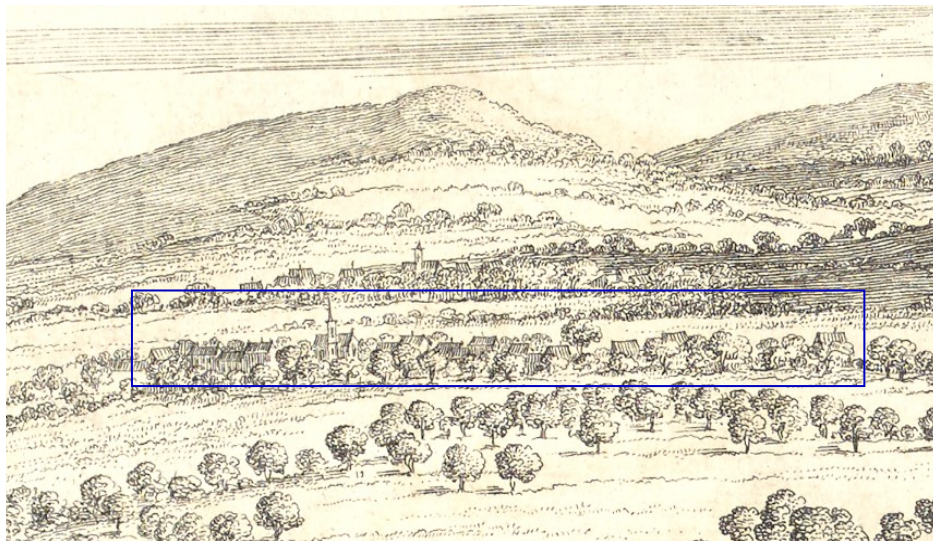




Newsletter No. 100

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July 2021



EDITORIAL

In this, the 100th issue of the Newsletter, it seems quite appropriate to look back not only to the founding of the Society in 1982 when our very first issue appeared (typed on a single A4 sheet), but also to the earlier history of Cheltenham itself. Before the town achieved the status of a spa it was a small place consisting of not much more than the one long street outlined in the old engraving above. This picture, part of a view of Leckhampton Court drawn by Johannes Kip for Robert Atkyns' 1712 book *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*, is probably one of the earliest images of the town. To find out more about it, see James Hodsdon's commentary on page 11. This engraving is one of the many illustrations in a new study of Kip's work by Anthea Jones entitled *Johannes Kip: the Gloucestershire Engravings*. Her book is reviewed by Oliver Pointer on page 23.

Kath Boothman

July 2021

Cheltenham LHS

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EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2021-22

We hope that by September of this year face-to-face meetings will be allowed once again and we will be able to return to our usual venues. It remains possible, however, that some at least of the lectures planned for the new season may have to be delivered via Zoom. Please note that an AGM is to be held in October.

Tuesday 21st September:

Mark Davies—'Young Zamiel Gripeall': Cheltenham's 'crafty, crabbed, selffish' newspaper proprietor, Samuel Young Griffith

Tuesday 19th October:

AGM at 7.00pm followed by Neela Mann—Booze, Balloons and Burials

Tuesday 16th November:

Steven Blake—The Perils of Speculation in Regency Cheltenham: the Rise and Fall of the Honourable Miss Monson

Tuesday 7th December:

John Putley—Gloucestershire Christmas

Tuesday 18th January 2022:

Mike Bottomley—Katherine Parr, Gloucestershire's Queen: the Life, Loves and Times of the Last Wife of Henry VIII

Tuesday 15th February 2022:

Research and Display Evening

Tuesday 8th March 2022:

David Elder—Dr Edward Thomas Wilson (1832-1918), Father of the Antarctic Explorer

Tuesday April 19th 2022:

Kirsty Hartsiotis—The Arts & Crafts Movement in Local and Cotswold Churches

MORNING LECTURES 2021-22

Tuesday 5th October:

Alan Pilbeam—The Royal Progress through Gloucestershire, 1535

Tuesday 1st February 2022:

Liz Davenport—Woodchester Mansion: an Unfinished Masterpiece

Tuesday 5th April 2022:

David Addison—Lord Northwick's Art Collection at Thirlestaine House

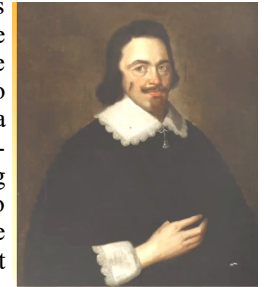
REVIEWS

John Simpson's talk on March 16, delivered by Zoom, was entitled **Mean Streets or La-La Land? The Fate of Cheltenham's 'unsettled poor'**. John said he had edited Vol. 34 in the Gloucestershire Record Series, 'Managing Poverty', which looked at the experience of some 3,500 people who came to Cheltenham between 1831 and 1852 in search of a better life but fell on hard times and had to undergo a 'settlement examination' to determine whether they were entitled to poor relief. As an example he told us about William Simmonds, his wife Phoebe and their children who, not being local people, faced an examination when they applied for admission to Cheltenham workhouse in 1838. John showed the text of William's interrogation. He was born in Pitchcombe but was deemed to 'belong' to Badgeworth because that was the last place where he had held a job for a year or more. So he was served with a removal order, signed by two magistrates, to go to Badgeworth. The records of all such examinations had to be kept, by law, and are now in the archives. Many concern Irish and Scottish transients, victims of famines and clearances. At first kindly received, they were less welcome when they came again, still destitute, and had to be re-examined. There were always more examinations in winter, largely because much low-paid and low-skilled work was seasonal. The dissolution of the monasteries in the 1540s removed the one dependable source of charity for those in desperate need, and the state only slowly recognised the need to replace it. Poor Laws were passed from the early 17th century, the parish being the usual source of relief. These laws evolved over the years until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 took management of the poor under central government control and, among other things, redefined the criteria that entitled paupers to remain in a parish and claim relief. The first such 'head of settlement' was to have been born or married within the parish or to have a parent with settlement rights there. The second was to have worked there for a year or more (as in William Simmonds' case). This threw up the curious case of Eliza Turner, who was hired in 1831 by a householder living right on the Cheltenham/Prestbury border. By testifying that her bed was on the Cheltenham side of the house, she successfully claimed settlement in Cheltenham. The third was settlement by renting—anyone able to take a lease of at least £10 on a tenement could stay—and the fourth was by apprenticeship. John showed a map demonstrating that many unsuccessful applicants for settlement in Cheltenham were removed to adjacent counties. When the rules were strictly applied, families could be torn apart: for illegitimate children the place of residence was deemed to be the birthplace, and William Simmonds' 11-year-old daughter Ann, born out of wedlock in Worcestershire, was sent there. The family reassembled in Cheltenham later, however. The full force of the law was not always invoked, and Cheltenham magistrates could be lenient. Cheltenham's 'muffin man' John Millbank, though born in Colchester, was allowed to claim settlement here in 1833 and died here. The system of relief was thus a worthwhile safety net for those in dire need, even when statutory entitlement still lay some way in the future.



