

Cheltenham Local History Society Journal

NUMBER TWO · 1984

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Cover illustration: a view, by Aylwin Sampson, of the Montpellier Arcade, built as a block of shops in 1831-2.

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Artwork by Aylwin Sampson.		

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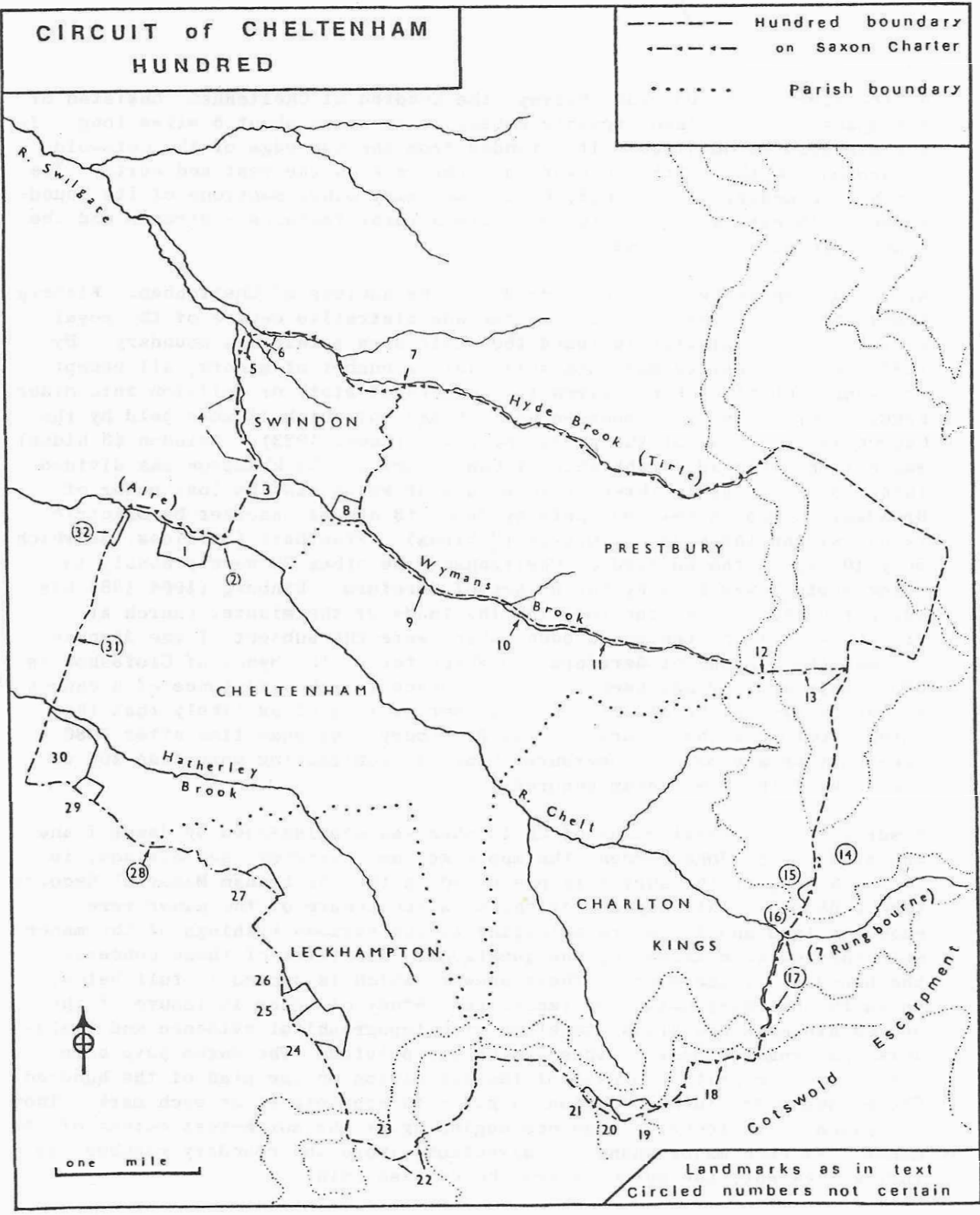
Bayshill House, the residence of Lord Fauconberg, at which King George III stayed in 1788. The house is mentioned by Elizabeth Brodie in her account of a visit to Cheltenham in 1800; see page 13.

The Hundred of Cheltenham and its boundaries

At the time of the Domesday Survey, the hundred of Cheltenham consisted of a compact block of land, roughly square, with sides about 5 miles long. It was assessed at 30 hides. It extended from the top edge of the Cotswold escarpment in the south and east into the vale in the west and north. Its northern boundary was the Hyde Brook; and many other sections of its boundaries, both external and internal, were natural features - streams and the sharp edge of the escarpment.

Almost at the centre of the hundred lay the nucleus of Cheltenham. Finberg (1964:158) has suggested this was the administrative centre of the royal estate which originally included the whole area within the boundary. By 1066 the royal estate had been split into a number of manors, all except Cheltenham/Charlton Kings given for reasons of state or religion into other hands. Cheltenham was assessed at 10 hides, of which $1\frac{1}{2}$ were held by the Church in the hands of the priest Reinbald (Rawes 1983). Swindon (3 hides) was held by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury and Leckhampton was divided into two, or possibly three, manors, one of which was the lost manor of Broadwell. The largest was held by Osgot (3 hides), another by Brictric (2 hides) and the other by Ordvic (2 hides). Prestbury (30 hides, of which only 10 lay in the hundred of Cheltenham; the other 20 were probably in Sevenhampton) was held by the Bishop of Hereford. Finberg (1964:158) has suggested that it was the rent for the lands of the minster church at Prestbury, not Cheltenham as such, which were the subject of the dispute between the Bishops of Hereford and Worcester at the Synod of Clofeshoh in 803. This charter has been used as evidence for the existence of a church in Cheltenham in the mid-8th century, but it is just as likely that the mother church of the hundred was at Prestbury. At some time after 1086 Prestbury became part of Deerhurst hundred, subtracting more than 20% of the area of the Cheltenham hundred.

A survey of the royal manor of Cheltenham was commissioned by James I and was produced by John Norden, the map-maker and surveyor, and his son, in 1617. A copy of the survey is preserved in the Cheltenham Manorial Records (GRO D 855 M7). All aspects of the area and tenure of the manor were enquired into and 32 jurors belonging to the various tythings of the manor were charged with answering the questions. The first of these concerned the boundary of the manor. Their answer, which is quoted in full below, names the boundary points or landmarks. Study of later inclosure, tithe and estate maps and plans, together with topographical evidence and field-work, has enabled most of these to be pin-pointed. The marks have been numbered for clarity and ease of identification on the plan of the hundred. The evidence for identification is given in brackets after each mark. They are given in a clockwise sequence beginning at the north-west corner of the manor. At each major change of direction, where the boundary reaches its furthest extent, the survey names the compass point.



"To the first article they say that the compasse, extent and circuit of the mannour namelie the hundred beginneth at

- (1) Barbridge Northweste (Barbridge common field -Arle and Alstone Inclosure Map 1835 (hereafter A&A1). GRO P78/SD1).
- (2) and from thence extendeth to Hawlings Mill (probably Bedlam Mill, granted by Simon the Chaplain, son of Michael the Miller of Arle, to the Hospital of St. Margaret without Gloucester and the leper bretheren there in about 1250 (Gloucester Corporation Records). It was administered by Gloucester Corporation in later times and a plan exists in a survey of land owned by the Corporation in 1824 (GRO GBR J4/11).
- (3) and from thence to Furzen Hill (field name - Swindon Tithe Map 1842 (hereafter STM) GRO P324a SD/2).
- (4) and from thence to Swyndon Brook (Wymans Brook).
- (5) and from thence to Ryehedge (field name STM).
- (6) and from thence to Maintle meadow (field name STM).
- (7) and from thence to Swindons gage towards the north (probably where the Swindon/Prestbury boundary turns south and leaves the Hyde Brook).
- (8) and from thence to Morrice Hill (field name Norris Hill STM).
- (9) and from thence to Cheltenham Brook (Wymans Brook again).
- (10) and from thence extendeth along by the said brooke to Cackebridge (the name still exists, where the Prestbury Road crosses the now-culverted Wymans Brook. The name appears as early as 1250 in the Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey).
- (11) and from thence to Bouncers gate (where Bouncers Lane crosses Wymans Brook).
- (12) and so to Hewletts(where the Cheltenham/Charlton Kings boundary meets that of Prestbury).
- (13) and from thence to the stonnes upon Northfield Hill towards the east (here the boundary changes direction to the south and was marked by boundary stones as it crossed Northfield (O.S.6 inch map (1884)). These could not be found on a field visit in April 1984. It has been suggested that the Northfield round barrow was meant by "the stonnes upon Northfield" (Hill:1930). However it is not usual for stones to be a visible feature of a round barrow, which normally presents the appearance of a grassy mound. Before excavation in 1912 the barrow was a considerable monument, being 12 feet high and 100 yards in circumference; however its pre-excitation condition was not described. It contained some large stones, but these were not visible before disturbance by excavation. Barrows were often used as boundary markers and it is possible that this barrow, together with the linear earthwork at 992219, may represent an earlier version of the hundred boundary. It seems more likely that at the time of Norden's survey a row of mere or boundary stones had been set out in an east-west direction across Northfield).

