VCH Gloucestershire
Academy News

Issue 2 January 2015

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the second newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust. Thank you to all of you who sent in encouraging comments having read our first attempt. It is clear that we will have sufficient contributions in the future to enable us to publish twice yearly to keep you informed of our progress. In this issue you will again find reports on our volumes' progress, plus items of interest from our researchers. Since July our most important event was the lecture, preceded by a reception, at the Cheltenham Literature Festival given by David Vaisey, former librarian of Oxford's Bodleian library. We are extremely grateful to the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire for sponsoring the events and to David Vaisey for allowing the Trust to publish his lecture, which did so much to raise the profile of the Trust in the county. This newsletter contains an edited version of the lecture; the full text can be found on our website. We are also particularly grateful to Professor Christopher Dyer, one of our patrons, for his profile of Professor Richard Hoyle, the recently appointed national director of the VCH.

My thanks again go to all our contributors and to John Chandler, our county editor, for the production, and to Jonathan Comber, the Trust's treasurer, who has collated the various contributions for me. We hope you enjoy reading what follows. If you have any comments or further ideas please let me know: dhaldred@btinternet.com.

David Aldred
Editor

David Vaisey CBE

Welcome from the Trust

Elsewhere in this issue you will read about Richard Hoyle, the VCH's new Director. From just one meeting with him in November, I can report that he is very engaging person, keen to become acquainted with all parts of his new realm, and willing to roll up his sleeves and 'do history'. We are hoping to fix a date before long for him to come and see the lie of the VCH land here in Gloucestershire. He is no stranger to the area – earlier in his career, while based in Bristol, he edited the 1522 Military Survey of Gloucestershire, which remains a great source for local historians.

From the Trust's perspective, the second half of 2014 has been an interesting combination of 'delivery' – Yate pretty well sewn up, first sections of drafts emerging for Cheltenham and Cirencester, and a draft Introduction for Volume 13 now shaping up – and of preparing for the next stages. Starting in the south, this has meant securing grants (most notably and generously from the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, once again) for the parishes next to Yate, and writing further applications in support of this.

A biannual newsletter for everyone involved in, or interested in, the progress of the Victoria County History towards its completion in Gloucestershire. The VCH Gloucestershire Academy is the name given to the editors and volunteers who work together researching and writing under the aegis of the Gloucestershire County History Trust. The Trust and the Academy are based at Gloucestershire Archives, Clarence Row, Alvin Street, Gloucester GL1 3DW

Although inevitably there's a wait to hear how we have got on with these, we have enough in the bank to be confident about making a start on the Sodbury parishes very early in 2015. Once this has happened, the focus will come round again to Cheltenham and Cirencester, and deciding how to tackle the follow-on from what Beth Hartland, Antonia Catchpole and Alex Craven have done so far.

In April 2015, it will be five years since the Trust was set up. When one takes a step back to consider, a terrific amount has been achieved in that time, not least the creation and engagement of a really strong corps of Academy volunteers. I'm sure many will agree that 2014 has zipped by in a flash, and I rather think the New Year will be just as busy and productive – and I hope enjoyable.

James Hodsdon
Chairman, GCHT

Latest on the Volumes

Volume XIII (Vale of Gloucester, as we are now calling it)

I spent the summer completing the account of Norton parish (Bishop's Norton and Prior's Norton between Gloucester and Tewkesbury), and reading the sources for Twyning (north of Tewkesbury), which are scattered in Worcester, Birmingham and Bristol archives as well as Gloucester. I had figured out much of the manors and estates section when I succumbed to an eye problem, so by agreement I diverted my temporarily limited vision onto writing the volume introduction, largely at home. With the co-operation of John Juřica and Simon Draper, the previous editors, I have just now submitted the text and maps of the whole volume (apart from Twyning) to central office for review, and can resume my work on that interesting but complicated parish. If all goes to plan we should be bringing the volume through all the stages to publication during 2015 so that it can appear towards the year's end.

Volume XIV (Yate and the Sodburys)

Rose Wallis completed her draft of Yate, which I have copy-edited for stand-alone publication in paperback as a VCH 'short'. We have received back comments on our work from the external reviewer and from our VCH director Richard Hoyle, and are amending the text accordingly. We are aiming for publication around April this year. The work on Yate will also form a significant portion of the proposed red book volume XIV, and plans are afoot to begin work in the new year on Yate's neighbours, the three adjacent (and historically linked) Sodbury parishes – Chipping, Little and Old.

Volume XV (Cheltenham and district)

Beth Hartland has submitted first drafts of her accounts of the medieval manor of Cheltenham and of the rectory manor. Alex Craven has been working closely with Sally Self and our very industrious academy volunteers on Cheltenham's later history: see his separate report below.

Volume XVI (Cirencester area)

Beth has written preliminary accounts of the smaller medieval manors and estates and is pulling together her work on the main Cirencester manor. Antonia Catchpole, Linda Viner and volunteers are continuing to research various topics connected with the town's later history. An important milestone has been reached by Jonathan Comber, who has now read right through and made notes from the town's local authority minute books up to 1974 when the sequence ends.

