

A FAIR DAY'S PAY FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK

A CHRONOLOGY OF WORKERS' MOVEMENTS IN CHELTENHAM



Compiled by
Mike Grindley and Jill Waller



Cheltenham
Local History Society

INTRODUCTION

A Fair Day's Wages for a Fair Day's Work was chosen as the theme of this year's Gloucestershire Rural Community Council's County Local History Afternoon, to be held on 2 October 2010 at Sir Thomas Rich's School, Longlevens, Gloucester. This book was compiled to accompany a display put on by the Cheltenham Local History Society at this event.

The *Chronology* details two centuries of the efforts by Cheltenham working people to achieve by combination the improvement of their livelihoods and the advancement of political and economic justice. The early Friendly Societies led on to the development of proper Trades Unionism in the town in the face of fierce opposition. The 1838-48 Chartist period in Cheltenham and district is covered, and details are given of the Mechanics' Institute and the various Working Men's Associations and Clubs (including one or two ruled by a distinctly outside agenda!). Trades Unionism was given a considerable boost in the town by the establishment in 1894 of its Trades Council, which itself founded the local Labour Party in 1918. The story of the General Strike in Cheltenham is described in detail, as is the recent, very long, but ultimately successful struggle to overturn the Government's 1984 Trade Unions Ban at GCHQ.

MIKE GRINDLEY, September 2010.

Much of the research for this book was reliant on secondary sources, and the compilers would welcome any corrections or contributions that the reader feels should be included in any amended future edition.

September 2010

Jill Waller,

Jill may be contacted via the Enquiries page on the CLHS website www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk.
For general queries about Cheltenham Local History Society please email secretary@cheltlocalhistory.co.uk.

CONTRIBUTORS include the following friends and members of the Cheltenham Local History Society:

Heather Atkinson, Sheila Barnfield (of Corse), Vic Cole, Mike Grindley, Sue Rowbotham, Jill Waller
(With apologies to those we may have omitted to mention.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted, yet again, to Stephen Osmond for allowing us to lift large chunks from his *Chronology of Cheltenham 200BC – 2000AD*, which provided a framework for this *Chronology*.

Huge thanks go to Sue Rowbotham for illustrating this *Chronology*, for her help with the layout and for organising the printing.

CONTENTS

Anti-Corn Law Association	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4
Chartists	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	4
Early Closing Movement, Shorter Hours, &c	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	8
Early Socialism	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	11
Mechanics' Institute	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	13
Oddfellows, Foresters & Other Benefit Societies	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	15
Trade Unions &c	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	20
Trade Unions &c – The General Strike of 1926	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	33
Trade Unions &c – The GCHQ Trade Union Ban Campaign	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	35
Working Men's Associations &c	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	39
Main Sources	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	45

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Front cover: March and rally in support of the GCHQ strikers, on the 5th anniversary of the union ban, 28 Jan 1989. Over 10,000 people marched from Pittville Pump Room to Montpellier Gardens

01	Chartist bungalow, Snigs End, 2010	10
02.	The old School House, latterly the <i>Prince of Wales</i> pub, Snigs End, 2010	10
03.	Feargus O'Connor, Chartist founder and leader	10
04.	Lodge of Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, back of 295 High Street, 2010	10
05.	Sheldon's York Hotel, High Street, 1816	10
06.	U.C.A.L. workers receiving strike pay, Imperial Café, 6 Dec 1919	19
07.	James Grist Carr, signalman at GWR Station, Lansdown	19
08.	George Wride, GWR engine driver	19
09.	St George's Hall, High Street, 2010	19
10.	St George' Hall, close-up of name embossed on wall, 2010	19
11.	<i>Clarion</i> van visits Cheltenham, 26 Apr 1908	19
12.	Railway staff strike in support of stationmaster A.E. Chandler, 1919	29
13.	Sunningend workers support local railway strike, 1919	29
14.	Illustration from 'New Fashion Book', published by Debenham & Freebody of Cheltenham in 1870	29
15.	Plaque on wall of Charlton Kings Club, Church Street, 2010.	29
16.	Charlton Kings' Club, Church Street, formerly Charlton Kings Working Mens' Club, 2010	29
17.	330 High Street, formerly Labour Hall and Institute, 2010.	38
18.	Fanlight above door at 3 Royal Crescent, 2004.	38
19.	2 and 3 Royal Crescent, formerly Cheltenham Trades & Labour Council premises, 2004.	38
20.	4 th rally and march in support of GCHQ strikers, 23 Jan 1988.	38
21.	Plaque in Montpellier Gardens commemorating sacking of 14 GCHQ Trade Unionists	38
22.	GCHQ strikers at entrance to Oakley site, Feb 1987	38
23.	Cheltenham Working Mens' Club members on outing to Lower Lode, 1904	45
24.	Annual Moveable Committee of Oddfellows, Winter Gardens, Cheltenham, Jun 1903	46
	Edward Bourne, member of Cheltenham Oddfellows, elected Grand-Master, Jun, 1909	46

Our thanks to these individuals and organisations for allowing us to reproduce the following illustrations:

Gloucestershire Echo: 22.

Mike Grindley: Front cover, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 23;

Sue Rowbotham: 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 21;

Jill Waller: 5, 14, 24, 25;

Wikipedia (public domain): 3.

Thanks also to Sheila Barnfield for kindly allowing us to photograph her Chartist bungalow at Snigs End, and for sharing information about the three generations of her family who have lived in the village.

Copyright © 2010. All text is copyright to Cheltenham Local History Society and the authors, and all illustrations are copyright to the owners listed above. Neither text nor illustrations may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the owner or owners. Every attempt has been made to contact and acknowledge illustration copyright holders. We apologise if any have been omitted or are incorrect.

A FAIR DAY'S PAY FOR A FAIR DAY'S WORK: A CHRONOLOGY OF WORKERS' MOVEMENTS IN CHELTENHAM

ANTI-CORN LAW ASSOCIATION

- May 1824 A petition was presented to the **House of Commons** by the **Anti-Corn Law Association**.
- 8 Jun 1839 A letter appeared in the *Cheltenham Free Press* from **Samuel Onley, Jun.**, Hon. Secretary, announcing the setting-up of the **Cheltenham Anti-Corn Law Association**. The aim was to cooperate with the **Grand Central Association of Manchester** in devoting all its energy, by all legal and constitutional means, to the total repeal of the existing **Corn Laws**. The annual subscription, in advance, was to be not less than 4s. 'A strong feeling exists against the present restrictive duties upon the prime necessities of life', i.e. corn.
- 12 Sep 1839 **Mr E.G. Wells**, treasurer of the **Anti-Corn Law Association**, gave a lecture at the **Cheltenham Mechanics' Institution** in favour of total and immediate repeal of the **Corn Laws**. Only 19 persons attended, of whom 10 were Chartists. The *Cheltenham Free Press* commented that this was 'a refutation of the calumny that the Chartists do not wish a repeal of the Corn Laws'.
- 26 Dec 1839 About 30 people sat down to a supper (1s 6d per head) at **The Star** for the **Anti-Corn Law** festival. The Chartists and the **Anti-Corn Law Association** members were seated at separate tables. A 'rather angry discussion' ensued between Chartists **Hollis, Spackman, W. Smith, Berrington**, and **Hughes**, and **Anti-Corn Law** members **Hennessy, S. Onley, Mr. E.G. Wells** and the president of the local **Anti-Corn Law Association, J.C. Symons**. **Symons** was also proprietor of the *Cheltenham Examiner*, a Whig paper known to readers of the Radical *Cheltenham Free Press* as the 'Hybrid Bantling', 'The Berkeley' or the 'Cheltenham Hybrid'.
- 4 Apr 1840 Petitions for the repeal of the Corn Laws were sent to the **Hon. C.F. Berkeley MP** for presentation to the **House of Commons**. They included 4,700 signatures from **Cheltenham**, 218 from **Charlton Kings**, 575 from **Leckhampton** and 50 from **Alstone**.
- 16 May 1841 Radical **James Vaughan**, a cabinet-maker, was observed by a policeman to scribble on a pillar of **Rodney Villa**. The policeman waited until he had finished before reading what he had written – 'Damn the corn laws'. He then asked **Vaughan** if he thought it was the right thing to write on the pillar. **Vaughan** replied that it was not and that he wished to erase it, but the policeman marched him to the station house to be taken before the magistrates, where he was fined 5s.
- 7 Jun 1841 An **Anti-Corn Law** petition with about 7,000 signatures attached was forwarded from **Cheltenham** to the **Hon. Craven Berkeley** for presentation before the dissolution of parliament.. A petition from **Leckhampton** was also presented.
- 27 Sep 1841 A meeting of the **Cheltenham Anti-Corn Law Association** was held at the **Music Hall** in **Regent Street**, with **F. Monro** in the chair. It was voted to send a memo to **Her Majesty** begging her not to accept Parliament 'until the distressed state of the country had been taken into consideration' and the Corn Laws had been repealed.

CHARTISTS

(The Chartists were the first organised independent working class movement in the world, begun in 1838.)

- 24 Dec 1838 A Preliminary meeting of the **Working Men's Association** was held at the **York Hotel** to consider adoption of the National Charter, which included three great principles – Vote by Ballot, Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments. The *Cheltenham Free Press* reported that, whilst many in the community stood in greater need of a loaf than of political enfranchisement, some of the speakers put forward very cogent arguments.
- 21 Jan 1839 A public meeting of workers, chaired by **W. P Gaskell**, was held at the **Imperial Emporium, Promenade**. A **London Working Men's Association** delegate addressed about 1,400 people. The motion to sign the national petition adopting the People's Charter was carried unanimously.
- 24 Jan 1839 A further meeting, attended by 1,800 and again chaired by **Mr Gaskell**, was held to discuss the People's Charter. **Jelinger Symons** spoke on a proposal that fell short of Universal Suffrage – i.e. instead of giving the franchise to every man of 21 years, to give it to those of 24 years, and only to those who could read and write 70 words selected from the authorised English Version of the Gospels. This suggestion brought cries from the audience of "We won't have it!"
- 23 Feb 1839 The *Cheltenham Free Press* editorial commented that the 'present Charter agitation' would fade away for two reasons. Firstly 'because the great body of the people do not want Universal Suffrage', and secondly 'because they are not fit for it ... Were the working classes ... one-half as capable of rightly estimating their own true interest ... we would not hesitate in extending to them the suffrage ...'.

- 8 Mar 1839 About 5,000 people attended a meeting at the **York Hotel** to hear speeches on the subject of the People's Charter.
- 7 Jun 1839 A Chartist meeting took place at the then uninhabited **York Hotel**. Its three rooms were crowded with about 2,000 people and **Mr Banfield** chaired the meeting. **William Spackman** proposed the first resolution – that the system of household suffrage should be fought against. **Mr Moore** (Secretary of the **Working Men's Association of Tewkesbury**) said that the reason given for withholding every man's right to enjoy the elective franchise was that the people of England were ignorant, drunken and idle. **Moore** claimed that the parsons of the established church, as well as the dissenting parsons, had done all in their power to keep them in ignorance. Surely God 'wishes for us universal happiness ... one class ought never to be rolling in riches while another class is working hard all day ...'. **Moore** continued that 'we do not wish to live without work, but we do wish to have a fair day's wages for a fair day's work'.
- 17 Jul 1839 **Mr Henry Vincent** began a series of lectures on Chartism at **Cheltenham**. He had spent time in **Monmouth** gaol because of his beliefs. The lectures were held at the **Fives Court** in the **Pittville Hotel** gardens and the first was attended by about 1,000 people. His second lecture was delivered to about 500 **Cheltenham** women. After **Mr Vincent** had spent an hour assuring the women that politics concerned them as much as men, the doors were opened to admit the men to the meeting.
- 27 Jul 1839 It was announced in the *Cheltenham Free Press* that a **Women's Association** for supporting the principles contained in the People's Charter had been set up in **Cheltenham**. Over 100 women had joined, holding their meetings every Wednesday at the room of the **Working Men's Association** in **Queen's Buildings**.
- 3 Aug 1839 The *Cheltenham Free Press* reported that the Chartists of **Cheltenham** had, in accordance with a resolution passed at a recent meetings, 'commenced a total abstinence from all excisable liquors. In lieu thereof they have taken to drinking milk, and herb tea, and smoking herb tobacco.'
- 16 Aug 1839 A public open-air Chartist meeting was held in a field near the **Beaufort Arms**. It was not well attended as the weather was poor.
- 18 Aug 1839 About 400 **Cheltenham** Chartists attended **St Mary's Parish Church**. The *Cheltenham Examiner* described them as 'misguided men who follow blindly the counsels of the foolish and wicked Chartist leaders'. The newspaper claimed that this 'violent party' hoped to establish their 'political rights' by intimidation. The **Rev. Francis Close** postponed an engagement elsewhere in order to deliver 'a most impressive and well judged rebuke to these weak men who must have felt ashamed of their conduct long before they left the church'.
- Close** was instrumental in providing establishments for the poor – churches, infant schools, working-men's Bible classes and charitable bodies. However these were also means by which he could indoctrinate and control the poor. Idolised and awed by his upper- and middle-class congregation, the authoritarian **Close** was able to preach vigorously against many things that threatened his comfortable position – Catholicism, dissent, radical politics, and popular recreations such as racing and the theatre.
- Close's** sermon to the Chartists began with his 'humble desire ... to dispel the delusions of the Working Classes ...'. In the course of his sermon he listed the charitable institutions in **Cheltenham**, including the **Hospital**, the **Orphan Asylum**, the **District Visiting Societies** and the schools, and claimed the working classes were showing 'peculiar ingratitude' by pursuing radical politics such as Chartism. The sermon concluded with the statement that 'Socialism is a rebellion against God, and Chartism is a rebellion against man'.
- 18 Aug 1839 Nearly 2,000 people assembled in a field on the London Road to hear **Mr Moore**, Secretary of the **Tewkesbury Working Men's Association**, who had taken out a licence to preach, deliver a speech in support of Chartism. He attempted to prove that the principles of the People's Charter were in accordance with the scriptures, taking his text from the first chapter of Jeremiah. **Mr Moore** was a commercial traveller, a Wesleyan Minister, and also a stocking maker.
- 24 Aug 1839 It was announced in the *Cheltenham Free Press* that **Cheltenham's** female Chartists were to follow the example set by the men the previous Sunday and attend the **parish church en masse**. Here they would, in all probability, hear **Francis Close** preach on 'the character, duties and privileges of the women of England'. 'We trust they will behave themselves in a quiet and orderly manner, thus following another example set them by the men.'
- 25 Aug 1839 The **Rev. Francis Close** addressed the female Chartists who appeared at the **parish church**, referring to them as 'Women calling themselves Christians, yet so far forgetting the delicacy of their sex ... that they stop out of their natural course, and from their fire-side duties, to launch on a sea of politics ...'. 'In the humbler class of life such a mother of a family equally neglects her children, leaving them in the lanes and streets of the city, while she seeks her pleasure elsewhere perhaps in meetings for political dissension ...'.

- 9 Sep 1839 The **Cheltenham** Chartists held a public meeting in the field where the new **Union Workhouse** was to be built (now **St Paul's Medical Centre**). As they were expecting **Feargus O'Connor**, founder of the **Chartist Movement**, and leading Chartist **John Frost** to be attending from **London**, the magistrates spent the day swearing in special constables and calling in military in case of trouble. A detachment of the **12th Lancers** was sent from **Stroud**, and the **1st troop** of the **Gloucestershire Yeomanry** from **Gloucester**, were put on standby at **Shurdington**.
- In the event **Mr O'Connor** was unable to attend, but the crowd were treated to rousing speeches by local Chartists **Charles Milner**, **W.P. Gaskell**, **Mr Spackman**, **John Goding**, **Mr Williams** and **Tewkesbury's Mr Moore**. It was declared that the people had recently been oppressed by arrests for expressing their opinions on public affairs, by excessive bail being required and by consequent imprisonment, which amounted to punishment before trial. **Mr Williams** described how **Henry Vincent**, the young representative at the **National Convention**, was denied the use of pen and ink, and kept on a starvation diet. The magistrates were censured for trying to alarm the people and disturbing the peace of the town.
- 12 Sep 1839 About 500 **Cheltenham** Chartists proceeded to join the **Winchcombe** Chartists at a meeting in a field at **Gretton**, with hand bells and banners bearing mottoes including 'Liberty of the Press', '**Cheltenham Female Democratic Association**', 'No Military Flogging', 'the Voice of the People', etc. Nearly 1,000 people attended the meeting and no disturbances were reported.
- 19 Sep 1839 A public discussion on Chartism and the principles of Reform was held at the **Working Men's Association** room, in **Queen's Buildings**, between **Mr Jelinger C. Symons**, editor of the *Cheltenham Examiner* and the **Cheltenham** Chartists. **Mr Hollis** chaired the meeting. One of **Symon's** views, that the populace were not literate enough to have Universal Suffrage, caused a number of speakers to protest, including **Viner**, **Wiggins**, **Milner**, **Goding** and **Spackman**.
- 15 Oct 1839 The Chartists of **Cheltenham** held a tea party in the large room of the **Imperial Emporium**. **Mr Goding** chaired the meeting, which attracted about 370 people, and after their plum cake, etc, everyone sat down to 'partake of the feast of reason and the flow of the soul'. **T. Henney** was thanked for allowing the room to be used. By 11 p.m. there were over 800 people in the room; musicians appeared and dancing commenced.
- 4 Nov 1839 Fourteen Chartists were killed and several wounded in an 'alarming and fatal riot' at **Newport, Monmouthshire**. Chartists were killed by soldiers at the **Westgate Hotel** in **Newport**. It was reported that the Chartists had gathered at **Newport** on their way to free the Chartist delegate **Henry Vincent** who had been imprisoned at **Monmouth** gaol for 'sedition'.
- 9 Dec 1839 The Secretary of the **Working Men's Association**, **Mr Tozer**, delivered a lecture at its room in **Queen's Buildings** on the People's Charter. He spoke at length on the poor laws and described the workhouses as 'bastilles' and 'hells upon earth'.
- 21 Dec 1839 The sum of £5 13s 4d was sent from the **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** to the general Chartists' fund towards the defence of **John Frost** and his fellow captives following their imprisonment after the **Newport** riots.
- 16 Jan 1840 A sentence of death was passed on eight of the **Newport** rioters, including **John Frost**, **Zephaniah Williams** and **William Jones**. All were to be hanged, beheaded and quartered 'with no hope of mercy on this side of the grave'. The **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** continued to receive contributions towards their defence fund.
- 30 Jan 1840 An address to **Queen Victoria** was sent from **Cheltenham** in favour of the condemned **Frost**, **Williams** and **Jones** of the **Newport** riots. 7,820 signatures were obtained from the working men of **Cheltenham** in two days. A petition with 165 signatures was also despatched from the **Female Political Union of Cheltenham**. Petitions to the same effect were obtained from **Gloucester** (560 signatures), **Winchcombe** (156), **Tewkesbury** (305) and **Cirencester** (1,500 signatures).
- 2 Feb 1840 A reprieve arrived at **Monmouth** and the following day the prisoners were sent to the hulks for transportation from **Portsmouth**.
- 7 Feb 1840 A public meeting was held at the **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** to adopt a petition, proposed by **John Goding**, to the **House of Commons** praying for a free pardon for Chartist supporters **Frost**, **Jones** and **Williams**. The petition was carried amid loud cheers.
- 20 Mar 1840 **Henry Vincent** and others were tried at **Monmouth**. **Vincent** was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment. The following week £4 was raised for the '**Chartist Defence Fund**' and forwarded from the **Working Men's Association** towards **Vincent's** defence. £2 5s 7d was also raised for **Wotton-under-Edge** Chartists, **Messrs. Lacey** and **Witts**, who were bound over to keep the peace for two years when the prosecution abandoned their case.
- 8 Jun 1840 A Chartist Whit Monday picnic was held on **Cleeve Hill**. **Mr Hooper** provided the food and drink, which was followed by speeches, chaired by **Mr Banfield**. Among the proposals was one by **Mr Goding** that they should not cease in their demands 'for equal laws and equal rights'.

- 24 Nov 1840 About 150 Chartists met at the **Mechanics' Institution** for a tea to show their esteem for **Mr Spackman jun.**, who was about emigrate to **Ireland**. The room was decorated with Chartist banners and toasts were made to various Chartist sentiments. **Mr Goding** was in the chair. **Mr Milsom**, a plasterer, in criticising the Radicals, recalled a bricklayers meeting at the house of **Mr Boodle**, thought to be a Radical. 'When we had about 500 outside, **Mr Boodle** came and said, **Milsom**, you and 2 or 3 others he named, who he knew had money, may come in, but I can't let the rest in for I have a party of singers in upstairs. ... He and **Mr Onley** are our greatest enemies in supporting the cotton lords'. The festivities closed with dancing.
- 5 Dec 1840 A letter was sent to the **Cheltenham** Chartists from **Henry Vincent** in **Oakham Gaol, Rutlandshire**, in which he said 'The *Free Press* gives me a report of a Tea meeting in **Cheltenham**, from which I see you bade adieu to our good friend **Spackman**. I am sorry you have lost so good a man. I write, however, to express the pleasure I felt on reading your declarations on behalf of teetotalism. You are on the right path now'
- 26 Dec 1840 Petitions with over 2,000 signatures, for the remission of the remainder of **Henry Vincent's** sentence, were sent from **Cheltenham** workers to be presented to **Her Majesty** by **Lord Normandy**.
- 14 Apr 1841 About 400 attended a Tea Party for **Henry Vincent** given at **Lambert's Stables**, 'spacious premises opposite to **Henrietta Street**' on the **High Street**. So great was the effect of **Vincent's** eloquence that one young lady dreamed that night that a body of armed Chartists entered **Cheltenham** and shot her in the neck. The following evening **Vincent** delivered the first of a three of lectures at **Lambert's Stables** to an audience of up to 400, including many members of the **Mechanics' Institute**.
- 24 Jun 1841 In the House of Commons **Mr Muntz** presented a petition from 1,536 of the working classes of **Cheltenham** on the subject of Universal Suffrage, and for the pardon of political offenders.
- 19 Aug 1841 A man named **Philp** from **Bath** delivered a lecture at the **Mechanics' Institution** on the principles of the People's Charter. He encouraged 'the shopkeepers and middle classes' to join with 'working men' to obtain the Charter, and said that if they did not do so it would be the duty of Chartists to practice 'exclusive dealing' and support only their friends.
- 26 Sep 1841 The **Cheltenham** Chartists celebrated the release of **Feargus O'Connor** from imprisonment at **York Castle** with a tea party and soirée at the **Mechanics' Institution**. **Mr J. Davies** was in the chair and the room was hung with the banners of the **Gloucester Democratic Association**. The motto '**Feargus O'Connor**, the people's true friend' was spelt out in dahlias. Songs and dancing were accompanied by **Mr Whittaker** on the harp. A congratulatory address was agreed to and signed by the Chairman, hailing **O'Connor's** release from prison.
- 30 Sep 1841 The Chartist **Henry Vincent** gave a lecture at the **Mechanics' Institution** to a packed audience. Predictably the *Cheltenham Examiner* cast scorn on the substance of his talk.
- 23 Mar 1842 Chartist lecturer **James Bronterre O'Brien** 'held forth' to a few working men at the **Albert Gallery** in **Clarence Street**. According to the Conservative *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 'the audience bore his displays of egotism with exemplary good nature.' It was the first of a series of lectures he gave on the subject of democracy.
- 20 Apr 1842 The Chartist leader **Feargus O'Connor** came to **Cheltenham**. He was met outside the **Prinns Arms** at **Charlton Kings** by about 50 **Cheltenham** Chartists, accompanied by banners, a band of musicians and 'a long train of boys and girls, and persons of the lower class' (*Cheltenham Chronicle*). The *Cheltenham Free Press* listed some of the inscriptions on the ornamented banners – 'More Pigs and less Parsons', 'The welfare of the People, the highest law', 'No Military Flogging', 'No impressment', 'Every soldier a Citizen, every Citizen a soldier', 'Radical Reform and Liberty of Conscience', 'The People's Charter and no Surrender', 'Liberty of the Press' and the following verse:

'Poor toiling slaves, hard is your fate,
You are eaten up by Church and State.'

