



Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 98

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November 2020



EDITORIAL

In this issue, another 'Covid-era' compilation, we again offer a variety of articles we hope you will enjoy reading. There is also a bit of mental exercise in the form of a little pictorial quiz—see page 12-13. This picture is by way of a free sample. Do you know where it is? If you walk along Royal Well Place towards St George's Place you'll see it there (appropriately) on the side wall of the Starline Taxis office. It is far from being our only piece of public art. Each year the Cheltenham Paint Festival, which happened again recently, adds more colourful murals to brighten up dull spaces around the town.

As before there have been no walks or excursions to report on, but the first two talks in our autumn programme have been delivered via 'Zoom' by speakers who were willing to try doing it that way. We hope a good proportion of our membership will have been able to take advantage of this arrangement. For those who couldn't, or didn't for any reason, the Newsletter offers the usual condensed version of each talk.

So we carry on as best we can, looking forward to better days. Perhaps by the time the March issue comes out life will be more nearly normal again!

Kath Boothman

November 2020

Cheltenham LHS

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REVISED LECTURE PROGRAMME 2020-21

When we learned that severe restrictions would apply henceforth at St Luke's Hall, and that the Borough Council was accepting no more bookings for the Council Chamber, we realised that our talks would have to go online. We are grateful that our lecturers are willing to adapt, and only sorry that not all members can participate. We have already delivered two lectures by Zoom. Those listed below will take us through until March, by which time - dare we hope? - there may be a prospect of meeting face to face once again.

Tuesday 8th December:

Paul Barnett— The Cotswolds Navy: What's in a Name?

Land-locked as Gloucestershire is, with only the River Severn running gently through its midst, this talk explores the region's inseparable connection to the sea via its maritime fleet of locally named vessels and the county's contribution to financing a depleted navy during Warship Week of 1942.

Tuesday 19th January 2021:

Martin Boothman and Peter Barlow—Early Gloucestershire Vehicle Registrations

Peter Barlow and Martin Boothman, both Society members, will be talking about how motor vehicle registration became compulsory country-wide with effect from 1st January 1904 and about their work in transcribing and indexing the Gloucestershire vehicle registers from 1904 to the end of December 1913. These registers tell us who owned motorcycles and cars and when, and give the owners' addresses as well as details of the vehicles.

Tuesday 2nd February 2021:

Martin Horwood—Cheltenham's Past Members of Parliament

Cheltenham won its own parliamentary representative in the Great Reform Act of 1832, having been represented by county members right back to the medieval origins of Parliament. Unusually, it has remained a single-borough seat ever since. Cheltenham has sent a fascinating cast of characters to the Commons—sailors and soldiers, flamboyant aristocrats and grassroots radicals, trusty old warhorses and precocious students. And it has rarely been a 'safe' seat, witnessing nearly two centuries of furious contests between Liberals and Tories.

Tuesday 16th March 2021:

John Simpson—Mean streets or La-La-Land? The fate of Cheltenham's 'unsettled' poor 1831-52

Every community looked after its own destitute poor in the mid nineteenth century, but what if you were an incomer? The Poor Law had strict rules for paupers who applied for relief outside their authorised 'place of settlement'. John's talk, based on his latest BGAS Record Series volume *Managing Poverty*, looks at 4,000 paupers who were thrown on the parish in Cheltenham between 1831 and 1852, but who were deemed not to be Cheltenham's responsibility. What happened to them? Where did they go? Did they ever return?

REVIEWS

The autumn lecture programme began on Tuesday October 6th with the first of our planned online lectures, given by **Jim Markland**, who took as his theme the title of his recently published book **Gamble and Greed: Oriental Navigators of Gloucestershire**. The meeting began with a few words of guidance from our programme secretary Alison Pascoe, explaining that questions could be asked at the end via the 'chat' button. Sue Brown then introduced the speaker. After a career in the oil and gas industry, largely in India and the Far East, Jim had been surprised to find on settling in Cheltenham that people were well aware of the town's connections with India and the army but knew little about the sea captains buried here who had also travelled to the east. Jim said he had found many links to the



Charles Timmins

East India Company, which had a virtual monopoly on shipping to the East until the 1830s, carrying passengers as well as cargoes on long voyages in their sturdy square-rigged ships. He showed a map marking the routes normally taken, on which St Helena was a regular port of call. Even sailing in convoy, these voyages were always dangerous. He painted a graphic picture of life on board. Fire was an ever-present hazard, as was sickness: between 1783 and 1815 the navy lost 100,000 men, 65% of them to disease. Jim then described the eventful career of Charles Sheldon Timmins, one of five seafaring brothers. Timmins left the navy in 1809 to join his brother John in the China trade and sailed for several years on the *Royal George*, the pride of the East India Company's fleet. Returning to Cheltenham in 1820 after captaining a new *Royal George*, built to replace the previous one, he built Oriel Lodge, where a friend, John MacDougall RN, met Timmins' daughter Sophie and asked for her hand.

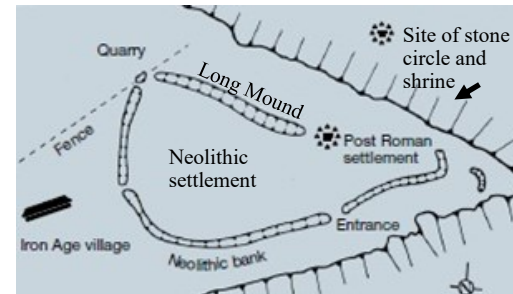
Timmins approved but was too much out of pocket at that time to afford a marriage settlement. His fortunes did not improve on his next voyage, when the *Royal George* caught fire in harbour at Whampoa and exploded. The wedding took place, however, and Sophie and her husband went to live at Dunollie House near Oban. Timmins' career continued on the *Reliance*, which on his first voyage to Bengal and China was struck by lightning. It was saved from destruction only by a sudden fall of rain. On the next voyage the *Reliance* ran into a hurricane, which laid the ship over on its side, swamping and ruining the cargo of tea. Timmins sailed to India and China once more, returning in 1832. He died in 1838 and is buried in the crypt of Trinity church. Joseph Stanton was another Company seafarer who had adventures. He had to take command of the *Atlas* when the captain died in Macao, and rescued survivors from another ship on his way home. Later, serving on the *Bridgewater*, he helped put down a mutiny. He is buried at St Peter's, Leckhampton. Jim said there are many more such stories to be discovered from ships' logs and the wealth of other material accessible online. Some of these are in his book. Several people asked questions at the end using 'chat', which worked very well. The talk had obviously been much enjoyed.

