



HEXHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Newsletter 76	Editor: Mark Benjamin (01434) 607746 editor@hexhamhistorian.org	Autumn 2016
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Thoughts from

In the last newsletter, we reported on apparent threats to the Brough Local Studies Collection in Hexham library. Members of the Committee subsequently met with staff from Active Northumberland (the arms-length agency now responsible for running the County's libraries) and were reassured that the County remains committed to maintaining the collection in situ. We have been exploring ways that the Society can support the County, particularly following the sudden and unexpected departure of Anne Newbury, the only member of County staff dedicated to local studies. As far as we know, she will be replaced and we look forward to dealing with whoever is appointed.

In a further co-operative venture, we are working with Hexham Abbey in the production of a book covering recent archaeological and architectural developments in the abbey. Intended to accompany a conference to be held at the abbey in 2017, this will be the next in our Occasional Publications series.

Our Facebook page continues to grow in popularity, a recent photo of Gojo's original shop on Back Street was viewed by 4.7 thousand people! Many of these are not members so it's a really effective way of reaching beyond our traditional community – as well as 284 in the Hexham area, some of the other 490 followers are from as far afield as Russia and Canada. For HLHS members, it's a great way of keeping up with not only what we're up to but also news of other developments of interest to anyone keen on the history of the region. If you haven't already, why not "Like" us now?



Can you scan? Yes you can!

Long-term member and unofficial town archivist, Colin Dallison, has passed his huge collection of photographs and slides to the Society. We have been awarded a grant to purchase a slide copier, but the photos can be scanned using an ordinary flat-bed scanner. We're looking for volunteers to share in the scanning of the collection. Guidance as to specifications will be given.

Once we have scanned Collin's collection, we hope to resurrect the Photo Archive Project, gathering and scanning photos held by members of the public. If you would like to join in with this project, please contact Mark – details above.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 22nd October. The Dance of Death: more than just a gruelling image? Talk by Prof Barbara Ravelhofer. Hexham Abbey Visitor Centre, 4.00-5.30pm. Free but with retiring collection.

Saturday 22nd October. Hadrian's Wall Archaeology Forum. Queens Hall; commencing 9.45 and finishing around 4.15. Tickets (£12.00 each) are available from the QH box office. Email: boxoffice@queenshall.co.uk Tel 01434 652477. The talks this year will cover recent excavations at Carlisle and Vindolanda, the discovery of a villa at Aiskew, near Bedale, and the re-discovery of the regimental bath-building at Chester-le-Street.

Saturday & Sunday 12th/13th November. The Ivan D Margary Memorial Conference: Roman roads: past, present and future research. Burn Hall Hotel, nr York. Nationally renowned Roman archaeologists, researchers, and academics will describe some of their recent work and discoveries in this field and will demonstrate how new technologies and approaches have moved and will continue

to move forward our understanding of the Roman road network our understanding in the years to come. Speakers will show how Roman Roads research has delivered a great number of new discoveries, roads, forts, signal stations, settlements and associated sites.

For further details, contact Mike Haken, 01457 872281 mike@romanroads.org Please note that the last date for bookings is 6th November.

Monday November 28th at 7.30pm in Slaley Commemoration Hall (village hall) – a talk by Shaun Hackett, Northumberland National Park ranger – “**The Plight of the Bumblebee**”.

This is a joint venture by Ladycross Nature Reserve with The Slaley, Healey and Ministeracres Local History Club. Tickets are £2, and there will be a sales table and a raffle.

Notes & Queries

Marion Fancey (Nee Timmins) asks: Love to hear from anyone re **Woodlands/Woodside/Woodside** Villas. I was brought up at no 4 1947-1959. It was like its own community, trying to get a ‘picture’ of it through the ages. Lot of local business people when we lived there. Any replies via the website or the Editor, please.

