

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Cheddar Gorge and caves**, by Linda Carter, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2014, 58 pp., 46 illus., many in colour, £4.99. ISBN 978-0-902152-27-4.

Cheddar Gorge is one of the best known landscapes in the British Isles and this book provides an excellent introduction to the history and natural history of the site. While the Gorge is visited by close to half a million people every year few are likely to know a great deal about the area they are visiting.

The book chronicles the early history of the site as part of the Royal Forest of Mendip and the prominence of Cheddar as the location of a royal palace in Anglo Saxon times. Further back in time there is reference to the use of the Gorge by man in the Mesolithic and Neolithic when it provided shelter to hunter gatherers.

Few of us will be aware of the social history of this place but the book makes it clear that Cheddar was being written about by various travellers from mediaeval times. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century Cheddar was attracting numbers of visitors, a rapidly increasing trend into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The water which issues from the Cheddar caves much of which is now collected and distributed for human consumption was a source of power for mills and used in the manufacture of paper. Evidence of this industrial past has now largely disappeared.

The origins of the Gorge were for many years a matter of great debate. Linda Carter describes the early theories and the research that eventually led to the realisation that it was fast flowing water from what was during Ice Age times a snow covered Mendip that created the Gorge that we now know.

Intimately associated with the Gorge are the Cheddar caves and these are described together with a history of their exploitation as a tourist attraction notably by Richard Gough. The visitor to Cheddar is aware of the show caves in the lower gorge but few know that these caves are the lower part of a system that begins on the southern slopes of Black Down way to the north.

The natural history of Cheddar which is of both national and international importance is introduced and its most important features described. Reference is made to the Gorge's unique plant assemblage including the aptly named Cheddar Pink and others less well known but equally important. Cheddar has

a flora which contains elements of both southern and northern distribution. As well as the higher plants Cheddar is also well known as a locality for mosses, liverworts and lichens which occupy the wide variety of ecological niches around the Gorge.

While today's wildlife is important we also have evidence of wildlife from the past including bear, wolf, hyena and wolverine which predated Ice Age herbivores including reindeer, bison, horse and wild cattle. The bones of these mammals together with a range of bird species have been preserved in cave sediments.

While this book provides an excellent introduction to Cheddar Gorge the list of references it contains will allow the reader to access a wide range of information about the history and natural history of the Gorge and Caves.

BOB CORNS

**The archaeology of hill farming on Exmoor**, by Cain Hegarty with Rob Wilson-North, English Heritage, 2014, ix + 137 pp., 136 illus., £20. ISBN 978-1-84802-082-5.

As part of the National Mapping Programme funded by English Heritage, a detailed archaeological survey of Exmoor was undertaken. An important aspect of this work was an analysis of thousands of aerial photographs. These reveal with much greater clarity than ever before the dramatic influence which the labours of countless generations of farmers have had on the landscape. In spite of its harsh environment, varied geology, poor soils, cold winters and higher than average rainfall, pioneer farmers have continued through the centuries to wrest a living from the moor, generally through livestock farming. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century a massive effort was made to introduce modern methods and productivity. This endeavour has left a profound imprint on the landscape and did more to shape the area of the high moor than at any other time since the Bronze Age.

Anyone with an interest in Exmoor or in hill farming in general will find much of interest in this book. There is a great deal of new material based on recent archaeological and documentary research, and new insights into subjects such as the royal forest, enclosures, common lands and the

well-known work of the Knight family during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly interesting are the case studies of routes across the royal forest, the leasing of the forest during the Commonwealth and the beginning of its decline. Other subjects include the evidence for drainage, sheep-farming, peat cutting, steam-powered land reclamation, rabbit warrens and the creation of water meadows. All this is lavishly illustrated with high-quality maps, diagrams, aerial views and examples of landscapes, farms, fields and buildings. There are a few minor quibbles. Henry II's reign began in 1154 (not 1133), the 'child King' in 1217 was John's son, Henry III (not Edward III), and although a section is devoted to sheep and sheepfolds or 'stalls', it would be good to learn more about the surviving evidence for cattle, horses and ponies. The cover illustration is not identified or explained and does not seem to be the most attractive of all the splendid landscape photographs in the book which might have been used.

The numerous documentary sources used include an easily-comprehensible map of Exmoor drawn in 1675 showing the royal forest, the surrounding commons and the encircling parishes, each with their (remarkably similar) parish church. The concise account of the royal forest provides a useful introduction to this complex subject. There is a good description of the laborious work of peat-cutting to provide winter fuel, an essential task since much of the moor was devoid of trees or timber for fires. A section is devoted to the introduction of steam-ploughing during the 1870s in order to bring the moorland soil into cultivation. This system can still be seen being demonstrated by steam engine enthusiasts at agricultural shows. As the author points out, it is best suited to level ground and can only have been of limited use on the steep slopes and rough surface of Exmoor. Another section is used to describe the use of water meadows. These were known as catchwork or hillside meadows. Water from a suitable stream was diverted along the contour of a hill in one or more channels or leats. It was then made to overflow down the hillside, evenly covering the grass with a moving sheet of water, thus stimulating an early growth, later producing an abundant hay crop. The author rebukes several earlier writers on water meadows, including this reviewer, for suggesting that catchwork meadows were inferior to the classic floated meadows of the Wessex chalk valleys. Certainly the archaeological surveys underlying this book provide ample evidence of the widespread

use of catchwork meadows throughout Exmoor and more widely in Devon and west Somerset, more than 800 having been identified.