- (14) and from thence to Bawles grove (possibly Arle Grove in Whittington parish, which may have been larger in 1617, or perhaps Colesgate Grove (Charlton Kings Tithe Map 1848 (hereafter CKTM) GRO T1/49) at the point where the Whittington, Dowdeswell and Charlton Kings parish boundaries meet).
- (15) from thence to Highwoods Hill (the wooded hillside overlooking the Dowdeswell reservoir is probably meant. A field named Hyetts Hill is shown here on a map of the estates of William Prinn in Charlton Kings and Cheltenham 1811 (hereafter PEM) GRO Photocopy 1341).
- (16) from thence to Rungbourne (17) and soe from thence to a little Brooke leading to Gales quarr. (These two points must be taken together and their interpretation is the most ambiguous on the circuit. The name Rungbourne (or Ringbourne) derives from Rindburna, meaning 'hill-stream' (PNG IV), which appears in a Saxon charter with a reputed date of 759. Grundy (1935:115) thought Rindburna referred to the upper part of the Chelt. Finberg (1964:1-65) considered that it meant the small stream, a tributary of the Chelt, which flows down the steep-sided valley and is followed by the hundred boundary. This tiny stream begins just below Old Dole farmhouse (19831876) in a spring which rises at the top of the Lower Lias clay. It borders a field, which besides the usual slumping, is covered with pits and delves, presumably for the extraction of clay (former field name 'Old Hole'). Gales quarr may be here, or more likely, at the outcrop of freestone at 98181880 (Kite Hill CKTM), which has been much quarried. If this little stream is regarded as the Rungbourne it is difficult to account for the "little Brooke leading to Gales quarr". There is no sign of another stream on the ground, nor is the topography such that one would expect one. This must mean that the upper part of the Chelt was called Rungbourne in 1617 and in Saxon times. Stream names are variable. The lower part of the Chelt was called the 'Alr' in early times and has had other names also (PNG I:5). The Withington Saxon charter calls the "little Brooke" the Maerbroc i.e. 'boundary brook', without naming it.)
- (18) and so from thence to Whislye (the modern boundary runs along the edge of the scarp on Charlton Common, skirting the flat top of Wistley Hill).
- (19) and so from thence to Hidepeece end (field name High Piece (CKTM)).
- (20) and from thence to a peece called office (field name (PEM)). The name 'Office' comes from the Old English word 'offes' meaning an edge or border (PNG IV:159) and well describes its situation on the scarp edge.
- (21) and so from thence to Richard Strawfords penn (called Strawfords Piece on (PEM)).
- (22) and from thence to Sowterley towards the south (field name Great Salterley on W.Croome's Map of the Parish of Leckhampton 1835 (hereafter CPL) GRO P198a/VE1/1. The 1884 6 inch O.S. map shows a Salterley oak on the Leckhampton/Coberley boundary).

- (23) and from thence to blackheadge (Blackhedg Grove runs along the top of the scarp to the west of Blackhedg farm (CPL)).
- (24) and from thence to Burlyfield (a common-field name on the plan by T. Pinnell for the Leckhampton Inclosure 1778 (hereafter LIP) GRO D2025/10).
- (25) and so from thence to Lynnakre (field name (LIP)).
- (26) and so from thence to Bandlands (field name Blandlands (CPL)). This may be the 'culture' called Banlond in Leckhampton containing 20 acres mentioned in Vol. II of the Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery) no. 729, dated 1324.)

The last three land marks are adjacent to each other. This may be because they are on the border between Leckhampton and Broadwell manors. Marks nos 2, 6, 8, 12, 13 and 23 also occur on parish or manor boundaries, and nos 19, 20 and 21 are also adjacent to each other.

- (27) and from thence to Lowens laynes (field name Lower Leys (CPL)).
- (28) and so from thence to the Rayes (not known, but possible at Warden Hill on the Leckhampton/Cheltenham parish boundary).
- (29) and so from thence to Tynn leasow (field name Tining (A&AI)).
- (30) and so from thence to the outside of Hartersfield towards the Weste (the boundary runs round the south and west sides of Harthurst common-field in the manor of Redgrove. A Plan of Hartisfield Farm (1759) in the Scottish Record Office RHP 5353, GRO photocopy 934 shows a "long headland" marking the Cheltenham/Badgeworth boundary for about 600 yards at this point).
- (31) and from thence to a house of Reynold Miltons called the Brandyards (site not identified, but probably near the boundary on the road or track which used to lead west from Fiddlers Green. There is now a break in this road, but it seems to start again at Whitehall Farm near Hayden and may well have been continuous when Reynold Milton's house, which appears in the manor court books, was occupied).
- (32) and so from thence to old acre (not identified, but possibly a wood, not named on A&AI, which runs north-south along the north-west boundary of the hundred).
- (33) and so thence to Barrbridge aforesaid".

The question now arises as to the antiquity of the boundary described above. W. G. Hoskins has said that boundaries are the most permanent and enduring features of the landscape. It can be shown that the boundary described in Norden's survey, which remained unaltered until the end of the last century and is still largely intact, was established at least as early as the Saxon period, and is likely to be mid-8th century or earlier. No Saxon charter survives which describes a grant of land made by a monarch of part of the royal estate of Cheltenham hundred, although Domesday shows that about half

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the original area had been given into church or lay hands by 1066. There are however four charters which describe estates bordering the hundred and in each case these sections use the same boundaries as those in Norden's survey.

- a) The first describes the bounds of a territory near Deerhurst over which Westminster Abbey claimed rights. It is in a 14th century manuscript known as the Westminster Domesday, but relates to the time of Edward the Confessor. The translation and commentary is given in Finberg 1961:79-84. Points 4 to 7 are relevant and start at the Tyrl, an early name for the Swilgate/Wymans Brook stream. The boundary follows the stream to Hawk Hill, i.e. the Furzen Hill of (3) above. From Hawk Hill to Alre. Finberg believes that Alre (Arle) is an early name of the Chelt. This is confirmed by a second occurrence of the name. A meadow in Boddington, on the south bank of the Chelt is called Arle (Craven Estates, Plans and Schedule Book, Withibridge Estate, GRO D184/P1). The boundary now follows the Chelt westwards, but the hundred boundary leaves it where it turns south at 915245.
- b) The second charter is that of Withington (Grundy 1935:262-271). Points nos 27 to 31 are relevant. Finberg has also discussed this charter in Finberg 1955.

(27) From the Pole (possibly Needlehole on the Withington/Coberley border, the boundary proceeds to the Cat's Lynch. Grundy identified this as Chatcombe on the Coberley/Dowdeswell boundary; Finberg suggests that it is high ground above Slait Coppice at 983180. However it seems more likely that the Cat's Lynch is Ravensgate Bank. This steep, rocky wooded hillside is probably much the same now as it was in Saxon times and would have provided a good habitat for wild cats. The word 'Hlinc' (lynch) is normally used for a ridge or bank, not for such a steep slope; but locally 'bank' is common for the scarp edge. Access to Ravensgate Bank is by a track, hollowed into the hillside, which is still known as Lynch Lane.

(28) From the Lynch to the Boundary Brook - the 'little brooke leading to Gales quarr' of Nordens survey (16 above).

(29) Along the Brook to the Boundary Ford. This appears to be where the hundred boundary crosses the Chelt, near its confluence with the little brooke.

(30) From the Ford to the Sharp Top of the Slope. The modern boundary climbs the hill on the west side of Dowdeswell Woods along the edge of a very steep slope (Colesgate Bank (CKTM)).

(31) And so to the Green Way. This is the track leading from the road over Ham Hill down to Colesgate Farm, and is the point where the charter boundary diverges from that of the hundred.

- c) A charter relating to land at Dowdeswell with a reputed date of 759 (Grundy 1935: 114-116). Four boundary points of the estate are given. They include "on the south side Wisleag (Wistley) and on the west Rindburna" (the Chelt?). Both names occur in the 1617 survey as discussed above; so it is likely that this section dates to at least the mid-8th century.

- d) The Bishop Cleeve charter (Grundy 1935:72-90) mentions the Tirle (A28) or South Tirle (B25). This is identified with the Hyde brook which formed the northern boundary of Prestbury and the Cheltenham hundred until at least 1086. The charter boundary follows the brook except for a section "round the meadow". This is where the Prestbury/Swindon boundaries meet and the hundred boundary moves south of the brook for about 650 yards (i.e. approximately 3 furlongs), giving a piece of meadow land on that side to Brockhampton hamlet. (Field name Corn Meadow, Bishops Cleeve Tithe Map (1839) GRO P46 SD2/1).

The boundary then continues along the Tirle/Hyde brook until it turns south just short of the next landmark along a ditch which appears to have been an earlier course of the Swilgate/Wymans Brook stream, presumably the one which existed in the time of Edward the Confessor (a) above and this charter.

The final piece of evidence for the antiquity of the hundred boundary is more tentative. It concerns the very straight western boundary between the Chelt in the north and the south-west boundary ditch. Finberg (1957:12-13) describes an entry in the Cartulary of St. Peter's Abbey, Gloucester. It relates to the third abbess, Eafe, who ruled from 735 to 767. Like her predecessors she was probably a princess of the Hwiccan royal house and had the reputation of acquiring great possessions for the abbey. Finberg quotes her acquisition of twenty cassati at Pinswell (near Upper Coberley) as a sheep pasture. He goes on to describe "a minor road called the Greenway which runs from west to east connecting Badgeworth, a manor which in Abbess Eafe's day belonged to St. Peter's, with her sheep walk on the Wold at Upper Coberley (Pinswell). It is, in short, a drove road". Finberg draws attention to the fact that "the composite document" he cites from the Cartulary "has not yet received thorough critical analysis The text has suffered a good deal in transmission, but Sir Frank Stenton has declared that it is "certainly not a medieval fabrication" and "its substantial authenticity is not in doubt". Finberg omitted the first part of the entry. It describes how Gaffe (Eafe) in her reign of 33 years acquired "terras multas scilicet in Alre XX hidas, in Pyndeswell XX hidas, ovibus suis illic abhibendas".

The road Finberg describes, the Greenway, has a continuation, which taken with the mention of Arle, is significant. From Badgeworth the Greenway swings northward past the Reddings until it meets the south-west corner of the Cheltenham hundred boundary which it follows for some 250 yards to the ancient Pogemead Lane. Here the modern road disappears, but a continuous hedgeline, double in places and followed by a footpath for part of its length follows the boundary to the Chelt. Development in this area has made it impossible to trace on the ground, but the route is clear on aerial photos (e.g. RAF 1948). Marked by sections of footpath and road the route continues past Uckington Moat and goes by a winding course to just north of Elmstone Hardwicke where it joins the ancient road from Gloucester to Evesham (Map of the Manour of Stoke Orchard (1751) GRO D627/23). This crosses the Swilgate and then the Hyde brook by the Lowdewell ford mentioned in the Bishops Cleeve charter, passes Lodelo field in Stoke Orchard parish (GRO D627/23), then follows the Bishops Cleeve boundary to the Dean brook where it crosses the fields to Gotherington by what is today a footpath. As Greenway Lane it continues along the modern road through Gretton and Greet and so joins the Saltway north of Hailes; it also links with Winchcombe, former capital of the Hwiccan kingdom and of the shire of which the Cheltenham hundred was once briefly a part.

