

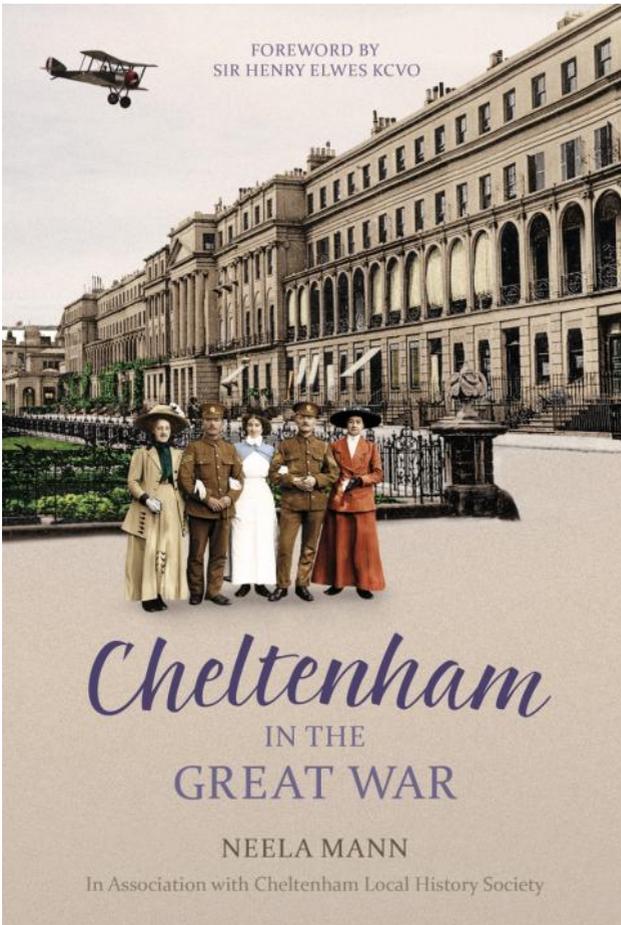


Cheltenham Local History Society

Newsletter No. 84

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council
Registered Charity No. 1056046
<http://www.cheltlocalhistory.org.uk>

March 2016



EDITORIAL

Here at last, launched this month by the History Press, is 'our' book, a new publication partly created by the Society itself. Its original aim was just to put on record all the research done by members for our Local History Day in 2014 (see p15 for the author's own account), but Neela has amplified this material with a lot of additional research. The result is a fascinating compendium of stories and images, facts and figures that lifts the lid on daily life in Cheltenham in the war years in a way that has never been done before. Generously illustrated, indexed and most attractively laid out, it is a book to browse in, to learn from and above all to enjoy.

Kath Boothman

For CONTENTS please see the back cover.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 17th May in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Promenade, Cheltenham at 7.30 pm prompt. (See **Agenda enclosed with this Newsletter—please bring this with you to the meeting. Copies of the minutes of last year's AGM will be available on the door.**) The Mayor, as President of the Society, will chair the meeting and give a short address.

Election of Officers and Committee 2016-17

Officers and committee members (as listed in the 2015 AGM Minutes) will resign in accordance with the Society's constitution, although they can be re-elected if they so wish. Nominations are invited for Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and for committee members. If you would like to nominate someone or be nominated yourself, either for one of these posts or as a committee member, please contact the Secretary Chris Conoley (e-mail chris.conoley@btpenworld.com) or phone 01452 700428 for a nomination form.

After the AGM business is concluded there will be a talk by **Gwilym Davies** entitled **Folk Music of Gloucestershire**.

SUMMER VISITS

You are invited to take part in the following visits with the Society. **IN ALL CASES PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SLIP ENCLOSED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER WITH YOUR PAYMENT AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE. There will be a priority booking period for members only until 13th April and, as places are limited on these visits, you are advised to book early to be sure of getting a place.** If you wish to bring a non-member as a guest, please indicate this on the slip when booking your own place. If there is any availability after 13th April, places will be offered to non-members in order of application. **If you find that you cannot attend a visit for which you have booked, please inform Sue Brown (01242 231837) or another committee member of your cancellation, so that someone else may have the opportunity to take your place.** If you don't let us know that you cannot attend, we shall expect you to pay the cost.

Wednesday 10th August leaving at 9.30 am from Royal Well, returning at 4.45 pm
ROSS-ON-WYE and KILPECK CHURCH

After a journey of about one hour the visit begins with coffee/tea and biscuits at the Royal Hotel, Ross-on-Wye (included). The party will then be divided into two

groups for a guided tour of the historic little market town of Ross, led by Heather Hurley, chair of the Ross Civic Society and Mary Sinclair-Powell, who was formerly in charge of the Ross Heritage Centre. Ross-on-Wye (population about 10,000) occupies a spectacular position on sandstone cliffs overlooking the Wye. The Royal Hotel, where the walk begins, is set high up and was built partly to enhance the town's skyline. The town centre has narrow streets lined with handsome red-brick and timber houses, with the tall spire of St Peter's church soaring above. From 12.30 to 1.30 pm there will be a break for lunch (not included) after which we will depart for Kilpeck. The church of St Mary and St David at Kilpeck was built around 1140 and is famous for its wealth of Norman carvings in the local hard red sandstone. These, all original and remarkably well preserved, predominantly depict animals, birds and mythical creatures. The south door is particularly richly decorated. The churchwarden James Bailey will give us an introductory talk on the church and its carvings. After the visit refreshments will be available at the Kilpeck Inn (not included). Note that the Inn will serve a cream tea at £5 per head if pre-ordered—see booking form.



Corbel at Kilpeck showing a hound and a hare

Wednesday 8th June at 6.30 pm and Wednesday 29th June at 6.30 pm

Victorian Cheltenham walk

An early evening walk, led by Adrian Barlow, exploring the architectural evolution of residential Cheltenham south of Montpellier. There will be a particular focus on the introduction of both serious and bizarre Gothic architecture around Aban Court and Christ Church Road. The walk will start and finish outside The Tivoli, Andover Road, where there is free parking adjacent to the pub.

Wednesday 13th July at 2.00pm

Cirencester walk

Groups of 12 will be led by members of the Cirencester Civic Society, each group looking at the general theme of the town's history and how what we can see today fits into that story. The emphasis will vary, and it would be possible for groups to ask for a focus on, for example, the Civil War or more recent history. The walk will finish about 3.30 pm at a teashop recommended by the guides.