This is a well-written and handsomely-produced book, splendidly illustrated and evidently the result of much dedicated research. It is essential reading for anyone with an interest in the history of farming in the challenging but attractive environment of Exmoor.

JOE BETTEY

**A maritime history of Somerset, volume 2**, edited by Adrian J. Webb, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2014, xii + 213 pp., illus., £19.95. ISBN 978-0-902152-26-7.

This is the second volume of essays describing various aspects of the maritime history of the county. Whilst the first volume contained a larger number of shorter chapters, this second volume contains just five much longer chapters dealing with their subjects in much greater detail.

Chapter one by Philip Ashford is an extensive 80 page treatise titled "Four Hundred Years of Maritime Travel via the Somerset Coast". This catalogues in detail the many and variable journeys and the outcomes of these maritime passages from Somerset. This is a chapter with a huge scope and Philip, who is renowned for his knowledge of the subject, has carefully arranged his material to tell the story – such as the Somerset men who travelled twice yearly to Pembroke by ship to buy wool. More permanent journeys such as that of the tiny 45-ton Margaret which sailed from King Road with 38 settlers for Virginia is recorded. Philip covers the many reasons people travelled – poor migrants, family reasons, pilgrimage and the need to 'avoid authority' – a fascinating account of everyday life in (and beyond) the county.

Chapter two by Sue Berry covers the development of Somerset's seaside resorts, primarily Burnham, Clevedon, Minehead and Weston. Although Minehead is the earliest resort to develop, Sue shows how Weston was the resort which expanded the most, growing from a population of merely 138 in 1801 to more than 18000 just one hundred years later – in fact Weston is detailed as the second fastest growing resort between 1801 and 1851 with a population increase of 2800%. The railways of course were mostly responsible for

this expansion and Sue details this along with the other consequences – the need for accommodation and the sanitation problems which the growth in visitors brought. The more modern growth of holiday camps and the resurgence in later years is covered in detail. The article is well illustrated with photographs and contemporary adverts and posters – a great flash of summer.

Chapter three is an account of two river ferries – Pill Ferry and Rownham Ferry, both across the Avon. The origin of these ferries is lost in history, but both are ancient and endured because of the crucial service they performed. In the case of the Pill Ferry, it provided the link for the Gloucester Road through the tricky geography at the mouth of the Avon and thus was a critical link between the two counties. Rownham Ferry provided a second link higher up the Avon for travellers from Bristol to north Somerset – the only alternative being a detour of several miles over the only bridge over the Avon – Bristol Bridge. Adrian Webb and Joseph Bettey have catalogued the detail of these ferries well, again with copious illustrations which bring the work to life.

Chapter four is Paul Hughes's account of Thomas Surbey's 1701 survey of Minehead Harbour that was commissioned by Minehead's two MPs with the aim of improving the facility. Surbey's background is obscure but he is known to have undertaken a survey of the estuary from Hull to York. Prior to 1700 the facilities at Minehead were basic and consisted of flimsy piers and jetties. Surbey consulted with local experts and after only a week's work produced a survey and plan for improvement. The article goes on to describe the content of the plan and draws conclusions about the size and shape of Minehead at the turn of the 18th century. This is a well-researched account of an original and highly detailed survey.

The book closes with an account by Bill Kelly on sea fishing in Somerset, past, present and future. Bill was brought up fishing and has fished coastal waters all over the world. In this article he considers the history of sea fishing off the Somerset coast and anticipates what fishing might be like in 50 years' time. Consumption of fish was an important part of the medieval diet and with Taunton being an important market town; it is not surprising how important fishing was to the local community. Bill closes his article with his look ahead and after discussing climate issues, describes how modern and effective fish finding technology needs to be teamed with a high degree of regulation and control

of the ecosystems in order to ensure that stocks are sustainable.

This book is exceptionally well produced, the illustrations are plentiful, large and the book has been clearly printed on quality paper. Well recommended and one for anybody's bookshelf.

IAN COLEBY

**The buildings of England, Somerset: South and West**, by Julian Orbach and Nikolaus Pevsner, Yale University Press, 2014, 789 pp., 7 maps, 62 b/w illus., 127 col. illus. £35. ISBN 978-0-300-20740-8

This new edition in *The Buildings of England* series replaces Nikolaus Pevsner's *South and West Somerset*, published in 1958. The companion volume of the same year, *North Somerset and Bristol*, was revised by Andrew Foyle as *Somerset: North and Bristol*, in 2011, and reviewed in the *Proceedings* for 2013. Both volumes are in an enlarged format with approximately double the number of pages, illustrated by high quality colour photographs and nineteenth-century drawings and etchings.

Elsewhere, throughout the South West, all the county first editions were systematically revised in the 1970's or 1980's. Indeed, Cornwall has a third edition, and the third edition for Wiltshire is being prepared at the present time. Despite constant re-printings, for some inexplicable reason Somerset has had to wait over half a century for this wholesale revision.

The new edition is, however, well worth the wait. Nikolaus Pevsner took just one year in 1955 to write the original edition, drawing on a paucity of published information that had been compiled two years previously. The new author, Julian Orbach, spent over five years painstakingly researching the subject before producing a comprehensive well-crafted account of the architectural history of this area of Somerset.

