

# FoGA newsletter Autumn 2023

## From the Chair of the Friends

Welcome to the Autumn 2023 edition of the Friends' newsletter.

My sincere thanks to John Putley for editing and producing this edition (and to Aimee Lewis for distributing the previous one).

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Friends. Originally formed at a time when there was a serious national threat to archive funding, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone who over the years has supported the Friends with their subscriptions, and donations of money and time.

Today statutory funding for county archives is more secure than it was 30 years ago but the Friends continue to make a significant contribution to the preservation of Gloucestershire's documentary heritage, by supplementing statutory funding, raising money for specific projects such as the recent Archives' refurbishment and the Heritage Hub garden (see Caroline Meller's article below), and by enabling the Archives to purchase documents which it would otherwise not have the resources to do.

The Friends' talks and outings have also enabled countless members living in Gloucestershire to learn more about their local history and the documents in which that history is preserved for posterity.

Thank you to all those who have sustained the work of the Friends over the past years, and continue to do so today, and who have thereby helped Gloucestershire Archives flourish and become an outstanding exemplar of best practice among the county archives of Britain.



Clive Andrews

Chair

# 'Gloucester Observed,' a talk by Tony Conder

*Caroline Meller*

This event was a new venture for the Friends whereby we teamed up with Gloucestershire Family History Society, to listen and learn more about Tony's research into diaries archived at the Hub. There are about 1,000 volumes of diaries connected to the county, written by 50 individuals or families. Indeed, typing 'diary' into the Glos. Archives catalogue search engine produces 1700 results, a list which makes interesting reading in its own right, covering as it does a multitude of eras and subjects. Tony was keen to point out that his research could not possibly take into account all the information contained within these diaries, but he hoped to highlight the wealth of information that can be found within all of them by focussing on just a select few.

Some of us perhaps keep a diary throughout our own lifetime but Tony discovered that the Lloyd Baker family who lived at Hardwick, and at Stouts Hill, near Uley, kept a succession of diaries for 200 years. Day to day life was recorded by generation after generation of the Lloyd Bakers, an absolute godsend to any social historian and providing a particular insight into life within those areas of Gloucestershire. A set of letters which formed a diary of sorts were written by Agnes Witts. It was her son, Francis, who would go on to write '*The Diary of a Cotswold Parson*,' reckoned to be upwards of two million words in its original form, and later published in a shortened format by Alan Sutton in 1978 before being reproduced many times over.

Diaries are by their nature a personal venture and the character of the writer, their interests, and concerns naturally come to the fore. In the case of Francis Witts, his writings reflected an interest in county administration, crime and punishment and early Victorian life throughout the county as well as within the city of Gloucester. Another diarist, John Dearman Birchall of Upton St Leonards, shone a light on what it was like to live in the late Victorian period. Between the two of them, these men provided a decade-by-decade account of life as they saw it throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Tony's talk was expertly delivered, providing a fascinating insight which was presented appropriately in the style of a power-point book. His talk proved how important it is to preserve diaries so that it enables those fortunate enough to have ancestors from Gloucestershire to broaden their understanding of what life was like within the county at a particular moment in time, or better still, to actually discover a reference to their kin.

This event, focussing as it did on diaries, was a great opportunity to bring two important groups, the Friends of Gloucestershire Archives and Gloucestershire Family History Society, both with strong links to the archives together, and the success of this has encouraged the organisers to look for similar opportunities in the future.

## The Gloucestershire Heritage Hub Garden Project

It all began with enormous rolls of brown paper laid out upon the soil. The initial idea, put forward at the FoGA committee meeting held in August 2019, had come to fruition just two months later. The lack of gardening expertise led to the 'Garden on a Roll' order to ensure that the right plants would be chosen for the right aspect (north east and north west) and soil type (fine sandy loam). Additional plants were then donated by keen gardening friends with connections to the archives. Once completed, the planting created a soft contrast to the austere red brick, providing a welcome sight for visitors as well as passers-by. It only remained at the time for a plaque to be put in position for the project to come to a gratifying conclusion.

