



Smoke Signal



Issue 97 | December 2022

The newsletter of Leckhampton Local History Society



Remembering HM Queen Elizabeth II

Above: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with children from Leckhampton Primary School during her visit to Cheltenham in 2004.

Picture courtesy of Gloucestershire Echo.

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Editor: Matt Youngs

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Chairman's Message: All Change! It's a Tuesday

Our membership is going from strength to strength! There were over sixty people at St Christopher's. Our researcher Eric Miller certainly brings in the crowds! The reason we had to leave The Cottages is that we were getting too big for the space. We have business cards available for you to take to give to a friend so they can contact us and also look at our website. Don't forget it is full of amazing old photos plus old Bulletins and Smoke Signals. You can while away a happy hour or two increasing your knowledge of Leckhampton and surrounding areas. I wish you all a happy time with family and friends this Christmastide and look forward to seeing you in January.

Sue Marlow

Chairman

Donation of Items relating to Naunton Park to the Society Archive

We are very grateful to Mr Gordon James for the donation of a number of items to the Society archive. These are memorabilia relating to Mr James' late uncle, Mr Douglas (Dick) Powell, who lived in Naunton Crescent in the 1940s and 1950s. There are photographs of the Leckhampton Home Guard in 1942, of which Mr. Powell was a member, and the Leckhampton and Charlton Kings Home Guard in 1944. These photographs have been reproduced in various publications, including in 'Leckhampton in Old Photographs' and 'Charlton Kings in Old Photographs' but these copies are in excellent condition.

Other items relate to the Naunton Park Old Boys' Rugby Club in the years around 1950, when Mr. Powell was the team Captain, and include a team photograph, fixture lists and Mr. Powell's team shirt!

We are very grateful to Mr. James for his kind donation and are pleased that these treasured items can stay in Leckhampton.

Anne Gale



Meeting of Cheltenham Local History Society

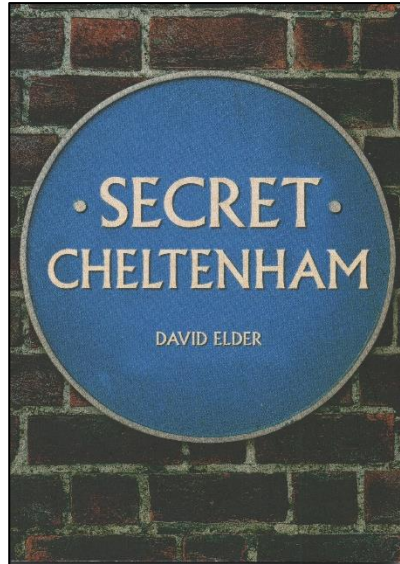
Wednesday 18th January | 7.30pm | St Luke's Church Hall

Louise Ryland-Epton will talk about progress on the Leckhampton section of the Victoria County History. Visitors welcome, admission £3.

Book Review: 'Secret Cheltenham' by David Elder

David Elder, a well-known local author, playwright, and lecturer, has recently brought out another book on Cheltenham. This time he has turned his attention to what he terms the less familiar 'flip-side' of the town's history. There are chapters on hidden places, local characters, crime and punishment, life during war and peace, reform and revolution, and the hidden story of the town's colonial past.

One learns something new at every turn, helped by numerous illustrations. Residents of Leckhampton will be especially interested in the ridge-and-furrow patterns on the hill that result from early ploughing, the gates on Crippetts Lane, moved from the Original Well in Cheltenham, Tower Lodge, linked to the Haw Bridge murder, and the bomb-damaged Pilley Bridge. The battle for the right to roam over Leckhampton Hill after Henry Dale fenced it off is presented as an example of 'revolution' and we are shown the reading of the Riot Act outside Tramway



Cottage and the cartoon where a little boy tells his mother that he has 'only been up the Hill to down Dale'.

Under the heading of 'Animal Rights' David tells the story behind the drinking trough near the Norwood Arms, and we learn of Dr Edward Wilson's less well-known role as a bird conservationist. There is a photograph of the grave in Leckhampton churchyard of Evangeline Butler, whose accidental death proved a turning point in her mother Josephine's campaigning as a social reformer.

