

The Trust would not exist without the financial support of many individuals and our chairman reports on the very successful fund raising evening at Little Sodbury Manor in early May.

Our contracted historians again write of their researches and their findings, some of which don't fit the demands of uniformity of approach required by the VCH. The general election earlier in the month gives a relevance to the final contribution as Louise recounts the failed attempts over two hundred years ago of one would-be MP to represent the county.

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, despite John having

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the July 2024 newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust bringing you the latest news of its work. This newsletter contains much on the work of and changes to the Trust itself. From the introductions from our new colleagues through the farewell musings of our retiring County Editor to the enthusiasm of our volunteers, I hope you will have an increased awareness and understanding of the ways in which the Trust works.



The successful fund raising evening at Little Sodbury Manor on 3 May (Lisa Earlam)

VCH Gloucestershire

Newsletter 21: July 2024

relinquished his rôle as County Editor. We hope you enjoy reading it and, as usual, if you have any comments or further ideas, please let me know: dhaldred@btinternet.com.

Welcome to two new trustees and our new County Editor

RICHARD MULLINGS



I retired as a solicitor in June 2023 having practised with the family firm in Cirencester for some 52 years. I continue to work with a few clients and a number of organisations largely based in Cirencester. In addition I am spending time with charities involved with Cirencester Town, Education, Museums and the Parish Church and I am particularly interested in history relating to Cirencester [and Roman Corinium] and the regimental history of Gloucestershire.

GRACE OWEN

I first discovered the VCH during my PhD research and I wanted to get involved with the VCH because of my passion for local history and that my primary research interests lie in the uncovering the lives of everyday people. I first began as a member of the committee in Herefordshire in 2021 before I



was contracted to work on the parish of Coates in Gloucestershire in 2022. During this time I made a number of interesting discoveries, one of which was an investigation into the life of Reverend Bryan Mackey, reportedly the first black clergyman in England, in 1799. (see below, Ed) I left the VCH for a research position at the University of Exeter, where I explored and examined women's work, what rôles they were hired for and how much they were paid, in later medieval England. My current role is as a research fellow, funded by the Economic History Society, where I am developing my doctoral work on peasant officers into a monograph. I have been keen to remain involved with the VCH and I am really looking forward to helping support the VCH as a trustee.

SIMON DRAPER

Back in April I took on the baton of County Editor handed to me by John Chandler, whose departure has certainly left me with big shoes to fill! I undertake the rôle part-time alongside my VCH duties in Oxfordshire, where I have been an Assistant Editor since 2012.

I should confess that I only became a historian by accident! I started off life as an archaeologist, reading Archaeology at Durham University and completing a PhD there in 2004 on the landscape, settlement and society of Anglo-Saxon Wiltshire (my native county). Whilst researching for my doctorate, I became fascinated with the origins of names (of both people and places), which led me to work at the University of the West of England, Bristol, between 2010 and 2012 helping to compile the four-volume *Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*

published in 2016. I also developed a deep interest in the origins of fields, farms, villages, towns, manors and parishes, which I guess is what drew me to the VCH.

My first experience of working for the VCH came in January 2007, when I accepted a six-month contract to research and write the history of Bromesberrow for Gloucestershire's Volume XII (Newent and May Hill). Soon afterwards I became Assistant Editor in Gloucestershire under the expert tutelage of the late County Editor, Dr John Juřica, who very sadly died in 2020. It was he who drilled into me the rigours of VCH discipline – how to write a good footnote (archaeologists generally don't use them!), how to read and make sense of deeds, how to compile and store VCH notes (then in towering piles of A5 paper slips), and, not least, how to use the all-important Oxford comma! To John I owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

After Volume XII John and I turned our attentions to Volume XIII (The Vale of Gloucester and the Leadon



Valley), for which I researched and wrote the histories of Elmore, Lassington and Minsterworth parishes before work came to a shuddering (but thankfully temporary) halt in 2010 owing to the withdrawal of funding. A few years later I also contributed a chapter on Sandhurst to the red book, which, completed and edited by John Chandler, was published in 2016.

