



# Gloucestershire Local History Association

Newsletter No. 7 August 2014



**News from the AGM and Members' Forum**

**Report from Cheltenham's WW1 History Day**

**Focus on Fairford History Society**

**Book Review: *Music in the Windows***

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### **Note from the Editor**

Hello all, and welcome to the seventh Gloucestershire Local History Association Newsletter. As always it's been a pleasure to put together, apologies for it being late!

If you would like to contact me with any comments, questions or submissions, please email me at [thisisntmydesk@gmail.com](mailto:thisisntmydesk@gmail.com).

I hope you enjoy reading, see you next time!

Benjamin Berry

### **Cover Photo**

The Polish plaque unveiling ceremony in 2009 near the site of the Former Polish camp 1947-59, the then mayor, Joe Cusack, June Lewis, the FHS President and Mr Czeslaw Maryszczak, President of the SPK, the Polish Ex-Combatants Association of Great Britain and the World Federation in the foreground. One of a number of 'milestones' in the life of Fairford History Society during its first ten years.

## News from the GLHA

### **News from the AGM and Members' Forum, 29<sup>th</sup> May**

The Association's third AGM was held at Gloucestershire Archives on 29<sup>th</sup> May and was attended by 22 people, representing 18 of the Association's 46 members; representatives of a further 11 members also sent their apologies.

The Chairman, Steven Blake, reported on the Association's activities over the previous year, including its three Members' Forums, the summer afternoon meeting at Stonehouse in July and the Local History Day on the topic of 'Gloucestershire's Special Houses', held at Cheltenham in October. He thanked all those who had contributed to these events, notably the speakers at our Forums (Marion Hearfield, Grant Repshire and Ollie Taylor) and at our Local History Day (Stephen Hague, Steve Hill, Chris Hobson and Averil Kear) and to Vicki Walker and her colleagues in the Stonehouse History Group for organising the summer meeting.

The Local History Day included the presentation of the annual Bryan Jerrard Award for what the judges believed to be the best article on an aspect of Gloucestershire history in a local journal in the previous year; the 2013 Award was given to Diane Charlesworth for her article on 'Medieval Tibberton' in *Glevensis* 44, and we were pleased that Bryan (who chaired the former GRCC Local History Committee for 20 years) was able to travel to Cheltenham to present the Award. The chairman thanked his fellow judges, David Aldred and Mike Greet, for their input to the award judging.

The Association has also organised a number of workshops, either on its own (*Computing for Local Historians*, led by Ray Wilson) or in conjunction with Gloucestershire Archives (*Writing Local History for Publication*, led by VCH staff John Chandler and Rose Wallis, and *Sources for Researching World War 1*, led by Archives staff). The Archives also organised two 'Behind the Scenes' visits for GLHA members, led by Vicky Thorpe, Sarah Aitkin and Helen Timlin.

Reports on all these meetings and events have been included in previous Newsletters.

The Association's wider role within the county's local history community was demonstrated by its involvement with the HLF-funded 'Gloucestershire Remembers World War One project',

for which it provided a 'letter of support' to HLF, and through which it will receive funding towards the costs of its 2014 Local History Day, which will focus on the effects of the Great War on Gloucestershire communities. The association has also provided a 'letter of support' for Gloucestershire Archives' 'For the Record' HLF bid for funding towards new strong rooms, enhanced facilities for digital preservation and the creation of a 'Heritage Hub' at the Archives.

The Treasurer, David Scriven, reported on the Association's healthy financial position, with an end-of-year reserve of £931, which was almost two thirds of the way towards building up what he believed was an appropriate reserve for its activities, equivalent to two years' expenditure. He recommended that subscriptions be held at current levels for the next two years. The Treasurer thanked Sue Brown for acting as the Independent Examiner of our accounts.

