

will never make their way into a Big Red Book. There is no place for them in the VCH's 'authoritative, encyclopaedic histories' which are largely based on a standardised list of archives in order to have a common approach to England's parishes.

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](mailto:dhaldred@btinternet.com).

*David Aldred*

## Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the January 2024 newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust bringing you the latest news of its work. It includes up-to-date reports on the volumes the Trust has been overseeing for the past decade and also explains our plans for the proposed Winchcombe volume. As in previous editions, you can read more of the interesting events and situations discovered by our historians which



*The present trustees. From right to left: David Aldred, Sir Nicholas Mander, Sue Brown, Sally Self, Sue Parsons, Rose Wallis, John Chandler (County Editor), Nicholas Kingsley, Heather Forbes (inset Jan Broadway).*

# VCH Gloucestershire

## Newsletter 20: January 2024



## Report from the Trust

### JOHN CHANDLER TO RETIRE AS COUNTY EDITOR

John Chandler advised the Trustees at their meeting last July that he intended to retire from his role as County Editor at the end of March 2024, in order to give time to some personal projects that he has been itching to take on! Although John's announcement was not completely unexpected, his departure will be a great loss, as he has been so much the heart of the Gloucestershire VCH since the Trust was founded in 2010. He was brought in initially to research and write the histories of Ashleworth, Hartpury, Maisemore, Norton and Twyning for Volume XIII in the county series (published in 2016), and he also saw this volume through final editing and publication. He played a leading role in the 'VCH Academy' set up to enthuse and develop the skills of our large group of volunteers in the 2010s, and served a term as a trustee himself, before stepping back into a more active role two years ago when the sudden death of our then Chairman, James Hodsdon, led to a general redistribution of work among the trustees. Since then, he has conceived and managed the delivery of a tremendously well-received programme of local history workshops on behalf of the Trust, Gloucestershire Archives, and the University of the West of England, and has worked tirelessly to coordinate the efforts of our team of contributors and volunteers. He has even managed to find time to work on another parish history, of Swindon Village (for Volume XV [Cheltenham]), most of which has already been written, and to scope out the planned future volumes on the Winchcombe and Marshfield districts. For all this hard work, and for his constantly cheerful demeanour and can-do attitude, the trustees will miss John's contribution very much. Happily, he is not running away altogether, as he has agreed to continue to undertake the publication of this newsletter for the time being, and to try and answer questions when the rest of us are stumped! The Trustees look forward to the opportunity to mark his retirement in a suitable way around the time of our April meeting. In the meantime, we are in discussions about the appointment of a new County Editor, and hope to be able to make an announcement soon.

### FUND RAISING FOR VOLUME XIV (SODBURY AND DISTRICT)

The results of our work in the Cirencester area are nearly ready for the press, and work in the Cheltenham area is progressing swiftly. You can read below John Chandler's summary of the progress on our other current volume, on Chipping Sodbury and district. We need to raise about £60,000 to research and write the remaining parishes for this volume. With this in view we are planning a fundraising event, to be held in the area in early May, which our royal patron, HRH the Duke of Gloucester, has kindly agreed to attend. If anyone would like to contribute to our appeal, please contact or send a cheque (made payable to Gloucestershire County Heritage Trust) to me: Nick Kingsley, 38 Dial Hill Road, Clevedon, North Somerset BS21 7HN.

Nick Kingsley  
Chair

### Report from our County Editor

#### LOST FOR WORDS

I seldom resort to the thesaurus, but I don't like the concept of retirement, so I sought inspiration in its pages. But none of the synonyms seem to fit – 'give up work' (certainly not), 'be pensioned off' (no chance), 'take the golden handshake' (even less chance), 'put out to grass' (well I am trying veganism), 'go out of circulation' (what, and be a recluse?). Anyway, I told the trustees last autumn that, with the bulk of the research completed for the three volumes in progress, I did not want to continue as general editor once we begin work on two more. So I shall retire at the end of March – retire *again*, strictly speaking, as I stood down several years ago and only came back when James Hodsdon died.

