

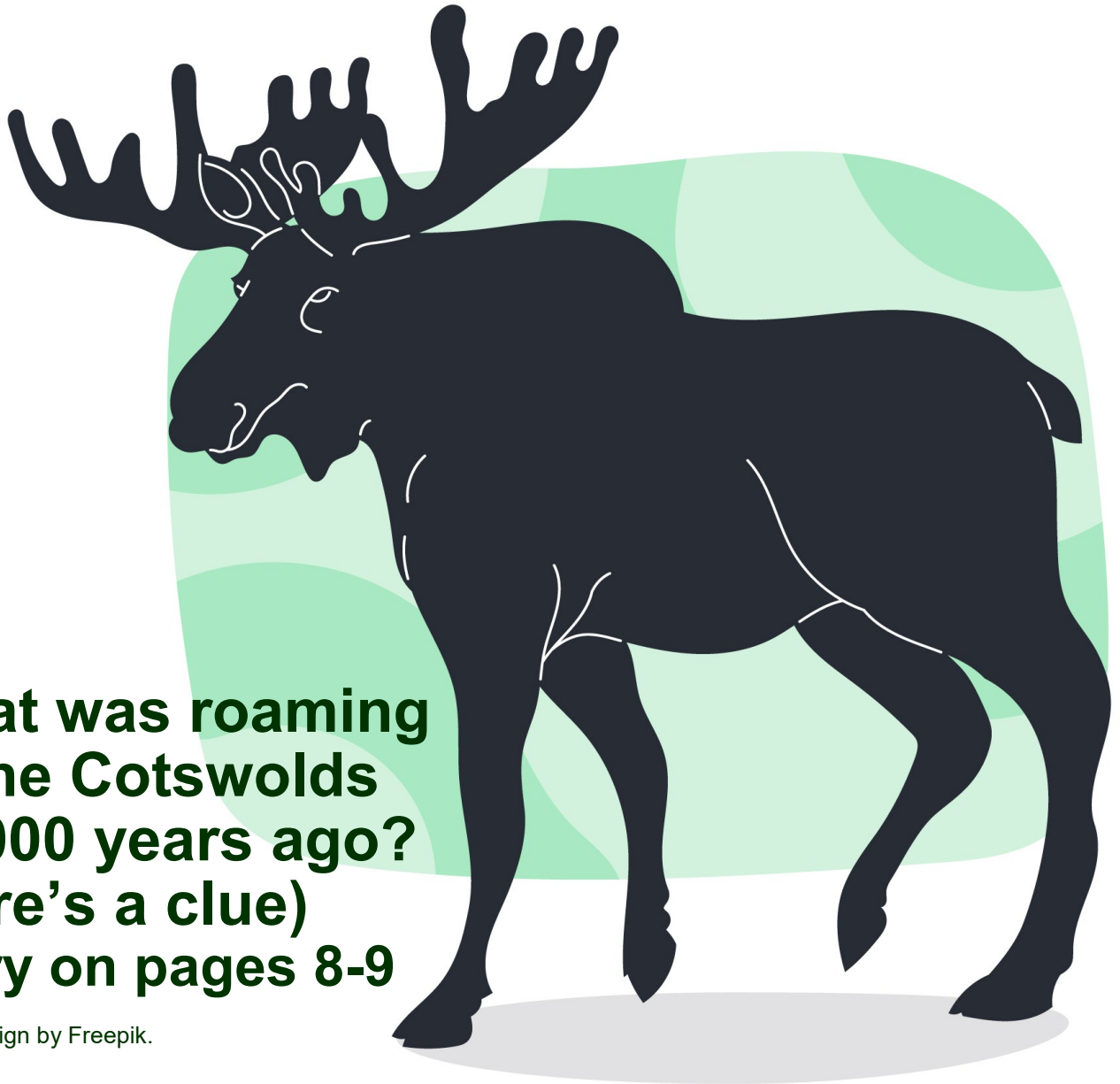
# The BGAS Newsletter

Archaeology and history in Bristol and Gloucestershire

Established 21 April 1876

[www.bgas.org.uk](http://www.bgas.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 202014



**What was roaming  
in the Cotswolds  
10,000 years ago?  
(Here's a clue)  
Story on pages 8-9**

Image design by Freepik.

## **Also inside this newsletter:**

Annual General Meeting date confirmed as Saturday 5 April  
Introducing our 2024 History Prize winner  
BGAS/ALHA History Day on transport through the ages  
Book reviews, diary dates and more

# Introduction by the editor

In the latest issue of your newsletter, we report on a number of developments relating to the Society. On the facing page, we report the news that our library is looking for a new home following notice from the University of Gloucestershire that it will no longer act as host at the end of the current agreement with BGAS. In the worst case, the library, gradually built up over the Society's long history, may have to be broken up.

Speaking of history, the Chair of Trustees reminds us on page 6 that 2026 marks the Society's 150th anniversary. Exactly what form the commemorations will take is still to be finalised, but Gail's article mentions some of the ideas under consideration.

On the centre pages is a preliminary report from Pete Moore, a research student at Reading University, on his work to confirm the identification of bones in the collection of the Museum in the Park, Stroud. His research was assisted by a BGAS grant and a fuller report will appear in the *Transactions* in due course.

Also in this issue, the General Secretary introduces us to this year's winner of the BGAS History Prize, Kelly Burriss, while we



have a bumper crop of reviews towards the end of the Newsletter.

Enclosed with the Newsletter is a booking form for another event being jointly organised by BGAS and Avon Local History and Archaeology - a history day on transport. Details are on the back cover.

