

# NEWSLETTER

Gloucestershire Local History Association



Gloucestershire  
Local History Association

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# News from the GLHA

## **GLHA Members' Forum, 1st December 2014**

Twenty-six people, representing 24 of the Association's members, attended our quarterly Forum at Gloucestershire Archives on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> December; apologies were received from representatives of a further seven member groups.

The Chairman reported on a number of past and future GLHA activities, including the October 2014 Local History Day on 'The Effects of World War One on Gloucestershire Communities' and plans for the 2015 day on 'People to Places: Immigration and Emigration: to, from and within Gloucestershire'. He also noted that GLHA had been invited to join a Stakeholders' Advisory Board for the Archives' major HLF-supported 'For the Record' project and that either he or another member of the GLHA Committee would attend Board meetings, the first of which had been held on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

The Treasurer reported on the Association's continuing healthy financial situation, and that our current membership stood at 43, including one new member – Lydbrook Historical Society.

Reports were also received from David Aldred on behalf of the Gloucestershire County History Trust (a report from which is included elsewhere in this Newsletter) and from Paul Evans on behalf of Gloucestershire Archives, the latter focusing on an update on the 'For the Record' project.

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with a discussion on how the Local History Day had gone and how lessons learnt might be applied to future meetings.

The formal part of the meeting was followed by a talk by John Putley (GA's Education and Outreach Officer), entitled 'A bit more interesting: Education and Outreach at Gloucestershire Archives'. John gave an overview of the history of the Archives' work with schools, which had involved creating resources for schools and inviting them to the Archives. This was becoming more difficult with changes in the National Curriculum, and now they mainly work on projects funded by external sources and often in partnership with other organisations such as Stroud Museum. John is keen to work with teachers to create topics and resources which can be used with a variety of groups.

John's talk was followed by our usual Christmas refreshments; we are grateful to Louise Scriven for making mince pies and cakes and to Alison Hobson for organising the refreshments. Gloucestershire Archives was thanked for hosting the meeting.

## Welcome to New Members

Three new members have joined GLHA in the past few months, to each of whom we extend a warm welcome:

**Lydbrook Historical Society** – a small group who meet on selected Tuesdays during the winter and organise occasional visits and social events in the summer. These meetings occur in the Lydbrook Football Club's premises in the basement of the Memorial Hall. The Society has a significant collection of photographs and documents which have been exhibited regularly at several meetings such as the September Heritage Weekend in the Baptist Church. External speakers have been invited to some meeting but other meetings involve discussion of Society materials.



For further information please contact Gaynor at [gaynoratcwmcot@btinternet.com](mailto:gaynoratcwmcot@btinternet.com)

**Gloucestershire Building Recording Group** – originally established in 1993, the Group has so far recorded a total of 159 buildings, plus around 57 tree-ring analyses. After a number of ‘fallow’ years, the Group was re-activated in 2014, and aims to continue recording and publishing data about the County’s historic buildings, with an additional long-term aim of identifying what building features are either common or rare in Gloucestershire.

**Forest of Dean Buildings Preservation Trust** – established in 2009 to take on the ownership of historic monuments and buildings at risk in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley and to raise funds to conserve them. The Group is currently concerned with three important sites – Whitecliff Ironworks, Gunns Mill and the ruined church of St James at Lancaut.

Both building groups have informative websites, so do take a look – they may be easily accessed by clicking on the link in the List of Organisations on the GLHA website.

This brings our total membership to 49 – so we await ‘the big 50’ with anticipation!

## **Dates for your Diary**

### **Forum Dates for 2015**

The March and September meetings will include discussion topics.

Monday March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2.00 pm. Stephen Haygarth, Chairman of the FoGA, and Heather Forbes, Gloucestershire County Council's Head of Information Management and Archives, will talk about the work of the Friends of Gloucestershire Archives.

Discussion topic: The Benefits of the GLHA Newsletter

Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm. AGM. Speaker from local media, radio and/or newspaper to be confirmed.

