



Dame Janet Trotter toasts the launch of Volume XIII at Wallsworth House (Alex Craven)

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to our January 2017 newsletter. Once again it contains a wide variety of contributions which show the enthusiasm, commitment and abilities of the large number of people who work in so many different ways to ensure that the work of the County Trust continues to be so successful. In this edition you will also read of the changes affecting the VCH at national level, as well as here in Gloucestershire.

As always my thanks go to all the contributors to this newsletter and as usual to John Chandler, our County Consultant, for another excellent production, and to Jonathan Comber, the Trust's treasurer, who has collected the various contributions for me. We hope you find the newsletter informative and enjoy reading what follows. If you have any comments or further ideas please let me know: dhaldred@btinternet.com.

David Aldred
Editor

Report from the Trust

Writing this at the turn of the year, it's easy to pick our highlight for 2016 – the very successful launch of VCH Glos Volume XIII on 14 September. This has been well described in a special supplement of *Academy News*, but for anyone who missed that, it's worth recalling the main features:

§ John Chandler's excellent illustrated talk in the afternoon, at Blackfriars – part of the Gloucester History Festival, an experiment we reckon is well worth repeating.

§ The formal launch itself, at Wallsworth Hall (aka 'Nature in Art') in Sandhurst, ably presided over by our Lord-Lieutenant and Patron, Dame Janet Trotter, before a packed room of supporters, contributors and well-wishers.

§ The entertaining yet erudite lecture by Professor Chris Dyer, 'On First Looking into Volume XIII' – kindly sponsored by the Marc Fitch Fund – which took the audience on a parish by parish tour of the new book.

§ The crowds milling round the Boydell & Brewer bookstall! It was very pleasing indeed to see so many copies of the red book being borne off into the night, on their way to new and appreciative homes.

We look forward to comparable celebrations in due course when Volumes XIV, XV and XVI hit the streets!

With Volume XIII safely issued, John Chandler had formally completed what he had contracted to do for us (and for which we remain immensely grateful), and was looking to reduce his hours. To cut a long story short

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

– as is the VCH way – John has kindly agreed to stay on as a consultant editor, reviewing the drafts submitted by our other editors, while Jan Broadway, who introduces herself below, takes on the organising of Academy days, keeping track of progress, and continuing to maintain our IT, amongst other things. This to my mind is an excellent outcome, giving us the benefit of the combined strengths of John and Jan, who between them have an enviable breadth of historical and technical skills.

As you will read elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, the VCH Central Office, within the Institute of Historical Research in London, now has a new head, Dr Angus Winchester, and a more sustainable basis for staffing the other posts there. This is all good news for the profile of the VCH nationally, and we hope to welcome Angus in Gloucester before too long. (Angus has now agreed to meet the Academy on 27 February. Ed.)

So, looking forward to the year ahead, we enter 2017 with good continuity in the editorial team – not least because we now have the funding to retain Francis Boorman's services for the Cirencester work for another year. The KD Winstone Charitable Trust has agreed to bring forward the remaining payments due under their grant, and we were delighted to hear just before Christmas that the Cirencester-based Bingham Library Trust has also agreed to make us a grant of £4,000 towards Cirencester, plus up to £1,000 of match-funding to start the work on neighbouring parishes – if we can find others to put up matching sums.

Having managed a publication a year in 2015 and 2016, we can't let 2017 pass by without a book, and we are pretty confident that the long-rumoured VCH Short, provisionally titled 'Cheltenham before the Spa', will actually come out this year. The ideal would be to launch in time for the Cheltenham LitFest in October, but several pieces have yet to fall into place. (See Alex Craven's report below. Ed.)

Meanwhile, the Trust's fundraising efforts continue. I'm enormously grateful to all those who have been so generous this year – and hope we can make some fresh breakthroughs in 2017.

With best wishes
James Hodsdon
Chairman GCHT

STOP PRESS Whilst going to press, the Trust learnt of the departure of Vicky Thorpe from Gloucestershire Archives. Vicky has been a good friend of the Trust from its inception and our debt to her is immense. All involved in the county's VCH will join me in thanking her for her unfailing support and wishing her a long and happy retirement.



From our County Co-ordinator

At the beginning of October John Chandler moved to a rôle as consultant editor and I became VCH co-ordinator for Gloucestershire. This means that I am taking on those aspects of what John has been doing that were not strictly editorial, such as:

- § making the practical arrangements for Academy meetings;
- § publicising and promoting the VCH locally;
- § producing progress reports for our trustees and VCH central office;
- § maintaining and developing the Academy database;
- § overseeing our online presence.

