



Cheltenham Local History Society

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EDITORIAL

The beautifully decorated plate above is one of the items to be featured in Dr Steven Blake's forthcoming book *A History of Cheltenham in 100 Objects*, which will be published next year by The History Press. Manufactured by William Davenport and Company of Stoke on Trent, it shows the 'crystal palace' that was erected as part of the 'Cheltenham Exhibition of Horticulture and Works of Art and Design Connected Therewith' held in the Royal Well and its grounds between 1 June and 12 July 1854. The great glasshouse, reminiscent of the Winter Garden but framed in wood rather than metal, was constructed by local builder (and later Mayor of Cheltenham) George Parsonage, and was demolished once the Exhibition had closed. Like the other objects in the book, the plate comes from Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery. The superior quality of this piece of souvenir ware surely says something for the prosperity of the town in the 1850s—or at least for the wealth of the visitors it attracted.

Kath Boothman

LECTURE PROGRAMME

December 2012 – May 2013

Tuesday 18th December:

Dr Frances Wilson-Copp—A History of Architectural Styles based on Cheltenham Buildings

The talk will be on the history of architectural style and will use buildings in Cheltenham and Gloucester as examples. We will see slides of Classical buildings and analyse what identifying features make up the style, and see how this is reflected in buildings such as the Queen's Hotel and other buildings on the Promenade. Following this we will look at the characteristics of Gothic, with an eye on Gloucester Cathedral, and will examine the decoration of the Ladies' College and other similar edifices. If there is time we might also deal with Modernism with reference to the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society.

Tuesday 15th January 2013:

Research and Display Evening

Our annual social evening gives members an opportunity to meet informally and to show the results of their researches. As usual refreshments will be served and there will be a raffle. David Scriven would like to hear as soon as possible from any member who is willing to provide a display, large or small, of their research findings or source materials.

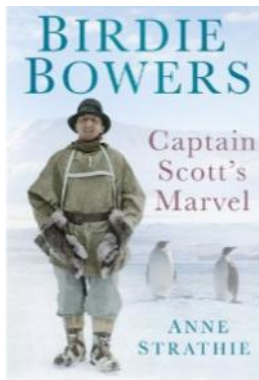
Please contact David on 01242 524593, or e-mail

david.scriven@hotmail.co.uk

Tuesday 19th February 2013:

Anne Strathie—Henry 'Birdie' Bowers: Another Antarctic Explorer with Cheltenham Connections

Anne Strathie's new biography, *Birdie Bowers: Captain Scott's Marvel*, is the story of an intrepid young man who died in 1912 in Antarctica, alongside his friend, Cheltonian Edward Wilson, and Captain Scott. During her research Anne uncovered unexpected and hitherto unknown connections between Bowers and Cheltenham. Bowers was born in Scotland in 1883 but his mother, Emily Webb, was a tailor's daughter from Cheltenham, who attended educational establishments founded by Francis Close before leaving to teach in Sidmouth and the Far East. Although it is unclear whether Bowers ever visited Cheltenham, the town made a considerable impact on his life and beliefs.



Tuesday 19th March 2013:

Mr Alan Pilbeam—Gloucestershire 300 years ago

The first history of the county - Sir Robert Atkyns' *Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* - was published in 1712. In this illustrated talk we will consider the man, his sources of information and the usefulness of his book to a geographer attempting to reconstruct the appearance of the county's landscape in the early eighteenth century, at a time before Parliamentary Enclosure, the canal age and coal powered industry, and when Cheltenham was little more than a single street. Mr Pilbeam's book *Gloucestershire 300 Years Ago* was recently published by The History Press.

Tuesday 16th April 2013:

Mr Barry Simon—the History of Aviation in Gloucestershire

From 1784 to modern times Gloucestershire has had a deep involvement in aviation. This talk by retired Wing Commander Barry Simon takes us through these years with a Cheltenham-centric point of view. From the first balloon in the county, the first parachute descent, through Gloster Aircraft Company and air raids on Cheltenham to early jets, the talk provides an overview of the area's considerable involvement with flying.

Tuesday 23rd April 2013 at 10.00 am for 10.30 am:

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

Mr Michael Cole—Prestbury's Lost buildings and their Legacy

When, in 1803, visitors to Cheltenham read Ruff's newly published guide to the town they were recommended to take as their first excursion a carriage ride to the nearby village of Prestbury. In this talk we follow the route taken by nineteenth-century visitors and highlight many of the interesting buildings, great and small, that have since been demolished, and remark on the lives of many of the people who lived in them. Our tour finishes at Prestbury Court, the largest and most impressive residence the village ever had, and the surprising consequences of a legal contract made by its last resident.

Tuesday 21st May 2013:

AGM followed by Dr Steven Blake—Cheltenham and the Glorious Cotswolds: The Carlsbad of England

In 1920 the Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce commissioned the Gaumont Company Ltd to make a promotional film of Cheltenham, which was eventually shown in such venues as London cinemas and ocean liners. Having lain forgotten for several decades, the film was 'rediscovered' and transferred to modern film stock, probably sometime in the 1960s or 1970s, and has since been transferred to DVD. The film, which lasts around 40 minutes, gives a marvellous insight into Cheltenham and the Cotswolds during the early 1920s, its title frame noting that the town 'stands in the midst of the beautiful hill scenery of the Cotswolds. It is the most Continental of British towns and a curative spa of national importance - it is also one of the greatest educational centres of the Empire'. The showing of the film will be preceded by a short introduction to its history and contents by Dr Steven Blake, who will also provide explanatory comments during the showing.

14th ANNUAL DE FERRIERES LECTURE

Wednesday 20th March 2013 at 7.15 pm

in the Bacon Theatre, Dean Close School

Caroline de Guitaut

Curator of Decorative Arts and Assistant to the

Director of the Royal Collection

ROYAL DIAMONDS

In 2012 Caroline curated the exhibition 'Diamonds: A Jubilee Celebration' for the Buckingham Palace summer opening, and wrote the accompanying publication.

Tickets £10 from the Tourist Information Office and from the Bacon Theatre box office.

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 8.00 pm.

Thursday 13th December:

Trevor Radway—An illustrated talk on GB Letter Boxes

Thursday 17th January 2013:

Amy Woolacott—Leckhampton Golf Course

Gotherington Local History Society

Meetings are held at Gotherington Village Hall starting at 8.00 pm. Visitors pay £1.00.