Barbara Hall writes: My ancestors were **Davidson** and owned what used to be called the Davidson Buildings on West Terrace (or Hencoates or Bellmans Close depending which source you read) next to the Fox Inn. I had found them on the 1850 ordnance map but they were not on the 1820 one. I would love to find out more about the buildings - when and by whom they were built if possible.

The Davison family were masons and 3 sons John, Thomas and William emigrated to Australia in the 1850s. Father Thomas died 1859 in Haydon Bridge. His wife Mary inherited the Davison buildings. Thomas is said to have been involved with mason work on "Hexham cathedral" and the Seal. Barbara can be contacted at bhh1852@gmail.com or via the editor

We've been contacted by an enquirer asking about the **French Garden**. As far as we've been able to establish, this was a market garden roughly where the waste disposal site now stands. We suspect that French was the name of the owner, rather than an indication of national origin! If anyone has any information or, even better, photos of the French Garden, please contact Yvonne Purdy on secretary@hexhamhistorian.org or (01434) 601237

Does anyone know the whereabouts of any **WW2 Hexham tribunal records** for those (especially women), appealing against conscription.. If you do, Yvonne would love to hear from you.

Haughton Castle visit June 2016

Greg Finch, with photos by Chris Britton

This highly anticipated outing had ‘sold out’ in minutes earlier this year and the 26 members at Haughton on a warm and still summer’s evening were not disappointed. This is an extraordinary building in a sublime setting, commanding the south bank of a bend in the North Tyne between Humshaugh and Barrasford. Approaching along the drive, it emerges high above the rhododendron bushes, a 13th century ‘hall house’ according to Peter Ryder, the renowned buildings expert who we were fortunate to have as our guide. The original house – occupied by the Swinburnes and then the

Widdringtons - was extended, upwards, more than once during the troubled 14th century. In a ruinous state by Tudor times, it was later patched up and extended yet again, most thoroughly by the addition of a modern wing by the Victorian architect Salvin, alongside ‘improvements’ added on by John Dobson.



What we see today is, therefore, a rambling, complicated and fascinating building, from the cellars to the top floor with its views to north and south. Here is a medieval spiral staircase leading to an empty chamber with a Bowman's defensive opening, and there a wide Jacobean-style flight of stairs beneath stags heads, ancient portraits and an arrangement of pikes and longswords. Our host Antony Braithwaite complemented Peter's understanding of the building fabric with pen pictures of some of the owners and occupants, apparently including some reasonably benign ghosts. Haughton has been a 'project' for a succession of owners since the 19th century and is clearly held in great affection by Antony, the latest steward of this astonishing piece of our local heritage. Our thanks go to him, to Peter Ryder, to our chairman Peter Rodger and to outings organiser Jennifer Britton for hosting and organising such an interesting and enjoyable visit.

**Raby Castle
visit
July 2016**
Louise Baxter,
with photos by
Chris Britton

As is becoming customary for HLHS outings, the sun shone, and so the views of Weardale and Teesdale on our drive to Raby Castle were spectacular. On arrival, we were met by the Curator, who gave us a most useful brief introduction to the site and its history – and pointed us in the direction of the tearoom where many had a fortifying cuppa or an early lunch.

Dating from mediaeval times, Raby remains externally a 'proper castle' (as my companion commented); but inside, it is a remarkably well-kept family home, much altered and refashioned over the centuries. We all marvelled at the excellent state of repair of the fabric and contents, a tribute to the custodianship of the Vane family since 1626. Brass was polished, wood shone, and not a spider in sight! The rooms contain a wide selection of paintings, furniture and porcelain, with something from every century and for every taste, from the grandeur of the silk and gilt Octagon Drawing Room to the simplicity of the servants' quarters. Perhaps most impressive was the Barons' Hall, large enough to hold 700 knights and reputedly where The Rising of the North was plotted in 1659. There, we were treated to a piano recital by a very talented local schoolgirl.