Some members were able to follow David's 'Secret Cheltenham' walk in September (see account on page 6).

Now everyone can read about it in his book, copies of which are available 'from all good bookshops', price £15.99, or better still from David himself (email: davidelder.net@gmail.com).

Eric Miller

Question Time

For a change from the usual members' evening, we are planning to hold an "Any Questions?" session on 28th February. For this to run smoothly, we'd like to receive questions in advance so that the members of the panel can prepare their answers. The panel will be chaired by Sue, and its members will be chosen according to the nature of the questions.

Here are some ideas to guide you. Do you want to learn more about your house or who lived in it previously? Is there something that puzzles you about the area you live in? Is there an aspect of Leckhampton that you'd like to research yourself but don't know where to begin? Would you like to know how to go about researching your family history? Are you bewildered by the range of resources, in the library, Gloucestershire Archives or online?

Please let me have your questions as soon as possible, and preferably not later than the meeting on 31st January. (If anyone is thinking of asking about the name Kidnappers Lane, an answer is already prepared!)

Eric Miller (Tel: 526461 email: chmiller@talktalk.net)

Leckhampton – a Place and its People

The Society intends to publish a bulletin on this topic that I produced earlier this year while recovering from knee surgery. It looks at our community from the prehistoric period right up to recent history and attempts to set Leckhampton in its regional context throughout that passage of time. In many ways it is an update to the excellent original work, *Leckhampton Through the Ages*, by Eve Andrew & Eric Brewin that was produced in 1984. The catalyst for this new work has been the succession of professional archaeology carried out in advance of developments such as the Redrow estate at Farm Lane.

As a taster for what is to come, I thought you might like to see a short excerpt from the very earliest period...

Prehistory

Archaeologists and historians use the term 'Prehistory' to refer to a time in a people's history before they used a written language. In Britain, the term Prehistory refers to the period before Britain became part of the Roman empire in AD 43. The prehistoric period in Britain lasted for hundreds of thousands of years and this long period of time is usually divided into: Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic (sometimes these three periods are

combined and called the Stone Age), Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Palaeolithic

Humans first arrived in Britain around 800,000 BC. These early inhabitants had to cope with extreme environmental changes, and they left Britain at least seven times when conditions became too cold. Continual human occupation probably began about 10,000 BC as humans returned to Britain following a very cold period.

The landscape around Leckhampton would have gone through extreme variations. During the cold spells, you would look out on an icy tundra, with sparse, low-lying shrubs and scattered Birch trees. The wild animals that would be seen would have included herds of woolly mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, and reindeer. These are the animals our ancestors would have hunted for food, clothing, and bone utensils.

In the much warmer periods in between, the landscape and wildlife would have been more tropical in nature, as seen in this image.

Thus far there are no remains from the Palaeolithic from our area.

Paul McGowan



A Palaeolithic Scene (Copyright John Sibbick)

Digging Up History at The Old Rectory: The Update

Since writing my last article about the antics of our amateur garden archaeology, I have been given a metal detector. This has now opened up the garden in many ways. Always garden jobs first, but then depending on the status of the ground, I allow myself a few digs.

