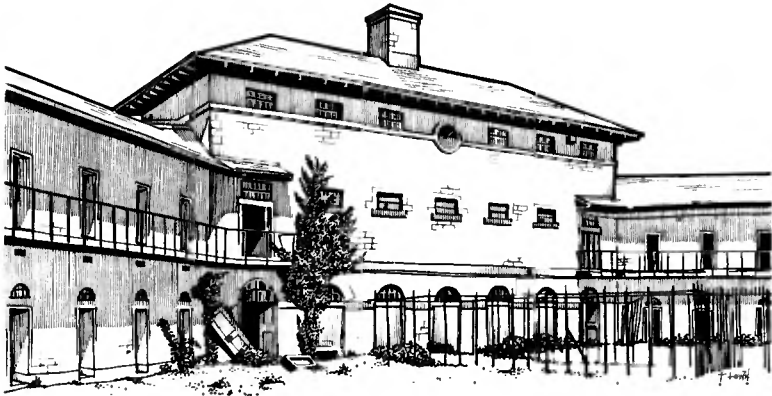


GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Local History Bulletin

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VALEDICTION

LAURIE DUIRS, your hard-working and resourceful Editor, is about to enter a well-earned retirement and has handed over the editorship of this Bulletin. I know that subscribers and contributors alike have much to thank him for during recent years, and would wish him all good fortune in the future.

EDITORIAL

It is always good for an Editor's peace of mind — especially for a new editor — to have his copy to hand in good time, and the industry of contributors has ensured ample interesting material for this edition; indeed, it has been necessary to hold some over for publication later. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of space available for the Autumn edition, contributions for which should be sent to Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester, not later than 15th July, 1978. Short items of interest are equally welcome, for inclusion in the appropriate section of the Bulletin, or, if the response warrants it, for the inauguration of a "Correspondence" section.

WYNNE ROBERTS, Editor.

COVER ILLUSTRATION

(by kind permission of The Butt Studio, Bourton-on-the-Water)

THE OLD NORTHLEACH HOUSE OF CORRECTION — a line drawing made by Gloucester College of Art from a photograph taken in 1936. Apart from the two articles in this edition which link with Northleach, the Old Prison is of topical interest due to the plan to use the Prison as a permanent exhibition building for the unique collection of 781 agricultural implements, and other items, built up over the years by the Lloyd-Baker Family of Hardwick Court, Gloucester.

CORRIGENDA

The Turnpike "Mystery" (Spring, 1977 — No. 35):

Page 13, line 9 — The phrase "gives 3 Turnpikes" should read "gives 31 Turnpikes" thereby revealing the "Mystery" referred to in the title of the article.

Wotton-under-Edge (Autumn, 1977 — No. 36):

Page 14, line 4 of Village entry: As the Mr George Thorpe referred to died in the 17th Century, this lecture may be difficult to arrange.



NORTHLEACH PRISON AND THE CASE OF CHARLES BEALE

“A LONGISH PLACE with Starvation at one end, Damnation at the other and Salvation in the Middle” — this is how the village of Northleach used to be described in the nineteenth century, i.e. the Union Workhouse, the Prison and the Church.

The architect was William Blackburn, a specialist in the design of prisons. The building could be described as a modified panopticon, i.e. not completely circular, but half-moon in plan. In 1831 the building was enlarged. An entry in the magistrates' journal for September 10th, mentions nine new cells and one for “filthy” vagrants. The same entry states that “. . . it is to be regretted that there is not laborious and irksome employment for the depraved women who are committed to this prison.” In 1833 the surgeon received an extra £10 because of the numerous dirty vagrants and prostitutes sent to Northleach prison from Cheltenham “. . . in a dreadful state of disease . . .” — Cheltenham, described by Cobbett on one of his Rural Rides, as a “. . . nasty, ill looking place, half clown and half cockney . . . resort of the lame and the lazy, the gourmandizing and guzzling, the bilious and the nervous.”

The case of Charles Beale was raised by the Gloucester Journal in October 1842. Apparently strong and healthy when he went into Northleach Prison, he was very weak at the time of his release and eventually died. He complained of the cold in the prison and the dampness of the cell to which he returned after a spell of work on the treadmill. He said that he was so hungry that he was reduced to eating the raw potatoes which it was his job to sort. Some other cases of hardship were reported at the same time, including John Cook, a lad imprisoned for six months for stealing pears, who was unable to walk the 14 miles to Cheltenham on his release and was now in a wheelchair.

More alarming details were revealed at the coroner's inquest on Beale. The cells did not have glass in the window openings, pools of water lay on the floor, prisoners slept in wet shirts. Beale's father said that his son had been a sawyer, but he preferred seven years' work as the 'pitman' to nine months' work on the tread mill in prison.