In all these tasks
I am being assisted by

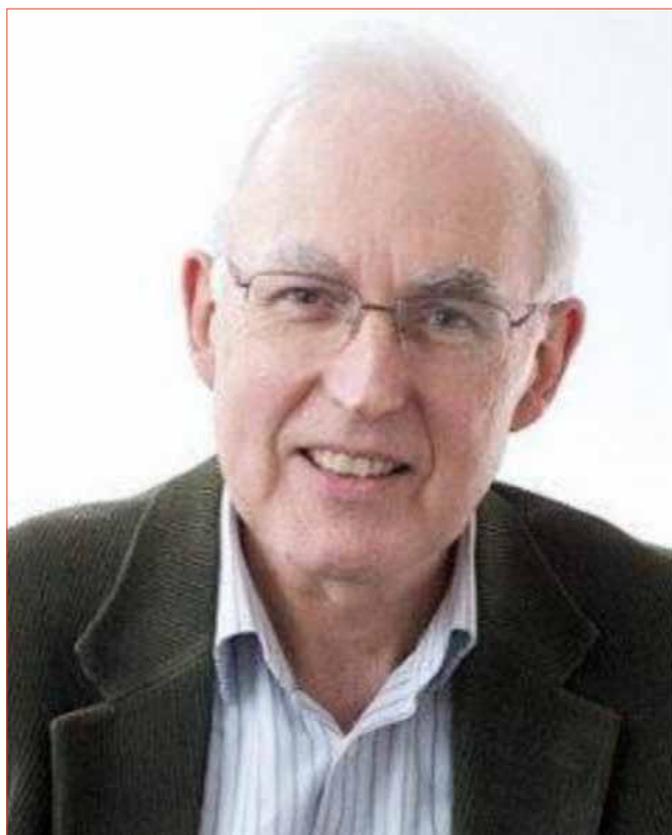


other members of the team. John Chandler has been largely responsible for the creation of our new publicity leaflet, while Jonathan Comber helps with managing the database and Alex Craven ensures that we have a social media profile. I see my rôle as essentially maintaining an overview of all VCH activity in Gloucestershire and to ensure that we've got all the bases covered, as my American colleagues used to say.

I know many of you already, as I have been involved in developing the Academy database and am also secretary of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, but a little biography might be in order. I graduated in Medieval and Modern History from Birmingham University in 1983. The following year I was trained as a software engineer at the University of Kent and spent a decade working in a real-time engineering environment. I returned to Birmingham and completed a PhD on the development of local and family history writing in the Elizabethan and early Stuart period in 1996. I have worked in research and ICT related roles at the universities of Glasgow, Wolverhampton and Birmingham and from 2002-2010 I was technical director of the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters at Queen Mary, University of London. I have published an expanded version of my thesis and a biography of the Warwickshire historian William Dugdale, as well as various articles and book chapters.

I am in the Archives each Monday and, when not otherwise engaged, I've been doing some research for Volume XIV. Recently I was delighted to come across a dispute over a dung monopoly in Chipping Sodbury. One of the few archival documents I've mentioned to my computer scientist partner that aroused any real interest was the confirmation of John Smyth's monopoly for the spreading and collection of straw on the streets of North Nibley. What happened, he enquired, if the monopolist failed to collect the straw and accumulated droppings? Would it have lain there indefinitely, getting deeper and deeper? The Sodbury dispute confirms my assumption, that given the chance the local inhabitants would quickly have made away with such a useful source of fertility.

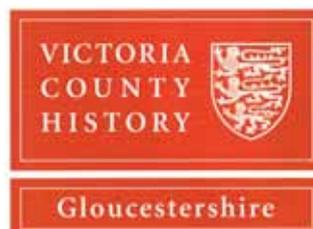
Jan Broadway



VCH Press Release 12 December 2016: Appointment of Angus Winchester

The Victoria County History (VCH) project has just appointed a new editor, Professor Angus Winchester from Lancaster University. Brush any 'waxed jackets' notions of county aside because this august body publishes historical reference works on English counties – it has a long and illustrious history of its own – and is coordinated by the Institute of Historical Research.

Part of the University of London's School of Advanced Study, the VCH's scholarly volumes are based on original research. Professor Winchester brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the mix, including his own contribution to the study of landscape history which has been to open up the hitherto little-researched history of the landscape of upland, pastoral Britain.



The VCH is an important resource for county and local historians as well as anyone researching genealogy and family history. Professor Winchester, who honed his local historian skills while an assistant editor with the VCH in Shropshire and as a lecturer at the University of Liverpool in the 1980s, will lead an initiative that has been built into a national treasure over 117 years and is without parallel. He has also been a member of the VCH National Advisory Board since 2007.

‘Having been associated with the VCH for so long, it is an honour to step into this role’, says Professor Winchester: ‘I look forward to working with colleagues in the Institute of Historical Research and with the wider local history community across the country, as the VCH moves forward in the changing world of local history research and publishing in the 21st century.’

Using his expertise in landscape history, Professor Winchester co-led a major Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project, ‘Contested common land: environmental governance, law and sustainable land management c.1600-2006’. This was an interdisciplinary study, linking environmental history and environmental law, and has contributed to current policy debates on the future management of common land.

Since 2010 Professor Winchester has taken the lead in reviving work for the VCH in Cumbria, developing a volunteer-based project under the auspices of the Cumbria County History Trust. He has written and edited several books and scholarly editions including two major 17th-century works on Cumbria, and wrote the history of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society for its 150th anniversary in 2016.

He retains a strong interest in local history communities. He has served as president and chairman of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. He is also founding president of Cumbria’s Lorton and Derwentfells Local History Society and, in 2014, set up Lancaster University’s Regional Heritage Centre.

‘The Institute of Historical Research and the whole community of VCH historians and supporters is delighted that Angus Winchester will be the next Editor’, says Professor Lawrence Goldman, Director of the IHR. ‘He brings to the VCH a wealth of experience in local history, great knowledge of

the VCH itself, and a formidable reputation as a historian of the medieval and early modern British landscape and environment. We all look forward to working with him.’

VCH Glos Progress Report

Following the publication of Volume XIII in September, we have not been resting on our laurels. Progress on the next three volumes continues apace. We are nothing, if not ambitious.

XIV: Yate and the Sodburys

Beth Hartland aims to have the account of the Sodburys in the medieval period completed by Easter, while Phil Baker continues with the research into the post-Reformation period. The text for this substantial part of the final volume is scheduled for completion in 2018. In parallel we expect to start work on Dodington this spring.