Travel

Buses from Cheltenham: Stagecoach 51 leaves the Promenade at 13.10 pm and arrives Cirencester Market Place at 13.51 pm. There is a return bus leaving from the Corn Hall, Cirencester Market Place, at 16.21 pm, arriving at the Promenade at 17.02 pm.

Car parks in Cirencester: the Forum Car Park (GL7 1FN) or the Beeches Car Park (GL7 1BN), which is cheaper but 10 minutes' walk away.

EVENING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2016-17

Meetings start at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Municipal Offices, Promenade
Visitors pay £2.

Tuesday 20th September:

James Rendell—H H Martyn

Tuesday 18th October:

Jane Adams—Healing with Water: Cheltenham Spa in the National Context, 1800-1960

Tuesday 15th November:

Rose Hewlett—Living on the Edge: Communities along the Upper Severn Estuary

Tuesday 13th December:

Steven Blake—Pittville after Pitt

Tuesday 24th January 2017:

Research and Display Evening

Tuesday 21st February 2017:

Adrian Barlow—Stained Glass in Cheltenham

Tuesday 21st March 2017:

Alec Hamilton—Coates Carter: a Late Flourishing of the Arts & Crafts

Tuesday 25th April 2017:

Jan Broadway—Georgian Nurseries in Gloucestershire

Tuesday 23rd May 2017: AGM followed by

John Dixon—Beguiling Barbara Cartland: ‘Stranger in our Midst’

MORNING LECTURES 2016-17

Morning lectures will take place at St Luke’s Hall, St Luke’s Place, Cheltenham. A donation of £2 from all attending these lectures is appreciated. Tea/coffee and biscuits are served (no charge) from 10.00 am. Lectures start at 10.30 am. All welcome. Parking at the Hall is for disabled only—please contact Chris Conoley (01242 700428) if you wish to reserve a space.

Tuesday 4th October:

Angela Panrucker—The Story of Sudeley Castle

Tuesday 1st November:

Paul Scott and/or Allen Miller—The History of the Cheltenham Playhouse, 1806-2016

Tuesday 4th April 2017:

John Chandler—Cheltenham’s History in Black and White

Reminder...

MORNING LECTURE

*Tuesday 5th April, 10.00 am for 10.30 am
at St Luke’s Hall, Cheltenham*

Tim Jordan—The Cotswold House

*The 2016 CLHS Journal will be available
for collection at this meeting.*

FOR YOUR DIARY

Leckhampton Local History Society

www.llhs.org.uk

Note new venue: Meetings are normally held at Glebe Cottages, Church Road, Leckhampton (next to the churchyard), at 7.30 pm Admission £2 for visitors.

Wednesday 16th March at St Philip's and St James' Church:

Neela Mann—Cheltenham Life in the Great War

Wednesday 20th April:

Aylwin Sampson—Roman Cotswolds

Wednesday 18th May:

AGM followed by Adrian Barlow—Cheltenham's Victorian Architecture

Prestbury Local History Society

www.prestburyhistory.com

Meetings are held at Prestbury Women's Institute Hall (corner of Bouncers Lane/ Prestbury Road), starting at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated. Guests pay £2.

Monday 4th April:

Lynda Hodges—Trouble at Church

Monday 25th April:

David Jones—Our Thatched Heritage

Monday 23rd May at 7.00 pm at the church:

Lynda Hodges—The History of St Mary's Church

Monday 27th June:

Village History Walk (details to be announced)

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 p.m. Visitors pay £3.

Thursday 14th April :

Pete Sullivan—Bishop Hooper, a Gloucester Martyr

Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

www.bgas.org.uk

Meetings are held at the Friends' Meeting House, Greyfriars, Gloucester. Talks start at 7.30 pm. Visitors pay £1.

Wednesday 16th March :

Dr Jan Broadway—J C Wheeler's of Gloucester: the History of a Commercial Nursery, 1750-1974

Charlton Kings Local History Society

www.charltonkings.org.uk

All meetings are held at the Baptist Church, Church Street, starting at 7.30 pm.

Tuesday 22nd March:

Dr Nicholas Humphris—Recent Developments at Chedworth Roman Villa

Tuesday 26th April:

Julia Sargent—The History of Sandford Lido

Tuesday 24th May:

Peter Grainger—Kings House, Charlton Kings

Swindon Village Society

Meetings are held at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated.

Non-members pay £2 (but no charge for the Bird and Nature walk).

Wednesday 16th March:

Peter Petrie—Gloucester Cathedral through the Ages

Saturday 16th April:

Bird and Nature walk—meet in Swindon Village Hall car park at 9.30 am.

Wednesday 18th May:

David Walton—The Arts and Crafts Movement

Wednesday 15th June:

Garden Visit (destination not yet confirmed) - **Meet at Swindon Village Hall at 7.00 pm.**

Gotherington and Area Local History Society

Meetings are held in Gotherington Village Hall, starting at 8.00 pm. Visitors are welcome, £2 per meeting.

Tuesday 22nd March :

Andrew Armstrong—Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Gloucestershire

Tuesday 26th April:

Sue Honore—DNA

Tuesday 24th May:

John Dixon—The Neglected history of Boat Building in Tewkesbury

FUND RAISING EVENTS FOR VCH CHELTENHAM VOLUME 15

Two dates for your diaries – please support this very worthwhile venture:

John Chandler – Coffee morning and talk – 19th April

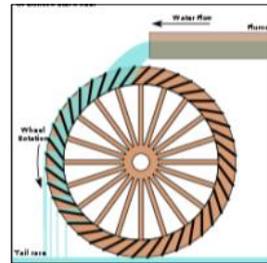
Anne Strathie – Afternoon Tea and Talk – 26th May

