



Cheltenham Local History Society

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July 2022



EDITORIAL

Here are four of Cheltenham's historic spas. One of them has vanished without trace: but which one? Not the Montpellier rotunda or the Pittville pump room, obviously. Hygeia House (top left), built in 1804 and named after the Greek goddess of health, was later renamed Vittoria House and still stands, in much altered surroundings, in Vittoria Walk. The Sherborne Spa (bottom right) is the one we have lost. Opened in 1818 and known from about 1830 as the Imperial Spa, it stood where the Queen's Hotel is now. In 1838, when the hotel was built, it was moved to a position behind Neptune's Fountain. There it stayed until, sadly, it was replaced by a cinema in 1937.

Kath Boothman

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EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2022-23

We are continuing to hold evening meetings at St Luke's Church Hall, at 7.30 pm on Wednesdays rather than Tuesdays. For the benefit of members who are unable or reluctant to attend in person, talks will be recorded and can be viewed online for up to four weeks after the event.

Wednesday 21st September:

Tim Brain—The Gloucestershire Regiment in Europe 1944 and 1945

Wednesday 19th October:

Helen Walliman— Growing up in the Savoy Hotel, Cheltenham, 1945-1960s

Wednesday 16th November:

Steven Blake—John Bellamy (1808-93), a Gloucestershire Travelling Showman

Wednesday 18th January 2023:

Louise Ryland-Epton—VCH - Leckhampton

Wednesday 15th February 2023:

David Elder—Cheltenham's Poet Laureates

Wednesday 22nd March 2023:

Polly Baynes—The History of the Cheltenham Charity Organisations

Wednesday 19th April 2023:

Robert Rimell—The History and Development of the Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens

Wednesday 17th May 2023 at 7.00 pm

AGM followed by Greg Godfrey-Williams—The Story of Spirax Sarco

MORNING LECTURES 2022-23

Morning lectures will take place at St Luke's Church Hall on Tuesdays. A donation of £3 from all attending is appreciated. Tea/coffee and biscuits are served (no extra charge) from 10.00 am and lectures begin at 10.30 am. All welcome. Parking at the hall is limited and is on a first come, first served basis. If you need to reserve a space please contact the Secretary, Alison Pascoe (01242 519413).

Tuesday 4th October:

Jim Markland—Cheltenham's East India Company Physicians

Tuesday 6th December:

David Aldred—Cheltenham's Lung: the long making of Cleeve Common

Tuesday 7th February 2023:

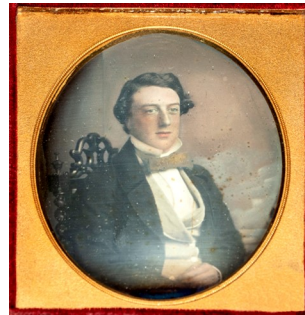
Neela Mann—Aristocrats, Admirals and an Architect: Glimpses of early 19th century Cheltenham social history

Tuesday 4th April 2023:

Sean Callery—Go West! Get your kicks on.... the A40. A journey with many surprises.

REVIEWS

On March 8th **David Elder** spoke to us on Zoom about **Dr Edward Thomas Wilson (1832-1918), Father of the Antarctic Explorer**, the subject of his recent biography. As the epitaph on his gravestone recorded, Dr Wilson was known for 'doing good', but there was much more to his life than his medical work. He was born in Liverpool into a line of rich Quaker industrialists, the eldest in a family of five boys and two girls. When Edward was four the family moved to Lydstep Haven near Tenby. He was educated in St David's and Liverpool before reading classics and natural sciences at Exeter College, Oxford. He trained as a physician at St George's Hospital, and in 1859 came to work in the Branch Dispensary at Cheltenham General Hospital. One of Cheltenham's many professional photographers took a portrait of him in 1853, a Daguerrotype, produced in black and white on a metal plate and hand-tinted. Edward himself was a pioneer photographer. From 1854 he experimented with the wet-collodion process for developing glass plates, and in 1865 he founded the Cheltenham Photographic Society. He and his friend Dr John Abercrombie experimented with photomicrography and photozincography, both difficult and complex processes. David explained and showed examples. Edward's medical work embraced several public health issues, notably the town's water supply, the development of district nursing and the fight against infectious diseases. The latter became his lasting legacy. He himself had been vaccinated against smallpox during the 1837 epidemic and caught scarlet fever just after he came to Cheltenham. He learned about yellow fever when there was a major outbreak in Brazil in 1871 and his brother Harry, then farming in Argentina, wrote and told him about the social conditions that had exacerbated it. That year Edward was made a trustee of the proposed Delancey Isolation and Fever Hospital. Built primarily to protect the town against smallpox, it opened in 1874 and did halt 31 serious outbreaks over the next 21 years. A scarlatina block was added and saved many lives, not least by improved hospital hygiene and the use of disinfectants. A third block, opened in 1898, treated diphtheria, again with considerable success. Edward's association with the Delancey hospital lasted 45 years and must count as his greatest achievement. He also did much research into factors affecting public health, collecting statistics to prove the need to improve Cheltenham's sewerage and water supply. Smallpox vaccination, then still a contentious issue, was another interest, and he campaigned with eventual success for the use of vaccines made from calf lymph rather than the more risky human lymph. He benefited Cheltenham in many other ways, notably in promoting the establishment of a town museum, which he himself had the honour of opening in 1907. David then spoke of Edward's family life, in particular his relationship with his brother Charlie, who was involved in the ill-fated attempt to rescue General Gordon from Khartoum. Finally there was the loss of his son Ted, to whom he was very close, in Antarctica, a loss from which he never recovered. His was a great life which, David thought, deserved to be better known.



Edward Wilson in 1853
(courtesy of CBC and Cheltenham Trust/The Wilson Family)

