



# Cheltenham Local History Society

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*The cover illustration shows the interior of The Priory and is by AYLWIN SAMPSON.*

# The Historian Gwen Hart (1897-1986)

PETER SMITH

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THERE MUST be few, if any, readers of this *Journal* whose bookshelf is without a copy of Hart's *History of Cheltenham*. Among all the many books published on the history of our town Gwen Hart's work will still remain of enormous importance, indeed a classic. A few words taken from a review of her history, shortly after publication in 1965, can well sum up her achievement. 'This is a work of scholarship, but, unlike many scholarly works, it is eminently readable ... Mrs Hart has been very successful in combining accuracy of historic narrative with those vivid incidents and personalities which bring history to life.' It is also worth remembering her own words at the end of her preface to the history: 'I have tried to give unity to the story by setting it where possible against the background of English History of which it is part ... no community develops in complete isolation from the nation to which it belongs. What is local is also national.'

Gwen Hart was born in Kings Norton, Birmingham, Gwen Muriel Posnette - a family of Huguenot origin. Educated in the city she obtained an MA degree with honours from Birmingham University in 1920. A family member told the writer that before she came to Cheltenham she was headmistress of a girls' school in Southampton. Bad eyesight and the onset of cataracts brought her to early retirement.

In 1927 Gwen Posnette married Charles William Scott Hay but tragically her husband died in a motor accident a year after marriage. As Mrs Hay she then lived with her mother in Tennyson Road, Cheltenham. It was not until 1951 that she married Ernest Parsons Hart, a retired chartered accountant and public school bursar. They lived first in Winchcombe and it was probably then that Mrs Hart became attached to the town. However, in 1957 they were living in Cheltenham at 54 Leckhampton Road and she remained there until the death of Mr Hart in 1966. A few years later Gwen Hart moved back to Winchcombe, living first in Abbey Terrace and then in North Street. The last two years of her life were spent in a nursing home, near to her relations in Maidstone.



Although Gwen Hart had retired she lectured and took classes of WEA students in both Cheltenham and Oxford. After being elected a member of The Cotteswold Naturalists

Field Club she lectured there and edited their proceedings, 1960-61. She was also elected a member of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.

On 11 March 1965 the *Gloucestershire Echo* included an item, covering almost a page, entitled 'Unique exhibition contains wealth of material'; it continued: 'Mrs Gwen Hart, the well-known Cheltenham Historian, is soon to publish a history of the town and an exhibition has been opened at Cheltenham Art Gallery to mark the occasion. Mrs Hart has contributed this review.' The review was a fine historical article. Mr Roger Beecham has kindly given the writer a copy of the special exhibition souvenir entitled 'Cheltenham from Domesday Book to Queen Victoria'. The exhibition of old manuscripts and pictures ran from 6-20 March, 1965. Undoubtedly the exhibition was a success and launched the book. Gwen Hart's nephew has treasured the photograph of her signing his copy at her Leckhampton home, and has willingly supplied a copy for this article.

Gwen Hart continued to lecture after the publication of her book. In the summer of 1969 an excellent series of articles by her appeared in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* entitled 'Old Cheltenham' - at a time when, as the *Chronicle* stated, 'the future of Cheltenham is very much in the planners' melting pot'. In 1981 her *History of Cheltenham* was reprinted. It contained corrections by the author and was mainly re-illustrated by Dr Steven Blake. This reprint surely confirmed the importance of her book and why her name and work should be remembered by CLHS in this millennium year.

Gwen Hart's affection for Winchcombe is shown in the lengthy and glowing preface which she wrote for the publication in 1971 of John Oakey's *Reminiscences of Winchcombe*. Later, in 1978, Mr D N Donaldson published *A Portrait of Winchcombe* and in his acknowledgements is the following: 'My heaviest debt is to Gwen Hart who has read and commented on the first draft of virtually the entire book, drawn my attention to many sources and allowed me to borrow a number of relevant documents. In happier circumstances Mrs Hart would have written Winchcombe's history, and it would have been the definitive work, which this is not. But its compilation owes much to her encouragement and advice.'

Gwen Hart may have been very fond of Winchcombe but this did not extend to her approval of the October fairs. In the words of Mr Donaldson, 'She objected strongly while living in Abbey Terrace to what she regarded as the misuse, by latter-day travelling showmen, of the right to hold two fairs in that central part of the town in early October, by virtue of the 16th. century Royal Charter granted to the town. As she pointed out, 'mop fairs' were traditional hiring fairs, not an opportunity for amplified music and fairground machinery'.

There is no doubt that Mrs Hart was an extremely strong character. She followed the political views of her parents and was a socialist. It is sad that so many of her contemporaries are not alive to tell the writer more of her life whilst she was in Cheltenham. Her history is certainly her memorial. For anyone who has not read her book let them turn perhaps to the chapter entitled 'The Merriest Sick Resort on Earth' and they will certainly wish to 'read on'.

'Read on' then to the final words of her Postscript: 'By great good fortune this church (St Mary's Parish Church) has through the centuries escaped the vandalism of Tudor reformers, of Cromwellian soldiers and nineteenth-century clergy and patrons, and thus

within its ancient walls - so near the busy heart of the modern town - past and present meet.'

### Acknowledgements

My very sincere thanks to Roger Beacham for all his help including the efforts to trace Gwen Hart's career. Also to Mr Donaldson of Postlip, Winchcombe, for his interest and for the hitherto unpublished article by Gwen Hart on 'The Corner Cupboard', which is now printed here with her family's permission.

### More Light on the Corner Cupboard *by* GWEN HART

THIS INTERESTING old building - undoubtedly one of the oldest in Winchcombe - is the youngest of all the public-houses in the town. According to the late Mr John Oakey, who remembered it in his boyhood, it was a farm-house occupied by a member of the Holliday family until the late 1860s. It was then bought by Mr Charles Richardson, who applied for a licence to sell beer and cider. Much later - about 1900 - the premises were sold to a Brewery Company, but a member of the Richardson family held the licence until the 1950s.

The name Corner Cupboard was not used in the early days of the newly licensed premises, but when tobacco was threepence an ounce and cigarettes literally ten a penny, it was customary in Winchcombe for public houses to supply with the beer free clay pipes, each of which was stamped with the name of the house concerned. It was to meet this need that a name had to be found, and as there were so many corner cupboards in the various rooms, Mrs Smith (née Richardson) suggested the name, which it has borne ever since. This information was given to me by Mrs Smith's daughter, who is also the grand-daughter of Mr Charles Richardson.

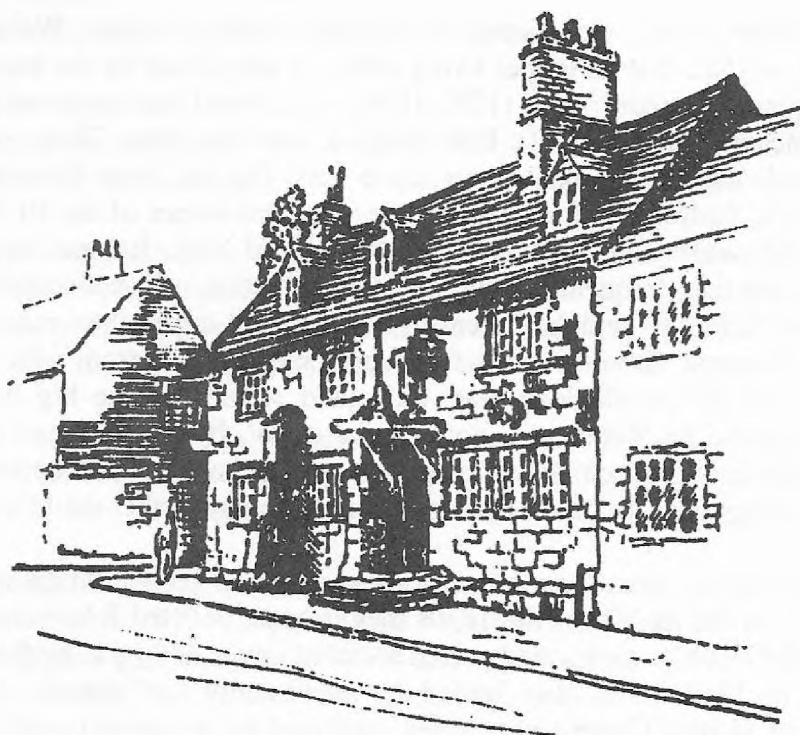
The bust of Disraeli, which is placed over the porch, was taken by way of a joke by Mrs Smith's son from a Cheltenham scrapyard. For many years it was always decorated with primroses on Disraeli's birthday - Primrose Day.

It is virtually impossible to give the exact date of this old building. Obviously, the suggestion that it might be a thousand years old is absurd, although there may have been an earlier medieval house on the site, parts of which may have been incorporated in the present building. The most likely theory is that it was built during the Tudor period, and the fact that stones and pieces of stone carving from Winchcombe Abbey - demolished by order of King Henry VIII in 1539 - were found built into the walls, gives support to this view. The original tiles which paved the head of the well were possibly from Winchcombe or Hailes Abbey, but most of these were removed when the Brewery bought the premises, and were later sold to Americans. Only one of the original tiles is known to remain in the Winchcombe area. It is unlikely, as was suggested in the earlier article, that monks or pilgrims bathed their feet in this well. There was an adequate supply of water at the abbey from both Sudeley and Postlip, and a separate infirmary in Corndean for sick monks.



Many of the older houses in Winchcombe had similar wells; indeed, at least two of the houses opposite to the Corner Cupboard still have wells underneath their floors. Since there was no main water supply in the town until 1887, the inhabitants were dependent on springs, wells and pumps. An old photograph - too faded to be reproduced - shows one such pump by the church wall - opposite to the Jacobean House.

It is also unlikely that the Corner Cupboard building was a centre for smuggling tobacco. Traditionally the tobacco warehouses were in Cowl Lane and North Street. The actual *planting* of tobacco - rather than the sale - was forbidden by a series of laws passed during the Stuart period. These laws were consistently broken by the local planters, and from time to time soldiers were sent from London to destroy the crops around Cheltenham and Winchcombe. There would have been little point in smuggling in Winchcombe what was so readily available in the surrounding fields. Indeed, it must have been grown within two or three hundred yards from the Corner Cupboard itself, as the surviving name of Tobacco Close shows clearly. Doubtless the people then living in the house saw the Life Guards (sent by King Charles the Second's government) actually destroying the plants. The ghost mentioned in the previous article seems to be a fairly recent arrival, since there is no record of its earlier appearance. There was however an unfortunate man who within living memory hanged himself on an apple-tree near the house, and for some time it was feared that the garden was haunted. To those who believe in ghosts it is very strange that there are so few records or legends of the re-appearance of the monks and the pilgrims, the kings and the queens who in their lifetime came to this ancient town of Winchcombe.



[sketch from Portrait of Winchcombe by D N Donaldson; reproduced with permission]

# Radicalism in Cheltenham: the Patronage offered by Ebworth Park

JACKIE E M LATHAM

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RADICAL ACTIVITY in Cheltenham in the 1830s and 1840s has been established, especially by the researches of Owen Ashton<sup>1</sup>, with the role of the Mechanics' Institute and the Chartists particularly well documented; Robert Owen's *New Moral World* estimated that there were 50 socialists living in the town in 1838<sup>2</sup>. There were, however, other subversive political and religious groups, some of which overlapped in membership and all of which had the same enemy: Tory Cheltenham whose spokesperson was the extreme evangelical, the Revd Francis Close: 'The Bible is Conservative, the Prayer Book Conservative and the Church is Conservative. It is impossible, therefore, for a minister to open his mouth without being a Conservative.'<sup>3</sup> These small unorthodox groupings required support and many found patronage at Ebworth Park, a large house about eight miles away from the spa town at the village of Sheepscombe, near Painswick. The village had, in the 1830s, a factory which produced fine cloth, but the surrounding country was given up to agriculture and the hills were covered in very fine beechwoods. There were no great houses in the neighbourhood except Ebworth Park.

Ebworth Park was owned by Stephen John Fletcher Welch, High Sheriff of Gloucester in 1822, but no longer living there. It was rented by the trustees of his estranged wife Georgiana Fletcher Welch (1792-1879) who shared the house with her widowed sister Sophia Chichester (1795-1847). Both women were childless. They were daughters of Sir Francis Ford, the first baronet, their uncle was Thomas, first Viscount Anson, owner of Shugborough, Staffordshire, and they were the great-nieces of the Rt Hon Edward Vernon Harcourt, the wealthy and aristocratic Archbishop of York. It is not known what radicalised the sisters, but they frequently expressed dissatisfaction with conventional marriage; it may well be that failing to find fulfilment in the expected upper-class roles of wife and mother they turned against the institutions that represented the life from which they felt excluded. Their first act of unorthodoxy was, like good women in the big house, to instruct the villagers, circulating 'better and more liberal ideas', by handing out in the 1830s George Combe's radical *Essay on the Constitution of Man* against the opposition of the 'Ultra-Calvinist' clergyman<sup>4</sup>. But their concerns were to spread farther than their village.

The sisters' lives were unconventional both in their political and in their religious radicalism. In the middle of the 1830s they became devoted followers of James Pierrepont Greaves (1777-1842), mystic and sacred socialist, given £100 p.a. by Sophia Chichester until his death in 1842. She also funded his community and school, Alcott House or The Concordium, at Ham Common in Surrey, and paid for the annual posthumous publication of Greaves's papers until her death in 1847<sup>5</sup>. From 1835 Sophia Chichester was also supporting the uneducated demagogue John ('Zion') Ward (1781-1837) who, having sampled a range of dissenting sects, had become a Southcottian, discovering himself to be the Shiloh, the redeemer, whom Joanna Southcott had failed to bear when she died in 1814. On Ward's death in 1837 the sisters turned to two other unorthodox reformers: James E ('Shepherd') Smith (1801-57) whose eclectic mix of Owenite, Fourierist and Saint-Simonian

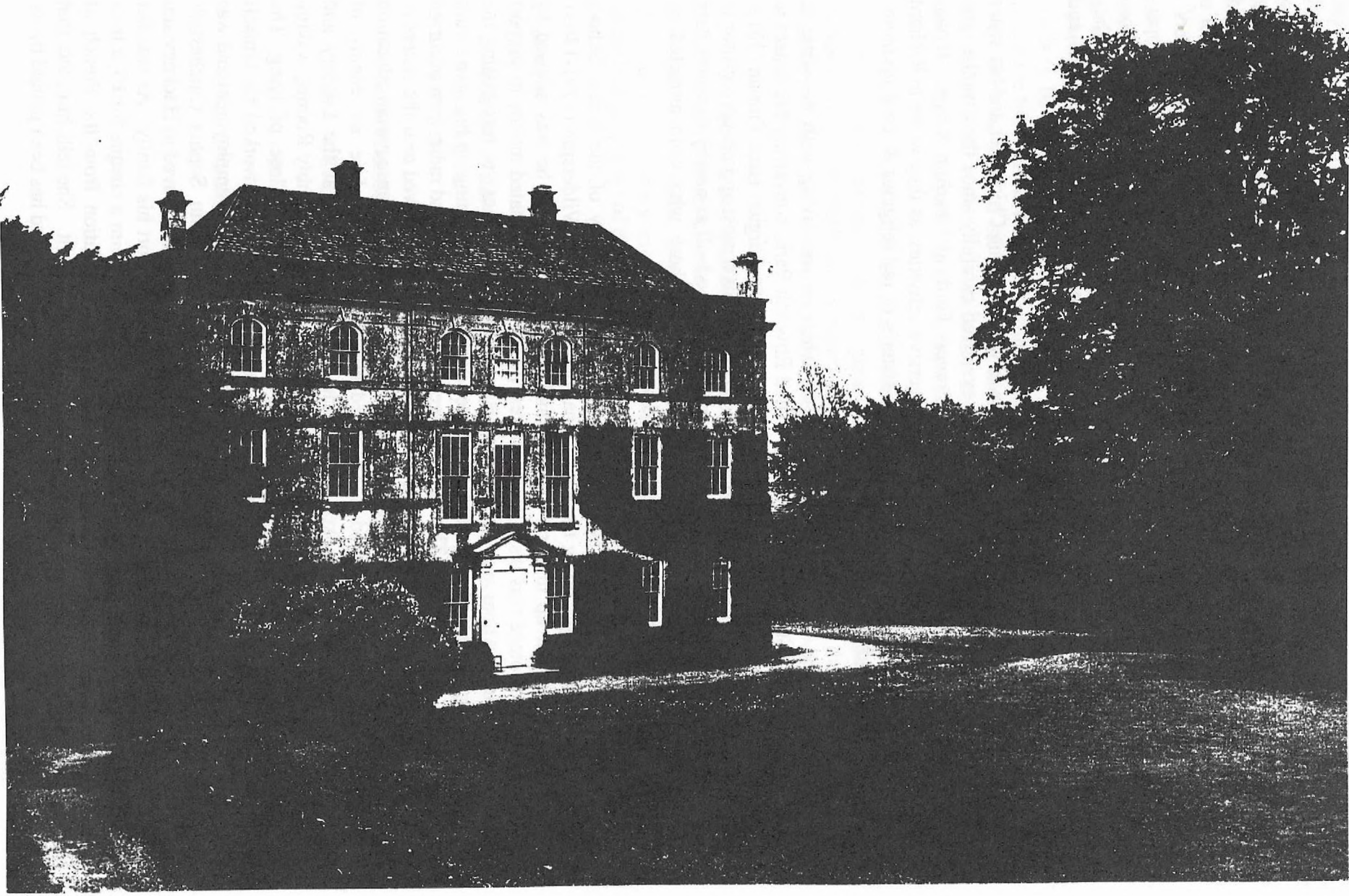
socialism with his religion of Universalism (good and evil are one and all apparent contradictions can be reconciled) offered a congenial menu of radical beliefs to the ladies of Ebworth Park. Even more important was their patronage of Richard Carlile (1790-1843) to whom they gave hundreds of pounds to support him, Eliza Sharples Carlile and their children. Carlile was a key reformer, campaigning for birth control, the unstamped press and free thought, enduring years in gaol for his beliefs. He was invited to stay at Ebworth for a week and on his death his wife was reluctantly housed at Alcott House with her daughters<sup>6</sup>. The sisters' political and religious radicalism is not therefore in doubt: they used their upper-class leisure to write to the men from whom they sought spiritual nourishment and whose reforming zeal they shared. However, they undertook no public role; instead, they encouraged unorthodoxy by sending money and advice from behind the stone walls and 1,000 beechwood acres of Ebworth Park.

Cheltenham, not Gloucester, was the scene in which Sophia Chichester and her sister used their local influence, though this had to be exercised carefully since their mother and sister lived in the town and their brother, Sir Francis Ford, at Charlton Kings. It was important not to let their family know of their subversive activities; as they wrote to Richard Carlile, if they 'knew the extent & nature of my sister's & my religious & civil opinions, their indignation would be unbounded.'<sup>7</sup>

The sisters had met Greaves in the 1830s, when he was living with his sister at Randwick or, later, at Stroud. He frequently visited Ebworth Park, converting the sisters to vegetarianism; together they made a vegetarian of the Swedenborgian Isaac Pitman (1813-97) who was running a school at Wootton-under-Edge and was a most appreciative visitor to the big house<sup>8</sup>. It was the presence of money and radical goodwill at nearby Ebworth Park that drew so many reformers to Cheltenham, particularly those who were attracted by Greaves's arcane mixture of theosophy and sacred socialism.

