

James Hodsdon BA PhD FSA 1947-2022



IT IS WITH THE GREATEST SADNESS that we have to announce that James Hodsdon, Chair of the Gloucestershire County History Trust, collapsed and died suddenly and unexpectedly on 20 January 2022. It would be no exaggeration to say that the progress that the Victoria County History in Gloucestershire has made during the last decade – a red book and a paperback published, and three more red books approaching completion – could not have happened without his drive, enthusiasm and meticulous hard work. In fact it is most unlikely that without him the project would have continued in the county at all. For all of us who worked with him he was our inspiration, and we are reeling from the shock of knowing that he will no longer be there to organise, guide and cajole us with his unique brand of humour, wisdom and sincerity. We have lost a charming, gentlemanly colleague and a dear friend.

Beside the leading role he took in the VCH, at national as well as local level, James has served at various times as Chairman of Council of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Honorary General Editor of the Gloucestershire Record Series (to which he contributed two volumes himself), Secretary of the Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group, and Editor of the Cheltenham Local History Society Journal; and he has been involved in some way or other in virtually every field of local history activity in his beloved Cheltenham, where he lived from 1971, and in the county. Our loss, therefore, is shared by many other organisations. It is hard to think of anyone else who has played such an influential part in our local history world as he has, as leader, diplomat, scholar and advocate. We offer our heartfelt and deepest sympathy to Judie and his family.

John Chandler

VCH Gloucestershire

Newsletter 16: January 2022

Welcome from the Editor

Welcome to our delayed January 2022 newsletter, bringing you up to date with the work of the Trust. It opens with a tribute by John Chandler, our consultant editor, to James Hodsdon our chairman who died so suddenly and tragically a few days ago. No words are sufficient to express our sorrow and the debt we owe to James for his leadership of the Trust since its inception in 2010. This is so evident from his contributions he had already submitted before his passing.

The newsletter continues to provide evidence that the Trust is prospering from the support of so many individuals and organisations across the county. The drafts our contracted historians and volunteers continue to produce are on our website for comments; summaries of their work appear below. Please read carefully at the end of the newsletter the plea for more trustees. If you would like to find out more, please contact Nick Kingsley.

My thanks go to all those who have contributed to the creation and distribution of the newsletter. Special thanks go to John Chandler for the excellent production. We hope you enjoy reading it and, as usual, if you have any comments or further ideas, please let me know dhaldred@btinternet.com.

