



Cheltenham Local History Society

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Picture courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives

EDITORIAL

This charming little watercolour was sent by 19-year-old Samuel Miles from South Africa, where he was fighting in the Boer war, to his family in England. His father was Alfred Miles the well-known local historian, whose enormous scrapbooks have been catalogued in recent years by Society volunteers. Miles was a benefactor to the town in many ways, and following a successful petition from the Society a blue plaque is to be erected in his memory next year. Sally Self tells the story on page 9.

Kath Boothman

March 2021

Cheltenham LHS

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LECTURE PROGRAMME 2020-2021

The remainder of the current programme, to be delivered by Zoom, is as follows:

Tuesday 20th April:

Simon Ridley—The History of the Bells of Cheltenham

Tuesday 18th May:

Anne Strathie—Herbert Ponting: Scott's Antarctic Photographer and Pioneer Filmmaker

EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2021-22

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

Tuesday 21st September:

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

Tuesday 19th October:

AGM followed by Neela Mann—Booze, Balloons and Burials

Tuesday 16th November:

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

Tuesday 7th December:

John Putley—Gloucestershire Christmas

Tuesday 18th January 2022:

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

Tuesday 15th February 2022:

Research and Display Evening

Tuesday 8th March 2022:

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

Tuesday April 19th 2022:

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

MORNING LECTURES 2021-22

Tuesday 5th October:

Alan Pilbeam—The Royal Progress through Gloucestershire, 1535

Tuesday 1st February 2022:

Liz Davenport—Woodchester Mansion: an Unfinished Masterpiece

Tuesday 5th April 2022:

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

REVIEWS

On December 8th **Paul Barnett** took the theme **The Cotswold Navy—What's in a Name?** Paul said he himself came from the north east and had been in the navy. The Cotswolds was an almost landlocked area, but nevertheless it had a naval heritage. The Gloucester to Sharpness canal, built around 1827, had soon become a busy waterway for commercial traffic. George Thomas Beard, the first official stevedore of Gloucester, had a fleet of ships named after places such as Dursley and Nibley. Paul showed pictures of the *Nibley*, first laden with timber, then as a hulk at Lydney. Beard died in 1955, by which time the company had been bought by John and Benjamin Cook. Another company at that time was M J Chadborn & Co, who ran a big fleet of steel lighters and also the sail training ship *Vindicatrix*. Chadborn's fleet passed into British Waterways ownership in the 1950s and was disbanded, many vessels being used to fortify the southern banks of the Severn. Paul showed a photo of the passenger vessel *Queen Boadicea II*, built in 1936, which had been at Dunkirk under Sir William 'Bill' Tennant. Another link with the Normandy landings was to be found in the concrete lighters beached at Purton, said to have been the model for the Mulberry Harbours. March 8th-15th 1942 was Warship Week in Gloucestershire, a response to the current National Savings campaign aimed at replacing ships and equipment lost at Dunkirk. Individual towns were given targets to reach, a clever strategy that played on local rivalries. All kinds of ships were needed. A destroyer might cost £700,000, so a town could perhaps raise the £210,000 that would pay for the hull, or else it might fund a whole minesweeper costing £62,000. Paul showed a detailed 'shopping list' of minor items: a binnacle



Badge sold in aid of Warship Week in Birmingham



HMS Trident

at £30, a sextant at £18. The amazing total of £955 million was raised in 1178 Warship Weeks held in over 1200 districts. Dursley, for example, raised £253,000 and 'adopted' *HMS Trident*, a T-class submarine built in 1938 that had sunk several German ships and had the distinction of having a moose called Pollyanna as a mascot, given to the crew by local people when she was on service in Russia. He showed pictures of plaques put up in Dursley and on the vessel to commemorate the town's support. Several destroyers were sponsored by Cotswold towns, notably *HMS Jaguar* by Gloucester, *HMS Jupiter* by Evesham and *HMS Whitehall* by Cheltenham. Smaller places took on smaller vessels: the Forest of Dean, for example, had three small inshore submarines. Thus, Paul maintained, Gloucestershire did play its part in the navy of World War II. He showed many pictures of ships, concluding with one of himself aged 17 on board the destroyer *HMS Berkeley*. He was continuing his research, he said, and drew attention to a book he had already written, *Fore and Aft: Lost Ships of the Severn Sea*. Judging from the number of questions at the end, the invisible audience had enjoyed the talk very much.

On 19th January **Neela Mann** and **Jill Waller** gave us a talk entitled **A Little History of Cheltenham Quakers**. The burial ground in Grove Street has been known of for some time, but Neela and Jill uncovered a deed written on vellum that took its origins back to the 1600s and opened up a wealth of further information about the people involved.

In an indenture dated 18 November 1682 Margaret Hopcott grants ownership of the ground to Daniel Hayward (a collarmaker) and Jacob Deaves (a tailor). The two men were Quakers, as were the Hopcotts, one of whom was imprisoned in Gloucester Castle for non-payment of tithes. Daniel Hayward was also imprisoned, in 1684, for attending a forbidden meeting. The Quakers Act of 1662 forbade meetings of more than five people, but the Toleration Act of 1689 allowed dissenters to meet for worship. The Quakers were permitted to affirm rather than swear an oath. A further indenture names, together with Deaves and Hayward, Robert Langly, Richard Phillpott, John Edmonds and John Elliott as the first six trustees of the ground. Before then meetings were attended at Stoke Orchard. The first interment recorded in Cheltenham was of Thomas Deaves (son of Jacob Deaves) in October 1682. Friends met in the garden with perhaps only a shed for shelter, and it was not until October 1701 that land was acquired in Bowling Alley (now Clarence Street) for the erection of a proper meeting house. This was also eventually replaced nearby in 1836.

A brass plaque to be seen at the current Friends' Meeting House in Warwick Place shows 33 grave sites, three of which are unnamed. It was believed for some time that only 33 members were interred between 1711 and 1870. Among them are William Mason (1723), who discovered the first mineral spring on his land, his father Thomas (1711) and his daughter Elizabeth. She married Henry Skillicorne who developed the first well on Mason's land, planted the lime trees along Well Walk and established Cheltenham as a spa. The visiting George III stayed in their house in Bayshill in 1788. The Barrett family were also prominent Cheltonians. William (buried 1784), a baker, was trustee of the ground and owned the Eight Bells pub (now Two Pigs). His son William Humphris Barrett owned Barrett's Mill near Sandford Park. His obstinacy over access to the river water forced the setting up of the Cheltenham Water Company in 1824. The Waterfall family were also tradespeople, dealers in fish and game until, in 1843, Mrs Waterfall's property was seized for non-payment of church rates. Another family was the Holdships. In the 1820s Ann Holdship was appointed Pumper at the Original or Royal Well. Under her management gas lighting and an aviary were installed, with Musical Promenades to rival Montpellier.

