
Cheltenham Memories

Handwritten Mss papers found in box of books – no name of scribe but box formed part of contents of estate of late June Hamblett formerly of Cavendish House (See Cheltenham Local History Society Journal 1985). Obviously notes taken at interviews of persons whose memories these are.

Transcribed by Brian Torode (copyright Cheltenham Local History Society)



Mrs Watts: War memories 1914-1918. Interviewed October 1984.

Mrs Watts used to travel from Cheltenham to Quedgeley to work in the munitions factory there. Leaving home at 7am she used to walk to the Midland Station to catch the train through to Quedgeley. Sometimes she worked night shifts.

She was a nursemaid 15-16 years old in 1912-1913

Munitions 17-18 years old 1914-1915

NAAFI and then Toy Industry.

When I spoke to Mrs Watts on my first visit to her she told me her father had worked as a coachman at Workman's Yard in Imperial Lane - "... From where ladies and gentlemen hired coaches and the coachmen wore silk hats."

On my second visit she continued:

“During the First World war there weren’t the carriages run by the men wearing top hats as my father did, so when it was given up by the owner, Mr Workman, he used to have his yard and his house in Imperial Lane. Of course he lived there and of course when the yard packed up, the horses... I think the Gloucestershire Dairy kept two of the horses for their use, because it was horses then and not motors. My father for some reason went to see to the horses that were kept in the yard. That gave us the house but my mother didn’t like it at all. So that’s where we were. Now that was the WWI and during that time we were living there.

Do you remember the munitions factory at Quedgeley? Quedgeley beyond Gloucester. Well there was a munitions factory there and the age I was then, about 16 or 17, I used to, and others, there were no trams or any other means of transport, only walking. So I used to start from home at seven o’clock in the morning to catch a train at the Midland Station. The train took us straight through to Quedgeley for munitions, and then we were brought back at night, and then walk home again in all winds and weathers.

(Mrs Watts is 87 years old and one of a family of 4 – two girls and two boys)

My mother and father adopted a boy because they thought they weren’t going to have a family. They took him from the old Workhouse because they thought they wouldn’t have any children so they adopted this boy and no sooner had they done it and I came to town-now then! We lived at Pilley then and he was a little bit like.... I don’t know whether you ever knew but some of those Workhouse children, I suppose their lives had been so curbed that they were inclined to be on the slow side. Now this boy was, to begin with, but he grew up very clever. But there’s one incident. He used to push me out in my pram, and it’s as clear in my memory as if it only happened yesterday. Living at Pilley my father was rather in with the Church. He used to sing in the choir. He had a good voice and of course we knew the Leckhampton Vicar. So this lad had me out in my pram and he got into some was coming down through Pilley. And do you know, he ran out, he ran out into the road and stopped him and he said, Can you come and help me with this wheel? trouble. He got so near to the curb and got the wheels hitched up just at the time the Vicar from Leckhampton

Oh you can get many a laugh said Mrs Watts. If all our thoughts were put down in writing it would make interesting reading.

Mrs Watts spoke about her present home, which is in a block of flats for retired people. The complex consists of either one bedroom, living room, bathroom, and kitchen or a bedsitting room, bathroom and kitchen. There is a Warden, also a community room for those who wish to use it. She has been living in the flat since the death of her husband. She suffers with arthritis so is unable to get out alone. She reads a great deal and loved her indoor plants.

After the First World War my father was working for a family in Bournemouth and they’d just got a new baby. And the Nanny had been with them, she brought the father and his brother

up, so when this son and his brothers came along, of course Nanny must be the one for them. And they kept nanny in the family, they gave her something to do in the house, you know, to see to the sewing or something like that. So she was with them. Well that Nanny was alone until the second baby came. Then they had to have a night nurse, er, nursemaid. So being my father was in the family, and they knew I should be wanting work, it was agreed that I should go down to Bournemouth. So I lived there, I've got the pictures of the house, so I was there, what would it have been, until the baby could toddle about. There were two little girls. Being as I was there I thought, this is going to be my career, but it didn't work out like that. How it came about, their intention was that as the children got a bit older and they'd got a Nanny to carry on they were going to pension old Nanny off. You see, she'd been in the family all those years. Then it was agreed as I got used to things, that I could take it on. I was rather ambitious for nursing. Well on this particular day, whenever the lady went away, Nanny always had to let her know how the children were. She used to have to phone every night to know how the children were. Well what used to happen in that nursery, – all the children's clothes were made by Nanny – she'd shut herself away. Whatever she was doing for the children, she wanted to be alone. So I had to look after them while she shut herself away. That was a standing order, that we always had to be out the next morning by 10 o'clock, that was a rule. And if we weren't the parlour maids would tittle tattle. But on this particular morning the Nanny was in the bathroom doing all those delicate clothes that she made belonging to the children. I was supposed to be stopping there until she had finished in the day nursery see. Well this particular morning I thought to myself, well the time was getting on, if we're not out by 10 o'clock we'll hear about it.