Picture of Charles Timmins © MacDougall Preservation Trust



The Bridgewater

Our second 'Zoom' lecture, on November 17th, was by **Professor Philip Dixon**, whose theme was **Crickley Hill, Progress and Discovery: the Next Stages**. Sue Brown, introducing him, said he had read Classics and Modern History at Oxford before becoming an archaeologist and had directed many other archaeological sites besides being Director of Excavations at Crickley Hill since 1969. Professor Dixon said work at Crickley Hill had involved some 5,500 people over 35 years. An aerial photograph from 1968 revealed some of the main features: an iron age



Map of the western end of Crickley Hill

village (a hill fort), which was the original target of the excavation, a Neolithic bank 2000 years older, a post-Roman settlement and the Long Mound that would be the subject of the third book in a six-volume series about the excavations. The very earliest feature on the site was the banana barrow (so called for its curved shape) which had pits, some containing bones dating to 5,400BC. The Neolithic bank had been built over the barrow: this ring-shaped rampart enclosing the Neolithic settlement dated, as radiocarbon dating showed, from about 3,600 to 3,400 BC. This site had had houses in the centre, a shrine at one end and a cooking area with pits containing bones, suggestive of ritual sacrifices. The rampart had several entrances at which large numbers of leaf-shaped arrowheads and pebbles used as slingshot missiles had been found, clear evidence of the battle that had marked the end of the settlement. Everything, it seemed, had been burned and destroyed at that time.

The Long Mound was a link between the Neolithic era and the dark ages: the north end dated from about 3,550BC, the middle part 300 years later, the south end about 490 BC. At the north end there had been a circular enclosure 22 feet across containing a shrine with a spot in front of it where burning had taken place. At a later date an altar stone had been set over the burning spot and a long cairn had been built over part of the causeway leading to the shrine. There were curious grooves in the cairn in which short slabs of stone had been set vertically, sometimes with bones underneath. Alongside the mound were three pits showing evidence of burning and containing pieces of skull. All very mysterious! The whole mound lay in a hollow caused by geological slippage, making it invisible both from the top of the hill and from below. Around the stone circle containing the shrine was a groove full of charcoal, which suggested that fires might have been lit there to screen secret rituals taking place within, 'magic' rituals perhaps performed by the chieftain to ensure victory in battle, for example. In answer to a question at the end Professor Dixon said no burials had been found on the site, nor any human bones other than fragments. The dead had evidently been disposed of elsewhere. He also said that as far as his team was concerned excavation on the Hill had finished, but there was still much to do in interpreting and writing up the findings. A million items had been dug up, including some later artifacts such as a Roman brooch. Sue Brown expressed our thanks and said it had been a fascinating talk - the concept of 'chieftain's magic' was particularly intriguing.

SOCIETY NEWS

Back in February, most of us had given little thought to PPE, antibodies, and flattening the curve, and thought that zoom was something you do when you're late for the bus. But times have changed, and even the history society has woken up to the 21st century and embraced technology with enthusiasm (some of us more than others). The committee now meets virtually, apart from a couple of socially-distanced and numerically-challenged occasions in Maggie Winterburn's garden, and we have been pleased to welcome two new committee members, Colin Nyland and Oliver Pointer. Oliver has just taken over the Society second-hand 'bookshop' (see page 22) from Heather Atkinson, who had run it for many years.

As explained on page 2, it is impossible at present to hold our meetings as we normally do and for the foreseeable future all our talks are being given online. In this way we hope we can continue to provide an interesting programme for members, albeit without the social interaction we could formerly enjoy. As not everyone is equipped to join in, could we suggest that if you are one of those who can, you might consider inviting a 'non-techie' CLHS member you know to watch a lecture with you?

Alison Pascoe

Programme Secretary

New members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Colin and Brenda Nyland
Derren Brown
Michael Wilkes

Dr Jim Markland
Andrew and Louisa Simon

Copies of the Society's Journals, numbers 1 to 9 will soon no longer be available in hard copy. We therefore propose to place scans of our first nine Journals on the website. If you are the author of any article in these Journals we would be grateful if you would contact Sally Self at projects.clhs@btinternet.com

Member's query

I am currently researching Peace Movements in Cheltenham in the 1920s and 1930s – particularly the League of Nations Union. I would be very interested to hear from any members who have any information on Joshua Monro Briggs (1861 – 1945) who was the honorary secretary of the Cheltenham LNU Branch for many years as well as serving on many other of the town's groups and committees. He lived at The Lawn, Park Place and was a member of All Saints Church, where his funeral was held in 1945. He gets numerous references in the local Press but I am particularly interested to discover if he kept any papers or records relating to his work with the LNU branch.

Adrian Courtenay ahcourtenay@btinternet.com

COVID LOCK DOWN @ THE HUB, GLOUCESTER

You may be sick of hearing about all the events that are not taking place, but this is one project that has restarted. The CLHS Archive volunteers were locked out on 23 March and were allowed back on 28 August under very tight regulations. Russ and I made a preliminary visit and the Search Room was eerily silent and unattended. Helen Bartlett met us and went through the procedures of sanitising hands, picking up locker keys and washing hands. We sanitise and then wash as no one knows the effect the gel has on parchment and paper. We are then shown to our seats where the boxes and bundles are ready for us. There are only 12 spaces, but we all fit in and are enjoying being useful and in company. If we need to consult a reference book from the shelves, after use it has to be placed in a 'Book Box' and quarantined for 72 hours, as do all the documents we handle. The kitchen is closed so we take our own 'nosebags' and if it is fine have our lunch in the very pleasant garden. We can use the coffee area during the winter. I have made several individual visits to carry out research for VCH Cheltenham Vol. 15. Documents have to be booked online and you will be allocated a time to arrive. Once one has mastered the format it is straightforward and quick. Go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/> and read Coronavirus Update, which has all the necessary information and the pre-ordering form. There are strict limits on the numbers allowed in each day and a face mask or shield are compulsory – all staff wear one as well. They will welcome you and talk you through all the procedures on your first visit. As a volunteer group, CLHS cataloguers have been honoured. We are the only group who have been allowed to resume our work and so we have been careful to conform to the rules.



Masks or shields are mandatory and close fraternising frowned on

Before lockdown we had started on a deposit that had arrived from the Sussex Record Office. It is a strange miscellany of deeds arranged in date order, Elizabeth I through the Commonwealth to George IV. Individual documents seem to have little relevance to each other, are in a dirty state and are wrapped in paper with a tarred interior. Not exactly the more recent Archival standards. This accession will soon be completed, and we have been asked to catalogue several hundred Dowty patent specifications. In some ways not a demanding task, as for once they are printed and we do not need any technical knowledge. We were going to be taught a new skill - how to cut up, form and fold into folders archival standard Klug cardboard. Sadly, this is now on hold until we are once again allowed to stand shoulder to shoulder!

