

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the January 2023 newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust bringing you the latest news of its work. We have recently appointed Dr Mark Forrest as one of our contracted historians and he introduces himself below. All our contracted historians and volunteers have continued their research and writing as you can read later in the newsletter. Then please consider carefully the appeal from our chairman which follows the reports.

As always, my thanks go to all those who have contributed to the creation and distribution of the newsletter with special thanks to John Chandler for another attractive production. We hope you enjoy reading it and, as usual, if you have any comments or further ideas, please let me know: dhaldred@btinternet.com.

David Aldred

Dr Mark Forrest

I read history at Royal Holloway where I returned in 2002, after a spell as a secondary school teacher, to complete my doctorate on the estates of Chertsey Abbey. As a researcher I worked on five counties for the Records of Lay and Clerical Taxation 1188-1688 ('the E179 Project') at the National Archives before completing three counties for the Manorial Documents Register (Dorset, Middlesex and Surrey).

I moved to Dorset in 2004 to become an archivist at the Dorset History Centre where I managed the paper and parchment collections. Since 2019 I have been an independent archive consultant and archivist for Lord Shaftesbury's estate at Wimborne St Giles.

At the same time I began work as a researcher for the Wiltshire Victoria County History where I have contributed texts on the history of Mere, Zeals and the manors of Chippenham hundred and am presently writing manorial and economic history sections of Kington St Michael and Kington Langley.

My research interests include medieval and early modern taxation, manors and manorial documents and the fifteenth century economy. I have published in the *Economic History Review*, *Southern History* and *Nottingham Medieval Studies* as well as county journals. I have produced two volumes for the British Association for Local History on Tudor and Stuart Handwriting and Post-Medieval Manorial Documents and edited the text of Ralph Treswell's survey of his lands in Purbeck for the Dorset Record Society.

I am the General Editor of the Dorset Record Society, Local History Editor for the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, Dorset Editor for *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries* and a member of the Publications Committee of the British Association for Local History.

I am now looking forward to working with colleagues on *VCH Gloucestershire* volume 16.

VCH Gloucestershire

Newsletter 18: January 2023

Report from the Trust

In the second half of 2022 the Trust returned to a more even tenor of activity after meeting the challenges posed by the unexpected death of our previous chairman, Dr James Hodsdon, in January last year. Our trustee body was augmented by the appointment of Mrs Sue Parsons from King's Stanley as a new trustee and she joined us for the first time at our October meeting. Sue played a leading role in fundraising for the restoration of the Winterbourne Medieval Barn and she is also a director of Cotswold Archaeology. The Trust hopes to benefit from her experience with these organisations and as a project manager in the nuclear industry. At the end of 2022 we regretfully said farewell to another trustee, Jane Marley, who stood down after four years with the Trust. This means we once more have two vacancies for new trustees, and I should be very pleased to hear from any supporters who feel they could bring some time and expertise to the Trust's work. We would particularly welcome applications from anyone with expertise in marketing and publicity, digital communications or fundraising.

Work has continued on all three of the current 'red book' projects. Dr Alex Craven completed his work on post-medieval Duntisbourne Abbots and Duntisbourne Rous in the summer, and turned his attention to Preston, for which he has now completed the first section, on landownership. Dr Grace Owen continued work on Coates and also completed the section on landownership, although other commitments meant that she was not able to make such rapid progress after the end of August. For many years we have relied on Dr Beth Hartland for input to current work on medieval sources, but personal circumstances have made it more difficult for her to contribute, and we agreed in the summer of 2022 to terminate this arrangement by mutual consent; the Trust is most grateful to her for contributions to the volumes in progress. To ensure continued momentum towards the completion of volume 16 on the Cirencester area, in December 2022 the Trust contracted Dr Mark Forrest to research and write the outstanding medieval content for that volume, as well as an analysis of the development of the topography of Cirencester and its suburbs, and an account of the hundred of Crowthorne & Minety. Dr Forrest was formerly an archivist at the Dorset History Centre and has recently been working for the Wiltshire VCH. We

remain on target to complete work on the Cirencester volume by the end of this year, for submission early in 2024 to the VCH Central Office for peer review and publication.