Some irritating niggles nevertheless remain. For the first edition, the County was split into two volumes making them pocket size and therefore convenient to use in the field. Understandably, the much enlarged second edition is not readily useable when out walking, the fact that in 1974 Somerset was divided into two administrative counties with a boundary running along the Mendip Hills, cannot be ignored. For this second edition the arbitrary division drawn by Nikolaus Pevsner could have been adjusted in accordance with the situation

the former County of Somerset now finds itself in. During the long intervening years between the first and second editions this simple geographical anomaly could have been remedied. Instead, the towns of Burnham-on-Sea, Glastonbury, and the many villages along the Mendips, are to be found in a publication entitled *Somerset: South and West Somerset*, all very confusing for the local and the visitor alike.

Notwithstanding this criticism, like all the recent volumes in *The Buildings of England* series, *Somerset: South and West* is beautifully produced and easily accessible to a wide audience. The buildings are logically grouped and sequenced within their respective towns, villages or parishes and can also be readily identified in the index of places. In addition, there is also an invaluable index of architects, artists, patrons and residents, and a very useful glossary of architectural terms to assist with the more arcane aspects of the subject.

Julian Orbach is well respected in the profession of architectural historians having trained at the knee of Professor Nikolaus Pevsner and then co-authored three volumes in *The Buildings of Wales* series. Previously, he had compiled the highly acclaimed *Blue Guide to Victorian Architecture in Britain*, published in 1987. Who better then to revise South and West Somerset? Julian Orbach has thoughtfully filled the many gaps and omissions of the first edition and disproved the rather sweeping assertion that...*There are no Victorian public buildings worth noting.*

This new edition, reflecting as it does our greater appreciation for nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture, is fulsome in its inclusive and descriptive narrative for that important period in building history. By way of example, three times more text is now devoted to the development of Minehead following the arrival of the railway after 1872, including the identities of the more prominent architects and surveyors who created the seaside town. In a similar vein the influx of wealthy Edwardians, building small country holiday houses in West Somerset is recorded, drawing attention to the design skills of some of the more fashionable regional architects of the time.

These and other welcome changes in this thoroughly enjoyable book are a far cry from the pioneering work started by Nikolaus Pevsner in the early 1950's, but are more than ample evidence that his legacy is in safe hands.

RUSSELL LILLFORD

**Ancient church fonts of Somerset**, surveyed and drawn by Harvey Pridham, edited by Adrian J. Webb, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2013, xl + 192 pp., 28 illus. (some in colour), 1 fig. and more than 430 drawings, £20. ISBN 978-0-902152-25-0.

In 1908, SANHS purchased a collection of some 416 measured drawings of Somerset fonts for 100 guineas from Harvey Pridham. Produced between 1886 and 1898, they were created as part of a large programme, on which he was engaged, to record ancient fonts in the south of England, touring the countryside on his bicycle. The drawings complemented his type-written notes, which he had already deposited with the Society. Some were unfinished at that time and he subsequently took them back to complete the job. It was his intention to publish this material but it did not happen and, more the 100 years after the Society purchased them, publication has finally been achieved. By his own admission, Pridham was not an artist and his drawings were mechanically produced using a 'two-foot rule and the plumb-line', more in the manner of architectural elevations, than free-hand sketches. Consequently, they are much more accurate than the work of artists such as the Bucklers who had sketched many of the fonts earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Storage of the drawings at Taunton Castle was not kind to them and they had become foxed and damp stained. However, careful, digitisation and processing of the images by David Worthy has restored them to health and they have been pleasingly arranged (typically three to a page), matched with Pridham's descriptions.

The book, which includes a Foreword by Julian Orbach and an Index for the whole work, is divided into three elements. There is an Introduction by the Editor, which goes into considerable detail to chart Pridham's activities and includes seven Appendices. This is followed by 'Part One' which reproduces what Pridham wrote about the fonts as a whole and is itself set out in six sections, as Pridham did. Finally, in 'Part Two' there is the main business of the book, containing Pridham's drawings and descriptions of the individual fonts.

Nothing appears to have been written specifically about Pridham, and the Editor, Adrian Webb, has had to delve deep to uncover his story. Pridham's full name was William Harvey Pridham but he was usually known as Harvey. He was born in Essex, the son of a clergyman, who in 1871 became vicar of West Harptree and the family moved to Somerset.

By 1881 Harvey was living in Clifton, Bristol and began recording fonts five years later, with the aid of a scholarship for that purpose. He became very passionate about the subject when he discovered the numerous examples which had been desecrated and thrown out of churches during the tidal wave of 19<sup>th</sup> century church restorations. To his great credit, at least a dozen displaced fonts were subsequently rescued as a result of his survey. Harvey's work on Somerset fonts was interrupted by a period he spent in the USA from 1889 to 1898 where he met with some success, being awarded first prize in the 1893 Denver Architectural Sketch Club Competition, for his design for a new church. He also served as their Secretary and later some of his font drawings went to the University of Colorado, via the descendants of one of his colleagues at the Sketch Club. Adrian Webb has located useful information through various record sources in the USA and his Appendix A lists all of Harvey's drawings held by the University of Colorado (including 32 of Somerset). Appendix B lists his drawings exhibited at the Sketch Club's 1892 exhibition. They differ from those at the University and include two views of Harptree church.

