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There is little resemblance between Chairman Mao and John Beckett, director of the Victoria History of the Counties of England (known to most of us as the VCH), but both have produced a Little Red Book. The Chinese version has a significantly larger print run, and may have had a greater influence on global history, but both enshrine thoughts, beliefs and attitudes which are very much of their time. The VCH volume is entitled The Little Big Red Book and it has been published to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the VCH project by the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. There is a compendium of information, ranging from a list of all contributors to VCH volumes 1990-2007, via a summary contents list of all Big Red Books and new popular volumes published in that period, to a series of short essays on the history of this extraordinary and idiosyncratic English institution since 1933. It is attractively illustrated with portraits of luminaries, maps, and photographs reflecting themes covered by recent VCH work. There are also testimonials from figures associated with culture and history, including Boris Johnson, a trustee of the Oxfordshire VCH who now has other even more weighty matters on his plate.

Its appearance is timely in other ways, for the VCH has been undergoing far-reaching changes and will surely continue to experience further reshaping and reappraisal during coming decades. The most significant, and one with a long ancestry, is the perpetual challenge of finding sufficient funding to carry on the work. This is hardly news, but the ever-growing costs of such a project, and the ever-greater complexity of the administrative and organisational frameworks which lie behind any such enterprise, have for many years presented the VCH and its editors with permanent insecurities. That, sadly, shows little sign of changing, and we might cynically feel that to the Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who suggests that ‘By working with local volunteers, the Victorian County History is helping local people to discover, record and take pride in the history of their communities’, the volunteer element has obvious financial attractions. And yet the volunteers working on current projects represent a fundamental and very welcome reorientation of the focus of the VCH, which began in the 1960s and 1970s with the inclusion in the Red Books of extended general essays on social, cultural, political and religious topics, essays which in some instances could be published separately as accessible introductions to key themes in local history.

This refocusing, with the adoption of less daunting and more popular works which parallel the traditional (and essential) specialist topographical compilations, has now continued into the production (under the auspices of the England’s Past For Everyone project) of attractive and readable paperback books on particular places, regional themes, and key topics within communities—thus, the volume on Bristol looks in depth at migration and ethnicity over the past millennium, while that on Codford is a popular history of a smaller Wiltshire community. The VCH will never escape either the legacy of its own late Victorian origins (and that is no bad thing) or the burden of fundraising, but it has shown in recent years a welcome ability to adapt and be flexible. That, far more than any sentimental attachment to a great institution, is what has allowed it to survive and flourish in the early 21st century. Floreat VCH!
Searching for the ‘small people’ of medieval London

CAROLINE BARRON

The small people of medieval London, and the marginal people of the city, are hard to find because their lives leave few traces in the surviving records. Here I explore just a few of the sources in which it is possible to track something of their existence. In the first place it might be helpful to discuss what is meant by the term ‘small people’, and in using this term it is not my intention to discuss children. The phrase ‘small people’ is to be found in the appeal (or accusation) which Thomas Usk, a London scrivener and erstwhile supporter of John of Northampton (mayor of London 1381-1383), drew up in 1384, in which he listed all the ‘crimes’ which John of Northampton had committed in alliance with his ‘confederacy’ of supporters during his mayoralty and in the weeks following his defeat in his bid to be re-elected as mayor for a third year.

John of Northampton, in some ways rather like Ken Livingstone, had been a ‘radical’ mayor of London, elected in the October following the Peasants’ Revolt of June 1381. He was very active as mayor and, although his radicalism has been questioned, there is no doubt that he did (for whatever reasons) take up the cause of the lesser—the small—people of London. For example, he supported the abolition of the monopoly on the sale of fish in the city, thus opening the London market to competition from non-citizen fishmongers. He also observed that the lack of small change was leading to inflationary prices (for example, of bread and ale) so in May 1382 he had £80 sterling minted in the Tower into farthings (which should have produced 76,800 farthings) so that brewers and bakers would no longer be able to claim that they had no change for a halfpenny. Northampton’s mayoralty was also noted for an emphasis on cleanliness, both physical in cleaning up the streets and watercourses of the city, and sexual in a renewed attack on prostitution in the city (a theme discussed below). The intensity and the pace of these reforming and interventionist measures were notable.

But they were not pleasing to everyone, and when in October 1383 John of Northampton came up for election the third time he lost to the grocer Nicholas Brembre. Northampton did not accept this and tried by various means (such as seeking a new writ, and strong arm tactics) to overthrow the election. There was rioting in the city, he was arrested, and in the following stormy days Thomas Usk, who had earlier been one of his supporters, decided to reveal all in his appeal or accusation against John. In this appeal, Usk reveals how the late mayor had organised his political support, in part by circulating ‘bills’ which were written by Usk himself. In this way, Usk argues,

‘he [John of Northampton] was evermore in excitation of the poor people to make them to be more fervent against the great men of the town, and against the officers of the city, and it was said to the people that the great men would ever have the people by oppression in low degree, for which words … the dissension is arisen between the worthy persons and the small people of the town’
He explains that in planning the tactics for the forthcoming mayoral election in October 1383, and referring to the enlarged and more radical Common Council of the 1370s and 80s,

‘it was agreed that certain persons of diverse crafts ...should be called at election day into the common council for to help to the election of John of Northampton and the small people were drawn in ... so that fully their hearts should stand with John of Northampton and that if, in time coming, another mayor should be chosen who would move against him [John of Northampton] he might have them ready to maintain him against all those who would speak against him’

Finally, Usk argues that John of Northampton and his supporters

‘drew to them many crafts and much small people that knew no skill of governance nor of good counsel, and by confederacy, congregation and covin purposed to ... maintain by might their false and wicked doings under colour of words of common profit’

So, in the view of Thomas Usk the ‘small people’ were the lesser craftsmen, as opposed to the large-scale merchants who dealt in overseas trade, or the prosperous artisans who employed the small people in their workshops. These small people would have been citizens but, perhaps, not yet householders or shopowners. They might have held office in some of the lesser crafts such as cappers, or joiners, curriers, tanners, or indeed scriveners, and such men are also to be found as the masters of parish fraternities, or acting as churchwardens. In fact Thomas Usk was himself just such a ‘small person’. His parents were David and Alice Usk who lived in the parish St Nicholas Shambles. David was a hurer (capper) and, since the Christian name David is rarely found in medieval London documents, he may have been an immigrant from Usk on the Welsh borders. David Usk is to be found in the records acting on local juries or as a surety for other ‘small people’: his associates were carpenters, plumbers, bakers, chandlers, cordwainers. He must have prospered sufficiently, for he owned a couple of properties in the parish of St Nicholas Shambles and was able to send his son to school, or to be apprenticed, to become a ‘clerk’ or ‘scrivener’. In 1380-1381 Thomas Usk became one of the clerks to the Goldsmiths’ Company and the hall of that company, as he makes clear in his appeal, became an important meeting place for Northampton’s supporters. The Drapers craft, to which Northampton belonged, as yet had no hall of its own.

In reading his appeal it is possible to see how Thomas Usk, himself a ‘small man’, was catapulted into the centre of political activity. This was, for him, very exciting and if the excitement went to his head, that is not surprising. Usk’s new role as ‘secretary’ to Northampton, at the centre of the political whirlpool of London politics, brought him into direct contact with many powerful men. Following Northampton’s defeat in the mayoral election of 1383, one of the strategies of the defeated party was to send a delegation to John, Duke of Lancaster, thought to be a supporter of Northampton, seeking a royal writ for a new election. The delegation consisted of Richard Norbury, a mercer, Robert Rysby, a draper, ‘and me, Thomas Usk’. The request for a new writ was curtly refused by Gaunt: ‘Nay, certes writ shall you non have, avise you among yourselves’. In other words Gaunt was telling the London delegation to get lost.

But Usk, the small man, had been there on a three-man delegation talking face to face with John of Gaunt. And a few months later, in August 1384, when Usk had decided to turn king’s evidence, he found himself again in the presence of ‘great’ men, this time reading or speaking his appeal to King Richard II himself. Later, when he came to write
his Testament of Love, Usk described the emotions of the small man brought face to face with his sovereign:

‘For I trowe this is well known to many persons, that otherwhile, if a man be in his sovereign’s presence, a manner of ferdens creepeth in his heart, not for harm, but of godly subjection: namely as men readen that angels ben aferde of our saviour in heaven’.9

But Thomas Usk, and his artisan allies, were by no means the smallest people in London. They were citizens, albeit members of the lesser crafts, and they played a part in civic government. David Usk, for example, served on juries, and other small men were members of the city’s Common Council. At the end of the fourteenth century the population of London had dropped from a high of perhaps 80,000 in 1300 to half that number by 1400. In fact the population of London did not begin to rise again until the end of the fifteenth century and then, in the course of the sixteenth, it expanded massively to reach some 200,000 by 1600. In the later fourteenth century, when the population was only about 40,000, we have to reckon that about half of the population would have been women. Of the 20,000 males, perhaps 7000 would have been boys, and another 1000 or so would have been clergy, aliens or royal servants. This means that the adult male population was about 12,000. It has been estimated that about one in four of these men would have been citizens, or freemen, so the politically-active citizen body may have numbered about 3000. Therefore Usk, and his fellow ‘small men’, the carpenters and tanners and cappers, were in fact members of an elite which comprised only a quarter of the adult male population of the city.

There were, of course, gradations within the group of 3000 or so citizens and when Usk spoke of the ‘small people’ he had in mind the citizens who exercised least authority in the city. The ‘small people’ did not become mayor or one of the twenty-four aldermen. But they might serve as one of the 150 men on the Common Council; or they might act as masters or wardens of their craft and so exercise authority of some sort for a period of time over their fellow men (and women). And some of the ‘small men’ would have been elected as churchwardens, at least two for each of the 100 parish churches in London. Moreover, there were increasing numbers of parish guilds or fraternities: some churches had four or five of these, each with their own wardens responsible for collecting money, spending it and exercising authority over their fellow guild members. Many of these men might well have held one of the numerous jobs as minor civil servants, ranging from those who audited the annual accounts of the land and income of London Bridge to the measurers of oysters at the quays along the Thames. In 1422 at Queenhythe the ‘keeper of the assay of oysters’ (the searcher or inspector appointed to ensure that the oysters were ‘in season and wholesome’) was a man named John of Ely. His neighbours complained at the Queenhythe wardmote, or ward meeting, that he did not carry out the office himself but subcontracted it ‘to women, who know not how to do it; nor is it worship to this city that women should have such things in governance’.10

Women were not citizens, and even when they participated in the economic life of the city (and they are particularly visible in this respect in London in the 150 years or so following the Black Death of 1348-1349) they did not participate in its political or governing structures. Those who objected to John of Ely farming the job of assayer of oysters to women did so because he thereby gave women a measure of public authority over men. It was not ‘worshipful’ that women should act in public judgement on men, so a woman who was married to a ‘small man’ did not participate alongside him in the political life of the city.
But there were some 9000 men in London who were not citizens, who never exercised authority over their fellow men and who never held any sort of office, however lowly. These are the men, and their wives and children, whom we might characterise as ‘smaller people’ or ‘smallest people’ or, to use a modern word, as ‘marginals’. But although these men and women were marginal to the political and governing structures of the city, yet they constituted some half, or three quarters, of the inhabitants of the city. Searching for the ‘small people’ of London is not in fact difficult; but finding the marginal men and women of London is much harder.

The nature of marginality has been much discussed in the last thirty years ago by anthropologists such as Michel Foucault and Mary Douglas, who pointed out that just as the body purges itself of impurities, so the city pushes out, from the centre, all that is ‘impure’, dangerous’, ‘undesirable’. And Martha Carlin’s work on the suburb of Southwark across the river Thames, whither the city banished crafts and activities which were unwholesome, noisy or dangerous, bears this out. Margins are distant and inhabited not by individuals, but rather by members of some group linked by apparently defining characteristics that render them, and their lives, intelligible to those living at the centre and observing them from their inner fastness.

There are difficulties in studying marginal groups, because information about them almost always comes from the centre, from those who are in power and who choose to expel or marginalise these people. Marginals tend to come into sight (whether as individuals or as a group) when they offend or when they cease to be sufficiently marginal and intrude on the centre. So the evidence about marginals in the past tends to come from legal records or tax records, and these records are shaped according to the requirements of those at the centre. There are almost no records from the medieval period which enable us to allow these lives lived at the margins to be seen in their own terms. In London there are excellent surviving records about civic government from the late thirteenth century, plenty of documentation of property transactions, and large numbers of wills. All these sources tell us about those at the centre but, sometimes, they reveal—fleeting—ly—a view of the margins. Usually such glimpses come when the marginals were in trouble or cause trouble, when they appear in the records of the mayor’s Court or the ecclesiastical courts. It was comparable judicial records (specifically the records of the Chatelet prison for the years 1389-1392) which enabled Bronislaw Geremek to reconstruct something of the lives of marginals in medieval Paris.

Who were the marginals of medieval London? It is possible to divide them into two groups. In the first place there were those who were marginal simply because of who they were, rather than by their own agency. In this group were the sick; lepers; the disabled; the elderly; and aliens such as the Jews, Italians, Hanseatic Merchants and Flemings. In the second group were those who were marginalised by their own actions or choice of lifestyle—prisoners, criminals, prostitutes, lower or unbeneﬁced clergy, anchorites, dealers in second-hand clothes (known as upholsterers), women who sold food in the streets (known as hucksters), beggars, servants, discharged soldiers, players and minstrels, vagrants, vagabonds and, in the sixteenth century, gypsies. The second group have in common their poverty (in varying degrees), their lack of property, and their instability or movement (comparable to the epithet in legal records today, ‘of no fixed address’).

There was a geographical or spatial dimension to marginality in medieval London. Many, if not all, of these ‘marginalised’ groups lived at the physical edges, outside the walls in the suburbs. In this respect medieval London was different from most cities today, where it is in the physical centre that the poorest people live and it is those areas
which are decayed and seen as dangerous. The suburbs now are inhabited by the prosperous, and by those with a stake in society. It is not easy to know how those at the centre perceived those who lived at the margins, often seen as dangerous because of their potential capacity to reform or change the centre, or to challenge central control. In the same way it is hard to know to what extent those at the margins were conscious of their marginal status. Did they have a sense of common purpose or action? Were they completely powerless or were they able to threaten or challenge the centre and those in power? Our main problem in attempting to answer these questions remains the centrality of the sources, and we have to live with that.

In an attempt to move closer to the marginals of medieval London, I have chosen to look at three groups who are usually considered as marginals, namely prostitutes, lepers and vagrants. In the case of prostitutes it is clear that they were expected to live at the margins of city life. Among the city’s earliest surviving ordinances or regulations of 1276-1278, it was ordained that ‘no whore of a brothel is to be resident within the city’.\(^\text{13}\) In 1393 it was decided that, because affrays and riots were caused by men resorting to common harlots at taverns and at the brewhouses of hucksters within the City (and especially those run by Flemish women—such xenophobia was commonly found in civic regulations) in future, common harlots were to keep themselves in the assigned places, namely the Stews (located in Southwark) and in Cokke Lane (outside city walls north-west of Smithfield). If prostitutes were found elsewhere they were to forfeit their upper garments and hoods.\(^\text{14}\) It may be remembered that one of the disreputable customers at Gluttony’s alehouse in Piers Plowman was Clarice of Cokkeslane.\(^\text{15}\) Clothing was significant: in 1351 (in the aftermath of the Black Death) the city ruled that ‘common lewd women’ were not to wear fur-trimmed garments (that is, they were not to appear like good and noble dames of the realm) but were to wear hoods of ray (a striped cloth) unlined and vestments without fur or lining.\(^\text{16}\) In these ways, prostitutes were doubly marginalised, by having to work at the physical margins and to wear a distinct, and marginalising, dress.

But prostitutes in London were not confined to brothels run by the town authorities as they were in, for example, Florence, Seville, Dijon, Augsburg or the towns of Languedoc.\(^\text{17}\) In London, Cock Lane seems simply to have been an area in which independent prostitutes lived. It lay outside the walls, but within the city’s jurisdiction. In Southwark the stews were run by the bailiff of the bishop of Winchester’s Clink manor. In the fifteenth century, rather remarkably, regulations were drawn up to govern these brothels or, as they were more generally known, stews.\(^\text{18}\) These regulations aimed to protect all the three parties to the business: the stewholder or brothel-keeper was assured of a rent of 14d a week paid by the prostitute and not by her client; the interests of the client were observed in that the prostitute was not to be diseased, nor was she to take his harness in lieu of payment, and nor was he to be dragged into the lodging of the prostitute. Moreover the prostitute was not herself to have a paramour, presumably so that she would not be distracted from her client. The prostitute herself was not be forced to live there, nor was she to do other work for brothel-keeper, nor was she to borrow money from him and so get into his debt and thus under his control. Above all, she was to be free to leave when she wished to do so. One of the regulations stipulated that the women were not to work at the stews while the king was at Westminster and holding either his parliament or council. The implication of this is that royal councillors and MPs were not to be distracted from the king’s business.

But, of course, prostitution was not confined to the two ‘margins’ designated by the civic authorities. Each of the twenty-four wards of the city of London held meetings (or moots) of the adult male householders of the ward at least twice a year. On these
occasions the inhabitants of the ward could complain about public nuisances such as dirty streets, dangerous buildings or anti-social behaviour. Only a few accounts of wardmotes survive from the medieval period but where they exist they can provide interesting insights into marginals. In the years 1422-1423, for example, several women living in the city were presented by the householders of St Botolph, Bishopsgate, a parish just outside the city walls, for committing fornication with diverse unknown men and were declared to be ‘common strumpets’. The householders also presented Maud Barbour, Joan Jolybody and Isobel Boxle as ‘common bawds between diverse persons on many occasion’ (that is, they were procuresses rather than prostitutes themselves).19

If prostitutes were found plying their trade in areas not designated for prostitution, their clothes might be confiscated. But in 1382-1383, during the mayoralty of John of Northampton, new and harsher punishments were laid down both for men and women for immorality. There were separate punishments for bawds (procurers or pimps) whether male or female, for prostitutes, for brawlers and scolds, for priests (and those whether married or single with whom they had sexual relations), and for adulterers (male or female). The punishments were directed at the public shaming of the offender. A ‘common courtesan’, or prostitute, was to be led, with minstrelsy and carrying a white wand, from Aldgate (east of city) through the city, along Cheapside to Newgate and then led to Cock Lane to take up her residence there. For a third offence, her hair to be cut while on the thew (a special pillory for women), and she was then to be banished from the city. The punishment for bawds or procuresses was more ferocious. For the first offence they were to be brought from prison, again with minstrelsy, and then to the thew, where their hair was to be cut. For the second offence the punishment was repeated but with the addition of ten days in prison ‘without ransom’, and for the third offence she was to suffer the same punishment and then was to be taken to one of the gates of the city and to forswear the city forever.20

In spite of these draconian regulations, the city appears only to have carried out the severe punishments against bawds and not against practising prostitutes. In 1385 Elizabeth, wife of Henry Moring, was severely punished because she took in young girls as apprentices and then prostituted them, and took their earnings. It was for the betrayal of trust and, especially, because she had abused the surrogate parental relationship of the mistress and her apprentice that Elizabeth was condemned to the thew, and then banished from the city.21 Similarly, Alice Boston, who also prostituted her apprentice, ‘a young damselle, innocent of sin’, to diverse persons for money was condemned to stand at the thew for an hour on three market days, having been led to the place ‘with pipes and other open minstrelsy’.22 But in neither of these cases, nor in any others at this period, is there any reference to cutting the culprit’s hair.

Another insight into life lived on the margins of medieval London is provided by the chance survival of a series of records of the annual meetings of the wardmote of the extramural ward of Portsoken in the 1470s and 1480s. It is clear that in this area many strumpets (in the later records known as harlots) were plying their trade, and there were also considerable numbers of male and female bawds, or procurers, at work. In all 151 men and women were accused of sexual offences in the years 1465-1483. Only thirteen appear twice, one three times and one four times. The large majority (90 per cent) of those accused of sexual offences appear only once, which suggests that the city’s regulations had some effect. It would seem that presentation to the wardmote led to punishment followed by a change of life style or, more likely perhaps, a change of location. The presence of four men accused of being harlots of their bodies suggests that there may have been less of a double standard than is usually presumed.23
So prostitutes, of whatever gender, lived at the margins of London and, when detected living and working elsewhere in the city, were driven back to their designated marginal areas or, in extreme cases, away from the city altogether. The most extreme punishments seem to have been reserved for notorious or high-profile procurers or bawds. In the later fifteenth century the situation may have begun to change. The population was rising and historians have detected an increased level of vigilance and anxiety on the part of those in authority in England. It is clear that attitudes towards prostitution in London became more condemnatory. In 1506 the Southwark stews were temporarily closed, and in 1516 when Elizabeth Chechyn was prosecuted as a common harlot and Elizabeth Knight as a common bawd they were condemned to be paraded through the city with minstrels,

> ‘the said Elizabeth Chechyn having on her breast a letter of H of yellow woollen cloth in sign and token of a harlot…and the said Elizabeth Knight having upon her one shoulder a letter of B in sign and token of a bawd’.  

In 1543, for the first time, the mayor punished harlots of the stews by ducking them in the Thames on a cucking stool at the Three Cranes in the Vintry, and three years later the stews were suppressed for good on the grounds that they provoked God’s wrath, corrupted youth, annoyed the ‘Commonwealth’ and led to robbery and violence. Their closure was proclaimed with the sound of the trumpet and the prostitutes were to leave the Stews by Easter and go ‘to their natural countries with their bags and baggages’. The emphasis here is once more on marginalisation and on expelling, the ‘impure’ from the body politic. Finally, in 1547, the city began to implement the harsh punishments which John of Northampton had introduced in the 1380s. Founsing Bess, who had been a prostitute at the Stews, was taken in the garden in Finsbury Court ‘with one of the King’s Trumpeters’. She was led ‘with basins tinged before her’ to the pillory at the Standard in Cheapside where she remained for an hour between 10 and 11 in the morning when the market was in full swing. Then her hair was cut off at the ears and a paper was placed on her breast which declared her ‘vicious living’. A contemporary chronicler observed ‘which punishment hath bene an old auncient lawe in this citie of longe tyme and now putt in use againe’.  

Another group of Londoners was marginalised in much the same way as prostitutes—the lepers. Leprosy was a disease greatly feared in medieval society, especially from the twelfth century, when its incidence seems to have increased sharply. In response to this problem pious laymen and women founded leprosaria in large numbers between 1100 and 1250. In London two leper hospitals were founded: St Giles (in the Fields) early in the twelfth century and St James Westminster by 1189: both of these were well away from the city in the countryside of Middlesex. The Lock hospital, which was founded by the early fourteenth century was also away from the city, at Newington in Surrey, well to the south of Southwark. Although it has recently been argued that the extent to which medieval society marginalised the leper has been exaggerated, there is no doubt that it was the policy of the city of London to confine them to the margins. The set of regulations of 1276-1278 which banned prostitutes from living within the walls also laid down that ‘no leper shall be in the City, nor come there, nor make any stay there’. This injunction was reiterated in 1346, 1366, 1372 and 1378. It was laid down that begging lepers were not to beg in the streets of the city ‘for fear of contagion’: instead, they were to live in the designated leper hospitals and beg from there. Moreover in 1375 the keepers of the city gates were sworn to prevent lepers entering the city and the keepers of the leper hospitals were forbidden to bring lepers in or nor knowingly to allow them to enter.
These injunctions were still being issued eighty years later, and they were enforced. John Mayn, who was a leper and a baker, often appeared before the mayor and aldermen and had been told to ‘provide for himself some dwelling outside the city and to avoid the common conversation of mankind’. He failed to act as he was instructed and in 1372 was sworn, on pain of the pillory, to leave the city and not return. Jurors at meetings of the wardmote provided the names of lepers and asked for them to be expelled from the city, as in the case of Christina, a Dutchwoman, who was presented in 1466 simply as ‘a leper defective’. Whether these people had leprosy, or simply skin diseases, they were driven out of the city, in spite of their desire to work, and they were physically marginalised. Yet, there were leper houses provided for them, run by the city and supported by the alms of pious Londoners (many testators left money to the leper houses) who received the prayers of the lepers in return for their benefactions. Thus, there was a way in which these people, although physically marginalised, were still included within the compass of Christian charity and reciprocal prayer. In this sense lepers were less marginal than prostitutes.

Another group of marginal Londoners were those, usually known as vagabonds and vagrants, who moved about and had no fixed address. Poverty and begging were not, in themselves, wicked in the eyes either of Church or State. Poverty was accepted (especially, but not only, life-cycle poverty) and since the poor would enter more easily than the rich into the Kingdom of Heaven, they (like lepers) had a role to play in helping the rich to achieve salvation. The Black Death of 1348-1349, in killing off about a half of the population of England, caused a crisis in the labour market. There were not enough workers. Therefore able-bodied beggars who could work became objects of suspicion, a suspicion aggravated by the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 when hundreds of rural workers (and priests and local manorial officials) moved in great armies of protest from the countryside towards London on the feast of Corpus Christ, 13 June. Previously, pilgrims, hermits and wandering strangers were considered as objects of charity—indeed, the fourth corporal work of mercy was ‘to harbour strangers’—but now strangers were under suspicion. The labour legislation of the Cambridge Parliament of 1388 required those who moving around the countryside to carry identity cards, or passports, sealed by the local justice of the peace or by a manorial official.

There was a serious shortage of labour in England during the late fourteenth century, and for most of the fifteenth, so the able-bodied man who drifted towards the towns was doubly questionable: why was he not helping to bring in the harvest and why was he on the move? The short answer was that he was seeking a better job, freedom and more pay, but the attitude of those in authority in London towards such ‘betterment migrants’ was little different from their attitude to prostitutes and lepers. In November 1381, again during the mayoralty of John of Northampton, Adam Ryebred from Spalding in Lincolnshire was brought before the mayor and aldermen on a charge of wandering through the City begging and pretending that he was unfit to work. But when he was examined it was clear that he was ‘strong and lusty, capable of labour and able to earn his food and clothing and a reasonable wage in any part of the kingdom’ and so it was considered that he was in this way defrauding genuine beggars and poor people, and deceiving the public. Adam did not deny the charges and was sworn not to beg within the city, under penalty of the pillory. At the same time Geoffrey Auncel from Ireland, Simon Crockere from Somerset, John Sperlyng from Hoddeston, Patrick the Irishman and Thomas Potager from Bristol together with other ‘faitors’ (cheating beggars) were also sworn not to beg within the city. The range of places from which these men came shows the range of betterment migration in late fourteenth-century England.
These vagabonds, categorised as ‘cheating beggars’, were marginalised and expelled from the city. But in the course of the fifteenth century vagrancy itself came to be regarded as criminal. In the wardmote returns of 1421-1422 no beggars or vagrants were presented by the juries, but fifty years later in the Portsoken wardmote meetings between 1469 and 1482, twelve men were presented as ‘faytoner beggars’ and one, Thomas Steward, simply for being a vagabond.\(^\text{35}\) This increasing hostility to vagrants and vagabonds was, doubtless, another symptom of the rising population. Betterment migrants were gradually being transformed into wandering vagrants in search of work.