Dr Louise Ryland-Epton has continued work on Leckhampton for volume 15 (Cheltenham Hundred) and has now completed sections on Local Government, Religious History and Social History for that parish. Dr John Chandler has continued work on Swindon Village, and work should begin on Charlton Kings, the last parish to be tackled for the volume, in the spring of this year. Dr Neil Stacy, working as a volunteer, has continued to convert his extensive notes on medieval and early modern Dyrham into draft VCH text for volume 14 (Sodbury & District), and has now completed well over half of the sections required. The Trust has begun planning a fundraising event for the Sodbury volume which it is hoped will raise the funds required to complete the remaining parishes for the volume.

As our current projects approach completion, the Trust is beginning to turn its attention to the question of which areas we should tackle next. About half of all that remains to be done is in the part of the historic county that is now South Gloucestershire, so we have decided that we will aim to commence work on two new areas, one in South Gloucestershire and one in present-day Gloucestershire. We would welcome views from supporters about which areas they would like to see researched next, although the final choice will also be influenced by the opportunities for fundraising which they present!

Nick Kingsley
Chair

Report from our County Editor

LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH: A SUCCESS STORY

As our longer-serving volunteers will recall, part of the strategy we adopted when we christened them the 'VCH Gloucestershire Academy' was that we would hold monthly workshops to discuss and explore as many aspects of local history research as we could think of or find someone to talk about. This went on for several years until we had run out of topics, and then we stopped. But there has been a gentle clamour ever since to start them again, especially for the benefit of new volunteers. So . . .

After discussion with former VCH researcher Rose Wallis, now associate professor at the Regional



LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH

a series of workshops

ten workshops to be held in the
Dunrossil Centre,
Gloucestershire Heritage Hub,
fortnightly, 9.30–1.00, beginning
Tuesday 18 October 2022

Each workshop will divide into two sessions with a refreshment break. Tutoring and discussion will be led by historians from VCH and UWE in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Topics will include: the historian's craft; the local historian's toolbox; the history of the landscape; the history of buildings; working with documents; ownership and government; movement and migration; community, society and welfare; working lives; and the influence of religion.

Open to all, whether you are a beginner or have research experience, £10 per workshop (free to VCH volunteers and RHC members, concession for archive volunteers and FOGA members). Advance booking recommended. Further details here: <https://www.heritagehub.org.uk/local-history-workshops/>

Arranged by Gloucestershire County History Trust (VCH) in association with Gloucestershire Archives and the Regional History Centre, University of the West of England.



History Centre, UWE and one of our trustees; with Heather Forbes, Head of Glos Archives and also a trustee; and with the other GCHT trustees, I put together a programme of ten workshops on 'Local History Research', as a joint venture between the three organisations, to run fortnightly on Tuesday mornings in the Dunrossil Centre at the Heritage Hub. As I write, we have just held the sixth in the series. Although aimed initially at VCH and Hub volunteers, who attend for free, we advertised the series as open to anyone interested, for a fee of £10 per workshop, hoping to recoup at least some of the cost. In the event we had to set a ceiling of 40 attendees, so great was the take-up, and occasionally we have squeezed in a few more. We seem to be making a profit too. There is a call to repeat the series next winter, on a different day of the week, and we are looking to run something similar at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.

We try to give participants value for money, by offering them a very full morning - from 9.30am to

1pm, with a break for coffee and usually a look at some original documents (not at the same time!). We generally have two lead tutors, drawn from VCH and UWE contributors and staff, offering practical advice about how to tackle various local history skills and themes. These have included sources, palaeography, working with maps and place-names, and examining topics such as government, welfare, buildings, communications, work and religion. After each workshop we circulate notes by email, with details of useful books and websites, and a summary of what was covered.

So far the feedback has been very positive and numbers have held up remarkably, despite some hostile winter weather. It has involved a certain amount of work for all the tutors involved, but seems to be much appreciated, and is certainly helping to raise the profile of the VCH and a more general understanding of how we research and write our parish histories. My thanks to all the tutors, to Hub staff (especially Kate Maisey and Jenny Rutland) and to Sally and Russ Self, who have masterminded the refreshments.

If we decide to run the series again next winter we shall publicise it as widely as we can, among Hub users, Glos Local History Association, the Regional History Centre and elsewhere.

