

## **Obituaries**

**John Dallimore**     *Fergus Dowding and John Rickard with reflections by the late Isabel Richardson and Mary Ewing*

**John Coles**     *Richard Brunning with a reflection by Stephen Minnitt*

**Lionel Walrond**     *Rob Walrond*

**Victor Ambrus**     *Bob Croft and Stephen Minnitt*

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## OBITUARY: JOHN TIMOTHY DALLIMORE MBE (28 SEPTEMBER 1928 – 2 SEPTEMBER 2021)

John, who was one of the six co-founders of the Somerset Vernacular Buildings Research Group (SVBRG) in 1979, died on 2 September 2021 aged 92.

Growing up in South Wales and serving for a while in the Merchant Navy, he came to Somerset in the 1950s and worked for the Yeovil Rural District Council, now South Somerset District Council, and became deputy chief Environmental Health Officer. This involved visiting farms and his interest in old farm buildings and farmhouses steadily warmed up. In the 1970s he began surveying old (vernacular) buildings in the area around his home in Stoke sub Hamdon.

He actively pursued the idea that it would be instructive to survey all the buildings in a village, rather than simply cherry pick the notable ones, to build a picture of the development of house styles and its community, then publish the information and encourage a wider appreciation of the built heritage. Altogether 13 Somerset Village books have been published, quite a few of which were largely his work. He also wrote a chapter on Farm Buildings and Farmsteads for the classic volume *Traditional Houses of Somerset*, now in its second edition.

John was an efficient worker, listing each feature methodically together with meticulous drawings. He was a man of few words and on surveys he maintained

focus by whistling quietly to himself. When it came to writing there was no wasteful prose for John, his survey reports becoming ever shorter and more concise over the years. An enduringly modest and publicity-shunning man, he was surprised to be awarded an MBE in 2008. He declined to go to London and his medal was presented to him at a group meeting by the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Lady Gass.

John worked hard to encourage newcomers to the group to take part in surveys and get involved with writing the reports. He worked to a high standard and expected those around him to do the same. His history of SVBRG, a detailed account of the group's origins and evolution, is on SVBRG's website. Part of his legacy to Somerset is 16 large boxes of building reports and archives now at the Somerset Heritage Centre near Taunton. He was a long-time member of the national Vernacular Architecture Group and the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society. He was also involved in the Somerset Dendrochronology Project which showed that the evolution of building styles was correctly sequenced, but that generally dates were 50 years earlier than had previously been thought.

While a strong family man, married to Joan by whom he had four children, he dedicated his 'retired' life to surveying buildings. John and Joan's move to



Pitney was accompanied by the building of an office down the garden path where he worked most days. Joan was a keen and knowledgeable gardener as well as an excellent cook, all the while helping John by typing and producing his reports. Their 'holidays' motor-touring in Europe were always spent studying the construction and styles of the local houses.

After the publication of the book on Trent in 2015, declining health saw John and Joan move to Cheshire to be near their daughter. There he continued his interest in buildings, participating in a study of Cheshire houses although, not so secretly, he longed to be back in Somerset.

Those who knew and worked with John have been fortunate; his knowledge and dedication have been rewarding influences for us and we hope to continue the work he started. Our best wishes go to Joan, his four children and many grandchildren.

Fergus Dowding and John Rickard, SVBRG

#### **JOHN DALLIMORE, A PERSONAL TRIBUTE**

I first met John when I was working for the National Trust's Vernacular Buildings Survey on the Holnicote Estate in West Somerset in the 1990s. I had previously been employed by the Trust in Devon, but on Exmoor, in Somerset, I was not acquainted with anyone working in the field. John made a point of getting in touch with me and gradually drew me into the Somerset Vernacular Buildings Research Group, which he had been instrumental in establishing in 1979. The members were surveying old houses in settlements further east in the county and then publishing a book on each village studied. I joined the group and worked with them for several years, gaining expertise and friends while doing so.

It was through John's friendship and my subsequent membership of the group that some of the cottages of the Holnicote Estate were included in the third phase of the dendrochronological survey that the group organised across the county. This resulted in five dates for properties, the first that had been obtained for houses on Exmoor. Also through the group the vernacular reports on all the Holnicote properties were taken to the Somerset Record Office, now the Somerset Heritage Centre, where they are available for research.

