



# Cheltenham Local History Society

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## *EDITORIAL*

We recently heard the exciting news that Friends of Pittville has won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to UK voluntary groups and equivalent to the MBE. According to the citation the group receives the award for '*caring for the environment and heritage of Pittville for the benefit of the people of Cheltenham and beyond*'. It is richly deserved. The award will be presented by the Lord Lieutenant, Dame Janet Trotter, at a ceremony in Pittville Park at 5.00 pm on Friday 29th July.

*Kath Boothman*



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*

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### *EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2017-8*

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

*Tuesday 19th September:*

#### **Julie Sargent—History of Sandford Lido**

No further details available at time of going to press.

*Tuesday 17th October:*

#### **Angela Applegate—Music, Friendship and the Cotswold Hills: a Life of Gustav Holst**

This is a general biographical talk about the Cheltenham-born composer of 'The Planets', and will include an overview of the work of the local Birthplace Museum (recently refurbished and re-opened after flooding in 2016) and a brief introduction to The Gustav Holst Way (a Cotswold walking route).

*Tuesday 21st November:*

#### **Steven Blake—Who was John the Muffin Man?**

Among Cheltenham's most unlikely 'celebrities' during its Regency heyday was a three foot something itinerant muffin seller named 'Little John', who – remarkably – was the subject of a large number of small anonymous watercolour portraits: The Wilson Museum alone has nine of these, while at least as many again are known to be in private collections. This talk will explore what is known of 'Little John': who he was, where he came from, when he lived, and why he was the subject of so many portraits. It will also consider whether there was in fact more than one 'Little John the Muffin Man' hawking his wares through the streets of the early 19th century town.

*Tuesday 12th December:*

#### **David Aldred—Cleeve Hill, the Cotswold Health Resort**

For hundreds of years Cleeve Hill provided valuable common land for the inhabitants of Bishop's Cleeve and Southam. Then in the last decade of the nineteenth century it rapidly developed as the Cotswold Health Resort, when Cheltenham people and money moved out of town to create a playground and affluent outer suburb which still holds its attraction as a place to visit and live.

Most of this development took place in the two decades before the Great War . This talk will chart many of these changes and show how they created the landscape we see today .

*Tuesday 16th January 2018:*

#### **Research and Display Evening**

*Tuesday 20th February 2018:*

**David J H Smith—The Fifth Earl of Berkeley and Mary Cole (1784-1811): a Regency Scandal**

The fifth earl of Berkeley goes down in the history of the family as the ‘wicked earl’. By his will of 1810 he disinherited his legitimate sons, leaving his fortune to his favourite but illegitimate eldest son William. As a result the title and estate were separated for over a century and his actions contributed to the extinction of the title. This all came about because of his liaison with Mary Cole, a Gloucester butcher’s daughter, whom he met when he was over forty and she was in her late teens. But was she a naive ingenue or a cynical gold digger? Come to the talk and find out.

*Tuesday 20th March 2018:*

**Barry Simon—The History of Swindon Village**

Barry Simon is Chairman of the Swindon Village Society. As well as being the ‘Nimbys’ for that area the Society’s members have also undertaken research into the area’s one thousand years of history. In particular they have produced seven books of local history which record the memories of those who grew up around Swindon Village and have lived in the area over the past ninety years. In turn this knowledge has proved useful in averting or redirecting a number of unwelcome developments. This talk will cover the thousand year history and also note how such knowledge can be turned to local advantage.

*Tuesday 17th April 2018:*

**Alex Craven and Beth Hartland—VCH Cheltenham**

Alex and Beth have both been involved in the preparation of Cheltenham’s own volume in the Victoria County History series for the past few years, working on different time periods: Medieval in Beth’s case and Early Modern in Alex’s. They will talk about the process of making the book: the archives they visited, the documents they used, the problems that cropped up, the interesting stuff that had to be left out. They will also be very willing to answer any questions about these materials or about the book itself.

*Tuesday 22nd May 2018: AGM followed by*

**Alan Pilbeam—A Week’s Holiday in the Forest of Dean in 1880**

In 1880 John Bellows the Gloucester printer and antiquary published ‘A week’s holiday in the Forest of Dean’. It was the first pocket guide to the Forest and together with the newly opened railway introduced visitors to the Forest. He describes the places he visited, his means of travel, the people he met and the wildlife he observed on his walks. He was a sensitive and sympathetic observer and in this talk Alan revisits the places and the scenery and comments on what remains from those early days.

### *MORNING LECTURES 2017-8*

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

*Tuesday 3rd October:*

#### **Dave Walton—Gimson and the Barnsleys**

The talk attempts to tell the story of Ernest Gimson, and the brothers Ernest and Sidney Barnsley, three young architect/designers who after training in London came to live and practice architecture and the crafts in the Sapperton area near Cirencester where, as it turned out, they were to spend the rest of their lives. It also features some of the craftsmen they employed or were associated with as well as slides showing examples of their work held in the Arts and Crafts Movement collection at The Wilson (Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum) and elsewhere.

*Tuesday 6th March 2018:*

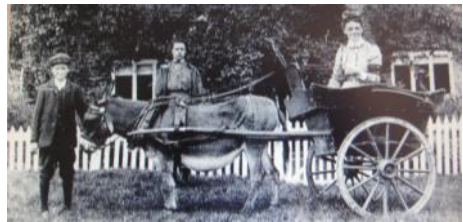
#### **Ray Wilson—The Quarries and Tramroads of Leckhampton Hill**

Come and learn the origin of the celebrated landmark above Cheltenham known as the Devil's Chimney. This fully illustrated talk by Dr Ray Wilson will reveal this as part of the story of the quarries on Leckhampton Hill and the tramroads that served them. In the 1920s, four 70 foot high steel lime kilns were built on the hill served by a standard gauge incline railway. Today it is possible to see the substantial remains of this unsuccessful venture. The talk will also include the story of the 'riots' in the early 20th century.

