

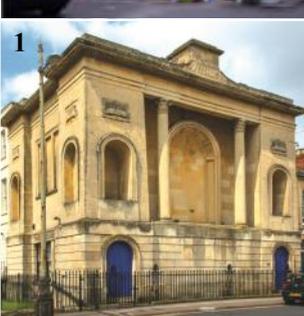


Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 94

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<http://www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk>

July 2019



EDITORIAL

A few weeks from now we'll be enjoying that familiar annual event, the Heritage Open Days, which this year run over two weekends in September. (See page 6.) There will be 18 walks and talks and 28 buildings to explore. You can, for instance, admire the fine interiors of the Masonic Hall(1) and the New Club(2), discover the link between Normandy House(3) and the hospital(4), see inside the synagogue(5), go behind the scenes at the Playhouse and the Lido, be shown round Leckhampton Court, several churches and our great public schools and hear the new ring of bells at the Minster. So much to see and to learn! Every year many of us don't do as much as we meant to: this time we should all try to make the most of this great opportunity.

Kath Boothman

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EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2019-20

Meetings start at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Promenade
Visitors pay £2.

Tuesday 17th September:

Tim Brain—A History of Policing in Gloucestershire

October 2019 will see a very special anniversary for Gloucestershire. In October 1839 the then Home Secretary, the Marquis of Normington, gave the county justices authority to establish a new police force. In doing so he was initiating modern policing in Gloucestershire, sweeping away hundreds of years of the old amateur system of parish constables and night watches. The Gloucestershire Constabulary today is one of the few county constabularies with an unbroken history stretching right back to the beginning of modern policing in England and Wales. Dr Tim Brain OBE QPM, former chief constable of Gloucestershire and police historian, will tell the story of the Constabulary's formation, its early years and its transition to be still at the leading edge of policing in this country.

Tuesday 15th October:

Mick Kippin—‘Broken by Age or War’: Life at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea

It has been said that only the Rich and the Old can live in Chelsea nowadays! Find out from one of ‘the old’ (In-Pensioner Mick Kippin) what life is like as a Chelsea Pensioner and what it is like to wear their iconic scarlet uniform (please, never call it red - that is a horrible colour!). Discover the history of the Royal Hospital. Who founded it, when and why, and did Nell Gwynne really play a part in its establishment?

Tuesday 19th November:

Steven Blake—Researching ‘the Old Man’: the story of Cheltenham’s Sherborne Street Sweeps

One of the most unusual items in the Cheltenham History Galleries at The Wilson is the early 19th century chimney sweep's trade sign that used to hang outside 43 Sherborne Street, Fairview. The sign—known to the Field family, who eventually ran the business, as ‘the Old Man’—was acquired by the Museum in 1950, when the last of the sweeps, Fred Field, retired at the age of 79. This talk will look at the careers of five successive Sherborne Street sweeps, from the 1820s to 1950, and at their (often confrontational) ‘interactions’ with a number of other Cheltenham sweeps during the middle decades of the 19th century.

Tuesday 10th December:

Jonathan Briggs—Mistletoe, History, Legend, Myth and Harvesting

A wide-ranging talk on mistletoe's place in cultural history, some myths and some truths, some biology and cultivation advice plus a discussion on why we

have so much in our area and the history of the local trade supplying mistletoe to the Nation (and the Empire!) at Christmas. Jonathan Briggs is a Stroud-based botanist and industrial archaeologist who has been studying mistletoe for over 30 years.

Tuesday 21st January 2020:

Richard Goddard—The Battle of Tewkesbury 1471

On Saturday 4th May 1471 the ‘Wars of the Roses’ came to a head at Tewkesbury. The Yorkist army, commanded by Edward IV, and his brother, the future Richard III, chased down and defeated the Lancastrian army of Queen Margaret and her son Edward, Prince of Wales. The outcome crushed the hope that the heir to the House of Lancaster would again take the throne of England. The talk concentrates on the last few days of the chase, why Tewkesbury was chosen as the site for the battle and the aftermath of the outcome.

Tuesday 18th February 2020:

Paul Drinkwater—Dr Walter Hadwen: Hero or Charlatan?

Dr Hadwen was a very remarkable man with strong convictions. He was invited to Gloucester at the time of the great smallpox epidemic of 1896 to set up a medical practice. He involved himself in many community issues as a local councillor and JP. He was an anti-vaccinationist, an anti-vivisectionist and a vegetarian. Popular with his patients, he was viewed with some suspicion by the medical profession, which led to his trial and acquittal for the murder of a child under his care. His legacy includes the Evangelical Church in Southgate Street, Gloucester and the Hadwen Medical Centre in Abbeymead.

Tuesday 17th March 2020:

Martin Horwood—Cheltenham’s Past Members of Parliament

Cheltenham won its own parliamentary representative in the Great Reform Act of 1832, having been represented by Gloucestershire’s county members before that time and back to the medieval origins of Parliament. Unusually, it has remained a single-borough seat ever since, giving a brilliant insight into not only changing local political fortunes but also the very evolution of parliamentary elections. Cheltenham has sent a fascinating cast of characters to the Commons - sailors and soldiers, flamboyant aristocrats and grassroots radicals, trusty old warhorses and precocious students. And it has rarely been a ‘safe’ seat, witnessing nearly two centuries of furiously contested dogfights between Liberals and Tories.

Tuesday 21st April 2020:

Neela Mann—A History of the Early Quakers of Cheltenham

Behind a crumbling wall in Grove Street lies a wealth of Cheltenham’s early history. The Friends’ Burial Ground contains the resting place of people of great importance to Cheltenham. There was a Quaker community in Cheltenham when the town had only one church. This talk, based on research by Jill Waller and Neela Mann, will tell a little of Cheltenham’s Quaker history and of the people who contributed to the growth of the town.

Tuesday 19th May 2020:

AGM followed by **Mike Bottomley—Katherine Parr, Gloucestershire’s Queen: the Life, Loves and Times of the last Wife of Henry VIII**

Using music, readings and video to recreate the atmosphere and intrigues of the Tudor Court, this talk tells the largely unknown story of Katherine’s journey from obscurity to the heart of English history and on to her final resting place at Sudeley Castle. The first woman to write and publish a book in English and the only one of Henry’s Queens to survive the accusation of treason with her head intact, we find out how, amongst all the power games and plots, Katherine Parr eventually took control of her own destiny and the tragic consequences of that decision.

