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## THE OTHER ALSTONE

In the late 18th century Lower Alstone was a small hamlet having a water mill and about 30 families whose ancestors had resided there for generations. Upper Alstone was on the south side of the tithing and here the land, much of it by then enclosed, was owned by only two or three landowners of whom Mr Skillicorne seemed to be the chief one. Neighbouring farms included Benhall Farm, Westall Farm and Mr Grif-fith's Farm (later Christ Church Farm). There was no nucleus of a village and basically it was vastly different to Lower Alstone where there was a close-knit community.

It had been well-known for many years that a spring in the area of Bays Hill was noted for its medicinal qualities. The well that was sunk near the spring later became known as the Royal Old Well. The owner's daughter Elizabeth Mason married the Manxman Henry Skillicorne and this marriage was to have far-reaching effects on the town of Cheltenham as a whole, but most particularly on that area we now know as Bayshill and Lansdown.

'Taking the Waters' was already fashionable in Bath, Clifton, Tunbridge Wells and other spas and reports of the efficacy of the Cheltenham spa waters reached the Royal Family. So it was that in 1788 George III with Queen Charlotte and three of their daughters came to partake of the Cheltenham waters, staying as guests at Lord Fauconberg's House on Bayshill (the only large house in that area).

Naturally, having to compete with other well-established spas, it was necessary to make the whole area attractive to visitors. Elegant and leafy walks were laid out and buildings erected in which the imbibers of the health-giving elixir could, whilst enjoying the waters and atmosphere, chat to other visitors and possibly make comparisons.

This royal visit set the seal on Cheltenham's future for not only British royalty, but French and Russian nobles came to Cheltenham. The nobility and gentry, having learnt of the royal approval, decided to visit the spa and see what this once small market-town had to offer.

Many famous persons came here, notably the hero of Waterloo who paid more than one visit since the waters amongst many other curative effects, were said to be ideal for those persons returned from hot climes who were troubled with a variety of illnesses. The noble Duke, having spent some time on campaign in India as well as on the Continent, believed the Cheltenham spa waters to have suited him, and what was suitable for the Duke of Wellington was certainly suitable for his army and navy officers.

So began the influx of many notable people and amongst them a very

large number of Indian Officers of the Honourable East India Company who mostly resided in the area that was slowly being developed near the spas. In addition other well-known visitors arrived, in the persons of Jane Austen, Byron and Tennyson, to name but a few.

There were, however, two drawbacks. First the lack of accommodation – the hotels and lodging houses were bursting at the seams. The second drawback was transport. The first problem was soon overcome for by the spring of 1829 a number of astute gentlemen, interested in the burgeoning prosperity of Cheltenham and desirous of maintaining this and lining their own pockets at the same time, got together to raise sufficient funds by subscription to develop the area around the spas.

Part of the land in that area had been purchased by one Henry Thompson, who had purchased it from the Rev. John Delabere, which land passed to his son, Pearson Thompson. Pearson Thompson called upon the services



**Map 1832**

of the London architect, J.B. Papworth, to design a prestigious estate with gardens, terraces, crescent and parades to be known as the Lansdown Estate.

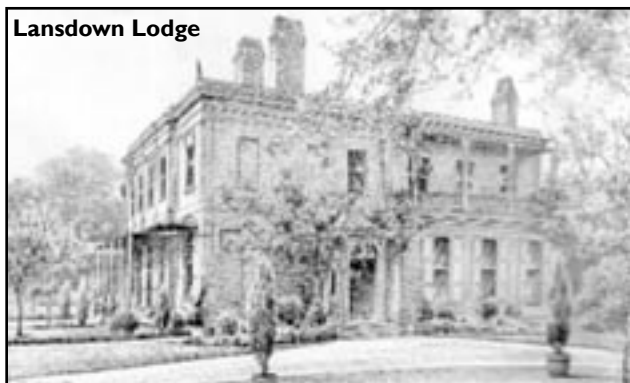
The large convex crescent, unequalled in its day, was planned by Papworth as villas rather than a continuous crescent. However, Thompson soon found himself in financial difficulties and in 1830 sold his interest in the estate to R.W. and C. Jearrad, two architects who proceeded to re-work Papworth's design and develop the Crescent, Lansdown Terrace and Lansdown Parade, all of which date from 1831-48. In addition there were a number of detached and semi-detached villas in the Greek, Gothic and Italianate style.

Lansdown Terrace was in progress by 1832 - a long row facing West intended for a moderate-sized family, whilst the Crescent houses are smaller and have a northerly aspect. The Lansdown Parade houses are smaller still but separated from those opposite by a landscaped garden and

**Lansdown Crescent**



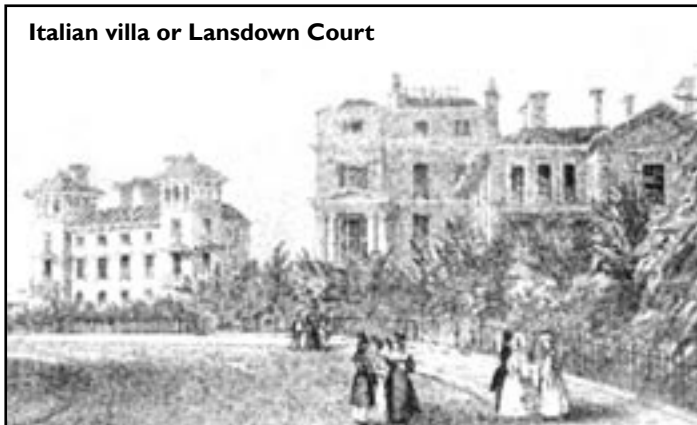
**Lansdown Lodge**



**Lansdown Parade**



**Italian villa or Lansdown Court**



having land at the rear offering vegetable gardens.

These houses were intended to accommodate the many visitors who flocked to Cheltenham in the first half of the 19th century. They were for the wealthy, leisured

class with large households and each area contained a proportion of retired East India Company men and a few naval officers. Whilst the climate of Cheltenham was said to have been similar to that of Simla, the hill station in India to which the officers and their families retired regularly to escape the heat of the plains, one cannot help thinking that to naval officers, used to pacing the quarter-deck in a howling gale, the climate might be somewhat enervating, yet a few high-ranking naval officers did retire here.

## TRANSPORT

**T**he second drawback to those many people wishing to travel to Cheltenham was, of course, the abysmal state of the roads in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The dangerous conditions of the roads throughout the kingdom in the late 18th century deterred all but the most intrepid or urgent from braving them. Overturned coaches or broken axles were a common sight. Coaches were not



sprung to withstand these conditions, to the detriment of the bruised and weary travellers. Not until the Turn-pike Trusts system, whereby groups of people formed a Trust to ensure the repair of certain stretches of road and to collect tolls from those wishing to use their particular road, did things improve. So Turnpike roads, chiefly the main roads of the country,



ensured that the adventurous traveller could be assured of reaching his or her destination with no broken bones. Today throughout the country one can still see the old turnpike houses – a reminder of those days when travel was much more hazardous than it is today.

This did not mean it was all warm and cosy – indeed not for, crammed four or six inside a coach, still mostly unsprung, unheated and draughty, even those rich enough to be able to afford a seat inside could hardly be comfortable. For those who clung to the basket seats in the rear, exposed to the elements and liable, if the coach hit a bump, to be bounced off along with their luggage, travel was not only uncomfortable but also dangerous. There was also the risk of being robbed by a highwayman.



**Rail travel First and Third Class**

However, coaching houses did all they could to make stop-overs pleasant and the number of visitors to Cheltenham increased as roads and coach design improved.

However, by the early part of the 19th century the railways were slowly beginning to take over from the coaches and offered (if you could afford first or second-class) a quicker and smoother means of travel. For a long time people objected to the railways and all sorts of dire forecasts were made, but once Her Majesty Queen Victoria, having been persuaded (reluctantly perhaps) to undertake her first journey on the 13 June 1842, (the Prince Consort having already travelled several times by rail), people felt that if Her Majesty could risk it so could they. However, coaches continued to be used for several years on many roads and within cities and Cheltenham was not lacking in coach builders.

## THE ELITE

As more houses were built some became permanent residences whilst others were let, furnished or unfurnished, to those transient visitors who went from spa to spa or to the Metropolis seeking good health and entertainment. The census returns show how transient were many of those residents in the Lansdown area. By 1858

the *Cheltenham Looker-On*, which claimed to be a 'Notebook of Fashionable Sayings and Doings', was able to report that the value of property in Cheltenham was forecast to increase, judging from the announcement of 'sales by auction', and that no less than six first-class residences in the very centre of the Lansdown estate, with a like number of a secondary character elsewhere in the town, were being advertised. Good prices were expected, which suggests that suitable accommodation was perhaps still in short supply.

These wealthy people, with their retinue of servants, came for the season and earned the condemnation of one William Cobbett in 1821 when he reached Cheltenham during the course of his 'Rural Rides'. He described





the visitors and new residents as 'idle parasites – Cheltenham is a nasty, ill-looking place, half clowns and half cockney. The town is one street about a mile long, but then, at some distance from this street, there are rows of white tenements, with green balconies, like those inhabited by the tax-eaters round London. Indeed this place appears to be the residence of an assemblage of tax-eaters. These vermin shift about between London, Cheltenham, Bath, Bognor, Brighton, Tonbridge, Ramsgate, Margate and other spots in England whilst some of them get over to France and Italy . . .'

This attack made Cobbett so unpopular in Cheltenham that when nine years later he attempted to deliver a political speech near the Market, he had to retreat hurriedly. His enemies, unable to seize his person, burnt his effigy in the street. However, he was not the only detractor of the idleness and frivolity at that time for one Catharine Sinclair claimed that 'she never saw such resolute idlers with such a lounging indolent do-nothing air. It is one of the places where card playing continues as a constant business', whilst the *Gentleman's Magazine* complained that there was not a literary institution in the whole place. This was, however, later rectified.



Nevertheless, all these people needed to be catered for and the market gardens of Lower Alstone met their needs in the provision of food, laundry services and a supply of servants. Though some of the richer families brought their own servants with them, many employed local people who worked long hours for little pay, although this was taken for granted in those days.

## THE SOCIAL WHIRL

The late 18th and early 19th centuries heralded a wide variety of visitors to Cheltenham following the King's visit. Their numbers included not only royalty but also the nobility, gentry and, perhaps most numerous, large numbers of retired army and naval officers.

To amuse this elite group of people, who were accustomed to the social extravagances of Bath, Tunbridge and even the metropolis, a very wide selection of entertainments was available. For the gentlemen, of course, there was hunting and that most popular sport, horseracing. Although the latter was in its infancy in Cheltenham in the early part of the 19th century, nevertheless it attracted such a varied class of people that it came under the strictures of the Reverend Francis Close who fulminated from his pulpit in the parish church against the iniquities of gambling. However, it would seem he was unheeded for the Cheltenham Races have flourished over the years and are now a national, if not international, event.

Also for the gentlemen there were clubs, one of the earliest being the Cheltenham and Gloucestershire Club that met at the Assembly Rooms. Later the Imperial Club, which was located on the Promenade on the site of the Imperial Hotel, proved very popular. (This was later to become the site of the main Post Office and more recently housed Waterstones bookshop.) It was, as most clubs are, very exclusive and its members included not only the local gentry but the many army and navy officers in the town.

Later another club opened in the Promenade called the New Club. This stood at the junction of Oriel Road and the Promenade (now known as the Quadrangle which houses the Endsleigh Insurance Company). In these clubs the gentlemen could play cards, bridge, billiards, piquet, whist, chess, backgammon, dominoes and draughts. However, no game of hazard of any description was allowed, including dice, presumably to avoid the embarrassment of destitute gamblers who had lost their all 'taking the gentleman's way out' on the premises. There was a coffee room, a dining room and a bar where the old colonels could discuss the latest news over their *chota pegs*.

Ladies, of course, could not be members and could only enter these sacred portals for lunch upon the invitation of a member, subject to the approval of five members. Lest you think this somewhat chauvinistic, the same attitude to 'intruding females' on all-male domains existed in the public houses in less salubrious parts of the town.

However, the ladies were not without their entertainment for there was a Master of the Ceremonies and a Committee who organised and regulated the balls and other amusements.

