

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to the July 2025 newsletter of the Gloucestershire County History Trust bringing you the latest news of its work. Our two recently appointed contracted historians introduce themselves and our chairman outlines the progress on Vol. XVI Cirencester as it nears completion. Please make a

note for 28 October when the work of the trust will be the subject of two lectures as part of the Cirencester History Festival.

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.



Fig1 An 18th century view (artist unknown) of Abbey House, Cirencester, as rebuilt to the designs of William Donn in the 1770s (By kind permission of William Chester-Master)

VCH Gloucestershire

Newsletter 23: July 2025

Welcome to our two new contracted historians

ABIGAIL LLOYD



Coming from a varied background, including practising as a commercial chancery barrister in London, I have latterly focussed on researching the historical landscape, particularly using place-names and various languages such as Old English and Old Norse, as well as Middle Welsh and Irish. My PhD focussed on the nuance of (early) medieval place-names, looking at hill terms that were intrinsically linked to settlement, farming and social identities and perceptions. I have been very involved in developing a digital database for the English Place-Name Society, alongside GIS web applications for use as portable research tools and as interactive, public presentations of research.

My other focus has centred on buildings archaeology and architectural history, carrying out research with Historic England's architectural investigators into 12th-century undercrofts in Gloucester, being the assistant editor of Vernacular Architecture and chairing the Oxfordshire Buildings Record. In addition, I chair the Oxford Diocesan Advisory Committee, am a Guardian of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and have been a DCMS-appointee to the national Statutory Advisory Committee and Church Buildings Council. Otherwise, I am usually to be found sinking into an upland bog looking for a view!

The Victoria County History has been at the centre of all my research and I have in the past been a volunteer for the Oxfordshire VCH. I look forward very much to being part of the Gloucestershire VCH.

LYDIA FISHER



I completed my doctoral studies at the University of Exeter in 2023, where I continue to hold a position as an Honorary Research Fellow. My thesis focussed on surviving medieval stained-glass schemes and fragments situated in parish churches across the South-West of England as a regional case study. This entailed detailed research into individual sites, their settings and communities across an extensive period, fostering my passion for local history. Until recently, I have been revising my thesis into a book manuscript with the support of a Paul Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship to be published by the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi, an international research project dedicated to stained glass and supported by the British Academy in the UK. I am now also a member of the British committee of the CVMA.

I was appointed as a contributor to the VCH in Gloucestershire in April. I am excited to be working on the parishes of Acton Turville and Tormarton for Vol. XIV and I look forward to sharing more of my research over the next year.

Report from the Trust

Activity in recent months has been focused very largely on two pieces of work. The first, and most exciting, is putting together the content written by many different hands over the last decade relating to the history of Cirencester and the parishes to its north and west for our next 'big red book'. This work is being led by the volume editor, Francis Boorman, who has been recasting the text for Cirencester town

into a single chronological narrative, making sure that the structure of the account mirrors the parish template established by VCH Central Office (which has been revised since many of our first drafts were written!), and bringing the text up to date with developments in recent years. Alex Craven has been busy too, revising and updating his articles on the surrounding rural parishes, and preparing draft maps and lists of potential illustrations for a final selection by Francis. The Cirencester volume has also been absorbing much of the time of our County Editor, Simon Draper, whose experience with red book projects in Oxfordshire is proving invaluable in ensuring that we achieve consistency in the minutiae of the text and footnotes. Do we say 'Fosse Way' or 'Foss Way'; 'Duntisbourne' or 'Duntisborne'; 'Rous' or 'Rouse'? In footnotes, do we consistently use the same abbreviation for the same source? We are aiming to submit the final text to the VCH Central Office at the Institute of Historical Research around the end of this calendar year, and they will then conduct a peer review and final edit before the book goes to press. We recently met the Central Office team via Zoom to firm up this timetable, so we look forward with increasing confidence to publication in late 2026 or early 2027. In the meantime, and to stimulate local interest in the volume ahead of publication, the

Cirencester History Festival has agreed to put on an event at the Royal Agricultural University on Tuesday 28 October at which Neil Holbrook (Director of Cotswold Archaeology and author of the chapter on Roman Corinium) and Simon Draper will explore the development of the Roman town; what happened to it after the withdrawal of the Roman Legions in 410 AD; and how it evolved into the medieval town. We have 300 seats to fill in the lecture theatre, so put the event in your diary now!