MORNING LECTURES 2019-20

Morning lectures will take place in St Luke’s Hall, St Luke’s Place, Cheltenham. A donation of £2 from all attending these lectures is appreciated. Tea/coffee and biscuits are served (no charge) from 10.00 am. Lectures start at 10.30 am. All welcome. Parking at the Hall is for disabled only—please contact Chris Conoley (01452 700635) if you wish to reserve a space.

Tuesday 1st October:

Joanna Vials - ‘A Magnificent Edifice’: building the church of St Gregory the Great, 1853-76

In the mid-19th century the appearance of Gothic Revival architecture in Cheltenham coincided with new confidence among Catholics. Many businesses found scope for innovative work in the building of St Gregory’s. Meanwhile, the town’s social character was challenged by a changing demographic, including impoverished emigrants from Ireland, supported by articulate converts from Anglicanism. Their ‘magnificent edifice’ was greeted with admiration and ambivalence. This talk will look at the methods, means and motivation behind their endeavours.

Tuesday 4th February 2020:

Ally McConnell—The Dowty Group: a History of the Company and an Introduction to the Archive

The Dowty Group was a massive employer and much loved local firm in this county and around the world. The extensive archive, stored at Gloucestershire Archives since the 1990s, is now being catalogued. The project archivist will take you through 60 years of Dowty history, from before the company’s formation in 1931 to its sale in 1992, using examples from the archive to illustrate the complexity of the company, reveal superb local, social and family history resources, and showcase the work being done on this previously hidden collection.

Tuesday 7th April 2020:

Jill Ruiz and the Boaters Group—the Lives of the Narrowboat Women, their Children and their Crafts

The Boaters Group are Friends of The National Waterways Museum, Gloucester and volunteers for The Canal and River Trust, with a particular interest in the lives of the narrowboat women and children and their crafts from the 1850s to the 1920s. They are in the Museum once a month demonstrating crafts such as rag

rugging, crochet, spider web belts and bonnet making. Four Group members, in costume, will talk about the lives of these people, bringing along craft items to show and encouraging listeners to come up at the end and have a go themselves.

FOR YOUR DIARY

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 24th September:

Andy Mellor—The Glosters at Waterloo

Tuesday 22nd October:

Edward James—England Discovers Russia

Tuesday 26th November:

Sue Jones—Cheltenham's Suffragette Movement

Prestbury Local History Society

www.prestburyhistory.com

Meetings are held at Prestbury Women's Institute Hall (corner of Bouncers Lane/Prestbury Road), starting at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated. Guests pay £2.

Monday 23rd September:

Val Porter—Rosehill and Neighbours

Monday 28th October:

Rebecca Sillence—Public Houses of Prestbury

Wednesday 25th November:

Neil Pryce-Jones—Tradesmen of Prestbury

Leckhampton Local History Society

www.llhs.org.uk

Meetings are normally held at Glebe Cottages, Church Road, Leckhampton (next to the churchyard), at 7.30 pm. Admission £2 for visitors.

Wednesday 11th September:

Richard Cann—Royal Connections: a Brief History of Gloucester Cathedral

Wednesday 9th October:

John Reid—Funerary Monuments: Gloucestershire's Hidden Gems

Wednesday 13th November:

Dave Abrutat—GCHQ, 100 Years in the Making

Swindon Village Society

Meetings are held at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm unless stated otherwise. Guests are charged £1. (Single membership is £5, family membership £10.)

Wednesday 18th September:

Arthur Ball—The Wildlife of the Dowdeswell Reservoir Nature Reserve

Wednesday 20th November:

Angela Applegate—Gustav Holst

Gotherington Local History Society

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

Tuesday 24th September:

Alan Pilbeam—A Week's Holiday in the Forest of Dean, 1880

Tuesday 22nd October:

Jon Hart (Cotswold Archaeology)—Prehistoric & Roman Settlement and Farming in the Severn Vale: Excavations at Cleavelands 2014-16

Tuesday 26th November:

Jonathan Briggs—Mistletoe: History, Legend, Myth and Harvesting

Holst Birthplace Museum

www.holstmuseum.org.uk

Exhibition

July 20th—December 14th

A Victorian Childhood Exhibition

What was life like for a child growing up in Victorian times? Glimpse young Victorian lives through objects from the times, including some from Gustav Holst's own childhood.

**Heritage Open Days 2019**

Friday 13th – Sunday 22nd September

A reminder that this is a national event and all over the country there will be special events, talks, walks and open buildings. You can find details on the national website www.heritageopendays.org

In Cheltenham, the brochure listing events and giving details of opening hours and how to obtain tickets will be available from the end of July from the Tourist Information Centre in The Wilson and from libraries.



Cheltenham College will be open for guided tours

Special event

Lou Beckett's play *Rotten Luck*, for which CLHS member David Elder is providing historical support, will be an affiliate event at this year's Cheltenham HODs. It is based on a true Gloucestershire crime story set in the 1800s. A young woman and man meet for the first time in jail. Will they hang, or will fate provide them a reprieve? The hangman tells the tale. There are two performances at Chapel Arts on 15th September, at 16:00 –17:00, and 18:00 -19:00. Tickets are £11 full price and £9 for concessions, available from Chapel Arts (tel 01242 580077).

