



Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter

Chairman's Message

Strange and Uncertain Times

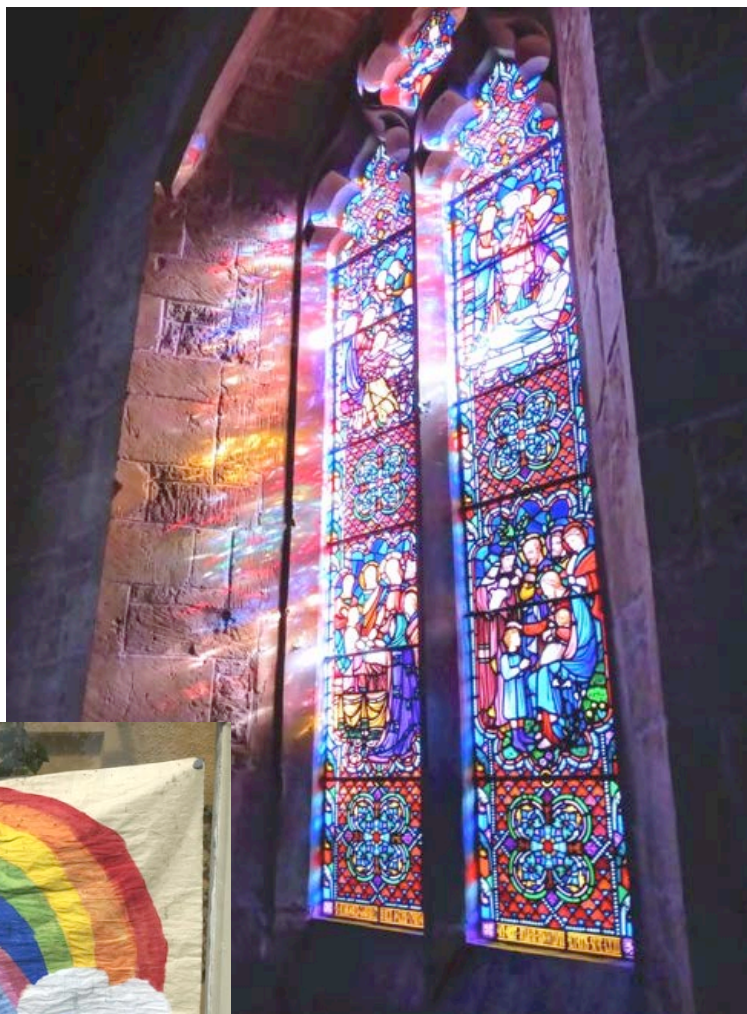
Welcome to your latest edition of Smoke Signal. In these strange and uncertain times, the committee has been working hard behind the scenes for you all. We have had some Zoom meetings, which are very strange and very odd to chair. Recently we have social distanced in a garden and on one occasion we were all holding up umbrellas - I should have taken a picture for the archives! After talking to the Rev Gary Grady, the priest at St Peter's church, and much discussion amongst ourselves, the committee has decided not to hold meetings in the cottages until at least January 2021 and we will review the situation then.

We discussed whether to have lectures by Zoom but we felt this was not practical at this stage. Reading on you will find what we have laid on for all members instead.

We felt we needed to have the AGM, originally scheduled for May 2020, with members present so we will hold it during the first meeting when we return to the cottages.

I am delighted to report that everyone remains in post to help the Society see a way through this time. At the AGM in May 2021, we will be looking for a new Membership Secretary. Amy has done great work fulfilling this role but would like to stand down. I too have expressed an intention to stand down after five years or so as Chairman. However, I have said I will not relinquish the post until we are all back to normal so this will probably be at the AGM in May 2022. I wish you all to keep safe and well and I am looking forward to seeing you all again next year.

Sue Marlow, Chairman



*Above: One of the earliest stained-glass windows at St Peter's Church, Leckhampton.
Left: A Leckhampton window rainbow*



New Research Bulletin No. 5

The Society's latest Research Bulletin is now available to purchase, with concessionary rates for LLHS members. Its 56 pages include a major study of Leckhampton's stonework, plus a varied selection of articles covering events and artefacts ranging from the 16th to the 20th centuries. Members will find plenty to interest, inform and even entertain, as well as a wealth of material to prompt further research. An order form is included with this edition of Smoke Signal or can be downloaded from the LLHS website.