Whether the road or the hundred boundary was established first it is impossible to say on the available evidence; but it does suggest that this section also dates from the mid-8th century. If the dating given in the St. Peter's Cartulary can be accepted as an embodiment of an authentic tradition, Arle and its boundary were in existence in Eafe's time, although the hidage, in view of the Domesday statements, is exaggerated. It is of course possible that the monks of St. Peter's claimed 20 hides for Eafe after deducting the 10 at Prestbury from the 30 in the Cheltenham hundred. After Eafe's death St. Peter's Abbey fell into a decline and presumably the land was taken back into the royal estate.

The Parish Boundaries

It is not known when the parish boundaries as such were established. It is likely that to a large extent they followed the divisions between the lordships which had been formed before the Conquest; though that between Cheltenham and Charlton Kings is of a later date. It must also be remembered that manorial holdings were not always neatly contained within a boundary, but that parcels of land owing dues to one manor or tything could be found within the confines of another. As with the hundred boundary, natural features, especially streams, such as Wymans brook, Hatherley brook and Pilley brook, were used as divisions. It is the artificial sections which exhibit some interesting features.

a) The Prestbury/Charlton Kings Boundary

A straight line was set out with boundary stones across the gently sloping land at the top of Northfield hill which was probably open downland pasture at the time. The name Northfield has persisted on both sides of the boundary, suggesting that it was the field in the north of a single estate (the king's?) at an early date.

b) The Swindon/Prestbury Boundary

This runs between fields named Stapleton (in Prestbury) and Stapling (in Swindon) and divides fields which appear to have been either furlongs in an open field, or part of the original Hyde Farm which served the Bishop of Hereford's estate at Prestbury. The element "staple" in the field names suggests a demarcation by "staples" or posts. The boundary makes a number of right-angled turns around the corners of fields. These corners were probably the corners of the original furlongs of an open field. Three of these sections are in fact approximately 220 yards (i.e. one furlong) in length. This pattern, plus the similar names on either side of the boundary, make it likely that a cultivated open field was in existence before the boundary was established, perhaps at the time when a pre-Conquest monarch gave Swindon manor to the church.

c) The Cheltenham/Swindon Boundary

Starting at the point where it leaves Prestbury, this follows Wymans brook for a short distance until it meets Kingsditch Lane, where the boundary turns south towards the Chelt. The "King's Ditch" must have been dug to mark this boundary. Its straight line is continued northward by the road

which forms the eastern side of the ancient manor site at Swindon Hall. To the south another land division can be seen which prolongs the alignment of the parish boundary. Although broken as it crosses the meadowland by the Chelt, this alignment carries on for a distance of approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles between the open fields of Arle and Alstone tythings until it reaches the Hatherley brook. It is more or less parallel to two other long straight boundaries; the western division between Arle and Barrow Slads open fields and the western boundary of the hundred described above. All these land divisions cross the gently sloping ground which rises to Coronation Square from the east-west streams of the Chelt and Hatherley brook. There is here a strong suggestion of a planned layout into open fields and tythings at an early stage in the development of the royal estate.

d) The Cheltenham/Leckhampton Boundary

This also followed a "right-angled" pattern for part of its length where it crossed Meerstones field. Once again the name is the same on both sides of the boundary suggesting the existence of a cultivated field before it was divided with meer or boundary stones (stone from Leckhampton Hill would have been readily available here).

e) The Cheltenham/Charlton Kings Boundary

North of the Chelt this follows a road, called the "King's Highway" in the medieval period; now Hales Road until its intersection with Hewletts Road, then Hewletts Road up the north side of Battledown and past the reservoir to the hundred boundary. Two fields, part of the Lord of the Manor's demense, intruded into the eastward-pointing "finger" which Cheltenham extends towards the scarp on the north side of this road. This boundary is probably later than the others and is certainly post 1086.

Barbara Rawes

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr. D.H. Smith and his staff at the Gloucestershire Record Office for the assistance I received when researching this article; also Mrs M. Paget and Miss E. Andrew for the helpful discussions I had with them. My husband has drawn the plan.

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 Documents in the Gloucestershire Record Office thus: GRO and reference number.

William Barrett his book

Mr. F. Baldwin of Charlton Kings has inherited a little pocket book bound in parchment, with a triangular flap and brass clasp (minus its pin). The book measures 4" x 6" x 3/4".

Inside on the front flyleaf is written

"Will^m Barrett
His Book
1746
Cheltenham"

and on the back flyleaf we read

"My Freedom for the City of Gloucester cost 15 shillings and 6 pence the copy I took it up in 17-- June ye 2d 1746 In Mr Sanders Maireltry Wine Marchant in the Colyg Grean"

From this it would appear that Barrett, though a Cheltenham man, moved to a job as journeyman baker in Gloucester in 1746. He could not work within the City without becoming a Freeman. He writes:-

"In the Yeare 1746 My Master Hierd me from the time Cald Micklemas for 8 Guines and Mend my stocking and shorts per Yeare".

The following year his wage was raised to 9 gns. One of the early pages of the book lists the clothing he took to his new job -

"2 haporns (aprons)
14 shorts
11 Caps
5 stocks
6 hankerchiffs
15 pair of stockings"

a list which indicates that his master's household did not wash clothes more than 4 times a year.

From 1746 Barrett began to note the price of corn and the weight of bread when it was put into the oven

"In 1746
Wheat sold at 4^s-6 and 4^s-10 and some 5^s per Bushell
the Brown Bread Waid In the Oven 15 pound the midle sort 13 pound"

"Looads of Lames Wheat sould at £9-5^s and som at 8[£]-10^s and som at 8[£] and seven pound ten per Load"

"Barly at 2^s and 1^s-10^d and 1^s-8^d per Bushell"

and he compares this with prices in 1744 and 1745, when malt was 2s 6d per bushel.

From our point of view, the most interesting entries relate to the spiced cakes he made for funerals and like occasions.

"In Year 1757 Augst 8 Mead 33 doz and half Buriel Ceakes for Mrs Gibbs of Prespery

Waid In the Oven Eaight Ouinces 13 doz & half 6 to the Doz Waid 6 ouinces In the Oven. But Wheat Butter & other things being Dear

	£	s	d
1 Bush ¹¹ of flour	0	8	0
8 pound of Currians	0	4	0
4 pounds of Butter	0	2	8
half Pound Carraways	0	0	3
2 Pound Eaighthpeny Shuger	0	1	4
Pint Brandy	0	1	0
Safforne	0	0	6
Barme Quart	0	0	6
	<hr/>		
	0	18	3

3 Doz & half Ceakes	1	13	6
In Groadancis	0	18	3

Profitt 0 : 15 : 3"

which does not seem too bad (for a time of high prices) when we refelct that he did not have to cost his fuel, for cakes were cooked in the oven after the loaves were taken out, and used up the heat left over from the bread.

In 1760 he tried a more spicy recipe

"Ap¹¹ 18: 1760 Made 20 doz & four Ceakes 6 to the Doz Waid In the Oven

	£	s	d
seven Ouinces	1	0	8
33 Pounds of fine flour	0	3	5
6 Pound Currans	0	3	0
1 Pound shugger	0	0	9
cloves & mace	0	0	6
Safforne	0	0	6
Carraways Pounded	0	0	4
2 pound Butter	0	1	0
Brandy	0	0	6
Guiny Peper	0	0	1½
Nutt Meggs	0	0	2½
	<hr/>		
	0	10	4

This Made Verey Good wons"

From this we can work out the recipe and also the prices of some of the ingredients - butter being 8s a pound in 1757 and down to 6d in 1760; sugar up from 8d to 9d, currants remaining constant at 6d, brandy at 6d a pint.

Barrett also made "Topeny Cakes" and "Painswick Wigs".

"To make Painswick Wigs
for a Quartin of flower thee mayst Put 3 Quartins of butter 1 Quartin
of Shuger and half a Pint of barm
When they Cum outt of the Ovin Wash them With the Yock of an Egg beat
up In beare".

Much of the rest of the book is concerned with ailments of horses and remedies for them, with one recipe only for a human ill -