Jill Barlow

REVIEWS

On March 5th **John Simpson**, assisted by his wife Hilary and Steven Blake, gave us an introduction to the Pittville History Works website entitled **11,000 Histories: putting Pittville online**. He said the project had been started in 2013 by a group of people wishing to study various aspects of Pittville's history and make the results accessible online. Pittville and its park formed a conveniently well defined area, and the database had grown quickly. They had thought it best to begin by transcribing all available street directories and annuaries which (unlike Ancestry) were mines of reliable information. This basic data collection was now largely done. The website was being managed by Jeffery Triggs of Rutgers University, whom John Simpson had known when the OED, of which John was then chief editor, had been put online for the first time. Showing the home page of the website he drew attention to the rolling left column that displayed the latest news of the ongoing research, and the tabs along the top that took the user via dropdown menus to various parts of the website. People and places, he said, were the main themes, and he proceeded to demonstrate how information on an individual or a particular street or house could be brought up. Under Pittville Lives he took the examples of Jimmy Brain the footballer, who had lived in Prestbury Road, and Edith Blundy, a servant in the house next to the Holst Museum. It was surprising what could be found out even about a servant: Edith had fallen pregnant while in service, had a baby in the workhouse and been sent back to Corse where she came from. Turning to the Places tab, he drew attention to the six big houses in Pittville Circus Road converted into prep schools. They were all well documented, and he commented that it would be good to do similar work on the many other schools all over Cheltenham. The census returns had been studied, and each Pittville person and building had been given an identification number so that information about them could be consolidated. Under Popular Searches it was possible to find everything known about an individual: he took the name Schreiber and found many references to George Schreiber, including the addresses where he had lived. Taking a particular address, such as 30 Clarence Square, one could find a picture of the house, a map reference and all about its occupants and their servants. In 1911 a Canadian family including two self-proclaimed suffragettes lived there. Asking for information on where people were born (eg India) brought up census records, with charts at the top of the page showing how proportions in the population varied over time. Similarly it was possible to find out how numbers of servants varied, or how many households had female heads. Under Advanced Searches, results could be plotted on a map, and Pittville Top Tens brought up information such as the most popular Christian names in any census year. Under the Places tab, house names and their origins could be explored. John then handed over to Steven Blake, who said his particular interest was the builders of the houses, notably those who bought plots from Pitt. He was seeking out deeds in private hands and had already fed over 100 of them for the period 1820-60 into the website. He wanted to look at the next 30 years and also build up biographies of builders to accompany facts on the occupants of the houses. He urged listeners to explore the website and volunteer to help with the research, which could easily be expanded to use the untapped resources in Lansdown, Bayshill and other areas.

Michael Cole's talk on March 19th was entitled **An Excursion to Southam in 1879**. Some 150 members of BGAS, founded in 1875, planned a journey with stops for talks and refreshments, from The Plough in Cheltenham High Street, through Prestbury and via Southam to Winchcombe. Michael showed a photo of a carriage which took 8-9 passengers on the top and a further 6 inside plus two coachmen. This would have meant a cavalcade of about 10 carriages to take all the members. Due to heavy rain it was decided not to stop in Prestbury but to go directly to Southam. At 9.45am the local history enthusiasts—a photograph showed a mix of ladies and gentlemen, all smartly dressed—set off on their day out. On arrival at Southam De La Bere House, now the Ellenborough Hotel, they were met by the then owners the three Misses Sergison and shown the collection of china and historical documents relating to the house. Samuel Hicks Gael (real name Gale), spoke from the minstrels' gallery on the history of the manor, stating that it was built by a Sir John Huddleston. However in the Tudor carving over the doorway are the initials T G (Thomas Goodman), and he is now thought to have started the building. Huddleston, who became Constable of Sudeley after ingratiating himself with Henry VIII, bought the house in 1540 and may have completed it. He left the estate at Southam to his daughter Elynor, who married Kynard De La Bere, from Kinnersley Castle in Herefordshire. The De La Beres finally died out in 1829, the last one being Thomas Baghott de la Bere (1729-1821). The Great Hall had tiles said to be from Hailes Abbey, probably salvaged from the Abbey after the destruction of the monasteries: similar tiles are found in other places. The owners of the Ellenborough Hotel returned some of them to Hailes after they modernised Southam De La Bere House. A coat of arms of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York is found in stained glass in the oriel window in the parlour, indicating that the window was created when Henry VII was still on the throne. Mr Gael talked of the pictures around the house. Among many others which are no longer at the hotel was a portrait of Edward VI when young, now in the National Gallery. Why was it at Southam? Elynor's mother was Jane Seymour, an aunt and namesake of the later queen and wife of Henry VIII. When the De La Beres died out the house was bought by Lord Ellenborough. He had a successful political career, entering the House of Commons aged 23 and becoming Governor General of India in 1841. When his first wife Octavia Stewart, a daughter of Lord Londonderry, died, he married Jane Digby, who was unfaithful. After divorcing her in 1830 he acquired the house, carefully maintaining its Tudor origins. In the grounds he erected a memorial to people and troops who had lost their lives in the Afghanistan conflict and also a bust of Octavia. He bought the Manor of Southam and had an old barn near the houses renovated and returned to its original use as a Chapel of Ease. He was so respected by his tenants that they had a brass memorial plate made and put in the chapel.

Having been bombarded with the tour and talk, the trippers then proceeded to Bishops Cleeve and Sudeley Castle, with luncheon provided by Mr and Mrs Dent. They returned down Cleeve Hill and were back at The Plough by 4.30 pm in good time for an evening lecture and dinner. What stamina! This trip is fully reported in the BGAS Transactions, many volumes of which can be found in the Local Studies Library. They were surely the pioneers of Local History groups.

Maggie Winterburn

On April 2nd **John Butterworth**, in the persona of the early 19th century stage-coach driver Sam Hayward, entertained us with the story of **How the stagecoach transformed our area**. He said the first known stage coach from Gloucester to London left at 3.00 am on April 1st 1729 and took three days. (The timing was to be much improved in later years!) The first service to pass through Cheltenham was recorded in 1777, when the Tewkesbury to London coach called at The Fleece Inn. As for the roads, the network of good roads built by the Romans, much decayed over time, improved only when the Turnpike Act of 1663 raised revenue to pay for repairs. Turnpike roads were not universally popular, and many were destroyed in 1734 by mobs objecting to the tolls, even though the penalty for such actions was death. They were however appreciated by travellers such as Defoe, who praised the one at Birdlip, ‘formerly a terrible place’. Tolls were collected rigorously: toll-keeper Robert Sleath even stopped George III and his party and made them pay. Highwaymen were a problem, the Birdlip-Cirencester and Cirencester-Stroud roads being notoriously unsafe. In 1780 John Palmer, a theatre owner from Bath, had the idea that stage coaches might be used for mail. His trial run from Bristol to London



took 16 hours, was deemed a success and evolved into a very popular service of great benefit to the economy. The grandest coach was the London Mail, painted red and black, drawn by four horses and carrying an armed guard. It had priority over other traffic and did not have to stop at toll gates. It was the fastest way for passengers to travel, but very expensive. In 1837 Rowland Hill proposed the introduction of set postage rates, prepaid with stamps, and soon every town had a post office. John said that he (as Sam Hayward) used to drive the Shrewsbury Wonder to London via Coventry and Birmingham. He was a conscientious driver and the only one skilled enough to take a coach through the narrow archway of the Lion Hotel in Shrewsbury. Many coaches had romantic names such as Queen, Hirondelle and Red Rover. Some drivers were well-known characters: one would lasso a duck from a pond or a pipe from a bystander’s mouth as he drove by. Riding in a coach was pleasant in summer, though outside passengers sometimes tied themselves on to avoid falling off if they fell asleep. Even so, accidents happened. Inside passengers had bales of hay to insulate them in cold weather, but those outside could only stamp their feet to keep warm. On Christmas Eve 1836 when a coach arrived in Bath from Tewkesbury three passengers on the roof were found frozen to death. There were complaints about the cost of travel—besides paying the fare, passengers had to tip the driver, guard and hotel staff. The travellers were mainly middle class people, because the rich had their own coaches and the poor could not afford it. Eventually stage coaches were driven out of business by the railways, despite efforts to compete with them for speed. The Birmingham to Gloucester rail link opened in 1836 and many more lines followed. After the last stage coach ran in November 1842, the once-busy turnpike roads became quiet. What had the coaches achieved? By dramatically improving communications, John believed, they brought prosperity to the country and helped to start the industrial revolution in Gloucestershire.

