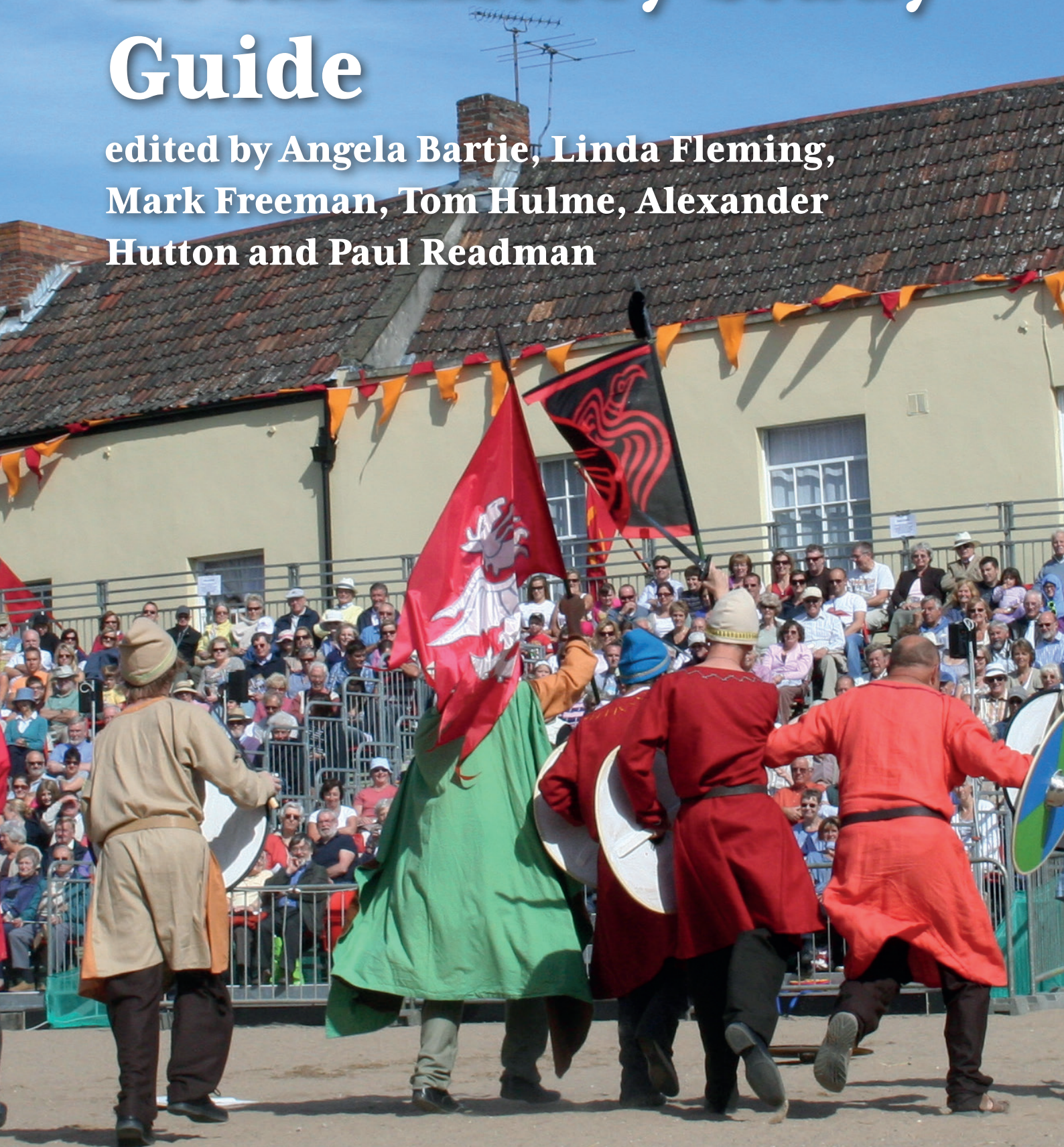


Historical Pageants Local History Study Guide

edited by Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming,
Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alexander
Hutton and Paul Readman



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About this Guide

This *Local History Study Guide* arises out of a major research project, *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905–2016*, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.¹ This ran from 2013 to 2017, with a funded follow-on project from 2019 to 2020. The project explored the fascinating and often forgotten phenomenon of historical pageants. From 1905 until the present day, many people dressed up as figures from history, and acted out the histories of their local communities or organisations in a series of episodes, to audiences that could, in the larger pageants, number in many thousands. The performers were supported by an army of volunteers, who would throw themselves into a range of activities designed to make the pageants a success—they might have made costumes and props, raised funds and awareness, provided musical accompaniment, or offered to build grandstands to seat the audience or direct traffic to the performance site. Directors in charge of the action, usually called ‘pageant-masters’, could make a living moving from place to place during the annual ‘pageant season’. They were supported by locally based scriptwriters who would identify and bring together the episodes from history that were considered important—or best suited to dramatic performance—from the local or organisational past. In short, pageants were often major undertakings calling upon the enthusiasm and labour of many, many people.

The aim of our *Redress of the Past* project was to produce an *open-access database* of historical pageants, as well as a series of articles and books about the phenomenon. The funded phases of the project lasted more than four years, but the database will probably never be complete, such was the popularity of pageants, and we continue to work on it as a labour of love. At the time of writing, the website contains around 1.5 million words of text, including fully referenced essays on individual pageants and images of the ephemera associated with them, as well as the voices of some pageant participants whom we interviewed. The *database* is fully searchable.² We welcome and encourage you to explore it (for tips about how to use the database, see the *user-guide* on our website).³

This *Guide* is one of the many public-facing activities of the *Redress of the Past* project, and is inspired by the rich and insightful experiences we have had working with a range of individuals, groups and organisations to bring knowledge of the pageant movement to a wider audience. We have encountered many knowledgeable and enthusiastic individuals—from local history organisations, the heritage sector, artistic communities, and elsewhere—who have assisted with our project in a variety of ways. They have pointed us in the direction of valuable source materials, including films, images, and objects connected with the pageant movement, and have directed us to people with first-hand experience of staging or performing in historical pageants. Those people in turn have shared their memories and experiences with us, through oral history interviews and in reminiscence events, and in exhibitions about pageants in their local areas. Many people and organisations, across Britain, have invited us to share the findings of our research.

This *Guide* has many purposes. It aims to encourage people and organisations to engage with the many historical pageants that took place—and, in some places, continue to take place—across the country. We know there is an appetite for finding

1 *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain*: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/>.

2 Angela Bartie, Paul Caton, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton and Paul Readman, *The Redress of the Past*: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/>.

3 ‘Guide to the Database’: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/database-guide/>.

out more about these intriguing events, and the significance that they held in ordinary people's lives, as well as in the lives and histories of communities—whether place-based or organisational—and we want to both widen and deepen understanding of them. One way we are seeking to do this is by highlighting the value of pageants to local heritage and family history activities, and so we will explore examples of these in dedicated chapters in this *Guide*.

We are also keen to support the development of sustainable research activities among the public at large. Hence this *Guide* provides advice on how to study historical pageants and where to find information about them; it also highlights the variety of outputs, activities and other events that might arise from this, through presenting a mixture of nuts-and-bolts information and 'case study' examples. We hope, therefore, that our *Guide* will offer both inspiration and practical support. We are also keen to maintain communication and interaction between the *Redress of the Past* project, particularly the website and database, and the diverse communities of researchers and others who are interested in historical pageants. We do this by linking the themes and locations mentioned in this *Guide* with relevant entries from our *database of pageants* in Britain, as well as highlighting the '*Get Involved*' section of our website, which allows users to upload images and other memorabilia and ephemera from their own collections.⁴ By doing this, we hope to work together to build a deep and lasting resource that will be of use to anyone interested in historical pageants and to build and maintain a community of interest.

The *Guide* begins by offering an introduction to the story of historical pageantry, covering its origins and development, and giving a flavour of where and when pageants took place, the kind of people who got involved and what kinds of scenes from history they depicted. This contextual chapter is followed by one that aims to provide a practical guide on where to find information on historical pageants, covering the sources and documents that have survived, and the kinds of information that you can find out from them—as well as some tips on how to access different sources.

The main body of the *Guide* is then made up of the following thematic chapters: 'Local and Family Histories'; 'The Material Culture of Pageants'; 'Exhibitions and other Events'; and 'Pageants in Film and Music'. Each chapter discusses its theme using examples drawn both from our project activities and others that we have come across during our adventures in historical pageantry. Each of these chapters also includes invited contributions by individuals active in local history research and/or the heritage sector. These contributions demonstrate how and where to find information on aspects of historical pageants (for example, Ellie Reid on the material culture of pageants), what might be done with this material, and how others have engaged with historical pageants in local, family or heritage sector activities and outputs. The chapters include accounts of successful exhibitions, reflections on the performance of music and scenes from historical pageants—and even some experiences of staging pageants in the modern era.

We hope you enjoy this *Guide*, and find it inspiring, useful and informative.

4 'Get Involved': <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/get-involved/>.

I About Historical Pageants

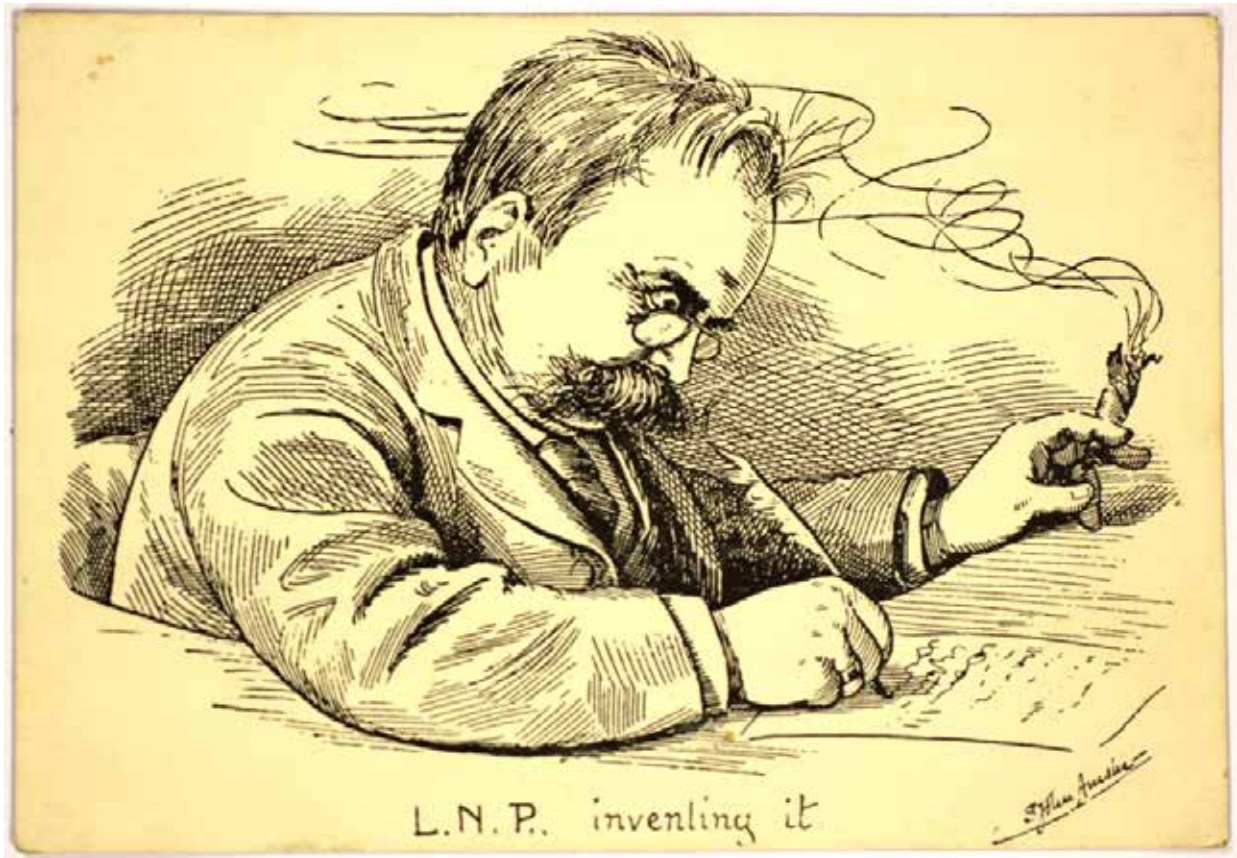


A scene from the Sherborne pageant of 1905, in front of the ruins of Sherborne Castle.
Reproduced with the permission of the Dorset History Centre, ref. D2259/6.

In the early twentieth century Britain succumbed to ‘pageant fever’ or ‘pageantitis’. Hundreds of thousands of people were infected by the contagion, giving up time to participate as performers, musicians, organisers and fundraisers: casts ran into the thousands. Hundreds of thousands more filled grandstands erected across the country every summer. People fought for tickets (in some cases literally), railway companies arranged special trains to pageant hotspots, and the press lavished column inches on the phenomenon. At social occasions before the First World War, ladies and gentlemen could expect to be asked ‘do you padge?’

There were precursors to the pageant craze, not least the late Victorian fashion for *tableaux vivant*, and more distantly the medieval traditions of pageantry. But the modern movement really got going in 1905, when the playwright and theatrical impresario Louis Napoleon Parker held *a pageant in Sherborne, Dorset*.⁵ Parker was a stocky, moustachioed little man with huge energy and a penchant for cigars. Some sense of his personality is captured in a cartoon of him ‘inventing’ the pageant form, which became popular as a postcard. He was a forceful, some might say dictatorial, presence—this may have been necessary, given the numbers of people involved.

Staged in June amid the ruins of Sherborne Castle, Parker’s pageant was a great success. The 2,000-seater grandstand was packed, with hundreds of people sitting and standing on the grass in front of the arena. Ticket touts made a killing. The total audience across the full run of performances was around 30,000. The press response was ecstatic: Parker’s pageant idea had really struck a chord with the public.



Postcard showing Louis Napoleon Parker 'inventing' the historical pageant.
From a private collection.



Morris dancers and hobby horses from the Sherborne Pageant of 1905. The two central figures are Robin Hood and Maid Marian.
From the collection of Ellie Reid; photograph by Benjamin Stone.



Cover of the souvenir programme for the National Pageant of Wales.
From the collection of Ellie Reid.

Originally conceptualised by Parker as a ‘folk-play’, the Sherborne pageant re-created 11 successive scenes from the history of the town, beginning with its foundation by St Ealdhelm in 705, and ending with a visit by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1593. In between, the pageant depicted the defeat of the Danes, the arrival of Alfred the Great, various events in the medieval history of the town and monastery, the establishment of the almshouses, and the expulsion of the monks in 1539. Music and dance—including morris dancers dressed as Robin Hood and his merry men—added colour and interest to the historical story told.