Tuesday 27th November:

Steve Goodchild—The Battle of Tewkesbury

Monday 17th December:

Gwilyam Davies—Traditional Cotswold Carols and Wassails

Tuesday 29th January 2013:

Tim Porter—Medieval Hospitals

Tuesday 26th February 2013:

Dr Tim Brain—The History of Policing in Gloucestershire

Swindon Village Local History Society

Meetings are held at Swindon Village Hall at 7.45 pm. Non-members pay £1.

Wednesday 21st November:

Angela Panrucker—Pub Signs of Gloucestershire

Charlton Kings Local History Society

Meetings take place in the Baptist Church, Church Street, Charlton Kings, starting at 7.30 pm.

Guests welcome, £2.

Tuesday 27th November:

Mrs Sue Rowbotham—Commemorative Plaques of Cheltenham: Celebrating People, Places and Events

Tuesday 22nd January 2013:

Dr Steven Blake—Discovering the Dightons

Tuesday 26th February 2013 (AGM):

Mick Kippin—Richard Rogers : the Dick Whittington of Cheltenham

Tuesday 26th March 2013:

Trish Thomas, MA, FRSA—Birdlip 'Lady', the subject of the Death of a Princess exhibition

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

www.bgas.co.uk

Note change of venue : talks will be held in the Frith Building at Gloucestershire Archives, Alvin Street, Gloucester, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors pay £1.

Wednesday 16th January 2013:

Dr Thackray, Head of Archaeology, National Trust—Chedworth Revealed: Bringing Chedworth to Life

Wednesday 20th February 2013:

Christopher Jeens, Archivist, Gloucester Cathedral Library—St Peter's Abbey and Gloucester Cathedral: Two Libraries, Two Archives

Churchdown Local History Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at the Community Centre, Parton Road, Churchdown, starting at 7.30 pm. Non-members pay £2.

Thursday 13th December:

Ginny Ring—My Life through Drama

Thursday 10th January 2013:

Richard Cann—A Brief History of Gloucester Cathedral

Thursday 14th February 2013:

Dr Nicholas Herbert—Medieval Towns in Gloucestershire

Thursday 14th March 2013:

Edna Garbutt—Bletchley Park

Prestbury Local History Society

www.prestburyhistory.btck.co.uk

All meetings are held at the Library in the Burgage, Prestbury, starting at 7.30 pm. Visitors pay £2.

Monday 26th November:

Lynda Hodges—The Toll Road Scandal

Monday 25th February 2013:

Tim Porter—Winchcombshire

Monday 25th March 2013:

Michael Cole—Masters, Servants and Tradesmen

Friends Of All Saints' Church

Friday 7th December at 2.30 pm in the church, All Saints' Road, Cheltenham:

Tim Porter—The Music of Christmas (an unusual historical perspective)

Members free. Visitors £4 (including refreshments)

Exhibition

Holst Birthplace Museum

To run until 8th December:

The Humorous Side of Holst

DISPLAYS IN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY

December 4th 2012 - January 5th 2013: 'ON A SEASONAL THEME'*

Tuesday 8th January - Saturday 2nd February 2013: a display by Friends of Pittville on **THE HISTORY OF THE PITTVILLE GATES AND THEIR REFURBISHMENT**

Tuesday 5th February 2013 - Saturday 23rd: **CHELTENHAM'S WEATHER - SUNSHINE & SHOWERS! ***

Tuesday 5th March 2013 - Monday 25th: **CELEBRATING HORSE RACING IN CHELTENHAM***

Tuesday 2nd April 2013 - Tuesday 23rd : **CHELTENHAM'S FIRE SERVICE:A HISTORY***

* CLHS displays

MORE FOR YOUR DIARY

2012 Paterson Memorial lecture

Tuesday 11th December at 7.30 pm
at Christ Church, Malvern Road, Cheltenham

Ben Bolgar

Director of Design, Prince's Foundation for
the Built Environment

'Learning from Cheltenham'

The Prince's Foundation has for many years been bringing designers, authorities and communities together to find practical solutions to planning problems. Ben Bolgar as Director of Design has led many new building and community regeneration projects ranging in scale from regional planning to low carbon buildings. Cheltenham is often cited as a magnificent example of Regency town planning, but now in the 21st century we wrestle with the problems of town centre regeneration and meeting expanding housing needs without damaging our wonderful heritage. The timing could not be better to hear from one of the leading players in finding real community solutions to these apparently intractable planning problems.

Tickets £5 on the door to include a glass of wine.

CLHS SEEKS NEW SECRETARY

Heather Atkinson has advised the CLHS committee that she wishes to stand down as Secretary at the next AGM, in May 2013. We shall be sorry to lose her expertise in that role which she has carried out so effectively for several years. Fortunately, Heather is willing to continue serving on the Committee. However, we now need to look for a new Secretary. If any member of the Society is interested in taking on this role please contact either Heather, our Chairman David Scriven, or any other member of the present Committee. Contact details are in your Member's Programme and on our website.

NEW WEBMASTER TAKES OVER

We are also sorry to announce that our long-serving webmaster, **Tom Maslin**, has decided to stand down too. Tom has done a great job maintaining and developing the Society's website to ensure that we have an effective presence on the internet. **David Ford** has kindly agreed to take over as webmaster. David already has some experience in this field, as webmaster for the Cheltenham & Gloucestershire National Trust Centre, and we look forward to seeing the beneficial impact of his skills and new ideas on our website.

REVIEWS

Summer events and visits July –August 2012

Visit to Dean Close School, Wednesday 11th July (repeated on September 12th)

One of the rare fine sunny days of this past summer happily coincided with the Society's visit to Dean Close School. Assembling at the front entrance we were met by the Archivist Charles Whitney and his assistant Grace Pritchard-Woods. Before taking us inside, Charles explained that the founders of the school were a group of evangelicals inspired by (though also intent on competing with) the Anglo-Catholic Woodard group, who set up a number of schools for middle-class boys in the 19th century. These evangelical gentlemen had already founded one school in Kent and were planning to start another in Bristol, when the death of Francis Close in 1882 prompted them to locate it in Cheltenham instead and name it after him. It opened in 1886 with only 12 boys, but the young and energetic first headmaster and his wife, Dr and Mrs Fletcher, built it up within a few years to about 200 boys. It remained that size until the second world war.