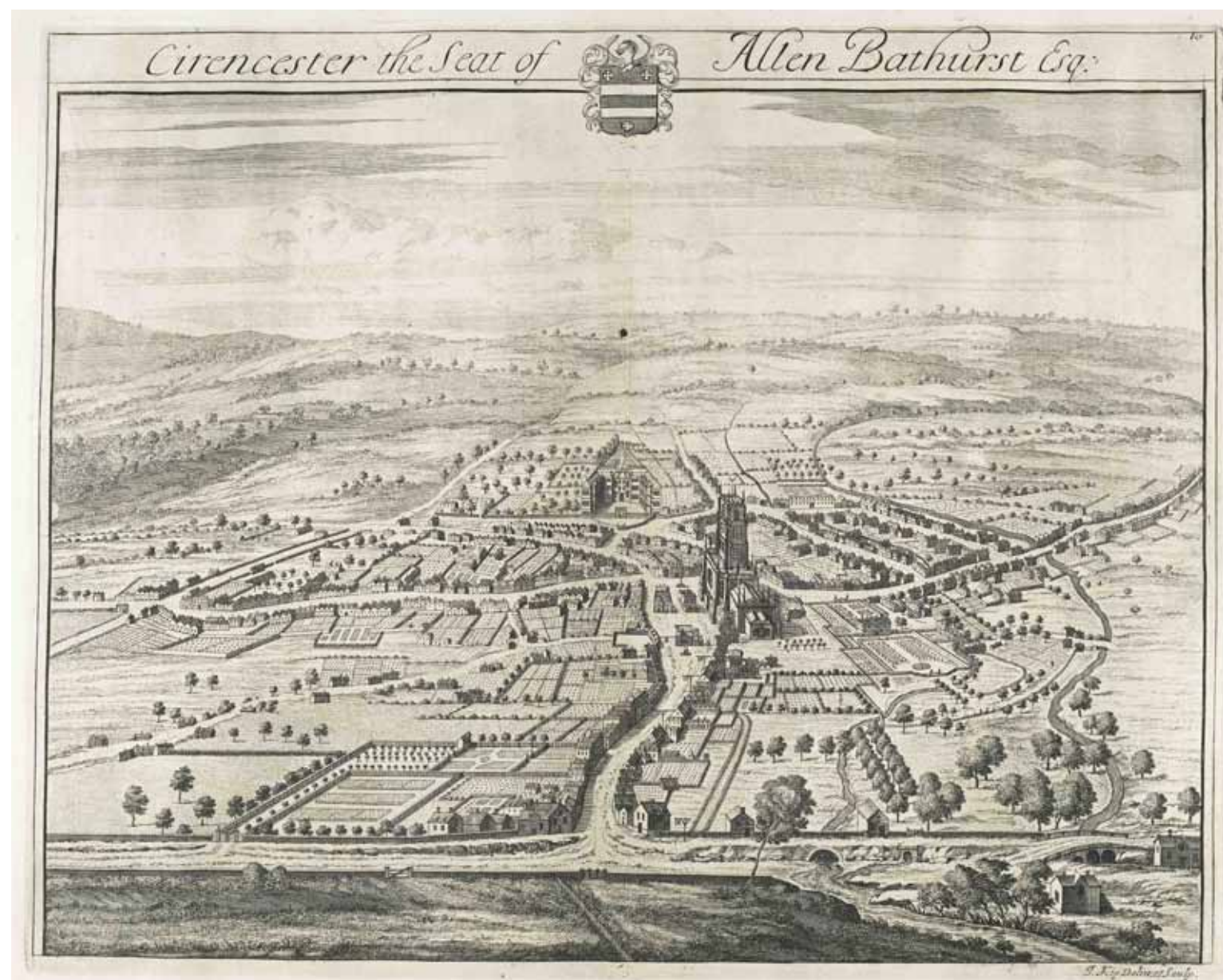
David Aldred

Report from the Trust

The year just passed has been a very challenging and frustrating one for the Trust and our researchers. Even when more and more resources can be accessed remotely, many of the key documents that underpin serious history still have to be consulted in archives. When archive access is constrained, for staffing or other reasons, and when working from home, progress is slowed and it's often hard to get tasks properly finished off. So hats off to all who have managed, one way or another, to get through the year's challenges.

So despite all that, what *did* we achieve in 2021? Looking across our three project areas, I would single out

- the completion of West Littleton (capped by a Zoom talk to the Marshfield and District Local History Society in December) for Vol 14



Cirencester park in c.1712

- the near completion of Swindon Village, and the start of work on Leckhampton, for Vol 15
- a memorable fundraiser, and the completion or near completion of Baunton and Daglingworth, for Vol 16

Over the year, we also made a number of new contacts who we hope will help open doors for us in the future. Speaking of the future, I return to a familiar theme: the need to refresh ourselves as a Trust. We started in 2010, and quite a few of your trustees have been in office ever since. A degree of continuity is of course no bad thing in itself, but we do *urgently* need new energy and ideas as well, so expressions of interest would be very gratefully received! See more on this at the end of the newsletter.

James Hodsdon

James Hodsdon

And a good time was had by all Cirencester fundraiser meets target

A drinks reception at Cirencester Park to raise funds towards the completion of Volume 16 – the Red Book covering Cirencester and district – went ahead successfully on 23 September. First mooted in the uncertain days of early 2021, in the hope that ‘things would surely be better’ by late summer, our timing was very fortunate indeed, given the further evolution of the pandemic since then.

The venue, and the balmy evening, could surely not have been bettered, and we are hugely grateful to the Earl and Countess Bathurst for hosting us at the Mansion and for their continued encouragement of the VCH's work. It was a real pleasure to meet

old friends and new supporters in such special surroundings. For the organising team, it was all the more enjoyable, knowing that generous pledges made beforehand had already put us well on the way to meeting our ambitious £40,000 target. Further donations on the night and afterwards meant that, including Gift Aid, we did actually achieve that sum – massively better than we could have dreamed of earlier in the year. We are particularly indebted to a select band of extra-generous individuals, who each had particular local reasons for wanting to support the cause. Our thanks to you, and indeed to everyone who helped.

For many who attended, the best bit was simply being able to socialise once again, over suitable refreshments, but for those who also thirsted for Knowledge, Rose Wallis and John Chandler gave short overviews of the project and what has been achieved to date on Volume 16. (For John, this was slightly *déjà vu* – earlier in the week he had spoken in similar vein to the Cirencester Civic Society.)

The immediate effect of these new funds is



Rose Wallis speaking at Cirencester

that we can afford to engage someone to begin the editorial review of the draft Volume 16 sections completed to date, detecting and filling gaps, planning the necessary maps and illustrative material, and so forth. We're very pleased to report that Dr Francis Boorman is re-joining us on a part-time basis, with effect from this January. Francis will be familiar to many of you as the main researcher of the post-medieval sections of Cirencester and Stratton, before taking on other historical work nearer to his home in London.

People have since asked whether we'll be mounting similar fundraising events in the future, perhaps for the South Glos work or for Cheltenham. If the circumstances look favourable (an appropriate venue, people prepared to get the funding ball rolling, suitable incentives, etc.) we should certainly consider it. At the same time, the time and effort it takes to put on a show like this can't be underestimated. Volunteers please step forward...

James Hodsdon

Francis re-introduces himself



I am very pleased to be returning to work on the fascinating history of Cirencester and the surrounding parishes. It is a great privilege to be able to round off my own research and collaborate again with the brilliant team assembled by the Gloucestershire VCH, to help shepherd an iconic 'Big Red Book' into print.