The Quarterly and Monthly Meeting registers show that in excess of 150 people are interred, considerably more than the 33 on the brass plaque. In 1712 twelve new trustees were appointed, 6 of them from Cheltenham, including William Mason, but over the years the number of Cheltonians decreased. By 1845 there were none from the town appointed, but several from Bristol including Richard Fry, chocolate maker. In around 1888 the ground was closed for burials. The Kyrle Society (founded by Octavia and Miranda Hill) acquired the land, then described as being in one of the most squalid streets in Cheltenham. Though laid to grass and flower beds it was not maintained, and came to be mostly paved over. Friends were not allowed to build a mission hall on the site because it was a

designated open space, and it fell into such disrepair that by 1921 local residents were complaining about damage to property caused by intruders to the ground. Even bones were being dug up and the site was 'a disgrace to any slum in any town'. The council washed their hands of the problem and handed the land back to the Society of Friends, who immediately passed it on to Burton Speck (scrap metal dealer) for £25, but had to retain ultimate responsibility for it due to the burials. The site went through various owners and currently belongs to a fencing company, A & C Waring.

One notable Quaker was William Penn, and he had links to the Cheltenham Quakers. Granted 45 square miles by Charles II on the east coast of America, he was a friend of George Fox who had visited Cheltenham in 1675. Widowed Mary Ashmead, who had married into the Cheltenham Quaker family, emigrated to America in company with a number of her relations. A prominent Gloucestershire Quaker Richard Wall and his son were also on board the *Bristol Factor*, one of Penn's chartered ships. In 1683 John Ashmead, Mary Ashmead's grandson Toby Leech and Richard Wall bought 1000 acres from William Penn at the rate of 250 acres for just £5. With the help of 11 other Quakers a total of 4000 acres was purchased, and Cheltenham, Pennsylvania was founded.

Thus the chance discovery of the 1682 and 1683 indentures opened up much new information linking the Quaker community to the spa, to King George III, to the Frys of Bristol and even to the founding of a settlement in America.

Maggie Winterburn

Heritage Open Days, 10-19 September 2021

Write the dates in quickly while your diary is still empty. This year we hope to be able to return to the usual variety of walks, talks and open buildings but there will also be digital events like filmed tours and talks. The national theme is Edible England, exploring the country's 'past, present and future culinary heritage and culture'. That may inspire you, but it need not limit you. We will have a second theme, such as Secret Places, but anything that will raise awareness of Cheltenham's heritage can be included. If you would like to be involved in any way please contact Sarah Harvey at hods@cheltecivicsoc.org or jillbarlow@virginmedia.com.

And let's hope we don't have a repeat of last year, when the sudden imposition of the 'Rule of Six' meant that tour leaders found themselves having to do twice as many tours with half the number of participants each time.

Jill Barlow



On February 2nd **Martin Horwood** took as his theme **Cheltenham's Past Members of Parliament, 1832-1974**, promising stories of furiously-contested elections and a very diverse cast of characters. He explained that for centuries, until the Reform Act of 1832, Cheltenham was represented only by one of the two county MPs for Gloucestershire. The first of these to be known by name is Sir Giles de Berkeley, who in 1290 became the first of over 50 Berkeleys to represent Gloucestershire and the adjacent counties. With the emergence of the Tory and Whig parties in the 18th century a long-standing rivalry began between the Beaufoots (Tory) and the Berkeleys (Whig). At the 1776 election, the first at which votes were recorded, much money was spent by both sides to attract voters, a habit that was to continue. In 1832 the Hon. Craven Berkeley took the seat and was re-elected in 1835, 1837 and 1841, holding a vast celebratory banquet in front of the Pump Room on the last occasion. In 1847 he lost to Norfolk baronet Sir Willoughby Jones, but successfully charged his rival with corrupt practices and regained the seat, only to be unseated himself on the same grounds. He was re-elected however, and when he died in 1855 was replaced by his cousin Grenville Berkeley, who was made a minister, the only sitting MP for Cheltenham ever to hold ministerial rank until Alex Chalk was appointed. His successor was Colonel Francis Berkeley, the last Berkeley candidate, who in 1865 offended local opinion by going horse-racing on a Sunday and lost his seat to the Tory Charles Schreiber, husband of the brilliant and formidable Lady Charlotte Guest. At the 1868 general election Disraeli faced Gladstone and Cheltenham fielded two new candidates, Henry Samuelson and James Agg-Gardner, both still undergraduates at the time. Samuelson got in but shortly left to take up a seat in Frome, and at the 1874 election Agg-Gardner got in again. In 1880 he was narrowly defeated by the Liberal Baron du Bois de Ferrieres, a local man (despite his name) who had been mayor of Cheltenham. He was a great benefactor to the town, giving £1000 to found the art gallery. When he resigned in 1885 Agg-Gardner returned with a record majority. Agg-Gardner won again in 1886 but stood down in favour of Colonel Frank Russell, regaining the seat when Russell left to pursue his army career in 1900. In 1906 Tory support was slipping and John Sears took the seat for the reunited Liberal party, to be replaced briefly in 1910 by Viscount Duncannon, the future Earl of Bessborough. In 1911 Agg-Gardner was back, and served with distinction until his death in 1928, gaining a knighthood and a seat on the Privy Council. The new Tory MP was Sir Walter Preston, a railway engineer. When he resigned in 1937 Daniel Lipson, former head of the Jewish boarding house at Cheltenham College, was elected as an Independent Conservative. He was a good MP, but his support for British activities in Palestine made him unpopular and he lost in 1950 to the old-school Tory Major 'Bill' Hicks Beach, who served Cheltenham well until he retired in 1964. His successor Douglas Dodds-Parker, also Conservative, had a distinguished war record and had been a foreign office minister. Knighted by Edward Heath, he was to become one of the first UK members of the European Parliament when Britain joined the EU in 1974.