John and his wife Joan were very kind to me; they would ask me to supper before a meeting (I lived in Devon, 50 miles from Compton Dundon where they were held) or to lunch on a Saturday when we would then go to look at some specially chosen buildings in the area. Eventually I found the journey too much but my connection with John continued even when he moved to Cheshire. We would discuss any work that I was doing, and occasionally I would send him a report that I

had completed. Even towards the end of his life he was interested in buildings and would happily discuss the results of a survey; he was dedicated to the compiling of accurate and informed records of old houses and farm buildings, which could then contribute to their care.

John's dedication, enthusiasm and knowledge were an example that I have gained greatly from following, the enormous amount of work that he has done in the field of recording Somerset's vernacular buildings is an apt memorial to him.

Isabel Richardson†

#### **JOHN DALLIMORE, A PERSONAL TRIBUTE**

It was sad to hear of the death of John Dallimore who was an inspiration, support and adviser in the setting up of the SANHS Building Research Group. His many years' experience of recording vernacular buildings in Somerset made him eminently qualified for this. In 1979 he, together with a small group, set up the Somerset and South Avon Buildings Research Group (SSAVBRG) which later became the Somerset Vernacular Buildings Research Group (SVBRG).

I first came across him in probably the early 1990s when I attended a talk that he gave on the work of their group. I was enormously impressed by his approach which involved the study of as many buildings as possible within a settlement. Anyone interested in the subject would be encouraged to volunteer in building surveys. He also had a great gift for involving others with allied interests to arrive at the breadth of study such as background, topography and agriculture, which is reflected in the SVBRG studies.

The next time that I saw him was at the Vernacular Architecture Group conference in Somerset in 2006 and my impressions of him and the work of the group were reinforced. In those days, I was employed full-time and busy with home life, so had little opportunity to get involved but once I part retired, I was able to start volunteering with SVBRG, particularly with their studies in Stogursey and in Trent (which is now in Dorset but was formerly in Somerset). John led the team work on this village at that time and I learnt a great deal from him. He talked little of himself but his knowledge of Somerset vernacular buildings was extensive.

While working at Stogursey it seemed that SVBRG was not keen to work further west than that, because of the travelling for other members who lived on the east side of the County. As I had the same problem in reverse, it seemed a good idea to set up a group for the west of the County, building on the work of former members of the Historic Building Committee and its rich archive of building recording surveys. The group was launched in 2013, later being awarded the 'Early Dunster Project' by Historic England.

John was most encouraging in the evolution of the new group, giving support, advice and organising local visits of interest. Sadly by this stage he was becoming increasingly elderly and incapacitated and he and Joan decided to move to Cheshire to be nearer to their family. As far as he was able, he pursued his interests in

vernacular buildings while he was there but obviously missed very much his days of greater involvement. His extensive work will live on and be a source of inspiration to others in this field. He is sadly missed and we have sincere sympathy for his family.

Mary Ewing

## OBITUARY: PROFESSOR JOHN MORTON COLES, FBA, FSA, HON FSA SCOT (25 MARCH 1930 – 14 OCTOBER 2020)

Few archaeologists have had such an influence on the archaeological profession around the world as Professor John Coles. He will be particularly remembered for his contributions to experimental archaeology, Scandinavian rock art and perhaps above all the promotion of wetland archaeology in the UK and across the Globe.

John was born in Canada and studied at Toronto University, but three years of office work in a small town induced him to travel to England and begin a Diploma in Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Cambridge. A PhD at the University of Edinburgh followed, where he was a research fellow (1959-60) before moving back to Cambridge as an assistant lecturer at the university in 1960, then promotion to a full lectureship in 1965 and a readership in 1976. He was Professor of European Prehistory from 1980 to 1986 and was a fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, from 1963 onwards. He was Director of Studies to Prince Charles while the prince studied at Trinity College.