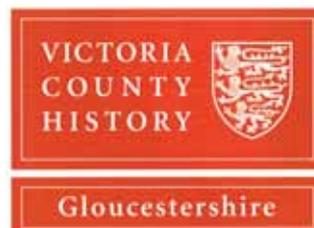
XV: Cheltenham

The texts Beth and Alex Craven have produced on Cheltenham before the spa are being edited by John. It will be submitted for peer review next month and we are now thinking about what maps and illustrations we will need. Your thoughts would be very welcome. We hope the book will be published by the end of the year. Meanwhile Alex continues to research the period to 1945. We have also been working with the Archives and Cheltenham Local History Society to digitize the Miles volumes (see Alex's report below. Ed.).

XVI: Cirencester

Beth has already drafted the account of medieval Cirencester. Francis Boorman is making great progress with the assistance of his volunteers and hopes to have the text for post-Reformation Cirencester finished by the summer. Once he has completed Cirencester, Francis will move north-west up the Ermin Way and start on Stratton.

Now that draft text for our forthcoming red books and short is starting to appear, we are making a paper copy of everything as it is posted online. This



is being assembled in a ring binder which will be available in the temporary search room. The online texts can be seen at <https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/gloucestershire/work-in-progress> and we welcome your comments.

The Academy continued to meet monthly throughout 2016. In August John Chandler arranged a field trip to Chipping Sodbury and the following month some of our editors and volunteers gave short presentations on their research. We had a visit from Judith Everard of VCH Shropshire in October, while in December John brought us up to date with what is happening in Wiltshire and I reported on developments at Central Office. We have also had talks from Sue Brown on Women's history (October), me on heraldry, Ray Wilson on mills (November) and John Reid on funeral monuments (December).

We attended the Cheltenham Local History Day in August and, of course, John gave his talk at the Gloucester History Festival relating to the publication of Volume XIII. A mass mailing before Christmas exhausted our supply of leaflets and, inspired by the stylish one Judith brought with her from Shropshire, we have now updated the design. We will be present at the Gloucestershire Local History Association day in Churchdown in March along with our smart new leaflets.

Jan Broadway

From our Editors

XIV: Yate and the Sodburys

As we all know, when researching a VCH parish no stones are left unturned. This approach, of course, leads to various piles of rejected stones as well as the odd gem sitting alongside the well-tilled historical record. And in this newsletter, I would like to draw attention to two such documents (whether gem or stone I leave to individual opinion).

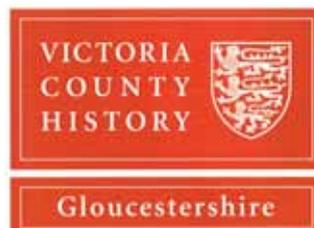
The first document to consider is a letter from Sir John Walsh of Little Sodbury manor *et al* to Thomas Cromwell, dated 14 November 1536. In this document Sir John informs Cromwell that he has sent him 'the presentments of jurors taken at a sessions at Sodbury on Thursday last, concerning the riots and misdemeanours about which

Cromwell wrote.' A tantalising start, but in the published record this is where the trail also ends. It was therefore with great excitement that I finally found the words '*riott et riottos*' in a document relating to Little Sodbury. And the riot that induced John Walsh to such 'great fury'? The alleged conspiracy of night watchmen who allowed the bucks and other game of John Walsh at Little Sodbury (and those of other gentlemen elsewhere) to be liberated from their parks. I confess to some little disappointment with the subject matter!

A second document was more easily found, being thrown up by a standard search on the TNA catalogue and attracting attention with the description 'Assault at Sodbury'. More interesting than the alleged assault to my mind, however, is the light the document shines on occupational surnames and the social habits of the gentry in the early sixteenth century. Whilst we would not usually assume an occupational surname to be indicative of actual occupation at this time, the defendant in the case, Thomas Smythe, describes himself as 'a smyth by occupation, ...[who] has always got his living by his craft and occupation and so supported himself, his poor wife and children.' Regarding the habits of the gentry, we discover that a friend of Sir Nicholas Poyntz having arrived at his unoccupied dwelling in Chipping Sodbury, a servant sent to Sir Nicholas at Acton to let him know his friend would 'suppe'. Sir Nicholas sent provisions with a servant, and followed later himself at nine o'clock in the evening. One would like to know who the mystery guest was, but the document does not concern itself with this detail.

Beth Hartland

Writing the 'Education' entries for the three Sodbury parishes requires working through a number of interesting sources, including school log books, school inspector reports and Ministry of Education records. The information contained in these provides the basis for the entries, which cover the location and establishment of schools, changes in their accommodation and an indication of their size and curriculum. While Chipping Sodbury School traces its origins



back to the fifteenth century, other institutions were more short lived, such as Little Sodbury National School, which opened in 1877, closed in 1901 and is now a private house. Other institutions are more recent creations, like the independent Overdale School in Old Sodbury, which opened in a converted sixteenth-century farmhouse in 1963. Nevertheless, one is often reminded that formal educational provision is still a relatively modern concept: in 1833 a parliamentary return reported that there was no school at all in Little Sodbury.

Whilst the history of education within a parish is of obvious interest in its own right, researching the topic often sheds light on life in the wider community. An interesting example of this is Old Sodbury at the turn of the twentieth century, when the children of navvies working on the construction of the railway between Wootton Bassett and Bristol Patchway caused a steep increase in attendance at the local national school. To accommodate this influx of pupils, a new temporary wooden teaching room was erected on the school site by the contractors of the South Wales and Bristol direct railway. Records of holidays in school log books also provide useful evidence of social life in the Sodburys. During the nineteenth century, for example, pupils in Chipping Sodbury National School were given the day off to attend a variety of events, including the Mop Fair, a concert in aid of a new church organ, a Band of Hope fête, Chipping Sodbury races and the drilling of the local yeomanry. One is reassured to learn that there was a half day holiday on the day of the teetotal fête 'as nearly all the children are teetotals'!

