

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the January 2025 newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust bringing you the latest news of its work. The three volumes on which the Trust has been working almost since its inception nearly fifteen years ago are moving towards completion. Volume XVI (Cirencester) will be the

first to be handed over to VCH central office for final editing and we are hoping with fingers crossed that the Big Red Book will be published before the end of the year.

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.



The Trust's display at the Gloucestershire Family History Fair on 2 November attracted much interest

VCH Gloucestershire

Newsletter 22: January 2025



INSTITUTE OF
HISTORICAL
RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF
ADVANCED STUDY
UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON

England's greatest local history community project is working in Gloucestershire to foster public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the history and heritage of the county.

Welcome to our new trustee



THOSS SHEARER

I lead the Gloucestershire Gardens and Landscape Trust (GGLT)'s research work - filling in gaps in our knowledge about significant sites in the county, particularly where these might be under threat from development or unsympathetic change. I am also coordinating the Gloucestershire Gentlemen Clothiers project (jointly sponsored by GGLT and Stroudwater Textile Trust) which is researching the houses, gardens and estates of successful C18th and C19th clothiers.

I live in Uley and am a former senior civil servant, having worked in the Business Department, the Foreign Office, the Cabinet Secretariat and the Government Office for the South West. My lifelong interest in architecture and architectural history led to a complementary interest in landscape design and garden history.

Report from the Trust

I'm pleased to report that with the welcome arrival of Thoss Shearer we now have a full complement of trustees. Our contracted historians and our volunteers have continued their researching and writing up for our three current volumes.

VOLUME XIV (SODBURY & DISTRICT)

At the time of writing we have a strong field of

candidates to work on the four remaining parishes for this volume. The work has been structured as two separate packages (Acton Turville and Tormarton in one and Dodington and Wapley & Codrington in the other). This has been made possible by the generosity of our supporters who attended the fund-raising evening with our patron the Duke of Gloucester at Little Sodbury Manor last May.

VOLUME XV (CHELTENHAM & DISTRICT)

Louise Ryland-Epton continues to work on Leckhampton economic history. John Chandler is completing the last two sections of Swindon Village (religious and social history). Alex Craven has submitted a unified (pre- and post-1500) draft of Charlton Kings landownership.

VOLUME XVI (CIRENCESTER & DISTRICT)

With input from Simon Draper and Mark Forrest, Francis Boorman has been working on editing the texts for Cirencester, written by many hands over several years, integrating them into a single chronological narrative suitable for meeting the publishing requirements of a Big Red Book.

We hope early in 2025 to be able to offer a contract for a history of Hailes parish as we embark on Volume XVII (Winchcombe & District). We have not yet decided on a date for making a start on Volume XVIII (Marshfield & Boyd Valley).

*Nick Kingsley
Chair*

Report from our County Editor

I continue to spend half a day a week on VCH Gloucestershire business (Simon is employed full-time by VCH Oxfordshire and the Trust pays for a tenth of his time which is spent in Gloucestershire [Ed.]). Francis Boorman, Nick and I met online in early December to discuss and agree a new chapter plan (with sub-headings) for the Cirencester account in Volume XVI, which should make the text more coherent and bring it into line with the VCH Central parish history template. In addition, I have read and made comments on Mark Forrest's first drafts of Charlton Kings (before 1540), and Mark and Alex Craven's joint draft of Charlton Kings landownership. I have also asked Alex to make final

changes to his Coates parish history so that the draft can be put on our website for comments in the spring. I have also begun reading and editing the Volume XVI rural parish histories, beginning with the two Duntisbournes, drafts of which should also be put on the website in the spring. In addition I have volunteered to write a digest of the latest published work on the Iron Age settlement at Bagendon for Volume XVI, assuming that this work is not taken up by the academic executor of Prof. Tim Darvill (author of the 'Prehistory' chapter in Volume XVI), who sadly died in 2024. Neil Holbrook of Cotswold Archaeology (author of the 'Roman' chapter) has kindly offered to review and update his own contribution.

