

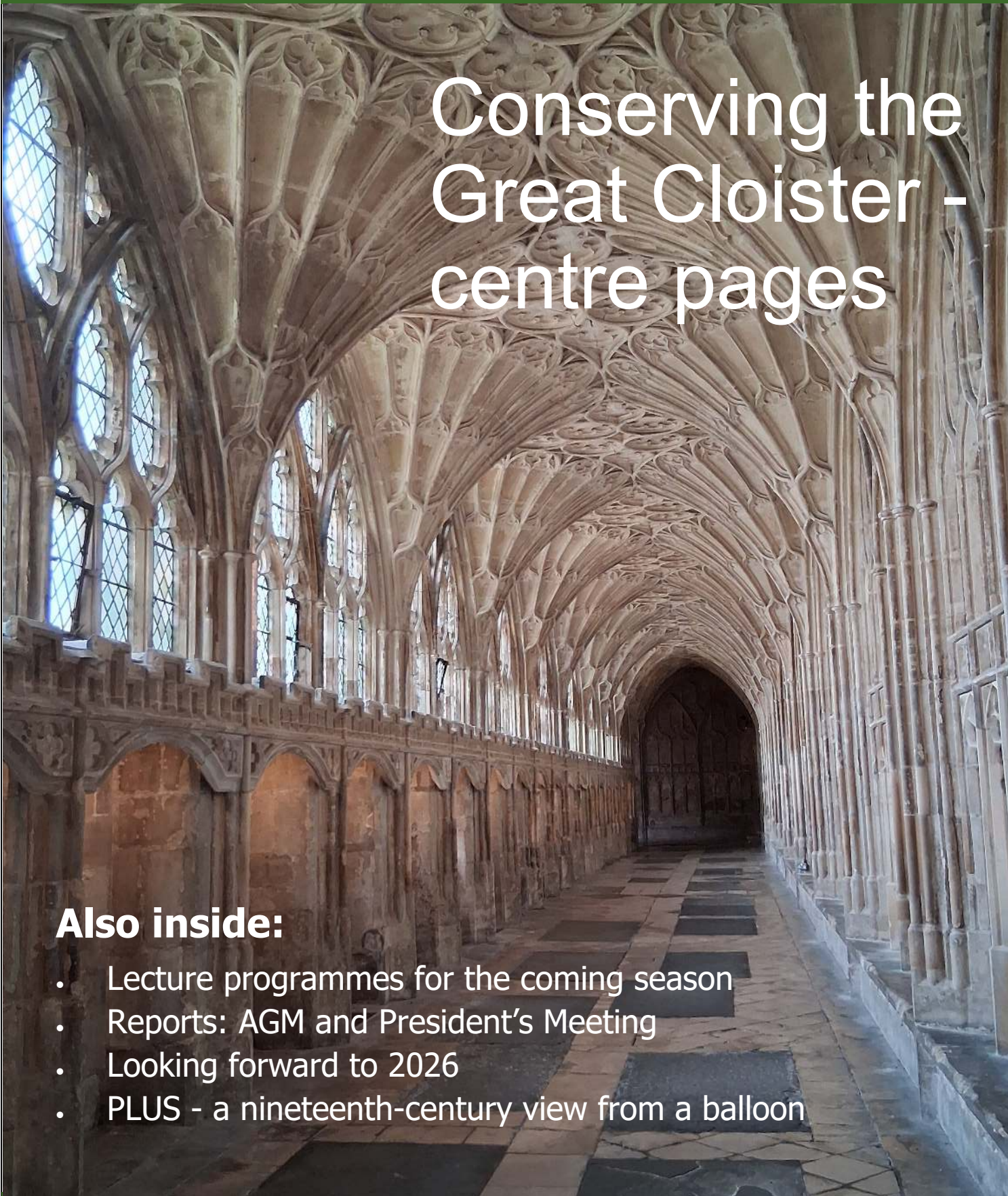
The BGAS Newsletter

Archaeology and history in Bristol and Gloucestershire

Established 21 April 1876

www.bgas.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 202014



Conserving the Great Cloister - centre pages

Also inside:

- Lecture programmes for the coming season
- Reports: AGM and President's Meeting
- Looking forward to 2026
- PLUS - a nineteenth-century view from a balloon

Introduction by the editor



Our latest magazine is being printed by a new firm, Whitehall Printing of Bristol, who are also undertaking its distribution. I anticipate that this will speed up the process and hope that no problems arise on account of the change.

In this issue, along with the 2025-26 lecture programmes for Bristol and Gloucester, we have reports from Chiz Harward on his work at Gloucester Cathedral, featured on the cover, as well as society news - reports of this year's AGM and President's Meeting, and a look forward to next year's anniversary celebrations - along with the usual articles and reviews. I hope you enjoy the magazine.

Sadly, we also have to report the death of distinguished medievalist Peter Fleming, who I met for the first time a few years back at a meeting of the 'People's University of Fishponds', where he was speaking on the

topic of Icelanders in Bristol - an example of the way he took history into the community. Our obituary is written by Eugene Byrne, who writes the *Bristol Post's* 'Bristol Times' local history supplement and was a colleague of Peter's at UWE.

Finally, this year saw the retirement of Dr Graham Barton from the position of General Secretary. It is impossible to overstate the gratitude owed to Graham for his work in this capacity, and we are pleased that his services are not completely lost to the Society, as evidenced by his contributions in this newsletter - the report on the facing page and the announcement on page 5 of the re-opening of our library, for which Graham supplied the photograph of the reading room shown below.

Alan Clarke



Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

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

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Annual General Meeting 2025

The 2025 Annual General Meeting was held at the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral on Saturday 5th April 2025. Twenty-eight members attended and the retiring President, John Stevens took the chair for the opening part of the meeting.