One particularly lengthy inscription read 'Thou shalt do no murder! Young men! Avoid enlisting parties and public-houses. Men of blood want to make you their victims, and send you to fight their un-Christian and unjust wars'.

By the time the procession had escorted **O'Connor's** carriage back to the **High Street**, some 2,000 people had gathered to see him. He stopped at the **George Hotel** prior to giving a lecture at the **Market Place**, in which he strenuously advocated the People's Charter. There was supposed to be a charge of 2d to gain a seat at the lecture, but so many people rushed forward that many gained free entry. The room was so crowded that several fainted before they could be taken out of the building. A vote of confidence in **Feargus O'Connor** was passed and the **National Charter Association** was adopted without opposition.

- 21 Apr 1842 **Cheltenham**'s MP, the Whig **Hon. Craven Berkeley**, stated that he would not present a petition to the **House of Commons** given to him by the **Cheltenham** Chartists. Firstly he considered the People's Charter to contain propositions totally incompatible with the country's Constitution. Secondly the local Chartists had not supported him in the previous general election, voting instead for **Mr Agg-Gardner**, 'an uncompromising Tory'. **Berkeley** cited **John Goding** and **Charles Samuel Harper** as being amongst his opposers who were included in this petition.
- 22 Aug 1842 Meetings had been held on **Bayshill** and at the **Mechanics' Institute** about the state of the country, with disturbances in the north sparked by scarcity of work, low wages and high prices. About 100 of **Cheltenham**'s unemployed marched from **Bayshill** along the **High Street**.
- 28 Sep 1842 A Chartist lecture was delivered at the **Temperance Union Coffee House, Bath Road**, by **J.F. Berrington**.
- Nov 1844 A Chartist meeting was held by **Mr Bairstow** at the **Music Hall** in **Regent Street**.
1846 A branch of the **Chartist Land Company** was formed in **Cheltenham**.
- Jun 1846 Chartist **Henry Vincent** promoted the 'peace movement' at a public meeting in the town.
- 1 Jan 1847 A procession of Chartists caused considerable excitement in **Cheltenham**, on their way to take possession of their new estate at **Snigs End**, near **Corse** and **Staunton**. Led by a band, 30 horses followed with 'bright harness and light steps through the sickly town of **Cheltenham**'. A number of wagons were filled with household furniture, wheat, potatoes, agricultural implements plus workmen and the families of settlers. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* commented that the horses were 'sleek well-conditioned animals, but destined we fear to present a very different appearance after undergoing a few months connexion with the system of Chartist farming'.
- 15 Mar 1848 Immediately after the **1848 French Revolution** a Chartist meeting was held in the **auction rooms** at **120 High Street** (later corner of **Pittville Street**), with the aim of adopting an address to the French congratulating them on the overthrow of the monarchy, and to obtain signatures for the 'National Petition'. The *Cheltenham Chronicle* described the meeting as 'a very flat affair' as the speakers announced failed to appear. However, **W.E. Adams** reported in his *Memoirs of a Social Atom* that 'the animated scenes at our meetings where the petition lay for signature are still fresh in the memory'.
- 4 Apr 1848 A **Chartist Convention** assembled in **London**, and **Cheltenham**'s local Chartist leader, a blacksmith named **J.P. Glenister**, attended as the town's representative.
- Mar 1851 **Thomas Cooper**, a leading Chartist, paid one of several visits to **Cheltenham**.
Jun 1851 A gathering of only about 150-200 met in showery weather in a market garden to hear **Ernest Jones**, a leading Chartist who had been imprisoned in **1850** for 'uttering seditious language'.
1852 **R.G. Gammage**, author of an outline history of Chartism, visited **Cheltenham** during a General Election. The local Chartists managed to get him nominated, so that he could make a speech from the hustings, although they were aware he was not a feasible candidate. **W.E. Adams** (*Memoirs of a Social Atom*) reported that he made 'a capital speech for the Charter'.
- 28 Aug 1853 A meeting was held at **Sandford Fields** at which **Ernest Jones**, **Mr Gammage** and others addressed the assembly in favour of the People's Charter. There was a large attendance as handbills had stated that the '**Grosvenor Street Prophet**' would be present. When he did not appear, many people left the ground to go to his house, **30 Grosvenor Street**. (The '**Prophet**' was **Julius Henry Shiloh**, a notorious 'spirit rapper'. **Shiloh** was subsequently arrested and bound over to keep the peace for haranguing large crowds of people from his balcony.)

EARLY CLOSING MOVEMENT, SHORTER HOURS, &c

- 2 Sep 1825 A meeting of Assistants to the Linen Drapers, Hosiers, etc took place at the **Regent Hotel** to consider the idea of closing shops at an earlier hour. The main reason given for this proposal was to provide the Assistants with opportunities to improve their minds, not previously possible as the lateness of shop closing times prevented participation in intellectual pursuits.
- 12 Sep 1825 The *Cheltenham Journal* published a letter from the Assistants to the Linen Drapers, Silk Mercers, Haberdashers, Lacemen, Hosiers, etc of the town. In it the Assistants proposed that the hours of business should finish at 10 o'clock p.m. on Saturdays, and at 9 o'clock on weekdays, between **15 March** and **15 October**, and at 8 o'clock on Saturdays and 7 o'clock during the remaining five months of the year. A petition supporting this request was sent on **16 September**.
- 10 Mar 1836 A meeting, chaired by **Rev. Francis Close**, was attended by a long list of **Cheltenham** citizens to discuss the most effectual means for preventing the practice of Sunday trading, which apparently continued in the town despite a recent appeal by the Clergy of the parish. It was felt that the practice was not only a desecration of the Sabbath, but also led to a demoralising of the 'Operative Classes' and the disgrace of the town generally.

- 27 Nov 1838 A meeting of the town's Assistant Drapers took place at **Mr Woodward's** late **Music Room, Regent Street**, to consider the best way of 'procuring an abridgement of the hours of business'. **Mr Shedden** was in the chair. The main resolution carried unanimously was that business should end at 8 p.m. in October – March inclusive, and 9 p.m. in April – September except on Saturdays.
- 17 Dec 1838 The new hours of business for linen drapers' assistants in **Cheltenham** came into operation, with all but two establishments closing at 8 p.m.
- 29 Sep 1840 The previous attempts to attain earlier closing in the town had only been partially successful. The **Cheltenham** Tradesmen's Assistants attended a public meeting at the **Tavistock Temperance Hotel** aiming to obtain earlier closing times, and to form an **Association** 'for moral and intellectual culture'. It was resolved to ask the employers that winter closing be at 8 o'clock.
- 3 Oct 1840 It was proposed to form a **Society** and establish a **Reading Room** with a Conversation or Assembly Room for the Tradesmen's Assistants, and an appeal was put out. A monthly charge of 1s was proposed and 'a trifle on admission'. 'The primary object of the promoters ... is the advancement of their class to its proper grade in the moral and social scale.'
- 5 Oct 1840 A meeting of the trade assistants took place at the **Tavistock Hotel** when about 30 members were added to the newly formed **Association**. Two days later a small number of tradesmen met at the **Fleece Hotel**, and with **G.A. Williams** in the chair a resolution was passed approving of the assistants' requests. It was recommended that shops close at 8 o'clock in the winter months, except on Saturday nights, and then on every night during the summer months at 9 o'clock.
- 21 Oct 1840 A public meeting of the Tradesmen's Assistants was held to celebrate the formation of the **Cheltenham Assistants' Literary Association** and the opening of their new reading rooms at **3 Clarence Street**. **Mr Ryder** was in the chair and a number of rules were agreed to, including Rule 6 – that 'no meeting shall at any time be held in a tavern', Rule 8 – that 'the discussion of all questions on religion or politics is prohibited at all meetings' and Rule 13 – that 'no works of an immoral tendency or Atheistical principles be admitted into the library'. **John Rimmer**, the secretary, announced the presentation of a large number of volumes from **Messrs. R.E. Marshall, Ormond Gibbon** and other gentlemen. The table of the reading room was covered with nearly 300 books, in addition to monthly magazines, weekly periodicals, London daily papers and all the **Cheltenham** newspapers.
- 22 Nov 1844 A public meeting to consider reducing the hours of business in the town was held at the **New Town Hall, Regent Street**, with **Francis Close** in the chair. It was agreed that shops should close at 7 o'clock in winter and 8 o'clock in summer, and a committee was formed to attempt to ensure that this resolution was carried out, with effect from **Monday 1 December**.
- Dec 1844 Following the establishment of reduced business hours, it was felt necessary to form a literary society to occupy the trade assistants in their newly acquired free time. The **Cheltenham Institute** (see p. 40) was formed, opening with about 200 members in rooms at the back of the **Diocesan School Room, Regent Street**. Donations of 200-300 books and £60 were received.
- Dec 1846 About 40 tradesmen of the town, mainly drapers, closed their shops for a day to give their assistants an extra holiday. The *Cheltenham Looker-On*, the majority of whose customers would have been inconvenienced by this, questioned the wisdom or necessity of the philanthropic action.
- 15 Oct 1847 A meeting of the **Assistants' Committee** of the **Early Closing Association** took place at the **Regent Mansion**. Several reports on the favourable progress of the movement were handed in.
- 1850 The closure of **Cheltenham Post Office** on Sundays caused sufficient outcry that it reopened for one delivery per day.
- 13 Sep 1854 It was announced that the law clerks in **Cheltenham** were agitating for a Saturday half-holiday. According to the *Cheltenham Examiner* 'most of the respectable firms in **London**, and some of the large provincial towns now close their offices at two o'clock on a Saturday'.
- 14 Feb 1857 A draper's assistant told the *Cheltenham Mercury* that he and his colleagues worked an average of 14 hours per day in the winter, and 17 hours per day on Saturday. He was comparing himself with 'ordinary labourers' who worked not more than 10 hours per day, and 8 hours on Saturday.
- Dec 1858 Following a campaign supported by the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, the town shop assistants managed to obtain an Extra Christmas Holiday, being allowed the day off on **Monday 27th December**.
- May 1860 A deputation of workers in the coach-making trade met with their employers who agreed to a uniformity of their working hours in **Cheltenham**. The meeting was held at **Mr Plaister's, the Dolphin Inn, St George's Street**. It was prompted by the fact that **Shackleford's** employees were working at different times to the rest of the town. The improved hours agreed were that all the men should work from 6 till 6 from Monday to Friday, and from 6 till 4 on Saturdays.
- 9 Nov 1861 Early closing was still not standard practice but it was announced in the *Cheltenham Mercury* that **Mr John Lance** 'has been one of the first to adopt this salutary system, by closing business at seven each evening during the Winter season'.

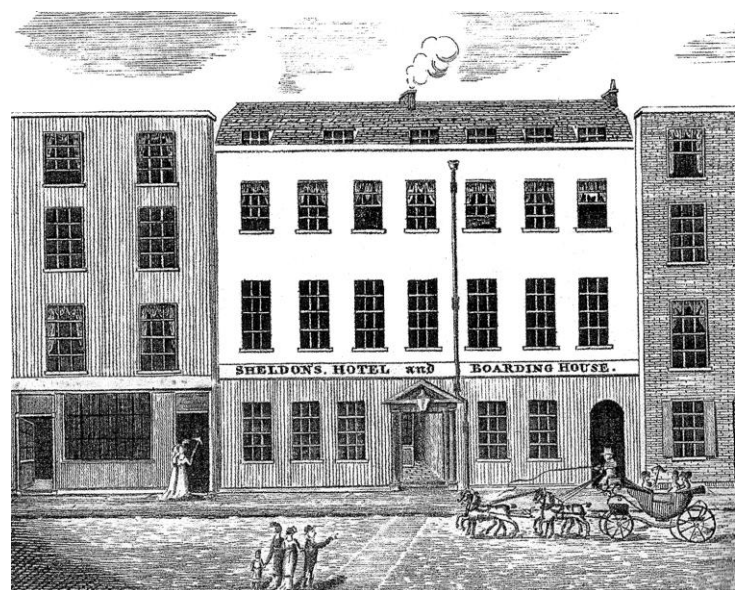


1 & 2. There was a great deal of support in Cheltenham for the Chartist movement. A Chartist procession caused considerable excitement as it passed through the town on 1 Jan 1847, en route to the specially-built bungalows at Snigs End, near Corse and Staunton. The one shown above left still has many of its original features. The large Chartist school at Snigs End (above right) later became the *Prince of Wales* pub, a fact which would have caused consternation amongst the teetotal followers of the movement.

3. The charismatic Chartist founder and leader Feargus O'Connor (right) visited Cheltenham on 20 Apr 1842. A crowd of about 2,000 followed his carriage through the town to the Market Place, where he gave a lecture strenuously advocating the People's Charter.



4. Behind the former *Full Moon* pub at 171 High Street (now No. 295) stands a purpose-built Lodge of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, possibly built between 1907-12. Now occupied by Sigma Industrial Intercom Systems.



5. Sheldon's York Hotel, in the High Street, was the venue for many socialist meetings during the 19th century. By the end of 1838 the Cheltenham Working Mens' Association met every night at the hotel.

- 11 Jan 1865 The findings of the **Commission of the Employment of Children** were published in the *Cheltenham Examiner* under the title ‘The condition of Milliners and Dressmakers in **London** and **Cheltenham**’. These girls were unaffected by the **Ten Hours Factory Bill**. Girls were apprenticed to the trade from age 15, paying a premium of up to as much as £50. They then worked very long hours, afraid to do less as they needed to obtain good references to stay in work. In **Cheltenham** the employers examined for the report were **Mrs H. Gilling** of **Promenade Villas**, **Mrs Gregory** of **Cambrey Villa**, **Mr** and **Mrs Smith** of **Brunswick House**, and **Miss Thomas** of the **Promenade**. They stated that the girls worked 12-hour days during the seasons (March-July and October-January). However, a mother of two girls living with a **Cheltenham** dressmaker stated they regularly worked 16 hours, and on some occasions they were kept working until 2 a.m. ‘on mourning orders’. Other workers reported working for five weeks consecutively in the Spring of 1862 from 8.30 a.m. until 11 p.m. every night except Saturday.
- Dec 1870 **Cheltenham** banks closed at 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays.
- 5 Feb 1872 A well-attended and enthusiastic meeting of working men took place in **St George’s Hall**, chaired by **H.B. Samuelson**, MP, to discuss the **Short Hour Movement**. Those on the platform included **Rev. Dr. Brown**, **Rev. J. Trotter**, **J. Fallon**, **S. Onley**, **S. Onley jun.**, **J.S. Lenthall** and **Mr Malvern**. It was resolved having 54 hours a week as a maximum time of labour ‘will be conducive to the physical and intellectual welfare of the working classes’. A second resolution was adopted – that **Cheltenham** employers should concede to the suggested nine-hour workday.
- Mar 1872 **J.T. Agg-Gardner** chaired a meeting of working men to support the nine hours movement.
- Apr 1873 About 200 shopkeepers agreed to close their shops at 5 p.m. on Wednesdays ‘in order to afford their assistants opportunities for relaxation’.
- 20 May 1873 A crowded meeting in support of the **Wednesday 5 o’clock Closing Movement** was held at the **Town Hall**, chaired by **Cheltenham College** principal the **Rev. T.W. Jex-Blake**. Although some assistants were proposing to make Saturday the half day, it was felt that this was the day when most people had the funds and time to shop and so shops should remain open all day. The public were asked to support shopkeepers by making their purchases at a reasonable hour; 5 o’clock closing on one day in the week should cause no inconvenience. The shop assistants were only asking to serve the public for 70½ hours instead of 73½ hours. A resolution was passed that all should unite in closing on Wednesday evenings. Shopkeepers giving their support included **Mr Beckingsale**, **Mr H. Beard** and **J.D. Steel**. An amendment was suggested, but not passed, that Wednesday evening closing should be limited to shops that had not already adopted Saturday early (The large drapery houses had adopted earlier closing on Saturdays 10 or 12 years before).
- 7 Jun 1876 A letter was published in the *Cheltenham Examiner* deploring the long working hours in grocers’ shops – over 12 hours per day.
- 5 Apr 1884 The *Cheltenham Free Press* reported that ‘last year the grocers of **Cheltenham** agreed to close their establishments at 5 o’clock on Wednesdays, and now that the Spring has dawned upon us the same rule is to be applied’.
- Sep 1888 A public meeting was called by the **Early Closing Association** to promote a weekly half-day holiday in all shops.
- Mar 1904 A conference was held at the **Town Hall** to discuss local working conditions in the building trade. It was agreed that a ‘full hour’ should be allowed for a dinner break.
- Mar 1970 **Cheltenham** young Christians carried a wooden cross and placards in a silent demonstration against Good Friday shopping.
- Feb 1989 A major **Cheltenham** bookseller defied the Sunday trading ban, opening its doors to the public.

EARLY SOCIALISM

- Nov 1838 The **Cheltenham Owenites** (followers of social reformer **Robert Owen**) informed the *New Moral World* that ‘numerous applications for membership had come in’, that they were now about ‘to open their **Social Institution** for mental improvement’, and were setting up a shop selling publications on socialism. Leading **Cheltenham Owenite** free-thinkers included **Samuel Ockford** (secretary), **George Adams** (a cabinet-maker) and his wife **Harriet** (presidents), **J.B. Lear** (a shoemaker, secretary), and **Mr Beckett** (branch treasurer). These activists organised meetings to denounce the **Rev. Francis Close** and ‘his anti-popery-fire-and-faggot-breed’.
- Nov 1838 **Harriet Adams’** writings appeared in the *New Moral World* explaining why she left the Baptist church when she became a Socialist. In response her former Baptist minister from the **Salem Church** preached a sermon against **Owenism** the next Sunday, referring to the **Adams** family as ‘hell-hardened apostates, rebels to God and to the Queen’. He appealed to the congregation to shun them, an order obeyed by most of **Harriet’s** neighbours, including her sister.

- 25 Dec 1838 The socialist reformer **Robert Owen** visited **Cheltenham** and lectured on ‘Charity, Marriage and the Social System’ on Christmas and Boxing Day in the large room of the **Imperial Emporium**. **Cheltenham**’s religious leaders were appalled by what they perceived to be a rejection of Christianity and the conversion of their parishioners to infidelity.
- 17 Sep 1839 Three evenings of discussions began on the ‘Principles, Practice and Results of Socialism’, at the **York Hotel**. Reporting on the meetings the *Cheltenham Free Press* declared the ‘Social System to be Utopian’, adding ‘we have done with the Socialists and their visionary scheme’.
- 24 Sep 1839 A member of the **Birmingham Association for the Suppression of Infidelity**, **Mr Brindley**, delivered the first of his series of shilling lectures to about 500 people at the **Assembly Rooms**. He lectured against the ‘blasphemous and atheistical system falsely called Socialism. The **Rev. Francis Close** was in the chair. **Mr Brindley**’s subsequent lectures at the **Assembly Rooms** over the following week were attended by a decreasing number of people.
- Mr Brindley** repeated his first lecture on the evening of **24 September** to the working classes at the **Infant School Room** (in **St James Square**) – his ‘twopenny customers’ – an act reported by the *Cheltenham Free Press* as a ‘virulent abuse of the missionaries of Socialism’. The paper went on to complain that, although there could only be a few people present ‘so bereft of common sense to think that the project of **Robert Owen** (promoter of Socialism) is either rational or practicable’, **Mr Brindley** was shown to be a man ‘who deals more in abuse than argument’. It was not becoming of him to compare Socialist communities to piggeries and the inhabitants to pigs. The paper declared itself much opposed to such intolerance, bigotry and persecution. In opposition to this view, a ‘defender of Socialism’, **Mr Rowbotham**, was shielded from injury by some of those attending, who did not necessarily support his ideology but wanted to see fair play and free discussion.
- 1 Oct 1839 The **Rev. Francis Close** preached to a crowded **parish church**, describing Socialism to the congregation as ‘a viper gnawing at their domestic happiness, who would make their homes uncomfortable and their wives unfaithful . . .’. He declared that Socialism was ‘everything that was bad, bare-faced atheism and unblushing sedition’.
- 1 Feb 1840 The *Cheltenham Free Press* editorial cheerfully referred to Socialism as ‘the horrid system known by this name – the last filthy abortion of **Mr. Owen**’s maggot-eaten cranium has been the subject of some discussion in the **House of Lords**’. The same week a petition with 880 signatures was sent from **Cheltenham** to the **Bishop of Exeter** at the **House of Lords**. It urged the **House** to hold an Enquiry into Socialism, which was ‘calculated to do amazing mischief to society by the dissemination of doctrines most dangerous to morals and religion’.
- 1 Aug 1840 The *Cheltenham Free Press* reported that during the previous week a **Social Missionary** from London had delivered five lectures at the **Social Institution** (in **St George’s Place**). The subject of one of these lectures was vice and immorality, and the newspaper commented ‘we doubt not he was well qualified to discourse on that at all events’.
- Dec 1840 The **Latter-Day Saints**, ‘a new sect which has lately sprung up’ with about 30 members in **Cheltenham**, used the **Social Institution** in **St George’s Place** for their meetings.
- 1841 The **Rev. Francis Close** used his authority to prevent freethinkers from hiring buildings or meeting-rooms. He also engaged to lecture, on several occasions, **Mr Brindley** of the **Birmingham Association for the Suppression of Owenite Infidelity**.
- Jan 1841 The self-described ‘agitator’ **George Jacob Holyoake** paid his first visit to **Cheltenham**, and noted that the local **Owenites** were very few in number.
- 29 Apr 1841 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* expressed dismay at the appointment of **G.C. Wells** as one of a committee to superintend the education of the workhouse children. The paper had no objection to **Mr Wells** as a tradesman or a member of society, but had the strongest objection to his appointment as a ‘guardian over the rising generation’ as he was an avowed Socialist whose opinions upon education were ‘dangerous in the extreme’.
- 3 Jun 1841 The *Cheltenham Chronicle*, a Conservative newspaper, gleefully reported that the Socialists had been ousted from the building they had been using in **St George’s Place** (the former ‘**Sadlers Wells** puppet theatre’, known as the **Echo garage** in the 20th century and now demolished), by the **Church of England Working Men’s Association**.
- mid-Jul 1841 The **Cheltenham Owenites** were reduced to only a small group of dedicated members, and with the loss of their meeting room the branch (No.44) was almost defunct.
- 28 Sep 1841 A lecturer named **Simpkins** gave a lecture at the **Mechanics’ Institute** in which he stated that ‘positive crime’ could be a blessing. He gave the example of the Swing Riots – the rick-burning ‘caused an inquiry into and an alleviation of the distress of the working classes’. The *Cheltenham Examiner* commented that ‘we can wonder but little at the demoralized state of a portion of the community while this species of moral poison is openly inculcated’.

24 May 1842 A lecture was delivered at the **Mechanics' Institute** by the notable, freethinking Socialist and **Owenite** missionary, **George Jacob Holyoake**. The (Conservative) *Cheltenham Chronicle* printed a damning report, accusing **Holyoake** of 'delivering atheistical and blasphemous sentiments. The Magistrates decided that **Holyoake's** lecture was a clear case of blasphemy, as he alluded to Socialism as his 'religion' and denied the existence of God, and the Superintendent of Police was asked to bring him to justice. Two of the witnesses who heard **Holyoake** in debate with local preacher **Maitland** at the lecture happened to be compositors who worked on the *Cheltenham Chronicle* who declared they were 'accidentally present' at the lecture. It is believed they had been advised to attend by the **Rev. Francis Close** to look out for heresy.

Holyoake was the last person in England to be indicted for blasphemy. Realising he would be unable to retain a Christian attorney, **Holyoake** defended himself at the Court of Assizes (**15 Aug 1842**). He advised friends caught in similar situations that "We do not want lawyers to defend our opinions, those opinions not being their own, but we want them to simply maintain our right to publish what are to us important convictions". During the trial **Holyoake** dramatically proclaimed "Christianity claims what she does not allow – each to have his own belief". Although convicted and sentenced to six months in gaol, he emerged the moral victor.

