



The Masters of the Ceremonies in Cheltenham

An essay by Brian Torode

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I. The Essay

The story of how Cheltenham's spa waters were discovered in 1716 is well known and by 1740 they had been acclaimed superior to any in the country. This claim probably started the fashion of coming to Cheltenham for health restoring purposes and by 1748 the town's annual visitor numbers had reached 700. In order to entertain these early visitors to the spa, the usual local provincial sports and pastimes such as bowls, riding and hunting were made available and there was a small theatre which had been opened in a converted malthouse. Balls and card parties also took place in the public rooms attached to the wells. However, in the early 1750s the town experienced a slump in the number of visitors which may have been due in part to the spread of smallpox but also most certainly to the difficulty in travelling to Cheltenham and the lack of suitable accommodation once one had arrived. This deplorable situation continued right up to the 1780s when *John Byng* paid his first visit to the town and described it in most unflattering terms:

'(Cheltenham) is the dullest of public places, the look of the place is sombre, the lodgings dear and pitiful and (there are) no inns or stables fit for the reception of gentlemen or their horses.'

It was therefore of great benefit to the prosperity and popularity of the town when William Skillicorne, son of Captain Henry Skillicorne who was son-in-law of the original owner of the Wells, and his partner William Miller developed and improved facilities at the Spa and thereby attracted greater numbers of visitors. It was during these early days and prior to the visit of the Royal family in 1788, that the first oil-filled 'street' lights appeared in Cheltenham, but only on ball nights, provided by Skillicorne in the avenue leading to the Long Room attached to the original Wells. Places like Bath attracted large numbers of visitors and for many years had employed a Master of the Ceremonies to preside over the entertainments and amusements provided for the polite and fashionable society that thronged to the city. But Cheltenham seemed to lag behind Bath in attracting high society from outside the county, and Byng remarked that most of Cheltenham's clientele came from Bristol or its neighbourhood. His description of the facilities in Cheltenham in 1781 was again, most uncomplimentary. There was little to do to pass the time of day and he made no excuse for complaining about how bored he was. His daily time table followed a predictable pattern:

'Rise early by 7 am; by 8 am have crossed the meadows to the pump room, passed an hour there in walking and taking two glasses of water which heating me I shall leave off; breakfast at 9 am and until dinner at 3 pm I am seeking out new rides. Another hour in the evening at the wells and bed early after strawberries or some slight repast. But the balls are now begun and players from Tewkesbury open their theatre on Saturday next...On Monday there is always a public breakfast which is the only opportunity of securing the company here, and that of the neighbourhood. This morning were assembled about 80 people but at the full season the number amounts to 200 or 300 people.'

The light relief to this boredom was noticeable in the summer mornings when music was played during the breakfast and everyone looked fresh and happy: *'The women are more in their natural looks, not disfigured by overdress and paint and the men are civil and sober.'* Nevertheless, those who were coming to Cheltenham at the time of Byng's second visit in 1784 were of the same type as those whom he had encountered in 1781 – widows wanting husbands, old men wanting health and misses wanting partners.

An interesting letter, written from Cheltenham in September 1788 by one, Samuel Capper to his wife in Birmingham gives a first hand account of what facilities were available in the year that King George III stayed here. (Gloucestershire Archives D5130/21):

Cheltenham

5th September 1788.

My Love,

Tho I wrote to you so lately yet I think you will not be very well pleased if I miss the opportunity of sending by Mr Barker and Mr Priest who leave this place after dinner today (sic) – I can scarcely yet form any judgement how the waters will agree with me-the first two days they made me rather drowsy. This morning I feel much more alert – there are a great many Warwickshire pleople(sic) here and I find among them several of my acquaintance which contributes to make the place agreeable – when you write next to me direct to me at Mr Rich's Silversmith or Mr Harwoods stationer, 'tho I have not lodgings at either of their Houses yet I am sociable with both of them and they will receive my letters – There are a number of very beautiful women here that if my heart was not where it is I cannot say what would become of it. Lady Katherine Howard and the two Misses Keppells would I fancy claim some part. The former of these women is said to be the handsomest woman of the age – She is certainly very beautiful and carries the appearance of an amiable disposition.



I want much to know how you go on whether I am wanted at home/in the shop/ or if business is slack. I fear the cash comes in but slow, tho it does not give me so much concern as to make me at all uneasy or uncomfortable – so long as I am happy in my dearest treasure I do not covet an abundance of any other – our great and good God will I hope my love, show us his mercy that we may continue many, many years a blessing to each other. There are no ordinarys here which make it less pleasant for single Persons – I have hitherto dined with Mr Rollason but as we are only two we can only have scraps. This afternoon we are going to dine with a small party at Prestbury that we may engage a good family joint and in the evening we purpose going to the play to see Mrs Jordan in Viola (Twelfth Night) and Priscilla Tomboy – there are plenty pf amusements if people have a mind to enter into them – Gaming tables, assemblies, plays etc etc that you need not be at a loss how to spend your money – There is company of all sorts, plenty of Lords and Ladies and no doubt a great many Black Legs* watching for their cash etc etc.*

I shall be glad to hear how you like the Fool of Quality. I as well as you had much pleasure in reading it some years past and have frequently regretted my incapacity of being so good a Tutor as Harry Clinkers Uncle.

My dear Mother I hope continues well and able to walk into Bull Street – give my affectionate duty to her and son George, Kiss Maria and give her my blessing...

I am my love ever Yours and only Yours.

SC

Mrs Capper

Bull Street
Birmingham.

(*Ordinarys=Eating houses serving a fixed price meal; *Black legs = swindlers.)

Twelve years later in 1796, Joshua Gilpin visited the town for a week and although he was very complimentary about the 'company'- Lords, Ladies and other members of the upper classes were frequently to be seen – he did comment that Cheltenham, of all English Spas, was *'the most extravagant place with the worst accommodation.'*

Things had changed little when Fosbroke visited the town in 1798, ten years after the Royal visit. *"The only superior objects were Faunconberg House and a double range of buildings in the High Street, above the Plough with the exception of one solitary brick house that bore the air of a country mansion and was near the Old Walk. (Mrs Field's House.)"* He continued with a description of the High Street houses with their balconies, *'but not a single viranda (sic) in the whole town', and the buildings were of all heights forms and descriptions. "Here and there in the fields near the town, new built houses were seen standing alone. The roads to them had the aspect of canals when the water is let off."*

Fosbroke's account of his visit added to the range of 'amusements' available at the time of Byng's visit, and included *'auctions at the Rooms – books, Colebrook-Dale ware, paintings, ladies' apparel, or jewellery for sale; billiards or libraries from 1pm – 3 pm; a drag from a Stanhope to a four in hand up and down the high Street between the hours of 3pm – 5 pm.; theatre or soiree, music, conversation or fireworks at the Wells, always full dress, between 8pm and 9 pm; and from 10 pm onwards, a rout – singing, card tables, tea, coffee, quadrilles. The silence was broken only by the footman at the door bawling out the name of every new arrival; flirting, ogling, wine, cakes, ices, confectionery etc and off!'* He also made mention of winter hunting with the Berkeley followed by a Hunt Ball, harrier hunting and trout fishing at the Frogmill.



In spite of the shortage of appropriate accommodation available in the town, the number of visitors increased steadily reaching upwards of 2,000 by 1800 according to *Goding* and a great surge in providing accommodation for these potential subscribers to Cheltenham's economic growth began. Buildings were designed to welcome and accommodate the wealthy and the influential and my, how they came – Dukes and Duchesses, Bishops, Counts and Countesses, Lords, Ladies, Knights and during and immediately following the French Revolution, many foreign Royals and holders of French and Russian titles. As well as being housed, they had to be fed, feted, cosseted and entertained and Cheltenham soon became a town of temporary resident society as well as permanent locals. This was in sharp contrast to the company which Byng had noticed in the town in 1781: *'We do not abound in beauty or odd characters and the war and the camps have taken away all the young.'* Gradually however, high society and its expectations dictated the way the social and cultural life of the town was to develop during the first half of the 19th century more so than at any other time in its history.

In order to co-ordinate the polite and genteel amusements and entertainments that were expected – and provided – in those early days, there was desperate need for a sort of Lord Chamberlain, a Major Domo, all rolled into the one office of Master of the Ceremonies as was the practice at neighbouring Bath, where the MC was the most important public official. This person had to be someone of rank, a military career being the minimum requirement it would seem, someone who would command respect, be outgoing, a good mixer, well-practised in social graces and a man of absolute discretion. His main task would be to examine and confirm the credentials of those who aspired to a place within the fashionable gatherings of high society within the town, to make sure that their presence was acknowledged and to make suitable introductions to similar newcomers to the town. It was not surprising therefore that

every effort was made to extend Cheltenham's reputation as a health resort and that Simeon Moreau, a well-known figure in Bath society was encouraged to come to Cheltenham in 1780 to act as the town's first Master of the Ceremonies.

Byng, who first came to the town within a year of Moreau's appointment described him as *'only self-elected and never properly crowned here. In Bath he has indeed the honour to be Arbiter Elegantiarum to the Corporation. If Mr Moreau continues to behave with decency I hope he may preside, as such a character seems necessary at a public place.'*

Moreau did stay to preside over the balls in the town and it was during his period of office that Cheltenham's lasting fame was assured with the visit of King George III in 1788. From 1791, this new official role was exercised under the direction of The Committee for Public Amusements which was composed of a number of the most influential resident gentlemen, to whom all disagreements or complaints were to be directed.

The more detailed job description for the MC consisted of directing and presiding over the public balls; keeping strangers and visitors informed of the rules and regulations of such public occasions and calling upon visitors as soon after their arrival as possible once their residence could be ascertained. This latter information was to be found in the subscription books provided at the main spas and libraries, into which visitors entered their name, rank and address. The subscription of one guinea assured them of a visit from the Master of the Ceremonies, and a polite introduction into the resident and temporary genteel society. All official duties of the Master of the Ceremonies, especially the drawing up of rules and etiquette to be observed, were to be confined to the Ball Rooms, beyond which he had no authority, although in later years, Cheltenham's MCs appeared in their official capacity at major functions in the town and on civic occasion such as presenting a loyal address to famous people.

When Moreau was 'appointed' Cheltenham's first MC there existed three public rooms in which dancing and card parties alternated – the Long Room attached to the Well, (Mr Miller's Room,) built by Miller in 1775-1776; Mrs Field's Great House and a converted house near the Plough Hotel in the High Street, leased to a Mrs Jones. During Moreau's first three years in the town, the High Street Rooms had been converted by their owner, Thomas Hughes a lawyer from a well-known Monmouthshire family, into new Assembly Rooms, 1783-1784, and this gave Moreau the venue in which to exercise his role. During the reign of the second MC, James King, these Assembly Rooms were rebuilt. The third and final Assembly Rooms to stand on the site were completed at a cost of between £50,000 -£60,000 and were opened by the Duke of Wellington in 1816. They were used for concerts, balls, billiards, cards and exhibitions. Upwards of 600 people could be accommodated at any one ball, although on the opening night,

The Examiner reported that *'The function was attended by 1,400 of the aristocracy and gentry of the locality.'* Williams' Guide of 1825 described these new Assembly Rooms as 'the most elegantly furnished pile of buildings in the empire.' By 1826, Summer Balls were held every

Thursday at the Rotunda from July to October and Winter Balls were held at the Assembly Rooms in the High Street from December to March. But the most spectacular of all the Balls was the MC's Ball which appealed to the generosity and good will of Cheltenham society. At these balls they were able to show their appreciation to the MC for the polite attention he had paid to both the local and visiting privileged classes and they provided the major source of his income. At one of these most brilliant of balls, over 800 people were present.

The purpose of this article is to look at the men who were holders of this prestigious and lucrative office, Masters of the Ceremonies – five in all – from 1780 until the role was abandoned in 1872.