Nowadays, still on its original 50-acre site, it numbers about 500 seniors, 250 juniors and 120 nursery children. Since 1967, when the first girl was admitted, it has been co-educational. We were first taken into the headmaster's house, which led through into the original small school building, now much extended. In a seminar room we heard more of the school's history, including the story of its wartime evacuation to Monkton Combe and the serious threat of closure it faced after the war, averted only by a gift of £1000 from a long-serving master. Grace then took us to the library,

formerly a large schoolroom and currently being redecorated, and out into a quadrangle. On a wall there we saw the Hooper sundial which was described in an article in our July Newsletter last year. Next came the chapel, built (rather unusually) in a very plain style in brick just after World War I. Charles said that according to John Betjeman it has the highest brick arches of any church in England. He drew our attention to the war memorial boards on the walls and told us about some of the past pupils whose names appear there. Passing through the vestibule of the Bacon Theatre, named after former headmaster Christopher Bacon, we came to the 'Shrapnel Building' (seen in the photo on the left), so called because it still shows the scars of a wartime bombing raid. Finally we arrived at the spacious modern dining hall, where to our surprise and pleasure tea and cakes were served, a very pleasant end to a most rewarding visit.

Kath Boothman



Visit to All Saints Church and Fairview, Wednesday 8th August

About 20 members gathered outside All Saints to be welcomed into the high Victorian magnificence of the church's interior by Father Stephen, one of the Team Vicars. Roger Beacham then gave us a short guided tour. He explained that the church, designed by John Middleton and consecrated in 1868, had been established by a group who wished to worship in the high Anglican liturgical style approved by the Oxford Movement. Their taste for richness and colour is very much reflected in the décor, which owes a good deal to the Arts and Crafts Movement. There are some fine stained glass windows, notably a rose window in the south transept designed by Burne-Jones and made by Morris & Co. The ornate stone and marble pulpit, designed by Middleton in the French Gothic style like the church itself, was carved by Boulton. Most splendid of all, perhaps, is the elaborate foliated and gilded ironwork canopy over the font, made by Letheren in 1896. The church was originally intended to have a 200-foot spire, which was never built. It is nevertheless a lofty and imposing building from the outside as well as within. It also has the claim to fame that Adolph von Holst, father of Gustav (who sang in the choir as a boy) was its first organist.



The second part of the evening's entertainment was a walk round the Fairview area guided by Steven Blake, who had thoughtfully provided maps and pictures to help us understand what we were seeing. This early 19th-century maze of little streets lined with terraced cottages and workshops has always been an artisan quarter. When it was developed there was still



open farmland to the east (most of the land on which it is built had belonged to a farmer of Charlton Kings called Flatcher) so that there would indeed have been a 'fair view' from some parts of it in the early days. Here and there Steven pointed out a house that had once stood alone and was now part of a street, or a shop mentioned in Rowe's Guide to Cheltenham that still survives, or a site where old commercial premises had been replaced by new dwellings. The houses, though in many cases refurbished and well kept, are mostly on a very modest scale, and the area still has much of its original character. A very enjoyable and instructive ramble round these quiet streets ended with a stop for rest and refreshment at the Kemble Brewery Inn in Fairview Street, which was originally built as a butcher's shop in the 1840s.

Cheltenham Local History Afternoon Sunday 1st July 2012 at St Andrew's Church, Montpellier Street

Our fifth biennial History Afternoon had the theme (cleverly contrived to reflect the initials of the Society) 'Consulting Local History Resources'. The main display, which attracted a lot of attention, illustrated the great range and variety of such resources, and the speaker was Jackie Fillmore of the British Association for Local History, author of *Local History Internet Sites—A Directory*, copies of which were on sale. She explained that the book, updated every year to keep pace with changes, was a guide to finding and evaluating sites useful for local history research. The first essential was to use a good search engine, such as Google. As each engine might bring up a different selection, she suggested using a 'metasearcher' which would sort through the databases of several search engines. Much time and effort could be saved by using carefully chosen search terms. A phrase such as 'local history' should be put in inverted commas to ensure it was not treated as two separate words. Devices called 'Boolean operators' could also be useful, eg asterisks to stand for one or more missing words, or a minus sign to exclude something. Material available on the web included, among much else, transcriptions and scans of archive material, digital versions of books, articles, images and maps also published in hard copy, and items collected especially for the web. The BBC website 'World War II—the People's War', for example, was such a collection. To get quick answers to questions



researchers could join discussion groups known as a 'chatrooms'. Evaluating websites was a matter of assessing their likely accuracy (anything with an extension such as .org or .gov was probably authoritative), relevance – is it out of date? — objectivity and coverage. She recommended reading round the subject before using the internet, so that you knew enough to judge the quality of what you found there. On the whole the internet was a good resource and she hoped this introduction would encourage people to use it. Meanwhile there were stalls, refreshments and a raffle, which this time raised £120 for the Mayor's charities. There were also two guided walking tours, one by CBC's Trees Officer Chris Chavasse of the trees around Montpellier, and the other by Elaine and Geoff North of Montpellier's decorative ironwork. As usual, both proved very popular.

Autumn lectures Sept-Oct 2012

The first meeting of the season began with the launch of the new CLHS publication *Cheltenham Revealed* (see page 8), introduced by Sally Self in the absence of both authors. The Chairman reviewed the events of the past summer, thanking those involved in the various visits and the St Andrew's afternoon and referring particularly to Heritage Weekend, when Neela Mann had arranged for a display to be put up in Cavendish House and Heather Atkinson, David Elder, Mick Kippin, Brian Torode, Judie Hodsdon and Geoff and Elaine North had all led guided walks.