Outside too, Raby is very well maintained and the beautiful gardens provided seats and shady corners for picnics or simply to enjoy the sunshine and flowers. There was time to wander through the extensive deer park, with two lakes full of families of wildfowl. The late 11th Lord Barnard's reluctance to cull meant that deer were easy to spot!



After a leisurely visit to the castle and grounds, we moved on to the adjacent village of Staindrop where in St Mary's Church ("The Cathedral of the Dales") we marvelled at the magnificent tombs of the Neville and Vane families and the Vane family hatchments. The church is Saxon in origin and contains much of architectural interest.

Overall, a great day out; Raby Castle is definitely on the list of places to revisit with friends and family (especially if we can get HLHS to arrange the weather!)

**Manslaughter
at Hexham**From the
Newcastle

Journal

8th Aug 1857

Another in our occasional series of snippets from the news of the past, found by Yvonne Purdy

An inquest was held at Hexham on Saturday last, by S. Reed, Esq. coroner, on the body of an old woman named Jane Frost, under the circumstances detailed in the following depositions:-

Mary Rutherford, wife of John Rutherford, Cattle Market, Hexham, plumber, sworn, saith:- On the 6th day of July last there was a great crowd in the street. The Band of Hope was playing, and a fight took place between two men at the Skinner Burn End. The men who were fighting were William Frost, the son of the deceased, and John Dodds. I saw them meet several times and strike each other. Some people in the crowd parted them, and I saw Jane Frost, who is an old woman of seventy-seven years of age, making up towards her son through the crowd. At that time William Frost was trying to make his way through the crowd towards Dodds again, when the old woman was thrown down either by him or some of the crowd, but I cannot say that it was her son who threw her down; it might be some of the crowd, but my impression is that Frost pushed his mother down. I ran to take her up. She said her thigh was broken. I held her up until another woman came and took her from me and carried her home. Jane Frost has been confined to her bed ever since, and died last Saturday morning the 1st of August. It appeared her thigh was not broken, but her hip was dislocated. She was attended by Dr. Stainthorpe. I saw Jane Frost a few days after she got her injury, and asked her how she was. She said the doctor had told her she would never get better, and that it would finish her. Both the combatants were very drunk. Her son afterwards told me he was so drunk that he did not know he had been fighting.

Mary Swinburn, wife of John Swinburn, Battle Hill, Hexham, horse dealer, sworn, saith: I recollect the 6th day of July last. There was a disturbance at the Burn End, and I left my house to go and see what was the matter. There were two men fighting, John Dodds and the deceased's son (William Frost). They met and struck each other several times. The old woman, Jane Frost, was told her son was fighting. She came to separate the men. I saw her put her arms round her son's waist. William Frost gave her a shove with his hand, and she fell down on the kerbstone of the flags. She said, "O! my leg is broken." She attempted to get up, but fell down again, and was carried home by some women. The last witness held her up till Bessy Campbell took her away home. Jane Frost never left her bed afterwards, and died last Saturday, the 1st of August. The crowd had parted the two men before I left.

Thomas Stainthorpe, of Hexham, surgeon, sworn, saith: About one o'clock p.m. on the 6th day of July last, I was called to attend Jane Frost. When I got to her house I found her in bed. On examining her I ascertained that she had fracture within the cup of the thigh bone. Jane Frost was an old emaciated woman, and not likely to survive the injury she had received. I attended her up to nearly the time of her death, which took place on the 1st of August. Very little violence would occasion the fracture in so old a woman, - a false step, or being thrown to the ground, would produce the fracture. The injury she received was the occasion of her death.

