



Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 82

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council
Registered Charity No. 1056046
<http://www.cheltlocalhist.btck.co.uk>

July 2015



EDITORIAL

This fine building, designed by George Underwood in 1823 as a terrace of private dwellings, has housed the Municipal Offices for 100 years. The Council bought the central block of five houses in 1915, gradually acquiring more until by 1958 it had thirteen. Now, following staffing cuts, some stand empty, and the Council has taken the wise decision to move in a few years' time to modern premises in Bath Road. It is reassuring to know that the future use of the old building will be resolved before the Council leaves, but what should it be—a hotel to rival the Queen's? More offices? A row of boutiques? It's an important decision and sure to give rise to much debate.

Kath Boothman

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EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2015-16

Meetings start at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Promenade

Tuesday 15th September:

Nick Humnphris—Chedworth Roman Villa

The lecture will first cover the pre-Roman and Roman history of the site, tracing the development of the early 2nd century villa into a magnificent 4th century villa, followed by its demise after the end of the Roman era. The speaker will talk about Roman hospitality and the villa's fine mosaics, and also about the rediscovery of the villa in the 19th Century. Finally, current archaeological work on the site will be discussed.

Tuesday 20th October:

John Loosley—Childhood Employment in Gloucestershire

The Victorians were increasingly concerned about the conditions in which children were employed and the lack of education. Over some 50 years numerous laws were passed governing the age and the conditions of employment and access to compulsory free education. The talk will look at the conditions of employment in Gloucestershire from the mills in the Stroud area to the mines in the Forest of Dean and the effect this had on the education of children. Firsthand accounts from the reports of the various commissions on employment and education and school logbooks will be used as evidence of conditions in Gloucestershire compared with other areas of the country.

Tuesday 17th November:

Ray Wilson—The Mills of the River Chelt

Pigot's Directory of 1830 for Gloucestershire states that '*...upon the River Chelt are more flour mills in the space of four miles than upon any stream of its size in the kingdom*'. While this is certainly an exaggeration there were at various times at least a dozen mills along its length. Our speaker, who is the Honorary Secretary of the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology, will take us along the entire length of the river from its source in Dowdeswell parish, through (and under) Cheltenham town, and out to the River Severn by means of historic and modern photographs. He will be looking particularly at the history of the former mills and what remains today.

Tuesday 8th December:

Ian Hollingsbee—Inside the Wire: The Prisoner of War Camps and Hostels of Gloucestershire 1939-1948

Stalag VIII-B, Colditz, these names are synonymous with POWs in the Second World War. But what of those prisoners in captivity on British soil? Where did they go? Gloucestershire was home to a wealth of prisoner-of-war camps and

hostels, and many Italian and German prisoners spent the war years here. *Inside the Wire* explores the role of the camps, their captives and workers, together with their impact on the local community. This talk draws on Ministry of Defence, Red Cross and US Army records, and is richly illustrated in a Power Point presentation with original images. The talk also features the compelling first-hand account of Joachim Schulze, a German POW who spent the war near Tewkesbury, Erwin Engler a German POW in Leckhampton who married a local girl and three Italians who married in Newent. This is a fascinating but forgotten aspect of the Second World War.

Tuesday 26th January 2016:

Research and Display Evening

Tuesday 16th February 2016:

Paul Barnett—Port to Port: the Sharpness Canal

In this talk the speaker charts the fortunes of Gloucestershire's waterborne trade via its famous ship canal. Starting in the south at the rural dock of Sharpness, the viewer is taken on a pictorial journey northward along the sleepy Gloucestershire ship canal, momentarily stopping at points of interest, until eventually 'heaving to' in the city's historic Gloucester dock. This is achieved by using a combination of recently acquired ship-side images and their historic equivalent, as captured in a re-discovered series of documentary images from the early 1950s.

Tuesday 15th March 2016:

Neela Mann— Cheltenham in the Great War

This previously un-researched period of Cheltenham's history is full of fascinating stories of remarkable people and events. Two factors in Cheltenham's favour led to the town making an enormous contribution to the war effort. But what was it the people here in Cheltenham did during World War I, how did they cope and what was happening here? Neela Mann introduces the book she has written, in conjunction with the Society, chronicling life in the town in those years. It will be published in March 2016 by The History Press. It is hoped copies of the book will be available for sale at a special price for CLHS members.

Tuesday 19th April 2016:

Tony Conder—Gloucester's Railways, Then and Now

When railways were young Gloucester was a very desirable target for a railway. Freight traffic was the thing and the newly opened docks taking ships from anywhere in the world offered the midlands a great opportunity. Bristol also wanted a link with Birmingham via Gloucester, partly to negate the competition from the docks but also as a way for Brunel's broad gauge to penetrate northwards. The Birmingham line upset every town and city in the Severn valley by ignoring them; Cheltenham's independence from its older neighbour led to rival railway

plans. Eventually two lines met at Gloucester, one broad, one narrow, and the scene for chaos was set. Richly illustrated with contemporary photographs and prints, this is the story of how Gloucester developed its connections to the country and helped set the pattern for railways worldwide.

Tuesday 17th May 2016:

Gwilym Davies—Folk Music of Gloucestershire

The county of Gloucestershire is fortunate in having a rich heritage of folk music, from children's singing games to wassail songs to Morris dances to songs of love, war, country life, humour, the supernatural, ancient ballads, songs from the gypsy community and so on. Gwilym has spent many years researching and performing the music and is an acknowledged expert in the field. The talk will be illustrated with audio and video clips from his extensive archive as well as live performance. You will also hear about an exciting Heritage Lottery funded programme to put all this material on line and to spread the word to schools, choirs, musicians of all types and researchers.

MORNING LECTURES 2015-16

Morning lectures will take place at St Luke's Hall, St Luke's Place, Cheltenham. A donation of £1.00 from all those attending these lectures is appreciated. Tea/coffee and biscuits served (no charge) from 10.00 am. Lectures start at 10.30 am. All are welcome. Parking at the Hall is for disabled only—please contact Chris Conoley (01452 700428) beforehand if you wish to reserve a space.