John Chandler

Updates from our Historians

From Alex Craven

PRESTON

As promised in the previous newsletter, the final sections of the histories of Duntisbourne Abbots and Duntisbourne Rouse were completed last Autumn, meaning that all of the parishes that make up the Duntisbourne valley have now been completed. Since then my attention has turned to Preston, a small parish one mile to the south-east

of Cirencester. Sections have been drafted on the topics of Landownership, and Landscape, Settlement and the Built Environment, with sections on Local Government and Social History to follow shortly.

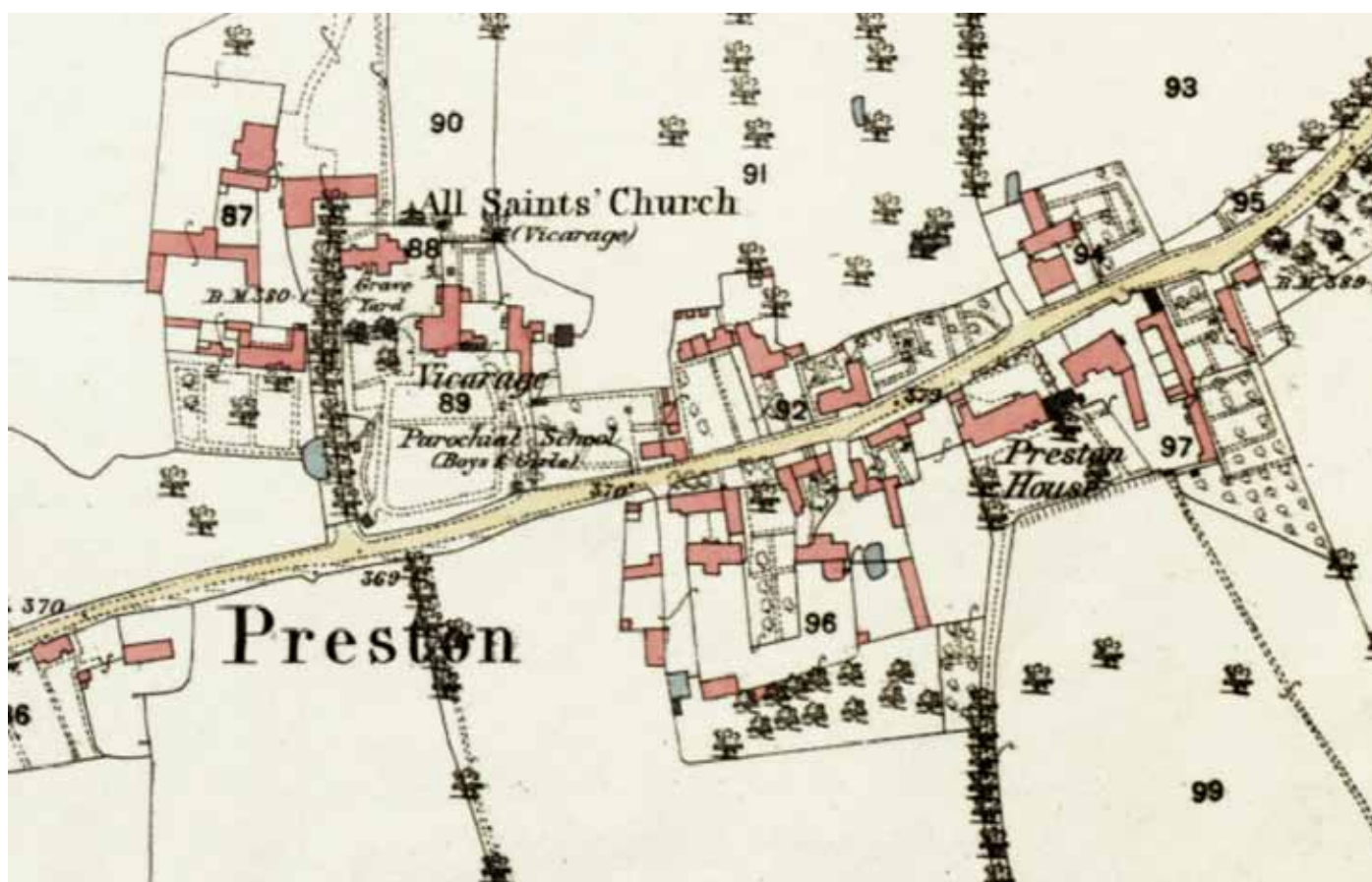
Unsurprisingly, being so close to Cirencester, Preston is crossed by several major routes east. Two of the Roman roads that radiate from the town make up significant stretches of the parish boundary as they run respectively north-east towards Stow and south-east towards Cricklade, whilst a third Roman roads forms part of the length of medieval routes to Fairford and Burford. These all remain important routes for regional traffic, whilst in the last quarter of a century the parish has also been crossed by the A417/419 dual carriageway. By contrast, the main settlement of Preston village lies on a quiet village street seemingly leading nowhere, although it once ran across the open fields of the parish to neighbouring Ampney Crucis.