*Tuesday 3rd April 2018:*

#### **Carrie Howse—Rural District Nursing in Gloucestershire, 1880-1925**

Few people have heard of Elizabeth Malleeson (1828-1916), founder of the Rural Nursing Association, or realise the importance of Gloucestershire as the place where her national system of rural district nursing began. This talk describes the development of district nursing in rural Gloucestershire from the 1880s, when Elizabeth Malleeson moved to the area from London. The establishment of her local charity and its expansion into a national scheme is traced to its affiliation and eventual amalgamation with Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, the organisation from which today's system of district



nursing has evolved. The subsequent progress of the work in Gloucestershire is then followed through the lives of and relationships between three tiers of local society: the middle and upper class ladies who devoted years of their lives to the administration and management of the rural district nursing system, entirely on a voluntary basis; the specially trained nurses who delivered the care; and the poor patients who benefited from it.

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## *FOR YOUR DIARY*

### **Prestbury Local History Society**

[www.prestburyhistory.com](http://www.prestburyhistory.com)

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

*Monday 25th September:*

**Archive and Quiz Evening: FREE event open to all**

*Monday 23rd October:*

**Rebecca Sillence—Prestbury School**

### **Leckhampton Local History Society**

[www.llhs.org.uk](http://www.llhs.org.uk)

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

*Wednesday 20th September:*

**Eric Miller—Leckhampton in a Nutshell**

*Wednesday 18th October:*

**Angela France—The Leckhampton Hill Disputes**

### **Charlton Kings Local History Society**

[www.charltonkings.org.uk](http://www.charltonkings.org.uk)

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

*Tuesday 26th September:*

**Fiona Mead—What Victorian school logbooks tell us about local social history**

*Tuesday 24th October:*

**Peter Covey-Crump—How to Make a Fortune**

*Tuesday 28th November:*

**Angela Panrucker—Quaint and Quirky Gloucestershire**

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**Swindon Village Society**

Meetings are held at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated.  
Non-members pay £2.

*Wednesday 20th September:*

**Nigel Thompson—Iberia: unknown nooks and corners of Spain and Portugal**

*Wednesday 18th October:*

**Dr Tim Brain—The Gloucestershire Regiment 1944-1945**

**Holst Birthplace Museum**

*July 1st—December 20th:*

**Gustav's Gramophone**

The Holst family gramophone is on display. Come and hear some vintage sounds in this special exhibition!

*Saturday 23rd September at 7.00 pm at All Saints' Church:*

**The Birthday Concert by The Holst Singers**

The programme will include Holst's Six Folksongs for mixed voices, the third group of Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, and Vaughan Williams' Mass in G Minor.

Further details to be provided nearer the time.

**The Deerhurst Lecture 2017**

**'The Deer of Deerhurst: Landscape, Lordship,  
Custom and Ritual'**

Dr Graham Jones, University of Oxford

*Saturday 16th September at 7.30 pm in St Mary's Church, Deerhurst*

Admission on the door from 7.00 pm

Tickets (to include a glass of wine and cheese) £5, students £3

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

## REVIEWS

On March 21st our speaker was **Alec Hamilton**, who gave a richly illustrated talk on the architect **John Coates Carter (1859-1927)**. Alec said Carter had been called the most distinguished Arts and Crafts architect in Wales, but he was neither typical of the Arts and Crafts movement, which was largely secular (whereas he was strongly religious), nor was he Welsh. Born near Norwich, he was first articled to the local architect J B Pearce, and in 1881 he was working as an architect's assistant in Hammersmith. The move to Wales came after he met the established architect John Pollard Seddon, who had done much work on churches in Wales. In 1884 they went into partnership. Carter flourished in Wales, working on churches both with Seddon and independently, and in 1901 he designed his own house in Penarth, an asymmetric brick and stucco building

called The Red House. There he lived with his wife, daughter and mother-in-law. He also built other houses and public buildings, some of which show Arts and Crafts influence, and designed reredoses and war memorials with distinctive lettering for various churches. In 1904, having dissolved the partnership with Seddon, he did his best-known work, the impressive Caldey Abbey on an island off Tenby. In 1908, for reasons



Caldey Abbey

which remain obscure, he moved his family to a much smaller house in Prestbury, to which he added extensions and alterations in the Arts and Crafts style. In 1913, having designed a memorial to the wealthy Thomas Dyer-Edwards of Prinknash, once a patron of Seddon, he did some work for Prinknash Abbey, which had links to Caldey Abbey. While living in Prestbury Carter took on assorted minor projects including some cottages and houses that still exist. Alec showed some of his church designs now held in Gloucestershire archives. After World War I there was much demand for memorials of all kinds, and Carter produced no fewer than 74 drawings. His winning design for the war memorial in the Promenade in Cheltenham did not get built: those for All Saints and Prestbury, however, were



St Teilo, Llandeloy

used. Around 1920 Carter played an ever bigger role in the life of St Mary's, Prestbury, acting as churchwarden and designing a screen, an altar, a pulpit and an aumbry. The war memorial and lych-gate at Charlton Kings were also his work. His last little church, Llandeloy in Pembrokeshire, designed to look like an early celtic church, was very much an Arts and Crafts creation. His other late work consisted largely of

decorative features, carving and lettering. He painted, too, in a naïve Arts and Crafts style—Alec showed a wall painting in a Welsh chapel—with no great skill but with sincerity. His work was to him a form of worship, and though never famous he was one of the most spiritual of architects.