So I thought, it won't take a minute, I'll just slip out. Now at the end of the corridor, our nursery was there, and at the end of the corridor, which we went down a step, there was a little kitchen which we could use if we wanted to boil their food, or for our own selves. I thought it won't take me a minute to slip down there, that'll save a bit of time. I thought I'd closed the door behind me but I hadn't so the eldest one opens the door and knowing that Nanny was in the bathroom just round the corner, she opened the door and away the little one went because she could walk by then. But in her hurry to get away from me she ran into the jamb of the door. Well it appeared worse than it was. She cut her head just a little bit, nothing much. But of course Nanny had to report everything. Well I had a hell of a life. Things hadn't been very happy, because if she wanted any safety pins or anything I'd got to get them from the night nursery. It was 'Go and get this, go and get that'. Well when I brought them back, if it didn't suit her, she wouldn't put them down, and tell me they wouldn't do. She'd chuck them at me. She was a real tartar. So you can imagine what happened that morning. Oh, I had a hell of a life. So I thought to myself, No I can't have any more of this. When Mrs F..... comes back I'm going to tell her I can't stand it. Well I had had eighteen months there so she said, 'Why Marjorie, why are you going to leave us?' She said, 'You know what our intention was don't you? We would have liked you to carry on.'

I said, 'Well I can't, I'm having such a life.' So I made up my mind. I wrote to mother and said, 'I can't stay'. So that was that.

(Mrs Watts showed me photographs of herself in uniform.)

My mother made that, she said. We had white pique in the nursery and grey uniform when we went out. I was 15 or 16 then. I came back to Cheltenham. The First World War had broken out and they were mobilising. All the soldiers were on the move for the Front. So I came home. My mother was billeting two soldiers and I expect they were killed out there. Well that then what's took me home.

And that's when you went to the munitions Factory?

No, I think..yes, I think so.

You were telling me that you've had quite a varied career.

Oh I have, yes I have very much so.

Did you go back to nursing?

No that made me pack it up. Yes I finished with that. Then I went into the toy industry. It must have been... because I was with the Air Force. I wrote away, I wrote because I wanted to join the NAAFI. So I wrote away. I'd got a friend in Aldershot. I wrote and asked if they'd got any vacancies. They wrote back straight away and said yes. There was vacancy at Uxbridge in the London area. So they took me on and I had training in a hostel and from there I was drafted to where they wanted me to go, which was Uxbridge. Well I done all my training down there, but I wanted to go home, I wasn't very happy. I'd done my training at Uxbridge when I joined up with the NAAFI first of all, then I wanted to come home. Well I came home and to get home, if you had a weekend off, you always had to let them know wherever you were. So they wrote to my mother. I was home then. My mother wrote to say yes I was at home, so I was excused. But I couldn't settle, couldn't settle. I'd got used to the NAAFI you know, and the life, so I thought, I'll have to go back. So I wrote again to Kennington, and asked if there was another vacancy and they said yes. Well when they told me it was Uxbridge, they said but it wasn't the same canteen. Still to get back to Uxbridge, that's what I wanted so I went. But things didn't turn out as I had expected and I was sent to Blackdown, that's in Aldershot. And that was with the Artillery. Oh such a lot of things happened down there. Oh, in the short space of time I was there. That's where I married my first husband from there. He was an old soldier and he was stationed at Aldershot. But before that, to get back to the NAAFI, I went to look after two maiden ladies in Camberley and they were queer old dears. I didn't like it there and I thought, Oh dear, I can't stick this. So he spoke of marrying me cos we'd got on a bit friendly. He was an old soldier you know, so he brought me home and we got married.

Were you married in Cheltenham?

No, just outside Aldershot. Just quiet you know. A lot happened in between then, I was with him. Oh a lot happened in those days.

Did you come back to Cheltenham to live then?

Yes, we got a house in Charlton Kings, up by what was the old railway station. I was in that house for forty-five years.

Were you?