Cheltenham Union Workhouse

On April 6th **Judith Ellis** gave us a talk on **George Townsend, Benefactor of Boys**. She said that Townsend, who died in 1683, was a man to whom many boys in Cheltenham, in her own home town of Chipping Campden and in several other Gloucestershire towns owed a great deal. He was probably born in Ford, near Hawling in the north of the county. His father Charles was an attorney and George worked with him as clerk before going to London to study law at Staple Inn, then at Lincoln's Inn, becoming a successful attorney in his turn. His wife Katherine predeceased him. It may have been because he had no surviving sons (though there were two daughters) that he chose to provide for the education and training of boys when he made his will in 1682. The will is an elaborate document giving much insight into his character. Generous and public-spirited though he was, he had a frugal streak, and decreed that his funeral should be 'without pomp' and that the mourning rings normally given as mementos should be modest ones. Among his benefactions, all using income from landed property, was money to maintain causeways for horse and foot traffic (and thus to serve poorer people) in Winchcombe, and to maintain pumps he had given to Stow on the Wold. He also paid for children in Stow to be taught to read, and gave financial support to schools in several Cotswold towns, taking the view that regular school attendance would prevent children from 'being offensive at home and elsewhere' - ie keep them out of mischief. He left an allowance of bread for poor people who went to church (the 'deserving' poor) and ordered it to be administered by four trustees and a paid steward, who were to have an annual dinner and each time receive a new pair of gloves 'not exceeding 12 pence'. This curious custom, as records show, persisted until the 1950s. His main benefaction however was a fund to provide apprenticeships for five carefully selected boys every year from each of the favoured towns: Chipping Campden, Winchcombe, Northleach, Cheltenham and Gloucester. The boys were to be apprenticed away from their home town: thus William Jefferson, a tailor's son from Campden, was apprenticed to a Cheltenham shoemaker. Many rules governing their behaviour were laid down in the indenture issued for each boy. ('Taverns he shall not haunt, cards he shall not play'.) Judith showed several indentures and a list of trades, some of them, such as 'peruke maker' and 'fellmonger' now obsolete. There were rules for the apprentice master too, specifying the living conditions and clothing to be provided for the boy—not that he always got what he was entitled to. By 1774 the £5 allowed under Townsend's will for each boy had become inadequate and the trustees eventually managed to ease the financial limit, allowing the system to continue. She showed a photo of an apprentice and his master taken in the 1950s. Townsend's other major legacy was in the form of scholarships to Pembroke College, Oxford for one boy from each of the five towns. Robert Payne Smith of Campden was one such boy, who from humble origins rose to become Dean of Canterbury. He expressed regret that universities were so hard on poor boys, many of whom, like himself, turned out to be a credit to them. Judith said she had traced the histories of many Townsend apprentices and scholars from Campden over the 300 years the charity existed, finding Ancestry a very useful source. She urged the audience to do the same for Cheltenham.



The subject of **Anne Strathie's** talk on May 18th was **Herbert Ponting, Scott's Antarctic Photographer and Pioneer Filmmaker**. Anne said that people might have seen photographs by Ponting in exhibitions, for example at The Wilson. Born in 1870 in Salisbury, he was the eldest in a family of seven. At his father's wish he went into banking, but always had other interests, notably photography. Working in Liverpool, he saw exhibitions and joined a photographic club. When he was 22, in response to an advertisement, he took up ranching in California. He had orchards, which prospered until over-production of fruit made the business unprofitable, whereupon he went into mining and became a mine manager. Meanwhile he had married and had a child. To support his family he sold the ranch and worked in England for about 18 months, but returned to America when his wife's mother died. Photography was still his hobby, and one day he met a professional photographer who advised him to enter competitions and market his pictures. Ponting soon began to make money, notably when he submitted his photos to magazines with accompanying articles. His work was also appreciated in salons where artistic qualities were expected: Anne showed (among many other images) a much-admired picture of a group of mules being trained for army use. He worked for companies that produced stereo images, which were then very popular, and one of them offered him the chance to go to Japan. He went there three times in total, fascinated by Japanese culture, taking many beautifully composed pictures and learning much from Japanese artists. By then he had a growing reputation in America. The stereo company next proposed a trip to India, and Ponting went. On board ship he ran into Cecil Meares, well-travelled son of an Indian army officer, linguist and veteran of the Russo-Japanese war. Ponting hired him as his assistant and interpreter for the Indian journey. He then returned to London. He had not seen his family for years, but they were happily settled among relations in San Francisco. Cecil Meares reappeared and revived an earlier idea they had had of going on an expedition together, in this case Scott's proposed venture to Antarctica. Scott was willing to hire them both, and Ponting prepared with enthusiasm to be the first official photographer in Antarctica. Edward Wilson was the expedition's artist and taught Ponting a lot about working in extreme cold. He constructed his own darkroom and often towed his equipment on a sledge. Using ciné film as well as plates he recorded the voyage south, wildlife, landscapes, portraits of men and preparations for journeys. Some of the work was scientific but he achieved many artistic effects, sometimes using flash. By early in 1912 his work was done and Scott sent him home to raise more money for the expedition by showing his pictures. After Scott's death, and once the expedition report was out, he was free to use his material for lecture tours. World War I came and Ponting was too old to enlist, but in 1918 the War Office encouraged him to show his films of the expedition to raise morale. In 1921 he wrote his best-seller *The Great White South* and combined his films into one long one *The Great White Silence*. His fortunes fluctuated in the depression years, his health failed and he died in 1935. He was remembered with great affection and respect, and left a legacy of extraordinary pictures that are much used to this day.



VCH News

As Sally notes elsewhere, the Gloucestershire County History Trust has engaged Louise Ryland-Epton to draft the account of Leckhampton which will form part of the Cheltenham 'Red Book'. This is a real boost, coming after a year that has been frustrating and worrying for many of us. Louise has previously contributed to our Cirencester work, and has also recently written for the VCH in Wiltshire. The task is expected to take about a year. She has family connections with Leckhampton and now lives near Stroud, so will be able to engage easily with volunteers and gather local knowledge.

James Hodsdon

Spurred on – Leckhampton and Cheltenham Volunteers

Volunteers from Leckhampton and Cheltenham Local History Societies have been urged into action by the appointment of Louise Ryland-Epton to research and write the history of the parish of Leckhampton as a section of Volume XV of the Cheltenham VCH. Work has already started on transcribing over a hundred wills and inventories. They cover not only the bequests, goods and chattels of the Norwoods and the Tryes but also those of yeomen, husbandmen, a quarryman, and widows and spinsters. Others are working on the Vestry documents, the Witts and Bendalls families and those of the Leckhampton Local History Society. There are many more opportunities to join the team of researchers; there are sources that need to be investigated from the Iron Age to the 21st century. If you are interested please contact me at projects.clhs@btinternet.com

Here is an example of the kind of interesting little story that even a routine transcribing job can bring to light:

A case of misappropriation of public funds?