Please see enclosed flyer for more details and booking form

REVIEWS

The morning lecture at St Luke's on November 3rd was by **Aylwin Sampson**, who under the rather misleading title **Ramblings of a Blockhead** gave us a lucid, wide-ranging and magnificently illustrated account of his life as an artist and writer over the past seventy years. He explained the title by quoting Samuel Johnson, who had said that no-one but a blockhead wrote except for money. Aylwin thought the same applied to drawing, which however was very rewarding whether it paid well or not. Born in Tonbridge, he had grown up in Bromley and Lincolnshire and studied at Durham University on an RAF scholarship. He had been a member of the university air squadron and after the war worked in air-sea rescue in Northumberland and then in the Air Ministry in London. When he was de-mobbed he took a 4-year printing course in Nottingham. His grandfather was a master printer and he had had a 'John Bull' printing set as a child, but had found his way into real print by drawing pictures for the school magazine. Then he had learned to integrate pictures with text by producing books of his own, such as a guide to Brittany with lithographs and a series of church histories on the Romney Marsh area with illustrations done on scraperboard. Sometimes for these small booklets he did the text in calligraphy, which was cheaper than typesetting. While teaching in Southampton and later in Taunton he thought of small publishing projects to do with local history and persuaded booksellers to take them. These initiatives set the pattern for much of his subsequent career. At Aberystwyth University he did a series of 32-page booklets on Welsh towns, and enjoyed exploring the area to find material. This led to other commissions. When he came to Gloucestershire he was soon involved in producing tourist material for the Holst Museum, Gloucester cathedral and the Three Choirs Festival and found many more opportunities to get involved with local history. A rich avenue for investigation opened up when a lady asked him to collaborate on some illustrated mini-histories of public houses, each pub paying for its own publication. John Drinkwater, features editor of the *Echo*, let him do a series on buildings called 'Seen by Sampson', which ran to 320 issues. A publisher reproduced 90 of these, then another 90, in book form. He collaborated with Steven Blake on a guide to Cheltenham which was to have been part of Harrap's Companion Guide series, but the promoter went bankrupt and they published it themselves, using Aylwin's illustrations, and sold it in aid of the Sue Ryder Home. It raised £11,000. He next devised a book of walks in the Cotswolds, sold through hotels and tourist offices, which proved, as he said 'a good little enterprise', and was followed by many more. One was a series on cathedral closes, which was seen by a publisher at the London Book Fair and led to commissions for books on Somerset, cricket grounds, racecourses and rowing clubs, all involving much enjoyable travel and research. In Cheltenham too he had written books and given talks on places of interest such as The Park and the Queen's Hotel. All along, he said, it had just been a matter of having ideas and seizing opportunities. Perhaps so, but the astonishing range of his achievements left his audience deeply impressed.

On November 17th our speaker was **Ray Wilson**, secretary of the Gloucestershire Association for Industrial Archaeology, who took as his topic **The Mills of the River Chelt**. He said Pigott's Directory for 1830 stated that the Chelt had 'more flour mills in four miles than any other stream its size in the kingdom', yet it is a tiny river. He showed an outline map of it with mills marked at about 12 main sites, six of them within the area of modern Cheltenham. On a map of Dowdeswell he pointed out that the source of the Chelt was a spring in Dowdeswell Wood, while another spring nearby formed a tributary. Over the reservoir, which had not been used for drinking water since World War II, there had once been a railway viaduct, demolished in the 1960s. He traced the course of the Chelt from Charlton Kings, near the site of the Charlton Mill, across Cox's Meadow to Sandford Mill, and via College Road and Bath Road to Rodney Road, where it disappeared underground. Much more of the river is culverted now than in earlier days. It emerged again near Waitrose, crossed Gloucester Road and ran out towards Boddington and eventually to its confluence with the Severn. Turning to types of mill, he commented that mills had been around for thousands of years and some good engineering had gone into them. One of the better designs was the overshot wheel, which could be 69% efficient, whereas undershot wheels were only ever about 20% efficient. The head of water available depended very much on the terrain. Sometimes a leat (an artificial channel) was created to improve the flow, and sometimes a bypass was needed to allow excess pressure to be relieved. He showed a cutaway drawing of a mill, illustrating how the 'feed' put in at the top reached the millstones. These were made of millstone grit, a hard sandstone, the upper one smooth and the lower one 'dressed' with a pattern of lines which had to be re-cut from time to time by an itinerant mill-dresser. The GSIA was interested in studying what remained of the mills on the Chelt, most of which were very old but had ceased to function by 1900. There was nothing to see now at Dowdeswell or Charlton. At Sandford the Chelt still ran into a leat, but the mill had been replaced by houses. Barrett's Mill in the town centre had been converted to steam in its later days and had been a pottery in the 1960s but was now a house. Upper Alstone Mill had disappeared under the Waitrose petrol station; at Lower Alstone the buildings survived but there were proposals to build flats on the site. Arle Mill had been where the Big Yellow storage facility now stands. At Withy Bridge the mill and its works had been restored but the river had been channelled away from it. Boddington still had two mills, one now a workshop and the other a house. There had been a complex system of watercourses there, as also at Norton Mill by the A38, where there was still a building with machinery inside. He admired the people who had built and worked the mills and thought the heritage they had left deserved more study. The audience, asking many interested questions at the end, evidently agreed.



An overshot wheel

to be relieved. He showed a cutaway drawing of a mill, illustrating how the 'feed' put in at the top reached the millstones. These were made of millstone grit, a hard sandstone, the upper one smooth and the lower one 'dressed' with a pattern of lines which had to be re-cut from time to time by an itinerant mill-dresser. The GSIA was interested in studying what remained of the mills on the Chelt, most of which were very old but had ceased to function by 1900. There was nothing to see now at Dowdeswell or Charlton. At Sandford the Chelt still ran into a leat, but the mill had been replaced by houses. Barrett's Mill in the town centre had been converted to steam in its later days and had been a pottery in the 1960s but was now a house. Upper Alstone Mill had disappeared under the Waitrose petrol station; at Lower Alstone the buildings survived but there were proposals to build flats on the site. Arle Mill had been where the Big Yellow storage facility now stands. At Withy Bridge the mill and its works had been restored but the river had been channelled away from it. Boddington still had two mills, one now a workshop and the other a house. There had been a complex system of watercourses there, as also at Norton Mill by the A38, where there was still a building with machinery inside. He admired the people who had built and worked the mills and thought the heritage they had left deserved more study. The audience, asking many interested questions at the end, evidently agreed.

