



# Cheltenham Local History Society

**JOURNAL 20**

**2004**

*Articles and other contributions appropriate to the Society's interests are welcome for possible publication in the Journal and should be submitted to the Hon Editor:  
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# From the Editor

SUE ROWBOTHAM

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ONCE AGAIN members of the Society have shown the breadth and depth of their knowledge. We have both new and established contributors in this year's Journal, which includes articles that cover the history of Cheltenham from medieval times to the present day. I have included an index of the articles that have appeared in the Journal over the past twenty-one years. I hope that you will find this useful. I would like to include an index with the Journal next year, and to compile a full index for all Journals in future.

Knowledge sharing is one of the principal aims of the Society, so if you are carrying out original research on a topic relating to the history of Cheltenham please think about writing an article for a future Journal. I am happy to discuss your ideas with you. If you have never written an article before, and do not know quite where to start, please let me know. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more confident contributors we have guidelines for the format of text and illustrations. Please ask if you would like a copy. Please note that the closing date for submissions for Journal 21 is 31 Dec 2004.

# In Praise of our Logo

ELAINE HEASMAN

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C.L.H.S. CELEBRATED ITS 21<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY IN 2003 and the Society's logo, designed by Aylwin Sampson, founder member and former chairman of the Society, appeared on the cover of *Journal No. 1*, issued in 1983. Aylwin is renowned for his local knowledge and his exceptional artistic skills and his drawings have adorned all of the Society's Journals to date. The choice of the Royal Well for the logo was, I feel, an excellent one. What could be more fitting for a society with the objective: 'to advance the education of the public in the history of Cheltenham'. Much of Cheltenham's history stems from the discovery of the spa waters which led to the town's rapid development and its popularity as a fashionable resort in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many famous people visited Cheltenham and in 1788 King George III himself came 'to take the waters'.

As to the benefit of the logo I believe that it serves to enhance the reputation of the Society. Used on correspondence, in publications and displays we hope to be seen as an established society, professional and well organised. Long may it continue.



# Index of CLHS Journal Articles (1983-2004)

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Back copies of Society Journals can be obtained from Geoffrey North, Treasurer of the Society Tel. 01452 857803 Fax 01452 540997 or e-mail [geoffreynorth@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:geoffreynorth@blueyonder.co.uk)

If Journals are out-of-print, photocopies of Journals or of individual articles can be supplied. All prices on request.

*Thanks to Elaine Heasman for compiling this list [Ed.]*

<i>JOURNAL NUMBER</i>	<i>YEAR</i>	<i>ARTICLE</i>	<i>AUTHOR</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>1983</b>	Three Properties of Cirencester Abbey in the Cheltenham Area	Barbara Rawes
		Population Figures for the Cheltenham Area 1548-1801: A Summary	Michael Greet
		Henry Merrett's Plan of Cheltenham, 1834	Steven Blake
		The Cheltenham Cottage Company	Robert Homan
		The Clarence Street Palazzo	Roger Beacham
		Gravestones Rediscovered	Robert Homan
<b>2</b>	<b>1984</b>	The Hundred of Cheltenham and its Boundaries	Barbara Rawes
		William Barrett His Book	Mary Paget
		Alleged Witchcraft in Cheltenham circa 1773	Michael Greet
		A Scottish Visitor to Cheltenham	George Breeze
		The Building of the Montpellier Shops: An Outline Chronology	Steven Blake
		A Radical Interlude: Cheltenham in the 'Hungry '40s'	Robert Homan
		The Mechanics' Institute and Radical Politics in Cheltenham Spa 1834-40	Owen Ashton
<b>3</b>	<b>1985</b>	Prestbury Park Farm	Beryl Elliott
		King George III at Cheltenham in 1788	Graeme Powell
		Cavendish House: An Outline History	June Hamblett
		Urch & Seabright of Fairview, Cabinet Makers and Builders, 1826-85	Steven Blake
		Cheltenham's First Photographers, 1841-56	Simon Fletcher
		'The White Slaves of England': the Early Closing Movement in Cheltenham in 1844	John Roles
		Parish Magazines as a Source of Local History	Eric Miller

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<b>4</b>	<b>1986</b>	The lands of the Withington Poor Charity	Barbara Rawes
		Squire Delabere and the Inclosure of Prestbury	Beryl Elliott
		The Pipe Organ in Cheltenham	Roy Williamson
		Arle House: Home of the Welch family 1806 – 1945	Phyllis White
		Gunmaking in Cheltenham since 1815: an Outline Chronology	Chris Howell
		Retailing at Montpellier, 1831-71	Ian McLean
		Parachuting in Cheltenham, 1837-38	Barbara Sobey
		Liszt in Cheltenham, 1840	Lowinger Maddison
		The Proposed Enlargement of Cheltenham Parish Church, 1841	Alan Munden
		Beer, Breakfast and Bribery: Electoral Corruption in Cheltenham During the Elections of 1847 and 1848	Adrian Courtenay
		A Short History of Thirlestaine Hall	Steven Blake
		<b>5</b>	<b>1987</b>
Cheltenham's Assembly Rooms, 1734-1900	Roger Beacham		
'Hewletts' and the Agg family	Jane Sale		
Printed Maps of the Environs of Cheltenham in the First Half of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	John V Garrett		
The Napoleon Fountain	Steven Blake		
The Condition of Milliners and Dressmakers in Cheltenham, 1865	June Hamblett		
The New All Saints' Organ, June 1887	Lowinger Maddison		
<b>6</b>	<b>1988</b>	The Fields and Field Names of the Hundred of Cheltenham Part 1: the Parish of Cheltenham	Barbara Rawes
		Farm Labourers in the Cheltenham Area: Their Conditions of Service in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Jane Sale
		The Hyde Spaw: an Early Rival to Cheltenham	Beryl Elliott
		Philip Strickland and the Fleece Riot of 1840	Adrian Courtenay
		King's Road Cheltenham: Contributions to a History	James Hodsdon
<b>7</b>	<b>1989</b>	The Fields and Field Names of the Hundred of Cheltenham Part 2: the Parish of Swindon	Barbara Rawes

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<b>7</b>	<b>1989</b>	The Unfortunate Mr Forbes: the Rise and Fall of a Cheltenham Architect	Steven Blake
		A Passage in Time: the Story of Swindon Passage and its Back-to-back Houses	Maggie Blake
		Victorian Vandals in the Valley: Thomas Butt and the Golden Valley Chapel 1876	Phyllis White
<b>8</b>	<b>1991</b>	Prestbury Ratepayers of 1698	Beryl Elliott
		Pittville Nursery Garden and the Ware Mortgage: a Cautionary Tale	A.J.Campbell
		The Rise and Fall of Edward Rupert Humphreys: a Mid-Victorian Scandal	Barbara King
		Glimpses of Cheltenham Through the Pages of a Victorian Schoolmaster's Diary	Julie Courtenay
		Indexing the Cheltenham Examiner	Barbara King & Peter Smith
<b>9</b>	<b>1993</b>	Charles Sturt: Australian Explorer and Resident of Cheltenham	Jane Sale
		Public Hire Chairs in Cheltenham	Geoffrey Wilson
		The Early Years of the Cheltenham General Dispensary	Daphne Doughton
		The Spa Bands of Cheltenham, 1780-1875	Mick Kippin
		The Cox family: 75 years in Cheltenham	James Toomey
		The Manor Mystery: the Rise and Decline of the House of the Bishops of Hereford at Prestbury	Beryl Elliott
		Intellectual Amusement & Instruction: the 1841 Exhibition of Works of Art and Science at the Cheltenham Literary and Philosophical Institution	Jean Lacock
		College and County: Cheltenham Training College and its Proposed Rival, 1903-7	Charles More
<b>10</b>	<b>1994</b>	Political Controversies and the Election of 1847	Adrian Courtenay
		Cheltenham Streets that Never Were	James Hodsdon
		'Cannon to Right of Them'	Peter Smith
		House and Hotel: the Belle Vue	Linda Warwick
		Cheltenham's Great Gas Bill	Keith Cooper
		The Catholic Mission at Cheltenham, 1799-1809	Richard Barton
		Cheltenham Toll Roads in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Brian Kearney
		Up Before the Bench	Eric Armitage

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		A Childhood in Cheltenham	Amina Chatwin
		Cheltenham's High Street at the time of Rowe's 1845 Guide	Mark Thomas
		Another Retrospection	James Hodsdon
		'Disgraceful Practical Joking'	John Elliott
		Cheltenham's Earliest Postcards	Steven Blake
<b>12</b>	<b>1996</b>	Francis Close's Battle with Tractarianism and Ritualism	Nigel Scotland
		Thomas Marshall's Legacy: the Cheltenham Building Survey Certificates, 1824-48	James Hodsdon
		Paganini Comes to Town	Leslie Burgess
		Cheltenham Police Court Reports, 1875	Jill Barlow
		The Winter Garden Theatre	Roger Beacham
		John Goding, Cheltenham Historian	Peter Smith
		Caught Out	Eric Woodhead
<b>13</b>	<b>1997</b>	Cheltenham's Bandstands	Mick Kippin
		The Old Swan and Betty Humphrys	Phyllis White
		A Visitor to Cheltenham in 1832: the Diary of Sarah Sargent	Steven Blake
		Cheltenham and the Lifeboats	Betty Greene
		Who Built Rosehill?	Oliver Bradbury
		The Church and its Chapels in Medieval Cheltenham: a Summary	Michael Greet
		Cheltenham's Mineral Wells: a Checklist	Steven Blake & Oliver Bradbury
		A Shurdington Tomb	Daphne Doughhton
		Before the Bench in 1844	Eric Armitage
		Montpellier Multiplied: a 'Local' Name in its Wider Context	James Hodsdon

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<b>14</b>	<b>1998</b>	Clara Winterbotham 1880-1967: 'Cheltenham's First Lady'	Julie Courtenay
		The Follies of Cheltenham <i>Part 1</i>	Oliver Bradbury
		A Cheltenham Century 1839-1939	Barbara King
		Edward Bedford of Prestbury: A Vicar in Difficult Times	Beryl Elliott
		Marle Hill Court Remembered	Barbara Weeks
		Cheltenham and the Indian Connection	Eva Bailey
		Hunting the Cotswold Stag	Peter Southerton
		Behind the Eight Bells: A Glimpse of Old Cheltenham	Terry Moore-Scott
<b>15</b>	<b>1999</b>	Nineteenth Century Motoring in Cheltenham	Derek Copson
		The Cheltenham Literary and Philosophical Institution 1833-60	Jean Lacock
		The Follies of Cheltenham <i>Part 2</i>	Oliver Bradbury
		The Grovefield Estate and its Houses	Phyllis White
		A 1787 Map of Cheltenham	James Hodsdon
		The Winchcombe Fire-Engine	Mick Kippin
		Alstone Lawn: A Noble Residence	Jill Waller
		A Possible Portway to Cheltenham	Terry Moore-Scott
A Wife for Sale	Mike Greet		
<b>16</b>	<b>2000</b>	The Historian Gwen Hart	Peter Smith
		Radicalism in Cheltenham: the Patronage Offered by Ebworth Park	Jackie E M Latham
		Barbadian Legacy: the Unacknowledged Earlier Life of William Hinds Prescod	Glenn O Phillips
		The Cheltenham Literary & Philosophical Institution 1833-60 <i>Part 2</i>	Jean Lacock
		A History of 'The Priory', Cheltenham	Oliver Bradbury
		Mrs Josephine Butler: Domestic Glimpses of a 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Feminist	Beverley Grey
		The Cheltenham Rifles 1859-1908	Mick Kippin
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		William Jay, Regency Architect – a Career in Reverse	Susan Hamilton
		Cheltenham as it might have been: The Kursaal	Eric Miller
		‘The Munificent Friend of Israel’ – Jane Cook of Cheltenham (1775-1851)	Alan Munden
		Aspects of Medieval Cheltenham	Michael Greet
		Cheltenham in 1823: a Letter by Captain Thomas Medwin	Oliver G Bradbury
<b>18</b>	<b>2002</b>	The Cheltenham Town Survey of 1855-57	Elaine Heasman
		Maskelyne and Cooke: Cheltenham’s Men of Mystery	Sue Rowbotham
		One Out - All Out: Resignations from the Cheltenham Fire Brigade	Mick Kippin
		No Hawlf Measures: Gifts of Land in the 12 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> centuries	Michael Greet
		Cheltenham Apprentices in Gloucester, 1595-1700	Jill Barlow
		Beating the Bounds: the 1823 Perambulation of Cheltenham	Terry Moore-Scott
		Cheltenham as it Might Have Been: the Grammar School, 1886	Eric Miller
		Cheltenham in 1830: Three Unpublished Letters from William Barton of Southwark	Steven Blake
		Frederick Munro (1791-1879): Soldier and Cheltenham Commissioner	Derek Rowles
		The Caffieri Family from France: their Life in Cheltenham	Mike Grindley
		Christina Rossetti’s Cheltenham Connection	Jill Waller
		<b>19</b>	<b>2003</b>
Montpellier Walk: Its Initial Development, Chronology & Early Occupants	Mike Grindley		
20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations	Sue Rowbotham		
The Blue Man & other Marvels: Buffalo Bill’s visit to Cheltenham, 1903	James Hodsdon		
The Cheltenham Improvement Act 1852	Elaine Heasman		
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19	2003	Snippets from Local Newspapers	Vic Cole
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		Dame Sidney Browne (1850-1941): 'The Modern Florence Nightingale'	Derek Rowles
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		Advertisements for Cheltenham Ale – 1927	Sue Rowbotham

## A School in Cheltenham in 1417?

MICHAEL GREET

A REFERENCE TO A SCHOOLMASTER in the Cheltenham Manor Court Roll (dated 10 March 1417) suggests that a school (previously unknown) then existed in the town. Any teaching in Cheltenham in medieval times before a school was founded was presumably carried out by the resident clergy, such as the chantry priests at Cheltenham and Charlton Kings. In 1548, after chantries were abolished, Cheltenham was suggested as a suitable site for a school, and before the dissolution of the chantries, one of the Cheltenham chantry priests had indeed been employed by Cheltenham people to teach their children.

**Source**

Orme, N., *Education in the West of England 1066-1548* (1976) p.16, 31, 123-4

# Cheltenham's Theatre Royal (1782-1839) Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum's Playbill Collection

TERRY MOORE-SCOTT

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*'In a few minutes we had started in a flutter of gaiety and excitement for Coffee House Yard Theatre. It was a poor place, little better than a barn, built in the lane leading out of the High Street. This lane was almost blocked up with play-goers of all ranks, and in all sorts of equipages, from the coach to the sedan chair, mingled with a motley crowd on foot all jostling, fighting and screaming, till the place became a complete bear garden. The crowd grew denser and more formidable. I looked beyond it up towards the hills that rose in various directions around the town – how green and quiet they were in the still June evening. But now there came a slight swaying in the crowd, as a sedan chair was borne through, or attempted to be, for the effort failed. There was a scuffle, and one of the bearers was knocked down and hurt. Some cried 'Shame'! Others seemed to think this incident only added to the frolic. At last, in the midst of the confusion, a lady put her head out and gazed around her. It was a remarkable countenance; once seen, you could never forget it. Pale, rather large in outline – an aquiline nose – full, passionate yet sensitive lips – and very dark eyes. She spoke, and the voice belonged naturally to such a face. "Good people, let me pass – I am Sarah Siddons". The crowd divided instantaneously, and in moving, set up a cheer that must have rang through all the town. There was a minute's pause, while she bowed and smiled – such a smile! And then the sedan chair closed. It was a glorious night!'*

**Extract from 'John Halifax Gentleman' by Dinah Maria Mulock Craik (1826-1887), evoking the occasion of actress Sarah Siddons' appearance in Cheltenham in 1774.**

IT IS HARD TO OVERESTIMATE THE HEADY EXCITEMENT that must have surrounded going to the theatre in Cheltenham's early days as a spa resort. During the season (roughly May to September), social life for residents and visitors was absorbed with taking the medicinal waters, attending a variety of events at the Assembly Rooms and, of course, promenading along the town's leafy boulevards. But, in addition, each evening throughout most of the week, crowds converged on the Theatre Royal and in especially large numbers if a star performer such as Sarah Siddons, Dorothy Jordan or the clown Joseph Grimaldi was on the bill (the above quotation, although it relates to an event at the Coffee House Lane theatre a little before the advent of the Theatre Royal, eloquently conveys the atmosphere of theatre-going around the time). George III, it is said, was extremely fond of the theatre, especially of farces and pantomime, and his visits to the Theatre in Cheltenham in 1788 (see illustration on p.13) set the royal seal of approval on what was to become a major entertainment venue. For more than half a century from 1782 until 1839 when it was destroyed by fire, the Theatre Royal attracted audiences as distinguished as any at the Drury Lane Theatre in London and its stage was trodden by all the famous actors and actresses of the time.

The experience and atmosphere of a visit to the theatre then is also well conveyed by Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum's large collection of theatre playbills, containing well over three thousand items, the bulk of which relate to performances at the Theatre Royal.<sup>1</sup> They provide a fascinating insight into successive productions put on at the Theatre on an almost nightly basis. Several authors have produced accounts of the early theatre in and around Cheltenham providing valuable information on the subject well worth reading [see *Sources*]. This article however sets out to show what the playbills in the Museum's collection tell us specifically about the Theatre Royal, how it functioned and how its audiences, from the highest to the lowest of social strata, enjoyed their nights out.