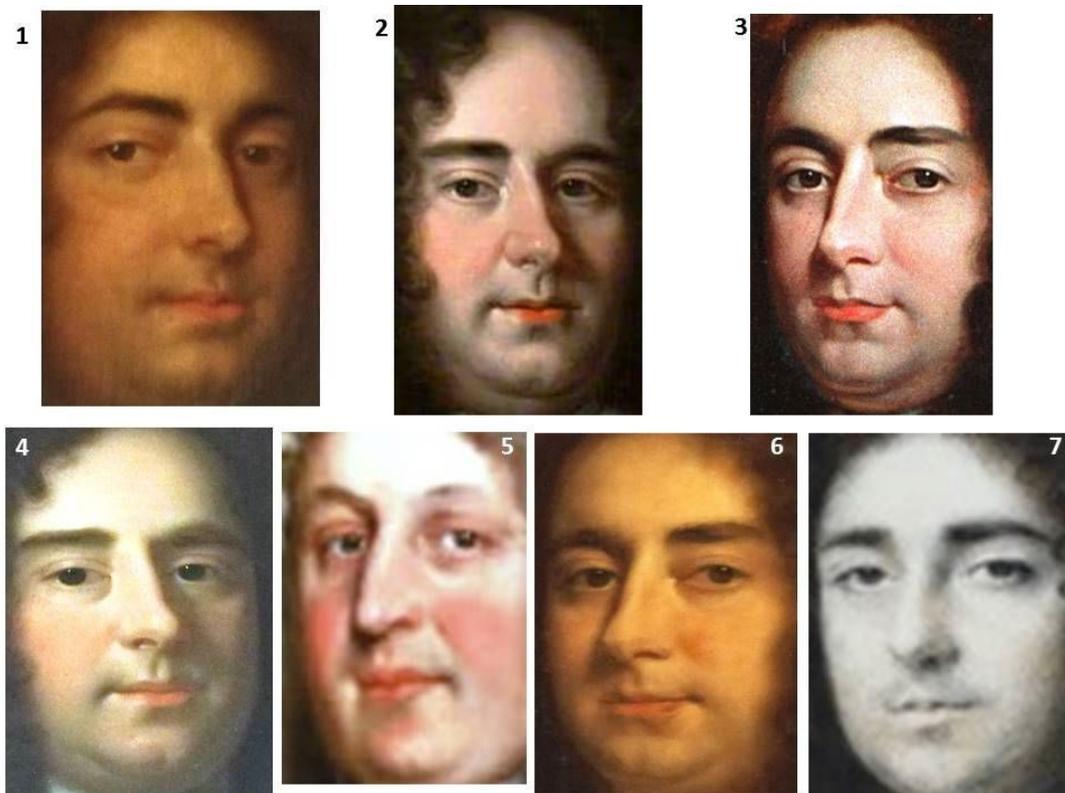
It appeared the constables could obtain little information, no one being willing to speak out, and it was not without difficulty that the two women examined before the jury were found to give any account of the affray. At the inquest (with the exception of the surgeon, who was called at the request of the jury,) no other witnesses came forward or could be obtained, although it is supposed there were many able, if willing, to describe what took place. The coroner, in going through the evidence to the jury, told them there were three points in the case to which their attention should be directed, namely, if there was a breach of the peace, if the deceased was thrown down by one of the parties engaged in the affray, and lastly, if the old woman thereby received such bodily injury as to occasion her death; if the jury considered these facts satisfactorily made out by the witnesses, the party so illegally engaged and causing the injury resulting in the death of the woman, would be guilty of manslaughter. The coroner left the jury to deliberate, and on his return to the room a verdict of "manslaughter against William Frost" was pronounced on the evidence laid before them, and he was committed on the coroner's warrant to Morpeth Gaol.

Which William's which? a useful bit of fun

Greg Finch

When the Dukesfield Documents group met at Wallington back in June we took a look at their various portraits of 3 generations of Sir William Blacketts. Their identifications are not all certain so we thought we could have some fun -and yet perhaps learn something useful- by placing them together to see whether there are any obvious likenesses and differences between the faces. HLHS members might also like to have a go. Here are seven numbered images of the faces alone, cropped as closely as possible to try and minimise the distraction of dress, wigs and settings. Which do you think belongs to the same person and how many different people do you think are portrayed? Actual identification doesn't matter, just which ones are of the same person - 7 different people altogether, just one person or some number in between. If you want to have a go either send an email with your thoughts to treasurer@hexhamhistorian.org or write them down on a piece of paper and bring it along to our November meeting where we will have a 'ballot box'! just a bit of harmless fun really, but the more opinions received the better. If we end up with a statistically significant consensus on the likenesses they are we might all learn something to our advantage and advance the frontier of knowledge in a tiny but helpful way....