In 1825-27 Greaves had worked as the honorary secretary of the Infant School Society, his close colleague being the educational pioneer Samuel Wilderspin (1791-1866). When Francis Close set up his first infant school at Alstone in 1827 he was advised by Wilderspin whose protégé was installed as master; local worthies donated money in support of the venture among whom was Sophia Chichester who gave £5, not yet recognising the enemy<sup>9</sup>. Wilderspin himself came to live in Cheltenham in 1829 setting up his own infant school in 1834 at Alpha House. The clash between reaction, Close, and radicalism occurred in 1837 when R J Morrison (1795-1874), the astrologer Zadkiel who lived near the sisters in Sheepscombe House and was their friend, drafted a petition supporting unsectarian education for all. Wilderspin, now revealed as a Swedenborgian and therefore an enemy of conservative evangelicalism, attacked 'Bible schools' at a meeting at the Literary and Philosophical Institute in October 1837. Close responded in the Assembly Rooms, waving the flag of patriotism and the Bible; Wilderspin's reply accused Close of lying. The controversy was not simply local, with the result that Wilderspin, who worked for himself giving advice to those setting up infant schools, found it harder to gain employment and was unable to secure a post as a government inspector<sup>10</sup>. Letters from Sophia Chichester's correspondence with Wilderspin survive from this time, when he had moved to Hackney and was particularly concerned with his failure to find work to support his family. As was her wont, she recommends uplifting reading for his daughters, sends him a cheque for £5, a tract and a copy of *The Phalanstery* (1841), her anonymous translation from the French of Madame Gatti de Gamond's sanitised summary of Fourierist thought. She tells him, too, that she has visited an Infant School in Cheltenham, evidently Close's, and has been pained by its





**Ebworth Park, Sheepscombe, Glos - home of Georgiana Fletcher and Sophia Chichester**



dull emphasis on scriptural instruction. In a letter written in 1842 at the time of Greaves's death, looking back at his life, she regrets the perversion of infant education and the way that the world turned, in 'Educated Ignorance', from his inspiration<sup>11</sup>. Mrs Charles Cluff, who was employed by Wilderspin as a teacher in Cheltenham and was well known to Sophia Chichester, went to work at Alcott House as did Wilderspin's daughter Emma.

Among Greaves's followers was the young Goodwyn Barmby (1820-81) who had moved through Chartism to his own 'Communist Propaganda Society' and established his Communist Church, of which he was Pontifarch. It had few branches, the chief of which was in Cheltenham, led by Henry Fry, carver and gilder of 9 Northfield Terrace. He was editor of Barmby's *Educational Circular and Communist Apostle* (1841-42), printed in Cheltenham by W Paine. Barmby, a man who tried to disseminate his ideas as widely as possible, writing regularly in Robert Owen's *New Moral World*, recognised the *Cheltenham Free Press* as another sympathetic journal and in this was followed by Henry Fry whose poems on Greaves's Alcott House reflected devotion rather than inspiration. It seems highly probable that the sisters at Ebworth Park supported with money the *Educational Circular*, since it printed as fillers quotations from Sophia Chichester's translation, *The Phalanstery*; William Hollis, the Cheltenham radical and gunsmith, contributed an article on the position of women and also quoted from Madame Gatti de Gamond<sup>12</sup>. It was evidently important to publicise Sophia Chichester's work, probably a reciprocal gesture. Certainly Richard Carlile found the sisters in 1842 'fond of new things, new projects, wildness no objection' and lost in 'the clouds of the Spiritual World'.<sup>13</sup> Barmby's London publication, the *Promethean or Communitarian Apostle* (1842), which he edited himself, carried a review of *The Phalanstery* and an attack on Fourier's 'Phalansterian delusion'.<sup>14</sup>

Henry Fry was a former Swedenborgian, and well known to Sophia Chichester. When the young free thinker George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), lecturing for the Owenites in May 1842 at the Cheltenham Mechanics' Institute, appeared to reject theism and was persecuted by Francis Close and the Tory *Cheltenham Chronicle*, he was committed to prison for trial at the Gloucester Assizes. Henry Fry offered bail of £50 but was uncertain whether he was worth the sum and so the magistrate Revd Dr T B Newell (who had been Stephen Fletcher Welch's chaplain when he was High Sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1822) refused Holyoake bail<sup>15</sup>. However, the sisters at Ebworth Park, taking pity on the young man in prison, sent him, via Henry Fry, game and wine from the estate. Writing with splendid irony in old age Holyoake declares that Fry was a follower of the mystic and vegetarian James Pierrepoint Greaves:

*'Mr Fry, however, was not mystical - he was very practical, for being a teetotaler, he drank all the wine himself, and, being a vegetarian, he ate the birds. Mr Fry was editor of the Communist Apostle, one of whose mottoes was that 'It is the beauty within that reflects beautiful light on outward objects.' It was presumably on this principle that my wine and pheasants became irresistible to him.'*<sup>16</sup>

Fry, however, did deliver Mrs Chichester's (less tempting) small bottle of raspberry vinegar. Though he may have failed as an honest messenger, Fry sent a protest via the radical MP J A Roebuck over the magistrates' treatment of Holyoake and they were censured in parliament for serious irregularities. When Holyoake was serving his six-month sentence for blasphemy, Sophia Chichester tried vainly to procure a meeting for him with A Bronson Alcott, father of Louisa M Alcott; Alcott was in England for a few months to visit Alcott House, named after him. Now calling on Ebworth Park and the patrons who funded the

community, he walked with Fry from Cheltenham to Gloucester but was not allowed to visit Holyoake in gaol.

Richard Carlile, who had himself experienced nine years in prison, came to Cheltenham in July 1842 to support the young Holyoake during his Gloucester trial. He stayed at 21 Regent Street (as Greaves had done two years earlier), the radical address that later became the People's Institute. Carlile visited Ebworth Park once for the day, costs paid by the sisters, and they next met at Henry Fry's house in Cheltenham, neutral ground<sup>17</sup>. Carlile in 1838 had stayed at Ebworth Park for a week and was 'superlatively happy'<sup>18</sup>; now he was no longer a favourite, and, ill and impoverished, he suspected that the money that should be supporting his family was going to others, among them R J Morrison and his family of eight children who lived at Sheepscombe<sup>19</sup>. However, he took the opportunity of preaching at Rodborough Common, Stroud, where he claimed an audience of 3,000 and likened himself to St Paul preaching at Mars Hill, Athens<sup>20</sup>.

Morrison was one of the founders of the Cheltenham Mechanics' Institute and after retiring from the navy became an astrologer, offering lessons for £1 and producing an *Almanac* from 1832. He lectured at the Mechanics' Institute and at the Cheltenham Athenaeum on astronomy and used the *Free Press* to publicise his radical ventures<sup>21</sup>. He ran into problems, however, when he failed to prophesy the death of William IV and had to defend himself by a letter published in the *Cheltenham Journal* of 24 June 1837. He was the most famous astrologer of the nineteenth century under the name Zadkiel which protected his status as a gentleman and at the same time projected an air of mystery<sup>22</sup>. Sophia Chichester tried to support her neighbour by dragging him into a footnote in *The Phalanstery* as a man who observed the 'effects of solar and planetary influences on the atmosphere'<sup>23</sup>. In 1844 Morrison was instrumental in setting up the British Association for the Advancement of Astral and other Sciences to defend astrologers from prosecution under the vagrancy act and to try to establish their academic respectability<sup>24</sup>. This was prescient, since in 1862 he was to be accused by the *Daily Telegraph* of false pretences and though he won his case the damages were nugatory. He also made money as a dubious company promoter and became a vigorous anti-Newtonian publishing *The New Principia* (1868) where he proved mathematically to his own satisfaction that the earth was the centre of the solar system.

Another Cheltenham radical who was close to the sisters living at Ebworth Park was F B Barton, the Unitarian minister at Bayshill church from 1836 to 1839. He had begun as an Anglican, taking a degree from Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1823. He too was a supporter of the Mechanics' Institute and a vigorous writer and speaker on behalf of radical causes, sending letters to James Hill's *Star in the East* and to Robert Owen's *New Moral World*. Barton moved on from Unitarianism, writing for Holyoake's agnostic *Reasoner*, becoming finally a Positivist follower of Comte. While still in Cheltenham he became involved in the controversy over infant schools, disagreeing vigorously with the evangelical Francis Close on the role of the Bible in education. His *Letter to the Rev. Francis Close, M.A.*, published in Cheltenham by S C Harper and printed by Paine & Co, (no date but 1838) mounts a ferocious attack on the minister for his dishonest argument; he calls him a 'cunning controversialist' and not a 'fair opponent, or an honorable man' since he has 'falsified and corrupted evidence'<sup>25</sup>. It is a blistering attack on the man who represented the Tory establishment of church and state in Cheltenham, accusing Close of denying others the right to interpret for themselves, the very right he as a protestant should uphold. It is astonishing that a Cheltenham printer and publisher could be found brave enough to produce the pamphlet.

Barton was a close friend of the sisters at Ebworth Park. A friend described him as a 'clever studious, worthy creature' who sang comic songs and had the 'inveterate habit of turning everything, however serious and even sacred, into ridicule'<sup>26</sup>.

Ebworth Park was let for a few years from 1843 or 1844, the sisters needing to retrench after their generosity to so many radical causes; Sophia Chichester died in 1847 at the home of another sister in Kent and Georgiana Fletcher Welch returned to Ebworth where she was visited in 1848 by Barton<sup>27</sup>. The friendship was maintained, since in 1877 a letter was sent to Barton in London to inform him of her failing health<sup>28</sup>.

There remain a few more radical Cheltenham figures who had a connection with Ebworth Park. When, on the death of Richard Carlile, Sophia Chichester reluctantly took responsibility for the penniless Eliza Sharples and her children, the first suggestion was that she should teach music. In June 1842 Joseph Mainzer was in Cheltenham running a public evening class in singing and the following month he lectured in the Assembly Rooms; Henry Fry contributed an article of support in the *Free Press*<sup>29</sup>. Sophia Chichester wrote to Mainzer to ask for his help, but was waiting for a reply in September.<sup>30</sup> Mainzer - a former Catholic priest - had come to England in 1839 to spread singing to the 'millions' who had no musical training<sup>31</sup>. That this was seen as a subversive political act is evident from the fact that Goodwyn Barmby became the first Hon. Sec. of the Mainzerian Association for Diffusion of Singing among the Millions<sup>32</sup> and from the many advertisements for *The Phalanstery* which were carried by Mainzer's *Musical Times*.<sup>33</sup> From what has survived of the correspondence between Richard Carlile and the sisters at Ebworth Park there are a few more glimpses of Cheltenham unorthodoxy. In February 1838 there is a reference to Gaskell, the leading middle-class radical of the town: 'Gaskell has been writing for the ministry. I feel this a blow. Between death & desertion, the Patriots' band diminishes. I mourn that it is so'.<sup>34</sup> It is the sisters' only comment on local politics and is heartfelt in its regret that Gaskell appears to be yielding to Melbourne's Whiggery; the identification of radicalism with patriotism is one which the Tory opposition would have strongly resisted.

The Cheltenham Unitarian jeweller and watchmaker, Furber, had sent his children to Ham Common to be educated at the austere and vegetarian Alcott House school but protested to Carlile that his daughter was 'all but murdered & that he was altogether deceived by the Ladies of Ebworth'.<sup>35</sup> However, not all the sisters' Cheltenham connections were resentful of their influence: Carlile, who was moving towards a more spiritual set of beliefs, was sent for by Mrs Colonel Taylor to meet the Revd D Howarth, the Swedenborgian preacher, who had been on a mission to Cheltenham<sup>36</sup>; in turn, Mrs Colonel Taylor, a potentially congenial companion, told Carlile that she wished to meet the ladies of Ebworth<sup>37</sup>.

Sadly, very few letters and no papers survive from the two unorthodox sisters. Most of what we know about them has to be traced in the correspondence of others. Their family knew little or nothing of their radicalism, and since in her lonely old age Georgiana Fletcher Welch was reconciled to the local Church and to meat and alcohol - eschewed by Greaves from 1817 until his death - she may have destroyed evidence of her youthful rebellion<sup>38</sup>. It is significant that though they used Painswick and Gloucester as *poste restante* addresses to protect themselves from importunate dependents, it was Cheltenham, with its growing tradition of dissent, that was the focus of their radicalism.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Owen Ashton, 'The Mechanics' Institute and Radical Politics in Cheltenham Spa 1834-1840', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal* 2, 1984, pp. 25-30; 'Clerical Control and Radical Responses in Cheltenham Spa 1838-1848', *Midland History* 8, 1983, pp. 121-147.
- <sup>2</sup> *New Moral World*, 7 July 1838, p. 293.
- <sup>3</sup> Quoted on p. 281 in G Berwick, 'Close of Cheltenham: Parish Pope', *Theology*, vol. 38, 1939, pp. 193-201 and 276-85.
- <sup>4</sup> W A Smith, '*Shepherd*' Smith, *the Universalist: the Story of a Mind*, London, 1892, p. 191.
- <sup>5</sup> For a full account of James Pierrepont Greaves, Sophia Chichester and Georgiana Fletcher Welch see J E M Latham, *Search for a New Eden: James Pierrepont Greaves (1777-1842): The Sacred Socialist and His Followers*, Rutherford N.J., 2000. Published in England by Associated University Presses.
- <sup>6</sup> Joel H Weiner, *Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-century Britain: the Life of Richard Carlile*, Westport, Conn., 1983. This is a superb account of Carlile's important political activities.
- <sup>7</sup> Letter Book (RC 265), 3 December 1837, C. P. With thanks for permission to use the Carlile Papers, the Henry E Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- <sup>8</sup> *A Memorial of Francis Barham*, ed. Isaac Pitman, London, 1873, p. 182.
- <sup>9</sup> Francis Close, *To the Friends and Supporters of the Sunday and Infant Schools*, Cheltenham, 1827.
- <sup>10</sup> Phillip McCann and Francis A Young, *Samuel Wilderspin and the Infant School Movement*, London and Canberra, 1982, pp. 221-235, 96-99.
- <sup>11</sup> Letters of Sophia Chichester to Wilderspin, November 1841 and 20 February 1842, 917 (GC 1841, 1842, Wilderspin Papers, University of London Library.
- <sup>12</sup> *Educational Circular and Communist Apostle*, 1841-2, pp. 16, 20, 24, 37.
- <sup>13</sup> Letters of Carlile to Turton, 19 August and 8 November 1842, C. P.
- <sup>14</sup> *Promethean or Communitarian Apostle*, 1842, p. 51.
- <sup>15</sup> G J Holyoake, *The History of the Last Trial by Jury for Atheism in England*, London, 1850, pp. 5-10.
- <sup>16</sup> G J Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, London, 1892, p. 162. Fry came from a distinguished family of carvers, one of whom carved the throne for Queen Victoria in Westminster Abbey and a bedstead for Queen Adelaide. They emigrated to the United States and set up in business in Cincinnati. See the *Vegetarian Messenger* for October 1892, p. 307. Information from James Gregory, Department of History, University of Southampton
- <sup>17</sup> Letter Book, 4 August and 25 August 1842, C. P.
- <sup>18</sup> Letter of Carlile to Turton, 13 May 1838, C. P.
- <sup>19</sup> Letter Book, 9 August 1842, C. P.
- <sup>20</sup> Letter of Carlile to Holyoake, 1 September 1842, Holyoake Papers, Co-operative Union Library, Manchester.
- <sup>21</sup> *Cheltenham Free Press*, 21 February and 18 April 1835, 28 January 1843.
- <sup>22</sup> For Morrison see Ellic Howe, *Urania's Children*, London, 1967, pp. 33-47.



- <sup>23</sup> Madame Gatti de Gamond, *The Phalanstery*, p. 172.
- <sup>24</sup> *New Age*, February 1844, p. 169-70.
- <sup>25</sup> F B Barton, *A Letter to the Rev. Francis Close, M.A.*, Cheltenham, n.d. p.3.
- <sup>26</sup> Newton Crosland, *Rambles Round my Life*, London, 1898, p. 76.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- <sup>28</sup> Information from the Sheepscombe History Society.
- <sup>29</sup> *Cheltenham Free Press*, 18 June, 2 July and 9 July 1842.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter Book, 10 August and 17 September 1842, C. P.
- <sup>31</sup> Aristide Guilbert, *Sketch of the Life and Labours of Joseph Mainzer*, Glasgow, 1844.
- <sup>32</sup> *Cheltenham Free Press*, 1 October 1842.
- <sup>33</sup> *Mainzer's Musical Times*, 15 July 1842 continuing into September.
- <sup>34</sup> Letter Book, February 1838, C. P.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September 1842, C. P.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter of Carlile to Turton, 8 November 1842, C. P.
- <sup>37</sup> Letter Book, 9 August 1842. C. P.
- <sup>38</sup> Mrs G F Welch's Payments and Receipts Book 1864-1879, P244a MI 8/4 and 8/5. Gloucester Record Office, Gloucester.

*ALCOTT HOUSE, HAM COMMON, NEAR RICHMOND*



# Barbadian legacy: the unacknowledged earlier life of William Hinds Prescod

GLENN O PHILLIPS

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JILL WALLER'S recent article, 'Alstone Lawn: A Noble Residence' (*Journal* 15), described the origins, rise and fall of one of the largest residences in Cheltenham of the 19th and early 20th century. This very impressive dwelling sat gracefully on seven acres at the corner of Alstone Lawn and Gloucester Road for just over 100 years between 1808 and 1913. She identifies William Hinds Prescod as the house's third owner.<sup>1</sup> As far as could be judged from local records, Prescod presented the profile, typical of the age, of a wealthy retired colonial man, moving in the town's upper social circles, little being known of his earlier or personal life. In this article, drawing on a wider range of sources in the West Indies and elsewhere, we see the fuller picture of Prescod's circumstances, the origin of his wealth, and the family he did not readily acknowledge.

Although it is uncertain exactly when Prescod purchased Alstone Lawn from Thomas Henry Sealy, he was clearly there by 1820. We know that when his sister Mary Anna Prescod married Major Thomas O'Neill, an officer in the British Army, on August 20, 1820, he was resident at 'Alstone Lodge'<sup>2</sup> (the house's earlier name). As noted by Waller, Alstone Lawn appears on the 1820 Cheltenham post office map as the residence of 'W H Prescod Esq'. We also know that Prescod's friendship with L C Fulwer Craven of Brockhampton began before 1820 since he is one of the witnesses who signed the marriage certificate of Prescod's sister. Henry Lamb's mid-1820s lithograph of Alstone Lawn depicts a large house in well-planted grounds; we can perhaps surmise that at least the landscaping, and perhaps some features of the house, were partly due to Prescod, as he realised his retirement 'dream home'. Who was this William Hinds Prescod who lived so lavishly at Alstone Lawn and had such great friends?

According to Waller, Prescod seems to have been known in Cheltenham as 'a Jamaican planter.' While he could have given his Cheltenham neighbours that impression, his real attachment was with another British Caribbean colony, Barbados. Both he and his wife Mary Brice Prescod were born in Barbados, a British colony from its first European settlement in 1627 until 1966. This easterly Caribbean island was the home of a sizable number of Englishmen, as well as a much smaller number of Irish, Scottish, French, and Dutch residents, and a large population of African slaves. Barbados was the wealthiest English colony in the Caribbean, producing large quantities of high-quality sugar, molasses and rum, since the seventeenth century. Additionally, Barbados had one of the largest white populations in the British West Indies. Before 1715 and 1816, the island's white population stabilized at around 16,000.<sup>3</sup>

William Hinds Prescod was born in Barbados in 1776 into the privileged upper class of Barbadians. He was the eldest son of Francis Prescod and nephew of William Prescod, one of the colony's wealthiest plantation owners during the early 19th century. William Prescod, his uncle, was the proprietor of several of the most profitable plantations scattered across the island from the parishes of St Peter to St Philip. On these plantations were hundreds of African slaves. At the time of Emancipation in 1838, the largest numbers of Prescod's slaves were on the Searles and Kendal

plantations numbering 330 and 286, respectively.<sup>4</sup> As a youth, William Hinds Prescod migrated to England, studied law and was admitted to the bar at Middle Temple on October 12, 1797.<sup>5</sup> Soon after he returned to Barbados and worked for his uncle as his attorney.

