

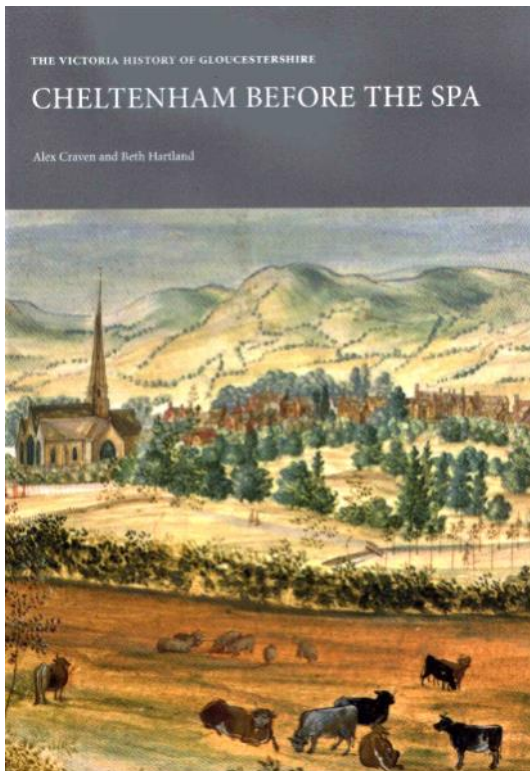


# Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 92

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council  
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<http://www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk>

November 2018



## EDITORIAL

We rather hope that the cover of our new VCH 'short' about the earlier history of the town is a familiar sight already to many of our members. As James Hodsdon reports on page 14, the book was delivered in June and most of the initial print run of 250 copies has already been sold. The picture on the cover, a charming image of the little place Cheltenham was in the 18th century, is taken from a watercolour by Thomas Robins, held at The Wilson, and anyone who hopes to find some equally attractive pictures inside the book will not be disappointed. There is a wide variety of illustrations, from woodcuts, drawings and maps to monumental brasses, portraits and colour photographs. Reproductions of extracts from historical documents of many kinds are also to be found, exemplifying the source materials explored by the authors in the process of writing this thorough

and scholarly little book. It only runs to about 150 pages, and is a book to browse in rather than read straight through, but it is a mine of information. If you haven't got your copy yet, perhaps you would like to turn to page 14 and find out how to get one.

*Kath Boothman*

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## *LECTURE PROGRAMME 2018-19*

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

*Tuesday 11th December:*

### **Sue Jones—Cheltenham's Male Suffragists**

Male support for women's suffrage often goes unrecognised. In Cheltenham, a town which was in some ways particularly supportive of feminism, there was an interesting range of support, from prominent figures such as William Earengy, who chaired and spoke at meetings and whose wife Florence was the leader of the local Women's Freedom League, to other men who, like him, colluded in their wives' evasion of the 1911 census. An important source also reveals many men who were not 'activists' in any way but who were prepared to put their names to the cause.

*Tuesday 15th January 2019:*

### **Research and Display Evening**

Our annual social evening gives members an opportunity to meet informally and to show the results of their researches. As usual refreshments will be served and there will be a raffle. Sally Self would like to hear as soon as possible from any member who is willing to provide a display, large or small, of their research findings and/or source materials. Please contact Sally on 01242 243714 or e-mail [projects.clhs@btinternet.com](mailto:projects.clhs@btinternet.com) Visitors will be very welcome.

*Tuesday 19th February 2019:*

### **Paul Barnett—Disaster Waiting: the Severn & Wye Railway Bridge Disaster**

In line with commemorative activities to remember the 50th anniversary of the structure's demise, Disaster Waiting gives a comprehensive overview of the bridge's construction, its daily operation and eventual destruction at the hands of two runaway tankers. The talk uniquely seeks to unravel several bridge myths and presents recently unearthed documentary evidence which helps to lay to rest this sad chapter of Gloucestershire's maritime past.

*5th March 2019 at 10.00 am for 10.30 am:*

(Note venue: St Luke's Hall, St Luke's Place)

### **John Simpson (Pittville History Works Group)—11,000 Histories: putting Pittville online**

Pittville History Works is a new local history group founded in 2014. Our aim from the start was to be fully digital and to take advantage of technology, both to collect and analyse data and to make our findings fully accessible online. We launched our website with historical data relating to the 1,500 people who lived in Pittville Lawn between 1841 and 1901. We now have searchable information on

over 11,000 individuals going up to 1939. In this talk, members of the group will discuss how this approach has led them to discover more about the area, its inhabitants and its history.

*Tuesday 19th March 2019:*

**Michael Cole—An Excursion to Southam, 1879**

The starting point is a local history society's field trip from Cheltenham's Plough Hotel to Prestbury, Southam, and thence to Sudeley Castle, where 150 members sat down to lunch with Mr and Mrs Dent. They returned to the Plough for a formal dinner, and then had a schedule of five talks for the evening at Cheltenham Ladies' College. (Some stamina!) Much of the talk concerns Lord Ellenborough and the history both of Southam Delabere and of his memorial chapel to his wife Octavia who died tragically young.

*Tuesday 2nd April 2019 at 10.00 am for 10.30 am:*

Note venue: St Luke's Hall, St Luke's Place)

**John Butterworth—History of the Stagecoach in Cheltenham and Gloucestershire**

This talk will describe how the advent of a regular stage coach service providing reliable links to London and other parts of the country for the first time led to an economic boom in our area. There will be stories of its famous drivers and of the many people from all walks of life who travelled in the coaches.



The speaker is a newspaper editor, author and historian..

*Tuesday 16th April 2019:*

**Tony Comer—The History of GCHQ**

No further information available at time of going to press

*Tuesday 21st May 2019:*

**AGM followed by Richard Cann—The Great East Window of Gloucester Cathedral: let's forget Crécy!**

In a book published in 1899, the author and the then Cathedral Architect used the word 'Crécy' when discussing this window – a very tenuous link, as the said battle was in 1346 when the window would have been nearing completion, its design and subject matter having been determined many years previously.