As intimated above, Simeon Moreau was the first person to hold office although it would seem that his appointment was not official in the sense that he was not elected to the post, but undertook it probably at the invitation of Thomas Hughes. It may have been because of this that he never felt very secure and those who in the past had managed Cheltenham's entertainments without him, – Miller of the Long Room attached to the Well and Mrs Field of The Great House – were very unwelcoming and even hostile towards Simeon and his wife. They refused them entry to the Wells and declined to have the Visitors' Subscription Book available there. In his 'appointment' they saw a rival to the monopoly which they had over the town's social life and also to a potentially very lucrative income which they saw threatened. Soon after his arrival, a doggerel was circulating in the town which must have added greatly to the insecurity which Moreau felt about his role. Part of the lengthy poem included the lines,

But lately an ape in the shape of a Beau

By the outlandish name of Simeon Moreau

Has officially come at the balls to preside

To preserve etiquette and pay homage to Pride.

Nevertheless, the antagonism eventually ceased thanks to the efforts of some of the local gentry and Moreau became the accepted Master of the Ceremonies at the Assembly Rooms on the corner of today's Rodney Road, not far from his home just below the Old Swan Inn in the upper High Street.

His time in Cheltenham was notable for several reasons. As far as his official duties were concerned it is to his credit that rules were established for the public balls at the later Pump Room and the Assembly Rooms. He was a keen musician and believed that music combined with the waters helped the organs of the body to adapt themselves more efficiently to their different functions, a philosophy which he found easy to promote in Cheltenham. Moreau also had a bent for finance, development and social organisation and it was partly due to his connection with influential people in London's political world that Cheltenham's Paving Act of 1786 was adopted. *Bryan Little* went so far as to say that Moreau '*had about him the*

energetic, pushing ambition of Beau Nash, and Cheltenham provided the ideal field on which to play. In fact, he lived in Bath during Beau Nash's reign as MC there and actually applied for that very position upon Nash's death in 1761.

Moreau was a retired Army Officer and the son of a Lieutenant Colonel in the 13th Foot Regiment. He was possibly of Huguenot origin and spoke several languages. However, the most tangible evidence of his time in Cheltenham is to be found in his Cheltenham Guide, published in 1783 which set the scene for the social life of the town prior to the visit of George III. Moreau was honoured not long after the King's arrival in the town, by being formally presented to Their Majesties, on which occasion he presented them with copies of his Tour of Cheltenham Spa.



The Cheltenham Medal, struck to commemorate the recovery of George III after his visit to Cheltenham in 1788 is another reminder of Moreau's contribution to the life of eighteenth century Cheltenham. The medal was originally commissioned by Moreau to commemorate the actual visit of the King in 1788 but the artist broke two of the dies and the production of the medal was abandoned. However, on the apparent recovery of His Majesty within a year of his visit to Cheltenham, it was decided to resurrect the idea and the medal was successfully produced to commemorate this latter event. For this reason it bore the two dates 1788 and 1789. The medal bears a representation of Cheltenham Well symbolising the Temple of Health with the inscription 'Salutem Restauratam' below which is inscribed, 'S Moreau, Arbit Eleg Cheltenham.' It was presented to their Majesties in gold and silver by the Earl of Courtown in April 1789 and copies were also presented to the members of the Royal Family who were with him at Cheltenham, to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and to the British Museum.



The Cheltenham Medal

Towards the end of his time in the town, Moreau's health had begun to deteriorate and for some years prior to his death he was unable to attend functions. Although he continued to be acknowledged as the Master of the Ceremonies at Cheltenham, it was a role which he exercised in name only. With nobody to supervise the standards which he had set for the public balls, dress, decorum and order were in decline and their re-establishment certainly presented a challenge to his successor. Nevertheless, Moreau's obliging manners and his pen, had done much to advance the interests of the town.

Moreau died in December 1801 and was buried in a vault in the centre aisle of Cheltenham's parish church where his wife was also laid to rest just one month later.

The appointment of a successor went ahead with haste and the honour fell to James King of Bath. At the time he was MC at the Upper Rooms in Bath to which position he had succeeded in 1805. Prior to this appointment he had been since 1785, MC at the Lower Rooms. Jane Austen visited Bath frequently during her life and in her novel, *Northanger Abbey*, the heroine Catherine Morland is introduced to the hero, Henry Tilney, by James King, the Master of the Ceremonies. King was able to continue with that position as well as accepting the Cheltenham appointment for at that time, Bath had a winter season and Cheltenham a summer season which ended in the first or second week of October. He continued to hold both positions until his death in 1816.

James King was the son of Thomas and Mary King of Dublin and he had followed a distinguished career with the British Army in the American War. He was appointed MC at The Lower Rooms, Bath in 1785 and married Margaret Bulkeley of Anglesey in 1794. They had no

children but James had fathered an illegitimate son, also James, whom Margaret adopted, and he also followed a distinguished military career.

Cheltenham's second MC had to address immediately the many challenges which had been left upon the death of Moreau. Indecorum had become accepted, social life was becoming fragmented and there seemed to be a total lack of authority at public functions. King set about addressing this affront to good taste and order by means of introducing rules which would give satisfaction to visitors and locals alike and it is to his credit that these rules were adopted by his successors with only minor adjustments. Alan Hollingsworth in *Cheltenham (1983)* interpreted the object of these rules as being to impose some vestige of social discipline upon a community that recognised few rules other than its own wishes and no restraints other than perverse pride. The Cheltenham rules reflected the social attitudes of the time and were expressly intended to exclude anyone not of the landed gentry class. It is perhaps this initiative that caused *Willoughby* to describe King as '*an exalted functionary of unlimited powers.*'

The Rules of the Lower Assembly Rooms, Cheltenham, came into effect in 1803 and showed that there were balls on Mondays and Fridays. One and a half guineas admitted a family to the season's balls with fifteen shillings being the single person's subscription. Balls began as soon after 8 pm as possible and ended precisely at 11 pm. Ladies of rank were to be given priority of place in the dances and were entitled to keep those places for the remainder of the evening. There were firm rules as to how one joined a dance set, and how many times a lady could change partners during the evening. No gentleman was to be admitted in boots or half boots, uniformed officers excepted. King also insisted that in order to prevent improper company being admitted to the Assembly Rooms, strangers must be introduced to him beforehand.



The Assembly Rooms at which James King presided

APPENDIX.

RULES of the Lower Assembly-Rooms, CHELTENHAM.

I. THAT the books to receive subscriptions shall be put down on the 1st of May: the rooms to continue open on that subscription until the 1st of November.

II. That the winter amusements shall commence on the 1st of November, and end the 1st of May.

III. That the public amusements for the summer season be as follow:—

Monday, ball.

Tuesday, cards (and theatre.)

Wednesday, dress card-assembly.

Thursday, cards (and theatre.)

Friday, ball.

Saturday, cards (and theatre.)

IV. That a subscription of one guinea and a half shall admit three of a family to the balls: single subscribers, 15s.

V. That a subscription of 10s. 6d. for gentlemen, and 5s. for ladies, shall entitle them to free admission on the card-nights, and for walking in the rooms at other times.

VI. That non-subscribers do pay 4s. on ball-nights, and 2s. on card-nights.

VII. That the balls do begin as soon after eight as possible, and conclude precisely at eleven.—Ladies are particularly requested to give attention to this regulation, that the Master of the Ceremonies may be enabled, by their early attendance, to commence the ball at the appointed time.

VIII. That a reasonable interval shall be allowed between the dances for ladies of rank to take their places. Those who

In his attempt to establish these rules, King drew extensively on his reputation in Bath and his apparent endearing personality. He was punctual in his calling upon visitors and was conscientious in taking around his subscription books at the end of the season. Obviously as the number of visitors increased so did his income which enabled him to build an elegant villa at Cambray, 'Cambray Lodge' near to today's Vernon Place off the Bath Road. *Ruff (1806)* says of this villa that *'in point of taste and elegance (it) may vie with any modern building whatever.'*

The influence which King exercised over his clientele was tremendous. His word could welcome and integrate as well as ban and ostracise, and his recommendation brought recognition and business to many a tradesman and shopkeeper. However not everyone took to him with open arms. Just as Moreau had faced opposition from Miller and Field, so too King was the victim of malicious gossip spread by Cheltenham's postmistress Mrs Entwistle who claimed that his new house, Cambray Lodge, had blocked the view of her daughter's house at Cambray – and her daughter was the influential actress Harriot Mellon, who had married into money. For a while, Mrs Entwistle had much support from the local middle class and King had to act with gentlemanly restraint in order to maintain his reputation.



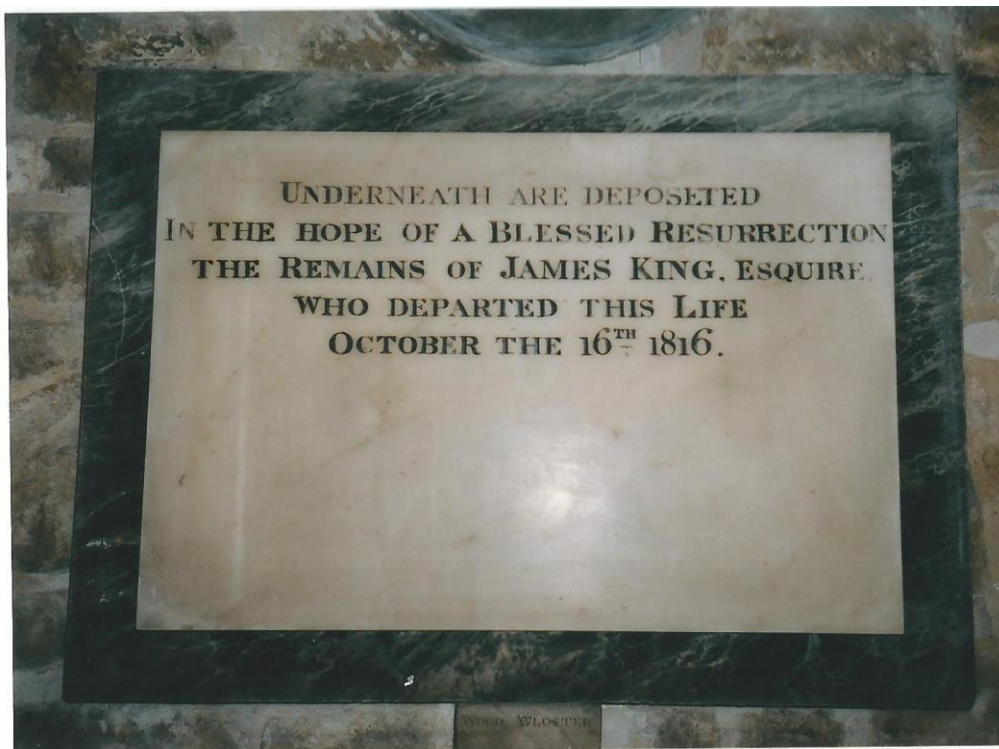
JAMES KING Esq.

James King, MC at Cheltenham 1801-1816

King served as Master of the Ceremonies at Bath and Cheltenham until 1816, in which year he died, aged seventy. There were many tributes paid to his memory after his death in Cheltenham on 16th October and the one which gives most insight into his character and personality is to be found in *Mainwearing's Annals of Bath*:

With a well-informed mind improved by association with polished society, Mr King was proverbially elegant in his person and manners and ever assiduous in the discharge of his official duties. Although he had arrived at the advanced age of seventy, he possessed all the activity and appearance of the zenith of life. No individual it is presumed, could have died more lamented by an extensive number of distinguished characters in the higher and fashionable circles of life.

The *Gloucester Journal* added that he '*continued to officiate highly to the satisfaction of nobility and gentry right up to the period of his decease.*' King was buried in Cheltenham's Parish church and a wall tablet in the North aisle records his burial.