John's involvement in the Severn Estuary area came about when Grahame Clark took him down to the Somerset Levels to meet Stephen Dewar, a local archaeologist who had uncovered some wooden prehistoric trackways. John excavated the 'Dewar's Tracks' and then in 1966 the Neolithic Abbot's Way, followed by several small excavations, until in 1970 John was sent a plank from a peat company that had been found by Ray Sweet. The subsequent excavation of the eponymous Sweet Track marked the beginning of the Somerset Levels Project which flourished for the next 15 years with the financial backing from the Department of the Environment/English Heritage. That year was also when John met Bryony Orme, who would soon co-direct the project from the University of Exeter. Their close working association would soon lead to marriage.

The Somerset Levels Project was pioneering in many respects, such as the close integration of palaeoenvironmental studies in the excavations, the use of dendrochronology, most memorably on the Sweet Track itself, and the excavation methodology. Those involved in the excavations will remember the hours spent lying down on planks over the trackways

excavating with fingers or bespoke plastic spatulas, for which there was a large fine for any individual careless enough to lose one. A 'no feet on peat' policy was rigidly enforced, with one student transgressor having to move the spoil heap as a reminder not to do it again.

John's practical and determined character was shown when faced with the problem of what to do with the large quantities of prehistoric wood coming from the rescue excavations in the Somerset peat cutting areas. When told there were no facilities for conservation, he created his own from scratch, with heated tanks of PEG (polyethylene glycol), first in his own rooms in Cambridge and later at a purpose made facility on the Somerset moors. There were occasional hiccups, most notably when a power cut led to wood having to be chipped out a mass of waxy PEG, but the end result is that the Museum of Somerset contains one of the world's largest collections of conserved prehistoric wood.

Prompt publication was one of John's points of principle. The 15-volume Somerset Levels Project series was an exemplar in that regard but the importance of reaching a wider audience was not overlooked, with the very popular book 'Sweet Track to Glastonbury' bringing the prehistoric wetland of Somerset to a wide audience. John wisely understood the power of a good image and anyone who worked on the trackway excavations will remember the lengths that were gone to in order to achieve those iconic photographs he took of the structures. A small Somerset Levels Museum was also created at the Willows Garden Centre near Westhay, where the owner, Roger Rogers made replicas of some of the trackways.

The success of the Somerset Levels Project inspired English Heritage to create a series of similar schemes in the Fens, the Humber Wetlands and the North-West wetlands. John was influential in the establishment and running of all of these projects and also in the development of wetland archaeology in Scotland and Ireland.

John and Bryony had a global influence on the development of wetland archaeology through the establishment of the *Wetland Archaeology Research Project* (WARP) which brought together wetland archaeologists from many countries through a newsletter,



*John and the Culbone stone*

a series of very successful annual conferences and eventually the establishment of the *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*. One of the most recent WARP publications was John's archaeological autobiography *Yesterday's man. An archaeological Life 1955-1980* (2019), although his contribution to archaeology continued for more than a quarter of a century after 1980.

Aside from the wetlands John published important works on the Bronze Age and Field Archaeology but also made a significant contribution to the development of experimental archaeology as a seriously regarded discipline. His *Archaeology by Experiment* (1973) was a landmark publication in that regard and no introduction to experimental archaeology can be complete without the ubiquitous image of John and Don Allan belabouring each other with bronze swords to test the relative efficacy of bronze and leather shields.

The interest in Bronze Age metalwork also led to engagement with Scandinavian rock art of that period, with the encouragement of Bo Gräslund, who became a good friend. His official retirement gave John more time to pursue the recording and interpretation of the rock art, helped by Bo and another long-term friend, Steve

Minnitt of the Somerset County Museum. The results were significant publications on the rock art of Uppland (2000), and Bohuslän and Ostfold (2005).

John's achievements were recognised by the profession. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1963 and a Fellow of the British Academy in 1978. He received an honorary doctorate from Uppsala University, and was awarded the Grahame Clark Medal of the British Academy (1995), the Gold Medal of the Society of Antiquaries of London (2002), and the Gold Medal of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (2009), and was made Honorary Professor at the University of Exeter in 1993.

John has left an enduring legacy, not only in the success of his work and the promotion of his fields of interest, but also in the personal effect he had on those who worked with him, studied under him, were examined by him or were advised and encouraged by him.

John suffered a heart attack at home and his wishes not to be resuscitated were respected. He will be sadly missed, and our sympathies go to Bryony, his four children and his other family and friends.

