# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Patricia Theobald</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Chairman</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nick Howell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWSHAS Events, September 2012 – June 2013</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Janet Preshous, Mike Greene</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritherdon Day 2013 - A Celebration of Local History</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Patricia Theobald</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydham Church Shropshire: the East Window</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Norman Morris</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Independence and the Bishop’s Castle Connection</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Paul Buttle</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgesses Hill: Bishop’s Castle Common</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nick Harding</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Sin Eater</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Joe Hawkins</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleonic Prisoners of War: the Hetet Connection</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Janet Preshous</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking the Architect of Bishop’s Castle Town Hall</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Editor</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludlow Through Time</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champagne &amp; Shambles</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest Home</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in Progress 2012-2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWSHAS Research Group, <em>George Bangh</em></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydbury Field group, <em>Mike Greene</em></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCHRC, <em>Patricia Theobald</em></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWSHAS Website</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers &amp; Committee 2013</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Editorial

The wealth of history embodied in the towns and rural parishes of Shropshire is in many cases self-evident. But for the remainder our heritage and history lie waiting to be discovered. In Journal 24 the connecting strand of the articles is ownership and mystery.

The continued existence of the rural parish church is a testimony to the enduring strength of small communities. The Reverend Prebendary Norman Morris unfolds a story surrounding the restoration of the East window in Lydham Church. His article introduces the reader to a remarkable stained glass artist, his descendants, a dog, and a Victorian incumbent, his wife and children. The second article stems from the eighteenth century when the British Empire was expanding. However, ownership of the American Colonies was hotly contested on the field of battle and in law. The mystery surrounding the connection between two contemporary parliamentary representatives for Bishop’s Castle, Benjamin Franklin, American Independence and three paintings is persuasively discussed by Paul Buttle.

The Town Hall in Bishop’s Castle was built during the eighteenth century and continues to dominate the High Street. It is also a reminder of the long recorded history of governance here since 1573. The Christopher Train History Essay Prize (Adult Section) for 2013 was awarded for a third year to Dr. Nicholas Harding for his intriguing essay concerning the nineteenth century management of the land known as Burgess Hill. The apparent vagueness of the Town Clerk at that time together with lost documents and mismanagement sends ripples of mystery into the twentieth century and beyond. The Secondary School Section of the Christopher Train History Essay Prize was awarded to Joe Hawkins for his essay concerning the subject of the last Sin-Eater. He sets out what is known of this archaic practice and its last practitioner and proceeds to unravel the history of the man, known as Richard Munslow, who lived in the remote village of Ratlinghope.

Also included in this edition is a short piece about long-term research on a French Napoleonic prisoner of war who lived in Bishop’s Castle when it was a parole town; a profile of the building which houses Wolverhampton Archive and three book reviews: one about the Victorian estate of a ‘cotton king’, another of pictures of Ludlow Then and Now and a booklet about three farms in Clun.

I am always indebted to the authors, reviewers and contributors without whom this Journal would not exist. Lastly, my thanks to Janet Preshous for proof reading the final text and to Sarah Ellison at Enterprise House who has produced Journal 24 in its present form.

Patricia Theobald
From the Chairman

The last season started with an exhibition organised by David and Janet Preshous at the Bishops Castle Michaelmas Fair entitled ‘Going Places: Historical Transport and Travels in South West Shropshire’. David and Janet have decided to give these Michaelmas Exhibitions a rest for a while and after so many years nobody can blame them but it will be missed as their archive of local photographs is, I think, second to none. Perhaps they can be persuaded to have another exhibition in the future.

I believe the lectures this last year showed a greater variety than ever before. From Jill Burton's very interesting talk on the ‘Servants of Erddig’ to Fred Averis and the Corndon Singers entertaining us at Christmas with ‘A short history of Choral Music’, from Nick Mansfield’s lecture on the ‘20th Century Labour Movement in South Shropshire’ to Dr Henry Oakeley’s ‘History of why and how plants were and are used in Medicine’ and Dr Richard Moore talking on the ‘Origins of the Salop Infirmary’. It is always good to have a talk from Society Members and Nick Harding didn’t fail with his talk about ‘The Woodcote Album and Diaries of Lady Victoria Alexandrina Cotes’ which showed his talent for original research.

The programme came to end with a very well attended Ritherdon Day with talks about Rotten Boroughs by George Baugh and Looking back over 40 years by our president David Preshous. Over lunch there were walking Town Tours kindly given by the Town Guides and the highlight of the afternoon was a liberal recreation of a hustings from the 1820 General Election when all 4 candidates received the same number of votes.

The change in venue for the talks to the Church Barn seems to have been accepted although when the renovation of the Town Hall is completed it could well be a good space for meetings.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee who have worked hard this year especially to make the Ritherdon Day such a success. I will be retiring as Chairman at the AGM in November and will be making a general plea to the membership to join the committee and help to keep the Society running over the next few years.

Nick Howell
SWSHAS Events: September 2012 - June 2013.

Sept. 2012: The Annual SWSHAS Exhibition, ‘GOING PLACES – historical transport in S.W. Shropshire’ attracted 600 visitors over the Michaelmas Fair weekend. The displays covered the earliest trackways, turnpikes and toll-houses and the changeover from horses. The history of the Bishop’s Castle Railway was celebrated as well as local buses and their operators, in the heyday of outings before the advent of the private motor car – the exhibition brought back many memories.

Oct. 2012: 60 members, meeting in the Church Barn, Bishop’s Castle, heard Jill Burton give a fascinating talk about ‘The Servants of Erddig’. The house had been given to the National Trust by the last owner, complete with all fittings, fixtures, papers and records, including paintings and poems about the servants.

Nov. 2012: Following the AGM and a presentation to the retiring Treasurer, Nicholas Harding shared his research on ‘The Woodcote Album and Diaries of Lady Victoria Cotes’. There were unique early photographs of family members and the diaries showed connections between various old Shropshire families, and insights into their domestic life.

Dec. 2012: Chairman’s Evening. Dr. Howell had invited Fred Averis and The Corndon Singers to present ‘A Short History of Choral Music’. Mr. Averis introduced a skilfully-selected programme of sacred and secular musical items, delightfully sung by the Corndon Singers, to show how choral music had developed over the past Millennium. The audience was most appreciative, and seasonal refreshments were enjoyed by all.

Jan. 2013: Dr. Richard Moore, author of ‘Shropshire Doctors and Quacks’ gave an illustrated talk on ‘The Origins of the Salop Infirmary’. In the 18th century public subscriptions began to contribute to medical care for those who could not afford to pay for physicians or surgeons. Shrewsbury was one of the first to provide an Infirmary – at Broome Hall, which was later demolished and replaced by the Salop Infirmary near St. Mary’s Church – it became the Royal Salop Infirmary.

Feb. 2013: Dr. Henry Oakeley (whose ancestors lived for centuries at Oakeley near Bishop’s Castle) is a retired consultant psychiatrist as well as an expert on Orchids. He gave a scholarly talk with humorous asides on ‘Why and How Plants were and are used as Medicines’ describing their attributes, and relating amusing anecdotes about the beliefs and superstitions regarding herbal remedies as well as stern warnings about the dangers.
March 2013: Nick Mansfield’s illustrated talk on ‘The Labour Workforce Movement in S. Shropshire, 1900-1930’ proved most interesting, comparing his research in the huge estates of Norfolk and the smaller, more paternalistic estates of Shropshire. After the introduction of mechanisation, the growth of rural Unions (in which Shropshire played quite an important part) improved conditions, but many still saw volunteering at the start of World War I as an escape from poverty.

April 2013: SWSHAS held a Ritherdon Day, celebrating 40 years since the start of the Local History Research Group. David Preshous spoke of the growth of heritage awareness in the town since 1973 when the late Keith Ritherdon started a Research Group after the 400th anniversary celebrations of Bishop’s Castle’s Royal Charter. George Baugh described the growth and nature of Rotten and Pocket Boroughs. Visitors went on guided tours of the town before the showing of the first digitised version of the cine film of the Charter celebrations and the day concluded with a re-enactment of the infamous 1820 Bishop’s Castle Parliamentary Election, with Committee members taking the parts of the four candidates and the Bailiff.

June 2013: Following October’s talk by Jill Burton, the SWSHAS Summer Outing was to Erddig House. This talk gave a unique insight through the pictorial record of the servants who served the Yorke family since the eighteenth century. The record first appears as paintings and then from the mid-nineteenth century using photography. In addition to this the pictures, whether painted or photographic were accompanied by a poem on the individual portrayed: a tradition that continued until the death of Philip Yorke II. This record not only provides us with images of the staff but also identifies them. By identifying them, they become real people rather than the anonymous and faded images of old photographs. Because of the detailed records kept by the estate, the careers of many individuals can be followed within their service at Erddig.

The house and grounds of Erddig (pronounced Erthig) might have easily been lost due to the declining wealth of the Yorke family during the twentieth century. The effects of two World Wars, the decline in the coal on which the family’s wealth was based and subsequent nationalization and, ironically, serious subsidence due to undermining of the house by the colliery. This, with economic and social changes, led to a long decline of the house and grounds through neglect. Erddig was only saved when, on the death of Simon Yorke IV his brother, Philip Yorke III, inherited the estate. Seeing the hopeless state of the property, for which there was no money for maintenance or restoration, he eventually persuaded the National Trust to purchase the house and lands and
restore it for the nation. This he achieved in 1973 and was able to live there, in a modern flat provided by the Trust, until his death in 1978. He lived to see the house of his childhood restored and enjoyed by the public.