Tuesday 6th October:

Geoff Newsum/ Caroline Meller—A Historical Tour of Gotherington

Rather than giving a chronological history of Gotherington, this presentation will consist of a virtual walk through the village looking at various properties, landscape features etc and linking them to appropriate historical periods and events from pre-history to the present. The speakers will show how, from being merely a portion of an estate that was given to support the church at Cleeve, Upper and Lower Gotherington emerged as distinct but overlapping manors leaving evidence that is still visible today. Obviously the village was very much an agricultural one until well into the 20th century and, although there is only one working farm left, most of the farmhouses and quite a few of the labourers' cottages remain. Stories about some of the people who lived in them will be another significant aspect of the talk.

Tuesday 3rd November:

Aylwin Sampson—Ramblings of a Blockhead

In his 90th year CLHS member Aylwin Sampson, writer and artist, who for many years has provided the cover illustrations for the CLHS Journal, looks back over a life in print, with particular reference to local history.

Tuesday 1st March 2016:

Lionel Walrond—The Cotswold House

Scores of books have been written on the Cotswolds, most of them full of pretty pictures but lacking in constructive data. One reason is that until the mid-1950s vernacular architecture was an unknown discipline. The Cotswolds are a large area composed of lesser regions resulting from economic growth and geological variations. There are also changes in house style due to status, function and evolving fashion. In the speaker's own book, *The Cotswold House*, co-written with Tim Jordan, the aim is to help readers understand and appreciate what they see.

Tuesday 5th April 2016:

Hugh Torrens—The extraordinary, but forgotten story of the Cotswold Stone Pipe Company trying (but failing) to provide clean water to the cities of London, Dublin and Manchester between 1805 and 1815

Water pipes had at one time been made of elm, which was too short-lived, and later of cast iron, which was more expensive and tended to stain the water. The Stone Pipe Company advocated clean, 'pure' stone as the best alternative. It chose Guiting stone as its source material, and for a few years 30 tons of bored pipes left the manufacturing works at Guiting every day. The lecture will explore the rise and dramatic fall of this amazing enterprise, in which many of Britain's most celebrated engineers were involved.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Prestbury Local History Society

www.prestburyhistory.btck.co.uk

Meetings are held at Prestbury Women's Institute Hall (corner of Bouncers Lane/Prestbury Road), starting at 7.30 pm. Non-members pay £2.

Monday 28th September:

Val Porter—The Craven's Influence in Prestbury

Monday 26th October:

Lynda Hodges DVD—Travelling in Time

Monday 23rd November:

Margaret Davies—The Burgage

Leckhampton Local History Society

www.llhs.org.uk

Note new venue: Meetings are held at Glebe Cottages, Church Road, Leckhampton (next to the churchyard), at 8.00 pm Admission £1 for visitors.

Wednesday 16th September:

Rose Hewlett—A Village Through Time

Wednesday 14th October :

Chris Wesley—VC Winners in Leckhampton Churchyard

Charlton Kings Local History Society

www.charltonkings.org.uk

All meetings are held at the Baptist Church, Church Street, starting at 7.30 pm.

Tuesday 22nd September (NB starting at 7.00 pm):

Geoff North—Voluntary Aid Hospitals 1914-19: ‘The Cheltenham Group’

Tuesday 27th October:

Aylwin Sampson—The Queen’s Hotel Story

Tuesday 24th November:

Steven Blake—John Bellamy (1803-93), a Gloucestershire Travelling Showman

Swindon Village Society

Meetings are held at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm. Non-members pay £1.

Wednesday 16th September:

Dr Tim Brain—The Floods of 2007

Wednesday 21st October:

Ray Wilson—Gloucestershire’s Industrial Archaeology

Wednesday 18th November:

John Dixon—Barbara Cartland and Tewkesbury

Gotherington and Area Local History Society

Meetings are held in Gotherington Village Hall, starting at 8.00 pm. Visitors are welcome, £2 per meeting.

Tuesday 22nd September:

Tom James—The Black Death

Tuesday 27th October :

Cherry Hubbard—Roman Medicine

The Deerhurst Lecture 2015**‘The post-Reformation chancel fittings at Deerhurst:
a unique survival’**

Trevor Cooper, Chairman of the Ecclesiological Society

Saturday 12th September 2015 at 7.30 pm in St Mary’s Church, Deerhurst

Admission on the Door from 7.00 pm.

Tickets (to include a glass of wine and cheese) £5.00, students £3.00

REVIEWS

Our speaker on March 17th was **Tony Roberts** of Archaeoscan, with the theme of **New Archaeological Discoveries in Gloucestershire**. He explained that he had set up Archaeoscan, the main aim of which was to get the public involved in archaeology, when he retired from the RAF. He wanted to give a flavour of the company's activities in South Gloucestershire and encourage his audience to think of joining in. (He had brought with him some 'finds' such as potsherds, which were laid out on the table.)

To explain how sites for digging were identified, he showed aerial photos on which crop marks revealed the position of ancient walls and ditches. There was a National Mapping Programme which collected all such photos and combined the evidence they contained to give a more detailed picture. There was also LIDAR, a scanning system that could detect earthworks concealed by vegetation. Other types of scanner, used at ground level, detected underground features by variations in electrical resistance. Using this geophysical system it had been possible to establish the location and layout of the long-lost big house and formal gardens at Chipping Campden, destroyed in the Civil War. At Hucclecote the local metal detecting club had gone over ground surveyed by Archaeoscan and found coins and pottery. He was always looking for sites where local people could become involved, and sometimes worked with schools and local history groups. He showed a picture of a group digging at Guiting Power, where magnetometry studies had indicated the presence of storage pits and foundations. They had found jewellery, coins and pottery. Volunteers had also worked at Miserden, where there was a late Iron Age site, and there was an ongoing dig at Doynton Villa in south Gloucestershire. Earlier archaeologists had dug there without finding the extensive Roman villa complex revealed by Archaeoscan's survey; so far hypocausts, a bath house, drains and part of the villa had been excavated. The stone walls had largely gone because local people had used the site as a stone quarry long ago, but it was still possible to determine the purpose of the buildings, as for example where the presence of animal bones indicated livestock shelters. He showed pictures of jewellery found in the bath house area, and said volunteers liked washing pottery fragments that turned up so as to reveal the detail on them. Another project had been undertaken at Sherborne where there was thought to be a lost church, but it had proved to be a Roman corn-drier, a hollow T-shaped structure in which a fire lit at the bottom of the long arm would have created a current of warm air to dry the corn spread out inside.