The Giffard Effigies in Leckhampton Church

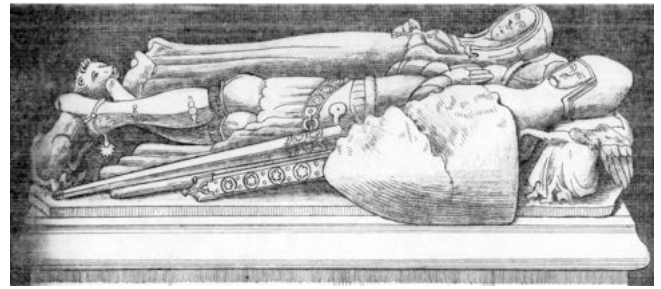
By Eric Miller

The Giffard effigies in Leckhampton Church are said by Alan Brooks in *Pevsner's Guide* to be 'among the best preserved and most delightful in the county'. Their details have been described in articles by Professor John Middleton and Albert Hartshorne in the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* (in 1880 and 1902) and also by Ida Roper in her *Monumental Effigies of Gloucestershire* (1930). These authorities remark that the figures were at one time decorated with paint, all trace of which has since disappeared. Hartshorne goes on to say that the knight was 'honoured in a coloured plate ... in Hefner's beautiful *Trachten*'.

The book referred to, whose full title is *Trachten des Christlichen Mittelalters (Medieval Christian Costumes)* by Jakob Heinrich von Hefner-Alteneck, was published in three volumes in several editions from 1840 onwards and is extremely rare. However, I have been able to download digitised versions. One edition contains a monochrome line drawing of the subject, but the other must be the 'beautifully illustrated' version, as described above.

The artist was named by Hefner as one Robert Pearsall of Willsbridge (near Bristol). He was a gentleman of leisure, a musician who helped found the Bristol Madrigal Society (now the Bristol Chamber Choir), and he was also an antiquarian with an artistic talent. In 1825 he left the family home at Willsbridge and went to live abroad, first in Germany and finally in Switzerland, where he bought and restored a ruined castle, Wartensee on the shores of Lake Constance. During this time he must have met and discussed the subject of mediaeval costume with Jakob Hefner. He made several return visits to this country between 1836 and 1850, and on one of these occasions he would have been able to visit Leckhampton and make a drawing of the effigies (as well as one of Sir Guy Bryan in Tewkesbury Abbey). It is tempting to think that he might have stayed overnight with Canon Trye at Leckhampton Court.

Some details in the drawing are lightly indicated, for example on the knight's shield and tunic. The accompanying text describes the knight's costume in great detail, in particular the tunic and shield, which were embellished with ten red roundels on a silver background (in heraldic terms *argent, ten roundels gules*). These characteristics are seen more clearly in the full-colour illustration (drawn by Hefner himself, with acknowledgment to Pearsall) and they are also evident in a very similar drawing from a French book published in 1847 – *Le Costume du Moyen Age* by André Volgin, which appears to have been inspired by Hefner's work. I am grateful to Bill Jehan for making this discovery; a framed copy of the illustration is kept in the church, on a window ledge near the effigies.



Pic 1: Engraving from *Views and Antiquities of the County of Gloucestershire* by Samuel Lysons (1791)



Pic 2: Illustration from Jakob von Hefner's *Trachten des Christlichen Mittelalters* (c.1840) – Plate 24. Drawn by Robert Pearsall

Pic 3: *Le Chevalier Giffard* from *Le Costume du Moyen Age* by André Volgin (1847)

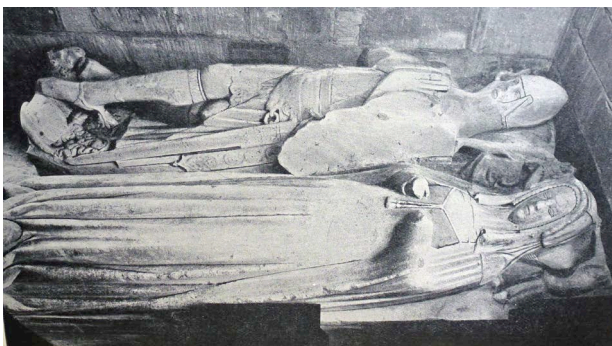


Pic 4: Illustration from a later edition of Hefner's *Trachten* (c.1854) – Plate 211

Pic 5: Engraving from an article by Albert Hartshorne in *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* No 4 (1879-80). The Artist's initials are dated 1863, i.e. before Middleton's alterations



Pic 6: Photograph of the effigies taken in about 1915, next to the south wall of the lady chapel, where they had been moved to in 1866. The figures had already been transposed.