On the other hand, William Prescod, the uncle, emigrated from Barbados to London, where he lived in Gower Street, near Bedford Square. On 12 May, 1814, he made a will that included his entire holdings 'in Barbados and elsewhere in the West Indies.'<sup>6</sup> He bequeathed his possessions of land, monies and plantations among his many nephews, nieces, great nephews, his godson, and even one friend, as well as four 'persons of color,' all women. However, the largest portion of immediate funds from the will would come to William Hinds Prescod, and he was also made one of its executors. This inheritance allowed William Hinds Prescod to return to England and reside permanently and live so lavishly. Previously, William Hinds Prescod had lived and worked in Speightstown, the second largest town in Barbados up to that time, when the will was made. He had been married in St. Michael, Barbados on June 29, 1812,<sup>7</sup> to Mary Brice, who came from a prominent Barbadian planter class family. He seems to have begun to receive his inheritance soon after his uncle's death in 1815. According to the will, he was to receive all profits from five of the plantations, although they were willed to other younger relatives after his death. They were Searles, Dayrells, Kendal, Barry's and Sion Hill plantations. During 1835, there were over one thousand slaves working on these plantations and John G Goding a prominent local attorney became responsible for all the financial arrangements on these plantations, as specified in the will.

About five years after his inheritance from his uncle, he settled in Cheltenham, living in great splendour like so many of the well-known absentee landowners from Barbados, Jamaica, and other British colonies. Why did he leave Barbados to live in a place with which he had apparently little direct previous connection? Was he seeking to avoid covetous relations or a sticky family situation? The main reasons why Prescod left Barbados and chose Cheltenham are not entirely clear. Maybe the area's reputation as one of the leading health resorts in Britain as well as his many acquaintances from this area were among the motivating factors. Additionally, Speightstown had had a long trading relationship with merchants in nearby Bristol for decades.<sup>8</sup> Maybe his longtime business associates helped to encourage him to settle in Cheltenham.

While Prescod and his wife appeared in Cheltenham to be a childless wealthy couple, who according to Waller 'adopted Mary Gurney, the second daughter of a near neighbor of theirs', all indications are that Prescod quietly acknowledged some paternal obligations back in Barbados. On the island, he had been identified informally as the father of a mulatto Barbadian family. The Barbadian baptismal certificates of the children do not give his name as father as was the custom for such families at the time. However, in November 1837, he carefully placed in trust the sum of 'twenty-five thousand Dutch guilders in five percent bonds' and instructed the English investment firm of Barrow, Clarke, and Leigh to give the dividends and its annual proceeds to Mary Lydia Smith of Barbados and her four children, whose names were Samuel Jackman, Maria Louisa, Rachel Gittens, and Francis Wellington Prescod.<sup>9</sup> These Barbadian mulatto children were born between 1806 and 1812. It would be most unlikely that he would have made this kind of financial arrangement for this family if he had no direct paternal ties. He was certainly not fulfilling the wishes of his uncle, for they were not mentioned in that will, neither could his uncle be these children's father.<sup>10</sup> However, it was not uncommon for white fathers in the Caribbean, the US, and Latin America to refuse to publicly acknowledge their mulatto offspring but at the same time, quietly support them financially and even pay for their education.

Prescod did indeed assist his Barbadian mulatto family from Cheltenham. Barbadian records show that even in regard to slave manumissions, few white Barbadian fathers were willing



to manumit their children.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Mary Smith and her children were free mulattoes. The children were free from birth. However, it is interesting to note that William Hinds Prescod seems to have made this financial gesture to 'his Barbadian colored family' only after the death of his uncle. Equally remarkable, it was not done until after the British Parliament ended slavery in Barbados and around the Caribbean as well as after his eldest son, Samuel Jackman Prescod, had emerged as one of the leading critical voices against the Barbadian plantocracy. Samuel J Prescod had, some months before his father's financial arrangement was made, become editor of two new newspapers, first the *New Times* and later the *Liberal*, which quickly gained wide readership in Barbados, other colonies, and in Britain.<sup>12</sup>

Samuel J Prescod had for years become a thorn in the flesh of the leading Barbadian planters and a strong ally on the island of members of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. A number of the society's leaders visited Barbados in the late 1830s and interacted closely with him. Anti-slavery publications in Britain mentioned the young Barbadian abolitionist by name and described him in detail. Some wrote about even visiting his home and meeting his family. One of the early writers remarked about Samuel J Prescod, that had he lived in England, 'he would be esteemed as a gentleman whilst in Barbadoes (sic) he is in some degree despised as a coloured man'.<sup>13</sup> While there is little evidence of direct correspondence between 'the son and his father,' it appears they had a very private and strained relationship. For example, in the pages of his newspaper, Samuel J Prescod made little or no mention of his white relatives by name either in Barbados or in England.



In the summer of 1840, Samuel J Prescod travelled to Britain to attend, as a guest, the General Anti-Slavery Convention held in London. He was the only Barbadian delegate of 21 representing the British West Indian colonies. He quickly captured the attention of the convention's members by speaking out against the Barbadian oligarchy and writing two essays that appeared on the front pages of the *British and Foreign Anti Slavery Reporter*.<sup>13</sup>

William H Prescod must have been aware of Samuel's open, direct, and continued attack on his social class in Barbados and now in Britain. At the same time, Samuel J Prescod seems to have no direct contact with his father in Cheltenham. Nevertheless, it appears both father and son were aware of each other's activities.

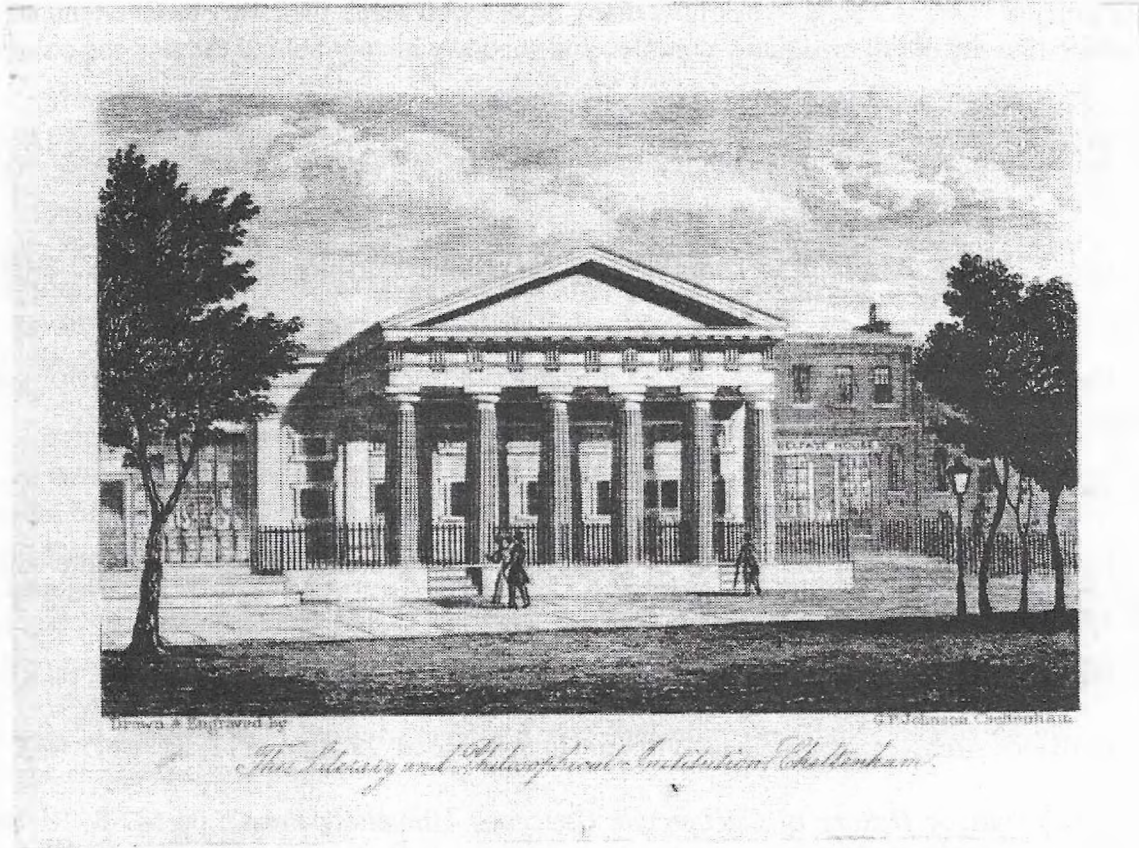
Samuel J Prescod was particularly close to John Scoble, who was one of the most outspoken and controversial English abolitionists who visited Barbados in the late 1830s, and who was the secretary of the Universal Abolitionist Society. They continued to correspond after Scoble's visit to Barbados. In one letter he wrote to Scoble, Prescod encouraged him to send William H Prescod copies of his newspaper the *Liberal*, and other information about living conditions in Barbados while requesting that Scoble not identify him as the source of the information.<sup>14</sup> Scoble seems to have graciously obliged Prescod by sending the materials to William H. Prescod at Alstone Lawn in Cheltenham. Consequently, in spite of William H Prescod's affluent lifestyle in Cheltenham, he knew about the economic decline and the aspirations of newly freed slaves, in the country of his birth. He knew about the important role his



son was playing to change the economic conditions of the former slaves. While living comfortably at Alstone Lawn, William H Prescod would have learned that Samuel J Prescod was elected on June 6, 1843 as the first Afro-Barbadian to serve in the Colony's House of Assembly, the island's highest elective body, representing the Colony's major city, Bridgetown. For Prescod senior, Cheltenham must have seemed safely distant from Barbados at that time. But was William Hinds Prescod unique? One is bound to ask how many others who made their way to Cheltenham for a comfortable retirement left an equally complex and shadowy history behind them in the colonies.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Jill Waller, 'Alstone Lawn: A noble residence', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal*, 15, 1999, pp. 45-8.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter to author from J V Thorpe, Archivist, Gloucestershire Record Office, Sept. 18, 1995.
- <sup>3</sup> Karl Watson, *The Civilized Island of Barbados, A Social History 1750-1816* (Bridgetown Barbados, Caribbean Graphic Productions, Limited, 1979), p.32.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Barbadian*, October 11, 1848 and the West India, March 5, 16, 16,23, 1835.
- <sup>5</sup> Letter to author from the Keeper of Records, the Honourable Society of Middle Temple, London, December 18, 1980.
- <sup>6</sup> Barbados Archives, Will of William Prescod, entered, 3 January 1815, RB 4/60, pp.92-102.
- <sup>7</sup> Barbados Archives, Marriage of William Hinds Prescod, 29 June 1812, RL 1/6, p 443.
- <sup>8</sup> Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester University Press), pp.147-8; Richard S Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves, The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, New York, W W Norton & Co, Inc.), pp.70-1.
- <sup>9</sup> Barbados Archives, Deed of William Hinds Prescod, 28 November 1837, indentured entered 3 May 1866 R B1 1/333, p.881.
- <sup>10</sup> Hilton Vaughan, 'Samuel Prescod: The Birth of a Hero', *New World Quarterly*, Vol.3, no.1 & 2, 1966-67, p.56 states that Samuel Prescod 'was reputed to have been born for William Prescod, a wealthy landowner in the Leeward parishes.'
- <sup>11</sup> Jerome S Handler and John T Pohlman, 'Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in seventeenth century Barbados', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. XLI, no 3, July, 1984, pp 390-408.
- <sup>12</sup> Glenn O Phillips, 'The Beginning of Samuel J Prescod, 1806-1843: Afro-Barbadian Civil Rights Crusade and Activists', *The Americas*, Vol. XXXVIII, no.3, January, 1982, pp.363-8.
- <sup>13</sup> William Lloyd, *Letters From the West Indies* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1832), p.17.
- <sup>14</sup> *The British and Foreign Anti Slavery Reporter*, no.16 & 17, May 15, 19, 1840, p.1.
- <sup>15</sup> Samuel Jackman Prescod to John Scoble, 1840 correspondence, *The Anti-slavery Papers 1823-1941*, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.



This engraving of the 'Literary and Philosophical Institution, Cheltenham' by 'G P Johnson, Cheltenham' can be dated to the late 1830s-early 1840s. George Phillips Johnson, who died in 1848, was active in the town from at least 1835, when he was at 128 High Street (opposite the Colonnade), and in business as a general engraver, including copper-plate, letter-press and lithographs (*Cheltenham Chronicle*). In 1836, he published *Cheltenham Displayed in a Series of 18 Views* – not including this one. Johnson's last dated production was in 1846, when 42 more of his engravings appeared in his *New Historical and Pictorial Cheltenham and County of Gloucester Guide*. In 1841, the CLPI paid R E Marshall £12 11s 7d for ironmongery: could this be the railings shown here? Belfast House, to the right in this engraving, is very similar to its appearance in Rowe's 1845 guide.

*Illustration by courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum*

# The Cheltenham Literary & Philosophical Institution, 1833-60 – Part 2

JEAN LACOCK

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THE MAIN *raison d'être* of the Cheltenham Literary & Philosophical Institution (CLPI) was to offer residents and visitors knowledge of literature and science, but it did not have a monopoly in this. During its existence a number of organisations with similar aims were founded in Cheltenham and met with varying degrees of success. The Institution members had to decide on their relationship with them.

In spite of the Victorian attitude that the estate of the lowly was God-ordained, as expressed in 'All things Bright and Beautiful', there were members concerned about the need to educate the lower orders of society. Their opinions can be found in reports of meetings. Dr Conolly argued for 'rational entertainment and instruction to all classes in place of frivolous pastimes'. Dr Crombie believed that if the mind is not employed 'The mechanic and the labourer resort to the alehouse, thus thousands not having resources within themselves seek for amusement in degrading and vicious habits'. Others feared such education. Dr Lardner predicted that the lower strata would seize information and would break into a higher class, causing disruption (unless the upper levels of society grasped knowledge too).

A Mechanics' Institute was set up in Albion Street in 1834 for 'operative' classes and persons friendly to the enlightenment of the people – one of the 700 or so founded nationwide. In comparing these, Dr Colin Turner has described Cheltenham's as democratically run, concentrating on science and genuinely concerned with working people. It began under middle-class patronage, e.g. George Rowe was one of the founding committee, and several CLPI members lectured there, but radicalism and an increasingly political agenda revealed great differences between the societies. The Mechanics' Institute petered out after the Holyoake affair in 1842 (see Hart, *History of Cheltenham*, pp. 205-6).

The Athenæum, a new literary and scientific society, was set up in March 1835 in Portland Street, with the aim of becoming a force in educating all classes. Its founders disagreed with the partisan activity at the Mechanics' Institute and determined to avoid politics and religion. It offered a cheaper rate for membership and lectures at 1s. for non-members. There must have been some hostility, for the *Cheltenham Free Press* to complain of petty jealousies and personal animosities between members of the three societies. However, it is clear that some members of the CLPI, such as E Wells, G Rowe, and Dr T Wright, were lecturing to all three. This Athenæum was short-lived (although yet another society took the name in 1856).

The Church of England's Working Men's Association was established for church members in 1839 by the Revd Francis Close and other clergymen. Meetings were to be held in St George's Place, with instruction by lectures, including ones on literature and science. Sometimes these were given by CLPI members, as when Dr Wright spoke on 'Evidences of

Design in the Animal Kingdom'. Not surprisingly lecture subjects were often on religious themes or the history of religion. The insistence on an exclusively Anglican membership met with some criticism in the town.

For some months in 1844 a literary club was held in the Brunswick Hotel where topics were discussed each Thursday. In December it was dissolved by the members as most had enrolled in the list of supporters for a proposed Cheltenham Institute. The promoter of this new association was Dr Disney Thorp, president of the CLPI, supported by other members – W H Gomonde, Revd A Morton Brown, and Dr Wright – in the belief that it would answer the needs of those whose circumstances or principles prevented them from joining the CLPI or the Church of England Association. That is, men whose financial or social position debarred them from the former or whose religion from the latter. No sectarian or political controversy was to be allowed. A temporary reading room was opened at 2 Clarence Street (later Rees' Library) from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. In particular this institute was intended for those engaged in commercial, professional and mechanical occupations, especially the assistants whose hours of work were meant to be curtailed by the adoption of earlier closing times for the town's shops from November 1844.

The two other societies were forced to consider change. Having already substituted 'Church of England Reading Association' for its original name, Francis Close's society altered its constitution, to keep an Anglican management committee but not an exclusively Anglican membership, in spite of its religious predisposition. A new reading room and library in Regent Street, at the back of the diocesan schoolroom, was opened with lectures and classes available. Membership cost 6s per annum. The CLPI council felt it had to meet the circumstances of the times by agreeing to charge assistants half-price for attendance at a full course of instruction. Membership remained exclusive!

By early 1845 there were about 300 members of the new institute and doubts were being expressed about the desirability of having this institution and the CLPI with similar activities. Amalgamation was soon discussed, and took place in March 1845. Those in favour rejoiced in the fact that the CLPI would gain 296 new members – a few at the one guinea subscription rate, and the majority paying 10s for evening membership, after work. It was hoped that a great amount of energy and zeal would be brought as well. Others feared that the united institute would degenerate into a common newsroom and circulating library, and that the ten-shilling members might be able to outvote the 1- and 2-guinea subscribers. A Mr Cotes was afraid that after the ten-shilling assistants, there would be five-shilling apprentices and two-and-sixpenny subscribers of lower grade still. So much for newspaper editorial hopes that the spirit of exclusiveness in the institute would be banished!

For a while, the CLPI offered a room in its Promenade building as a venue for the Church of England Reading Association's lectures. This led to complaints of overcrowding. Trouble arose when Francis Close gave a Sunday evening lecture on Roman Catholicism as a false religion. A Roman Catholic member of the CLPI tried to object, was hissed by the audience, told to hold his tongue and that he was there by courtesy and permission, not right, and would be turned out if he persisted in speaking. No discussion was allowed under Association rules.

Within two years, the CLPI members who had opposed amalgamation with the Cheltenham Institute claimed it had failed. Henry Davies in the *Cheltenham Looker-On* declared that it had never produced any advantage to either society but on the contrary had



caused discord and unpleasantness. Many of the young men gained as subscribers had soon left. The full earlier closing of shops had not been implemented. This undoubtedly affected attendance but some blamed the manner in which the assistants had been treated by other members. About 50 of the higher rate subscribers had also refused to rejoin. When the council tried to abolish the ten-shilling membership, Mr S C Harper believed it was due to the loss of these members – and suggested that the gentlemen had resigned because shopmen would be allowed to come and sit beside them. The supporters of reversion were regarded as ‘this little knot of exclusiveness’, a clique who called their opponents, the tradesmen and their assistants ‘the snobs’, according to the radical press. Friction and heated meetings continued for months with dissolution and remodelling threatened.

It took until October 1847, after a charge of council, for a decision to be taken ‘to legislate for privileges in the institution rather than for classes’ and a new system was agreed. Privileges meant right of admission to public lectures, the library of reference and circulation, reading rooms and museum, with any advantages offered. Annual subscribers could choose to pay two guineas for all these, with the right to take two family members to lectures. Twenty-five shillings bought all privileges and the right to take one female family member to lectures. One guinea gave the subscriber all privileges, whereas 15s allowed for admission after seven p.m. only. Once more some objected to the fact that the lowest subscription carried equal voting rights with the others.