First, a little about the development of the theatre in Cheltenham. The earliest theatre was provided by groups of strolling players who moved from town to town within a set circuit, playing in temporary accommodation such as barns attached to inns or in outside pavilions. The stage was usually erected on trestles or bales of hay and audiences were accommodated in a "gallery" set up on wagons or carts. Gradually, more established arrangements were made and, by the summer of 1774, a makeshift playhouse was in use in Cheltenham in a disused malthouse in Coffee House Lane off Pittville Street (the venue alluded to in the quotation at the start of this article). In 1782, John Boles Watson who owned the theatre circuit based in Cheltenham at the time<sup>2</sup> had the first permanent playhouse built in York Passage in Grosvenor Street (on a site later occupied by the York Tavern) and it was this theatre that George III patronised during his visit in 1788, officially entitling it by letters patent to be called the Theatre Royal. Subsequently, Watson built a new theatre in Cambray Colonnade (on the site of the old Garrick's Head in what is now Bath Street) and it opened in 1805 as The Theatre Royal.

On entering the premises, patrons found an auditorium divided into three areas: the pit (so-called because it was often below ground level), the gallery (the haunt of lowly paid and manual workers) and the boxes (intended strictly for the nobility, gentry and officers and their families). It must have been a strange mix of people in such a small space. The playbills for this period provide the names and titles of numerous patrons, from which we can observe a quite glittering 'who's who' of dukes and duchesses, earls and countesses and lords and ladies frequenting the theatre during their seasonal stays at the spa town.<sup>3</sup> We know also that patrons included such notables as the Duke of Wellington<sup>4</sup>, and Lord Byron.<sup>5</sup> The other end of the social scale is reflected in a playbill for 2 July 1811 (no.691) which regretfully notes 'the very improper and indecorous behaviour' of a certain person named Ballinger who on a number of occasions in the theatre had refused to stand and pull off his hat when the band played *God Save the King* and had 'had the audacity to return to the pit after he had been indignantly turned out for his riotous and improper conduct'.

Having found one's way to the theatre in time for the usual 7 o'clock start and being in possession of tickets<sup>6</sup>, the first task was to find seats. These were evidently available on a first come basis and not allocated by ticket. Playbills regularly record the fact that patrons could send their servants to secure their places provided that these servants were at the theatre before the opening of the doors at 6 o'clock when they could hold the seats till the end of the first act but no longer. Reduced prices began to feature later in the period, as the theatre's popularity appears to have declined. Half-price tickets were usually on offer for patrons arriving at the end of the third act or after 9 o'clock and on one occasion in 1834, half-price admission was offered 'in compliance with the

request of numerous parties whose dinner arrangements interfered with earlier attendance'. Refreshments were available before the start of entertainment and, in cold weather, patrons were guaranteed that 'good fires' would be kept to keep the theatre warm.

After curtain-up, the evening's entertainment typically consisted of 2 or 3 plays or sketches, often light musicals like, for example, *Inkle and Yarico*, (a Polynesian romance) or *Speed the Plough* (with a rustic plot). Frothy farces were also popular like *The Agreeable Surprise* and *The Jealous Wife*, as were thundering melodramas sometimes with bloodcurdling effects like *The Castle Spectre* and *Bluebeard*. These main items were interspersed with comic songs (having titles like *When I, Sir, Ogle the Ladies*) and dances (usually a pas de deux or hornpipe – the latter on one occasion billed as being danced by a 'one-legged veteran'!). As time passed, whole programmes were devoted to circus-type acts featuring tight rope artistes, acrobats, clowns, fire-eaters and jugglers and even live performing animals and, as the Cheltenham season began to extend into winter months, pantomime became popular.

Famous performers appearing at the Theatre Royal included Sarah Siddons, Dorothy Jordan (for many years mistress to the Duke of Clarence, later William IV)<sup>7</sup>, and William Betty, aged 16 in 1807 and noted for his playing of child and youthful roles (in plays such as *The Young Norval* and as Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*). The most celebrated clown of the time was Joseph Grimaldi who maintained his popularity at least in Cheltenham well into his declining years. The tight rope dancer Richer appeared often at the theatre. These were just a few of the many performers appearing at the Theatre Royal credited on the playbills with having performed 'to great acclaim' at the Drury Lane and other leading London theatres. Such was the power of their performances (and of the audiences' susceptibilities) that, depending on the production, audiences were easily moved to tears of laughter or gripped by extreme fear. Goding (p.335) records the occasion in 1774 when the ladies in Lord Bruce's (later the Marquis of Aylsbury's) party were so affected by Mrs Siddon's portrayal of Belvidira in *Venice Preserved* that they had wept so excessively as to be unpresentable the next morning and confined to their rooms with headaches.

The playbills also record occasions when members of high society actually appeared on stage but invariably they were billed anonymously as 'gifted amateurs' or, as on the occasion of a production of *Othello* in 1811, when the part of Othello was played by 'a Baronet'. One frequent amateur player appears to have been Col. Berkeley, a leading Cheltenham socialite of the time whose enthusiasm for the stage and social entertainments generally is well recorded.

Often highlighted in playbills was the arrival of new specially commissioned scenery. A leading scenery painter for the Theatre Royal for a number of years was Samuel Seward, known also for his ownership of the Sadler's Wells puppet theatre in Cheltenham's St George's Place<sup>8</sup>. Added attraction was provided by extravagant effects. One production in the autumn of 1801 featured a 'grand illumination of 200 wax lights with variegated flowers' and at other times fireworks and explosions were used (seemingly with low regard for safety). Other effects included an 'illuminated bower' and a 'regal procession with mechanical figures'. Occasionally, 'Masquerade Evenings' took place when apparently persons holding box tickets were entitled to join in the masquerade dances on stage. So-called 'Fashionable Nights' were also held. The content of the playbills reflect a range of national and local concerns occupying the minds of the general public at the time. On one occasion in 1809 (no. 577), the performance planned for 26 October was postponed to the following day because of 'a ball of great magnitude in honour of the National Jubilee' i.e. of George III. After the victories at Trafalgar and the Nile, performances were held specifically to raise funds in aid of 'Nelson's brave tars' and, following Waterloo, programmes at the theatre included patriotic addresses in honour of Wellington and Waterloo. A playbill of 1

Loyal address to King George III on the occasion of his visit to the Theatre Royal on 15 August 1788  
*[Playbill no. 3391 reproduced by kind permission of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum]*

July 1831 (no. 2049) announced that the evening's receipts would be devoted to 'the plight of the distressed Irish'. The accession of William IV in 1831 was marked by the inclusion in a series of playbills of the slogan 'Vivant Rex et Regina' and, on one evening in September 1831, the programme at the theatre ended with a staged presentation of the coronation of King William and Queen Adelaide complete with scenery and costumes. There is also a playbill in June 1830 (no.1955) which announced that the entertainment announced for 28 June would not take place as intended 'in consequence of the recent national calamity'. It provides no clue as to the nature of the calamity but it almost certainly refers to the death of George IV which had taken place just two days earlier (the gloom was probably increased by the fact that on the same day the centre of Cheltenham had been severely flooded following a great storm).

At a local level, race weeks in both 1820 and 1821, were marked with special performers and entertainments<sup>9</sup> and in March 1829 on the occasion of the Gloucester Assizes (always a major social attraction) it was announced that the Theatre would close for the whole of the assizes week. On 6 September 1813, a Mr Sadler of Cheltenham planned a balloon ascent in what was clearly intended to be a special public spectacle. This led the Theatre to advertise that on that day it would open especially to coincide with the event and, moreover, that Mr Sadler would appear on stage to 'satisfy his friends and an anxious public of his safe return'. In the event, the ascent did not take place until the following day when the balloon was flown not by Mr Sadler but by his 16 year old son (the father proving to be too heavy for the flight) and the landing happened not in Cheltenham but in Chipping Norton (Goding, 542). There is no mention in subsequent playbills of this event, which, for the Theatre at least seems to have been a total non-event!

By the early 1800s, John Boles Watson was in failing health and beginning to lose hold of the direction of his theatres, some of which he had leased out to associates. In 1811, direction of his enterprises passed entirely to his son Jack (alias JBW II) but by 1811, following economic recession after the Napoleonic Wars, JBW II's theatres in Gloucestershire were bringing in declining returns, and management of the Theatre Royal continued to pass through a series of managers, some evidently of dubious ability<sup>10</sup>. JBW II died in 1826 and the remainder of the business was transferred to his son (JBW III) who sold off the Theatre Royal that same year to new owners.

On the face of it, these developments had little or no direct impact on the Theatre's operations, which continued on through successive seasons well into the 1830s. But the playbills give some clues as to the situation. From around 1815 there seems to be a tailing off in the level of individual aristocratic patrons, most of the patronage thereafter coming from local institutional supporters such as the Stewards of the Races, members of the Masonic and Oddfellows lodges, principal tradespeople and even, on one occasion, members of the Society of Cheltenham Archers (no. 1876). Something of the deteriorating situation might be read in the periodic price reductions offered by the Theatre. One is also left wondering as to the real reason why in August 1835, ostensibly because of 'excessive heat preventing attendances at the theatre', it was to close and re-open only for a short winter season in November (nos. 2369, 2438 and 2447). A more pointed indication of the kind of troubles being experienced is provided by two playbills for 22 October and 28 October 1831 (nos. 2143 and 2150) which announced that the manager, a Mr D'Ville, had 'suddenly quitted Cheltenham, taking with him the receipts of last night's performance and leaving debts to numerous individuals connected with the theatre'. The statement continued 'the company proposes, under these circumstances, to keep open the Theatre on their own account for a limited period and earnestly solicit the interest and support of the Public'. The seriousness of the situation is even more

Playbill announcing a performance by the Theatre Royal Company in the Assembly Rooms, Cheltenham  
a few weeks after the Theatre's destruction by fire.

*[Playbill no. 2849 reproduced by kind permission of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum]*

eloquently demonstrated by a lengthy printed notice issued in December 1835 by the managers as an appeal to the 'nobility, gentry and public of Cheltenham' (no. 2480). It bemoans the lack of public support during the summer season, which had resulted in considerable losses; an experimental winter season had proved equally unsuccessful. The managers were therefore reduced to soliciting the views of the public as to whether they intended supporting the Theatre or not, thus indicating whether they should give notice to the ladies and gentlemen of the company to allow them to seek other engagements.

The Theatre seems gradually to have lost its appeal but it is also probable that public attitudes towards theatre across the nation were being influenced by the growing opposition to it (and other such forms of 'sinful' pleasures) from the Wesleyans and Evangelist Anglicans. In Cheltenham, the church's assault on the theatre was led by the Rev. Francis Close who, from his appointment as curate-in-charge of the parish church in 1826, regularly fulminated from the pulpit against such pleasures. His sermon in 1850 on 'The Tendencies of the Stage, Religion and Moral' was made at the height of the evangelical movement but, by this time, there was no Theatre Royal to be railed against for 11 years earlier, on 3 May 1839, it had been totally destroyed by fire.

The latest Theatre Royal playbill in the Museum's collection is for performances due to take place on 2 and 3 May 1839 (no. 2753). The exact circumstances of the disaster are unknown but its effect was a total gutting of the Theatre. Goding, quoting the *Cheltenham Free Press* of 4 May 1839, records that no cause for the fire had been assigned; the preceding evening's performance had involved no pistols or stage fire and the footlights and chandeliers had been extinguished at 11 o'clock. In today's world, such circumstances would be likely to prompt all kinds of conspiracy theories but there is no sign of this ever happening at the time. The demise of the Theatre Royal did not mean the end of theatre in Cheltenham though. Within a short time the Theatre Royal Company were putting on performances in the Assembly Rooms (see illustration on p.15) and by the early 1840s a proper stage was fitted up there. In 1850, a regular theatre was once more established in Cheltenham with the re-building of the Royal Old Wells Spa, initially as a music hall and later as a new Theatre Royal. The museum's collection also includes playbills for these later venues but their contents do not convey quite the same magic, excitement and glamour, and the theatre-going tradition that the Theatre Royal had so gloriously set for Cheltenham in those earlier years did not really become re-established until the *Opera House* (later known as *The Everyman*) opened in Regent Street in 1891.

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### Acknowledgements

The author is extremely grateful to Dr Steven Blake of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum for permitting access to the museum's playbill collection and for his active encouragement and support towards producing this article.



1 This collection principally consists of a large number of playbills purchased by the Art Gallery and Museum using funds from the Leslie Young Bequest and an almost equal number ('The Shenton Collection') presented to the museum by descendants of Thomas Bartlett Shenton whose family ran a printing business in Cheltenham from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. T B Shenton (d.1887), in addition to being a printer, seems also to have been well-known locally as a stage actor and manager.

2 Watson's circuit, which he had inherited from the actor/manager Roger Kemble, extended across the west Midlands and into Wales as far even as Carmarthen. The company played in Cheltenham through the spa town's summer season and worked the rest of the circuit during the spring and winter.

3 Such patrons supported their 'desire' for a particular programme of entertainment by buying up a block of seats in the boxes for use by their guests – somewhat along the lines of modern-day sponsorship.

4 According to Goding (pp.313, 320), the Duke visited Cheltenham and attended the Theatre Royal on two occasions, once in 1816 and again in 1828. The latter visit is reflected in a playbill for 27 August 1828 (no.1695), the main item on the programme being a performance of the operatic comedy *Rencontre or Love Will Find Out the Way* with Madame Vestris in the lead role.

5 A playbill for 8 September 1812 (no.894A) publicises the performance on that day as being by the desire and under the patronage of Lord Byron, who was in Cheltenham as the guest of Col. Berkeley. The entertainment included two plays: *Barbarosa* (with the celebrated Mr Betty as Selim) and *Spoiled Child* (with Mrs Horne as Pickles).

6 Publicised admission prices remained relatively stable over much of the period covered: for boxes 4s to 5s, pit 2s to 2/6d and gallery 1s to 1/6d. By the 1830's, there appear to have been two tiers of boxes, 'upper' at 3s. and 'lower' at 4s. Goding (p.341) records that a performance of *Richard III* by the famous actor Edmund Kean in 1814 so filled the theatre that all the boxes were occupied so that 'even the gallery became the resort of respectability' and the musicians relinquished their seats to patrons, playing from behind the scenery.

7 During their 21 year long union, Dorothy Jordan is said to have borne the Duke ten children but in 1811, while performing at the Theatre Royal, she received a note from the Duke ending the relationship. This very likely happened when she appeared at the Theatre Royal during September 1811 for a playbill for 24 September (no.775) notes that this was her farewell visit and the last opportunity for the public to witness her 'transcendent talents'. She nevertheless seems to have made appearances at the Theatre Royal during June 1814 but never returned to Cheltenham and she died in France in 1816.

8 Roger Jones, *Samuel Seward of Sadler's Wells*, published in two instalments in Cheltenham Local History Society's newsletters nos.43 (July 2002) and 44 (November 2002).

9 The Theatre frequently staged 'by desire' programmes sponsored by various prominent Stewards of the Races.

10 According to Denning (p.176), in 1822 the two Crisp brothers then managing the Theatre Royal were failing in their payments causing scenery and property to be seized.

# Drums, Cudgels and Pugilism: Early Entertainment

JILL WALLER and VIC COLE

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POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT IN CHELTENHAM has a varied history. In Tudor times recreation for labourers was regulated, with the encouragement of useful skills such as archery and artillery practice, and the suppression of games of chance, and sports such as tennis and bowls. Large gatherings were discouraged for fear of spreading the plague, as recorded in the manor court book in 1611. Early that year Guy Dobbins had banged his drum through the town, followed by numerous labourers including Richard Clarke who marched with a truncheon, mimicking a marshallman. They were advertising a play to be performed at the *Crown*. The Bailiff stopped them, ordering the innkeeper, Thomas Milton, to ban the performance, as nearby Tredington and Prestbury were infected with the plague. The noisy proclamations continued, with a change of venue to the house of victualler, David Powell, until the Bailiff again intervened. The participants, who also included Richard Fortey, Edmund Trinder, Walter Milton and Robert Clively, were heavily fined for the offence.

The public houses of Cheltenham provided the opportunity for a number of activities other than drinking. Meetings were convened, and inquests frequently held, in the nearest public house, as groups could be comfortably accommodated. Amusements for the local population were often centred on the inns and taverns. The *Gloucester Journal* of 11 August 1741 advertised a cudgel match to be held opposite the *Plough*, with 'he that breaks the most heads in three bouts' to win a good hat and one guinea. A note added that 'betwixt the hours of 10 and 2, there will be a gown jiggging for by the girls'. Bull baiting with dogs was also advertised at this time, and cock fighting remained popular into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

One local hero was the pugilist James 'Earywig' Edwards (1822-57). Born in Rutland Street, St. Paul's, Edwards not only became a local champion in the prize ring, but was also acclaimed as the national 'king of the lightweights'. Undefeated in nine contests, he would often go into the ring with opponents who had a great weight advantage. On one occasion Edwards suffered a broken bone in his arm in the second round of a contest with one known as Herbert the 'Mouse'. 167 rounds later the fight was declared a draw when nightfall prevented the continuance of hostilities. On retiring from the ring Edwards became 'mine host' of the *Roebuck Inn* in the Lower High Street, but retained an interest in boxing, coaching Cheltenham College boys in the art.