Thursday Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm. Sally Self from Cheltenham and Linda Viner from Cirencester will talk about what volunteer researchers are doing to support the work of the paid VCH staff.

Discussion topic: to be decided.

Monday Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2.00 pm. Speaker to be arranged.

### **Newsletter Deadlines**

March 20<sup>th</sup> – pub April

July 10<sup>th</sup> – pub August

Sept 25<sup>th</sup> – pub October

### **Events**

Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> 2105. Summer afternoon meeting at Lechlade.

This is being organised by Lechlade History Society. Details and booking forms will be sent out at the end of March.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2105. Local History Day at Pate's Grammar School, Cheltenham. Topic - 'People to Places: Immigration and Emigration, to, from and within Gloucestershire'

We invite member groups to bring along a display on the topic, linked to their own community. Each group will be allocated a space in the hall at Pates along the same lines as 2014. Steven Blake is compiling a list of ideas of possible topics that would fit the main theme but the choice is yours! We would appreciate it if you could let us know as soon as possible if you will be bringing a display. The group who wins the 'Best Display' award will be given a year's free membership of GLHA. Full details of the event will be sent out in due course – if you have any questions please email Vicki Walker - [walkeravsj@aol.com](mailto:walkeravsj@aol.com).

The Bryan Jerrard Award for the best article in a Local History Journal will also be awarded – please send in your Journals to Steven Blake by the end of July.

## Focus on... Winchcombe History Group

The historic town of Winchcombe was once an English county town, and boasts a very ancient street pattern, two stately homes, the site of a monastery, Hailes Abbey, Belas Knap Long Barrow, a steam railway and a town museum. It was inevitable that it would have to have a strong and active local history group.

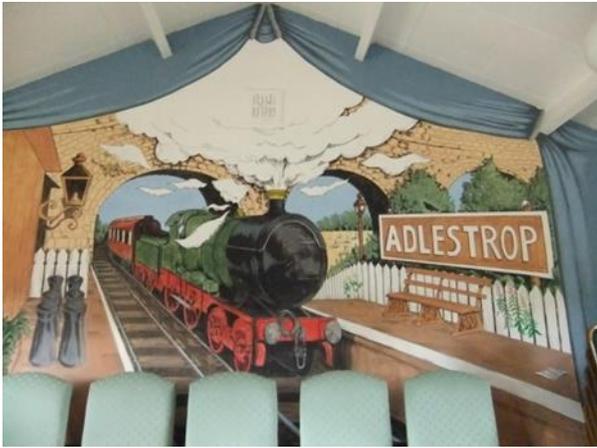
Interest in forming a group was stimulated by an exhibition of old photographs of the town in the Winchcombe Methodist Hall in the autumn of 2012. Plans to establish a history group were advertised in Winchcombe and more than thirty people attended an initial meeting. A Steering Committee volunteered to set up the essentials of the group including its aims, membership, subscription, booking of speakers, refreshments and financial matters. The Steering Committee recommended that the Winchcombe History Group (WHG) be set up at a meeting of interested people on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2012. A committee for the WHG was formed.

The first meeting of the Winchcombe History Group took place on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012, with 49 members in attendance. A series of short Christmas extracts were read and Christmas refreshments provided. In the business part of the meeting it was reported that speakers had been arranged for 2013 and that membership had reached 80. It was agreed that, in view of the size of the hall, membership should be limited to 80. A waiting list was established which would be kept under review by the Secretary. In January 2015 the Group has grown to have 100 members (and it still has a waiting list) and the average attendance at meetings is near to 60.