The verdict of the jury was that Beale had died of a disease of the lungs — probably tuberculosis — brought about and aggravated by the punishment and the treatment he had received while he was in prison. They recommended that a memorial should be drawn up and sent to Sir James Graham who was the Home Secretary in Peel's government; this was done and on November 19th the Gloucester Journal reported the arrival at and inspection of Northleach Prison by three inspectors of prisons, a surgeon from St. Thomas's Hospital, London, and a Mr Gurney, a shorthand writer. Evidence was taken from the prison officials, Beale's parents, Joseph Rowley, John Newton and James Churn, who had been fellow prisoners with Beale, Rowley's wife and the surgeon at the Cheltenham dispensary.

The report which was published in 1843, condemned the 'negligent manner in which the journals of this prison had been kept' so that it was difficult to find out exactly what sort of work Beale had been ordered to carry out. The surgeon at the infirmary in Cheltenham who had carried out the post-mortem,

said that Beale had died from a suppuration of the left lung, the result of a chronic disease which he had suffered from a for long time, but it was stated in the report that Beale's condition had been aggravated by his long spells of work in sorting potatoes and on the tread mill; both the Governor and the Prison Surgeon were to blame for not realising this until it was too late. In fact the Governor did not seem to be aware of all that was going on in the Prison. The Chaplain who was also the Curate of a church in the neighbourhood, was very vague about his duties and did not appear to know that he was supposed to instruct the prisoners in right living. The Surgeon who lived in Northleach, visited the Prison twice a week, but had failed to examine the prisoners when they were first admitted.

The report summed up the state of affairs in Northleach Prison in strong terms, remarking on the 'absence of a salutary and perspicuous code of regulations and the 'negligence of some of its officers' . . . 'discipline . . . operated with an unnecessary degree of severity on many of its inmates and . . . calculated to harden rather than to correct or reform'. Since the prisoners were faced with only two alternatives — solitary confinement or hard labour on the wheel, many preferred the latter, simply because it carried the privilege of extra food. Afterwards, however, they had to return to their damp day cells — the worst possible places after a long spell of hard labour.

The report contained nine major recommendations: there should be a proper code of regulations for the prison, the dietary should be increased to ensure less liquid and more solid nourishment; every prisoner to be examined by the Surgeon when first admitted to the Prison — the Surgeon to be allowed to order flannel shirts for prisoners in bad health; increased attention should be paid to the ventilation and warmth of the cells; prisoners in solitary confinement to be visited daily by the Governor, the Chaplain and the Surgeon; prisoners not sentenced to hard labour should be given employment more suitable than the tread mill, which should definitely not be prescribed for female prisoners, or males under fourteen years of age — a maximum spell on the wheel should be laid down and no prisoner given more without the sanction of the Governor himself; more attention should be paid to the moral and religious instruction of prisoners.

The prison authorities attempted to refute some of the criticisms made in the report. However, there are entries in the journal that give weight to the view that all was far from well in the prison. In 1835 there were complaints from the prisoners of an 'insufficiency of the diet and consequent weakness.' The reaction of the visiting magistrate to these complaints was to refer to the Surgeon who believed that the prisoners were complaining simply to avoid doing any work. So the magistrate ' . . . spoke to the men separately and warned them of the consequences of disobeying the rules of the prison.' Yet, in January 1841, the Officer in charge of the tread wheel was given an overcoat and it was noted in justification of this that the last Officer had actually died of cold. In June of the same year holes in the mens' sleeping cells were reported and work had to be put in hand to repair other parts of the prison.

In fact even before the report was published, entries in the prison journal show that some of the recommendations it was going to make were already being put into action; for example, the loaf of bread given daily to each prisoner

had in future to be divided so that half might be kept for the prisoners' supper. The windows of the cells were glazed and wooden tops fixed on the window seats.

There are several reasons why this report is of more than local importance. In reaction against the noisome atmosphere of the old gaols and because of the prevailing medical belief in the miasmatic theory of disease — that it could in some way be transmitted through the foul air of the prison — Paul, accordingly followed Howard's advice and sited his prisons by running water and in airy places. Northleach prison had a stream running through its exercise yards; the whole prison lay in a hollow and on one occasion in 1837 eighteen inches of water was reported in the day cells. The description of the prison in the 1816 report on gaols, as being in a dry and elevated situation, is completely misleading; as one approaches the site along the Fosse Way there is a steep hill both to the north and the south. The insistence on a free circulation of fresh air, also explains the unglazed 'windows' of the day cells and the open arcades in early plans for the prison.

Paul Cunningham had introduced for short term prisoners serving a month's sentence, a harsh regime of solitary confinement for the whole sentence, on a diet of bread and water and a pint of pease soup twice a week, which he claimed was such a terrifying deterrent that no man who had experienced it had returned for a second dose. Paul, of course, wanted *reform*, as well as deterrence; it was not a happy omen for the future.