The General Secretary presented highlights from the Trustees' annual report for 2024 and the Society's statutory report to the Charity Commissioners. At the end of 2024, membership of the Society was 436 and Dr Barton reported the deaths of eleven BGAS members, including Professor Tim Darvill, OBE, a past President of the Society. A short silence was held in their memory. The Society's accounts confirmed BGAS to be in good financial health, the value of our general reserves having increased by almost £40,000 in 2024.

The shortage of Trustees had continued to present the Society with significant administrative challenges during 2024. Despite these difficulties, the Trustees managed to arrange a successful excursion to Chedworth Villa to celebrate the centenary of the acquisition of the property by the National Trust and co-hosted a successful day-conference with Avon Local History & Archaeology to commemorate the bi-centenary of the birth of Handel Cossham, a prominent Bristol industrialist and philanthropist.

Following a brief valedictory address by Mr Stevens, Toby Catchpole was welcomed as the Society's incoming President. The medallion of office was exchanged, and Mr Catchpole took the chair for the remainder of the AGM.

Nominations for the election of Trustees for 2025-26 had been circulated with the AGM papers and the individuals listed were approved by acclamation. The appointment of Miss Sue Brown as independent examiner of the Society's accounts for 2025 was proposed by the President, his motion being approved with 27 votes in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

Reports from Trustees responsible for key aspects of the Society's operations were then presented. Dr Barton (Library Manager) updated members on our search for a new host for the BGAS library when our current agreement with the University of Gloucestershire expires in September 2026. Dr Butterworth (Membership Manager) provided an update on the report included in the AGM papers on the development of an online membership system. Dr Barton reaffirmed the Trustees' commitment to review BGAS governance arrangements in 2025/26, after 3 years operation.

Finally, Mr William Evans was asked to introduce a motion presented in the AGM papers, seconded by Dr J Butterworth. The motion proposed that: *'Should Trustees consider that responses to the chair of Trustees' appeal for members to put themselves forward for Trustee and other roles are not sufficient to enable the Society to continue to operate lawfully and effectively, Trustees are requested to formulate a plan for the orderly winding up of the Society, the transfer of its functions to other appropriate charities, and the equitable distribution of the Society's assets to those and other charities as may seem appropriate having regard to the Society's objects'*. Following debate, the meeting unanimously approved this motion.

The formal business of the AGM having been concluded, Mr Catchpole declared the meeting closed and invited Mr John Stevens to give his Presidential Address, entitled *'A Tory Journalist: The Life and Times of John Mathew Gutch, 1776-1861'*.

Graham Barton

BGAS 2026: 150th anniversary celebrations update



Our Society held its inaugural public meeting on 21 April 1876 at Bristol City Museum. Attempts to found the society had been under way for some time, for, as was explained in the *Transactions* for that year, 'it is believed that the establishment of such a Society would supply a real and long felt need in our county. Gloucestershire, though wanting neither in archaeologists nor in the materials of archaeology, has long been wanting in archaeological organisation.' Plans for celebrating the 150th anniversary have now also been under way for some time. It would seem fitting, since the first meeting was in Bristol, for us to celebrate our 150th anniversary with a major event there, and so we are planning to hold a symposium, at M Shed in the springtime. The date has yet to be confirmed but will most likely be a Saturday in April or May. Kate Iles and members of the Committee for Archaeology have volunteered to take charge of arrangements, and a 'Call for Papers' will go out in September. As funds have been allocated to support 'BGAS 150' events, we envisage this to be a free to attend hybrid in-person/online event, with a priority booking window for our members, before being offered to the general public.

In addition, we are hoping that all groups in Bristol and Gloucestershire who have an interest in archaeology, history and heritage matters, will apply to take advantage of a 'BGAS 150 Small Grant' to support the delivery of a talk or event in their locality which offers the public insights into the history and archaeology of our area. We envisage applications for funding towards, for example, the cost of room hire, or speaker's fees and expenses, or perhaps small pieces of equipment. Details of how to apply to the scheme, terms and conditions etc., will be published

on our website in the autumn. All BGAS 150 grant-aided activity will also be publicised via our online events page and via social media, as will a range of visits and walks we are planning in collaboration with museums and other organisations.

With regard to publications, Trustees have agreed that a supplementary volume to *Transactions* 143 will be published and available at the 2026 annual general meeting. The Publications committee has been asked to badge the double volume as a special 150th anniversary issue. Aside from this, speakers at the BGAS 150 symposium will be given the opportunity to have their papers published in a separate volume of proceedings.

Trustees are also using the approaching anniversary as a stimulus, to review how the Society currently operates, and to renew and refresh where needed. We hope to reflect upon the Society's long history and its many achievements, and to consider how we can make it robust and relevant for the future. In the 150 years since the Society was founded, the 'archaeological organisation' of the region has changed drastically, but the Society's aims remain the same. So, to return to the first volume of the *Transactions*, the new society requested 'your co-operation and influence on [the Society's] behalf in your immediate neighbourhood. The Committee would also be greatly obliged by any suggestion in furtherance or improvement of the general design.' If you have ideas for the 2026 celebrations, or wish to help with organising the anniversary, do please contact us via the Secretary or newsletter editor (see page 2): the organising committee would be delighted to hear from you!

(Images: clipart/freepngimg.com)

Obituary - Peter Fleming

Longstanding BGAS member Peter Fleming, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of the West of England, died in April, having been unwell for some time.

His contribution to our understanding and knowledge of medieval Bristol was huge, not just in research that historians will be consulting for years to come, but in presenting his work to a wider public.