I hope you enjoy the Newsletter. Please feel free to provide feedback - my contact details are in the box below.

**Alan Clarke**

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

## **Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society**

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

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# BGAS Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 5 April 2025 at 2.15pm**

We are delighted to announce that this year's AGM will be held at 2.15 pm on Saturday 5 April 2025 in the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, Bristol BS8 3BX.

The AGM papers, setting out the agenda and the issues to be dealt with at this year's meeting, will be posted to all BGAS members in the second week of March.

Volume 142 of the *Transactions* will be available for members to collect at this meeting.

## The Society's library

The University of Gloucestershire has given the Society notice that it will no longer continue to host the Society's library when its current agreement to do so expires in September 2026.

The library is the Society's largest tangible asset. Started in the Society's early years, the library now has over 14,000 volumes, some of which are old, rare and valuable. They are mostly books and runs of journals. Most relate to Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol, but the collection extends to adjoining counties and to some counties further afield, largely as a result of exchange arrangements with other societies.

The Society's Trustees have decided that the first priority is to seek a replacement host for the library. Obvious preferred hosts include the universities in the area, other institutions with academic or relevant specialist libraries, and local public libraries and record offices.

Should that search for a new host prove unsuccessful, Trustees consider that the Society does not have the resources to enable the Society to buy or rent premises of its own, and to run the library itself. Even if resources were available, the requirements would be out of proportion to the limited use that members of the Society and the public make of the library. That being so, should Trustees not be able to find a new host for the library, they would propose to offer parts of it to academic institutions, museums, specialist charities, public libraries, record offices and local studies centres, as may be relevant to their location, interests and capabilities. Any stock remaining would then be offered to members in accordance with the Society's disposal policy. Trustees would expect to take specialist professional advice regarding particularly rare or valuable items.

Request for expressions of interest in taking on the hosting of the library have been sent to the higher and further education institutions in the Society's area, to the major local authorities, and to charities such as the Daniel Bingham Foundation in Cirencester. So far, no organisation has expressed willingness to take over the library in its entirety, but there are suggestions that some may be prepared to consider taking over parts of the collection.

The search and subsequent operations are being handled by the chairman of the library committee and the treasurer, who would be grateful for any suggestions and offers of help.

# Presenting our 2024 BGAS

**W**e are pleased to introduce readers to Kelly Burriss, who was presented with the Society's 2024 History Prize by BGAS President, Mr John Stevens, at the University of Gloucestershire's annual awards ceremony at Cheltenham racecourse on 21 November. Kelly's outstanding final year performance in the University of Gloucestershire's undergraduate history programme led to her being nominated by her faculty for this prestigious award, which includes a £200 cash prize and a year's complimentary membership of the Society.

Kelly was raised in Gloucestershire, and she attributes her love of the past to growing up in a county with such a rich abundance of pre-historic sites, littered with folklore and heritage. These are feelings that will be readily understood by many BGAS members, whose own interests in the archaeology and history of our region will have been inspired by similar experiences.

For Kelly, studying at the University of Gloucestershire was an obvious choice and, as she explains, 'they offered a joint history and religious studies course which complements my interests in the history of religion and I felt that studying both would prove ben-

eficial and equip me with an array of interdisciplinary skills.'

When asked how her combination of degree subjects had enriched her understanding of local history, Kelly offered her dissertation topic as an example. 'My principal historical interests involve the history of pre-Christian religion in Britain and how these beliefs and practices have been interpreted and reimagined across the eras. My dissertation topic was: An Examination of the English Reformation and Attempts to Eradicate Pagan Survivals. I aimed to address the gap in current research by giving due consideration to the possibility of pagan survivals following the Reformation and the extent to which these beliefs and practices survived in popular culture, using post-reformation Gloucestershire as a case study. The evidence I discovered allowed me to theorise that, although those who indulged in these activities and customs were not consciously 'pagan' or knowingly indulging in pre-Christian practices, these activities, beliefs and practices survived because they were engrained in the collective memory and cultural heritage of the populace.'

Commenting on some of the other memorable activities she had been involved with dur-



**Kelly with John Stevens, BGAS President for 2024-25 (left), and University of Gloucestershire Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr Matthew Andrews.**

(Image courtesy of University of Gloucestershire.)

## Prize Winner - Kelly Burriss

ing her undergraduate programme, Kelly revealed: 'During my time at the University of Gloucestershire I was a member of the community panel for Voices Gloucester, an organisation which helps under-represented communities to discover and explore their own histories through the distribution of small grants. I also volunteered at the Folk of Gloucester museum and assisted with events designed to engage the community with the city and county's heritage.'

So, what lies in store next for our latest prize winner? As Kelly reveals: 'Now that I've graduated, I'm undertaking an M.Phil. in History at the University of Bristol, exploring the

transformation of gendered magic in fictional literature between the medieval and early modern periods. I aim to progress to Ph.D. study and hope to conduct research concerning the folklore of ancient monuments and wells.

We wish Kelly every success with her post-graduate studies. As Kelly is still living locally, we are delighted to remind her that the Society's library remains available to support her research and we look forward to welcoming her to join us at the regular talks we hold in both Bristol and Gloucester.