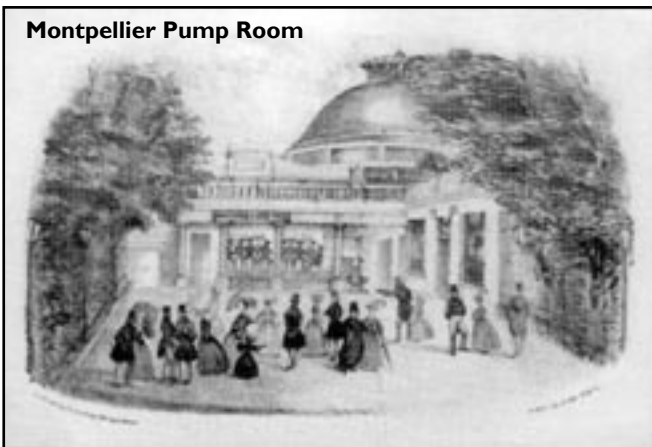
During the daytime there would be promenades in Montpellier Gardens and music to soothe subscribers as they wandered up and down, displaying their finery and gossiping. There was a flourishing Archery Club and a Horticultural Society for the more energetic, and for the 'blue stockings' a Literary and Philosophical Institute. Also, of course, there would be the endless round of visiting but the highlight of each 'season' would be the splendid balls, sometimes held at the Assembly Room, sometimes at the Pitville or Montpellier Pump Rooms, attended by all the nobility and gentry of the town.

In this giddy round of social life of the early 19th century the ladies naturally wished to be seen in the latest fashions and the *Looker-On* regularly published the latest news on fashions from Paris and London. In fact the first article about fashion was entirely in French, but the editor probably

**Early Montpellier Gardens**



**Montpellier Pump Room**



realised this was being too ambitious and all following articles, though sprinkled with French phrases, were assumed to be understood by those familiar with *haute couture*.

During the day gowns were very circumspect but evening wear gave them more scope; neck lines became lower and lower, as bosoms were very much to the fore, but for those few more modest damsels a Bertha could be worn which, whilst leaving shoulders bare, discreetly hid what lay below. Ball gowns were very *décolleté* though perhaps a corsage might hide some of a lady's charms. However, whatever might be exposed in the upper gallery was definitely not exposed in the lower tier, for ankles were definitely not to be seen!

It was felt that a glimpse of a dainty ankle might inflame men to forget themselves!

As skirts became fuller crinolines came into fashion and so voluminous were they that negotiating them became quite an art. Nevertheless, the sight of the



beautifully gowned ladies with their escorts at the many fashionable balls held either at the Assembly Rooms or Montpellier was a sight worthy to be seen and no doubt compared favourably with the grand balls in London.

When, in the latter part of the 19th century, neck-lines at the back plunged dramatically, the following witticism was penned –

*Les Ele'gants, who used to bare  
Their snowy bosoms to the air,  
A new device have hit upon;  
For now they wear their gowns so low  
'Tis thought they soon intend to show  
The very parts they sit upon.*

Nevertheless, there cannot have been a more spectacular sight than the scenes at the magnificent balls held in Cheltenham, with the elegantly clad ladies in their exquisite gowns accompanied by the equally elegant partners in their colourful uniforms, as they whirled about beneath the glittering lights of hundreds of candles and perfumed by the aromatic display

of exotic flowers, no doubt supplied by Cypher's Nurseries. Little wonder that Cheltenham became so popular.

However, without the vast army of servants who slaved from early morning till late at night, and were taken for granted in those days, residents could not have maintained the style of living to which they were accustomed. Every house had its quota of servants from the highest in the establishment, the butler, to the lowest, the tweenie or maid of all work. Not all could aspire to employing a butler who, naturally, received a higher wage and because of his superior position and responsibility could also obtain quite a few 'perks' from the local tradesmen who sought his favour. Only



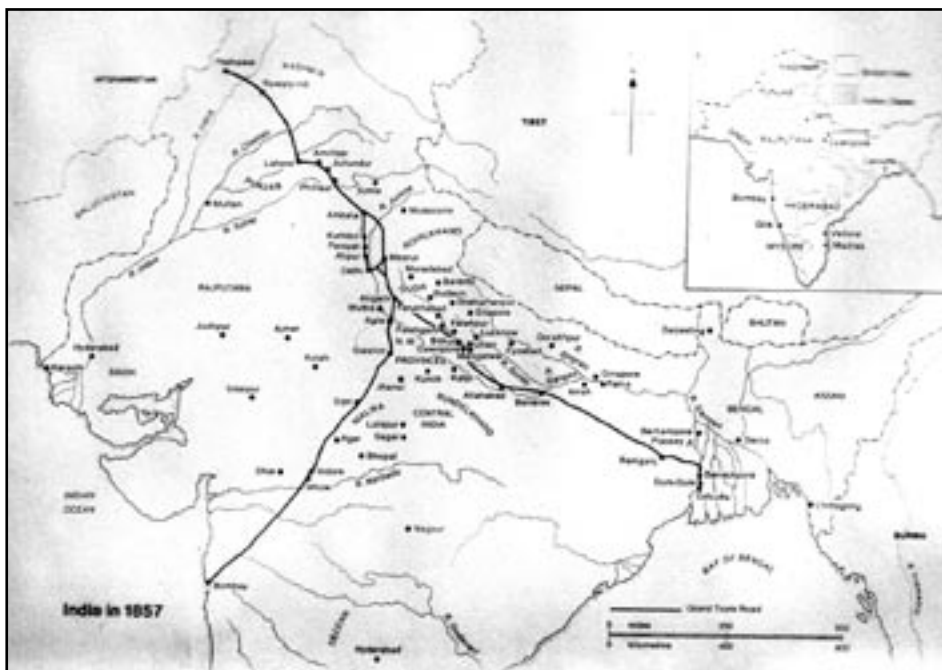
the richest families could afford a butler, and at least one butler, William Fern, in 1878 managed to salt away sufficient from his wage to buy a piece of land opposite Christ Church Terrace for £55.2s.6d. On this, with the help of his family who were in the building trade, he managed to build a house that he named called Fern Villa, now 6a Christ Church Villas. He may not have 'lived in' as servants usually did, but even so this must have been a rare occurrence.

Butlers were selected not only for their honesty but also for their appearance and were usually handsome and tall with an air that could daunt any unwanted callers and a physique which would impress ladies. They were thus the most important in the servant hierarchy.

Indeed in this circle of rich socialites there was no shortage of entertainment and this giddy social whirl continued unabated until the summer of 1857, when horrifying news began to filter through from across the globe.

## THE AWAKENING

In the late spring of 1857, whilst the Summer Season had barely begun and the endless round of gaities were in full swing, with arrivals and departures of the nobility and gentry being reported in the *Cheltenham Looker-On*, little did the Anglo-Indians, predominant in the Lansdown area and Bayshill, realise what was happening to their compatriots far away in India.



**Map of 19th-century India**

There were a great many members of the Honourable East India Company living throughout this area – some in the army who retired here, some as civil servants who were in retirement or on leave. One must remember that in those days there was no radio or TV to inform people what was happening on the other side of the world, so news often took weeks or even months to reach England by telegraph.

The Honourable East India Company (HEIC) was founded in 1606 by

Royal Charter and began primarily as a trading company, not just in India but also in the Far East. It expanded over the years and many men who were willing to risk the hazards of the long sea voyage and endure the extremes of climate made their fortunes.

The Company was not only the British Government's representative but was also responsible for the armies in each presidency in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. In addition to the native regiments there were also regiments of the British army, such as The Queen's Regiment, but the ratio of one British soldier to three Indian soldiers had fallen to one in six, which disparity was later seen to be one of the causes of the Mutiny.

However, the underlying causes that had been building up over the years were economic, intellectual and religious. The arrogance and high-handed attitude of the British officers and their wives towards the Indians, and their ignorance of the Hindu and Moslem religions coupled with their dismissal of beliefs that were at the root of Indian life, particularly the caste system, led inevitably to a situation simmering with suppressed anger.

The final spark, however, which touched off the conflagration was the introduction of the new Enfield rifles, the cartridges of which were greased with cow and pig fat – both anathema to Hindu and Moslem alike. The refusal of the native Indians to use them led to revolt, and the harsh treatment which followed resulted in the mutiny which soon spread like wildfire from province to province.

It began in Meerut and then spread to Delhi with similar consequences and as the news was telegraphed to England the newspapers began to report it. At first the *Cheltenham Examiner*, quoting from *The Observer*, on 17 July 1857 said that 'whilst the news from India was certainly serious, it would probably not turn out to be so alarming'. *The Times*, however, gave a different view – 'To say that the news from India which the telegraph sends us need cause no anxiety would be perhaps to counsel a confidence bordering on apathy'.

To the Anglo-Indian society in Cheltenham, whose friends and relatives were out there, the news which filtered through became more horrifying as time progressed. The *Looker-On* reporting at length on 18 July 1857 on the developing troubles, did nothing to allay the fear of those at home. On 8 August it reported on the experience of some young gallant officers, one of whom was intimately known to many inhabitants of Cheltenham. Their courage and that of others at the siege of Delhi was later borne out by Kendal Coghill, son of Vice Admiral Sir Josiah Coghill of Lansdown. Lt. Proctor, however, was literally hacked to pieces, as Edward Vibart recalled. Another brave officer, Willoughby, who was unaware at that time that his

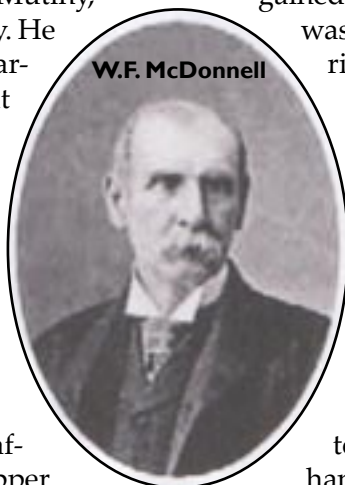
father, mother, brother and sisters had been cruelly massacred at Cawnpore accompanied Vibart and helped to blow up the Kashmir Gate. Yet another Cheltonian, Charles Battine, son of Major John William Battine CB of Cheltenham, also lost his life at Cawnpore. A young ensign who died from his wounds at Delhi was Ensign Gambier, whose commemorative plaque can be seen in Leckhampton Church.

A survivor of the Indian Mutiny lies in Leckhampton churchyard where he was later laid to rest. Not all of the victims of the Mutiny were army officers – many women and children also lost their lives as did some of those men who



**Massacre at Cawnpore**

served in the Indian Civil Service. For example, William Fraser McDonnell, who won one of only four awards of the Victoria Cross made to civilians during the Indian Mutiny, gained his award through great daring and bravery. He was attached to an expedition to relieve a small garrison at Arrah. During the retreat from there it was necessary to cross a river by boat. When it was discovered that the mutineers had immobilised these boats by lashing their rudders to the hulls, McDonnell, under heavy fire, climbed on to one of the boats and succeeded in freeing the rudder, enabling it to be steered, and thereby according to the citation, saved 35 European soldiers from almost certain death.



Though eventually, after much loss of life, the British regained the upper hand in Delhi, still the mutinies continued. It was not until the arrival of General Havelock's force at Cawnpore that the extent of the frightful catastrophe there became known. After a forced march of 126 miles in eight days, in

indescribable conditions, what they found on arrival at Cawnpore, was never to be forgotten.

## CHELTENHAM LOOKER-ON

**September 19, 1857**

### **THE MASSACRE AT CAWNPORE: OPERATIONS OF GEN. HAVELOCK**

*General Havelock's force, on the reoccupation of Cawnpore, had, in eight days, marched 126 miles, fought four actions with Nana Sahib' army against overwhelming odds in point of numbers, and taken 24 guns of light and heavy calibre – and that, too, in the month of July in India! On the morning of the 17th July the force marched into Cawnpore. The soul-harrowing spectacle which there presented itself to them beggars description. The extent of the frightful catastrophe now became known. A wholesale massacre had been perpetrated*

*by the fiend Nana Sahib. 88 officers, 190 men of H.M's 84th foot, 70 ladies, 120 women and children of H.M's 32nd foot, and the whole European and Christian population of the place, including civilians, merchants, shop-keepers, engineers, pensioners and their families, to the number of about 400 persons, were the*



*victims of this satanic deed. The courtyard in front of the assembly rooms, in which Nana Sahib had had his head-quarters, and in which the women had been imprisoned, was swimming in blood. A large number of women and children, who had been "cruelly spared after the capitulation for a worse fate than instant death," had been barbarously slaughtered on the previous morning – the former having been stripped naked, beheaded and thrown into a well; the latter having been hurled down alive upon their butchered mothers . . .*

You can imagine the terrible anxiety of the Anglo-Indians in Cheltenham as they read of these horrific events, and when on 26 September *The Times* published a list of the unfortunate victims it quoted a total of 163 people. The impact this news would have had on the gaiety-loving residents of



Cheltenham must have been heart-breaking for surely they would have known some of the victims. In November they learnt the full extent of the massacre of the officers, their wives and children as well as civilians who met their horrific fate only the day before the arrival of General Havelock. The list was prepared by Lt. Delafosse who, with three others, were believed to have been the only persons to escape, makes harrowing reading.