Yes but he died up there. We were only married five years. He's the father of my son. I only had the one boy. And I had a terrible life. He was addicted, though he was a splendid man in every way, he was a real old soldier. But this addiction caused him to act as he did. I had a terrible time with the way he went on and brought on his death. Because when he came out of the army, he was going to settle in British Columbia but when he met me, that finished it you see. He wanted to live with me here. So that's how it was he brought me to Cheltenham and we got this house in Croft Gardens. He got a job being as how he was an old soldier and wanted work. He took a turn in the shipyard up north where my son was born. But I wasn't very good when my son was born so he thought he'd bring me home when my son was born, which he did. We stopped with my parents for a bit until we could get a house which we did in Croft Gardens. Then he got a job. He was a senior Bailiff in those days, he got this job as senior Court Bailiff. Well the work wasn't very difficult then but of course it was a good post and he was a very intellectual man, a proper old soldier. I've got the writings from the Echo, what the Echo had to say about him, as he was a County Court Bailiff. I've got some nice letters that they wrote about him and me, who he married, but we only had five years. Gerry was just five years old when he died – I think not only the strain of the work but being addicted too.

Yet my second marriage was so different. Oh it was. That poor darling had both his legs off.

How long were you married?

We had our 25th wedding anniversary – very, very happy we were. He was a baker by trade but then my son, in those days was working for the railway and he got him this job. He was in Great Western Road, that's where his office was. When he had the one leg off, he used to get from Charlton Kings to Gloucester with one leg. What happened, there was a man who lived just by us. He'd meet him of a morning, just at the top of the road and he'd take him into town and he'd catch the train to take him up to the Midland Station. He'd get his train at the Midland Station and he'd go through to Gloucester, they'd meet him in Gloucester with a car and take him to his office in Great Western Road. Then at night they'd bring him back again and he'd get his train for Charlton Kings. To get to Charlton Kings he'd get the bus or the tram home. Then it wasn't long after that his other leg went. I used to go backwards and forwards to Bristol to see him. They tried to save his leg but they couldn't.

Was he able to come home after?

Yes he came home. I had to look after him.

That must have been a very difficult time for you.

Yes it was.

How long ago was that?

Well it must be about ten years since he died. My son thought such a lot of him. I've got lots of photographs. In fact it wasn't long before he died he was given a car and he learnt to drive this car. It was a beautiful little car. Oh he was so pleased with it. The Council had a garage built for us and do you know what the Council did – they built ramps. They were doing that when he died.

Did your husband serve in the war?

No he didn't, he was a baker then. But such a contrast to the first one, although it was his own fault. Of course a lot of old soldiers are like that, for what they've been through, because he'd been terribly wounded himself. He was an old soldier and one of the first to be called up. I used to hear such a lot of what went on out there. He would tell such a lot of stories, it was such a pity he spoilt his life. I think if he hadn't drunk so much he might have gone on. Although he worked as a Bailiff he had no car. He had to go everywhere by bicycle. He had a high bicycle because he was a tall man. He had to go all round the county, miles and miles, all on his bike. That's what war does. Yes, I could tell a lot about the war.

And I've got a memory, a very, very beautiful memory. My mother wanted to adopt another baby and that baby came from a titled family- so my mother wanted to adopt him. That was when we lived in Imperial Lane. Well, seeing that I was on munitions you see, I had to go to bed in the daytime naturally because of working through the night as we had to. I'll never forget coming home one morning and seeing all these lovely baby clothes all around the room. But in the afternoon, I'd gone up to bed because we lived upstairs. We had a room downstairs, but most of our rooms were upstairs then. When Workman's used to have the whole house, we used to have more or less the upstairs rooms and one room downstairs. Well on this particular day when this baby was brought to my mother, I was in bed, waiting to go on nights. Well mother...they had to come upstairs you see, and our bedroom came next to our mother's sitting room. So she was shown into that room by the nurse, from whose nursing home she'd come. She'd come from Bristol I think it was. Well mother entirely adopted this baby boy, he was very tiny, a very tiny baby. Anyway she wanted to adopt him. The mother we seemed to think, she got into the family way and her husband was an Officer

abroad. But anyway, this nurse from the nursing home brought her to mother. As I lay in bed I heard their conversation. I heard her say to the nurse, 'I'd like it here it's all so clean'. I'll always remember that.