# Cheltenham Manor Court Rolls 1527-29

JILL BARLOW

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THIS ARTICLE is based on information gleaned by the Latin Research Group<sup>1</sup> from Cheltenham manor court rolls of 1527-29<sup>2</sup> held in the National Archive at Kew. There are examples of both the court leet (or view of frankpledge) which was held twice a year in Cheltenham, and the three week court. They contain most of the elements described in the many books on the subject<sup>3</sup> and show that in Cheltenham, as in manors throughout the country, the structure and the language of the courts had remained almost unchanged over several hundred years.

In 1528 the manor of Cheltenham was the property of Syon Abbey and the courts were held in the name of the lady of the manor, Agnes, Abbess of Syon. The twice-yearly courts were described in the heading as 'view of frankpledge', a title which goes back to the Anglo-Saxon system of placing men in small tithing groups and making them collectively responsible for each other's good behaviour. In 1528 the tithing men still came to court from Alstone, Arle, Ashley, Bafford, Bradwell, Charlton, Cheltenham, Leckhampton, Swindon and Westall. They were accompanied by the bailiff of the borough<sup>4</sup> of Cheltenham. The tithing men began their 'presentments' with the statement that the 'common fine', a payment which started as a levy on each member of the tithing but became a fixed amount, was the same as in preceding years. This was certainly true of Ashley (5s), Leckhampton (3s) and Swindon (2s) which had paid the same amount since at least 1334<sup>5</sup>. Bradwell tithing paid 5s in 1528 and in 1334 the tithing man of Leckhampton presented 'cert money' of 5s *ex parte* Walter de Bradewell.

Courts were a source of revenue for the owner of the manor and virtually every transaction recorded required some payment from the tenants. Every penny due was recorded above the tenant's name, added up in the margin and a final total given at the end of the court summary.

All tenants, even those whose land in Cheltenham was only a fraction of their total holdings, owed 'suit of court' to the manor court and were fined for non-appearance. It was however possible to pay in advance for the privilege of not appearing in court for a year: Sir William Compton, Sir Edward Greville and Ralph Norwood esquire paid 12d; Henry Frensh, gentleman, and Margery Greville, the widow who held the water mill at Arle, paid 6d.

Views of frankpledge had a sworn jury of 13 or 14 tenants, sometimes referred to as the 'homage', who attested to the truth of all statements made in court and issued local regulations such as the dates when pigs should be kept ringed and when animals could be allowed into the stubble fields. They could also appoint a jury of enquiry to settle disputes by going to take a 'view' of the premises or by appeal to local knowledge and custom. The court rolls are a good source of names, both of people and of places, and the jury lists provide the names of some of the prominent tenants. In November 1527 and June 1528 the list was the same, although in a different order and with a different spelling for virtually every name. Several millers were included but no butchers, bakers or brewers. Thomas Brusshe, the miller of Alstone tithing, served on all four juries over the period, as did John Lovear of Westall. In addition to their duties as jurors, most of the men were involved in some other aspect of court business, not always on the side of the righteous.

John Higges was fined 6d for allowing his sheep to wander freely on the cornfield called Samfordesfeld; William Keke was accused by Joan Welles of ploughing up three of her acres in Milkwell furlong in Charlton, although he insisted that he had inherited them; Henry Stile had a case of trespass brought against him and another for unlawfully taking six cows, four bullocks and a heifer from Nasshmede in Alstone. He was clearly a man on the make. He owned an acre at Swyndonshegge, acquired another in the new field of Cheltenham next to le Frepece in the middle furlong and he and his wife Margaret were also granted a half burgage in Cheltenham.

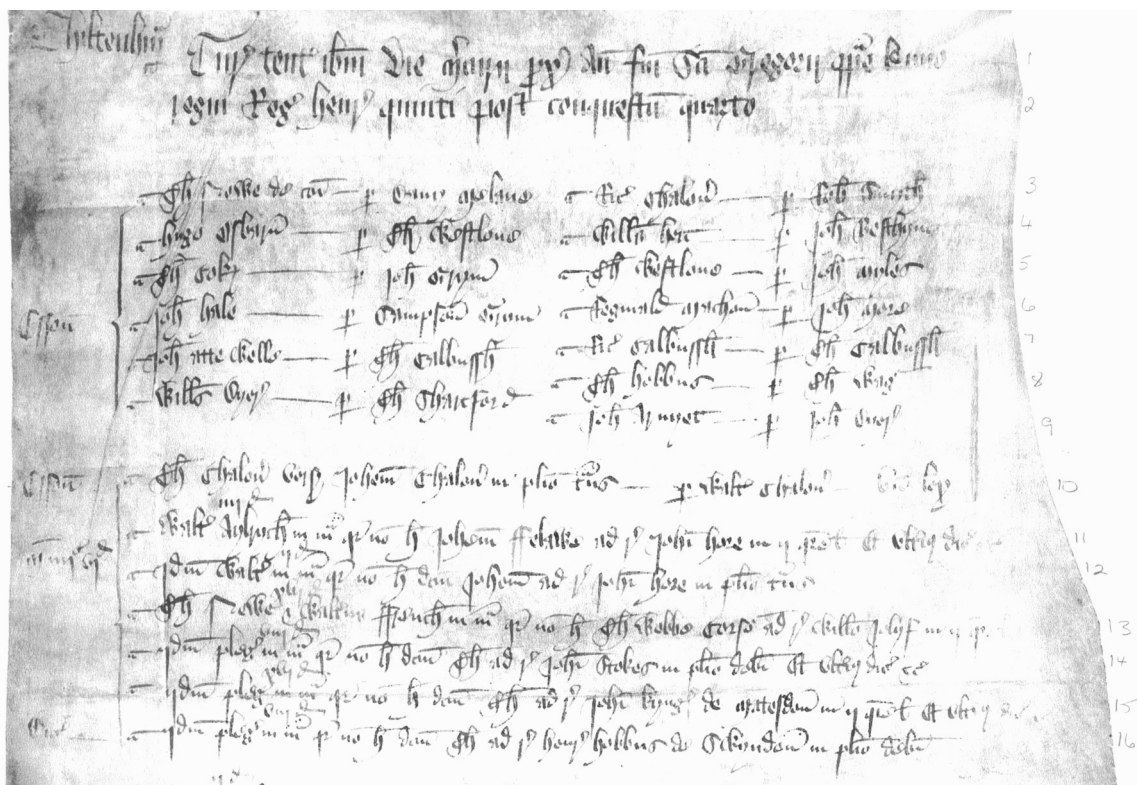
When Ralph Norwode paid for a jury to go and inspect the hedge dividing his land in Kingeshame in the tithing of Sanford from the Abbot of Cirencester's meadow called Mylmede and to decide which of them owned it, the eight men chosen were all jurors at the current court. The homage were also ordered to enquire by what title Walter Whithorn held the lands and tenements formerly held by Thomas Hall.

The tithing men's presentments give a glimpse of life in a community still ruled by 'the customs of the manor'. They reported stray animals (mostly sheep) which theoretically became the property of the lady of the manor if they were unclaimed after a year but seem sometimes to have been allowed to stay with the man looking after them. They reported breaches of the king's peace: 'Alice Bike assaulted Joan Baker and William Baker assaulted Alice Bike'; 'Robert Awod assaulted Edward Hall with a stick of no value and Edward Hall assaulted Robert Awod'. For this Robert was fined 4d and Edward only 3d. Elena Barks was fined for being an eavesdropper (*ascultator sub fenestris vicinorum*).

They reported individuals who showed an understandable reluctance to scour ditches or cut back hedges and a fondness for obstructing the road by digging trenches or making dung heaps. Major road repairs were the responsibility of the entire tithing. The highway between Westhallsegrene and the stone bridge and the bridge itself had fallen into disrepair through the fault of the tithings of Westall and Alstone and the inhabitants were threatened with the hefty penalty of 10s if they failed to repair it. In fact in cases where the penalty became due it was apparently reduced to a more affordable sum like 4d or 6d. Tithings were also instructed to repair the flooded highway at Marshgate in Cheltenham and the dilapidated bridge called the Brodebrugge at Arle.

Millers in Arle, Alstone and Westall paid a fine of 6d ostensibly for overcharging for grain 'to the common harm of the king's subjects'. In Cheltenham Andrew Grenehill (who was bailiff of the lady of the manor) and William Machyn (bailiff of the borough) held horse mills and paid only 3d. There seems to have been a dispute over the mill at Westall. In 1526 the miller was Walter Pate. In 1527 and 1528 both Walter Pate and Thomas Lynet are given as millers but in November 1527 Thomas brought a suit of trespass against Walter claiming that on 4 July of that year he had broken into the mill. In December 1528 the jury decided that Walter was indeed guilty of trespass and he had to pay damages. Unfortunately the entry for Westall in 1529 is completely illegible and we do not know if Thomas retained sole possession of the mill.

In Cheltenham tithing Walter Pate is listed as butcher, baker, candle seller and innkeeper. 'The same Walter' was both baker and butcher, but can he have fulfilled all the other roles as well? Walter Pate and his fellow candle seller Richard Stew were in trouble for charging 1¼d or 1½d per pound for their candles when they had been ordered to sell them for 1d a pound. Walter Pate the butcher, together with John Swannyng and Thomas Hall, were accused of using 'flar' on their meat to make it look better than it was. This has been helpfully translated into English by the clerk as 'to blowe', but we still do not know what it means. Can anyone help?



Part of one of the manor court rolls being transcribed and translated by the Latin Research Group. This particular roll – dated 10 Mar 1417 – is apparently much easier to read than some!

At both autumn courts brewers paid 6d each for a licence to brew for a year (John and Robert Awod, Reginald Frensh and Walter Muchcroft in Cheltenham tithing, Joan Chesenall, John Elcock, George Hurst, Thomas Fisher and Thomas White in the borough) yet those who were guilty of breaking the assize of ale (including Thomas Atholle alias Walshman) were fined only 1d or 2d. The fine for breaking the assize of bread by baking underweight loaves was 2d or 3d.

Property transfers were heard both at views of frankpledge and three-week courts. Land held 'in base tenure' was granted most usually for 12 years with customary services and sometimes rent due to the lady of the manor and 4d paid to have the transaction officially enrolled.

Many of the transfers between tenants were for a few acres in the open fields. Field names given included Overfeld, Netherfeld, Westfeld, Newfeld and Whaddon in Cheltenham, Nauntonsfeld and Samfordesfeld in Westall. In the Netherfield were furlongs called Holow Wethies, Sowrelond, Bittoms and Kyngesdiche. There was a Symondesbroke in the Middelfurlong of Whaddon and Dyrdespike, Gosethorst and Brodoke in the Westfield.

Foster's Place in Cheltenham, described as a *mansio* was granted by William Foster to William Laughlyn, clerk, and by William Laughlyn to Andrew Grenehill, gentleman. As was the case in several other transactions, the new tenant was allowed to take only enough wood to make fences and was forbidden to cut down trees. Walter Pate (which one?) was granted a small close called Maydenhorn, a close called Bittons, an acre of meadow in Whaddon and 21 acres of land scattered in the fields of Cheltenham. In addition he was to have a barn except for the space at one end reserved for the previous

owner to keep two cows with room for them to go in and out. Thomas Brussch granted to William Byke lands in Arle which included part of an orchard next to the cross. An intriguing grant of demesne property was to George Hirst for 31 years of a messuage called the court house with 'le madefurlong? Laverham and Spencers leynes'. The lady's council and her steward reserved the right to hold views of frankpledge and other courts there whenever they wished.

The transfer of burgage plots in the borough of Cheltenham was 'presented' by the bailiff (William Machin in 1527-8, Thomas Butler in 1529) and at least two other burgesses. Burgage and half-burgage plots were transferred 'in perpetuity'. One transfer is described as 'a quantity of burgage' (*quantitatem burgagii*). Was this because, as Norden's *Survey of the Manor of Cheltenham* recorded in 1617 'Most of the burgages were dismembered into so many parts it is likely they cannot apportion their rates'?<sup>6</sup> A payment known as a relief, equal to a year's rent (which varied between 6d and 3s), and all customary services were due to the lady of the manor and the new burgess had to 'do fealty'. Walter Pate and his wife Alice were granted one burgage plot and the chantry of St Katherine in the parish church is listed as owning at least two.

A great deal of space in all courts is devoted to private pleas, mostly of debt or trespass, which are very repetitive and on the whole not very informative. We are rarely told the story behind the case and almost never discover the result. They must however have been excellent sources of income for the lady of the manor. Some cases came to court again and again and each time there was a fee payable. If the plaintiff decided not to pursue the case, he had to pay a fee; if the parties applied for a 'licence to agree', they had to pay a fee.

John Alexander junior brought a case of debt against Reginald Frensh and John Strange; John Strange and William Huntley brought a case of debt against Reginald Frensh. In the sample of court rolls we looked at, the cases appeared eight times but no decision was reached in either.

When we do find the reasons for a suit of trespass, the complaint is usually that someone has broken into a close to plough it or pasture animals and both parties claim ownership of the land. In many cases the offence took place three or four years previously and first came to court a year after it had been (allegedly) committed. Agnes, Abbess of Syon brought two cases of trespass against William Machyn, but although the jury was instructed to enquire into it in November 1527, no decision had been reached a year later.

This is only a sample of the details we found in the 1527-29 manor court rolls but they perhaps add a little colour to the background given in Gwen Hart's *History of Cheltenham*<sup>7</sup>. We have not been able to read the whole text even of those rolls which survive for the period. A combination of the Latin, the abbreviations, the hand-writing and the poor state of some of the manuscript means there are still passages which we cannot understand. Some of the place names quoted only appear once and may be open to different readings. Most of the personal names appear several times with different spellings so I have made a fairly arbitrary choice. At least Walter Pate was consistent.

1 Jill Barlow, Mike Greet, Elaine Heasman, Jane Sale and Jill Waller. Jean Lacock was a founder member and has been much missed. We would like to thank the Local History Societies of Cheltenham, Charlton Kings and Leckhampton for financial assistance in obtaining laser prints of the rolls and Geoff North for making copies from which to work.

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2 PRO SC/175/27. Membranes 8 and 10-15 (m9 is earlier) contain summaries of 11 courts dated between 28 November 1527 and 17 August 1529. They vary greatly in legibility. Some areas of the parchment are so worn and discoloured it is impossible to read anything.

3 See for example P.D.A. Harvey, *Manorial Records*, (British Records Association, 1999) and Mark Bailey, *The English Manor c1200 – c1500*, (Manchester University Press, 2002)

4 In her article 'The field and field names of the hundred of Cheltenham, Part 1', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal* 6, (CLHS 1988) Barbara Rawes traces the first mention of burgesses in Cheltenham to 1294 but says that the burgage plots were probably laid out at the time of Henry III's market charter of 1226.

5 PRO SC/175/25 membrane 5

6 Rawes, p.5

7 Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham*, (Leicester University Press, 1965)

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# Some Cheltenham Connections with Nelson and Trafalgar

MIKE GRINDLEY

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Nelson Inn, Lower High Street<sup>1</sup>  
[courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum]

NEXT YEAR WILL BE THE BICENTENARY OF NELSON'S DEATH at Trafalgar on 21 October 1805. Over the years, Cheltenham has remembered the Admiral and his final battle in names such as *Nelson Cottages* in Trafalgar Street, *Nelson House* (near Montpellier Spa), etc., not to mention the *Nelson Inn* (Lower High Street, until 1912) and the *Nelson* beer house (Bath Road, mid-1830s<sup>2</sup>), but more personal local connections are also known, such as the following.

## Mr John Scott

In early 1910 a mahogany sea-chest, which belonged to Mr John Scott, Lord Nelson's secretary and prize agent, and which was aboard the *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar, was sold by Arthur Whitcombe of Clarence Street, Cheltenham to a 'patriotic donor' who presented it back to the famous flagship now lying at Portsmouth. This sea-chest had been bought by Whitcombe at a sale of the effects of the widow of the late Rev. Francis Scott, grandson of John Scott<sup>3</sup>. The Admiral's secretary had been one of the first to fall on the *Victory*, being killed by a cannon shot while conversing with Hardy, the ship's Captain. An attempt was made to remove the body from Nelson's sight, who had a great regard for Mr Scott, but the Admiral anxiously asked 'Is that poor Scott that's gone?' and being informed that this was indeed so, exclaimed 'Poor fellow!' When later Nelson himself was hit by a ball from the mizzen-top of the *Redoubtable*, he fell upon his face on the spot which was covered with his secretary's blood, the stains of which are today still visible on Nelson's coat. Scott's body was committed to the deep.

The eldest and last surviving son of Mr John Scott was Alexander Innes Scott, who was





John Scott's sea-chest from the *Victory*<sup>5</sup>  
[courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery  
and Museum]

born c.1795 in London and served with the East India Company before retiring. He arrived at Cheltenham in 1855, where he resided with his wife Julia (née Deacon, from London) and family at 9 Royal Parade. They moved in August 1856 to 1 Montpellier Spa Place, and again two months later to 17 Lansdown Terrace where his wife died aged 57 on 1 February 1859. After this there was a final move with his unmarried daughter Charlotte (born London c.1823) to 26 Park Place, the location of his death on 29 February 1872. Under his will, all the furniture at 26 Park Place, 'including a portion of the furniture that was in Lord Nelson's cabin on board the *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar', was auctioned off in April 1872. It would be interesting to learn its eventual fate.