A summary of what is known about Harvey's work on the fonts of other counties is given in Appendix E, under: Berkshire; Bristol; Dorset; Essex; Gloucestershire; Hampshire; Middlesex; Monmouth; Oxfordshire; Surrey; Sussex and Wiltshire, although some counties are only included because examples exist in Colorado. However, Reading Local Studies Library has two volumes covering 100 fonts in Berkshire and he sold his 230 pen and ink sketches for Wiltshire to the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in 1913 for £20. They are still in the collections of the Wiltshire Heritage Museum. Under Harvey's 'Section I' entitled *General Remarks and Explanatory Notes* he claims to have drawn 1200 fonts in other counties.

Given the pioneering work which Harvey undertook and the fact that he seems to have worked on his own initiative, unconnected with any learned society, it would be unfair to be overly critical of his understanding of the subject matter. However, he does appear to have been unaware of one particularly important aspect. In the medieval period, the water for baptism was blessed periodically and then remained in the font for some time. This led to fonts being covered and locked to prevent theft or desecration of the holy water they contained. During the thirteenth-century, for

instance, several bishops issued regulations to this effect. It was typically achieved by the insertion of two iron staples on opposite sides of the font bowl, through which an iron bar was placed to secure a flat cover. After the Reformation, the adoption of baptism by aspersion rather than immersion, meant that water was no longer kept in the font. Locking it was not necessary and the staples seem to have been either broken off or, more usually, wrenched out of position. The resulting damage has often led to the insertion of repairs in new stone. This damage to genuine medieval fonts can be a very useful tell-tale, helping to distinguish them from later replacements. Harvey's drawings, despite their great care of execution, do not show such repairs, and he ran the risk of including some examples which are not medieval. It is very rare for the staples to survive intact but there is at least one font in Somerset which has both still in place, at Chilton Cantelo. Harvey's description makes no mention of them and they are omitted from his drawing. Curiously, on the font at East Lyng, he drew one staple which is no longer present. However, he did recognise the importance of stone and identified two fonts as alabaster, several as Purbeck marble and a larger number as Ham Hill stone but the great majority he simply described as 'freestone'. No attempt was made to distinguish between the major limestone sources in the county at Doulling, Dundry and Bath. Clearly, there is an opportunity for further work to be done so that the distribution patterns of the different materials can be established.

An otherwise very commendable work is somewhat marred by some unfortunate errors. Glancing through the drawings, Sutton Montis (in the Romanesque style) is clearly out of place amongst the fifteenth-century examples which accompany it. However, Harvey's description differs markedly from the drawing, whereas the actual font conforms very well to his description. The answer to this puzzle is to be found on page 68, where the same drawing appears (correctly) for another Sutton, Sutton Bingham. Sadly this means that the image of Harvey's drawing for Sutton Montis has been omitted. By a curious twist of fate, this font is one which does not show any evidence of having been locked (as explained above) and appears post-medieval, so it is doubtful whether Harvey should have included it anyway. Another duplication has happened for a different reason. Most of the drawings were grouped by Harvey into historical date ranges which corresponded with

his perception of the development of architectural styles. He rightly saw this as a useful tool to date the fonts and they are presented in the book in the chronological sequence he had devised for them. Just a few remained unclassified in this way and they have now been given a special category of their own, at the end of the catalogue. Surprisingly, East Coker is included in this 'unclassified' group, when precisely the same entry has already appeared on page 41, clearly assigned by Harvey to his earliest period, A.D. 1066-1100. Section III gives Harvey's chronology in the form of a place name listing for each architectural period and again East Coker is included as 'Earliest Norman'.

There are some further errors of the type which can result from computerised processing. The Introduction has endnotes, although, thereafter, footnotes are used because they are less numerous. Consequently, the endnotes occur after the Appendices to the Introduction. There are 146 endnotes but the final reference in the text is number 141, so presumably the final five references are applicable to the Appendices. Unfortunately, they do not appear there and nothing now links them to where they belong. Because of the way the drawings are grouped, the Index is essential for navigating the book. It is irksome to find that the entry for Sutton Bingham refers back unnecessarily to Closworth, where Pendomer and Sutton Bingham are listed as sub sets of Closworth. It may be technically correct that these two churches lie within the parish of Closworth but it is both pedantic and confusing to list them in this way, when other works (e.g. the newly issued Pevsner for South and West Somerset) treat them as places in their own right. Bizarrely, both Pendomer and Sutton Bingham are also listed under Cloford, a completely unrelated place, which just happens to precede Closworth in the index. A similar unnecessary and confusing entanglement occurs with the entries for Podimore and Yeovilton, when completely separate entries would have been more appropriate.

However, such editorial criticisms should not be allowed to detract from the high intrinsic value of this important new addition to the reference works for the county. It has been produced with some very pleasing and highly commendable features. For instance, it was a good decision to produce it in a large format. There must have been a valid case for publishing it in the Somerset Record Series (like Sir Stephen Glynne's church notes) but that would have meant significantly reducing the image size and the present volume has most drawings with

only a 40% reduction. A number have even been reproduced full size to the original scale of 1½ inches to 1 foot. It is to be hoped that the success of this volume will encourage the production of others in a similar manner such as the Harvey drawings which the Editor has identified for Berkshire and Wiltshire. From a Somerset point of view, it would be wonderful, now that browsing is no longer possible, if the Buckler and Wheatley drawings could be published in companion works.