Sally Self

At the time of going to press we're locked down again, but if the lockdown ends soon, as promised, we hope the volunteers will be able to return. - Ed.

THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Some years ago, CLHS was granted a Cheltenham Arts Council Award to fund an Oral History Project. Originally the idea of Geoff and Elaine North, in 2017 the project was carried on when three enthusiastic volunteers, Janet Graham, Irene Finlayson and Jenny Miller came forward. Training sessions were arranged with Paul Evans at Gloucestershire Archives, to cover all documentation (copyright and permission forms), tuition on how to conduct a successful interview, and guidance on making recordings using the professional digital voice recorder purchased by CLHS. Allen Miller later joined the team as ‘techie’ and received training on editing and preparing sound bites.

The St Andrew’s Local History Afternoon in 2018 saw the team put on a display for visitors, where they played some of their recordings, and some further potential interviewees volunteered to record their memories. So far the team have completed nine interviews, and these have been placed online so they are available to the general public.

You can access the recordings in two ways – either from our website <https://www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk/oralh.html> or via our Youtube channel (search for Cheltenham Local History Society – this is free to access and there is no need to sign up or create an account).

The interviews available so far are:

Dave Wheeler’s memories of his first job working as an apprentice at Cavendish House in 1965.

Carol Oddy talks about Pate’s Grammar School, Secretarial College, Arcu-print and the Leicester Permanent Building Society, and The Beatles.

Lyn Morgan talks about Cheltenham’s High Street banks in the early 1960s.

Anne Warne remembers relocating from London to Cheltenham with the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA), later UCAS.

Heather Coeur recalls life as a shopkeeper in the Lower High Street, retraining as a teacher of English as a foreign language, and her students.

Carolyn Greet’s memories of teaching at Pate’s Grammar School, the reorganisation of secondary education, town centre shops, cinemas and theatre, Parabola Road and Montpellier, and musical activities.

Joan Whiting Moon’s life in Cheltenham as a history teacher at Pate’s Grammar School and as a Magistrate.

Rod Bowden’s memories of Whitefriars School, playing rugby, work as a hairdresser, and male voice choirs.

Tim Deekes talks about the early days of Bournside School, student life at the Technical College, playing cricket and golf, and his memories of his father and grandfathers.

Sally Self and Alison Pascoe

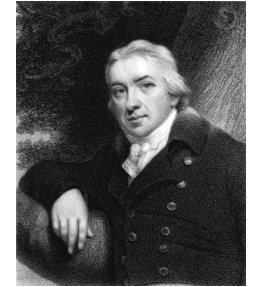
FEATURE

Covid, Vaccination, and the Medical Men of St George’s Place

Covid 19 has made us look with fresh eyes at the history of epidemics and see parallels with previous events. We appreciate more deeply the sacrifice of the villagers of Eyam and can empathise with the plague-ridden families confined to their homes in 1665 and those forced to isolate for six weeks by James I earlier in the seventeenth century. There are also parallels with the recurrent and deadly smallpox epidemics in this country.

Today the part of St George’s Place between the High Street and Clarence Street is a narrow cul-de-sac providing access to a car park. However it is a street that has an important place in the history of Cheltenham. Formerly called Styles Lane, it appears to date from the Middle Ages. It was a track leading to William Mason’s fields when the spring was discovered in 1716 and was the only vehicular access to the Wells. Not only was it the first street south of the High Street to be paved, it was also the first to have sewers. I have been finding out about the occupants of six houses at the High Street end.

St George’s Place came to be known as the Harley Street of Cheltenham. Edward Jenner, working at Berkeley, had discovered that inoculation with cowpox (later called vaccination) gave immunity against smallpox. Having married the niece of the Earl of Suffolk, a local Cheltenham landowner, he moved to Cheltenham in 1795, briefly living in the High Street before first renting and then buying no 8 (now no 22) St George’s Place. He was in Cheltenham for the season each year—some eight months—but always retained a home at Berkeley.



Edward Jenner

Jenner House was part of a terrace, ‘*that handsome row of houses known as St George’s Place consisting of 4 capital messuages which are occupied by families of the first distinction.*’ There he worked on the vaccine which came to be used all around the world and quickly reduced deaths from the disease. He later bought the gardens opposite his house, widening the road to provide a turning place for his carriage. Regrettably, his house and its neighbour were allowed to fall into disrepair and were demolished in the 1970s.

Also living in the terrace were other vaccination pioneers. At Eskdale House (no16) was Dr Newell who became Surgeon Extraordinary to George IV. Dr Fowler, who helped Jenner vaccinate the poor, lived at Athelney House (no18) for 12 years before Dr Riddell, a rich and notorious quack doctor, moved in. Finally Dr Minster, who in 1793 was appointed doctor to the poor and later became the first parish vaccination officer, lived at no 20, Amberley House, which was owned by Jenner. Drs Minster and Newell are known to have bought a criminal’s corpse in 1801 for dissection. There had long been rumours that Jenner and Newell had a dissection vault in the garden of Athelney House. Vaccination was widely supported by the people of Cheltenham, and as free vac-

inations were given to the poor, the street was regularly packed with crowds waiting to be vaccinated. As a result deaths from smallpox in Cheltenham were far lower than in other areas.

Jenner, although much admired and respected, did not receive the honours and Court appointments of some of his peers. After his wife's death he presided over the Vaccination Convention in Cheltenham in 1816 before retiring to Berkeley. When the Duke of Wellington visited Cheltenham later in 1816 he had intended to call on Jenner because he believed vaccination had prevented many deaths from smallpox in the army, thus contributing to his victories. Stamford Raffles, who stayed at 3 Crescent Place on his first visit to Cheltenham in 1816, finding Jenner gone, went to see him in Berkeley. Raffles had had people trained to administer the vaccine in Java.

In early 1880s Birmingham my great aunt's husband caught smallpox. Nursing him, she caught the disease, and while they were ill they paid for deliveries of provisions by putting coins outside in a jar of vinegar. Although they survived and (amazingly) both lived another sixty years, they separated shortly after their recovery! She later lived in St George's Place for nearly 20 years.

Then as now there were anti-vaxxers. As early as 1851 legislation had been introduced making vaccination compulsory for all babies, and the legislation remained in force for nearly 100 years. It was very unpopular, so much so that it became legally possible to claim exemption.

