

Introduction

In the first three post-war decades Cheltenham's development was hampered by resistance to the expansion of its borders and its failure to free itself from county council control. The arrival of GCHQ in the 1950s increased the level of professional employment in the town. In subsequent decades a number of businesses relocated to the town. The built environment of the historic centre was one of the town's attractions, but its maintenance created a number of demands. During this period Cheltenham developed as a Festival Town, hosting an annual music festival from 1945 and subsequently developing the literature festival.

From 1974 Cheltenham acquired greater autonomy, but its development continued to emphasise the importance of the town's built and natural environment and of its social and intellectual life.

Topography and Settlement

Jan Broadway

Boundaries

Following the 1972 Local Government Act the municipal borough was merged with the urban district of Charlton Kings to form the non-metropolitan district of Cheltenham.¹ In 1991 the boundary of Cheltenham was extended to include the built-up areas of Badgeworth, Swindon, Prestbury, Leckhampton and Up Hatherley. The revised borough covers 4,680 hectares.² The borough is primarily urban, but a green belt was established in 1968 to preserve the open land to the west between Cheltenham and Gloucester and prevent the two communities merging.³ The green belt was extended in 1981 to prevent Cheltenham merging with Bishop's Cleeve to the north.⁴ The green belt covered 17% of Cheltenham's area in 1991. To the east of the town 10 sq. km. of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies within Cheltenham borough.⁵ In 2007 a government inspector ruled that a business park could be built by a commercial company within the green belt near Arle Court.⁶ Despite considerable local opposition⁷ plans adopted in 2017 reduced Cheltenham's green belt from 820ha. to 550ha.⁸

Population

In 1947 Cheltenham's population was estimated to be 64,640.⁹ The development plan for the area expected the population to reach 71,400 by 1971 by a combination of natural expansion and inward migration.¹⁰ At the 1951 census the population was 62,850¹¹ and it was estimated to be 68,630 in 1958, when the development plan was reviewed.¹² In 1955 it was estimated that GCHQ had brought 3,400 people to Cheltenham in 1952/3, of whom around 2,000 were living in the borough.¹³ While inward migration was lower than anticipated by the development plan, the natural increase in the population was greater.¹⁴ By 1961 the population had grown beyond expectation to reach 72,154. In the subsequent decade the rate of increase slowed, with the population reaching 74,356 in 1971. Following the 1972 boundary changes the 1981 census returned a total of 82,972. In 1991, after a further expansion of the borough, the population

1 Local Govt. Act 1972 c. 70; O.S. Map 1:25000, SO 82/92 (1982 edn).

2 GA, PR4.51GS.

3 GA, B253/35913, 7.

4 AERC Ltd., *Cheltenham Green Belt Review Final Report* (2007), 25.

5 GA, PR4.51GS; Cotswold ANOB Factsheet (<https://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/cotswolds-aonb-1.pdf>).

6 *Western Daily Press*, 5 May 2007.

7 *Glos. Echo*, 25 Apr. 2017.

8 *Western Daily Press*, 9 Oct. 2018; CBC Online, *EXAM 146 Inspector's Preliminary Findings On Green Belt Release* (2015).

9 GA, PF4.82, 6.

10 GCC/COU/1/1/25, 1 Nov. 1950.

11 Census, 1951.

12 GA, PF4.82, 6.

13 GCC/COU/1/1/26, 25 Mar. 1955.

14 GA, PF4.82, 4-5.

reached 103, 115, and showed a steady increase to 110,013 in 2001 and 115,732 in 2011¹⁵.

Urban Redevelopment

In 1944 the council sought the advice of the Georgian Group concerning the town's reconstruction and redevelopment. The group's resulting *Report on Cheltenham* included an appendix of buildings that should be preserved, but also stressed the importance of respecting the town's layout and general character in the course of redevelopment.¹⁶ In 1955 four buildings in Cheltenham received Grade I listing: Thirlestaine House, All Saints church, Montpellier Rotunda and Pittville Pump Room.¹⁷ (The parish church was listed Grade I in 1972.)¹⁸ In 1968 there were 988 buildings within the borough on the statutory list and an additional 614 buildings on the supplementary list.¹⁹ The council considered it impractical to try to preserve every listed building. They decided to concentrate on preserving the most important streets and squares, while allowing the demolition of isolated buildings unless they were of exceptional merit.²⁰ The results of this policy led to considerable controversy towards the end of the century.²¹

Post War

The influx of industry into the town immediately before and during the war had massively increased the demand for housing, led to relatively uncontrolled conversion of existing buildings to industrial use and increased the problems of traffic congestion, particularly in the vicinity of the High Street.²² In November 1945 the council agreed to schedule for redevelopment a war-damaged area around the High Street between Swindon Street and Townsend Street on the north and Park Street to Gloucester Road on the south.²³ By 1948 the council were envisaging a wide-scale redevelopment of the St Peter's area in conjunction with the widening of Tewkesbury Road and consequently decided not to erect temporary houses in the area.²⁴ In 1955 the Tungum Company relocated from its town centre Royal Oak Works off the lower High Street to the suburban grounds of the White House, Arle.²⁵ The redevelopment of the Lower High Street began in 1957, once the post-war overcrowding had been solved.²⁶ The Maud's Elm estate combined the renewal of houses in existing streets and the creation of Bridge Street and Richards Road.²⁷

The Pittville Pump Room had been closed to the public for some years before the war and by 1945 was in need of extensive repairs. Although restoration was approved by the council in 1949, it remained controversial and progress was slow.²⁸ The restoration was eventually completed in

15 Census, 1961 - 2011.

16 *Glos. Echo*, 10 Sept. 1945.

17 HE, 1386724, 1386679, 1387363, 1387559.

18 HE, 1386792.

19 GA, GCC/COU/1/1/31, 17 Jan. 1968.

20 GA, PF4.82, 22.

21 Timothy Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed* (1995); Oliver Bradbury, 'Cheltenham Destroyed', *Gloucestershire History* 14 (2000), 2-9.

22 GA, GCC/COU/1/1/25, 1 Nov. 1950.

23 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 3 Nov. 1945.

24 *Glos. Echo*, 2 Mar. & 10 Nov. 1948.

25 *Tewkesbury Register, & Agricultural Gazette*, 10 Nov. 1951; *Glos. Echo*, 9 July 1955; *New Scientist*, vol. 8, no. 197 (1960), 521.

26 GA, PF4.82, 22.

27 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 111.

28 See *Local Government, 1945-1974*.

1960, having cost £40,000.²⁹ In 1947 the county council issued a compulsory purchase order for Thirlestaine House³⁰, which it intended to use for offices, but after a public enquiry it was acquired by Cheltenham College.³¹ The Montpellier Rotunda, acquired by the council through compulsory purchase in 1940,³² by 1945 needed considerable structural work.³³ In 1961, following the extension of the municipal offices in Promenade Terrace to include a council chamber, the Rotunda was put up for sale.³⁴ It was bought by Lloyd's bank, which already occupied part of the building, and was extensively refurbished in 1965.³⁵ In 2017 the building was taken over by the Ivy restaurant chain.³⁶

From 1928 there had been controversy over the possibility of the Royal Crescent garden being converted as a car park and bus station,³⁷ with a bus station being established there shortly before the war to relieve traffic in Clarence Street.³⁸ In 1946 the council acquired the former Methodist chapel on St George's Road opposite the Ladies College.³⁹ A plan was developed for a combined bus station, taxi centre and car park,⁴⁰ and the garden and some houses were acquired. Controversy over the site continued with the Rodney Road car park being suggested as an alternative bus station.⁴¹ The new bus terminus with shelters along Royal Well Road opened in 1955.⁴² When the Development Plan was revised in 1958 the integrated plan was abandoned, but the 'functioning well' bus station in Royal Crescent was retained and the site of the Royal Well chapel and adjoining buildings designated for car parking.⁴³ The chapel was demolished in the 1960s.⁴⁴ Although in 1976 the 'visual intrusion' of the bus station with its 'insensitive' bus shelters was recognised as detrimental to the Regency townscape,⁴⁵ the shelters were not replaced until 2016.⁴⁶ The bus station and the car park remained in 2020.

The development of the town centre was influenced by the emphasis placed on its role as a regional shopping centre. In 1947 plans were put forward for the development of the Regent Street-Cambray area as a 'leisurely business and shopping area', although the shortage of housing meant that the immediate demolition of existing properties was not possible.⁴⁷ In the early 1950s the west side of Pittville Street was demolished and the road widened. The rebuilt ground floor shops with storage and accommodation above, increased the amount of available retail space by

29 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 May 1960; *Illustrated London News*, 11 June 1960.

30 *Glos. Echo*, 15 May 1947.

31 *Glos. Echo*, 19 June 1948.

32 GA, CBR/C2/1/2/37, 71.

33 GA, CBR/C2/1/2/42, 8.

34 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 Feb. & 16 June, 1961.

35 Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 244.

36 *Glos. Echo*, 29 Sep. 2017.

37 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 7 Apr. 1928; *Glos. Echo*, 22 May, 20, 23 & 28 June 1933.

38 *Glos. Echo*, 3 Aug. 1935.

39 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 12 Jan. 1946.

40 GA, CBR/C2/1/2/43, 154, 340.

41 *Glos. Echo*, 3 Jan. & 22 Apr. 1950.

42 Peter Gill, *Cheltenham in the 1950s* (Stroud, 1996), 74-8.

43 GA, PF4.82, 2.

44 Oliver Bradbury, *Cheltenham's Lost Heritage* (Stroud, 2004), 80.

45 GA, PR4.75, 28.

46 *Glos. Echo*, 30 Mar. 2016.

47 *Glos. Echo*, 4 Jan. & 4 Mar. 1947.

23,000 sq. ft.⁴⁸ This was followed in the early 1960s by a similar redevelopment of the east side of the lower end of Winchcombe Street.⁴⁹ In the High Street retail increasingly dominated over the service sector, as the Lamb Hotel site was taken over by Marks and Spencer in 1955⁵⁰ and the Royal Hotel by Woolworth's in 1957.⁵¹ This move gave both retailers larger and more central premises than their previous High Street shops.

During the 1960s with the planning emphasis on the development of central Cheltenham as a regional shopping and administrative centre⁵², modernist architecture replaced a number of Georgian and Victorian buildings within the town. In 1965 Eagle Star purchased 2.5 a. at the eastern end of Montpellier Terrace to build a headquarters building.⁵³ Most of the eastern side of Montpellier Parade was demolished to make way for the 175 ft tall office block, an elongated hexagon in plan, opened in 1968.⁵⁴ This was, and remains in 2020, by far the tallest building in Cheltenham. The only other tall building erected within the town during this period was an office block at the brewery, which was demolished in 2004.⁵⁵ The Fleece Hotel and the Victorian Gothic grammar school on the High Street were demolished in 1967 to make way for a modern, brutalist retail block.⁵⁶ In 1969 the former Market House (1808), demolished following a fire, was replaced by a similar, contemporary building.⁵⁷

St James's railway station was bought by the council to accommodate displaced factories as part of the plan for the town centre development and demolished in 1967.⁵⁸ On the Promenade Cavendish House was remodelled in 1966, the row of brick and stucco houses that had been incorporated into the store over time being replaced by a 'long, bland' 300ft frontage.⁵⁹ In 1970 the Quadrangle, 'a stolid office block' was erected on the corner of Imperial Square, on the site of the demolished New Club.⁶⁰

From 1973

The Cheltenham conservation area achieved official status in June 1973.⁶¹ The purpose of the designation by the county council under section 277 of the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act was to conserve and enhance the special character of the Regency layout and architecture, and of the numerous trees and gardens.⁶² The conservation area covered almost the whole of the original spa town, the main exception being the industrialised area around the Gloucester Road.⁶³ Of the 1,658 listed buildings in Cheltenham, 98% were within the conservation area, representing 23% of

48 GA, PF4.82, 14; Gill, *Cheltenham in the 1950s*, 66-9.

49 GA, PF4.82, 14; *Birmingham Post*, 16 Jan. 1963; Timothy Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed* (Tiverton, 1995), 58.

50 *Glos. Echo*, 29 Sep. 1955.

51 GA, PF4.82, 14; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 Feb. 1957.

52 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 Nov. 1963.

53 Isabel Syed, *Eagle Star: A Guide to its History and Archives* (Cheltenham, 1997), 39.

54 Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 270.

55 *Birmingham Post*, 21 Feb. 2004; Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed*, 92.

56 *Glos. Echo*, 3 Mar. 1967; Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 254, 266.

57 Bradbury, *Cheltenham's Lost Heritage*, 31.

58 See Local Government, 1945-1974.

59 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 Sep. 1966; Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 260.

60 Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 259.

61 *Glos. Echo*, 2 June 1973.

