



Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 65

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EDITORIAL

The pictures on the front and back of this issue, unlike the snowy photograph on the front of last November's Newsletter, are not at all seasonal—more a look back to summer than a foretaste of winter. They are there to celebrate two things: first, the opening of the Jenner Gardens in June (see report on p8), an event which just missed the last issue, and secondly the fact that we can now use colour, at least on the covers. Mary Nelson's lovely photos of the Gardens seemed the ideal choice on this occasion.

In the 30 years since I came to live here Cheltenham has changed a lot, generally for the better I think, and there seems to be more civic pride and awareness of our history than there used to be. The evidence is not hard to find: this year alone we have several initiatives to be proud of, notably the Holst statue, the Crimean War memorial and of course the Jenner Gardens. Long may this trend continue. Meanwhile, a very happy Christmas to all our members!

Kath Boothman

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LECTURE PROGRAMME

December 2009 – April 2010

Meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Promenade, starting at 7.30 pm unless otherwise indicated. Visitors are most welcome to attend at a charge of £1 per head; under 16s and students pay 50p. The Members' Evening in January is open to all without charge.

Tuesday 15th December 2009:

Mr Eric Williams—Up Hatherley past 2010

The last half of the 20th century transformed the village of Up Hatherley into a suburban adjunct of Cheltenham. There had been a settlement in the area in Romano-British times. The Saxons gave it its name and the Normans presented it to the Church. Later it fell into lay hands following the dissolution of the monasteries. It remained as a hamlet of no more than fifty souls until the late nineteenth century when several large rural villas were built by gentlemen who desired the peace of the countryside and the proximity of urbane Cheltenham. In such a tranquil setting it would seem hard to find events that would be of much interest to the local historian. But within the county and national archives there is evidence of stirring events and records that enrich our understanding of Up Hatherley. A plea for justice to the King in Parliament in 1330 and a proposed railway scheme by I K Brunel 500 years later are just two of the incidents that involved Up Hatherley.

Tuesday 19th January 2010:

Research and Display Evening

The annual social evening gives members a chance to meet informally and to exhibit the results of their research. Sue Newton has received one offer of a display for this evening but she would like to hear as soon as possible from any members who are willing to provide a display large or small. As 2010 is the anniversary year of the girl guide movement, maybe somebody could bring an early photo or two of local scouts or guides?

If you wish to contribute a display of your own research findings or source materials, please contact Sue Newton (01242 243049) or e-mail spnewton@talktalk.net.

Tuesday 16th February 2010:

Dr. Steven Blake — “Dissenters' Boxes”: the Nonconformist chapels of Regency and Victorian Cheltenham
Cheltenham has a large number of historic Nonconformist churches and chapels, most of which were built during the town's 19th-century heyday as a fashionable spa, residential and educational centre. This talk explores the wealth of surviving chapel buildings (including some that are now in secular use) and identifies others that have been demolished. In so doing, it also traces the history of Nonconformity in the town since the 17th century.

Tuesday 16th March 2010:

Miss Eunice Powell — The history of Bishop's Cleeve
For most of its history Bishop's Cleeve has remained a small agricultural community, the population differing very little from century to century; the opposite of the oversized village of today, though one feature is common

to both, the large Norman church of St Michael. At first glance it is a rural community like many others, but its history is worth a second glance. It would be impossible to do justice to all that history in one talk, so after a brief background we shall take a journey back in time to visit events and individuals from the 12th to the 19th century and times when national events affected the village or some of its inhabitants.

Tuesday 28th April 2010:

A.G.M. followed by Mr. Aylwin Sampson — A Cheltenham Looker-On

Many of you will remember Aylwin's talk entitled 'Cheltenham for the Curious' that he gave at the Regional History Afternoon at St. Andrew's Church in 2003. This evening he will continue in the same vein, describing oddities around the town..

Thursday 15th April 2010 at 10.00 am for 10.30 am:

Note venue: St Luke's Hall, St Luke's Place

Brian Torode—The Bouncer's Lane Cemetery

What happened to Charles Sturt, the Marshall family, the jockey George Stevens, William Nash Skillicorne, Admiral Henry Christian, the Brown family of Caryatides fame, and many other well known sons of Cheltenham? The illustrated talk will include a short history of the formation of the Bouncer's Lane Cemetery and its opening, followed by a look at the monuments and memorials of some of Cheltenham's illustrious inhabitants and benefactors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

FOR YOUR DIARY

Gotherington Local History Society

Meetings are held at Gotherington Village Hall at 8.00pm.

Visitors £1.

Thursday 19th November:

Brigadier Johnny Rickett—The Battle of Edgehill

Thursday 3rd December:

Gorden Ottewell—Evolution of the Village School

Thursday 21st January 2010:

Barry Simon—The History of Swindon Village

Thursday 18th February:

Ian Mackintosh—400 Years of Stroudwater Textiles

Thursday 18th March 2010:

David Smith—The Murder of Edward II at Berkeley Castle

Thursday 15th April 2010:

Dr Nicholas Herbert—The Development of Georgian Gloucester

Swindon Village Society

Talks start at 7.45 pm at Swindon Village Hall.

Non-members pay £1.