Sir James Agg-Gardner

*SOCIETY NEWS***New members**

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Tony Bugbird	Christine Newton
Michelle Rees	Jenny James
Judith Ellis	Geoff Gibbons

Society Update and News on the AGM

We had hoped to be able to hold our 2021 AGM in person on 18th May, but under the continuing COVID restrictions this is clearly not possible, so the committee have decided to postpone the AGM until Tuesday 19th October 2021, when the new officers and committee will be elected and the annual report and accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021 will be presented for approval by the members. Nomination forms for the committee will be made available in advance. We hope that by October we will be able to hold the AGM in person, but if that is not possible we will go ahead on Zoom, and will arrange for members who are unable to attend the online meeting to raise questions and cast their vote in advance, so that all have the opportunity to participate.

The committee is currently carrying out a review of the Society's activities and we would be most grateful for any input or comments you can make, both on how the Society has been operating in the last few years, or suggestions for the future. As we approach our 40th anniversary in 2022 we would like the Society to be in the best possible position to fulfil its brief and build on its many notable achievements, so if you would like to raise any points for us to consider in our review then please email me at cheltlocalhistory@btinternet.com or phone 01242 519413.

Alison Pascoe
CLHS Secretary

Call for papers for Journal 2022

This may seem some time away, but it's amazing how quickly the months go. As Journal editor I will be happy to hear from anyone who is planning to write up a piece for submission as an article in next year's issue of the Journal. There are guidelines for authors on the Society's website (which contributors are urged to read before submitting) but I will gladly talk through your submission with you, especially if this is your first attempt at writing up your research. The deadline for articles is not until the end of November, but now is a good time to get started and submissions can be sent in at any time before then. Particularly welcome are articles supported with suitable images and illustrations. Please contact me on editor.clhs@gmail.com if you have any questions or would like to discuss your proposed piece.

Julie Courtenay

*APPEAL***COLLABORATOR NEEDED!****Henry Martyn (1842-1937)**

Suppose that, as a supporter of Cheltenham Local History Society, you heard about a business leader in Cheltenham who had founded a company that became the town's largest employer of skilled craftsmen, with national and international orders that many a competitor would welcome. However, his varied life was almost unknown. Would you want to know why?

It might well have been Henry Martyn. Three years ago, I knew very little about him, although his life not only met that description but a much wider one as well. You may know of him as H H Martyn, who came here as a skilled carver in 1868 from his then home town of Worcester, and twenty years later formed a Company that bore his name. His influence, often in ways no longer heard of locally, led to benefits socially as well as in his Company work. And yet there is no biography, and barely a mention in recent books about the town. There is just one book, *The Best*, written mainly to illustrate the work of the Company and saying little about its founder.

When I searched and found so little, I contacted John Whitaker, author of *The Best*. He said I was correct: there was no book about Martyn, who was his great-grandfather. But he had a copy of a document Martyn himself wrote, and another book whose one known copy appeared to mention him. No-one else had enquired about them, so I was given a copy first of one and later of the other. All seemed set for me to work towards a biography: John was strongly supportive, as were others, and all (including some who had copies of the main source document which I had transcribed into digital form) were agreed that Henry Martyn's life ought to be better known.

So work progressed, but difficulties emerged. There was much still to do, and I was getting older and slower. Who might help, in whatever way?

Surely, perhaps, somewhere within the supporters of the Cheltenham LHS? If you are interested, please contact me; no obligation whatever unless agreed on both sides.

Martin Leonard

Email: jmartinleonard@hotmail.co.uk ; telephone 01242 523080.

Editor's note: Members will recall that we had a talk by James Rendell on H H Martyn in September 2016, which told us something of his early life.

Dowty News, the Newspaper of the Dowty Group.

All available editions of Dowty News have now been catalogued and placed on the Gloucestershire Archives online catalogue, reference **D8347/DGL/7/3**. The link is <http://ww3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/CalmView/>

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

A Successful Undertaking - a Blue Plaque for Alfred J Miles 1853 -1932

We have been looking for ways to celebrate the work of the Society's volunteers in cataloguing all 6,000 pages of the Miles scrapbooks. Apart from being a keen local historian, Alfred owned a successful business building coaches and carriages for the well-to-do and rich. He was also a County and Borough councillor and a well-respected non-conformist preacher.

It was suggested that petitioning for a Blue Plaque might be achievable. The Civic Society, who oversee the Blue Plaque scheme in the Borough, received our submission very favourably. The next step was to gain permission from the owners of St Anne's, off Albion Street, which was considered to be the most appropriate site, as it was where Alfred Miles worked on the scrapbooks from around 1910 until he died. The firm who own the building, now rented out as prestigious flats, responded very quickly and positively.

So now, in an amazingly short time, planning can proceed to the design and wording stage and at a date, yet to be fixed, in 2022, we can look forward to its unveiling. There are two reasons for choosing 2022. Not only can we commemorate one of Cheltenham's colourful characters, but we can also celebrate the 40th birthday of Cheltenham Local History Society and the work of the Society from its birth in 1982. Over the next 18 months the Committee will be looking for ways to have a lively year of celebrations – hopefully totally mask free!

It is usual to invite members of the family to the unveiling. If anyone knows of any relations of the Cheltenham-based Miles family, we would be pleased if they could get in touch. For more details, please contact Alison Pascoe or Sally Self, cheltlocalhistory@btinternet.com or projects.clhs@btinternet.com

New Project Needed!

Having completed the Miles Scrapbooks Project, we are looking for new ideas for the next one. Criteria would be that it can be carried out at home (having been supplied with the necessary information), and that it should tackle a previously untapped source of use to researchers and, of course, of interest to the volunteer.

Please contact either Oliver Pointer or Sally Self
hardy_pointer@hotmail.com or projects.clhs@btinternet.com

Sally Self

Picture courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives



Cartoon of Alfred Miles,
'A Human Dynamo'

NEW PUBLICATION

You've Got Me Thinking

Many Local History Society members will remember the late Amina Chatwin, who was a member of our Society from its earliest days, and the author of *Cheltenham's Ornamental Ironwork: A Guide and History* (1975), the first – and indeed only - detailed study of this important part of Cheltenham's architectural heritage.