**Graham Barton**

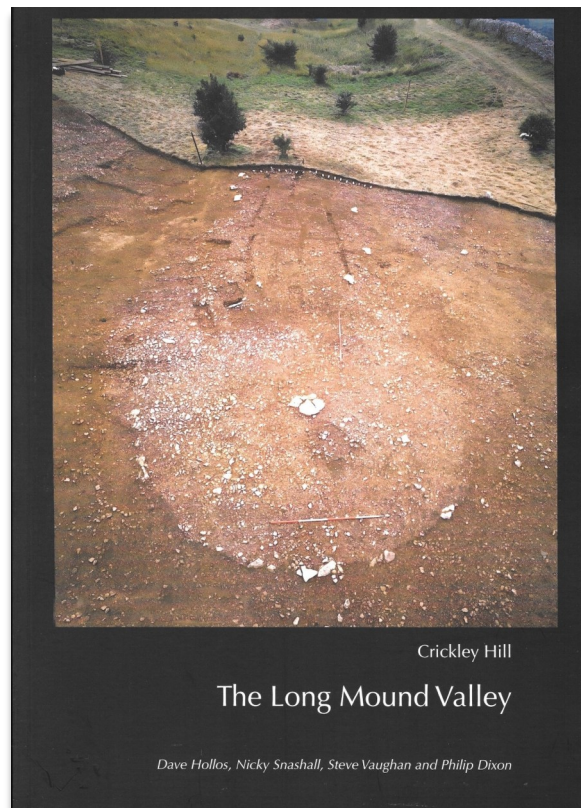
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## Crickley Hill - new publication

Many readers will be aware of the long-running excavations at Crickley Hill in Gloucestershire, the site of multiple distinct periods of human occupation and activity dating back to the neolithic period.

Two excavation reports have already been issued, *The Hillfort Defences* (1994) and *The Hillfort Settlements* (2019), both by Philip Dixon, and a third has just been published with the aid of a £500 grant from the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. Crickley Hill Vol. 3: *The Long Mound Valley* by D. Hollos, N. Snashall, S. Vaughan & P. Dixon (2025) is now available for £25 plus £5 postage and packing. More details of the site and the publications can be found on the website of the Crickley Hill Archaeological Trust ([www.crickley.org](http://www.crickley.org)). A site guide book, *Village, Fortress, Shrine* by Richard Savage (2nd edition, 2018) is also available.

There has not yet been time for BGAS to review the new volume, but it is likely that a review will appear in the next (2026) edition of the *Transactions* of the Society.



## A new printer for the Society's publications

In 2024, the Bath-based printer and publisher, 4Word Ltd, who had printed the Society's *Transactions* and Record Series volumes since 2007, closed following the retirement of its Director. This situation was reported last year in BGAS Newsletter no. 94, since when the Society has been working to find a replacement.

We can now report that the Society has appointed a new printer, Henry Ling Ltd, a long-standing family-run business based at Dorchester in Dorset, which already prints a number of comparable volumes for other archaeological societies. They will be printing *Transactions* volume 142 and Record Series volume 38, both of which will be published later this year.

During our discussions with both Henry Lings and other potential printers, it became clear that the current dimensions of our *Transactions* are uneconomical in terms of both paper wastage and cost. It has therefore been agreed that the width of volume 142 will be reduced by 15mm, which will be achieved by a reduction in its margins. This will result in a considerable saving of around one third of the cost of printing and binding. The size of the typeface and the height of the volume will remain unaltered. This change will, in fact, make the *Transactions* exactly the same size as our Record Series volumes, which already use this reduced dimension.

**Steve Blake**

## 2026 – 'BGAS150' and a year of celebration

**A**s many of you will no doubt know, 2026 marks our society's 150th anniversary year. An inaugural public meeting took place on 21 April 1876 at Bristol City Museum, with the society attracting 513 members in that first year. Although our numbers are not so high now, the society continues to attract new members and Trustees are keen that its aims to 'advance and promote the education of the public in the history, heritage and archaeology of Bristol and Gloucestershire' are of benefit to as wide an audience as possible. To this end, Trustees have set aside a budget to support a range of celebratory public engagement activities during the course of 2026. These will include visits, meetings, talks and events that will be designed to enable as many people as possible to participate. Three trustees have been tasked with preparing the 'BGAS150' programme, which will involve, amongst other things, a symposium that results in a formal publication. Work is currently underway to commission a logo with which to brand these events and our website during the year, and this has also sparked a conversation about the visual accessibility of our standard logo. We hope to be able to offer small grants to enable others to deliver celebratory events across Bristol and Gloucestershire, and to encourage schools and other local community groups to participate in a 'BGAS150 Archaeology & History Festival'. Preliminary conversations have also taken place with organisations such as Historic England and the Portable Antiquities Scheme about collaborative projects and publications promoting sites to visit and finds of note. All of these activities will be listed on our website and promoted via our social media channels, as well as through our newsletters, so please watch this space!

**Gail Boyle, Chair of Trustees**

# Obituary: Professor Timothy Darvill, OBE, FSA

When Tim Darvill (1957-2024) joined BGAS in 1975, he was a seventeen-year-old schoolboy with aspirations to read archaeology at Southampton University. Although one of our youngest members, Tim had already acquired significant practical experience before he commenced his undergraduate studies, having supervised archaeological digs for the Cirencester Excavation Committee.

Soon after joining BGAS, Tim played an instrumental role in creating the Society's Committee of Archaeology in Gloucestershire (CAG) and served as CAG's secretary from 1980-85. Tim was also a frequent contributor to the BGAS *Transactions* and a regular speaker at our conferences, his most recent appearance being at the M-Shed, Bristol, in November 2023 when he presented a paper entitled 'Recent excavations at the Sisters Long Barrow, Baunton, Gloucestershire'.