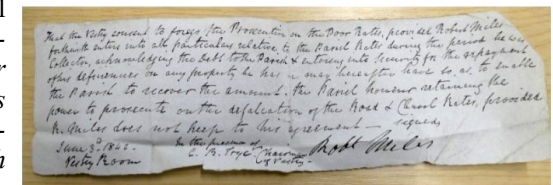
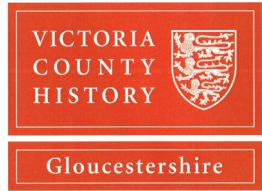
P198a /OV/2/4 Overseers' Bill
That the Vestry consent to forego the Prosecution on the Poor Rates, provided Robert Miles forthwith enters into all particulars relative to the Parish Rates during the period he was

Collector, acknowledging the Debts to the Parish & entering into Security for the repayment of his deficiencies on any property he has or may here after have so as to enable the Parish to recover the amount. The Parish however retaining the power to prosecute on the defalcation on the Road & Church Rates, provided R Miles does not keep to his agreement—signed

*June 3rd 1842
 Vestry Room*

*in the presence of C B Trye Chairman of Vestry
 [signature] Robt Miles*

Sally Self



*SOCIETY NEWS***New members**

A warm welcome is extended to the following :

Ian and Joy Gower	Michael Bourne
Sean Callery	Nigel and Sue Boulding
Jo Elliott	Simon Plumb
David Jackson	

Society Update

We are very pleased to announce that David Elder has been co-opted on to the committee. David is well known to many in CLHS and is the author of several books on Cheltenham and the surrounding area.

The main items under discussion at recent committee meetings were:

- Possible in-person or online venues for meetings from September onwards, depending on any remaining COVID restrictions.
- The Local Studies Library – the building has not re-opened post lockdown, but Local Studies materials are available on request in advance and a microfiche PC has been relocated into the main Library. This can be booked by emailing the Library cheltenhamlibrary@gloucestershire.gov.uk or by calling 01242 532686. Please can members use this service or enquire about re-opening – we don't want the LS Library to quietly 'disappear' because it was thought no-one missed it.
- Planning for events to mark the Society's 40th anniversary in 2022, including the unveiling of the Blue Plaque in honour of Alfred Miles.
- Planning for next year's GLHA Annual Summer Afternoon, which we will be hosting at St Andrew's on 25th June 2022. This will be similar to this year's event at Nailsworth, and we will be inviting members from the various history societies around the county to join us for a talk, walks and an afternoon tea. Please save the date!

A review and possible update of our website.

We also plan to develop a strategy for the next 5 years, and will be glad to receive comments or suggestions from members – please email me by 31st July.

Alison Pascoe cheltlocalhistory@btinternet.com

Call for papers for Journal 2022

This may seem some time away, but time flies! As Journal editor I will be happy to hear from anyone who is planning to write an article for next year's Journal. There are guidelines for authors on the Society's website (which contributors are urged to read before submitting) but I will gladly talk through your submission with you, especially if this is your first attempt at writing up your research. The deadline for articles is not until the end of November, but submissions can be sent in at any time before then. Particularly welcome are articles supported with suitable images and illustrations. Please contact me (editor.clhs@gmail.com) if you have any questions. If you are thinking of writing something it would be helpful to let me know, even if you haven't started work on it yet.

Julie Courtenay

*FEATURE***THE 'CYCLING CHERUBS' – A MYSTERY****ALMOST SOLVED**

Since the last Newsletter was published I can report significant progress in my attempt to account for the panels depicting 'cycling cherubs' at the entrance to Chapman Way. The trail, which began in Nottingham, finished at Liverpool with a diversion to Kirkintilloch.

First, why were the panels placed at the entrance to Chapman Way? The simple and authoritative answer, provided by a director of the builder Robert Hitchens Ltd, is that the firm was looking for ways of distinguishing this housing development, located in an attractive urban part of Cheltenham, and occupying a former playing field owned by the nearby Dean Close School. An associated company, Architectural Heritage Ltd of Taddington, had in its stock these plaques, which it had purchased from a dealer in Liverpool. Their subject – bicycle manufacture, industry and young children – was thought loosely appropriate, given that the site itself was associated with Dean Close School and its role in preparing children for life and that Cheltenham was once an acknowledged centre of bicycle manufacture. (This dismisses the urban myth that nearby there was once a home for children, who carried out repairs to bicycles. Amina Chatwin describes the cycle industry in Cheltenham in GSIA Journal No 1.)

Next, who designed the plaques and for what purpose? They are identical with two of a series on the main frontage of the former administrative HQ of the Raleigh Cycle Company in Nottingham, which was named after its architect Thomas Cecil Howitt (1889-1968). The sculptor, Charles Doman (1884-1944), is said to have modelled the putti on Howitt's young son Ian, and they were known locally as 'the little Ians'. There are 28 plaques in total, comprising three repeated designs; two are identical with those in Cheltenham, while the third is another treatment of the subject.



The Howitt Building, Nottingham

It turned out that Howitt and Doman had collaborated on a similar large building in Nottingham, the Home Brewery. Again there are relief panels on the main façade, where three alternating designs depict cherubs engaged in various stages of brewing beer. The website <http://breweryhistory.com> helpfully stated that the panels were made at the Lion Foundry in Kirkintilloch, in East Dunbartonshire. What if the Lion Foundry had also cast the 'cycling cherubs'? The on-line catalogue for East Dunbartonshire archives confirmed that this was indeed the case, reproducing a publicity leaflet for the foundry that showed the three 'cycling cherubs' panels.

The Nottingham panels are cast in bronze, but the two at Chapman Way are made of iron. (They attract a magnet and there are traces of rust.) It is likely that they were test cases made by the foundry or perhaps proof copies for the artist.

So far, so good, but the final unanswered question is: how did they come to end up in a scrap yard in Liverpool? Attempts to identify a building in that city to which they might previously have been attached – maybe a cycle shop – have so far been unsuccessful. It is also possible that they had been on a private house elsewhere in the Northwest. The search continues.



Detail showing the three different but repeated designs (A-B-C-A)

I am grateful to the following for information and advice: Stephen Hitchins of Robert Hitchins Ltd; Scottford Lawrence of the National Cycle Museum, Llandrindod Wells; Steve Maule, director of Pangolin Editions; and Cheltenham LHS members Lorna Robson and Jill Waller.