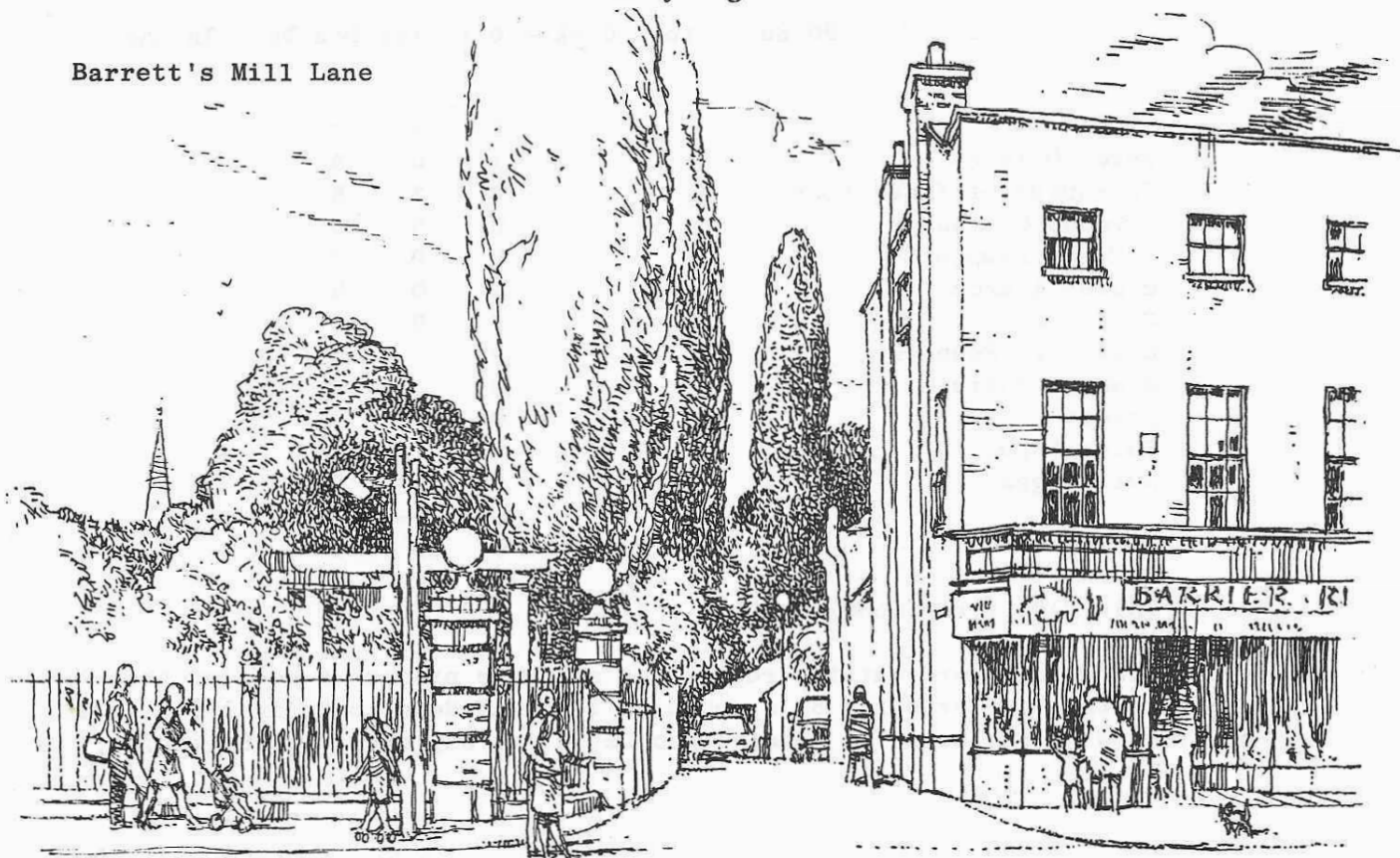
"Very Good for a paine In the back or side. Good Ould Rum and som
Goes Grees Mixt to Geather Make the rum hot a nuff to melt the Gus
Greas and beath It In Well"

William Barrett's family has given a name to the mill on the Chelt by Sandford Park, Barrett's Mill; but it does not appear from the book that our man had anything to do with milling. He buys wheat in 1767 from "Farmer Humphriss of Guitin" and "Farmer Humphris of Kintton"; and now and then he pays 2s for grinding 8 bushels of wheat. There is nothing to show that he came back to Cheltenham and set up his own business here, but the order from Mrs Gibbs of Prestbury suggests that he did.

There is an advertisement for Barrett's Mill when it was being sold in 1860 which describes it as having, besides the stones for grinding and the machinery of the mill, "two excellent Ovens, of ten bushels each, with large Bakehouse and Flour Room--". So this may have been a joint family concern, with William Barrett baking on the premises. That would explain why he only pays occasionally for grinding wheat, when clearly he used very much more flour than the odd 8 bushels. But this book does not pretend to be a full account of his debits and credits. It is a memoranda book, to guide him and remind him; and it must be treated as such by us.

Mary Paget

Barrett's Mill Lane



Alleged witchcraft in Cheltenham circa 1773

The Gloucestershire Record Office contains a copy of a letter from the Reverend Winterbotham referring to alleged witchcraft in Cheltenham, circa 1773.¹ He assessed the intellect of the inhabitants as being low, judging from the tales of witchcraft he remembered, and the treatment of two poor sisters, resident there, who were suspected of that "yet too widely imagined crime". The two women, and their cat were "certainly the terror of the neighbourhood" and they, though aged, subsisted by means of parochial aid, and begging from their neighbours "who were afraid to refuse them anything". These neighbours avenged themselves by refusing the sisters proper burial; neither had even a coffin. Winterbotham saw one of these "victims of folly" dragged on a cart, followed by a noisy rabble, and buried in a piece of boggy ground outside the town, with no ceremony.

If true, this is a very late date for a case of witchcraft, and I have been unable to trace any other instance of alleged witchcraft in this area. The nearest parallel I have found is a case in which information was laid before a magistrate in December 1736, that the wife of a shopkeeper in Thornbury had accused one Mary Hudd of bewitching her, had threatened Hudd with revenge and had cursed, assaulted and had wounded her left arm. Hudd lost some 7 or 9 shillings during the assault.²

Michael Greet

1 G.R.O. D.729. Winterbotham was born in 1763, and left Cheltenham shortly after his tenth birthday.

2 G.R.O. Photocopy 445.



A scottish visitor to Cheltenham

In 1800 Elizabeth Margaret Brodie travelled from Drummore, near Edinburgh, to Cheltenham "to meet Mr. B." She was "attended by a maid and a man serv^t", and kept a little leather bound pocketbook, consisting of alternate sheets of plain white paper and blotting paper, in which she wrote in black ink. She titled her pocketbook "Diary of Journey to Cheltenham, 1800".

Mrs. Brodie's account is brief, but is of interest for her views on accommodation and the Season in Cheltenham and for her picturesque views of nature.

The diary begins on May 7th 1800 and peters out at Chepstow, where the author died in August 1800. The pocketbook is now in the archives of Brodie at Brodie Castle, and this extract, covering only that part relating to Cheltenham and its environs, is quoted with the generous permission of the twenty-fifth laird. There have been Brodies at Brodie for over 800 years and no one but Brodies ever appear to have lived there. This unpublished diary is printed here in the hope that it may interest others, and as part of the rich history of a particularly fascinating family.

Mrs. Brodie's route was as follows: Haddington (16 miles), Dunbar (11 miles), Dress Inn (15³/₄ miles), Berwick (12 miles), Belford (15³/₄ miles) where the first night was spent; Alnwick (15 miles), Morpeth (19 miles), Newcastle (15 miles), Durham (15 miles) where the second night was spent; Bushyford (9 miles), Darlington (9 miles), Northallerton (16 miles), Boroughbridge (19 miles), Wetherby (12 miles), Ferrybridge (16 miles) where the third night was spent; Doncaster (15 miles), Worksop (16 miles), Mansfield (14 miles), Nottingham (14 miles), Derby (16 miles) where the fourth night was spent; Burton (11 miles), Lichfield (13 miles), Birmingham (16 miles), Bromsgrove (13 miles), Worcester (13 Miles), Tewkesbury (15 miles), and Cheltenham (10 miles).(1). She arrived "at the Plough Inn - found Burke & / the Saddle Horses frm Londn there - / I had had a pleasant and speedy journey - / too speedy - to admitt of my making / any remarks - worth-noteing ... " (2)

f.2r) On the 12 May - at 10. at night I / reached Cheltenham - and next / Morning - at seven - Sir Hector M - / attended me - in search - of private / lodgings, which we were fortunate / in finding at 25 High Street - (3) / a clean - new fitted up House - containing / two Parlours - a Drawing room - 3 - / good Bed-chambers - Garretts - &c / accomodations for servt and below / an excellent - kitchen. I also engaged / the Woman - who - had charge of the / House - to act - as Cook - & Housemaid - / We paid 3 guineas & a half per week - / for the House - and the use of Bed & Table Linen - Crockery-ware - Knives / Spoons &c - all good of their sort - on the 13th Mr B & my Bro^r Charles / arrived and we spent a Month / together very pleasantly - The Gentlen /

f.2v) drank the Waters - I mett a few old / acquaintance - and - school-fellows - / and was particularly fortunate in / renewing an Intimacy commenced at / Queens [?] - with Lady [?] Lowther - /

The Season - for company resorting / to Cheltenham - was not begun - but / there were more than ever was / known - so Early - and on the Birth / day the 4th June (4) - Balls & Plays - / begun for the Season - and the / Town was Gay - as many Families / go there for amusement - as much / as for Health. The Walks - and Rides / are beautiful - and the country fine / near Winchcombe - 7 miles - we rode / to see Sudley Castle - the property / of Lord Rivers - an old House - but / some part of it - inhabited -

f.3r) in the garden is the remains / of a Gothic Chapel - the most / picturesque on a small scale / that can be imagined - the Ruins / overhung - and quite covered with / Ivy - a little corner of the Chapel / is still roofed - and used for divine / service - the neatness of the Garden / and Beds of Gaudy Tulips & other / flowers - seemed quite incongruous / and ill suited to the venerable Ruins / they surrounded - after seeing / Sudley Castle we went to its Lodge / now a neat Farm House - where / Mrs Cox - the present Tenant - has / a Dairy - reckoned among the Best / in Gloucester-shire ... (5)

f.3v) about a mile / from Cheltenham on the same / road is the pretty villa of / Prestbury - a grotto - & a variety of little embellishments - Birdlip / Dowdswell - Charlton Kings - & Mr Hunt's villa - all furnish very / charming Walks - & Rides - & / Bay's Hill - just above the Wells /

f.4r) is a seat of Lord Fauconberg's where / His Majesty and the Royal Family / resided - when at Cheltenham - / for the Benefit of the Waters - / we left this agreeable place on the 9th of June, and proceeded / to Gloucester - nine miles - thro' a / highly cultivated country - a / Church on the Top of an Eminence / among wood - Strikes the Eye - is it / called Chosen Hill - & is indeed a / happy choice - commanding an / extensive and delightful view - ...

From Gloucester Mrs Brodie and her party travelled to Upton, Malvern and the hills, Ledbury, Ross (-on-Wye), Monmouth and the River Wye, and Abergavenny, where she spent almost three weeks, leaving on July 4th for Chepstow.

Most of the diary speaks for itself. Mrs. Brodie married Alexander Brodie of Arnhall and the Burn, Kincardineshire in 1793 but, sadly, little else is known about her. Mr. Burke is a mystery figure, as is Mr. Hunt with his villa at Charlton Kings. There is little information on the personalities of Cheltenham life here, but the descriptions of some of their surroundings must excite one's attention.

George Breeze

- (1) Folio 1r & 1v.
- (2) Folio 1v.
- (3) No longer extant.
- (4) Birthday of King George III, who had, of course, made the Spa famous.
- (5) The next part is about cheese and milk and Mrs Cox being a friend of Mrs Brodie's maid.