A photograph of the complete window from floor to apex was available to the team who carried out a descriptive and photographic inventory of all the Cathedral windows, 156 in number. It was obvious that a new interpretation of what was represented in the window was needed – forget Crécy!

## *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 26th November:*

**David Jones—World War One**

### **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 21st November:*

**Peter Donovan—Bomber Harris**

*Wednesday 19th December:*

**David Smith—Edward Jenner**

*Wednesday 20th March 2019:*

**Eric Miller—Cheltenham Slave Owners**

### **Swindon Village Society**

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

*Wednesday 21st November:*

**Norman Baker (Chairman of Prestbury LHS)—the History of Prestbury**

### **Gotherington Local History Society**

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

*Tuesday 27th November:*

**Kirsty Hartsiotis—Enchanted Cotswold Country with the Arts & Crafts Movement**

*Tuesday 11th December:*

**Gwilym Davies—English Gypsy Folk Song and Dance**

*Tuesday 22nd January 2019:*

**Andy Meller—The Glosters at Waterloo**

*Tuesday 26th February 2019:*

**Melanie Webb—The Winchcombe Workhouse**

*Wednesday 13th March 2019 at 2.30 pm:*

**Nicholas Herbert—Inns and Traffic in the Coaching Age**

**STOP PRESS:** The Paterson Memorial Lecture, scheduled to take place in the Harwood Hall, Christ Church, on December 5th, has been cancelled.

### **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 27th November:*

**Bruce Buchanan—Cheltenham Civic Society nominations and awards, with an emphasis on Charlton Kings**

*Tuesday 22nd January 2019:*

**Martyn Fry—Higgs and Cooper Educational Charity**

### **Historical Association**

Meetings normally begin at 7.30 pm and visitors pay £3. Cheltenham meetings take place in the Teaching Block, University of Gloucestershire Park Campus, and Gloucester meetings at the Oxstalls Campus.

*Monday 3rd December in Cheltenham:*

**Tony Comer GCHQ Historian—The History of GCHQ and how it came to Cheltenham**

*Monday 14th January 2019 in Gloucester:*

**Malcolm Mclean, University of Gloucestershire—Apartheid and Sport**

*Wednesday 13th February 2019 in Cheltenham:*

**Dr Justin Bengry, Goldsmiths, University of London—Aspects of LGBTQ History (details to be confirmed)**

*Monday 18th March 2019 in Cheltenham:*

**Dr Sarah Evans, Royal Geographical Society—Female Explorers in Antarctica 1913-1970**

### **Holst Birthplace Museum**

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

#### **Talk**

*Friday 30th November at 7.30 pm at Harwood Hall, Christ Church:*

**Adrian Barlow—The Stained Glass of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones**

Adrian Barlow is President of the English Association and an authority on Victorian architecture, ecclesiology and stained glass.

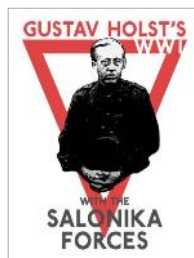
Tickets (adults £15, members £13, students £6) to include a glass of wine or soft drink and canapés, available from the Museum, the Tourist Information Centre and online via the Museum's website.

#### **Exhibition**

*July 10th to December 15th 2018 at the Museum:*

**Gustav Holst's WWI: with the Salonika Forces**

An exhibition exploring how Holst taught music to soldiers in Salonika and Constantinople during World War I. The story will be told through letters, diaries, photographs and archive film, as well as a reconstruction of Holst's own room in the Salonika YMCA.



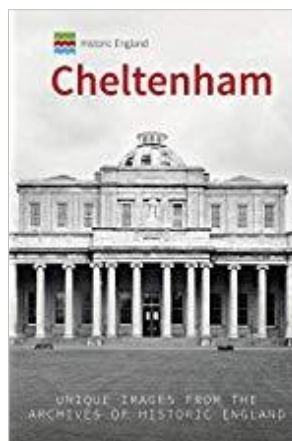
## NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Historic England: Cheltenham

by David Elder

The photographs in this book are taken from the Historic England Archive, a unique collection of over 12 million photographs, drawings, plans and documents covering England's archaeology, architecture, social and local history. The pictures date from the earliest days of photography to the present and cover subjects from Bronze Age burials and medieval churches to cinemas and seaside resorts.

The book shows Cheltenham not only as the elegant and fashionable resort it once was, but also as it has evolved in more recent times with its racecourse, cricket, famous schools and colleges and ever-growing programme of festivals.

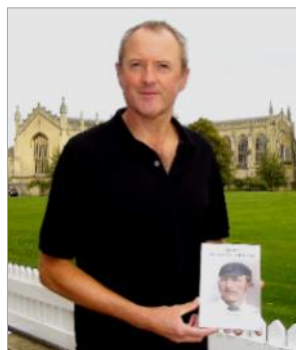


Published in paperback in October 2018 by Amberley Publishing, price £13.49

### 'Woofy' The Life and Times of W. A Woof

by David Battersby

Cheltenham based cricket fan David Battersby has written and published an account of the cricket career of William Woof. A slow bowler, Woof represented Gloucestershire from 1878 to 1902 (appearing in many matches alongside W G Grace), and the MCC and the Cheltenham Cricket Club. He was employed in a coaching capacity at Cheltenham College for more than forty years and he opened sports outfitters shops in the town. Cricket apart, we learn that Woof's family background was in agriculture (his father designed ploughs), that his mother committed suicide and that one brother emigrated to Australia. Woof also stood for election as a county councillor and founded the Cheltenham Harriers Club. Liberal use is made of contemporary reports and there are some very pleasing photographs supplied by Woof's great-grandson.



180 pages, signed and numbered limited edition of 120 copies, paperback.  
£10 + £2 p&p.