At the morning meeting on April 5th **David Addison** talked to us about **Lord Northwick's art collection at Thirlestaine House**. He said Lord Northwick had one of the most important art collections in the country, if not in Europe. When he came to Cheltenham in 1838 and opened his house to let the public see his pictures, he already had more works than were in the National Gallery. He came of a family of Huguenot textile traders, the Rushouts, who bought Northwick Park at the end of the 17th century. David showed a picture of him as a young man. Born in 1770, he was educated at a progressive school and then sent on an 11-year-long 'grand tour' of Europe, learning about art and collecting works all the way. When his father died in 1800 he came home as the second Lord Northwick to take over the estate and a house at Connaught Place in London. By the 1830s both that house and the gallery he had built at Northwick Park were full of his art collection. He then bought Thirlestaine House. David showed a plan of the house, which had been started by J R Scott in 1820 but was unfinished when Lord Northwick bought it and added a wing to create a public art gallery that was open to visitors every day. David showed pictures of the interior, where the walls of every room were covered in paintings, and took us on a virtual tour, drawing attention to the great variety of artists from old masters to 17th century Dutch and modern British painters. Lord Northwick had broad tastes, liked to encourage young artists and was a good curator, extremely knowledgeable about his collection. In 1857 a huge exhibition, 'Art Treasures of Great Britain', was held in Manchester and the organising secretary who negotiated loans of art works for it left a record of his visit to Thirlestaine House. David showed a plan of the house in 1859, revealing how many extra galleries had been added in the previous 20 years. At least 2,000 works of art passed through Lord Northwick's hands, some of them not appreciated in his day but now seen as interesting. Besides supporting young artists he was a patron of the theatre and showed a public-spirited concern for the welfare of his tenants and of local people in Cheltenham. In the cold winter of 1855 he gave blankets to the people of Blockley, and he once paid for new tools for a coach-builder who had lost everything in a fire. He welcomed visiting parties from orphanages and other institutions, greeting them personally, and held public picnics at Northwick Park. He was always generous in lending his artworks for exhibitions. When he died in January 1859, childless and apparently intestate—no will was found—it was inevitable, though a cause of great public dismay, that his vast collection would be broken up. People had thought that he would leave it all to Cheltenham, but instead a sale lasting 21 days was held in July that year, with a big handsome catalogue produced by Phillips the auctioneers. It was reported in the national press and attracted buyers from far and wide. Even now, pictures come up for sale noted as having been in Lord Northwick's collection. In answer to a question at the end David said about 150 of them were now in the National Gallery or the Tate. He urged the audience to look at the website Art UK, where very many of them can be seen.



Lord Northwick as a young man

On April 20th **Kirsty Hartsiotis** took as her theme **The Arts and Crafts Movement in Local and Cotswold Churches**. She said that when she was furloughed from The Wilson in April 2020 she and a friend had decided to make a database of Arts and Crafts work in Cotswold churches, taking the rise of Morris & Co in the 1860s as their starting point. It had become a big project. She then took us on a tour of a great variety of churches in and around Cheltenham and in the wider Cotswold area, first showing two glass panels by Morris at Selsley near Stroud, an early example of his interest in pattern-making. It was hard to define a distinctive Arts and Crafts style, the practitioners being a disparate group of people. Kirsty showed a church in Brockhampton, Herefordshire, built in 1901-2 and notable for being very plain, with a concrete vault and simple woodwork. Randell Wells built a church in Kempley in 1902 for one well-off client. This was unusual: more often Arts and Crafts people just contributed features to existing churches. Wormington, for instance, has pews by Jewson and Barnsley. Much work was commissioned, but often on a humble scale. Much of the best work in the Cotswolds was relatively late. There is a stone sanctuary at Brownhill by W D Caroe, who was an architect for the church commissioners and, like most artists, tried to make his new work harmonise with the old. The best glass designer and maker was Christopher Whall, who with his daughter Veronica made windows for Gloucester cathedral. These are distinctive for their 'medieval' style and their sometimes generous use of white glass. Also in the cathedral is the Price memorial clock, made by Henry Wilson in 1899. Unusually ornate for Arts and Crafts work, it has zodiac symbols. The practitioners who worked in Cheltenham and Gloucester were generally different from those in the rural areas. In Cheltenham Middleton, Prothero and Phillott dominated. All Saints church, Pittville, started by Middleton in the 1860s, has a mural designed by William Blake Richmond in a style reminiscent of Burne-Jones and painted by James Eadie Reid, who also painted the 'Dream of Fair Women' frieze in the Princess Hall of the Ladies' College. Eadie Reid's stained glass, richly coloured to imitate medieval art, can be seen in various churches including St Mary's, Charlton Kings and Christ Church, Gloucester. The latter church has an unusual west front, the work of Prothero and Phillott around 1900. The end of World War I brought innumerable memorials and monuments: Kirsty showed examples of windows in St Stephen's church and Cheltenham College chapel. Sidney Meteyard of Birmingham and Henry Paynes (who was trained by Christopher Whall) were other stained glass artists who produced high quality work. Many practitioners were masters of more than one craft: F C Eden, who made windows, also made a rood screen for All Saints, North Cerney. Women's part in the movement was largely confined to textiles, needlework being a female speciality: Kirsty showed a finely worked altar cloth from Charlton Kings. Lady Dixon Hartland, however, was making wrought iron gates as early as 1908, and in later years many women became skilled both at that and at stained glass. Their descendants are still at work today. The arts and crafts movement in the Cotswolds, she concluded, is not yet over after more than 100 years.



Window by Veronica Whall in Gloucester cathedral

For those members who were unable to attend the AGM on 18th May 2022, summary reports are printed below. If you did not have a copy of the accounts and would like one posted to you, please telephone the Treasurer on 01242 231837, or e-mail suebrown@waitrose.com

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18th MAY 2022

The Chairman David Elder welcomed the Mayor Cllr Sandra Holliday, who had agreed to be President of the Society for her term of office and to chair the meeting.

Election of Officers and Committee

The following were elected:

Chairman: David Elder

Treasurer: Sue Brown **Secretary:** Alison Pascoe

Committee: Heather Atkinson, Anne Bateman, Kath Boothman, Mary Moxham, Oliver Pointer, Sue Robbins, Maggie Winterburn

Chairman's Report (summarised): David Elder said the aim of the Society was summarised in its new tagline 'Exploring, recording and celebrating Cheltenham's heritage'. Eleven meetings were held during the past year, three of which were 'virtual' because of the pandemic. Five evening meetings and three morning meetings were held at St Luke's Hall, which had become the Society's regular venue while the Council Chamber remained unavailable. Since January the meetings had been recorded, each recording being made available to members for four weeks. The Society was grateful to John White of the Cheltenham Camera Club for his help in creating this facility. The usual programme of visits and walks in the summer of 2021 had to be cancelled, but a self-guided walk on Historic Public Gardens of Cheltenham was developed for use on the Pocket Site app. As before, 'snippets' of local history were sent out to members to help keep them in touch. Sub-committees had been formed to plan for the Society's 40th anniversary celebrations and for this year's major events, the GLHA Local History Day on the theme of education on May 14 and the GLHA Summer Afternoon, postponed from 2020, which was now scheduled for June 25. The Society's website was about to be re-launched with some enhanced features, using WordPress and with blue as the main colour scheme. Grateful thanks were due to Jan Broadway, who had looked after the current website for eight years, and to David Hewitt who had agreed to be the Society's new webmaster. A plan had been developed to guide the Society's progress over the next 5 years, with a focus on improved collaboration with other local groups such as Pittville History Works. Much interaction with the wider public was through research, and as ever Jill Waller was to be thanked for dealing so expertly with enquiries. The Society produced three Newsletters during the year containing summaries of lectures, information on local events of historical interest and feature articles. There was also an annual Journal of articles on historical themes researched and written mainly by members. Published in April, it was free to members and could be purchased by the general

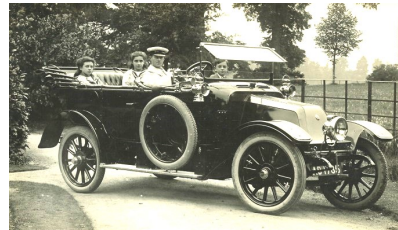
public. He thanked the editors Kath Boothman and Julie Courtenay for keeping up the high standards of their publications. Although access to Gloucestershire Archives and the Local Studies Library remained somewhat restricted, Society members continued to work on research projects notably in connection with Volume 15 of the Victoria County History series, where good progress was made this year on research into Leckhampton. He thanked Sally Self and her group for all the work they did. The Society provided speakers for various initiatives and contributed to podcasts on local radio and to the recently formed Virtual Heritage Network. Valuable new digital resources were added to the new CLHS website, including PDF versions of Journals volumes 1-12 and 26. The Society attracted 36 new members during the year and membership now stood at 354. Considerable thanks were due to Sue Robbins, who had filled the role of acting chair during a difficult period for the Society.