When I came to Gloucester in 2011 I was already older than many people are when they retire, and I had in fact been visiting the record office, as it used to be, for several decades every now and then as a researcher. I like to think that working with much younger colleagues has been a rejuvenating experience. I don't feel old, and I am eternally grateful to my VCH and Archives colleagues for their cheerful acceptance and camaraderie – and of course to our wonderful volunteers.

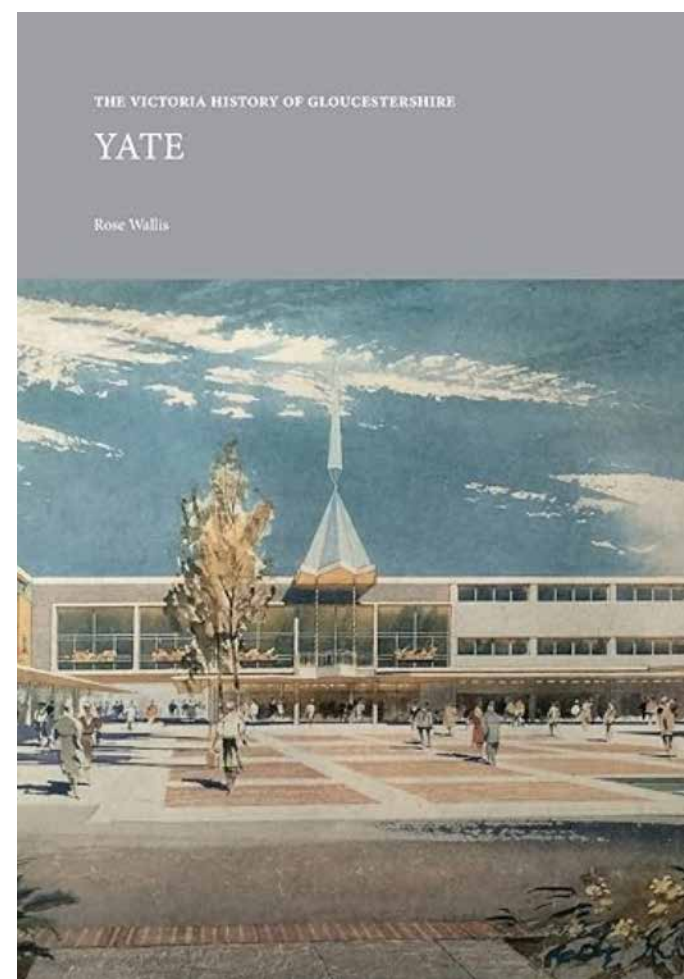
But there are several other avenues I wish to explore before I do feel old. I have a somewhat similar role for the VCH in Wiltshire as in Gloucestershire, and there is a volume almost complete which I have

to see through to publication. I have for many years produced and published books, and now, with help from my VCH colleague Louise, our imprint Hobnob Press is beginning to flourish – and becoming more time-consuming. I have at least three long-term research projects on the go, concerning medieval Salisbury, the Wylde valley in south Wiltshire just before the civil war, and John Leland the Tudor traveller. And I should like a little more time off to go exploring round towns and villages.

I'm not going away, mind. I hope, if the trustees permit, to help bring our Volume XIV, on Yate and the Sodburys, to completion and publication, and I daresay I can go on assisting with odds and ends, such as producing this newsletter. I'm settled in my flat in Gloucester docks, so I hope to continue as one of the regulars at the Hub; and a regular too, with the many friends I've made, at the pubs and cafés that we tend to frequent. Retiring perhaps, but not 'unsocial, aloof, standoffish, distant, reticent, reserved . . .'

#### VOLUME XIV: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

As the numbering implies, the first volume we embarked on as a trust, while completing Volume XIII, was our South Gloucestershire Volume XIV, which began with a grant in 2012 from South Glos Council.