Available from the author: email [talbot@talbot.f9.co.uk](mailto:talbot@talbot.f9.co.uk)

## REVIEWS

### *Summer events and visits July—October 2018*

#### **Lady Writers of Cheltenham Walk, Wednesday 11th and 18th July**



This evening stroll through the town centre, led by David Elder, began at Neptune's fountain in the Promenade. David drew attention to the building behind the fountain which had replaced the old Regal cinema. The poet U A Fanthorpe, he said, who taught English at the Ladies' College nearby for sixteen years, witnessed the demolition of the old cinema and wrote a poem

about it. Further behind the fountain, in Royal Crescent, Lady Margaret Sackville had lived from 1936 until her death in 1963. She was reputedly attracted to the town by its great wealth of trees, and wrote a poem about them in 1947. Moving on to the High Street we stopped at the entrance to the Regent Arcade, the site of the Plough Hotel where the novelist and diarist Fanny Burney stayed when she came to Cheltenham in George III's entourage in 1788. The Argos shop on the other side of the road was once the York Hotel: David showed a picture of it in 1816, the year when Jane Austen's sister Cassandra stayed next door at Mrs Potter's lodging house and was horrified to be charged 3 guineas a week. Jane herself was probably here in May that year. She was not much impressed with the town, but thought the waters did her good. In Cambray Place David pointed out number 8, where Elizabeth Barrett Browning often stayed from her early years because she had many relations living here. At the age of 12 she wrote two poems about the spa, saying that she liked Cheltenham but loved Bath: in fact, she said, Bath was worth 100 Cheltenham! Elizabeth's mother died here, as did her favourite cousin Arabella, aged only 16, of TB. The wealth of the Barretts came from West Indian plantations inherited by her father, and Elizabeth, strongly anti-slavery, thought the money was a curse to her family and expressed her views in a poem and a novel. The present Pizza Express opposite the Town Hall was a boarding house in the 1840s, and Fanny Burney stayed there when she came seeking treatment for rheumatism in her later years. She said in a letter that she liked living by the Promenade because she could watch people going by.

Back at Neptune's fountain David named three novelists who were all pupils at the Ladies' College: D K Broster, author of *Flight of the Heron*, May Sinclair, whose works included *Tree of Heaven* and Margaret Kennedy who wrote *The Constant Nymph*. The fictional Cleeve College in that book, 'built in the 19th century by a famous pioneer of women's education' was clearly modelled on CLC. As is usually the case after these Society guided walks around Cheltenham, we all went home feeling we had learned something interesting.



## Cheltenham Local History Afternoon 'Salubritas et Eruditio'

*Saturday 21st July*  
at St Andrew's Church, Montpellier

Our eighth local history afternoon was held as usual at St Andrew's church, this time on a dual theme derived from the motto on Cheltenham's coat of arms: health and learning. While the Society occupied the main hall, numerous other societies and organisations had stalls in the Garden Room and the Mews Room.



The Society's own displays covered a wide range of subjects. 'Salubritas' was represented by the story of the spa, the histories of Cheltenham's various hospitals, Edward Jenner's work on vaccination and the story of Dame Sidney Browne, first President of the Royal College of Nursing. 'Eruditio' naturally focussed on education, from the teacher training colleges and the university to the three major public schools, Richard Pate's foundations, elementary schools for

the poor and Samuel Wilderspin's Sunday schools.

There were no guided walks this time, but we had two talks rather than the usual one. The first, by Robert Rimmel, tied in with the educational theme. Its title, 'Prison... or Prestige', gave little clue to its content, which was the rather sad story of the Pate's grammar school buildings erected in the 1960s only to be demolished in the 1990s. Robert said he himself had spent two years at the old Pate's in the High Street and had been among the first pupils at the new school. The old school had been built in 1886 for 400 boys, but by the 1960s numbers had doubled and facilities were woefully inadequate. The then Headmaster Dr Bell mounted a successful campaign to move out of the town centre, resulting in the building of a new school in Hester's Way. Its plain functional style reminded some people of a prison, but Robert showed photographs to demonstrate that it was a place to be proud of at the time, light and spacious and with many attractive features, besides facilities such as libraries, laboratories and workshops that had been lacking in the old school. Unfortunately the architects Chamberlain, Powell and Bon had used a novel quick-setting concrete which over time became porous so that the metal reinforcements inside rusted and the whole building was unsafe: hence its ignominious end at the hands of a demolition squad.

The other talk, entitled 'Blood, Guts and a Little off the Top' was by John Putley and was about what passed for medical care in medieval and Tudor times at the hands of physicians, apothecaries and barber-surgeons. He discussed the theories behind their work, the belief in the balance of 'humours' in the body and the 'doctrine of signatures' that supposedly indicated which plants would cure which ailments. Remedies for toothache, treatments for battlefield injuries and even limb amputation were described in fascinating if grisly detail, and an array of equipment was laid out on a table for visitors to examine.

Also on sale at the event was the new VCH book 'Cheltenham Before the Spa'.



## *Autumn Lectures September—October 2018*

The new lecture season got off to a good start with a lively talk by **Mark Davies** entitled **The First English Aeronauts: some momentous early balloon flights from Cheltenham**. Mark first told us about James Sadler, who came from a family of pastry-cooks with a shop in Oxford High Street. Not being highly educated he never received recognition from the university, but he was adventurous by nature and clearly had an aptitude for science. Montgolfier and a few other people made balloon flights in France in 1783, and the Italian Vincenzo Lunardi had launched his balloon from London a few weeks before Sadler took off from Oxford on 4th October: Sadler was thus the second person, but the first Englishman, to fly in Britain. His balloon, 170ft in circumference, was powered by a small stove in the basket, producing hot air, and unlike his predecessors he made the ascent unaided and alone. His next flight, on 12th November, was in a hydrogen-filled balloon, and in June 1785 he tried unsuccessfully to repeat Blanchard's feat of flying across the Channel. That same month saw the first fatalities, when French aeronauts de Rozier and d'Arlandes went up in a balloon unwisely powered by both hot air and hydrogen, which caught fire. Two weeks later Mrs Letitia Sage (who weighed 200lb) was taken up by Lunardi, thus becoming the first woman to fly in a balloon. She was a target for satirists and cartoonists but did not seem to mind.



