christ Church, Oxford and as such is head of Oxford's largest college as well as head of the cathedral; she is also Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History. She has published extensively on Anglo-Saxon monasticism, and will be talking about the subject with special reference to Gloucestershire.</i></p> <p><i>(Joint event with the Friends of Gloucester Cathedral)</i></p> |
| <p>Wednesday 23 October 2024</p> <p>Chris Sullivan, 'Lydney Park and the Bathursts'</p> | <p><i>To many, Lydney Park means its Roman Temple, excavated under two Bathursts, both politicians. Benjamin Bathurst bought the estate, impoverished by Civil War, from the Wintours in 1724. Subsequent Lydney Bathursts ran their estates, and 'County business', in an industrialising world. The first Viscount championed agriculture and ran New Zealand.</i></p> |
| <p>Wednesday 27 November 2024</p> <p>Andy Moir, 'The Cotswolds Hidden Crucks Project in Bishop's Cleeve'</p> | <p><i>Forty stylistically dated and fourteen tree-ring dated buildings will be discussed. The earliest tree-ring-dated building in Bishop's Cleeve is the Tithe Barn and the end of cruck construction will be shown. Box-frame buildings with a previously unrecognized expansion in the village will also be discussed together with historical links.</i></p> |
| <p>Wednesday 22 January 2025</p> <p>Jeremy Lake, 'A Revolutionary Landscape. Sandford Park Lido in Context'</p> | <p><i>Sandford Park Lido is not only one of the best-preserved lidos in Europe, it is also an experiential landscape that expresses revolutionary new ideas that blossomed after the First World War. This talk will examine how this and other landscapes of this type emerged and developed in a global context.</i></p> |
| <p>Wednesday 26 February 2025</p> <p>Steven Blake, 'Dissenters' boxes: The Nonconformist chapels of 19th-century Cheltenham'</p> | <p><i>This talk will explore Cheltenham's wealth of surviving 19th-century Nonconformist chapels, including those that are now in secular use, and will identify those that have been demolished. It will also consider the history of Nonconformity in the town since the 17th century.</i></p> |
| <p>Wednesday 26 March 2025</p> <p>Alex Thomson (Cotswold Archaeology), 'Millennia of traffic at the Air Balloon: The A417 "Missing Link" – revealing a Cotswold landscape 12,000 years in the making'</p> | <p><i>From Spring 2023 to Summer 2024, archaeological mitigation works were undertaken by Oxford Cotswold Archaeology (OCA) along the route of the A417 'Missing Link' project, on behalf of Kier Transportation and National Highways. The archaeological excavations covered over 350,000m², and features were identified from multiple periods, including Mesolithic and Neolithic activity, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman funerary activity, Iron Age and Roman settlement, and a Second World War air defence position. With fieldwork now complete, OCA are able to share more detail about the discoveries, which tell a story of how this part of the Cotswolds was used across 12,000 years.</i></p> |

Lectures (**except for the September meeting**) will be held at the Dunrossil Centre, Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester, GL1 3DW, beginning at 7.30 pm. Free parking at the Heritage Hub is available. The September lecture will be held jointly with the Friends of Gloucester Cathedral and will take place in the Parliament Room in the cathedral precincts at 2 pm on 23 September 2024. Entry to all lectures is free both to members and non-members of the Society. There is no charge, but donations are welcome. Refreshments are provided.