Magistrates however were so reluctant to grant exemptions that amending legislation had to be passed. My grandmother, who lived at Blockley Villa, St George's Place (now demolished but previously nos10-12) for over 25 years, was a fervent anti-vaxxer. I grew up hearing that in 1911 she went to the Magistrates Court to stop her elder child being vaccinated, and I was rather disappointed to find, when I looked at the legislation, that she probably only made a Statutory Declaration rather than addressing the Bench in spirited fashion. Had Cheltenham not been famed for vaccination it would in medical circles have been famed for its Eye Hospital. Bournemouth House (no 11 St George's



Bournemouth House

Place) became the Cheltenham Ophthalmic Infirmary in 1861. Dr Colledge, who founded the Medical Missionary Society and the Canton Ophthalmic Hospital, came to live at Lauriston House in Montpellier. When the hospital here was opened he was the physician and Walter Hamilton Jessop the consulting surgeon. Again the poor thronged the street, and over 200 cases were dealt with in the first six months. Poor Jessop was dead within a year, possibly from overwork. He was succeeded by a surgeon from the General Hospital, but Dr Colledge continued in post until his death in 1879.

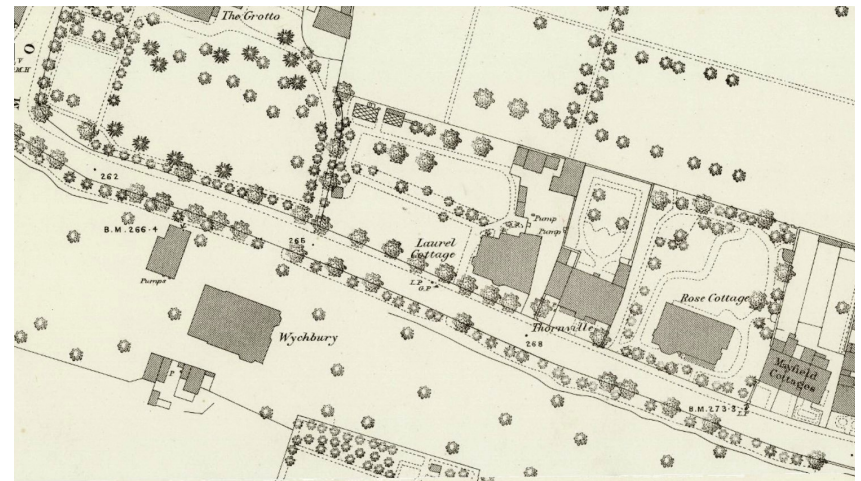
One can only hope that a vaccine giving immunity to Covid-19 can soon be found and be used throughout the world as quickly as Jenner's discovery was.

Elizabeth Bennett

FEATURE

Nathaniel Smith and Wychbury*

Nathaniel Smith and Richard Liddell (see article in previous Newsletter) were close neighbours. Liddell had lived at The Grotto in Moorend Road (then known as Prospect Place) and Nathaniel Smith was next door at Laurel Cottage. Later, from about 1880, Nathaniel Smith had moved to Wychbury, on the opposite side of the road. Its grounds were extensive, covering about 5½ acres (over 2 hectares), and some of the specimen trees planted there are still standing.



Map showing The Grotto, Wychbury and Laurel Cottage
(Reproduced courtesy of the Know Your Place West of England website (www.kyp.org.uk))

Wychbury was named after a feature in the parish of Pedmore, in Worcestershire, where Nathaniel Smith was born, and he probably had it built. The house was demolished in about 1980 after being used as a children's nursery for some years, and Wychbury Close was built over the site. The adjacent Duckworth Close was built on an area of the garden that had been transferred to the nearby Rosenhoe, which was occupied for many years by the Duckworth family. I can recall grass being mown by one of the young Nigerians whose education was supervised by Edward Harland Duckworth, who died in 1972.

Nathaniel Smith came to Cheltenham at the age of 25 to manage a branch of Lea and Perrins, which at that time was not only a manufacturer of sauces but also a chemist's. He eventually became a partner in the firm and set up as a chemist on his own account, being one of the founder members of the Pharmaceutical Society. In public life he was one of the original members of the Leckhampton

Local Board until its dissolution in 1893 and was chairman of its Highways Committee. He was a churchwarden at Leckhampton church, resigning in 1891 after 25 years' service.

His main chemist's shop, which also incorporated a factory and laboratory, was at 373 High Street, and there was a branch at 2 Montpellier Exchange. He regularly advertised his products in the local press, such as aerated citrus or potash water for gout and rheumatism, and aerated Lithia water in bottles or in 'French lephons, now so much appreciated'. (What was a 'lephon'?) In 1860, when the duty on eau de cologne had been reduced, he 'begged respectfully to state' that the price per bottle would be reduced from 2/6d to 2/-.

In addition to his other activities, documents in Gloucestershire Archives show that he was involved in a number of property dealings. In 1865 he purchased the Wesleyan Methodist Bethany Chapel in Regent Street. The trustees were authorised 'to sell and dispose of the chapel premises' to him for the sum of £600. The sale coincided with the move of the congregation to the newly built Royal Well Chapel. The building remained as a chapel but more recently was used by an estate agent.

He also had property of his own, which he leased out. These included Nos 8a and 19 Promenade Villas and No 1 High Street (next to Hales Road). In 1865 he was one of the parties in a transaction relating to a cottage and tenement at the back of Essex Place (in the northern part of the present Rodney Road), a consequence of the will of Robert Thomas Humphris, ironmonger.

In 1870, jointly with a Unitarian clergyman the Revd Henry Shaen Solly he signed the lease of Painswick Lawn House (today the Painswick House Dental Practice) to Charles Haward, at a quarterly rent of £70. (Charles Pratt Haward was a professor of singing, who with his wife ran a boys' preparatory school. It still existed in 1891, also occupying the neighbouring Haldon House. There were then nine resident pupils, and their two daughters were among the four governesses.)

On his retirement as a churchwarden, Smith was presented with a silver inkstand and address, and tribute was paid to his untiring devotion as well as to acts of charity that had endeared his wife to the parish. He died in 1903, aged nearly 90. In the parish magazine his obituary recorded that 'there was never a scheme started for the good of the Parish, but Mr Smith was always a willing and able help. Many of the poor will miss a very kind friend.... He tried to live up to his name as Nathaniel, in whom was no guile.' Nathaniel Smith thus counts as another of Cheltenham's 'Eminent Victorians'.