In 1991, Tim was appointed as Professor at the newly established Centre for Archaeology at Bournemouth Polytechnic (later Bournemouth University) but he continued to maintain close links with both BGAS and our mutual friends at the Cotswold Archaeological Trust (CA), serving as President of our Society in 2013/14 and remaining Chair of Cotswold Archaeology's Trustees to the time of his death.

During his academic career, Tim became one of Britain's leading prehistorians. His principal specialism was the Neolithic period in Wales and the West of England, the theme he had chosen to investigate in his doctoral thesis. His major publications, which include *Megalithic Chambered Tombs of the Cotswold Severn Region* (1982), and *The Long*

*Barrows of the Cotswolds and Surrounding Areas* (2004), clearly reflect these interests. Tim will perhaps be best remembered among the wider archaeological community for the research he co-directed on the bluestone circles at Stonehenge, which helped to identify the source of these stones as a site in the Preseli mountains of South Wales.

Tim was a former Chair of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, a past Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries of London and Vice President of the Royal Archaeological Institute. He had the distinction of being awarded an OBE for services to archaeology in 2010. Tim sadly passed away a few months before being able to celebrate his half-century of BGAS membership. With his passing, the Society has lost both a long-standing member and a good friend.

**Graham Barton**



Tim wearing his chain of office as President of the Society. (From Newsletter 73.)

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## **BGAS *Transactions* - new home wanted.**

We are advised that a former President of the Society is seeking to dispose of a complete set of the *Transactions* - 142 volumes plus indexes. If anyone is interested in acquiring them, please contact the Editor (see page 2 for contact details). Potential owners of the set should be aware, however, that the number of volumes would take up to about 4.25 metres (14 feet) of shelving.

# Roaming in the Cotswold

**Pete Moore**, whose research has been partly funded by a BGAS research grant, reports on his work to corroborate the apparent discovery in the nineteenth century of elk bones in the Nailsworth valley, Gloucestershire. A more detailed account of the findings will appear in the *Transactions* of the Society in due course.

**M**any of us will have a fair appreciation of what characterises the modern Cotswold landscape: its verdant mosaic of farmland, beech woodlands, and calcareous grasslands are a familiar sight to us all. Unsurprisingly, though, thousands of years ago it all would have appeared quite different. Gaining insights into exactly what plant and animal species were present, however, is challenging. The long passage of time, as well as a widespread absence of favourable deposits, makes the preservation of environmental evidence to undertake such research (pollen, wood etc.) difficult.

Whilst compiling a database of the county's Mesolithic (9,500-4,000 BCE) collections, connected with ongoing research, several bones within the collections of the Museum in the Park, Stroud, caught my eye. The bones were identified to elk (*Alces alces*), a species long extinct and uncommonly found in archaeological contexts across the country. It is believed they lingered in Scotland until

around 2,000 BCE but are scarcely known in Southern Britain beyond around 8,000 BCE, having been pushed northwards by a warming climate, as well as human-related pressures (e.g. hunting). If the remains did indeed belong to elk, it would prove a noteworthy re-discovery not only nationally, but also for the Cotswolds, where it has not hitherto been evidenced.

Just two bones, comprising a metacarpus and jawbone, were identified as elk, themselves forming part of a small assemblage of animal bones recovered from buried peat-like deposits at Dunkirk Mills in the Nailsworth Valley. The deposit was encountered during construction work for the foundations of a dwelling at the site in 1854, which, alongside the animal remains, also revealed the well-preserved remains of plant, wood and tree stumps. These were curated by the discoverer (G.F. Playne), with the circumstances of their discovery being subsequently discussed within the proceedings of the Cotswold Naturalists' Field Club.



Photo of the exterior face of the elk jaw found at Dunkirk Mills

From the collections of Museum in the Park, Stroud, STGCM 1950.210. (Author.)

# landscape 10,000 years ago

Contemporary study of the two bones has validated them as belonging to an elk, corroborating them as the first instance of the species evidenced within the Cotswolds. It is apparent that both bones came from a mature adult elk, due to the substantial teeth wear and presence of all molars, whilst the metacarpus was fully fused. There are no apparent signs of manipulation by human hands, such as cut marks, but it cannot be dismissed that it was not a casualty of hunting or curated by people, especially as it was recovered alongside bones of other animals and was not a complete skeleton. How the bones came to be deposited where they were found is unclear due to the lack of recording, but the absence of abrasion and water damage to the surface of the bones suggest that they have not travelled or been re-deposited by the adjacent river.

Whilst noteworthy, it nevertheless proved necessary to ground the remains, therefore samples from both bones were taken for radiocarbon dating providing results of 8,800 BCE, firmly placing them in the Early Mesolithic. The dates from both bones were near identical, likely suggesting that they both belong to the same individual; however, this cannot be explicitly stipulated.

At the time when elk roamed the Cotswolds, the valleys would have provided corridors of lush marshy vegetation favourable to their browsing. The break in the Cotswold escarpment at Stroud, and the valleys (such as the Nailsworth Valley) that radiate from it would have provided favourable routes for accessing the high ground and traversing through the landmass. There is good evidence of Mesolithic people occupying the landscape surrounding the local area, possibly implying that this funnelling effect was exploited for efficiently hunting elk, as well as other evidenced species such as boar, auroch and red deer.



Posterior face of the elk metacarpus (top) and close-up of the teeth within the elk jaw found at Dunkirk Mills. From the collections of Museum in the Park, Stroud, STGCM 1950.209-10. (Author.)