Updates from the Volumes

Volume 14: South Gloucestershire

ENGAGING WITH WEST LITTLETON



Interesting ephemera from West Littleton

Work began in 2020, at the instigation of local residents who donated much of the cost, on the small South Gloucestershire parish of West Littleton. Simon Draper of VCH Oxfordshire was contracted to research landownership and religious history, and I undertook the other sections, but relying heavily on Simon's note-taking of sources. We were hampered of course by lockdown, but Simon completed his work last summer, and I followed on, finishing in November – or so we thought! We had agreed to give a presentation shortly before Christmas to the Marshfield and District Local History Society (just down the road from West Littleton), and this became virtual rather than actual, with between 80 and 90 attendees. Everyone seemed very interested and we were all very pleased with the local reaction.

Then, and this was the best bit, we started to get emails about specific aspects of the parish history (another arrived today, as I write) – we had appealed for more information, and this was certainly what we were getting. Relatives of former residents rummaged through family papers and found useful dates and snippets. And then a whole cache of documents came to light, kept in a trunk in a local farmhouse, which included the PCC minute

book, a handwritten personal history, information on charities and, to quote the finder, 'many more interesting bits and pieces'. When the interested local residents have finished devouring all this I am to be allowed to borrow the material, and a chance for another scratch beneath the surface of this small community's local history.

Suitably encouraged, we are now making overtures to the neighbouring parishes of Tormarton and Acton Turville – whose histories are closely linked to West Littleton – to see whether they will help to support our work in the same way. Both parishes are to be included in our Volume 14. We are very grateful to everyone involved, and especially to the Marshfield and District Local History Society – all the more so since (to everyone's regret) Marshfield won't be included in the volume.

John Chandler

DYRHAM – A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS



Dyrham, © Rick Crowley (cc-by-sa/2.0)

We had the pleasure last October of meeting Dr Neil Stacy, an independent scholar who has long resided as the National Trust's tenant 'over the shop' at Dyrham Park. The parish of Dyrham is to be a component of our Volume 14, and we learned that Neil has in fact already done a considerable amount of solid research on the parish. Part of his research formed the basis of an article in the BGAS *Transactions* (vol 113, 1995). Neil is now considering converting more of his material into a VCH format for us, which would give us a welcome head start on this parish, besides potentially adding broader context for the National Trust's understanding of their own estate's history. He has already passed to us his work on a charity school in the parish.

Nick Kingsley and James Hodsdon

Volume 15: Cheltenham and surrounding parishes

SS PHILIP AND JAMES, LECKHAMPTON: A CHURCH FOR THE POOR AND A CHURCH FOR THE RICH

Leckhampton in the early nineteenth century was changing fast, not least by its rapid population growth. By the mid-1830s, the rector of the parish church of St Peter's, Rev. Charles Brandon Trye (whose family had owned the manor of Leckhampton for generations), estimated the parish population was over 2,000, only one-fifth of which could be accommodated in the parish church. The solution seemed obvious. In 1837, a new church was planned in the Bath Road area of Leckhampton, a predominately working-class neighbourhood 'chiefly consisting of mechanics and labourers.' Later the fundraising made explicit the intention to provide 'a Church for the Poor.'

Fundraising initially went well but work on the new church soon outstripped income, necessitating repeated appeals by Rev. Trye. After stoppages due to the lack of funds and the necessity of selling pews to further raise resources, the new church of St Philip, later SS Philip and James, was finally consecrated in 1840. It was not placed in the control of the Diocese (who had initially agreed to cover some of the cost) but rather subscribers who had contributed over £50 each. One of those subscribers, Rev. Trye, also benefited from the majority of the income raised by the rental of church pews. Trye similarly had the choice of minister. The high church publication, *British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review*, remarked that the new church had 'fallen into the hands of some of those gentry, who will not give into the church unless they receive in return their *quid pro quo* of ecclesiastical power.' It had thus become 'some sort of proprietary chapel.' [A church funded by subscribers, who kept private pews, but designated others as 'free sittings' for the local population-Ed]