On other matters, Alex has set up a VCH Glos. social media account on Bluesky (@vchgloucester.bsky.social), on which he will post VCH-relevant material. John Chandler (my predecessor as County Editor) has reworked the substantial section on Cirencester nonconformity for Volume XVI and hopes during the coming quarter to tackle the two outstanding sections of Swindon Village - social and religious history. Mark Forrest has recently negotiated access to the Duchy of Cornwall archive which contains court rolls for Cheltenham. Louise

Ryland-Epton continues work on Leckhampton.

Sally Self and the volunteers have been working hard, continuing to work steadily in the Archives through collection D7821 of solicitors Yeend, Middleton and Yeend of Cheltenham. They hope to make a start on transcribing wills for the remaining Volume XIV parishes (e.g. Tormarton, Acton Turville etc.).

Simon Draper

Updates from our contributors

From Alex Craven

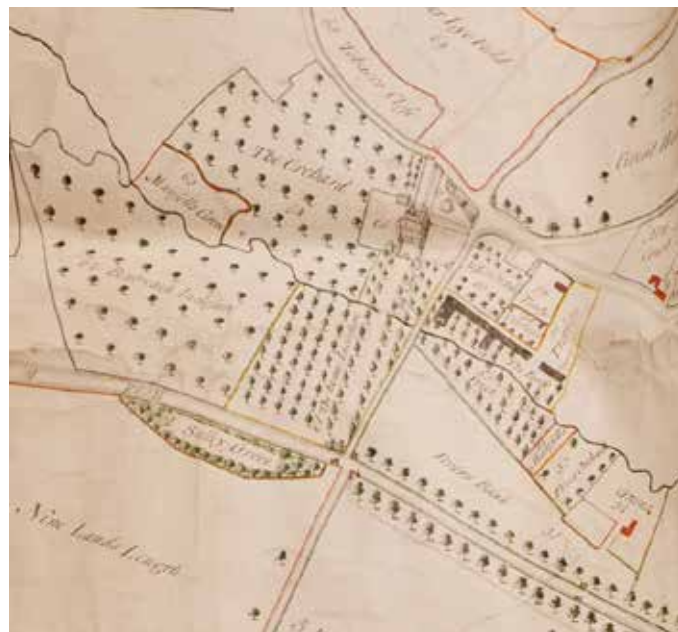
THE LANDSCAPE OF CHARLTON KINGS

When I start working on any parish, one of my early priorities is to focus on the landscape and settlement history. As a topographically-focussed project writing predominantly about rural parishes, it generally follows that the character of the landscape plays a large part in shaping the history of a parish. As



Duntisbourne Rouse church

with Cheltenham, one of the challenges of writing about Charlton Kings is to recover the landscapes and buildings that have long ago disappeared under modern developments. At Charlton Kings, however, we are greatly aided in the endeavour by the extensive research of the Charlton Kings Local History Society, which has done much work in the area already. Indeed, the society has already published an excellent history of the parish, detailing its history from its ancient roots and dealing with many of the same questions that concern us at the VCH. Nevertheless, their book was published more than 35 years ago, since when more material has become available. whilst it does not appear that the group were able to draw greatly on material held at the National Archives or the archives of the Duchy of Cornwall, so I hope we will be able to add important detail and nuance to the story.