An ascent by Sadler in 1811

In October 1785 Sadler went up from the wharf in Stroud. Balloonists liked people to pay to watch them, but on this occasion many had a good free view from the hillsides. Sadler was appointed assistant to the scientist Thomas Beddoes, then became a chemist in the Naval Works Department for several years, returning to ballooning only in 1806. His sons John and Windham also took to ballooning, and in 1813 Windham, aged not quite 17, went up from Cheltenham, first displaying the balloon to the public at the Assembly Rooms. In 1817 he flew across the Irish Sea, a trip his father had attempted in 1811 when he unfortunately landed in the water and had to be rescued. George Graham and his wife Margaret (the first female solo pilot), who were friends of the Sadlers, also did many flights and survived numerous accidents. In 1823 they came to Cheltenham and flew from the Royal Oak, Prestbury, to near Oxford, and in 1836 they took off from Montpellier. Charles Green, the best-known balloonist of the day, flew from Cheltenham in 1822 and again in 1839. He flew 500 times altogether and in 1821 was the first to use coal gas.

In conclusion Mark returned to James Sadler, showing a map of the many flights he and his two sons made and a portrait of him. Sadly, Windham Sadler was killed in 1824 and James himself died in 1828 in poverty, having pursued too many impractical ideas in his life. In answer to one of several questions at the end, Mark said ballooning had yielded little benefit to science: amusement was all it was really good for, because balloonists were mainly interested in making money by providing a public spectacle and taking passengers for rides.

At our morning meeting at St Luke's on October 2nd **Edward Gillespie** gave us **A Brief History of Cheltenham told through its Festivals**. He did not show pictures, rather unusually, but instead set out on the table in front of him a series of tokens including a toy piano and a gold cup, to illustrate his themes. Edward said he himself had run the racecourse for 30 years, had been involved with the Everyman and the Playhouse and was now on the board of Cheltenham Festivals, the trust which runs and co-ordinates all the town's festivals. Cheltenham had been an insignificant neighbour to the historically more important Gloucester until the discovery of its waters in the 18th century made it a spa town attracting large numbers of visitors every summer. This brought a need for entertainment. Racing on Cleeve Hill began in the early 19th century and thrived (despite strenuous objections from Francis Close) until the grandstand burned down in 1830. Lord Ellenborough offered his estate at Prestbury Park, and races were held there for a few years, then back at Cleeve Hill, but were discontinued in 1842. Steeplechasing,



The winners' enclosure at the racecourse

ing, which originated in Ireland, was introduced a few years later and became established at Prestbury Park in 1898. The National Hunt Festival has been held there every year since 1911.

Meanwhile another sport, cricket, had launched its first festival in 1872 when James Lillywhite, the Cheltenham College coach, organised a Gloucester vs Surrey match starring W G Grace.

Music, always an important form of

entertainment, was also bringing celebrities to the town. In 1897 Grieg played at the Assembly Rooms and Nellie Melba sang in the Winter Gardens. Sibelius conducted in the newly completed Town Hall in 1902. Cheltenham had grown quite prosperous before World War I, but living standards were much lower in the inter-war years. The first Cheltenham Music Festival was held only in 1945 (with Bliss, Walton and Britton conducting their own work) and was popular from the start. In 1948 Cheltenham Arts Festivals Ltd was formed as a non-profit making company. The following year George Wilkinson organised a three-day Festival of Contemporary Literature which, after a shaky start and from 1965 under the directorship of Alan Hancox, evolved into the Literature Festival we know today. Famous names were involved—Joyce Grenfell, John Betjeman—and style and content changed annually, sometimes causing controversy, until a settled policy was adopted. In 1999 40,000 tickets were sold, in 2003 120,000 and this year twice as many again. Since the 1960s the racecourse has enjoyed a new era of growth and prosperity, largely owing to its great popularity with Irish fans. The Jockey Club bought the course in 1964 and by the late 1980s the Gold Cup was attracting crowds of up to 70,000, including, for many years, the Queen Mother. The Music Festival has also expanded and a Jazz Festival began in 1996. 2001 saw the launch of a Science Festival, which has proved extremely successful. All the festivals are hugely valuable to Cheltenham's tourist trade, and Edward paid tribute to the remarkable people who had set each of them going. The audience clearly enjoyed this lively talk very much and asked several questions at the end.

On October 16th **David Smith** told us about **The Fifth Earl of Berkeley and Mary Cole (1784-1811)**. The talk was subtitled **A Regency Scandal**, and as the story unfolded we could soon see why. Mary, born in 1767, was the third daughter of William Cole, a butcher who became a publican. Because he was a tenant landlord, when he died in January 1783 his family were then homeless and had to move in with the recently married eldest daughter Ann, whose husband was also a butcher, in Westgate Street, Gloucester. Some weeks later Mary and Susan, the



other unmarried daughter, went to London to work as lady's maids and had their first glimpse of society life when they were befriended by a young barrister called James Perry, who met them at a masquerade. Unable to find regular work, the girls left London in July and Mary went back to Gloucester until, through a friend, she was taken on as a maid by a vicar's wife in Kent. She did not stay very long; Susan was back in London and persuaded Mary to join her in December 1784. How Mary met the idle and dissipated young Earl of Berkeley remains

unclear. She herself told a tale, later disputed by witnesses, in which she and Susan were attacked by ruffians trying to drag them off to a debtor's prison, and Mary fainted and awoke to find Lord Berkeley there, ready to pay the men off and save the girls. He then took her home with him, she claimed. Although a book written about her in 1961 by Hope Costley-White gives credence to this story, David



thought Mary was more a gold-digger than an innocent victim of seduction. The 18th century was a time when intelligent attractive girls could move up in society, as Lord Nelson's Emma Hamilton did, and many thrived as courtesans. At all events, by March 1785 Mary was living at Charles Street, Berkeley Square, and it seems likely that she became the earl's mistress soon afterwards. Her first son, William, was baptised in 1786, and by 1796 she had four sons. In that year she finally persuaded the earl to marry her, and a wedding took place in May. Their first legitimate son, Thomas Morton Fitzhardinge, was born the same year, but in the hope of securing the succession for the eldest illegitimate son, William, they later claimed to have been married much earlier, in 1785. A marriage register for 1785 with a record of marriage in the earl's writing was produced in evidence, but the entry had been pasted in and had probably come from a different book. When the earl died in 1810 he left Berkeley Castle to William (known as Lord Dursley), whose claim to the earldom, however, was refuted by a House of Lords committee of privileges. Mary appealed to the Prince of Wales to reverse that decision, but in vain. William became plain Colonel Berkeley, his brother Thomas never assumed the earldom even though his right to it was established, and both men died without heirs. Thus Mary's ambitions and her malign influence over the earl had led to the extinction of the senior branch of the family. A listener suggested she could be admired as a 'Becky Sharp' character, but David thought the damage she had done outweighed any personal achievement..