The title of **John Chandler's** talk on April 4th at St Luke's was **Cheltenham's History in Black and White**. Until the 1980s, John said, the daily arrival and departure of hundreds of coaches, often causing gridlock in the town centre, was a familiar sight. How did this come about? For many years Black and White Motorways, part of the Associated Motorways group, operated out of the coach station in St Margaret's Road. In the days of horse-drawn transport coaches had called at The Plough; those services had died out with the advent of railways, but had come back in the form of buses. The impetus for the development of a big motorbus network was the First World War, when many men learned to drive. Afterwards old buses were plentiful and local services soon started up, running between towns and villages and providing links to railway stations. Excursions became a profitable sideline and long-distance services followed. In



1926 George Readings, a young driver, set up the first service connecting Gloucester, Cheltenham and London. This was the origin of Black and White Motorways, which by the late 1920s was offering travel to the midlands, the coast and the west country in a fleet of comfortable buses. John showed photos, adverts and a spider-like map of all the routes available, centred on Cheltenham. Unfortunately the company expanded too rapidly, and in 1930 it was bought out by Midland Red, based in Birmingham. The 1930 Road Traffic Act brought a shake-up in bus services, introducing new rules that prompted companies to amalgamate. In 1934 Associated Motorways was formed, based in Cheltenham, and Black and White soon had a new headquarters at the coach station that was then built on a large site in St Margaret's Road. It included not only well-appointed waiting rooms and a café but a big service garage. The 1930s were a time of expansion. Some of the companies in the group were owned or part-owned by the railways, which were then in decline. All had their designated routes and shared booking facilities, while Black and White ran tours, promoting Cheltenham as a holiday destination. Coach services were suspended during the Second World War, but enjoyed a bonanza when they started again in 1946, petrol being then still rationed for private motorists. The excursion trade peaked in the 1950s; in 1957 Black and White alone owned 115 buses. John showed photos and advertising leaflets. With the nationalisation of the railways in 1948 some of the Associated Motorways bus companies were also nationalised but still operated out of Cheltenham. The coach station, which had been bombed in the war, was rebuilt in the 1950s and fleets of buses in many liveries continued to use it until the syndicate now known as National Express was formed in 1972. By the 1980s Cheltenham, being too close to Bristol and Birmingham, was no longer a major hub in the road network. Services dwindled. The coach station, up for sale in 1985, was demolished in 1990, and Royal Well took over as Cheltenham's bus station.



Our speaker on April 25th was **Jan Broadway**, who spoke on **The Nurserymen of Georgian Gloucestershire**. Jan began by showing a picture of a big vase of tulips and other flowers, exemplifying the kinds of flowers that were advertised in Georgian times. Nurserymen were distinct from gardeners in that they raised plants for more than one customer and ran an ongoing retail business. Market gardeners who brought plants as well as flowers and produce to sell at the market were nurserymen. Some were retired gardeners from big houses, or indeed were still employed. Thomas Pole of Bristol was one such. John Collurne leased land outside Gloucester and left a stock of trees when he died in 1729; his son William who succeeded him and traded from a stall in the market, called himself a nurseryman and florist and advertised kitchen garden and flower seeds and plants as well as trees and shrubs. Two ex-gardeners from Highnam Court ran nurseries: John Murray, who set up shop in Southgate Street, Gloucester, in 1784, but failed, and John McLaren who started his business in 1796 (but, like some others, also had a second job—he sold spirituous liquors). Jan said the earliest nurseryman she had found in the county was Joseph Hockley, who leased the 3-acre garden of Chapel House. As he claimed that his father had been the first to train espaliers, it is likely that he was trained elsewhere. Quite a few nurserymen went broke, and the records of the stock they disposed of reveal what they had been selling. She showed an 1826 advert for trees, fruit trees and hothouse plants from John Miller of Bristol. Could he have grown it all himself? More probably he, like other nurserymen, had bought some of his stock from London or elsewhere.



Jessop's Nurseries

Cheltenham, too, had its nurserymen. Thomas Tovey advertised trees, shrubs and hothouse plants in 1810, hoping to serve spa customers. Trained fruit trees were popular in town gardens, as were evergreens. Richard Pigott and his son Luke of Shurdington and Alstone specialised largely in carnations, on which Luke published a book in 1820. Edward Pipe was a seedsman and florist in Montpellier offering such flowers as dahlias, camellias and geraniums, some of which at that time (1837) were new to the UK. All this, too, was aimed at spa visitors. Gardening was a fashionable pursuit and there were gardening societies gentlemen could join. Samuel Hodges of the Imperial Nursery and Cambray Garden offered landscaping and maintenance services as well as stock, and Joseph Evans in 1826 advertised himself as a 'contract planter' as well as a seedsman and florist. Most nurseries had hothouses buyers could go into. Jessop's 20-acre nursery near St James' Square, set up in the 1820s, had aviaries and was a destination for visitors besides being famous for its roses and other plants. It survived into the Victorian era, as did most of the others. Cheltenham was unusual, Jan said, in having nurseries located within rather than outside the town. The audience had obviously listened with great interest and asked several questions at the end.

After the AGM on May 23rd **John Dixon** gave us a lively talk entitled **Beguiling Barbara Cartland, Stranger in our Midst**. He explained that she had a connection with Tewkesbury (where he was chairman of the local history society) in that her mother's family, the Scobells, had owned Walton House near the abbey. In 1994 Barbara had been asked to speak at a fund-raising event for the abbey, and had raised a lot of money. Her grandfather on the Cartland side was a general, but the Cartlands' money actually came from a brass foundry they owned in Birmingham. When Barbara's mother, known as Polly, married into this family, the young couple were given a grand house to live in and enjoyed a lavish lifestyle until 1903 when Mr Cartland senior committed suicide. Barbara was then two years old. Family fortunes declined somewhat, but