13 Jun 1842 One of several **Owenite-Chartist** meetings took place, this one at the **Clarence Gallery**, to protest against the spurious charges against **Holyoake**. Part of the money for **Holyoake's** bail was raised by **Henry Fry**, a leading teetotal Chartist and a shopkeeper, helped by **Thomas Willey**, a ballad printer and Chartist sympathiser of **Oxford Passage**. **Henry Fry**, of **Northfield Terrace**, had played a leading role in the **Universal Communitarian Association** formed by **Goodwin Barmby** in **1841** (a utopian organisation which aimed to set up a 'social house for the free exponency of the loveful, the intelligent and the beautiful'.)

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

- 1 Jun 1825 The first **Mechanics' Institute** was formed in **Cheltenham**.
- 3 Aug 1825 A meeting to promote the **Cheltenham Mechanics' Institute** was held at **347 High Street**, the premises of **William S. Hollis**, (gunsmith), who was in the chair. About 18 members joined.
- 10 Apr 1826 The *Cheltenham Journal* stated their support for the recently-formed **Mechanics' Institute**, applauding the 'well-directed zeal' of its founder, **Dr J. Chichester** and praising the idea of 'extending to the labouring artisan the benefits of education and of making him familiar with science'. **Mr Hollis** later commented (at a meeting held 16 years later on **3 Oct 1840**) that as long as they were 'good boys' the **Rev. Francis Close** sent them the *Record* and other newspapers, but as soon as he heard that **Paine's Age of Reason** was in their library he refused to have anything more to do with them.
- 19 Aug 1833 A celebration dinner was held at the **White Hart** for the **Mechanics' Institution** anniversary. **Mr John William Partridge** was the president, and 84 sat down to dinner.
- 1 Mar 1834 A new **Mechanics' Institution** was formed in **Cheltenham**, one of 700 founded nationwide. Initially under middle-class patronage, (artist **George Rowe** was on the founding committee), an increasingly political agenda and radicalism led to a withdrawal of their interest. Despite the name it was not solely for mechanics – anybody, male or female, could claim admission as a member by paying 3s per quarter. The term 'Mechanics' referred to every hand-worker, everyone in the 'manual labour' class, and everyone employed by another to work for wages. It provided the working man with access to newspapers, too expensive for him to buy on his own, and this enabled him to acquire 'political knowledge'. Initially it was called the **General Association for Scientific & Literary Instruction**, and meetings and weekly lectures were held in rooms in **Albion Street**, in an old Presbyterian chapel near the **Pittville Street** junction.
- Sep 1834 Discussion appeared in the **Cheltenham** press as to whether the new **Cheltenham General Association for Scientific & Literary Instruction** was formed for political purposes rather than educational. **William Penn Gaskell**, a member of the management committee, defended the **Association** saying that it 'affords so innocent an opportunity' for the political instruction of the working classes. He claimed that political information was far more essential to the well-being of the people than 'acquaintance with any other science'.

The founding committee of the **Institution** were all middle class, apart from one artisan, **William Hollis**, gunsmith and radical. His fellow committee members were **E.G. Wells** (chemist and progressive Liberal), **Samuel Onley jun.** (builder and progressive Liberal), **Capt. Morrison** (R.N. Retired), the **Rev. Frank Barton** (Unitarian) and **George Rowe** (printer and staunch Liberal). **William Penn Gaskell** was a driving force who promoted working class radicalism at every opportunity, urging not just mechanics but 'other males and females' to join.

- 1 Dec 1834 It was decided, at a General Meeting, to change the name of the **Association for Literary & Scientific Instruction** to the **Cheltenham Mechanics' Institution**. The Radical newspaper, the *Cheltenham Free Press* declared 'We cannot too strongly recommend this **Society** to the Tradesman and Artizan. It is an admirable means of obtaining the best scientific and political knowledge; and also furnishes a most economical and comfortable resort for the evening.' Political science was considered an inseparable limb of **Mechanics' Institutions**; an anonymous letter appeared in the *Cheltenham Free Press* claiming 'the **Mechanics' Institute** was degenerating into a political club and he would strongly recommend a return to literary pursuits'.
- 29 Jan 1835 The **Mechanics' Institution** held its first 'Conversazione' in its room at **105 Albion Street**.
- Feb 1835 The **Cheltenham** artist **George Rowe** was a member of the **Mechanics' Institution**, often chairing meetings, acting as the secretary, and also giving lectures e.g. on lithography. Other considerations of the 'natural sciences' included lectures on the 'Circulation of the Blood', aspects of chemistry, etc.
- Mar 1835 There was some concern when it was decided to let the **Mechanics' Institution** room every Sunday for Unitarian worship, 'for a £10 note'.
- 6 Apr 1835 The **Cheltenham Athenaeum** opened in **Portland Street**. It was a literary and philosophical society set up by members of the **Mechanics' Institution** who disapproved of the political and religious questions that arose at their **Institute**. The name '**The Athenaeum**' was used again in **May 1856** when the **Working Men's Improvement Association** was so renamed.
- May 1835 **William Penn Gaskell** became Vice President of the **Mechanics' Institute**. He firmly believed that the working classes could only effect a radical change to their status and conditions by achieving political knowledge and moral power; he saw the **Mechanics' Institute** as the only vehicle for doing this in **Cheltenham**.
- 7 Jul 1835 As they did not need to use their room until 7 p.m., the members of the **Cheltenham Mechanics' Institution** opened it as a **Public Reading Room** for the principal newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets. The terms of subscription were 1/- per week and up to 18/- per year.
- 9 Feb 1836 A petition to the **House of Commons**, introduced by **Mr Hollis**, was agreed to by the members of the **Mechanics' Institution** for a total repeal of the Stamp Duties on newspapers. The high cost of Stamp Duty was seen as an impediment to the further advancement of the mechanics.
- 3 Mar 1836 Members of the **Mechanics' Institution** celebrated their anniversary, with 110 sitting down to a dinner prepared by **Mr Boodle**. **Fulwar Craven Esq** was president, and **Dr Christopher** and **Edward Kendal Esq** were vice-presidents. The room was 'tastefully decorated with evergreens interspersed with variegated lamps'.
- Jun 1836 The Stamp Duty on newspapers was reduced from 4d to 1d.
- 4 Jun 1836 **Mr Healy** gave a lecture at the **Mechanics' Institution** on sweeping chimneys by machinery. He concluded his talk by saying that 1,992 chimneys were swept in the first year by the machine on its introduction to **Cheltenham**. During the second year, although 2,300 were swept by the machine, 400 bushels of soot less were obtained, 'proving that the machine had in the first instance removed greater quantities than the boys who had previously swept them'.
- Nov 1837 **John Goding** and **William Hollis** were becoming political activists, increasingly interspersing their scientific lectures at the **Mechanics' Institute** with more politically-oriented subjects.
- 6 Mar 1839 At the **Mechanics' Institution** anniversary celebration the proprietor of the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, **Mr Rawlings**, said he thought it his duty to continue sending a free copy of his paper to the **Institution**, a tradition begun by his father-in-law, former proprietor, **Mr Cunningham**.
- 26 Sep 1840 It was announced that a committee, anxious for the spread of education amongst mechanics, had been appointed to devise plans for remodelling the **Institution** and 'for restoring it to its pristine usefulness'. The *Cheltenham Free Press* commented 'we have no fear for its success if the varied sentiments on religion and politics necessarily held by the subscribers are prevented from again coming into collision'. A public meeting was to be held on **28 September** at the **Institution** room in **Albion Street** to explain the plans of the committee.
- 28 Sep 1840 At a public meeting at the **Mechanics' Institute** the president, **E. Kendall Esq.** alluded to a press report suggesting that the institution had been broken up by quarrels among the members about religion and politics. It was decided that the rule forbidding the discussion of politics should be expunged. **Mr Goding** seconded this saying that the main cause of other **Mechanics' Institutes** failing was that they did not discuss politics, 'the subject of most importance to the working-man'. The **Mechanics' Institute** had steadily become a forum for the Radicals and Chartists to spread their views, providing intellectual and mutual instruction for the working man. This increased knowledge was to prove a powerful instrument for social and political transformation.
- At this meeting it was also proposed that the rate of subscription be lowered to make the **Mechanics' Institute** even more accessible to working men.

- 12 Oct 1840 The **Rev. F. Bishop**, minister of the **Unitarian Chapel**, delivered the first lecture since the remodelling of the **Institution**. He spoke to about 80 members, with **E.G. Wells** (chemist) in the chair, on the subject of ‘Early Education’.
- 19 Oct 1840 Local chemist **E.G. Wells** lectured to a large audience at the **Mechanics’ Institute** entitled ‘How to Extinguish the Largest Conflagrations in Five Minutes’. The following month he gave a lecture on physiology, ‘with reference to the Structure of Man and the best means of preserving health’.
- Nov 1840 Lectures at the **Mechanics’ Institute** this month included the subject of political economy, by **Mr Nourse**, with the object of showing that all men ought to interfere with politics. The following evening **Mr Davis** delivered a lecture in defence of teetotalism. It was also announced that an elocution class had been formed at the **Institute**.
- 5 Sep 1841 There were disturbances outside the **Mechanics’ Institute** when about 400 people gathered in the street to demonstrate against the Mormons, who had been lent a room at the **Institute** in **Albion Street** to use as their chapel. The *Cheltenham Examiner* (Liberal) criticised the Mormons being allowed to propagate their doctrines, and complained generally about ‘Mormonism, Socialism, and all the other monstrous –isms’.
- 2 Mar 1842 **J.F. Berrington** delivered a lecture on ‘Class Legislation and the Corn Laws’ at the **Mechanics’ Institute**, with **Mr Hollis** in the chair.
- 20 Apr 1842 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* (Conservative) reported that the ‘continued annoyance to which the inhabitants in the neighbourhood of this **Institution** are subject, particularly on the Sabbath, calls loudly upon the owners ... to rid the building of its present occupiers’. ‘We trust we shall not be called upon to refer to this nuisance again.’
- 17 Nov 1842 A driving force behind the **Mechanics’ Institute**, and supporter of the People’s Charter, **William Penn Gaskell** died at his home, **3 Exmouth Street**. He was lineally descended from **William Penn**, the founder and first proprietor of **Pennsylvania**.
- End 1842 After the **Holyoake** affair (see **May 1842**, p. 13) support for the **Mechanics’ Institute** gradually waned, and the role of educating the working man was taken over by **Working Men’s Clubs** (which see).

ODDFELLOWS, FORESTERS & OTHER BENEFIT SOCIETIES

(**Oddfellows** – **Friendly Societies**, non-profit mutual organisations owned by their members, set up to protect and care for their members before the existence of the welfare state, trade unions or the NHS. The **Ancient Order of Foresters** is a national Friendly Society established in 1834.)

- Late May 1824 The **Cheltenham Loyal Albion Lodge of Oddfellows** assembled at the **Royal Oak Inn** and marched to the **parish church**, accompanied by the **Gloucester Grand Lodge** and several brothers of the **Worcester** and **Manchester Lodges**. Immense crowds were assembled in the **High Street** to witness the ceremony. The brothers afterwards returned to the **Royal Oak** where an excellent dinner was provided.
- 2 Jun 1828 The *Cheltenham Journal* reported that several of the **Cheltenham Benefit Societies** ‘walked in procession to the church, with their banners flying accompanied by bands of music’, followed by dinners held at their respective headquarters ‘where the remainder of the day was spent in innocent hilarity’. The paper commented that ‘by the existence of these **Benefit Clubs**, for the support of each other in old age, sickness, disease or want, a great saving is effected to the poor-rates and even on this account they deserve encouragement’.
- 1829 The first **Oddfellows Society** was established in **Cheltenham**.
- 31 Jan 1831 The *Cheltenham Journal* reported on the 12th AGM of the **Cheltenham Savings’ Bank**, describing it as ‘the Poor Man’s Treasure’. Nearly £40,000 capital had been invested by the ‘industrious classes’ in Government Securities via the Bank. A decrease of the funds over the previous year was attributed to the breaking up of several **Friendly Societies**, the funds of which had been withdrawn from the **Savings’ Bank** to be divided amongst the members.
- 1834 A **Leckhampton** branch of **Oddfellows** was established.
- 1 Jun 1835 The sixth anniversary dinner of the **Loyal United Regent Lodge of Oddfellows** was held at **Brother Humphris’s**, the **Royal Oak Inn**, **High Street**.
- 1840 The **Loyal Imperial Lodge** of **Oddfellows** was established.
- 27 Jul 1840 A Grand Procession of various **Oddfellows Societies**, took place along the **High Street** and the **Promenade**, in celebration of the institution of the **Manchester Lodge** in **Cheltenham**. In addition to a display of their flags, the members of the different societies carried a variety of insignia, such as broad battle axes, sceptres, etc. They attended the **parish church**, where the **Rev. Francis Close** preached a sermon. After the parade the members dined in the **Old Wells Pump Room**. A variety of amusements, including music and fireworks, concluded the festivities.

- 24 May 1841 It was announced that the **Loyal United Regent Lodge of Oddfellows** had moved their meeting place from the **Royal Oak Inn, High Street**, to the **Clarence Commercial Hotel, Clarence Street**. Here over 60 people attended a 12th anniversary dinner on **Monday 7th June 1841**.
- 20 Sep 1841 The 7th anniversary of the benefit society, the **Loyal Cheltenham Harmonic Lodge 899 Manchester Unity**, was celebrated at the Lodge Room at the **Beehive Inn**. The chair was taken by **Bro. Carter** and the vice-chair by **Bro. Beavan**.
- 24 Jul 1843 A procession of between 600 and 700 **Oddfellows** took place through the town. They assembled in the **Old Well Walk** before attending a service in the Parish Church, where the **Rev. Francis Close** preached a sermon to them. The party then marched to the **Park Gardens** for dancing and music at a picnic in the grounds.
- Jul 1843 The triennial procession for the **Widows & Orphans Oddfellows Lodge** took place.
- Jan 1844 A new **Oddfellows Lodge** was opened at the **London Inn, Charlton Kings**.
- Nov 1845 A dinner was held to celebrate the opening of an **Oddfellows Lodge** at the **Crown Hotel**.
- Jan 1847 The annual ball of the **Loyal Albion Lodge of Oddfellows** was held at the **Rotunda**.
- Nov 1847 A Town of **Cheltenham** Court of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** was established.
- 28 Jun 1849 Members of the **Cheltenham Working Men's Benefit Society** celebrated their 10th anniversary at the house of **Mr Hayward, Sydney Arms Inn, Pittville Street**.
- Jul 1849 The **Tradesmen's Friendly Benefit Society** held its anniversary dinner.
- May 1850 The **United Friendly Society** held a meeting at the **Infant School** house.
- Jun 1850 About 700 **Oddfellows** from **Cardiff** visited **Cheltenham** on a special train.
- Aug 1851 The **Oddfellows Imperial Lodge** met at the **Bell Hotel** under the presidency of **P.G. Pipe**.
- Jun 1856 The **Oddfellows** welcomed and entertained **Captain Berkeley MP** at **Alstone Mill**.
- Jul 1857 About 200 members of the **Independent Order of Oddfellows, M.U.** met for dinner and speeches in the grounds of the **Royal Old Wells** for their annual gathering. Lodges attending included the **Cheltenham Harmonic**, meeting at the **Beehive**, the **Imperial** and the **Widows' & Orphans' Lodges**, meeting at the **Eight Bells**, and the **Beaufort**, meeting at the **Beaufort Arms**. About 200 brethren attended, plus a large number of 'the uninvited'.
- Jul 1857 The brethren and friends of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** celebrated their anniversary at the **Music Hall, Sydney Arms**. They assembled first at the **Masonic Hall** where they usually held their Court and then proceeded to the **Sydney Arms** for dinner, provided by **Mr Bretherton** for about 140. **T.J. Cottle** presided in the chair and a band played during the dinner. Two past Chief Rangers, **Brothers William Gibbons** and **William Dryall**, were presented with silver medals.
- Jul 1858 The **Ancient Order of Foresters** held their first gala at the **Royal Old Wells**.
- Feb 1860 The **Oddfellows Rifle Corps** held a public meeting at the **Montpellier Rotunda** to recruit members.
- May 1860 The **13th (Oddfellows) Company Gloucestershire Volunteer Rifle Corps** was set up. Subscriptions were raised from the townspeople and sent to the Captain, **Edmond Percival Morphy**, towards defraying the expenses of the Company. They held their shooting prize competitions at **Seven Springs**. Annual dinners were usually held at the **Eight Bells**.
- Jan 1862 **Lodge 2981** of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** moved their meeting place to the **Bell Inn, Bath Road**.
- Apr 1864 The **Oddfellows Band** performed at the **Old Wells**.
- Whitsun 1864 A number of **Benefit Societies** held their annual celebrations in the town. The **London Inn Benefit Society** held their annual dinner after a procession to . The previous **October**, after sums had been spent on deaths, relief of sickness and expenses, funds of £895 13s 6d were divided amongst the members. The **Cheltenham United Friendly Society** held their 25th anniversary celebration at the **Town Hall**, where 177 members sat down to dinner after attending a sermon at **St Mary's Parish Church**. The **King William Friendly Society** and the **Nag's Head Benefit Society** met at the respective pubs after which they were named. The **Cheltenham Female Provident Society** celebrated its 18th anniversary at the **Trinity Schoolroom**, where they partook of 'the cup that cheers but not inebriates', according to the *Cheltenham Mercury*.
- Nov 1864 The **Greyhound Inn** in **North Street** was renamed the **Oddfellows Arms Hotel**.
- 12 Jul 1866 The annual gala of the **Cheltenham District of the Loyal & Independent Order of Oddfellows** was held on a spacious meadow near the 'new' **Cemetery**. The usual dinner did not take place as the banquets of recent years had not been satisfactory to the majority of members. The fête was attended by several thousand people, which contributed considerably to funds.
- 16 Jun 1868 Honorary members of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** were instituted at a special meeting held in the **Masonic Hall**.
- Jul 1868 **Frederick Thompson** was brought before the police court for refusing to pay **John Jakeway** from the **British United Friendly Society** funds.

- 3 Nov 1868 The **Oddfellows** annual dinner was held at the **Farmers Club** room.
- Apr 1869 The **Operative Stonemasons Friendly Society** presented a cheque to a disabled member.
- Jul 1872 The **Oddfellows Fête** at **Pittville** included a balloon ascent.
- Jun 1873 The annual tea meeting of the local branch of the **Female Friendly Society** was held in the **parish schoolroom**.
- 2 Aug 1875 The **Loyal & Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, Friendly Society** held their annual fête at the **Cricket Ground** in **Hales Road** on the August Bank Holiday. The **Town Band** was engaged, plus two other bands for dancing. A display of fireworks was put on by **Mr Wilder** of **Birmingham**. The Secretary, **Samuel Artus** of **1 Sandford Street** invited tenders for supplying the refreshment booths with wine, beer and spirits and with confectionery.
- 28 Oct 1875 The **Loyal Imperial Lodge of Oddfellows** celebrated their 32nd anniversary with a supper in their lodge-room at the **Eight Bells Inn**.
- Dec 1876 The Liberal candidate, **Sir Henry Hoare**, was initiated into the **Oddfellows**.
- May 1877 **Baron de Ferrières** was elected a trustee of the **Oddfellows Lodge**, joining **Mr Skillicorne** and **Mr Fallon**.
- Jul 1877 The **Ancient Order of Foresters** held a procession from the **Plough Hotel** to **Pittville**, followed by dancing in the **Pump Room**.
- Sep 1878 A former secretary, **Samuel Artus**, was accused of embezzling money belonging to the **Manchester Oddfellows** in **Cheltenham**.
- Dec 1878 The Vicar of **Prestbury** refused to allow the **Oddfellows** to give an address at the funeral of **Mr Makgill**.
- Feb 1879 A new **Oddfellows** branch, numbered 6,306, opened at the **Vine Tree Inn** in **Prestbury**.
- 2 Oct 1880 It was announced that **Mr Markey's** house, the **Oddfellows' Arms** in **North Street**, was required for 'Town Improvement purposes'. Among the bodies holding their meetings there were four different Lodges of **Oddfellows**, the **Society of the General Union of Carpenters**, the **Amalgamated Society of Tailors**, the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants** and the **Friendly Society of Operative Cabinet Makers**. They were all willing to move to the **Cambridge Hotel** opposite, provided the licence could be arranged for **Mr Markey** to run it.
- May 1882 Members of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** attended a special service at **Holy Trinity** church for their **Hospital Sunday**.
- Jul 1882 The Juvenile Branch of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** had their annual outing to **Oakley Park**.
- Aug 1883 About 500 of the juvenile **Oddfellows** branch boarded a special train for an outing to **Malvern**.
- Apr 1884 The **Leckhampton** branch of the **Young Men's Friendly Society** provided an entertainment.
- Oct 1884 About 700 members of the local **Oddfellows Lodges** attended a service at **Gloucester Cathedral**.
- Jul 1885 The annual dinner of the **Leckhampton** branch of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** was held at the **Norwood Arms**.
- Nov 1886 The **Rev. C.V. Childe** of **Christ Church** chaired a meeting of the **Girls' Friendly Society** in the **Montpellier Rotunda**.
- Oct 1887 About 400 from the local Friendly Societies attended a Jubilee Dinner of the **Amalgamated Friendly Societies**, chaired by **J.T. Agg-Gardner**.
- Sep 1888 The **London Inn Branch** of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** held their anniversary party.
- May 1889 The **High Chief Ranger** was a guest of the local **Ancient Order of Foresters** court dinner at the **Corn Exchange**.
- Sep 1889 The **Town Band** accompanied about 600 members of the **Oddfellows** on a march to **St Mark's Church**.
- May 1890 The **Oddfellows** of **Cheltenham** purchased the **York Rooms** for £800.
- Nov 1890 The **Imperial Lodge of Oddfellows** made a presentation to **Dr E.J. Gregory, P.G.**, their treasurer for 30 years.
- Jul 1891 Nearly 600 **Oddfellows** attended a service at **Christ Church** as part of their annual celebrations.
- 20 Apr 1892 The new **Oddfellows Hall**, formerly the **York Rooms**, was formally opened after undergoing extensive alterations. The **Mayor** attended the inauguration of these new headquarters. The hall, 76ft x 26ft, was available to let for concerts, dinners, auctions, etc.
- Jul 1892 About 800 members of the **Cheltenham** District of the **Manchester Unity of Oddfellows** marched from the **Gordon Lamp** to **Salem Chapel** for a service.
- Jul 1893 The **Oddfellows** annual church parade was to **St Paul's Church**.
- Sep 1893 The **United Juvenile Order of Oddfellows** enjoyed an outing to **Weston-super-Mare**.
- Jun 1894 At a meeting of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** in the **Parish Room, St James Square**, a number of ladies enrolled as Founders of a branch of **Female Foresters**. The female branch, '**Cheltonia Floreat**' formally opened the following month.

