HARPTREES HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No 11 MAY 2022

As this Newsletter is circulated so we are in the midst of celebrations for the Platinum Jubilee. Sue Emmett reminds us that Royal Jubilee celebrations are nothing new in our area. Her newspaper research has found evidence of the 1887 event in Bishop Sutton and Stowey.

We are also nearing the holiday season and Gill Hogarth provides some websites with alternative historic holiday destinations. You never know where those may take you!

The exciting news at home is that work has commenced on East Harptree's Church of St Laurence. One of the first parts of the work has been to remove the bells for restoration. Sue Emmett gives us an update.

Amidst this is, however, the war in Ukraine. Steve Ward, using an example from his huge postcard collection, gives us a postcard snapshot from a troubled region.

Our indoor meetings and talks have now finished for the season. These will commence again in September. Meanwhile we do have two visits, the first being a Guided Walk in Bath on Wednesday 29 June. This will be led by a Mayor of Bath's Blue Badge Guide, and it will be a little more than one mile in length and generally flat. The tour includes two of Bath's most famous streets. Great Pulteney Street is one of the finest formal streets in the country, and has housed many famous residents and visitors. Sydney Gardens is the oldest park in Bath, and was originally an eighteenth and nineteenth century pleasure garden. It was a favourite spot for Jane Austen who lived opposite. The tour will last about two hours. To book a place contact; info@harptreeshistorysociety.org Booking closes on Wednesday 22 June and costs £5 per person paid in advance.

The final visit of the season will be to the Chained Library in Wells on 27 July. Further details will be sent out by email nearer the time.

If you have any queries about the Society, events or suggestions or comments on our publications, do contact us at info@harptreeshistorysociety.org.

Editor: Nick Roberts

Plea for Help!

For those who attended the last meeting in WH Hall you will have heard Guy Stobart's fantastic news about Project Newton and that the final Lottery hurdle has been jumped. Besides giving us an update on the work programme and visits to see restoration work offsite (the bells and the Karl Parsons stained glass window for example) he explained how the internal wall restoration is already revealing fabulous images from under years' of paint. We will be keeping you abreast of this exciting work.

But back to the plea for help. Guy explained that a portion of the funds secured by Project Newton can be used by the History Society to lead research work. It is intended that a professional historian will be employed to assist in guiding anyone who wishes to carry out some research. This really is a wonderful opportunity for any of us to undertake research projects over the next 6 months….or more. If you have an idea and would like to carry out a piece of research that you think is relevant (ideally to our locality) and that will benefit others and/or the community please get in touch with any member of the Committee.

No specific subjects have been drawn up as yet – we just want to hear from you with your suggestions for research. You might want to form a small team to undertake a particular subject, or tackle something on your own. What a great opportunity.

Above all, it wants to be fun!

Mystery items

I have received no conclusive identification to the mystery lead holder or ?scoop that appeared in the last newsletter. I hope to take it to the Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme for identification, so watch this space.

A new mystery item will appear in the next Newsletter.

News

The Bells of St Laurence

Sue Emmett

A once in a lifetime opportunity presented itself at St Laurence in East Harptree on Wednesday 18th May. For the first time since 1910, the bells were removed from the tower and were available to be viewed close up.

When we arrived, the three smallest were already lined up by the side of the path, in the churchyard, waiting to be loaded on a lorry to be taken away to Bridport for restoration, as part of the extensive Project Newton. The

fourth bell was also out, waiting to be moved down a temporary wooden path, on a trolley, to join the others.

A number of villagers had come to have a look, and several people commented that the bells were smaller than expected, but then the two larger ones had not yet come out, as they were proving more challenging to get down. The only feasible way to get them out was through the west door, and even then the tenor (largest) bell had to be squeezed through. It was not lost on the skilled workers that they would have to get it back in as well!

The treble, or smallest bell, is also the newest and was first hung in 1910. The others varied in age, with the oldest dating back to the fifteenth century. All bear inscriptions. It is planned to take brass rubbings of at least some of these, so they can be easily viewed.