Treasurer's Report (summarised): Sue Brown said that the Society had had a successful year and its finances were sound. This year the Society had net payments in the general account of £1,583.69. Subscriptions were up on 2021, which was particularly pleasing considering the challenging circumstances during the period. As before, Gift Aid was a valuable addition to the funds. Total donations for the year amounted to £380, of which £310 came from people grateful for Jill Waller's help with research. £100 was received towards the cost of the recently unveiled Alfred Miles blue plaque. The Journals and other CLHS publications sold steadily, and almost £400 was raised by sales of donated books. The new Trade and Industry Chronology would be available at the GLHA Summer Afternoon in June, and should sell well. The Society was delighted to resume face-to-face meetings, but as the Borough Council had not yet made its council chamber available St Luke's Church Hall had become the regular venue. The Society had to pay for this, hence the admission charge which this year raised £232.50 against rental cost of £172. Turning to payments, the main cost this year was the Journal, which was printed earlier than usual with the result that payment for two issues fell in one financial year. As before, hand-delivery of Newsletters and Journals had cut expenditure on postage. With the resumption of 'live' meetings speakers' fees had increased to a more normal level of £455. As part of the planning for the celebration of the Society's 40th anniversary music had been commissioned to go with a new audio-visual presentation. The bank balance as at 31 March 2022 was £8,494.03 of which £7,414.03 was in the unrestricted fund and £950 in the Peter Smith Award Fund.

Presentation of the Peter Smith Award: The award was given to Steven Blake and Michael Greet, who have both given outstanding service to the Society over many years. (see page 9).

Address by the Mayor, Councillor Sandra Holliday (summarised): The Mayor said it was a longstanding custom for the Mayor to be honorary President of the Society and she was following in the footsteps of some distinguished people. Looking at the new website and at the programme for the coming year she was very impressed, and would be happy to offer her support. She urged the Society to get in touch if she could help in any way.

After the AGM on May 18th **Peter Barlow and Martin Boothman** gave a talk about **Early Gloucestershire Vehicle Registrations**, based on the book *Conspicuously Marked* which they edited and published in the BGAS Record Series in 2019. The book contained the first ten years of motor and motorcycle registrations in Gloucestershire, transcribed from the handwritten registers in the archives and illustrated with over 30 period photographs. With the much valued support and guidance of the late James Hodsdon as overall editor they had worked on the project for several years, and it was James who chose the title *Conspicuously Marked*. Peter said that early motor vehicles carried no form of identification, and when France introduced a vehicle registration system in 1893 the Gloucestershire County Council petitioned the government for a scheme under which vehicles would be 'conspicuously marked'. It took some time, but in 1903 the Motor Car Bill came into effect and the first registrations were made in the county and in the city of Gloucester in December that year. Martin explained why the county and the city had different registration letters, AD and FH respectively: the government had based the system on population figures, with London, as the largest registration district, receiving the single letter A. Peter showed the first page of the AD register. Each entry included the owner's name and address and details of the car including its weight and colour. Often a note was added indicating that a new owner had kept the same registration, but sometimes that number was transferred to a different car. (Sir Charles Apperley of Rodborough Court used the number AD 234 on six of his cars.) Martin showed a page of motorcycle registrations from the Gloucester book, where the clerks habitually crossed out the old owner



when a bike changed hands. This required some detective work. Throughout the project the 1901 and 1911 censuses proved very useful for confirming the names, addresses and occupations of owners. Some were well-known people: Sir Hubert Parry (the composer of *Jerusalem*) of Highnam Court owned a 20-30hp Humber. Sometimes it was possible to identify people in photographs from the census: the three children in the 19hp Crowdy pictured here, for example, turned out to be Doris, Cicely and Charles Canning. The book was fully indexed by owners, places, occupations and makes of cars and motorcycles. Some 250 makes of cars were listed, from many countries, whereas motorcycles were mostly British with familiar names like Triumph and Douglas. They took various forms from power-assisted pedal bikes to tri-cars under 3cwt, and being more affordable than cars, especially if second-hand, were very popular, accounting for a high proportion of registrations. Who were the owners? In the AD lists (Cheltenham and the wider county) the medical profession and army officers registered most cars and bikes, whereas the FH (Gloucester city) registrations were dominated by people in the cycle and motor trades. In later years ownership spread down the social scale to farm labourers and bootmakers. Lady owners, initially very few, also became more numerous and varied: in 1910 Annie Edington, a district nurse, registered a 2hp Moto-Reve motorcycle. The last photo of all showed Lilian Faithfull, Principal of the Ladies' College, in her BSA car.

*SOCIETY NEWS***New members**

A warm welcome is extended to the following :

Rosemary Westgate Barbara Marsh Diana Carbin Chris West
Sandra Holliday Paul Davies Elaine Schollar and Richard Crowhurst

Society Update*Congratulations!*

The Peter Smith Award goes each year to a member who has given outstanding service to the Society.



The Mayor Councillor Sandra Holliday presented a double award at this year's AGM on May 18th to Steven Blake and Michael Greet, who were both instrumental in founding the Society in 1982 and developing it in the 40 years since. Michael was the first Chairman of Charlton Kings LHS when it began in 1978, and became the first



Chairman of CLHS from 1982-1984. He has been a committed member ever since and has contributed regularly to the Journal. Steven was the first editor of the Journal for six years from 1983 and was Chairman from 1984-1987. He also served as Secretary and has written countless articles, given countless talks and led many guided walks. He received a CAC citation award in 1998 and, like Michael, continues to be one of our most valued and respected members.