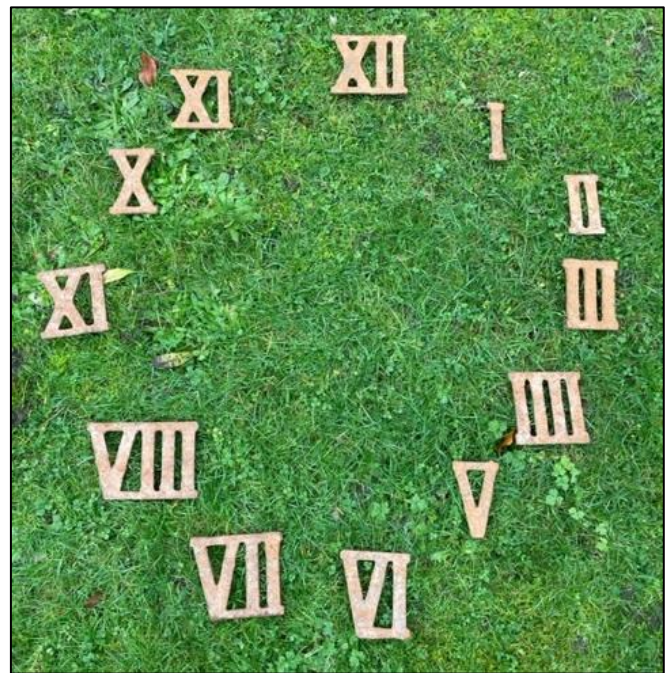
Living where we do in Leckhampton is exciting from a historical perspective: the timeline is potentially significant. While siting a guinea pig house, I was allowed to survey the ground which led to the glebe field, now Rectory Court, before their fine accommodation was placed. Several tones were detected, and old brackets were unearthed, garden wire and a very old pair of secateurs. Eventually a lovely lead toy soldier revealed itself, and then another 4. Still bearing their colours.

In the same spot while digging a hole for a tree, I accidentally unearthed a rose and orb Nuremberg Jetton, used as a counting token in the 16th century. The issuer Hans Krauwinkel II included an inscription on the token; ours bears the message 'Gotes Gaben sol man lob', One should praise God's gift. This inscription further identifies the age of the Jetton to 1534-1539. I like his words of wisdom which on some also include 'Heit rodt morgantodtt', today red, tomorrow dead. (Mitchiner 1988)

I try to leave as little evidence of my dig as possible and forensically cover my tracks. But one such excavation led to a series of 12 neat plugs. Adjacent to the front door we have a magnificent juniper which disguises the original entrance to the house. I thought a scan might prove fruitful. On discovering a broken air vent (I thought) a second similar item revealed roman numerals. Paul then paced out a rudimentary circle when a third number was found. Twelve Victorian roman numerals lay on the grass. Anne Gale was to thank for the insight - a Victorian clock golf set. Still available to buy on Ebay. A family's forgotten game was now my treasure.

The search and research which comes with each find continues and so does the size of the shelf we now have for display. The gardening, well...

Sarah McGowan



Secret Cheltenham

Dashing around the town at our usual speed, and without David Elder as our guide, one would be forgiven for missing so much of Cheltenham's fascinating history.

How many people know that the great house, a medieval manor, once stood on the site of St Matthew's Church? Just round the corner was Sadler's Wells Puppet Theatre (1799). Surprisingly, the former puppet theatre building survived until 2004 and the basement was still visible when the site was cleared for the building of Chelsea Court apartments.

Pausing by St Gregory's Church, David recalled how non-conformity played a significant part in Cheltenham's religious life.

In the 1850s there were religious riots, one in particular because a Mr Hardwick, a tailor in the High Street, had placed an effigy of Cardinal Wiseman in his shop window. The window was broken, the effigy removed, and large crowds accompanied the effigy in a procession around the town. The effigy was ceremoniously burnt on a bonfire on land adjoining the Roman Catholic Chapel.

The oldest surviving specially designed Infant School stands on St James's Road. It opened on 20 July 1830 and consisted of a single schoolroom measuring 60 x 30 feet, designed to accommodate 250 children aged 2 to 7. David's photograph of a painting of the school showed a knap beside it. A knap is a Neolithic long barrow comprising a mound of earth. The photograph showed a sepulchral chamber of two upright stones or shorls and a capstone on the top. This chamber was opened up and excavated in 1832. (There is an outstanding example of a long barrow at Belas Knap on Cleve Common.)

We stopped at Well Walk, where the first visitors to Cheltenham Spa would walk from the Parish Church to the original well. The route took visitors along a fashionable tree-lined route where the Royal Crescent now stands, crossing the River Chelt, and continuing up to the spa. A little of this route, from the churchyard to Clarence Street, still exists today.