Erddig has two important aspects, first the record of the servants, mentioned above, and second, the contents. Because it was not subject to a sale of contents, as so many significant houses have been subjected, it has retained three hundred years of accumulated possessions, which represents in many respects the final wealth of the family forming a great asset for the Trust. The Edisbury family, who had the house built in 1683, sold it to John Mellor in 1716 due to bankruptcy. It was he, who filled it with much of the superb furnishings we see today. On the death of the childless Mellor, Simon Yorke I, his nephew, whom he had made his heir, inherited the estate in 1733.

The members of SWSHAS were able to enjoy the restored house and grounds enriched with the eighteenth century furniture with all the subsequent additions of the nineteenth century. The tour of the house was very much a study of two social classes of the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, who lived in a proximity and culture of respect that created, for a while, a family of the estate. The house provides insights to the private world of the Yorkes’ while allowing the functioning of the house to be experienced through the servants’ areas and accommodation. What was apparent was the high standard of accommodation the servants had, which included good pay for the time. Those in service at Erddig generally stayed until they were unable to serve, which is attested in the photographic and documentary evidence kept and preserved by the family.

The visit to Erddig was thoroughly enjoyed by those who came, and is strongly recommended to the members who have yet to visit it. The grounds of the house are a delight in the late spring and summer providing ample space to stroll, have a picnic or both.

Mike Greene
Ritherdon Day 2013:
A Celebration of Local History

On Saturday 6 April a full day of activity was provided for members of the Society and visitors. After the welcome and announcements by the Chairman (Nick Howell) our President (David Preshous) presented the Christopher Train History Essay prizes to the successful candidates: Nick Harding, (adult section) and Joe Hawkins (secondary school section)

The first lecture of the morning, ‘Local History in Bishop’s Castle - 40 years On’, was given by David Preshous, first chairman of the Society. He guided the audience on a tour of the development in interest and enthusiasm for local history over four decades which was accompanied by copious evocative illustrations; this demonstrated the speaker’s understanding and skill in presenting a topic which has steadily grown over many years. George Baugh (former editor of the Victoria County History of Shropshire and Secretary of the Shropshire Historical & Archaeological Society) delivered a stimulating lecture ‘Rotten Boroughs’ which provided a synopsis of the history of rotten boroughs which existed before political reform in 1832. He placed Bishop’s Castle into the context of other politically rotten boroughs leaving the audience to reflect upon election practices of those times.

During the lunch break tours of the town were conducted by Bishop’s Castle Town Tour Guides with transport available courtesy of Bishop’s Castle Dial-A-Ride. Additional attractions were also available in the foyer and main hall where displays were provided by SWSHAS, Lydbury Field Group, Bishop’s Castle Heritage Resource Centre and the Town Hall Restoration Project & Target 250.

In the afternoon there was a screening of the historic film of the Bishop’s Castle Charter Celebrations in 1973, which brought back memories of a week-long celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Elizabethan Charter in which the whole town was involved. After a short break, there followed a light-hearted, yet thoroughly researched, interpretation of the local Parliamentary election in 1820 by members of the society attired in early nineteenth-century costume. The election was conducted despite heckling from the audience, and order was maintained throughout - unlike the actual event. Votes were recorded in the manner of the times and the results announced by the town Bayliff. The event closed with a toast to the successful candidates and to South-West Shropshire Historical & Archaeological Society in 2013.

Patricia Theobald
The Candidates for Election with the Bayliff:
Edward Rogers (Maurice Young), William ‘Black Billy’ Holmes (Malcolm Redgrave), Bayliff John Wollaston (Nick Howells), Robert Knight (Norman Morris), Douglas Kinnaird (David Presbous)

Lydham Church Shropshire: the East Window

‘In honour of the Atonement and in thankful remembrance of their parents – Lydham’s East Window - a Memorial to a Victorian Rector and his wife from their children’

The Victorian Age was a period of furious change and restless development in every direction. The face of every landscape, rural as well as urban, even down to the humblest parish church, could well be transformed. Now more than a century later, we can more readily appreciate or not what the Victorians did for us! Churches, in particular, especially in south Shropshire and the Welsh Marches, bear the marks of Victorian ‘improvers’ They were once derided and criticized but now judgments are more circumspect; maybe on balance its a legacy we feel fortunate to have inherited.

In the OnnyCamlad group of parishes, north and west of Bishops Castle, all nine churches were decisively re-shaped and re-cast by Victorian Patrons, Parsons, and their Architects. Much of this work, however, after more than a century needs re-visiting and often repairing. So it came about that in 2010 at the Church of Holy Trinity, Lydham, near Bishop’s Castle, the stonework of the east window needed to be replaced. The Victorian stonework - a mudstone - had decayed and needed a complete re-build at the cost of £80,000. Ironically other windows, equally using mudstone, dating from mediaeval times, had lasted much better!
Most Clun Forest parishes have severely small populations - Lydham has only 150 parishioners - and even though Christmas and Harvest Festival might muster forty or so in the congregation, single figures are more the norm on Sundays. So it was quite a challenge to raise funds necessary to replace a Victorian East Window! Fortunately, English Heritage, Shropshire Historic Churches, and other grant-making bodies, as well as the congregation themselves, and other well-wishers, including a descendant of the former Patrons, Dr. Henry Oakeley, were able to raise substantial funds. Therefore the Church managed to meet the cost. Before going ahead, we did seek wider support from the community by holding a public meeting in the church. The alternative would have been closure of the Church. Happily wider support was forthcoming and the work, which took twelve months, was successfully completed by Recclesia, specialist restorers, in 2011 and today the East Window has been restored to its full Victorian glory.

We know the donors of the window from an
inscription in the right-hand corner where it states that the window had been put there ‘in honour of the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ & in thankful remembrance of Frederick Septimus Green Rector of this parish for 21 years & Arabella Elizabeth his wife; this window is dedicated by their three children AD 1904’. Rev. Frederic Septimus Green was Vicar of Lydham between 1870 and 1891 when he resided at ‘The Roveries’ Lydham. It was during his time that a major restoration of the Church - the nave rood being repaired - took place in 1885.

The Green’s children were evidently highly appreciative of their parents and also highly theologically literate. How many Vicarage children today would dedicate a Church East Window in honour of the Atonement and their parents? The East Window has three small upper lights, each filled with an angel, the lower pair holding a sun and a moon (possibly representing the Old and New Testaments) and one at the apex holding a gold disc with the legend ‘IHS’. The three lancet windows represent the scene at the Foot of the Cross in St John’s Gospel with the crucified Christ addressing the Beloved Disciple to his left to take his Mother into his home – the words ‘St Johannes discipulus dilectus’ (St John beloved disciple) – running alongside the figure, while the Virgin Mary on the other side is described as ‘Santa Maria Mater Dolorosa’ (Mary, Mother of Sorrow). See also Fig. 5.

Fig. 3: Interior view of window and altar (photo by Roger Turner)

It was acknowledged by the Lydham Church Architect, Andrew Arrol, in 2010 that the East Window glass was the work of Herbert Bryans 1856 – 1925 and was particularly fine – his trade mark ‘running dog’ can be spotted in the right-hand corner. But who was Herbert Bryans? It so happened that, by coincidence, during this period of rebuilding information about Herbert Bryans whose firm had actually created the Victorian stained glass used in the East Window came to light.

Remarkably, at this time, by chance, one of his descendants, Felicity Lampitt, and her husband, John, who had already extensively researched Herbert Bryan’s work, were seeking to confirm that the Lydham window was by Bryans. The date and running dog confirmed this so now light could be shed on a little-known area of Victorian church ‘improvement’, namely stained glass. Today in so many of our churches we see Victorian pews, choir stalls, organs, screens, altars and their furnishings and of course much stained glass, often given for commemorative purposes. Behind this
legacy lie the crafts and craftsmen. So extensive was Victorian church restoration - ‘improvement’ in so many areas - that it is not surprising to learn from the Lampitt’s researches that so far 350 Bryans’ windows have been recorded - Lydham being just one!

The story of Herbert Bryans tells us much about Victorian restorers and their skills. Herbert Bryans was born in 1856, the son of the Vicar of Tarvin near Chester, who had married Sophia Lonsdale, the youngest daughter of the Bishop of Lichfield. He was educated at Haileybury College and Pembroke College Oxford, but did not take a degree. As a young man he had spent ten years as a tea planter with his brother in India and on the way home through France, saw a vineyard for sale. He bought it and so produced wine for two years! Returning to England, he decided to train as a stained glass artist. For eight years he trained with the famous stained glass designer, G.E. Kempe and in 1895 set up his own studio at 38, Chester Terrace, Regents Park, London, moving to 12 Mornington Crescent, London in 1911. In 1890 he married Louisa, fourth daughter of the Rev. Richard Richardson of Capenhurst Hall, Cheshire. They had three children and James, the elder son, worked with him in his studio for a few years. Bryans was keen on the Perpendicular style and felt it should be adopted in all Gothic buildings. The Lampitts in their monograph about Herbert Bryans state that according to the Journal of the British Society of Master Glass Painters Vol.XV No.2, ‘Their aim was the preservation as far as possible of the technology of the best Medieval English period especially the 15th C. while finding their own expression of current thought.’ They also report ‘that he had a considerable knowledge of iconography with a sincere religious belief as in his address to the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society in 1910 he stated “But the Perpendicular style can, and I think should, be adopted in all Gothic buildings as a model for our work. ...It should not, of course, be slavishly copied, etc.”’ [1]