Small wonder that in December 1848, after the failure of an earlier attempt from 1839-45, a new Working Men’s Association/Institute was formed ‘for intellectual recreation and improvement’ of its members. It would be cheap and free from narrow restrictions, politics and religion. Reasons given were that the bulk of workers were shut out of the Church of England Reading Association by restrictive membership or bias, or from the CLPI by its costliness and by the fact that working men did not like mingling with gentlemen in a meeting room. The new society opened three rooms – one in the upper part of Bath Road, one in Tewkesbury Road, and one in Regent Street for members paying sixpence a month. Again CLPI stalwarts lectured to the new society. In February 1853, Henry Dangerfield noticed a printed bill in a shop window and discovered he was named as its president and was to lecture on the pyramids! Soon the Regent Street premises were listed in a town directory as those of the People’s Institute.

Claiming to have been founded in 1854 as the Working Men’s Improvement Association, The Athenæum opened under its new name in May 1856 at No 1 Crescent Place, near the Carlton Hotel. Dr Humphries, headmaster of the grammar school, was its president.

In their own building Lit & Phil members, including Revd C H Brunby (principal of the Normal College), Dr Wright and Mr Ronna of the grammar school, lectured to working men in three series from 1854 to 1856. There was either no charge, or a nominal 6d for five lectures on scientific and literary subjects – with exhortations to self-improvement!

Soon the *Looker-On* reported that the three institutions – the CLPI, the Church of England Reading Association, and the Athenæum – were in great difficulty through lack of financial support. CLPI members agreed to give fortnightly lectures to the Athenæum, with free use of the room in the autumn of 1857. This Athenæum closed in 1858 and became a working men’s club in 1859. (Another Athenæum was to arise in 1870; it expired from debt

in 1875-76). The Church of England Reading Association meanwhile had rallied briefly, but was dissolved because of lack of support in 1861.

No evidence has been found to suggest that the CLPI council believed it was in much competition for members from these societies, even though it always needed more subscribers. A more obvious competitor was the Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club, formed in 1846. The *Geological Curator*, vol 5 no 5, listed geological collectors and museums in Cheltenham. Biographies and collection details are interwoven with the story of the CLPI. Dr H Torrens described how the Field Club took over and expanded the original role of the CLPI in the local encouragement of natural science, particularly in the organisation of field trips. The coming of railways revealed new sections of rock and the lines provided the means to visit them and other places of interest for geology, natural science, and archaeology. Dr Torrens argued that the days of the CLPI were shortened by such competition. Rivalry for membership must have meant loss of subscriptions and lack of funds which would have hindered progress and success. It does not seem that the institution attempted to run field trips or compete overtly. The impression gained is that the CLPI continued in its own way, concentrating on lectures and its museum.

At various times the local newspapers offered other reasons for its decline. To a large extent, they bore out the complaint of the council that there was public indifference. The conservative *Cheltenham Chronicle* ascribed the society's 'languishing condition' to the fact that only a very small section of the community had the practical interest in literary and scientific culture. However, other papers also made statements – about inefficient management, discordant opinions, pettiness, arrogance, and acrimonious displays!

Dissatisfaction among members was not surprising. Any committee of management with recurring financial constraints and crises would have found it difficult to spend much on the facilities offered, in order to make the Institute more attractive. The building, praised in the *Cheltenham Magazine* of 1836-37 for its system of using heat from hot water under very high pressure, so avoiding heat loss through chimneys, was by 1842 described as having for a reading room 'a little cell with naked floor and lime-washed walls', a gloomy vestibule and a cheerless hall. Lack of comfort and convenience was blamed for loss of members. Lectures were said to be poorly attended, so some gentlemen would have preferred less space in the lecture theatre and more agreeable reading and meeting areas. The council was accused of inertia, mismanagement, and weakness.

Apart from the lack of money, one reason appears to have been the way the governing body, the council, was formed. Dr Disney Thorp who tried valiantly to save the CLPI and who set up the Cheltenham Institute, described it as the most exclusive and restrictive body that ever governed a society. He later explained that this criticism was not of individuals but of the rule that put ten proprietors on the council. Some of these gave little or no support and others were accused of lack of vision and openness to change. Certainly a group fought hard to keep foremost what they believed were the real purposes of the institution – the lectures and museum. They resisted attempts to encourage the use of a newsroom and circulating library or to lower subscription rates. So they were accused of 'absurd exclusivism' and were attacked as a literary and scientific clique who wanted a club for the favoured few. They claimed their opponents were discontented rebels, showing envy and malice, who wanted to destroy the true nature of a literary and philosophical society. Publication of their disagreements could not have helped any membership drive! The conservative papers – the *Cheltenham Chronicle* and the *Cheltenham Journal*, the liberal *Examiner*, and the radical

*Free Press* obviously found good copy in the problems and discord. At times all were at odds with the institution.

The *Free Press* attacked James Buckman's 1842 *Guide to Pittville* (1s 6d) as issued to publicise the sale of his preparation of Cheltenham salts. Buckman replied by claiming that the editor, Mr Harper, would have offered 'as many lies in favour of the book, as are now wilfully and maliciously published against it' if only he had paid for an advertisement in the paper. As honorary secretary of the CLPI, Buckman refused to advertise its meetings in the *Free Press* and had placed printing orders with tenants of his – the 'prostitution of official influence' according to Harper. The row was taken to the institution council, which declared the remarks about Buckman to be highly objectionable, though not enough to warrant the ban on advertisements. Claiming they could not afford to pay all the papers, they decided that future placards and circulars were to be shared equally between printers.

The paper continued to report on lectures but in December 1842 took the opportunity to print a letter signed 'A Brother Shareholder' which attacked another honorary treasurer, Mr Henry Davies, for 'low insult and indecent conduct' and questioned his honesty, describing him as a needy tradesman (Davies published the *Cheltenham Looker-On*, the *Cheltenham Annuaire*, and town guides). A little over a year earlier, Davies had featured in a court report when charged with assault on an institution member, whom he had first accused of letting off the fire alarm and then had forcibly ejected from the premises. The magistrates fined him 2s 6d with costs. Apparently the alarm was attractive to youths and at times the institution had to have a policeman there!

The *Examiner* in November 1844 gave another dispute some prominence when an early plan to make the library a public one was marred when the president, Dr Thorp, was accused by W H Gomonde (the succeeding president) of acting from 'unworthy and personal considerations'. This matter was soon smoothed over by conciliatory statements.

Much more copy was given to the press at the end of 1847 by the Wilkinson affair (see Hart, *History of Cheltenham*, pp 227-9). The Revd W F Wilkinson, theology tutor at Cheltenham College, had been asked to propose a vote of thanks after two lectures given to the CLPI by George Dawson, a radical nonconformist minister from Birmingham. The college directors considered this suggested approval of Dawson's ideas and character and expressed strong displeasure. Wilkinson resigned. Whereas the *Looker-On* supported the right of directors of a private institution to act as they saw fit, the *Chronicle* considered this action a great injustice. There was much lobbying on Wilkinson's behalf and he was eventually able to accept a living in Derby.

A more domestic row was reported in the *Journal* and the *Free Press* in March 1848 when the Revd A Morton Brown referred to the removal of chess-boards by Mr Baynham Jones in terms that were construed to imply theft. He later carefully described it as a most unwarrantable proceeding, rather than a criminal act!. Harsher words were quoted after the 1850 AGM when Mr F Binckes contended that the management had perverted the institution into an association for the propagation of class doctrine and had carried out class legislation. This attack was due to the provision of newspapers, all of a liberal tendency, when a request to purchase the fashionable *Morning Post* had led instead to the introduction of the *Economist*. Binckes' claim was vehemently denied by the council – one of whom described political feeling as the 'canker worm of this town'.

In the institution's latter years, letters of criticism were printed in the papers. One to the *Examiner* from 'A Visitor' in September 1856 claimed the CLPI was about to expire, following the closure of a similar institute in Leamington Spa – these events being considered symptoms of a general national regression. The author blamed the failure of the wealthy gentry to set an example, to mediocre lectures and the preference of audiences for buffoonery rather than good useful instruction! In contrast, the letter said, Plymouth's institute attracted a thousand people to its lectures, two or three times weekly.

The following March, a correspondent called 'Vindex' wrote to the *Journal* that lectures in Cheltenham were given to the chairman, a few council members, and empty benches. The library of reference was described as 'the most heterogeneous catalogue of dust-smothered volumes, notoriously unused'. He contended that the council had been asleep and swamped by rival institutions. His remedy would be to improve the reading room or sell the property. A few months later, 'Vindex' decried the lack of funds, general discontent, and gradual decay, and advocated turning the whole building into a library (Cheltenham was not to have a public library supported by the rates until 1888). The *Examiner* itself described the CLPI in 1857 as subservient to the interests of a few individuals and claimed it must be reformed on a more comprehensive basis.

What the council did in the last few years was to work hard on the lecture programme. They battled against financial weakness. They tried having a separate department for newspapers with its own subscription, and having no newspapers. While hoping vainly for endowments, they planned the sale of new shares to enable them to extend, improve and repair the building, but failed to gain much support. The personal efforts of a few members produced some successes. The most notable was when the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its annual conference in Cheltenham in 1856. The institution's lecture room was arranged as a geological museum which was described as the best local collection ever exhibited at any meeting of the association and unequalled in London and Paris. Alas for the CLPI which was judged by another correspondent to have received 'a halo of departing glory and a transitory lustre' from the event.

Yet the council continued to hope to rally support and form a reference and circulating library for the town. In 1860, they were forced to give up the struggle, in spite of what were judged 'the most strenuous and devoted efforts of the executive' in the last years. The institution had shown a 'spasmodic semblance of vitality' in its 27 years but its activities had not had a wide enough appeal. In spite of Cheltenham's growing reputation as the home of education, closure became inevitable. The Promenade building was returned to the trustees and offered for sale to the town commissioners for use in carrying on municipal business.

At first by a majority vote, the commissioners agreed to pay not more than £3,000 - £1,500 down, with a bank loan if necessary, and the rest by instalments. It was soon pointed out that four shareholders of the building had voted in favour. Opposition mounted and resulted in a list of nearly 1,000 people against the purchase, with signatories including magistrates, gentry and shopkeepers. The building was valued at £2,780 and another £300 would be required to purchase additional land behind it, where a corn exchange and town hall could be built. The contents of the museum and library would be given to the town. The commissioners then decided not to pay more than £2,150, which would have reduced the payments to the 40 shareholders, of whom ten refused to accept. At auction, £2,500 was the final bid and the building was subsequently resold at that price, plus £275 for the land, to Mr



Stucke, tailor, of Clarence Street, for the erection of two shops. Furniture, portable gas burners, and demolition materials were later offered for sale.

Two handsome shops and dwelling houses with workshops behind were designed by Henry Dangerfield, town surveyor. They were described as 60ft high from the ground floor, with front elevation of cement with enriched cornices, strong curves and architraves and plate glass sashes with patent iron shutters. Jearrad, the institution’s architect, lived to see the building demolished but died before the new ones were erected. Cheltenham had lost ‘the classic front, the simple unadorned pediment ... and air of classic beauty in the leading thoroughfare of the town’. It had even lost the chance of having the building used as a Roman bath, as a letter in Hale’s *Musical Record* had earlier suggested that the shareholders spend a few hundred pounds on conversion for cleanliness, purity and health! Today the town’s main library foyer presents inhabitants and visitors with details of many societies – but not the one housed in a Promenade temple.

Cheltenham’s was one of those institutions that were lost in a relatively short time, whereas others such as Gloucester’s continued much longer through the nineteenth century, before becoming redundant after competition from more specialised societies and the more ready availability of information and courses of instruction.

A few continue today. Newcastle-on-Tyne’s, founded 1797, still has its own library. The Yorkshire Philosophical Society, founded 1822, now caters for those interested in archaeology, conservation, ecology, heritage, science, technology and wildlife. Cheltonians can pursue knowledge of these subjects in a variety of societies, without registering the loss of the ‘Lit and Phil’.

Sources: as Part I, plus those mentioned in the text.

N.B. You are requested to produce this Bill when you pay the annual tax.

**PROPERTY AND INCOME TAX.**

**FOR THE SOUTH SIDE OF CHELTENHAM.**

<p>Mr. <i>W. G. ...</i> Dr.</p> <p>Two Quarters' Property Tax, granted by Schedule A, due the 20th day of September, 1847</p> <p>Two Quarters' Property Tax, granted by Schedule B, due the 20th day of September, 1847</p> <p>Two Quarters' Income Tax .....</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">£.</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">s.</td> <td style="width: 33%; text-align: center; font-size: x-small;">d.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">14</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> </tr> </table>	£.	s.	d.		14	2
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Received the *10* day of *Oct* 1847

*S. Onley* COLLECTOR. £

Notice is hereby given—That the Collector cannot call more than once after this Notice, for the amount due; therefore those who omit paying when demanded, or do not send it to his Office, cannot feel themselves aggrieved at his putting his warrant in execution to enforce the same.

The Collector will attend at his Office, Hewlett's Close, Hewlett Street, every Thursday, from Ten till Four.

**S. ONLEY, SEN., COLLECTOR.**

Appeal Day, 1st October, 1847, at the Public Office.

Bills, bills, bills.... the CLPI’s half-yearly property tax demand, 1847

# A History of 'The Priory', Cheltenham

OLIVER BRADBURY

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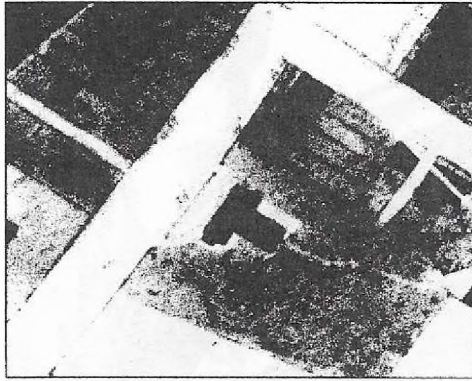
IN 1961 Gwen Hart swiftly demolished the local myth that the imposing Regency house known as The Priory, in London Road, stood on the site of an eighth century priory. She wrote: 'It may be stated at once that there is no connection between this Regency building and the ancient Priory known to have existed in the town in the eighth century.'<sup>1</sup> We do not know who chose the name or for what reason, but the fact is that it does not predate the 1820s, when this Regency building assumed the form that most remember it by, and which has been echoed in the 1999 apartment block that today occupies the site, west of the junction of Priory Street and London Road. Baseless as the the claim of a thousand-year history may be, the 1820s Priory was however not the first building on this spot; it replaced (or was developed from) a late 18<sup>th</sup>-century residence, The Cottage, also quite a large building in its day. Surprisingly for such a landmark building, the history of The Priory seems never to have been set down.

As The Priory's deeds have disappeared, its history has to be reconstructed from other sources. Let us start in the year 1824 when we have the first secure mention of The Priory in writing. This is to be found in the Cheltenham Manor Court Books, which record a transfer of copyhold between John Harvey Ollney and Thomas Gray of 'all that messuage or Tenement or Mansion House heretofore called the Cottage but now commonly called or known by the name of the Priory situate at the top of the Town of Cheltenham ... together with Garden or Pleasure Ground adjoining the same as the same Garden or pleasure Ground is now separated from other parts of the Ground and premises separated late attached to the said Mansion House and which said Messuage Garden pleasure Ground and premises ... lately bought and purchased by the said John Harvey Ollney of and from Thomas Gray'.<sup>2</sup> So we now know that The Priory was previously known as 'the Cottage'.

In 1788 William Tunnicliff noted 'A Little way out of *Cheltenham*, on the left, is *the Cottage*, the seat of Richard Cox, esq.'<sup>3</sup> While 'The Cottage' is scarcely a unique label, there was no other gentleman's residence of the name at this end of town, and there can be little doubt that the same building is referred to. The sequence of ownership/tenancy is incomplete, but we may note that by the 1800 Directory, it is the 'Hon. Mrs. Leeson' who is listed at The Cottage.<sup>4</sup> The 1806 map notes the building as 'Cox's Cottage, now C Gray'; and at a Cheltenham Manor Court of 1816, 'the Cottage' passed from Thomas Gray to Ollney.<sup>5</sup> So we appear to have reasonable evidence of a dwelling on the site since 1788. However the 1788 dwelling would not have been the building we were familiar with as The Priory. The Priory we knew, at least stylistically, was an early c19<sup>th</sup> building and not a late c18<sup>th</sup> creation. This is partly borne out by contemporary newspaper descriptions and maps.



While the early maps lack detail, the representation of the structure on the 1806 map (*left*) - echoed, perhaps uncritically, on the 1819 map - shows a largish L-shaped structure. By the 1820 map, however, the outline has changed to the T shape broadly retained for the rest of the building's life.



*Previous page:* Detail from 1809 edition of 1806 map, showing unnamed L-shaped building east of Upper Turnpike (London Road-Hewlett Road junction).

*Left:* Detail from 1820 Post Office map, rotated to same alignment, showing what has become a T-shaped building, with a crescent drive on the London Road frontage, and extensive grounds to the rear.

The fullest physical description of The Priory known is from sale particulars in the *Cheltenham Journal* of 20 October 1828. Here it is described as: 'All that CAPITAL MESSUAGE or MANSION HOUSE, called "THE PRIORY" late the residence of Charles Henry Marshall, Esq. with the PLEASURE GROUND adjoining.' It goes on:

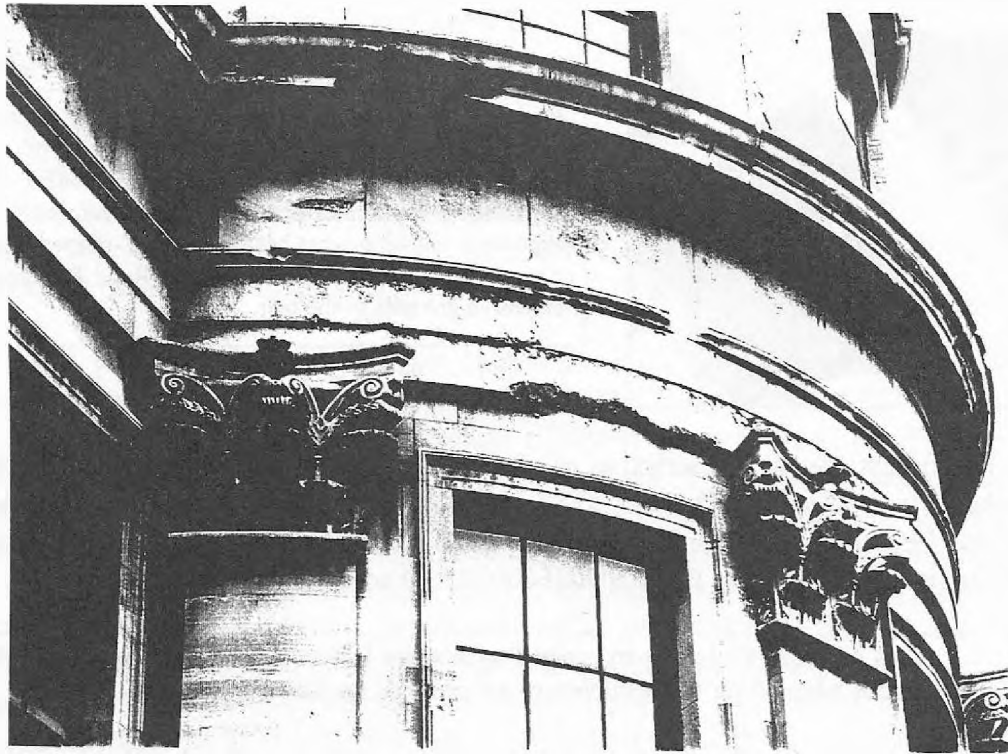
This MANSION has been erected within the last three years in the most substantial manner, and is adapted for the residence of a Family of the first eminence.