An Important Anniversary Year

This year heralds several important anniversaries for Cheltenham, including the 150th anniversary of the birth of one of its most famous sons, Dr Edward Adrian Wilson (1872-1912), on 23 July. It also marks the Society's 40th anniversary year, giving Cheltenham Local History Society the accolade of being the 11th oldest society of its kind in the county. It was one evening in March 1982, when Steven Blake and Michael Greet were driving home from the County Record Office, that the idea of forming the CLHS was 'floated'. In many ways the impetus came from the already established Charlton Kings group, then chaired by Michael. While we have already celebrated this landmark year partly through events such as the unveiling of the Civic Society blue plaque honouring Alfred Miles, we still have much to look forward to, including:

- a members' event, planned to coincide with the morning meeting on 4 October.
- the Local History Afternoon on Trade and Industry, which forms part of the Gloucestershire Local History Association's 2022 Summer Afternoon.
- a full programme of summer walks and outings.
- a bumper issue of the Society's Journal (available in 2023), which will include an article on the CLHS's history.
- a short audio-visual production telling the story of CLHS in pictures, music and words.

David Elder

The History of Education in Gloucestershire GLHA Local History Day

Saturday May 14th 2022

at the University of Gloucestershire Oxstalls Campus, Longlevens



Doors opened at 10.30 am and the meeting began at 11.00 with a welcome from Dr Steven Blake. He recalled that all four of the day's speakers were to have come two years ago, when the event had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. He then introduced Catherine Holloway, whose subject was 'Stroud Technical High School for Girls, its alumnae, and technical education for girls in the post-war period'. A lunch break followed with refreshments provided and time to look at the ten displays in the long foyer at the front of the building. The CLHS display was on the theme of teacher training. The first afternoon speaker, Professor Nicholas

Orme, spoke on 'Going to School in Gloucestershire in the Later Middle Ages'. There was then a tea break followed by the presentation of this year's Bryan Jerard Award, sponsored as usual by the History Press, to Nigel Spry for his article in *Glevensis* 53: 'In Memoriam: Gloucester's 19th Century Cholera Epidemics'. The runner-up was Dr Tim Brain with his article on 'The Early Years of Policing in Gloucestershire' in the BGAS Transactions vol 138. The award for the best display went to Painswick. Two more talks followed, Judith Ellis on 'The George Townsend Charity, educational opportunities for Gloucestershire boys over 250 years' and Averil Kear on 'The Girls' School at Lydney in World War II'. At 4.30 pm Dr Blake closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their support, especially the Summerfield Trust, which had partly funded the event.

Heritage Open Days

9-18 September 2022

This year's theme:

'Astounding Inventions'



Discover the wealth of hidden places and stories on your doorstep or further afield this September with Heritage Open Days, England's largest festival of history, architecture and culture. Many places not usually open to the public will open their doors to visitors, all free of charge. Events will be listed on the Heritage Open Days website between June and September, so keep checking to see what's available both locally and nationally.

Curry and Colonels walk, Wednesday 1st June and 15th June

The walk started at the war memorial in front of the Municipal Offices, where our guide Phil Collins, in his trademark 'Captain Skillicorne' outfit (but minus the wig) began by explaining that his title referred to Cheltenham's connections with India and the army. He then gave a brief account of Henry Skillicorne's life. Born in 1678 in the Isle of Man, he had been a sea captain for 40 years on ships trading out of Bristol. His second wife's father owned land in Bayshill, where a mineral spring had been discovered, and, seeing the potential for developing a spa like Hotwells in Bristol, Skillicorne built assembly rooms and planted the Well Walk. (Phil showed us on his iPad the first of several pictures he used to illustrate his talk.) Skillicorne's son continued the work, and George III's visit in 1788 did much to establish Cheltenham as a spa town. It always appealed particularly to ex-



-colonial people, who liked its mild climate. The present Municipal Offices were originally private houses for such people to rent or buy. Phil next stopped at Waterstones, which was at one time the Imperial Club, a club for 'nabobs', the nickname given to people who had made money in India. At No 3 Royal Crescent he noted that a young lady called Sophia Hull, visiting here in 1815, met and subsequently married a Mr Raffles who was to become Sir Stamford Raffles, founder of Singa-

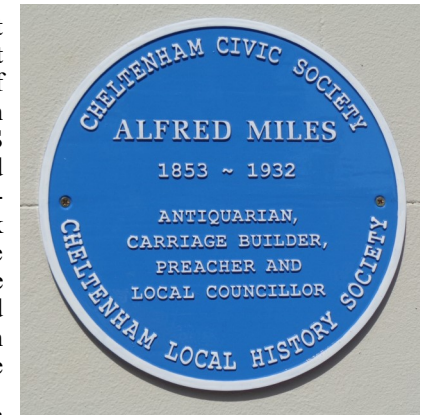
pore. Stopping in St George's Road he read out an early advert for Cheltenham's medicinal waters, listing all the ailments they supposedly cured. William Cobbett saw the town differently, calling it 'a nasty ill-looking place' frequented by

drunken debauchees. People nevertheless came to live here, and they sent their sons to school at Cheltenham College, which was founded, initially in St George's Road, in 1841. It has a strong military record, its alumni winning 14 VCs. He told us about one of them, William Fraser McDonell, who won his VC in the Indian Mutiny. To educate the sisters of the College boys, the Ladies' College opened in 1853. Pausing in Montpellier Street by the plaque commemorating Dorothea Beale, Phil told the story of Pandita Ramabai, a remarkable Indian Sanskrit scholar and social reformer who was a friend of Miss Beale and spent some time here. The Queen's Hotel, our next stop, was the largest purpose-built hotel in England when it opened in 1838. A dinner was held there in 1849 for Major-General Charles Napier, to celebrate his capture of the Indian province of Sindh. A plinth in front of the hotel was originally one of two, supporting cannons taken at Sebastopol. Phil told us about Fanny Duberly, the adventurous officer's wife who accompanied her husband to the Crimea and India and left a fascinating journal. She is buried at Leckhampton. A shop in Montpellier near the Rotunda (originally a pump room) was once an outfitter called Officers' Barrack Furniture. We had learned a lot, and could now well understand why colonels and 'curry-eaters' were attracted to Cheltenham—life here must have been far from dull!



THE LATEST BLUE PLAQUE

On the sunny morning of April 30th about 30 people assembled at Potter House, St Anne's Road, to witness the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the antiquarian Alfred Miles, sponsored jointly by CLHS and the Civic Society. Chairman David Elder began by thanking everyone for coming, especially the Mayor and Alex Chalk MP, and noted that this was the first of the special events planned to celebrate the Society's 40th anniversary. He thanked Neela Mann and Sally Self for their part in organising the commissioning of the plaque.