At the time of the Norman conquest the parish was divided into four estates, but twenty years later they were held by two people. The largest estate, which later became the manor of Preston, was then held by Regenbald the priest, a senior official of Edward the Confessor who had probably retired to Cirencester. His lands, including Preston, would subsequently

form part of the foundation of Cirencester abbey, which retained Preston until its dissolution in 1539. The manor was bought in 1580 by Dr Richard Master, who already owned Cirencester Abbey, and Master's descendants owned the manor into the 20th century.

The other estate, which became the manor of Norcote, was held in 1086 by a tenant of Humphrey the Chamberlain, and later became part of the honour of Gloucester, held as part of the manor of Fairford. The manor was divided between three sisters and their descendants for a time, including the Raleigh family, in whose hands the three parts of the manor were reunited by the 15th century. It was sold to the George family of Baunton in 1604, the last of whom died childless a century later. His widow, Rebecca, married Thomas Powell, who founded the Blue School charity in Cirencester by his will in 1718. When Rebecca died four years later, she also left her estate, including Norcote, to charity, and this ultimately became the Yellow School in Cirencester. Ironically, having sold Preston House in the 19th century, the Chester Master family purchased Norcote House for their residence shortly after the Second World War. It was owned until recently by the poet Pam Ayers and her family.

The parish was probably never very populous, with approximately 70 inhabitants early in the 18th century, and 141 in 1801. The population rose



Preston in 1875, Ordnance Survey 25-inch map (National Library of Scotland)

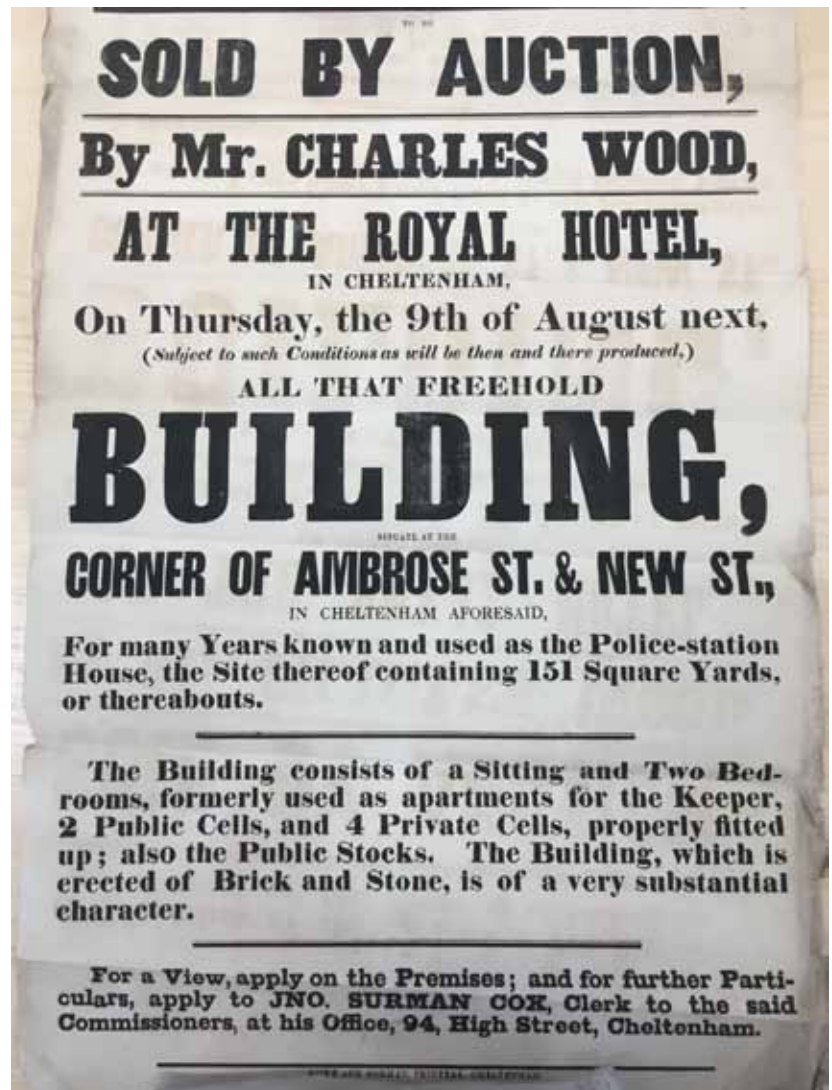
unsteadily over the next 150 years, reaching a peak of 282 in 1951. Although it fell again in the following decade, developments on the southern and eastern fringes of Cirencester spilled over the Preston boundary during the latter part of the 20th century, raising the population to 408 in 1971, and 569 in 1981. The alteration of the parish boundary, transferring these new developments on the fringe of the parish to Cirencester and Siddington, reduced the population to historic levels, and in 2011 there were 327 inhabitants. Care has been taken to maintain a clear division between the suburbs of Cirencester and the village of Preston, meaning that the latter retains much of its traditional Cotswold charm.

