



Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter

Chairman's message

Travelling out of town on the 'F' bus, I reflected on how lovely the trees looked and how lucky we are to have them lining Leckhampton Road. I always look forward to the leaves slowly appearing in Spring and the wonderful colours of Autumn. In Eric and Alan's book, *'Leckhampton in Old Photos'*, photographs show the road with the newly planted trees in 1900 and later in the 1930s when they had grown. Over a hundred years on we still are enjoying their shade and colour. Looking at the other pictures gave me memories of the Malvern Inn and the Ladies' College Sanatorium, whose matron attended St Peter's church when I was growing up.

On a hot Saturday afternoon in August I found myself at The Quays in Gloucester. It was very busy as a Food Festival was being held there so I sought refuge in The Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum. I never cease to feel proud of the men who gave their lives for our country or were injured during warfare. There are pictures and artefacts showing the conditions they lived in including the army barracks and married living quarters. Please do visit if you have not already - I already have another visit on the cards! (for more information visit www.soldiersofglos.com)

We have arranged a wide and varied programme for you this year. Talks begin again on September 21st at 19.30 at The Cottages Church Road with Fiona Mead - 'What Victorian School Logbooks show us about social History'. We have decided to include the quiz again as it was so



Photos: Leckhampton Road with newly planted trees in 1900 and later in the 1930s when they had grown. From *'Leckhampton in Old Photos'* by Alan Gill and Eric Miller

successful last year (I learnt so much!). I know it is very near Christmas on 21st December but do leave your preparations, come and taste some Christmas fare and pit your wits against others!

Sue Marlow, Chairman

Welcome new members!



We are very pleased to have recently welcomed several new members and hope that they will find our talks and newsletter informative and interesting. For all members, membership renewals are due this month. Forms are enclosed with this edition of Smoke Signal. We would be grateful if you could please take 5 minutes to complete and return the form with your membership payment. The details on the form are useful in ensuring our records are up to date. Thank you.



Members' Research:

The truth about Dr Boisragon, Cheltenham's eminent physician

By Peter McDade

Dr Henry Charles Boisragon, an eminent physician of Cheltenham in the early nineteenth century, died as a grand old man in 1852 some 15 years into the reign of Queen Victoria. On his death, instead of reporting the true facts - that Dr Boisragon had made his fortune during the reigns of George IV and William IV (considered to be lampoonable and foolish monarchs) - his obituary in the *Examiner* on 2nd June 1852 made him out to have been at the height of his powers 'in the good old days when George the Third was King.'

During the King's one and only visit to Cheltenham in 1788, the Doctor's residence 'was daily besieged with crowds of patients' the obituary says – even though Dr Boisragon was somewhere between 10 and 13 at the time and living elsewhere. Did no-one think to do the sums?

The attractive legend can be explained, I think, by the urge to link Dr Boisragon with the solid and respectable George III, and it was taken up by later historians – notably by Arthur Bell in his book *'Pleasure Town'* (1981) which quotes the *Examiner* obituary directly, and in Aylwin Sampson's *'Laid out with taste and judgement – the Park and its environs in Cheltenham'* (2010) on page 95 where Dr Boisragon, a resident of Segrave Villas, now Mercian Court at 46 Park Place, is described as 'Physician Extraordinary to George III'.

Since one's research can often run in reverse order to the chronology of events, it was curious to read Aylwin Sampson first, then Arthur Bell, and finally to find the *Examiner* obituary in the archive at Cheltenham library.

It gave me pause to wonder at what point the English newspaper obituary became a carefully checked and worded account of a person's life, and not a thing that could be taken over by airy fancy. There seems to be a parallel in the realm of archaeological excavation, where, at some point, the idea of the treasure hunt was replaced by a scrupulous attention to the findings on the site, whether they were glamorous or not.



Photo: Mercian Court, then known as Segrave Villas

Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 21 September, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages: Fiona Mead – What can Victorian school logbooks tell us about local social history?