The evening's speaker, **Sue Rowbotham**, needed little introduction. Her book *Commemorative Plaques in Cheltenham*, produced in collaboration with the late Peter Smith, was published in 2009. Peter, who sadly died in 2007, was the Plaques Officer for Cheltenham Civic Society, co-ordinating the Society's commemorative plaque scheme from 1995-2005. He had approached Sue with what he thought might be material for an article in the *Journal*; this prompted her to undertake research culminating in the production of the 128-page book. To show the locations of the plaques, CLHS member Brian White, an ex-Dowty draughtsman and talented artist, illustrated the book with a series of eight hand-drawn maps. Sue explained that she had always wanted to 'put a face' to the name behind a plaque or find out more about a place or an event being commemorated, and it was evident from her talk that she has amassed a wealth of knowledge about them all. She related some fascinating stories. Sometimes she found that her research forced her to look at subjects she would not normally have been interested in, such as the first visit to England in 1908 of the New Zealand rugby league team, commemorated on a plaque in St John's Avenue where the Athletics Ground used to be. One of the personalities she had most enjoyed researching was Fred Archer, whose plaque, we were told, can be viewed by writing to the present owner of St George's Cottage, 43 St George's Place. Sue searched tirelessly for photographs of every person commemorated by a plaque, and the lovely photograph in the book of Fred Archer and his young daughter Nellie Rose is one such example. Anyone who knows Sue will be aware that a particular hero of hers is John Nevil Maskelyne (1839-1917), described as 'illusionist and watchmaker'. Sue gave us a detailed history of his life and achievements and told how an earlier plaque sited in the old Town Hall had disappeared when the building was demolished and years later had reappeared (as if by magic!) and can now be seen in the foyer of the Everyman Theatre. Sue's very informative talk also covered many other plaques to be found elsewhere in the country, and outlined the history of plaques throughout the world. She will have whetted many an appetite to learn more. Copies of the book are still available to purchase from Sue, and an up-to-date record of the plaques in the town can be found at www.cheltenhamcivicsociety.org.uk

Elaine North

Our speaker on October 16th was **Dr Simon Draper**, who was assistant editor of the Gloucestershire VCH from 2007 to 2010. His theme was **Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire**, and he began by identifying settlements that had survived from Roman times into the Anglo-Saxon period. In many place names such as Wickham or Wycomb the 'wic' element comes from the Latin 'vicus', a small Roman settlement

usually near a road or a villa. Names ending in -chester or -cester come from the Latin 'castra', originally meaning a camp. In Gloucestershire and Wiltshire however they often seem to be associated with villas, sites which in some cases (Frocester for example) were occupied long after the Romans left. From the 7th century Anglo-Saxon kingdoms evolved; he showed a map of Mercia, a confederation rather than a single entity, with Gloucestershire at its southern edge on the border with Wessex. East of the Severn was the territory of the Hwicce people; further north were the Magonsaete. The south of the county, where no pre-7th century Anglo-Saxon artefacts have been found, seems to have been part of a British kingdom up to the mid-7th century, when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells of battles there. As for the land west of the Severn, it was probably subject to the Welsh Christian kingdom of Ergyng until the late 8th century when Ergyng became part of Mercia. In the later Anglo-Saxon period there were many large estates (Bishops Cleeve being one of the largest in this area) with places around them having names that showed their dependent status. Thus Southam was to the south, Prescott was where the priest lived. Places ending in -bury may have been fortified or, as at Tetbury and Bibury, may just have had a church with a defensible enclosure round it. The first part of such place names was usually a personal name; he finished with an aerial photograph of Saintbury, originally Saewine's burh, on which not only the church with its surrounding earthworks but also the likely site of the manor could be seen. Questions to the speaker showed with what keen interest the audience had followed this talk, which gave us all a new perspective on the familiar places around us.

Aylwin Sampson's talk on October 23rd at St Luke's was a tribute to our fondly remembered past Chairman Sue Newton, who died in June 2011, and we were very pleased to welcome Sue's husband Dave to the meeting. Aylwin's subject was **Città Italiana—Cheltenham?** (Sue was involved for many years with the Cheltenham Italian Society). He said that although Henry Skillicorne is always considered the founder of Cheltenham as a spa, the physical aspects of the town really owe much more to Andrea Palladio, the 16th century Italian architect who rediscovered the principles of classical Roman and Greek architecture. He demonstrated, with the aid of many of his own fine architectural sketches, that the evidence is all around us, from the Queen's Hotel with its pillared façade to the pediments and porches found on churches, public buildings and private houses. Palladio built country villas, and his style, emphasising proportion and symmetry, was first brought to Cheltenham by John Buonarotti Papworth. Villas in the classical style abound here; the Pittville Pump Room, too, is heavily Italianate. The Palazzo Strozzi was based on a palace in Florence and Neptune's fountain on the Trevi fountain in Rome, while Montpellier Rotunda echoes the Pantheon. The apses found in many churches have their origins in Roman basilicas. Aylwin proved that even the theatres, the racecourse and the Montpellier Baths have Italian connections – thus, he claimed triumphantly, Cheltenham could indeed be called Città Italiana! The audience had listened spellbound to this fascinating tour de force. One member remarked that if we had all thought we were observant, we had surely realised now that there was a lot we had failed to notice!

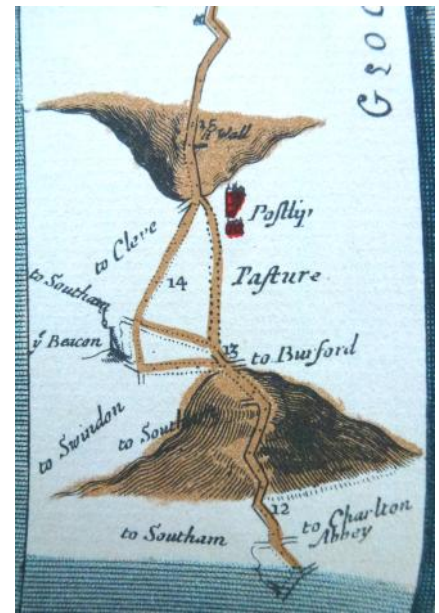
FEATURE

LIGHT THE BEACON!

The beacon that marked this year's Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II's accession stood on Wistley Hill, near the southern edge of Charlton Kings. Leckhampton Hill and Cleeve Cloud would have been more traditional sites, however. In 1588 Cleeve was the location of one of a chain of warning beacons prepared in case the Spanish Armada made an approach along the Bristol Channel. This is marked as 'Ye Beacon' on Ogilby's roadbook of 1675, near the road from Prestbury to Winchcombe, close to today's 317m trig point.