As to how all this work was funded, the company received money from local councils and charged fees to schools such as Marlborough College and other customers for working with them. They did not usually undertake many projects at once, but were getting busier every year. He was pleased when young people interested in taking up archaeology came, and when children were brought to see the work. At the end there was a pause before the audience came up with several questions. It had been a very interesting and thought-provoking talk.

On 14th April at St. Luke's, CLHS member and St Gregory's Church historian **Joanna Vials** gave an illuminating talk titled **The Indomitable Mr Cotham**. Joanna explained how, when helping to compile a guidebook for the church in 2013, she had been surprised to find no memorial plaque in the church to its founding priest, Fr James Ambrose Cotham OSB. So began her quest to learn more about the man and his life.

James Ambrose Cotham was born in 1810 at Warrington, Lancashire into a well-established Catholic community. Aged 16 he went with his younger brother to the Benedictine college at Douai, Northern France. In March 1835, following his ordination, Fr Cotham sailed on *The Oriental* bound for Australia. Religion in the colonies was seen as a civilising influence, helping people to be educated, moral, hard-working and above all law abiding. In Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) he was warmly welcomed by settlers and was soon building the first Catholic church in the colony – he was to be responsible for building two of the earliest churches in Tasmania during his 14 years there. His life in Tasmania was busy, initially as a mission priest and later ministering to prison guards and convicts, the sick in convict hospitals, the Queen's Orphanage and workplaces etc. He sailed back to England in 1851 and in July 1852 preached at St.



The Oriental - 506 tons sailing ship

Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, erected 10 years previously. Catholic churches were now being built all over the country and the influence of Pugin and others was clearly evident. However, in Cheltenham, the chapel in Somerset Place still looked like a dissenting place of worship, although the congregation had risen to 1000 by 1850. The arrival of the energetic Fr Cotham in 1852 soon brought about change here too. By early 1853 he was convening meetings of the whole congregation, the Committee and supporters including newcomers or recent converts. Adverts were placed in local and national press inviting subscriptions towards the building of a new church. Plans progressed very quickly and it seems Fr Cotham matched whatever sums were raised with his own personal contribution. Meticulous accounts were kept and still survive at Gloucestershire Archives. The church was completed in stages from 1857. In 1859, *The Cheltenham Examiner* reported apparent rivalry with the Established Church - the spire of St Gregory's was to be 208 feet, 41 feet higher than that of the parish church!

Fr Cotham resigned in 1873 and travelled abroad. He did not attend the consecration of St Gregory's in 1877. His health declining, he returned to England and died in May 1883. His grave is at Belmont Abbey. Although a 'pioneer' for the Benedictines in Tasmania and for the Catholic community in Cheltenham, Joanna described him as an individualistic, somewhat eccentric, lone missionary.

Elaine North

Our speaker on 21st April was **John Paddick** with the theme **The First Civil War in Gloucestershire (1642-46)**. He said that the county was important in the war because of its strategic position between Oxford and Wales. He asked the audience whether they supported the Parliamentary or Royalist side, and on receiving a largely neutral response said that in 1642, similarly, even the gentry were lukewarm, though most eventually followed the King. Early in 1641 Parliament produced a Protestation of allegiance to Charles I and the Church of England which all adults over 18 were required to sign. It found support in some places (Cirencester was in favour) and resistance elsewhere (Tewkesbury opposed it). Factional fighting had already broken out by the time the King raised his standard in August 1642. He was at a disadvantage: his armoury was mostly in London and Parliament seized it, the Navy declared for Parliament and he had few trained troops, his army consisting mostly of farm workers recruited from country estates. At the battle of Powick Bridge on 23rd September the King's nephew Rupert of the Rhine and his cavalry were victorious, but the battle of Edgehill in October was inconclusive. Charles then gave up hope of regaining control of London and made Oxford his headquarters. The court occupied Christ Church while other colleges were used as barracks, a powder factory was set up and defences were built around the city. Meanwhile he sent the Queen to France to raise money for desperately needed arms and clothing from his troops. Supplies were a constant worry. In February 1643 the Royalists stormed Cirencester, which was garrisoned and defended under the command of Sir John Fettiplace. Rupert, who was in command, placed a mortar on the west side and lobbed incendiaries over the wall, destroying all the biggest houses. It was the first major bombardment of the Civil War. The Royalists took 1000 prisoners and seized 3000 muskets among other things—a very useful haul. On the King's orders, these were given only to seasoned soldiers, not to new recruits. Rupert was also sent up the Stroud valley in search of red and blue wool cloth for uniforms. By 1643 the balance of power between the two sides was almost even, with the Royalists strongest in the north and south-west. In July 1643 Rupert successfully stormed Bristol, giving the King a major stronghold at last. In August the Royalists besieged Gloucester, which held out until the besiegers became sick and demoralised and a relieving force arrived from London. After the loss of Gloucester other Royalist strongholds such as Sudeley and Tewkesbury also fell to the Parliamentarians. The battle of Naseby in June 1645 effectively saw the end of the Royalist army. Turning to the socio-economic effects of the war, he counted the destruction of property and loss of revenue from farming and other sources as among the worst. There was also a huge cost in lives, amounting to 12.3% of the population. The audience followed this stirring narrative with rapt attention, and one member suggested Civil War sites should be marked, as is done in America.