Over the years, Bryans created a successful team around him. It's likely Bryans got many commissions from his family as five were clergymen. The firm grew larger and by 1910 employed about twenty staff. It has been calculated that Bryans worked on some 200 churches and on over 400 windows; the largest window being an East Window at West Hartlepool with seven lights, each having 3 figures of saints. Commenting on the style of Bryans’ work, the Lampitts state that as Herbert Bryans was trained by C.E.Kempe, much of his work is similar in style to him. ‘The figures, whether single, as with prophets and saints, or part of scenes such as ‘The Adoration’ were realistically drawn with contemporary faces. Their garments were usually rich in colour and texture. The main characteristic of these windows is a great deal of detail and decoration of the garments. The backgrounds are partially or completely coloured and decorated and other areas filled with well defined architectural canopies. In the case of narrative scenes there is a lot of realistic scenery. It was stated that he based his work on English 15th century glass.’ They also add that ‘there are about 30 windows that are different in character, some with more stylised figures mainly on white glass with yellow staining. These have light backgrounds of quarries, the garments are less sumptuous they therefore let in a lot more light. It is possible that this due to the influence of Sir Ninian Comper’s work.’ [2]

As to subject matter, the Lampitts say ‘the largest numbers of subjects are saints,
standing in static poses. There are also considerable numbers of Crucifixions, either solitary, or with attendant figures usually, but not invariably, Mary and John, as at Lydham. Narrative scenes are mostly the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Adoration by the shepherds or the magi and the presentation in the temple, but there are a number of other biblical scenes and a few scenes representing events in the life of the saints.’ [3]

The Lampitts add that Herbert Bryans ‘was a bit of a humorist and loved making jokes and puns. On his tombstone at St. John’s Church, Charlton, near Shaftesbury in Dorset is his epitaph which he had composed himself:

Here lies my body which after sixty nine years left me on 30th April 1925. I was the youngest son of William who was the youngest son of William Bryans a merchant and Magistrate in Liverpool, and of Sophia who was the youngest daughter of John Lonsdale a Bishop of Lichfield. I married Louisa the youngest daughter of Richard Richardson of Capenhurst Hall, Chester. I was educated at Haileybury College and at Pembroke College Cambridge. For ten years I made tea in India, for two I made wine in France. For thirty stained glass windows in England and had puns all the time. I asked my dear wife to put up this stone and my beloved children to keep it tidy. May the Lord have mercy on my soul. Herbert William Bryans.’ [4]

Fig. 4: Bryans running dog logo

According to the Lampitts, ‘the Herbert Bryans logo of the greyhound or running dog, as shown above, normally appears in the bottom right hand corner of the memorial inscription in the window. It is in black, and the dog is running towards the left. In some cases the logo is placed in the picture, and is often hard to find among all the detail of the window. In a few cases the dog is yellow or white.’ [5]

The restoration of the East Window at Lydham in 2010-2011 was chiefly about replacing the actual stone work but unexpectedly uncovered a fascinating story about the work of one active Victorian Church Stained Glass designer and the appreciation the children of a Victorian Country Parson had for their father.

Norman Morris
References


Fig. 5: The East Window (Photo by David Preshous)
American Independence and the Bishop’s Castle Connection:

The representation of two of Bishop Castle's Members of Parliament in the depiction of significant moments in the life of Benjamin Franklin.

In the reign of King George III America was one of the British colonies. However, in 1773, as a protest against British taxes, militants destroyed shipments of tea in the ‘Boston Tea-Party’. Tensions mounted until a state of war existed between Great Britain and the American colonies. The American War of Independence began in 1775 and was swiftly followed in 1776 by the American Declaration of Independence. Ties of Allegiance to the British crown were severed. The war continued until 1783 when the negotiations led to the Treaty of Paris with recognition of the new United States of America and British acceptance of American Independence.

During the period of unrest and war leading to the Independence two British politicians - Andrew Wedderburn and Henry Strachey - became involved in shaping the future of America. Both of them were parliamentary representatives for Bishop’s Castle. This account discusses the paintings created from the negotiations and meetings together with the statesmen taking part. (Ed.)

Benjamin Franklin’s likeness has been depicted in many portraits and illustrations. In three depictions of him (certainty in one and almost certainty in the others) two separate Members of Parliament for Bishop’s Castle are also depicted - though it’s probably true that the three artists who created these images had no idea they were Members of Parliament for Bishop’s Castle - and had even less idea of what they actually looked like.
Wedderburn and Franklin
The earliest of these illustrations is an engraving made by Robert Whitechurch in 1859 which shows Franklin standing before Britain's privy council in 1774. It depicts what may have been the most uncomfortable moment in Franklin’s entire life. For an hour he listened to the chairman of the meeting, Alexander Wedderburn the country’s solicitor general, and at the time the Member of Parliament for Bishop’s Castle, demean and humiliate him before a crowd of English peers and other prominent persons who had gathered especially to watch the proceedings.

An involved, almost bizarre, sequence of events lay behind Franklin’s day of discomfiture - which was as follows: between 1757 and 1775 Franklin spent much of his time in England as a representative for New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Georgia, presenting various petitions and grievances they wished to be heard by Parliament and the King. In 1773 there seemingly came in to Franklin’s hands some letters that were sent in the 1760s to Thomas Whately, a leading British politician of the day, who had died the year before. The letter writers gave Whately their view of the political situation in America at the time. Amongst them was Thomas Hutchinson who became governor of Massachusetts in 1771. Hutchinson’s letters showed he believed in firmly curtailing the political power of the colonialists. Franklin sent the letters to political activists in America and although Franklin intended them for limited circulation they were published in a Boston newspaper in June 1773. This led to the Massachusetts’ Assembly petitioning for Hutchinson’s removal - a petition which Franklin himself had to present to the privy council in London.

In London the publication of the letters was regarded as an outrage and William Whately, the brother of Thomas Whately, accused an individual called John Temple of having made the letters public. This led to the two men fighting a duel in Hyde Park on the 11th of December 1773. Whately was injured but as neither man was satisfied with the outcome they planned to fight yet another duel. To prevent this occurring Franklin, through the press, let it be known that he was the person responsible for leaking the letters. This caused his reputation, which had hitherto been high in England, to plummet.

When he presented the Massachusetts’ petition on 29th January 1774 not only was it swiftly rejected but Franklin himself was subjected to a barrage of abuse from Wedderburn, who poured scorn on Franklin saying of him: ‘having hitherto...’
aspired to fame by his writings the fabrication of this iniquity will henceforth esteem it a libel to be called a man of letters.’ He advised those present, which included Burke, Bentham and Priestly, to lock up their desks if Franklin was anywhere near. Through it all Franklin stood stock still never uttering a word. He left for America three months afterwards a committed supporter of American Independence whereas before his public drubbing he had been in favour of the colonies retaining their links with the crown.

Strachey and Franklin
It was as a champion of American independence that Franklin met another Member of Parliament for Bishop’s Castle - Henry Strachey, Wedderburn’s successor. This time the meeting took place in America. Though Strachey was for almost forty years a Member of Parliament, for four different boroughs, he was more of a civil service mandarin that a politician. He began his working life as a clerk in the War Office (presumably quite a high grade clerk) and was recruited by Lord Clive to be his private secretary when Clive went out to India. Not only did this make Strachey a rich man it gained for him Clive’s support which ensured him a place in Parliament when he returned to England - first for Pontefract in 1768 and then Bishop’s Castle in 1774. 

Peace in America
In May 1776 he was appointed secretary to Lord Howe when Howe was given the task of seeking a peace settlement with the American colonies. At first Strachey was reluctant to take this position but persistent overtures from the prime minister, Lord North, and the offer of a generous pension for taking on the job persuaded him to accept. Howe and Strachey arrived in New York on July 12, 1776, eight days after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and almost immediately began attempts to negotiate a settlement. On the 11th September 1776 Howe met with John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge on
Staten Island for discussions which lasted three hours. Strachey took notes of what was said. The talks of course failed and the American delegates left on the same day as they had arrived.

**The Painting, an Article and Some Papers**

This meeting is the subject of a painting (see above) by Alonzo Chappel, an American artist of patriotic subjects who lived from 1828 - 1887. In Chappel’s depiction Franklin, Adams and Rutledge are stood together facing a bewigged, finely dressed Admiral Howe. Behind Howe is a seated pensive figure intensely studying something lying on the table before him. If the seated figure is meant to be anyone it has to be Strachey who minuted the meeting - but did Chapel intend it to be Strachey? It is probable that he did for there is good circumstantial evidence to believe the details of Strachey minutes, or the fact he had made any at all, did not come to light until the late 1850s. It was that disclosure which prompted Chappel to paint this picture. The evidence is as follows:

According to an article which appeared in the New York Times on the 12th November, 1860: *In the Winter of 1857-8, a stranger called upon Mr. Moore (the librarian) of the New-York Historical Society, and offered him several documents relative to the history of the War of Independence*.  

There can be little doubt that the stranger was John Gregory who was the son of a housekeeper in the employ of the second Sir Henry Strachey (the son of Henry Strachey who minuted the Staten island meeting). Through ‘undue means’, as the 3rd baronet described it,[1] Gregory ‘carried off many of the Strachey papers to America and sold them in the late 1850s’. [2] One of the persons he called upon to do so was clearly George Moore. Moore was particularly interested in a document which appeared to prove the treachery of Major General Charles Lee, who was George Washington’s second in command. This he purchased. He appears also to have bought other documents from Gregory at the same time. It is clear that Gregory intended to offer those papers which he did not buy, to other potential buyers. [3]
On the 4th June 1861 at a meeting of the New York Historical Society Moore read extracts from the notes Henry Strachey had taken of the Staten Island conference - the notes then being in his possession. But when did Moore acquire them? It seems highly likely the notes were in Gregory’s possession when he offered to sell him Lee’s letter. But did Moore buy Strachey’s notes at the same time as he bought Lee’s letter, or was it later? Or, did he purchase them from someone who had bought them from Gregory a year or two before. Whenever George Moore acquired the notes there seems little doubt they were in circulation in New York prior to 1860.