In 1367 the City had expelled all ‘mendicants, vagrants and pilgrims’, who were to leave the city by the morrow of St Laurence day (10 August), presumably because such persons were desperately needed to bring in the harvest.\(^\text{36}\) There were similar expulsion proclamations at intervals during the next hundred years. But by 1475 the emphasis had changed: ‘vagabonds and masterless people’ were to leave the City under penalty of the stocks, and this proclamation came in November when the harvest would have long been safely gathered in.\(^\text{37}\) Similar proclamations and injunctions (accompanied by searches) were issued over the next forty years, banishing ‘mighty beggars and idle persons’ from the city. But in 1516, a new method of dealing with the problem was introduced: Robert Samond was banished from the city as a vagabond ‘with a letter of V of yellow woollen cloth fastened upon his breast’.\(^\text{38}\) This policy was reinforced in September 1517 when the beadles of the wards were ordered to bring to Leadenhall ‘all such mighty beggars and vagabonds as now be in the prisons and cages of the city … And there every of them to have set on his breast a letter V of yellow cloth in sign and token of a vagabond, and from thence to be driven throughout Cheap, with basons ringing before them’.

They were banished from the city and if any returned ‘a hole was to be stricken in one of his ears with a stamp made for the same, and then to be banished from the city forever’. Legitimate beggars were, however, to receive badges licensing them to beg and 772 badges were distributed to the wards for the needy poor.\(^\text{39}\) Surveyors of beggars were appointed, presumably to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy. In 1523 Robert Pykering was appointed as ‘Master and Chief avoider and keeper out of this city and the liberties of the same of all the mighty vagabonds and beggars and all other suspect persons’.\(^\text{40}\) From this time onward, punishments become increasingly harsh: whipping, tying to a cart tail or imprisonment. It was only very gradually that those in authority in England came to realise that a population dearth had been transformed into a glut and that the root of the problem of vagrancy and beggary was not viciousness but lack of work.

Finally let us move away from the marginals and consider once again the small people of London. Another route towards them is to make use of the collections of miracles which were put together when a community (usually monastic) was compiling the case for canonisation of a prospective saint, probably buried within its church. This approach to the small people of Paris was developed most imaginatively by Sharon Farmer in her book *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris* (Cornell, 2002). The monks of St Denis, just outside Paris, where Louis IX was buried, had put together the testimony of 330 witnesses to 63 miracles performed by Louis after his death at Tunis in 1271. The minutiae of the lives of the testators and their condition before and after the miracles are recorded in great detail because by this date the papacy had laid down guidelines as to the evidence to be collected in support of a canonisation. This required some biographical information about the person to whom the miracle had happened and those who were the witnesses. Almost all those who had been miraculously helped were very poor, the very small people of Paris. From these small pieces of urban mosaic
Farmer was able to provide insight into the lives of those who usually fall beneath the historian’s radar screen.

London certainly had saints, but they had all been canonised before the papal regulations were in place. So, for example, although numerous miracles were attributed to Thomas Becket to support his canonisation, the circumstances of the witnesses were not recorded. But there is some evidence of small Londoners who visited the shrines of saints elsewhere in England and testified to miracles. There are surviving collections of the miracles (and witnesses) gathered for the unsuccessful enquiries into the saintliness (or not) of Simon de Montfort (died at Evesham 1264) and Henry VI (died 1471), and from the successful enquiry which led to the canonisation of Thomas Cantelupe, bishop of Hereford, who died in 1282.

The account of the miracles of Simon de Montfort was compiled by the monks of Evesham very soon after his death. They recorded 194 and of these six involved Londoners. Their names, a description of their work or status and, sometimes, the date of the miracle are all provided. Take the case of Lamede Machare. On 5 August 1278 Lamede, who lived in parish of St Bride, Fleet Street, was struck by an illness (possibly a stroke) and was paralysed on her left side from the soles of her feet up to her shoulder, with the result that she was unable, from then until Christmas, to go to a church, or enter it, except with the support of a stick or crutch. Her condition was so bad that her life was despaired of. But Lamede vowed that she would personally visit the blessed Simon at Evesham and seek his help in restoring her health. While still sick, the following Whitsun (21 May 1279), ‘turgida et contracta’, Lamede was taken to Evesham by her husband ‘in quodam cinera’ (a barrow with one wheel and two feet). When they reached Evesham on 1 August 1279, after a journey of some ten weeks, Lamede prayed for a whole day in the church. On the following day she was taken in the barrow to the well of the blessed Simon and there prayed, drank, and washed her body. She soon recovered her health and was able to stand upright without any support. She then went to the church of St Mary and St Edwin at Evesham and gave thanks to God for her health.

Some years later, one of those who experienced Thomas Cantelupe’s healing powers was a girl named Alice. Born in Lonsdale in Yorkshire, when she was five she was taken by her father on a pilgrimage to Compostella. While on the journey, still in England, Alice tripped and hurt her foot. It became infected and she was crippled. The pilgrimage to Compostella was abandoned and she and her father lived in London begging at church doors and bathing Alice’s sore foot in the well-known well or fountain near the church of St Clement Danes. They had been living in this hand to mouth way for about ten years when they heard of the miracles of Bishop Thomas of Hereford. They decided to go there and begged enough money to buy a wheelbarrow (parvum currum unius rote) in which Alice’s father pushed her all the way to Hereford (130 miles). Once there she had a visionary experience and was able to stand and walk, albeit with a stick. After her cure, Alice remained in the cathedral for a week, testifying to her recovery, and then she and her father returned to London leaving the wheelbarrow behind as a votive offering. By 1307, when the enquiry into Thomas of Cantelupe’s miracles took place, they were back in London living in the parish of St Giles Cripplegate. Both the parish of St Clement Danes and that of St Giles lay outside the city walls, suggestive of the marginal space occupied by Alice and her father.

Finally, a collection of 174 miracles performed at the shrine of Henry VI at Windsor between 1481 and 1500, was assembled in the reign of Henry VII, who was hoping to have the pious king canonised. They were collected together in preparation for the papal enquiry and contain a good deal of circumstantial information. Pilgrims had
been drawn to the shrine of Henry VI from 34 English counties, and fifteen of the miracles involved Londoners. One saved the life of Thomas Fuller, who lived in the hamlet of Hammersmith in the parish of Fulham in 1484. Thomas, the account relates, had no craft to support him and so ‘lived a poor life among country people, procuring food and clothing for himself with great difficulty by the use of a spade (vanga) and shovel (tribula)’. Often he had to leave his home and wander about in search of employment, so was a vagrant or vagabond as a result of the shortage of available work. On one occasion he fell in with a man driving a flock of sheep along the road: they lodged together at Ickleton (eight miles south of Cambridge, near Duxford). There the law caught up with them for, unknown to Thomas, the sheep were stolen. The two men were taken to Cambridge, pronounced guilty by a jury, and condemned to hang. The true culprit got off by pleading benefit of clergy. Thomas, meanwhile, thinking only of his soul’s health (they say) summoned two ‘venerable doctors of the University’ who confessed him, and he asked them to ensure that he had Christian burial.

He was then taken to the gallows and a large crowd, seeking entertainment, turned out to watch. The halter was placed around his neck and Thomas prayed to the Virgin and to ‘Christ’s worthy champion, King Henry VI’, affirming his innocence. He was then forced to hang himself by his own weight and, this done, the onlookers drifted homewards while he hanged there for an hour. To all intents and purposes Thomas was dead. The judge allowed his body to be removed for burial, and as he was being carted away to the Friars in Cambridge (who had agreed to bury him) he began to breathe again. Those who were with him tried to resuscitate him further rubbing his forehead and cheeks with vinegar and gave him something to drink. But he said nothing until they reached the Friars’ churchyard where a ditch had been dug for the body. There he was able to speak and declared before a crowd of friars, and officers and other people, that the Virgin and ‘Christ’s noble champion, King Henry’ had saved his life, by placing his hand between ‘my neck and the rope’. The Friars cared for him and let him stay for a fortnight while he recovered. Thus rejoicing in the miracle Thomas travelled to Chertsey and then to Windsor to give thanks to his royal intercessor. Thomas Fuller was still alive in 1514 and able to provide the investigators with details of the miraculous events of thirty years earlier.

So, with this story of Thomas Fuller from Hammersmith, who was not a small man (he had no craft by which to earn a living) but rather a marginal and vagrant who earned his bread and clothing by moving from place to place, digging and hoeing, I end this search for the small people and the marginal people of medieval London. It is not easy to track these people and, even when they are found, it is hard to find more than one piece of evidence, yet we might reflect, that if the saints in heaven thought their lives were worth saving, perhaps we also should make the attempt.

Notes and references

3 ibid., pp.424-425 (my italics)
4 ibid., p.426 (my italics)
5 ibid., p.427 (my italics)
8 Usk, ‘Appeal’, p.427
9 Usk, Testament, pp.62-63
10 A.H. Thomas (ed), Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London 1413-1437 (Cambridge, 1943) p.139
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Sources for local history

‘The abstracts and brief chronicles of the time’: memoranda and annotations in parish registers 1538-1812

STEVE HOBBS

The huge growth of interest in family history over the last thirty years has seen much attention focused on parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, the primary genealogical source before the introduction of civil registration in 1837. In recent years they have been systematically gathered up into local record offices, microfilmed to protect them from the heavy demands of access, and transcribed and indexed by family history societies. At all stages there has been significant input from genealogists, which has inevitably led to an almost overwhelming concentration on the relevance of the registers for family history research. This has tended to hide their importance for local historians, in spite of the work of W.E. Tate (see below)—yet on the pages and covers of the registers can be found memoranda, jottings and annotations which provide firsthand evidence for events, attitudes and activities that might otherwise be undocumented. As chronicles of communal memory and experience they provide a vibrant counterbalance to the laconic style of the bureaucratic purpose of the registers. Occasionally incumbents have added observations on the character and circumstances of the parishioners to the records of their rites of passage. These have caught attention of family historians eager to flesh out their ancestors, but the detail in them is often a richer historical source than just a means to allow the reader to empathise with past lives, important though this is.

The variety of this material is considerable and can inform a wide range of studies, from those of specific local interest, such as the fabric of the parish church and local charities, to broader based topics, including demographic research, religious practice, and attitudes to the religious and political upheavals of the English Civil War. This article seeks to draw attention to this material by examining the results of systematic trawl through the registers of Wiltshire parishes, which is offered as an example of what exists in similar variety and quantity in other counties. Over sixty years ago W.E. Tate, in his magisterial study The Parish Chest, drew attention to what he called ‘miscellaneous entries’, describing them as ‘other records as may be found [which] do not really relate to registration business at all, and have been entered in the registers largely for convenience, or perhaps from the notion that the recording of an agreement in the parish register gave it extra sanctity, or simply because the register was the book most readily to hand.’ He identified two main reasons for using registers other than for their principal purpose—as a place of record and as an informal notebook. In spite of his attention, registers remain much underused source by local historians. This is probably due to the randomness of the distribution of the material, which was so dependent on the keeper of the register—the incumbent or parish clerk. Furthermore, similar material might reasonably be expected to be found in more obvious sources, such as vestry minutes and account books of the churchwardens and overseers of the poor, so registers have been overlooked. It is true that comparable material can be found in both those sources, but it never duplicates the register annotations. Parish registers
have a serendipity, and there is no guarantee of success, so they have thus become the preserve of only the most pertinacious local historian. But the evidence from Wiltshire suggests that a considerable amount of important and unique material can be found in them, complementing that found in other parish records.

The registers
The keeping of records of baptism, marriage and burial was required from 1538. Early registers were generally of paper, but in 1598 the synod of Canterbury ordered that parchment books should be purchased by each parish and that all existing entries, or at least those from the start of Elizabeth’s reign, must be copied into them. Parchment was stipulated because it was more durable than paper. These copies rarely contain any annotations that may have been made in the original registers, although in any case the five Wiltshire parishes (Calne, Chippenham, Steeple Ashton, Tisbury, Urchfont) for which original (1538) registers survive have very few annotations. This suggests that the practice of annotating developed rather slowly, as the registers came to be regarded less as a central government imposition and more as a parish record that could be adapted for local needs. Also in 1598, the sending of copies of the registers annually to the registry of the bishop of the diocese became formalised. Provided that this instruction was followed, the register was to some extent released from a bureaucratic straitjacket and a less rigid format could develop, reflecting the interests and requirements of the parish. Churchwardens purchased what they thought was appropriate for the parish and their budget—and as registers were the property of the parish there was inevitably considerable room for variety and individuality in their format and style, provided that this did not detract from the primary business of registration. The opportunity presented by the blank pages and wide margins was taken up by many incumbents and parish clerks to include other information of local importance, so registers became repositories of local knowledge and experience. Significantly, the registers of populous urban parishes, in which registration business was extremely brisk, fare less well in the quantity of additional notes than rural villages, where the pace of such work was inevitably much slower and there was more scope to be expansive.

As well as containing a great variety of miscellaneous notes, registers may be embellished with elaborate title pages or annual headings, reflecting the artistic skills and penmanship of their compilers and making them attractive and lively documents to study. There are also many examples of verse, in the form of encomia and aphorisms, which are doubtless the result of the clerks practising their handwriting. We must remember that there was a constant need to re-cut quills and prepare them for use. Scrap paper was hard to come by and the temptation to test a new nib, offered by the endpapers of the register or even unused parchment pages, was too great. The results give the registers a vitality and exuberance they would otherwise lack. In 1808 Thomas Andrews, parish clerk of Overton, wrote

In 17 Hundred 49, Into the World I came;
Near Candlemas it was the time, And Andrews is my name.
In 18 Hundred ’twas and 8, that I did write this Rhyme;
So you have got Age compleat, It being 59.
And if this Year should be my last, And such the Will of Heav’n
I hope for Pardon for the past, And all my faults forgiv’n3
The musings of John Crooke, baker and clerk of Urchfont, on 8 December 1693, suggest a more serious philosophical character:

Man is a glass, Life is as water, So weakly wayld about,
Sinn brings in Death, Death breaks the glass, So runst the water out

1. The record of a local catastrophe: Netheravon register 1693
   (WSA 2093/2)

2. An example of extravagant penmanship: Dinton register 1658
   (WSA 1211/2)
Printed format registers for marriages were introduced in 1754 as a result of Hardwicke’s Act to Prevent Clandestine Marriages. The recording of baptisms and burials generally continued unchanged until Rose’s Act of 1812, which introduced the form of registers familiar today. Often the empty pages of the redundant registers were used for memoranda and endpapers of the new printed registers fulfilled the same purpose in the period after that covered by this article.

Charity and the Poor Law

In 1708 Gabriel Thistlethwaite, clerk, gave money for the poor of Alderbury to be administered by the rector of Winterslow, who was to hold the writings because, as they might ‘easily wear out or be lost, it is at the request of the donor that this may be fairly recorded in a page of your parish register in perpetuam rei memoriam’.5 This is good example of one of the motives identified by Tate. Notes about local charities are a common subject of memoranda, and were frequently cited in the series of reports into endowed charities in Wiltshire dating from 1818,6 but registers often include details of charities not mentioned in the reports and which presumably had ceased to function by the early nineteenth century. In 1601, for example, Hugh Atwill, parson of St Ewe in Cornwall, gave 33s 4d for the relief of the poor of Amesbury; an act of munificence whose subsequent history is as unclear as its original inspiration.7

The most common records of charitable gifts are lists of collections resulting from briefs, which are royal orders to collect money for deserving causes throughout the country. The needy causes were most frequently responses to fires and other natural disasters, or the building of churches. In the twenty years from 1717, 140 briefs were read out in the church of Baverstock (a parish with a population of 174 in 1801) and £5 1s 4½d was collected.8 The good causes included a fire in St Ives, Cornwall; work on Bampton Church, Westmorland; and help for the sufferers of a hailstorm in Staffordshire. Generally only the total sums collected were recorded, but in several cases donors are listed and they provide useful lists of inhabitants. Six briefs relate to a collection for captive Christians in 1670, while in 1653 the parishioners of Shrewton collected money towards instructing and relieving Indians in New England.9 Communal giving on such a scale is replicated in similar lists found in many parish registers and provides important evidence of the early history of organised charity, the ancestor of the modern phenomena of Comic Relief and Red Nose Day.

In an attempt to help parishioners who found themselves teetering on the edge of poverty, a parish stock—a fund of cash or livestock—might be set up, to be loaned at times of need. This stock might be managed by the churchwardens or the overseers of the poor and often figures in their account books. However there are several examples in the registers, including one from Atworth:

30 May 1670 remaining in the hands of Thomas Willshear and Thomas Pinchin
the sum of £4 which is the church stock and the intrust [interest] to be paid to
the poor yearly … In the year 1671 Thomas Willshear paid the yuse [use] to
James Clarke and James Davies.10

Evidence of the implementation of the Poor Laws, in particular relating to the travelling poor, is covered in the registers. An order made at the quarter sessions in Easter 1678 concerning rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars, was copied into the registers of four parishes, and in one, Dauntsey, a note of an order to be read out in church probably refers to the same matter. The language of the preamble and final paragraph of the order, which top and tail sixteen sections from relevant Acts of 1596-1662, is striking, as is the fact that the policy should be enforced with such rigour in a
period when demographic stagnation and labour shortage are often thought to have reduced the numbers of vagrants.

This Court taking notice that the daily concourse & great increase of Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars is a great grievance & annoyance to the Inhabitants of this County: and through the negligence or ignorance of those officers who have been intrusted in this Concern, they are now growne soe insolent & presumtuous that they have oft by threats & menaces extorted money & victuals from those who live in houses far remote from neighbours, whilst their husbands & servants have been employed abroad in the management of their lawfull Vocations, & have put the people in a generall consternation or fear that they will fire there houses or steal thereire Goods; the Consequences whereof may prove very dangerous, if not timely prevented.11

This is a particularly significant find because the minute books of the sessions are lacking for this period, and this is the only documentary evidence of the order. It also illustrates the use made of the gathering of parishioners in church to disseminate policy and information on civil matters.

The church and its fabric

The allocation of seats in church was generally agreed between the incumbent and churchwardens, and evidence of this may be found in the records for which they were primarily responsible. Richard Gough’s celebrated History of Myddle highlights the significance of the distribution of parishioners in the church, reflecting social status.12 Seating plans or schemes for ten parishes are recorded in the Wiltshire registers. That for Cholderton, made in 1659, lists the parishioners and the estates to which the seats were attached.13 As well as full schemes there are many examples of agreements for individual seats, most notably for Corsham, where 41 were recorded in the register between 1708 and 1806.14 We might reasonably expect to find these in the churchwardens’ accounts, but again the register can be an important and unique source.

The maintenance of churchyard walls was another matter requiring agreement, this time between incumbents and parishioners, and the arrangements for fifteen parishes can be found in Wiltshire registers. These are also indicators of the relative status of landholders, there being a correlation between size of holding and length of wall to be maintained.15 Although it is to the churchwardens’ accounts that the church historian is principally drawn, those records are often silent on two key aspects of the fabric and furnishings of the parish church; the upkeep of the chancel, which was the responsibility of the rector, whether ecclesiastical or lay, and the gift of items or funds for works, the result of individual largesse. These were not paid out of church rates and so are not accounted for by the churchwardens. Instead, evidence of such gifts are often found in registers, and in more detail than items of expenditure by the churchwarden, for which a single line in his account book usually sufficed. Gifts of church plate are often recorded and described, as in the following from Highworth:

1749 a silver chalice the inside whereof was gilt and the Glory on the outside gilt, holding a pint and a half of wine-measure, was given by George Bryan, vicar, for the use of the communion table; with a base for the same.
1750 two silver patens with the Glory gilt in the middle of each with a case for the same were given for the use of the communion table in the church of Highworth by Mrs Henry Southey, 2 Jun 175016

The following example from Broad Hinton illustrates the amount of detail that is of general interest—in this case to the historian of textiles as much as to the ecclesiastical historian:

21 May (Trinity Sunday) 1769: First used the new pulpit cloth and cushion which cost the parish £4 10s 1d, besides what I paid myself, 5s 5d; total £4 15s 6d

2yd of super fine crimson cloth at 12s a yd, £1 4s; 6in of same, 2s 10½d >The tailor made it 1yd 3in deep and cut off the remainder for the cushion<.

6½yd of narrow silk fringe at 2s 11d a yd, 18s 11d; 5yd of broad silk fringe at 4s 8d a yd, £1 3s 4d; 2 silk tassels, 2s 7d each, 5s 2d; 2 ½ yd of bed tick for the cushion at 20p a yd, 3s 9d; red sewing silk, 10½d; carriage from London, 1s 2d; sub total £4 10s 1d, ½yd of callimancoe at 14d a yd, 7d; hooks and eyes, 1s; paid the tailor for making it, 3s 10d. Total £4 15s 6d17

From the same parish the frustrations of the rector to thwart precursors of the modern Kilroy give the register an immediacy that brings the record to life:

1760 the tower was new leaded and a lock and key put on the door: The key to be kept by the minister to prevent people cutting their names etc etc etc in the lead.18

The register of Bradford on Avon has a record of a severe lightning strike on 26 January 1611, written on the front cover, and so badly faded that it had not been noticed before. Its significance lies in the mention of a clock which was ‘straight shattered’ and its frame was broken.19 The earliest reference previously known to a clock in the church was in the mid eighteenth century. The significance of the distinction between chancel and nave is illustrated by a note by the rector of Stratford Tony in 1702 as a result of a dispute with the churchwardens over the costs of work on the church and ‘whether the arch at the east end of the church did not belong to the rectory’. The matter was resolved to his advantage on the verdict of workmen: ‘that the chancel goes no further than the rafters and that four tiles … breadth more or less beyond the rafters belongs to the church’.20

References to the fabric and furnishings of churches are not the only evidence of the religious life of the parish. A few examples give insight into the content of the religious services, a subject generally very thinly covered by local archives. The register of Durrington includes a list of preachers and the texts of their sermons delivered between 1605 and 1617. It covers the period of the compilation and publication (in 1611) of the Authorised Version of the bible. Careful study of the texts might reveal which bible was in use before 1611 and when, or if, it was replaced by the Authorised Version:

4 Jan 1607 Mr James of Freshwater, Isle of Wight preached in church; his text was Luke 12 verse 32; feare not littell flocke for it is father’s pleasur to give you a kingdom

6th Sunday in Lent 1607 and 7 Jun 1607 Mr Griffiths of Idmiston preached in church; his text was Isiah 1verse 16 ‘wash you’

13 Sep 1607 Mr Brown of Winchester preached in church; his text was Mathew 6 verse 24 and the pistle for the 15 sonday after Trinytie sonday; no man can
serve too masters sowe can not serve God and Mammon, which was the doctrine he delivered unto\textsuperscript{21}

In 1707 Francis Greenaway, the parish clerk of Preshute, wrote a series of verses, some of which may be original but others were from the psalms in which he changed the voice from singular to plural, presumably so they could be repeated by the congregation after he spoke or sang them. Thus we are given a rare glimpse of the form of a church service from the early eighteenth century:

\begin{quote}
have mercy upon us (me) o God after thy Great Goodnes According to the multitude of thy mercies do away our (mine) offences.

for we (I) acknowledge our (my) faults & our Sins are Ever before (me) us\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

We have seen above that the gathering of parishioners was an opportunity to read out church briefs and disseminate government policy relating to the poor, but events in the church were not always of a religious or charitable nature. Some are disquieting indeed. A suspicious death in Corsham in 1727 led to an autopsy being carried out in the church, when Ann, wife of James Best, was 'cut open in the church Suposed for Murder'. The outcome is not recorded but three years later Millicent Burbidge was 'poisoned and cut open for a child in the church'.\textsuperscript{23}

The benefice, glebe and tithes

The importance of recording privileges and rights for posterity, or, more particularly, for their successors, was prevalent in the minds of many incumbents in their record-keeping. Several clergymen recorded in great detail the work they had paid for in maintaining the fabric of vicarages or rectories and the chancel of the parish church. A prime motive for doing this was to protect themselves, or the beneficiaries of their estates, against any unreasonable claims for dilapidations their successors might make. The register was the ideal and, thus, often the sole repository of this information, since it was passed on from incumbent to incumbent.

The following lengthy extract from a memorandum by John Mayo, rector of Beechingstoke, describing his considerable efforts to maintain and improve the benefice, demonstrates these points very well. It also illustrates a not uncommon way in which a young man might be set up for a career in the church, albeit somewhat prematurely in this case:

\begin{quote}
My father bought the next presentation of Mr Walker. The incumbent then was one Mr [John] Chapman of Bath, who was then so healthy and strong that my father’s best friends told him that Mr Chapman’s life was as good as mine, yet in less than two years after the purchase (viz. May 1737) Mr Chapman died. I was then in my 24th year in the month of November, the year I was instituted and inducted and when I came to see the parsonage and the buildings etc I found everything in the greatest degree [...] repair, the usage consequence of non residence; the house within 3 perch of the brook and the ground [...] very little above the level of the water when Puckshipton hatch was shut to water the meads; the chancel windows excessively bad. The barn without floors and scarce any thatch: The inclosure without gates, stiles or hedges or trees. In the year 1743 I began building the parsonage house and finished it entirely at my own expense without demanding or receiving anything from Mr Chapman’s
\end{quote}
executors for dilapidations. In the year 1744 I came with my family to reside in my new house …

I had the chancel window glazed and ceiled and my seat there enlarged at my own expense […] the churchyard was so full of nettles that they even peeped [up] at the windows of the church and chancel. These have been with much labour destroyed.24

This need to preserve and maintain rights and privileges was an important aspect of the relationship between the incumbent and his parishioners. In 1760 John Reeks, rector of Stratford Tony, allowed the body of Mrs Dorothea Hill to be brought by hearse through the rectory backside. In a memorandum he emphasised that this was a permissive rather than customary right (a concession, not a precedent), granted for ease of access because the coffin was of lead and extremely heavy.25

Incumbents were keen to maintain the glebe and rights to tithes for themselves and their successors, and there are several examples in local registers. Gilbert Cowper, vicar
of Wanborough, recorded the following, which illustrates the complexities of tithe arrangements (in this case payments due for cattle brought into the parish for fattening up, technically known as agistment). Although large numbers of cattle were brought each year into Wiltshire for this purpose, documentary evidence of this important trade is a very scarce.