Wednesday 18th November:

Carolyn Greet—Jessops Gardens

MORE FOR YOUR DIARY

Leckhampton Local History Society

www.llhs.org.uk

Meetings are held at St Philip's & St James' Church House, Painswick Road, Cheltenham at 8.00pm.

Thursday 19th November:

Rosemary Westgate—Wildflowers of Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds

Thursday 17th December:

Aylwin Sampson—The Queen's Hotel

Thursday 21st January 2010:

Jean Jefferies—Cheese Rolling in Gloucestershire

Thursday 18th March 2010:

Steven Blake—John Bellamy: a Gloucestershire Victorian Showman

Charlton Kings Local History Society

Meetings take place in the Baptist Church, Church Street, Charlton Kings, starting at 7.30pm. Guests welcome—£2.

Tuesday 24th November:

Dr A Jones—Context for some Charlton Kings History

Tuesday 26th January 2010:

Brian Torode and Heather Atkinson—Delancey: the End of an Era

Holst Birthplace Museum

www.holstmuseum.org.uk

4 Clarence Road, Cheltenham

Sunday November 29th at 3.00 pm, Pittville Pump Room:

Concert of English Songs by the English Ayres Group— settings by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Bliss with lute and violin accompaniment

Tickets £10 (to include tea/coffee), available now from Holst Museum and Town Hall box office

Saturday 12th December, 10.00 am—4.00 pm

Victorian Christmas Activity Day

Drop-in fun for the family. Children FREE with paying adult. No prior booking necessary.

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

www.bgas.co.uk

Meetings are held at Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester at 7.30 pm.

Wednesday 18th November :

Dr Stephen Yeates—The Tribe of Witches: the religion of the Dobunni and Hwicce

Wednesday 20th January 2010:

Alan Sutton—Agnes Witts, the Lady of Rodborough

Wednesday 17th February 2010:

Dr Tim Jordan—Cotswold Stone Barns

Wednesday 17th March 2010:

Joan Tucker—Ferries of the Lower Severn

Historical Association, Cheltenham and Gloucester Branch

All meetings start at 7.30 pm. Cheltenham meetings are at the Up Hatherley library, Gloucester meetings at the Friends' Meeting House, Greyfriars (off Southgate St.)

Monday 14th December in Gloucester:

Irene Page—Calender and Customs in Rhyme

Monday 18th January 2010 in Cheltenham:

Dr Lawrence Goldman—A Life in Victorian Politics: Gladstone and the coming of democracy

Monday 15th February 2010 in Cheltenham:

Dr Stuart Hall—The Conservative Party between the Wars

Monday 8th March 2010 in Gloucester:

Professor Stephen King—Healthcare in the South West, 1750-1850

Monday 22nd March 2010 in Gloucester:

Professor Neil Wynn—The Depression and the New Deal in America

Gloucester and District Archaeological Group

Meetings start at 7.30 pm.

Wednesday 2nd December at the Gloucestershire Archives, Alvin Street, Gloucester:

Sir Stuart Prior—Excavations at Berkeley Castle

Wednesday 13th January 2010 at St Andrews United Reformed Church, Montpellier, Cheltenham:

Professor Tim Darvill—Merlin's Magic Circle: Stonehenge and the Bluestones

Wednesday 3rd February at Gloucestershire Archives:

Dr Steven Blake—English Medieval Wall Paintings



Friends of All Saints' Church

Thursday 28th January 2010 at 2.30 pm in the church, All Saints' Road, Cheltenham:

Dr Richard Cleaves—Josephine Butler: The Story behind one of Cheltenham's Blue Plaques

Visitors welcome, £3. Tea and biscuits.

Tewkesbury Historical Society

Thursday 19th November at 7.45 pm in the Methodist Church at the Cross, Tewkesbury:

David O'Connor—Cheltenham's Great Water Controversy: Tewkesbury's Gain?

Cirencester Archaeological and Historical Society

Meetings are held in the Ashcroft Centre, Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, at 7.30 pm. Visitors welcome £3.

Wednesday 27th January 2010:

Tristan Molloy and Jane Milne—William Morris and Kelmescott Manor

Wednesday 10th March 2010:

Sarah Staniforth—Current Approaches to Conservation Management in Historic Properties

Cotswold Archaeology Annual Lecture

Wednesday 31st March 2010 at Bingham Hall, King Street, Cirencester

Tom Moore—The birth of a capital? Becoming Roman in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds

REVIEWS

Summer visits July - August 2009

Visit to Cheltenham College, July 9th

On a pleasantly bright summer morning twenty-five members assembled at the main entrance of Cheltenham College for a guided tour of Cheltenham's first great public school. The history of the school since its founding in 1841 is well illustrated by the many changes in its buildings, as our guide Stephen Friling (Deputy Bursar) soon demonstrated. He took us first to Big Classical, the large high-ceilinged original schoolroom (now adapted for use as a theatre) where in the early days several classes were taught together. The present dining hall with its rich array of stained-glass windows was formerly a chapel and has an imposing memorial to Cheltonians who died in World War II. We later saw the present chapel, built in 1896 at the north end of the site, which has a fine stone reredos by Boulton and woodwork by H H Martyn. It seats 675, which by chance is exactly the number of war dead from the First World War commemorated on plaques around the walls. For the first hundred years of its existence Cheltenham College had a military 'side' which trained up large numbers of boys for entry into the armed forces via Sandhurst and Woolwich. Its losses in both World Wars were consequently very great, and it can claim more VCs among its alumni than almost any other school.