## Montpellier Fiesta, Saturday 7th July



The Fiesta was held on one of those extremely hot days that were so typical of this past summer, and unsurprisingly it pulled in a good crowd. There was plenty of entertainment on offer but perhaps a little less activity around the many charity, craft and gift stalls than usual because it was too hot to stand about in the sun for long. Even so the Society's stall attracted a good share of attention, and books and publications sold made a total of £82.20. The Society

wishes to thank all those who helped on the day.

## Visit to Worcester, Wednesday 15th August

This year's outing was different from those of past years in that it took us to only one destination rather than two: we spent the whole day in Worcester. Leaving Royal Well by coach at 9.30 am as usual, we arrived at Worcester Cathedral soon after 10 o'clock and were divided up into three groups. Each group then embarked on one of the three visits planned for the day, meeting again only when it was time to re-board the coach for home. One group went first to the Cathedral Library and Archives, a long oak-beamed room up a little spiral staircase off the nave. Here the archivist showed us a fascinating selection from the hundreds of medieval manuscripts and very old books preserved in the archives. There were enormous royal charters, including a copy of Magna Carta, and at the other end of the scale pocket-sized and richly illustrated Books of Hours used for private prayer. Many documents featured intriguing and often amusing marginal drawings and doodles. Besides religious texts we saw books on subjects such as law, medicine and music, once presumably used for study by the monks. Most were in Latin (whether they originated here or on the continent), leather-bound and beautifully written in a variety of scripts usually large and clear but in a few cases so small that we wondered whose eyesight was good enough to read them. We were allowed to handle a few of the items, but most were shown and explained to us by the infinitely knowledgeable archivist. It was altogether a novel and memorable experience.



After a short break for coffee in the Cathedral coffee shop we moved on to the Commandery, only a short walk away. This picturesque complex of old buildings overlooking the canal is said to have been founded as a hospital by St Wulfstan,



Bishop of Worcester, around 1085. It served that purpose for nearly 500 years until 1540 when it suffered the fate of all monastic institutions under Henry VIII and was dissolved. Most of the building as it survives today is 15th century, timber-framed and with an H-shaped floor plan typical of the period. After the dissolution it passed through various hands, often being used a family home and undergoing many alterations, before the Civil War gave it its place in history. On 22nd August 1651 the future Charles II marched into Worcester at the head of his army and set up his Headquarters in the city. His commander in chief the Duke of Hamilton and other officers were billeted at the Commandery. On 3rd September Oliver Cromwell attacked, and the Royalists, despite determined resistance, were soon overcome. Charles escaped into exile. Our visit began with an introductory talk in the lofty and ancient Great Hall, after which we were left to explore the rest of the building by ourselves.



The Civil War story is set out in some detail in a series of rooms on the upper floor, where there is also a medieval 'painted chamber' with wall paintings and other displays reflecting the Commandery's earlier history as a monastic hospital.

Then it was lunchtime, when most of us found refreshment in the street of old half-timbered buildings in the town centre known as The Shambles. There also was our third port of call, the Tudor House Museum. We were shown around by a guide, who explained that though originally built as a private home around 1520, the property had been divided into small dwellings and workshops for a variety of tradespeople in later years before becoming a tavern, the Cross Keys, for a time in the 1700s and again being divided up. In 1900 Richard Cadbury, a



grandson of the founder of the chocolate firm, bought it, restored it and opened it as the Tudor Coffee House. Sold in 1921 to Worcester Corporation it next became a school clinic and dentist's surgery. In World War II it was used as a billeting office and an ARP post. Now, as a museum run largely by volunteers, it has charitable status. Those of us who ended the day there were treated to a free tea and cake, which we much appreciated. By 4.00 pm we were on our way home. It had been a day full of interest,

ably organised as usual by David Johnson, to whom our thanks are due for another very enjoyable summer visit.

## SOCIETY NEWS

### New Members

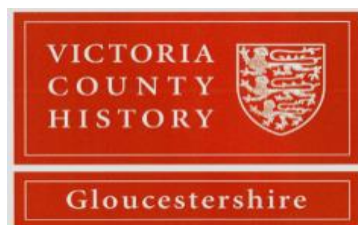
A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Junko Chi  
Michael and Lesley Plumb  
Robert Marks  
Dr Helen Little  
Celia Underhill  
Valerie Codling

Frances Hebditch  
Jennifer Pope  
Tony and Jane Watson  
Matthew and Linda Routledge  
Lloyd and Anne Surgenor

### VCH News

At long last, our paperback, *Cheltenham before the Spa*, was delivered in June, and it's great to report that almost all of our initial printing (250 copies) has been sold – and probably over half of these went to CLHS members. It was very gratifying to be able to distribute so many in person to our very patient supporters at St Andrew's in July. We've had lots of favourable comments on the illustrations and the 'topic panels', which give general introductions to aspects of medieval history – all helping to make the subject matter as accessible as possible. We have a few copies left at the introductory price of £12, and after that it will be £14 when ordered via a bookshop or online. Contact [vchglos@btinternet.com](mailto:vchglos@btinternet.com) if you're interested.



Regular Archive users will already know that VCH editors and helpers now have the use of the Elrington Room. Just off the main search room, this allows all the VCH reference books and working materials to be kept handy in one place, another very welcome result achieved by the Heritage Hub project.

Jan Broadway continues to work on completing the VCH account of Cheltenham in more modern times, and as winter approaches, we are gearing up for further fundraising to keep all three of our projects—in Cheltenham, Cirencester and South Glos—moving along at the right pace. With the very welcome help of the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire, we are now planning for an event in the New Year, to raise awareness of the VCH and attract new support. More details in due course!