Well after that he was handed over and that was that. See, he was properly adopted but when he was twelve months old we were living then in my mother's house at Ryeworth, just over Charlton Kings, and I don't know what I was doing then but anyway, this lady came and she brought a little woollen cap for him. So she said to my mother, What do you call him, Mrs Underwood? She said, 'Bobby'. 'Oh' she said, 'Bobby'. We seem to think that he was killed or she was let down see, and nobody knew, nobody knew that this child was adopted. She came to Cheltenham to have this child and then as soon as he could be adopted, at this nursing home where she went, they found him a home and as mother at that time wanted a baby to adopt that's how that came about and that boy has never known.

Hasn't he? Is he still alive?

Yes, he's done very well, very well. Yes there was a gentleman who knew more or less his history, he knew about him. Do you know, he helped his education, this gentleman. He went to Dartmouth College and then entered the Navy and he did very well. He came out as a Lieutenant Commander. I can show you photographs of him. We all loved him, well he was just one of ourselves. People used to try and pump me because I remember I was pushing him out in his pram one day and a woman in Charlton said, 'That boy's just like you!'

'Well' I said, 'he isn't mine.'

Mrs Watts then spoke about a programme on Television about adoption. Then we continued:

Well we did hear whispers, that is some years ago, whether it was right or not I don't know. There were two cousins of mine that lived in Ryeworth and they were a little bit doodle-alley. And my sister told me but my brother Bob never mentioned it, but my sister told me that these two girls met him somewhere across the fields and they said, 'That's not your real mother.' But he never said anything to us. He probably didn't take any notice, but my mother was so proud of him. He had a good education.

After the munitions finished there were two ladies who started a toy industry. They were very talented, one was an artist and she designed the toys, the other one used to do the book keeping, you see. All the materials we used for our toys was bought by what we sold and what we sold brought in the money to buy other material. A lot of the material came from London stores like Liberty's. They took me to London one time. There was an exhibition going on at Marlborough House. They were closing Marlborough House down. As a last chance to see it there was an exhibition being held there. So I had the opportunity to go with them and another girl to London. We stayed the weekend. They took us to London and showed us where we get a lot of our materials from. It used to come in great big bales you know, from those shops. It was beautiful.... and seeing that we were working on such lovely designs! You

see, they knew what they were doing and how we should make, you see. There wasn't many of us who worked there and I'll tell you where it was. You know Bath Road. It used to be years ago Morton (Marton) Garage and it took the whole on the corner of Cambray end. That used to be a great big garage. We had our workrooms up above so we used to be there all day, and we used to go up a staircase and in to our workrooms. Well that's how that came about and I was one of the two chosen to go to London with them. They started this industry for unemployed dressmakers. You see, clothes weren't being so much handmade then, there wasn't the work for dressmakers. So that's what started this toy industry. It was called an artistic toy industry because it was artistic work you see. Our work used to go all over the country you know. And you see, they took such an interest in it, not only that, it was such beautiful material to work on.

Mrs Watts still makes softy toys for various charities. She hasn't lost the art.

Family Tree compiled from the scant information given in this interview as recorded above, and researched via Ancestry.com by Richard Barton.

Rose Marjorie Watts nee **Underwood**, born 9th November 1897. Died July 1988 in Cheltenham.

Census 1901: Cotswold Cottage (part of a terrace) Charlton Kings

William **Underwood**, married 10 years aged 36, coachman, Born Malvern, 2 children alive.

Rosellen wife, married, aged 34, born Charlton Kings.

Rose Marjorie daughter aged 3

Lillian Dorothy aged 4months.

Ned Hawkins, boarder.

Census 1911: Ryecroft, Ryeworth, Charlton Kings. Living in 4 rooms.

William **Underwood**, married 20 years; aged 46. Coachman domestic. Born Malvern; 2 children alive

Rose Ellen wife married aged 44, born Charlton Kings

Marjorie daughter aged 18, born Cheltenham

Lillian daughter aged 10 born Cheltenham

Census 1891 Carlisle

Joe Wilkinson aged 46, insurance agent, married born Carlisle

Elizabeth, wife, married aged 31

Thomas -son born Carlisle

Joe – son born Ireland

Musgrave – son, 6 years old, born Penrith

Diane – daughter born Whitehaven.

Census 1901 Carlisle

Musgrave Wilkinson born last quarter 1884 aged 15

Census 1911 Carlisle 12, Metcalf Street

Musgrave Wilkinson aged 26 born Penrith, Cumberland

Served in Borders Regiment Private 6027 RGA. Joined up 25th November 1914. 3 Medals: Victoria, British and Star.

Marriage Index 1926 last quarter

Musgrave Wilkinson married Rose Marjorie Underwood in Farnham.

