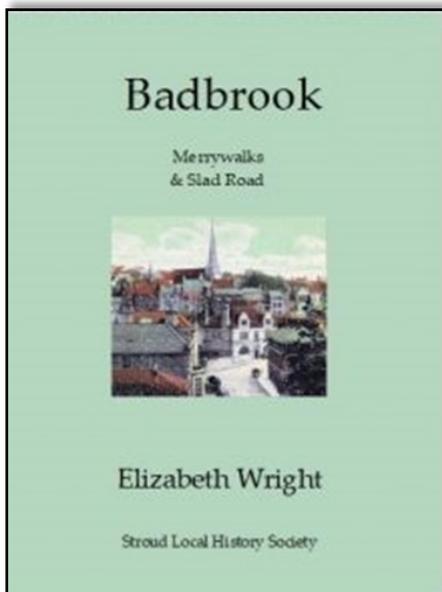


Book Reviews

Badbrook, Merrywalks and Slad Road: a history 1750-1980 and beyond

Elizabeth Wright, (Stroud, Stroud Local History Society, 2019), 198 pp. many b/w and col. ill. Paperback, £13.50 [no ISBN]
Reviewed 02.2020



Badbrook is located at the lowest part of Stroud and will be familiar to readers as the area where the current bus stops, shopping centre, multi-storey car park and cinema complex are located. The Slad Brook runs through the area, now culverted, which was prone to flooding through the centuries. The book traces the development of the area from 1750 to the present day. Early in its history the Slad Brook was used, as water was in much of the Stroud area, for the woollen cloth industry with two mills and associated mill ponds and dyehouses. This led to considerable pollution from their works and also from sewage emptying into the brook from houses and industry above the brook.

The author has used many sources of information to trace the history of each

building extending to the four principal roads, Slad Road, Merrywalks, Gloucester Street and Beeches Green and neighbouring streets. Before the turnpiking of the roads any traveller wishing to cross the brook from Beeches Green to the town had to use a ford with stepping stones and later a wooden footbridge. One problem in the development of the area was that the land to the north of Slad Brook was in Painswick parish and to the south in Stroud parish with the different administrations and rates. This continued until the end of the 19th century with many disputes concerning the improvement in sanitary conditions.

For the early history the author has used the well-known Notes and Recollections of Stroud by Paul Hawkins Fisher, published in 1871, together with the 1820 map of Stroud by Charles Baker and the 1860 Stroud Board of Health map by Taunton. A series of maps showing the location of the buildings described in the text are clearly drawn and essential to the understanding of the development of the area. The author has searched out and used many relevant documents in Gloucestershire Archives and Museum in the Park, Stroud, and consulted local directories to untangle the various businesses established in the Badbrook area.

The most interesting area of research is the extensive use of newspapers, the Stroud papers and those further afield, now made easier by the continuing digitisation programme by the British Newspaper Library. The trade advertisements and sale notices give clues to the commercial enterprises, their rise and fall. It seems as if bankruptcy was very common in the 19th century as were fires. The book is illustrated with images from the extensive postcard collection of the local historian, Howard Beard.

Although the area covered is small it contains a fascinating history of changes from mainly commercial premises to the building of housing on both sides of the brook along Lansdown and in Uplands and the demolition of many others to allow for the widening of the roads to adapt to motorised traffic. The author relates many amusing tales of characters associated with, amongst others, the public baths, the police station, the drill hall and schools.

The use of references in the text is welcome as is an extensive index and bibliography. (The reviewer discovered a mention of his great-great-grandfather!)

Although at first sight it would appear to have limited appeal it is well worth a read to discover the immense amount of research which has gone into the production of this history.