Although there is still a Combined Cadet Force, sport has always been important too, as we were reminded on seeing the cricket pavilion adorned with historic team photos and the spacious gym with its modern climbing wall. Crossing the road, we visited Thirstaine House, once the home of Lord Northcliffe. Its former stable block has been converted into a boarding house for girls, named Westal (the school has been fully co-educational for several years now), while the long, light ground floor rooms of the main house serve as art rooms and sometimes as galleries for public exhibitions.

For most of the group the tour ended in the Library, where some of the VCs awarded to Cheltonians are on display, but eight people accepted Jill Barlow's invitation to pay a visit to the Archives where she works and see some of the extensive and ever-growing collection stored there. Most evocative, perhaps, were albums of group photographs of boys educated at Cheltenham College over 100 years ago.

Kath Boothman

Visit to Witcombe Roman Villa, August 18th



After some very dull weather, we were fortunate to have a beautiful evening for the Society outing to Great Witcombe to see the remains of the large villa built c. AD 250. Dr. Steven Blake started by giving us an introduction to the site and then we made our way down to the ruins. Our group was very grateful to Steven for making a special arrangement to get the keys to the huts, which protect the mosaics of the bathhouse complex. The mosaics are only open to the public for a few days each year but you can visit the rest of the site free of charge at any time. It is in a lovely location with views along the Cotswold edge.

Sue Newton

Autumn lectures Sept-Oct 2009

The first of the autumn series this year was David O'Connor's talk on September 15th on the topical theme of Battledown's 150th anniversary this year. The story of **150 years of the Battledown Estate**, which is now possibly the only private residential estate left in England, began in 1858 when George Ridge, an ambitious young solicitor recently arrived from Grantham, announced a grand plan for an Estate of 'first class residences' on farmland up at Battledown. Cheltenham had been expanding, and it was hoped that the demand for superior houses would continue. He and his fellow-speculators bought a total of 105 acres at auction, expecting to sell the land on quickly as building lots. Unfortunately it hung fire: in 11 years only 4 houses were built, and meanwhile the inevitable infrastructure costs drained their resources. It was a disaster for Ridge, who died in poverty. David drew parallels with the Pittville estate, which had similarly ruined its founder. However, the Trustees who took over from Ridge fared much better. Development went forward slowly but surely, and today there are 180 houses on Battledown. David showed pictures to illustrate their varied styles, reflecting the gradual growth of the Estate. It still has Trustees, who serve voluntarily, and residents pay an annual rate of only about £140 to live in this very pleasant leafy neighbourhood, which David hopes will remain as one of Cheltenham's attractions for at least another 150 years.

Kath Boothman

MORE REVIEWS

John Loosley's lecture on October 20th on **Almshouses in Gloucestershire**, illustrated with innumerable excellent slides, was an appropriate follow-up to the recent Local History Afternoon on the theme of 'Housing the Poor'. John noted that a nationwide survey of almshouses is now under way, the first since the Charity Commissioners' survey in the 1830s, which perhaps explains the current interest in them. He spoke first about the pre-Reformation era, when help for the destitute, as for the sick, was provided mainly by abbeys or other monastic establishments. The 12th century almshouse of St Mary Magdalene near Wotton-under-Edge, for example, was controlled by Llanthony Priory. Some were charitable: St Thomas's in Cirencester was built by a rich attorney to house 'four decayed weavers'. (Typically, then and later, they were very small.) After the Reformation most of those attached to abbeys were lost, though some were taken over by the crown or by local burgesses. Later, and especially from the 18th century, many more were founded by wealthy patrons. John's comprehensive survey of the county showed, too, that many still survive. There is indeed a modern and very active Almshouses Association.



Brian Torode, the Mayor Councillor Lloyd Surgenor and Elaine North at the **Montpellier Fun Day** on Saturday 18th July in Montpellier Gardens. Sunny weather, fair-ground rides, live music, classic cars, numerous stalls and a wide variety of other attractions brought out a large crowd, and the Society's book stall and display boards received a good share of attention. Altogether, as the organisers doubtless hoped, fun was had by all. Many thanks to those who helped on the day.

'Housing the Poor: Social Housing for All' Gloucestershire Annual Local History Afternoon

Saturday October 3rd 2009

at Sir Thomas Rich's School, Longlevens

This annual event organised by the GRCC's Local History Committee, always rewarding and full of interest, was made even more enjoyable for CLHS this year by the fact that we won the award for the best display. Congratulations and thanks are due to all those whose hard work made it such a particularly good one. Our success may also have owed something to our 19" digital photo frame (purchased using an Arts Council Grant awarded earlier this year), which formed part of the display, running a continuous slide show of almshouses, workhouses and housing estates. Members who missed the event will have another opportunity to see the frame, and the display, at the January meeting.



Bryan Jerrard and Alec Hamilton

The Bryan Jerrard Award proved to be another triumph for the Society: the ten finalists included four CLHS members, Steven Blake, Carolyn Greet, Jane Sale and the winner Alec Hamilton, whose article on the architect Samuel Whitfield Daukes appeared in Journal no. 25 this year.