The second big development in recent months has been the start of work on the four remaining parishes (Acton Turville, Tormarton, Dodington, Wapley & Codrington) for our future 'big red book' on the Sodbury area. Regular readers of this newsletter may remember that we successfully raised the money needed for this work through a memorable fundraising event at Little Sodbury Manor last year, which was attended by our royal patron, HRH the Duke of Gloucester. Earlier this year we appointed two new contractors, Dr Lydia Fisher and Dr Abigail Lloyd to undertake the work, and they started in April and July respectively. (See County Editor's report)

Nick Kingsley
Chair



Fig4 Dodington church, as rebuilt by James Wyatt
c.1800. (© Paul Larsen)

A VCH award for one of our contributors

Report from our County Editor

I have continued to spend half a day a week on VCH Gloucestershire business, mainly editing rural parish histories to be included in Vol. XVI Cirencester. I recently sent a finalized PDF draft of Coates to Adam Chapman at VCH Central Office in London for mounting on the county website. I will continue to edit drafts of the remaining Vol. XVI rural parishes over the summer/autumn, as well as the amended Cirencester town texts.

Lydia Fisher began her contract (on Acton Turville and Tormarton for Vol. XIV South Gloucestershire) in April. She has consulted the majority of printed sources on the research checklist and has compiled around 100 pages of notes for each parish. She has also made site visits to both parishes, photographing important buildings and features and spending a good deal of time looking around the parish churches. She visited Gloucestershire Archives in June (where we met) and is currently compiling a list of archival sources for further research visits over the next three months.

Abigail Lloyd begins her contract (on Doddington and Wapley & Codrington for Vol. XIV) in July. However, she has already visited the two parishes, where she met a farmer and came face to face with a large and angry bull!

Progress on Leckhampton and Swindon Village for Vol. XV Cheltenham has been slow so far this year but will restart in earnest in the near future.

Sally Self and the volunteers have continued to meet at Gloucestershire Archives weekly on Mondays. Some are transcribing wills and inventories for the remaining Vol. XIV parishes, and others are cataloguing or making notes from documents of relevance to the Cheltenham and Winchcombe area volumes. I have been liaising about suitable new projects for the volunteers to take on, especially with regard to the proposed Vol. XVII Winchcombe and district.

Simon Draper



I was surprised and delighted when I received the VCH Outstanding Contribution Award at our annual VCH day at London University in May, in recognition of my rôle in developing VCH Partnership Publications, my efforts to connect VCH scholarship with local communities, and my work in training and mentorship. This reflects years of collaboration with several communities in north Wiltshire, work that has taught me as much as I hope it has contributed to the project. Next month, I will be publishing a VCH Partnership book, produced in collaboration with Langley Burrell Parish Council, the third book to be published alongside the Wiltshire VCH volume XX on Chippenham and the surrounding area, which is scheduled for publication next year.

Completing the final stages of the volume has been a significant effort on the part of myself and fellow VCH Wiltshire and Gloucestershire colleagues, John Chandler, Mark Forrest and Rosalind Johnson, over the last few months in response to internal and external reviewer comments. I've only recently completed this work, and we're now looking forward to celebrating the launch in 2026, which will be combined (pending a successful lottery funding application) with a history festival in Chippenham that will include street art, museum exhibition, talks, workshops and more to celebrate the VCH, the history of the town and adjacent parishes. All VCH colleagues and friends cordially invited!

Louise Ryland-Epton

Gloucestershire County History Trust

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