Meanwhile at Lucknow, which had long been under siege, the defenders suffered under the most abominable conditions in temperatures often reaching 130 degrees F. Barely surviving, starving, sick and under constant bombardment, the stench from the corpses of people and animals was overpowering. Little wonder that many died from disease. Perhaps the most emotive of all the reports was that on the Relief of Lucknow. In October, the *Looker-On* was able to give its readers cheering news and reported at length from a letter written by. M. de Bannerot, a French Physician, and published in *Le Pays* (Parish Paper) Calcutta on 8 October.



General Havelock

## HOW LUCKNOW WAS RELIEVED

*'I give you the following account of the relief of Lucknow, as described by a lady, one of the rescued party:-'*



*'On every side death stared us in the face; no human skill could avert it any longer. We saw the moment approach when we must bid farewell to earth, yet without feeling that unutterable horror which must have been experienced by the unhappy victims at Cawnpore. We were resolved rather*

to die than to yield, and were fully persuaded that in twenty four hours all would be over. The engineers had said so, and all knew the worst. We women strove to encourage each other, and to perform the light duties which had been assigned to us, such as conveying orders to the batteries and supplying the men with provisions, especially cups of coffee, which we prepared day and night. I had gone out to try and make myself useful, in company with Jessie Brown, the wife of a corporal in my regiment. Poor Jessie had been in a state of restless excitement all through the siege and had fallen away within the last few days. A constant fever consumed her, and her mind wandered occasionally, especially that day, when the recollections of home seemed powerfully present to her. At last, overcome with fatigue, she lay down on the ground, wrapped up in her plaid. I sat beside her, promising to awaken her when, as she said, 'her father should return from the ploughing.' She fell at length into a profound slumber, motionless and, apparently, breathless, her head resting in my lap. I myself could no longer resist the inclination to sleep, in spite of the continual roar of the cannon. Suddenly I was aroused by a wild unearthly scream close to my ear; my companion stood upright beside me, her arms raised, and her head bent forward in the attitude of listening. A look of intense delight broke over her countenance; she grasped my hand, drew me towards her, and exclaimed, 'Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it? Ay, I'm no dreamin', it's the slogan o' the Highlanders! We're saved! We're saved! Then, flinging herself on her knees, she thanked God with passionate fervour. I felt utterly bewildered; my English ears heard nothing but the roar of artillery, and I thought my poor Jessie was still raving, but she darted to the batteries, and I heard her cry incessantly to the men, 'Courage, courage! Hark to the slogan – to the Macgregor, the grandest of them a'. Here's help at last!' To describe the effect of these words upon the soldiers would be impossible. For a moment they ceased firing, and every soul listened with intense anxiety. Gradually, however, there arose a murmur of bitter disappointment, and the wailing of the women who had flocked to the spot burst out anew as the colonel shook his head. Our dull Lowland ears heard nothing but the roll of the musketry. A few moments more of this death-like suspense, of this agonizing hope, and Jessie, who had again sunk on the



**Colin Campbell**

ground, sprang to her feet, and cried in a voice so clear and piercing that it was heard along the whole line, 'Will ye believe it noo? The slogan has ceased indeed, but the Campbells are comin'! D'ye hear, d'ye hear?' At that moment we seemed indeed to hear the voice of God in the distance, when the pibroch of the Highlanders brought us tidings of deliverance, for now there was no longer any doubt of the fact. That shrill, penetrating, ceaseless sound, which rose above all other sounds, could come neither from the advance of the enemy nor from the work of the Sappers. No, it was indeed the blast of the Scottish bagpipes,, now shrill and harsh as threatening vengeance on the foe, then in softer tones seeming to promise succour to their friends in need. Not a heart in the Residency of Lucknow but bowed itself before God, All, by one simultaneous impulse, fell upon their knees, and nothing was heard but bursting sobs and the murmured voice of prayer. Then all arose, and there rang out from a thousand lips a great shout of joy which resounded far and wide, and lent new vigour to that blessed pibroch. To our cheer of 'God save the Queen, ' they replied by the well-known strain that moves every Scot to tears, 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot,' &c. After that, nothing else made any impression on me. I scarcely remembered what followed. Jessie was presented to the General on his entrance into the fort, and at the officers' banquet her health was drunk by all present, while the pipers marched round the table playing once more the familiar air of 'Auld lang sine.' (Jersey Times of 10 Dec.)

The Relief of Lucknow was heralded as a great victory and as the brave survivors were evacuated and returned to England, the mutiny continued in other states. Atrocious as had been the behaviour of the mutineers, the reprisals upon not just mutineers but any unfortunate Indians whom the British soldiers encountered, were every bit as appalling and unmerciful, inflicted with the cry 'Remember Cawnpore'.

The mutinies continued but were gradually put down with great loss of life on both sides and it was not until the last leader of the mutineers was captured and hanged in 1859 that it could be said the Chapter on this terrible episode in English and Indian history could be said to be closed.

In March 1858 Parliament met to consider the future of India and it was agreed that, as the HEIC had fallen into decay and totally mismanaged the whole affair, the Government should take control. Eventually the surviving Indian leaders, who survived swore allegiance to Queen Victoria and it was hoped that lessons had been learnt. However, as so often with this over-used platitude, lessons would seem not to have been learnt, for the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), on visiting India less than 20 years later, confessed himself to be deeply shocked by the "rude and rough manner

THE  
**CHELTENHAM LOOKER-ON;**  
A Note-Book of fashionable Sayings and Doings.

No. MCCXLI.

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1858.

[PRICE 2d.]

**MADAME MONTIGNANI'**

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**SOIREE MUSICALE**

WILL TAKE PLACE

**ON TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 9TH, 1858**

COMMENCING AT EIGHT O'CLOCK,

**AT THE QUEEN'S HOTEL,**

Under the distinguished patronage of

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March 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th.

**GRAND ILLUMINATED DAY EXHIBITIONS!!**

**ON TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, AND SATURDAY,**

Commencing at Two o'clock.—Doors open at Half-past One.

**M. GOMPERTZ**, Proprietor and Artist of the Panoramas of the Cabal Powers, China War, and the Crimean War, begs respectfully to announce to the Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy of this Town, that he has been busily engaged upon his present Panoramas, assisted by some of the first London Artists, from the commencement of the Mutiny, and that he has executed in magnitude and completeness any of his former productions.—Accompanied by a splendid SAXOPHON BAND, who will perform Selections from the most popular Composers on their SILVER INSTRUMENTS, manufactured expressly for them by Antoine Carls, of Paris.—Musical Director, Mr. A. YOUNG; Descriptive Lecturer, Mr. RINKLER.

**GOMPERTZ'S GRAND**

**HISTORICAL PANORAMA OF THE INDIAN MUTINIES.**

In order to convey an idea of the Localities in India, where the Revolts have taken place, a PICTORIAL CHART is introduced, showing at a glance the whole of Hindostan.

The Panorama commences moving with a View of the CITY and FORTIFICATIONS of DELHI, embracing every object of interest around the City—British Encampment—General Barad and Staff, and Fortified Position before Delhi—Battle of Subrohmudie—Execution of mutinous Sepoys at Feshawar—City of Lahore—Massacre at Cawnpore—General Havelock's Victory at Moolwah—Assault and Capture of Delhi. To be followed by Gompertz's Panoramas of

**THE CITY OF CANTON,**

Presenting a magnificent View of the entire City, together with the Eastern and Western Suburbs; the French and Dutch Factories; the Hong and European Factories; the Governor's House and City Pagoda; Place of Execution; Chinese War and Trading Junk, and every description of Craft peculiar to Chinese Waters.

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with which the English Public Servants treated the natives” and “by the disgraceful habit of officers speaking of the inhabitants of India, many of them sprung from great races”. Mr Albert Grey, one of the prince’s equerries, remarked “if I were an Indian, I would long to be free of such contemptuous masters”. It was to be many years before Indians were free – not until 15 August 1947 when India received its independence but that is another story.

Whilst the horrors of the Mutiny were still fresh in the minds of the Anglo-Indians in Cheltenham, the *Looker-On* of 6 March 1858 advertised on its front page an ‘Historical Panorama of the Indian Mutinies’, and again on 1 May ‘Siege, Storm and Capture of Delhi’.

Thus closed a chapter in the lives of the Anglo-Indians and the memorials in Christ Church, Leckhampton, the New Cemetery off the Lower High Street and in the Cheltenham College Chapel bear witness to those brave and intrepid people who perished in India. The many hundreds of memorials in the churches and graveyards in India are even more poignant.

## NOTABLE RESIDENTS OF LANSDOWN

**T**here were many people of note living in the Lansdown area. It would be impossible to include them all but a large majority of them were members of the HEIC or the army and navy, and no doubt they all had very interesting careers. Included here are some of those men who were not only respected members of this close-knit society but who served their local community in many ways.

### SIR JOSIAH COGHILL

Perhaps the most colourful and flamboyant newcomer in 1835 was Vice Admiral Sir Josiah Coghill who arrived at Birkenhead from Ireland with his large family and all their possessions. They set off in a variety of coaches with their servants with Sir Josiah himself, driving a mail coach. He fancied himself as a driver but his youngest son, Kendal, later said his father could steer a ship but not a team of horses. More than once Josiah managed to overturn his coach in Cheltenham, spilling the junior Coghills out, but it seemed they survived these mishaps.

On their arrival in Cheltenham they stayed first at the Plough Hotel before settling briefly



**Sir Kendal Coghill and grandson**

in Lansdown Place, as is shown on the 1841 census. Joscelyn, the eldest son, is not recorded there but he probably had already become a boarder at the newly-opened College. Josiah finally settled at Kenilworth House in Pittville where he died, aged 78. His eldest son, Joscelyn, inherited the baronetcy, and Joscelyn's own son Neville was killed defending the flag at Isandhlwana.

Josiah's son Kendal also followed a military career and it is to him that we owe much of the history of this family for he appears to have been a bit of a lad. Despite the family's proximity to the college, he was sent as a boarder; no doubt he needed the discipline. Kendal likened the College at that time to Dothe Boys Hall, where more caning was applied than learning and boxing was more prized than scholarship. He boasted of the expense he caused for new canes, with 'which he was hammered for nothing'.

Kendal took part in many fights and escapades, one being to scale the wall of the girls' school in Suffolk Square. One day Miss Aldridge, the headmistress, went to Kenilworth House to complain to Josiah about his son's behaviour. The old Admiral, trying not to laugh, said "Damned young dog. He didn't get it from me. Where did he get it from?"

Kendal also recalled how he and other chaps painted the 'armless ladies' in Montpellier red, blue and green and were later flogged for it. He believed the Reverend Francis Close complained of these ladies as being scantily attired.

On leaving college, Kendal took up his military career and was at Delhi during the Indian Mutiny, fighting alongside Willoughby and Vibart. He seemed to have led a charmed life in that dangerous time and was of the opinion that the British were too lenient in punishing the mutineers, though records do not seem to bear this out.

He returned to Cheltenham just before the First World War and recounted his experiences. He died in 1919 at his family estate in Dublin.

## **THOMAS RICHARDSON COLLEDGE**

Another well-respected resident of Lansdown was Thomas Richardson Colledge MD, F.R.S. Edin. He qualified as a surgeon after five years' study and practice in the Leicester Infirmary in 1817, and was then appointed to the HEIC service in 1819, proceeding directly to China where he at once entered into practice. Subsequently, under the political arrangements of the time, he was transferred to the Crown as presidency surgeon of hospitals in Canton, Whampoa and Macao. He continued his duties there till his discharge in 1838 when he returned to England and shortly after took up his MD Degree at King's College, Cambridge.

In 1841 he selected Cheltenham as his future residence and commenced

practice as a physician, having for his colleagues, Drs. Baron Boisragen, Cannon, Aclarde, Gibney and a dozen others, serving the large society of the rich and famous in Cheltenham. The family settled in the newly built Lauriston House, on the corner of Queen's Parade and Lansdown Crescent.