He was an entertaining and engaging speaker and writer with a great flair for showing us how our distant forebears were often just the same as us, but sometimes very different. His lectures, whether to students, academics or the general public, were delivered with theatricality and humour.

One of his colleagues remembered: 'His infectious enthusiasm for his subject won over the student body. He had been an amateur actor and was ever ready to don tights to recreate the early modern world.' Another colleague recalls him trying to ride a horse for research purposes.

Born in 1958 and from a working-class background, he studied at University College Swansea where he met Ann Rippin, his partner of almost 50 years until her death in 2023. She joined him in Bristol, later becoming a lecturer at Bristol University's Management Research Centre.

He published for both academic and general readers, and his final work, *Late Medieval Bristol: Time, Space and Power* (Yorkist History Trust, 2024) was a superb summation of a lifetime's work, a remarkable exploration not just of the city in the middle ages, but the landscapes of its citizens' minds as well.

Eugene Byrne



Peter speaking in the crypt of St John's church, Bristol, a few years ago.

Following its recent move to the University of Gloucestershire's Francis Close Hall campus, we are delighted to confirm that the **BGAS library** reopened to visitors in late July. The need to relocate our collection resulted from the university's decision to rationalise their teaching and administrative accommodation, which led to the disposal of part of their estate, including Hardwick campus where the BGAS library had previously been housed. The costs of moving our collection to Francis Close Hall were met in full by the university, in accordance with the terms of our joint library agreement.

Most of the Society's book and journal stock is now located in room TC002 in the West Quadrangle at Francis Close Hall campus. A small selection of items relating to Avon and Gloucestershire has been assembled to provide a 'local studies' collection and this material is now held adjacently in room TC 002a. This room has been designated as a 'reading room' for the BGAS library and the University of Gloucestershire's own special collections.

The opening hours for the BGAS library remain unchanged following the move and are: Monday 1pm to 5pm, Wednesday 1pm to 5pm, Friday 11am to 5pm. Appointments to visit the collection can be made contacting the Society's Hon. Librarian, Mrs Anne Pengelly, by telephone (01242 714617) or by e-mail (archives@glos.ac.uk).

2025 Presidential Meeting

On June 21st, a few hours after the summer solstice, our immediate Past President, John Stevens, began a tour of three historical sites in Bristol, reflecting different aspects of the city's history and culture.

The group met outside the Red Lodge museum, itself a site of interest as an Elizabethan house later purchased by Lady Annabella Byron and used as a girls' reform school under the supervision of social reformer and educationalist Mary Carpenter. Our first visit, however, was not to the museum but to the adjacent Wigwam, the meeting place of the Bristol 1904 Arts group, originally known as 'Bristol Savages', where we were offered coffee. The Wigwam, acquired by the group in 1919, is designed to resemble a medieval tithe barn and is furnished and decorated with an eclectic mixture of artefacts, to which we were introduced by our host, Michael Newstead, the club's Archives Warden, who also outlined the group's history and the format of its meetings. There are several cate-



Michael talks us through the Wigwam's collection.

gories of member: Artists (known as 'red feather' members), Performing Artists ('blue feather') and general members ('green feather') who comprise the majority and who enjoy the entertainment, the art and the ambience of the club.



Four Presidents on Brandon Hill. L-R: Michael Hare, John Stevens, Toby Catchpole and Bob Jones.

The next stage of the day's events took us to Brandon Hill, where the remains of Civil War fortifications can be discerned, part of the defensive structures reinforced by the Parliamentarians after the Corporation allowed their commander, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, to enter the city in December 1642. The following summer, Bristol came under attack by Royalist forces under Prince Rupert and were only able to get through the defences by good fortune, when Captain Henry Washington, an ancestor of the US President, found a breach, now commemorated by a plaque near the City Museum and Art Gallery on Queen's Road. However, the site of the breach may, as one of our members explained, have actually been a different location about a hundred yards away.

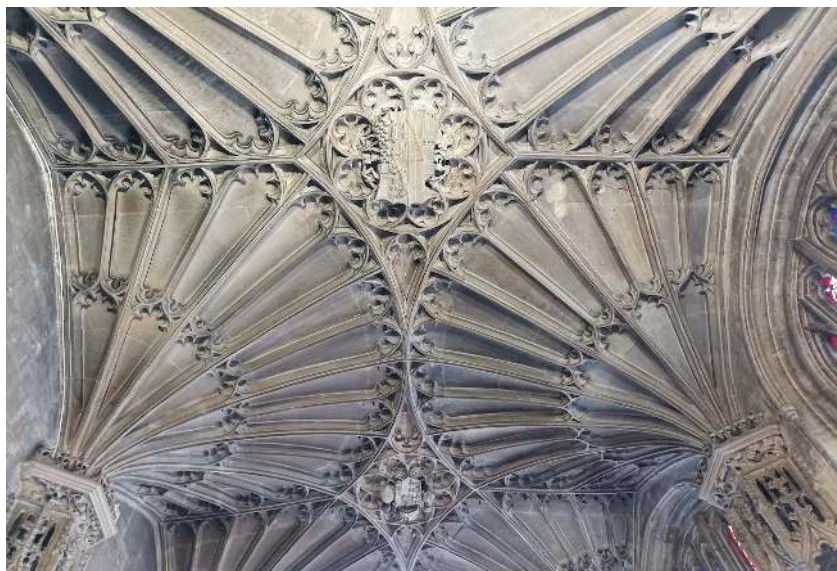
After lunch, we re-united on College Green for a visit to the church of St Mark, known to most people as the Lord Mayor's chapel, originally part of the medieval St Mark's Hospital and later acquired, in 1539, by the City Corporation. For this reason, Bristol was able

to place the church temporarily at the disposal of the refugee Huguenot community in the late seventeenth century, following Louis XIV's revocation in 1685 of Henri IV's Edict of Nantes, which had granted freedoms to the Protestant community in France. Inside the church, we were given a guided tour, the highlights including the coats of arms in the nave, the east window – but with reservations about the modern altarpiece underneath it – and the architectural gem, the Poyntz Chapel, added at the south-east cor-

ner in the sixteenth century as a chantry chapel for Sir Robert Poyntz of Gloucester, which has fan vaulting and, most unusually, a tiled floor made of coloured Spanish tiles contemporary with the date of construction.