10 Jul 1729 memo that there are about 364 east side common leases in Wanborough and that 100 of them or more are every year stocked with foreign cattles out of other parishes, which yield no profit to the parson or vicar either by plow or pail, therefore a tenth part ought to be paid for their agistment but nothing is or has been paid to the vicar for their pasturage there.26

These examples provide an important source for the study of the relationship between the incumbent and his flock, a crucial dynamic in the history of the parish. Further material about this relationship is revealed in a note about a Christmas custom in Everleigh, made in 1610 by John Barnstone, rector, who came up with an interesting, if initially unsuccessful, compromise to dissociate the Christian feast from the perceived bacchanalian excesses of the custom:

When I first came to this parish, being about eleven or twelve years past, it was said there had been a custom long before of making the neighbourhood eat only bread and cheese and drink at the parsonage house on Christmas day after evening prayer, which custom out of neighbourly kindness, or out of weakness, (for I misliked it) I continued accordingly til the gunpowder treason 1605; after which time we agreed, both I and the parishioners, (except one or two) that drinking should be on the fifth of November, in remembrance of our deliverance, which continued some few years, but after they desired to have it on their old day and so had.27

Old habits die hard and in this case were only changed in 1755 by a particularly cunning suggestion by the rector to move the custom to 5 January.28

**Agriculture and weather**

Notes about weather conditions are often found, perhaps supporting Dr Johnson’s opinion that when two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather.29 They are a reminder of the real concerns for the fate of the harvest on which so much depended. As we might expect of the clergymen of a rural parish, John Giles, rector of Long Newnton (now in Gloucestershire), was fully familiar with the agricultural world in which he was directly involved, either by his own efforts on his glebe land or as the recipient of tithes of the produce of his neighbours’ lands:

1707 This year began with a very dry spring there being little or no rain to refresh the earth from February to the 21 May. And much land was unsown with barley till the rain came and that which was sown did not come up until the earth was moistened with showers, and the clods were so baked and fastened with the dry weather that much corn (especially beans and peas and some barley) rotted under the earth and never came up, and yet there was a plentiful harvest. The late sowed corn came up and was ripe and cut and carried in 3 months or by the latter end of August. The late sowed corn being green in ear by 3 or 4 days of violent hot weather all the barley was full ripe to the admiration of all people by God’s providence.30

Perhaps the most important document found in the Wiltshire registers is an agreement for regulating the common fields and downs in Shrewton, dated 9 March 1600.31 It is
crucial for a study of the agricultural and social history of the parish and notes that following the dismemberment of the manor

divers disorders have been committed to the great hurt and detriment of the greater part of the freeholders, tenants and commoners, and to the breach of Christian charity and peace of the neighbourhood: For reformation whereof and at the earnest persuasion of Nicholas Barlowe, clerk, we the freeholders, tenants and commoners whose names and marks are hereunto subscribed do with one accord agree, consent, determine and ratify that these orders following shalbe inviolably kept observed, binding ourselves, our heirs and assigns to the due observation thereof; and of every part and parcel thereof from henceforth for ever. And for the better corroboration hereof we have caused these orders to be ingrossed in this register book to remain in perpetual record:

Bereft of the apparatus of a manorial system, the parishioners were seeking to fill this administrative void by establishing something similar to the practice that had prevailed before in Shrewton and similar downland parishes. Because the common flocks of sheep of Shrewton and Netton had suffered for want of fodder in recent years, money was to be collected at midsummer to buy hay. To prevent overstocking no more than twelve lambs were to be bred for each yardland (about 25-30 acres) in Shrewton, ten in Netton. The orders governed the grazing of horses and cattle with the appointment of a hayward and hogward for Shrewton and Netton. The seventeen orders deal with these aspects of farming in great detail. Although specific to Shrewton the information has much wider relevance for the study of agriculture of downland parishes in Wiltshire and southern England.

Demography

The apparently insatiable appetite of central government for revenue led to an Act in 1694 which taxed baptisms, marriages and burials, on a sliding scale according to the social status of the individual. It provided for the first complete census, and the statistical data collected was used by Gregory King to produce his estimates of population totals. Unfortunately, very few of the full assessments survive. Some registers reflect the requirements of the legislation and become, for about ten years, a very informative source for the social structure of their parishes, providing, in particular, information about occupations. The register of Donhead St Mary 1695-1702 includes the full assessment and records the status of all parishioners and the amounts of tax due. It is in effect a local census and the population of the parish in 1695 is stated, on the cover of the register, as being 814. In order that the tax burden was shared across all religious persuasions, births and burials of nonconformists can be found in the registers of nine parishes, on the western side of the county between Malmesbury and Warminster. However, that so few registers are as informative is an indication of how little the act was regarded. Causes of death are sometimes noted in registers. This is not restricted to accidental or violent deaths, and the victims of such diseases as smallpox or plague are often noted. The provision of this information, with ages at death and occupations of parents, was regularised in printed format registers of baptisms and burials, produced as a result of another taxation law effective from 1783. Examples of these survive for 25 Wiltshire parishes and are valuable demographic sources.

Before the introduction of the decennial census in 1801 parish registers were the most reliable source for population statistics and it is not surprising that clergymen took an
interest in demographic research. Totals of baptisms, marriages and burial are frequently found in the registers, which before the introduction of civil registration was the only method of estimating population totals and trends. Thomas Meyler, rector of Marlborough St Peter and St Paul, responded to a circular letter from the Reverend John Howlett of Maidstone, Kent in 1782:

who (as his letter set forth) was collecting materials to refute the gloomy and dispiriting accounts we repeatedly had of the depopulation of England and Wales, and to establish the opposite and more pleasing doctrine of the greatly increased number of our inhabitants since the revolution.37

As well as providing totals of the baptisms and burials from 1688, Meyler answered the other queries including the numbers who died of smallpox (333 in 1775) and noted that there were 1109 inhabitants, 226 houses, and 231 families. Howlett was responding to a thesis promoted by the philosopher and demographer Richard Price, that England and Wales were experiencing depopulation.38 This had many supporters and his views on the increase of the population were developed by Thomas Malthus in his essay on the principle of population published in 1798, which set out the theory that the growth in population always outstripped food supply, but was restricted by checks, such as famine, wars and plagues. John Nichols, a Salisbury printer, was in the Howlett’s camp and produced printed format baptismal and burial registers in 1780, in the preface to which he wrote that

It is hoped, that the clergymen of every parish will, at the end of the each year, cast up the baptisms and burials, from which it will appear whether the inhabitants increase or decease. From many inquiries, indeed, made in different parts of the kingdom, it may be pronounced, that there is no foundation for the melancholy apprehensions of many writers on this head.

He left pages in the books for memoranda and gave examples, and concluded, presciently, that

such or like memoranda will, in time, perhaps, become considerably interesting to the parishioners of succeeding centuries, whilst making the entry cannot be considered as troublesome, even by the most indolent.39

Fifteen parishes purchased Nichols’ registers and the use of the memoranda pages is frankly disappointing. It is as if the constraints imposed by a defined blank space and the suggestion of topics discouraged creativity and diversity and few made use of the opportunity presented by this new format.

**Incumbents**

The registers are very useful for the compilation of lists of clergy. Although the principal source for this subject are the bishops’ registers of institutions, and records of visitations at which clergy presented their orders, they are not always complete, especially during the Civil War and Interregnum which so seriously affected ecclesiastical administration. Curates, whose appointments were not made by the bishop, are particularly difficult to pin down. Incumbents might sign the register annually, but records of their institution and subscription to the articles of religion, frequently found in the registers, may include biographical details that can assist in identifying them and tracing their career. For example, the register of Bishopstone notes that George Watts MA, a preacher of Lincolns’ Inn, prebendary of York and rector of Orcheston St Mary, was inducted as vicar on 8 April 1746.40
A good example of the tensions generated at parish level as a result of the Civil war and Interregnum is provided in a note by Thomas Ernle, rector of Everleigh from 1660, the prose section of which was diplomatically written in Latin. That such feelings were aroused during the upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century is well known, but these vivid examples enable historians to gauge the level of tension at local level.

Of events forever shameful: Under the military regime of Oliver Cromwell (who snatched the sovereignty of this kingdom, first by the wickedness, trickery, bloodshed and treachery of others, but especially and principally by his own). A certain runt of a man, William Eastman (commonly called ’Tinker’, whose true occupation was a ploughwright) was thrust into the rectory of this parish, divided by fanatics, and was aroused by these jackdaws for five years; he attracted to himself much gossip and the concealment of lowly sorts of people. Charles II having been restored, he was expelled, not without much heartache on the part of his followers, 30 Sep 1660: but the more completely exposed by the abuse and jeers, he left with the dregs of his followers

Exit Tinker, Let all men henceforth Know A Thorne was planted wher a Vine should grow/ Downe went saint Paul, Apollo & Cephas/ For silver Trumpets here was sounding Brasse.41

In his determination to defend his rights, whether against burials of non-parishioners or in resisting the efforts of the overseers to charge poor rates on two cottages given by a predecessor for the use of the poor, Thomas Hewitt, vicar of Westbury and Dilton from 1749 to 1792, reveals himself to be a man not to be crossed. He is by far the most prolix, and thus informative, of the Wiltshire clergy, and what he has to say is of considerable historical interest:

thus the Dilton chapel yard now by an increase of burials from the liberties of the mother church is so crowded with corpses that some bodies are dug up with their hair upon their sculls which a shock to human nature and now some want the vicar’s house at Dilton, which the churchwardens made me rebuild anew in the year 1753; a pretty proposal indeed. So the vicars must lose their property, enlarge their chapel yard and ride all manner of weather to Dilton to bury the dead which ought to be buried at Westbury church. But I am determined they shall never lay the vicar’s orchard to the chapel yard, neither shall they carry so many of the dead to Dilton without my leave as they have done.42

Parish clerks and parishioners

Keeping the registers was not the sole responsibility of the incumbent and many interesting examples of the work of parish clerks are also found. There are several examples of the office being held by successive generations of the same family: thus, the Noads of Swindon were clerks for about 150 years. In Devizes the eponymous Clerk family held the office for the parishes of St John and St Mary for about 80 years from the mid-seventeenth century. Such longevity of office-holding could encourage proprietorial feelings, particularly in the mind of Richard Clerk who served from 1702 to 1729. His literary ambitions proved irresistible and he wrote in the register of Devizes St John an amazing 76-line verse in praise of St George, against whom just about every figure from ancient and medieval history and literature was compared, and found lacking:

St david you know loves leeks and toasted chese
and iasan wase the man brought home the golden fleece
and Patrick you know he wase St george boy
Seven years he kept his horse then stole him away
For which knavish Act a slave he doth remain
But St george St george the dragon he hath slain
St george

Notwithstanding the range of notes and memoranda discussed above, the principal value of the registers is as a source of names and relationships of parishioners over several centuries, providing a framework for reconstructing communities. They are a constant reminder that people should be at the centre of historical studies. Occasionally the outlines of individual lives are enhanced by observations by the incumbent on their character and circumstances. They provide compelling, if tantalisingly patchy, glimpses of the experiences of real people. This adds mystery and potential which feeds the imagination, and provides chronicles of past lives. At Broughton Gifford in 1711 a fatal accident must have seemed a terrible consequence of ill-spoken words. Isaac Bull

was thrown of his horse on Lansdown and dyed the next day his mother cursed
at his going out, and she wisht he might break his leg or nek before he came
home. He mockt her, calling her snoching Bitch and other reproachfull words.44

Such information is of obvious interest to the family historian, but can also be a unique source of information for the local historian. Thus, Thomas Crockford, vicar of Fisherton Delamere and curate of Stockton and Wylje in the early seventeenth century, took upon himself the task of writing Latin obituaries of parishioners in the parish registers. He recorded in the Stockton register the burial on 21 April 1621 of Mary, daughter of Christopher and Mary Potticary. His words describing how she had lived out one month of untried life is moving, but they are considerably enhanced as an historical source by the information that she died at the house of a nurse, the wife of William Wandsborow.45 A rather scathing obituary in the Westbury parish register by Thomas Hewitt is both revealing and fascinating:

27 Oct 1766 buried Edward Hayward, a kind of cannibal man, had eat some
horse flesh raw and never well after it; had 2 or 3 bastards by Jane Arnol; his
father was hanged some years ago at Salisbury for the murder of one Bayly of
Westbury.

Although somewhat trenchant and brusque, Hewitt’s style nevertheless reflects the simple and direct approach to death and life prevalent in the eighteenth century. His notes are particularly useful for the personal and historical detail they provide. For example, the widower John Bodmant died as a result of a blow he received from the turnpike gate he kept at Pipins bridge in Westbury Leigh, which caused a ‘fungus’ to grow under one of his eyes.46 The registers can also reveal attitudes to outsiders, as the following examples from Castle Eaton and Britford reveal:

[22 Sep 1682] happened a sad accident in this parish; for Francis Richens
senior, a person always reputed by all that knew him to be a sober, civil and
honest man, yet upon some discontent or melancholy, hanged himself in
Richard Curtis’ Ox house in Bullers – Piece. He was an unmarried man and
commonly called Bachelor Francis. Lord Grant us Thy Preventing Grace.47

Britford A Jew found dead in a chalk pit Jan 26 1768. But was removed to
London Feb 7

Neither person would have received a Christian burial, but the compassion for a parishioner who had committed suicide contrasts somewhat harshly with the brief note about the Jew, whose name, Wolf Myers, was known at the inquest taken the same day.48
Miscellaneous items

Like several of his contemporaries William Hickes, rector of Broughton Gifford from 1690 to 1733, kept detailed notes on his work on the rectory and church, and also added comments about his parishioners. John Wilkinson, in his account of the parish published over a century later, wrote of him as ‘a keen, observant man, not unkindly, but tenacious of his own rights and of the law ... He was not without a sense of humour, was something of a gossip, and believed in ghosts and apparitions’.49 This description could be applied to most of incumbents discussed in this article. In recording a poltergeist, Hickes’s account has much of interest for the historian.

‘In Novemb. Ano Domini 1732 A House called the Church House, which had two Chimnys, one at each end, was pulled down, and the stones & Timber used in the rebuilding the House near the Parsonage House… This Church House was Built by one Thomas Cookson, as appeard by a stone in the wall of the said house next the church yard side, in which was engraven a Pedlars pack, & on each side, a Cock. Some poor people lived in it in the memory of man who lived in the year sixteen hund’ eighty & nine and in particular (as I have been informed by some that could remember it) the Father of John Oatridge, which John Oatridge had a leg cut of and mended shoos, in a house belonging to Esquire House in the lower end of the Feild near the brook, and was buried in May 1706 ... about This Church house, after it was pulled down, were noises heard in the night like throwing the Timbers about one upon another and upon the stones that lay near, by Mrs Hunt and her two daughters that lived just by. Likewise in the Farm house (lying by the parson’s house (in which then lived one Robert Newman) while the church house was pulling down after they heard the treading of one going up and down the stairs. Also A noise of throuing the stones (that were brought from the said church house into their Barton) from one heap to another’.50

Two examples for the cure of, and recovery from, illnesses, illustrate the use of the registers as an accessible repository of useful information. At the front of the register for Beechingstoke, which covered the years 1737-1812, are three recipes for the cure of the bite of a mad dog, evidence of the danger of rabies in an age before penicillin.51 Between 1618 and 1661 there are ten examples of licences to eat meat in Lent in the Wiltshire registers, copied out for easy reference in case any difficulties arose over this important concession during that time of self-denial.52 Tate noted the recording of parish boundaries among the miscellaneous items found in registers.53 For six Wiltshire parishes perambulations of the bounds are recorded in the registers, one, Chute, having perambulations in 1622 and 1785.54 The topographical importance of these is clear, and they are sufficiently detailed to enable their routes to be retraced.

Conclusion

This survey of memoranda from the parochial registers of Wiltshire illustrates the wealth and range of such material for local and family historians. Notwithstanding the writer’s loyalty to the county, Wiltshire is not exceptional in this source, and the registers of parishes anywhere in England and Wales can be searched with profit and, I am sure, considerable pleasure.55 At the start of the register of Chilton Foliat, begun in 1705, the clerk wrote the following: ‘Stel not his Book Good Jentel Frind, Lest Tiber be
He meant to write Tyburn, the place of public execution in London, which became a generic name for a hanging place. But awareness of the need to preserve the register is only very clearly expressed, illustrating the significance of these documents not only as a record of the baptisms, marriages and burials of the parishioners, but also as a chronicle of parish life and a repository of shared experience and communal knowledge for the benefit of both present and future generations.

4. The account of the Broughton Gifford poltergeist 1732 (WSA 501/2)

Notes and references

1. The author has edited an edition of miscellaneous notes found in parish registers, *Gleanings from Wiltshire Parish Registers 1538-1812*, published by the Wiltshire Record Society. The quotation is from Hamlet Act 1 scene 5 line 172. He wishes to acknowledge the helpful comments of Dr Alan Crosby, Dr John Chandler, and his colleagues Robert Pearson and Robert Jago.

2. Wiltshire and Swindon Archives [WSA] 1079/3

3. WSA 645/3


5. WSA 1966/2

6. Endowed Charities (County of Wilts) HMSO 1908

7. WSA 1550/1

8. WSA 1082/2; *Wiltshire Notes and Queries* vol.4 (pt.42, 1903) pp.276-277

9. WSA Burbage 1678/1, Chute 627/1, East Knoyle 536/2, Figheldean 1756/1, Shrewton 1336/1, Stratton St Margaret 819/1

For example WSA Collingbourne Kingston, 666/1 and Hannington, 1819/2

For example Wroughton, WSA 551/10, West Harnham WSA 1967/4


This timely example caught the eye of the author while working on this article.

STEFAN HOBBES is an archivist at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre who has published and lectured on local archives in Wiltshire, Somerset and Dorset.
The vanishing unemployed, hidden disabled, and embezzling master: researching Coventry Workhouse registers

ROSEMARY HALL

Workhouse admissions registers are acknowledged to be a rich source for the local historian. Dymnna McLoughlin has used them to show the survival strategies of poor women in Ireland,1 while Jacquelené Fillmore used the records of Bedford workhouse to shed light upon the lives of female vagrant paupers.2 Investigating the admissions registers of Coventry workhouse seemed a good choice for a local study. Finding out why people entered the workhouse ought to have been a comparatively simple task—time-consuming undoubtedly, but presenting few problems of interpretation. This proved not to be the case. This paper is an attempt to share some of the problems encountered when using and interpreting the data, and to make suggestions for possible opportunities for further research. The study covers the years 1858 to 1882, but not all the registers survive. The five which do made it possible to study the changing pattern of admissions,3 but David Chater had already identified inaccuracies in some of the entries for the registers from mid-1880 until 1887. The blame may be laid at the feet of one man, William Ward, workhouse master. He was suspected of fraud and after his resignation in 1887, at least 37 instances of embezzlement, to the value of £105, were discovered. Ward disappeared before he could face charges: newspaper reports said that he had sailed to America. As Chater explains, Ward’s entries ‘are clear, well written but inaccurate. He was in the habit of discharging the same individual twice without an intervening readmission. Conversely some were admitted twice without being discharged in the period between’.4

An embezzling master was highly unusual, and research in the pre-1880 registers has not given any reason to doubt their accuracy. It would have been extremely time-consuming to check every admission against the discharge registers (and the census) but studies were undertaken into admissions due to illness (to ascertain death rates) and the admittances of deserted wives. These showed clearly the reliability of the registers in the late 1850s and throughout the 1860s. Even in 1880-1881, when Ward was in post, a study of deserted children revealed that, for that group of inmates, records appeared generally reliable. Ward’s inaccuracy should have come to light in the course of the regular audits of the registers. It is surprising that this did not happen, since the audits were designed to ensure that accurate statistics of paupers admitted and discharged were kept. Less emphasis seems to have been placed upon ensuring that the reasons given for admission were accurate and consistent. Indeed, some record-keeping was simply slapdash, throughout the period studied. Officials would sometimes completely fail to give any reason for admission. Such cases usually amounted to a few per cent of the total, but in the early 1860s the workhouse was faced with a sharp rise in admissions because of a crisis in the silk-weaving industry.5 Under the pressure of work caused by so many admissions, the standard of record-keeping fell. In 1860, there were 63 cases where no reason was given (12 per cent of the total), but in 1861 99 such cases
(16 per cent) and 1862 133 cases (21 per cent.) Even in 1867, after the crisis had waned, there were 57 cases. Since this represented 12 per cent of the total, it could have a significant impact upon a study of the reasons for admission.

The carelessness of an official could take other forms. For example, an official might not write out the reason for admission in full but would use ‘ditto’ marks to indicate that the reason was the same as in the entry above. This caused problems. For example, deserted husbands were not unknown, but were very rare. From 1858 until 1870 there were just two, one in 1859, the other in 1860. It therefore seems too much of a coincidence that a deserted husband should have appeared directly after a deserted wife, as happened on 28 October 1879 and on 25 June 1880. Since their deserted status was indicated only by the use of ditto marks, it seems much more likely that the men were destitute rather than deserted. However, when one encounters long lists of paupers, all supposedly in want of work, and their unemployed status indicated only by ditto marks, there seems no reason to disbelieve the record. Perhaps one should be more suspicious?

Some of the challenges in using the records arose from the unusual legal situation of Coventry workhouse. In 1801, well before the 1834 Poor Law (Amendment) Act, Coventry had secured a private Act which united the parishes of Holy Trinity and St Michael for the purposes of poor relief. In 1804, a house of industry was established in the former Carmelite monastery of Whitefriars. Coventry’s private Act remained on the statute books until 1874, but this did not mean that Coventry retained complete independence until 1874. Matters were more complicated. During the decade after
1834, the Poor Law Commissioners put increasing pressure on the Coventry guardians to implement national policy. Coventry ratepayers wished to remain independent (many wished to be more liberal to the city’s poor than would be allowed under the 1834 Act) and when, in 1842, a bill was proposed to extend the life of the Poor Law Commission for five more years, the city ratepayers united in favour of an amendment which would have preserved the city’s independence. They lost and, as Peter Searby has observed, ‘within eighteen months the united parishes had been brought as firmly under the control of the poor law commission as any ordinary union’. But the control was not complete—the Victoria County History suggests that ‘One later result of the local Act was that the Poor Law Commission set up by the Act of 1834 did not have the power to control in detail the administration of poor relief in the city’.10

The style and procedure of record-keeping

Only after 1874 did Coventry begin to use the form of register approved by the Commission, requiring officials to give the date of birth, religion and occupation of each pauper. But these were not the only changes in record-keeping once Coventry’s administration came under central control. Some of the terms used to describe the reasons for admission also change, as tables 1 and 2 indicate. Most significantly, unemployment (‘want of work’), which before 1874 was the most common reason for admission, disappears entirely from the register. ‘Destitution’ now appears as the most
common reason, presumably to comply with the requirements of the Poor Law (Amendment) Act. However, it is unclear why deserted children were now described as ‘destitute’ but wives continued to be labelled as ‘deserted’. ‘Destitute’ was a term used only rarely before 1874, when it had the distinct meaning; a state of poverty more intense even than that of most paupers admitted to Whitefriars. Usually a pauper was described as destitute only after being admitted to the workhouse on several occasions. From 1877, ‘destitution’ could be considered the default category for admission, but how is one to interpret entries such as ‘Destitute. Ague’ or ‘Destitute. Pregnant’? Was that individual noticeably poverty-stricken, as well as being feverish or pregnant? In some cases, perhaps, for there were certainly cases where the circumstances of an individual were so clear as to justify an expansion of the usual short entry—thus, the phrase ‘Weak, Destitute’, applied to Frederick Reader, a dyer. But it is likely that in most cases the official was making absolutely sure that nobody should have cause to criticise his admission of that particular pauper.

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At first glance, the record-keeping from 1877 seems more formal. In the early registers, one finds disapproving references to illegitimacy, descriptions such as ‘father a soldier, mother unable to support’, and two admissions due to laziness. Such colourful entries can give a misleading impression, and even under the new administration officials continued to express disapproval by such entries as ‘Insane through drink’. Not all the changes introduced after 1874 were an improvement. For example, earlier records differentiated between children admitted to join a parent already in the house and children who were deserted, and the older term ‘want of work’ (rather than ‘destitution’) was probably was a more accurate description of why most paupers were admitted, to them and to the officials. It is impossible to tell if the standards for admission were more stringent. The numbers of admissions for drunkenness were comparable before and after 1874, although such individuals did not usually stay long. One of the two men admitted for ‘laziness’ reappears in the 1877-1882 register but it is unlikely that he suddenly became industrious, for one learns that he was sent to ‘Prison for 2 months for stealing Shoes & Leather – the Property of the Union’. The descriptions of why people were admitted changed, but the criteria for admission probably did not.
Admissions due to disability

Destitution, infirmity, illness and want of work were common causes for admission, but surprisingly few were due to a physical disability, as table 3 indicates. The slight rise in 1868 (when disability accounted for only just over 3 per cent of admissions) is largely accounted for by the six separate admissions of the same person, the deaf-and-dumb Anthony Hines. One might have expected more evidence of admissions due to sight problems in a town where many worked in watch-making, but there is evidence of the under-reporting of disability. It is unlikely that this would have a major impact upon the overall admission figures but one case highlights the problems of researching disability in the Victorian period. One woman was described as ‘deaf’ on her first admission, but on her second (for illness) and her fourth (as ‘destitute’) no mention was made of her deafness. When Charlotte Palmer was admitted on 1 July 1859, the entry clearly stated that she was ‘nearly blind’, but although she was admitted four more times in 1858-1861, on none of those occasions was her blindness mentioned. It is possible that she was suffering from an eye infection, but that cannot explain the case of Thomas Adler who was certainly visually impaired—in 1868 he had been sent to the Birmingham eye infirmary—and who was admitted to the workhouse on in March 1878 because he had ‘Imp’d sight’. That diagnosis was confirmed on later admissions, for on 28 May 1879 he was described as blind and on 25 September 1880 as having defective eyesight. But on 22 May 1878, he was simply described as ‘destitute’. The statistics below refer to physical disability, but David Reading, a frequent visitor to the workhouse, had a learning disability. Sometimes the register uses the term ‘imbecile’ to refer to him, but not always; no mention was made of his disability on the three occasions when he was admitted in 1866.

![Table 3 Admissions due to disability](image)

<table>
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Admissions due to family problems

Those with family problems—a category which includes deserted wives, the dependents of those in prison, a wife fleeing domestic violence, and deserted children—accounted for many more admissions than disability. The histories of the deserted children admitted to the workhouse make a fascinating study, but before they can be studied they must be identified. The earlier registers make the researcher’s task much easier, as they distinguish between deserted children and those joining a parent already in the workhouse. In the earlier period, the latter were often adolescents—such as William Hall, who came on 4 December 1861 to join his mother, or Sarah Evans who was admitted on 31 May 1870 because her mother was in the house. After 1874, with a few exceptions, most unaccompanied children were simply described as destitute. It requires concentration and an eagle eye to identify those destitute paupers who were under the age of fourteen, and then to differentiate between those whose mother or father was already in the house and those who were genuinely deserted. In the 1870s, there are some cases of very young children joining their mother in the house and sometimes it is relatively easy to discover the link: Emily Charley, an infant,
was admitted on 2 March 1881, and on the same day, Ann Charley, probably her mother, was admitted separately. On other occasions, more work is involved. Illness would explain why a mother might be admitted without her child; but matters were more complicated with the Yardley family. Emma Yardley was not apparently sick when she entered on 27 October 1881, and the register states that she was destitute. Four-year-old George Yardley had already entered on 20 July 1881 but only on 2 November 1881 did the rest of her family join Emma.