Son Gerard Wilkinson born 23rd May 1928. Stockton Registration District, Durham. Mother Marjorie nee Underwood and Father Musgrave Wilkinson.

Gerard died November 1995 in Cheltenham.

Musgrave Wilkinson died third quarter 1933 in Cheltenham

SECOND MARRIAGE of Marjorie Wilkinson, nee Underwood.

Census 1911:

Thomas Watts, 1 Brunswick Street, Cheltenham. Carriage cleaner on railway.

Frances, wife

Thomas F , son under 1 month

Emma aged 2

Thomas F Watts married **Rose Marjorie Wilkinson** 2nd quarter 1946 in Cheltenham

He died last quarter 1971 in Cheltenham.

Second interview found with same box contents.

Mr Flint, born 1902. Resident at The Reddings, Hatherley, and an authority on its history.

....these families, the Gyles family and a family called Eldridge had put a lot of money into...because while they were halfway through this idea of developing the canal to.... and take the line which was then being taken by horse rail, where the present run at the Gloucester Road, because Gloucester Road as you and I know it, from Cheltenham, is from Tivoli to Longlevens, of course was not there. All that was there was a horse road.

That was a straight road to Gloucester?

A straightway and afterwards when the railway was sold, because the railway of course squashed all these ideas together of the railroad which came in 1840. And my great grandfather came with the railway, came with the firm that was acting for Brunel, the railway engineers. They were the big engineers of the Gloucester to Birmingham section of the railway.

My great grandfather came from Surrey, he was with the firm called Constandouras, who was the grandfather of the lady called Mabel Constandouras. Her father's and grandfather's business was taken over by the Wimpey combine. They were relatives to the Wimpey family. That is how my family came to this area. My great grandfather was rather a naughty boy. He was a baker (by trade) by the way, but part of his job was to look after the Irishmen. Now the Irish contingent, they started digging this cutting from Badgeworth to Hatherley from this way, and the English navvies from the other way, because they didn't agree. They used to fight like anything. So there were constant battles between the Irishmen. Now the Irishmen spoke their own lingo and of course they were recruited in Ireland by the Constandouras people to come and work. Because at that time there was the potato famine you see. One undertaking they had was that they would have a pound a week, they would have transport and they would have their keep. They worked twelve hours a day, they started at eight in the morning and they worked till eight at night and they had so many breaks in the day.

Part of my grandfather's job on a Sunday morning was to go to Gloucester and pick up the Priest who would come to administer... (*Holy Communion*).

Then came the cock fights. There was a lot of cock fighting in this area. And of course on Crickley Hill. Churchdown Hill was a big cock fighting area. Of course cock fighting wasn't abolished until 1864. Twenty-four years after the railway was built. And my grandfather used to say that they always knew at Badgeworth Church when there was a big cock fight, because the Vicar would announce the service half an hour earlier, because he liked to go along as well.

You see, I lived with my grandfather for seven years. My father, he gardened there, he brought up nine of us. I'm the youngest boy of five and I had four sisters. In those days everybody lived off the land. We had no water, no gas, no electricity, no sewers. The well which we had for water I filled in when I built this house and put the clay into the well. The well was at the side then. I know the area from that angle. Well my grandmother on my mother's side not my father's side, my mother's side, she was a Dimmery. I don't know if you know where the Whitesmith's Arms is at the end of Gloucester Road? Opposite the old

Gasworks. My great grandfather on my mother's side he was a whitesmith, a blacksmith and bell hanger and he was bought out by the Gas Company because he had a workshop, a living house and garden right opposite the Whitesmith's Arms. That's why it is called the Whitesmith's Arms.

Mr Flint remembered Six Chimneys Farm and Alstone Manor which was burnt down c1912. He spoke about a house that was situated in Chimneys Lane, Arle Avenue about the area at the corner of the Junior School near the Chelt.

Just there a house was taken down brick by brick and rebuilt near the Dowdeswell Inn, by the reservoir. The next house on the right, by a lane which goes up to a house by the railway over the bank there, you'll see that it was moved stone by stone and rebuilt there. That's in my time.

I asked Mr Flint if he could remember anything of the Manor House in Six Chimneys Lane.

There was Alstone Manor – I can remember that being burnt down. I was about 10 years old – must have been about 70 years ago. Now Alstone Manor was where a part of Alstone Lane, that's a very old part you know, it joined the old Arle Road.

Mr Flint showed me a copy of the Dowty History of Arle Court presented to him by Sir George Dowty.