Charles I commanding
his troops

After the AGM on May 19th **John Puttley**, interestingly garbed as a 16th century barber-surgeon and with the aid of an array of equipment laid out on the table, entertained us with a talk entitled **Blood, Guts and a Little off the Top!** The items on display, he explained, related to the three main branches of the medical profession in medieval and Tudor times. First, there was the university-educated physician, whose clientele would be mainly wealthier people. His treatments were based on the belief, originating with the ancient Greeks, that health depended on a correct balance of four 'humours' (hot, cold, dry and moist). After assessing a patient he would consult an astrological chart to decide on treatment, normally consisting of emetics, laxatives and/or bloodletting using a fleam (knife) or leeches. He might also send his patient to an apothecary, the second medical practitioner. Some of his concoctions worked: warm bacon fat



A set of fleams for bloodletting

was good for earache, for instance, because it would loosen the wax. Others were based on the 'doctrine of signatures' whereby something was thought to have an affinity with whatever it resembled. Thus, kidney beans should be good for kidneys, and snails were used to treat respiratory infections because their slime trails look like phlegm or mucus. Some ideas were wildly wrong—tobacco was highly recommended for coughs, for instance—but others were well-founded: garlic, as the Romans knew, is a good antiseptic. Turning to surgical techniques such as might be undertaken by the third kind of doctor, the barber-surgeon, he first discussed trepanning, long believed to cure chronic headaches and mental disorders. This had been done in Neolithic times using flint tools, but in the middle ages a hole was made in the skull by drilling a circle of holes with a spike and tapping out a section of bone. Later a saw was used, and later still a small brace-and-bit drill with calibrations to set the depth of the cut. Many healed skulls have been found, showing that (amazingly) 45-50% of patients survived. Teeth gave a great deal of trouble, with abscesses a common problem. It was believed that scratching around the offending tooth with a nail and knocking the nail into an oak tree would carry away the pain; if, by chance, the abscess burst in the process, the treatment might seem to have worked. People tried to clean their teeth to prevent the tooth worm which (they believed) lived in each tooth from coming out to eat food remnants and going back into the tooth, causing pain. To cure toothache the surgeon might poke a red-hot needle into the tooth, which would kill the nerve but not cure the rot. Extractions, which could be an excruciating process, were often done in public, with a paying audience. Battlefield injuries were also in the barber-surgeon's province. Arrows and crossbow bolts were pushed through rather than drawn out if possible to avoid extra damage from barbs, but even if removed and the wound cauterised they were apt to cause infection. Festering wounds were drained. The speaker finished with a fascinating if grisly account of limb amputation. Some of the implements used were among the exhibits the audience crowded round to examine at the end.

*FEATURE***From Pittville to Printing:
a new display in the Paper Store at The Wilson**

A new display opened on May 2nd in The Wilson's Paper Store. The material fits broadly into three themes: Pittville, photography and printing. Dr Steven Blake, in his capacity as a Museum Volunteer, has selected plans, prints and watercolours from the Museum's collections to illustrate the history of Pittville. Some items have never been shown before (or at least not in the last 40 years!), and Gloucestershire Archives have kindly loaned the Pittville Spa Subscription book to accompany the display – which, of course, coincides with the recent publication of the Local History Society's CD with images of the book's 475 pages and a fully searchable transcription.

The main photographic displays celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Cheltenham Camera Club, founded by Dr Edward Thomas Wilson, who also campaigned to set up Cheltenham Museum, now of course, bearing his family name. Some of Wilson's photograph albums are on show, along with the entry in his own handwritten biography detailing the first meeting of the Photographic Society and his early experiments in photography. The Camera Club has kindly provided panels illustrating its history and has helped select cameras for display. Richard Dighton junior set up one of the early photographic studios in the town, and we are able to show a selection of his work as well as work by one of the town's best-known 20th-century photographers, Hugo van Wadenoyen. Photography underpins many of the other displays, including a case celebrating the 100th anniversary of the setting up of the Gloucester Aircraft Company, and pictures of the Leckhampton riots, respectively chosen by guest curators Nigel Cox and Eric Miller.

Also on display in the Paper Store is a selection of books from the Emery Walker Library illustrating two sides to Emery Walker: first, the man of business who developed cutting edge photographic reproductions for books, and secondly, the expert in the traditional art of letterpress printing. It features books by Walker's own press, the Doves Press, the Kelmscott and Ashendene Presses, and many more, including books never displayed before. Alongside this display are items from the Emery Walker archive, focusing on Walker's many friends, from William Morris to Violet Woodhouse.

From the Arts and Crafts collection there are new selections from the Ernest Gimson and Sidney Barnsley collections, showing their beautiful and detailed working drawings and plans for architecture, furniture and metalwork, as well as work by Gimson's successor Norman Jewson, and a selection of Gloucestershire (and beyond!) images by local artists associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement - Charles March Gere, Henry Payne and the etcher F L Griggs.

The displays will be in place until the end of October.

Ann-Rachael Harwood

*LOCAL NEWS***Formal opening of the Pittville Gates**

On the gloriously sunny afternoon of April 7th, four years to the day since the campaign to renovate them was launched, the restored Pittville Gates were officially re-opened by the Mayor Cllr Simon Wheeler.

The original gates had been built in 1833 as the entrance to Pittville Estate, developed by Joseph Pitt, but those had been removed in 1921 and the lamps on the stone piers had been lost in the 1960s. The whole structure had been in a poor state of repair for very many years. The Mayor, who to the delight of the crowd arrived in a coach drawn by two magnificent black Friesian horses, thanked the Friends of Pittville for masterminding the renovation project, which in total had cost nearly £290,000. The work had been carried out in two stages, beginning in 2012 with the construction of new gate piers. In March 2014 four new lamps, made to replicate the originals, had been installed on top of the piers. New pedestrian and carriage gates had been made and fitted and the area around the gates had been repaved. All the work had been carried out by local craftsmen with financial support from both the borough and the county council. Judie Hodsdon, Chairman of the Friends' restoration sub-committee, said that the end result looked much better even than they had thought it would, and had been worth all the hard work they had put into it.



After the formal opening a reception was held at the Cheltenham Townhouse Hotel in Pittville Lawn, where an excellent tea was served and the guests, who included Martin Horwood, MP, heard more about the origins and progress of the restoration project and the problems encountered along the way. All those involved were heartily congratulated on their magnificent achievement.