Amongst New Yorkers with a strong curiosity about the country’s history these papers would have aroused much interest. Chappel was a New Yorker whose work focused heavily, if not exclusively, on his country’s history. Chappel’s painting was exhibited in the National Academy of Design’s annual exhibition of 1860 which opened on 2nd April which indicates it was probably painted some twelve months prior to that date - in fact soon after the Strachey notes must have passed into American hands.

It is feasible to believe, therefore, that the disclosure of the notes was the catalyst which caused Chappel to paint his picture. In which case the seated figure has to be seen not as some idle construct of Chappel’s imagination but an intended representation the man whose notes had inspired the painting’s conception. To add weight to this belief is the scene Chappel depicts through the window next to which is the seated figure of Strachey. Just discernible is a small rowing boat drawn up on the water’s edge which is perhaps meant to reflect the opening lines of Strachey’s account: ‘Lord Howe received the Gentlemen - the American delegation - on the Beach.’

The house in which the conference took place is now a museum known as Conference House. On the museum's web site there is a photograph of the room in which Howe met the American delegation. In many ways, it does resemble the room featured in Chappel’s painting. If Chappel did view this room in order to give his work some authenticity he also used some artistic licence. An ‘online blogger’, who visited the room records his disappointment at finding that the window Chappel depicts in his painting lacks any view of the sea.

Though opportunities for peace negotiations became less frequent after the Staten Island meeting Strachey spent a further two years in North America for part of which period he kept a diary entitled ‘An insignificant Journal of Insignificant Events.’ When Howe resigned his office Strachey returned to England. Though his time in America lasted little more than two years (during which time he was supposedly representing Bishop’s Castle in parliament) it brought him, at the age of 42, a pension of £587 a year for the rest of his life.
Six years after the Staten Island Peace Conference Strachey met with Franklin again, this time in Paris, as one of Britain’s chief negotiators in talks which led to Britain recognising America’s independence. During these negotiations he helped to settle the boundary between Canada and the United States and fishing rights between Britain and America. (Fishing rights may seem an obscure issue but the peace settlement could well have foundered had it not been resolved and Strachey appears to have been the person responsible for its settlement). John Adams, in his diary, called Strachey ‘as artful and insinuating a Man as they could send. He pushed and presses every Point as far as it can possible go.’ His diary entry on this occasion makes the Freudian slip of calling Strachey ‘Stretchy’ - he usually spelt it as ‘Stratchey’.

The negotiations led to a Preliminary Articles of Peace being signed in Paris on November 30th 1782. There is a painting of this event as conceived by a German artist called Carl Wilhelm Anton Seiler who lived from 1846 to 1921. The date when the original painting was executed has not been discovered but an engraving of the painting held by America’s Library of Congress is dated 1905.

![Painting of the preliminary treaty meeting by Seiler](image)

Seiler’s painting shows the faces of the American signatories, John Jay, Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, and features three other figures whose faces can’t be seen but are no doubt meant to be members of the British delegation - but who are they?
An Australian biographer, Andrew Tink, has recently reproduced this illustration in his biography of Lord Sydney and has identified the British figures as being, ‘though not individually identifiable’, Richard Oswald, Henry Strachey and Alleyne Fitzherbert. Only Oswald signed the treaty. Andrew Tink explained how he reached his conclusion:

‘Although Henry Strachey and Alleyne Fitzherbert did not sign, they were the powers behind the scenes on the British side. Home Secretary Tommy Townsend, as Lord Sydney then was, had handpicked Strachey to go to Paris to stiffen up the lead British negotiator, Richard Oswald, who Townsend believed was being too soft with the Americans. And Fitzherbert, also well known to Townsend, but who represented Foreign Secretary Grantham, did likewise..... Indeed I think Strachey was so important that I have a chapter in my book entitled ‘Strachey strikes the peace with America’. The key issue for Townsend and Strachey was the fate of the loyalists, those Americans who had fought for George III. And when the American negotiators refused to guarantee their safety, Townsend instructed Strachey to obtain a place of refuge for them under the British crown by pushing for a boundary between the US and what is now Canada through the Great Lakes rather than further north as the American Congress had demanded. As a result, Toronto is a Canadian city not an American one. In all this, Oswald was little more than a bystander, even though he later signed the preliminary articles.’

This author has no doubt that the conclusions of Andrew Tink are correct. Moreover, John Adam’s diary strongly implies Strachey and Fitzherbert would be present when the treaty was signed - it would be very odd had they not been.

The painting has other puzzles - besides knowing conclusively who Seiler meant to feature. Why does it not include Henry Laurens? Laurens also signed the treaty as a member of the American delegation - why is he absent? Andrew Tink thinks it is because he played a minor part in the negotiations that led up to the signing having arrived in Paris only the day before. However, one wonders if the painting is meant properly to illustrate an occasion a few days before the signing when the six men held discussions together - before Laurens arrived - rather than the actual signing.

Speculating on the nature of the historical account on which this painting is based raises the biggest puzzle of all: what spurred a German artist to create a painting which had nothing at all to do with the history of his own country? What prompted him? In trying to locate the whereabouts of the original painting, and failing it was discovered that Seiler had a fondness for conceiving figures in eighteenth century settings. His painting of the ‘Signing of the Preliminary Treaty of Peace’, however, is the only one that appears to been inspired by a real event.
However it can be said with a degree of certainty that Seiler's painting depicts Strachey, but which figure Strachey is meant to be cannot be confirmed - perhaps Seiler didn't know either.

Paul Buttle

ENDNOTES

[1] The words ‘undue means’ come from the following passage in ‘Collections of the New York Historical Society for the year 1872.’

In order to put on record, not only a proof of the authenticity of this important document (relating to Charles Lee) but the fact that the MSS. of which it was one were neither disposed of by the honoured family from whose archives they were taken, nor obtained in any improper manner by their present possessor, we are authorized to print the following statement by Sir Edward Strachey, Bart., with reference to such of these papers as have come into the possession of Mr. Moore:

'These Papers were obtained by undue means from Sutton Court, but having fallen into honourable hands, the retention of them is sanctioned by the present representative of the Strachey family.'

E. Strachey.

Sutton Court,
15 June, 1860.

[2] The second quote in this paragraph comes from a footnote in ‘The Strachey family 1588-1932: their writings and literary associations’ by Charles Richard Sanders, page 76. On page 67 Sanders specifically states that Gregory sold documents that Moore is known to have bought, not to Moore but to the New York State Historical Society. Clearly Sanders should have written: ‘to the librarian of the New York Historical Society’, as Moore bought the papers for himself not the society – though it seems the documents were eventually acquired by the society. Sanders appears to have misunderstood this point just as he misunderstood the proper name of the society.


[4] A brief report of this meeting is given in ‘The Historical Magazine’ Volume 5, p. 214 (July edition.)

[5] Two statements I've come upon suggest Gregory may have returned to England to bring another bundle of papers back with him to America after selling Lee’s letter to Moore. Firstly in a talk Moore gave to the Historical Society in June, 1858, concerning the Lee papers to the society he had acquired, More spoke of expecting ‘additional materials of great importance’ from England (‘The Treason of Charles Lee’ by George H. Moore p.vii). This may have been a reference to Gregory.

Secondly the New York Times article of November, 1860 explained that the Lee papers had ‘found their way to the United States by one of those accidents to which all private collections are exposed in passing through the hands of heirs and legatees, not always sufficiently interested in them to watch over their preservation.’ This statement appears to be an elliptical reference to the death of the second Henry Strachey in April, 1858 - yet the Lee papers the article says were acquired in the winter of 1857/8. Was this observation, therefore, properly a reference to a subsequent bundle of papers Moore acquired later in 1858 - a new batch Gregory had been able to lay his hands on subsequent to the death of the second Henry Strachey?

Warren’s account of the conference is the only account I’ve come across, published prior to Parton’s biography, which acknowledges Strachey was present - information she appears to have acquired by interviewing either Franklin, Adams or Rutledge, but she does not specify whom. Her account, however, fails to mention that Strachey took minutes of the discussion.

[7] It was listed in the catalogue as ‘The Committee of Conference with Lord Howe’ with the description ‘Sept. 6 1776. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge, were appointed by Congress to confer with Lord Howe, at ‘Staten Island,’ to adjust the Colonial difficulties.’ There appears to be two mistakes in this listing - the date is incorrect and it surely should have been ‘The Committee of Congress in Conference with Lord Howe.’ If the title was foreshortened it is perhaps not surprising that Strachey’s name was omitted - it was in any case quite unusual for any description to be included in the catalogue. (Information supplied by Marshall N. Price Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art National Academy Museum via e-mail.)

[8] If Chappel had based his painting on the account of the meeting as given by the American delegation as it is printed the Journals of the Continental Congress it is unlikely he would have included a fifth figure in the painting since nobody is described as ‘minute taker’ for the meeting on either side.

Main sources:
The History of Parliament, which is now online at http://www.historyofparliamtonline.org
The Victoria County History of Shropshire
Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society
Other sources include the internet and Google book search

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
A number of people in New York Institutions and other places were astonishingly helpful in responding to my requests for information. However, I should acknowledge the particular help Mr C. Schopieray, Assistant Curator of Manuscripts, William L. Clements Library, Michigan, and the assistance of Mr. Andrew Tink in Australia.
Burgesses Hill: Bishop's Castle Common

Christopher Train Prize Essay 2013, Adult Section Winner, Nicholas Harding

Bishop’s Castle was one of more than 100 boroughs left unreformed by the Municipal Corporations Act 1835. In 1876 a Royal Commission, with six members, was appointed to inquire especially into the criminal jurisdiction, and also into the revenues of unreformed corporations. The six commissioners included Sir J. B. Karslake QC, a former Solicitor General, who played an active role in the inquiry at Bishop’s Castle. The Commission identified 75 towns with corporations still functioning, and recommended that 26 of them, including Bishop’s Castle, should be reformed, the others being abolished. The recommendations were incorporated in the Municipal Corporations Act 1883 and Bishop’s Castle gained a new charter in 1885.