This enabled us to contract Rose Wallis to research and write on Yate, and her work was published as a VCH Short in 2015 – copies still available. Alex Craven then carried out most of the work on the three Sodbury parishes, funded from various sources including the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. Nearby are three adjacent parishes with intertwined ownership and history, and the residents of one of these, West Littleton, clubbed together to commission their history, which Simon Draper and I worked on either side of covid lockdowns. In the course of this Simon was able to research a good deal of the history of Acton Turville and Tormarton. At Dyrham we are fortunate that an eminent historian, Neil Stacy (who has lived there for many years) had long been working on its history. He is completing a very substantial book on the parish, arranged more or less to the VCH plan, and he is happy that we use this as the basis for our parish entry. Two other parishes, Dodington and Wapley with Codrington, have not been started.

Looking forward, it is likely that the three volumes currently in progress – XIV, XV, XVI – will be published in reverse order (VCH Glos used to make a habit of not publishing volumes in numerical sequence), as there is still a good deal of work to be done, although the remaining parishes are small; and we are already setting our sights on the next South Gloucestershire volume, which will take in Marshfield and places along the southern edge of the county, bordering Somerset and Wiltshire.

#### LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

Our second winter of ten fortnightly workshops at the Heritage Hub began in October and will continue until March. As I write, the seventh is imminent, entrusted to Adam Chapman (VCH General Editor) and me, but we shall find the previous one a hard act to follow. This included Mark Forrest staging (as steward) manorial courts leet and baron in the presence of Nick Kingsley (lord of the manor), and various VCH researchers as tithingman, clerk, chief homager and copyholder. Our hapless students formed the jury and the homage, and several found themselves appointed to rôles such as constable and hayward. The proceedings required a wand of office – actually my large pepper mill. No-one was seriously amerced, and we certainly did not have a gallows or a ducking stool.

When embarking on this second series we were not expecting attendance to be as high as the first, but in fact we have regularly had more



*The lord of the manor (Nick Kingsley) transmits his authority through the wand of office to his steward (Mark Forrest)*



*The steward admits a tenant (Francis Boorman) to his copyhold*

than thirty attendees, and we even ran a second handwriting session at the request of county council staff. The workshops would not be possible without the enthusiastic support of the lecturers – all drawn from the VCH community – and archive staff Kate, Jemma, Yvonne and Paul, with a special thanks also to Jean Gibbons who has organised the refreshments. We shall not be running the workshops for a third season in Gloucester, but we have been asked to repeat the whole programme at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre in Chippenham.

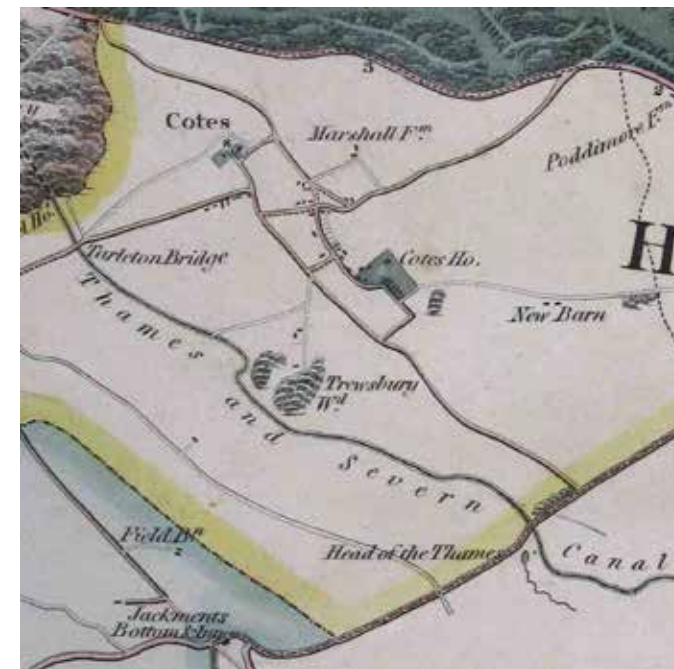
John Chandler

## Updates from our historians From Alex Craven

### COATES

Looking back over 2023 it is pleasing to be able to say that it was another productive year, as the writing of the parish histories for the Cirencester volume draws near a close. As anticipated in the last newsletter, the final section of the history of Preston was produced at the end of the summer, since when I have been focused on researching and writing the history of Coates. Fortunately for me, Dr Grace Owen had already tackled the knotty subject of the complicated manorial history of the parish, which comprised six separate estates at the time of Domesday, three of them with the same name!