Sally then gave a brief account of Miles' life and achievements. Born in 1853, he was the son of a carriage-builder and was apprenticed to that trade at the age of 12. After spending time in London as journeyman he returned to Cheltenham to take over his father's business, which he ran successfully for many years, even exporting carriages overseas. He was proud of the fact that it involved the exercise of so many skills, from engineering to



Andrew Booton, Chairman of the Civic Society, Sally Self, David Elder, Neela Mann and Mayor Councillor Steve Harvey after the unveiling.

fine leather work, all done to the highest standards. The coming of the motor car, however, was too big a change for him and he retired, handing the business over to his son. He bought Potter house and moved in, bringing with him the already large collection of assorted ephemera he had been acquiring since childhood. Written material, pictures, pamphlets, newspaper cuttings, everything to do with Cheltenham and the surrounding area from pre-history to Miles' death in 1942 found its way into ten huge scrapbooks as he added to and organised his collection over the remaining years of his life. Sally and a team of volunteers have digitised and catalogued the contents of all ten books over the past four years to make them a readily accessible source for local historians. Miles himself was more than a historian: a successful businessman and well-known nonconformist preacher, he also served as a local and county councillor.

The outgoing Mayor Councillor Steve Harvey then unveiled the plaque, saying that he did so with pleasure, not least because he is President of the Society, and expressing his admiration for all the work done by volunteers in Cheltenham.

FEATURE

Reading Between the Lines: The memorial to Katherine A'Court (c.1735-1776) in St Mary's Church

Part 2

Part 1 of this story, which appeared in the March Newsletter, covered the story of Katherine A'Court's death in 1776 and the subsequent conviction and suicide of her alleged murderer, ending with her widower, William A'Court, learning of a legacy from an elderly cousin, and the appointment of William's father as the cousin's executor.

The legacy William A'Court received from his elderly cousin Bridget Ashe in early 1777 was doubly welcome, both as a supplement to his army salary and as a means of bringing him and his father into closer contact with their Wyndham and Penruddock cousins, including William's co-legatee Charles Penruddock. William's generation of the two families often socialised in Salisbury Close, where the Wyndhams and their near-neighbours, the Harrises, would invite family members and friends to participate in or attend theatrical and musical entertainments, including open-air performances of music by the Harrises' friend and occasional visitor, George Frederick Handel.

William's time in Wiltshire was limited by army duties, which required him to live in army barracks or in London, where he stayed either with his late wife's father, John Bradford, in Rathbone Place, or in 'town houses' rented by his own father or other family members. But when he was in Salisbury, William enjoyed the company of his distant cousin, Laetitia Wyndham, a leading light in the Wyndham-Harris entertainments. A lively young woman, she had acted in several all-female versions of Shakespeare plays, becoming perhaps too widely known locally after an effusive poem in her praise written by the Dean of Salisbury was published in the local paper!

William, who had no property and few assets of his own, had little to offer Laetitia, but she raised no objection to his approaching her father. In due course William signed a lengthy marriage contract, in which he confirmed that his first wife Katherine was indeed dead and thus could make no claim on any funds transferred to the couple by Laetitia's family. But William's prospects looked likely to improve, as his late uncle's wife Janet showed no interest in Heytesbury, the property the uncle had inherited from the Ashe family, while the Wyndham-Penruddock lawsuit challenging William's eligibility to inherit Heytesbury seemed increasingly unlikely ever to be heard at London's Chancery courts.



Laetitia A'Court by George Romney

Thus it was that, on 30 October 1777, William A'Court married his distant cousin, Laetitia Wyndham, in Salisbury Cathedral. Within the year, family members rejoiced in the birth, in Salisbury Close, of the couple's first child, Laetitia, who was soon joined by William and Annabella. The family stayed mainly in family properties in Wiltshire and London, but William kept in touch with John Bradford, who seemed happy to handle financial administrative matters for the couple in London (as he did for the offspring of other former army colleagues) and to discuss the question of a memorial to Katherine. By 1781 the memorial, designed by James Wyatt and carved by Richard Westmacott, had been erected in Cheltenham's parish church, close to her grave, and been mentioned in a new publication, *The Cheltenham Guide: Or Useful Companion, In a Journey of Health and Pleasure To the Cheltenham Spa*, whose author noted 'the melancholy catastrophe of recent date, which befell the lady during her intended stay'.



Heytesbury Manor, Wiltshire

Katherine's memorial, in contrast to another Wyatt-Westmacott memorial in Cheltenham, suggested that she and William had no surviving children from their marriage – which meant that when William's father died in August 1781 he knew that the assets he inherited, including rights in respect of Heytesbury, would remain in the immediate family, along with their customary right to occupy one of Heytesbury's two parliamentary seats.

By 1785 William and Laetitia had seven children (including three boys) and were spending most of the year at Heytesbury, which they had adapted to be more suitable for family use. John Bradford visited them most summers, but that year he arrived later than usual, having spent the early summer in Cheltenham and Malvern, combining a visit to Katherine's grave with 'taking the waters.' John Bradford, now in his late seventies, still lived in Rathbone Place with a long-standing servant and a cook; still fit, he still kept meticulous records of expenditure and income and seemed to enjoy living in a street where his neighbours included the artist Nathaniel Hone, an organist praised by the great Handel, and several Huguenots – the kind of people likely to be interested in his growing collection of folio and other books.

In 1786, to commemorate Laetitia's fortieth birthday in late June, William commissioned a portrait of her from the well-known artist, George Romney. In early May, during sittings for the portrait, a letter appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, referring to the murder, almost ten years previously, of Laetitia's predecessor, Katherine. The pseudonymous correspondent, 'Mr Philaethes', suggested that while Katherine's memorial (of which he quoted the full inscription)

'naturally excites emotions of pity and horror', all was not as it seemed: Monumental inscriptions may veil, but they cannot obliterate truth. This epitaph is an instance of notorious misrepresentation. I have been informed, that Mrs A'Court's real disposition was very contradictory to the above panegyrick. She was remarkable not only for severity, but cruelty, to her servants. She frequently used to tear the hair and beat the man who had

recourse to this barbarous mode of revenge. In the course of the trial he protested his innocence, and hinted that he was not the only abettor of the crime for which he was condemned to suffer. Human nature starts back from the contemplation of an Iago or a Zanga. The livery-servant, although stigmatised with the perpetration of so horrible a deed, ought not to be ranked with those fiends of revenge. However diabolical his conduct, impartiality demands that it should not be represented in the blackest colours. He was a villain, but not without such provocation as truth, while it records his crime, is industrious to discover and divulge. Yours, &c Philaethes, Mr'

No response or other correspondence appeared in the magazine, but Laetitia and other playgoers would have understood the references to Shakespeare's Iago, and to Zanga, a character in *The Revenge*, a popular play by Edward Young, son of a former Dean of Salisbury.

That summer John Bradford visited Heytesbury between late July and early September, returning to London before the tenth anniversary of his daughter's death. That week, he continued with his usual, often solitary, routines, but dined out more frequently than usual. In May 1787, in another departure from custom, he bought a ticket for the dress rehearsal, in Westminster Abbey, of Handel's popular oratorio, *The Messiah*, performances of which would raise funds for charitable causes. So that his servants could also have a night out, he also paid for them to visit the entertainments at Sadler's Wells in north London. During June and July, John Bradford signed an updated will and made decreasing numbers of entries in his ledger book. In September, eleven years after his daughter's death, he died at Heytesbury, where he was buried, far from his daughter but near members of his son-in-law's family. John Bradford left legacies to his servants and his half-brother in Scotland but left his favourite gold watch and other property and effects to William A'Court, who, like him, remembered Katherine when she was a child.