John Loosley

Cheltenham: unique images from the archives of Historic England

David Elder, (Stroud, Amberley Publishing 2018). 96pp. 160 ill. Paperback, £14.99. [ISBN: 978-1-4456-8366-9]

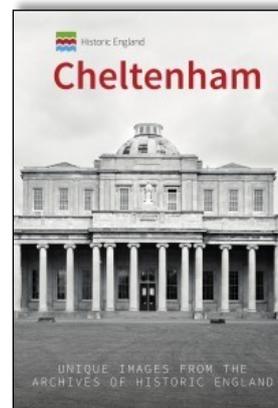
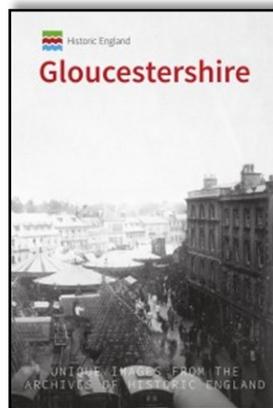
Gloucestershire: unique images from the archives of Historic England

David Elder, (Stroud, Amberley Publishing 2019). 96pp. 160 ill. Paperback. £14.99. [ISBN: 978-1-4456-9215-9]

Both reviewed 03.2020

Following on from the publication of *Gloucester: unique images from the archives of Historic England* (reviewed by Alan Tyler in *BGAS Newsletter* 83), local author David Elder has produced two further books, one on Cheltenham and the other on Gloucestershire, in this series (currently running to more than 40 titles nationwide), which is a collaboration between Historic England and Amberley Publishing.

Both books follow an identical format to the Gloucester volume: a total of 160 colour and black & white illustrations, largely drawn from



Historic England's photographic archive, but supplemented, where the author felt that an important topic was not covered by the archive, either by his own photograph or by an image from a library, museum or private collection. Clearly, the availability of Historic England images was far greater for the Gloucestershire volume (in which only six images are not theirs), but apparently less so for Cheltenham, in which 49 of the images are from elsewhere, including a number of maps, plans and topographical prints, which certainly add visual variety to that particular book.

Inevitably, there is some overlap between the images in these two books: of the 12 Cheltenham images in the Gloucestershire volume (six of which show schools and colleges, which is perhaps something of an 'imbalance', given the range of other Cheltenham topics that might have been chosen), seven are also included in that for Cheltenham – a situation that in fact also applies to the earlier Gloucester volume, seven of whose images re-appear in that for Gloucestershire. Also inevitable, but wholly understandable, is an overlap in the subject matter of the sections into which each book is divided: places of worship, public buildings, education, entertainment & leisure, and industry & commerce appear in each, while the remainder certainly reflect the contrast between Cheltenham and the rest of the County: among the sections in the former are the Regency and the Races, while the latter includes agriculture & food, castles, houses & gardens, and transport

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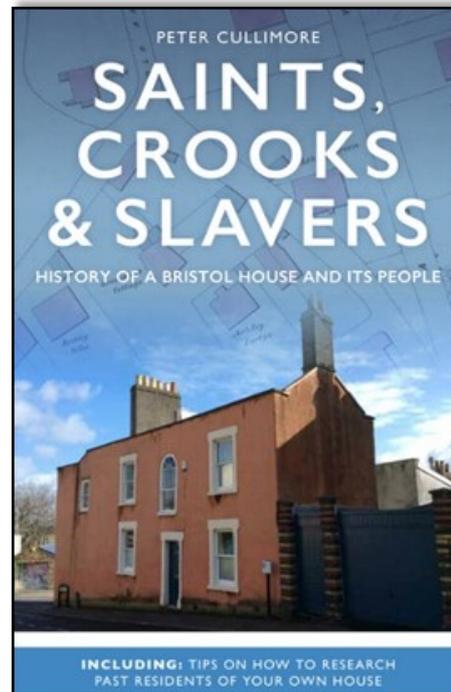
(the latter being a rather surprising omission from the Cheltenham book).

Both books include much that is familiar, in terms of both locations and information, but also much that is new. That they offer the opportunity to sample, often for the first time, images from Historic England's remarkable archives (which comprise no fewer than 12 million photographs, drawings, plans and documents) is the real strength of both these volumes and of the series as a whole, which sets it apart from many other 'old photograph' publications. The images are all of high quality, varied, and full of interest, and the captions are all to the point and eminently readable – as indeed is the succinct one-page Introduction to each book. The inclusion of many aerial views from the Harold Wingham and Aerofilms collections is a real bonus in both of these books, while the Gloucestershire volume has a welcome focus on people (generally shown at work) as well as on places. It is also remarkably comprehensive in its coverage of the historic, pre-1974, county, with images ranging from Tewkesbury in the north to Bitton in the south, and covering a wide range of topics and eras, from the prehistoric landscape of Minchinhampton Common to the decommissioning of Berkeley power station. Both books are certainly a pleasure to read and to browse, and are a welcome addition to the available images of Gloucestershire's past.