62 GA, PR4.48.

63 GA, PF4.75, 13, fig. 1.

all buildings, and there were a further 420 buildings on the local list.⁶⁴ In 1987 the conservation area was extended to include Marle Hill and an area north of the Pittville Pump Room, formerly in Prestbury, and an area to the south-east formerly in Charlton Kings.⁶⁵

Despite the growth of Cheltenham's suburbs in 1971 the 3,746 dwellings in the central area still provided 12% of the borough's total housing stock. In 1975 it was estimated that 30% of these dwellings might be 'unfit' through lacking exclusive use of one or more basic amenities.⁶⁶

Lansdown Crescent was identified as an area, where the general townscape quality was poor, due to subdivision and the lack of concern with the backs of terraces.⁶⁷ Large scale slum clearance was unacceptable for conservation reasons, so a policy was adopted of limited clearance combined with improving as many extant buildings as possible. A number of three-storey Regency terrace houses were converted into flats by the Cheltenham and District Housing Association, while the partially demolished Iveagh House in Lansdown Crescent was rebuilt in 1985.⁶⁸ Once the rugby club moved to Pittville, Tom Price Close was developed on their former ground in Albion Street from 1982.⁶⁹ Outside the conservation area 85 houses in Crabtree Place and Manser Street in St Paul's were demolished and replaced in 2008 by a wider range of accommodation and some pedestrianised areas as part of the regeneration of the St Paul's area.⁷⁰

Shopping remained a major driver of development within the town. In 1985 the Regent Arcade shopping mall and multi-storey car park opened. Built between Regent Street and Rodney Road and the site encompassed the Plough hotel, giving it a frontage to the High Street and was connected by a bridge to Cavendish House on the Promenade. The large car park and site of the former Regent Garage behind the Plough had been earmarked for such development in successive plans since the war.⁷¹ In 1976 only one site in Montpellier, occupied by a garage, was identified as of poor townscape quality.⁷² This was redeveloped as Montpellier Courtyard, a small retail development, opened in 1985.⁷³ In 1991 the Beechwood Place shopping mall opened on the former Royal Hotel/Woolworth site. This was anchored by a Debenhams store, and incorporated a car park and had a Winter Garden in its atrium.⁷⁴ The Beechwood was demolished in 2017 and replaced by a John Lewis store.⁷⁵

The continuing importance of the High Street and Promenade in the circulation of traffic within the town complicated the pedestrianisation of the shopping areas. Pedestrianisation of the eastern end of the High Street was completed in 1977, part of Promenade in 1989, a further sections of High Street (with part of Regent Street) in 1994 and 2003 (with part of Cambray Place).⁷⁶ An experiment to limit traffic travelling from Clarence Street to North Street through Boots Corner

64 GA, PF4.75, 13-14.

65 *Cheltenham Borough Local Plan* (2006), Table 8; CBC, map of Central Conservation area (2009) [https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/1067/central_conservation_area_map].

66 GA, PF4.69.

67 GA, PF4.75, 40, fig. 12.

68 GA, PF4.75, 42; Historic England, 1333171 ; Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 275.

69 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 178.

70 *Glos. Echo*, 1 Oct. 2008.

71 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 147; *Glos. Echo*, 21 Nov. 2019.

72 GA, PF4.75, fig. 12; *Tewkes. Register*, 18 Aug. 1961.

73 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 115.

74 *Glos. Echo*, 25 Feb. 2011; Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed*, 69.

75 *Glos. Echo*, 23 Jan. 2017.

76 *Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Second Review* (2006), 99.

begun in 2018 was abandoned after 18 months.⁷⁷

Much of the former St James station site remained 'a derelict wasteland', used as a car park for 30 years.⁷⁸ In 1976-7 an office block was constructed on the site of the demolished station building. From 1989 further tall office blocks were built to its south on Jessop's Avenue, the name recalling the site's earlier incarnation as a nursery.⁷⁹ In 2002 a 8,361 sq. m. Waitrose store opened on the western end of the site, bordering Great Western Road.⁸⁰

Following the closure of the Whitbread brewery, its High Street 7,000 sq. m. site was developed as a retail and leisure complex.⁸¹ In 2014 work began on the second phase of the Brewery Quarter development. This involved the regeneration of the Lower High Street, including the demolition of the 1960s block on the former grammar school site.⁸²

Suburban Expansion

From 1943 the council was preparing to resume its pre-war housing programme for slum clearance and the abatement of overcrowding.⁸³ The need for new houses was exacerbated by the results of bombing raids, particularly in the vicinity of Stoneville Street and Brunswick Road where 72 houses had been destroyed and 2,200 damaged.⁸⁴ The first of 173 pre-fabricated aluminium bungalow was erected on land at Prior's Farm on the north side of the government site of Oakley in December 1945.⁸⁵ Pre-fabricated houses were also erected at Selkirk Gardens, Brighton Road, Hales Close, Courtney Street and Cakebridge Place.⁸⁶ The first permanent post-war houses to be erected by the council were on bombed sites in Margrett Road and Kipling Road, where an experimental technique using foamed slag was used.⁸⁷ In 1947 it was envisaged that dealing with the shortage of houses would take 12 years.⁸⁸

Land belonging to Lynworth Farm between Whaddon and Prestbury was earmarked for construction from 1943.⁸⁹ The extension of Cromwell Road was agreed in 1945 and work on the first 62 houses began in early 1946.⁹⁰ The 60a. Lynworth Farm Estate, which straddled the border between Cheltenham and Prestbury was completed in 1948.⁹¹ The Alma Road Estate was developed from 1947 on the former Sandybank farm, between Alma and Hatherley Roads. Some 200 'aluminium permanent bungalows' were planned for roads named on a Lake District theme. The first batch of 100 homes were completed in early 1949.⁹² Further prefabricated homes were

77 *Glos. Echo*, 2 Jan. 2020.

78 GA, PF4.79, 93; Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed*, 71.

79 Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 265.

80 *Western Daily Press*, 13 Sep. 2002; *Cheltenham Borough Local Plan* (2006), 96.

81 *Cheltenham Borough Local Plan* (2006), 96.

82 *Glos. Echo*, 7 Feb. 2015.

83 GA, CBR/C2/1/2/40, 124.

84 *Glos. Echo*, 8 May 1945 & 1 Jan. 1946.

85 *Glos. Echo*, 12 Dec. 1945.

86 GA, CBR/C2/1/2/43, 59, 344; *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 24, 28, 29, 47, 76.

87 *Glos. Echo*, 24 Aug. & 18 Sep. 1945.

88 GA, JF7.59GS.

89 GA, CBR/C2/3/23, November 1943.

90 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 48; *Glos. Echo*, 1 Jan. 1946.

91 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 105.

92 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 4; GA, GCC/COU/1/1/24, 14 Jul. 1948; CBR/C/3/18, Feb. 1949.

built on the other side of the railway between Reddings Road and Hatherley Road.⁹³ By the summer of 1950 George Wimpey & Co. Ltd. had built 394 houses on the open fields and market gardens to the west of Rowanfield Road.⁹⁴ Constituted of Wimpey No Fines concrete houses and low-rise flats⁹⁵, this network of Avenues named for English counties included a new infant school on Alstone Lane adjoining the King George V playing field.⁹⁶ The Cleavelands estate, west of the Evesham Road on the borough's northern border, had received planning permission for 42 building plots in 1937, but the majority of the houses were built after the war.⁹⁷ To the south of Cleavelands Albemarle Gate between Evesham Road and Tommy Taylors Lane was developed in the 1960s.⁹⁸

Planning for the development of an estate of up to 2,000 houses to the west of the town near St Mark's began in 1942.⁹⁹ In 1945 13.5 acres of land was purchased from the Arle House estate¹⁰⁰ and the following year the council agreed to issue a compulsory purchase order for 122 acres around Hesters Way for the first phase of 1,000 houses.¹⁰¹ Having agreed to provide 1,050 dwellings for incoming GCHQ employees and faced with opposition from local farmers and market gardeners, the council issued a further compulsory purchase notice for 166 acres in 1950.¹⁰² Site works began in mid-1950 and house construction in 1951.¹⁰³

In 1954 Wimpey's proposed to build houses on 120 a. of Benhall Farm, lying to the south of Gloucester Road. The land had been obtained by St Paul's College, but with the development of the Pittville site was not required.¹⁰⁴ The county council opposed this, which was a substantial departure from the Development Plan.¹⁰⁵ Wimpey's successfully appealed to the Ministry of Housing, arguing that the land would have been designated for housing, if it had not been earmarked for educational use.¹⁰⁶ Work on the site began in 1956¹⁰⁷ and by August 1962 607 houses had been completed.¹⁰⁸

The Development Plan and associated Cheltenham town map were approved in 1955. This laid down that the Hesters Way estate would provide housing for 10,500 people at 50 people per acre.¹⁰⁹ A survey of the borough in 1957 showed that 395 acres of land had been restored to agricultural use since 1945, but 800 acres had been lost to general development.¹¹⁰ By 1958 5,600 dwellings had been built and overcrowding had ceased to be a major problem.¹¹¹ In 1971 55% of the borough's housing stock was owner-occupied, 24% council tenancies and 21% private rented.

93 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 183.

94 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 8 July 1950.

95 *Glos. Echo*, 3 Nov. 1948.

96 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 152; *Geographia Street Plan of Cheltenham* (c.1960).

97 *Glos. Echo*, 4 Dec. 1937, 18 June 1938, 6 Apr. 1939; *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 40.

98 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 2.

99 *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 82; GA, CBR/C2/1/2/40, 197.

100GA, CBR/C2/1/2/42, 53, 83.

101*Chelt. Chronicle*, 7 Sep. 1946.

102*Glos. Echo*, 4 Apr., 1 July & 25 Aug.

103*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 82.

104See Part II, Education, University of Gloucestershire and its predecessors.

105GCC/COU/1/1/26, 3 Nov. 1954 & 19 Jan. 1955.

106GCC/COU/1/1/27, 2 Nov. 1955; *Glos. Echo*, 1 July 1955.

107*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 19.

108GA, D11753/1

109GA, JF7.59GS.

110GA, GCC/COU/1/1/28, 30 Oct. 1957.

111GA, PF4.82, 1.

There was no longer a significant shortage of housing in the borough.¹¹²

From the mid-1960s the area west of Hesters Way Road was developed. Tiverton Close and Dunster Road were built by New Ideal Homesteads from 1965¹¹³, but the majority of the development in the area, which became known as Springbank, was by the local company Robert Hitchins.¹¹⁴ Dunster Gardens was added in 1988/9 on land belonging to the Midlands Electricity Board¹¹⁵ and from 2004 Triscombe Close and the adjacent roads were built on the company's former sports field.¹¹⁶ Fiddler's Green, to the south of Springbank, was developed by a number of developers from 1973.¹¹⁷

Windyridge Road was begun by Robert Hitchins in 1971 as an access road to its Stanwick development to the east of Swindon Road north of Maud's Elm.¹¹⁸ The road was extended to join Swindon Lane across the borough boundary and the Wyman's Brook estate was built predominantly on the west side of the road by George Wimpey between 1973 and 1975.¹¹⁹

Windyridge Gardens to the east was developed from 1975 by Wimpey and Westbury Estates.¹²⁰

The area between Springbank and the Old Gloucester Road was developed during the 1990s.¹²¹

Between 2011 and 2015 Bloor Homes built a further 176 houses on land formerly part of the Midwinter allotment site between the Windyridge Gardens and the former Honeybourne railway line.¹²²

Other development in the late-20th century was predominantly small scale infilling of existing sites. Wheeler & Mansell Ltd. built four roads off Sandford Mill Road between London Road and the river Chelt in the mid-1960s.¹²³ In Arle the land between Kingsmead Close and the Arle was developed from the late 1970s with the roads being named after former councillors.¹²⁴ Reddings Park, to the west of Benhall and south of Reddings Road was developed in the 1980s.¹²⁵ In the 1990s Redgrove Park was built to the west of Hatherley Lane on part of the Arle Court grounds.¹²⁶ In 1987 the pre-war Poets estate was designated a conservation area, imposing restrictions on development.¹²⁷ A report on housing land availability in 1990 found an unexpectedly high proportion of small sites in Cheltenham (21%), especially in comparison with Gloucester (8%), and posited this was due to the conversion of large houses into flats.¹²⁸

In the decade from 1991 63% of new housing in Cheltenham was built on brownfield sites.¹²⁹

Although 140 houses were envisaged for the Howell Road allotments in the early 1990s,¹³⁰ building

112GA, PF4.69.

113*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 54, 179.

114*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 10, 54, 58, 81, 101, 168, 170, 179; GA, DC137/61/26.

115*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 54.

116Geographer's A-Z Map, *Cheltenham* (c. 1986); CBC Online, Residential Land Availability (2003), 2.

117*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 10, 20, 62, 97, 107, 119, 147, 153.

118*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 171, 195.

119*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 12, 52, 102, 109, 111, 164, 197.

120*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 195.

121*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 8.

122*Glos. Echo*, 4 July 2015.

123*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 35, 96, 169, 193.

124*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 32, 65, 67, 91, 126.

125*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 147.

126*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 147; GA, 21538/78/16/GS.

127*Cheltenham Borough Local Plan* (2006), Table 8.

128GA, JR9.92.

129GA, PR4.51GS.

130GA, JR9.92.

did not begin for over a decade.¹³¹ In 1997 the regeneration of Hesters Way began with the demolition of flats in Shakespeare Road and Goldsmith Road.¹³² The eight-storey blocks of India and Pakistan House were demolished in 2006.¹³³ The demolished buildings were gradually replaced by a mix of private and housing association houses and low rise flats. The Howell Road allotment site was developed by Persimmon Homes from 2007.¹³⁴ In 1998 the land at the GCHQ Oakley site was sold to George Wimpey to fund the re-development of the Benhall site. The first phase of 159 houses with a supermarket was completed in 2006. In 2007, when it became clear that a proportion of the staff would need to remain at Oakley for some years, about half the original site was bought back, and later released. In 2008 permission was given for a further 150 houses on the site. Following the opening of the new building at Benhall part of the site previously occupied by temporary buildings was released for housing development.¹³⁵ In fill development on Gloucester Road included Stow Court (2011) and Taylor's Yard (2017).¹³⁶

Public Open Space

In 1949 the acreage of public playing fields in Cheltenham was below that considered sufficient by the Ministry of Health, although this was to an extent mitigated by access to school and college playing fields and to the surrounding countryside.¹³⁷ The first section of the King George V playing field on Brooklyn Road became available in 1949 and eventually with the adjoining St Mark's Recreation Ground covered 28.66a.¹³⁸ In 1950 the council acquired 21.42 a. of the Swindon Hall estate beyond the borough boundary as a playing field.¹³⁹ A 15 acre 9-hole golf course was laid out in 1952 to the north of the Marle Hill Annexe of Pittville Park with a number of hard tennis courts and the area was designated the Pittville Sports Area.¹⁴⁰ In 1965 the council acquired land to the west of Marle Hill Annexe, expanding the sports area to 67.06 a. The adjoining Agg Gardner recreation ground provided a further 10.94 a.¹⁴¹ Following the closure of the rubbish tip on the former Folly Brickworks to the west of Tommy Taylors Lane in 1969, the land was used to extend the golf course to a full 18 holes.¹⁴² The 18a. Tewkesbury Road playing field, which was also beyond the borough boundary, was leased to the Civil Service from the late 1950s.¹⁴³ The future grammar school site provided a playing field for Hester's Way into the 1960s, in addition to the park provided between Monkscroft school and the GCHQ site. A playing field, now Springfields Park, was provided on Welch Road as part of the Springbank development.¹⁴⁴

In 1947 the area occupied by the demolished Winter Gardens was redeveloped to form the

131CBC Online, Cabinet, 21 Jan. 2003.