### Latin group grows by 33%

Earlier in the summer, the CLHS Latin Group was pleased to welcome Celia Underhill from Malvern – causing our ranks to grow from three to four! Celia has so far not been daunted by our current project, the manor court rolls of the 1560s and '70s (D855/M2). These were skimmed for *Cheltenham before the Spa*, but patient scrutiny of the surviving rough notes (the fair copy was lost long ago, perhaps in the Civil War) is slowly teasing out all the detail. In the last session, for example, we unearthed a previously unknown reverend, presumably officiat-

ing at St Mary's, by the name of Rehes—or as we would now say Rhys—Jones. He would fit into the long line of Welsh clergy who served in Cheltenham. He bought a half-burgage in the High Street in 1569. Occasionally the rolls lapse into English, so we learn that 'William Hyde of Glocester taner dyd offer to sell a dycker of lether being 10 hydes in the house of William Lane of Cheltenham & nott in the open feyer or market neyther was it Sufficently tanned according to the Statute'. We'll be sure to remember in future that a dicker is 10 hides, won't we?

If there's anyone else out there who has basic Latin, and a sharp eye for crabby writing, do please get in touch.

*James Hodsdon*

## Projects

### And What About the Musk Rat?

Probably, like me, you have at times questioned the validity of the Cheltenham Borough Council's actions. My estimation of the work of the Council has changed perceptibly since coming into contact with the Minutes of the Council from 1889 onwards (to 1947 at present) as part of a CLHS project to make them more widely available. If you are researching any aspect of the town's history, late 19th or early 20th century, or just have a few moments to spare, do go to the CLHS website and investigate the new section RESEARCH, just below the section featuring the JOURNALS. We have already uploaded CBC Minutes from 1889 to 1937 and more will follow shortly, thanks to the dedicated work of David Drinkwater.

Our other projects continue to progress: cataloguing the Miles scrapbooks has now passed half way; the volunteers at the Gloucestershire Archives are halfway through the Cheltenham Council's maps of the Borough's Green Spaces (DC137) 1950s to 1970s. We never realised that there were so many bedding schemes, allotment sites, parks, lakes, pitches, tree-lined roads, tree and shrub borders and children's playgrounds – all meticulously drawn and annotated.

I would like to make a special mention of the Memories project. The organisers are Irene, Janet and Jenny, all of whom are now fully trained and, having practised their skills, are very keen to make new contacts. Yes, I know (I've said it myself) – 'I've never done anything very interesting' – well we all have, and we believe that having been a Cheltonian, be it for a couple of years or a lifetime, you do have memories of the people and events of which you have been a part. Please do come forward and meet the organisers for an initial chat.

And the musk rat? The Borough Minutes cover very diverse areas: the fate of the Winter Gardens, the welfare of mothers and infants, planning permissions for private houses, business, roads and town development, actions during World War I and the Depression, insanitary houses, allotments and their sheds, the price for a bath... the list goes on. The musk rat was a threat identified in a Government circular in 1933 – but the rodent, found mostly in wetlands, was not about to devastate our town as none appears to have been identified here!

*Sally Self*



## OBITUARY

### Joyce Cummings 1928-2018

It could be said that Joyce ‘went out on a high’: in June she celebrated her 90th birthday (see the report in the July issue) with a party for 70 people that she clearly enjoyed, and she remained active and busy almost to the end.

Joyce was a true native Cheltonian, born in Dockem as the eldest of five children of Arthur and Violet Gibbons. Educated at St Paul’s school and Christchurch, she left school at fourteen to take her first job as a book-keeper at Yates’ Seed Merchants. Having grown up during the Second World War she later recalled incidents such as the unexploded bomb in Folly Lane near her family home, and the bomb blast that left her with a perforated eardrum.

In 1952 Joyce married Leslie Cummings. While bringing up their children Sue (born in 1962) and Dave (1967), she worked as a self-employed seamstress and dressmaker, later in partnership with her sister Jean. Both her children were heavily involved in swimming and water polo, and Joyce loved watching galas and matches. In 1978 she joined Eagle Star and worked until she was 65, meanwhile also belonging to various voluntary organisations such as the school PTA, the Townswomen’s Guild and the Women’s Institute, where she often served on committees. These activities must have suited her sociable nature: always out-



Joyce and Les on their 50th anniversary



going and generous with her time and energy, she also had a great sense of humour.

At the age of 62 Joyce went on an adventurous four-week tour of Australia with her daughter Sue. After she retired she took courses in computer skills and creative writing and became interested in researching her family history. That hobby naturally led her into exploring local history too, and she joined our Society in 1997. In 2003 she was co-opted on to the committee, taking the role of contact person for all local history enquiries. The queries came to Joyce by email, and she and her great friend Vic Cole researched them and provided the answers with

impressive efficiency, receiving numerous credits for their work in books and magazines. This activity continued even after she left the committee, and indeed to the last days of her life, when from her hospital bed she was still making arrangements to ensure that her email enquiries would be answered.

The loss of Joyce will of course be most keenly felt by her family, but she leaves a big gap in our Society too. Hers was a long life well lived to the end.

*Kath Boothman*

## OBITUARY



### Elaine North 1947-2018

When we heard in December last year that Elaine, on holiday in Australia with Geoff, had fallen ill, there was a general sense of surprise and concern. Surprise, because it was unexpected for anyone so full of life suddenly to be ill, and concern because it sounded serious, as indeed it proved to be. With a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and following an unsuccessful operation it seemed unlikely for many weeks that she would even be able to travel home, but in the spring she did, and she lived right through this year's extra-

ordinary summer. She was even able to get out and about, though latterly in a wheelchair, and we had the pleasure of seeing her at the Montpellier Fiesta and at the Local History Afternoon at St Andrew's, smiling and talking as ever.