Since taking on the parish I have written the landscape and settlement history of the parish, which until the 19th century lacked any obvious single focal point, a legacy of having been divided between those six small estates. Besides the modern village of Coates and the fringe of the hamlet of Tarlton, the parish also boasts a deserted medieval settlement at Hullasey which once had its own chapel, subsequently occupied as a barn. The most famous feature of the parish are the springs which emerge here and form the source of the River Thames. A man-made waterway was laid across the parish in the 18th century with the construction of the Thames & Severn Canal, which emerges from the two-mile-long Sapperton tunnel



*The village of Coates from Bryant's map of Gloucestershire, 1824 (Gloucestershire Archives)*

through the impressive Coates portal. A railway was also built across the parish. Due to resistance from the local landlord, the station at Coates (formerly called Tetbury Road Station) was the first to serve

Kemble. The station closed to passengers in 1889, and to all traffic in 1963. The section of the canal running through the parish was abandoned in 1927 and is now mostly drained.

Another section, on the local government of the parish, is largely complete, although I hope to enhance it soon with reference to some locally-held modern records, and the religious history of the parish will also soon be complete. This will leave only two more sections to draft, on the social and economic history, to complete the history of the parish, the last to be drafted for the Cirencester volume.

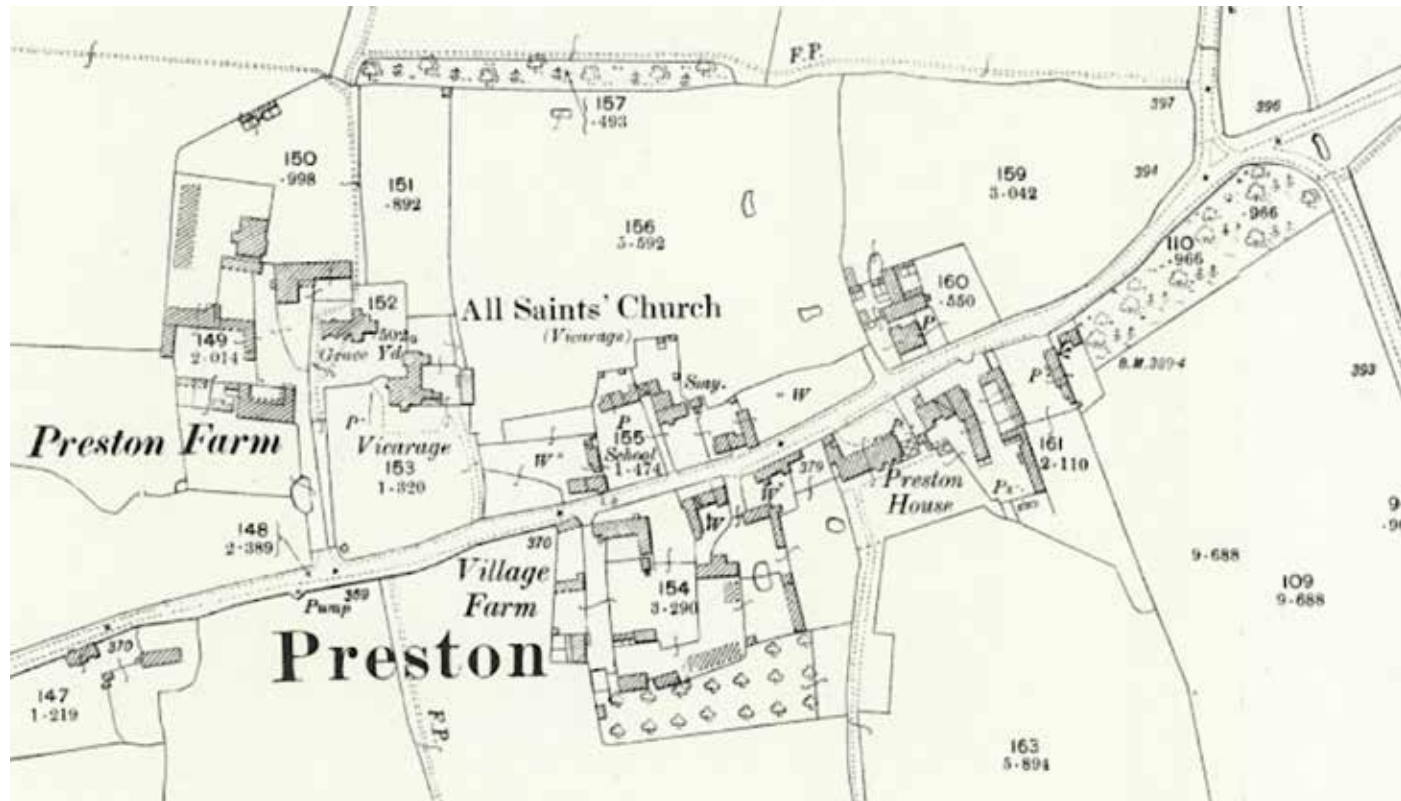
*Continuing the account of Preston from the July newsletter*