In 1877 Mr. Thomas Griffiths, Town Clerk of Bishop's Castle, was asked: ‘Are there any privileges attached to freedom?’ He answered: ‘Only the Burgesses Hill, it is called Moat Hill or Burgesses Hill.’

Mr. Griffiths was testifying before the Municipal Corporations Commission presided over by Sir John Karslake QC [1]. The Town Clerk was examined at length on the arrangements the town burgesses had with regard to Burgesses Hill. Five years later, recommendations of the commission were incorporated into the Municipal Corporations Act 1882.

Burgesses Hill was the historic common land of the town encompassing around 125 acres [2] of the northern slope of the hill bounded by the Kerry Ridgeway between Banks Head in the east and the Montgomeryshire border in the west and as far as the lane leading to Burnt House (Fig.1). In the 17th century the common was called Burgess Common and was said ‘to adjoyne to a great Waste’ [4].

Today the hill is commonly referred to as Moat Hill and its extension into Wales, Aston Hill.

As we will see a small portion of the common did spill over to the southern side of the ridgeway.

Fig. 1 Former Bishop’s Castle Common: dark outline [3] © Crown copyright
On August 17th, 1745 the town burgesses agreed to the enclosure of the common as recorded in the town minute book:

At a Common Hall held at the Guildhall of the said Borough the seventeenth day of August in the year of Our Lord 1745 pursuant to the order written in this Book dated the twentieth day of July last past It is ordered and agreed upon by the major number of all the Burgesses of this Borough then and there assembled that the wast or Common belonging to the Burgesses of this Borough shall (or as soon as conveniently may be) be inclosed and ploughed up and that each Burgess inhabiting within this Borough shall have an equal part thereof.

Seventeen signatures are attached including that of Thomas Morris the town clerk.

By the time that the Borough Tithe map was produced, in conformity with the provisions of the Tithe Commutation Act 1836, most of the hill appears to have been enclosed (Fig.2). During the 1877 enquiry, Sir John Karslake asked the town clerk ‘It [Burgesses Hill] was an open Common in the days of the former [1835] report?’ Mr. Griffiths replied ‘Yes.’ When next asked ‘But it has been enclosed?’ he also replied ‘Yes.’

Fig. 2 Moat Hill portion of the Bishop’s Castle Borough Tithe map of 1843 [6]
If Mr. Griffiths's testimony is to be believed, then the inclosure and division stipulated in 1745 did not occur until almost a century later. The 1745 agreement stipulated that all the burgesses were to share equally in the division; the 1877 testimony of the town clerk seems to suggest that this did not take place:

Q: What privileges have the freeman upon it, if it is enclosed?
A: The Corporation put a rent upon it.
Q: Is that rent divided amongst them?
A: No, it is appropriated to public purposes.
Q: What privileges have they upon it?
A: None now.
Q: They formerly had a right of pasturage?
A: An exclusive right of pasturage.

Common land that was enclosed by a burgess was then let by the Corporation.

Q: What are the terms of the lease?
A: 60 years upon payment of a rent of 5s an acre, and if any burgess encloses more than an acre he shall pay 7s 6d.

These conditions were stipulated by a majority of the Capital Burgesses at a Common Hall held in the Guild Hall on 12 January 1850 [7]. It was further agreed that an annual rent of 2s 6d be imposed for each cottage erected on the land. It would seem that this agreement was precipitated by legal proceedings authorized in 1849 against several individuals occupying properties on Moat Hill.

Sir John Karslake asked if the lease was renewable for ever. Mr. Griffiths replied yes.

Q: So to what ever amount the acre of land may increase in value the burgess is still to have it at 5s an acre?
A: I do not think it will ever increase in value, it is common and does not possess much advantage, it was only a Sheep walk before.

Griffiths stated that between 15 and 20 leases had been granted which could be sold on to other burgesses.

Q: You are a burgess are you not?
A: Yes
Q: Have you any of the land?
A: Yes a good deal. I have purchased it from the Burgesses who have held leases.
Q: How many acres do you hold yourself?
A: Probably from 35 to 40.
Q: Out of what acreage?
A: 90 to 100 acres I should think.

He went on to say that the consideration he paid for the leases would be up to £50, if he thought the land was worth it. The total amount of rent for his leases was £11 10s 1d.

The tithe map (Fig.2) clearly shows a narrow strip of common land lying along side the southern side of the Kerry Ridgeway up to Banks Head. At some time thereafter, this strip was incorporated into adjoining land as can be seen on the modern map (Fig.3). It turns out that this land was expropriated by none other than Lord Powis!

![Fig 3 Southern Common strip © Crown copyright](image)

When questioned about this, Mr. Griffiths said:

_A: The main turnpike road [the Kerry Ridgeway] went over the hill and the land which Lord Powis has taken in, stands between the turnpike road, and his own ancient freehold._

_Q: How is it that he has taken it?_

_A: He has taken it. I do not know how it is that the corporation have been so indifferent; he was always a very good member, and I think that he ought to pay as well as other people._

_Q: According to your view Lord Powis being a favoured member of the corporation and having shown kindness to the corporation took in several acres of the land lying between his inclosures and the road, which you have no doubt whatever was corporation property?_

_A: I have not the slightest doubt of it._
It is clear in reading Mr. Griffiths’s responses to a number of questions put to him that he lacked detailed knowledge of the history of some of the leased properties.

**Q:** How many acres had Mr William Bowen which are supposed to have been encroached from the common?
**A:** I can hardly say, but not many. I know that he has inclosed a portion, but I am unable to say what.

**Q:** Can you say what that £10 odd [Mr Bowen's rent] represents in acreage?
**A:** Indeed I can not; there has never been any map made of these inclosures.

**Q:** We wish to know the terms of the lease to Mr William Bowen how many acres there are and at what rent?
**A:** That I cannot find out.

Poor record keeping - records not kept, misplaced or destroyed - has continued into recent times, and has made it difficult to follow the history of many of the holdings on Moat Hill. To this day there are leases not known and rents not collected. In 2011 the town’s solicitors turned over to the town clerk a file containing the Moat Hill legal archives, marked Moat Hill Leases Notes. Contained within the file are typescript copies of three leases from 1851, 1852 and 1881; a much altered 3 page list of town holdings: Schedule of Lands on Moat Hill property of the Corporation of Bishop’s Castle and 30 or so other documents many of which are no more than rough notes on scraps of paper.

The list of holdings gives two map reference numbers (one from the Map of Moat Hill and the other the corresponding Ordnance Map number), the name of the lessee or tenant, name of occupier, acreage, description of the tenure and the date of the original lease. An example is shown in Fig.4. The date the list was compiled is not given, but, from the handwriting, seems to be some time in the 1880s. The Map of Moat Hill has not been found.

![Fig 4 Part of Schedule of Lands on Moat Hill](image)
The map reference numbers in the second column can be found on the 1903 edition of the Ordnance Survey map (Fig 5).

![Fig 5 1903 Ordnance Survey map of south western portion of Moat Hill](image)

The *Moat Hill Leases Notes* file, referred to above, contains instructions dated July 1958 from Frank Lavender the then Town clerk: *Notes for future Corporation Solicitor*. In these notes, Lavender explains:

> Leasehold properties on Moat Hill held for leases of 2000 years subject to a rent to the Corporation.  
> See endorsements on the Leases and see Leasehold register and Town Clerk’s Rent Book.

The register and rent book cannot be found. Also, Lavender refers to the *Corporation Estate Deed Box*; this was held at the local branch of the HSBC bank and has been found to contain no deeds.

In the Town archives, kept at the Bishop's Castle Heritage Resource Centre (BCHRC), there is a small exercise book entitled *Extracts from Corporation Book as to the granting of Leases and other special matters adopted at Common Hall and by the major part of 15 Capital Burgess*. The earliest entry is dated 4 November 1743 and the last 26 March 1881. This undated and anonymous work seems to list all of the leases approved by the Town in that time period, as recorded in the Town's minute books. A summary of the Moat Hill leases appears in the following table:
It would seem that the flurry of lease granting occurring in the early 1850s was a direct result of the actions of the Common Hall of 12 January 1850 (see page 3). Details of the individual holdings would have been included in the lease documents. One surviving typescript copy of T. J. Griffithes’s lease [8] shows that the 12 July 1851 lease agreement was for three parcels of land: one of three pieces totalling 1a 1r 35p; one of two pieces, including a cottage, totalling 2r 3p

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LEASE HOLDER</th>
<th>ACREAGE</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 June 1850</td>
<td>Richard Beddoes</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Home</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward Nicholas</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Griffiths</td>
<td>2a 0r 4p</td>
<td>OS 506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 December 1850</td>
<td>Edward Sayce</td>
<td>4a 0r 32p</td>
<td>1 dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 July 1851</td>
<td>Thomas Jones Griffiths</td>
<td>2a 2r 22p</td>
<td>2 dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Beddoes</td>
<td>7a 0r 0p</td>
<td>1 dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward Nicholas</td>
<td>3a 3r 6p</td>
<td>1 dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward Griffiths</td>
<td>2a 1r 30p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Griffiths</td>
<td>3a 2r 10p</td>
<td>3 pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 January 1852</td>
<td>Levi Home</td>
<td>11a 0r 0p</td>
<td>2 dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Bluck</td>
<td>7a 3r 35p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Beddoes</td>
<td>2a 2r 11p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward Bright</td>
<td>1a 2r 1p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Griffiths</td>
<td>5a 1r 30p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 September 1852</td>
<td>William Bowen</td>
<td>4a 2r 7p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Bird</td>
<td>2a 1r 14p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October 1852</td>
<td>Thomas Nicholas</td>
<td>2a 0r 0p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edward Richards</td>
<td>1a 1r 16p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Griffiths</td>
<td>0a 3r 27p</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 October 1854</td>
<td>John Home</td>
<td>2a 1r 27p</td>
<td>3 pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 March 1881</td>
<td>T. J. Griffiths</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>70a 2r 32p</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

acres, roods & perches  

\[4r = 1a, 40p = 1r\]
and lastly, another pair totalling 2r 22p. There is a small (2p) discrepancy in the total and the one given in the table above. The six pieces were numbered respectively 551(OS 142), 553(OS 140), 608(OS 115), 609(OS 115), 619(OS 107), 620(OS 106) and 631 (OS 40). (The correspondence between the two map numbers was found in Schedule of Lands on Moat Hill property of the Corporation of Bishop’s Castle (see page 5).)

