

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

# Local History Bulletin

AUTUMN 1977 — No. 36



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## EDITORIAL

WHAT A SPLENDID effect Her Majesty's Jubilee celebrations had on us all — from every side it is heard how people, not generally involved with one another, were brought together to work and enjoy themselves, and how pleasant it was to meet and get to know one another. And why allow this Jubilee spirit to sink into oblivion? Far better, surely, to keep that part of local history very much alive, so that the community spirit thereby engendered thrives for the continued benefit of us all.

This idea — very ably brought to the attention of readers of the Spring issue of "The Village", has acted as a spur to several Jubilee Committees, who have decided to continue in office and our readers are encouraged to support this within their own community. There is much to be done if all the inhabitants are to continue to be involved in community life, and the Jubilee celebrations did make it quite clear how worthwhile this was. Positive ideas can be obtained from the Gloucestershire Community Council, covering a multitude of things, including village appraisals, rural transport, care of the elderly, or better still, care of all ages in the community, village newsletters, etc., etc.

Every day living really relates to Local History of quite recent date — the Queen's Jubilee, no less.

God Save the Queen.

## COVER ILLUSTRATION

*(with kind permission of Canon J. E. Gethyn-Jones)*

**KEMPLEY PARISH CHURCH, ST. MARY'S, KEMPLEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE:** Original 12th Century Building, 13th Century Tower added. 12th Century Frescoes in Chancel, 13th and 14th Century Paintings in Nave.

Protracted negotiations continue, as a result of which it is hoped the Department of Environment will assume responsibility for this lovely little Norman Church, and its irreplaceable Frescoes.

## THE CLOCKS AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH, DYMOCK

OF GREAT INTEREST is an up-to-date opinion on the Dymock Church clock and the old one it replaced, which is still lying close to hand, and Mr David Nettell of Uffington, Oxon, writes:—

“There are two clocks in the tower of the Church — one a ‘modern’ one dated 1880 and a much older one that it replaced.

“The older one is of interest, since it is built in a wooden frame and is of the so-called door frame variety. This term describes it well, as the frame is rectangular of oak construction. It differs from a true door frame in having a vertical post about a quarter of the way along, which divides it into two compartments, one large and one small.

“The smaller compartment contains the movement and the striking mechanism. The movement incorporates an escapement, but the pendulum is missing. A feature of the ‘scape-wheel’ is that it can be disengaged from the pallets and pendulum, thereby letting the clock run free should it have lost time. The larger of the two vertical compartments contains the barrels around which the ropes suspending the pendulum weights were wound.

“Wooden framed clocks are a feature of the Midland Counties and stretch from Suffolk to Shropshire. Many of these clocks were made in the 17th century or earlier. The striking control on the clock at Dymock is of a rather later type and suggests that the clock was made in the early part of the 18th century. It is significant also that the bells in the tower were cast around 1708 and it is, of course, upon the tenor bell that the clock would have struck the hours.

“The ‘modern’ clock was made by Joyce of Whichchurch (now amalgamated with John Smith & Sons of Derby). The frame is made of cast iron and is known as a ‘flat bed’. This particular type of clock was designed by E. B. Denison, later Lord Grimthorpe, especially for the Great Clock of Westminster — Big Ben. That clock was set going in 1860 and the design proved so satisfactory that all subsequent clocks were to the same basic design.

“The Dymock clock also embodies another feature which Denison made for Big Ben — the gravity escapement. At Dymock this is a single four legged type and was much used on Joyce clocks. In fact, Denison and Joyce did a great deal of business together.

“All clocks by Joyce are exceedingly finely made and the one at St. Mary’s is no exception. It is a two train movement — going and striking and there is room on the bed for a third, quarter chiming train to be fitted later. The train wheels are brass. It has Harrison’s maintaining power. This keeps the clock going when the driving force is taken off during winding. Another feature which Joyce fitted to their clocks was a friction loading device on the striking and chiming trains, which compensated for the load that disappears when the clock bell hammers are pulled off during ringing. The clock also has a huge cast iron pendulum bob — another feature of Joyce’s. The pendulum rod is made of steel and zinc tubes, so arranged to compensate for expansion and contraction with changes of temperature.

“Before the coming of the railways and their electric telegraph system,

clocks could only be set correctly by the sun or the stars. It is not surprising, therefore, that a large sundial is mounted on the south wall of the Church.