One short but very important sentence in the report reads "The repeated and vexatious punishments for trivial offences which seem indispensable to the enforcement of the silent system of prison discipline, are calculated to produce unfavourable effects on the health of the prisoner in long periods of imprisonment." This paragraph was not heeded when the most rigorous of all silent systems was being planned for the new prison at Pentonville *in the same year*, 1842 — to be speedily abandoned when it was realised how severe was the psychological damage done to the prisoners. We have a word for it: brain-washing.

R. W. JENNINGS.

AN ACCOUNT OF YE ANCIENT COURT LEET OF NORTHLEACH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

AFTER THE NORMAN conquest, the Northleach area became the property of the Abbey of Gloucester, and the Abbot became the Lord of the Leet. In 1227 came a "Grant to the Abbot and Monks of St. Peter, Gloucester" of a yearly fair and a weekly market at their manor of Nordlegh, and, at the same time, "Protection for the Abbot and Monks of St. Peter, Gloucester, their men, lands and possessions." The original charter may well have been destroyed in 1645, when Northleach was occupied by Sir Thomas Fairfax and his army. The troops rifled the town chest, and amongst the articles stolen were 22 parchments. From 1227 onwards the town seems to have been allowed a good deal of freedom to govern itself with a minimum of supervision from Gloucester, for ordinances were made "from tyme to tyme" by the "Bailliff, Burgesses, and Inhabitants of the town or borough of Northleach", and were to be "for ever observed".

In 1576 39 ordinances were written into a book. The book is still in existence. The ordinances regulated practically every aspect of the lives of the inhabitants of Northleach, as shewn below, and in some cases on their deaths, for certain classes, had to be buried in a woollen shroud, or their relatives had to pay a fine. To set up in trade required a licence costing 12 pence, and to practice the "science" of tailoring cost 30 pence in licence fees. Part of the town water supply was the River Leach, and there were two ordinances covering this: the first, that "the brooke be rydde (cleaned out) by the Sunday after St. Peter's day". The second law threatened that "Anyone known to wash in the brooke shall be fined 4 pence every time". All butchers who kept their shops open after the Boothall bell rang, were fined 12 pence, and all apprentices who were caught in the streets after the same warning, spent the night in the stocks. The male inhabitants of the town had to assemble for archery practice "with sufficient bows and arrows" or forfeit 6 pence. Every household had to provide himself with four loads of wood each year, and get the testimony of two honest men that it was not stolen. A "burden" of wood had to be brought by the bearer along the open street to the market cross and there "attested" by the giver or seller. No-one could enter an inn except by the "forstrete" door, upon pain of a forfeit of 60 pence.

To enforce these, and the rest of the 30 Ordinances, was the responsibility of the High Bailiff and his Officials at the Town Court. There were, of course, evasions and breaches of the laws. For instance, in 1577 Edmund Midwinter with eight other men, were each fined 2 pence for attending church without the necessary caps and in the same year Thos. Fowler is accused of assaulting the watchman with his sword and dagger drawn. Roger Russell is fined 12 pence for card playing in his house during the time of divine service, and five men are each fined 6 pence for playing "coyts" on a Sunday. In 1608 the wife of the Bailiff is called "vile and approbrious names" and the Arbitrators at a town court hold that the lady has been "much wronged". The slanderer, a woman, is ordered to be "sette in prison". The Court Leet also acted as pawnbroker, landlord, tenant and employer of labour. Entries record the taking of "Goody Smarte's pawn of two pieces of cloth" for a loan of 30 shillings. Mary Maule is paid for one half year's rent of two houses, and one quarter's rent for a house is collected from James Hutt. Wages are paid to a man for "Woonting the Downs". This item refers to catching moles on the Downs, and a mole is still a 'oont on the Cotswolds today.

The High Bailiff was to be chosen from four nominees by "the hole condicent and agreement of the old baylyf and the Burgis". The Officials were a Sergeant-at-Mace, six Arbitrators, two Constables, two Wardsmen, an unstated number of Sealers of Leather and Surveyors of Caps, and a Town Clerk. Bailie Choosing, as the event is locally known, takes place in November. Earl Bathurst is the Lord of the Leet, and the Court is summoned by the High Steward with a notice couched in the centuries-old form. It is the duty of the Constables to ensure that the notice is displayed in the porch of the parish church for three Sundays before the Court meets. With the Lord of the Leet present, and the mace in position, the High Steward is given an assurance by a Constable that the necessary notice has been displayed. The Court is opened with a proclamation by the High Bailiff, and twelve jurymen are sworn in. The jurymen then elect the

Court Officials, firstly a High Bailiff, followed by two Constables, two Carnals, two Tything Men and a Hayward. The business concluded, the Court is formally closed and the jury discharged.

