



Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter

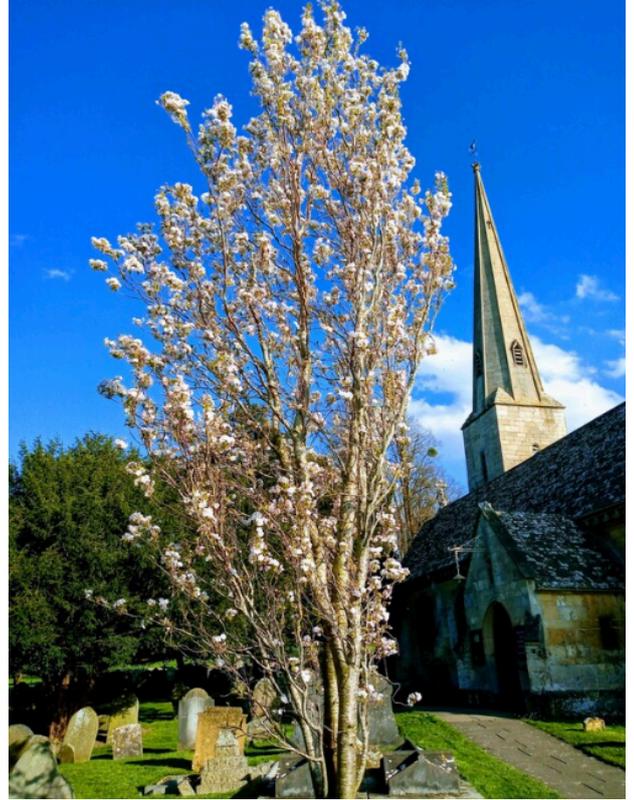
Chairman's Message

Signs of Hope

As I am writing to you all there are signs of hope everywhere. Nature always cheers us up. From the snowdrops in the churchyard to the birdsong, I feel we are turning a corner. We have been through sad times and the society sends its condolences to the families of Don Biddle, John Jurica, Geoff North, Sylvia Breddy, Joy Buckland and Doreen Jewel who died during the year. They will be missed.

I have enjoyed exploring the local footpaths with a friend (and my brother) throughout the winter months and continued my interest in the River Chelt and the brooks that feed it. I have discovered the bridge in Bafford which goes over the Lilleybrook (Someone commented to me "Oh there is actually a Lilleybrook!") which I think is a hidden gem.

I had never actually been to the ford in Charlton Kings where the Hearne Brook meets with the River Chelt. It is so pretty. I also walked to the pigeon gate in the Crippets which I have not done for many years.



We have decided to hold the Society's AGM on-line using Zoom on **Thursday 27 May** starting at 7.30pm. Notification of this is included with this newsletter. The AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk from Neela Mann entitled "Martyrs or Thugs: The Leckhampton Rioters" so I will move the meeting on apace as usual!

Stay safe and well. *Sue Marlow, Chairman*

*Far Left: Charlton Kings ford of the Chelt and the Hearne Brook.
Near left: The bridge over the Lilleybrook.*

New Programme 2021 - 2022

In the September 2020 Smoke Signal, I had written about the exciting topics for our meetings to come that year. This all went on hold rapidly, but not forgotten. Some of the meetings really will be worth waiting for when we join together as a society when we are permitted. Caroline Alexander is still due to visit us and talk about her father, Douglas Keen. During our absence from one another, we have filled the gaps with some excellent reading material. Depending on circumstances, we do have options; some of the speakers I have been researching now add Zoom presentations to their repertoires and depending on where we are we may be able to continue meetings online for those that can join us and we may still reach those who cannot, with written accounts. Either way the society soldiers on.

Sarah McGowan

George Rowe: *the prolific Cheltenham printmaker*

Looking through the Picture Books on the LLHS website one view of Leckhampton was familiar. I searched through my pile of framed maps and views of Cheltenham and found I had a copy of that same view. It is a print by George Rowe.

George was born in Exeter in 1796. He worked as an art teacher, he also produced topographical prints and views of Sussex, Kent and Devon.



Above: George Rowe's 1840s print of the view from Leckhampton Hill

He married Phillipa Curtis and in the early 1830s he and his wife and children moved to Cheltenham, where he gave drawing lessons and sold artists' materials and prints of Cheltenham and other towns.

He became involved in Civic life, he was a founder member of the Cheltenham Liberal Association, was joint owner and publisher of the Cheltenham Examiner, director of the Bayshill Estate Building Company and joint owner of the Royal Well Spa, a Church Warden, Town Commissioner, and High Bailiff of Cheltenham.

By 1852 one of his businesses was in difficulties and he left Cheltenham for the Australian goldfields. He failed as a prospector and as a shopkeeper but found success in producing water-colours of the area and the gold diggers. One of

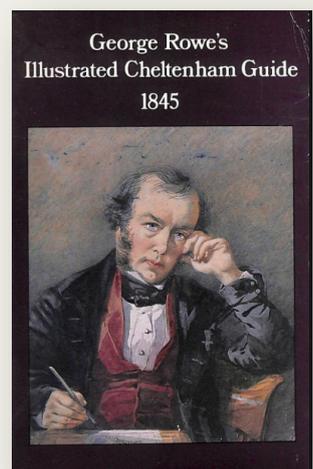
his paintings won a medal in the 1862 International Exhibition in London.

He was not in good health and in the late 1850s he returned to Exeter where he died in 1864.