Barbara and daughter Raine

Barbara's parents were still able to educate her two younger brothers at Charterhouse and send her to Malvern College. In 1910 a fire destroyed Walton House and Barbara's grandfather Lieut-Col Scobell died of a heart attack. The house was restored but divided up. Many years later houses were built on its land, against the wishes of Barbara, who offended the people of Tewkesbury by saying that there would be only 'little people' left in the town. John's aerial photos showed how Tewkesbury had grown and changed. Meanwhile Barbara's father fought in the First World War and in 1918 was posted missing. Although his death was never confirmed his widow set up a memorial to him outside Tewkesbury Abbey. Local people did not, as she had hoped, contribute to it: the family was not popular. In 1923 Barbara published *Jigsaw*, the first of her many novels, and it became a best-seller. As a young woman she was a society hostess and very attractive. Setting her heart on a rich husband, she had an affair with the heir of Lord Beecham, who owned Madresfield, but married instead (in 1927) the wealthy but drunken Captain Alexander McCorquodale. They had a daughter, Raine, who was to become stepmother to Diana, Princess of Wales. Barbara had been unfaithful to her husband and believed that the Duke of Kent was the child's real father. The marriage ended in 1933 and three years later Barbara married her ex-husband's cousin Hugh McCorquodale. They had two sons. In the Second World War, like many people, she took her children to Canada, but being ashamed to think that the royal family had stayed in London she came back and did war work. After the war she continued to be involved in public life, supporting causes such as the mislabelling of food and the rights of gypsies. Her husband died in 1963 and she shared her home at Camfield Place, near Hatfield, with her mother, who lived to be 99, and her daughter. Barbara had various famous friends and remained a prominent figure, giving interviews and appearing on television, until near the end of her life. She died in May 2000, ostensibly wealthy but in debt. Her hats and clothes were sold to raise money, and the Spitting Image puppet of her went for £3290. The audience had been well entertained—perhaps even beguiled—by the story of this remarkable woman.

### Pittville Walk, Tuesday 20th June

On a memorably hot evening about 20 people assembled at Pittville Gates for a walk, led by Steven Blake, to pursue the theme of his talk last December on ‘Pittville after Pitt’ by looking at some of the houses built on land that was auctioned off after Joseph Pitt’s death in 1842. We started at Clarendon Villas in Pittville Lawn, developed by stonemason Thomas Cantell. He had bought all the plots in the street but, as often happened, had sold some of them on to other builders. (This accounts for many variations in style.)

We moved on to Clarence Square, most of which was built in Pitt’s lifetime, the exception being five houses on the south side (nos.15-19) that were not finished until 1849. In Wellington Square, where we were glad to stand under the shade of the trees in the central garden, Steven pointed out the fine terrace on the west side, the most substantial development after Pitt’s time. Though later than Clarence Square, the architecture of Wellington Square is similar, and the builder William Williams certainly had a hand in both. On the east side is an oddity, Eastholme, a brick villa possibly designed by John Middleton. Steven explained that the land it stood on had first been bought by Thomas Bodley, who had also bought Anlaby, a big villa in Evesham Road. In 1867 his executors sold



Wellington Square



Eastholme

the plot to Eleanor and Mary Bennett, daughters of an Irish QC, who built themselves this unusual house. In Evesham Road we passed the site of Anlaby, now replaced by modern houses, and came to a group built in the 1870s with decorative quoins on the corners and beside the entrance. Edwin Broom built these, but houses with similar features in Pittville Crescent were the work of Luke Baker some years before. Pausing at the junction of Albert Road and Pittville Lawn, Steven pointed out that we were now in Prestbury parish, the border being Wyman’s Brook which had been dammed to form Pittville Lake. Pitt had bought the land north of the brook after 1806 but nothing was built there before he died. Later the land was sold on by the County of Gloucester bank to various builders. One of them was Charles Winstone, who built Ellerslie in Albert Road and some villas on the north side of East Approach Drive. Passing the Pump Room into West Approach Drive we saw more villas built in a similar style in 1851-4, the earliest in the Prestbury part of the estate. Steven had promised to show us 62 houses built between 1844 and 1886: the last of these was one by Winstone on Evesham Road just north of the playground, where our very enjoyable walk ended.

*FEATURE***RON PREWER (MR. ST. PAULS),  
1936-2012.**

Ronald James Prewer was born in the St. Paul's area of Cheltenham in 1936 and was an ardent fan and supporter of all things "St. Pauls" throughout his life, so much so that local residents took to calling him "Mr St. Paul's".

Ron joined the army in the early 1950s, becoming 23015678 Private R J Prewer of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. He rose to the rank of Corporal and saw service in Cyprus during the EOKA emergency. 1st Battalion the Royal Berkshire regiment deployed to Cyprus in October 1956 where

they were stationed near Episkopi. On 3rd November the battalion suffered its first fatal casualty from an EOKA ambush. For his service in Cyprus Ron received the General Service medal 1918-1962 with the clasp "Cyprus". On 9th June 1959 the Royal Berkshire Regt was amalgamated with the Wiltshire Regiment to form the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (DERR) and it may have been this that persuaded Ron to apply for a transfer to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC). He clearly got on well in the RAOC and was soon promoted to Sergeant. Ron was posted to Aden in 1964 and spent two years there. This earned him his second medal, the GSM 1962-2007 with clasp "South Arabia". When a Gloucestershire branch of The Aden Veterans' Association (AVA) was formed in Stroud in 2008, Ron attended the first meeting and remained a loyal supporter for the rest of his life. He regularly attended the annual reunion in Blackpool whenever possible and liked nothing better than telling stories of his time in Aden. I well remember one of these stories:

*"Ron was on duty at a checkpoint at the end of the causeway leading into Aden when a long convoy of camels approached his guard post. The Arab on the lead camel was fast asleep, so Ron and some other soldiers turned the camel around without waking the driver. The convoy then slowly made its way back along the causeway to where it had come from!"*

Ron Prewer died in Cheltenham General Hospital on 1st August 2012 after a lengthy illness. Both The Aden Veterans' Association and Cheltenham Local

History Society were well represented at his funeral together with the Standard of the Gloucestershire Branch of the AVA carried by the author.

Medals for service in Aden form an important part of my medal collection and I am honoured and pleased that those of my friend Ron are now a part of it.

