

Book Reviews

Brian Vincent & Raymond Holland,
Chemistry in Bristol into the early 20th century
 (Bristol, Avon Local History & Archaeology Books 18,
 2014) 43pp., 30 ill., 1map. Cardcovers, £3.50

If you are a reader who 'glazes over' at the very thought of chemistry please don't be put off either by the title, or the first sentence, of this very interesting booklet which recounts the development of chemistry in Bristol's industries, medicine and academia from the late 18th century to the establishment of the University by Royal Charter in 1909.

The text is laid out in four parts. Following a short historical overview of the early chemistry-based industries in Bristol the first part is devoted to potted histories of six companies whose produce varied from chocolate to creosote and buckets to fertiliser. There are also short biographies of the men who ran those companies emphasising the many contributions that they made both to the development of the processes involved and to the civic and academic life of the City.

The second short section is devoted to the professional scientific societies, and some of their leading players, that were either established in the City during the period in question or were local sections of national bodies such as the Society of Chemical Industry.

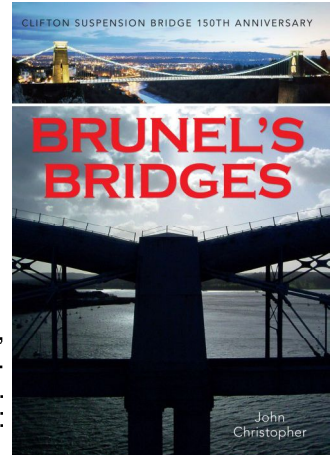
The developments in early medicine and toxicology undertaken at the Pneumatic Institution and the Bristol Medical School form the third part of this work. Following brief details of the background of Thomas Beddoes, his links to the Lunar Society and how he came to Bristol, there are descriptions of the rather bizarre treatments that he practised on his patients at his clinic in Hotwells. Beddoes was also instrumental in the setting up of an anatomy school in 1797, but it was not until 1833 that the various training establishments in the city came together to form the Bristol Medical School where William Herapath made many significant contributions. In addition to their successes in medicine the various activities of both Beddoes and Herapath in the field of local politics are also covered.

The final section charts the development of academic chemistry in the City from 1867 when it was proposed that science be taught at the Grammar School. As with the previous sections there is much emphasis on the notable men who contributed to the success of the various establishments. The development of the Merchant Venturers' Technical College and its successor institutions is covered, while in more detail is the campaign to set up University College which came to fruition in 1876. One of the two initial professorships was in chemistry, the other in modern history and literature. The rest of the work then discusses the six men who were the professors of chemistry at UC during the next 33 years.

This work is well written with a wide ranging referencing and is produced to the usual high standard of the ALHA series.

Alan Tyler

John Christopher,
Brunel's Bridges (Stroud,
 Amberley Publishing 2014).
 96pp., 146ill., 2 plans.
 Cardcovers, £14.99 [ISBN:
 9781445639956]



John Christopher's *Brunel's Bridges* follows hard on the heels of his studies of I.K. Brunel's civil engineering work in Gloucestershire and Bristol (reviewed in BGAS Newsletters 72 & 75) and is presented in a similar format, although it is not intended to be part of the same "regional" series. Written in the author's characteristically engaging and relaxed writing style, it is apparent that much of the text and many of the illustrations have been "recycled" from his previous publications. This is of course a reasonable and practical approach given that this is intended as a stand-alone publication, but it should be borne in mind when considering its purchase.

The bridges are organised under four headings: suspension, then brick and stone masonry, followed by iron, and finally timber. Text and attractive captioned images set each bridge in its historical context. All the well-known structures are covered, plus an interesting selection of lesser-known sites. The front and back covers indicate that the book is intended to mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Clifton Suspension Bridge in 1864, five years after Brunel's death; indeed, the history of this iconic structure is the first to be dealt with, along with Brunel's short-lived Hungerford Suspension Bridge whose chains were "salvaged" by members of the Institution of Civil Engineers to complete the unfinished Clifton bridge as a memorial to their celebrated colleague.