In other news

We have now completed a whole year of monthly academy days held in the Frith Centre at Gloucestershire Archives. With an average attendance of around twenty we have discussed and reported on our progress and held workshops exploring numerous local history topics in a relaxed and enthusiastic way. Particularly valuable have been the sessions run by Jan Broadway, as she explained, developed and refined our academy website and its note-taking database. We plan to continue meeting through 2015 on the third Thursday of each month.

Two other social highlights have been the tea party hosted in July by Sally and Russ Self at their home, with talk by Steve Blake; and David Vaisey's lecture (included in abridged form in this newsletter) in support of the VCH at October's Cheltenham Literature Festival – both were

stimulating, enjoyable occasions, and excellent profile-raisers.

My thanks, as always, to our wonderful band of volunteers, to our editors, and for the invaluable support that we receive from Gloucestershire Archives and VCH central office.

John Chandler
County Editor

Gloucestershire History: a View from The Bodleian Library

Abridgement of David Vaisey's lecture at Cheltenham Literature Festival, 8 October 2014

John Chandler and I are here today not selling or signing a book: we are here as part of a project – a project to complete for our county, the county of Gloucestershire, the published history of every place within its boundaries; the Victoria County History of Gloucestershire. What qualifies me, the former Director of the Bodleian Library at Oxford to talk about Gloucestershire? Well, it is because I am, bred in the bone, a Gloucestershire man. I was born in Tetbury, the latest in 1935 in a long line of agricultural labourers who had come up from Somerset in the eighteenth century.

I joined the Bodleian Library in 1963 as the most junior archivist in its Department of Western Manuscripts and slowly, over the years, rose to become the Library's Director in 1986. My entire working life has been spent largely within that one institution dedicated to rescuing and then preserving in perpetuity, paper- and parchment-based materials, to enable persons interested in such matters to interpret the activities of those who have gone before us and who have created the world in which we live.

But now, why should there be a particular view from the Bodleian Library in Oxford, of Gloucestershire's history? Apart, that is, from the fact that three of its County Archivists in the last half century (Brian Smith, David Smith and Nick Kingsley) were trained there. Bodley placed his library *in* Oxford University but was careful to state that it was not just *for* Oxford but for what he called 'the republic of letters' i.e. the literate public; and from its earliest days, it has attracted research materials and consequently researchers, from all over these islands and, indeed, the world. Some of these materials originating in Gloucestershire now have a curious ring.

My predecessor as Bodley's Librarian in the late eighteenth century was Thomas Hyde who was also Archdeacon of Gloucester. He was renowned for pursuing scholarship in original ways and often down a series of blind alleys – one of which for example was to seek out the origins of the severed hand of a mermaid – or rather a merman, which had been exhibited at the Library. The so-called hand was over five feet in length and it was said to have come from a creature killed off the coast of Denmark. Hyde, the Archdeacon and Librarian, pursued ships' captains and surgeons by letters (which still exist) to places as far away as Virginia in an effort to get a detailed description of the creature which was said to have been capable of capsizing ships with these great hands. So far as we know he never found a witness.

The library had little success in the nineteenth century in its dealings with Sir Thomas Phillipps, the wealthy, vain and irascible baronet who amassed in Thirlestaine House here in Cheltenham and at Middle Hill, near Broadway, the largest collection of books and manuscripts ever assembled by a private person in one place. As early as 1827 he had approached the Bodleian with an offer to sell his collection for £20,000, but by the next year, the price had risen to £30,000 and the offer had so many conditions attached that it was refused. The ultimate break-up of the collection and its dispersal over the century following Phillipps's death in 1872 made fortunes for many in the book trade. Fortunately the Gloucestershire Record Office was able to acquire much of the archival material from this county by purchase in 1982. Meanwhile, the Robinson brothers, booksellers, who had bought the collection in 1946, gave the Bodleian Library nearly 2000 boxes or volumes of Phillipps's antiquarian and topographical papers which they deemed of no commercial value. Some 70 of these relate to Gloucestershire and

include many papers of those antiquaries who had worked on the county's history, including Ralph Bigland, John Jones, The Rev. Thomas Fosbroke and others.
Of course, over the centuries, significant historical finds, made in Gloucestershire, but with no particular relevance to the county, now rest in the Bodleian. The 17th-century papers which, back in 1963, I was summoned from the county archives of Staffordshire to the Bodleian to catalogue, are those of Charles I's attorney-general in the 1630s – in the period leading up to the Civil War: Sir John Bankes. Thought to have been lost for two centuries after his death they had been discovered in 1949 in Lord Bledisloe's estate office at Lydney Park by Irvine Gray the Gloucestershire County Archivist and, having been placed for safety in the Bodleian, were subsequently sold to the Library.