Images courtesy of Building Design

Eric Miller

GÖTTINGEN LINK

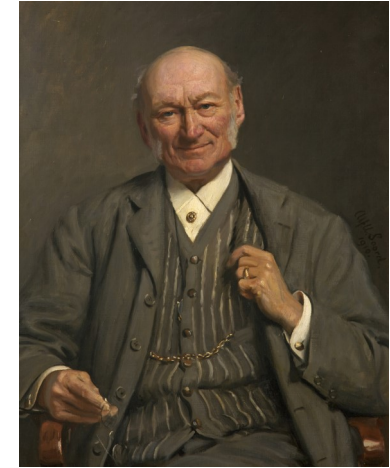
To mark the 70th anniversary of the twinning of Cheltenham with Göttingen the Society produced a Power Point presentation of *Cheltenham Then and Now*. This has been sent to Göttingen, and they are preparing one of their own. Both presentations should be online by mid-August. This image from the beginning of our presentation shows the ‘twin’ statues of William IV in Cheltenham (on the left) and Göttingen (on the right). Following it is a broad selection of contrasting pictures of Cheltenham as it is now and as it was 70 years ago.



FEATURE

And the name of the ‘Unknown Man’ is ...

Visitors to The Wilson art gallery must have conjectured often about the real identity of the congenial-looking man portrayed in one of Alfred Soord’s paintings, currently known as ‘Portrait of an Unknown Man’. It was while undertaking research for a biography of Dr Edward Thomas Wilson (1832-1918) - father of the Antarctic explorer who, incidentally, officiated at the opening of the town’s museum in 1907 - that I chanced upon a reference pointing to a possible answer to this mystery. The key piece of evidence came from a comment made by Dr Wilson in his autobiographical notes when talking about two portraits which Soord had undertaken for the Wilson family. These, he said, ‘were the means of introducing the artist to Mr James Winterbotham whose portrait and that of his wife and brother Sir Henry he [Soord] subsequently painted with great satisfaction to all’. Final confirmation that the ‘unknown man’ could be categorically identified as James Batten Winterbotham (1837-1914) was provided by Neela Mann, who researched his son Cyril for the ‘Cheltenham Remembers’ website.

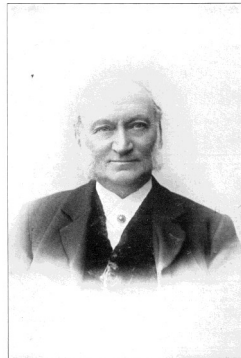


Portrait of an Unknown Man
by Alfred Soord
Courtesy of CBC & Cheltenham Trust

Born in Cheltenham in 1837, Winterbotham became a solicitor, serving in the family firm. From 1881 he became an Alderman and also served as a JP. Wilson and Winterbotham became friends through their membership of Friends in Council, a small club ‘established for purposes of Intellectual Entertainment’. They also shared several interests, including fine art and philanthropic work. Wilson and his contemporaries particularly appreciated Winterbotham’s literary talent which, when combined with his excellent sense of humour, led to him penning many memorable parodies in verse, regularly published in the *Cheltenham Examiner*. Among the targets for his satire was the protracted ‘battle’ between the private Water Company and the Town Council for ownership of Cheltenham’s water supply, an issue which he summarised in a poem exceeding 400 lines! Tragically, in 1914, Winterbotham died at the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor, Egypt, while on holiday there with his wife and daughter. Subsequently, his body was brought back to Cheltenham and he was buried in the town’s cemetery. Although the name of James Winterbotham has fallen into obscurity in recent years, I’m sure that the ex-Alderman would have smiled gleefully from his grave when, in 1918, his daughter Clara Winterbotham MBE (1880-1967) became the town’s first female councillor and, three years later, Cheltenham’s first elected

female Mayor. Equally, he would have been proud of his son, Cyril, who had been accepted as the Parliamentary Candidate for the Cirencester area until he enlisted for the First World War where he was killed in action, and also another son, Percy, who was a sitting town councillor when he too enlisted for the war. It is fitting that the 'unknown man' has now been identified so that James Winterbotham's contribution to Cheltenham can be more fully celebrated. Perhaps his two most significant legacies were as Chairman of the Art Gallery and Museum Committee (a role also filled by his daughter Clara later on) and as Chairman of the Town Improvement Committee, which piloted the scheme for the new Town Hall.

David Elder



Ald. J. B. Winterbotham, J.P. of Cranley Lodge, Cheltenham. He died in Egypt on Tuesday, March 24, aged 77 years. He was one of Cheltenham's most prominent and respected citizens, the leading member of the firm of Winterbotham, Gurney and Co., Solicitors; Alderman of the Town Council and County Council; Governor of Cheltenham College, a prominent Freeman; and a genial, artistic, well-read English gentleman. (Photo by G. P. Woodward, Wotton-under-Edge, Cheltenham.)

Obituary from the *Chronicle & Graphic*, 28 March 1914
Courtesy of Neela Mann

The earliest view of Cheltenham?

'Lavishly illustrated' may be a hackneyed term in the publishing world, but one that is absolutely justified for Anthea Jones' recent book (*Johannes Kip: The Gloucestershire Engravings*), which is a real pleasure to dip into.

The Leckhampton Court engraving from which our cover picture is taken naturally focuses on the Reverend Thomas Norwood's impressive dwelling and its grounds, taking a bird's eye view of the front of the house, and then looking beyond to the hills, approximately ENE. You may need a magnifying glass to see it, but in the middle distance there is a church with a line of houses either side (outlined with a box in our extract). Accepting that Kip was not aiming for total accuracy in these background details, this does seem to be recognisably the same as the Cheltenham that Thomas Robins sketched in the 1740s - a line of houses strung out along the High Street, parallel with the Chelt. It's tempting to see the isolated building at the right-hand end as what we now know as Barrett's Mill. The view certainly conforms to the Tudor antiquary John Leland's oft-quoted description of Cheltenham as 'a longe towne'. We can therefore claim this as possibly the only surviving depiction of Cheltenham 'before she was famous' - four years before the pigeons were first spotted pecking at a Bayshill spring, and a quarter-century before Captain Skillicorne took the young spa in hand.

Another settlement, with its own church, lies further off in the same direction, though perhaps slightly more to the east. We might guess Prestbury, but it's hard to be certain. Anthea advises that Kip adopted a fairly standardised outline for distant churches.

James Hodsdon

(Extract reproduced with permission from a digital image supplied by Gloucestershire Archives)

FEATURE

The Holst Victorian House

The Holst Birthplace Museum (4 Clarence Road in Pittville) is undergoing an exciting transformation into the Holst Victorian House (HVH). HVH is the only Victorian home in Cheltenham open to the public. The aim is to broaden the appeal to visitors, immersing them in the experience of stepping back in time and being among the residents of a Victorian home. All whilst retaining the attraction for those interested in Holst and his music. We hope very much to welcome (back) members of the Cheltenham Local History Society.