In St Mary's Parish Church, Cheltenham

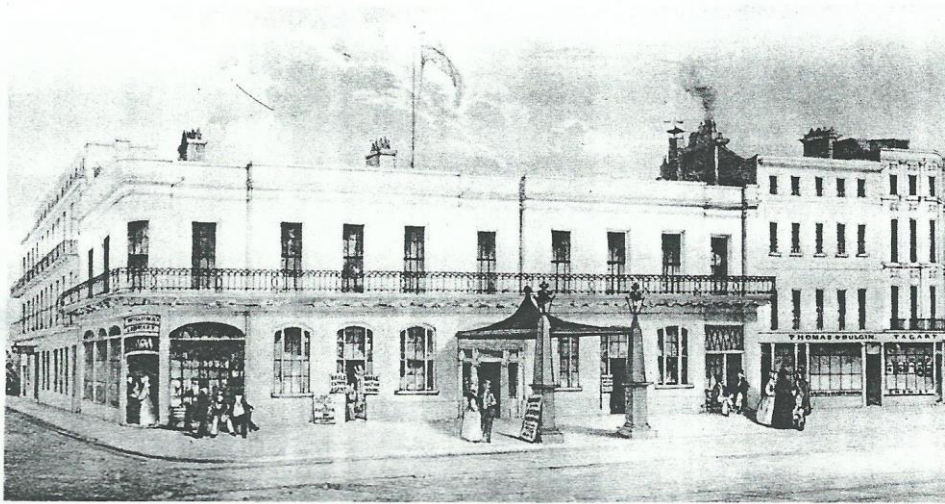
While at Bath, King had an MC's medal struck which was of fine gold, enamelled blue and deeply enriched with brilliants. On one side was a raised figure of Venus with a golden apple in her hand and a rudder in the other. Underneath the figure was the motto *Venus Decens*. The reverse showed a wreath of laurels within which was the motto '*Arbiter Elegantia Commune Consensus*', (Judge of Good Things by Common Consensus). Whether this was worn

in Cheltenham is not known. Although no known representation of Moreau has come to light, an engraving of James King appeared in the 1789 edition of *The New Bath Guide*. A published Panegyric in verse, written in French probably by a French émigré in Bath, extolled King's virtues and charm with expressions such as '*How charming he seemed, The King, full of politeness, an air sweet and gallant towards the bourgeoisie and nobility alike. ... His smile announced happiness....and everyone knew themselves to be the focus of his care and his attentions.*'

King had served Bath and Cheltenham faithfully and on his death, Cheltenham's popularity had increased to such an extent that it was decided to elect someone who would serve Cheltenham exclusively. Those considering themselves suitable for the position were waiting in the wings and on the day after his death, there appeared in the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, an announcement by Robert Kannan, late Lieutenant Colonel and Major in the 70th Regiment, offering himself as a candidate for the vacant position. He did not pursue this ambition however, withdrawing '*in consideration of enjoying £200 per annum*' offered by another candidate, Mr Fotheringham for as long as he was in office, assuming of course that he was elected.

King's successor served as Master of the Ceremonies from November 1816 to January 1820, a period of just three years. Because of the brevity of his period in office there is little to share about Captain Alexander Fotheringham and his contribution to the social scene in Cheltenham, but the press does give much coverage to the circumstances of the death of his wife and his subsequent demise.

The Fotheringham family was not, it would seem, blessed with good health. Mrs Juliette Fotheringham, a much respected and very accomplished lady, died on 16th January 1820 at her home, Chalybeate Lodge. Her funeral was due to take place at an early hour on the following Saturday, but at the exact moment when the hearse arrived to take her body to her Prestbury grave, Alexander Fotheringham himself '*expired in convulsions at half past eight o'clock.*' The press recorded that he had been ill since the time of his wife's death, with a cold and sore throat, but that there was certainly no cause for concern. However, in the early hours of the morning of the funeral, Saturday, his doctor was called and left him at 6 am. He died just over two hours later. There must have been a tremendous confusion in the household until it was decided to postpone Mrs Fotheringham's burial until such time as she and her husband could be buried at a joint funeral. This took place on the following Tuesday, when their mortal remains were laid together in one vault in Prestbury churchyard, the same vault in which five of their children had been buried in one year.



The Assembly Rooms of 1816

Four candidates were announced who were keen to succeed Alexander Fotheringham. They were Luke Reilley Esq., Captain Clough, Master of the Ceremonies on the Isle of Thanet, Mr Smyth and Mr Charles Henry Marshall, Master of the Ceremonies at the Kingston Rooms in Bath since 1817. The successor was chosen by ballot and the campaigning, canvassing and eventual election certainly had the appearance of a Parliamentary contest, with each potential voter having his name checked against the subscription books. Tellers were chosen by the candidates themselves. Each candidate prepared an election address, bought newspaper space to advertise his credentials and to refute claims made by the rival candidates. Each did everything in his power to endear himself to those eligible to vote going so far as to tear at the heart strings of the more sentimental members of high society in the town.

The main thrust of Marshall's campaign was that he needed the job because he was the father of a numerous family who relied on him for support, being totally dependent upon his labours. *'The cause is not my own, it is my children's,'* he pleaded in one of his election advertisements. He also made much of his military service in the hope that this would appeal to his many naval and military friends *'who had come forward at a time when others might have been tempted to despair,'* as well as of the important public situation he had held in Bath prior to his military appointment. But his success was by no means a foregone conclusion. At the end of the first week of campaigning, he acknowledged publicly that he was trailing his main rival, Capt. Clough, and his chances of success seemed to diminish as time went by. Some of his own supporters *'the most respectable members of society,'* had deserted him it seemed and formed a coalition in favour of Captain Clough.

One of the other candidates, Luke Reilley, had supported and worked for Marshall's election to his Bath appointment at the Kingston Rooms. It would appear that Marshall had therefore promised not to stand against Reilley in Cheltenham unless it looked certain that Reilley had little chance of being elected. Marshall came to Cheltenham to explore the feeling in the town

and decided that Reilley did indeed stand little chance of success. According to Capt. Clough, Marshall offered to pay Reilley £100 per annum for life, if he would withdraw as a candidate and persuade his supporters to vote for him (Marshall) instead. Marshall refuted this accusation in an announcement in the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* of 9th February 1820. He did however admit having sought a negotiated settlement with Reilley *before* the list of candidates had been drawn up but Reilley had refused. Marshall saw Clough's accusations as an attack upon his integrity and published the correspondence he had received on the matter from Captain Clough's attorney thus sowing the seeds of further discord.

Faced with this enormous challenge both to his suitability for the post and his personal integrity, Marshall threw caution to the winds and entered the contest. A further potential 'scandal' came to light when Marshall received a letter from a local attorney suggesting that Capt. Clough might procure for him the situation he would vacate were he to be successful in the Cheltenham election. This meant of course, MC at Margate and Ramsgate. Together with the Bath appointment which Marshall already held, this would be, according to Capt. Clough, equal in revenue to the Cheltenham appointment. Marshall interpreted this as a bribe to do a deal with Clough and publicised what he saw as corrupt practice in an open letter to the *Cheltenham Chronicle* on 8th February 1820. It was at about this time that Luke Reilley withdrew from the contest leaving three candidates, Marshall, Clough and Mr Smyth to continue the campaign. Clough had a committee of eleven to support him and they made it quite clear that they had no intention whatsoever of entering into a mud slinging battle which the other candidates seemed to be pursuing in their election addresses.

Marshall and Clough published their final appeal to the people of Cheltenham on March 15th, and both promoted their perceived suitability for the position for which they were fighting and promised that if elected, they would be Master of the Ceremonies for everyone, supporters or not. Election day was 21st March, and Mr Smyth obviously sensed that he was a non-runner in the election, and withdrew from the contest at 1 pm. At 4 pm the votes cast were 228 for Marshall, 200 for Clough and only 21 for Smyth, at which point Clough conceded defeat. Marshall was declared duly elected much to the delight of his many supporters some of whom had travelled from Oxford, Bath, London and Clifton, '*regardless of personal inconvenience and at considerable expense*'.

Upon being declared the victor, Marshall resigned his position at Bath in favour of the very lucrative and honourable position at Cheltenham. Among those whom he publicly thanked via the local press for their support and encouragement from the outset, Marshall listed '*ONE DISTINGUISHED LADY at CHELTENHAM*' (sic), the Colonel of the Regiment in which he had held a commission, General Sir Henry Johnson, Lt. General Orr, and Lt. Colonel George D'Aguilar, an impressive list indeed. Marshall was also at pains to point out that '*I have disregarded all that happened before the result and beg indulgence for any unkind word that has escaped my lips.*'

His installation-cum-investiture took place at the Assembly Rooms newly erected in 1816 on the corner of Rodney Road and the High Street. They were owned by a joint stock company and let out to interested parties. The Ballroom was considered to be the best in England. The ceiling and cornices were elegantly decorated and the sides of the rooms were broken by well-proportioned pilasters. A band played from a balcony in the centre of the west wall and there was a neat gallery across one end of the room above folding doors opening into the room in front, which on ball nights was converted into a space for cards and refreshments. Upstairs there were two large apartments extending through the entire frontage of the building, two billiard rooms and two or three other rooms.

The new Assembly Rooms were opened in the presence of the Duke of Wellington on 29th July 1816. At his installation, Marshall was escorted into the Hall by Mr Scott on his left and Col. Berkeley on his right. Mr Kelly, who held the lease of the Rooms, carried the insignia of office on a velvet cushion in front of Marshall as the parade made its way to the Chair of the Lady President, the Countess of Haddington, to whom he was presented by Col. Berkeley. The Countess, on investing Mr Marshall with the insignia of office, expressed the satisfaction it afforded her to perform such a duty, and also expressed confidence in the zeal with which Mr Marshall would discharge his duties. Marshall seemed almost overcome by his emotions but managed briefly, to express his gratitude to everyone, but in particular to Colonel Berkeley. He then retired... and gave the signal for the amusements to begin. The press reported that a subscription had been arranged, already amounting to over £100 to present some item of plate to Captain Clough for his gentlemanly conduct during the campaign!

Mr Marshall, the new Master of the Ceremonies at Cheltenham had served in His Majesty's Army in Holland, France and the Netherlands but had been compulsorily retired from his regiment, The First Foot, when a reduction in the forces was deemed necessary at the end of the Napoleonic wars. After such a stormy election campaign he was immediately keen to affirm his position and establish his authority and within a year of his appointment he was presented with the ideal opportunity to do just that. His Majesty, King George IV made a passing visit to the town in 1821 arriving via Charlton Gate where he was greeted by a cheering crowd which had been informed of his impending arrival. The royal party halted while Mr Marshall, wearing the insignia of his office and accompanied by the Incumbent of Cheltenham the Reverend Mr Jervis, and Mr Kelly of the Assembly Rooms greeted His Majesty. King George lowered the carriage window as they made their obeisance and he received a loyal address from Mr Marshall. He expressed his gratitude but explained that he was too fatigued to allow a longer stay in Cheltenham adding that he well remembered the kind attention he had received when last in the town and hoped to return at a later date.

Other opportunities for Marshall to establish himself in the town presented themselves on many occasions but none more so than during a visit by the Duke of Wellington in 1823. Marshall had served under the command of the Duke in the Peninsula wars and when the Duke visited the town, he was entertained at Marshall's home, The Priory, in London Road. Marshall accompanied the Duke on visits to the spas, arranged balls at which the Duke was

guest of honour, ensuring that His Grace's arrival was heralded by a full military band playing 'See the conquering Hero Comes'. The fact that the band remained to play for the dancing raised some eyebrows and some media criticism at the inappropriateness of musicians dressed in full military costume playing on stringed instruments at a ball!



