

Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico

County archaeology and local history societies have traditionally exchanged their publications. Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society exchanges copies of our *Transactions* with some thirty six societies, though Northamptonshire and Yorkshire now require purchase. One name that stands out in our Society's list of exchangers, and in the catalogue of our Society's library in Cheltenham, is the *Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico*, evidently not an English or Welsh county society. Aventicum, modern Avenches, was the capital of the iron age Helveti, who ruled western Switzerland and were conquered by Julius Caesar, as he modestly explained in his unassuming military memoirs. Pro Aventico was founded in 1884 to investigate and protect the remains of the ancient Roman town. It has over 600 members. Apart from archaeological investigations, displays and multilingual publications, its successes include getting a main road diverted.

Nowadays the population of Avenches is barely 2,000, but in Roman times it was a provincial capital whose 5.6 km of watchtowered walls enclosed a population ten times as many. Overrun by the Alemanni in 260 CE, Aventicum declined. The Roman army withdrew in 401, and by 450 the town was of little significance. Surviving remains include an amphitheatre which sat 6,000 and seems to have been extended to accommodate 16,000; a tower; a forum; baths; a theatre; insulae; and a 40 metre corinthian column. The local Roman museum, in a medieval tower built within the amphitheatre in the days before planning controls and when bishops were less constrained than now, at any rate so far as building was concerned, contains the usual range of artefacts together with mosaics and wall paintings. Its most spectacular item is a replica of a gilded bust of Marcus Aurelius, the original of which, unearthed in 1939, is now in the cantonal museum in Lausanne.

Not far away near Neuchatel is the 3 hectare museum complex Laténium, opened in 2001, which has at its centre comprehensive displays of artefacts and interpretive material from La Tène, the iron age 5th century BCE celtic settlement by the lake.

For Avenches, including photographs, see <http://www.avenches.ch/en/siteetmuseeromains>; and for the Association, <http://www.aventicum.org/index.php/fr/association-pro-aventico>.

Members who deplore Wikipedia will ignore <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aventicum>, but might find amusement in the Latin version at <https://la.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aventicum>

The area – Fribourg is only a few miles away - has much else of medieval gothic interest, and does not appear to lack places that manufacture or sell chocolate. A possibility for a future overseas visit once a meetings secretary is appointed?

Christine Martyn, 2015. *The Forest of Dean revisited: a modern history*

(Blakeney, Holborn House 2015). 356pp., 36figs. Cardcovers, £15.00. [ISBN: 9780992895938]

The title is appropriate, as the thread running through the book is the author's knowledge from her earlier stay in the Forest compared with today. It is both description and history, particularly of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the two themes intermixed. The author says in the charmingly-written Introduction 'It is incumbent on us, therefore, to record the changes that are happening all around us to inform future generations and perhaps prevent them from making the same mistakes that were made in the past'.

The first chapter deals with the framework of the Hundred of St Briavels and the archaeology that has revealed aspects of early settlement and exploitation of the resources of the area. Chapter two considers the reputation of the Forest's inhabitants for fierceness and law-breaking, chapters three and four review aspects of mining and iron working while chapter five has some interesting information on the rights of common, particularly for sheep. Chapter six brings together observations on gypsies and travellers, chapter seven discusses deer, boar and game particularly in recent times and chapter eight various aspects of the use of the timber. Chapters nine and ten take the towns and the villages and give snapshots of each of them in recent times with historical information referred to from place to place. Chapter eleven takes the Rivers Severn and Wye as its theme. Finally there is a chapter on recent customs and festivities, and the last chapter reviews the changes of the very recent past.

The structure appears from this resumé to be clear, but the writing is discursive, as in the discussion of the siege of Berwick (not indexed) pages 58-59 and the material is not in practice so clearly organised. The chronology is confused; intermingling of history and modern detail prevents the story appearing clearly.

The text is nonetheless very nicely written and the author knows the Forest well. Yet for this reader no sense of the topography of the Forest emerges. For example, there is no map of the contours of the Forest, and there is no coverage of subjects which might have been expected in such a volume, for example on buildings apart from some general comments. The text relies extensively on published material which is freely acknowledged, but provides a synthesis rather than containing any original research. The two maps, which would have been better placed near the beginning, are unacknowledged; the second is Fig 24 in the Victoria County History of Gloucestershire V.

Book Review cont'

The book does not appear to be a professional production. There is no table of contents or list of plates and no acknowledgements, though there is a bibliography. The layout is cramped on the page and the chapter headings are squeezed in above the text. The text of each chapter is continuous but cries out for some sub-headings to guide the reader – and perhaps the author, too. Yet there are footnotes. The print size and the quality of the paper are both good. There is an index of the main places and people.

Anthea Jones

Forthcoming events

BGAS Lectures Bristol Section

All meetings will be held in the Apostle Room in the basement of Clifton Cathedral, Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol at 7.45 p.m. £1 charged per visitor per meeting (full-time students FREE).

2016

Monday 26th September

Kings Weston: A forgotten history

David Martyn, Chair of Kings Weston Action Group

Kings Weston remains one of Bristol's least explored historic landscapes, but one with an extraordinary past. Misunderstood and overlooked for decades the estate has been long neglected, but new research from the Kings Weston Action Group aims to restore its lost fame and uncover forgotten features. This talk will explore the context and evolution of Bristol's "most important Eighteenth Century Building" and its parkland.

Monday 31st October

'The Growth of Victorian Clifton'.

Professor Peter Malpass

Professor Malpass will explain how most of Clifton was built in the Victorian period, on land belonging to four main owners. He will look at the different ways these landowners responded to the opportunities presented by rising demand from the burgeoning middle class and in the process created a residential suburb quite unlike anything previously seen in Bristol. He will outline the nature of the development process and identify some of the builders involved. He will also show how house designs changed over time, from the predominance of terraces to very large semi-detached and then smaller semi-detached as the market for really big houses moved further out of town.

Monday November 28th

'Crime in Gloucestershire in the long 18th century'

2017

Monday January 30th

'Marching unto War: Training Soldiers for the Great War on Salisbury Plain, an Archaeology'

Richard Osgood, Senior Archaeologist, Defence Infrastructure Organisation

The military has owned Salisbury Plain since 1897 and, as a result, has laid down its own legacy as the topmost part of the archaeological palimpsest. Carvings on trees, hospitals for horses and the trenches in which they trained for the Somme are just some of the components which survive. The Great War may have passed into history from living memory but traces survive across this landscape.

Monday February 27th

The Building of the Bristol General Hospital, 1853 – 2012

Peter Davenport MCIfA, FSA

"The Bristol General was founded as a charitable hospital in the 1830s. In 1853 work began on a new site by the Bathurst Basin and the hospital opened in 1858. This talk will outline an almost never-ending process of expansion and renewal, led by changes in medical practice, with barely a decade going by without new works, until closure in 2012".

Monday March 27th

"Bristol Poets and Anglican Englishness, 1791-1830

Mr Stuart Andrews, Hon. Librarian, Wells & Mendip Museum

Both Coleridge and Southey were Anglicans by christening, but in Bristol of the 1790s were committed Unitarians. Yet by 1830 each poet had written his own passionate defence of the Established Church. Meanwhile the near-pantheism of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" gave way to over 100 *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* and his unlikely boast that he "would give his life-blood for the Church of England." How did this happen?

The start-date of 1791 marks the completed rebuilding of both Christ Church, Broad Street (Southey's parish church) and Lewin's Mead Chapel - nominally Presbyterian but actually Unitarian. That's the closest I shall get to archaeology.