As usual the event was well attended, and there was a large audience for Professor Stephen King's talk on almshouses and workhouses in western England under the old Poor Law. He gave it the extra

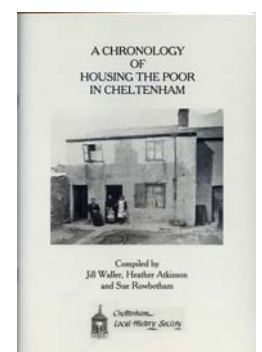
title: 'I wish I did not have to go, for I like it here', which proved to be a quotation from a letter written by a workhouse inmate. Among much other fascinating information drawn from several counties' records, Professor King revealed that many people so much valued the security offered by workhouses/ poorhouses/almshouses (the terms varied and overlapped) that they resisted being moved even to allow repairs to be done. Conditions of course varied enormously, depending on the prosperity of the area, the nature and quality of the administration and other factors, but it seems clear that admission to a workhouse, especially for the elderly, did not necessarily carry such a stigma as is generally thought. Much more remains to be found out about this fascinating aspect of social history. After the presentation of the Bryan Jerrard award three further speakers each gave a short talk: Cecile Hunt on the five remaining almshouses that served the Forest of Dean, Christine Seal on the provision of social housing in Cheltenham and Judith Ellis on the almshouses of Chipping Campden and some of the individuals who lived in them.

A new *'Chronology of Housing the Poor in Cheltenham'* compiled by Jill Waller, Heather Atkinson and Sue Rowbotham was on sale at the event and sold well. It is now available at meetings from Sally Self and also by post. (See order form enclosed with this newsletter)

The theme of next year's event is to be 'The Working Class Movement in Gloucestershire'.



Sue Newton with the award for the best display



FEATURE

A HISTORICAL SNIPPET FROM MINSTERWORTH

For local historians keen to discover more about past inhabitants of their town or village and how they lived, one valuable source of information is provided by local parish records – where these have survived. For Minsterworth, where I now live, the Gloucestershire Archives hold parish records dating from as early as 1575, and interesting reading they make too. Compiled by the church incumbents of the time, they provide a written record week by week and month by month of all baptisms, weddings and burials taking place at the church. But this still doesn't tell us a lot about the circumstances in which these people actually lived.

As it happens though, also in the Archives is a small faded, much-thumbed, leather-bound notebook containing hand-written parish accounts for the period 1770 to 1796 compiled by the churchwardens of the day. It records the levels of parish rate agreed at successive vestry meetings and the names of all those liable to pay rent to the church. But what really brings the record alive for me is the fact that one at least of the churchwardens (farmer William Grasing by name) also used the book to note down a number of remedies (they used the word *receipts* i.e. recipes) for treating various common ailments suffered by persons and domestic animals. Churchwardens then had a wider role in the community than we perhaps associate with their successors today, and I imagine that when access to doctors and vets was not easy for poorer folk, having advice on hand like this must have been a boon to villagers. To get a flavour of the kind of remedies it contains, take this remedy for gout (spelling as in the original):

*A receipt to cure the gowt.: Thre ounces of salvata
1 oz of laudanum
one pennyworth of spirits of turpentine
one pennyworth of Linseed oylx
This mixture to be well rubed in the place swelled
Then put half ounce of potash in a quart of sprung water
You must take a wine glass full twice a day until you are well*

or this refrain (which would usually have been sung) for healing a burn or scald :

*A charm for A Borne or Scold: Mary mild as burned her child
and on a Spark of Fire. Out Fire, in Frost
in the name of the father Son and holy Gost.
Amen, amen, amen.*



St Peter's church
Minsterworth

Salvata was probably a salve made up from a mix of tar and butter or some other grease; potash would have been a salt dissolved out of wood ash and evaporated in iron pots. None of these ingredients would be nasty if used in an ointment but, by the middle of the 18th century, turpentine had been dropped for internal use.

For me this evokes something very real about what life among ordinary folk was like in Minsterworth well over two hundred years ago. But I don't recommend trying out any of the remedies!

Terry Moore-Scott (With acknowledgements to Gloucestershire Archives)

CLHS HELPS TO PURCHASE WILSON PAPERS

At the September lecture evening, a retiring collection was made following a request for the Society's help in raising money towards the purchase at auction of important Wilson papers. The collection raised £115, which was sent to Dr David Wilson. He sent this reply:

"Thank you very much for your letter of 16 September and the enclosed cheque from your members towards acquiring important material at the unfortunate sale of items by a distant cousin. The Society's members will be pleased to hear that ten lots of Wilson papers were successfully bid for. The total price was £18,000 and so the support of members in achieving the sum required is greatly appreciated. You will also be pleased to hear that the material has already been transferred to the Wilson Collection at the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. It contains some wonderful local history items as well as material more pertinent to the Wilson family

*and Edward Wilson of the Antarctic. Whilst viewing is currently by appointment, I am sure some of it will be put on temporary display in the next month or two, and more permanently when the new Museum Open Archive is built, so that your members can appreciate it. With my heartfelt thanks to you all for your assistance,
Yours sincerely, David Wilson"*

DOCUMENT DONOR CARD

Gloucestershire Archives have devised a new means of preventing the future loss of original documents, photographs etc. relevant to the history of the county. Owners of any such material who think their descendants may not wish to keep it are invited to fill in a Document Donor Card and store it with the items, thus ensuring that in due course they will be given to the Archives. Gloucestershire Archives have kindly provided copies for us to enclose with this Newsletter, and Members are encouraged to use them.