Send your suggestions to Greg at Dotland Farm Cottage, Hexham NE46 2JY or email gregpfinch@hotmail.com



Get your free book here!

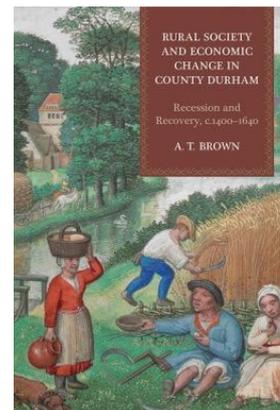
Would you like to write a review for inclusion in future newsletter? The Society receives notification of a wide range of titles from a number of publishers, offering books for review.

Reviews can be anywhere between 100 and 600 words, depending on your opinion of the book! And you get to keep the book – regardless of their opinion!

We'd like to expand our reviewing panel so, if you think you might be interested, please contact Mark (contact details above) giving any subject areas in which you are particularly interested.

Book Review
Greg Finch

Brown, A T. Rural Society and Economic Change in County Durham, Recession and Recovery, c1400-1640 (Boydell, 2015) xv + 288pp, 19 figures, 32 tables, 4 maps, ISBN 978 1 783270750, £60



In the catastrophic wake of the Black Death and subsequent plagues in the 14th century, the following century was 'the golden age of the labourer' as the earlier balance between scarce land and many people was dramatically reversed. By the same token it was less golden for landowners, as small tenant farmers sought lower rents, labourers' wages rose, and it was difficult to keep land under cultivation.

Their reaction to these changed circumstances was to have long-term consequences, as demonstrated by Alex Brown in this new academic study of County Durham over the long period between the aftermath of the Black Death and the eve of the English Civil War. It is a work of ambitious and bold scope, straddling the medieval and early modern periods, usually kept apart by academics specialising in one or the other. The course of the economic depression of the 15th century is poorly charted in original records, and the decision by many landowners to lease out their estates helps to explain this. But because much of Durham was owned by the church it remains reasonably well documented. Crucially these ecclesiastical estates were in two quite different parts: those belonging to the medieval Durham Cathedral Priory which emerged after the dissolution of the monasteries as the Cathedral's Dean and Chapter, and those of the Bishop of Durham. Brown examines the different decisions taken in the 15th century each case, and also those of the main non-ecclesiastical landowners including the Nevilles of Raby, the Lumleys and Bowes, and traces the subsequent development of their estates into the 16th and early 17th centuries.

This later period has long been associated with 'the rise of the gentry' exploiting rising prices at a time of renewed population growth and 'aristocratic crisis'. Brown's central conclusion is, however, that the relative fortunes of different groups of people are better characterised by whether they were 'rentier landlords' –whether aristocratic, ecclesiastical, grand or humble- or actively involved in farming. Simplistically, the former are more likely to have suffered from a limited ability to raise rents while prices rose, while the latter, conversely, benefited from those higher prices for their produce while rents remained low. Varying decisions taken by different owners in the 15th century affected how well placed they were to benefit – or suffer- in the 16th and 17th. The impact of long term population change on the landed economy was therefore filtered through an institutional prism: the development of the Dean and Chapter's estates was quite different to those belonging to the Bishop. Outside the church, those landowners who gave up the struggle (or who backed the wrong side in the 1569 Rising of the Northern Earls) found willing buyers amongst their prospering larger tenants, and –particularly- Newcastle merchants grown rich from trade, especially in coal. But this was not mainly a pursuit of landed respectability. Brown argues persuasively that most of the merchants were seeking land for its mineral wealth, and they remained close to their urban status rather than disowning it.