*Mick Kippin*



## **‘Gardens for Food, Fun and Flowers’ GLHA Local History Day**

*Saturday 18th March 2017*

*at Churchdown Community Centre, Parton Road, Churchdown*



The meeting began at 11.00 am with a welcome from Dr Steven Blake, who introduced the first speaker Dr Jan Broadway. Her talk, entitled “Florists’ Feasts and after: the History of Gardening Societies in Gloucestershire”, was followed by a break for lunch. Refreshments were provided at the back of the hall and there was time to view the various displays, most of which were in

the adjacent rooms. After lunch Dr Jeremy Burchardt spoke on the theme ‘Gloucestershire’s Place in the early Allotment Movement’. Next came the presentation of the Bryan Jerrard Award, sponsored by The History Press. It went this year to Nick Herbert for his article ‘The Squatter and Rural Settlement in the Georgian Age: Woolridge Common, Hartpury’ published in TBGAS Vol.133 (2015). Sally Self, as one of the two runners-up, received a certificate and a book token for her article ‘In the Mault House’: four Centuries of Malting and Brewing in Cheltenham’ in CLHS Journal 32.



The CLHS display was on the theme of allotments

The award for the best display went to the Forest of Dean. There was then a break for tea before the last speaker, Michael Brown, gave his talk on ‘The Historic Gardener—Ghastly Gardening: Horticulture’s Horrible History’. At 4.00 pm Dr Blake closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their support.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Brenda Evans	Mike Bottomley
June Morris	Richard Burge and Celia Hermann

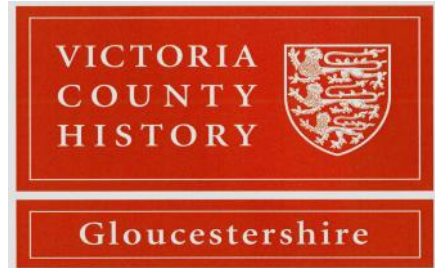
### VCH News

The draft text of our planned paperback on 'Cheltenham before the Spa' has now been read by an academic peer-reviewer, who commented very positively on it. So we have a definite green light, and John Chandler is now busy enhancing the text with various explanatory notes and boxes. A list of potential illustrations has been drawn up in consultation with Steve Blake

and others, all with the aim of making the finished product both attractive and accessible. So, when shall we see it? We hope very much it'll be in time for the LitFest this October, as we now have a slot in the Festival's 'Locally Sourced' strand, and we'd much rather be talking about a book that people can go out and buy straightaway, rather than just do a preview. Getting the first part of the new history of Cheltenham into print will be a big moment, and we shall be hoping to get some decent publicity out of it. Fingers crossed...

Meanwhile the VCH volunteers have continued to keep busy, despite restricted conditions at the Archives while building works take place. The account of Cheltenham is now well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Alex Craven's professional inputs now being ably supplemented by contributions drafted by our tireless volunteers - locally sourced indeed!

On a related note, some research I did last year on the 'true' date of the discovery of the spa waters has been now published in *The Local Historian* (April issue – copy available in the local studies library), and this will help sharpen up some of the facts in the VCH account. Although different sources suggest different dates, I am now pretty certain that 1716 was indeed the correct year, so we won't have to run the anniversary dinner all over again. One interesting discovery was that pigeons have featured in the discovery of at least five other mineral springs over the years, so it seems that Cheltenham's founding legend has a firmer factual base than you might have thought.



*James Hodsdon*

### *Congratulations Neela !*

On 23rd March at the annual ceremony at the Playhouse Neela Mann received an Arts Council Award with the citation: "*For her dedication and commitment to Cheltenham Local History Society, promoting an interest in the history of the town, especially Cheltenham in the Great War, and preparing for Heritage Open Days.*"

This has been well earned, and indeed we feel it understates her achievements.



Neela with Graham Lockwood, President of Cheltenham Arts Council, and the Mayor Cllr Chris Ryder

### **Volunteer Projects**

All the Miles scrapbooks have been digitised and most of Volume 1 has been recorded on spreadsheets, which will eventually be combined into one spreadsheet. When that is done we shall consult with Kate Maisey and Jan Broadway as to where they can be placed and who will have access to the images and the catalogue. Although the scrapbooks are out of copyright, there may be members of the Miles family who should be contacted. Meanwhile about a third of Volume 2 has been distributed to our eleven volunteers, and work on the project continues. The cataloguing of the 270 boxes of Ticehurst and Wyatt (solicitors) papers is making steady progress, and a volunteer has just come forward with the specialised knowledge needed to deal with the bundles of maps that accompany the papers. The processing of the Mike Grindley archive also goes on. This is a task calling for both patience and dexterity, involving as it does thousands of often very small newspaper cuttings that fly away if you breathe on them.

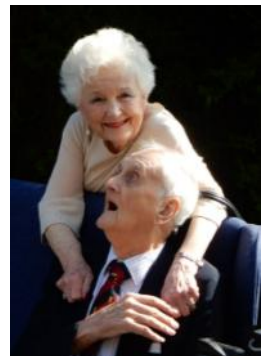
Never a dull moment!

*Sally Self*

### **Message from Brian White**

*Brian sends his sincere thanks to everyone who has visited him recently or sent him 90th birthday cards. He appreciates their kind thoughts and good wishes. He was reluctant to give up his home but is now happy and settled in Astell House.*

Brian is pictured here on his 90th birthday with Inga Guilor, whose husband John is also living at Astell. The Guilors are both past members of the Society.



*For those members who were unable to attend the AGM on 23rd May, summary reports are printed below. Full minutes of the meeting will be made available at next year's AGM. If you did not have a copy of the accounts and would like one posted to you, please either telephone the Treasurer on 01242 231837 or e-mail suebrown@waitrose.com*

## *ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23RD MAY 2017*

*The Acting Chairman Chris Conoley welcomed the Deputy Mayor Cllr Bernard Fisher and thanked him for taking the chair. Cllr Fisher was standing in for the Mayor Cllr Klara Sudbury, who had agreed to be President of the Society for her term of office.*

### **Election of Officers and Committee**

The Acting Chairman invited nominations from the floor for the still vacant position of Chairman, but there were none.