132Glos. *Echo*, 21 & 31 Jan. 1997.

133Western Daily Press, 29 Nov. 2006.

134Glos. *Echo*, 1 May 2008.

135Glos. *Echo*, 22 Apr. & 14 Nov. 2008.

136GA, CW/Box W/PR114.398; *Glos. Echo*, 25 Sep. 2017.

137Chelt. *Chronicle*, 5 Feb. 1949.

138GA, DC137/61/15.

139Chelt. *Chronicle*, 9 Dec. 1950; *Cheltenham Parks and Gardens* (1956), 28.

140Cheltenham *Parks and Gardens* (1956), 28; Chelt. *Gazetteer*, 110.

141GA, DC137/61/15.

142CBR Online, The Landscape Agency, *Pittville Park* (2008), section 2, 32-3.

143GA, PF4.82, 32.

144GA, DC137/61/15; Geographia map, *Cheltenham* (c1960); Geographer's A-Z Map, *Cheltenham* (c. 1986).

Imperial Gardens.¹⁴⁵ By 1956 Cheltenham's parks and ornamental gardens covered around 80 acres.¹⁴⁶ In 1965 the council acquired the former burial ground behind the shops on the Lower High Street and developed it into the 2.9a. Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens.¹⁴⁷ In 1986 Pittville Park was given a grade II listing¹⁴⁸ and in 2016 Green Heritage Site and Green Flag status, recognising its importance and good maintenance.¹⁴⁹ Following the opening of the Prince of Wales stadium in 1981, a cycle track was developed along the former railway line, providing the basis for a green corridor connecting with the river Chelt.¹⁵⁰ Between 2005 and 2009 the former graveyard adjoining Cheltenham Chapel on the Lower High Street, which the council acquired when the chapel was converted to offices in the 1980s, was restored as Jenner Gardens.¹⁵¹ By 2011 Montpellier Gardens, Naunton Park, Hatherley Park and Springfields Park had all obtained Green Flag status,¹⁵² while the Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens received a Green Flag in 2018.¹⁵³

Cheltenham, which promoted itself as the Garden Town of England¹⁵⁴, won the Britain in Bloom competition in 1985, 1988 and 2003.¹⁵⁵ Between 1983 and 2017 a local Cheltenham in Bloom competition was also run.¹⁵⁶ In 2010 the suggestion that the layout of Imperial Gardens could be altered to provide more space for festival marquees and sponsors' hoardings met significant opposition.¹⁵⁷ In 2008 a statue of Gustav Holst was installed in the gardens,¹⁵⁸ and in 2014 two new beds were created there to commemorate the centenary of the start of the First World War.¹⁵⁹

In 1973 the contribution of Cheltenham's street trees, parks and gardens were recognised as contributing to the overall Regency townscape.¹⁶⁰ Trees within the town's conservation areas received protection in addition to that provided by individual tree protection orders.¹⁶¹ Dutch elm disease had a significant effect on the town's trees, with over 2,000 diseased elms being removed from streets, parks and council owned land between 1971 and 1975.¹⁶² Many of the original horse chestnut trees on the Promenade reached the end of their natural lives in the 1980s, were felled and replaced. By the end of the decade birch bark, sooty bark and oak wilt had joined Dutch elm disease in taking their toll on the town's trees.¹⁶³ Between 2006 and 2008 130 trees were cut down, because they were deemed unsafe.¹⁶⁴ A programme of replacement tree planting was undertaken in Montpellier Gardens in the 1990s and 2000s, where the iconic Trafalgar copper

145 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 1 Feb. 1947; GA, CBR/C2/1/2/44, 139.

146 *Cheltenham Parks and Gardens* (1956), 21.

147 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 May 1966; GA, DC137/6/25 & 27; GA, DC137/61/15.

148 HE, 1000196.

149 *Glos. Echo*, 3 Aug. 2016.

150 GA, DC137/39/5; *Glos. Echo*, 4 June 2015.

151 GA, D14709; *Glos. Echo*, 1 July 2009.

152 *Glos. Echo*, 30 July 2008 & 2 Aug. 2013.

153 *Glos. Echo*, 29 Nov. 2018.

154 GA, PR4.24GS.

155 *Glos. Echo*, 21 Jan. 2013.

156 *Glos. Echo*, 1 Mar. 2018.

157 *Glos. Echo*, 13 July & 12 Oct. 2010.

158 *Glos. Echo*, 5 Apr. 2008.

159 *Glos. Echo*, 28 June 2014.

160 GA, PR4.48.

161 CBC Online, *Local Plan Second Review* (2006) 51.

162 GA, PF4.75, 51.

163 *Glos. Echo*, 12 July 2014.

164 *Glos. Echo*, 13 Dec. 2008.

beech was felled when disease made it unsafe in 2014.¹⁶⁵

Suburban expansion gradually absorbed long established allotment sites as well as those established during the war. The 30a. North Ward allotment site off Marsh Lane was developed for housing and the extension of St Paul's college in the 1970s,¹⁶⁶ while the Creamery Piece and Baglins Piece allotments at Marle Hill provided sites for the municipal swimming pool and Prince of Wales stadium.¹⁶⁷ In 2007 15,000 sq. m. at the northern end of the Midwinter allotment site to the west of the former railway line in Marle Hill was sold for housing development.¹⁶⁸ Asquith Road allotments in Naunton remained unaffected by development in 2020.

Suburban expansion also created a requirement for new allotment sites. The Severn Road allotments were provided for the Lynworth development.¹⁶⁹ As the town developed to the south-west sites were provided off Alma Road, Warden Hill Road and Reddings Road to supplement the existing site adjoining the Hatherley tank.¹⁷⁰ In 1953 the plans for Hester's Way included a 10a. 'model allotment' site and a further 10a. adjoining for further expansion.¹⁷¹ As the development spread the original site on Howell Road was sold for development and replaced by sites off Hayden Road to the north and Henley Road to the west of Springbank.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁵*Glos. Echo*, 16 July 2014.

¹⁶⁶GA, DC137/30/8-10; *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 110.

¹⁶⁷CBR Online, The Landscape Agency, *Pittville Park* (2008), section 2, 32.

¹⁶⁸*Glos. Echo*, 20 June 2009.

¹⁶⁹.GA, DC137/31/18.

¹⁷⁰GA, DC137/32/35; DC137/14/16; DC137/29/8; DC137/54/5.

¹⁷¹GA, DC137/30/4 & 5.

¹⁷²GA, DC137/53/1-3; DC137/18/30.

Local Government

Jan Broadway

1945-1974

Following the 1945 local government elections, the Conservatives remained the largest single party, but lost their majority. None of the fourteen candidates standing for the Labour party in conjunction with local co-operatives were successful. The council consisted of 15 Conservatives, 7 Independents, 5 Chamber of Commerce, 3 Labour and 2 Liberal.¹⁷³ In the 1946 county council elections, the first since 1937 and in which the turnout was very low, Labour gained St Peters, with Conservative wins in All Saints, Naunton Park and Park wards.¹⁷⁴ By 1947 the Conservatives had re-established their majority on the borough council.¹⁷⁵

In 1946 the council applied to the Local Government Boundary Commission for county borough status, but was unsuccessful.¹⁷⁶ A renewed attempt was approved by the Local Government Boundary Commission in 1948, but failed with the winding up of the commission in 1949.¹⁷⁷ Despite opposition from the county council, Cheltenham was granted excepted district status under the Education Act 1944.¹⁷⁸ The educational scheme, which was eventually agreed in 1949, freed the borough from county council control of education except on financial matters.¹⁷⁹ This meant that in 1967 the council retained some autonomy over the implementation of comprehensive education in the borough.¹⁸⁰ The borough also obtained delegated powers under the 1947 Town and County Planning Act.¹⁸¹

The police and fire service operated at a county level. The county police headquarters was established at Holland House, Lansdown Road, while the main station remained in Crescent Place with sub-stations for the Tewkesbury Road, St Marks and Bath Road areas.¹⁸² In 1959 the county council approved in principle the erection of a new Police Station and Magistrates' Court on land adjacent to Holland House, which it already owned.¹⁸³ When the site was found to be insufficient, the magistrates' court was built in St George's Road.¹⁸⁴ The county fire service also established its headquarters in Lansdown Road.¹⁸⁵ In 1948 the borough's responsibility for electricity supply ceased on nationalisation, when its former electrical engineer became the chief commercial officer of the South-Western Electricity Board.¹⁸⁶ In May 1949 the Cheltenham & District Gas Company was absorbed into the South West Area Gas Board.¹⁸⁷ The North West Gloucestershire Water

¹⁷³*Glos. Echo*, 2 Nov. 1945.

¹⁷⁴*Western Daily Press*, 4 Mar. 1946.

¹⁷⁵*Chelt. Chronicle*, 8 Nov. 1947.

¹⁷⁶*Chelt. Chronicle*, 28 Dec. 1946.

¹⁷⁷*Glos. Echo*, 8 Apr. 1948 & 28 June 1949.

¹⁷⁸GA, GCC/COU/1/1/23, 17 Jan. 1945; *Chelt. Chronicle*, 9 Dec. 1944.

¹⁷⁹*Chelt. Chronicle*, 4 June 1949.

¹⁸⁰*Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 May 1967.

¹⁸¹*Glos. Echo*, 10 July 1948; GA, K149/41.

¹⁸²*Kelly's Directory* (1948), A31.

¹⁸³GA, GCC/COU/1/1/29, 11 Nov. 1959

¹⁸⁴GA, GCC/COU/1/1/29, 20 Jan. 1960; Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 242.

¹⁸⁵*Kelly's Directory* (1952).

¹⁸⁶*Glos. Echo*, 2 Mar. 1948.

¹⁸⁷*Glos. Echo*, 31 Mar. 1949.

Board, which took over the Cheltenham & Gloucester Joint Water Board in 1965¹⁸⁸, was itself absorbed into the Severn Trent Water Authority in 1974.¹⁸⁹ In 1964 the borough council lost a case at the Lands Tribunal over the rating of the Hayden sewage works.¹⁹⁰

In the aftermath of the Second World War the council agreed to redevelop the Pittville Pump Room and the Medical Baths, which were seen as important elements in the town's future as a cultural and spa town. By 1950 the birth of the NHS had made the medical baths seem less essential, while councillors opposed spending £13,000 to restore the Pump Room.¹⁹¹ A modified scheme for essential repairs and interior decoration at Pittville was agreed after several months of debate.¹⁹² In 1954 the Ministry of Works agreed a grant of £4,000 towards the work, provided the council spent the same amount.¹⁹³ The Pilgrim Trust and the Dowty company also provided grants. Work was underway by 1958 and the restored Pump Room, housing Cheltenham's one remaining productive well, was officially opened in 1960, having cost £43,000.¹⁹⁴ In 1968 leakage of diesel from the central heating contaminated it. After controversy in the council chamber over the expense, £3,000 was spent in drilling a new well so that Cheltenham could legitimately continue to call itself a spa.¹⁹⁵

During the evolution of the post-war Gloucestershire development plan, the council was keen that an inner ring road to improve traffic flows through the town should be included. There was also concern about the 'urban fence', which limited Cheltenham's expansion into the surrounding countryside and farmland.¹⁹⁶ The number of buildings proposed for listing for their architectural merit was also problematic, with the borough surveyor warning that potential claims for compensation might limit development.¹⁹⁷ The development plan and associated town maps were approved in 1955. The Cheltenham town map area covered both the borough and parts of the surrounding parishes.¹⁹⁸

In 1956 the borough council proposed the extension of its boundaries to include the whole of Charlton Kings Urban District and parts of Cheltenham Rural District. This was opposed by the district councils concerned and rejected by the county council.¹⁹⁹ Although Charlton Kings UDC subsequently approved their inclusion in the proposed Cheltenham county borough in 1959, the opposition of the county council and rural district council continued.²⁰⁰ The Local Government Commissioners were initially unconvinced there was a strong enough case, as the population of the proposed borough was expected to be well below 100,000.²⁰¹ Following a revision of the population figures after the 1961 census, the commissioners reversed their decision, but the county council remained opposed.²⁰² A public inquiry was held in 1964,²⁰³ with the decision not to

188GA, D3609; *Tewkesbury Register*, 2 Apr. 1965.

189Dept. of the Environment, Circular 100/73.

190*Estates Gazette Digest of Land and Property Cases* (1964), 9; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 Jan. 1964.

191*Glos. Echo*, 7 Mar. 1950.

192*Glos. Echo*, 1 Aug. 1950.

193*Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Aug. 1954.

194*Gloucestershire CountrySide* 10 (2) (1958), 32; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 July 1960.

195*Birmingham Daily Post*, 13 Dec. 1971.

196GA, CBR/C5/4/3/1/1.

197GA, PF1.2; CBR/C5/4/3/1/1. See Topography, Urban Redevelopment.

198GA, JF7.59GS.

199GCC/COU/1/1/27, 11 Jul. 1956

200GA, K149/41; GCC/COU/1/1/29, 20 Jan. 1960.