Steven Blake

Saints Crooks and Slavers: History of a Bristol House and its People: including how to research past residents of your own house

Peter Cullimore and Sue Cullimore, (Bristol, Bristol Books, 2020), 128 pp, ill. Paperback, £12.00 [ISBN: 978199446243] Reviewed 05.2020



This is a Bristol book, by a Bristol resident, Peter Cullimore, published by Bristol Books. However, it is of wider interest, containing a useful guide to sources, both written and web-based, contributed by Sue Cullimore, whose knowledge of historical geography shines through. Spring Cottage, 58-60 Fairfield Road, is a property built perhaps originally in the 18th century, and enlarged in the early 19th. Nor is it concerned only with the house, for there is a select account of the people who occupied it, whether as tenants but latterly as owner occupiers. Spring Cottage emerges from obscurity and there is a well-told history of its occupants from an originator, the Quaker Shurmer Bath to Penny Gane, a recent Chair of Bristol Women's Voice and a head of Bristol's Mayoral Women's Commission; as well as many others in between before the authors arrived over 30 years ago – almost the longest-standing residents in the house's history.

The house has an interesting and varied history of occupancy and ownership. The author has chosen an excellent variety of brief lives to illustrate his strong narrative. The text is further strengthened by the judicious use of maps and carefully selected and beautifully reproduced and labelled illustrations. They show the development of the area from 18th-century fields to 21st-century pictures of the area and the house today. The research is light-touch, no jargon such as 'map-regression' although that has clearly taken place. The illustrations are fine: there is an image or map on almost every page.

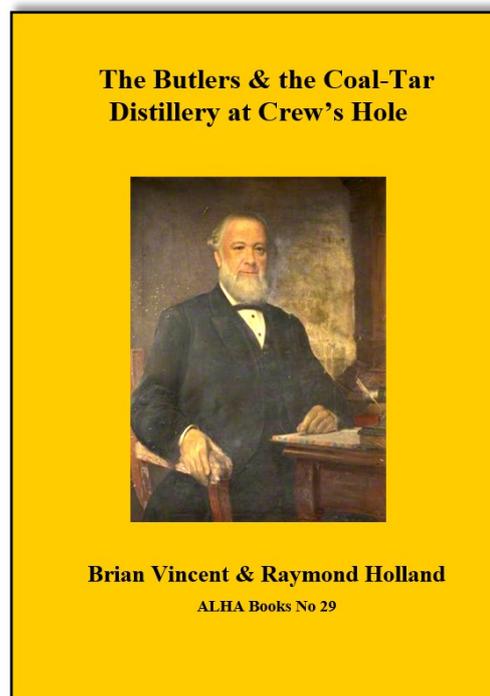
The range of sources used is impressive, notably censuses, directories and newspapers as well as records of births, marriages and deaths. The stories of individuals and families are set in the context of significant national and international events: wars, revolutions and riots, migration and movement to and from abroad as they affected or impinged upon the residents of Spring Cottage. There are many social and economic insights, not least a snapshot of the regular curse of bankruptcy and poverty – not to mention slavery – all hot topics in the city as I write.

The authors have chosen well. Inevitably they have at times had to proceed by assertion in tracing individuals. The result is impressive. Inevitably too there is much more they could have said, and much more that could be done. The fascinating aerial picture showing the double ridged roof on the earlier part of the house makes this reviewer itch to get up in the roof and to look. Likewise the photo of the brickwork of an external building reminds us that there is much more on the fabric history to be said – the windows are very fine. But these are mere quibbles, this is a well-researched, informative, elegantly written and well presented work of microhistory from which anyone could learn about sources for their house history, whatever their background or research skills. The Cullimorees have set a solid and highly readable baseline.