During this visit the Duke insisted that the spectacular MC's Ball be held while he was in the town and the press reported on the success of the event crowned by the brilliant display of beauty and fashion such as had never been surpassed. However, all was not unchallenged bliss. Some unpleasantness was experienced in 1826, when Marshall received an invitation to attend Pearson Thompson's Ball at the Montpelier Rooms. Marshall agreed but Miss Kelly, who now held the lease of the Assembly Rooms in place of her father, did not hide her feelings of injury and jealousy believing that his presence at Montpelier would prejudice the popularity of the activities at her Rooms. In a fit of pique, she closed the Assembly Rooms, refused to open them up if Marshall intended to be present as MC and by this action, effectively deprived the town of any winter amusements. The matter was eventually resolved but not until a fair amount of acrimonious gossip had been circulated. Miss Kelly went so far as to challenge Marshall's standing by advertising a winter Dress Ball in the Assembly Rooms, at which a Mr John Williams would be the MC while on the same evening at the Rotunda, Marshall was MC at another Full Dress Ball.

To have the town's official MC exercising his role at Montpelier while a substitute fulfilled the role at the hub of the town's social life was too much. Representatives of the town's

influential gentry arranged a meeting which was chaired by Lord Sherborne. It was resolved that a committee be formed to arrange all business connected with public balls for the ensuing season. This committee comprised twenty-two influential residents determined to support Marshall and only the events at which he officiated.

The Balls were grand affairs, brilliant gatherings of rank and fashion, always attended by upwards of 400 guests, but on some occasions as many as 800 – 900 filled the Rooms, people coming from all over the county and beyond to be present. A lovely description of Marshall at the Bachelors' Fancy Dress Ball at the Assembly Rooms showed him dressed very appropriately as Beau Nash, dancing with his daughter, *'The Old Somersetshire Lady.'* He was obviously very popular and fulfilled his role admirably. The local press was always singing his praises, referring to the *'complete satisfaction felt by the residents and visitors to Cheltenham, with the politeness and assiduity with which he discharges his official duties. Attendances have borne witness to the successful manner in which he has carried out his assignments.'* This popularity was assured when the Duke of Wellington again visited the town in 1828 during which time he stayed with Marshall and his family at The Priory.



The Priory, the residence of C H Marshall, MC

However, the town's society must have been totally stunned by the announcement in the columns of the local press in November of that year, that The Priory was offered for sale by auction, *'the late residence of Charles Henry Marshall, Esq., with pleasure ground adjoining. The Mansion, erected within the last three years is adapted for the residence of a family of the first eminence'* The numerous and valuable contents of the house were offered for sale on the premises *'without reserve'*.

CHEL TENHAM

The Priory, &c. an Elegant Mansion.

To be Sold by Auction,
BY MR. HARPER,

On SATURDAY the First Day of NOVEMBER Next, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, at the ROYAL HOTEL, (unless in the mean time disposed of by Private Contract, of which due notice will be given,)

ALL that CAPITAL MESSUAGE or MANSION HOUSE, called "THE PRIORY" late the residence of CHARLES HENRY MARSHALL, Esq. with the PLEASURE GROUND adjoining.

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

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

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

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

The tenure is partly Freehold, and partly Copyhold, of the Manor of Cheltenham, which is equal to Freehold; and immediate possession may be had.

To be viewed with Tickets only, which may be had of the Auctioneer, 93, Winchester Street; at the Mart, London; Mr. Paul, Surveyor, St. George's square, and from whom, and from Messrs. Pruett, Griffiths, and Pruett, Solicitors, Cheltenham, farther particulars may be had.

Cheltenham, 13th October, 1828.

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The Priory, Cheltenham.

Costly and elegant Furniture, superb Chimney Glass, a Grand Piano Forte, by Broadwood, &c.

To be Sold by Auction,
BY MR. HARPER,

(Without the least Reserve,) on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 4th and 5th days of November, 1828, on the Premises known as "THE PRIORY," Cheltenham, and late the residence of CHARLES H. MARSHALL, Esq. M. C. commencing each day punctually at Twelve o'Clock.

ALL the COSTLY and TRULY ELEGANT FURNITURE, CHINA, GLASS, and other EFFECTS; comprising lofty mahogany four post and other bedsteads, with moreen and chinz furniture; prime goose feather beds, hair mattresses, and suitable bedding; mahogany winged wardrobes, chests of drawers, and dressing tables; cheval and Wellington glasses of large dimensions; a splendid suite of drawing room curtains, in Norwich damask; Grecian couches; handsome rosewood cheffonier, fitted up with plate glass; dining, Pembroke, card, loo, and occasional tables, in mahogany and rosewood; superb chimney glass, 84 in. by 47 in. gilt frame; a brilliant toned grand piano forte, by Broadwood; a selection of paintings and drawings, by eminent masters; an excellent Spanish mahogany sideboard on massive pillars, beautifully carved; dining and drawing room chairs; Brussels carpets and rugs; polished steel fenders and fire irons; richly cut glass, china; a quantity of iron bound casks and brewing utensils, nearly new; a variety of kitchen requisites, and a capital Mangle.

To be viewed three days prior to the sale, with catalogues only, which may be had at 6d. each, of Mr. Harper, Auctioneer and Estate Agent, No. 93, Winchester Street, Cheltenham; and at the Auction Mart, London.

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It would appear that Marshall then moved to Harley Place, Rodney Terrace, where he lived until he was forced to resign in 1835. This came about because Marshall had been offered the position of MC at the prestigious Hanover Square Balls in London under the patronage of the Princess Augusta. Marshall was enthusiastic about the offer and proposed to the Cheltenham Public Amusements Committee that he could still carry out his summer duties in Cheltenham but that a new appointment for the winter season would be necessary. There were other issues that were not publicised and he was offered the compromise of attending the balls at the Assembly rooms for the season if he felt that he could not carry on at the Montpellier Rooms, and to this he agreed.

However, he encouraged criticism by announcing his resignation at a time when the leasee of the Montpellier Rooms, Mr Jearrad and the owner, Pearson Thompson, were both away from Cheltenham. On his return Thompson wrote an open letter to the press stating that the reasons for Marshall's attempted resignation was based on the assumption that to stay in Cheltenham would affect Marshall's plans for his future career and secondly, Marshall claimed that Thompson had spoken to him in public in an ungentlemanly way, – which Thompson denied and even apologised if he had in any way given offence to Marshall. But he was quite firm in giving Marshall an ultimatum – total service to Cheltenham or resign. He had been elected to work in Cheltenham all year and also it was understood at his appointment that he would be resident in the town.

The local press had a field day in its reporting of the argument that ensued between the Committee and Marshall, referring to his recent partial resignation which was considered unwise. 'Partial' was used because of Marshall's proposal to continue at Cheltenham during the summer season. His sudden announcement of his intentions right at the start of the season of 1835 and doing so without having first consulted the Committee was considered most disrespectful to Cheltenham. Nationally this would be seen as a desertion of his duties and would deter potential visitors from coming to the town. But Marshall was determined not to let the Hanover Square opportunity pass him by. He was encouraged by his London friends to return to Cheltenham to apologise and return he did, but public opinion was totally against him.

'Let not Mr Marshall delude himself with the belief that the town will ever choose to recognise him as MC. All that is expected is that he should formally announce his resignation. The town will not, and cannot support two MCs. Mr Marshall must have the sense to withdraw completely from a contest which will end in his defeat.'

This latter statement refers to the suggestion that separate winter and summer MCs be appointed. Marshall did eventually resign and that season's arrangements were overseen by the Committee for Public Amusements until his successor could be appointed. Only 80 people attended Marshall's farewell ball so strong was the town's disappointment at his decision. He left Cheltenham for Dublin shortly after his resignation, in August 1835, prior to taking up the full time post in London, but in the event this contract proved short lived.

Marshall's death was reported in the CLO of 12th October 1861. He had died on 27th September previous, in Kensington, at the advanced age of 83. Little was said about his time in Cheltenham other than that he had made himself unpopular with the Reform Party of the day by his open avowal of Conservative opinions, and also with the influential inhabitants of the town over his opposition to the holding of Summer Balls and other entertainments at the Rotunda as he saw this as harming the attraction of the Assembly Rooms.

Immediately after his resignation, advertisements appeared in the local and national press seeking applications for the post of Master of the Ceremonies. There were five contestants this time, and two whole weeks of electioneering.

The election build-up began on 30th May 1835 and when the time for voting arrived two weeks later only two candidates presented themselves at the Assembly Rooms. The Chair was taken by Dr Newell in the presence of the subscribers to the balls and any other interested parties. Captain Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan was proposed by Sir William Burdett and seconded by Colonel Crowder. Kirwan's opponent, Mr Sissons, was proposed by Dr W Thomas and seconded by Mr Webster. On a show of hands, Captain Kirwan obviously had the majority vote, but Mr Sissons insisted on a secret ballot. This was arranged and after just one hour it was clear that Captain Kirwan had indeed gained the support of the majority of those present. At this point Mr Sissons could do little other than withdraw, which he graciously did. The result was announced with 297 voting for Captain Kirwan and only 62 for Mr Sissons, a truly decisive majority. Speeches were made by both candidates and Mr Sissons heartily congratulated the Captain. In reply, Capt. Kirwan thanked Mr Sissons for his honourable and gentlemanly conduct throughout the proceedings.



Cheltenham's last Master of the Ceremonies,



Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan.

At the time of his election Kirwan had actually been a resident of Cheltenham for some considerable time. Two daughters had been born in the town, and his mother who died in 1827 at her home in the Colonnade, was a well-known and respected member of the social scene. Kirwan's first known address was 8, Montpellier Villas, but by 1837 he was living at 8, Promenade Terrace, and it was there that he died. In the mid 1830s when Kirwan was elected, Cheltenham was at the peak of its popularity and the Master of the Ceremonies was perhaps the most highly respected non-political office in the town, if not in the county.

An early report of him attending a public function appeared in the local press at the time of the proclamation of Victoria as Queen in 1837. Almost all of the town turned out for the occasion and as the proclamation was being read by Deputy Sheriff Stafford, *'Captain Kirwan, Master of the Ceremonies, who was standing by, lifted his hat with official grace whenever our Sovereign Lady was referred to.'* However, the Captain's obituary provides most of our information about the background to this man who was to reign over the town's amusements and entertainments for nearly thirty seven years.

Born of Irish stock in 1800 he was presented with a commission in the Galway Militia at the age of 15. In 1815 he was gazetted to a Lieutenancy in the 7th Royal Fusiliers but only served for a year. The Fusiliers were stationed in Jersey, Portsmouth and Dover at the time of Waterloo and it is possible that he saw service in all three places. In 1822 he was gazetted to the 66th Regiment and served in England, Ireland and Canada. He retired with the rank of Captain in 1828, on half pay, at which point he made Cheltenham his permanent home. In December 1827, he married Charlotte, second daughter of Francis Eld Esq., of Singleford Hall, Staffordshire.



The home of Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan, MC

Kirwan as we have seen, soon became an integral part of the town's social scene and was obviously well liked and respected. Newspaper reports of any event over which he presided always speak most flatteringly of his popularity, the amenity of his manners and 'that gentlemanly bearing so essential in the fulfilment of the duties of his office'. As when James

King took over from Moreau, so too when Kirwan succeeded Marshall, he found that standards had slipped somewhat and it was reported within months of his election, that *'since the appointment of the new MC Captain Kirwan, and through his exertions, the balls have been restored to much of their original splendour and popularity. We consider his election as MC one of the most fortunate occurrences of the year.'*

He demanded high standards of dress and behaviour but his popularity may also have stemmed from the fact that he was something of an eccentric. One description likened him in appearance to the Beau Brummel of the town, *'who presided at public events at the Assembly Rooms in tights, silk stockings, blue tail coat, brass buttons, a cocked hat under his arm and the blue silk sash of his office over his shoulder.'*

His induction to the post followed a similar pattern to that experienced by his predecessors. He was escorted to Lady Burdett, supported by the Earl of Moray and Mr Jearrad the architect of the Rotunda. After congratulating him, Lady Burdett invested him with the Blue Ribbon and the proceedings closed with a flourish of trumpets and the band played the National Anthem.