Ian Hollingsbee's talk on December 8th was called **Inside the Wire**, the title of his book published in 2014. He said a visit to Colditz on a battlefield tour had prompted him to wonder what life as a POW was like for lower ranks (as opposed to officers) and for German and Italian prisoners. During the war it had been Churchill's policy to ship many German POWs to the United States and Canada rather than keep them here, but after the war they had been brought back and kept doing useful work until 1948. There had been numerous camps in Gloucestershire. Camp 61 near Coleford, which started as a tented camp, housed 482 Italians, most of whom were sent out to farms for eight hours a day in working parties. An aerial photo of the camp showed a monument built by the Italians, part of which had been salvaged by the descendants of one of them after the camp was abandoned and eventually demolished. As at Coleford, the Italian POWs at Newent camp were later replaced by Germans. In 1946 the Germans there took part in a local church concert and people were encouraged to invite them for Christmas, which many did. The camp at Highnam had been a searchlight station and then accommodation for factory workers bombed out of their own homes, before German POWs were brought in. Camp 37 at Sudeley Castle was built by Italians, who enjoyed more freedom as time went by. He played a recording of the popular wartime ditty 'Mairzy doats and dozy doats'.

In 1944 Austrian POWs arrived at Sudeley, followed later by over 1000 Germans transferred from other camps. The camp closed in January 1948. Ian showed a picture of German POWs with American guards at Moreton-in-Marsh, and a suicide note by one of them, a reluctant SS officer who had hated the Nazis and feared he might be sent to Nuremberg. The camp at Brockworth, occupied by Italians until 1946, is still remembered by local boys (now old men) who used to climb into the camp to visit the prisoners. Camp 157 at Bourton-on-the-Hill had six compounds accommodating different batches of POWs. It had been run by the Americans originally, then by the British. He showed a sketch and some photos of Springhill, camp 185, which had been used as a clearing station after D-Day in 1944 when 2000 prisoners arrived, including Poles from a part of Poland that was then German. After the war it became a resettlement camp for Polish refugees. Northway camp at Ashchurch had been run by the Americans with black and white POWs segregated, to the disapproval of local people. After Italy surrendered to the Allies in 1943 some camps, such as Swindon Village, Churchdown and Hempstead, formed Italian POWs into working companies (known as Coys) organised along the same lines as the British Pioneer Corps. These men, like German POWs who worked, were paid and could take their earnings home when they were repatriated. The Nissen huts at Northwick Park, once a German POW hospital, have become a trading estate. Finally, there was a camp at Leckhampton Court from 1939 to 1946 (well researched by Society member Eric Miller) which had been used after 1945 for a mixed population of Germans, Belgians and others. In response to questions at the end Ian said there were camps all over Britain, but little had survived because no effort had been made to preserve them once they were no longer needed.

Research and Display Evening

The Society's annual social evening, held on 19th January, was well-attended as usual. This year we were not able to use the Sherbourne Room, but both the Council Chamber and the Pittville Room held a number of displays, and others were set up in the lobby area. The main item in the Pittville Room was the display about immigration and the growth of Cheltenham that had been prepared for the Local History Day last October. The themes of the other displays included Cheltenham South Town website development, the project to refurbish the Minster alleyways, the Leckhampton hill riots, immigration and emigration to and from Leckhampton, Cheltenham soldiers who died in World War II, the first policewomen in Gloucestershire and a display by Joyce Cummings telling the story of her grandfather.



Gwyneth Rattle and Chris Lance
selling raffle tickets

David Elder had a stall to promote and sell his books. In the lobby Neela Mann exhibited some of the source material used in her new book *Cheltenham in the Great War* and took orders for copies, while Sally Self showed items and information relating to the Cheltenham VCH project. The VCH editor John Chandler was also present to help publicise the project.

As usual, drinks and snacks were served in the Cambray Room, and a raffle was held in aid of the Mayor's charities, which this year are Maggie's Centre in Cheltenham and Cotswold Riding for the Disabled. It raised £138.

Photos courtesy of Jill Waller

MICROFICHE READERS FOR SALE – surplus to Society's requirements.

Following on from the successful completion of the St Mary's Parish Register project, we are proposing to dispose of two microfiche readers. Price £20 or near offer.

Contact Sally Self 01242 243714 or email journal.clhs@btinternet.com

Paul Barnett's talk on February 16th, entitled **Port to Port: the Gloucester to Sharpness Canal**, was defined as a pictorial journey, and it was indeed built around a remarkable collection of pictures old and new. Paul described how, in the course of researching the canal's history by talking to local people in pubs, he had met a man, one Maurice Freeman, who had about 130 photographic plates taken in August 1955. He had been allowed to use these, and had taken photos of his own to go with them, matching the locations as closely as possible. Begun in the late 18th century, the canal had eventually opened in 1827. There had been a plan to extend it to Berkeley to allow produce from the Berkeley estate to be shipped out, but the geology of the area made that idea unfeasible. A large dock complex with a railway link evolved at Sharpness where larger vessels could come in for repair and cargoes could be transhipped. This large cargo-handling capacity, which included giant steam cranes, had had strategic value in both World Wars. As with nearly all the pictures, the 1955 scenes were much busier than the modern ones. At Sharpness there had been several warehouses and a dock village for workers, but most of this had been demolished, only the north warehouse surviving, together with an Art Deco concrete silo. At one time great quantities of coal from the Forest of Dean had passed through the port; now the main export was scrap metal. A railway bridge had become a road bridge and there was a marina for leisure craft where ships had once docked.



The main dock at Sharpness

Moving northwards up the canal he drew attention to the largest ships' graveyard in the country at Purton, where from 1909 old vessels ('hulks') were grounded to form a tidal erosion barrier reinforcing the strip of land between the canal and the River Severn. He showed examples of bridges designed to open for the passage of larger vessels, a single-span swing bridge and a two-part cantilever bridge that needed two people to operate it. At Frampton part of a factory building survived where chocolate crumb had been made to be taken by barge up to Bournville. Further up was the junction with the now disused Stroudwater Navigation, and beyond that, near Quedgeley, an old timber yard formerly supplying wood to the match factories in Gloucester. Another old photo showed a dry dock, once a free facility for canal users but now privately owned. Just outside Gloucester there had been a warehouse stocked with peanuts, destined to be crushed for oil, and the Gloucester Wagon Works where railway stock was built. Gloucester dock had existed since 1812. He showed its original entrance from the river and some of the many warehouses, long since converted or demolished. It was still a partly a working dock, but as on the canal the picture had changed dramatically since 1955. At the end of this hugely informative and rather nostalgic talk someone asked about the economic value of the canal. Paul said the import trade it carried had made it very profitable until the 1960s, but now it was used almost entirely for leisure. As for the 1955 photos, they were to go to Gloucester Folk Museum.