Tom Beaumont James

The Butlers & the Coal Tar Distillery at Crew's Hole

Brian Vincent and Raymond Holland (Bristol, Avon Local History & Archaeology ALHA Books No 29, 2019), 44 pp, 25 ills (1 col). Paperback, £3-50 [ISBN 978-1-911592-29-7]. Reviewed 06.2020



Coal-tar is a thick dark liquid obtained as a by-product of the production of coal gas, and a vital feed-stock in the manufacture of a large number of important medical and industrial products. The latter include binders for road surfaces, sealants for roofs, fuel and as a source of creosote, which is a cheap and effective wood preservative patented in 1838. In 1843 Isambard Kingdom Brunel established a coal-tar distillery on the north bank of the River Avon at Crew's Hole just over two miles east of Bristol Bridge. This was already a centre for industry, starting with copper smelting in 1695 using ore imported by ship from Cornwall, and in time the site boasted a number of major chemical industries such as the manufacture of various alkalis, acids and fertilisers as well as coal-tar.

Brunel made extensive use of timber for both sleepers and for his viaducts in Cornwall and

Book Reviews continued

the Stroud Valley. The large quantities of wood preservative needed made it economic sense to have his own works, to which he appointed the 24-year-old William Butler (1819-1900) as manager. Butler had been with Brunel for about three years when he must have impressed his employer. He also made a success of the new business and was able to buy the works in 1863 and form his own company, Wm Butler & Co Ltd.

As the title suggests, a substantial part of the book is devoted to the Butlers and, starting with William Butler's grandparents, six generations are traced in some considerable detail. Inevitably, some family members became part of the firm while others pursued successful careers elsewhere. We also learn that William Butler took an active role in the Methodist Church, the Liberal Party, local government and was heavily involved with the introduction of a tramway system in Bristol. Later generations were similarly involved in the community.

As might be expected when one author, Brian Vincent, is a Professor of Chemistry and the other, the late Raymond Holland, was chief chemist and later production manager and deputy works manager at the Butler firm, the account gives technical details, but they are clearly explained. The complex history of the company's changing fortunes in the twentieth century is also well documented.

The Crew's Hole works closed in 1981 and the site is now a housing estate. Clearly the Butler brand was held in some esteem as after a number of takeovers it is still in use today with Butler Fuels who supply domestic and commercial heating oil.

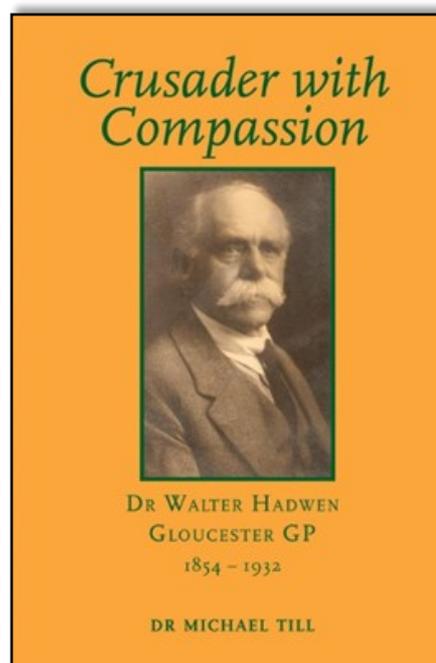
There is a good range of illustrations and maps which are reproduced well, although some would have benefited from being larger in size. The booklet has a comprehensive list of references and is an excellent starting

point for anyone wishing to learn about this important aspect of Bristol's industrial past.

Ray Wilson

Crusader with Compassion: Dr Walter Hadwen

Michael Till, Gloucester GP 1854–1932 (Gloucester, Hobnob Press, 2019), 192 pp, many ill in b/w and col. Paperback, £14.95. [ISBN 978-1-906978-78-5] Reviewed 06.2020



Dr Walter Hadwen was a character. First trained as a pharmacist he retrained as a doctor and became a GP in Gloucester. A firebrand orator, his powerful views as an anti-vaccinationist, anti-vivisectionist and confirmed vegetarian were spread widely, and his campaign against smallpox vaccination held resonance in Gloucester where several outbreaks occurred during his

lifetime. He appears to have been regarded as an antihero by many in the medical profession but when he was charged with murder of a girl who died in his care with diphtheria his patients stayed loyal to him. He was acquitted. His force of oration and prolific pamphleteering made him a national and international force. His interest in alternative or traditional medicine is intriguing.

Dr Michael Till was a GP (now retired) in the practice Walter developed. He writes a detailed and well researched book on Dr Hadwen, replete with personal recollections by people who knew the man, and many illustrations and primary sources. He writes well and though the material is detailed it is an entertaining read which may not encourage sleep.