Richard Brunning



*Bro Uttmark (2003)*

### JOHN COLES, A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

I met John Coles in 1974 when I was appointed curator of archaeology at the Somerset County Museum, Taunton. We got on well in a business-like way with the Somerset Levels being the main focus. Our meetings were often short as John was very focused with much to do on his many visits to the county.

Our relationship changed following John's retirement in 1986 and his move to Devon. A very special relationship quickly developed. Archaeology was inevitably at the heart of it. Initially the focus was the Somerset 'lake villages' of Glastonbury and Meare. The sites had been excavated by Arthur Bulleid and Harold St George Gray between 1892 and 1956. In the earlier years the sites were very high profile and frequently cited in publications but by the 1980s they had rather lapsed into obscurity. John who, with Bryony, had carried out excavations at Meare as part of the Somerset Levels Project recognised that the archives from the early excavations had significant potential to reveal more. The beginning was a volume in the Somerset Levels Papers which brought to print

the unpublished excavations at Meare East. With little funding but, crucially, the willing support of a number of specialists the next significant outcome was the book: *Industrious and Fairly Civilized, the Glastonbury Lake Village* (1995) which helped to return this internationally important site back into the forefront.

This concluded John's primary work in Somerset and he returned to another long-standing interest – Scandinavian rock art. He undertook numerous field trips to record sites in detail to try to better understand their purpose and place in the landscape. I had the great pleasure of accompanying John on 14 or 15 of these occasions. Sometimes the plan was to undertake a regional survey involving visits to a very large number of sites and at other times it was to record a single large and complex site. Numerous publications followed. John received many grants towards this work, particularly from the British Academy and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. In typical John fashion, the sums requested were usually quite small resulting in modest lifestyle when away. Getting on with the fieldwork was the absolute priority.

On occasion, unexpected things happened. During

one visit we had unseasonal snow which made recording rather difficult! Another time we set off on our first day of work to realise, to our horror, that it was also the first day of the hunting season in Sweden, something that is taken very seriously. Numerous pick-up trucks with men sitting in the rear with guns passed us. We were all heading for very rural locations for our different reasons. John and I kept our eyes peeled but it was an uncomfortable feeling.



*Some techniques wouldn't meet H&S standards!  
(later 1990s)*

Fieldwork in Sweden was helped considerably by the liberal approach to the right to roam. Private gardens are excluded. On one occasion, when visiting a large number of mainly small sites, there was one that John was particularly keen to see. We eventually located it;

it was in the remote corner of the grounds of a very large house. There was no sign of anybody and so, undeterred, John found a small gap in the boundary and in we went. There must have been some form of security system because, shortly afterwards, a man came striding up and asked us what we were doing on his property. John explained what we were doing and the owner became very interested. He invited us in for coffee and it turned out that he was a member of Sweden's leading folk group, Väsen, and had also been one of ABBA's backing musicians.

The final fieldtrip to Sweden was in 2009 when John was 79 but still scampering over the rocks! After that John and I regularly met for lunch, usually at The Globe, Sampford Peverell, Devon, where, almost invariably, we had bacon and brie baguettes.

Stephen Minnitt



*End of day relaxation (2009)*

### **OBITUARY: LIONEL WALROND (29 SEPTEMBER 1927 – 4 AUGUST 2020)**

A seven-year-old back-copy of a Somerset archaeology periodical may not have been typical reading for many 17-year-old farmer's sons in 1945, but it proved to be a life changing choice for Lionel Walrond. Lionel noticed

the brief mention of the discovery of a Roman tile by farmer Herbert Cook whilst burying a dead sheep. Mr Cook's farm at Low Ham was barely a mile from Lionel's home at Glebe Farm, Pitney, and with Herbert's



2008 VAG Sanders, Lettaford - making notes  
(Image: Linda Hall)

permission, Lionel surveyed the site and decided on the spot at which he and a few friends would dig. Stopping for a flask of tea on the first afternoon, they noticed that as the sunlight dried the bottom of their trench, coloured mosaic became visible. They had come upon the head of the black horse being ridden by Aeneas – part of the Dido and Aeneas Roman mosaic. The mosaic was to receive national attention, and has pride of place in the Museum of Somerset at Taunton.