SOCIETY NEWS

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

<i>Marian Elliott</i>	<i>Diana Russell</i>
<i>Anne Jones</i>	<i>David Thacker</i>
<i>Mildred Jennings</i>	<i>Mrs M L Shipfield</i>
<i>Michael R Kirby</i>	<i>Margaret Silk</i>
<i>Janet Mann</i>	<i>Helen Smith</i>
<i>Susan Panikkar</i>	<i>Thelma Speake</i>
<i>Georgina Phillimore</i>	<i>Malcolm and Elaine Stennet</i>
<i>Amy Woolacott</i>	

A warm welcome back to *John Rawson*

Members' Interests

(Additions/amendments)

Members are reminded that they may submit additions or amendments to their interests at any time—Ed.

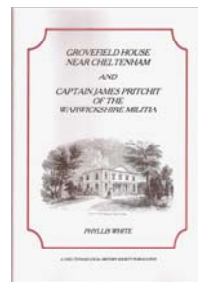
Jill Barlow	Medieval Cheltenham; Tivoli Road
Sue Brasher	Prinbox Works Site, Tivoli; W H Brasher, Stationer, High Street in 1890s, and lay preacher at Charlton Kings
John Clark	Family history (Arthur Jesse Smith); A J Smith, Furniture Dealer, 7,8 & 9 Bennington Street; history of Bennington Street
Charles Cleal	Bennington Street; Oxford Passage
Raymond Hunt	Cheltenham mail services and post offices; History of Cheltenham in general; All Saints' Church and the Pittville and Fairview areas
Sandra Maxted	Sussex House, Portland Street: owners, staff, guests
Alan Munden	Francis Close; Cheltenham churches; Edward Walker; F W Robertson
Geoff North	David North, gunmaker, Cheltenham c1840
Pamela Osborn	Cheltenham theatres; Malvern Place, Lansdown
David Thacker	Cheltenham in general

Membership e-mail database

To facilitate the dissemination of information to members, particularly when time is short, the Society has compiled a database of members' e-mail addresses. These will only ever be used for communication within the Society and will not be released to any external body. At present we have e-mail addresses for 137 members of the Society, most of which have come from membership application and renewal forms. If any member would like to receive information from the Society by e-mail but hasn't yet given their address to the Membership Secretary, or if you have recently changed your e-mail address, please contact Dorothy Seton-Smith at seton-smith@talktalk.net

New Publication

Grovefield House near Cheltenham and Captain James Pritchit of the Warwickshire Militia by Phyllis White



Phyllis's book, which started life many years ago as an article intended for the Society's Journal, is the fruit of her extensive research into the Grovefield Estate, its houses and occupants. Now at last fittingly presented in book form (though sadly too late for her to see it published), this wealth of material is more readily available to those outside Cheltenham who have an interest in the many topics covered.

Copies are available at CLHS meetings, price £6.50 and also by post (£8.00 to include postage within the UK—see order form enclosed with this Newsletter).



Phyllis White
(photo by Graham
Whitehead)

Message from Brian White:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee, under Sue Newton's leadership, and all those who have made it possible for my late wife Phyllis's book concerning Grovefield House to be printed and made available through the Society.

Journal Matters

In April, another successful year was completed when Journal 25 was distributed to members: it had 76 packed pages from established and new contributors, and covered a time span from the 15th century to the present day, with articles on many diverse subjects. It also featured a coloured central spread recording the July 2007 floods.

In theory, the summer is a quiet time for the Editor but, thanks to the up-dated CLHS website, I have had not only the usual local enquiries but also requests for back numbers from abroad, and have been busy packing and posting. The website is bringing the contents of the Journals to a wider and often very erudite audience! Now is also the time to think seriously of the next edition. Have you been researching something that is of interest to others? Do you need help with getting your ideas into a suitable format? Have you already promised that an article will be submitted? If the answer to any of these is 'yes,' then please contact me as soon as possible. The deadline of 15th January will be strictly adhered to for all text. Please remember that articles of all lengths, from 'fillers' of only six or seven lines to fully researched articles, are needed. So don't feel daunted, have a go! It's very rewarding to see your work in print.

Sally Self

Journal Editor russself@aol.com or 01242 243714

P.S. We are keen to reduce overstocks of Journals, 10, 11, 12 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23, and can offer a generous discount on these. So have a look at your shelves and see which Journals are missing.

OPENING OF THE JENNER GARDENS

On the morning of the 30th June a small crowd gathered in Jenner Walk to watch the official opening of the gardens by Cheltenham's Mayor, Cllr. Lloyd Surgenor. The Chairman of CLHS and a number of the Society's members were present, together with many of the people who had been involved in the gardens' restoration over the last three years, including representatives of the various sponsors and supporters.