201GCC/COU/1/1/30, 19 Jul. 1961

202GCC/COU/1/1/30, 27 Feb. 1963

203*The Times*, 4 Mar. 1964.

promote Cheltenham being taken in October 1965.²⁰⁴

In 1960 the post-war proposal for retail development of the Regent Street-Cambray area was revived.²⁰⁵ A link road from the Promenade via Ormond Place, Cambray Place and Rodney Road into the High Street²⁰⁶ formed part of a plan for a pedestrianised town centre partially surrounded by a dual carriageway with the bus station and multi-storey car parks on the periphery and displaced factories accommodated on the St James's station site.²⁰⁷ Approved by the council and local chamber of commerce, the plan met with considerable opposition leading to a public inquiry in 1967 and its ultimate rejection.²⁰⁸

While council and private house building resolved the borough's overall housing shortage by the 1970s, there was considerable concern about the quality of accommodation provided to private tenants in historic properties in the town centre.²⁰⁹ In 1966 the council established the Regency Properties Fund to provide grant aid for restoration with funds provided by the borough, the county council and the Historic Buildings Council.²¹⁰ Councillor Charles Irving considered the available grants insufficient, but the council's actions were circumscribed by the limitations of its delegated planning powers.²¹¹

In 1957 the county council received approval to begin construction of a new fire station in Keynsham Road.²¹² This subsequently replaced Lansdown Road as the fire service headquarters.²¹³ Following the redevelopment of the police headquarters in Lansdown Road, the police station in Crescent Place was closed by 1970 and put up for sale.²¹⁴ Converted into offices, it became the national headquarters of the Countryside Commission in 1974.²¹⁵

1974 - 1991

Following local government reorganisation, Cheltenham borough was joined with Charlton Kings urban district in what was described as a 'shotgun wedding'.²¹⁶ The Conservative party controlled the shadow council, which met from June 1973.²¹⁷ It was agreed to drop 'Spa' from the council's name, Councillor Charles Irving wanting Cheltenham to be known as 'an energetic, virile town' and not to be connected with the 'worn-out old colonel business'.²¹⁸ Borough status was granted to the new council, which took over control of the town on 1 April 1974.²¹⁹ The Conservatives retained an overall majority on the council until 1979.²²⁰ In December 1979 the mayor, Dudley Aldridge,

²⁰⁴*The Times*, 12 Feb. 1966.

²⁰⁵See Topography and Settlement, Urban Redevelopment, Post-War.

²⁰⁶*Birmingham Daily Post*,

²⁰⁷*Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 July 1965 & 4 Aug. 1967.

²⁰⁸*Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 Feb. 1961, 1 Feb. 1967 & 24 July 1969

²⁰⁹GA, PF4.69, 4; see Topography and Settlement.

²¹⁰GA, PF4.75, 14.

²¹¹*Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 July 1970.

²¹²*Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 July 1957.

²¹³Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 242; *Tewkesbury Register*, 2 Oct. 1964.

²¹⁴Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 242; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 12 Nov. 1971.

²¹⁵*Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 June 1974.

²¹⁶*Glos. Echo*, 2 Apr. 1974

²¹⁷*Glos. Echo*, 8 June 1973.

²¹⁸*Glos. Echo*, 20 June 1973.

²¹⁹Hansard, *HC Deb.*, 28 Mar. 1974, vol. 871, col 187.

²²⁰Colin Rallings & Michael Thrasher, *Cheltenham Borough Council Election Results 1973-2012*, 1

resigned from the Conservative party, removing their one seat majority on the council.²²¹ Days earlier it had been announced that the majority of councillors were boycotting the mayor's charity ball, having been asked to pay for their own tickets.²²² No party took overall control of the council thereafter.²²³

The new borough council assumed responsibility for local planning matters in addition to its already delegated powers of development control.²²⁴ The Cheltenham Central Area Interim District Plan was drawn up to replace part of the old town map, but was non-statutory and only the section covering 1978-83 was formally approved.²²⁵ In it the council planned for a long-term increase in the population of the central area. The sites designated for private housing development were 5 a. of the St James station site and the Athletic Ground, Albion Street.²²⁶ The borough's local plan, which included the wider area, was the subject to a public inquiry in 1984, at which the relocation of the bus station was a particular concern. The plan, which aimed to attract new light industry and offices to the town and to promote shopping and tourism, was adopted in 1986.²²⁷ In 1984 and 1985 the council issued yearling bonds worth £0.5 million to fund development.²²⁸

The borough council continued to pursue the expansion of its boundaries, as it was largely reliant on the adjacent local authorities for the provision of land for housing and industry. The council hoped to incorporate Badgeworth, Swindon, Prestbury, Leckhampton, Up Hatherley, Bishop's Cleeve and Shurdington and in 1981 majorities in favour of the expansion were obtained in referendums held in Prestbury and Up Hatherley.²²⁹

1991 to 2020

In 1991 the boundary of Cheltenham was extended to include the built-up areas of Badgeworth, Swindon, Prestbury, Leckhampton and Up Hatherley.²³⁰ The Liberal Democrats achieved a majority in 1991, which they retained until 1999.²³¹ As a result of the extension the borough council included councillors from the People Against Bureaucracy group, which had been established in 1976 to protect the Green Belt.²³² The Conservatives gained a majority in 2000 and the Liberal Democrats in 2002.²³³ The parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon and Up Hatherley were retained. The boundaries of the parish councils within the borough were adjusted in 2003.²³⁴ In 2008 their relationship to the borough council was

[<http://www.electionscentre.co.uk/>].

221 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 Dec. 1979.

222 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 26 Nov. 1979.

223 Rallings & Thrasher, *Cheltenham Borough Council Election Results 1973-2012*, 2-4.

224 GA, PF4.69.

225 GA, P4.70GS.

226 GA, PF4.79, 20-1, 59.

227 GA, D12676/2/4/4; GA, P4.70(1).

228 *Financial Times*, 30 Aug. 1984 & 19 July 1985.

229 Les Godwin, *Lifting the Lid* (Gloucester, 2015), 61-2.

230 Gloucestershire (District Boundaries) Order 1991.

231 Rallings & Thrasher, *Cheltenham Borough Council Election Results 1973-2012*, 4-5.

232 *Glos. Echo*, 22 Apr. 2015; <http://www.pab.org.uk/>.

233 Rallings & Thrasher, *Cheltenham Borough Council Election Results 1973-2012*, 7-8.

234 Cheltenham Parishes Order 2003; Cheltenham (Parishes) (Amendment) Order 2007.

formalised by charter.²³⁵ Between 2004 and 2010 there was no overall control, but since then the council has been controlled by the Liberal Democrats.²³⁶ The boundaries of all the parishes except Swindon were again revised in 2018.²³⁷ In 2018 the Liberal Democrats held 32 of the council's 40 seats.²³⁸

In 1991 the problems with collecting the community charge led to Cheltenham imposing a £40 surcharge.²³⁹ This resulted in the Environment Minister capping the council's spending plans.²⁴⁰ In 1995 the council brought in Reg Ward, former chief executive of the London Docklands Development Corporation as a consultant on the modernization of the town centre.²⁴¹ In order to fund the development of the town centre at a time when interest rates were rising, the borough council took out a loan of £22.5 million at a fixed rate for 15 years in 1996. Subsequently falling interest rates led the council to lose a considerable amount of money, despite rescheduling the loan in 1999, and the district auditor considered taking action against the council for illegal financial speculation.²⁴²

In 1999 the revised Gloucestershire structure plan provided a new framework for development, which emphasised the accommodation of new development within the county's larger towns. The constraints on Cheltenham were relaxed, although all new development was required to respect the town's special built and natural environment.²⁴³ The council commissioned a report into the feasibility of constructing a state-of-the-art conference centre to boost the local tourist trade.²⁴⁴ Following the opening of the Centaur centre at the racecourse in 2004,²⁴⁵ the local plan envisioned the provision of facilities to support the further development of the town as a medium-sized conference centre²⁴⁶ for which the redevelopment of the Town Hall was seen as essential.²⁴⁷ In 2015 £2.2 million was committed to the project²⁴⁸, but a considerable funding gap remained.²⁴⁹ The borough council adopted the leader and cabinet model with seven deputies from October 2001.²⁵⁰ In 2003 a rift developed between Christine Laird, who had been appointed managing director of the council the previous year under the Conservative administration, and the new Liberal Democrat cabinet.²⁵¹ Following Ms Laird's dismissal in 2005, the legal action unsuccessfully pursued by the council against cost taxpayers over £2 million.²⁵² Following floods in 1979,²⁵³ it was estimated that some 600 homes in Cheltenham were at risk in a 1 in 100 year flood event. Although the borough council carried out some improvement works to

235 *Glos. Echo*, 21 Oct. 2008.

236 Rallings & Thrasher, *Cheltenham Borough Council Election Results 1973-2012*, 9-12.

237 Cheltenham Borough Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Orders 2018.

238 *Glos. Echo*, 10 May 2018.

239 *Sunday Times*, 22 Dec. 1991.

240 *Daily Mail*, 24 June 1992.

241 *The Times*, 3 May 1995.

242 *Western Daily Press*, 4 Dec. 1999; Godwin, *Lifting the Lid*, 256, 267.

243 GA, PR4.51GS.54nj

244 *Western Daily Press*, 7 July 1999.

245 *The Guardian*, 15 Mar. 2004.

246 CBC Onlione, *Cheltenham Borough Council Local Plan Second Review* (2006).

247 CBC Online, *Tourism and Marketing Strategy* (2011).

248 *Glos. Echo*, 17 Apr. 2015.

249 *Glos. Echo*, 19 July 2018.

250 CBC Online, *Cabinet Minutes*, 23 Oct. 2001.

251 *Western Daily Press*, 1 Apr. 2003; *The Times*, 29 May 2004.

252 *The Times*, 16 June 2009; *Glos. Echo*, 7 Dec. 2011.

253 *Glos. Echo*, 31 May & 28 Dec. 1979.

reduce the risk, it lacked sufficient resources to complete the work. In 1996 responsibility for the river Chelt was passed to the Environment Agency, which began a £22 million flood alleviation scheme in 1999.²⁵⁴ A 1 in 75 year flood event occurred following heavy rain in June 2007, when the flood alleviation scheme protected the town centre although a number of houses elsewhere were flooded. A second flood in July 2007 overwhelmed the defences and 600 properties were flooded, including 230 within the alleviation scheme area.²⁵⁵ A subsequent flood risk assessment identified a number of sites designated for housing development, which were at risk of flooding.²⁵⁶ Prior to 2007 the council's annual watercourse maintenance budget was around £15,000. Thereafter a Civil Emergency fund of £602,000 was made available and a budget of £90,000 over three years was allocated to flood risk work.²⁵⁷ A surface water management plan was produced in 2011 and work on protecting a number of homes in Whaddon began in early 2012.²⁵⁸ In 2014 the council established a network of volunteer flood wardens.²⁵⁹

In the present century a number of council activities have been delegated to separate organizations. Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) was set up as an arm's length company to take over responsibility for the maintenance of the borough's housing and homeless services in 2002.²⁶⁰ In 2018/19 CBH managed 5,082 homes and 685 garages.²⁶¹ In 2011 Ubico Ltd. was established in collaboration with Cotswold District Council to provide waste collection, recycling, and street cleansing.²⁶² The Cheltenham Trust was established as a charity in 2014 to manage the Town Hall, the museum and art gallery, Pittville Pump Room and sports centre.²⁶³ In 2017 the council agreed to loan the trust £1.5 million for improvements to the sports centre.²⁶⁴

In 2015 the council purchased Delta Place, Bath Road for £13.75million to provide new municipal offices, although existing tenancies prevented occupation until 2023.²⁶⁵ In 2016 the council agreed to increase its investment in property for income generation from commercial rents.²⁶⁶ In 2018/19 the council owned investment property with an estimated worth of just under £76 million, including Delta Place and Ellenborough House, Oriel Road.²⁶⁷ In 2016 the council joined with Gloucester and Tewkesbury to develop a cyber park for hi-tech businesses and housing to the west of Cheltenham.²⁶⁸ By 2020 45 hectares of land adjoining the GCHQ site had been purchased by the council for £37.5 million to ensure the cyber park project would proceed.²⁶⁹ Following the decision in 2016 to close courts in Stroud and Gloucester, Cheltenham became the

254Environment Agency, *Cheltenham flood alleviation scheme: Your questions answered* (2003).

255CBC, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Framework Level 1 (2008), 39-40.

256CBC, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Framework Level 1 (2011), 35.

257CBC Online, Briefing Note, Cabinet 22 June 2010.

258CBC Online, Flood Protection Update, Environment Overview & Scrutiny Cttee 29 Feb. 2012.

259*Bristol Evening Post*, 19 Mar. 2019.

260Companies House, 04587658.

261Cheltenham Borough Homes Ltd., *Report and Financial Statements* (2019).

262*Glos. Echo*, 1 Feb. 2012; Companies House, 07824292.

263*Glos. Echo*, 1 Oct. 2014; <https://www.cheltenhamtrust.org.uk/>.

264*Glos. Echo*, 28 Mar. 2017.

265*Glos. Echo*, 26 June 2015.

266CBC Online, Cabinet, 6 Dec. 2016, Property Portfolio.

267CBC Online, Statement of Accounts 2018/19.

268*Glos. Echo*, 11 Nov. 2016.

269*Glos. Echo*, 14 May 2020.

only magistrates' court in Gloucestershire.²⁷⁰ The county constabulary, having transferred its headquarters operations to Quedgeley, put most of the Lansdown Road site up for sale in March 2016. The town's main police station remained there in 2020, with some functions transferred to the Hester's Way police station.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰*Stroud News & Journal*, 11 Feb. 2016.

²⁷¹*Glos. Echo*, 5 Mar. 2016.