The phrase ‘deserted children’ may be misleading, implying as it does abandonment. In this respect, the registers of the 1870s and 1880s are more informative, in that they tried to distinguish between ‘lost’ and ‘abandoned’. Thus, in May 1880 William Collins had ‘wandered from home’, probably an accurate description since his mother took him back just two days later. But making this distinction was not always easy—Charles Gay was described as having ‘wandered from home’ on 29 June 1880, but not until 10 August was he taken out by his father. Being orphaned or deserted by one’s parents was not the only reason for a child being admitted to the workhouse on his or her own. The post-1874 registers includes regular entries for children detained under the Industrial Schools Acts. There are no such entries in the 1860s, though the legislation was in place by then: the 1857 Act was limited to vagrant children, but further legislation in 1861 concerned children under twelve who were guilty of a criminal offence, those deemed by their parents to be out of control, and those under fourteen found ‘wandering without visible means of support’. There were cases of children sent by magistrates in the 1860s, but certainly none of the regular admissions listed as detentions under the Acts which are a feature of the later registers. Questions arise: were the admitted children detained under this new legislation, or were they guilty of more serious criminal activity? Was Coventry slow to implement the legislation in the 1860s, or were its officials simply bad at record keeping? Even after 1874, when we see the meticulous recording of detentions under the Industrial Schools Acts, some children were simply recorded as having been sent by the magistrates. In one memorable case, three very young boys stole a van in Birmingham and managed to drive it as far as Coventry, before the police took charge of them; but there is no indication that they were detained under the legislation.

The problems of researching deserted children pale into insignificance if compared with the difficulties of researching deserted wives. Children admitted without adults were a distinct group, but the same woman could be described as a ‘deserted wife’ and also as ‘unemployed’. Indeed, it was a common pattern for a woman to start off as the former and later to be ‘redefined’ as being in want of work. Moreover, the study of deserted wives poses questions which cannot readily be answered by the admissions registers alone. A few deserted wives established a long-term dependence upon the workhouse, while others simply made one visit. Of the 46 women admitted as deserted wives between August 1858 and the end of 1860, 33 were admitted just once, whereas Maria Furness was admitted ten times in these years. When first admitted, she was accompanied by her children, but at the end of the period she was on her own. In 1866–1867, 26 women were described as having been deserted. Seventeen were admitted just once; five were admitted twice, three on three occasions, and one, Mary Harrity, on five occasions. How did some deserted wives manage to stay out of the workhouse? It was rare, but not unknown, for a husband to reclaim his deserted wife: such a reunion occurred in the cases of Louisa Garlick, Emma Newman, and Elizabeth Whitehouse, although since Louisa and Elizabeth were reclaimed by their husbands the very next day after their admission, and Emma, two days after her first admission, it may be questioned whether these were genuine examples of abandonment. Some wives must have received out-relief, but other ways in which women could have coped after
their husband’s desertion, such as cohabiting or being in paid employment, are harder to research. The census might help, but the employment record of an ordinary Victorian woman is often likely to prove elusive.33

Pregnancy is a reason for admission which is unlikely to be in dispute.34 Women who entered the workhouse to have their babies were usually single and without social support, normally entering about a month before the birth, but sometimes very near their time—or even already in labour. During 1868 no fewer than eight women were admitted while in labour. Such a large number of emergency admissions was exceptional. A key question is whether a woman entering the workhouse to have her baby was at greater risk of a miscarriage or a stillbirth. In statistical terms there is not a large enough sample of pregnant women for 1858-1882—with too many gaps in the admissions records and only small numbers of admissions of pregnant women. However, the evidence is more plentiful for the later period. David Chater examined the workhouse birth registers from 1875-1900 and discovered that the ratio of stillborn to live births was remarkably high.35 Stillbirths were recorded but miscarriages were not. Sometimes one suspects that a miscarriage or stillbirth: thus, two of the women who entered the workhouse in 1868 while in labour left with no record of a baby being born.36 But if a pregnant woman was discharged, with no record of her baby being born, it could simply be that she had been taken out by friends to have her baby elsewhere. This would impose a limitation on such a study, but research could be carried out based upon the birth records of a larger workhouse.

The problems involved in such a study should not be underestimated. By contrast, it would be a straightforward though lengthy task to analyse the admissions registers by sex and marital status. In examining the Coventry registers, one is struck by the very small proportion of nuclear families and married couples. Only in the crisis years of 1860-1862 does one see married couples entering Whitefriars in any numbers. Even then, in 1862 such admissions accounted for just 1 per cent of the total, and those of nuclear families 4 per cent. Some 66 per cent of total admissions were of single people. It could be argued that, since married couples and ‘respectable’ widows were more likely to receive out-relief, the high proportion of admissions of single people is not surprising, and that a statistical study by sex and marital status would be unlikely to justify the time and effort required. But policies regarding out-relief varied from union to union, and policy within a union might change over time. Besides, it is unwise to assume the proportions of particular groups, without the support of statistics.

Other factors also came into play. Some towns were dominated by industries where it was traditional for both husband and wife to be in paid employment. Would that make any difference to the ratio of men to women admitted? It seems likely. But researching the Coventry registers showed that, while it would be comparatively straightforward to analyse the registers according to sex, and type of household, drawing conclusions was more difficult. Coventry’s two principal industries in the late nineteenth-century were silk-ribbon weaving and watch-making. In silk weaving it was the custom for both husband and wife to work, whereas watch makers prided themselves upon being able to support a wife.37 But silk weaving was in decline and watch-making industry, though more prosperous, was subject to occasional downturns.38 Is it perhaps expecting too much to be able to compare two towns, one dominated by an industry where men and women worked, and the other where the principal industry provided only male employment?

Many previous studies of workhouse inmates have focussed upon women, such as the excellent work by Dympna McLoughlin and Jacquelené Fillmore.39 Norman Longmate’s *The workhouse* devotes a chapter, ‘Fallen Women’, to one particular female category:
although he mentions widows struggling to maintain a family, and servants between situations, the emphasis is on ‘depraved women [who] bring contamination with them’ or were rowdy. Does this really give a fair picture of the female paupers? Admittedly, the chapter is about fallen women but, having mentioned struggling widows and maidservants between positions, Longmate goes on to say that ‘a high proportion [of women admitted] from the first were women of, in the eyes of the authorities, low moral character, ranging from tearful girls of seventeen or so, expecting their first baby, to bedraggled and brazen harridans with a lifetime of prostitution behind them’. It is true that a number of the women admitted at Coventry were single mothers, though we know that some of these were deserted wives and some may have been widows. The registers contain a high number of admissions of women. It seems stretching credulity to believe that the city contained so many women of low character. Some undoubtedly were rowdy (there are references to women being punished for breaking windows and
two to women being guilty of violence against a fellow inmate), but in the 1877-1882 register, the only one covered by this study which lists the inmate’s occupation, just one woman is described as a prostitute. It is more likely that most women were simply poor. The interest in female paupers perhaps stems from the more general interest in women’s history, but admission records offer a rare opportunity to research the role of men in poverty-stricken Victorian families. Many poor men were left as the sole provider for their children. Admittedly, most single parents admitted to Whitefriars were women; in 1862, 101 single mothers as compared with just thirteen single fathers. David Chater, in his study of 1875-1900, noted that ‘Fathers with children were rare’. But he based his conclusion upon three census returns (and the pattern of admissions in the later period was different—for example, including more pregnant women). Admissions registers contain valuable information on children admitted without an adult, indicating whether it was the mother or father who had left them, and they supplement the information given in the census.

When one looks at such admissions, a surprising number of the cases were of children left by their father. Although just two ‘lone fathers’ are mentioned in 1859 and 1860, they became more numerous in the two succeeding years—in 1861 and 1862 there were seven instances of a child or children being deserted by the father, while John Greenway was admitted because his father was already in the house. There were cases in April 1861 and August 1862 of a child admitted because the father was in prison. Eight instances of a child or children being deserted by the father occurred between 1 January 1866 and 30 September 1870. Another youngster was admitted because his father was in the asylum. Some of these fathers would have been widowers, but some were separated. A family of six children, admitted in October 1868, were ‘Neglected children’, the entry explaining that their mother was dead, but a fortnight later they were taken out by their father. In another case, the mother had apparently lost all contact with her family: a boy was admitted in July 1867, his father having died, but it was eight months before the authorities could send him to his mother. William Wadsworth was simply ‘Unable to maintain his family’ of three children; perhaps his predicament was shared by many of the lone fathers described as being in want of work. Perhaps research should change its emphasis from deserted wives towards deserting husbands. Newspaper reports and the guardians’ minutes might shed light on why husbands left. However, although the authorities were prepared to spend a great deal to track down an errant husband, and despite the large number of deserted wives in the register, it seems likely that answers would be found only in a few cases. It cost Coventry almost £50 to trace, apprehend and return the husband of Jane Ward, who had fled to Bradford leaving his wife and their six children dependent upon the parish.

Coventry’s admission registers have proved a mine of information. They have a particular interest, not only because they showed the city struggling during an economic crisis, but also because they enable one to see the change in record-keeping between the early years, when it retained its own administrative independence, and later, when it came under central control. Coventry was one of many places which took advantage of the Gilbert Act to establish its own poor law union, and it was not until 1868 that the whole country was covered by the 1834 Poor Law (Amendment) Act. There must be many other registers surviving which allow comparison in this way. But not just the methods of record-keeping will vary. So too will the reasons for admission, the policies of the guardians, and the number of multiple admissions. Regional differences are likely to be reflected in individual workhouses; differences in terms of industrial growth and decline, female participation in the labour force, and other forms of social provision, such as charities. More local studies will enrich our knowledge of the operation of the nineteenth-century poor law.
Acknowledgements

I should like to express particular thanks to Dr Robert Bearman, until recently the archivist of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, whose advice, particularly on the presentation of statistics, provided the breakthrough I needed in writing about the workhouse. I should also like to thank Michael Hinman and his colleagues at Coventry City Record Office for their patience, when they may have thought I would never finish studying the registers!

Notes and references

1 Dympna McLoughlin, ‘Workhouses and Irish female paupers, 1840-70,’ in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds), Women surviving (Poolbeg Press, 1989) pp.117-147


4 David Chater, The guardians, the officers and the inmates of Coventry workhouse 1874-1900, MA dissertation Warwick University (1996) pp.52-55, 65

5 Peter Searby, Coventry in crisis 1858-1862: ribbon factory, free trade and strike (University of Warwick Open Studies and Coventry branch of Historical Association, 1977) pp.57, 11

6 CCRO SLA/6/13/2 17 Mar 1859; SLA/6/13/2 13 Sep 1860

7 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 28 Oct 1879 Bates Thomas [ditto marks under ‘Deserted’ against name of Selina Taylor, the previous person admitted]; SLA/6/13/6 25 Jun 1880 Hudson Thomas b.1835 [ditto marks under ‘Deserted’ on previous entry for Jane Covicton]


10 VCH vol.8 p.276

11 I cannot find a specific reference to destitution as a requirement for admission in the act. However, Ann Crowther has informed me (pers. comm.) that if a person was destitute, the workhouse officials were obliged to receive them, and could be prosecuted if they refused to do so and the person subsequently came to harm.

12 For example CCRO SLA/6/13/6 ‘19 January 1882 Aldridge Katey [aged eleven] Destitute’; [Discharges] 11 March 1882 ‘Sent to her Friends in London’

13 Thus, when Maria Furness was described as destitute on 19 June 1860 she had already been admitted to the workhouse eight times in the period from January 1859 to that date; on the previous occasions, it was either because she was in want of work, or because she was a deserted wife.

14 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 [ague] 20 Nov 1878 [see also 3 Apr 1878 ‘Destitute & ill’; 4 Oct 1878, ‘Ill & destitute’]; [pregnant] SLA/6/13/6 20 Nov 1878 [see also 25 Jan 1878 ‘Destitute & pregnant’]

15 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 28 Jan 1880

16 One finds several such references to illegitimacy in the 1860s e.g. SLA/6/13/2 12 Nov 1860); SLA/6/13/2 4 Nov 1860; ‘laziness’ SLA/6/15/4 28 Jul 1866 and 6 Jun 1867 [two different individuals]

17 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 25 Apr 1880

18 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 5 Sep 1881 (he was back in the house on 14 December 1881)

19 CCRO SLA/6/13/5 [Discharges] 11 Apr 1868 [Admissions] 15 Jun 1868; SLA/6/13/6 1 Mar 1878 (the entry is hard to read, and may stand for ‘Impaired’ or ‘Imperfect’ sight)

20 CCRO SLA/6/13/5 1 Jan–18 Mar 1870; SLA/6/13/4 6 Jun, 3 Jul, 27 Jul 1866 (the reasons given were: infirmity (twice) and unemployment).

21 CCRO SLA/6/13/3 4 Jun 1861; the wife fleeing domestic violence made a long stay in the workhouse on this occasion; was readmitted with her adolescent daughter on 30 December 1865 because her husband was in prison; and again on 28 September, 1867 because he had deserted her.

22 Although the three Bromley children, admitted on 3 November 1862, were described as ‘Destitute’.

23 CCRO SLA/6/13/3 4 Dec 1861

24 For example, CCRO SLA/6/13/6 22 Sep 1880 (the Flanders brothers); 29 Sep 1880 (the Thompson children); 23 May 1881 (the three Adler sisters); all these described as ‘deserted’.

25 This was the age at which children would usually be sent to service from the workhouse.

26 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 11 May 1880


28 CCRO SLA/6/13/6 25 Sep 1880: two of the boys were extremely young, which may be why they were not detained under the Industrial
Schools Acts. The oldest boy, William Crofts, may have been detained under this legislation later.

29 CCRO SLA/6/13/2 10 Feb 1859, 10 Mar 1859, 21 May 1859, 12 Dec 1859, 29 Dec 1859, 15 Jan 1860, 21 Mar 1860, 26 Apr 1860, 19 Jun 1860, 28 Dec 1860

30 Maria continued to visit the workhouse during the 1870s, being admitted in 1877, 1879 and 1880.

31 CCRO SLA/6/13/4 13 Dec 1866, 14 Feb 1867, 27 Feb 1867, 1 May 1867, 26 Jun 1867

32 CCRO SLA/6/13/4  Garlick 8 Aug 1866 [Discharges] 9 Aug 1866; Newman SLA/6/13/4 16 Apr 1866 [Discharges] 18 Apr 1866 (although Emma Newman was taken out by her husband, she was deserted a second time on 2 January 1867); Whitehouse SLA/6/13/6 23 Sep 1878 [Discharges] 24 Sept 1878 (she was described as destitute, but the fact that she was taken out by her husband suggests that she had been deserted).

33 I have been unable to discover any mention of Maria Furness in the 1861 census for Coventry.

34 There were a few occasions on which a woman was not described as pregnant on admission, but gave birth shortly after her entry into the workhouse. Annie Whitwell was described simply as destitute when admitted on 4 February 1880; she gave birth to a boy six weeks later, on 19 March 1880. Rebecca Woodfield was described as being in want of work when admitted on 6 September 1861; she gave birth four days later, on 10 September 1861.

35 Chater, Coventry workhouse 1874-1900, pp.62-63

36 CCRO SLA/6/13/4 7 Jan 1868 [Discharges] 18 Jan 1868 Discharged Own Act [no child born]; SLA/6/13/5 19 Nov 1868 [discharged with no reference to child being born]

37 Later in the nineteenth-century and in the twentieth the watch-making industry employed many women, but this was not the case in the late 1870s and early 1880s. There were some women workers earlier in the century—but, thus, Catherine Lawrenson, who was admitted twice, on 8 February 1879 and 6 December 1879, was a dial-painter.


39 McLoughlin Workhouses and Irish female paupers; Fillmore, The female vagrant pauper

40 Norman Longmate, The workhouse (Temple Smith, 1974) ch. 13 ‘Fallen women,’ pp.156-164

41 ibid., p.156

42 Chater, Coventry workhouse 1874-1900, p.64


44 CCRO SLA/6/13/3 10 Apr 1861; SLA/6/13/3 23 Aug 1862

45 CCRO SLA/6/13/4 22 Jan 1866, 27 Jun 1866, 5 Dec 1866 [2 cases]; SLA/6/13/5 26 Jul 1869, 29 Jul 1869, 28 Oct 1869 [Discharges] 12 May 1870 ‘taken out by grandfather’, 14 Mar 1870

46 CCRO SLA/6/13/5 2 Jul 1868. This child had a mother or stepmother, and it is unclear why she did not care for him while his father was in the asylum. The father was admitted to Whitefriars due to mental illness on 24 April 1868 and taken to Hatton Asylum on 1 May 1868. He must have been released as he was readmitted to the workhouse due to mental illness on 26 December 1868 and taken out by his wife on 29 December 1868.

47 CCRO SLA/6/13/5 6 Oct 1868; [Discharges] 21 Oct 1868 taken out by father

48 CCRO SLA/6/13/4 4 Jul 1867; [Discharges] 4 Mar 1868

49 CCRO SLA/6/13/4 13 Jun 1866

50 Coventry Weekly Times 2 Feb 1860

51 Trevor May, The Victorian workhouse (Shire Publications, 1997) p.8

ROSEMARY HALL worked as a librarian for thirty years, most recently in the field of business studies. The history and landscape of Essex first inspired her interest in local history. She is continuing her researches into the inmates of Coventry Workhouse.
The ancient town of Bromley in Kent and the surrounding villages do not figure largely in the annals of the Civil War. No large armies marched across their countryside, no battles were fought there. Yet it was inevitable that the tumultuous events of the 1640s and 1650s should affect everyone since, as it was a mere half day’s ride from London, this area of north-west Kent came early under the influence of Parliament—whatever the leanings of individuals may have been. In spite of the distance in time, can we tell what those leanings might have been, or what happened in Bromley during the Great Rebellion of 1642-1648 and the years of the Commonwealth that followed? Surviving evidence is often sparse, but a shadowy picture may be glimpsed of the people, of the town, and what went on there. Bromley is just one community, and a comparable narrative might perhaps be reconstructed for many other places. Local circumstances will of course differ, but the impact of politics and war was often inescapable.

The background: Kent and Bromley in 1642

During the early seventeenth century Kent’s few industries included the manufacture of gunpowder and, in the Weald, of the iron that was largely used in armaments by the dockyards at Chatham, Deptford and Woolwich.1 Otherwise the county landowners mainly concentrated on agriculture. They, like their counterparts in the rest of England, felt increasing concern about the state of government. Only a few weeks before the final breakdown of relations between king and parliament the gentlemen of Kent submitted one of many petitions,2 pleading for their reconciliation in view of ‘the sad condition that we and the whole land are in, if a good understanding be not renewed between His Majesty and both Houses of Parliament’. Their petition was rejected, their leaders arrested, and the brusque matter of its rejection by the extremists then in power only heightened the tension. In a pre-emptive move just days before the king raised his standard at Nottingham in August, a parliamentary force went round the county seizing not only arms, ammunition and horses from many country houses, but also money and plate. With no weapons and little money, and with most royalist lands now sequestered and their leaders in the Tower, the Kentish gentry were powerless. For the next decade they concentrated instead on improving and running their estates—once the large fines were paid off. The only exceptions were when there was a brief attempt by royalist forces to raise resistance near Sevenoaks in 1643,3 and the period of the ‘Second Civil War’ in 1647-1648 which was sparked off in Canterbury by riots over the prohibition of Christmas celebrations. The townspeople were furious when they were told to open their shops on Christmas Day, and there was to be no greenery hung up, and no plum pottage.

When Charles I came to the throne in 1625 Bromley had already been a market town for over 400 years.4 It had grown up on the sandy hill above the Ravensbourne valley along the highway from London to the Channel port of Rye. By the beginning of the
seventeenth century there were four victuallers licensed in the town, besides bakers, brewers, butchers and a tailor. The Bell Inn and the White Hart had been named by 1640, as had the Rose, King’s Arms, Cross Keys, the Red Lyon in Bromley Street and the Pye House (which later became the Crown) on Bromley Common. Farmers on market day were well served. It is uncertain when the first market house was erected but it was certainly before 1659, when James Basley described the property next door in his will, and perhaps before 1647. One definition of a town is that it is a place where services are obtainable which are not available in a village—by the 1670s Bromley also had a cheesemonger, chandler, a ‘horseman’, a draper, collier, maltster, bricklayer, tanner, and wheelwright, and some of these had been established for a good many years. By 1650 the town was also home to at least one lawyer, a doctor, and a number of gentlemen of independent means.

‘Bromley Street’ began at the top of Beckenham Lane and ran south past the entrance to the ‘Grete House’ and the Bell, where it still widens today at what must surely have been the original market-place, to a crossroads formed with the lane leading past the church and down to the watermill on the west, and that to Wigmore to the east. The later market square was tucked into the south-east angle of this crossroads. A little further south stood, until recently, the White Hart and then there were no more buildings until Mason’s Hill, which was one of Bromley’s five hamlets (the others being Plaistow, Southborough, Elmstead and Wigmore). Down among the watermeadows stood the moated Simpson’s Place and the mill, which had probably been used for something other than grinding corn since a post windmill had been built at the top of Bromley Hill in about 1600. The mansion of the bishop of Rochester, the lord of the manor (in 1642, John Warner) stood in its park a decent distance back from the hurley-burley of the town. Bromley was not a quiet place, especially on market days when lowing cattle and flocks of sheep were driven in for sale, wagons of local produce trundled in from nearby farms and neighbouring villages, and the inns were busy as farmers exchanged the latest news over their tankards. Every day the fish carriers rumbled along the Street adding to the noise (and aroma) and there was frequent bustle when strangers passed through, the wealthier ones on horseback or in the heavy unsprung coaches of the time, and also needing the services of the inns—unless they were bound for the hospitality of the Bishop’s household.

The bishop and the manor

The manor of Bromley had belonged to the bishops since the tenth century, but now parliament deposed all the bishops and confiscated their estates. John Warner was not to be ousted easily, in spite of having the manor sold over his head in 1647 to Augustine Skinner, a member of the Committee of Kent which had been established by Parliament at the beginning of the war. In fact Warner had not lived in Bromley since 1642 because, he said, ‘the general opinion and carriage of the people … was such to Bishops, that it were not easy to pass by them without reproach, yea (often) not without danger of their persons’. The people of Bromley were clearly on the side of parliament in its condemnation of Archbishop Laud and his ‘high church’ ideas, and Warner was a friend of Laud. In early 1647 commissioners were preparing an inventory of the manorial estate in preparation for putting it on the market. After a perambulation accompanied by a jury of some dozen of Bromley’s inhabitants, they repaired to the Bell where Daniel Giles was the landlord, to write their report. They described the bishop’s estate as a ‘Manor or Mansion House containing belowe stayers one greate new Hall being builte part of Bricks, part timbre, and one Little Hall, one Wainscott parlour [panelled], two Studyes, one Buttery, Two Kitchings, One Larder and three other
Roomes adjoining being builde parte of flinte parte of Timber and Morter. Above staieres seaven lodging rooms, one faire Dyning Roome with six garrets above ... Washouse with two chambers above, two stables tyled, two barns thatched, one outhouse contayninge one wainscot Chappell and one lower room, two chambers overhead ... Courte yarde at entry with east and west a brick wall, north and south the mansion and chapel'.

They went on to detail fields and woods, and a list of tenants including seven or eight owing for small houses where the quit-rent (in lieu of the medieval service-rent) was only 2d or 3d, some in the town itself. The market tolls and profits of Bromley’s two fairs, which formed part of the estate, had already been sequestered and leased out for £10 per annum, though the first lessee was soon removed ‘for his delinquency’ and they went to someone else. The survey also mentions the tenants’ rights to ‘commonfeed or dispasture on the Wide Common called Bromley Common, so to pay one henne rent yearly on St. Andrew’s Day’, the value of which had on the previous year amounted to £1 6s 8d ... adding that ‘the common is sand and turfe and the Freeholders may put cattle as they please’. The manorial half-year lands could be grazed on the stubble after harvest from Michaelmas until Lady Day, a practice which also ensured that the lord’s fields were well manured. The whole was evaluated at £5,665 11s 11d. While this

![Image of a map of Bromley]

1. Bromley in the mid-seventeenth century: a conjectural plan based on John Rocque’s map of Kent, published in 1746 and other contemporary documentary sources.
very poor opinion of the Parliamentary Commonwealth—‘What Commonwealth?’ he demanded scornfully in a letter to a royalist neighbour on the Isle of Wight (who was later to attempt to help King Charles to escape from Carisbrooke Castle). Sir John Oglander, the father of Lady Anne Lennard of West Wickham, had written to the bishop for his advice about signing the Solemn League and Covenant which everyone was now supposed to do. Warner’s response was that it would be contrary to Sir John’s oath of allegiance previously given to King Charles and thus would put his very soul in jeopardy. Both men were among those who steadfastly refused to sign.

The townspeople

The bishop of Rochester was Bromley’s largest landowner and richest inhabitant. In 1642 the second richest was Ralph Watson, a London merchant draper, or mercer, who leased the ancient glebe lands—originally the parish priest’s allocation—from the bishop’s estate. This included Church House, a small timber mansion of some ten rooms where he lived. Watson also owned several lesser properties, which he leased out to smaller husbandmen. The other ‘capital messuage’ in the town at that time was Grete [Great] House in its grounds to the east of Bromley Street. First mentioned in surviving records in 1532, a century later it belonged to Sir John Thornhill, although in the 1640s it was occupied by Henry Allington. In the Ravensbourne valley below the town was the old moated Simpson’s Place belonging to the Style family of Beckenham, which was rented to a tenant. Along the Street and around the market were timbered and jettied houses and shops, old and new, which were home and workplace to Bromley’s townsmen and their families. In his will, builder Richard Tanner described his house and shop ‘where I usually lay my tyles, with well and well yard’; and James Basley a butcher, left his son his ‘house in the town of Bromley abutting that of Robert Titchbourne on the north west and against the Market-House east, nine rooms, woodhouse and yard … and another tenement belonging to his son James which abuts against the Market-House, four rooms and a little yard’. In 1651 Francis Egleton, a tailor, lived in a house in Bromley Street with two rooms ‘below stayers and two Roomes or Chambers above stayers, Together with a yard thereunto belonging now enclosed with a new pale about 20 feet … by 18 feet … with that Howse of Office that now openeth into the said yard’. By the time of the 1662 hearth tax there were about 50 families living in the town—over a quarter of them too poor to be able to pay the tax. All these townspeople would have known each other, shopped and gossiped, served their turn on the parish vestry and met at manorial courts. The wills that survive show them (and not always only the men) acting as executor, witness or trustee for a neighbour. The town was not isolated from the country and connections spread out to the surrounding farms and hamlets.