Tony Comer's talk on April 16th was not illustrated, as our talks usually are, but then **The History of GCHQ** is not a story that can be told in pictures. Tony said he had joined the organisation in 1983 as a linguist and military specialist, and had been its historian since 2009. In this, its centenary year, he particularly wanted to make it better known and understood. GCHQ had started in 1919 as the Government Code and Cypher School, opening with 56 people in Watergate House in London. Wireless telegraphy had been used in World War I, but the idea of gaining intelligence by intercepting wireless signals was still new. Monitoring stations had been set up in the UK, France and Italy from 1914 and politicians had been quick to see the value of this. Discussions on the shape of the new intelligence organisation began straight after the armistice, and it was set up as a department of the Foreign Office, recruiting cryptanalysts, translators, interceptors and typists. It was very successful, breaking almost every cypher system used by other countries and bringing the government 300-500 intelligence reports every month that gave it an unequalled insight into world events. Things began to change in 1926 when the Germans invented Enigma, the first electric cypher machine. It was only being used commercially at that time and the head of GC&CS was able to buy one in Berlin, but the GC&CS was acutely aware of the need to keep abreast of technical advances and worked out how to crack Enigma codes long before the machines were first used for military purposes in the Spanish Civil War. By then the German military had taken over the manufacturer and made the machines much more complex. In the 1930s GC&CS hired mathematicians and automated the decryption work as far as possible using punched cards. It looked to the universities for the best brains and enticed back people, such as Alan Turing, who had worked in signals in World War I. Even so, with war approaching, they recognised the need for outside help to deal with the latest German encryption system. In July 1939 at a meeting in Warsaw British, French and Polish cryptanalysts pooled their knowledge of Enigma. Bletchley Park, which had been bought for the use of MI6, became the new home of GC&CS, which then adopted the less revealing name GCHQ and took on many more staff. The only way to interpret material put out by other countries was to collect and process as much of it as possible, and 180 sites all over the country sent intercepts to Bletchley. The 'bombe' machine invented by Turing and the later Colossus (a proto-computer) made it possible to cope with this volume of material. Before VE Day Bletchley began to be run down, and the last 2000 staff went to Eastcote. It was too big to be a Whitehall department, however, and also the Russians had missiles that could hit London, so the decision was taken to move to a larger and safer site in a town somewhere in the south of England away from the coast and with good communications and accommodation for staff. Eventually Cheltenham was chosen. By 1962 and for the next 40 years 50% of new staff were recruited locally. During the cold war 70% of GCHQ's work was concerned with Russian intelligence, but that changed after 1989. The advent of the internet in 1991 brought more changes, not least the spread of terrorist movements. By then GCHQ had 58 buildings at Benhall and Oakley and a move to a larger site was needed. The 'Doughnut' was the eventual result. There are minor outposts elsewhere, but Cheltenham is and will remain GCHQ's main home. The more than usually well-informed audience had listened with rapt attention and asked numerous questions at the end.

River Chelt walk, Wednesday 5th June

On a fine mild evening about 20 people gathered at the Meadow Café by Cox's Meadow for a walk led by Mary Moxam along the course of the River Chelt. Taking us first into the Meadow, Mary said the Chelt, which arose from a spring



near Dowdeswell Reservoir, was much more important in the middle ages than it is now because it powered a series of mills. Even before 1066 there were two, and William the Conqueror granted three more. Small as it is, with its several tributaries it has always been prone to flooding, and the flood prevention scheme that drastically altered the look of the Meadow in 2006 but proved inadequate in 2007 was essential to protect the town. We next stopped in

Sandford Mill Road where the present Sandford Mill House was a corn-mill until 1929. Mary explained that the miller used to divert the Chelt to form a pond or 'leat' there. Crossing Old Bath Road, we took a path between the river and the back of some hospital buildings, one of which was originally the Cheltenham College swimming pool. The former pool-keeper's house is now Maggie's Centre, one of a chain of cancer care centres launched by Maggie Keswick Jencks in 1996 when she herself was dying of cancer. We next followed the river through Sandford Park, where it runs in the open. A statue of a reclining figure marks the point where flood water from storm drains is channelled back into the Chelt. Crossing into College Road we saw a rather dilapidated building that was the original chalybeate spa, built in 1801 by Mr Barratt of Barratt's Mill. In the next part of the park we paused to admire the beds of perennials by the fountain and noted a plaque marked



Stampersgat Walk, the name of a (little-known) twin town of Cheltenham in Holland. A flight of steps a little farther on brought us to Barratt's Mill, now private accommodation but formerly the town's main mill. The river is faster-flowing and deeper at this point, and Mary said the miller used to be required to divert it into the High Street from time to time to clean the street. Passing through a pretty Italian garden we saw a board commemorating Edward White, the landscape architect who designed that garden and planned Sandford Park as a whole. We crossed the Bath Road, pausing at the Playhouse while Mary told us something of its history, and saw the river again where it runs through Rodney Road car park. Imperial Lane brought us out opposite Neptune's Fountain, behind which the Sherborne spa building once stood. The river is underground here but we found it again beside the footpath that runs from Royal Well Lane to Waitrose, and had a final, extensive view of it looking west from the footbridge over Honeybourne Way, where this very enjoyable and interesting walk ended.

Another Cheltenham

Since pictures of Cheltenham in Adelaide appeared in our last issue, members have been sending in their photos and memories of another distant namesake.



Cheltenham Beach, as it is also called, is just north of Auckland, New Zealand. Member Elizabeth Bennett particularly liked the vast stretch of sand with its view of Rangitoto Island, and also admired the charming old houses typical of the area. (One does wonder sometimes quite what it was about these exotic places that could have reminded early settlers of Cheltenham!)