As we all know, however, plants are forever changing, vying for space and competing with unexpected visitors otherwise known as weeds. Jonathan Hoad, an archive volunteer, stepped forward during the pandemic to pluck out the invaders to ensure the shrub border continued to look its best. It was noted at the October 2022 committee meeting that the border was 'seen as a sign of hope and normality during the uncertainty of the pandemic.' The wonderful display of plants at that time was captured on camera by a local resident, Phil King.

Jonathan's departure from the archives last summer meant that sadly the shrub border was forced to take care of itself. The drought certainly slowed down the amount of growth, both wanted and unwanted, but the border gradually took on a faint air of neglect. What was needed was a volunteer with a passion



for hacking and so Caroline Meller, secretary for the Friends, gamely stepped forward. By giving the border some attention just once a month, order is slowly being restored. The renovation of the plaque, found lurking amongst the shrubs, has now been given pride of place within the border, highlighting the continued support the Friends give to the archives.

This garden project is an ongoing, evolving entity. If you have a plant that you think will enhance what is already within the border or, would like to volunteer to help maintain the garden, then please contact Caroline at [cmbmeller@gmail.com](mailto:cmbmeller@gmail.com)

# Gloucestershire Archives Collections Management – new accessions

*Max Parkin*

We've been as busy as ever in the Collections Management Team, with new accessions coming in thick and fast! We took in an extensive collection of business records from Halls & Keck Ltd, a construction and architects organisation, who built much of Gloucester over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including parts of Kingsholm Stadium (see image 1).



Image 1 – Ref.No D16375/7/1



As part of an ongoing project, we are actively collecting photographs depicting lockdown in the county, and have thus far taken in 18 new accessions, consisting of over 800 photos, and they are very nostalgic. We had forgotten the positive community spirit that developed during the pandemic! (see image 2).



Image 2 Ref.No D15340/19/5

Other notable accessions include an accrual to Black and White Motorways, the coach company from Cheltenham (see image 3) and the charter for the Rotary Club of Gloucester (see image 4).



Image 3 – Ref.No D8552



Image 4 – Acc.No 16430 (Ref D5674)

# FoGA Mystery Tour- FoGA members pretend to be Gloucester rugby players!

*Clive Andrews*

On Sunday 25 June members of the Friends and their guests waited at the roadside for the coach that would take them on their annual mystery tour. The coach came into sight, but it was not what they expected. This was no ordinary coach but one painted in Gloucester Rugby's livery and emblazoned with their logo, the luxury vehicle used to transport the famous Cherry and Whites to away games. Here was a treat even as the tour started.

At various stopping points onlookers spotted the coach. They watched and waited for big burly rugby players to descend, perhaps hoping for an autograph, but showed some surprise when a group consisting mainly of senior citizens clambered slowly down the steps.



The coach headed to south Wales where the first stop was Caerwent, a town founded by the Romans and built to much the same design as Gloucester. Whereas Roman Gloucester has been built over by countless generations, the remains buried under later buildings, in Caerwent the foundations of Roman buildings are clearly visible, houses, shops, the forum and even a basilica.



The second stop was Cowbridge (with more surprised onlookers when the coach arrived) where the Friends enjoyed lunch in cafes and pubs but also explored the medieval layout of the town, discovered a wonderful physic garden, and enjoyed seeing a variety of delightful town houses.

The last stop was Llantwit Major. The object of the visit was to explore the magnificent church dedicated to St Illtud, but a short wait was necessary as a wedding was taking place. Fortunately, one of the local pubs was holding a beer festival, which kept some members pleasantly entertained. The church itself is a breathtaking edifice, perhaps as long as the nave and quire of Gloucester Cathedral. In effect it is three churches of different eras joined together in one glorious building, with intriguing wall paintings and monuments. It sits on the site of a monastic school founded by Illtud about 500 AD and claims to be Britain's oldest seat of learning. A once derelict galilee chapel, recently restored, houses an impressive collection of large inscribed Celtic stones, the earliest dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century.