It contains, on the basement, a roomy kitchen, scullery, larder, laundry, butler's pantry, wine and beer cellars, and every domestic office; - on the ground floor a handsome vestibule, (from which springs an elegant staircase with fancy iron balustrade and mahogany continued rail and oak stairs,) a breakfast parlour, 22 feet 8 inches by 17 feet 6 inches, fitted with statuary marble chimney pieces, enriched cornices and flowers; a dining room, 30 feet by 17 ft. 6 in. connected by folding doors, with a drawing room of 22ft. 8 in. by 17ft. 6 in. opening through French windows<sup>6</sup> to a neat lawn; and the rooms are each fitted up with marble chimney pieces; - on the first floor, a drawing room, 30 ft. by 17 ft. 6 in. and 12 ft. 7 in. high, fitted up with statuary marble chimney pieces, and enriched cornices and flowers; with two spacious lofty, and airy bed rooms, adjoining on each side, and a dressing room, each leading from a spacious landing place; - and on the second floor, six excellent bed rooms.

The elevation of the House is of a most commanding description, is fronted with stone, and forms a very elegant feature on the entrance to Cheltenham by the London Road.

The Premises are fitted up in the best style with plate glass in the principal windows, and are replete with every convenience.

The most curious and illuminating point to arise out of this description is 'This MANSION has been erected within the last three years'. This would suggest that it was built in 1825. Stylistically 1825 would be a perfectly acceptable date for The Priory, but we have a conundrum as the building is unambiguously depicted on the 1820 Post Office map. I suggest that 'erected' should be interpreted as 'substantially restyled'. As pointed out above, the building is present on the 1819 map, but that of 1820 is the first secure topographical depiction where it is indexed 'Priory'. The 1820 map shows a large garden on all sides of the house, especially at the back towards the north-west. It in fact stretched back as far as the present Hewlett Place, but already by Merrett's 1834 map the north-east end of the garden had been sold off, and built on with a terrace of four houses still extant in Priory Street. In fact by the 1820s the Priory was being encroached on three sides, its London Road elevation by the plugging of the gap between it and neighbouring Priory Buildings. Likewise a strip of land to the east was sold off by at least 1825 (Griffith's map)

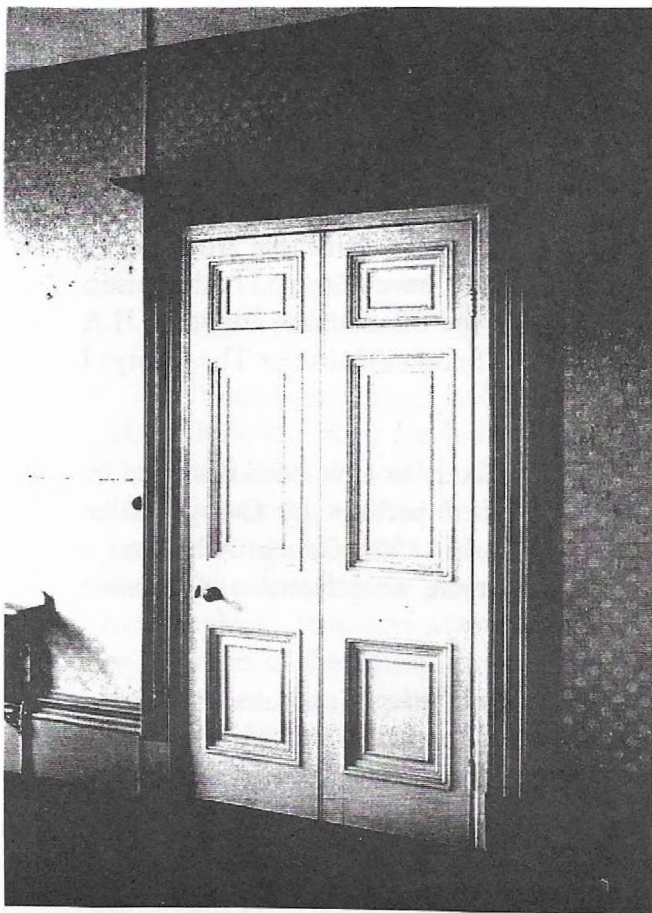
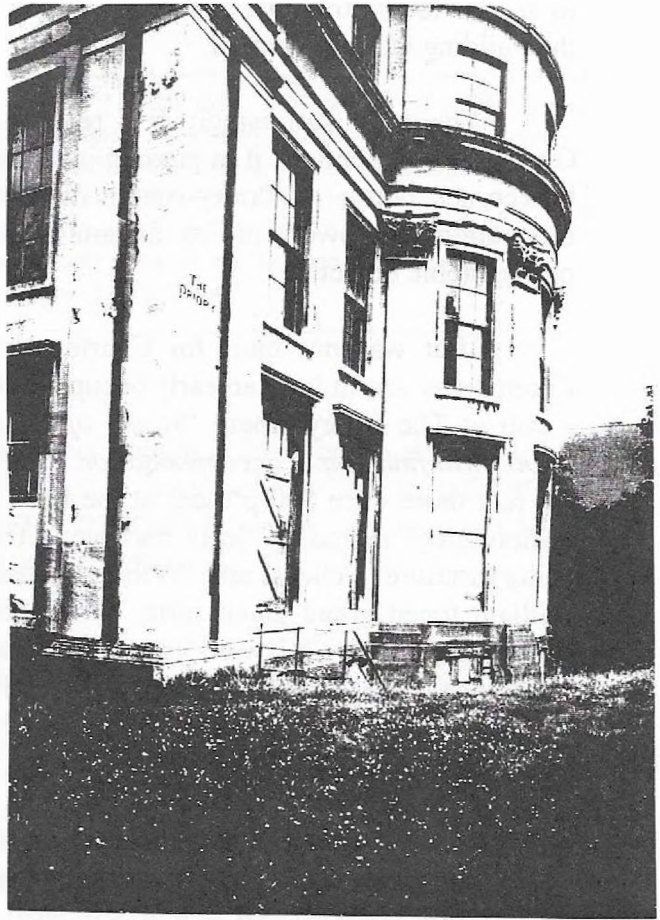


These illustrations are taken from a series of photographs taken of The Priory in its final days, just before redevelopment. *This page*: the eastern elevation, facing Priory Street, with detail of the bow window. *Facing, clockwise from top left*: the rear view, looking south; the south-east angle, from the London Road; the London Road frontage, showing the two front doors; an interior door.

*Reproduced with the permission of the GRO (ref D3867 IV/35 DNC 5-26)*









to accommodate the intended Priory Street. Despite these changes the intrinsic integrity of the building was not harmed.

There are surprisingly few references to the house within Cheltenham histories. George Rowe mentions it in passing in 1845: 'and the building at the extremity of the view, the corner house of Priory-street, the residence of Mrs. Broughton.'<sup>7</sup> The incidental illustration in Rowe with its ungainly perspective appears to be the only known pre-photographic depiction.

If it was not built for Charles Henry Marshall, he as Cheltenham's Master of Ceremonies was at least an early occupant in the 1820s. In September 1827 Marshall hosted a ball at The Priory where '*by the opening of Seven Large Rooms, his Friends and the Public will find ample accommodation...*'<sup>8</sup> An indication of The Priory's scale or capacity is the fact there were 800 present at the ball.<sup>9</sup> Marshall appears to have furnished the house sumptuously, including 'lofty mahogany four post and other bedsteads, with moreen and chinz furniture ... cheval and Wellington glasses of large dimensions ... Grecian couches ... a brilliant toned grand piano forte, by Broadwood ... polished steel fenders and fire irons; richly cut glass'.<sup>10</sup> It is well known that Marshall entertained the Duke of Wellington here in August 1828 – not long before The Priory went on the market in October. Their connection appears to have been that Marshall had served with the Duke in the Peninsular War in Spain.<sup>11</sup>

What is still not clear after much research is whether The Priory was in fact two properties within one shell, as there were two entrance porches on the London Road.<sup>12</sup>

There are few clues to The Priory's architect. Bryan Little, complaining about its imminent demolition, took the opportunity to hazard a guess. He wrote: 'There is, however, one consideration which may point to The Priory's architect, and which is in any case of interest. The eastern, narrow elevation of The Priory is extraordinarily like the main frontage of a house in the Promenade at Clifton, Bristol, first known as Sundon House, but now called Fanum House and used as the regional office of the Automobile Association. The giant order of Corinthian pilasters, the round-bowed central element of the front with an attic storey above the pilasters, and the handling of the windows - all these are so much like the features seen in The Priory that the same architect may have designed both houses. Other buildings of this period in Clifton are known to be by the Cheltenham architect, H A Underwood.<sup>13</sup> In default of documentary proof (whether for Sundon House or The Priory) I would hazard the suggestion that Underwood was the man.'<sup>14</sup>

I would largely agree with Little's surmise that it is likely to have been designed by an Underwood. My own conjecture is that it was designed perhaps by George Allen Underwood, who was working in Cheltenham during the early 1820s. George Allen was a pupil of Sir John Soane and particularly inside The Priory there were features of possible Soanean derivation.

The Priory was an accomplished Greek-Revival design crisply executed in dressed stone over a brick shell. One reason why The Priory was so successful is that it responded so effectively to its corner site. As Bryan Little put it: 'Standing as it does, a most seemly and accomplished terminal to the westward vista along Oxford and Priory Parades, The Priory is a perfect foil to the plainer architecture of its neighbours.' The arresting feature was the

powerful full-height bow on Priory Street with its giant Corinthian pilasters, and their richly carved, deeply undercut capitals. The use of the Corinthian order successfully contrasted with the Greek Doric order used within the London Road porches with their columns *in antis*. These columns were fluted and supported miniature pediments. The fluted giant Corinthian order employed on both elevations supported a deep entablature. The masonry throughout was excellent - note how the acanthus leaf capital meets the window frame in plate [ ]. The Priory's garden elevations were not so tidy with their riot of windows and drab cement render.

The Doric porch led into the 'handsome vestibule'. This consisted of a new order - four free-standing Ionic columns supporting projecting entablatures. In the centre of this arrangement was a large ceiling rose. This vestibule arrangement is similar to Sir John Soane's at Aynho Park, Northants., designed in 1800 with its four Ionic columns in similar positions to The Priory.<sup>15</sup> The similarities are continued with the employment of a door between the columns on either side of the vestibule as one goes in. However tenuous it might be, George Allen Underwood might have seen Soane's 1800 designs as a pupil. At ground floor level beyond the vestibule were various doors and an arched internal window.

The internal *tour-de-force* was the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor landing with its large circular skylight casting an ambient glow and shadows deep into the building.<sup>16</sup> The base of the skylight was enriched with various mouldings including a repeated ball motif - a favourite of Soane's. The penultimate landing consisted of a segmental wall, centrally pierced with a tall arched doorway with fanlight. It is flanked by semi-circular niches perhaps once housing statuary. This arrangement bears some resemblance to a segmental landing composition at St. Margaret's Terrace, Cheltenham, a building attributable stylistically to George Allen Underwood. The stairwell cornice follows the curved well in a streamlined manner with egg and dart, and various minimal mouldings. The overall clean neo-classical lines perhaps bear some debt to Soane's influence.

The accompanying photographs to this article were taken by the Cheltenham architect Robert Paterson in 1963.<sup>17</sup> He took four photographs of rooms within The Priory. One of these was an long airy room within the Priory Street bow with a 'statuary marble chimney piece(s)', 'enriched cornice(s)', and three reeded and shuttered window cases. Other rooms had plain yet elegant white marble fireplaces which had survived institutional use into the '60s. These rooms had plainer cornices compared to the reception rooms and so probably indicate a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> floor existence. An elaborate doorcase was to be found probably on the ground or 1<sup>st</sup> floor with its reeded case and rectangular moulded panels on the door itself. The Priory's elegant yet minimal interior room decoration (when unfurnished) is characteristic of 1820s taste - as we can see the sensational spaces were reserved to the vestibule and stairwell.

During the late c19th The Priory passed from private domestic to a succession of educational/institutional uses [see following article for an example], finally becoming a hostel for student teachers. In 1942 a letter written by a National Monument Record employee noted that: 'The Priory, High Street, is at the moment the property of St. Mary's College, Cheltenham. I believe the room in which Wellington is supposed to have slept in has rather a good ceiling.'<sup>18</sup> However by September 1959 it was on the market, having become redundant as a hostel, but it failed to reach its reserve price at auction. This was the beginning of the end of The Priory; in 1961 demolition was proposed for the vacant

building. This ignited a flurry of protest letters to the *Echo* including ones from the architectural historians Bryan Little and Dr. Nigel Temple. Temple's expressed similar sentiments to Little's, but he noted, poignantly, as early as 1962, 'The first, unofficial, stage of demolition - the breaking of windows - has begun.'<sup>19</sup> Somehow demolition must have been kept at bay for most of the 1960s, but alas physically the building was allowed to reach rock bottom. By December 1967 demolition was planned 'during the next eight weeks', and so it was replaced with the unsightly computer centre and associated offices for Mercian Builders Ltd., of Leamington Spa in 1968.<sup>20</sup>

The Priory was not first rate - the vestibule ceiling rose lacked inspiration - despite decades of applied paint, as did the 'fancy iron balustrade', but alas, these are mere quibbles with a building, which at the end of the day was unbeatable within Cheltenham. In the words of the late David Verey 'it was stupidly demolished in 1968.'<sup>21</sup>

### Acknowledgements

In preparing this article my thanks go to Dr Nigel Temple, Dr Steven Blake, Ken Pollock, Amina Chatwin, Roger Beacham, and James Hodsdon.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Gloucestershire Echo*, 8 December 1961.

<sup>2</sup> GRO D855 ACC 2198, Vol. 1, p. 370.

<sup>3</sup> 'From Cheltenham to Bath', *A Topographical Survey of the Counties, Bath*, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> In 1800 (*Royal Cheltenham & County Directory* with a facsimile of the 1800 Directory, 1872-3, p. 17), there is the following entry: 'Going from the top of the town, to Sandford, on the left hand.'... 'The Cottage, Hon. Mrs. Leeson'. It must be recalled that the road to Bath (now the Old Bath Road) was accessed via the London Road at this point.

<sup>5</sup> GRO D855 ACC 2198, M25, 15/10/1816, p. 473.

<sup>6</sup> These appear to have been two separate fanlit doors on the north-east garden elevation.

<sup>7</sup> *Illustrated Cheltenham Guide*, Cheltenham, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> *The Cheltenham Journal*, 24 September 1827.

<sup>9</sup> *The Cheltenham Journal*, 1 October 1827.

<sup>10</sup> Sale particular of contents: *The Cheltenham Journal*, 27 October 1828.

<sup>11</sup> *Echo*, 26 September 1959, p. 3

<sup>12</sup> The 1855 Old Town Survey appears to have borne out this theory as it indicates a line dividing the property in half. Leila Hoskins' notes held at Cheltenham Boys' College include the following: 'The Priory which was the East-half of Priory House. Later the two houses became one. This was verified by Mr Bayly the auctioneers who said he could see where the two separate houses were originally.'

<sup>13</sup> There appears to be some confusion as to which Underwood Little is referring to. The only Underwood to work in Bristol was Charles Underwood. There was no Underwood with the initials 'H.A.', however George Allen Underwood worked in Cheltenham. There were two Henry Underwoods (not related), but neither worked in Cheltenham or Bristol. See Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1600-1840*, 3rd ed., Yale, 1995, pp. 1000-1.

<sup>14</sup> From Ken Pollock's scrapbook of local demolitions; presumably the *Echo*, undated, but probably early 1960s.

<sup>15</sup> John Summerson *et al*, *Architectural Monographs John Soane*, Academy Editions/St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Reproduced in Cheltenham Local History Society *Journal* 14 1998, p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> GRO D3867 1V/35.

<sup>18</sup> 23 May, letter held at Cheltenham Reference Library.

<sup>19</sup> 'Regency Building in Danger', illustrated protest letter sent to *Country Life*, 1 February 1962, p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> *Echo*, 1 December, 1967.

<sup>21</sup> *Gloucestershire: The Vale and the Forest of Dean*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1991, p. 145.



# Mrs Josephine Butler: Unusual Domestic Snapshots of a Fiery 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Feminist

BEVERLEY GREY

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IN OCTOBER 1999 a new block of apartments was opened in Cheltenham's London Road on the corner of Priory Place. Passers-by may have noticed a gathering on the elegant steps and wondered what was happening there on a noisy Saturday morning. A similar building stood on this spot in Regency times, and back in the 1860s it was used as a house for boys attending Cheltenham College. But sadly in the 1960s this fine building was demolished [*see preceding article*], and an ugly concrete block held the blue commemorative plaque denoting the fact that a Mrs Josephine Butler had lived there. Our gathering was to reattach this blue plaque to the entrance of the fine new 1999 apartment block.

Apart from feminist historians, most people today have forgotten Mrs Josephine Butler, but I have a special interest because she was my great-aunt. Her father, my great-grandfather, was born before the French Revolution; my grandfather Charles Grey was born in the reign of George IV; and his sister Josephine was born in 1828 - being nine years old when Queen Victoria came to the throne. She lived and worked herself to exhaustion throughout those Sixty Glorious Years, finally fading away in the last days of 1906. To us, moving into the next century, death at 78 seems no great age, but reviled and revered in unequal measure at home and internationally, Josephine had become old and wearied fighting the cynicism of that male-dominated Victorian world.

From childhood she and her many siblings had been taught history by their father, who had earlier campaigned against the Corn Laws, worked with Clarkson against slavery, and upheld his kinsman, the Prime Minister Earl Grey, during the battle for the great Reform Act of 1832. The consequences of injustice always faced Josephine's scarily God-centred conscience, and manifested most specifically in her fight for the natural rights of working-class women, who so often had no choice but to support themselves and their children through prostitution.

My father, who was 26 at the death of Queen Victoria, often referred to his 'Sainted Aunt' Josephine, whom he knew well, and as a child I grew up with stories about her - in fact she has lived permanently on my shoulder for most of my life. To such an extent that a couple of years ago I went back to school in my old age to gain a Master's degree at Bristol University - and my dissertation was of course on 'Josephine Butler and her Mission to Reform'. I am now researching to turn this dissertation into a modern biography of Josephine, because she still has a lot of lessons to teach us about injustice, social reform and love of our fellow human beings - however defeated and distressed they may be.

George Butler - Josephine's good, kind, loving and long-suffering husband - was Vice Principal at Cheltenham College for Young Gentlemen in the 1860s. They did not have designated boarding houses then - masters would take a few students into their own homes and the housemaster's wife was influential in the sort of lifestyle the boys had during

termtime. Married in 1852, the Butlers had three boys in quick succession - Georgie, Stanley and Charlie, and the youngest, a pretty little girl called Evangeline, was born in 1858. Throughout her life Josephine had inexplicable times of illness - sometimes almost to death - and was often too ill to take part in life around her. So it is a wonder how she ever coped with her own quite naughty boys and the control of the housekeeping at the Priory. I thought readers might be interested in seeing a few excerpts from a diary written by one of Josephine's older sisters.

Their elderly father, John Grey, was giving up his land agency work for the Crown in Northumberland in favour of his son Charles, and moving to a smaller house, with one of his daughters, 'Poor Fanny' Smytton, as his housekeeper. Charles's wife, Emily Mary, was slowly dying of TB, and five of his six children were soon to follow their mother to the grave; the oldest girl was Hilda, already showing signs of the consumption which carried her off. All members of the large and far-flung Grey family came visiting at Dilston Hall during 1863 to say farewell to their family home, and probably to check that Fanny, scandalously no longer living under her husband's roof, was not exceeding her privileges as a younger daughter. Her diary tells us (she was not great with spelling and punctuation):

'Josey and her four children came from Cheltenham on the morning of the 25th June before breakfast. Of course this was a day of great bustle in the bedroom department, as one party had not vacated before another had to go in, but it was fortunately fine, and we sitting on the lawn were not incommoded by this, and it was contrived that Emily Mary and Josey were a good deal together under the chestnut trees.