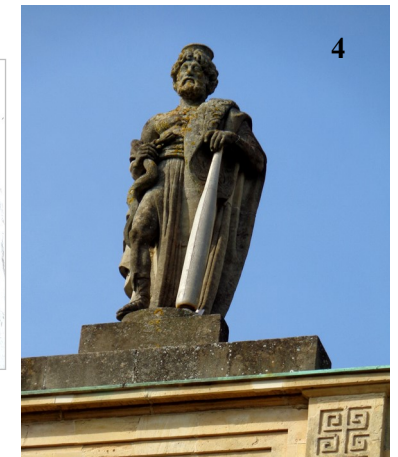
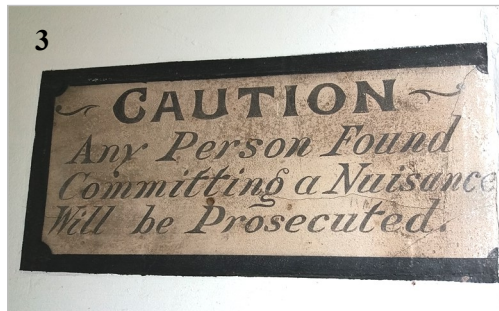
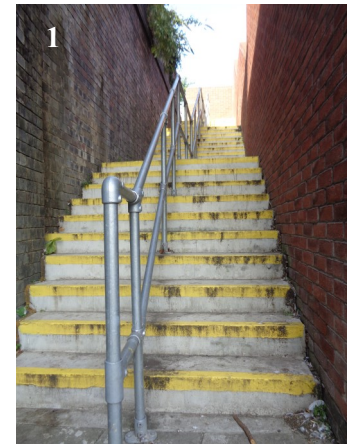
Eric Miller

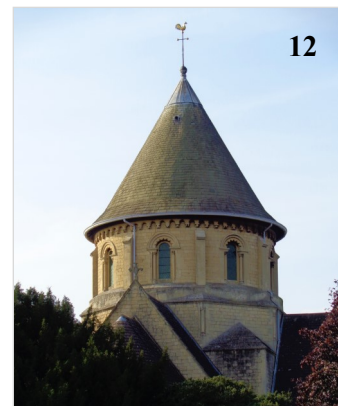
* Here's a coincidence! See the query about the nursery school on the back page.

GLIMPSES OF CHELTENHAM

Can you place them?

Answers on pages 23





FEATURE

A LIFE OF RILEY ?

Cheltenham baker John Riley began his business at 69, High Street, in 1825, taking the property, a shop with house and garden behind it, on a twenty-one year lease from Sarah Thornton at forty pounds a year. Five years later he appears as a baker in Pigot & Co's 1830 Directory. By the autumn of 1831 he was having to make an agreement with his creditors [Gloucestershire Archives, ref D2201/3/78/33]. Not so unusual a tale, perhaps, but it is one with points of interest.

By 1825 Cheltenham's population was expanding, and 'the season' still brought the 'A list' celebrities of the time to the spas. This gave rise to a problem. The trouble was that although Cheltenham had flour mills on the Chelt from Dowdeswell to Sandford and Barrett's Mills, Upper and Lower Alstone and then Arle Mill, the river has always brought down large quantities of silt which impeded the flow to the mill wheels. The Water Company set up in 1826, to increase the amount of water available domestically, worsened the mills' problems by abstracting water from the river, leaving even less for the mills.



Lower Alstone Mill and mill house

According to Pigot's 1830 Directory there were 44 bakers in the town, and another 8 confectioners and pastry cooks. It is no wonder that some sought flour supplies elsewhere. This was not always easy, because although almost every locality had its own mill, the price of flour was not high enough to permit the addition of extra charges for haulage and still remain competitive. Most local flour mills traded within a radius of seven miles from the mill. In the days of horse-drawn transport, for two cart-horses to pull a wagon loaded with two tons of flour at an average speed of little over two miles an hour, seven miles out and seven miles back, with breaks for feed and water, was a day's work. After that, the carter was expected to care for the horses, perhaps another two hours' work for him.

When John Riley's creditors were listed, three of them, unsurprisingly, were local millers. Joseph Hobbs, of Sandford Mill, was owed eighty-four pounds; James Arkell, of Alstone Upper Mill, was owed sixty-three pounds and was to be made bankrupt himself in 1834; and the assignees of James Motley of Arle Mill were owed thirty-six pounds. Motley had been made bankrupt in 1829. (Local corn millers had other problems besides the silt.) Samuel Martin was a local silversmith and jeweller at 395 High Street, and was owed forty-eight pounds, eighteen shillings and ninepence. Whether the debt was for goods supplied, or

perhaps an unwise investment, is not known. A Mr Thomas Jeffrys is listed but without an amount stated; Messrs Lloyd Brothers were owed forty-seven pounds.

The real point of interest concerns the two final creditors, who were placed at the head of the list. Mr William Bowley was owed sixty pounds and ten shillings. Bowley was a member of an established Cirencester milling business, and his involvement with a Cheltenham baker may point to an attempt to extend his business. Besides his main mill at Querns Lane in Cirencester, his firm later took over Arlington Mill in Bibury, adding steam power which so shook the building that large stone buttresses had to be added to its walls. The creditor owed by far the most, two hundred and sixty-four pounds and seven shillings, was the Bourton-on-the-Water milling partnership of Kimber and Dyer.

Why was John Riley having to go so far (the Bourton and Cirencester mills are roughly fifteen miles away) for his flour supplies? Was his local credit used up? Kimber and Dyer rented Bury Fields Farm which included Lower Mill in Bourton from 1827, after leaving Little Aston Mill and its farm, until 1836, when their partnership was dissolved. Throughout their time at Lower Mill they sold flour to several bakers in Cheltenham, and first sold ten sacks of 'seconds' (the main bread flour) to John Riley on 6th October 1827, charging him twenty-two pounds and ten shillings. Before the end of the year, accounts with their Cheltenham customers were no longer entered in the main ledger [GA:D4794/1], but were transferred to another, which is not in the Archives.



Lower Mill, Bourton-on-the-Water

Despite the distance to be travelled, the trade continued (with other millers and customers) for more than seventy years, so what was the attraction? The answer seems to have been the ready availability of return loads. Cheltenham was becoming a busy trading centre, with its quarries at Leckhampton, the manufacture of various kinds of iron-work, and the closeness to the timber yards of Gloucester and the collieries of the Forest of Dean. It may have been the coal that was the first attraction, as Kimber and Dyer also traded very profitably as coal merchants. Once Bourton's retail traders got to know that Kimber and Dyer had wagons regularly in Cheltenham, they ordered supplies of timber and stone from the town's wholesalers. It was cheaper for them to pay thirty shillings per ton carriage charge than to send their own wagons. Coal was always good as a standby return cargo, as Bourton did not get its own railway station until 1862.