"This clock is nearly a century old — a mere youth by clock standards. Given a little care and attention, it will tell the time accurately for a few centuries to come."

REV. R. F. NASH.

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF BRISTOL UNIVERSITY EXTRA-MURAL DEPARTMENT TO THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

THE EXTRA-MURAL Department of Bristol University provides courses of lectures in many different subjects throughout Gloucestershire, and among the most popular of all courses are those on local history. The Extra-Mural Department courses take several different forms; some are straightforward series of weekly or fortnightly lectures; others are provided for research groups, such as those which meet each week throughout the winter at the Gloucestershire Record Office; many are on specific topics such as industrial archaeology, vernacular architecture, parish churches, the study of various kinds of documentary evidence or the records of a particular locality. Several courses also meet during the summer for field work and visits, and in addition there are weekend and residential courses. Many of these Extra-Mural courses are arranged in conjunction with local history societies, or at the request of a society or group to help with a particular project or piece of research. Some of the work done by Extra-Mural groups has been published by the Department, including a regular series of essays from the Gloucestershire Record Office, and an edition of some of the probate inventories of south Gloucestershire.

As there will be some twenty courses based on local historical studies in Gloucestershire during 1977/78, it is impossible to do more than give some examples. They fall into three groups:—

- (a) Courses focusing on the history of a particular place or parish — there will be courses of this kind taking place at Minchinhampton and Fairford.
- (b) Courses which examine and use records and other historical sources, and which offer skilled advice also on undertaking local historical research — there will be courses of this kind at Frampton-on-Severn and in Gloucester where the on-going Local History Research Group will continue. At Tuffley there will be an experimental afternoon course seeking to attract people without previous local history experience or knowledge.
- (c) The largest group of courses comprises those which examine the impact upon social, demographic and topographical characteristics of the county of developments in agriculture, industry and communications. There will be industrial archaeology courses at Coleford, Cheltenham and Stroud, for example, and at Bishops Cleeve, Alderton, Brimpsfield and Cheltenham there will be courses looking specifically at changes in the Gloucestershire landscape effected by, in the main, non-industrial processes.

The University Extra-Mural Department is always willing to consider requests from local history societies or from any group of interested people, and will be glad to help in any way it can. For further information and details of all courses in Gloucestershire please contact Dr. J. H. Bettey, Staff Tutor in Local History, or C. Jessup, Resident Tutor for Gloucestershire, 32 Tyndall's Park Road, Bristol BS8 1HR, telephone Bristol 24161, extensions 686 and 846.

J. H. BETTEY.

A detailed brochure is available from Public Libraries. Courses include "Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England" at Tuffley Community Centre, and "Local History" at Hucclecote Community Centre.

*Editor.*



## LIFE IN AN AUGUSTINIAN ABBEY

Saint Mary's, Cirencester

THE GREEK WORD *monos* means "alone", and it is a paradox that its derivative "monastery" should refer to an elaborately developed community. Our general idea of a monastery is still coloured by the thought of solitary hermits set apart from everyday life for the sake of prayer and holiness. Though there were seven services every day at St. Mary's Abbey in Cirencester, isolation was not the ideal, and in fact four centuries of the town's history were completely dominated by the Abbey, in worldly as well as spiritual matters.

Founded late in the 11th century, the order of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine was not subject to the strict rules formulated by Saint Benedict, which demanded a discipline and devotion only few could achieve. Austin canons were by no means monks. They were all in priest's orders, but did not suffer the inconvenience of artificial baldness — the tonsure — in fact they wore caps. They wore linen under a furlined black cassock, with a knee-length white rochet over, and an enveloping cloak from which they acquired the popular name "Black Canons". Their garments were renewed twice yearly, and they had leather shoes. Professional waiters (there were no "lay brothers") served plentiful food, which included meat; they drank ale and wine (Gloucestershire was the greatest vine-growing district, according to William of Malmesbury) and at meal times they were not silent. They could leave the precincts freely and own private property. They mixed with the world, and were not required to do manual work.