As the Mayor prepared to cut the ribbon, a few spots of rain fell, but fortunately umbrellas were hardly up before it stopped. After the ceremonial cutting of the ribbon and taking of photos, all those who had gathered were wowed by the transformation of the gardens and the wonderful display of flowers. The timing of the opening could not have been better as the lavender bordering the new paths, and the dense spread of poppies between the tombstones, were flowering at perfection. The bright blue of the lavender, contrasting with the vibrant yellows, oranges and reds of the poppies, was a tremendous sight. (See the pictures on the front and back covers!)

All who attended were very impressed and I am pleased to report that the gardens have continued to be enjoyed by residents and visitors since.

Currently there is still only one seat in the gardens, although two more are required. The FOJG committee are currently seeking funding for one of these as a memorial seat for Fred Archer, the famous jockey who was born in St. George's Cottage, adjacent to the gardens. Fundraising is also underway to purchase a copy of a bronze bust of Edward Jenner, by the sculptor Michael Rizzello. The original is in St. George's Hospital, London. Michael Rizzello's daughter, Susan, has given her permission for a

copy to be made. The statue would be a jesmonite bronze cast - this is a modern resin with bronze content, and would be finished in a bronzed patina. This is a less expensive option than a bronze casting and is considered more appropriate for this quiet public space. The bronze would be cast by Morris Singer Art Founders, who have the original mould. Anyone wishing to contribute to either the seats or the statue would be welcome and should contact either Alan Taylor, Chairman of the FOJG, or Mike Rigby. Contact details can be found on the FOJG website - www.friends-of-jenner-gardens.org.uk

Although the summer flowers are beginning to die away now, 1000 crocus - 500 Blue Pearl (a pale blue colour) and 500 Cream Beauty (a creamy yellow colour) will soon be planted, which should produce a lovely show in the spring. It is hoped to involve local school children in the planting of the bulbs. One more tree, a Malus coronaria Charlottae, an attractive crab-apple producing pale pink, violet scented flowers in late May, will also be planted this winter, and by the new year three bird boxes, kindly given by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, will be put in the trees. The gardens will be worth a visit in the early spring to see the crocus display.

Mary Nelson



The Mayor and Alan Taylor, Chairman of the Friends of Jenner Gardens Committee, at the entrance to the Gardens

MEMBERS' REQUESTS

From **Geoff North:**

Has anyone any information on **David North** of Cheltenham, gunmaker, born 1806? Very little is known about him beyond the fact that he is recorded in the Cheltenham census for 1841 and 1851 as living at Brunswick House, 139 Bath Road, and in the 1871-73 Cheltenham Directory as living at 4 Albert Cottages. This information was given in an article by Chris Howell in CLHS Journal No.4 entitled 'Gunmaking in Cheltenham since 1815: an Outline Chronology'.

Please telephone 01452 857803 or email geoffreynorth@blueyonder.co.uk

From **Elaine North:**

Memories Project - can you help?

I was asked recently whether any members may have memories of WWII and more specifically may remember an incident in 1943 or thereabouts involving a tank being driven rather erratically along the High Street by an American serviceman. The gentleman asking this question, who was about 11 years old at the time, remembers his father telling him that a US tank driver, rather the worse for drink, had been driving his tank up the High Street (from west to east) when he swerved and struck the entrance to Lloyds Bank, cracking and dislodging some brickwork. Continuing along the Strand, he swerved again and crashed through the gates to Sandford Park. The tank allegedly came to rest in the Gardens and was then abandoned.

If anyone has heard this story before and/or can provide any factual information relating to the incident, however small, please get in touch with me in the first instance. Elaine North 01452 857803 or email elainenorth@hotmail.com

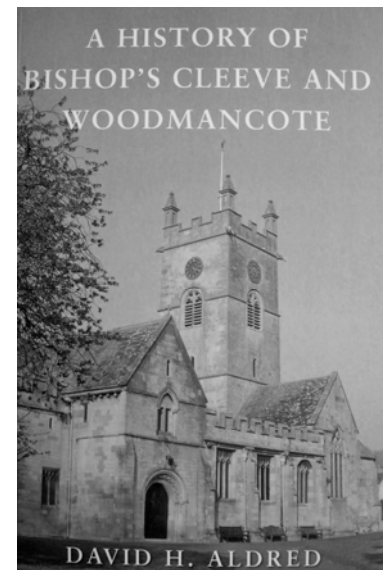
NEW PUBLICATIONS

A History of Bishop's Cleeve and Woodmancote by David H. Aldred

A founding member of CLHS, David Aldred, has recently published a book about two of Cheltenham's northern neighbours. His book traces the history from a single flint blade dating from c12000BC found near Cleeve Hall, to two thriving communities of nearly 15000 inhabitants. His story takes the reader from the scarce evidence of early hunter-gatherers to the first scattered settlements of the Iron Age and to the creation of a village around St Michael's church in the early Saxon period. Then follows the expansion of settlement into Woodmancote, possibly by the time of Domesday, and the long period of dependence upon agriculture which only ended with the arrival of Smiths' Industries in 1939. The most recent building developments have thrown up enough archaeological evidence to push back detailed knowledge of the centre of Bishop's Cleeve into the Bronze Age.