In 1845 he had published a book "Rowe's Illustrated Cheltenham Guide" which was republished in 1969. It contains four routes around Cheltenham for "the Visitor, for the purpose of conducting him through the principal Avenues of our beautiful Town and pointing out those objects of interest which are usually sought for by all strangers". Many of the illustrated points of interest are still visible today.

George Rowe has a Blue Plaque on 3, Priory Terrace where he lived.

By Mary Oliver



Annual General Meeting – 27 May 2021



It is still unclear when we will be able to resume meetings, so the AGM will be held online using Zoom starting at 7.30 pm on Thursday 27 May. This will enable the majority of members to participate if they wish – email invitations will be sent out later in April. We will do our best to ensure that members who are not online are kept informed and can make an input. Papers and further details are being circulated with this newsletter.

The Southern Bypass

In a recent smoke puff I included a sketch plan of the tramway depot. The reason why I didn't show the original map is that the details were obliterated by a wide streak of ink, which someone had added at a later date – see below. The streak looks like the outline of a road, starting at the tramway depot on the west side of Leckhampton Road, continuing to the north of Leckhampton Court, crossing Church Road at the Kidnappers Lane junction and Farm Lane near Cummins Row. Presumably it was intended to link up with Shurdington Road.



Ordnance Survey Map of Leckhampton Parish dated 1923, with later annotations by hand. *As loaned by the Revd Paul Wilkinson in 2013*

that there was talk of a road raised on stilts and passing between the Court and Collum End Rise, but again fortunately that was shelved. Nevertheless, the topic is an interesting one and is crying out for someone to find out more. When lockdown is over and you can see plans at the archives, who will volunteer to do that?

The road was presumably the Cheltenham Southern Bypass, which was proposed in 1934, starting at the Cirencester Road. As its name implies, Southern Road, which leads off the top end of Old Bath Road, now a residential cul-de-sac leading to the Richard Pate School, was originally intended as part of the bypass. If the project had been realised, Bottom Lodge in Church Road and part of the Rectory garden would have been obliterated, and Collum End Rise couldn't have been built. Certain of the society's committee are relieved that this scheme never came to fruition!

The idea was resurrected more than once after the war. I recall in the 1970s

Eric Miller

Additions to the LLHS Website

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the society won't be holding meetings until further notice, but there is no social distancing in the internet, so the website has moved on apace! You can catch up with all the latest Smoke Signals online.

A few copies of the excellent Bulletin 5 are still available in hard copy. Reading this bulletin, may have triggered an interest in earlier bulletins. If so, we are pleased to say that all previous bulletins are now available free from the website! This is a really excellent resource and we would encourage members to have a look. You can find them under the 'Out of Print Publications' page.

There have been many updates to the Family History section, with most blocks of the graveyard now mapped and images of all the tombstones now available online. This is a really excellent resource for locals to Leckhampton, but also proves invaluable to family history researchers from all over the world. Many thanks to Mike Riley for his collaboration in getting the tombstone images section working.

All the earlier material is still there, including the popular local walks, countless images of old Leckhampton and many links to other sites of interest, such as local Leckhampton information sites and other local history societies.

Paul McGowan

Obituaries

We regret to report the recent deaths of several members of the society and offer our condolences to their families and friends.

Sylvia Breddy had attended meetings regularly beside her husband Jim. We shall miss her smiling presence but are grateful to know that Jim, a former Hon Treasurer, is willing to continue as independent examiner of the accounts.

Doreen Jewell (née Newman) was a member of long standing. She will be remembered for her association with the family hardware shop in the Bath Road (now merged with Bloodworths), managed by her husband 'Chubb', who was also Hon Treasurer of the Cheltenham LHS.

Joy Buckland was another faithful supporter. She had shared her interest with her late husband Ken, one of several inhabitants of Leckhampton to be elected Mayor of Cheltenham.

Geoff North was well known for his wide interests as a historian and active support for a number of societies. He had been due to talk to Leckhampton LHS about Cheltenham's Ironwork, a topic in which he and his late wife Elaine had become expert, carrying on earlier research by Amina Chatwin. He had been working on a book about the WW1 VAD Hospitals of Gloucestershire.

John Jurica was an outstanding figure in his field. He was for many years deputy editor of the Victoria County History for Gloucestershire and also edited the Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society. In 1988 he gave a series of lectures in the Glebe Cottages on 'Sources for the History of Leckhampton' – a comprehensive overview of the subject. His last years were clouded by a cruel illness but his mind was as acute as ever and he was generous in his advice and guidance.

Though not a member, **Mrs Anne Hicks** of Church Farm had cast a benevolent eye on the society's activities. Her husband Bill had died many years ago and with her death the last of Leckhampton's farms passes from the ownership of one of the great local farming families.

(An obituary to **Don Biddle** appeared in September's *Smoke Signal*.)

Eric Miller

Little Devils

Just before the end of last year, Paul and I were so pleased to receive a distanced visit from Amy Woolacott. She very kindly asked us be trustees of some very special treasures from her personal collection. Her good friend, and the true founder of the Society, Bruce Stait had made a model of Devil's Chimney, using a mould and material from the Chimney itself. He gave one for each of his children and one to Amy. I have only met Bruce through his words, so this feels very special.

Part of our new collection also includes a miniature painting by Bruce's wife June, clearly a very talented artist. As I'm sure you will agree the detail is exquisite. They will be well looked after and enjoyed by many.

By Sarah McGowan



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