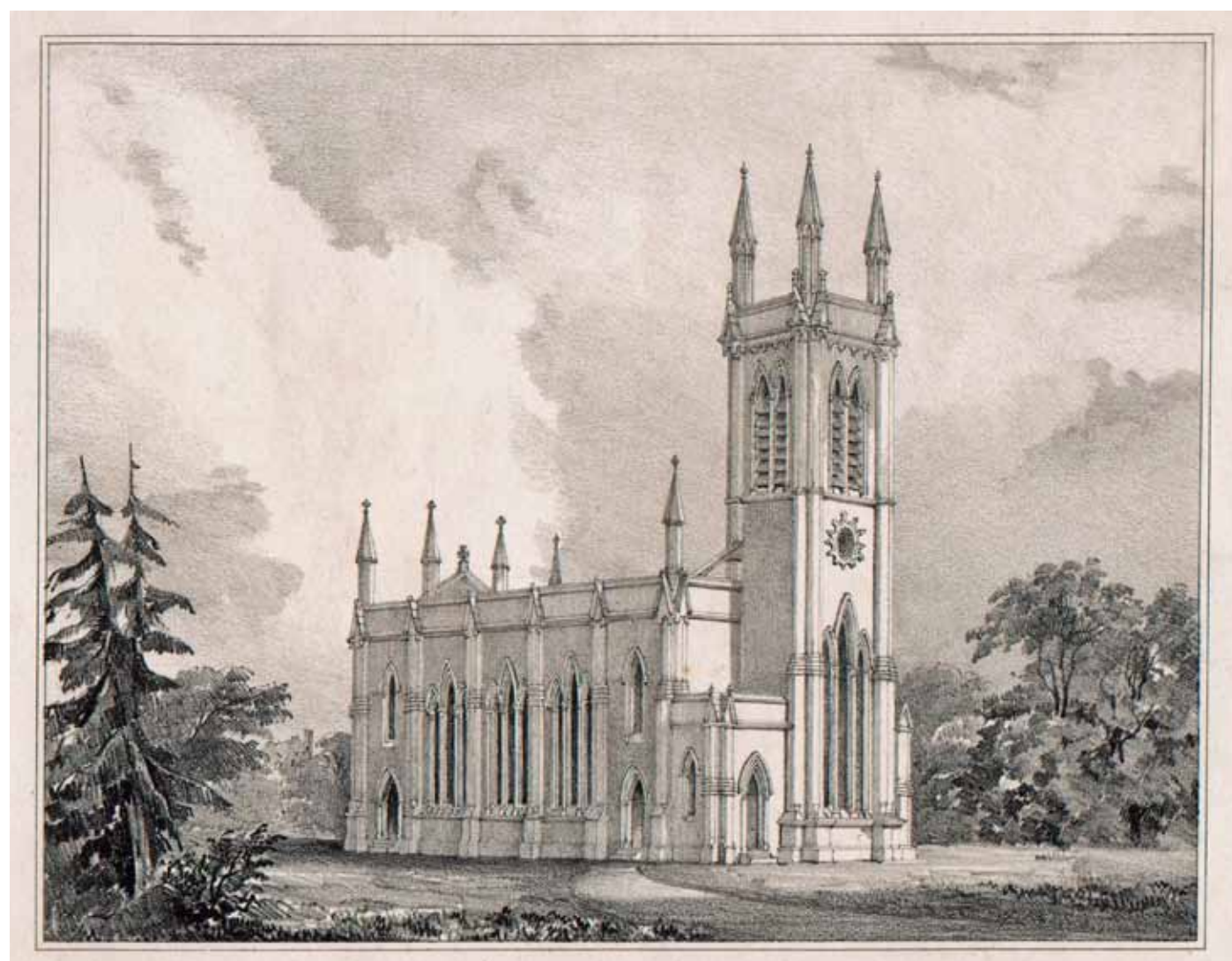
Due to the fundraising difficulties, only the south and east fronts were completed to the original architect's plans. The plain Gothic-style structure accommodated 850 congregants on two floors, of which 370 'free sittings' were provided for the poor. A correspondent to the *Cheltenham Chronicle*

observed, 'It is obvious from what has already been done, that had not the scantiness of funds rendered it necessary to curtail the expenditure, this church would have been more handsome than it is at present; but as it has been erected principally for the benefit of the poor of the neighbourhood, whose comfort has been more than usually studied in this instance, we do not much regret that the original design has not been more carried out.'

The 'neat inornate edifice' of SS Philip and James, while being 'well suited to the poor' of the sparsely populated area it inhabited in the 1840s, was by the 1870s described as 'wholly inadequate for the improved and wealthy neighbourhood which had since sprung up around it'. As the bishop politely put it, the original structure 'for many reasons was unsuited for this large and growing congregation'. The solution seemed evident to the incumbent, Rev. William Hutchinson, that the construction of a new church was needed. Perhaps it was unsurprising

as SS Philip and James had already asserted its independence from St Peter's. The district had been created an ecclesiastical parish in 1869, a process which had necessitated buying pews from Rev Trye (ironically Trye was the largest contributor to these funds). It was now likely time to break with the past fully.

