



Cheltenham Local History Society

Journal 28 ~ 2012

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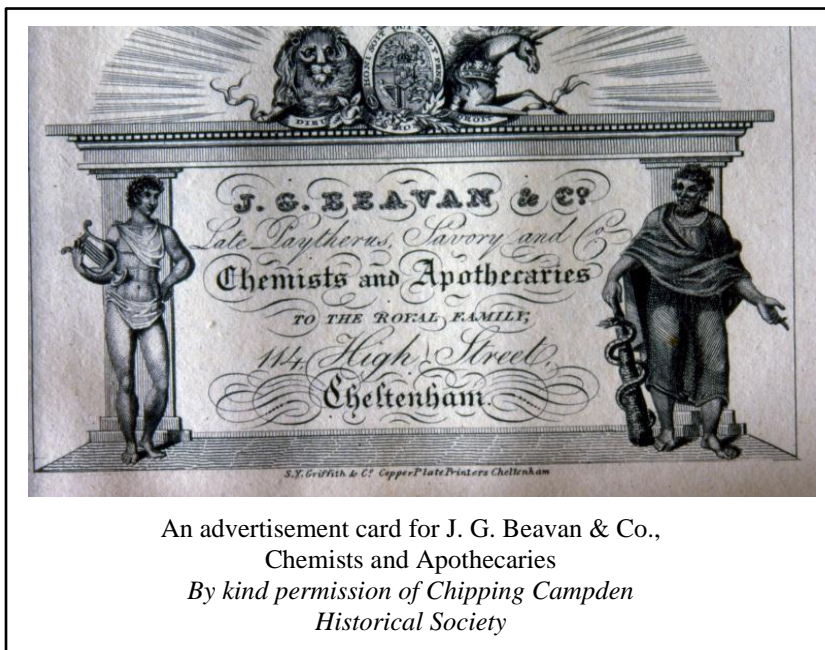
Introduction

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THIS YEAR THE JOURNAL CONTRIBUTES several articles to commemorate anniversaries and celebrate local connections with national events. It is 30 years since our Society was formed in 1982; it is the centenary of the death of Edward Wilson, artist, scientist and Antarctic explorer; and the 2012 London Olympic Games, with which Cheltenham has, surprisingly to me at least, very many connections. My thanks go to the authors for submitting such appropriate pieces.

Two articles commemorate less happy events. We dedicate one article on ‘Cheltenham-30 Years of Development’ to the memory of Sue Newton, whose patience, calm understanding and jolly laugh we all miss and another to Les Burgess, a long standing member whose dedication to the music in the town will be appreciated by many. He submitted an article last year – now we have the pleasure of publishing it. We also have the final section of the political history article on the early Members of Parliament for Cheltenham, 1832-1924 and another economic and social article on ‘Railway Mania in Cheltenham’ series.

The main purpose of the Journal is to publish local research and I am always very grateful to our many contributors. Over the years we have published around 320 articles and well over a thousand illustrations and maps. I am always pleased to receive new articles and illustrations. I would particularly welcome articles on pre-1800 subjects and those on social and economic aspects of Cheltenham, although I do appreciate the difficulties imposed by researching these areas. If you are carrying out original research, but are hesitant about submitting your work, we are glad to give advice and support as necessary.



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The Members of Parliament for Cheltenham, 1832-1928

MARTIN HORWOOD, MP & ANTHEA JONES

THE CHELTENHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL in 2010 carried an article on the Members of Parliament for Cheltenham between 1928 and the present time, which contained details of their parliamentary careers not before published.¹ The careers of earlier holders of this office have been published, but they were a colourful set of men, and Martin Horwood's researches add considerably to the earlier accounts in W.R. Williams's *Parliamentary History of the county of Gloucester (1212-1898)*² and F.A. Hyett's article, 'Members of Parliament for Gloucestershire and Bristol, 1900-29'³. As in the previous article, the statistics of elections are presented in an Appendix, pages 12-13.

Cheltenham's explosive growth in the early nineteenth century had changed it from a fairly typical small market town into a significant urban centre, with a population which by 1832 was twice as large as the borough of Gloucester, nearly four times as large as Tewkesbury, and more than four times as large as Cirencester. Yet these towns each had two MPs to represent their interests, while Cheltenham shared with the rest of the county the two members representing Gloucestershire. Such anomalies were becoming more and more common across the country, and the Whig government which took office in 1830 determined on a reform of parliament, both in the distribution of seats and the methods by which members were elected.

Although much bigger than the other Gloucestershire towns with separate representation, Cheltenham was given only one member, becoming thereby a 'parliamentary borough'. The borough franchise was standardised, sweeping away many of the miscellaneous ways in which men had been entitled to vote in the past. Every male owner or occupier of property worth £10 or above in rental value could now vote, provided their names were first registered. These arrangements lasted until 1867. The first electoral register for Cheltenham compiled in 1832 contained 415 names, a very small proportion of the men of the town, but the number of registered voters steadily increased thereafter.⁴

THE BERKELEY YEARS 1832-1868

During these years, Cheltenham's representative was often a member of the Berkeley family, a highly political Whig family with a long history of serving in parliament; an astonishing 30 members of the family represented Gloucestershire over the centuries. There was no poll in 1832, the seat going unopposed to the seventh son of the Earl of Berkeley, the Honourable Craven Berkeley, and he was re-elected in 1835 against token opposition from a Radical candidate. He continued to win, albeit with some difficulties, only briefly giving way to the Tory Sir Willoughby Jones in 1847 and to a Berkeley cousin in 1848-1852 while banned from standing for election.

The Honourable Craven Berkeley (Whig) 1832-1847, 1848, 1852-1855

Cheltenham's first MP could be called a bit of a character. The twelfth child of the high-living 5th Earl of Berkeley and the former maidservant Mary Cole, Craven reached the rank of captain in the Life Guards and was brother to four previous Gloucestershire MPs. He was accused of guarding the door of a London bookshop while his brother horsewhipped the Tory proprietor for publishing a bad review of his book. He also fought a duel against the Tory MP for Chippenham but, mercifully, both missed twice.

Craven's election campaigns were boisterous affairs involving entertainment, marching bands decked out in his orange and green colours and several small riots. He crossed swords with 'the Pope of Cheltenham', the formidable evangelical Anglican and arch-Tory Francis Close, later Dean of Carlisle. Craven certainly did not share Close's disapproval of racing, theatre and drink, and accused him of slander after Close called him 'an atheist, an infidel and a scoffer at religion'. Close probably felt vindicated when Craven proposed an amendment to Sunday pub opening hours which would have removed closing time! A passionate Liberal, Craven couched even this argument in terms of solidarity with working people and was a consistent supporter of extending the vote to more of the population. Perhaps he always had his own mother's modest origins in the back of his mind.

Craven Berkeley defeated serious Tory opponents in 1837 and 1841 but was defeated by Sir Willoughby Jones in 1847 - the only Tory ever to beat him at the polls - after tactlessly drawing attention during a parliamentary debate on public health to the mortality rate in Cheltenham. It was an important issue to raise but potentially devastating for the spa town's tourist trade. Re-elected again in 1848 after Jones was unseated on petition for bribing and treating, Craven was promptly unseated himself for the same reason. Barred for one parliament, he was re-elected for the last time in 1852. He died in Carlsbad in Germany in 1855, still an MP and aged just 50.

Sir Willoughby Jones (Conservative) 1847-48

'Handsome, gracious and a fair speaker', Cheltenham's first Tory MP interrupted an otherwise continuous 30 year run of Berkeley domination, following an election 'in which money was spent like no other' and 'every man who had a vote and was willing to sell it, was passing rich for many days after, not to say gloriously drunk also.' Perhaps Berkeley was a sore loser, but no sooner had the Norfolk baronet been elected than he was unseated in turn by parliament's Liberal majority on grounds of bribing and treating. Barred from the subsequent election, he fought his old adversary Craven Berkeley again in 1852, in what must have been a particularly bitter campaign, but lost. He abandoned Cheltenham and was to fight one further election in his native Norfolk in 1865 but lost there too. An MP in the end for only ten months, he was Cheltenham's shortest-serving member until Richard Mathias in 1910-11. Ironically, by the time of his death at his Cranmer Hall home in Norfolk in 1884, Jones had joined the Liberal Party.

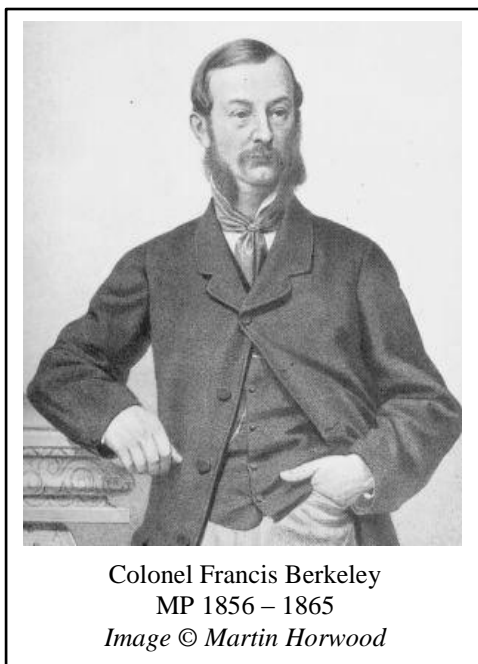
Grenville Berkeley (Whig) 1848-52, 1855-56

When Craven Berkeley was unseated on petition in 1848, Berkeley Castle suddenly needed a new candidate to keep the seat warm. Step forward cousin Grenville: he

narrowly won the by-election and then graciously stood aside for the returning Craven in 1852, despite having been appointed a 'whip' in the meantime. He secured his own election as MP for Evesham but when Craven Berkeley died in Germany in 1855, Grenville yet again responded to the family's call and resigned his Evesham seat to stand in Cheltenham. Whether in sympathy for the family, through his own talents, or simply by outspending his bank manager opponent, he secured 81% of the vote. He sat for Cheltenham for less than a year before forcing a by-election by accepting the post of Commissioner of Customs, a crown office that disqualified him from being an MP.

Colonel Francis Berkeley (Whig/Liberal) 1856-65

A captain in the Royal Horse Guards and nicknamed 'the Giant', Cheltenham's third Berkeley MP was the son of one of Craven's older but illegitimate brothers, Admiral Sir Maurice Berkeley, who was already MP for Gloucester. Francis succeeded his cousin Grenville, winning the by-election in 1856 against an ominously high Tory vote. Francis, by now Colonel Berkeley, faced no Tory opponent in the subsequent 1857 general election since they, like him, supported Prime Minister Palmerston's aggressive China policy.



Colonel Francis Berkeley
MP 1856 – 1865
Image © Martin Horwood

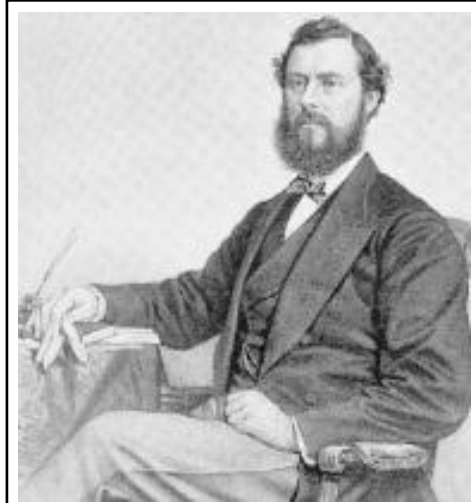
Colonel Berkeley received a shock in 1859. The new 'Liberal' party had united Whigs and Radicals, but in Cheltenham a vigorous new Tory candidate, Charles Schreiber, came within 12 votes of defeating him. Berkeley Castle's influence was waning while Schreiber combined good organisation with smart attacks on privileged Anglican aristocrats who promoted democracy and religious toleration. And with religion an electoral issue, Berkeley's attendance at the Grand Prix in Paris on a Sunday was used against him. The Colonel was defeated in 1865 by just 28 votes. He complained afterwards that Cheltenham was 'very dear and more money is spent on political matters than it is worth. I wish I had never seen the town of Cheltenham.' Cheltenham returned the compliment. No Berkeley ever stood for

Parliament here again. Francis inherited his father's title and seat in the House of Lords in 1867. In 1886, he completed the break with the political past by accepting the presidency of Tewkesbury Conservative Association.

Charles Schreiber (Conservative) 1865-68

The 'zealous and eloquent' victor over the House of Berkeley in 1865 was a former Cheltenham College pupil, classics scholar and tutor who married his employer, the brilliant, ambitious and rich widow Lady Charlotte Guest. Charlotte was actually a Whig but seems to have tolerated her young husband's Tory ambitions.

Schreiber was a good organiser and ‘a forcible speaker’, pitching his arguments well to his still small urban property-owning electorate. He railed against both the aristocratic fox-hunting activities of the Berkeleys and the threat of Liberal concessions to workers, Roman Catholics and non-conformists. He declared ‘of all the existing forms of government, democracy is the lowest and worst,’ and ‘Shall England abandon her Protestant Faith, her Established Church, the blessing she enjoys, for the evils offered to her clothed in the specious garb of Progressive Reform and Civil and Religious Liberty?’ Religious opinion in the town swung strongly behind him.



Charles Schreiber 1865 – 1868
Image © Martin Horwood

Tensions ran high. Schreiber had to dodge rotten eggs and dead cats at the hustings but the violence got worse and a Liberal runner was shot dead by one of Schreiber’s supporters. Amidst riotous scenes, the Tories narrowly triumphed and promptly had their windows broken by a radical mob. Schreiber astutely left the windows unrepaired for many weeks. He then successfully fought off accusations of bribery in the now customary election petition and continued to argue forcefully against the extension of the vote to the poor.

It must have been a severe blow to the local Conservatives that a man of such great political talents stood down at the next election, to ‘abandon the quest of politics for that of porcelain’; one passion at least that he shared with Lady Charlotte. He was returned to Parliament for Poole in 1880.

THE AGG-GARDNER YEARS 1868-1928

In 1867 a Conservative government led by Disraeli introduced a further measure of parliamentary reform. In boroughs the £10 qualification was removed and a simple ratepayer qualification was introduced instead. Lodgers occupying lodgings worth £10 or more were also brought within the franchise. This doubled the number who could vote: in Cheltenham 3536 registered. Women, and many men who were not the rate-paying heads of households, were still excluded. These arrangements lasted, with only minor changes, until 1918. A large extension of the franchise was introduced as World War One ended; all men aged 21 years and over could vote, and women aged 30 years who were householders or married to householders. Three quarters of the adult population could then vote.

James Agg-Gardner was the dominating influence in Cheltenham elections from 1868. Although his representation of the borough was not continuous, he was Cheltenham’s longest-serving MP. Henry Samuelson won the first election of the ‘Agg-Gardner years’, and in the intervals between Agg-Gardner’s subsequent parliamentary service, four other men in turn represented Cheltenham.

Members of Parliament for Cheltenham 1868 -1928			
Henry Samuelson	1868-1874	James Agg-Gardner	1900-1906
James Agg-Gardner	1874-1880	John E. Sears	1906-1910
Baron de Ferrières	1880-1885	Vere Ponsonby, Lord Duncannon	1910
James Agg-Gardner	1885-1895	Richard Mathias	1910-1911
Colonel Francis S. Russell	1895-1900	James Agg-Gardner	1911-1928

Henry Bernhard Samuelson (Liberal) 1868-74

Following the introduction of the 1868 Parliamentary Reform Act, an election had to be held and in Cheltenham a new generation entered the contest. The Tories selected the young 22-year-old Cambridge undergraduate, James Agg-Gardner. The Liberals chose a 23-year-old Oxford undergraduate, Henry Samuelson, the son of wealthy Banbury Liberal MP, Sir Bernhard Samuelson. It was a good time to be the Liberal candidate. The party nationally had broken with its aristocratic leadership and was now led by William Gladstone who swept to a landslide victory on a platform of reform and opposition to privilege. Samuelson campaigned in particular for universal education and turned the Tories' narrow majority into a Liberal one.

Even the kindest friend would have to admit his maiden speech was hopeless. He chose a debate on the odd subject of the House of Commons Ladies' Gallery screen, but was unable to see why members laughed. According to the official record, he dismissed the suggestion that removing the screen would force ladies to wear evening dress because,

'...it was the custom in society for both sexes to appear in full dress or neither. [Laughter] Hon. Gentlemen might laugh, but he believed he was quite correct in what he had stated, and it was no more necessary for a lady to come in full dress than for any Hon. Member to appear in evening dress....'

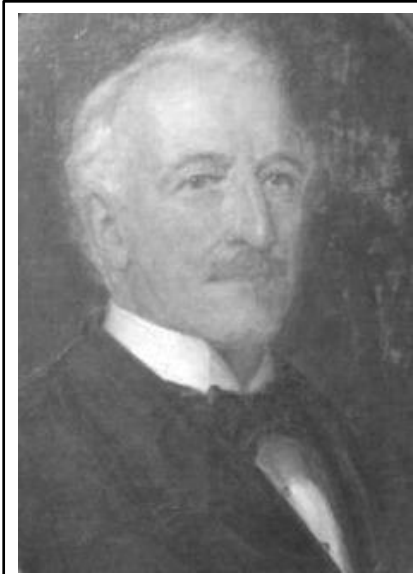
Within a couple of years Samuelson was putting in a more assured performance in favour of the revolutionary 1870 Education Act for which he had campaigned and which paved the way for universal primary education for all.

But the mood of the country – and the state of the economy – was changing. Disraeli's Tories had also picked up the baton of social reform and Agg-Gardner won in 1874. Samuelson did not immediately look elsewhere for a seat, but just two years later in a by-election he was elected for the safer seat of Frome.

Baron de Ferrières (Liberal) 1880-85

With Samuelson gone to Frome, the Liberal party needed a candidate with stature and popularity. They chose the larger-than-life figure of Baron Charles Conrad Adolphus du Bois de Ferrières, the grandson of a Napoleonic general whose family had settled in the Netherlands, where Charles was born in 1823. The family moved to England when he was very young and eventually to Bays Hill House in Cheltenham so, despite his exotic roots, he was actually the Liberals' most local candidate yet. He was granted 'letters of naturalisation' in 1867 – without which he could not have stood for Parliament.

Although he had opposed the establishment of Cheltenham's mayor and corporation in 1876, the handsome and flamboyant Baron joined the triumphant Liberal majority in the first municipal elections that year and succeeded fellow Liberal William Nash Skillicorne as mayor in 1877. 'His mayoralty', commented Agg-Gardner, 'was marked by generous hospitality. In the presence of the Baron, maces and loving cups winked right joyously as knowing who was their friend'. He was 'a picturesque citizen and a sincere lover of Cheltenham.'



Baron de Ferrières
1810 – 1885
Courtesy of the CAG&M

Gladstone's reforming zeal delivered a landslide Liberal victory nationwide in 1880, but the Baron only squeaked home in Cheltenham. He was an active MP but it must have dismayed the local party that he declined to defend his tiny majority five years later – Agg-Gardner suggests he had 'had enough of St Stephen's and of the rather insistent demands made upon him'. With Gladstone's popularity waning, the loss of the parliamentary seat in 1885 was pretty inevitable.

But the indefatigable Baron went from strength to strength and is best remembered for his gift to the town in 1899 of his collection of Dutch masters and £1,000 to establish Cheltenham Art Gallery. His obituary said there was 'scarcely a society or charitable institution in the town that [had] not benefited from his support'. He is remembered by a suitably extrovert monument in St Peter's churchyard in Leckhampton.

Colonel Francis Shirley Russell (Unionist/Conservative) 1895-1900

A distinguished soldier, Colonel Francis Shirley Russell was a suitably eminent and wealthy replacement for Agg-Gardner (MPs were still unpaid) as the Conservative and Unionist candidate in 1895. Colonel Russell was an Aberdeenshire landowner and soldier with a distinguished record in the South African wars, who had twice failed to get elected by his native county. It was a tough call for an outsider to follow Agg-Gardner but at the 1895 election the Marquess of Salisbury won a crushing Conservative and Unionist majority. The Colonel was elected, albeit with a reduced majority, defeating both his official Liberal opponent and the first Independent Labour candidate, Mr Hillen, who polled just 23 votes.

The colonel was an active and eloquent MP, speaking often with a predictably expert take on farming and military affairs and a devastating dry wit which he deployed mercilessly, in particular at dozy military bureaucrats. But he was already in his late fifties and in 1900 retired, paving the way for Agg-Gardner's return.

John Edward Sears (Liberal) 1906-10

In 1900 locally the divided Liberals had for the first time failed to find a candidate at all. By 1906 local and national Liberal organisation had revived and the party had

reunited in support of free trade and radical social reform, just as the Unionist coalition was under growing attack over food prices, the conduct of the Boer War and from Non-conformist Protestants over the recent Education Act.

The Cheltenham Liberals selected J. E. Sears, a London architect and son of a Baptist minister, as their candidate. Sears was still a senior London County Councillor but promised to be a zealous radical opponent for Agg-Gardner, who had not actually won a contested election for 14 years. Sears lack of a local connection was overlooked as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's party swept to an historic landslide victory at national level and the Liberals regained Cheltenham for the first time in twenty years.

Under the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman and then Asquith and his radical chancellor, Lloyd George, the Liberal government waged 'implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness', introducing free school meals, old age pensions, punishment for child neglect and banning many forms of child labour. Amongst these huge issues, Sears chose the spectacularly boring subject of Inland Revenue organisational reform for his maiden speech.

Sears stood down from the London County Council in 1907 but never seems really to have established himself in Cheltenham, and in 1910 he stood down from the parliamentary seat 'for family and personal reasons'. He later made an unsuccessful bid to return to Parliament, contesting St. Pancras in London for Labour in 1935.

Vere Brabazon Ponsonby, Viscount Duncannon (Unionist/Conservative) 1910

Agg-Gardner did not stand in 1910 in the elections forced by the House of Lords' rejection of Lloyd George's 'People's Budget', which included the first real attempt to tax the rich more heavily to benefit the poor. Cheltenham Tories found instead the handsome Vere Brabazon Ponsonby, son of an Irish Earl, Lord Bessborough, with the title Viscount Duncannon; an Irish peerage did not disqualify him from sitting in the English House of Commons. He was already a commissioned officer, a barrister at the Inner Temple and a Conservative London County Councillor. He was also the grandson of Lady Charlotte Guest, the wife of the Cheltenham Tories' historic victor of 1865, Charles Schreiber.

The January 1910 campaign must have been a passionate one. Duncannon secured a majority of 138 votes over Liberal Richard Mathias. At national level, the January 1910 result was equally close with Arthur Balfour's Unionists falling just two seats short of the Liberal total. The People's Budget was passed but Prime Minister Asquith had no majority and was set on reducing the power of the Lords to disrupt the government again, and another general election was called for December. Nationally the result was much the same, but in Cheltenham this time Duncannon lost the seat to Mathias by just 93 votes. Mathias was then unseated on petition, and the local Tories reverted once again to Agg-Gardner as their candidate.

Duncannon's glittering establishment career did not suffer unduly. He married his French wife Roberte in 1912, was elected MP for Dover in 1913, served in the Great War, inherited the Irish earldom and entered the House of Lords on his father's death in 1920 as Baron Duncannon of Bessborough. He built a successful business career, becoming joint chairman of the new conglomerate Unilever in 1929. From 1931 to 1935, he served as a rather stiff Governor-General of Canada with Roberte as

the first French vicereine and in 1937 was created 1st Earl of Bessborough in the English peerage in recognition of this service.⁵ Never really retiring, he retained a Cheltenham connection as a governor of Cheltenham Ladies' College, published three books, including Lady Charlotte's diaries, and entered the French Légion d'Honneur for his supervision of assistance to French refugees and partisans in Britain during the Second World War.

Richard Mathias (Liberal) 1910-11

Richard Mathias, who contested the 1910 January election and won the second in December, was the son of an Aberystwyth steamship owner and pursued careers as a barrister and banker in London before returning to the family ship-owning firm. He was a political Radical, supporting votes for all women and men and a national minimum wage - just right for the Cheltenham Liberals looking to replace J. E. Sears. But the national swing was against Mathias and despite winning the largest Liberal vote ever of 3,850, Mathias lost in January to – of all people – a Tory aristocrat. However in December he snatched victory by 93 votes.

In their desperation to unseat Duncannon, Mathias's Liberal campaign team overstepped some important marks. His election expenses were challenged. He took the oath of allegiance on 1 February but by the end of March his agent, Mr Kessel, had already admitted that he had overspent, illegally paid for lifts to the polls and generally made a mess of the official election return. In court, Mathias's lawyers made some effort to clear him personally, but he never made a maiden speech and goes down in history as Cheltenham's shortest-serving MP, narrowly beating Sir Willoughby Jones.

His brother Major Lewis J. Mathias contested the hard-fought by-election in September, but lost to Agg-Gardner. It was a fateful moment. The party would be fatally divided during the First World War, and Agg-Gardner would not relinquish the seat until his death in 1928. The Liberals would not regain Cheltenham for more than eighty years.

James Tynte Agg-Gardner (Conservative/Unionist) 1874-80, 1885-95, 1900-06, 1911-1928

James Agg-Gardner won Cheltenham in 1874, and he represented the borough for 39 of the following 60 years. Agg-Gardner was the first truly local MP. His father, also James Agg-Gardner, was a local brewery owner who had unsuccessfully taken on the Berkeley machine as the Conservative candidate in 1841 and 1848; in 1842 he bought an interest in the not very meaningful but prestigious lordship of the manor of Cheltenham, and his son acquired the manor in its entirety in 1872. Young James was born in 1846; James senior's untimely death in 1858 left the twelve-year-old heir to his father's business - and his political ambitions. He was sent to Eton, and had barely begun his studies at Trinity College, Cambridge, when in 1868 Schreiber stood down and wrote to the young undergraduate offering him his support. James's memoirs record that his 'tender years caused some opposition' but he had some influential backers and had soon abandoned his studies for politics. He launched his successful campaign with a rejection of the 'hide-bound Toryism' that opposed all social reform.