Although the two MC's Balls were the high society events of the season, they were nevertheless arranged for the MC's benefit and showed in what esteem the MC was held by the people whom he was appointed to serve. One of the first acts which endeared Captain Kirwan to the public and the Committee of Public Amusements after his induction was his proposal to abolish the twice yearly collection of subscriptions. His predecessors had started the practice of opening separate winter season and summer season subscription books but Kirwan suggested that one book and one collection for the whole year would be just as beneficial to himself as two, *'and relieve one of the ungracious situation of having to tax the kindness of friends twice a year.'* As the number of subscribers influenced the MC's income, the Committee was highly impressed by his apparent desire to perform his duties as much for satisfaction as for gain. Kirwan encouraged subscriptions by visiting every 'society' house at the end of the season with the subscription books, *'conferring on those ladies and gents who desired to receive a mark of respect appropriate to their rank in society, the accolade of his presence.'*

Kirwan's *'gentlemanly and conciliatory manner, his ability to bring together on social occasions people of every shade of political or religious persuasion and his success in maintaining the discipline proper to a polite and refined society'* earned him the good opinion of all who were brought into contact with him. In the early years of his 'reign' many of the balls at which he officiated continued to draw large crowds, up to 900 persons on some evenings. On one occasion in September 1838, the town was host to more people than had ever been known previously, many resident families returning from seaside excursions so as to be part of Kirwan's Cheltenham scene. Of course his personal popularity encouraged attendance at the winter and summer social events and anyone who wanted to be noticed, made sure that they were present on such occasions. This of course meant modern fashionable dress and accompanying adornments, all of which could be purchased in

Cheltenham: *'George Hacker announces that due to the number of dresses etc. which he has sold prior to the MC's Ball in the past year, he has imported a few of the greatest novelties – embroidered Crepe and Tarlabare dresses – and he is expecting head dresses, wreaths, turbans, hats and dress caps etc.'* was just one of the adverts that appeared in the local papers of the period.

Seven years later the press took delight in reporting that *'the elegant costumes of the ladies, the rich display of jewels which they wore, the bright uniforms of the officers present and the honourable orders and decorations which glittered thereon, these, while contributing to the splendour, bespoke also the rank and situation of the wearers.'*

But Kirwan was not always riding the crest of the wave and as Cheltenham moved into the second half of the nineteenth century there was a marked change in the attitude and practices of the younger members of society. Many clubs and organisations wished to dispense with the *'formality and officialdom'* of having to employ the services of the town's MC and rival events, privately organised, appeared on the social calendar. In the early 1850s smaller more private functions were organised in private homes where a mere 150 people might be entertained for the evening and the press frequently carried announcements and descriptions of these functions at fashionable addresses in Pittville, Lansdown and Montpellier.



Lieutenant Colonel A H Kirwan, MC 1835 – 1872

The Committee for Public Amusements saw this change in the pattern of social life as challenging but inevitable. Alterations were made to their seasonal calendar, always after having consulted Kirwan, in an attempt to accommodate the wishes of the locals as well as to

support their MC, now officially promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. This show of support was welcomed as Lt. Col. Kirwan had taken some quite unpleasant criticism of his role. The issue revolved around the apparent conflict between privately organised functions mentioned earlier, and those seen as public functions. The situation was not dissimilar to that which CH Marshall had had to face. The Public Amusements Committee was also criticised for the poor decoration of the Rooms or the quality of the band, and there was a perceived insult on the part of some of the influential members of society who did not invite the MC to their private functions. The Public Amusements Committee viewed this as showing disrespect towards the MC *'than whom it would be difficult to find a gentleman in official life more generally or deservedly esteemed.'*

In response to these snubs to his office, the Committee decided that a bumper attendance at the MC's Ball would refute the groundless supposition that the Private Balls which were becoming more and more frequent, were in fact arranged as a sign of unkind rejection of Lt. Col. Kirwan. When the 1856 Official and Private Balls clashed, there was a concerted media attempt to encourage attendance at the former to *'show respect to the gentleman who for the last 20 years has assiduously endeavoured to uphold the character of the assemblies over which he was appointed to preside.'*

Outside of his official role, Kirwan must have received a boost to his morale in 1858 when his eldest daughter married at St Mary's Church. There were 9 carriages drawn by grey horses bearing such noble personages as Lord de Saumarez of Montpellier and Lady Selina Henry of Tivoli and spectators lining the roads anxious to testify their loyalty to Captain Kirwan as he then was, numbered nearly 5,000 persons.

The situation did not improve dramatically, however, and for the years leading into 1860 there were regular newspaper articles which encouraged residents and visitors to support balls organised by the MC. It was recognised that a change in social lifestyle showed that what was considered indispensable by the upper classes of society just fifty years previously, was now considered passe. Nevertheless, it was firmly believed by those for whom his role had been originally established that to be deprived of the services of an MC would deter fashionable society from coming to the town. *'Society replenishes itself through Public Assemblies and these need a good, judicious and experienced MC'* was the general feeling of Cheltenham's older members of society.

For a while there seemed to be a move towards increased recognition of the value of the MC's role and a concerted effort to maintain the status quo. But within a short while the writing on the wall could be clearly seen. The press reported that private events at which the MC's offices were neither necessary nor desirable were on the increase and that the expectations of society were undergoing a complete revolution. The office of MC was no longer seen as essential to fashionable life and where once it had been seen as exerting supreme authority it was now hardly recognised. In fact, one paper forecast that with the retirement of Lt. Col. Kirwan, whenever that might be, it was more than probable that the office would become extinct.

Kirwan continued to provide what was wanted by polite and refined society and cultivated the respect and good opinion of all those who were brought into contact with him. Nevertheless, within ten years, it had to be admitted that the office of MC had outlived the conditions which had necessitated its creation.

By 1870 Cheltenham was the last fashionable place to continue the office of Master of the Ceremonies and in March 1872 Lt. Colonel Kirwan announced his resignation on health grounds after 37 years in office. Although attempts were made to persuade him to continue with lighter duties, he declined and in June of that year his state of health was giving grave cause for concern amongst his family and friends.

Within just six weeks, the *Cheltenham Examiner* reported his death, which had taken place at his residence, 8, Promenade Terrace at the age of 74. The cause was cancer of the face which had probably been started by a bite which he had received from his pet parrot several years previously.

'There are few who will not miss from our fashionable promenades and reunions, the noble form, the cheery voice and the polished courtesy of our late MC.... He gave offence to no one, never mixing in matters of controversy and so acting as to win golden opinion from all sorts of men. We are losing one of the landmarks of a bygone era and parting from someone who has made himself one of the institutions of the town. His handsome figure, erect carriage and courteous demeanour will long be remembered and will be found hard to replace.'

Lt. Colonel Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan was buried in Cheltenham Cemetery in Prior's Road and his grave in which his widow and one daughter are also buried, is marked by a stone cross on a granite plinth.

In his will, his estate which included 8, Promenade Terrace, was left entirely to his wife and friends, Colonel Frederick Eld, May Frances Chambers and their heirs, and the Kirwan's three daughters, but all jewellery, trinkets, watches, clothes and wardrobe, were to be the property of his dear wife absolutely. The will was proved at Gloucester in August 1872 and valued at £7,000, in the region of £350,000 in today's reckoning.



The tomb of Lt Col Kirwan and his wife and one daughter at Cheltenham Cemetery.

'A link between Cheltenham present and Cheltenham's halcyon days has departed' was the Examiner's fitting tribute. And so arrived the end of an era, the end of a way of life which gradually faded into oblivion as newer and more liberal and exciting amusements were sought by the young society of the 1880s. Sadly, Cheltenham Society as reflected in the busy, bustling life over which Kirwan and his predecessors in office presided has not featured overmuch in published histories of the Town and although this article only scratches the surface of the gay lifestyle of nineteenth century Cheltenham, it might inspire others to research more fully what took place 'after the waters had been taken.'

Cheltenham's last Master of the Ceremonies, Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan.

Glos Archives D5135: 21-24 Chelt Aug 15th 1803.

Dear Lady Reade,

We had a comfortable morning drive to Cheltenham which had been remarkably full and gay: the cottage formerly inhabited by Mrs Cox (at the entrance to the town from London) is now occupied by Mr Mrs Grey, who gave a fete to about 100. They met early, drank tea, danced on the green then went into the house and concluded with an elegant supper.

The Ball for the Master of the Ceremonies was uncommonly thin, only 200 were at it. 50 more intended going but were prevented by the bad news from Ireland and one of Lord Longford's family being wounded. Mrs Siddons seems to have behaved here with less politeness than usual, both she and Cooke were gone before we came.

Lord and Lady Somers paid 9 guineas a week for the house at the end of the Well Walk.

Lord and Lady Stourton are at Bayshill, once Lord Fauconberg's house.

Lord and Lady Southill have taken a house in St George's Place till Christmas.

The Great House is once more advertised to be sold. It has been full of lodgers all summer.

Last Thursday Lord Dunsany's second daughter was married to Mr Roach at this church so privately that the company coming from the Wells did not suspect it till the bells rang.

We have not been one evening in public balls, preferred (sic) walks to crowded rooms.

Etc..M Nevill

Letter D5130 No 27

Chelt Oct 15th 1805 to Shipton, Burford.

Dear Lady Reade

We arrived 6th August and found a great crowd of company, few of whom I knew by sight. Excepting the MC's Ball and one play we did not go to any public evening amusement the first night but led a country life and preferred evening walks to hot rooms.

The month of September produced a great change in the company till within a week the Inns as well as the lodging houses have been full, notwithstanding the number of new houses.

Mr Tyson has given up the Upper Rooms at Bath and Mr King is canvassing to succeed him, and sent a letter here last night to excuse his attendance at the Ball which was a very good one. Above twenty couples danced till 12 but from want of an MC it was late before they began.

We have a very neat, elegant new theatre but I cannot say much for the company of actors. We had five concerts here thinly attended. But the sixth had 400.

Etc M Nevill, from Mr Jones's Garden House.

From Miss Sweetenham of Congleton at Foster's Hotel, Cheltenham 3. 9 1815 to her papa:

Dearest Papa,

I am very pleased with Cheltenham, the walks are beautiful and so crowded with beaux and belles that you scarcely know which way to turn. We have got a very nice sitting room in a very gay situation. Mr Norris is in the same house with us and a Miss Gardener, a very pleasant girl, niece to Mrs Halliwell.....

Dr Baillie is not here at present, we don't know yet where he is to be seen, but when we make any change in our intentions I shall write to you again as... be..... My aunt and eldest sister write with me in love to you and granny(?) and believe me my dearest papa...

The Masters of the Ceremonies in Cheltenham:

II. The Sources

Notes gleaned from identified sources:

Simeon Moreau esq. MC Buried 14.12.1801 Or 1810-check!!!

James King 'elected' 1806 died Oct 16th 1816. Built Cambray Lodge. Guernsey connections through son.

Alexander Fotheringham d 1820

Mr Marshall Lived Priory, London Road.

Capt Kirwan elected 1833. Last to hold Office. Died July 1872, having resigned that week.

KIRWAN: Ex 29.1.1840

Monday last, MC's Ball – 900 leading aristocrats from Cheltenham and neighbourhood. Truly gratifying for Capt **Kirwan** to find parties of every shade of politics uniting unanimously to show their deservedly popular respect for their MC. The evening ended with an old fashioned English Country Dance, led by Capt **Kirwan** himself.

Ex 19.2.1851

Complaints about conduct of the MC's Balls, by a self appointed committee of Public Amusements. **Kirwan** defended by the nobility. They said he had had their support for the past 16 years.

Ex 1.2.1854.
Benefit Concert for **Mr Marshall** (previous MC) Items selected by him. Proceeds will provide his annual benefit.

Ex 28.1.1857

The present MC (**Capt Kirwan**) most assiduously labours at all times combining with the requirements of his position a conciliatory and truly gentlemanly spirit, adduced by the multitude of friends by which he was surrounded the other evening at the MC's Ball.

Ex 17.11.1858

Resumption of the Winter Subscription Assemblies at the Assembly Rooms, organised by the excellent MC Lt Col **Kirwan**.