The second section features Brunel's GWR brick arch bridges at Hanwell, Maidenhead, Basildon and Moultsford, followed by stone arch bridges at Bathford, and in the Bath and Bristol area. There are a number of factual inaccuracies here; for example, contemporary illustrations of the Wharncliffe Viaduct at Hanwell under construction clearly show that the arch centerings were

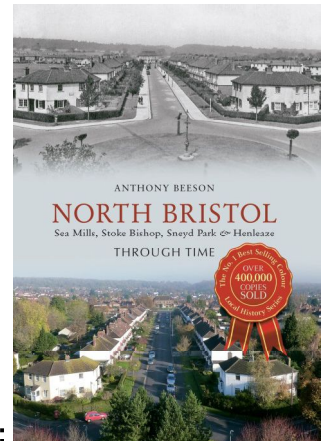
not supported on the stone cappings of the piers; and the quoted figure of 700 feet for the arch spans of the viaduct is obviously a misprint for 70 feet. The Maidenhead Bridge was widened on both sides in the 1890s, not the 1870s, and it is not expressly stated that no trace of Brunel's original London stock brick arches can now be seen there – in fact, everything visible is built in Cattybrook brick from South Gloucestershire. Masonry bridges beyond the GWR London-Bristol main line include Somerset Bridge, the very flat stone arch (not brick, as quoted), which carried the Bristol and Exeter Railway over the river Parrett for a short time before settlement problems forced its demolition. The innovative "flying bridge" form of construction is illustrated by the Liskeard Station bridge, whereas Devil's Bridge (misprinted as "Deals Bridge") over the B&ER near Weston-super-Mare might be more representative.

The former bridges at Newport and Chepstow, with the extant bridges at Windsor and Saltash, comprise Brunel's major wrought-iron bridges. Of the minor iron bridges, the Swivel Bridge at Bristol is given special attention, on account of its reputed status as the direct predecessor of the Chepstow and Saltash "tubular" bridges. In reality, contemporary evidence shows that it can have had no direct influence on these iconic bridges. Nevertheless, the bridge has considerable "engineered heritage" significance; Bristol Industrial Archaeological Society is currently involved in joint efforts to restore it.

Brunel used timber extensively, particularly in his railway bridges. The final section features former timber bridges and viaducts on the GWR main line, as well as some in the Bristol/Swindon/Gloucester area, and many more in South Wales, South Devon and Cornwall. None of the timberwork has survived, but some original masonry supporting piers remain.

The book is suitable for a general non-technical readership. However, it is worth noting that Imperial dimensions are used throughout the book. Yes, this is the system to which the bridges were designed and built, but an ever-increasing proportion of the potential readership will have little comprehension of non-metric dimensions.

David Greenfield



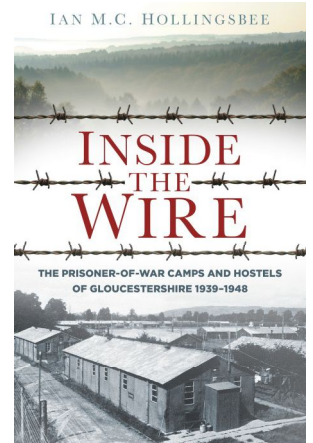
Anthony Beeson,
North Bristol through time: Sea Mills, Stoke Bishop, Sneyd Park and Henleaze (Stoud, Amberley Publishing 2014). 96pp, sepia & colour ills. Cardcovers, £13.49 [ISBN: 9781445615424] e-book ditto 15653