Pic 7: The effigies in their present position. From *The Monumental Effigies of Gloucestershire and Bristol* by Ida M Roper (1931).

It is generally believed that the effigy of the knight portrayed one Sir John Giffard, who died in 1327 and who had inherited the manor of Leckhampton after the Contrariant Sir John Giffard, of Brimpsfield, had been hanged as a traitor in 1322. In both editions of the book it is a puzzling fact that Hefner identifies the knight as Sir Thomas Gifford (*sic*), and the caption beneath the drawing reads '*Ritter Th. Gifford von Leckhampton um 1360*'. He adds that the style of carving 'undoubtedly' dates from the second half of the 14th Century. The only Thomas Giffard living at that time would have been Sir Thomas of Twyford (Berkshire) (c.1344 – 1394), but the coat of arms illustrated was not appropriate for that line, and the heraldry may be a 'red herring', as we do not know what sources were used by Hefner or Pearsall. After all this time, without documentary evidence, all one can say is that the figures portray members of the Giffard family, who held the lordship of the manor in the early part of the 14th Century, at the time when the church was built.

Hefner stresses that the figures were among the few to have been decorated with paint right at the outset (*ursprünglich*) and whose colours were still intact. However, an illustration of the effigies in *Views and Antiquities of the County of Gloucestershire* Samuel Lysons, published in 1791, shows no hint of decoration on the knight's shield. Nor is it understood when and how any colour disappeared subsequently. One possibility is that the paint suffered from the elements when the church roof was removed for several months during alterations carried out in 1865-66. If it was a Victorian elaboration, there is no mention of it in Churchwardens' Accounts, which include such trivial details as payment of 8 pence in 1837 'for painting a cow on the vestry'!

In a nice touch the artist gave the lady back her hands, which had evidently been broken off even by the early 19th century. Observant readers will also notice that the knight is shown on his lady's left-hand side; today they are the other way round. This switch was made for some unaccountable reason when the effigies were moved into the lady chapel after the 1866 alterations. They have been moved three times altogether, most recently in 1921 when that chapel was reordered, and today they lie in the south-west corner of the church.

By Eric Miller

Future Programme

We have been keeping ourselves busy during this period of 'Isolation'; for me that was home schooling three children. However I was able to think beyond the phonics and algebra and think about whether we had the chance to meet again as a society; to wonder what a new Programme might look like. This year I contacted Caroline Alexander who is connected to Leckhampton by her late father, Douglas Keen. Douglas was the Editor and inspiration for shaping LadyBird Books, a familiar sight in all home libraries. He lived on Hall Road as a boy and was a pupil at Leckhampton School. 2021 is a census year, which caused me to look at finding a speaker who has background in using past census results to show us how these illuminate our ancestry. I am poised, when I'm given the go-ahead, to get some great new talks lined up. So expect a jam packed, exciting Programme when we get there!



Sarah McGowan, Programme Secretary

More Reminiscences from Mary Paterson

Mary has offered the following information on friends and family, after seeing the photo of performers in the 1909 Leckhampton pantomime (Smoke Signal 87, April 2019)



Louis Sharpe (moustachioed, back row 3rd from left) was half-Belgian; his mother, always known as Madame Sharpe, never lost her French accent. Louis was also involved in leading the Church Lads' Brigade. Louis and Willie Sharpe were brothers and lived next to each other on Leckhampton Hill – Louis and his wife Edith (née Marshall) in Craigside Cottage, and Willie and his wife in Ferncliff. The gardens were connected by a path

alongside the boundary wall to the hill. The paddock between them gave grazing to the pony (transport was by trap, not car, in those days). A snap of the pony, paddock and beech trees behind was a frequent subject for developing and printing at the chemist's shop where Maud Mares's husband Leslie worked. Maud was for some time housemaid at Craigside Cottage.

The Sharpe brothers were bootmakers. Their retail outlet was in The Promenade, subsequently taken over by Jones (on the corner of County Court Road). The Sharpes' leather warehouse was in County Court Road. It was a tall room, two storeys high, lit by a glass ceiling, no windows on walls, which gave space for full-size leather hides to be stretched out, one on each wall. A narrow head-height shelf along the walls was where the lasts were kept, some for general use but some individualised. Indian Army personnel would send for a new pair of boots; there are tales of men meeting in a jungle camp and exclaiming 'I see by the style of your toe-cap that your footwear comes from Sharpes of Cheltenham'.