The building of the Montpellier shops: an outline chronology

One result of the increasing prosperity of Cheltenham during the first half of the 19th Century was the growth in its retail premises, not only in the traditional High Street area, but also in a number of new locations, notably the Imperial Promenade and Montpellier. By 1845, George Rowe was able to write in his Illustrated Cheltenham Guide that "nearly the whole of the left hand side of the Promenade is devoted to professional or business establishments. The handsome shops in Montpellier Avenue and those recently erected at the top of the Old Well Walk are evidences of the encroachment of trade in this direction". (1) This article aims to establish an outline chronology for the building of the Montpellier shops

referred to by Rowe, in the streets now known as Montpellier Avenue, Montpellier Street and Montpellier Walk. Although a number of the actual businesses which occupied them are mentioned, this article is not primarily concerned with that aspect of Montpellier's history.

The earliest building at Montpellier was undoubtedly the Pump Room itself, opened as a wooden structure in 1809 and rebuilt in its present form in 1817-26. By 1812, a small, possibly brick, building with an open semi-circular colonnade of columns had been built to the south of the Pump Room; its exact function is unclear, but it may simply have been an elaborate shelter. (2) In 1816-17, it was replaced by Mawe and Tatlow's Museum, at which specimens (mainly geological) were sold as well as exhibited. The Museum survived until July 1843, when it was demolished to make way for the Montpellier Exchange, a block of 3 shops, now occupied as the Midland Bank. (3) The only other buildings at Montpellier to pre-date the 1830s - apart, that is, from the residential developments in the Montpellier 'walks and rides' - were those immediately adjoining the Pump Room on its north and south sides. On the north, and having direct access to the Pump Room via its conservatory, was a building that was occupied between c. 1830 and 1848 as Henry Davies' Montpellier Library. (4) On the south were Ormond Villas (now 2-8 Montpellier Street), including, next to the Pump Room, the premises occupied by an optician named Jacob Abraham by 1828 at the latest. Exactly when these properties were built is uncertain, although they were probably contemporary with the alterations made to the Pump Room by J.B. Papworth in 1825-6. (5)

The impetus behind the first stage in the concerted development of the Montpellier shops was undoubtedly the acquisition, in 1830-1, of both the Montpellier and Imperial Spas by the architects Robert and Charles Jearrad, who were described as "gentlemen of great opulence and well known in the metropolis", (6) and who later developed much of Lansdown and designed Christ Church and the Queen's Hotel. According to the Cheltenham Chronicle in March 1831, a part of their plan was to continue "the grand carriage road and walks from the High Street" (i.e. the Promenade) to the Montpellier rides. (7) By September 1831, that had clearly been done and the building of the shops in Montpellier Avenue had begun. On September 26th 1831, the Cheltenham Journal noted "the erection of two rows of very elegant edifices, which, since the junction of the Imperial Spa Promenade with the Montpellier property, the Messrs. Jearrads have constructed in admirable style. The new buildings commence at the western extremity of the Imperial Spa, forming a street which opens into the Montpellier Promenade and will be let out as bazaars". These were undoubtedly the shops now forming 1-6 Montpellier Avenue (between the Queen's Hotel and Montpellier Spa Road) and the Montpellier Arcade.

Exactly when the shops in Montpellier Avenue were completed is uncertain, although sometime during 1832 is the most likely date. (8) At least a part of the Arcade was completed and tenanted by March 1832, when 12 of its shops (9 of them occupied) were insured against fire with the Royal Exchange Assurance Company for £5000, (9) while on September 7th 1832, the Jearrads - who clearly built as well as designed the shops - received a building certificate from the Town Surveyor for 9 "messuages or shops" on the west side of Montpellier Avenue. (10) In all, the new development appears to have totalled 22 shops, 16 of them in the Arcade. In 1845, George Rowe noted that the Arcade "although not extensive, yet presents a pleasing coup d'oeil from the upper entrance. It is furnished with shops and lighted by a glazed roof". (11)



Engraved by J. Rowe

Printed by G. and J. Street.

MONTPELLIER REPOSITORY.

(John Nottingham)
Inventor & Teacher of Several Styles of Painting

A trade advertisement for John Nottingham's Montpelier (sic) Repository, showing the Arcade and the entrance to the Montpellier Promenade from Old Well Lane, c.1834. Reproduced by courtesy of Mr. David Bannister.

The second stage in the building of the Montpellier shops was the construction of the earliest premises in what was to become the celebrated 'Montpellier Walk', on the site of the tree-lined promenade leading from the Old Well and Imperial Spa to Montpellier. Unfortunately, this most unusual feature of Cheltenham's architecture, with its succession of 'caryatids' is also one of its least well-documented in terms of contemporary references, and it is difficult to be precise about its dates. Although the date '1836' is carved at the southern end of the Walk, on the shop adjoining the former Montpellier Library, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the buildings - apart perhaps from the one on which the date is carved - are that early. On the contrary, Griffiths' 1838 map of the town fails to show any buildings north of the Library, while the earliest definite reference to shops in the Walk does not occur until March 1841, when the *Cheltenham Looker-On* noted "two additional shops now in course of erection on the Walk or Grand Promenade at Montpellier". (12) It was perhaps to these shops that Rowe was referring when he wrote in 1845 that "adjoining the Pump Room, and continuing a little way down are some shops devoted to the sale of fancy articles", (13) a comment which would,

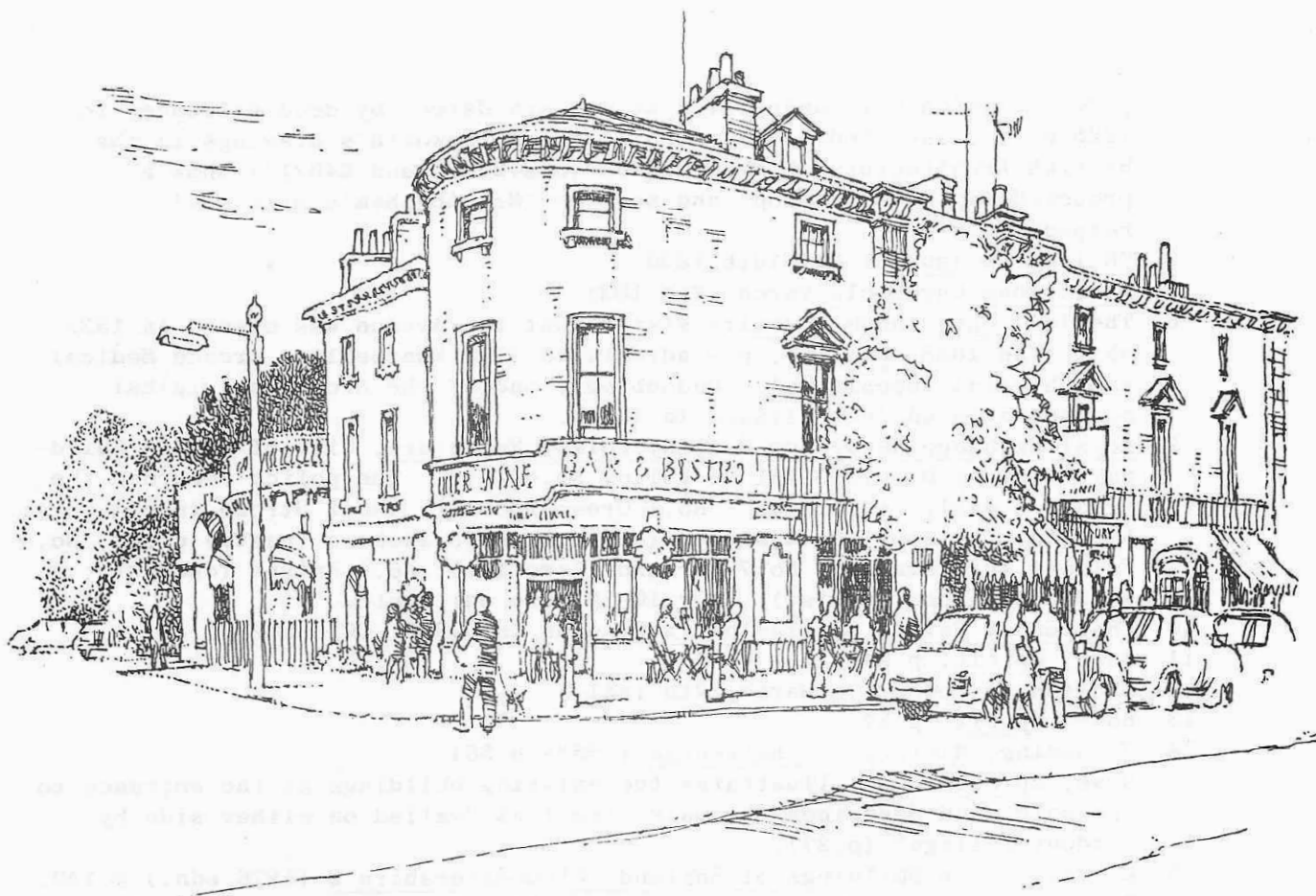
in fact, suggest that very few of the shops had been built by that date. What had been built, however, was the superb northern end of the Walk, opposite the Arcade, which formed a covered entrance to the tree-lined walk. It may have been to these shops that John Goding was referring in 1863 when he stated that "new shops at the entrance to the Montpellier Walk" were opened for business in August 1843. (14) According to the late David Verey, the shops were designed by a local architect, W.H. Knight, and the 'caryatids' were made of terracotta by a sculptor named Rossi; those on the later shops were carved from stone by W.G. Brown of Tivoli Street. (15)

The actual completion of the shops in Montpellier Walk may well have formed a part of the third and final stage in the building of the Montpellier shops, which began early in 1844 and which saw considerable building activity on both sides of Old Well Lane, which was widened and re-named Montpellier Street. (16) On December 13th 1843, the Cheltenham Examiner stated that "we understand that it is in contemplation to build a range of handsome shops in Old Well Lane on the site of Grove House and Garden. Several influential tradesmen have signified their intention of purchasing plots of ground for this purpose Plans and elevations have been prepared by Messrs. Daukes and Hamilton of Gloucester". (17)

The intended buildings referred to were a block of 19 shops forming Rotunda Terrace, on the west side of Montpellier Street, a part of the Bays Hill Estate, which had been developed for Building from 1837 onwards. By the end of February 1844, the trees in the southernmost part of the Well Walk had been felled and the 18th Century Grove House (also known as Grove Cottage) had been demolished (18), and by the end of May, work on the shops had begun. (19) In the meantime, the Cheltenham Looker-On announced on May 18th 1844 that it was "in contemplation to erect a row of good substantial shops, in continuation of those already built adjoining the back of the Montpellier Library", and on June 10th 1844, the Cheltenham Journal announced that "both sides of the turnpike road, in the neighbourhood of the Rotunda, resound daily to the hammer of the mason, the trowel of the bricklayer and the chisel of the carpenter; two lines of handsome shops are to be the result of their joint labours". Rotunda Terrace and Montpellier Walk are clearly the shops in question and it is therefore no surprise that the two frontages facing Montpellier Street are identical, even though the east and west sides of the shops in Montpellier Walk were thereby rendered very different in style.