### Captain John Cooke

On a different tack, the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral contains a stone memorial 'erected to the memory of Captain John Cooke, who was killed commanding the *Bellerophon* at Trafalgar, in the 44th year of his age and the 30th of his service'. The 74-gun *Bellerophon* (known as the *Billy Ruffian* to jack tars throughout the Navy) occupied fifth place in the starboard attacking column led by Admiral Collingwood in the *Royal Sovereign*. Cooke's vessel crashed into the *L'Aigle* whose soldiers rained a hail of musket and grenade fire onto their enemy's deck, resulting in the gallant Captain's death. A painting of

Captain John Cooke hangs in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

Captain Cooke's widow Louisa (born at Blackheath) later lived at Cheltenham, at 13 Montpellier Terrace in 1829 and from at least 1836 at 9 Montpellier Terrace, where she died on 5 February 1853, aged 96. With her resided her Plymouth-born daughter Louisa Charlotte, who had married Abraham Devonsher of Kilshannig, Co. Cork, and died 30 April 1871 at St Anne's, Albion Street. Three of the Devonsher Cheltenham-born children were Louisa Cornelia (married Edward Helsham), Sophia (married Robert D. Gibney, son of a Hussars surgeon at Waterloo who became consulting physician to the Cheltenham General Hospital) and Augusta (married Rev. Edward Rolles). In 1883 the long-widowed Augusta moved with her three spinster daughters from St Anne's to Walsingham, Evesham Road, where the last survivor, Caroline A Rolles, died on 14 January 1931, aged 82.<sup>7</sup>



Miss C.A. Rolles, last surviving daughter of  
Captain John Cooke<sup>6</sup>  
[courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery  
and Museum]

### Captain G W Hooper

This officer, who served seven years in the *Neptune* and was 'in command of the slaughter-deck at Trafalgar', died in Cheltenham on 12 July

1839, aged 65.<sup>8</sup> It was the *Neptune* that towed the battered and largely dismantled *Victory* into Gibraltar a week after the battle. Aboard the flagship was Nelson's body, preserved in a cask full of brandy.

### Captain William Coote

Another Trafalgar veteran who died on 4 October 1857 at his Cheltenham residence, 15 Promenade, was William Coote in his 76th year. After 10 years in the Navy he joined the 64-gun *Agamemnon* in December 1804 and fought in her as the seventh ship of Nelson's (port) column in the famous 1805 battle. The following year he was wounded at the victory of San Domingo in the West Indies and left the Navy on a pension of £□400 with the retired rank of Post Captain.<sup>9</sup>

### Admiral Lord de Saumarez

Although not at Trafalgar, this Admiral was 'an intimate friend of Lord Nelson' and served under his command, winning medals for his prowess at the Battles of St Vincent (1797) and the Nile (1798). After his death in Guernsey on 9 October 1836 he was succeeded by his eldest son, the Hon. and Rev. James Saumarez, of Montpellier Lodge, Cheltenham<sup>10</sup>, in which house the latter died on 9 April 1863, aged 71.

### William Hunt

Perhaps the most long-lived Trafalgar local connection was Mrs Mary Yiend of North Street, Winchcombe, where she died on 30 April 1922 in her 101st year. She had been born at Gloucester Street in that town on 8 December 1821 to William and Alice Hunt, the father a tailor by trade. William Hunt had volunteered for naval service at the beginning of the 1800s and was 'on the next ship to the *Victory* when Nelson was killed at Trafalgar'. This was the 98-gun *Temeraire*, whose last journey in 1838 to the breaker's yard at Rotherhithe is immortalised by Turner's famous painting. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* of 18 October 1838 noted that 'one old tar with a wooden starboard leg who had sailed in the *Temeraire* at Trafalgar successfully begged a piece of her timbers to have himself a new wooden leg made'!



Mrs Mary Yiend, daughter of William Hart<sup>11</sup>

[courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum]

Mary Yiend retained her faculties almost to the last, and for the final 45 years of her life conducted a small Winchcombe grocery business helped by her spinster daughter Alice. Mary's husband John died about 1900, and her other two children were Frederick Yiend who died in Canada and Mrs Medcraft who ended her days at Brighton.<sup>12</sup> It is amazing to reflect that the daughter of an 18th century-born veteran of Trafalgar died in 1922, well within the lifetime of many senior citizens currently alive in the 21st century.

### Acknowledgement

My thanks to Cheltenham Reference Library for providing access to local newspapers, directories and census microfilms, to establish family dates, locations and movements, and also to provide main references (see below).

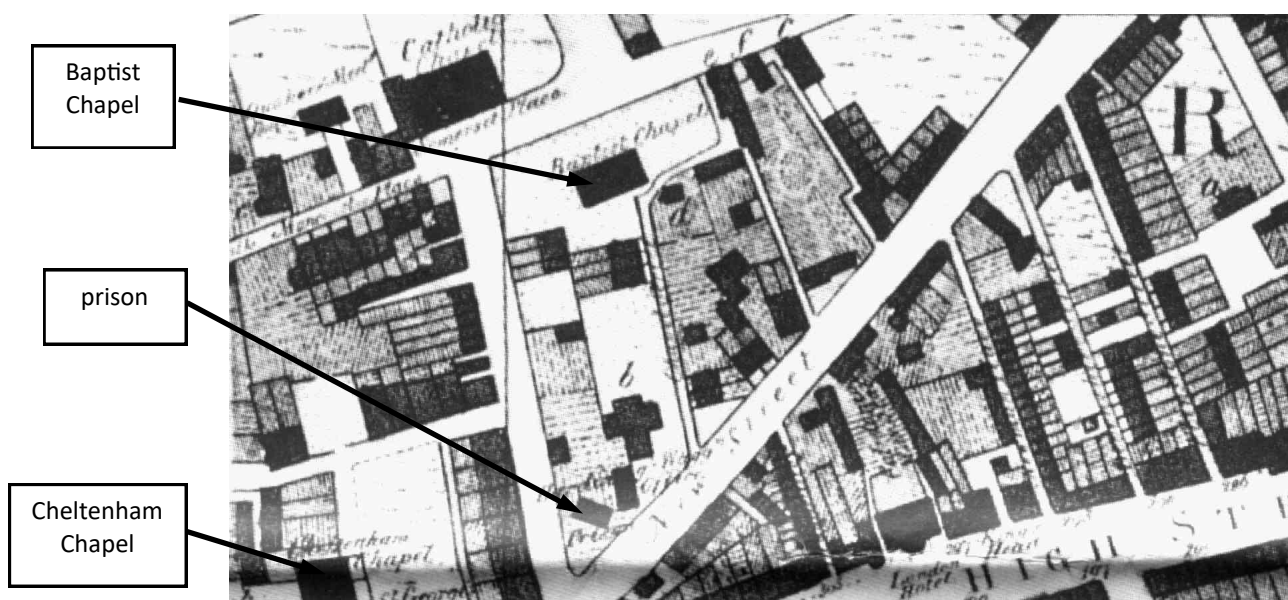
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## Notes on Cheltenham's Prison(s)

MICHAEL GREET



Portion of Post Office map showing the prison's location in 1820

FROM MEDIEVAL TIMES until the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a prison or prisons in Cheltenham. In medieval times a prison existed primarily to hold prisoners until they were tried, but evidence below shows that a prisoner could sometimes be held in prison for years. The first prison in Cheltenham seems to have been a royal one, as the Crown then held both the manor and the hundred of Cheltenham, and we can assume it existed at least from c.1220, when we can show a royal court existed in the town<sup>1</sup>.

The grant of the manor and hundred to the Abbey of Fecamp in 1247, however, may have created the need for a separate seigneurial prison. Alternatively the Abbey may have taken over the royal prison. In any event the Crown still had rights over a prison in the town in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

John Gode of Cheltenham, an excommunicated person, was from 1310 to 1314 in Cheltenham prison for not acknowledging the Bishop of Worcester's decision in the Gloucester Consistory Court that he was to marry Juliana Scot who was legally his wife<sup>2</sup> (presumably because he had promised to marry her).

A letter of July 1309 from the Vicar General of Worcester Diocese in the absence of the Bishop, suggests that Gode had seriously annoyed the Church:

*'John Gode of Cheltenham for his contumacy and manifest offence has been bound by us under sentence of great excommunication and for 40 days and upwards has in the hardness of his heart persisted in contempt of the keys of the Church. Wherefore we beg your highness to stretch forth the right hand of*

*your royal majesty to coerce more strictly the malice, contempt, and pertinacity of the said John.*<sup>3</sup>

Gode was still in Cheltenham prison in January 1313 when the Prior of Worcester (probably acting for the Bishop of Worcester Walter Reynolds) wrote to the Bailiff of the Liberty of Cheltenham ordering his release to marry Juliana, he 'desiring to return to a better course of life ... make satisfaction to God and the Church for his rebellion and be reconciled'.<sup>4</sup> He was not released until 1314, however.

A John Gode, living in Cheltenham, was assessed to marry 6d., the minimum amount, in the 1327 Lay Subsidy.<sup>5</sup> He may be a relative of the Robert Gode who held land in Le Tounfurlong on the King's Road, and elsewhere in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

Bishop Reynolds (with effect from October 1313 Archbishop of Canterbury) who imprisoned Gode was 'intellectually and morally ... of all the medieval Archbishops the least deserving of respect'.<sup>7</sup>

It is not known whether this prison was the one referred to as the 'Lord's prison', apparently with 'two chambers', in 1556, and perhaps the one called 'the Blind House' ... 'out of repair and dangerous' in 1692.<sup>8</sup> Cheltenham Prison (located in the High Street) was more fully described in 1781 as 'a kind of cage or prison, built of stone, and not unsuitably decorated with the inscription in front "Do well and fear not."' A description published 1863 stated it was:

*'... a round building of stone with an iron grating for a window ... A painted board over the door way, has upon it the words "Blind House"'*<sup>9</sup>

In 1786 it was ordered that:

*'a Market House shall be forthwith built upon the Scite where the old Blindhouse and the present Prison stand, that the Prison shall be removed to where the Pound is.'*<sup>10</sup>

The site of the old prison was that next to the house of William Barrett near Church Street on the south side of High Street to the left of (the present) Coop Travel.<sup>11</sup> This was replaced by a small prison in Fleece Lane in 1788. It was:

*'... ordered that a stone prison be erected in the Fleece Lane forthwith to consist of Two Apartments of the same size as the prison lately pulled down'.*<sup>12</sup>

The Paving Commissioners debated the need for a new prison in 1810, 1811 and 1812. In 1814 the *Cheltenham Chronicle* refers to the existence of a new prison<sup>13</sup> and Hart locates this 'opposite the chapel on the corner of New Street'.<sup>14</sup> In c.1822 *The New Guide to Cheltenham* explained the reasoning:

*'The inadequate state of the old place of confinement induced the Commissioners to erect a more commodious Gaol, which is now rendered comparatively comfortable. It is situated near Saint George's Place.'*<sup>15</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my wife Carolyn for the details from the Paving Commissioners' Minutes and the *Cheltenham Chronicle* reference.

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-

## Sir Ralph Richardson (1902 – 1983)

### One of Cheltenham's most famous sons

DEREK ROWLES

*How Ralph Richardson came to be born in Cheltenham and personal recollections of the day when he returned to his home in Tivoli Road 80 years later.*

THE RICHARDSON FAMILY hailed from Newcastle-on-Tyne where they owned a leather factory. The family was also well known in Northumbria as artists. Ralph's father, Arthur inherited the family's artistic talents and is said to have been sent to Paris to study art where he met a fellow art student named Lydia Russell. They were married in 1890. Their first son Christopher was also born in the year of their marriage at Newcastle and two years later they had a second son Ambrose.

Now 27, married and with a young family Arthur Richardson decided to accept a full time position as Master at the School of Art at Cheltenham Ladies' College. The Lady Principal of the Ladies' College in the spring 1893 issue of the school magazine states that she has engaged Mr Richardson who comes 'highly recommended' having studied in Paris. The autumn issue of the same year records that Mr Richardson actually joined the staff in September and that he was 'formally a student under M. Bougereau at Paris.' It was undoubtedly the vacancy at the Ladies' College that persuaded the Richardsons to leave Newcastle and come to Cheltenham. Arthur Richardson is first listed in local directories in 1893 living at 16 Naunton Park. The following year he moved to Tivoli Road and took up residence at *Herbert Lodge* (now no. 25) which had its name changed to *Cleveland* in 1895. A notice confirming the removal of the Richardson family from *Cleveland* to *Langsyne*, a house in Tivoli Road some 100 metres nearer to the town centre, was placed in the October 6<sup>th</sup> 1900 issue of the *Cheltenham Looker-On*. The 1901 Census confirms 35 year old Arthur Richardson, his wife Lydia (30) and son Ambrose (4) living there together with one servant Muriel Edkins (21) - a domestic nurse. Christopher, the eldest son, was away.



**Richardson, Arthur, R.B.A.**, belongs to an old quaker family and was born at Newcastle-on-Tyne; studied art at Julian's studio, Paris, under Bougereau and Fleury; is a member of the Royal Society of British Artists, and holds the appointment of Art Teacher at the Cheltenham Ladies' College. Mr. Richardson finds recreation in walking. Residence: Lang Syne, Tivoli Road

Extract from *Who's Who in Cheltenham* (Williams Press 1911)  
[courtesy of Jill Waller]



Ralph Richardson on the day of his christening with his mother Lydia, probably in the sitting room at 11 Tivoli Road. Photograph taken by G.H. Martyn.<sup>1</sup>

[photograph courtesy of British Library]

*Langsyne* is a late Regency style house, built during the reign of William IV. The house was given the name of *Charnes* in 1921 and still exists as 11 Tivoli Road. It was this house that Arthur Richardson decided to rent and settle with his family and where, on the 19 December 1902, his third son Ralph Richardson was born. From here, Ralph Richardson recalls, it was his father's practice to travel by cab to his work at the Ladies' College. Although some surprise has been expressed that he should not have walked this comparatively short distance it was probably the most convenient form of travel as a cab with driver was normally waiting at the end of Tivoli Road to take Tivoli residents down to town or to the station; in winter, and especially if laden with drawings or paintings, it was probably the best option. A mysterious cab waiting at the end of the road is again referred to by Richardson in connection with the time he and his mother eventually left *Langsyne*, escorted by a nun, when he was five years old and his two parents split up and went their separate ways. Arthur however stayed on at *Langsyne* until 1911, presumably with his two elder sons, at which time he stopped teaching at the Ladies' College but took pupils privately at an Art Studio at the Montpellier Rotunda.

During his lifetime Ralph Richardson had established an international reputation as one of the finest British actors of all time along with his two contemporary actor friends Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud. For over 50 years he was the star in many plays and films. Towards the end of his career much had been written about him in books and the press – about his performances, eccentricities and antics – some amusing, some controversial; most were complimentary and many indicated a fondness for the man.

Ralph was knighted in 1947 and in 1982 it was decided that Sir Ralph Richardson's achievements should be celebrated around the time of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. In Cheltenham *The Cheltenham Civic Society*, supported by the Borough Council and the National Theatre, decided that a plaque should be attached to the house to commemorate the famous actor's birthplace and a call was received from David Phillips, the then Chairman of the Civic Society, seeking our agreement. It was hoped that Sir Ralph would attend an official ceremony.

On Saturday 6 November 1982 the great day arrived and a crowd started to gather on the front lawns of the house. Television crews were soon in place and reporters from the



local press and radio started their interviews. Soon after the interviews had drawn to a conclusion Sir Ralph and his small party arrived. My wife and I went out into the garden to meet the new arrivals and everyone was introduced. After welcoming him to his home of many years ago we invited Sir Ralph and the official party inside.

Sir Ralph radiated charm and delight as we escorted him up the steps and into the house. There were many exclamations of - 'Oh! Oh! How kind! How beautiful! Oh I say! Oh how splendid!' Any prior feelings of apprehension almost immediately disappeared as this great actor and film star of international fame rapidly became, within minutes, a much revered and kindly friend of long standing. Guided to the most comfortable chair, the rest of the party having followed us into the drawing room, Sir Ralph was asked 'Would you like a glass of wine or a scotch perhaps Sir Ralph?' 'Oh! How kind, a glass of scotch would be splendid. Thank you so much.'

As refreshments were served the noise in the room gradually increased as more and more people were introduced. Eventually the time came to unveil the plaque and as everyone went outside for this official ceremony Sir Ralph caught hold of my arm and almost whispered 'have the National Theatre been involved in this?' By this time the front lawns were full of people and traffic was stopping in the road to see what was happening. The mayor and his wife stood alongside the plaque; officials from the Civic Society and Borough Council mingled with the townsfolk and reporters as David Phillips, Chairman of the Civic Society, commenced proceedings by welcoming Sir Ralph and asking him to unveil the plaque to commemorate his birthplace. Then Sir Ralph commenced his un-scripted reply as he reached forward to remove a small blue curtain, covering the plaque, carefully installed the previous evening.