Louis Sharpe's wife, Edith, was the second of Charles Marshall's ten children. She was somewhat delicate, but always neatly turned out, and great fun. Every Saturday afternoon there was Craigside tea for friends and relations, the table groaning with cake from Brunners, bread and butter and scones, home-made jam and jelly, and a big teapot for Edith to pop round and dispense. Tea and games and croquet on the lawn in summer for adults, while children climbed trees or scrambled on the hill, and paper games or cards round the sitting-room fire in the winter.

The Sharpe brothers and their wives are all buried in Leckhampton churchyard. Louis and Edith, who had no children, lie under a plain stone slab 'both dearly loved'. A wooden churchyard seat bears the initials LS and ES.

Second from the right in the panto photograph is Miss Ida Marshall, the ninth of Charles Marshall's ten children. She and her younger brother John, who was the last Marshall to run the firm of R E & C Marshall, ironworkers and Aga dealers (one of whose workers was Fred Read, of Moorend Road) lived for a time in Wares' Hotel, Suffolk Square, with their elder unmarried sister Grace. When Miss Lilian Faithfull bought Wares' Hotel to turn it into a retirement home – Faithfull House – Ida and Jack moved to Painswick House, now a dental surgery, and Grace to the Royal George, Birdlip.

As related to Eric Miller by Mary Paterson. Charles Marshall was her great-grandfather. Mary herself now lives in Faithfull House.

Smoke Puffs

Early in lockdown we started emailing short articles of local history interest compiled by members entitled "Smoke Puffs". These cover a tremendous variety of topics and are typically more open-ended than inputs to Smoke Signal, suggesting potential lines of research and/or asking if anyone had anything to add. Often, people have done so and some fascinating threads started to develop.

Thanks so much to everyone who has contributed, and please do keep these coming! Meanwhile, we are planning a booklet based on the Smoke Puffs that have been produced so far, so that members not on email can enjoy these pieces. We hope to be able to make this available free to all members later in the year.

Obituary of Don Biddle *who died on 10 April, aged 88*

Don was a member of the panel interviewed for BBC Radio Gloucestershire in April 2006, along with Amy Woolacott, Eve Andrew and myself. He recounted his memories of living in the village, where he arrived at the age of three 'and seemed to have stuck'. In adult life he taught Geography at Churchdown School.

He spoke with fondness of his long service in the church choir and his particular enjoyment of the well-attended choral evensong in years gone by. He relished the village atmosphere, typified by the church, school, village hall, two pubs, and local shops including the Pop-in at the end of Moorend Road and the ice-cream cabin at the foot of the hill.

He reminded us that there had been a strong sporting tradition, with football and cricket teams playing in leagues against surrounding villages. The cricket field (now incorporated into the school field) had been the venue for summer fêtes but these were later transferred to the Rectory garden.

The station was beautifully kept, with colourful flower beds. There was a regular train service to Cheltenham as well as further afield, and Don said he joined the Sunday School because of its outing along the lovely line to Bourton-on-the-Water. (He said he didn't stay on as a member after that!) Troop trains stopped there, especially after D-Day, and GWR Castle-class locomotives were an attraction for train-spotters.

On one occasion during the war a barrage balloon had broken away from its moorings at the Gloucester Aircraft Company at Hucclecote (where his father worked) and had been blown over to Leckhampton.

A local girl caught a dangling hawser and wrapped it round the old wooden pavilion in the cricket field. A sapper came later to release the gas (Don recalled its foul smell) and took the balloon away on a lorry.

A bomb landed in a garden opposite the village hall but failed to explode, though it made a deep crater. Don watched with bated breath as a sapper unscrewed the percussion cap at the end – he thought that might have been his last moment on earth. Inside was a slip of paper, with the words 'BEST WISHES FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA' written on it. Don supposed that someone working in the bomb factory might have deliberately interfered with the detonator [NB that was the kind of sabotage allegedly carried out by the workers in Oscar Schindler's factory]. The bomb was later disposed of with a controlled explosion beside Crippetts Lane.

After VE Day German POWs were held in a camp at Leckhampton Court, and Don recalled seeing them march to the sports field to play soccer while singing the German army song "Westerwald".

Don was an enthusiastic member of the Leckhampton Players [Veronica adds that he joined in 1964 when he agreed to take part in a revue which she was directing]. By then they were regularly putting on three productions a year – a panto, a musical and a play – in the village hall. He later joined the management committee, eventually becoming the chairman, and he was especially proud of having raised enough money to be able to enlarge the stage for more ambitious productions.