Following the church visit, the group repaired to the Cathedral café on the opposite side of College Green for refreshments and reflection on the tour and its demonstration of some of the rich variety of Bristol's history.

Alan Clarke



The fan vault and tiled floor of the Poyntz chapel. (All images: Alan Clarke)

BGAS award for digitisation project

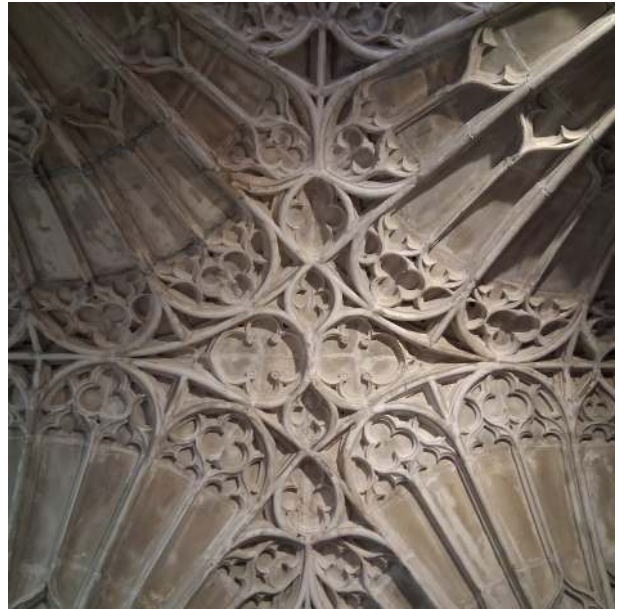
The Society has recently approved an award to researcher Sally Self to assist with a project for the digitisation of the Enfranchisement Volumes for 1845 to 1935 of Cheltenham Manor Court, which it is hoped may result in a future volume in the Society's Gloucestershire Record Series. (Enfranchisement refers to the action of turning copyhold land into freehold.) The initial draft of the first book, 1845-1880 (Glos. Archives ref. D2025/35471/1), has been completed. As there are a further 8,000 pages to be listed, Sally has recruited three volunteers to assist her in tackling Books 2 and 3. Sally thanks the Society for the award. She also mentions that some data – names, properties and the amounts paid for changing the tenure to freehold – has already been uploaded to the Cheltenham Local History website (<https://cheltlocalhistory.org.uk/database/transcriptions/>), but this may not be entirely reliable as it stands. Anyone wishing to use this information as the basis for research is requested to get in touch with Sally at: projects.clhs@btinternet.com.

Recording the Great Cloister

Gloucester Cathedral's Great Cloister is one of the most significant and beautiful works of English medieval architecture and is known through film and dramas to millions around the world. It is also an incredibly important archaeological site both as the earliest surviving fully-developed fan vault and as it contains evidence for at least two earlier cloisters on the site.

Following a successful trial in 2022, work has started on a long term project to conserve the 14th century Great Cloister which is suffering from a variety of threats including inappropriate hard Portland cement pointing, decay of the stone from salts and the weather, chemical pollution, decay of the stained glass, and a roof that is largely made of RAAC – reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete. Working their way around the cloister, the cathedral's own masons will clean the walls and vault, remove the cement and replace it with breathable lime mortar, and carve and fix new stone.

Chiz Harward, from Gloucestershire-based Urban Archaeology, will work alongside the masons to produce the first detailed record of the Great Cloister and analyse its structure and development. Given it is so frequently



photographed, it is perhaps surprising that the Great Cloister has received little in-depth attention from archaeologists and architectural historians. To date, researchers have concentrated on the Perpendicular tracery and superficial elements of the fan vault, but Chiz believes other important stories lie a bit deeper:

'The sheer beauty and symmetry of the cloister's fan vault calms and beguiles the observer but behind the surface treatment of intricately carved ribs and trefoils there is a solid structure that has never been properly studied. The cloister has to be seen as an integral part of the rebuilding of St Peter's abbey in the new Perpendicular style – an architectural style that was developed right here by its highly skilled masons.

'With this vault the abbey's masons were working out new ways of building – true fan vaulting had probably never been tried before, anywhere. If you look behind the tracery there is a very complex structure of shaped blocks transferring stresses and forces through the walls. This approach does not



at Gloucester Cathedral

seem to be repeated in later fan vaults suggesting that the masons may have been playing safe as they innovated, drawing on the experiences gained during the reinforcement of the south transept and the near-contemporary work to refashion the Quire and Presbytery. St Peter's masons developed Perpendicular architecture as a visual style, but the work here is also structurally audacious and groundbreaking.'

Work probably started on the Great Cloister almost immediately after the Black Death, and there are signs that its massive loss of life may have impacted on both the supply of stone to the project, and the skillset of the banker masons who carved the stones - if not the vision of the master mason who led them. One objective of the project is to see how the construction of the cloister developed over the decades it took to build, as the masons learnt how best to construct these extraordinary structures.