James Tynte Agg-Gardner,
Cheltenham's longest serving M P
Photograph Martin Horwood

Agg-Gardner's first four elections all went with the national swing, making Cheltenham what would now be called a 'key marginal'. After a period out of parliament during the second Gladstone government, Agg-Gardner returned in 1885 when, though not victorious, Lord Salisbury was able to form a minority Conservative government. The opening of the Cheltenham Conservative Club in 1881 had bolstered support for the party, and Agg-Gardner's majority of 804 over radical *Punch* journalist Rudolph Lehmann was a Cheltenham record. Salisbury was defeated in parliament after only seven months; Gladstone took office and called another election after being defeated on the issue of Irish Home Rule. The Conservatives won triumphantly – Agg-Gardner held Cheltenham and increased his majority to over 1,000. In 1892, when the pendulum

swung back to Gladstone's Liberals, Agg-Gardner held Cheltenham though with a reduced majority.

The reasons why Agg-Gardner stood down in 1895 were not explained in his memoirs, though said to be 'unconnected to politics'. He had already been the MP for 16 years and perhaps wanted to focus on the brewery business; or perhaps his bachelor status was beginning to raise eyebrows. But he stood again in 1900. As it turned out, the Liberals were now deeply split over the Boer War and the country swung towards the Conservatives; in Cheltenham the Liberals failed to find a candidate, handing Agg-Gardner an unopposed victory. Cheltenham again followed the national trend in 1906, giving the Liberal party a landslide majority, and rejecting Agg-Gardner.

Two elections were held in 1910 during the constitutional crisis caused by the House of Lords' rejection of the 'People's Budget'. Agg-Gardner did not stand in either of the elections in 1910, but when a by-election was necessary following the disqualification of the Liberal Richard Mathias, local Tories turned to him as the man who could win back the seat, although by this time the veteran campaigner had not actually won a contested election for 18 years. He scraped back against Mathias's brother by just four votes after six recounts, surely the most extraordinary comeback of Cheltenham political history and he remained firmly entrenched during the years of coalition. This government, established by the Liberal Prime Minister in 1915, continued through the First World War, but after 1918 it became largely Conservative, while the Liberal party was in decline. In 1918 Agg-Gardner comfortably held the seat with a majority of 3,285 over an Independent Liberal. He went on to win the following elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924.

His record was very long but quite odd. He spoke in debate very rarely, and only when he really could not avoid it: on army pensions, which was a matter of

interest to his constituents; twice to introduce his own private members' bills, fire escapes, 1891 and hire purchase, 1928; and once, notably, to move the second reading of the unsuccessful 1912 bill to give women the vote – of which he was one of the very few senior Tory supporters. In 1916 he was knighted and in 1917 put his professional knowledge to good use to become chairman of the Kitchen Committee, although he failed to stem what he regarded as regrettable trends towards cocktails and smoking in the Palace of Westminster. In 1924 he was made a privy councillor. He was also twice mayor of Cheltenham but again quite late in his career, in 1908 and 1912, when he was in his 60s. Well-liked for his gentle manners and affectionately nicknamed 'Minister for the Interior' for his services to Members' digestion, the Right Honourable Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner died in office in 1928.

The Cheltenham Electorate 1832-1924					
Year	Electorate	Year	Electorate	Year	Electorate
1832	919	1857	2170	1895	7169
1835	960	1859	2171	1900	No election
1837	1324	1865	2793	1906	8114
1841	2003	1868	3536	1914	8353
1847	2345	1874	4438	1915	8712
1848	2345	1880	5018	1918	23217
1848	2400	1885	6464	1922	23997
1855	2147	1886	6464	1923	24768
1856	2170	1892	6642	1924	25454

Sources

The sources for this article are as printed in Cheltenham Local History Society Journal **26**, 'The Members of Parliament for Cheltenham 1928-2005', pp.56-57

¹ Horwood, M., & Jones, A., 'The Members of Parliament for Cheltenham 1928-2005', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal*, **26**, (2010), pp. 49-58

² Williams, W.R., *Parliamentary History of the county of Gloucester (1212-1898)*, Hereford, 1898.

³ Hyett, F.A., 'Members of Parliament for Gloucestershire and Bristol, 1900-29', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, Vol. **51**, (1929), pp. 321-62.

⁴ The figure of 415 registered voters does not match the figure of 919 quoted by Williams. It is not clear how he arrived at that figure, but possibly it was the number of potential £10 householders, rather than those actually registered. He suggests that 435 voted in 1835, and 930 in 1837. Williams, p. 145.

⁵ Vere Brabazon Ponsonby inherited or was given an array of titles, Irish and English; finally he had two earldoms: Irish, Earl of Bessborough and English, Earl of Bessborough; three baronies: English, Duncannon and Ponsonby of Sysonby and Irish, Bessborough of Bessborough, County Kilkenny; and one Irish viscounty: Duncannon of the Fort of Duncannon, County Wexford.

APPENDIX

Date of election	Candidate	Party	Votes rec'd
10 December 1832	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Whig	unopposed
6 January 1835	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Whig	411
	William Penn Gaskell	Radical	25
24 July 1837	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Whig	632
	Jonathon Peel	Conservative	298
29 June 1841	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Whig (Liberal)	764
	James Agg-Gardner	Conservative	655
	Col. T. Peyronet Thompson	Radical	4

29 July 1847	Sir Willoughby Jones, bart Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley E.C. Smith	Conservative Whig (Liberal) Conservative	1015 907 4
29 June 1848	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley James Agg-Gardner	Whig (Liberal) Conservative	1024 848
4 September 1848	Charles Lennox Grenville Berkeley B. Escott	Whig (Liberal) Conservative	986 853
8 July 1852	Hon. Craven Fitzhardinge Berkeley Sir Willoughby Jones, bart	Whig (Liberal) Conservative	999 869
14 July 1855	Charles Lennox Grenville Berkeley William Ridler	Whig (Liberal) Conservative	760 178
8 May 1856	Capt. Francis W. Fitzhardinge Berkeley E.G. Hallewell	Whig (Liberal) Conservative	841 655
27 March 1857	Col. Francis W. Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Whig (Liberal)	unopposed
30 April 1859	Col. Francis W. Fitzhardinge Berkeley Charles Schreiber	Whig/Liberal Conservative	922 910
12 July 1865	Charles Schreiber Col. Francis W. Fitzhardinge Berkeley	Conservative Liberal	1157 1129
17 November 1868	Henry Bernhard Samuelson James Tynte Agg-Gardner	Liberal Conservative	1646 1458
4 February 1874	James Tynte Agg-Gardner Henry Bernhard Samuelson	Conservative Liberal	2121 1842
April 1880	Charles Conrad Adolphus du Bois, Baron de Ferrières James Tynte Agg-Gardner	Liberal Conservative	2318 2297
24 November 1885	James Tynte Agg-Gardner Rudolph C. Lehmann	Conservative Liberal	3504 2700
2 July 1886	James Tynte Agg-Gardner Russell H.W. Biggs	Conservative Liberal	3323 2260
4 July 1892	James Tynte Agg-Gardner Frank Debenham	Conservative Liberal	3241 2610
15 July 1895	Col. Francis Shirley-Russell W.T.Blaydes A.W.Hillen	Unionist (Conservative) Liberal Independent Labour	3409 2940 23
29 September 1900	James Tynte Agg-Gardner	Unionist (Conservative)	unopposed
16 January 1906	John Edward Sears James Tynte Agg-Gardner	Liberal Unionist (Conservative)	3910 3509
17 January 1910	Vere Brabazon Ponsonby, Viscount Duncannon Richard Mathias	Unionist (Conservative) Liberal	3988 3850
5 December 1910	Richard Mathias Vere Brabazon Ponsonby, Viscount Duncannon	Liberal Unionist (Conservative)	3846 3753
28 April 1911	James Tynte Agg-Gardner Major L.J. Mathias	Conservative Liberal	4043 4039
14 December 1918	Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner Dr Richard Davies	Coalition (Conservative) Independent Liberal	9602 6317
15 November 1922	Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner Cuthbert Plaistowe	Conservative Liberal	11383 8237
6 December 1923	Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner Cuthbert Plaistowe	Conservative Liberal	10514 9170
29 October 1924	Rt. Hon. Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner J. Stanley Jolmes	Conservative Liberal	11909 9146

Cheltenham's Olympic Connections

SUE ROWBOTHAM

THE STORY OF CHELTENHAM'S OLYMPIC CONNECTIONS is both history, and history in the making. Sue looks back at Cheltenham's associations with the Games since 1895, and forward to the part that the town will play in the Summer Games in the UK in 2012.

The Ancient Games

Legend has it that the ancient Olympic Games were founded by Heracles (the Roman Hercules), one of the many sons of Zeus. The earliest written evidence of the Games, which were held as part of religious festivals, dates from 776 BC, although the Games are thought to have started much earlier. The first recorded Olympic champion was Coroebus, a baker from Elis¹, who won the only event, a run of about 210 yards (192 m). The ancient Olympic Games continued to be held every four years for over 1100 years, until the Christian Roman emperor Theodosius I abolished the event in 393 AD because of its pagan influences.

Modern Olympic Beginnings

Cheltenham can claim a strong connection with the very earliest days of the modern Olympics. On Tuesday 29 July 1897 the **Reverend Robert Stuart de Courcy Laffan**, Principal of Cheltenham College, 1895-99, addressed the Second Congress of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) at Le Havre in fluent French. It was a chance speaking opportunity that helped set the course of the modern Games.



*Reverend Robert Stuart de Courcy Laffan M.A.
Principal of Cheltenham College 1895-1899.*

Rev. Robert Stuart de Courcy Laffan
M.A., Secretary of the British
Olympic Association, 1905-27.
Courtesy of Cheltenham College

The Congress had been organised by Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, the French aristocrat, educationalist and historian. Coubertin, who had founded the IOC and was Honorary President from 1896-1925, strongly believed in the '*splendid and beneficent task of reviving the Olympic Games*'. He had studied the education of American, British and German children and had decided that exercise, particularly sport, helped to make a well-rounded and vigorous person. Coubertin was not the first to have proposed reviving the Games, but he had the drive and influences to make it happen. The first Modern Games were held in Athens in 1896, but had lacked the widespread support that Coubertin needed to fulfil his vision.

Reverend de Courcy Laffan attended the Second IOC Congress in 1897 as representative of the British Headmasters' Conference, the association of headmasters of the English Public Schools. Laffan had

arrived late, at the point when *'a sort of vacuum had developed in the proceedings, and [Coubertin] considered that the gathering might benefit from hearing the sound of an English voice'*², so Coubertin asked Laffan to speak. Laffan was an unlikely Olympic emissary. He was not a physical educator or an exceptional athlete, but he believed strongly in both the spiritual and physical benefits of sport, and more importantly he was an inspiring orator. Coubertin described what followed:

*'Without haste, without any hesitation, both modest and confident, Monsieur Laffan rose, and with a French of the utmost purity, with a measure and choice of expression altogether unexpected, he described his theory of the moral use of the sporting phenomenon.'*³

Coubertin said that he was *'convinced that a new collaborator of the most invaluable quality had come down from the heavens to help [them]'*.⁴ Laffan's speech was a great success and at the closing banquet he was asked to propose the toast to France. Before he left Le Havre he had been co-opted into the IOC. He soon became Coubertin's friend and ally, and a lynchpin of the Modern Olympic movement.

The British Olympic Association (BOA) was established in 1905 and Reverend Laffan became the organisation's first Honorary Secretary. Unfortunately Rome had to back out of hosting the 1908 Olympic Games when Mount Vesuvius erupted on 7 April 1906, devastating Naples and the surrounding area and impoverishing the country. London was chosen as the alternative host city. Given two years and a budget of £44,000 to organise the event, Laffan wrote over 11,000 letters in four languages and translated the rules into French and German. The 1908 Games, held alongside the Franco-British Exhibition in White City, London were a great success, with 22 sports contested in 24 sporting disciplines. The Games were the first to establish standard rules for sports, and to select judges from different countries, rather from just the host nation. At the closing banquet of the Games Laffan declared:

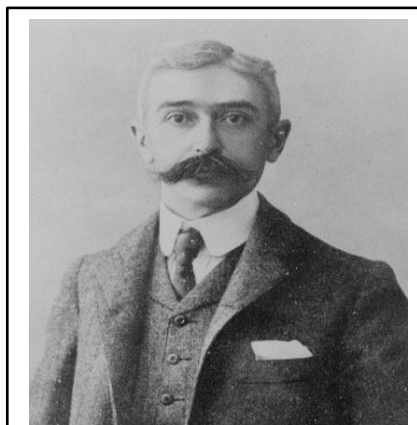
*'You are at the beginning of one of those world movements which is going to develop itself long after we are departed - the beginning of something of which no man can foresee the ultimate results.'*⁵

Laffan remained Honorary Secretary of the BOA for 20 years until his death in 1927. To him the Olympic Movement was everything:

*'It is to me a privilege in itself to have been allowed to do something for what I consider one of the greatest concerns on earth, the cause which has as its supreme ideal "Peace on earth and goodwill towards men".'*⁶

Olympians Born in Cheltenham

There have been at least 14 Cheltenham-born athletes who have competed at the Modern Olympics since 1896. These athletes have come from all walks of life, but all have shared a passion for sport.



Baron Pierre de Coubertin,
founder of the Modern Olympics.
Wikimedia Commons

Eddie ‘The Eagle’ Edwards – Ski Jumping – 1988

Who can forget watching Michael Edwards, better known as Eddie ‘The Eagle’, at the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary? Eddie was born in St Paul’s Hospital, Cheltenham on 5 December 1963, and attended Dunalley Primary School and Naunton Park Senior School. After leaving school he followed his father and grandfather into the building trade and became a plasterer. He was a good downhill skier, and narrowly missed qualifying for the Great Britain team in the 1984 Games. To improve his chances of qualifying for the 1988 Games he moved to Lake Placid, USA to train. He was entirely self-funded and soon switched to ski jumping which was cheaper, although his lack of funds led to him having to ski in boots that were too large for him. Eddie came 55th at the World Ski Jumping Championship in 1987 and thus qualified as the first competitor ever to represent Great Britain at Ski Jumping when he competed at the 1988 Olympics. At the time he was the British ski jumping record holder, the world number nine in amateur speed skating (106.8 mph) and the stunt jumping world record holder (10 cars/6 buses).

Eddie’s appearance at the Calgary Olympics provoked very mixed reactions. He came last in both the 70m and 90m Ski Jumping events, but his very lack of success endeared him to people all over the world. To many he epitomised the essence of the amateur sportsman, and he became a media celebrity. However some athletes and officials felt that Eddie was making a mockery of the sport, and not long after the Olympics finished the IOC toughened the entry requirements under what has become known as Eddie the Eagle Rule, making it virtually impossible for others to follow his example. Eddie failed to qualify for the 1992 Olympic Games in Vancouver and for subsequent ski jumping events around the world over the next few years. However he has continued to make media appearances since 1988, co-hosting a successful radio show on Radio Gloucestershire in the early 2000s, appearing on advertisements for cars and insurance, and making numerous television appearances. He earned a degree in law at De Montfort University, Leicester, although it is thought that he has not practised law. Today Eddie works as an after dinner speaker, and is described as ‘a great character with bags of personality’. He is still associated with the Olympics and was a torchbearer in Winnipeg at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. A film ‘biopic’ of Eddie’s life is due to be released in 2013. The film will star Rupert Grint, who played Ron Weasley in the Harry Potter films.

John Evelyn – Bobsleigh – 1972

Bobsleigh is Great Britain’s most successful winter sport, and the British team won gold in the two-man Bobsleigh at the 1964 Olympics. Cheltenham is not a place that many would particularly associate with either the Winter Olympics, or the perilous sport of bobsleigh, but the town has produced not one, but two Olympians in the event. John Patrick Michael Hugh Evelyn, born in Cheltenham on 16 October 1939, competed for Great Britain at the Winter Games on the Mount Teine course, north-west of the host city Sapporo, Japan in 1972. 79 men from 11 countries participated in the event. John, aged 32, partnered Peter Clifford in the **Men’s Twos**, and was a member of the British **Men’s Fours** team.

Rachel Hirst – Rowing - 1992

Rachel Clare Hirst was born in Cheltenham on 4 March 1964, and rowed in the Women’s **Coxed Eights** team for Great Britain in Barcelona, Spain at the 1992 Summer Olympics.

Chris Ineson – Hockey - 1972

Christopher Robert Ineson was born in Cheltenham on 4 January 1945. Chris and his family moved from Cheltenham to New Zealand sometime between 1945 and early 1950, and he played hockey for New Zealand at the Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany in 1972. Olympic prowess runs in Chris's family, and if the family had not moved to the southern hemisphere Cheltenham might have been able to claim another Olympian. Chris's younger brother, Anthony Braemar 'Tony' Ineson was born in Christchurch, New Zealand in April 1950. Tony, nicknamed 'Arnold', captained New Zealand Men's Hockey team at the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, Canada, beating Australia 1-0 to win the gold medal.

Jack Jones – Water Polo - 1952 and 1956

Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo Club and its predecessor clubs have been amongst the top Water Polo teams in Great Britain since 1895, swimming first at Montpellier Baths (now the Cheltenham Playhouse) before moving to Alstone Baths. The Club now swims at Leisure@Cheltenham in Tommy Taylor's Lane.

John Shaw 'Jack' Jones, born in Cheltenham on 17 April 1925, was a member of the British Men's Water Polo team at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, at the age of 27, and was British team captain at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. Jack, now aged 86, and his brother Phil, another Club elder statesman, continue to support the Club.⁷ The British Olympic Association has confirmed that as host nation Great Britain will compete in the Water Polo event at the 2012 Olympics, for the first time since Jack captained the British team 56 years ago.

Hayley Palmer - Swimming - 2008

Hayley Gloria Palmer was born in Cheltenham on 8 May 1989. Both her parents are from New Zealand and the family moved to New Zealand for two years, before returning to Cheltenham when Hayley was three. She began swimming at a local club⁸ when she was eight, and it was there that she met Graham Brookhouse, a bronze medallist in Modern Pentathlon at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. She attended St. Edwards's school in Cheltenham⁹. Hayley competed in the Gloucestershire County Championships for Gloucester City Swimming Club for several years, and qualified for her first National Age Group, aged 15, in the 50m freestyle.

Hayley returned to Auckland, New Zealand in 2007, and swam for the New Zealand team in the **Women's 4 x 200m Freestyle Relay** at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, at the age of 19. She currently holds five New Zealand women's freestyle records, and the national record for the Short Course 100m individual medley. She won bronze medals in the 50m Freestyle and 4x100m Freestyle Relay at the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi¹⁰. Hayley is currently training for the London 2012 Olympics.

James Parrack - Swimming - 1988

James Guy Parrack, born in Cheltenham on 10 March 1967, was a pupil at Dunalley Primary School and Cheltenham Grammar School. After moving to Leeds he represented Great Britain at **100m Breaststroke** in the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul at the age of 21. He competed as part of the England team at the 1990 and 1994 Commonwealth Games. He won the silver medal in the 100m Breaststroke at the 1990 Games, just beaten by fellow British teammate Adrian Moorhouse.

James is now a swimming commentator for the *Eurosport* television channel, and has also written for *The Independent* newspaper and several swimming magazines¹¹. He will be commentating at the London Olympics. He co-founded The Best Swim Centre on Mallorca in 2009 with fellow British Olympian swimmer Matthew O'Connor. The Centre has hosted training camps for many national swimming teams, including many European countries, China and Canada. It is also said to be 'the fastest growing destination for triathlon'¹².

Duncan Pugh – Bobsleigh – 2010

Cheltenham's second bobsleigh Olympian is Duncan Michael Pugh, who was born in the town on 2 December 1974. Duncan competed with the National Australian team for three years from 2007, earning his best finish of third in a two-man event at the Americas Cup in Calgary in December 2009. Duncan suffered a concussion following a crash on his first run as a part of the **Two-man** team competing for Australia at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. Sadly he and his team mates were subsequently withdrawn from the Four-man event¹³. He now teaches Physical Education at Newman College, Perth, Western Australia.

Zac Purchase MBE – Rowing – 2008

Zachary 'Zac' Jake Nicholas Purchase, who was born in St Paul's Hospital, Cheltenham on 2 May 1986, is the most successful British Lightweight rower in history. Zac lived in Bushley, Tewkesbury for most of his childhood, and attended St Mary's Longdon Primary School. He began rowing whilst at King's School, Worcester in 1999, initially acting as a coxswain because he was too young to row. After success in the junior world rowing events he became Under-23 World Champion at the Lightweight Men's Single Sculls in Amsterdam in 2005. He was invited to race at the Senior World Championships in Gifu in Japan, two weeks later, in the same event and won a silver medal.

Zac worked as Rowing Coach at Cheltenham College between January 2005 and March 2006, culminating in the school achieving 'the best results at the National Championships in the boat club's history'¹⁴. He competed again at the Senior World Championships in 2006 at Dorney Lake, Eton (an Olympic venue) and won, setting a new World Record.

In 2007 Zac partnered Mark Hunter in the Great Britain **Men's Lightweight Double Sculls**. They were undefeated in this event in **2008**, finishing the season as gold medallists at the Beijing Olympics and setting a new Olympic record. Zac was awarded an MBE in the 2009 New Year Honours list for services to sport¹⁵, and was crowned Gloucestershire Professional Sports Personality of the Year at the Gloucestershire Media Awards at Cheltenham Racecourse on 23 November 2011¹⁶. Today Zac describes himself as 'Olympic and Triple World Champion', experienced public speaker, columnist and presenter.' He spends much of his time in Cheltenham, and treats it very much as his 'go to' town. Zac and Mark Hunter are considered firm favourites for medals at the London Olympics in 2012.

Dan Robinson – Marathon – 2004 and 2008

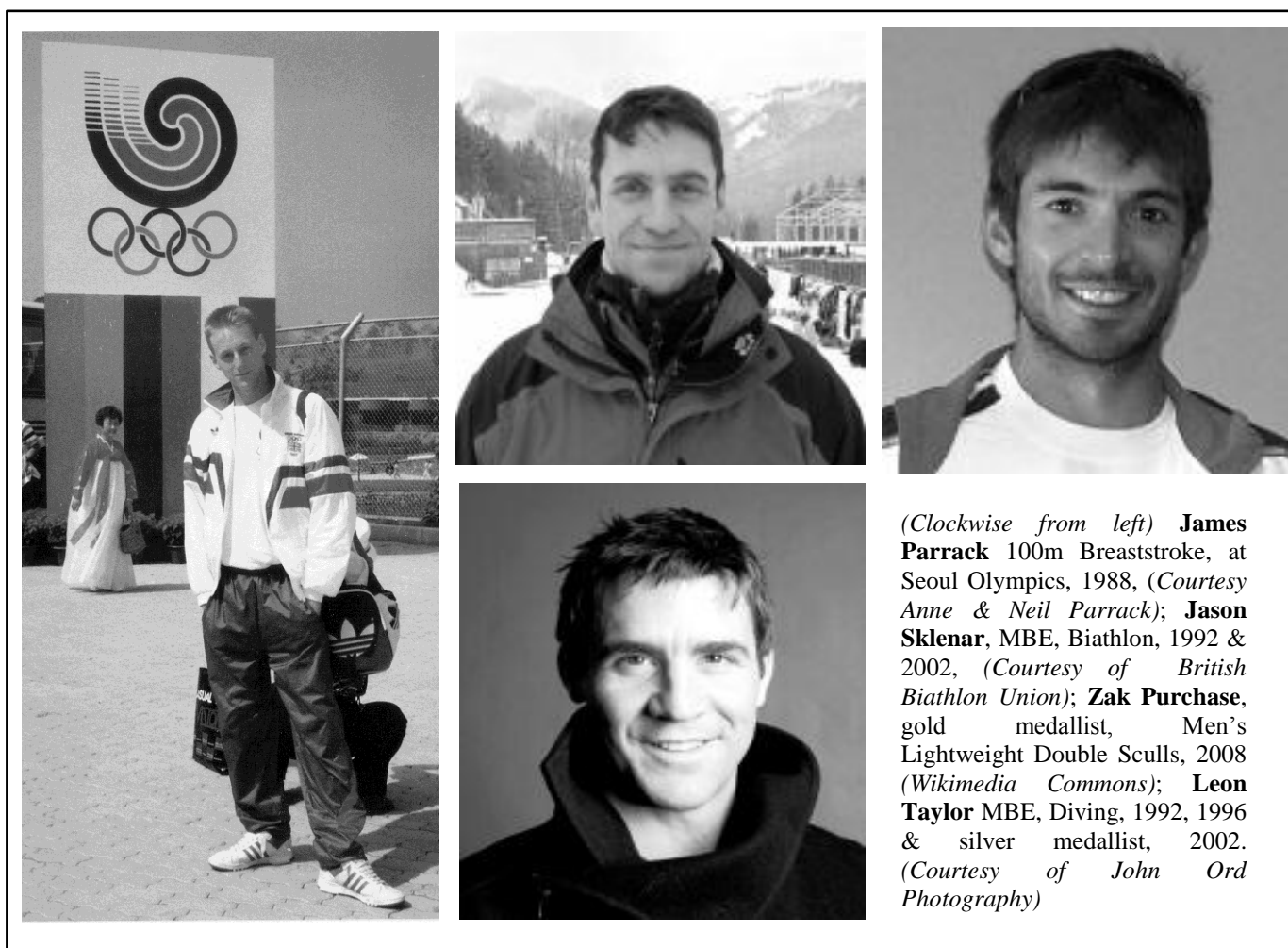
Daniel Stephen Rowley 'Dan' Robinson is said to be Britain's top marathon runner. Dan, who was born in Cheltenham on 13 January 1975, only began running at university in 2004, aged 19, and did not take the sport seriously until he was 23, but he was soon at the top of his field. He represented Great Britain at the 2004 Olympics

in Athens, finishing 23rd and at the Beijing Games in 2008, where he came 24th in the event. Dan continues to compete, but in October 2011 he declared that he would not be attempting to qualify for the 2012 Olympics¹⁷. Dan lives in Nailsworth, and is based at the Stroud and District Athletics Club.