Members Mike and Mandy Jenkinson have also been there, and they noticed an interesting thing:

in the picture on the right here the sign on the side of the hotel is an advert for the Chelty Speed Shear, a local sheep-shearing contest. Not quite the kind of thing we have here, is it? - but I suppose it could suggest a link with the Cotswolds.



Has anyone come across other Cheltenham on their travels? I know there's also one in Melbourne, and another in Pennsylvania...

Local History Today: themes, challenges and opportunities GLHA Local History Day

Saturday 11th May 2019

*at the University of Gloucestershire School of
Business and Technology
Oxstalls Campus, Gloucester GL2 9HW*



This year we had not only a change of venue, to the impressive atrium and lecture theatre of the new School of Business Studies in Gloucester, but also a change of programme: there were no

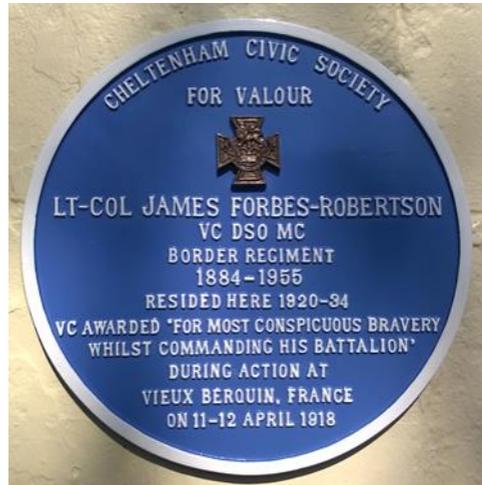
displays by individual local history societies, just two talks and the presentation

of the Bryan Jerrard Award. The meeting began with a welcome from Dr Steven Blake, after which Dr Matthew Cole spoke on the theme 'Mastering Local History: an introduction to the programme at the University of Birmingham'. After an excellent sandwich lunch the Bryan Jerrard Award was presented to Louise Ryland-Epton for her article 'Cirencester Workhouse under the Old Poor Law' in BGAS Transactions 135 (2017). The second talk, by Dr Alan Crosby, was on 'Themes, challenges and opportunities: the current state of local history in Britain.' At 3.15 pm Dr Blake closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their support.



Blue plaque to James Forbes-Robertson unveiled

On 11th April at 60 London Road, the home of Mr and Mrs Andrew Ellis, the Mayor Cllr Bernard Fisher unveiled a plaque in honour of James Forbes-Robertson, VC, who lived in the house from 1920 to 1934. Andrew Booton, Chair of the Civic Society, gave an account of his life. An ex-pupil of Cheltenham College, trained at Sandhurst, Lieut-Col Forbes-Robertson had already won a Military Cross on the Somme and two DSOs when he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his 'most conspicuous bravery' on April 11th 1918. The citation describes how



'through his quick judgement, resource, untiring energy and magnificent example' he saved the line from breaking on four separate occasions, making a reconnaissance on horseback in full view of the enemy under heavy fire and leading a successful counter-attack. In his later career he commanded the 2nd Gordon Highlanders and 152 Infantry Brigade, and also served in the Home Guard in the Second World War. He is the fourth Cheltenham VC to be honoured with a blue plaque.



The Mayor with Mr and Mrs Ellis at the unveiling

SOCIETY NEWS

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Duncan Rainy-Brown
Martin Mordecai
Barbara Wood

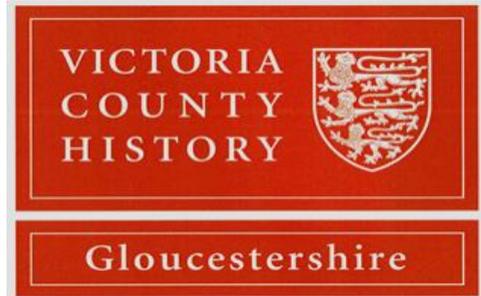
Jean Willcox
Alan Jamieson
Rob and Tracey McCausland

VCH News

Steady progress continues. A start has been made on preparing the VCH account of Swindon Village. One novel topic, which volunteers are now working through the relevant archives for, is the post-war commercial/industrial development of the Kingsditch Lane area. A far

cry from the distant days when the 'king's ditch' was the formal boundary between the royal manor of Cheltenham and neighbouring Swindon! Jan Broadway has been busy consolidating the drafts covering 19th and 20th century Cheltenham itself, to which Sally is contributing some economic segments. Prompted by Tony Comer's recent talk to CLHS on the early days of GCHQ, I have got on with putting a few paragraphs together on that subject, which have now been passed to Jan. We are still exploring ways of making a start on Leckhampton – by the time this Newsletter comes out, there should have been discussions with 'local experts' – you know who you are!

James Hodsdon



Calling all researchers!

Please contact the Journal editor, Julie Courtenay, if you are planning on writing up your research and thinking about submitting it for our next Journal. Julie will be pleased to discuss your draft with you and has guidance notes to help you prepare your article for publication. The deadline for draft articles is the end of November but it would be really helpful if you could let Julie know well before that if you have an article you would like to be considered.

Many thanks

Julie Courtenay
editor.clhs@gmail.com

A Busy Six Months

It's six months since I last reported to you on the CLHS projects, and all that time we have as usual been busy cataloguing – that is, working through documents and making an entry for each in the searchable Archives Online Catalogue. Over 100 Dowty Social Newsletters have been completed, article by article and picture by picture, and there are only 10 more to do. If you would care to work at home on some of the Dowty, Rotol or British Messier material, we do have duplicate magazines that you may be able to catalogue from the comfort of your own arm-chair. Perhaps you worked for these firms: if so, might this task interest you? Soon we will be moving on to two new deposits – D2010 which consists of four boxes of Skillicorne papers, 1695-1892, and 20 boxes of commercial records, D1276, 1849-99, previously held by solicitors McLaren, Jeens and Seacombe – these will be of use in writing the economic sections for the Cheltenham VCH Vol 15. The Oral Group continues to make recordings. Their subjects include a teacher at Pate's Girls and the new Pate's Co-Ed, someone who was educated in the town, worked here and had contact with several local clubs, and a gentleman who cut the hair of many a Cheltonian. The cataloguing of the Miles scrapbooks continues at a steady pace. There are only two and a half, of the daunting 10 that we started with, left to complete. Steps are now being taken to make the first volume available on our website. After four years' hard work The Memorandum Book of John Stubbe, Under Steward of the Manor of Cheltenham, has been published and the 30 copies are nearly all sold. If you think you might like to see one before buying, let me know and I can bring a copy to a Meeting. If any of these projects appeal to you (or contributing to the VCH, see James Hodsdon's report) please contact me on projects.clhs@btinternet.com You can always have a taster day at the Archives, or support if you want to work from home.