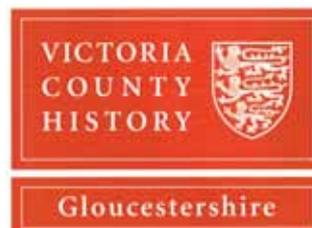
Finally, school log books are a wonderful source for the type of incidental stories and information that never quite make it into a VCH red book. In nineteenth-century Little Sodbury, for instance, several children were absent during the winter months on account of 'having no Boots', and both the school mistress and the school inspector described the pupils as 'very backward'. Clearly, not all of the local children behaved themselves. In Old Sodbury in 1904, 'A.N. Other received a severe caning to be followed by forfeiting recreation for one week, for stealing and eating other children's dinners, under the pretence of leaving the room'. A brother and sister of Little Sodbury were both caught playing truant twice in one week in 1878. Meanwhile in Chipping Sodbury, in 1867 a boy was punished

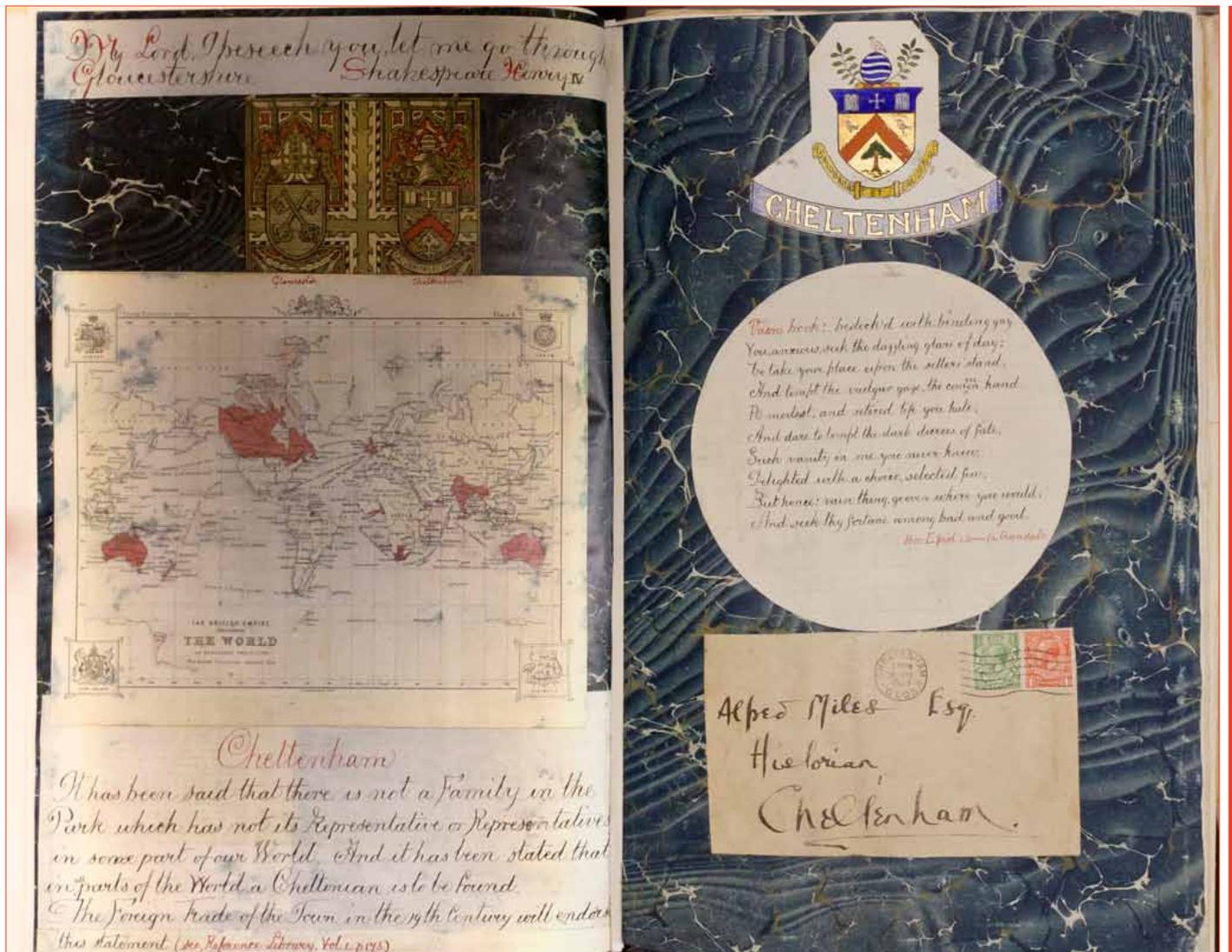
for writing 'a species of love letter to the girls', while in 1870 a girl was kept in school and given a short lesson to write out after being rude to a teacher. However, it was not just the local children who are recorded as misbehaving. In 1900, the caretaker of Chipping Sodbury National School was sacked on the grounds of theft, while five years earlier it was noticed that one of the desks had been broken when one of the first ever local parish council meetings was held in the schoolroom. Perhaps my favourite story, however, relating to the same school in 1871, is when during a large market several cattle wandered into the school yards and were 'very troublesome ... causing an obstructing at the gate'.

Philip Baker

XV: Cheltenham

Progress continues to be made on writing the history of Cheltenham, and a draft history for the years between 1738 and 1852 was completed in the summer. This period deals with the development from 1738 of a mineral water spa at Cheltenham which, following the visit of George III in 1788, led to the rapid expansion of the town in size and significance during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Work has now begun on researching and writing the next phase in the town's history, taking the story up to the end of World War Two. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the spas were in decline as centres for health and leisure, and Cheltenham would never again experience such explosive growth. Nevertheless, a new rôle for the town was forged with the founding of the colleges, and the town remained a popular retirement location for colonial administrators and military officers. The period also saw the development within the town of modern local government, beginning with the introduction of local elections in 1852, leading to the granting of municipal borough status in 1876. In line with other large towns, these new institutions gradually asserted control over local utilities and schools, amongst other things. As one of the largest towns in the county, Cheltenham was also







The premises of Alfred Miles in Cheltenham (courtesy of Glos. Archives)

the VCH draft history of the town.