Of course, having a customer like John Riley could be a misfortune, but clearly Kimber and Dyer's credit control was not of the best. The sum he owed implies that in four years Riley had a minimum of one hundred sacks of flour, and, since we may presume that initially he was paying his bills, possibly as much as four times that. Even one hundred sacks of flour, baked into 'quartern' loaves of four

pounds each, was nine thousand loaves of bread. Riley must have been very unlucky or very careless. But then, it seems that Kimber and Dyer would have approached Riley with an offer of flour supplies, rather than the other way round.

The creditors' meeting had taken place on 20th October 1831, and on the 24th Williams, Kimber and Bowley leased the 69 High Street premises to another baker, Thomas Cooke, for fifteen years at eighty pounds a year. Cooke was presumably doing well in his chosen trade, as he already had a bakery at 211 High Street. It is a surprise to find that eight months later, on 25th June 1832, John Riley was back leasing number 69 from Kimber and Bowley again.

Apparently, Riley had been able to obtain brand new financing from a James Batten of Plymouth, at least enough to settle with his creditors. Unfortunately the last document in this bundle is missing, removed perhaps by the solicitor who drew up the others, because on the original wrapper in which they were kept is a pencilled note saying that Batten eventually purchased the shop from John Riley's assignees.

This leaves a few questions. Did Riley die? He does not appear in Cheltenham in the 1841 Census. Did he Welsh again, and disappear? What was his connection to James Batten – whoever he was? He does not appear in Pigot's Devonshire directory of 1830, unless 'Batten' is a perversion of 'Paddon' – William Paddon and Son were auctioneers and agents in Plymouth. Unfortunately, so far no answers have been found.

Mike Beacham

Leckhampton LHS Research Bulletin No 5.

The Leckhampton Local History Society's latest *Research Bulletin* is now available. The contents include: Leckhampton's Stone Legacy, Rough Justice in 16th Century Leckhampton, a Tudor Will, History and Nature Walks around Leckhampton The Moored Grotto and its Occupants, Kidnappers Lane Market Gardens, Wild Flowers on Leckhampton Hill in the 1950s, Youthful Memories of Leckhampton fifty years ago, and Stories from old postcards.

The cover price is £5.00, for delivery by hand within Leckhampton. For delivery by Royal Mail, please add £1.83 to cover postage. To order please send a cheque payable to Leckhampton Local History Society for the appropriate amount to: Stephen Gale, LLHS Hon Treasurer, Larchwood, Pilford Court, Pilford Road, Leckhampton, Cheltenham Glos GL53 9BB (for further inquiries please email leckhamptonlhs@gmail.com or telephone 01242 526144).

FEATURE

In his forthcoming novel, *'The End of the Sky'*, Bob Rogers, a member living in Wales, tells the story of his adventurous great-great grandmother..

The End of the Sky

'And then I saw behind me those who were gone - they were of me and in me and I in all of them.' So said Richard Llewellyn in his best-known work, *How Green Was My Valley*. But I, like a large percentage of us, had little knowledge of 'those who were gone' beyond the names of some great-grandparents. Names, and occasionally occupations, in a family bible and a couple of half-remembered anecdotes were all I had to go on when I began exploring my roots. I was past sixty and both my parents were dead, which made the research even more of a challenge.

My father's recorded line petered out after four generations into the backwaters of Welsh-speaking Snowdonia and all I had to go on from my mother's side was a family bible telling of the Marsh family, who left Ireland in 1849 for the Black Country, from where my great-grandfather moved to South Wales to work on the railways.

However, on the living room wall, for as long as I could remember, had been the gracefully posed photograph of a beautiful woman in her early thirties called Lily May. She was the grandmother I never knew who died in childbirth in 1921. My mother had been just two, and all she knew of her own parent was, 'She played the zither and came from Uckington in Gloucestershire'.

So I began to look into who this lady in the photograph might have been. Finding her as a thirteen-year-old on the 1901 census, I conjured up a mental picture of what she and her ten-year-old sister Lizzie would have been like back then, pinafore dresses, ribboned bonnets, whips and tops and picnics in the park. All, sadly far from the truth.

In 1901, Lily and Lizzie were in Cheltenham workhouse. They were there as a 'burden on the parish' because their impoverished great-grandparents could not afford to take care of them. Great-grandparents? Where were their parents? Or even grandparents?

I discovered the girls' father, Willie Mitchell, had died aged nineteen of what the death certificate called phthisis - an archaic tongue twister more commonly known now as pulmonary tuberculosis. He had worked at Whaddon Farm as a milkman and had in all likelihood contracted his illness from drinking untreated milk. Their mother, Sarah Ann, had remarried but evidently there was no room in the new arrangement for the girls. So where were Sarah Ann's parents, the girls' grandparents? Stepping back fifty years into the mid nineteenth century, I found them - and in doing so discovered the extraordinary story of my own great-great grandmother.



Lily May

When Ellen Bullingham left home to travel all of three miles to her new live-in employment, she could have had no idea of the vast journeys ahead of her and the perils she would face in an implacably hostile land.

A month before her twelfth birthday, Ellen left the tiny tied cottage in Uckington she shared with her parents and five siblings and walked into Cheltenham to begin her new life as a live-in servant in the Noah's Ark Inn on St George's Street. It was March 15th, 1861.

Ellen was the third child of shepherd and casual farm labourer, Charles Bullingham and his wife Sarah Dubber. Her employment at such a tender age was by no means uncommon and was testimony to the hand to mouth existence of tenant labourers and their families, who ate and enjoyed a roof over their heads at the whim of landlords/employers. The workhouse was only ever one bad harvest or poor lambing season away.

I could add little detail to Ellen's years as a serving maid and so in my forthcoming novel I have dramatised her time at the Noah's Ark, populating the story with murderous poachers, haughty race-goers and the delightful, dark and dubious types indicative of a town inn of the period. The only evidence I have comes from the census of 1861 which places her at the Noah's Ark along with landlord, Thomas Wells and his family and a travelling salesman called George Tetley. I do know, however, that her tenure there was short-lived and that, by 1862, Mr Wells had left the Noah's Ark and Ellen had been forced to seek new employment.

She was living in Andoversford in 1865, most likely as a domestic servant, and by 1869 she was back in Cheltenham where in June of that year she married Enoch Johnson, a coal labourer from Colesbourne, in the Salem Baptist Chapel, Clarence Parade. They set up home in Little Bayshill Terrace.

