

# Cheltenham Local History Society Journal

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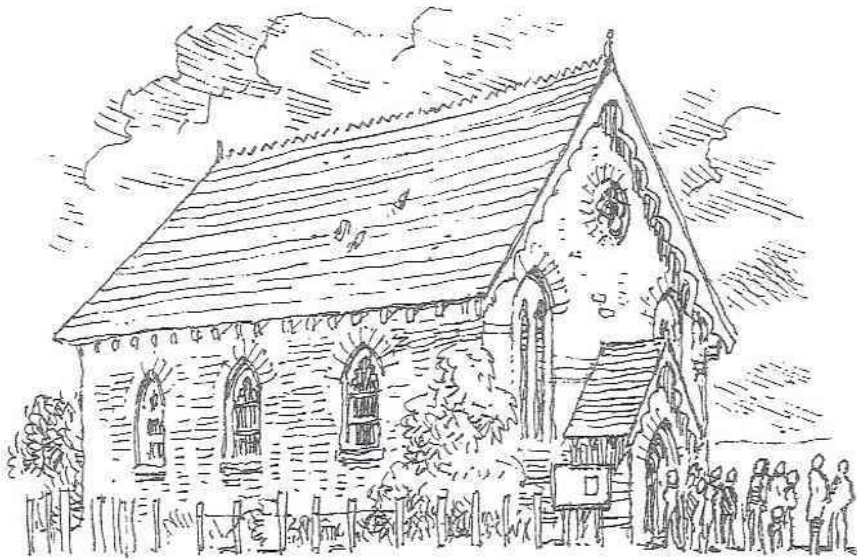
Cover Illustration : St Paul's Church, from an original drawing by Aylwin Sampson. The career of the church's architect, John Forbes, is discussed on pages 7 - 27.

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Artwork by Aylwin Sampson

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The brick-built Golden Valley Chapel, in Staverton parish, to the west of Cheltenham. Phyllis White gives an account of an earlier, Anglican chapel in the valley on pages 43-48.

# *The Fields and Field Names of the Hundred of Cheltenham. Part 2: The parish of Swindon*

## INTRODUCTION

The small parish of Swindon (c.721 acres) (1) lies in a typical Severn Vale landscape on heavy Lower Lias clay with occasional small pockets of gravel. The land rises very gently towards the Cotswold Scarp in the east, with two small undulations - one at Furzen Hill on the western boundary and another in Oat Furlong and Quoinams fields. Much of Swindon's boundary is formed by three streams which flow from east to west across the parish. In the south the Chelt is the boundary with Arle. Wymans Brook enters the parish at Farbridge, crosses it in a north-westerly direction, then swings north to form the western boundary and is called the Swilgate from this point until it reaches Tewkesbury. The northern boundary, from its junction with Prestbury, was formed by the Hyde Brook. The modern courses of both the Swilgate and Hyde Brook diverge slightly from the boundary line; in fact the boundary fossilises earlier courses of these streams. Another important alignment in the field system is the drainage ditch or brook in a slight valley which crosses the parish diagonally to the north-west on the southern side of the rising land in Quoinams and is bordered by a series of narrow meadows. To the south, between Wymans Brook and the Chelt lies an area with parallel, roughly north-south, boundaries which are in approximately the same alignment as field boundaries in Arle and have no relevance to nature features (2). The railway and, more recently, modern housing and industrial development have obscured much of the early topography.

The place-name Swindon means 'hill where swine are kept' (PNG) (3). This suggests that in early Saxon times much of the parish was wooded swine pasture, probably largely of oak. It can be suggested that this wooded area lay in the northern and western parts of the parish - accepting that the early boundary was substantially similar to that defined by Norden in 1617. The name Oakey Ground in the north-east angle of the parish boundary may represent the last surviving memory of the original oak wood. However Oakey/Okey is a common surname in the area and the name may come from ownership.

Domesday tells us that at the time of King Edward, the manor was of three hides and had two ploughs in lordship. It was probably part of the original endowment of St Oswald's, Gloucester and was held by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury. By 1086 Thomas, the influential Archbishop of York, held Swindon from the land of St Oswald's. The plough teams now numbered seven, the value had increased from £3 to £4 10s. and there were seven villagers, two smallholders and four slaves. This suggests a very large increase in the area of arable land under Norman exploitation, probably consequent upon the felling of woodland (4).

The village lies just to the north of Wymans Brook in the centre of the parish, around the nucleus of church and manor. A mill lay to the south of the village where Wymans Brook was dammed to form a mill pond. A second mill (originally called Priest's Mill and later Bedlam Mill) was situated on the Chelt and is the second boundary point in Norden's

survey (5). Like most other mills in the Cheltenham Hundred, it was strategically placed for trade near a tything and/or parish boundary. The history of this mill and the quarter virgate of land belonging to it can be traced in the Gloucester Borough Records (6). It was given, c.1250, by Simon and Arle, chaplain, to the hospital of St Sepulchre and Blessed Margaret the Virgin, Gloucester. At some time after the Reformation it passed to the Corporation of Gloucester to help maintain the charity hospital of St Margaret. At one time the rents must have been used to run an asylum for the insane; hence the name Bedlam still firmly attached to this area

The pattern of fields which comes down to us does little to reflect the earlier field system of the manor, although the parallel boundaries of enclosures in the north-east and south parts of the parish are suggestive of strip alignments. However, the description of the quarter virgate of land granted with the Priest's Mill in c.1250 is the one piece of evidence which throws some light on the early layout (7). Some of the names given can be located on the tithe map of 1839 (8). Several are near the Sandy Way (the old Gloucester road), other strips lie in Smallreve (in Rivelands), in the Dene (Dean field), in Stapelinge (Stapling), in Berwrpe (Barley enclosure (PNG), i.e. Barley Close) and in Barwebrug (Barbridge). The last field was in Arle (9) and it is likely that the same name was found on each side of the bridge. This field would have been just south of Sand Way where it entered the parish. Rufurlong (Rye furlong) was not necessarily near Rye Hedge. The distribution of these names suggests a two field rather than a three field system. Enclosure may already have begun by the mid 13th century at Berwrpe which lies between the Sand Way and the Chelt in a convenient position for enclosing. Piecemeal enclosure appears to have taken place over the centuries. There is little evidence as the manor court rolls cannot be traced and there was no inclosure act. A Corpus Christi plan of 1822 shows a part of Lot Mead (normally a common meadow) as a small close. A lease of 1783 mentions the Upper field (10) and it is likely that the final inclosures of the open field remnants took place between those two dates.

The field names on the sketch plan are based on the tithe apportionment map of 1839 and on other 19th-century plans for some small areas. Anyone wishing to find out more of the history of individual fields and farms in the parish is referred to the excellent notes made in the 1960s by Lt.-Col.R.M. Grazebrook for a history of Swindon and alas never published. These are deposited in the Gloucestershire Record Office (11) and I gratefully acknowledge the confirmation of my own research which I found there. Col. Grazebrook gives one reference to the Over (an alternative for Upper) field of Swindon. This is likely to be the north-east open field, the name Over meaning Upper, i.e. nearer the hills (12).

### THE FIELD NAMES

As it is not possible to reconstruct the original open fields and their furlongs from the 1839 tithe map, the field names have been divided into four classes: names indicating pasture; crop names and other agricultural practice; ownership names; and miscellaneous. Where the name could be in more than one category this is stated. Where the meaning is obvious no explanation is given. Enclosures with similar names have been amalgamated with the later enclosed subdivisions dotted in. These subdivisions often relate to the furlongs. Bold numbers in brackets ( ) locate small enclosures on the plan which is based on the 6 inch O.S. map of 1884. The railway and other post 1839 developments have been omitted.

The fields of Swindon parish



### 'Pasture' names

Much of the area, particularly by the streams, is more suitable as pasture, hence the frequent occurrence of 'ham' and mead/meadow names.

Mantle Meadow	The meaning is not clear. Possibly the derivation is from <u>(ge)mana</u> = community, i.e. land held in common ( <u>PNG</u> ).
Quoinams	The 'ams' is probably an abbreviation of 'hams'. Quoin could possibly mean a corner, but is not likely here. Earlier spellings including Quynam and Quineham.
Corn Mead Piece	Corn Mead is the field name to the north of the Hyde Brook in Brockhampton.
Bedlams Meadow Bedlam Green (10)	Part of the endowment of the St Margarets Hospital, i.e. asylum hospital (see above).
Runnings	Land where cattle are run for pasture, especially by a stream (here Wymans Brook) ( <u>PNG</u> ).
Stiles Meadow	Ownership name or entry by a stile.
Farbridge Meadow (9)	Near 'Farbridge' where Wymans Brook enters the parish.
Brook Meadow	Little Meadow (2)      Home Meadow
Mill Meadow	Long Meadow      Home Leaze
High Leaze	Little Ham      Lower Meadow
Little Broad Green	Upper Meadow

### Agricultural use names

Rye Hedge	This field lies on the north-west boundary. The 'hedge' element is indicative of an established boundary. 'Rufurlong', i.e. Rye Furlong occurs in the 1250 survey, but topographically is not likely to have been here.
Purgatory and Pilcatory	Purgatory is usually taken to refer to a field which is hard to work; however in this case the older spellings are Pilcatory and Pilcatters, the meaning of which is obscure. Perhaps it is derived from OE <u>pil-ate</u> 'pill-oats' ( <u>PNG</u> ) and is a crop-type name
Barley Close	Named in the 1250 grant (Berwrpe).
Hitchings	Part of field ploughed and sown while remainder lies fallow.
Ash Coppice (11) Small Withies	Both ash wood and willow products were important to the agricultural community.

Furzen Hill Furze, that is gorse, was used as tinder in early times and most manors had an area where it was not discouraged. A 1617 boundary point.

Wheatland Carthouse Orchard Shepherds Close

Oat Furlong Little Orchard Ploughed Piece

Peas Furlong Rough Ground

#### Ownership names

Bedwells Close Bed is derived from OE byde, 'vessel or tub' (PNG). However, it is also a common local surname and here ownership is more likely.

Morrice or Norris Hill Uncertain derivation. Possibly an ownership name. It is one of the boundary points in the 1617 survey.

Clarkes Lower Ground Hawkers Ground Chandlers Ground (1)

Flux Close (3) (The Fluck family)

Also possibly Oakey Ground (see above), Shepherds Close and Elmore Ground.

#### Miscellaneous names

Rack Close (12) Formerly Mill Platt. The place where cloth was hung on racks to dry. Bedlam Mill was a cloth mill by 1775 (Col. Grazebrook's notes).

Blake Butts (4) Land 'butting' up against other pieces. Blake, i.e. black often refers to the colour of the soil and could be indicative of ancient occupation.

The Bank A prominent headland?

Langett Long strip of land (survival of open field strip?)

The Horn (8) Little Horn (8a) Narrow, pointed piece of land.

Lower Dean, Green Dean Furlong names in Dean, i.e. valley field. Possibly the name of one of the open fields. In 1250 grant.

Crows Nest Land frequented by crows (EFN) but possibly refers to distance from the home farm.

Riveland Uncertain. Perhaps land belonging to the King's Reeve?

Kingsditch Named from the ditch dug, possibly in the Saxon period, to define the boundary between the King's manor of Cheltenham and the manor of Swindon. Part of the parallel alignments found in this part of the hundred.

The Hydes	This land was adjacent to, and probably part of the Bishop of Hereford's Prestbury estate. The usual explanation is that an area of a hide was involved. In all instances I have been able to trace in Gloucestershire the name is associated with an ecclesiastical or monastic estate.
Stapling	Boundary defined by Staples, i.e. posts. In 1250 grant (11).
Starve Acres	Unproductive land.
Swindon Ground	Land near the Bishops Cleeve boundary.
Swindon Field (6)	Land near the Cheltenham boundary.
Uckington Field Ground (5)	Land adjacent to Uckington.
Long Orchard	Formerly 'Badnum' Close (Grazebrook's notes). Perhaps a corruption of Bedlam?

#### Little Close (7)

#### Other Local Names

Quat Goose Lane	Quat may derive from OE <u>cwead</u> = mud. It occurs in the form Quatford in <u>Quedgeley (PNG)</u> . However, in association with goose it could come from 'quot' meaning sated or over-fed, here a specially fattened goose?
Sand (Sond) Way	This name is common for old roadways in the area. From the topography it is obvious that it does not always mean that the surface was sandy.

BARBARA RAWES

#### Notes:

1. Throughout this article the parish boundary considered is that in use before 1935 changes and does not include that part of Brockhampton, formerly part of Bishops Cleeve, which was then added to the parish, or the small 1949 modification.
2. See B. Rawes, 'The Hundred of Cheltenham and its boundaries', Chelt Loc Hist Soc J 2 (1984), 7-9.
3. Use has been made of the following publications for field and place name meanings: A.H. Smith, Place Names of Gloucestershire (1965) Parts 2 and 4 (abbreviated as PNG) and John Field, English Field Names, A Dictionary (1972), (abbreviated as EFN).
4. B. Rawes, 'Field Names of the Parish of Cheltenham', Chelt Loc Hist Soc J 6 (1988), 14.
5. B. Rawes, 'The Hundred of Cheltenham and its boundaries', Chelt Loc Hist Soc J 2 (1984), 1-9.
6. Records of Priest's/Bedlam Mill in G.R.O. GBR J1/1056, J1/474-5 etc.
7. A transcription of this document can be seen in TBGAS 67 (1946-7-8), 283-4.



8. Tithe map 1839, G.R.O. P324a SD2/1 and 2/2. Also consulted: G.R.O. D1637 E29 (1878); G.R.O. D2025/D5, Corpus Christi land in Cheltenham 1822; G.R.O. D177 VI/1, Wingmore estate.
9. G.R.O. D332/T46.
10. Ibid.
11. G.R.O. D3571. Lt.-Col. Grazebrook made his notes between about 1950 and 1964.
12. I wish to thank Mr. D. Smith, the County Archivist, for permission to quote the Gloucestershire Record Office (G.R.O.) documents mentioned above and the G.R.O. staff for the help they have given me.



## *The Unfortunate Mr Forbes: the rise and fall of a Cheltenham architect*

Without doubt, two of the finest buildings ever erected in Cheltenham are the Pittville Pump Room and St Paul's Church. These buildings have two things in common - firstly their Greek Revival style of architecture, and secondly the architect who designed them. That architect was John Forbes (Fig. 1), and this article is an attempt to reconstruct what is known of Forbes' life and work in Cheltenham, and in particular to unravel the events surrounding his arrest, trial and imprisonment in 1834-5, which appear to have cut short a promising architectural career.

According to Howard Colvin's Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, Forbes was 'presumably the John Forbes who was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools in 1815 at the age of 20' (1), and later evidence confirms his year of birth as sometime in the mid to late 1790s; in 1835 he was stated to have been 38 years old (2). The young Forbes appears to have worked in the office of the London architect David Laing, probably around 1817, for, some years later, on 9 January 1826, the architect Thomas Rickman wrote in his diary, 'I had with me today a young man named Forbes, an architect at Cheltenham, who was with Laing while the Custom House was building' (3).

Rickman's diary notes Forbes' address as North Street, Cheltenham, and already by that time he had been living in Cheltenham for at least five or six years. Gell and Bradshaw's 1820 Gloucestershire Directory (page 146) lists him as a land & building surveyor and architect at 120 High Street, while Pigott's 1822-3 London and Provincial Directory (page 47) lists him at 3 Colonnade, from where he subsequently moved first to North Street (as recorded by Rickman in 1826), and then, in July 1827, to 83 Winchcombe Street (also known as Belvidere House), at the corner of Warwick Place (4). It is however unclear whether these were his home or office addresses. For a time he worked in partnership with a land surveyor named George Hayward, a partnership that was dissolved on 27 January 1826 (5).

Forbes' earliest known architectural designs are three pen and ink drawings 'for altering the Montpellier Spa', two of which are signed by Forbes and dated January 1821 (Figs. 2 & 3). However, the alterations were never carried out, and the first actual commission that he is known to have undertaken in the town was some alterations to the interior of Holy Trinity Church; on 14 April 1825, the Cheltenham Chronicle noted that,

'a considerable improvement has been effected in the interior of the New Church, by the alteration of the pulpit, reading desk etc., which were originally set apart, on the opposite sides of the middle aisle, but which are now united in a very elegant structure, devised by Mr Forbes, in the Gothic style and placed centrally in front of the Communion Table'.

