

The Revd John Gibson. Gothic Revivalist: an extended chronology, by Philip J. Wells, privately published, 2017. 52pp. £5.

This booklet was produced and published by Philip J. Wells, with the sale proceeds to support St George's Church, King's Stanley, Gloucestershire. It is beautifully illustrated with a variety of colour and black and white photographs. Content in the booklet is laid out in a chronological order with texts referenced in the footnotes and a full list of sources at the back. The introduction by the author provides a brief précis of Reverend John Gibson's life, the reason for his own interest in Gibson and how his enthusiasm for the subject creates more ideas for further research. At the end of the booklet there is an interesting section regarding the author's own history which indicates his love of music and church organs.

Reverend John Gibson read mathematics at Cambridge University, was elected a Fellow of Jesus College in 1842 and ordained as a Priest in 1846. He was involved with the major restoration of Jesus College Chapel and continued to have an interest in the College long after he was living at King's Stanley. His analytical mind led to his involvement with designing organ cases, church windows, parish buildings and the restoration of the local church. The chronological layout shows how he communicated regularly with architects and local craftsmen to offer advice and develop ideas. Throughout this building process, he was an enthusiastic fundraiser.

Gibson's relationship with S.S. Marling of Stanley Park could be described as challenging at times and in 1871 S.S. Marling attempted unsuccessfully to obtain the Patronage of the King's Stanley Parish. After Gibson retired to Hove, he continued to exchange letters with Sir W.H. Marling regarding the further developments at Selsley Church.

Gibson married Caroline Bendyshe in 1864 but there were no children from the marriage. There are notes throughout the text of incidences of his ill health which limited his preaching at times. In 1886, Gibson retired to Hove, where he died in 1892.

Overall the booklet provides a large amount of information in an easy to read manner. With church attendance dropping, it is easy to forget the enthusiastic and hard-working clergymen who contributed to parish life. It is reassuring that such an individual has been remembered by his parish even though his grave is now under the tarmac of a car park!

Michelle Rees

Chalford Parish in 42 Stories: Brownhill, Bussage, Chalford and France Lynch, by members of the Chalford Parish Local History Group (edited by Camilla Boon, Hilary Burgess and Roger Carnt), 2018. 340pp. £10.

As the title implies, there are 42 sections to this book, too many to list individually, but they have been organised into the following aspects:

- Chalford through Time
- Buildings
- People and Places
- Events and Activities
- Transport
- Reminiscences

The first section ranges from descriptions of the early landscape and items from the Mesolithic period, medieval ecclesiastical stones including a variety of examples of dry stone walls and an old gargoyle called the Jellyman Stone. It covers Chalford's woollen and silk mills and concludes with two sections on local public houses, those on the hill and those in the vale.

The second section, on buildings, includes the bakery in France Lynch and the Ram Inn, Chalford Place, The Round House, Seville's Upper Mill and Chancery and The Limes. The article here on Bussage church includes 21 pictures of ministers since the ecclesiastical parish was formed in 1848 – the 22nd is recorded by his monumental inscription. The history of the nonconformist churches and chapels, the Congregationalist and Baptists, is given. Skiveralls House and its occupants are described including James Bradley who was the Astronomer Royal from 1742 to 1762.

Richard Webb's Historical Notes and Anecdotes from his 1920s' lectures begin the third section of the book. It also contains information on Chalford's one hundred springs, particularly one petrifying spring and others named Black Gutter and Bubbler. This is followed by the sad story of Thomas Carrington who, after 43 years working on the railway, was killed whilst walking through the short Sapperton Tunnel on his way to work as a signalman – a route that was banned due to the danger from passing trains. This section concludes with articles on local builders, clockmakers and medical practitioners who worked in the area.

Life was not always easy for the people of Chalford, France Lynch, Bussage and Brownhill. Like many working in the weaving industry during the 1820s and 1830s, they were affected by loss of work and their hardship led to the subsequent strikes and riots. Items from the Royal Commission on the weaving industry and newspaper reports illustrate the suffering of the weavers. This contrasts with the fairs, feasts and festivals held in the area in the years before the First World War and the various clubs and bands of the 20th century.

The fifth section of the book, on transport, covers the building of the Thames and Severn Canal which began in the area in 1784 in order for goods to be taken to London. The cargoes transported are discussed, as are the local lock and wharf. The coming of the railway to Chalford in 1845 and the building of the local railway station in 1897 were important events affecting the lives of the villagers. Maps showing the local highways and byways are provided and a plan is mentioned regarding the proposed building of a tramway connecting Chalford with Stroud and other towns in the county, a project which was never completed.

The final section looks at France Lynch villagers, the personal reminiscences of the early days of Desmond Gardiner, life without power (in many homes not until the 1950s) and mains water (until the 1960s). A short article on Frank Lydiatt, the cobbler, is followed by life growing up in a cottage on Cowcombe Hill. At the very end of the book, there is a list of sources for each story but, sadly, no index – I do like an index to a book! But it is so packed full of information, on people, places, and events that an index would certainly add many more pages to the publication.

Not being very familiar with Chalford myself, it is hard to imagine any aspects of Chalford's history that have been omitted, the coverage being so comprehensive of local, family and social history. The book contains 340 pages of a combination of research and memories, enhanced by plenty of black and white maps, sketches, photographs and newspaper cuttings.

It is available from Eastcombe Stores, Eastcombe; Greenshop, Bisley, and the Community Shop, Chalford. It will definitely find a space on my book shelves.

Liz Jack