In more recent times bonfires were lit on Cleeve Cloud and Leckhampton Hill to celebrate the coronation of Queen Victoria in June 1838. These were the climax of jollifications throughout Cheltenham which included the official opening of the Zoological Gardens in The Park with a 21-gun salute.

Queen Victoria's two jubilees led to beacon-lighting on a grand scale throughout the nation and the Empire. For the Golden Jubilee in 1887 fires blazed from 10 o'clock until midnight at Cleeve and Leckhampton, accompanied by salvos of rockets. Disaster struck Cleeve's unguarded Diamond Jubilee bonfire when it was prematurely fired by intruders and burned to the ground. Within less than a week, the schoolchildren and adults of Bishop's Cleeve rebuilt it, to a height of 60 feet. Up to a hundred other fires could be seen on the night, and the keen-eyed Edward Wilson claimed to have identified one on The Wrekin, 60 miles away, from his home at The Crippetts.



Extract from Ogilby's *Britannia*, 1675



The 30-foot high bonfire on Leckhampton Hill for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 1887

The coronation of King Edward VII in 1902 was delayed because of his operation for appendicitis. Originally scheduled for 26 June, it took place on 9 August, but the stack at Cleeve was ready and waiting and was lit on 30 June, after it had been announced that the future king was out of danger. (No bonfire had been planned at Leckhampton, where instead a dinner was provided for the old people of the village.)

Leckhampton's bonfire for George V's coronation in 1911 was regarded as Cheltenham's 'official' one. It blazed merrily despite a downpour. It was made up from 50 tons of wood cleared from the newly prepared 'North Gloucestershire' golf course below The Crippetts. For the King's Silver Jubilee in 1935 the beacon at Cleeve was lit despite an outbreak of measles and mumps which caused the postponement of many of the other celebrations. At Leckhampton the lighting was preceded by a torchlight procession of Scouts. For the first time people began to travel in cars or charabancs to witness the event, and near Crickley Hill a line of parked vehicles stretched from the Air Balloon to Birdlip.

George VI's coronation, perhaps because it came so soon after, was a more modest affair. Beacons were lit on Robinswood and Chosen Hills on coronation night itself, but at Leckhampton it was only on the following Friday that 250 Cheltenham Girl Guides gathered round a 12-foot high bonfire on the plateau above the Devil's Chimney.

For the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, Leckhampton's beacon, built by the Leckhampton Scouts, was advertised as being 'bigger than any in the past'. Round its framework were packed nearly 100 trees that had been felled in Witcombe Woods and brushwood cleared from below Tower Lodge, impregnated with old gear-box oil, dirty paraffin and cellulose thinners. The structure was hollow, like a chimney, and an oil-soaked rope hung down its centre, to serve as a wick. Scout guards intercepted three miscreants bent on lighting the beacon a day early. Though the wind interfered with the actual lighting (it is well known that this Coronation Day itself was wet and stormy, like several others), the flames shot up to a great height.

It seems unlikely that a beacon fire will ever be erected again on Leckhampton Hill, if only for environmental reasons. Furthermore, the festivities of 1953 were probably the last when Leckhampton's inhabitants truly came together as a community. Though the events were prompted by the Parish Council, the actual work was carried out by other organisations: the Mothers' Union, Child Welfare Committee, Pilley Sisterhood, Young Wives' Group, Women's Institute, and the Leckhampton Players. Many of these (mainly women's) groups no longer exist or are too small to undertake the necessary preparations.

Eric Miller

*SOCIETY NEWS***New Members**

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

<i>Barbara Williams</i>	<i>David Mills</i>
<i>Martin Kilbey</i>	<i>Jane Gundry</i>
<i>Dr Diane Lewis</i>	<i>Dr Hanne Lambley</i>
<i>Miss Janet Medcalf</i>	<i>Mrs Julie Arnold</i>
<i>Stephen Baldwin</i>	<i>Nicolas Wheatley</i>
<i>David and Sandra Ford</i>	<i>Mrs Maggie Rayner</i>
<i>Guy Simmins</i>	<i>Philip Cole</i>
<i>Anna Wishart</i>	<i>Barbara Weaver</i>
<i>Mrs Brenda Davies</i>	<i>Dr D E Jackson</i>
<i>Philip Crimes</i>	
<i>Dr Michael and Mrs Judith Wilson</i>	

Victoria County History

Work on Volume XIII (parishes in the Gloucester vale) is progressing well, in John Chandler's capable hands. The number of volunteers supporting the project is growing steadily, and CLHS members among others have been transcribing inventories for some of the parishes under study. Completed transcripts are being posted on the VCH Explore website, which not only puts more archive material into the online domain, and is good for VCH visibility, but is also a justifiable source of pride for the volunteers themselves.

The Gloucestershire County History Trust is now very seriously considering making Cheltenham the focus of the next VCH volume, something your committee has long wished for. James Hodsdon has been talking to potential supporters, and was very pleased indeed when your committee gave the new project for a Cheltenham-area VCH a very clear thumbs-up at a special meeting in mid-October. The plan is to do enough groundwork over this winter and spring to allow GCHT to appoint an editor

to begin work this time next year. But to achieve this, there needs to be quite a few thousands in the bank, and a plan to find the rest. Fundraising will be the task of the Trust rather than CLHS, but if enough of our members can commit now, in the form of a cheque or a monthly standing order—see the red leaflet enclosed with this newsletter—this will give the appeal a terrific early boost. We urge you to support this project! More details next year.



CAC Award winners James Hodsdon and Catriona and Richard Smith with the Mayor, Councillor Colin Hay at the ceremony on 28th Sept.

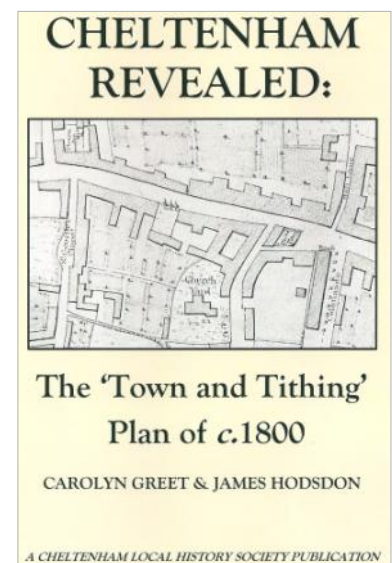
Congratulations are in order for three of our members who won Cheltenham Arts Council Awards this year.