In addition to all this, our volunteers continue to catalogue the large collection of the Ticehurst Wyatt firm of solicitors (Gloucestershire Archives, D2025), having now catalogued 140 boxes of material. Though this material refers to a wider area than just Cheltenham, nevertheless it continues to produce useful material relating to life within the town, shedding light on the late history of the manor of Cheltenham, and providing interesting items relating to political culture within the town. The many private and business papers contained within the collection also supplement our understanding of the economic life of the town, and providing further insight into the institutions and charities of Cheltenham. Sections of the draft history covering 1738–1852 have been written by our volunteers, and will be incorporated into the final text which will be published as our red book volume. Volunteers will again contribute written sections for incorporation into the next draft. These include Dr Tom Carter who has agreed to write the section detailing the topography and settlement history of the town, having previously studied urban development and planning during the late 19th and early 20th centuries for his PhD.

Besides working to complete the draft history of 1852–1945, we are also working hard to produce a paperback history of Cheltenham before 1738, drawing upon the draft medieval and early modern histories of the town written respectively by Dr Beth Hartland and myself. Much of the research for these periods has already been completed, but it will require journeys to such exotic locations as Corpus

Christi College, Oxford; Madresfield Court (Worcs.), ancestral home of the Lygon family; Buckingham Gate, home to the Duchy of Cornwall Archives; and, of course, Kew, home to the National Archives. Our intention is have the paperback ready in time for the literary festival in October, so it is full speed ahead!

Alex Craven

XVI: Cirencester

During my recent research on the cultural and sporting life of Cirencester, I discovered a somewhat unexpected former resident. Charles Brooke, Rajah of Sarawak, died in 1917 at the age of 87 and his funeral



was held at the parish church, attended by his widow Margaret, the Ranees of Sarawak, and his sons Bertram Brooke and Henry Keppel Brooke, who held the respective titles of Tuan Muda and Tuan Bongsu. They were joined by local dignitaries including Earl Bathurst and the entire Urban District Council.

Born Charles Anthony Johnson in Somerset, he took



his surname from his uncle James Brooke, who was the first ‘white Rajah’ of the small country of Sarawak on the coast of Borneo. Charles was named as his uncle’s successor and ruled Sarawak from 1868 until his death. His achievements in Sarawak included suppressing piracy and the local practice of head-hunting, and he left behind a country boasting parliamentary government and a railway. He was succeeded by his son, Charles Vyner Brooke.

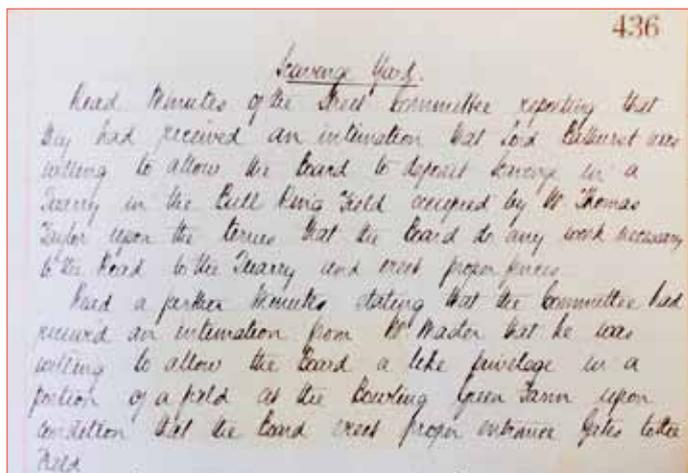
Brooke’s connection with Cirencester began when he spent hunting seasons there from at least 1887. He purchased Oakley Hall in Chesterton, later acquiring the adjoining estate of Chesterton House, and for many years spent his winters participating in the Vale of White Horse Hunt upwards of four days a week. The *Gloucester Journal* described him as ‘well mounted and a straight and fearless rider’. He also enjoyed coaching. Brooke contributed greatly to the sporting life of Cirencester, serving as vice-president of Cirencester Cricket Club, which added tennis matches to its range of activities at the public courts on Brooke’s estate. He also built a children’s playground there. Brooke did not neglect the cultural life of Cirencester and erected a museum showcasing the history, customs and produce of Sarawak, adding a library and reading room. These sat alongside an aviary, where he kept a collection of rare songbirds. He opened the grounds of his house for Sunday afternoon music and promenades. He left his Chesterton property to his son Bertram, who closed the museum, reading room and playground, offering to sell them to the Urban District Council, but they felt that they could not afford the purchase.

Francis Boorman

From the Archives...and over the border

Jonathan’s Hapax Legomenon

While reading some draft text by Francis Boorman on Cirencester Local Board, I was struck by a sentence about street cleaning (scavenging) which began: ‘Agreement was reached in 1892 to deposit the scavenge in Lord Bathurst’s quarry . . .’ No doubt what it



Cirencester Local Board Minute Book (GA DA4/100/5, f.436, courtesy of Glos. Archives)

meant, but I was unsure of the word ‘scavenge’ as a noun, so searched for it in the OED.