The initial builder of the shops in Rotunda Terrace was a local builder and glass merchant named William Swain, who purchased the site of the entire terrace (totalling 376 foot of frontage) from the Bays Hill Estate Company by 4 separate conveyances between July 25th 1844 and February 12th 1846. (20) However, exactly when the shops were completed is uncertain; in each of the conveyances, the plots were described as occupied by 'unfinished houses' and although Swain agreed in each case to complete them within 4 months, it is clear that only Nos. 1-5 were completed by Swain before he went bankrupt on March 25th 1847. (21) The entire terrace had, however, been completed by the time of the 1851 census, although the names of the builders who acquired and completed Swain's unfinished houses have not been identified.

On the eastern side of Montpellier Street, the completion of the shops in Montpellier Walk probably continued throughout the second half of the 1840s, while to the north of the Rotunda, further alterations and additions were



Rotunda Terrace

made to Ormond Villas by Pearson Thompson. According to the available deed evidence, Thompson built "divers new messuages, tenements or dwelling houses and other erections and buildings" there in 1845-8. (22) It is likely that these included the large bow-fronted building at the southern end of Ormond Villas which clearly echoed the style of Rotunda Terrace, and also the early Victorian shop fronts on the Montpellier Street facades of the earlier houses in Ormond Villas.

Steven Blake

1. G. Rowe, Illustrated Cheltenham Guide (1845), p.11
2. The building is shown in Thomas Hulley's aquatint of Montpellier Pump Room, published in 1813 from drawings made by the artist in 1812.
3. For the Museum, see Cheltenham Guide Books 1818-43, especially H. Davies, Stranger's Guide to Cheltenham (1834) p.166, in which the Museum is illustrated. Also Cheltenham Looker-On May 6th 1843 et seq.
4. A. Varley, A History of Libraries in Cheltenham from 1780-1900 (unpublished thesis 1968, in Cheltenham Local Studies Collection).
5. Ticehurst, Wyatt & Co. Copy Deed Book Vol.4 p.429 (G.R.O. D2025) records the lease of 1-2 Ormond Villas to Abraham on June 14th 1828. The property ran 60 feet southwards from the Pump Room and was bordered on the south by a 'plantation'. This corresponds to the present 5-8 Montpellier Street; on map and architectural evidence, 2-4 Montpellier Street are near contemporary. See also A. Chatwin, Cheltenham's Ornamental Ironwork (1975)

p.30, in which 6-7 Montpellier Street are dated, by deed evidence, to 1825-6, and ascribed to Papworth. Two of Papworth's drawings in the British Architectural Library /RIBA (nos.248/1 and 248/15) show a proposed 'optician's shop' and mention 'Mr. Abraham's premises' respectively.

6. Cheltenham Journal May 10th 1830.
7. Cheltenham Chronicle March 17th 1831.
8. The 1837 Cheltenham Annuaire states that the Avenue was opened in 1832, while the 1838 Annuaire, p.9 advertised 'The Montpellier Arcade Medical and Chemical Repository' - undoubtedly one of the Arcade's original businesses - as 'established in 1832'.
9. Royal Exchange Assurance Company Policy Registers, City of London Guildhall Library Mss.7253 Vol.95 Policy No.403750. The policy recorded the Arcade's early tenants as - No.1 Green (mercier); No.2 Stroud (shoemaker); No.3 May (tailor); No.4 Davies (cutler); No.5 Jackson (pastry cook); No.6 Elliott (dressmaker); No.7 Barnard (jeweller); No.8 Knight (chemist); No.9 Nottingham (artist). Nos.10-12 were untenanted.
10. Cheltenham Paving Commissioners Records in G.R.O. (CBR Box 7).
11. Rowe, op.cit. p.24.
12. Cheltenham Looker-On March 27th 1841.
13. Rowe, op.cit. p.27
14. J. Goding, History of Cheltenham (1863) p.561.
Rowe, op.cit. p.26 illustrates the existing buildings at the entrance to the walk, and describes the walk itself as "walled on either side by verdent foliage" (p.27).
15. D. Verey, The Buildings of England: Gloucestershire 2 (1976 edn.) p.140.
16. The conveyance of the site of 1 Montpellier Street on July 28th 1844 describes the plot as bounded to the south-east by "a street heretofore known as Old Well Lane, which is or will be enlarged by the additional carriage road and foot pavement to be thrown in thereto and which is henceforth intended to be known as Montpellier Street (Cheltenham Manor Court Book Vol.16 p.132 G.R.O. D.855).
17. 'Daukes and Hamilton' were the architectural partnership formed by Samuel Whitfield Daukes and James Hamilton. Daukes designed several important Cheltenham buildings, including St.Paul's College and St. Peter's Church.
18. Cheltenham Examiner February 28th 1844.
19. Cheltenham Journal May 27th 1844.
20. The conveyances are recorded in Cheltenham Manor Court Book Vol.16 p.132 (July 25th 1844 re 1 Montpellier Street); p.249 (November 11th 1844 re 2-4 Montpellier Street); p.490 (June 21st 1845 re 5-11 Montpellier Street); Vol.17 p.246 (February 19th 1846 re 12-19 Montpellier Street). G.R.O. D.855. Unfortunately, the purchase prices are not recorded.
21. In January 1847, Swain had offered for sale "several dwelling houses in Montpellier Street, late Old Well Lane", including the bow-fronted 1 Montpellier Street, which was described as "admirably situated for a boarding house or small hotel" (Cheltenham Examiner January 6th 1847). Following Swain's bankruptcy, the sale of his property was announced in the Cheltenham Examiner on June 23rd 1847, including "all those desirable and newly built stone fronted dwelling houses and premises, 2-7 Montpellier Street". No.2 was occupied by William Salisbury (dairyman); No.3 by Mr. Hooke (saddler) and No.5 by Mr. Gee (tailor). No.4 had, until recently, been occupied by Swain himself, while Nos.6-7 were unfinished. It is most unlikely that any of the other houses in the terrace were completed by 1847.
22. Title Deed evidence contained in the deeds of 6-7 Montpellier Street, seen by courtesy of Amina Chatwin.

A Radical Interlude: Cheltenham in the "Hungry '40s"

The economic depression of the 1840's came as a profound shock to a society which, during the early years of the 19th century, had become familiar with domestic economic growth and diplomatic and military success abroad. Towns such as Cheltenham, which lacked a strong manufacturing base, did not face the degree of hardship so graphically portrayed by Dickens in his description of "Coketown", the fictional Northern industrial centre. Even so, the problem of unemployment in Cheltenham was sufficiently great to prompt the local churchwardens to call a public meeting in January 1843 to consider the most appropriate method of providing temporary employment for the town's poor. Several schemes were considered, including the construction of almshouses and the cultivation of smallholdings on Aggs Hill. The plan finally adopted involved the repair and cleansing of the streets and pavements in Cheltenham's centre. However, as the Cheltenham Free Press shrewdly noted, these were jobs which would have been done in the summer months by workmen paid between 8 and 12 shillings a week. Instead they were completed for only 4/6d, thereby helping local ratepayers at least as much as the unemployed (1).

The most obvious physical evidence of the depression was provided by the unfinished terraces of houses on the prestigious developments at Lansdown and Pittville. Builders who had planned large projects in favourable years of high demand and easy credit were faced instead by an acute shortage of capital and a collapse in the housing market. Not so apparent, but nevertheless a significant consequence of the slump, was the wide-ranging interest shown by some sections of Cheltenham's working class in various radical and utopian schemes designed to further their interests. Cheltenham had a strong radical tradition, but after the failure of their candidate in the parliamentary election of 1841, some of this group turned away from orthodox politics. Many supported the Chartist movement, which fed on the widespread dissatisfaction with the short-comings of the 1832 Reform Act, while a smaller number actively pursued the search for a new and better way of life, and firmly rejected the dominant economic and social systems of Victorian Britain (2).

In the early 1840's, Samuel Harper, the editor of the Cheltenham Free Press, introduced his readers to a range of alternative modes of social and economic organisation. Some of these were undoubtedly obscure, both in their impact on Cheltenham and in the phraseology of their proposals. One such group was the Universal Communitarian Association formed by Goodwin Barmby in 1841, in which Henry Fry of Northfield Terrace, Cheltenham, played a leading role. Fry was both the organiser of the Association's Midland section and the editor of its journal, The Educational Circular and Communist Apostle. Barmby called



Northfield Terrace

for the formation of a communitorium or "social house for the free exponency of the loveful, the intelligent and the beautiful" (3). The Free Press was a major outlet for Barmby's cryptic metaphysical ramblings and contained a weekly series of his articles in the spring of 1842.