I will end with a Gloucestershire man who is one of my favourite donors to the Bodleian. This is George Ballard from Chipping Campden who died in 1755 at the age of 49. George's father had died when he was an infant and he was brought up by his mother, a midwife. He was a sickly child and, incapable of heavy work, was apprenticed to a maker of female clothing and became a staymaker. Early in life he developed an interest in books and coins, and in the evenings taught himself Anglo-Saxon and then Latin, achieving local notoriety as an antiquary and building up a wide circle of correspondents who were similarly minded. In 1750, at the age of 44, he enrolled at Magdalen College, Oxford, funded by Lord Chedworth and the members of his hunt at Chipping Campden. This was a kind of sports scholarship in reverse. The hunt offered an annuity of £100 but Ballard, unaccustomed to such largesse, said he needed only £60 (can you imagine that happening nowadays?). Maybe because of the nature of his trade, most of Ballard's friends seem to have been women – especially learned ladies – and in 1752 he published *Memoirs of several ladies of Great Britain who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the learned languages, arts and sciences*. Of the book's 400 subscribers, 143 were women. He never married and died in 1755, according to one authority, from a 'too intense application to his studies'. Others said that kidney stones had led to his death, while the Bodleian's catalogue of the papers that he bequeathed to it is more direct. 'He died', it states baldly, 'from the effects of a too sedentary life'. The papers he bequeathed include much of his correspondence and that of others and have provided a mine of information on 18th-century scholarship and antiquarianism in the centuries since.

I have just touched on a few of the people, the books and the papers that have found their way into the second largest library in this country, and that have to do with the history of this county. There is a tide running which the Victoria County History group seeks to ride as it moves into the Cirencester and Cheltenham areas. But rest assured that the contents of the Bodleian will be available to forward the cause.

David Vaisey CBE

Professor Richard Hoyle: From Giggleswick to Bloomsbury

The role of the Director and General Editor of the Victoria County History is to be head of the office in the Institute of Historical Research in London which oversees the national operation, edits the publications, and helps the counties to achieve their goals. In recent times the post has been held in succession by Christopher Elrington, Chris Currie, Anthony Fletcher and John Beckett. Since John Beckett's completion of his term of office and return to the University of Nottingham, Elizabeth Williamson ably held the fort, but now she has retired and the London office is chronically understaffed.

The University of London advertised for a new appointment and the successful candidate was Richard Hoyle, who started work in October 2014. He was appointed to a chair in Local and Regional History in London University as well as filling the post of Director of the VCH. He is very well qualified for these roles because he has been active in local history since his teens. He was brought up in Yorkshire and identifies with that county. A Yorkshire upbringing ensures that he speaks directly and even bluntly, and knows

Richard Hoyle

his own mind. He pursues academic objectives with the same determination and persistence that we associate with Yorkshire cricketers.

He was involved in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society while still at school, at Giggleswick, and then did a history degree at the University of Birmingham. There such a formidable scholar as Rodney Hilton encouraged his interest in agrarian history and he benefited from Eric Ives's expertise in the law of the early modern period. His particular enthusiasm, developed before he arrived in Birmingham, was in systems of land tenure, such as copyhold, and the institution of 'tenant right', found in the north of England and only understood by historians born north of the Trent. His work on aspects of land tenure (along with many other subjects) has continued since those early days. Hoyle went on to Oxford, where he became Joan Thirsk's last research student. After a research fellowship at Oxford, he spent two years at Bristol, and was then professor at the University of Central Lancashire (in Preston) and at Reading.

Richard Hoyle made an important contribution to Gloucestershire history in his early years as a researcher when he edited the county's military survey of 1522, which has since been complemented by M. Faraday's edition of the taxes of 1524 and 1525. This gives Gloucestershire historians access to a wide range of information about people and wealth in the early sixteenth century. The publication of the military survey gave a boost to the fledgling record series set up by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. In addition he has used Gloucestershire examples in compiling his great survey of copyhold tenure which we hope to see published in the near future.

He has also written many articles and books, including a study of the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536. He has edited a number of books of essays, which include contributions by himself, on such diverse subjects as the Crown lands, blood sports, farmers and the Forest of Bernwood. His many international contacts have led to him into editing one of the four volumes of a new Agricultural History of north-western Europe organised by the University of Ghent.

For many years Richard Hoyle has been the editor of the *Agricultural History Review*, which has become more international while at the same time satisfying the demand in this country from academics and from more general readers for authoritative but readable articles about all aspects of the British countryside. The conferences that he organises attract both seasoned professionals and newcomers, and they are conducted in a friendly atmosphere under his genial chairmanship. His most remarkable achievement has been to coordinate the formation of a new European society devoted to rural history, of which he is the first president.

Readers will see that Richard Hoyle is a good organiser who gets things done and breaks new ground. He also appreciates the value of well-established institutions which deliver useful results, yet can be modified and have new life breathed into them. We look forward to him applying his energy, talent and enthusiasm to the VCH.