Dr Till does not allow this to be either a hagiography nor an assassination, and from this Walter emerges as a caring and compassionate man of single-minded views. If there is a weakness it is that whilst the author presents the material and puts it in the events and ideas that occur locally and nationally he does not attempt to extend his analysis to a wider frame or relate it to modern times. As such he allows his evidence to speak for itself and leaves the readers to make their own interpretation.

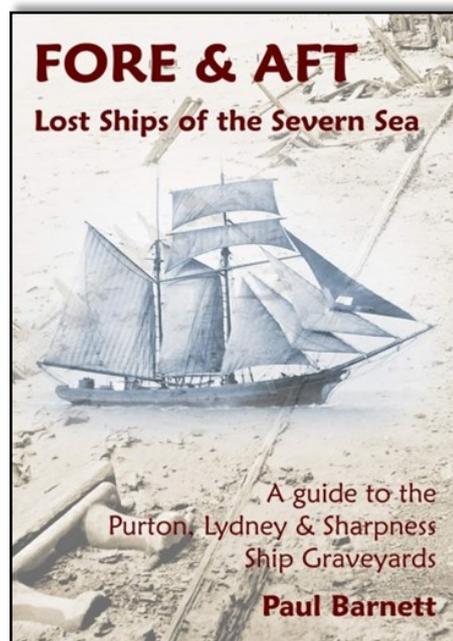
This is a well written and detailed book that is easy to read and provokes a lot of reflection. It is also a good primary source for people studying the anti-vaccination or anti-vivisection movements. Walter's argument against vaccination – the way it failed to protect against smallpox, caused an increase in other infectious illnesses and as a dirty vaccine inflicted people with other disorders – are still echoed in many modern anti-vaccination campaigns.

I would commend it to anyone interested in general practice, public health or the history of medicine.

Peter Carpenter

Fore and Aft: Lost Ships of the Severn Sea

Paul Barnett, (Paul Barnett, 2020), 192 pp, over 400 ill. Paperback, £14.95 [no ISBN]
Reviewed 07.2020



I have to start this review by saying this is a sad book, especially for anyone with any hint of the sea in their blood. Simply browsing through its pages you are struck by melancholy at the thought of so many fine ships that are now lost. It's a scene that is repeated around the country for our creeks, pills and inlets are often crowded with the abandoned remains of all kinds of craft,

Book Reviews concluded

unloved and rotting away out of view of anything except the local wildlife.

Anyone who walks the banks of the Severn will at one time or another come across the timbers of some long-lost ship, jutting proudly out of reed-beds or estuarine mud. For many people, this is just another sight and they take a photograph and walk on. Some may ponder a bit more; wondering what type of craft they are looking at, what its name was, what it did and why it ended up where it is. It is these questions that Paul Barnett has answered and this book is a tour-de-force – the author has researched the identity and fates of over 150 of the hulks which can be found along Severnside, not just those of the now famous ship graveyard of Purton but also the graveyards around Lydney, Sharpness and the lower reaches of the Wye. For each craft Paul has been able to source two photographs, creating a 'then and now' with good concise notes explaining the images and giving part of the vessel's story. (To give the full story would need several more books!) In addition to chapters on the Purton hulks, Lydney hulks and Sharpness hulks, there are chapters on other even less well known areas and, in geographical terms, the book covers the Severn from Wainlode above Gloucester down to Portishead below Avonmouth. Paul also includes a chapter on the Severn & Wye Railway Disaster, various vignettes detailing aspects of the maritime usage of the river (including a fascinating account of how vessels were beached) and a useful vessel index.

What impresses the reviewer most of all however is the sheer amount of research that Paul had to undertake to produce this book. Maritime research is one of the most difficult areas to delve into thanks to the myriad of sources, few of which are signposted or even easily available. Highlighting the fates and history of these craft has also brought their national importance and lack of protection into full view. Thankfully – and Paul has played an important part in this – these

vessels (and all those similar ones around the country's creeks and estuaries) are now firmly on the archaeological radar. At Purton itself, where Paul's fascination was first triggered, one barge has been scheduled as an ancient monument and several are now included in the National Register of Historic Vessels, a long overdue but definitely worthy status. So, having initially said that this is a sad book, I also have to say that it is a work of joy, for at long last the fascinating histories and fates of these craft are receiving the attention that they deserve.

John Putley