Forbes also appears to have made a design for some unspecified improvements to St Mary's, the parish church, for which he received £15 in September 1825 (6), and it was perhaps on the strength of these commissions that he managed to persuade the incumbent of the parish

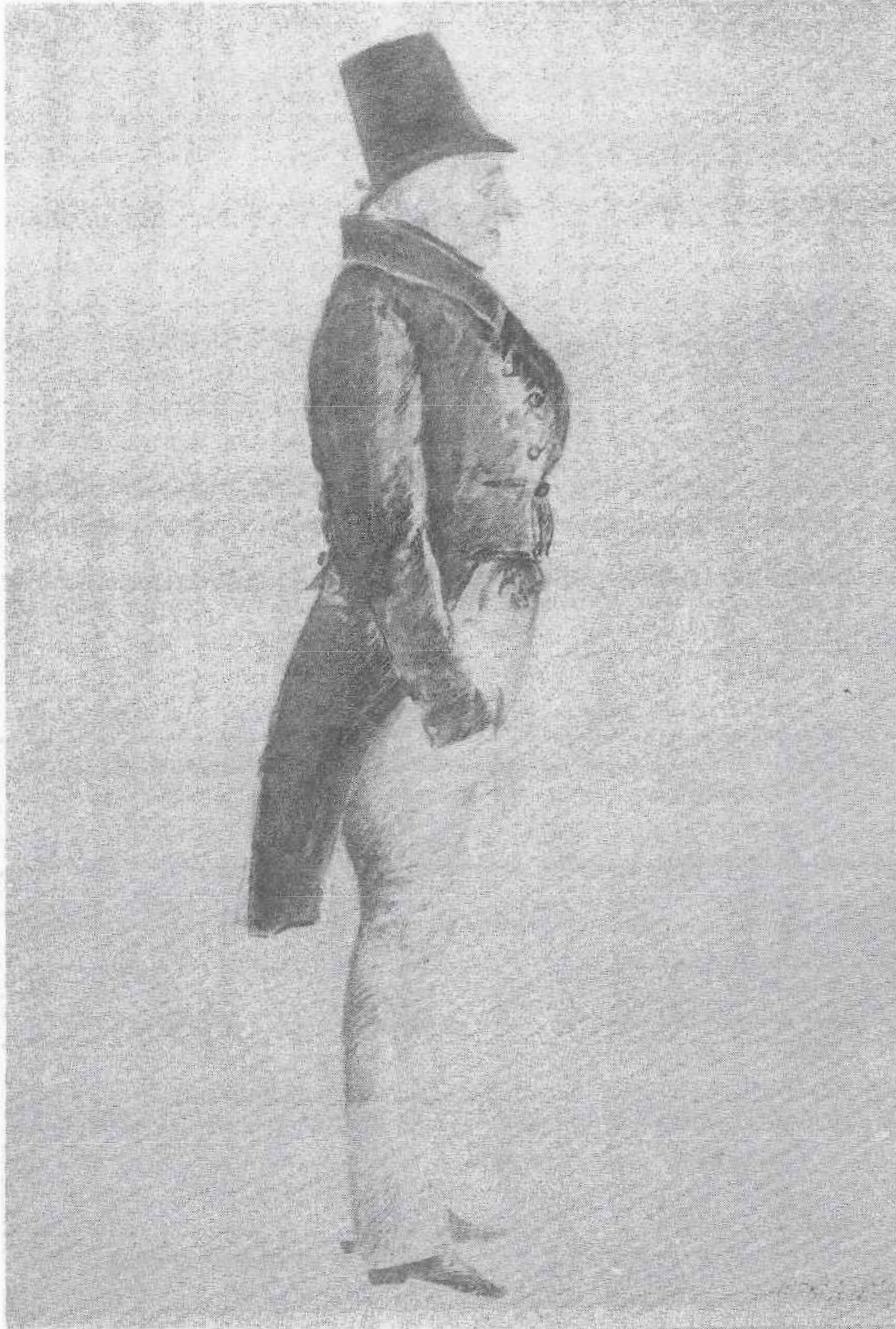


Fig. 1. A watercolour, by Richard Dighton, inscribed (lower right), 'Mr Forbes, Pittville'. The portrait probably dates from Dighton's 1828 stay in the town, for by the time of his next visit, in 1832, Forbes was no longer connected with Pittville. Forbes' appearance in the portrait fits well with his description in the Gaol Register (see below, page 20). Reproduced by courtesy of Messrs Rickerby Jessop & Co.

church, the Revd Charles Jervis, to adopt a set of plans that he had submitted for the proposed Free Church at Cheltenham, the building of which Jervis had first mooted in January 1825 (7). On 8 December 1825, Jervis wrote to the Commissioners for Building New Churches in London that,

'finding it expedient to have some sketch of the proposed church for public inspection, I have been offered several gratuitously by a very able architect of this town, who is very ambitious of being employed in the work, and who has even offered to raise me £1000 among the tradespeople in furtherance of my object. May I be allowed to accept his services?' (8).

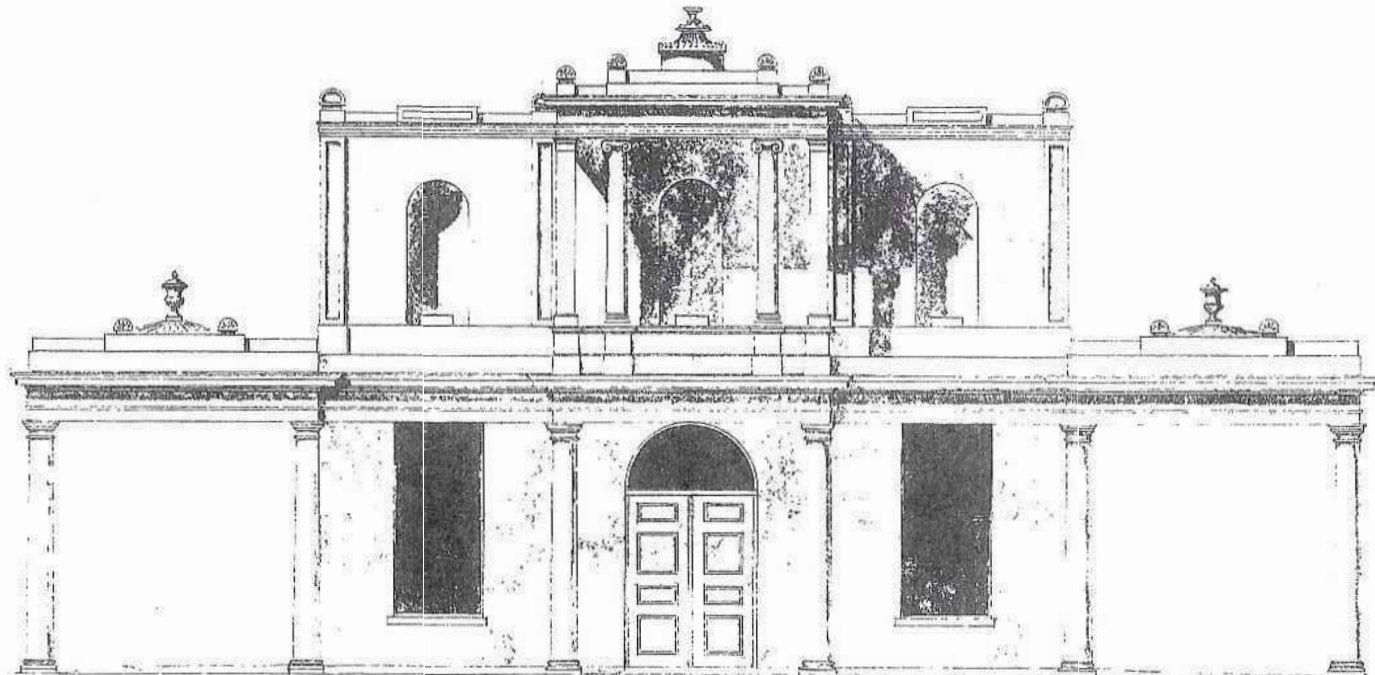
This 'very able architect' was undoubtedly Forbes, as the later history of the Free Church makes clear, and his offer to raise £1000 towards the project was, as his subsequent career was to show, a characteristically impetuous gesture, which there is no evidence that he was ever able to fulfil.

Unfortunately for both Forbes and Jervis, plans for the Free Church were disrupted by the difficulty in raising cash in the wake of the financial and banking crisis of December 1825, and it was not until 1827 that the scheme was revived, with Forbes once again anxious to gain the commission. By then, however, Forbes was intimately involved in a far greater project, the building of the Pittville Pump Room and the creation of the Pittville Estate, for both of which he was the principal architect (9).

Exactly why Joseph Pitt chose a relatively young and unknown local architect for his prestigious new development remains a mystery, for on a previous occasion at Cheltenham, the designing of the Royal Crescent in 1805, he had employed a far more prominent architect from outside the town, namely the Bath architect Charles Harcourt Masters, whose best-known buildings at Bath are the Sydney Hotel (now the Holburne of Menstrie Museum) and Widcombe Crescent (10). But choose Forbes he did, and whether or not the choice was a good one is something that only individual architectural taste can decide. The Pump Room, though not without its critics - Sir Hugh Casson, for instance, has called it 'a stilted, high-shouldered and rather graceless building' (11) - is certainly imposing in its scale, and the estate as originally envisaged by Forbes is spacious and well thought-out, with its combination of crescent, square, villa and terrace. Where Forbes appears to have failed, however, was in his ability to work with others. That this was so is well revealed in a letter to Forbes from Joseph Pitt, dated 1 December 1828, and written in response to a letter from Forbes, seeking his support at a time when his abilities as an architect were being called into question. It reads,

'Sir,

I am sorry to hear of any Difficulty being in the way of your appointment as architect to the intended free church at Cheltn., and the more so, as from what you say, it arises out of your having been my architect at my pump room at Cheltn. - In respect to the plan of that Room, which was made by you, I believe there is but one opinion - which is highly favourable to your abilities as an architect. It is visible & speaks for itself. In respect to the practical part of the Building, - which was at first immediately



- DESIGN - FOR - ALTERING - THE -

- MONTPELLIER - SPA -

- Pearson Thompson Esq. -  
Cheltenham -

John Forbes  
Architect  
Cheltenham Jan 1881

Fig. 2. 'Design for altering the Montpellier Spa', proposed for Pearson Thompson Esq. and signed and dated by Forbes. One of a pair of drawings now in Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (Acc. Nos. 1977.284 and 1978.132). Size of originals 252 mm high x 372 mm wide.

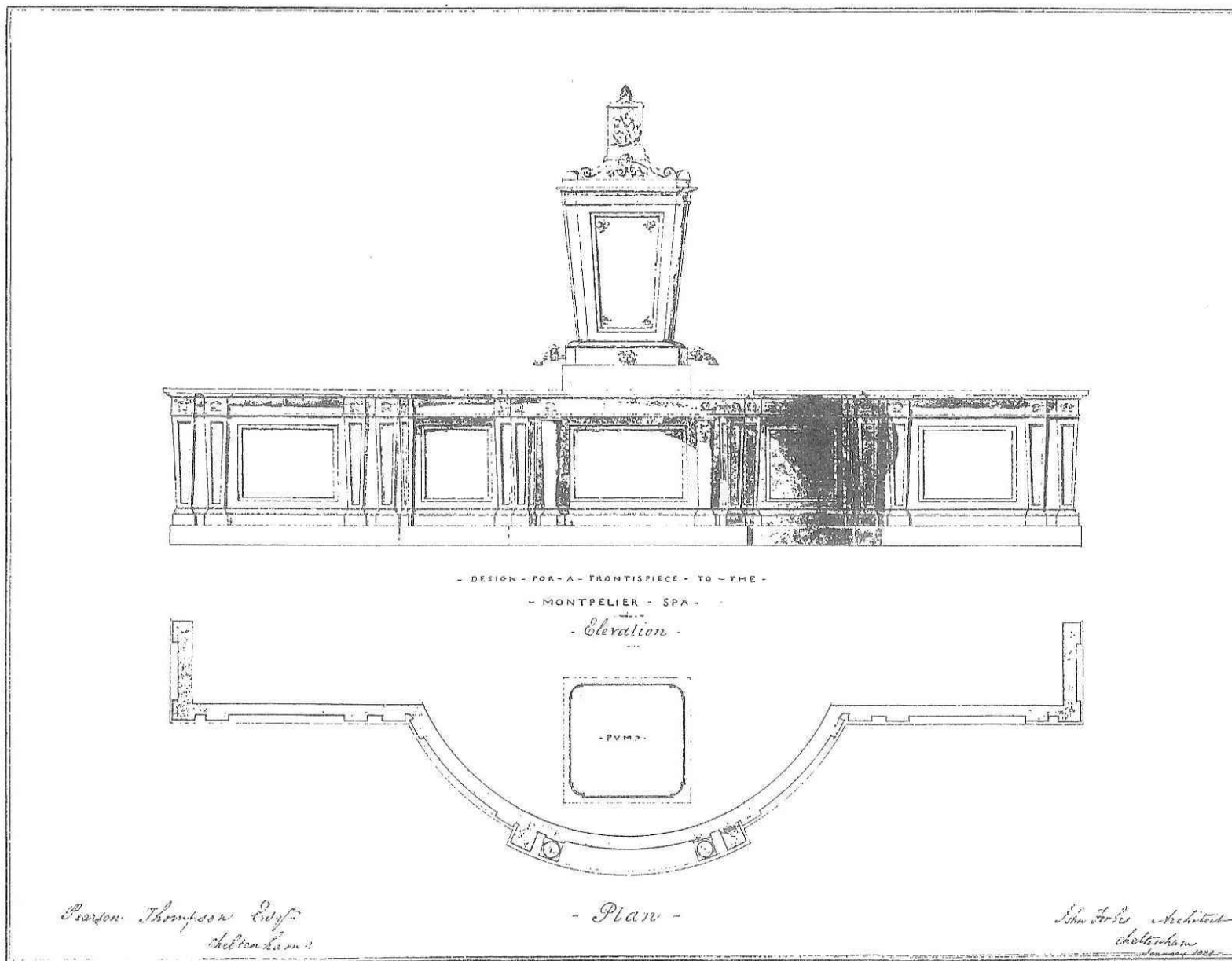


Fig. 3. 'Design for a frontispiece to the Montpellier Spa', showing the pump and counter, proposed for Pearson Thompson and dated by Forbes. Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum Acc. No. 1986. 1061. Size of original 285 mm high x 365 mm wide.

under your sole Inspection, but subsequently Mr Morris (a very skilful, practical builder as I thought) was, from his being in great personal difficulties introduced to the work, & he taking on himself perhaps more than I intended, & certainly more than you liked, gave offence to you, and such as to induce you as I understood not to attend to the building in the way you had done. After this it was hinted to me that parts of the Building had not been done properly, - this I mentioned to you, which led to your sending to me a Resignation. - That the work of which I complained was not done well I am satisfied - tho' it was not to the extent I imagined, & the errors or faults are completely corrected, but in justice to you I am willing to testify to your abilities as an architect, & that you well understand the Science of Building' (12).

The 'Mr Morris' of whom Pitt wrote was probably Samuel Morris, who had worked as a speculative builder at Royal Crescent in 1807-8, and who had been made bankrupt in 1827 (13), and it was clearly a personality clash between the two men that led to Forbes' impetuous behaviour, and ultimately to his resignation and break with the Pittville Estate. That Forbes did indeed resign as architect of the Pittville Pump Room during the course of its construction is further suggested by a comment in the Cheltenham Journal for 12 October 1829, which stated that 'we cannot sufficiently praise Mr Meade the architect, for the very classic designs he has given for the interior of the building'. 'Mr Meade' may well have been the London architect John Clement Mead (1798-1839), who certainly designed the Grecian-style stoves which were to heat the building (14), and who may therefore have been responsible for the completion of the building in 1828-30, and for designing much of its fine interior decoration.