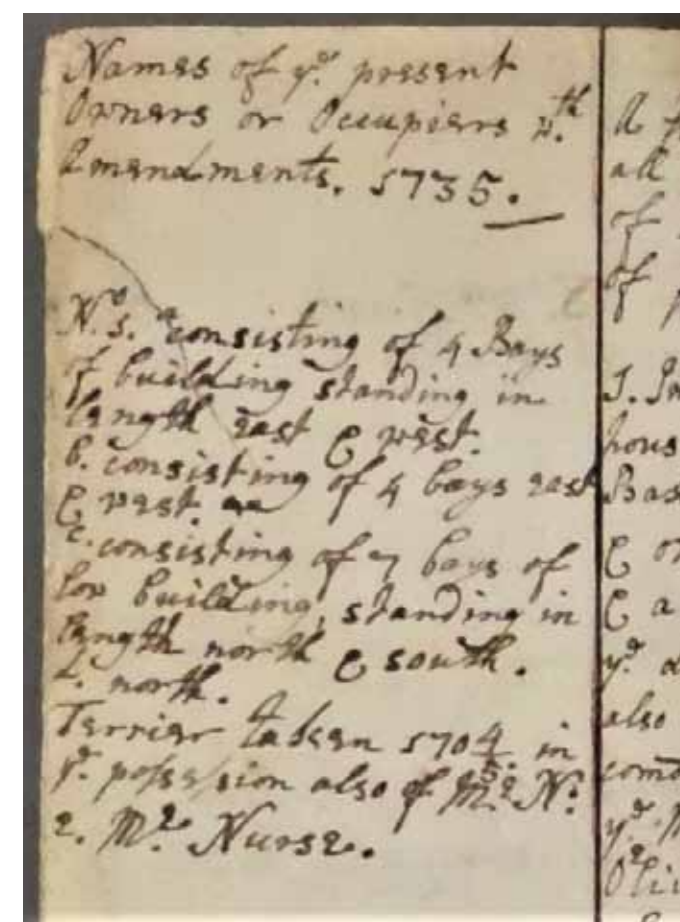
While publicly, inadequate space largely justified the construction of a new edifice, the old structure could have been extended, an idea raised by a churchwarden but quickly discounted by Hutchinson. The process of fundraising and building the new church was swiftly expedited, 'so short a time' remarked the bishop 'that it is the subject of a marvel.' Thus in 1882, the forty-year-old Gothic-style edifice of SS Philip and James which accommodated 850 was replaced by a new Gothic-style structure, albeit in a Decorated style, that housed 860 on the same site. The new church cost approximately double that of its predecessor and was, unlike the previous 'church for the poor', lauded for its architectural merits.



St Philip's church in 1845

THE RECTORY AND GLEBE LAND OF LECKHAMPTON - EARLY 18TH CENTURY

A single tri-folded sheet of paper gives some insight into the Rectory site and glebe land of Leckhampton. The information is arranged in two columns. The right-hand column is headed 'Copy of A True Terrier ... of all the Glebe-lands, & other things belonging to the Rectory of Leckhampton ... taken the 26 day of Feb: 1679 by the Church-Wardens and Sidesmen there'. The left-hand column is headed 'Names of the Present Owners or Occupiers w[i]th Amendments 1735'. A further date '1704/5' rather confuses the exact dating. A reasonable assumption would be that the paper in the Gloucestershire Archives (D303/E12, bundle 2) was written in 1735, that amendments to the original terrier of 1679 were added in early 1705. The original, it states, was in the hands of Mr Norwood.



(Courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives)

The page gives some remarkable details. Referred to as The Parsonage, the main building consisted of four-bays, orientated east-west, and by implication when compared to another building, was of at least two floors, probably with additional rooms for accommodation and storage in the roof space. To

its rear, and parallel, was another four-bay building, known as the Bakehouse or Backhouse, which contained a barn, stable, outhouse and cowshed. At right angles was a 'low', presumably single storey, building of seven bays, its purpose is not given, nor is its position in relation to the other buildings certain.. Other unnamed outbuildings, possibly lying to the west, may have completed the parsonage area, leaving a central yard. It is believed that at this time entrance to the Rectory lay to the west.

Surrounding the buildings were a garden and little orchard, with to the south, a 'little Pasture almost an Acre ... called the Pigeon House Close, in which also stands a small low Pigeon-house.' The document implies that the Rectory was surrounded on three sides by 'the common-way'. As it is known that the later 19th-century Rectory was built on approximately the same footprint, these 'ways' can be identified as Church Lane/Road and Kidnappers Lane. Other markers are identified as 'the House and Garden of Mr Oliver Partridge (sic)' to the west and a 'crooked ash-tree'. The position of many of the mounds (boundary markers) is included, as are the names of those responsible for their maintenance.

Glebe land, around 20 parcels, or pieces, are named: Upper and Lower Harpe, about seven acres; a pasture or 'mowing ground' on Ash Hill about two acres; the Home-mead, about one acre; in the common field, written as Burly- or Burleigh-field, strips of land, called variously butts, lands, gores or picks, and headlands amounting to five and a quarter acres; also four arable lands, Harvest-bridge Acre in Upper Stanley Field; four lands in Longley-field; in Clay-piece two butts. Other butts/lands were in Gill-Rodge, Dock-mead-end, Walkonsteed, a green sward on The Moors, lands in Collum-field, Briz Furlong, Parson's Lownes, Parsonage Piece with small strips in the Mortar Pits, the town-mead and Middle Stanley Field. Some parcels are noted as pasture or arable, with a few such as Burleigh-field, giving an indication of the crops. One other boundary is noted as the 'water-current'. Further research may identify this as the Hatherley Brook.