Lionel Frederick James Walrond was born at Leigh on Mendip on 29 September 1927 to Frederick and Mary Walrond. His parents were tenant dairy farmers producing milk for local cheesemakers. It was not an easy start to life; Mary died when Lionel was only three weeks old, and Frederick was to die before Lionel's fourth birthday. Lionel moved back to the Walrond family base at Glebe Farm, where he was raised by two aunts and an uncle. Childhood was spent labouring on the farm for his father's brother, Percy.

Lionel did well at school and earned a place at Huish's Grammar School in Taunton where he achieved an Oxford School Certificate and Exemption from the London Matriculation Board Examination. However,

after leaving school after his 16th birthday Lionel felt deflated at the prospect of, in his words "a life of drudgery working for little return or appreciation on the farm. I did not enjoy farming, but gained a working knowledge of old ways of life, of geology, archaeology, old churches and architecture."

His increasing archaeological knowledge led to the discovery of a further two significant Roman sites in South Somerset – both before Lionel's 18th birthday! Lionel had begun collection old farm tools and household items which he meticulously labelled and displayed on the walls of a former US Army Nissen Hut that the farm had purchased for storing farm machinery.

Early influences included Kenneth Hudson, a writer and broadcaster with the BBC, who was a key player in Lionel's fascination with social and industrial history and who encouraged Lionel to deliver talks and lectures. Sir Cyril Fox (former Director of the National Museum of Wales) was another early influence. After attending (at the age of 18) a lecture of Sir Cyril's on old houses, Lionel described to him a cottage in his home village that he suspected of being a jointed or false cruck house. Sir Cyril insisted on being taken to see it. After the visit he told Lionel to write it up. "But I don't know how," said Lionel. "Do a first draft and I will help," was the Sir Cyril's reply. And he did. Lionel's first paper became the first such report ever for the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society.

Lionel had begun courting Olive Lazarus, a schoolteacher that he had met on an archaeological excursion, but they had agreed not to marry until he had obtained a museum post of some kind. Several applications had been sent off but, not having a degree, he was always rejected. Until Stroud Museum advertised to implement an improvement plan, that they were seeking a 'recently retired curator'. Lionel dashed off an application, quoting as referee Dr F. S. Wallis of Bristol. The museum chairman contacted Dr Wallis whose reply was "grab him before he changes his mind".

Lionel and Olive duly married in 1955, moved to Stroud, and he began a 37-year tenure as Curator of Stroud Museum. It was a steep learning curve. Collections needed completing and updating, changes needed to be made – not least adapting the labelling so that priority was given to the object itself rather than its donor! Olive obtained a local teaching post, and helped Lionel by rewriting many of the exhibit labels. They happily enjoyed 49 years of marriage until Olive's death in 2004.

One of Lionel's notable achievements at the museum was, in conjunction with Hugh Morrison, the development of a computer program to record details of all of its 55,000 holdings. A similar program was produced by Microsoft a few years later.

Lionel was elected to the Fellowship of the Society

of Antiquaries and to the fellowship of the Museum Association. In his lifetime he was a member of many societies including: Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club, Vernacular Architecture Group, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Gloucestershire Building Recording Group, Gloucestershire Industrial Archaeology Society, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, British Agricultural History Society, Methodist History Society, Society for Folk Life Studies, Stroud Local History Society, Stroud

Civic Society.

In retirement Lionel continued his passion for vernacular architecture by visiting many old buildings accompanied by his trusty canvas bag, camera and notebook. He co-wrote *The Cotswold House* with Tim Jordan, published in 2014, and continued to give talks on a variety of topics.

Lionel died peacefully on 4 August 2020 following a short period of ill health.

Rob Walrond

### OBITUARY: VICTOR AMBRUS (19 AUGUST 1935 – 10 FEBRUARY 2021)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ILLUSTRATOR WHO COULD BREATHE LIFE INTO THE PAST  
SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON HIS WORK IN SOMERSET



*Victor in his studio (Photo: Justin Owen)*

Many people in Somerset will be very familiar with the work of the artist Victor Ambrus who died aged 85 on the 10 February 2021. He was a prolific illustrator and was widely published as an illustrator of children's books, television programmes, stamps and museum displays. His early work on television was on the BBC programme *Jackanory* and he found new fame for over 20 years working as the resident artist for *Time Team* on Channel 4.