Elaine, the youngest daughter of Bill and Iris Worsfold, was born in Cheltenham in 1947 and brought up in Prestbury. Her parents ran a wholesale stationery business and also, as many will remember, The Corner Shop in Bath Road. She attended Pate's Grammar School where her love of music was evident; this remained important to her throughout her life. She married John Heasman and had two sons, Jonathan and Matthew, but the marriage didn't last. Before the birth of Jonathan Elaine worked for GCHQ, then she did several part-time jobs while the children were growing up. She eventually joined Eagle Star where she worked for 27 years. There, 30 years ago, she met Geoff. Besides being colleagues they shared a love of family and local history and were members of several local history societies, including CHLS. Elaine's infectious enthusiasm led them into various history-related activities that occupied a lot of their time over the years: researching, writing books, creating displays, conducting guided walks and dealing in second-hand books, which they often brought to Society events. In 2000 Elaine took over from Jean Lacock as Editor of this Newsletter, characteristically deciding to do three issues a year rather than two and giving it a new layout.



Elaine enjoyed travelling, and after Geoff retired they took 'time off' to do more of it, notably several overseas trips. She loved her family too, taking particular pleasure in the company of her grandchildren. Though she and Geoff seemed the perfect companions for one another she always had time for others, making friends easily and in her kindly way being a valued source of support for many who had grown old and infirm. Her energy, good humour and organising ability made her an asset and an inspiration wherever she went. The old cliché 'she will be much missed' is especially true of Elaine.

*Kath Boothman*

## FEATURE

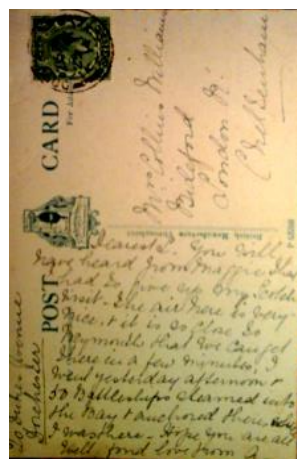
## Two First World War Postcards



Society member Elizabeth Bennett has kindly lent us these two cards, which neatly bracket the First World War: the one on the left was posted to Ms Bennett's grandmother in July 1914, shortly before the conflict began, and the one below was sent to a child by her brother at the front near the end of the war.

The message on the first card, which features a photograph showing Judge Jeffrey's Lodgings in Dorchester, mentions a recent visit to Weymouth and says that 'Fifty battleships steamed into the Bay and anchored there, while I was there.' The outbreak of war was looming, and the fleet was assembling in the Channel.

The second card is curious in that the propaganda message it carries is given in three languages: French and Russian as well as English. Even more oddly, whereas the English simply says 'Hello! Who's your lady friend?' the other two captions both translate roughly as 'The Germans can't see us, can they?', perhaps just a more oblique way of conveying the same warning.



## Congratulations!

to our oldest member **Judy Smith**, who has just celebrated her **100th** birthday. Judy and her late husband Peter were founder members of CLHS back in 1982, and she still takes a keen interest in our activities. It is good to know that although she can no longer attend meetings, Judy still lives independently (with a little help), enjoys seeing friends, reads the newspapers and keeps remarkably well. After Peter died in 2007 she founded an award in his memory—the Peter Smith Award—which goes each year at the AGM to someone who has given outstanding service to the Society. The Society appreciates this thoughtful tribute to those who work hard behind the scenes, often with little other recognition. We all send Judy our heartiest congratulations and best wishes on her very special birthday.



## LOCAL NEWS

### WWI battlefield crosses in Cheltenham

At the end of October, 22 WWI wooden battlefield crosses returned to Cheltenham following treatment for the rot and general wear and tear they had suffered since their erection on the graves of men killed in the First World War. Placed originally on the burial sites of the fallen, they, rather than the remains of the men, were repatriated and, along with many hundreds of others, were offered to the men's relatives. These 22 crosses were not claimed and so they were given a place in the Bouncers Lane cemetery. Although they were conserved and repositioned in 1987, they have spent the last 30 years attached to a fence in the Cemetery, exposed to the wind and rain, and had begun to show serious signs of deterioration.

Following a survey by local volunteers as part of a national WWI War Memorial survey organized by Civic Voice, the national organization for the Civic Society movement, the state of the crosses was recognised and a project created to restore them to a more appropriate condition.

Thanks to an award of £9800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, I and colleagues from the Cheltenham Civic Society were able to arrange for the crosses to be taken to the Surrey studios of Artefacts Conservation Services to be restored and conserved, ready for the centenary of the 1918 Armistice.

The HLF funding has also enabled a team of 13 pupils from Pittville School to undertake a programme of research into the men commemorated by the crosses. This involves visits to local museums, the Imperial War Museum and the National Archive in Kew, holding an exhibition of their work and publication of a booklet and learning materials for other schools that may wish to do similar studies. A number of local historians, including Neela Mann from CLHS, have been helping with the project.

Finally, the crosses are to be re-dedicated at a special church service in the Minster on 11 May next year, 95 years after their original dedication on 27th April 1924.

*Freddie Gick*



Some of the crosses in their present location in the cemetery



## FEATURE

### Historic pictures

Here we have two old photographs, one quite fully documented and the other as yet unidentified.



The photograph above, showing a large group of Cheltenham post office staff, was handed in by CLHS member Will Doxey; it belonged to his father, a post office employee in Cheltenham from 1936 to 1974. A separate sheet identifies some of those pictured. The young woman seated extreme right is Lillian Wedberg, a telegraphist, whose sister Evelyn also worked for the post office from 1904. Lilian was born in 1885 and appears to be the youngest of the group. She joined the Cheltenham office in March 1902. Violet Taylor, third from right, was born in April 1888 and was an employee from November 1903.

Also among the ladies are two spinster Yapp sisters (second and fourth from left), Lizzie and Emma. Emma was born in 1874 and Lizzie four years earlier. Emma commenced work at the post office in 1888 and her sister in January 1894. The oldest woman seems to be Miss Passey (sixth from left), who was in charge of the telegraph office. Other identified surnames for the women are Spiers, Sheen and Rose (seventh, eighth and ninth from left) and Mayos (second from right). Another list for the women has Rose and Sheen eighth and ninth from the left.