Today, reclamation and continued development of the Nailsworth Valley has largely covered much of the valley floor, altered the natural river course, and eradicated the formerly marshy conditions. How this has collectively affected the peat deposits, and whether further archaeological evidence is still present, is uncertain. Further investigation would greatly bolster the insights gleaned from the elk remains, whilst the rare, attested peat-deposits will provide a unique means to investigate the past environments that were once present and likely contemporaneous with the elk remains. Nevertheless, confirming and dating the presence of elk within the Cotswolds 10,000 years ago provides an important new window into understanding the ecology of the landscape that was once present and hopefully begin to unravel what is currently an enigmatic period within the region.

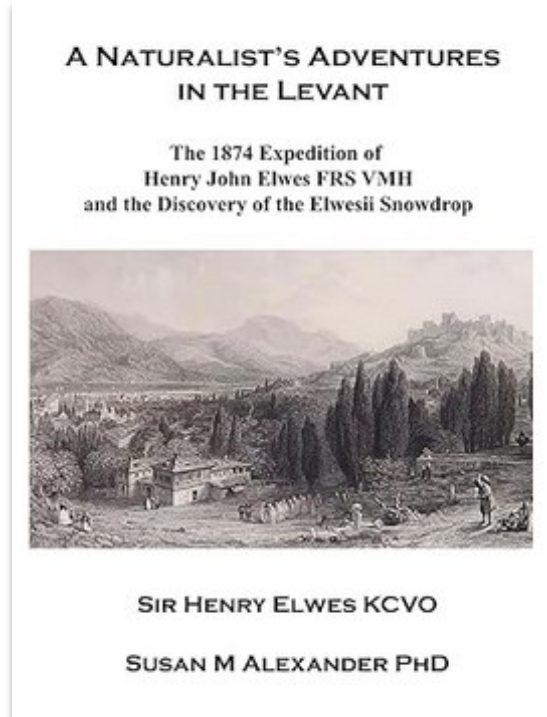
# Book reviews

***A Naturalist's Adventures in the Levant. The 1874 Expedition of Henry Elwes FRS VMH and the Discovery of the Elwesii Snowdrop.* Sir Henry Elwes KCVO and Susan M Alexander. 2024. Privately published (paperback available at Snowdrop Openings or post free from 01242 870264, hwg@colesbourne.net). 81 pages, many colour illustrations. Hardback £10, Paperback £7. [ISBN 979-8-874091-0-26]**

This book describes a journey across the Levant taken in 1874 by Henry John Elwes, as told by his great grandson, 150 years after the expedition took place. The journey revealed is based upon his memoirs and letters to his wife Margaret. In contrast to the difficulties presented to travelling in this area in the twenty-first century, it was freely accessible to the Victorian British traveller, especially if one was a wealthy gentleman of leisure, who had from the age of 23 devoted his life to the study of the natural world.

The volume is copiously illustrated throughout, using family photographs and with the butterflies and plants illustrated using plates taken from books of the same period or, occasionally, modern photographs. The introductory pages cover Elwes' early life from his birth at Colesbourne in Gloucestershire, his parents and his marriage and touch on his two major publications, *The Genus Lilium* and the seven volumes of *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland*, the latter co-authored with Augustine Henry.

The bulk of the account traces his journey as a 28-year-old through the then Ottoman Empire, landing in the port of what is now Izmir. Whilst there he was able to visit the archaeological remains of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. As an aside, the authors have included passages about the expansion and contraction of the Ottoman Empire, the history of the ancient region of Lycia and the Crimean War. Initially, the journey commenced by coastal steamer before heading into the



interior on horseback into an area not previously known to English naturalists. Further ruins were visited and these are well illustrated, mostly with modern photographs. A section is devoted to the exciting discovery of the Elwesii Snowdrop, which is now frequently found for sale in garden centres and nurseries. The plants collected were subsequently identified in England as a new species. Some collections sadly died in transit and some were stolen *en route*.

The volume concludes with appendices on *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, the text of the entry for the snowdrop in that publication and a well-illustrated account of the other new plants collected in the Levant and included in that magazine. There is an extensively illustrated account of *Galanthus Elwesii* Cultivars. The final appendix is a list of the various papers written by Elwes on the study of butterflies.

**Clare and Mark Kitchen**

***The History of Leckhampton Church.* Eric Miller. 3rd ed (rev.). 84 pp, numerous b/w ill. Soft cover, £5, plus £2.50 postage and packing if by post. Copies available in the church or from the Parish Office (01242 513647; email: parishofficeleckhampton@btinternet.com). [ISBN: 978-0-9512008-2-7]**

The parish church of St Peter, Leckhampton dates from the 12th Century, a half-column at the base of the tower bearing witness to its Norman origins. The church was rebuilt in the early 14th century; this is accurately shown by the structure of the slender spire atop a square tower and 'ballflower' mouldings in the chancel.

The nineteenth century was, generally, an era of church restoration and, in Leckhampton's case, the problems of a greatly increased congregation consequent on demographic changes in and around Cheltenham. A gallery was erected in the 1830s but only survived a few decades before the whole church, with the exception of the chancel and tower, was demolished and replaced by extending the west end and the construction of a north aisle, leaving the building virtually as it is today.

Alterations did not however cease and a movable nave altar was installed in 2017, allowing, in the author's words, 'a more flexible space...for worship and other activities such as school events and concerts'. To your reviewer, this seems to illustrate the contemporary Church of England's changed relative emphasis on the public worship which was once its glory.