When I was a boy, on Friday afternoons we would go for nature walks. . We had two mistresses who used to take us for walks. Outside the Benhall Farm Drive on the Gloucester Road.... because you've got to remember before ... Benhall Farm had been there 400-500 years, but Benhall was not approached from there at all, Benhall was approached from the Hatherley side not from that side. There was a farm lane used to come out somewhere at the end at Benhall Avenue out on to the Gloucester Road. Just alongside of there, there was a a drive, now outside that drive, even when I was a boy, there used to be a milestone. And the interesting part of it was Cheltenham 6, Gloucester 10. Now Cheltenham wasn't 6, it was to the top of Leckhampton Hill. The Centre Stone in Bennington Street was the distance they reckoned for Cheltenham to be the centre. People used to say that was wrong. Cheltenham was 4 miles to the Centre Stone, but this was a milestone left from the old horse railway which reckoned their mileage from the top of Leckhampton Hill from the kilns. So it was 2 miles extra to what was the ordinary mileage.

So that's what the Centre Stone is?

That's the centre of the old town. They always reckoned if you reckoned from Andoversford or any of the milestones – Shurdington or anywhere – it was to the Centre Stone in the High Street.

Mr Flint read out some notes for a talk he was giving.

Two people to whom I owe so much of my life I met over 70 years ago. Miss Wright and Miss Weaver. The two teachers in my school, my village school. They taught the boys and the girls and the best day of the week was Friday. In the afternoon the girls went sewing. They had a classroom to themselves, making mysterious feminine garments which boys weren't supposed to know about. This was a great day for the boys who were taken by one of the ladies on what was called a nature tour, nature walks. Both teachers were nature lovers themselves. They were real frumps. Their skirts were down to their ankles. When we went across the fields the boys used to tease, not let them see of course, but we used to lift our trousers, making out you were lifting your skirt like they would.

Mr Flint recollected the humour of those days and remarked that we now live in a computerised society. He mentioned how on wet days they would read the Children's Encyclopaedia. Of his prized possessions was a set of books by Edward Steppes, the Botanist.

An Act of Parliament in 1835 sanctioned the building of a railway line from London to Bristol. A group of Cheltenham residents then considered plans for the construction of a line from Cheltenham through Gloucester and Stroud to join this line. Brunel was called in to make a survey. In the meantime the Birmingham and Gloucester Company (later the Midland) had also applied for a Bill to permit the construction of a line from Cheltenham to Gloucester. The two Companies then made an agreement to share the Cheltenham to Gloucester line and at the same time purchased jointly the old tramway between the two towns, although they did not immediately close it to the horse drawn trucks which carried coal and other goods along the line.

Soon afterwards the local company ran short of money and the Birmingham and Gloucester Company took over the almost completed line to Gloucester on which Brunel had been working. This was opened in 1840 with a station at Lansdown as part of the new line from Birmingham.

Rachel Whinyates wrote in her diary (October 1840):

Got up early to see Laetitia off. We went to the train station at a little after 7 o'clock and at 8 the strange and wonderful steam conveyance set off moving slowly at first. The carriages are very comfortable, with armchairs for 6 persons in each. At Birmingham (50 miles in 3 hours) they entered a fresh train for Liverpool. One cannot but feel nervous. God grant them a safe arrival. (Gwen Hart, History of Cheltenham 1965 p233.)

Stanhope Street contained a large colony of Irish people. In Milsom Street there were many labourers, and as many of the children were English born, the parents must have been immigrants from some years back, arriving from before the vast famine of the late 1840s. (Bryan Little, Cheltenham in Pictures 1964 p14.)

15th July 2012

Dear Archivist,

Please find attached a manuscript that came my way some time ago, from the estate of the late June Hamblett. June worked for years at Cavendish House in Cheltenham and was very interested in local history and lectured to the CLHS on her research into that establishment. Her article on the subject was printed in the Journal of the Cheltenham Local History Society 1985, pp 5-9.

When June died- some ten years ago I think – her Executor asked if I would like any of June’s ‘writings’ and of course I replied in the affirmative.

Unfortunately, none was of much interest apart from a WWI diary which I sent to the British War Museum - very little local mention in it!

I have copied the contents of the enclosed document for my own collection and perhaps you might like to keep the original for the archives. Some of the information is personal and I have not attempted to trace any descendants of the people June wrote about.

If you do not wish to retain this document, I will be happy to collect it and deposit it with the Local History Society collection in Cheltenham.

Yours faithfully,

Brian Torode

See also

‘The Diary of Jack Crook’:

<http://wp.me/p4BX9P-3w>