- Jun 1894 A meeting of **Oddfellows** was held to consider opening a Lodge in the lower part of town. A 17th **Cheltenham** Lodge opened the following **September** in the **St Peter's schoolroom**.
- Oct 1894 A meeting was held at the **Imperial Temperance Hotel** to discuss the formation of a **Women's Oddfellows Lodge**. A year later the **Loyal Sisters Self Help Lodge** celebrated its first anniversary.
- Mar 1896 The **Ancient Order of Foresters** gathered to present a bureau to **Bro. G.C. Pratley** who had been their clerk for 30 years.
- May 1896 A demonstration was held by the local **Friendly Societies** in aid of the **Gloucester** smallpox relief fund, displaying their banners in a march around the town. A total of £65 was collected. In **September** the committee of the **Cheltenham Friendly** and **Trade** societies were thanked for collecting £100 towards the **Gloucester** epidemic.
- Aug 1897 The **Oddfellows** held their first **Horticultural & Industrial Exhibition** in the **Oddfellows Hall**.
- Jul 1898 The **Girls' Friendly Society** held a meeting to promote the work of its **Reading Union**.
- Sep 1899 About 250 brethren attended the annual **Oddfellows** church parade in **St Matthew's Church**.
- Mar 1901 The **Cheltenham Oddfellows** made a fraternal visit to those at **Gloucester** and gave a concert at their **Oddfellows Hall**.
- Jun 1903 The **Annual Moveable Committee** of the **Oddfellows** (the national AGM) met at the **Winter Garden**, with a reception, church parade, service, Grand Master's address, speeches and a fête at **Pittville** attended by 16,000. The **AMC** had first met in **Cheltenham** 35 years previously.
- Sep 1902 The bell ringers of **St Mary's Parish Church**, led by **W.T. Pates**, issued a 'merry peal' for the **Foresters'** parade.
- Aug 1905 The Medical Officer, **Dr William Hutton**, of the **Friendly Societies Medical Association** received a testimonial at the **Oddfellows Hall**.
- May 1906 About 200 **Friendly Society** members visited **London** for the opening of the **Hearts of Oak** offices in **Euston**.
- Nov 1907 The **Ancient Order of Foresters Cheltenham Court** celebrated its diamond jubilee.
- Jun 1908 A member of the **Cheltenham Oddfellows**, **Edward Bourne**, was elected Deputy-Grand Master of the **Manchester Unity of Oddfellows** at **Cardiff**. In **June 1909** he was elected Grand Master and a banquet was held in **Cheltenham** in his honour in **October** that year.
- Sep 1908 The **Ancient Order of Foresters** held their annual church parade, from the **Queen's Hotel** to **St Paul's Church**.
- 1909 An **Oddfellows' Conference** was held at the **Winter Gardens**.
- 1909 The headquarters of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** moved to **Cheltenham**. At the time there were no **Lodges** operative in the Gloucestershire area and the Grand Secretary, **Brother W.H. Rose**, worked tirelessly to amend this.
- Mar 1909 There were now only five **Oddfellows Lodges** in **Cheltenham**.
- Jan 1912 The funeral of **W.T. Caulkett** took place. He was licensee of the **Full Moon Hotel** at **171 High Street** (now **No. 295**) and a member of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes**. Behind the former **Full Moon** stands a purpose-built **Lodge** of the **R.A.O.B.**, now used as business premises. It was possible that it was erected while **Mr Caulkett** was landlord, between **1907** and **1912**.
- Aug 1912 The **Cheltenham Friendly Societies** held an open-air service in aid of **Cheltenham Hospital**.
- Dec 1912 The **District Primo Lodge** of the **R.A.O.B.** was re-opened in **Cheltenham** with five lodges, at the **Kings Head**. More lodges opened over the next five years, recruiting many new members.
- Oct 1913 Member of the **Ancient Order of Foresters** attended the placing of a memorial over the grave of **Bro. George Pratley** as a mark of their respect and the esteem in which they held the man who had been their secretary for 25 years.
- Early 1915 The first of 18 ambulances paid for by the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** was driven by **Brother George Pearce R.O.H.** of **Cheltenham** at **Ypres**. Another, ambulance No. 8, was driven by **Brother Ernest Harding**.
- May 1920 The **Oddfellows Annual Moveable Committee** was held in the **Town Hall**. A view from the balcony showed only six women on the male-dominated crowded conference floor benches.
- 1922 A Convention of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** was held in **Cheltenham**.
- Nov 1932 The **Lodge of Oddfellows** in **Cheltenham** celebrated its centenary.
- 1946 A Convention of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** was held in the town.
- 1962 **Cheltenham** hosted the Grand Lodge of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes**.
- 1970 The **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** moved their headquarters to the **Wiltshire Brewery** public house at **4-5 Hewlett Place**. The public house closed in **1975** and the premises became the **R.A.O.B. Club**, from which five lodges still operate today..
- 2000 **Cheltenham** hosted the Grand Lodge of the **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** for the second time.



6. Pharmacists, drug and chemical workers from the U.C.A.L works formed the Cheltenham branch of the Chemical Workers' Union in Nov 1919. Here U.C.A.L. workers are receiving strike pay on 6 Dec 1919, at their room in the Imperial Café, High Street .



7. James Grist Carr, a signalman at the GWR Station, Lansdown, for 34 years, was a well-known figure in friendly society, trade union, cooperative and political circles in Cheltenham.



8. George Wride retired in 1919 after 48 years' continuous service as a GWR engine driver. He was national President of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen for six years.



9 & 10. St George's Hall in the High Street (opposite Wilkinson's today) was often used as a venue for public meetings to discuss social and political issues. It was here that Cheltenham's Trades Council was set up on 6 Nov 1875.

11. The *Clarion*, a weekly socialist newspaper, adopted a British-focused perspective on political affairs. *Clarion* vans toured small English and Scottish towns and villages from 1896-1929 spreading the socialist word. Here the 'Vanner', Mr Kennedy (on the van steps), is handing out newspapers to local socialists on 26 Apr 1908.



TRADE UNIONS &c

- 27 Jun 1811 An advertisement in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* for boot and shoemakers contained the following stipulation – ‘Men belonging to any Combination need not apply’.
- 1823 Rapid expansion was taking place in the town; over 4,500 workmen were in daily employment in the building trades. The speculative building crisis and ruinous banking crash of the end of **1825** led to ‘so many artisans being thrown out of employment, but in consequence of the major part of them leaving the town, the builders were enabled to finish their new houses more leisurely’.
- 2 Mar 1829 The *Cheltenham Journal* reproduced a placard seen in **Cheltenham** – ‘Take Notice The Prodistant Petition to Government We Wants Work And the Pleace Men putt Apon Half Pay And the Malt Tax Took of for We Have Beard the Burden Long Anuff Like Jack Asses and We are worse than Balias Ass.’
- 1 Dec 1830 At the **Public Office** 70 gentlemen and principal inhabitants were sworn in as an ‘armed and mounted Association’, and 322 as ‘special constables’ to preserve the peace of the district in view of the **Swing riots** in the Cotswolds. The machine breaking and rick-firing had not yet happened in the Vale but **Cheltenham** felt it best to be prepared.
- Jun 1832 The press reported that ‘Considerable improvement has taken place in the employment of the Working Classes this summer in this town. Business is brisker than it has been since the Panic; but, unfortunately for the parishioners, a greater number of carpenters, bricklayers, stone-masons, &c, have poured in this spring than for many years.’
- 25 Nov 1833 The *Cheltenham Journal* reported that a **Trade Union** had been established in **Cheltenham**. The paper recommended that employers avoid employing any mechanics involved in this ‘Association of Artisans’ as these individuals were likely to have ‘their principles corrupted, their moral rectitude destroyed, their industrious habits altogether subverted ...’. It went on to suggest that the Superintendent of Police should lose no time in investigating the matter – ‘an early check given to the formation of such a body may prevent much ulterior mischief’.
- 28 Nov 1833 Magistrate **George Russell** stated that the town’s vigilant Superintendent of Police had investigated the recently formed **Trade Unions in Cheltenham**. Meetings were held at certain public houses and it was suggested that the landlords should not allow these gatherings ‘if they have any interest in the renewal of their licences’. The fear was that **Trade Unions** were more political than instructive and involved certain ‘suspicious mystery’, considered illegal at that time. Members ‘must henceforth be aware that all their actions are closely watched by the Police’.
- 9 Dec 1833 A carpenter named **Jarvis Carter** charged two members of the **Bricklayers’ Union** with unlawfully taking away his tools. They did this as he refused to join the union, described in the *Cheltenham Journal* as ‘a very disgraceful transaction emanating from a most dangerous principle’. The accused were ordered to pay ample compensation to **Carter**, not only for his tools but also for his loss of time, and also to pay costs. The paper also felt that the employer should have done his duty to society by dismissing the accused for belonging to a **Trade Union**.
- 5 Jan 1834 Workmen lost all their tools in a disastrous fire at the **St George’s Place** workshop of **Messrs Wood & White**, cabinet makers. A public subscription was set up to raise money to replace the tools, but suspended when it was rumoured that the workmen were **Trade Union** members, as ‘so strong was the expression of public feeling against those dangerous and illegal associations’. Public confidence was restored when the men made an affidavit denying they were **TU** members.
- 17 Feb 1834 Rumours were discounted in the *Cheltenham Journal* that ‘the misguided and deluded workmen’ who had been induced to become members of the ‘dangerous’ **Trade Unions** had determined to ‘desert their employers and “strike” for an advance of wages’. The paper pronounced that it was happy that the character of **Cheltenham** had not been compromised by any such unlawful proceeding. It also supported the move by local Magistrates to refuse to renew the license of any public house landlord that allowed unlawful **Trade Union** meetings on the premises.
- 5 Mar 1834 A Circular was distributed in **Cheltenham** addressed to all the Master Carpenters: ‘Sir – We, as Journeymen Carpenters, with feelings of the greatest respect, invite you as a Master to meet us at a Meeting convened on **Wednesday March the 5th 1834** at three o’clock in the afternoon, in accordance with a requisition sent to you a few days ago; when we hope to lay before you such evidence as shall convince you that we are not combined to injure, but united to protect the interest of both master and man. Sir, the place appointed for meeting is the **Pittville Hotel**.’
- 17 Mar 1834 **John Lyfield**, a painter employed by **Messrs. Jearrad**, appeared before Magistrates. **Lyfield**, a member of the **Trade Union**, had damaged the work of another painter, **Blakeney**, as he refused to join the Union. **Lyfield** was fined 7s plus costs, or be committed to **Northleach House of Correction** for two months hard labour. The Bench repeated their determination to oppose the granting of any license to taverns or public houses in which **Trade Unions** were allowed meet.

- 14 Apr 1834 The first town petition in support of the **Tolpuddle Martyrs** (then known as the **Dorchester Labourers**) was presented by **Craven Berkeley** MP to the **House of Commons** on behalf of the inhabitants of **Cheltenham**, who petitioned the **House** to present an address to **His Majesty** to reverse the sentence (of transportation for seven years) passed upon the agricultural labourers at **Dorchester** on **19 March 1834** for ‘the administration of unlawful oaths’. Their real crime was to fight against the farmers’ desire to reduce their wages below subsistence level. Although **Berkeley** presented the petition, he stated that he himself did not think the case of the **Dorchester** men deserved the further consideration of His Majesty’s Ministers.
- 8 May 1834 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* reported that the **Cheltenham** parochial authorities had ‘resolved to refuse all relief to members of the **Trade Unions**, and to refer them to the Magistrates, who will routinely decide that no relief can be granted in consequence of their “refusal to work”’.
- 8 May 1834 **Mr Jearrad** (architect of the **Queen’s Hotel**, **Christ Church**, etc) posted a notice at his establishment stating ‘The highly improper and unauthorised use made of **Mr Jearrad’s** name throughout the town of **Cheltenham** by the **Unionists**, for the furtherance of their objects, obliges **Mr Jearrad** to desire that all Members of the **Union** will quit his employ on Saturday next.
‘**Mr Jearrad** believes that success on the part of the Unionists is altogether impossible; but that if they pursue their present course, the peace of society may be endangered, and the destruction of the interests of the workmen will ultimately result.
‘**Mr Jearrad** has declined all combinations with the Masters, because he believes combinations, whether on the part of the master or the workmen, to be arbitrary, unjust and oppressive, and therefore he stands opposed to them.’
- May 1834 Workmen were often keen to assure the public that they had no connection with **Trade Unions**. For example an advertisement placed in the *Cheltenham Journal* by **J. County**, Oil and Colourman of **Winchcombe Street**, informed the nobility and gentry of **Cheltenham** ‘that 4s 6d per day is not an exorbitant price for a journeyman Painter, considering the profits of a Master Painter, and the 5 months they have to work in the Summer, their health is seriously injured by the Colours &c, and in the Winter months they are nearly starving for want of work. Any Nobleman or Gentleman favouring **J. County** with their work – he will allow them 30% for cash payment ... and he will pay every Journeyman 5s per day, as he will have none but experienced workmen. No connection with any **Club** or **Union**, except the **Masonic Lodge**.’
- 20 May 1834 **Mrs Elizabeth Artus** charged **W. Snelus** and his wife **Anne** with repeated breaches of the peace in threatening to assault her. It appeared that her husband, **Mr Artus**, had at one time belonged to the **Trade Unions**, but ‘being convinced of the illegality of such a confederacy’ he had given up his membership. **Snelus** was still a member of the **Union** and he and his wife had repeatedly menaced the **Artus** family. The Magistrates reprimanded **Snelus** and ordered him to be bound over to keep the peace for three months.
- 10 Jun 1834 Policeman **H. Hollands** charged **R. Keating** with being drunk and ‘causing a great disturbance in company with 18 or 20 other tailors who refused to disperse when required by him to do so’. (At this time the tailors in the metropolis were striking in large numbers as members of the **Trade Unions**, and **Cheltenham** was nervous that the movement would take hold locally.) **Keating** was fined 5s for being drunk, 5s for profane swearing, and costs. In default of payment he was committed to the **Northleach House of Correction** for 14 days.
- 18 Jun 1836 Three men were charged with intimidating workers at the building firm of **Urch & Seabright** in **Fairview**. The majority of the 28 workmen at the firm were on strike as they were not happy about a particular man being allowed to work in the shop. Those who continued to go to work for **Urch & Seabright** suffered considerable abuse and threats for not joining the strikers. The three men who led the threatening behaviour, including assaults on those they perceived to be ‘scabs’, were sentenced to 10 days imprisonment at the **Northleach House of Correction**.
- Feb 1840 A Tradesmen’s Ball was held at the **Assembly Rooms** to celebrate the marriage of **Queen Victoria** and **Prince Albert**.
- 27 Jun 1840 A letter appeared in the *Cheltenham Free Press* to ‘Fellow Working Men’ from ‘An Enemy to Oppression’ about the ‘combination’ of master butchers in **Cheltenham** ‘who seek to extort unwarrantable prices by secret combination acts. . . . Let us defeat their over-reaching design by establishing a Peoples Shambles conducted by an open committee, elected by the people of **Cheltenham**’.
- 15 Aug 1840 At a meeting of the plasterers of **Cheltenham** it was resolved to raise by subscription a fund for the widows and 10 children of the late **John King** and **William Brown**. These two men had both fallen from scaffolding on the **Bays Hill Estate** in late **July 1840**. Subscriptions were to be sent to the treasurers, **William Clifford** of **10 Fairview Place** and **Thomas Tustin** of **Casino Cottage**, or to the secretary **James Mayo** of **24 Duke Street**, as well as at banks and libraries.

- 21 Jul 1841 The *Cheltenham Examiner*, a Liberal newspaper, reported that Tory zealot **Capt. H.P. Wallace** of **Priory Lodge** had attempted to force an ex-employee, a stonemason named **G. Weaver**, not to vote for **Mr. Berkeley** (Liberal candidate) in the recent General Election. He threatened never to employ **Weaver** again if he voted Liberal. **Weaver** responded to this by saying he believed it better to upset an employer than to violate his conscience and be called a turncoat.
- Nov 1842 A number of journeymen tailors in **Cheltenham** went on strike to protest against the employment of women and girls in the trade while so many of their number, who had served apprenticeships, were unemployed. One journeyman tailor wrote to the *Cheltenham Free Press* to commend the firms **Messrs Colt & Bastard** and **Messrs Shirer & McDougall** who ‘did not resort to this unjust practice; consequently their men are at work and their business proceeding as usual’.
- 26 Nov 1842 A letter was published in the *Cheltenham Free Press* from ‘A Working Man’ complaining about the men being employed to build ‘the new **College**’ on the **Bath Road**. A contractor from far outside **Cheltenham** was being used and the writer felt that, in order to provide a lower tender than any local firm, the men were being employed there for much reduced wages and shortened breaks. He felt that advantage was being taken of the ‘badness of trade, to lower their already scanty wages beyond starvation point’.
- 28 Nov 1842 Tailors **Ebenezer Maitland**, **Bartholomew Wilson** and **Michael Walsh** were charged with intimidating **Joseph Willis**, a journeyman tailor working for **Messrs Thomas & Bulgin**, to induce him to come out on strike. The cases were dismissed.
- 24 Dec 1842 Tailor **George Smith** was charged with assaulting **Michael Welsh**, a striking journeyman tailor. The watchmaker **Robert Brown** stated that he saw **Smith** ‘knock **Welsh**’s head through my window’. **Smith** said that **Welsh** had been taunting him for employing men from **London** during the **Cheltenham** tailors’ strike. The Bench fined **Smith** 1s only, plus costs, as they felt he had acted under great provocation.
- 3 Dec 1844 A letter to the *Cheltenham Chronicle* stated ‘At present more than 400 men are daily employed upon the New Railway Line ... But the bad plan adopted and now acted upon is to pay them only once a month. Most of these men are very poor; many are altogether strangers to **Cheltenham** and unknown to shopkeepers, and therefore cannot obtain credit ... The men are furnished with tickets, to take to particular shops for what they may require, where they pay considerably too high for Bread, Bacon, &c, &c. As these hardworking men dare not complain for fear of being immediately dismissed ... I beg you to excite public attention to the case of these poor labourers, that their Employers pay them every fortnight, thus entirely doing away with the ticket system.’
- 1851 The 1851 Census reveals that there were 40,595 residents in **Cheltenham** Hundred. Of these 1,400 people in the town were small shop workers, and 6,065 people were involved in some form of service employment, including 1,020 laundresses.
- 30 May 1853 A petition signed by 1221 working men of **Cheltenham** was forwarded to **Craven Berkeley MP** for presentation to the **House of Commons** in support of a change in the law, the **Combination of Workmen Bill**. They claimed that they were currently placed in danger because it was impossible for workmen to consort together in relation to their trades without peaceably persuading each other, thus breaking the law – they would be compelled to resign a privilege that had existed for centuries, that of peaceable persuasion. The petitioners also wanted to claim the same right as that possessed by their Masters – the right to persuade. (The **Combination of Workmen Bill** was read three times in the **House** and then passed.)
- 29 Oct 1859 A journeyman tailor **Thomas Mills**, employed by **Mr Bastard** of the **Promenade**, was summoned for assaulting another journeyman tailor, **Francis Garlick**, employed by **Mr Hardwicke** of the **High Street**. The complainant was a ‘non-Society’ man, whereas **Mills** was a ‘Society’ man. **Garlick** had called into **Bastard**’s shop and was discussing the possibility of joining the society when **Mills** struck him under the ear and kicked him with no provocation.
- Dec 1860 The working people of **Cheltenham** contributed £400 to a subscription for the relief of the distressed ribbon weavers of **Coventry**. A list for people wishing to donate was opened at the shop of **Mr. E. Sharland**, news vendor, **St George’s Place**.
- Feb 1865 The **Cheltenham** Cabmen had an unsuccessful attempt at a strike.
- Apr 1866 Builder **Charles Rainger** chaired a meeting of master joiners following a strike by their workers.
- 10 Jul 1867 A meeting of delegates from various trades in **Cheltenham** met at the **Greyhound Inn** and passed a resolution of ‘abhorrence at the shocking outrages proved to have been committed at **Sheffield** by men belonging to some of the local societies of that town’. These men had been firmly convinced that their objects could best be obtained by the ‘only legitimate method’ recognized by themselves or their unions – the power of ‘moral persuasion’. They also condemned the portion of the press that, in support of long-standing prejudice to **Trade Unions**, cowardly criticised a large number of their fellow workmen on account of the sins of a few men.

- Oct 1871 The **Cheltenham Branch** of the **Amalgamated Cordwainers' Association**, in line with national action, submitted a list of prices (showing an increase of up to 15%) on work they did not feel was adequately being paid for by their employers. These prices were accepted by the principal employers, i.e. **Mr Sharpe, Mrs Clare, Mr Ryder, Mr Press, Mr Yeuell, Mr Caudle** and others. The shops of **Messrs Schwamenkruge, J.D. Steel** and **T. Steel** refused to accede to the society's request to proportionate advance and were placed on strike.
- 29 Nov 1872 A second meeting of the local branch of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union** took place at the **Chapel in Charlton Kings**. There was a large attendance and the meeting was addressed by **Messrs. Allaway, Winters, Hemmings**, among others. (The **National Agricultural Labourers' Union** had been founded in **1870**.)
- 4 Apr 1873 The agricultural labourers' held a meeting at **Charlton Kings**, where they were addressed by **Mr Jordan**, 'the great **Warwickshire** champion of his class', on the subject of wages and unionism.
- 22 May 1873 A large meeting of agricultural labourers took place at the **Town Hall**. The **Union** president **Mr Arch** addressed them on education, the franchise and their social position. The meeting was chaired by **Samuel Onley**, surgeon, and resolutions were passed in support of the labourers attempts to improve their condition by combination and unity of action. Some Gloucestershire agricultural labourers with families to support earned as little as 10s per week. Condemned practices included payment in cider and the system of renting cottages from the farmer from which labourers could be evicted without notice, leaving any crops of their own they had planted.
- Jul 1873 The **Agricultural Labourers' Association** met at **St George's Hall, High Street**, to press for better conditions and the franchise.
- 9 Sep 1873 The first of a series of meetings of the **Agricultural Labourers' Union** took place opposite the **Compasses Inn** at the bottom of **Park Street**, with **E.W. Sharland** in the chair. **Joseph Smith** addressed the meeting, explaining that the aim was to unite to secure better wages for their work. He urged his listeners to become members of the **Union**, echoed by **J. Tew** and **John Smith** who spoke of the need for better homes and wages, and better education for their children.
- Thomas Harper**, proprietor of the *Cheltenham Mercury* warned the meeting that parsons would tell them not to listen to agitators, but, he asked, what had the parsons taught them? Nothing other than to 'be humble and touch their hats to the broad cloth when they went out, and if they had no hat then to pull their hair. 'It was a wonder they had any left to pull'. They should unite and try to obtain a fair wage of at least £1 per week.
- The general secretary of the **Gloucestershire Labourers' Union**, **Mr W.E. Yeats**, pointed out that gardeners were as poorly paid as the labourers. He reported that **Cheltenham** was at the bottom of all towns for the rate of wages its market gardeners paid, and some were earning as little as 10s per week.
- 10 Sep 1873 A meeting of the **Agricultural Labourers' Union** was held outside the **New Inn** in **Shurdington** attended by **Messrs Yeats, Joseph Smith, T. Harper, John Smith (Leckhampton), Joseph Tew, Sharland** and **Sparks**. Loud cheers greeted their arrival and once again listeners were urged to join the **Union**, as without that combination they would be powerless. They were urged not to rest until they had obtained a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. **Yeats** then explained the benefits of unionism – for a few half-pence a week they would better their social and moral position, obtain better wages, be enabled to give their children a better education, provide for sickness or death, and lay by something for their old age to keep them from the **Workhouse**.
- 11 Sep 1873 An enthusiastic meeting of the **Agricultural Labourers' Union** was held in **Cheltenham's** East Ward, near the end of **Duke Street**, presided over by **Thomas Harper**. **Dr Onley** addressed the meeting, speaking of the low rate of wages in **Cheltenham**. He said that some of their homes, especially in the area of **Sherborne Street**, were little better than mud cabins. Further meetings were held around **Cheltenham** on subsequent nights to encourage labourers to join the **Union**.
- Sep 1873 The **Gloucestershire Labourers' Union** secretary, **W.E. Yeats**, was dismissed by the Executive Committee sitting at **Leamington** as he 'had not complied with the rules of the **Union**, having expended upon his own authority more than one-fourth of the subscriptions and payments he received'. He had also collected large sums of money 'upon the plea of a Sick Fund in connection with the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union**, without any authority from the Committee.
- 11 Oct 1873 The *Cheltenham Mercury* reported that **Dr Samuel Onley**, a member of the **Board of Guardians**, had suggested an increase in pay for the men employed in scavenging in **Cheltenham**. They currently earned only 12s 7d per week, which the Highway Inspector, surveyor **Mr Sadler**, deemed sufficient. The newspaper told readers it was their duty to join the **Gloucestershire Labourers' Union**, which met every Saturday evening at **Mr Tompkin's clubroom, High Street**, where by payment of a few pence weekly 'a better scale of wages will be secured for them'.