A Roman town, a physic garden and a church which played a part in the development of Welsh Christianity – all these were within easy distance of Gloucestershire yet virtually no one on the tour had ever been to them before. Our thanks go to Dr John Chandler who organised the tour and introduced them to members. John's research and meticulous planning provided the Friends with a most memorable, and enjoyable, mystery tour.

## Dates for the diary

### The Friends' Annual General Meeting

will be on **Thursday 12 October** at **4pm** at the **Heritage Hub**. Agendas for the meeting are being sent to members.

## Introducing Gloucestershire Archives next major project: the GREEN Pledge

*Heather Forbes*

We recently celebrated the award of a £246,800 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help record the county's environmental legacy and drive forward climate action.

Our project aims to encourage further environmental action by exploring climate change and involving people in green heritage activities.

It comes under the Heritage Fund's Dynamic Collections programme, which will see the county's unique environmental archives sorted, catalogued and used for various events and activities involving the public, including:

- Public workshops with young people and environmental groups to help collect new environmental archives and oral histories, including from key environmentalists to fill gaps and provide a fuller record for future generations.
- An online and travelling exhibition called 'Green Gloucestershire – Our Past, Our Future'.
- Events hosted at the Heritage Hub in Gloucester as well as inside libraries, schools, community venues and online, to help raise awareness of environmental sustainability.
- Volunteer programme sorting and listing significant environmental map collections.
- Cataloguing existing environmental records held at Gloucestershire Archives including the Environment Agency and Severn Trent collections as well as many smaller collections.
- Training for new archives apprentice to produce guides and toolkits to unlock environmental archives for diverse audiences.
- Environmental audit of Gloucestershire Heritage Hub to reduce its carbon footprint, by adding solar panels and reducing waste and consumption of water, gas and electricity.
- Public pledge campaign with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to reduce carbon footprints.

We interviewed for the project manager, project officer and project archivist in early September 2023 and will start to advertise volunteering opportunities and events once we have the new team in place. The project is due to run until December 2025. And if you wondered why GREEN is in capitals? Getting Records Everywhere Environmentally Noticed... We look forward to seeing Friends get involved with the opportunities that will emerge, and helping us promote the importance of archives.

## Victoria County History (VCH) Local History Research Workshops

*John Chandler*

I reported in the previous newsletter on the success of our series of Tuesday morning workshops at the Heritage Hub, which was then nearing completion. The last session took place on 14 March, and numbers held up to the end. We were very gratified by the comments we received on the feedback forms which we circulated to participants, and I was able to write a report summarising them, which circulated to the University of the West of England, the VCH central office, the archivists at the Hub and of course to the lecturers. There were very many complimentary remarks, but also some suggestions for changes,



additions, and improvements, and I am trying to take these all on board, because..... We are planning to repeat the series, on alternate Thursday mornings this time, and we have dates booked in the Dunrossil Centre at the Hub. The first will be on 19 October, then fortnightly to 14 December, and resuming on 11 January and running to the final session on 7 March. Over the next few weeks, I shall be working out the syllabus, contacting all the lecturers and publicising the course as widely as possible. If you are interested in coming to all of them, or just to the ones you missed first time round, do please look out for further publicity and a syllabus once it is all worked out, or contact the Hub.



## Hobnob Press – new Gloucestershire books

*John Chandler*

Although Hobnob Press has not published any Gloucestershire titles so far this year, we have three quite imminent titles for you look out for.

Following the success last Christmas of his *Walking through the History of Bishop's Cleeve*, David Aldred is revising and expanding his *Cleeve Hill: the history of the common and its people*.

The Gloucester Rugby Heritage team are putting the finishing touches to the last of their five volumes charting every aspect of Gloucester Rugby's history. This one, to be published to coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, will be the *Club* book, tracing year by year (and with a team photograph each year) the results of every club game, with the names of the players who scored points in each. An amazing achievement!

The third, edited by Anthea Jones, is an edition of an almost forgotten 17<sup>th</sup>-century traveller, Thomas Baskerville, whose journeys took him all over England, but in particular he included a great deal of fascinating and sometimes amusing information about Gloucestershire.