*The following were elected:*

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

**Committee:** Jill Barlow, Chris Bentall, Kath Boothman, Alison Pascoe, Sue Robbins, Sally Self, Joanna Vials, Maggie Winterburn.

**Secretary's Report** (*summarised*): Chris Conoley said that in the absence of a Chairman it was his privilege to report on the Society's activities in the past year. The Society did much to increase awareness of local history, not just for its members but amongst the general public. Twelve well-attended meetings had been held in the course of the year, nine in the evenings and three in the mornings, covering a wide variety of topics from the life of H H Martyn to a history of the coach station. The annual Research and Display evening had as usual given members a chance to display their research findings, and had also raised £100 for the previous mayor's charities by the holding of a raffle. The quality of the meetings was a tribute to David Johnson, who had been Programme Secretary for several years. He had now relinquished the position and the Society was grateful to Alison Pascoe for arranging the 2017-8 season of talks. David would still organise the 2018 summer visits, for which he was to be thanked. The main summer visit in the past year had been to Ross on Wye and Kilpeck church, and there had also been a Victorian Cheltenham walk and a Cirencester walk. He thanked Sue Brown for her extremely efficient organisation of the bookings. The biennial Local History Afternoon had been held in August 2016 at St Andrew's church on the theme 'Women of Cheltenham' with some fascinating displays and a choice of walks. The Society had again participated in the Montpellier Fiesta and the Heritage Open Days weekend and provided displays at the Local and Family History Library. The society was grateful to members who gave up their time to help with various projects, notably in connection with the ongoing VCH



but also including the cataloguing of the Miles scrapbooks and the Mike Grindley archive. He thanked Sally Self and Kath Boothman for their respective roles as Editors of the Journal and the Newsletter, and all others, especially the rest of the hard-working Committee, who helped to support the Society.

**Presentation of the Peter Smith Award:** The award was given to David Scriven, who had been Chairman for five years and a Committee member since 2009, serving as website manager and Membership Secretary. Even after resigning as Chair in May 2016 he had stayed on the organising committee for the Local History Afternoon in August, and he was still involved with the GLHA. It was his immense contribution ‘behind the scenes’, though, that most deserved the award. Exceptionally well-organised and ever courteous, he had been tirelessly supportive of everything the Society did and had always done much more than his official role required.

**Treasurer’s Report** (*summarised*): Sue Brown said the Society’s finances were sound. Although the constitution did not require it, an independent examination had been carried out as usual by Alison Milford, a Certified Accountant. There was an excess of income over expenditure of £276.80 in the general fund and an excess of expenditure over income of £7.13 in the restricted funds, which comprised the Peter Smith Award (net income for the year £75), the 2015 Arts Council grant of which £82.13 was spent during the year, and the 2016 Arts Council grant which was spent in full. Subscriptions were slightly down on last year, reflecting a reduction in membership from 410 to 395, still a very healthy figure. There was a Gift Aid receipt of £577.90, including £125 for the Peter Smith Award, and £8 in donations to the general fund. The Journals and the Society’s other publications continued to sell well, as did the book *Cheltenham in the Great War*, published in March 2016. Donations from other sales, which included sales of books given to the Society and percentage sales from authors, had amounted to £487.00. Morning meetings were popular and had produced a surplus of £159.01 for the year. Fees for speakers at the meetings totalled £423.50. Postage costs had been lower than last year thanks to members hand-delivering Newsletters and Journals, which was a tremendous help to the Society. A payment of £1,000 had been made to the Victoria County History project, the second of three donations. A further payment of £1,000 would be made in 2017.

**Address by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bernard Fisher** (*summarised*): Cllr Fisher said he loved Cheltenham and was himself was part of local history, since he had been born here and his father had worked for H H Martyn. He owned a collection of Rowe prints and had seen Alfred Miles’ scrapbooks. He was glad so many people shared his interest in the town’s heritage, helping to protect and preserve it; the Pump Room, for instance, would have been demolished but for public resistance. This had been his first civic engagement as Deputy Mayor and he thanked the Society for inviting him.

*FEATURE*

## Accidental light on the date when Cheltenham's Great House was erected

Checking the wording of a certificate requesting a licence to hold a religious meeting outside the Church of England in a volume of the Gloucester Diocesan Records, I noticed the name Dame Frances Stapleton. She was an important figure in the history of Cheltenham spa, well-known as the builder of a large house near the developing spa well, but the date when it was built has not been clearly established. The house seems to have been built by the time that Thomas Robins, a painter of fans, included it in a fine fan which showed in the centre the new well building, with the Great House and the church in the background, and on the reverse the Assembly Rooms at Powers Court. Robins carefully painted an avenue of trees, obviously saplings, so that the date of the Great House appeared to be close to 1740 when Skillicorne planted the second part of his Well Walk. The document which follows shows that the house was 'new erected' in 1742, and the legal process set out suggests that it was probably under erection in 1740 or 1741.



The Great House as shown on Thomas Robins' fan

The document, as set out in the Diocesan Record Book (GDR/284/143-44), follows.

