

Elder, David, *Secret Stroud*, Amberley Publishing, 2024, £15.99

Why were 'glutinous, sloppy custard pies' being thrown about in the Stratford Abbey kitchen in January 1950, with well-known local actors such as Jack Marshall having great fun 'getting plastered'? To find out, look no further than this richly illustrated and freshly informative book by David Elder, which is a delight to read.

I am a relatively recent newcomer to Stroud, having moved here in 2018, and whilst I have come across a couple of stories or photographs of places that I am already familiar with, the majority of this book details people and places that I was at best only fleetingly aware of. Elder's chapter on the Whiteway Colony contains fascinating details about some of the people who have lived there. Edwin Tregelles, aka 'the Merry Quaker' and 'the Lord of Misrule' according to the *Stroud News* of the time; George Allen, who broke a previous record by walking 909 miles Land's End to John o' Groats in just under 17 days, and who also welcomed Mahatma Gandhi when he arrived at Stroud railway station on August 22nd 1909, are just two of those mentioned.

Protesting as a way of voicing opposition has long been a part of the fabric of Stroud, and along with the Stroudwater Riots and Tailors Strike, Elder also covers the Fifth of November Riot (1824) and protests at the Subscription Rooms against the Licensing Bill (1908) along with the more recent, singular protest by 73 year old Miss Eileen Halliday in 1991 with her refusal to sell Sainsbury's her home – Riverside Cottage in Meadow Lane – I must take a walk down there!

Other chapters light upon intriguing exhibitions of detailed scale models of castles and abbeys made by John Bellamy; the short-lived history of Stroud's first cinema; clothiers' marks on buildings and the keeping of 'Great Western Railway time', 'Midland Station time' and also 'Stonehouse time' (one minute later than Stroud). Through this book, I have deepened my knowledge of Stroud – of the people, of places and of events. I have been made aware of industries previously unknown to me, such as the Animation Industry and the establishment of the Anson Dyer Studios - 'Custard for Cupid' by Edward Eve Productions Ltd being the cause of the custard pies throwing. I have more details to look out for as I walk around town, and more to ponder: was Charley Brown the 'known troublemaker' (p41), the boy who grew up to be Charles Brown, the man who was imprisoned for three months for his part in the Fifth of November Riots (p57)?

For the curious of mind, this book delivers!

By Kate Harrison