We have scheduled some infrastructure work for next year, depending on external funding. However, we will be launching the first phase to coincide with Heritage Open Days (10-19 September). There will be a number of events at that time: in the Museum, in public spaces (pandemic permitting) and also online. At launch we will have new interpretative material and visitor guide, a redesigned website, a changed visitor pathway passing through a succession of period rooms and new films which set the scene and showcase some of our key exhibits. We are also working on a redecoration of the house exterior, returning the front door and railings to their original colours.



Grand piano owned by Holst when he lived in Thaxted

a grant toward enhancing the virtual tour application for those with sight and hearing impairments.

House History

4 Pittville Terrace, later known as 4 Clarence Road, was built in 1832 by the local builder James Creed as part of the Pittville Estate. The house was owned from at least 1845 by the Lediard family.

The Holst family had originally come from Riga in Latvia. Gustav's great-grandfather Matthias, who had been a court musician in St Petersburg, left Latvia with his young family at the turn of the 19th century and eventually settled in London. His eldest son Gustavus, who had been born in Riga, was musical as well, teaching the harp and pianoforte. He began visiting Cheltenham as a tutor in the 1830s.

One of Gustavus's children, Adolphus, established himself among the town's

leading musicians and spent much of his youth in Cheltenham. He married one of his piano pupils, Clara Lediard, at All Saints Church in 1871.

Gustav Holst was born in the house in 1874, his brother Emil in 1876. Tragically, Clara died in 1882 and Gustav and Emil were looked after by their aunt Nina. Gustav was educated at Cheltenham Grammar School (now Pate's Grammar School) and the Royal College of Music.

After William Joshua, the husband of Henrietta Lediard, Clara von Holst's sister, sold the house in 1895 only six different people or sets of people lived there until it became a museum. A Colonel Mannors lived there 1895-1911, a Mrs Skinner 1926-1936. In 1936 the house was in the hands of the Doxsey family who lived there until 1952 when they sold it to the Garlicks.

Cheltenham recognized Gustav Holst's continuing status when it unveiled a plaque at 4 Clarence Road in 1949. The ceremony was attended by a range of VIPs, including Holst's wife Isobel and daughter Imogen and his great friend Ralph Vaughan Williams.

After attending the Gustav Holst Centenary Exhibition held at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (now The Wilson) in 1974, Mrs Garlick, who was looking to move into a smaller property, began negotiations to sell the house to the Council, in order for them to create a museum, not just for Holst, but to display some of their furniture and decorative art collections.

To finance this new Museum an appeal was launched in December 1974 by the Mayor, together with a supporting message from the composer Sir Arthur Bliss. £22,000 was raised to buy and restore the property and the house was opened by the Duke of Beaufort on 21 October 1975. Imogen Holst donated a large archive of material to the Museum, which included autograph manuscripts, letters and photographs. Her father's piano, previously donated in the 1960s, had been part of a gallery display at the Art Gallery & Museum.

The Museum remained under Council control until 1999, when it was closed, due to budget cuts. Fortunately, a campaign was organized to save the Museum and in 2000, eight months after it had first closed, it was reopened as an independent charitable trust. It is currently open on Wednesdays and Fridays for pre-booked appointments and there are plans to extend opening in line with Government regulations. This is dependent on our wonderful band of volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Museum and would like to know more, please email us at volunteers@holstmuseum.org.uk.

Martin Renshaw

(on behalf of the Trustees of the Holst Birthplace Trust)



19th century kitchen range in the Victorian kitchen

FEATURE

Shillings were made round to go round...

Some of us during Covid 19 lockdowns have experienced the shortage of cash, now that 'contactless' is so often used. This shortage of the 'readies' is not new. While researching Cheltenham Borough minutes for VCH 'Big Red Book' Volume XV, I came across a similar situation in 1956.



Then it was a shortage of shillings for the gas and electricity meters – mention of which will cause nostalgia or annoyance for some of our older readers. The dearth of shillings was causing hardship among some sectors of the town's population, such that it became an agenda item for the General Purposes Committee and caused Alderman Bush to raise the matter with the South Western Gas Consultative Council.

The local Gas and Electricity Boards blamed each other for the situation. Electricity took the higher ground, reasoning, somewhat dubiously, that there were fewer electricity meters so it was the Gas's fault. It appears that both meters had previously been cleared every six weeks, but this was changed to only every three months

– cost cutting is not mentioned, but seems likely.

To remedy the situation, arrangements were made to distribute £50 worth of shillings every weekday and £150 worth on Saturdays from the Boards' shops and showrooms. Shame that the banks do not make similar arrangements now!

Sally Self

An old favourite returns

First issued over 25 years ago, this newly revised edition of Eric Miller's little book offers a vivid picture of village life at the turn of the 20th century. From contemporary accounts in parish magazines, the author describes village fêtes and entertainments, Sunday School outings by horse-drawn carriage, smoking concerts, recreation classes, the Parish Library, hospital egg days, bandage parties and charitable work in the days before organised state welfare. Advertisements placed by local shops, most of them now vanished, illustrate the trades and goods that were in vogue at the time. Full of curiosities, it has something of interest for everyone.

Copies may be obtained by sending a cheque to:

Stephen Gale, LLHS Hon Treasurer,

Larchwood, Pilford Court, Pilford Road, Cheltenham GL53 9BB

Price £3 to include hand-delivery locally, or £4.53 if it is to be posted.

LECKHAMPTON YESTERYEAR



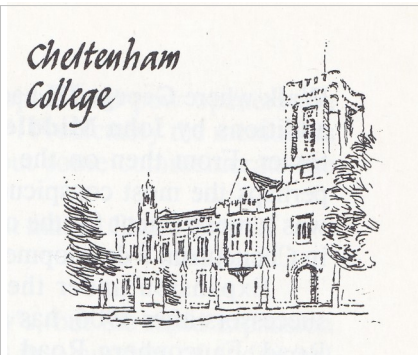
Eric Miller

Revised Edition

OBITUARY

Aylwin Sampson 1927-2021

We were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Aylwin Sampson, a supportive and knowledgeable member of our Society since its beginning. He served on the committee for many years as Chairman, *Journal* Editor, and then Secretary and was our representative on the Arts Council Executive Committee and the Conservation Area Panel. He gave many and varied talks to many and varied societies, but his most enduring contributions to CLHS are the logo he designed for us and his drawings in the *Journal*. Until 2018 every front cover had a drawing by Aylwin and there were many more illustrating articles inside. The 2007 *Journal* had a list of them, and even then there were more than 100.



One of Aylwin's illustrations for *A Cheltenham Companion*

Aylwin went to Durham University on an RAF scholarship and studied philosophy, political theory and modern history. After the war he studied graphic design at Nottingham and Leicester and later qualified as a chartered librarian. While he was a teacher in Southampton and later in Taunton he thought of small publishing projects integrating his calligraphy with his drawings. At Aberystwyth University he wrote and illustrated a series of 32-page booklets on Welsh towns.