New plaque

A notable event on March 25th this year was the unveiling by the Mayor Cllr Simon Wheeler of a blue plaque at the house in Evesham Road where Cheltenham's celebrated pioneer lady doctor Dr Grace Billings opened her first clinic. Born Grace Stewart in 1872, she trained at the London School of Medicine, then in Edinburgh and Newcastle, graduating as MB and BSurge in 1898. In 1899 she married Frederick Billings of the well-

known Cheltenham family of builders and set up her first practice, specialising in women patients. She and Frederick had a son in 1900 and a daughter in 1911, when the practice moved to the Promenade. During the First World War Dr Billings was one of the few female medical officers in the town's eight VAD hospitals. She died in 1957.

The plaque is funded by Cheltenham Civic Society and Friends of Pittville. Civic Society Chairman Roger Woodley commented that Dr Billings was a pioneer of national importance who not only made an important contribution to women's health in this town but also blazed the trail for women in medicine at the British Medical Association.



Mayor Simon Wheeler and house owner Jo Thompson with Hilary Simpson of Friends of Pittville and Roger Woodley of Cheltenham Civic Society at the unveiling of the plaque.

Langland Study Day at Worcester Cathedral

Saturday 19th September, 9.15 am—5.30 pm



The Worcestershire poet William Langland wrote his epic poem *Piers Plowman* 650 years ago. Five distinguished speakers discuss Langland and medieval life. The programme includes live medieval music and a buffet lunch. Tickets £30, available from the Worcester Live Box Office, tel 01905 611427.

For full details see the Cathedral website www.worcestercathedral.co.uk

For those members who were unable to attend the AGM on 19th May, summary reports are printed below. Full minutes of the meeting will be circulated prior to next year's AGM. If you did not have a copy of the accounts and would like one posted to you, please telephone the Treasurer on 01242 231837 or else e-mail suebrown@waitrose.com

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH MAY 2015

The Chairman, David Scriven, welcomed the Mayor Cllr Duncan Smith, who had agreed to be President of the Society for his term of office and to chair the meeting.

Election of Officers and Committee

The following were elected:

Chairman: David Scriven **Treasurer:** Sue Brown **Secretary:** Chris Conoley

Committee: Jill Barlow, Kath Boothman, Neela Mann, Gwyneth Rattle, Sue Robbins, Sally Self

Chairman's Report (summarised): David Scriven said the Society continued to grow and to generate support and interest among its members, as well as promoting awareness and knowledge of local history amongst the general public. Membership stood at a record 387, and it had been good to see so many new members joining the society. Unfortunately we lost a number of old friends, who would all be greatly missed. Eleven meetings had been held during the year, nine evening and two morning meetings. It was pleasing to see them so well attended, reflecting both the quality of speakers and the interest in the wide variety of topics on which they spoke. He thanked Programme Secretary David Johnson, and all those who helped with the organisation and running of the meetings, singling out Vic Cole for his work in setting up the rooms and welcoming people as they arrived. There had been four local history outings for members and their friends during the previous summer: a visit to Hellens and Ledbury in Herefordshire, a guided walk around the centre of Gloucester; and a guided walk around the Lower High Street in Cheltenham, which had to be repeated due to the level of demand. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly our 6th biennial Local History Day, held at St Matthew's Church in July 2014. The theme was Cheltenham Life 1914-1919, the main feature being an exhibition illustrating life in the town during the war years, based on new research carried out by several members of the Society. Supporting displays were provided by The Wilson and other local groups and individuals, and there were two talks, one on 'The Home Front Consumer', given by Robert Opie, the other on 'Leckhampton Court VAD Hospital', by Eric Miller. Particular thanks were expressed to Neela Mann for all her work on the project. The exhibition subsequently went on display, either in part or in its entirety, at several locations in Cheltenham and Gloucester. Other events in which we had participated included the Gloucestershire Family

History Fair in Gloucester in May, the Montpellier Fiesta and Heritage Open Days in Cheltenham. As in several past years Geoff and Elaine North had mounted a series of displays on various aspects of local history at the Local and Family History Library. Now they had decided to pass on the baton to others. They were warmly thanked and the Chairman expressed the hope that the high standard they had set would be maintained in future years. Joyce Cummings and Vic Cole were commended for the service they provided in processing enquiries from the public, usually on people connected with the town. The Society's local history publications had kept up the very high standard for which they had become noted. There were many to thank for their contributions but particular thanks were owing to the Editor of the Journal, Sally Self, and the Editor of the Newsletter, Kath Boothman. We had also added to our list of publications with a new CD containing a transcription by Jill Waller and Kath Boothman of the Pittville Spa Subscription Book covering the period 1830-1852. Members of the Society had continued to give much valuable assistance to the Victoria County History project by researching for the planned Cheltenham volume. Other work included the cataloguing of documents at Gloucestershire Archives, compiling a list of non-conformist chapels in Gloucestershire and doing further research on life in Cheltenham during the First World War in preparation for a book to be written by Neela Mann and published by The History Press in 2016. Finally, our webmaster David Ford was thanked for maintaining the Society's website, which enabled users to keep track of the Society's activities, read the latest Newsletter, search the Journal index and ask questions about Cheltenham's history.

Treasurer's Report (*summarised*): Sue Brown said the Society had had a successful year and its finances were sound. There was an excess of income over expenditure of £1,959.81 in the general fund and £75 in the Peter Smith Award fund. Donations towards the general fund amounting to £63 were received. Judy Smith very generously gave the Society a further £100 for the award presented in Peter Smith's name. We claimed Gift Aid receipt of £894.02, which reflected the claim for two years. The sale of Journals had reduced this year because many of the older issues had been sold in previous years. Some of these issues had now run out, and where there was still a demand for them they had been reprinted, costing £372.80. The net cost to the Society of this year's Journal was £1,290.90.

Address by the Mayor, Councillor Duncan Smith (*summarised*): Cllr Smith said he had been impressed by the breadth and academic rigour of the Journal and thought groups like ours had an important part to play in recording and preserving the history of the town. Oral histories and family archives should all be treasured as true records, particularly now that so many people put their trust in the internet, which was often less reliable. There were challenges in Cheltenham, where so many old buildings had been lost and much of what remained was threatened by development. Financial cuts made it hard for the Council to protect remaining assets; however, the Cheltenham Trust which had taken over the running of services such as The Wilson had a serious commitment to the town's heritage.