Locked away within the masonry are the remains of earlier cloisters, with blocked doorways and reused stonework from the Norman cloister and scorched stones bearing witness to cataclysmic fires. There are also tantalising glimpses of the 13th century cloister with the 'stiff leaf' foliate capitals of the northeastern door hidden behind its Perpendicular successor.



'That is classic Gloucester' says Chiz. 'Rather than build a new doorway, the masons added a façade in front of the existing one – look behind and it is all still there. We see this approach throughout the Perpendicular rebuilding, from the south transept to the tower, Quire and Presbytery. Was it to save money? Possibly also to limit disruption, but it is also part of a signature approach: the comprehensive re-representation of existing buildings to give them a radical new appearance in an economic way.'

The detailed archaeological recording is expected to rewrite and rebalance the history of the Great Cloister, but also the earlier cloisters and the buildings that surrounded them; setting the cathedral's cloister in its medieval monastic context; and shining further light on the masons, and monastic community, that designed and built these remarkable buildings.

The cloister remains publicly accessible throughout the project, with a walkway beneath the scaffold. Initial generous funding of the works has come from the Headley Trust.

(All images: Chiz Harward)

Edward Colston Lavars in flight

The panoramic chromolithograph 'Bird's Eye View of Bristol' published in 1887 has often been commended for the quality of the evidence it offers for the topography of Bristol in the late nineteenth century: 'Every street corner and building is meticulously captured by Edward Colston Lavars, allowing us to explore every nook and cranny of this historic city,' says one ad for the print. Reece Winstone called it 'splendid'. The image is sometimes attributed to Edward Colston Lavars (1842-1917) and sometimes to his father John Lavars (1812-1889). Edward was an artist and John a commercial printer, well known for, among other works, his maps of Bristol and Clifton (1865) and the Bristol coalfield (1862). That explains the origin of the work as it is publicly known: John created the lithograph from Edward's original image.

Edward's technique involved taking plate glass negatives from a balloon 2000 feet up. One careful analyst has calculated that for the Bristol view it must have been tethered in what is now the car park of B&Q in Hartcliffe. From the photos Edward created ink and watercolour drawings, and from these John produced the lithograph. An image of the 'Bird's Eye View' can be seen online at <http://www.rareoldprints.com/p/11837>. None of the original photographs or plates are known to have survived. Some who have commented on the image seem reluctant to conclude that Lavars must have risen in a balloon basket to prepare it: 'Possibly observed from a hot air balloon', according to one Doubting Thomas. Any doubt can easily be dispelled by considering a further work by the same team.

This note is to draw attention to another bird's-eye panorama, which is on public display but seems to have gone under historians' radar. This is 'Balloon view of Avonmouth, Bristol', a chromolithograph signed 'J. Lavars delt', and published by Lavars Steam Litho, Broad Street. It is not dated, but shows Avonmouth docks (opened, as stated on the work, in 1877), along with Penpole Ridge, part of Dumball Island, the old Avonmouth



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Public Collections, CMS_CLE00910

lighthouse (1840-1902), Broad Pill, the West Town brickworks in Shirehampton and the earliest incarnation of the adjacent factory (the Crown Bottle Works, first surveyed and mapped by the Ordnance Survey in c.1880), Shirehampton's old (pre-1928) church, and trains on the Bristol Port Railway and Pier and the Bristol & Portishead Pier and Railway lines. We can only date it to 'about 1877-80'. If we could be sure the Portishead branch was depicted broad-gauge, that would date the work to before January 1880! The balloon must have been tethered in or near Portbury village; tongue in cheek, perhaps, a balloon with its basket is shown poised directly over the new dock. A copy of this image is on display, although inconveniently situated, on a staircase at Clevedon Court. A reproduction of that can be seen online at www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/624236, and the image is reproduced here with permission. The view is scarce and not widely known – an inquiry was made after a copy in *The Mariner's Mirror* in 1964, the only published reference that I am aware of. Bristol Archives used to have a copy (41964/RIJ/7/7), but it has gone missing.

I know of no other Lavars images produced aerially.

Richard Coates

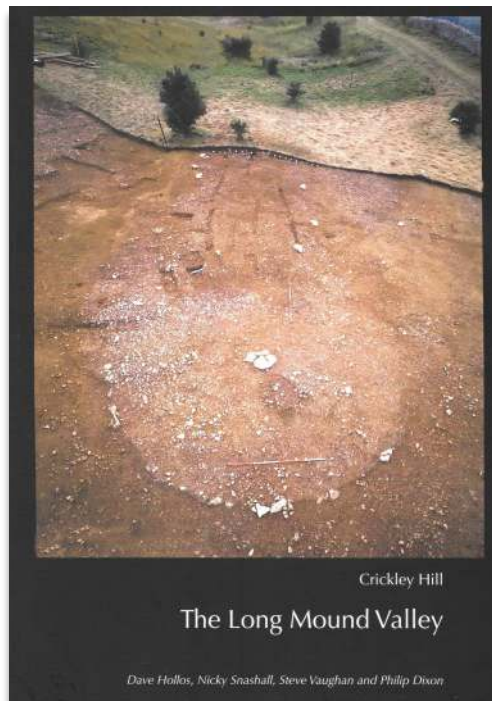
Book reviews

***The Long Mound Valley.* David Hollos, Nicky Snashall, Steve Vaughan and Philip Dixon. (Crickley Hill Trust, 2024) 341pp, 250 col. illustrations, maps and plans. Paperback, £25 [ISBN 0-900572-84-3].**

Without the sign boards and pamphlets of the Country Park, the Long Mound Valley might easily be missed as it can't be seen from the plateau until you are on its lip. Its important characteristic is at the northern end which frames a panorama of the Severn Valley and Forest of Dean. This volume covers the period between 1975 and 1993 when the features in the Valley were excavated.