BRIAN & MOIRA GITTOS

**The Bickley Book: The Bickley Ceramics Project 1981–2010**, by David Dawson and Oliver Kent with Vicky Dawson and Heather Kent, Bristol: privately published, 2013. 40 pp.

Over a period of thirty years (1981–2010) David Dawson and Oliver Kent undertook a series of experimental firings of various forms of traditional pottery kilns at Bickley in north Somerset, aided by their families, friends and colleagues. Alongside the excavations at Wharram Percy, Hen Domen, the Somerset Levels and some towns, this was one of the longest-running archaeological field projects of its day in Britain. The academic results of this programme have been published in more than 20 papers in archaeological and ceramics literature, including major contributions to the international journals *Medieval Archaeology* and *Post-Medieval Archaeology*.

Prior to the emergence of social media in recent years, scholarly publication was normally the sole public record of an archaeological project; rarely has there been much of a record of the people who took part, or the circumstances in which the work took place. *The Bickley Book*, with its numerous colour photographs, provides such an account. It celebrates the efforts of the team whose commitment and hard work made the experiments a success, showing them at work and play, and listing more than 400 people who took part. It describes the motivations which lay behind the project and its development over successive seasons, with the increasingly adventurous choice of kiln, and with its offshoots at Cleeve Abbey, Barnstaple, Shepton Mallet, Aberystwyth and even Plimouth Plantation, Massachusetts. Alongside illustrations of throwing and firing, we read of the charms of the traditional coppiced woodland at Bickley with its unexpected buried medieval archaeology excavated below the

site. For those who took part, this book will be an acknowledgement of their contribution to an important piece of archaeological work; others who read it will have a richer understanding of what the Bickley project set out to do and what was achieved.

JOHN ALLAN

**A history of Dunster: the castle and the village**, by Bev Woodger, Matador Books, Kibworth Beauchamp, 2014, xvi + 168 pp., £9.99. ISBN 978-1-78306-444-1.

Dunster is one of those special places where history, environment and the needs of the modern world combine to give particular challenges to the local authorities and the local community. Over the last half century much time and effort has been expended in attempts to reconcile these various interests.

During more than 150 years many words have been written about this 'jewel in the crown' of the Exmoor National Park. A search of the Libraries West catalogue lists 80 entries for Dunster in the Somerset Heritage Centre Library, and no doubt there are more as well as articles in magazines and journals. Bev Woodger's book is among the latest to appear on the scene, although it is a new and fuller account of his book published in 2006. A retired teacher and now volunteer for the National Trust at Dunster Castle the author sets out to 'analyse the truth' about some of the more romantic versions of Dunster's history.

After 16 pages of preface and introduction the book is divided into three sections. In the first, entitled 'The Castle and the Family', the long and complicated story is told of the castle's owners, from the arrival of Guillaume de Moyon from Normandy to the transfer to the National Trust after the Second World War. Alongside the account of the people involved the development of the castle buildings is described, and includes some interesting black and white illustrations of various features, although the author specifically states that it is not intended as a guide book. This is interesting stuff, in particular for this reviewer the discussion of the connections with Normandy and the Norman invasion. (Moyon is today a pleasant village to the south of St Lô in the bocage country of the Département of La Manche and although unexceptional is well worth a visit). The author usefully includes two diagrams showing the chronologies of the de Mohun and

Luttrell families up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However the complicated story did not stop then, so it would have been helpful to bring the chronology up to date.

The second section of the book deals with the history of the village (or should it be called a town?). Again this provides much useful information about life in Dunster in earlier centuries, but it is disappointing in that the last 100 or so years are covered only cursorily and the post war era not at all. This is a pity. It would have been enlightening for the general reader or visitor to learn how Dunster in the Middle Ages and early modern period is reflected in what we see today. One of the important questions facing a historic settlement such as Dunster is how to provide for the needs of the modern world while looking after the valuable inheritance from earlier years. This is not just an academic matter, witness the current controversy about the replacement of the High Street's distinctive cobbles with paving slabs.

Finally the author examines the matter of the Luttrell family of Ireland and Warwickshire, primarily for the benefit of the many Luttrells of Irish/American descent who visit Dunster and who believe their ancestors are connected with the Castle. He explains at some length why he does not share this view. Clearly this section of the book is included for a specific purpose and is interesting in its own right but is of little relevance to its central themes.

Having spent 19 years in the 1980s and 90s engaged with the problems of conservation and traffic in Dunster (through the National Park Authority) I was looking forward to reading Bev Woodger's account of the history of the village. While I found the content fascinating I was both frustrated and disappointed: frustrated because the story would have been better told if more illustrations, especially a good map of the village, had been included (setting aside the often poor punctuation and proof reading which made re-reading sometimes necessary); disappointed because the opportunity has been missed to bring the story of this lively village community up-to-date. Perhaps this part of the story is for another day.