So what are the Cheltenham connections? David considers they have never been stronger than they are today. The Stagecoach D service to Bishop's Cleeve is the most frequent of all Cheltenham's bus services and the 2001 census revealed that over a third of employed people travelled to Cheltenham to work. Links in the past were fewer and much more difficult to discover, but it is well-known that Cheltenham races took place on Cleeve Hill in the early 19th century. At the end of the 14th century, the rector was selling his pigs in Cheltenham market. William Marshall, writing in 1796, tells how cheeses were also sold there. There are chance references that suggest many of the villages' labourers found daily work in Cheltenham as it developed as a spa and that girls and young women were employed there as domestic servants, no doubt walking along the Evesham Road which was built in 1810. The arrival of the tramcars on Cleeve Hill in 1901 and the opening of Bishop's Cleeve station in 1906 brought Cheltenham much nearer and really began the process which has continued until today.

It took David over thirty years to research and three to write his book, but he hasn't finished with his historical interest just yet, as he has recently jointly completed a photographic record of the last 120 years of the area, which should be in the shops in time for Christmas.



Iron Age farm at Dean's Lea

A History of Bishop's Cleeve and Woodmancote by David H Aldred
(Amberley Publishing, Chalford)

ISBN 9781848687271 £15.99

Signed copies available from Courtyard Books, Bishop's Cleeve
(www.courtyardbooks.co.uk or tel. 01242 674335)

Also

In and Around Bishop's Cleeve Through Time by David Aldred and Tim Curr
(Amberley Publishing, Chalford)

Cheltenham Music Festival at 65 *A Perspective on its Theme and Variations* by Graham Lockwood

110 pages with index, approx. 45 illustrations.

Published 2009.

Graham Lockwood, author and CLHS member, has very kindly given the Society a number of copies of this new publication to sell to raise funds for the Society. Copies will be on sale to members at Society meetings at the special price of £9, or can be posted for an inclusive price of £10.

Note: With this newsletter is a list of publications available from the Society, to be either collected at meetings or posted within the UK.



Unutterable Love: the Passionate Life and Preaching of F W Robertson by Christina Beardsley

Frederick William Robinson, who was born and grew up in Cheltenham, was one of the foremost preachers of the Victorian era. He was not only a clergyman but a poet and orator whose sermons were read like novels for their spirituality as well as their theology. While dealing with issues such as the impact of science on religious belief and the rise of militant atheism, his sermons were also influenced by the Victorian gender debate, and he represented Christ as a Romantic figure uniting the masculine and the feminine. In this book Christina Beardsley sheds new light on the development of modern liberal Anglicanism.

The book is published by James Clarke & Co—the Lutterworth Press, P O Box 60, Cambridge CB1 2NT

LOCAL NEWS



VICTORIA CROSS BLUE PLAQUES



On Friday 11th September 2009, Cheltenham Civic Society unveiled blue commemorative plaques to recognise the heroism of three of the town's Victoria Cross heroes.

The idea of "blue plaques" for at least some of the men from Cheltenham who had been honoured with the award of the Victoria Cross came initially from members of the Cotswold branch of The Orders & Medals Research Society. Cheltenham has an impressive record of thirteen men who have received the VC, plus a further twelve awards to former pupils of Cheltenham College.



The Mayor, Councillor Lloyd Surgenor, with the plaque to Capt. Anketell Moutray Read

The three men recently recognised with plaques were all born in Cheltenham: Mr William Fraser McDonell of the Bengal Civil Service, A/Lt.Col Richard Annesley West, The North Irish Horse and Capt Anketell Moutray Read, The Northamptonshire Regiment. McDonell is one of only five civilians ever to be awarded a VC. Unfortunately Lord Ashcroft, who generously sponsored the plaques to McDonell and West since he has these two crosses in his outstanding collection, was unable to make it on the day, but he was well represented by Michael Naxton, the curator of

the Ashcroft collection. Following a short introduction by Steven Clarke, Chairman of the Civic Society, citations were read for all three men by myself. The Mayor of Cheltenham, Councillor Mr Lloyd Surgenor then unveiled each plaque. Mr McDonell's is at Pittville House, Wellington Road, Lt.Col. West's at 1, Oxford Street and Capt. Read's at Beaumont House, Shurdington Road. Cheltenham's MP Martin Horwood then said a few words in conclusion. A reception for the dignitaries and those closely involved with the project was held at Beaumont House (which is now a five-star guest house), after Captain Read's plaque had been unveiled by the front door.

The Cheltenham Civic Society has already erected 21 blue plaques around the Town to commemorate many of the Town's famous sons and daughters (see Peter Smith's and Sue Rowbotham's excellent book) and it is to be hoped that these three plaques are just the first of a series to commemorate some more of Cheltenham's thirteen VCs.



MP Martin Horwood with the plaque in memory of William Fraser McDonell

Mick Kippin



Vic Cole with the 'Fun in the Sun' display

CLHS ON SHOW IN THE LIBRARY

Some members may not be aware that the Local Studies Library in Cheltenham is now situated behind the main library in Chester Walk (on the 2nd floor where the Music Library was previously). It is a much bigger area with helpful and friendly staff. If you have not yet visited I recommend you to do so.

In March the Society was invited to put up a table-top display with an historical racing theme to coincide with the Gold Cup. I was 'caught' by the Echo photographer so the Society benefited from the unexpected publicity. Members of the committee manned the display for one day during the two weeks the display remained in the library and at least one new member was signed up as a result.