St. Mary's Abbey was founded A.D. 1117 by King Henry I, and richly endowed with manors and rents. The Abbey Church, half as long again as the present parish church of St. John Baptist, was consecrated A.D. 1176, King Henry II being present. The foundations, 252 feet long, 72 feet wide, and with a



### CIRENCESTER TOWNSMEN ATTACK ST. MARY'S ABBEY PROTESTING AGAINST THE MILL MONOPOLY

cloister 90 feet square, were fully excavated and recorded in 1964-5, and a plaque in Abbey Grounds now indicates the shape and extent of the Abbey Church.

Most Augustinian houses were priories of fewer than ten canons, but St. Mary's became the largest and richest unit of its order in England. Using the commercial yardstick of the time, the Abbot's Barns were reported as holding 20,000 bales of wool. Iris Origo, in her book "The Merchant of Prato" tells how agents from Florence came to buy the finest quality wool from Chondisguald (Cotswold) especially Norlecco (Northleach) and Siricestre (Cirencester).

The Abbot had a right, literally, to coin money. In 1416 he was "mitred" and summoned to the House of Lords. Even so he was liable to vexatious supervision from Worcester, whose Bishop was the official Visitor. The Bishop, titular Abbot of his own Benedictine Monastery, deputed his powers to his Prior, who, privately interviewing each member of the Augustinian Abbey, recorded much tittle-tattle, gossip and scandal.

In 1273 there were about 25 canons, and though this number at one time rose to 40, after the Black Death, 1349, 25 was never exceeded. There were about 100 Abbey servants. The town's population was about 900, and friction with the Abbot's men was constant. The Abbot's Bailiff ruled the Market and

collected the dues. Townsfolk were forced to have their corn ground at one of the Abbot's mills and, of course, paid for this service in kind. When Abbot's men invaded homes to destroy illegal hand-querns, the townsfolk retaliated by breaking into the Abbey — perhaps through the "Norman Arch" which is the sole part of the building remaining above ground. The Dole Hall of the Abbey, where food was distributed to the needy, is commemorated in the name of Dollar Street. Townsfolk were required to perform certain tasks, such as reaping, for the Abbot, without pay, and another cause of resentment was the monopoly of the "fulling" process for cloth. (Short-staple wool, carded with teasels, was woven, and beaten in a fulling mill, so that felting took place to produce broad-cloth that lasted a lifetime).

The Abbot's power was unique. Only for a few years were the townspeople successful in obtaining from the King a Charter such as most comparable towns had. There is not, and never has been, a Mayor of Cirencester. Similarly, because the Abbot was also Rector, the Incumbent of the Parish Church is still a Vicar.

In 1343 townspeople petitioned the Abbot to remove a huddle of buildings he had permitted to invade the traditional Market Place at the west end. They were not in the event removed until 1830.

Augustinians were scholarly, all being priests, and also well-known for their promotion of the vernacular English, instead of writing Latin. The Abbey Library, probably housed next to the Chapter House, was dispersed in 1539, and many of the manuscripts are now at Hereford. They include one which, for the first time in England, uses the sign 0 for zero. This circle was in India used to confirm the mere dot, which transformed mathematics with so-called Arabic numerals — Roman figures have no nought sign.

Our most distinguished Abbot was Alexander Neckham (1213-17) a foster-brother of Richard I. He was an original thinker, wrote about the mariner's compass, glass mirrors, syphons and vacuum. His hobby was the new game, Chess.

In 1539 Henry VIII's orders dissolved all remaining monasteries. Few Monks, and no Canons, refused the pensions which rewarded a peaceful departure. Most of the Canons received £6.13s.4d., per year, but the Abbot was lavishly provided with £250. He retired to Fairford, with a household. 110 Abbey servants were also compensated.

The large Tudor building still sometimes called The Town Hall, which looks like a church porch, was really built as an office outside the precincts for the transaction of the Abbey's many business affairs. It is very clear that at no time between 1117 and 1539 could anyone in St. Mary's Abbey be said to lead anything like the life of a hermit!

KENNETH POVAH.

## COUNTRY CARRIERS TO CHELTENHAM — 1880

SHORTLY AFTER THE Second World War the country carrier disappeared from the roads of Gloucestershire, his usefulness diminished by the spreading motor-bus services linking village to market town and bringing unprecedented mobility to the country dweller. For a century-and-a-half the country carrier, typically with his one horse and slow, crowded cart, had been an important link between the village community and the wider world. He took the villagers to the town market and shops; he brought them home again; he made purchases for villagers unable to go themselves; he brought back the local newspapers; and he made his own news from the gossip he had picked up around the town. It was an unhurried journey, stopping to pick up passengers and orders at the villages en route, and bringing them home again. It was often so slow that if the villagers were in a hurry, they would walk. Nevertheless, the appearance of the carrier's cart was the main regular event of the day in many villages until well into this century.