The wealthy Ralph Watson was part of this community, describing Martin French of Freeland as friend and neighbour, leaving him and Nicholas Gardner, a chandler in the town, 20s each for acting as his overseers; James Basley witnessed his will, written in 1644 when he was ‘stricken in years and sicklie’. Ralph’s son Richard, who died only a year after his father, also appointed Martin French as trustee and left him 20s (he also bequeathed to his uncle William Barr his ‘great horseman’s coat’, to his brother-in-law a gilded sword, and a suit of clothes or 20s to Thomas Wood, ‘Translator of Bromley’). Martin French also acted as overseer to Simon Bedel, as Simon’s son acted in due course for Martin French with John Littlegroome, who had been the executor for Robert French in 1632.

The parish registers are disappointing in their record of the family alliances that must have taken place, but a few wills, deeds and, it must be admitted, the odd court case,
demonstrate some connections. Henry Allington’s son and daughter witnessed the will of Martin French’s wife in 1656 (when she left £20 to her husband ‘and to each of his five children a ring of black enamel with a verge of gold and a death’s head with the motto “die daylie and live ever” ’). John Littlegroom’s daughter Grace married Richard Gratwick. When Ralph Watson’s son Richard married Alice Gratwick part of her marriage portion was £200 towards the purchase of ‘Elmsteede Howse at Elmsteede Greene’16 with the barn and other buildings, yards, gardens, orchards and parcels of arable land and woods, with another new house occupied by John Earlidge—and Earlidges continued at Elmstead and are mentioned in the wills of both Watsons, father and son. Martha Earlidge married into the French family. No doubt property and parcels of land changed hands continually as marriage portions, especially as partners often died young and remarriage was a usual thing.

In the running of town affairs, too, the townsmen must needs co-operate. Unfortunately, vestry records survive only from after the Restoration, so tell nothing of the earlier activities of churchwardens, parish constable, waywardens, poor law overseers and others. Lists of these officers, approved by local JPs,17 show only that the Frenches, Littlegrooms, Giles, Gratwicks and Bedels were among those expected to pay their part, generation by generation. Richard Watson was chosen as churchwarden shortly before he died in 1646. In 1645 Martin French and Richard Gratwick were appointed to be collectors of the subsidy tax imposed by the Commonwealth, and in December that year it was the turn of Robert Titchbourne and John Hinger to be collectors of a two-month’s tax, the parish share of which came to £47 4s (less 7s 10d allowed to the collectors). The task of collecting tax was shared and refusing to pay brought trouble: Sir John Oglander was sent to prison until he paid a fine.

The burden of taxation

Everyone was affected by the burden of paying taxes to finance the war effort. The king’s proposal to impose ‘ship-money’ and certain other subsidies had been a major factor in his quarrel with parliament. Now, ironically, parliament itself was forced to
raise revenue by regular and frequent taxes. Between 1643 and December 1645, for example, Bromley’s assessments, spread over thirteen collections on roughly 100 taxpayers, amounted to almost £1150. There were also compulsory loans of money, and ‘voluntary’ collections of money and plate. In May 1642, just after the Kentish petition had been presented to parliament, there had been a call for ‘A Contribution Collected for the releife of the distressed Christyans in Ireland’. Henry Allington and John Stevens gave the generous sum of £5 each; Richard Gratwick and Nicholas Warner £2 apiece, Ralph Watson and three others including Martin French £1. The village of Beckenham produced £4 10d, West Wickham only £3. In the same year the more affluent residents were assessed for another donation besides their regular taxes, either in plate or in money in lieu; Henry Allington for another £5; William Delver, the bishop’s secretary, £4; Martin French £2; Nicholas Gardner £3; John Littlegroom £5; John Stevens £2 and Ralph Watson £1. The total sum raised in Bromley was £19 10s. But West Wickham produced only 5s, and that from a single contributor, who appears to have been a strong supporter of parliament which his manorial lord (married to the daughter of Sir John Oglander) certainly was not.

In March 1644 the Committee of Kent addressed a warrant to the high constable of Bromley and Beckenham Hundred, and presumably all the other Kent hundreds, explaining that ‘the late expedition to Arundel having ingulphed us in such great debts’ in raising, arming, clothing and paying 1200 foot soldiers and 400 horse, they must needs impose another tax of 10d on personal estate; and soon after that they had the clever idea of levying fines for not having taken part in the siege of Arundel, which was a Catholic, and therefore a Royalist, stronghold. Returns list ten men from Cudham, six from Downe and sixteen from Chelsfield, but any other local parish lists seem not to have survived. In October 1644 one treble-fifteenth tax ‘for rayseing the Monie for the forces under the Command of Sir Thomas Fairfax’ (which became the New Model Army) was expected to bring in nearly £1250 from the parishes of the Hundred of Sutton-at-Hone (the present London Borough of Bromley plus Knockholt and Bexley, excepting Bromley and Beckenham which formed a hundred by themselves).

In addition, goods such as mattresses might be commandeered from villages—as they were from West Wickham, for the use of ‘the soldiers lying at Knole’—and although some were returned they were ‘not soe good as them that weare sent’. Horses could be impounded with their ‘furniture’ and feed, or else with a charge of perhaps £5 for ‘the buying of Saddle, Pistolls, Arms, Swords etc.’ and the bishop’s sequestered estate had to contribute four of them. In the autumn of 1645, perhaps with the aborted raid of 1643 in mind, soldiers were billeted along the ‘frontshires’ of Surrey to ‘give the plough peacable passage’. There were 200 on the manor lands of West Wickham, fifty at the parsonage and others in the village, all making inroads into the recently harvested grain stocks. To a lord of the manor with royalist sympathies this was particularly galling. A further dread at this time was plague, and the soldiers were accused of bringing ‘the sickness’ to Beckenham (perhaps influenza) and also the smallpox.

In Bromley’s assessment in December 1645 Bishop Warner heads the list for the two-month’s tax. Not surprisingly there are considerable differences in the demands. The bishop’s was for 14s, and Ralph Watson’s 12s for the glebe lands and another 2s for his own. Henry Allington paid 1s but his landlord Sir John Thornhill was assessed for a further 1s 6d. Daniel Giles at the Bell was assessed at 9d on his own holding, 1s ‘on Widow Masyer’s land’ and 1s on Mr. Young’s; this at a time when 10s paid the rent on a fair-sized farm. The majority of the 59 inhabitants taxed across the parish were expected to pay the lowest amount of 4d, mostly for a single parcel, which equalled a good
proportion of the 1s 6d wage of a skilled craftsman; while about forty others had multiple holdings of their own and also rented pieces. This multiplicity of holdings is probably a reflection of the ancient Kentish partible inheritance laws of gavelkind, which were still partly operational. A good number of the landlords were ‘foreigners’ like Sir Humphrey Style of Langley Park. Both under-assessments and over (in the view of the assessed at least) must have been made: in February 1645 Richard Gratwick as constable for the hundred signed a certificate declaring he had over-assessed Richard Barrat of Orpington. Because of the poor survival of documents it is seldom possible to discover whether the amount collected was the required sum. The money took time to collect. In March 1645 Gratwick ‘paid in full of his arrears for 12 weeks’ (£10 9s) and on 1 December he and Martin French paid arrears of £7, just in time to begin the next collection at the end of the month.

Taking sides?

That a man collected taxes for the parliamentary authorities does not necessarily mean that he supported them. For centuries the parish constable had been responsible for tax collection, among his other many and varied duties. There were penalties for refusing office when chosen by fellow parishioners so, unless a man held very strong opinions (like Sir John Oglander) he must fulfil his obligations as best he could whatever his views. On the face of it those who gave donations to parliament might be expected to be pro-parliament, but the pressures on all landowners to do so were overwhelming. Sir Stephen Lennard had to make a ‘loan’ of £50 in 1645, although he did recover it later. Pressure was also put on government supporters. In March 1646 Sir John Thornhill, now living at Greenwich, was ordered by the Committee for the Advancement of Money to be sent into custody until he paid ‘arrears’ of £700. However in May his debt was discharged since they found ‘he had paid it in Kent, and done good service there for Parliament’ to boot.

One can only be tolerably certain of somebody’s sympathies (unless there are surviving letters like those from Sir John Oglander and his son-in-law) when their name turns up in official records such as those of the Committee for Sequestrations, which put a ransom on the estates of suspected royalists such as Sir Stephen Lennard, or in the ‘returns of suspected persons’. Suspected royalist ‘delinquents’ were required to ‘compound’ for certain sums or else go to jail. Two such in Bromley in 1651 were Robert Grandison, for the sum of £10, and Nicholas Gardner the chandler for a similar sum. Gardner was one of those still under surveillance in 1656, when the Commonwealth was worrying about possible plots to bring Charles II back to England, and was listed with two of the King family and two other Bromley men (Henry Gilmore and William Phillips). At the same time John Andrews, another local man, was arrested at the Crown public house in Shoe Lane in London. Henry King was accused of being ‘an officer in arms against Parliament in the Kent Insurrection in 1648 under Lord Goring’; his cousin Arnold was also said to have been in arms under Goring and to have ‘aided the King’s party with arms and assisted in plundering and imprisoning the well-affected’; and this accusation was also levelled at Martin French and John Stevens.

So there was indeed a group of eight or nine Bromley men who revealed their royalist tendencies sufficiently to be identified, though we cannot say how much truth there was in these specific accusations. Sir Stephen Lennard was charged in much the same way but he denied guilt and ultimately proceedings were dropped. It must be borne in mind that fines were another source of government revenue and were in fact largely intended as such. Other royalist supporters must have got away with it. ‘By their friends shall you know them’—so did Martin French’s friend Ralph Watson and his son Richard.
also belong to this group? And what of Thomas Wood, left a suit of clothes in Richard’s will? He had been coffinbearer at the funeral of Edmund Style, when a sermon against papacy was preached with only a frugal wake of ‘bread, beer and wine but without dinner or banquet’ in the best Puritan manner.

One Bromley man who must have supported parliament was ‘Mr. Auditor George Bingley’, who owned the property later known as The Rookery near Bromley Common. He was a civil servant, glimpses of whose career can be found in the State Papers from 1630 when he was ‘one of the Auditors of the Imprest’, answering a query regarding the ‘rates of pay of Admirals upon the coasts of Ireland from 1580 to 1620’, through 1648, when he and a colleague were to inspect the accounts for victualling the ships employed during the winter of 1642 in guarding the Narrow Seas and the Irish coast, to 1650, when he ‘certified of the quantity of angel and crown gold, and silver moneys coined in the Mint from 1610-15 and 1639-47, viz, angel gold yearly from four to 69 lbs., crown gold from 1,032 to 7,900 lbs, and silver from 2,062 to 305,464 lbs’. For all that, when the Civil War broke out Bingley, like Sir John Thornhill, was expected to contribute his share to the government’s finances. In December 1643 the Committee for the Advancement of Money assessed him to pay £200 and, also like Sir John, he was ordered to be brought into custody the following month for not doing so. But in Bingley’s case, at the end of January he was ‘respite until he receive money due by the State for his services’; and in November 1645 the demand was cancelled, ‘there being

3. The market square, Bromley, redrawn from a painting of 1795 now in the Bromley Museum collection. Buildings encroached upon the market house as early as the middle of the seventeenth century: in his will of 1659 James Basley described his house ‘against the Market House on the east’.
much money due to him for services in the army, and no assessment to be levied on
him in any place’. There must have been many others who supported parliament and
the puritans with enthusiasm but there was no call to record their names, and so their
identity is lost to us.

**Ordinary life and great events**

Most people, for all that in the early days they may have backed the movement against
Archbishop Laud with his high-church leanings, must before long have grown tired of
the war and only wished things to return to normal. But life did, on the whole, go on
much as usual in this quiet area near the protection of London. Everyone depended on
weather and harvest, even those who lived in towns. Fortunately there seem not to have
been any cold wet summers during that period. There were hot summers in 1649 and
1657, when corn ripened early, and summer fevers flourished. People were born and
died throughout those years, got married (though perhaps the new lay register may
have been lax in the recording of it), loved and quarrelled and got themselves into
trouble with the law. The Kent assize records from 1647 tell of John Hate of Bromley,
accused of stealing two ewes worth 1s; Lewis Harmer, labourer, indicted for stealing
seventeen handkerchiefs, two bands, a woman’s dressing, a cap and a coif, altogether
valued at 10s; John Sharpe, yeoman, accused of taking away a brown gelding worth £7;
and in 1646 of Roger Delve, husbandman. Mary Delve, perhaps his sister or daughter,
had given birth to a bastard child, so two local JPs, Sir Thomas Walsingham and Edward
Ady, committed her to the House of Correction at Dartford. Roger promptly ‘assaulted
Richard Rowland alias Watson the Constable and rescued Mary’ and ended up before
the Bench himself’. At this time smuggling probably did not benefit Bromley, but goods
seized in 1647 at Gravesend, bound for Amsterdam, included Sheffield knives, lengths
of cloth, silver goods and gold and silver thread, fox, squirrel and swan skins, and silk
stockings. ‘Concerning Lawlessness in the County’, declaimed the Kent JPs in 1654, ‘let
there be sufficient watching and warding and the Constables in each Hundred are to
give Weekly Accounts to the JPs.’

Only two war-related incidents in Bromley might have occasioned some local
excitement. The first was an adventure by Sir Roger Twysden, one of the gentlemen
who had organized the Kentish Petition in 1642. After imprisonment for his pains, he
was released on bail on condition he was not to go into Kent nor journey more than
eight or nine miles from London. However, he decided he would ‘bee freer from giving
offence out of the kingdom’ and so set out for France among a group of French and
Portuguese returning to the Continent, ‘desirous not to bee knowne but to passe
through that shyre as a traveler … In the after noone of the 9 June 1643 I came to
Bromeley, where the Committee for Kent then sate … Sir Anthony Weldon, Augustine
Skinner, Sir Thomas Walsingham and others … I was desirous to have past away as one
of the croude, having then, upon some weaknesse in my head, wore a cap of hayr which
they had never seene me in, which having used for some tyme I left of for the
troublesomenesse and not finding the good I expected’. Of course he was recognised
and hustled into the Bell where the Committee was meeting. At first he tried to bluff his
way out of his predicament but when Sir Anthony Weldon said if he was not Sir Roger
Twysden he was a rogue and must be whipped, he gave in and admitted who he was—
and was sent back to London as a prisoner escorted by an armed guard of
parliamentarian soldiers.

The second incident was about a month later, when there was the attempt by a royalist
force to infiltrate Kent from Surrey at Westerham. Colonel John Browne was sent
south to intercept them but was to rendezvous, at Bromley, with another troop of
soldiers before going any further. Browne waited in Bromley for two days, before giving up and going on alone. Even a small troop of soldiers, and the need to house and provision them and their horses, must have disrupted the calm tenor of normal life for the townsfolk. And it poured with rain all the time.

These two incidents apart, the Civil War and Commonwealth must have been a gloomy time for most, with the high taxation, no playing of games, decorous behaviour, and no feast days to relieve the long littleness of life. What Sir Stephen thought of in 1643 as distractions and Sir John Oglander later as general calamity, and his daughter as ‘these sade tymes’ lasted for the best part of twenty years—almost a generation. By the late 1650s people were tired of restrictions and inept government. The gentlemen of Kent gathered to compose a last petition:29 ‘The Nobility, Gentry, Ministry, and Commonality of Kent’ deplored with sadness ‘the multiplied calamities wherein we are at present involved, how friendless we are abroad and how divided at home: the loud and heart-piercing cries of the poor and the disability of the better sort to relieve them, the total decay of trade”—and then called for the dissolution of parliament and a fair election. Kent was, of course, not alone in this plea. This time, petitions were listened to, and before long General Monck was on his way to bring Charles II home from exile. The king landed near Dover and his triumphant progress towards London through Kent was strewn with flowers and cheered on by kerchief-waving crowds. No doubt there were Bromley folk among them.

Notes
1 C.H. Chalklin, Seventeenth Century Kent: a social and economic history (Longman, 1965) pp.156, 180
2 Elizabeth Melling (ed), Kent and the Civil War: catalogue of an exhibition at Kent Archives Office, Maidstone (1960) pp.11-14
3 Alan Everitt, The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60 (Leicester UP, 1966) pp 196-197
4 E.L.S. Horsbrugh (ed), Bromley, Kent from the earliest times to the present century (Hodder and Stoughton, 1929) p.11
5 Bernard Davis, Notebooks, vol.6-9 c.1935 (facsimile in Bromley Library)
6 Heath Tax Assessments, 1662 and 1664 (Centre for Kentish Studies.)
8 Bromley Archives [BA] 43/6: Survey of Bromley Manor 1647
9 Calendar for the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents (printed, indexed)
10 Isle of Wight Record Office [IWRO] Onglander Collection (ref. Og)
12 Patricia E. Knowlden, Bromley Manor and Palace through the Centuries (Bromley Borough Local History Society, 1996) p.4
13 BA 35: deeds of Grete House
14 Davis, Notebooks (index volume)
15 see note 6
16 BA 28/2 deed re Elmstead
17 Centre for Kentish Studies [CKS] QS/B4
18 TNA SP28/158-160 and 235
19 IWRO Og
20 TNA SP28.
21 Mary A.E. Green (ed), Calendar of the proceedings of the Committee for Advance of Money, 1642-1656, preserved in the State-paper department of Her Majesty’s Public Record Office (Stationary Office, 1888)
22 ‘Returns on Suspected Persons’ (Archaeologia Cantiana vol.23) p.71
23 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1640-60.
24 Green, Advance of Money
25 Bromley Library: Bromley parish registers, index and transcript
26 CKS QS/B4
28 Everitt, Community of Kent, p.190
29 ibid, pp.307-8

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Reviews Editor’s round-up for 2007

EVELYN LORD

So many excellent local history books are sent to *The Local Historian* that there is not enough space to do justice to them all with separate reviews. However, everything received is listed and most of those which are not separately reviewed are included in my annual ‘round up’. This year the review is divided into themes and also includes a regional section.

**Britain at War**

The last time invading troops actually landed on the shores of Great Britain was at Fishguard in Wales in 1797. *Britain’s Last Invasion* by J.E. Thomas sets the local and international context before the invasion took place, discusses the action, and considers its aftermath when there were accusations of cowardice and treason. It ends with analysis of the myths that have grown up around these events, especially the familiar one which claims that the invasion was repelled by local women dressed in scarlet cloaks and ‘Welsh’ hats marching up and down, to give the appearance of massed redcoats. This interesting and informative work suggests that this myth was in circulation soon after the event, but that although women were present they were not armed and did not parade as soldiers. Also from Wales, but describing somewhat more sinister events, is *Fron Goch and the Birth of the IRA*, which examines the internment of 2000 Irish Republicans near Bala in 1916, and shows how their dissatisfaction there led to the formation of the IRA. The book shows that there was a cordial relationship between local people and the internees, and points out that what happened at Fron Goch camp affected many thousands of people. Following the unsuccessful invasion at Fishguard a young general, Napoleon Bonaparte, rose to power, but eventually fell and was imprisoned on St Helena. *The Bennett Letters* were written between a family living in St Helena at the time of his captivity, and their relatives in England and the Cape. The letters contain a mass of information about military life at the time, and about the death of Napoleon.

Returning to England, and looking at the twentieth century, *Uppingham at War* covers life on the Home Front during the Second World War. It includes accounts of evacuees, the parish church and (rather oddly) reminiscences of Bletchley Park 1941-1945. This unbalances the rest of this lovingly recreated portrait of coping in wartime. Of course, many lives were lost during the 1939-1945 war, and *Never Has So Much Been Owed*... is a commemoration of the men from Tewkesbury and District who died in the conflict. It gives the roll of honour, includes biographies of those who fell, and describes the theatres of war where they fell. A comparable approach is demonstrated by *Lest Cudworth Forgets*, which remembers the men of this Yorkshire mining community who were killed during both World Wars. It lists where they were buried, and the medals they won. Such medals can be identified and studied using *Medals: the researcher’s guide*, a National Archives publication that illustrates and describes the medals, lists the class numbers of documents where details about these can be found, and explains what information can be gleaned from these records. *Shot Down and in the Dark* is an account of the heroism of the RAF and Commonwealth air crews saved from the sea in the
Second World War, giving dramatic stories of remarkable survival in the North Sea, the Atlantic, Mediterranean and more distant waters.

**Drink and public houses**

Consumption of alcohol and the conviviality of the public house have long been an essential part of leisure. Hampshire seems to have been exceptionally well provided with public houses, if two towns covered by recent books were typical. The title of *So Drunk He Must Have Been to Romsey* says it all, while *Pubs of Aldershot Across Three Centuries* is a history and gazetteer in the special context of a hard-drinking garrison town. *A History of Littleborough Pubs* provides a comparable coverage of a small Lancashire cotton town. All three books would be invaluable for anyone embarking on a pub-crawl in these towns (on a historical basis of course) while, on a more serious note, comparative work on public-house naming and the advent of commercial brewing could draw on these and similar books—a basis for such analysis can be found in Appendix VII of the Littleborough book.

**Schooldays**

The notion that these are the happiest days of our lives is one that many might debate, but *The Happiest Days! Education in Haxby 1854-2004* suggests that education in this Yorkshire community did provide the happiest days for some. It traces the history of the village school through text and photographs, and although the children in the 1903 school photograph look rather grim, the Haxby School Cricket Team 1946/7 look as if they were enjoying life, as do the children in the 1950 photograph. Another Yorkshire school is covered in *Dore Old School in Records and Recollections*. This village school on the edge of Sheffield has Georgian origins, through the bequest of Robert Twine to the people of the village. Illustrated by drawings and photographs, the book is well referenced and provides a useful comparative study on local education through the ages. Although the children photographed in 1901 look as grim as those at Haxby, those photographed in 1966 have big smiles and look as if they are indeed having happy days!

**Towns and cities**

Urban history is represented in this round-up by four industrial settlements (Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Redditch) and two market towns, as well as four collections of photographs. In *Commercial Life of a Suffolk town: Framlingham around 1900*, John F. Bridges uses photographs, documents and reminiscences to give a snapshot view of the places, with its industries and the agriculture of its surrounding countryside; appendices include a list of places to visit. Framlingham developed around a great castle whereas Wymondham, another East Anglian market town, focused on its abbey. *Wymondham: history of a Norfolk market town* traces its history from early beginnings to the late twentieth century, showing that Wymondham also had industrial concerns including, in the nineteenth-century, brickworks, weaving mills and a tannery. It also had considerable synthesis with surrounding countryside. Both books contain useful bibliographies. *Old Redditch Voices* takes us to the industrial Midlands. A history of the town is followed by oral reminiscences and photographs covering themes such as the important needle industry, schools, churches, sport and the two World Wars. This helps the reader to build up an understanding of the role of the town and its citizens in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

*Manchester’s Little Italy* is also based on memories, this time from the Italian colony in Ancoats, which began in about 1835 and flourished until slum clearance in the early
1960s dispersed it. This is a sad reflection on the way in which communities were broken up by local councils, but this book shows that the corporate memory of Little Italy has survived despite this. *Liverpool Walks Through History* and *Liverpool City Beautiful* cover a different aspect of urban history—the townscape and its architecture. The first includes twelve walks through different areas of the city, noting places of interest on the way, while the second complements this with sumptuous illustrations of Liverpudlian architecture past and present. *Glasgow City Beautiful* uses the same format for the Scottish city, and includes illustrations of the Roman Antonine Wall, Celtic crosses, and residential Glasgow. The *City Beautiful* books could be described as ‘coffee table’ style (although not in a coffee table format) rather than local history, but will be of interest to anyone who knows the two cities or wants to visit them.

Collections of photographs evoke the past in a way in which words cannot. *The Market Towns of Leicestershire and Rutland* and *Nottingham Life in the Post War Years* show aspects of urban life in the Midlands. Many of the scenes illustrated can still be identified, so that these pictures are good evidence of change over time. *Edinburgh People and Work and Leisure* and *Edinburgh Shops Past and Present* deal with people rather than place. The first of these goes from the cradle to the grave, and the second shows aspects of consumerism in Scotland’s capital.

**Villages**

The tavern or public house was a feature of almost every village, playing a large part in community life. This is demonstrated in *Millgate/Aylsham, Norfolk* where at one time in the nineteenth century a population of around 400 had three public houses, all of which are now closed. This book includes a useful list of sources on the village. Two other books on Norfolk villages have been received. In *Exploring the Norfolk Village* Chris Barringer explains that he does not attempt to look at all Norfolk villages, and in order to make this large county manageable has divided it into sub-regions, examining the impact of man in each area by using case studies of individual villages. The result is an accessible, well-researched and referenced, beautifully-illustrated book that should encourage visitors to the villages and also prompt further investigation. The Runtons are on the Norfolk coast, and *East and West Runton—Two Villages, One Parish* shows how proximity to the sea has influenced their development and landscape. The book is graphically illustrated with photographs of battered sea defences, and caravan parks. Moving inland to Cambridgeshire, *Mepal Vignettes* contains reminiscences about this Fenland village in 1984 and 2005. Even in this relatively short space of time there have been profound changes, demonstrating a pace of change that we as local historians should be aware of and try to record before it is too late.

*Glimpses of Cottered* and *A Village in Sussex: the history of Kingston near Lewes* take a longer-term view. Cottered (Hertfordshire) has ancient origins, and prehistoric remains have been found. Nowadays Throcking and Broadfield, once separate manors and parishes, are included in the civil parish of Cottered. The book describes the manors, churches and chapels and then moves on to consider the people and village life in the twenty-first century. *Kingston near Lewes* concentrates mainly on the medieval and early modern periods, showing that change came through the influence of one family, the Rogers, whose activities caused a disintegration of village society even though the villagers resisted enclosure until 1831. Gourdon is a fishing village in Aberdeenshire. *Gourdon: A brief history of the village and its people* is a well-illustrated account covering five themes: the village; its families; the fishing trade and the sea; the kirk; and the village and the law. This book includes a useful bibliography and is a good example of a local history of a village. In the past each parish had markers showing where its limits lay. These were
marked in various ways. At Heavitree in Devon there were boundary stones. *Heavitree Parish Boundary Stones* is an illustrated guide—an interesting and imaginative idea. This selection of books shows the variety if ways in which the history of a village can be treated. May many more be written!

**Voluntary associations**

Voluntary associations play and played an important part in local life. These associations range from the medieval gilds and livery companies, to the nineteenth-century dispensaries and hospitals and twentieth-century institutions such as the YMCA and Dr Barnardo’s. *Featherbeds and Flocks Bedds* [sic] is the history of the Worshipful Company of Upholders of the City of London. Upholders were ‘upholsterers’, but as well as upholstering furniture and stuffing feather beds they also furnished ceremonial tents and pavilions, such as those used at The Field of the Cloth of Gold. This history of the company shows that they had charities which took care of sick and aged members, and that disputes with other livery companies seem to have been rife. The book is well researched but is first and foremost a history of the company, not setting the company in its social and economic context.