Lots of photos were taken, and then, eventually, the clatter of chains running through the block and tackle gave us a clue that the other two bells were on the move down the tower. When I got round there, the fifth bell was hanging in the doorway, before being expertly manoeuvred onto the trolley.

Then the fun really began, for the tenor bell was too large to go through the doorway without being tipped onto its side. No problem for the men in the red boiler suits, though. After what must have been dozens and dozens of pulls on the chains, at last the inside of the bell could be seen, facing us. The clapper had already been removed, although you could see the mark on the edge of the bell where it had been striking the metal since 1863, when it was recast to celebrate the wedding of the then Prince of Wales. At this point, the bell had to be turned sideways to edge it through the doorway and then hauled upright again, before, finally, it could be moved out into the sunlight and away to join the others. The relief was palpable!

Of course, in a few months' time, there will be more fun and games as the process is reversed for the clean and refurbished bells.

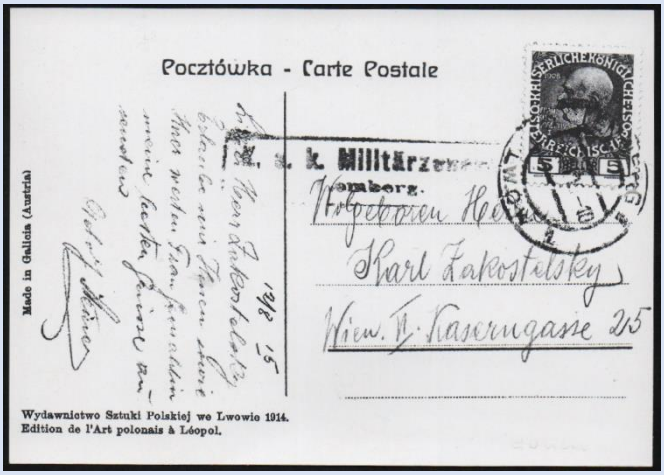
Snippets

A postcard snapshot of a troubled region — Steve Ward

A postcard from Lwów (Polish and Russian), Lemberg (German), Leopolis (Latin – 'lion city'), Léopol (French), Leopoli (Italian), Lviv (Ukrainian). It was generally called either Lemberg or Lwow in English, recently changed to the Ukrainian Lviv. So why does the city have a name appropriate to the French, German, Italian languages, but not to English? Quite simply, because British interests traditionally lay thousands of miles away across the seas – Africa, the Caribbean, the Far East, Australasia. Central and Eastern Europe only concerned us if we felt directly threatened by the disputes which intermittently flared up between Austria, Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Russia and the diverse, sometimes random and invariably fleeting unions thereof – Austro-Hungarian Empire, Nazi Empire, Soviet Empire, Warsaw Pact.

As Chamberlain said (admittedly not about the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, but it could easily have been), 'a far away country; people of whom we know nothing'. This is a great pity. As tourists to Saxony, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and so on will readily testify, this is a region of picturesque and historically very wealthy towns, fairytale castles, stunning architecture and huge market squares. It's also a region with a troubled tradition of wars, conflicted loyalties, persecution, populations forcibly expelled (or worse), families torn apart.

The region's mineral wealth and good agriculture resulted in its being frequently invaded from all directions. Its map has changed dramatically over the centuries. Lviv, at the crossroads of eastern Europe, has been affected more than most places. No sooner was it founded by King Daniel of Galicia in 1250, than it fell to the invading Mongols, who destroyed it. They were repelled, the town was rebuilt and became the capital of Galicia. Then the Lithuanians conquered it. Then it was populated by Armenians fleeing from Mongol attacks on their own homeland. Then the Polish Galicians took it back. The 17th century was especially unkind, with invasions by the Swedes, Hungarians, Turks, Russians and Cossacks. But by the late 1700s, things had finally settled down. Lviv became a cultural and commercial hub of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and grew very wealthy.