The former Police Station HQ (including cells) in St George's Place has been transformed into luxury apartments.

Further along Clarence Street there is an ornate lamppost which became a central meeting place in the 1900s. It was a traditional place for residents to celebrate the new year. Many people attended meetings there held by the Women's Suffrage Society. WW1 recruitment drives were held here, and a crowd of 2000 assembled in June 1915 for a recruitment meeting by the 11th Gloucesters.

Passing Post Office Lane and onto The Promenade, where the Post Office stood, now stands a very grand branch of Waterstones Booksellers. The Aberdeen red granite horse trough here was erected in 1872 for the protection of animals and was paid for by the Cheltenham Ladies Society.

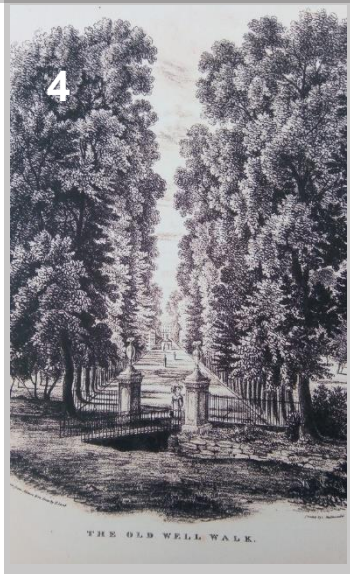
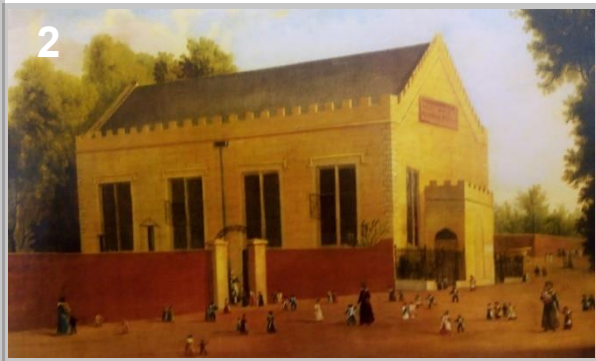
Dodging Saturday morning shoppers, we walked up to the much-photographed Neptune's Fountain, which was inspired by the Trevi Fountain in Rome and erected in 1893. Dick Saunders, a local labourer employed by the CBC posed for the head of the Roman god.

Looking towards the Cheltenham Ladies' College before we went our separate ways, David pointed out the dome on the roof. This housed a fully functioning observatory, which is being restored.

For anyone who loves secrets and enjoys finding out more about our town, I can think of no better way than joining David on a trip around the town. It has led me to do more research and to share this with you. I wonder whether a trail could be produced for visitors perhaps?

And wouldn't it be a great achievement if the rusting gates, (now deteriorating on the lane leading to 'The Crippets') that once graced Well Walk could be restored to the Royal Crescent?

Lorna Robson



Acknowledgements (previous page)

- 1 David Elder with an illustration of The Great House (Patrick Phair)
- 2 St James' Square Infants' School, 1832 (oil on canvas) Westall, J. (fl.1873-93).
(Courtesy of Cheltenham Borough Council and the Cheltenham Trust)
- 3 Merrett's Map 1834
- 4 The Old Well Walk, by Henry Lamb, c.1825
- 5 Clarence Street Lamp
- 6 Post Office Lane
- 7 Horse trough
- 8 The Police Station (Facebook Days gone by in Cheltenham)
- 9 The Post Office (Facebook Days gone by in Cheltenham)
10. Neptune's Fountain (Mary Nelson)

And Finally...

Just a gentle reminder to let everyone know that subscription renewals for 2022-23 need to be paid by 31st December 2022. If anyone needs another form or if you know of someone who might like to become a member, please email me (marklorry@hotmail.com) or call on 01242 522328.

Also, if you could please let me know if you do not want to renew.

Many thanks,

Lorry Butler

Membership Secretary



Credit: Eric Miller

Leckhampton Local History Society

Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council