Since transferring to Oxfordshire, I like to think that I have further honed my VCH skills.

I still live in Gloucestershire, where I sing in the Gloucester Choral Society and Three Choirs Festival, give talks locally (including in this September's Gloucester History Festival) and edit the annual *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*. Having supported VCH Gloucestershire from the sidelines for more than a decade now, I am thrilled to be taking an active part once again in this important project very dear to my heart, and I look forward to helping to bring to fruition the excellent work of this county's talented VCH contributors and volunteers.

STOP PRESS

Simon has been confirmed as a speaker in this autumn's Gloucester History Festival. His talk, at 12 noon on Monday 16 September in Blackfriars, is entitled 'A Time Traveller's Guide to the River Severn' and draws on research he did on Elmore and Minsterworth parishes for VCH Gloucestershire XIII. It will also seek to promote the work of the VCH more widely in the county. The event will be live-streamed, but he would appreciate seeing some familiar faces in the audience. For more information and tickets, visit <https://www.gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk/>. (Ed)

Farewell from our retiring County Editor

I'm probably one of the few VCH people left to have known Ralph Pugh, who re-founded the whole project in the 1940s. I encountered him in the 1970s (he died in 1982 and I attended his memorial service in Devizes in January 1983). He didn't come across as a joking sort of a person, but he did introduce a note of levity into the VCH when describing the chaotic reign of prioress Sybil Montague at Amesbury around 1400. After 'six of the elder and weightier nuns gave a good testimonial of the prior (and I've always been intrigued about how on earth he came to find out about the weight of a medieval nun!)', the trouble was not over, Pugh tells us. Several hooligans, including a holy-water clerk, entered the convent and imprisoned the prioress, urged on by five nuns and three brethren, who rang the convent bells. Two days later the clerk entered the prioress's chamber and pulled her out of it, threatening to shoot an arrow at the under-sheriff. In

the same volume (III) another researcher, reporting on Malmesbury abbey, probably had no notion of double entendre when he began a paragraph: 'The cook was well endowed.'

So there has always been an element of mischief in the VCH. But usually it was understated or completely ignored. But when John Beckett asked me to write the introduction to Cricklade for the Wiltshire VCH he sent me a copy of a Yorkshire East Riding volume as an example of what he wanted. And there I discovered Christina Anna Jessica Cavendish-Bentinck, a highly intelligent young woman with strong opinions, who in 1874 when 18 married the 48 year old Sir Tatton Sykes II, who had no interest in society, and was an obsessive hypochondriac with a mania about keeping his body at a constant temperature. She, the VCH tells us, found life with this deeply religious, introverted, misogynistic and middle-aged eccentric impossible. Lady Tatton Sykes, to give her her proper title, enjoyed London society, and took to drink, gambling and a series of affairs. She was nicknamed Lady Satin Tights. I'm still rather surprised that the editors got away with including that but I'm pleased that they did.

My own efforts in that direction are more limited – but the beauty of working on parishes for the VCH is that you are continually tempted down rabbit holes. So at Maisemore I enjoyed following the curate from 1776-93, Martin Stafford Smith, down one such. He had five other livings, though not all at once (Cirencester was one, so we'll be seeing him again), and he was the bishop's chaplain. When the bishop died Smith married his widow, 20 years his senior, and thereby inherited Prior Park in Bath and the nickname 'Gaffer Smut'. She died and he lost her inheritance, thereby – it is thought – suggesting to Jane Austen the plot of Northanger Abbey. Another curate, at Norton 1836-43, was Hugh Percy Rennett. 'A violent man.' I wrote. 'He was shot and wounded in that year (1843) by his stepson in self defence' [he had returned from the pub threatening to murder his wife and stepson]. After that he disappeared, and I was lucky to find what happened to him. He appears in the pages of the *London Gazette* 25 years later, having recently died in a Paris hotel. And then there was the unmarried schoolmaster at Hartpury who resigned in 1903 because he was unwilling 'to provide a wife to assist in school as required by some of the managers.' That seemed worth putting in.