The Chairman concluded the AGM by thanking all his fellow Committee members (Alison Hobson, Nicholas Holland, Janet Hudson, David Scriven, Mary Sullivan and Vicki Walker) for their hard work on behalf of the Association, Ray Wilson for maintaining the Association's website and Ben Berry for producing its quarterly Newsletter. He also expressed the Association's thanks to Gloucestershire Archives – and in particular to Heather Forbes, Vicky Thorpe and Paul Evans - for their constant support for the work of the Association, and for hosting its Forum and Committee meetings. Finally, he thanked the Association's members for their support, without which the Association would not exist! The Chairman was thanked by the Secretary, Vicki Walker, for his work on behalf of the Association.

The two Reports, copies of which have been circulated to members with the draft minutes, were accepted by those present, and the current Committee was re-elected *en bloc*. The Chairman appealed for other members to join the Committee to help develop the work of the Association.

The formal business of the AGM was followed by a presentation by Virginia Adsett and Gillian Morss, who talked about their reminiscence work with adult groups, focusing on 'The Fab 50s', for which they brought along a large collection of original 1950s material for those present to see and enjoy.

## **GLHA Summer meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> July**

Around 60 people, including members of local history groups from around the county, attended the Association's Summer meeting, which was hosted by the Forest of Dean Local History Society at St Briavels.

The meeting began with an introduction to the history of the village by the Society's Chairman, Cecile Hunt, following which we were divided into four groups for tours of the village, castle and church – led by Cheryl Mayo, Simon Moore, Joyce Moss and Mary Sullivan. Joyce Moss gave two of the groups a tour of the village's fine partly-Norman church, while Stuart Chaplin, activity manager at the Youth Hostel that now occupies the medieval castle, provided tours of the castle interior, including the many intriguing medieval features that are still visible in the hostel dorms and common rooms!

Back at the Village Hall, the meeting ended with a splendid afternoon tea, provided and served by the ladies of the St Briavels WI, and a chance to see a series of panels on the Forest in the First World War, prepared by Keith Walker.

The Association is most grateful to the Forest of Dean Local History Society for hosting the meeting, to all our guides, and in particular to the Society's Vice-Chairman, Mary Sullivan, for taking on the organisation of the meeting.

The Association's summer meeting is a well-established part of the County's local history calendar, and we are planning to meet at Lechlade in 2015, Chipping Campden in 2016 and Tewkesbury in 2017 – each meeting to be hosted by the relevant local history society. Dates and venues will be announced in due course.

## **Gloucestershire County History Trust Report**

The trustees are grateful to Dr John Chandler, our Editor-in-Chief, for providing the following update.

“We now have five historians on contracts: Rose Wallis working on Yate and South Glos (vol. 14); Beth Hartland on medieval Cheltenham and Cirencester; Alex Craven on early modern Cheltenham (vol. 15); Antonia Catchpole on early modern Cirencester (vol. 16); and myself completing the Vale of Gloucester (vol. 13). We are also calling on Jan Broadway for IT support, Jonathan Comber, an experienced VCH worker and now trust treasurer, Linda Viner, Sally Self and an expanding coterie of enthusiastic volunteer researchers.

“Informally we have formed ourselves into the VCH Glos Academy, and we hold ‘drop-in’ sessions once a month in the Frith Centre. These hitherto have concentrated on setting up and refining our IT systems and working methods. We have created a searchable database accessible to all academy workers via a designated website, on which we are accumulating notes, transcripts and other assets, such as scans and photographs, made during the course of reading sources. We are now working on updating and refining the sources checklists, which will also be posted on our website. Increasingly from now on the monthly ‘academy days’ will concentrate on helping to improve our research skills, such as recognizing and understanding different kinds of title deeds, and exploring the survival and peculiarities of sources from the Civil War and Commonwealth period (on our June agenda), as well as updating each other on the progress of each project.