However, the country carrier is an ideal subject for a piece of local history research for a large amount of information can easily be found in the various Trade Directories, copies of which are kept in the main libraries. The following account is an attempt to show how the information given in Trade Directories can be used to study the country carrier. The centre studied is Cheltenham and the Directories used are *Kelly's Directory of Gloucestershire* for 1879 and the *Post Office Directory of Cheltenham* for 1880-1. The year is 1880; the heyday of the country carrier.

Cheltenham was linked by carrier's cart to the villages in an area bounded by Gloucester, Stroud, Cirencester, Burford, Bourton-on-the-Water, Broadway and Tewkesbury. None of the villages in this area was very far from a carrier's service, although on the fringes of the area the cart would not necessarily be going to Cheltenham. To the south and west Cheltenham was in competition with Gloucester, and to a lesser extent Stroud, as a commercial and market centre. To the east, there was competition from Cirencester, which in 1880 had the most extensive network of services of any town in the northern part of the county. To the north Tewkesbury provided a certain amount of competition. Fairford, Bourton-on-the-Water and Broadway were sub-centres with a few services to them, but obviously unable to offer all the facilities of the larger centres.

Within its hinterland, fifty carriers operated one hundred and fourteen services each week into Cheltenham. The busiest days of the week were Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, with twenty-four and thirty-seven services respectively. Most villages had a service to Cheltenham on those days only; Gloucester and Winchcombe alone enjoying a daily service. Cheltenham was not one of those great market centres such as Leicester, where the importance of the town market for the villagers was reflected in much more numerous services on market days. Cheltenham's trade attraction was not so much its Thursday market, but rather the shopping and other facilities which had increased rapidly in the earlier part of the century to provide for the needs of the increased resident and transient population.





*(with acknowledgments to Gloucestershire Federation of Women's Institutes)*

The carrier's journey ended at an inn or hotel. This was the usual practice, for it was an easily located assembly point. It could also provide standing space for the cart, and rest and refreshment for both the horse and its master. In 1880 ten inns or hotels in Cheltenham were used by carriers. They were all situated on or near the High Street, from The Old Swan (near St. James' Street) in the east, to The Shakespeare (in the lower High Street) in the west. The full list of inns and hotels was The Crown (used by seventeen carriers), The Bell (eleven), The Fleece (eight), The Old Swan (seven), Royal Hotel (six), The Shakespeare (four), Sydney Arms (two), The Dove and Rainbow (one), Lamb Inn (one). It can be seen from the figures that some carriers used more than one inn or hotel.

The greatest activity of the week was around 4 p.m. on a Saturday, as twenty-five carriers turned out of the inns for home. Ten carts left The Crown alone, and the noise and bustle in its yard must have been intense. The original choice of inn or hotel must have been made for personal reasons, but adequate facilities for horse and cart, and proximity to the town centre were powerful factors influencing that choice. The changing use of town centre buildings has meant that The Bell, The Fleece and The Royal Hotel, no longer survive today, and The Dove and Rainbow, George Inn, Lamb Inn and the Sydney Arms have also disappeared, but at The Old Swan there can still be seen the great doorway fronting the High Street, leading back into the yard with its range of buildings far less altered than those of The Crown.

Working only from the Trade Directories it is difficult to identify the people who were the carriers, but the information which does emerge confirms that the average country carrier operated on his own, with a horse and cart or wagon. Of the fifty carriers providing services to Cheltenham, fourteen can be identified from elsewhere in the Directories. These fourteen included two women, six tradesmen and five who were described solely as "carriers". The busiest of this latter group was Joseph Stroud and Son, operating out of Northleach with services to Bourton-on-the-Water, Burford and Cirencester, in addition to the thrice weekly service to Cheltenham. Only one carrier, Green of Kemerton, advertised his services separately in the Directories. A comparison with a Directory of 1870 showed that during the decade, ten of the fifty carriers had changed. This gives an average life of fifty years per carrier!