Researching aspects of Preston's history has proved challenging due to important gaps in the historical record. In particular, there are no records of the courts of either manor, nor of the parish overseers, the churchwardens before 1757, the vestry, and the parish meeting. The parish has also retained no documents relating to the elementary school that belonged to the parish until its closure in 1904. Some of these gaps can be filled with documents produced by national institutions such as the Board of Education, which produced a large file of information about the parish school, now held at the National Archives. Answers to parliamentary enquiries and Royal Commissions tell us more about local government and education in the parish, whilst annual statistics compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and its predecessors enable us to quantify the changing trends in agriculture in what remains a heavily rural parish. With these challenges therefore not proving insurmountable, I expect to have the full draft completed in April, which will draw my work on the Cirencester area to a close.

From Louise Ryland-Epton

CHELTENHAM CENTRAL POLICE STATION, 1831-1860

In December 1831, *Cheltenham Chronicle* proudly reported that a Cheltenham police force had been created, 'there is every reason to anticipate that our police force, as far as numbers will admit, will be equal to any establishment of the kind in the Kingdom.' It continued, 'a Station House being necessary, it was resolved [by the Cheltenham Improvement



*Advert for the sale of the former police station 1841
(GA/CBR/A3/7/1)*

Commissioners at a public meeting] that a room in the Watch House should be fitted up comfortably for the purpose, where a Serjeant of Police [sic] and one Constable shall be in attendance day and night.' The early force employed 20 constables and was subject to some civic pride in town guides: 'The Watch House was centrally located near St George's Place, however, within a short time, it proved insufficient, and a small police station was created on the corner of Ambrose and New Street. Its simple design comprised an apartment for the keeper and two 'public' and four 'private' cells.

In 1840 the Gloucestershire Constabulary was formed. The first year after its creation was confused for policing in Cheltenham as there was a town police under the jurisdiction of the Cheltenham Improvement Commissioners and a force provided by Gloucestershire Constabulary. While the town police continued at Ambrose Street, the county force was based elsewhere in the town. The problems created

were largely resolved by May 1841 when the town police were disbanded, and the former police station sold. In January 1842, the *Cheltenham Chronicle* reported that 'the Cheltenham Police Station has been removed to Chester House, St George's Place.' The site, formerly a gentleman's residence, offered a more spacious base. Here, accommodation was provided for the deputy chief constable and for the local superintendent, two sergeants and 39 constables. There were additionally two male and one female cells, and outside a parade ground, stabling and coach house.