At her death in 2016 Amina left two unpublished manuscripts: a history of British ironmaking, which it is hoped will be published in due course, and an unfinished autobiography, which has now been published, having been edited, with



additional information, by her friend and executor, Julian Rawes.

Amina's well-illustrated autobiography covers her life from childhood to 2005, and although around half of the book comprises accounts of her many overseas travels – with Italy and the USA (the latter partly in pursuit of historic ironwork!) being particular favourites – there is a great deal in the book to interest a specifically Cheltenham readership. Amina was born in Wellington Street (in a house named St Albans, which is still there), and her maternal grandfather, George Elston, was a boot maker in Winchcombe Street. Her autobiography is rich in memories of both locations (and of

other parts of Cheltenham) during the 1930s and 1940s. These certainly amplify two articles by Amina that were published in our Society's Journal some years ago: 'A Childhood in Cheltenham' (*Journal* 11, 1994-5) and 'Growing up in Wellington Street' (*Journal* 24, 2008). The book is also rich in Amina's family history, notably the life of her architect father, Walter Chatwin.

Four words may be said to have defined the major concerns of Amina's life at one time or another: archaeology, puppetry, dancing and fashion, all of which feature in considerable detail in her autobiography.

Amina's love of archaeology, and of history in general, stemmed from both her overseas travels and, closer to home, her friendship with the archaeologist Bernard Rawes (her executor's father), in several of whose local excavations she took part. Her interest in Industrial Archaeology stemmed from her membership of the fledgling Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology (founded in 1964), of which she became President in 1993. GSIA held regular lectures in Stroud, and Amina recalls in her autobiography that 'The lectures encouraged us all to do our own research. Cheltenham had no great industrial past and at first I was at a loss to know where to turn my attention. Then I thought of the ironwork, which was literally on my doorstep and all over the town. I went to the library to get out a book on the subject but nothing existed. I began to look at it carefully'. Such was the genesis of *Cheltenham's Ornamental Ironwork*, and her autobiography describes how she went about her research.

Amina's interest in Industrial Archaeology, and in particular archaeometallurgy, was lifelong and resulted in the publication of a succession of articles about Cheltenham and Tewkesbury in *GSIA Journals* and in her second book, *Into the New Iron Age: Modern British Blacksmiths* (1995). The latter grew out of her membership of the Historical Metallurgy Society (of which she became Chairman) and of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association. Her contributions eventually resulted, in 2002, in her being the first woman to be awarded the Companionship of the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths.

Amina's venture into the world of string puppets (or 'marionettes') stemmed from her friendship with a pioneer puppeteer, Olive Blackham (1899-2002), who established a marionette theatre and workshop in a converted granary at Roel Farm, near Guiting Power, in 1932 and who also lived in Wellington Street. The young Amina became one of her pupils, and later her assistant, and together they toured the theatre widely in the years after the Second World War. Amina also made her own puppets and gave performances locally, and these (along with Olive Blackham's puppets) now form part of the National Puppetry Archive at Bridgnorth.



Amina with the Roel puppets

That Amina would take to dance - initially ballet, then ballroom - was perhaps inevitable since her mother, Phyllis, ran a dance school at their house in Wellington Street, and it was as a dance partner that Amina met Ron Dodd, who was to be the first of the two 'unrequited loves' of her life, her accounts of both of which give her autobiography a particularly poignant and personal tone. It is also noteworthy that her first published article was not on Industrial Archaeology but on an aspect of the history of ballet. It appeared in *Ballet Annual* in 1961.

The fusion of dance and fashion in Amina's life was also very much down to her mother, who by the early 1960s had moved her dance school to larger premises in Montpellier Street, which she called the Elston Studios, after her maiden name. She then decided to open a dress shop in part of the building, of which Amina (who became an accomplished dressmaker) soon took charge. This eventually became the Elston Boutique (motto: 'We Care What You Wear'), which Amina was to run for around 30 years until her retirement in the early 1990s. For many years Amina lived 'above the shop' and became a leading light in the organisation of the regular Montpellier Fair. Her former boutique is now the 'Giggling Squid' Restaurant.

There is so much more in Amina's autobiography than this brief note can reveal, and anyone who would like to purchase a copy—at cover price, without the added cost of postage and packing!—can do so by contacting me, either by telephone (01242 510926) or by email (steven.blake@deltonglos.plus.com) as I hold a small stock of the books and would be very pleased to sell you one.

Steven Blake

You've Got Me Thinking. The Autobiography of Amina Daphne Chatwin 1927-2016, Reardon Publishing, Cheltenham. Hardback, 176pp. £15.

FEATURE

JOHN HIGGS, c1788-1825, Famous Man for Killing Pigs

To the Memory of JOHN HIGGS, Pig Killer, who died November 28th 1825, Aged 55 years.



*Here lies John Higgs / A famous man for killing pigs
For killing pigs was his delight / Both morning, afternoon and night.
Both heats and cold he did endure / Which no physician could e'er cure.
His knife is laid, his work is done / I hope to heaven his soul is gone.*

Many visitors to Cheltenham Minster churchyard must have wondered about this well-known epitaph. John Higgs was indeed a pig-killer, successful and proud of his chosen profession. The Cheltenham Parish records (held in Gloucestershire Archives; transcribed by the CLHS) show that John was baptised on Christmas Day 1769, the son of John Higgs. In 1802 he married Hester Jordan of Cirencester, in Cirencester parish church.

John's will of 4 November 1825, proved 6 May 1826, which starts 'This is the last Will and Testament of me John Higgs of Cheltenham, Pig Killer', reveals a little more about him. In it John bequeaths all his real and personal estate to his wife Hester, and then, after her decease, to his children: sons Thomas and Charles, and daughter Ann. The property detailed in the will includes a house and shop in the High Street, already in his son Thomas's possession, with garden behind, extending to 'the privy and the barn in the possession of An Freeman'; son Charles is to receive three cottages, with gardens in front, situated in Grove Street; daughter Ann is to receive John Higgs' own house, with the garden behind as far as the

pig-sty, and another small cottage in Grove Street. John's wife, Hester, is ordered to put the rents and profits of these properties towards paying John's debt to his brother William, at the annual rate of £20 (about £1,800 today) until the debt is cleared.