SOCIETY NEWS

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Mrs Jean Gibbons	Mr Richard Woolley
Mr Christopher Britton	Ms Caroline Sherwood
Ms Justina Linton	Mrs Catherine Sing
Mrs Barbara Marsh	Mr & Mrs Bob and Pat Leopold
Mr John Hancock	Mr Anthony Noel

New members' interests:

Anthony Noel—Medieval Prestbury

Caroline Sherwood—Revd John Moore; hostel for blinded servicemen in Cheltenham in WWI

Justina Linton—The Park area, especially the building formerly on the site of the present Park House flats

Barbara Marsh—History of Royal Crescent

VCH News

Victoria County History



Several things are just coming to fruition, and there'll be more to report in the next Newsletter. But in brief, Alex Craven has delivered the first draft of his big section covering the post-Reformation period, and it's now being edited before being put online. Beth Hartland has likewise delivered several thematic sections on the medieval period, which are now being reviewed. We still haven't set eyes on the very earliest manorial documents for Cheltenham, but we do know that the long process of specialist conservation has now been completed, and the Latin Group is waiting impatiently to get stuck into it. We're hoping that when all this has happened, we can get some wider publicity and (financial) support for the next stages. Meanwhile, many thanks to Sally for organising two further very enjoyable Tea & Talks!

James Hodsdon

Cataloguing for the Gloucestershire Archives and the VCH Cheltenham: Jarndyce versus Jarndyce

The Cataloguing Group has continued to work at the Archives through the spring and we have completed another 16 boxes of documents of the Ticehurst and Wyatt collection, which relate to Cheltenham. This work continues to throw light on several aspects of the town's history. Many of us will have read *Bleak House* or watched the recent television serial, or will at least have heard of that protracted case which, when finally resolved, left nothing for the Jarndyce

children. Whilst cataloguing we have had our patience tried by not one but two similar Chancery cases: the Attorney General versus Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and Pitt against Pitt, both in the 19th century.

The second case, starting in the early 1840s, arose from the bankruptcy of Joseph Pitt, caused by his attempts to realise his dream of founding a rival spa to Cheltenham. Having re-mortgaged, he apparently indulged in 'creative accounting' using his other substantial estates as securities. His holdings included the Eastcourt estate, near Cirencester, the manor and hundred of Cricklade, lands at Minety and other lesser property in Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Somerset, as well as his assets in Cheltenham and Prestbury, freehold, copyhold and leasehold premises, shops and valuable building plots. There were also the tolls on several local turnpike roads. It is a difficult case to follow as, confusingly, there are three Joseph Pitts – Joseph Pitt of Pittville, who died in February 1842, Joseph Pitt the younger, who became the Revd Joseph Pitt of Lichfield, and Joseph Pitt, the son of Revd Cornelius Pitt of Rendcomb. The claims of the creditors, which included the Gardners and the Agg Gardners of Cheltenham, Mullings of Cirencester and the Gloucester County Bank, extended the case until 1890 and fill up boxes 60 to 66!

However while the majority of the documents are long (and dare it be said rather tedious) there are lighter moments. Recently a bill was found for the expenses of two nights' board and lodging, at the *Plough Hotel*, Cheltenham, October, 1843. Eight people sat down to dinner for two nights at a total cost of £6, with desserts at 14 shillings and tea and coffee an extra guinea. However the alcohol - ale, sherry, madeira, moselle and 'old port' - came to £6 6s 6d – the *Plough* had well stocked cellars! There was also 5s for 'wax lights and fire' and tips were included. But the only one that appears to have been actually paid was to the waiter, a generous £1: he must have given then good measures. The tips to the chamber maid of two shillings and to the 'boot' (boot-boy) for two shillings and six pence were crossed out! The total bill was £16 7s, of which James Randolph Mullings paid a half share!

Sally Self

31 Plough Hotel	
Dinner 2-8	
Sherry	1-
8 Desserts	5-0
Tea & Coffee	2-6
Wax Lights & Fire	1-6
Sherry	12-
Moselle	8-
Claret	10-6
Dessert	7-
Tea & Coffee	10-6
Wax Lights & Fire	2-6
31 8 Desserts 3-0	
ale	2-
Sherry	12-
Old Port	1-6
Madeira	16-
Claret	10-6
Dessert	7-
Tea & Coffee	10-6
Wax Lights & Fire	2-6
Paper	1-
Pence for Beer	
Tins Stationery	
30 Desserts	
Coffee Room Bill 11-9-6	
Waiter 15-7-0	
Chambermaid 2-0	
Boot 2-6	
Paid by Mr Mullings 16-7-0	
2-3-6	

FEATURE

JANE COOK

An Extraordinary Cheltenham Lady

(The author wishes to acknowledge that much of his narrative, of which this is the second instalment, is based on an article written in 2001 by Alan Munden.)

Jane (1775-1851) was a good friend of the Reverend Charles Simeon (1759-1836) a well-known evangelical clergyman whose ideas, particularly on the conversion of Jews to Christianity, strongly influenced Jane's thinking and actions. Simeon was deeply committed to the principles of the Protestant reformation and opposed to Catholicism and the Anglican High Church. A very good and sincere man, he was vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge. He came from a well-off family with a high social profile. Simeon founded the Church Missionary Society in 1799 and established the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews (now known as the Church's Ministry amongst Jewish People) in 1809. On his final visit to Cheltenham in July 1836 he was deeply impressed with the vibrant Christian activity in the town under the influence of the Reverend Francis Close. He described this as being



Revd Charles Simeon



Revd Francis Close

‘almost a heaven upon earth’. Jane was also a good friend, supporter and financial backer to Francis Close, the well-known Rector of St Mary's church (now Cheltenham Minster St Mary's).