Born in Hungary, Victor started drawing at an early age and he was inspired by British illustrators such as Arthur Rackham and E. H. Shepherd and the Hungarian

artist Mihaly Zichy.

Much has been written about Victor both before and since his death. Notable examples include 'Victor Ambrus: Bringing History to Life' in the July/August 2016 edition of *British Archaeology* and an obituary in *The Guardian* published on 13 March 2021, both by Mike Pitts, and 'Bringing the Past Alive, in *Artists and Illustrators* in 2006.

This article contains some personal reflections and memories from Steve Minnitt and Bob Croft of a remarkably talented, modest and special friend. Victor made a major contribution to helping promote the

appreciation and understanding of Somerset's past to a wide audience.

A summary of his life, which could have turned out so differently, is needed. Born in 1935 in Budapest, Hungary, Victor's enthusiasm for drawing began in his childhood. As Victor described it "I've been drawing ever since I could hold a pencil." He began his formal art training at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest in 1953. His studies, however, were cut short in October 1956 by the Hungarian Uprising which was violently put down by the Russians. Victor, along with other students, occupied the Academy. As a result of his involvement with the Uprising, Victor was forced to flee the country. Steve got a small insight into just how lucky he was to survive events that year when driving Victor from Taunton to Strode College to attend a memorial conference for Mick Aston in 2014. Steve recalls that:

"Somehow our conversation got on to the subject of Hungary in 1956 and three stories that he told particularly come to mind. One morning in the Academy, having slept overnight in a chair, he awoke to discover the barrel of a Russian tank pointing towards him. Shortly afterwards the Russians made examples of four of his student friends by executing them. Aged 21, Victor knew he had to leave the country and headed for Austria. A curfew was in place which meant that travel

was by night. Passing through one town he realised that Russian soldiers were approaching and there was nowhere to hide. Quick thinking saved the day – Victor and his female companion got into a romantic embrace in a doorway and simply attracted words of encouragement from the soldiers. On another occasion, whilst following a railway line on their journey out of Hungary, Victor and two companions arrived at a signal box. They decided to speak to the signalman and went up the steps and through the door. However, the signalman had been replaced by a soldier with a rifle. Once again luck was on their side, the soldier was asleep and knew nothing about his visitors who left very quietly."

Victor, who spoke no English, chose to come to Britain. He continued his studies, firstly at Farnham Art College and then at London's Royal College of Art having won a Gulbenkian scholarship. Whilst at the RCA, Victor was commissioned to illustrate *White Horses and Black Bulls*, a book by Alan C. Jenkins. Reviews of Victor's work were extremely positive and his career had begun. In another life changing event at the RCA, Victor met his future wife, Glenys, who also became a successful artist and book illustrator.

Victor, who particularly enjoyed working with historical themes, went on to illustrate around 300 books by authors including Hester Burton, James Riordan,



*Reconstruction drawing of Pitney Roman villa*

Rosemary Sutcliff, Geraldine McGaughrean, James Herriot, and he illustrated the first edition of *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo. Victor also wrote and illustrated several of his own books, winning the Kate Greenaway Medal for children's illustration twice. He became one of Britain's foremost illustrators of history, folk tales and children's books.

We both first met Victor in 1993 whilst filming was taking place at Athelney on the first programme in the long-running Time Team series set up by Tim Taylor and Mick Aston. Victor absolutely relished the idea of a new challenge and was extremely grateful to Tim for giving him the opportunity to explore a new and exciting avenue to channel his illustration skills which also fulfil his avid interest in historical subjects. Over the next 20 or so years a further eleven programmes based upon Somerset followed, most featuring Victor. Robin Bush was the first historian for the series and he and Victor often discussed the finer points of historic details about medieval England or whenever possible, battles and battlefields. There was great camaraderie in Time Team and Victor was a key member, turning ideas into a reality with the help of his pencil. Horses were one of Victor's favourite subjects and he often included them in reconstruction drawings. His scenes of the Monmouth Rebellion and the Battle of Sedgemoor show some of this skill and prowess.