Voluntary care of the sick was important in the past, as shown in *Treatment for Two Guineas* and *Scarborough Hospital and Dispensary: The First Fifty years 1852-1902*. The first of these considers how medical provision for all came to Norfolk in general and Great Yarmouth in particular. It shows how prehistory and the Romans dealt with illness, and progresses to the medieval infirmary hospitals, of which the Great Hospital in Norwich is one of the finest in England. A great deal of primary research has gone into this unashamedly Whig representation of the history of health care. Brian Callan demonstrates that Great Yarmouth, although a late starter, had a dispensary for the poor in 1826 which became an infirmary in 1836, and eventually a general hospital. The dispensary in another seaside town, Scarborough, was founded in 1852, and developed into a general hospital which opened in 1893. The account of the dispensary and general hospital examines the finances and staffing problems experienced in the early days, as well as the way in which hospitals reacted to new medical technology such as the Roentgen X-Ray machine.

*Warwick County Asylum: The First Reformatory Outside London* appears to cover another aspect of health care, but in fact this institution was a place where juvenile offenders could be lodged and reformed. This ‘asylum’ was the brainchild of local magistrates who thought that if young offenders were taught crafts and could earn a living they would eschew a life of crime in the future. The YMCA is another institution dedicated to the preservation of the male mind, body and spirit in a healthy state. Founded in 1844 and the inspiration of George Williams, the organisation spread quickly across the country and by 1877 reached the Surrey market town of Guildford. In *Guildford YMCA an illustrated history*, Helen Chapman Davies shows how from a small beginning the branch opened a well-appointed hostel and has three permanent centres in the town. One function of the YMCA is to provide facilities for sport. The Sutton Harriers and Athletics Club (St Helens) is an example of a voluntary organisation that provided training and encouragement for young adults. *From Acorns to Oak*, a history of the club, details its development and achievement.

When discussing voluntary organisations it is difficult to avoid a Whig view of history, which sees society in a sequence of progression, with later agents showing improvement on the earlier. *Keeping the Vision Alive*, the story of Barnardo’s 1905-2005, shows that although the organisation has changed, there are children still in danger and Barnardo’s is there to help them. Dr Barnardo started his work with children at a time
of intense poverty, but while such destitution might have disappeared, poverty still exist and requires a different approach. This book can be recommended as a sympathetic account of an organisation that is a household name.

Defying the Demon: Smallpox in Sussex shows how a combination of voluntary and official agencies was needed to deal with this killer disease. After 1665 plague was no longer endemic in the British Isles, but the scourge of smallpox took its place. Measures to deal with this appeared in the eighteenth-century, when inoculation began to be used, and eventually eradicated it. In this book, Diana Crook not only discusses the appearance of the disease in Sussex, but also its treatment, and gives insights into the wider medical implications of the search for a cure. This book is a good example of local case studies illustrating wider issues.

Regional round-up

London, South East and South

This region has been particularly well served in 2006/7, and it is clear that London’s many local history societies are active and publishing good material, as Chris French’s review article in this issue will reveal. Lost Theatres of Harringey was received too late to be included in that review, but deserves mention anyway. It demonstrates that in the nineteenth century theatreland was not confined to the West End, but flourished outside central London, with at least six theatres in the Harringey and Highgate area, and seven more within easy reach. Nineteenth century gentlemen were great collectors as well as great theatre-goers. Thomas Layton of Brentford collected antiquities, books and other artefacts that he generously gave to the people of Brentford. Layton’s Legacy gives details of his life and describes the collection, now housed in a number of London museums as well as Brentford. Moving eastwards we come to Chigwell in Essex and Rolls Park, of which, unhappily, little remains. But the Harvey family who lived there from the sixteenth century are remembered in The Harveys of Rolls Park, Chigwell. The Harveys originated from Folkestone in Kent. Walks Through History: Kent describes 24 walks through the antiquities and history of that county. They are arranged in chronological order, from prehistory to the twentieth century.

In Kent’s neighbouring county Sussex, Peacehaven has become synonymous with bad planning and ribbon development. Before the Bungalows explains that people had been living in this area since prehistoric times, but to the twentieth century observer it looked like an empty landscape, ripe for development. Different landowners sold off plots, and unplanned development and a sprawl of bungalows was the result. A different type of planning went into Foxenden Deep Shelter, a purpose-built air raid shelter hewn out of the chalk beneath Guildford and housing over 2000 people during the air raids of 1940 and 1941. The illustrations in the book show that the shelter had good ventilation, electricity and toilet facilities. Are there any other examples of deep shelters like this in chalk downland areas? Stendish Manor in Kings Langley (Hertfordshire) traces the history of the Stendish estate from the Romans onwards. It includes detailed maps and illustrations, and a comprehensive bibliography.

Hampshire local history is well represented this year. Romsey in Charter Year 1607 celebrates the town, its people and their lives. Briscoe Eyre’s New Forest is a reprint of Briscoe Eyre’s The New Forest. Its Common Rights and Cottage Stock-Keepers by a verderer, published in 1883. The original publication was a response to attacks made on forest rights by the government, and was an attempt to confirm these rights through legal and customary evidence. This makes a useful casebook for anyone interested in forest law. The Life and Times of a Hampshire Blacksmith is the story of Walter Murphy, who moved to Hampshire when a baby, and after being apprenticed to his uncle as a
blacksmith, worked at that trade for the next seventy years. This book goes beyond his life story and describes neighbouring villagers and their experiences. The illustrations demonstrate how village life changed during the twentieth century, when many smithies were turned into garages.

**The East and the Midlands**

Two books from Norfolk discuss different aspects of life in that county. *The Norfolk Almanac of Disasters* is a monthly calendar of catastrophes over the ages. Disasters natural and man-made haunt our newspapers and television screens every day, and I wonder who wants to read about more of these, unless it is as a form of voyeurism. Much more positive and useful specifically for those interested in transport history is *The Norfolk Railway: Railway Mania in East Anglia 1834-1862*, which charts the events surrounding the coming of the railway to Norfolk. This started by linking local places (as in 1844, with the line from Norwich to Great Yarmouth). A connection to London via Ely and Cambridge was established in 1845 but the direct link to Liverpool Street was a later development. The book is packed with details of company rivalries and finances. There is a note on sources, but no references, which is a pity since it detracts what from what otherwise would be an excellent local account of a developing rail network.

Those involved in early land drainage are unsung heroes, yet played an important part in the agricultural revolution and increasing food production. *Joseph Elkington* was such a pioneer in Warwickshire, and his work was given wider publicity in a report by John Johnston in 1797. Pioneers in a different sphere were the early police constables. Thomas Woollaston served in Staffordshire for 38 years and his memoir *Police Experiences and Reminiscences of Official Life*, first published in 1883 and now reprinted, is invaluable for anyone working on the early police force. It shows that not only were they involved in local crimes, such as theft, bigamy, illegal distilling and the arrest of a fraudulent town clerk, but national events such as Chartist activity impinged on them as well.

**The West**

Two pamphlets from western cities illustrate different aspects of urban life. *Bristol’s Courts of Law* traces their development from the hundred courts onwards. Many different types of court were found in a city such as Bristol: their functions are described, and the pamphlet gives a clear account and definitions of the courts which will be of use to local historians elsewhere. *Bill Miller: Black Labour Party Activist in Plymouth* was a prominent figure in that city. His ancestors came from Sierra Leone, but his father ended up in Plymouth married to an English girl. Bill was involved in the Labour movement from the 1920s onwards, and became a town councillor, making a lasting contribution to the town.

**The North**

Tickhill and District Local History Society are publishing an interesting series of Occasional Papers. No.2 concerns *Tickhill’s Misen Dew* (the Maison Dieu almshouses) and no.3 is about Eastfield Farm, *Tickhill 1925-1955*. The occupants of the almshouses are traced through the ages, and the Eastfield farm paper includes an interesting account of the farming year, with photographs of work on the farm. *Memories of Bowden* (County Durham) is based on photographs and memories of a mining village. On page 17 there is a rare illustration of a slate set beside a front door for the ‘knocker up’ to use when rousing the workers. *Durham Biographies* (vol.5) includes a variety of people, including a cricketer, a pit man poet, an actress and numerous clerical gentlemen.
Scotland

In 1200 William the Lion, king of Scotland, built at castle at Ayr. In 1205 he added a burgh. Ayr and the Charter of William the Lion, 1205 gives the text of the charter, and a commentary by a distinguished Scottish historian. From the other end of the social scale comes Robert Lees, an early nineteenth century member of the fishing community of Stonehaven in north-east Scotland. The Diary of Robert Lees is an intimate account of life and work in Stonehaven from 1809-1831, plus a biographical list of all the people mentioned. The diary is about ordinary people whose live and work was dominated by the sea, and if it were not for Lees diary they might otherwise be unknown.

Scotland has a remarkable series of comprehensive statistical accounts, the first being compiled in 1791. East Lothian is carrying on this tradition and publishing the Fourth Statistical Account. East Lothian 1945-2000. Vol.4 covers Aberlady to Tyningham, and is valuable account of the social, political, economic and cultural environment of the county. The usefulness of such a series to historians of the future is incalculable, and one hopes that more comparable volumes will be published.

Wales

Hereford and Wales border and intermingle with each other. Herefordshire, the Welsh Connection considers their relationship, showing how Welsh influence remains strong in Hereford. This volume needs a companion, on the influence of Herefordshire on neighbouring Welsh counties. In this area many battles were fought. A hero of some of them was Llewellyn Bren who in 1316 led a revolt against English overlords. His biography, part of a series on Welsh heroes, shows that the revolt did not have the impact on the imagination of Owen Glendower’s revolt, but is a story well worth telling. Perhaps this sums up all the books in this review: they contain important stories which otherwise might be lost to succeeding generations.

FROM ACORN TO OAK A history of the Sutton Harriers and Athletics Club, St Helens (St Helens’s Association for Research into Local History 2007 ISBN 978 0 9536908 1 1) £9.99

FRON GOCH and the Birth of the IRA by Lyn Ebenezer (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch 2006 ISBN 0 86381 977 X) £7.75

GLASGOW City Beautiful by John McDermott (Breedon 2007 ISBN 978 1 85983 598 2) £9.99

GLIMPSES OF COTTERED by Neville Chuck (Friends of Cottered Church 2006 ISBN 978 0 9553142 0 9) £9.95

GOURDON A brief history of the village and its people by Andrew R.C. Simpson (Aberdeen & NE Scotland FHS 2005 ISBN 1 900173 98 0) £7.50

GUILDFORD YMCA An illustrated history by Helen Chapman Davies (Guildford YMCA 2006 no ISBN) £4.99

HEREFORDSHIRE The Welsh connection by Colin Lewis (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch 2006 ISBN 0 86381 958 3) £6.90

A HISTORY OF LITTLEBOROUGH PUBS (Littleborough HAS Tempus 2006 ISBN 0 7524 4131 0) £12.99

JOSEPH ELKINGTON Warwickshire’s land drainage pioneer by Chris Holland, Anne Langley and Adam Moore (Stretton HS 2006 ISBN 0 9537462 4 0) £3.50 from Stretton HS, 12 Squires Road, Stretton on Dunsmore, Rugby CV23 9HF


KENT Walks through History by John Wilks (Breedon 2007 ISBN 978 1 85983 552 4) £9.99

LITTLEBOROUGH PUBS of Aldershot across three centuries by Peter G. Palmer (Aldershot Historical and Archaeological Society 2004 ISBN 0 9542650 9 2) £10.95

MANCHESTER’S LITTLE ITALY Memories of the Italian Colony of Ancoats by Anthony Rea (Neil Richardson 1988 no ISBN) £5.25 from Anthony Rea, 47 Blackburn Street, Trinity Riverside, Salford M3 6AS

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MANOR OF SHENDISH by Alan Penwarden (Kings Langley Local History and Museum Society 2006 no ISBN) £4+65p p&p from Frank Davies, KLLHMS, 28 Watford Road, Kings Langley WD4 8EH


NOTTINGHAM LIFE in the Post War Years by D. Whitworth (Sutton 2006 ISBN 0 7509 4367 X) £12.99

NEVER HAS SO MUCH BEEN OWED A commemoration of those who from Tewkesbury and District who lost their lives during the Second World War by John Dixon (Tewkesbury HS 2005 ISSN 1742 6030) no price

OLD REDDITCH VOICES edited Anne Bradford (Hunt End Books 2005 ISBN 0 9549484 4 8) £12.95 from Hunt End Books, 66 Enfield Road, Redditch B97 5NH


PUBS OF ALDERSHOT across three centuries by P.G. Palmer (Aldershot Historical and Archaeological Society 2004 ISBN 0 9542650 9 2) £10.95

ROMSEY IN CHARTER YEAR 1607 and the years that followed (Lower Test Valley Archaeological Study Group 2007 ISBN 978 906921 8 9) £3.95 from LTAVS, 8 Church Lane, Romsey SO56 7EP


WE DRUNK HE MUST HAVE BEEN TO ROMSEY A history of Romsey’s pubs and inns (Lower Test Valley ASG 2006 ISBN 90621 23 6) £5.95
NOTE: from this issue onwards a selection of full-sized reviews which cannot be included in The Local Historian for lack of space are being published instead on the British Association for Local History website (www.balh.co.uk). This on-line reviews section will be updated each quarter, to coincide with the appearance of the journal, and a list of books reviewed will be printed in each issue. The books reviewed on-line for May 2008 are as follows (with name of reviewer in brackets):

Peter Chapman, Grimsby: the story of the world’s greatest fishing port [Roger Bellingham]
Tim Cockin, Biographical county maps: Staffordshire based on the Ordnance Survey New Series six inch to one mile maps 1875-86, and showing a notable person associated with each parish [Sarah Bendall]
Maxwell Craven, An illustrated history of Derby [Dawn Tivey]
Jim Fox, How durst he do that? The life of Benjamin Flounders Esquire 1768-1846 [Winifred Stokes]
Ian Freeman, From Saxons to Speed: a new history of old Bedford [Wendy Anderson]
Tom Beaumont James, Winchester from Prehistory to the Present [Barbara Selwood]
Philip Nixon, Exploring Border Reivers History, and Philip Nixon and Hugh Dias, Exploring Solway History [Richard Brockington]
Geoffrey Oldfield, Nottingham: Picture the past [Dawn Tivey]
Alan Pallister, Middleton St. George: windows on the evolution of a Tees Valley parish [Melyn Jones]
Chris Pomery, Family history in the genes: trace your DNA and grow your own family tree [Alan Foster]
Lynda Smith, A History of Rosherville Gardens: the place to spend a happy day [Jean Wilson]
An exemplary achievement

**LEOMINSTER MINSTER, PRIORY AND BOROUGH c660-1539 by Joe and Caroline Hillaby (Friends of Leominster Priory/Logaston Press 2006 292pp ISBN 1 904396 56 9)**

£10 from FLP Townsend House, Luston, Leominster HR6 0DZ

The striking achievement of this book is that it offers a highly detailed account of Leominster’s minster, priory, and town, from the first foundation of the minster in the seventh century to the demise of the priory in the sixteenth, firmly set within the framework of local, regional, national, and even international events and influences. There is always a strong sense of place, and indeed the priory’s strategic location in the often-troubled Marches of Wales is shown to have been a key factor in its history.

The book opens with the story, based on the twelfth-century *Life of St Mildburg*, of the conversion by Edfrith, monk of Northumbria, of Merewalh, ruler of the people west of Severn, in about 660. Merewalh then endowed the minster, so the foundation is part of the wider pattern in which royalty played a key role in the conversion of the English people. Leominster’s early history as an important religious centre and repository of saintly relics is explored, with a detailed discussion of the contents and likely Leominster provenance of the Anglo-Saxon prayer book, now in two manuscripts in the British Library, against the background of the tenth-century monastic reform movement. The prayer book is used as evidence of local saintly cults, of Roman influences in the region west of the Severn, and in support of the possibility that, by the early eleventh century, the foundation had become a nunnery. The Domesday evidence for the great manor of Leominster is discussed in the context of its ranking in the pattern of local land ownership.

A new set of influences was brought to bear with the re-foundation of Leominster in 1123 by Henry I as a dependency of his great Cluniac abbey of Reading. Leominster’s history was ever after bound up with that of its mother house. The Romanesque monastic church does not survive, but the authors draw on the results of archaeology and comparisons with other periapsidal churches in England and on the Continent to evoke its likely appearance. The architecture is described in terms of liturgical function, Cluniac monastic observance and Leominster’s role as a pilgrimage church. The detailed account of the architecture of the nave, the part of the church which served the needs of the parishioners and which does survive, is again enriched by comparisons drawn with other Romanesque churches in the region and beyond. The discussion of the (now mainly lost) cloister and conventual buildings emphasises the functions of the separate buildings, the priory’s obligations to its servants and relations with the local community, and the working of the home farm.

The development of the market town is set clearly in the context of the promotion of trade by the Crown and ecclesiastical landlords in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The nature of burgage tenure and Leominster’s economic base in wool, cloth and leather, its government and parliamentary representation are addressed. The development of the nave of the church and establishment of the parochial lady chapel are seen as evidence of the growing civic pride of the burgesses in the later medieval
period, while written evidence, such as that in the Hereford bishops’ registers, is used to show increased assertiveness in their relations with the priory.

A special strength of the chapters on the agricultural economy is the separate treatment of different locations within the priory estates, allowing discussion of their separate topographies and deployment of resources. The post-Black Death practices of leasing estates, commuting labour services, and favouring sheep farming are explained, tendencies common among larger landowners in the later middle ages. The impact of the demographic decline of the fifteenth century on the success of market towns in Herefordshire is explained as the context for the experience of Leominster. There, it is suggested, the fifteenth-century architectural features in the parish church speak of relative prosperity and even new confidence on the part of the borough elite, due to Leominster’s continued success in producing good-quality wool, manufacturing cloth, and stock farming.

The book concludes, as it must, with the priory’s inauspicious demise at the Reformation. But the Epilogue, describing the descent of the lordship of Leominster thereafter, emphasises the continuities with its grander past, and in particular it is pleasing to note the adaptation of the Edfrith tradition to become the foundation legend of the borough.

The authors make use of every scrap of available evidence to add to the rich tapestry of Leominster’s history. Perhaps the jewel in the crown is the Anglo-Saxon prayer book; but the written source material—including unpublished material from both local and national repositories—ranges far beyond this. Of special value are the extracts of the halmote rolls used to elucidate the management of the priory estates in the fourteenth century. Archaeological investigations, architectural features, artefacts, studies of the townscape and standing buildings are all brought into play to illuminate the functions of the priory and the growing importance of the town. The book is enhanced by generous use of black and white and colour plates (of special note are the reproductions of sections of manuscripts, and of the remarkable capitals in the nave), plans, maps, aerial photographs, figures, and tables.

This book will surely appeal to local people wanting to learn more about the history of their church and town, and indeed local initiatives have been highly important in the project. But it will also be enormously informative to anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of medieval monasteries and their associated communities. The book gives a very clear sense of the manifold connections of an important religious house: its relations (sometimes stormy) with its parishioners and townspeople; its responsibilities to its servants; its links with the bishop of Hereford, its local patrons, and its mother house; and the often far-flung cultural influences that inspired its architecture. Those involved in the production of this splendid book—above all its authors, but also its supporters and sponsors—should be very proud of its achievement.

ELIZABETH GEMMILL

Diaries and letters


Kathleen Tipper was born in south-east London in 1919, and began her diary for Mass Observation in July 1941. She was still alive when Patricia and Robert Malcolmson were editing the diaries with sensitivity and care. They therefore had the considerable good
fortune of being able to seek both clarification and advice on various matters, including which people she wished to be named and which she preferred to remain anonymous. She was also able to fill in the details for those times when her diary was not written; for example there were no entries for 1943. In January the family was bombed out of their home. They had gone to the air-raid shelter and, when the ‘All Clear’ sounded, they emerged to find their house gone—all they possessed was what they had stood up in. They were rehoused in a requisitioned house and received a government grant to buy household goods, but it was totally inadequate to cover all that had been lost. Later in that year Kathleen’s mother became very seriously ill with cancer, which had been diagnosed in 1938, and she died in November. It is therefore not surprising that Kathleen did not feel able to write in her diary in such difficult times. Her subsequent contribution also shows the value of oral evidence being used to expand and clarify a written account.

This is a wonderful diary, which makes fascinating reading. Kathleen Tipper wrote interestingly about everyday life in far from ordinary times. She combines details about work, food, friends, with comments on the wider world events. She followed the progress of the war with close attention, relying on radio, film newsreels, and newspapers. There is not room in a brief review for her many pithy quotations, but her view of General de Gaulle is typical of her far-from-rosy assessment of some politicians: ‘It is obvious that he is a most high-handed and violent man, even if he is the saviour of his country’ (February 1945). She could be quite caustic about her fellow-Londoners. She noted the presence of large numbers of American soldiers: ‘London was seething with them, with their girls in tow. I wonder what those girls will do when the Americans go home and the British soldiers come home battle-weary and hard-up. I am afraid they won’t get taken about in such style then’. A continuing thread in the diaries is her unswerving admiration for the British forces, which found practical expression in her voluntary work in a YMCA canteen for service personnel. It would be a great pity if this compelling book were to be seen only as being of interest to historians of London. It is of value to all social historians of the twentieth century.

KILLERTON, CAMBORNE AND WESTMINSTER The political correspondence of Sir Francis and Lady Acland 1910–1929 ed. Garry Tregidga (Devon and Cornwall Record Society 2006 viii+180pp ISBN 0 901853 48 8) PRICE?

During the period covered by the documents in this volume, there was a complex realignment of British politics, with the near-collapse of the Liberal party and the rise of Labour. For those not familiar with these political complexities Garry Tregidga provides a comprehensive introduction to this collection of letters and election addresses. The Aclands, important landowners in Devon, were closely involved in both local and national politics. Francis was MP for Camborne, then for Tiverton, and finally, in the 1930s, North Cornwall. Eleanor stood unsuccessfully for Exeter in 1931. Before the First World War both Sir Francis and Lady Acland were supporters of female suffrage (but not of the militant suffragettes). In a letter to the Women’s Liberal Federation News in November 1911 Eleanor wrote, ‘We all agree that militancy … has created an atmosphere unfavourable to the grant of women’s suffrage; this is because militancy has made the Women’s Suffrage Movement appear to be one of sex-antagonism. Whereas it really is one of sex-comradeship’. This moderate and considered attitude is typical of the tone of most of the letters, whether written by Francis or Eleanor. There are a few exceptions: in 1911, when Asquith failed to give him the government position he wanted, Francis began a letter to his wife ‘Damn, Damn, Damn’. In another, in 1917, when Asquith had failed to thank him for a letter, he began ‘Asquith is a pig’. In the
1920s both the Aclands were part of Lloyd George’s inner-circle and were involved (without success) in trying to create a new Liberal party.

There were frequent tensions between the policies of the national Liberal party and the concerns of Liberals in the South West, with Francis Acland trying, not always successfully, to square the circle. In his address to the electors of Camborne in 1910 he supported Home Rule for Ireland and added ‘I hope also to each of the other parts of Great Britain full control of its own local affairs’. But he was unable to bring this wish to fruition, and there was a growing feeling of alienation among local people because of the dominance of London and ‘metropolitanism’. During the First World War, West Country Liberals appear to have been most concerned with ‘The Drink Question’. Other issues also troubled their non-conformist consciences, such as the government proposal for farmers to work on Sundays. Sir Francis was, of course, aware of these issues, but he was much more concerned with national ones such as education and social reform. He was never likely to become the leader of embryonic Cornish nationalism. This volume provides many insights into both national politics and West Country history in the period 1910-1929. It probably requires some prior knowledge and understanding of both topics if the full value of the book is to be realised.

ELIZABETH ROBERTS

Nineteenth-century religion and the local community


In the nineteenth-century there was of course a great variety of religious denominations: as religious toleration gained ground, so the Roman Catholics re-established themselves, the nonconformist chapels proliferated and, as the 1851 religious census illustrates, more unusual denominations emerged, such as the Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists. Although the local community had many choices of where to worship on a Sunday, the Church of England remained central to parish life (but not necessarily community life), and was the Established Church.

The role of the Anglican Church in a small Humberside market town is discussed by Dinah M. Tyszka in Church and People in a Victorian Country Town. Barton-on-Humber was divided into two parishes, St Peter and St Mary. St Peter’s was where the better-off lived, while St Mary’s catered for the poor. Inexplicably, the two parishes were served by one vicar, although there were numerous curates, and each church had its own set of churchwardens. Both churches were heavily restored in the nineteenth-century, and the book describes this process in detail, as well as giving detailed biographies of the vicars. An introduction discusses contemporary religious trends and disputes, and shows how this impacted on to Barton-on-Humber—thus, a ritualist curate fell foul of the vicar in 1842. There is a great deal of information in this book, mostly well-handled. Perhaps some of the most interesting material is the extracts from the late nineteenth-century visiting registers of the vicar Charles Moore, and his curates. These give an intimate picture of the parishioners as seen through their eyes.
George Uppleby, vicar of Barton-on-Humber 1834-1851, corresponded regularly with his bishop, John Kaye of Lincoln (1827-1853). Kaye’s parish correspondence has been collected and edited by Rod Ambler, and published in the Lincoln Record Society series. Kaye was a reforming bishop with a great concern for the pastoral care of the parishes that were his responsibility. The letters deal with topics such as pluralism, timing of services, clerical residences, clergy stipends and the role of the clergy in the life of the parish. This collection is a valuable addition to the documents on the Church of England in the nineteenth-century.

The 1851 religious census returns for Barton-on-Humber showed that more parishioners attended the Wesleyan Methodist chapel than the two parish churches, but the same census showed that in the Barony of Glasgow the Wesleyan Methodists had less influence, their attendance amounting to a mere 0.6 per cent, whereas 30.4 per cent attended one of the various versions of Presbyterianism, 7 per cent a Roman Catholic church, and 1.4 per cent an Episcopalian. In his examination of church and people in the Barony of Glasgow, Peter Hillis shows that in total only 44.8 per cent of the population attended any church on census Sunday, a trend away for active religion which began to emerge in the early nineteenth-century. He broadens the discussion on nineteenth-century religion in Glasgow away from the 1851 census by using a great variety of local church records, census enumerators’ books, newspapers, probate records and family papers to examine the social and employment status of nineteenth-century congregations, within the economic context of a place sometimes known as the ‘second city of the Empire’. The book is packed with material and includes five appendices; one of which contains biographical notes of the management of six churches. There are 32 tables, 3 charts, and 30 illustrations. This is admirable, but the detail distracts from the central arguments on the relationship of class and gender to religious affiliation, and the book falls between two stools—it is neither an academic monograph nor popular history. However, anyone interested in Scottish history and nineteenth-century religion will be rewarded by reading it.