The 1806 Cheltenham Inclosure Award map clearly shows the property owned by J Higgs as Allotment number 342, on the corner of Grove Street (east side) and High Street; it is now No 384 High Street, formerly 275 High Street. There appear to be two properties fronting the High Street here, and behind them, beyond a garden or courtyard, a range of buildings in Grove Street. Another site, No511, is allotted to J Higgs further west along the High Street, near to where Park Street is now. Shenton's Cheltenham directories of 1800-1803 list two members of the Higgs family



Detail from 1806 Cheltenham Inclosure Award map (ref.D855/E9) courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives.

in the Lower High Street area – William Higgs, hurdle maker, on the north side, next to the *Cross Keys*, and John Higgs, variously described as a dealer in wood, shopkeeper and hurdle-maker, on the south side where Allotment No511 is placed on the Inclosure Award map. When he wasn't killing pigs, which was unlikely to be a full-time occupation, John Higgs was also a gardener. He is listed as such in Gell & Bradshaw's 1820 *Gloucestershire Directory*, evidently making good use of a piece of copyhold land that is mentioned in his will.

John Higgs' unusual epitaph has frequently been quoted in various publications over the years, noted for its humour, but its first appearance in print occurred in *Dolly Dubbins' (Cheltenham) Diary*, a lampoon of a visit to Cheltenham, published in the *Morning Post* in 1829. Dolly refers to John Higgs as a 'celebrated pork butcher' and declares the lines are 'remarkable for their elegance'. She quotes the epitaph in full but the first couple of lines differ slightly from those we see today. Until recently gravestones were often re-carved when the writing became worn, and Dolly's version may be the original:

*Here lies a careful and industrious man / You will scarce find such an one in ten;
For killing pigs was his delight / Both morning, afternoon and night.
Both heats and cold he did endure / Which no physician could e'er cure.
His knife is laid, his work is done / I hope to heaven his soul is gone.*

Jill Waller

FEATURE

THE CYCLING CHERUBS



The bas-relief metal plaques illustrated above are fixed to the boundary walls at the entrance to Chapman Way, off Alma Road. Last year the editor of the U3A newsletter invited readers to explain who was responsible for putting them there, where they came from, and why. I have inquired of scores of individuals, societies, businesses and institutions, including the Civic Society, the builders Robert Hitchins, the Borough Council's Planning Department, the Chapman Way Management Committee and Dean Close School, which formerly owned the land on which the houses were built in 1984. No one knew anything or had any record of their installation, and U3A members likewise drew a blank. Back numbers of *The Echo* are inaccessible during lockdown. Other avenues are still being explored.

A contact of Lorna Robson's provided an important lead. The panels are identical with two that adorn the former headquarters of Raleigh Cycles in Nottingham. Jill Waller had an inspired suggestion: that the link with Nottingham was H H Martyn & Co, which had carried out several commissions for buildings there, including a war memorial tablet for the Raleigh employees. John Whittaker in *The Best* mentions that Martyn's produced many castings but these are mostly impossible to trace, and moreover few of the company's records have survived.

This is an appeal for help to members of CLHS. Can anyone recollect the circumstances when Chapman Way was being built, or suggest who might have supplied these apparent duplicates of the Nottingham panels, and crucially explain why they were put there? (Also, beside a nearby overgrown footpath, is what appears to be the ornate base of a fountain. Is there a connection?)

Eric Miller (email: ehmiller@talktalk.net)

Stop press: I have recently been told, on good authority, that the panels were acquired by Robert Hitchins the builders from a scrapyards in Liverpool. It seems there is more to the story, and in the next issue I hope to be able to give a full account.

EM

OBITUARY

Geoffrey North 1949-2021

It was with great sadness that we learned of Geoff North's death in Gloucester Royal Hospital on 17th January at the relatively young age of 71, a victim of the Covid pandemic. He and his late wife Elaine, who died in 2018, were among the best-known long-standing members of the Society, indefatigable researchers noted for their displays and regularly present at meetings and events with their stall of second-hand local history books. Geoff also gave talks, wrote articles and was a skilled photographer, always on hand to record Society activities. He was Treasurer of the Society from 2000 to 2009 and served for many years on the Committee.



In private life he was an accountant, working first in Bristol and later for over 20 years at Eagle Star, where he met Elaine. (He was in fact her boss.) He was very much a family man, with two sons from his first marriage and two stepsons. He and Elaine between them had 8 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren, and Geoff, gregarious by nature, loved spending time with them all. He was loved in return for his unflinching kindness and generosity and wonderful sense of humour. He missed Elaine acutely but was well supported by friends and family, bravely keeping up his usual contacts and activities. In 2019 he was baptised into the Church of England and confirmed by the Bishop of Gloucester.

NEW PUBLICATION

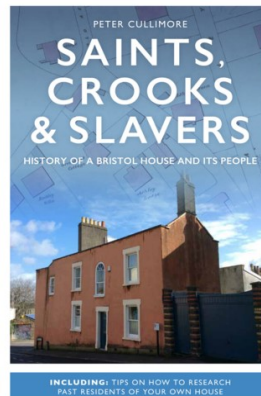
Saints, Crooks and Slavers
History of a Bristol House and its People
 by Peter Cullimore

Peter and Sue Cullimore's Georgian home in Bristol was shortlisted for the TV history programme *A House Through Time*. In the end, theirs wasn't the one chosen. But it inspired them to become house history detectives themselves, and to offer us tips on researching the past of our own homes.

The couple delved into some amazing untold stories about people who lived at 60 Fairfield Road over the centuries, including a shady French aristocrat whose parents were guillotined in the Revolution, a Quaker philanthropist who twice married into slave-owning families, and the Phippen sisters who ran schools for destitute girls. It has also been their own home for over 30 years.

Finding out about their many colourful predecessors was a steep learning curve and a lot of fun. This book combines their discoveries with a step-by-step guide on how to investigate the history of your own house.

Published in paperback in 2020 by Bristol Books, price £12.



FEATURE

The Bombing of Kipling Road

Last November we commemorated the terrible devastation of Coventry in 1940. Cheltenham suffered its worst bombing on 11th December 1940 when 23 people were killed and 600 people made homeless.

While we may remember the bombing incidents that night at Stoneville Street which led to loss of life and a visit from Queen Mary, and at Pilley Bridge where a specific target was hit with disruption for many years, it is easy to forget the many incidents with no obvious target and where fortunately there was no loss of life. For the 600 made homeless there was considerable loss and disruption, sometimes for many years. The wartime generation got on with life and rarely mentioned such things, so that although a dwindling group of people, children at the time, may still recall that night, the descendants of those involved will often know little or nothing about it.