The Group meets ten times per year on the third Tuesday of each month (except July and August) in the Methodist Hall in Winchcombe. At each meeting the Chair welcomes members and the speaker is introduced. After the one hour talk, with questions, a vote of thanks is proposed. During the interval free refreshments of tea, coffee and biscuits are served. The evening ends with brief business announcements concerning future trips, exhibitions and events. Membership cost is £10 per year with a further £1 paid when attending a meeting. A popular feature of each evening is a display of local photographs and maps arranged by Carol Harris. These often focus on one local family house or view. Members enjoy these displays and informally recall their involvement with a particular aspect of local life. Typical overheard comments include: "I was at their grandson's wedding", "I remember my father taking me there when I was a young lad" and "Do you remember Andrews Liver Salts and Scott's Emulsion?"

The varied programme of speakers has proved popular with the membership and the committee acknowledges the help it has received from the GLHA Speakers List.

As well as the evening lecture meetings, the Group has made visits to a number of important historical sites. Six visits were made in 2013 and a further six in 2014. Places visited included Bletchley Park, Blackfriars Priory Gloucester, the National Arboretum and Cheltenham Ladies' College. Several particularly valuable and instructive visits were made to the Gloucestershire Archives in Alvin Street.



*WHG visited Adlestrop and Churchill villages*



*WHG visiting the Gloucestershire Archives*

The Group has been invited to mount a number of exhibitions. Some 800 people visited one of these when it was displayed as part of the 2013 Winchcombe Arts Festival. In 2014 the exhibitions have often focused on the anniversary of the First World War 1914-18. Themes covered by the photographs included: Winchcombe VAD hospital; Women in the war; Going to war and increasing Government regulation; Strangers arriving; New opportunities for women; Voluntary service; Pressure on food supplies and the hungry year 1917; and Reactions to the end of the war.

At this early stage of the Group's existence the idea of study and research has been mainly in the hands of individuals rather than towards Group publications. Pleasing successes have included Anne Crow working on the 25 issues of the trench magazine of The Fifth Glo'ster Gazette and publishing a book detailing this study. Carol Harris has, after much detective work, detailed the biographies of all those servicemen mentioned on the war memorial in Winchcombe. One group effort was the transcription of a set of letters sent by former casualty patients of the Winchcombe VAD hospital to one of the nurses. Peter Davies worked as a volunteer with the Gloucestershire Archives. He spent a year transcribing 35 pages of handwritten vellum related to the Enclosure Map for Winchcombe and Greet. Jane and Paul Clark became intrigued two years ago in the provenance of their house, Union Cottage. They wondered if they could believe several web sites that suggested the house was part of Winchcombe Workhouse. They are near to a conclusion with ten volumes of minutes to go. During the year a number of established local families have loaned to WHG valuable photographs. These have been scanned and an archive of these is being built. Further plans are in hand to extend the enquiry into the Winchcombe VAD hospital and the part played in

the town's history by certain key local families. These examples show the richness of the activity of some members of the WHG.



*Members at the GCHQ memorial at the National Arboretum and at Blackfriars Priory*

An important milestone for the Winchcombe History Group was the presentation and adoption of its Constitution. This key document was presented at the AGM in November 2013. The document covers the aims of the groups, membership rules, the composition of the managing committee, regularity of meetings, the AGM and Extraordinary AGM, voting procedures, subscriptions, accounts, dissolution and amendments to the Constitution.

For the future the 2015 programme is in place and visits for that season are being planned. The committee is also developing the 2016 programme and pencilling in the names of speakers. In addition new ventures include the publishing of a quarterly newsletter and the embryonic notion of a Group website. For these latter initiatives the Group committee would like to thank the GLHA and other local history groups and societies in Gloucestershire who have given generous advice and support.

John Hancock

# Gloucestershire County History Trust

The work of our contracted historians and volunteers has continued steadily. We continue to be very grateful for the support of the local history community especially in the research for the Cheltenham and Cirencester volumes.