The family lived at this imposing residence and Dr. Colledge died there in 1879 leaving a Will which provided for his wife and children. His eldest son, George, the only one of his children to

have been born in China, becoming a British subject, evidently had predeceased him. However, his son John stayed on at Lauriston House with his family.

A daughter had married Major Cunliffe Martin who was a great friend of General Roberts, the hero of Kabul. Dr. Colledge had not only provided adequately for his wife, children and grandchildren but also made two special bequests to his 'valued coachman', John Pike, and his wife's maid, Ann Bullock, of £50 each. These appreciative gestures showed what a thoughtful, revered and popular man he was.

The imposing Lauriston House, now offices, still stands, looking down Montpellier and facing the junction with Lansdown Road.

## **SIR HENRY CHARLES DARLING**

Sir Henry Charles Darling had a long and wide-ranging colonial career. He was born in 1809 in Nova Scotia, the eldest son of Major General Henry Charles Darling Senior and was educated at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, where he obtained an ensigncy without purchase in the 57th Foot on 7 December 1825. In 1827 he was appointed Assistant Private Sec-



retary to his uncle Lt. Gen. Ralph Darling, then Governor of New South Wales, and in 1830 became his Military Secretary.

In 1833, during another period at Sandhurst, he was appointed to the staff of Sir Lionel Smith as a Military Secretary in the West Indies from 1833-6 and in Jamaica from 1836-9.

Darling retired from the Army in 1841 and later became Adjutant General for immigration. After serving many years in the West Indies, in 1863 he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Victoria, Australia, being made a KCB for his long and effective public service. However, whilst in the administration for this Imperial colony some misunderstanding arose between two personages of the Legislature as to certain financial actions. Sir Charles Darling, following this unhappy dispute, was constrained to act in certain matters upon his own responsibility and unfortunately in so doing, incurred the displeasure of the Government at home,



**Sir Charles Darling**

by whom he was rather summarily recalled.

On his return to England he took up residence at 7 Lansdown Terrace, Cheltenham, where he had many friends and where, in 1851, he married Lady Darling, then Miss Salter. She was his third wife.

Sir Charles died on 25 January 1870 in his 61st year and on receiving notice of his death the Government of Victoria voted the sum of £20,000 to his widow.

Although Darling was adjudged free from blame, this misunderstanding must have been common knowledge when he came to Cheltenham. Nevertheless, the *Cheltenham Looker-On* published an article on 21 May 1870 commenting on the annuity made to Lady Darling, pointing out that when news of Sir Charles' death was announced, Parliament and the Assembly adjourned as a mark of respect. 'When the House met on the following day, the action taken by the Constitution Party was sufficient answer to the slander, which at one time was so industriously circulated, to the effect that the policy pursued by the Party was the result of personal hostility to the late Governor.' It would seem the Australian Government had shamed the British Government for the way they had treated one of Australia's most respected Governors.

## **THOMAS FROBISHER**

Thomas Frobisher (1789-1863) was born in York and was the third son of Nathaniel Frobisher of Halifax and Mary his wife. Thomas arrived in



India in 1806 becoming an Ensign that year. His rapid promotion through the ranks involved him in operations against Gopal Singh in Budethland in 1807 and the capture of Java in 1811. He became a Lieutenant in the 5th Bengal Volunteers and served in Java till 1814, and the Nepal War 1814-15. He gained the India Medal at the third Mahratta War and saw further action with Pindaries in 1817.

His first wife, Caroline, whom he married in July 1833, died in Cheltenham soon after and in 1836 he married Rose Helsham by whom he had a son and daughter. In 1841 they settled at 15 Lansdown Place where they were popular members of the close-knit Anglo-Indian society, and Thomas became a leading figure in local events.

Frobisher was a regular visitor at Sir Josiah Coghill's home and no doubt a willing member of the gentlemen's clubs. He died in Cheltenham in 1863 mourned by many friends.

### **LT. COL. CHARLES PRATT KENNEDY**

Charles Kennedy (1789-1875) was born at Holywood, Co. Down on 15 November 1789 and was the eighth son of John Kennedy of Cultra, Co. Down, JP, and his wife, Elizabeth née Cole of Fermanagh.

Col. Charles Kennedy married Charlotte Unett of Herefordshire and entered the service of the Bengal Artillery in 1806, shortly after being nominated to the only troop of horse artillery then existing in India. He served with them in the Nepal Campaign under General Sir R. Gillespie. The General was killed by Kennedy's side whilst storming the hill fortress of Kalunga.

Kennedy revisited England in 1818 and on his return to India in 1820 was appointed by the Marquis of Hastings to the political agency of the Hill States at Simla, where he was well-known.

A French traveller, Jacquemont, described him 'as an amiable fellow, the best paid of all the Captains of Artillery . . .' Such was the confidence reposed in his diplomatic ability, sound judgement and discretion whilst he was in charge of the regiment of artillerymen, that he continued in the Agency of the Hill States down to the close of his sojourn in India in 1836, when he retired from the service, returning to Cheltenham.

He took up residence at 13 Lansdown Crescent, so evidently was not superstitious. He played a very active part in Cheltenham's affairs and was, no doubt, a valuable member of the clubs.

Kennedy died in Lansdown at the age of 85 and his nephews, Lt. Gen. McCausland CB and Sir Arthur Kennedy, who had only just returned from China, were in attendance. He was interred in the New Cemetery off the Lower High Street, as were many Anglo-Indian Officers.

## THE LOUSADA FAMILY

The Lousada family lived at 3 Lansdown Villas, the very impressive Italianate villa standing at the junction of Malvern Road and Lansdown Crescent (pictured on p.5).

The family were of Portuguese ancestry and in the 19th century they were banned from Portugal and settled in Jamaica for a short time before coming to England, settling in Lansdown. Miss Lousada was instrumental in founding the synagogue that stands tucked away off St. James Square.

The Jewish congregation in 19th-century Cheltenham included many well-known, respected residents; among who were the Da Silva family, the Lousadas, M.R. Henriques (bookseller), E. Samuel (furrier), and H. Karro (jeweller).

In the 20th century Captain Lousada, son of Simeon Charles Lousada JP of the Norfolk Regiment and then resident at Shelburne Hall in Lansdown Road, was educated at Cheltenham College. From there he went to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, receiving a commission in the 1st Battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment in 1909. After spending some time in India, he went to France in January 1915 where he was killed in action on the 4 May 1915 at the age of 27.

His brother, Edward Arthur Lousada of the Royal Essex Regiment, also attended Cheltenham College and Sandhurst. He went to France in 1914 and was killed there during the First World War.

Like so many young men living in the Lansdown and Bayshill areas, they attended the College and their names, with many others, are commemorated on a stained glass window in the College Chapel.

## SIR ROBERT SMIRK

Sir Robert Smirk, Architect, was born in 1781 and is best remembered for his design of the British Museum Portico, the romantic Eastnor Castle near Ledbury and Shire Hall, Gloucester.

On coming to Cheltenham in 1851, he lived for a time at 3 Lansdown Villas next to the Lousada family. He then moved to 20 Suffolk Square where he died in 1867. He is buried in Leckhampton Churchyard.

His house in Suffolk Square became known as Bunwell House and from 1872 was the home of Dr. Edward Jex-Blake,



**Sir Robert Smirk**

Principal of Cheltenham College. Later it was used as a boarding house for the Cheltenham Ladies' College, but today, like so many grand villas, it has been converted into flats, and bears the name Montpelier House.

## **SIR WILLIAM SAMPSON WHISH**

Sir William Whish (1787-1853) was a Lt. Gen. in the Bengal Artillery and was son of Richard Whish, Rector of West Walton and Vicar of Wickford, Essex, by Anne the daughter of William Sandys.

In 1809 he married the daughter of George Dixon, by whom he had children. His eldest son, George Palmer Whish, became General of the Bengal Corps and served with his father in Gujarat. Another son, Henry Edward, was Major General of the Bengal Staff Corps and also served with his father at the siege of Multan and in the Indian Mutiny Campaign.

Sir William, like so many of his generation, became part of the Indian Army receiving a commission as Lieutenant in the Bengal Artillery in 1804 on his arrival in India. He was promoted to Captain on 13 May 1807 and was in the rocket troop of horse artillery and served under the Marquis of Hastings in the Pindari and Maratha War at the end of 1817 and beginning of 1818. In 1820 he was appointed as Brigade Major and promoted to Major on 19 July 1821.

After a brilliant career in India, he was made CB on the occasion of the Queen's Coronation in 1838 and then promoted to Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, Military Division, on 6 June 1849, and transferred to the Command of the Bengal Division of the Army. But before taking up his appointment he came home on furlough. For a short time he resided in Lansdown Parade but he died at Claridges Hotel, Brook Street, London on the 25 February 1853.

Three surviving daughters, Mary, born 1818, Ann, born 1821, and Ellen born 1824, were living with their two servants in Lansdown Parade in 1881, supported by dividends. The Misses Whish were well-known as benefactors to the town, particularly in the Alstone/Westall area. They donated money to provide an annual prize for children at the Christ Church Schools. In the 1890s they donated the ornate drinking fountain that stood at Westall Green, but now is now situated at the far end of Sandford Park by Keynsham Road. The family gave much to the area in which they had settled and Anne Whish, the wife of Sir William, is buried in Leckhampton Churchyard.

It was quite common in the Anglo-Indian community for sons to follow in their fathers' footsteps. Many married out in India and their children were born out there but, because the climate was not conducive to raising white children there, many were sent home to England to board with rela-

tives or to attend the numerous boarding schools in Cheltenham, as census returns indicate.

## SIR GEORGE DOWTY

We leave behind the 19th-century worthies and look at the 20th-century residents of Lansdown. Sir George Dowty who founded the great Dowty Group business empire, was born in Pershore, Worcestershire, and was his parents seventh son and a twin. He was only 10 years old when his father died in 1911.



George Dowty

There was no engineering tradition in his family for his father was a chemist by trade. His mother's family, the Masters, were long established in the Vale of Evesham. It was her brother-in-law, Sidney Fitzroy Fell, a Worcestershire solicitor, who first awakened George's mechanical skills by giving him a small steam engine. George then contrived to make a mini set of fairground gallopers for his engine.

Dowty went to grammar school and later began his engineering career as an apprentice at Heenan & Froude at 6s. per week. He little thought then that he would found an engineering empire.

He later served with a number of engineering companies, extending his skills, particularly in aeronautics. On 11 June 1931 this aeronautical designer returned home to his flat in 10 Lansdown Terrace to find a telegram awaiting him from the Kawasaki Aircraft Company in Japan, concerning a new type of landing wheel which had been publicised by Dowty, the inventor, a month earlier.

Events proceeded rapidly, for the designer's company, the Gloster Aircraft Company, withdrew from the scheme and so Dowty decided to produce the wheels himself and resigned from the company. He thereupon rented a mews loft in the lane behind his flat and equipped it with a workbench and manually operated dies and a few hand-tools and began work.

Despite neighbouring premises being a petrol station, and the floor beneath being covered with wood shavings, no fire insurance was taken out as Dowty could not wait for the formalities. Besides, he could keep watch from his flat.

By 21 September the finished wheels were on their way to Japan. The Kawasaki Company were thoroughly satisfied and paid up immediately and from this modest beginning grew the vast Dowty empire, based at

Arle Court. A plaque on the wall of the mews behind Lansdown Terrace commemorates the success of this former Lansdown resident.

## **JOHN JAMES CYPHER**

Rose View, Queen's Road, Cheltenham was the home of Mr James Cypher, the founder of the Queen's Road Nurseries. He was born in Tetbury in 1827 and settled in Cheltenham in 1848 where he worked as a gardener for Miss Savage of Tetbury Lodge (Douro Road). On her death in the early 1860s, Cypher set up his own business on disused claypits on the Bayshill estate (i.e. on the Queen's Road site site of some former brickfields). He was the head of this famous firm of orchid growers and florists of Cheltenham and was known throughout the British Isles as an expert at his business and a great judge of flowers.

Despite the poor quality of the soil, Cypher managed to build up a thriving business that at the time of his death occupied both sides of Queen's Road, with 70 large greenhouses in the Exotic Nurseries, and a workforce of 60-70 .