DAVID RABSON

**The Reverend Dr Thomas Sedgwick Whalley and the Queen of Bath: a true story of Georgian England at the time of Jane Austen**, by Chris Stephens, Candy Jar Books, 2014, 438pp., 110 illus., £9.99. ISBN 978-0-9928607-6-9

Thomas Sedgwick Whalley (1746-1828) has been forgotten as a poet, dramatist and letter-writer, but Mendip Lodge, his exotic country house overlooking Upper Langford and the Vale of Wrington, survived into living memory, including my own, and its extensive grounds have been the subject of recent studies (Addison, 2001; Bond, 2003).

The author tells us that a need for historical background to a bid for funds to restore the perimeter wall prompted him to immerse himself in Dr Whalley's correspondence, those of Dr Johnson's friend Hester Thrale/Piozzi, Anna Seward and Hannah More, and numerous other sources, and to recover an impressively full picture of Dr Whalley's life, his circle of family and friends, and Mendip Lodge itself.

Thomas Whalley's father, a Cambridge academic, died when he was young, and his mother brought the family to Wells, where her own father was chancellor of the cathedral. Thomas went to Cambridge himself, probably took a Grand Tour in France, was ordained and presented to a living in Lincolnshire and appointed a curate to serve it. He married a wealthy widow who brought him Langford Court, and they settled to a routine of spending summers there and winters enjoying the social and literary life of Bath, interrupted by a lengthy tour of the continent, and resuming with the substitution of the newly built Mendip Lodge for the Court. His wife died and another short-lived marriage followed, this time to a wealthy spinster. A third and final wife came encumbered with debts and a dependent deranged brother, and after a few years they separated. Much of his later life was spent in France, where he died, with intervals in Frome and the Bristol Hotwells.

The author quotes William Wilberforce describing Dr Whalley as 'the true picture of a sensible, well-informed, and educated, polished, old, well-beneficed, nobleman's and gentleman's house-frequenting, literary and chess-playing divine - of the best sort,' but adds his own apposite comment that 'one can only be astonished at the extent to which the 18th-century landed English gentleman, and especially those who held holy

orders, appear to have been totally unconcerned with the plight of the poor.'

Separate chapters are devoted to niece and protégé Frances Sage, 'Queen of Bath' and party to a scandalous divorce; to cousin Penelope Weston; to the Blagdon Controversy between the curate and Hannah More's schoolmaster, involving a pamphlet war to which Dr Whalley made a conciliatory contribution; and to Mendip Lodge. No original plans survive, but the author has reconstructed conjectural ones from contemporary descriptions and from photographs. He traces its later history through family and other private hands, until it housed evacuated mental patients from Brislington between 1939 and 1950, and fell into dereliction. We are told that a shutter was reputedly used as a counter for a shop in Churchill, and I can add that paving stones were used for the floor and step in front of the rood screen in Banwell Church.

The first of six appendices supplies brief biographies of Whalley's friends. The remaining ones deal with his poetry and plays, his paintings, his character, his will, and the Jane Austen connection, and the book concludes with a good index. Everything is thoroughly researched and sources are properly referenced. Just one curious aberration is that, despite 'Prebendary' being used correctly on pages 26 and 437 to mean the holder of a prebend, everywhere else the two terms are reversed. Production standards are modest, with only black-and-white illustrations printed on ordinary paper, but this is perfectly adequate, and a refreshing change from the fashion for glossiness.

The book will be of absorbing interest to folk acquainted with the site, but can also be enjoyed by a wider readership for its human interest and the light it sheds on the social history of its period.

Addison, K., 2001, *A dissertation on the garden history of Mendip Lodge Estate, North Somerset* (unpublished, for M.A., University of Bristol)

Bond, J., 2003, 'Somerset parks and gardens 1500-1830: some addenda' in Wilson-North, R., *The lie of the land* (Mint Press)

DAVID BROMWICH



**Cheddar in the industrial age**, by Peter Daniel, SIAS Survey No 20, 2014, 100 pp., illus., £5.70 post free from Geoff Fitton, Giles Cottage, Hill Lane, Brent Knoll, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 4DF. ISBN 978-0-9558742-2-2.

When SIAS hosted the South West and Wales Regional Industrial Archaeological Societies annual day conference in 2012, Peter Daniel led a walk around the village as one of the post-conference activities. So much information came to light (too much to be passed on there and then in detail), it became obvious that a booklet should be produced. Peter is the Societies' Field Officer, and as such has often led "fossicks" around various towns and villages, where members have been able to explore and to contribute knowledge. This has led to two IA Trail leaflets which are available to print from their website. However, this substantial booklet goes into much more detail, and covers the whole parish. It draws on many different sources to make a comprehensive study.

The village itself is dealt with as one chapter, with a map, so that it is possible to re-create the walk and see and read about the various sites. Those within the parish, but outside the village are covered in the next chapter, and include such industries as mining (ochre, lead and zinc), quarrying and lime burning, as well as the perhaps more expected tourism, drainage, and water extraction and supply. Lime-burning is particularly well covered, with Peter drawing from his extensive knowledge of the subject to include details of the various surviving kilns with styles analysed and measurements given.

The following chapter discusses the impact industry had on the village and its surroundings. There are sources and references, a glossary and indices of subject, places and people.

Peter is to be congratulated on a very comprehensive and well-illustrated booklet, and SIAS for producing it to a high standard. Hopefully there will be more along similar lines, helping to draw knowledge from across the Society.

Although Cheddar is a small, rural community, perhaps associated with cheese, strawberries and caves today, this book serves to show just how much history of industry there is under the surface. It should be a template for consideration when looking at other, seemingly quiet backwaters – they may not always have been so!