One such incident took place in Kipling Road. Mr and Mrs Tom Jones and their family lived at No 18, and their granddaughter only learned details of the bombings in the 1980s from a photo (shown opposite), with her grandfather standing in front of their bomb-damaged house. The photo is endorsed with the words 'Bomb crater outside 18 Kipling Rd Cheltenham following German raid on Dec 11th 1940. Properties totally demolished to foundation level and rebuilt under the War Damage Act 1946.' This is accompanied by a sketch showing the house cavity wall balanced precariously on its foundations.

The family were lucky not to suffer greater loss, as her Uncle Jimmy Jones told the author of *Cheltenham at War in old Photographs*. Then a teenager in the Home Guard waiting to be called up, he was in the house having just got home during the raid when he heard and felt a bomb land outside the house. 'Not a pane of glass was broken, but the house moved about 4½ inches off its foundations', he recalled. Poor Mr Tom Jones, an ARP warden (seen here in his uniform) having spent the night on duty in Leckhampton, during which Pilley Bridge was bombed, returned to find his home badly damaged.

Finally in an incident which has certain resonances with the present-day situation, another son, William, came home on leave from the forces just then and in the middle of all these difficulties was married on 14th December at Christchurch.

A later memory is of the family furniture being taken away to their temporary home by horse-drawn cart. Although it seems newspapers did report the looting of ruined houses in Cheltenham, no evidence of looting has been found here. How soon the buildings were demolished is unknown. Rebuilding took place only after the war. The 1948 Kelly's Directory shows numbers 16 - 22 Kipling Road as still unoccupied. It is believed that the houses numbered 7 - 17 on the



Tom Jones, ARP Warden

opposite, eastern side of the road suffered worse damage, and they were totally rebuilt in a different style.

In nearby Tennyson Road a five-year-old girl was living with her parents, and she still has graphic memories of that night in December 1940. This is her account:

‘Just at the start of the war my Dad arranged for an air raid shelter to be built at the end of our garden, and it was there we went once any air raids started. This one in Kipling Road was the closest to my home and was the most upsetting. Whether our neighbours from each side joined us every time, I don’t remember, but they were certainly there that night.

‘Not long after the first air raid warning started, the sounds of the bombs began, increasing in intensity to loudest of all, the most almighty bang and my most frightening moment of the war, the one that dropped on Kipling Road. It was the noise which terrified me most of all, convincing me it was our house that had taken a direct hit.



Kipling Road

To my shame now I couldn’t stop crying. Eventually I was pacified by the arrival of our Air Raid Warden, Mr Pennell, who made notes of all our names, checking that we were all well. Then poor Mrs D, who had earlier become frantic with worry as to where her beloved cat Raffy was, pleaded with Mr Pennell to do his best to find him - all this no doubt creating a diversion for me! Not long after that came the long droning noise of the all clear, telling us we could leave the shelter, and so, having previously convinced myself that my house was a wreck, I fearfully emerged and cannot explain the relief I felt to look and see my house was standing.

‘The next day, as always after an air raid, news flew around the community and we learned that the bomb had dropped at the far end of Kipling Road. I was taken there by my Mum some days later, and it was such a shock to see the remaining wrecks of those houses and most of all the huge crater in the middle of the road. There were boys walking around the perimeter and inside the rim, searching around in the debris for pieces of shrapnel, which would later be traded at school for swaps.

‘Compared with other war bombings in Cheltenham, I guess the fear I experienced that night is as nothing compared with what other five-year-olds suffered, but even after my later war experiences, I think this one had the greatest impact on me’.

Just as the adults didn’t talk of their experience, so even a small child would downplay it both at the time and even now, many years later, and be very aware that others had had a worse time.

Elizabeth Bennett

FEATURE

Dr Thomas Christie: from military misfortune to the defeat of smallpox in British Ceylon

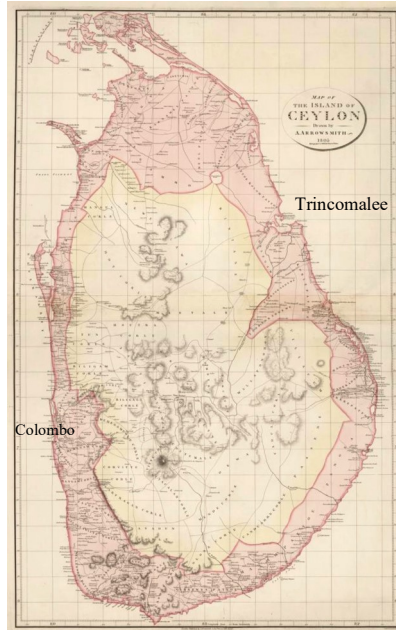
A good number of the very many Anglo-Indians with Cheltenham connections were medical people (as was the occasional woman). Several made their mark professionally and a few came to practise in the town. Vaccination being very much on our minds at the present, it is timely to remember the work of one of them, Dr Thomas Christie (1773–1829).

Third son of a clergyman, he was born in Lanarkshire and educated at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities. His early career was not an easy one, initially joining Lord Paget’s newly formed 80th Foot as a surgeon, then facing a great many misfortunes and misadventures. Following a brief spell at the Chatham recruiting depot the Regiment was sent to Guernsey, where training continued until September 1794 when it embarked on an overlong voyage to join the catastrophic Flanders Expedition. By the time it arrived in Flushing almost a month later, the novice Regiment was suffering greatly from mosquito-borne diseases. The transports had not been fumigated on returning from the West Indies and the Regiment was to pay a heavy price. This was only the start of its troubles. Within just a few weeks Christie was performing amputations under fire at the Siege of Nijmegen. They were to spend the rest of the year moving backwards and forwards between the rivers Meuse, Waal and de Lek. Despite a successful New Year’s Eve attack on Zaltbommel, the British found themselves in a perilous situation trapped between the stronger French Revolutionary Army to the south and swollen rivers to the north. They were lacking supplies and unable to hold the line. Retreat was the only option.