*FEATURE***Decorative Stones in the Church of St. Gregory, Cheltenham**

The Catholic Parish church of St Gregory the Great, located in St James Square, was designed by Charles Francis Hansom and built between 1854 and 1877 in the Gothic Revival Decorative style. The first phase of building (1854-1862) cost £7,812 but by completion in 1877 the cost had risen to just under £20,000. Additional adornment using polished stone continued until 1975.

The church of St Gregory has twenty two different decorative stones and these embellish the altars, floors, furniture, monuments, screens and walls (see the table opposite); only Christ Church has more. In geological terms, these stones comprise a granite, three serpentines, four marbles and fourteen sedimentary rocks. Four unpolished building stones are also seen in this church, namely, *blue Forest*, *Bath*, *Syreford cream*, and *white Mansfield*.

The palette of polished stone used by Hansom and added to by later architects came from Italy, France, Belgium, Portugal, England, Ireland and Scotland . The most abundant stones are brownish-white *English alabaster*, green *Connemara*, *Belgian red*, red and green *Lizard serpentine* and the white *Carrara* marbles *statuario* and greyish *ordinario* (also called *Sicilian*). Hansom decorated the interior using short colonnettes in contrast to the soaring shafts of granite in the nave of All Saints and of red and green serpentine in the choir and sanctuary of Christ Church.

The table opposite is based partly on data compiled by Joanna Vials (2013) and shows the chronology of installation and the kinds of marble used over a period of 170 years. Such detail is not commonly available for our churches.

Dennis Jackson



Fig.1 High Altar



Fig. 2 Forward Altar

DATES	FURNITURE	DECORATIVE STONES INCLUDE
1857	High altar (Fig. 1)	<i>Connemara , Lizard serpentine, Carrara ordinario, English alabaster, Petitor fossil</i>
1857	Sacristy	<i>Belgian red, Carrara statuario</i>
1857	Lady Chapel	<i>Belgian red, Connemara, Carrara ordinario</i>
1864-71	West door	<i>Peterhead granite</i>
1874-75	Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	<i>Belgian red, Lizard serpentine</i>
1874-75	Statue of St Joseph and child Jesus	<i>Connemara , Lizard serpentine</i>
1877	Statue of the Virgin and child Jesus	<i>Belgian red, Lizard serpentine, English alabaster, Connemara</i>
1877	Church consecrated	
1879	Forward altar (Fig.2) installed in St Paul's Convent (moved to St Gregory in 1975)	
1880s	St Benedict's Chapel (Fig. 3)	<i>Cork red, Belgian red, Lizard serpentine</i>
1880s	Sepulchre (Fig. 4)	<i>Draycott breccia, English alabaster, Belgian red, rouge griotte de Belge</i>
1880s	Holy water stoup	<i>English alabaster, Lizard serpentine</i>
1880s	Statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and tiled floor	<i>Verde d'Aosta, English alabaster, jaune de Var</i>
1894	Statue of St Peter	<i>Carrara ordinario, Cihique noir, white Mansfield</i>
1921	Two screens in chancel	<i>English alabaster, Belgian red</i>
1954	Statue of St Thérèse	<i>Carrara calacata, giallo di Siena</i>
1975	Forward altar	<i>Carrara statuario, Belgian red, gris rose, Spanish broccatello, English alabaster, Lizard serpentine (painted white)</i>
2011	Tabernacle stripped of white paint	<i>Lizard serpentine revealed</i>



Fig.3
St Benedict's
Chapel

Fig.4
Sepulchre



SOCIETY NEWS

New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Elizabeth Bennett	Mr Chris Vidler
John and Tegwen Minett	Mr W E Smith
Jonathan Comber	Alan and Lesley Cottle
David Drinkwater	Alastair Graham

VCH News

The last few months have seen many developments in Cheltenham and the county. The Archive volunteers have now, in total, catalogued 167 boxes, to the benefit of VCH research and the Archives, as each document is listed on the VCH Academy and the Archives database. A second group of volunteers, recruited in October, bringing the total to 22, has joined us and is working at the Library or at home, extracting information from all the extant Cheltenham newspapers from 1809 to 1855.

Alex Craven, contributing editor for Cheltenham, is hard at work writing an outline of the town's history from 1750 to 1852, under the VCH headings of topography and boundaries, local government, political, economic, religious, social and cultural. This will form the first draft, into which further information, as it becomes available, can be added.

A new editor, Francis Boorman, has been appointed for Cirencester, to continue the work started by Beth Hartland and Antonia Catchpole. In South Gloucestershire, the VCH 'short' for Yate has been published and has received a very positive reception. Copies are available from me or from James Hodsdon.

Further enquiries are welcome, and especially any donations or standing orders.

Sally Self



Mick Kippin

Members may have read in the *Echo* in January about the departure of CLHS member and retired soldier Mick Kippin to become a Chelsea Pensioner. He was given a warm send-off by MP Alex Chalk and the then Mayor Councillor Duncan Smith at a function in the mayor's parlour, and received a certificate of appreciation for his

10 years' service as standard bearer for the local Aden Veterans Association. Mick said at the time that he felt a little apprehensive, but was excited at the prospect of living in a community and making new friends. We hope that by now he is well settled and enjoying his new life at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

Cheltenham in the Great War – the Story behind the Book

Sometimes a throw-away comment may lead to a series of events. At a Society committee meeting in October 2013 the theme of the Society's biennial history day was under discussion and someone asked: what did we know about life in Cheltenham between 1914 and 1919? Virtually nothing, was the reply. A team of six members began to research that gap in our knowledge from many sources. In July 2014 a big exhibition was held at St. Matthew's Church to display just a part of what had been discovered. At our invitation, Matilda Richards, Senior Commissioning Editor of The History Press, came to see it and was sufficiently impressed to commission this book with myself as author.

Then the work really started. It was necessary to trawl through almost every local newspaper covering the war period. This mammoth task paid dividends. Letters published in the *Echo* helped to highlight the social issues of the day. Shirkers and soldiers, servants and shopping were common topics. Other recurrent themes were Belgians and bullets. Cheltenham was not slow in helping Belgian refugees, but housing them could cause controversy. 'Bullets' relates to the setting up of



November 1914: roast meats being delivered to the 9th Battalion of the Glosters

the town's first small munitions industry—the precursor of the vast National Filling Factory No. 5 at Quedgeley which later employed nearly 1,000 Cheltenham women. On 10th November 1914 Cheltonians must have gasped at the newspaper headline 'The Invasion of Cheltenham'. It referred to the arrival of 2,700 soldiers to be billeted in 21 empty properties in Lansdown. Cheltenham

hastily prepared for the influx and church committees got together to lay on a soldiers' welcome at the Rotunda. By the end of the war Cheltenham had billeted around 11,000 soldiers. The whole town mobilised to give time and resources to the war effort. Schools were disrupted to make room for VAD hospitals, of which Cheltenham had eight eventually. In the latter part of the war the concerns centred on food shortages, which resulted in meatless meals in restaurants, the removal of sugar bowls from cafés and ultimately rationing. Communal War Kitchens were set up—the first 'take-aways'—under the slogan 'Economy not Charity'.