We are nearing the first tangible result of the Trust's work, as the history of Yate by Rose Wallis is due for publication in early summer as a VCH 'short'. Attention is now turning to the three nearby Sodburys, which with Yate, will form the nucleus of Big Red Book Volume XIV. Also before the end of 2015 we are hoping to have Volume XIII published. Twelve of the thirteen parish accounts are ready to be put out for review early in the new year. We are also pleased that our contracted historians are moving from research to production for Cheltenham and Cirencester. Completed sections will appear on our website in due course. The Trust's Academy continues to meet on the third Thursday of the month at the Archives. The meetings provide an opportunity for our contracted historians and volunteers to meet and discuss their research and findings. The meetings are open to all and new volunteers will always find a welcome.

There have also been important developments more generally. James Hodsdon has replaced Sir Nicholas Mander as our chairman and Jonathan Comber has replaced James as our hon. treasurer. July saw the inaugural issue of our newsletter which was sent to all members of GLHA for distribution. It has been very well-received and the second issue should be appearing about the same time as this newsletter. Once again we will circulate it to GLHA members. It will carry a summary of the very successful lecture on aspects of the county's history by David Vaisey, formerly head of the Bodleian Library, at the Literary Festival. The trustees are indebted to the Honourable Company of Gloucestershire for sponsoring the event.

VCH has a new national Director and General Editor, Professor Richard Hoyle, who edited the 1522 Military Survey for the BGAS Record Series. He has already committed himself to increasing awareness of the VCH and moves are afoot to digitise Gloucestershire Volume VIII (Fairford) and place it online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/catalogue.aspx?gid=13> where all except Volume XII can be consulted.

As always, the Trustees continue to appreciate the support of Gloucestershire Archives and the local history community, which is so necessary to strengthen our case when applying for grant-funding.

David Aldred  
for the Trustees.

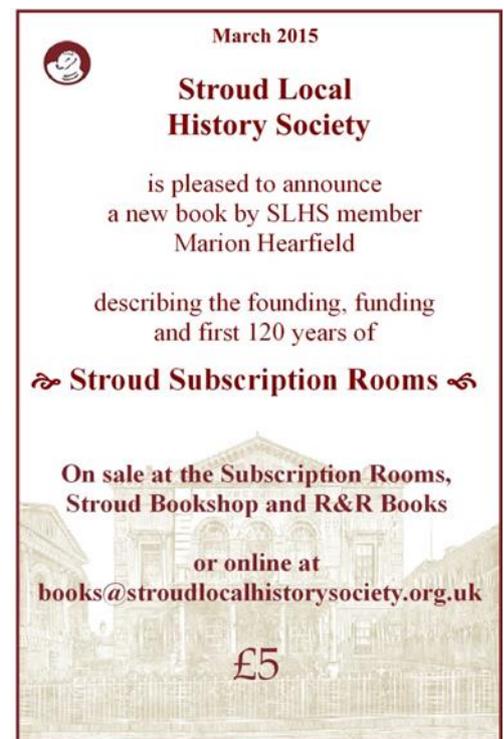
# Stroud Local History Society's 30 Year Anniversary



Our first meeting was at the library in December 1984 and by the next month (January 1985) the Stroud Library Local History Society was up and running, with Betty Mills as its first Chair. A couple of years ago the Stroud Library manager approached us, keen to re-establish that old close link, and we are experimenting with ways of doing so.

In 2014 the Society took part in the Stroud Tourism Day events based in and around the Subscription Rooms, then celebrated its 30th anniversary by publishing a new local history book and holding a week-long exhibition at the Museum in the Park to coincide with Stroud Show in Stratford Park. The show was washed out but we had over 500 visitors that week. You can see the range of our displays (and details of our other exhibitions over the years) on this page of our website. The summer exhibition attracted so many visitors that the Museum has invited us back next year – where one topic will be the Innovation and Technology that arose during World War 1 (all ideas and suggestions welcome, please).