When William died in 1812, the erstwhile disinherited young soldier had been made a baronet and served as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Wiltshire Militia and High Sheriff of Wiltshire. Heytesbury passed to his son William, who was elevated to the peerage and therefore had no need of Heytesbury's two 'rotten' parliamentary seats, which were abolished in 1832. The A'Courts eventually sold Heytesbury, but in 1933 it was purchased by another military man, Siegfried Sassoon – who wrote a poem entitled 'Heytesbury Woods'. The house still stands but is now divided into flats and separated from the village by the successor to the turnpike, the A36 trunk road. As Roger Jones predicted, I have enjoyed 'reading between the lines' of Katherine A'Court's memorial and I hope he might have enjoyed reading this feature. As he suggested, the memorial inscription and known facts surrounding Katherine A'Court's death raise more questions than they answer. Did widower John Bradford spoil his only child so much that her treatment of a servant contributed to her death? Did Joseph Armstrong act on impulse, or had an accomplice encouraged or paid him to kill her? Who was Mr Philaethes? The truth appears to be lost in time, but the handsome memorial in St Mary's still stands witness to her short, and at times sad, life.

Anne Strathie

FEATURE

Cheltenham and the Crimean War

Members will have seen the Ukrainian flag flying over the Crimean War memorial. Whilst sadly the Ukrainian flag has not flown over Crimea since 2014, it draws one's attention to the memorial itself, the men commemorated and life in Cheltenham during the Crimean War.

It was Mr Davis, proprietor of the Queen's Hotel, who launched the memorial project at the end of the Crimean War. Having seen another town buy cannons, he thought they would make a fitting display in front of his hotel. Two Russian cannons taken at Sebastopol were then purchased and placed on elaborate cast iron plinths. In the second world war, however, both the cannons and one of the plinths were taken for scrap metal, and now only one plinth bearing names of the fallen remains, the officers on one side and the men on the other. In Cheltenham the *Looker-On* gave a summary of the events of the war and the local officers who had been killed (but not the men).



One of the Sebastopol cannons, pictured in War Week, November 1940

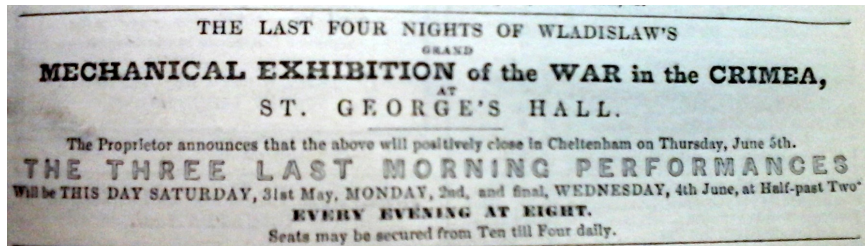
The usual comings and goings and social life of the town continued. On the home front it was reported that by October 1854 a Patriotic Fund for the Relief of Widows and Children of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines who had fallen in the war had been started. With collection points throughout Cheltenham, by early November donations of £618 had been raised. Lord Northwick contributed £100, but most individual donations were much smaller, often just a few shillings. All classes gave, including groups of servants in individual households. Shortly afterwards a list of donations from the surrounding villages was published. There was also a Clothing Society which appealed for old linen for the wounded soldiers. In all such initiatives much emphasis was placed on the Queen's concern for the wounded.

By December 1854 the Civil and Military Department of Cheltenham College had produced a scale model in sand of Sebastopol (2 foot to the mile) to show the progress of the war. It was open to the public, with special 8 pm evening openings 'to afford an opportunity to the middle classes to inspect it after their shops and places of business were closed'. To limit the numbers, tickets were required for entry in the evening.

When great battles were being fought Imperial Circus was packed with soldiers' relations waiting for the daily bulletin of the *Examiner* to appear. This was the first war to be photographed, and Cheltonians had the opportunity to see pictures taken by Roger Fenton, one of the first war photographers. The photographs were tremendously popular and were shown in at least 26 venues across the country and seen by at least two million people. They were exhibited in Cheltenham at the Literary & Philosophical Institution on the Promenade, with half-price entry in

the evenings at a price of 6d—which was probably still too expensive for the families of the ordinary soldiers.

In addition, at St George's Hall in the Lower High Street there were performances of Wladislaw's 'Mechanical Exhibition of the War in Crimea', described by the *Cheltenham Chronicle* as 'the best Panorama ever exhibited in Cheltenham'. It combined lifelike illustrations with mechanical figures, a moving background and a lecture. It showed a fearful storm in the Black Sea, the arrival of the fleet, the troops landing, the march to Alma and the ensuing battle. Sometimes the explosive effects were too lifelike, and substantial damage to the venue resulted when the exhibition was shown in Devises.



Newspaper advertisement for Wladislaw's Exhibition

After the war came Mr Davis's idea for a cannon memorial. The two cannons were presented to the town by Lord Panmure, and on 5th July 1858 the town witnessed the Ceremony of the Mounting of the Russian Guns. It lasted 4 hours, 'the weather exceeding fine, audience innumerable'. The guns had been stored in the stables of the Queen's Hotel and were taken in procession to Prestbury Park to be fired for the first and last time with English gunpowder on English soil. Two to three hundred little ragamuffins preceded the procession, which included the Town Crier, the High Bailiff, the Gloucestershire Yeomanry, the Oddfellows and the South Gloucestershire Militia, through packed streets. At Prestbury Park 'an immense concourse of people had collected to witness the firing of the Sebastopol guns.' Only one of them could be brought into position and with difficulty the gunners fired off the royal salute. The procession returned by a different route, and then there were speeches on the colonnaded balcony over the entrance to the Queen's Hotel. A song 'The Russian Guns!' had been composed for the occasion. The procession was followed by Julian's Grand Summer Festival in the Gardens with a magnificent display of fireworks.

Quite a lot is known about some of the fallen named on the Crimean memorial. Captain Connelly of the 23rd Regiment, whose death was the first reported by the *Looker-On*, 'gallantly fell leading his men to the charge under the murderous fire of the Russian batteries' at the Siege of Sebastopol. 'He went in front waving his sword and before he had gone 10 yards he was killed by eight balls'. Privates Algernon Holliday, a blacksmith with the 13th Light Dragoons from Badgeworth, and Robert Jackson of the 17th Lancers, a tailor's son from Devonshire Street, both died in the Charge of the Light Brigade on the 25th October 1854. The *Looker-On*'s description of the event had none of the drama of William Russell's description in *The Times* which inspired Tennyson's famous poem!