James Hodsdon, a respected author and Director of the County History Trust, received the Joyner Cup for his all-round contribution to the arts in Cheltenham. He said that the fun of history is in the discovery and sharing of knowledge, and spoke of his current work raising funds to support the continuation of the VCH series. Richard and Catriona Smith, who received a joint citation, were nominated by Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum and by the Holst Museum for their outstanding service over many years to these and other local organisations.

*NEW PUBLICATION***Cheltenham Revealed: The 'Town and Tithing' Plan of c.1800**

by Carolyn Greet and James Hodsdon

As part of the Society's 30th anniversary celebrations this year we have sponsored the publication of this 76-page A4 book, which reproduces a little-known large scale map of Cheltenham held in the Gloucestershire Archives. The original measures 164.5 cm (64 in) by 77.5cm (30½ in) and is drawn mostly in black on two pieces of vellum joined at about the halfway point. There is some mystery over who commissioned it, but its value to local historians is not in doubt – it is a very useful addition to our knowledge of the town at the turn of the 19th century. As the title indicates, the map covers only the town and tithing of Cheltenham, which mostly lay on the north side of the line followed by the High Street and Tewkesbury and London Roads. It does not extend south of the Chelt, which for part of its length formed the southern boundary of the tithing. However, drawn on a scale of about 20 inches to the mile, the map shows buildings, gardens, fields, roads, paths and other landmarks very clearly, with fields distinguished by their usage and some of the roads and buildings named. Nearly 300 features are listed and annotated by Carolyn and James, and there are useful cross references to other maps and books on the town's history. The whole map, divided into 18 sections, is reproduced as a centre section on photographic paper. At the modest price of only £5 it would make an excellent present for yourself or a friend! Copies can be purchased at the Society meetings or from Sally Self: 01242 243714; e-mail journal.clhs@btinternet.com Postage and packing £1.80.



*FEATURE***WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM LISTS AND INVENTORIES?**

When I was at the Gloucestershire Archives, researching St Paul's Hospital in its early days as the Union Workhouse Infirmary, I came across an Inventory Book of 1901-1932 which provided me with a mine of information. The Infirmary was built in 1887.

The Inventory revealed that the Women's Hospital contained 10 wards, the largest containing 11 beds, two of 10 beds, two of 8 beds, one of 6 beds, and a single-bedded room, formerly a nurse's bedroom. There was a two-bedded Labour Ward, a five-bedded 'Offensive Cases' Ward (for incontinent patients) and a five-bedded 'Lock' Ward (a nationally used term for patients with venereal disease). Furniture was limited to a bedstead and locker for each patient, with few chairs. The numbers of chamber pots, bedpans and douche cans are listed, as are small items, such as 'spitting cups', feeding cups and

thermometers. A 'Convalescents' Room' contained 11 armchairs, one propelling chair, four oil paintings and a piano. Other rooms in this block were the Superintendent Nurse's sitting room and bedroom, which were carpeted, a Nurses' Dining Room, set up for about 6 nurses, a Linen Room and a Store Room. The store room contained hot water bottles, leg cradles and air cushions. A spinal carriage, basket wheelchair and operating table and bed net were kept in the corridor.

According to this Inventory, the Women's Hospital could accommodate 66 female patients, including 2 maternity cases. Gynaecology patients were looked after on ward 4 (evidence provided by the douche cans). The presence of only one thermometer per ward indicates that this was an expensive item and it was probably not routine for every patient to have their temperature recorded. (This applied even at Cheltenham General at that time). The lack of chairs in the wards, and the numbers of bedpans and chamber pots indicates that many patients spent most of their time in bed. The Inventory also refers to each ward having an open fireplace with a fireguard, and blinds to the windows. Children were accommodated in the adult wards of both hospital blocks as appropriate.

The Men's Hospital accommodated 51 men in 7 wards. There was one ward of 11 beds, two of 10 beds and four 5-bedded wards. One of these was a 'Lock' ward, but there was no 'Offensive Cases' ward specified for men. Bedding is listed per bed as flock mattress, bolster, pillow, sheets, blanket and quilt. There was also a Convalescent Day Room, with oil paintings and a piano, as well as books and games. The Men's Hospital also housed the Medical Officer's Consulting Room, containing a desk, chairs, surgical instruments and an operating table acquired in 1913. There were also 4 nurses' bedrooms.

A Prescription Book (undated) indicates the use of very basic medications, lotions and dressings. Medicines included aspirin, liquid paraffin, malt and oil, senna, linctus, and peppermint water. Lotions were itemized as Eusol (for cleaning wounds), Lysol, carbolic (for general cleaning), magnesium sulphate paste (for septic wounds), Vaseline, palm-olive soap and cold cream soap. Dressings included cotton wool, plain gauze, boric lint and bandages.

A Diet Book of 1930 reveals that sick men received 18 ounces (oz) of bread daily with 1oz margarine, 3½oz meat, 6oz potato or vegetables, 4oz bread pudding, 2 pints of tea and half a pint of milk. Sick women received slightly less bread and meat. Sick children received 12oz bread, 1oz margarine, ½oz sugar, 2 pints of milk and one pint of gravy or Bovril instead of meat and vegetables. This diet was prescribed nationally by the Poor Law Board.

Although these lists sound meagre, I was able to deduce that the patients, who would have been either inmates of the workhouse or living in extreme poverty in the local parishes, received a modicum of care and treatment by the Poor Law Medical Officer and probably six nurses, who covered all shifts between them for up to 117 patients (aided by able-bodied female inmates). Even the food was better than many would have had at home.