Economic Activity

Jan Broadway

In the immediate post-war period the economic strategy of Gloucestershire County Council was guided by the aims of safeguarding the aircraft industry workforce and encouraging the provision of jobs in the smaller towns and the Forest of Dean. There was consequently little provision for industrial development in Cheltenham, where the arrival of GCHQ, UCCA and Eagle Star increased the proportion of white-collar employment. There was also an emphasis on the town's development as a retail and tourism hub. At the end of the 20th century 28% of the town's economic output derived from the financial and business sectors, 20% from public administration, 18% from manufacturing, and 20% from distribution, hotels and catering. Its particular strengths were in tourism, shopping, education, construction and manufacturing.²⁷²

Manufacturing

In 1946 a report by the county's former chief planning officer foresaw Cheltenham's future development as 'an industrial centre of no small importance'.²⁷³ However, as a result of its failure to acquire county borough status²⁷⁴, Cheltenham was obliged to follow the G.C.C. moratorium on new industrial development within the town.²⁷⁵ A 1947 survey of small, local firms found a majority in favour of moving to purpose-built, out-of-town facilities²⁷⁶, which of necessity would predominantly be built beyond the borough boundaries. In response to this the council purchased land across the borough border at the Runnings, Swindon for factory development.²⁷⁷ As the aircraft industry entered a recession, Cheltenham attempted to attract more industry to the town.²⁷⁸ In this the borough was hampered by lacking the freedom to attract new factories enjoyed by Gloucester.²⁷⁹ By the time the town gained more autonomy following local government reorganization in 1974, most of the manufacturing development was in the surrounding parishes.²⁸⁰

After the Second World War Dowty Equipment Ltd supplied hydraulic equipment to various fields through a number of subsidiary companies.²⁸¹ The Arle factory, which had around 1,500 employees in 1952, concentrated on prototype and development projects on aircraft undercarriages, pumps and other components for hydraulic systems.²⁸² In 1967 the Dowty Group acquired Gloster Engineering (Cheltenham), a company employing over 50 specialist toolmakers.²⁸³ During the 1980s the Dowty Group reduced its workforce, but continued to employ 7,000 people in the

²⁷²CBC Online, Local Plan Second Review (July 2006).

²⁷³Gordon E. Payne, *A Physical, Social and Economic Survey and Plan* (Gloucester, [1946])

²⁷⁴See *Local Government*.

²⁷⁵GA, JF7.59GS.

²⁷⁶GA, K193/1.

²⁷⁷*Glos. Echo*, 7 June 1949.

²⁷⁸GA, B526/47394GS.

²⁷⁹GA, K149/41; *Glos. Echo*, 12 Oct. 1965.

²⁸⁰G.C.C. Planning Dept., *Industrial Estates in Gloucestershire* (c. 1984), 11-13.

²⁸¹*The Times*, 24 Nov. 1953; *Tewkesbury Register*, 15 May 1954.

²⁸²'Visits to Works', *Proceedings of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers* (1952).

²⁸³*Birmingham Daily Post*, 9 Sept. 1967.

Cheltenham area.²⁸⁴ In 1991 defence cuts resulted in a loss of 300 jobs at the Dowty Fuel Systems plant in Cheltenham.²⁸⁵ The acquisition of Dowty Group by TI in 1992 resulted in the closure of the Arle Court headquarters with the loss of 70 jobs.²⁸⁶ The closure of the fuel systems plant in Cheltenham, which had 380 employees, was announced the following year.²⁸⁷

In the immediate post-war period Maple-Martyn were engaged in the production of internal woodwork for pre-fabricated houses, before returning to the furnishing of of cruise ships. They also obtained the contract for fitting out the Southampton Passenger Terminal Ocean Dock.²⁸⁸ H.H. Martyn, which continued as a separate subsidiary of Maple-Martyn, remained nationally important as the suppliers of ornamental metalwork,²⁸⁹ but the demise of Britain's ship building industry led to the company's closure in 1971.²⁹⁰

In 1947 Walker Crossweller employed around 150 people at its Whaddon factory.²⁹¹ The company manufactured thermostatic mixing valves, gas and air flow, pressure and vacuum recorders to the steel, gas, cement, pottery and similar industries with much of its output being exported.²⁹² In the early 1960s it developed a mixer shower control, which worked with British plumbing²⁹³ and by 1968 claimed 70% of the home shower market.²⁹⁴ In 1975 the company was acquired by Reed Building Products²⁹⁵ and subsequently, following a management buyout, became Caradon Mira.²⁹⁶ In 1988 Caradon Mira employed 750 people at Whaddon, Kingsditch and in Gloucester, including 50 researchers in its R & D department.²⁹⁷ In 2001 Mira, then employing 600 people, was acquired by the US company Kohler.²⁹⁸ In 2020 Kohler-Mira UK continued to be based in Whaddon.²⁹⁹

During the Second World War the brewing industry had been relying on reserve stocks, which were exhausted by the end of the hostilities, while labour, hops, bottles and crates were in short supply. Demand exceeded production. In 1945 the Cheltenham Original Brewery merged with the Hereford and Tredegar Brewery,³⁰⁰ changing its name to the Cheltenham & Hereford Breweries in 1947 and moving some production from Hereford to Cheltenham.³⁰¹ In 1955 a hostile takeover attempt was thwarted by the intervention of Whitbread, which acquired a substantial amount of preference capital.³⁰² In 1959 Whitbread encouraged the merger between the company and Stroud Brewery, in which it also had an interest, the resultant company becoming West Country Brewery

284*The Times*, 30 June 1988.

285*The Times*, 12 Apr. 1991.

286*Financial Times*, 4 July 1992.

287*Sandwell Evening Mail*, 2 Dec. 1993.

288*Nottingham Journal*, 31 Mar. 1947; *Glos. Echo*, 26 Jan. 1950.

289*Chelt. Chronicle*, 18 Mar. 1950; *Western Mail*, 8 Aug. 1955; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 30 Oct. 1967.

290GA, D5922/4/4; *Glos. Echo*, 1 Feb. 2018.

291*The Times*, 11 Nov. 1947.

292*The Times*, 17 & 21 Aug. 1961.

293*The Times*, 8 July 1965.

294*The Times*, 17 Apr. 1968.

295*The Times*, 1 July 1975.

296*The Times*, 22 June 1987.

297*Financial Times*, 12 July 1988; GA, PR7.8GS.

298*Western Daily Press*, 23 July 2001.

299<http://www.kohlermira.co.uk/>.

300*Glos. Echo*, 7 Dec. 1945.

301*Chelt. Chronicle*, 20 Sept. 1947.

302*Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Dec. 1955.

Holdings.³⁰³ In anticipation of the expansion of the Cheltenham brewery onto the adjoining grammar school site, the Stroud brewery was sold to Whitbread in 1963.³⁰⁴ In 1964 West Country Brewery Holdings was acquired by Whitbread.³⁰⁵ With the creation of Whitbread-Flowers in 1968, the Flowers brewery in Stratford-on-Avon was closed, with some of its production moving to Cheltenham.³⁰⁶ In 1977 a strike among fork-lift drivers in Stroud, who refused to load a privately-owned lorry, spread to warehousemen and production workers at Cheltenham.³⁰⁷ The company closed its distribution depot in Cheltenham in 1980, with the loss of 47 jobs.³⁰⁸ The brewery, which produced 500,000 barrels a year, was put up for sale in January 1998, but closed in October having failed to secure a buyer.³⁰⁹ In 2000 Whitbread announced the closure of its regional headquarters in St Margaret's Road with the loss of 150 jobs.³¹⁰

In the post-war period industry increasingly moved away from the centre of the town. The Tungum Company, which produced components for aircraft cooling and fuel systems from a non-ferrous alloy³¹¹ had a 'modern factory near the town centre' at the Royal Oak Works, Lower High Street and a sales office at Brandon House, Painswick Road.³¹² They later moved to a 4a. site at the White House, Kingsmead Road, Arle.³¹³ Tungum sold the site in 2006 and moved their business to Tewkesbury.³¹⁴ The precision engineering company Delapena, originally based at the Zona Works in Russell Place³¹⁵, subsequently moved to the former Andy's Candy's site further along the Tewkesbury Road³¹⁶ and later to its current Runnings Road site, where it employed 35 people in 2012.³¹⁷ United Chemists (Ucal) continued to manufacture pharmaceuticals at its site off the London Road, until a number of serious fires in the 1960s led to concerns about the restricted access for fire engines and the danger to surrounding houses. The company was taken over by MacCarthy Pharmaceuticals in 1972 and production in Cheltenham stopped soon after.³¹⁸

Commerce, Offices and Service Industries

The Cheltenham and Gloucestershire building society was a major employer in the centre of the town for more than four decades after the Second World War. In 1947 the Cheltenham and Gloucestershire (C&G) Building Society had assets of over £10 million and reserves in excess of £1 million.³¹⁹ The society acquired a number of properties adjoining its existing headquarters in

303 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 31 Jan. 1959.

304 GA, D4322/1; *Birmingham Post*, 3 July 1963.

305 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 June 1964.

306 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8 July 1968.

307 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 July 1977.

308 *Glos. Echo*, 24 Jan. 2015.

309 *The Independent*, 7 Jan. & 24 Oct. 1998.

310 *Western Daily Press*, 20 Jan. 2000.

311 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 22 July 1950.

312 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 5 June 1948; *Tewkesbury Register*, 10 Nov. 1951

313 *Glos. Echo*, 9 July 1955; *New Scientist* 8 (197), (1960), 521.

314 *Glos. Echo*, 6 June 2008.

315 *Gloucestershire County Handbook* (1956), 54-5.

316 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 Dec. 1958; *Glos. Echo*, 18 Nov. 2015.

317 GA, PR7.8GS; *Bristol Post*, 3 July 2012.

318 *The Times*, 10 Nov. & 9 Dec. 1972; *Glos. Echo*, 25 May 2011.

319 *Glouc. Journal*, 22 Feb. 1947.

Clarence Street³²⁰ in order to develop Cheltenham House, officially opened in 1972.³²¹ Having failed to reach a satisfactory agreement over a council-owned site in Cheltenham for a further expansion of its headquarters, the society acquired a greenfield site at Barnwood on the outskirts of Gloucester in 1987 and moved from the town two years later.³²²

As the county council's policies limited the industrial development of Cheltenham, the council sought to attract commercial companies. Eagle Star insurance began the gradual move of its head office and computer centre to Cheltenham in 1965 and by the time its new building was officially opened in 1968, the company employed around 1,000 staff in the town.³²³ Eagle Star House was extended in 1981, and the company subsequently acquired a 10 a. site at Arle for further expansion. Following the opening of a new computer centre at Arle in 1988, the company employed 1,250 people in Cheltenham.³²⁴ As its expansion continued, in 1990 Eagle Star acquired The Grange and surrounding parkland in Bishop's Cleeve.³²⁵ In 1995 the introduction of a new computer system led to a substantial reduction in back office staff in Cheltenham.³²⁶ In 1998 Eagle Star became part of Zurich Financial Services Group.³²⁷ Following significant losses, the company began cutting jobs in Cheltenham in 2001,³²⁸ transferring its data processing to Switzerland, reducing the workforce in Cheltenham to 1,500.³²⁹ Eagle Star House (by then renamed Eagle Tower) was sold in 2003, after which its office space was let to multiple companies.³³⁰

In the 1970s other financial companies followed Eagle Star to Cheltenham. In 1972 Endsleigh Insurance moved from Southampton Row, London to new offices in Ambrose Street.³³¹ In 1994 plans for a new headquarters building in Little Shurdington were delayed by the discovery of a colony of great crested newts on the site.³³² The firm left Cheltenham on completion of the new building in 1997.³³³ In 1973 Chelsea Building Society acquired the 23,500 sq. ft. of offices and storage space provided by Thirlestaine Hall as its headquarters.³³⁴ The company employed 700 people in the town, when it merged with Yorkshire Building Society in 2010.³³⁵ Following the merger, Thirlestaine Hall was sold and the remaining staff were moved to a site in Charlton Kings.³³⁶

In the mid-1970s the supply of office accommodation outran demand, leading to around 200,00 sq. ft. standing empty by 1977. Following a campaign by the council and local estate agents to promote the town as a business centre, Gulf Oil (G.B.) relocated in 1978 from Hammersmith to The Quadrangle on the corner of Imperial Square.³³⁷ In 1993 Gulf Oil moved to a new purpose-built

320GA, D4322.

321Historic England, 1466801 .

322*Financial Times*, 7 Sep. 1987 & 26 Nov. 1993.

323Isabel Syed, *Eagle Star: A Guide to its History and Archives* (Cheltenham, 1997), 39, 63, 70.

324Syed, *Eagle Star*, 21, 39; *Financial Times*, 12 July 1988.

325*The Times*, 17 Mar. 1990.

326*The Independent*, 8 July 1995.

327*The Times*, 12 June 1999.

328*Financial Times*, 19 Apr. 2001.

329*Western Daily Press*, 19 July 2003.

330*Western Daily Press*, 27 Feb. 2008.

331*The Times*, 7 Apr. 1972.

332*Aberdeen Press & Journal*, 17 June 1994.

333Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 670.

334*Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 Mar. 1973.

335*Western Daily Press*, 1 Apr. 2010.

336*Glos. Echo*, 19 Feb. 2011 & 8 May 2012.

337*Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 Feb. 1978.

headquarters overlooking the racecourse.³³⁸ In 1997 the company was sold to Shell and its Cheltenham office closed a year later with the loss of 200 jobs.³³⁹ In 1979 the printing technology company Linotype-Paul, which had acquired the lease of a factory on the Kingsditch trading estate the previous year, moved its UK headquarters to Chelham House, Bath Road, which had provided a temporary headquarters for the Central Electricity Generating Board 1971-76.³⁴⁰ Chelham House was demolished for housing in 1999.³⁴¹

Two national housebuilders established their headquarters in Cheltenham. Westbury Homes, formed in 1964, moved from Hucclecote on the outskirts of Gloucester to a listed building in Lansdown Road, where it employed 450 people in 1988.³⁴² The company was acquired by York-based Persimmon Homes in 2006.³⁴³ Bovis Homes acquired the Cheltenham builders Herbert W. Tily and Son in 1968, which formed the nucleus of its expansion in the South West.³⁴⁴ The company subsequently moved its administrative headquarters to Cheltenham, moving from Albion House to The Quadrangle, Winchcombe Street and Lansdown Road before leaving the town for Bishops Cleeve in 1999.³⁴⁵

In 1988 Astec Communications, a mobile telecommunications company formed in 1986, established its headquarters at Selby Lodge, Cambray Place.³⁴⁶ By 1994 the company had 50,000 mobile phone customers³⁴⁷ and was employing 60 people.³⁴⁸ In 1996 the company made a loss and in January 1997 was taken over by Vodafone Group, who moved the office to Newbury.³⁴⁹ By April 1996 the educational publishers Stanley Thornes had moved from Leckhampton to Ellenborough House, Wellington Street.³⁵⁰ In 2000 its parent company merged it with Thomas Nelson to create Nelson Thornes, based at Delta House, Bath Road.³⁵¹ The company employed 160 staff in Cheltenham, when it was acquired by Oxford University Press in 2013.³⁵² The company was absorbed into OUP and quit Cheltenham in 2015.³⁵³

Government Offices

In early 1950, a large Ministry of Pensions unit vacated the wartime government offices at Benhall, and an advance party of Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) staff arrived directly after. GCHQ's move, from its immediate post-war home at Eastcote (Middx), had been agreed in principle in late 1948. It formed part of a wider plan, driven by Cold War fears of air attack, to disperse government offices to safer locations. Cheltenham, situated within a region already

338Verey & Brooks, *Glos.* II, 290.