Jason Sklenar MBE – Biathlon – 1992 and 2002

The British Biathlon Union (BBU), the National Governing Body for Biathlon in Great Britain, selects and trains athletes to represent Britain at Olympic, World and major European events. Biathlon combines the cross-country skiing, an endurance discipline, with shooting, a precision sport. The British Army is the BBU's main sponsor, and nearly all biathletes in the country are serving members of the Armed Forces¹⁸.

Sergeant Jason Michael Sklenar, of 28 Engineer Regiment, was born in Cheltenham on 27 March 1970. He competed in seven World Championships in biathlon. He also competed in the Men's 10 km Sprint and Men's 20 km Biathlon events at the Winter Olympics in Albertville, Canada in 1992. At the age of 31 Jason returned to compete in the **Men's 10 km Sprint, Men's 20 km Biathlon and Men's 4 x 7.5 km Relay** at the Olympics in Salt Lake City, USA 2002. Jason acted as coach of the British Biathlon team at the Winter Olympics in 2006. He currently describes himself as the 'Coach / Manager at [the] British Biathlon Union'¹⁹.



(Clockwise from left) **James Parrack** 100m Breaststroke, at Seoul Olympics, 1988, (Courtesy Anne & Neil Parrack); **Jason Sklenar**, MBE, Biathlon, 1992 & 2002, (Courtesy of British Biathlon Union); **Zak Purchase**, gold medallist, Men's Lightweight Double Sculls, 2008 (Wikimedia Commons); **Leon Taylor** MBE, Diving, 1992, 1996 & silver medallist, 2002. (Courtesy of John Ord Photography)

Leon Taylor – Diving – 1996, 2000 and 2004

Leon Roy Taylor was born in Cheltenham on 2 November 1977, and was a pupil at Benhall Infants School, St Marks Junior School, and Bournside School and Sixth Form Centre. He represented Britain in the Men's Platform at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, at the age of 18. Four years later he competed in both the **Men's Platform** and **Men's Synchronized Platform** at the Sydney Olympics, coming 13th and 4th respectively. Finally he competed in the same two events at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, coming 6th in the Men's Platform, and winning a silver medal for Men's Synchronized Platform, diving with Peter Waterfield. These were Britain's first medals in the sport for 44 years. He also had many other swimming and diving successes in the course of his career. He is acknowledged as the inventor of 'the world's most difficult dive' – 'a backward 2.5 somersaults with 2.5 twists in the piked position'.

A succession of injuries finally forced Leon to retire in 2008, just three months before the Beijing Olympics. He was only 30. Leon is still very much involved with sport. He is a member of the BBC Sports Olympic coverage team, and is a popular motivational and after-dinner speaker, and conference host, who has '*an infectious passion and enthusiasm for the lessons he learnt during his sporting career*'.²⁰ He published a book entitled '*Mentor: The Most Important Role You Were Never Trained For*' in 2011, and is official mentor to 18-year-old Tom Daley, World Champion in 2009 and double Commonwealth champion in 2010. Tom has paired up with Leon's diving partner Peter Waterfield, and they are tipped for medals at the 2012 London Olympics. Leon's parents still live in Cheltenham.

Edward Tickell – Shooting - 1912

Born in Cheltenham on 9 February 1861 Edward James Tickell is the earliest Olympian known to be from the town. In April 1861 Edward was living with his father Thomas, a retired Royal Navy Lieutenant, and his mother Louisa (nee Saunders) at 2 Bath Villas, Cheltenham, the home of the Reverend James Saunders and his wife. By 1871 the family, including two younger sons and a daughter had moved to Simla Lodge, Charlton Kings. Edward went on to take a Captain's commission in the 4th Hussars²¹. On 1 July 1912, he competed against 53 other sport shooters from 12 nations in the **50m Men's Free Pistol Shooting** at the Stockholm Olympics. Edward died on 4 January 1942. It is not known where he is buried.

Howard Timms – 50 Km Walk - 1972

Howard William Timms competed in the Men's 50 Km Walk at the Summer Olympics in Munich on 3 September 1972. Howard was born in Cheltenham on 9 July 1944, and was a pupil at Cheltenham Grammar School. Howard's main interest at school was not in athletics, but in the stage, which was sparked at the age of 11 when he appeared in a production of the opera *The Poisoned Kiss* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. Having retired from editorial work for a Chicago publishing house, Howard is now an actor, writer and playwright, and lives in Brockworth²². He wrote and will be appearing in the intriguingly-named *Accidental Olympian* at The Playhouse, Cheltenham on 13 – 14 April 2012²³.

Olympians Who Studied in Cheltenham

Both Cheltenham College and Dean Close School have attracted a significant number of athletes to the town, as pupils and masters, who have competed at the Olympics.

Cheltenham College Olympians

A former Cheltenham College pupil with the splendid, if improbable, name of **Beaufort Burdekin** rowed in the **Men's Coxed Eights** team from New College, Oxford which won silver for Great Britain at the **1912** Olympics in Stockholm. Beaufort was born in Poole, Dorset and was a pupil at Cheltenham College between 1904-10. He became a barrister and in 1915 he married British novelist Katharine Burdekin (née Cade), who had been a pupil at Cheltenham Ladies' College from 1907-13. Beaufort, who had been a classmate of Katharine's elder brother at Cheltenham, served with the Royal Field Artillery during World War I and was invalided from France, but later returned to the war. Katharine served as a nurse in one of the two Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) hospitals at the Ladies' College.

At the age of 22 **Thomas Alfred Arnold**, a College pupil between 1915-18, was the youngest member of the **Four-man Bobsleigh** team which won a silver medal for Great Britain at the first Winter Olympics, which were held in Chamonix in January **1924**.



Philip Neame,
gold medallist, shooting, 1924.
Courtesy of Cheltenham College

At the **1924** Summer Olympics in Paris **Philip Neame**, a College pupil from 1903-06, won a gold medal as part of the four man team in the **Men's Running Target, Double Shot** event, at the age of 35. He is the only man ever to have won both an Olympic gold medal and the Victoria Cross. He was awarded the VC after engaging the Germans in a single-handed bombing attack at Neuve Chapelle, France in December 1914, lighting grenades by holding a match head on the end of the fuse and striking a match box across it. A much decorated career soldier, he reached the rank of Lieutenant General in the Royal Engineers in 1940, and was knighted in 1946 while Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey (1945-53). He was President of the Cheltonian Society from 1955-56.

Edward Ralph 'Teddy' Smouha, who studied at the College from 1918-26, only managed to come 3rd in the 100 yards at the Cheltenham College Athletic Sports in 1925. However, he went on to represent Cambridge University against Oxford in the relay in 1927-8. He always ran wearing a monocle as his coach said it would stop his head wobbling, and he trained by running behind his father's chauffeur-driven Daimler in Richmond Park. He won a bronze medal at the **1928** Olympics in Amsterdam as a member of the British **4 x 100m Sprint Relay team**.

In **1932** the rowing events forming part of the Los Angeles Olympics were held at the Long Beach Marine Stadium. Two Old Cheltonians were in the Great

Britain **Men's Coxed Eights** team at the Games. **John Maurice Ranking**, a pupil from 1924-27, and **Donald Henry Ewan McCowen**, a pupil from 1922-27, had been at College together, and in 1927 Ranking had coxed McCowen and his team in the College coxed fours. Ranking coxed the British team to 4th place at Long Beach, losing in the semi-finals to Canada, who took the bronze medal.

Polo has been an Olympic sport only five times. On the last occasion, the **1936 Berlin Olympics**, **Bryan John Fowler**, a College pupil from 1912-15, won a silver medal as part of the Great Britain team which lost to Argentina.

Two Old Cheltonians have competed for Great Britain in men's **fencing** events. **Ulrich Luke Wendon**, a College pupil from 1940-43, competed at the **Men's Foil** event at the **1948 Games** in London, and he and **Allan Louis Neville Jay**, at College from 1944-48, were in the national team at the Helsinki Games in 1952. Both men had been in Cheltenham College fencing teams, but were not quite contemporaries. Jay competed at more Games than any other Cheltenham Olympian to date, going on to fence at foil and epee in Melbourne in **1956**, Rome in **1960**, Tokyo in **1964** and Mexico City in **1968**. In Rome he won both team and individual silver medals for epee, and in Rome he carried the flag at the closing ceremony. He was national epee champion in 1952 and from 1959-61, national foil champion in 1963 and won medals at both Commonwealth Games and World Championships.

Two Old Cheltonians have competed with Great Britain Olympic **Men's Hockey** teams. **John Anthony Strover**, a pupil from 1944-49, played in Melbourne in **1956** when the British team lost the bronze medal match to Germany, and **Robert Patrick W. 'Rob' or 'Nicky' Thompson**, a pupil from 1979-84, who played in Barcelona in **1992**, and again in Atlanta in **1996**.

John Allan Farrington, the Australian long distance runner, who was a pupil at Cheltenham College from 1959-61, represented his country in the **Marathon** at the Mexico City Olympics in **1968**, and captained the Australian Athletics team at the Munich Olympics in **1972**, though he did not compete himself.

Dean Close Olympians



Denys Carnill shakes hands with Dean Close Headmaster Rev. Douglas Graham before departing for the Melbourne Olympics, 1956.

By kind permission of the Headmaster, Dean Close School

Three ex-pupils from Dean Close School, known as 'Old Decanians', have competed for Britain in the Olympics. **DA Pringle** was the reserve in the **Modern Pentathlon** at the **1936 Berlin Olympics**, and **RI Ireland** was a member of the Great Britain **Men's Hockey** team in Tokyo in **1964**. **Benjamin 'Ben' Marsden** was born in Blackpool in 1979. He first played hockey while a pupil at Dean Close School, and has since played for the

Cheltenham, Teddington and Barcelona hockey teams. He won his first international cap in 2005, and earned a further 45 caps in his playing career. He was in the Great Britain **Men's Hockey** Olympic Squad at Beijing in **2008**, and announced his retirement from international hockey in 2009. He said:

*'From playing as a youngster on a windswept pitch in Cheltenham to the Olympics in Beijing, hockey has always been an adventure.'*²⁴

Hockey player Denys John Carnill was born in Hampstead, Greater London in 1926. Denys, who was on the Dean Close School teaching staff from 1951-83, played full back, and won 45 England caps. He was captain of the Great Britain Men's **Hockey** team at the Helsinki Olympics in **1952**, where he came back with a Bronze Medal. He **captained the hockey team** at both the Melbourne Olympics in **1956** and the Rome Olympics in **1960**, coming fourth on both occasions. Denys is affiliated with Cheltenham Hockey Club. Now aged 85, he still lives in Cheltenham.

Stanley Hoare, a teacher at Dean Close School, was an old boy of the School and its first international hockey player, captaining England from 1926-37. He became **manager of the Great Britain Men's Hockey team** at the Melbourne Olympics in **1956** when Denys Carnill was the team's captain. It is thought that this situation of both manager and captain coming from the teaching staff of the same English school at the same time is unique. Stanley Hoare retired to Cheltenham, and died in 1994 aged over 90²⁵.

Other Olympians With Cheltenham Associations

Colin Lewis – Swimming - 1908

Charles Colin Lewis was born in Chalford, Gloucester in about 1882²⁶. His family moved to Cheltenham in about 1896, and at the time of the 1901 census he was living at Marsh Villa, St Paul's Road, Cheltenham with his father Francis Lewis, a 'Foreman in a Patent Food Maker'²⁷ his mother Elizabeth and his 10 siblings. Colin was described as a 'Coach Painter' in 1901 and a 'Tram Painter' in 1911.²⁸

Intriguingly he has also been described as a 'Comic sketch specialist'.²⁹ Colin Lewis was one of the earliest members of Alstone Swimming Club in 1898-9, and of Cheltenham Swimming and Water Club from 1900-13. He swam the **100m backstroke** for Britain at the White City Stadium, London in the **1908** Olympic Games, competing against 20 other swimmers from 11 nations. He made it to the semi-finals.



Colin Lewis,
Swimming 1908 Games.
Courtesy Jill Waller

Queenie Newall – Archery – 1908

Finally we have Queenie, arguably the greatest Olympian with Cheltenham connections. 53-year old Sybil Fenton 'Queenie' Newall is the **oldest woman to win an Olympic gold medal to date**. The eldest of ten children of John Newall, a wealthy merchant, and his wife Maria, Queenie was born on 17 October 1854, and raised in a large country estate at Hare Hill,

Littleborough, Lancashire. By April 1901 Queenie had moved to Cheltenham. In April that year she was head of the household at the 20-roomed Ellingham House, 79 Pittville Lawn, Cheltenham, living with two younger sisters and several other family members, and in 1911 she was living at the same address with three sisters.³⁰ Queenie and her sisters were all described as being ‘of independent means’.

Queenie Newall and her younger sister Margaret Fenton Newall joined Cheltenham Archers in 1905. Queenie rose spectacularly through the ranks and in 1907 she made the highest score in four of the five regional finals and came second in the fifth. She was chosen to represent Britain at the **1908** London Olympics in the women’s archery at the **Double National Round event**. The event consisted of 48 arrows shot at 60 yards (54.9m) and 24 arrows shot at 50 yards (45.7m) on each day (144 arrows in all).



Queenie Newall,
the oldest woman to have won an
Olympic gold medal, 1908 Games.
Wikimedia Commons

The first day of competition was hampered by dreadful weather and Queenie trailed one of her key rivals, Lottie Dod, by ten points, but on the second day she won the gold medal by 43 points. Alice Legh, considered by many to be the greatest all-round woman archer of all time, and also a member of Cheltenham Archers, chose not to compete in the 1908 Olympics, but defeated Queenie at the Grand National archery meeting the following week by a spectacular 151 points. Queenie did, however, go on to win the national titles in 1911 and at Cheltenham in 1912, and only missed by 3 points in 1914. She carried on shooting after World War 1 and her last recorded score was with the Cheltenham Archers in September 1928 at the age of 74. Queenie died at Ellingham House, Cheltenham on 24 June 1929, and it is thought that she is buried in the Newall family vault in Littleborough Parish Church.

The Olympic Flame in Cheltenham – 23 May 2012

The Olympic torch for the 2012 London Games will arrive at Land’s End, Cornwall from Greece on Friday 18 May 2012, and will be carried by a relay of 8,000 Torchbearers on a 70-day tour around Great Britain. On 23 May the torch will be carried from Bristol through Wiltshire and into Gloucestershire, and will pass through Cirencester, Stroud, Painswick, Brockworth and Shurdington before arriving in Cheltenham. The town’s Torchbearers will carry the flame to the Centaur at Cheltenham Racecourse, which will become one of only 66 places in the United Kingdom to host an evening event on the torch’s 8,000 mile journey. The following day the torch will be carried on to Gloucester, before continuing its journey, arriving at the Olympic Stadium for the opening ceremony on 27 July. Details of the Centaur

event, together with a confirmed list of the names of the Cheltenham Torchbearers and the route that they will take through the town, will be announced early this year.

Cheltenham to Host Malawi Olympic Team

The national Malawi Olympic team has chosen to base themselves at the University of Gloucestershire before the Olympics as part of their warm up training. 25 track and field athletes, swimmers and tennis players and 15 back-up staff will stay in accommodation at the University. Cheltenham Borough Council have offered the team access to the town's top sporting facilities, including Leisure@Cheltenham, Sandford Park Lido and the Prince of Wales Stadium. Students and residents will have an opportunity to see the athletes in the final stages of their preparation.³¹

Winter Olympics 2014 and 2018

It is intriguing to note that two of Cheltenham's five twin towns are closely associated with future Olympics. Sochi in Russia will host the Winter Games in 2014. Annecy, Cheltenham's twin town in France, bid to host the Games in Winter 2018, but was beaten by Pyongyang in North Korea. There are no known plans for Cheltenham to host the Olympics in future.

The Cheltenham Connections Continue

Andrew Hunt, Chief Executive of the British Olympic Association (BOA), joined the BOA shortly after the Beijing Games in 2008 and was the Chef de Mission for Team GB at the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games. He has been appointed in the same role for the London 2012 Games. Andrew's role has many similarities to that of Reverend Laffan in the early 20th century, and coincidentally he also lives in Cheltenham. The town's Olympic story has come full circle.

Postscript

This article has been written using information from a wide range of sources, from 19th century census returns to social networking websites and interviews. The author would be pleased to hear of any further connections between Cheltenham and the Olympics, or to receive additions or corrections to the text above. Please contact her on suerowbotham22@gmail.com, or call 01242 580035 (evenings).

Acknowledgements

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¹ Elis was also known as Eleia, an ancient district in southern Greece on the Peloponnesos peninsula.

² Bailey (1997), pp.51-2.

³ Quoted in Bailey (1997) p.52.

⁴ Quoted in Bailey (1997), p.51.

⁵ Miller (2011).

⁶ Bailey (1997) p.60.

⁷ Cheltenham Swimming and Water Polo Club.

⁸ Thought to be Gloucester City Swimming Club since Graham Brookhouse was senior coach at the Club.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hayley_Palmer

¹⁰ http://hayleypalmer.com/Hayley_Palmer/Home.html

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Parrack,

¹² <http://www.bestswimcentre.com/>

¹³ <http://vancouver2010.olympics.com.au/athlete/duncan-pugh/athletebio.html>;

¹⁴ <http://www.linkedin.com/in/zacpurchase>

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zac_Purchase

¹⁶ <http://www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/Glittering-ceremony-Gloucestershire-Sports-Awards/story-13938776-detail/story.html>

¹⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/athletics/15290251.stm>

¹⁸ http://www.britishbiathlon.com/pages/about_us.htm

¹⁹ <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/jason-sklenar/37/291/160>

²⁰ <http://www.leontaylor.co.uk/html/speaker.php>. Accessed 29 Dec 2011.

²¹ The Tickell Story <http://hompi.sogang.ac.kr/anthony/GrigsbyTickell.htm>. Accessed 27 Dec 2011.

²² See <http://www.howardtimms.com/default.html> for details of Howard's writing & performances.

²³ See <http://www.playhousecheltenham.org/framecontent/AccidentalOlympian.html> for details.

²⁴ <http://www.chelthockey.org/quotes.php>. Accessed 29 Dec 2011.

²⁵ Charles Whitney.

²⁶ Olympic Sports References, *Colin Lewis*. Accessed 29 Dec 2011.

²⁷ This was probably Cheltine Foods.

²⁸ 1901 and 1911 census returns.

²⁹ Lewis (1937) p.49.

³⁰ 1901 and 1911 census returns.

³¹ This is Gloucestershire website, *Malawi's national Olympic team has chosen Cheltenham as its training venue for the build-up to the 2012 Games*, 3 Mar 2011, <http://www.thisisgloucestershire.co.uk/Malawi-s-national-Olympic-team-chosen-Cheltenham/story-11851525-detail/story.html>. Accessed 5 Jan 2012.

Edward Wilson – His Life in Cheltenham

DAVID ELDER

THE YEAR 2012 MARKS THE CENTENARY of the death of Edward Wilson, one of Cheltenham's most famous sons, who perished with Captain Scott at the South Pole around 29 March 1912. Whilst there are many visible reminders to his memory throughout the town, including the bronze statue on The Promenade; the inscription on his birthplace at number six (now 91) Montpellier Terrace; the Wilson gallery in Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum; the 'Fortitude' stained glass window in Cheltenham College Chapel; and even the four-storey block of flats on Princess Elizabeth Way known as Edward Wilson House, there is perhaps a wider tapestry of local connections and associations that ought to be more widely known. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to highlight some of these as part of the local celebration of his life¹ in this year when new work is carried out, not only to clean and conserve the statue, but also to install three new interpretation boards² about his life, and unveil a Civic Society blue plaque to mark the location of his mother's farm, *The Crippetts* (which he once described as 'a little piece of heaven'³) near the top of Shurdington Hill.

Edward Adrian Wilson, or Ted as he became affectionately known, was born on 23 July 1872 in the front bedroom on the first landing of 6 Montpellier Terrace. His father, Edward Thomas Wilson (1832-1918), was an eminent physician whose epitaph in St Peter's Church graveyard, Leckhampton, appropriately records that 'He went about doing good'⁴. His mother, Mary Agnes Wilson, nee Whishaw (1841-1930), also achieved distinction as a respected authority on the breeding of poultry.



Drawing of Westal by E. A. Wilson.
Courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

In 1874 the family moved to *Westal*, a large Regency villa in Montpellier Parade with large gardens, four reception rooms, 10 bedrooms, a nursery and servants' quarters. Unfortunately, the house no longer exists having been demolished along with two other villas to make way for the Eagle Tower building, but the house remained as the Wilson family home until the 1930s. It was at *Westal* that it was noted that Ted was always drawing which resulted in his mother giving him some drawing lessons.

In 1878, as part of his formal education, Ted started lessons with a governess, Miss Watson, who found him clever but boisterous. The following year he went to join his older brother, Bernard, at Glyngarth School, a purpose built Preparatory School considered to be a model of excellence by the school examiners⁵. Here he learned Geography, English, History, Scripture, Latin, Mathematics and French, all the subjects necessary for him to progress to a Public School. His father thought him

‘in his element’⁶ when fighting with boys from a rival school, ‘the Austinites’, on his way to and from school. The school, which still stands in Douro Road, is now a boarding house for Cheltenham Ladies’ College and called Farnley Lodge.

Outside of school, however, the family habit of taking long walks in the countryside, often of 10 miles or more, soon started Ted on the lifelong habit of collecting objects which interested him. With his father as his guide these walks, particularly in the surrounding Cotswolds, started to yield a bountiful fascination with the natural world. He started collecting fossils and butterflies, then went on to feathers but soon moved on to ‘anything he can lay his hands on’. From September 1879 the countryside came slightly closer to home. His mother took on a little farm, *Sunnymede*, near Up Hatherley, where she could breed poultry and practice ‘scientific farming’, whilst the children could keep farmyard pets. Much of the produce was consumed in the household or sold locally, although it was never very profitable. The farm produced over 40 varieties of apples and pears, amongst other crops, which were often shown in local agricultural shows. Today, although the farmhouse has been demolished some of its neighbouring cottages can still be seen today in Ward Road, near Hatherley Village Hall.



Farnley Lodge – formerly the site of Glyngarth School.

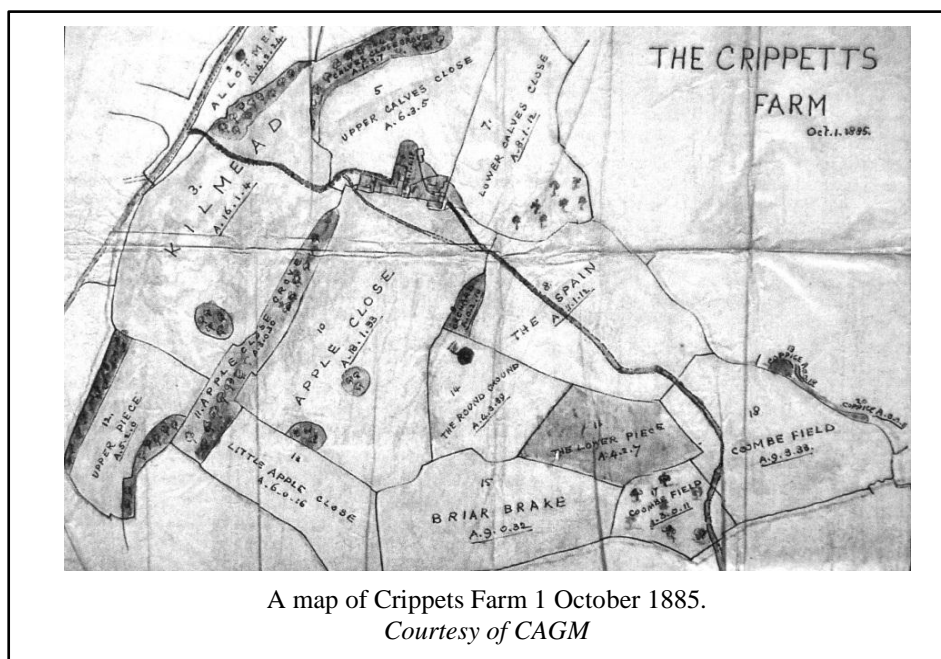
Image ©David Elder



Mary Agnes Wilson at Sunnymede farm c1882.