The action of 26 March 1881, also has a corresponding surviving typescript copy lease. This document [9], dated 16 July 1881, grants T. J. Griffiths a lease to pieces of Moat Hill, 9a 0r 25p in total, which he had acquired at various times since 1850 from burgesses who were not in possession of a lease.

Several years ago, volunteers at the BCHRC were instrumental in preserving a copy of the 1903 25-inch second edition OS map showing the owner's name associated with the leased land (washed in a light blue colour) (Fig 6).

Fig 6 BCHRC’s rescued 1903 map
Land numbered 136 is coloured brown which seems to indicate freehold land. The map is in extremely poor condition and was about to be thrown away before its rescue by BCHRC. The handwriting seems to be the same as the later handwriting on the list (Fig 4) and would then date it to no earlier than the 1920s.

The *Law of Property Act 1922* did away with perpetually renewable leases, replacing them with ones with a term of 2000 years. The fine of 5s for renewing the lease was then replaced by an annual rent of 1s. Over time some of the lease holders, but not all, bought the freehold from the Corporation. For example, John Trow, in 1924, was granted a perpetual 60 year lease to lands on the NW boundary of Moat Hill (OS numbers 6 & 38 – see Fig 7) at an annual rent of £4 [10]. In 1926 this was converted to a 2000 year lease, and in 1963 was conveyed by the Corporation to Mr Trow & his wife for the sum of £121.10.0. (The *Town And Country Act 1959* allowed for the disposition of public lands subject to certain conditions and restrictions.) Two adjacent pieces of land (OS numbers 4 & 39 – see Fig 7) were leased to Richard Morgan, on the same day in 1924 as the above, for the consideration of £1.5s [11]. Conversion to a 2000 year term took place also in 1926. In this case it seems that the freehold was not purchased and is therefore still subject to a rent of £1.5s plus the addition 1s.

![Fig 7 Trow & Morgan pieces at Upper Beech](image)

In 1881 Richard Morgan's land had been held by Thomas Jones Griffithes [12]. Mr. Griffithes was a major holder of Moat Hill Leases and came to the attention of the Commission in 1877.

**Q:** The largest sum of all in the amounts of rent is your own namely £11.10s.1d. and then there is another Mr. Griffiths namely Mr. T. J. Griffiths, £5.13.6, is that a relation of yours?

**A:** No he is no relation. You will observe that the name is spelt differently – it is Griffithes.
Mr. Griffithes held leases for two pieces in the SW corner of Moat Hill (OS numbers 140 & 142 – see Fig 8). These too have been passed down without the benefit of freehold conversion.

Thomas Jones Griffithes managed the extensive local Botfield estates and died in 1884 aged 81. The lynch-gate at the parish church of St. John the Baptist was erected in 1894 by the Griffithes family in memory of Thomas and his wife Mary Elizabeth Griffithes.

Opposite fields 140 & 142 is Moat Hill Cottage (OS number 143) behind which are the premises of D&G Car Repairs (Fig 9).
Notice the roadway adjacent to fields 146 & 147 (Fig 8) joining up with the Kerry Ridgeway, today serving as a drive way (in foreground of Fig 9). At one time this was the northern end of Kerry Lane. An indenture dated 25 March 1850 describes the cottage as

\[
\ldots \text{belonging and adjoining situate on the side of the road leading from Bishop's Castle to Newtown called Kerry Lane in the parish of Bishop's Castle aforesaid and lately and for some years past used as a Toll House and known as the Kerry Lane Toll House and there in the occupation of the said trustees or commissioners or their collectors} \ldots [13]
\]

Directly across from old Kerry Lane is a short access roadway numbered 141 on the OS map (Fig 8). No reference to leases of this piece have been found, and presumably it is one of the only remaining pieces of Bishop's Castle Common. The footpath across Aston Hill is part of this roadway. To the east of the Toll House lies a quarry (151) and a strange irregular shaped piece (152) around the back and side of the quarry. As recently as 1938 it was in the hands of the Morris family. In recent times the quarry has served as a BC Council rubbish tip.

The Woodbatch Township tithe map of 1841 (Fig 10) shows both the old and new ends of Kerry Lane. A new triangular plantation is formed and a series of narrow fields created on the north side of the ridgeway from a point opposite the old Kerry Lane up to Bishop's Moat. The Welsh border follows the back hedges of these fields then the west hedge of *Little Piece* (OS 118) and crosses the ridgeway at the NE corner of the lane adjacent to Moat Farm. A house had been built on one of the new enclosures. Local folklore has it that the space occupied by the new narrow fields was formerly used by Welsh drovers to avoid the Kerry Lane toll!

![Fig 10 Northern portion of Woodbatch Township: Tithe map of 1841 [14]](image)

Nick Harding
Notes and References


2. Estimate based upon acreage given in *The Schedule of Lands on Moat Hill property of the Corporation of Bishop's Castle*.

3. Based upon OS Explorer map 216.


6. Based upon the Tithe Map: Bishop's Castle Parish 1843. Shropshire Archives.


9. *ibid.*

10. Abstract of the Title of Mr. John and Mrs. Margaret Jane Trow to land at Banks Head and Upper Beach Bishop's Castle. Author's deeds

11. Indenture of 2 September 1924 between the Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Bishop's Castle and Richard Morgan of Cwmago, Moat Hill, Bishop's Castle. Author's deeds.


Note: a copy of the Municipal Corporations Commission Report for Bishop’s Castle is available at BCHRC [1835, vol 4, p 2589] also a copy of the transcribed Corporation leases. *(Ed)*
Shropshire, our rural and idyllic county, harbours a barely known piece of history, much darker and mysterious than the usual soft and rolling beauty around us. This ritual of sin eating is said to have been practiced in parts of England and Scotland, and allegedly survived until the late 19th or early 20th century in Wales and the adjoining Welsh Marches of Shropshire and Herefordshire. Traditionally it was performed by a beggar and certain villages even maintained their own sin-eaters. They would be brought to the dead person’s bedside on demand to eat and drink over the corpse in the belief that this would absorb the sins of the deceased.

In the study of folklore, sin eating is considered a form of religious magic. Sin-eaters were generally poor people in need of a meal, not to mention an alcoholic drink. Believers thought the sin-eater taking on the sins of a person who died suddenly without confessing their sins would allow the deceased’s soul to go to heaven in peace. The theory was all the sins of the corpse had been transferred through the food and drink into the sin-eater.

Abhorred by the superstitious villagers as a thing unclean, the sin-eater cut himself off from all social intercourse with his fellow creatures by reason of the life he had chosen. He lived as a rule in a remote place by himself, and those who chanced to meet him avoided him as they would a leper. This unfortunate soul was held to be the associate of evil spirits, and given to witchcraft, incantations and unholy practices. Only when a death took place did they seek him out, and when his purpose was accomplished they burned the wooden bowl and platter from which he had eaten the food handed across or placed on the corpse for his consumption.

This description was recovered from a diary of the late 1800s: ‘The corpse being taken out of the house, and laid on a bier, a loaf of bread was given to the sin-eater over the corpse, also a bowl of maple, full of beer. These consumed, a fee of sixpence was given him for the consideration of his taking upon himself the sins of the deceased, who, thus freed, would not walk after death.’ By making a short speech at the graveside, the sin-eaters took upon themselves the sins of the deceased – ‘I give easement and rest now to thee, dear man. Come not down the lanes or in our meadows. And for thy peace I pawn my own soul. Amen.

And for thy peace I pawn my own soul!
The tradition of sin-eating in Shropshire is recorded in the county’s most proclaimed novel. Precious Bane, first published in July 1924, was Mary Webb’s
fifth and last completed novel in a literary career cut short by her death at forty-six. One of the outstandingly successful novels of the century, its main character the seventeen-year-old Gideon - already ruthlessly ambitious for wealth and power - becomes his father's sin-eater. He takes on the dead man's sins in return for his mother's promise of 'the farm and all' and, ignoring the superstition that sin-eaters are cursed, is irretrievably doomed.

The ritual is an interesting piece of history, but how does a sin-eater know what to confess to on his deathbed having consumed the unknown sins of others? Perhaps because most were beggars, they were simply ready to sacrifice an afterlife in heaven for some food and beer in the here and now. But Richard Munslow, of Ratlinghope, Shropshire, Britain's last recorded sin-eater, was not a beggar. We can be pretty certain of that just by the grandeur of his gravestone. So how did he ever become a sin-eater? And the last in Britain at that.

**Why did Richard Munslow become a sin-eater?**
Ratlinghope is a remote and sprawling village of about 100 residents situated at the foot of the Long Mynd, once described as ‘... a bit blowed off a village.’