The long march across Holland towards Bremen took place during one of the very worst winters on record, throughout which the retreating caravan was pursued by the French. British losses were immense. The weather was so cold that French Cavalry were able to capture the ice-bound Dutch Fleet at Den Helder. During the whole of this campaign the Regiment suffered from a litany of misfortunes: incompetent and inexperienced leadership, unreliable allies, a corrupt Commissariat and inadequate logistical support, not to mention drunkenness. Christie found himself associated with a medical corps whose reputation was in tatters. The disgrace was a massive embarrassment for the army, and no account of it was published for many years. An unhappy 80th sailed for England on the 18th of April 1795.

The next, and also badly conceived and unsuccessful foreign postings were in support of the Comte d’Artois and French Royalists. Firstly, a secret expedition to Quiberon Bay aborted at Plymouth after three weeks at sea, followed by a failed invasion of the Vendée. There, the Regiment again suffered poor logistical support and near starvation on the Île d’Yeu. They disembarked in Southampton in January 1796.

Three months later the Regiment was posted to the East Indies along with several others that had served in the Flanders theatre. This was a time of very large troop movements. Almost every East Indiaman which sailed in that year's four fleets operated as a transport. The 80th sailed for South Africa with the April fleet on what, once again, proved to be a protracted voyage. They arrived at False Bay on 26th July 1796, soon to take part in a 170 km forced march north through arid landscape to Saldanha Bay where the Royal Navy saw the opportunity to trap a Dutch Fleet. It would be the well-organised Navy that enjoyed the prize money when the Dutch surrendered on August 17th.



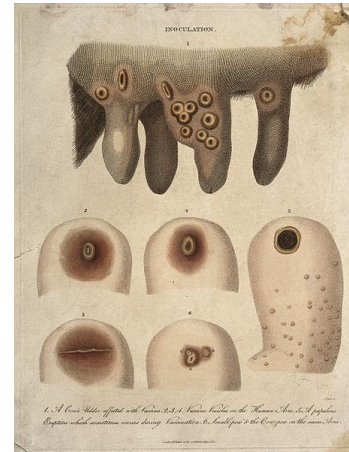
An early 19th century map of Ceylon

The Regiment remained at the Cape until early December, when ships of the August fleet took it to Madras where it disembarked. However, within days of arriving in India, the Regiment was ordered to Ceylon, whose Coastal Provinces the British had captured the previous year. Ceylon was thought to be one of the unhealthiest postings in the East Indies, a reputation which the island was to do little to dispel. The 80th arrived at Trincomalee on 14th March 1797 when yet again alcohol, in the form of a particularly pernicious toddy, would contribute to a dreadful mortality.

Fortunately, Christie's professional prospects began to improve on the island. By the time much of the Regiment sailed for Egypt in February 1801 he was settled in a broader role as Senior Medical Officer and Superintendent of the Civil and Military Hospitals serving the Coastal Provinces. He was to marry Mary Tolfrey, whose family moved to the island that same year. During the thirteen years of Dr Christie's residence in Ceylon he had to deal with the whole panoply of diseases. He writes, for example, about rabies, beriberi, tetanus, diabetes, hepatitis, and above all else smallpox. The record reveals a very professional approach to his work. First and foremost, Christie was responsible for virtually eradicating that dreadful disease throughout British Coastal Provinces (Kandy, the central district, was still not under British control). On his return to England with his family he set up as a physician in Cambray Street, Cheltenham where in 1811 he published an *Account of the Ravages committed in Ceylon by Smallpox*. Together with Jenner, he was appointed to be one of the Prince of Wales' Physicians Extraordinary in 1813.

Smallpox had broken out in Trincomalee in 1799 and 1800 and soon spread to other parts of the island. Under Christie's watch, a system of smallpox hospitals

had been set up which attempted to control the disease through the risky procedure of variolation, or inoculation using the true smallpox virus, *variola*. Despite these efforts a proportion of patients died.



Jenner's diagrams showing a cow's udder infected with cowpox and the effects of vaccination on a human arm

When firm news of Jenner's outstanding success with the much milder cowpox (*variola vaccinae*) arrived, every effort was made to transport the cowpox to India. After many unsuccessful attempts the vaccine material arrived in Ceylon via Vienna, Baghdad, Bussorah and Bombay, eventually reaching Trincomalee in August 1802. The cowpox was speedily communicated to every part of British Ceylon by impregnated threads or vaccinated patients (young disadvantaged children were often used for this purpose). Coloured diagrams of the cowpox pustules, provided by Jenner, were an essential guide to the effectiveness of the vaccine. It was an outstanding success, leading Christie to take the initiative to recommend the closure of the smallpox hospitals and to ban all inoculation using smallpox *variola*. British

Ceylon was the first territory in the world to do this. That same year Thomas Christie was appointed Justice and Conservator of the Peace for the town and fort of Colombo.

Within three months ten thousand people had been vaccinated and in not one case had the patient subsequently contracted smallpox. The vaccination programme took a setback with the outbreak of the ill-fated 1803 Kandyan War when Dr Christie's services were much needed. Even so, smallpox was eradicated from the district of Colombo. It took a further setback when some patients died as a result of poor practice by native practitioners, creating distrust among the local population. Nevertheless by the start of 1808 smallpox was virtually extinct in the British possessions in Ceylon. It wasn't, however, until after the 1815 British conquest of Kandy that the vaccination programme could begin to be extended to the whole island, by which time Christie was in England.

Thomas Christie became a much-valued member of Cheltenham's community and played an active role in the establishment of the Cheltenham Dispensary, where for many years he was Senior Physician at the Casualty Hospital. He much enjoyed maintaining contact with the many Anglo-Indians in Cheltenham and sharing stories of his extensive travels and experiences in Ceylon.

The Christies lived at what is today 1, Cambray Place. Thomas Christie died of angina pectoris in 1829 and is buried with his wife at Prestbury, where there is a memorial in his honour.

Jim Markland

Election Results in Cheltenham

Dr Clifford Williams was inspired by Martin Horwood's recent talk (see p6) to do research into Cheltenham's prowess in election counts over the years:

Cheltenham was often in the race to be first to declare results at General Elections. We won the race in 1955 and the result was broadcast live on BBC, beating Salford West by two minutes. In 1959 Billericay was the first to declare and Cheltenham came second about six minutes later. In the 1964 and 1966 General Elections we regained the prestige and publicity of being first.