Sally Self

Congratulations!

To **Sally Self**, this year's winner of the Peter Smith Award, which goes each year at the AGM to a member who has given outstanding service to the Society. For-



ever busy and involved in several projects at once, Sally has always seemed to do as much as three or four other people put together. Besides initiating projects and working hard on them herself, she has a talent for organisation and for motivating others to join in and help. Thus things get done and, however long they take, are brought to a successful conclusion. Her reaction to hearing the list of her activities and achievements read out was to say that she never realised she did so much, and that she thought she would go and lie down! Fortunately she is unlikely to give up just yet, we think. The Society is very lucky to have her.

For those members who were unable to attend the AGM on 21st May, summary reports are printed below. Full minutes of the meeting will be available at 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 21st MAY 2019

Sue Robbins, as Acting Chairman, welcomed the Mayor Cllr Roger Whyborne, who had agreed to be President of the Society for his term of office and to chair the meeting.

Election of Officers and Committee

Nominations from the floor were invited for the still vacant position of Chairman, but there was none.

The following were elected:

Treasurer: Sue Brown **Secretary:** Chris Conoley

Committee: Anne Bateman, Chris Bentall, Kath Boothman, Alison Pascoe, Sue Robbins, Joanna Vials, Maggie Winterburn.

Secretary's Report (summarised): Sue Robbins, on behalf of Chris Conoley, said that the Society had held twelve meetings in the past year, of which nine were evening meetings and three were held in the morning. Thanks were due to Alison Pascoe for finding and booking the speakers and for publicising these and other local history matters on the Society's website and via email directly to members, and also to Jan Broadway for running the Society's website. There were two summer walks, one in the South Town area and another concerned with lady writers with Cheltenham connections. The main summer outing was to Worcester to visit the Cathedral Archives, the Commandery and the Tudor House. The Society was grateful to David Johnson for researching and arranging these visits and to Sue Brown for handling the administration. The Society's biennial History Afternoon was held at St Andrew's church, taking Cheltenham's motto *Salubritas et Eruditio* as its theme. Displays were mounted by the Society itself and by similar organisations. There were two talks on the themes of health and education. This was a very successful event, attracting many members of the public and generously supported by Cheltenham Arts Council, which gave a grant of £300 towards the cost. During the year the Society mounted several exhibitions on local history topics, co-ordinated by Sally Self, in the Cheltenham Local and Family History Centre. It also maintained its usual presence at the Montpellier Fiesta and the Gloucestershire LHA Local History Day. The Society produces three Newsletters each year containing summaries of the lectures and news of recent and forthcoming local events of historical interest besides some feature articles. She thanked Kath Boothman for her able editing of this publication. The Society also produces an annual Journal with longer articles, researched and written mainly by members. For many years it had been edited by Sally Self, who had now handed the role over to Julie Courtenay. Thanks were due to Sally for the work she had done

to establish the high standard of the Journal. A wide variety of projects was being undertaken by Society members. These included research for the VCH, the Oral History and 'Know Your Place' projects and the cataloguing of various collections in the Gloucestershire Archives. The Society had also been involved in the 'Cheltenham Remembers' project commemorating the end of World War I.

Presentation of the Peter Smith Award: Sue Brown drew attention to the recent death, at the age of 100, of Judy Smith, who had created the award in memory of her husband Peter. The award was presented to Sally Self, who in addition to editing the Journal for many years had done an immense amount for the Society both as a Committee member and researcher and by masterminding numerous projects, organising volunteers and working and fund-raising for the VCH.

Treasurer's Report (*summarised*): Sue Brown said that the Society's finances were sound. Although the constitution did not require it, an independent examination had been carried out by Alison Milford, a Certified Accountant. This year the Society had an excess of income over expenditure of £800.68 in the General Fund and an excess of expenditure over income of £650 in the Restricted Funds. The Restricted Funds consisted of the Peter Smith Award (net expenditure for the year £50) and £617.94 for the Cheltenham Remembers World War 1 exhibition for which the Society received a grant of £600 in the previous year, the balance of £17.94 being taken from the General Fund. Subscriptions were slightly down on last year but the situation was still very healthy, membership standing at 387 compared with 394 in the previous year. Donations to the general funds had amounted to £5.50 and the Gift Aid receipt was £290.65. The Journals continued to sell, and the Society's other publications had raised £224.90, nearly double the amount the previous year, despite no new ones being issued. Morning meetings continued to be popular, this year producing a surplus of £188.66. The summer visits were also popular and showed a surplus for the year of £146.90, compared with £129.00 the previous year. The CLHS biennial exhibition took place on 21 July 2018, costing £542.79 in total. Receipts on the door and from letting tables amounted to £338.10 and Cheltenham Arts Council kindly gave a grant of £300. Overall there was a surplus of £95.31. Newsletter costs remained constant despite the recent change of printer. Fees for speakers were £486, which was good value. The Research and Display evening had cost £56.95. Website costs had been higher this year due to the creation of a research page on the website and new security regulations that had to be complied with.

Address by the Mayor, Councillor Roger Whyborne (*summarised*): The Mayor said history had not been his favourite subject at school, but going into politics had made him realise every town was different (he was from Bourne-mouth) and that a town's history should inform the decisions that were taken about it. In the 1960s the Council had very nearly voted to demolish Pittville Pump Room! Those who did not learn from history would repeat its mistakes. There was so much to know. He thought more historic local figures such as Skillicorne and Pitt should be commemorated in street names. He was impressed by the size of the Society's membership and all the research being done that would benefit future generations.

FEATURE

The Resident and Lake House



LAKE HOUSE.
The Property of Mordaunt Ricketts Esq.

Lake House on Thirlestaine Road, Cheltenham, was built in 1821 by Thomas Tomlins Esq, a wealthy and cultured intellectual. Lauded in his day as an accomplished musician, amongst his compositions was a popular air, *The Bath Waltz*. His library at Lake House contained over a thousand volumes, including many Fine Art books and sets of sermons. Tomlin's estate at Lake House, which cost him £30,000, included

extensive pleasure grounds, greenhouses, a lake with a boat, a small farm and pew No 60 in the centre aisle of the newly-erected Holy Trinity Church.