Ex 26.1 1859 MC's Benefit Ball.

Season drawing to close. MC Lt Col **Kirwan** has achieved great success in maintaining discipline proper to polite and refined society and also cultivated the good opinion of all who were brought into contact with him.

Ex 26.6.1872

Colonel **Kirwan**, MC for 37 years has definitively resigned. Col **Kirwan** for 37 years past the Master of the Ceremonies of Cheltenham has just resigned his post having intimated to the committee of the subscription balls that failing health will prevent his longer continuance in it. The committee has requested that he continue his services, if they make his duties lighter.

Recalling his appointment, it will be remembered that it was a spirited contest between him and Capt Sessions., ending in **Kirwan's** election on 8th June 1835 by majority of 235 votes. His first event was the Summer Ball at the Rotunda.

His occupation of office has outlived the condition of things which made the office a necessity. For some years past Cheltenham has been only fashionable place to continue the office. At time of his appointment Chelt was place of temporary rather than permanent dwelling with the spirit of caste prevailing more than at present. Therefore a sort of Lord Chamberlain was required to examine the credentials of the aspirants to the entrée of fashionable assemblies and to arrange the requisite introductions. Now this is less of a necessity he will probably be the last to hold this office. Always highly respected and his retirement and failing health will be very much regretted.

Ex 7.8.1872

Subscription list opened for Col **Kirwan** who was forced to resign through ill health.

Ex 30th Aug 1872

Andrew Hyacinth **Kirwan Deceased**. Notice hereby given all creditors having claim etc... late Lieutenant Colonel in her Majesty's Army who died 3rd day August 1872, and whose will proved at Gloucester 19th Aug 1872, by Charlotte Kirwan, widow, sole executrix must claim by 29th September or Charlotte will proceed to distribute assets according to the will....

Ex August 7th 1872.

Obituary: Death of Lieut Col **Kirwan**.

37 years MC in Chelt. On Sat at his Prom residence, breathed his last at age 74. Caused by cancer of face perhaps by bite by his parrot many years ago. Otherwise he was healthy enough to live to a ripe old age. A link between Cheltenham present and Cheltenham's halcyon days. Cheery voice and polished courtesy. Innumerable enquiries made at his residence and assiduity with which he was attended to his last is testimony to his character as father and husband.

Fourth son of Hyacinth **Kirwan** of Cregg Castle Co Galway and Elizabeth eldest dtr of Francis Blake esq.. Presented with Commission by Lord Clancarty in the Galway militia at age 15 Served in Cork and Portsmouth. 1813, gazetted to lieutenancy in 7th Royal Irish Fusiliers. Served until Jan 1816, when reduced to half pay on reduction of size of battalion. Fusiliers stationed in Jersey and Portsmouth and Dover when Waterloo was fought. The served in Belgium and formed part of army of occupation in Paris. Kirwan restored to full pay in 1822 and gazetted to 66th Regt. Purchased his company in 1825, retired on half pay 1828, after serving in England, Ireland and Canada.

Married Charlotte, 2nd dtr of late Francis Eld esq., of Singleford Hall, Staffs.

His election as MC Chelt, where he had come to live permanently on retirement from active service, took place 1833.

The subscription started for him amounts so far to £400 which we hope will now be largely augmented.

Grave inscription – see elsewhere in this Document.

James King; Notes and Queries LI

Family tree given in N&Q but summary = **James** was only son of Thomas King and Mary Adamson of Dublin. Captain in Army and distinguished in the American War, (see The Original Bath Guide, by Meyler 1841.)

Retired from the service and in 1786 was Master of the Ceremonies in the Lower Rooms, Bath. He became MC in the Upper Assembly Rooms in 1811 and was also MC at Cheltenham. He married August 18th 1794 Margaret, sister and heiress of Sir John Bulkeley., Kt of Presaddfedd, Bodedern, Anglesey. She died without issue 1830. Mr King died 16th Oct 1816 leaving no legitimate issue but having a son, James King, educated for the army, gallant soldier, and adopted by Mrs King. Succeeded to her estate at Presaddfedd. In 1806, ensign, in 1811 Captain in the Light Infantry.

Served as High Sheriff for his county and married Mary Moulin, a Guernsey Lady who died Aug 5th 1873., aet 77. He died Oct 8th following, without issue, aet 86. Report of trial and conviction of Thomas Kelly for brutal assault on Capt King is in Times March 21st 1873.

Simone Pakenham

By 1780 a new character on scene – '**Simeon Moreau**, arbiter elegantium at Bath.' (John

Byng). Opposition to him from the influential local Spa owners. Strong rivalry between him and William Miller, a Londoner and partner of William Skillicorne, son of Henry. Saw Moreau as 'self elected'.

Miller of the long Room, continued his impertinence and tyranny to Mr Mrs Moreau by refusing them entry to the waters. After dinner while at the Walks, this officer was canvas'd.

Meeting in Mrs Field's room, sent to Mr Miller who sent this polite answer: Anyone who wants me, might call on me.

So four gentlemen did, and at first he was very violent and refused to have any connection with Moreau. But at last, all was compromised by shaking of hands and a level of peace was established. Poor **Moreau** was in agony of joy, and on his return home, fell into hysteric fits.

Byng returned to Cheltenham two years later.: Rift twixt Miller and **Moreau** seems healed, but a doggerel had done the rounds;

But lately an ape in the form of a Beau

By the outlandish name of Simon Moreau,

Has officially come at the balls to preside

To preserve etiquette and pay homage to pride.

Some use there may be in this creature tis true,

Their way to the Temple, the ladies to shew.

Moreau never secure as MC. Compiled Chelt Guide in 1770s and edited revision in 1781.

Rules started by Moreau: 5/- subs to Pump Room

Monday breakfast and fancy balls 1/-

No need to dress for Monday Ball

Moreau died **1801** Burial stone in centre aisle of Parish Church.

Moreau Succeeded by **James King** – MC Bath in Winter therefore able to MC at Cheltenham in Summer. Stayed six years.

Photo of his former house in **Chelt Chronicle 25 .1. 1929.**

Followed by Alexander **Fotheringhay** in year of Wellington's second visit

Cheltenham Pictorial History.

1757 Thomas Hughes had leased Well from Skillicorne. Also ran ballroom in High Street.

1780, invited **Moreau** from Bath to act as MC in Cheltenham and within four years another new Assembly Rooms had been provided in High Street.

Blake – Book of Cheltenham:

Charles Marshall was MC 1820 – 1836. Lived in The Priory for some of the time.

Assembly Rooms were the domain of the MC

Moreau at Holland's Ass Rooms, demolished 1810

King at replacement to above, demolished 1816

Fotheringhay at replacement, opened 1816

MC appointed by Town Committee for Public Entertainment. MC role to welcome visitors, regulate balls and assemblies, draw up rules and etiquette. Record arrivals.

Willoughby – At Cheltenham Spa:

Moreau died Dec 1801

In 1780 Cheltenham began to emerge from its villagedom. Visitors were coming to the town in considerable numbers though there was little accommodation for them. In that year Simeon Moreau arrived upon the scene and either took the title of the Master of the Ceremonies or induced a few of the visitors and residents to create such an office and to elect him its first occupant. He was not popular at first as many thought him without a regular claim to the title which he had assumed. In the following year the author of *The Cheltenham Guide* or *The Memoirs of the Barnard Family Continued* wrote,

Lately an ape in the shape of a beau,

By the outlandish name of M M—u,

Has officiously come at the balls to preside,

To preserve etiquette and pay homage to pride.

The company however, soon became used to Moreau's government though Cheltenham cannot boast of such distinguished MCs as its rival Bath, the gentlemen who were elected to the post were of considerable local importance and filled a big place in the general scheme of things in Cheltenham. (sic)

In 1788 a few of the townspeople ... were literally seething and boiling with excitement and Mr Moreau the MC was here there and everywhere like a flea on a gridiron as Tom Oliver would have said. Most of the fashionables had already arrived in the town and others were coming in fast and fain to see and to hear all that was to be seen and heard. (The visit of George III.

Simeon Moreau the first MC died in December 1801 and was buried in a vault in the middle aisle of the church. He was author of the *Tour to Cheltenham Spa* which was founded on Butler's *Cheltenham Guide* and went into several editions.

Owing to ill health for some years he had become rather slack and had allowed rules and regulations to be disregarded, so that James **King his successor** found that indecorum had slipped in and he had the hard task of putting the social life together and getting recognition

of his own authority. His conciliatory manners and the authority which he possessed as MC of the Upper Rooms at Bath enabled him by degrees to restore order and regularity.

He laid down rules and orders which were adopted en bloc by subsequent MCs with only few additions made as experience proved necessary:

Ladies perfectly free to accept or refuse partners.

Undress trousers or coloured pantaloons not permitted on any account.

No theatrical or public performers by profession to be admitted.

He was able to combine the two roles at Bath and Cheltenham – the former in the winter and the latter in the summer.

MC took round subs book at end of season and as visitors increased so too did his income. **King** made good profit, invested wisely in land at Cambray and profited by it, where he built the elegant villa. At that time there were but few houses in Cambray although from its open situation, these were eagerly snapped up by visitors. The actress, Harriot Mellon's mother, Mrs Entwistle suggested that her daughter might build a house in the area which could be then let at a smart profit. This was agreed but once built, Mrs Entwistle started dreaming of a whole row of houses and even a street full.... But as we know there existed in Cheltenham an exalted functionary of almost unlimited powers – Mr King the MC, whose approval welcomed visitors into the gaieties of Cheltenham and found customers for tradesmen and whose ban consigned both shopkeepers and visitors to outer darkness. They were both in the place but not of it until Mr King had branded them as part of his own flock. Therefore, when he bought the block of land immediately opposite Miss Melon's nothing could be said. He built a great, new, high, staring building which effectually blocked out the view which was one of the attractions of Mrs Entwistle's speculation. Mrs Entwistle was Cheltenham's postmistress and very popular amongst the middle classes. Soon her love of gossip had spread far and wide the story of how badly treated she and her daughter had been by the Master of Ceremonies and hardly a resident in Cheltenham had not heard the story, and most duly sympathised with her.

King died in his seventieth year in October 1816 and it was decided to elect a successor who could give all of his time to Cheltenham. The successor was Mr Alexander Fotheringhay who held his office barely three years dying under tragic circumstances on 22nd July 1820.

Five candidates appeared to fill the vacancy and those who had most support were Mr Marshall the MC of the Kingston Rooms at Bath and Captain Clough, MC of the Isle of Thanet who ruled over Society at Margate and Ramsgate. The election campaign lasted several weeks each candidate preparing his own election address as one would have done in a political contest. Feelings ran high between the supporters of the various candidates and this led to manifestos and rejoinders which make very amusing reading. Mr Marshall had seen ten years service in Holland, France and the Netherlands but had been compulsorily retired from his

regiment, the first Foot on the reduction of the army at the close of the Napoleonic wars. He made an appeal to the subscribers at the Assembly rooms, on the ground that he was the father of a numerous family who looked up to him for support and were dependent upon his exertions. This cause is not my own, it is my children's.

Captain Clough wrote that he could have made a similar appeal but considered it undignified to do so, adding that his opponents had presented themselves as objects of compassion and regard.

The actual voting day proved very close, but Marshall's supporters came from as far as Bath, Clifton and even London and won the day for him. Marshall was declared victor by 228 votes to 200.

The Chronicle reported that when George IV made a passing visit to the town in 1821 he was cheered by an immense crowd as he and his entourage passed through Charlton gate and they halted while Mr Marshall who rightly anticipated the point of vantage ground, and had made his arrangements most judiciously, approached adorned with the insignia of his office accompanied by rev Jarvis as chairman of the meeting and Mr P Kelly one of the proprietors of the Rooms, and made an obeisance to HM who immediately lowered the window and was addressed by our excellent Master of the Ceremonies. The King was most pleased to receive Mr Marshall in the most gracious and affable manner and made the following kind reply: I thank you andam too much fatigued to allow of my making a longer stay in Cheltenham. I am not however unmindful of the kind attention I have received when last here, and shall certainly make a point of paying Cheltenham another and an early visit.