Forty members of B&GAS live in the part of north-west Bristol depicted in this book. It is not one organic entity: it straddles two parliamentary constituencies, and is an agglomeration of settlements. Their surviving nuclei retain a village flavour, but they are now linked by sprawls of modern housing, whose building styles vary from the entertainingly quirky and serendipitous to the desperately dull and the dire. A potted history would be that once it was all fields, then it got built upon. The palimpsest, however, is complicated, and has not yet been fully deciphered. At the west end of this book's scope lay Roman *Abona*, whose exact functions have still not been ascertained, and which calls for comprehensive and systematic archaeological investigation using modern technologies. The eighteenth century harbour, mentioned by Defoe, is still visible. Behind it is Sea Mills, a 1920s planned garden suburb with neat council houses and two Oatley churches. To the east lies Stoke Bishop, long an agricultural cash cow for the church but in the nineteenth century colonized by Bristol's affluent who built country pads conveniently near to the city but avoiding the financial burdens of the urban infrastructure that facilitated their profits. Then comes Sneyd Park, Bristol's leafiest enclave, once for deer but now upmarket houses and flats, often replacing, or in the grounds of, large houses of which some traces remain. East of The Downs, now public open space but once teeming with quarrymen, lime-burners and carpet-beaters, lie Westbury Park (named after the lord chancellor, not Westbury-on-Trym) and Henleaze: Edwardian and inter-wars private housing built mostly on farms and the grounds of large houses now demolished. As its subtitle makes clear, this book does not cover Avonmouth, Shirehampton, Kingsweston (though Philip Napier Miles is acknowledged in connection with Sea Mills), El Dub, Henbury, Southmead, Westbury-on-Trym or Horfield, all of which are vital to understanding the area's past.

The author groups images of selected buildings and views into four 'walks', the captions outlining in varying degrees of detail aspects of the past of the building or view portrayed. So the book should not be judged as a short history of the area, for which readers may wish to refer to works such as Stoke Bishop & Sneyd Park Local History Group's 1998 and later pictorial histories, Ethel Thomas's 1983 and 2002 works on Shirehampton, or Veronica Bowerman's books on Henleaze. Rather, the emphasis is on selected buildings, especially houses, so themes such as shopping, the railway and other forms of transport are barely featured; nor are Bristol University's buildings, which have had social and visual impact. Unlike the SB&SPLHG accounts, this book does not try to trace the order in which pieces of land were developed or the reasons why: rather, the author comments on each photograph, sometimes entertainingly, building up a picture, albeit with gaps, of various influences and influencers. The book will be helpful to those who wish to write a more comprehensive and analytical history of this under-researched area, or to learn a little of the origins and occupiers of those houses depicted.

Several points stand out. First, that wealth was not always accompanied by architectural taste: mixed styles, bombastic towers, ostentatious materials, mock timbering and hyperactive decoration were but some of the aesthetic misdemeanours committed. Second, how brief were some of the families' occupations of the large houses, and how short-lived some of them: The Grove, for example (not mentioned) was built 1840, demolished in 1937 to become playing fields of Clifton High School, and plastered with houses in 1997. Third, how many of the city's leading business families built or occupied houses here: why not in Clifton? They could have afforded to do so: did they want to avoid oversight or architectural control by the Society of Merchant Venturers? Was there going on some politics now hidden to us? Lastly, how many of the builders and occupiers of the large houses are now near-forgotten names, whereas in their day they must have been influential and respected contributors to, or rent-takers from, Bristol's prosperity. Well-known owners of houses here included Abraham Hilhouse (Albion Dockyard); Sir George White (Old Sneed Park House); Elisha Robinson; Henry Goodeve; Sir Robert Cann. But where in the history books are the *res gestae* of alderman Taggart, William Tothill, Sir George Edwards, Peter Pranker, Thomas Wedmore, Augustus Phillips, Serjeant Ludlow, William Munro or Bruce Cole? One suspects that much latent local history lurks here waiting to be teased out, and this book will offer some ideas to those who wish to go exploring.

William Evans



Ian M. C. Hollingsbee,
Inside the Wire: the prisoner-of-war camps and hostels of Gloucestershire 1939-1948 (Stroud, The History Press 2014) 178pp., 56ill., 8 maps/plans. Card-covers, £12.99 [ISBN: 9780750958462]

It is always refreshing to review a book on a subject about which very little has been written, in this case Gloucestershire's Second World War POW camps. To my knowledge, no other publication has attempted to provide a comprehensive study of this important aspect of the war for the county of Gloucestershire.

Established academic author Ian M. C. Hollingsbee has researched widely, drawing on personal recollections of former prisoners and their families as well as the records of the Red Cross, Ministry of Defence and US Army. Also to be noted is the extensive list of acknowledgements of help received from individuals, local history societies, museums and archives etc.