As someone who has always been on the fringe of the academic world, basically a hack writer and populist for local history, I stand in awe of my VCH



John with the late James Hodsdon and the editor at the public launch of the VCH shortly after John's appointment (Editor's collection)

predecessors and colleagues – including especially Simon, my successor - and I have always felt a bit of a fraud. And I realise that in some academic historical circles the VCH is seen as an anachronism – an old-fashioned way of doing history, rooted in the Victorian past, as its name suggests. But I disagree. I was trained as a reference librarian, where you were supposed to know how to find out about anything (Professors Google and Wikipedia have rather taken over that rôle these days); and it is as reference books for historians, not histories as such, that we should regard our work. Others can build histories on our foundations, our clipped no-nonsense matter-of-fact sentences and our precise footnotes, which are our trademark. But to select what goes into those sentences and footnotes we do have to be attuned to the world of historians, to attend to their needs. And researching for the VCH is a great way, as many of my younger colleagues have told me, of broadening your knowledge of the whole sweep of historical periods and disciplines.

I remember three things about my interview in 2011. First was how pleasant James Hodsdon (chairman of the Trust) and Heather Forbes (County Archivist) were about it all. Second, that they asked me how I would trace a manorial descent – I wasn't prepared for this, and to be honest I hadn't a clue, but I bluffed my way through; and third Heather thrust a medieval court roll at me and asked me to decipher it – fortunately I spotted Tewkesbury in the heading, and bluffed my way through that as well. I was genuinely astounded when James phoned me later on to offer me the contract. I think what swung it (and I would recommend this to young VCH hopefuls) was that I had spent the previous weekend exploring the parishes I would be working on, and had discovered (among other things) how to pronounce Twynning.

This sounds like a valedictory address – that it's all over and I am going to disappear. But I hope that is not what you want me to do. For one thing I haven't finished all the things I'm contracted to do. And anyway, I've made so many friends in the archives and in the VCH community, and here in Gloucester, that I want to continue to be a part of it all, even if not responsible or paid. So, thanks to you all for your support, your friendship, and for the confidence you have shown in me over the last decade and more. It has been an honour and a delight to work alongside you all, and I know that under its trustees, its researcher and Simon its editor, the VCH is in good heart and will continue to flourish. Thank you.

John Chandler

Report from the Trust

FUNDRAISING SUCCESS!

In our last Newsletter, I mentioned that the Trust was planning a fundraising event aimed at raising the £60,000 required to complete the research and writing of VCH Gloucestershire Volume XIV, on the Chipping Sodbury district. The event was duly held at Little Sodbury Manor on 3 May by the kind



HRH the Duke of Gloucester with hosts Jessica Livingston and Paul Graham (Lisa Earlam)



HRH the Duke of Gloucester being introduced to trustees by Sir Nicholas Mander (Lisa Earlam)

invitation of Paul Graham and Jessica Livingston, and was attended by our royal patron, HRH the Duke of Gloucester. Thanks to the attendance of our patron, the generous hospitality of our hosts, the meticulous planning of Sir Nicholas Mander, one of our trustees, who designed the event and played a major part in making it happen, and the hard work of the trustees



HRH the Duke of Gloucester with trustees and contributors (Lisa Earlam)

and contributors on the night, the event was a great success, much enjoyed by the 75 or so people who attended: one departing guest said she thought it might be the nicest party she had ever been to! We kept the speeches short (if heartfelt!), but a particular highlight was provided by Neil Stacy, currently working on the history of Dyrham as a volunteer, who spoke entertainingly about some of the discoveries he has made in the course of his research. We include a number of photographs of the occasion.