The Duke of Wellington made a visit in 1823: 27th July at 8 o'clock in the morning, the Duke went to the Old Wells and drank the waters. He then proceeded, accompanied by Mr Marshall to the Montpellier and Sherborne Promenades.

28th July, on Monday evening the Rooms were honoured by the presence of the Great Captain of the Age. Mr Marshall most agreeably surprised the illustrious soldier for at his entrance, which was announced by a full military band playing See the Conquering Hero Comes, he beheld the floor chalked out most handsomely and in the centre of every circle was inscribed Talevera, 28th July being the anniversary of that eventful fight five years previously when the Commander had signally defeated the French. The Duke had expressed a wish that the MC's Ball be held during his stay. Mr Marshall had announced that it would take place on 11th July. Tickets were available at Mr Marshall's house, 28 Winchcombe Place. The Ball was a huge success, with the brilliant display of beauty and fashion having never been surpassed. The Duke honoured the scene with his presence, and Mr Marshall has every reason to be proud of this demonstration of respect and good feeling and deeply indebted to our illustrious hero for the kind suggestion that induced the gratifying change in the appointment of the Ball.

The Duke attended worship at the new church (Trinity) on 17th August and sent his donation via the Master of Ceremonies.

On 14th August 1828 Mr Marshall received notification that the Duke would arrive in the town the following day. He spent the first night at the Plough and the following day went to Mr Marshall's house, the Priory. Early in the morning he visited the wells to take the waters, returning to The Priory by 9 am for his plain and simple breakfast.

During this visit he attended the Promenade Ball when his arrival was announced by three distinct and enthusiastic cheers from the populace in front of the vestibule and the Duke was ushered into the room by Mr Marshall.

Miss Anna Maria Kirwan was the wife of Captain John Charretie an oil painter and miniaturist.

Kirwan the MC wore an old blue coat and buttons and things, but he used to wear silk tights.

The character of Cheltenham was Captain Kirwan the MC the Beau Brummell of the town who presided at all the public balls in the Assembly Rooms in tights, silk stockings, blue tail coat, brass buttons and a cocked hat under his arm and a blue silk sash over his shoulder. To maintain his dignity and for greeting every one every day, whether it be wet or fine with a 'nice day today' he went round every house at the end of the season with a subscription book.

When Marshall was forced to resign over the conflict of loyalties between London and Cheltenham, there were only 80 people at his farewell ball so angry were the Cheltenham people with him., As it turned out he was very unsuccessful with his London undertakings.

Kirwan was his successor, identified for twenty years with the town and very popular. He was something of a character but beloved by residents and visitors alike. He died on 5th August 1872 at his residence 8, Promenade Terrace aged 74. he had been MC for 37 years only resigning shortly before his death. His death was the last link with the old Georgian days.

Ruff's Guide: 1806

Simeon Moreau, first MC was appointed in 1780 and died in 1801 and lies buried together with his wife who in consequence of a melancholy accident, survived him but one month. The vault is in the middle aisle of the church.

Mr Moreau had the honour of attending his Majesty and his majesty, recovering from the dangerous illness which attacked him, **Mr Moreau** son afterwards caused some gold and silver medals to be struck to commemorate the happy event.

James King the present MC who has been lately promoted in the same situation from the Lower to the Upper Rooms at Bath, was son afterwards chosen, and has by his conciliatory manner and conduct obtained the approbation of the inhabitants and the liberal patronage of the Company.

He experienced many difficulties in taking on the office, as **Moreau** due to illness had not attended the Rooms for some years and therefore indecorum, had set in. Restraint was at an end and the rules little attended to. **King** has succeeded in introducing order and regularity

and has laid down the rules which have given satisfaction and are henceforth considered established. (A list of the rules follows.)

Griffiths' Guide.1826

Early morning, promenades literally thronged with company.

Afternoon, libraries, walks or excursions or in winter, hunting with Colonel Berkeley. In 1780 when visitors arrived, they found it not merely expedient but indispensably necessary to elect an MC for the efficient regulation of the amusements. In that year, **Simeon Moreau** esq was the first appointed here and retained that position until his death in 1810. Buried in the centre of the church, wife survived him three weeks.

Moreau had the high honour of receiving the Royal Family. On his death the election fell on **James King**, MC at the Upper Rooms in Bath. At that time there were alternating seasons – and he was able to satisfy both towns. However increasing popularity of Cheltenham meant that when he died on October 16th 1816 aged 70, it was decided to elect someone exclusive to Cheltenham. **King**, in spite of the many difficulties he had to surmount established a system and regularity which had not previously been followed. He was held in very high esteem.

Alex Fotheringhay succeeded King who had died on 22nd January 1820. His wife had died the previous Sunday 16th January after a severe, short illness. At the moment the hearse arrived to take her to the grave, his heart gave way and he died in convulsions within half an hour. They were interred the following Tuesday in the same vault in Prestbury wherein five of their children had been laid.

On 21st March following, **Charles Henry Marshall** was duly elected. The seasons ran from 1st week of May to close of November. (p63, details of Assembly Room – rules, MC's role etc. Built & opened July 29th 1816, cost £60,000. Mr Kelly of Cheltenham was the person responsible for their erection. Between Plough and Cambray, an extensive building, with neat portico entrance (Hunt's Guide 1847) Handsome suite of rooms-club rooms extending the entire length of the building and conducted as a London Club, under a yearly elected management committee.

The Ball Room is 80'x40'x40' and finished and decorated in superb style. Eleven glass chandeliers. Opened on 29th July 1816 in presence of Duke and Duchess of Wellington.

Ante rooms for refreshments, cards, billiards. Dress Balls weekly during Winter season, attended by elite of the town, (under Captain Kirwan MC after 1835 who also supervised the summer balls at the Montpellier Rotunda.)

Marshall's investiture took place and he was supported on the right by Col Berkeley and on the left by Mr Scott. He was introduced and preceded by Mr Kelly proprietor of the Assembly rooms, bearing the insignia on a velvet cushion, conducted through a most numerous and fashionable assemblage, by the Chair of the Lady president, the Countess of Haddington, to whom he was presented by Col Berkeley in a most kind and appropriate address, marked by those gracious and excellent impulses which are ever conspicuous in his character.

The Countess on investing Mr Marshall with the insignia of office, expressed the satisfaction it afforded her and a reliance upon the zeal with which his duties would be discharged by Mr Marshall who seemed nearly overpowered by his feelings but briefly expressed his gratitude.

(Spas of England gives good list of Activities.)

Rees New Guide 1841.

Balls were under the regulation and management of the Committee for Public Amusements and were presided over by an MC. Present one is Captain **AH Kirwan** of 8, Promenade Terrace. He was elected June 1835 and has given the most entire satisfaction by the amenity of his manners and that gentlemanly bearing so essential in the fulfilment of his the duties of his office.

Those ladies and gentlemen who desire to receive the mark of respect from this gentleman due to their rank in society should not neglect to enter their names and address in the MC's books which are at the Spas and also the Libraries.

(Description of the Ass Rooms p30. of MC's role p32-33 and of attractions for visitors in summer.)

Bryan Little

In 1780 the Cheltenham scene needed organising so a first MC was appointed. **Simeon Moreau**, the sponsor of Cheltenham's first Guide had a bent for finance and development as well as social organisation. He presided for 30 years. Up to then, balls and formal events had been held in a converted house in the High Street and in the long Room. But in early 1780s a special Assembly Rooms by Thos Hughes were opened by which he gave Moreau a place to hold sway. These were a rival to Miller's Long Room. In 1786 the Paving Act was helped through by Moreau's connections in high places in London. He had about him, the energetic, pushing ambition of Beau Nash.

James King followed Moreau in 1810 – a man of energy and he combined with Mrs Kelly to give Cheltenham assemblies a worthier setting, a new Assembly Rooms.

Gwen Hart

The Duke of Wellington made his last visit in 1828. He stayed at the Priory in London Road, the home of the MC **Mr Marshall**, who had succeeded 1820. His induction by Colonel Berkeley and his terms of employment meant he was confined to Cheltenham, both winter and summer seasons. Fotheringhay had succeeded King and he devoted all his time to Cheltenham. At election time, he offered his rival candidate £200 a year during his lifetime if he would stand down, thus indicating what a lucrative office this must have been. **Fotheringhay** died 1820 and was succeeded by **Marshall**.

Marshall requested permission from the General Committee for Public Entertainment, chaired by Lord Sherborne, after 15 years as MC, to give up some of his duties in order to

accept an offer from London to preside over the Hanover Square Balls. This made him unpopular and he was forced to resign in 1836. The Committee made a new election by Heads of Families, ladies or gentlemen who had been resident, tenants or occupiers or owners, for at least 12 months. The election took place in the Assembly Rooms by the committee and Kirwan elected. Later he was described as THE character of the town, the Beau Brummel of the town, who presided at all the public balls in silk stockings, blue tights, blue tailed coat, cocked hat under his arm and the blue sash over his shoulder.(Willoughby p263)

In May 1835, Marshall MC had been selected to superintend a series of subscription balls at the King's Concert Rooms, Hanover Square, London, under the patronage of HRH the Princess Augusta and the Landgravine of Hesse-Hamburg. He suggested that he keep his summer contract in Cheltenham but that someone else be appointed to take on the winter duties. He implied that if one of his contracts had to be relinquished, it would not be the London one. He was politely told he had to make a choice or resign. This he did – he resigned- and opinion was against him for there were only 80 people at his farewell ball, showing the feeling of the Cheltenham company. In the event his London contract was a not very successful venture. There were five contestants for his job – **Kirwan** who had links with the town for 20 years was elected. His initiation was as follows:

On Thursday last Captain **Kirwan** was received at the entrance to the Promenade Rooms by the Earl of Moray and Mr Jerrard, the proprietor of the Rotunda, by whom he was conducted to Lady Burdett who, surrounded by the lady patronesses, was seated on a raised dais, which had been erected for the occasion. Her ladyship on receiving Captain Kirwan, addressed him in a brief but appropriate congratulatory speech after which he was invested with the Blue Ribbon. In his reply, he acknowledged the honour which had been conferred upon him, after which the proceedings closed with a flourish of trumpets and the Band played the national Anthem.

CLO 1861 p673:

Death of CH Marshall formerly Captain in 81st Regiment, at the advanced age of 83. Thirty years ago he was MC having succeeded Mr Forheringham in 1820 until 1835. He took an active part in public matters relating to the town, and rendered himself especially unpopular with the Reform Party of the day by his open avowal of Conservtive opinions and also with the large and influential section of the inhabitants over his opposition to the Summer Balls and other amusements at the Rotunda which he objected to as tending to injure those at the Assembly rooms.

Few of his contemporaries are now alive. He died at Kensington on 27thSeptember last.

Goding:

8.6.1835 Kirwan elected

7.6.1845 Kirwan's duties.

Mike Grindley:

CJ 11.11.1833 First Winter ball at Assembly rooms on 18th inst. The Rooms occupy the very site of the Room which Moreau describes as one of two public rooms opened for the reception and entertainment of the company under the direction of Mr Moreau the first MC at this spa in 1780.

CLO 25.2.1843 Departures: Mr Eld , 8 Promenade Terrace for Sighford Hall Staffs

CLO 29.7.1837 Arrivals Mr George Eld 8 Promenade Place (8 Prom terrace surely, Lt Kirwan?)

CJ 31.12.1827 Married – Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan to Charlotte, 2nd dtr of Francis Eld esq, of Sighford Hall Staffs.

CJ 19.11.1827 Died yesterday morning at her residence in the Colonnade, at an advanced age, Mrs Kirwan, sincerely regretted by her friends and acquaintances.