Hilda, tho' a good deal older, had been looking forward to meeting her little cousin Eva, and when Eva's German governess, Miss Blumke, in her love of discipline, was calling the bright little roundabout child in, E Mary and I called for a reprieve, that the two cousins might get to know each other. Hilda had been hiding timidly near her Mother and me, as the two known ones, but now stepped quietly forward and frank little Eva, nothing loath, turned to make friends, and thus these two little ones were introduced to spend some short sunny hours near us elder ones on the lawn of dear Grandpapa's house. Hilda, even then not very strong and rather coy, required drawing out. She was refined with deft little maidenly ways and some nervousness of temperament. Healthy, happy, joyous Eva was then the picture of a sturdy, frank, roundabout girl, neatly formed, graceful too, but more solid than her cousin. She looked up at once with such round wideopen honest eyes, which had in them truly nothing of disguise, and an exuberance of sunny hair falling down on her neck.

And thus these children played and got acquainted, with mysterious intuition as only children can. Charlie Butler vibrating between the little girls and his elder brothers; inclination often leading him to the soft little girls, a sense of importance and imitation drawing him off to the brothers, then with his brain in a dilemma at times taking refuge doglike with his Mother. But he and Eva were the fast friends. Then we bid goodbye to quiet undemonstrative Emily Mary and her child. When she returned to the house again it was after I left, and she returned as Mistress.'

John's wife had not long died, and because of George Butler's academic timetable and the distance between his work in Cheltenham and the family home in Northumberland, this may well have been Josephine's first visit home since her mother's death.

'On Tuesday 30th I drove with Josey to Corbridge. We called on old Joe and Bessy Dodds, both old friends of Josey's, both lamenting over the changes going on at Dilston, and Josey took a sketch of dear Mama's grave. Papa and Josey were a good deal together during intervals of other occupations, and it seemed a great comfort to them to be together.

The Butler boys had their usual rambles and outside amusements, dear Eva was the only little girl there, sometimes vieing to do what the boys did, sometimes playing beside her Mama or me, sometimes being accompanied and superintended by the governess; always a joyous, bright little thing, claiming sympathy in an outburst of engrossment in her own favorite occupations, but not dependent and clinging, then going off again to her own independent devices.

Then came our last quiet day at Dilston, all together - the last unbroken day before all was pulled to pieces. This was Sunday, the 5th of July 1863, and a quiet day of thought and feeling it was, without much being spoken, yet all knowing the thoughts occupying the others. There was no forenoon service at Corbridge that day; Papa, George Butler and the boys went to Hexham, Josey and I sat out on the banks and garden, and little Eva also. Such a bright sunny day it was, the little bright haired one as blythe as any, seeming to accord well with the gayly hued flowers, the warbling birds and the shimmering butterflies. I made a wreath of bright red roses as a parting gift from Dilston garden, as mine to dear Mama's grave.



MRS JOSEPHINE BUTLER

George Butler and I drove to Corbridge afternoon service, when I visited Mama's grave. I could not make out whether Papa shrunk from going to the church

and graveyard at this time, a place to him fraught with so many associations, but he spent that afternoon quietly at home with Josey and her children. We none of us liked to press the old man to speak much of passing events, and we cannot tell what might be passing in his mind in his quiet moments. He seemed so quietly towering above us all, and there was much in him it would have seemed almost like desecration to intrude upon. Then came a very quiet Sunday evening, Josey playing to us in the old Dilston drawing room. This was the Butlers' last evening there at Father's home, as they left on the following day.

They too were the first to visit him in his new Lipwood house, coming from Keswick on the evening of Saturday the 1st of August, having been not quite 4 weeks away from us. It must have seemed like magic to them, coming from such a different sphere, to find us so settled there; Papa and I ready to meet them, and the old well-known furniture looking home like and yet strange in a new place. It was lovely weather and a beautiful moonlight night. I remember Josey sitting by the open bay window of her bedroom, looking down on the rose beds and out to the river and quiet woods looking soft in the moonlight, and calling George to enjoy the scene and the fresh pure air and the calm repose. They only knew the place from the railway before, and this was a pleasant first impression, an impression which was never altered, I believe, or lowered.

Then was a pleasant Sunday, our first Sunday there with the innocence of young children and flowers around us, and we spent our Sunday afternoon partly in the usual pleasant summer occupation of eating gooseberries in the garden - those grand luscious ripe gooseberries - an occupation which I remarked Geo Butler fully delighted in. On the Monday, Papa did justice to the neighbourhood and entertained his visitors by taking Geo over the moors to inspect the old Roman Station at Housesteads. They rode off, Papa on tall grey Shaftoe and GB on fat wheezy Bobby; we declared that they looked like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. During this time, as at other times, Josey and I took quiet strolls or sat about on the sloping lawn, sometimes watching the young ones.'

In the following year, 1864:

'I went to Cheltenham on the 22nd March. It was still bitterly cold weather. I found Josey stronger than I expected, tho' still looking delicate, her arm in a sling as she had strained her hand. They had enlarged their number of boarders and there were now 30 boys in the house and a Tutor who sat with the boys in the evening. Georgie and Stanley (the older Butler boys, aged about 11 and 10) had found some friends among the younger boys and I found them improved and leading a more complete schoolboy life, rushing out and in with the others. Georgie had become a capital gymnast, so agile. I was taken to the new Gymnasium to see them at their exercises. Little Charlie (aged 7) took charge of me there one forenoon when the Priory House boys were in.

Charlie and little Eva (then aged 5) were at this time at home under the charge of the German Governess Miss Blumke. Dear little things they were, constantly together, often out and in of the room beside me. I would watch their forms flitting past the windows, or hear their merry bursts of laughter - occasionally they would bring a fat guinea pig to the window to show me.



I found Georgie improved and entering into the school work of boys older than himself. Stanley was very well when I first went; towards the end of my visit he was at home with earache. He has become quite the studious little boy, showing much more application than he was at one time given credit for.

Eva is much the same, developing in all ways. She is very affectionate, clinging about one. It is difficult when there is only one girl among so many boys to prevent spoiling, or on the other hand too much correcting. I am sure she will turn out to have very fine qualities, and she is already getting more sense to manage herself. Josey seems really much better, able to turn more rapidly and cheerfully from one thing to another, and there is a good deal of amusing chaffing and fun going on between her and the boys.

George is very much occupied, and so pleasant, going out in the evening to debating societies, and having young men to read with him, over and above his usual routine of work. I seemed when there to get into such an atmosphere of earnest and healthy life, a sort of sunshine glow of full occupation, filling the heart and mind, and distributing rays of light to those around.

One charmingly busy day we had amongst the youngsters on Easter Eve, when we dyed eggs in a large bare upstairs bedroom, trying to keep a whole tribe of younger ones happy and good, whilst Josey and I were famously tired. It was great fun; some of them had never seen dyed eggs. Miss Blumke was so clever in this, knowing it as a German custom, so happy to return to her old habits. She made grand eggs covered with patches, whilst Georgie and I marked names on large ends of cochineal eggs.

Young Napier went smilingly down the street to get patches, bringing beautiful patterns of Silk ribbons, which he thought were the proper things where ladies were concerned. Helyer and Charlie an off for eggs and brought them up squashed and cracked in their caps, whilst small boys were sprawling and kicking on little iron beds, and looking at specimens, but leaving the labour to us. And little Eva was very happy, trotting from one to another, standing on tiptoe to look at the bright pretty eggs. There were also the usual accompaniments of rags and lemons, butter and soot, dirty paws and greasy plates, filthy towels, cracked eggshells, and burning hands, dirt, laughter and disorder.

In the evening we had amusements for the elders - tall boy came into the drawing room, looking sheepish, dressed as a lady; George joined us, leaving his classics, to play 'snip-snap-snorum-high-cockleorum-jig'; whilst Georgie showed off a magic lantern to great advantage downstairs. We did all we could to make these short holy days happy. Thus passed our Easter even, and thus ended my very pleasant visit to Cheltenham. Then I went out on my adventures more amongst strangers, quite sorry to leave the dear little ones. They were so kind to me, and Charlie and Eva seemed to treat me as tho' I belonged to them.'

Fanny's comments seem almost to be a requiem for little Eva, because later that year, in the original Priory House there was a terrible disaster. Josephine and George came back from a tea party and little Eva ran to welcome them from the nursery on the top floor. She fell over

the bannisters from the top of the stair-well and knocked her brains out at their feet in the hall. She never fully regained consciousness, and this tragedy lasted the rest of Josephine's life, so that she said she could remember it as well in old age as if it happened yesterday. Evangeline's grave is in Leckhampton churchyard, and several times a year I come to clean her up and plant flowers in remembrance (*Directions: straight up from the lychgate, take first little tarmac path right, her cross with white gravel surround, stands on the left of the path towards the big yew tree*)

One of George Butler's nephews, Ralph Butler, wrote in old age a cynical biography which he called *No Moss by Rolling Stone*, in which he recalls some family events: 'I once stayed a night when a small boy with my Mother at a Swiss hotel where the landlord, on learning that my Mother was the sister-in-law and I the nephew of Josephine Butler, refused to take any money from us for our bill. This much impressed my youthful imagination; and, when next I saw Aunt Josephine on our return to England, I told her the story. She seemed pleased. 'But why did he do it, Aunt Josephine?' I asked. 'I expect he admired my work,' said she. 'What is your work, Aunt Josephine?' said I. 'Work for Purity,' she answered. 'Oh that!' said I. I had not the slightest idea what Purity was; but I knew it was something which cropped up frequently in sermons, and was not a thing to be talked about, like the W.C. It was obviously however a worthwhile commodity, if it was good for bed and breakfast for two persons in a foreign hotel. No doubt it was one of those things I should know about 'when I grew up' ... Their daughter when still a child fell from some upper floor of the house where they lived onto the stone floor of the Hall below, and was killed instantaneously. The butler, who was passing through the Hall at the time, could have broken her fall; but he thought it was the boys pelting him from above with pillows. The boys, who were always out of hand, used to drop pillows and cushions on him, when he was bringing the dinner in from the servants' quarters to the dining-room. In the shock of this untoward interruption of her family life Aunt Josephine sought and found relief in the Crusade to which the rest of her life was devoted.'

Most of the commentators on Josephine's life point to this ghastly event as the reason she went on a few years later to campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, which encouraged unjust and physically degrading treatment of women suspected of being prostitutes. In my opinion it may well have generated Josephine's campaigning ardour, in that after Eva's terrible death the Butlers left Cheltenham; George became Principal of Liverpool College, and they had to start a completely new life in a part of the world where they knew nobody. She herself says that she went out into the city to find those even more miserable than she. But there are numerous stories of her disgust with the male-dominated moral and social system before this date. So her propensity for campaigning against the Establishment was already there, it only needed some final trigger to flare into white-hot fury.

Because of the perception we in this amoral time have of the up-tight, joyless Victorians, the general view of Josephine Butler is of a God-centred, humourless fanatic. Indeed this is how she was depicted at the time of her public campaign against the upper-class 'punters' who picked up a girl in the street and next morning acted as magistrate on the bench to condemn her; or those who bought and sold girls of 10 or 11 and transported them to London and Continental brothels. But we have to recall that press and public opinion was formed by just such men, and their womenfolk were mostly kept within doors, many not even knowing that such matters existed until Josephine's voice roused them.

But she was not that sort of sour spinster at all. She and her many brothers and sisters were brought up in a singularly happy home, in daily contact with their God-fearing parents, but allowed an amazing amount of freedom to play and later to ride the countryside unaccompanied. She was not at all the spoil-sport sort of philanthropist we visualise when we think of Victorian do-gooders. She was unusually beautiful with gorgeous hair, dressed in the height of fashion, spoke and read several languages, could paint and play piano to almost professional standards, and had a ringing sense of humour.

A propos her centenary celebration in 1928, another nephew, my father, recalled a visit to her in old age: 'I remember her as a very sweet-faced, yet handsome and strong-faced old lady, with an outrageous sense of humour.. One of my liveliest recollections of her is when a one-man band came along the road (the man played an accordion, a drum on his back, a triangle at his foot, and pan-pipes in his mouth). Aunt Josie went to the door to give him some money, and spoke to him in Italian. The man nearly fell over his instruments trying to explain with his hands how joyous he was at being addressed in his own tongue by a so-understanding nobleness. He marched off to a kind of Hallelujah Chorus on all his instruments and I asked Aunt Josie how she had known he was Italian. 'Oh!' she said, 'there's an Academy for musicians of that kind at Castellamare and I asked him whether he was educated there!' She was a wonderful woman, and heaven must be a much brighter place since she arrived.'

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There are no modern 'critical biographies' of this early feminist and astonishingly un-Victorian campaigner, but the following rather dated studies may prove interesting to those who want to find out more about Josephine Grey, who in 1852 became Mrs George Butler.

- *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, Josephine Butler (1896)
- *Josephine Butler, an Autobiographical Memoir*, George and Lucy Johnson, editors (1913)
- *Josephine Butler, Her Work & Principles and their Meaning for the 20th Century*, Millicent Fawcett & E Turner (1927)
- *A Portrait of Josephine Butler*, A S G Butler (1954) (her grandson; a lovingly partial portrait of Saint Granny)
- *Josephine Butler, Flame of Fire*, E Moberley Bell (1962);
- *A Singular Iniquity: The Campaigns of Josephine Butler*, Glen Petrie (1971)

# The Cheltenham Rifles, 1859-1908

MICK KIPPIN

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A SMALL army is of course much cheaper to maintain than a large one, and the idea of supplementing a small regular army with volunteers in times of national emergency is nothing new. The spirit of volunteering to serve one's country probably goes back as far as King Alfred's demands for all men between the ages of 16 and 60 to defend the country from marauding Danes and Vikings. This idea continued to be used after the Norman Conquest: William the Conqueror and his son William Rufus both turned to volunteer soldiers to help repel invaders from Scotland and Wales.

Britain enjoyed a comparatively long period of peace after Wellington's famous victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, but by 1847 many felt that the threat of an invasion from France was once again very real, and volunteer groups began springing up around the country. Initially they were turned down by the government who did not consider 'amateur soldiers' to be of any military value. However in 1859 the government changed its mind and in a letter dated 12 May, Gen. Peel, the Secretary of State for War, appealed to the Lords Lieutenant of all counties to put forward any plans they might have regarding the establishment of volunteer corps under the Volunteer Act of 1804; although there was to be no financial support from the government and volunteers would have to provide their own uniform, equipment and arms.

Some idea as to why so many people were so keen to enrol as volunteers can be gained from a quotation taken from a sermon preached by the Rev. J G Derrick at a church parade for Cheltenham's Engineer Volunteers in June 1884: 'Why are we Volunteers? .... we are influenced by our historic traditions and by a patriotic desire to form part of the inner line of defence necessary to the national security.' Clearly many people felt the need to be a part of the country's defence against invasion. Perhaps there was also some underlying mistrust in the ability of the regular armed forces to defend their country?

THE  
**CHELtenham LOOKER-ON;**  
*A Note-Book of fashionable Sayings and Doings.*

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No. 1100CVI.      SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1859.      (PRICE 3d.)

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**A PUBLIC MEETING**  
WILL BE HELD AT THE  
**ROYAL OLD WELLS,**  
*At Half-past Two o'Clock,*  
**ON THURSDAY NEXT, THE 2ND OF JUNE, 1859,**  
When the Deputy-Lieutenants will propose that a  
**SELF-SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS**  
shall be raised in Cheltenham, in connexion with other similar Corps about to be raised in other parts of the County.

Cheltenham's first 19th-century volunteer corps was instigated at a meeting held at Royal Old Wells on 2 June 1859 when Lord Ellenborough proposed its formation (see announcement, *left*).

Capt R D Gibney was elected Captain, and he was to serve in this

position until June 1861 when he was appointed Adjutant to the Wiltshire Rifle Volunteers.



The uniform of the Cheltenham Corps was initially grey, with green collars and cuffs, and plumed shakos; the colour was changed to dark green in 1871 and the shakos replaced by busbies. The busby was changed again in 1880 for green cloth spiked helmets to fall in line with the regular army. The official title was 7 Corps, The Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers; Gloucestershire ranked 20th in the county order of precedence.

The number of men in Cheltenham prepared to pay all the costs of uniform and equipment was, at first, very low - perhaps only 17 or 18; but in July 1859 the Government agreed to supply 25 rifles for every 100 volunteers, and this move helped recruiting figures. (This figure was later increased; Volunteer Regulations for 1861 state: 'Every Volunteer Corps is supplied gratuitously with arms from the Government Stores, to the full number of its Enrolled Members, if required.')

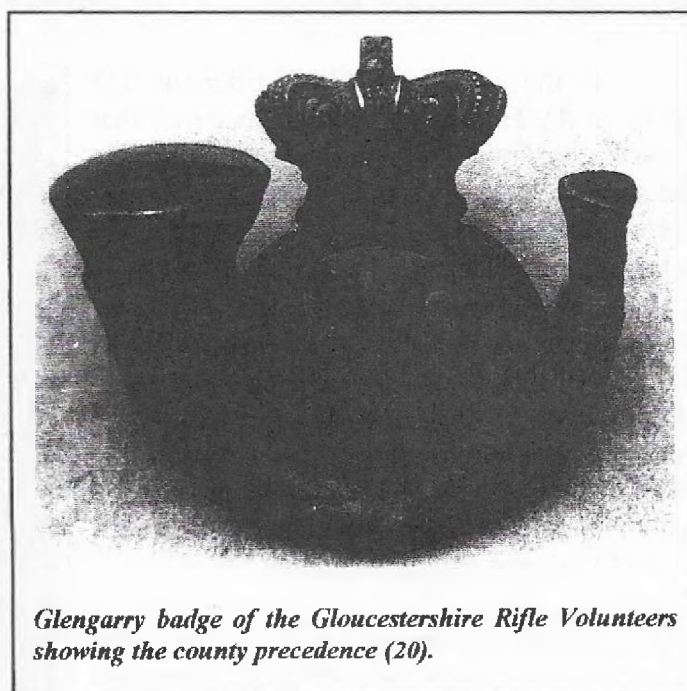
In the same month Lord Ellenborough spoke in the House of Lords of his belief that invasion by France was imminent. Following the successful formation of Cheltenham's first corps of rifle volunteers, others quickly followed - the Cotswold Rifle Volunteers (10 Corps) was formed during February 1860, followed by a corps from the local branch of the Friendly Society of Oddfellows (13 Corps). Agreement between the three Cheltenham corps allowed all members to make use of the shooting range and practice ground at Southam which had originally belonged to 7 Corps, with 10 and 13 Corps paying an annual fee of £25.

Unlike regular and militia units, rifle volunteer corps were not officially permitted to possess colours. Volunteer Regulations for 1863 state: 'Neither Standards nor Colours are to be carried by Corps on parade, as the Volunteer Force is composed of Arms to which their use is not appropriate.' Despite this, colours were presented to the Cotswold Rifle Volunteers at a ceremony in Cheltenham Town Hall in November 1862. They had been purchased by the wife of the Officer Commanding and other officers' wives. A similar ceremony took place on 19 January 1863 when 13 Corps was also presented with colours; in May the Cheltenham College Cadet Company followed suit. Clearly the general view of the official regulation was that while colours could not be carried on parade there was no objection to a volunteer company actually possessing them!