There was no sign of it, so I asked Francis if he had found it in his source, the local board minutes. The note-taking from those minutes was part of Jonathan Comber’s heroic work on Cirencester’s local government records, so he tracked back through his notes and had another look at the reference. Sure enough, under the heading ‘Scavenge Yard’ the clerk had written: ‘Read Minutes of the Street Committee reporting that they had received an intimation that Lord Bathurst was willing to allow the Board to deposit Scavenge in a Quarry in the Bull Ring Field occupied by Mr Thomas Taylor . . .’

So Jonathan seems to have discovered a previously unrecorded word, the noun (and I suppose adjective, if we consider the heading of the item) ‘SCAVENGE’, which presumably was intended to mean the sweepings and rubbish accumulated by scavenging the streets. And a very useful and pleasing word too. Via James Hodsdon’s good offices the OED has now been informed of their omission.

I recall from my time studying classics that such a word, which only makes a single appearance in surviving literature, is known as a ‘hapax legomenon’ (Greek for ‘said only once’), or simply as a ‘hapax’, and I find from Google that it recently cropped up as a question on University Challenge. Mind you, ‘hapax’ isn’t in the original OED either, which is where we came in – but it is in the supplement.

John Chandler



Secondary sources require primary references, in VCH tradition

This extract is taken from one of twelve articles written by the late R.W. (Bob) Jennings, former Head of History at Cirencester Grammar School, published in the Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard in 1975 to mark the 1900th anniversary of the founding of Cirencester. Sadly, Bob died in 1979 at the age of 53. The articles were based on a series of WEA lectures given by Bob at the Beeches Centre in 1966-67. In his introduction to the series he stated “full details of all sources of information will be placed in the Bingham Library.” Sadly the list, which would be demanded by the VCH's approach to historical research, does not survive. In the late 1960s, his source documents would have been scattered between Gloucester City Library, Gloucester Shire Hall and the Bingham Library in Dyer Street, Cirencester. All are now housed in Gloucestershire Archives. The material from the Bingham Library was catalogued by the late Jean Welsford, equally deserving of recognition for her work and research into the town's history. So it's back to the original sources - : D9125/1/7870, D10820 et al - to complete the footnotes, after this inspiring read.

Extract from:

R. W. Jennings, 'Cirencester 1750-1850: People and Occupations', printed in the *Wilts & Gloucestershire Standard*, March 28 1975, p12. Directories were beginning to appear in large numbers in the 18th century. The entry for Cirencester in Bailey's *British Directory* for 1784 lists 52 people, presumably the more prosperous and better known. The largest group of occupations is nine woolstaplers and three more listed as woolstaplers and yarnmakers. Next come four attorneys, one of whom was also the town's Bailiff. There are three edge tool makers, three cheesefactors, three grocers, two hatmakers and two hosiers. There is one mercer, a mercer and draper, and a mercer and manufacturer of hose. There are single carpet manufacturers, and ironmongers.

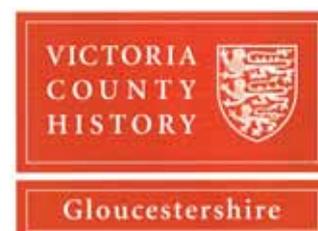
More information about occupations can be discovered from poll books. Cirencester was a town with what used to be called a 'potwalloper' franchise, i.e. all householders had the vote: so from these lists of voters

we can get the more humble occupations not mentioned in the directory. Thus from a list made in 1790 we find that, apart from a large number of labourers, among the largest occupational groups (other than those mentioned above) are woolcombers and edge tool makers, shoemakers, masons, carpenters and weavers.

Many of these occupations might have been found in any county town at this time. Peculiar to 18th century Cirencester were the manufacture of edge tools, wool stapling, woolcombing and yarn spinning. The edge tool makers specialised in making curriers' knives for shaving leather which were sold at home and sent abroad. Water mills in and around the town powered stones which ground on the tools an edge which, it was claimed, could not be matched in Birmingham or Sheffield.

The woolstaplers acted as middlemen between the suppliers of raw wool and the clothiers who needed a variety of wools but did not want to carry very large stocks; this was the job of the woolstapler, who sorted the wool for the clothier. The woolstaplers were wealthy men; the woolcombers were humbler folk and sometimes lived on the edge of unemployment and poverty. They needed few tools – two handcombs and a charcoal stove on which a pot of oil was heated; the combs were dipped into the hot oil so that they could be drawn more easily through the wool. The woolcombers had some sort of organisation. When Mr Master, a member of one of the town's two leading families, returned to the town with a new bride they were greeted by the woolcombers, all dressed in wool of different colours and headed by one man dressed up as the woolcombers' patron saint, Bishop Blaise, in clerical vestments and wearing a bishop's mitre.

Going back to the Directory – here are names that recur again and again in Cirencester's history – Bowley, three of them in 1784, all listed as woolstaplers; Cripps, Joseph (woolstapler and yarnmaker) and John (woolstapler and wine merchant); Croome, Robert and William (cheese factors); Thomas Lediard (attorney-at-law); Joseph Pitts (also an attorney); Samuel Rudder (draper and printer – an interesting juxtaposition of occupations!); and Timothy Stevens (book seller and stationer).



To take the last two ... Samuel Rudder, born in 1726, was an auctioneer and a dealer in cheese, bacon, salt and butter; and in 1749 he opened a business as printer and bookseller where he advertised the sale of Sheffield ware, sugar, tea, writing paper and corks. 'At the lowest price, without abatement, a proper allowance being made to such as pay ready money'. However, it is his achievements as a historian that are mentioned in his memorial tablet in the parish church. 'A man of the strictest honour and most inflexible integrity. His history of Gloucestershire will establish his character as a writer'.

Timothy Stevens, another bookseller, also plays an important part in the life of the town. He and his son were both parish clerks; he himself was at the centre of a great row between the parson and his congregation.