By 1872 'Johnson' had become 'Johnsey', a not uncommon distortion in the days of handwritten record keeping, and in October of that year Enoch and Ellen left England for Australia on the migrant ship *Royal Dane* with infant son, Charles - inexplicably leaving behind their fifteen month old first-born, Sarah Ann, to be cared for by her grandparents Charles and Sarah Bullingham in Uckington.

Landing in Brisbane in 1873, the young family obtained employment at a wagon station delivering goods throughout the south Queensland territory, but the big story of the day was the discovery of gold in the far north. The Palmer River Rush was on and according to the newspapers, fortunes were being made by those intrepid enough to risk all. However, the papers also stated that for every success there were countless failures. The headlong race to the sweltering and hostile frontier became a free for all in which Europeans fought the Chinese and both fought the indigenous Australians. One newspaper columnist for *The Northern Miner* wrote in 1874, 'Like ghosts along the muddy and murderous roads between the Palmer River and Cooktown, assailed on all sides by hostile tribes, disease and, increasingly, by those they would have regarded as chums and compatriots on the journey of hope just short weeks before, a ragged army, bereft of hope, have discovered all that glitters is not gold.'

We can have little concept today of the hopes and fears that drove Enoch and Ellen to seek a better life on the other side of the world. Here newspaper advertisements of the time painted Australia as a land of plenty where vast acreage waited for those willing to work it. The hopeful souls dreaming of a life free to plough their own fur-

row may have imagined a vast antipodean 'England' - green, pleasant and free from the yoke of the ruling classes. But in a gold rush there is a very fine line between riches and ruin.

As Hector Holthouse reports in his narrative *River of Gold*, published in 1967, 'They were easy marks, and many who came with money to buy stores soon lost every penny of it. Without even the money to pay their fares home, they swelled the ranks of Cooktown's desperate men. By the end of April, 1874 there were from three thousand to four thousand men camped between Grassy Hill and the spot where the Palmer track disappeared into the scrub. Many of them were destitute.'

The warnings did not seem to deter Enoch. He travelled north, leaving his family in Brisbane, and returned months later with not a penny to show for his endeavours - but he had a scheme aimed at helping some of the lucky ones spend their gains. Heading back to the North, this time with Ellen and Charles in tow, he set up a business selling fruit and fresh garden produce.

It was his proud boast, according to a newspaper advertisement he had taken out, that 'All our produce is grown by white men.'

But a fortune was not in the stars for Enoch and Ellen. The pair had thirteen children, seeing seven of them survive to adulthood and - for reasons I have yet to discover - in the 1890s



Workers at Canning Jarrah Mill, where Enoch died

Enoch left the family home in Townsville, Queensland and turned up working in a timber mill 4,200 kilometres away in Perth where, in April 1896 at just turned fifty, he was crushed by a massive jarrah trunk and died of his injuries the same evening.

Ellen seemingly struggled on with her large family, now without a breadwinner. Eldest son Charles became a prominent member of the Queensland Wheelmen cycling team and, until his death in 1952, he ran a successful cycle shop in Townsville. But for Ellen herself, Australia must have been a place of painful memories and broken dreams. At the age of sixty, in 1910, she and her daughter Mary Ellen Johnsey boarded the *SS Manuka* sailing from Sydney to Vancouver.

Ellen lived another twenty years on Canada's west coast, dying in January 1930 at the age of eighty. She never saw any of her other children again and never returned to Australia. Her father Charles died in Cheltenham workhouse in 1900 at the age of eighty-nine, outliving his beloved wife Sarah by just two weeks.

Ellen Bullingham-Johnsey is buried with her daughter Mary Ellen in Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver.

Bob Rogers

FEATURE

Joan Cooke A Woman Who 'Lived Famous to her End'

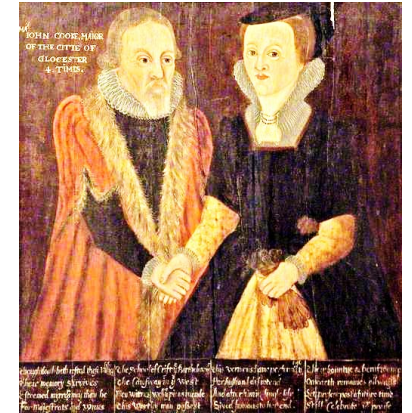
This quote comes from the narrative under the 'portrait' of John and Joan Cooke produced for the city fathers of Gloucester about 1598 in an attempt to create a 'memory' of civic pride, obedience and respect. The symbolism in the portrait is unusual. They are depicted as soulmates, working together for the benefit of the City, but it is Joan who is in the foreground.

Why would a woman who had died around 1544 be regarded with such reverence half a century later? As we will see she was the driving force behind the establishment of the Crypt School.

They were an influential couple in Gloucester, living in some style on Southgate Street opposite St Mary de Crypt church, then known as Christ Church. John was born in Minsterworth in the 1450s and rose to prominence, serving as Mayor of Gloucester on four occasions. Joan's date and place of birth are unknown. She was part of the Massinger family who were also politically active. Both her brother and nephew Thomas served as the City's Mayor and her nephew William served as Mayor and on three occasions MP for Gloucester. She appointed these nephews as her executors and named them residuary beneficiaries in her will.

John had wanted to break Llanthony Priory's monopoly of education in the City, but died on 14 September 1528 before he could do so. However, through his will he ensured that his wish would be fulfilled. Knowing Joan's capabilities, he appointed her as executrix of his estate. Under the will she was instructed to establish a schoolhouse and free school. She also enjoyed a life interest in his not inconsiderable estate.

She wasted no time in acquiring part of the burial ground next to St Mary de Crypt from Richard Hart, prior of Llanthony, on 6 October 1529 which was to become the site of the first Crypt School. Ten years elapsed before she took further steps to establish that school. At which time she purchased a mortmain licence from the Crown to enable the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester to acquire land in part to support it. Sensing an opportunity following the dissolution of Llanthony Priory, she purchased the manor of Podsmead and other lands from the Court of Augmentations on 5 September 1539. These and other properties were transferred to the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester under a tripartite agreement of 11 January 1539/40, by which time the school had been built. The third party was the Bailiffs and Citizens of Worcester who were to be paid £10 if the covenants were broken, one of which was the provision of a schoolmaster and



John and Joan Cooke
Gloucester Museum Art Collection

accommodation for him and the scholars. While alive she would collect the rent and bear all the costs. Annual surveys were to be carried out after her death to ensure that the agreement was adhered to.