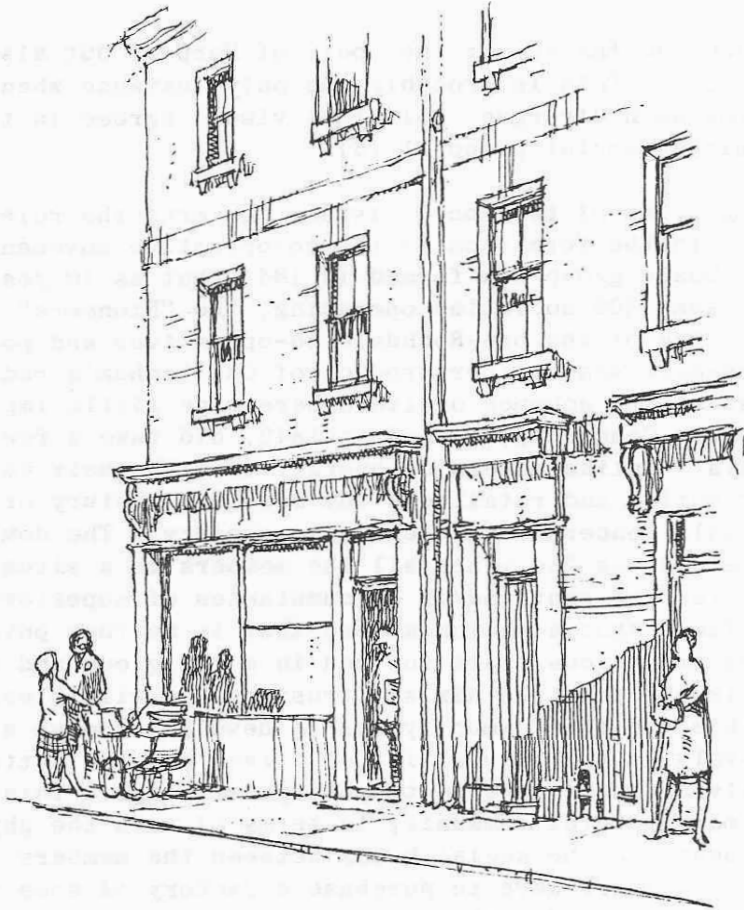
Utopian communities attracted a great deal of attention in Cheltenham and Robert Owen's schemes in particular were a major topic of discussion, including for example, a debate staged over three successive evenings in 1842 on the theme of "Socialism". Among the protagonists was Alexander Campbell, one of the original members of the Orbiston Community, the first major British communal experiment aimed at reducing the burdens of working class life through the creation of a new economic system. It was in Cheltenham that Campbell first met James Pierrepont Greaves, known as "the sacred Socialist", a follower of Pestalozzi and the creator of an early experimental community at Randwick near Stroud in 1832 (4).

Later in 1842 Harper gave space to J. M. Morgan's plan for a self-supporting agricultural community of 300 families. This scheme envisaged strong links with the Church of England with the object of raising "the moral and religious character of the people". Overall, Morgan's plan involved a degree of paternalistic middle-class control as "clergymen, directors and a committee of management will act as the Christian advisors and friends of the families in all that regards their eternal and temporal interests" (5).

Morgan's system received the support not only of Harper, but also of the Reverend Francis Close. This is probably the only instance when the two individuals, holding such divergent political views, agreed in their attitude towards any economic or social proposal (6).

One of the enduring myths of text book history concerns the role of the "Rochdale Pioneers" in the formation of the co-operative movement of England and Wales. The Rochdale group was formed in 1844, but as 10 years earlier there were already some 400 societies operating, the "Pioneers" were clearly not the first (7). One of the pre-Rochdale co-operatives and possibly the first in Gloucestershire was another product of Cheltenham's radical interlude and while most of the schemes outlined here made little impression, the Christian Co-operative Community, formed in 1842, did take a few tentative steps towards Utopia. Unlike modern co-operatives with their emphasis on wholesaling, distribution and retailing, the mid-19th century organisations had much broader goals concerned with changing society. The dominant aim of the Community therefore was "to place all the members in a situation of comfort, above the fear of want and in circumstances of superior moral atmosphere. We believe that a medium state, that is neither poverty nor riches, is the most propitious state for man in a religious and moral point of view, and this is the point we aim at, trusting God will bless our efforts" (8). To achieve this end the Community was to develop through a series of stages, firstly involving the acquisition of a farm and the settlement of each member's family on the estate in temporary dwellings. This would then lead to a more permanent rural community in terms of both the physical structure of the settlement and the social bonds between the members. Meanwhile, in Cheltenham, other members were to purchase a factory of some type so as to provide winter employment for the Community, when work on the land was impossible (9). The plan therefore had a close affinity with the contemporary Owenite Movement, which advocated the formation of self-supporting rural groups. There was, however, one major difference, as the formative meeting of the Cheltenham co-operative stressed the place of Christian faith in the guiding philosophy of the Community. Thus Edwin Wilkes, a Cheltenham schoolmaster and an active supporter, noted that "he believed Mr. Owen to be a benevolent man, but to be in error on theological points and that he had grafted these errors on his system and he (Wilkes) could not join with him. (10). The clear intention of the Cheltenham group was to distance itself from society as a whole and to develop an independent and self-perpetuating commune. The rules, therefore, included the following injunctions: "among members no appeal is to be made to the civil law of the nation all children of the society shall, from their birth, be under the especial care and protection of the society, but their parents shall have free access to them at all times the land, the buildings, machinery, goods, chattels and other effects, shall be the property of the Community" (11).

To supply the capital necessary to finance the venture a membership of between 100 and 400 families, each paying a subscription of 2 shillings a week, was needed. However, the community only managed to gain the support of about 40 individuals. Consequently its achievements fell far short of the initial aims. The co-operative managed an "emporium" at 69 St. George's Place, (later renumbered 3, and recently demolished) where quarterly meetings were held, which in accordance with the rulebook's prohibition on "intoxicating drinks" were described as "tea meetings". In a report of one such assembly held in April 1843 the number of members was said to be "increasing" (12). However, by 1844 the St. George's Place building was occupied by Cornelius Reilly, a tailor, and there were no further reports of the Community's activities in the Free Press (13).



69 St. George's Place

The wave of interest shown in community based schemes for working-class self-improvement produced little in the way of concrete results, and after 1844 it was steadily eclipsed by support for the People's Charter. However, Cheltenham radicals did not lose sight of the back-to-the-land ideal and in 1846 a branch of the Chartist Land Company was formed in the town, while the Company's acquisition and management of the nearby estates at Snig's End and Lowlands were a source of interest and gossip (14). However, this concern faded in the late 1840's when disappointment with the Company's performance began to spread, and Radicals and Liberals turned to Cheltenham's first Building Societies as a means of securing political power and economic improvement.

This sketch of Cheltenham in the 1840's represents an alternative to the conventional view of the spa town. The extent of local working-class political activity reflected not only the widespread interest in alternative forms of social organisation at a time of intense economic depression which sharply demonstrated the weaknesses of Victorian capitalism, but also Cheltenham's long-standing radicalism and such local 'causes célèbres' as the Holyoake blasphemy trial. Ironically the spa function may also have contributed to the vibrancy of the radical interlude by exposing the town to a panoply of views and opinions which by-passed more isolated centres.

Robert Homan

1. Cheltenham Free Press, January 21st and January 28th 1843.
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5. Cheltenham Free Press, September 10th 1842.
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11. Rules ..., op.cit.
12. Cheltenham Free Press, April 8th 1843.
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The Mechanics' Institute and Radical politics in Cheltenham Spa 1834-40

The cultural life associated with Spa finery and fashion in the early 19th century was impressive. For its wealthy residents, motivated by a quest for knowledge of all kinds and by participation in the 'social scene', Cheltenham had become well-endowed with what contemporaries termed 'lounge libraries' (1). Lee's Royal Library in the High Street, for example, the parent of Cheltenham libraries, had an extensive assortment of books, newspapers, periodicals and a large reading room. In the Promenade there was to be found the influential Imperial Library which specialised in works of 'a theological and sterling character'. The 'Lit. and Phil.' was re-opened by Lord Segrave and Dr. Boisragon in 1833 for the cultivation of literature and science in an imposing establishment on the Promenade. It possessed a library, reading room and held weekly lectures through the season (2). Equally important in the range of material they offered were Wight's Theological Library in the Promenade and Williams' Library adjoining the Assembly Rooms (3). In all these buildings, of course, no unprivileged footsteps were suffered to intrude.

The opening, however, in the autumn of 1834 of a Mechanics' Institute in the old Presbyterian Chapel in Albion Street (near its intersection with Pittville Street) by a group of enlightened tradesmen was welcomed, at least in one

quarter, as "highly desirable" and Spa operatives were urged to join (4). Yet like so many other Mechanics' Institutes in the country, which aimed at "diffusing knowledge amongst the trading and mechanical portions of the country" (5), the one in Cheltenham was founded under middle class patronage (6). The Institute was opened by E. G. Wells (a chemist and progressive Liberal), Samuel Onley jnr. (a builder and progressive Liberal), Captain Morrison (R.N. Retired), the Rev. Frank Barton (Unitarian) and George Rowe (a printer and staunch Liberal) (7). The only artisan on the founding committee was William Hollis, a gunsmith by trade and a radical in his politics.

Apart from evening lectures on subjects that ranged from Geology and Animal Physiology to Infant Education, the new committee tried to provide a focus where all classes could obtain, at a cheap rate, the news and public information of the day (8). As early as December 1834, however, an indication of entirely new departures and the tensions thereby created within the Institute appeared in an anonymous letter to the Cheltenham Free Press. The writer objected to the way in which

political and theological subjects were expressly prohibited but advantages were being taken by some person of the general term "scientific" to institute a series of political readings called Radicalism.

As a consequence it had already caused the membership to decrease from nearly 200 to less than 100. 'Unfortunately', the anonymous writer concluded,

the Mechanics' Institute was degenerating into a political club and he would strongly recommend a return to literary pursuits (9).

It is not difficult to escape the conclusion that the reference was aimed at one man - William Penn Gaskell, by now the standard bearer of a working class radicalism that had shattered Cheltenham's political calm (10). Within a month of the allegation in the Free Press, it was Gaskell himself who responded with a lengthy column in the same paper on precisely the kind of political emancipation afforded to the Spa's working classes by attending the Mechanics' Institute. In his letter Gaskell urged 'not just mechanics to become members' but appealed to 'other males and females' to join. The letter continues in an imperative mood:

the diffusion of knowledge, in particular political knowledge amongst you, is an absolute necessity since any grounds of excluding you from political power on the score of ignorance may be removed.

Despite this plea to the working community, the cost of 3/- each per quarter was surely prohibitive to all but the highly paid artisan. Even Gaskell had to admit, at the end of his letter, that, 'the union of your common funds is the only way by which you can obtain that expensive knowledge'. He concluded the letter however with his usual optimism:

While you are struggling for political emancipation, there seems no reason why you should not at once enjoy all the rational pleasures for which you may have a relish and which can be rendered accessible (11).