Francis Close was born on 11th November 1797 and died on 18th December 1882. This dynamic and influential man was the first vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham. In 1824 he was assigned to the parish of St Mary's and was elected Rector in 1826, when the incumbent died. Like Jane, Close was an ardent follower and friend of Charles Simeon. He was a puritanical, austere man and a fine preacher who strongly influenced church and educational development in the town. He was strongly opposed to alcohol,

tobacco, horse racing and theatrical amusements. No doubt he would be very upset by the present-day social environment of Cheltenham with its theatres, ever-expanding racecourse, gambling shops, night-time alcohol-fuelled entertainment, and the drunks and drug addicts in St Mary's churchyard.

Jane, Charles Simeon and Francis Close were all staunch evangelical Christians. Jane provided substantial financial backing to Francis Close as he developed new Anglican churches to cope with Cheltenham's expanding population during the growth in popularity of the spas in the early 1800s. The background to the building of churches, schools and colleges in the town was based on opposition to the rising tide of the Oxford Movement which was a development of the Anglican High Church. The new churches were also designed to counter the influence of the nonconformists who were opening chapels in the town. Strangely, Jane's efforts to convert Jews to Christianity coincided with the establishment of a Jewish community in Cheltenham, also related to the growth of the spa town. A small Jewish congregation first met in about 1820 and the architecturally magnificent Cheltenham synagogue opened in 1837. It declined in use and closed in 1903, only to be reopened in 1939.

The new Anglican churches were established as overflows to St Mary's. In addition to coping with the growing population, one of the aims of the new churches, strongly favoured by both Jane Cook and Francis Close, was to assist poor people by providing free access to church pews or 'sittings'. The new churches included Holy Trinity in Portland Street; St James' in Suffolk Square (now an Italian-style restaurant); St Paul's in St Paul's Road; Christ Church in Malvern Road; St Philip's and St James' in Leckhampton; St Peter's in Tewkesbury Road (now closed as a church) and St Luke's near the Cheltenham General Hospital. Jane's grave is in the churchyard of St Peter's. The parish of St Peter's was created in 1845 and Jane contributed significantly to the planning and building of the church and the support of its clergy. The handsome church was constructed for the growing population of artisans in the surrounding area. In 1848 Jane gave half an acre of land for a boy's National School in the adjacent Waterloo Street, and the following year she contributed £600 towards the building of the church, which was consecrated in 1849. Funding was almost entirely



St Peter's Church, Jane's burial place

by private subscription; donors included Jane's sister Mrs Tatham, who gave £50, and Francis Close who donated £25. There is no mention of Jane Cook as a subscriber but it is almost certain that she was the major contributor to this church. This unclaimed and unacknowledged funding is typical of her reluctance to be identified as a generous donor towards her charities.

St Peter's is a beautiful building with an unusual shape. It has a Norman style with a round tower above an octagonal lower stage, finished with a conical roof. The church was designed by the architect Samuel Whitfield Daukes, whose other works in Cheltenham included the Lansdown railway station and Francis Close

Hall. There must have been close links and presumably friendships between Daukes the architect, Francis Close the religious and political driving force and Jane Cook the financial backer.

In the 1930s the majority of the houses around Tewkesbury Road were demolished to make room for new and better housing and industrial estates and by 2008 dwindling congregations meant that St Peter's closed for worship. It was converted into a church-subsidised Christian youth centre called 'The Rock', designed predominantly to support disadvantaged local youngsters. Jane would no doubt have approved of the use of the church to aid poor people but she would have been saddened by the falling congregation numbers and the absence of regular Christian worship. Jane's gravestone is in the neglected and overgrown churchyard. A brief article in *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries* states: 'This lady who was an old inhabitant of Cheltenham will long be remembered for her munificence'.

Jane had in fact wished to be buried not at St Peter's but at St Mary's. In her will published in 1850 (the year before her death) Jane stated 'it is my wish that my mortal remains may be interred in the vault in the churchyard of St Mary's, Cheltenham in which the remains of my parents were deposited and as the tomb is now rather dilapidated I desire that a new tomb may be erected on its site and enclosed with strong iron railings at the



Cheltenham Minster St Mary's

direction of my executors. I also request them to raise a handsome statuary marble monument to be erected to my memory in the Church of St Mary and that they employ Mr Weaver to execute it.' Unfortunately, when she died the site was full; burials had ceased in St Mary's churchyard in the 1820s, so by the time of Jane's death it is probable that her request was no longer possible. Nor is there any record of her parents' tomb. Many of the gravestones and tombs in St Mary's were destroyed or moved during the tidying up of the churchyard in the 1960s.

There is however a small marble memorial plaque to Jane high up on the wall behind the pulpit in the church. The inscription reads 'In memory of Jane, daughter of John and Ann Cook of this town, the only sister of Elizabeth, the wife of the Reverend Edward Tatham, D.D., Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Who departed this life, in the hope of a blessed immortality. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Feb 11th 1851. Aged 75 years'.

The year before her death Jane gave £250 towards an organ in the church.

Mike Bell

(to be continued)

Cheltenham and the Men in their Flying Machines

After reading the article by Amina Chatwin and Steve Osmond in Journal 30, I venture to add the following observations:

I also saw the Graf Zeppelin in 1932, from my garden in Tonbridge, Kent. It was heading for London even though cloud cover was low.

The Auxiliary Air Force (not Royal) was raised in the 1930s for well-heeled young men who had acquired a Private Pilot's Licence; it was linked to counties, eg the County of London Squadron.

The Air Transport Auxiliary was a civilian organisation for ex-service pilots who were no longer suitable for active service; it gained the sobriquet 'Ancient Tattered Airmen'! In 1939 the ATA was enlarged to include a women's section, 'atagirls', which attracted fashionable ladies who had enjoyed recreational flying.

The ATA's role in the war was largely ferrying unarmed aircraft from factory to airfield. There were 1,318 pilots, of whom Amy Johnson was one. By 1943 ATA was taking untrained recruits and providing basic training.

The RAF was formed on 1st April 1918 by amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps with the Royal Naval Air Reserve. Incidentally, in World War II all aircrew were members of the RAF Volunteer Reserve

Aylwin Sampson

(ex-RAFVR)

Aylwin Sampson wishes it to be known that he is in good health and is still very ready to make pictorial contributions to the Society's Journal. It was an editorial decision to use an illustration, 'The Majesty of the Law' from Punch on the cover of the 2015 issue and not his unwillingness to supply a picture.