Finding features in the Long Mound Valley was not easy as beneath the turf was shattered limestone, heavily weathered by rain and wind. Understanding the effect of people, compacting it in making paths, and the colourations caused by burning was crucial to interpretation of the site, with both needing damping with water in order to be recognisable. The thin turf was a problem with the depth of the stratigraphy across the whole feature.

Evidence of two tiny huts of an early or pre-Neolithic settlement of the last part of the fifth millennium BCE was followed by a platform surrounded by a wicker fence overlooking the valley. A small rectangular building was placed on it which may have been a shrine or 'cult house', in front of which was evidence of burning. A roadway from the nearby settlement appears to have been routed around a pillar, the Orthostat, to reach it. These features were probably destroyed about 3300 BCE. A cairn of small stones with rows containing very shallow grooves was constructed overlooking the position of where the platform had been, and this was extended possibly four times along the valley. At the southern end was a hearth and other features. A circle of upright stones with three phases was set at the northern end of the cairn with a fireplace above that of the earlier platform, again with the smoke from it being visible



across the Severn Valley. In the final phase an 'altar stone' placed in its centre was smashed. When new sections of the cairn were added, each in a different style, the previous segment was deliberately covered by an earth mound, starting at the north end with sets of slabs being placed at both sides, perhaps extending from the early second millennium to the first millennium BCE and lengthened at least three times. In the 3rd or 4th century CE a Short Mound with similar characteristics to the Long Mound was built to the north and set at an angle to it.

Even though the first two volumes of the Crickley Hill excavations have been published, it is probably this one that has been awaited most eagerly, and we are not disappointed. It is well structured, presented and produced by Philip Dixon who as Director thoroughly understands the site and the necessity of placing drawings and images – and there are many – which are adjacent to the text they illustrate.

Tim Copeland

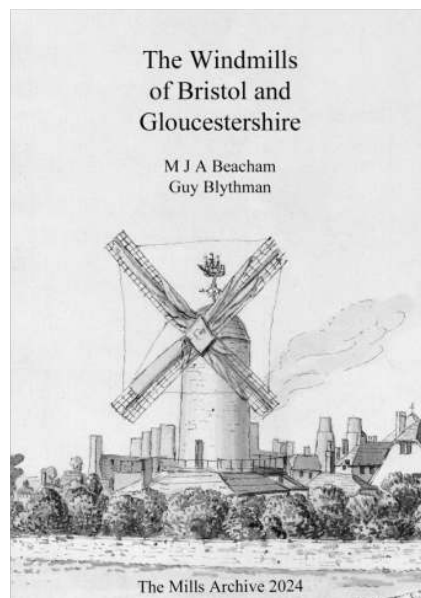
Book reviews (contd.)

***The Windmills of Bristol and Gloucestershire*. MJA Beacham and Guy Blythman, Mills Archive Trust, Reading, 2024. 40pp, 14 colour and 13 b/w ill. £25.00. ISSN 2051 6924**

Throughout the region's agricultural and industrial past, water came to be the main source of power for corn mills and latterly, a host of other uses – for example, the extensive woollen cloth manufacture in the Stroud valleys. The uses that windmills were put to were much more limited, mainly flour production, although there were also a few isolated applications such as snuff grinding in Bristol and ore crushing at Warmley.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, water – readily available in much of the region – always tended to overshadow wind power as it was generally more consistent, predictable, and controllable. The output from 'typical' early windmills must have been relatively small, but doubtless many were vitally important to their respective local populations who were unable to travel far. Windmills were a valuable, much-needed asset, even if their importance was limited to an individual village or small manor. However, the working life of most windmills came to an end through a combination of their weather dependency, competition from water mills, and the arrival of steam power, increasingly deployed in country mills or more importantly, in the large urban mills that came to quickly dominate the industry.

Even though the authors have identified more than a hundred potential windmill sites within the region, unlike water mills, only a handful of tangible remains exist, sometimes limited solely to an obscure reference in an ancient manuscript. The all-wooden construction of most early windmills means that in many cases, little has survived, making it difficult to gauge their configuration and capacity. As the authors point out, there is no complete example in Gloucestershire, none retaining its sails, original cap, or machinery.



The lack of information on many early windmills and their disappearance from the landscape must have conspired to make the authors' task difficult. This is in contrast to the region's many water mills, many of which survive in some form, or their remains are at least recognisable and traceable. However, even though little may be recorded on the history of many windmill sites identified, the book's gazetteer is a valuable source of information. Many of these sites are probably unknown outside the world of molinology, so their identification can provide a useful starting point for further targeted in-depth local research into individual locations and their history. The book also provides useful insights into the overall geographical spread and applications of wind power in the region.

It is somewhat ironic that this apparently archaic form of power production, now almost entirely gone from the landscape, has re-emerged as a viable source of energy. Modern society has taken inspiration from the past, with increasing amounts of electricity now being generated by the modern equivalent of the windmill both on land and offshore. The wheel has turned full circle.

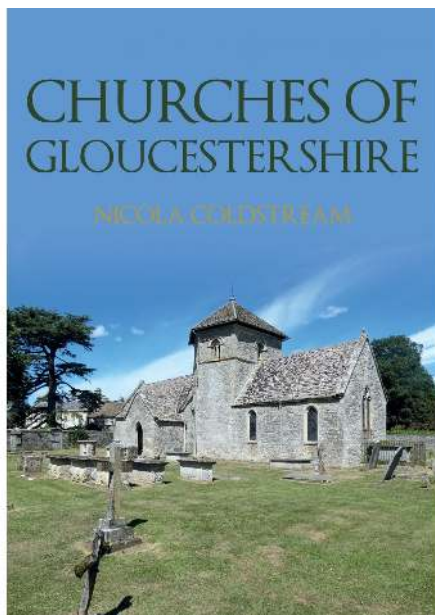
The authors have produced a valuable resource that provides useful insights and information on the region's windmills, not just to those with an interest in the subject, but one that will also be beneficial for historical researchers in the wider community.