Following Tomlins' death in 1824, Thomas Lenox Napier Sturt took up residence at Lake House. He was the father of the famous Australian explorer, Charles Sturt, and a former *puisne* judge in the service of the Honourable East India Company. Charles' decision to retire to Cheltenham in 1863 may have been inspired by his parent's brief residence in the town.

1831 saw the arrival of perhaps the most flamboyant of Lake House's owner-occupiers, Mordaunt Ricketts Esq and his wife, Charlotte. Again a former civil servant in the employ of the HEIC, this gentleman immediately entered the social scene of the spa town, becoming one of the patrons of the balls held at the Assembly Rooms. He was one of the founders of the Cheltenham Horticultural and Floral Society, chairing the initial meeting held for its establishment and winning a goodly proportion of the prizes over the next few years. He exhibited a considerable range of flowers, fruit and vegetables, from exotic myrtle trees in pots to cauliflowers, all grown in the extensive grounds and hothouses of Lake House.

Almost immediately after his arrival in Cheltenham, Mordaunt Ricketts was welcomed into Foundation Lodge 82 (Cheltenham Freemasons), rising rapidly to the position of Worshipful Master. He was instrumental in establishing the Old Cotteswold Encampment of Knights Templar, and donated an 18th century organ to the Masonic Hall in Portland Street, which remains in use today.

During the Ricketts' occupancy Lake House was thrown open to company on numerous occasions for dinners, *fêtes* and banquets. One such event, a ball given in 1834 for nearly 500 guests, provided music and dancing with a sumptuous supper at 1.00 am, the festivities continuing until 3.00 am. The lavishness of the décor was

described in the local press; a native Indian in full costume welcomed the guests into the hall, which was surrounded by myrtle trees in which were to be seen a variety of Indian birds with brilliant, exotic plumage. At the end of the hall was an elephant's head, gloriously displayed with rich decorative coverings.

Mr and Mrs Ricketts rose through the social ranks as celebrities of their day. Charlotte, Mordaunt's second wife, had a song dedicated to her in 1831, and in 1846 the renowned sculptor, John Edward Jones, whose works were exhibited at the Louvre, carved a bust of Mordaunt. The couple were presented to Her Majesty in 1843. Mordaunt himself was presented by Sir Gore Ouseley, a founder of the Royal Asiatic Society, of which he was a member. The *Court Circular* records that Mordaunt's wife wore 'a most magnificent necklace composed of diamonds and emeralds of immense value'. Mrs Ricketts was able to present her own daughter, and other aspiring *débutantes*, at the Queen's Drawing Room in the following years.

So how did Mordaunt Ricketts, a civil servant, fund his family's lavish lifestyle? Born in 1786 to George Poyntz Ricketts, Mordaunt joined the HEIC in 1802 and had risen through the ranks taking a succession of minor appointments in Calcutta and Bengal before moving into the Political Service, ultimately becoming the Resident of Lucknow in 1822, a senior ambassadorial position. In 1825 he took, as his second wife, the wealthy widow Charlotte Ravenscroft. Her late husband George had been the collector of land revenue in the Cawnpore district, but had absconded with a considerable sum of money from the treasury, taking Charlotte and their son with him. After George Ravenscroft was murdered in 1823 by dacoits, Charlotte sought refuge with the Resident of Lucknow, who married her after his own wife died in 1825. (Incidentally, Charlotte's brother John Fitzgerald married Mordaunt's eldest daughter from his first marriage, in 1828.)

In those days the city of Lucknow was at its zenith as the seat of the Kingdom of Oudh. It was an ancient oriental city abounding in exotic architecture, costumes and adornments, entertainments and ceremonies to delight the Ricketts during Mordaunt's Residency. One of the ceremonies that the Resident performed was to crown the King of Oudh, a formality the King would call for as and when he wished! It was not unusual for a coronation procession to include as many as 400 elephants. The King would honour important guests, including Mr Ricketts, with a portrait of himself by the Court painter, Robert Home. A miniature of Mordaunt shows him wearing a pendant portrait of the first King of Oudh, Ghazi ud-din Haidau.



Portrait miniature of Mordaunt Ricketts
(courtesy of Ellison Fine Art)

In 1829 Ricketts was granted leave of absence from Lucknow, due to declining health, and he resigned from the Service. On the eve of his departure he was informed that an enquiry was to be held into allegations of corruption by him during his Residency. After remaining in Calcutta for a further six months, with no charges pressed, Ricketts returned to England, settling at Lake House in 1831. The HEIC enquiry was carried on in his absence and in 1834 he was publicly dismissed from the Service and his pension stopped. In 1835 Ricketts published *A Refutation of the Charges Preferred by the HEIC*, which seemed to exonerate him in the eyes of society in general, and fuelled outrage at the high-handedness of the Company directors. (Ricketts was rumoured to have absconded to England with £750,000.) Rickett won a High Court Case against the HEIC in 1841, getting his civil service pension reinstated, but would this alone have been sufficient to fund his lifestyle?

The King of Oudh had no such qualms about the Ricketts, whom he considered his closest friends, and sent an extremely expensive, jewel-encrusted watch and chain to Charlotte at Lake House. The couple remained in Cheltenham until 1837 when they left to live for much of the time in France, near their offspring and where Mordaunt had business interests. He died in Paris in 1862, aged 76, where he had been a member of L'Ordre Moderne du Temple.

Lake House became the property of George Neville Wyatt Esq, a retired indigo planter. In 1906 it was owned by Cheltenham Borough Council before being sold to Cheltenham College. The Junior School was built in the grounds of Lake House which, as the home of the College headmaster, was renamed College House. Since the 1970s it has been known as Southwood, the day boys' House.

Jill Waller and Jim Markland

The Deerhurst Lecture 2019



**‘Æthelred, lord of the Mercians (d. 911)
and his Deerhurst connections’**

Professor Barbara Yorke, University
of Winchester

*Saturday 14th September at 7.30 pm in
St Mary's Church, Deerhurst*

Tickets at the door, price £5 (students £3).