MARY MILES

**Chirnside 1, Auxiliary Units, Special Duties Branch OUT-Station**, by Captain Hugh May, FRGS, Royal Navy, contributing authors A.S.G. Blackmore, D. Hunt, T.R.N. Walford. Dudfield Publications, Axminster, 2014, xvi + 121 pp., 87 coloured plates, 12 annex diagrams, £16.50. ISBN 978-0-9929139-0-8.

This subject was first produced in 1998 as 'Now you see it - Then you didn't' as associated with the Inter Channel Stop Line by Derrick Warren (SIAS Survey 14). He had been shown the site by the then owner Major David Ingrams. Such a tour was a special treat and privilege as the writer had found ten years earlier when doing fieldwork in preparation for The History of Chardstock book which contains a paragraph about the site. In the year 2000, Derrick via SIAS revised his book and in 2008 introduced David Hunt to the new owner, Hugh May who was inspired to form a project team to research the history, study the remains and in some cases carry out minor excavation of the underground spy network centre and the radio OUT Station Chirnside 1. This became the name of this new book, which considering how difficult it must have been to find any information, is little less than a triumph.

The preface is devoted to the history of the site. Its early history which must be associated with Intelligence Officer Douglas Ingrams before WW2, is shadowy and may never be known. By 1940, a local observation network in E. Devon had been set-up, separate from operational units such as the Home Guard. Information was gathered by about 30 local people such as farmers and foresters and passed to certain key men via intermediary runners. In the event of invasion, it was necessary to protect such men and so the dugout was one of many built in early 1940. Communication from these OUT stations was by means of agents but by 1942, wireless communications were fitted, the code name being Chirnside 1. A sub OUT station was in Axminster and an IN station at Castle Neroche. In July 1944, the system closed.

Chapters 2 & 3 are by Hugh May and describe the property and the adventurous Ingrams family. Chapter 4 is by Stanley Blackmore and gives details of the dugout's excavation and construction. Difficulty in hiding the excavation material by spreading it out is described but in fact, much went into the (too) adjacent ancient holloway and county boundary, Downend Way. The buried Nissan Hut was built of heavy grade corrugated iron and this

covered with sheet zinc (as vital sacrificial anode?). The entrance was by a shaft under a lifteable privy in an outhouse.

Chapter 5 is by Tim Walford who describes the electrical and wireless installation. Interestingly, the wireless cable was insulated with polyethylene. This had only just been invented and at this date its use was restricted for security and defence. Ventilation, heating and power supply were major problems and the means adopted of operating a workable system are described.

This book is full of surprising and interesting information. The understanding of this story is greatly enhanced by a detailed timeline, the excellent illustrations and a useful glossary.

ROGER CARTER

**Somerset Atlas of breeding and wintering birds 2007-2012**, by David Ballance, Rob Grimmond, Stephen Moss, Julian Thomas and Eve Tigwell, Somerset Ornithological Society, 2014, 336 pp, 3 reference maps, 294 species maps, 14 col. photos, over 100 line illus., bibliography, index. Hbk, £35. ISBN 978-0-9931205-0-3.

This is an attractively produced book, the front cover showing birds of the Somerset Levels while the back has artistic representations of birds of the Quantock oak-woods, and in full colour too. The numerous black-and-white bird illustrations add interest to the text, although the artistic quality is variable. Colour photographs illustrate differing Somerset bird habitats and are very well chosen.

It should be noted that the area covered in the Atlas is the present-day county of Somerset, so the Somerset portions of the old county of Avon are excluded. Special care has been taken in preparing the species map outline, using the latest computerised mapping software; I felt, however, that these outline maps would have benefited by including the main river systems. Obviously the Atlas could not have been compiled without the help of many observers and 'collectors'; a full list is given at the end of the book. Fieldwork ran from November 2007 to July 2012; all records were checked before acceptance.

In a Foreword, written by Simon King, it is stated that the changes in Somerset bird species populations are clearly linked to changing agricultural practices, including the use of different pesticides and herbicides; the conclusion is that

"change is inevitable", this Atlas providing not only a modern "snapshot" to compare past records, but also a reliable baseline for studies of changing bird distributions in the future. Stephen Moss has written the introduction for the work, referring especially to Somerset's varied habitats and, importantly, to the past bird literature for the county. Both good and bad news is discussed, including ideas of 'rewilding' and 'living landscapes' and, unavoidably, the possible influence of climate change leading to the arrival of new breeding species. For the future, Great Reed and Melodious Warblers are suggested, and even Zitting Cisticola. For myself, I would add Common Rosefinch, which could well colonise Somerset's bushy areas, starting with the Levels.

I found a well-written and well-illustrated section dealing with Somerset's varied geographical bird habitats. It is pointed out that even the county town of Taunton has some bird interest, with visiting Peregrines, Black Redstarts and Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, not forgetting all those Black-headed Gulls over the River Tone. In addition, Nightingales still sing and nest not too far away from the town.