Chris Dyer
Leicester

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Early Modern Cheltenham

Since the last newsletter, much of the work towards writing the early modern history of Cheltenham has focussed on the court books of Cheltenham manor. The manor of Cheltenham, a remnant of the feudal age which governed land-holding and land-use within its jurisdiction, covered the parishes of Cheltenham, Charlton Kings, Leckhampton and Swindon. Its regular courts were primarily concerned with recording the inheritance, leasing or sale of land, as well as adjudicating disputes over property, allegations of trespass, and debt. Through studying these transactions one not only builds up a picture of the patchwork nature of land ownership within the manor, but one can also catch glimpses of buildings and structures that are otherwise long gone, such as the Crown and Plough inns, the upper and lower market crosses, the market house, and the court house, helping us to piece together the shape of early modern Cheltenham. Over the period, we can see the subdivision of property within the town, as the large houses and garden plots of the medieval period were turned into the shops, workhouses and tenements of a modern town.

The Plough in 1826 (on the site of the Regent Arcade)

The court was also concerned with the regulation of property held in common for the whole community, especially the commons but also the waterways and lanes that traversed the countryside, with punishment of individuals who polluted the rivers with the filth of their farms or workshops. Every six months the view of frankpledge was taken, another medieval institution by which the inhabitants of each tithing, or distinct settlement within the manor, were held collectively responsible for the behaviour of their neighbours, through the presentment of offenders to the court for punishment. Whilst justices of the peace and assize judges dealt with criminals, and the ecclesiastical courts dealt with heresy, fornication and defamation, the manorial court dealt with those individuals who disrupted the good order of the community. These included brawlers, common tipplers, who sold ale without licence and often in illegal measure, those who maintained illegal gambling houses, and wives who publicly scolded their husbands.

Sometimes the desire to maintain the authority of the court, suppress disorderly conduct and protect the community were combined in a single incident, such as the occasion in January 1611 when a group tried to put on a play in the town. A man called Dobbins 'in very disorderly and rude manner' marched up and down the High Street on market day beating a drum and announcing a play to be put on that evening at the Crown. Fearing that plague, which had already broken out in Tredington and Prestbury, might also be in Cheltenham, the bailiff of the town ordered the men to desist, and also ordered the publican at the Crown not to put on the play. The group, young men of lowly status, were understandably unhappy, and left 'in a murmering manner', only to try to stage the play in a different house later that evening. When the bailiff sent his deputy to order them to stop, he and the bailiff were 'much insulted and reviled against… with many railing and opprobrious terms saying they respected neither of them', although they fled the scene before the bailiff himself arrived. It was this 'contempt of all authority and good government', especially by youths who were merely lowly 'artificers and labourers', which concerned the town authorities, more even than the threat of the spread of plague, and is reflected in the heavy fine of twenty shillings for the ring-leader. This seems to have been an unsettled time in Cheltenham's history. Two months later, a large fight broke out in the market place, apparently by unknown travellers. When the bailiff tried to put one of the combatants in the stocks, one of the townsmen refused his order for assistance, encouraged, 'with unlawful words publicly and openly [spoken]',

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to resist by another townsman. Another man, a pedlar from Tewkesbury, was successfully arrested, but was able to break out of the town gaol and flee.

These sources provide a wealth of material about the history of early modern Cheltenham, but of course there are also gaps. Some property within Cheltenham manor was held as manors in their own right, held from the lord of Cheltenham manor as feudal overlord but otherwise distinct and autonomous. Some of these sub-manors – the Norwood's manor of Leckhampton and the Greville's manor of Charlton Kings – are real manors, with their own courts, officers and records. Other, smaller sub-manors were really little more than large freehold properties, given the name of a manor but really lacking in the institutions of a real manor. One must use other methods to trace the history of these estates. The history of one of these, Power's Court, a small freehold estate with land in Cheltenham and Charlton Kings, can be traced through study of the surviving deeds. These reveal the ownership of the property – from the Packer family in the 16th century to the widow Mary Stokes in the 18th century, to the Hughes family in the early 19th century. The deeds also reveal the transformation of Cheltenham over the course of the 18th century. Mary Stokes had converted part of her grand mansion house in the east end of the High Street into a ball room house. By the early 19th century new owners, the Hughes family, had expanded the Ball Room House, now called the Lower Assembly Rooms, behind which they built a grand new house called Rodney Lodge. Powers Court House had been divided into three shops, respectively held by jewellers, a dressmaker, and a lace maker, indicative of the genteel clientele now frequenting the Assembly Rooms next door.