Eric Miller is a former civil servant and a resident of Leckhampton associated with its church life for over fifty years. This is the third (and revised) edition of a work first published in 1987, drawing on parish registers, vestry minutes and other documentary sources and now incorporating recent information about the pre-Victorian layout and contents of the church.

The first two chapters are the most substantial, dealing respectively with 'Priests, People and Patrons' through the ages and the architecture of the church. Chapter 1 introduces a

number of individuals who add flesh to the story, from a priest named Henry who disputed parish dues owing to the Abbey of Cirencester in the 1160s to the 'Squarson', Canon Charles Brandon Trye, rector for 53 years from 1830 and also lord of the manor. Two twentieth century incumbents, both former army chaplains who later became bishops, receive honourable mention: Austin Hodson, who served in France in the First World War and Eric Cordingley, who showed 'great fortitude' when ministering to his fellow captives as a Japanese prisoner of war in the Second.

Chapter 2 contains a wealth of architectural detail which is occasionally daunting, but this is in large part remedied by the illustrations and in particular plans of the church as it was at various stages of its history.

Succeeding chapters deal with monuments and memorials, the stained-glass windows, the bells, the organ, the churchyard and finally a 'miscellany'. Among the appendices are lists of incumbents and patrons and the weights and inscriptions of the bells and a specification of the organ (the latter, it has to be said, only comprehensible to the initiate!).

The author has succeeded well in his aim of giving 'a comprehensive account of the evolution [of the church] ... set in the context of the ecclesiastical parish of Leckhampton' and there is much social and general history too. We learn of the running nineteenth-century argument about pew rents (paid by the wealthy and an important source of income) versus accommodation for poorer parishioners. The expansion of Cheltenham led to many local worthies, not all of them parishioners, finding their rest in the churchyard. Among them was Sir Robert Smirke, architect of the British Museum and of the Gloucester Shire Hall.

Something might have been said about churchmanship – did the clash of Evangelicals and Tractarians leave its mark in Leckhampton? – but this is to cavil, for overall Mr Miller's fine work should find a place on the shelves of anyone interested in the history of the village and its locality or the history and antiquities of the Church in England.

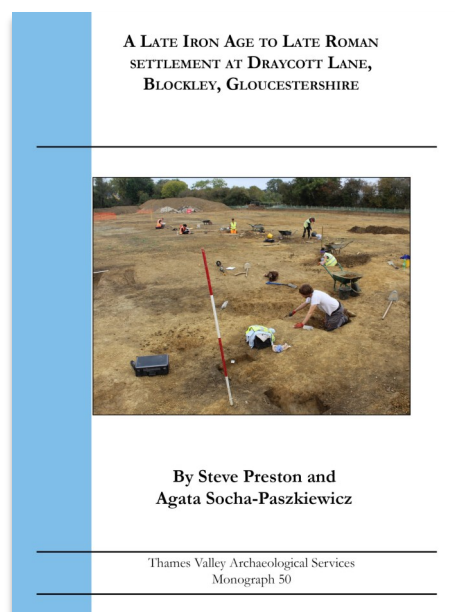
**John Stevens**

## Book reviews (continued)

***A late Iron Age to Late Roman Settlement at Graycott Lane, Blockley, Gloucestershire.* Steve Preston and Agata Socha-Paszkiwicz. Thames Archaeological Services Monograph 50, (Reading, Thames Archaeological Services 2024) 121pp, 31 figs, 16 plates, 19 tables. Paperback, £17, [ISBN 978-1-911228-73-8]**

Because of the lack of both domestic and industrial developments in this part of the north-west Cotswolds, the opportunity of excavating 1.35 hectares at Blockley was an important opportunity, even though the area involved was crossed by prominent ridge and furrow 8-10 metres apart and had been used for dumping modern rubbish. This challenging site had an extensive and intricate system of 150 groups of associated ditches and gulleys, and which required over 700 single cuts to plot them. Except for a panorama of the whole site, every photograph records a section of ditch or a gully indicating the lack of evidence for upstanding structures. There appeared to be nine separate phases in some of these linear features and it was not always possible to correlate the chronological relationships between the many ditches and gullies. Pottery was of limited help as often this was residual from the many modifications of the site, but it did demonstrate deposition over at least 400 years, the fabrics suggested a wide trading area and the forms indicated an agricultural site of no pretensions, similar to others in this part of the Cotswolds.

An example of this frustrating excavation is the presence of two major parallel ditches. Clearly, the excavators had hoped that these were of Roman origin and that they would have formed a western boundary for a possible settlement. However, though the features were filled with Roman pottery, it was thought to be residual, and since medieval pottery was also present in the fills of the ditches, reluctantly, they had to be dated to that period and their purpose unknown.



The opaqueness of the site is demonstrated in the limited conclusions. The report's authors argue that the number of finds could not have reached the site from afar if there was no settlement, and have postulated a timber-built set of domestic structures without the use of nails or of postholes that would have been needed but few discovered. Non-earth fast structures have been found in other places and so there were precedents and therefore some of the smaller enclosures could be draining or defining house sites. The authors have more confidence in the nature of the linear features as 'inward-looking' enclosures for small animals such as sheep or goat rather than outward to the landscape. While cereals were present there was no indication of production or storage.

The authors are at pains to point out that the results are 'slightly unusual', showing a continuity of occupation from the late Iron Age to the late Roman period and then no evidence of Saxon settlement. It would have been valuable to have a wider bibliography to undertake comparisons with similar long-lived locations in the Thames Valley or those recently excavated around Bishop's Cleeve. However, it is a heroic effort to disentangle a very complex site.