The firm specialised in exotic plants and particularly in orchids that were exhibited at various shows, winning many awards. Cypher's sons followed in his footsteps and built up the business. Messrs. Cypher gained cups and medals and their first prizes must have run into the hundreds. When they were not winning medals they were judging shows, including Chelsea, Shrewsbury, Southport, Taunton and the Royal Show. The export trade of the firm was extensive, winning international acclaim; Cypher's products were shipped to Japan, East Indies, Portugal and the British colonies.

Throughout the 19th century, however, locally the firm were best known for the exquisite floral decorations at the many balls held in Cheltenham, and no doubt they were called upon to add their exotic blooms to enhance private parties and weddings. Certainly there cannot have been many dwelling in the Lansdown/Bayshill area which did not display their beautiful blooms.



**John Cypher**

## **THE REVEREND FRANCIS CLOSE**

Perhaps one of the most controversial characters who came to reside in the Lansdown area in the 19th century was The Reverend Francis Close. For 30 years he was the incumbent of the Parish Church of Cheltenham, having previously served as the incumbent of Trinity Church. He was de-

scribed by one of his contemporaries as 'a gentleman of plump proportions, rather rosy-faced and of an undeniable amplitude of waist, rather burly in figure, dignified in demeanour and rather reserved looking'.

There was one great peculiarity in Mr Close's manner at Cheltenham, in that he had a habit of talking to his lady parishioners from the sacred desk as he might talk to a circle of ladies engaged in charitable work. 'Leaning over his pulpit, complacently folding his arms and lowering his voice, he talks quietly to his hearers, as if he were coaxing them into piety.' The ladies adored him – not so other members of his congregation.



**Rev. Francis Close**

Evangelical in his outlook, he despised what he called 'Romish Practices' and ritual. He was very forthright and did not hesitate to say what he thought, nor was he concerned to whom he expressed his views, thereby earning himself detractors. On the subjects of RACING and GAMBLING he fulminated from his pulpit that 'it was scarcely possible to turn one's steps in any direction without hearing the voice of blasphemers or the reeling drunkard, or witnessing scenes of the latest profligacy. In the evening and to a late hour of every night, the houses of public resort are filled with excess, and the streets too frequently with the disturbance and contention. These', he declared 'were the invariable consequence of the RACE WEEK.' One wonders what he would say were he around today for Cheltenham's popular Gold Cup week!



**The little school in St James Square**

Close held contempt for what was popularly known as 'the hunting and shooting set', the leader of which was Lord Berkeley, with whom he had acrimonious correspondence. Nevertheless, despite his very forthright and outspoken manner he did much good for the town for, along with Samuel Wilderspin, he was instrumental in

setting up one of the country's first purpose-built Infant schools in Alstone Lane for the less advantaged children in the area. This was followed by the little Infant school in St. James Square, which building still exists, though no longer as a school. Even so, in this latter worthy venture he and Wilderspin did not see eye to eye regarding teaching methods; Wilderspin pioneered learning through play whereas Close held a much more disciplined outlook.

Francis Close was involved in many other worthy causes, not least the Cheltenham hospital, which in those pre NHS days relied on charitable donations. Perhaps he expressed himself badly at a meeting to discuss accepting the proceeds of amateur theatrical performances, or what he said was misconstrued, but the outcome was a series of anonymous letters to the local papers and indeed to *The Times*, to which his attention was drawn by his supporters and which he refuted. The editor of *The Times* printed his disclaimer whilst at the same time quoting the defamatory article from the *Gloucester Journal*. All this occurred in 1849 when Close was also involved in raising funds to found Teacher Training Colleges, namely St. Paul's and St. Mary's. The stress of this unsavoury affair told on his health and he and his family were compelled to take a break to recuperate.

That same year the *Looker-On*, printed a lengthy letter from Close's supporters who, concerned for his lowered spirits and declining health, welcomed him back and assured him that during his absence they had continued to raise money to fund the Training College and had raised the £2,000 still required to complete its erection. Today that College still stands with Francis Close Hall in St. Paul's Road, so-named to commemorate all that the worthy gentleman did for education in the town.

Despite his detractors, Close was a very popular preacher and his home, provided by subscriptions from his parishioners, furnished with knick-knacks from his adoring female followers, can still be seen as The Grange, Malvern Road, where in the 20th century Charles Irving, MP for Cheltenham, resided for a time. The Rev. Francis Close, after serving the town for 30 years, left to become Dean of Carlisle where, no doubt, even in his declining years, he probably upset some people with his forthright manner.

Besides the Training Colleges, he is also commemorated by Dean Close School. Although many light years away from the modest little school room in Lower Alstone, it reflects his abiding interest in education.

## **SIR CHARLES GRAHAM IRVING MP**

Perhaps the most famous and well-known resident of Lansdown in recent times was Sir Charles Irving. A native of Cheltenham, he was born on the 4 May 1924 at the family hotel in the High Street and later educated

at Glyngarth School (now a Cheltenham Ladies' College boarding house), later going to Lucton School in Hereford where, he confessed in later years, he was never very happy. He followed in the family business and became chairman of Irving's Hotels from 1949-67. During the war years it became a focal point for such celebrities as Ellen Terry and Mae West, and later the Beatles visited in 1963.

Sir Charles, in later years, recalled that his first political memory was when he was taken by his mother, an actress and former suffragette, to an Anti-capital Punishment Demonstration held to protest against the planned execution of a Gloucester prisoner. He was rescued from the



**Sir Charles Irving**

police baton charge by the American millionairess, Violet Van der Elst, then a leading figure in the Anti-Hanging Movement, who pulled him into her Rolls Royce. Although this particular prisoner was reprieved, the idea of hanging was so appalling to the young Irving that once in the House of Commons he voted against capital punishment.

He had hopes of joining the Army during the last war but failed to pass the test, which perhaps, in view of later events was just as well, for whilst in the Home Guard during an exercise on Leckhampton Hill he slipped and plunged his bayonet into the rear of another volunteer who, unfortunately, happened to be a retired Lieutenant General.

He served for many years as a local and county councillor and was elevated to the aldermanic bench in 1959 and was, for 28 years chairman of the Finance Committee. He was Mayor from 1958-60 and again in 1971-2 and later became an honorary freeman of the borough. In 1974 he gained a seat at Westminster with a majority of 10,500.

In his memoirs Irving confessed to being somewhat disappointed on his arrival at Westminster where he was made to feel very much like 'the new boy, yet to prove himself'. This he soon did and, as was the common custom, was co-opted to serve on various committees where he found his niche on the Catering Sub Committee. He soon set about improving the conditions of service there, for which he was heartily praised but he was not enamoured of the House of Commons itself, saying it reminded him of 'Old Gentlemen's Clubs with leather sofas and rather smelly toilets'. He



deplored the wasted space in Westminster Hall which was kept for ceremonies such as Lying In State.

Irving soon lost his awe of Westminster and settled in and found friends in all parties. He was a favourite of Margaret Thatcher who was regarded as a bit of a dragon, but with his old world courtesy (so rare in these days) he arranged for fresh flowers to be delivered to her each day.

As a constituent MP Irving was extremely popular and people of all ages and classes felt they could turn to him for help when needed. He took a great interest in many local affairs and in 1964 he was invited by Sir George Dowty to join the Dowty Group and for 22 years he was a director and consultant on public affairs. He served the town of Cheltenham for many years until he retired in 1992. He was also instrumental in initiating the Gloucestershire medals of courage which were awarded each year to local people who had shown acts of bravery or courage in the community. However, ill health dogged him and when he died in April 1995 he had left instructions that his ashes be scattered over the town which he loved and which he served so well in many capacities.

Despite some objectors to this distribution of his remains, his ashes, along with those of his twin sister Tibby who had died in Canada, were scattered over the countryside that had meant so much to him.

His funeral service at St. Matthew's was attended not only by colleagues from Westminster, but local dignitaries and the many friends he had made over the years. People lined the streets to bid farewell to this man who, surely, must be classed as one of the town's most popular MPs.

Irving did so much for the town itself and was involved in the setting up of a Hindu Temple and in raising finance for the St. Mark's and Hesters Way Community Centre where a room is named after him. A subscription was raised to have a bust made which graces the Town Hall, although people who knew him well did not feel it did him justice. He had previously lived at Drake House in Malvern Road but spent his final years in a flat at The Grange in Malvern Road (formerly the home of Francis Close) where he had assembled a valuable art collection. Sir Charles Irving left an estate of £1,434,010 net. After personal bequests of £155,000 and some effects, he left £5,000 to the Sue Ryder Foundation, £2,000 to the St. Mark's and Hesters Way Community Association, and £300,000 and the residue of his estate to the Charles Irving Charitable Trust.

Thus passed away one of Cheltenham's most loved and respected gentlemen and many ordinary people of the town have good reason to be grateful to him.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

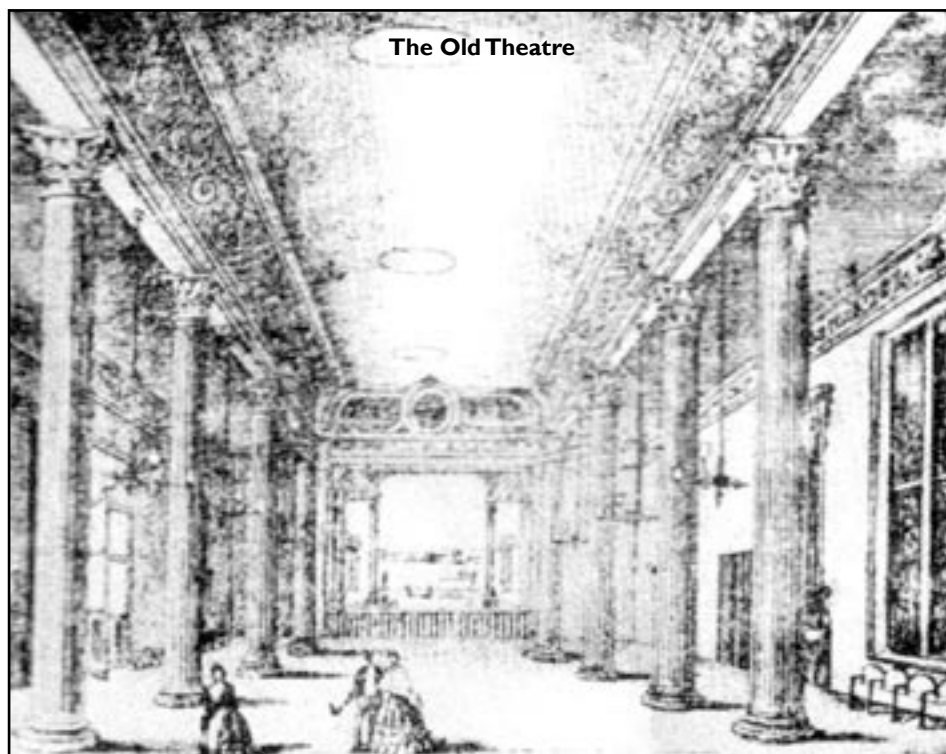
Following the final defeat of the rebels in India, the Anglo-Indian population in Cheltenham still retained their ties with the sub-continent, for the *Looker-On* regularly reported on births, marriages and deaths of those Anglo-Indians who still ventured out there. Indeed, only a few years later the English people gave generously to the Indian Famine Relief Fund, for it must be remembered that not all Indians were linked with the rebels.

Soon after 1858 the gaieties resumed much as ever but changes were gradually taking place and had been doing so since the 1840s. The first harbinger of change came when the Proprietary College for young gentlemen opened in Bayshill and amongst those first students were the Coghill boys. It was soon apparent that the premises were totally inadequate and so it moved to the present site in Bath Road.

However, another college set its sights on the area, namely the Ladies' College, then a flourishing academy for the daughters of the gentry, which was established in Cambray. Just as the College found it needed larger premises, so did the Ladies and its first step was to acquire Fauconberg House on the corner of Bayshill and St. George's Road. This was one of the first boarding houses set up in the area and, at that time, had the distinction of being the first one to have a bathroom.

By 1891 the block of buildings known as Fauconberg Terrace was acquired by the shareholders of the Ladies' College and the buildings and land extended for nearly the whole of the square enclosed by St. George's Road and Fauconberg Road on the North and South, and Bayshill Road and Old Well Lane on the West and East. All of this area was originally part of the Old Well gardens. The price paid for this land was believed to be in the region of £6,000. The Terrace had been built by Samuel Onley who then held the Old Pump Room and Theatre. These historical features, which had seen George III and his family partake of the healing spa waters, were eventually swept away along with most of the beautiful Well Walk. More villas and terraces in Bayshill were taken over as boarding houses for the Ladies' College pupils and by 1896 the Royal Theatre too was demolished to make way for the Princess Hall.