These deeds are vital for our understanding of the history of Cheltenham, but several important collections of deeds held by the Gloucestershire Archives remain uncatalogued. Most important for the history of Cheltenham is a large collection (D2025) of material deposited by the Ticehurst, Wyatt and Co. firm of solicitors. Roland Ticehurst also acted as steward of Cheltenham manor, and the collection includes much material relating to the Agg-Gardner family, who were lords of the manor in the later 19th century. Other collections include documents belonging

Assembly Rooms in 1813 (on the site of Lloyd's bank)

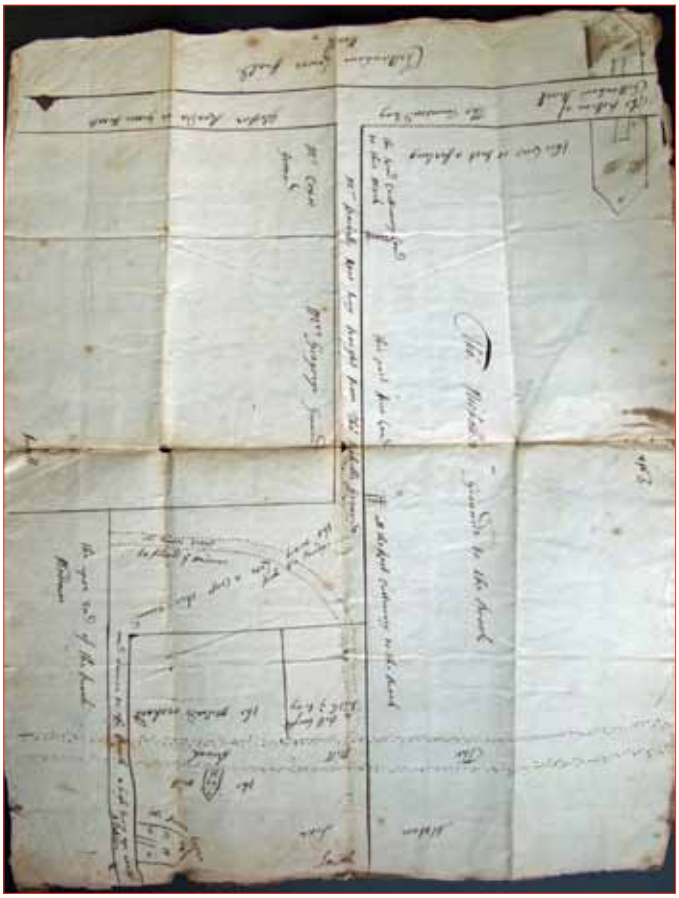
to the Prinn family, and material deposited by Jesus College, Oxford, who owned a large farm in Alstone. A group of our dedicated volunteers are now undertaking the cataloguing of these collections, making them available not only for use by the VCH but also for anyone else interested in researching Gloucestershire's history. This will, however, be a long task, as the Ticehurst collection contains almost 250 large boxes of papers, almost half of which have no description at all, and the remainder only a short note of their contents. Nevertheless, by starting this work now, it is hoped it will make much of this material available ready for when we begin writing the later history of the town.

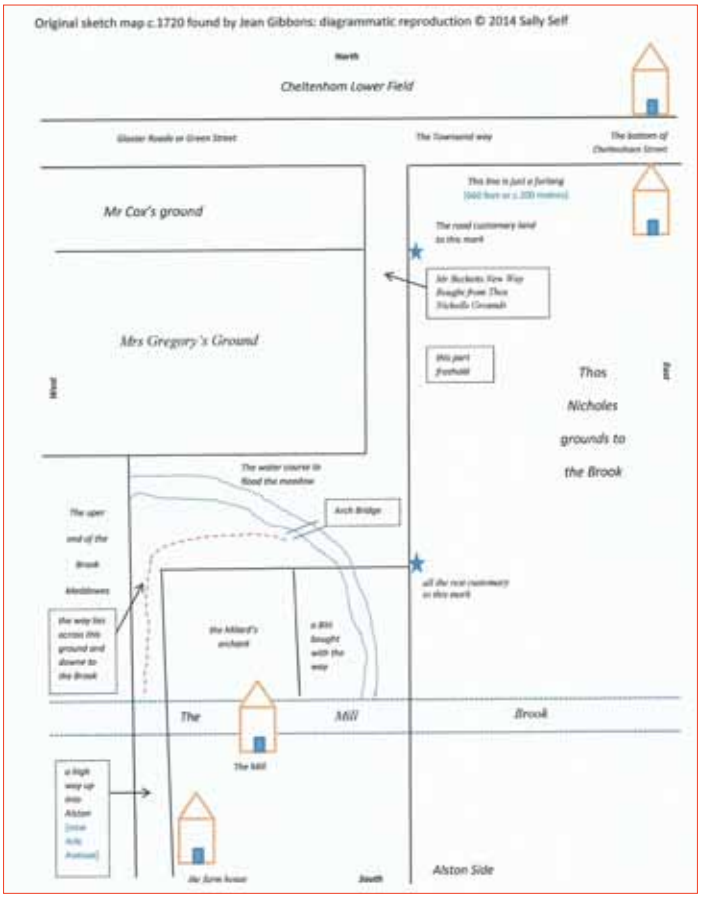
Alex Craven

From the Archives
Beginner's Luck?

Recently, the Cheltenham volunteers have been joined by a new member, Jean Gibbons. At her first session she began work on a box that forms part of the Jesus College, Oxford [D8285] uncatalogued deposit at the Gloucestershire Archives. There was great excitement when the very first document she unfolded was what, at present, seems to be the very earliest sketch map of an area of Cheltenham – beginner's luck indeed.