The book charts Cheltenham's story from the day before war is declared to the day after the Armistice is signed. Full of anecdote and incident, it depicts life on the home front for people at all social levels. Remarkable personalities emerge, and there is plenty of humour. There are also 82 photographs to enhance the stories.

All proceeds from the book go to the Society, which has a limited number of copies on sale at £10 each (shop price £14.99). To reserve a copy send a cheque plus £2.50 for postage and packing to Neela Mann, Orchard House, 338 Old Bath Road, Cheltenham GL53 9AF or ring 01242 238920.

Neela Mann

1716-2016 – TIME FOR A TERCENTENARY!

‘Visited with benefit by the greatest persons of the age’ – this description of the original spa and its waters appears on the famous memorial to Captain Henry Skillicorne, in the nave of St Mary’s Minster. Said to be the longest inscription in the country, it runs to 53 lines and 595 words. It’s fitting to recall the good captain this year, because before too long his portrait will be on public show at The Wilson, having been presented by The Friends of The Wilson, who secured it at auction. And while Skillicorne did not actually discover the waters, it was his vision in laying out the walks and rides linking the spa to the town, and vice versa, that established their wider reputation and made Cheltenham into a fashionable resort.



Henry Skillicorne

As all the books tell us, the special qualities of a spring on Bays Hill were first recognised in 1716. The land was then in the hands of the Mason family, prominent among the town’s Quaker community. The Masons, or their lessees, took steps to rail off the spring, and a charge was being made for the water, but by 1730 it was still very much ‘out in the fields’, and hardly a destination.

Skillicorne, a Manx sea-captain who spent 40 years trading out of Bristol, enters the picture in 1732, when he married Elizabeth Mason, who by then was co-heir to the family lands in Cheltenham. He was about 54, she 20 or 21. The marriage took place on the outskirts of Bristol, the city where he had met her. Elizabeth’s brother had been a merchant there, and her sister had married the brother of Skillicorne’s late first wife (are you still with me?). As the memorial tells us, sadly his first wife had died in childbirth, and equally sadly, the first two children of Henry’s second marriage, born in Bristol, also died young. This particular story of infant mortality has only recently emerged, as more records become accessible, and I argue that it rather alters our view of Skillicorne, who might otherwise come across as a worldly-wise entrepreneur, exploiting an opportunity to use his wife’s estate to turn the emerging spa into a nice little retirement fund.

After 40 successful years at sea, he didn’t lack a fortune – but what he did lack was a family. I suggest that he and Elizabeth moved to Cheltenham not only to look after their estate, but also to get away from the unhealthy city surroundings of Bristol. Of their first three children, all born in Bristol, only one son (William) survived, as did daughter Elizabeth, born in Cheltenham in 1740. I was puzzled by an entry in the St Mary’s register showing the burial of a Henry, son of Henry Skillicorne in 1738, where no suitable baptism appears. The slightly macabre truth is that this little lad was buried twice: he had been born in Bristol in 1735, and buried there in April 1738. 1738 was the year the Skillicornes moved to

Cheltenham. It seems clear that the loss of Henry was a deciding factor, and the detailed inscription on the boy's Cheltenham grave marker (now covered up, but luckily transcribed by a Victorian antiquary) speaks to me of a cherished infant, who simply could not be left behind when the parents started a new life:

Here lieth the body of Henry, the son of Henry & Elizabeth Skillicorne, who departed this life the 17th of April 1738 and was buried here the 9th of August 1738 being two years, nine months and 3 days old.

Skillicorne himself was to be buried in the same spot, just inside the west door of St Mary's, in 1763.

This background adds new depth to another line on his memorial, which otherwise might seem rather conventional: 'he was a kind Husband and tender Father'. There's no evidence that Skillicorne profited significantly from the spa itself, though as a landowner he would have shared in the general rise in prosperity as visitor numbers increased. The historical accounts of the 1730s to 1750s show instead someone who had a public vision, and persistence, and persuaded others to co-operate with him in successfully setting the market town on the path which led to the great Royal Visit of 1788. If you haven't looked recently at the memorial, I do recommend a visit to St Mary's.

But back to 1716: though I've often been heard to say there's more to Cheltenham than the Regency Spa, surely the 300th anniversary of the discovery of the waters (by pigeons or an ailing horse, take your pick) can't be allowed to pass without an event or two? At the time of writing, I hear that in fact various plans are afoot, so let us look forward to some suitable toasting of the occasion – preferably not in spa water!

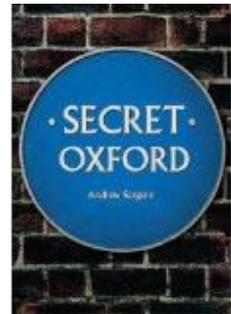
James Hodsdon

NEW PUBLICATION

SECRET OXFORD

By Andrew Sargent

Oxford is identified with its university, and the university has certainly played a huge role in shaping the town. But the history of Oxford is much more than just a footnote to its colleges. The town was already old when the first scholars gathered there, and it has seen many major non-academic milestones, such as the founding of the hugely influential Morris works at Cowley by Lord Nuffield. *Secret Oxford* explores town and gown, the little-known facts as well as the familiar ones, and directs the reader to key locations and visible remains. Each well-illustrated chapter ends with a list of related things that must be seen. There are also a number of self-guided walks to help the reader experience the diverse flavours of the city.



Published January 2016 in paperback by Amberley Publishing, price £13.49

*FEATURE***MINSTERWORTH'S SENIOR CITIZEN?**

About two years ago, I challenged my readers to offer thoughts on the oldest man-made object in my local parish of Minsterworth. This time I am thinking about the oldest living thing in the parish. In my opinion, a leading candidate has to be one of the three impressive yew trees in the churchyard. Typically, the yew tree puts on vigorous growth in the early part of life; it then grows very slowly, at times stops growing altogether, and can then re-awaken and grow still more, often lasting for 1,000 years or more. Also, an old yew dies inside, develops a rotten hollow centre and then puts out secondary shoots from the base which merge with the tree and it keeps on growing. For these reasons, the yew tree has been called the 'Tree of Life', and since ancient times has acquired sacred significance in many different cultures.