Steve Mills

***Churches of Gloucestershire.* Nicola Coldstream, Amberley Publishing, Stroud, 2024. 96pp, 113 colour illustrations. Paperback, £15.99 [ISBN 978-1-3981-1144-8 (print); ISBN 978-1-3981-1145-5 (eBook)].**

This attractively produced and well-illustrated volume is one of an ongoing series of books, each covering the churches of a specific county, that Amberley has been publishing since 2021. Its scope is the historic County of Gloucestershire, excluding Bristol, on which a companion volume has also been published. It comprises alphabetical entries on 44 churches, with an accompanying map, preceded by a 550-word preface, which places Gloucestershire's churches in their geographical, geological and historical context.

The author, who is an architectural historian specialising in the medieval period, has clearly chosen her churches to showcase as many different aspects of the buildings and their contents as possible, from the Anglo-Saxon era to the 20th century, each period being given equal weight. In this, she has succeeded admirably. Although almost all are Anglican parish churches, they do include three Nonconformist chapels (at Apperley, Cheltenham and Stroud), although no Roman Catholic church is included, apart from a brief mention of the former Catholic



chapel at Hartpury as being adjacent to that village's Anglican church. It is also noteworthy that none of Gloucester city's churches are included, and only two (Bitton and Iron Acton) in the unitary authority of South Gloucestershire, an imbalance that may simply reflect a greater wealth of religious buildings further north.

Each entry is written in an engaging and conversational style (you might almost feel that the author is by your side, guiding you through the building), which soon makes it clear why she has felt that particular church to be worthy of inclusion. Where appropriate, its setting and historical significance are assessed, as are both its overall qualities and any features of particular significance that should not be missed by an intending visitor. Each entry is illustrated by between one and four photographs, often focussing on a specific detail of the church. The photographs alone give an excellent overview of the variety of artistic pleasures to be found in the County's churches, from pre-conquest and Norman carvings to 20th-century furnishings and stained glass. As only one photograph, of a stained glass window at Selsley, is credited to a named photographer, one assumes that the rest of photographs are the author's own.

Although much of the book's content will be familiar to the seasoned 'church crawler', I would challenge anyone not to find something new and surprising here, particularly in the accounts of some of the rather less well known churches. These might be said to include the 19th-century churches at Berry Hill and Cinderford in the Forest of Dean and the author's choice of two 20th-century buildings to represent Cheltenham (a brave choice given that town's wealth of Regency and Victorian churches!), namely St Michael, on the Whaddon Estate (1965-6) and the new Salem Baptist Church (2000). For the novice, however, this is a perfect, and very enjoyable, introduction to the County's churches, which might well inspire the reader to further study and exploration.

Steven Blake

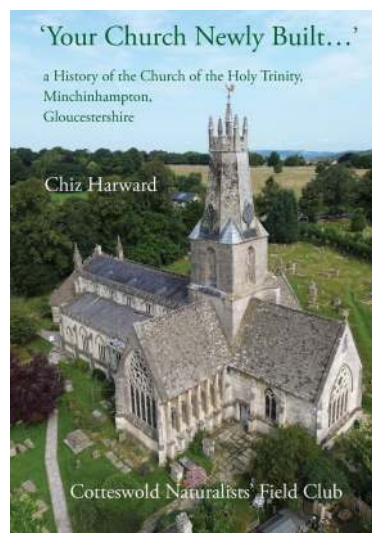
Book reviews (contd.)

'Your Church Newly Built. . . ' a History of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, Chiz Harward, Gloucester: Hobnob Press for the Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club, 2025, 254pp., 152 figures. Paperback. £20.00 [ISBN 978-1-914407-87-1]

Minchinhampton parish church sits in a prominent location overlooking the market square. The church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, was substantially rebuilt in 1842 except for the tower, crossing and transepts. However, by the 21st century the church was suffering severe damp problems, and the pews made the worship space very inflexible. This led to the reordering project of 2016-22 which involved the removal of the pews and the floor in the nave and aisles so that underfloor heating and a new paved floor could be installed and drainage problems could be rectified. Such a major undertaking required, as a condition of Faculty, archaeological observation, survey and excavations. These aspects of the project, together with historical research, were undertaken by Chiz Harward of Urban Archaeology.

This impressive and unusual volume is the result of a decision taken early in the project to produce a report that was not 'a traditional archaeological report, nor a standard church history and guide, but a hybrid ... that could be read by as many parishioners and visitors as possible.' In this, and despite several frustrating editorial faults, the book succeeds admirably. The illustrations are consistently of high quality and the printing is excellent.

An introductory chapter sets the church in context and the subsequent chapters show the development of the church beginning with the Norman building. Woven into the chronological journey are a series of thematic 'interludes' that offer the opportunity to ex-



plore in greater detail subjects including a mason's setting-out slab, fragments of black-letter wall plaster, the church clock, the bells, and some of the finds from the excavation. These sections contain intriguing details which are unusual in a report of this kind.

The church has been substantially rebuilt twice, firstly in the 14th century and then again in 1842. A new tower was part of the 14th-century work, as were 'the west and south walls of the nave, the south aisle and its arcade, parts of the north transept, [a new] south transept and the south wall and upper parts of the east wall of the chancel'. The tower and north transept survived the 1842 rebuild, as did the remarkable 14th century south transept. Close-set buttresses strengthen the transept's side walls, and a dramatic rose window is set in the south gable. Internally the stone roof of the transept is supported by stone transverse arches which cross like scissor-beams.