The High Bailiff was today's equivalent of Lord Mayor. While the Constables kept law and order, the Wardsmen, each in his own district, collected tythes and reported to the Constables such breaches of the laws as came to their knowledge. The Hayward had the responsibility to see that the mounds and fences of the common grazing land were kept in order. The Sergeant-at-Mace rang the Boothall bell to summon a Court session, and accompanied the High Bailiff from his house to the Court. In later years the Sergeant, carrying the mace on a cushion, headed civic processions. Two of the most important of the Court Leet Officials were the Carnals, whose duties included the supervision of all inns and victualling houses in the town. They had also to attend at the market cross on fair days and the weekly market days, for nothing could be sold in the market without their inspection and approval.

The market cross and Boothall were probably situated near the present post office, and both have long since disappeared. The head of the cross was used as an ornament in the vicarage garden until the 1890's and a stone fireplace from the Boothall still exists, built into a private house in Northleach.

The decline of the wool trade greatly affected Northleach. No railway replaced the mail coaches, and with the coming of vestry meetings and parish councils, the ancient Court Leet lost nearly all its former powers. By the end of the nineteenth century it was said to be all but extinct. Yet it still met, and still meets, to carry on the old ceremony. The Court Leet today is a purely ceremonial affair, except that the High Bailiff becomes chairman of the Northleach Town Trustees, a centuries old body which administers certain lands, properties and charities.

T. L. MILES.

SEVERN INCIDENT

TUESDAY, 25th OCTOBER, 1960 was a tragic day for shipping on the Severn Estuary. For years few serious accidents had occurred in these parts, but severe river mist led to two tankers, waiting for the tide to rise to enter Sharpness Docks, drifting up river and colliding with each other and the Severn Railway Bridge between Lydney and Sharpness with disastrous results. Five men lost their lives in the fire that engulfed both vessels, the Wastdale and Arkendale of John Harker. Severe damage was done to the bridge, two spans and a pier being torn away by the impact and explosion. This was a severe blow to British Railways, who had been progressively strengthening the bridge for increased traffic. After much thought, the bridge was written off and the problem of removal then arose.

Those who had built her had not envisaged such an untimely end, and had themselves considerable difficulty in erecting the structure. The Severn Estuary had long been an impediment to communication between Southern England and South Wales, and the proprietors of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal

Company, the Severn and Wye Railway Company, and others, promoted the Severn Bridge Railway Act of 18th July, 1872. Built between 1875 and 1879 to the design of Mr T. E. Harrison, the Severn Bridge consisted of approach spans on the north side of 12 arches, 21 steel spans varying between 305 feet and 135 feet across the tidal river, a swing span of 240 feet across the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal, and two approach arches on the Severn Bank. The rail height above normal low water is 80 feet. The tide has a range of 30 feet and the current can reach ten knots. The piers were 10 feet diameter below low-water and 7 feet above, being composed of 4 feet lengths ring of cast iron; 3,600 tons of cast iron and 3,500 tons of wrought iron were used in the bridge's construction.

Clearly the salvage of the metal from this vast structure represented a worthwhile prospect for those prepared to take the risk. And risk it was. There had been no prefabrication and the entire structure was built in situ. A West German floating crane was hired to remove the spans, but its 400 tons capacity could not cope with the 500 tons of the two largest spans. Fractures were induced in these and they fell into the river, but much valuable metal was lost below the shifting sands.

The columns proved an even tougher nut. Filled with a type of Roman cement, their removal broke the demolition company and the job was subsequently finished by British Railways themselves. During this episode a further tragedy occurred. The contractors had purchased the former Aust-Beachley ferry-boat, the "Severn King", and converted her into a salvage vessel. A large crane was secured to the forward deck and a generator put into the former turntable well. Thus equipped, she carried explosives to the pillars and salvaged scrap to take ashore. Unfortunately she broke adrift from her moorings because of the current, but finally came to grief on the night of 4th July, 1969. She sat on the broken pillar she had helped to demolish and was salvaged with difficulty. She had traded as a ferry-boat for over 30 years, and ended up sold for £75 scrap.

The estuary is still as beautiful now as it was, and hopefully always will be, but the rusting hulks of the tankers and a few broken piers thrown up by the deep are a sorry reminder of a one-time black day on the Severn.

C. JORDAN.

HEMPSTED CHURCH

"Whoever dwell within this door Thank God for Viscount Scudamore"

THESE PIOUS WORDS of thanks are enscrolled over the front doorway of what was till a very few years ago the Rectory of Hempsted. The Rectors of Hempsted have certainly long had cause to be grateful to the first Viscount Scudamore.

A staunch Protestant, he was a friend and supporter of Archbishop Laud, a former Dean of Gloucester Cathedral. In 1635 he was the ambassador of Charles I to the Court of Louis XIII. His wife, nee Porter, had inherited the lands and tithes conveyed in the grant of properties formerly owned by Llanthony

Priory, which had been made to Arthur Porter at the Dissolution in 1540, and in her right they formed his estate of Hempsted.