**Tim Copeland**

***Nora Yoxall and Elsie Whitford: Blockley's Stained Glass Artists.* Lynn Bedford, Blockley Heritage Society, 2024. 27 pp. Available by email to [blockley.heritage.soc@gmail.com](mailto:blockley.heritage.soc@gmail.com). £3.50. [ISBN 978-1910673-20-1]**

By the time Nora Yoxall (1892-1998) and Elsie Whitford (1897-1993) had moved to Blockley, they thought of themselves as stained glass artists, but it was not always thus. This booklet naturally concentrates on this aspect of their work and even includes an appendix on the construction of a stained glass window. It is also a window on life in Blockley from the 1950s, when both artists moved there. It is well illustrated in colour with several photographs of both of them.

Yoxall and Whitford's first commission had been when they were still students at Birmingham Municipal School of Art, where they met, and where they studied, Yoxall from 1912 and Whitford from 1915. In 1926, while attending advanced courses at the School, they were given the commission to decorate the whole of the chancel of St. Peter's, Handsworth, in Birmingham (assisted by a third student, Sylvia Ward, for part of the project). This was their most complete scheme, covering the roof, the reredos and stained glass. For the last of these, as they had no experience, they had the assistance of Richard Stubington, the School's excellent teacher and stained glass artist.

It is worth quoting Martin Harrison, the stained glass scholar, on Yoxall's and Whitford's work at St. Peter's, because it indicates what their style might have been. In his essay, 'Stained Glass', in *By Hammer and Hand: the Arts and Crafts Movement in Birmingham* (Alan Crawford (ed.), Birmingham 1984, p. 128), he calls their work a bold step, and points out that, unlike contemporary Birmingham work with background details from nature and 'Pre-Raphaelite references to the figures', one finds 'very tough – perhaps almost too strong – reworking of the thirteenth century idiom, roughly worked in thick bright

## Nora Yoxall and Elsie Whitford

### Blockley's Stained Glass Artists



Lynn Bedford

chunks of slab glass'. But, apart from further work in this style at SS. Mary and Ambrose, Edgbaston, 1930, and Kingsbury church, Warwickshire, 1934, their subsequent work, to quote Harrison again, moved towards the 'plain white background to let in more light' school.

To update Lynn Bedford's text, Andy Foster points out in *The Buildings of England: Birmingham and the Black Country* (2022, footnote 247n) that Yoxall's and Whitford's work at St. Peter's, now the Church of God of Seventh Day, is inaccessible, if indeed it survives, and that the windows have been moved elsewhere. But, seen overall, this is probably the most extensive printed text available about the two artists and Lynn Bedford is to be commended for her diligent research.

I would add that I corresponded with both Yoxall and Whitford in 1979-80, while conducting research on their painted work for my essay on 'Decorative Painting' in *By Hammer and Hand*, and have taken advantage of some notes I made then in this review.

**George Breeze**

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

## Book reviews (continued)

**Shirehampton Remount Depot (1914-27).** Richard Coates. Bristol 2023 (ALHA Books no 38). 45 pp, numerous b/w illustrations. Paperback £3.50. [ISBN 978-1-911592-38-9]

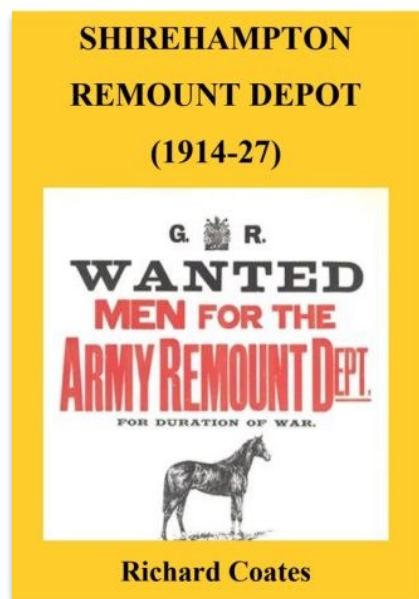
Richard Coates has produced another superbly researched and referenced book - this time a meticulous pulling together of the history of the Shirehampton Remount Depot.

Those of us who worked on various projects in Bristol commemorating the centenary of the First World War had heard about the Depot and dabbled in its study to varying degrees. The chance rediscovery of a plan of the depot at Bristol Archives in 2012 gave rise to a community learning project and further work to document the site and collect local memories.

The depot was a major supply base in the First World War for the war-trained horses needed in huge quantities to replace those lost at the front. Richard Coates takes full advantage of the work done around 2014 to restore the history of the depot; quoting copiously from the contemporary press, delving deeper into the records held by our civic institutions, and giving a full picture of the depot operationally and its dissolution.

We learn that it was Lord Kitchener, when Minister for War, who appreciated the strategic location of Avonmouth Docks and its environs when deciding where to base remount depots. The Shirehampton Depot – there were other major ones at Romsey and Ormskirk – was a massive enterprise.

There are plenty of statistics in the book to illustrate the scale of the operation; enough to say here that the throughput of nearly 350,000 horses and mules destined for the Western Front stands out, as does the realisation that fewer than 14,000 returned to Shirehampton from France after the Armistice. The scale is further illustrated when it is revealed that each day, 60 wagons of hay and sawdust and 12 wagons of manure arrived and were dispatched respectively.



