

Research Bulletin No 1

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Editorial

I. Welcome to this Bulletin

Welcome to Leckhampton Local History Society's first collection of research articles. In its quarterly newsletter, *Smoke Signal*, there is room only for short articles and notes. Here our contributors have had the opportunity to develop their theme at greater length, accompanied by illustrations in a larger format.

'Leckhampton in a Nutshell' sets the scene. It is a 'potted history' listing all that is significant or unique about the village and I hope it also demonstrates why Leckhampton's past is worth investigating and chronicling, as a means of establishing a 'sense of place'. There follows an article on the pleasure grounds at Liddington Lake, which for a quarter of a century delighted crowds from miles around. Barely a trace or memory of it remains, and John Milner has performed an important service in unearthing the evidence. Many townspeople will know him as a popular lecturer on the history of Cheltenham and its surroundings. He is also a supportive member of the Society, and we are pleased to print one of his rare articles, written at our special invitation. At the Society's recommendation, backed by the two other similar societies in the area, John has been chosen to receive this year's Cheltenham Arts Council Award for his work in the historical field.

Other forms of amusement were taking over as the Twentieth Century progressed. Alan Gill's account of the early days of flying deals with rough and ready forerunners of today's air tattoos, which just before the First World War drew crowds of spectators to Leckhampton's open spaces.

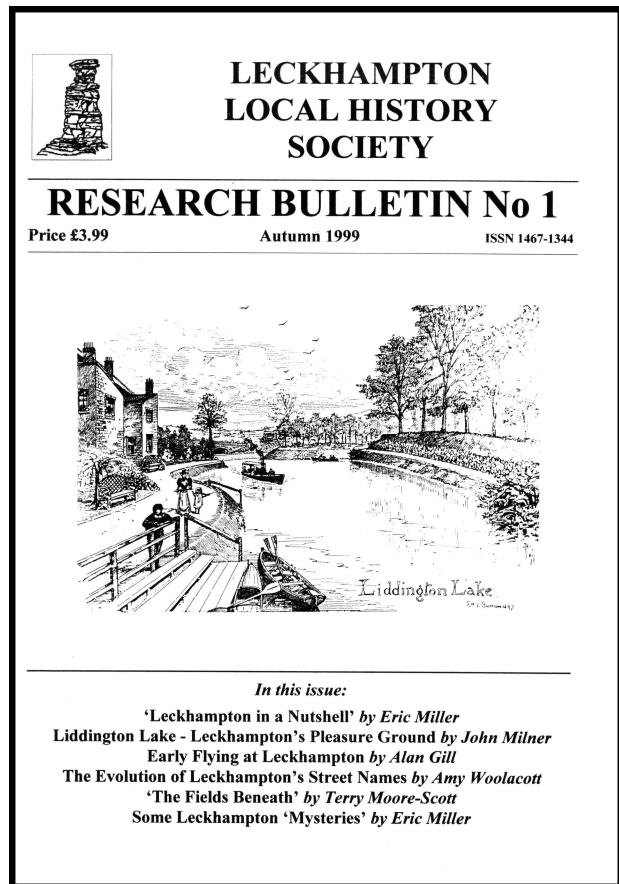
To complete the picture, two complementary articles are concerned with Leckhampton's physical layout, from the pattern of its medieval fields to its present-day system of roads. The ownership and use of the land are comprehensively described by Terry Moore-Scott and some of the historical names of the fields and their owners find echoes in Amy Woolacott's study of the evolution of Leckhampton's street names. At the end are three short items which investigate some local myths: correcting false impressions of the past can be as important as presenting new information.

Leckhampton's highways and byways may now be no more than an extension of Cheltenham's, and its remaining fields may be under threat from developers, but there is still an air of individuality about the village, which this bulletin aims to portray. We hope that it has succeeded and that enough interest will be shown to justify the compilation of a second such bulletin in due course. (To whet your appetites, articles are planned on the Leckhampton Golf Club and on Leckhampton's brickworks and potteries.)

II. Chronicling Leckhampton's History

Leckhampton has been well served by past and present historians. The local worthy Robert Cary Barnard set a fine example in 1897 with his *Records of Leckhampton*. It chronicles the evolution of the village from the Domesday onwards, and gives a particularly detailed description of the parish records. A *Souvenir of Leckhampton Court*, edited by Sydney Harrison in 1919, paints an intimate picture of the Red Cross Hospital which was housed there during the First World War. Both books are rare, but second-hand copies may occasionally be found.

More recently, the Leckhampton Women's Institute's *Leckhampton - the Story Of Our Village Within Living Memory, 1850 - 1957*, produced for private circulation, is a valuable source of local tradition. David Bick's *Old Leckhampton* describes the rise and fall of the Leckhampton Quarries and the associated tramways and also gives an



excellent summary of the disputes over access to the hill. In *Leckhampton through the Ages* , Eve Andrew and Canon Eric Brewin give a concise yet comprehensive survey of the evolution of the village from prehistoric times to the present day, with chapters on the church and court and the families of the lords of the manor. Your editor's *History of Leckhampton Church* covers the building, furnishings, stained glass, the bells, the organ, memorials, parish records, and much more besides.

The Local History Society's first publication, *1894 - the End of an Era* (now out of print), describes the sale of Leckhampton Court and its lands in that year and presents a portrait of the village as it was then. It was edited by the late Bruce Stait, who first proposed the formation of the Local History Society. Your editor's second book, *Leckhampton Yesteryear*, based on information taken from parish magazines, describes aspects of village life from the turn of the century to the beginning of the Second World War: entertainments and the growth of local societies, the building of the parish hall and the new school, celebrations of peace and war, and much additional information on church activities.

Most recently, in 1998, the Society brought out *Leckhampton in the Second World War* , based in large part on the recollection of numerous present and previous inhabitants, but also using important and hitherto unpublished documentary material and some 50 rare photographs. The chapters on the air raids over Leckhampton and on the POW camp have attracted particular attention, but the descriptions of aspects of everyday life have a general appeal: civil defence and the Home Guard, air raid precautions, fire-watching and the blackout, the arrival of evacuees, the effects of rationing, the response of schools and churches, and attempts to maintain some kind of social life.

The Society has collected some 400 historic photographs of the area, as well as a number of prints and engravings, and its next venture is planned to be the publication of a selection of these, with appropriate commentary. If any reader feels able to fill a possible gap, please get in touch with Alan Gill (phone 01242-519248).