And there, in the graveyard of St Margaret's Church, is the grave of Richard Munslow.
The restored monument to Richard Munslow

Upon further investigation of this grave, this is what I found. On April 11, 1862, the first child of Richard and Anne Munslow died at just eleven weeks old. His name was George, and although it was very common for a child to die at this age, it would no doubt still have been the cause of great distress for the parents. However, 8 years later three further deaths would follow, and all within a single week. On May 1, 1870, Thomas died, aged 3 years 8 months. On May 2, just one day later, James John died, aged 6. And then, just 5 days after that, Elizabeth, the last of the Munslow children, died, aged 1 year and 7 months.

Whatever the cause, whether a fire or an illness or something even more sinister still, one can only imagine the awful toll it would have taken on the parents and the suffering they must have endured. Did they feel guilt or responsibility? Did they blame themselves or each other? We can only guess. All we know for sure is that they never had any other children, and almost certainly lived out the remainder of their years (both of them lived into their 70s) with this single week hanging over their every day. [see end note, Ed]

Did this tragedy drive them further into religion, or further from it? Did Richard become a sin-eater because he felt he had so much owed to him by God, or was it a challenge to God himself, to prove his existence, or at least make sense of His plan? Or did he simply go mad with grief? What is almost certain, is that Richard Munslow only became a sin-eater sometime after this tragedy, which occurred when he was 37 years old.

When he did eventually die, in 1906, his epitaph read simply, Thy Will Be Done. Anne’s, who died 6 years later, read, Thy Purpose Lord We Cannot See/ But All Is Well That’s Done By Thee. Neither of these epitaphs suggest happy lives were lived.
Restoring The Grave

In 2010, Campaigners raised £1,000 to restore the grave of Richard Munslow, who was buried in the village of Ratlinghope, Shropshire, in 1906. It was believed he was the last remaining sin-eater in Britain. Frowned upon by the church, the custom mainly died out in the 19th Century. It took a few months to raise the £1,000 needed to pay for the work, carried out by local stonemason Charles Shaw. Local inhabitants began the collection to restore the grave, which had fallen into disrepair in recent years, believing it would be good to highlight the custom and Mr Munslow's unique place in religious history.

The Reverend Norman Morris, the vicar of Ratlinghope, led the ‘God’s Acre’ service at St Margaret's Church. Rev Morris said: ‘It was a very odd practice and would not have been approved of by the church, but I suspect the vicar often turned a blind eye to the practice.’ Mr Morris then finished his interview with the BBC with these words: ‘This grave at Ratlinghope is now in an excellent state of repair, but I have no desire to reinstate the ritual that went with it!’

The east-face inscription on the grave where Richard Munslow is buried with Anne and his 4 children. The sudden motive to become a sin-eater will never fully be recovered.

Joe Hawkins,
Bishop’s Castle Community College

Note: J. Ian Langford’s leaflet about Richard Munslow, Sin-Eater at Ratlinghope Church, states that ‘Richard and Ann had two more children who outlived them, Mary Ann in 1873 and Annie in 1876’ (Ed)
In November last year an e-mail from New Zealand to Neville Richards at The Six Bells was passed on to SWSHAS. I recognized the name HETET as one of the Napoleonic prisoners of war on parole in Bishop’s Castle. Our Research Group’s work on the Parish Registers had revealed about 11 French names between 1812 and 1817, including the well-known Louis Pages, Lt. Col. of Light Horse whose grave is in the churchyard. Richard Rose had given a most illuminating lecture to the Society in 2011 on his research into parole towns such as Bishop’s Castle and Montgomery. There were at least 57 French prisoners of war here, and at least 9 seem to have lodged at The Six Bells.

Joseph Louis Hetet, an officer taken prisoner after a naval battle, had married Mary Morgan, a Bishop’s Castle girl, in 1813 – her father had a shop in the town. Their son Louis was born on 6 March 1815.

It was most rewarding to correspond with Sybille Hetet, and discover that Louis, (who we knew had rejoined his father in France), had eventually settled in New Zealand. He became a respected intermediary between the Government and the Maori people, and had married the daughter of a Maori tribal chief.

We were able to find Mary Morgan’s grave in Bishop’s Castle churchyard ‘relict of the late Louis Hetet’ – she died aged 85. The Hetets were delighted to receive a photo. They sent us more details of Louis’ later life, with an obituary and even a picture of him.

John and Sybille Hetet were to visit Germany this April, and we persuaded them to come to
Bishop’s Castle, suggesting that they might stay at the Porch House, which also has Napoleonic connections. By chance Richard Rose and his wife happened to be staying as well. It was a real thrill to us all to meet together and to be able to show John Hetet the grave of his many-times great-grandmother, as well as introducing them to Patricia Theobald and Gill Lucas at the Heritage Resource Centre, and of course Neville at The Six Bells. We were able to take them on a tour of the area to show them the milestone on the Lea road that marked the limit of ‘The Frenchman’s Mile’ allowed to the parole prisoners. We hope one day to be able to identify Mary Morgan’s shop.

If only all the painstaking work on parish registers and other documents resulted in such an exciting and personal encounter! As the late Ken Jones, oral historian of Ironbridge, used to say: ‘History is People’.

Janet Preshous

Seeking the Architect of Bishop’s Castle Town Hall: Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies

As part of the development phase for the Town Hall Renovation Project it became necessary to visit Wolverhampton Archives in order to view some documents connected with work of William Baker the eighteenth century Midlands architect. He was most probably designer of the Bishop’s Castle civic building but evidence to support this is elusive. However, visiting the Wolverhampton resource was a fascinating experience because of the building itself.

After a disastrous fire in 2003 and an ambitious 5-year building restoration plan (2055-9) the historic Grade II* listed building, known as the Molineux Hotel, has housed the Wolverhampton Archive and Local Studies since 2009. The original building, home to the Molineux family, was built by Benjamin Molineux a wealthy banker and ironfounder in the eighteenth century. The mansion was built to a three-storeyed five bay design; an additional Georgian-style south wing was added at the end of the eighteenth century and there were further alterations and extensions, including a belfry, in the nineteenth century. Molineux House was sold in 1860 and became a hotel during the 1870s. The new owner created a pleasure park in the grounds which hosted fêtes, galas, exhibition and sporting activities at a time when professional bicycle racing and football was in its infancy. The pleasure park was closed in 1889, after which Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club made the grounds its home and the hotel
(formerly Molineux House) continued to operate until 1979 after which the building became derelict.

Following the restoration and new life of the building in 2009, historic documents are now stored in four large rooms over three floors. The result is a fusion of original architectural features and state-of-the-art technology. The storage areas maintain ideal conditions for preservation and there are sensitive smoke detectors and suppression systems in place. Fragile material is protected and stored appropriately. Hi-tech electronically controlled cabinets allow staff to easily access the books and documents. The main reading and search room has been created from the hotel’s former ballroom. The remaining garden areas include interesting features such as an eighteenth century style kitchen garden, box hedging parterres, yew and holly topiary and seating which create a peaceful oasis for visitors.

During the visit to Wolverhampton Archive some useful information was gleaned in the reading room concerning William Baker, with the added bonus of an account of the Waring family, a branch of which helped to shape the history of Bishop’s Castle.

Ludlow Through Time

ISBN 978-1-4456-0847-1

This is a book of photographs of Ludlow, then and now, and follows a simple but effective format. It starts with a very brief run though of Ludlow’s origins: it was a deliberately planned town, and subsequent history. There is just enough information to set the background.

The rest of the book has nine chapters, the first six dealing with the old town and immediate surroundings; ‘Ludlow Castle’, ‘The Square’, ‘St. Lawrence’s Church’
and so on. The final three are ‘Into the suburbs’, ‘Along the River Teme’ and ‘Further afield’. Each page contains two photographs showing the same view many decades apart. With the photographs is a paragraph of information about the particular site being shown.

The oldest of the illustrations is about a century old and others were taken in the 1960s but it is a pity that there is no suggestion of the possible dates of most of the old photographs. There is also repetition in that each chapter heading is given a page with two photographs and these same photographs are repeated in the substance of the chapter.

The comments range from the purely informative to the personal. For example in the 1700s a decision was made to demolish the structure of the castle and sell off the stone; the building being saved by the architect asked to prepare an estimate for the work who deliberately overestimated the cost so that the project was deemed too expensive. Comments such as the fact that the author collects photographs of pub signs add a personal touch. She also points to little details, such as in the photograph of the old Lloyd’s Bank Building in Broad Street. Over the entrance to the building there is a carving of a beehive representing ‘thrift and industry’. As the symbol of the bank changed to the black horse in the late 1880s the branch is obviously older than this.

With the photograph of the now closed Ludford Lodge Youth Hostel the author remarks that staying in the hostel in the 1930s was her father’s first introduction to Ludlow. As it happens that was also mine, over a Christmas period some 50 years later where I remember an enjoyable quiz night in the Charlton Arms opposite.

The book would be very suitable for visitors to the town wanting a reminder of their holiday as well as for those who live locally.

HW

* A copy of this book is available to members for reference in the SWHAS Collection at Bishop’s Castle Public Library (Ed).
Champagne & Shambles: The Arkwrights & The Country House In Crisis


Champagne and Shambles is the true story of Johnny Arkwright (1832 - 1905) and his Hampton Court Estate - the largest in Herefordshire (10,559 acres). Johnny was the great grandson of Sir Richard Arkwright of cotton spinning fame who with his son made a vast fortune from the evolving cotton industry.

The book vividly describes the break up of a large Victorian estate, a process that was happening all over the country.