- 12 Oct 1873 A meeting was held at the **King's Head Inn** to consider forming a branch of the **Amalgamated Railway Servants' Association in Cheltenham**. Over 100 sat down to an excellent anniversary supper the following year, prepared by **Mrs Blanton**, on **16 February** at the **King's Head**. Speeches followed in which the long hours and poor wages were discussed. In some instances at small stations one man had to undertake the duties of pointsman, ticket collector, and even station master. It was no wonder that sometimes he became muddled and accidents happened.
- 12 Nov 1873 All building labourers, porters, scavengers, dustmen and other labourers were invited to a public meeting held at **St George's Hall**, convened by the **Bristol, West of England & S. Wales Amalgamated General Labourers' Union** and chaired by **Dr Samuel Onley**. It was resolved unanimously that labourers should join the **Union**, and secondly that the borough franchise should be extended to include agricultural labourers in the countryside, to place them on the same political footing as town labourers. **Mr Skey**, secretary of the **Operative Masons**, urged building labourers to join, saying that often their wives urged them not to join for fear of being sacked; then when sickness and death came they had to find their way to the '**Swindon Hotel**' (i.e. the **Workhouse in Swindon Road**) for assistance, and the wives wished they had joined the **Union**.
- 1 Dec 1873 A mass meeting of labourers was held in **St George's Hall, High Street**, chaired by **J.S. Lenthall**, recent president of the **Reform Club**. Labourers were urged to join the **Union**, as ever. The **Bishop of Gloucester's** recent anti-Union accusation that the agitators used violent language was discussed. **Thomas Harper** pointed out that the **Bishop's** suggestion that agitators should be put in the horsepond was more violent than any language used at **Union** meetings. It was resolved that clerical influence had ever been ready to oppose political and social reforms.
- 10 Jan 1874 A letter in the *Cheltenham Mercury* from a horse-cab driver asked why 'we poor Cabbies' should be left out when all other labourers were getting pay increases. On the 'miserable sum' of 12s per week they were expected to turn out with clean, white scarves and gloves to wait around for the gentry at up to 5 o'clock a.m. **Robert Fowles** of the **College Mews** had proposed paying his flymen 2s 6d a week more for late work, providing the other masters would do the same. The letter-writer said that as the other employers had failed to follow suit the cabbies intended striking on a ball or concert night, 'then the masters will be left to drive the cabs themselves'.
- 17 Feb 1874 An appeal was sent to the employers of journeyman tailors inviting them to appoint a committee to meet the workmen to construct a Time Statement for making the different garments, and also to consider an increase in wages, to be settled by the end of **March**.
- 12 Mar 1874 A large meeting of agricultural labourers was held at **Alderton**, near **Winchcombe**. **Cheltenham** visitors included **J.S. Lenthall**, who chaired the meeting, **Dr Onley**, **Thomas Harper**, **Mr Malvern**, **G. Norman**, **George Bailey**, **Mr Box**, **Mr Solomon** and **Mr Sharland**. It was resolved to send a petition to the **House of Commons** in favour of an assimilation of the County with the borough franchise – the combination of all labourers would help get their political rights. The meeting concluded with the labourers being advised of the value of education - an increase in wages would mean their children could be educated instead of having to work in the fields.
- Apr 1874 Donations were made by the workers of **Cheltenham** towards the support of the 'locked-out' agricultural labourers at **Leamington**. (Over 4,000 agricultural labourers in the Eastern counties were locked-out from their employment for refusing to give up their union.) **Mr Oakley**, secretary of the **Cheltenham** branch of the **Amalgamated Society of Bakers**, was able to contribute £20 from his members.
- 13 Apr 1874 Following three months of agitation, a strike amongst **Cheltenham's** tailors took place. Their employers had not acceded to any of their requests made in February about time allowed on garments or on increasing wages. The men had asked for 6d per hour and rejected the employers' compromise of 5½d per hour, walking out from their work. They had to rely on the funds of the **Amalgamated Tailors' Society**, which had 13,000 members nationally, for support.
- 20 Apr 1874 A meeting of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union, Cirencester District**, was held at **Piff's Elm** near **Cheltenham**, organised by **Messrs. Spencer** and **Winter**, the **National Union** delegates. They held another meeting at **Churchdown** the following day, when a 'Mr Grumps' pushed a barn door open against **Mr Spencer's** chair to try and upset him as he began to address the meeting. The men were so indignant about this cowardly act that Grumps had to retire for his own safety. The next day **Spencer** and **Winter** held a meeting at **Shurdington** where, according to the *Cheltenham Mercury*, 'the men here are very dull and not up to the mark. The next meeting was at **Witcombe**, where presumably there was a poor response as the *Mercury* reported that 'bad pay and sour cider have starved both the intelligence and manly dignity out of the men. An enthusiastic meeting was held on **24 April** at **Charlton Kings** where a new branch was formed.
- 23 Apr 1874 The master tailors of **Cheltenham** met at the **Eight Bells** to discuss the tailors' strike. The meeting ended with an obstinate hostility to the increase in wages suggested by the men.

- 23 Apr 1874 A **Cheltenham** Branch of the **Cirencester District** of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union** was opened at the **British Workman Lodge Room, Lower High Street**. Several members were admitted and arrangements made for a series of open-air meetings, the first of which was fixed for **Monday 4th May** at 7.30 p.m. in the vicinity of **Maud's Elm**.
- 2 May 1874 The *Cheltenham Mercury* announced that 'the little difficulty in the tailoring trade has been temporarily settled', with the men returning to work and the Log of work to be considered by a committee of masters and men.
- 9 May 1874 The left-wing *Cheltenham Mercury* reported that the plasterers in the employ of 'that patriotic tory' **Samuel Martin** of **Portland Street**, who was 'paraded as a model working-man's friend at the last election', had gone on strike after failing to get their request for shorter time agreed to. The plasterers claimed that they were working 2 hrs 20 mins more per week than the recognized time adopted by all the principal firms in the town. For the previous two years the other plasterers had enjoyed the hour system and the benefit of a half-day holiday on Saturdays. The plasterers striking included **Charles, George** and **James Gibbons sen., William Watkin, John Davis, Charles Etheridge, Joseph Kitchen, Charles Bowcott, Charles Goldick** and **Joseph Clifford**.
- 17 May 1874 A special service in aid of the **Agricultural Labourers' Lock-out** (at **Leamington**) fund was held at **St George's Hall** with an appropriate sermon preached by **Mr Thomas Harper**.
- 16 Jun 1874 **Joseph Arch** of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union** addressed a meeting at the **Town Hall** on the subject of the Labourers' Lock-Out and on the need to assimilate the county and borough franchises. It was reported that the wages of Gloucestershire's agricultural labourers had risen by 3s as a result of the **Union**. During his stay in **Cheltenham Arch** was hospitably entertained at the house of **J.S. Lenthall**.
- 2 Jul 1874 A meeting was held at the **British Workman, 228 High Street**, addressed by delegates explaining the present position of affairs in an effort to establish a powerful branch of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union**.
- 4 Jan 1875 The local Lodge of the **General Union of Carpenters & Joiners** met at **Mr Markey's, Oddfellows Arms**. It was announced that the Lodge would meet regularly here every other Monday. One of the carpenters' cause for grievance was that they had to expend more on their tools of trade than any other branch of the building trade.
- 5 Jan 1875 The annual meeting of the **Cirencester District** of the **National Agricultural Labourers' Union** was held at the **British Workman**, chaired by **J.S. Lenthall**. It was announced that donations were still being received to support the ongoing lock-out of the agricultural labourers in the Eastern counties. The **Union** had also spent money locally on relief, migration and emigration.
- 16 Jan 1875 The men in the coal mining districts, including the Forest of Dean where there had been recent strikes for improved pay and conditions, had been accused of being the main cause of the excessive price of coal. According to the *Cheltenham Mercury* the townspeople of **Cheltenham** were invited to attend a public meeting at **St George's Hall**, 'should Fanaticism and Illiberalism not interfere to prevent the assembly, when **Timothy Mountjoy**, the miner's agent, would attend and explain why coal is so expensive. **S. Onley jun.** chaired the meeting and a deputation from the **Amalgamated Association of Miners** attended.
- 14 Apr 1875 The second Annual Supper of the **Cheltenham** branch of the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants** was held at the **Corn Exchange**, with **Lord Fitzhardinge** presiding. Although registered under the **Trades' Union Act**, theirs was a society that endeavoured to prevent rather than promote strikes.
- 26 Jun 1875 A letter was published in the *Cheltenham Mercury* from **Charles Bailey** of **12 Kensington Place**, one of the brushmakers employed by **Samuel Malvern** of **Winchcombe Street**. He claimed that when he and his colleagues petitioned **Mr Malvern** for an increase in wages, to bring their pay in line with that in other towns, **Malvern** treated him in a most insulting manner. After verbally abusing his employees, **Malvern** told all those who had signed the petition to leave his premises within 30 minutes or they would be ejected. **Bailey** complained that he had 'never heard of such a case of tyranny and despotism in my life, to discharge ten of the most steady and industrious men he had ever had upon his premises. Six non-Union men were left in employment at **Malvern's**.
- 28 Jun 1875 The *Cheltenham Mercury* published a letter from 'A Working Man' who expressed great surprise that **Samuel Malvern** should sack his employees for daring to present a petition asking for an increase in wages. **Malvern** was known to be a Liberal, had once been president of the local **Reform Club**, and had recently contributed to the funds in support of improving conditions for agricultural labourers.
- 25 Sep 1875 A notice appeared in the local press on the '**Rise of Wages Movement 1876**'. All building trades were requested to send representatives to form a **Town Trade Committee** or similar on **2 October** at 8 p.m.

- 9 Aug 1875 About 69 carpenters and joiners of **Cheltenham** attended an excellent supper provided by **Mr Markey** at the **Oddfellows' Arms Inn** to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the local branch of the **General Union Society of Operative Carpenters & Joiners**. They also celebrated the success of the trade in obtaining an increase of wages – three farthings per hour. **Mr. S. Onley jun.** took the chair and speeches, songs and recitations were enjoyed by the men.
- 6 Nov 1875 A meeting attended by 374 building trade operatives was held in **St George's Hall** to draw up a code of rules and form a **Trades Council**. **George Skey** was unanimously voted to the chair. Wages in **Cheltenham** were lower than in other towns – from 3s to 5s per week less, and men worked two or three hours more. **Skey** stressed the necessity of union between all branches of the building trade. The rules included a 54-hour week from February to November with a half-day on Saturday, a 50½ -hour week in the winter months, overtime rates, all 'walking time' to be computed from the **centre-stone, High Street**, all jobs 1½ miles from that point walking time to be allowed at the rate of 3 m.p.h., or lodgings paid, and employers and employees to give two hours notice of discharge/leaving employ. Men should be paid within 15 minutes of finishing their work. No **Trades Council** developed as a result of this meeting, however.
- Jun 1877 The masons working on building the new **Parish Church (St Matthew's)** came out on strike and were partially locked-out. The contractors on the job had refused to pay the rate of 7d per hour agreed by the **Masons' Union**. The contractors also employed non-Union men on the job. The grievances were put to be put to **Mr Estcourt**, the builder, but he caught wind of this and discharged the seven or eight Union men first.
- Oct 1877 **Alfred O'Brien** unsuccessfully sued the **Amalgamated Society of Tailors** for two weeks strike pay.
- 11 Feb 1878 About 90 members of the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants** sat down to their annual supper for their **Benevolent Fund**. The Mayor, Alderman **Baron de Ferrières**, presided.
- 19 Aug 1878 A public meeting of the **Cheltenham** Branch of the **General Alliance of Operative House Painters** was held at the **Oddfellows' Arms** in **North Street**.
- Apr 1883 There was a strike among the shoemakers of **Cheltenham** for an advance of 1s per pair, on the grounds that the large business houses of the town were making enormous profits on their goods.
- Jul 1883 The **GWR** signalmen were refused extra payment for Sunday working.
- 20 Aug 1887 The **Operative Bricklayers' Society** held their second anniversary dinner at the **Cambridge Hotel** in **North Street**, where a 'capital spread' was provided by **Mr Franklin**, the worthy host.
- 13 Feb 1893 The 20th Annual Dinner of the **Cheltenham** branch of the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants** took place at the **Oddfellows Hall**.
- 26 Apr 1894 An preliminary meeting was held at the **Rose & Crown Inn**, followed by two more on **10 May** and **7 June** to discuss forming a **Cheltenham & District Trades & Labour Council (TLC)**. The aim was to form a more friendly relationship between members of the different Trades Unions in **Cheltenham** and secure united action in all questions affecting their interests.
- 5 Jul 1894 The inaugural meeting of the **Trades & Labour Council** was held at the **Rose & Crown Inn**, attended by representatives of the **Stonemasons, Carpenters, Railway Servants, Bricklayers, Plasterers and Tailors Unions**. **Mr Charles Fisher** (Stonemasons) was elected president, **Mr J.T. James** (Tailors) vice-president, **Mr James Grist Carr** (Railway Servants) secretary, and **Mr J. Grimes** (Carpenters) treasurer.
- 15 Aug 1894 From this date onwards all the meetings of the **Trades & Labour Council** were held at the **Oddfellows Hall, York Passage, Grosvenor Terrace**.
- Sep 1894 A **Trades & Labour Council** labour demonstration, advocating **Trade Unionism**, was held in a ground beside the **Gas Works**, resulting in a good wages rise for the gas workers.
- 1896 With the help of the **Trades & Labour Council**, 'a satisfactory settlement was reached of the differences between the employees and employers in the building trades of the town'.
- 1896 The **Trades & Labour Council** was pressing that parks, gardens and library reading rooms should be open on Saturday afternoon and Sundays, to be available for workers on a 6-day week.
- 24 May 1896 The **Trades & Labour Council** organised a combined parade of the **Friendly and Trade Societies** in **Cheltenham**. It assembled in **Montpellier Gardens** and marched to **Pittville Park**, where the **Town Band** gave a 'Sacred Concert' to collect a fund for the distressed smallpox patients of the City of Gloucester.
- Dec 1896 The **Cheltenham** Branch of the **Independent Labour Party** was set up with the help of the **Trades & Labour Council**, whose leadership was on the platform of the inaugural meeting at the **Oddfellows Hall**, with **G. Fisher** presiding. About 600 working men attended and were addressed on **Trade Unionism** by well-known labour leader, **Tom Mann**.
- 1897 The **Trades & Labour Council** began to involve themselves in the question of the sort of education being provided in the locality.

- 19 Jan 1897 The president of the **Trades & Labour Council** said its foundation ‘had brought about a wonderful change in the organisation of labour in the town. There were four or five trade societies (with a total membership of over 500) at present in **Cheltenham**, which were absolutely non-existent two and a half years ago, while the older societies had in some instances doubled and trebled their numbers. Further, in these days, **Trades Unionism** was not afraid to disclose itself.’
- 19 Jan 1897 An evening meeting of coachmakers and coach wheelwrights was addressed at the **Imperial Coffee Tavern** by the organising secretary of the **Society of Coachmakers**, who invited all present to join the **Society**. A man joining at age 21 and paying his weekly subscription of 1s would at age 60 be allowed superannuation pay of 8s per week. Out of the 40 or 50 engaged in coachmaking trades in **Cheltenham** only 4 or 5 so far were members of the **Society**.
- Apr 1897 The **Society of Railway Servants** gathered at the **Oddfellows Hall** for a meeting on **Trade Unionism**, chaired by **J.G. Carr**.
- 26 May 1897 A **Trades & Labour Council** resolution was passed ‘emphatically protesting against the increase of salaries of higher-paid Corporation officials, whilst the majority of employees get barely sufficient to obtain the common necessities of life’.
- 6 Jun 1897 The Whit Sunday demonstration was organised by the **Trades & Labour Council**, with ‘a hearty invitation to our **Gloucester** brethren to join us’.
- 15 Jul 1897 The **Trades & Labour Council** arranged a meeting of the **Cheltenham** women workers to hear an address by a **Women’s Trade Union League** speaker.
- 29 Jul 1897 The ‘Privileged Cab Question’ was raised at the Police Court when a number of drivers were summoned for plying for hire with unlicensed carriages at the **Cheltenham** railway stations. The prosecutions were brought by the local **Cab Drivers’ Union**. Only one case was gone into – that of **George Frederick Hughes**, a driver employed by the **Plough Hotel**. It emerged that for 20 years there had been a private arrangement between the **GWR** and the **Plough Hotel** and the **Queen’s Hotel**, with the standing of cabs at the station by ‘privileged’ cab drivers.
- Dec 1897 In conjunction with the **Independent Labour Party**, the **Trades & Labour Council** held a meeting to support the engineers strike, with **Mr Betteridge**, secretary, in the chair.
- 1898 The **Trades & Labour Council** debated the **Workman’s Compensation Act**, and demanded that **Town Council** meetings be held in the evenings so that workers could attend as visitors.
- 17 Jun 1898 Labour leader **Tom Mann** gave a lecture entitled ‘Poverty: Combination a Remedy’ in the **Winter Garden** to a large audience. The **Mayor** presided on the understanding, through **Mr Fisher**, president of the **Trades & Labour Council**, that it was in no way a political gathering.
- 1899 The **Trades & Labour Council** debated the **Housing of the Working Class Act**, and also wrote to **Cheltenham’s** MP to ask him to support the **Shop Assistants Bill** and the **Railways Bill**.
- May 1899 The joiners of **Cheltenham** struck for two weeks. Stone masons accepted a rise of ¼ d per hour.
- Sep 1899 A meeting was held to discuss the formation of a **Cab Proprietors & Drivers Trade Union**.
- Later 1890s **Miss Margaret Bondfield** of the **Shop Assistants Union** secured an office and committee room at **Bennington Hall** in the face local hostility. Hundreds of **Cheltenham** girls were serving a four-year apprenticeship without pay, only afterwards starting on 2s 6d or 3s per week, yet employers expected a smart appearance and a minimum 60-hour working week. The **Cheltenham** branch of the **Union** ‘never became effective due to the “caste” system prevailing in the town’ (antipathy between the **Promenade, High Street, Winchcombe Street** shop assistants)..
- 1900 From here on the question of peace was a dominant issue for the **Trades & Labour Council**, as the Boer War ended and the problems of looking after the dependents of killed soldiers emerged.
- Jun 1900 The **Mayor** called a meeting to discuss how to end a town labourers’ strike; his offer to arbitrate was accepted, but the strike continued. Builders’ labourers were calling for an increase from 5d to 6d per hour. In **August**, with **R.R. Skemp** acting for employers, the arbitrator **O.J. Williams** declared that no increase be awarded. A further arbitration found in favour of the local builders labourers to increase pay to 6d per hour. Local builders opposing this included **R.R. Skemp, A.C. Billings** and **Collins & Godfrey**.
- 1901 The **Trades & Labour Council** joined in the demand for old age pensions.
- Mar 1901 A strike by labourers on the **Cleeve Hill to Cheltenham** tramway obtained a pay increase from 5d to 5½d per hour.
- 9 Sep 1901 The **Trades & Labour Council** called upon its **Cheltenham** affiliates ‘to work together to secure those advantages so necessary for our well-being by electing onto the **Town Council** DIRECT REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOUR ... Not a single direct Labour representative has a seat on the **Council Chamber**. Is **Cheltenham** always to be behind the times?’ From this period on the **Trades & Labour Council** performed in the town the function of a **Labour Party**, alongside its industrial activities.

- Oct 1901 **Mr W.J. Merrett** was adopted by the **Trades & Labour Council** as their candidate for the **Cheltenham East Ward**, and won the unanimous support of that ward's Liberal Committee.
- Nov 1901 The **Trades & Labour Council** complained that the lowest tender for building a new **Town Hall** came from a firm outside the town.
- 1903 The Annual Conference of the **National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain** was held at the **Ladies' College**.
- Jun 1907 The MP for **Leeds, James O'Grady**, addressed a meeting of **Trade Unionists** in **Rodney Hall**.
- 1908 A **Trades & Labour Council** representative on **Cheltenham's Education Committee** carried an amendment respecting contractors who did not pay fair wages.
- 13 Jan 1908 A group of **Cheltenham's** unemployed, believed to be organised by the **Trades & Labour Council**, interviewed the **Mayor** in the **Municipal Offices**.
- 8 Nov 1908 A group of Hunger Marchers (protesting about unemployment), led by **Mr Charles Ashleigh** of the **Social Democratic Federation**, visited **Cheltenham**, 'towing their rough-and-ready van' on their way from **London** to **South Wales**. In late April the **Social Democratic Federation's** 'Clarion Van No.2' had stopped in **Cheltenham** to spread the Socialist word at an open-air meeting addressed by the 'Vanner', **Mr Kennedy**.
- 1910-14 The **Trades & Labour Council** frequently participated in public activity, seeking to lessen tensions and build public opinion for the peaceful solution of international problems. During this period it also gave equal weight to the question of **Trade Union** legal rights.
- 18 Aug 1911 **Cheltenham** members of the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants** went out on the first ever national rail strike, returning to work at **Lansdown Station** on **24 August**.
- Late Feb 1913 The annual meeting of the **Cheltenham Branch** of the **National Union of Women Workers** took place at the **Ladies' College**. The president of this **Union's Cheltenham & Gloucester Conference** 10 years before had been **Lady Battersea**.
- May 1913 Striking local carpenters, joiners and bricklayers agreed to a provisional rise of ½d per hour.
- Jun 1913 The **Hospital Saturday Fund** changed its name to the **Trades & Labour Hospital Fund** in an attempt to revive it. In **September Dr Cardew** chaired a meeting of the **Fund's** committee at the **Oddfellows Hall** to discuss the hospital and insured persons.
- Oct 1913 The **Cheltenham Branch** of the **National Association of Operative Plasterers** contributed 3d per week per member for four weeks to support the locked-out **Dublin transport workers**.
- Aug 1914 The **Trades & Labour Council** protested at the suspension of three men by the Railway Superintendent for not wearing starched collars to work.
- 18 May 1915 The death occurred of **Mr James Grist Carr** of **18 Alstone Place**, the first secretary of the **Trades & Labour Council** in **1894**. For 34 years he was the **GWR** signalman at **Lansdown** and initiated the local branch of the **Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants**.
- 13 Mar 1918 **Mr E. Burge** of the **Trades & Labour Council** moved 'that this **Trades & Labour Council** considers the advisability of forming a **Local Labour Party**, with the object of nominating **Labour** candidates for the national and municipal bodies.
- 11 Aug 1918 An 80-strong **Trades & Labour Council** meeting at the **Oddfellows Hall** resolved unanimously to form a local **Labour Party** in **Cheltenham**. They elected as the Provisional Working Committee:- president, **Mr Joseph Edward Curtis**; secretary, **Mr E. Burge** (Railwaymen); financial secretary, **Mr S. Morris** (Aircraft Workers); treasurer, **Mr George Blagg** (Postmen).
- 14 Aug 1918 The **Cheltenham Branch** of the **National Federation of Women Workers** held a meeting at **Bennington Hall**, which was addressed by **Miss Margaret Bondfield** (by then the **Federation's** organising secretary). Branch membership fluctuated from 800 to 1,000.
- 25 Aug 1918 The banner of the **Trades & Labour Council** led a procession of workers round the town to celebrate Labour Day. Music was provided by the **Gloucester Wagon Works Band**. A rally was then held on the **Athletic Ground**, followed in the evening by a mass meeting at the **Opera House**, addressed by Labour leaders **Tom Mann** and **Miss Margaret Bondfield**.
- 2 Nov 1918 A group of the 31 male and five female members of the **Trades & Labour Council**, (all named), was printed in the *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic*.
- 22 Dec 1918 **George Wride** of **Alstone Avenue** was presented with a gold hunting watch and a money by the locomotive men of Britain, having just retired after 48 years continuous service as a **GWR** engine driver. He had been president of the **Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen** for six years.
- Jan 1919 A labour strike at **Sunningend**, together with demobilisation and the out-of-work munitioners made **Cheltenham's Labour Exchange** overwhelmingly busy. Two months earlier all employees at **Sunningend Aeroplane Works** had celebrated the Armistice by organising a giant, impromptu procession through the town, headed by their own orchestra on a lorry and with a full-size Bristol Fighter on another lorry.