In 1856 a report was ordered 'into the requirements of various police stations, in order that the [Gloucestershire County] force may be rendered so thoroughly efficient as to be qualified to receive government aid.' Cheltenham's police station was deemed inadequate for its needs. A year later, work began to convert the former Clarence Hotel, 1 Crescent Place, into a police station. The location, originally Liddell's Boarding House, was favoured because 'it possessed all the qualifications for a station; it was substantially built and might be cheaply purchased; and was worthy of the principal station in the county.' The building was converted to a design

by county surveyor, James Medland, by Cheltenham builders Broom and Son, who provided the lowest quote.

The station was completed by July 1858. The cost of £3,800 was reckoned to be 'exceedingly low' given it was 'one of the best police stations with petty sessional court in the kingdom.'

The site had extensive accommodation for all police ranks. The higher an officer's ranking, the more extensive and private his accommodation. The deputy chief constable enjoyed a 14 roomed apartment across three floors while constables were accommodated in third-floor dormitories. By the 1860s, 59 police officers were living on the site. The ground floor included a charge room and constables' day room. The plan suggests the station was not designed to facilitate crime reporting by members of the public. Instead, it was planned for certain procedural functions pertaining to the detention and interrogation of suspects and critically, by accommodating officers, their rapid deployment and organisational discipline. The court accommodation on the first floor with the offices of the chief constable and deputy chief constable no doubt perpetuated this. There were separate male and female cells in the basement where a female attendant looked after the female prisoners. Outside, there was a large parade



Part of James Medland's design for Cheltenham Central Police Station, 1857. Later renamed John Dower House and now converted into flats (GA/C/AA/B1)

ground, garden and stabling.

The site was supremely adaptable and was used until 1970, when it was replaced by a purpose-built station, just outside the centre of town, on Lansdown Road. At Crescent Place, the accommodation became offices, and a new office block was built in the former parade ground to the rear. In 2018, following a 'stunning restoration', eleven newly refurbished luxury flats within the original building, renamed John Dower House, were offered for sale.

From Sally Self

DOMESTICITY?

The Gloucestershire Archives' group of volunteer cataloguers has continued to expand the listing of deposits donated to the Archives. As we approach our ninth birthday, it is only Covid and domestic commitments plus the occasional Monday Bank Holiday that have stopped our attendance. It is a remarkable commitment at which I can only marvel: the majority are from the original group formed in March 2014, and have remained steady at around 10, to which we have recently welcomed two new volunteers.

Solicitor's deposits form ninety-nine percent of our cataloguing and we are now familiar with the language of conveyancing, though final concords still make us shudder as they are often in Latin. While telling us, in detail, that Mr Y conveyed property to Mr X, and that Miss A on her intended marriage to Mr B will have a secure settlement, little is learnt about personalities, attitudes or emotions. Was Mr Y forced to sell as he faced bankruptcy? Or was Mr X acquiring building plots to take advantage of the property boom? Was Miss A happy with her future husband? Or was Mr B after her fortune?

Just occasionally we do get a glimpse of life beyond the solicitors' office – an envelope with an added illustration, an annotated pamphlet, letters of condolence or annoyance, letters from Bombay, the Arabian Gulf and Rome. Recently we came across a letter that gives a real insight into local domesticity – let's style it the case of Payne, Polley and Chirm.

Mr Polley died in May 1801 and Mr Payne called on Mrs Chirm to enquire if Mrs Polley "intended to carry on the business" and "if she had enough to live

Mr Polley died in May 1801. The first time Mr Payne called upon me (which was soon after) he asked me whether Mrs Polley intended to carry the Business on or not, or whether she had enough to live upon without it. I told him I did not know, but if she did not continue in it, she might come to be with me, if she approved of it, as I have Room enough for her; not that I can afford to keep her, but as two People by boarding together may live cheaper than they can separate, and one Servant Maid might do for both, as for a Master & Mistress; I mentioned the same to Mrs Polley when I saw her, but she seemed not then to be determined about it, only said she could not care for it by herself, but that she must do something; Nothing more passed at that time, as I remember, nor did till some months after, when some time in October Mrs Polley came with such of her effects as she had not disposed of and without any notice taken by her of the conditions we were to be upon in the joint housekeeping which I had proposed for the advantage of us both. It now came out that there was an implacable animosity between Mrs Polley and my Maid Anne Saunders who had lived with me more ^{than} five Years, and was recommended to me by Mrs Polley herself, whom now she cannot please in Cooking, nor often in marketing, or in any thing else; this has caused Mrs Polley to withdraw from all connexion in housekeeping even Coals, which I was at first surpris'd at, but the reason she gave me for it was, Nanny made a waste in using the Coals, and if they be gone sooner than usual, the waste of them would be laid upon her. So I let her take her own way, and since then she has bought her own Coals by herself, and dressed her own Food and kept her Room, and as that unconnected Plan of living here, was Mrs Polley's own choice, and has been productive of some Board and quiet to me which I had not enjoy'd before since she came, I hope nothing will induce me to consent to have it altered J. Chirm