No total acreage is given, though, if none had been sold, in 1821 it was 174 acres 2 roods 8 perches. (Approximately 73 hectares-Ed) This later terrier repeats some names such as Pigeon House Piece, the three Stanleys and Walkonsteed. The most



*St Peter's church Leckhampton in 1860.
(Courtesy of Eric Miller)*

frequently recorded owners are Mr Norwood, Mr Nurse and Mrs Terrett, in that order, with numerous tenants, the most prominent being Cherringtons and Ballingers.

I would suggest that compared to the parishes of Cheltenham, Swindon and probably Charlton Kings, the details this document gives concerning the early Rectory buildings and their layout are remarkable. This article is based on a single document, but already other very pertinent information is becoming available which will add significantly to the history of the site. So watch out for a more detailed, comparative article in the future.

Sally Self, with additional information from Eric Miller and Oliver Pointer

Volume 16: Cirencester and surrounding parishes

A 14TH-CENTURY ROAD ACCIDENT

When focussing on the research for a particular parish, it can be easy to lose sight of the wider narrative. The boundaries of the parish become the extent of the study: tunnel vision can set in and banish peripheral vision to the sidelines where it (seemingly) belongs. But sources related to a parish's history can draw our attention to the bigger

picture, causing us to 'zoom out' and concentrate on the more complex context. The VCH approach demands a narrow focus on individual parishes, but by locating those parishes within their hundred it also provides geographical breadth within a given 'Red Book' and even more so through the project at large.

Take Coates as an example. The medieval account of this parish will make little reference to life outside the parish boundaries. But Coates was not a kingdom unto itself; rather, as we are reminded in the following extract, it was very much part of the kingdom of England and its inhabitants subject to the rule of the king of England. More pressingly, day by day, those inhabitants also felt pressure from the claims of the abbot of Cirencester, as can be read in the following extract from The National Archives.

12 May 1381

To the sheriff of Gloucester. Order, upon petition of Reynold Cartere of Gloucester, by the promise of John Gybbes of Oxford and William Blyssed of Tettesworth to deliver to him a wain (farm cart) and eight horses and a tun of wine, giving notice to abbot Cirencester to be before the king on the morrow of Ascension day, when the king will cause him to come before him the office of the coroners of Gloucestershire upon view of the body of William Herdewyke, to shew cause wherefore the same ought not to pertain to the king; as the said petition shews that for the service of the people for their carriages and to gain his livelihood the said Reynold delivered the wain and horses on the request of the said William his servant, that on the way being laded with the wine at Cotes in the hundred of Crouthorne within the abbot's liberty (land over which he had legal control) the said William fell by accident under one of the wheels and was crushed to death, and that the abbot seized the wain, horses and wine as forfeit, shewing that if any of them were the cause of the said William's death they ought to pertain as a deodand (forfeit) to the king and to none other; and the said John and William Blyssed, appearing in person in court, have promised under a pain of £20 that the petitioner shall answer for the price or value thereof if they shall be adjudged to be forfeit to the king.

Calendar of the Close Rolls, 1377-1381, p. 455.

It is therefore fitting that the medieval history of the parish of Coates will sit within the volume centred on Cirencester.

Beth Hartland

DUNTISBOURNE ABBOTS

The start of a new year is a good time to look back upon the work of the previous one. Since turning my attention to the Duntisbournes early last year, a new round of lockdowns, limited access to archives, and occasional periods of isolation have all intervened, but progress has nevertheless been made. When the finishing touches are finally made to the draft economic history I am currently working on, we will have finished the complete history of Duntisbourne Abbots, having made a start on its neighbour Duntisbourne Rouse.

Duntisbourne Abbots nestles in a narrow valley carved from the rolling landscape north of Cirencester by the stream which rises in the parish and flows south to meet the Churn. As well as the main village of the same name the ancient parish also comprised of a second settlement, Duntisbourne Leer, separated by perhaps half a kilometre but which once formed distinct manors and tithings, divided between two different hundreds. Beyond these two nucleated settlements lie a handful of isolated farmsteads, of which Nutbeam farm in Duntisbourne Leer is of great antiquity whilst others are much more modern in origin. Near the western boundary of the parish, overlooking the river Frome, stands Duntisbourne House, originally constructed for the lords of the manor in the 18th century when they took up semi-permanent residence in the parish, and subsequently much altered over the centuries. The

other noteworthy feature of the parish, like many parishes in the vicinity of Cirencester, is the ancient Roman road which crossed its fields en route to Gloucester.