In view of his pronounced Royalist sympathies, it is hardly surprising that his estates were sequestered by Parliament. In 1652 however, they were restored to him, and from that date he made himself responsible for all arrears of tithes that had accumulated and continued to do so till the Restoration, after which he formally conveyed the tithes for the maintenance of a clergyman at Hempsted. But the Parliamentary Commissioners had disposed of the Church, the churchyard and glebe, with a portion of the tithes, to Henry Powell of Williamstrop. So Lord Scudamore, for the sum of £376, acquired "the Vicarage house, garden and orchard, the Parsonage Close, and Barn, and a parcel of land on Hempsted Moor".

By the gift of these tithes, great and small, Hempsted acquired the dignity and status of a Rectory. At his own expense Lord Scudamore began to build the rectory that has stood there ever since. The house, which had to be completed by his executors, cost £700.

The second occupant, John Gregory, also an Archdeacon of Gloucester Cathedral, lies buried in front of the altar.

It is one of the ironies of History that the once poor mean Vicarage of Hempsted was now an imposing mansion, whilst the formerly magnificent Priory of Llanthony, of whose domains Hempsted had been so humble a part, lay in desolation and ruin.

Heyhampstede was once part of the domains of Harold Godwinson, from whom it was held by one of his thegns, Edric the Long-handed. After the Conquest it became part of the estates of Walter, Constable of Gloucester, who gave it to the Church of St. Owen, which was immediately outside Gloucester's South Gate. When the Priory of Llanthony Secunda was founded by Milo of Gloucester in 1136, he endowed it with the Chapel of St. Owen, which included the Chapel of Hempsted, with the tithes of the tenants in villeinage. In 1151 Milo added the vill of Hempsted as a perpetual alms.

Hempsted's church is dedicated to St. Swithun. It was probably built by Henry Dene, Prior of Llanthony, later Bishop of Bangor, and ultimately Archbishop of Canterbury. In a painted window in the North wall of the tower is a mitred figure, reputedly Henry Dene. His likeness is also said to be perpetuated in the figures on two corbels in the nave. The original church dates from the early 15th Century. Of this building the tower, the porch walls, the nave and the chancel remain. The tower is carried upon very peculiarly constructed arches, between the nave and the chancel. It is a singularly picturesque feature, its details very bold, with a commanding view over the Severn Vale.

In 1848 new roofs were placed on the nave and the chancel, a new vestry erected on the north side, and new windows placed in the west wall of the nave and the east wall of the chancel.

In 1885 much of this work, of poor craftsmanship, was removed, and new erected. In no case was the old work interfered with, except that twelve feet was added to the nave.

Before the restoration of 1885, there was a minstrels' gallery and a stained glass window. These have completely disappeared, as have the old oak pews.

There are mural tablets to the memory of Eleanor (Wife of Richard Atkins)

who died in 1594. Also a recumbent effigy of Richard Atkins, Chief Justice of South Wales, who died in 1610.

Hempsted Court was owned by the Atkins Family till about 1700, when it was acquired by Daniel Lysons, who built a new mansion on the same site. There is a mural tablet to twenty-one of the Lysons' Family, most celebrated of whom is Canon Samuel Lysons, the famous antiquary.

In 1643, during the siege of Gloucester, in a sortie from the North Gate, four Royalists were killed, including a "captain of the King's Horse". Charles I and his young sons are reputed to have been present at his burial in Hempsted churchyard where the "Cavalier's Tomb" is the most celebrated feature. The churchyard contains also the tomb of the Addison Family. The tower of "Addison's Folly" in Greyfriars, built by Thomas Addison in honour of Robert Raikes, was reputedly built so that Addison could see the tower of Hempsted Church, in whose graveyard his Wife Hannah lay buried.

Two of the six bells of the church date from 1694, one from 1764, two from 1817 and one from 1885.

R. P. SMITH.

Mining in the Forest of Dean

Mining in the Forest of Dean, although now carried on by only a handful of free miners working their private gales deep in the woodlands to win coal, is the oldest of the industries of the area.

Over the centuries countless tons of earth have been moved from one spot to another and overturned in the search for the mineral wealth that still exists beneath its tree covered surface, despite the withdrawal of the National Coal Board on economic grounds in the early 1960's.

But it was iron ore, not coal which bred the first miners centuries ago and which, undoubtedly, proved a major attraction to the Roman Legions when they commenced their occupation of the area in AD 44. Although still heavily wooded, the Dean is vastly different now from the time when the Romans brought their brand of civilisation to the Forest.

Yet, for the imaginative mind, it is easy to cast away the space of years and look through the barrier of time to see members of the Roman Legions in their camps at Lydney, Littledean, Woolaston Villa and using the Dean Road, parts of which are still plainly visible and preserved at Blackpool Bridge. They worked the surface mines at Bream, The Scowles and Perrygrove, leaving a legacy of moss covered labyrinths that now prove a tourist attraction. The Scowles is probably the best known of these early workings, with the dark coloured hematite showing from the boulders and rock faces. Large cuts, gullies, tunnels and passages cut through the stone, now covered with vegetation and adopting weird shapes, have led to fine sounding names being given to certain spots, such as "The Devil's Pulpit" and "Devil's Oven".