From the 19th century onwards, our understanding of the character of a community is derived in large part from the abundant records of the decennial censuses. Unsurprisingly, these inform us that the character of the parish remained overwhelmingly agricultural until the 20th century. Of the 47 families resident in 1831, 36 were employed in agriculture, and four more in trades and crafts. Seven farmers



*Coates entrance to the Sapperton tunnel (CC SA 1.0)*





employed 32 agricultural labourers between them, and one more man occupied land without employing any labourers. Domestic service was the principal occupation for women, providing employment for 15 women and also two boys.<sup>1</sup> Whilst domestic service continued to be the chief employment of female parishioners in 1881, occupying 18 women and three girls, other opportunities were also provided by agriculture (one farmer and one dairymaid), teaching (two), textiles (one dress maker and one stay maker), and as laundresses (three). Farming continued to be the main occupation for men and boys, with four farmers, and 39 men and 13 boys employed as agricultural workers. There was a magistrate and army officer, a grocer, and a blacksmith, whilst one of the farmers combined agriculture with milling.<sup>2</sup>

Although agriculture still dominated at the start of the 20th century, a commercial element was provided by a builder (who also employed his son), a tailor, and a dairy man, Thomas Cambray, who had been supplying milk to Cirencester since the 1890s, and who was described in the following year as a shop keeper and carrier.<sup>3</sup> There were also three men employed respectively as a navvy,

a slaughterman, and a rolling-man at a local mill. Whilst one woman was a farmer and another a schoolmistress, domestic service continued to be the main source of employment for females, occupying 12 women and four girls, as well as three men and one boy.<sup>4</sup> As elsewhere, the agricultural character of the parish declined in the late 20th century, with the conversion of farmhouses and barns into residential and commercial properties.<sup>5</sup> By the start of the 21st century agriculture only provided employment for three parishioners. In keeping with neighbouring parishes, Preston had become a dormitory town for workers employed in Cirencester and further afield. Retail and real estate were the two largest occupation sectors in the parish in 2001, employing 25 and 24 people (19 per cent each) respectively.<sup>6</sup> Of the 115 people in employment in 2011, more than half were in professional (45, 40.5 per cent) or managerial (15, 13.8 per cent) roles, with another 15 in skilled trades, whilst ten (10.3 per cent) were employed in administrative positions and other ten in elementary occupations.<sup>7</sup>

4 TNA, RG 13/2449, fos 8v-12.

5 *Design in Preston*, <https://www.prestonpc.org.uk/data/uploads/final-preston-parish-design-statement-april-2017.pdf> (accessed 3 May 2023), p. 5.

6 Census, 2001.

7 Census, 2011.

1 *Abs. Pop. Returns, 1831* (Parl. Papers, 1833 (149), xxxviii), 206-7.