Following Joan's death, William Massinger, as a residual beneficiary, claimed the properties at Podsmead and Ebley for himself, maintaining that they had not been legally transferred to the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester. In 1550 the Mayor and Burgesses brought a case before the court of Chancery to reclaim them and the court found in their favour. The dispute arose because by the time the properties were transferred Joan was 'such an unwieldy woman' that she could not attend the ceremony. Instead she had letters of attorney drawn up for Richard Parkyns, chaplain and Thomas Yonge, clerk and schoolmaster to act on her behalf.

The depositions relating to this case provide an insight into Joan's feisty character. The problems had in part arisen because she was unwilling to allow the Mayor and Burgesses of Gloucester to hold the deeds during her lifetime. When pressed to hand them over she is reported as stating 'for her time she was mistress of the rents thereof, and therefore would have the keeping of the evidences'. In reply to Alderman Thomas Payne's attempts to persuade her she 'said to him that if that which was done were undone she would tell him more of her mind'. Her servant Phillip Draper gives a possible explanation for her actions. Payne had asked her to buy land for the 'use of the town'. Unfortunately, this was land that William Massinger also wished to acquire. She therefore interpreted Payne's approach as an act of ill will towards her family. Her response was that he should 'make much of that they had for they should be sure to have no more of her whilst she lived'. Clearly a woman who knew her own mind.

There is a plaque on the first schoolhouse, but maybe the greatest celebration of Joan's drive and determination is the school that she established 'to have continuance... for evermore while the World shall last', which since 1943 has appropriately been based at Podsmead.

Sue Brown

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BOOKS FOR SALE



News from the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop'

I am happy to tell you that as a result of my appeal in the last Newsletter, a volunteer has come forward to take over the running of the CLHS donated books sales. Oliver Pointer, a fairly new member of CLHS, who has previous experience of selling second-hand books, has now taken all the books from me, and will be sitting by the Book Table when our lectures recommence.

Thank you, Oliver, I'm sure the book sales will continue to flourish under your care.

I would like to thank everyone who has donated books, journals, maps and pictures for me to sell, as well as those who have perused, bought items which have caught their eye, and chatted to me at lecture evenings and other Society events over the last 10 years. Between us we have raised a lot of money for the society. Thank you all!

Heather Atkinson

As you can never have too many books, one of the unanticipated pleasures of moving to Cheltenham in the past couple of years has been the discovery that so much has been written about the area. Even by comparison with Oxford, where I studied and became an antiquarian and second-hand bookseller, and the beautiful middle Thames Valley, where I lived and worked as a bookseller then primary school teacher for many years, Cheltenham and district more than holds its own.

The joy of the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop' is that, as well as seeing the well-known titles, since the books are donated by Society members, there are many less commonly found books and research pamphlets. These rarely appear in the various second-hand outlets around town, yet are invaluable.

And, of course, as they are donated, we can ask very modest prices. Donations of books, primarily of local historical interest, of whatever quantity, are always welcome. I am happy to collect.

Since taking on the stock, I have been catalogue-listing them. The lack of physical meetings currently prevents actual browsing. I can, however, send *pdf* copies of my catalogue list electronically, for browsing at leisure over coffee at home. Purchases can then be made by cash, cheque (made out to the Society) or BACS transfer (details on application). I can deliver most purchases personally; or would charge p&p at cost for orders from beyond Gloucestershire.

Just a few titles that have caught my eye:

Bell, Arthur, Pleasure Town Cheltenham 1830-1860 (Chalfont St Giles, Richard Sadler, 1981) *1st edn*; x + 70 pp., 25 b&w illus; hard covers, **£6.00**

Johnson, Joan, Tudor Gloucestershire (Gloucester, Alan Sutton & Gloucester County Library, 1985) *1st edn*; viii + 184 pp, b&w illus/photos; paperback, **£4.00**

Black, A & C – Black's Guide to Gloucestershire (Edinburgh, A & C Black, 1865) *2nd edn*; b&w illus/maps; hard covers, *A rare title.* **£4.50**

Saville, Alan, comp, Pre-Regency Cheltenham: An Archaeological Survey (Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, 1975) 29 pp & 12 pp of maps; **£1.00**

Whitaker, John, The Best – a history of H H Martyn & Co... and the Gloster Aircraft Co (Cheltenham, Promenade Publications, 1998) *2nd edn*; xvi + 387pp, many b&w illus/photos; hard covers, **£25.00**

Oliver Pointer

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GLIMPSES OF CHELTENHAM— the answers.

1. Lower High Street: the stairs beside the old railway bridge leading up to the Honeybourne Line.
2. Suffolk Road, outside the former Thomas Plant shop.
3. Sign on the wall at the entrance to an alley in St Philip's Street, off Bath Road.
4. Statue of Aesculapius, god of healing, on the roof of the Pittville Pump Room. At the other end of the roof is the Greek physician Hippocrates.
5. This giant cat, apparently about to ride off on a scooter, is in a mural at the junction of Albion Street and Winchcombe Street.
6. One of three sculptures on a footpath in Sandford Park, west of College Road.
7. The former Horse and Groom Pub in St George's Place (near the Minster), until recently the Cheltenham Shopmobility office.
8. Clock tower at the corner of Gloucester Road and Tewkesbury Road.
9. Arch at the entrance to Royal Parade Mews near the top of Montpellier Street.
10. Plaque to Dr Grace Billings at 6 Evesham Road, unveiled in March 2015.
11. Sandford Park, east of College Road: statue of a reclining figure marking the point where flood water from storm drains is channelled back into the Chelt.
12. St Peter's church, Tewkesbury Road.

CAN YOU HELP?

The Davis Penny-Farthing

An enquirer living in Switzerland who writes books and makes documentaries about historic bicycles is investigating the Davis Works, once a Cheltenham company, and specifically the Davis Penny-Farthing (pictured). Is there a local enthusiast who knows something about either the bicycle or the company? Has anyone written anything about it? Might there be a company archive? Any information or suggestions for lines of research will be gratefully received.



Wychbury Nursery School and Oaklands School

An enquirer who grew up in Cheltenham in the 1960s remembers attending a nursery school and later a small day school, both of which have long disappeared, and would like to hear from anyone who has memories of either of them or knows something about them. The nursery school, run by a Mrs E J Christie, was at a big old house called Wychbury at 69 Moored Road. It had closed by 1969. The house was later demolished and a group of houses called Wychbury Close now occupy part of its large garden. The school, called Oaklands and run by a Miss A U Herbert, was at 19 Eldorado Road., and it too had gone by 1969.

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

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the March 2021 issue by
Monday 8th February 2021
to the Editor: Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA
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We are always very pleased to receive contributions from members—articles of any length, interesting facts and photos, memories, comments, all are welcome.