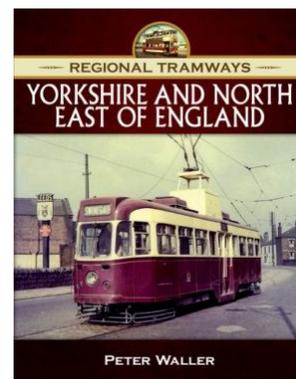
This is a work for those with a strong interest in the economic and social history of our region, and is likely to provoke further research into the questions surrounding how land was owned and let in the Tudor and Stuart north. It is well structured, if repetitive in places: we probably don't need to be told three times where Richard Bellasis had stashed his gold and silver about the house for his executors to find. Further maps would help, particularly to show the geographic distribution of the various estates around the county to support the arguments made, and it is unfortunate that the two –small- maps of villages used as case studies are presented without a scale or a key to the shading of their content. On the whole though, the book distils a great deal of research to make an interesting case explaining important changes in the life and society of rural Durham.



Book Review

David Crockit

Waller, Peter. Regional tramways Yorkshire and North East of England (Pen & Sword, 2016) 176pp ISBN 9781473823846 £25



This is an anorak's book, and all the better for that. The text is comprehensive, the illustrations many and clear and the captions fulsome.

The chapters are in alphabetical order by system from Bradford to the Tyne & Wear Metro and include the recent reincarnations of trams, with a chapter on preservation of trams from the area also covered in the book.

The introduction is a history of tramways in the region starting with the first in Darlington in 1862, while this predated the Tramways Act of 1870 it was sadly short-lived, closing on 1st January 1865. The effect of the Tramways Act is explained, giving Local Authorities the capacity to grant rights to establish tramways, the 21 year lease and the duty of maintaining the strip of road on either side of the rails. Some local authorities ran the system themselves and others were operated by private contractors.

The first trams were horse-drawn, electric trams coming into use from around the start of the 20th Century. There were also brief experiments with steam hauled trams. Similarly to the railways, various track gauges were used, from 3' to the standard railway gauge of 4' 8 1/2". With the increase in motor vehicles trams were seen as an inconvenience and from 1920s onwards began to be replaced by trolley buses and ultimately by buses, a process which sped up after WWII.

After this brief history each of the remaining chapters, other than the final one, describes one tram system in the region. They begin with a map showing connections to neighbouring systems and coloured to show the dates when the various sections were withdrawn. The photographs are many, showing the range of designs and the captions informative. The majority are in black and white, with colour only for the Metro, some preserved vehicles and rare colour examples of trams in service.

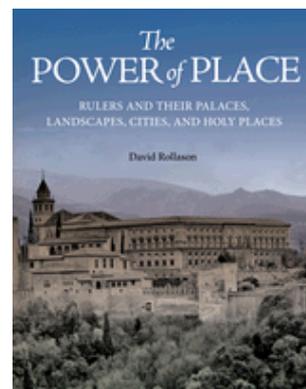
Bradford built the bulk of its trams at Thornbury with some built by English Electric between 1919 and 1921. Some of these were later sold onto Sheffield in 1942. This was a City-run system from beginning to end. The chapter continues with a comprehensive history of the system. This includes a table of closures and descriptions of the many tramcars and their eventual fates. The Gateshead system was operated by a private contractor to the end. This & the subsequent chapters follow the same plan as that described above.

Two recent systems are also described, South Yorkshire Supertram, Sheffield and the Tyne and Wear Metro. The concluding chapter is on preserved trams from the systems described within the book, some of these can be found at the National Tramway Museum at Crich, some at Beamish and others in local museums.

The set format of the body of the text ensures that the reader is kept on the straight and narrow & does not find themselves lost in foreign parts or even Yorkshire. For anyone with an interest in urban mass transport this is worth consulting and probably adding to their library.