The map shows an area which locally is often referred to as the 'Gas Works corner, you know, where the





GA reference: D8252/Box 3/Bundle 1 Jesus College Oxford. Original sketch map c.1720 found by Jean Gibbons: diagrammatic reproduction © 2014 Sally Self.

big Tesco's is.' More accurately it is the area in the westerly quadrant of the intersection of the Lower High Street, with the Gloucester Road, Townsend Street and Tewkesbury Road; though two of those roads did not exist around 1720 (Townsend Street and Gloucester Road.) Some indication of scale is included: *'This line is just a furlong'* and from knowledge of the area it would appear to be reasonably accurate, given that the position of the river Chelt in relationship to the Lower High and Tewkesbury Road is unlikely to have changed appreciably.

The map shows four buildings: two of which, those *'at the bottom of Cheltenham Street'* appear to represent the end of the built-up area of The Street, rather than specific buildings. The other two show buildings that have existed up until recent times – *'The Mill'* and *'the farm house'* photographs of them taken around the turn of the century appearing in several local books. This map has also clarified that *'Green Street'* is synonymous with what is now referred to as the Tewkesbury Road; its exact position being open to conjecture.

Most of the lines on the map are severely straightened, and indeed *The Mill Brook* (the Chelt) is shown as ram rod straight which on this stretch is inaccurate. Another point of interest is the reference to *'the water course to flood the meadow'* and a previously unknown bridge, *'arch bridge'* both of which could well be seasonal – the flooding of the meadow would, most likely, be undertaken in the first part of the year, either to provide an early flush of grazing for animals in February to April, or to encourage a good hay crop in mid-summer.

For anyone with local maps the comparison with later ones is illuminating. At first glance it appeared that *'Mr Beckett's New Way'* would become the Gloucester Road from the Gas Works corner to the railway station, but on closer inspection of the present map and the distances, it appears more likely to be, what is now, with some modification, Lower Mill Lane leading into Arle Avenue. Not surprisingly the area around the Mill and Six Chimneys Farm has been the subject of many developments in the last three hundred years but is still an area which is well worth exploring.

Jean Gibbons, Mike Rigby and Sally Self

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The Musicians of Twyning

Having lived close to the Dorset border for more than twenty years, one is inclined to take an interest in the works of Thomas Hardy. For me the 'Mellstock Quire' going their Christmas rounds is a memorable image, and even better is the same cast of characters who appear in a short story, leading the singing in church, then falling asleep during the sermon, and waking up to find themselves playing a dance-tune instead of the final hymn, being thrown out of church for ever by the squire, and replaced by a barrel organ. It is funny and poignant, with scarcely any of the accustomed Hardyesque melancholy.

So it was a pleasure to find references in a book of Twyning churchwardens' accounts which hint at similar activities of the local musicians. The first entry, in October 1785, is a payment of 3*s*. for three bassoon reeds, and similar small amounts were paid for reeds almost every year until 1821. Occasionally we are told the names of the suppliers, Maurice Tayler and Samuel Nash in 1812, E Tayler in 1821. According to Hardy, such consumables were supplied by itinerant pedlars, and I have not tracked down these names in local sources. In 1797 and 1798 the instrument is described as the 'Church Bassoon' and by 1809 it was in serious trouble, as 'Pd Mr Lloyd a bill for repairing bassoon £2 18*s*. 6*d*.' It still was not quite right, as in 1814 a further 1*s*. 6*d*. was laid out for mending the crook of the bassoon.

There was also an oboe, and this too needed a supply of reeds. The 'hautboy' is mentioned in 1786, and the two instruments together are described by 1799 as the 'church musick'. Like the bassoon the oboe must have been in crisis by 1809, as the following year the churchwardens forked out a guinea for 'a new hautboy', and (wearied perhaps by the noise the old one made) purchased its operator an instruction book from Mr Lloyd. It was still in use in 1821, the last occasion that reeds were purchased. The supplier, 'Mr Lloyd', could have been Omwell Lloyd (d. 1811), a Tewkesbury mercer who had held most important local offices in the town; although repairing a bassoon was perhaps not something even this most capable gentleman undertook personally.

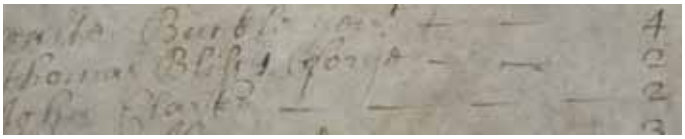
Around this time several developments occurred. In 1818 £2 10*s*. was laid out for psalm books purchased of Mr Bennett (doubtless James Bennett, the Tewkesbury printer, bookseller and historian). And in December 1819 the singers were paid £2 15*s*. 'in lieu of collecting from house to house'. In two earlier years the churchwardens had bought candles for the singers (for their nocturnal carol-singing, one assumes), but for most years 1819–32 they were paid a lump sum, apparently to dissuade them from 'going the rounds'. We are reminded of Mr Shiner, Hardy's hungover churchwarden, who swore at the quire for waking him up with a carol early on Christmas morning. In 1830 and 1832 the payment was made specifically for the singers' feast, so presumably this was how in earlier years the collection had been spent.