Plans for what was to be Forbes' other great Cheltenham building, the Free Church of St Paul, were revived during the spring of 1827, and, once again, Forbes sought to obtain the position of architect. Although the late Revd Jervis (d. 1826) had certainly agreed to Forbes' plans during 1825-6, his appointment in 1827 was by no means a foregone conclusion, and on 5 June 1827, Jervis' successor as incumbent of the parish church, the Revd Francis Close, wrote to the Commissioners for Building New Churches, emphasising that the Church Building Committee had not yet agreed to Forbes' design (15). Indeed, it is clear that at least one member of the Committee was adamantly opposed to Forbes' appointment. The Building Committee Minute Book for 5 January 1828 states that,

'a communication was received from Mr Cole stating that Mr Ingledew requested to withdraw his name from this Committee and his subscription from this undertaking upon the grounds that he did not think Mr Forbes a competent person to be employed as an architect in the building of the Free Church and that he expressed his determination not to rejoin the Committee, nor to pay his subscription while any chance remained of Mr Forbes being employed in that capacity'.

- while a subsequent minute of 15 January noted that Ingledew had resigned on the grounds of 'having determined never either to act with or to give encouragement to Mr Forbes', although he sought to have the word 'competent' withdrawn from the previous minute, claiming that it was a word 'which I believe I did not employ', and no doubt fearing a possible libel action (16).

Forbes was, however, appointed by the Commissioners in February 1828, after Francis Close himself had written in his favour, on 29 January, although the tone of his letter is perhaps rather lukewarm. He noted that Forbes had incurred 'considerable expense' in drawing plans for the Revd Jervis, that Jervis had accepted them, and that although,

'I would not venture to give an opinion upon his efficiency in that capacity, though I believe that Joseph Pitt Esq., M.P., for whom he has superintended the erection of a splendid Pump Room may be referred to upon this subject, I would merely observe that I esteem him a very respectable man and that if his plan should be approved or should be as good as any other submitted to His Majesty's Commissioners, I really conceive that he has the first claim upon their attention' (17).

Still, however, this was not the end of the matter, for - as Pitt's previously quoted letter of December 1828 to Forbes implies - criticisms continued, and on 21 November 1828 a minute of the Building Committee recorded that they felt 'obliged to mention to His Majesty's Commissioners that some reports have recently become prevalent in Cheltenham affecting the competency of Mr Forbes to carry into effect the plans which have been laid before the board', shortly after which, on 6 February 1829, their minutes record the receipt of a letter from the Commissioners 'stating that Mr Forbes had presented a letter to His Majesty's Commissioners in vindication of his character as an architect with which the Commissioners were satisfied' (18).

Despite the Commissioners's satisfaction, however, the history of the church's construction - which began in May 1829 - reveals personnel problems not dissimilar to those encountered between Forbes and Morris at the Pump Room. On 15 May 1830, when the building work was at its height, the Commissioners received the following letter of resignation from the Clerk of Works, John Cook, which criticizes both Forbes and the builder, Forbes' close friend, Edward Cope. It reads,

'I beg leave to inform you, that in consequence of the unfair proceedings of the builder and not meeting with that protection I stand in need of from the architect I am obliged to leave the concern - the builder will insist on using 6lb. lead, where 7lb. is inserted in the specification and bids me defiance' (19).

The Commissioners clearly forwarded Cook's letter to the Building Committee in Cheltenham, with a request that they should investigate the matter, for on the rear of Cook's letter is the Committee's draft reply to the Commissioners, which puts the responsibility firmly back in the hands of the Commissioners. Signed by Close and six of his fellow Committee members, it reads,

'In reply to His Majesty's Commissioners, I am requested by the Committee of the Free Church to remind the Board that from the commencement of the undertaking, they declined all interference with the appointment of Architect, Builder and Clerk of Works - that they also declined all inspections of plans and practical details of business, being none of them acquainted with such problems, nor competent to form any judgement upon them.

On these grounds it was that on a former occasion when reports were circulated affecting Mr F's professional character, the

Committee confined themselves to a simple statement of the existence of such reports without hazarding any opinion whatever on them. With the same view of the subject, they must now beg to decline entering into an investigation of the nature proposed to them - which they could not hope to bring to any satisfactory conclusion.

They therefore submit to the Board the expediency of their sending down without delay some competent and confidential person unconnected with Cheltenham, thoroughly to investigate this important business. The Committee are the more disposed to adopt this line of conduct in as much as that notwithstanding the guarded terms of their former communication which they felt it their duty to make to the Board on the subject of Mr F., they have both individually and collectively been threatened in action at law by that gentleman on the score of deformation (sic) of character'.

And, indeed, the Commissioners accepted the responsibility and sent a surveyor to Cheltenham, who reported that the works undertaken on the church were in order (20).

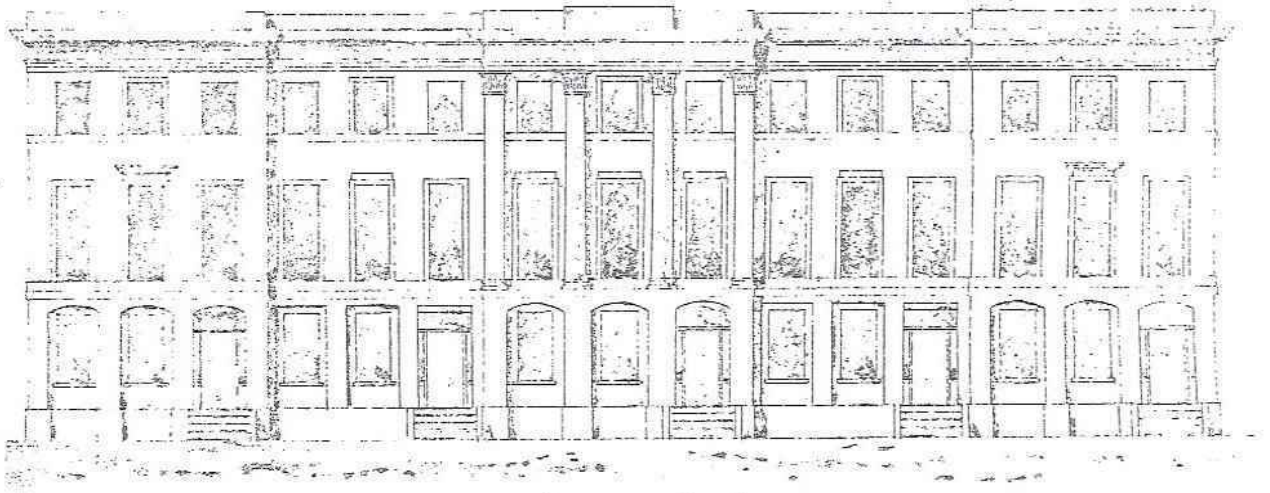
As in his dealings with Joseph Pitt, Forbes' relationship with the Church Building Committee was not altogether cordial, and although there is no evidence that he resigned as architect of the Free Church, it is perhaps indicative of his disenchantment with the promoters of the project that his promised contribution of £50 towards the expenses of the church was one of the few donations that were never paid (21).

How many of the early villas and terraces at Pittville were actually designed by Forbes is difficult to say, particularly as at least one other architect, William Jay, is recorded as 'superintending' the completion of houses there in 1826. Forbes was, however, certainly responsible for designing 1-5 Pittville Lawn (now 29-37 Pittville Lawn), perhaps the Estate's finest terrace, constructed in 1826-7, and built at the joint expense of five men, including Forbes himself and his one-time partner, George Hayward. Each man paid £158 towards the total purchase price of £790 for the five building lots, jointly raised a £3100 mortgage from one Henry Headley, a doctor at Devizes, and then employed a builder named John Knight to construct the houses, to Forbes' design, a pen and wash elevation of which is drawn on the rear of the deed of conveyance from Pitt, dated 18 May 1827 (Fig. 4). A deed of partition was executed on 1 June 1827, by which Forbes received 2 Pittville Lawn (now 31 Pittville Lawn), which he presumably then rented to tenants, as there is no evidence to suggest that Forbes ever lived in the house (22).

Forbes' involvement in the building of 1-5 Pittville Lawn is just one of a number of instances in which Forbes concerned himself in speculative building within the town, although it seems to have been his only undertaking at Pittville. Elsewhere however - in Montpellier, Imperial Square and the Promenade - there is evidence of considerable financial and practical involvement in building speculation from 1826 onwards, and it is most likely that, as with so many speculative builders at this time, this involvement was the root of his subsequent problems.

At Montpellier, Forbes was involved in the development of a new street, originally known as Montpellier Retreat, but soon renamed Montpellier Villas, its former name being applied (as it still is) to the rear access





*Elevation of the five Houses.*

Fig. 4. Elevation of 1-5 Pittville Lawn (now 29-37 Pittville Lawn), a pen and wash drawing by Forbes, on the rear of a conveyance dated 18 May 1827 (G.R.O. D2025 Box 52). Reproduced by courtesy of G.R.O. and Messrs Ticehurst, Wyatt & Co.

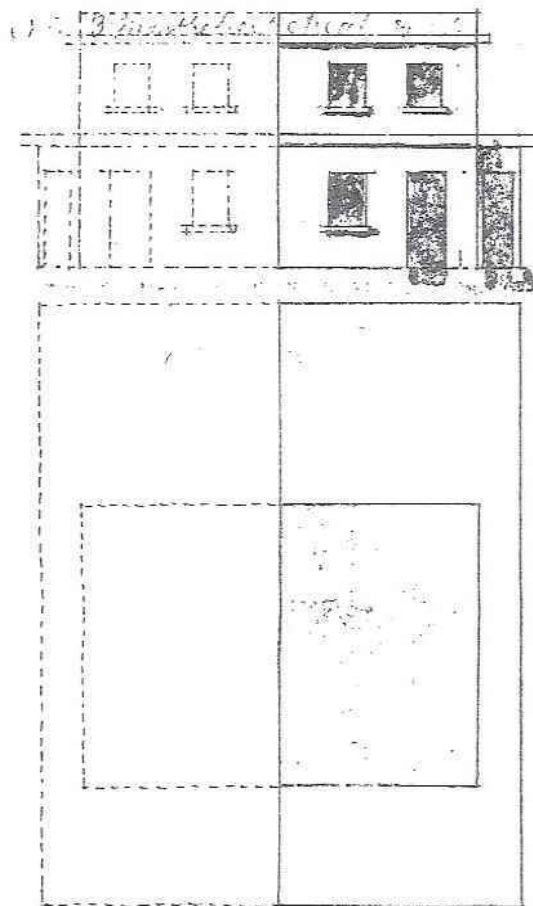


Fig. 5. Elevation of the proposed 4-5 Montpellier Villas, a pen and wash drawing by Forbes on a draft building agreement of September 1824 (G.R.O. D2216 Box 4), reproduced by courtesy of G.R.O. and Messrs Griffiths McIlquham & Co.

road on its western side. Montpellier Villas was laid out, probably in 1821-2, by a widow named Sarah Bate, on part of a 3-acre block of land in Horn Acre Piece that she had purchased from Henry Thompson in 1818 (23). Its earliest houses (nos. 1-3, now the Beehive Inn) were built by mid-1822, sometime after which, and certainly by September 1824, Sarah Bate sold the new roadway and the remaining building land on either side of it, to one Henry Edmund Dodsworth of Billingsborough Hall in Lincolnshire. Dodsworth was subsequently responsible for the construction of several of the street's houses, and for the sale of the other building lots to a number of builders, including Forbes.

That Forbes may actually have designed some - if not all - of the street's post-1822 houses seems likely, as he witnessed a draft building agreement of September 1824 between Dodsworth and the intending builders of 4 Montpellier Villas (two plumbers named James Graham and Thomas Gibbons), whereby the builders agreed to build a house 'conformably in every respect to the plan and elevation in the margin of these presents', that plan and elevation being an attractive pen and wash sketch labelled in what would appear to be Forbes' handwriting (Fig. 5).

4 Montpellier Villas (along with the adjoining no. 5) was certainly built in 1824-5, and was followed, by c. 1828, by the remainder of the street's houses. Among the Building Certificates issued by the Town Surveyor in 1826-7 (24) are two referring to houses in Montpellier Retreat (as it was then still known) built by John Forbes, dated 6 October 1826 and 29 January 1827 (Fig. 6). These appear to have been nos 27 and 31 Montpellier Villas, both of which Forbes owned in 1831. No. 31 - the site of which cost Forbes £150 - was his own home from c. 1826-7 until its sale in April 1831 (25).

Forbes' other known involvement in building speculation was within the Imperial Estate, where he built four houses - three in Imperial Square and one in the Promenade (26). The Estate had its origins in 1817-18, when the short-lived Sherborne or Imperial Spa was established (on the site now occupied by the Queens Hotel) and the various Sherborne rides, including what would later become the Promenade and Imperial Square, were laid out. Building began along the northern part of the Promenade during the early 1820s - notably with the construction of the Imperial Hotel and Harward's Buildings (the latter now largely occupied as the Municipal Offices) - while during the 1830s, building extended southwards, with houses on the west side of the Promenade, backing onto Old Well Lane (now Montpellier Street).

Forbes' earliest involvement within the Estate was the building of Sherborne Lodge (now 129 Promenade), one of a pair of semi-detached houses, now the premises of the antique dealers, H.W. Kiel Ltd. Forbes purchased the site of the house, once part of a field called Burford's Mead, for £480 on 24 January 1833, by which time its building was already underway. Although there is no proof, it is possible that Forbes also designed the two houses. In order to help finance its construction, Forbes raised a £1500 mortgage from Robert Capper of Marle Hill, also on 24 January, to which a further £300 was added on 6 July. Three weeks later, on 29 July, the debt was transferred from Capper to two gentlemen named William Saunders and Henry Knight, who also advanced Forbes an additional £300, with a further £150 on 29 October, bringing the total mortgage debt to £2250. The house appears to have been substantially completed by 1 November, when the Town Surveyor issued its Building Certificate (27).

To the Cheltenham Paving Commissioners.

I, the undersigned RICHARD BILLINGS, late Surveyor for the purposes generally of the Act of Parliament hereinafter mentioned, and now the Surveyor appointed by the Commissioners acting under the same Act for Surveying New Buildings within the limits of the Town of Cheltenham, do hereby certify to the said Commissioners, that I have viewed and surveyed the *messuage or*

*Dwelling house* situate in ~~the~~ *Montpellier Retreat* within the limits of the said Town of Cheltenham, and lately erected by

*Mr. Forbes* and that the same hath been completed and finished with Party Walls of the thickness of *fourteen* inches, and in all respects agreeably to the directions and regulations of the Act of Parliament passed in the second year of the reign of his present Majesty, for Paving and Lighting the Town of Cheltenham aforesaid.—Witness my hand this *29<sup>th</sup>* day of *January* 1827.

*Rich Billings*

Fig. 6. A Building Certificate, issued by Richard Billings, the Town Surveyor, to Forbes for a house in Montpellier Retreat (now Montpellier Villas), 29 January 1827 (G.R.O. CBR Box 7).

In addition to the £2250 owed to Saunders and Knight, Forbes had also saddled himself with a number of other mortgage debts by 1834. When 1-5 Pittville Lawn was partitioned in 1827, Forbes had agreed to assume responsibility for £650 of the £1300 debt owed to Dr Headley, and he had subsequently mortgaged 2 Pittville Lawn jointly to two of his fellow-speculators in the building of the five houses, namely William Pitt, a banker, and Edward Lambert Newman, a solicitor. Pitt and Newman agreed to advance him sums of up to £100 and £600 respectively, and by 1833 he owed Pitt (who had assumed Forbes' debt to Newman) more than £850. At least one mortgage was raised on 31 Montpellier Villas, one James Stewart of London being owed £456 18s. 1d. when the house was sold in 1831, while an additional £120 was raised on security of Sherborne Lodge from the Misses Stable of Cranbrook (Kent) on 11 February 1834.