Courtesy of CAGM

It was the Gloucestershire countryside, full of birds, beasts and flowers that inspired the young boy more and more. At the age of nine he announced to his father that he was going to become a naturalist. His mother noted that he would rather have a naturalist’s ramble with his father in the countryside than enjoy the games of the playground. In 1885 the family decided to give up the lease of *Sunnymede* and rent instead a new 120 acre farm, *The Crippetts*⁷, at the top of Crippetts Lane in Leckhampton. Here his mother could indulge her new interest in Dexter cattle. The Tudor farm cottage stood on a site that had been occupied and farmed for many hundreds of years, employing in the region of 10 people at this time. More importantly, from Ted’s point of view, its woods, fields and hedgerows were teeming with wildlife of every sort: badgers and foxes, red squirrels and rabbits, grass snakes, newts, birds and insects in profusion



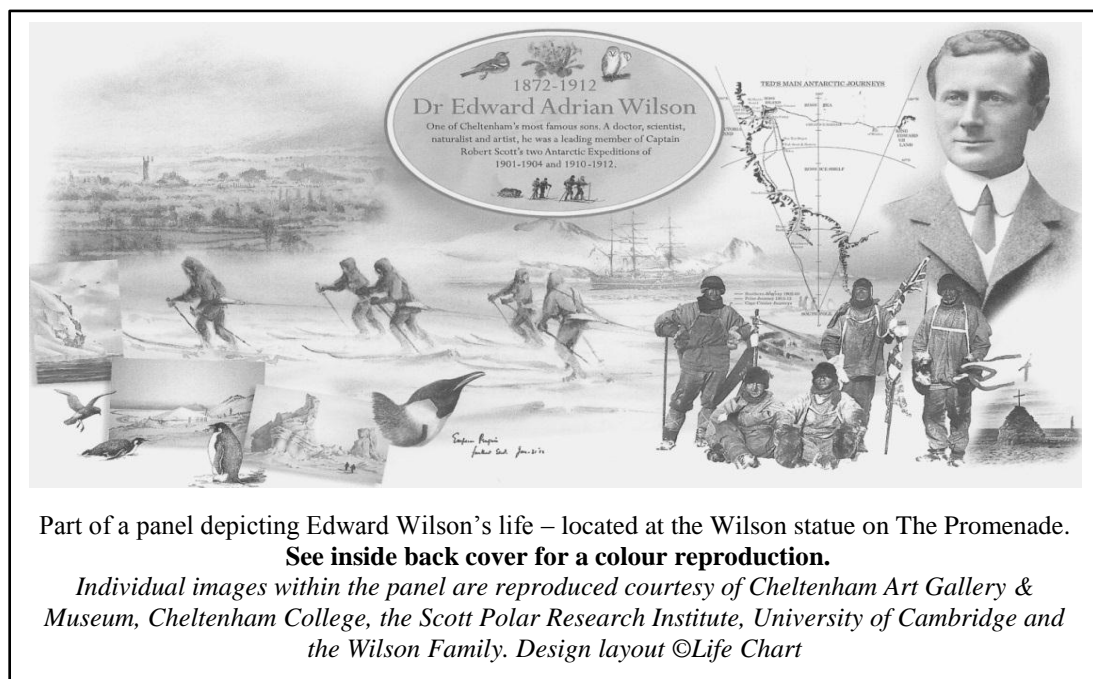
In 1886, following encouraging progress being made at a small independent preparatory school in Clifton, Bristol, it was decided that Ted should continue his education at Cheltenham College. His uncle Charlie was an 'Old Cheltonian' and his father was, amongst many other roles in Cheltenham, the school physician. The College was also convenient to *Westal*, so that Ted could be a day pupil rather than a boarder, hence he could wander off at the end of the day to *The Crippetts* to ramble in the hedgerows and observe the wildlife there. This isn't to say that he didn't enjoy life at the College to the full. He was always proud of his school and valued his time there. His academic work was mostly solid but never outstanding. One of the masters, Mr J. Hitchins, nevertheless seems to have taken a particular interest in him and 'obliged him to work to the limit of his capabilities'⁸. He played in the Day Boy XV and in their 2nd football XI. He also took up rowing whilst at the College, rowing in the 1st Day Boy IV.

Ted also excelled in art, winning the school prize for drawing four years in succession. However, he was active most of all in the Natural History Society, of which he was Secretary of the Ornithological Section. The lists of the observations made by Ted provide interesting insights into the changes that have occurred within the last century to the local wildlife. On one occasion Ted even found the nest of a hawfinch at *The Crippetts*, a triumph long remembered in the Society, even after he had long gone. On another occasion, Ted noted a golden eagle that was shot at Prestbury. Such were the details of his notes that his father often used to draw upon them when preparing his lectures to give before the Cheltenham Natural Science Society.

It was at *The Crippetts* where he trained himself to become a remarkable field naturalist. He would frequently rise early in the morning, leaving the house before daybreak to be in place to observe a coppice at *The Crippetts*, or Crickley Hill. Here, wrapped in his cloak against the cold of dawn, he would watch and note the forms of the emerging light, the calls of the birds, the state of the weather, the scuttles of mice, the seasons of the wild flowers, the arts of the fox. Often, he would return to

The Crippetts again in the evening. One of his favourite pastimes was to buy his supper for sixpence and take it to the farm where he would sit and observe the rabbits whilst he ate it. In all seasons, but particularly in the long days of summer, he came to know every bird, plant and beast, its rituals, and its habits.

In 1891 Ted left Cheltenham College to study Natural Sciences at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. During his time there, he would often return to Cheltenham for the holidays. He never lost his profound love of his home area, nor of his family, continuing to possess a strong sense of duty regarding what he owed to them. Later, when he qualified as a medical doctor, he worked briefly as a locum and then Junior House Surgeon at Cheltenham General Hospital where he gave anaesthetics and performed minor surgery. Around this time it must have been devastating for Ted when, in September 1900, his mother, much against her own wishes, decided to sell the lease of *The Crippetts*. The bailiff, Griffin, had lost the farm large sums of money through his ‘drunken carelessness’ and his negligence meant that it had become unsustainable.



However, even during Scott's two Antarctic expeditions of 1901-1904 and 1910-1912, Ted never forgot his Cheltenham home; because his Antarctic diaries were written for the family he often wrote of the Gloucestershire countryside around *The Crippetts*. It was his way of giving metaphorical access to the strange land and so to some extent to allow the family to share in his adventures. For example, on 31 March 1902, when Ted was setting out on a sledge journey he noted that it was the same day that the hounds were to meet at the Queen's Hotel and draw Crippetts Wood⁹. On another occasion when he accompanied Shackleton to take thermometer readings at the top of Crater Hill, he described the old volcanic cone at the top of the hill as being ‘about as big as Montpellier Gardens’¹⁰; and when he became very hungry on a long march his mind would sometimes wander to ‘the hot summer days at the *Crippetts* when one could go down into the cool dairy and find unlimited fresh creamy thick milk and a large common “destroyer” cake.’¹¹ More poignantly, when he was suffering from snow blindness as a result of removing his snow goggles to make sketches and would have to sledge blindfolded, he would sometimes have the

following vivid day-dreams: ‘Sometimes I was in beech woods, sometimes in fir woods, sometimes in the Birdlip woods... And the swish-swish of the ski was as though one's feet were brushing through dead leaves, or cranberry undergrowth or heather or juicy bluebells... it was delightful.’

Following Ted's return from the *Discovery* expedition (1901-1904), Cheltenham developed an appetite for things Antarctic, especially following an exhibition at Cheltenham Art Gallery in February 1905 of his Antarctic watercolours which large crowds lined up to see. He also gave occasional lectures, including one at Cheltenham College in 1905 and another at the Town Hall in 1906. Laced with his dry humour and his impressions of penguins, his direct conversational style won him many ovations and accolades. *Westal* also became a focal point for visiting Antarctic explorers, including Captain Scott, who was engaged on a national speaking tour and stayed at *Westal* in December 1904. *Westal* was also the place where Ted held an important meeting with Shackleton following concerns that Shackleton's proposed *Nimrod* expedition could interfere with Scott's own future expedition plans. With Ted acting as peacemaker, the *Westal* meeting cleared the way for Scott and Shackleton to reach an agreement as to their respective spheres of operations, even though Shackleton later reneged on this agreement, much to Ted's annoyance. In fact, following Shackleton's breaking of his promise to Scott, Ted decided to break off altogether his friendship with Shackleton.

The Cheltenham public also became excited at the prospect of Scott's second Antarctic expedition, the *Terra Nova* (1910-12). Prior to departure, one of the models of snow goggles which were to be used on the expedition and had been designed by Ted were proudly displayed in the shop window of the Cheltenham manufacturers, the boot and shoemaker firm, William Sharpe and Sons. This wasn't to be Cheltenham's only contribution to the expedition. Through Mr Gill, the father of one of the pupils at Cheltenham Ladies' College, where many of Ted's sisters had been pupils, the field telephone was donated which was to be used in making some of the earliest telephone calls in the Antarctic. Financial contributions also came from the town, including from Cheltenham College which raised funds towards a sledge and other equipment.

And so, when Cheltenham received news of the tragedy at the South Pole on 10 February 1913, shocked by the heroic loss of one of its own, a separate memorial fund was quickly started to raise money for a memorial to Ted. A statue of him was created by Lady Scott (Scott's widow) and unveiled with full civic pageantry by Sir Clements Markham, in front of a large crowd on The Promenade on 9 July 1914. There was a large private reception at *Westal*. The statue was, in fact, never fully paid for and was partly an act of love by Lady Scott. In 1924 a memorial window to Ted was installed at Cheltenham College representing the Christian virtue of Fortitude.

In this centenary year it is worth reflecting on how privileged Cheltenham is, not only to be the birthplace of such a remarkable doctor, scientist, naturalist and artist as Edward Wilson, but also to be home to much of his vast, rich legacy which is housed in extensive archival collections at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum and Cheltenham College. But it is also fitting that Ted's love of the Cotswold's countryside is able to live on through the woods, fields, and hedgerows surrounding *The Crippetts* which, even today, still remain relatively unspoilt. This is something that would have greatly pleased Ted's father, since on 10 April 1913 when he came to

write an ‘In Memoriam’ sonnet¹² for his son, it was to *The Crippetts*, Ted’s favourite place, that he turned for inspiration.

*‘Hark to the songsters in yon flowery grove!
That grove now sacred, to his memory dear.
Where erst in rapture he was wont to rove
And note the changes of the opening year.
For him the tiny disclosed her nest,
Her sweetest notes for him the Mavis trilled,
The Warblers’ song his very soul possessed,
And stirred the deeps, with vibrant music thrilled.
The flush of early dawn, the sunset glow
The subtle tints half seen on bush or tree,
Revealed to him what few but he might know,
And gave him freely of their mystery.
Now he knows all – and with unclouded eye
Reads the full wonders of the sea and sky.
The birds sing on – and who will dare to say
He hears them not, where breaks the Eternal Day.’*

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. David Wilson, Edward Wilson’s great nephew, for his most helpful advice and comments, and to Ann-Rachael Harwood at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum and Christine Leighton at Cheltenham College Archives for permission to reproduce some of the photographs and drawings.

¹ As Chair of the Wilson Centenary Group I would like to formally record my thanks to the following members of the committee: Dr. Steve Blake, Helen Brown, Steve Cooper, Dominic Faulkner, Ann-Rachael Harwood, Christine Leighton, Ken Stephens, Anne Strathie, and Dr. David Wilson for their help in achieving this work, as well as to acknowledge the considerable help and support received from members of the Cheltenham Civic Society, particularly Dr. Roger Woodley. A list of the events organised for the centenary celebrations is available through the CAGM web site at <http://www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk/Docs/Edward%20Wilson%20Centenary%20list.pdf>.

² The interpretation boards will be installed before 18 March 2012 at Cheltenham College, Bath Road; the site of ‘Westal’, Montpellier Parade; and at the Wilson Statue, The Promenade.

³ D.M. Wilson and D.B. Elder, *Cheltenham in Antarctica: the life of Edward Wilson* (Cheltenham: Reardon Publishing, 2000), p.42.

⁴ For a summary of his life see David Elder, ‘He went about doing good’: the life of Dr. Edward Thomas Wilson (1832-1918), *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal* **22** (2006), pp.13-21.

⁵ *Glyngarth: report of the examiners and class lists, July 1880 with papers.*

⁶ Edward Thomas Wilson, *Edward Adrian Wilson (1872-1912): a memoir by his father*. Single manuscript volume (Wilson Family Collection Reference 1995.550.36). All quotations are from this volume unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ The unusual name of ‘Crippetts’ is thought to derive from ‘Cropet’ or ‘Crupet’, a common Middle-English surname in Gloucestershire during the 13th century.

⁸ Cheltenham College, *The education of Edward Wilson*, ([np]: [Cheltenham College], 1955), p.4.

⁹ Ann Savours (ed.), *Edward Wilson diary of the Discovery expedition to the Antarctic regions 1901-1904* (London, Blandford Press, 1966), p.129.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.160.

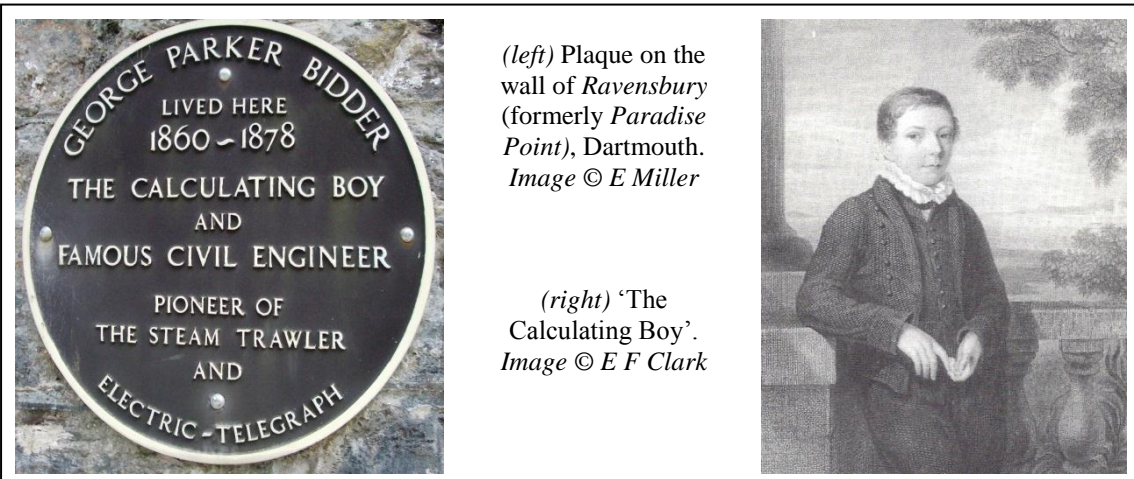
¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.224.

¹² Edward Thomas Wilson, *A single volume of hand-written poems, 1909-1916*. Single manuscript volume (Wilson Family Collection Reference Ref.1995.550.177).

In Search of the Calculating Boy: George Parker Bidder, 1806 -1878

ERIC MILLER

UNTIL RECENTLY I WAS AWARE OF GEORGE PARKER BIDDER only as a name – as one of the engineers in charge of the Manchester and Southampton Railway, mentioned in the article, ‘Railway Mania in Cheltenham: Part One’, Journal 26. Imagine my delight when, on holiday in Dartmouth, I came across the commemorative plaque illustrated below, in which he is also described intriguingly as ‘The Calculating Boy’. This aroused my curiosity and set me on a trail that led to libraries at Oxford University and to an aircraft hangar near Swindon, where I learned that he was a brilliant and versatile engineer, on a par with the likes of Brunel, Locke and Stephenson. More particularly, he deserves to be better known by us in Cheltenham, since he had visited the town long before his involvement in railway building.



(left) Plaque on the wall of Ravensbury (formerly Paradise Point), Dartmouth.
Image © E Miller

(right) ‘The Calculating Boy’.
Image © E F Clark

He had shown a passion for counting from an early age and would earn a few pence from customers in the blacksmith’s shop near his home in Moretonhampstead by performing complicated multiplication sums in his head. He progressed to local fairs and shows, accompanied by his father, a stonemason. Between at least 1814 and 1819 they went on tours of the country, hiring halls, charging admission and giving exhibitions of the boy’s amazing powers of calculation. He travelled as far as London, Liverpool, Great Yarmouth and even Edinburgh, attracting the attention of members of the aristocracy and leading scientists. His most celebrated invitation was in 1815 to perform for Queen Charlotte, who was astounded by his accuracy and the speed of his answers to the arithmetical problems she gave him to solve.

He performed in the Assembly Rooms at Cheltenham some time during 1818 (the precise date is not known). While Cheltenham was fortunate to be supplied with local newspapers at that time (the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* and the *Cheltenham Chronicle*), a search has not turned up any mention of his visit.¹ Moreover, as there are no surviving playbills for the Assembly Rooms in that year, there would seem to be little likelihood of finding out more about the Calculating Boy’s visit.²

My search was not entirely fruitless, however. I had scarcely begun when I chanced upon an advertisement for the boy to appear in Tewkesbury.³ This most respectfully informed the nobility and gentry that the ‘Phenomenon of England’, 8-year-old George Bidder, would attend any party of ladies and gentleman at their own houses. The learned, the scientific and the curious would have an opportunity of exercising their ingenuity in proposing to ‘this most wonderful boy’ the most difficult questions in calculation, despite his total ignorance of figures or the use of pen, pencil, or chalk. He was still said to be ignorant of figures two years later when performing at Oxford, by permission of the Vice-Chancellor and the Mayor. It was stressed that there was no manner of deception in his calculation. Admission charges were two shillings and sixpence for ladies and gentlemen and one shilling for young persons under 14 years of age. He visited Tewkesbury again in September 1817, occupying a large room at the Anchor Inn on three consecutive days, from 12 noon until 2 o’clock and 7 until 9 o’clock.

If readers feel let down by this result, here by way of compensation is an example of the demanding conundrums presented to the boy wonder. (The question is perhaps of greater interest than the answer, though the speed with which it was reached is striking.)

Question: In a rookery containing 769 nests – built by 1538 rooks – each nest having 549 sticks – each rook bringing 11 sticks a day, how long will they be building?⁴

George Parker Bidder will have had an unusual and adventurous childhood for one brought up in a country town, and it is no wonder that he looks so self-possessed in his portrait. The journeys by carriage would have been long and uncomfortable. Maybe even then he dreamed of a speedier means of transport, on the railways which he was later to design. His lack of schooling was soon rectified. In 1816 two gentlemen who recognised his potential persuaded his father to let him attend a school in Camberwell, and in 1819 private tuition was arranged for him in Edinburgh. He went on to study mathematics at Edinburgh University, where he began a life-long friendship with Robert Stephenson and later became his partner in business. He gave up his performances, but as an engineer his special ability stood him in good stead when he appeared before railway committees, enabling him to point out errors in opponents’ calculations.

Postscript

GEORGE PARKER BIDDER
A SON OF DEVON
1806 – 1878
WITH GEORGE
STEPHENSON
PIONEER IN RLYs
RECORDED IN HISTORY AS
THE CALCULATING BOY
Concrete plaque, Stoke Fleming

By coincidence, your editor and her husband were away for a weekend break at Stoke Fleming. Spurred on by reading my original draft, they reconnoitred the village where George Parker Bidder and other members of his family are buried. They found that he is commemorated by two stained-glass windows in the village church. Also, on the wall of the garden surrounding Stoke House, his daughter’s home for 60 years, there is a

concrete plaque which complements the smaller plaque on the wall in Dartmouth. Several bungalows have been built in the grounds of the house, one of which is called 'Bidders', and a 'Bidders Walk' and a 'Bidders Close' also recall his name.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Mr E F Clarke for providing the engraved portrait. He is the author of the comprehensive biography *George Parker Bidder* (with an analysis of the boy's mathematical ability by Joyce Linfoot) and reprinted *A Short Account of George Bidder*, originally published in 1820. The books were published by KSL Ltd, in 1983 and 1995 respectively. The former is available at, among other locations, the Radcliffe Science Library in Oxford and the latter in the Science Museum Library at Wroughton, near Swindon, which also holds the extensive George Parker Bidder Archive.

¹ These publications are on microfilm in the Cheltenham Local Studies Centre, and do record another prodigy: 'Wonder of the present age. TOBY, the sapient pig.' See CLHS Journal **25**, p22.

² *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 22 October 1818.

³ *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 11 January 1815

⁴ Answer (in 1½ minutes): 24 days, 22 hours, 54 minutes plus a fraction.



Victorian Wedding in Cheltenham c 1899

The wedding at All Saints' School Cheltenham of Andrew Smith and Louise Davis, later the parents of Marjorie Smith. On the bride's left is her mother and father and her sister Maud (later from 1916 Maud Lloyd). To the right is Gertrude, Mabel and Lilian also sisters, who never married due to World War One.

Courtesy of Richard and Joan Sly

Cheltenham - 30 Years of Development

SALLY SELF

THIS YEAR SEES THE CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS of the Society's existence. During that time the Society has grown from small beginnings to a membership of around 350, with a programme of lectures and visits, Newsletters three times a year and a 76-page Journal, bursting at the seams. We have won prizes for the standard of our Newsletters and authors have been awarded prizes from the county and nationally. We have recently launched our first CD of the Old Town Survey map. Historical enquiry continues to play an important part, on an individual basis and with groups assisting in various Cheltenham research projects.

The Journal has changed remarkably. At first with only 15 sides of articles, all black and white, typed, run off and assembled all by manual processes, by our 20th anniversary¹ it ran to 72 sides with a glossy cover and as a regular feature the inclusion of 'Recent Books and Articles' compiled by Steven Blake and the Cheltenham Accessions list from Julie Courtenay at the Gloucestershire Archives. In 2010 we had the first coloured front and centre pages and all its processes are now largely carried out by technology with text and illustrations coming to the Editor by email and disc.

Throughout these 30 years one of the many constants in the Journal has been the drawings of Aylwin Sampson. He has meticulously recorded our townscape over these years and to celebrate our anniversary he has coloured some which come from the early 1980s at the time the Society was founded. To highlight that it is not just the Society that has changed but also our surroundings, these drawings have been teamed up with Mary Nelson's excellent 2012 photographs.²

Although not always possible, Mary has tried to stand in the exact location that Aylwin used: we climbed on to parapets, dodged cars and even asked permission to 'invaded' an office to the surprise of their staff. The photos show that roads have changed, buildings have disappeared and viewpoints have become obscured. Our townscape has more car parks and apartments, with more sites being developed or awaiting development and also some sensitive examples of well thought out growth and expansion. We may have lost some treasured buildings and with them the memories they conjure up, but others are in the making – one of the pleasures of the Regent Arcade is watching the faces of toddlers as they gaze at the Wishing Fish clock. They show a town that is developing quickly in terms of its long history, and we hope that the next four pages will bring some smiles to your faces.

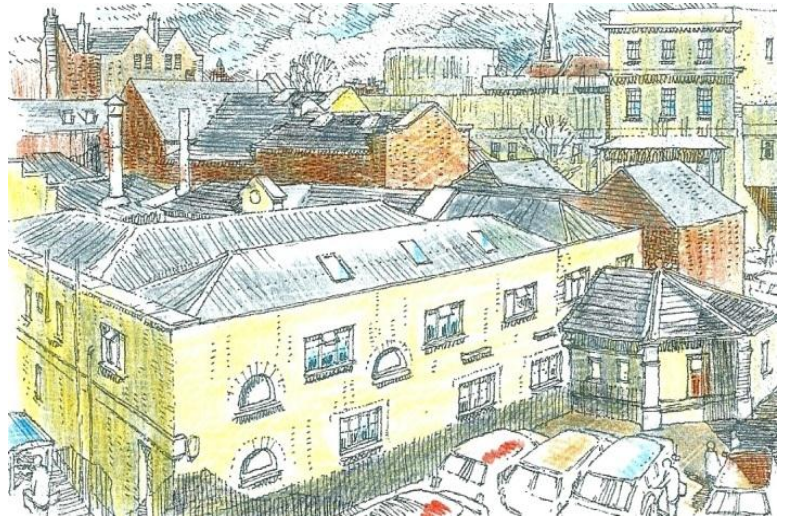
These following pages are dedicated to the memory of Sue Newton – she would have loved to have been part of our thirtieth anniversary celebrations.

(facing page) **1 & 2 Imperial Lane Dairy** - both images, looking north, were taken from the upper storeys of neighbouring buildings. The Regency façade on the left is a reference point, but the view across Cheltenham to St Gregory's is now obscured. **3 & 4** This attractive **Alstone Spa** house was demolished to make way for the development of the **St James's** site – the railway (now a cycle path) is just visible in the background. **5 & 6** Now the **St Paul's Medical Centre**, this was previously **St Paul's Hospital** and the site of the town **Workhouse**.

Further details on the illustrations can be found on pages 68-69.



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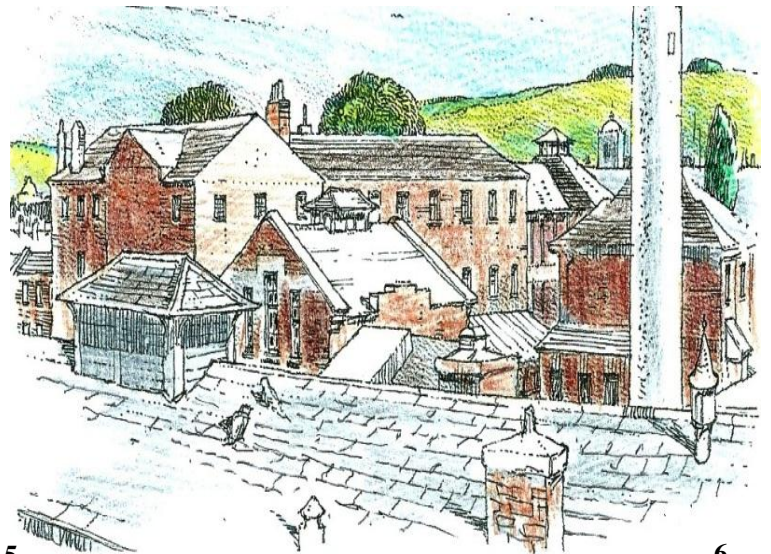
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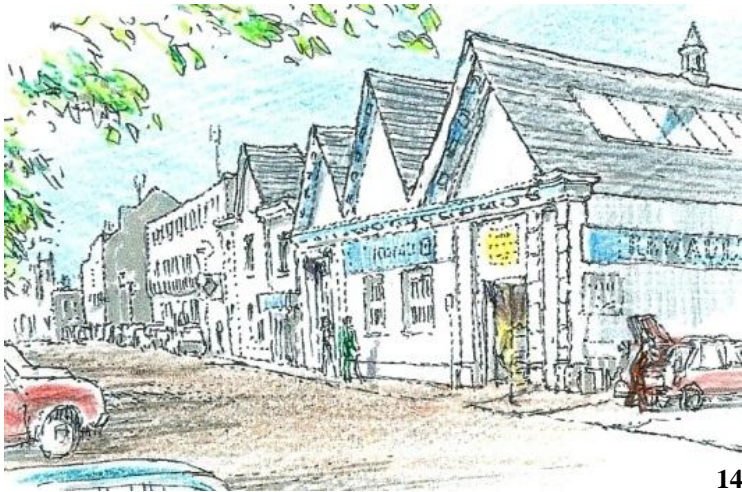


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7 & 9 Royal Well Car Park was the site of the much-loved **Sandwich Box**. 8 & 14 **Montpellier Spa Road**: once the site of the Bristol & Carriage Co. later a Renault garage. 10 & 17 Probably the greatest change to the heart of the town, the **Plough** was demolished, for the building of the **Regent Arcade**. 11 & 12 **St George's Place**, now **Chelsea Court**, once the **Echo garage**, earlier a 'Sadler's Wells' theatre. 13 & 19 **The Brewery** has retained its upper storeys but the arcade is now devoted to a cinema complex, retail shops and restaurants.