*Dame Frances Stapleton Faculty for a seat in Cheltenham church*

*Sir Henry Penrice Knight Doctor of Laws Chancellor of the Diocese of Gloucester*

*To all Christian people to whom these presents shall come Greeting*

*Whereas it has been alledged before us on the part and behalf of Dame Frances*

*Stapleton of Cheltenham in the said diocese of Gloucester That she is owner and*

*possessor of a large new erected messuage or tenement in the said parish and that*

*she hath not any convenient seat or seat places in the church belonging to the same*

*And whereas it hath been also alledged that the said Dame Frances Stapleton having*

*applied to the minister churchwardens and parishioners of the said parish It had*

*been agreed at a Vestry or parish meeting that the fourth and fifth seats west from the*

*belfry stairs on the north side of the south isle of the said church containing eight feet*

*and nine inches in length and six feet and six inches in breadth might be appropri-*

*ated to the said Dame Frances Stapleton That whereas she and her family and the*

*future owners and occupiers of the said messuage may sitt stand kneel hear and*

*attend Divine Service and sermons without interruption and exclusive of all others*

*and therefore a petition was presented to us on behalf of the said Dame Frances*

*Stapleton to grant and appropriate the said seats above mentioned to her and the future owners and occupiers of the said messuage that therein she and they may sitt stand kneel hear and attend Divine Service and sermons from time to time and at all times thereafter at the usual and accustomed times exclusive of all others And whereas a process was thereupon issued and under the seal of our office to cite the churchwardens of the said parish in particular and all others in general who should have anything to alledge why the said petition should not be granted to appear before us our surrogate or other competent judge in that behalf at a certain day and at a certain place in the said process mentioned then & thereto alledge if they should think it their interest so to do reasons to the contrary sufficient and concludent in law And whereas upon return of the said process no one did appear to alledge anything whatsoever why the said petition should not be granted Know ye therefore that we the said Chancellor favourably inclining to the petition aforesaid Have by this our faculty granted confirmed and appropriated and we do hereby grant confirm and appropriate the seats above mentioned in the said parish church of Cheltenham unto the said Dame Frances Stapleton and the future owners occupiers and possessors of the said new erected messuage that therein she and they may from time to time and at all times hereafter sitt stand kneel hear and attend Divine Service and sermons at the usual and accustomed hours for that purpose without interruption and exclusive of all others In witness whereof we have caused the seal of our office to be affixed to these presents Dated the second day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty*

So Dame Frances had her private seats.

*Anthea Jones*

## NEW PUBLICATION

### **Secret Cotswolds**

by Sue Hazeldine

The Area of Outstanding National Beauty known as the Cotswolds is famous for its range of rolling green hills and quaint English towns and villages, filled with honey-coloured stone cottages and hosting bustling weekend markets. This beautiful vast expanse stretches across five counties in southern England and has a rich history that reaches right back to the Neolithic Age. Join Sue Hazeldine as she covers a wide variety of topics from people and animals to places and buildings, all relevant to the Cotswold area and illustrated with colour photographs and her own wonderful hand-drawn illustrations.



Published in paperback in May 2017 by Amberley Publishing, price £13.49

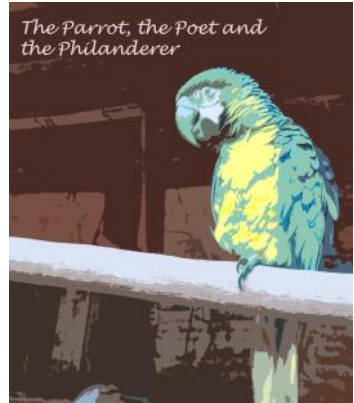
## LOCAL NEWS

### The Parrot, the Poet and the Philanderer

Every September the Society's members offer a wide range of advice and support for the Cheltenham Heritage Open Day events. One unusual event which the Society has helped to sponsor this year in collaboration with the Cheltenham Arts Council is a play!

Entitled *The Parrot, the Poet and the Philanderer*, it has been written by two local playwrights, Lou Beckett and David Elder (also a CLHS member). The play focuses on Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett and Alfred Tennyson, three world-famous English writers who all spent time in Cheltenham during the middle of the 19th century; their true stories include

scandal, competition for an important literary prize and a fight for women's higher education. The play asks whether a young woman can change not only the lives of the three authors but the story of Cheltenham as well. 50 seats are available for each of the 3 performances, which will be held in Chapel Arts, Knapp Road on Thursday 7th September: 16:00-17:00 and Friday 8th September: 16:00-17:00 and 19:30-20:30. To pre-book tickets (which are FREE) please contact Chapel Arts, tel. 01242 580077 or email [info@thechapelarts.com](mailto:info@thechapelarts.com).



### GWR Gates and Railings from the Travis Perkins Site

As most people know, the former Travis Perkins site on Gloucester Road is now being developed for housing by Taylor Wimpey. Earlier in its history, however,

the land belonged to the Great Western Railway and was a steam depot with several large locomotive sheds, one of which Travis Perkins had retained. Built in 1908, this shed was in use for locomotives until 1966. In it and elsewhere on the site were found a number of late 19th century railway artefacts, including a quantity of cast iron fencing and four original Great Western gates



The old steam depot near Gloucester Road

bearing the GWR crest, all of which Taylor Wimpey were happy to donate to a railway restoration project. In the event they have gone to the Vale of Berkeley Railway group, which is working to restore the line at Sharpness. The gates and railings have been put into storage for the moment and will be used in due course, it is hoped, as part of the Sharpness Station restoration.

## Cheltenham Past and Present

David Hanks, a former member of the Society, author of the book *Cheltenham Past and Present* and owner of an extensive collection of historic and modern images of the town, has a Facebook site, also called 'Cheltenham Past and Present', which serves as an online continuation of the book. He writes to say that he has recently added to this repository an album taking a look at some 200 years of redevelopment of what is now known as the 'Brewery Quarter', which he hopes will be of interest to members. A link to the Facebook page has been added to the Society's website.