This prestigious college was far superior to the many other educational establishments which had flourished in Cheltenham from the 1700s for the education of children of the gentry, but that is not to say the children of the lower classes were neglected. As early as 1824 the Rev Francis Close and Samuel Wilderspin had founded the Infant school in Lower Alstone for the less fortunate, though of course the curriculum was somewhat differ-



ent. One cannot imagine the Higgs and Cook children conjugating Latin verbs as they tended their pigs or gardens.

However, these were not the only schools to set up in that area for in the 1830s in Bayshill House itself was Mr Fallon's School for the sons of gentlemen which offered a classical education and aimed at preparing boys for the army and navy or the HEIC. Even so they took boys from the landed gentry – both dayboys and boarders. It is doubtful if their lives differed much from those of school boarders today, but it should be borne in mind that many had been sent here by their parents in India for a suitable schooling and so they rarely saw any members of their family. It must have been lonely for them so it is not entirely surprising to read in the *Looker-On* in March 1837 of the 'Melancholy Suicide' of one of the pupils. Thomas Watson appears to have been an orphan with a background originally set in India who, at the age of 16 had been at the school some years when it would seem he had been showing signs of depression. Although allowances were made, no-one evidently expected the out-come.

It was found that Watson had crept out late one night and went to the chemist and asked for a bottle of laudanum for his grandmother who was

known in the area. He asked for a large bottle to be charged to her and sneaking back into school he drank most of the contents. His body was found next morning by one of the other pupils and the inquest gave a verdict of suicide. Whether this sad event had any effect on the school one cannot be sure for it seems to have closed down for a time before re-opening a year or so later under another headmaster. It finally closed in 1858 when a Mr Derby bought the premises and demolished them to make way for what is now Sydney Lodge, the home of Baron de Ferrieres in 1860 and now a Ladies' College boarding house. Thus the original home of Lord Fauconberg, once the temporary residence of George III and his family, was swept away.

One thing is certain, the curriculum at these private schools would have been very different from that at the little schools opened in Lower Alstone, but we doubt if the pupils at the latter would have envied the former, for when their brief lessons were over they would be free to run off and play, to help on the land, or even, in the case of the young Higgs, to muck out the pigs. They would not have felt under-privileged, but it was their rich neighbour, Mr La Terrière who seemed to object to the educational establishments springing up in and around Bayshill, for he wrote a lengthy volume expressing in no uncertain terms what he thought of these changes.

The La Terrière family resided at the magnificent edifice called Alstone Lawn which, rather incongruously, was adjacent to the Higgs Cottages, and stood facing Malvern Road which led into Upper Alstone. The writer of this 300 page volume with the very long title of *Days that are gone; being the Recollections of some Seventy Years of the Life of a very Ordinary Gentleman and his Friends in Three Reigns* was Mr B. de Sales La Terrière (Exon of the Yeoman of the Guards).

After stressing his aristocratic lineage, and his relationship to his mother's adoptive parents – the Prescods who owned plantations in the West Indies - he commented on their income from such plantations. They had produced some £40,000 a year before 'a sentimental wave liberated the slaves' (the only available labour), so reducing the income that, on Mr Prescod's death and after his affairs were settled, only about £40,000 capital remained. This was left to his wife who died aged 90 in 1880.

The Prescods lived in great style at Alstone and drove about in a yellow coach or a blue chariot. They were great friends of Fulwar Craven of Brockhampton and naturally were well in with the hunting and shooting set. However, La Terrière bemoaned that 'those palmy days of Cheltenham, when it was a fashionable resort, where people with money to spend came to enjoy themselves, was altered and spoiled when the College was

built and the system of 'day-boarders' with education on the cheap' was started. Small private schools sprang up all over the place as feeders for the College, and the fashionable residents and visitors were soon ousted by a host of Anglo-Indians, and other of the same class, with crowds of children and two-pence halfpenny to live on; that most of the fun and fashion departed the place never to return'.

This narrow and snobbish view of the 1920s was reproduced in the *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic*, surely offending the College authorities at the time. It is doubtful if many parents at that time considered they were getting education for their offspring 'on the cheap'. Col. La Terrière himself had been educated at Eton and his views serve to illustrate the general attitude of the 'hunting and shooting' class towards those who did not move in the same circles. Nevertheless, despite La Terrière's contemptuous remarks, the College has, over the years, well-earned its present good reputation.

## MONTPELLIER GARDENS

The nearest amenity for the residents of Bayshill and Lansdown were the gardens at Montpellier, built in the neighbouring tithing of Sandford. When in 1801 Henry Thompson, a wealthy London merchant and underwriter, bought a large portion of farmland belonging to the De La Bere family, he developed the site with the Montpellier Spa building, the first pump room, in 1809. A tree-lined walk was laid out as an approach and gardens were laid out opposite.

Among the attractions in those early days were glasshouses filled with exotic plants, built by Pearson Thompson. The Jearrad brothers designed and erected a Chinese pagoda with a bandstand underneath. There was also a pavilion that was used at the famous Eglinton Tournament in Scotland, and situated at the upper end of the gardens was the historic Napoleon's fountain which represented an infant boy clasping the neck of a swan from whose mouth water issued, as also from a circle of cherubs' heads below.

At that time in the 1830s both the Montpellier and Imperial Spas (the latter on the site of the Queen's Hotel), were owned by the Jearrad brothers. And the Montpellier grounds extended to Bath Road and the Imperial walks and drives went as far townwards as the River Chelt. The subscription rates were 3s. 6d. for six weeks, exclusive of gratuity to the pumper. To walk in the grounds was 3s. 6d., to ride 7s. per horse, and to drive 10 s. 6d. per carriage.

It can be imagined then that Montpellier would become the exclusive domain of the rich gentry who flocked to take up temporary or permanent

# THE CHELTENHAM LOOKER-ON:

A Note Book of the Sayings and Doings of Social, Political, and Fashionable Life.

No. 1459.]

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1861.

[Price 3d.]

## "THE CHELTENHAM MONTPELLIER GARDENS COMPANY, LIMITED."

### Directors:

Mr Alexander Ramsay, Bart., Montpellier Parks  
by William Ramsay Esq., C.S., M.P., Cheltenham  
Park

Edward Aynsley, Esq., Farnley Lodge

Robert Beauchamp, Esq., White Square

H. B. Barton, Esq., Byfleet Lane

Captain Ince, Coleridge House

T. E. Colledge, Esq., M.B., Lanchester House

John Abercrombie, Esq., M.B., Suffolk Square

R. W. Ramsay, Esq., Wensley Vale

G. F. Coghill, Esq., Bayhill Villa

Samuel T. Ellis, Esq., Bayhill Villa

Mr. W. S. Davis, Queen's Hotel

Alexander Elliot, Southport, Lanchester

James Downing, High Street

John Williams, High Street

Don Gibson, High Street

Chas. Banger, South Road

Edward Hale, Frome Street

A. Stuart, Esq., Frome Street

### Secretaries:

Messrs. Whitehead, Bell, and Co.

### Secretaries Not yet appointed:

### Shareholders:

The Gloucestershire Banking Company.

THE OBJECTS for which this Company is established are amongst others, "To lay out and maintain the Montpellier Gardens as a place for Public Amusement, Recreation, and Resort. To erect a Theatre and Hall for Musical and other purposes, and for Public Assemblies and Entertainment, with convenient Ante-Rooms, Museum, Walkways, Conservatories, Tennis and Cricket Courts, Lush and other Parks, and other necessary or convenient Offices and Buildings."

The Gardens, containing upwards of 21 Acres of Land, have been purchased for £12,000.

The nominal Capital of the Company is £12,000, divided into 1200 Shares of £10 each.

The Liability of the Shareholders is limited.

The great importance to Cheltenham of the objects the Company have in view, the Shareholders should not be doubted by any one interested in the prosperity of the Town, and they confidently appeal to their Fellow-Townsmen to come forward and render them a cordial support in their endeavours to carry these objects into effect.

Applications for Shares to be made to the Secretary (when appointed), or to the Directors of the Company.

R.E.—THE APPOINTMENT OF SECRETARY will be made by the Directors on the 7th of November next; and any person desirous of being appointed is requested to send in an application, with Testimonials, before that day (addressed to the Chairman), to the Secretaries of the Company, from whom information may be obtained as to the Rules and Rules of the office, &c.

residence in the newly developed areas of Lansdown and Bayhill. However, by the 1840s Montpellier Spa was used less for drinking the waters than for the balls and concerts at the Rotunda, and a row of shops was built in a style which happily, blended with that of the Spa, being distinguished by the use of the statues, the Caryatids, instead of pillars - those same statuesque maidens which Kendal Coghill and others tried to enhance with a coat of paint and were flogged for it.

Of the many entertainments offered at Montpellier Gardens in the 19th century, there cannot have been one more exciting and thought-provoking than that held from 31 May to 5 June 1858 which was a 'Colossal Representation of the Siege, Storm and Capture of Delhi', for the Indian Mutiny was still fresh in everyone's mind, not just the Anglo-Indians. The knowledge that local men had lost their lives there and some, notably Kendal Coghill, had survived, must have aroused great interest.

The Gardens were open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except Sundays and no servants or dogs were allowed in. During the summer season in June and July there were musical promenades. Everything was done to maintain the exclusivity and the attractions of the gardens but in September 1860 the editor of the *Looker-On* felt it incumbent upon himself to report in detail

the events that took place in the Gardens during that particular week. He stated that

*'The Montpel-  
lier Gardens,  
he regretted to  
say, witnessed  
repetitions of  
those low-life  
exhibitions  
which, on more*



**Montpellier Gardens and restored Proscenium today**

*than one occasion that summer, he had felt it his duty to speak of in terms of censure; more in sorrow than in anger – as calculated to damage the establishment in which they originated, and bring disgrace upon the town.'*

*'The entertainments announced for the evenings in question were, of themselves, unobjectionable, and, properly conducted, might have afforded amusement to respectable people; but associated as they were with drinking booths and vulgar pastimes, indulged in by disreputable characters they effectually forfeited all claim upon public sufferance: added to this, on Wednesday evening the promised horsemanship performances, which had taken place on Monday, were withheld – the manager of the troupe informing the crowd collected within the tent that, the proprietor of the Gardens having failed to keep his engagements with him, he must decline their repetition, and, if the company felt aggrieved, he was no party to the "swindle" of which they complained.*

*The murmuring throng thereupon repaired to where the temporary theatre seemed to proffer relief; but here also, they encountered disappointment. Neither the "great Blondin feat" nor any of the other wonders promised in the advertisements were forthcoming; and even the fireworks were suppressed. Disorder and confusion everywhere prevailed; and, to render the scene still more melancholy, a serious accident occurred to a young man who, in the dark, falling over an outstretched rope, broke his leg, and had to be conveyed on a shutter to the hospital.*

*Whilst these disreputable and disastrous proceedings were taking place, the drinking booths, to which he had already alluded, carried on a thriving trade; and one of the Rifle Bands of the town continued the performance of jigs and polkas for the diversion of a noisy crowd of men and women, whose conduct*

*and appearance were anything but respectable. Public decency and some little regard for the fair name of Cheltenham, had compelled the Looker-On to speak thus plainly in regard to this last attempt – and it was sincerely hoped that it would be the last – to demoralise the middle and to debase the lower orders of society by lures such as those which enticed them into the Montpellier Gardens on the occasions there alluded to. Nor could he close the present notice of the disreputable scenes enacted therein without enquiring by whose authority the bands of the Rifle Volunteers were permitted to appear in full uniform to stimulate and take part in such orgies? By so doing the character of the corps to which they belonged became compromised, and their commanders exposed to censure.'*

After this plain-speaking report was published, it evidently stirred the gentry of the town to take action and so in April 1861 a meeting took place at the Queen's Hotel to form a limited liability company for the purchase of Montpellier Gardens. The following November they were purchased by a joint-stock company consisting of noblemen and gentlemen interested in 'the welfare of the town'. Their object was to lay out and maintain the gardens as a place for public amusement recreation and resort, with public assembly rooms, conservatories, tennis, and racket courts. It was hoped that with more supervision and control such shocking incidents would not happen again.