339*Glos. Echo*, 6 June 2008.

340*New Scientist* 84 (1979), 722; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 15 Apr. 1976, 20 Oct. 1977 & 8 Feb. 1979.

341CBC Online, Employment Land Review (2007), Appendix 4.

342*Financial Times*, 12 July 1988; Companies House, 00822538; *Historic England*, 1104386.

343*Birmingham Post*, 27 June 2006.

344*The Times*, 16 Jan. 1968.

345*Financial Times*, 12 July 1988; *Glos. Echo*, 19 May 2015.

346*Newcastle Journal*, 20 Jan. 1988; Companies House, 02023193.

347*Newcastle Journal*, 17 May 1994.

348Companies House, Annual Accounts for YE 30 June 1994.

349Companies House, Annual Accounts for YE 30 June 1996.

350*The Times*, 25 Apr. 1996.

351*The Times*, 13 July 2000.

352*Glos. Echo*, 30 Sep. 2013.

353*Bristol Post*, 23 Apr. 2014.

favoured by the dispersal planners, was selected because Benhall was very well served with GPO landlines (a legacy of its wartime use by a large US Army logistics headquarters), fortuitously combined with the impending departure of the Pensions staff.³⁵⁴ Empty wartime offices were also taken up by GCHQ at a second government site, at Oakley, which had enough space for the erection (1952-4) of a large new headquarters building and other facilities.³⁵⁵ The town saw the move as 'an important step forward, for 1,800 permanent civil servants will be gradually transplanted here from London, men and women of the kind that the town desires to absorb.'³⁵⁶ Taking on many local recruits (900 by 1953)³⁵⁷ as technical trainees and apprentices, as well as in clerical and executive grades, the 'Foreign Office' (as GCHQ was generally known locally) soon became Cheltenham's largest employer.³⁵⁸ Within the county as a whole, only the NHS employed more, and by 2014 the workforce had grown to around 5,300 people.³⁵⁹ In 1968 the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) moved to Rodney House with 29 of its 82 London staff.³⁶⁰ The Polytechnics Central Admissions System (PCAS) was set up in 1985 within the same five-storey building, providing 58,000 sq.ft of office space.³⁶¹ New offices in Fulton House were officially opened in 1990.³⁶² The two bodies amalgamated to form UCAS in 1993.³⁶³ When UCAS moved out of the town centre in 1999 to the former Gulf Oil premises on New Barn Road, Prestbury, its vacated offices were taken over by the financial software company Marlborough Stirling.³⁶⁴

Retail, Tourism and Hospitality

Throughout the post-war period retail, tourism and hospitality have been important to Cheltenham's economy. The town proclaimed itself as the 'shopping centre of the West', the 'Gateway to the Cotswolds', and the 'halfway house' on the road from London to Wales.³⁶⁵ Although the opening of the M4 in 1971 reduced its significance for traffic heading to Wales, it continued to offer the widest selection of hotels for tourists to the Cotswolds.³⁶⁶ The town has also marketed itself as a conference centre and festival town.³⁶⁷

Cavendish House remained a dominant presence on the Promenade, becoming part of the House of Fraser group in 1970.³⁶⁸ Other Cheltenham department stores, such as Shirer and Lance's in the Colonnade, Drake's in Winchcombe Street and E.L. Ward on the corner of North Street,³⁶⁹ closed

354Peter Freeman, *How GCHQ Came To Cheltenham* (2002), 10-16.

355Freeman, *How GCHQ Came To Cheltenham*, 15, 26.

356*Gloucestershire Echo*, 15 Feb 1950.

357Freeman, *How GCHQ Came To Cheltenham*, 30.

358Freeman, *How GCHQ Came To Cheltenham*, 33-34.

359Sunday Times, 21 Sep. 2014.

360UCAS News 33 (Spring 2011).

361*Staffs. Sentinel*, 4 Feb. 1986; Michael Harloe et al., *Place, Policy and Politics* (1990), 107.

362*The Times*, 20 Mar. 1990.

363*The Independent*, 9 Feb. 1993.

364*Birmingham Post*, 26 Apr. 1999.

365*Glos. Echo*, 1 Feb. 1947; *Cheltenham Spa Official Guide* (1960s), 15, 28, 33.

366Heart of England Tourist Board, *The Cotswolds* (c.1985).

367*Chelt. Chronicle*, 2 Sep. 1950; *Glos. Countryside*, 9 (10) (1957), 260; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 20 Jan. 1973; CBC, *Visit Cheltenham The Festival Town* (2019).

368*The Times*, 4 Dec. 1962 & 9 July 1970.

369GA, D4322/1; PR22.33GS.

between 1967 and 1979.³⁷⁰ In 1951 the London fashion retailer Peter Robinson opened a branch in Cheltenham,³⁷¹ introducing the novelty of self-service to fashion retail.³⁷² In the 1970s the slow development of multi-storey car parking and pedestrianization threatened the town's status as a regional shopping centre.³⁷³

Following the opening of the Regent Arcade and Montpellier Courtyard in the 1980s, Cheltenham regained its status as an important regional retail centre.³⁷⁴ Regent Arcade provided 78 shops, anchored by BHS and Mothercare stores, and parking for 540 cars.³⁷⁵ It created a shopping route between the east end of the High Street and the Promenade and was linked to Cavendish House by a bridge at first floor level.³⁷⁶ The Beechwood Arcade, opened in 1991 north of the High Street to the east of the Regent Arcade, was anchored by a branch of Debenhams.³⁷⁷ Hoopers, a department store specialising in designer labels, occupied the former Promenade post office building between 1987 and 2003.³⁷⁸ Liberty's, the London department store, also had a branch in the Promenade for almost a decade from 1988.³⁷⁹ Both the Regent and Beechwood arcades were designed as tourist attractions as well as retail hubs. The glass-roofed atrium of the Regent Arcade was dominated by the Wishing Fish Clock designed by local artist Kit Williams,³⁸⁰ while the Beechwood Arcade offered a modern-day Winter Garden.³⁸¹ The tourist attractions of the town were supplemented by the opening of the Gallery of Fashion at the Pittville Pump Room and the Gustav Holst Birthplace museum in Clarence Road.³⁸²

In 1998 the town introduced the short-lived 'Noddy train' shuttle service to link its shopping areas in a bid to counteract the attractions of the Cribbs Causeway shopping mall outside Bristol.³⁸³ Other efforts to encourage out of area shoppers was the introduction of a German-style Christmas market in wooden huts in the Promenade in 2005³⁸⁴ and a £1million refurbishment of Cavendish House in 2009.³⁸⁵ The arrival of Waitrose on the St James site and the redevelopment of the Lower High street further dispersed the town's shopping areas.³⁸⁶ The town's retail sector weathered the effects of the 2008 banking crisis³⁸⁷, and in 2014 Cheltenham was ranked among the top 50 UK shopping destinations.³⁸⁸ In 2013 the museum and art gallery, rebranded as The Wilson, reopened after a £6 million refurbishment and expansion.³⁸⁹ The town also had an increasing reputation as a

³⁷⁰*Glos. Echo*, 11 July 2015.

³⁷¹*Yorks. Post*, 5 Dec. 1951.

³⁷²Hulton Archive, HL8787, 21 Nov. 1951; *The People*, 23 Aug. 1953.

³⁷³*Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 Dec. 1975.

³⁷⁴*The Times*, 30 June 1988.

³⁷⁵*Glos. Echo*, 21 Nov. 2019.

³⁷⁶*Financial Times*, 15 Mar. 1985.

³⁷⁷*Glos. Echo*, 25 Feb. 2011.

³⁷⁸*Cheltenham Bicentenary Commemorative Programme* (1988), back cover; *Western Daily Press*, 21 May 2003.

³⁷⁹*The Times*, 7 Nov.1988 ;*The Independent*, 13 June 1996.

³⁸⁰*The Times*, 18 June 1994.

³⁸¹*Western Daily Press*, 28 Aug. 1999; Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed*, 69.

³⁸²Heart of England Tourist Board, *The Cotswolds*, 33.

³⁸³*Western Daily Press*, 15 June 1999.

³⁸⁴*Glos. Echo*, 8 Nov. 2008.

³⁸⁵*Glos. Echo*, 11 Nov. 2009.

³⁸⁶*Western Daily Press*, 14 Sep. 2000.

³⁸⁷*Western Daily Press*, 2 July 2011.

³⁸⁸*Glos. Echo*, 29 Sep. 2014.

³⁸⁹*The Times*, 2 Nov. 2013.

'foodie capital' with a wide range of restaurants.³⁹⁰

Within the confines of the borough boundaries there was limited potential for out-of-town retail development. There was some development to the west of the town. The building supplies company Sharpe and Fisher moved from Pittville Street to Gloucester Road in the 1970s.³⁹¹ From its Cheltenham head office the company developed a network of 38 branches, before being taken over by Travis Perkins in 1999.³⁹² Texas Homecare opened a distinctive round building on the old gasometer site in Gloucester Road in the 1980s, before moving to the Northern Relief Road in the 1990s.³⁹³ A Tesco superstore opened on the former gasworks site alongside the Tewkesbury Road in 1994.³⁹⁴ The council consistently objected to the development of large-scale retail in neighbouring parishes (under different councils), worried by the likely adverse effect on town centre shops.³⁹⁵ In the 21st century the relocation of aerospace companies allowed out-of-town retail development at The Reddings, which expanded onto adjoining greenbelt land.³⁹⁶

The Cheltenham Business Improvement District was established in 2016, covering the central retail and entertainment area of the High Street, Promenade, Montpellier and Brewery Quarter.³⁹⁷ In 2016 tourism employed 3,607 people in Cheltenham and was worth over £150 million to the town,³⁹⁸ but visitor numbers were declining.³⁹⁹ Marketing Cheltenham, a council backed initiative, was launched in 2017 to further promote tourism beyond the niche markets of the sporting and cultural festivals.⁴⁰⁰ Following the collapse of the department store BHS, redevelopment plans for the Regent Arcade involved a mixed development with reduced retail space.⁴⁰¹ The Beechwood Arcade closed and was demolished, being replaced by a 115,000 sq. ft John Lewis department store.⁴⁰² Following the takeover of House of Fraser by Sports Direct in 2018, an agreement with the landlord secured the short-term future of Cavendish House.⁴⁰³ High rents and business rates resulted in the closure of a number of long-established shops even before the advent of Covid-19 in 2020.⁴⁰⁴

The development of the town as a festival and conference centre depended on the availability of sufficient hotel accommodation. In 1946 Cheltenham had 9 licensed hotels, compared with 12 in Bath and 16 in Harrogate.⁴⁰⁵ Twelve hotels advertised in the programme of the Contemporary Literature Festival in 1949,⁴⁰⁶ while there were 29 hotels and guest houses in the 1960s official town guide.⁴⁰⁷ There was disappointment that the music festival, while attracting a good, regional

390 *Liverpool Echo*, 21 Feb. 2012; *Glos. Echo*, 7 Sep. 2017; *Cotswold Life*, 22 Aug. 2019.

391 GA, D4322/1; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 3 May 1979.

392 *Birmingham Post*, 26 Oct. 1999.

393 GA, K884/1/19; Timothy Mowl, *Cheltenham Betrayed* (Tiverton, 1995), 54.

394 *Construction News*, 29 Apr. 1993; *The Grocer*, 26 Sep. 2019.

395 GA, K193/111; DC13/1, 127-8; DC28/1, 1098; DC39/2, 33.

396 *Glos. Echo*, 7 Apr. 2009 & 16 Jan. 2010.

397 *Glos. Echo*, 30 Apr. 2016.

398 *Western Daily Press*, 26 Jan. 2018.

399 *Glos. Echo*, 28 Dec. 2016.

400 *Western Daily Press*, 27 Nov. 2017.

401 *Glos. Echo*, 18 Oct. 2018.

402 *Glos. Echo*, 25 Oct. 2018.

403 *Glos. Echo*, 13 Dec. 2018.

404 *Glos. Echo*, 16 Apr. 2020.

405 *Glos. Echo*, 8 Mar. 1946.

406 GA, PQ7.8.

407 *Cheltenham Spa Official Guide* (c 1960), 57-89.

audience, did not become a 'holiday' festival like Edinburgh or Salzburg.⁴⁰⁸ In 1950 the Spa and Entertainments Officer wanted more hotel accommodation in the town, as the maximum number of delegates that could be accommodated was 600, reduced to 400 in the summer tourist season. Larger conferences had over 1,000 delegates.⁴⁰⁹ Local hoteliers conversely wanted conferences limited to the winter, when occupancy rates were low.⁴¹⁰ In the 1960s the plans for the redevelopment of the town centre included a conference centre and hotel on the Plough site.⁴¹¹ In 1973 the Golden Valley hotel, Gloucester Road, the first new hotel to be built in Cheltenham for 40 years, provided conference facilities and accommodation for 200 guests.⁴¹² The high value of residential land led a number of smaller hotels and guest houses to close, but in 2006 the town's hotel sector retained a capacity of around 2,500 beds.⁴¹³ In the 1970s the possibility of building a concert hall on the St James's station site was investigated, but rejected, although the provision of an entertainments centre/concert hall, enhancing the facilities long offered by the Town Hall, remained a long-term aspiration.⁴¹⁴ In 1999 there were rival proposals for a conference centre on the Whitbread site on the High Street and at the racecourse in Prestbury,⁴¹⁵ with the Centaur centre opening at the racecourse in 2004.⁴¹⁶

408 Frank Howes, *The Cheltenham Festival* (1965), 35.

409 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 2 Sep. 1950.