And what of the instrumentalists? No more reeds were purchased for them after 1821, and it may be significant that on three successive Sundays in May and June 1823 there was 'disorderly conduct' in the church, after which eight individuals were named and shamed at a meeting. Was this the musicians' last stand, after which – as in Hardy – they were thrown out of their west gallery? One might think so, as the following year new pins for hats were fixed in the gallery (suggesting that it was being used by the congregation instead), and then in 1830 the gallery itself was enlarged with seventy additional seats. But the bassoon at least lived on. In 1831 Mr Pearce was paid £2 2*s*. 6*d*. for repairing it. After that the accounts become scrappy and summary, and for two decades church music disappears from its pages. The final blow is not struck until 1852: 'Pd Hancock for fixing organ'.

John Chandler

The Gloucestershire Hearth Tax Returns of 1671 and 1672

The Hearth Tax was a levy of 1*s*. on every hearth or fireplace, payable twice a year at Michaelmas and Lady Day by the head of each household. Agreed by parliament in 1662, administering



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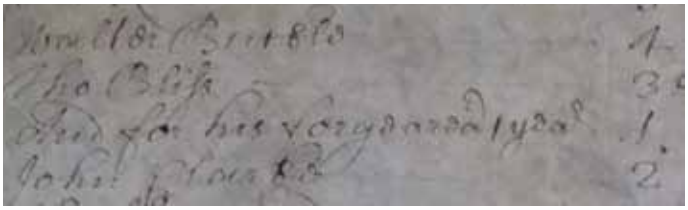

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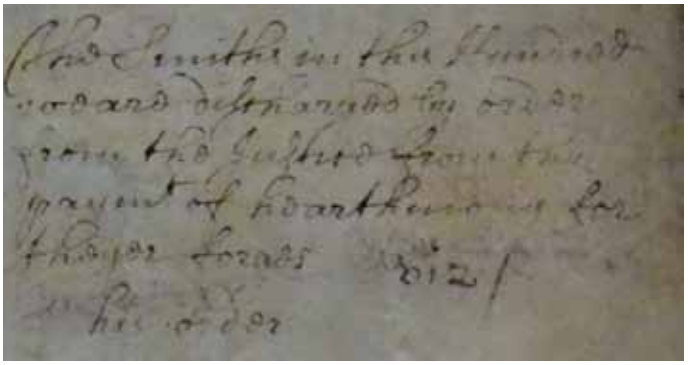

TNA E179/247/14, 3v

the tax proved a headache and it never brought in as much money as expected. Initially the machinery of local government was used with the petty constables doing the assessment and collection, while the sheriff was responsible for making the payment to the Treasury. Within two years this was abandoned in favour of a system of dedicated hearth tax receivers and collectors. When this too failed to work effectively, the government in 1666 farmed out the tax for an agreed annual rent to a consortium of wealthy businessmen. The farmers failed to make the profit they expected and, when they surrendered the lease in 1669, the government could find no one else willing to take it on. Consequently, the system of dedicated tax receivers and collectors was reinstated.

The first receiver for Gloucestershire appointed after the government resumed control was Nathaniel Whetham, an Inner Temple barrister and son of the Interregnum governor of Portsmouth. His wife Elizabeth was the daughter of Adrian Scroop of Wormsley, Oxfordshire, one of the regicides executed in 1660. From Whetham's appointment in May 1670, there appears to have been a problem. Initially he failed to provide the sureties that were required or complete the other bureaucratic steps for taking out his commission. Then the hiatus caused by the changes in administration meant that arrears had built up and attempts to collect these met with resistance. Whetham's lack of local contacts hampered his ability to support his collectors, when the JPs wrote to the Treasury complaining of their behaviour. After a year Whetham was dismissed for his 'neglect and misdemeanour' and Charles Smyth of Nibley, the grandson of the historian, was appointed in his place. Smyth had far stronger local support, but he too experienced problems in collecting this tax.

Two hearth tax returns survive from Gloucestershire for this period, one prepared under Whetham and the other under Smyth. The collectors were authorised to enter each house once a year to check the number of hearths and to seize goods in respect of a refusal to pay the tax and their returns list those liable to the tax and those who were exempt with the number of hearths for each household. The first return, drawn up in the summer of 1671, recorded bakers' ovens and smiths' forges, but excluded them from the taxed hearths. This was in accordance with the view of the Gloucestershire JPs, who believed that ovens and forges required by a man's trade should be exempt. The Treasury disagreed and directed that the previously exempted hearths should be included. The second roll, prepared in 1672, illustrates the difficulty the Treasury experienced in enforcing its policy. Thomas Payne, the collector for Cheltenham Hundred, dutifully included the hearths and ovens. So Thomas Bliss in Cheltenham was taxed on 2 hearths in 1671 (figure 1), but 3 hearths and a year's arrears in 1672 (figure 2). In Cirencester Hundred, however, the collector William Hawkins continued to exempt the ovens and forges. At the end of the entries for the hundred an explanation was provided: 'The Smiths in this Hundred weare discharged by order from the Justice from the payment of hearthmony for theyer forges'. (Figure 3) Such intransigence from local figures of authority made assessing and collecting taxes a tricky task in the England of Charles II.