CLO 2.6.1855 The recent army promotions include Capt AH Kirwan on 25th May who was gazetted as retiring from the service with the brevet rank of Lieut colonel, which though no longer holding HM's Commission he will retain, under the official regulation as an honorary degree for the rest of his life.

CLO 29.10.1842. Departures Mr F Eld and the misses Eld 19 Promenade, for Sighford Hall Staffs.

CLO 10.12.1842 Deps Hon Mrs Eld, Sussex Villas for Clifton

CM 10.8.1872 Died, 3.8th of 8 promenade Terrace, of cancer aged 74, Lt Col Andrew Hyacinth Kirwan. (obit p4)

CLO 13.1.1855 Died suddenly 6th Jan at Sighford Hall Francis Eld aged 82, father of Mrs Kirwan, 8 Promenade Terrace. An affectionate parent a kind friend and generous landlord etc.

CLO 10th Jan Died at 8 Promenade Terrace, Charlotte, widow of Lt Col Kirwan, late 7th Royal Fuseliers and 66th Regt. Dtr of late Francis Eld of Sighford Hall. Aged 89.

CC 21.4.1831 Born at Rodney Terrace, on 16th April the lady of Capt Kirwan, of a daughter.

CJ 16.10.1826 Married Lately R Kirwan esq to Eleanor, dtr of the late G Bond esq.

CLO 6.3.1858 Married Caroline Ann, second dtr of Lt Col Kirwan in St Mary's Church.

CM 29.6.1872 resignation of the MC Col Kirwan. For years, nearly 37, has held the post of MC and who during the past week has resigned that office owing to declining health.

CLO 20th Feb 1858. Marriage in St Mary's of eldest dtr of Lt Col Kirwan, Charlotte Hyacinth.

CE 28th April 1841 Died April 15th at Hastings, Mariana, eldest dtr of CH Marshall esq, late MC in this town.

CLO 30 May 1835 AH Kirwan offers himself as candidate for the MC to the Cheltenham Summer Balls as Mr Marshall has resigned. (He later ended up as MC at St Leonard's.) He says of himself that he had a general residence in this town of upwards of twenty years.

CE 15.Seot 1841 A full grown otter captured and kileld near Prestbury, weighing nearly 20 lbs. From the great verity of an otter being found in this part of thhe cuntry it is conjectured that the one now found is the samme which escaped from the Zoological Gardens in this town, where it was deposited, we believe, by the father of Capt Kirwan.

CEx 29th June 1872 The resignation of the MC has taken place in the laast few days- the state of Col Kirwan's health not permitting him to hold this office. At the time when he was chosen MC the office was held in the highest and most honourable estimation... the office of MC requiring great tact and acquaintance with the usage and habits of the upper circles of society, only attainable by one in intercourse thereunto. Since then the usages have undergone a complete revolution and the office of MC is no longer an essential of fashionable life. In fact its existence has ceased to be recognised where once it exerted supreme authority. Cheltenham having long been the only town in the kingdom in which it has been upheld and now with Col Kirwan's retirement it is more than probable it will become extinct here also.

1851 Census:

8 Montpellier Villas: Andrew Kerwan Head M 52 b Chester

Charlotte Wife M 45 b Sudford Staffs

Charlotte Dtr U 20 b Sudford Staffs

Ellen Dtr U 18 b Chelt

Emily Dtr U 12 b Chelt.

+ 3 female servants.

Obituary in Chelt Express 10.8.1872

Bath Local Studies Library;

Clippings: Capt James King MC 1785-1815

Born 1752. Capt 1782 while serving with 105th Regt in the war with America. Retired 1783; MC Lower Rooms 1785; MC also at Chelt 1801; MC Bath Upper Rooms 1805.

Married 18.8.1794 Margaret, sister and heir of Sir John Bulkeley.

Died in Cheltenham 16.10.1816 aged 64.

Widow died 1831.

Portrait in bath Guide 1789. (Copied by BT)

Bath Guide 1841:

Capt CH Marshall MC of Lower Rooms 1817-1820

ON THE RESIGNATION OF THE Bath MC in 1817-1818 season, contest took place between CH Marshall and Capt Fisher.. Ballot in favour of Marshall. He conducted amusements highly satisfactorily til Spring 1820 when he was elected to the honourable and very lucrative position of MC at Cheltenham. He resigned Bath's sceptre which was then handed to LP Maddon.

Sydenham Collection p 637.

Reprinted in **Times 10th April 1901** – original in Times April 10th 1801: **Death of Beau Nash in Feb 1761.**

James King died Cheltenham Oct 16th 1816. Monument in Parish Church Chelt. Born 1762. MC Bath 1785-1805 at Lower Rooms and 1805 – 1816 at Upper Rooms.

Appointed MC Chelt 1801. Married Margaret sister and heri of Sir John Bulkeley, Knight, of Angelsey, on 18th August 1794. His protrait (King's) was painted and engraved by John Raphael Smith. Had a son, Capt James King severely wounded at Vittoria. Sherrif for Angelsey 1834. Died Oct 8th 1873. Left his estate to his friend Hon WO Stanley MP.

Bath Herald March 16th 1793

A portrait of James King M of the Cs at the Lower Rooms which is executed in superior engraving by Edmund Scott esq, engraver to their Royal Highnesses the Duke of York and Prince Edward, from an approved miniature just finished by Mr Jones next to the Pump Room which with a specimen of the works of that celebrated engraver, is for public inspection.

5 shillings to subscribers per print and 7/6 for proofs.

Annals of Bath – Mainwearing

King's Death 1816

With a well informed mind improved by association with polished society, Mr King was proverbially elegant in his person and manners and ever assiduous in the discharge of his official duties. Although he had arrived at the advanced age of 70 years he possessed all the activity and appearance of the zenith of life. No individual it is presumed, could have died more lamented by an extensive number of distinguished characters in the higher and fashionable circles of life.

Bath Herald and Register Feb 1st 1794

Mr King's medallion is made of fine gold enamelled blue, deeply enriched with brilliants. On one side is a raised figure of Venus, with a golden apple in one hand and a rudder in the other. The motto is Venus Decens.

The reverse is a wreath of laurel. The motto *Arbiter elegantiae Commune Consensus*.
(Judge of good things by common consensus.)

Panegyrique de Mons King Maitre des Ceremonies. (Probably by a French émigré)

Oui, je l'ai vu cet aimable Roi,
Dans la brillante Assemblée
Où nous avons passé je crois
La plus agréable soirée.
Qu'il me paraissait charmant
Le Roi, rempli de politesse,
Avec son air, doux et galant,
Aux bourgeois comme à la noblesse
Quand aux dames, il offrait son main,
Sur son front brillait la candeur.
Les Grâces étaient dans son maintien
Son sourire annonçait le bonheur.
Recevant d'un accueil affable
Tout le monde sans exception
Chacun se croyait redevable
De ses soins et de son attention.
Heureux qui a l'art de plaire
Il est comble de mille faveurs
Quand il fait par les manières
Comme James King, gagner les cœurs.

SPAS of ENGLAND

P321/2 There are at Cheltenham Christmas Balls, then a ball on behalf of some orphan asylum and a ball the Cheltonians will have again when the MC appeals to their kindly feelings for a suitable return for his polite attention to them and their visitors. This last ball is one of the most brilliant affairs of the season, as the gentleman who currently happens to fill the post of MC (an officer in the army) is universally and deservedly acclaimed. On such occasions seldom

less than 800 persons assemble to honour him with their presence as the families of nearly all the residents as well as of the great number of those who live even at some considerable distance from Cheltenham make it a point to join in the festivity.

P429 Bath- nothing marks more distinctly the successive changes that have taken place in the manners, costumes, amusements and intercourse of the superior classes of society than the ceremonies codes of laws, formed by succeeding dictators (yclept MCs) from Nash to Dawson.

III. Torrington Diaries and Cheltenham

The Torrington Diaries: A Tour through England and Wales of the Hon John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, between 1781 and 1794. Eyre and Spottiswood 1938.

1781: Vol 1 p10+

Cheltenham is divided into two parties the most powerful being the Republicans, headed by Mr Miller who built the New Rooms and by Mrs Field who keeps Grove Boarding House where we have the honour of lodging. These are averse from a Master of the Ceremonies in the person of Mr Morreau (sic) supported by Mrs Jones of the town rooms and the generosity of the company. I have heard both parties and neither liking the character or manners of my hostess am inclined to yield subjection to Mr Morreau who to be sure is only self-elected and never was properly crowned here. In Bath he has indeed the honour to be Arbiter Elegantiarum to the Corporation. If Mr Morreau continues to behave with decency I hope he may preside, as such a character seems necessary at a publick place and his opponents seem to be guided by ill humour and self interest.

June Returned via a great old Mansion called Postlip, belonging to Lord Coventry without a tree near it and surrounded by a rabbit (sic) warren.

On Sunday 10th June attended divine service as irreligiously performed here as at most other places. The inhabitants are of different sects which is owing to the want of discipline in the church of England. (He then continues to lay blame at pluralities and the lack of a resident Curate to provide the spiritual needs of the locals)

The best house in the town is Mr de La Bere's, a relation of the owner of Southam.

Byng's timetable: Rise early by 7 am; at 8 am have crossed meadows to the pump room, passed an hour there in walking and taking two glasses of water; which heating me I shall leave off; breakfast at 9 am and until dinner at 3 pm I am seeking out new rides. Another hour in the evening at wells and bed early after strawberries or some slight repast. But the Balls are now begun and players from Tewkesbury open their theatre on Saturday next.

We do not abound in beauty or odd characters and the war and the camps have taken away all the young men.

June 18th On Monday there is always a public breakfast which is the only opportunity of securing the company, here, and that of the neighbourhood: this morning were assembled about 80 people but at the full season the number amounts to 200 or 300 people.

There is a gaiety in a public breakfast on a summer's morning with music that is to me very pleasing, everyone then looks fresh and happy; the women are more in their natural looks not disfigured by overdress and paint and the men are civil and sober.

In the evening I took my old walk by the stream in the meadows and returned in time to see the first minuet (for this season) danced in the pump room. I played two rubbers of whist and won 12/6 from the Vicar whose stipend is £40 per annum. Sedan chairs are to be had but are expensive and as the MC dares not and the company cares not to make any alterations, many such exactions and abuses continue here unrectified. A brick kiln is close to the walks, burning bricks for the new house for Lord Fauconberg who is expected at Mrs Field's tomorrow.

June 20th Mr Miller of the Long room confirmed his impertinence and tyranny to Mr Mrs Morreau by refusing them the waters and by turning his subscription book out of the room. I hate oppression and as this is particularly against the sense of the company, Moreau should be supported. (The controversy was resolved with an apology and shaking of hands). Lodgers of Mrs Field, if supporters of Moreau, also are to be refused waters.

June 25th. After some stay at one of these places, there is nothing left to see, say or do. And that is the case at present with me, for my life passes in the dullest gloom....in these places I soon lose my happiness and retain only noise and unsettledness.

June 27th Cheltenham I quit thee with pleasure, and hope never more to visit thee. Cheltenham is the dullest of public places, the look of the place is sombre, the lodgings dear and pitiful, and no inns or stabling fit for the reception of gentlemen or their horses. Most of the company comes from Bristol or its neighbourhood. Without advantage to Mrs Byng's health, and without comfort to myself, I have been spending much money.

Notes: Mr Moreau, combining authorship and his position as MC wrote in 1789 'A Tour to the Royal Spa at Cheltenham':

On the east side of the Pump Square is the Long room, built 1775 at the joint expense of Mr Skillicorne the ground landlord, and Mr Miller the present renter of the spa, for the accommodation of the increasing company from all parts of the world while drinking the water and for public breakfasts during the season from May to October.

Cheltenham on the return visit 1784: Cheltenham is the same as ever, widows wanting husbands, old men wanting health and misses wanting partners. Since my last visit new rooms have been built and a new theatre.

V. Bibliography and Acknowledgements: The Masters of the Ceremonies in Cheltenham

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Brian Torode