410 *Chelt. Chronicle*, 4 Nov. 1950.

411 *Birmingham Post*, 1 July 1966.

412 *Birmingham Daily Post*, 2 Mar. 1973.

413 CBC Online, *Local Plan Second Review* (2006), 80.

414 GA, PF4.79, 66, 93.

415 *Western Daily Press*, 7 July 1999.

416 *The Guardian*, 15 Mar. 2004.

Social History

Jan Broadway

Social Structure

In the decades immediately following the Second World War the age profile of the population remained comparatively stable. Around a fifth of the population were aged under 15 and around 9% were over 65. By 1981 the proportion of the population that was over 65 had doubled and has since remained at the same proportion. The proportion of managers and professionals within the working population was comparatively stable at around 22% from the 1940s to the 1970s, increasing to 28% by 1981, but returning to the earlier proportion in 1991. By 2001 the proportion in managerial and professional occupations had increased to 31% and had reached 37% in 2011.⁴¹⁷ In 1962 it was estimated that there were around 9,200 industrial workers in Cheltenham, of whom c. 45% were employed by companies outside the borough.⁴¹⁸ Conversely, only 2,000 GCHQ employees settled in the town itself, rather than the 3,400 originally expected.⁴¹⁹

While nationally the country saw an increase in unemployment following the end of hostilities, Cheltenham was largely unaffected.⁴²⁰ During the first two post-war decades the unemployment rate in Cheltenham was below the national average, but a decline in the aircraft industry and restrictions on the introduction of new industry into the town meant that by 1967 unemployment had reached the national average of 2.4%.⁴²¹ The introduction of new commercial and government employers into the town in the 1970s meant that unemployment returned to below the national average.⁴²² The town continued to enjoy comparatively low unemployment into the 21st century, having a rate of 3.8% in 2001.⁴²³ The effect of the 2008 banking crisis on the town's economy led to an increase in local unemployment, which stood at 4.6% in 2011.⁴²⁴

Health and Welfare Provision

On 5 July 1948 all the Cheltenham hospitals joined the National Health Service under the administration of the South West Regional Board.⁴²⁵ The county infirmary in Swindon Road, formerly the public assistance institution, became St Paul's hospital and was designated a mental hospital.⁴²⁶ Part of the former infirmary was used to house unmarried mothers and their children.⁴²⁷ By 1953 the premises were being used to accommodate homeless families and was separated from the hospital as the Swindon Road Hostel.⁴²⁸ In 1953 the General & Eye Hospital had 224 beds.⁴²⁹

⁴¹⁷Census, 1951 – 2011.

⁴¹⁸GA, K149/41.

⁴¹⁹GA, PR4.82, 4.

⁴²⁰Glos. *Echo*, 16 Nov. 1945 & 22 Mar. 1946.

⁴²¹*Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 Sep. 1967.

⁴²²*The Times*, 5 May 1989.

⁴²³Census, 2001.

⁴²⁴*Glouc. Citizen*, 17 Dec. 2009; Census, 2011.

⁴²⁵Glos. *Echo*, 5 July 1948.

⁴²⁶GA, GCC/COU/1/1/24, 4 Nov. 1948.

⁴²⁷GA, GCC/COU/1/1/25, 12 Jul. 1950.

⁴²⁸GA, GCC/COU/1/1/26, 28 Apr. 1954.

⁴²⁹GA, GCC/COU/1/1/26, 22 Apr. 1953.

During the war the county council had agreed to the conversion of a property it had acquired in Pittville into the Sunnyside maternity home under the Emergency Hospital Scheme.⁴³⁰ In 1946 the county council required the return of Sunnyside, so that it could be converted to its originally intended use as an old people's home. The Ministry of Health proposed the erection of six temporary huts in the grounds of the General Hospital, until a more permanent building could be provided.⁴³¹ In 1948 the South West Regional Board acquired Sunnyside as a maternity home on a five year lease.⁴³² Sunnyside was officially opened as an old people's home in June 1954.⁴³³ Thereafter a maternity hospital was provided on the Swindon Road site and administered with St Paul's hospital.⁴³⁴

The Colbalt Appeal Fund was founded in 1964 by Dr Fred Hanna, a consultant radiotherapist, to raise funds to buy a Cobalt Radiotherapy Unit.⁴³⁵ A 20 bed Colbalt Unit for the treatment of cancer at the General Hospital opened in 1966.⁴³⁶ The 3D body scanner acquired in 1979 was the first in clinical use in the world.⁴³⁷ The Colbalt Unit moved to Linton House, Thirlestaine Road in 1996,⁴³⁸ opening an MRI imaging centre in 2005.⁴³⁹ A new breast clinic, built in the grounds of Linton House, opened in 2010.⁴⁴⁰

The 20-bed Nuffield Cotswold Nursing Home in Talbot Road opened in 1973, following concern about an acute shortage of private beds in the area.⁴⁴¹ In 2000 it moved to a converted former Dowty building in Hatherley Lane as the 38-bed Cheltenham and Gloucester Nuffield Hospital.⁴⁴² In 2015 it launched a specialist sports injuries clinic.⁴⁴³

After children's services were moved into the General Hospital, the former children's hospital became the Battledown Centre for disabled children.⁴⁴⁴ In 2006 the Battledown children's ward was controversially closed to in-patients.⁴⁴⁵ In 1996 the St Paul's maternity hospital was closed and replaced by a new maternity unit at the General Hospital.⁴⁴⁶ A new medical centre was built in the St Paul's grounds.⁴⁴⁷ The St Luke's wing of the general hospital opened in 2009, housing intensive care and high dependency units to replace the Delancey hospital.⁴⁴⁸

In 1946 the Cheltenham Old People's Housing Society was established on the initiative of Lilian Faithfull J.P., former principal of the Ladies' College. A house in Pittville was acquired to provide accommodation for 20 aged residents.⁴⁴⁹ In 1948 the county council concluded an agreement with

430GA, GCC/COU/1/1/23, 17 Jan. & 18 Apr. 1945.

431GA, GCC/COU/1/1/24, 17 Jul. 1946.

432*Glouc. Citizen*, 7 Apr. 1948; GCC/COU/1/1/25, 1 Nov. 1950.

433GA, GCC/COU/1/1/26, 19 Jan. 1955.

434GA, HO9; *Geographia Cheltenham Street Plan* (c1960).

435*Western Daily Press*, 12 May 2010.

436*Tewkesbury Register*, 19 Nov. 1965; *Birmingham Post*, 17 Sep. 1966.

437*Birmingham Daily Post*, 19 Sep. 1979.

438*Glos. Echo*, 30 Mar. 2013.

439*Western Daily Press*, 8 May 2010.

440*Glos. Echo*, 30 Aug. 2008 & 21 Dec. 2010;.

441*Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 Jan. 1973.

442Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 292; *Sunday Times*, 6 Apr. 2003.

443*Glos. Echo*, 28 Jan. 2015.

444*Glos. Echo*, 26 Mar. 2010.

445*Glos. Echo*, 23 Dec. 2008.

446*The Independent*, 11 July 1997; Verey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 244.

447*Western Daily Press*, 23 Dec. 1999.

448Glos. Hospitals NHS Trust, *Acute Angle* (June 2008), 25; *Glos. Echo*, 11 Apr. & 24 June 2009.

449*Glos. Echo*, 21 Mar. 1947.

the charity to provide two homes in Cheltenham.⁴⁵⁰ A third home, Faithfull House, was registered as an old people's home by January 1952.⁴⁵¹ The charity also ran a home at The Knole, St Mark's.⁴⁵² In 2007 the charity changed its name to Lillian Faithfull Homes (subsequently Lillian Faithfull Care)⁴⁵³, which in 2020 ran four care homes in Cheltenham.⁴⁵⁴ The boy's orphanage in St Margaret's Road closed in 1956;⁴⁵⁵ the building was converted to an old people's home with the support of Sir George Dowty. It closed in 2018.⁴⁵⁶ In the 1950s bungalows were built in Pope's Close, within the grounds of The Elms, and one-bedroom flats at Alstone Court, Alstone Lane to provide sheltered housing for the elderly.⁴⁵⁷ In the 1960s the site of Arle House was used to provide accommodation for the elderly.⁴⁵⁸ In 1978 the council earmarked a vacant site in Winchcombe Street, then used for car parking, to provide flats for elderly sheltered accommodation. Robert Harvey House, built a decade later, provided 80 beds in 2005.⁴⁵⁹ In 2012 a new care home opened on the site of the former Monkscroft primary school. Run by The Orders of St John Care Trust, it took residents from Arle House and Eilerslie, Pittville.⁴⁶⁰ In 2013 the trust opened a further 81-bed care home, built on a former factory site in Windsor Street.⁴⁶¹ The Wentworth Court, a 62-bed specialist dementia home opened in 2015, on the site of the former Arle House nursing home.⁴⁶²

The Cheltenham Old People's Welfare Association was formed in 1948, when it had 80 members and met weekly in the Y.M.C.A. hut in Royal Well.⁴⁶³ The association provided a Meals on Wheels and a visiting service.⁴⁶⁴ As the Cheltenham Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee the charity continues in existence in 2020.⁴⁶⁵

In 1959 L.G. Northcroft of Spirax-Sarco purchased a house in Overton Road and the Rotary Club began raising £10,000 for its conversion into a Cheshire Home.⁴⁶⁶ In 1962 there were 23 patients.⁴⁶⁷ The home was extended and extensively renovated in 1977⁴⁶⁸ and moved to Leckhampton in 1990.⁴⁶⁹

As well as care homes, from the 1970s onwards there were many private developments, both new-build and conversions, aimed specifically at those of retirement age.⁴⁷⁰ By 2015 there was some

450GA, GCC/COU/1/1/25, 31 Oct. 1951.

451GA, GCC/COU/1/1/25, 16 Jan. 1952.

452GA, GCC/COU/1/1/26, 15 Jul. 1953.

453FCA, Mutuels Public Register, 12952R; Charity No. 1122183; Company No. 6461263.

454<https://www.lilianfaithfull.co.uk/>

455GA, GCC/COU/1/1/27, 11 Jul. 1956.

456GA, GCC/COU/1/1/28, 21 Jan. 1959; *Glos. Echo*, 15 Nov. 2008 & 22 Feb. 2018.

457GA, GCC/COU/1/1/28, 17 Jul. 1957; *Chelt. Gazetteer*, 5, 137.

458GA, K577/2/14; DC137/4/18.

459GA, PF4.79, 16, 20-1; CBC Online, *A Housing Strategy For Older People in Cheltenham 2005-08* (Draft, 2005),

460*Glos. Echo*, 21 Sep. 2012.

461*Western Daily Press*, 10 Nov. 2011; *Glos. Echo*, 6 Mar. 2013.

462*Glos. Echo*, 1 May 2015.

463*Glos. Echo*, 11 Sep. 1948.

464Cheltenham Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee, *Our Story* (1995)

465Charity Commission, No. 212051.

466*Gloucestershire Countryside* (Dec. 1959), 320.

467*Tewkesbury Register*, 9 Nov. 1962.

468*Cheshire Smile* (Summer 1978), 11.

469Verrey & Brooks, *Glos. II*, 293.

470*Chelt. Gazetteer*, 134.

concern that the market had become saturated, and that office space in the town centre was being lost.⁴⁷¹

Leisure and Culture

The Cheltenham Cultural Council was formed in 1944 at a meeting organised by the Rotary Club to address the 'right use' of leisure after the war.⁴⁷² The Cheltenham Esperanto Society affiliated a few months later.⁴⁷³ By the autumn of 1946 nearly 50 societies were associated with the council,⁴⁷⁴ which was based at the School of Art in St Margaret's Road and also had individual members.⁴⁷⁵ Following a meeting arranged by the council at the Rotunda, the Cheltenham and District Naturalists' Society was formed in 1948.⁴⁷⁶ The council published a magazine⁴⁷⁷ and arranged a winter programme of talks in addition to supporting other cultural events, but by 1950 was in financial trouble.⁴⁷⁸ It was disbanded in 1953.⁴⁷⁹ In 1966 the Cheltenham Arts Council was established as a charity to foster and promote the arts in Cheltenham and the surrounding area.⁴⁸⁰ In 2020 the Cheltenham Arts Council had 56 member societies, encompassing the visual arts, music, drama, literature and history.⁴⁸¹

In 1947 the Victory Fund committee purchased Nelson House, Trafalgar Street as premises for a club for ex-services personnel.⁴⁸² The club moved to Burlington House, Lypiatt Road in 2002.⁴⁸³ The New Club, which had seen declining numbers in the decades before the war, began to admit lady members in 1950.⁴⁸⁴ By 1962 it had 560 members, of which two thirds lived within six miles.⁴⁸⁵ In 1970 the New Club sold the freehold of the Imperial Square premises and moved to Montpellier Parade as tenants of Eagle Star.⁴⁸⁶

The civic playhouse opened in 1945, hosting 30 productions and two drama festivals in its first year.⁴⁸⁷ The civic players were formed to relieve the burden on the individual local amateur dramatic societies of producing sufficient plays to fill the programme, which featured over 80 plays in the next four years.⁴⁸⁸ In 1957 the council leased the building to the Cheltenham Theatre and Arts Club, who obtained guarantees from the five amateur companies that regularly produced shows.⁴⁸⁹ Since that time the theatre has been run by volunteers, becoming a registered charity in

471Glos. *Echo*, 25 Aug. 2015.

472Glos. *Echo*, 29 Mar. 1944.

473Glos. *Echo*, 11 Sep. 1944.

474Glos. *Echo*, 8 Nov. 1946.