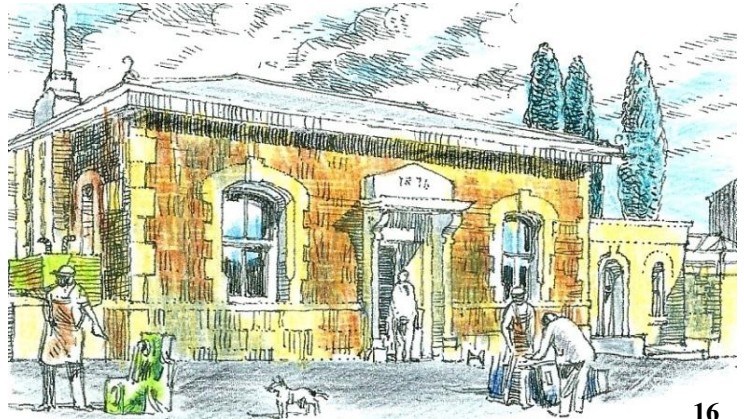
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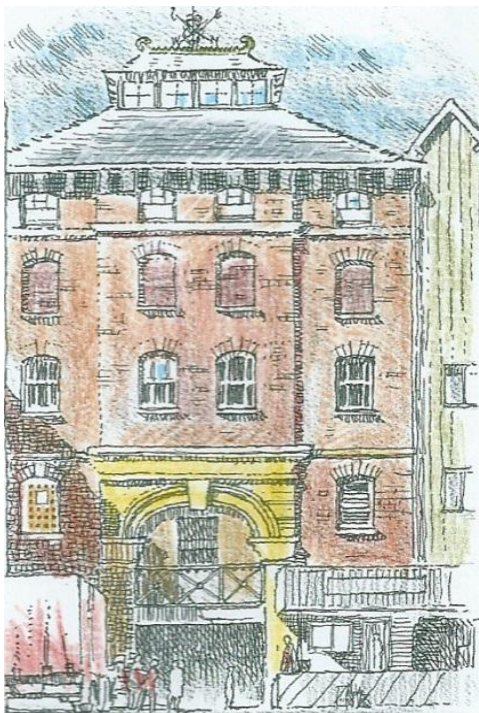


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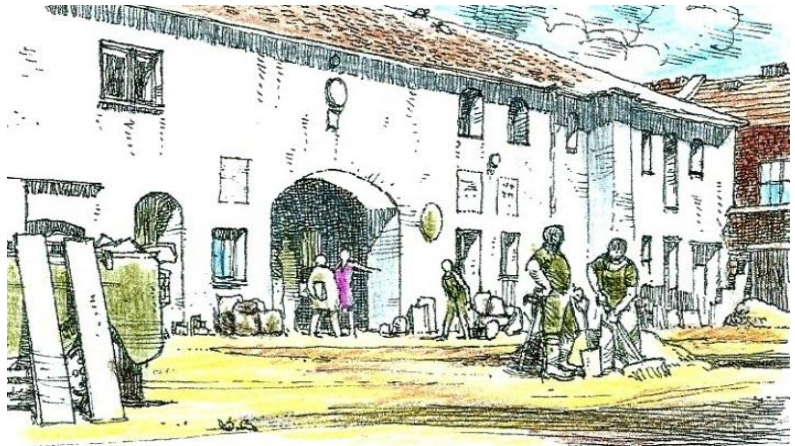


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15 & 16 The development of the Market Street Cattle Market area meant the demise of this Victorian Mortuary. 18 & 20 The familiar Fairview Trading Co has become Wallace Court flats, Sherborne Street.



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21 & 22 Lower High Street, originally **Dobell's**, then **Regent Components**, the site awaits further development. **23 & 24** The tiny **Waterloo Infants School**, **Tewkesbury Road**, was replaced many years ago by these flats. **25 & 26** At the Gloucester Road end of **St George's Road**, another redevelopment – **Spirax Sarco** has relocated and this site will become a retirement complex. See pages 68-69 for more details.

¹ For an article on the first 20 years, written by Elaine Heasman (North), see CLHS Journal 19, pp.2-3 and 15.

² I would like to formerly acknowledge and very much thank Aylwin Sampson and Mary Nelson for the time they have given to preparing their work for publication in this article.

Cheltenham's Mr Music – Arthur Cole

LESLIE BURGESS

Editor's note. This article was submitted to the Journal in January 2011 by Les and it is now published with the permission of Morfydd Burgess in his memory.

IN 1934 A MILITARY BAND WAS FORMED in Cheltenham and for many years performed in the town. The band's performances were of a very high standard and attracted large audiences when they gave concerts in the Town Hall or the Winter Gardens. In fact, 50,000 people paid to hear them in one year. The 'Cheltenham Military Band' broadcast twice a week for some years and became famous within a much wider area than just Cheltenham. The band had been formed and directed by Arthur Cole, who soon became known as Cheltenham's 'Mr Music.'


Born in Cheltenham in 1891, Arthur Cole's family moved to Hereford while he was still a boy. He was educated at a school in the city and while still a young man became the first accompanist of the Hereford Harmonic Society. His family was a musical one and he carried on the tradition of his grandfather and father by becoming an organist at several churches. Later, whilst serving in the Forces in the First World War, he formed his own choir and conducted an orchestra. After the war he studied at the Royal College of Music in London.

On returning to Cheltenham he took charge of the outside activities of Dale, Forty and Co Ltd, possibly the biggest and most important music business in the town. They were pianoforte merchants, who, besides selling all the well-known makes, made good quality pianos of their own – one of which I still have. They also had a depot for the selling of gramophones and all musical merchandise.

At the same time, Arthur, as a pianist and accompanist, became associated with the Sunday concerts that had already been established in the town since the early 1920s. Later on in 1932 he formed a 30-strong band of professional and amateur instrumentalists with himself as its conductor; this later becoming a fully professional orchestra of 20 players. It was around about this time that he accepted the position of full-time musical director to Cheltenham Corporation. Two years after that he formed the Cheltenham Military Band.

Just before the Second World War he added further instrumentalists making it the Cheltenham Spa Light Orchestra of 25 to 30 performers. The Sunday evening concerts that they gave in the Town Hall reached a record number of 325 consecutive Sunday appearances. It was not surprising that he should be regarded as Cheltenham's 'Mr Music,' because, as well as this, he was often guest conductor to the Cheltenham Bach Choir and, in 1931, he became musical director for the Tewkesbury Pageant. In addition to being a one-time President of the Cheltenham Spa Open Music Competitive Festival, he was closely associated with the Cheltenham Music Festival from its inception, not only being a member of the Management Committee, but also a member of the Festival Board of Directors.

By now he was fully established in the town and was extremely highly regarded and respected even though he was fondly referred to as 'Uncle Arthur' by those who worked with him. In addition he was for 21 years a Director of the New Theatre and Opera House, now called since 1960, The Everyman Theatre.



3rd SEPTEMBER 1969

Death of Mr. Arthur Cole

**CHELTENHAM'S
"MR. MUSIC"**

CHELTENHAM'S "Mr. Music," Mr. Arthur Cole, died in a Gloucester hospital yesterday.

For many years Mr. Cole, who was 78, had been closely associated with the life of the town in all spheres of musical activity. His activities ranged from conducting for the Cheltenham Operatic and Dramatic Society to being an active member of the Cheltenham Open Music Competitive Festival, while for 21 years he was a director of the Opera House, Cheltenham.

As conductor of the Town Hall Sunday concerts, and founder of the famous Cheltenham military band, he achieved wide popularity.

By birth a Cheltonian, his father left the town when the future musical director was still a boy.

Mr. Cole was educated at a Hereford school and when a young man became the first

Gloucestershire Echo
3 September 1969

The Cheltenham Operatic and Dramatic Society, known as the C.O.D.S., presented a musical production every year in the Opera House. On one occasion, they were preparing possibly one of the most ambitious works yet attempted - Ivor Novello's *Glamorous Night* a story which centred around the dazzling but temperamental opera star Militza Hajos. The producer, Morris Hughes, who was a friend of Arthur, engaged him and his orchestra to play for the show. One incident prior to the opening night indicates that even the most carefully organised presentation may have its 'incidents', even if only a slight one. It happened during the final rehearsal. The dancers, the chorus, the supporting actors and two of the principals were all assembled: the orchestra and Arthur Cole were ready. Everyone was determined to do their best because Arthur was held almost in awe, not only by those on stage, but by members of the orchestra as well. This was not because he was a martinet, quite the opposite, but because he was highly regarded for being a first-class musician.

Arthur stood up, raised his baton and brought in his orchestra to play the opening number. After the introduction had been played, Militza entered centre stage and walked to the front, singing. Suddenly she stopped, angrily stamping her feet and waving her arms as she shouted at the conductor, "Stop, stop this is all wrong!" Arthur looked up, shocked and then annoyed, getting rather red in the face - he had never been treated like this before! The dancers and chorus stood stunned and the members of the orchestra looked bewildered. Arthur was still trying to understand why he should be spoken to in this way. There was complete silence and a sense of tension everywhere. At that moment the producer rushed up, he was laughing as he put his hand on Arthur's shoulder. "It's alright Arthur," he said, "she has to say that. It's in the script!" The tension

disappeared as everyone realised what had happened and there was laughter throughout the theatre, with Arthur joining in, although he sat down and lit a cigarette as he regained his composure. Of course it was Morris Hughes' joke and the only one to know about it was Militza. Even so she felt a little nervous about it, mainly because she did not know him very well. In fact she later found him to be an extremely pleasant person and afterwards she was a soloist for him and his orchestra on other occasions.

I witnessed this event because I was there and my wife was playing the part of Militza Hajos. With regard to Cheltenham Corporation, obviously things were very different from what they are today. Not only did they employ a full-time musical director for the town but they also paid a retaining fee to two professional musicians in order that they would assist Arthur Cole and ensure that he would not leave Cheltenham! The musicians were Ron Summers – a trumpet player who was Secretary to the Musicians' Union, a powerful body in the town at that time, (he was also a peripatetic brass teacher to various schools), and Ken Watkinson, a percussionist who opened a music shop in Ambrose Street, about where the Balloon Shop is now.

After Arthur Cole's death in September 1969, Ron Summers paid a tribute to him in the form of a letter to the *Gloucestershire Echo*, headed 'Musician's Tribute to Mr Music.' He wrote of a deep feeling of loss,

'... for a man who was responsible for many years in giving musical pleasure to thousands and also for educating the young in this sphere by giving them encouragement to take part in his concerts. Many of our local musicians owe a lot to Arthur Cole for his interest and endeavours to help.'

Arthur was a Rotarian for many years and was elected to the Cheltenham Clubs Council in 1944. He was also a member of the Past Members Group. The Rotary Club belongs to an international association of clubs whose aim is to improve

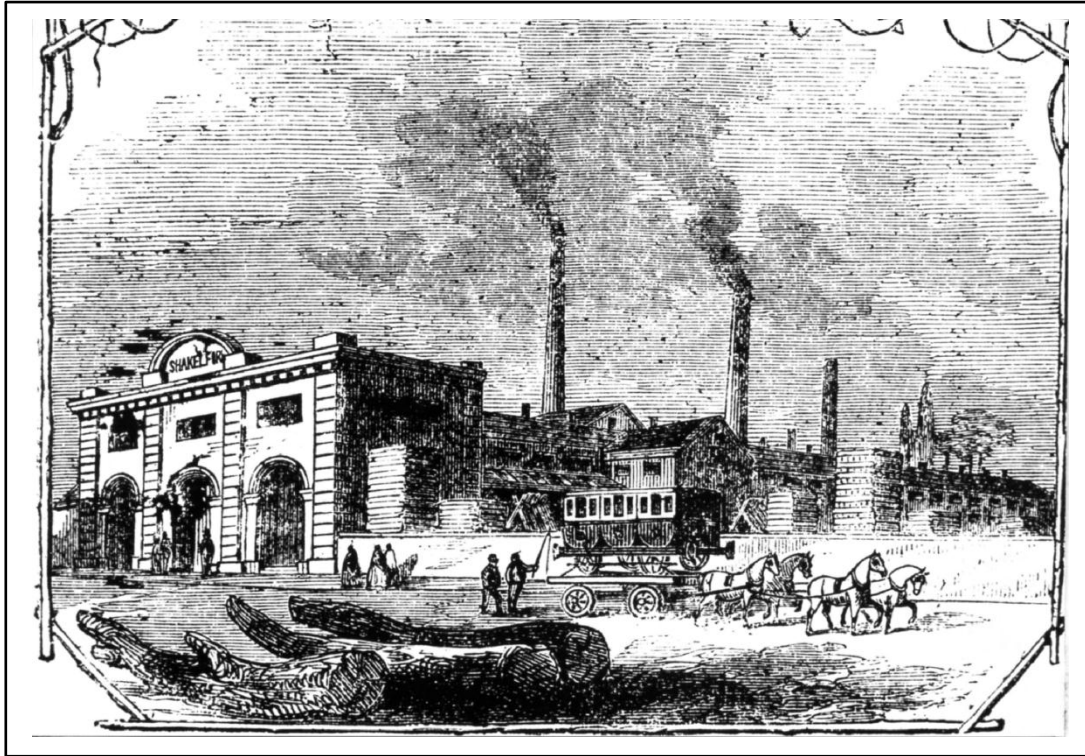


(back right) Arthur Cole, musical director at the first night of Novello's *Glamorous Night*. Also, (back row, left to right) Mr Taylor (C.O.D. Secretary), Cllr. Richard Board, (front row, left to right), Clive Young, (male lead), Morfydd Burgess, (female lead), Cllr. Smith.

Image Morfydd Burgess

civic services and whose motto is 'Service.' Something that was known only to a few was his natural desire to help people of all kinds. During the Second World War he was, in conjunction with the Corporation, responsible for arranging accommodation for the many evacuees who came to the town. Arthur worked hard for this town and was proud to do so. I feel certain that the people of Cheltenham who benefited from his work were also extremely proud of him.

I should like to record my thanks to Vic Cole who has given me his help - without it I should have been unable to make this contribution to the Journal.

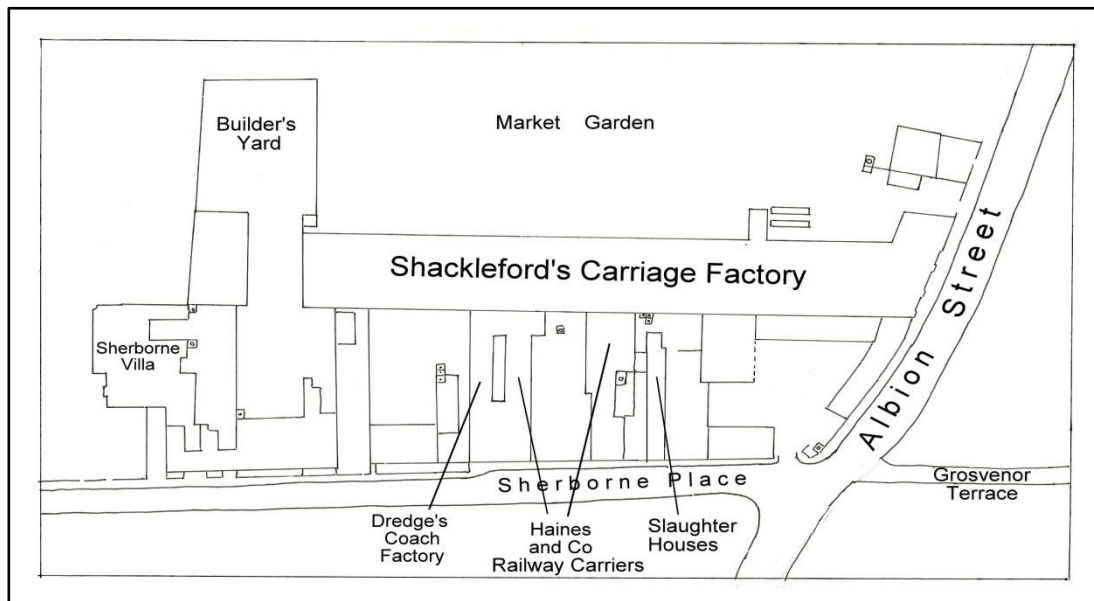


(above) An impression of the imposing frontage of Shackleford's Albion Street 'manufactory', from *The Official Illustrated Guide to the Great Western Railway* of about 1858. A completed railway passenger carriage is shown mounted on a horse-drawn trailer, on its way to be delivered by road. Smoke from the prominent chimneys was the cause of protests by local residents.

Image Eric Miller

(below) A sketch map of an edited section of the Cheltenham Old Town Survey, 1855-57, showing the extent of the premises.

Courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Local History Society



Shackleford's Railway Carriage and Wagon Works, Albion Street and St James's

ERIC MILLER

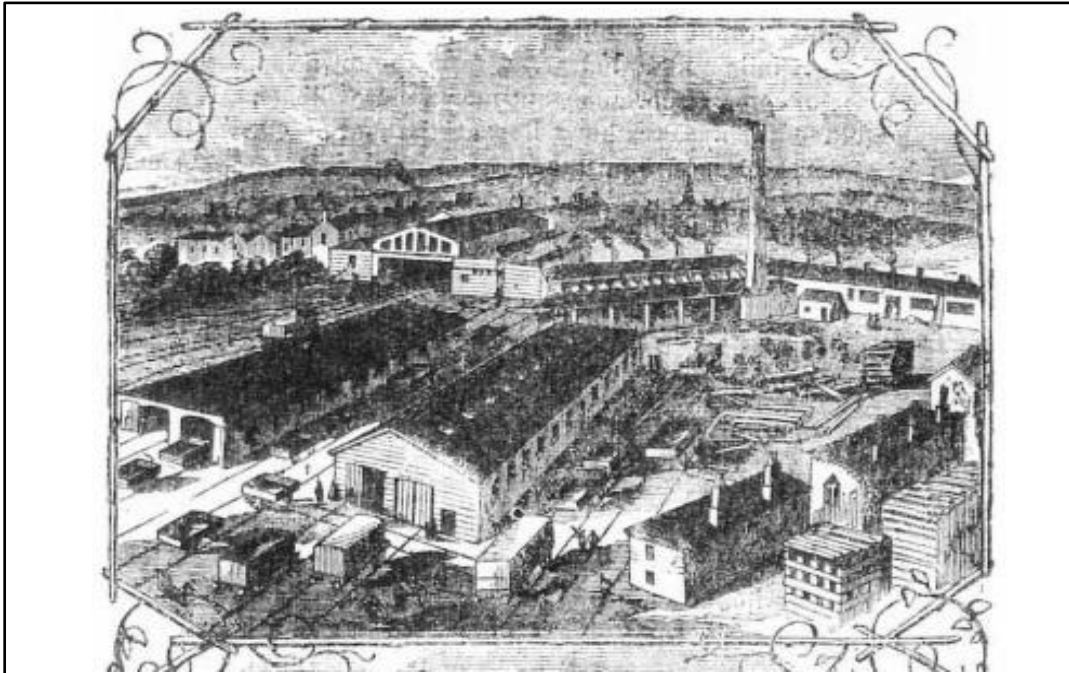
This article recounts a further episode in the series 'Railway Mania in Cheltenham'¹

AT THE PEAK OF ITS PROSPERITY IN THE 1860s, Shackleford's Railway Carriage and Wagon Works was one of the biggest employers in Cheltenham. For over 25 years, under three generations of the family, the firm was a major supplier of rolling stock to the Great Western Railway (GWR), yet though its importance is acknowledged in the standard railway histories, it scarcely attracts a mention in books on Cheltenham itself. However, the firm's fortunes were reported in the local and even the national press of the time, in particular the financial complications that led to its downfall following the ill-advised purchase of a concern in Swansea.

The business evolved out of the manufacture of conventional carriages for use on the highway. It was started by William Shackleford, who together with his son, also named William, already owned coach building workshops in Oxfordshire. The father had been in business as a coachbuilder and harness maker since before 1823² and moved to Cheltenham by about 1839³, while his son continued to run the Oxford business as well as another workshop at Benson, near Wallingford.⁴ According to *The Official Illustrated Guide to the Great Western Railway*, William Shackleford, senior, began making railway carriages in 1836 'at his manufactory near Oxford'; this could mean Benson. The *Guide* adds that 'the present establishment [in Cheltenham] was formed about four years later', i.e. about 1840.

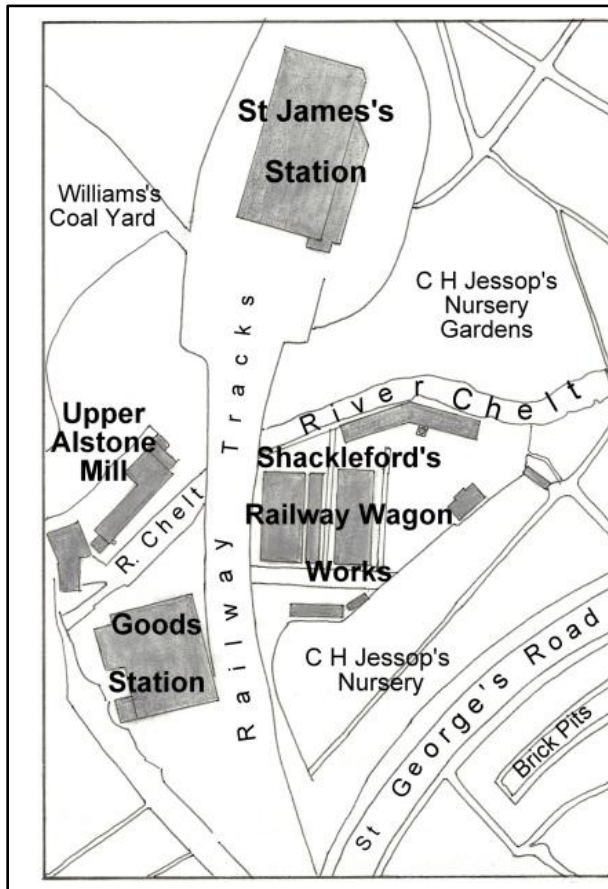
The details of the first years in Cheltenham are unclear, but William Shackleford's first address was at Stamford Terrace in Regent Street⁵. It was not until 1847, the year after his death, that the manufacture of railway carriages was specifically mentioned.⁶ This was an enterprise of his son's on a site in Albion Street near the junction with Sherborne Place (the location today of Williams' Cycles and one of Bence's yards). The premises extended from Albion Street northwards almost as far as Sherborne Terrace and were bounded on the east by Hampton's Market Garden (later Cheltenham Rugby Ground) and on the west by houses in Sherborne Place.

In 1854 around 200 men were employed in the manufacture of railway carriages, trucks and horse-boxes⁷ and by 1861 this had increased to 214 men and 50 boys. Buildings were also rented from the GWR at a more convenient location beside the rail approach to St James's Station. Both installations are marked with Shackleford's name on the Cheltenham Old Town Survey map of 1855-57.



Impression of the St James's Station site, taken from *The Official Illustrated Guide to the GWR*, Shackleford's work sheds occupy most of the foreground again overshadowed by a smoking chimney.

Image Eric Miller



A sketch map of an edited section of the Old Town Survey 1855-57, showing the same area as the above. Note also the 'brick pits' near St George's Road, which would have supplied material for the houses then being built on land formerly under cultivation – compare this with Map 2, page 5, Journal 27.

Courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Local History Society

William Shackelford, junior, died aged 50 in December 1857, suffering a seizure while 'superintending some alterations going on at his house'. This was York House, Bayshill – an affluent address which is some evidence of his prosperity. He had for many years been a deacon of Salem Chapel.⁸ The business was inherited by his widow Ann (his second wife) and his eldest son, William Copley Shackelford. In 1864 a Mr Henry William Ford, a resident of Bath who had previously worked for the GWR, bought Mrs Shackelford's share, and the firm's name was changed to 'Shackelford and Ford'.

Production

The GWR's *Illustrated Guide* lavished praise on William Shackelford and the facilities that his factories offered. He manufactured some of that railway company's first carriages and continued to build a large proportion of them, as well as wagons. The first-class carriages on the Great Western were 'the most perfect, being from 24 to 30 feet long, and 8 to 9 feet 6 inches wide, and of sufficient height for a person to walk about' – 'monster carriages,' in the words of a reporter on the *Examiner*. Shackelford also supplied other companies with both broad- and standard-gauge stock and also built private carriages of all kinds.