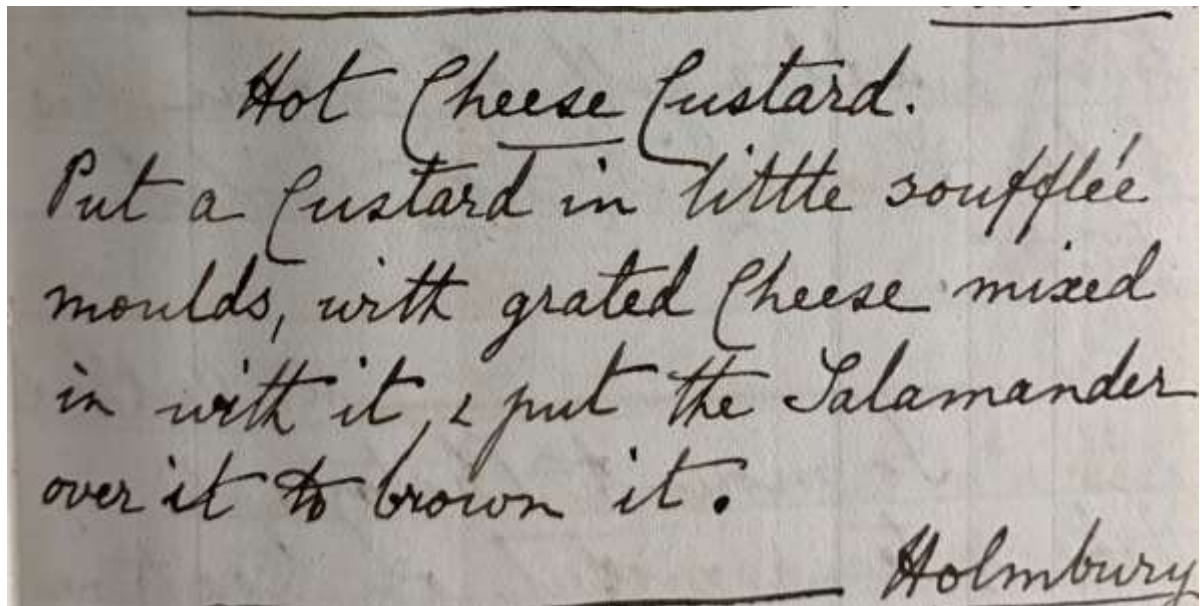
## GHH Saturday Events

Future Saturday events at the Hub are as follows:

### **Knife, fork and spoon - local food from the past to the current day**

Do you know your single from double Gloucester? A Little Herbert from an Ashmead's Kernel? Squab pie from a squab? If not, this event, a look at local foods in the country through history, will be for you! As a canapé we give you Hot Cheese Custard from the Codrington Family's archive (D1610/E146)!

7 October 2023 1pm-4pm



**Regiment and Rhyme - a focus on the First World War in association with the Soldiers of Gloucester Museum**

For Remembrance month – speakers to be finalised.

4 November 2023 1pm-4pm

**Stay on track! A special focus on trains, railways and stations**

After last year's Saturday event 'Anything that moves!' on transport was so successful, we've decided to split it into separate themes. This month we will be celebrating the county's wonderful railway history & heritage. Speakers have yet to be finalised, but the keynote speaker will be Ian Pope.

Saturday 2 December 2023 1pm-4pm

Don't forget the Secrets Revealed Online Talk series on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month – you can get details from [www.heritagehub.org.uk/events](http://www.heritagehub.org.uk/events)

## Bringing the County to you: An Archive's A-Z of Gloucestershire

*John Putley*

This edition we are looking at the letter 'B' and it's a bumper letter as there are four places for your delectation and amusement: Badminton, Bibury, Bishops Cleeve and Brockworth. The reason for choosing these instead of the many other places beginning with 'B' was simply that these were all images that we had to had digitised on our files.