“We now look forward to a period of solid progress, as sources are read, new discoveries made, and draft texts begin to be written. We are keen to collaborate with, help and benefit from parallel projects, including our colleagues in VCH Herefordshire; Jane Heward of Glos Archives, who has now begun cataloguing the Mullings Ellett (Cirencester solicitors) archive; and Anthea Jones’s team working on meeting house certificates. We continue to be very grateful to Glos Archives, who host our activities with such enthusiasm, and we are keen to welcome new recruits to our friendly band of ‘academy’ volunteers.”

A new development initiated by GCHT will be a twice-yearly e-newsletter, not only to inform subscribers, volunteers and supporters about the work in progress, but also to publish short

articles on topics discovered by our researchers and which do not fit the strict framework of VCH accounts. The first one will be published in July and GLHA members will be included in the distribution lists. The Trust continues to seek funding and as always will be delighted to receive donations, or suggestions as to where additional grant-funding might be sought. As always, the work of the trust can be followed on

<http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/gloucestershire>.

David Aldred for the trustees.

## Cheltenham Local History Society's Local History Day, 2014

“Cheltenham Life 1914-1919”

With so many events commemorating the First World War, it was important for Cheltenham Local History Society to add its own contribution to an aspect of the town's history that did not appear to have received much attention in existing publications. For its biennial Local History Day, which took place in St Matthew's Church, Cheltenham, on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, the Society mounted an exhibition, based on original research, giving a comprehensive view of life in Cheltenham during the First World War. The exhibition was accompanied by two talks: Eric Miller, of Leckhampton Local History Society, talking about the VAD Hospital at Leckhampton Court, now the Sue Ryder Home, and Robert Opie, of the Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising, talking about the Home Front Consumer. There were also displays of artefacts from The Wilson Art Gallery and Museum and the Outreach Department, Gloucestershire Archives; a display by Friends of Pittville about Dr. Grace Billings, Cheltenham's first female GP, who practised in the town during this time; and a display by Geoff North of material relating to the VAD hospitals in Cheltenham.

Little did the Society realise, in choosing to research what life was like in Cheltenham for those left behind, that published information was almost non-existent. Many of the books chose to sidestep this period of Cheltenham's history. As a consequence, the research team spent ten months trawling through local papers of the time, papers in the Gloucestershire Archives and the Ladies' College Archive, Cheltenham Borough Council Minute Books and other resources in the Local Studies and Family History Library in Cheltenham. This proved to be painstakingly slow but, ultimately, teased out of these resources, there came a wealth of information, which pieced together a complete picture of life in Cheltenham during the First World War.

Divided into subjects rather than being in chronological order, the exhibition covered

- Food: The Food Economy Campaign; the drive to increase food production and make use of empty spaces as allotments; food shortages and, towards the end of the war, food rationing. Cheltenham women working in the munitions and aircraft factories protested most strongly on one occasion when the local Food Control Committee tried to stop shopkeepers selling tea, margarine and meat, in order to preserve stocks.



- **Women at Work:** Women took over jobs which would normally have been done by men, on the land, in factories and, in particular, the munitions factory at Quedgeley. 1,000 women a day from Cheltenham took the 6.10 train in the evening or the morning to work a 12 hour shift at Quedgeley – a subject worthy of an exhibition in its own right! The Society was very grateful for the contribution of valuable information and photographs relating to this topic by Jerry Jenkinson of Gloucester Local History Society.
- **Recruitment of Soldiers:** Many men left to fight in the war and there were moving pictures of young Cheltenham lads streaming onto trains, going off to train for the Front, as well as more joyful pictures celebrating their return at the end of the war.
- **The War Effort on the Home Front:** This featured the important voluntary work that women performed, including the Cheltenham Prisoners of War Fund run by Mrs. Elphinstone Shaw, working from her house in Bayshill Road, to send parcels to Cheltenham POWs; also the numerous fundraising schemes and events that were organised, including one which raised £100,000 in a week for a submarine!
- **Schools:** Schools too played their part in the war effort, with the involvement of children in making and supplying items to the War Office or assisting with work on local farms. Some schools were requisitioned as VAD hospitals and the displaced children found places elsewhere.
- **Entertainment & Leisure**
- **Fashion & Shopping:** There was a noticeable change in ladies' fashions and a growing demand for workwear for both men and women.