Since the summer we have shown Unintended Consequences - the first results from our WW1 Home Front research project being carried out in collaboration with Stroud Library and the Gloucestershire Remembers project. In addition, SLHS's Stuart Butler devised a research project with Archway school pupils into local war memorials, Jenny Bailey and Barry Harrison staged displays of manufacturing history at the FestoMANE event in November, and Howard Beard and Marion Hearfield have created a display for Stroud's Tesco store illustrating the history of the site on the edge of Stratford Park. We are contributing to the Five Valleys Great War Researchers project of identifying every person named on our local war memorials. Our latest book, about the history of Stroud Subscription Rooms, will be launched on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.



March 2015

**Stroud Local History Society**

is pleased to announce  
a new book by SLHS member  
Marion Hearfield

describing the founding, funding  
and first 120 years of

**Stroud Subscription Rooms**

On sale at the Subscription Rooms,  
Stroud Bookshop and R&R Books

or online at  
[books@stroudlocalhistorysociety.org.uk](mailto:books@stroudlocalhistorysociety.org.uk)

£5

One of the highlights of the summer exhibition (in the Museum) was a slideshow using newspaper cuttings courtesy of The Citizen/Stroud Life newspaper editor, who invited member Pauline Stevens to come into

the office and explore the files. By July she had enough material to create a slideshow illustrating events in Stroud from each of the past thirty years – it was surprising how long ago some things were, compared with people’s memories. Pauline is still working through the newspaper’s files and scanning old news, for a digital archive on our Society’s website. We are really grateful to have the editor’s enthusiastic co-operation for this project, and to Pauline for her imaginative and thorough overhaul of our website.

A Gala afternoon was held on February 15<sup>th</sup>, with a review of the year’s publications and new research by various members – and another chance to see “Was it Really 30 Years Ago?” And a cake, of course.



Marion Hearfield and the Committee

## A Key to History

Stonehouse History Group welcomed special guests Mark Heywood and Dr Freddie Pemberton-Pigott to their meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> to make a special presentation. The History Group meet in Stonehouse Town Hall which is in the old Post Office Sorting Room.

In 1933, builders A R Blick and Son designed and built a new Post Office using local craftsmen and materials including bricks from the Stonehouse Brick and Tile Co. The new building was seen as a credit to both the postal authorities and the contractors and a symbol of the growing prosperity of Stonehouse and its district. As such it warranted a grand opening on 2nd Nov 1933.

The guest of honour was GPO Public Relations Officer Sir Stephen Tallents. An article in the Stroud Journal featured this quotation from his opening speech:

“Sir Stephen Tallents said that although he was a little doubtful as to how a post office should be opened, he was quite sure that a fine new post office such as the one Stonehouse now possessed should not be allowed to just “slink” into the world, opening its shutters one morning without a word of explanation or warning. It should be opened with an air of distinction!”

He hoped that the growing prosperity of Stonehouse and its district would fill their new office quickly to the brim with business.

Mr Leo Blick then presented Sir Stephen Tallents with a souvenir key and Lady Marling was presented with a bouquet of flowers by three-year-old master Alan Blick (Valerie Blick's late husband).

The key was kept at Sir Stephen's house - St John's Jerusalem, a 13<sup>th</sup> century manor house which he later donated to the National Trust. When the family moved out of the house Sir Stephen's grandson Jason Pemberton-Pigott (Freddie's father) discovered the key and gave it to his old friend Mark Heywood, who lives near Stonehouse.

A few weeks ago postman Paul Dicker was talking to Mr Heywood about working at the old Post Office Sorting Room. Mr Heywood remembered the key and asked if Stonehouse History Group would like to have it. We were delighted to accept the key and invited Mark and Freddie (Sir Stephen Tallents' great-grandson) to come to our meeting to formally present it. We asked Valerie Blick, whose husband's family originally presented the key, to receive it on behalf of SHG.

Dr Pemberton-Pigott said that he was delighted that the key had returned to its original home and he was pleased to present it to Mrs Blick. The silver-gilt key is inscribed with Stonehouse Post Office and the date of the opening ceremony.