The settlement at Lydney was one of the finest sites in the Forest of Dean, occupied by the Romans and strategically sited overlooking the Severn estuary with the main woodland acres at its rear. Erected on what is now called Camp

Hill, it contained a Temple of Nodens, to the pagan god, and many of the relics found on the site were housed in a museum which was erected by the first Viscount Bledisloe in 1937, as a new wing of Lydney Park mansion.

Coins, tools and other relics found in and around the old iron mining sites also suggest that they were worked by more primitive tribes before the Romans began to take advantage of the iron ore within them. Celtic tribes were probably among the first of the Forest miners and it was possibly through them that the news of the iron wealth filtered through to the Romans.

In the early Middle Ages the Forest provided most of the munitions for the Irish expedition by the Earl of Pembroke, known as 'Strongbow', which included horse nails, iron rods and axes. Richard I (1189—1199) ordered 50,000 horse shoes to equip his armies for the Crusades. Evidence is also available of forges working in the 13th century and the Abbey at Flaxley owned two. There was a forge at St. Briavels, famous for its manufacture of arrow heads, and nails used in constructing Westminster Hall were made at Gloucester out of Forest iron.



*15th Century Miners Brass in
Newland Church*

It is around this time that the first references to coal mining are found and it appears to have been started to meet the need of the iron forges. Although large quantities of wood were used to fire the forges, coalmines were appearing on the landscape of the Forest of Dean and records show early mines at Blakeney and Abenhall. This then, was the birth of coal-mining, but the winning of iron ore was to retain its importance over its black cousin for many years to come. During the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, smelting processes continued and iron production remained an extremely important industry until well into the 17th century.

Iron mining declined severely towards the end of the 17th century, when there were only about 20 men employed in the industry, but it was given a boost in 1837 when the Westbury Brook Iron Mine was opened and the Buckshaft Iron Mine began hewing iron ore at the rate of 46,000 tons per year in 1865. Moses Teague opened an iron smelting works in Parkend and Cinderford and in 1871, the total production from the Forest of Dean was 199,111 tons. This was, however, the last fling at power of a dying local industry and, with the exception of a small increase brought about by the needs of the 1914-1918 war, it dwindled quickly and was finally laid to rest.

The deep coal mines were now approaching their shortlived zenith of power, as shafts were sunk into the earth of the Forest to win a different mineral wealth. With the passing of the Dean Forest (Mines) Acts of 1904 and 1906, gales were grouped together and it was possible to venture almost to the bowels of the earth to hew out the coal. At the turn of the century tonnage from the coalfield was topping 1,180,000 and coalmining became a way of life as sons followed fathers into the mines, with many of them having to walk miles underground to reach the face before starting a shift.

For the major half of this century the coal industry flourished, but in the late 1950's the decline set in and rapidly escalated with the closing of one large pit after another. The last colliery, Northern United, one of the giants of the Dean, closed in 1965.

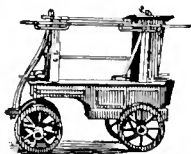
Since then, open-cast extraction of coal has been carried out in the Dean, but this has received stern opposition from local conservationists and others who are concerned at the possible scars left on the landscape by this type of mining. The free-miners still battle on, but with planning restrictions now coming into the working of the gales, it is doubtful whether many of these will carry on for any great length of time.

An industry spanning virtually over 2,000 years is rapidly dying.

CLIFF DAVIES.

GLOUCESTER'S FIRST FIRE ENGINE

THE RISK OF fire was an ever present danger in seventeenth century towns. The predominance of timber framed buildings, the widespread use of thatch as a roofing material for both houses and outbuildings, the presence of the workshops of tradesmen such as bakers, blacksmiths, brewers and maltsters within the built up area and often, too, the sheer physical congestion of buildings confined in a comparatively small area, combined to make the threat of fire a serious hazard. It is difficult for us today to conceive of the danger which fire represented in a town of narrow streets and timbered buildings. Although Gloucester was fortunate enough to escape a serious blaze during the early part of the century, it nevertheless experienced a number of alarms. On one occasion in the late 1630's



An early Hand-Pump Fire Engine

a malt house near to the Red Lion Inn, between the inner and outer Northgates, took fire and it was "thought that if the wind had been big it had been impossible to quench it by reason of hayricks, woodpiles and other old houses adjoining".