12. On 5 Oct 1919 staff from the Midland, GWR, and M.& SWR companies went on strike in Cheltenham, demanding the reinstatement of the stationmaster, A.E. Chandler.



14. Illustration from the 'New Fashion Book', published by Debenham & Freebody of Cheltenham in 1870. Before the advent of ready-to-wear apparel, most clothing was made to order. Dressmaking rooms took up half the business premises, and apprenticed girls worked at least 12-hour days during the seasons (Mar-Jul & Oct-Jan).



13. Some of the Sunningend metal workers held a three hour strike in sympathy with the railway workers in Oct 1919.



15. The plaque above, situated to the right of the central doorway of the Charlton Kings Club, reads 'United We Stand', reflecting the working class origins of the building.



16. The foundation stone for the Charlton Kings Working Mens' Club and Institute was laid by Captain St. Clair-Ford on 19 May 1888. The Charlton Kings Club, as it is known today, is still popular as a venue for local functions.

- 10 Aug 1919 The **Tramway Employees' Union** and the **Taxi Drivers' & Chauffeurs' Union**, having recently amalgamated, held a joint meeting in **Cheltenham**.
- Late Apr 1919 The **National Union of Teachers** held their Annual Conference in the **Town Hall**.
- 26 Sep-7 Oct 1919 Local members of the **National Union of Railwaymen** joined the national rail strike against enforced wage reductions; there was a complete shut-down of **Lansdown** and **St James** railway stations. Railwaymen **J.G. Carr** and **E. Burge**, leading members of the **Trades & Labour Council**, played a forefront role in **Cheltenham** during this strike. Meetings were held at the **Imperial Hotel**. The **GWR** and **Midland** men refused return to work until **Lansdown** stationmaster **Mr A.E. Chandler** (a prominent striker) was reinstated. After a protest meeting at **Lansdown Station** yard on **6 October**, **Chandler** returned to work with everyone else.
- End Sep 1919 Some of the **Sunningend** workers, members of the **Cheltenham Branch** of the **Sheet Metal Workers' & Braziers' Society**, held a brief sympathy strike with the railwaymen.
- Mid-Oct 1919 A local branch of the **London & Provincial Union of Licensed Vehicle Workers** was formed.
- Mid-Nov 1919 Pharmacists, drug and chemical workers at **UCAL (United Chemists' Association)** works formed a **Cheltenham Wholesale Branch** of the **Chemical Workers' Union**.
- 1 Dec 1919 About 300 **UCAL** employees went on strike, mostly women, who did picket duty in **Corpus Street**, **Keynsham Road** and outside **Priory Court**. Strike HQ through the week was their room at the **Imperial Café, High Street**.
- Jan 1920 **Cheltenham Pearl Insurance** collectors were on strike for better wages and conditions.
- 24 Jul 1920 The workmen at the town **Gas Works** struck work suddenly, the **Gas Co.** having said they could not afford to pay the national award. A settlement was only finally reached at a meeting on **6 September** presided over by the **Mayor**. The men returned next day.
- 5 Nov 1920 The **Cheltenham & District Light Railway** tramwaymen went on strike against longer hours for less pay. The company took on new hands, which resulted in a damaging collision between two trams. **Strike Committee Rooms** were at the **Imperial Temperance Café** in the **High Street**.
- 9 Apr 1921 The **Trades & Labour Council** led a deputation to see the **Town Council** about unemployment in **Cheltenham**. Numbers of the out-of-work, carrying a 'Cheltenham Unemployed Demand Work or Maintenance' banner, marched to the **Municipal Offices**, where the **Council** showed some sympathy. Another such demonstration was held outside the **Workhouse** on **8 September** after a march through **Imperial Square** and up the **Bath Road**.
- 1 May 1921 The **Trades & Labour Council** held a May Day **Labour** demonstration. Among the banners marched up the **High Street** was that of the **Co-operative Workers Guild, Cheltenham Branch**. Prominent on the march was **Mr A.E. Chandler**, the local **Midland Railway** station master and an active Trade Unionist.
- May 1922 About 750 delegates attended a **Post Office Workers' Union Conference** at the **Town Hall**.
- 2-5 Jun 1922 A **NALGO (National Association of Local Government Officers) Conference** was held in the **Town Hall**.
- April 1924 A branch of the **National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen & Clerks** was formed in **Cheltenham**.
- 6 May 1924 Certain **Trade Union** branches in **Cheltenham** were sent a letter from the local **Labour Party** requesting their affiliation and declaring 'We workers must all realise the vital importance of unity and cooperation, now that the **Labour Party** is "His Majesty's Government".'
- Jun 1924 The **Cheltenham** members of the **National Association of Operative Plasterers** went on strike, rejecting an employers' offer of an extra ½ d per hour and voting to retain the 44-hour week. The dispute rumbled on until **August**.
- Oct 1924 The **Trades & Labour Council** transferred from the **Oddfellows Hall** to the newly established **Labour Hall & Institute Ltd** at **299 High Street** (now **No. 330**), next door to the then **Royal Oak** pub. The premises were shared with a Branch Post Office and a fancy draper. Some **Union** branches, such as the **Plasterers**, also began to use the **Labour Hall** for their meetings.
- 2 Nov 1924 The funeral of **Charles Fisher** of **34 Swindon Street**, first president of the **Trades & Labour Council** from **1894-99**, took place. As a mason he had been a member of the **Bricklayers' Union** for 55 years. In **1921** he became one of the first members of the local **Education Committee**.
- 3 May 1926 The **General Strike** in support of the miners started at midnight.
- May 1926 The **Trades & Labour Council** created a **Cheltenham Council of Action** to coordinate and facilitate **General Strike** activities in the town. This included **Trades & Labour Council** leaders, delegates from various **Union** strike committees and representatives of working-class organisations. Known members were **Mr H. Allsopp**, **Mr & Mrs Burge**, **Mr & Mrs J.G. Carr jun.**, **Mr S. Gale**, **Mr F. Hobbs**, **Mr H. Mees**, **Mr Richard Stubbs**, **Mr G.F. Tawney** and **Mr F. Virgo**. The **Council of Action** organised three mass meetings and were to the fore in deputations to employers. (*See General Strike section for day-to-day details.*)

- May 1926 After this month the **Trades & Labour Council** had to revise its constitution and became the **Cheltenham & District Trades Council**.
- 1931 The **Trades Council** transferred to **3 Royal Crescent** when the **Labour Hall & Institute** left **299 High Street** and took up residence there (as did the **Cheltenham Labour Party** till **1960**). In **1950** the premises were expanded by the addition of **2 Royal Crescent**. The **Trades Council** finally left **Royal Crescent** in **March 2004**.
- 6 Sep 1931 The **Trades Council** strongly protested against the refusal by the **Town Council's Street & Highway Committee** to introduce a 47-hour week and a 12 noon finish for Saturday work.
- 1930-39 Efforts of the **Trades Council** concentrated on agitation for slum clearance; against Government economic cuts; for the abolition of the Means Test; for the organisation of the unemployed; continuous support for strike action to resist cuts in wages and conditions; and agitation to win sympathy for the people of **Abyssinia, Spain**, etc.
- Jun 1934 A **National Conference of Labour Women** was held at the **Town Hall**.
- Apr 1938 The **Cheltenham** plasterers urged that the **TUC** bring pressure on the Government 'to allow the **Spanish Legal Government** to buy arms in defence of democracy'.
- 20 Jan 1939 Following a request from the **Trades Union Congress**, the **Town Council** agreed to invite them to hold their Annual Conference in the **Town Hall** (without charge) from **4 – 10 September**. The expected attendance of 1,200 would include about 800 delegates. However the **TUC** gathered at **Bridlington** instead in the first week of the Second World War.
- Late Sep 1939 The **Trades Council** circularised **Branches** asking for delegates to form a **Local Vigilance Committee** to collect evidence of profiteering and other matters.
- Dec 1939 At the invitation of the **Town Council**, the **National Union of Women Teachers** were to hold their Conference in the **Town Hall**.
- 1940-45 The main objects of the **Trades Council's** focus during the Second World War were increasing production, and the immediate social and economic needs of the people. There was much debate on the **1942 Beveridge Report** and its implications for post-war Britain.
- Jun 1940 Building workers' branches in **Cheltenham** received a letter from the **National Federation of Building Trade Operatives** emphasising that 'the new Emergency Powers (Defence Act 1940) did not give employers any sort of power whatsoever to violate agreed **Trades Union** rates of wages and conditions'.
- Post 1945 The **Trades Council's** practical policy concerned productivity in the changeover from war to peace; black market problems; increased rations for heavy manual workers; etc.
- 25 Sep 1947 The **National Association of Colliery Overmen** held its Conference in **Cheltenham**.
- 1949 The **Trade Unions** affiliated to the **Trades Council** at this period were:-
- Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers** (Two Branches)
 - National Union of Brassworkers & Metal Mechanics**
 - National Association of Operative Plasterers**
 - Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers**
 - Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists**
 - National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association**
 - National Union of Tailors & Garment Workers**
 - Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen**
 - National Union of Municipal & General Workers**
 - Transport and General Workers Union**
 - National Union of Sheet Metal Workers & Braziers**
 - Amalgamated Engineering Union** (Three Branches)
 - National Union of Plumbers, Glaziers & Domestic Engineers**
 - National Union of Clerical & Administrative Workers** (Two branches)
 - Association of Engineering & Shipbuilding Draughtsmen**
 - Union of Post Office Workers (Indoor Branch)**
 - National Union of Agricultural Workers** (Four Branches)
 - N.U. of Operative Heating & Domestic Engineers & General Metal Workers**
 - National Society of Coppersmiths, Braziers & Metal Workers**
 - National Union of Shop Assistants & Distributive Workers**
 - Association of Supervisory Staffs & Engineering Technicians**
 - National Society of Painters**
 - Cheltenham Typographical Society**
 - Railway Clerks Association**
 - National League of the Blind**
 - National Union of Railwaymen**
 - National Fire Brigades Union**
 - Electrical Trades Union**
 - Confederation of Health Employees**
 - Musicians Union**
 - Association of Scientific Workers**

- 1950s The **Trades Council** developed its work on public advisory bodies such as the **Employment Committee, Disablement Committee, Hospital Welfare Committee** and **Accident Prevention Committee**.
- 13 Oct 1956 The **Cheltenham** bus drivers held a one-day token strike.
- 20 Sep 1961 The **National Association of Schoolmasters** went on strike – 300 local children had a ‘holiday’.
- Jul 1964 There was a two-week postal strike in **Cheltenham**.
- 12 Nov 1965 **Cheltenham Co-op** was affected by a bakers strike.
- Nov 1966 **Cheltenham** had the highest unemployment figures for **November** in the town for seven years.
- 1968 The **Trades Council** represented 11,390 workers organised in 39 branches and drawn from nearly all the organised trades and professions in the town, except teachers.
- 15 May 1968 **Cheltenham** factories were halted by a one-day token strike by the engineering **Unions**.
- Oct 1969 Around 13,000 workers at **Smiths Industries** walked out for the third time over their pay dispute.
- 1 Dec 1969 A national fortnight of strikes by members of the **National Union of Teachers** affected several local schools. Teachers’ strikes in the town occurred briefly in **May 1984** and **April 1985**.
- Jan 1971 **Cheltenham** workers demonstrated over the new **Industrial Relations Bill**. On **1 March** strikes in protest about the new **Bill** halted several major factories in the town.
- 6 Mar 1971 Postal workers in **Cheltenham** voted to return to work after a 6-week national strike.
- Apr 1971 The **Cheltenham** standing **Conference of Women’s Organisations** held its last AGM.
- Jun 1971 Students from **St Paul’s College of Teacher Training** went on strike.
- Aug 1971 **Cheltenham**’s jobless total was the highest since the Second World War.
- Jan 1972 Unemployment in **Cheltenham** stood at 2,199.
- Feb 1972 The crisis of the miners’ strike led to the **Cheltenham** division of the **Central Electricity Generating Board**, responsible for power station design, being urged to find ways of reducing reliance on coal supplies.
- 31 Mar 1972 About 500 workers began a six-week strike at two **Dowty** factories.
- 23 May 1972 The **National Prison Officers Association** held its Conference at the **Pittville Pump Room**.
- 13 Feb 1975 **Cheltenham** trains were affected by a signalmen’s strike.
- Mar 1975 About 1,500 manual workers at **Smiths Industries** went on strike over pay.
- Sep 1975 **Cheltenham**’s jobless stood at 5.9% – above the national average.
- May 1976 Students from Gloucestershire colleges held a protest rally in **Cheltenham** over the worsening employment situation.
- Jun 1976 Students of **St Paul’s and St Mary’s Teacher Training Colleges** ‘occupied’ **Cornerways, The Park**, in protest at the lack of jobs for trainee teachers.
- 1 May 1978 On this first **May Day Bank Holiday** a march and rally was held by the **Trades Council**. The 200-strong turnout marched in dismal weather from **Montpellier** through the town’s main streets to a rally outside the main **Post Office** in the lower **Promenade**. In **1981** there were 350 people on the **Trades Council’s May Day** march.
- Nov 1978 Bread rationing was imposed as a bakers’ strike loomed.
- Dec 1978 With the threat of a petrol tanker drivers’ strike in the New Year, panic buying occurred in town.
- 16 Jan 1979 There were no trains at **Lansdown Station** during a national train driver’s strike.
- 22 Jan 1979 Strikes by public sector workers affected the life of the town on this date and again on **5 February**. A lorry drivers’ strike caused food stocks in the town to dwindle.
- 23 Feb 1979 Less than 100 (mainly junior staff) at **GCHQ** went on a one-day strike.
- 29 Apr 1980 Industrial action by the **National Graphical Association** led to the *Echo* producing an ‘Emergency Edition’ for two weeks.
- 24 May 1980 The **National Association of Head Teachers** held their 83rd Annual Conference in the **Town Hall**.
- 9 Mar 1981 A one-day Civil Service strike was joined by around 20% of the **GCHQ** workers, angry over the Government’s unilateral tearing-up of their 27-year-old **National Pay Agreement**. Great care was taken not to affect essential operations at **GCHQ**.
- Feb 1982 The **Trades Council** initiated the establishment of the **Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People**. Other bodies became involved and donated funding, in particular the **Manpower Services Commission**. The **Centre** was set up in an office at the **Salem Baptist Church** and in **1998** moved to larger premises in the **Lower High Street**, where a **Credit Union** was also set up.
- Jul 1982 ‘Right to Work’ campaigners held a rooftop protest at the **Conservative Club** in **Albion Street**.
- Aug 1982 Unemployment rose sharply in **Cheltenham**.
- 23 Feb 1983 A **Severn Trent** water and sewerage workers’ strike ended.
- 25 Jan 1984 The Government suddenly announced that all **Trade Unions** were to be banned at **GCHQ** (see **GCHQ Union Ban Campaign**, p. 35).
- Apr 1984 Coal stocks in **Cheltenham** reached a critical low as the miners’ strike began to hit.

- May 1984 Several schools in **Cheltenham** were affected by a national teachers' strike action.
- 26 May 1984 This year's **Trades Council May Day** march and rally was in support of **GCHQ Trade Unions**. 400 striking miners from the **Gwent** coalfield also attended the march from the **Pump Room** to **Montpellier Gardens**.
- Jul 1984 The **Gloucestershire Miner's Support Centre** was set up in **Bevan House, 67 Clarence Street**, by the **Trades Council** and the **Cheltenham Labour Party**. It was manned continuously by four miners from **Celynen North Pit** in **Gwent**, and until the end of the **Great Strike** in **March 1985** raised £44,000, plus large amounts of food, clothing and toys for the **Gwent Hardship Fund**. £7,000 was raised for the **Fund** by **Cheltenham's** twin town **Göttingen** in **Germany** under the slogan '*Hoch die internationale Solidarität*'.
- Feb 1985 School meals were cancelled at **Bournside School** as teachers intensified their work-to-rule.
- Apr 1985 Around 100 pupils walked out of a **Cheltenham** secondary school in protest against the **Government's Youth Training Scheme** for the jobless.
- 14 Jun 1987 The **Trades Council** organised a 10-mile sponsored **Soweto Day** walk from **Holy Apostles, Charlton Kings**, to raise money for the **Anti-Apartheid Campaign**.
- 23 Jan 1988 At the end of this year's **GCHQ Trade Unions** rally at **Montpellier** the **Trades Council** organised a bucket collection as supplementary funding for the **Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People**. The same was also done for the nine annual rallies from **1989** to **1997**, and a grand total of £6,580 was thereby donated to the **Centre**.
- 7 Nov 1988 A 14-hour **Vigil** was organised by the **Trades Council** on the **A40** outside the **Benhall** base as part of that day's nationwide protests against the sackings at **GCHQ**. The **Vigil** was repeated with great success on **18 November** every succeeding year until the lifting of the **Union** ban in **1997**.
- Feb 1989 The **Trades Council** changed its name to the **Cheltenham & District Trades Union Council**. From **April 2004** its meetings were held at the **Labour Club's** premises at **377 High Street**, and from **August 2006** at **Bevan House, 67 Clarence Street**, where it still meets every month.
- 17 Oct 1992 About 3,000 marched from **Montpellier Gardens** against the Government's proposed closure of 31 more coalmines. Two local hoteliers organized the march and rally in front of the **Municipal Offices**. Four coachloads also went from **Cheltenham** and **Gloucester** on **21** and **25 October** to take part in giant **TUC** and **NUM** marches and rallies in **London** against the pit closures.
- 9 Dec 1992 The **Cheltenham & District Trades Union Council** helped launch the **Gloucestershire Campaign for Jobs & Recovery** at a meeting in the **Wheatstone Hall, Gloucester**.
- 27 Jan 1993 The **South West Regional Office** of the teaching Union **NAS/UWT** was formally opened on the north side of **Imperial Square**.
- 26 Apr 1993 The **Gloucestershire One Fund for All** scheme, to raise money for the county's unemployed workers centres, was launched by the **Cheltenham & District Trades Union Council** at the **Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People** in **Clarence Parade**.
- 15 May 1993 Local **Trade Unionists** took part in the '**March for Education**' from **Montpellier** to **Pittville Park**, for a rally organised by **P.A.C.E. (Parents Against Cuts in Education)**. The proposed cuts in education were a threat to 150 teaching jobs in the county.
- 5 Nov 1993 **Cheltenham civil servants** joined in the national strike against Government plans to market-test **Civil Service** jobs and put them into private contractors' hands.
- 30 Mar 1995 **NHS** workers in **UNISON** demonstrated outside **Cheltenham General Hospital** against low pay and worsened conditions of service.
- 11 Nov 1997 The new **Trade Union Studies Centre** was formally opened by **John Monks**, the **TUC** General Secretary, at the **GLOSCAT Christchurch Campus** in **Gloucester Road**.
- Aug 2000 The **Federation of Master Builders** complained that the new **GCHQ** development (the 'doughnut') was taking on so many workers that it was affecting the building industry in the southwest, Wales and the south midlands.
- 5 Dec 2001 The **Cheltenham & District Trades Union Council** passed a resolution condemning the bombing of **Afghanistan**, having two weeks earlier taken their banner on a big **Anti-War March** from **Hyde Park** to **Trafalgar Square**.
- 5 Nov 2004 **Cheltenham Civil Service Trade Unionists** joined the **PCS** national strike against the planned cutting of 100,000 jobs and the impact on services to the public.

TRADE UNIONS – The GENERAL STRIKE of 1926

- 3 May 1926 The **General Strike** in support of the miners started at midnight. To coordinate it locally, the **Cheltenham & District Trades & Labour Council** had formed a **Council of Action** which operated from the **Labour Hall** at **299 High Street** (its members are listed under the **May 1926** entry in the main **Trade Unions** section). All **Trade Union** printers 'went out' that night.

- 4 May 1926 There was a total rail stoppage at both the **GWR** and the **LMS** stations. ‘Not a single puff of smoke ... and not a porter’s truck disturbed the quietude of empty platforms’. The railway clerks struck as well. ‘Outside the **Midland Station** taxi-drivers were kicking their heels. Only one railway employee remained at work, charged with looking after the horses’. At the **Railway Institute** (i.e. the **Railway Mission Hall**) in **Millbrook Street**, a crowd of men stood about, discussing events, ‘while inside the building the piano tinkled to a lively tune’. The **Sunningend Works** men downed tools at 10 a.m. and ‘a stream of men poured into the **Gloucester Road**’. There was a complete cessation of the **Cheltenham & District Light Railway** tram service. The *Echo* was produced this day ‘under very great difficulty’, all the **Typographical Association** members having struck. From **5 – 12 May** only a two-page daily was turned out.
- 5 May 1926 Both of the **Cheltenham** railway stations remained closed. A skeleton tram service (of two cars only) was worked by company inspectors from this date onwards. On the building sites carpenters ‘relinquished their grip of saw and chisel’ and plumbers were due to down tools too. The **Cheltenham Gas Company** works was ‘proceeding normally’.
- 6 May 1926 The only workers seen on the large job of rebuilding and enlarging **Boots Ltd** on the corner of the **High Street** and **North Street** were an apprentice bricklayer and his labourer. All the many other workmen on this job had joined the strikers. The lack of train services forced the postal authorities to use ‘two great motor vans’ to carry the mails from **London** to **Cheltenham** to **Gloucester**. The plasterers formed a five-strong **Strike Committee** and struck till **13 May**.
The *Gloucester Strike Bulletin* sold for ½ d a copy in **Gloucester** and **Cheltenham**. **Miss Edith Detmore** of **Charlton Kings** was assaulted in the **Promenade** when selling the two-sided single sheet; the **UCAL Works** managing director later apologised to her in court on **20 May**.
- 7 May 1926 Only a skeleton train service was run, mainly by volunteers, on **GWR** and **LMS** local routes.
- 8 May 1926 The *Cheltenham Chronicle* reported that in **Cheltenham** ‘the railwaymen, tramwaymen, practically all the building trades, and members of the **Typographical Association** are out, and various industrial owners have been affected by the inability to obtain supplies of raw material and means of transport for their products. Food transport has been well maintained’. At the various postal sub-offices there was a morning delivery and an evening collection only.
- 9 May 1926 A mass labour meeting was held by the **Council of Action** in the **North Street Picture House** (Sunday afternoon). Speakers were **Mrs Arthur Bouchier**, **Mr A.E. Chandler** (the **Lansdown Station** stationmaster, and himself on strike), and **Mr E. Burge** (**Council of Action**), who wanted ‘to see **Stanley Baldwin** go back to feed his pigs!’.
- 10 May 1926 The two-page *Echo* reported that coal stocks in the town were nearly exhausted. All the journeymen linotype operators together with their foreman, who formerly helped produce the *Echo*, were still on strike. Owing to the impossibility of getting goods away by rail, **UCAL** (**United Chemists Association**) had suspended their despatch packers.
- 11 May 1926 The tram service was still restricted to two cars run by the **Company’s** inspectors. Non-strikers were running one route only, with two motor-buses.
- 12 May 1926 Cheltonians heard the end-of-strike announcement broadcast at 1.15 p.m. over station 2LO.
- 13 May 1926 The **Council of Action** called a mass labour meeting at **Barrett’s Mill, Cambray**. Over 1,000 attended. **Mr Dick Stubbs** said the **Council** had concluded that the return to work should be for all or none. The railwaymen were refusing to return after being asked twice to sign conditions. A deputation of **Sunningend** workers had been told that all had been sacked and could only go back under new conditions. The tramwaymen would be taken back on the same wages but with longer hours. Three shops (including **Burrow’s Press**) were letting strikers return under old conditions.
- 14 May 1926 The tramwaymen went back today after a settlement reached at the **Labour Hall**, with the **Deputy Mayor** as intermediary. The men marched four-deep back to the depôt. There was little response by the railwaymen to an **LMS** ultimatum. At the **GWR** goods yard no-one had returned and at the passenger station extremely few. A deputation of all **Gloucestershire Aircraft Works** organisations met management at **Sunningend**. A return to work on existing conditions was agreed for the 1,200 workers involved.
- 15 May 1926 A large procession marched from the **Labour Hall** to the **Gloucestershire Aircraft Works**, where employees signed on to start work on **Monday 17 May**. Women at the front led the singing of labour songs *en route*. ‘Everything was very orderly and good-humoured.’
- 16 May 1926 About 1,200 attended another mass labour meeting in the **North Street Picture House**. **Mr Dick Stubbs** again presided. The main speaker was the miners’ MP **Mr Morgan Jones**, supported by **Mr E. Burge** of the **Council of Action**. **Mr Jones** declared the **Strike** ‘had been called off ... when millions of people were prepared to carry on ... We had a demonstration of working-class solidarity of such a character and dimension that the most enthusiastic of the Labour leaders never anticipated it ... It had given the Government an eye-opener and a wonderful shake-up.’