*Photo of Mark Heywood, Freddie Pemberton-Pigott, Valerie Blick and Paul Dicker with key*

Following the presentation, an audience of 50 members enjoyed a talk and display by Val and Eric Winder on the history of Guernsey during World War Two. Val dressed in 1940s costume and acted out extracts from her grandmother's diary during the time she was evacuated from the island as a child. Christmas refreshments of mulled wine and mince pies made it a special evening for all who attended.

## Gloucestershire Archives' partnership with Ancestry

Gloucestershire Archives is working in partnership with Ancestry to provide online access to key archive resources for family and local historians. The first set of images - wills and probate inventories from Gloucester Diocese 1541-1858 - went online in March 2014. Parish registers and bishop's transcripts will be added early in 2015, followed by land tax and electoral registers.

Ancestry has created digital images for the wills and inventories by converting microfilm copies supplied by GA. However, Ancestry is also including wills that were missed from GA's earlier microfilming projects - such as those proved at the 'Peculiar Courts' of Bibury, Bishop's Cleeve and Withington (all owing their special jurisdiction to having been manors of the Bishop of Worcester before the diocese of Gloucester was founded in 1541). Ancestry's camera team, led by former GA conservator Nick Berkeley, has been based at the Archives since April 2013. So far the team has digitised the parish registers, bishop's transcripts and land tax assessments, with electoral registers well underway. The latter series includes the registers for Cheltenham that are held at Cheltenham Library.

Under the partnership agreement, visitors can access Ancestry for free at Gloucestershire Archives <http://ancestryinstitution.com> and at any Gloucestershire library, and also at the Gloucestershire Family History Centre <http://gfhs.org.uk/the-family-history-centre/>.

Julie Courtenay  
Collections Team Leader  
Gloucestershire Archives

# Liz Jack's Literary Review

## **Inside the Wire**

The Prisoner-of-War Camps and Hostels of Gloucestershire 1939 – 1948

By Ian M C Hollingsbee

Published by The History Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780750958462. Price £12.99

This A5 book has 180 pages containing black and white pictures, aerial photographs, maps, and personal accounts relating to the prisoner of war camps and hostels that existed in Gloucestershire during and after the Second World War. It is a fascinating insight into a forgotten aspect of World War Two, when many German and Italian prisoners were forced to spend their time in our county.

The book begins with a map showing the location of the camps and hostels in the county together with a list of abbreviations and a list of German ranks, followed by a table giving a reference number for each place, a grid reference to aid location, the name of the camp or hostel and, in many cases, a comment. The latter briefly states the original location if the camp no longer exists and what happened to it (e.g. 'under Gloucester's northern ring road') and gives information on its current situation (e.g. 'now an industrial area').

Twelve chapters follow; an introduction to the topic discussing Churchill's 'unexpected guests' followed by descriptions of each camp plus a compelling account of the time spent by Joachim Schulze, a German prisoner of war who passed much of the relevant time in the Newtown Hostel near Tewkesbury.

Lots of little stories as well as factual details of the camps are provided throughout, including details of medical and dental facilities, food preparation methods, descriptions of the work given to prisoners and the hours they were expected to work, their free time allowance, the sports they played, books available in the camp libraries, and the items they could buy in the camp shops.

I was particularly intrigued to read about the camp at Elmbridge Court Farm, just a few hundred yards from where I live, about which I knew nothing at all. With an aerial photograph of the site, a photograph of the camp taken from the farmhouse and the reminiscences of one who could recall the camp and its inmates, it was fascinating to get a glimpse of life in earlier and more difficult times. The Germans had quickly made the camp shipshape when they arrived but, when leaving, they wrecked it as they did not want their hard work to be used by the displaced persons who were to occupy it afterwards.

Giving copious notes and references at the end, Ian Hollingsbee has explored the role of the camps, their captives and their workers, together with the impact on the local community. This book draws on Ministry of Defence and US Army records and those of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is richly illustrated with original images and make for a very interesting read.

Liz Jack