In 1970 Cheltenham was beaten into 2nd place by Guildford. In February 1974 Guildford was first again. Apparently one ballot box was late in at Cheltenham that time and delayed the result, with the town finishing 3rd (Salford West was 2nd). In the second General Election of 1974 (October), Cheltenham was again in the race. Alistair Burnett on the BBC remarked, while waiting for the first result, that 'Cheltenham, of course, is the home of national hunt racing so they ought to know how to race'. But it was Guildford that declared first again, beating Cheltenham into second place by just two minutes. In 1979 the smallest constituency in the country declared first (Glasgow Central). Cheltenham was second.

In 1983 and 1987 Torbay managed to be first. Cheltenham was 3rd in 1983 and 4th in 1987. In 1987 the BBC put the incorrect result up initially (showing it as a Lib gain when it was a Con hold)! Since then Sunderland or Newcastle have always been first to declare. Cheltenham fell back a bit in 1992, finishing 15th (the Liberal Democrats took the seat), and has never since come in first.

The race brought a lot of coverage on Election night for the town. There are recordings on You Tube with much coverage of the counts at Cheltenham.

Frances Hebditch, another member, has memories of one particular occasion:

I well remember election night in October 1964. I had only worked in the Town Clerk's Department in my first job for a few weeks but was allocated to be on the count, held in the Town Hall. We were seated at long tables with representatives from the political parties opposite. The first ballot box in was from the polling station in the Town Hall, just a few minutes after 10.00 am. Television cameras were there but I don't recall being aware of them, though my aunt in Leeds remembered seeing me! The first task was counting the votes to see that they tallied with the number of votes cast, then dividing into the parties. I can't remember how many candidates there were, not having a vote myself. The counted votes were



Election night, 1964

put in piles for each candidate in the centre of the hall. I believe we finished at about 11 pm and found we were the first to declare. I didn't realise it was the first time for a decade that this had happened in Cheltenham. I am not sure now, but I think we were paid 7/6d.



BOOKS FOR SALE



News from the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop'

Despite having to meet virtually for our speaker Meetings, I am delighted that so many Society Members have browsed and bought from our on-line listing of books for sale. Thank you.

If you have not done so yet, please do search out the list on the 'Library and Bookshop' page of the CLHS website (www.cheltlocalhist.org.uk) There you will find around 500 books and pamphlets of local and national historical interest, all at very reasonable prices.

We have some interesting **Dowty** anniversary items from 1951 (£2.50), 1981 (£2.00) and 1991 (£1.50); a copy of *Dowty World* celebrating Gorbachev's visit in May 1989 (£1.50); nice copies of **L T C Rolt's** two-volume history of the company (£3.00 per volume); and The Dowty Group's history of Arle (£3.00).

As well as several guides to the Holst Museum and books related to his family, we have copies of **Aylwin Sampson's** short booklet, *Holst and Cheltenham* (£1.00) and two related titles on Cheltenham's musical heritage by **Graham Lockwood**, *Cheltenham Music Festival at 65 A Perspective on its Theme and Variations* (2009) (£3.50) and *Concordant Cheltenham The making of a musical town 1716-1944* (2018) (£4.00).

Neil Parrack, *The New Club at Imperial Square A Diary of its first 98 Years* (2012) (£4.00) provides a look back at a former Cheltenham institution; while **Philip Moss**, *Historic Gloucester An Illustrated Guide to the City & its Buildings* (2009) (£5.00) provides an expert armchair guide to the city's treasures – one of many titles in the list on Gloucester and the County.

Heading towards Spring and, fingers crossed, a relaxation of travel restrictions, **F W Rowbotham** and **Peter Scott**, *The Severn Bore* (1964) and **Chris and Nicki Witts**, *The Mighty Severn Bore* (1999) (both £3.00) are certainly worth reading. And, for the more adventurous, what about **Gerry Stewart's** illustrated *The Gloucestershire Way A 100 mile walk through Gloucestershire of 'Forest and vale and high blue hill'* (1996) (£3.00)

We are always happy to receive donations of books. We are currently looking for good copies of **Eric Franks**, *Images of Cheltenham* and of **Aylwin Sampson's** *Scene Again*. There is always strong interest in the more substantial booklet histories of Cheltenham's churches and chapels. If you have copies of these, or any books on Cheltenham, that you no longer need and would be happy to donate, we would be very grateful to receive them.

Oliver Pointer

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

A Poem for our Times

Lockdown

I won't arise and go now, and go to Innisfree
 I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
 I won't go down to the sea again, I won't go out at all,
 I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
 There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu
 But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think, will you.
 While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
 I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray.
 I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye
 Or take the rolling English road from Birmingham to Rye.
 About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
 To see the Keep Out posters or the cherries hung with snow.
 And no, I won't be travelling much within the realms of gold
 Or get to Milford Haven. All that's been put on hold.
 Give me your hand, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
 Nor come within a mile of you, until this lockdown ends.

This topical verse was found circulating anonymously on the internet. Do you feel inspired to follow suit? If so, and if you would care to send us the result, we'd be delighted to publish it in our next issue.

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CAN YOU HELP?

Frank Edward Hill, 1892-1962

A researcher describing himself as 'a retired police officer turned history writer' is looking for help with some research into a former Cheltenham resident, Frank Edward Hill, who was born in Gloucester and became a police constable from 1919, working in Cheltenham, Coombe Hill and Chedworth, before becoming Sergeant in Painswick in 1937. He retired to 53 Market Street, Cheltenham, in 1946. He was married firstly to Minnie Burford, and they had a son, Ronald E Hill, born 1924. Frank married again in 1954, to Gladys Clifford. Any information or photos relating to Frank Hill or his family, or the chance to make contact with his descendants, if there are any, would be much appreciated.

'Friendly Notes'

A researcher wishes to find out more about the 'Friendly Notes' that were sometimes found in unexploded World War II bombs, some of which landed in the Leckhampton area. Her aim is to draw attention to the hitherto unrecognised bravery of the men in prison camps in Europe who secretly sabotaged bombs and placed the Notes inside them to let people in Britain know that they were being helped from behind enemy lines. Many of these prisoners were executed when their actions were discovered. The researcher hopes to donate her completed article to the American and London Holocaust Memorials as well as to local centres such as The Wilson and Cheltenham Library. Any memories or suggestions for furthering her research would be very welcome.

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 July 2021 issue by **Monday 14th June 2021** to the Editor: Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA
 Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: kboothman3@gmail.com

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