2 TNA, RG 11/2555, fos 86-90v; *Kelly's Dir.* (1879 edn).

3 *Wilts. & Glos. Standard*, 8 Sep. 1894; *Kelly's Dir.* (1902 edn.).

## From Louise Ryland-Epton

### HENRY NORWOOD, GENTLEMAN AND CANNIBAL

Each place is different. Consequently, VCH work is always full of surprises and firsts. I recall my first convicted witch, undocumented moated site and, recently, my first gallows, amongst many. I am currently writing up the landownership section of my history of Leckhampton, which has provided details of my first, and I would imagine my last, cannibal.

The individual in question was the larger-than-life lord of the manor, Henry Norwood, whose swashbuckling story is the stuff of novels. The Norwood family had held the manor of Leckhampton since 1486, but Henry was born the younger son of a younger brother and was seemingly not destined for the seat. Intended for a legal career, the outbreak of the English Civil War changed the course of his life. A distinguished military career in support of the King was followed by exile in the Netherlands after the surrender of Worcester in 1646. Henry returned to England in June 1649, shortly after the murder of the regicide Isaac Dorislaus (for which Henry was later arrested), but depressed by the execution of Charles I, he set sail from Deal (Kent) for a new life in Virginia on board the *Virginia Merchant* three months later.



A modern replica of a seventeenth-century merchant ship

The voyage was eventful; the ship, probably under-provisioned, sailed via the Azores to Bermuda, where they failed to make land. The *Virginia Merchant* then ran aground on an island off the coast of North Carolina in November 1649. Re-floated, but, then damaged by storms, the ship was dis-masted. It made shore on 4 January 1650 at an island off the eastern shore of Maryland. The following day, the crew sailed off and marooned Henry with 15 men and 3 women without food or shelter. Henry and his companions were soon starving. Henry Norwood's own account included this passage:-

Of the three weak women before mentioned, one had the envied happiness to die about this time; and it was my advice to the survivors, who were following her apace, to endeavour their own preservation by converting her dead carcass into food as they did to good effect. The same counsel was embraced by those of our sex; the living fed upon the dead; four of our company having the happiness to end their miserable lives...

The survivors were eventually rescued by the indigenous population, and Henry made his way to Jamestown, where he recuperated for several months at the governor's house.

He travelled back to the Netherlands in September 1650 to solicit the future Charles II for the post of treasurer of Virginia, journeying back to the colony before making it back to England again to foment revolt. He was arrested several times and, in 1655, was imprisoned in the Tower of London. After some years in prison in the Tower and in Jersey, his fortunes revived after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 (unfortunately, his adventures abroad are too numerous to elaborate). He purchased Leckhampton manor from his kinsman, Francis Norwood, in 1667. However, he did not settle down quietly into the role of county gentleman, instead becoming embroiled (amongst other things) in local politics. He was returned as MP for Gloucester in 1675, but the election was disputed, and he was not declared elected for another three years. He died unmarried and childless in 1689, shortly after subscribing £1,700 towards a loan to the new government following the Glorious Revolution – which suggests that the once starving cannibal had become a man of considerable means.

(The ship was wrecked in 1661 off the coast of Bermuda with the loss of 169 lives. The fragmentary remains are a popular diving location, see <https://bermuda100.ucsd.edu/virginia-merchant/> Ed)



*From Mark Forrest*

CIRENCESTER INSIGHTS

I have now finished my work on the Cirencester volume and that ends my time in Gloucestershire for a little while; although I may return to look at some of the medieval records for the Cheltenham area.

One of my favourite parts of the research was looking at the distribution of monastic properties at the Dissolution and these records certainly gave some insights into life in Cirencester in the 1540s as well as providing the ghostly outline of the town in the previous century. The number of households in the town is often quoted as the 152 messuages (houses) granted in 1545. But this only includes the manor's copyhold and leasehold properties and we can add a further 96 freehold dwellings detailed in a set of accounts produced in 1540. To these may be added various cottages, properties belonging to the parish

church, Llanthony priory, and Archebaldes and Chesterton manors.