Victor worked closely with Mick Aston and Time Team colleagues on hundreds of archaeological sites around the country to interpret and visualise how the archaeological evidence could be woven into the reconstruction. He produced several drawings for Mick Aston and Chris Gerrard's book on Shapwick village and his painting adorns the cover of *Interpreting the English Village – Landscape and Community in Shapwick, Somerset* (Aston and Gerrard 2013). Three of Victor's own books featured historical scenes of Somerset: *Recreating the Past* (with Mick Aston, 2001), *Drawing on Archaeology* (2006) and *Battlefield Panoramas* (2012).

Throughout the Time Team years, Victor never stopped creating his remarkable and evocative illustrations for books, notably for the Spanish publishing house Vincens Vives. He particularly enjoyed working with the editor, Paco Anton, on numerous books by Spanish authors including Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and *Trafalgar*, by the renowned Benito Perez Galdos.

Victor was central to three of Steve's career highlights: the creation of The Museum of Somerset, a retrospective temporary exhibition at the museum, *The Art of Victor Ambrus*, and the creation of the book *Drawing Somerset's Past: an illustrated journey through history* in 2018.



*Reconstruction drawing of Glastonbury Lake Village*



*Victor on site at Hinkley Point C power station (Photo: Justin Owen)*



*Reconstruction drawing of the Frome Hoard burial*

“When it came to the creation of The Museum of Somerset and the need for an artist to recreate scenes from the county’s past there was only one illustrator on the list and, fortunately, he accepted the commission. Victor produced 19 new drawings for us. All dramatically and memorably illustrate the stories that we wanted to tell. The process was very straightforward. A brief was provided, backed up with discussions, a draft drawing was produced, comments were passed on, changes were cheerfully made, then the final version created.”

In 2016 Steve had the great pleasure of curating the temporary exhibition *The Art of Victor Ambrus*. Surprisingly, this was the first exhibition to reflect the full range of Victor’s work. It featured some 98 original works created over a period of nearly 60 years. Besides historic scenes and book illustrations, there were elements which may have been less familiar to many visitors such as portraits, artwork for stamps for places such as Tristan da Cunha, the Isle of Man and the Falkland Islands and, perhaps most significantly, dark lithographs created at the RCA which were inspired by events in 1956. We both have fond memories of visiting Victor and Glenys at their home to discuss the range and content of the exhibition and to select some of the paintings from his enormous archive. The *Art of Victor Ambrus* exhibition followed shortly after an exciting project on the archaeology of the Hinkley Point C power station. The site visits to Wick Barrow, Stogursey, and to Bineham Farm were some of the last field visits that Victor made to capture the landscape context of these archaeological sites. Within minutes of being on site Victor had captured the character of the landscape and was adding the details of how it may have looked in the Bronze Age.

Several films were produced by Justin Owen to record the Hinkley Point story and they feature Victor hard at work. These films were part of the *Landscape of Power* exhibition (2015) and these films can still be seen on [www.swheritage.org.uk/historic-environment-service/films](http://www.swheritage.org.uk/historic-environment-service/films).

Immediately following the work at Hinkley Point plans were agreed to put on the exhibition of the *Life and Works of Victor Ambrus* in the Museum of Somerset. A further film was commissioned about Victor and in this he provides an account of his early life, the importance of art to him and his approach to creating historic scenes. It also gives a taste of his sense of humour. The impact that Victor has had on people’s lives was revealed in the many comments written in the exhibition visitor’s book. They included:

*‘My children – now in their 30s – started their love of books and medieval history through Victor Ambrus’ illustrations’*

and

*‘To see some of his actual drawings has been a real privilege and an inspiration to my own drawings’.*

It was while working on this exhibition that the idea to produce a book evolved that would pull together and expand Victor’s many existing works on Somerset. He leapt at the idea. Besides those undertaken for The Museum of Somerset, the drawings featured ones that he had done for Mick Aston’s Shapwick Project and the Hinkley Point and other archaeological projects, together with those for Time Team. The History Press were approached about publishing the book and responded very enthusiastically. Whilst many drawings already existed, there were gaps, particularly for the more recent past, and Victor set to work. The book, which features 87 of Victor’s drawings spanning the Palaeolithic to the 20th century, has recently been reprinted.

Victor’s skills were without parallel, and he really could breathe life into the past. It was a delight to work with him. Victor is sadly no longer with us, but his legacy lives on.

Bob Croft and Stephen Minnitt

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