It is well known that more combatants died of illness and disease than wounds, but the Times Casualty List named only those killed in battle or who died of wounds. Private James Townsend, also of the 13th Light Dragoons, died of disease in October 1854 before the Charge of the Light Brigade. Midshipman Robert Morris of *HMS Wasp*, a supply ship which oversaw the management of transports in and out of Balaklava, died of cholera.



Captain Richard Sherwood

Both Captain Every and Lieutenant Somerville were killed on the final attack on the Redon at Sebastopol on September 8th 1855. Captain Bentick Gilby of the 77th Regiment was the son of the vicar of St James' church. In June 1855 he was made a Brevet Major in recognition of his very gallant services before Sebastopol. He was twice wounded and died of cold in the trenches of Sebastopol in August 1855, aged 23, having fought at the battles of Alma and Sebastopol. Out of affection and respect for their pastor the congregation paid for a memorial in the church with a lengthy inscription and with what Pevsner described 'as a finely carved scene of his death, accompanied by two fellow officers'.

Of those commemorated, the most is known about Richard Surtees Sherwood. Educated at Cheltenham College, he joined the 17th Bombay Lancers as a Cornet. At the beginning of the war the War Office offered any of the men of the East India Company who joined the Turkish Cavalry Contingent temporary promotion for the duration of the war, and Sherwood joined as a Brevet Captain. Last year his photograph (shown above), a drawing of his grave at Arglie and a copy of the letter from the Commander of the Turkish Contingent to the Minister of War were auctioned locally. The letter states that on 16th December 'This officer was engaged in a skirmish between the detachment of our cavalry and a party of Russian cavalry; his gallantry in this affair was most conspicuous. He was carried off by the Russians and, as I have learnt, died on the 19th from his wounds. I have reason to believe that the treatment he received from the Russians was most humane and considerate.' There was a truce to enable his body to be viewed. The letter further states 'I deplore his loss for he was an intelligent and promising young officer.' This was quoted at the time in the *Looker-On*. He was 23. He and his family are commemorated on a plaque in Christ Church. All the soldiers or the next of kin of the fallen were entitled to the Crimean war medal with ornate clasps to indicate the battles where they had fought. At least one of these is still treasured by a family member.



It is good that the local men are remembered together on our memorial, particularly as the graves of those who had graves overseas are likely to have been desecrated long since. Many of the fallen are also commemorated on their own regimental memorials.

Elizabeth Bennett

FEATURE

Cheltenham's Connection with the Opium Trade

Early nineteenth century British trade with China was an East India Company monopoly. Exports of tea and other goods were paid for through imports of Indian cottons and, increasingly, of opium. Despite the substantial size of this trade only a remarkably small number of expatriates were based in Macau and, seasonally, in Canton.

Dr Thomas Richardson Colledge, once a prominent figure in Cheltenham, best known for his ophthalmic medical missionary work and his efforts to support the dying Lord Napier, was one of these. He lived



The Ophthalmic Hospital, Macau

12 years in China. Then, on 12th May 1838, he said goodbye to all that and boarded the American ship *Charlotte* for New York. All Macau turned out to wish him farewell. It was quite an occasion. He was going to Philadelphia to address an American Missionary Society on his way back to England. Dr Colledge's wife Caroline boarded the *Inglis* for England on 20 February 1839, accompanied by her son George Welstead. Had they not sailed on the *Inglis* she would almost certainly have been encouraged to leave anyway, because the makings of the First Opium War and the prospect of evacuation to Hong Kong were in the air.

The Colledges were to reconvene in Edinburgh, where Thomas would advance his professional qualifications. In 1840 he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. The family moved to Cheltenham in 1841. In June that year they could be found living briefly at number 11, Promenade Terrace before moving to Lauriston House, Montpellier, where they remained for many years. Although Colledge was never to return to China, his contact with Chinese affairs did not stop there. In 1843 his opinion was sought by Hugh Lindsay MP, when Parliament debated the suppression of the opium trade. Lindsay had been one of Colledge's China associates and they had also sailed together. Colledge attempted to present a balanced professional view of the influence of opium, although some might prefer to say that he 'sat on the fence'. In any case, Lindsay would interpret his statement to his own ends. Thomas remained lifelong President of the Medical Missionary Society of China. He was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1844 and of the Royal College of Surgeons, England in 1853, and practised medicine in Cheltenham for the rest of his working life. For some years he had a hospital in St George's Place. It was said that, outside London, no other physician was more sought after. Strangely, though, for a very successful surgeon, he doesn't appear to have contributed much, if anything, to the medical literature. George was the Colledges' only child born in China to survive: three other infants were buried in the Macau

Protestant cemetery. More children arrived during their years in Cheltenham: John (born in 1843), Frances Mary (1847) and Robert Inglis (1850). Thomas Richardson Colledge died in 1879, aged 83, and Caroline died in 1880. The family grave is at St Paul's church, Shurdington.

Unsurprisingly, many people involved in the China trade knew one another well. Thomas and his family were not the only 'old China hands' to wash up in Cheltenham. At various times all his old friends came to visit him, and a few made the town their home. Robert Burland Hudleston, a man 'never known to dance', who started his working life in Canton as a company Writer, rose to become Office Superintendent engaged in important but unexciting back-office



Thomas and Caroline Colledge

work. He left China when the Company's monopoly expired and, in time, came to live at the Tudor-gothic Aban Court North on Malvern Road. He became a public figure: he was a subscriber to the construction of Christchurch, a churchwarden and town commissioner and he had connections with the hospital and orphanage. His daughter Annette Charlotte would marry Lieutenant Henry Pelham Close, son of Francis Close, in what was reported to be a noteworthy wedding at St Mary's. Sir George Robinson, Bt had been another Writer and became Superintendent of Trade, following the resignation of Napier's successor, John Davis. Robinson did not like the opium trade at all and was eventually dismissed by Palmerston in favour of Charles Elliott. Robinson married his wife Louisa in Cheltenham whilst on leave in 1825 before returning to China. They were described as 'both six feet tall and no beauty to boast of; very well matched as regards intellect, and not at all troubled by the fashions of the world'. He was very much a family man. They came back to live in Cheltenham for a while. Dame Louisa died here in 1843 and is buried in Trinity crypt. Sir George died at Dyrham in 1855. Robert Inglis, son and nephew of East India Company directors, was perhaps the most colourful of Colledge's former associates. To the EIC's consternation Inglis left its service only to join Dent and Co, who were second only to Jardine and Matheson in the opium business. When China eventually moved to eradicate the illegal trade, Commissioner Lin's order to evict Inglis from China was pointless, he was going anyway. He left on 29 May 1839 for the Red Sea on Dent's clipper *Ariel*. He came to live in Cheltenham at Montpellier Mansion (on the site of which now stands the Eagle Tower complex) where he lived with his sister. He lost his heart to one of the 'Boston Belles' in Macao but, seemingly, never married. He died in 1852 and is buried in a distinctive grave at the rear of St Peter's church in Leckhampton. Lancelot Dent, a long-standing friend of Colledge and a former lover of Colledge's sister, was also expelled from China and left on 2nd July 1839, but the Dent business continued in Manila and Hong Kong. Dent died in Cheltenham at the Plough Hotel in 1853, presumably while visiting his friends. He was buried in Cumbria.