The origins of the parish are difficult to discern, but it seems probable that the Duntisbournes once belonged with much of the neighbouring landscape to a huge *parochia* centred upon a minster church at Cirencester, before subsequently breaking away to become a distinct *parochia* itself, perhaps focused on the pre-Conquest church at Duntisbourne Rouse. This large estate had been broken into a number of smaller parts by the time of the Domesday Book, including three which later would become the parish of Duntisbourne Abbots. The suffixes of the two settlements, Abbots and Leer, provide clues to the ownership of the two manors, both of which belonged to monastic institutions. The larger of the two belonged to the abbey of St Peter's in Gloucester, now the cathedral, which was also the patron and possibly the founder of the parish church. The smaller settlement belonged to the Benedictine abbey of Our Lady in Lyre, Normandy. A third small Domesday estate, Nutbeam farm, was granted in the 12th century to the abbey of St Mary's in Cirencester, placing all of the parish in monastic hands until the Dissolution in the 16th century.

The parish was never large, peaking at a population of 371 in 1851, perhaps only double its population in 1086. The first detailed glimpse we have of one of its residents is provided by the early-16th century will of John Jones. Jones was the tenant



Duntisbourne Abbots church of St Peter (CC BY-SA 2.0)

of Cirencester abbey in Duntisbourne Leer, and his closeness to his landlords is demonstrated by his bequests, including generous sums to each member of the abbey chapter, dressed stone for the tombs of the late abbot and prior, and new vestments for one of the chaplains. Amongst his acquaintances could be counted Thomas Ruthall, the Cirencester-born bishop of Durham. Besides these generous gifts, his other bequests included 500 sheep, £40 in money, and numerous books of law. This level of wealth was remarkable even a century later, however. During the early 17th century several parishioners described themselves as yeomen, wealthier farmers, when drawing up their wills, yet the possessions described in their wills do not hint at a great level of finery. Wooden furniture predominated, including cupboards, coffer, tables, benches and joined stools, with one example of wainscoting also included. Only the lord of Duntisbourne Abbots, James Dolle (d. 1600), could demonstrate any obvious material wealth amongst his possessions, which included silver cups and cutlery, jewellery, fine bedding, and foreign gold coins. The yeoman Richard Jefferies, whose will was proved in 1636, left a great Bible and a turquoise ring among his bequests.



Duntisbourne House in 1827

During the 18th century the two manors were united by Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell, from whom they passed to his grandson Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, 2nd earl of Radnor, and the manors were purchased early in the 19th century by Dr Matthew Baillie, a morbid anatomist and physician to George III. His son, William Hunter Baillie, succeeded his father in 1823 and would go on to hold the manor for the next 71 years, dying in

1894 aged 97. So long-lived was Baillie, he was survived by his son, also William Hunter Baillie, by only a few months, and the estate passed to his unmarried sister, Helen. The 1890s also brings us into contact with another notable parishioner, albeit only briefly, the self-styled 'Radical Parson', George Napier Whittingham, whose account of the parish presented a disparaging picture of the state of Duntisbourne Abbots at the end of the 19th century. An active Liberal campaigner in a Tory landscape, a supporter of the Disestablishment of the Church, and champion of the working man, he found himself frequently engaged in controversy with his conservative neighbours, often reported in the pages of the *Wilts. & Glos. Standard*. His description of life in the parish during the hard winter of 1892, recounting the ruinous state of the labourers' cottages, which he claimed let in the rain and snow, the vindictiveness of the highly popular squire, and the general lack of religion, all produced howls of indignation from his neighbours. Nevertheless, his presence was not wholly divisive, and he is credited with founding the village cricket club, and his wife with establishing the first Mothers' Union. Whittingham's professed desire to rid the Church of the taint of mammon resulted in charges of hypocrisy being laid against him, having acquired his place at Duntisbourne Abbots through the purchase of the patronage. Perhaps this charge weighed heavily against Whittingham, and he resigned the living within two years.

By the middle of the 20th century, many of the cottages which Whittingham had disparaged so heavily were being converted into superior residences, although the housing shortage of the time meant that several were shared by more than one family in 1951. Whilst agriculture remained the most important occupation in the village, the convenience of the village for major roads meant that an increasing number of residents travelled to Cirencester and Gloucester every day for employment. Like elsewhere in the Cotswolds, this trend towards dormitory status has continued, and the decades since the Second World War has seen a quiet transformation of the society of these villages. In 2001 the census found that parishioners travelled an average of 17 miles a day for work. Agriculture remained the most important economic sector in the parish, with almost a quarter of all local businesses in Duntisbourne Abbots engaged in some way with agriculture in

2017, but it was no longer a significant employer of local people. Instead, the principal employment sector was hospitality, providing more than a quarter of all jobs in 2017. In the same year almost three-fifths of working residents were employed in managerial or professional roles, and another 15 per cent in skilled trades, a very different profile than one that would have been presented less than a century earlier.