I'm no expert when it comes to ageing trees but I know that the only precise and scientific way is to measure the growth rings inside the tree's trunk. In the case of ancient yews, though, an alternative method is usually employed to estimate age. That method is by measuring the girth of the trunk at about chest height from the ground. I say 'estimate', because I discovered that there are numerous formulae for ageing a yew and they produce varying results. One formula is to divide the girth by 1.25; another is to square the girth and then divide by 300cm. One source I found on the Internet provides a graph which confidently equates size of girth to estimated age (e.g. 5m girth = 800 years, 6m = 1150 years).



The oldest yew trees in St Peter's churchyard. The one in the centre is the larger of the two

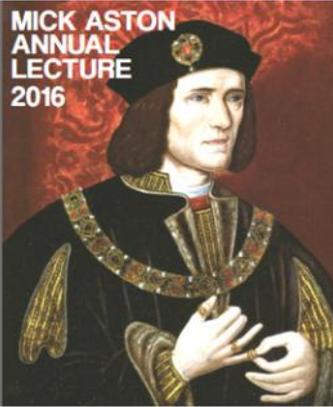
The two oldest yews at Minsterworth's church are at the eastern end of the churchyard. The girth of one is a bit over 6 metres and of the other 5½ metres; the wider one has a large hollowed-out centre. According to which formula you use, the estimated age of these trees could range between 480 and 1,200 years but at least three of the formulae seem to agree on around 800 years.

The place name Minsterworth first appeared in a record of the boundary of Hereford diocese in the year 1030 AD, showing that the place was known ecclesiastically at least by that time. By the early 1200s a chapel-of-ease of Westbury parish was here and, in 1309, a parish church in its own right was established in the village. Based on

age estimates, the larger yew tree could conceivably have been planted around the time of the earliest chapel in Minsterworth. If however we accept the estimate of around 800 years, it is distinctly possible that one or both trees were in place when the parish church itself was first established in the early 1300s.

Terry Moore-Scott

**MICK ASTON
ANNUAL
LECTURE
2016**



Cotswold Archaeology Mick Aston Lecture

*Wednesday March 16th at 7.30 pm
Bingham Hall, King Street, Cirencester*

Dr Richard Buckley (University of Leicester)

‘THE KING UNDER THE CAR PARK’: GREYFRIARS, LEICESTER AND THE SEARCH FOR RICHARD III

Free entry, no need to book

For further information contact Cotswold
Archaeology on 01285 771022

The Deerhurst Lecture 2016



‘The Road to Deerhurst: 1016 in English and Norse Sources’

Dr Matthew Townend

Saturday 24th September 2016 at 7.30 pm in St Mary’s Church, Deerhurst

The Lecture will commemorate the millennium of the peace treaty made at Deerhurst between King Edmund Ironside and King Cnut in 1016.

Admission on the door from 7 pm.

Tickets (to include a glass of wine and cheese) £5.00 Students £3.00



BOOKS FOR SALE



DONATED BOOKS, MANY IN 'AS NEW' CONDITION

The New Club—Neil Parrack (new copies) £8.50

A Grand City: Bristol in 18th and 19th Centuries –Ed M J Crossley Evans, now £6 (2 copies)

History of Cirencester—Beecham , now £23

Miniatures— Dudley Heath (1905) £20

Mee—The King's England series, and Pevsner County series: Various counties and prices, please contact me for details.

BGAS RECORD SERIES (see November 2014 Newsletter for titles).

Various prices between £5 and £20 and 'bundles' as below.

Bigland's Gloucestershire Collections, Vols 2,3,5,8; 4 volumes for £30.

Gloucester Apprenticeship Records, Vol 14, £10, Vol 25, £25, or both for £30

Gloucestershire Feet of Fines, Vol 16, £5, Vol 20, £5, Vol 27, £30 or all for £35

Berkeley Muniments, Vol 17, £5, Vol 18, £20, or both for £22

OTHER TITLES

Back again Mr Begbie—Revd Begbie, OBE (ex Cheltenham College Day Boy) - £20 (new condition)

Don't forget to check out the Society's book table on lecture evenings, where many other books are on sale. You can always make me a reasonable offer on book table books. Thank you to everyone who has brought books to me that they no longer need, and to Elaine North for kindly pricing them up for me so that we can obtain their realistic value in today's market. It is surprising how much we can raise for CLHS in this way. If you are interested in any of the above books, or wish to donate books to CLHS, please contact me either on 01242 232740 (ex directory) or at heatherbell71@hotmail.com . Many thanks.

Look out for some interesting new titles coming shortly, due to some generous donations.

Heather Atkinson

*FEATURE***JANE COOK**
An Extraordinary Cheltenham Lady

(The author wishes to acknowledge that much of his narrative, of which this is the 4th and final instalment, is based on an article written in 2001 by Alan Munden.)

During her lifetime Jane gave away much of her fortune, and on her death a further £20,000 (about one and a half million pounds in today's money) to Christian missionary enterprises. Her will gives an indication of the efforts which she supported in addition to the conversion of Jews. Her bequests emphasised the importance of the bible. She left £2,000 to the Trinitarian Bible Society. The Church Anglican Missionary Society received £5,000 which was spent on the erection of the Missionaries' Children's Home in Highbury Grove, Islington in London. This institution opened in 1853 and provided a home for the children of serving missionaries working in unhealthy tropical countries. The British and Foreign Bible Society received £5,000. The Edinburgh Bible Society for the distribution of Gaelic bibles and testaments in the highlands and islands of Scotland got £1,000. The Irish Society of London, for the distribution of bibles, testaments and common prayer books in the Irish language and character amongst the Irish speaking population of Ireland, received £1,000. Allowing for inflation these are very big sums if we recall that in the mid-1800s the cost of building an elegant church in Cheltenham was under £5,000.