Neil Stacy addressing the attendees (Lisa Earlam)

The event did much to raise awareness of the Victoria County History in the south of the historic county, and we hope that many of those who attended the event will continue to follow the progress of the VCH in the future. However, important though it was to make new friends through the occasion, and for everyone to have a good time, the evening was really all about raising money, and I am delighted to say that thanks to more than twenty individual donors, and to one couple in particular, we reached our target of £60,000. Our attention now turns to the task of completing Volume XIV, and over the next few months we will be seeking to find a suitable contractor to research and write the histories of Acton Turville, Tormarton, Wapley & Codrington, and Dodington. Further progress reports should appear in future newsletters.

Nick Kingsley
Chair

Report from our County Editor

Since starting in April, I have met a number of times with the volunteers at the Heritage Hub on Monday mornings, and also met face-to-face with all our contributor contracted historians.

Mark Forrest began work on the Volume XV (Cheltenham) sections for Charlton Kings to 1540 in early May. The preliminary reading and data gathering is now complete, and he has started to write up the Landscape, Landownership and Economic History sections. John Chandler is about to finish the last two sections of Swindon Village. Louise Ryton-Epton is working on the last section for Leckhampton.

Alex Craven has submitted drafts of Coates' Economic and Social History for Volume XVI

(Cirencester). On completing Coates, he will then start a new contract on Charlton Kings after 1540 for Volume XV. Francis Boorman has been working on the Cirencester town drafts and has started rearranging the text thematically so that it is no longer divided by time period. The contributors who have been involved with the volume are also identifying the most telling illustrations for the book and drafting maps to be drawn by a professional cartographer, while Francis will be writing an introduction to the volume. We very much hope to be able to submit the completed text to the VCH Central Office soon after Christmas 2024.

Neil Stacy has submitted Dyrham's Economic History and a revised version of Landownership for Volume XIV (South Gloucestershire).

Sally Self has continued to lead the Cheltenham volunteers at the Hub every Monday. She has supported Rob White with the group of combined Cheltenham and Winchcombe transcribers, who are working their way through all the relevant wills and inventories for proposed Volume XVII (Winchcombe and district).

Simon Draper

Report from our Volunteers' Coordinator

It's Monday: it must be the Archives

The Monday group of cataloguers, now often as many as twelve volunteers, continue to work hard at the Gloucestershire Archives every Monday. In January 2024 we were set to work on a recently made deposit of 150 boxes donated by Yeend, Middleton and Yeend, (pronounced Yend), solicitors of Imperial Square, Cheltenham.



Sally explaining the work of the volunteers to Simon (Alison Pascoe)

Each box contains between 15 and 25 bundles, dealing mainly with probate records and house conveyances from the late 20th century. The bundles have clipped in 'flimsies', copies of the solicitor's correspondence with their clients. The additional, enclosed documents and papers vary according to whether the bundle is concerned with probate or conveyancing. In the case of winding up an estate, this can include certificates of birth and death, draft copies of the will, naming executors and beneficiaries, and detailed valuations of the estate, with, of course, the legal searches and charges, which, in the case of the Yeends, do not seem to be over inflated.

If the bundle is for the sale and purchase of property, the relevant enclosures cover names of the vendors and purchasers, affidavits as to the long-term ownership, sale particulars, sometimes with photographs and plans, and occasionally legal disputes over boundaries. These documents are of great interest to family researchers, but unfortunately do little to assist the VCH volumes.

Recently, we have said a sad farewell to John Chandler who, for over ten years, gave us so generously of his time and knowledge. We wish him all the very best in his retirement from Gloucestershire, though he continues to research the VCH history of Swindon Village. In his place we have welcomed Simon Draper from Oxfordshire, who is as knowledgeable and as helpful. We welcomed him to a coffee and chat, a few weeks ago, as he settles into his new role as County Editor. He will be guiding us as we continue to contribute to Cheltenham Volume XV, and also in our involvement in the newly proposed Winchcombe volume XVII.