*'Well here goes. I am famous for my mobility and chameleon like qualities. Let's hope they come off now. One, two, three! Oh I say! Well! Well I really never, never in my whole life, expected to see my name on the house in which I was born. Fantastic! I was born here. I left here when I was four or five years old, so I didn't think very much about anything in those days did I? But I did remember Cheltenham, and I did remember being here for those few years, in quite a remarkable way. I remember that tree (pointing to the chestnut tree) very well and it was a smaller tree than it is now but I used to climb up upon it. Cheltenham's child is sweet and mild. I don't know whether I was sweet or mild or wild but I used to climb up; there was one branch that used to go over the pavement a little bit and I sat there and as people, two and two in solemn talk or something, I would lean over and say - How are you feeling this morning? It astonished them and sometimes they would look up and perhaps shake their fist at me or they would say - I am quite well, how are you? I remember that very well.'*

*'But I really do thank you, oh! from the depth of my heart, for your kindness in thinking of that. I do recommend anyone who are thinking of bringing up a family or if they know anyone who is thinking of bringing up a family - try to get the child born in Cheltenham, because I can assure them that it is something they will never regret, and always look back to with happiness and pleasure and honoured, as I am now. Thank you all. Thank you very very much.'*

The official plaque ceremony over, David Phillips very kindly and thoughtfully suggested that Sir Ralph might like to be shown around the house on his own and meet up with the official party later - an idea welcomed by Sir Ralph. After introductions to the family and several friends, all of whom he enchanted, we started to look around the house

where he had spent the first four or five years of his life. It was fascinating to learn of what he remembered, failed to remember and imagined of those early years. On re entering the now empty drawing room, he recalled that this used to be his father's studio where he did his painting. As one of the lightest rooms in the house it certainly would have been good for this purpose. Sir Ralph was once said to have thought that his mother's redecoration of this room, while his father was away, was the reason for his parents splitting up. He lingered over the paintings in the house done by a favourite aunt, who trained at the Slade, and after a lengthy examination of a painting of a water lily remarked – 'You are very lucky – she must have been a very special lady to have painted like that.' He remembered no other rooms on the ground floor. We then started climbing the stairs when he said; 'There are two floors upstairs aren't there?' In fact there is only one but later I remembered that in his days there was a kitchen and other rooms in the cellar in use which are now only used for storage. On reaching the arched window on the landing at the rear of the house, he pointed and, looking slightly wild said; 'And that is where the man committed suicide. Oh yes,' he said, rather like a small boy, 'that's why they had to put those bars across.'

In fact, although the house and previous owners has been researched very thoroughly no evidence of this macabre story has ever come to light; however a possible explanation became apparent later after we had visited the spare bedroom. Here he recalled games played with his brothers who used to call him 'Ralphie.' One could well imagine young boys playing rough games on the landing, being warned not to go near the window and the warning perhaps emphasised with some gruesome tale by an anxious parent or an imaginative elder brother.

Our teenage daughter and a school friend named Charlotte had decided to withdraw to the main bedroom. On arriving here Sir Ralph immediately engaged them in conversation about their schooling and enquired about their favourite subjects. 'Shooting' said the one – proud at having just been promoted into the school shooting team. 'Shooting!' Sir Ralph exclaimed with considerable surprise and, turning to Charlotte, 'what about you?' 'Acting' said the other diplomatically. A conversation then ensued about one of the latest plays in which the young girl had been involved concerning a character named Charlotte Corday who apparently stabbed the French revolutionary leader Marat to death. 'Good gracious!' said Sir Ralph, 'what a terrible pair – if the one does not shoot you the other will stab you!' This amusing moment was later captured for all time by Charlotte, who later took a photograph whilst running backwards, as Sir Ralph left the house – his hand held high in a stabbing gesture and chuckling.

Our final visit was to the dining room where Sir Ralph admired one of the clocks. 'Do you wind all the clocks yourself?' he asked, 'and tell me – do you wind them at the same time each week?' 'That is interesting, the man that winds my clocks insists on winding them at the same time each week and I am sure that is right,' he said. His attention was soon caught by some old 1930s catalogues of art exhibitions at the Paris Salon. He became fascinated and soon engrossed in their contents and spoke of his family, some of whom were well known artists, and his own attempts at painting. It became clear that painting was one of the great loves of his life and one could not help wondering whether he would have preferred success as a great painter rather than as an actor. Eventually the official schedule was such that it became necessary to move on to lunch at the Queens Hotel. Several officials attended from the Everyman Theatre, where one of the small theatres was to be named after him. Although conversation largely related to the theatre, Sir Ralph shared my enjoyment of a good film. The occasion was a happy one and enlivened by Sir Ralph's eccentricities - including pouring and drinking his coffee out of an ash tray. Suddenly it was discovered that he had departed – clearly not one to dwell on lengthy farewells.

In the following months, we received two letters from his home in Chester Terrace, Regents Park – one thanking us for '*your welcome into your house and family,*' and adding - '*The day was an honour and a great happiness which I shall treasure for EVER – Ralph.*'



Sir Ralph Richardson unveiling the plaque commemorating his birth at 11 Tivoli Road  
*[photograph courtesy of Gloucestershire Echo]*



Spectators in the garden at 11 Tivoli Road watching the unveiling ceremony. Can you spot a familiar face in the crowd? *[photograph courtesy of Gloucestershire Echo]*

The second letter acknowledged receipt of a photograph of an aunt's painting, which he particularly admired, and sent to him as an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday card. Sir Ralph enthused over my aunt's painting ability and wrote '*nothing so delightful could be found for me*' and responding to an invitation to visit again he ended the letter with - '*Oh, yes, I hope I may come to you again one day.*'

Sadly this was not to be for Sir Ralph Richardson died in October 1983, less than a year after his visit to Cheltenham. Following his death, his wife, Lady Richardson – the actress Meriel Forbes, set up the Ralph and Meriel Richardson Foundation to enable their assets and collections to be preserved for the benefit of actors in need. Meriel Forbes died in the spring of the year 2000 and one year later Sotheby's held an auction of 'The Ralph Richardson Collection.' In an attempt to acquire a personal memento from this collection, a bid was made for an early self portrait by Ralph Richardson. Although the bid proved to be unsuccessful, Sotheby's kindly agreed to send a photograph of this painting which, now framed, hangs proudly in the house where he was born as a reminder of a wonderful day spent with a truly great and charming gentleman. As Sir Ralph wrote, for us also – 'the day was an honour and a great happiness which we will treasure for ever.'

### **Acknowledgements**

The staff at Cheltenham Reference Library  
Mrs J Mann, Archivist, Cheltenham Ladies College  
Mr Brian Eagles executor of the late Sir Ralph and the late Lady Richardson  
The Trustees of The Ralph & Meriel Richardson Foundation  
Mrs Kathryn Johnson – Curator of the Sir Ralph Richardson archives at the British Library

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1 G.H. Martyn and Sons were photographers in Cheltenham from 1878 onwards with premises in Oriel Road and Imperial Square. They are thought to have taken many of the photographs known to exist of the manufacturing premises owned by H.H. Martyn, to whom they were related. [Ed.]

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# Grand Flower Show and Military Fete in Cheltenham

MICK KIPPIN

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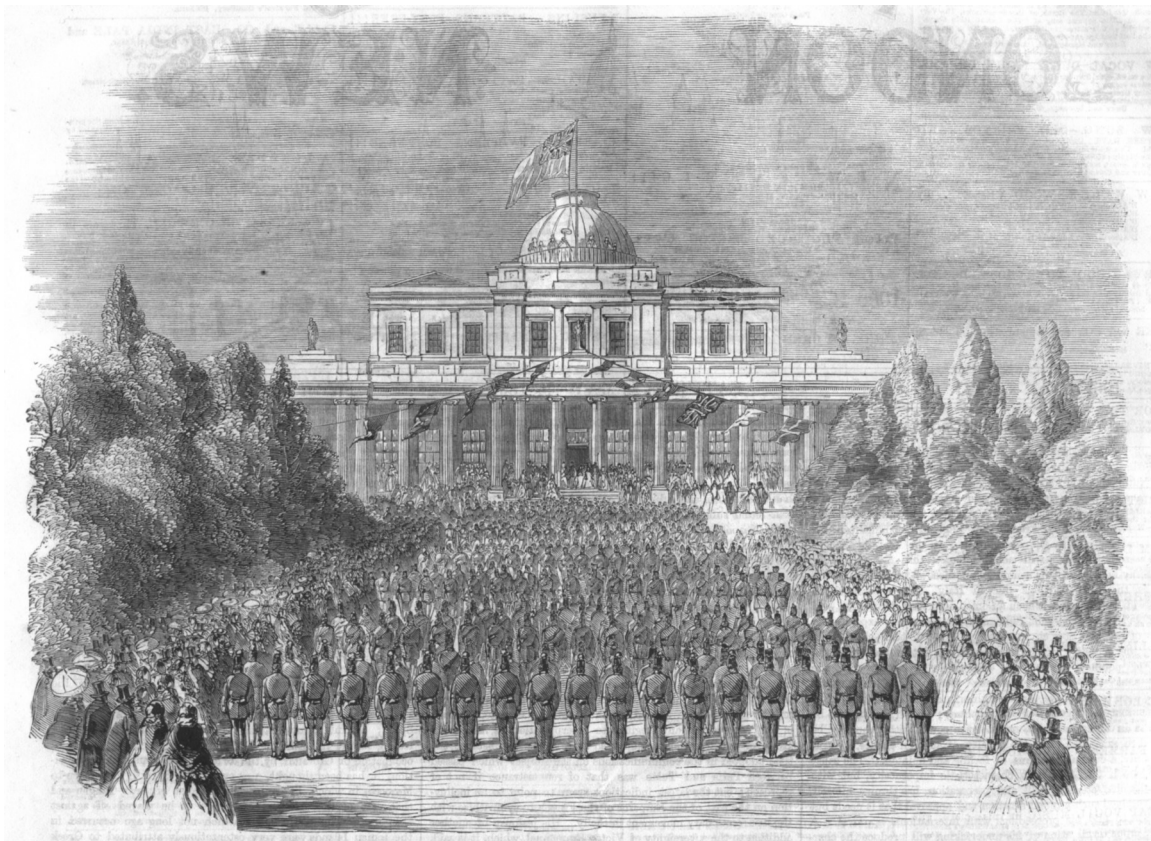
ALONG WITH SIMILAR UNITS from the rest of the country, Gloucestershire's Rifle Volunteers of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were keen to show the general public that they were serious about their soldiering. So an opportunity to put on a military parade in Cheltenham was eagerly turned into a major Public Relations exercise.

Flower shows had played a large part in the social life of 19<sup>th</sup> century Cheltenham for many years, with the various spas competing for bigger and better public attractions. The first floral fete of the 1860 season took place in Pittville Gardens on Wednesday 2 May. So as to put on an event of the required magnitude to draw the crowds and, of course, outshine anything the Montpellier Spa could arrange, the organising committee sent out free invitations to all the Volunteer Corps. The organisers also obtained the services of the band of the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars for the occasion. In order to bring all these visitors into the town, special excursion trains were laid on from as far afield as Birmingham, Bristol and South Wales as well as places closer to home – Swindon and Stroud.

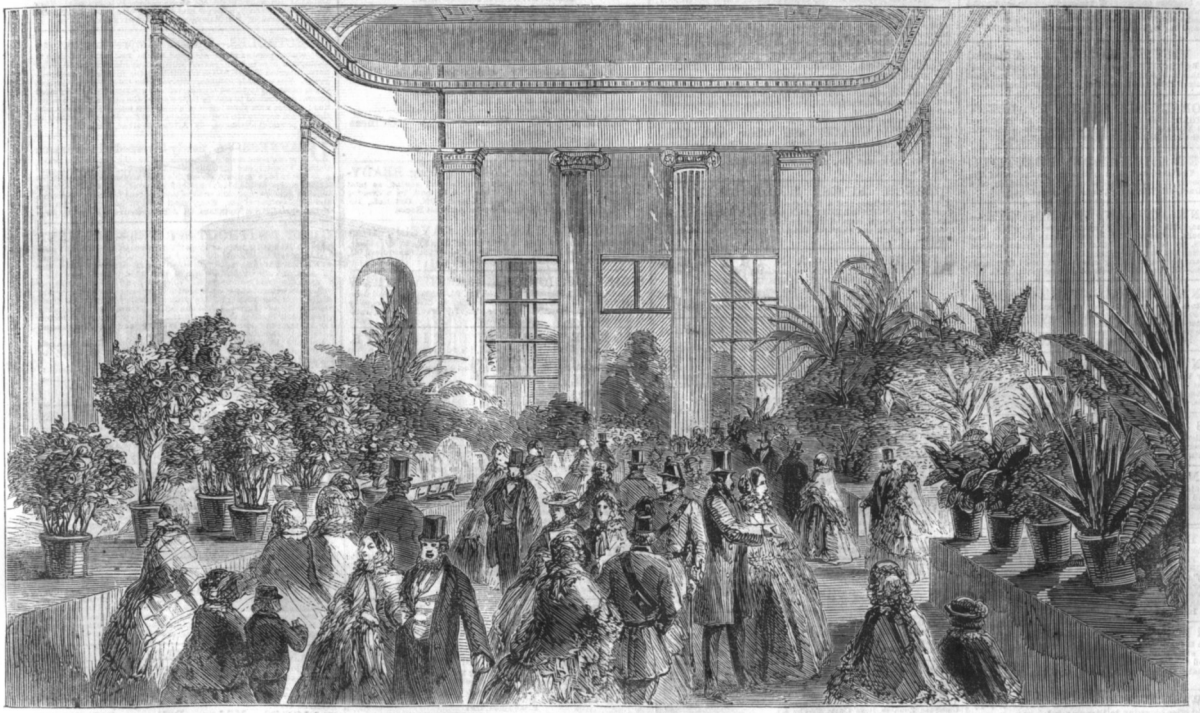
Military preparations for the day began early. The 10<sup>th</sup> (Cotswold) Rifle Volunteer Corps, whose headquarters was in Cheltenham, was responsible for most of the arrangements for the parade and many members were out early that day. At 11 o'clock a Guard of Honour from the 10<sup>th</sup> Corps, paraded at the Midland Station together with the Corps' band to meet the Tewkesbury and Dursley companies (8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Rifle Volunteer Corps). Next on parade were members of the 13<sup>th</sup> (Oddfellows) Rifle Volunteer Corps, whose headquarters were also in Cheltenham. This was the Oddfellows first parade in uniform; the Corps had only formed in March 1860. The Oddfellows then marched to Cheltenham's other mainline station, the Great Western, to meet members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps from Gloucester. With all the participating Volunteers safely arrived in Cheltenham, the whole parade of almost 600 men assembled in the Promenade near the Queen's Hotel, under the overall command of Lt. Col. W.P. Purnell<sup>1</sup> of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Administrative Battalion, the Gloucestershire Rifle Volunteers.

It is apparent that not all of the Gloucestershire Volunteer Corps took advantage of the invitation to take part in this parade. The 9<sup>th</sup> (Cirencester) and 12<sup>th</sup> (Forest of Dean) Corps had only been formed in February and April 1860 respectively and may have felt that they were not yet up to the required standard. Likewise the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps of the Gloucestershire Artillery Volunteers from Newnham had been invited, but had declined the offer.<sup>2</sup> As well as the Gloucestershire Volunteers who were on parade in the Promenade, several members of both the Worcestershire and Warwickshire Volunteer Corps had travelled to Cheltenham for the occasion; the Worcester and Pershore Corps in sufficient numbers to participate in the parade.

The Gardens at Pittville had been opened to subscribers<sup>3</sup> from 1.30 p.m., so that as many people as possible could watch the troops arrive. The parade set off for Pittville Gardens at 2 o'clock headed by the Recruiting Staff and the band of the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars with the bands of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Corps dispersed amongst the marching troops. Lt.



Rifle Volunteers parade in front of Pittville Pump Room  
*Illustrated London News* 12 May 1860 (courtesy of Sue Rowbotham)



Interior of Pittville Pump Room, Grand Flower Show and Military Fete  
*Illustrated London News* 12 May 1860 (courtesy of Sue Rowbotham)

Col. Purnell, Major Noel (2<sup>nd</sup> in command) and Captain Swiney (Adjutant for the day) were all mounted.

The route through the town to Pittville was lined with spectators eager to get a glimpse of their part-time soldiers. Once the parade had reached the Gardens the men were dismissed so as to meet up with their friends and families and enjoy the real reason for being there – the Cheltenham Horticultural Society's Spring Show. The band of the 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars were seated on the terrace of the Pump Room and played throughout the day. Amongst their musical programme was a march arranged by the Bandmaster, Mr. J.P. Clarke, entitled *The Gloucestershire Rifles*, which had been adapted from Balfe's song *Riflemen Form*, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson's patriotic verse of the same title, published in *The Times* on 9 May 1859 – a fitting tribute to the Volunteers of Gloucestershire.