475Glos. *Echo*, 4 Apr. 1946.

476Glos. *Echo*, 22 Jan. 1948.

477GA, PQ6.9GS

478Glos. *Echo*, 17 May 1950.

479GA, D5130/3.

480Charity Commission, No. 273501.

481<http://www.cheltenhamartscouncil.co.uk/>.

482Glos. *Echo*, 18 Mar. 1947.

483<https://thevictoryclub.org/>.

484Neil Parrack, *The New Club at Imperial Square* (Cheltenham, 2012), 110.

485Parrack, *The New Club*, 122.

486Parrack, *The New Club*, 128.

487Glos. *Echo*, 13 April 1946.pro

488Glos. *Echo*, 10 Apr. 1950; CW/63G792PLA.

489Tewkesbury Register, 4 Oct. 1957.

2001.⁴⁹⁰

A community art gallery moved into the Proscenium building in Montpellier Gardens in 2007, securing a 25 year lease from the borough council in 2013.⁴⁹¹ Chapel Arts, a commercial multi-purpose gallery and arts space, opened in the former Baptist chapel in Knapp Road in 2017.⁴⁹² The Town Hall, designed as municipally-run concert and entertainment venue, continued to offer a varied programme throughout the year, and was regularly used for festival events.⁴⁹³ The Opera House continued as a professional repertory theatre under the management of Wilfred Simpson, who produced his sixteenth pantomime in 1954/5.⁴⁹⁴ When he was forced to retire due to ill health, the theatre was bought by the council in October 1955 with the support of the Arts Council.⁴⁹⁵ Eighteen months later the council leased the loss-making theatre to a company led by Frank Maddox of the Theatre Royal, Bath.⁴⁹⁶ Continuing losses resulted in the company closing the theatre in June 1959. Led by Margaret Davies of the Ellenborough Hotel and assisted by Cyril Wood, director of the South Western Arts Association, the Cheltenham Theatre Association was formed and raised £4,000. In October 1959 the association was granted a three year lease by the council.⁴⁹⁷ The theatre re-opened as the Everyman repertory theatre in May 1960.⁴⁹⁸ In June 1961 the theatre closed once more, but the agreement of its creditors to a moratorium allowed it to survive.⁴⁹⁹ In 1983 the theatre closed for three years during a major refurbishment, as part of the Regent Arcade development.⁵⁰⁰ In 1995 financial pressures led the Everyman to abandon repertory and become a receiving theatre.⁵⁰¹ In 2011 the Everyman underwent further refurbishment.⁵⁰² In 1945 there were six cinemas in Cheltenham: the Ritz (Lower High Street), Palace (High Street), Regal (Promenade), Coliseum (Albion Street), Gaumont (Winchcombe Street) and Daffodil (Suffolk Parade).⁵⁰³ The Palace closed in 1954, as the building was too narrow to be converted to show widescreen or 3D films and became retail premises.⁵⁰⁴ In 1955 the Gaumont (later the Odeon) began presenting live shows, hosting the Beatles and Rolling Stones in the 1960s.⁵⁰⁵ The Daffodil became a bingo hall in 1963⁵⁰⁶, followed by the Ritz in 1964⁵⁰⁷ and the Coliseum in 1974.⁵⁰⁸ The Regal was renamed the ABC in 1962 and closed in 1981, after which the building was demolished and replaced by an office block.⁵⁰⁹ The Odeon survived as a cinema until 2006, when a new

490Charity Commission 1088889; *Western Daily Press*, 7 Apr. 2015.

491*Glos. Echo*, 17 Oct. 2013.

492*Glos. Echo*, 18 Feb. 2017.

493<https://www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk/>.

494*The Stage*, 6 Jan. 1955.

495*Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 July & 1 Nov. 1955, 13 June 1956.

496*The Stage*, 14 Feb. 1957.

497*Glos. Countryside* (Dec. 1959), 326.

498*Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 May 1960.

499*The Stage*, 21 Sept. 1967.

500*The Stage*, 20 Mar. 1986; See Topography and Settlement, Urban Redevelopment, From 1973.

501*The Stage*, 23 Mar. 1995.

502*Glouc.. Citizen*, 3 Oct. 2011.

503*Glos. Echo*, 13 Nov. 1945.

504*Glos. Echo*, 26 Apr. 2018.

505*Glos. Echo*, 13 Sept. 2018 & 3 Jan. 2019.

506*Glos. Echo*, 5 Dec. 2016.

507*Glos. Echo*, 16 Aug. 2014.

508*Glos. Echo*, 6 Dec. 2016.

509*Glos. Echo*, 30 Aug. 2018; *Cotswold Life* (Nov. 1982), 42.

multiplex opened in the Brewery Centre.⁵¹⁰ A branch of Gala Bingo opened in the Brewery in 2007, but closed in 2008. Ace Bingo in the former Ritz cinema building, the last surviving bingo hall in the town, closed in 2015.⁵¹¹

In 1946 four public houses were closed by magistrates, including the bomb damaged Apple Tree, Russell Place. The Swindon Arms, Swindon Street, having 9 other licensed houses within 440 yds, was allowed a licence with the provision that it must be renovated. The Noah's Ark, St George's Street, having 38 licensed houses with 440 yds, was refused. Also refused was the Central Inn, Bennington Street and Brunswick Arms, Brunswick Street.⁵¹² In 1960 the Benhall Residents Association opposed the building of a pub on the estate. When a referendum was held, 567 local residents voted against and 251 in favour. As more than 200 people were in favour, the magistrates granted the licence.⁵¹³ In 1968 there were 11 public houses owned by five breweries in the immediate vicinity of the High Street, in addition to the Plough Hotel and a Berni Inn.⁵¹⁴ Despite concerns being raised over the closure of pubs,⁵¹⁵ prior to Covid-19 Cheltenham's pub culture remained robust. In 2016 the Sandford Park Alehouse won CAMRA's national pub of the year award and the Cheltenham and Gloucester Beer Week took place in September.⁵¹⁶

The Sandford Park open-air pool remained popular⁵¹⁷, and with a record attendance in 1955 made a profit for the first time since it opened.⁵¹⁸ In the 1960s an application to erect a covered pool on the site was rejected.⁵¹⁹ Folly (Tommy Taylors) Lane was preferred for the site of the new municipal baths,⁵²⁰ which opened in 1971.⁵²¹ These replaced the Alstone Baths, which closed a few years later and were demolished in the 1980s.⁵²² As Pittville became the focus for the development of the town's leisure facilities,⁵²³ the lido declined and the site was considered for redevelopment. In 1996 it was taken over by a charitable trust on a 25-year lease (renewed for 35 years in 2019).⁵²⁴ Following a £700,000 refurbishment in 2006, it officially reopened in May 2008⁵²⁵ and around 600 season passes were sold that year.⁵²⁶ In 2004 the large number of groups and clubs running sessions at the Pittville pool led to complaints, that there were insufficient opportunities for individual swimmers to use the facilities.⁵²⁷ Following its refurbishment after the 2007 floods, the Pittville leisure centre attracted 900 members, with the pool being particularly popular.⁵²⁸

510*Western Daily Press*, 7 Nov. 2006.

511*Glos. Echo*, 16 Aug. 2014 & 21 Mar. 2015.

512 *Glos. Echo*, 8 Mar. 1946.

513GA, D11753/1.

514GA, D4322/1.

515*Glos. Echo*, 5 Apr. 2012, 14 Aug. 2014.

516*Glos. Echo*, 10 Mar. & 15 Sep. 2016.

517*Glos. Echo*, 12 May 1950.

518*Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Sep. 1955.

519GA, K577/2/40.

520GA, K577/2/53.

521*Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 May 1971.

522GA, K767/1/1.

523GA, PF4.79, 8.

524CBC Online, Cabinet, Lease of Sandford Park Lido (5 Nov. 2019).

525*Glos. Echo*, 5 May 2008.

526*Glos. Echo*, 23 Apr. 2009.

527*Western Daily Press*, 11 Feb. 2004.

528*Glos. Echo*, 3 Dec. 2008.

Festivals

The first Cheltenham music festival was planned during the war and took place over four days in June 1945 at the Town Hall, featuring a programme of talks and three evening concerts by the London Philharmonic Orchestra. It featured works by William Walton, Benjamin Britten and Arthur Bliss, conducted by the composers.⁵²⁹ From the outset the festival programme emphasised works by contemporary British composers.⁵³⁰ The competitive music festival, which had begun in 1926 but been suspended during the war, resumed in May 1946.⁵³¹ In 1947 the Hallé Orchestra led by John Barbirolli began a 15 year association with the contemporary music festival.⁵³² Although the festival made a loss, councillors felt it compensated for this by generating publicity for the town and increasing the number of visitors.⁵³³ In 1948 the festival was extended to two weeks. In order to secure Arts Council funding, which was not available to local authorities, Cheltenham Arts Festivals Ltd. was established as a non-profit making company, with the council having a majority on the board.⁵³⁴

The first Cheltenham Festival of Contemporary Literature, organised by Cheltenham Arts Festivals Ltd. took place in October 1949.⁵³⁵ Exhibitions were run in conjunction with both festivals.⁵³⁶ In 1951 Cheltenham was one of the primary centres for the Festival of Britain with exhibitions of Architecture, Contemporary Art and Cotswold Crafts and open-air performances of *As You Like It* in Pittville Park running alongside the music festival in June.⁵³⁷ The lecture programme for the first Contemporary Arts Festival in May 1955 was shortened due to the General Election, but the exhibitions and film programme continued as planned.⁵³⁸ In 1957 the Art and Literature festivals were amalgamated, running for a fortnight from 21 September.⁵³⁹ There was no literature festival in 1961 or 1964,⁵⁴⁰ while the music festival received poor reviews in 1961 and made a substantial loss in 1963.⁵⁴¹ In response events were increasingly built around the core festivals to increase their attraction.⁵⁴²

Under the artistic direction of the poet P.J. Kavanagh in the 1970s the literature festival established a strong reputation for poetry and for popularising the Cotswold school of poets.⁵⁴³ In 1980 the festival included 15 events over 4 days and sold 2, 046 tickets.⁵⁴⁴ In 1982 it was described as having been transformed 'from a kind of cathedral of the arts for a local elite to an untidy, sprawling, magnificent world of books and ideas'.⁵⁴⁵ In 1990 there were 65 events over 8 days and 13,621 tickets were sold.⁵⁴⁶

⁵²⁹*Glos. Echo*, 7 June 1945.

⁵³⁰*Glos. Echo*, 30 July & 25 Nov. 1946; Frank Howes, *The Cheltenham Festival* (1965), 1.

⁵³¹*Chelt. Chronicle*, 27 Jan. 1940; *Glos. Echo*, 20 May 1946.

⁵³²*Western Daily Press*, 3 Apr. 1947; Howes, *Cheltenham Festival*, 10.

⁵³³*Glos. Echo*, 27 July 1946; *Chelt. Chronicle*, 12 July 1947.

⁵³⁴Howes, *Cheltenham Festival*, 10-11; *Glos. Echo*, 8 July & 18 Sep. 1948.

⁵³⁵GA, PQ7.8 (1-3) GS; *Western Daily Press*, 8 Oct. 1949.

⁵³⁶*Glos. Echo*, 30 June 1948, 30 Sept. 1949 & 3 Oct. 1950.

⁵³⁷*Glos. Countryside* (Apr.-June 1951), 387, 397; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 29 June 1951.

⁵³⁸*Birmingham Daily Post*, 25 Apr. 1955.

⁵³⁹*The Stage*, 1 Aug. 1957.

⁵⁴⁰Nicola Bennett, *Speaking Volumes* (Stroud, 1999), 41, 47.

⁵⁴¹*Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 & 24 July 1961; Howes, *Cheltenham Festival*, 41.

⁵⁴²*Birmingham Daily Post*, 7 July 1964.

⁵⁴³*Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Aug. 1975 & 9 Apr. 1976; *The Stage*, 22 Sep. 1977.

⁵⁴⁴Bennett, *Speaking Volumes*, 70.

⁵⁴⁵*Financial Times*, 25 Oct. 1982.

⁵⁴⁶Bennett, *Speaking Volumes*, 70.

In 1980 the music festival was extended to 15 days and in addition to the Town Hall and Pump Room included performances at Berkeley and Sudeley castles.⁵⁴⁷ The 1988 programme covered 200 years of music in celebration of the town's commemoration of the visit of George III and included an organ recital at Gloucester cathedral.⁵⁴⁸ In its 75th anniversary year the festival continued to champion contemporary British composers, featuring three premieres on its opening weekend.⁵⁴⁹ A separate Jazz Festival has been held since April 1996,⁵⁵⁰ while the Cheltenham Science Festival began in May 2002.⁵⁵¹ In 2005 and 2006 the Great British Cheese Festival was held in Montpellier Gardens. In the second year the festival was adversely affected by wet weather.⁵⁵² With the cheese festival having moved elsewhere, the Cheltenham Food and Drink Festival was initiated in 2008.⁵⁵³ There was an annual film festival between 2010 and 2012,⁵⁵⁴ and a revival in 2019.⁵⁵⁵ The inaugural poetry festival was held in 2011 under the direction of an MA student at the University of Gloucestershire, and by 2019 had expanded to a ten day event.⁵⁵⁶

547*The Stage*, 27 Mar. 1980.

548*Cheltenham Bicentenary Commemorative Programme* (1988), 52-3, 55.

549*The Guardian*, 8 July 2019.

550*The Times*, 16 Apr. 1996.

551*Daily Telegraph*, 18 June 2001 & 22 May 2002.

552*Western Daily Press*, 1 & 24 Oct. 2005; *Evening Standard*, 4 Oct. 2006.

553*Glos. Echo*, 23 June 2008.

554*Glos. Echo*, 27 Mar. 2010; *Bristol Post*, 12 Oct. 2012.

555 *Glos. Echo*, 26 July 2018; <https://cheltfilm.com/>.

556*Glos. Echo*, 26 Nov. 2010; <https://cheltenhampoetryfestival.com/>.