That Forbes' business dealings were not wholly successful is perhaps suggested by the gradual sale of his properties from 1831 onwards. When 27 Montpellier Villas was sold is not known, but no. 31, Forbes's own house, was sold to the bankers Pitt, Gardner & Co. on 14 April 1831 for £1300, almost half of which was used to pay Dodsworth for the site of the house, which had never been paid for, and to settle the mortgage to James Stewart. Then, on 5 April 1833, 2 Pittville Lawn was sold to William Pitt for £1556 19s. 1d. - an amount made up of the outstanding debts to Pitt and Headley, plus a meagre £50 for Forbes himself. Where Forbes lived after the sale of 31 Montpellier Villas is uncertain, although in July 1833, when the solicitors Messrs Gwinnett and Newman wrote to Forbes demanding payment of a dishonoured bill of exchange for £15, owed to a builder named Benjamin Smith, he was living - presumably as a lodger - at the premises of Thomas Furber, a High Street jeweller (28).

It is possible that at least some of Forbes' apparent difficulties during these years may have been the result of his unhappy domestic life. In or before 1823, Forbes had married a lady named Elizabeth Martha, whose maiden name is unknown. John and Elizabeth had four children between 1824 and 1829 - Sarah Sophia (baptized 21 January 1824), John Robert (baptized 9 September 1825), Charles William (baptized 28 March 1827) and Lydia Elizabeth (baptized 22 July 1829). Sadly, neither of their sons lived beyond early childhood. The burial of John Robert Forbes, aged 6 months, was recorded on 18 February 1826, and that of Charles William Forbes, aged 2 years 5 months, on 27 May 1829 (29). Forbes' wife herself died on 7 March 1833, 'at her mother's residence, Dobson's Terrace, London', aged 37 (30), and according to a letter to the Cheltenham Free Press from one of Forbes' friends, the artist Dederick Eichbaum in 1834, her death had been 'of a broken heart', no doubt because of the loss of her sons, compounded perhaps by the loss of her home and her husband's apparent business and financial difficulties (31).

Certainly during 1833-4, those difficulties got progressively worse, as Forbes made one final sortie into the world of speculative building. This time, he turned his attention to Imperial Square, where the principal developers were William Prosser jnr., a patent marble manufacturer, and his partner, Robert Todd (32). Between 25 and 28 March 1834, land forming the entire northern side of the Square was conveyed by the Estate's owners, Thomas Harward and Thomas Henney, either directly to Todd and Prosser (sites of 6-13 Imperial Square) or, at Todd and Prosser's request, to three other builders, namely John Stephens (site of 5 Imperial Square), Benjamin Smith (site of 4 Imperial Square) and John Forbes (site of 1-3 Imperial Square). A small plot of land, with a

35 foot frontage, to the west of Forbes' three lots was also conveyed to Todd as an additional piece of garden ground for two houses that he had previously built on the corner of the Promenade and Imperial Square, now combined as Belgrave House.

In his evidence at Forbes' trial, Prosser stated that he had known Forbes for about 10 or 12 years, and that he had employed his services as an architect during the previous 12 months (33). It is therefore most likely that Forbes was the architect of the previously unattributed terrace on the north side of the Square. It was perhaps this employment that induced Forbes to take three of the building lots for himself, and, as subsequent events were to show, Forbes' and Prosser's financial dealings became intimately connected. The three lots were conveyed to Forbes (or, more correctly to his trustees, the solicitors Kell and Howard, who also acted for Prosser) for £528 on 25 March 1834, by which time the building of the three houses - and presumably the rest of the terrace - was underway. Already, in fact, Kell and Howard had raised the first of two mortgages for Forbes, a sum of £3000 from an unknown lender on 25 February 1834, to which a further £1000 was added during August. These sums were actually held by Prosser as security for unspecified advances that he had agreed to make to Forbes, who - according to Prosser's testimony - 'was carrying on business under some embarrassment'.

Certainly, it was Forbes' financial embarrassment that led to his misguided - and ultimately disastrous - decision to forge Prosser's signature on a series of bills of exchange, in order to settle a number of his personal debts. The circumstances in which he did this were made clear at his subsequent trial in April 1835, at which it emerged that on 16 July 1834, Forbes had gone into John and Thomas Brunsdon's butcher's shop in Winchcombe Street, in order to settle a debt for meat amounting to a little over £4. In order to pay his debt, Forbes presented Thomas Brunsdon with a bill of exchange for £25, bearing what appeared to be the signature of William Prosser jnr. and payable at Sir James Esdaile & Co.'s Bank in London in three months' time. Brunsdon accepted the bill, deducted the amount owed, plus his charge for discounting the bill and gave Forbes £20 13s. cash, by way of change. Brunsdon subsequently paid the bill into his own bank, Messrs Pitt, Gardner & Co., only to have it returned, dishonoured, in October, on the grounds that Prosser had denied all knowledge of it.

When challenged by Brunsdon, Forbes admitted that he had forged Prosser's signature, but claimed that he was entitled to do so - and, indeed that Prosser had authorized him to do so - on the grounds that Prosser owed him money for professional services. Prosser, it seems, believed otherwise, and was in fact already aware of Forbes' forging activities. Three months earlier, on 15 July, a Mr Conybeare of Birmingham had written to Prosser, informing him that a bill of £19 15s., again with Prosser's apparent signature, had been dishonoured, which letter was followed by another on 18 July, informing Prosser that Forbes had since paid Conybeare £15 on account and had got possession of the forged bill. Given that Forbes must have paid Conybeare his £15 between 16 and 17 July, it is likely that this is what most of the money obtained from Brunsdon was used for.

Clearly affronted, Prosser had sent for Forbes on 20 July, and confronted him with Conybeare's letters. Their conversation was quoted by Prosser at the trial, and, according to the Cheltenham Journal, it ran thus,

'I said, this, Mr. Forbes, must be a forgery of yours, and I have written to say such is the case. He said, "yes, it is, unfortunately. I have put your name to a bill, but I hope you will take it up". I said, "how could you dream of doing such a thing? You have not paid the bill". He said he had. I told him the second letter stated that he had paid £15 and had got the bill, and it was lucky he had. I asked if he had any more bills out with my name; and he said, on his life, he had not. I told him, if he ever did so again, he should suffer the law'.

Given that Forbes' conversation with Prosser took place only four days after he had cashed the forged bill at Brunsdon's, he was clearly lying when he assured Prosser that he had issued no more bills in his name. Not surprisingly, therefore, when Brunsdon's bill was dishonoured in October 1834, Prosser refused to help Forbes, claiming - perhaps correctly - that he was prevented from doing so by the terms of his partnership agreement with Todd. On Monday, 27 October, about 10 days after the dishonouring of Brunsdon's bill, Forbes was arrested and charged, according to the Gaol Register, 'with having falsely made and counterfieted the exceptance (sic) of and upon a certain bill of exchange for the sum of £25 with intent to defraud Thos Brunsdon and his copartner John Brunsdon, being or purporting to be the exceptance (sic) of Mr Prosser of Cheltenham' (34). The following morning, he was brought before two of the Cheltenham Magistrates, Robert Bransby Cooper and Dr Thomas Newell, and both Brunsdon and Prosser appeared to testify against him. The magistrates committed Forbes to Gloucester Gaol to await his trial.

Some idea of Forbes' treatment during his first days in the gaol may be gained from a letter sent by one of his friends, Thomas Weatherall, to the Cheltenham Free Press on 15 November 1834, along with copies of correspondence between Weatherall, Bransby Cooper, Major Cunningham, the Governor of the Gaol, and Forbes himself. From these letters it appears that Forbes arrived at Gloucester between 4 and 5 o'clock on the afternoon of 28 October and was examined the following morning by the prison surgeon, who pronounced him healthy. As was customary, his committal was recorded, along with a physical description, in the Register of Prisoners, in which Forbes' entry reads thus:-

'Dark brown hair, grey eyes, sallow complexion, long visage, long nose, several small moles on the right arm, large mark of the small pox on the left arm, marks of old scars on the left leg, the fore-finger of the left hand broke, mole on the back of the right shoulder and one on the small of the back. Can read and write. Labourer. Height 5 - 8½' (35).

- a rare insight into the physical appearance of a well-known local figure, and one that certainly does not conflict with the only known portrait of the man, painted six years before (Fig. 1).

Following his examination, Forbes was taken to the prison washroom and made to strip naked, washed, and put into prison clothes, after which his hair was cut off by the prison barber. The next day he was visited by Edward Cope, who was outraged to learn of the treatment meted out to his old friend, particularly as Forbes had merely been committed for trial and was therefore technically innocent until proven guilty. Cope reported Forbes' situation to Forbes' former landlord, Thomas Furber, who in turn told Thomas Weatherall, who immediately visited the two committing magistrates, in the hope of having his circumstances alleviated. One of them, Bransby Cooper, claimed that at the time of his committal,

Forbes 'appeared in a state approaching to insanity' and that the removal of his clothes was probably the result of an order from the magistrates 'to take all instruments of self-destruction from his person'. However, the other magistrate, Dr Newell, admitted that to strip, shave and put into prison clothes a person in a disordered state of mind could serve to aggravate his condition. Even so, neither of the magistrates would agree to interfere with Cunningham's management of the gaol, although Forbes did in fact receive his own clothes back a day or so later, having learnt from a copy of the prison rules that it was permissible for committal prisoners to do so as long as their clothes were 'wholesome', which his clearly were.

Forbes presumably spent the next few months in prison, awaiting his trial, which was set for the 1835 Gloucestershire Lent Assizes. Little is known of this period of his imprisonment, apart from two incidents - one trivial and one damaging to his defence at his forthcoming trial. The first is recorded in the Gaol Chaplain's Journal for 20 November 1834, which noted that 'the prisoners for trial are orderly, with the exception of one of the name of Forbes, who has been singing after having been cautioned not to do so' - an indication, perhaps, that despite all his troubles, his spirit had not been broken (36). The second, more serious incident was an unsuccessful attempt by Forbes to conceal yet another forged bill of exchange by writing to its recipient, his friend Robert Lawrence, admitting that it was 'the last one of Prosser's, with your name to it', begging him not to reveal it to anyone, and promising to settle it in 2 or 3 months' time, from money then being collected for him by his friends. The letter was, however, made public and served only to incriminate him further at his trial, where this apparent attempt to defraud Lawrence was introduced as a second indictment.

Forbes' trial, at which he pleaded not guilty on all counts, took place on the morning of Monday, 13 April 1835, in a crowded courtroom - an indication of the interest that his case had aroused. A succession of prosecution witnesses were called - notably Brunsdon, Prosser and Lawrence - while Edward Cope appeared for the defence, and at least ten of Cheltenham's leading inhabitants, including two magistrates and two solicitors, appeared as character witnesses (37). Forbes himself remained silent, leaving his defence to his counsel.

Among those present at the trial was the Revd Francis Witts of Lower Slaughter, who commented on the trial in his diary, published in 1978 as The Diary of a Cotswold Parson. From what he heard at the trial, Witts clearly felt that Forbes was a foolish victim of circumstance, and that Prosser had indeed permitted Forbes to issue bills of exchange in his name, though not for Forbes' own personal use. The bill transactions were, he argued, 'of a temporizing character, such as in a moral view are barely removed from a fraud, though so generally resorted to and connived at in an unsound state of trade', while the defence counsel's cross-examination of Prosser 'exhibited (him) in a most unfavourable light and displayed in disgusting detail the whole unprincipled system of accommodation bills'. Although Witts may have felt some sympathy for Forbes, he had to admit that the bill cashed at Brunsdon's was 'an unsanctioned forgery', and certainly the Jury also reached that conclusion. At the end of the trial, after a 15 - minute deliberation, they found the prisoner guilty of forging the bill, but not with an intent to defraud, as he fully intended that Brunsdon should receive what was due to him. This, however, was not accepted by the Judge, Mr Justice Coleridge, who directed the Jury to reconsider their verdict, and to

deliver an unqualified guilty verdict if they believed that Forbes knew he had not been given Prosser's permission to use his signature on the actual bill in question. After another deliberation, the Jury concurred with the Judge, and delivered an unqualified guilty verdict.

The Judge's sentencing of Forbes was delivered, according to Witts, 'in a most feeling and impressive manner', and was reported in several of the newspapers. In particular, the Judge abhorred the fact that a man of Forbes' education and station in life should 'so far have fallen from your condition as to be guilty of the crime of forgery', and that the crime was compounded by the number of times on which it had been committed. These circumstances, the Judge argued, left him no option but to impose the severest permitted sentence, namely transportation for life, and he reminded Forbes of his relative good fortune in that, until recently, forgery had been a capital offence. According to the Gloucestershire Chronicle, it was after receiving his sentence that Forbes broke his silence and made his only recorded contribution to the proceedings. Before leaving the dock, he turned to the Judge and said, 'My Lord, I would rather stand here, and receive the judgement of the Court, than stand there (pointing to the witness box) and have the consciences of Mr Prosser and Mr Brunsdon'.

The severity of Forbes' sentence immediately induced his friends to organise petitions in both Cheltenham and Gloucester seeking from the Crown a commutation of his sentence to a term of imprisonment. Among the first to sign was the entire Jury, who also sent a protest to Mr Justice Coleridge, reiterating their belief that Forbes had never intended to defraud anyone, and 'deeply regretting that he should suffer through our inadvertance'. Within four days, over 4000 signatures had been collected in Cheltenham alone, and on 25 April, the Cheltenham Free Press was able to announce that the sentence was indeed to be commuted, news that was officially confirmed on 29 April in a letter to the organisers of the petition from the Under Secretary of State, in which a revised sentence of two years in prison was announced.

Public sympathy for Forbes had clearly been fuelled by the poor light in which Prosser was shown at the trial, by the severity of the sentence and by Forbes' former standing in the community. It was no doubt increased by two other factors. One was the disparity between Forbes' sentence and that meted out at about the same time at Warwick Assizes to one Benjamin Lumby, who, despite having defrauded his employer of many thousands of pounds, only received a sentence of seven years' transportation. The second factor was the fate of Forbes' two daughters. At the time of the trial, they were boarded at the Misses Herbert's school at Charlton Kings, where - according to a letter to the Free Press from Forbes' friend, Dederick Eichbaum - their expenses had been met by Edward Cope, who had 'most generously and disinterestedly sacrificed much of his valuable time on behalf of the unhappy prisoner'. Even after the commutation of Forbes' sentence, his children's plight was a cause for public concern, and on 27 June 1834, the Free Press carried an appeal on their behalf, seeking contributions towards their continued maintenance at the Misses Herbert's, and stating that 'if under the necessity of leaving their present instructor, they will be thrown upon the world and the consequences would indeed be painful to contemplate'. Subscription books were opened at Pitt's Bank, and at the various Circulating Libraries, but whether they were successful is nowhere recorded.



Some glimpses of Forbes' years in prison, which were spent in that part of the gaol known as the Penitentiary House (Fig. 7), reserved for prisoners convicted of misdemeanours, rather than of more serious crimes, may be obtained from the Journals of the Gaol Chaplain (38) and the Visiting Justices (39), both of which are now in the Gloucestershire Record Office. By far the most interesting episode concerning Forbes' time in the Penitentiary occurred in April 1836, and involved a possible prison 'break out'. On 4 April, the Chaplain noted that,

'Forbes, one of the Penitentiary prisoners has been detected in receiving parcels from his friends through one of the officers, in consequence of which the officer has been discharged and Forbes assigned to solitary punishment'.

The Visiting Justices' Journal for 11 April names the officer as James Lane and notes, more seriously, that on Forbes' cell being searched, two knives, 'one of them of hard steel with the back notched as a saw' were found. It also records that another prisoner, John Crowder, had informed the prison authorities that while shaving Forbes one morning a few days before, Forbes had told him that 'two or three dozen of them had agreed to catch Moore, Lane and Coates and lock them up in the cells and get possession of the prison'. This was corroborated by yet another prisoner, Charles Grover, who claimed that, while washing, Forbes had told him 'that there would be a row in the prison soon'. Forbes defended himself by arguing that 'he heard the two next men to him on the wheel saying they should like to have a spree - but he thought nothing of it and merely mentioned it as a piece of gossip'.