Sally Self

Updates from our historians

From Alex Craven

COATES

As promised previously, the remaining sections of the history of Coates have been completed, dealing with the economic, religious and social history of the parish. Coates was the last outstanding parish from the Cirencester area still to be completed, so this marks a large step towards completing the Cirencester Volume XVI. Writing the history of the parish has been complicated by its complex landownership pattern, divided as it was between six estates in the 11th century. Part of the parish lay in



Coates manor house in 1848 (Nick Kingsley)

the hamlet of Tarlton, which was divided between Coates and Rodmarton until the late 19th century. The profusion of estates all labelled with the same name in Domesday Book proved a challenge, and has led many previous historians to misidentify which of the estates in Tarlton descended with the manor of Hullasey to become part of the parish of Coates. In this matter we are indebted to our predecessors for



Coates manor house after the rebuilding in 1919-21. The house is now known as Bledisloe Lodge (Nick Kingsley)

having unpicked this tricky problem in our history of Rodmarton (VCH Glos. XI). The later manorial history of the parish, as estates changed hands during the 18th and 19th centuries, may also be responsible for another challenging aspect of researching Coates, the total absence of any manorial records or even many tenants' leases, leaving gaps in our understanding of life in Coates.

We are left with only an impression of the social life of the parish before the 19th century, drawing upon taxation records and probate documents. It seems few in the parish engaged in non-agricultural occupations, perhaps unsurprising given the proximity of the markets of Cirencester, although for a time in the late 18th century the women of the parish were employed spinning yarn for local textile



St Matthew's church Coates (CCL)

merchants. One of the more eccentric characters to emerge from the records is Rev'd Bryan Mackey, rector of the parish between 1799 and 1847. My predecessor Dr Grace Owen has written at length about him in a previous newsletter (No. 17, July 2022), in particular examining financial difficulties he experienced later in life. As a mixed-race Jamaican, who had successfully asserted his rights as a freeborn British subject and who was given an advantageous education by his father, a white planter, Mackey is a noteworthy addition to the history of the parish. His relations with his parishioners appear to have been strained, and the rector was disciplined in 1807 for his refusal to bury the child of Nonconformist parents, insisting that her baptism by an Independent minister was insufficient. The unfortunate corpse and her father were left sitting in the porch of the parish church for three nights in a row whilst Mackey refused to bury her, before he eventually permitted the parish clerk to place the coffin in a grave, although he still refused to say any form of funeral rites for her. This level of obstinacy may explain another incident in 1813, when three Cirencester labourers were required to apologise in the pages of the *Gloucester Journal* for abusing Mackey in public. Coates is also remarkable in the 18th and 19th centuries for the longevity of its clergymen. Beginning with the presentation of John Chaunler in 1763 and ending with the death of Thomas Simpson in 1936, just four rectors spanned the period between the Seven Years' War and the eve of the Second World War.

Having finished Coates, my attention will now turn back to the Cheltenham district, after a gap of seven years since I last worked on the area. With Mark Forrest, I will be spending the next couple of years working on the history of Charlton Kings. From what I already know from working on the history of

Cheltenham it will be a fascinating parish to research, so I am looking forward to getting stuck into it properly in the Autumn.

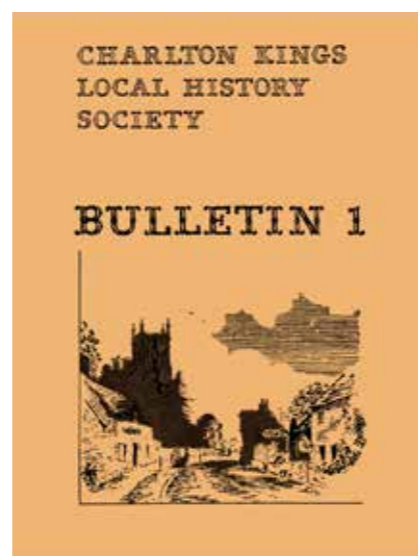
From Mark Forrest

Having had a short break from Gloucestershire I have recently returned to examine the history of Charlton Kings from prehistory to 1540. So far I've mostly been collecting material from various archives, reviewing the substantial body of material produced by local historians and getting to grips with the evidence collated in the Historic Environment Record.