The railway carriages were fitted on to frames, at first of wood but later of iron, which had been previously supplied by the GWR. From 1854 onwards many of the coaches consisted of five compartments, two first-class, two second-class and one for luggage.⁹ The body panels for the carriages made between 1850 and 1858 were of papier mâché rather than wood. After the GWR had absorbed the narrow-gauge Shrewsbury line in 1854, it ordered twenty-four four-wheeled coaches, many with teak bodies, half of which were made by Shackelford's, and in 1861-62 Shackelford's and three Birmingham firms shared a contract to supply 200 narrow-gauge passenger carriages and brake vans for a new service from London to Birkenhead.¹⁰ In 1861 the *Examiner* reported that 'two very handsome and commodious Post Office vans' had just been completed at the workshops. They were 'fitted with all known improvements and turned out of hand in a style which does infinite credit to the factory'.¹¹

Timber was stored in a yard at Regent Place (diagonally opposite the northern end of Henrietta Street). Children were in the habit of playing there, and on one occasion a girl was killed when some pieces of timber fell on her.¹²

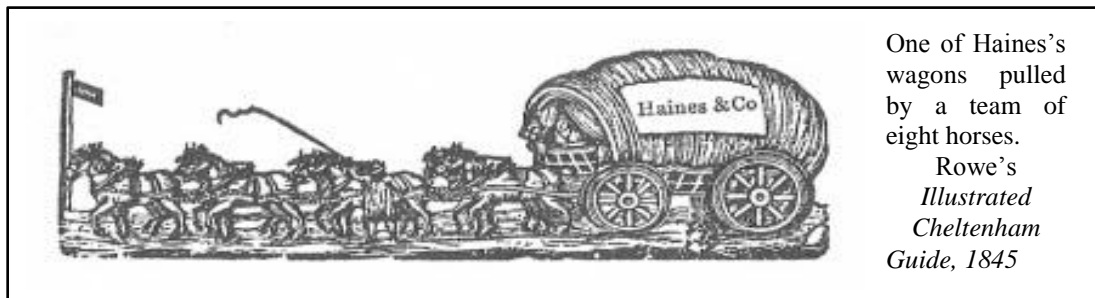
Albion Street Factory Twice Damaged by Fire

The first incident occurred in the early hours of 28 September 1854, when extensive damage was caused.¹³ The glow was seen for miles, and 'thousands' came to watch and help. No definite cause was established. Though the seat of the fire was near the engine-house, suspicion also fell on two men who had remained on the premises until 9 o'clock, using candles to see by. At the time there were twenty-two carriages as well as luggage wagons in various stages of completion. Nine carriages and six goods wagons were destroyed, along with materials for twelve other carriages, tools and benches, but many highly finished and costly private carriages in the showroom were saved.

Several nearby homes were threatened by the flames, including Mr Gyde's house (Sherborne Villa).¹⁴ Two adjoining buildings were destroyed: Haines's van warehouse in front of the factory and one occupied by a coach maker, George Dredge. The whole range of Shackleford's building was reduced to a skeleton, only the outer walls remaining, and the damage was estimated at over £2000. The property was said to be sufficiently insured, but a large number of hands were out of work for some time afterwards until the building could be restored. Cheltenham Fire Brigade was criticised for its slow response, which was attributed to a delay in getting water to the fire engine.

Thirty-eight of the workmen had lost tools in the fire valued at £150 and were in no position to replace them. A subscription list was opened, which after only a few days had already raised half that amount. The contributors included representatives of the local nobility and gentry and also people in related trades, for example John Churchill of the *Plough Hotel*, with its extensive mews, John Alder, a coach painter and his shopmen, Arkell and Jackson, coach builders and harness makers, and William Richards, a wheelwright. Female students of the recently founded Training College also showed their concern. William Shackleford was himself listed as having given £5 to the appeal – one of the highest amounts.

The second fire was one of three that broke out the night of 14-15 August 1861. Smoke was seen at 2 am issuing from the boiler house at the rear of Haines's Van Office. The alarm was raised and the Phoenix Fire Engine and the town engine were both soon on the spot. Sheep and lambs were moved from Field and Wagborne's slaughterhouse. The fire was much less severe than on the previous occasion and was extinguished in less than two hours, but the boiler house was completely gutted. The damage was estimated to have amounted to £350-£400. The emergency services had evidently improved, but the *Examiner* reported that crowds had got in the way of the firemen.¹⁵



One of Haines's wagons pulled by a team of eight horses.

Rowe's
*Illustrated
Cheltenham
Guide, 1845*

Industrial Unrest

William Shackleford was a strict disciplinarian, as was shown by his reaction to what the *Examiner* called 'an ill-advised step' on the part of some seventy of the Albion Street workmen in July 1855. The men worked thirteen hours, from 6 am to 7 pm, which was said to be one hour longer than in similar factories elsewhere. In a protest against the extra hour, these men left at 6 pm. The management's response to this action was to give a ticket to each man who left at 7 pm. Only those presenting one the next morning were admitted. For some time there had been agitation among the workers to rebel against the extra hour, though it is not known who was the ringleader. The *Examiner* described the men as having 'thrown themselves out of employment ... in a town where there is no other field for their labour' but hoped that

the parties would effect a reconciliation.¹⁶ The employer was strictly within his rights, as the men had contracted to work the thirteen hours. It was not until 1874 that the length of the working day for such workers became legally limited to ten hours.

The Annual Treat

A more generous spirit was shown after the firm had become Shackleford and Ford's, to judge by the summer treat held in August 1864; the first of what was intended as an annual event. At 7.30 am 300 workmen, wives and friends left from the GWR Station on a special train, bound for Ross-on-Wye: and more joined at Gloucester (45 minutes from their destination). They were accompanied by a brass band formed from among the workpeople. 'Dinner' was taken at a hotel, followed by toasts, solo songs and glees. Later there were outdoor sports and races for prizes. The only accident reported was to a young man who was hit on the head with a quoit, but the injury was not serious. At 7 pm the men marched back to their waiting train.¹⁷

The Great Smoke Nuisances

The two factories with their smoking furnaces were a constant irritation to those living nearby. In August 1854 a formal complaint about the Albion Street factory was submitted by residents of Exeter Place, Grosvenor Place and Sherborne Place, including the above-mentioned William Gyde. The specific complaints were about the hammering of heavy iron bars, riveting of coal trucks, smoke from the chimneys of steam furnaces and noise from a blowing machine. After nine hours of deliberation the Town Commissioners ordered the removal of the truck-making portion of the business (presumably to the St James's site) and of the blowing apparatus. Beating of bars was to take place only once a fortnight, for not more than eight hours. The case was dealt with leniently in view of the large investment of capital and the livelihood of the 200 workers.¹⁸

The issue was revived in May 1860, this time in relation to the other works. William Shackleford, junior, then living at 22 Clarence Square, had been elected as a Town Commissioner but was absent from a meeting when a question was intended for him. This related to 'a tall chimney, from which was constantly emitted a dense volume of smoke, to the annoyance of people living ... in the neighbourhood of Bay's Hill'. It emerged that the Commissioners had the power to compel the proprietor to make this furnace 'self-consuming, as far as the smoke was concerned'. Shackleford had already been told about it more than once, but the nuisance persisted, as well as the noise from the steam engine.¹⁹

Matters came to a head in October 1863, when a letter of complaint was sent to the Cheltenham Improvement Commissioners, signed by residents of nearby houses. They claimed that dense smoke prevented them from opening their windows or enjoying their gardens, where the shrubs were turned black. Charles Brydges of St James's Nursery (formerly Jessop's) complained that smoke had blackened the plants and entered greenhouses. He had two or three times remonstrated with the Foreman, Mr Ashurst, but the latter had laughed it off. The Inspector of Nuisances made frequent visits to the site and reported that there were two fireplaces, one at either end of the boiler, only one of which had a patent smoke consumer. The smoke met at the centre, but if the air flow was not properly adjusted, it was worse than having no such device. He suggested too that the stoker was 'not as careful as he might be'. In fact,

the stoker had had long absences through illness, and Shackleford and his foreman made various excuses: a carter had thrown on some slack, his men had used the wrong sort of coal, Welsh steam coal was hard to obtain, or they would attend to it, but did not. In December the Inspector ordered Shackleford to discontinue the use of the furnace unless it was modified, on pain of a penalty of 40 shillings a day.²⁰

Despite assurances, Shackleford did not remedy the defect and was summonsed to appear before Magistrates in March 1864. The plea offered in mitigation reveals some interesting facts about the firm's prosperity and its part in Cheltenham's economy. It was estimated to bring in an income of £20-30,000 a year in trade to the town and by then employed 500 men who earned a total of £20,000 in wages. When the works first opened, the strip of land on Bayshill had been unproductive woodland, and no buyers were forthcoming. The villas came later and, so the argument ran, the occupants should be prepared to 'put up with the occasional puff of smoke'. The works occupied low and marshy ground, next to St James's Station, where smoke from railway locomotives was an equally great nuisance. In the light of all this, the Magistrates merely imposed a nominal penalty of one shilling.²¹

A Ruinous Expansion

In 1866, with a view to increasing production, the company bought a factory in the Crymlyn Burrows dockside area of Swansea, at a cost of £121,000. This was a spelter (a commercial term for zinc) and paint factory, formerly owned by Messrs Monroe and Co. A new joint stock company – the Cheltenham and Swansea Railway Carriage and Waggon Company (with two 'g's in this case) – was formed to co-ordinate operations in both towns. William Shackleford and Henry Ford were joint managing directors, the latter to oversee the Swansea factory. The other directors were a Mr Goddard of the Gloucester Banking Company and two colliery proprietors, Handel Cossham of Pucklechurch, near Bristol, and Edward Dangerfield, junior, of Warwick House, Cheltenham who also had a house in Swansea. Henry Dangerfield's father, of the same name, put funds into the venture as well, making the firm's capital £45,000.

In April 1866 the *Cambrian* newspaper welcomed the arrival in Swansea of the 'gigantic works ... under the fostering care and spirited management of Messrs Shackleford, Ford and Co'. The works there employed over 600 hands and was capable of turning out something like £200,000 worth of railway wagons and carriages per year.²²

This optimism was soon dashed, for in less than a year came the first hint of bankruptcy. At a meeting held in January 1867 creditors were told that the new holding company was unable to meet its financial obligations. Surprise was expressed, as the Carriage and Wagon Works in Cheltenham still appeared to be operating profitably, the operations had been portrayed as 'immensely prosperous' and the prospectus had forecast raising £300,000, offering a 'handsome dividend'.²³ In June a disillusioned *Cambrian* reported that 'the Directors made representations ... which they knew to be false' and that 'unwary shareholders [had been] most scandalously swindled'. Shackleford and Ford's operation in Cheltenham could not survive independently, and the *Looker-On* commented loftily: 'That such works should ever have been called into existence in such an uncommercial and unsuitable locality as Cheltenham has oftentimes evoked surprise'.²⁴

Newspapers devoted many pages to reports of meetings of shareholders and statements by the chairman and others. For the most part the details are not directly relevant to Shackleford's enterprise in Cheltenham and the following is but a brief summary of the circumstances.

There were conflicting sets of estimates of the company's losses and liabilities. At a meeting in January 1867, liabilities were given as £45,000 and assets £23,000 – a deficiency of £22,000, itself a considerable sum. In May, however, an additional £24,000 was alleged to have been misappropriated as a result of unauthorised cheques issued by William Shackleford. It also appeared that 50 goods vans due to Edward Dangerfield for the GWR had not been delivered to him. A report was prepared by a committee appointed in Cheltenham, which concluded that the firm of Shackleford and Ford was insolvent even before its transfer to the new company, despite statements by the chairman to the contrary. The case came before the Bristol Bankruptcy Court in July 1867 and was adjourned several times until October, when William Shackleford, Henry Ford and Handel Cossham were discharged, and no case was found against Edward Dangerfield. In March 1868 Cossham informed shareholders that many liabilities had been cleared off and all petitions and hostile proceedings had been withdrawn. Some shareholders nevertheless made claims against the company, and the legal ramifications were reported in *The Times* in the following year.²⁵

The factory premises in Swansea had already been advertised for auction, in six lots, in April 1867.²⁶ By October that year the Albion Street works was being managed by a Mr Lyne, with little work to do.²⁷ In December 1869 all the Cheltenham works had closed with no prospect of a customer and after 1870 Shackleford's name was no longer listed in local directories. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* regretted 'that a town so barren in manufacturing industry should thus lose a source of employment to some hundreds of its inhabitants'.²⁸

One excuse that was offered for the company's failure was a commercial crisis affecting the country, and 'money panic and unparalleled depression in all railway property'.²⁹ This cannot have been the whole story, as rivals such as the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company prospered. In 1861 this company employed 360 hands and produced 313 wagons, and a few years later it was exporting rolling stock to India, Russia and the Continent.³⁰ Another potential competitor was the Bristol Wagon Company, which Shackleford's Co-director Henry W Ford had helped found in 1866.

To Pastures New

William Copley Shackleford took his expertise to Lancaster, where by 1868 he had been appointed manager of the Lancaster Carriage and Wagon Company. A much younger brother, Arthur, was a clerk working for the same company in 1871; by about 1902 he had become Managing Director of the Britannia Works of the Oldbury Railway Carriage and Wagon Company. A cousin, Henry, was employed as a coach maker in Manchester.

Edward Dangerfield was still described as a colliery proprietor in the 1871 Census, living in a suburb of Swansea, but a few years later he had moved to Scotland (where his wife had been born). In 1875 he was listed as a member of the Highland and

Agricultural Society and was serving in a very different capacity as Factor to Lord Mansfield of Scone Castle.³¹ Little is known of his Cheltenham background. Further research is in hand to establish whether his father was the coach proprietor Edward Dangerfield, who in the early 1840s ran services to London and other cities from the *Plough, Queen's* and *George Hotels*.

¹ Miller, E., 'Railway Mania in Cheltenham, Part 1', *Cheltenham Local History Society, Journal* **26**, (2010)

² *Pigot's Directory of Oxford*, 1823-24. He was mentioned in the *Oxford Freeman Index* in 1809 and men were apprenticed to either him or his son (and in one case, in 1841, to both) between 1824 and 1842 (Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Oxford). The Oxford workshop was in George Street backing on to Gloucester Green, partly occupying the site of today's Odeon Cinema. Chris Sambrook (*British Carriage and Wagon Builders and Repairers*) adds that he 'moved from Oxford to premises adjacent to the GWR station at Cheltenham' in 1844.

³ See *Annales* from 1839 onwards, *Hunt's Directory*, 1847 and *Edwards's Directory*, 1848

⁴ E T MacDermot, *History of the Great Western Railway*, Vol 1

⁵ *Annuaire*, 1839; the Stamford Terrace reference is by Ian Pope, in *Private Owner Wagons of Gloucestershire*

⁶ *Hunt's Directory* 1847

⁷ *Examiner*, 2 August 1854

⁸ *Examiner*, 30 December 1857

⁹ J H Russell, *A Pictorial Record of Great Western Coaches*, Part 1

¹⁰ E T MacDermot, *Op cit*

¹¹ *Examiner*, 3 April 1861

¹² *Examiner*, 17 September 1862

¹³ *Examiner*, 4 October and *Looker-On*, 30 September 1854

¹⁴ He was the owner of numerous properties and built Gyde's Terrace – later renamed as Grosvenor Street (Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham*)

¹⁵ *Examiner*, 21 August 1861

¹⁶ *Examiner*, 1 August 1855

¹⁷ *Examiner*, 17 August 1864

¹⁸ *Examiner*, 2 August 1854

¹⁹ *Examiner*, 9 May 1860

²⁰ Gloucestershire Archives CBR B2/7/2/6

²¹ *Examiner*, 9 March 1864; also related correspondence in Gloucestershire Archives CBR/B2/7/2/6

²² *Cambrian* 27 April 1866 (Swansea Central Library)

²³ *Looker-On*, 26 January 1867

²⁴ *Looker-On*, 13 July 1867

²⁵ *The Times*, 27 February and 2 March 1869

²⁶ *Cambrian*, 5 April 1867

²⁷ *Examiner*, 23 October 1867

²⁸ Quoted in the *Cambrian*, 17 December 1869

²⁹ *Examiner*, 12 June 1867

³⁰ *History of the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company*, 1960

³¹ *Dundee Courier and Argus*, 18 June 1875 and 6 October 1880

Sadler's Wells; or Puppet Show

'As a species of dramatic entertainment, we must not forget Mr. Seward's exhibition of the Fantoccini, with all the merriment of pantomimic achievement. Mr. Seward has for several years visited Cheltenham with his Sadler's Wells in miniature. The whole apparatus is well got up, and affords a pleasing variety to the more serious and just representation of human nature every night of the week, except Saturday. However trivial this sort of dramatic exhibition may appear, it is well known that many a high lord and lady, when they seek this humble, but genuine scene of drollery (like suns of superior lustre condescending to illuminate a lower sphere) express their applause, the high gratification they receive.' See illustration 12, p.38.

Ruff's Beauties of Cheltenham 1806

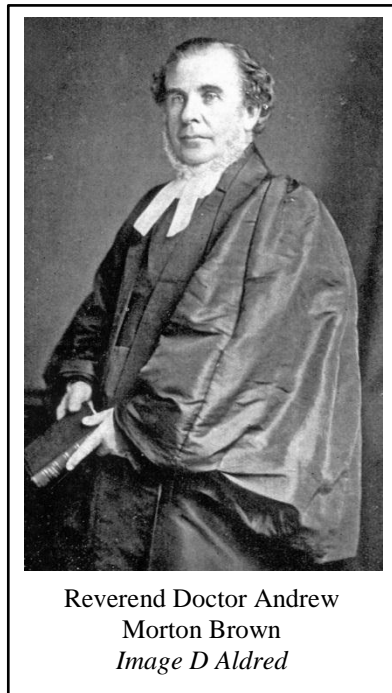
Reverend Doctor Andrew Morton Brown and a Welsh Connection

DAVID ALDRED

EVER SINCE MY UNIVERSITY DAYS AT SWANSEA I have continued an interest in the chapels of South Wales. Imagine my surprise therefore when I came across this little story:

'In April 1859 Barham Chapel (in Beaufort near Ebbw Vale) was opened by Dr Morton Brown of Cheltenham. As the service drew to its conclusion and a collection was taken, an elderly gentleman standing in the vestibule beckoned to one of the collectors, whereupon he produced twenty five sovereigns from each pocket. This moved the collector to tears but on receiving the collection from the pulpit, Dr Morton Brown told the assembled packed congregation not to worry as he explained that the gift had come from George Freeman "a rich gentleman" who was a member of his Highbury church congregation. He had followed his minister in secret to the opening and giving generously because "he likes to do exceptional things like this"'.¹

Here was a challenge! I had never for a moment expected to find a Cheltenham Non-conformist minister appear in my readings into Welsh history. Why had this little episode taken place? Who were Dr Morton Brown and George Freeman? I soon learnt that the former was an important, but historically neglected, leader of Cheltenham religion and society in the mid-nineteenth century.² I learnt that the latter was a member of his Highbury congregation, and I was also soon introduced to a third key player in the drama: the Reverend Doctor Thomas Rees, the man behind the new chapel. He was a giant of nineteenth-century Welsh Non-conformity, especially amongst the Welsh Independents (Congregationalists). So I began my task to investigate these three players in an attempt to understand how and why this little scene had unfolded in a chapel in industrial north Monmouthshire in the middle of the nineteenth century, with the key role being taken by a clergyman from Cheltenham. My investigation started by trying to understand why Barham chapel was built.



The Spread of Chapels in Industrial South East Wales.

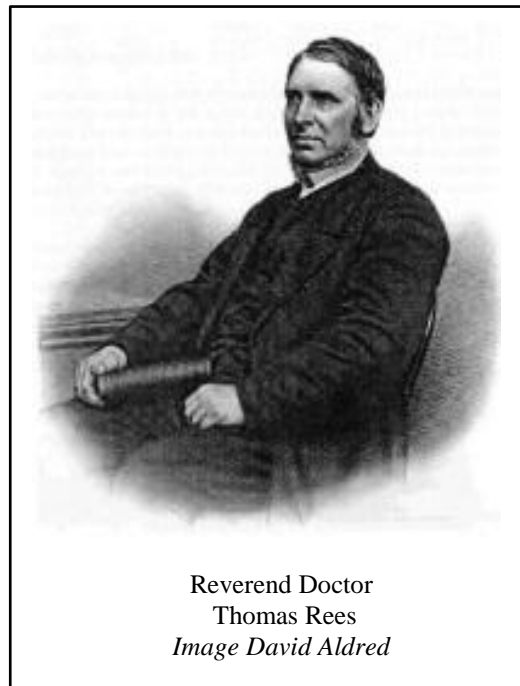
The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw an explosion of population along the heads of the Monmouthshire and Glamorgan valleys as the iron and later coal industries attracted workers, mostly from the rural parts of Wales in the earlier

period and then from the rest of the British Isles as the nineteenth century progressed. Existing places of worship were inadequate as they were largely the parish churches standing away from the new centres of population on the hilltops between the valleys. The incomers were working class and those from Wales brought their language, society and religion with them and so they began to build their own chapels to continue their patterns of worship in their own language, especially as the parish churches generally used only English.

Chapels sprang up largely through the initiatives and funding of the immigrants from rural Wales, as the Anglican Church could not respond so quickly to these challenges, being hindered by its status as the established church. However, from the middle years of the nineteenth century another factor came into the situation - the spread of the English language, either by increasing immigration from across Offa's Dyke and the Irish Sea or by parents failing to pass on the Welsh language to their offspring. If Welsh Non-conformity was to survive, it had to address this language change. Into this changing picture enter the Reverend Doctor Thomas Rees, the first of the three players in our story, with his mission to save the souls of English speakers, especially in industrial South East Wales.

Reverend Doctor Thomas Rees (1815-85) and Barham Chapel

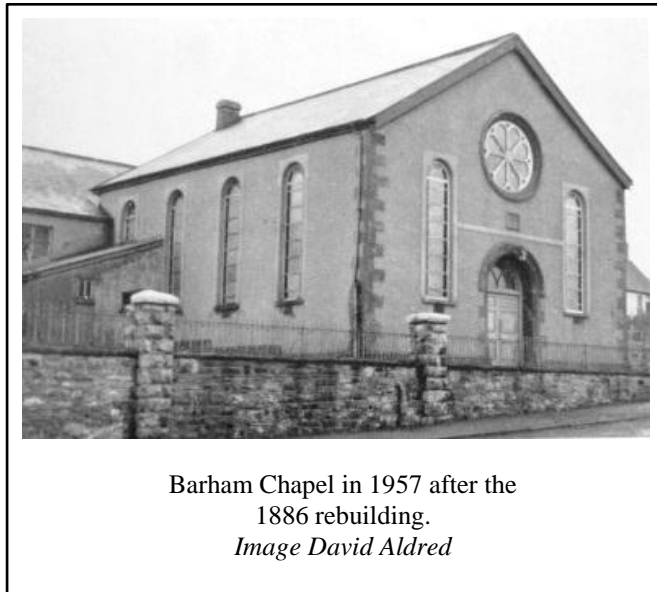
Thomas Rees was born in Llanfynydd in Carmarthenshire and was almost entirely self-taught. In the religious revival of 1828 he promised his life to his Lord Jesus.³ Four years later he began preaching in South West Wales; in 1840 he became pastor to a Welsh Independent chapel in Aberdare; two years later he moved to a similar chapel in Llanelli and in 1849 he became minister of Carmel chapel in Beaufort, just north of Ebbw Vale.⁴ It is here we can now pick up the Barham chapel story.



Reverend Doctor
Thomas Rees
Image David Aldred

Worried that the Welsh Independents were not offering the means of grace to local monoglot English speakers, Thomas began to hold meetings in the hall behind the Refiners Arms in Beaufort. He and his supporters took the view that in 'those districts where the Welsh language has been supplanted by the English tongue, the inhabitants have absolutely degenerated in body and mind and religion' and thus it was his mission to preserve God-fearing Welsh attitudes and save souls, if not the language.⁵ From its outset this initiative had to rely heavily on funding from wealthy English Congregationalists and George Freeman of Cheltenham stood alongside such famous benefactors as W. D. and H. O. Wills, the Bristol tobacco merchants, Samuel Morley of Nottingham, the greatest wool manufacturer of his age, and John Crossley, the Halifax carpet manufacturer. Barham chapel cost £1200, mostly collected by Thomas Rees himself and it was named after Lady Barham, another English benefactor. So it was here in April 1859 that the Scotsman Andrew Morton Brown from Cheltenham found himself

playing a key role in the opening ceremony. We must now cross the River Severn and search for reasons for his fame and so why he might have been invited.



Barham Chapel in 1957 after the
1886 rebuilding.
Image David Aldred

Reverend Doctor Andrew Morton Brown (1812-79)

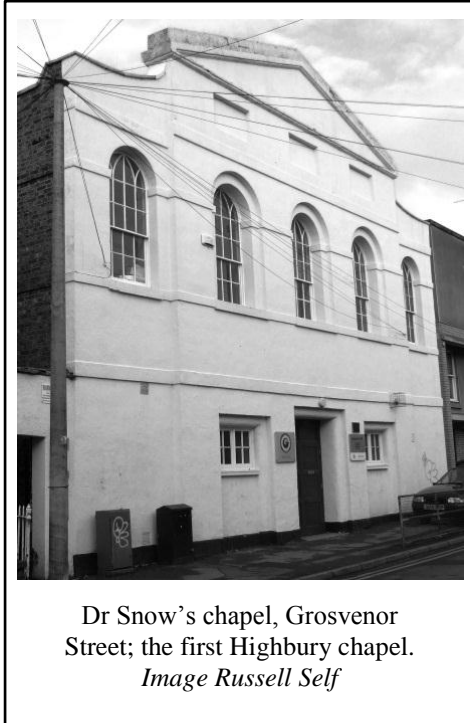
Andrew Morton Brown is one of Cheltenham's most neglected nineteenth-century historical figures. Although a full evaluation of his significant contribution to Cheltenham's social, political and religious life awaits a later study, hopefully this investigation can begin to redress the neglect. It was his misfortune to have been active in the town during some of the key years of Francis Close's influence (1843-56),

which has tended to keep him in the shadows, despite serving his congregation and town for nearly a quarter of a century after Close's departure for Carlisle.