Heather Atkinson

References: GRO/G/CH/110 Inventory Book, 1901-1932: GRO/G/CH 185 Prescription Book. GRO/G/CH Diet Book, Union Workhouse. *Photograph by Steven Blake c.1980, courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.*

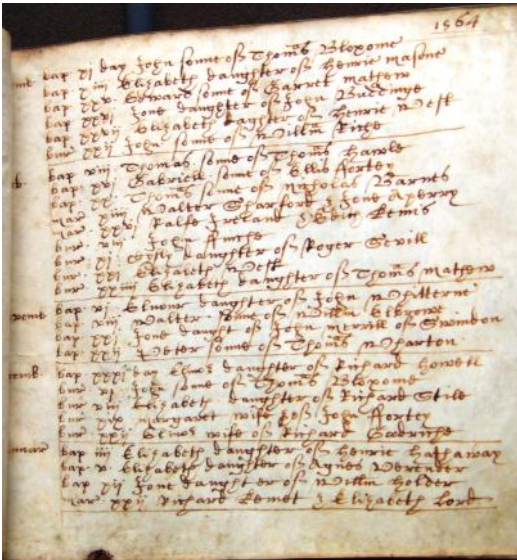
THE MILES SCRAPBOOKS—HELP NEEDED

Sometime ago we appealed for a member to come forward to help the Cheltenham Local Studies Library digitise a very important source of recent history for the town. Since then the MILES SCRAPBOOKS (D12400) have been transferred to Gloucestershire Archives for more controlled storage. While this is a very sensible decision it now means that they cannot be consulted in Cheltenham. The ten scrapbooks were compiled by Alfred Miles, a Cheltenham resident, during the 1920s and 1930s. The handwritten volumes include press cuttings, correspondence, maps, notes and record extracts. It would be a valuable research source for local historians if we could make a digital copy available locally, without having to travel to Gloucester. So once again, we, on behalf of Chris Rainey, Cheltenham Local Studies Library are making this appeal to our members. Please contact Sally Self (journal.clhs@btinternet.com) in the first instance, who can give you more details.

LOCAL NEWS

Pittville Gates Restoration Project

The Friends of Pittville project to restore the 1833 'Grand Entrance' to Pittville has reached a major milestone. After countless meetings, letters and emails, a sizeable Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been secured. Crucially, this was complemented by a substantial sum from Cheltenham Borough Council's Environment Fund. This means that Phase 1 of the restoration can now start, probably late November. This will see the removal of the six decayed stone pillars, to be replaced with new stonework using Forest of Dean stone, just like the original. The existing ironwork will be thoroughly renovated, and the surroundings landscaped in a fitting manner. This is amazing progress in a relatively short time, and Friends of Pittville are to be congratulated on their hard work and determination. Fundraising continues for Phase 2, which will replace the lamps, the six opening gates and the adjoining railings, all missing for many decades.



A page from the parish records for 1564

(Photo courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives)

of the mother also follows, either 24/48 hours later as a direct result of childbirth or a week to ten days later from puerperal fever or other complications. However, births do seem to have outstripped deaths at all times and in the first 20 years of the 17th century there was something of a 'baby boom' with five births for every two deaths, indicating the likelihood of a thriving town of young people. Marriages too follow a distinctive pattern: on average nine to ten annually, the majority in the months of October and November, with very few in February and the Lenten months. Weddings in Advent and at Christmas time, at first avoided, become steadily more popular in the late 17th and 18th centuries.

The records of deaths can also give some clue as to the health of the town and its vulnerability to 'mortality crises.' Two such episodes have been found, though others are likely to emerge with further analysis of the death rate. In October 1592 six died 'of the pestilence', all within a fortnight of each other. It was almost certainly bubonic plague, of which there was a serious outbreak in this part of the country in 1592-3. The victims on this occasion seem to have been older inhabitants, possibly from the Almshouse. A more 'normal' incidence of illness, one that follows the accepted curve of development, occurs in 1682 with a smallpox outbreak. Of the 25 deaths, 20 occurred within nine weeks during October and November: the first cases in May seem to have been contained but there were more in July, August and September and it died out only at the end of January 1682/83. Of the 25 deaths 16 appear to be those of young females. Further minor outbreaks were recorded in 1685, 1687 and 1688. The Ireland family lost three people, the Wills family two. In a town where the average number of deaths per year was about 28-35, these losses must have been harrowing. Occasionally the occupations of those buried or of the father of the infant being baptised are documented. We learn of a school master, John Chew, of a succession of midwives and even a female apothecary, Sara Stevens, who appears to have taken over the shop and practice of her husband when he died in 1698. The Arters (Arthurs) were a family of paviours and William Dennys was a Town Cryer. There are in the early years many tailors, weavers, shoemakers, butchers and carpenters, with fathers handing on the trade to their sons. But by the third generation there is evidence that the grandchildren adjusted to changing times and became more 'consumer' minded - mercers, haberdashers, cordwainers, milliners, glaziers, brasiers and plasterers are all recorded. The town that had thrived on the necessities of the market and fair developed into a place that also catered for more refined tastes. At the last count more than 50 occupations have been found.

It is early days in the analysis of these records and the transcriptions are not yet complete. More will be revealed as we progress, but there will be many questions that the transcripts cannot answer. Where are all the labourers and servants? Are the growing numbers of non-conformists recorded or absent? Was there a large influx of families that escaped the records? People who did not marry or die here and had no children baptised may have left no trace of their presence in Cheltenham.

Sally Self, Project Co-ordinator

ST MARY'S PARISH RECORDS TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT 1558-1804

As many of you will be aware, a group of CLHS members has been transcribing St. Mary's parish records from their beginnings in 1558 up to 1804, chosen as the cut-off point. The project, begun many years ago by Christine Leighton, Carina Bibby and others, has been progressing steadily and now a publication date of late 2013 seems a possibility. Apart from the early family history that they obviously reveal, other interesting information has begun to emerge, though a full statistical and narrative analysis is still some way off.

Most entries are very basic: '1680 March 7 Bap Sarah the child of Giles Coxe' and 'Bur Willm. Ashmead', but on occasions there is additional information which brings the facts into sharper focus: occupations (millard, weaver), status (gent, widow), abode ('of the towne', 'Hartersfield') and extras such as 'buried within the weeke' or 'died in the common streame'.