*There is a sound of thunder afar,  
Storm in the South that darkens the day,  
Storm of battle and thunder of war,  
Well, if it does not roll our way,  
Storm, storm, riflemen form!  
Ready, be ready against the storm!  
Riflemen, riflemen, riflemen form!*

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*The Times*, 9 May 1859

- 1 Colonel Purnell was formerly a Lt. Col. in the 90<sup>th</sup> Foot (2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion the Cameronians).
  - 2 Press publicity prior to the event showed this artillery company as being on parade, but reporting afterwards clearly shows they did not attend.
  - 3 Admission charges to the Gardens were not finally abolished until 1954!
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# The Former Axiom Building: 57-59 Winchcombe Street

KLARA SUDBURY

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FROM THE EARLY 1980s until February 2000, 57-59 Winchcombe Street was used as a community art centre and was most recently occupied by the *Axiom*, Cheltenham's Art Centre. However, a local Corn Merchant originally constructed the building at the end of the nineteenth century. The history of the site goes even further back than this and the extensive deeds for this building cover the ownership of this site for the past two hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest record in the deeds is a '*Feoffment* of part of Stones Orchard' dated 3 May 1805. A document dated 1814 shows that there was a carriage house, coach shop, workshops and buildings on the site of 31 (now 57-59) Winchcombe Street (from an 'Assignment' between Mr Philo Maddy by direction of Mr William Powel to Mr William Spring.<sup>2</sup> Philo Maddy (also spelt Meddy) was a currier and leather dealer of Whitefriars.<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, Maddy built the grand classical house (most incongruously abutting the nave of Greyfriars), which is now Gloucester library c.1810.

From around 1830 31 Winchcombe Street was first used as a corn merchants.<sup>4</sup> Across the road was Richard Humphrey's Livery Stables.<sup>5</sup> Documentary evidence from the County Record Office shows that a neighbouring shop at 33 Winchcombe Street was newly built in 1842.<sup>6</sup> A map of Cheltenham dated 1855, which includes the site of 31 Winchcombe Street, shows a shop on the North side of the site facing Winchcombe Street with a separate warehouse to the rear and an entrance to the granary at the rear via yard to the South of the shop.<sup>7</sup>

In *Slater's Commercial Directory* of 1858-1859, one Thomas Mills is registered as a 'Corn and Flour (also Hay and Straw) Dealer' at 31 Winchcombe Street. Other 'Corn and Flour (also Hay and Straw) Dealers' in Winchcombe Street are John Davis and Williams Charles Henry of 21 and 66 Winchcombe Street respectively. Across the road from no 31, at 70 Winchcombe Street, was the Livery Stable Keepers Humphrey's & Son and there was also Coach Builders & Harness Makers, Arkell & Jackson, at 38, 75, and 76 Winchcombe St.<sup>8</sup>

The 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map from 1885 shows that at that time the buildings on the site of 31 Winchcombe Street had not been altered since the 1855 map.<sup>9</sup>

## Investment in the future

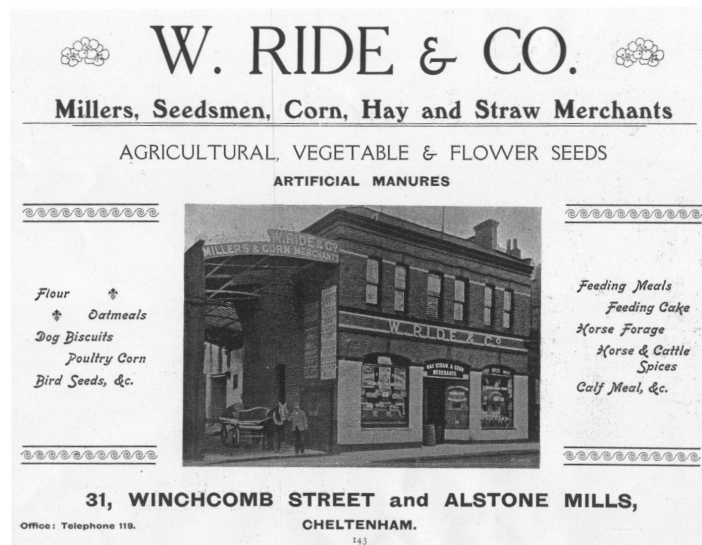
In 1887 Mr G.S. Chapman of Malvern and William Ride of Cheltenham, trading as W.Ride & Co., bought 31 Winchcombe Street. An Agreement dated 4 August 1887 was made 'to sell' 31 Winchcombe Street between James Wadley and Francis John Wellesley (also written Welsley) Wadley (vendors) and George Stoddart Chapman and William Ride (purchasers) for £1,100. However, James Wadley died on 7 August 1887 bequeathing everything to Daniel Merrett and John Wilkins Smith. Included in the old deeds is a statutory declaration by one William Barron dated 17 September 1887 in which he says:

- He was well acquainted with James Wadley and Elizabeth Ann Wadley his wife.
- That Elizabeth Ann Wadley was the only child of Francis Garrett (a Coach and harness maker of 418, High Street, Cheltenham)<sup>10</sup> and Ann Long. On her father's



death on 2 August 1853 intestate she became entitled to the freehold of 31 Winchcombe St, formerly in the occupation of W. Davis and now of Messrs Ride and up to the time of her death on 10 August 1856, when James Wadley became entitled to the freehold until his death on 7 August 1887.

- There was one child namely Francis John Welsley Wadley.



The issue of James Wadley's will was resolved as far as 31 Winchcombe Street was concerned and the abstract of title recites an indenture dated 19 Sept 1887 between Daniel Merrett, John Wilkins Smith and Francis John Welsley Wadley (vendors) and George Stoddart Chapman and William Ride (purchasers).

After they had purchased the site, the existing buildings – a shop, dwelling house and granary (formerly workshops)<sup>11</sup> were demolished and W. Ride & Co. re-built the granaries, which were situated on the rear of the site and the shop to the front. Additionally a covered roof was added to shelter part of the courtyard where Ride's staff would load up their carts and prepare their horses (see photographs on p.42).

The building work was complete around 1899 and the historic interest of these buildings lies in the role they played in the economic development of Cheltenham as host to the largest Corn Merchants in the town.<sup>12</sup> In the same way that we rely on oil in the modern world to be able to able to travel, when this building was built people still relied on horsepower. Ride's had been established on the site of 31 Winchcombe Street prior to their purchase of it and this huge re-build and investment was rational and showed immense vision and commitment to the future of the business and the future of Cheltenham.

Included in the old deeds was a letter from John G. Villar (Auctioneer, Land Agent and Surveyor of 8, Clarence St, Cheltenham) to the Manager of the National Provincial Bank, Cheltenham dated 6 April 1911, which provides valuable information about the building:



W. Ride and Co. from Winchcombe Street – date unknown  
*[Axiom web site]*

*Dear Sir,*



Inside the courtyard at W. Ride and Co. – date unknown  
*[Axiom web site]*

*I have as desired measured up and estimated the Value of the Freehold Premises, belonging to and occupied by Mr. W. Ride trading as above, and beg to report the premises comprise large shop with frontage to Winchcombe Street of 31 ft, and double entrance doors, 16 ft wide making a total frontage of 47 ft to the street. The premises being immediately opposite the Horse Repository, forms the best position in Cheltenham for a Forage Contractor and Corn & Seed merchant, and this kind of business has been carried on for 80 years continuously on these premises which are well suited for that purpose.*

*The total ground area is about 7,400 square ft. The Warehouses adjoining the shop at the rear have half basement, and 3 corn storage floors above. There is an engine room with gas engine 30H.P. and large Grist Mill, and set of pulley wheels and shafting complete. Adjoining the warehouse are the Stables, excellently arranged for 9 horses, with harness room, and next to the Stables is a coachhouse with entrance from the occupation road leading into Mountpleasant, as well as entrance to the main yard of 31 Winchcombe Street, giving the whole premises the advantage of double entrance. Over the stables are Hay and Straw Stores on two floors, with suitable unloading places and large lift. The floor above the Warehouse is about 9,000 square ft. There is a large covered space in the main yard, under which several loaded wagons of Hay, Straw and Corn may be drawn, sheltered from the rain. This roof is constructed of galvanized iron with ample roof lights. There is an excellent weighbridge fitted in the yard to weigh loads of up to 6 tons.*

*The premises are lighted by Electric Light in all parts. The whole of the buildings were erected on the site of original warehouses some 12 years ago, and the work had been carried out in the most approved and substantial manner, the outer walls are eighteen ins in thickness, the floors are supported by iron columns in the centre of each floor, and floors are constructed to carry very heavy loads of corn &c. The total cost of the premises with the fixed machinery was £4,500. I find that everything has been kept in good repair, order and condition. The premises are rated to the relief of the Poor, gross £210. nett £178.10.0. I am of the opinion the value of the property as described is the sum of Three thousand, five hundred pounds (£3,5000.) but if the value of the business carried on is taken into consideration, then a considerable sum must be added on.*

*I am, Dear Sir,  
Yours faithfully,*

*J.G. Villar.*

An Ordnance Survey map of 1923 shows the site of 31 Winchcombe Street and, in terms of the buildings on the site, it looks much as it does today.<sup>13</sup> The shop was built to the South of the site with a warehouse immediately behind it and access to the covered courtyard and warehouses via an entrance now to the North of the site where the original shop had once stood.

Despite once being a successful Corn Merchants with several premises in Cheltenham, W. Ride & Co. went into liquidation in 1949. Four years later, in 1953 Oldacres, a rival corn merchant who had a shop at 40 Winchcombe Street bought Ride's premises including 31 Winchcombe Street.<sup>14</sup> Oldacres had leased 40 Winchcombe Street in 1907. This business was called W.J. Oldacre and Son and they later bought the freehold for

that property, which was run as a hay, corn and coal merchants. However, they had found themselves 'up against a neighbour who was the largest of a number of corn merchants in the town. While Oldacres were able to attract the smaller type of customer into their shop, it was difficult to persuade the larger farmers to change their allegiance from W. Ride and Company. It was an uphill task'.<sup>15</sup>

W.J. Oldacre had been looking to expand their business and in March 1953 'at a special meeting the directors were told that W. Ride and Company, one of the largest corn merchants in Cheltenham and a major competitor was on the market. Ride's owned a large shop and warehouse on Winchcombe Street, two further shops and other properties in the town and the firm agreed that a firm offer of £23,000 should be made for the property, plant and transport plus a sum for the stock at an agreed value'. In the three years that followed alterations were made to 31 Winchcombe Street and their sales doubled as a result of their expansionist policy.<sup>16</sup>

### **From Grain Warehouse to Groovy Art House**

The history of the building's use as a grain warehouse came to an end in the 1970s.<sup>17</sup> However, the Oldacres sign remains partially visible on the South-facing gable end over twenty years later.

Following the formation of the Cheltenham Art Centre Trust, which was seeking to set up an art centre in the town, in March 1979 the go-ahead, was given for the former Oldacres premises in Winchcombe Street to be used as the venue for this project. At the time planning Officer Mr G.S. Walker said: 'We think this is an ideal use for this building, which is situated away from a residential area. There is no one living close enough to be annoyed by the noise'.<sup>18</sup>

'Enthusiasm key in arts centre plan' was the headline in the *Gloucestershire Echo* of July 6 1979 as the local paper reported on a meeting held at the Municipal Offices to discuss the plans for the new art centre. By early 1980 the former Oldacres building was leased to the Cheltenham Centre for Visual and Performing Arts. In April the same year the *Gloucestershire Echo* reported that it had been able to increase its number of music nights and drama presentations since the opening of three new rooms.<sup>19</sup> In the early 1980s Cheltenham Borough Council bought the building for £71,500, continuing to lease the building to the art centre for several years and MP Charles Irving was appointed as its president.

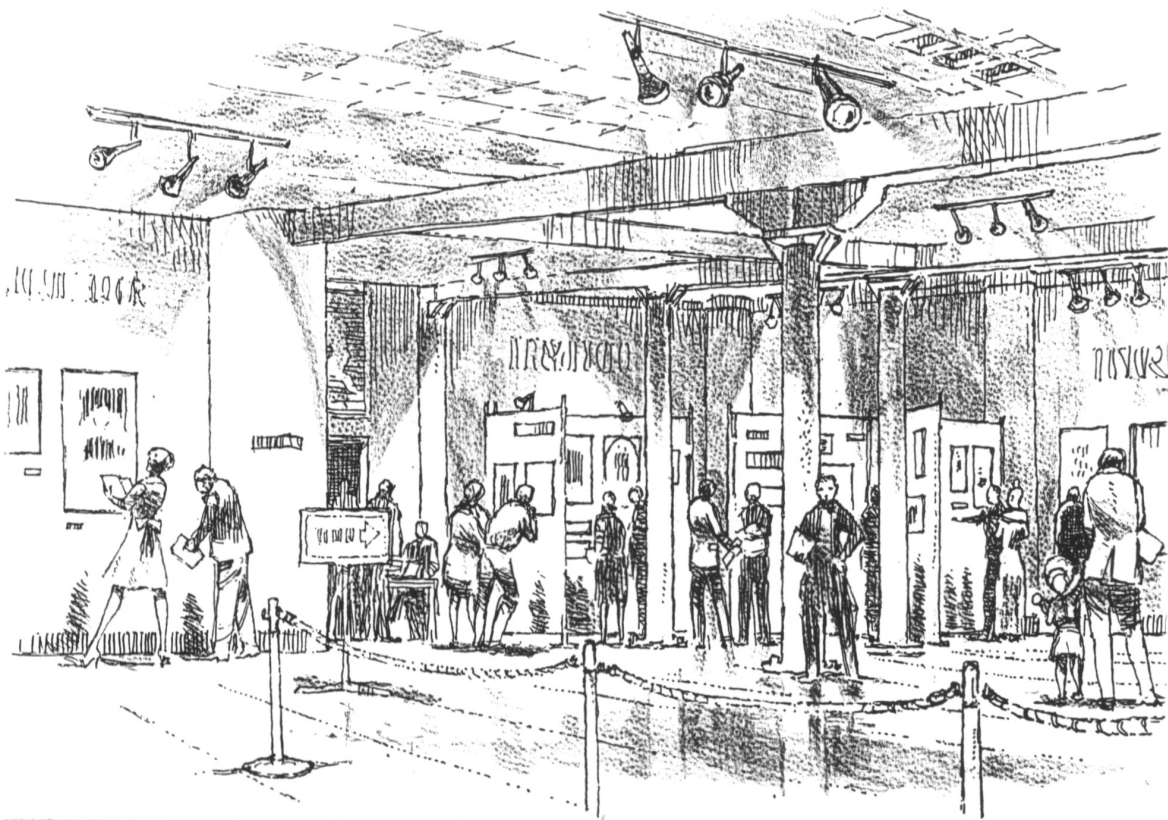
During this time 'The Centre', as it was known, had a bar in one of the basement rooms and a cafe in what had been the shop at the front. There was also a music-recording studio (Toucan Studios) in another part of the basement towards the rear of the building. Each Saturday a flea market was held in the courtyard where fruit and veg sellers sold their wares alongside art college students with their stalls of tie-dyed and second-hand clothing. One sunny day, a huge wooden seagull was hauled up to the iron roof canopy to be perilously suspended over the heads of those who browsed the market below.

In the early 1980s The Centre closed for a while before re-opening again in 1984 renamed the *Axiom Centre*. In March 1985 plans to turn the *Axiom* into a major national art centre were jeopardised because the County Council refused to award money towards the scheme, which would enable them to get funding from South West Arts.<sup>20</sup> The following month the *Axiom* closed for a month to allow staff time to devote to raising money for repairs and redecoration.<sup>21</sup>

In 1987 Swan Promotions announced ambitious plans to buy the building and get the



Sketch designs by Aylwin Sampson commissioned in support of a proposed re-development of the Axiom Centre as an art gallery, club / bar and courtyard market in 1985???  
*[sketches reproduced courtesy of Aylwin Sampson]*



art centre, which was struggling financially, back on its feet.<sup>22</sup> However, the council turned down Swan Promotions plans. In October 1987 the centre debts were revealed as £90,000 and Mr Irving quit saying it is a 'financial shambles'.<sup>23</sup> In November that year a second rescue package put forward by the new management committee was also rejected by the council and in December the *Axiom* went into voluntary liquidation; it was closed down after losing a four-year struggle with mounting debts.<sup>24</sup>

When people talk about this buildings use as an art centre terms such as 'chequered history' or 'beleaguered' are usually brought out with alarming alacrity but in January 1989 a report drawn up by art, media and leisure consultants Boyden Southwood singled out the site as the best location for a new arts centre in the County.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Phoenix Rises**

In 1993 the boards, which had sealed the windows and doors for over five years, finally came down for three days as part of the Cheltenham International Festival of Music. Cheltenham Borough Council gave a £25,000 grant for restoration and a Voluntary Management Committee was given an 18-month rent-free lease to prove the centre could work.<sup>26</sup>

From 1993-1994 there was work done to the building and a live music venue was set up in the old stables (originally called 'Art's Bar' after the resident cat 'Art'). The *Axiom* was better than it had ever been before and became a fantastic place to see a band or meet friends for a cup of tea, a wonderful art gallery, with brilliant children's art workshops, and a special venue for all day family events. It was a vibrant, inclusive, unpretentious, creative melting pot of musicians and fine artists, beer lovers and culture vultures, bohemian night owls and struggling artists, kids and grannies.

In 1995 things still looked promising as volunteers were granted a 25 year lease at peppercorn rent to expand its range of activities on the back of a 5,000 name petition. In 1996 the theatre and gallery were refurbished and a sound system installed. In April 1996 a new committee re-launched the *Axiom* as a registered charity and promised to clear all debts.<sup>27</sup> Towards the end of the 1990s the *Axiom*, despite the odds, had become a very successful community art centre.