Andrew Morton Brown's background was very different from that of Thomas Rees. Born near Kilmarnock, he was educated at both Glasgow and Edinburgh universities. His career with the Congregationalists began with his working as a missionary in the east end of London before moving to Overton in Hampshire and then in 1837 to Poole in Dorset. In 1843 he accepted a call to Cheltenham. Here a small Congregational cause had been established, which in 1827 had become sufficiently strong to purchase Dr Snow's former chapel in Grosvenor Street for £1300, naming it Highbury after the London home of one of the sponsors, Thomas Wilson.⁶ Andrew Morton Brown was a popular preacher, although perhaps not in the same league of popularity as Francis Close. The 1851 religious census recorded that 466 worshippers and 174 Sunday school scholars attended Highbury on the morning of 30 March, with 470 attendances in the evening; the average attendance was given as 500 with 150 scholars. In contrast, Francis Close packed 2000 into St Mary's for morning worship with 150 scholars attending Sunday school (these figures were obviously rounded).⁷ In 1852 a new 1200 seater Highbury chapel was opened in Winchcombe Street.⁸ Two years later he had become sufficiently well-known to be elected chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at the very young age of 42; Thomas Rees became chairman elect only in the year of his death in 1885.⁹

Brown's theology was mainstream nineteenth-century Congregationalism; the grace of God through Jesus Christ was available to all; it was more liberal and intellectual than other brands of evangelicalism and it was all-inclusive. The best example of his beliefs was probably his befriending the dissolute and intemperate Earl Fitzhardinge, who was a very long way beyond the pale as far as Francis Close and his followers were concerned, but Brown's philosophy was that he would go 'wherever he could do good to a perishing soul.'¹⁰ 'I am a great sinner,' confessed the

Earl as he neared his end in 1857. 'God be praised! Christ is a great saviour,' replied Andrew Morton Brown. The minister recounted that he visited the Earl seventy-five times during the last eight months of the latter's life. In gratitude for this friendship, the Earl donated £200 to clear the debt of the new Highbury chapel.¹¹



Dr Snow's chapel, Grosvenor Street; the first Highbury chapel.
Image Russell Self

However, Andrew Morton Brown did share many of the views, theologically and otherwise, of Francis Close and they could be found working together on a number of causes. They were both Evangelicals in their approach to religion; they both spoke largely to Cheltenham's middle classes but had deep concerns for the poor, encouraging the building of more churches and chapels, providing education for children, supporting the temperance movement and the anti-tobacco society.¹² But there were also fundamental differences. Francis Close was a conservative who generally wanted to defend an existing social order, but Andrew Morton Brown was a reformer, in politics a Liberal and in religion Free Church and so against the established Anglican Church and its privileged political position. He supported the setting up of the Literary and Philosophy Institute in the Promenade in 1843 and the

YMCA in 1855.¹³ He played a prominent part in the Boys' Industrial School in Albert Street and for many years entertained the town's cabmen to a tea party, persuading a hundred subscribers to support the establishment of a benefit society for them in 1873.¹⁴

The status of Andrew Morton Brown as an influential leader in the town is evidenced by the Reverend F. W. Wilkinson affair of 1847. Wilkinson was a tutor of religion at Cheltenham College who proposed a vote of thanks to the rationalist George Dawson of Birmingham after the latter had addressed the Literary and Philosophy Institute, although the college tutor made it clear he did not agree with the latter's arguments. Nevertheless, his action caused uproar amongst the college's directors and Wilkinson was forced to resign. Andrew Morton Brown was a vice-president of the Institute and so sprang to Wilkinson's defence. He led the Non-conformist and rationalist attack on the Anglican 'non-intellectual ruling class' that seemed to be governing Cheltenham and its college, seeing Francis Close's influence behind the whole affair. Public opinion split into two factions and the weekly newspapers supported the two sides with enthusiasm. Although Wilkinson's reinstatement was not secured, the Brown party appealed to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and succeeded in gaining a church living in the gift of the Crown for Wilkinson in Derby. So Andrew felt vindicated in his battle with Cheltenham's Anglican establishment and his leadership qualities became apparent for all to acknowledge, both supporters and opponents.¹⁵

If Francis Close was known as the Pope of Cheltenham, Andrew Morton Brown 'to his friends was almost a bishop'.¹⁶ On the day of his funeral in July 1879 all the

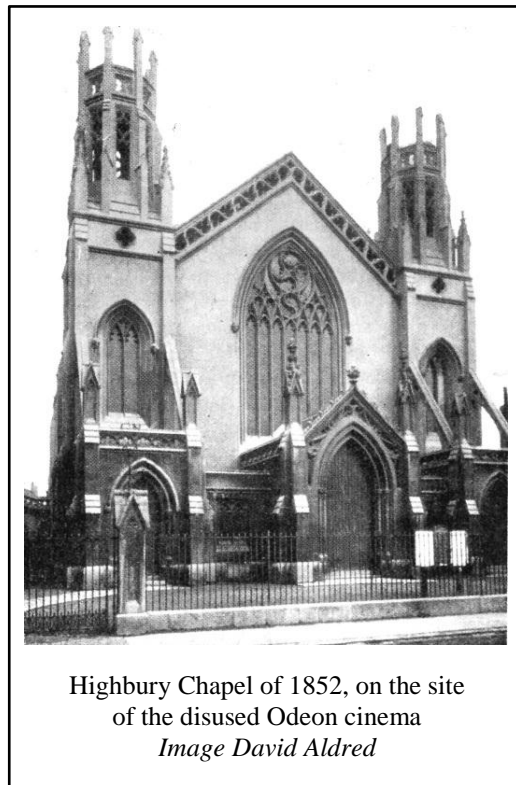
town's shops closed and the cortège stretched half a mile as it made its way from his home in St Margaret's Terrace to the cemetery; it was the longest such procession ever seen in the town.¹⁷ 'Cheltenham has lost one of its most notable, most valuable, most highly valued men, and the vacant place cannot be soon occupied by another' was one of the many tributes to this largely forgotten Cheltenham statesman.¹⁸

George Freeman c1780-c1869

Of the three players in the story, George Freeman remains to historians the most shadowy. According to the *Cheltenham Annuaire* he lived at 6 Bayshill Villas in the years 1846-69. According to the 1851 Census he was a bachelor fund holder born in Leicestershire, living with two unmarried nieces aged twenty five and thirty and two servants.¹⁹ His age was given as a suspiciously rounded seventy but he must have clearly appeared to have been an elderly gentleman in Barham chapel on that day in April 1859. Although we don't know how he acquired his wealth, we do know he was extremely generous to Congregationalism. He contributed to paying the costs of the new building for Highbury, but his greater generosity was to join the illustrious list of English benefactors who supported the English language cause of the Welsh Independents. This seems to have begun at Barham chapel and then to have continued for the rest of his life. His fifty sovereigns in the collection on that day marked the first of an untold number of donations to the cause: at least £2500 (perhaps £250,000 in today's money) was given to support chapel building, plus unknown amounts to support retired preachers and to pay Thomas Rees' expenses, especially from South Wales to London, as he travelled indefatigably around England and Wales to raise more funds. 'Here is a man who loves our nation although he is not one of us', was Thomas Rees' eulogy to him.²⁰

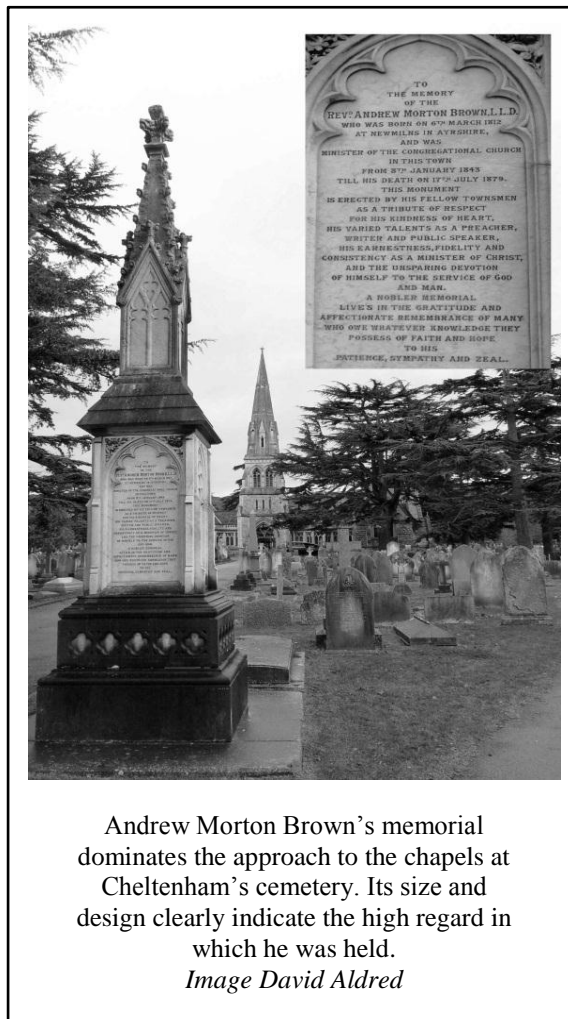
So why might Andrew Morton Brown have been invited to open Barham Chapel?

I have found no clear answer to this question but my search has not only thrown light on a much neglected character from nineteenth-century Cheltenham, but has made it possible to make some suggestions. It seems quite likely that Thomas Rees came to know Andrew Morton Brown through the Congregational Union. Thomas first spoke at a meeting in London in 1856.²¹ Then in 1858 he became the first Welsh clergyman to address the Union, which in that year was held in Halifax; his paper on the Congregational churches of Wales assumed his audience was completely ignorant of their history and current situation – language was felt to be creating a barrier to understanding.²² As we have noted, Brown became the Union's chairman the following year. He was still relatively young and very enthusiastic to spread its principles and was gaining a reputation as a principal player at chapel



Highbury Chapel of 1852, on the site of the disused Odeon cinema
Image David Aldred

openings. 'Did a chapel require opening, or a congregation need assistance? He was there.'²³ Random references in the *Cheltenham Examiner* record at later dates his speaking at the laying of the foundation stone of Brunswick Road Baptist Chapel in Gloucester in 1872 and at the re-opening of Drybrook Chapel five years later.²⁴ With fifty guineas (two-thirds the annual stipend of many Non-conformist ministers) donated by Thomas Thompson, yet another English benefactor, to pay for a guest speaker at the opening of Barham chapel, Thomas Rees probably thought Andrew Morton Brown could be the big name to give his campaign a boost.²⁵ In fact, Ifor John, Barham chapel's historian, suggests it was through the influence of Thomas Thompson that Andrew was secured for the opening ceremony, for they already knew each other through the Congregational Union.²⁶



Andrew Morton Brown's memorial dominates the approach to the chapels at Cheltenham's cemetery. Its size and design clearly indicate the high regard in which he was held.

Image David Aldred

But how did George Freeman fit in? Were his fifty sovereigns an attempt to return most of this money to pay off some of the debt of the newly-built chapel? Andrew's explanation as recorded in the opening story appears a little thin when one considers George Freeman was around eighty years old; that there was only one railway line open at that date by which he could have followed his minister to Beaufort and this left a six mile road journey from the station. Add to this the infrequency of the trains, and it seems hardly likely that George Freeman decided to follow Andrew 'in secret' and that his decision was based on a chance overheard conversation only the day before it happened. The explanation to the congregation also seemed rather too well-argued to have been spontaneous. It would be entirely consistent with Andrew Morton Brown's character to arrange for George Freeman to be there and make the donation, even though at present this remains speculation.

The end of the story

With the benefit of historical hindsight it seems Andrew Morton Brown was unwittingly taking part in an unnecessary venture. Already some Welsh language chapels were naturally changing to English and even contemporaries questioned the movement by the Welsh denominations to establish English language causes. 'This is not to evangelise the English, but to anglicise the Welsh', wrote a sceptical Welsh Independent minister in 1864.²⁷ But for Thomas Rees the souls of men, women and children were ultimately more important than the future of the Welsh language, '[We] have to take things as they are and do the best with them'.²⁸ Welsh Independents

needed to be there building chapels to secure their future as a denomination. Barham was one of the more successful. After a shaky start, which saw closure for two weeks in the following November as the membership split, it was rebuilt in 1886; survived a disastrous fire in 1892; numbered 150 fifty members after the religious revival of 1904 and closed only in 2000 when its congregation combined with Libanus chapel in Ebbw Vale, which continues to flourish.²⁹ Subsequently the building has been demolished.

In turn, Thomas Rees's own chapel Carmel lost its Welsh services in the 1970s and at present is for sale – the two neighbours serving as a microcosm of Welsh Non-conformity into the twenty first century. As for Andrew Morton Brown, members attending Highbury chapel today will know his memory lives on in the room named after him. For the wider number of members who are interested in Cheltenham's history, this story of a Welsh connection has, I hope, begun to re-establish an outstanding leader of mid-nineteenth-century Cheltenham society who has been sadly neglected by the town's historians.

Acknowledgements

This article would not have been written without the assistance of a number of people to whom I give my thanks: Elaine and Geoff North, Janet Karn of Tredgar Local Studies Library, Jill Waller, Reverend Richard Cleaves of Highbury, Richard Watkins of Libanus URC Ebbw Vale and the staff at Cheltenham Local Studies Library.

1 The story is based on John Thomas, *Cofiant Y Parch.T.Rees, D.D., Abertawy* [A Biography of the Rev.T.Rees, D.D., Swansea] (Dolgellau 1888), p.195.

2 'Contem Ignotus', *The Golden Decade of a Favoured Town 1843-53* (London 1884) seemed to set a trend, with fifty nine pages on Francis Close and six lines on Andrew Morton Brown. Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham* (Leicester 1965) has four references. Arthur Bell, *Pleasure Town* (Chalfont St Giles 1981) has a chapter on the Wilkinson affair (see below). More recent history books about the town generally lack any references to him.

3 Thomas, *Cofiant*, p.17.

4 *Welsh Biography Online* (<http://wbo.llgc.org.uk>). Confusingly, Beaufort is known as Cendl in Welsh.

5 Sian Rhiannon Williams, 'Iaith Y Nefoedd: Anghydfurfiaeth a'r Gymraeg yn Sir Fynwy yn y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg' ['Heaven's language: Non-conformity and Welsh in Monmouthshire in the nineteenth century'] *Y Traethodydd* [The Essayist], Vol. 142, (1987), p. 217 (<http://www.welshjournals.llgc.org.uk>).

6 Steven Blake, *Cheltenham Churches and Chapels AD773-1883* (Cheltenham 1979), pp.9-10.

7 A. Munden, 'The Religious Census of 1851', *Cheltenham Local History Society Journal*, Vol. 21, (2005), pp.42,44.

8 Walter Ansell, *One Hundred Years of Congregationalism in Cheltenham: Highbury 1827-1927* (Cheltenham 1927), p.29.

9 *Ibid.* p.31 and fn.4 above, respectively.

10 *Cheltenham Examiner*, 22 January 1868, p.3.

11 Gloucestershire Archives: CW/63G252/CE. *Funeral Sermon preached by the Reverend Morton Brown at the Congregational Church Cheltenham on Sunday October 25th on the occasion of the death of Earl Fitzhardinge* (London and Cheltenham 1857), pp.22-4.

12 Francis Close's efforts in building Anglican churches in Cheltenham are well-known, for example Alan Munden, *A Cheltenham Gamaliel: Dean Close of Cheltenham* (Cheltenham 1997), pp.29-35. Andrew Morton Brown's efforts lay chiefly outside the town: Bishop's Cleeve, Northleach, Oxenton, The Reddings and Gas Green in the town, (W. Ansell, *One Hundred Years*, pp. 26-32 *passim*). Similarly Francis Close's work in education is well-known, (Munden, *A Cheltenham Gamaliel*, pp.34-45); in 1860 more than 1000 children were attending schools associated with Dr Morton Brown's chapels (W. Ansell, *One Hundred Years*, p.33).

13 W.Ansell, *One Hundred Years*, pp.27, 32.

14 For the school, *Cheltenham Annuaire* 1858, p.xxi; for the cabmen, *Cheltenham Examiner*, 5 March 1873, p.2.

15 This account is based on Bell, *Pleasure Town*, pp.52-7; Hart, *A History of Cheltenham*, pp.248-9.

16 W. Ansell, *One Hundred Years*, p.33. Interestingly, in 1858 Thomas Rees was also described as 'Esgob Y Cendl' ['The Bishop of Beaufort'] (A.H.Williams, 'Y Dr Thomas Rees a'r achosion Saesnig' ['Dr Thomas Rees and the English causes'], *Y Cofiadur* [The Recorder (the Journal of the Welsh Independent History Society)], Vol. 40, (1975), p.11. (<http://www.welshjournals.llgc.org.uk>)).

17 *Cheltenham Looker On*, 26 July 1879, p.475.

18 *Cheltenham Examiner*, 23 March 1879, p.8.

19 National Archives: HO129/344, by courtesy of Jill Waller.

20 Thomas, *Cofiant*, p.196.

21 Williams, 'Y Dr Thomas Rees a'r achosion Saesnig', p.11.

22 Thomas Rees, 'The Congregational Churches of Wales: a paper read at the Congregational Union of England and Wales held at Halifax October 1858' in Thomas Rees, *Miscellaneous Papers on Subjects Relating to Wales* (London 1867), pp.70-82.

23 W. Ansell, *One Hundred Years*, p.33.

24 *Cheltenham Examiner*, 11 September 1872, p.8 and 11 July 1877, p.2 respectively.

25 Thomas, *Cofiant*, p.196.

26 John, *Barham Congregational Church*, p.3.

27 Reverend D. Hughes at the quarterly meeting of the Welsh Independent churches of Monmouthshire in 1864, quoted in Williams, 'Iaith Y Nefoedd:.....', pp.218-9.

28 Thomas Rees and John Thomas, *Hanes Eglwysi Annibynnol Cymru [A History of Welsh Independent Churches]* (Liverpool 1871), Vol. 1, p.232.

29 John, *Barham Congregational Church*, pp7-8 and <http://www.urc.org.uk>, respectively.



Billhooks, with which in 1516 William Parker 'brained the keeper' (see facing article), are still common tools in forestry work, along with long handled slashers. They would have been made locally by the blacksmith, with each district having its own distinctly shaped tool which served the needs of the particular task. Billhooks are used for hedge laying, coppicing hazel, hurdle making and long handled slashers for clearance work.

(Above left) Long handled slashers. Image Peter Lewis

(Above right) Modern billhooks. Image Russell Self

The Dangers of Being a Nosey Parker, 1516

ANTHEA JONES

THE REGISTER OF CHARLES BOTHE OF HEREFORD, Bishop of Hereford, contains several transcripts of legal documents concerning a break-in and theft from the bishop's park in Prestbury. Some are in English, some in Latin.¹ This is a slightly edited, modernised version which involved a large number of Cheltenham men.

'On 20 May 1516, Henry Poole of Boddington, Robert Spencer, William Spence, his brother, John Mercer, Walter Matthews and Nicholas Style, all of Cheltenham, Thomas Marshall of Whitebridge, and Robert Herbert of the same, with divers other riotous and misruled persons, with force and arms, that is to say, with bows, arrows, swords and bucklers, and other arms defensive, broke the gates of Prestbury Park, entered, and cut down and carried away riotously and with force, divers principal trees that were growing in the park. Then, with other persons, not being content with the misdemeanours neither dreading the King's laws entered the park although the park keeper, William Raynesford, tried to stop them, and killed a buck. Furthermore, they assaulted the keeper and sore wounded him, and struck away a great part of his brain pan, whereby he is in danger of his life, and also shot many arrows at his servant and sore hurt him on the side that his wind come forth.'

'The culprits possibly took advantage of the vacancy in the bishopric of Hereford, a period during which the King held Prestbury manor. The King's council examined these men, and further details then emerged. Robert Spenser of Cheltenham, yeoman, did not deny that he had broken down the park gates, and carried away six loads of wood from two trees which he and two workmen had felled. He also confessed that a little boy, twelve years old, let go a leash of greyhounds, but that they killed no game. They were on their way home when the keeper called them back. They had 'words', and the keeper struck William Rede, and in turn he hurt the keeper. Spenser then brained the keeper with a forest bill. William Parker was also there with bow and arrow.

'Rede agreed that this story was correct, but he was not there when the park gates were broken. Parker likewise agreed with the details. William Rede, William Parker and Robert Spenser were committed to the Fleet, but were given bail.'

Further information given later was that Robert Spenser was under-escheator², and that he felled the trees. (Were they for some repairs to the king's property in Cheltenham?) Over the next fortnight he entered the park and carried the trees away.

'The names of them that felled the trees: Thomas Marshall, Walter Keanes, Walter Herbert, labourers in the town of Cheltenham. The names of them that carried the trees: Nicholas Style, Walter Mathew, John Mercer, of the parish of Cheltenham.'

¹ The Register, *Registrum Caroli Bothe, Episcopi Herefordensis, A.D.1516-1535*, edited by Arthur Thomas Bannister, (Canterbury & York Society), 1921.

² Escheators were appointed by the Crown to oversee the collection of revenues from escheated property in a particular county. An escheated estate was one that had reverted to a lord when a tenant died without heirs, or where the heir had not obtained his majority. *The Sutton Companion to Local History*, (Sutton) paperback ed. 2000

William Penn Gaskell, 1808-1882

DEREK BENSON

'Let the people think they govern and they will be governed'
William Penn (1644-1718) *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 1682

WILLIAM PENN GASKELL WAS BORN on 20 February 1808 at Burnham, Buckinghamshire. He was the son of William Penn Gaskell senior and his wife Elizabeth; they had a small family estate at Great Marlow. The Gaskells were descended from William Penn, the Quaker leader and founder of Pennsylvania. This lineage was through William Penn's great-granddaughter Christiana Gulielma Penn, the mother of William Penn Gaskell senior.¹



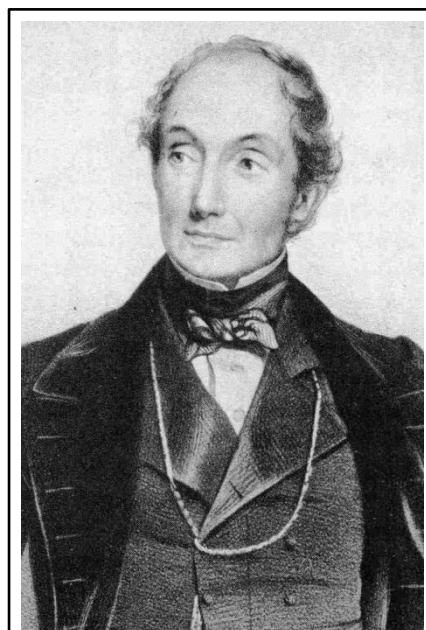
Christiana Gulielma Penn –
grandmother of Gaskell.
Digitalised image
www.archive.org/details/familyofwilliamp00jenkuoft

William Penn Gaskell studied at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1831. From Owen Ashton's writings on radical politics in Cheltenham,² we know that after graduating Gaskell lived in London. There he moved in radical political circles and was particularly influenced by Rowland Detrosier.³ Although a campaigner for workers' rights, Detrosier believed that democracy posed real dangers unless individual moral development preceded political freedom. Ashton also informs us that by 1832 Gaskell was living in Cheltenham at 4 Bedford Buildings, Clarence Street (the area is where the Library now stands). His father, mother and sister were also living in or around Cheltenham. His twenty-eight-year-old sister Elizabeth died in 1835 and was buried at St. Mary's, Cheltenham on 23 June 1835.⁴

Gaskell stood as the Radical candidate in the General Election of 1835. His opponent was the sitting Whig MP, Craven Berkeley,⁵ who had been returned unopposed in 1832 when Cheltenham first became a constituency in its own right. Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner⁶ described election proceedings of the time.

*'On the appointed day the rival candidates with their respective proposers, seconders and hosts of supporters, accompanied by bands and banners, marched in procession to the hustings. On arrival there the Returning Officers, who presided, invited the proposers and seconders to describe the claims and merits of their respective nominees. After these duties had been discharged, the candidates themselves were called upon to speak, which they did as well as they could, to the accompaniment of rival bands, cheers, jeers, hisses, and volleys of eggs, dead cats and other missiles. At the conclusion of the entertainment, the Returning Officer called for a show of hands, and gave his decision on the result.'*⁷

On Tuesday 6 January 1835 the ‘hustings’ had been erected in Barnett’s Riding School (on the site of the present Regent Arcade). The area was capable of holding several thousand people – and was crowded. Formal nomination of the candidates took place, Gaskell by Messrs Hollis⁸ and Vaughan, and Berkeley by Captain Gray and William Seale Evans. Speeches were made by the candidates, although both were interrupted by great uproar. In his address, Gaskell called for the repeal of the Corn Laws⁹ and the Poor Law¹⁰ and for extending the right to vote to all classes. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* reporter thought that ‘the Riding School rather presented the appearance of a bear garden ... the cries, cheers, groans, and confusion, to say nothing of a dog-fight that interrupted the delivery of the speeches’. Elections could be decided by a show of hands at the hustings regardless of whether the hands belonged to the enfranchised or not. Only when a candidate defeated in this way demanded it, would a formal poll be held; the poll itself could extend over several days. Gaskell easily won on the show of



Craven Berkeley MP –
opponent of Gaskell in the
1835 General Election.
Courtesy of CAG&M

hands and of course Berkeley demanded a poll. The population of Cheltenham at this time was around 33,000 but those entitled to vote (property owners or tenants of substantial property) only amounted to some 1156; of these, 436 exercised their franchise on the first day of the poll. Gaskell resigned from the contest before the second day of polling as he was trailing 411 votes to 25.¹¹

A month later, on 14 February 1835, a letter addressed ‘to the Mechanics of Cheltenham’ signed by ‘W.P. Gaskell’, appeared in the *Cheltenham Free Press*. It reminded readers that the first anniversary of the Mechanics Institution would be on 1st March. (Gaskell was a member of the management committee of this new society that replaced a former Mechanics Institute that had run from 1825-1833.) Gaskell appealed to all ‘Mechanics’, men *and* women to join the society in order to gain knowledge to assist them in bettering their condition. He defined ‘Mechanics’ as ‘every hand-worker, everyone in the manual-labour class, everyone who is employed by another to work for wages’. The cost of belonging to the institute was 3/- a quarter [15p]. As skilled artisans at the time earned perhaps £1 a week, this charge was probably within their means, but not so for unskilled workmen. Key was the motivation of workers to give up time and money for self-improvement. Even if they actually read the letter, one wonders how effective was Gaskell’s exhortation that ‘it is therefore your duty, because it is your interest, to enrol yourselves as members’.