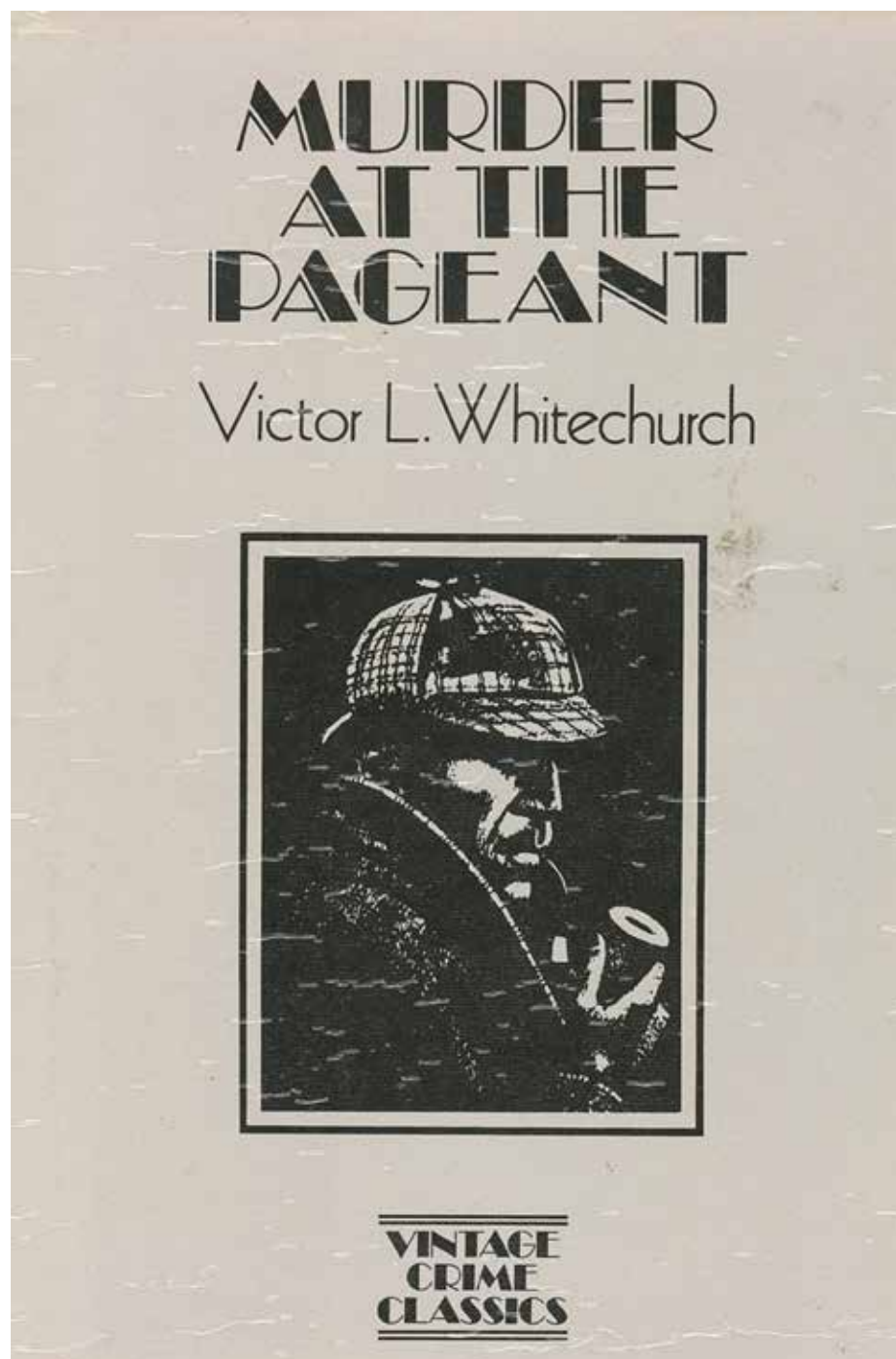
Originating at Sherborne, pageant fever ran high in the next few years. The Parker format was replicated and adapted. Parker himself staged pageants at Bury St Edmunds (1907), Dover (1908), Colchester and York (both 1909), and others besides; and towns and cities across the country did the same. Large cities such as Liverpool (1907) got in on the act, as did tiny places like Hinchingsbrooke, outside Huntingdon, in 1912. There was a Scottish National Pageant in Edinburgh in 1908 and a National Pageant of Wales in Cardiff the following year. Some pageants were huge: the *Pageant of London*, for example, staged at the Crystal Palace as part of the Festival of Empire in 1911, was seen by more than a million people across a remarkable 120 performances.⁶ The pageant-master here was Frank Lascelles, another key figure in the story of historical pageantry, who produced a number of significant pageants both in Britain and overseas. A typical pageant of the Edwardian period would have around ten scenes, organised chronologically, perhaps beginning with the Roman Empire, certainly containing lots of medieval content, and often ending with a scene featuring Elizabeth I, accompanied with revelry and folk dancing.

The guns of August 1914 sent pageant fever into remission, but after 1918 the movement started up again. Despite the increasing popularity of radio and cinema, pageant enthusiasm reached new heights in the 1920s and 1930s. Everyone was at it: villages, small towns and cities, schools, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Women’s Institutes, nurses’ organisations, nonconformist churches, the League of Nations Union, the Co-operative movement, the Junior Imperial League, and political parties from the Conservatives to the Communists. Hundreds of thousands of people were involved. The *Pageant of Empire at Wembley in 1924* had 15,000 performers—human performers, that is: there were also elephants, sheep, camels, monkeys, parrots and a bear.⁷

Pageants became established as an important part of British culture. Many household names were involved: for example, the historians G. M. Trevelyan and Arthur Bryant, the composers Ralph Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar, and the novelist E. M. Forster, who wrote the text of two pageants, a revival of one of which featured in Radio 4’s *The Archers* in 2016. Virginia Woolf wrote a novel about a village pageant, *Between the Acts*, and pageants also featured in the fiction of (now) lesser known authors. Arthur Quiller-Couch, for example, who had a hand in writing Winchester’s pageant in 1908, loosely fictionalised the Winchester experience in his novel *Brother Copas*; crime writers loved to set their mysteries at a country house pageant; the children’s writers *Noel Streatfeild* and Rosemary Manning covered pageants

6 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1305/>.

7 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1302/>.



Published in 1930, Victor L. Whitechurch's *Murder at the Pageant* was one of many novels in the mid-twentieth century that featured an historical pageant. *From the collection of Mark Freeman.*

in their novels; and pageanting was a pastime enjoyed by Richmal Crompton's schoolboy rascal 'Just William'.⁸

As in 1914, war put a stop to major pageanting in 1939, although some pageants were performed during and just after the Second World War, including *one in the bombed-out ruins of Coventry Cathedral* in September 1945.⁹ But once again pageantry was revived with the coming of peace. Major pageants staged in the 1940s included Bristol (1946), St Albans (1948) and *Nottingham (1949)*.¹⁰ These were followed by a

8 For Noel Streatfeild, see <https://tinyurl.com/partyfrock>.

9 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1044/>.

10 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1141/>.



The 'dun cow' from the Warwick pageant of 1906.
 From the collection of Ellie Reid.

flurry of pageants to coincide with the Festival of Britain in 1951, and a further burst of activity around the time of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

The content of pageants evolved considerably during the first half of the twentieth century. Pre-1914 pageants often ended with Elizabeth I, showing a marked reluctance to address potentially controversial topics such as the Civil War or the industrial revolution. But there was a tendency after the First World War, and even more after the Second, to feature more recent historical events. For a few years after 1914, the First World War itself was depicted in pageants, often graphically, but this fashion was short-lived. Nevertheless, many pageants contained poignant references to twentieth-century conflict, occasionally portraying the efforts that a town or city made on the Home Front. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, too, were increasingly common elements in the narratives of historical pageants, as was a greater emphasis on economic and social history. In particular, the Festival of Britain pageants were keen to depict the history of the 'ordinary' man and woman, placing the rapid economic changes of the twentieth century into a longer historical context.

Pageants depicted real and mythical historical figures. Kings Alfred and John, Queen Elizabeth I and many significant individuals were staples of pageantry, but so were figures such as King Arthur and Robin Hood, as well as many local traditions and legends such as that featuring the monstrous 'dun cow' of Warwick. St George and the dragon appeared in many pageants, as did countless local saints for whom



Mummers and dragon from the Shropshire Historical Pageant, Ludlow Castle, 1934.

David Clarke Collection, King's College London.

there was a more-or-less patchy historical record. Pageants blended fact, myth and outright fiction—a scene at *Birmingham* in 1938, entitled ‘The Dawn of History’ featured a huge fire-breathing dinosaur, called ‘Egbert’, fighting with fur-clad cavemen—but they did also have an educational purpose, bringing history to life for local communities in a dramatic and enjoyable way.¹¹

Not until the mid-to-late 1950s did the pageant movement go into real decline. And even so, there were some exceptions to this, such as the Bury St Edmunds Pageant of Magna Carta in 1959. Indeed, in some places, historical pageantry remained a significant element of local historical culture into the 1970s and 1980s. One important carrier of the tradition was the pageant-master David Clarke, who was based in Surrey and produced several pageants there and across England. Clarke had first worked with the pageant-master Christopher Ede as production designer for the Guildford pageant in 1957, and went on himself to stage another pageant in Guildford in 1968, as well as others including a ‘Pageant of Monarchy’ in 1987. Clarke also produced a notable pageant at *Carlisle* in 1977, one of a number staged in that year at the time of the queen’s silver jubilee.¹²

Another example of a place that has spectacularly bucked the trend of decline in historical pageants is the small town of Axbridge in Somerset. Here, a pageant was staged to celebrate the opening of the A371 bypass road in 1967; and this inaugurated a tradition, with follow-up pageants being staged in 1970, 1980 and every ten years thereafter. At the time of writing, Axbridge is preparing for its next pageant in August 2020—you can read more about this, and its value to the local community, in Case Study A.

Pageants often left a significant impression on places that staged them. The names of streets and parks provide evidence of this: Pageant Close in Sherborne, Pageant Road in St Albans and Pageant Field in Framlingham are all examples. At Warwick,

11 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/994/>.

12 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1025/>.



Pageant-master David Clarke at work.

Photograph by Ann Page; reproduced with permission.

profits from the 1906 pageant bought the large house in the town centre that had served as the headquarters of the pageant officers. Named 'Pageant House' in honour of the event, it was given over to local government use. Its grounds—also bought with pageant-generated funds—became a public open space called 'Pageant Garden'. There are public memorials to pageants in Bath and Bury St Edmunds. And in Arbroath, Angus, there is a pub called 'The Pageant', commemorating the long series of pageants that has been held there at frequent (though not regular) intervals since 1947.

Across much of the twentieth century, pageants were a means of representing, to whole communities, established understandings of the local past, linked to wider



The memorial to Frank Lascelles's Bath pageant of 1909. This plaque is in the Temple of Minerva in Sydney Gardens, not on the site of the pageant itself. The temple was originally constructed to advertise Bath at the Empire Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1911, and was subsequently moved to Bath itself to commemorate the pageant.

Photographs by Mark Freeman.

national narratives. They attempted, not always successfully, to bring communities together. They could be divisive—local social and political rivalries were often replicated in the organisation and content of pageants. Thus, for example, at Manchester in 1938 there was a controversy as to whether the 'Peterloo' massacre of 1819 should be depicted, and at Bury St Edmunds in 1970 a group of young people, disaffected with what they saw as the social exclusiveness of the pageant in that year, staged their own alternative puppet pageant in opposition to the main event. As their ringleader wrote to the local press, '[t]he people on the estates ... are not involved in many of the so-called commemorative events, and see the whole affair as a waste of ratepayers' money on what is proving to be an advertisement for the businesses of the town.' Similar social divisions were portrayed in fictional pageants, too: a good example is Hugh Walpole's *The Inquisitor* (1935), in which a pageant staged in a cathedral town arouses strong opposition from the local working-class community.

Many pageants, however, were successful in their aim of bringing communities together, even if only for a short period of time. They involved people of all ages and social groups, generated a spirit of civic celebration, and in many cases acted as a tonic to places feeling the pressure of the modern day. Such had been the case for smaller places such as Winchester or St Albans, the dramatic commemoration of their glorious medieval heritage offsetting nagging feelings of being left behind in the onward rush of present-day preoccupations. But it had also been the case for large industrial centres, which had turned to pageants as a source of redress in the context




Maypole dancing in the Olympic opening ceremony (technical rehearsal), London 2012.

Photograph by eltpics, Flickr; Creative Commons Licence: Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC 2.0).

of interwar depression and uncertainty, and as a means of articulating a progressive civic agenda. Villages, too, had found in pageants a means of celebrating their historic identities, often using the church parish as the focus, not of any lament for a lost rural idyll, but as a means of affirming a continuing sense of place.

Though largely eclipsed today by other aspects of popular culture, the pageant movement stands as a powerful reminder of the importance of the past in maintaining a sense of community. Coherent and meaningful local—and national—identities depend on the persistence of the past, and on popular engagement with it. Our experiences on the *Redress of the Past* project have shown us that historical pageants continue to exert a powerful fascination for people, whether or not they had ever heard of them before. Feedback from our public talks and exhibitions shows us that, for those who took part, pageants could live long in their memories, eliciting fond recollections not just of their own experiences of taking part, but also of their fellow performers (who were often friends and neighbours), and of their home villages and towns at particular moments in time. Pageants could, and in many cases did, foster an appreciation of the history of one's home community. And for some of our interviewees who were children when they performed in a pageant, the experience very vividly brought the past to life. In this way, their perception of history shifted from something that happened long ago and was of little relevance to their daily lives, to a force that had shaped and influenced their community—and continued to do so

ARBROATH ABBEY
HISTORICAL PAGEANT



— WITHIN —
THE ABBEY OF ARBROATH
where, on 6th April 1320, there was signed the
Declaration of Scotland's Independence as a
Nation, by the Three Estates of Scotland, in
Parliament assembled under the Presidency of
King Robert the Bruce.

THURSDAY, FRIDAY and SATURDAY,
19TH, 20TH & 21ST AUGUST, 1948

Arbroath Abbey Historical Pageant programme, 1948. This was the second of 18 pageants performed at Arbroath from 1947 to 2005.

Reproduced with the permission of the Arbroath Pageant Society.

into the present time. Stephen Dunn, who performed as a child in the 1977 Carlisle Historical Pageant, recalled in an interview in 2015:

at school, I didn't know what history was, I know that sounds terrible, but the way it was taught I think, I didn't get it, it was all about dates and ... lists of names and stuff and that didn't mean anything to me. But then when I was put into a physical way, which the *Pageant* did in a dramatic form, and you got that sort of community feel, that sort of social side and what it meant to people, and then what it meant to society after that and how society was formed, and how society formed history and vice versa ... it just opened up a million cans of worms, and I realised what history was.

Dunn went on to become Arts Officer for Carlisle City Council; in this role he revived the idea of an annual 'pageant parade', with giant puppets representing key figures in the history of Carlisle, in part to inspire people to learn more about the history of their town (this has taken place annually since 2012).

Performances that share many features and characteristics of historical pageants can still be seen in contemporary Britain. Something rather like an historical pageant was performed during the opening ceremony for the 2012 London Olympics. Created by Danny Boyle and Frank Cottrell Boyce, this told the history of Britain in four major episodes, with thousands of performers cast in an array of different roles. More recently, in 2016 a summer season of dramatic performances was staged to large audiences assembled in a purpose-built uncovered grandstand near Bishop Auckland in County Durham. Titled 'Kynren'—an adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon word for 'generation' or 'family'—and with the subtitle 'an epic tale of England', some shows attracted capacity crowds of 8,000 people. Now staged every summer,

and set in a soon-to-be-opened historical theme park that includes a ‘Viking village’ and a ‘Georgian shop’, Kynren shares a similar aim of ‘bringing the past to life’. Its official website states:

We round off the day with the stunning, award-winning tale of a 2,000 year quest. Prepare to be spellbound as Kynren brings to brings [history] to ground-shaking life ... through invasions, royal splendour, wars, heroic sacrifice, daily life and seismic change.¹³

In this sense, Kynren is like an historical pageant, but in many other respects it represents a very different history and undertaking—as we discuss in a chapter of our forthcoming open-access book, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (UCL Press, 2020).

Many towns and cities that held one historical pageant held another at a later date, and some held three or four. Our exhibitions in Bury St Edmunds, Carlisle and St Albans are all based on three different pageants that each of the towns put on over the course of the twentieth century. But the undisputed title of Britain’s ‘pageant hotspot’ goes to Arbroath, a fishing port on the east coast of Scotland, which held *no fewer than 18 historical pageants between 1947 and 2005*.¹⁴ Arbroath was the famed site of the signing of the Declaration of Scottish Independence in 1320, and it is this act that has been the focus of its many pageants. The year 2020 marks the 700th anniversary of the Declaration—and this is being celebrated, appropriately enough, with a pageant. Unlike earlier pageants in Arbroath, and unlike the pageants on which we focus in this *Guide*, ‘*Arbroath 2020*’ takes the form of a procession and ‘costumed tableau’ rather than an episodic theatrical re-enactment. But the influence of the long-standing Arbroath pageant tradition is abundantly clear.¹⁵

The year 2020, then, is an important one for pageants. Our first case study examines one of the most important survivals in the world of historical pageantry: the decennial pageant at Axbridge, in Somerset, which will be staged again in August 2020.

CASE STUDY A

Why the Axbridge Pageant Bonds the Whole Community

Harry Mottram and John Bailey

Axbridge in Somerset is a town of some 2,500 souls and is confined to a narrow strip of land between the Mendips and the Somerset Levels. Its situation means that for centuries the town’s social life has been concentrated in the Square with little room for urban sprawl. The Square, the town’s condensed geography and its long history dating to its Saxon origins are all factors in why the pageant held every ten years works as well as it does.

13 <https://www.kynren.com/>.

14 Linda Fleming, “‘Not for Glory, Nor for Wealth...For Freedom!’: The Arbroath Abbey Pageant, 1949... and a few other Arbroath pageants...”: <https://tinyurl.com/arbroathfeature>.

15 <https://arbroath2020.com/>.



The 'bull and anchor' scene at the Axbridge pageant of 2010.

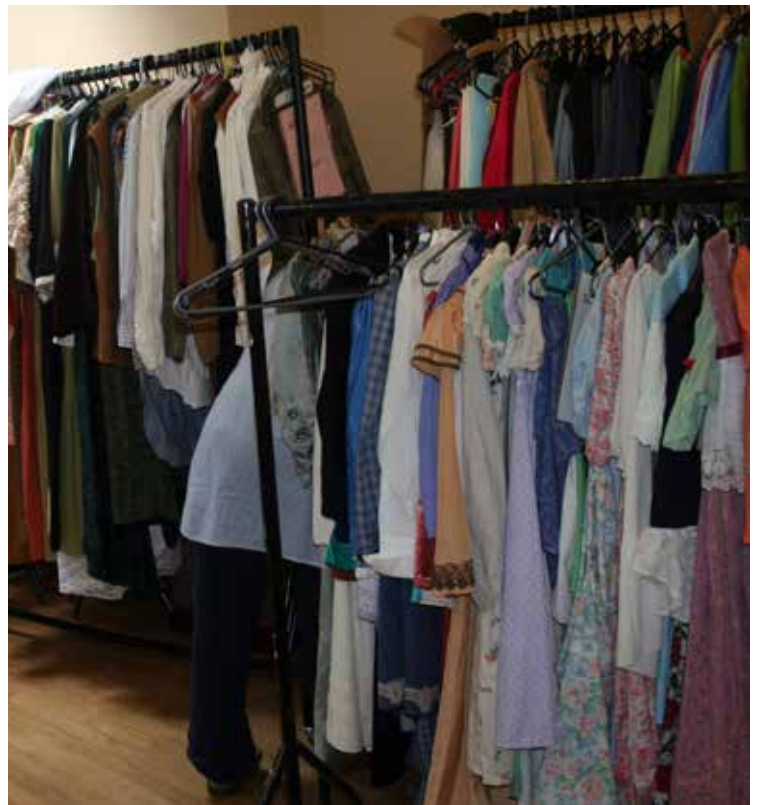
Photograph by Traci Bullock; reproduced with the permission of the Axbridge Pageant Association.

There are football teams, book groups, the carnival and the 'Sports and Social', but only the pageant encompasses the whole community. Young, old, working-class, landowners and the newly arrived—it brings everyone together for a mixture of reasons. One reason is that there is a part for everyone. Tractor drivers, horse riders, marshals, costumiers, actors and musicians are all needed. The football team, being a ready-made unit, form up as soldiers in the Monmouth Rebellion, while the British Legion revels in portraying the Home Guard in World War Two. The school supplies the evacuees—and so on. And there's a precedent with community groups taking part in the annual carnival where clubs and societies parade through the streets.

Another reason is the Square—already mentioned. It's the focus of many of the town's events—the carnival, the funfair, the hunt, Father Christmas, street parties for royal weddings, and the monthly market. Then there are several long-standing local families who have connections going back generations—and by taking part in the pageants over the years there's a certain pride that they may have been children in the first ones and their own children then take part in later ones. And we must mention the bonding of the community through the tragic air disaster in Switzerland in 1973. The crash killed a large number of women from the town who had set out on a special shopping trip to Basel. With so many families without a mother, the town pulled together to support the bereaved dads and children left behind. Part of that pulling together continues with the likes of the Sports and Social, the church community and other groups who help to form the core of the pageant.

And other factors include a near universal pride in the community's imagined or real history, plus of course key individuals coming together to direct, write, produce and stage the pageant.

It all began in 1967 when the new bypass took heavy traffic away from the town, and to celebrate this, two residents with a background in theatre (perhaps looking to their own pasts) suggested a pageant. The first one now looks quite archaic with a procession of Romans and Tudors and kings and queens acting out dramatised sections of Francis A. Knight's 1915 book, *The Heart of Mendip*. It purported to show in



Behind the scenes at the Axbridge pageant of 2010: the costume store.

Photographs by Alex Duncan (left) and Geoff Dunlop (right); reproduced with the permission of the Axbridge Pageant Association.



A scene from the Axbridge pageant of 2010, featuring a maypole and dancers.

Photograph by Alex Duncan; reproduced with the permission of the Axbridge Pageant Association.

15 scenes the history of the town, but inevitably was in places quite inaccurate. In a way that didn't matter much, as it was the taking part that seemed to be the main thing.

So, it was simply good fortune which delivered the pageant to the town. In 1970 it was updated, with further pageants taking place in 1980 and 1990. In 2000 the original committee and people behind the pageant were retiring or leaving, and so John Bailey took up the task of reshaping what had by then become an established script, with clubs and societies like the Crown Inn or the parish church laying claim to various scenes. That aspect was a strength and a weakness, as some in the town were not keen on the updating of the pageant to include the twentieth century. Working with Harry Mottram as scriptwriter, John updated the script in 2010 and again this year (2020) to at least make the scenes more accurately reflect the past and to increase the role of real characters from all our yesterdays and to present a people's history—rather than a simple procession of kings and queens.

The next pageant takes place from 29 to 31 August 2020: see www.axbridgepageant.com

2 Where to Find out about Historical Pageants

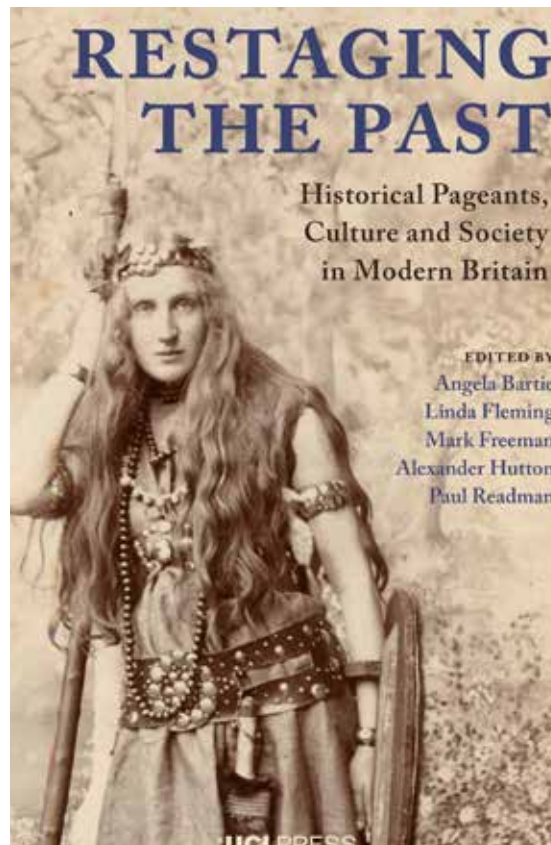
Historical pageants have left behind many traces—from scripts and souvenir programmes to mementos such as badges, postcards, photographs and more. Given that many pageants were designed to raise the profile of a given area, and attract visitors during the summer months, traces of them can be found in a wide variety of places, including vividly illustrated posters and flyers, and advertisements in magazines and other publications of the time. Historians, writers and journalists showed interest in the phenomenon, so there exist written accounts of many performances. Indeed, there is no shortage of sources that shed light on historical pageants, and these can be found in locations both obvious (e.g. local libraries and archives), and more elusive (e.g. second-hand stores and family belongings).

Published histories of pageants and the *Redress of the Past* Project

The first book specifically on the history of pageants in Britain explored their popularisation during the period between Parker's Sherborne pageant of 1905 and the outbreak of the First World War: this was Ayako Yoshino's *Pageant Fever: Local History and Consumerism in Edwardian England* (2011). Other historians have explored aspects of historical pageantry in relation to specific themes and subjects. To give just two examples, Mick Wallis has examined the left-wing pageants of the 1930s, while Zoë Thomas has discussed the part that pageants played in citizenship and the performance of women's history in the early twentieth century. Historical pageants turn up in histories of a wide range of topics, and in work by academics from a range of subject areas, including theatre studies, literature and the visual arts, such as their appeal and spread.

Despite this work, however, the *Redress of the Past* project is the first major project dedicated to the study of British historical pageants

across the twentieth (and into the twenty-first) century. We have published articles and stand-alone chapters on various aspects of historical pageants, including First World War pageants, the role of education in the performance of the past, and the medieval past in historical pageants (see Further References). A fully open-access and freely available edited collection, *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society*



Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain, an open-access edited collection published in 2020 by UCL Press.

Reproduced with the permission of UCL Press and St Albans Museums.

in *Modern Britain*, based on papers presented at our project conference ‘History in the Limelight’, is published in 2020 by UCL Press. This book includes essays exploring pageants in a variety of areas—for example, Daryl Leeworthy on interwar south Wales, and Linda Fleming on Arbroath, the ‘pageant hotspot’ of Britain. It also addresses a range of themes, such as the role of women in the pageant movement, the interrelationship between pageantry and local and national identities, and much else besides. There are chapters by Michael Shallcross on the Edwardian pageant revival and the writer G. K. Chesterton, Alexander Hutton on pageants and the Festival of Britain, and Ellie Reid—the author of chapter 4 of this *Guide*—on the material culture of pageants. A book exploring the history of pageants in modern Britain is in preparation too.

The main output of our project is our *database of historical pageants*.¹⁶ We believe that it covers all major pageants and a sizeable sample of smaller ones—at the time of writing there are entries for 656 historical pageants and over 1.5 million words of text about them. Our research has shown that pageants were much more widespread than previously thought, and that practically every town and city—along with many villages and churches, stately homes and schools, social organisations and political parties—held one or more pageants at some point during the twentieth century. We will probably never know just how many historical pageants took place, but we estimate that they numbered into the tens of thousands.

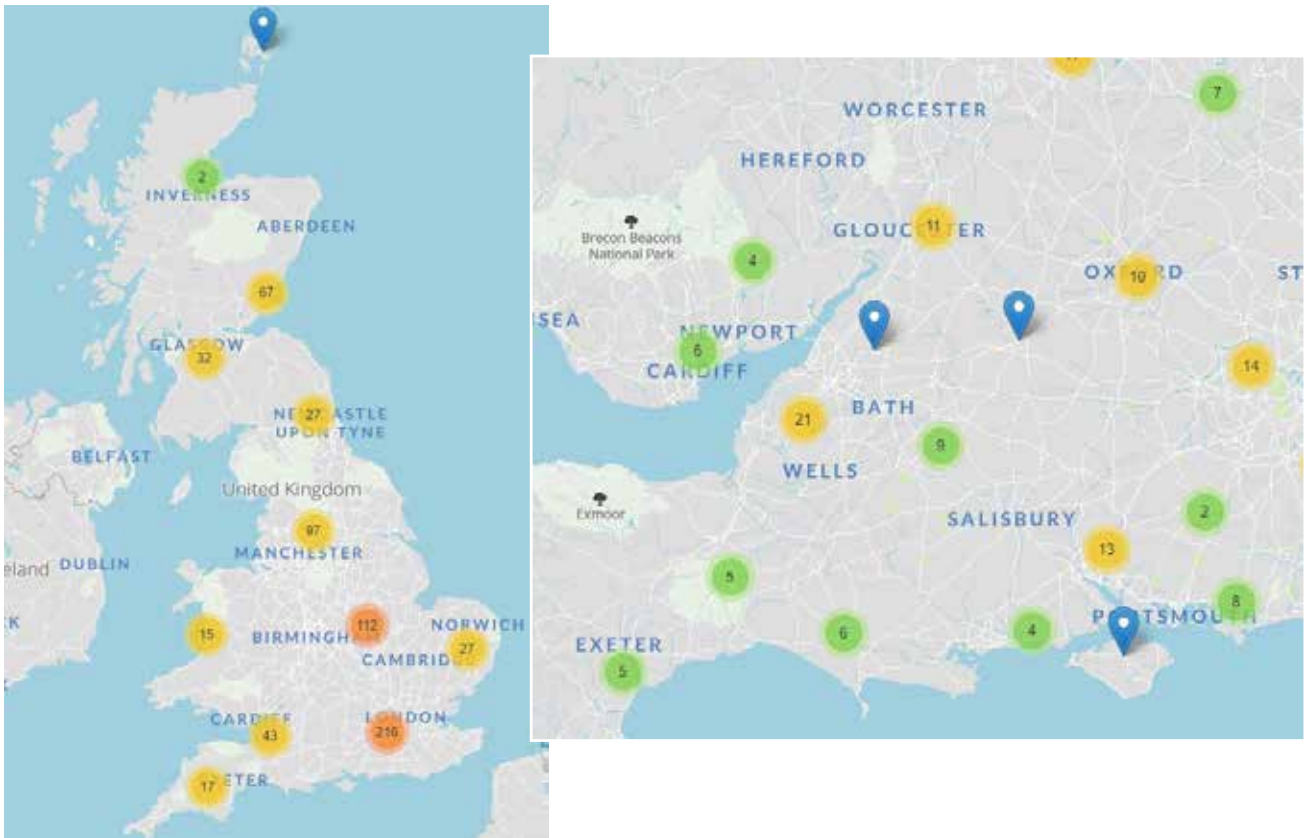
Our database is the ideal first port of call for anyone seeking information about a specific pageant. It can be searched in a number of ways, including by place or keyword, and the results filtered by a range of characteristics, including by date, geographical location, and pageant-master. The results can be viewed on a map or in a list, and can be filtered further if desired (we have provided information on *how to search the database*, with *frequently asked questions available*).¹⁷ The entries list a wealth of information about individual historical pageants. Insofar as records allow (and little trace remains of many pageants), we have sought to record details of the times and places of performances, those involved in organising and staging them, and how many people attended. For each pageant, we have also sought to record, again as fully as possible, whether the pageant made or lost money, details of the music that was played and who composed it, and synopses of the individual episodes which featured. In addition, for each pageant record we provide lists of the names of the notable historical figures that featured in the action. Last but certainly not least, we have prepared a detailed summary essay explaining each pageant and placing it in its wider historical context.

We have included a ‘*Guide to the Database*’ on our project website.¹⁸ This contains information on how we have tagged and categorised pageant entries—for example, how we define the ‘types’ of pageants, including ‘church’, ‘county’, ‘town’ and ‘institutional’, with many pageants tagged across multiple ‘types’. We have also provided ‘*A Note on Key Themes*’, which details some of the many themes we identified as prominent during our research into pageantry, including class structures and gender

16 Angela Bartie, Paul Caton, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton and Paul Readman, *The Redress of the Past*: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/>.

17 User-guide: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/database-guide/>. FAQs: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/database-faq/>.

18 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/database-guide/>.



The interactive map at the *Redress of the Past* pageants database: historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/.

Zooming in on the map shows the distribution of known pageants: in this case the large concentration in the south-west of England is clearly visible.

relations, technological innovations, and community identities.¹⁹ In addition, our website has a *'Featured Pageants'* section, with case-study essays on some notably interesting pageants, building on the information contained in the database and illustrating it with images and ephemera.²⁰

For each individual entry, our database contains details of references made to the pageant in secondary literature. It also includes information about primary sources, such as 'books of words', souvenir programmes and other primary published materials (musical scores, for example). Where possible, we have provided details of archival holdings connected to the pageant concerned—for example, in the case of the *Glasgow pageant of 1928*, these include the minutes and annual reports of the Glasgow Dental Hospital and School, the intended beneficiary of any money raised by the pageant.²¹ It is to these different types of sources and their locations that we now turn.

Sources and locations of information on pageants

Larger pageants—and many smaller ones too—produced lavishly illustrated 'books of words' containing the complete script of the performance. They were extremely detailed, setting out long descriptions of each episode with the aim of allowing

19 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/key-themes/>.

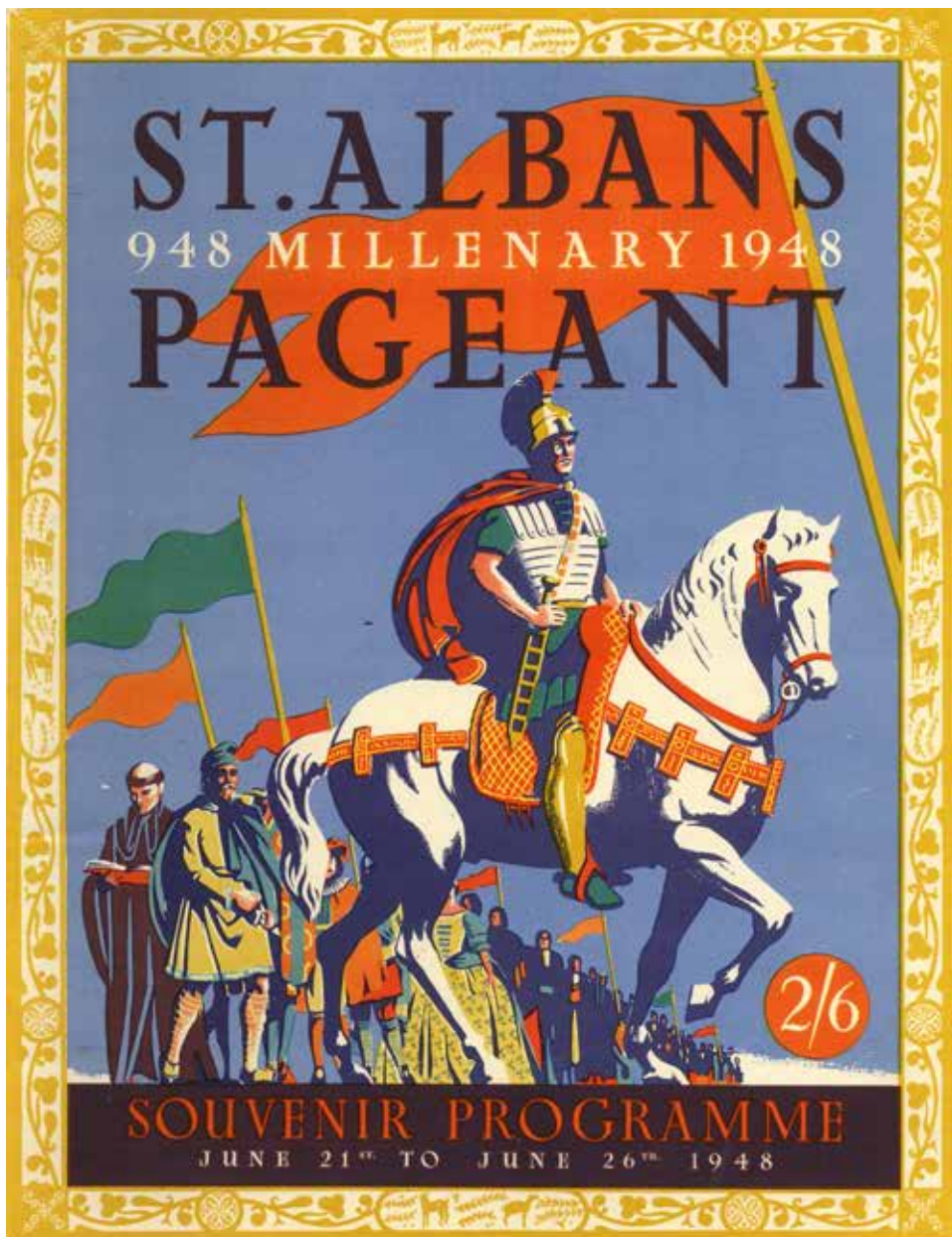
20 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/featured-pageants/>.

21 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1073/>.

audience members to follow the action unfolding in front of them. This was particularly important before the widespread use of amplified sound, as it would have been difficult for many in the audience to hear the words spoken by the performers. Souvenir programmes were produced too, sometimes including historical essays and information about the key people behind the pageant, as well as synopses of the episodes. In some places, the programme incorporated the book of words. Not all scripts, even for larger pageants, have survived: there are, for example, fewer scripts from pageants staged in Scotland. Many pageants, however, produced both an expensive, high-quality book of words and a more affordable souvenir programme. (See also Ellie Reid's discussion of these items in Chapter 4.)

To summarise, then, programmes and scripts are fantastic sources of information about historical pageants, where you can generally find the following:

- Details of the organisational structure and key individuals—the pageant-master, those in charge of the props and costumes, and the names and



The St Albans pageant programme from 1948. This contained the full text of the pageant, written by Cyril Swinson. *From the collection of Mark Freeman.*

members of the many different committees formed to ensure the smooth running of the pageant. These can give interesting insights into social relations in communities—the Carlisle pageants, for example, demonstrate a shift from a *pageant led by the landed gentry in 1928* to *a more civic-organised pageant in 1977*.²²

- Information on the main historical characters depicted in the pageant. For the key roles, there are often images of the individuals playing them.
- Cast lists sometimes appear, often taking up many pages given the thousands of performers that some pageants included. These are usually organised by episode but where the casts were made up from local schools, workplaces and other groups, they are sometimes listed by organisation or institution. It is worth noting that there were often last-minute changes to the cast, so lists should be considered a guide rather than an absolutely accurate account of who actually performed. If any animals appeared in the pageant, this information is also often included.
- Information on when and where the pageant took place, price lists (sometimes including a plan of the grandstand with ticket prices by location), and details of any special transport arrangements put in place for the pageant.
- If the pageant was to raise funds for anything. Examples include charities, schools and parish churches.
- Information on any additional events linked to the pageant. Organisers often put on events like firework displays or local markets or fairs, and some pageants—as at *Dundee in 1945*—were held as part of bigger celebrations, such as civic weeks.²³ Other examples are pageants staged in association with the Festival of Britain in 1951 or the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

Souvenir programmes and books of words are also great resources for other information about the places where pageants were staged. Since very many pageants were partially funded by advertising revenue, these publications often include adverts for a range of local businesses, including shops, cafes, hotels and services of various kinds. They are often eye-catching in their design, and so can give us insights into the art and design of the time, as well as being collectors' items in their own right. A large collection of programmes and books of words (as well as several hundred pageant postcards) can be found in the *David Clarke Collection*, recently donated to King's College London by Clarke's widow, Juliet Renny.²⁴ The Collection contains around 300 publications, and formed the basis of a substantial research project undertaken (though never published) by Clarke himself.

Musical scores also survive from many pageants, although these are usually more difficult to come by than the ubiquitous scripts and programmes. Arrangements of well-known pieces were often used, sometimes in combination with specially written compositions by the 'master of the music'. Sometimes the arrangements can be found in local studies libraries, and the British Library holds some examples too. Many of the entries in the *Redress of the Past* database contain considerable detail on the musical

22 For the 1928 pageant, see <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1341/>; for 1977, see <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1025/>.

23 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1055/>.

24 David Clarke Collection, King's College London Special Collections, K/PP251: <https://kingscollections.org/catalogues/kclca/collection/c/clarke-david/>.



A biscuit tin produced as a souvenir of the Carlisle historical pageant of 1951.
From the collection of Ellie Reid.

Souvenir of the Pageant of Ayrshire, 1934.
From the collection of Ellie Reid.

compositions and performance, and you can read more on this theme in Case Study I, by Parker T. Gordon.

Pageants were marked by many other official and unofficial souvenirs. These range from badges to postcards to medals to ornamental china and even biscuit tins. Ellie Reid explores these and more in Chapter 4, and we also mention them in Chapter 5, where we examine exhibitions and other events. Many pageant souvenirs can be bought in second-hand shops or online, and there is a small community of collectors.

Archivists and librarians will often be able to identify items in their collections that are related to historical pageants. Examples include collections of press cuttings, or scrapbooks created by people who took part in a pageant. The *archive at Sherborne School*, where the modern pageant movement originated in 1905, holds a rich and wonderful array of papers and objects relating to Parker's production, including a recently unearthed banner used by schoolchildren in the pageant.²⁵

In many places the local press was an important channel of information in the run-up to pageants, and local newspapers often carried long illustrated reports when the event finally took place. Sometimes a special pageant supplement was produced, which was sold separately and contained the full cast list. Local studies libraries can be a good place to start, as many have indexed collections of newspapers that help

25 <http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/school-archives/>.



A banner used by schoolchildren in the Sherborne pageant of 1905. Left: front; right: back.
In the Sherborne School Archives collection.

researchers identify pageant-related material quickly and effectively. Online sources such as the *British Newspaper Archive* can also be helpful.²⁶ Philip Sheail put the *Hertfordshire Mercury* to good use in his centenary history of the 1914 Hertford pageant, and he describes this work in Case Study C.

The national press, too, sometimes reported on individual pageants, especially the larger ones. Illustrated magazines such as the *Sphere* or the *Illustrated London News* loved covering pageants, and again it was not unknown to see a special supplement produced.

Another source of information are the records and papers of prominent individuals or organisations involved in historical pageantry, whether as pageant-masters, scriptwriters or performers. Where large organisations like churches and political groups organised pageants, their official archives and papers are likely to contain information on the pageants they produced. Louis Napoleon Parker's own papers can be found in the archival collections of Columbia University Libraries, New York, but, if this is too far to travel, there are many other collections of pageant-masters' papers, not least the aforementioned David Clarke Collection at King's College London—and more material related to Clarke at the *Surrey History Centre*.²⁷ In local archives, too, personal and family papers contain traces of involvement in pageants.

Personal recollections of pageants exist in the form of scrapbooks compiled by those who took part. Many of these are doubtless gathering dust in attics and basements, but some have found their way into local record offices. They demonstrate the personal meaning and significance that pageants held in many

26 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>.

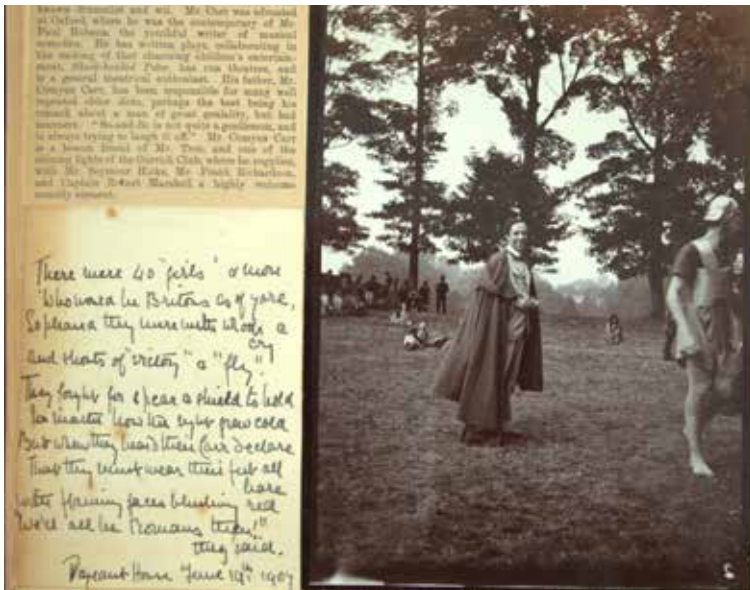
27 Surrey History Centre, David Clarke papers, ref. 8147: <https://tinyurl.com/clarkepapers>.



A page from the *Illustrated London News*, 3 June 1948, containing a report on the St Albans Millenary Pageant.
 Reproduced from St Albans School archives.

people's lives, even where they may have played only a small role themselves. One of our favourite examples was compiled by Mary Archer, who as a young girl played a small part in the *1906 Warwick Pageant*.²⁸ She was one of a group of children who delivered, in unison, a single line: 'Thank you, Master Oken!' (Thomas Oken was a noted local benefactor who was depicted in the pageant.) Despite her minor role, the pageant made a big impression on Mary. Her scrapbook, which she entitled 'Just the elements of a memorable week in life', contained photographs and other memorabilia, with pride of place going to a picture of herself alongside one of pageant-master Louis Napoleon Parker. On her death the scrapbook passed to her sister, and is now in the Warwickshire County Record Office (CR367/39). We have come across other scrapbooks like this one, which often incorporate official souvenirs such as postcards, as well as tickets, leaflets and other printed ephemera. They provide a compelling window onto the meanings that participation in a pageant could hold for those who took part.

Thousands more people retain their own undocumented memories of taking part in or watching historical pageants, and these memories can themselves be a valuable resource for historians. As well as illustrating what it felt like directly to experience pageants, oral history interviews can shed light on aspects of them that are not documented elsewhere, reveal information about individual personalities involved in their production, and highlight challenges that were encountered when



A page from a 1907 St Albans pageant scrapbook, featuring information about the assistant pageant-master Philip Carr and a poem written at 'Pageant House'.
 Reproduced with the permission of St Albans Museums.



Ticket for admission to the royal box at the Carlisle pageant of 1951.
 Reproduced from the Redress of the Past exhibition at Tullie House, Carlisle, 2015.

pulling together the performances. They can also give us insights into the ways that pageants shaped and influenced the lives of the communities in which they took place. Working with our project partners in various parts of the country, we undertook around 50 oral history interviews, which brought to the fore many aspects of pageantry that we might not otherwise have considered. Some examples, from *Bury St Edmunds* and *Carlisle*, can be heard on the project website, but these are just snippets from a much larger whole.²⁹ It is now almost 70 years since the decline of historical pageants set in during the mid-1950s, and memories of that period will disappear with the lives of those who took part in the post-war revival. There is, then, some urgency in the task of collecting oral histories of pageants.

Oral history can also be done collectively, through reminiscence sessions. We look at these separately in Case Study F.

29 Bury St Edmunds: <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/events/bury/>. Carlisle: <https://tinyurl.com/carlislememories>.

3 Local and Family Histories



St Albans Millenary Pageant, 1948: the mayor and city councillors playing their Victorian predecessors in a scene set in 1877. Reproduced with the permission of St Albans Museums.

Historical pageants are fertile ground for local historians. Through pageants, we can explore how communities viewed their own pasts, consider which aspects of those pasts they chose to perform, and reflect on the pride they felt in different elements of their histories. (Shame might also be involved, as in the case of the *Liverpool pageant of 1907*, which—briefly but significantly—referred to the city’s slave-trading past.)³⁰

We can also learn about the social and cultural history of a community at the time when a pageant was performed. We can ask many questions that shed light on local social, political and cultural history. Who organised the pageants? What was their role or significance in the local community? Who took the key speaking parts in the pageant? How much did it cost to get a ticket to watch it? All these can tell us a lot about local social relationships and the structure of power. Was the pageant being held to raise money or awareness for something important to the community, as many were, or to mark a national event (or both)? Who decided what episodes the pageant would cover, and what sources did they use to tell that story?

We can also ask if the pageant movement prompted local historians to do new research to explore forgotten elements of a community’s past. In many places, it is clear that local historians and antiquaries played a key part in the organisation and production of pageants. This could be done directly, through their researching and writing the episodes to be performed. But it was also done indirectly, through the provision of a solid foundation of local scholarship on which the dramatised version of the past could be based.



Louis Napoleon Parker, pageant-master at Sherborne in 1905, with a very large megaphone (pictured here at York in 1909).

David Clarke Collection, King's College London.

Historical pageants can also reveal much about family history. In some pageants descendants of historical characters played their ancestors, adding another layer of supposed authenticity to the production and enhancing the sense of continuity with the past. Even where this was not literally possible, scriptwriters and pageant-masters delighted in contemporary parallels: at St Albans in 1948, for example, the mayor and city councillors played their own predecessors in one of the scenes. As noted in Chapter 2, there are many surviving cast lists which give an insight into who performed in which roles.

For earlier pageants especially, it may be possible to find out more about the profiles of those who performed in and organised them. Linking the names of those involved in pageants to other sources, such as census enumerators' books and trade directories, offers striking insights into the ways in which communities, or parts of them, were mobilised behind the cause of historical pageantry. As will be seen in the second case study in this chapter, local historian Philip Sheail did this for Hertford, building up a picture of the community that staged a substantial pageant in 1914. Our first case study, by Barbara Elsmore and Rachel Hassall, explains how this is being done in Sherborne.

CASE STUDY B

Somerset & Dorset Family History Society: The Sherborne Pageant Participants

Barbara Elsmore and Rachel Hassall

In June 1905, to mark 1,200 years since the founding of the town, Sherborne staged its historical pageant, which involved around 900 local people and attracted an audience of some 30,000. The *Sherborne Pageant* was dubbed by its creator Louis



The SDFHS project, Sherborne Pageant Participants, on the Society's website.

Napoleon Parker as 'The Mother of all Pageants', and resulted in a period of 'pageant fever' in Britain and the USA.³¹

Sherborne School was heavily involved with all aspects of the pageant, and today holds the largest *collection of material* relating to it, including scripts, scores, programmes, photographs, publicity material, postcards and souvenirs, press cuttings, publications and audio-visual material.³²

In 2010, the archivist at Sherborne School contacted the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society (SDFHS) to suggest that they might work together to identify the individuals who took part in the Sherborne Pageant. Following a very successful event held by the SDFHS on 12 July 2015, which involved members of the *Redress of the Past* project team, it was agreed that the Society would make '*Sherborne Pageant Participants*' an official SDFHS project.³³

Sherborne Pageant Participants is a valuable resource for family historians who have ancestors from Sherborne and the surrounding area. Our research has enabled us to name more than 600 participants whose names can be downloaded as a fully searchable PDF list. This list contains details of the people involved, the roles they played, and brief biographies.

With the help of the family history community, '*Pageant Profiles*' are being compiled for individuals who took part in the Pageant. This is very much an ongoing project and more details and profiles will be added as research continues.³⁴

31 <https://tinyurl.com/sherbornefeature>. Pageants were an important social phenomenon in the USA: see the book by David Glassberg in 'Further References' at the end of this Guide.

32 <http://oldshirburnian.org.uk/sherborne-pageant-1905/>.

33 <http://www.sdfhs.org/sdfhs-projects/sherborne-pageant-participants/>.

34 <http://www.sdfhs.org/sdfhs-projects/sherborne-pageant-participants/pageant-profiles/>.

To date around half-a-dozen family historians have made contact with SDFHS and helped contribute to the writing of a profile on an individual from within their own family. Once contact is made in this way it often enables the sharing of wider information of benefit to the person making the enquiry and to the SDFHS. This is very much an ongoing project and more details and profiles will be added as research continues.

Elsewhere, too, historical pageants have attracted the interest of local historians. As the *Redress of the Past* project team discussed in an essay published in T. G. Otte's book on *The Age of Anniversaries* (see Further References), centenaries of pageants have provided inspiration for exhibitions, events and publications. Louis Napoleon Parker's Colchester pageant of 1909 was marked with an exhibition staged by Colchester Museums, and in 2013 there was a similar centenary exhibition in Lancaster, where a large pageant was staged in 1913. The 1909 Bath pageant, produced by Frank Lascelles, was the subject of a centenary history, *The Year of the Pageant*, by Andrew Swift and Kirsten Elliott, published in 2009. Our next case study considers another example of a centenary publication, by local historian Philip Sheail.

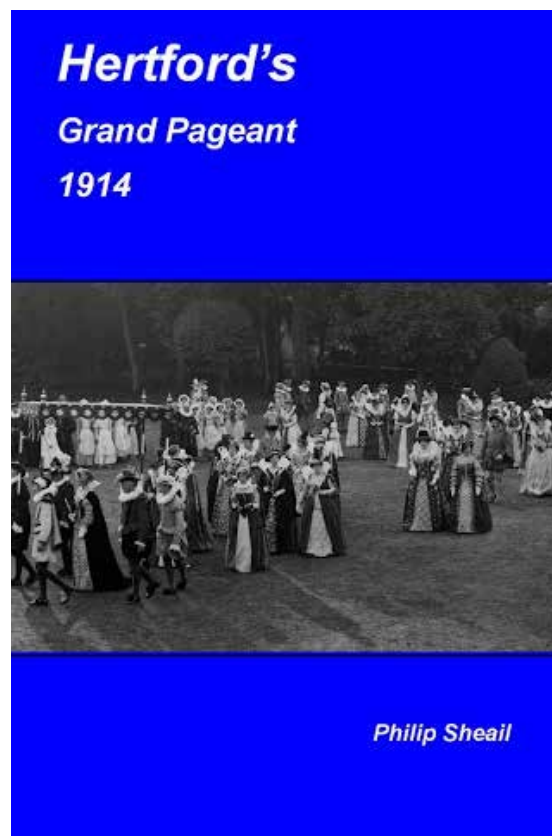
CASE STUDY C

The Publication of *Hertford's Grand Pageant 1914*

Philip Sheail

My wife and I came to live in Hertford in 1976. I'd always been interested in local history and at one time I'd done a good deal of research into a village in Hampshire where my family had its roots. I eventually drew this research together in a book which I self-published in 1979. However, it wasn't until I retired in 2004 that I really got involved in local history in a big way.

I joined the Hertford & Ware Local History Society and became a volunteer at the Hertford Museum. One of my tasks there was to catalogue some old scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings, most of which had been taken from the local paper, the *Hertfordshire Mercury*, in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. In the process I became highly intrigued



Hertford's Grand Pageant, by Philip Sheail, published in 2014.

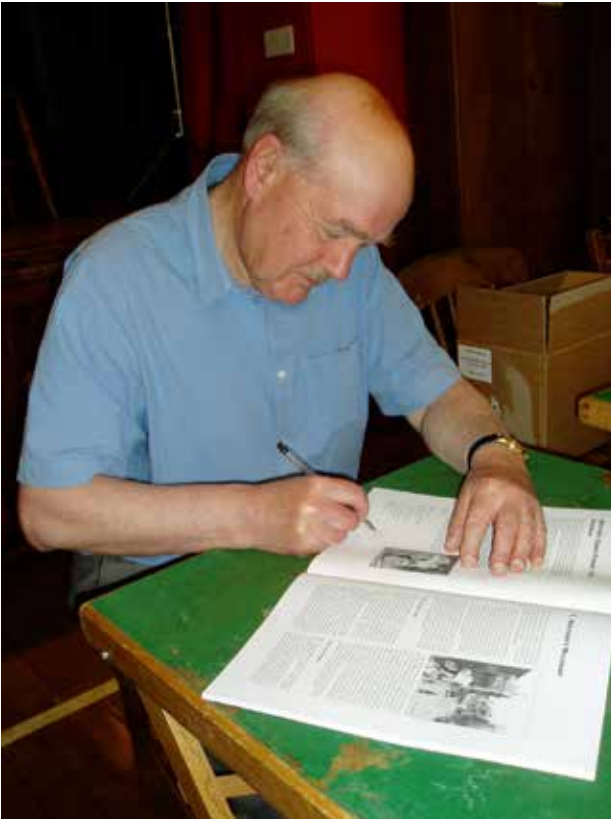


Photograph taken behind the scenes at the Hertford Pageant in 1914.
Reproduced with the permission of Hertford Museum.

at what the cuttings revealed about life in Hertford during that time. It was clearly a vibrant community. Many of the issues affecting daily life were dealt with at a local level—far more so than is the case today—and in that regard, certain individuals and families seemed to play a key role. I thus began to delve deeper, looking at various aspects of town life in Hertford in the early 1900s, and over the following years I gave several talks on this theme to the Local History Society and other groups, and also contributed articles to the Society’s journal (of which I subsequently became editor). These included subjects such as the make-up of the town council, the influence of the local gentry, the workings of the Poor Law and charities, the role of the Rifle Volunteers and how they volunteered for active service in the Boer War, and much more. At the same time, I assisted other active members of the Society in pursuing and publishing the results of their own local history research.

In 2012, while mulling over possible future projects, someone in our group pointed out that in 2014 it would be the centenary of Hertford’s historical pageant. This had been held to celebrate the town’s millenary and had taken place in the grounds of Hertford Castle each afternoon from Monday 29 June to Saturday 4 July 1914. It had comprised eight episodes, beginning with a Synod held somewhere in the neighbourhood in 673 AD, and ending with a visit made by Elizabeth I to the castle in 1561.

We were all familiar with the pageant, principally because the town’s leading photographer, Arthur Elsdon, had taken a set of very fine photos of the occasion. These were held by Hertford Museum and over the years certain photos had become a staple of exhibitions or books about the town’s history. The story behind the



Philip Sheail signing a copy of his book at the launch event in 2014.

Photograph by Mark Freeman.

pageant, however, was largely a blank. It occurred to us that the centenary would be an excellent opportunity to put this right. At first we thought in terms of producing a bumper edition of the Society's journal, but I then decided that it would be much more rewarding to produce a stand-alone publication, A4 in size, in which all the Elsdon photos could be properly displayed. I therefore set to work on the research.

The major source of information was the *Mercury*. During the early months of 1914 it had produced detailed reports of progress on the pageant week-by-week. The issue of the week following the performance contained an extensive review which was then reproduced as a booklet. The Museum held copies of this booklet as well as the script, plus the score and lyrics of the accompanying music. There was also a publicity booklet produced by the Management Committee, containing practical details about the dates and times of performances, the venue, railway connections and ticket prices. In its review of the pageant, the *Mercury* had included a list of all the people who had participated, whether as performers, stage assistants, or makers of props and costumes. From this list I was able to build up profiles of these people, drawn from the census and the records of births, deaths and marriages. This provided an insight into the age, sex, family connections, occupation and social status of those taking part which I then put onto a database. The publishers of the *Mercury* also produced each year a county-wide almanac which provided information on the make-up of the County Council, the County Magistracy, Hertford Town Council, the Poor Law Guardians, and the officers and leading figures in a host of organisations, ranging from school governors to friendly societies, the Literary & Debating Society, and sports clubs. These details too went into the profiles and provided me with a very detailed insight into the people who organised and supported the pageant.

The book *Hertford's Grand Pageant 1914* was thus very easy to construct and very enjoyable to write. It fell naturally into five sections: how the decision was made to stage a pageant; the practicalities of staging it (the venue, fund-raising, publicity, recruiting volunteers, and the controversy over the cost of tickets); the creative side of the venture (the script, the music, the making of costumes and props, the type and class of people who took part); a description of 'pageant week' itself, including summaries of the eight episodes; and the aftermath of pageant week and the outbreak of war a month later. I also added two appendices. One provided historical notes on the episodes depicted in the pageant, and the other provided profiles of the organisers, leading performers and assistants (this was aimed particularly at family history researchers).

In writing the book I was concerned to do more than simply recount the events surrounding the Hertford pageant. Rather, I wanted to put them in context by showing how the story of the pageant gave us an insight into the life of a small market town at that time. One example of this was the way in which the organisers had to co-operate with the shopkeepers and tradesmen to ensure that the normal patterns of trade could still function while their assistants were taking part in the pageant. There was the problem encountered by Charles Ashdown, the pageant-master, in finding volunteers to manufacture armour, weapons and other metalware. There were plenty of men in the town skilled in such work, but most of them had no wish to spend their evenings doing it for nothing, and those who did volunteer were soon drawn away—once the spring evenings arrived—by sports activities. On the other hand, Ashdown had no trouble finding volunteers to make the 600 or so costumes—a reflection perhaps of the under-employment which existed amongst middle-class wives and their teenage daughters.

Like any town at this time, Hertford was riddled with petty snobbery and class distinction, and it was interesting to see how this played out in the pageant. In his appeals for people to volunteer as performers, Ashdown insisted that it didn't matter what 'station' in life a person occupied: they would be given any part that was suitable for them. In practice, however, it's noticeable how the status of the performers reflected their 'station' in contemporary society. Queen Elizabeth I, for instance, was played by a member of the local gentry; Alfred the Great by the town clerk; other monarchs by leading businessmen; the prelates at the Synod by the incumbents of the local parish churches; and the burgesses of Tudor Hertford by actual members of the town council. On the other hand, the Saxon peasantry were all drawn from the families of the town's shopkeepers and tradesmen.

The project also illustrated the parochialism of town life in 1914. Charles Ashdown was engaged as pageant-master because of his expertise in staging pageants, but he was a resident of St Albans and there are indications that his presence in Hertford was rather resented. This fact would never have surfaced in the record had it not been for the presence of Alice Graveson, a former teacher who over the years had done much to encourage the performing arts amongst the town's elementary school children and had staged a series of masques and pageants which had been well received. She had drafted a script for a children's masque to celebrate the millenary, but this had been pushed aside once Ashdown came on the scene. Graveson had initially volunteered to assist with the pageant, but she soon fell out with Ashdown over the fact that he had largely excluded the town's children from taking part, and

she went on to stage her own masque on the evening of St George's Day, 23 April 1914. Once the pageant was over, she resorted to the *Mercury's* letters column to make her disagreement with Ashdown public. This was a gift for my book, for Ashdown made a forthright response to this letter, which in turn prompted Graveson—as well as other Hertford citizens—to respond in kind. Some of these people had been performers in the pageant, but nonetheless they had no qualms about giving Graveson their support.

The story of the pageant was also a pleasure to write because it was so inherently comic. Ashdown, for instance, comes over as a highly pompous individual. His script for the pageant was a piece of the purest cod Shakespeare and was truly awful, though it does seem to have been taken perfectly seriously by cast, audience and reviewers. Another factor, which nobody wanted to recognise, was the fact that Hertford's history was pretty humdrum and as a consequence most of the episodes were distinctly lacking in any sort of dramatic content. The exception to this was the siege of Hertford Castle (1216), in which 150 foot-soldiers and archers took part; but their efforts were treated with great hilarity by the spectators, due largely to the feebleness of the trebuchets and the way in which the archers fired their arrows well short of any human target. There was also the fear expressed by the management committee that the publicity for the pageant might well have made Hertford Castle a target for suffragettes, and so they hurriedly sought to organise overnight security during the period of the pageant—their solution being to enrol the 1st Hertford Troop of Boy Scouts. This aspect of the pageant was dramatised in 2018 by a local theatre group and incorporated in a play about the campaign for women's suffrage in Hertfordshire.

4 The Material Culture of Pageants

Ellie Reid



Souvenirs of pageants staged by pageant-master Gwen Lally.
Photograph by Ellie Reid.

Souvenirs and mementos

Souvenirs and mementos kept by participants and spectators are invaluable sources through which to recover the experience of making, performing in, or watching an historical pageant. Items range from the mass-produced official programmes, postcards and souvenir wares issued by large civic pageants, to personal memorabilia such as photograph albums and scrapbooks that can survive from even the smallest village pageant. Such artefacts may be found in museums and archives, in private collections, or among family heirlooms. They may also be sourced through the second-hand book trade, from collectables dealers and via online auctions.

Guides, programmes and books of words

Official publications invariably contain an outline of the pageant with synopses of the episodes to be enacted. Many contain illustrations or photographs of the principal characters, and artists' depictions or rehearsal photographs of scenes. Some provide commentary on the evidence underpinning the pageant narrative, even including documentary sources to justify the story told. Information may also be included about costume designs and heraldic devices. In addition to all this, however, programmes and souvenir guides are valuable sources of information about the practical organisation of the pageant. Most contain extensive credits listing the names of the principal organisers and their committee members, patrons and financial supporters, participating organisations and contracted suppliers. They may also include partial or even complete cast lists—although given the enormous difficulty

of listing thousands of performers, some pageant-masters dispensed with these; the performers' anonymity was said to aid the verisimilitude of the performance! But where they exist, these lists do much to reveal the kind and level of local support the pageant attracted and can, incidentally, be an excellent source for family historians.

Pageant scripts, where published, could be included in programmes and souvenir guides, but were often published separately as a 'book of words' (see also Chapter 2). As well as often luxuriously illustrated souvenir editions, plain editions intended for performers can be found for some of the large Edwardian pageants. The quality and extent of a pageant's publications depended on the scale of the event and the economic circumstances of the time, with the lavish productions of the Edwardian period giving way to simpler publications in the 1930s and 1950s. Many examples of programmes and souvenir guides can be found with notes about the performance; some have performers' autographs added. Such copies are a unique record of pageant history.

Posters and advertising material

Advertising materials such as posters, brochures, leaflets, handbills and adhesive labels (known as 'Cinderella stamps') were produced not only to sell tickets but to 'create a buzz' about the event, to garner support, and to reassure volunteers that the hours spent on preparations would not be wasted. These ephemeral publications can reveal the organisers' aspirations. Questions to consider include: Is the graphic design professionally produced, or an amateur design perhaps produced for a poster design competition? Is the design nostalgic, modern or something in between? How does the chosen aesthetic represent the content of the pageant? Is the scope of the target audience local, national or international? To what extent did the pageant as eventually staged fulfil the prospect promoted by the advertising campaign?



Advertising labels ('Cinderella stamps') for pageants in the 1930s.

Photograph by Ellie Reid.

Postcards

Postcards were the email of their day, being a quick and cheap way to send an image with a message. As they were often both personal and decorative, many were subsequently kept as mementos or in postcard collections.

Artist-drawn images advertising the event, or depicting scenes or characters featured in the narrative, were often issued by pageant committees well in advance of the first performance. Official pageant committee stationery included pre-printed postcards such as rehearsal notifications. Photographic postcards were produced in great numbers. These included photographs of performances (often taken at a dress rehearsal), official studio portraits of the leading members of the cast and organising committee, and photographs with postcard backs of individual performers in costume following a visit to a photographer's studio or tent on the pageant ground. Unofficial postcards included photographs of costumed performers on their way to and from the pageant, capturing the amusing juxtaposition of the old and the new. Cartoons poking fun at a town's outbreak of 'pageant fever' can also be found. Postcards with messages on the back sometimes reveal the identity of the performers depicted and record the sender's thoughts about the pageant.



Souvenir postcard from Louis Napoleon Parker's York Historical Pageant of 1909.
From the collection of Ellie Reid.



A selection of pageant badges.

Photograph by Ellie Reid.

Badges, medallions, commemorative silverware and souvenir china

Badges issued by pageant committees could be handmade in textiles, cheaply produced tin button badges, or enamelled metal designs. Some were badges of office for stewards or performers to give un-ticketed access to the pageant ground. Others were distributed as souvenirs to reward the voluntary contributions of patrons, committee members and performers.

Mass-produced souvenirs for sale to pageant visitors tended to follow the fashions of the day. Specially designed medallions, silver spoons and crested china miniatures decorated with civic heraldry or the pageant logo ('badge') were among the goods produced for larger Edwardian pageants. Pageant handkerchiefs and textile or paper napkins are examples of smaller items that could be tucked away as a reminder of the day. From the interwar period onwards, souvenirs in the form of domestic wares predominated: tea towels, ashtrays, mugs and tankards (for pageant ale!) can all be found. Souvenir tins which contained locally produced sweets and biscuits were kept and re-purposed. The decorative designs chosen sought to encapsulate the essence of the event. The array and variety of such items that survive demonstrate how widely pageants were experienced.



Crested china from three pre-1914 pageants.

Photograph by Ellie Reid.

Scrapbooks and photograph albums

The most fascinating records of historical pageants are often the scrapbooks and photograph albums compiled by participants (see Chapter 2). Some albums were made as official records or as commemorative gifts for presentation; these were created as a public account of the achievements of the pageant organisers and performers. Others were the personal mementoes of individuals wishing to capture their whole pageant experience. For some, this was a record of months of endeavour—from their first response to a circular seeking volunteers to the final performance and post-pageant events. Albums can contain a wide range of ephemera including items such as receipts for costumes, props and wigs, rehearsal schedules, rules for performers, entrance tickets, newspaper clippings and unique behind-the-scenes photographs. These souvenirs and mementos, together with diaries and oral history, contribute the perspective of the individual to the history of pageant-making.

5 Exhibitions and other Events



Glass case at the *Redress of the Past* exhibition at Moyses's Hall, Bury St Edmunds, in 2015.

Photograph by Mark Freeman.

During the first phase of our *Redress of the Past* project (2013–17), we staged successful public *exhibitions* in Bury St Edmunds, Carlisle and Scarborough; in 2019–20 we put on two further exhibitions in St Albans and at Cecil Sharp House, London.³⁵ Indeed, given the wealth, colour and variety of material that has survived, there is huge scope for exhibitions focused on historical pageants. Such exhibitions can focus on specific pageants staged by individual communities or organisations. They can also explore themes running through a wider range of pageants—as in, for example, our exhibition at Cecil Sharp House, which we curated in collaboration with the English Folk Dance & Song Society, and which explores the folk arts in historical pageantry. We have taken real pleasure in working with our project partners to produce these exhibitions, bringing together information, images, film and objects to help raise public awareness and understanding of pageants.

Given the variety of traces that they have left—from richly illustrated and beautifully produced books of words, to eye-catching promotional posters, and, in some cases, surviving props and costumes—historical pageants lend themselves very well to exhibitions. Add to these artefacts the many photographs that were taken (some reproduced as postcards), personal mementos such as letters and scrapbooks, newspaper articles, tourist souvenirs and films of performances, and you have all the ingredients to bring pageants back to life. Feedback obtained from our exhibitions has shown that today's audiences are often amazed by the sheer scale and popularity of these dramatic spectacles. Many express surprise that they had not heard of historical pageants, given the virulence of the 'pageant fever' that once gripped the country.



Members of the *Redress of the Past* project team, with Boudica, at Moyses's Hall, Bury St Edmunds.
Photograph by Mark Freeman.

Bury St Edmunds

From May to August 2015, we staged a small exhibition at Moyses's Hall, Bury St Edmunds, in association with the St Edmundsbury Heritage Service. This was the first of the *Redress of the Past* exhibitions and we learned a lot from it. We had limited space for the exhibition itself, but we were able to tell the story of Bury's three major pageants—in 1907, 1959 and 1970—through a series of pull-up banners, the portable nature of which has allowed us to re-use them in other contexts since. We had little in the way of objects for this exhibition: small glass display cases included photographs, a steward's badge, and the book of words from the 1959 pageant, amongst other small items. But we ensured that the exhibition reached a wide audience by designing a programme of events to run alongside it. We arranged reminiscence sessions for those who had taken part in the two later pageants (see Case Study F) and a series of film showings, led by Tom Hulme (see Case Study G), that brought the pageants back to life in an accessible way. We also created a life-size cardboard cut-out of Queen Boudica, which proved very popular with visitors to the exhibition (and members of the project team!). You can view and download the exhibition panels and 'info-paddles' *from our website*.³⁶

Scarborough

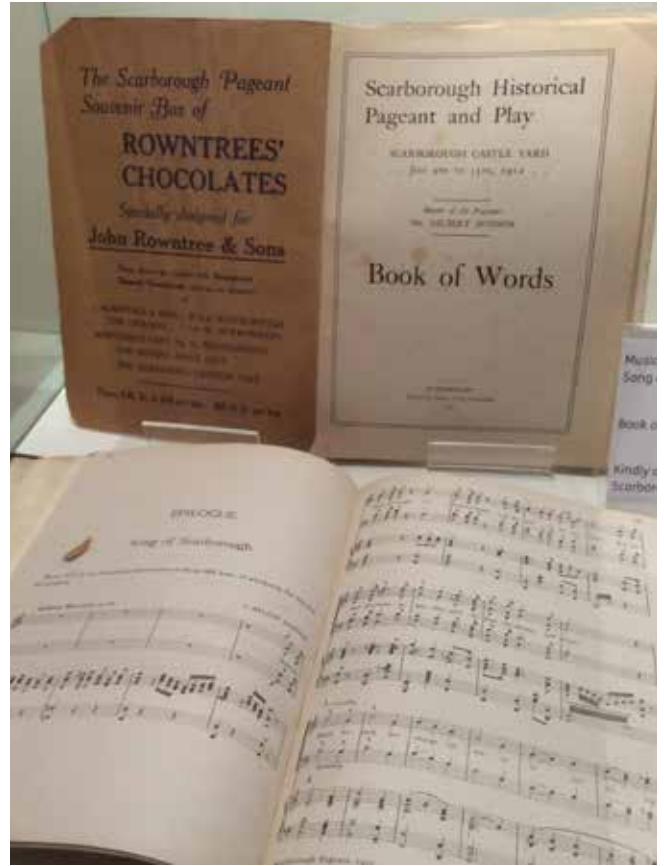
Our exhibition in Scarborough was held at the Scarborough Art Gallery, in association with our project partners the Scarborough Museums Trust and the Scarborough Archaeological & Historical Society, in September and October

36 <https://tinyurl.com/panelsandpaddles>.



Part of the *Redress of the Past* exhibition at Scarborough Art Gallery, 2016.

Photograph by Mark Freeman.



Book of words and pageant music, as shown in the *Redress of the Past* exhibition at Scarborough Art Gallery.

Photograph by Mark Freeman.

2016. The exhibition largely focused on the Scarborough historical pageant of 1912, and contained text, images and many objects relating to this important event in the history of the town. Among the highlights of the exhibition was a rolling wall display of images from the pageant, versions of the costumes used by some of the key performers, and a cardboard re-creation of Edward I and Queen Eleanor on horseback. Visitors also had the opportunity to sing along with the 'Song of Scarborough', which was specially composed for the pageant, and which was re-recorded for the exhibition by a professional singer. You can view a selection of images of the exhibition *on our website*.³⁷

Cecil Sharp House

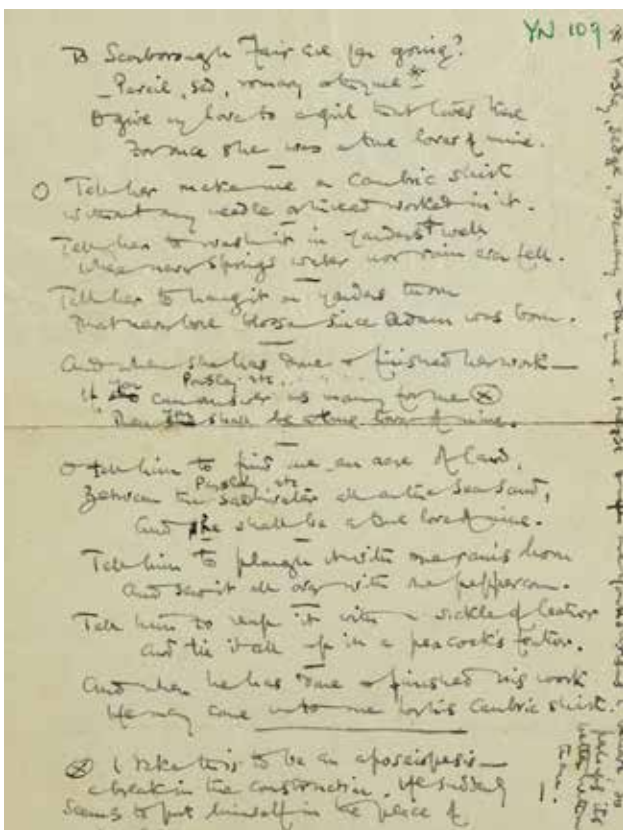
One notable aspect of modern historical pageantry has been its inclusion, from the outset, of folk song and dance: early pageants were sometimes called 'folk-plays'. Not only did folk elements feature in many urban as well as rural pageants, there were even pageants devoted solely to the folk arts. One notable example was the *Folk Dance Pageant* staged by the English Folk Dance Society in Winchester, in 1929.³⁸ Despite the prominence of folk culture in historical pageantry, however, relatively little attention had been paid to this aspect of the movement. Certainly, so far as we were aware, no exhibition had yet been devoted to the subject. It was thus with some enthusiasm

37 <https://tinyurl.com/scarboroughimages>.

38 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1470/>.



Attendees at the opening event of 'Pageant Fever!', an exhibition staged at Cecil Sharp House by the *Redress of the Past* project team in association with the English Folk Dance & Song Society. Photograph by Matthew Reed; reproduced with the permission of EFDSS.



'Scarborough Fair'. This folk song, later made famous by Simon and Garfunkel, was collected in Yorkshire by Clive Carey in September 1911 and first performed in the Scarborough pageant of 1912. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House; reproduced with permission.



Costumes at the centre of the *Redress of the Past* exhibition at Tullie House, Carlisle, in 2015.
 Photograph by Mark Freeman.

that the *Redress of the Past* team partnered with English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) to curate an exhibition in 2020 at the EFDSS headquarters, Cecil Sharp House in London. A series of information boards told the story of the folk arts in pageants from Sherborne in 1905 to the present day (there is maypole dancing in the Axbridge pageants, for example). These were complemented by around 25 images, carefully chosen from a range of sources (including the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library at Cecil Sharp House), which were reproduced to illustrate the intertwined story of historical pageantry and folk culture. Mounted in the entrance lobby and staircase of Cecil Sharp House, the exhibition was designed to attract the attention of people visiting EFDSS for lessons, concerts or perhaps just the café, and in doing so to foster knowledge of a lesser-known aspect of the history of folk arts in Britain. Judging from the feedback received, it seems to have succeeded in this. Visitors expressed particular interest in pageantry's celebration of 'the folk history of ordinary people', and in the inclusion, in many pageants, of now-established folk standards such as 'Scarborough Fair' (one of the first public performances of which, at least to a large paying audience, was at the Scarborough pageant of 1912).

CASE STUDY D

From a Curator's Perspective: The Carlisle Historical Pageants

Edwin Rutherford

Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery's collaborative participation in the *Redress of the Past* project led to the creation of a temporary exhibition in the Special Exhibitions Gallery in 2015. As the Keeper of Social History (2007–16) I was very keen to get



Figures of Mary Queen of Scots and Kinmont Willie in the *Redress of the Past* exhibition at Tullie House, Carlisle, in 2015.

Photograph by Mark Freeman.

Tullie House involved in this project which would enable a more thorough analysis and detailed understanding of Carlisle's historical pageants of 1928, 1951 and 1977. The benefits of the project included working closely with academics to develop research and interpretation, and the opportunity to display the Museum's own material culture relating to the Carlisle pageants. Photographs of pageant episodes



Costume and props worn by one of Boudica's 'wild women' in the St Albans pageant of 1907, used in the 'Pageant Fever!' exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery in 2019-20.
Items in the collection of St Albans Museums.



Silk scarf, probably hand-painted, showing some of the queens who were depicted in the 1953 St Albans pageant. One of these scarves was given to each of the performers who played a queen. This one was presented to Brenda Swinson, wife of pageant-master Cyril Swinson, for her services as Boudica; it was shown in the 'Pageant Fever!' exhibition in 2019-20.
From the collection of Peter Swinson.

Dress worn at the time of the 1907 St Albans pageant by Violet Worssam, daughter of the then mayor. Unlike her older sisters, Violet did not perform in the pageant herself, but a dress was made for her in any case. The dress was displayed in the 'Pageant Fever!' exhibition.
Item in the collection of St Albans Museums; photograph by Mark Freeman.

and costumed participants were displayed, along with film footage and elaborate costumes from each pageant. As a result, visitors could engage with these mass community events through the objects and images on display and explore the unique identity and character of each pageant.

A key part of the project was the development of a network of former pageant participants following an appeal in the *Cumberland News*. Many people from the local community came forward and donated or loaned material for display. Having first-hand accounts of those involved in the 1951 and 1977 Carlisle pageants enabled a better understanding of these events. Case studies of individuals were developed, and oral histories captured. The gallery opening event empowered many former pageant participants and helped the museum to connect with its local audience. Indeed, the involvement of the local community was a major success: the exhibition was an excellent means of analysing an important part of Carlisle's communal history, displaying hidden collections and bringing people together. It was also fun to co-curate the display and to meet those who took part in 1951 and 1977. I often use the project as a good example of collaborative working. The *Redress of the Past* project was a great way to explore local history and identity, and to work closely with stakeholders and the community.

Editors' Note: You can view the exhibition panels and images of the Carlisle exhibition *on our project website*.³⁹

CASE STUDY E

'Pageant Fever!' An Exhibition and Events in St Albans

Mark Freeman

One of the most significant partnerships for the *Redress of the Past* team has been with St Albans Museums. From November 2019 to February 2020, we staged an exhibition in the new St Albans Museum + Gallery, which opened in the old town hall just 18 months earlier. This exhibition—'Pageant Fever! St Albans Performs Its Past'—featured text, images, film, sound, objects and printed materials from the pageants of 1907, 1948 and 1953 in the city of St Albans.

Among the objects featured in the exhibition were two costumes from 1907: one worn by a 'wild woman' from the scene where Boudica destroyed the Roman city of Verulamium, and one by the then mayor's daughter, who was too young to appear in the pageant but who had an Elizabethan costume made anyway. Both costumes, along with the surviving props used by the 'wild woman', show the attention to detail that was a feature of Edwardian historical pageantry. They also help us to imagine the scale of the enterprise: this pageant had 3,000 performers.

Oral history was also available: reminiscence sessions had been held in 2003, at which participants in the 1948 and 1953 pageants remembered their involvement both on 'stage' and behind the scenes. We were fortunate to have the support of Peter Swinson, son of the 1948 and 1953 pageant-master Cyril Swinson, who provided not only these recorded memories, but also a wide range of photographs and some interesting objects, as well as film footage of the pageants. A hand-painted silk scarf



St George slaying the dragon, in the St Albans pageant of 1953.
From the pageant film; reproduced with the permission of Peter Swinson.

presented to Peter's mother Brenda, who played Boudica in the 1953 pageant, was a good example in the exhibition of interesting memorabilia that were sometimes created for these events.

As we had also done at Carlisle and Bury St Edmunds, we staged a programme of events in association with the exhibition. An evening of short talks about pageants—in St Albans and elsewhere—featured Paul Readman, Ellie Reid (see Chapter 4) and myself. There was an evening of film and music, where Peter Swinson showed the half-hour colour films of the 1948 and 1953 pageants, providing commentary on the content. Music was provided by Parker T. Gordon (see Case Study I), who arranged some of the 1907 pageant score for oboe and cor anglais. Feedback from this event noted how the films brought the pageants vividly back to life, especially for one man who had performed, aged 8, in the 1948 pageant. He remarked that 'the music was vital ... it is the one thing I remember that stops me in my steps'.

The exhibition culminated in the February half-term week of 2020, when another project partner, Trestle Theatre Company, also based in St Albans, re-performed some extracts from the pageant in the grand surroundings of the Museum + Gallery's assembly room. Trestle's creative director Helen Barnett re-worked selections from all three scripts, and the performance featured professional actors and a professional singer—Amanda Boyd—as well as a group of young people working with Helen as director. Leading up to the performance, local families attended dragon-making workshops, under the watchful eye of designer Sophia Lovell Smith. The dragon



Children taking part in a dragon-making workshop at St Albans Museum + Gallery, February 2020
Photograph by Mark Freeman; reproduced with the permission of Isobel Griffiths.

replicated (on a smaller scale!) the one used in 1953, for a mummers play of 'St George and the Dragon', performed in front of Queen Katherine in a scene set in 1428. The production showed how pageantry evolved over time; it also raised interesting questions about its ongoing viability as a dramatic format, and about what we would include in a pageant if we were writing one in St Albans today.



Members of the Trestle Theatre Company with the pageant dragon, St Albans Museum + Gallery, February 2020.
 Photograph by Hannah Pressman; reproduced with the permission of Trestle Theatre Company.

CASE STUDY F

Reminiscence Events

Reminiscence has become popular in various settings, including as a therapeutic tool in care homes and for those with dementia. The benefits of ‘remembering together’ and sharing memories of pleasant experiences have been well documented. Given the large numbers of people involved, historical pageants have some potential as focal points for reminiscence events. That said, because pageantry went into decline in the second half of the twentieth century, in most places there are (and will be) progressively fewer opportunities to stage such events. However, where there are likely still to be individuals with first-hand memories of taking part in pageants, this is an activity that may prove very enjoyable and worthwhile for those involved. Furthermore, it may also provide new information on a given historical pageant, shed new light on the personal experiences of taking part and offer an opportunity for reflection about community identity and its relationship to history.

In our *Redress of the Past* project, we organised a reminiscence event as part of our exhibition ‘Pageants and the People’. This was held in Bury St Edmunds in May 2015. We were expecting around 15 people who had memories of the 1959 pageant



Participants in the *Redress of the Past* reminiscence session at Bury St Edmunds in May 2015. Some are holding printed memorabilia of the Bury pageants.

Photograph by Angela Bartie.

to meet up for our '59-ers reunion event, reminisce and share memories of the pageant. We knew things were going well when, by the time we arrived to set out the tea and cakes, there were already half-a-dozen people there, discussing their memories and showing each other photographs, press clippings and other ephemera they had kept from the pageant. There was a palpable buzz in the room, and when our advertised start time of 4pm arrived, the session was already well under way, with 18 people having taken time out of a sunny weekend to come along. We are hugely indebted to Margaret Charlesworth for doing so much to organise the event and for directing the proceedings—she introduced the session and shared some of her own memories of taking part in the performance, alongside her mother and two sisters. One participant, John, whose father had designed the set, brought along some amazing paintings used in the conceptualisation of the pageant, as well as an incredible image of the original publicity poster. John also talked about how crucial he believed the 1959 pageant was in sparking the campaign to restore the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds just a few years later, a restoration that he himself led. Many who were present agreed, and our research also supports this view.

Soon, everyone was sharing their own distinctive memories of the 1959 pageant. Many in the room had been small children at the time, yet their recollections were often crystal clear and, moreover, had remained precious and important to them

throughout their adult lives. There was some excitement to see Peter Wood, now in his 90s and still sporting his distinctive beard—many had vivid memories of him playing his role as one of the barons on horseback, thundering into and out of the arena on a horse that he learned to ride especially for the occasion (see Case Study G).

It was a real thrill and privilege for us to listen to these recollections. As historians, we can understand many aspects of pageants from the documents that are left behind. Books of words and souvenir programmes tell us who organised and wrote pageants, and what histories they dramatised, whilst press reports can tell us about the weather, local perceptions of success or failure, and other contextual information. But they are silent on how it felt to be part of a major historical pageant, what it was like to be in the audience, and how (or even if) pageants affected the ways in which individuals understood their locale, its history, and its place in wider narratives. This reminiscence event gave us valuable insights into the personal experience of taking part in pageants; but, perhaps more importantly, it gave former pageanteers an opportunity to reconnect with each other, revisit their memories, and reflect on the part that the pageant played in their lives, and the life of their community.

6 Pageants in Film and Music



A still from the colour film of the 1953 St Albans pageant. This film was shown to an appreciative audience at a *Redress of the Past* project event at St Albans Museum + Gallery in January 2020.

Reproduced with the permission of Peter Swinson.

Alongside spectacle on an epic scale, the aim of historical pageants was to make the audience feel they were watching history come to life in front of their very eyes. Capturing this effect during the 1928 historical pageant in Glasgow was the correspondent for the *Evening Citizen*, who wrote: 'For two and a half crowded hours ghostly figures from Scottish pageantry, wild, staid, pompous, and romantic, live a brief while again as they slowly cross the stage, linger, and disappear back into the pages of the history books.'

There are so many ways in which history can be brought to life for present-day audiences through what pageants of the past have left behind. A wide range of film footage of historical pageants remains in existence, stretching right back to the 'Mother of all Pageants', Sherborne in 1905. These films can work very well in exhibitions about historical pageants, as we have found in our exhibitions in Carlisle and St Albans, for example. They can give contemporary audiences more of an understanding of the sheer scale of pageant performances, and also of the remarkable attention to detail that went into them. They nicely complement surviving objects from pageants, the large body of images (not least postcards), and the much smaller number of surviving costumes and props, as well as the oral histories that we have discussed elsewhere in this *Guide*. Some of the earlier films are silent, but we have discovered the power that showing them—sometimes with a selection of music from the original pageant score—can have on viewers. They vividly bring the past to life and can trigger happy memories for those who performed.

This means that, where footage is available, it can form the basis of film evenings—what we termed 'pageant replays' in the *Redress of the Past* project. As Mark Freeman shows in Case Study E, this can work beautifully when some of the original music



A Hertford-based choir, the Mimram Singers, performing at the launch of Philip Sheail's book, *Hertford's Grand Pageant*, in 2014. They sang some of the music from the pageant.

Photograph by Philip Sheail; reproduced with permission.

is performed alongside the film showing. This chapter explores the value of film in the study and representation of pageants, with contributions from Tom Hulme, a member of the *Redress of the Past* project team, and Trevor Bailey, director of the Windrose Rural Media Trust. We have collaborated with Windrose to make available films of the Sherborne pageant of 1905 and Bridport Royal Charter Pageant of 1953 on our [website](#), and also to create a short documentary film about historical pageants in modern Britain, which, once completed, will be made available freely online.⁴⁰

We also explore the crucial importance of music in historical pageants, especially in the early decades, long before amplification systems became more widely and easily accessible. Parker T. Gordon, who is researching historical pageants for his doctoral thesis and is also a practising musician, highlights the range and variety of music used in pageants, discusses its importance to the overall performance, and reflects on the possibilities of music for promoting engagement with the history of pageants. Philip Sheail, the local historian who recounts his experiences in Case Study C, also writes:

in celebrating the centenary of the [Hertford] Pageant, we had the opportunity to revive the music which had been used as a chorus to each of the episodes. Much of it had been specially written by the organist and choirmaster of All Saints, the leading parish church in the town, and as far as we knew, it hadn't been performed since the summer of 1914. The task was

40 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/featured-pageants/film/>.

taken up by a choral group, the Mimram Singers, and was performed at the launch of the book at St John's Hall, Hertford on Sunday 1 June 2014.

We have witnessed at first hand the power of reviving the music of historical pageants as part of the *Redress of the Past* project. In St Albans, in an event to coincide with our exhibition on the town's three historical pageants, in 1907, 1948 and 1953, we worked with Parker T. Gordon to revive some of the music of the 1907 pageant, and also showed short films from the 1948 and 1953 pageants (see Case Study E). For a special evening event following our Historical Pageants Day at Cecil Sharp House, London, in March 2020, we invited Parker to arrange new performances of original pageant music. He was joined by singer Amanda Boyd, who performed some of the folk songs that featured in many historical pageants. With information available on the music used in many pageants, through books of words, souvenir programmes, newspaper reports and, in some cases, specially produced volumes of pageant songs and music (including scores), there are real possibilities for reviving these elements of pageants. In this way, contemporary audiences can be given an insight into what music was used, and how it worked alongside the dramatic performances to help bring the past to life.

CASE STUDY G

'Pageant Replays'—Historical Pageants on Film

Tom Hulme

The pageant movement grew rapidly in popularity at the same time as the cinema and, from their earliest days, pageants were filmed by newsreel makers, professional production companies, and even enthusiastic amateurs. Clips of these re-enactments were then shown in the grand 'picture palaces' of the early to mid-twentieth century, usually as a part of newsreel shown before the main feature. Longer films provided an opportunity for local communities to remember their pageants many years after the fact, and were shown in town halls and local cinemas, or at amateur film clubs. For performers and audiences alike, a sizable slice of the thrill of taking part was seeing themselves, or their friends and family, on the big screen—and in some cases the performers couldn't resist smiling or waving to the camera! But some of these pageant films travelled far beyond the borders of Britain, spreading 'pageant fever' to new audiences. 'John Alden's Choice', for example, a pageant staged in Southampton in 1920, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Mayflower, was even shown in the USA.

In 2014, we put on our own series of 'pageant replays' at Moyses' Hall in Bury St Edmunds—a town that has a pageant tradition as strong as any in England. The first Bury pageant in 1907, mastered by none other than Louis Napoleon Parker himself, has survived in a thirty-minute black-and-white silent video. Using the pageant script and our knowledge of the technicalities of pageant production at the time, we narrated several episodes to our audience—who were particularly thrilled to see the sight of Boudica thundering into the arena on a proper horse-drawn chariot, as Roman soldiers scattered before her. Even more exciting was the much longer film—in colour and with sound—of Bury's 1959 Magna Carta pageant. We were fortunate



Performers in the Bury St Edmunds pageant of 1907. There is silent film footage of this pageant and others from the Edwardian period.

From the collection of Ellie Reid.

to have several original performers with us for the showings—such as Peter Wood, who was remembered by many for his bushy-bearded turn as one of the barons who ‘signed’ the charter in 1215. Finally, a touch of humour was brought to the evening with several clips of the ‘Edmund of Anglia’ pageant in 1970, a gory spectacle in which the pageanteers revelled in the medieval horrors of ten centuries earlier—and, it must be said, not without a touch of early 1970s camp.

Today, films of historical pageants convey a sense of the sheer scale and ambition of the endeavour—thousands of amateur actors gathered together in one place for one purpose, dressed in costumes they had often helped to make in huge ‘sewing circles’, and performing to huge (and usually appreciative) crowds. In our view, showing these films to local audiences was so successful because it provided an opportunity for people to reflect on the meaning of civic identity—both past and present. For relative newcomers to Bury St Edmunds, appreciation of the community spirit of the past encouraged an affinity with their new home. People in the front rows were singing along to the music, conversation flowed in the interval, and some brought along their own memories, photographs and artefacts. Such was the popularity of these evenings that we had to extend our original plan for one event to three, and in the end more than 130 people attended. As academic researchers, showing these films was also a really useful exercise. The sight of communities coming together to remember and share in their collective past was inspiring. In particular, it stimulated an appreciation of the serious educational power of dramatic performance—something that has not always adequately been recognised by historians.

To share our appreciation with others, the *Redress of the Past* team, in partnership with Windrose Rural Media Trust, made long films of two famous Dorset pageants available on our website. First, Sherborne in 1905—the ‘Mother of all Pageants’, staged to commemorate the 1,200th anniversary of the town—and second, the colourful *Bridport Royal Charter Pageant in 1953*, visited by Princess Margaret on the



Stills from the film of the Bridport Royal Charter Pageant, 1953.
Reproduced with the permission of the Windrose Rural Media Trust.

opening night.⁴¹ Using the British Film Institute's catalogue, researchers can identify many other pageants that were filmed, with details about the production company, scenes and cast also sometimes being provided. This is a useful starting point for locating surviving film in local record offices or film archives across the country—such as footage of the Bury St Edmunds pageants, which is in the East Anglian Film Archive. The Media Archive for Central England and the North West Film Archive also have valuable footage of pageant performances, and their holdings can be searched online. Another good place to find more digitised material is the website of British Pathé, a company that was creating newsreels for cinemas from 1910. Before the late 1920s these clips were silent, but for the middle of the twentieth century they often include commentary, music and even live sound from the performances. You can see, for example: six minutes of the epic medieval pageant staged in the grounds of Taunton Castle in 1928; the Prince of Wales attending Ipswich's 'Wolsey Pageant' in 1930; and Brighton's pageant in 1951 to mark the Festival of Britain. Unfortunately, many of these pageant films have been poorly catalogued and we do

41 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1003/>.

not know which spectaculars they depict—perhaps you can spot a local landmark to fill in the gaps in knowledge ... and maybe even put on a ‘pageant replay’ of your own?

CASE STUDY H

Windrose Rural Media Trust—Historical Pageants and Documentary Films

Trevor Bailey

On a winter night in a dark hall a shining screen gives forth the image of a saint blessing a king and queen, a mad woman with dramatic gesture defends dispossessed monks, a Danish horde is defeated in pitched battle.

‘That’, says the presenter, ‘is what the people of Sherborne were up to 115 years ago!’

It is the surviving film of Louis Napoleon Parker’s Sherborne Pageant of 1905; the first of them all.

Windrose Rural Media Trust is a charity which, for 35 years, has used film, video, audio recording and the Internet in a mass of community-based projects. These are too many to list, but they range from radio drama to the use of music and archive film with people affected by dementia; from full TV/video productions to an internet radio station for farmers.

One of Windrose’s abiding missions has been to save old ciné films of life in Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire so that they, and all that they tell us, can be experienced again by the public. The result is a now massive archive. Some 230 shows have taken films to village halls, theatres, cinemas and arts centres and have reached tens of thousands of people, including in the USA.

The Sherborne film was amongst the first that Windrose found. From it came an understanding of the synergy that existed from the beginning between pageants and film. Parker had a great eye for publicity. His film was made of a dress rehearsal, quickly processed and then, it is believed, shown in London to attract some of the 30,000 people who came to see the live performances.

In 2001 Windrose brought together a local historian, Sherborne School, Sherborne Museum, English Heritage and Sherborne musicians to make



Stills from the film of the Sherborne pageant of 1905.

Reproduced with the permission of the Windrose Rural Media Trust.



Stills from 'Glastonbury Past and Present' (1922).
Reproduced with the permission of the Windrose Rural Media Trust.

a production which told the story of the 'Mother of All Pageants', including reviving some of the original 1905 music composed for the pageant. This production, incorporating the 1905 film, is now available again on DVD.

There was much more to discover about pageants and film. It became clear that films of performances and occasionally of some of the work that went into them were a normal part of the pageant concept. Thus there is a rich film record, conceived as a natural extension and afterlife for these great community events. Windrose found films of a 1930s Lulworth pageant, a Women's Institute pageant, and a 1970s pageant in Cheddar. The films showed how techniques changed, some pageants using a tight performing space before an historic backdrop while others used dramatic movement over wide expanses. The development of audio technology influenced how speech and music could be featured.

In Axbridge, Somerset, where a pageant takes place every ten years and will do so again in 2020 (see Case Study A), the community had its own professional film maker, Nick Barrington. In consequence, there is film not only of performances but also from within and around audiences. Audiences, important as they are, rarely

feature in most of the pageant films. Nick also filmed the event that sparked the creation of the first Axbridge Pageant: the opening of the local bypass road!

The discovery of a high quality film of the 1953 Bridport pageant offered a special opportunity. Not only did it show the wider occasion of which the pageant was the central part, with attendance by Princess Margaret, but Windrose was also able to film interviews with some of the participants; this added even more human experience to the pictures.

In a Windrose show at Wedmore in Somerset early in 2020, an excerpt from another kind of pageant film was shown, accompanied by live choral music. Made in 1922, this is entitled 'Glastonbury Past and Present', and is a pageant conceived purely as a film. Like all pageants, it is local history acted out by local people in the place where it happened. Alice Buckton and the other 'Avalonians' who were behind it hoped that it would take cinemas by storm nationally. That did not happen, but it is being seen again now.

At the time of writing, filming is under way for a documentary on pageants being made in partnership with the *Redress of the Past* project. Archive films of pageants in St Albans, Guildford, Axbridge, Birmingham and Carlisle are being incorporated. There is no lack of films. Crucial, however, is the opportunity to add first-hand accounts of what it is like to create pageants—or just to participate.

The films, of course, enshrine not only an event but the people themselves and what they achieved. As Parker wrote of his first pageant, '[i]t is a great Festival of Brotherhood, in which all distinctions of whatever kind are sunk in a common effort.'

The Windrose website can be seen at <https://windrose-rmt.postach.io/>

CASE STUDY I

Pageants and Music

Parker T. Gordon

Music was an essential part of twentieth-century pageant performances, often establishing the narrative voice even more clearly than the spoken word. For the thousands of audience members seated or standing in the outdoor pageant grandstands, spoken dialogue without amplification was often inaudible. In addition to the pageant's story reproduced in the book of words, pageant music communicated the narrative through large choirs, often numbering in the hundreds, to introduce and summarise the historical episodes. These choral interludes provided smooth transitions between scenes, and, similarly, instrumental preludes or fanfares signalled aural cues to large numbers of performers for the next episode to begin. Like music for the theatre or for films, pageant music guides an audience's emotional response to the action, provides continuity across scenes, establishes period settings, and accompanies dramatic or even supernatural effects. The wide range of music for pageants varies immensely across the thousands of British pageants performed in the twentieth century, and each composition is just as unique as the intricately designed costumes and custom-written episodes of local history.

Whether specially composed or selected from pre-existing music (including classical music, folk tunes, popular songs, religious chants or hymns), the music was



Parker T. Gordon (the author of Case Study I) performing music from the 1907 St Albans pageant in the assembly room at St Albans Museum + Gallery, January 2020. *Photograph by Liz Munday.*



Ralph Vaughan Williams conducting the music at the Pageant of Abinger, Surrey, 1934. *Reproduced with permission of Dorking Museum.*

THE AGINCOURT SONG
OLD ENGLISH MELODY, 15TH CENTURY. WORDS CIRCA 1411. ARRANGED BY GEOFFREY SHAW

1. Our King went forth to New-man-day, With grace and
 2. Now gra-cious God he save our King, His peo-ple and

might of his chi-val-ry; Thum-dal for him wrought mar-rous-ly, Where
 all his well-will-ly; O'er him good life and good end-ing, That

‘The Agincourt Song’, arranged by Geoffrey Shaw. This song was used in a number of historical pageants in the mid-twentieth century.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House; reproduced with permission.

tailored to fit the dramatic needs (and budget) of the pageant. Some of the larger pageants employed military bands, consisting of woodwind, brass and percussion, which could be heard more easily than orchestral stringed instruments across the expansive outdoor arenas, whilst other pageants used simpler, more economical ensembles including piano and pipes. Indoor pageants—such as *T. S. Eliot’s The Rock* at Sadler’s Wells and Charles Williams’s *Judgement at Chelmsford* at the New Scala theatre—had richly textured scores composed for enlarged pit orchestras by Martin Shaw, which worked well in the enclosed spaces.⁴² With technological advances in recording and electronic amplification, some pageant-masters such as Mary Kelly opted to use a gramophone for playing selections of recorded music. Miss La Trobe famously utilises this method in Virginia Woolf’s fictitious pageant in *Between the Acts*.

Music was vital to the success of a pageant, and this important factor was noted from the beginning of the twentieth century with Louis Napoleon Parker’s pageants. Combining his expertise as a composer and music teacher for his first pageant in 1905, Parker incorporated music into the very fabric of the pageant form, tying the narrative language of the drama to music akin to opera. As a recognised follower and devotee of the works of Richard Wagner in the 1880s and 1890s, Parker had a natural flair for choosing music that served the needs of the pageant drama, establishing a model for all other pageant masters, music directors, and composers to follow.

Some of the music selected by these pageant organisers helped establish the appropriate historical setting for specific scenes. Period music by Renaissance and Baroque composers such as Thomas Tallis, William Byrd and Henry Purcell, combined with the thoroughly researched period costume designs and props, helped establish an accurate historical setting that transported the scene back in time.

42 <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/1323/>.

Pageants that could afford to hire a composer would commission new music from local music teachers such as Parker, orchestral composers and conductors such as W. H. Bell, or theatre composers such as Christopher Wilson. Some pageant committees even secured the talents of renowned twentieth-century composers—including Edward Elgar, Gustav Holst, Frank Bridge, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Geoffrey and Martin Shaw, Benjamin Britten and Alan Bush—to compose and arrange their pageant music.

The various styles of music are usually well-suited to the needs of the pageant. Triumphant fanfares announce royal entries, epic marches provide time for grand processions, sombre plainsongs accompany funeral parades, lively folk tunes signal morris and maypole dances, and intense battle music fills frequent scenes of invasions and conquests. Some incidental music is also effectively employed to convey supernatural effects, introduce pagan rituals, and capture the mood of the occasional witch-hunt.

Pageant-goers could expect to hear familiar songs in addition to new pieces of music, and some of the most popular music from pageants still is performed today. In fact, the closing of a major civic pageant in the 1930s would not sound so different from the last night of the Proms. Patriotic songs and hymns such as ‘I vow to thee my country’, ‘Land of hope and glory’, ‘Jerusalem’, ‘O God, our help in ages past’, and the national anthem were standard fare for the conclusion of a pageant, often with the thousands of audience members joining together in the singing.

Pageant music unifies the disjointed episodes of history in performance, but it also unifies the audiences and performers. Aside from the most popular national songs, music from pageants is often overlooked and rarely performed. Very few recordings of pageant music have been made, but some of the specially composed pieces still can be found in pageant handbooks, popular song anthologies, choral sheet music, hymn books, manuscripts in local archives, and library collections of composers’ works. The tunes are often catchy and memorable, full of innovative and dramatic writing, and provide additional ways to interact with local history and these pageants of the past.

Notes on Contributors

John Bailey was born in Bristol in 1956. An English graduate, John taught English and Drama for over twenty years before switching disciplines and becoming an art dealer. John and his family moved to Axbridge in 1996 and quickly became involved in the artistic life of the community. He has been the Artistic Director of the Axbridge Community Theatre since its inception in 2000 and was Artistic Director of the Axbridge Pageant in 2000 and 2010. He is now preparing to stage and direct the 2020 Pageant.

Trevor Bailey is Director of Windrose Rural Media Trust. He has created many media-based projects, including an Internet radio station for farmers in the UK and abroad, a major film archive, support and training for community broadcasters, media commissions for musicians and poets, oral history recording, and opportunities for new radio playwrights and documentary makers. Trevor has worked in rural economic and community development, setting up independent projects to provide employment in villages and create social enterprises. Alongside his other work he has been a BBC television presenter, written for national newspapers, acted as a consultant to major charitable foundations and chaired an EU funding body and a regional film and television archive.

Angela Bartie is a Senior Lecturer in Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh. She was a co-investigator on the *Redress of the Past* project. She has written on a number of aspects of modern British social and cultural history, both individually and in collaboration with others, including arts festivals, youth gangs, the policing of youth in post-war Britain, and oral history methods. She is the author of *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Postwar Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

Barbara Elsmore has been fortunate in coming to live in Sherborne and is now surrounded by an area where her past family lived and worked over many generations. She is now actively involved in promoting the study of family history in the

Sherborne area with the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society and the University of the Third Age, and by writing articles in the *Conduit* magazine.

Linda Fleming is currently a Research Associate at the University of Glasgow, and was a researcher on the *Redress of the Past* project. Linda has long-standing interests in gender and community history and has published widely on a number of aspects of social and cultural life in modern Britain. She is co-editor of *Scottish Women: A Documentary History, 1780–1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) and author of a number of entries in *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

Mark Freeman is a Reader in Education and Social History at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London. He was a co-investigator on the *Redress of the Past* project. He is the author of a wide range of books and articles about aspects of modern British social history, including, most recently, *The St Albans Pageants: An Illustrated History* (St Albans: Regents Court Press, 2020). He is also co-editor of the journal *History of Education*.

Parker T. Gordon is a PhD student at the University of St Andrews in the School of English. His thesis, *Twentieth-Century Pageants: Word, Music, and Drama in Britain*, focuses upon the collaborative creative processes of writers and composers for pageants during the interwar years. In addition to his literary research, Parker works as an editor and arranger, reviving pageant music for new audiences. An active musician, Parker regularly performs with ensembles in St Andrews and throughout the UK.

Rachel Hassall is a qualified archivist with more years' experience than she cares to mention. She is currently School Archivist at Sherborne School in Dorset where she preserves and makes available for research a treasure trove of material relating to the history of Sherborne School, its former

pupils, and Sherborne town, including the largest single collection of material relating to the 1905 Sherborne Pageant.

Tom Hulme is a Lecturer in Modern British History at Queen's University Belfast. Between 2013 and 2015 he was a researcher on the *Redress of the Past* project, and still maintains an interest in historical pageants—in his recent book *After the Shock City: Urban Culture and the Making of Modern Citizenship* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2019), for example, there is a chapter on the civic spectaculars staged in Manchester and Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s.

Alexander Hutton is a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow at King's College London and was a researcher on the *Redress of the Past* project. He is a cultural historian of twentieth-century Britain, with a particular interest in the ways in which the industrial past has been represented and remembered. He has published on aspects of literature and history in the twentieth century, and first got interested in historical pageants during his doctoral research.

Harry Mottram, journalist and occasional actor, was born in Devon and initially attended Stella Maris Convent School in Seaton in 1960. After school at Colyton he went to art college in Taunton in Somerset and later became an advertising copywriter before switching to journalism after reading a library book on the subject. In 1997 he moved his family to Axbridge and immediately became interested in the pageant, contributing as a writer.

Paul Readman is Professor of Modern British History at King's College London. He is principal investigator on the AHRC-funded project, *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain*. His publications include *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) and, as co-editor with Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman and Alexander Hutton, *Restaging the Past:*

Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain (London: UCL Press, 2020).

Ellie Reid is a local historian with a long-standing interest in the history and material culture of historical pageants. She is also a Local Studies Librarian at Oxfordshire History Centre. She has collaborated in various ways with the *Redress of the Past* project; these have included contributing to published outputs and lending material for exhibitions.

Edwin Rutherford currently works as the Regimental Curator of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Museum in Edinburgh Castle. He is originally from Northumberland and studied History at the University of Liverpool and Museum Studies at Newcastle University. He has subsequently worked in the museum sector for seventeen years and developed a range of exhibitions, events, workshops and presentations across several disciplines. As the Keeper of Social History at Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Edwin worked on the Carlisle Historical Pageants exhibition in 2015. He is an Associate Member of the Museums Association and an Inaugural Winfield Fellow of the United States Embassy. Edwin is also studying a part-time PhD with the University of Liverpool examining the material culture of the Orange Order.

Philip Sheail is a retired town planner who has lived in Hertford for over 40 years. He is a member of the Hertford & Ware Local History Society, co-editor of the journal of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History, and a trustee of the Hertfordshire Record Society, which seeks to make the county's archives more readily available to researchers. He has done a great deal of research into life in Hertford during the early 1900s and more recently has been researching the life of a Hertfordshire aristocrat, the 3rd Earl Cowper (1738–89).

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We are also grateful to Berenice Smith, of Hello Lovely Design, for her work on the typesetting of this *Guide*, to our printers the Langham Press, and to all our partners on the *Redress of the Past* project: the Axbridge Pageant Association, Bury St Edmunds Magna Carta 800, Charles Kingsley 200, the English Folk Dance & Song Society, St Albans Museums, St Edmundsbury Heritage Service, Scarborough Archaeological & Historical Society, Scarborough Museums Trust, Trestle Theatre Company, Tullie House Museum and Gallery, and the Windrose Rural Media Trust.

Project Website: www.historicalpageants.ac.uk
Twitter: @pageantry_ahrc
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HistoricalPageants/>

Further References

(1) Publications arising from the *Redress of the Past* project

We have actively published in a number of different formats during the lifetime of our project, including a *project blog* and our major *pageants database*.⁴³ The database is the principal output of the project; it is now available and fully searchable:

Angela Bartie, Paul Caton, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alexander Hutton and Paul Readman, *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain, 1905-2016* (database, published online, 2016).

Books

Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton and Paul Readman (eds), *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London: UCL Press, 2020; gold open-access).

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Historical pageants were one of the most striking and widespread forms of popular entertainment in twentieth-century Britain. Presenting large-scale theatrical re-creations of scenes from local and national history, they brought the past to life as never before. Tens of thousands of people in communities across Britain performed in these vivid extravaganzas of music, dance and drama, and millions more watched them. Historical pageants were important events in the places that staged them, and have often attracted interest among local historians and heritage-sector organisations. This *Local History Study Guide* is designed to encourage and support the study of these pageants, through their content, organisation, material culture, music, costume and even film. The *Guide* draws on experiences of carrying out detailed local research, staging exhibitions and re-performances of pageant music and scenes, and even producing an entire pageant.

This book is available in paper copy and as an open-access PDF, and is distributed free of charge. It is one of many publications from a major research project, *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905-2016*, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. This *Guide* can be downloaded from the project website: www.historicalpageants.ac.uk

Front cover: a scene from the Axbridge pageant of 2010.

Back cover: the finale of the Axbridge pageant of 2010.

Both photographs by Maggie Neill; reproduced with the permission of the Axbridge Pageant Association.

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