*Private Robert Barrett, 13 Corps, c1867. He is wearing the earliest form of efficiency badge - a ring of silver lace on the right cuff.*

With some 16 volunteer corps scattered throughout the county, some form of higher administrative formation was needed and following a circular issued by the War Office in March 1860, the Lord Lieutenant called a meeting on 11 April 'for raising a fund to meet the expenses of battalionising the various Volunteer Corps in the County.' By June 1860 all volunteer corps in the county, apart from Bristol, had been grouped together as the 1st Administrative Battalion, each corps becoming a company within the battalion. However, with three companies based in Cheltenham many members and especially the local press began to argue for the formation of an independent battalion of rifle volunteers for the town. At yet another meeting at the Plough Hotel in Cheltenham on 7 April 1860 the Lord Lieutenant sanctioned the establishment of a Cheltenham battalion of rifle volunteers if a fourth company could be raised. Recruiting began in earnest for this fourth company, and by 12 May 72 men had put their names forward. Soon 14 (Cheltenham) Company was formed and the idea of a Cheltenham battalion came a little closer. The officers of 10 (Cotswolds) Company felt that an independent battalion for Cheltenham was premature and were opposed to the idea. Despite this opposition, Col Church Pearce was gazetted as a major in 7 Company on 17 October. The *Cheltenham Looker-On* was displeased that no mention was made of a new battalion for Cheltenham. The paper's displeasure was further aroused in November when it was found that 10, 13 and 14 Companies had all been omitted from the monthly Army List; on 3 November the editor wrote, 'Whether the officers will submit to this silent extinction of their respective Corps, we know not. It is evident that there has been some grave misunderstanding between the promoters of the Rifle Movement in Cheltenham and headquarters.' The following week the officers of 10 Company wrote to the *Looker-On* '... the Cotswold Company do not object to forming a portion of the Cheltenham battalion, but they do most assuredly object, one and all, to that complete abolition of their individuality as a Company.'



*Glengarry badge of the Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers showing the county precedence (20).*

Had the editor of the *Looker-On* seen the War Office's circular of 24 March to all Lords Lieutenant, he would have realised that the correct procedure had been followed: 'A consolidated battalion applies to one whose companies are all drawn from the same Town or City. When such a battalion is formed the constituent Corps are to lose their original numbers and continue to serve as either numbered or lettered companies. After consolidation the Corps will be known by the number previously held by its senior company.' So the new Cheltenham Battalion should have been the 7th Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteer Corps.

On 11 December the *London Gazette* carried an order cancelling the previous one and forming 7, 10, 13 and 14 Companies into an administrative battalion. Two administrative

battalions were created in addition to the 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers which was made up of the 10 companies in the City of Bristol Rifle Volunteer Corps. The 1st Administrative Battalion in Gloucester was to be responsible for 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 16 Companies scattered throughout the county and the 2nd Administrative Battalion based in Cheltenham consisted of 7, 10, 13 and 14 Companies. Being only administrative meant that the Cheltenham Battalion did not have as much independence as it would have liked, so the *Looker-On's* campaign for a Cheltenham battalion was something of an own goal.

Shooting was always one of the volunteer movement's major military preoccupations. Each company held an annual rifle competition both for monetary prizes and the privilege of representing one's unit at a county or even National level. In 1860 Sgt Burgh of 13 Company was Cheltenham's only representative at the National Rifle Association's competition at Wimbledon; he won a presentation rifle.

When 7 Company was formed in 1859 Lord Ellenborough provided land at Southam for rifle butts and a practice ground, and after the other Cheltenham companies were raised arrangements were made for them all to use the Southam ground in exchange for an annual fee. However in April 1861 this arrangement seems to have been forgotten and the officers of 7 Company insisted that Southam was their private property.

Col Pearce, as Major-Commandant of the Cheltenham Battalion, arranged for the use of some land on the Charlton Kings side of Leckhampton Hill. This would provide better facilities than at Southam and allow shooting at ranges from 100 up to 1000 yards. By 27 April work on the new ranges was almost complete and they were approved by an inspecting officer in May. Southam was to be handed back to Lord Ellenborough. The following month the War Office unexpectedly prohibited the use of the Leckhampton ranges. Apparently Sir William Russell had raised objections since the range was partly on his land. Luckily the Southam range was still available, and it was adopted by the Battalion Committee for use by all four companies.

Then in September came a further shock: the safety of the Southam range was questioned, since some cottages were within 500 yards of the shooting area. In October the War Office officially condemned the Southam ranges. Following this the possibility of using land on the Gloucester Road which had earlier been the site for the Gloucestershire Rifle Association's competition was investigated. At the end of November 1861 the Cheltenham Battalion of Rifle Volunteers was still without any local range facilities.

Following an inspection in August, the inspecting officer commented that he hoped the strength of the Cheltenham Rifles could be expanded to six companies and not just four. However, by June of 1863 Cheltenham interest in the volunteer movement was beginning to wane. Cheltenham's rifle battalion was now seriously short of officers and attendance at parades was far below the stipulated numbers. Members of the battalion band that Col Pearce had organised were ordered to hand in their instruments, due to their irregular attendance and general indifference to orders. In August the War Office proposed reducing the battalion's four companies to the two that the numbers attending could sustain and to dispense altogether with the battalion staff. 7 and 14 Companies were amalgamated with 10 and 13 and the



resulting two companies were attached to the 1st Admin Battalion in Gloucester, along with the other corps in the rest of the county.

Cheltenham's volunteers were cut back still further in March 1874 when several of members of 13 Company resigned en masse in protest at being ordered to amalgamate with 10 Company. Although they resigned from the rifle volunteers, these members had no wish to leave the volunteer forces and they elected to try and join either the artillery or the engineer volunteers in Gloucester.

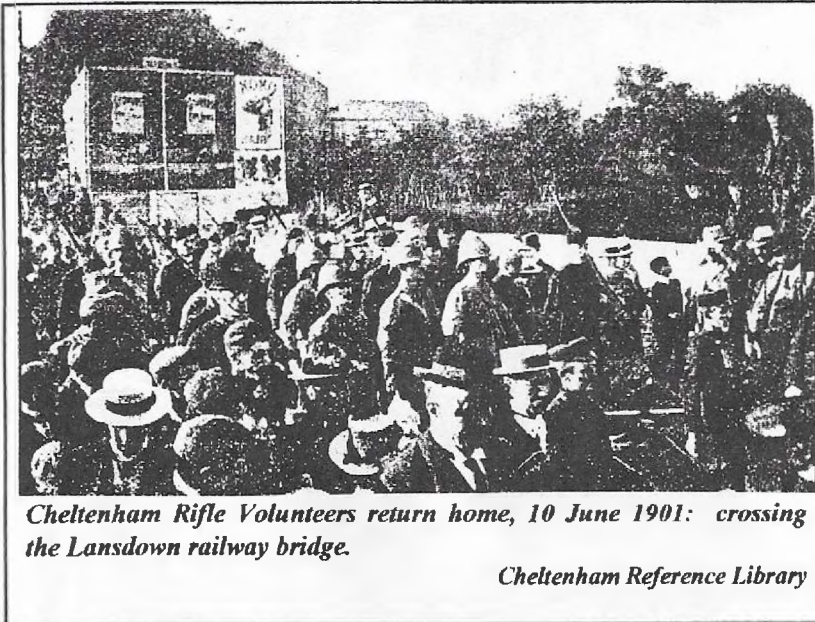
The engineers agreed to accept them and the new Cheltenham detachment of engineer volunteers was the start of a lengthy relationship between Cheltenham and the engineer volunteer service. The officer commanding 10 Company lodged a formal protest with the War Office over this loss of manpower to the rifles, but the War Office found in favour of the new detachment. Cheltenham was now left with just one company of rifle volunteers. They soldiered on until April 1880 when the War Office issued orders consolidating all volunteer units in the country. The 1st Admin Battalion, Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers was to be termed the 2nd Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteer Corps. All officers serving on the staff of the battalion and in the various constituent corps would be considered to have received commissions of the same rank and date in the new consolidated body. Cheltenham's only surviving rifle company, 10 Company, became E Company of the reorganised corps.

Toward the end of the 19th century the army as a whole began to experiment with bicycles as a means of transport and in 1885 several cyclist companies were formed within rifle volunteer corps. Gloucestershire was amongst these early pioneers and a cycle detachment was attached to E Company, 2nd Volunteer Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment (VBGR) in Cheltenham in 1886 or 1887. This detachment eventually became L Company, 2 VBGR. The cost of raising the new company was levied on Capt Pottinger, commanding E Company, and he launched a public appeal to pay for both the new company and for recent refurbishment to the Seven Springs rifle range. Another innovation which began in E Company in Cheltenham was the establishment of a Maxim gun section, formed in 1905 with Lt Waller in command; the section was equipped with two single horse-drawn guns of naval pattern dating from about 1890.

The Boer War in South Africa was to prove an important milestone for the Volunteers. Several Cheltenham men from the 2nd Volunteer Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, volunteered to go to South Africa. Capt C E F Mouat-Biggs from Cheltenham commanded an active service company formed by men of both the 1st and 2nd Volunteer Battalions: he had resigned his commission on 22 November 1899, but once war broke out he applied to serve in South Africa in his civilian capacity as a surgeon, not thinking that volunteers would be called upon. For some weeks he received no reply, so he volunteered for active service. Replies to both letters arrived at the same time: one thanked him for his offer of service as a surgeon, but regretted that he was too old, the other accepted his offer of active service! He was re-gazetted in his former rank on 10 January 1900, and after training at the Gloucestershire Regiment's depot at Horfield, the company left for South Africa just one month later on 10 February, joining the regiment's 2nd battalion at Bloemfontein in May. While the Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers did not get involved in



much of the fighting, they did valuable work protecting lines of communications and manning fortified posts.



*Cheltenham Rifle Volunteers return home, 10 June 1901: crossing the Lansdown railway bridge.*

*Cheltenham Reference Library*

Capt Mouat-Biggs' Active Service Company returned to England on 10 June 1901 and was entertained in Bristol to a formal luncheon with the mayor before the men returned to their own home towns. A special service of thanksgiving for the safe return of the Volunteers was held in Gloucester Cathedral, on 11 June. Unfortunately, Mouat-Biggs was unable to return home with his men as he was in hospital recovering from enteric fever. He returned

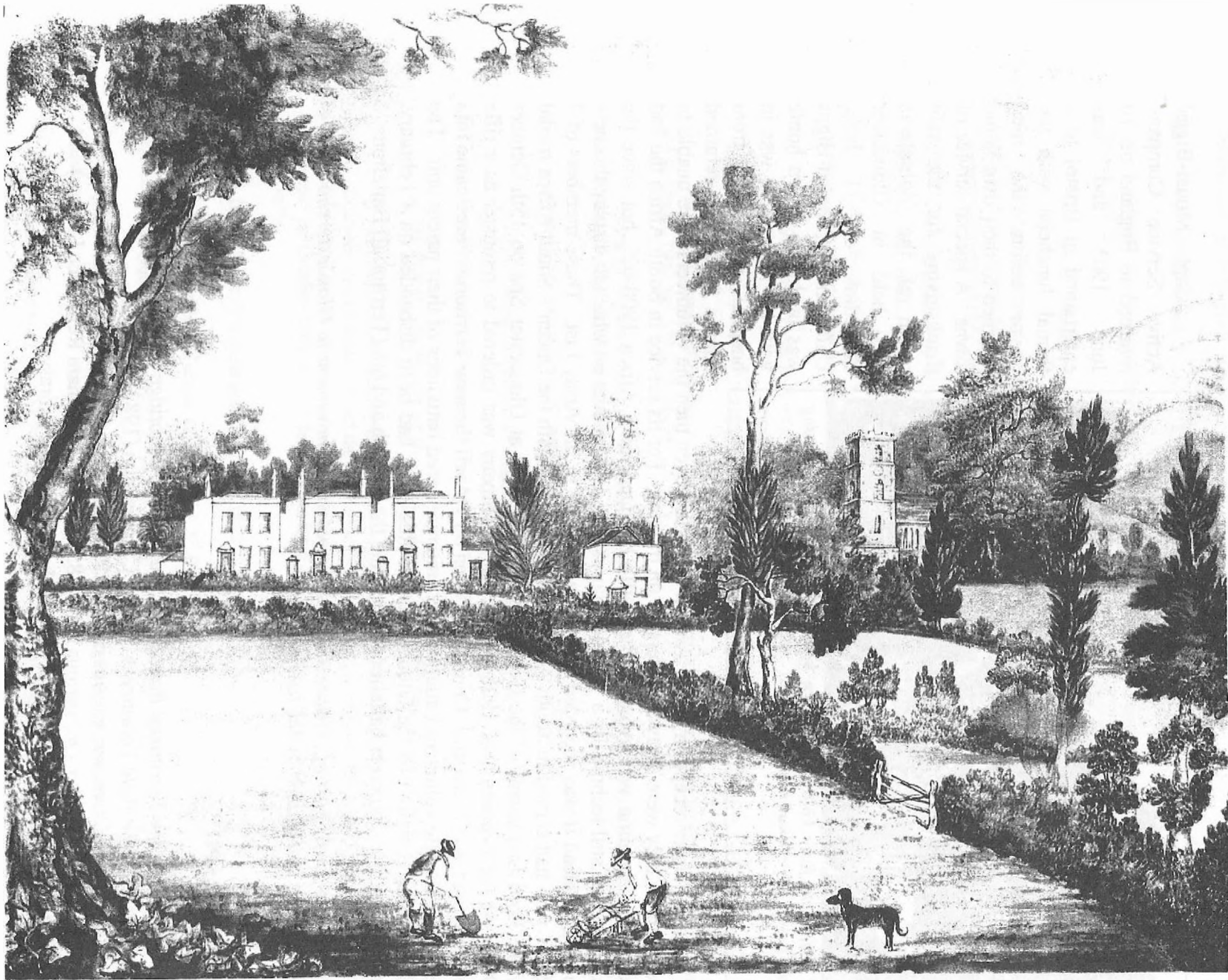
to a much quieter reception of his own on 6 August; even then the volunteers were unable to greet him as they were away at Aldershot on training. For its service in South Africa the 2nd Volunteer Battalion was awarded the battle honour 'South Africa 1900-02', but since the battalion was still technically a volunteer corps it had no colours on which to display this new honour. Instead it was recorded below the unit title in the Army List. Those members of 2 VBGR who had served in South Africa were presented with the Queen's South Africa medal by the Lord Lieutenant of the County at a parade held at Gloucester Spa on 15th October 1901. At the beginning of 1908 L (Cyclists) Company was ordered to remuster as a rifle company and was renamed F Company. Then on 1 April the new Territorial Force came into being and all rifle volunteer battalions became numbered battalions of their parent unit. The 4th (Militia) Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment had been disbanded on 4 February, leaving the three volunteer battalions to become the 4th, 5th and 6th (Territorial) Battalions.

*This article forms part of a wider study of the volunteer movement in Gloucestershire (1794-1908) being undertaken by the author.*

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 Ray Westlake, *The Rifle Volunteers*, Picton. Chippenham (1982)  
 The *Cheltenham Examiner*, various dates 1859-1908 (Cheltenham Reference Library)  
 The *Cheltenham Looker-On*, various dates 1859-1908 (Cheltenham Reference Library)  
*Cheltenham Annuaire*s, 1859-1908 (Cheltenham Reference Library)





Tatchley Villas, Prestbury, Glos (1848); by Eliza Rouse *In a private collection*



# Tatchley Villas, Prestbury

ROGER BEACHAM

A PHOTOGRAPH of this topographical drawing, which is in private hands, has been deposited at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum. On the back of the drawing is written:

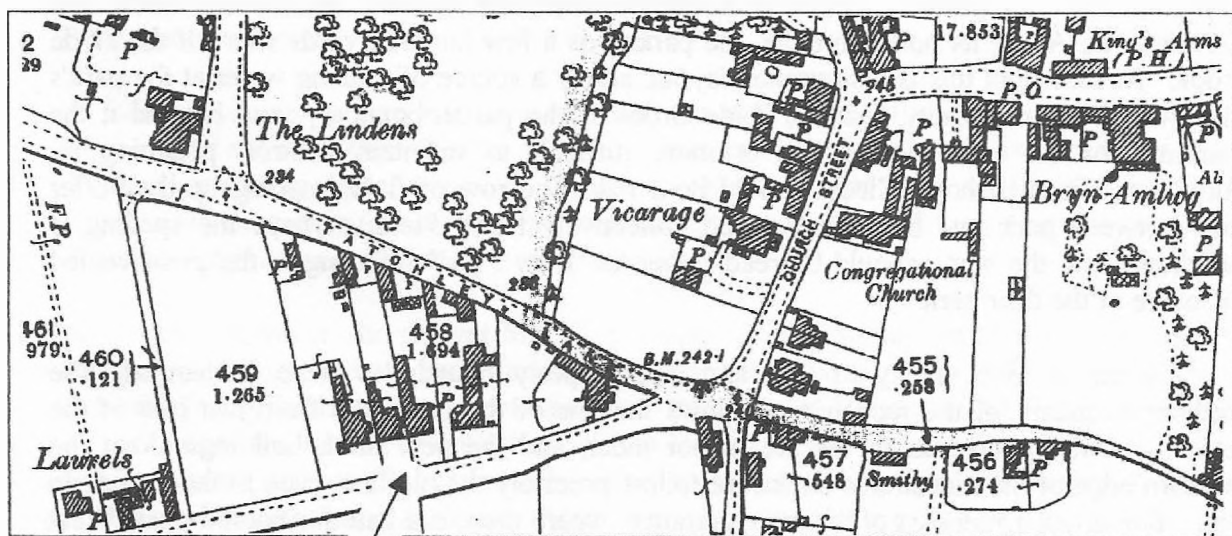
*Thatchley [sic] Villas  
Prestbury Cheltenham  
The temporary residence  
of Mrs Billington Rouse*

*Eliza Rouse pinx<sup>t</sup> Nov 1848*

The drawing depicts the three early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tatchley Villas, now re-numbered 326, 328 and 330 Prestbury Road, and the smaller Tatchley Cottage, now known as Little Tatchley, 334 Prestbury Road, with St. Mary's Parish Church in the background. Eliza has omitted the late eighteenth century Tatchley House, to the right of Tatchley Cottage, and all other buildings that obscured her view to the church.

Several of the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century guides to Cheltenham mention Prestbury's sylvan setting. For example, Bettison's *New Guide to Cheltenham* of 1820 refers to 'the vicarage house (embossed [sic] as it were, in shrubs and trees...)'. The former vicarage, re-named The Three Queens, stands in Deep Street leading from Tatchley House to the Church. Eliza's drawing shows that 28 years after Bettison's observation it was still 'embossed ... in shrubs and trees.'

Though of little artistic merit and despite Eliza's artistic licence, this drawing is an important record of a village of which we have few known views of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Extract from 1903 OS map

# The Deer Park at Prestbury: Traces in the Landscape

BERYL ELLIOTT

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TRAVELLING NORTH out of Cheltenham today, the A435 Evesham Road, constructed in 1810, cuts directly across the north-south axis of the deer park which the bishops of Hereford maintained at Prestbury from the 11th to the 16th centuries<sup>1</sup>. As you leave the town, you cross the southern boundary into the park a few yards after the roundabout at the racecourse entrance, (SO 952244). Over the hill by the old railway station, (now GWR) and going down the next slope, the former parkland extends on both sides of the road, and the northern boundary is crossed just before the small stream in the dip which bounds the Jardinerie garden centre (SO 954254). From one boundary to another, you have travelled about a kilometre, almost the greatest north-south extent; the east to west dimension is bigger, a little over 2 kilometres. Starting in the east by the moated site of the bishops manor house in Spring Lane (SO 967246), the park covers all the racecourse, and also the ridge of land to the west of the Evesham Road with Hunting Butts farm on the crest, culminating in the miniature spur (SO 945251) overlooking the main Birmingham railway a field or so away.