This explanation was not, however, accepted, and Forbes' three days in solitary was extended by a fortnight, during which time he was visited by the Chaplain, whose account both amplifies the situation and highlights the prison authorities' expectations from the more 'respectable' prisoners, such as Forbes. The Chaplain visited Forbes 'who is represented to me as having been guilty of acts of insubordination', on 13 April and noted that,

'Forbes had communication with some of the other prisoners respecting the discontent that appeared prevailing with respect to the diet of the rice in the Penitentiary - and I consider Forbes to be guilty of misconduct in not having informed the officers, as well as of holding any communication with the prisoners on the subject. He states that his object was to soften the discontent that existed against the diet, but testimony is somewhat opposed to this. I therefore reprovved Forbes for his conduct which appears to have been reprehensible, if nothing further was intended by it - and I represented to him that a man of superior education and station was bound to do all in his power to support the rules and discipline of the prison. He expressed himself sorry and promises to conduct himself in future with propriety'.

Forbes clearly felt himself badly treated over the alleged planned 'break out', for at the end of his period in solitary, he complained to one of the Visiting Justices, Thomas Lloyd Baker, that he wished 'to be reheard concerning his last punishment'. This was deferred until the other Justice, Daniel Niblett was present, but there is no evidence that he was ever heard on the matter. Similarly, requests made in September 1836 to have back some bread that he was unable to eat during a bout of illness, and to have a copy of the Euclid in his cell, were both refused.

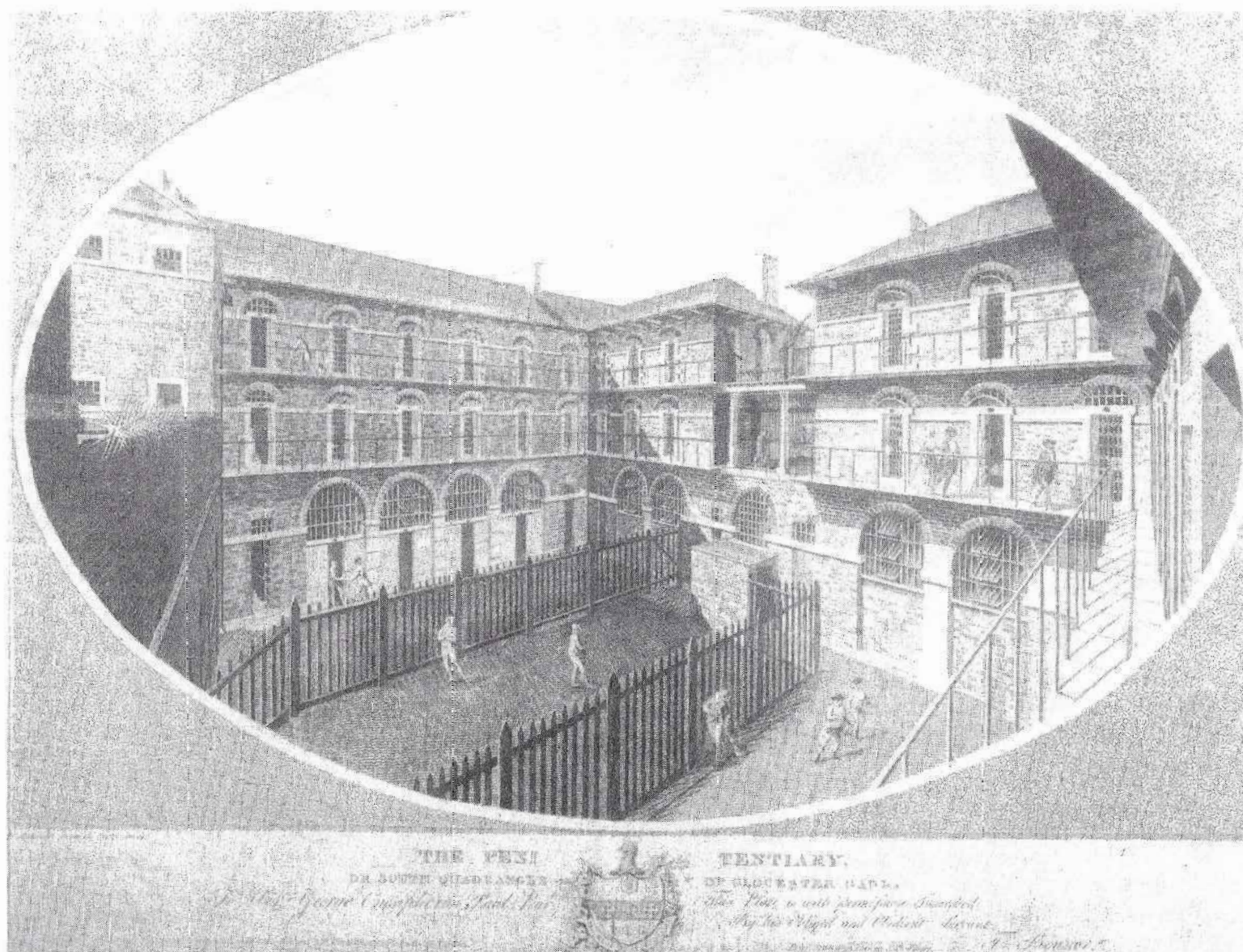


Fig. 7. The Penitentiary, or south quadrangle of Gloucester Gaol, an engraving by Thomas Bonner, published in 1795. Reproduced by courtesy of Gloucestershire County Library.

Exactly when Forbes was released from prison is uncertain. He last appears in the quarterly calendar of prisoners on 3 January 1837 (40), and was certainly still there on 15 January, when he received the sacrament from the Chaplain. Ten prisoners were released on 10 February 1837, and as Forbes was not included in the 11 April calendar, he may well have been among them.

What he did on leaving prison is also uncertain, although he appears to have lived, and practiced as an architect in Cheltenham until at least 1842. He certainly remarried, for the Cheltenham Free Press for 4 August 1838 noted the marriage, on 22 July, at St John's Church, Clerkenwell of 'Mr. John Forbes, architect, to Mary Ann, eldest daughter of Mr. Thomas Poole Butt, both of this town'. A Register of Electors for November 1839 lists him in Northfield Terrace, on the southern fringe of Pittville, as does the 1840 Cheltenham Annuaire, but at the time of the 1841 census, his residence appears to have been very much more 'down-market'. Then, he was recorded, with his daughter Lydia Elizabeth, at a house in St George's Street, off the Lower High Street, the other occupants of which were a carpenter and his family, a paper hanger and a dress maker, who, like one imagines Forbes to have been, were possibly lodgers. Where Forbes' second wife and eldest daughter were in 1841 is not known.

The very last reference to Forbes - and the only one relating to his architectural practice after his period in prison - is to be found in the Cheltenham College Governors' Minutes for 11 April 1842, which record a meeting to consider a number of plans for the proposed new College buildings in Bath Road, including 'the plan sent in by Mr. Forbes of Cheltenham', which they rejected, the commission eventually being awarded to James Wilson of Bath (41). Thereafter, Forbes disappears completely from view. He was certainly not in Cheltenham at the time of the 1851 census, and where he went, what he did, and when he died are - and will probably remain - complete mysteries.

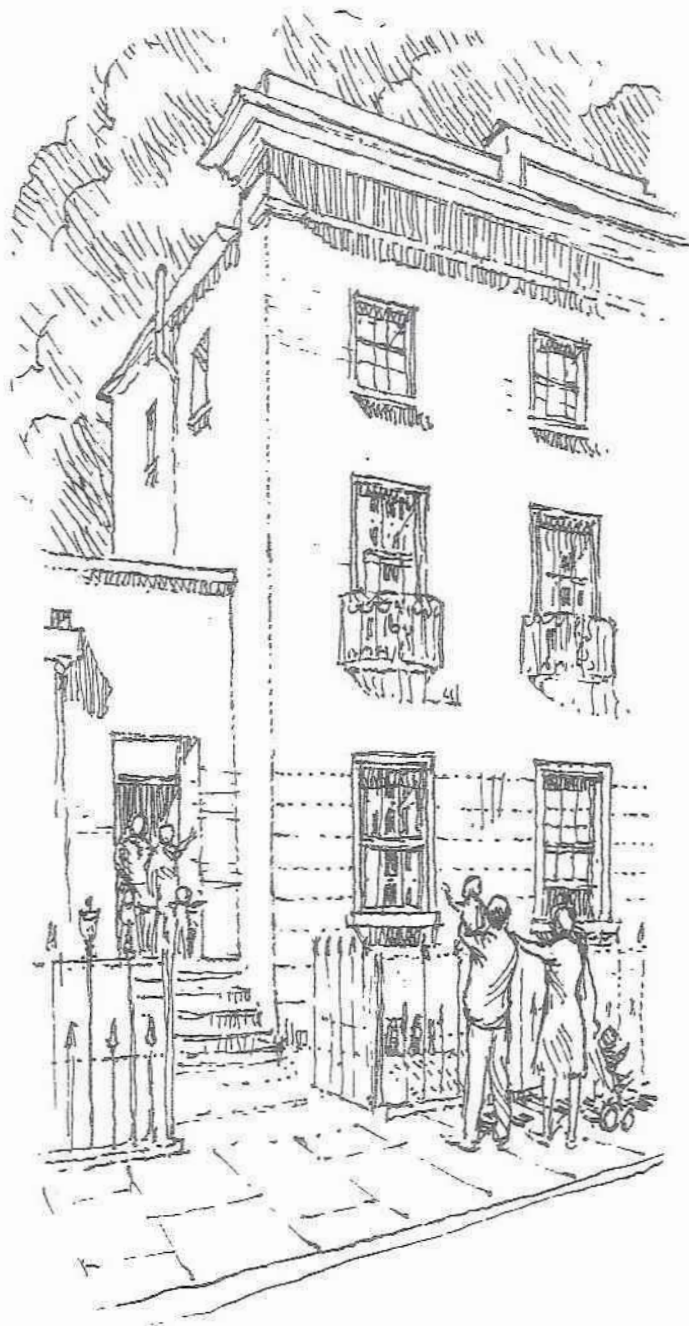
STEVEN BLAKE

Notes:

1. H. Colvin, A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1660-1840 (1978 edn), 313. Colvin puzzlingly calls him John B- Forbes, possibly confusing him with John B. Papworth, as there is no evidence that Forbes had a middle name.
2. List of Prisoners in the Penitentiary House, Gloucester, 20 June 1835 (G.R.O. Q/SG2). The 1841 Census gives his age as 40, but this is probably erroneous.
3. Rickman's diaries are now at the R.I.B.A. Library in London. David Laing (1774-1856), a pupil of Sir John Soane, was appointed Surveyor to the Customs in 1810, and was responsible for designing and supervising the construction of the London Custom House in 1812-17. Unfortunately, much of the work on the building was badly done, and part of the facade collapsed in 1825, leading to Laing's dismissal and premature retirement from architectural practice (Colvin, Biographical Dictionary, 500).
4. Directories in Cheltenham Local Studies Collection; also Cheltenham Chronicle, 26 July 1827.
5. Cheltenham Chronicle, 2 Feb 1826.
6. G.R.O. P78 CW 2/19.

7. For details of the proposal to build a Free Church, see S. Blake, Cheltenham's Churches and Chapels (Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museums, 1976), 19-21.
8. Minutes of the Commissioners for Building New Churches 19, 98 (Church Commissioners Record Office, London).
9. For details of the development of the Pittville Pump Room and Estate, see S. Blake, The Pittville Pump Room 1825-1980 (Cheltenham Borough Council, 1980) and S. Blake, Pittville 1824-1860 : A Scene of Gorgeous Magnificence (Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museums, 1988).
10. Colvin, Biographical Dictionary, 541.
11. H. Casson, 'Cheltenham. A Regency Town', Geographical Magazine, Feb 1943, 504-5.
12. The letter is contained in the Church Commissioners R. O. File No. 15474, relating to St Paul's Church.
13. Cheltenham Chronicle, 1 Feb 1827; also G.R.O. D2025 box 91, deeds of 7 & 10 Royal Crescent.
14. Cheltenham Journal, 10 May 1830; Colvin, Biographical Dictionary, 545.
15. Minutes of the Commissioners for Building New Churches 25, 185.
16. St Paul's Church Building Committee Minute Book (seen by courtesy of the College of St Paul & St Mary, Cheltenham).
17. Minutes of the Commissioners for Building New Churches 28, 230.
18. St Paul's Church Building Committee Minute Book.
19. Letter in St Paul's Church Archives, seen by courtesy of the Revd Paul Fiske.
20. Recorded in St Paul's Church Building Committee Minute Book.
21. Ibid.
22. Details from Blake, Pittville 1824-1860, 34, 70.
23. The account of the development of Montpellier Villas is based on documents relating to 1-4 Montpellier Villas in G.R.O. D2216 Box 4, and entries in the Cheltenham Manor Court Books (G.R.O. D855 vols 3-9).
24. G.R.O. CBR Box 7.
25. The conveyance to Forbes of 'a message or dwelling house lately erected and now in the occupation of John Forbes, architect', the site of 31 Montpellier Villas, is recorded in Cheltenham Manor Court Book 4, 461 (17 July 1827), and again in Court Book 7, 164 (14 April 1831).
26. The account of Forbes' involvement in the Imperial Estate, including his various mortgages and the subsequent sale of his houses is based on entries in the Cheltenham Manor Court Books vols 8-16.
27. G.R.O. CBR Box 7.
28. G.R.O. D2025 Letter Book 3, 315.
29. Births and deaths from Cheltenham Parish Registers (Bishops Transcripts) in G.R.O.
30. Cheltenham Chronicle, 14 March 1833.
31. Cheltenham Free Press, 15 Nov 1834.
32. Details from entries in Cheltenham Manor Court Book 9.
33. This, and all subsequent references to Forbes' trial are taken from the accounts published in local newspapers, namely Bath and Cheltenham Gazette, Cheltenham Chronicle, Cheltenham Free Press, Cheltenham Journal, Gloucester Journal, Gloucestershire Chronicle, and from D. Verey (ed), The Diary of a Cotswold Parson (1978), 102-6, quoted by permission of Mr F.E.B. Witts.
34. G.R.O. Q/Gc 5/5.
35. Ibid.
36. G.R.O. Q/Gc 15/3.

37. Namely the magistrates Robert Capper and William Pitt and the solicitors John Packwood and George Bevir. The others included Dr Boisragon, one of Cheltenham's leading physicians, and Elizabeth Wallace, for whom Forbes had probably designed three houses in Wellington Square.
38. G.R.O. Q/Gc 15/3.
39. G.R.O. Q/Gc 1/4.
40. G.R.O. Q/SG.
41. I owe this reference to Mr John Bowes of the Cheltonian Society.



31 Montpellier Villas, the home of the architect John Forbes between c. 1826-7 and 1831.

## *A passage in time: the story of Swindon Passage and its back-to-back houses*

In 1849, Edward Cresy, in his Report to the General Board of Health on a preliminary inquiry into the sewerage, drainage and supply of water and the sanitary conditions of the inhabitants of the town of Cheltenham stated that,

'Swindon Place consists of forty houses placed back to back with three sets of privies, wash houses and pumps: it is without sewage (sic), carriage way or pavement: the gutter-channels on the surface are always full of filthy fluid: and the place is never free from fever, wanting in ventilation, the houses are always in an unhealthy condition' (1).

This statement reveals a very different picture of 19th-century Cheltenham than the fashionable spa of popular imagination, and the aim of this article is to unravel the origins and development of Swindon Place, and indeed of Swindon Passage, the alleyway in which Swindon Place was situated, and to recount a unique part of Cheltenham's history, as Swindon Place was probably the town's only block of 'back-to-back' houses. Also, through census material, an assessment will be made as to who lived there, the size of families, where they came from and what they did for a living. Finally, through the medium of oral history, an insight will be gained into what life was like in Swindon Passage in the late 1920s, some 100 years after it was built, and shortly before it was slum cleared.