The four volumes of accounts which he kept are in the City Library in Gloucester [now Glos Archives]; they span nearly 50 years of trading between 1774 and 1818 and list transactions with over 350 clients. Besides books, pamphlets and magazines, Stevens sold musical instruments and sheet music, 'paper hangings, stationery and drawing materials, patent medicines and toilet requisites'. There are entries which reveal other activities – attending the manorial court and copying out the proceedings, tolling the bell and assisting at a funeral and providing the paper for the inventory or lists of the deceased's possessions. Customers included most of the leading citizens of the town and from the entries we get tantalising glimpses of their working and their domestic lives.

The account of John Cripps, the woolstapler and wine merchant, for 1785 includes the *Complete Vermin Killer*, a child's book, *Town and Country Magazine*, a lady's diary and a box of pills. Mr John Timbrell, mercer and draper, owes two years later for Fielding's *Peerage*, Mr Lucas, a brewer of Dyer Street, orders cartridge paper and Pleyel's *Concetante* for Mrs Lucas. In 1790 Mr Davies, musician, purchased two hautboy reeds and a bassoon reed in the second week of May; later in the month he has Thompson's *Country Dances* and *The Haunted Tour* – an opera.

Miss Sheppard runs a school for young ladies; she has a collection of sonnets, a life of Petrarch (for binding which she pays six shillings), an ivory folder and a bottle of balsam of honey. Mr Mason, an attorney, on various

occasions – two skins, hair powder, tax tables and a 'Wedgwood's' inkstand, whereas Mr Hall, surveyor, has to pay in 1801 for a vellum skin and its carriage by post and in the next year he has Malton on *Cottage Architecture*. About the same time, Mr Bleuler, optician, was taking delivery of a camera obscura.

Stevens orders paper from Quenington in Gloucestershire, and from Kidderminster; he has dealings with firms in London – Middleton, pencil manufacturers of Piccadilly and Messrs. Rowney. There are reminders of contemporary political events. Mr Stronge, mercer, in 1790 is buying Burke on the French Revolution; Mr Wilkins of Dollar Street orders sixteen copies of *Evidence on the Slave Trade*. In 1800 Joseph Cripps owes £1 7s 8d for memorandum books, to be used for the election when he was a candidate for a seat in parliament; accounts for earlier years mention rope for the mill and message cards for Mrs. Cripps.

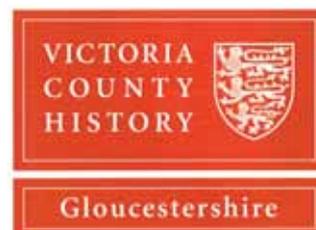
Earl Bathurst appears in the ledgers as well. He is booked on one occasion for fifty toothpicks and on another for '2 Canal Acts and 2 Paul on Prisons' – Paul is Sir Onesiphorus Paul, justice of the peace and reformer of Gloucestershire Prisons. Other customers were Robert Raikes of Gloucester, founder of Sunday schools, and the antiquarian Samuel Lyons.

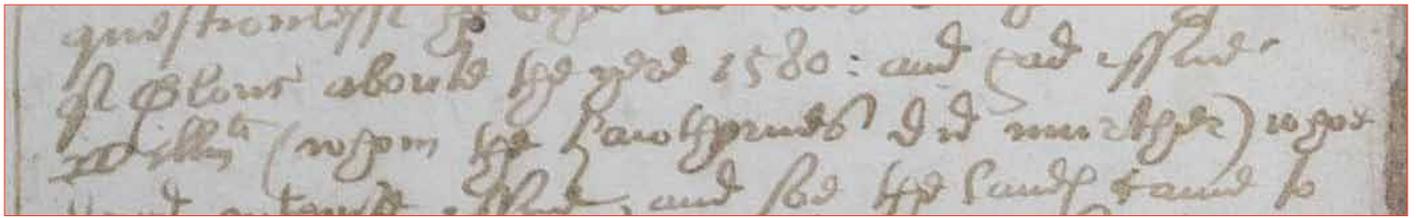
The titles of books ordered are interesting – twelve volumes of Gibbon's *Roman History*, for example, or four volumes of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* ordered by Mr Smith, clerk of the Thames & Severn Canal. Master Knight has Chesterfield's letters bound for him. A selection of titles, including the *Vicar of Wakefield* and *Tom Jones*, are labelled 'Wemmans Books.'

Linda Viner

Charlton Kings murder: time for a cold case review?

At the National Archives, there's a wonderful compendium of personal notes kept by Alexander Packer (d.1638) of Ham Court, Charlton Kings (TNA C 116/150). The main value for VCH researchers lies in its numerous copies of deeds for lands in Cheltenham and





Note by Alexander Packer (TNA, C 116/150, courtesy of The National Archives)

Charlton Kings, and extracts from court rolls which don't survive elsewhere, but there are also some intriguing mercantile accounts – all of which deserve a proper edition one day (#283 on Alex Craven's to-do list). At the end, in the manner of a family bible, there are various notes and jottings on Packer's connections. Just as you get towards the end of a long paragraph about the Goodrichs, we suddenly ... but you'd better read it yourself:

John Goodrich had issue Giles, Robert, Richard, John and William. Giles the eldest sonn had issue onlie a daughter [*so disappointing!*] and dyed before his father, and soe because noe land was conveyed to the said Giles, the land descended to Robert the next sonn, whoe sould the mannor of Ham to Tho: Packer. This John Goodrich dyed in St Oswells parish in the Cittye of Glou^r about the yere 1545, and in the said parish Church was buried. Robert the second sonn dyed allso in the said parish, and was (as I thinck) there buried – but questionless he dyed and was buried in the City of Glou^r about the yere 1580: and had issue William (*whom the Hawthornes did murther*) who dyed withowte issue, and soe the lands came to Richard his next sonn: he had also issue John & Edward...