The most important, and largest, section of the Atlas is that of the species accounts, with David Ballance as the lead author. The Somerset Atlas is based on recording within tetrads; a tetrad is a 2 x 2 km square, with 25 tetrads in each 10-km square. The BTO Bird Atlas 2007-11 mapped records at 10-km square scale so, obviously, provided less detail than is possible at a local level. For most species, there are two distribution maps, one for the breeding season and one for the winter. For breeding season records, dark red dots or circles on the outline map show *confirmed* breeding, those in light red indicate *probable* breeding, and pink ones *possible* breeding. Presence in a tetrad during the breeding season but without any evidence of breeding is shown with a black plus sign. On the winter outline maps, species presence is shown by means of a blue dot or circle.

I thought that the species maps, and their accounts, were both informative and fascinating; they indicate bird population trends and distribution in Somerset, sometimes with disturbing conclusions. As one example, I noted that, for the Grey Partridge, once so common in the county, the Atlas showed confirmed breeding in just two tetrads. Of course, there are success stories, as with the Bittern, where the early spring count of 2014 reached 42 for booming males; then, for the Little Egret, there were no less than

eight confirmed nesting records. I was pleased that Somerset heronries are well-covered, with numbers of pairs at each nesting site given for 2012; 20 such sites were known to have been occupied during the Atlas period. I was also interested to read that in the four Atlas winters (2007-11), the Levels held over 1100 Mute Swans, even more than at Abbotsbury and surroundings. However, sad stories had to be told for the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (just two records of confirmed breeding), Wood Warbler, Willow Warbler, Ring Ouzel, Spotted Flycatcher and Whinchat.

As soon as this book went to the press it became out-of-date but, even so, all of the packed information that is presented is invaluable, and will become increasingly so in years to come. Clearly the work has been a long-term, and time-consuming, labour of love for many Somerset naturalists. I certainly recommend a purchase for anyone who wishes to follow the fortunes of Somerset's birds; past status can be compared with the present day picture. Bird data are presented in an easily-understood manner and the text is well-written. Yes, this is a book for your library.

PHILIP RADFORD

**Understanding the Flowering Plants: A practical guide for botanical illustrators**, by Anne Bebbington, The Crowood Press, 2014, 256pp, numerous illustrations and colour photos, six appendices and index. Pbk £24.95. ISBN 978-1-84797-758-8.

As the title states this is indeed a very practical guide to the understanding of the structure of flowering plants, regardless of size. The potential illustrator is given a detailed, comprehensive course in botany. The language used is simple and direct and leads the aspiring artist or photographer safely through the pitfalls of identifying the parts and structures of flowering plants.

The line drawings are clear and well labelled, the numerous photographs are of excellent quality but there are few indications of size of the subjects being depicted. When pictures of Honesty seed-heads and an orange appear close together this could cause confusion.

The chapter on tools, techniques and equipment is especially useful. The methods used for photographing down microscopes and instructions for using a scanner appear to have been well tested

by the author. The tricks of the trade used to stabilise specimens for illustration are informative – who would have thought of using small pieces of carrot to hold small items? Two chapters on sexual reproduction and the structure and dispersal of seeds will extend illustrators' understanding of what they are looking at, and so enable them to make their work as informative as possible.

The well laid out self-assessment projects are delivered in a manner to encourage rather than depress the beginner. The language of the text is light and humorous, the book is a pleasure to read as well as being a mine of information. (How about using a hairy dog when out walking as a collector of seeds?)

The appendices and the glossary are comprehensive and place this book in the 'must have' category for botanists who need to make visual records of the flowering plants they are studying and recording.

MARILYN CROTHERS

**Wild Orchids of Somerset**, by Chris Gladman, privately published, 2014, 60 pp, a photographic guide containing numerous colour photographs, index. Pbk £11.99. No ISBN.

In recent years there has been quite a spate of county orchid guides, and now Somerset's orchid enthusiasts will be pleased to see their own county being added to that list. Beginners and experts alike will find much to interest them in this slender volume. Its great strength lies in the quality (and quantity) of the illustrations, with photos of subspecies and varieties to cover the full range of variation found within each species: so, rather than just a single photo of a 'typical' Green-winged Orchid (*Anacamptis morio*), there are actually fifteen to illustrate all the various colour forms as well as a useful 'habitat' shot of an orchid-laden field at Barrington Hill National Nature Reserve – a site rightly said to have one of the finest displays of this species in England.

The coverage of taxa is comprehensive, and the identification notes should enable adventurous botanists to identify some of the less well-known forms of common species. The 'albino' variants of widespread species like Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and Green-winged Orchid are well illustrated, while the photo gallery of Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) flower variants is particularly

impressive. There is also a useful section at the back of the book depicting all the British orchid species that *don't* (as far as we know) occur in Somerset. Hopefully this will lead to a few new discoveries in the future!

As the introduction makes clear, the book confines itself to administrative Somerset rather than the historic county – so the northern portion of our area is sadly omitted. And unfortunately the index lists English names only, and these are rather unhelpfully ordered by the second part of the name – so, for example, Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) is listed along with lots of other species under 'O' for orchid, rather than under 'P'

for Pyramidal or 'A' for *Anacamptis*. In my view, the inclusion of scientific names (and synonyms) would have made the index far more useful and useable.

I would heartily recommend this little book, which will certainly be welcomed by anyone who, like me, occasionally struggles to distinguish between some of the more closely-related and morphologically similar taxa. The price might seem a bit steep for a volume of just eighty pages, but it is packed with information and hundreds of splendid photos, and is well worth the outlay.

SIMON J. LEACH