On his move to Cheltenham he became senior lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture, Gloucestershire College of Art and was soon involved in

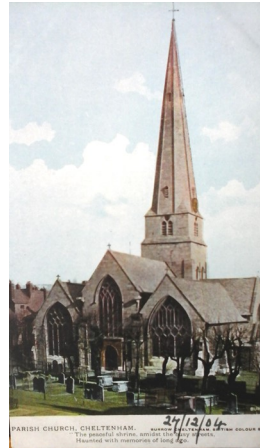
producing tourist material for the Holst Museum, Gloucester Cathedral and the Three Choirs Festival. His series on buildings called *Scene by Sampson* ran in the *Echo* for 320 issues and a number were published in book form. He collaborated with Dr Steven Blake on *A Cheltenham Companion*, sales of which raised £11,000 for Cobalt and the Sue Ryder Home.

In addition to the talks, walks and books covering aspects of Cheltenham history he published research on cathedral closes, cricket grounds, racecourses and rowing clubs: a man of wide interests who used his artistic skill to share his knowledge.

Jill Barlow

FEATURE

The Blacksmith's Tombstone



Jill Waller's article on John Higgs' tombstone sent me to my grandmother's postcard albums and two relevant postcards.

The first is a 1904 card of the Parish churchyard looking at the west end of the church. The crowded gravestones illustrate, better than words, why there had been such an urgent need for the New Cemetery. It is interesting to see the railings surrounding the church and some graves, presumably removed as part of the war effort in the Second World War. David Lyall, who came to Cheltenham as a schoolboy in 1941, confirms that the railings had gone by then. Does anyone else have a vague memory of a kerb dotted with the remains of the railings before the path was resurfaced?

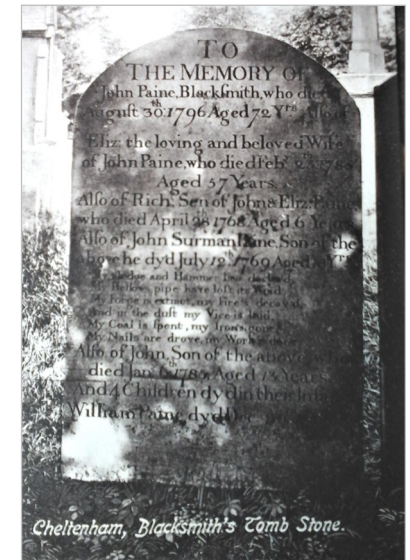
The second card, published in 1907 as part of Frith's Series, shows the Blacksmith's tomb, another of what Pevsner calls the church's 'famously peculiar inscriptions'.

Sadly the stone has now gone but some members may remember it standing (plot 296) to the north east of the church near the Cross and not far from John Higgs' gravestone. A church guide records that it was still standing in 1983. The stone commemorated John Paine who died in 1796 aged 72 and his family, and it bore this verse:

*My Sledge & Hammer lies declin'd,
My Bellows pipe have lost its Wind,
My Forge is extinct, my Fire's decay'd,
And in the dust my Vice is laid,
My Coal is spent, my Iron's gone
My Nails are drove, my Work is done.*

This version may not be original, but it is of interest. The same verse in modern script can still be seen on the Russell tomb in Ledbury churchyard.

That John Paine or his family could afford such an elaborate tombstone reminds us that being a blacksmith must have been a lucrative business in Cheltenham's golden age. The inscription also reminds us of the sadness and brevity of life then, as it commemorates 4 unnamed infants and three sons who died very young: Richard aged 6, John Surman aged 16 and John aged 13.



The blacksmith's wife Elizabeth died in 1785, aged 57, seven weeks after the last of these sons died. Smallpox was prevalent that year.

The last name on the tomb is that of William Paine, who died aged 60 in 1814. Although there is reference to a Thomas Payne (spellings vary) being buried in the churchyard on 23rd December 1690 it cannot be proved that he was an ancestor of John Paine, or that John was Cheltenham-born. Elizabeth certainly seems to have been born elsewhere. The first reference to the family living in Cheltenham is the baptism of their son John Surman Paine on 4th March 1752 at St Mary's.

Two pieces of Cheltenham history in danger of being forgotten.

Elizabeth Bennett

Heritage Open Days, 10-19 September 2021

With more than 40 events to choose from over 10 days in September you'll get a chance to get a fresh taste of Cheltenham with the return of Heritage Open Days and the theme of Edible England.

You can explore beautiful buildings and schools not normally open to the public, learn more about Victorian food and drink, wander round Cheltenham's parks and gardens and visit hidden gems and regular favourites which are throwing open their doors to give you the opportunity to explore for free.

Escape the everyday by taking in an organ recital, unleash your creative side at a Watercolour Workshop or explore exhibitions and displays. There is a packed calendar of Walks and Talks giving you the opportunity to learn about characters from Cheltenham's history and discover more about your local area and its particular points of interest.

If you're not able to get to any of the events there will be online activities on the Cheltenham Civic Society website including an online tour of Francis Close Hall Campus, a Taste of Jewish Food and a virtual trip to Cheltenham's twin towns abroad to discover their edible delights.

The brochure will be available from 20 July online at www.cheltcivicsoc.org/events/heritage-open-days/ and a printed version can be picked up at various places including the Everyman, the Playhouse, Pittville Pump Room, Waterstones, Coffee Number 1 in Montpellier Gardens, the railway station and most libraries from 25 July.

Come along to Cheltenham Farmers' Market on the Promenade on Friday 13 August between 9am and 2pm to find out more.

Booking for ticketed events opens on 2 August. Tickets must be booked and collected from The Suffolk Anthology, 17 Suffolk Parade, Cheltenham GL50 2AE.

Sarah Harvey



Look out for Captain Skillicorne!

FEATURE

The Joy of Pantomime

At Christmas 1940 a leather covered autograph book was gifted to a girl named Joy, a 10-year-old dance student, from a person named Ann. The book would travel from Cheltenham to Leeds, to Oxford, to Melbourne and finally come to rest in Sydney, Australia, 79 years later. Joy was Joy Avent, the Cheltenham-born daughter of Fredrica (nee Pate) and Arthur Avent.

The first entries in the book were notes from her father, friends and family. In 1936, Uncle B Gordon wrote a note 'May the opening of this book foretell a future brighter than a bed of roses' and accompanied it with an illustrated picture of her name surrounded by the flower. That same year Daddy wrote his daughter some advice:

If wisdom's wants you wisely seek

Five things observe with care

Of whom you speak

To whom you speak

How, when and where.



The first page of Joy's book

He illustrated it with a pencil sketch of Mickey Mouse.

As a youngster during the war years, Joy had dancing lessons from Evelyn Courtney in Cheltenham and performed in amateur theatrical entertainments. In December 1942 she gained a role in the chorus of the pantomime at the Cheltenham Opera House (as the Everyman was called until 1960), and she used the opportunity to fill her autograph book.