Johnny inherited Hampton Court aged 24 but within six months was borrowing to find the moneys to pay his brothers their inheritance. From the extravagant balls, parties and processions to the eventual sale of the estate farms, lands and even the big house this book traces the downfall of the landed classes - not through revolution as in France but through the dramatic fall in the price of land, repeal of the Corn Laws and even the appalling weather.

Catherine Beale’s painstaking research from surviving correspondence and estate records shows why so many country houses in Britain lost their occupants and were either torn down or taken over by heritage bodies.

Champagne & Shambles is a very readable and compelling book not only for academic historians (there are 56 pages of references!) but also for anyone with any interest in Victorian social and economic history.

NH
Over many years the author Jean Withers has written articles about the history of Clun and its people for the Clun Chronicle, Clun Courier and the SWSHAS Journal. This collection about three Clun valley farms, published in a series of booklets ‘Stepping back in Time’ revisits articles written by the author about the childhood memories of growing up on their family farm. Each topic is delivered with considerable knowledge and sympathy for the subject.

The introduction by Richard Bright, of The Farm, Kempton, provides an overview of the changes in twentieth century farming within the Clun valley. The four chapters are records of farming from the 1930s to 1980s recorded aspects of social history on different farms. The Clun Farm in the Time of Frank Collins 1933-81 tells some of the story of the Matthews and Collins families. Farm on the Hill imparts glimpses into the life of Charles B Ellis and family. Growing Up on Woodside Farm recounts the childhood memories of Mary Ellis and Meryl Evans. Memories of Lower House Farm is the story of farm management seen through the eyes of Ron and Ruth Morris and his sister Evelyn Meredith.

There are copious monochrome illustrations throughout the booklet. Thanks are due to the Clun Museum for republishing these articles in an accessible format.

Research in Progress 2013

SWSHAS Research Group
This year the Group has transcribed the greater part of the Wentnor register, which begins in 1662 but for which two or three earlier years survive as bishop’s transcripts. The work builds on what was found of the late Marion
Roberts’s work (on the 17th-century bishop’s transcripts), and it should not be long before transcripts up to 1841 have been completed. There will be a good deal of editorial work to do along with comparison of the transcribed original register with the bishop’s transcripts. A list of rectors has been made to form part of the introductory material. The change from working with photocopies to working from digital images has proved highly successful. Methods of publication, for this and other more-or-less completed registers, continue to be under review. The May meeting had to be cancelled owing to various adventitious circumstances which prevented all but two members from coming on the arranged date. It proved impossible to arrange a second July meeting to make up for the loss of May, but it should be possible to meet twice in September. Most regrettably our indefatigable indexer, Mrs Ivy Evans had a fall which has caused her to miss several monthly meetings, but it is hoped that she will be back again soon.

George Baugh

Any member of SWSHAS with an interest in old documents is invited to join the group in a fascinating, if sometimes challenging, monthly session on local documents. The Group usually meets on the third Thursday in each month 2.00-4.00 p.m. at Enterprise House. Please contact Malcolm Redgrave, email: mredgrave@btinternet.com or Patricia Theobald, email: panda.theobald@virgin.net, tel: 01588 638 555

Lydbury Field Group: Community Archaeology
The Lydbury Field Group, is a community archaeology group based in south west Shropshire which was formed in 2003 by a group of local residents who wanted to explore the archaeology of the area through practical fieldwork. The Group carries out investigations into the development of the archaeological landscape in south-west Shropshire. Activities include documentary research, map analysis, fieldwalking, finds recording, site surveying, and excavation. As a result of the research, with Heritage Lottery Funding, the Group has published a research report ‘The Making of the Lydbury Landscape’ (2009) and a summary publication ‘Lydbury, The Making of a Landscape’ (2010). Regular monthly meetings are also held for talks or guided walks and visits to places of archaeological interest. These are usually open sites or free through English Heritage as educational visits. We also publish a monthly newsletter. The purpose of them is to engage members in the local and regional archaeology as a part of the continuing educational function of the Group. We welcome all with an interest in archaeology and the historic environment, regardless of experience. The cost of annual membership, which allows us to cover the insurance, is £10.00.

The Lydbury Young Archaeologists Group, formed in March 2009, seeks to engage and encourage the children in practical field archaeology and
archaeological techniques. We meet every fourth Sunday of each month from 10 am until 12 noon. If the weather is fine we meet at whatever site we are excavating; if the weather is unsettled we have archaeological games, slide shows and activities including finds processing. The activities of the children and their findings actually contribute to the continuing research project. The annual cost of membership per child is £5.00.

Contact Mike Greene (Chair) Email: greenefate@hotmail.co.uk mobile: 07816133372

Research Groups at Bishop’s Castle Heritage Resource Centre

The Transcribing Group continues to work upon the town’s first Borough Minute Book spanning the years 1572-1677. There are approximately 280 pages which list bailiffs, town clerks, sergeants at mace, constables and chamberlains together with oaths and the law and order of the Borough. Approximately three-quarters of these pages have now been transcribed up to the 1640s. Besides the annual records of elections of bailiffs and other officers there are references to the affairs of the town. In 1636 there was a great fear of plague in the town and the Headburgesses ordered:

Apud Guildbaldam 3ª die Septembris Anno Regni Regis domini nostri Caroli Anglie nunc etc, duodecimo

At which day upon Consideracion had to the great danger of sickness & the infection that is at this Instant time both in London & divers other partes of this kingdome & in the Towne of Presteigne within this our neighbourhood, ffor prevention of daunger It is at a Comon Hall concluded upon, that noe manner of person or persons whatsoever Inhabitinge within this Towne shall offer to Receave & entertaine within his or their houssse or housses or any part or parcell therof any straunger or person unknowen either to drincke or Lodge therin without notice therof ffirst geaven to mr Bayliff ffor the time beinge upon payne of havinge his or their houssse shutt up ffor one Moneth, . . .

When completed, this transcription will provide another useful reference available at BCHRC for researchers.

Oral History Group
The group at BCHRC continues to collaborate with Janet Preshous in preserving her valuable archive of taped ‘reminiscence’ interview sessions. These recordings
made in the 1980s and 1990s were of people remembering their lives in Bishop’s Castle before World War 2. More recent reminiscences take us through that war and into the second half of the Twentieth Century. During 2013 students at the Community College have been instructed in the basic techniques of this discipline in order to gather memories of the Town Hall.

**Town Hall Renovation Project 2012-15 at BCHRC**

The House on Crutches Museum Collection Trust is one of the three organisations which will form the Town Hall building Trust once the building has been restored. Interpretation of materials connected with the town hall and the town for the period 1750-1850 and beyond will continue over the next two years; the time-span has inevitably widened with the discovery of additional material. This research is carried out by a small group of volunteers at BCHRC. Students at the Community College have interpreted some of the material in the form of promenade theatre which was performed in Bishop’s Castle on 7th July 2013 as part of the Carnival. The drama group has built on the themes identified and interpreted in 2012. Other topics being explored by the BCHRC researchers include members of parliament for Bishop’s Castle, the bailiffs and burgesses, Clive of India, the town’s clockmakers, the town hall architect, law and order and policing the borough, Napoleonic prisoners of war, local roads and transport.

*If you would like to help with this heritage project, please contact Sam Hine, email sam@sambine.co.uk; mobile 07974772840.*

The **Local History Centre at BCHRC** continues to provide a volunteer-run service. A considerable amount of information about Bishop’s Castle and surrounding parishes is available including: parish and census records, maps, electoral registers, family documents, together with local estate catalogues for collections held at Shropshire Archives. Some of the material now available was acquired through the Parish Champions Project and more recently extended during the Parish Profiles Project which focussed upon the parishes of Bettwys-y-Crwn and Lydbury North. The library includes general reference books and journals on local history, publications on Shropshire together with publications and references for Bishop’s Castle and its environs.

*The Local History Centre is open at BCHRC on Saturdays from 10.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. It is also available on Thursday and Friday mornings 10.30 a.m. - 1 p.m when volunteers are present. On other days the Centre can be contacted by telephone: 01588 630556 or email: mail@bchrc.co.uk. If you would like to have more information about opportunities for helping at BCHRC please get in touch.*

Patricia Theobald
SWSHAS Website

In 2011 the Society launched its own website which can be accessed through the URL: http://swshas.org.uk. There are seven drop-down menus leading to screens describing various aspects of our organisation:

- A potted history of the Society.
- A list of officer contact details.
- The table of contents for the last three issues of the Journal together with an index of all issues from 1989-2012.
- The shop lists back issues and other publications available for purchase.
- Under Events is the programme of talks, details of outings and notice of exhibitions.
- Relevant internet sites, including other Shropshire historical societies are provided.
- A downloadable membership form is to be found on the navigation bar.

Nick Harding
webmaster@swshas.org.uk
Officers and Committee 2013

President: David Preshous OBE
Chairman: Nick Howell
Vice Chairman: Maurice Young

Hon. Secretary: Joye Minshall,
4 Alvaston Way, Shrewsbury SY2 5TT
Membership Secretary: Peter Hutton
Hon. Treasurer: Roy Howells
Journal Editor: Patricia Theobald
Webmaster Nicholas Harding : webmaster@swshas.org.uk
Committee: Mike Greene, Peter Hutton, Graham Medlicott,
Norman Morris, Janet Preshous, Gavin Watson,
Heather Williams, Alan Wilson.

For membership details apply to:
Peter Hutton, 11, Copall Paddock,
Bishop’s Castle, SY9 5DL, 01588 630 271
email: peterhutton186@btinternet.com

If you would like to make a contribution to the Journal please contact the Editor, Patricia Theobald, at Old School House, Mainstone, Bishop’s Castle, SY9 5LQ,
Tel: 01588 638 555: email panda.theobald@virgin.net

BACK-NUMBERS
for some years of the JOURNAL
are available at 50p each
from the Editor