## FEATURE

### A 1914 Postcard

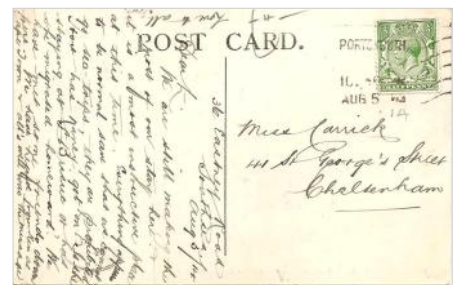
Dr Clifford Williams, a member of CLHS living in Hampshire, thought we would be interested to see this postcard of the Royal Naval Barracks in Portsmouth, sent to Cheltenham on August 5th 1914, the day after the First World War began. The message reads:

*Dear L,*

*We are still making the most of our stay here & it is a most instructive place at this time. Everything appears to be normal save that we cannot go sea trips, they are prohibited. How has Nancy got on. Is she staying at St Brieuic or has she migrated homeward. We have met some friends down here. We have heard from Ken at Cape Town and all's well was the message.*

*Love to all, Tom.*

Dr Williams has discovered that the addressee, Miss Ann Elizabeth Carrick of 41 St George's Street, Cheltenham, was born in 1869 and died in 1969 aged 101. She was a school teacher and never married.





## BOOKS FOR SALE



### News from the CLHS 'donated books' stall

We have recently received a very generous donation of local history books which will be priced up and available shortly. Meanwhile, as well as the usual selection, I'm hoping to highlight books I don't usually bring, such as some very old volumes, which are very interesting and a joy to handle. Another time I'll bring books on general subjects, mainly paperbacks, and some in 'as new' condition, which would make a good holiday read or gift. On my office shelves at home I have an almost complete set of the BGAS Gloucestershire Record Series, offered at various prices from £5 upwards, also 3 copies of the Archives & Local History in Bristol and Gloucestershire - Essays in Honour of David Smith (2007) at £5. I still have a number of guide books - Arthur Mee 'King's England' series for Worcestershire £4, Warwickshire £4, Somerset £4, and Monmouthshire (first edition 1951) at £15. In the Pevsner series are North Somerset and Bristol; North-East Norfolk and Norwich; North-West and South Norfolk; Suffolk, all at £10, South and West Somerset £7.50, and Cumberland and Westmorland at £5, which has some loose pages. If you are planning a holiday to any of these counties this year, one of these could be useful.

### Here are some of the other books currently for sale:

A History of England (1962) GM Trevelyan, hardback, £2.50

Age of Extremes, 1914-1991 (1995) E Hobsbawm, paperback, good condition, £3

Frampton on Severn, portrait of a Victorian Village (2000) R Spence, hardback, signed copy, good condition, £6.50

A History of Tetbury (1978) E Hodgson, hardback, good condition, £10

A History of Cirencester (1978) K J Beecham, hardback, excellent condition, £15

Winchcombe, a history of the Cotswold Borough, 1st ed. (2001) D N Donaldson, excellent condition, £10

The English Spa, 1560-1815 (1990) P Hembry, hardback, good condition, £10 (including references to Cheltenham spas)

Kelly's directory (1978) Paperback, well-used copy, no map, (but difficult to find these days), £15

Thank you so much for bringing me your unwanted books, particularly the local history ones which sell very well at reasonable prices. As many are no longer available to buy new, it helps our newer members to build up their own collection as well as raising funds for the Society. If you are interested in any of the above books, or wish to donate books to CLHS, please contact me either by email at [heatherbell71@hotmail.com](mailto:heatherbell71@hotmail.com) or on 01242 232740 (ex-directory). Many thanks.

*Heather Atkinson*

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## CLHS DISPLAYS IN THE LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

20th June - 31st July	Cecily Lewis and Grace Billings
1st August - 12th September	The notorious Mrs A'Court
13th September - October	Cheltenham's Big Red Book— launch of VCH short 'Cheltenham before the Spa', linked to the Literary Festival
October - November	The Ladies' College

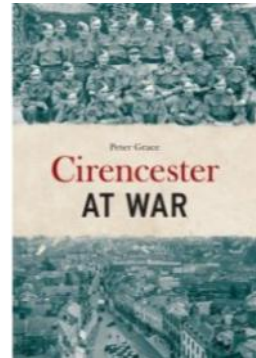
## NEW PUBLICATION

### CIRENCESTER AT WAR

by Peter Grace

*Cirencester at War* is a pictorial record of the main events of the Second World War as they impacted on the town of Cirencester and its surrounding district.

Illustrated with over 200 old photographs and documents, it gives an insight into wartime life with its tragedy, heroism, austerity and humour. With over thirty military establishments within a 12-mile radius of the town, from the 'Piggeries' at Poulton to the US 15th Hospital Center at Stratton, the combat element was well represented. The civilian population showed their resilience through the restrictions of rationing, the blackout and other privations that continued long after hostilities had ceased. It was perhaps the period that made the most changes to the town and population during the twentieth century.



Published in paperback in February 2017 by Amberley Publishing, price £11.99

## *CAN YOU HELP?*

### **John Roebuck**

A researcher is looking into the background of Dorothy Johnston (1880-1962) who gave her home in Kent to the National Trust, and has learned that her grandfather, Charles, married a Caroline Roebuck in 1827.

Caroline's father John lived in The Crescent, Cheltenham and gave his daughter a generous marriage settlement. Does anyone know any more about him?

### **Cowley Manor**

A researcher is trying to establish the dates when Cowley Manor changed hands, specifically during the period when Gloucestershire County Council owned it. Internal photos are also wanted with a view to tracing the location and ownership of some paintings that are believed to have hung there.

### **Boneshaker**

An enquirer not living locally wishes to trace the history of this early bicycle that he owns. The man who sold it to him said he had bought it in the 1980s from an ex- World War II Blenheim pilot who ran a garage in Cheltenham, but remembered nothing more except that when he first acquired the bicycle it was lime green. The enquirer wonders if anyone remembers seeing it, perhaps on display at the garage or in use?



*If you can help with any of these queries please contact Joyce Cummings on 01242 527299 or e-mail [joyce@cyberwebspace.net](mailto:joyce@cyberwebspace.net)*

## NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the November 2017 issue by

**Monday 9th October 2017**

to the Editor : Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA

Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: [kbooth@dircon.co.uk](mailto:kbooth@dircon.co.uk)

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