However, despite the great things that were happening, the financial problems that had dogged the place through the 1980s finally caught up with Cheltenham's community art centre once again and in February 2000 it was abruptly closed for good amid a police investigation into financial irregularities.

### **History For Sale**

Despite the hopes of many people that the *Axiom* would be re-opened as a community art centre, after lying empty for nearly three years, in 2002, following the recommendation of council officers, members of Cheltenham Borough Council's Cabinet concluded that the building would cost more to repair than replace and put the building on sale for conversion or re-development with a price guide of £500,000.

There were about 7 offers made to buy the building but at the time of writing (December 2003), the purchase price and the purchaser's identity still remains a mystery and no planning application for the building has yet been submitted. The former *Axiom* building isn't a nationally listed building but it is included on Cheltenham Borough Council's Index of Buildings, Structure, Parks and Gardens of Local Importance and it does fall within Cheltenham's Central Conservation area, both of which offer some protection from drastic alteration or demolition.

A cross-party working group was set up to see if it is viable to replace the *Axiom* with



Exterior of the Axiom today  
*[photographs courtesy of Klara Sudbury]*



a new 'Complementary Art Centre'. However, in November 2003 that group reported that the revenue from the sale of the *Axiom* building would not be sufficient to build or buy a new art centre. The proceeds would instead be divided between existing facilities such as the Playhouse Theatre and Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, with the *Axiom* being replaced by a 'Virtual Art Centre'.

### **A Unique Building of Local Importance**

The former *Axiom* building is a 3-bay by 2-storey front elevation, in a polychromatic scheme. There is an engineering brick base and turquoise faience ground storey. The ground floor windows have segmental heads and spring from moulded brick imposts. The section above, and including segmental arches, is stock brick. Additionally the building is decorated with blue faience coursing and moulded brick corning. At the first floor are narrow, segmental-headed windows.<sup>28</sup>

The warehouse to the rear is a four-storey building of a utilitarian design. The outer walls were constructed approximately 18in thick with iron columns in the centre of each floor to support the floors in the warehouse. The ceilings are exposed timber and the interior walls of the warehouse are bare brickwork, which are now painted white. The pointing of the brickwork looks intact throughout, and there are no obvious signs of past movement in the building.

There are two pieces of machinery still in-situ; the line shafting on the first floor (see photograph on p.49) and on the outside of the building the hoist is still in place and whilst not particularly rare in the national context it is certainly rare for a building in the centre of Cheltenham. The cobbles in the courtyard have needed some attention for at least the past 25 years and more so now than ever as it has become overgrown with vegetation. The original courtyard roof has had the front two struts removed, it looks like it needs some attention too and the wooden sea gull has long since gone.



Original line shafting inside the Axiom  
[photograph courtesy of Klara Sudbury]

From both outside and inside of the building it looks like the warehouse at the rear was re-built before the shop at the front was. From the outside, where the overhead roof structure finishes, the bricks appear a slightly different colour. On the inside as one walks through the shop, the original rear internal wall has been removed and stairs, installed about



10 years ago, lead into the raised ground floor area of what was from 1993 the bar area of the *Axiom*.

Near to the upper ground floor bar area is a doorway, which leads through to the next part of the warehouse. That doorway has a curved edge and the design seems to be original – indicating an original doorway. On the floor directly above this there is also a doorway but it looks like it has been cut through more recently and does not appear to be original. There is also a window; this wall, which is now an internal one, looks like it was originally the exterior wall of the re-built warehouse.

Similarly on the floor above there is a bricked up window and the doorway on this floor again looks like it is not an original feature. From this I believe that W. Ride's first re-built the warehouse at the rear first and later re-built the shop and added the newer part of the warehouse with the join being where the overhead roof structure ends. In front of the old stables, obscuring the view of the stable doors a large, unattractive 'lean-to' type structure has been added to provide an entrance and foyer to the gig venue of the *Axiom*.

The building has undergone some adjustments over the years, by Oldacres and for its use as an art centre but retains its character and many original features - such as most of the outside roof canopy structure, floors, doors and windows. This building is one of the most significant elements in the development of the area and the contemporary streetscape and it provides a physical link between the old Cheltenham, the Spa resort where visitors came to take the Spa waters in their carriages pulled by horses, and the car dependant modern world.

The history of its use as an art centre – through good times and bad – is part of the history of the town too and should be valued as such. It is hoped that it will be restored rather than demolished by whoever buys it and that the future holds a place where we will still be able to peer curiously through the gates of this old grain warehouse into the cobbled courtyard and into another world.

- 1 Deeds with Cheltenham Borough Council
- 2 Contained in the old deeds above
- 3 *Pigot's Directory for Gloucestershire* 1830
- 4 Letter from J.G. Villar, dated 6 Apr 1911 in <sup>2</sup> above
- 5 *Pigot's Directory for Gloucestershire* 1830
- 6 Gloucestershire Records Office (GRO) Miscellaneous deeds etc given by Mrs. M. Pruen, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1969 – D 2444
- 7 GRO, Cheltenham Board of Health Map, 1855
- 8 *Slater's Commercial Directory* of 1858-1859
- 9 Ordnance Survey, 1:2500, First edition, 1885
- 10 *Pigot's Directory for Gloucestershire* 1830
- 11 From the title of deeds dated 19 Sep 1887
- 12 Garret, Cheltenham 1906, Advert for Ride & Co.
- 13 Ordnance Survey, 1:2500, Third edition 1923
- 14 Contained in the old deeds above
- 15 Charnock, Denys, *Oldacre: a Gloucestershire family and business 1881-1986* (Book Guild 1990), p.37
- 16 *Ibid*, p. 176-177
- 17 *Gloucestershire Echo* 20 Jul 1998
- 18 *Gloucestershire Echo* 30 Mar 1979
- 19 *Gloucestershire Echo* 16 Apr 1980
- 20 *Gloucestershire Echo* 1 Mar 1985
- 21 *Gloucestershire Echo* 18 Mar 1989
- 22 *Gloucestershire Echo* 24 Aug 1987
- 23 *Gloucestershire Echo* 20 Jul 1998
- 24 *Gloucestershire Echo* 18 Jan 1989
- 25 *Gloucestershire Echo* 20 Jul 1998
- 26 *Gloucestershire Echo* 20 Jul 1998

27 *Gloucestershire Echo* 20 Jul 1998

28 Bradbury, Oliver, *A Survey of non-Listed Buildings of Architectural or Historical Interest within Cheltenham Borough*

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# The Theatres That Never Were

ROGER BEACHAM

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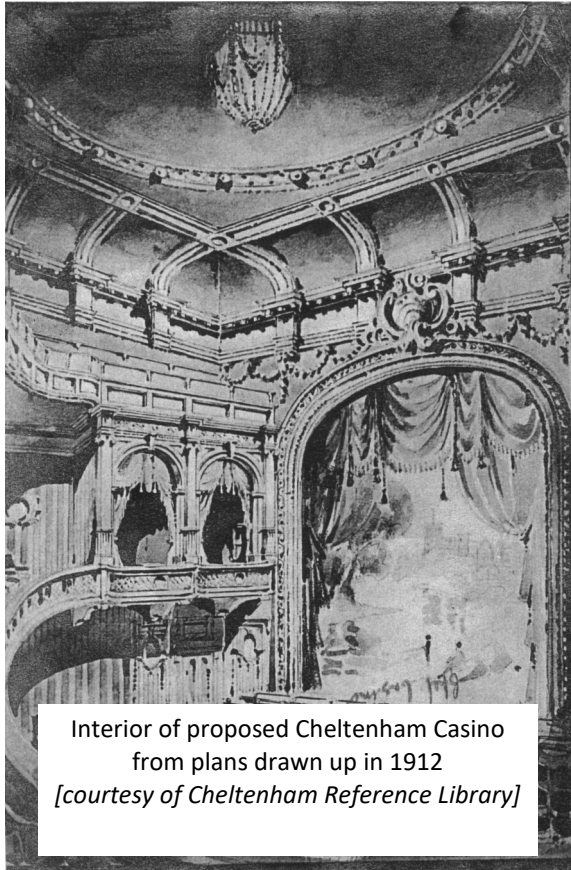
*Roger Beacham continues his series of articles on theatres in Cheltenham.*

IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY, the era of their greatest prosperity, the music halls were rebuilt as variety theatres. The individual supper tables were abolished in favour of normal theatre seating and the former unbroken succession of individual acts replaced by twice nightly programmes. In 1912, in the words of Sir Oswald Stoll 'the Cinderella of the arts went to the ball' when King George V and Queen Mary attended the very first Royal Variety Command Performance held at the Palace Theatre in London. All over the country new 'Empires', 'Palaces' and 'Hippodromes' were opened even in the smaller towns.

In September 1913 Cecil Gill Smith opened the Hippodrome (later the Coliseum) in Albion St. designed by local architect Herbert Rainger. The previous year Smith had announced plans to build the Casino, a variety theatre seating 984, at the junction of The Promenade and St Georges Road; a site then occupied by the Imperial Rooms and later by the Regal/ABC Cinema. The plans, now in the Local Studies Collection of Cheltenham Library, were drawn up by Herbert Rainger. Objections to the building of the new theatre were raised, principally by residents of the adjoining terrace now housing the Municipal Offices, but at a meeting of the Council's Street and Highway Committee it was pointed out that the plans being in accordance with the bye-laws, the Corporation had no power to prevent the building's erection. It seems very likely that Smith was unable to attract sufficient investment to build the Casino, opening the less elaborate and cheaper Hippodrome on a less prestigious site.



Drawing of the front elevation of the proposed Casino Theatre  
from plans drawn up in 1912  
*[courtesy of Local Studies Collection, Cheltenham Reference Library]*

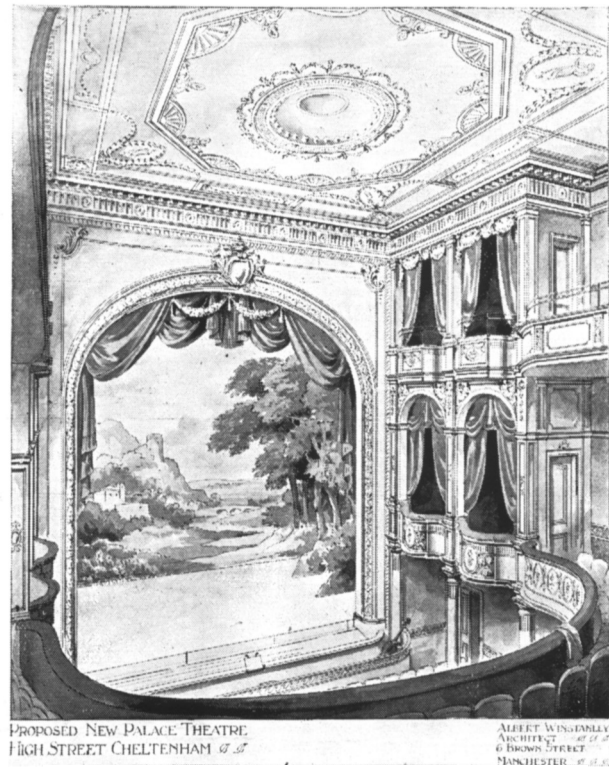


Interior of proposed Cheltenham Casino  
from plans drawn up in 1912  
[courtesy of Cheltenham Reference Library]

Victoria Rooms, the former Corn Exchange in the High St., announced, in January 1908, a scheme to re-build the Rooms as the Palace Theatre. Albert Winstanley of Manchester, the architect of a number of theatres mainly in the north of England, drew up plans, and an interior view was published in both the *Looker-On* and the *Graphic*. The Palace was to open on August Bank Holiday Monday. In 1910 Charles Poole acquired the lease of the Victoria Rooms, which, after complete re-furbishment including a new stage and seating and, to comply with the Cinematograph Act of 1909, a new fireproof chamber for the Biograph, opened on 11 April 1910 as the Picture Palace, one of the town's earliest cinemas.

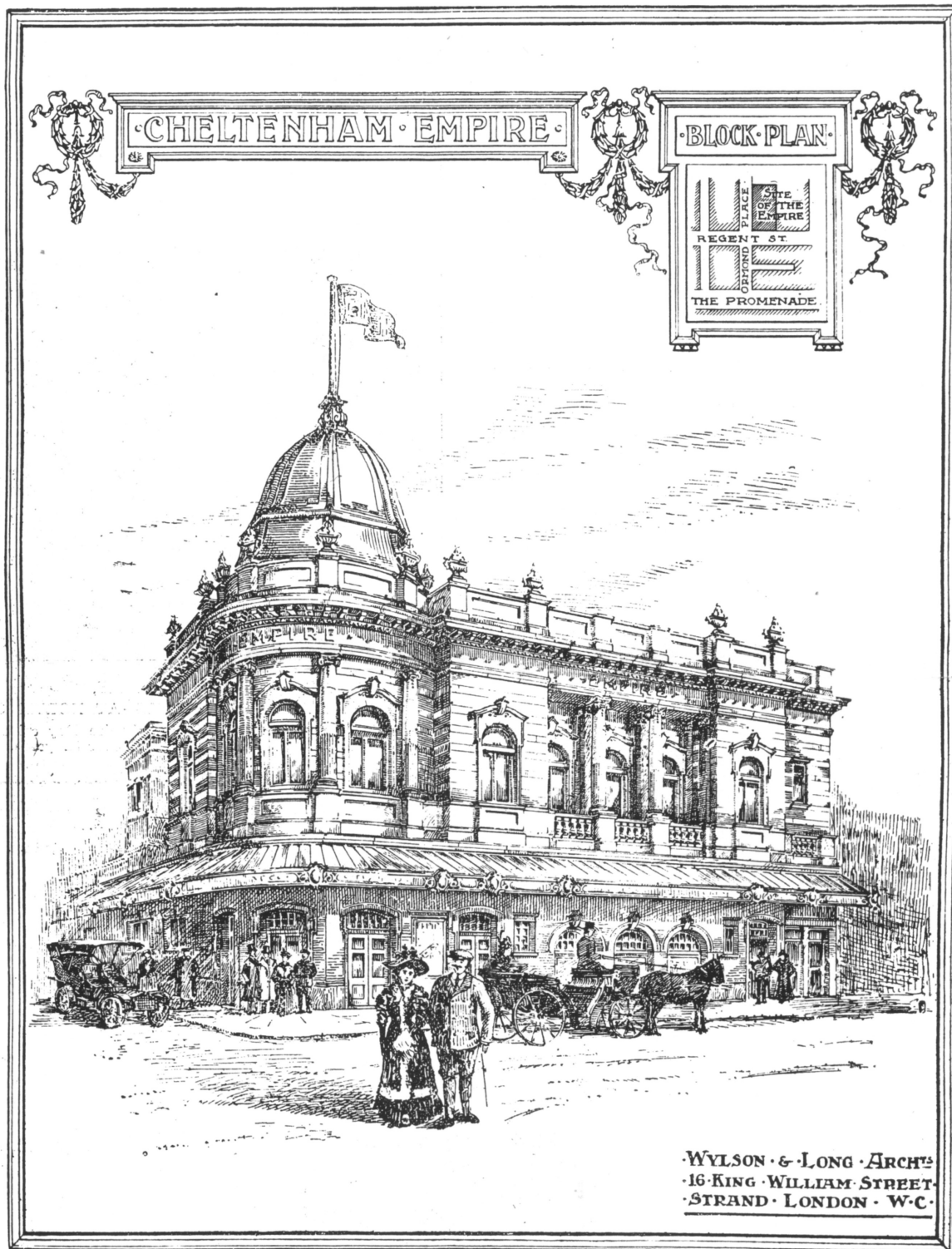
There had been at least two previous schemes to open variety theatres in the town, both abortive, both probably failing to attract enough investors. In 1907 plans were announced to build the Empire in Regent St. at the junction with Ormond Place. Seating 1200, it was designed by the London architectural practice of Wylson and Long whose many theatres included the Bristol Empire (1893) and the Chelsea Palace (1903). An advertisement for the proposed new company was published in the *Cheltenham Looker-On* of 30 May 1908. The directors were named as Major George Peake, dentist, of Alma House; A.W. Newton, Director of the Cheltenham Corporation concerts; Fred McCrea of Gloucester, concert agent and Alfred Cammeyer of London, under the chairmanship of Hugh Astley, Chairman of the London Pavilion. Building was to start almost immediately, and the theatre to open before Christmas.

Edward Shenton, a member of a long-established local family and lessee of the



Interior of the proposed Palace Theatre  
*Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic*  
18 Jan 1908

[courtesy of Cheltenham Reference Library]



Proposed location and front elevation for Cheltenham Empire  
from *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic* 30 May 1908  
[courtesy of Cheltenham Reference Library]

# Advertisements for Cheltenham Ale – 1927



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It  
Your  
Aim”**

to always ask  
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**Cheltenham Ale.**

Sit down and talk over the day's sport and enjoy a glass of this Sparkling Ale; it adds to that good fellowship which all good sportsmen enjoy.

Sold at all the Licensed Houses of

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CHELTENHAM  
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**Cheltenham  
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**Fit & Cool.**

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**OUR**

**“Little Chelts”**

Take a lot of beating.

Sold at all the Licensed Houses of

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CHELTENHAM  
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THE  
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The Oldest Inhabitant on the Cotswolds will tell you that for

**LONG LIFE AND GOOD HEALTH**

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**Cheltenham Ale.**

Sold at all the Licensed Houses of

THE  
CHELTENHAM  
ORIGINAL BREWERY  
CO., LTD.