Jane was deeply concerned with the provision of evangelical Protestant education in England and abroad. She was an enthusiastic education supporter in parts of the Mediterranean region and in her will she made an award of £1,000 to the Malta Protestant College. It had been intended that this College would become a 'centre and rallying point for Evangelical work of all kinds in the Mediterranean'. The aim of the institution was to 'spread the light of revealed religion, with the blessings of moral and intellectual civilization' amongst the 100 million inhabitants of the Middle East. The College occupied a 20-acre site at St Julian's Bay near Valetta. It was planned to have 220 adults training as missionaries, scripture readers and schoolmasters together with a school for 120 pupils. The College opened in 1846, but in 1857 it was reported that since then only 198 students had been recruited. The numbers never reached more than 80 and eventually fell to a mere 14. The College was forced to close in 1865, and the chairman of the committee reported 'the Malta College must, on the whole, be regarded as a complete failure ... and we must close it in debt'.

Meanwhile, at home in Cheltenham, 1847 saw the opening of a 'scriptural, evangelical and protestant' college with the financial support of Jane Cook and the driving force of Francis Close behind it. Over the next century and a half this



Francis Close Hall was built as a teacher training college on land donated by Jane Cook in 1848.

teacher training college grew and absorbed other institutions to become the present-day University of Gloucestershire. Despite its foundation there remains little today of the religious origins of the institution. In 1848 Jane gave six acres of land valued at £2,600 in Swindon Road for the erection of the Church of England Teacher Training Schools. She gave a further £500 after building work had started. At this time there was no state-supported education and most school teachers were educated at Oxford and Cambridge, so the establishment of teacher training colleges for less well-off pupils who would work in ordinary schools was very important in the development of English school education. Jane's gift is recorded in a small marble plaque in the lobby of Francis Close Hall which reads: 'Early in 1848 Miss Jane Cook a spinster of Cheltenham gave the association six acres of land valued at £2500 and £500 towards the building.'

In the same year of 1848 Jane provided a site in St Margaret's Road opposite the Brewery, for the erection of a Boys' Orphan Asylum. The foundation stone was laid in 1865 by Edward Walker, the Rector of Cheltenham. It cost £1,630 and a further £32 for fitting out. It remained in use as an orphanage until 1956 when it became a retirement home known as Dowty House.

Jane's will was witnessed by her solicitors John Bubb and Benjamin Bubb and is dated 5th June 1850. Her heir at law in whom the real estates were devolved was the Reverend Richard Bonner Maurice Bonner, a highly-respected clergyman who lived near Oswestry. For four years after her death her next of kin were involved in a lengthy and unseemly legal process to obtain some of her fortune. The family felt it was wrong that so much of her wealth had been given away to Christian causes. Lengthy proceedings 'Edwards v Hall', took place in the Court of Chancery, but in December 1855 the case was dismissed. The delay meant that the beneficiaries of her will had to wait a long while before receiving their dues. The particular matter raised by the family was that Jane had left an

unspecified amount of money for the endowment of churches or chapels in areas where the gospel might be preached to poor people. She specified that these churches should be under the patronage of Charles Simeon's or similar evangelical trusts. Since Simeon's trustees were the patrons of Cheltenham parish church, and Francis Close, the incumbent, was responsible for other churches in the town, the three poorest churches became the recipients of her bequest. The executors gave £2,000 each to St Paul's, St Peter's and St Luke's. The investments provided a modest income towards the stipend of the incumbents.

In addition to her gifts to missionary endeavours and the Walker family, Jane made a number of other bequests to individuals in her will. Legacies were made to three men involved in the ministry to the Jews. Firstly to Samuel Gobat, the first principal of Malta College and later Bishop of Jerusalem, secondly to John Nicolayson the first minister of Christ Church, Jerusalem and thirdly to John Christian Reichardt who since 1831 had been the superintendent of the Bethnal Green Operative Jewish Converts Institution. Each man received £200 for his personal use as tokens of her esteem and regard. A crossed-out and witnessed statement in her will gave 'to Miss Catherine Isles Axford now residing with me the sum of six hundred pounds'. I wonder who she was and why she was removed from Jane's will?

The will also stated that each of her executors should receive £300 'as some recompense for the trouble they will have in the execution of the trusts of this my will'. These executors were John Hall, rector of Saint Werburgh's in Bristol, John Browne, minister of Holy Trinity Church, Cheltenham and Edward Frampton, a manager of the County of Gloucester Bank in Cheltenham. She specifically willed and directed 'that all the said transfers shall be made and legacies paid within three calendar months from the time of my decease and as to the legacies of sterling money free of legacy duty.' This clearly did not happen due to the contesting of her will.

Jane's will requested that the residue of her personal estate should be used for the 'endowment of District Churches or Chapels in populous Parishes in order that the poor may have the gospel preached to them in this country'. The establishment of free churches such as St Saviour's in Tetbury in 1848, where poorer parishioners did not have to pay for their pews, was a concept favoured by both Jane and Francis Close.

Jane Cook is a little known and enigmatic character in the history of Cheltenham. Withdrawn, yet shrewd and determined, despite her generosity she was always financially cautious. She kept firmly to the shadows during her life yet wished to be remembered after her death. Her strong religious and social beliefs, particularly in helping the poor and converting Jews to Christianity, shaped her remarkable charitable efforts.

Mike Bell

CONTENTS

AGM; Summer Visits	2-3	Features	12-13, 16-17, 18-19, 21-23
Lecture Programme 2016-7	4	Society News	14-15
For Your Diary	5-6, 19	New Publication	17
Reviews	7-11	Books for Sale	20
Microfiche readers for sale	10	Can You Help?	24

CAN YOU HELP?

Photograph of Brook Cottage

An enquirer is anxious to track down a long-lost photograph of the Tudor Cottage, sometimes known as Brook Cottage, that once stood near the gas works (where the big Tesco store now is). Between April and June 1929 it was dismantled and moved on a low loader to Rossley Manor, near the Andoversford reservoir. Several people remember seeing a photo of the moving operation but so far no-one can trace it.

Thomas Adams and the James family

An Australian soldier called Thomas Alexander Adams is believed to have convalesced in a hospital in Cheltenham after surviving a gas attack in World War I. His family would be grateful for any information about him. They would also like to make contact with any descendants of the James family who then lived at 'Charnwood', Queen's Road, Cheltenham.

If you can help with either of these queries please contact Joyce Cummings on 01242 527299 or e-mail joyce@cyberwebspace.net

NEXT ISSUE

Please forward articles for inclusion in the July 2016 issue by

Monday 6th June 2016

to the Editor : Kath Boothman, 3 Taylor's End, Cheltenham GL50 2QA

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