NEW PUBLICATION

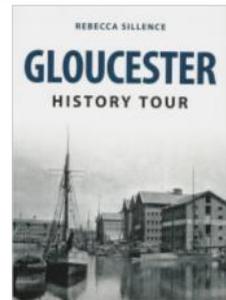
GLOUCESTER HISTORY TOUR

by Rebecca Sillence

This latest title in Amberley Publishing's pocket-sized *History Tour* series takes readers on a guided walk through Gloucester, providing a fascinating guide to the rich and varied history of the city. As an important crossing point on the River Severn, Gloucester has played a significant role in history from Roman times to the present day. Founded by the Emperor Nerva in 97AD, it is a cathedral city, county capital and formerly a busy port. The book has 120 illustrations including many evocative old photos, and a map with links to the text showing the most interesting landmarks.

The author was born in Gloucester, lives in Prestbury and works in the library service, primarily in the local and family history department.

Published in May 2015 in paperback by Amberley Publishing, price £6.99



Appeal for Volunteer Picture Researcher: Early Motor Vehicles in Gloucestershire

A project is underway to transcribe and index all the Gloucestershire vehicle registration records held at Gloucestershire Archives, from January 1904, when registration began, to December 1913. The records cover primarily cars and motorcycles. The registration numbers run from AD-1 to AD-3506 for the County of Gloucestershire and FH-1 to FH-758 for those issued by the County Borough of Gloucester i.e. what we'd generally now call the City of Gloucester. The lead transcribers are Peter Barlow and Martin Boothman.

Once the work is complete, the results will be published in book form in the Gloucestershire Record Series (the General Editor is CLHS member James Hodsdon). To judge by a similar volume already produced for Wiltshire, it will give a fascinating insight into the social patterns of early vehicle ownership and there will be indexes of places, people and the myriad types of vehicle taking to the roads of Gloucestershire at the beginning of the last century.

We are very keen to find suitable illustrations and we are here appealing for a volunteer researcher to take on the task of locating contemporary photographs of cars and motorcycles that we can use in the book. There are many potential sources including the families of owners of these early vehicles, other Local History Societies, the Vintage Car Club and other motoring organisations, and perhaps photographic societies such as the Cheltenham Camera Club.

The volunteer does not need any motoring knowledge, rather we are looking for somebody who enjoys the chase of finding unpublished material, getting permission for its use in the book and perhaps finding other documents such as original purchase invoices that will enhance the records.

Can you help – are you the person to take on this interesting task?

Do you know of anybody who is well fitted to take it on?

Please contact either :

Peter Barlow, email pbarlow88@hotmail.com, telephone: 01242 233421

or Martin Boothman, email boothman@dircon.co.uk, telephone: 01242 230125



Photo courtesy of Malcolm Jeal

Stretton's Garage, also known as the Million Motor Works, Bath Road, Cheltenham, in 1908. The firm had another branch in Wellington Street and also one in Gloucester, near the railway bridge. Notice that the cars in this picture all have Gloucestershire number plates, starting with AD .



BOOKS FOR SALE



DONATED BOOKS, MANY IN 'AS NEW' CONDITION

Held in Honour, Cheltenham and the Second World War—Graham Sacker, £35.

The New Club—Neil Parrack (new copies) £8.50

A Grand City: Bristol in 18th and 19th Centuries –Ed M J Crossley Evans, now £6 (2 copies)

History of Cirencester—Beecham , now £23

Miniatures— Dudley Heath (1905) £20

Mee—The King's England series, and Pevsner County series: Various counties and prices, please contact me for details.

BGAS RECORD SERIES (see November Newsletter for titles). Various prices between £5 and £20 and 'bundles' as below.

Bigland's Gloucestershire Collections, Vols 2,3,5,8; 4 volumes for £30.

Gloucester Apprenticeship Records, Vol 14, £10, Vol 25, £25, or both for £30

Gloucestershire Feet of Fines, Vol 16, £5, Vol 20, £5, Vol 27, £30 or all for £35

Berkeley Muniments, Vol 17, £5, Vol 18, £20, or both for £22

OTHER TITLES

Back again Mr Begbie—Revd Begbie, OBE (ex Cheltenham College Day Boy) - £20 (new condition)

A Gloucester Boy, A story of life in the 1950s & 1960s—C Ballinger - £8.50 (new condition)

Don't forget to check out the Society's book table on lecture evenings, where many other books are on sale. You can always make me a reasonable offer on book table books. Thank you to everyone who has brought books to me that they no longer need, and to Elaine North for kindly pricing them up for me so that we can obtain their realistic value in today's market. It is surprising how much we can raise for CLHS in this way. Please contact me either on 01242 232740 (ex directory) or at heatherbell71@hotmail.com so that I can arrange collection, delivery or postage as necessary during the summer break.

Heather Atkinson

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CAN YOU HELP?

Elliston family

A researcher seeks information about this family and particularly about Gertrude Agnes Elliston, daughter of John, who married an American doctor, Edmund Quincey Putnam, in Cheltenham in April 1868. She later lived in London and Rome, where she ran a hotel. She died in Rome in 1901 and was buried in the Protestant cemetery. Any information about her would be gratefully received. The researcher also wonders whether she was English, or whether her family had moved here from the USA.

‘Babs’ Parry

An American enquirer has found a letter from a ‘Babs’ Parry of Fairholme, Hewlett Road, Cheltenham to the mother of Lance Corporal William Richardson, who had died on April 9th 1918, saying that she was returning his badge ‘which had been cracked in the War’. His family in Texas has his medals and other effects from his WWI service in the British Army. (He was evidently among the Americans who joined the Canadian and British forces before the USA entered the War.) The enquirer wonders who ‘Babs’ was—a nurse perhaps? Or did he lodge with the Parry family?

If you can help with either of these queries please contact Joyce Cummings on 01242 527299 or e-mail joyce@cyberwebospace.net

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward articles for inclusion in the November 2015 issue by
Monday 12th October
 to the Editor : Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor’s End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA
 Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: kbooth@dircon.co.uk