In 1914, Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand (nephew of Emperor Franz Josef I) was assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist, thus triggering the First World War. The following year, someone with the German-sounding name of Georg Steiner in Lviv thought it appropriate for some unknown reason to send a postcard for the sole purpose of expressing (in German) his obsequiously best wishes to the 'Highly Esteemed' Karl Zakostelsky and his 'equally highly esteemed'

wife at 25 Kaserngasse (which no longer exists) in Vienna. The card shows a main thoroughfare in Lviv, Karola Ludwika Street. The Austro-Hungarian stamp with the head of Franz Josef I (brother of Karl Ludwig, after whom the street was named) bears the bilingual postmark LEMBERG / LWOW. The city was at war and although the card was being sent from one part of Austro-Hungary to another, the message was still checked by the authorities and a cachet applied by the Imperial and Royal Military Censor. This is rather ironic, as the addressee Karl Zakostelsky was director of the police department in Vienna!

The First World War changed everything – although not Herr Zakostelsky's job. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was on the losing side and was disbanded. Lviv and its surrounding area became part of Poland. Twenty years later, the Second World War saw Poland invaded from the west by the Germans and from the east by the Russians. Unimaginable atrocities were committed by both sides. In the aftermath of 1945, a huge part of eastern Poland (including Lviv) became the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Ukraine finally gained its independence in 1991 when communism fell. It had finally cast aside the yoke of foreign rule. Or so it thought.

It was Lenin who said 'there are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks when decades happen'. We know what's happened in the past few decades and, particularly, the past few weeks. Structurally, Lviv survived World War 2 largely unscathed. The scene on the postcard was still recognisable in early May 2022. It is to be hoped that it still is and will remain so.

As a wry aside, online Austrian police archives record that the recipient of the postcard, Karl Zakostelsky, was one of numerous high-ranking police officials in Vienna who all died of dysentery within a few weeks of each other in 1920.

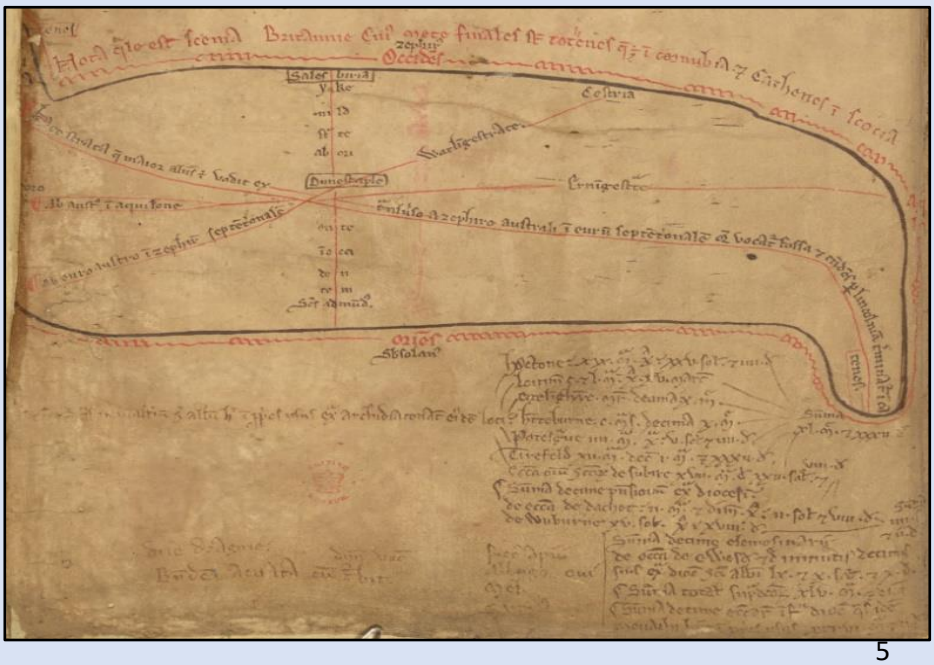
sources: Wikipedia, online Austrian police archives