Much more restrained in tone is The Northern Catholic Community in 1823, based on a report sent to Rome by Bishop Thomas Smith. Edited by John Dunne, the Latin text of the report is reproduced, followed by an English translation, and a commentary on the document. The introduction gives details of the life and career of Bishop Smith, Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District (which covered the area from Cheshire to the Scottish border). Bishop Smith had two major concerns when writing his report: one was the relationship with the Jesuits, and the other was Catholic Emancipation in England and its practical implications—a shortage of priests, chapels and money. The report placed the northern district in its geographical context, estimated the number of Catholics in the district, gave details on three northern colleges, and four convents, and the number of clergy. The whole is a partial account of a nineteenth-century Catholic community, but nevertheless an important document in an under-explored section of church history in England. This quartet of books illustrates the diversity of religious experience in nineteenth century Britain and indicates that there are still many local themes to be explored, for which these will supply useful material and comparative examples.

EVELYN LORD
The failure of the ‘Rash Adventurer’

**THE JACOBITE INVASION OF 1745 IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND** by Jonathan D. Oates (Centre for North West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster 2006 144pp ISBN 1 86220 179 X) £12.95

This book is a major contribution to eighteenth century local studies. It furnishes an in-depth analysis of the impact of Prince Charles Edward Stuart’s dramatic incursion into the four north-western counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire and Cheshire at the head of a 5000-strong Jacobite army in the closing months of 1745. While giving a basic and very lucid narrative of the Jacobite advance and retreat through the region from the siege of Carlisle in early November to the ‘battle’ of Clifton Moor on 18 December 1745, the author is primarily concerned to provide a survey of the responses of the local inhabitants to such an unexpected military presence in their midst. The conclusions of his exhaustive investigation are tentative but nevertheless extremely revealing for the light shed on both the degree of support for the Jacobite invasion as well as the strength of sentiment for the Hanoverian establishment in the vital north-western battleground.

Not unexpectedly, in view of what we know from many previous studies of the Forty Five, Dr Oates finds that the Jacobites of the area did not turn out to fight for the Stuart cause in significant numbers, though he confirms a ‘spontaneous mass outbreak of Jacobitism’ at Ormskirk on the night of 25 November 1745 when 200 local Catholics made a brief vociferous appearance in favour of the prince. But, in his own words, this was ‘the only one to occur’ and was quickly suppressed. Even in Manchester, reputedly a staunch Jacobite stronghold, only 25 known recruits joined the prince’s colours, a dismal turnout even if supplemented by the 163 additional volunteers who were drawn from the hinterland and merged with their Mancunian fellows in the ‘Manchester’ regiment. Nevertheless, while militant Jacobites were thin on the ground in the region during the Forty Five, Dr Oates is perhaps unduly pessimistic when he concludes that the region’s attachment to the Stuart cause ‘was virtually nil’. In Lancashire at least Jacobitism had been a vibrant force since the 1690s, furnishing a substantial number of recruits for the Jacobite army led by Thomas Forster in 1715 and remaining—as Dr Oates himself admits—a strong influence even after the failure of the last Jacobite rebellion thirty years later. Poor Jacobite response in this county in 1745 was surely due more to the precipitancy of the ‘Rash Adventurer’ in launching his insurrection without adequate pre-planning and devoid of the crucial backing of French troops, than to the lack of an effective local power base to sustain the operation. The Jacobite potential was there; it simply was not mobilised properly.

By contrast to the lacklustre reaction of the people of the North West to Charles Edward’s presence, Dr Oates shows that loyalty to George II proved much more strong and assertive than is commonly supposed. This is undoubtedly the most valuable aspect of his investigation. We are familiar with the weak performance of the Cumberland and Westmorland militia, the pusillanimity of the Carlisle city fathers, and the cowardice of absconding government officials when confronted by the Jacobite invaders; but less well known is the sturdy resistance offered by the Liverpool Blues or the intelligence provided about Jacobite movements by loyal citizens such as Dr Henry Bracken, a physician of Lancaster, to say nothing of expressions of civilian support for George II’s government by means of loyal addresses before the rebels even ventured into England. In view of these loyalist demonstrations it is difficult to disagree with Dr Oates that ‘the local status quo was stronger than the internal Jacobite threat’ during the scare, a sober and chastening lesson for all modern Jacobite sympathisers, including the reviewer!
Jonathan Oates’s book is a pioneering work, well-written, exhaustively researched and immensely stimulating.

JOHN SUTTON

Shaping an ancient countryside

MEDIEVAL DEVON AND CORNWALL Shaping an ancient countryside ed. Sam Turner
£19.99

This is another superb book from Windgather Press—a thoroughly enjoyable read, well structured, containing a wealth of information and sources, and with illustrations and photographs of very good quality. The book demonstrates the techniques and methods available to reconstruct past landscapes and the communities that shaped them and, although about Devon and Cornwall, it will be relevant to all local historians in providing examples of questions that should be asked of documentary, field and archaeological sources in other areas. The book explores the elements that make up the landscape of the South West, telling the story of changes between 500 and 1700 and suggesting a series of revolutions, which transformed the structure of the rural landscape, how people experienced the landscape in which they lived, and how they imbued places with symbolic and cultural meaning.

The late Harold Fox’s foreword is an excellent summary of the development of landscape studies including a synthesis of all the contributions in the book. Each chapter makes a significant contribution towards our understanding of this complex landscape, with coverage of such topics as chapels, crosses, castles, mines, open fields and intricate patterns of hedges and winding lanes. The period covered witnessed far-reaching economic, political and cultural changes which impacted upon the rural landscape, such as the reorganisation of the countryside into open fields, conversion to Christianity, later medieval enclosure, post-Conquest castle-building, and extensive tin-working.

Palaeoenvironmental perspectives focus on the development of the distinctive medieval landscape of the region, characterised by dispersed settlement and sprawling hamlets, with a mixture of open and enclosed field systems. These features, although their origins are unclear, seem to have existed before the Conquest and a regionally-distinctive form of agriculture, ‘convertible husbandry’, is known from manorial records by the thirteenth century. But evidence suggests continuity of land use from late prehistory until significant changes in the eighth century, which links with a fascinating and controversial chapter on Cornish strip fields, opposing the traditional view of the ‘Celtic landscape’. It suggests that the earlier medieval landscape contained small farming communities organised into hamlets whose fields were common, open and subdivided into strips. From the thirteenth century the advent of externally-driven and commercially-founded processes stimulated hamlet disintegration and engrossment.

An exploration of the medieval castle within the historic environment questions the purely military rationale by placing castles in their wider landscape context—social, economic and symbolic. It suggests differences between those castles in urban settings and those on rural estates, and discusses the symbolic image of castles such as Tintagel and Lutyens’s Castle Drogo. The concluding chapter on ‘Imagined landscapes’
explores ways people visualised and understood their environment and those of others. The relationship between landscapes and seascapes, magic, ritual and fate were physically intertwined with symbolic meaning, such as the reordering of the medieval landscape to conform to the Christian mindset.


GRAHAM WINTON

The education of boys


This meticulously edited volume of letters traces the fluctuating fortunes of the Hookham family over almost seventy years, mainly through the correspondence of two of the sons, Thomas and Henry. When the correspondence began in the 1830s the family was enjoying modest prosperity through the ownership of a renowned London circulating library and associated literary assembly. However, with the rise of competing circulating libraries, their enterprise declined until its eventual collapse in 1871. This created great financial hardship for the elder brother, Thomas, who had remained with the firm, as well as for his mother and one of his sisters. By that date Henry had become established in New Zealand as a schoolteacher and was able to send small cash remittances up to his own death in 1898.

During the 1830s the two boys were at school, and the first half of the book describes their daily life, with the majority of the letters written by or to Henry. Of particular interest are the accounts of the education he received at John Stratton’s private school in Princes Risborough. The letters mention the subjects studied, Henry’s relations with the Strattons father and son, his leisure interests and the books he read. He was a keen student of radical politics even in his teenage years, and took that enthusiasm with him to New Zealand when he emigrated in 1865 with his wife and children. Also mentioned in the early letters are events in the local community, such as the departure from Princes Risborough in May 1835 of ’60 persons to Manchester’, where they were to seek employment; ‘and there to go 60 more next week. We think it will be a great relief to the parish’. More frivolous matters are included, such as Henry’s request to his father in February 1837 for ‘a Flag, and, an iron stick for my Hoop … Tell Tom that I am much obliged to him for his attention to my Hyacinths’. This related to the family’s preoccupation with hyacinth-growing and keen competition among them to produce the best blooms.

The final third of the book consists of letters written between the 1860s and the late 1890s. They are of less interest to the wider readership, discussing as they largely do Thomas’s perennial financial problems, the health and welfare of various family members, and similar matters. Henry has surprisingly little to say about life in New Zealand beyond his own immediate domestic concerns and his preoccupation with political matters and with chess—in 1879 he became New Zealand’s first chess champion and earned extra cash in his retirement by writing a chess column for the local newspaper. The main value of this book therefore lies in its account of middle-class boys’ education at a small provincial private school at the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign. It also reveals the importance of family networks and the precariousness of business life for proprietors who failed to keep up with the times.


PAMELA HORN
A central theme in recent Irish history

**THE POOR LAW IN IRELAND 1838-1948 by Virginia Crossman** (Studies in Irish Economic and Social History 10 2006 71pp ISBN 978-0-947897-02-4) £6.95

This is the latest in a pamphlet series on major themes in Irish history containing a concise review of the present state of historical knowledge and a critical bibliography. Crossman has published extensively on the subject and is presently analysing poor relief in post-famine Ireland. In this study she shows why the Poor Law was introduced, and how it operated and changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The focus of research in recent years has shifted from institutional and administrative questions (often in the Great Famine period) to the experiences of being poor and the strategies people adopted to survive—as well as exploring regional variations in relief to assess differences in application of the law.

The pamphlet examines the making of the Irish Poor Law, its application during the Great Famine, and the operation of the law in post-famine Ireland. Differences between Ireland and England are highlighted. For example, although the workhouse test was mandatory in Ireland, applicants could, in the absence of a law of settlement, claim relief from any Irish board of guardians and, so long as they were destitute and there was room in the workhouse, guardians were obliged to admit them. The Irish Poor Law was designed to be minimalist and was extended in 1847 to enable boards to give outdoor relief to those unable to work due to age, disability or ill health, together with orphans and widows with two or more legitimate children. Research has revealed wide contrasts and variations in practice; for example, a number of Ulster boards displayed an aversion to outdoor relief during the Famine.

In post-famine Ireland Poor Law Commissioners aimed to improve Poor Law medical services, and sought to organise provision for large numbers of pauper children. The system was expanded with new responsibilities for public health in the 1860s and 1870s, and guardians were subsequently given discretionary powers to build and maintain improved housing for rural labourers. Studies have explored the radicalisation of Poor Law politics, with the decline of landlord influence, Crossman arguing that it provided a platform for nationalists to promote campaigns for land reform and home rule. While the growing use of discretionary powers proved advantageous for those who could prove their eligibility, a tendency to assess entitlement on the basis of behaviour rather than need resulted in exclusion of marginal groups such as vagrants and prostitutes. Tracing the evolution of the Poor Law in the twentieth century, Crossman outlines differences in practice after partition. Historians find more extensive records of Unions in Northern Ireland, safeguarding the records of a disliked and discredited system having been a low priority in the Irish Free State.

Crossman signposts further research into the decision-making process, in particular issues of entitlement and eligibility, and the process by which the poor sought relief. Local studies are needed to reveal regional characteristics in both the pre- and post-Famine periods. In offering an accessible summary of the issues and principal research findings Crossman has provided a valuable source for those wanting to acquire a better grasp of the subject, and those who may undertake local research.

**DICK HUNTER**
Mutual endeavours for the good of mankind

Rothley and the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The mutual endeavours of Babington, Gisborne, Wilberforce and Macaulay by Terry Sheppard and Iain Whyte (Rothley History Society 2007 98pp ISBN 0-9545426-6-5) £6

This small pamphlet celebrates the role of the Leicestershire village of Rothley in the abolition of the slave trade. It has a foreword by James Walvin, Professor Emeritus of the University of York, a leading historian of slavery and its abolition. He makes the point that Rothley was home to a dynasty of abolitionists, the Babingtons, and that parliament was forced to act in 1807 because of a series of overlapping local campaigns, like the one at Rothley, which persuaded politicians and ministers that the slave trade had become a deeply unpopular issue.

Thomas Babington became lord of the manor of Rothley in 1776, aged only 18, on the death of his father. The family home was Rothley Temple, with its associations with the Knights Templar: it is now an hotel. Babington was a supporter of Wilberforce for 30 years (1788-1818), with his brother-in-law, Thomas Gisborne; they had all met while at St John’s College, Cambridge. The bulk of Babington’s papers are at Trinity College, Cambridge, rather than in Leicestershire, and the authors also drew on Macaulay material in the Huntington Library in California. Babington married Jean Macaulay in 1787; her younger brother, Zachary, made his home with his sister and brother-in-law on his return to Britain, having worked on plantations in Jamaica, and—according to the authors—’was to leave the most indelible mark on the movement for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery’. Chapter 7 of the book is devoted to Zachary, who became governor of the important Sierra Leone Company. His eldest son was Thomas Babington Macaulay, the famous nineteenth century historian.

This book describes the work undertaken by Wilberforce and his supporters, but also includes general information about slavery and the abolition campaign. The descriptions of Babington’s role in the abolition movement are well illustrated by quotations from his letters to his wife. It is clear that the three men worked tirelessly for the campaign and in 1791 produced a 648-page report, later distilled into a smaller volume. In addition, Babington was campaigning in his native county, raising a petition against slavery. In 1800 he was elected to parliament as one of the members for Leicester, and so was able to cast his vote for abolition seven years later. He retired from politics in 1818 and died in 1837.

There are two appendices, one giving the testimony of four former slaves, and the other a timeline of the British slave trade; there is a short bibliography but no index. There are a number of black and white illustrations which, though not particularly good, are adequate for a publication of this nature. It is quite nicely produced but unfortunately not very robust; the review copy fell apart when opened beyond a certain point. However, at £6 it is modestly priced and is a welcome addition to the body of knowledge of an important movement which is celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2007.

Kate Thompson

Codford’s past for everyone


This book is the first in a series of England’s Past For Everyone illustrated paperbacks providing a new approach to local history. It has been compiled by John Chandler in
collaboration with other specialist contributors and is the culmination of a community research project. EPE is a Heritage Lottery Funded project run by the Victoria County History staff. The planned series of fifteen paperbacks covering places in ten different counties is accompanied by an interactive website, and learning and schools resources. The overall impression of the Codford book is excellent. It is well set out, readable and authoritative. The advent of digital printing has been especially beneficial in the layout, with most pages having some colour either in the headings or the illustrations. Perhaps the only place where the colour was not wholly satisfactory was in the date coding of the village buildings on map 8 and in successive versions of the map. The tiny size of the outlines makes it difficult to see whether the colour is indicating, for example, the green of sixteenth century or the slightly darker green of late seventeenth century, and the stages in the development of the village are not clear though they are well described in the text.

There are panels throughout the book on special topics (for example, the Anglo-Saxon sculptured stone in Codford St. Peter’s church, or Codford’s military landscape covering the two World Wars). These are most successful and informative. There are some apparent errors: thus, in the panel on ‘roofing the wool store’ the north and south roofs in section, vital evidence for the development of the building, are wrongly labelled and described, whereas in the text the description is correct. It would have been worth including an additional panel on the varied building materials of the village, typical of the area around the margins of Salisbury Plain, with timber-framing, followed by chalkstone, greensand, limestone, cob, flints and bricks. There are numerous good, clear photographs both old and new, although the view of the Congregational chapel is not much larger than a postage stamp.

The main text and the historical conclusions can rarely be faulted. A few topics made me stop to think whether I agreed or understood—for example, wool is said to have been important to the village’s prosperity, from the cloth trade of the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century when the large wool store was constructed. There fleeces were sorted and stored, awaiting collection by a dealer. ‘Codford’s principal industry derived from its numerous sheep’ but ‘for cloth production, fleeces were imported’. Wool is said to have come from local sheep yet the Wiltshire breed had a very poor fleece and was kept to manure the arable fields. ‘The wool was short and of little value’, but although ‘the fleece … was almost non-existent’ it ‘was probably used in the carpet trade’. The apparent contradictions need explanation.

There is always a conflict between what could be included in a book and the need to keep the size to manageable proportions. As in most Victoria County History productions, social history is given less space than administrative and economic history. It would have been interesting to have more on the ordinary people, even to find out family names which persisted for centuries. As a start the 1332 tax list names 44 taxpayers for the three settlements. Later documents give more detail on people’s lives. The Wiltshire wills project now has an internet index to 363 Codford wills, some readable on line, dating from the mid sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century. As well as farming families they cover many trades and professions including three shepherds (the earliest 1571), tailors, weavers, blacksmiths, wheelwright, innholder (1605), clockmaker (1702), schoolmaster (1732), maltster (1705), and mercer (1603).

Declaring an interest, I am delighted that the archive of Wiltshire Buildings Record, an independent society, was used and that the WBR was able to help with new building surveys for the book. In the endnotes, references to the WBR building numbers are given. It is therefore surprising that no reference is made in the sources section to the location of the WBR collection and that it is available to the public at the new Wiltshire and
Swindon History Centre in Chippenham. Similarly our four books, intended as introductions to understanding and dating the county’s buildings, could have been listed alongside Pevsner and other sources. ‘Codford’ is an enjoyable and instructive read whether you know the village or not. It is also an important book, showing how professional historians utilise a range of original sources, not least the medieval ones. One hopes it will become a model for any local historian attempting to write the history of their own village. In addition the reader is impressed by the beauty of the maps, photographs, tables and diagrams, all in glorious ‘technicolour’.

PAM SLOCOMBE

The ambiguous role of medieval women


Based on the author’s doctoral thesis, this book ranges across the social hierarchy from noblewomen to townswomen and peasant women, and from criminals to those in religious orders. Their experiences are explored within the context of a county which experienced significant population growth and economic development, including the expansion of sheep farming and wool production. The book provides valuable new case studies of three prominent Lincolnshire women: Nicholaa de la Haye (d. 1250), sheriff of Lincoln; Hawise de Quency (d. 1230), countess of Lincoln; and Margaret de Lacy (d. 1266), countess of Lincoln. Nicholaa directed the royalist defence of Lincoln castle against the supporters of Prince Louis and was appointed the county sheriff. While her appointment was made at a time of exceptional political crisis, Wilkinson argues that King John would have been unlikely to consider Nicholaa for the post had her talents not already been proven. Equally informative are the shorter snapshots of other Lincolnshire women, such as Alice de Senlis, who granted land to the nuns of Stixwould c.1183. In return for the grant, the nuns agreed to observe the anniversary not only of Alice’s death, but the continued commemoration of Countess Lucy, an important ancestor of Alice, who had died some fifty years before.

The study draws on a wide range of documentation, from records of the royal chancery, exchequer and law courts, bishops’ registers and cartularies, to manorial rentals and surveys. These are skilfully brought together to explore influences of gender. Lincolnshire crown plea rolls are compared with legal treatises to reveal the extent to which gender differences were expressed in law in both theory and practice. Lists of the women who paid window-toll, ale toll and brewing amercements in the Lincoln keepers’ accounts of the 1290s are used alongside guild records and wills to show how single and married women could exploit their domestic skills, albeit within an environment where economic opportunities for townswomen were more restrictive than for men.

Wilkinson concludes by arguing that while contemporary ideas of female fallibility and inferiority limited their responsibilities, so that husbands rather than wives tended to fulfil public obligations such as serving on local juries or staffing manorial courts, at every level in society there was an ambiguity in women’s roles. When there were no surviving direct male heirs, direct female heirs often inherited property. Many male landowners delegated duties to their wives. Women had extensive responsibilities as widows. Female identity was not therefore static, but its many aspects evolved with the female lifecycle. Providing a fascinating glimpse into the lives of medieval women, those
researching the society of medieval Lincolnshire, as well as those exploring women’s history, will find this study valuable.

JOHN S. LEE

East End and Golders Green


This paperback edition of a book which first appeared in 2003 provides a comprehensive history of the Jewish community in London from the establishment of the first settlement in the reign of William the Conqueror until the present day. Although, as the author establishes at the outset, Jews have never accounted for more than one per cent of the British population, two-thirds of this number settled in London. The book succeeds admirably in establishing that the relationship between the capital and these incomers has, on the whole, been beneficial to both and that the impact of the Jews on London’s history has been profound and far greater than the relatively small numbers would indicate. Chronologically, Dr. Black charts the history of Jewish Londoners from their first settlement in about 1070, through the period of expulsion between 1290 and 1656, followed by re-admission, consolidation and growth until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The core of the book, however, is to be found in the two chapters covering the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Here the focus ranges across the whole spectrum of Jewish experience of urban life, including municipal and parliamentary emancipation; the role of the synagogue; welfare, medical and education provision; occupations, and housing conditions; integration; and Jewish clubs and societies. A wealth of interesting material provides many fascinating insights into the mechanisms by which a distinct community of immigrants not only attempted to maintain their identity but also accepted the need for (and achieved) a fair degree of integration.

The final two chapters cover the years between the outbreak of the First World War and the present, emphasising the Jewish support of both World Wars, a continuing commitment to education and numerous welfare organisations, and demographic change as the Jewish population increasingly moved away from the East End into north-west and north-east London. The Jewish community—as for Londoners as a whole—became increasingly suburban as the twentieth century progressed. According to the census of 2001, two-thirds of Britain’s Jewish population of 300,000 people reside in the extended London area and recent research quoted by the author indicates that this community ‘is comparatively affluent and middle class’. The history of London has been shaped partly by the impact of successive waves of incomers. Jews were part of this process—especially during ‘the avalanche’ of 1881 to 1914—and played a significant role in the capital’s growth. Dr. Black’s book examines this role in a clear, well-written and interesting fashion. The text is supported by over 200 excellent illustrations and a brief guide to further reading is provided. It is a pity that endnotes have not been used (probably the result of editorial policy) and the map on pages 8 and 9 of Jewish East London in 1900 would have been much clearer in colour (as was the original). Nonetheless, this book can certainly be recommended.

CHRISTOPHER FRENCH
Taken at the flood


Water meadows were areas of grassland artificially irrigated to force the early growth of grass in the spring, and thereby to produce a bumper hay crop in the dry summer months. Although they could be found throughout Britain, they were a particular feature of the chalklands of southern England, where they formed a key element in the local sheep-corn farming system. All serious students of irrigated (or ‘floated’) meadows will be aware of the work of Michael Cowan, principally through his landmark 12-page monograph on water meadows in Wiltshire, published in 1982. Now he has provided a much fuller account of the subject. In some ways this is an odd book, with a slightly rambling structure and including, for example, long annexes comprising extracts from other works. It tells us little that is new about the early history of this remarkable technology, but it is clearly and entertainingly written, and packed with interesting and original observations, the fruits of Cowan’s long and intimate knowledge of his subject.

The author begins with a general discussion of water meadows, before presenting detailed case studies of the important examples at Ramsbury, Pewsey, Lower Woodford, Great Wishford, and Harnham, and in the valley of the Avon between Salisbury and Downton. All are of immense interest, although only three (already treated in the 1982 volume) include detailed plans (although the writer also uses, to great effect, extracts from the 1:2500 First Edition Ordnance Survey, and reproduces a version of Tim Tatton-Brown’s fine survey of the Harnham meadows). Chapter 3 contains briefer and more general descriptions of irrigation systems in the valleys of the river Ebble, Nadder, Wylye, Avon, and Bourne. These are perhaps less useful, not least because they lack the detailed maps which would provide some indication of the extent of irrigation, and the descriptions are occasionally somewhat vague: indeed, at times the precise purpose of what is essentially a tour of these river valleys is unclear. Chapter 4 discusses the West Harnham meadows near Salisbury, which form the setting for the cathedral, as immortalised in John Constable’s famous paintings, and are now managed by an education trust.

All these chapters are useful to the local historian, landscape historian and industrial archaeologist. But it in chapter 5 that Cowan really displays his knowledge, and his abilities as an industrial archaeologist, describing in wonderful detail (and with some excellent diagrams) various practical aspects of meadows irrigation, including the design of weirs and sluices and the kinds of tools employed in maintenance and operation. This is a mixed volume, but packed with wonderful insights and information. Anyone interested in water meadows, or in the history of Wessex farming more generally, will find it indispensable.

TOM WILLIAMSON
Most books are also reviewed in this or a future issue. Publishers should ensure that prices of publications are notified. When addresses are quoted prices normally include postage and packing. Other books should be obtainable through normal book-selling channels and retail prices are quoted. The Reviews Editor is Dr Evelyn Lord, Institute for Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge CB3 8AQ.
Papers 16 2007 ISBN 978 0 950121 19 2) £9.50+£1.50 p&p from Hilary Sims, 112 Putney Bridge Road, London SW18 1NJ based on the hearth tax but using other sources to put flesh on the bare bones of the tax listing.

THE REVEREND EDWARD IRVING and the Catholic Apostolic church in Camden by Barbara Waddington (Camden History Society: Occasional paper 7 2007 ISBN 978 0 904491 72 2) £7.50+£1.70 p&p from CHS, Flat 13, 13 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SH Edward Irving was a Presbyterian minister who fell from grace when he encouraged speaking in tongues. He then founded the Catholic Apostolic Church, which believed in the imminent second coming of Christ.

STREETS OF HIGHGATE ed. Steven Denford and David Hayes (Camden History Society 2007 ISBN 978 0 904491 71 5) £7.50 from above address: walk round the streets of this historic London borough

SCHOLAR DAUGHTER OF THE RECTORY The life of Caroline Frances Cornwallis 1786-1858 by M.J. Barber (priv. pub. 2007 ISBN 0 9583193 3 7) £5 [sold in aid of St John’s Church, Wittersham, Kent] an intimate portrait of a middle-class woman in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

ST LUKE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, PINNER The story of a parish by Bernard A. Harrison (Mark/Lucy Enterprises 2007 no ISBN) free but donation of £10 to the parish fund is welcome: from Canon R. Plourde, 28 Love Lane, Pinner HA5 3EX celebrating fifty years in the life of this parish.

TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE IN WESTERN BERKSHIRE c.1327-c.1600 Social and economic change by Margaret Yates (Boydell 2007 ISBN 1 978 18433284) £55 using evidence from Newbury and its hinterland, this study challenges the view that there is a boundary between the medieval and the early modern period.

A VICTORIAN TEENAGER'S DIARY The Diary of Lady Adela Capel of Cassionbury 1841-1842 (Hertfordshire Record Society vol.22 2007 ISBN 978 0 9547561 4 7) £9.99+£3 p&p from HRS, c/o Mrs G. Grimwood, 190 Lonsdale Road, Stevenage SG1 5EX the daughter of the Earl of Essex, Lady Adela was thirteen at the time she kept her diary, which gives a unique insight into a liberal Victorian household

Midlands


THE HERITAGE OF RUTLAND WATER ed. Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath (Rutland Local History & Record Society: record ser. 5 2007 ISBN 978 0097 464396) £20+£8.50 p&p from Hon. Editor, RLHRS, 5 Forth Close, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JW Rutland Water is one of Europe's largest man-made lakes. This book celebrates the landscape that was lost, and the landscape today in a detailed local and natural history of the area.