As shown on the 'Old Town Survey' of 1855 - 1857 (2; Fig. 1), Swindon Passage was entered by an arched opening on the north side of the High Street, and its 38 houses may be divided into two parts - firstly, an 'L' shaped terrace numbering 1 - 10 at the southern end of the Passage, divided into two blocks of five by a row of four privies, and, secondly, Swindon Place itself. This comprised two rows of 14 houses placed back-to-back at the north end of the Passage, the block's north wall facing onto Swindon Lane, from which there was also access to the houses; this block included eight privies. It is worth noting that Edward Cresy's description of Swindon Passage is slightly inaccurate as he describes it as 'a row of forty houses placed back-to-back'. However, evidence from maps and census returns clearly shows that there were 38 houses, of which only 28 were built 'back-to-back'. From a set of surviving photographs in the Cheltenham Borough Council's Environmental Health Department, we know that these houses were built of brick (Figs 2 & 3).

Just why these houses were built in this manner will always remain a mystery, although it would seem reasonable to assume that the builder was making the maximum use of the land available.

Clearly, the most obvious way of finding out who owned the land, when the houses were built and who built them, would be to consult the original title deeds - and by good fortune these were deposited in the Gloucestershire Record Office in April 1989 by Messrs. Thomson and Badham, a firm of Tewkesbury solicitors, who had been involved in the management of the property during the early part of this century (3).



Fig. 1. Part of the 1855-7 'Old Town Survey', showing Swindon Passage. The Passage's 38 houses have been outlined and numbered in black, for clarity. Reproduced by courtesy of Cheltenham Borough Council Engineer's Department.

The earliest of the deeds dates back to 10 October 1778, when Thomas Finch of Cheltenham transferred to his son John, for £80, 'all that messuage, burgage or tenement situate on the north side of the Great Street of Cheltenham' plus one acre of land behind the house.

By 1811, when his will was drawn up, John Finch had divided his house into two, the property being described as having a barn, stable and other out-buildings, potato bury and garden. Under the terms of his will the property was to be held in trust for his two grandsons, George and John Snelus, until they reached the age of 24 - which they had done by 9 October 1819, when the property was conveyed to them by the late John Finch's trustees.

The Snelus brothers had clearly been in possession of the property for some time before 1819, as they had already built a number of cottages on the land behind their houses. John Snelus, who was described as a gardener and who inherited the easternment of the two houses (no. 230) had built three cottages immediately behind his house, plus four cottages at the north end of the garden, adjoining Back Lane, as Swindon Lane was then known. George Snelus, who was described as a tailor, and who inherited no. 231, had also built four cottages at the north end of the garden, and it is fair to assume that these eight cottages were the first of the back-to-backs, perhaps what later became nos. 21-28 Swindon Place.

George Snelus is recorded as living at 231 High Street in Gell and Bradshaw's 1820 Gloucestershire Directory, and in the 1841 Census, in which his age was given as 45 years. Also at that address was his wife, Hannah, also 45 years of age, possibly the Hannah Piff to whom a George Snelus was married at St Mary's church, Cheltenham, on 22 June 1815. Far less is known of John Snelus, apart from two possible references in the marriage index held in the Gloucestershire Record Office. The first recorded the marriage of John Snelus to Mary Buckle at Leckhampton church on 27 May 1815 (witnessed by George Snelus), and the second recorded the marriage of John Snelus, widower, to Sarah Webb at St Mary's church, Cheltenham on 26 May 1827 (4).

In around 1819-21, John Snelus clearly loaned money to his brother George; by 25 May 1821, he was owed £189 13s.3d., and in order to repay this debt, George transferred his house and four cottages to John, who in addition paid his brother George £100 in cash. John Snelus thereby became the sole owner of 230-231 High Street and the 11 cottages at the rear.

Three months later, on 10 August 1821, John Snelus raised the first in a series of mortgages on the property, borrowing £800 from one William Jenkins - by which time he had built two more cottages at the northern end of the garden, almost certainly the future nos 19 - 20 Swindon Place, immediately to the south of the four cottages that he had built prior to October 1819. Two more cottages had been built by 22 August 1823 - perhaps the future nos 29 - 30 Swindon Place - thereby completing the northernmost block of 12 back-to-backs. It was on that date that Snelus' mortgage was transferred from the late William Jenkins' executors to one Michael Procter, who agreed to increase the principal sum to £1000.

Snelus had clearly raised his £1000 in order to build his cottages, and he continued both to build and to borrow during the following years.





Fig. 2. Swindon Place, looking south towards High Street from Swindon Lane. Photographed c. 1930. Reproduced by courtesy of Cheltenham Borough Council Environmental Health Department.

Between November 1824 and June 1829, Michael Procter loaned Snelus an additional £1158, while Procter's sister, Mary Jenkins (possibly the widow of William Jenkins), loaned Snelus £600 between February 1823 and February 1826. Michael Procter's brother William, a farmer from Elkstone, loaned Snelus £2600 between May 1822 and February 1832, and also took over Snelus' debt to Michael Procter in June 1829. In all, Snelus is known to have raised mortgages totalling £5358 during a ten year period between 1822 and 1832.

From the mortgage deeds between Snelus and Michael Procter it is clear that seven more cottages were built between August 1823 and November 1824, and an unspecified further number between November 1824 and August 1825. On 7 October 1825, a building certificate, certifying that the party walls of a number of recently-built houses were of sufficient thickness, was issued by the Town Surveyor, and included 12 houses in Swindon Place, most probably the northernmost block, built between c. 1819 and 1823 (5; Fig. 4). Certainly, all 16 houses forming the southern part of Swindon Place had been completed by August 1826, in which month a dispute arose between Snelus and the Town Commissioners over his refusal to pay for a further building certificate for 16 houses, which although not specifically identified as such are undoubtedly those in Swindon Place (6). The dispute resulted in an appeal being heard at the 1826 Gloucestershire Michaelmas Quarter Sessions and the surviving documents are invaluable in providing a further insight into the building of Swindon Place. Snelus had apparently refused to pay the Town Surveyor's charge of £5 12s. 0d. for his certificate, and had been committed by the Cheltenham magistrates on 10 August 1826. Snelus gave notice of his intention to appeal, and counsel for the Commissioners was instructed to prepare a case, the draft of which has survived. This notes that,

'The appellant John Snelus having laid out his own private ground or property without the limits of the town of Cheltenham for the purpose of building small houses or cottages, he built thereon 16 houses (adjoining other cottages he had before built) which Billings the Commissioners' Surveyor inspected as they proceeded and when they were finished and he found the regulations of the Act had been complied with, he certified to the Commissioners that such regulations had been so complied with and thereupon the houses, being of the lowest class he claimed to be entitled under the 74th section of the Act and the orders of the Commissioners being set forth, to the sum of £5 12s. 0d.'

The document also notes that the houses 'are not in, at least do not front any of the public streets of Cheltenham' and that they 'are connected or communicate with the highway called the Back Lane' - both of which statements would tend to confirm the identification of the houses as Swindon Place. Tantalisingly, the documents also refer to 'a sketch to elucidate the situation of the houses, left herewith', although no such sketch has survived. Nor, unfortunately, has any record of the outcome of the case.

Snelus owned and rented out his cottage properties until the year 1840, when he was declared an insolvent debtor. On 31 March 1840 the Court for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors met to appoint assignees for his estate, Snelus being described as 'lately a prisoner in Fleet Prison' - the latter being London's notorious debtors' prison, familiar to readers of Dickens. Assignees and creditors met in Cheltenham on 21

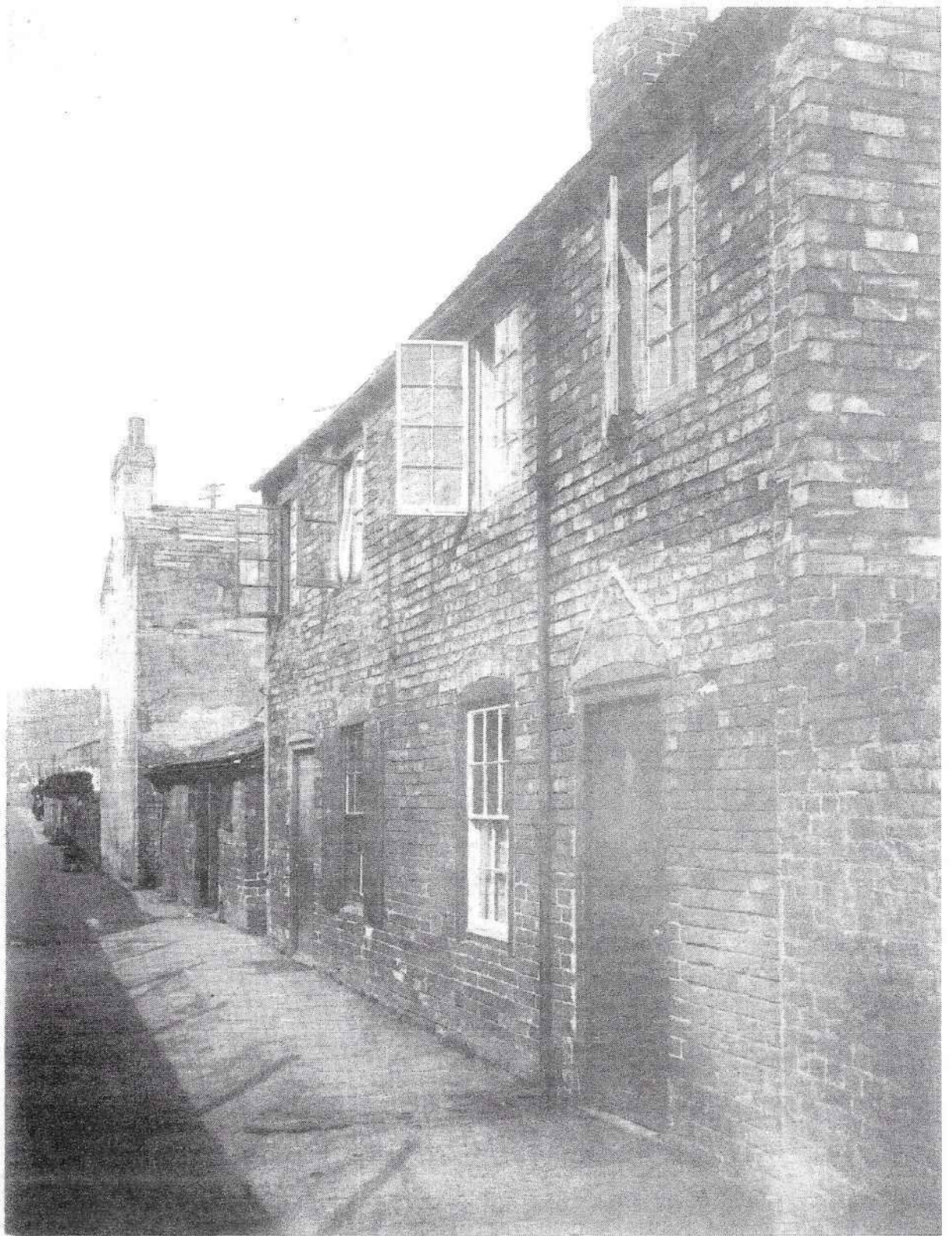


Fig. 3. Part of Swindon Place, looking northwards towards Swindon Lane. Photographed c. 1930. Reproduced by courtesy of Cheltenham Borough Council Environmental Health Department.

This is to Certify that the Persons hereinafter specified, have, in erecting  
and Building the houses and Buildings, as stated hereinafter, Conformable  
to the rules & regulations required by the Chatterham Paving Act,

- Fig Mrs Despard, 1 house in Priory field  
Mr N. Washburn & D<sup>o</sup> in Jersey Street  
Mr John Williams 2 houses in D<sup>o</sup> -  
Mr Robert Williams & D<sup>o</sup> Tewkesbury road  
Mr George, 1 Bakehouse and apartments over, in Pittsville Terrace  
Mr Sam<sup>l</sup> Clarke, Smith shops in North Place  
Mr Thick 1 house Rodney Terrace  
Mr Wicomfield & D<sup>o</sup> in D<sup>o</sup>  
Mr Wescott 1 house in Regent Street  
Mr Samuel Barnes 1 house at the Knave  
Mr Gore, 1 Brewery in S<sup>t</sup> Georges Place  
Mr Wallinger 1 house in Gydes Terrace, next to the Chapel  
Mr J. Snelus 12 houses in Swindon place

Chatterham, Oct<sup>r</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 1825, Richard Killings  
Town Surveyor

Fig. 4. Building Certificate, issued on 7 October 1825, including Snelus' 12 houses in Swindon Place (G.R.O. CBR Box 7).

May 1840, and it was agreed to put the Swindon Passage properties up for sale at the Wellington Hotel, on 22 June, with a reserve (or 'upset') price of £4758, the amount owed to William Procter who had the first claim on the property (7; Fig. 5). Procter in fact purchased the property at the sale for £4793, being the only bidder, and therefore just offering £35 - the minimum bid above the reserve price.

What happened to Snelus after 1840 is unknown. What is clear however is that William Procter and his descendants owned 230 - 231 High Street (latterly known as 429-431 High Street) and the 38 houses in Swindon Passage until 1912, when under the terms of the will of Mrs Esther (or Hester) Procter of Painswick, the property was vested in her trustees, Messrs. Brookes and Badham, solicitors, of Tewkesbury.

The first stage in the final demolition of the Passage came on 12 June 1930, when the Cheltenham Borough Council Housing Committee resolved to ask the Public Health Committee to consider an improvement scheme for Swindon Passage. At a meeting of the latter committee held on 11 December 1931, it was resolved that the matter should be passed to the Medical Officer of Health. On his recommendation to the Housing Committee, held on 19 January 1933, it was resolved that Swindon Passage should be declared a slum clearance area and that it should be demolished, a demolition order being issued on 11 August 1933 (8). Just over a year later, on 27 August 1934, Mrs Procter's trustees sold the property to Mark Williams and Co., demolition contractors, for £225, the conveyance stating that 'the purchasers hereby covenant with the vendors to carry out the terms of the demolition order' - which was presumably carried out shortly thereafter, the inhabitants being moved to new council homes, mainly in Pates Avenue, Rowanfield. On 10 February 1939, Mark Williams and Co. sold the site of the Passage to the Post Office for £550 and it was subsequently used as the Cheltenham Postal Garage. The houses fronting the High Street remained in use until the late 1970s, and were demolished in 1986 to make way for the new G.P.O. sorting office which now occupies their site and the site of Swindon Passage (9).

#### **The inhabitants of Swindon Passage - an insight from the census years of 1841-1881**

The first substantial evidence for the occupiers of Swindon Place is, of course, the 1841 census. To discover who lived there between its completion and the 1841 census is very difficult to establish. The street directories for Cheltenham do not begin until 1837, and cover only the 'fashionable' areas of town. However, the 1841 census for Swindon Place poses one slight problem - only 32 of the 38 houses are enumerated, although previous evidence tells us that by 1841 all 38 houses had been built. It is possible that it may have been an oversight, or they may be listed elsewhere on the census, although the latter does not appear to be the case. There is one early directory that lists Swindon Place - Harper's 1844 Directory of Cheltenham (Fig. 6), which lists all the occupiers of the Passage, and gives their trades.

Each census year has been individually examined and, as expected, there were no significant changes over time. Therefore the information for each year has been amalgamated and an average has been given for the five years. The following criteria was used for each census year:-

Freehold Property in Cheltenham  
for Sale

To be sold by Auction.

---

By "Mr Thomas Williams"

---

On Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of June  
instant at the Wellington Hotel Cheltenham  
at four o'clock in the afternoon by order  
of the Assignees of the Estate and effects of  
John Inelus an Insolvent subject to  
such Conditions as shall be then and  
there produced in One Lot the following  
desirable Property. -

---

All those two Messuages or Tenements  
known as Nos 230 and 231 High Street  
in Cheltenham aforesaid. -

And also all those thirty eight Cottages  
or Tenements lying behind the before  
mentioned Messuages and numbering  
from one to thirty eight inclusive and  
called or known as Swindow Race

---

Further particulars may be known by  
applying to Mr Sheldon or Mess<sup>rs</sup> Bubb  
and Longwood Solicitors Cheltenham

SUSSEX PLACE.