The Improvement Acts gave the Borough Council increased powers with regard to the provision of public parks, but the spas themselves were declining as few residents or visitors were willing to pay for admission. The proprietors of Montpellier Gardens failed to keep in repair the ugly wooden railing which screened the gardens from the public view and the rides on the north and south sides had lodging houses built along them during the second decade of the 19th century, their names being changed from North and South Parades to Montpellier Spa Road and Montpellier Terrace respectively.

By April 1881 Messrs. J. Lillywhite and C. Sweeting announced that they had taken the Gardens on lease and respectfully sought to solicit the support of the residents and visitors in their efforts to preserve this centrally situated pleasure garden as a place of festive resort. It was intended to add lawn tennis and be available for archery meetings, flower shows, athletic sports and other 'high-class' amusements. As many persons had expressed a desire that music should be provided, the lessees, in order to comply with the wishes of their subscribers, stated that a subscription would be opened and a book kept at the Lodge for such interested parties to append their names and amount of subscription, and they hastened to add that



should subscriptions be sufficient a band would be engaged.

The response having proved to be more than adequate a military band was engaged to perform two afternoons and two evenings a week in June, and if the poorer residents of the town could not enter the gardens, at least they could hear the music.

By 1886 however, conversion of the Gardens into building plots was mooted so Messrs. H. and R. Webb, the coal merchants of Tivoli, issued a circular announcing their intention of not only keeping them open as pleasure grounds for the recreation of residents and visitors, but also giving Promenade Concerts each week for which the town band had been engaged. On May Day 1886 the *Looker-On* announced that the Gardens would be opening under new management and restored to the purpose for which they were formed as a place of recreation for the residents and visitors to Cheltenham to which they may at all times resort, secure from the intrusion of the general public, and where they may, on four days a week, be amused by the pursuits of the Town Band undisturbed by the throngs.

But upkeep and changing circumstances made maintenance so precarious that in 1891 the Borough Council purchased the Montpellier Spa and its gardens for £7,400. By this policy the gardens were saved from the speculative builder, thus maintaining a large part of the Regency heritage, and today (Spring 2008) with the financial help of the Heritage Lottery Fund the Council is committed to improving the Parks and Gardens through the Civic Pride initiative and the project for Montpellier is valued at just over £1 million of which just under £800,000 is allocated to capital works.

Much has already been achieved and more is to be done to change this historical survivor of Cheltenham's Regency past into an attractive amusement garden catering for all tastes, young and old, and from all walks of life. It is to be hoped those who visit it will not bring disgrace to the town as did those thoughtless revellers in 1860.

## HOME, SWEET HOME

In the hey-day of the Lansdown area in the 1860s, out of a population of 379, 149 were servants. By the early part of the 20th century servants were no longer keen to slave the long hours for low rates of pay and the gentry could not keep up these large establishments without their help. Where once these elegant establishments had housed gentry, white-collar workers began to move in and Lansdown Crescent, with its large number of decaying houses, gradually deteriorated. In the 1970s the Guinness Trust began to buy up houses in Lansdown Crescent and with conservation grants was able to restore the derelict properties and sub-divide them into



**Aerial view Lansdown**

self-contained flats, the insides of which differed vastly from the original rooms, though the exteriors retained their former Regency grandeur.

The tenants, far from being aristocratic, were mostly white and blue-collar workers. The larger villas in and around Lansdown and Bayshill, because of their size and rates, could not attract residential families and so gradually they became hotels, nursing homes or offices, often with two or three businesses using the same premises.

One imposing residence, said to be one of Samuel Onley's architectural gems, was Glenlee, situated at the top of Bayshill Road. Originally it housed an extremely wealthy family. Later it was used as a boarding house by the Ladies' College before becoming an hotel, the Savoy, and most recently (2008) the Kandinsky Hotel. It has had many important guests over the years including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and, more recently, Julie Walters. Indeed, Bayshill comes into its own during Race Work, for the many hotels in the area cater for the great influx of race-goers. Many of

the Victorian villas in the prestigious offices.

As to the more modern away at the Crescent, which in housed the numerous fly men who earned their area taking the dents wherever to go, are now, turned into mews into workshops. that this once is often defaced tippers of another fronts of these no-need to turn to gain they looked in their

In the 1860s the *Look-some* houses in Lansdown buyers, but with its re-birth in property prices rose sharply till in 2007 No. 1 Lansdown Terrace was put up for sale at the enormous sum of £1,125,000. Who will purchase it – a film star, a pop star, a TV Idol? We wonder if they will give a thought to the notable person-ages who once lived in the Terrace.

If you care to visit the area in the spring on a Bank Holiday when the commuters' cars are absent and the residents away on holiday, and if you can ignore the many 'For Sale' signs and the obtrusive wheelie bins which detract from this

quiet backwater, then you can almost imagine yourself back in the mid-19th century. You can picture old Josiah Coghill whipping up his team of

Bayshill area now house

est dwellings hid-back of Lansdown the 19th century numerous fly men living in the wealthy resi-they wished in many cases flats and others It is regretted prestigious area by casual fly-kind. It is to the ble dwellings we some idea of how hey-day.

*er-On* reported that Terrace failed to attract the 20th and 21st centuries,



**Cottage Rowanfield Road built 1850**

horses, or maybe a weary maidservant scrubbing the steps outside one of the lofty houses of Lansdown Crescent.

It is a far cry from Lower Alstone which, although it has seen even greater changes with the railway cutting across it and the opening of the gas-works, appears to have had a longer and more continuous familial history



**Old Town Survey of Lansdown Parade and Lansdown Crescent**

than Upper Alstone whose transient residents came just for the 'Seasons'. In Lower Alstone, where old families whose ancestors had lived there for

generations, occupying the same premises year after year, sharing with their neighbours a closeness and harmony. It is strange to see this the gentry who dwelt in that area have finally left and their noble houses have long gone. However, many little cottages still remain to give the Lower Alstone area a continuity that is missing in the Lansdown and Bayshill areas with its grand Regency and Victorian houses.

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## A GUIDED TOUR AROUND LOWER ALSTONE

'Walk round ... and count the towers; take notice of the walls and examine the fortresses, so that you may tell the next generation.'

Psalm 48 vss. 12,13.

'... old buildings are the physical record of our past and culture, and ultimately they belong to us all.' *Ptolemy Dean (Restoration)*

**A**lstone is a largely unheard-of suburb of Cheltenham. As a place-name, it now only appears on road-signs as the name of an industrial estate. The correct pronunciation is indicated by the spelling 'Aulston,' which is how it appears in the historical records in 1548.

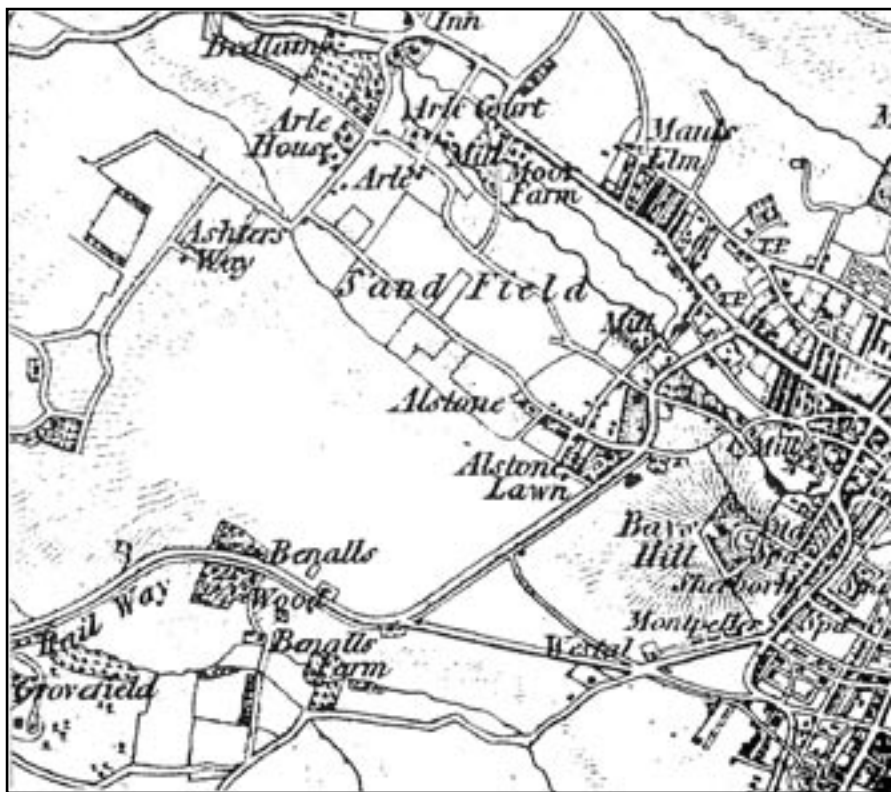
The authors, having worked on the companion volume *Discovering Alstone Volume One*, had created a list of the areas oldest buildings. Out of that evolved this imaginary guided tour around part of old Alstone. The inquisitive reader can follow the suggested walk on foot. We hope to publish a second walk around the upper part of the village, around Millbrook Street.

A mention of every historic cottage in the area is beyond the space available in this book. The following selection of buildings is biased towards those still existing rather than vanished ones. In the following survey we have also included some recent buildings which similarly fail to publicise their heritage.

There are many more surviving buildings of over 175 years old than might be expected in the area – maybe more than can be found in some nearby country villages. Note that the oldest buildings are not always the most exciting, but they are soundly-built pieces of vernacular architecture, some of them older than the Regency building boom.

The existence of old houses also implies the existence of old highways. We have not gone into great detail about the survival of old roads, but it is impossible to start our walk without mentioning G. Coates's 1776 plan of the roads through Cheltenham. This old map is quite detailed but not particularly easy to understand. Rather than reproduce that original map in its faded state, here instead is a re-drawing of the part of it that is relevant to Alstone. The words in capital letters are the modern street names added. Other words are as on the original map, with the original spelling, but set in a modern typeface for clarity. We can then use this as a basis for our walking tour. By keeping the walk only to the area of Alstone within





**The Ordnance Survey 1 inch: 1 mile map of 1828.**

pear on the 1776 map, nor in the 1831 Arle & Alstone Inclosure Act. The house-names given in the following text appear in later directories and census returns and maps, in particular Harper's 1844 street directory and the Old Town Survey map of about 1855.

Very few of Alstone's old buildings are defended against demolition by being officially listed (at present). It may be that Alstone contains nothing rare or unusual, but that doesn't mean it's not worth preserving. Anyway, the reader of this book may like to follow on foot this circuit of the area, to see if it inspires any degree of affection for our locality, or any desire to preserve its architecture.

Allow about 20 minutes for walking, plus reading time. We start and finish at the crossroads where Gloucester Road meets Alstone Lane and St. George's Road, by Andrews' Newsagent's. Start by heading westwards down Alstone Lane, (which is sometimes referred to as Alstone Street or Alstone Road in old documents).

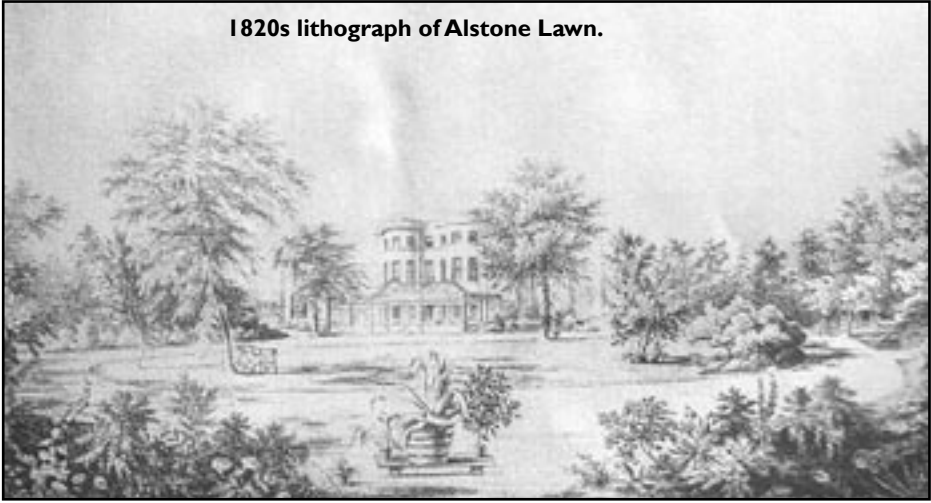


## A LANE OF MANSIONS AND COTTAGES

Here once stood a fine mansion, set in a garden of just over seven acres, called Alstone Lawn. This was built two hundred years ago in 1807 by William Sealy as an 8-bedroomed villa. Overlooking its garden was a double-bow window, to which a large conservatory was later added – probably in



**1820s lithograph of Alstone Lawn.**



the 1820s. William Sealy's son, Thomas Henry, was born at Alstone Lawn in 1811 - he later became a much-celebrated writer and poet, and sadly died at the early age of 37.