Jan Broadway

Monumental Brass Society Cirencester Study Day

Saturday 27th September 2014

Beth Hartland, Linda Viner and I were fortunate enough to attend this very well attended study day at the end of September comprising four papers which painted a picture of Cirencester and its inhabitants in the fifteenth century, alongside a longer than usual lunch break to allow attendees to view the brasses in the church.

First to speak was Miriam Gill, Lecturer in the History of Art in the Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, who gave a very interesting paper on '**The Chantry Chapel of Bishop Chedworth'**, in which the interests of the society made a segue into ecclesiastical wall paintings. Bishop John Chedworth is thought to have been born in Cirencester, though raised in Buckinghamshire, and died in 1471 as Bishop of Lincoln. Over the course of his lifetime Chedworth had influence over a wide geographical area, reflected in his commemoration with stained glass in Oxford, a brass in Lincoln, a chantry chapel in Cirencester, while his will stipulated that he should be buried in Stepney, and he is recorded as a founding guild member in Daventry.

Bishop Chedworth's chantry chapel in Cirencester is also known as St Catherine's Chapel, and stands on the north side of the chancel with the Lady Chapel beyond. Licence for the chantry was granted in 1457, allowing for two to four chaplains to say a daily mass at the altar of Ss Nicholas and Catherine for the souls of the bishop, his parents and benefactors. The chapel was decorated with paintings on the north and south walls which were an integral part of the original design and layout. The paintings have lost their original brilliance as the chemicals in the pigments decayed over time but it is still possible to make out much of each artwork. On the south wall there is a series of roundels depicting scenes in the life of St Nicholas, perhaps relating to his installation as bishop and similar to those in the De Lisle psalter of *c.*1308. Dr Gill described the artwork of the figures as very beautiful with very gentle lines creating high eyebrows, long noses and delicate, small mouths. On the same wall there is also a scene of St Christopher, whose cult had been present in the church for some time. Such scenes are usually set in a primary axis of the church, but the Cirencester painting lies deep within the church. The painting itself was discovered in the 1870s and heavily restored, although the brilliant colours probably do reflect the medieval original. The background to the painting is an imitation of a patterned brocade fabric, perhaps to mimic the cloths of honour which hung behind church statuary. Dr Gill explained that wall paintings were an affordable form of art and often imitated expensive art forms, especially textiles such as European tapestry works. To the left of St Christopher is another figure, often identified as St Catherine although in this case Dr Gill

Cirencester church and market place

suggested that it might be John the Divine, and form part of a crucifixion group.

The paintings on the north wall of the chapel have suffered considerable pigment alteration, but probably also had a fabric-style background and thus was probably created at the same time as the St Christopher panel. They depict a scene of St Catherine with similarly fine features as the figures on the opposite wall. The saint stands between two wheels, while to the left of her feet is a kneeling figure. In 1799 Rudder described the paining and mentioned the images of donors at the feet of the saint, and Dr Gill ended her talk by suggesting that this wall painting might contain the only surviving image of Bishop Chedworth.

The second paper was presented by Rupert Webber and was entitled **'Piety and Belief: the brasses of Medieval Cirencester'**. Mr Webber began by setting the social, political and economic background to the period in which the brasses were created. The purpose of the brasses was to provide a permanent reminder of the contributions made by a person or family to the local community for those who came after them. Those men who could afford to commission brasses also gave much money to the church to support lights, chantries, building works and so on as part of a commemorative strategy which would afford them and their families a swifter passage through purgatory. Interestingly brasses do not usually appear in wills, perhaps because they had to be ordered and completed in advance, while bequests of money for building works, chantries, lights and so forth came from the estate after death. Mr Webber also explained that while brasses tended to be created in a generic style, they were personalised through the use of inscriptions or images, such as that of Hugh Norys which contained images relating to his profession as a vintner.

The brasses of Cirencester are unique in that they include those of merchants who were not involved in the wool trade (cf. Northleach for example) which raises the question of whether such brasses have been lost from other churches, or whether they show one of the ways that Cirencester differed from other Gloucestershire towns and wool towns. The wide variety of brass types – commemorating merchants, gentry and clerics – is also unusual, and has led Webber to consider whether the role of the church in Cirencester was different or whether it was the factors influencing the parish which led to the differences. Webber's conclusion is that at Cirencester monumental brasses were considered by the townspeople to be a highly visible and thus a highly successful strategy for commemoration, which might explain why there are so many brasses covering such a wide range of individuals.

Antonia Catchpole

[Editor's note: the second part of this article will appear in the July newsletter.]

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