Eric Miller

David and Tom Lyall

David and Tom Lyall have been residents at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, for some years now. They were in touch with us recently and send their kind regards to 'anyone in the LLHS who still remembers them'. David was our Chairman from 2002 to 2005.

They have a voluntary job as assistant archivists, answering enquiries about former In-Pensioners from their families doing genealogical research and family history. They take full advantage of all the excursions organised for the residents, including a visit to the GCHQ exhibition at the Science Museum. Tom (who now uses a mobility scooter) has recovered his N-gauge model railway layout from local storage and has started to set it up in a basement room.



In September they were invited to a reception at the Victory Services Club at Marble Arch in honour of their Patron-in-Chief the Duchess of Cornwall. When she spotted them in their scarlets she said "I must have a photograph with you!": the result appeared in the "Hello" and "Today" magazines.

Over to you

Since March, the Committee has had to take decisions about members' meetings in the light of Government restrictions and guidelines. It now seems likely that restrictions around gatherings of people will continue for some time. There are practical difficulties around the capacity of available venues and the need for additional procedures to do with cleaning and sanitising surfaces. We are also aware that many individuals may be unwilling to attend gatherings even if guidelines are relaxed. In the light of all this, we have decided not to attempt to hold physical meetings until at least January.

We have considered holding meetings via Zoom or other online platforms and we know that some Societies are doing this or thinking about it. So far, we have no plans to do so; such meetings exclude those members who are not online, some people who are working from home are already spending a lot of their time in virtual meetings, there can be issues with the technology or connectivity, and we know some speakers are not happy with online presentations. We will keep a watchful eye on the experience of those Societies that experiment with this route. But – we need to know what you, the members, think as we plan for the future amid the continuing uncertainty. So, please send us your thoughts and ideas. You can email to leckhamptonlhs@gmail.com or 'phone me on 01242 526144.

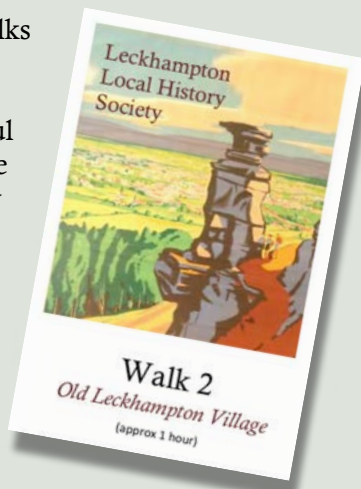
Anne Gale, Hon. Sec.

History and Nature Walks

The leaflets of walks around Leckhampton prepared by Paul McGowan have proved especially popular during lockdown. There are five routes: around the Church and its yard; around the Old Village; the Lower Hill; the Upper Hill; and the Farms

and Fields. Each is presented in two flavours - one focusing on local history, and the other on the natural history that can be observed. Both of course may be enjoyed at the same time!

Paper copies of the leaflets may be found (supplies permitting) by the gate to the St Peter's car park opposite the Church, or may be downloaded from the Society's website at www.llhs.org.uk.



Membership Subscription 2020 “Buy One, Get One Free!”

Membership subscriptions are due for renewal. As this year has been like no other and we are conscious that many of the society's activities are temporarily suspended, the Committee has decided that for this year, subscriptions will cover not one but two years – to Summer 2022. The membership form now includes details for paying subscriptions by online banking and sending your application form by email. We still accept payment by cheque or cash, although we cannot guarantee to be as prompt with banking cheques this year given the current situation! Thank you for your support.

Obituaries

We are sad to learn of the recent death of Kathleen Randall. She had been a long-standing member of the Society, along with her late husband John, the first Chairman. They had moved away from Leckhampton a few years ago to be near their son Andrew and we send condolences to him and his family.

We also regret to learn of the death last December of Janet Thom. She and her late husband Derek had been members of the Society for many years and thoroughly enjoyed the meetings. We send our condolences to their family.

Data Protection Act.

Details of members' names and postal and email addresses are stored on a computer file and will be used solely for the distribution and dissemination of Smoke Signal and other information and literature. This information will not be divulged to any outside agency.

Copyright.

Unless stated otherwise, copyright of articles and illustrations remains with the author or artist concerned or with the Editor. The Society does not accept any responsibility for statements and opinions contained in this newsletter, which are those of the author alone, but corrections or additions are invited.