In a short article such as this, there are many aspects of country carriers which are beyond its scope. There has been little space to name people or places, and carriers were not statistics, they were people of importance in their communities. By using other sources: reminiscences, newspapers and guidebooks, diaries and photographs, the study could be extended over time and space, to include the growth of Cheltenham's network of services as the town itself grew in population, and also to compare Cheltenham with other carriers' centres, both locally and nationally. The purpose of this article has been to explore the possibilities provided by a single historical source — the Trade Directory — to throw light on a much neglected part of the history of the local community and its relationship with its market town.

D. H. ALDRED.

### GLoucestershire RECORDS OFFICE LIST OF PRINCIPAL ACCESSIONS 1975-76

A comprehensive List can be seen at the Archives Office, Shire Hall. The List following gives only an indication of the interesting documents available for research.

#### PUBLIC RECORDS:

Gloucester Assizes, Jurors' Lists, Gaol calendars 1779-1879, Petty Sessions (1875), Health Authority Reports, Correspondence 1906-1977.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

*The County Council:* Various Minutes, Correspondence and Plans 1859-1975.

*Cheltenham Corporation:* Various Minutes and Reports 1852-1952.

*Gloucester City Council:* Canal Boat Registers 1879-1918.

*Tewkesbury Borough Council:* Various Minutes, Records and Accounts 1898-1967.

*Other Local Councils:* Various Ledgers, files, Minutes, Bibury Inclosure Award, Allotment Registers 1703-1966.

SCHOOLS: Various Admission Registers, Managers' Minutes, etc. 1875-1970.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL:

*Anglican and Methodist:* Various Minutes, Registers, Poor Rate books, Churchwardens' Papers, Charity Accounts 1598-1974.

**CHARITIES:** Papers concerning Cox and Mill Charities, Great Witcombe 1892-1971.

**FAMILY AND ESTATE:** Various papers dated from 1477 to 1975 concerning Cold Aston, Quedgeley, Nailsworth, Ruardean, Great Witcombe.

**SOLICITORS:** Various Deeds dated 17th to 20th centuries, concerning Agg-Gardner Family, Gloucestershire Breweries, Berkeley, North Nibley, Wotton-under-Edge and other places.

**BUSINESS:** Various papers, 19th and 20th centuries, concerning firms in Dursley, Gloucester, Kingswood (Wotton-under-Edge), Nailsworth, Tetbury, Whitminster and Woodchester.

**MAPS, PLANS, PHOTOGRAPHS:** Various dated 1840-1975.

**SOCIETIES:** Posters, Minutes and papers dated 1911-1974, concerning various Societies, Clubs and Guilds.

**SMALLER DEPOSITS:** Various Deeds dated 1651-1954.

### NEWS OF SOCIETIES AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

**Agricultural Collection:** Hopes are still entertained that it will be found possible to retain in the County the collection of farm implements belonging to Miss Lloyd-Baker.

**Avon Local History Association:** We look forward to receiving the next issue of "Quest", the Association's Newsletter, which has items of interest from many Local History Societies just over the border.

**Blockley Antiquarian Society:** The Collection referred to in Bulletin No. 35 contains many interesting items connected with the Prophetess Joanna Southcott, but unfortunately not The Box — the last known advertisement connected with which appeared in "The Illustrated London News" of December, 1976. "Crime and banditry, distress of nations and perplexity will continue to increase until the Bishops open Joanna Southcott's Box" and the hope is expressed that "the Box is safely preserved somewhere against the depredations of mice, women and predatory Americans, and that it might soon be opened by the Bishops".

**Cheltenham Local Studies Library:** The Cheltenham collection comprises approximately 10,000 items on Cheltenham and North Cotswolds and will provide information on these areas to any enquirer. The collection houses the Subscription Books of the Williams Library, a unique copy of Alfred Miles' History of Cheltenham, the sites card index of the Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group, guide books from 1781 and town directories from the early 1800's. In addition to the large collection of books, there are newspapers, press cuttings, engravings, prints, photographs and maps of Cheltenham and the surrounding area.

**Cheltenham Society, The:** would appreciate on loan, or otherwise, photographs or other relevant records to assist in its efforts to establish a list of Historic Buildings.