Transcribing is not always a joyful experience. All too often the record of a birth is, within five to ten days, followed by the infant's burial. In the case of twins this is almost inevitable. Then, on too many occasions, the death



BOOKS FOR SALE



As members will know, good quality local history books priced between £2 and £10 are regularly offered for sale at meetings. In addition the Society has a quantity of more valuable and/or less easily obtainable books, surplus to the needs of the library, and the Committee has decided that these too should be offered for sale to members. They include the following:

The New Club by Neil Parrack— new book, special price £8.50 (several copies, some signed and very kindly donated by the author)

Cheltenham Music Festival at 65 by Graham Lockwood—£9 (several copies)

A Grand City: Bristol in the 18th and 19th Centuries, ed. M J Crossley Evans—£7.50 (2 copies)

BGAS Essays in Honour of David Smith (2007)—£5

Miniatures by Dudley Heath (1905) - £20

Volumes of the **BGAS Record Series**, now for sale at **only £5 each**, as follows:

(Vol 7) Tewkesbury Churchwardens' Accounts 1563-1624 (2 copies)

(Vol 11) Original Acta of St Peter's Abbey, Gloucester c 1122-1263

(Vol 13) The Bishop Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester 1735-1750

(Vol 15) A Calendar of the Registers of the Priory of Llanthony by Gloucester 1457-1466, 1501-1525

(Vol 19) Notes on the Diocese of Gloucester by Chancellor Richard Parsons c1700

(Vol 20) Abstract of Feet of Fines relating to Gloucestershire 1300-1359

Also Vols 17 & 18 A Catalogue of the Medieval Muniments at Berkeley Castle - 2 volume set £8

The Society is always grateful for donations of suitable books in either the lower or the higher price range. If you have anything to donate, or if you are interested in buying any of the books listed above, please contact Heather Atkinson on 01242 230740 or e-mail heatherbell71@hotmail.com

OBITUARY

RON PREWER (1936 – 2012)

It would have surprised no-one that the cemetery chapel was full to overflowing for the funeral of Ron Prewer, who died after a long illness, aged 76, on August 1st. Ron was a real Cheltonian, born in St Paul's. He was a member of the Society for many years and only two years ago wrote an article for the Journal about a project he had instigated to restore a World War I honours board from the long defunct St Paul's Practising School. Ron himself had been one of the last pupils at the school, which from 1847 to 1951 was part of St Paul's College, Cheltenham's teacher training college for men. Ron's grandfather, who died in World War I, had also been a pupil at the school, and while researching his family history in the College archives in 2007 Ron discovered that his grandfather's name was inscribed with many others on a memorial board stored there. The board was in poor condition and Ron launched a successful appeal to have it restored. With support from the *Echo* he contacted over 40 former pupils, re-formed the school's Old Boys' Association, which had closed in 1939, and helped to raise the £2500 needed to pay for the restoration. The board was rededicated at a special service on December 12th 2009. Ron also helped the university to raise money for another project, now well advanced, to create a similar board commemorating old boys of the school who died in World War II.

As a young man in the 1960s Ron had served as a soldier with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Aden, where a total of 280 British servicemen and women lost their lives. A Gloucestershire branch of the Aden Veterans' Association was formed in 2008 and Ron attended its first meeting, where he enjoyed reliving memories of his army days. He was always noted for his fund of stories, his memories of people and events and willingness to share information. 'Mr St Paul's' is the affectionate nickname given to him for the particular depth of knowledge he had gained by delving into the history of the St Paul's area, but he will be remembered for more than that by members of the Society. Some members will remember attending one of his 'events' such as the Society's visit to St Paul's Church and the old school building nearby some years ago. More recently, when Ron knew that the Society was compiling a display on WWII he gave copies of his own archive photographs, some of which had not previously been on public display, to be used. Such was Ron's generosity. To Ron, memories and photographs were all-important and history was something to be talked about, shared and kept alive.

The Society was represented at Ron's funeral by the Chairman David Scriven and several members. Our thoughts are with his widow Sylvia, his children and step-children and his two sisters.

In Ron's memory, at the Society's Research & Display Evening on 15th January 2013, Elaine and Geoff North will be displaying original material from Ron's research into Cheltenham's High Street. His photographs of shops and buildings form what is now a fascinating and valuable archive.



CAN YOU HELP?

Brass Bands

An enquirer is researching the history of brass bands in local communities, and would like to ask if anyone knows of any information about any such extinct bands in our area. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were the 'golden age' for these bands numbering, it is said, up to 40,000 distinct bands at their peak. Many of them were associated with local industries, often being a 'works' band. Others provided a musical focus for many small towns and villages in the days before the gramophone and the wireless. Today, in contrast, only some 1,500 or so are left active in the UK. Sadly many of the bands left little in the way of information about their existence, and what does exist is widely scattered with individuals, local archives and national collections. Part of the research is simply to identify these lost bands, to collect together material to provide a central database of information containing a mixture of primary information as well as references to material held elsewhere (e.g. in local archives). Any information you can provide would be gratefully received. Actual information on or pictures of any bands, or pointers to resources, or sources suitable for further investigation would all be welcome. Even knowing that a particular band existed is significant!

Who were 'the Ladies of Cheltenham'?

On the 16th July 1894 George's the Bakers and Confectioners delivered a christening cake to the Duchess of York at White Lodge, Richmond. This cake, made by George's Ltd, was in the shape of a crown, bearing in the centre a sugar model of the font at Canterbury Cathedral, where according to legend the first King of England was christened. The cake appears to have been a gift from the Mayoress Mrs E Wethered and 'the Ladies of Cheltenham'. 'The Ladies of Cheltenham' also sent a 'Beautiful Bridal Cake' to the Duke and Duchess of York on their marriage in July 1893. A horse trough in the Promenade is also inscribed as being presented by these same ladies.

Any information on either the ladies or the cakes would be most welcome.

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

CLHS Journal

Sally Self, Journal Editor, is making her annual appeal for articles for the forthcoming Journal 29 - 2013. Articles need to be submitted by 6 January 2013. If you are already writing or have an idea for an article please let Sally know, as soon as possible. Advice and support can be given if it should be needed.



Is your grandmother here?

This photograph, probably taken in the early 1900s, is an unused postcard and has the photographer's name E M Bailey, Cheltenham, printed on the back. We know that Bailey had studios first in Leighton Road, then from 1914 -34 in the High Street. The identity of the three girls is unknown, but the uniform suggests that they might possibly be senior students at a local school or college. Each wears a badge with a letter 'S', which may signify membership of some club or organisation. Could they be suffragettes? Or are they just going to a fancy-dress party? The background offers no clues. Any information or suggestions would be welcome.

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward items for inclusion in the
MARCH 2013 Newsletter by

Monday 11th February 2013

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