This is but a glimpse of the information that was on display and also of the information still in notebooks! There are plans for a book on the subject for publication at the end of next year. The exhibition can be seen at the Local Studies Library in Chapel Walk, Cheltenham, in instalments, three posters at a time, from now until 10<sup>th</sup> September and then, for Heritage Open Days (11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> September), at Christ Church, Malvern Road, Cheltenham, where it will remain on display until 21<sup>st</sup> September. If any local history society would like to borrow any of the posters or learn more about putting on the exhibition please contact Neela Mann, [neela.mann@live.co.uk](mailto:neela.mann@live.co.uk) or 01242 238920

## Features

### **Dates for your Diary 2014-2015**

Glos. Archives 'Behind the Scenes': Monday Sept 29<sup>th</sup> 2014, 2-4 pm - Bookings

[walkeravsj@aol.com](mailto:walkeravsj@aol.com)

### Forum Dates for 2014

Thursday Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm: 'Know Your Place' project officer, Chris Webb

Monday Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 2.00 pm: John Putley (Glos. Archives) on his work with schools

### Forum dates for 2015

Monday March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2.00pm: Friends of Gloucestershire Archives

Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm: AGM. Speaker TBA

Thursday Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm

Monday Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2.00pm

### Newsletter deadlines

September 19<sup>th</sup> – to be published October

December 19<sup>th</sup> – to be published January

### Local history days

October 11<sup>th</sup> 2014 – The Effects of World War 1 on Gloucestershire Communities

October 10<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Immigration and Emigration: to, from and within Gloucestershire

### Summer afternoon meeting

July 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Lechlade, hosted by Lechlade History Society



# Gloucestershire Local History Association

[www.gloshistory.org.uk](http://www.gloshistory.org.uk)

## Local History Day

### The Effects of World War 1 on Gloucestershire Communities

Saturday 11 October 2014

at Pate's Grammar School, Princess Elizabeth Way, Cheltenham (entrance in Oldbury Road)

### Programme

- 10.30 Doors open; refreshments available
- 11.00 Welcome and Introduction
- 11.05 **Gloucestershire and the Great War** - Lt. Col. Robert Dixon, Chairman of the Trustees of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum, who is writing the Gloucestershire volume in The History Press's 'Great War Britain' series.
- 11.50 Short break
- 12.00 **Kidderminster's War: a local history society's project** - Sally Dickson of Kidderminster Archaeological & Historical Society which is preparing a volume on the effects of the War on the local community for The History Press's 'Great War Britain' series.
- 12.30 Lunch break and time to view displays; refreshments available
- 13.45 Announcement of the winner of the Bryan Jerrard Award for what the judges believe to be the best article on an aspect of Gloucestershire's history in a local history publication during the preceding year.
- 14.00 **Researching Gloucestershire's VAD Hospitals** - Geoff North, from Cheltenham, who is writing a book about the County's VAD Hospitals.
- 14.30 Tea break
- 15.00 **Music Will Win the War: Popular Music in Britain during the Great War** - Dr Christopher Hutchison and Maria Soriano, from the Radio Days Vintage Music Project, will illustrate the part that popular music played as propaganda and social and political commentary, including original recordings and songs from the Great War era.
- 16.00 Closing remarks and announcement of the winner of the 'best display'.
- 16.30 Close

#### Displays

Local history societies, groups and organisations will be mounting displays on the chosen theme. Three judges will decide on the best display.

#### Admission and refreshments

Admission to the event is free. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available on arrival, at lunchtime and at afternoon tea break. There will be sandwiches and cakes available at lunchtime for which donations to GLHA will be appreciated.