To deal with the problem most towns kept a modicum of equipment for use in fire fighting. This consisted mainly of long iron hooks and chains for un-roofing or even demolishing buildings to create fire breaks, ladders, leather buckets and perhaps a few hand held water squirts. At Gloucester such items were provided out of a fund supplied from a levy on those who were admitted as freemen: 2s. 8d. roughly the price of one bucket, was received from those

entering as freemen's sons, or after serving an apprenticeship and double that sum from those paying a fine for the privilege. In the years preceding the Civil War this brought in between £4 and £7 each year, which was spent on the purchase, painting and repair of buckets and upon ladders. In 1640 the City possessed eight long hooks, a chain, six long ladders and 219 buckets. The chief innovation in fire fighting in England during the century was the introduction during the 1620's of a fire engine of German design. Known as the "Nuremberg" engine it consisted basically of a water tank, which was filled by a bucket chain, and a squirt supplied from the tank by a manually operated brass pump. The method of operation was described in a manual later in the century: "Observe when you goe to worke the engine that fflower or five men be placed at each end, and lett them lift up their hands with the handles as high as they can and pull downe the handles againe as low as they can, and the men to work and make their stroakes jointly and as nere as they can together". An improvement on all previous methods of fire control these engines came increasingly into use during the middle decades of the century.

During the Civil War the receipts of Gloucester's "bucket money" fund fell somewhat, but expenditure from it fell more sharply so that by the end of the City's financial year 1646-7 there was a surplus on the account of £10 7s. 2d. In that year a number of items were mistakenly duplicated on the general account and one of the stewards had also erroneously included gunpowder and bullets there. This rather unexpected cash surplus of £17 2s. 1d., in addition to the bucket money, at a time when the City's finances generally were at a low ebb, may have been one of the reasons why the Common Council agreed on 21st February, 1648 "that Mr. Sheriff Pierce shall send up to London for an engine to quench fire to be made with all convenient speed". Anxiety aroused by recent fires may also have prompted them to take action. Andover, where 90 houses were destroyed, Bristol and Shrewsbury all suffered from serious outbreaks in 1647. Bristol's example in obtaining an engine in the previous August and civic pride, which seems to have been especially high in Gloucester in the years following the Civil War, could also have been relevant factors. Whatever the reasons, the engine was duly ordered and a copy of the City's Coat of Arms was sent to London to be painted on it. The engine itself cost £30 and the carrier charged £1 15s. 0d., for bringing it from the capital and delivering it to the Boothall. The balance was made by up the £4 18s. 8d., received for bucket money in the financial year 1647-8.

After a short time it had to be moved as the Boothall was required for the imminent Summer Assizes. Three men were accordingly pressed into service to pull the City's pride and joy up Westgate Street to Holy Trinity Church, which was being used as a general storehouse. On their arrival, however, they found that its wheels made it too wide to go through the door and so a further five men, fortified with a round of beer, were called in to help and the engine was lifted bodily from its carriage and into the Church. This was clearly unsatisfactory as it made it difficult to remove it should it be urgently required at a fire. It was, therefore, moved once again, this time to the barley market house in Eastgate Street where the ladders and hooks were kept. John Welsteed, a blacksmith who frequently did work for the Corporation, was given charge of the new engine, receiving an annual stipend of 10s. 0d. He occasionally tested

it, applying soap and tallow as lubricants. After a few years he found it advisable to fit iron tyres to the wheels. With the building of a new market house in 1655-6, it was at first decided to demolish the existing one and rebuilt it near to the Eastgate as a store for the fire engine and other items. But this plan was soon abandoned and after it was taken down the materials were sold. A new, and preferably central, site was therefore sought for the engine and it was eventually resolved to return it to Holy Trinity, which was being divided, part for use as a school and the remainder for a storehouse. Accordingly it was hauled back past the Cross. On this occasion the problem of its width was overcome, not by removing it from its wheels, but by paying Howell Davis 6d. for "hewing Trinity Church door to let the engine in".

During the next few years the engine was employed at a number of dangerous fires. One was at the house of John Jordan, a baker, in Southgate Street. A few years later while fighting a blaze at Edward Tyther's house one Thomas Powell was injured and he received 1s. 0d., from the City in compensation. The same sum was dispensed on another occasion for beer given to those assisting at a fire near to the Cross. It seems that the Corporation was satisfied with its purchase, although perhaps they felt it to be somewhat inadequate by itself. For at a meeting of the Common Council on 31st August, 1652 it was resolved to buy another one. There is no evidence, however, that this was done. Probably the City's financial position prevented it, for there was a deficit of £364 11s. 9d., at the end of that financial year. The money in the bucket fund was being used to replenish the stock of buckets which had fallen from the peak reached in 1640 to a mere 32 in 1645. Nevertheless both the equipment and the organisation of fire fighting in Gloucester during the mid-seventeenth century proved sufficient to prevent serious fire damage. Ironically the only extensive losses were self-inflicted for in the summer of 1643 the suburbs were put to the torch by the City's defenders to render them useless to the Royalist forces. This action produced a scar which was to take a long time to heal.