*W. side of Hewlett street.*

- 2 Keys the Misses
- 3 Robinson Collings, M.D., Westcombe house
- Robinson S. D. M.D.
- 4 Ashwin Misses, ladies' boarding school, St. John's house
- 6 Eccles James, carver & gilder
- 7 Gore John, hairdresser
- 8 Tyler John, baker
- 9 Musgrove Mrs
- 10 Neville Richard, lodging house

SUSSEX VILLAS.

*W. side of Cleeve road.*

- 1 Letherington Mrs Mary
- Wells Mrs Isabella
- 2 Brackenbury Mrs Catherine
- 3 Wilson Mrs Anna Margaret

SWINDON PLACE.

*N. side of High street.*

- 1 Bennett William, porter
- 2 Jones Richard, stonemason
- 3 Hiscox George, labourer
- 4 Webb Ann, dressmaker
- 5 Cox Thomas, bricklayer
- Cox Eliza, dressmaker
- 6 Dodwell Henry, wood dealer
- Charlwood Thos., basket maker
- 7 Lawrence Joseph, maltster
- 8 Palmer John, carpenter
- 9 Clee Joseph, gardener
- 10 Perkins Thomas, labourer
- 11 Williams Charles, bricklayer
- 12 Spackman Thomas, plasterer
- 13 Sage John, labourer
- 14 Clifford Charles, labourer
- 15 Talboys Thomas, ropemaker
- 16 Jones Priscilla
- 17 Lloyd Joseph, bricklayer
- 18 Lane Ann, laundress
- 19 Jackson Jane
- 20 Parker Thomas, labourer
- 23 Jones Elizabeth
- 24 Brown Mary
- 25 Bowell John, carpenter
- 26 Packer Henry, labourer

- 27 Hiscocks George, carpenter
- 28 Terry John, porter
- 29 Severn James, servant
- Severn Ann, laundress
- 30 Price James, porter
- 31 Pike Richard, painter
- 32 Barrott Henry, baker
- 33 Bliss James, porter
- 34 Good John, labourer
- 35 Garn Thomas, labourer
- 36 Taylor Edward, painter
- 37 Powis Joseph, labourer
- 38 Batchelor James, porter

SWINDON ROAD.

*From Back street to Swindon.*

(S. side.)

Hobbs Wm., *Old Cherry tree* b. h.  
Townsend street north  
(*Swindon terrace.*)

- 1 Gibbins Samuel, plasterer
- 2 Morgan Edwin, painter
- 3 Paviour Mary Ann, dressmaker
- 5 Fruin William, baker
- 6 Powell James, carpenter

*Albert street north*

*Cleveland street*

Band Mary

Champion John, sen., market gr.

Archer Wm., maltster, Swindon c.

(*Cullen place*)

- 1 Green Charles, labourer
- 2 Tanner Charles, bookbinder
- 3 Smith Elizabeth, laundress
- Coull John, florist & market gdnr.

*Queen street*

Coull Alexander, market gardener,

Ripstone cottage

Perry Giles, labourer, Swindon c.

Perry Mary, laundress, ditto

*Stanhope street*

(*Swindon cottages.*)

- 2 Smith Hugh, cutler
- 3 Lea Darby, labourer
- 4 Warden John, chimney sweeper

Fig. 6. The entry for Swindon Passage in Harper's 1844 Cheltenham Directory. Reproduced by courtesy of Gloucestershire County Library.

1. Total population.
2. Average number of persons per household.
3. Migration - based on head of household and non-dependant relatives, ie lodgers.
4. Number of inhabitants in employment and their occupations.

1. POPULATION

Total population	158
Total males	74
Total females	84

2. PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD

Average number of persons per household	4
---	---

3. MIGRATION

Migration - based on heads of households and non-dependant relatives. (Excluding 1841 census).

Total heads of household/non-dependant relatives	42
Total born in Cheltenham	15
Total born in Gloucestershire (excluding Cheltenham)	11
Total born elsewhere	14
Not known	2

It is interesting to note that those born outside of the county and moved to Cheltenham on the whole came from adjoining counties.

4. EMPLOYMENT

Employment figures - based on minimum age of ten years, and no maximum age.

Total population aged 10 and over	106
Total males aged 10 and over	51
Total females aged 10 and over	55
Total males employed	44 out of 51
Total females employed	23 out of 55

From the figures given we can see that there was virtually full employment amongst the male occupants. As may be expected of this type of housing many of the inhabitants were employed in low-skilled occupations. Many of the men were employed in the building trades, and the women in domestic service and allied trades such as dressmaking. Such types of employment were indicative of the town at that time; Cresy notes that,



'There are no manufactures, and the great mass of the inhabitants depend on the influx of visitors for their employment and support' (10).

The most unusual occupation of one of the inhabitants of Swindon Place was that of a 'portrait painter', listed in the 1851 census.

The following table provides a more detailed insight into occupations in Swindon Passage and the number of people employed in the various trades:-

OCCUPATION	NUMBER EMPLOYED IN TRADE				
	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Agricultural labourer	7		1	2	
Baker	3			1	1
Basket maker		2			
Blacksmith	1	1	1	1	
Brewer			1		
Brickboy	1				
Bricklayer	2		4	4	
Butcher			2		1
Carpenters apprentice	1				
Carpenter	7	3	4	4	
Carter			1		
Charwoman		11	4	2	3
Coachmaker			1		
Coachpainter		1			
Dealer in china and glass			1	1	1
Dressmaker	5	6	8	10	5
Errand boy		2	1	1	
Farmers apprentice	1				
Gardener	2	4	2		1
Gas stoker					1
Greengrocer			1		
Labourer	3	7	4	7	11
Launderess	6	4	3	9	7
Mason	1	2			
Nailer	1				
Needlewoman		1	2	1	4
Nurse girl		1			
Painter	2	4	7	3	2
Paper hanger				1	1
Parchment maker			1		
Plasterer	2		3	1	2
Porter	5	3	6	4	4
Portrait painter		1			
Rope maker	1				
Saddlemaker	1				
Sawyer		3			
Seaman			1		
Seamstress			1	1	1
Servant		1	3	3	
Shoebinder	2	3			
Shoemaker		4		2	
Shopman		1			

Stonemason		2	1	1	3
Stone sawyer			1		2
Tailor	1		1	1	
Tailoress		1		1	
Tin man				1	
Washerwoman		1		1	
Well sinker					1
Wheelchairman			1		
Wheelwright			1	1	
Whitesmith		2			
Has Parish relief		1			

It is interesting to note that there were a number of families who remained in Swindon Passage for a large number of years. The Pike family of 31 Swindon Passage and the Jones family of 16 Swindon Passage both lived there for 40 years, perhaps a small indication that mobility in this part of the town was low. The following table contains information on the various families:-

NAME	House number	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881
Brotherage	24	x	x	x		
Hiscock	27	x	x			
Jones	16	x	x	x	x	
Page	13	x	x			
Pike	31	x	x	x	x	
Webb	4	x	x			
Tallboys	17	x		x		
Archer	2/25		x	x	x	
Jones	36		x	x		
Kitchen	38		x	x	x	
Thomas	18		x	x		
Williams	11		x	x		
Batchelor	4			x	x	
Darvill	30			x	x	
Deekes	4			x	x	
Dunman	12/10			x	x	x
Nutcombe	7			x	x	
Pike	29			x	x	
Pledger	15			x	x	
Williams	19			x	x	x
Hill	27			x	x	
Howship	6/8				x	x
Onion	11			x	x	
Jelfs	9/12				x	x
Jones	18				x	x
Knight	28				x	x

#### Oral History - A view of Swindon Passage in the 1920s

As a result of a letter in the local free newspaper, the Cheltenham News (11), several people who remembered Swindon Passage either through living there or knowing people who lived there contacted me both by letter and telephone, and provided an insight into what the houses were like inside, and perhaps more importantly, a view of a community.

From talking to two people, it was possible to establish the design of the 'back-to-back' houses. The main room of each was approximately 14 foot square and directly entered through the front door. One lady

described the room as large enough to take one sideboard, one table and four chairs. There was a hearth and oven in this room - bathtime was a zinc bath in front of the fire! The room had a flagstone floor. The upstairs was approached by stairs to the left of the main room, and there were two small bedrooms. Some of the houses were lucky enough to have a tap - this was underneath the stairs. All the lighting was gas mantles or candles. Prior to the houses being demolished in the 1930s the rent was 6s. 6d. per week.

It became very clear in conversations with a few people that although the people who lived in Swindon Passage were very poor, they were very happy - mainly because they had a great sense of community belonging and spirit, and when needed would always help one another. One example of the passage working together as a community would be use of the wash-house. Each wash-house was shared by three or even four families, and each family had it for a particular day - and it was an unwritten rule that if it was that person's day for the wash-house no-one else would attempt to use it.

It also became clear that they were in fact self-sufficient within their district and that they rarely ventured from the immediate area of the Passage. Locally they had a fish and chip shop, Winnie Walton's faggot and peas shop, a pawn shop, Lusty's hardware shop, Moxey's and Vizard's fruit and vegetable shops and Stanley's the butchers. When there was not enough money to buy food many of the children from the Passage ate at the nearby soup kitchen for 1d. or at the Workhouse.

Very few families ventured further up into the High Street - they had a limit known as the 'Pepperbox' (an underground gents toilets), a little to the east, towards the town centre. This would be as far as they would normally go - and on Saturday nights it was forbidden to go past there. They were also not allowed along The Promenade.

One old resident also mentioned the number of gypsies who used to come into this part of town, and that many of the children of Swindon Passage were taught gypsy dialect by their parents, if only to help them survive. The Passage was not without its characters - the most notable seems to have been 'Cock Robin', who got his name from always wearing red hunting clothes. It would appear however, that much of his entertainment was a result of too much alcohol which gave rise to too much singing and dancing!

The importance of the community spirit became even more clear when people spoke of being rehoused prior to the demolition of the Passage. It was evident that they felt that their community had been broken up and although their housing conditions were infinitely better, they missed the contact of their neighbours.

This article has traced from beginning to end a 'passage' of Cheltenham's history - a unique corner of the town, gone but not forgotten.

MAGGIE BLAKE

Notes:

1. E. Cresy, Report to the General Board of Health..., 15.
2. A series of detailed maps produced for the local Board of Health; originals in Cheltenham Borough Council's Engineers' department, copy in G.R.O.

3. G.R.O. D2079 111/208; a total of 45 documents.
4. Marriage Index housed in G.R.O., compiled by the Gloucestershire Family History Society, from Bishops' Transcripts and Parish Registers.
5. Building certificates for 1824-5, in G.R.O. CBR Box 7. The fact that such certificates were only issued from mid-1824 onwards may explain the apparent time-lag between the completion of the block and the issuing of the certificate.
6. G.R.O. CBR Box 4, bundle 65. Papers re. John Snelus.
7. The draft sale particulars in G.R.O. D2079 are reproduced as Fig.5, and were published in Cheltenham Examiner, 10 June 1840.
8. References from Cheltenham Borough Council Committee Minutes 1931-3.
9. Details from post-1933 deeds of G.P.O. sorting office seen at Post Office solicitors, Croydon, by courtesy of G.P.O. For a history and architectural survey of the houses fronting the High Street, see S. Blake and S. Davies, 'Nos 427-431 High Street, Cheltenham : an architectural survey', Glevensis 13 (1979), 43-46.
10. Cresy, Report, 8.
11. Cheltenham News, 1 Dec 1988.

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## *Victorian Vandals in the Valley : Thomas Butt and the Golden Valley Chapel, 1876*

Situated, somewhat incongruously, in a graveyard of old and broken cars on the Cheltenham to Gloucester Road, just within the boundary of the parish of Staverton, is a small but attractive brick building, once known as 'The Golden Valley Chapel'. In 1967, this little chapel became redundant, and planning permission was given for it to be used as a warehouse. The only apparent objection to this plan was raised by a Society known as 'The Cheltenham Spa Campaign', which protested that the chapel was in a Green Belt area, which in view of the fact that the building is on the edge of a car-breaker's yard, reminiscent of a World War battlefield, seemed somewhat irrelevant.

It was, however, a different matter just under a century before, in 1876, when the residents of the Golden Valley were, after 15 years, also about to be deprived of their church, which was on, or very near the site of the present chapel. Then there was a far greater outcry, and as a result some very high quality 'dirty Victorian linen' was washed in public!

At the centre of the controversy was one Thomas Packer Walter Butt, the second son of a wealthy clothier from Chalford, who, since the death of his elder brother William in 1848, had been the owner of the Arle Court Estate at Cheltenham. Squire Butt, as he was affectionately known to his tenants, lived in the 19th-century Arle Court, a house which he and his wife, Eliza (née Lutener), the daughter of a Salopian surgeon, had built, and which is now the headquarters of the Dowty Group of Companies. This house should not be confused with the original Arle Court, which was an Elizabethan house, the remains of which are in Kingsmead Road, two miles to the north. In this house Squire Butt had been born in 1823, and here also, over 300 years ago, his ancestor, Thomas Packer of Arle had lived, and died in 1558.

It was obviously of some pride to Squire Butt that he had both the physical and the spiritual welfare of his tenants at heart, and with the latter in mind, in 1861, he had thoughtfully erected just within the boundary of the parish of Staverton, a small wooden church, which was known officially as 'St Peter's in the Valley' but which was always referred to by the local inhabitants more intimately, as 'The Little Church in the Valley'.

This little church had always been well attended, both by the local people, and, particularly in the summer, by Cheltenham folk, who having attended evensong, liked to stroll leisurely back to town in the cool of the evening.

Mr Butt had always been solely responsible for the upkeep of the building, and for the stipend of the Curate to conduct the services, and all appeared to be well until early in 1876, when rumours began to circulate that Mr Butt intended to demolish the building, due to the fact that he and the Revd Alfred Hall, who had been curate for the past four or five years, had had an unpleasant misunderstanding.

There was no official announcement from Mr Butt, nor from the Revd Hall, and the people who used the church regularly, and had come to regard it

as a permanent amenity, began to feel affronted, and demanded to know exactly why Mr Butt was taking such an unprecedented step, without as much as a warning, or a consultation with them. Tongues wagged, and the gossips, unable to stand the strain of being 'in the dark' any longer got together and entreated the incumbent of Staverton, the Revd Thomas Purnell, in whose parish the little church was situated, to intervene on their behalf.

Together with a number of 'other responsible gentlemen of the neighbourhood' the Revd Purnell 'waited upon' Mr Butt at Arle Court, in the hope of persuading him to reconsider his decision, if the rumours were well founded, or, at best, to give them an explanation for his refusal to continue to provide the residents of the Golden Valley with 'spiritual consolation and instruction'.

Mr Butt remained adamant, and without further explanation as to why he had decided to take such a step, expressed his determination to have the church removed, and refused to be drawn further on the matter. On the morning of 28 February 1876, a number of workmen descended on the neat little church, and in a matter of minutes they razed it to the ground.

Mr Butt obviously intended that this should be the end of the matter, but he badly misjudged the interest and indignation that his action had aroused amongst the local inhabitants, who clearly felt he should have consulted them. The Cheltenham Looker-On for 11 March 1876, which printed their understanding of the affair, only made matters worse, for their account was absolutely biased against Mr Butt. Obviously the Revd Hall had been talking to the editor!

On returning to Arle Court after a week's absence, Mr Butt had his attention drawn to the account, and immediately sat down and wrote a very long letter to the editor, begging him 'to give insertion of the facts and the circumstances of the case, as a mere matter of justice to me'. Had he realised the trouble he was stirring up for himself by this action, he would no doubt have allowed the matter to drop there and then, and let justice take care of itself.

Mr Butt's letter said that on 29 December 1875 he had received a letter from the Revd Alfred Hall stating that he had, for some time, had serious thoughts of resigning the curacy of the little church in the valley, and had now made up his mind to do so, and was giving Mr Butt two months' notice herewith. The Revd Hall ended the letter by thanking Mr Butt for his kindness over the past few years.