# Gloucestershire Local History Association

## Local History Day

Saturday 11 October 2014

at Pate's Grammar School,

Princess Elizabeth Way, Cheltenham (entrance in Oldbury Road)

10.30am - 4.30pm

## The Effects of World War 1 on Gloucestershire Communities

### Programme of speakers and displays from Local History Societies

#### Morning Talks

Lt. Col. Robert Dixon – Gloucestershire and the Great War

Sally Dickson – Kidderminster's War: a local history society's project

#### Afternoon Talks

Geoff North – Researching Gloucestershire's VAD Hospitals

Dr Christopher Hutchison and Maria Soriano, Radio Days Vintage Music Project – Music Will Win the War: Popular Music in Britain during the Great War (presentation and musical performance)

### Admission Free

Tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes available during the day



See [www.gloshistory.org.uk](http://www.gloshistory.org.uk)

for further information



## **Ten years of Fairford History Society**

The 10-year-old story of Fairford History Society is closely intertwined with the story of our community centre. Fairford Free School was established in 1738 through the generosity of local benefactors, notably Elizabeth Farmor. It was originally for 60 poor boys. In 1815 girls were admitted which required an extension to the building. In 1922 mixed boys and girls classes were introduced. As the town grew, the Secondary School became desperately overcrowded, and it became clear that a new school was required. This was planned before the war, but it was not until 1961 that Gloucestershire County Council built a new Farmor's school in Fairford Park, leaving an empty building in a wonderful position looking across the graveyard to the church. The old building passed into the ownership of the GCC and became the centre for youth and community activities. Unfortunately, insufficient money was spent on maintenance and modernising, and the building became so run down that, by the year 2000, GCC decided it was uneconomical to maintain, and put it for sale on the open market.

The community was determined to save the old school for the town and Fairford Town Council joined forces with St Mary's parochial church council to secure the building for community use. A heritage consultant suggested amongst other things establishing a museum and archive in the town. In January 2004 a Heritage Drop-in Day drew a lot of interest in the town. Over 400 attended and it was a great success. There was material from the old school as well as items that people had brought in. Subsequently a wine and cheese event was held on June 18<sup>th</sup> to launch Fairford History Society. Speaking at that meeting Councillor Trevor Hing observed that the people of Fairford should note the day as it was an important day in Fairford's history and in 25 years time people would look back and be thankful that the History Society had been formed and important artefacts and first-hand knowledge of events had been recorded. It was directly from that meeting that a committee was elected with Keith Cottam as chairman. Appropriately Colin Watkins, headmaster of the primary school, gave the first talk to the society.

We didn't know what sort of history society we wanted to be but we did know we would have a place to meet and an archive room for our exclusive use. We began quite modestly with the aim of putting on four meetings a year with a subscription of 50p. At this early stage in our existence we knew we had local resources and people with a range of interests who were prepared to be speakers or contributors.

In the 10 years since our foundation we have achieved a lot. The recording of which Trevor Hing spoke took place in various ways, especially in the form of oral history recordings. The Archive Room is overflowing. The number and range of publications has been



Fairford Free School, 1738, now the Fairford Community Centre. The FHS Archive Room is the top floor front, next to the churchyard, the window has a pane of the original glass.

impressive; publications often supplement meetings and activities. Amongst the most memorable events of our existence was the commemoration of the Polish Hostel that stood in Fairford Park for ten years from 1949. A plaque was dedicated, speeches were made and then we moved to the community centre for a social event which was attended by many who had lived at the hostel. The talk was animated, reminiscences vivid. Out of this event came a book to record the experiences of the Polish Community.