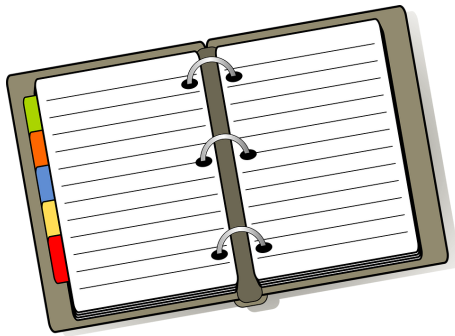
Coming mostly from Britain's Dominions (Canada, New Zealand and Ireland), Argentina, the USA and Spain, the depot had a notional capacity of 5,000 animals, with all the stabling and associated veterinary facilities. Overseen by a handful of officers, the undertaking comprised 1,380 civilian staff initially, including 'frontiersmen' or cowboys, employed to break in the animals. We can imagine the scene at the time. The depot soon became fully integrated within the trading, social and community life of Shirehampton.

We also read accounts from people who worked at the depot, including a letter by a frontiersman who describes the exciting early days of taming unbroken horses. A memoir by Mrs Maunsell-Thomas tells of her fears when taking on the Unit Administrator job and managing 100 women, mostly from the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

Especially poignant is her description of being alone in her office on 11th November 1918 when she heard the hooters of the ships at Avonmouth announcing the Armistice: 'I broke down completely and cried as I had not cried all through those anxious and sad years. Luckily, no one saw me.'

Richard Coates is to be congratulated on an informative and well-illustrated work, pulling together the history of the Shirehampton Remount Depot in such a thorough and engaging way.

**Clive Burlton**



## For your diary

The **final meetings of the season** for the Bristol and Gloucestershire branches of BGAS will be held in March:

- On Monday 24 March at the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, **Bristol**, Professor Brian Vincent will be speaking on 'Alderman Thomas Proctor: A Victorian Industrialist and Benefactor in Bristol'. The meeting starts at 7.45 pm, with refreshments available from 7.15.
- On Wednesday 26 March at Gloucestershire Heritage Hub in **Gloucester**, Alex Thomson of Cotswold Archaeology will be speaking on 'Millennia of traffic at the Air Balloon: The A417 "Missing Link" – revealing a Cotswold landscape 12,000 years in the making'. The meeting starts at 7.30pm.

**BGAS, in association with Avon Local History and Archaeology**, are holding another history day on the topic of 'Transport through the ages' at Little Stoke Community Hall on 31 May 2025. Full details can be found on the back cover of this Newsletter; a booking form is also enclosed.

The **Bristol Radical History Festival 2025 will be held over two days in April:**

- Saturday 26 April at M-Shed (day) and the Watershed (eve)
- Sunday 27 April at The Cube (day and eve)

More details of the programme will be available shortly on the Bristol Radical History Group website: <https://www.brh.org.uk/site/event-series/bristol-radical-history-festival-2025/>.

The **Tewkesbury Medieval Festival** will take place on 12-13 July. According to the festival website ([www.tewkesburymedievalfestival.co.uk](http://www.tewkesburymedievalfestival.co.uk)) it is 'now widely regarded as the largest free medieval gathering of its kind in Europe, attracting re-enactors, traders, entertainers, and visitors from all over the world. Its central feature is a spectacular re-enactment of the Battle of Tewkesbury on part of the site of the original battle of 1471.'

The national **2025 Festival of Archaeology** will be celebrated with a series of events at **Chedworth Roman Villa** between 19 July and 3 August, including mosaic cleaning, artefact handling and archaeological discovery.

The **Gloucester History Festival** returns in September 2025 with, according to the festival website ([www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/autumn-2025/](http://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/autumn-2025/)), 'a packed programme of 150 talks, exhibitions, tours and performances taking place all over the ancient city of Gloucester'. The full programme will be unveiled in July, from when tickets will be available.

# AVON LOCAL HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY BRISTOL & GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



## Transport through the ages

Avon Local History & Archaeology and Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society are organising a local history day on:

**Saturday 31 May 2025, 9.30am to 4.30pm**  
**at Little Stoke Community Hall, Little Stoke Lane**  
**Little Stoke, Bristol BS34 6HR**

Talks will cover Roman roads, inland waterways, trams, buses, trains and the Whitchurch Airport.

Speakers booked include Hon. Ald. Bev Knott, Steve Grudgings, Peter Davey (to be delivered by Prof. Brian Vincent), Mike Walker, Gerry Nichols and Clive Burlton.

ALHA member groups and societies are invited to book space for a stall in the hall during the event.

The cost for the day is **£15 per person**, which will include tea and coffee, and, as usual, we offer two free places to any group bringing a display or items for sale. Booking can be made via Eventbrite after 29 March 2025; a booking form is also enclosed with this Newsletter.

Tea and coffee will be served during the day. There is a cafe adjoining the hall for light items of food at lunchtime. The menu can be viewed at <https://www.stokegifford.org.uk/services/little-stoke-community-cafe.php>. You can also bring your own lunch if you prefer.

### Directions to the venue

From the north, take A38, take the slip road left before the bridge and at the roundabout take sharp left into Stoke Lane, and the hall is on the right after the playing field.

From the south, take A38, after the former Filton airport take slip road left, bear right, then bear right onto B4057 / Gipsy Patch Lane, then turn left into Little Stoke Lane, and the hall is on the left before the playing field.

Patchway railway station is just under a mile to the west of the site.

Buses passing the hall are CS7 (Thornbury to Stoke Gifford) and Y6 (Bristol to Chipping Sodbury). Buses serving the Little Stoke area include the 12 (Bristol Parkway to Severn Beach) and Metrobus M4.

There is plenty of free parking at the venue.

(Map data ©2025 Google.)