Part of the Prinn estate in 1746 (Gloucestershire Archives D7661/Box 8)



Charlton Kings in 1921 (National Library of Scotland)

Turning to the landscape, I was left with the impression that the parish is divided very much into two halves, with an upland section formed from a crescent-shaped ridge of the Cotswold edge which forms a natural amphitheatre, surrounding the low-lying plain at the heart of the parish. The settlement, originating from a farm belonging to labourers on the royal manor of Cheltenham, grew up around the parish church, formerly a chapel, after its founding in the 12th century. As at Cheltenham, prosperity from the late 16th century onwards led to growth in the population, and at Charlton Kings the fringes of former arable fields were occupied by new buildings. Growth westwards towards Cheltenham was blocked, however, by the establishment by the Prinn and Hunt families after the late 17th century of a grand mansion surrounded by a landscaped park at Charlton Park, where ancient roads were diverted or replaced in order to afford them greater privacy. The arrival of turnpike roads in the 18th century and of the trams in the early 20th century had further impact on the character of Charlton Kings, the former stimulating the construction of numerous grand villas on the approach to Cheltenham, the latter encouraging the erection of rows of suburban houses along the tramways.

The arrival of the railway at Up End in the 19th century arguably had less impact upon the character of the village. Nevertheless, despite the growth of the village during the early 20th century, a glance at a map of the parish on the eve of Second World War reveals that much of it remained then agricultural land and it is only the last 60 years which has seen the extensive urbanisation of Charlton Kings, with the construction of numerous housing estates. Even the former pleasure grounds at Charlton Park now lie largely under modern housing, whilst the house itself has been incorporated into a school, although part of the park remains green, occupied by the local cricket ground and by playing fields.

Despite being overshadowed by Cheltenham, the parish retains its identity distinct from its larger neighbour, overseen by a separate parish council and with numerous separate institutions. The task ahead of me for much of the rest of the year will be to map out the remainder of the history of Charlton Kings, and hopefully to do justice to this very interesting place.

From Sally Self

ENFRANCHISEMENT OF CHELTENHAM PROPERTIES, 1854-1935

Enfranchising, when the term was applied to the premises in Cheltenham, meant replacing the customary or copyhold classification, where one is holden to the Lord of the Manor, with that of freehold status, such as most properties enjoy today. This process is recorded by the Manor Court of Cheltenham between the 1850s and 1930s in three large, leather-bound volumes now being stored at Gloucestershire Archives. Listing these enfranchisements, written on 1,300 double pages, for the purpose of producing a volume in the Gloucestershire Record Series (produced by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological society [Ed]), becomes, over time, very repetitive.

The layout of the volumes is strictly adhered to, and is for the most part, in clear, if occasionally faded, handwriting. The lefthand page records the date of the enfranchisement, the owner's or occupier's name/s, the amount paid to the Lord of the Manor to obtain freehold status, the consideration, and the date that the then copyhold property passed through the Manor Court - the property was surrendered into the hands of the Lord, by the then customary owner, before being recorded as to the use of the new customary owner. The righthand page gives a description of the property. That is its status as capital mansion, dwelling house, tenement or cottage. Also mentioned are the other buildings or erections present on the site. Also recorded, in the majority of cases, are the dimensions of the site and the bordering properties and their owners. For example:

90 ft. on the N side, 139 ft. at the S side, 80 ft. in depth, N-S, facing Queen Street ...
23 ft. W side, partly next Sun Street and partly 73 ft. next land late of Robert Williams ...

and

N by the highway, Swindon Lane, E by Queen Street, S, partly by land late of Mr Champion and partly by other land late of Robert Williams and W partly by Sun Street and partly by other land late of Robert Williams.

However, occasionally one finds more intriguing details of privies, dust holes and dung heaps. The best so far is the record of an owner who was determined that the privy, whether two one or a two-seater, will remain in his tenure as a freehold property.

‘ ... and two privies or one privy divided into two parts, the one is now used with the messuage and premises and the other with the back cottage, and which privies extend from the messuage and garden first described.’

The potential of the many rear court yards is fully exploited. Not only for stables and privies, but also for dust holes or dung pits. These turn up next to more salubrious premises such as breweries and malt houses ... the stables and dung pit, near the malt house ... and the brewery ..., with another malt house ... along the E side of the stables... One wonders what the beer tasted like! Recording the first volume nears completion with over three-quarters of the pages calendared, but there are two more volumes to go, so no one should hold their breathe for the final result!

Gloucestershire County History Trust

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