There have also been things we have not got round to. Early on there were plans for some practical archaeology. Discussions were under way for field walking but the death of the key enthusiast meant we lost this focus. But we are adaptable and if someone joins the society who is keen to explore some aspect of history we will encourage him or her. As was observed earlier, it takes time to find out what sort of society you want to be or can be. We have made an astonishingly productive start to our life and we don't know what we might branch off into over the next ten years. We owe a lot to many people and we know we need them and their successors to ensure we continue to flourish in the coming decades.

Geoff Hawkes, FHS Chairman

## Fairford History Society Publications

### Occasional Papers

1. Commander Charles Haultain, RN, KH (1787-1845), 2006 (now online)
2. The Honeybones of Fairford: A brief account of the Honeybone watch and clockmaking family of Fairford from the early 1800s to 1939, 2006 (now online)
3. Valentine Strong – Cotswold stonemason, 2006 (now online)
4. Richard Green, schoolmaster (1713-1767), 2009 (now online)
5. A Christmas tragedy: on Christmas Eve in 1874 a mother and her two children caught the train from Fairford station for a festive holiday in the West Midlands. Sadly, they never completed their journey.
6. Searching for Thomas: curate of Fairford 1851-1879, 2009
7. Pubs, inns and beer retailers in Fairford, 2012
8. Titanic: the Fairford connection 2012 (now online)
9. Royal celebrations in Fairford 1887-2002 by Alison Hobson
10. This is the end of the line: Fairford's Branch railway by Colin Moulden, 2012
11. Fairford Street names by Alison Hobson and Sue Middleton, 2012
12. Fairford Gas Works by Alison Hobson, 2012
13. Fairford Park – a lost treasure, 1661 – 1955 by Chris Hobson, 2013
14. Music in the windows of St Mary's Church, Fairford by John Read, 2014

### Monograph series

1. Fairford's War Memorial and Roll of Honour by Chris Hobson, 2005 (to be updated)
2. RAF Fairford 1944: a momentous year by Brian Routledge, 2007
3. The Raymond Barkers of Fairford Park by Chris Hobson, 2007
4. The Oldisworths of Fairford by Chris Hobson, 2008
5. The Tracys of Toddington by Chris Hobson, 2009
6. Alexander Colston, Alexander Ready: the man with two names by Chris Hobson, 2010
7. The clergymen of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Fairford by Chris Hobson, 2011

Tomb Trail: a look around St Mary's Churchyard (leaflet)

Fairford Flyer Newsletter is issued in January and July.

Fairford Polish Hostel 1947-59 by Alicja Swiatek Christofides, 2010

Distributed by FHS.

The Tames of Fairford by Chris Hobson. 2014 Price £12 (£10 to FHS members)

Distributed by FHS.



## **Book Review**

### **Music in the Windows of St Mary's Church, Fairford.**

The beautiful stained glass windows in St. Mary's church are famous and are a source of much interest to visitors to the area; this occasional paper looks at a specific aspect of them – their musical content.

The text begins with a description of the Palm Sunday window, pointing out a boy holding a musical scroll, the notes on which have been transcribed from the 15<sup>th</sup> century motet into modern notation. Other notations are discussed. Following this is a list of the musical angels portrayed in the windows on the south side of the church, some singing, some playing early musical instruments, all of the angels being in the highest parts of the windows - so take your binoculars with you when you go to study them.

The instruments depicted and described are necessarily early ones, including a rebec, strawm, triangle, gut-stringed psaltery, a six-stringed harp, portative organ and even some bagpipes! What an orchestra!

I have always been attracted to the glorious colours in stained glass windows but never realised quite how fascinating the content can be, even, in this case, to a non-musician. I must look more closely at stained glass windows in future!

Packed with detailed information and containing over thirty colour photographs of angels and singers, this 20 page A5 booklet is the 14<sup>th</sup> occasional paper produced by Fairford History Society ([www.fairfordhistory.org.uk](http://www.fairfordhistory.org.uk)). Written by John Read, it is available from the society for £2.50. It deserves to be made widely available.

Liz Jack