## B is for Badminton



This photograph (GA Ref.No: GPS/32/15) shows one of Gloucestershire's great country houses: Badminton House, home to the Duke & Duchess of Beaufort. This is the west side (the main frontage is the north side to the left) with estate offices on the right and the Dairy & Laundry Pavilion on the left.

Large county houses could generate as many as 4,000 items per week that required laundering and it was an arduous task that usually started on Monday and continued all week. Laundry maids would do the work, while the housekeeper would keep track of it all and record clothing needing repair or replacement. At Badminton, the 1881 census reveals 3 laundry maids but by 1901 there were 4 laundry staff; 2 laundry maids and 2 laundresses (sadly the 1911 census doesn't give the job details of the house's domestic servants). The laundry would have had a large 'copper' for boiling water and the high roof line of the building suggests there was airing racks or an airing loft. Water for washing probably came from underground tanks that collected rainwater from the main house, which was the usual method employed in great country houses.

The photograph was taken from the 'Drying & bleaching grounds' – a flat area about half the size of a football pitch. Where possible laundry was almost always dried in the open air – laid flat on grass or on wooden racks – and such grounds were usually situated close the main house – mostly to prevent items from disappearing due to opportunistic light fingers!

The lake in the foreground isn't ornamental but is in fact a horse-pond – where horses could drink and have their legs washed. The stables are behind the office building on the right but there was direct access to the pond where a ramp – the edge of which is just visible bottom centre – was built on the photographer's side to allow horses to enter and leave the pond.

## B is for Bibury



This photograph (GA Ref.No: GPS/44/121) shows Arlington Row at Bibury – easily one of the most famous places in the county and probably one of the most iconic and heavily photographed places in the whole of England!

Surprisingly little is known about origins of the row. It was probably built sometime in the late 1300s as a monastic wool store by the Augustinian canons at Osney in Oxfordshire who owned land in the parish and fishing rights in the Coln. What is known is that it was originally a single range with an open roof (a roof with its rafters visible from beneath, i.e., with no ceiling). Sometime in the late 1600s or early 1700s this building was converted into seven small cottages with attics which were then let for tenant weavers – who could utilise water flowing along the mill leat in front of the cottages to wash fleeces and the cloth they produced. At some point extra cottages were added to both ends of the Row.

In the late 1920's the row was virtually derelict when Henry Ford allegedly tried to buy it and ship it back to the USA to an open-air museum. The Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Trust managed to block this plan and in 1928, the row was bought and restored by the Royal Society of Arts for the sum of £1,750. In 1930, they handed the deeds to the archaeological trust who held them until 1949 when the row was transferred to the National Trust who still owns it today.

This view was taken around 1890 has some of the residents posing outside the cottages although today, you'll mostly see tourists here. On the left of the picture, you can see the mill leat and the edge of Rack Isle, an ancient water meadow so called because wool and cloth were once hung out to dry on racks there after it had been washed in the river. Rack Isle was given to the National Trust in 1956 and is maintained as a nature reserve. A survey in 2016 recorded grass snakes, frogs, shrews and water voles, four-spotted chaser

dragonflies, damselflies (demoiselle and azure species) as well as wildflowers such as the southern marsh orchid and ragged robin – making it a great addition to Bibury’s biodiversity.

## B is for Bishops Cleeve



This photograph of Bishops Cleeve (GA Ref.No: GPS/46/1) is believed to have been taken around 1894. It shows a busy scene in Church Road looking roughly west with the photographer seemingly standing in what was once a garden on the corner of Church Approach (the exact spot is now a closed bank). While the area has changed almost beyond recognition perhaps surprisingly the road layout hasn’t altered greatly. Church Road still exists and the entrance way by the pub is now the turning that leads into the carpark for the shopping precinct. It’s an interesting aspect when looking at old maps for very often road junctions remain fixed through time despite everything else around them changing and it’s one way of pinpointing places so, if you’re not sure – look at the roads!