Already I am most grateful for the work of Mary Paget, published in *A History of Charlton Kings*, numerous articles in the Charlton Kings Local History Society Bulletin, and particularly to Mike Greet who has managed to unpick the extraordinarily complicated descent of Ashley manor through several generations of the Greville family, tracing inheritance by second cousins not once, but twice!

I have yet to undertake any detailed analysis of the records and particularly look forward the sections on the economy and agricultural conditions. It is already clear that the series of rentals held at the National Archives will provide much useful material. There is evidence of the merger of peasant holdings in the 14th and 15th century as the population fell and retention of traditional agricultural divisions of land including virgates and ferendells.

Charlton Kings did not receive the tax allowances granted to impoverished towns during the 15th century and was probably regarded as relatively prosperous. Some local wealth almost certainly derived from the business interests of the Frensshe, Goderich and Greville families who appeared



The cover of the first bulletin Spring 1979 (Glosdocs)

regularly as plaintiffs and defendants in the Court of Common Pleas where the cases reflect the range and scale of their commercial interests.

From Louise Ryland-Epton

THE PARLIAMENTARY AMBITIONS OF SIR GEORGE ONESIPHORUS PAUL

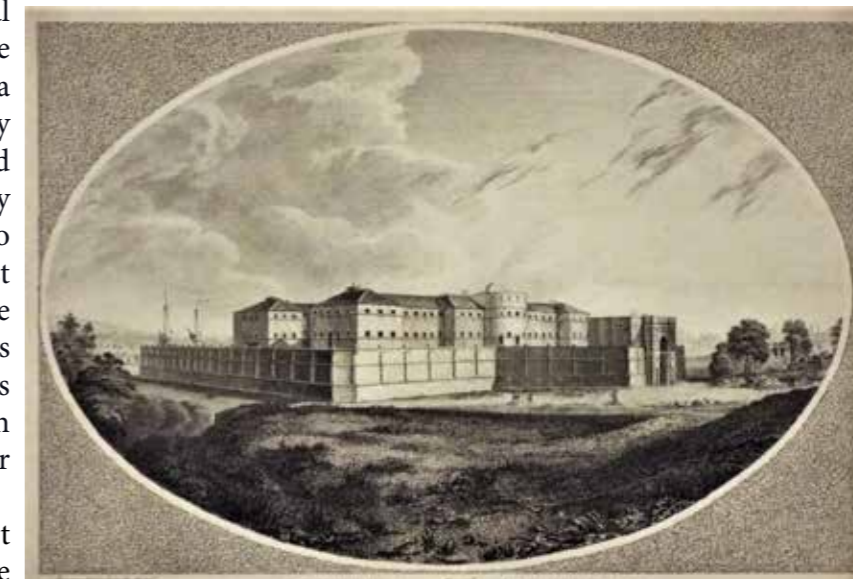
In Georgian England, county magistrates like Gloucestershire's Sir George Onesiphorus Paul (1746-1820) wielded a significant amount of power that extended beyond their own counties to Westminster. Magistrates of the period were essential for the operation of local government, the administration of justice, and the formulation of domestic policies. Consequently, magistrates played a pivotal role in the English state, and many became parliamentary MPs. In 1785, Paul made a significant contribution to penal reform by securing an act of parliament that allowed Gloucestershire to build a new county gaol and several houses of correction to an innovative plan. It was 'the greatest achievement of the Gloucestershire justices sitting as a bench', and Paul was lauded nationwide. However, despite his eminence as a magistrate, Paul's ambition to be a member of parliament was never realised.