The pantos were a family affair run by Wilfred Simpson and his wife. Mrs Simpson was a talented costumer. During the war talent was difficult to find, so the same cast lined up year after year to entertain the locals, the on-stage talent often taking on off-stage roles such as script writer or general manager. The production in 1942 was Simpson's fourth, *Robinson Crusoe*.

Despite the tough times there was little austerity visible on stage. The principal girls wore pretty frocks and the scenery was beautifully arranged. George Young doubled as the dame and general manager, whilst Violet Fields was principal boy. Jimmy Mac and Arthur Carvey played the comedy parts and Basyl played Man Friday. Nita Grey, Stella Holles and Margaret Thompson played major roles too. Speciality items included the dancing of Petro and Petrova, supported by the Rich and Hayes sisters.

People came from everywhere to see the pantomime. There was no sign of petrol rationing as the crowds lined up outside the theatre. When the matinee was full, people remained in queues outside, waiting for the evening show to begin.

For 12-year-old Joy, the excitement must have been immense, but the backstage atmosphere seems to have been warm and friendly. She eagerly filled her little brown book with photos and autographs from the panto stars. Most gave simple clichéd best wishes, but Stella Holles who played Polly Perkins went a bit further. 'May you be one of the world's happiest girlies. This is my sincere wish to you Joy.'

This was one of at least five pantomimes that Joy performed in at the Cheltenham Opera House. The autograph book was present for four of them and recorded the players in each one. Wilfred Simpson continued producing pantos during the war. *Red Riding Hood* in 1943 starred Stella Holles and Jimmy Mac and much of the same cast as the previous year. It was followed by *Jack and the Beanstalk* for Christmas 1944.

In 1945 Simpson was still in charge and his task this time was to produce a post war extravaganza in an environment of austerity. He chose *Aladdin*. The lack of materials did not hamper the magnificence of the scenery, and the end of the war meant that topical allusions to the Americans and the Russians were frequent. Simpson, his cast, crew and associates defied shortages and produced a show that was a celebration of the vibrancy and endurance of the pantomime tradition.

Three spectacular scenes highlighted their efforts, the magic cave, the street of lamps and the palace of happiness. The street of lamps banished the blackouts of the war era with a sparkling display of Chinese lanterns. The music too reflected a joyful mood. It included some tuneful songs including one called 'I've got a chicken' which encouraged the audience to sing along.

The cast, many of whom were regular players at the Opera House, was well known to the locals, but it also included some newer members. Irene Ascot played Aladdin and strummed a melodic ukulele, Joan Louanne played Princess Balroubadour whilst Ted Lewis provided some laughs. Jean Carlin, a ventriloquist, was So Shi and Pat Beryl was Prince Pekoe.

The acrobatic feats of Les Cygne Four featured as a speciality turn and Frank Wilson added to the fun by playing the accordion and a trumpet.

Joy was in this show and at one stage may have taken a speaking part, because she received a note signed by the chorus girls thanking her for 'filling the 'breach.' Joy noted that this was presented to her on the last night of the pantomime with a pot of tulips and two ballet pictures. The chorus girls' signatures were carefully kept as a memento in the autograph book. Overall the show was a spectacular celebration of peace for a long suffering community.

Between pantomimes Joy participated in local dramatic presentations with a group called the X players. They frequently performed in Cheltenham. She also competed in dramatic and dance competitions, doing quite well in both. However, these amateur events were not worthy of the autograph book and there is no record of them in its yellow gilt-edged pages.

When panto season came again in December 1946, Simpson, still in charge at the Opera House, prepared *Cinderella*. Patricia Page starred in the title role and Doris Yorke was principal boy. These two performers had wonderful voices which echoed melodically off the stage.

Olga Saville produced the ballets and also played an ethereal fairy godmother,



Irene Ascot as Aladdin

whilst the comedic Buttons was played by the man who wrote the book for the show, Scott Gordon. He had been in these pantos for several years and knew how to amuse and entertain an audience. Pat Beryl, who had also played a principal role the year before, took the role of Dandini, whilst Harry Tollfree provided humour with his portrayal of Baron de Broke.

The sets were lavish, especially the design of the Prince's Palace, and Mrs Simpson again sewed some spectacular costumes. The whole was well received by an enthusiastic audience who appreciated the professional and polished presentation. Joy filled her autograph book with pictures and autographs of the principals. She received a warm note from ballet mistress Olga Saville, who probably knew her well. 'Lots of Luck, Joy, and every good wish.' Patricia Page doodled a wishbone, a horseshoe, an old boot and a black cat in the autograph book 'May all these things bring you good luck', she wrote.



Irene Lister as Robin Hood

Patricia Page's lucky wishes may have been a portent for Joy because the pantomime of 1947-48 provided her with a golden opportunity. That year, the chosen production was *Babes in the Wood*, a lavish show that starred some old hands and some new faces. After what was described as 'stiff auditions' Joy made it to the chorus of the show and was given a small speaking part as Margery Daw. It was her fifth time in the chorus. She was also given the role of understudy to Sheila Crowe, Maid Marion, the principal girl. 'Bill' Scott Gordon played the dame, as he had in previous shows, and he was joined by Frank Wilson, Pat Beryl and Irene Lister as Robin Hood. The speciality turns were provided by roller skaters, The Barodas, and the Bashful Boys who did a comedy act with a jacket. The show was very popular with audiences, and Mr and Mrs Simpson again provided lavish sets and costumes to delight their patrons.

All was going well until January 26th 1948, when Sheila Crowe contracted tonsillitis and lost her voice at the end of the matinée performance. It was time for her understudy, young Joy Avent, to take the role of Maid Marion. Joy was given a half hour notice, but she was well prepared and performed well. Her peers and employers were delighted and the local paper noted her 'clear and sweet singing voice' saying that she was very 'capable' for one so young. Sheila Crowe was warm and gracious to her understudy, writing 'To Joy, I'm so glad you had your chance this year. Lots of luck in the future, Best wishes, Sheila.'

The other remarks in the book indicate that Joy was well liked and reflect her loftier status in the ensemble. Instead of the rather formal best wishes of 1943,



Scott Gordon as the dame

she was now being given advice, witty rhymes and love from everybody including the principal performers. 'Pantomimes come pantomimes go but joy goes on for ever (and everyone) luck and love to my berlei girlie' wrote Pat Beryl. Despite petrol rationing and continued hard times, the pantomime was seen by over 21,000 people by the end of January. This was about the same number who had always attended pantos at Cheltenham and illustrated the lasting appeal of the Christmas tradition.

It seems obvious that Joy wanted a career on the stage. The autograph book indicates a young woman who was interested in making friends and idolised stage stars. It is silent for two years after *Babes in the Wood* but by 1950 there are entries from some very significant performers.