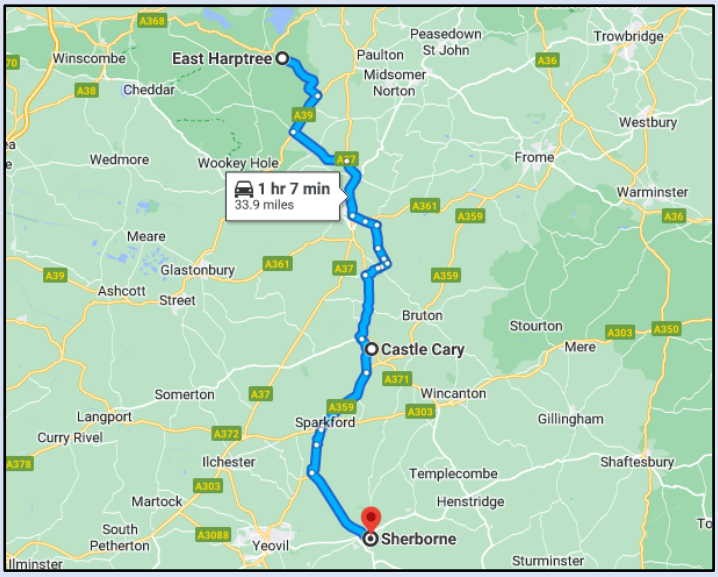
Where to go on holiday? Gill Hogarth

Fancy exploring places in 1086? If so, https://opendomesday.org/ is a fascinating website.

But how to get there? The road map of Matthew Paris - the 13th century version of GPS – can be found here https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2020/07/the-maps-of-matthew-paris.

But if you want to get in the car and try an actual journey back in time how about a trip to Castle Cary – the other castle attacked in 1138. There is a tiny free museum run by volunteers and a walk up a hillside where the castle once stood, then on to Sherborne Abbey for its colourful interior – what did St Laurence, East Harptree once look like?





About 34 miles by car, and evidently an estimated 9 hr 45 min by foot today – how long would it have taken by horseback 900 years ago?

If you can't get away then 'googling' can be a substitute. Try Corfe Castle audio trail online at https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/corfe-castle

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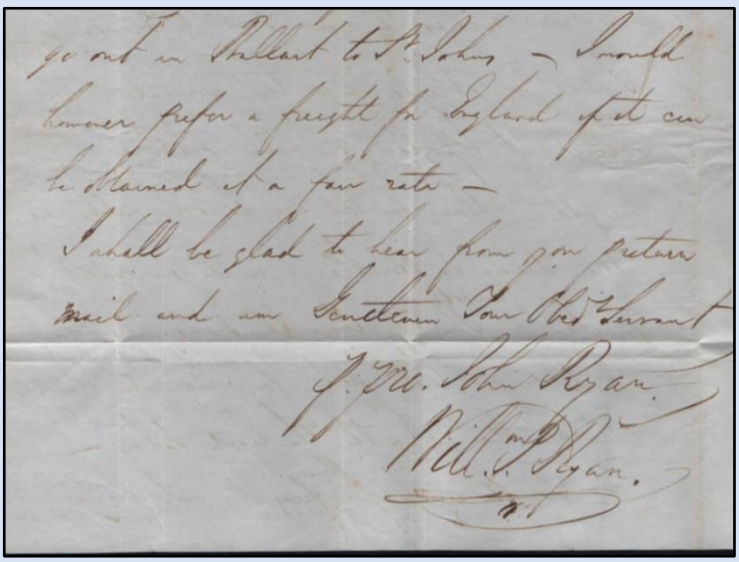
Wine from Porto in 1840

Steve Ward

In October 1840, Bristol wine merchant William Ryan wrote on behalf of John Ryan (probably his father) to wine merchants Hunt Roope & Co. in Oporto (Porto, Portugal). Postage stamps had only been introduced in May of that year and letters destined for abroad still required pre-payment. In this case, 1s 10d, the amount written on the front. (Around £9.50 in today's money.)

The letter is of interest if only for the light it sheds on how complex and circuitous maritime trade could be in the 1840s.