THE  
CHELTENHAM  
ORIGINAL BREWERY  
CO., LTD.

THIS MASTERS CHOICE

Would any of these advertisements from the  
*Cheltenham Chronicle*  
be allowed today?  
[courtesy of Sue Rowbotham]

# Recent books and articles on the history of Cheltenham

List compiled by STEVEN BLAKE

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Avery, Gillian, *Cheltenham Ladies. A history of The Cheltenham Ladies' College*, James & James (Publishers) Ltd., London, 2003. 240pp. £35.00.

Bradbury, Oliver, 'Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The first eighteen years', *The British Art Journal* **4.1** (Spring 2003), pp. 102-9. A detailed account of the building and architectural history of one of Cheltenham's finest early 19<sup>th</sup>-century houses.

Catchpole, Toby, 'Excavations at West Drive, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire 1997-9', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* **120** (2002), pp. 89-102. A report of three excavations revealing Romano-British enclosures on the northern edge of Cheltenham.

Edwards, Harry, *Sticks & Stones. The life and times of a journeyman printer. Hertford, Dunstable, Cheltenham and Wolverton*, The Book Castle, Dunstable, 2001. 98pp. £7.99. Personal recollections of a printer, including two years working at Prestbury in the 1980s.

Grimes, Sarah, and Webster, John (ed.), *The history of Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors. Volume 1*, Cheltenham Borough Council, 2001. 32pp. £1.00.

Munden, Alan, *Wearing the giant's armour. Edward Walker (1823-1872). The first Rector of Cheltenham*, published by Cheltenham Local History Society, 2003. 32pp. £4.50. An account of the Revd. Walker's career.

Rossiter, Ashley, 'The renovation of Pittville Pump Room and its reopening', *Gloucestershire History* **17** (2003), pp. 16-20.

Sale, Jane (ed.), *Charlton Kings Local History Society Research Bulletin* **49** (Spring 2003). 62pp. £3.50. A wide range of notes and articles on Charlton Kings, by a variety of authors, including the Kingham Railway Line (Chris Fletcher), Croft Road (Mary Paget and Jane Sale), Battledown (David O'Connor), local district nurses (C.M. Howse) and Hales Road (Carolyn Greet), plus notes on local buildings and people.

Sampson, Aylwin, *Cheltenham Outlined*, Portico Press, Cheltenham, 2003. 60pp. £2.95. Line drawings, with accompanying texts, of many of the town's best known buildings and people, being an abridged version of *A Cheltenham Companion*, by Aylwin Sampson and Steven Blake, first published in 1993.

*Swindon Village Collection* **5** (2000, 84pp.) and **6** (2001, 94pp.) both contain a range of articles on Swindon people and properties.

Waller, Jill, *A chronology of trade and industry in Cheltenham*, published by Cheltenham Local History Society, 2002. 36pp. £1.50.

Wills, Jan (ed.), 'Archaeological Review No. 26, 2001', *Transactions of the Bristol and*

*Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* **120** (2002), p. 243 has reports of archaeological watching briefs in Evesham Road, Whittington Road, St Gregory's School playground and along the River Chelt.

Wilson, Ray, 'The Industrial Archaeology of Leckhampton Hill', *Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology Journal* 2001, pp. 35-46. A gazetteer of sites on the Hill, with some plans and photographs.

## Gloucestershire Record Office: Cheltenham Area Accessions, 2003

JULIE COURTENAY, Senior Cataloguer, GRO

The GRO continues to receive a wide range of archives relating to the Cheltenham area. The following is a brief list of archives donated or deposited in 2003. Gloucestershire Record Office (GRO) is always pleased to hear about archive material relating to the county and can give advice about preservation. Most of the accessions received during 2003 are not yet fully catalogued so it is best to enquire in advance of making a visit if you want to see any item.

More of the GRO's existing catalogues are going online - you can use the Access to Archives (A2A), a national project website <http://www.a2a.org.uk> as well as GRO's own webpages at <http://archives.gloucestershire.gov.uk/dservea/index.htm>

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| <b>Barnby Bendall and Company of Cheltenham:</b> Plan of proposed premises; 1897 (D9523)   | 1995; British Orchid Council Congress, 1988; 1975-1995 (D9447)   |
| <b>Bartosch and Stokes, architects of Cheltenham:</b> Project and job files; 1930s-1990 (D7266)                                      | <b>Cheltenham Assembly Rooms:</b> Deed of Covenant between the Proprietors; 1836 (D9550)   |
| <b>Battledown Estate Trustees, Charlton Kings:</b> Trust deed; 1859 (D9472)  | <b>Cheltenham Bach Choir:</b> Committee minutes, 1989-1999; AGM minutes and related papers, 1990-1999; concert programmes and reviews, publicity material and correspondence, 1963-1971, 1978-1995; 1963-1999 (D9116)  |
| <b>Bishop of Gloucester:</b> Confirmation returns for the Archdeaconries of Gloucester and Cheltenham; 2002 (GDR/P2)                 |  |
| <b>Charlton Kings:</b> Deeds and related papers concerning Bafford House and Croft; (1735)-1929 (D9480)                              | <b>Cheltenham Borough Council:</b> Corporation Water Plans and Sections incorporating plans of the mills on the River Chelt (1877), 1878; 1877-1878 (CBR)  |
| <b>Charlton Kings:</b> Deed for a message and land at Little Herberts; 1872 (D9508)  |  |
| <b>Cheltenham:</b> Medieval charter concerning land in the open field of "Newenton"; 1350 (D9709)                                    | <b>Cheltenham Borough Council:</b> Survey of the River Chelt from the Alstone area in the west through the centre of town to the Lilleybrook fishpond in Charlton Kings in the east showing the course of the river and the main sewer, (66 feet to 1 inch). It includes a longitudinal section, |
| <b>Cheltenham and District Orchid Society:</b> Minutes, 1975-1991 including show committee meetings, 1986-1994; correspondence 1989- |  |



(10 feet to 1 inch), as well as cross sections of culverts (nicknamed the Dead Sea Scroll because of its size); c.1933 (CBR)

**Cheltenham Borough Council:** Cheltenham and Charlton Kings commons' management plan (concerns the biodiversity of the area and all environmental issues); 2003 (DC124)

**Cheltenham Ratepayers' Association:** Records of the Association; 1970s -1990s (D9662)

**Christopher Davidson, solicitors of Cheltenham:** Deeds and related papers concerning various Cheltenham properties (6 Jenner Walk, 217 Swindon Road & 19 Evesham Road); (1880s)-2002 (D6791)

**Dee and Griffin, solicitors of Gloucester:** Deeds and related papers including some property in Cheltenham; mid 20th century (D7631)

**Delancey Hospital:** Copy deed of endowment , 1871 bound with Annual Reports, 1875-1892; Town Clerk's report on Delancey Trust, 1892; staff register (indexed) , c.1923-1945; admission register, 1926-1940; patients' registers, 1935-1949; Matron's reports, 1949-1959; material relating to the 50th anniversary of the NHS celebrations including photographs, various health service time lines and a brief history of the Delancey Hospital, 1998; 1871-1998 (HO7)

**Diocese of Gloucester:** Education department files for schools throughout the diocese; 1950-1994 (GDR)

**Everyman Theatre:** Programmes and other publicity material, 1970s-2003; photographs of productions, undated [?1990s]; 1970s-2003 (D6978)

**Everyman Theatre Association:** Cuttings files; 1999-2003 (D6540)

**Gloucestershire County Council:** Transport Planning: Cheltenham study, 1973, and Cheltenham Central Area Interim District Plan, 1978; 1964-1978 (K1814)

**Gloucestershire County Council:** Photographs of buildings demolished as a result of the Cheltenham Northern Relief Road (in Fairview Road and North Place), 1977-1990; photographs and related papers concerning the opening of the Cheltenham Northern Relief Road, 1984; 1952-1991 (K1810)

**H H Martyn and Company of Cheltenham:** Photographs of furniture and other items made by the Company (additional); 2003 (D5922)

**HMI school inspection files:** Reports concerning various independent schools in Gloucestershire including Cheltenham Ladies' College, 1919-

1952, and Whitefriars, Charlton Kings, 1965; 1906-1966 (D9511)

**Leckhampton: Anglican Parish:** Communicants' Roll, 1909-c.1912; papers concerning proposed new organ, 1970s; 1909-1970s (P198/1)

**Manor of Cheltenham:** Abstract of title for Lypiatt Close; (1654)-1824 (D9650)

**Martin Davis, of Gloucester formerly chief engineer of Tewkesbury Borough Council:** Reports and academic papers, maps and plans relating to flooding and land drainage including a rainfall chart, Cheltenham catchment, 1970; Bishops Cleeve drainage study, 1976; Cheltenham environs local plan for land drainage, 1984; 1960s-1990s (D9414)

**Tewkesbury and Cheltenham Methodist Circuit:** Pamphlet concerning all churches in the circuit, pamphlet concerning the circuit steward's attendance at the Weston super Mare conference; 1998 (D7028)

**Walker family of Cheltenham:** Cheltenham cemetery, pen and ink drawing of the grave of Rev E Walker and his two sons and a note of his memorial, 1872; notes concerning other memorials [undated] c.1872; 1872 (D9640)

**Whitaker family of Southam:** Plan of Southam Village water supply, 1911 [copy]; map of Southam showing field names, 1922 [photocopy]; (1911)-(1922) (D5922)

**Young & Gilling, estate agents of Cheltenham:** Registers of insurance policies issued under the Phoenix Assurance Agency, 1838-1894, 1900-1906, 1917-1930; registers of leases, 1880-1923; property registers (for sales and leases in and around Cheltenham) 1903-1950s; office accounts 1930s-1971; 1838-1971 (D4858)

# Members' Interests and Research Topics

ELAINE HEASMAN

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*The Society aims to share knowledge and promote research. With this in mind, members are asked, when joining the Society or renewing membership, to specify any topics being researched or any special interests they may have.*

To be put in touch with a member please contact Elaine Heasman Tel:01452 857803,  
Fax: 01452 540997 or e-mail: elaineheasman@hotmail.com

*If you have any interests or research topics that are not listed here, and you are willing to share that knowledge with Society members please be sure to let Elaine know. [Ed]*

<b>Member</b>	<b>Interest(s) / Research Topic(s)</b>
Heather Atkinson	The Old Workhouse, St Paul's Hospital site 1860-2003
Jan Baltzersen	The Commemoration of the War Dead
Eva Bailey	Cheltenham and the Indian Connection; The Park
Jill Barlow	Medieval Cheltenham; Cheltenham Manor
Beryl Bates	Tracing family history
Roger Beacham	Cheltenham theatres; All Saints' Church; Howlett Family - watch, clock & chronometer makers
John & Sue Brasher	Prinbox Works, Lypiatt Street, Tivoli; William Henry Brasher 1864-1942 – stationer & printer of 410A High Street, Cheltenham [also organist and lay preacher]
Bob Brown	Cheltenham's railways and tramways; coal traders; field names in the Cheltenham area
Paul Burgess	Customs & traditions; The Promenade; The Harward Family; Thomas Willey; music
Vic Cole	Pubs; Victorian murders
Hugh Conway-Jones	Gloucester & Sharpness Canal
Joyce Cummings	St Paul's & St Peter's areas – housing, people etc.; family history; Cheltenham WW1 & WW2
Pat & Roy Davis	Gloucester Road Primary School; Pate's Grammar School; Cheltenham Racecourse; Hatherley
Selina Dunn	Greyhound Inn; Bradshaw family
Timothy Edgell	Gloucestershire Breweries, in particular Breweries of the Stroud Valleys & Cheltenham Original/Cheltenham & Hereford/West Country Brewery
Beryl Elliott	Prestbury: 19 <sup>th</sup> century occupations
John Elliott	History of Cinema in Cheltenham
Lyle Eveille	The connection of John Ruskin with Cheltenham and in particular The Ladies' College
Harvey Faulkner-Aston	St. Mark's Housing Estate
Joy Foottit	Architecture

<b>Member</b>	<b>Interest(s) / Research Topic(s) (continued)</b>
Alan Gill	Early flying displays in Cheltenham and area; Cheltenham's link with Englefontaine, France after WW1
Carolyn Greet	Cheltenham High Street before 1850; Barrett family; Cheltenham Markets
Mike Greet	Cheltenham before 1617; Isaac Bell – gardener/rhymer 1801-c1851
Isabel Grindley	Regency balls & soirees and music played at same
Mike Grindley	Portland Square/Albert Place district; Caffieri family; Cheltenham 19 <sup>th</sup> century fires, building site crime and accidents
Susan Hamilton	William Jay; Lypiatt Terrace
David Hanks	Old pictures of Cheltenham
Bret Harris	Transport [especially rail]; natural history; church history; local politics; cricket
Mike Hawkes	Cheltenham Lido; Cheltenham bottles & pot-lids; old pictures of 54 London Road (Herondon)
Elaine Heasman	Books, postcards, photographs and ephemera of Cheltenham [all dates]; Cheltenham in the 1850s; Cheltenham's Lifeboats
James Hodsdon	Place names of the Cheltenham area; Manor Court records of Cheltenham
Mike Holtam man,	Holtam fishmonger & fly proprietor, Cheltenham; Pates, nursery-Cheltenham
Gordon Jones	Yeomanry and cavalry in Gloucestershire, particularly the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars
Nick Kingsley	Windsor St. & adjacent areas
Mick Kippin	The Volunteer Movement in Gloucestershire 1794-1918; Cheltenham's bandstands
Richard Lacock	Quakers in Gloucestershire 1650-1750
Peter Leppard	John Redmond and Irish Nationalism 1900-1918
Peter Levy	Sydenham Villas
Pauline McGregor-Currien	East India Co.; Cheltenham connections with India; Mauritius and Burma; Oriel Lodge; Murvagh House; Pittville Parade; Nazareth House; Newick House
George Marchant	Elementary schools in Cheltenham
Linda Marsh	Cheltenham Cemetery; WW1
Sandra Maxted	Sussex House near Pittville Gates
Patricia Meyrick	St Mary's Church; Demolition of Brewery
Eric Miller	Cheltenham worthies buried at Leckhampton; prints and engravings of Cheltenham; The Whishaw Family of St. Petersburg and Cheltenham
Ann Mitchell	Up Hatherley; Joynes Family
Terry Moore-Scott	Early theatre in Cheltenham; Leckhampton Manorial History; Cheltenham area archaeology
Alan Munden	Anglican Churches, schools and clergy; Rev. Francis Close; Rev. Edward Walker; Rev. Thomas Thomason; Miss Jane Cook
David Norman	Norman, Boodle, Bullock
Susan Newton	Coronation Road, Prestbury; Pigeon House, Southam; Black & White Motorways

<b>Member</b>	<b>Interest(s) / Research Topic(s) (continued)</b>
Mary Nelson	History of Up Hatherley
Geoff North	VAD Hospitals in Cheltenham WW1; Capt. Patrick Heenan ex-Cheltenham College; Victorian artist, Marianne North
Shane O'Neill	Emigration from Cheltenham to Australia mid 1850s; The Cosier Family 1700
Daphne Pennell	Antiques – specifically sewing accessories & Mauchline Ware with pictures of old Cheltenham
Patrick Phair	Gloucestershire pubs; Millennium Map
Ken Pollock	The Park; South Town [Leckhampton – off Bath Road]
Peter Phelps	Cheltenham places of worship especially All Saints & St Paul's; development of Pittville area; former Central School; art collections
Sue Rowbotham	Maskelyne Family; Alstone Area; Christchurch Schools; W D Slade; entertainment & leisure especially circuses and theatres; photographers in Cheltenham
Aylwin Sampson	Thomas Shotter Boys in Cheltenham
Daphne Sanderson	Textiles – research and development in synthetic fibres 1960-1978
Dorothy Seton-Smith	Growth of Cheltenham via churches and schools in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century
A J Smith	Machinery / water & windmills / steam engines/textile mills; castles
&	medieval life; Victorian work life; Arts & Crafts period
Keith Smith	Cheltenham books; postcards; photographs; ephemera; crested china
Peter Smith	Plaques and inscriptions
Peter Stephens	History of Casino Place; Black & White Coach Station; Cheltenham postcards
Margaret Stocker	Palmer family of 1 Royal Crescent; Gwinnett family; dentists and solicitors in Cheltenham; TB in Cheltenham mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century
Klara Sudbury	Winchcombe St. – nos. 57-58 former Axiom/Rides Co. building; Naunton Park / Maida Vale area – Leckhampton
Peter Tombs	Victorian Cheltenham especially Montpellier Spa; internal transport system
Brian Torode	W H Knight, architect; religious controversy in 19 <sup>th</sup> century Cheltenham, especially Evangelicals versus High Church
Jill Waller	Christ Church Schools; Central Ironworks [Lansdown Industrial Estate]; Alstone Area; house deeds
Michael Webber	The Synagogue; Jewish cemetery; local Jewish community; Holst, Elgar, Delius, Ralph Vaughan Williams
Miriam Webber	Local family histories
Phyllis White	Arle Court (old & new); Grovefield Hse. 1826-1956; Grovefield Villa, Gros. Rd. demolished 1968; Henry Lucy builder/surveyor b.1787
Eric Woodhead	Tivoli Road