At which point the modern reader is thinking 'Come on, Mr Packer, that's no way to write a thriller. You don't put the murder on practically the last page, and it would be nice to have just a teensy bit more detail, don't you think?' Sadly, there is none, and we're just left to speculate on why the Hawthornes (intriguingly plural) should have laid lethal hands upon poor William Goodrich. A quick check of the Archives catalogue reveals no immediate clues – but any amateur sleuths out there are welcome to pick up the trail in earnest.

James Hodsdon

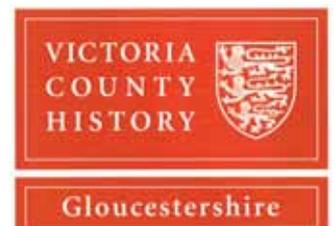
Why are VCH volumes XV and XVI like the taylor's cushion?

Answer from our much-esteemed editor is because they, too, will be patchwork made of many pieces, the work of many hands, like *The Taylors Cussion*.

The Taylors cussion made of threades
of divers peeces hath a patch,
So he that all this volume reedes
of divers thinges shall finde a snatch.
Therefore this booke of others all
the taylors cussion do I call.

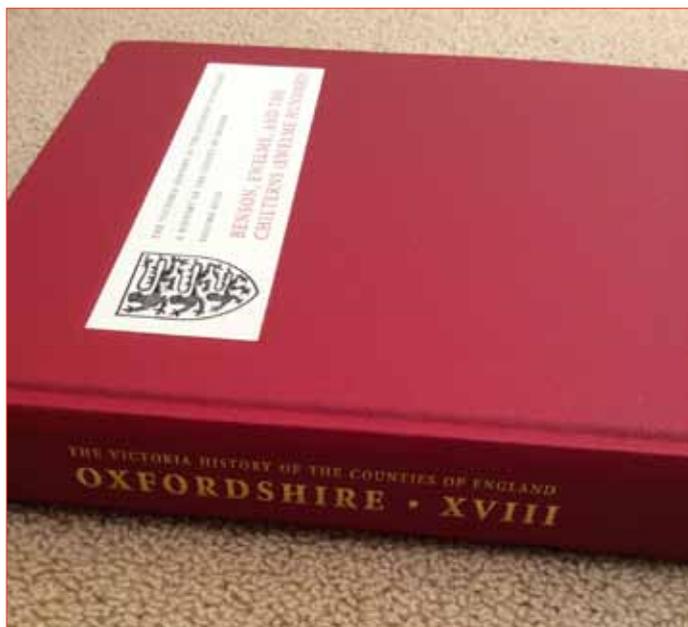
The Taylors Cussion was a commonplace book compiled by George Owen (1552-1613), a famous antiquary and remarkably observant and diligent collector of local history, especially of his own area of Pembrokeshire, of which he wrote *The Description*. He was also a very early geologist and an expert map-maker. His own pen did not write the manuscript of *The Taylors Cussion*, but those of the three scribes he employed. The book contains tables of coinage, weights and measures, inventories of livestock, lists of high office-holders in Wales, *aides-mémoire* and mnemonic verses, and passing thoughts. None of his work was published in his lifetime and *The Taylors Cussion* not until 1906, when a facsimile was published. It came to our notice because it contains 'The survey of a parck' called Whitley Park and may refer to Whitcliffe Park in Berkeley. Jon Hudson was the correspondent who contacted Gloucestershire history organisations and details of George Owen's life and work come from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Anthea Jones



. . . and over the border

Our Volume XIII wasn't the only Red Book launched last autumn. Our neighbours to the east, the Oxfordshire VCH Trust, were celebrating the issue of their Volume XVIII, which covers 14 parishes in Ewelme Hundred – you pass though the top end of this where the A40 joins the M40, rising towards



the Chilterns. Their Marc Fitch lecture, which I attended after a VCH meeting in late November, described a very interesting collaboration with Oxford University during the course of work on the volume, which led to a fuller understanding of the social geography of the various settlements, and a richer treatment of each parish. I hope we'll be hearing more about this at an Academy day. The book itself sets very high standards, and besides being quite a bit longer than ours (Ewelme is a big Hundred), it has a number of colour plates which are really eye-catching (see overleaf). This sort of thing costs extra money, which the Oxfordshire Trust had to find, but to my mind it is something we should seriously consider for the future. I succumbed to the introductory discount, and will be happy to show my copy to anyone who's interested. And I shall definitely be diverting off the main road on future trips to London.

James Hodsdon

Books for sale

The Trust purchased a number of copies of Volume XIII (as mentioned on page 1) at the special introductory discounted price which is no longer available, and these are available at £72.50. We have also copies of Gloucestershire Volumes II (General volume including religious), IV (Gloucester), VII (Brightwell's Barrow and Rapsgate hundreds), VIII (Tewkesbury area), X (Westbury & Whitstone hundreds) and XII (Newent and May Hill) all at £28 as well as our short on Yate (£12). These can all be obtained from the Trust's Treasurer Jonathan Comber by e-mail to Jonathan.Comber@easynet.co.uk or by phone at 01684-577134.

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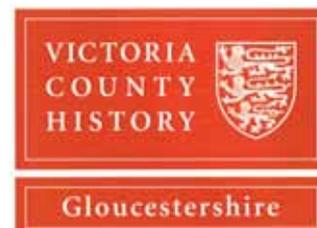
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Vernacular buildings

8 No. 59 High Street, Chalgrove (predominantly 17th-century): timber framing and thatch.

9 Fords Farm in Ewelme (17th- to 18th-century): coursed clunch rubble, brick dressings, and tiled roof.



A page from the new Oxfordshire VCH volume (XVIII)