S. PORTER.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Friends of Gloucester Museum

An organisation to be known as Friends of Gloucester Museum is being set up, from which it is planned to form a sub-group on Local History, the aim being to generate further interest in the local history of Gloucester and environs. This group will be keen to attract members and support, and those interested should contact Mr Stuart Davies at the Folk Museum, Westgate Street (tel. Gloucester 26467).

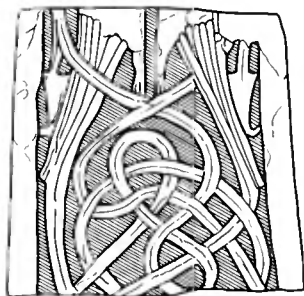
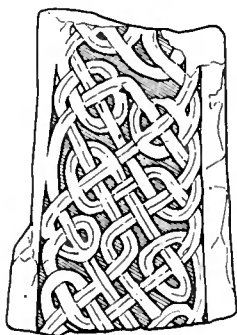
Move of the Record Office

The County Record Office is moving to Kingsholm, Worcester Street, Gloucester GL1 3DW, during October 1978. This will result in placing the administration, historical records and research facilities together in a building

solely occupied by the Record Office, and with good car-parking. Local Authority records from the mid-19th century onwards, quarter session records from that date, highway, coroners', school-board, Petty Sessions and guardians' records will remain at Shire Hall. A pamphlet giving full details of the much improved facilities offered, and other details, may be obtained from the Record Office.

Parochial Records and Registers Measure, 1977

Starting in 1979 and over the following five years, Parochial Records will be inspected. Parishes will be required to deposit in the Diocesan Record Office, all non-current registers and all other records more than 100 years old, unless they can meet stringent storage conditions and obtain exemption. The County Record Office has been appointed Diocesan Record Office. The above measure will accelerate the existing trend for more parishes to deposit their registers and records in the Record Office.



*A carved Saxon cross shaft,
found at St. Oswald's Priory.*

ST. OSWALD'S PRIORY, GLOUCESTER

THE EXCAVATIONS IN 1977, besides providing work for ten young unemployed people, produced still more evidence about Gloucester's oldest monument, St. Oswald's Priory.

We uncovered the plan of the north and south chapels of the church, and found that there were four rebuildings before the Normans added the great arcade in 1150: this arcade still survives today, but the wall into which it is inserted is Saxon, and was built by Queen Aethelflaed, Daughter of Alfred the Great.

The most exciting finds were four pieces of Saxon sculpture, with rich carved decoration depicting birds and beasts. Late Saxon sculpture does not survive in quantity, so it is very important to find dated material to add to that already in the City Museum.

CAROLYN HEIGHWAY
Head of Excavation Unit,
Barbican Road,
Gloucester GL1 2JF.

BOOK REVIEW

“POETS’ ENGLAND — GLOUCESTERSHIRE”

I count it as a privilege to have been asked to write a brief review of “Poets’ England — Gloucestershire”. This is clearly an anthology that has been selected with much loving care, and Mr Guy Stapleton is to be congratulated on the great variety of time, mode and theme that are here brought together to make up a vivid picture of a richly varied county.

I liked the division of the book into its four sections of Shire, Wold, Vale and Forest; and I particularly liked the fact that each poem carries the date of its first publication, thereby helping the reader to understand the variations of mood and expression, and also creating such a strong sense of continuity through the centuries.

So have all these varying voices brought together a long story of their love of the great gleaming rivers, and the cool breath of the hills. In words as diverse as traditional jingle and the rich weaving of James Elroy Flecker, they capture the fascination of Gloucestershire through long ages for men of all conditions.

The line drawings by Gillian Durrant are fresh, delightful and very evocative.

I feel honoured to have been asked to add a tiny footnote in verse to this rich collection.

So many poets sing of a lovely Shire;
So many voices over so many years;
And I have listened to this splendid choir
And shared with them their laughter and their tears

Sweet is the landscape that can thus inspire
Poet and singer. Blue are the misty hills,
Green the lush valleys, and the beechwoods’ fire
Glow in the Autumn sunlight and instils
A rapture in the mind. The distant spire
Praises the souls of men to the sublime,
And all the beauties of the earth conspire
To banish even the memory of Time.

Thus can enduring loveliness inspire
Poets to sing of fairest Gloucestershire.

G. S. WARD.

BOOKS NOTED

- “Joanna Southcott at Blockley” — illustrated — A. W. Exell. £1.20
Blockley Antiquarian Society, The Stone House, Blockley,
Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos.
- “The Port of Chepstow” — Ivor Waters. The Chepstow Society, £1.25
1 Wyebank Close, Tutshill, Chepstow, Gwent.
- “Old Cotswold Photographs” — D. J. Viner. Hendon Publishing £1.00
Co. Ltd., Nelson, Lancashire.