At the end of that year, Joy was involved in the *Humpty Dumpty* pantomime at the Theatre Royal Leeds. The panto starred Joy Beattie as the principal boy, Don Saunders, (known as one of England's best clowns) Bert Rich and Jasmine Dee. It also included a children's chorus called the Sunbeams. All of the principals signed Joy's book and the Sunbeams also signed a paper with their names in a childish scrawl. Joy Beattie wrote with 'love and best wishes', Bert Rich donated a sketch, and Jasmine Dee a warm inscription with a postcard. Joy was now a small fish in a large pond, but she was still collecting signatures from her idols.

The book is silent for the next year, except for a tantalising inscribed postcard from Barry Lupino with a note saying 'Aladdin, Oxford 1951/52.' It is an indication that Joy was also a part of this production.

In 1954, Joy journeyed to Australia. Her days as a performer were at an end and she was seeking a new life. The next year she married John Eric Shaw in Melbourne. Her occupation was listed as secretary.

Joy took the autograph book with her on the long sea voyage to Australia, and she retained it until her death in Sydney in 2019. She was 89 years of age and had spent most of her life in Australia.

The book tells a story of hopes and dreams and uncertain futures. It is a story of pantomime and players, a young girl who starred on an English stage 60 years ago, and a woman who treasured the memories she made.

Leann Richards

Leann, a writer and collector of theatrical history, came across Joy's album at a postcard fair in Sydney, where she lives. -Ed.



Jasmine Dee
in *Humpty Dumpty*



BOOKS FOR SALE



News from the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop'

During this past year of on-line meetings we had to resort to listing our donated books to bring them to your attention. Browsing a list is certainly less enjoyable than looking at the books themselves.

But on a positive note, listing does mean that our fantastically diverse and competitively priced collection of books now remains open for Society members *throughout the Summer break!*

You can find the list on the 'Library and Bookshop' page of the CLHS website (www.cheltlocalhist.org.uk). Orders may be placed at any time, in the normal way.

One new delight we can offer are copies of **Carolyn Greet's and James Hodsdon's** marvellous *Cheltenham Revealed*, a reproduction, in plain and annotated sections, of the Town and Tithing map of Cheltenham, hand drawn around 1795-1800. In apparently correct bird's eye view detail, it shows many public and private buildings, gardens and fields, road, paths, hedges and some toll-gates and landmark trees. It makes for a fascinating armchair wander and comparison with the present-day centre of town. All for just **£2.50** per copy.

Other 'walks' around Cheltenham in stock include: **Elaine Heasman**, *Walk Around Historic Cheltenham* (2005) **£3.00**; **John Bainbridge**, *Francis Frith's Cheltenham* (Photographic Memories series) 0(c.2000) **£8.00**; and **Aylwin Sampson & Steven Blake**, *A Cheltenham Companion* (1997) at **£2.50**. Not forgetting: **Robin Brookes**, *A Century of Cheltenham Events : People and Places over the last 100 years* (2001) **£7.00** and **Steve Blake**, *Cheltenham A Pictorial History* (1996) **£8.00**

Published by the Society are the Chronologies series, packed full of information on their various topics which include: Sport, Trade and Industry, Crime and Punishment, Literary Connections and Workers' Movements. Invaluable guides for anyone interested in the town's history, these are excellent value at between **£2.50** and **£3.00** per copy.

Two new arrivals in stock are a copy of **John Ferris's** magisterial study of GCHQ, *Behind the Enigma The Authorised History of GCHQ, Britain's Secret Cyber-Intelligence Agency* (2020) **£10.00**; and the well-illustrated first edition of **Nicholas Kingsley**, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire Volume One 1500-1660* (1989) at **£10.00**

We are always happy to receive donations of books. If you have books on Cheltenham that you would be happy to donate, we would be very grateful to receive them.

Oliver Pointer

(01242 216889 or 07400 197989; email hardy_pointer@hotmail.com)

BOOK REVIEW

Johannes Kip: The Gloucestershire Engravings

Edited by Anthea Jones

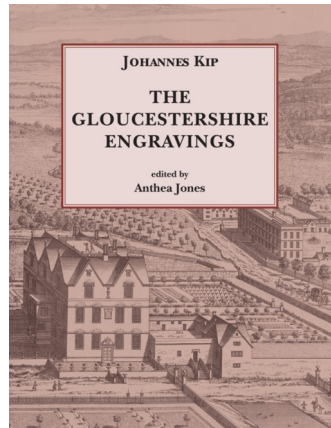
Handsomely produced by John Chandler at The Hobnob Press, in association with the Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust; generously laid out across double page spreads; and researched in depth by Dr Anthea Jones – this book is a delight to browse and lose oneself in.

Johannes Kip was a Dutch artist/engraver who arrived in England in 1688. He worked on a variety of projects depicting, in bird's eye views, the houses and near estates of the royal family, nobility and aristocracy. His most notable work, with Leonard Knyff, was *Britannia Illustrata*, published in 1707, which included eighty views.

Around this time, Kip met Sir Robert Atkyns junior, who was planning a county history, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*. Between 1706 and publication in 1712, Kip created sixty-four views of Gloucestershire; a uniquely substantial collection for any one county. Though Atkyns died before publication, his work enjoyed immediate fame, being reprinted in 1768 and in more recent times, though copies remain scarce and expensive.

Here reproduced clearly and in a scale sufficient to show many smaller details, Dr Jones' interpretation brings each of the views to life. She comments not only on each house, its site, gardens and near estate, but also highlights what the many incidental details of daily life depicted can tell us. Of particular pleasure is the 'tour' of Gloucester drawn from the bird's eye view of the city. Enlarged details from the plates and modern photographs for comparison add to our understanding. Detailed references from Atkyns' book, the relevant VCH volume, post code and grid reference enable the curious to research further. In all, a gem of a book, highly recommended.

Oliver Pointer



NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the November 2021 issue by **Monday 11th October 2021**

to the Editor: Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA
Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: kboothman3@gmail.com

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

CAN YOU HELP?

Robert Wilson and his bookshop

An enquirer living in Belfast asks if anyone remembers an antiquarian bookshop in Cheltenham run by Robert Wilson, who had previously worked for GCHQ. The location of the shop is uncertain, but it may have been at 3 Suffolk Place. Robert Wilson lived for many years in Overton Park Road and was last heard of there a few years ago, long retired and in his nineties. Does anyone know whether he is still alive, or whether any of his family still live in Cheltenham?

21-23 Lansdown Road

An enquirer who has recently moved into these properties (known respectively as Eildon House and Merridown House) would like to find out about their history. He wonders if there is a resident spirit, as there have been a few mysterious sightings. Does anyone know of any past events in either house that might account for this?

Lansdown Crescent Lane

An enquirer researching the history of Lansdown Crescent Lane would like to hear from anyone who has photos taken between about 1930 and 1970 of the mews buildings (nos 1-10) in the lane.

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

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