A comprehensive introduction explains the need for such camps from the arrival of the first prisoners right through to the end of the war and beyond. In Gloucestershire, large estates such as Quedgeley Court, Swindon Manor and Leckhampton Court were requisitioned as were some hostels previously built by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to house agricultural workers. Property previously used by American troops in the build up to the D-Day landings on 6th June 1944 around Moreton-in-Marsh, Blockley and Northwick Park was also utilised as POW camps.

I was especially interested to learn that Northwick Park was eventually re-designated by the Red Cross as a hospital solely for German casualties.

The book offers an insight into the day to day life of prisoners in these camps and hostels and the impact on local communities. Ian explains that under the terms of the Geneva Convention Prisoners of War were allowed to carry out non-military work such as farming and construction and many prisoners were billeted at farms.

It is interesting to note the relationships enjoyed by the prisoners of different nationalities both with local communities and with British and American troops.

Regular inspections of camps and billets are comprehensively covered, clearly indicating the depth of investigation Ian has undertaken.

The descriptions of the facilities afforded to the prisoners by way of accommodation and provisions are recorded in some detail. Following the end of the war prisoners were selected for repatriation, priority being given to men who had provided essential work prior to the war such as policemen, builders and miners. Ian brings to life the various camps with the inclusion of personal recollections from prisoners. A series of letters from one POW to his sister in Poland are especially illuminating. O/Gefr Erwin Engler B2818 was a POW from October 1944 to 18 May 1948 and one of five German soldiers to marry whilst in Campo 263 [Leckhampton Court, Cheltenham].

Each camp is analysed in some depth, some camps being well illustrated, and the end notes are both comprehensive and useful. However, I was left wishing that further illustrations had been included and I do believe the subject and content of this book warranted an index for easy reference.

Ian freely admits that the book is incomplete. He has not been able to find information about some hostels which no doubt existed and for which no records have been found so there remains the possibility of further research and more information coming to light at a later date.

Apart from one spelling mistake at the start of the book and the incorrect numbering of Chapters 6-12 on the Contents page I found the book to be well-written and compulsive reading. All in all a book to be recommended to anyone with an interest in military history in general or of Gloucestershire in particular.

Geoffrey A. North

Editorial

Sorry to anyone who tried to send a mail to my old email address, I had an unfortunate and catastrophic failure with the old address.

Articles for the next Newsletter by 15th August 2015.

E-mail: markburroughs9@btinternet.com

Mark Burroughs

Brief Notes

Toddington Court

The archway which leads to the main entrance had WELCOME inscribed across it. This was erased when it became a prison.

Lost abbeys of Gloucestershire

We are fortunate that the magnificent abbey churches of St Peter's, Gloucester now the cathedral and Tewkesbury a parish church survived the dissolution of the monasteries. Equally grand by repute but of which there are no meaningful remains or illustrations were Cirencester and Winchcombe abbeys. J H Harvey commented that the exceptional tower and architecture of St Peter's might be less so if Cirencester and Winchcombe had survived. David Vevey noted the sophistication and delicacy of 15th century work attributed to the influence of Winchcombe in parish churches connected with it.

HGML

Forthcoming dates

Beau street hoard

A two-day Symposium covering the Beau street hoard will be held at the Assembly Rooms in Bath on the 23/24th April. This will be preceded by a free lecture, on Wednesday 22 April in the Pump Room, by Richard Abdy, Curator of Coins and Medals at The British Museum. www.romanbaths.co.uk

ALHA Local History Day 2015

ALHA's local history day 2015, will be held on 18th April at the UWE's Frenchay campus and is themed around democracy and freedom, to celebrate the 800th year since the signing of the Magna Carta. See www.alha.org for more details.

Cheltenham, Thursday 30th April Graham Barton, Using the B&GAS Library as a Resource for Historical and Archaeological Research

B&GAS / University of Gloucestershire History Research Group joint Seminar Archive Room - QU024, Francis Close Hall Campus, University of Gloucestershire Admission free to B&GAS members and to University of Gloucestershire staff and students.