17 May 1926 At the **GWR** goods station the strikers were steadily being reinstated and goods were expected to start rolling into **Cheltenham** again the next day. About 50% of the normal staff worked in the **GWR** passenger department. At the **LMS Lansdown Station** similar conditions prevailed.

TRADE UNIONS – The GCHQ TRADE UNION BAN CAMPAIGN

- 25 Jan 1984 All **GCHQ** workers were suddenly ordered to leave their **Trade Unions** by **1 March** or face dismissal, and access to **Industrial Tribunals** was barred. The **Government's** ban came out of the blue. The long struggle began. It became an international *cause célèbre* and the second longest continuously fought dispute in British **Trade Union** history.
- 26 Jan 1984 The first big protest meeting took place, in **Pittville Pump Room**, attended by 1,500 **GCHQ** workers. There were further packed meetings in the **Pump Room** on **2** and **14 February**. The **TUC** pledged an initial £500,000 to support the campaign. On **24 February** 800 **GCHQ** workers met in the **Town Hall**. Prime Minister **Thatcher** declared 'There is an inherent conflict between the structure of the **Trade Unions** and loyalty to the State'. In a six-hour parliamentary debate on **27 February** the Government was comprehensively flayed over the ban, and the topic was given huge media publicity month after month.
- 28 Feb 1984 ('**GCHQ Day**') A 1,000-strong rally of **GCHQ** workers at **Pittville Pump Room** was addressed by **TUC** General Secretary **Len Murray**; hundreds of thousands took industrial action nationally.
- 1 Mar 1984 The **Trade Union ban** was imposed at **GCHQ**. 130 refused to sign away their **Union** rights. The name '**GCHQ Trade Unions**' was chosen on **5 March** at a meeting in the **Park Place Hotel, Cheltenham**, and officially launched five days later as a high-profile campaigning organisation.
- 2 Apr 1984 After temporary residence from late **January** to the end of **March** at **4 Royal Crescent**, a permanent **Campaign Office** opened on the second floor of **22 Clarence Street**, where it operated continuously until the end of **1997**, manned by some of the remaining workers who had defied the ban. Thousands of support messages were received at the **Office** over the years, and countless media interviews were held there. It published 150 issues of the journal *Warning Signal* (written by campaign members themselves), mailing out up to 9,000 copies each issue. **GCHQ Trade Unionists** criss-crossed the country for 13 years to address **TU** and party political conferences and branch meetings, trades councils, rallies and seminars. Active support was exchanged with other main **TU** struggles. Westminster MPs were regularly contacted and lobbied. The international dimension included regular trips to address **TU** conferences in **Ireland** and visits to **Strasbourg** and **Brussels**.
- 14 Apr 1984 The following Early Day Motion No.675 was presented to the **House of Commons** by **Neil Kinnock**, leader of the **Labour Party**, and signed by nearly all the Shadow Cabinet (a virtually unprecedented act):- 'That this House notes that the first town petition in support of the **Tolpuddle Martyrs** was presented to the **House of Commons** on **14 April 1834** ... on behalf of the inhabitants of **Cheltenham**; it now regrets that 150 years later the people of the United Kingdom are having to campaign as strongly for the basic civil liberty of the right to combine in independent **trade unions**; and hopes that the success of the people of **Cheltenham** and others in the **1830s** in securing the release of the **Tolpuddle Martyrs** will be matched today by the restoration to the workers at **GCHQ** of this fundamental liberty to be members of a free, independent **trade union**'.
- 2 Jun 1984 The **United Nations ILO (International Labour Organisation)** at **Geneva** condemned the **GCHQ Union ban** for the first of many times, as contravening the **ILO's** most central Convention No.87 on 'Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise'.
- 1 Jul 1984 **GCHQ Trade Unionists** took part in the 150th Anniversary **Tolpuddle** march and rally in **Dorset**, and attended the **Tolpuddle** commemoration every year thereafter.
- 13 Jul 1984 Foreign Secretary **Howe's** visit met with energetic protest activity inside **GCHQ Oakley**.
- 16 Jul 1984 The High Court in **London** ruled the ban invalid, and a further 150 rejoined their **Unions**. On **6 August** the Appeal Court overturned the High Court ruling. On **22 November** the Law Lords confirmed the Appeal Court decision. **GCHQ Trade Unionists** attended these hearings.
- 25 Jan 1985 Individual campaign members from **GCHQ** addressed 30 out of 70 big rallies across the country marking the first anniversary of the struggle.
- 26 Jan 1985 A **First Anniversary Cheltenham Rally** was held in a monster marquee in **Montpellier Gardens**, after a 5,000-strong march from **Pittville Pump Room**. Political speakers **Neil Kinnock** and **David Penhaligon** addressed the rally. This and all subsequent **January** rallies in the town were always addressed by the **TUC** leadership, the **Council of Civil Service Unions**, the **GCHQ Trade Unions** chair, and often by international **TU** visitors, as well as by opposition politicians. The marchers came from all parts of these islands.

- Late Apr 1985 The **GCHQ Trade Unions 'Roadshow'** began, distributing literature, and selling badges, mugs and pottery animals (including the very popular '**GCHQ mole**'). By **1997** it had covered over 150,000 miles, attended over 350 events and raised large sums for the campaign.
- 9 Aug 1985 The Head of the **Civil Service** announced that **GCHQ** would discipline rejoiners, but the Government backed off in **September** after a **TUC** pledge of industrial action if anyone was dismissed. Earlier threats had also been made by the Government in **April** and **May**.
- 25 Jan 1986 The **second Anniversary Rally** took place in **Montpellier Gardens**, after over 7,000 marched from the **Pump Room**. The political speakers were **Roy Hattersley** and **David Steel**.
- 18 Mar 1986 The Government gave rejoiners ten days to renounce their **Trade Unions**. All refused. There was a massive reaction and **Civil Service** walk-outs occurred across Britain and Northern Ireland. Six days later the Foreign Secretary backed down from ordering dismissals, but 13 **GCHQ Trade Unionists** were fined around £2,000 each on **18 June**.
- 20 Jan 1987 The **European Commission on Human Rights** declared the **GCHQ** case 'inadmissible'. Nine campaign members from **Cheltenham** flew to **Strasbourg** for this hearing.
- 24 Jan 1987 The **Third Anniversary Rally** took place in **Montpellier Gardens** with over 6,000 on the march from the **Pump Room**. The political speakers were **John Prescott** and **Paddy Ashdown**.
- 22 Jun 1987 Following the General Election result, campaign members pledged 'The fight goes on!'
- 23 Jan 1988 The **Fourth Anniversary Rally** took place in **Montpellier Gardens**, with political speaker **Michael Meacher**. Around 7,000 were on the preceding march from the **Pump Room**.
- 29 Sep 1988 The Government finally announced its intention to dismiss all the remaining **Trade Unionists** at **GCHQ**, which resulted in spontaneous mass walk-outs from country-wide **Civil Service** offices.
- 7 Nov 1988 There was widespread support on '**GCHQ Day**' by the **Trade Union** movement and others. A 24-hour strike action was led by over 200,000 civil servants. Well over 70 packed protest rallies were held across the country, with 10 of the biggest addressed by workers to be sacked from **Cheltenham** and the outstations.
- 18 Nov 1988 The first four sackings took place at **GCHQ** (**Mike Grindley, Graham Hughes, Brian Johnson** and **Alan Rowland**) were followed by 10 more on **5 December** (**Gerry O'Hagan**), **12 January 1989** (**Dee Goddard**), **22 February** (**Bill Bickham, Allan Chambers, John Cook, Clive Lloyd, Roy Taylor** and **Harry Underwood**), **2 March** (**Gareth Morris**) and **7 April** (**Robin Smith**). These workers were the first Government employees ever to be dismissed in the 20th century solely for belonging to a **Trade Union**. Five worked at **Oakley**, three at **Benhall**, and six at the outstations. A brief rally was held on **18 November** at the **Priors Farm** playing field after a march up **Imjin Road** from the gates of **GCHQ Oakley**, led by the **Brodsworth Colliery Band**.
- 30 Nov 1988 Civil servants from all over the country carried out a huge mass lobby of Parliament.
- 8 Dec 1988 The Prime Minister announced the abandonment of the **Polygraph 'lie detector'** scheme for **GCHQ**. (In **May 1983** it had been claimed that lie detectors were to be used on **GCHQ** staff.)
- 29 Jan 1989 The **Fifth Anniversary Rally** met in **Montpellier Gardens**, with political speakers **Neil Kinnock** and **Paddy Ashdown**. Well over 10,000 (with 170 banners) were on the march from **Pittville Pump Room**.
- 20 Jun 1989 The **United Nations ILO Conference** in **Geneva** issued an extremely severe condemnation of the **GCHQ Union** ban and the recent sackings.
- 27 Jul 1989 Sacked **GCHQ Trade Unionists** drove from **Cheltenham** to **Strasbourg** to present a petition at the **European Parliament**. This eventually led to decisive condemnation of the ban at the **European Parliament** in **1993** and **1997**.
- 18 Nov 1989 When the **Trades Council** held the first sackings anniversary **Vigil** outside **GCHQ Benhall**, the **Bishop of Gloucester** sent his personal message of support, calling the ban 'unjust and unworthy'.
- 27 Jan 1990 Over 5,000 marched from **Pittville Pump Room** in appalling weather to attend the **Sixth Anniversary Rally** in **Montpellier Gardens**. The political speakers were **Tony Blair** and **Paddy Ashdown**. The visiting speaker from the **South African Trade Union movement** told the rally 'the struggle of **GCHQ** workers is our struggle'.
A special tree was planted on this date in **Montpellier Gardens** by TUC General Secretary **Norman Willis**, and a commemorative plaque added to it on **18 November 1993**.
- 26 Jan 1991 The **Seventh Anniversary Rally** was held, with about 7,000 marching from the **Pump Room** to **Montpellier Gardens**. The political speakers were **Tony Blair** and **Baroness Seear**.
- 18 Jun 1991 The **United Nations ILO** in **Geneva** voted 160 countries to one (Britain) in condemnation of the **GCHQ Union ban**. 'In the sphere of human rights this **ILO** decision is equivalent to a resolution of the **UN Security Council**'.
- 25 Jan 1992 Around 7,000 marched in very wet weather from the **Pump Room** to **Montpellier Gardens** for the **Eighth Anniversary Rally** to hear political speakers **Gordon Brown** and **Baroness Seear**.

- 30 Mar 1992 Prime Minister **John Major** was confronted in person in the **Promenade** by sacked **GCHQ** workers during his General Election visit to **Cheltenham**.
- 14-16 Dec 1992 The Chair of the **GCHQ Trade Unionists** addressed various groups of MEPs at the **European Parliament** in **Strasbourg**, and observed the Prime Minister accused to his face over the **Union ban** by the European Labour leader during the plenary session of the **European Parliament**.
- 23 Jan 1993 The **Ninth Anniversary Rally** took place in **Montpellier Gardens**, after 5,000 had marched from **Pittville Pump Room**. The political speakers were **Mo Mowlam** and **Nigel Jones**.
- 11 Mar 1993 The **European Parliament** in **Strasbourg** officially adopted as its policy ‘the condemnation of the unilateral removal of **Trade Union rights** from **GCHQ** workers’.
- 5 Jan 1994 **Gloucestershire County Council** (without dissent) condemned the ban and ‘strongly urged restoration of the **Trade Union rights** at **GCHQ**. **Cheltenham Borough Council** followed suit on **7 March**.
- 25 Jan 1994 This date was the exact 10th anniversary of the **Trade Union ban** announcement. Six sacked campaign members handed in a strong protest letter at **10 Downing Street**. Protest messages were also sent to the Prime Minister and to British Embassies and High Commissions by at least 40 international **Trade Union** organisations.
- 29 Jan 1994 The **10th Anniversary Rally** was held in **Montpellier Gardens**. Around 11,000 were on the march from the **Pump Room**, and the political speakers were **John Smith** and **Nigel Jones**.
- Jan-Apr 1994 There was considerable debate on the **ban** by both the **House of Lords** and the **House of Commons**.
- 25 Nov 1994 Prime Minister **John Major**’s unannounced visit to **GCHQ Oakley** was ambushed by the sacked **Trade Unionists** at the gates to the base, leading to ‘**Major Faces Spybase Protest**’ headlines.
- 28 Jan 1995 The **11th Anniversary Rally** was held, this time in the **Town Hall**. About 7,000 marched from the **Pump Room**, and the political speakers were **Harriet Harman** and **Nigel Jones**.
- 14 Jun 1995 The **ILO** in **Geneva** ‘deeply regretted and deplored that the British Government had not taken action to resolve the **GCHQ Union ban**’.
- 8 & 29 Jan 1996 The City Councils of **Dublin** and **Cork** separately passed motions condemning denial of **GCHQ Trade Union rights**, and calling on the **Irish Foreign Minister** to raise the issue with his British counterpart.
- 25 Jan 1996 The leader of the **Methodist Church** declared the **Union ban** ‘a violation of the basic freedom of association for which the **Tolpuddle Martyrs** fought’ and called for ‘the rights of those who work at **GCHQ** to be fully restored’. This was the third January running that the Methodist leadership had condemned the ban.
- 27 Jan 1996 The **12th Anniversary Rally** was held in the **Town Hall**, after over 6,000 had marched in snowy conditions from the **Pump Room**. The political speakers were **Michael Meacher** and **Nigel Jones**.
- 17 Sep 1996 At **Strasbourg** the plenary session of the **European Parliament** condemned by 223 votes to 158 the British Government’s unilateral removal of **Trade Union rights** at **GCHQ** and called for ‘restoration of those rights and full compensation and reinstatement for the sacked workers’.
- 25 Jan 1997 Over 7,000 were on the march from the **Pump Room** to the **Town Hall** for the **13th Anniversary Rally**. The political speakers were **Peter Hain** and **Nigel Jones**. Dozens of international messages of support were received from major **Trade Union** bodies, as on previous January rallies.
- 15 May 1997 The new Foreign Secretary **Robin Cook** announced the overturning of the **ban** (after the change of government at the **1 May** General Election). This was the 4,860th day of continuous campaigning.
- 25 Jul 1997 A symbolic march took place back into **GCHQ Oakley** by the sacked **Trade Unionists**, who were all awarded the **TUC Gold Badge of Congress** in **September**. Two of the four banners used in the campaign are now preserved by the **Museum of Labour History** in **Manchester**.
- 31 Aug 1997 A final rally was held in **Montpellier Gardens**. Around 5,000 marched from the **Racecourse** in driving rain and a heavy thunderstorm. The political speaker was **Ian McCartney**. All three living **TUC** General Secretaries (**Len Murray**, **Norman Willis** and **John Monks**) addressed the meeting. **Len Murray** declared “If they had not stood firm in **1984**, the rest of the public service would have been next”.
- 9 Sep 1997 The first of the sacked **Trade Unionists** wishing to return started work at **GCHQ**; seven of the 14 were now too old. The right of workers there to go to **Industrial Tribunals** was reinstated, and **Trade Union** recruitment was already under way. The removed pension rights for the 14 sacked were finally restored in **February 2000**.



17. The Trades & Labour Council transferred to the newly-established Labour Hall & Institute at 299 (now No. 330) High Street (above) in Oct 1924. The premises were shared with a Branch Post Office and a fancy draper. The Council coordinated local response to the General Strike from here in 1926.



18 & 19. The Trades & Labour Council moved to 3 Royal Crescent when the Labour Hall & Institute moved there in 1931.

2 Royal Crescent was added in 1950. The Council finally left the Crescent in Mar 2004.



20. The ban on all trade union membership at GCHQ on 1 Mar 1984 led to the second longest continuously-fought dispute in British Trade Union history. The 4th annual march and rally in support of the workers who refused to leave their union, shown above, took place in Cheltenham on 23 Jan 1988.



21. This plaque in Montpellier Gardens commemorates the sacking of 14 GCHQ trade unionists in 1988-9.



22. GCHQ strikers by the main entrance to the Oakley site in Feb 1987. The group includes Mike Grindley (centre front), local historian and long-term member of Cheltenham Local History Society.

WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATIONS &c

- Mar 1835 A new literary and scientific society, the **Athenaeum**, was set up in **Portland Street**, with the aim of becoming a force in educating all classes. The founders were anxious to avoid the controversial and political and religious activities that were associated with the **Mechanics' Institute**. It offered a cheaper rate for membership with lectures at 1s for non-members. The **Athenaeum** was short-lived although the name was used again in **1856** (which see).
- 18 Nov 1837 The *Cheltenham Free Press* (Radical) published a letter from **William Penn Gaskell** 'to the Working Classes of **Cheltenham**' calling for the formation of local **Working Men's Association**. It was formed the following month, the first in **Gloucestershire**. The first chairman was **John Walter** and other founder members included **Dudley Ward Smith** (bricklayer), **A. Bannister**, **John Davis**, **Thomas Riorden**, **John Goding** (leading Unitarian and Chartist supporter), **J. William Spackman** (tailor and first treasurer) and **Thomas Down** (secretary).
- 12 Dec 1837 Members of the **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** addressed local workers, urging them to join the **Association** 'for obtaining our Rights, Moral and Political, and prove to the ruling few that they can no longer pour down upon the Working Classes that heavy load of taxation in order to enrich themselves'. The objects of the **Association** included 'to draw into one bond of unity the intelligent and industrial portion of the Working Classes in the town and neighbourhood for the purpose of obtaining by every legal means Universal and Equal Suffrage'. The **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** was initially established at **No.7 Chapel Street**, before moving to a room at the **York Hotel**. By the end of **1838** the **Association** met every night at **Sheldon's Hotel**.
- 1838 The **Cheltenham Working Men's Association** (per **Mr Banfield**) sent a subscription of £0 11s 1d to the **Dorchester Labourers Farm Tribute**, collected to help five of the **Tolpuddle** men and their families settle on farms in **Essex** after their return from **Australia**.
- 4 Nov 1839 A **Church of England Working Men's Association** was established in **Cheltenham**, with the **Rev. Francis Close** at its head, holding its first meeting at the **Diocesan School Room** in the **Vittoria Hotel (High Street)**. The aim of the **Society** was 'to ground the working men of this town in Church of England principles, and thus give them the strength to drive out Chartism, Socinianism' (linked to the Unitarians) 'and all the other -isms'. The first meeting was chaired by the **Rev. C.G. Davies**, who offered to give lectures in Natural History, which he had made his study. The **Rev. Francis Close** presented the **Society** with a small library of books.
- 18 Nov 1839 The **Cheltenham** gun-maker **Mr Hollis** delivered his first lecture on National Education to a crowded room of the **Working Men's Association**. The meeting was chaired by **Mr S. Tozer** and great numbers of people were turned away as the room was so full. Subsequent lectures at the **Association** included several by grocer and local historian **John Goding**, who spoke on democracy, geology and the abolition of capital punishment amongst other topics.
- 2 Dec 1839 In a lecture at the **Working Men's Association** on National Education, **Mr Hollis** referred to the rival **Church of England Working Men's Association** as 'the Political Parson's Spouting Club'.
- 20 Jan 1840 **John Goding** gave a lecture on Universal Suffrage to a crowded audience at the rooms of the **Working Men's Association**.
- 28 Feb 1840 A crowded **Working Men's Association** meeting adopted a Petition to the **House of Commons** in favour of the entire abolition of capital punishment. **J.E. Banfield** chaired the meeting and **John Goding** spoke at length on the statistical returns *re* punishment by death, proving that 'the law was not only useless, but that it was inflicting a positive injury upon society'. He went on to say 'how much more would it accord with the feelings of humanity to see an erring brother, perhaps the victim of early neglect, reforming his character in some penal settlement, than to have seen him hurried into an awful eternity, unclaimed and unrelentless'. The petition was carried unanimously amidst much cheering, and signed by 464 members of the **Association**.
The **Cheltenham Female Political Union** forwarded a similar petition, signed by 216 of their members, to the **House of Commons** the same week. The petitions were to be presented by **Mr Ewart MP** and supported by the **Hon. Craven Berkeley MP**. In the event **Mr Ewart's** motion to abolish the punishment of death failed.
- 1 Jun 1840 A public meeting was held at the **Working Men's Association** to adopt a petition to the **House of Commons** asking that body to request **Her Majesty** to release 'all persons now confined in prison for advocating the principles of Universal Suffrage; and to dismiss her present ministry as unworthy of her confidence and enemies to the welfare of the people'. The petition was adopted unanimously amidst loud cheering.
- 8 Jun 1840 A lecture was delivered at the **Working Men's Association** by **John Goding** on the inefficacy and cruelty of the system of transporting criminals to the penal settlements in **New South Wales**, **Van Diemen's Land**, **Norfolk Island** and **Bermuda**.