**Chessals, (The) Kingscote:** A Local Studies Group paid a second very enjoyable visit to the Kingscote Excavations to examine the interesting work carried out since the first visit last August. The Excavations are open to the public seven days a week during the Summer. Mosaics, pottery and hardware finds are on view.

**Cirencester Archaeological and Historical Society** are to be congratulated on their attractive Annual Report and Newsletter. The programme of Lectures for the Winter Season depicts September: Dr. Iid Anthony, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A. "Some aspects of textiles in the Roman Period"; October: Roger Leech, B.A. "An archaeological survey of the towns of Gloucestershire"; November: Nicholas Thomas, M.A., F.S.A., F.M.A., "Prehistoric Craftsmen"; December: Richard Reece, B.Sc., D.Phil., F.S.A., "The Cirencester Area, 1871 — people and population"; January, 1978: Brian Carter, "The Blue and the Gray — an account of the American Civil War"; February: John S. Wachter, B.Sc., F.S.A., "Some thoughts on urbanisation in Iron-age and Roman Britain"; March: Alan McWhirr, B.Sc., M.A., F.S.A., "The production of tiles and bricks in Roman Britain, with particular reference to Cirencester".

**City Museum and Art Gallery, Gloucester:** At the Old Fire Station, Bearland, Gloucester (at the bottom of Longsmith Street, next to the Police Station) may be seen a manual fire-engine dating back to circa 1870, retrieved from Westbury Court. Awaiting restoration are a Gloucester-type farm wagon, a horse tram and the figure-head from the Ship "Prince Victor", which sank in the Severn, circa 1880.

**Cotteswold Naturalists' Field Club:** The Summer Programme for 1977 contained varied outings, including visits to Malvern Priory, Ramsbury and Stanley St. Leonard. The two September meetings take Members to Warwick Castle and to the Frome Valley.

**Council for British Archaeology (Group 13)** holds its next meeting in Exeter University in the afternoon of Saturday, 29th October.

**County Records:** Acquisition by the County Council of the former Kingsholm Secondary School to provide additional strong-room accommodation and improved public search rooms, is welcome news: it is hoped these will be ready for use by 1979.

**Forst of Dean Local History Society:** The Summer Programme includes a novel and enterprising three-day coach tour at an estimated all-in cost of £35 per person, accommodation being arranged at several Universities. We hope to give a success report on this venture at a later date.

**Gloucester Civic Trust:** The Annual Report for 1976 is in the usual attractive format with illustrations and is available at 20p. The Summer Newsletter draws attention to a "Walk Round Robinswood Hill" with the Warden on September 6th, and a Riverside Walk on Sunday, 2nd October. The Society seeks many more Members' support both financial and otherwise, to assist in its work which includes regular guided tours in the City, attempts to retain historic buildings,

successful efforts so far include Ladybellegate House, Numbers 30 and 66, Westgate Street, and negotiations proceed concerning the North Warehouse of Gloucester Docks.

**Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group** has compiled a card index of some 5,000 sites in Gloucestershire, some parishes in considerable detail. This index is available for examination in the Local Studies Library Cheltenham Library, and would prove a useful starting point for anyone interested in making a parish checklist.

**Historical Association, Cheltenham and Gloucester Branch:** Those attending the Annual General Meeting in March, were reminded of the successful Annual Sixth Form Conference held at Dean Close School in the Autumn of 1976 organised by Mr J. Watson. News of any special efforts to involve young people in local history is particularly welcome to us all, and sixth formers of any schools which are members of this Society are welcome to come to Society lectures.

**Local History Conference and Social:** It is hoped to welcome many subscribers and friends at this event to be held in Gloucestershire College of Education, Oxstalls Lane, Gloucester (NOT the Technical College) from 2.15 until 6 p.m. on Saturday, 15th October, 1977. Each of the two talks is illustrated with slides:— Miss Elizabeth Danbury, Lecturer in Palaeography and Diplomatic “The Illuminated Charters of Bristol and Gloucester”; Mr F. W. Rowbotham “The River Severn and its effect on the History of Gloucestershire”, and the enjoyable afternoon will also include Teas, view of Exhibits from Local Societies and “Any Questions or Suggestions” to a History Panel. Programmes obtainable at the door. There are ample parking facilities.

**Nailsworth Society, The:** held a most successful two weeks’ Exhibition, topically entitled “Nailsworth during the Queen’s Reign” which proved of great interest to the public. We hope the Society will stage a small exhibition at the Local History Conference and Social.