Shortly after this, Mr Butt said, he learned that the advowson of Staverton was for sale, and as St Peter's in the Valley was in this parish, and only there by the courtesy of the Revd Purnell, he had decided that the possibility of the little church falling into other hands might complicate matters, and that it would be safer to remove the church altogether, and he had informed the Revd Purnell of this on his visit to Arle Court on 22 January 1876.

Mr Butt continued that on the morning of 20 February he had placed a notice on the church porch stating that services would be discontinued after the following Sunday, but this notice had been pulled down before the service commenced. Because of this he had asked the Revd Hall to make an announcement to this effect after the service that evening, but Mr Hall refused to do this, in what Mr Butt considered to be 'a prematory tone and uncourteous manner'. The following Sunday, Mr Butt

fixed another notice on the church porch, but this too was torn down and disappeared before the service began on the following Sunday morning.

Mr Butt attended the evening service despite a warning that there were plans afoot to upset his carriage and afterwards set fire to the little church - but he had wisely taken the precaution of requesting the presence of the Police! The ultimate in discourtesy came at the end of the service that evening, when the Revd. Hall invited those who wished to do so, to meet him on the other side of the road, in a few minutes, which seemed to Mr Butt an extraordinary way for a cleric to behave. He was not too pleased either with the reception he received himself when he left the church, to find 'a large concourse of people gathered' who, as predicted, began to jeer and hoot at him, and to throw stones at the church, and at his person, and 'otherwise behave in a very insulting manner'. Whilst all this was going on, the Revd. Hall, according to Mr Butt, did nothing whatever to calm the mob, or assist him to his carriage.

Mr Butt's servants had guarded the church the previous night, and the presence of the Police prevented further damage to himself and the church, but, wrote Mr Butt, 'the demonstration of ill-will from those people whom I had sought to serve for so many years, decided me to remove the church, and protect my property'. Mr Butt ended his letter, 'there are few things I dislike more than a newspaper controversy, and I do not intend to be drawn into any further public reference to the subject'.

In spite of this, the following week, the Looker-On printed three letters on the subject of the 'Little Church in the Valley' - one from the Revd Alfred Hall of Cotswold Lodge, another from the Revd Thomas Purnell of Staverton, and yet another from Mr Butt of Arle Court.

The length of the Revd Hall's letter exceeded that of Mr Butt's the previous week, and its contents left no one in any doubt that there had been some trouble between the two men, and that feelings were still running high. 'On two previous occasions', said Mr Hall, 'I placed my resignation in Mr Butt's hands, only to withdraw them at Mr Butt's earnest solicitation, and in the hope that, after an explanation, a better state of things might ensue'. Mr Hall spared Mr Butt nothing. Where Mr Butt's letter had been tempered with diplomacy and Victorian good manners, the Revd Hall threw discretion to high heaven! He went on to accuse Mr Butt of not speaking the truth about his resignation, and he denied that the church was run solely at Mr Butt's expense (as Mr Butt had claimed), pointing out that on the first Sunday in the month, and on special Holy Days, the alms and oblations of the congregation had been duly collected, a half of which Mr Butt was in the habit of retaining for church expenses.

With regard to Mr Butt's statement that the curacy of the 'little church in the valley' was not one that an active man might find satisfying, Mr Hall scathingly remarked, 'it is not my intention to vindicate the fame of the eight clergymen who in ten years preceded me, but anyone could be forgiven for thinking that something was amiss, that in so short a time so many relinquished the job'.

Not content with that, Mr Hall went on to question the truth of Mr Butt's statement that only one of these gentlemen left of their own free will, adding, 'in my case I am leaving, not by the wish of my congregation, my Vicar (the Revd. Purnell) or my Diocesan'.

He then accused Mr Butt of ignoring a petition signed by 200 inhabitants (in the 19th century the Golden Valley was large enough to be called a hamlet) who 'gratefully acknowledged the benefits received by his (Revd Hall's) kindness in having done so much to provide for their spiritual wants during the past five years, and humbly praying that the same spiritual advantages might continue'. There was, he said, 'no abstaining from a definite reply' (which Mr Butt had professed to withhold from the Revd Purnell), 'no waiting to see what turn events might take' but simply 'a decided and positive refusal to entertain the prayer of the petition'.

Many must have thought that Mr Hall had said more than enough - but he went doggedly on, saying, 'I come now to the most painful part of your letter', where Mr Butt had accused him of using 'a prematory and an uncertain manner'. He strongly denied the charge, making the plea 'that no clergyman could remain un-moved, when announcing to the people he had administered to for some four or five years, that the door of the church, where he was wont to meet them at God's table, would be closed to them forever'. In spite of this, he emphasised, 'Mr Butt and I had shaken hands as usual that evening', and he went on to say that it was Mr Butt himself, on the morning of 27 February 1876, who had refused the hand 'which I held out to him, and this in full view of the congregation'.

Somewhat sanctimoniously, the Revd Hall went on to say 'This did NOT stop me from returning in the evening to take my last service at St Peter's, read prayers, and preach calmly, and, at the end of the service, request those whom I had not been able to visit in their homes, to meet me outside the church where I should be happy to have the opportunity to take my leave of them'. Mr Hall went on, 'in spite of Mr Butt's remarks to the contrary I had the satisfaction of seeing him safely to his carriage', adding, 'I having no apprehension at all for his safety, knowing the worshippers of St Peter's had been taught their duty towards God and their neighbours better than that'.

The Reverend Gentleman ended his long letter (which it is to be hoped was not an indication of the length of his sermons!) by saying to Mr Butt, 'I leave you to your own conscience, trusting that even you may be constrained to make what reparation lies in your power, in the cause of truth, right and charity'. 'No-one', he pointed out, 'would hold you to your self-imposed obligation to make no further public reference to the matter, for it can never be dishonourable for a man to acknowledge an error into which an infirmity of judgement, or undue excitement of feeling has betrayed him, and to refuse to do so, on the plea that he has bound himself to silence, is an act of moral cowardice'.

This public outburst of vindictive self-righteousness on the part of the Revd. Hall must have caused Mr Butt considerable distress, for as well as a considerate landlord and employer he was a shy and retiring man, who even in death requested that his funeral 'be conducted in as quiet and simple manner as possible'. It could not have done a lot to enhance the Revd. Hall's reputation either, but one man must have found some satisfaction in the unhappy affair and that was the editor of the Looker-On whose sales, for a few weeks, must have soared sky-high!

Mr Butt had little option but to reply to the Revd Hall, and this was brief. He denied that the two occasions in which Mr Hall tendered his



resignation were in any way connected with the present differences between them, and anyone reading his letter of 29 December 1875 would see, quite plainly, that his reason for resigning was that 'he should not wish to be tied by any permanent engagement', and reminded him, that had there been any other reason 'you had plenty of opportunity to acquaint me with it, when you and Mrs Hall dined with me at Arle Court a few evenings ago'. Touché!

Mr Butt pointed out that Mr Hall must be aware that the alms and oblations received by him did not amount to more than £4 a year, and were always expended 'frequently with an addition from my own pocket, in the purchase of warm clothing at Christmas, to poor persons attending the church'. Mr Butt ended his letter by saying, 'I have, to a limited extent, departed from my expressed intention not to be drawn into any further public reference to this subject. Of course I can have no objection to the exercise of your undoubted right to put your letter in the local paper, and I have only to ask to let it be accompanied by this reply'.

Obviously, before sending his letter to the Looker-On, the Revd. Hall had shown a copy of it to Mr Butt, almost in a gesture of blackmail, hoping perhaps that having seen its contents Mr Butt would beg him not to make it public.

The third letter to appear that week was from the Revd Thomas Purnell of Staverton, who was anxious to make his position clear. He insisted that he only gave Mr Butt permission to erect the little church after a solemn promise by him that a permanent church would be erected and endowed if the people of the neighbourhood were found to appreciate it, and he called upon a Mr Warren, who was at that time (1861) acting as Mr Butt's Chaplain, to confirm this. The Revd Purnell must have had the same hopes as his Curate, the Revd Hall, for it was obvious that he too had shown his letter to Mr Butt, before forwarding it to the editor of the Looker-On, who in the meantime, wrote himself to the Revd Warren asking him if the Revd Purnell's claims regarding the permanency of the little church were true.

Mr Warren, writing from the Rectory at Esher in Surrey replied that 'he did not recall any solemn promises being made by Mr Butt concerning the erection of a permanent building' and enclosed a copy of a communication he had received from the Revd Purnell, dated 27 June 1861, which referred to the opening of the building. Mr Warren also became upset and continued 'that it would have been as well if the Revd Purnell had first consulted me, before making a public assertion in which my name is so materially involved'.

The readers of the Looker-On must have wondered what more would be revealed, and just how many more men of the cloth would feel obliged to make a comment. They were not to be disappointed.

The following Saturday, the editor of the Looker-On published another letter from Mr Butt which was a reply to that of the Revd Purnell, and included a copy of the letter he had received from the Revd Warren. Mr Butt invited the Revd Purnell to state that his memory had played him false and 'in justice to me write such an acknowledgement'. Mr Butt was keen on justice! He added that until the events of the past month he had never contemplated the removal or the demolition of the little church,

and ended his letter by apologising again 'for being compelled to enter into the lengthy correspondence on the subject'.

By that time the Revd Purnell had obviously sent Mr Butt a private apology for he ended by thanking him for 'his expression of regret, that any insult was offered me, or any threat made use of'.

All in all it seemed a very odd way for mature and educated men (Mr Butt was an old Etonian) to carry on, but it is interesting to note that some semblance of fair play and olde worlde courtesy was observed by the fact that each had had sight of the other's letters before they were passed to the editor of the Looker-On for publication.

What then was it all about? The basic cause of this rather unpleasant public squabble was never revealed, but undoubtedly it lies in the Revd Hall's reference to 'interference in church matters by a member of Mr Butt's household'. Had Mrs Butt still been alive at that time she would have certainly been suspect number one, for she took a keen interest in the education of the children of the Arle Court Estate, both in Sunday Schools, and in day school. However, it seems fairly certain that the culprit was in fact Mr Butt's eldest son by his first wife, Walter William Arthur Butt M.A., who in 1875 had just come down from Magdalen College, Oxford, where he had been an enthusiastic advocate of the Oxford Movement, a revival of High Church beliefs and practices within the Church of England.

Walter Butt later entered the Church of England himself, and he remained a life-long close personal friend of the Keble family. It was, of course, John Keble's sermon at Oxford in 1833 on 'national aposty' which is generally taken to have been the foundation of the Oxford Movement.

In 1875, Walter Butt, at 24 years of age, was a brash and self-opinionated young man, with Socialistic leanings, and his ideas, both lay and clerical, were in complete contrast to those of the Revd Hall. Mr Hall was a Victorian clergyman with a very rigid code of behaviour in his professional and personal life, and it must have been a matter of extreme irritation and regret to him, that his patron, Mr Butt, was not prepared to admit that his son was to blame - even when threatened with a newspaper controversy.

Mr Butt must have had to do some deep heart-searching, for to contemplate removing this little church and its benefits from his tenants, and others, must have cost him dearly, particularly as so many were quick to condemn him out of hand. However, his sense of family loyalty would not allow him to publicly blame his son, and the best way he knew to solve the problem, for all time, was to remove it completely.

PHYLLIS WHITE



**GLOUCESTERSHIRE RECORD OFFICE ACCESSIONS RELATING TO THE CHELTENHAM AREA, 1989**

Many members will know the County Record Office well, but may not be familiar with its more recent accessions of archives covering the Cheltenham area. The following list comprises those archives deposited or donated to the Record Office during 1989 and subsequent issues of the Journal will include similar annual summaries. It is hoped that this may help members in their research interests.

In the course of a year, the majority of new accessions are catalogued and packaged ready for use by researchers; however, some collections are too large to be dealt with immediately on arrival and access for researchers may be delayed (uncatalogued collections in this list are denoted by an asterisk). Records less than 50 years old are not usually available to researchers without the written permission of the depositor.

\*Bruton Knowles, estate agents of Gloucester: additional office files including some relating to Cheltenham properties, 1950s-70s. D2299

Cheltenham Adult School: minutes, accounts, reminiscences of members of the 1920s and other records, 1923-60s. D6000

Cheltenham Council of Churches, Peace and Development Group: minutes, accounts and corresp., 1979-89. D6050

\*Cheltenham District Area Health Authority: additional records, 20th cent. HA18

Cheltenham Methodist Circuit: additional chapel records relating to St Matthews, 1885-1989, and Bishop's Cleeve, 1953-85; minutes, accounts, etc., of the Wesley Choir, 1919-68. D3418

Gloucester and Cheltenham District of the Congregational Union/United Reformed Church: Annual Assembly and Executive minutes, etc., 1884-1972. D6026

\*Healing and Overbury, architects and surveyors of Cheltenham: drawings, photographs and other office records (buildings include the General Hospital), 1930s-60s. D5587

H.H. Martyn Ltd., sculptors and art metal workers of Cheltenham: photograph albums of furniture made, not dated; some contracts and insurance records, 1918-45. Note: The firm destroyed its archives deliberately in 1971. Many of these records were collected from former employees. D5922

Anglican parish records were received from Charlton Kings (Holy Apostles) and Swindon. The latter included the earliest surviving parish register (begun in 1608), churchwardens' accounts (from 1732), overseers of the poor accounts (from 1756), surveyors of the highways accounts (from 1813-36) and vestry minutes (from 1834). P324

Deeds were received throughout the year from solicitors and private individuals. They included references to copyhold lands in Alstone 1704 (D5998); Fairfield House estate 1877-1903 (D5018); 24 Fairview Place 1838-82 (D5412); a house in St George's Place, parties to the conveyance being Col. Riddell and Edward Jenner 1812 (\*D1229); various properties in the Promenade 19th cent (\*D6084); 28 Painswick Road 1895-1903 (D5999);

25 Rodney Road and property in Waterloo Terrace 19th cent (D5902); 5  
Victoria Street 1838-82 (D5412).

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Gloucestershire Record Office

#### RECENT BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON THE HISTORY OF THE CHELTENHAM AREA

The following is a list of books and articles published on the history of Cheltenham and its immediate surroundings during the past couple of years. A similar list will be included in future issues of this Journal, so that members may keep abreast of new published information on the history of the area.

Barton, R. 'St Gregory's Convent, Cheltenham', Gloucestershire and North Avon Catholic History Society Journal 5 (1988), 11-16.

Barton, R. 'Nazareth House, Cheltenham, from 1884 until 1916', Glos North Avon Catholic Hist Soc J 6 (1988), 18-24.

Barton, R. 'William Norwood of Leckhampton Court', Glos North Avon Catholic Hist Soc J 6 (1988), 15-17.

Barton, R. 'Father Birdsall and the founding of the Cheltenham Catholic Mission', Gloucestershire History 2, (1988), 5-7.

Barton, R. 'Anti-Catholicism in nineteenth century Cheltenham', Glos North Avon Catholic Hist Soc J 9 (1989), 29-39.

Blake, S. Pittville 1824-1860 : a scene of gorgeous magnificence, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums, 1988, 72pp. £3.50.

Cowen, H. 'The selling of history : Cheltenham in change', Glos Hist 2 (1988), 8-9.

Jackson, F. A portrait of Prestbury, Drinkwater, Shipston on Stour, 1988. 101pp. £3.75.

Jones, A. A short history of the first Cheltenham spa in Bayshill, Cheltenham Ladies College, 1988. 20pp. £1.50.

Meredith, B. Cheltenham : town of shadows, Reardon, Cheltenham, 1989. 36pp. £2.25 (Re Cheltenham's ghosts).

Moore, A. The picture palaces of Gloucester and Cheltenham, Amber Valley Print Centre. 38pp. £2.95.

Paget, M. A history of Charlton Kings, Glos County Library, 1988; reprinted by the Charlton Kings Local History Society, 1989. 226pp. £9.50.

Torode, B. 'St Gregory's Schools 1903-1916 : from the pages of the managers' minute books', Glos North Avon Catholic Hist Soc J 9 (1989), 11-14.

Wallace, A.B. 'Henry Charles Boisragon, Cheltenham's eminent physician 1778-1852', Glos Hist 2 (1988), 2-4.