With Duntisbourne Abbots complete, my focus will turn to the remaining few sections of the history of Duntisbourne Rouse, which brings with it the pleasing prospect of enjoying the hospitality of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, the lords of the manor since the early 16th century. Following the completion of Duntisbourne Rouse, there will only be two more parishes to research, Coates and Preston, after which I will join colleagues in the important work of revising our completed texts and

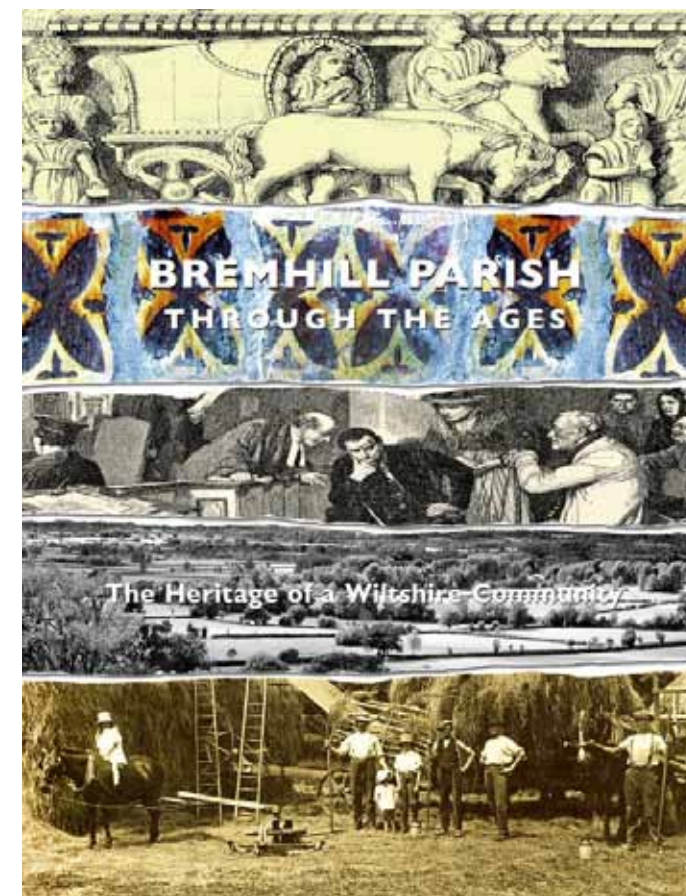


From Isaac Taylor's map of Gloucestershire 1777

preparing them for publication in our long-awaited red book, the prospect of which now seems quite close indeed. This progress is in no small part to the encouragement we have received our supporters in and around Cirencester, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Earl and Countess Bathurst on behalf of myself and my wife for welcoming us so graciously into their home last Autumn for the fundraising event in support of our work. It was wonderful to be able to meet so many local residents and to see their enthusiasm for the VCH.

Alex Craven

An update from across the border: VCH Wiltshire



After a three-year community history project run by the Bremhill Parish History Group (BPHG) and supported by Wiltshire VCH, a new history book on Bremhill parish was launched on December 11. The lavishly illustrated book incorporates the research, writing and oral testimonies of dozens of contributors alongside VCH contributing editor Louise Ryland-Epton, who compiled the book. It was edited by Wiltshire VCH consultant editor John Chandler and former Penguin editor Eleo Carson and designed and produced by John Harris from the BPHG. The launch was accompanied by a parish-based history festival followed by a children's festival the next day. The book is available from www.bremhillparishhistory.com

Louise Ryland-Epton

Help build the best local history ever!

Are you looking for a rewarding role in a nation-wide project with a local focus? The Victoria County History (VCH) is a vast, diverse and lively community of historians, researchers and local groups, working on county histories across England. Here in Gloucestershire, the work is taken forward by a local charity, the Gloucestershire County History Trust.

Trustees have the satisfaction of helping to build an enduring legacy – a well-researched and authoritative local history for every place and parish in the county, a rich mine of information that's available to all. Well over half of Gloucestershire is now researched and published; we're currently working on three multi-year projects centred on Cirencester, on Cheltenham, and on the Chipping Sodbury area. We operate by raising the funds to engage professional freelance historians, assisted by local volunteers. Our website shows what has been achieved so far, and future milestones. To keep the three projects moving, and prepare the way ahead, we are looking to bring in new trustees.

We particularly seek active people with skills and experience (or the potential to develop) in

- General administration, website maintenance, communications, publicity
- Fundraising and development (grant applications, building a supporter base, occasional events)
- Working with volunteers
- Editing for publication

Most of the executive work of trustees – aimed at delivering results under one or more of the

above headings – is managed through email and personal contact, governed through quarterly formal meetings, either in Gloucester or virtual (about two hours on a weekday). Your overall time commitment will vary according to which rôles or functions you feel suited to, and we can offer support and induction as appropriate. While some expenses are reimbursable, these are voluntary positions, and trustees carry the usual responsibilities that go with being a registered charity.

This is a great opportunity to contribute to a unique national project, and to become part of a friendly team with a shared vision. If you or someone you know might be interested in learning more, please get in touch for a chat.

Please contact Nick Kingsley – 01275 542263.
Gloucester County History Trust CIO, Regd Charity
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Gloucestershire County History Trust

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