**South Cerney History Group** produced an attractive short history of the Parish, 1952—1977 and a Programme of Events to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of E.R. II.

**Staunton, Gloucester:** Congratulations to those who organised a highly successful three-day Festival and Exhibition in April. Matters of especial interest to historians were crafts as handed down from our ancestors, and a fascinating array of tools and old farm implements. The Organisers have accepted an invitation to stage a small exhibit at the Local History Conference and Social on 15th October.

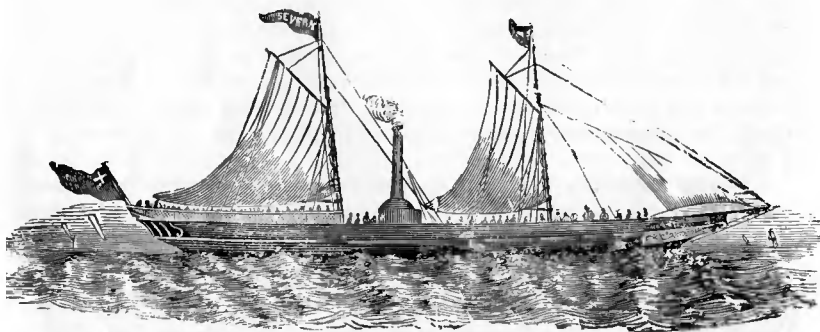
**Tetbury Civic Society** arranged a successful historical exhibition during August in conjunction with the Tetbury Festival. A history of Tetbury, compiled on behalf of the Civic Society and published in hardback, with 47 illustrations, at £5.40 in time for last Christmas, soon went out of print. Societies wondering whether to publish a history may be encouraged to hear that Tetbury Civic Society made a profit of close on £300 from royalties and commissions on sales.

**This Ancient Festival:** We hope that many readers will have enjoyed visiting the Exhibition in St. Mary's Gateway, presented by the County Archivist from 2nd to 27th August, when many manuscripts, prints, photographs and newspaper cuttings of great interest relating to The Three Choirs Festival were on view.

**Uley Society:** The Exhibition "Uley through the Ages" on 2nd April, proved a great success: we are hoping that a small part of this will be exhibited at the Local History Conference and Social on 15th October. Preparatory work is now being undertaken by the Society for publication of a booklet on the History of Uley.

**Wotton-under-Edge Historical Society** continues in its efforts to interest sixth formers and teachers in local history, and extends invitations to them to attend lectures and participate in field studies. A series of lectures is planned for the Winter Season, during which it is hoped to hear Mr George Thorpe, Mr Bettey of Bristol University, Mr Chouls on Roman Britain, Mr David Milner, Canon How and Mr Chappell.

## BOOK REVIEW



### "SEVERN ENTERPRISE"

Christopher Jordan

(Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd.)

£3.

THIS IS AN excellently researched and well-written history of the Severn estuary ferries at Old Passage (Aust-Beachley) and New Passage (Redwick-Portskewett). Beginning with evidence that crossings existed near both sites before recorded time, the author traces in fascinating detail the development of both routes to their heydays — New Passage as a railway link and Old Passage as a car ferry — until each, in turn, was superseded, the former by the Severn Tunnel (1886) and the latter by the Severn Bridge (1966). Reference is made also to the Arlingham-Newnham crossing.

The main core of hard facts is well spliced with anecdotes and very profusely illustrated. Indeed, the large collection of photographs, prints and line drawings is quite exceptional and of immense interest.

In respect of the Aust-Beachley car ferry (1931-1966) the book is largely a tribute to Mr Enoch Williams, whose Severn Enterprise this was, and to his redoubtable skippers. However, while rightly extolling the advantages of the car ferry, the book makes no direct reference to its great drawback, which was that on nearly half the days of the year there were breaks of up to 3½ hours in the service arising from the fact that low water levels during spring tides are appreciably lower than during neap tides. The breaks are revealed only by a study of the Time Tables reproduced in Appendix F. For example, it will be seen that if one turned up for a crossing at 1.35 p.m. on 5th April, 1966 there would be no boat until 5 o'clock.