- 6 Jul 1840 **Mr Hooper** delivered a lecture at the **Working Men's Association** on 'Poetry as Connected with the Advancement of Universal Liberty'.
- 27 Aug 1840 **Mr Hooper**, whose previous lectures had included topics such as Phrenology and Poetry, gave a farewell address to the **Working Men's Association** as he was about to emigrate to the **USA**. He praised Chartism and denounced the social system in Britain saying "Agitate! Awake from your lethargy, to class formation, to organisation ... My advice is to never cease petitioning till you get by importunity from the House of Irresponsibles (*i.e. the House of Commons*) that which they will never yield to justice ..."
- 7 Jun 1841 The ex-Socialists' meeting place in **St George's Place**, the former **Sadler's Wells puppet theatre**, was re-opened as the Library, Reading and Lecture Rooms of the **Church of England Working Men's & Tradesmen's Association**, with the **Rev. Francis Close** in the chair. The Conservative *Cheltenham Chronicle* reported that the building would be converted into a 'Hall of Science', after the Socialists had employed it as 'a cloak for the disgraceful scenes of riot and licentiousness which so frequently occur at their meetings'. ... 'A few short days ago this place was the sink of iniquity from whence the most blasphemous and demoralising doctrines were promulgated.' The room used for the opening meeting had undergone a thorough repair since its former occupants had been 'ejected' – 'the filthy state it was then in was an emblem of the foul and abominable tenets held and promulgated by those demoralizers of the world ...'
- It is ironic that the **Association** supported by the **Rev. Francis Close** should have a former theatre, and former Socialist headquarters, as its centre of operations – perhaps a triumph for **Close**, who for many years had harangued the townspeople for wishing to attend theatres. At the opening of the **Association's** Reading Rooms etc he condemned the **Socialists** and 'their abominable infidel principles' in extreme terms and talked of 'the most shocking history' of what had passed between the walls of the building. **Close** said that 'about 40 years ago the celebrated **Mr Fox** used to come to that room to see low comedies performed, there being then no theatre in **Cheltenham**, neither indeed was there one now, for it was burned down, - cheers and laughter from **Close's** audience. 'From that time to the present it had passed through a variety of changes, until at last it came into the bosom of the old mother church'.
- 22 Nov 1841 The **Working Men's Temperance Association of Cheltenham** had taken a spacious yard and premises at **230 High Street** (now **427 Lower High Street**) as their headquarters. On **22 November** the foundation stone of a lecture room was laid by **Mr Berry** in the presence of the building committee and various members of the society, in the ground attached to the premises. The room was built to hold over 500 members and was paid for by shares amongst members and by voluntary contributions. The building became the **Ragged School** in the **1850s**.
- 28 Sep 1842 The second anniversary of the **Cheltenham Rechabite Tents** took place, with a procession from the **Temperance Hotel** to **St Paul's Church**. This was followed by a procession of banners through the town, preceded by the **Rechabite Band**. The **Working Men's Association** joined the procession, headed by a large new flag with the words '**Cheltenham Working Men's Association** for the Suppression of Intemperance, Established **May 1842**'.
- Oct 1842 The **Rev. Francis Close** advised the **Working Men's Association** to admit its ladies for £5 payment.
- 1844 A literary club for the working man was held in the **Brunswick Hotel**, meeting every Thursday. It was dissolved in **December** the same year; most of the members had enrolled in the list of supporters for a proposed **Cheltenham Institute**. The **Institute** was aimed at those whose financial or social position prevented them from joining the middle-class **Literary & Philosophical Society** on the **Promenade**, or whose religious beliefs prevented them from joining the **Church of England Reading Association**. No sectarian or political controversy was to be allowed at the new **Institute**, and it was aimed at workers in commercial, professional and mechanical occupations, especially shop assistants whose hours of work were supposed to be curtailed by the adoption of earlier closing times from **November 1844**. A temporary reading room was opened at **2 Clarence Street**, (later **Rees' Library**) from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- 1845 The **Church of England Working Men's Association** was renamed the **Church of England Reading Association**, with an altered constitution keeping an Anglican management committee but no longer insisting on an exclusively Anglican membership. A new reading room and library was opened at the back of the **diocesan Schoolroom** in **Regent Street**. Membership was 6s per year.
- Mar 1845 There were about 300 members of the new **Cheltenham Institute** and, as many similar activities were offered at the **Literary & Philosophical Institute**, the two amalgamated. The membership of the latter, with their greater leisure time, tended to pay a one guinea membership, while the working men paid 10s for evening membership after work.

- 10 Dec 1848 A public meeting was held at the **Town Hall in Regent Street** to promote the objects of a newly-formed **Working Man's Institute**, (after the failure of that of **1839-45**). It was set up as the bulk of workers felt shut out of the **Church of England Reading Association** by restrictive membership or bias, and from the **Literary & Philosophical Institute** because of the cost and the fact that working men did not feel comfortable mingling with gentlemen in a meeting room. It was announced that **Messrs. Rowe and Onley** had granted the use of **Old Well Cottage** for the purposes of the society until a more suitable room could be found. In the event the new society opened in three rooms – one in the **upper Bath Road**, one in **Tewkesbury Road** and one in **Regent Street** for members paying 6d per month. The **Regent Street** premises became known as the **People's Institute**.
- 17 Feb 1849 It was announced in the *Cheltenham Free Press* that the **Cheltenham Working Men's Institute** had taken spacious rooms in **Regent Street**. It was open on weekdays from 7.15 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. and the subscription was 6d per month. Four public teachers attended regularly, gratuitously, and the following classes were offered:
- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Monday | Arithmetic, Mathematics & Geography |
| Tuesday | Reading, Writing & Spelling |
| Wednesday | Elocution |
| Thursday | Discussion |
| Friday | English Grammar & Natural Philosophy |
- May 1849 The **Working Men's Institute** held their first meeting at the **Town Hall in Regent Street**.
- Jun 1849 The **Conservative Working Men's (Benefit) Society** held their annual dinner at the **Sydney Arms**.
- Aug 1850 The **Working Men's Institute** issued a printed circular about its purchase of premises in **Regent Street**.
- 1854 The **Working Men's Improvement Association** was established.
- May 1856 The **Working Men's Improvement Association** was renamed '**The Athenaeum**', a name which had been used in **1835** for an **Association** which proved to be short-lived. The new **Athenaeum** opened at **1 Crescent Place**, near the **Carlton Hotel**, with the headmaster of the **grammar school, Dr Humphries**, as its president. Following financial difficulties the **Athenaeum** closed in **1858**, becoming a **working men's club** in **1859**.
- 9 Apr 1859 A notice appeared in the local press requesting those interested in joining the proposed **Working Man's Club Rooms** in **St George's Street** to enrol their names with **J. Downing** at **135 High Street**, **Mr Marshall** in **Clarence Street**, or **J. Garrison** in **Rose & Crown Passage**. The notice was signed by temporary secretary **R. Frederick L. Blunt**.
- 21 Jul 1860 The **Working Man's Club** held its first anniversary meeting at its premises, the former **British School** in **St George's Street**.
- 1861 The **Church of England Reading Association** was dissolved due to lack of support.
- 29 Aug 1863 The fourth anniversary of the **Working Man's Club** was celebrated in a field near the **Midland station**. Unfortunately the event was marred by heavy rain, preventing many from attending.
- 11 May 1864 It was announced that 17,000 people had attended the **Working Man's Club** during the season contributing £80 in twopences. Saturday night entertainments, begun in **Oct 1862**, were a popular draw.
- Oct 1864 A **Working Men's Institute** was established for the **St Peter's** district of **Cheltenham**.
- Jul 1864 The **Working Men's Reform Club** (Liberal) met at the **Fountain Inn** in the **Bath Road**.
- Oct 1865 The **Working Men's Reform Club** held their annual dinner at **St George's Hall**. They met at other venues to hold their entertainments, including the **Royal Old Wells Music Hall**.
- Jan 1866 The brilliant pianist **Matthias Von Holst**, an uncle of **Gustav Holst**, chaired a concert held by the **Working Man's Club**.
- Feb 1866 A 'dry' smoking room was opened at the **Working Man's Club**.
- Mar 1866 The **Charlton Kings Working Man's Institute** was entertained by members of the **Cheltenham Working Man's Club**.
- 21 Jun 1867 The eight-strong society, the **Conservative Working Man's Society**, held an anniversary at the **Beehive Inn**. In the early years of the **Society** they usually met at the **Sydney Arms**.
- Feb 1868 The **Working Man's Reform Club**, by now using premises in **Albion Street**, was renamed the **Cheltenham Reform Club**. In **December 1874** the **Club** moved from **Albion Street** to **St Georges Place** and in **January 1878** purchased its own building, **5 St George's Place**. In **September 1886** the **Reform Club** merged with the **Liberal Club**.
- Apr 1868 The **Cheltenham Working Men's Constitutional Association** was founded.
- 20 Jul 1868 The newly-established **Association**, the **Working Men's Constitutionalists**, held their first meeting at the **Royal Hotel** skittle alley.

- 31 Aug 1868 The weekly meeting of the **Cheltenham Constitutional Working Men's Association** (a Tory-established organisation) was held in the **Royal Hotel Yard**, attended by about 700 members of the association. The **Constitutional** candidate for **Cheltenham**, **J.T. Agg Gardner** also attended.
- Aug 1869 The **Working Man's Reform Club** (Liberal) visited **Berkeley Castle**.
- Nov 1869 The majority of members of the **Working Man's Club** voted to establish a smoke room at their **St George's Street** premises.
- Nov 1869 The **Working Men's Constitutional Association** held a dinner at the **York Rooms** for **Mr Agg Gardner**.
- 1870 An **Athenaeum** opened, **Cheltenham's** third. It only lasted until **1875-6**, closing due to debt.
- 4 Jan 1870 The members of the Elocution Class of the **Working Man's Club** gave a successful free entertainment to a crowded audience. **Capt. St Clair Ford** was in the chair, supported by **J. Philp**, teacher of the class. The performance included two farces and extracts from Shakespeare.
- 8 Jan 1870 The **Working Man's Club** began the first of a series of **penny entertainments**, consisting principally of songs and readings 'so that all who choose may now obtain good music and good reading at a cheap rate'.
- Mar 1870 The **Working Man's Club** committee acknowledged a gift of a set of encyclopaedias.
- 11 Mar 1871 The **Working Men's Constitutional Association** held its weekly entertainment at the **York Rooms**, its usual meeting place, with songs and readings. **Major Boissier** presided.
- 16 Mar 1871 A dramatic entertainment to raise funds for the Library of the **Working Man's Club** was performed at the club's rooms in **St George's Street**.
- 26 Apr 1871 A special meeting was held to consider whether the **Working Man's Club** should be closed as it was about £75 in debt. **Sir A. Ramsay, Bart.**, was in the chair. The financial difficulties had been caused by the death of several of the **Club's** honorary members, by the falling off of the ordinary members, by a diminished attendance at the classes, and by the little interest shown in the lectures and entertainments. The institution was formed 'to afford moral and intellectual recreation to the working man after a hard day's toil'. It was agreed the meeting should be adjourned and decisions made at a later date.
- 15 Jun 1871 The **Cheltenham Working Men's Constitutional Association** held their third AGM in their rooms (**York Rooms**). There was prolonged and enthusiastic cheering when the future Member for the Borough, **James Tynte Agg Gardner** (Conservative), took his seat on the platform. It appears, from the accounts of the members and meetings, that this **Association** was not just for working men, but attracted Conservatives from all classes.
- 23 Oct 1871 The **Working Men's Constitutional Association** held their annual Tea & Musical Entertainment at the **Corn Exchange**. Admission to the post-Tea Concert and Political Addresses was 6d.
- Nov 1871 **Sir Thomas Phillips, Bart.**, of **Thirlestaine House**, presented £100 to **Gawen Harle**, collector for the **Working Man's Club**.
- 20 Feb 1872 The **Working Men's Peace Association** met but according to the *Cheltenham Express* 'very few working men put in an appearance, the attendance comprising a few dissenters, among them several who are not celebrated for peaceful proclivities in local affairs'. The cost and horrors of war were discussed and it was resolved to give support to the ultimate abolition of war, a motion seconded by the **Rev. Dr. Andrew Morton Brown**. **Mr J.D. Steel** proposed that copies of the resolutions adopted at the meeting should be forwarded to their Parliamentary representatives. He characterised the Army as 'a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy'.
- 6 Jun 1872 At a special general meeting of the **Working Man's Club** a resolution was passed allowing beer to be drunk on the premises. **Mr Joyner** (who owned a brewery) stated arguments in favour of the introduction of beer, showing how membership of the club had lately dropped off, and how necessary it was to introduce some 'fresh life' amongst the members.
- Jan 1875 A scheme was drawn up to convert the **Green Dragon Public House** into the **Albion Crêche** and **Working Men's Club**.
- 4 Dec 1875 A meeting was held in the **Vestry Hall, Charlton Kings**, to inaugurate the opening of premises in **Church Street** as a **Workman's Rest**, or a '**British Workman**'. The premises were purchased through the 'liberality and energy' of several residents of the village. At a very low cost, well-lit, warm rooms were kept open and newspapers and periodicals, with bagatelle and other games were provided. One room was open to the public at no charge, where tea and coffee (but no alcohol) could be bought at a moderate price.
- 23 Jun 1876 An auction of contents was held at the **Cheltenham Working Man's Club, St George's Street**. Items included a 'large and well-selected library' with glazed bookcases, a large and complete china tea service, several very large tables suitable for a public institution, a considerable number of boards and trestles used for public dinners, several dozen Windsor chairs, benches, &c, a valuable collection of fossils, a semi-grand piano, plaster models for drawing class.

- 24 Jun 1876 At a committee meeting earlier this month, it was decided to close the **Working Man's Club**. The *Cheltenham Mercury* reported that the **Club**, 'after a lingering existence of many years, has at last given up the ghost. Its mortal remains, in the shape of the library, fossils and fittings, were disposed of by public sale yesterday ... by **Mr Henry Harrison**, the well-known local auctioneer.' The building itself, formerly used as the **Boy's British School** and leased from **Corpus Christi, Oxford**, was sold at auction on **11 July**.
- Feb 1878 A 'new-style' coffee tavern, the **St George's Coffee Tavern**, opened on the **High Street**. The **Mayor** and the **Town Band** were present for the grand opening and speeches. Coffee taverns became very prevalent from the **1870s**, mainly connected with **Working Men's Clubs** and the Temperance movement. They were a conscious attempt by late Victorian social workers to lure working men from the perils of demon drink in their pubs, providing a selection of cheap non-alcoholic beverages and newspapers. Lectures and classes were offered as well as entertainments.
- 6 Jun 1878 A new coffee tavern opened in the **St John's** district at the well-established **Working Man's Club & Crèche** carried on at premises, formerly an old public house (the **Green Dragon**, corner of **Witcomb Place**), in **Albion Street**. The premises had been renovated and additional accommodation was obtained in a neighbouring building. The new coffee tavern was to be open from 5 a.m., when breakfasts could be obtained, until 11 p.m. every weekday.
- Oct 1878 A new coffee tavern opened at **300 High Street** (now **No.328**), with an opening ceremony at the **Assembly Rooms** with civic dignitaries attending.
- May 1879 A new temperance refreshment room, a **Coffee Tavern**, opened at **Ryeworth**.
- Aug 1879 **Capt. St Clair Ford** opened the new **Star Coffee Tavern** in **Tewkesbury Road**.
- Oct 1879 The **Tivoli Coffee Tavern** formally opened at **2 Tivoli Buildings**.
- Apr 1881 The **Lansdown Coffee Tavern** offered free weekly lectures to working men. In **November 1881** another '**Lansdown Coffee Tavern**' opened opposite the **Midland Station**. Confusingly there was also a **St Mark's Coffee Tavern** in the same area, which had opened in **December 1880**.
- Aug 1881 The **Victoria Coffee Tavern** opened on the corner of **Gloucester Road** and **Stoneville Street**.
- Oct 1881 A concert was given to inaugurate the opening of the **Imperial Coffee Tavern** on the corner of the **High Street** and **Rodney Road**.
- 18 Jan 1882 **Mr E.H. Gillilan** gave a free tea to 100 working men at the **Imperial Coffee Tavern**. The previous June the coffee tavern had increased its accommodation at its **Rodney Road** premises in a building designed for it by **Messrs. Middleton**.
- Feb 1882 A new **Coffee Tavern** opened in **Sherborne Street**.
- Nov 1882 A new **Coffee Tavern** opened in **Rutland Street** due to the efforts of the **Rev. J.A. Owen**. **Capt. St Clair Ford** made a speech at the opening ceremony.
- Dec 1882 The **Prestbury Working Men's Club & Institute** held a sale of work and a concert.
- Oct 1883 The **Cheltenham Working Men's College & Union Club** opened in the large room at **16 Clarence Street** under the auspices of the **Rev. J. Mugliston, Rev. J.A. Owen, Mr Wethered** and **H.H. Martyn**. The object was the 'higher class education of the working classes, and such objects as French, geometry, music, drawing and other kindred and elevating arts will here be taught free of expense'. It was proposed that a debating society would also be set up.
- 14 Nov 1883 A freehold property, the former **Working Men's Club**, in **Manchester Street** was up for sale.
- Dec 1884 The **Working Men's College** held their annual entertainment at the **Montpellier Rotunda**.
- Apr 1885 **W.N. Skillicorne jun.** presided at the opening of the **North Ward Liberal Working Men's Club**.
- 14 Oct 1885 A letter appeared in the *Cheltenham Examiner* from the **Working Girls' Dorcas Class** appealing for more members. The class stitched linen and clothing for the district poor.
- Dec 1885 The **Charlton Kings Working Men's Institute** was formed following a public meeting.
- Feb 1886 The **Working Men's College** put on an entertainment at the **Corn Exchange** to raise funds to provide extra accommodation for the **College**.
- April 1886 A concert was held at the **Assembly Rooms** in aid of the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club**. In **August** later that year the **Club** held a fête at **Charlton Park**.
- Nov 1886 A **Working Men's Institute** for **Leckhampton** was opened in **Moorend Road**.
- Feb 1887 The **Working Men's College** gave a successful performance of **Henry IV** at the **Corn Exchange**.
- Mar 1887 A large audience gathered at the **Corn Exchange** to hear **Canon Bell's** lecture to the **C. of E. Working Men's Protestant Union** on the history of the English Bible.
- Mar 1887 A concert at the **Leckhampton Working Men's Institute** proved so popular that many failed to get admission.
- Nov 1887 A three-day costume bazaar was held at the **Montpellier Rotunda** for the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club & Institute**.

- Nov 1888 **Capt. St Clair Ford** organised a costume bazaar at the **Assembly Rooms** in aid of the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club**.
- 1889 The **Working Men's College** moved to **3 Liverpool Place**.
- 1889 The **St Peter's Working Girls' Club** was formed, connected to **St Peter's Church** on **Tewkesbury Road**.
- Feb 1890 The **Prestbury Working Men's Club** combined with the national school to present an entertainment.
- Apr 1890 The **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club** put on an entertainment at the **St Clair-Ford Hall** in **Church Street**.
- Mar 1891 The **St Peter's Working Girls' Club** provided an entertainment at the **Waterloo Schools**.
- Mar 1892 The **St Peter's Working Girls' Club** assisted in a performance of **Farmer's** cantata 'Christ and His Soldiers' at **St Peter's Church**.
- Sep 1892 A serious fire at the **Prestbury Working Men's Institute** resulted in the loss of premises and contents worth £700.
- Nov 1892 The ninth annual report of the **Working Men's College** gave the membership as 129.
- Jun 1893 A recreation ground for the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club & Institute** was opened.
- Feb 1894 The **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club** fortnightly concert was arranged by **F.J. Peacey**.
- 26 Sep 1894 The editorial in the *Cheltenham Examiner* emphasised the role of the **Working Men's College** for clerks, artisans and other working people.
- May 1895 The **St Peter's Working Girls' Club** gave a concert at the **Montpellier Rotunda** in aid of funds.
- Nov 1896 The **Working Men's College** annual report showed a satisfactory 13th year, but this was not to last. They were only able to stay at **Liverpool Place** for another couple of years.
- Mar 1898 Acting on a suggestion by their president, **General Norman**, the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club** erected a gymnasium at the rear of the building.
- May 1899 Lack of funds forced the **Working Men's College** to leave their premises in **Liverpool Place**. The **Rev. J. Owen** issued appeals for help. In **October** they moved to premises in **North Street**, previously occupied by the **YMCA**, and were renamed the **Cheltenham Institute**.
- Aug 1900 Between 2,000 and 3,000 attended the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club** fête.
- Dec 1902 **Councillor Bence** chaired the first annual supper of a new **Working Men's Club**. Membership stood at 568, but the financial position of the **Club** was 'difficult'.
- Mar 1903 The **Rev. Henry Solly** died. A former minister of the **Cheltenham Unitarian Chapel**, he devoted many years of his later life to founding **Working Men's Clubs** in all parts of the country.
- Oct 1904 A rifle range was officially opened at the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Club & Institute**.
- Dec 1904 The **Working Men's Club** annual supper was held at **224 High Street**, presided over by **W. Seward**, supported by **Councillor Bendall**.
- Mar 1905 **Mr Agg-Gardner MP** was elected president of the newly formed **Conservative Working Men's Club**. The **Club** operated at **Portland House** in **Albion Street**.
- Jun 1905 The annual meeting of the **Conservative Five Hundred** was held at the new **Conservative Working Men's Club** in **Portland House, Albion Street**, with **W.F. Hicks Beach** presiding.
- Dec 1905 The **Working Men's Club** held their fourth annual dinner with **Councillor Bence** in the chair. The members were treated to an exhibition of clog-dancing.
- Jun 1908 Members of the **Working Men's Club** were charged with drunkenness.
- Aug 1908 The **Charlton Kings** fête was held in aid of the **Charlton Kings Working Men's Institute**, then in its 26th year.
- Sep 1908 **Councillor Bendall** chaired a musical and social evening at the **Emmanuel Working Men's Institute**.
- Sep 1910 A new **Working Men's Club** opened at the **Baker Street Institute**.
- Sep 1910 **Archdeacon Scobell** performed the opening ceremony at the new **St Peter's Institute**, set up in a conversion of the former **Star Hall** and **Star Coffee House**.
- 1914 The **Baker Street Institute**, a club for young working men, was formed.
- Oct 1924 The first **Workers' Education Association** class was held at **Pate's Grammar School**.
- Feb 1927 A new **Working Lads' Club** opened in **Grosvenor Street**.
- Dec 1941 The **Workers' Education Association Library** opened at **Whaddon Mixed School**.
- Mar 1942 A **Workers' Education Association Library** opened in the **St Mark's** district.
- Oct 1948 The **Workers' Education Association** held its Annual Conference in **Cheltenham**.
- Mar 1951 The **Oakley Emergency Training College** for men closed after training 800 students.

MAIN SOURCES

Adams, W.E., *Memoirs of a Social Atom*, (1903)

Ashton, Owen, 'Clerical Control and Radical Responses in Cheltenham Spa 1838-1848', *Midland History*,
Vol VIII, 1983, pp 121-147

Cheltenham Examiner Index – Compiled by members of the Cheltenham Local History Society,
(Available at the Cheltenham Reference Library)

Cheltenham Local History Society Journals, Vols. 2, 5 and 16

Grindley, Michael – author's own archives on the GCHQ Trade Union ban campaign

Hadfield, Alice Mary, *The Chartist Land Company*, 1970

Local Press, including *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic*, *Cheltenham Examiner*,
Cheltenham Free Press, *Cheltenham Journal*, *Cheltenham Looker-On*, *Cheltenham Mercury*,
Gloucestershire Echo – Cheltenham Reference Library /Compiler's own collection.

Cheltenham Town Council Minutes for 1939

Cheltenham Trades & Labour Council/Trades Council minutes & documents (including 1968 historical notes by
the late Harry Smith):

1894-1915 and 1931-1985 (Gloucestershire Archives D3614/4/1)

1986 to date (Author's own copies; official copies are with the Trades Union Council)

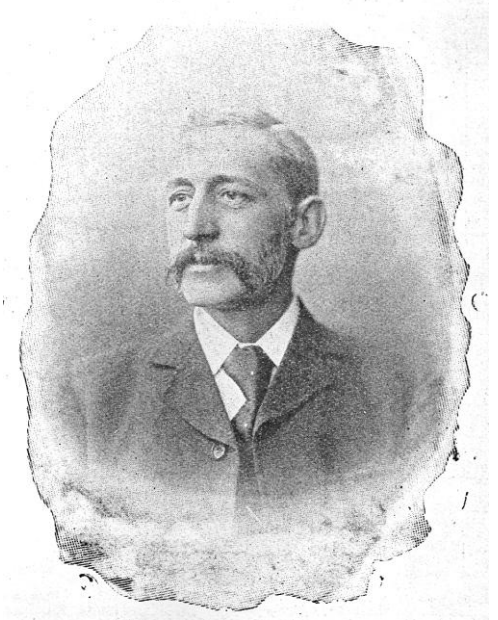
Osmond, Stephen E., *A Chronology of Cheltenham, 200BC – 2000AD*, (2000)

Rowbotham, Sue, and Waller, Jill, *Cheltenham: A History*, (Phillimore Press, 2004)

World Wide Web – various sites



23. Members of the Cheltenham Working Mens' Club enjoying an outing to Lower Lode, 27 Aug 1904.



25. Cheltenham & Cirencester was a District of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows. Edward Bourne, a member of the Cheltenham Oddfellows, was elected Deputy-Grand Master of the Manchester Unity at Cardiff in June 1908. In June 1909 he was elected Grand Master and a banquet was held in Cheltenham in his honour in October that year.

24. The Annual Moveable Committee of the Oddfellows (the national AGM) met at the Winter Gardens in June 1903, with a reception, church parade, service, Grand Master's address, speeches and a fête at Pittville attended by 16,000 people. The AMC had first met in Cheltenham 35 years previously.