MODERN INDUSTRIES VCH Northamptonshire vol.6 (Boydell & Brewer for Institute of Historical Research 2007 ISBN 1 978 1904256059) £75 transport, boots and shoes, and iron-mining and smelting are some of the industries of Northamptonshire; some are in decline, but regeneration is taking place.

AN OSWESTRY MISCELLANY by John Pryce-Jones (Llanforda 2007 ISBN 978 0 9517162 3 6) £4.95 from johnpryce-jones@tiscali.co.uk people and events in Oswestry over past centuries


TUTBURY AND NEEDWOOD FOREST VCH Staffordshire vol.10 ed. Nigel Tringham (Boydell & Brewer for Institute of Historical Research 2007 ISBN 978 1 90435 610 3) £110 covers the honour and castle of Tutbury, Needwood Forest, and Hanbury, Rolleston, Tatenhill, and Yoxall

North

THE ANCIENT SQUIRE'S FAMILY The History of the Aglionbys c1130-2002 by Henry Summerson and Francis Aglionby (Bookcase 2007 ISBN 978 1 90417312) £25 from Bookcase, 17-19 Castle Street, Carlisle CA3 8YS account of a Cumberland gentry family from 12th-21st centuries

BLACKBURN A history by Derek Beattie (Carnegie 2007 ISBN 978 1 85936 113 9) £20 handsomely illustrated book showing how the industrial revolution changed a market town into a prosperous and bustling industrial centre, and the consequences of the decline of its cotton industry

THE BUXTON HYDRO The story of the spa town's best-known hydropathic 1866-1975 by Peter Lomas (Ashridge/Country Books 2007 ISBN 978 1 901214 83 5) £14.99 from Courtyard Cottage, Little Longstone, Bakewell DE45 1NN the hydro saw many famous visitors: this is the story of its foundation, use as a Canadian Hospital in World War I, and regrettable demolition in the 1970s


GEORGIAN LIVERPOOL A guide to the city in 1797 by William Moss ed. David Brazendale (Palatine Books 2007 ISBN 978 1 874181 46 0) £7.95 from Palatine Books, Carnegie House, Chatsworth Road, Lancaster LA1 4SL eighteenth century guidebook that takes the reader through the streets and wharfs of Liverpool, with modern editorial interpolations

LIVERPOOL IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY A small Tudor town by Janet Hollinshead, (Carnegie 2007 ISBN 978 1 85936 149 8) £11.99 many primary sources are used in a detailed account of the small and relatively poor Tudor market town

HOW DURST HE DO THAT The life of Benjamin Flounders by Jim Fox (History of Education Project 2007 ISBN 978 1 870268 ) £12+£1.50 p&p from History of Education Project, Miners’ Hall, Red Hill, Durham DH1 4BB A Quaker, born in Yorkshire, Flounders moved to Yarm and supported local projects such improving the navigation on the River Tees

MIDDLETOWN ST GEORGE Window on the evolution of a Tees Valley parish by Alan Pallister
THE MONUMENTS OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER AT LEEDS by Margaret Pullan (Thoresby Society 2007 ISBN 978 1 9059 8152 6) £24.50 history of the church followed by a description of the monuments, including memorials to Samuel Wesley and Woodbine Willie

REGIONAL IDENTITIES IN NORTH EAST ENGLAND 1500-2000 ed. Adrian Green and A.F. Pollard (Bordell 2007 ISBN 978 1 84583 335 2) £50 definitive book on regionalism, which discusses how to identify regions, and gives case studies on regional identity from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century

SCARBOROUGH MPs 1836 to 1906, SCARBOROUGH’S MAYORS 1836 to 1906 A biographical dictionary by A. and P. Bayliss (A.M. Bayliss 2008 ISBN 0 9506405 73) £5.25 inc. p&p from publisher, 2 Cooks Gardens, Scalby, Scarborough YO13 0SU biographies of MPs from the First Reform Act to the redistribution of seats, with mayoral biographies from the Municipal Reform Act

LIVERPOOL FROM THE AIR by Webbaviation.co.uk (Bredon 2007 ISBN 978 1 85983 589 0) £16.99 150 images from the city of culture and its surroundings

South, South West, West BOTLEY AND CURDRIDGE A history of two Hampshire villages by Dennis Stokes (Botley & Curridge LHS 2007 ISBN 978 0 9557571 0 5) £13.70 inc. p&p from Penny Farthing Gallery, 21 The Square, Botley, Southampton SO30 2EA pictorial and documentary history of two Hampshire villages up to World War II

A CHRONOLOGY OF NONCONFORMITY AND DISSENT IN CHELTENHAM compiled Jill Waller (Cheltenham LHS 2007 no ISBN) from Geoffrey North, 7 Parr Close, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 1NH chronology of dissent arranged by religious persuasion

A CHRONOLOGY OF SPORT IN CHELTENHAM compiled Jill Waller (Cheltenham LHS 2007 no ISBN) details as above: sport in Cheltenham from archery to water polo


FOWNHOPE REMEMBERED ed. David Clark (Fownhope LH Group 2007 ISBN 978 0 9557867 0 9) £10+£2.50 p&p; also CD of recordings of local residents £5 from Fownhope LHG, Pippins, Capler Lane, Fownhope, Hereford HR1 4PZ photographs, documents and oral recollections illustrate change in a rural setting.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL CHAPTER Act Book 1616-1687 ed. Suzanne Eward (Gloucestershire Records vol.21 2007 ISBN 978 0 900719T 0 9) membership subs. £22 p.a. details from Hon. Secretary, J.R. Loosely, Stonehatch, Oakridge Lynch, Stroud GL6 7NR Acts of the dean and chapter in a time of far-reaching religious and civil changes

A HISTORY OF VERNHAM DEAN A village in Hampshire by C. Cobbold (Hampshire County Council 2007 ISBN 978 0 9557322 0 1) £9.99+£1p&p from Mrs G.L. Palmer, 6 The Dell, Vernham Dean, Andover SP11 0LF Romans, Saxons, and Normans helped to make this village and its landscape; farming, the manor, and parish church also played a part, and the story includes the experiences of the village during the First and Second World Wars,

THE HISTORY OF TEWKESBURY RURAL HOSPITAL (Tewkesbury Hospital League of Friends 2007) £2.50 from Tewkesbury Hospital 01684 293305 founded in 1865, this hospital has served the local community into the new millennium


SOTHAMPTON Gateway to the British Empire ed. Miles Taylor (J.B. Tauris 2007 ISBN 978 1 84511 032 1) £20 collection of papers giving a fascinating insight into the local and provincial character of aspects of imperial culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries


Scotland ABERDEEN SCHOOL BOARD Female Teachers 1872-1901: a biographical list by Alison McColl (Aberdeen & North East Scotland Family History Society 2007 ISBN 978 1 905004 02 7) £6-74p p&p from ANESFHS, 164 King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5BD detailed list showing clearly that Victorian women could have careers outside the home

THE KIRKYARD OF NEWHILLS compiled Sheila M. Spiers (Aberdeen & North East Scotland FHS 2007 ISBN 978 1 905004 00 3) £5.25+36p p&p from ANESFHS as above

STRANDS OF SEAWEED The story of a Ross family in Aberdeen by W. Ross Napier (Aberdeen & North East Scotland FHS 2007 ISBN 978 1 905004 01 0) £6+53p p&p from ANESFHS as above: a family which became separated but is reunited in this book

EXPLORING BORDER REIVERS HISTORY by Philip Nixon (Bredon 2007 ISBN 978 1 85983 583 8) £16.99 the Borders of England and Scotland were a disputed area. The reivers who rustled cattle came from both sides of the border, and built tower houses and bastles to defend themselves

EXPLORING SOLWAY HISTORY by Philip Nixon and Hugh Dias (Bredon 2007 ISBN 978 1 84983 586 9) £16.99 now an area of outstanding beauty and home to migrating birds, this area was a dangerous frontier

Wales BRAINS 125 years by Brian Glover (Bredon 2007 ISBN 978 1 85983 606 4) £12.99 lavishly illustrated history of this well-known Welsh brewery
CARDIGANSHIRE The concise history by Mike Benbow-Jackson (University of Wales Press 2007 ISBN 978 0 7085 2111 9) £14.90 history of the county now known as Ceredigion, from the Ice Age to the present

LLANCLUDNO BEFORE THE HOTELS by Christopher Draper (Llygad Gwalch 2007 ISBN 978 1 84524 995 0) £9.50 from Welsh Books Council, Distribution Centre, Glanrafon Enterprise Park, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth SY23 3AQ the Queen of Welsh Resorts had a long and dramatic history before the holidaymakers took over

NATIONAL TRUST WALKS 2 Southern and Central Wales by Dorothy Hamilton (Llygad Gwalch 2007 ISBN 978 1 84524 076 9) £7.50 from above address: walks in the area from Barmouth to St Davids, Swansea and Aberavon


FAMILY HISTORY

FAMILY HISTORY IN THE GENES by Chris Pomeroy (The National Archives 2007 ISBN 978 1 905615 12 4) £7.99 explore your family tree through genetic testing.

FAMILY HISTORY IN THE WARS by William Spencer (The National Archives 2007 ISBN 978 1 903365 95 3) £7.99 how your ancestors served the country from the Boer War to the Korean War

GENERAL


RECORD SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

JULIAN GRENFELL soldier and poet: letters and diaries, 1901-1915 ed. Kate Thompson (Hertfordshire Record Society vol.20 2007 ISBN 978 0 9547561 1 6) £22+£3 p&p from RHS, 190 Loundsdale Road, Stevenage SG1 5EX Julian Grenfell’s family moved into Pausanias in Hertfordshire in 1913. He joined the army in 1910 and after serving in India and South Africa was part of the BEF to France. He was fatally wounded in 1915. These letters were written during his military service.

CDs

FIND YOUR WAY ROUND LATE VICTORIAN LONDON Edward Stanford’s Library Map of London and its Suburbs 1891 (Ralph Hyde 2007 ISBN 978 0 9555227 0 5) £27.50 from Ralph.hyde@homechoice.co.uk CD includes an index of 24,000 place names and is PC and Mac compatible

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS RECEIVED

The more substantial articles in these journals are noted below, but we do not give a full contents list. Most journals are listed alphabetically by geographical location, not title of publication; general journals are at the end of the list.

Abbots Langley Local History Society Journal (no.27 Autumn/Winter 2007) 75p from ashbyaudrey@yahoo.co.uk: Jean Harris—50 years a Church Army Sister; John King, incumbent of St Lawrence’s church; medieval wall paintings; Scouting centenary; transported beyond the seas

Acton Historian (no.44 Nov 2007) £2 from David Knights, 50 Highland Avenue, Acton W3 6EU: du Cross trucks in Australia; Brenford and Turnham Green; did the Acton Gazette report the death of Jack the Ripper; the ATC: 1st Acton Squadron 1941-1949; Goldsmith Hall

Ayrshire Notes [Ayrshire Archaeological & Natural History Society] (no.34 Autumn 2007) £2 from David Courtney McClure, 7 Park Circus, Ayr KA7 2DJ: 1832 cholera epidemic in Ayr

Cake and Cockhorse [Banbury HS] (vol.17 no.4 Autumn/Winter 2007) available from Jeremy Gibson, Harts Cottage, Church Hanborough, Witney OX29 9AB fifteenth anniversary celebrations; Wroxton Abbey: a house and its builders

Berkshire Local History Association Newsletter (no.90 January 2008)

Berkshire Old and New [Berkshire LHA] (no.24 2007) £3 Berkshire and Jacobitism: ‘white elephant’ to town museum: Abingdon’s County Hall; Fair Mile Hospital, Cholsey 1870-1948; Berkshire County Council building contracts 1892-1939

Birmingham Historian [Birmingham and District LHA] (no.31 Winter 2007) £3.50+75p p&p from Joan Davies, 112 Brandwood Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 6BX: Christmas in Birmingham 1940s style; political rallies and ructions in Bingley Hall; the Harper family—architects, art and industry; William Kenrick 1831-1919; scandal at Winson Green; Thomas Swain 1793-1857

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Newsletter (no.61 Aug 2007) from Elaine Heasman, 7 Parr Close, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 1NH first colour edition, news and reports of talks and visits

Local History Records [The Bourne Society] (vol.53 Nov 2007) £5 from Derek Neal, 21 Park Road, Caterham CR3 5TB London & Brighton Railway Merstham Tunnel; Godfrey Talbot LVO, OBE, PGC; Caterham on the Hill; navvies on the Oxted line; Woodcote Park Avenue, Purley

Transactions of the Caernarvonshire Historical Society (vol.68 2007) details from Lynn Francis, Membership Secretary, Gwasanaeth Archifau Gwynedd, Swyddfeydd y Sir, Caernarfon LL55 1SH early Bronze Age metal axe from Trefor; Maurice Griffin (1558) esgob Rochester; Bodfel, Barbados and slavery; Penyrosedd Quarry Hospital; correspondence of R.C. Trench, Penrhyn estate agent andLady Penrhyn 1904-1905; Dr Thomas Jones (1870-1955) and the death of David Lloyd George
Cheltenham Local History Society Journal (no.23 2007) £4.50 from Sue Rowbotham, 222 Gloucester Road, Cheltenham GL51 8NR. Alywin Sampson: artist and writer; flooding in Cheltenham 1731-1985; early cinema in Cheltenham; eminent Cheltenians commemorated in Loxhampton; Jane and Cassandra Austen in Cheltenham 1816; parks and gardens 1887 and 2007; Cheltenham’s other hospitals 1918-1948; Victorian Tivoli Road; mayors of Cheltenham 1876-2007; milliners and dressmakers in Cheltenham 1851

Cheltenham LHS Newsletter (no.58 Jul 2007; no.59 Nov 2007) pdf copy free from kbooth@dircon.co.uk tour back in time: St Mary's Church, Cheltenham

The Past Uncovered [Chester Archaeology Design and Conservation News] (Oct 2007) free from Gillian Dunn, Chester Archaeology, 27 Grosvener Street, Chester CH1 2DD Archaeology in the Park; Io Saturnalia; Chester's Roman Town

CHH News [Chester Community History & Heritage] (Winter 2007) free from CHH, St Michael’s Church, Bridge Street Row East, Chester CH1 1NW new future for Grosvenor Park; memories of the White House Sandy Lane

Cleveland History [Cleveland and Teesside LHS] (no.93 Winter 2007) from Julie Tweedy, 14 Oldford Road, Cheltenham GL51 8NR A bygone Eastbourne

Cranbrook Journal (no.18 2007) £2.50 from Cranbrook Museum, Carriers Road, Cranbrook TN17 3JX the slavery connection in Cranbrook; early banking in Cranbrook; clockmakers in Cranbrook; the Cornwalls; early Victorian landowners and farmers; Cranbrook Union Workhouse

Dorking History [Dorking LH Group] (2007) from Sales Officer, Dorking LHG, c/o Dorking Museum, The Old Foundry, 62 West Street, Dorking RH4 1BS the Olivers in Dorking; Captain Swing disturbances in the 1830s; Cotmandene; Little Dudley House; Dorking men at the Battle of Trafalgar; the Holmwood Manoeuvres of 1876; the double life of a Capel yeoman

Droitwich History and Archaeology Society Newsletter (no.47 Nov 2007) from Chris Bowers, 9 Laurewood Close, Droitwich Spa WR9 7SA slap up feed '50s style; Solvaarpe and the Civil War; 1886 diary of Rev. W. Lea, vicar of St Peter's Droitwich

The Dunningite [Dunning Parish HS] (no.62 Winter 2007/8) £1.50 from editor@dunning.uk.net mysterious murder at Mount Stewart; Dunning Heather Football Club; memories of Dunning 18th-early 20th centuries

Centre of East Anglian Studies Newsletter (Sep 2007) membership £15 p.a. details from CEAS, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ

Eastbourne Local Historian [Eastbourne LHS] (no.146 Winter 2007) eastbournehistory@hotmail.co.uk Birds Eye—a bygone Eastbourne employer; William and Colin Hay Murray, architects; Beachy Head lighthouse and the aerial cableway

Essex Journal: a review of local history and archaeology (Autumn 2007) annual subs. £10 from EJ Distribution Manager, Intercity Print Financial PLC, 35 St Augustine Mews, Colchester

C01 2PF women at war; new light on prehistoric warfare in Essex; archives in the information age; baptismal practices in medieval Essex

Farnham and District Museum Society Journal (vol.14 no.12 Dec 2007) £15 annual subs. from Mrs P. Heather, Tanglewood, Parkside, Upper Hale, Farnham GU9 0JF: the 'Barn' Arts/social club; Old Kiln Yard; The Borough, Farnham; a spout in Farnham

The New Record [Forest of Dean LHS] (no.22 2008) £7 from FODLHS Publications Officer, Croft Cottage, Old School Lane, off Henry Street, Ross-on-Wye HR9 7AL. Keepers and woodmen of Dean; James Davies, steward to Viscount Gate 1768-1805 deputy surveyor of the Forest 1806-1808; Westbury Brook iron mine; Princess Royal pithead baths; Smarts of Woolaston 1500-168; Oakwood Brook bream

Fram: Journal of the Framlingham & District Local History & Preservation Society (no.9 Dec 2007) £12.50 p.a. from Editor, 43 College Road, Framlingham IP13 9ER: rural unrest in Suffolk, 1816-1834; social and economic impact of Framlingham College on the town; All Saints Church, Saxtead

Friern Barnet Newsletter [Friern Barnet & District LHS] (no.32 Jan 2008) £6 p.a. the Hollies; riots on Finschley Common; 1930s library technology; R.W. Munro, precision engineers; the Big Storm; Mrs Neath’s Kindergarten

Hackney History [Friends of Hackney Archives] (vol.13 2007) £4 from FHA, Hackney Archives Department, 43 De Beauvoir Road, N1 5SQ the library of John Dawson; the brothers Bevan and Barber’s Barn; cholera and public health in 19th century Hackney; Harper Twelvetrees: industrialist, philanthropist, campaigner; council housing in Shoreditch 1949-1950

Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society (new ser. vol.15 2007) from Publications Officer, 6 Baker Fold, Halifax HX1 5TX desmene cattle farms in Sowerby circa 1500; room numbering systems of Halifax Poor House (1778-2007); Benjamin Rushton (1784-1853) handloom weaver; radical agitator and non-conformist preacher; trade union activity in Halifax area, 1800-1960; Owenite Socialism and anti-Socialism in Halifax 1829-1845; Halifax Chartists’ speeches; Halifax during Second World War; de-industrialisation in Calderdale and changes in local employment.

Herne Hill Society Newsletter (no.101 Winter 2007/8) 80p from HHS, PO Box 27845, London SE24 9XA

Hertfordshire Local History News and Events [Hertfordshire Association for LH and Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies] (Winter 2007/8)

Hexham Local History Society Newsletter (no.49 Autumn 2007)

Ilkeston and District Local History Society Newsletter (vol.9 no.15 Sep/Oct 2007; vol.9 no.16 Nov/Dec 2007) from P. Stevenson, 16 Rigley Avenue, Ilkeston: Market Street Chapel; Ilkeston Methodists New Connexion in 1876 Stanley Common and Smalley Common; Miniature Stylon in Ilkeston; Trouval as the 'Festival' village

Lancashire History Quarterly (vol.11 no.2 Winter 2007) £12.50 p.a. from Hudson History hudsonhistory@totalise.co.uk Benjamin and John Hick, Bolton engineers; Fylde Street disaster, Farnworth; the
Preston Massacre, suspected witchcraft in Lancaster; Lancashire priest holes; old tramways in Bolton; some Wenningdale mills

Smoke Signal [Leckhampton HS] (no.58 Dec 2007) from ehmiller@talktalk.net

Rickmansworth Historical Society Newsletter (no.78) 60p from Geoff Saul, 20 West Way, Rickmansworth WD3 1EN railways from Rickmansworth to Uxbridge; NW London wartime hospital organisation; Pinner chalk mines; Rickmansworth from the Watford Observer Autumn 1907

Transactions of the Scarbororough Archaeological and Historical Society (no.40 2007) from Dr. Farrell Burnett, Scarbororough AHS, 30 Sussex Street, Scarbororough YO11 1BJ: Sonte Rowes: a further note; the origins of St Oswald’s Church and Lythe parish 650-1100; where were Scarbororough’s Dominicans; Tanger Cholney: an unwritten biography; Scarbororough’s Forgotten Chapels; Scarbororough’s war memorial

Scottish Local History (no.71 Winter 2007) £5 from SLH Editor, Doris Williamson, School of History, Classics, University of Edinburgh, 17 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9LN Black people in Scotland during the slavery era; 100 years of life in Stirling; Alexander Ross, architect; early 19th century letters between Paxton, Berwickshire and Grenada; the Roy Military Survey map of Scotland (1747-55); white servitude or white slavery?

Send and Ripley History Society Journal (vol.6 no.195 Jul/Aug 2007; no.196 Sep/Oct 2007; no.197 Nov/Dec 2007; no.198 Jan/Feb 2008) from Les Bowman, Send Manor, Ripley GU23 6JS 8-16 Rose Lane, Ripley, the ‘Wokeing’ button; Royal Arms, Ripley; memories of spotting in Send; the parish workhouse; horse buses at the Anchor; Ripley parish look-up; Clayton’s the butcher; Stansfield Brothers; Edwardian costume; Thomas Davsson’s account book; confidence trickster at Ripley 1785

Stapleford and District Local History Society Newsletter (no.22 Spring 2007; no.23 Autumn 2007) 50p each from Barbara Brooke, 57 Westerlands, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 7JE Drummond murders; Park Estate, Abigail Gauthorne of Nottingham 1751-1810; Lord Carizon of Kedleston; town criers, monks and monasteries; Florence Nightingale

Journal of West Sussex History (no.76 2007) Aviation Edition £5.95 from West Sussex Record Office, Orchard Street, Chichester PO19 1RN aviation in West Sussex; Cyril Pashley and Shoreham—the story of a pioneer aviator; West Sussex military airfields during World War II; design and construction of RAF Towner 1936-1945; Tangmere Military Aviation Museum; aviation memorials of West Sussex

Tameside Local Studies and Archives Newsletter (no.1 2007) free from Tameside Local Studies and Archive Group, Central Library, Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 7SG

Tewkesbury Historical Society Bulletin (no.16 2007) from info@alisonsbookshop.co.uk Halsey’s End; Cleal family; Capt. E.W. Price, a corrupt MP; Great Fire of 1890-91; Tewkesbury’s medieval synagogue; Milton Chapel and environs; life and Times of a Tewkesburian in the 20th century


Wandsworth Historian [Wandsworth HS] (no.85 Autumn 2007) £3 from WHS, 119 Heythorp Street, London SW18 5BT Longhedge Farm, Battersea; freemasonry and other mutual organisations in Battersea and Wandsworth; Home Farm of Allfarthing in the 14th century, Dorman Long’s Nine Elms Steelworks, 1941-1944

Warwickshire History [Warwickshire LHS] (vol.13 no.5 Summer 2007) from Mrs Christine Woodland, 28 Lillington Road, Leamington Spa CV32 6QW Fashion, consumption and production in the Shottery home, 1556-1624; Dr Henry Liley Smith and the invention of self-supporting or provident dispensaries; luxury lodgings in Leamington Spa

The Link [Wessex Newfoundland Society] (no.72 Dec 2007) annual subs. £10 available from I.K. Andrews, 105 Orchard Avenue, Poole BH14 9AH Why so loyal? the Irish in 19th century Newfoundland

Worcestershire Local History Forum (no.42 Autumn 2007) from annebradford@blueyonder.co.uk

Yorkshire History Quarterly (vol.12 no.3) £14 p.a. from Hudson History, Procter House, Kirkgate, Settle BD24 9DZ. Old Dye House, Waterside, Knarborough, East Yorkshire twangers; Yorkshire Jewish worthies; Robin Hood and Kirklees Priory; two West Riding Methodist pioneers; clay miners of Sheffield; merchant manufacturing in West Yorkshire 1896-1972; stable boy to prime minister, George Calver; storytelling and folklore on the North York Moors early 1800s; enigma of Scaw Ghyll

English Heritage Conservation Bulletin (no.56 Autumn 2007) subscription enquiries to mailinglist@english-heritage.org.uk images of change; social landscapes; profitable landscapes; political landscapes; Leisure and pleasure

Industrial Heritage (vol.33 no.2 Autumn 2007) £12.50 p.a. from Yorkshire History, Procter House, Kirkgate, Settle BD24 9DZ Benjamin and John Hicks, Bolton engineers; clay miners of Sheffield; old tramways in Bolton; some Wenningdale mills; James Nasmuth and industrial espionage; motor manufacturing in Yorkshire 1896-1972

Local History Magazine (no.115 Sept/Oct 2007) £3.50 from Local History Magazine, Doric House, 56 Alcester Road, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7LG On the trail of Marconi; a town unearthed; rethinking consumer landscapes; American hospitals in Malvern in World War II

Local Population Studies Society Newsletter (no.41 Sept 2007) from Dr Peter Franklin, 46 Fountain Street, Accrington BB5 0QP the incredible Battle of Tounton

Propheie: magazine of the Friends of The National Archives (vol.18 no.3 Dec 2007) £2 from TNA, Ruskin Avenue, Kew documenting the 1914 Christmas truce; using newspapers in historical research; one little whiff [cannabis!]; sources for tracing British civilians PoW WWII

William Barnes Society Newsletter (no.55 Nov 2007) from Mr Richard Burleigh, Alberta Cottage, Higher Sea Lane, Charmouth DT6 6BB
Events include our annual Local History Day, regional conferences, and activities around the country planned jointly with other organisations. Visits are arranged to places of interest to local historians, often not easily accessible to individuals. View our events.

Resources. BALH aims to encourage interest and enthusiasm for local history amongst learners of all ages, and to share best practice, knowledge and skills. Our publications meet the needs of local historians for background information, and for practical advice and guidance about sources and methods. More on education More on public...Â Local History News is our quarterly magazine containing topical articles, shorter notes and reports for everyone interested in local history. View archive. Current Issue Local history is the study of history in a geographically local context and it often concentrates on the local community. It incorporates cultural and social aspects of history. Local history is not merely national history writ small but a study of past events in a given geographical but one that is based on a wide variety of documentary evidence and placed in a comparative context that is both regional and national. Historic plaques are one form of documentation of significant occurrences in the past Mapping London: a GIS platform for the history of early modern London. People, property and charity: the Clothworkers’ Company 1500-1750. Beginning in October 2010, the “People, Property and Charity: the Clothworkers’ Company 1500-1750” project, will provide the first detailed history of the benefactors, property acquisitions and other bequests of the Clothworkers’ Company in the City of London during the late medieval and early modern periods.Â Keynote lecture to conference on “Medieval London and the World”, London Society for Medieval Studies. 26-Apr-2015. Crafts, skills and migration in late medieval London.Â Keynote lecture given at ’Nova Lisboa Medieval III: Gentes, Espaços e Poderes’, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon. 07-Nov-2013.