In addition to the people who were resident in China there were the seafarers without whom the China trade would have been impossible. Captains Charles Sheldon Timins RN and Joseph Stanton were both contemporaries of Thomas

Richardson Colledge. Charles Sheldon Timins, who built Oriol Lodge in 1823/4, commanded voyages to China numerous times, mostly in his brother's ships. His sailing career was punctuated by a number of notable events. The most significant was when, in 1825, his ship *HCS Royal George*, one of the finest merchant ships of the day, caught fire and blew up in the river at Whampoa. Timins died in Cheltenham in 1838 and is buried in the Trinity crypt with his wife. His only daughter Sophie married Vice-Admiral Sir John MacDougall, the chief of clan MacDougall. In 1847 Sir John, on the steam paddle frigate *HMS Vulture*, led a naval expeditionary force escorting Sir John Davis, the Governor of Hong Kong, through the defences of the Bocca Tigris to Canton. Joseph Stanton frequently sailed in the same fleet as Timins and, on occasions, Colledge. He took over command of the *General Harris* on these voyages as successor to George Welstead. Stanton, originally from Stroud, retired to the Leckhampton Rectory. When he died in 1858 he was buried in the churchyard there and a beautiful stained-glass window was placed in the church in his memory. Neither Timins nor Stanton was directly involved in the opium trade.

Some people, however, were very much involved. The huge quantities of opium that made their way to China were in a very large part from India, where the drug was sold to private traders who illegally imported it into China with the connivance of local officials. Its production involved a great number of people and it seems inevitable that Cheltenham would have had some connection with the production side of the business. This indeed appears to have been the case. John William Paxton, the one-time Deputy to the Superintendent of Opium at Behar, is buried in the Trinity crypt. In all probability there will be others like him.

The trade in opium was to grow to an extraordinary level throughout Queen Victoria's reign and there were those, such as the missionary-cum-linguist Gutzlaff, who took the opium smuggler's dollar in order to help push Christianity. In later years, too, there were those who chose to sell the bible 'at the point of a lancet'. Indeed, for some, spreading the gospel may have been more important than administering medicine. Colledge was none of these. Although deeply religious, he was fundamentally driven by his medical work. Among Thomas's former colleagues and friends there were those who profited from the opium trade and those who hated it. Regardless, they all directly or indirectly benefitted from it. In some ways the doctor, who was always held in the highest regard, faced a dilemma. Today, Lauriston House speaks of much more than a Medical Missionary Society. It evokes memories of nineteenth century surgery, of the days of sail, of the East India Company, of Macau and its Anglo-American society, of the Canton factories, of the tea and opium trades and, above all, of one man's selfless efforts to help others.



Lauriston House, Montpellier

Jim Markland



BOOKS FOR SALE



News from the CLHS Donated Books 'Shop'

To mark the summer break in our Speaker Meetings (and to clear a little space on the shelves):

A Half-Price Sale of *our entire book-stock*

(until the end of August 2022)

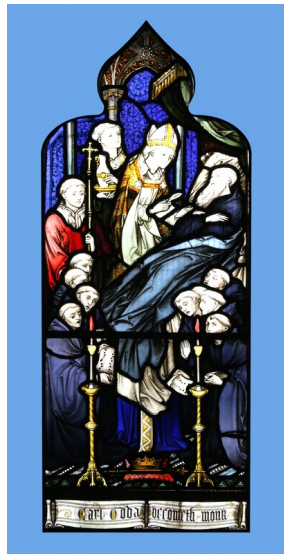
Details of all our stock can be found for you to browse at your leisure on the Resources tab of our website, www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk. Looking through the titles on offer, I am sure that you will be tempted by books which range across the whole spread of local, regional and national history, all now at unbeatable prices.

Thank you to all who have bought from the 'Shop' during the past year, either on-line or from the table at the back of St Luke's Hall Meetings. We really do appreciate all your support. All proceeds go entirely to defray the running costs of your Society. Local delivery is free, payment on delivery or in advance by bank transfer (details on request). Postage is charged for more distant deliveries. And if, over the summer, you are doing a little slimming down of your own history book shelves, please do consider offering the books to us. Titles with local Cheltenham or Gloucestershire focus are particularly of interest. Collection can be easily arranged.

CALLING ALL STRAYS!

By way of a little Society spring cleaning, we are carrying out an informal audit of the several collections of research materials that have been donated for the use of Members over the years, including the **Jeremy Jefferies' map collection** and **Brian Torode's collection of books, maps and research notes**. We are conscious that we need to make these more widely known amongst the membership and, where appropriate, take steps for better conservation and preservation of them. If you think that you may have parts of these, or indeed other collections that we might have overlooked, it would be very helpful if you could contact me with their brief details.

Oliver Pointer hardy_pointer@hotmail.com (07400 197989)



The Deerhurst Lecture 2022

‘Worcester, Odda of Deerhurst and lay participation in the written culture of pre-conquest England’

Professor Francesca Tinti, University of the Basque Country

Saturday 17th September 2022 at 7.30 pm in St Mary’s Church, Deerhurst

Tickets at the door, price £5 (students £3). Further details available at <https://deerhurstfriends.co.uk>

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QUERY CORNER

THE MYSTERY OF THE EGYPTIAN CAT

Not long ago I had an enquiry from a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton. He was researching the importation of several tons of mummified cats from Beni Hasan in Egypt in 1890; most were auctioned for use as fertiliser, but some specimens were acquired by institutions including the Liverpool World Museum. This museum also has a cat mummy acquired from Cheltenham College, which had been given



Cheltenham’s Literary and Philosophical Institution

to the College by the Cheltenham Literary and Philosophical Institution, (formerly at 86-88 Promenade), and my enquirer wanted to establish whether this cat mummy was one from the 1890 auction. From sources available (Jean Lacock’s article on the ‘Lit. & Phil.’ in *CLHS Journal* 9; the British Newspaper Archive; Cheltenham museum collections article in *The Geological Curator*, Vol.5 No 5, 1988 by H S Torrens and M A Taylor) I was able to establish that the cat mummy from the College could not be one of those imported in 1890. The ‘Lit. & Phil.’ opened in 1836 but closed in about 1860, after which its collection mouldered in a disused stable for ten years. Cheltenham College did indeed acquire items from that collection in 1871 to put in their own museum (situated in a converted rackets court), enough items to enable them to open their museum to the public, well before the 1890 imports.

Jill Waller

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward any material for inclusion in the November 2022 issue by **Monday 10th October 2022** to the Editor: Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor’s End Cheltenham GL50 2QA
Tel: 01242 230125 e-mail: kboothman3@gmail.com

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