Some years ago the B.B.C. West Region, I introduced Skipper Charlie Savage on the bridge of *Severn King* and Mr Enoch Williams on Beachley Pier. Enoch concluded "A book could be written about this Ferry". It has been; and a good book it is.

F. W. ROWBOTHAM.

### THE GOODS AND CHATTELS OF OUR FOREFATHERS:

Frampton Cotterell and District Probate Inventories, 1539—1804

edited by JOHN S. MOORE (Phillimore, 1976) — £6.50.

ALTHOUGH LOCAL HISTORY is often described as an ideal subject for adult education classes and village societies, the work of groups is all too often unenterprising, with lectures predominating and the opportunities for co-operative investigation neglected. The Frampton Cotterell Local History Group and their tutor John Moore, are to be warmly congratulated, therefore, on producing a publication which adds to our knowledge of the English villager in the early modern period.

Until 1858 the task of probate fell to church courts. In order that the officials might charge appropriate fees, appraisers compiled inventories of the 'personal estate' of the testator. This personal estate comprised clothes, money, furniture, animals, farm produce, trade goods, debts and land held by leasehold. Unfortunately, 'real estate' in the form of land held by freehold and copyhold — a vital form of wealth in the pre-industrial period — was not included. Nevertheless the probate inventory is a rich source for economic and social history and has been used to good purpose by scholars over the past twenty years. Mr Moore and his enthusiastic class have located 413 documents relating to the goods and chattels of men and women living in Frampton Cotterell and six neighbouring parishes.

The inventories, carefully transcribed and forming the greater part of the book, enable the reader to trace the changes in the occupational structure of the villages and a host of other topics. Light is thrown on the nature of individual occupations. For instance, the inventory of Thomas Coules, yeoman of Frampton Cotterell, lists his cattle, his hay-fields and his cheese-press, and illustrates the pastoral pattern of the agricultural economy in the Vale. Clothing left by members of different social groups affords striking contrasts: the magnificent wardrobe of Samuel Codrington, Esquire, was valued at £26.10s.6d. and included six suits and three wigs; John Hicks, a clothworker who died in the same year, 1709, left clothing appraised at 9 shillings.

As is shown in the lucid introduction, Frampton Cotterell, Iron Acton, Winterbourne and Westerleigh were chiefly agricultural communities at the close of the middle ages, although the production of woollen cloth was an important subsidiary occupation. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the northern and central Cotswolds became the local centre for textiles, and the industry declined in the region north of Bristol. Frampton Cotterell, Winterbourne and Westerleigh responded to this crisis by diversification, and a substantial minority of the inhabitants made hats from felt. Coal-mining provided work for some of the villagers of Westerleigh. By contrast all but a handful of the male inhabitants of Stoke Gifford, Almondsbury and Alveston were engaged in farming or ancillary crafts from the middle ages to the nineteenth century.

The standard of editing is high and twelve useful tables are provided. One wonders why the total personal wealth of members of the occupational and social groups has not been summarised when there is a table analysing the number of rooms in the houses of such testators. But this is a minor quibble. *The Goods and Chattels of our Forefathers* is a scholarly and stimulating book which can be recommended to anyone interested in the past of this region.

P. RIPLEY.

#### BOOKS NOTED

"A History of Gloucestershire County Council" — illustrated — M. J. Kerr. £1.30. Shire Hall and Community Council.

"Writing a Church Guide", David Dymond. 75p including postage from The Local Historian, 26 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HU.

Volume XI, Victoria County History of Gloucestershire "Stupendous History of Stroud District", Editor: Dr. N. M. Herbert. £30 Oxford University Press and Reference Libraries.

"The History of Stonehouse", J. H. A. Anderson, 45p County Library.

"The Kingscote Excavations" — Interim Report — illustrated. 65p by post from Kingscote Archaeological Association, 31 Frome Gardens, Stroud or 50p on site.

"The Cotswolds in the Civil War", R. W. Jennings, Commissioned by the Cotswold District Council. 75p Corinium Museum.

First Edition 6" O.S. Maps — high quality reproductions. Four sheets available covering Gloucester (2), Cinderford and Coleford, each with short interesting notes. £1.40 including postage, each sheet. The Pound House, Newent.

"The Autobiography of Richard Boswell Belcher" (1818—1901). Available through Blockley Antiquarian Society, C. Draper, Esq., The Stone House, High Street, Blockley.