The brig Sarah loaded by Messrs Newman & Co at Newfoundland has been ordered to your port to discharge. I shall be obliged if on the arrival of the vessel at Oporto you will procure a freight of wine for me for London with as little delay as possible – or if you could get a freight for Liverpool or Bristol I would prefer it …… In the event of a wine freight not being obtainable, I would wish the vessel to be despatched to St John's [Newfoundland] *with a ballast of salt if it can be shipped at a price not exceeding 9/- per ton.*



The firm of Newman & Co. traces its origins back to 1679, when one of its vessel loaded with port wine from Porto and bound for London slipped its moorings. As it floated out to sea it encountered French privateers, who drove the ship off course. Trying to escape, it ventured further out into the Atlantic. After weathering severe storms, the captain decided to head for

Newfoundland where the ship over-wintered at St. John's. The cargo of port wine was safely stored in nearby caves. The following spring the vessel finally made it to England, where it was found that the port had acquired a bouquet, smoothness and flavour that it did not have before. From then on, Newman & Co. decided to age its port wine in Newfoundland. The practice continued until the very early 1900s.

Hunt & Roope go as far back as Dartmouth in 1503, when they started importing wine from Portugal. In the early years, the wine was bartered for salt cod brought to England from Newfoundland by Devon fishermen. By 1700 the firm had become Robert Newman & Co. and business premises were opened in Porto to handle fish. By the end of that century, other wine traders had joined to form Hunt, Roope & Co., which wasn't bought out until 1958.

'Ballast' referred originally to a ship with no cargo but with holds filled with sea water (or preferably any money-earning freight readily to hand – in this instance, salt) to add weight.

The brig Sarah is more difficult to track down, as there were several ships of that name. (Brig is short for brigantine, a two-masted vessel with complex sail configurations.) The Sarah referred to in the letter appears to have been built in Teignmouth in 1826 and regularly plied the Atlantic between Europe and the eastern Americas from Newfoundland to New Orleans. She may finally have met her end in Kent in January 1871, when a silver medal was awarded to Margate lifeboat coxswain William Grant for his 'gallant services and particularly for his highly meritorious conduct when saving the crew of six from the Brig Sarah that became a total wreck on the Margate Sands in heavy seas and a strong easterly wind'.

Who was William Ryan, signing per pro John Ryan? There weren't many Ryans listed in the 1841 census for Bristol, but a John Ryan (aged 26) was living at Hope Square. That was probably the right one, as his house was just across the road from Hotwells post office, where the letter was postmarked. William Ryan lived in Green Street, Clifton (only one minute's walk away), was 59 and was born in Ireland. Neither father nor son appear in the 1851 census for Bristol.

It's not certain whether the Ryans were happy when they finally got their wine, but their letter certainly proved worthy of research.

Sources: British Lifeboat records, Wikipedia, maritime lists, Hunt Roope website

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Celebrations in Bishop Sutton and Stowey — Sue Emmett

Many villages made big plans to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

'Twas ever thus: in 1887 the villagers of Bishop Sutton and Stowey were anxious to *"demonstrate their loyalty in a very hearty and enthusiastic manner"* when Victoria celebrated (only) 50 years on the throne. The Bristol Mercury described how *"a committee of 30 gentlemen was appointed to make the necessary arrangements, and a gratifying feature in connection with their efforts was the universal support they received from all classes of society."*

There was *"tea for the children and a supper for the adults and a series of old English sports..... The dwellers in Bishops Sutton were anxious to do honour to the occasion, and amongst the arches which decked the village was one at the entrance to The Redlands, the residence of Mr Arter, bearing the inscription " Welcome to our Jubilee,' and another at the gate affording access to the field put at the disposal of the committee by Mr W. C. Lyde. From the centre of this arch suspended a floral crown,*

and the structure bore the loyal aspiration, "God save the Queen, long may she reign." A string of flags was stretched across the highway by Messrs Andrews and Lovell, and in many other directions bunting fluttered in the breeze and imparted an attractive aspect to the prettily situated village." There was a procession with a brass band, not to mention dancing and fireworks in the evening.

Presumably they were at it again in 1897 for Victoria's Diamond Jubilee but the Stowey Sutton celebrations apparently did not make the newspaper. Queen Elizabeth is the first British monarch ever to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, of course.

Quotes sourced from www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk