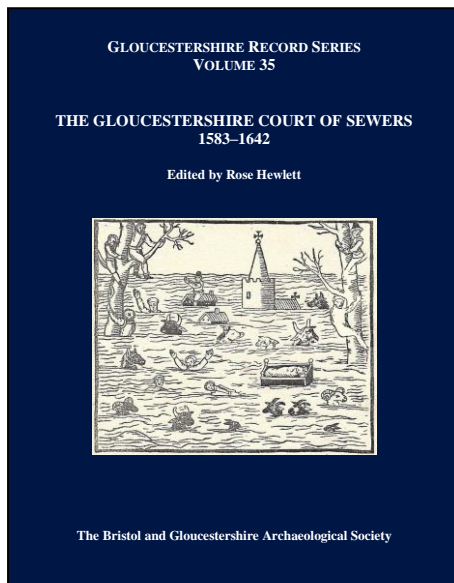


A new book about Gloucestershire's coastal communities



These remarkable Court of Sewers records open a window on communities of the Gloucestershire Levels between 1583 and 1642, and their struggles against encroachments from the sea in a changing political climate. They touch all walks of life from the peasantry to the county's elite. The extraordinary detail they contain about people and places make them a valuable resource for family and local historians. They are almost unique in their survival, and of national significance.

The records survive because of a long-running legal dispute at Oldbury on Severn regarding responsibility for the sea defences.

From mud walls to grass embankments fortified with stone, sea walls have defended coastal Gloucestershire since Roman times, and management of flood risk and drainage on the low-lying land they protected is documented from the medieval period. Maintenance was a constant draw on labour, materials and finances, especially following the great Severn Estuary flood of 1607 and another significant inundation in 1636. This fully indexed edited transcription reveals the condition of the sea walls and drainage systems before and after these events.

'Sewers' here are watercourses, natural or manmade. Courts of Sewers were the forerunners of today's Internal Drainage Boards, and their form of local government deserves wider attention not only from historians, but from scientists and policymakers who seek a better understanding of historic floods. A comprehensive glossary assists the reader with unusual terminology.

Rose Hewlett's doctoral research at the University of Bristol into the 1607 flood is underpinned by these records which shed new light on how communities on the Severn Estuary Levels coped in its aftermath.

Published by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. UK price £30.00 currently discounted to £22.50. Postage extra, but free delivery may be possible.

Copies available from Rose Hewlett: rose@gloucestershirehousehistories.co.uk.

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