It is possible to be so definite about the situation of the deerpark because its shape became fossilised in later field boundaries, seen well in the Tithe Map of 1841<sup>2</sup>, and in an earlier estate map of 1769<sup>3</sup>, and confirmed by the description of the property in a lease of 1542<sup>4</sup>.

In its heyday the deer park was a dominant feature in the landscape. The low hill plentifully planted with forest trees must have stood out among the cultivated fields of Bishop's Cleeve, Prestbury and Swindon spreading around it. To any but the bishops' guests and servants it was forbidden territory. The boundary was strongly marked and scaled off with a ditch and a high bank topped with a timber pale, to keep the valuable deer inside, and poachers out. Along its northern edge, the park ends a few hundred yards short of the Hyde Brook. At first sight this is a surprising layout: surely a source of running water at the park's edge would be an amenity. But the Hyde Brook is the parish boundary, and beyond it the guardians of the park would find it more difficult to maintain control; poaching by 'foreigners' from Bishop's Cleeve would be a risk. The row of fields making up the buffer zone between park and brook are called collectively Berry Field; perhaps the spelling is misleading and the name should be read rather as 'Bury Field' referring to the great walled enclosure of the deer park.

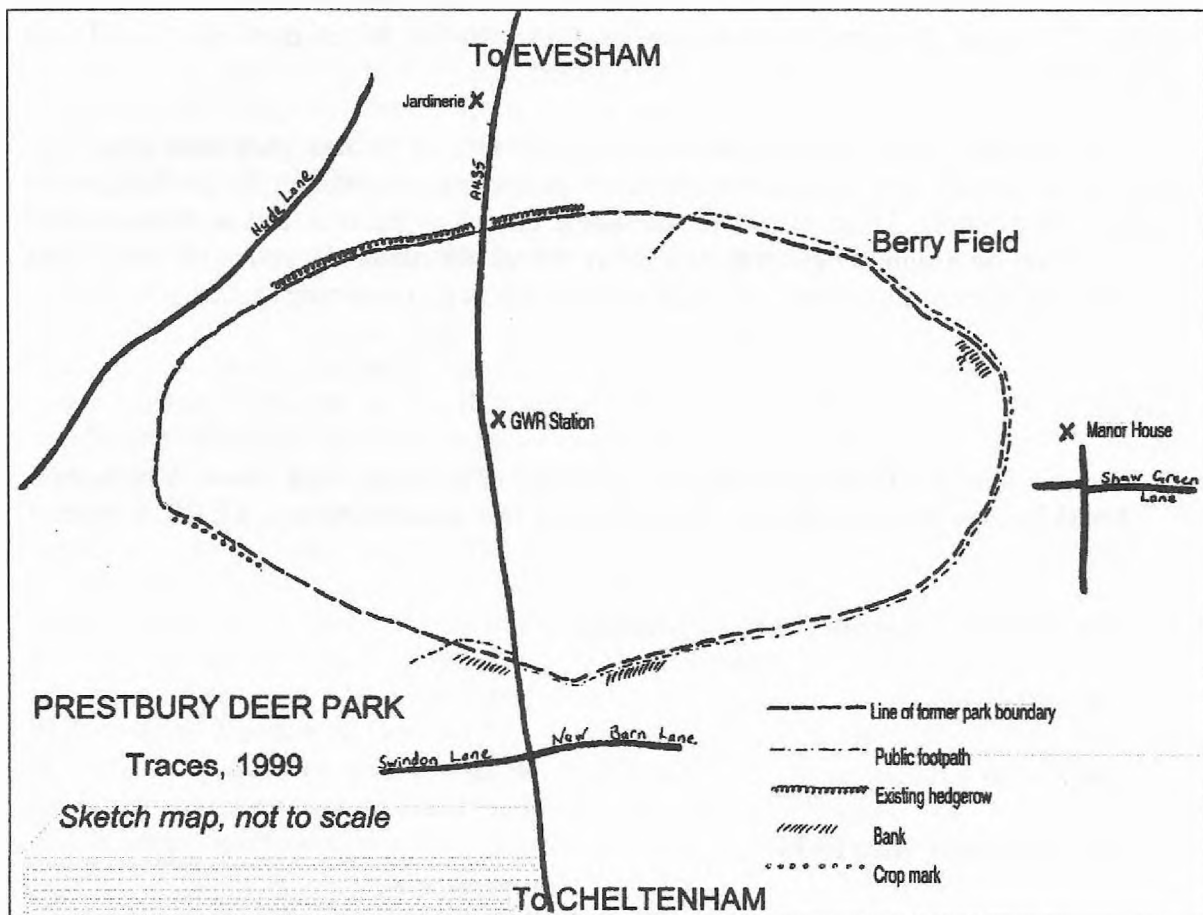
Even in 1999, many of the field and property boundaries were unchanged. The northern boundary of the racecourse follows the line of the park pale from just east of the disused railway almost as far as the manor moat, and the new brick buildings along the southern edge of the racecourse enclosure follow precisely the old line, even to the change in orientation about 150m east of the main entrance, where there is a gate for horse-boxes. West of the Evesham Road, much of the layout is preserved in hedge lines. From that road there is



a good view of the line of the hedgerow boundary running one field to the south of Hyde Lane, curving away west and south towards the clump of trees which now represents the western tip of the park.

Of the bank and ditch nothing seems to remain, and it seems amazing that such an imposing construction could have vanished so completely. Yet though the change in use of the land from a private hunting facility to general agricultural use was a gradual process, that is not to say that it was a casual development. To anyone interested in maximising farming revenues, the earthworks of the park pale represented a waste of useful land, and a barrier to efficient access. Already before 1610, the steward of the estate was cutting down forest trees, and breaking through the old boundary works<sup>5</sup>.

Not everyone was pleased by his innovations, and there was a lawsuit to try to reverse the changes. Traditionalists were scandalised at the loss of amenity and the ruin of a familiar landscape; the steward saw an urgent need to turn the land from an outmoded and unwanted gentleman's playground to profitable pasture or arable. His successors, stewards to the Craven lords of the manor, or their later tenants, must if they had an eye to good business have invested effort and money in sweeping away the useless earthworks.



It may be, after all, that not all traces of the pale have been totally wiped from view, though the surviving evidence is slight and ambiguous. At the southern boundary, the field in the north-west angle between Swindon Lane and the A435 has a steep bank at its northern

edge: it is about 1m high at the north-west corner of the field, diminishing gradually to 30cm or less in the middle of the field, and rising again to perhaps 2m towards the north-east corner. To the north of the bank, ie inside the park, where a public footpath now runs west from Evesham Road towards Hunting Butts Farm, the ground surface is level with the top of the bank, so if this is indeed a remnant of the park pale it has been considerably modified.

Over on the eastern side of the Evesham Road, the public footpath to Prestbury skirts the car park, and then continues between the racecourse on the left and rough grassy paddocks to the right; the boundary with the first two or three fields consists of a loose hedge on an unusually wide strip of apparently waste land, amounting to a low and ill-defined bank - not very impressive as an earthwork. Yet if this is not the much degraded park boundary, it needs to be accounted for in some other way. Finally, in the north-east corner of the park, where the track of the racecourse runs right against the modern boundary fence, turning west away from the moat of the manor site, the fence is erected along a low bank not much more than 40cm high. Is this little bank due simply to the requirements of creating a level race track, or could it possibly be the remnant of a much older landscape?

There remains one last piece of physical evidence, more evanescent than any so far described, but all the same less ambiguous. In the right conditions when young corn is a few inches high, a crop mark can be clearly seen from Swindon Lane, defining the south west boundary of the park, half-way up the little spur, (SO 946249). It was particularly well seen in Spring 1984.

The pasture and arable fields that took over the area of the deer park have given way in their turn to another sporting use, though now it provides recreation not for an elite, but for thousands. With public footpaths round the whole circuit of the race course, this is also a place for a stroll on a summer evening or a frosty winter afternoon. As you walk there, think of the changing roles of this landscape - and look closely at its remaining bumps and ridges.

### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For the history of the deerpark, see B Elliott, *Prestbury Park Farm*, Cheltenham Local History Society *Journal* 3 (1985); and *The Manor Mystery*, CLHS *Journal* 9, (1992-3).
- <sup>2</sup> Gloucestershire Record Office P2541SD/2.
- <sup>3</sup> GRO D184 P1.
- <sup>4</sup> GRO D184 T70.
- <sup>5</sup> Public Record Office E134.

## Recent books and articles on the history of Cheltenham

List compiled by STEVEN BLAKE

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Beacham, Roger, 'The Grotto tea gardens, Prestbury, Gloucestershire', *Follies* 10.4 (Spring 1999), pp.17-18. An account of the now vanished tea garden in Mill Street, which operated from at least 1780 and eventually became an inn, prior to its demolition in the 1860s.

Bennett, Nicola, *Speaking Volumes. A history of the Cheltenham Festival of Literature*, Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1999. 96pp. £4.99. An illustrated account of the Festival by a former Festival Director, published to mark its 50th anniversary.

Bick, David, 'Bick Bros. A Cheltenham family business (1836-1961)', *Archive* 24 (December 1999), pp. 31-40. An account of a trunk and portmanteau manufacturer and retailer, which had premises in Montpellier Avenue.

Bradbury, Oliver, 'From Northwick to Thirlestaine - part 2', *Campden & District Historical and Archaeological Society Notes & Queries* 2.6 (Spring 1999); further evidence for the history of Thirle-staine House, Bath Road, covered by the author in a previous article, listed in last year's *Journal*.

Bradbury, Oliver, 'Lord Byron's 1812 visit to Cheltenham', *The Byron Journal* 27 (1999), pp. 97-101. An account of Byron's visit, focusing on locations connected with his stay.

Bradbury, Oliver, 'St James's Square, Cheltenham: an unfulfilled commission by Charles Harcourt Masters of Bath?', *Architectural History* 42 (1999), 349-53. An account of one of Regency Cheltenham's unfinished developments, based on documentary sources, including a previously unknown plan in Bath Library, and architectural observation.

Cossons, A, 'The Tewkesbury and Cheltenham roads', *Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology Journal* (1998), pp. 40-6. An account of the 18th-century Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Turnpike Trusts, with many Cheltenham references.

Dymock, Colin & Birch, Kerry, *The Gas Green Story 1849-1999*, published by Gas Green Baptist Church, Cheltenham, 1999. 136pp. £10.00. An historical account of the church is followed by a '20th century chronicle', in which events at Gas Green and its immediate area since 1900 are noted on a yearly basis, including many photographs.

Fletcher, Susanne, for the Charlton Kings Local History Society, *Charlton Kings* (Britain in Old Photographs series), Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1999. 128pp. £9.99. Around 200 photographs of Charlton Kings, many previously unpublished, with full and comprehensive captions.

Gill, Peter, *Cheltenham's racing heroes*, Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1998. 118pp. £9.99. Illustrated accounts of ten 19th- and 20th-century jockeys, from Fred Archer to Jim Wilson.

Green, Chris (ed.) and members of Hesters Way History Group, *The history of Hesters Way. Volume 1*, Cheltenham Borough Council, 1999. 44pp. £1.00. An account of the early history of the estate, with notes on local farms, houses, schools and churches, plus some personal recollections and an historical chronology of the area.

Hayes, Dean, *Gloucestershire County Cricket Club* (Britain in Old Photographs series), Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1998. 158pp. £9.99. Photographic account, with many Cheltenham images.

Heasman, Elaine, *Cheltenham* (Images of England series), Tempus Publishing, Stroud. 128pp. £9.99. Over 250 photographs of the town, many previously unpublished, and including sections on Leckhampton, Charlton Kings, Prestbury and Cleeve Hill.

Marchbanks, C. J., 'Visit to the Cheltenham Brewery', *Brewery History* 94 (1998), pp.30-2. An account of the Brewery History Society's visit, shortly before the brewery's closure.

Miller, Eric, Randall, John & Woolacott, Amy (eds.), *Leckhampton in the Second World War*, Charlton Kings Local History Society, 1998. 76pp. £4.95. A detailed and well-illustrated historical account.

Miller, Eric (ed.), *Leckhampton Local History Society Research Bulletin 1* (Autumn 1999). 50pp. £3.99. The Society's first research bulletin contains an overview of the parish's history by the editor, entitled 'Leckhampton in a nutshell', plus articles on Liddington Lake (John Milner), aviation events at Leckhampton in 1912-13 (Alan Gill), Leckhampton fields and fieldnames (Terry Moore-Scott), Leckhampton street names (Amy Woolacott) and short notes on Kidnappers Lane, Lillie Langtry and tramroad rails near the Norwood Inn.

Mitchell, Vic & Smith, Keith, *Stratford-upon-Avon to Cheltenham*, Middleton Press, Midhurst, 1998. 96pp. £12.95. A well illustrated account of the 'Honeybourne Line', with details and photographs of all the Cheltenham stations.

Paget, Mary (ed.), *Charlton Kings Local History Society Bulletin*, published twice yearly. Approximately 40 pages per issue. £2.50 per issue. A wide range of notes and articles on the history of Charlton Kings, by a variety of authors. *Bulletin 41* (Spring 1999) includes two articles by a former Charlton resident, Mr. E.J. Winter, on growing up in Charlton and Cheltenham during the 1920s, one of which focuses on the history of Webb's brickworks. Other articles include an architectural survey of Charlton Cottage, School Road (Linda Hall), extracts from a local newspaper 1809-13, further information on previous articles, several previously unpublished photographs and a list of inscriptions in Holy Apostles church. *Bulletin 42* (Autumn 1999) includes articles on the Church House and other parish properties (Mary Paget), The Hawthornes and its former occupant, the architect Samuel Holland Healing (Mary Paget and G. Husband), the closure of roads and footpaths at Charlton in 1827 (Jane Sale) and notes on several other Charlton Kings people and properties.

Sale, Tony, *Cheltenham Probate Inventories 1660 - 1740*, Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society Record Series 12, 1999. 231pp. Transcriptions of more than 500 documents covering Cheltenham and its adjoining parishes, with an introduction and several indexes.



*Swindon Village Collection 3* (1999), published by the Swindon Village Society. 70pp. Unpriced. Includes articles on the parish church, the old post office and Swindon Hall, plus several personal recollections of the village.

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## Gloucestershire Record Office: Cheltenham area accessions received in 1999

JULIE COURTENAY, SENIOR CATALOGUER, GRO

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*Please note that some of the following records may not be readily available to researchers, either because they have not been catalogued or are in need of repair. Records less than 30 years old also may be closed to researchers.*

All Saints, Cheltenham: additional parish records including registers of banns 1869-1973 and services 1885-1973, choir registers 1895-1934, Charity Committee minutes 1899-1919 and War Memorial Committee minutes 1918-20 (P78/2 acc. 8181)

Alstone Lane: British Rail property file c.1960-80 (D8251)

Bourton-on-the-Water Railway Company: records relating to its unsuccessful attempts to extend the line to Cheltenham including statements and petitions from local residents 1864-67 (D8251 acc. 8384)

Thomas Bugbird & Son Ltd, civil engineering contractors of Cheltenham: files concerning Dymock water supply 1946-48 (D8409)

Cheltenham Borough Council: plans of buildings including the Winter Gardens and New Town Hall c.1902-03 & 1927, Pittville Pump Room c.1910, Montpellier Gardens 1902-04, 1923, buildings adjoining Montpellier Spa 1916, Sandford Park 1928, Pittville Street 1945 and Imperial Gardens 1952 (CBR acc. 8240) *Researchers will be pleased to hear that the project to catalogue the Cheltenham Borough Archive (1786-1974) was completed on schedule at the end of 1999.*

Cheltenham District Coroner: case papers 1994-97 (CO7/1 acc. 8247)

Cheltenham Free Church Federal Council: minutes 1986-99 (D8011 acc. 8185)

Cheltenham & Gloucester branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society: minutes 1946-78, 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary booklet 1951, records relating to lectures, etc. 1950-90s (D8280)

Cheltenham Warriors' Rugby League Club: handbook and bulletins 1999 (D8324)

Dowty Group of Cheltenham: records of the Group, its predecessor, subsidiary and related companies 1932-1990s (D8347) *This is an extensive archive of great local and national interest; it will be some years before a detailed catalogue enables it to be used by researchers*

East Glos. NHS Trust Estates Department files relating to St Paul's Hospital 1979-87, Cheltenham General Hospital 1981 and Battledown Children's Hospital 1985 (HA24 acc. 8283)

Ebenezer Wesleyan Chapel, King Street, Cheltenham: pew rents book with small seating plan of chapel 1823-65 (D8243)

Gallipot and Westall Farms, Arle: copy map (1817) based on Miller's map of 1765, with additions 1822 (D8244)

George Hotel, Cheltenham: timetable for post coaches issued by Edward Dangerfield, proprietor, n.d. [c.1850] (D8278)

Gloucestershire Association for Family Life: minutes c.1965-97 (D8269)

Gloucestershire Constabulary: personnel files 1880s-1990s (Q/Y acc. 8401)

Gloucestershire Football Association: additional records including minutes, correspondence and handbooks 1974-98 (D5244 acc.8171 & 8210)

Gloucestershire Local Pharmaceutical Committee: records of branches and committees 1923-90s (D8274) and Gloucestershire Prescribing Advisory Committee minutes c.1995-98 (D8275)

Independent Order of Rechabites, Gloucestershire District: records include minutes of the Cheltenham Rescue Tent 1894-1937 (D8215)

Post Office records for the Cheltenham area: including staffing records and registers 1878-1958 and plans of Carlton Street garage 1963 (D8242)

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheltenham: records include baptisms and burials registers from 1810, rebuilding church 1894-95, minutes 1901-91, seat letting book 1911-53 and communicants' roll 1957-68; also copy deed for Gotherington chapel (1846) (D7755 acc. 8221)

St Peter's, Cheltenham: registers from 1851, scrapbook 1840s-1910s, vestry minutes 1849-1909, deeds for church property 1816-20<sup>th</sup> cent. (P78/11 acc. 8305)

Waterworks: Witcombe Waterworks' record of yield of springs in the Cheltenham area 1837-1958 and register of rainfall 1863-1940 (D8226); photograph album recording laying of water main from Churchdown to Hewletts through Leckhampton and Charlton Kings parishes 1938 (D8226 acc.8299)

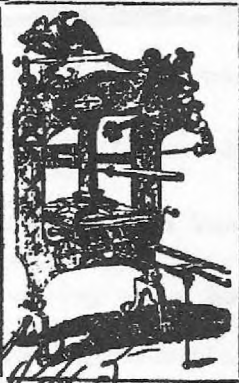
Frederick Wright, tobacconist, High Street: accounts 1939-58 (D8241)

Schools records include: Cleeve View Infant School log books 1976-95, governors' correspondence file 1991-98 (S78/22 acc. 8168 & 8332); Dunally Primary School governors' minutes 1990-97 (S78/7 acc. 8364); Elmfield Junior School governors' correspondence file 1982-98 (S78/15 acc.8333)

Cheltenham deeds include: 15 St George's Street 1835-1998, 28 Marsh Lane 1889-1998, 7 & 8 Ambrose Street (1882)-1936 and 6 Chapel Street 1905-69 (D5907 acc. 8166); 221 Gloucester Road (1872)-1998, Alstone Green (1814)-1847, 75 Charlton Lane (1894)-1979, 2 Highwood Ave (1899)-1970 (D5907 acc. 8271); 48 London Road (1 Oxford Parade) (1742)-1864 (D8327); The Old Market House, High Street 1799-1829, High Street and Church St. properties 1799-1944 (D6909 acc. 8355)



And as a tailpiece – a further 'Lit & Phil' bill (see article, p 18)



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