The rebuilding of the nave, aisles and chancel in 1842 is covered in detail, drawing on the work of Fenning Parke, school master, parish clerk, church warden and local historian, who not only encouraged the builder, William Shepstone, to record the Old Church before it was demolished but also preserved the church warden's accounts and had them transcribed. This book is a fitting memorial to a remarkable man.

Richard Bryant

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

2025-26 Lectures – Gloucester

<p>Monday 22nd September 2025</p> <p>Steven Bassett, 'Hailes church – the first 1000 years'.</p> <p>(Afternoon event at 2 pm in the Parliament Room in the precincts of Gloucester Cathedral)</p>	<p><i>Hailes's church (dedication unknown) stands immediately north of Hailes Abbey. It has twelfth-, mid thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century fabric and nationally important wall-paintings. Written evidence shows that its structural predecessor was of pre-Conquest minster status. The talk demonstrates these origins and also explores the profound impact of its ownership by the abbey (1246-1539), from which it has never recovered.</i></p> <p><i>(Joint event with the Gloucester Cathedral Guides)</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 29th October 2025</p> <p>Melanie Barge, 'Pillow Talk: The Archaeology of Rabbits'.</p>	<p><i>Melanie Barge of Historic England will talk about the archaeology of rabbits, a personal interest initially sparked by the question of the date and use of the Long Mound at Crickley Hill. We can expect to learn all about pillow mounds and much else besides.</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 26th November 2025</p> <p>Dean Irwin, 'Eleanor of Provence, Gloucester, and the Jews'.</p>	<p><i>This talk will explore the presence of Jews in Gloucester up to 1275, the expulsions of Jews from Eleanor of Provence's dower towns, and the afterlives of those communities.</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 28th January 2026</p> <p>Rebecca Lane, 'Recording and Investigation of The Fleece Hotel, Gloucester'.</p>	<p><i>Between 2020 and 2022, as part of the Cathedral Quarter High Street Heritage Action Zone, investigators from Historic England undertook the detailed recording and investigation of The Fleece Hotel, Gloucester. The building has long been known for its 12th-century undercroft, but dendrochronology has established that there was extensive timber framing from the late 15th century also surviving. In 2020 far more of this timber frame was made available for recording. The recording work, combined with documentary research, enabled a much fuller understanding of the form and original function of the buildings on the site.</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 25th February 2026</p> <p>Richard Coates, 'National and local place-names'.</p>	<p><i>The local place-names of Gloucestershire and the West of England arise where language, history and culture meet. Some well-known ones can be understood with greater precision if we pay attention to linguistic and historical detail. This talk presents some choice specimens, and engages with a few long-standing mysteries.</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 25th March 2026</p> <p>Professor Tom Beaumont James MBE PhD FSA</p> <p>'Rediscovering the lost medieval royal palace at Clarendon, Wiltshire'.</p>	<p><i>With Westminster and Woodstock (Blenheim) Clarendon was a focal point of royal itineraries from William the Conqueror to the Tudor age. Salisbury developed beyond the gates of its uniquely large deer park. How was it lost and what's there now? Why are the largest exhibits in Room 40 (Medieval Europe) at the British Museum from Clarendon?</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 Gloucester Cathedral Guides and will take place in the Parliament Room in the cathedral precincts at 2 pm on 22nd September 2025. 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.

2025-26 Lectures – Bristol

<p>Monday 22nd September 2025 Brian Vincent, 'The Capper Pass Smelting Works'.</p>	<p><i>Brian will tell the story of one of the most successful local metal smelting concerns of the nineteenth century and the family who made it.</i></p>
<p>Monday 27th October 2025 Steve Grudgings, 'Inland Waterways in Bristol and Gloucestershire'.</p>	<p><i>The importance of inland waterways to local and national communications is under-appreciated and poorly understood. We shall learn why and how historians and archaeologists need to recalibrate their understanding of the matter.</i></p>
<p>Monday 24th November 2025 Richard Graydon, 'Bristol and Lloyd George's Land Valuation of 1909'.</p>	<p><i>The budget of 1909 proposed a tax on increasing land values. The surveyors' returns, being analysed by a keen group of volunteers, tell us much about the social history of the years 1911-15. We shall also look at the surveyors' methods and why the land tax never came into force.</i></p>
<p>Monday 26th January 2026 Evan Jones, 'Plague and its Impact in the Early Seventeenth Century'.</p>	<p><i>(No details available yet – refer to website for details.)</i></p>
<p>Monday 23rd February 2026 Alan Clarke, 'Journey to St Petersburg: Robert Charleton of Bristol and the Quaker mission to Russia, 1854'.</p>	<p><i>In January 1854, Robert Charleton, pin-maker and temperance activist from Bristol, set out with two other members of the Society of Friends on a mission to the Russian capital in the hope of an audience with Tsar Nicholas I and the overall aim of averting war between Britain and Russia. This talk focuses on that mission, setting it in the context of Charleton's life and work in Bristol.</i></p>
<p>Monday 23rd March 2026 Eugene Byrne, 'Bristol's Home Front in the Great War'.</p>	<p><i>Between 1914 and 1918 we find soldiers living in a theme park, women police detectives and moral panic over everything from trashy American films to darkened streets and the unladylike way factory girls threw themselves at visiting highlanders. Along the way we'll find out how Bristol failed to kill Corporal Hitler and a handy way of jumping the queue at a grocer's shop.</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.

**Note – copy date for the next newsletter is
31st January 2026**