It is clear that Gaskell's aim was the diffusion of both political and more general knowledge for the 100 or so members that still attended the Mechanics' Institute. In his lectures he called for Universal Suffrage, the Secret Ballot and radical self-help through temperance and education.

This indeed was the pattern that emerged over the next three years. On the one hand we find evidence of a series of weekly lectures on General Science by local men of importance. Dr. Chichester, for example, gave a series of lectures on Chemistry and Natural History. Mr. George Rowe, who later wrote his Illustrated Cheltenham Guide, delivered practical lectures on Lithography by actually operating his printing presses in their midst (12). Mr. E. G. Wells' lectures on Combustion were everywhere in demand in the Spa, as was Lt. Morrison's on Haley's Comet (13). On the other hand, the record and quality of the political lectures was also quite impressive. In no small way was this Gaskell's achievement, doubtless assisted by the fact that in May 1835 he had become the Institute's Vice President. The Mechanics' Institute for him was the only means in the Spa whereby the working classes could achieve such political knowledge and moral power as would enable them to effect a radical change in the structure of society (14).

In the seminal period of the late 1830's, as working class discontent in Britain gathered momentum, Gaskell's lectures in Cheltenham begin to show encouraging results. During the winter of 1835-36, for example, William Hollis increasingly interspersed his lectures to the artisans at the Institute with remarks about their 'lowly position in society' and affirmed that 'they should no longer be treated as the inferior classes in society' (loud cheers) (15). By November 1837 Hollis had advanced even further and was lecturing now, along with John Goding, on 'Bread Riots', 'A History of the Working Class', 'Peterloo and the Betrayal of the Reform Bill'. In the same month as Goding and Hollis were becoming political activists Gaskell called for the formation of a local Working Men's Association (16).

Gaskell's sense of timing, which combined reports of London example with what he now significantly called 'the united democrats of Cheltenham Spa', brought almost immediate rewards. Within a month the potential for Chartism had been realised and a Spa branch of the W.M.A., the first in the county of Gloucester, was formed at 7 Chapel Street in mid-December 1837 (17). There can be little doubt that the perceptive Gaskell must have been aware of the new mood amongst the artisan audience in the Mechanics' Institute since many of the founder members had attended his lectures. Those who came together at the first W.M.A. meeting on December 12th 1837 included John Walter (first chairman), Dudley Ward Smith (bricklayer), A. Bannister, John Davis, Thomas Riorden, John Goding (grocer), J. William Spackman (tailor and first treasurer) and Thomas Down (secretary) (18).

From its dual role as a kind of social policeman and an agency of bourgeois propaganda (19), the Mechanics' Institute was steadily transformed into a Chartists' forum for intellectual and mutual instruction. By 1840, judging by the celebrations, this radical assault had been completed. In October of that year, when the laws of the Institute were formally amended, an euphoric William Hollis, amongst others, toasted the occasion, proclaiming that

despite all obstacles which party, class or sectarianism may throw in our way, the Mechanics' Institute had full scope, plenty of politics, unsectarian education, plenty of almost EVERYTHING. (20)

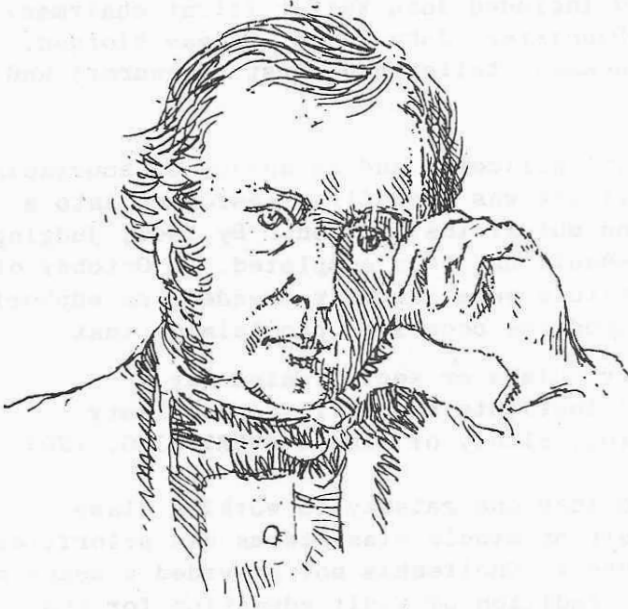
If the Sunday and evening school provided one gateway to working class education and self-improvement, albeit on middle class terms and priorities, the radically run Mechanics' Institute at Cheltenham now provided a means of preserving a completely independent tradition of adult education for the politically conscious artisan. Around this institution was formed an alternative radical culture which, in opposing those middle class values and philanthropy that taught the working people just as much as would suit their purposes, stressed the importance of working class dignity through mental self-

help and mutual instruction. Denied access to the exclusive Assembly Rooms and the 'Lit. and Phil', it was here that the Chartist shoemakers and blacksmiths, carpenters and plasterers took education into their own hands. They availed themselves of a whole new secular dimension in the educative process and acquired an appreciation of the value and power of knowledge both for its own sake and as an instrument for social and political transformation (21).

The radicalization of the Mechanics' Institute was a considerable achievement given the strength of middle class patronage in the Spa. The reasons for success probably lie with several inter-connected factors: firstly, the particular sentiments shared by the pioneers of the Institute; secondly, the energy and skill of William Penn Gaskell; and lastly a growing political consciousness amongst Cheltenham's working class after the 'Great Whig Betrayal of 1832' when they were refused the vote.

Composed of small shopkeepers, Nonconformist ministers and men in liberal professions or progressive in outlook (some were Unitarians), the Institute's committee not only encouraged lectures on "useful knowledge" and "the steam intellect" but were sufficiently open-minded enough to embrace men like William Penn Gaskell. Such a decision however proved to be a costly one since Gaskell, who could attract those large artisan audiences which others had lamentably failed to do, more or less hoodwinked the cautious but inexperienced committee by his political skill and confident manner. By a process of permeation Gaskell worked his way up to the position of Vice-President of the Institute's committee, won over Hollis and Goding, and together they initiated, with little opposition, a weekly programme of lectures that were openly political in scope and content. Henceforward the politically conscious recruits to Chartism found in the Institute a strong cultural complement to their campaign for the six points. If the battle for the mind had been won then in the struggle for the vote which followed, this victory plays a key role in helping to explain the strength and quality of Chartist resistance in Cheltenham Spa in the years down to 1848 and beyond.

Owen Ashton



George Rowe



John Goding

1. G. Hart, A History of Cheltenham, Leicester, 1965, p.191.
2. For further information on these Libraries, including some delightful lithographic sketches, see G. Rowe's Illustrated Cheltenham Guide, Cheltenham, 1845. Reprinted, Gloucester 1981 with Introduction by Dr. S. Blake, particularly pp.4-18.
3. G. Hart, op.cit., p.191.
4. Cheltenham Free Press, November 1st 1834. The Institute was formally constituted sometime in October although lectures had been given on an experimental basis for the previous six months. See also H. Davies, The Stranger's Guide Through Cheltenham, Cheltenham 2nd edition, 1834, pp.99-100 for the founding of the Mechanics' Institute.
5. H. Davies, The Stranger's Guide Through Cheltenham, op.cit., p.99. It also had a "no politics and religion" rule.
6. The statistical extent of middle class patronage is indicated by Dr. Edward Royle in 'Mechanics' Institutes and The Working Classes, 1840-60', The Historical Journal, XIV,2,1971, pp.305-321, in particular p.305. Dr. Royle points out that 'out of 204 Mechanics' Institutes in England and Wales in 1849, only 43 were mainly supported by operatives and Mechanics'.
7. For a useful profile of George Rowe, see Dr. S. Blake's Introduction to G. Rowe's Illustrated Cheltenham Guide, op.cit.
8. See Cheltenham Free Press December 12th 1840.
9. Ibid., December 20th 1834.
10. According to J. Goding's, Norman's History of Cheltenham, Cheltenham, 1863 p.366, Gaskell was, in the 1835 Cheltenham Election, 'the Radical candidate and a descendant of the family that founded Pennsylvania, U.S.A.'. The brief glimpses that have been unearthed of his early career before 1835 are a fascinating and rare combination of the life-style of a gentry figure with involvement in the antecedent activities of Chartism. He was born on the small family estate at Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire and in 1827 went up to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he first became interested in politics. He left University at the height of the Reform Crisis and went to London where he came into contact and was influenced by Rowland Detroisier, a working class leader, at a Mechanics' Institute in the city. By 1832 Gaskell had come to live in Cheltenham at 4, Bedford Buildings. The Berkeley following made much political capital out of his radical convictions but they failed to realise that he was no political adventurer. He was a member of Place's Radical Club, supported the Complete Suffrage movement of the 1840's and, as late as 1858, attended the last great Chartist Conference in London.
11. Cheltenham Free Press, February 14th 1835, Letter to the Mechanics' Institute from W. P. Gaskell.
12. Ibid., February 21st 1835.
13. Ibid., May 9th 1835.

14. Ibid., June 24th 1837.
15. Ibid., October 24th 1835.
16. Ibid., November 18th 1837.
17. Ibid., December 16th 1837.
18. John Goding was undoubtedly the leading figure amongst this group of early Chartist supporters. He was also a leading Unitarian and later became an influential figure in Spa Liberal politics. See also his Norman's History of Cheltenham, 1863, generally.
19. For the scepticism about the benefits obtained by working men from the Mechanics' Institutes, see H. Silver, English Education and the Radicals 1780-1850, London, 1975, pp.40-42.
20. Cheltenham Free Press, December 12th 1840. Meeting on December 1st in the Mechanics' Institute. Hollis said that 'the Mechanics' Institute was his pet hobby!'.
1840
21. In the pursuit of a working class inspired education at the Mechanics' Institute, the Chartists were vigorously opposed by the Rev. Francis Close. For a discussion of the Close v. Chartist battle, see O. R. Ashton 'Clerical Control and Radical Responses in Cheltenham Spa, 1838-1848', Midland History, Vol.VIII, 1983, pp.121-147.