Book ReviewHelen
Rutherford

Rollason, David. The power of place: rulers and their palaces, landscapes, cities and holy places (Princeton UP, 2016) 488pp. 37 color illus. 151 halftones. 33 line illus. 3 maps. ISBN 9780691167626 £37.95



David Rollason is Professor Emeritus (Early Medieval History) in the History Department at Durham University. "The Power of Place" is the culmination of a pre-retirement project funded by a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship: it is a wide ranging book both in terms of geography and time period. It has the outward appearance of a "coffee-table" book, with what could be a hand-tinted photograph of the Alhambra, reminiscent of an antique postcard, on the cover. However what lies within is a fascinating and scholarly discussion of the nature and demonstration of

power afforded by buildings and landscape.

Rollason has clearly relished the challenge of bringing together diverse architectural, historical and archaeological material to explain his thesis. In the preface he describes the breadth of the work carried out as taking him beyond his areas of comfortable expertise and into new, complex, and exciting arenas. He suggests that the aim of the book, to explore the nature of power through an examination of the places and palaces created by rulers and the holders of power from the first to the sixteenth century AD, and the work required to achieve this aim was “risky...extremely exciting, but fraught with danger”. Individual chapters are concerned with palaces, landscapes, cities, holy places and, finally, burial places throughout Europe.

It is impossible to do justice to the depth of scholarship that is demonstrated in a short review, however in order to illustrate the breadth of the discussion, I will give a flavour of the contents of chapters 5 (“Forests and the hunt”) and 11(“Death and Power”): a contrast between the power conveyed by the live and vital and that demonstrated from beyond the grave. Chapter 5 looks at the scale and location of forests, and their role to enable hunting and the outward demonstration of power and might, and the relationship with palaces they served. Not only does the discussion look at mainland Europe but there is a local dimension with a brief discussion of the hunting forests of the bishops of Durham.

Chapter 11 opens with the aims of the chapter, to explore places of burial and analyse what messages of power they conveyed both in life, during construction, and after death as monuments. Rollason begins with burial mounds and the tombs of first century Roman emperors and Danish royal mounds in the south of Denmark and he discusses scale and position as markers of status. The chapter then moves to churches, mausoleums and necropolises. There are plans and diagrams of royal tombs and photographs of tomb architecture.

The book concludes with a comprehensive section on research and reading to sign- post further material for those who wish to further explore the issues illuminated in the text.

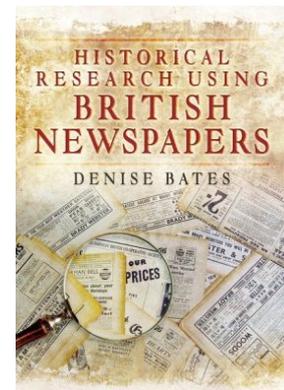
The chapters are illustrated throughout with both black and white images, which are somewhat dulled by the fact that the book is printed on cream coloured paper, and a set of colour plates. The illustrations contribute to the immersive nature of the book: it is a Grand Tour without leaving the comfort of the armchair- thus, perhaps, reflecting the aptness of the “postcard” on the cover.

Book Review
Yvonne Purdy

Bates, Denise. Historical research using British newspapers (Pen & Sword, 2016) 181ppp ISBN 9781473859005 £12

Many more old newspapers are becoming available online, via subscription sites, and some also freely available with library membership, and as I have a great interest in them for both social history and family research, I was very keen to read this book, and I was not disappointed.

Denise Bates has written an excellent book which is clearly laid out, very informative and easy to read, and includes a good insight into the history of newspapers, and their publication processes. It provides both experienced and new users with very good advice on the best methods of using newspapers as a tool of research, using interesting case studies, explaining possible political and social bias between different newspaper reports of the events of the day, and techniques on organising research results, including the use of spreadsheets for data handling.



I would highly recommend this book for both social and family historians.