Wednesday 19 October, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages: Dr. Simon Draper – The Victoria County History of Gloucestershire and Writing a Parish History.

Wednesday 16 November, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages: Alan Pilbeam – Old Gloucestershire Paths

Please be reminded that LLHS meetings take place on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Glebe Cottages (next to St Peter's Church) from September through to May each year.

Women of Cheltenham

Last month the Cheltenham Local History Society held its summer event at St Andrew's Church. The topic was 'Women of Cheltenham'. Escorted walks went to locations associated with women writers and (led by Neela Mann) with women of Cheltenham in the First World War. Numerous illustrated displays had been prepared by members of the Society, giving a brief account of the person's life and importance.

My own contribution was on three ladies who had connections with Leckhampton too: Frances Duberly, Josephine Butler and Marianne Colmore. If you wonder why I chose them, you will see their names in my article *Eminent Cheltonians and their Memorials at Leckhampton* (in *Research Bulletin* No 4). But if you'd like to see the actual display, it will be on show in the Family and Local Studies Centre behind the Main Library in Cheltenham from 3 January to 13 February 2017. The other displays will have their turn too during the next few months, so if you haven't already done so why not venture into that Aladdin's Cave.

Eric Miller, Co-ordinator of Research



Marianne Colmore, the Belle of Cheltenham.
Detail from portrait miniature, CAGM.

Quiz

Are these Leckhampton's smallest shop and house? Can you identify where they are?



The mystery of 'Allenfield'

by Amy Woolacott

When I moved into Arden Road in 1975, my coal merchant always wrote 'Allenfield' on the delivery note. I asked him why and he said that Allenfield was an old name for this area - previously allotments. On the Shurdington Road almost opposite the track to the allotments there is a house named 'Allencroft'. From a dictionary of historic rural terms, *allen* is Old Saxon for land/grassland lately 'broken' (ploughed); *croft* is a small enclosure. In 1818, a road was planned linking Cheltenham to Stroud avoiding Leckhampton Hill (GROm66). Shurdington Road was cut in 1819 and opened to Painswick in 1823, as a toll-road; 9d for wheeled traffic, less for horse and rider.



The Heritage Open Days will be held during 8 – 11 September celebrating 300 years since the discovery of mineral waters – more information is available at:
<http://www.visitcheltenham.com/whats-on/cheltenham-heritage-open-days-p1582603>

Contributions for Smoke Signal are welcome

Our Smoke Signal newsletter is written by the members for the members and relies on members' contributions. Please do send any articles, no matter how short, to the editor at julieannsharpe@gmail.com. Thank you.

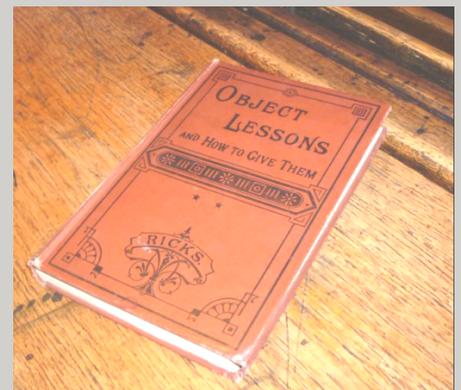
Don't miss the next talk on Wednesday 21st September

*The whole truth? Social history from
Victorian school logbooks.*

with Fiona Mead

School log books which were introduced by law in 1862 contain a surprising amount of information of value to the social historian.

They were meant to follow a standard format but in fact vary tremendously depending on the interests of the head teacher. This talk shows how much useful information can be gleaned from the entries about school and family life, weather conditions, health and discipline, teaching methods and indeed educational policy. Although some entries are dry and boring, the majority give a good idea of life in the latter part of the 19th century, and the talk gives numerous examples of entries from local village schools, all informative and many unintentionally amusing.



Contact Us

Webmaster, Mike Rigby via website:
www.llhs.org.uk

Editor, Julie Sharpe, via email at:
julieannsharpe@gmail.com

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