In the centre of the photograph is The Old Elm Tree beer house, which was owned for many years by William Gilder although the 1897 Kelly’s Directory suggests it was run by his wife, Ellen. The cart on the right is a box cart and has a wooden cask on the back, either a barrel or churn on it. If it is a milk churn, it’s not a purpose-built milk-cart as these had a drop-down step at the back to allow the milk man to hand out milk. Both churns and barrels were made by coopers which was a highly skilled profession. The casks had to fit tightly to carry liquids or solids but could also be disassembled after use to save space. Numerous goods were carried in barrels including oil, molasses, flour, and apples. In 1897 the Kelly’s



Directory for Gloucestershire gives around 20 coopers working in the county, including one in Bishops Cleeve; Jesse Minett, whose work might very well be visible in the cart!

## B is for Brockworth



This fantastic image – one of my absolute favourites – is from the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1932 edition of the *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic* and shows British Imperial Airways Handley Page H.P.45 G-AAXC *Heracles* coming into land at Brockworth Aerodrome on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August. Beautifully elegant, yet somehow ungainly, *Heracles* was one of eight H.P.42/H.P.45 aircraft that at the time were the largest airliners in the world capable of carrying 38 passengers in high comfort over 500 miles at 100mph! They were the latest word in luxury, design, and speed, quickly becoming the darlings of royalty, celebrities and the well-to-do. Companies wanted to use them to promote their products and the fashion industry posed models around it while people who had never flown could even book special scenic ‘afternoon tea’ flights around London, albeit at a fairly hefty price!

This H.P.45 came to Gloucestershire by chance for it was on a private charter from Croydon Aerodrome with 36 drama critics going to the Malvern Festival to see the premier of George Bernard Shaw’s play ‘*Too good to be true.*’ Brockworth (the newly acquired home of the Gloster Aircraft Company) was the nearest suitable landing site to the festival and *Heracles* touched down at around 1.15pm.

The critics went on to Malvern by road and in the meantime, the airline had arranged a joy-ride flight for local civic dignitaries. This was a time when aircraft manufacturers and aviation companies were trying to promote commercial aviation and convince local authorities that building airdromes in their area was a good idea. In the event, it seemed to

have been successful for just four years later, in 1936, the joint Councils of Cheltenham and Gloucester purchased land on the east side of the Gloucester-Cheltenham Road to build an aerodrome (the present Gloucestershire Airport).

After the civic dignitaries had been flown, *Heracles* began making short flights for the public – who were now gathering in their hundreds. These flights had been advertised at Thomas Cook in Gloucester (see picture below) and were all pre-booked at a cost 10s/6d (about a day's wages for a skilled tradesman). The *Gloucester Journal* reported that it was an ideal day for flying, with little wind and that the aircraft '*flew as high as 2,000 feet!*' Eventually the critics returned to Brockworth (they panned Shaw's play) and G-AACX departed to return to Croydon.



*Gloucestershire Archives JR14.18GS*

As an H.P.45, *Heracles* was optimised for Imperial Airways' European services and so most of her flights were from Croydon to Paris, Amsterdam, Guernsey, Brussels, Zurich, and Cologne (the sister H.P.42's were configured for Imperial Airways' long-range Eastern routes – Egypt, India and South Africa). *Heracles* went on to serve Imperial Airways well – by 1937 she had flown 1 million miles in 10,200 hours of flying and had carried around 80,000 passengers.

At the start of WW2, *Heracles* and the rest of the H.P.42/45 fleet were all taken into RAF service to act as transport aircraft in No. 271 Squadron. *Heracles* end came in March 1940 when she was damaged beyond repair in a severe gale at Whitchurch Airport, Bristol, after her sister, G-AAUD *Hanno*, was blown into her. Since then, bigger, and faster aircraft have landed in Gloucestershire – notably G-AAXC's namesake a C-130 Hercules (one of which landed at Staverton in 1985) and several redundant 747 Jumbo jets at Kemble – but none have been quite so elegant or luxurious! None of the H.P.42/45s survived WW2 but, there are currently plans to build an exact replica and while it will be built to an airworthy condition and fly, various safety regulations will sadly prevent the carriage of paying passengers – it would still be a sight to see though!