(GA/D2216/Box 3)

on" – a kind and possibly generous thought. The letter revealed that Mrs C could not "afford to keep her" but that "two boarding together may live cheaper", and that "one Servant Maid might do for both." Mrs Polley appeared indecisive, "but that She must do something".

In October, seemingly precipitously, Mrs Polley "arrived with such of her effects as She had not disposed of and without any notice of ... the conditions we were to be upon in joint housekeeping" – not so thoughtful. It then appeared that there was "implacable animosity" between her and Mrs C's "Maid, Anne Saunders, who had lived with her for five Years" and had been recommended to her by none other than Mrs Polley, herself. Anne's "cooking, marketing and anything else" no longer suited her and she "withdrew from all connexion ... keeping even Coals." Her reason being

“Nanny made a waste in using the Coals”, and she would be blamed, presumably by Mrs Payne. The outcome was that Mrs Polley “bought her own Coals by the Bushel ... dressed her own Food and kept her Room.” Mrs Chirm, who seems to have been living a home life devoid of peace, felt that this was now “productive of some Peace and quiet [and she hoped] nothing will induce me to consent to have it altered”.

The “business” seems likely to have been lodging housekeeping, though it is not clear if Mrs C was female but it seems probable. The letter was signed T (or possibly S) Chirm. There was no envelope and no addressee. It reveals a minor domestic disagreement – but bliss it was not!

Can You Help the Trust?

Most of the funding the Gloucestershire County History Trust receives comes from substantial one-off personal donations and grants from other charitable trusts. These grants are usually made for specific pieces of work, often on a place of particular interest to the donors. However, every year we also receive vital help from supporters who make a regular monthly gift of sums from £5 upwards by standing order. This regular giving currently brings in about £10,000 a year, and since most of these donations are also covered by gift aid, we receive a further £2,500 from the taxman. Because this income from regular giving is not tied to a specific project, it gives us invaluable flexibility: we use it to keep work going when other sources of funding dry up or fall short of the costs involved. If you are not already supporting us in this way, I would really appreciate it if you would consider doing so, because even a small regular gift can be of real help to our work. I appreciate that a period when we have such rampant inflation may not be a good time to ask for your help, but if you can assist us, please do. And if you can't assist us now, please consider making a bequest to the Trust in your will. You can find our regular giving form at https://www.history.ac.uk/sites/default/files/file-uploads/2021-03/Glos_Donation_Form_2020.pdf, or I can supply a hard copy if you contact me at the email address below.

Strengthening our regular giving income stream is in my mind now particularly because one of the many ways in which it is useful is to provide seed-corn funding to get work started on new projects and to provide ‘matched funding’ for bids to other trusts. Since we are currently approaching the end of our current projects in the Cirencester, Cheltenham and

Sodbury areas, the Trustees are currently considering which areas which we will tackle next, and having increased regular giving income would be of the greatest help in getting our new projects underway.

Giving money is, of course, not the only way in which supporters of our work can provide practical help to the Trust. We rely a great deal on the efforts of volunteers, who both provide specialist input to our work (e.g. on prehistory or the analysis of buildings) or contribute through the cataloguing of archives relevant to the areas we are working on, or by making extracts from or transcripts or analyses of complex or voluminous sources such as wills and inventories, census returns and local authority records. The workshops which we are currently running in conjunction with Gloucestershire Archives and the University of the West of England to develop skills in local history have encouraged a number of new volunteers to come forward to help the Trust, and if you would be interested in joining them, please contact me at nick.kingsley@blueyonder.co.uk.

Thank you.

Nick Kingsley

Gloucestershire County History Trust

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