At the time, the families of Beaufort and Berkeley, or as Sir George Paul once quipped, 'the Chieftains' dominated the political life of Gloucestershire. Paul was frustrated by their influence, particularly their sway over the election of county MPs. In part, at least, the irritation arose from his frustrated political ambitions to represent the county, which he felt 'so repeatedly smothered' by them. In 1781, Paul was considered for the role of Bristol MP and in 1784, his name was mooted amidst his prison reform campaign as a potential candidate for Bath. Four years later, it was rumoured that Sir Charles Barrow, another magistrate, would retire from the Gloucester seat, paving the way for Paul's succession. However, Paul did not actively seek selection for these borough seats. His objective was higher.

Representing a county seat invested the member with a certain authority. The sheer size of the electorate, the spectacle of elections, and likely the particular importance of county MPs in creating local legislation made the rôle attractive to Paul. However, an

impediment was in his way. Since 1783, an electoral pact between the Duke of Beaufort and the Earl of Berkeley meant each nominated one Gloucestershire county member. The arrangement caused some resentment at the outset from the county's freeholders who made up the 6000 strong electorate. At the general election in 1784, several correspondents to the Gloucester Journal, complained of aristocratic influence 'strong arming' independent freeman in their exercise of choice. Paul was suggested as an opposition candidate. However, at a critical moment in his prison reform campaign, Paul was focused elsewhere and temporarily, at least, other ambitions were set aside.

In 1796, the retirement of Thomas Master, Beaufort's nominated county MP, who managed to transition from magistrate to MP provided another opportunity for Paul to intercede. The new county gaol had been completed since the preceding election.



Gloucester gaol shortly after it was built in 1792. Its design earned Sir George a national reputation as a prison reformer

In London during May 1796, he decided to stand. But, Paul had not reckoned on Beaufort putting up his son, Lord Worcester, or that the Berkeley and Beaufort clans would collaborate to seek a peaceful election. On 18 May, Paul visited Beaufort to inform him of his changed intentions. According to the duke, Paul had called on several Gloucestershire gentlemen in the capital to find their minds already decided on Worcester and the Berkeley candidate; and he had therefore withdrawn. While their nominations were carried without incident, Paul placed a notice in the Gloucester Journal elaborating the circumstances of his possible candidacy and change of heart. It was a veiled, but public attack on the two landed interests. 'Against so powerful a combination, determined to

oppose the views of a third candidate, I could not presume to contend,' he wrote.

Unselected again in 1811, when Paul believed he 'had a claim on both sides' to support his candidacy. In circumstances, he thus felt 'extraordinary above all other instances of aristocratic caprice that has ever been (even in Gloucestershire)'. The opposition to aristocratic supremacy long threatened finally materialised. But Paul set aside his own ambition and instead nominated William Berkeley Guise (like Master from an old county landowning family). Paul acted as his political mentor, and Guise was promoted (perhaps on Paul's instigation) as the candidate of independent gentlemen. This time circumstances were aligned to undermine the Berkeley interest. Earl Berkeley died in August 1810, but there were questions over the legitimacy of his eldest son, who had represented the county since May and subsequently vacated the seat. With Paul's support, Guise won against the Berkeley nominated candidate.

Paul set his sights high on a county seat but was never confident enough to directly challenge the local aristocratic dominance and test his appeal to voters, despite his considerable reputation. He was likely pragmatic. While landed interests were prepared to follow Paul's lead to obtain penal reform, he had failed to ingratiate himself sufficiently with them to gain their nomination of a county seat. Nonetheless, his support and guidance of Guise were major factors in his success. Had Paul set his sights on a borough seat and taken advantage of the bump in his reputation afforded by his penal reform endeavours he may have been better able to capitalise on his magisterial connection to begin a parliamentary career.



The monument to Sir George Onesiphorus Paul in Gloucester cathedral (Editor)



Sue Brown, Sue Parsons and Sir Nicholas Mander represented the Trust at the royal garden party at Buckingham Palace on May 8th. Sir Nicholas was accompanied by his wife Karin Lady Mander (Sir Nicholas Mander)

Gloucestershire County History Trust

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