Men named are (top row) Mayos 'Chief Supt', Powell-Chandler 'Postmaster'

and Taylor 'Cashier etc'. Standing (top six from left) are J Powell-Chandler, C Sullivan, A Roberts, -, - and S Dawes. Standing (from left) are Record, Draper, T W A Smith, Bond, Dawes, J Morgan, F T Merrett, P S Sheen, -, G Newman and ? Biggin. Men sitting (from left) are W Bleney, Pop Jones, -, -, C Kendall, -, -, - and W Morgan. The two men standing apart at the back are not identified. Notes at the bottom of the sheet say that Sheen completed his service as Postmaster in Leeds and Merrett as Postmaster at St Austell/Truro. Sheen was not the husband of N Sheen in the front row: she married a Clarence Record in 1913. I can find no record of Merrett in Cornwall although he became Head Postmaster in Coventry. Neela Mann has corroborated the name of J Morgan, recognising him as her husband's ancestor John Woodington Morgan. The photograph dates no earlier than 1905 (when Merrett began his employment) and no later than 1911 when retired 'Postmaster' Powell-Chandler passed away. Further information regarding those pictured would be welcome, including why the photograph was taken, (evidently at 8.30 one morning). No postmen were present as presumably they were out on their delivery rounds.

The undated photograph below, showing what is believed to be a group of police officers, was taken at the studio of Debenhams, Longman in the Promenade, Cheltenham. Can anyone shed any light on it?

*Chris Bentall*





## BOOKS FOR SALE



### News from the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop'

For the November Newsletter, I thought it might be an idea to list some of the local history books which are in 'as new' condition, which would make suitable Christmas presents (or why not just treat yourself?). If you are interested in these or any of the books below please contact me by phone on 01242 232740, or email [heatherbell71@hotmail.com](mailto:heatherbell71@hotmail.com)

Pleasure Town, Cheltenham 1830-1860, A Bell, hardback, as new, £7.50  
Cheltenham, A History, S Rowbotham & J Waller, hardback, signed copy, as new, £12

Cheltenham, A Pictorial History, S Blake, hardback, signed copy, as new, £12.50  
Commemorative Plaques of Cheltenham, P Smith & S Rowbotham, paperback, as new, £4

A Gloucestershire Quiz Book, J Owen, paperback, as new, £2

From a Cotswold Height, J H Garrett, paperback, as new, £4

A Cotswold Christmas, J Hudson, paperback, as new, £3

Gotherington, the history of a village, Ed D H Aldred, 1st Edition, paperback, as new, £7.50

Charlton Kings (In Old Photographs series) S Fletcher, paperback, as new, £6

Cheltenham, (Images of England series), E Heasman, 1st Edition, signed copy, as new, £7.50

A Stroud Valley Childhood, T Jones, paperback, as new, £4

The County Maps of old England, T Moule, hardback with dust jacket, reprinted 1991, large with lovely colour plates in excellent condition, £10

Don't forget to come and have a browse of the CLHS book stall at the meetings – it's a good opportunity to ask if you want a particular book I may have at home, or make me an offer on the more expensive books. I'd like to thank everyone who has brought me their unwanted books – it is surprising how much we can raise for the Society by selling them on. We can also occasionally offer local maps and pictures at reasonable prices.

*Heather Atkinson*



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## CLHS DISPLAYS IN THE LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY LIBRARY

November-December	A Tribute to the Men of Leckhampton who lost their Lives in the First World War
January-February 2019	Nonconformist chapels in Cheltenham and the locality: the launch of the latest volume in the BGAS Record Series
March-April 2019	Transport in Cheltenham between the wars, 1918-1939

## Introducing a friendly competition for budding photographers amongst our members!



Have you a favourite building/feature/object that conjures up for you an interesting piece of Cheltenham's history? If the answer is yes, then why not take a photograph of it and enter it into our competition? I will just need a sentence or two explaining why it's special in your eyes. And if the answer is no, then there's still plenty of time to start looking around the town and taking some shots! It's amazing what you can capture even with a modest camera phone.

**The deadline for the competition is 31st December.** Please email your entries as jpeg attachments to [editor.clhs@gmail.com](mailto:editor.clhs@gmail.com)

The best entrants will appear in next year's Journal.

Looking forward to receiving your contributions!

*Julie Courtenay*

Journal Editor

## *CAN YOU HELP?*

### **A lost caravan site**

An enquirer says that from 1950 to 1956 her father, as a child, lived on a caravan site somewhere near an airfield not far from Cheltenham. She thinks it was called Pear's Hill, but it has not been identified. Does anyone know anything about it? Was it perhaps in the Arle/Staverton area?

### **Photographs wanted**

Enquirers are looking for historic photos of Fairhaven Road or Fairhaven Street, Leckhampton, and also of Crabtree's Garage in Carlton Street—can anyone help?

### **Giberne, Bacchus and Brandling families**

An enquirer is researching a group of mid-19th century Cheltonians with connections to the Oxford Movement.

Maria Rosina Giberne (1802-1885), artist, friend of John Henry Newman, later a Roman Catholic nun, lived in Cheltenham at Keynsham Villa (then 10 Oxford Parade) c1843-1845 with Selina Bacchus and Selina's brother Henry Bacchus. Selina married (in 1846) Cheltenham doctor George Copeland (brother of Newman's curate). She died in 1850. She and Dr Copeland both became Catholics and he helped found St Gregory's. They had two daughters. In April 1872, their daughter Mary Elizabeth married Henry Charles Brandling (24 years older, artist, friend of Wilkie Collins); their other daughter Matilda Catherine married Henry William Berkeley of Spetchley. Dr Copeland, living at Bayshill, suffered a long illness. His daughter Mary Brandling and family still lived in Cheltenham at 7 Royal Crescent in 1881. By 1891 they had moved to Clevedon, Somerset. Matilda Berkeley and her husband moved earlier, to Worcester.

Is any further information—documents, art, photographs etc—relating to these people still in local hands?

*If you can help with any of these queries please contact Jill Waller on 07512318866 or e-mail [jill.waller@virginmedia.com](mailto:jill.waller@virginmedia.com)*

## NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the March 2019 issue by  
**Monday 11th February 2019**

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, all are welcome.