Further details available at
<https://deerhurstfriends.co.uk>



40 years of the Family History Society

Members of the Society were invited to take part in the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Gloucestershire Family History Society at the Heritage Hub on 28 April 2019. We were asked to demonstrate the Know Your Place website, where we have pinned hundreds of names and images on the World War One and Suffragette layer for Cheltenham. Apart from having three laptops ready to

explain how to call up and query the information, we had a display of the maps that David Drinkwater has prepared and which we have shown to members at the Research and Display Evenings. We received a good deal of interest and explained the website to 45 interested people, including youngsters.

Sally Self



OBITUARY

JUDY SMITH, 1918-2019

Sadly, only a few months after congratulating Judy on her 100th birthday we have to record that she died at home in May. A proudly independent lady, she always enjoyed visits and phone calls from friends or being taken out for a drive or a meal. She was greatly helped by 'her' taxi driver who took her shopping every week and even put the groceries away for her. In her mid-nineties, unable to continue the knitting and tapestry work she used to enjoy, she decided to start doing jigsaws 'to keep her brain active'.

Judy was born in Birmingham. Although her name was registered as Gwendoline Nora she was always known to everyone as Judy. She and Peter married in 1946 and moved round the country before settling in Pickering Road where they at last had a garden. Their beautifully tended garden was the setting for many fund raising coffee mornings for CLHS and the RNLI, and provided space for their much-loved cat, Mac.



After Peter died in 2007 Judy founded the Peter Smith award, given annually to a member who has made an outstanding contribution to the Society.

She also provided a bench in Montpellier Gardens in his memory, with a plaque describing Peter as a 'well-beloved character'.

Jill Barlow



BOOKS FOR SALE



News from the CLHS Donated Books ‘Shop’

I have had a good sort out of the donated books recently and am pleased to say that there are several copies of the most popular local history books, including some ‘must haves’ for a comprehensive background of the history of Cheltenham. I have listed some of these below. Some are in ‘as new’ condition and are being offered at competitive prices. Some are signed copies – first come, first served!

- A History of Cheltenham, G Hart, (3 copies) £5
- Cheltenham, B Little, (4 copies) £3
- Cheltenham, A Biography, S Pakenham, (5 copies) £2
- Cheltenham in pictures, B Little, (3 copies) £3
- Pleasure Town, Cheltenham 1830-1860, A Bell, (3 copies) £3
- Cheltenham’s Lost Heritage, O Bradbury, (2 copies, as new) £7.50
- The Book of Cheltenham, S Blake, R Beacham, (2 copies, limited edition, signed) £7
- Cheltenham, A Pictorial History, S Blake, (2 copies, as new) £7
- Cheltenham, A History, S Rowbotham, J Waller, (2 copies, as new) £8
- Around Cheltenham, photographic memories, F Frith, (3 copies) £6
- A Century of Cheltenham, R Brooks, (2 copies, as new) £7
- Gloucestershire Worthies, A Sampson, (4 copies) £3
- A Cheltenham Companion, A Sampson, S Blake, (5 copies) £3

I also have back copies of CLHS Journals for sale in bundles of 10, vols 1-10, 11-20, 21-30, as well as various single copies. £5 per bundle or £1 for singles – let me know what you need to complete your set.

If you are interested in any of these items please contact me by phone on 01242 232740, or email heatherbell71@hotmail.com As we are now into the summer break, I am happy to deliver anywhere in Cheltenham or the nearer suburbs, or books can be collected from my home address. Thank you for supporting the CLHS Bookshop, which will be back as usual when the lectures start again in September.

Heather Atkinson

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CLHS DISPLAYS IN THE LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

July - August	Education for the Masses: Cheltenham Schools up to 2000
September - October	The Development of the Spas
November - December	Cheltenham's Hospitals

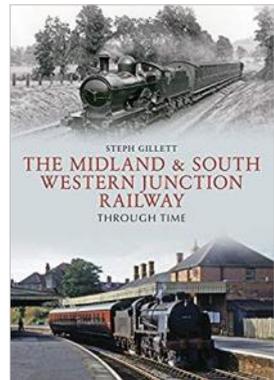
NEW PUBLICATION

The Midland & South Western Junction Railway Through Time

by Steph Gillett

The Midland & South Western Junction Railway was formed in 1884 by the amalgamation of the Swindon, Marlborough & Andover and the Swindon & Cheltenham Extension railways. It provided a north-south link between the Midland and the London & South Western railways through the heartland of the Great Western Railway. It also served several military establishments in Wiltshire. It joined the Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway at Andoversford with running rights to Cheltenham and had a junction with the L&SWR at Andover. Passing west of the GWR station at Swindon, it was absorbed by the GWR in 1923. The line was closed by British Railways in 1961, apart from a few freight sections that had gone by 1970. The Swindon & Cricklade heritage railway is recreating some of the line from its base at Blunsdon. Several sections of the trackbed have been converted to pleasant walking and cycling routes.

Published in paperback by Amberley Publishing in August 2018, price £13.49



Appeal

Please would **Christine Seal** who wrote the article 'Medical Assistance to the Poor in 19th century Cheltenham' (CLHS Journal 26) make contact with **Sally Self**, projects.clhs@btinternet.com

CAN YOU HELP?**Samuel Harward**

An enquirer seeks information about Samuel Harward, who died in 1809. He prospered as a bookseller and stationer in Cheltenham, buying much land south of the High Street which was later sold as the Promenade developed. His first business was in Tewkesbury (active from 1760), and he was almost certainly part of a large Harward family from Hartlebury, Wores. When he married Kitty Brooks in 1802 his age was given as 55, but he may have been older. Efforts to find records of his birth or baptism (probably around 1740), have so far been unsuccessful. Can anyone help?

4-digit telephone numbers

An enquirer is researching the history surrounding an old packaging box of Martin & Co Ltd, Cheltenham, which details the telephone number 2821. Does anyone know in what era 4-digit numbers were in use?

**Severn Valley Gas Corporation**

An enquirer seeks information on the Severn Valley Gas Corporation (SVGC) which took over his own local gas works in Shropshire in 1935-36 and held it until nationalisation. He wonders to what extent the Shropshire works remained autonomous, or whether SVGC took control of its activities, perhaps using their own coal wagons. Cheltenham Gas Company was the first works that came under SVGC control, so the two cases may be similar.

If you can help with any of these queries please contact Jill Waller on 07512318866 or e-mail jill.waller@virginmedia.com

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the November 2019 issue by
Monday 7th October 2019
 to the Editor: Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA
 Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: kbooth@dircon.co.uk

We are always very pleased to receive contributions from members—articles of any length, interesting facts and photos, memories, comments, all are welcome.