The Mechanics Institute was housed in the former Unitarian, later Wesleyan Methodist, chapel in Albion Street that was demolished when Pittville Street was formed.¹² In June of 1837, William Penn Gaskell spoke at the Institute on the subject of Tee-Totalism. Apparently a meeting was to have been held to debate ‘whether Mechanics’ Institutions or Tee-Totalism will best serve the liberty and happiness of the working classes’. However, the Tee-Total Society declined to attend and Gaskell

proceeded to gently mock the abstemious and championed Mechanics Institutes as the best means of workers obtaining political knowledge.¹³

A further development in the radical politics of Cheltenham was in November 1837. Gaskell wrote a lengthy appeal to the 'working classes of Cheltenham' calling on them to form a Working Men's Association with the objective of obtaining universal suffrage.¹⁴ However, he clearly targeted the more politically aware of the working classes, stating that what was wanted was 'not a hodge-podge of hundreds ... but an union of none but uncompromising democrats of moral character ... Let a few intelligent working men and democrats unite and be pioneers of the people'. In conclusion, he styled himself, 'The zealous friend of Radical Reform, W.P. Gaskell'.

A month later, The Cheltenham Working Men's Association was formed with the objective to improve the condition of the working classes. The founders clearly laid down their non-violent stance: 'to create a moral, reflecting, yet energetic public opinion, so as eventually to lead to a gradual improvement in the condition of the working classes, without violence or commotion'. William Penn Gaskell was not among the nine committee members that signed a letter to the press¹⁵ announcing the event, but he no doubt was a key participant behind the scenes. At this time he was also a member of *The Radical Club* formed by Francis Place¹⁶ in London in 1833. Gaskell appears on a membership list of 75 as at 29 January 1838, but he could of course have been a member from an earlier date.¹⁷

The movement to obtain electoral reform soon became known as 'Chartism', after the charter drawn up by the London Working Men's Association in 1836 which called for universal manhood suffrage, vote by secret ballot, and no property qualification for MPs, payment of members, equal sized voting districts and annual parliaments.

On Christmas Eve of 1838, the Chartist leader John Collins¹⁸ of Birmingham discoursed on the Charter at the *York Hotel*, Cheltenham with Gaskell chairing the meeting. Resolutions were carried in support of the aims of the Charter but only around a hundred people attended. However, subsequent meetings in January, also chaired by Gaskell, attracted far larger audiences of 1,400 plus.¹⁹

Also in January 1839, Gaskell wrote to 'the working classes of Stroud'.²⁰ He urged them to support the national petition for universal suffrage and to organise themselves. He told them, 'you are as much the slaves of the law-makers as the black man is the slave of his single master'. He also counselled non-violence: 'Be temperate, but firm and decided, and all will soon be convinced that only an insignificant minority advocate force.'

On 25 August 1839 female Chartists attended St. Mary's Church, Cheltenham in numbers; this followed a similar 'sit-in' carried out by male Chartists the week before. The Rev. Close, in his sermon, told the women to stay at home, compared them to the women of the French Revolution and generally quoted biblical passages that suggested that women should be subjugated by their husbands.²¹ On 4 September, William Penn Gaskell gave a lecture to a meeting of the Female Chartists Association, chaired by Miss King. He thought if Rev. Close wanted women to 'keep at home', he should support them in agitating for the overthrow of a system that drove them into factories and the workhouse. He also pointed out various inconsistencies and contradictions in the biblical directives concerning women. However, he did concur with Close in condemning any resort to physical violence.

Five days after this lecture a major Chartist meeting was held in a field where St. Paul's Medical Centre now stands. National Chartist leaders were to have spoken at the meeting but in the event were unable to attend. Nevertheless, local magistrates had troops stationed in Cheltenham in anticipation of trouble.²² Gaskell chaired the meeting and ridiculed the magistrates' actions: 'The childish conduct of these old ladies in pantaloons, who sit in the Town Hall, is a ludicrous proceeding.' In addition he once more attacked various utterances of the Rev. Close, described the Whigs as 'nothing but the tools of the Tories', attacked the Corn Laws, advised against drunkenness and (as usual) disavowed any use of violence in attaining their aims.²³



Rev. Francis Close, vicar of St Mary's Cheltenham – antagonist of Gaskell.

Courtesy of CAG&M

In October 1839, Gaskell lectured against the Corn Laws to the Anti-Corn Law Association. He thought that the artificially inflated corn prices caused great harm economically and the high price of bread contributed to sickness among the working classes due to insufficient diet. He also challenged the notion that the repeal of the Corn Laws would lead to lower wages for the rural working class (a view held by many Chartists, who also considered the Anti-Corn Law Association to be middle-class and not to be trusted).²⁴

This lecture was the last report of William Penn Gaskell speaking in Cheltenham. Around this time he moved to London and became the proprietor and editor of the radical newspaper the *Statesman* (formerly the *Weekly True Sun* where Charles Dickens was once a parliamentary reporter). It was a London evening paper which attempted to mediate between working-class and middle-class radicalism, and was in the forefront of the campaign to repeal newspaper stamp duty. At a Chartist National Delegate Meeting in Manchester in July 1840, the *Statesman* was one of eleven newspapers recommended as advancing their cause. However, some delegates demanded that it should be removed from the list as it supported the Anti-Corn Law movement. The chairman, Mr Smart, went as far as saying that he considered the *Statesman* to be 'an enemy of the working classes'. The *Statesman* was accordingly expunged from the approved reading list.²⁵ This attack on Gaskell prompted a response from William Spackman of the Cheltenham Working Men's Association in a letter to the *Northern Star* published 15 August 1840. After praising the efforts of the Manchester meeting in setting up a National Charter Association, the issue of Gaskell and the *Statesman* was addressed.

'But we are constrained to acknowledge it our duty to express our sincere regret at the manner in which the delegates threw a stigma upon, and held up to the world as an enemy to the people, our best friend, Mr. Gaskell, by their remarks upon the Statesman newspaper, because Mr.G. therein differs with us upon one minor point. We should feel it a shameless dereliction of our duty did we not thus publicly justify our warm-hearted and noble-minded friend from attack which has been (we hope) in ignorance cast upon him, by declaring to our brother Chartists of Great Britain that Mr. Gaskell, the proprietor and editor of the Statesman, is the

man who established our Association, and is still a worthy member of the same. Neither can we forget that his talents and his purse have ever been at our service when required. We can point at the most splendid set of banners which ever graced a Chartist procession, as the gift of that gentleman. Nor can we forget how he drew forth the crocodile tears from the craven Berkeley upon the hustings, before assembled thousands; and shall we be unmindful of his unwearied exertions to save the blood of Messrs. Frost, Williams, and Jones? Nor will we be ungrateful to him for the use of his columns to advocate our cause, when we request it; nor will we at any time remain criminally silent in his defence, by whomsoever he may be accused as the enemy of the people.

W. Speakman, [sic] Chairman.

August 5th, 1840

William Penn Gaskell married on 27 June 1842 in London, at St. John's, Paddington.²⁶ His bride was Mary Hobbs by whom he appears to have already had two sons. Mary came from the working class that Gaskell championed – she was the daughter of a blacksmith, John Hobbs, of Sandhurst, Gloucestershire.

The parents of William Penn Gaskell were still living in the Cheltenham area and are recorded on the 1841 census as living at Alba Cottage, Charlton Kings. However, William Penn Gaskell senior lived only another seventeen months, he died 17 November 1842 at Exmouth Place, Cheltenham and was buried at St. Mary's seven days later – the service was conducted by his son's old adversary, Rev. Close. In his last will and testament, William Penn Gaskell senior left his only son at least £13,000 (perhaps £994,000 in modern values).²⁷

Gaskell continued his political activities in London, supporting the Complete Suffrage Movement, an organisation that was set up by the more moderate Chartist leaders. Among its objectives was 'to effect a cordial union of the middle and working classes' and to disavow violence;²⁸ two aims very much in accord with Gaskell's thinking. He also kept up his Anti-Corn Law activities whilst in the capital, and in 1843 joined the General Committee of 'Members of Parliament and Gentlemen residing in London' who pledged themselves 'to promote free trade by the abolition of the corn and provision laws, and all other monopolies'.²⁹ He did not abandon his mainstream Chartist involvement either, as in 1858 he attended the last major Chartist Conference held in London.³⁰

By 1851 Gaskell and his wife Mary were living in Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire; the census describes him as a farmer of 56 acres. The couple had seven children by now (one of the daughters given the family name of Gulielma – all of the children were also given Penn as an additional name). From their given places of birth on the census it would seem that the family moved to Great Marlow in around 1846. On the 1861 census they were still there, with Gaskell described as 'landed proprietor', and there were three more sons. In 1871 the household was in Ealing, Middlesex, Gaskell a 'landowner' with no further additions to his ten children. In 1881 they were living in Craven Terrace, Ealing and on the night of the census two grandchildren were staying, including the two-year-old Gulielma Bowen.

William Penn Gaskell died 22 December 1881 and was buried at Ealing 31 December. He left a personal estate of just under £23,000 (perhaps £1,720,000 in current values) and also 'a freehold house at Sandhurst, (Glos) and household effects

to his wife with an annuity of £400. He left the rest of his estate to his ten children.³¹ His widow continued to live in Ealing and died there in 1885.

Gaskell's son, George Edward Penn Gaskell (1857-1946) a barrister, was a leading charity worker involved with the Charity Organisation Society and for many years was secretary of the National Society for Epileptics. He married Eleanor Charlotte Lindsay (1861-1937) who became a leading figure in the Suffragette Movement. The other Gaskell sons were all successful professional men, barristers, civil engineers and accountants. Only one of the daughters married, the other three lived comfortably on their independent means. The majority of William Penn Gaskell's offspring lived well into their 80s and the last to pass away was Elizabeth Penn Gaskell who died aged 98 in 1947.

William Penn Gaskell lived to see some of the aims of Chartism realised: the property qualification for MPs was abolished in 1858, the franchise widened in 1867 and the secret ballot introduced in 1872. However, universal suffrage for *all* men was not achieved until 1918, and then for *all* women in 1928. Nevertheless, as his illustrious ancestor William Penn once said, 'To have striven, to have made the effort, to have been true to certain ideals – this alone is worth the struggle.'³²

¹ Howard M. Jenkins, *The Family of William Penn*, 1899.

² Owen Ashton 'The Mechanics Institute and Radical Politics in Cheltenham Spa 1834-40', *Cheltenham Local History Society (CLHS) Journal* 2, 1984.

³ Rowland Detrosier, (c1800-1834) radical politician, preacher and lecturer.

⁴ *Bristol Mercury* 4 July 1835: Glos. Archives, Cheltenham parish register P78/1.

⁵ The Hon. Craven FitzHardinge Berkeley, (1805-1855) Cheltenham MP 1832-1847 and 1852-1855.

⁶ Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner, JP, (1846-1928) Conservative MP for Cheltenham for a total of 39 years.

⁷ Gwen Hart, *A History of Cheltenham*, 1965.

⁸ William Sydney Hollis, (1798-1867) Gun-maker, Unitarian, Radical, Chartist, Temperance-supporter.

⁹ Import tariffs on foreign corn, keeping the price of domestic corn artificially high.

¹⁰ *Poor Law Amendment Act 1834*, replacing the old, mostly 17th century, parish based 'Poor Law'.

¹¹ *Cheltenham Chronicle* 8 & 15 Jan 1835: *Times* 9 Jan 1835.

¹² George Rowe, *Illustrated Cheltenham Guide*, 1845.

¹³ *Cheltenham Free Press* 24 Jun 1837.

¹⁴ *Cheltenham Free Press* 18 Nov 1837.

¹⁵ *Cheltenham Free Press* 16 Dec 1837: The nine were, J. Walter, D.W. Smith, A. Bannister, J. Davis, T. Riordan, D. Bryan, J. Taylor, W. Spackman, T. Down.

¹⁶ Francis Place (1771-1854) Social reformer involved in many Radical movements of his time.

¹⁷ British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk

¹⁸ John Collins (1802-1852) imprisoned 1839-40 for his Chartist activities.

¹⁹ Compiled Grindley, M. & Waller, J., *A Fair Day's Pay for a Fair Day's Work*, CLHS (2010).

²⁰ *London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer*, 13 Jan 1839.

²¹ Benson, D., 'Chartism in Tewkesbury and District', *Tewkesbury Historical Society*, (*THS Bulletin* 19, 2010: Rev. Francis Close (1797-1882) later Dean of Carlisle.

²² For an extended account of this see, Derek Benson, 'William Morris Moore,' *THS Bulletin* 20, 2011.

²³ *Northern Star* 21 Sep 1839; *The Charter* 22 Sep 1839.

²⁴ *Cheltenham Examiner* 16 Oct 1839.

²⁵ *Northern Star* 25 Jul 1840.

²⁶ London Metropolitan Archives, P87/JNE1, (via www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁷ Glos. Archives, Cheltenham parish register P78/1: National Archives, PROB 11/1972: as endnote ¹⁹.

²⁸ Lovett, W., *Life and Struggles of William Lovett*, Vol. II, 1877.

²⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 24 Jan 1843

³⁰ As endnote ².

³¹ *Belfast News-Letter* 20 Mar 1882.

³² William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude*, 1682.

Notes on Cheltenham - 30 Years of Development

SALLY SELF

THESE ARE BRIEF NOTES to accompany the illustrations on the centre pages, pp.37-40. More information on most of the locations can be found in the sources named at the end.

1 and 2: Imperial Lane

The drawing shows an interesting perspective across the site of the Gloucestershire Dairy & Creamery to St Gregory's spire. One of Cheltenham's oldest business concerns, founded in 1876 as a cake shop, it expanded to the Promenade, with an open-air roof-garden café and to the adjacent Imperial Lane with a bottling and distribution centre. They sold out in 1993 to Express Dairies and the development into the five-storey Imperial Court and Imperial Gate apartments have obscured the view. Both images were obtained by 'invading' neighbouring offices!

3 and 4: Alstone Spa

Now an area of grass and willows this has become a wild life habitat close to the River Chelt and the Honeybourne cycle path. Once the site of the Alstone Spa building (erected 1903) with its pump for dispensing the waters, it was demolished in 2001. The adjacent St James's area has been redeveloped into Honeybourne Way, the 'Waitrose' roundabout and supermarket but the railway embankment remains and is just visible in the background of both images.

5 and 6: St Pauls

Both images are taken from the railway bridge over Swindon Road, but the distant view is again obstructed. The first building on this site was the Union Workhouse (1841). Over the years the buildings were added to, adapted and put to different uses, most recently as St Paul's Hospital (1948-97), then from c2000, as the St Paul's Medical centre.

7 and 9: The Sandwich Box, Royal Well

At the junction of St George's Road and Royal Well Road the Sandwich Box was a much loved feature of this area, with its many decorative embellishments and sign – one wonders if it is still in existence in some builder's yard? It was the office of the College Coal Exchange, originally part of Pate's and Sharpe's Imperial Nursery, 1895 to c1953.

8 and 14: Montpellier Spa Road

Standing on exactly the same spot, both images show Christ Church tower just visible in the distance. Once the site of a riding school, it became the Bristol Tramway and Carriage Company running Bristol Blues to that city, Gloucester and Stroud. Some of the buildings later housed the offices of Mann Egerton. All were demolished in 1995 to be replaced by an extension to the existing terrace. It faces Montpellier Gardens.

10 and 17 The Plough and Regent Arcade

The name of the *Plough* can be traced back to 1727. It was the premier coaching inn of Cheltenham with extensive stables and mews, which over the years housed many buildings: one such was in turn a riding school, the Salem Baptist chapel, (1835-44) and then the 'Old Town Hall'. There was also a temporary shopping hall and car park. The site was completely cleared in the early eighties and now houses a prestigious commercial arcade with the 'world famous' Wishing Fish Clock.

11 and 12 St George's Place

Now Chelsea Court, 67 St George's Place has been the *Echo* garage, William's St George's Garage, the New Clarence Theatre and Samuel Seward's marionette 'Sadler's Wells' theatre. Latterly a

reminder of this was found hidden beneath later plaster work. Ruff's *Beauties of Cheltenham*, (see page 52) refers to the theatre.

13 and 19 The Brewery

Another site with a long history, Gardner's Brewery was founded in 1760. Subsequent expansion and amalgamations saw a massive five-storey building and the distribution centre for the Cheltenham Original Brewery. Taken over by Whitbread in 1998, its recent development includes a new cinema, retail outlets and restaurants. However, the Brewery 'tower' has been retained as a focus for the site.

15 and 16: Market Street

The drawing is of the Mortuary, Market Street, formerly Old Cemetery Road. The land, occupied by the Albion Brewery, was bought by the Council for the erection of an Inquest Room and Mortuary in 1875. This Mortuary had a dramatic change of use when it became a refreshment room for the Market, which had moved there from the centre of the town in the 1890s. The Thursday and cattle markets have all been swept away to be replaced by a mixed housing development of terraces and four-story flats.

18 and 20: Sherborne Street

Fairview Trading Company, remembered by do-it-yourself enthusiasts with affection, occupied this courtyard. In earlier years, several candle makers had their premises in the area; one, George Page, surviving until the 1930s. The Wallace Court apartment's arch echoes that of the Trading Company but is not the original one. The trading sign of the chimney sweep, now in Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, once hung at 43 Sherborne Street.

21 and 22 Dobells

Originally the site of John Dobell & Co., wine and spirit merchants, founded in 1836, it later suffered bomb damage in the World War Two and was eventually reduced to just the ground floor c1970s. It housed Regent Components from 1973 and latterly was used by the company and car components. The site is now behind hoardings, the buildings pulverised and the site levelled – which explains the very different viewpoint for these two images.

23 and 24 Waterloo Street

I remember this tiny building with great affection as I passed it every day on my way to work at another school! Waterloo Street Infant school took children from the surrounding St Peter's area. The associated school house was home to the school head, his numerous family and a pupil teacher according to the 1881 Census. Demolished in the mid-80s these Council flats were built in a few weeks.

25 and 26 St George's Road

Alpha House was Edward Jenner's surgery where he vaccinated against smallpox. The surrounding area was later developed by Spirax Sarco engineering. They have now moved and the site, including Alpha House has been demolished, November 2011. A retirement complex is about to be built.

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Compiled by STEVEN BLAKE

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Cuttler, Richard, 'Iron Age and Romano-British Activity at Arle Court, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, 1999', *Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* **128** (2010), pp.55-72.

Hasted, Michael, *A Theatre for All Seasons – The History of the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham*, Northern Arts Publications (part of Jeremy Mills Publishing Ltd., Huddersfield), 2011. 184 pp. £25.00. Also includes a brief survey of Cheltenham's theatrical history since the 18th century.

Hodsdon, James, *Pittville Gates. Cheltenham's 'Grand Entrance'*, Friends of Pittville, 2011. 35pp. £10.00. Published to support the Friends' Pittville Gates restoration campaign.

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Gloucestershire Archives: Cheltenham Area Accessions, 2011

JULIE COURTENAY, Collections Team Leader

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Bartosch and Stokes of Cheltenham, architects: project files for work carried out on Gloucestershire churches, 1967-2007 (D7266 Acc 12319)

BBC Points West: digital copies of unedited 'rushes' including footage of Cheltenham Race

Course during Foot and Mouth outbreak, 2001 (D12373)

Charlton Kings Girls' Council School: reminiscences of former pupil in 1930s, Betty Hills [2000s] (D12573)

Cheltenham and District Business and Professional Women's Club: minutes, scrapbook, photos and other records, 1943-1999 (D7433 Acc 12363)

Cheltenham and Gloucester Tramroad: collection includes correspondence, maps and drawings, (1809)-1960s (D11304 Acc 12336)

***Cheltenham Art Club:** newsletters, 1996-2010 (D11487 Acc 12335)

Cheltenham Ladies' College: letters from an unidentified pupil to her parents, mostly abstracted by [her father], but including one original letter, 1909-1912 (D12608)

Cheltenham Orchestral Concerts: committee minutes, 1928-1932; correspondence with the BBC concerning proposal to broadcast a concert by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra at Cheltenham, 1928; list of guarantors of the concerts, undated, [1928-1932] (D12605)

Cheltenham, St Mark parish records: West Cheltenham Team Ministry Ledgers, 1971-1999; register of marriages 1998-2010 (P78/8 Acc 12438)

***Coombes:** weather journals kept by Martin George Coombes of Woodmancote, recording daily weather conditions, 1969- 2010; also include newscuttings relating to weather conditions in the Cheltenham area (D12466)

***County Coroner, Cheltenham Division:** registers of deaths reported, 1983-1997 (CO7 Acc 12537)

Crawshay family: letters, newscuttings and other papers concerning World War II in Cheltenham, including papers concerning fire watching at Cambray Court, the Home Guard and war damages contributions , 1939-1946 (D12609)

***Deeds** of various properties including: 11 London Road Cheltenham (formerly known as Langtonleigh and before that as Priory Villa) and a property on the south side of the Turnpike Road between Cheltenham and Charlton Kings, 1816-1946 (D11824 Acc 12297); Salem House, Clarence Parade; 8 Grosvenor Place; Mission room & premises, Sherborne Place, all part of Cheltenham Manor, 1823-1950 (D12316); property on

Sherborne Street, 1811-1920 (D12426); Hewlett Road, (1883)-1970 and 2 Moored Grove Villas, The White Lodge and Moored Grove Estate, Leckhampton, 1841-1926 (D8139 Acc 12514)

Diocese of Gloucester: terriers and inventories for various Cheltenham churches, 1976-2009 (GDR/V5 Acc 12424)

***Everyman Theatre:** administrative files relating to theatre productions in 2005 (D6978 Acc 12414)

George Townsend Charitable Trust (set up to apprentice poor boys; since 2009 transferred to the Hugh Westwood Educational Trust): expenditure and income for the charitable trust in Chipping Campden, Cheltenham, Guiting Power, Northleach and Winchcombe, 1875-2009; trustees' minute book, 1935-2001 (D3576 Acc 12332)

Griffiths: digital audio recordings of the institution services of Rev Canon Dr Tudor Griffiths as rector of St Mary and St Matthew, Cheltenham and Cheltenham Area Dean, 2011 (D12581)

***Highbury Congregational Church:** membership registers, minutes, sermons, newsletters, various publications, photographs, notes on history and other records, 1827-2011 (D12407 Accs 12407 and 12440)

Hughes, Nash, Scudamore, Skillicorne and Tanner families of Cheltenham and Oxfordshire: notes, pedigrees, photographs, copy and original documents compiled by [descendant] Mrs A Freeman, 19th century-20th century (D10591 Acc 12604)

***Illman and Young Landscape Design Limited of Cheltenham:** project files for work undertaken throughout the UK and Europe, 1994-2005 (D10830 Acc 12315)

Leckhampton Probus Club (previously Cheltenham Cotswold Probus and Cheltenham Cambray Probus clubs): minutes and other records 1978-2010 (D12357)

Leckhampton, St Peters parish: registers, 1954-2009 (P198/1 Acc 12393)

Leckhampton, St Philip and St James parish: records mainly relating to church fabric 1840-2010; Mother's Union minutes (1906-2010) (P198/2 Accession 12284)

Maisey: short memoir of wartime Cheltenham entitled 'Memories: The Shrapnel Years' by Roy Maisey, 2011 (D12399)

Majer-Williams: personal papers of Ilse Majer-Williams, 1914-[2010] [Ilse had a prominent role in Cheltenham's twinning with Anney, Gottingen and Cheltenham, Pennsylvania] (D12376)

Miles: a History of Cheltenham and District by A. Miles (handwritten histories of Cheltenham and Gloucestershire in 10 volumes including press cuttings, correspondence, maps, notes, photographs, printed illustrations and record extracts. The volumes appear to have been compiled by Alfred Miles, a Cheltenham resident, between the 1920s and 1930s. Transferred from Cheltenham Library) (D12400)

Milner: John Christopher Milner's photographic slide collection including many

Cheltenham buildings and roads, 1960s-2000s (D12397)

Monksroft Secondary School: log book, 1956-1985 (S78/30 Acc 12606)

Old Bath Road Fire Watchers: minute book of the Pilley Lane to Southam Road Section of Old Bath Road Fire Watchers, 1941-1945 (D12607)

Paterson: photographs and plans of Pittville Pump Rooms, by R W Paterson, architect, 1950s (D3867 Acc 12610)

Photographs: 35mm colour slides of views in Gloucestershire including Charlton Kings, Cheltenham and Leckhampton, c.1974-1979 (D12624)

***Pittville Area Residents' Association:** minutes, accounts and membership records, 1992-2010 (D12467)

Sale: typed extracts from court rolls of manors of Ashley in Charlton Kings, and Cheltenham, (18th century-19th century) with subject index, by the late Jane Sale of Charlton Kings, local historian (D12570)

LOST DOG

‘Lost, on Thursday the 20th of March past, from Mrs. Dormer's, at Arle Court, near Cheltenham, a fine smooth-haired, WHITE SPANIEL BITCH, about Two Years old, with some small Light Liver-coloured Spots and Hairs about her Body, which are much thicker on her Nose, and the Inside of her Ears and round the Eyes also Liver-coloured; having on, when lost, a Brass Collar with this Inscription, *Mrs. Dormer, at Arle Court, near Cheltenham*: Whoever will bring her safe to Mrs. Dormer's, at Arle Court aforesaid, shall be handsomely rewarded for their Trouble.’

Gloucester Journal, Tuesday 1 April 1760

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