Subsequently, I was asked to provide further displays on a regular basis throughout the year on a variety of themes. June's display was 'Crime & Punishment', in July it was entitled 'Fun in the Sun', September's was 'Trade & Industry' and more recently 'Poets & Writers' to coincide with the Literary Festival during October. Each month members of the committee have volunteered to spend a few hours manning the display and I know that their presence has been appreciated by the library staff. It is very rewarding to be able to help with an enquiry and the Society's Journals and Chronologies are proving to be useful in this respect. The latest Chronology 'Housing the Poor' had only been launched two days previously when it was used by a member of the public to find out information about one of the poorer streets of Cheltenham partly cleared in the slum clearance programme in the 1930s.

In November (9th-20th) the Society will have a display on a military theme. If you get a chance to visit, please do so.

Elaine North

*FEATURE***ST MONICA'S HOME FOR GIRLS**

The 1923 map of Cheltenham shows St Monica's Home for Girls situated in Battledown Approach close to the turning for Haywards Road, but the home had not always been there, nor had it always been known as St Monica's.

The Home for Little Girls, as it was originally called, was set up in the 1880s by Miss Eliza Ann Sawyer, a music teacher at the Ladies' College, in her own home at 2, Alcombe Villas in Hewlett Road. It was for homeless and destitute girls with ages ranging from four years upwards. The 1891 census shows that Miss Sawyer was Head of Household (later referred to as Lady Superintendent) with a Matron and ten girls in residence. The girls attended All Saints School and received training in domestic work, later being found employment.

Such was Miss Sawyer's enthusiasm for the Home that girls from the Ladies' College, in particular St Hilda's boarding house, were encouraged to help supervise the younger children by taking them for walks on a Sunday morning when the older ones went to church.

The problem of funding seems to have been solved by events such as garden parties and by donations from generous benefactors. The Ladies' College regularly raised money for the Home for many years, and continued its support even after Miss Sawyer's death. The College Magazine for Spring 1919 reported that the first production by the College's newly-formed Dramatic Society had been staged in aid of St Monica's, and a similar event took place in 1920.



Girls and staff of the Home for Little Girls with Miss Sawyer (on the right) in 1897



Battledown Grange, about 1910

In 1897 the home was affiliated to the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society (now known as the Children's Society). In November 1902 a meeting held at the Imperial Rooms in support of the Home for Little Girls reported that in spite of several difficulties such as an outbreak of measles and then, later, diphtheria, the Home had received a clean bill of health from the Medical Officer, with the outbreaks being blamed on All Saints School!

Miss Sawyer retired from teaching in 1907, and it was in October of that year that the Home moved to Battledown Grange and became known as St Monica's Home for Girls. Miss Sawyer carried on her work in the role of Honorary Superintendent and maintained a close interest in the welfare of the girls until she died in 1912. After her death the Home was taken over completely by the Waifs and Strays Society.

The Home continued until the 1950s, taking in evacuees from London at the outbreak of the Second World War. By 1959 it was no longer mentioned in Street Directories and we do not know what happened to the girls. Were they part of the contingent sent to Canada and Australia, as was happening at that time, or were they dispersed into small family groups?

Dorothy Seton-Smith

Mayday at St Monica's, about 1910



CAN YOU HELP?

A letter written in 1897 by **Fanny Duberly**, who lived in Cheltenham, to Sylvia Kathleen Coventry, is quoted as being largely about getting Lord Deerhurst to be president of the **Cheltenham Branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**. This interest would be quite in keeping with Fanny's lifelong love of horses. Can anyone help with information about the Cheltenham branch of this particular charitable society?

St Alban's Nursing Home, 81 Hewlett Road, formerly known as 1, St Alban's Villas, Hewlett Street, Cheltenham, was run as a private nursing and maternity home by its founder Nurse (Mrs) J Clarke from approximately 1919 until 1948. She then turned it into a guest house until 1961 or later. Can anyone who (perhaps) was born there or worked there, or knows someone who did, provide information about it? Any help would be welcome.

A distant relative of **Captain P H Ward**, a member of the local family who owned Wards Department Store in Cheltenham, would be grateful for any information about the Ward family and especially about Captain Ward, who is believed to have been a sailor.

If you can help with any of the above queries please contact Joyce Cummings on 01242 527299 or e-mail : joyce.cummings@tesco.net

Correction: In the list of Penfold pillar boxes given in the last issue, one of the grid references was incomplete. The reference for box no.1 should have been SO949229.

LOCAL HISTORY AFTERNOON SUNDAY 18th JULY 2010

at St Andrew's United Reform Church,
Montpellier Street, Cheltenham

In 2004, 2006 and 2008 the Society held highly successful History Afternoons at St Andrew's. The time has now come for another to be organised and we are hoping that even more members and their friends will attend next year's event.

Be sure to mark CLHS on July 18th in your 2010 diary as soon as you get it!

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward items for inclusion in the
MARCH 2010 Newsletter by

TUESDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2010

to the Editor: Kath Boothman
35 The Park
Cheltenham
GL50 2SD

Tel: 01242 230125
E-mail: kbooth@dircon.co.uk

The Committee is happy to consider requests to place advertisements in the Newsletter and/or include flyers for circulation to members.