Another interesting topic to research was the end of the court held for the Seven Hundreds of Cirencester. Remarkably little attention has been paid to post-medieval hundred courts. This court was clearly valued by the inhabitants of Cirencester who complained in 1736 that they were not held regularly. When it was replaced by a Court of Requests in 1792 the new court was still only empowered to hear cases of debt up to a £2 threshold, maintaining a medieval restriction that severely limited its jurisdiction. Nevertheless it still met regularly and issued a small number of summonses each year until its abolition in 1848.

*From Francis Boorman*

VOLUME XVI (CIRENCESTER) UPDATE

I am very pleased to deliver a positive update on progress towards the completion of volume XVI, covering Cirencester and District. You may know



Cirencester church and market place c.1800



Winchcombe in 1820

my name from my contributions to the research and writing of the post-medieval history of Cirencester. I am excited to have recently been appointed volume editor, with responsibility for ushering a Big Red Book into print, over the course of 2024.

I am aware that this volume is already a team effort. I worked with several volunteers to prepare the text for Cirencester, with an incredible range of expertise, contributing pieces on schools, railways and roads, to name just a few. Specialists have put together pieces on the important early history of Cirencester, especially its place as a prominent settlement in Roman Britain. John Chandler and Jan Broadway have already provided input with editing. Most recently, Mark Forrest has been writing and updating medieval texts on both Cirencester and the surrounding parishes. Meanwhile, Alex Craven continues his fantastic work on several parishes in the area and will be delivering work on Coates in the coming months. The list of authors for this volume will be considerable!

It will certainly be a challenge to draw together work from a diverse group of contributors, but what a pleasure and a privilege too. The resulting volume will contain a wealth of collective knowledge. I will still need to draw on the resources of others to finish the book this year and welcome the input of anyone who has suggestions, comments and complaints about

current and future drafts on the VCH Gloucestershire website. I look forward to hearing from you and delivering a volume of which we can all be proud.

*From Sally Self*

A WINCHCOMBE WELCOME

With the completion of two Gloucestershire volumes now in sight – Cirencester with Cheltenham to follow – the VCH Trustees have considered where we should go next. This is primarily so that fund raising and initial preparatory work can be undertaken mainly by volunteers. Following a convincing case being put forward by Rob White, Winchcombe will become one of these and to provide a balance across the county, Marshfield has also been chosen.

Dr John Chandler has produced a scoping paper which covers Winchcombe and the ten associated parishes that the volume will cover. Among other information, the document lists a series of collections catalogued as deeds with suffix 'D' available at Gloucestershire Archives. In timely fashion, the Cheltenham Local History Archive volunteers are also about to complete the cataloguing of the 80 boxes of the Griffith and Lewis, Cheltenham



solicitors' deposit. These are now, or soon will be, available on the Archives' digital catalogue.

The Monday cataloguers were looking forward to working on new sources from a wider date range than the Cheltenham solicitors' largely 19th/20th-century documents. Unfortunately, it has been found that the majority of the D-numbers, suggested by John, already have digital listings and while we can complete these, they will not provide sufficient work for more than two or three of the ten or eleven regular cataloguers. Therefore, we have been asked to work on a recent deposit of 150 boxes, again mainly 19th/20th-century, of the Yeend solicitors' consignment. If nothing else discussing the pronunciation will give us some thought! Apart from a firm of Cheltenham solicitors, the family have a considerable presence in the county from the 1830s onwards. First noted as yeoman and farmers, a section of the family became Cheltenham house builders.

Volunteers whose strengths lie in transcribing early documents, mainly wills at this stage, have started work on the numerous Winchcombe probates. We are hoping that the Cheltenham volunteers, can over time be strengthened by offers of help from Winchcombe and the neighbouring parishes, that will be covered by the VCH volume, the group being trained and led by Rob White.

*If anyone from the Winchcombe or Cheltenham areas is interested in volunteering please contact me, c/o the Trust, and I will pass your information on to the relevant volunteer organiser.*

## Gloucestershire County History Trust

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