A selling-point in 1813 was that Alstone Lawn had its own well of saline water – spas still being popular at the time. The next owner of the property was William Hinds Prescod who obtained his wealth from sugar plantations in Barbados. Prescod and his wife Mary appeared to those in Cheltenham to be a childless wealthy couple. They adopted Mary Gurney, the second daughter of a near neighbour of theirs who lived at Maryville (in St. George's Road). However, in Barbados, Prescod had fathered four mulatto children with Mary Lydia Smith, between 1806 and 1812. He may not have publicly acknowledged these children, but they did have his sur-

**Pates Avenue, on the site of Alstone Lawn. (2005 M.H.)**



name and he did support them financially. (This was a set of circumstances not unusual in the 19th-century Caribbean plantations). The eldest child, Samuel Jackman Prescod, was a strong promoter of anti-slavery who in 1840 travelled to London to attend the General Anti-Slavery Convention. In 1843, while his father was living comfortably at Alstone Lawn, Samuel

was elected as the first Afro-Barbadian to serve in the colony's House of Assembly.

William Hinds Prescod died in 1848. A sale of his art collection at Alstone Lawn in 1861 shows just how wealthy he must have been – it included paintings supposedly by Rubens, Vandyke and Titian, and marble busts of over twenty warriors, senators and poets.

Prescod's adopted daughter Mary Gurney married Fenwick Bulmer de Sales La Terrière in 1853. The La Terrière family, known for their sporting interests, continued at Alstone Lawn into the 20th century. The property remained empty following the death of the widowed Mary in 1911 – she had lived at Alstone Lawn almost all her life.

In December 1913 the house was the subject of a suffragette arson attack which destroyed the staircase and left a large hole in the roof. The two young women responsible proved unco-operative when taken into custody, refusing to recognise a court where they were to be tried by men. They were subsequently taken to Worcester Gaol to await trial. The grand mansion was obviously considered to represent establishment values and therefore to be a legitimate target for protest.

By the 1920s, Alstone Lawn had been demolished, and the grounds were used as allotments for a time. In 1933, the site was bought by Cheltenham Borough Council, and Pates Avenue was built there. This street was named after the chairman of the Housing Committee at that time, John Poytress Pates, and it was built specifically to re-house families of Swindon Place and Swindon Passage (off the High Street). These families had been displaced by the Borough Council's efforts to tidy up the town through slum clearance schemes.

The location of the actual mansion house itself since 1933 would correspond to the entrance to Pates Avenue, where nos. 63-5 are, on the right. The extensive gardens and grounds are now occupied by Pates Avenue and also 2-22 Alstone Lane. And plots of building land were also sold along Gloucester Road, on which shops and private houses were built over the next ten years or so, the houses costing £550-£650 to buy. These are now nos. 93-139a Gloucester Road.

A remnant of the former Alstone Lawn estate can be seen at its southernmost corner, (beside the turning into Vineyard Lane), where there is a part of the old original garden brick wall, with a curved ramped coping at one end.

## **2. THORNBURY CLOSE**

Moving on to the poorer properties of old Alstone.

Here once stood the group of dwellings called Cox's Row - a long terrace

developed from what had originally been a single property belonging to Thomas Cox. This terrace is apparent on the 1828 map but was possibly much older. The terrace was set well back from the highway, accessed by means of a very narrow driveway, (which was the tail end of an old foot-path that had led from Arle Road through to Alstone Lane). There were seven cottages in the terrace by 1844, when Hannah Cox is recorded as living at no. 1 Cox's Row. These had grown to eight cottages by 1851 and nine by 1881. They are otherwise recorded as New's Cottages from about 1891 onwards. Former local resident Peggy Ashton (late owner of Neuville Hairdressers) recalled that in the 1930s: "Cox's Alley led to New's Cottages, behind Alstone Avenue. Gypsies and the like lived up there!" So the older name had not yet been forgotten.

This terrace was one of several in the area which grew up informally out of a single property. The quality of building was probably poor and sanitation even worse. Many of these local terraces were compulsorily purchased as part of the Borough Councils efforts at slum clearance. The Council purchased New's Cottages in 1937 and emptied them, with the intention of demolishing them and creating a new cul-de-sac. However, they were still standing at the outbreak of war in 1939 when the A.R.P. (Air-raid Precautions) took them over for fire-fighting drills. Some remaining cottages were still being used for storage when the Council gave Mr. J.R. Flint notice to quit in 1947 ready for their demolition. The location was developed as Thornbury Close in the early 1980s.

### 3. ST. JOHN'S COTTAGES

St. John's Cottages is an alternative name for the existing nos. 17-27 Alstone Lane. Perhaps they were built in the 1860s: they are mentioned in the 1871 census. They had replaced Page's Row, an earlier terrace of three small houses belonging to Mr. S.

Page: they are marked on the 1831 map but were maybe somewhat older than that. (Page's Row faced eastwards and had stood in front of Thomas



**St. John's Cottages. (2001 M.H.)**

Cox's house mentioned above, but behind the present no. 27).

#### 4. ALSTONE COURT

On the opposite side of Alstone Lane stood buildings called Higgs' Cottages. The old property belonging to the Higgs family had developed into a terrace of six cottages by 1824. It was a row of eight by the time of the 1855-6 O.T.S. (Old Town Survey) map. In 1862, Mr. F. La Terrière of Alstone Lawn next door asked the Council to look into the overcrowded state of these cottages and the number of pigs being kept there. (More is said about the famous pig-keeping Higgs family, and the dispute with their neighbours at Alstone Lawn, in our *Volume One* pp. 21-3). There were nine cottages in the terrace by 1871.

By the 1930s, nos. 1 & 2 (at the Gloucester Road end) had been demolished, and only five of the remaining seven were habitable. Directories of the 1930s list Mr. Andrews the newsagent living at no. 3 Higgs' Cottages. Former local resident Rosemary Jarrett who lived nearby in the early 1930s, confirms this:

"Alstone Croft and Alstone Avenue housed many railway families, and there were a few cottage shops in Alstone Lane between these two roads: a tiny paper shop in a front room (Andrews, I think), and honey sold at a cottage window, and a sweet shop."

The sweet shop was Vine Cottage – see below, (but the selling of honey from a cottage window was then quite usual, and is still occasionally seen in villages). In 1933 Mr. Andrews applied to build on the corner of Gloucester Road, where the newsagent's shop has been since. Higgs' Cottages were subjected to compulsory purchase and demolition in about 1940. Since 1953 the location is now Alstone Court flats.

#### 5. ALSTONE MEWS

In 1831 this particular tract of ground went by the name of Pear Tree Orchard. It was being used as allotments in 1939 when it was purchased (from Six Chimneys Farm) by the War Office. Later, when the Territorial Army Centre buildings were moved up towards the Arle Road end of this piece of ground, the Alstone Lane end became under-used, until the present housing was built in 2002 through 2003. The new street



Alstone Mews. (2004 M.H.)

which is called Alstone Mews was at first labelled Newland Place by the housing developers, (after themselves), and a plaque with this name still stands at the road's entrance. Developments are now being squeezed into the tiniest areas. Although Alstone Mews is definitely a piece of urban rather than village architecture, Newland Homes can perhaps be congratulated for getting the scale and presentation here about as good as it gets in the 21st century.

## 6. VINE COTTAGE

Vine Cottage, at no. 39 Alstone Lane, is not very conspicuous but is a really ancient black-and-white cottage. It is an officially listed house, described by the heritage authorities as of the 1600s with a late 1700s extension. The owner here in 1831 was Thomas Bowles, and the Bowles family continued to

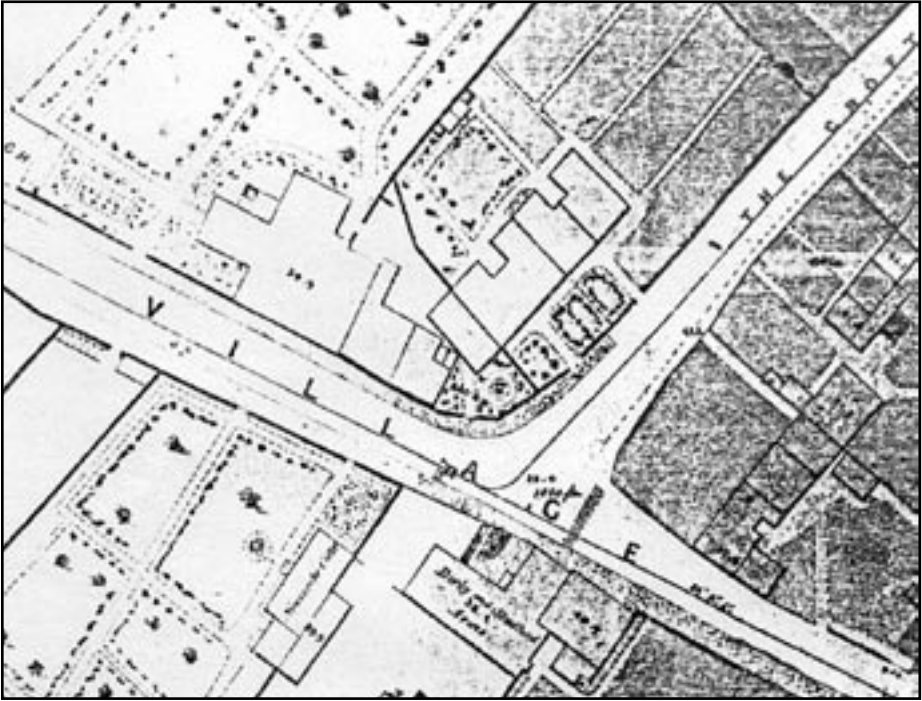


live here for at least another 50 years. Thomas's son Daniel Bowles set up a grocery shop at Vine Cottage in the 1840s, which he ran until his son-in-law's family the Marshalls took over in the 1880s. The late Peggy Ashton recalled a grocery shop at Vine Cottage in the 1930s, where Mrs. Marshall sold sugar measured out in bags. (A sweet shop was still here until at least 1952).

## 7. DERBY & STAFFORD ARMS

At this point alongside Alstone Lane, opposite the junction with Alstone Croft, the 1776 map indicates a Whipping Post. Here local discipline would have been enforced promptly in the usual method of those times. (A variation on stocks, a surviving example of a whipping post can be seen on the village green near the parish church at Forthampton, near Tewkesbury).

Also at the junction here stood a substantial black-and-white timbered farmhouse dating from the 1600s or earlier, which had a traditional Cotswold stone roof. In 1831 the building was owned by Walter Taylor. Half of this farmhouse had been converted by 1844 into a beer-house, the Derby & Stafford Arms. This pub's name was a reference to the nearby railway



**1850s map showing Alstone Manor (not named) at the top left. At the bottom is Newcombe Cottage and the Derby and Stafford Arms. On the right are Derrett's Cottages.**

wharf, which after 1840 brought in coal from the Derbyshire and Staffordshire pits. John Williams owned the pub and also the nearby coal wharf (described later).

In the 1880s the building reverted to housing known as Derby Cottages or nos. 40 & 42 Alstone Lane. Peggy Ashton recalled this as “a lovely old half-timbered house where Mr. Paynter lived. He worked at Shirer’s [department store] and was on ‘Down Your Way,’ the radio programme, with his collection of records. The house went with the road-widening.” Derby Cottages were demolished around 1969/70 and their location would currently (2008) be occupied by the frontages of CDS and Word Logic Ltd.

## **8. THE BRAMERY**

An old farm cottage is shown on the 1831 map, standing within the yard of Walter Taylor’s above-mentioned farmhouse. The cottage was known as Newcombe Cottage. (The surname Newcombe is recorded locally, which is presumably how the house derived its name. The date of the record is 1727, which is a clue to the age of the cottage.)

Newcombe Cottage was afterwards owned by the coal merchant John Williams, and then in the 1860s became the home of his eldest child, his

daughter Matilda, (after she married draper John Hill Nicholson in 1854). Newcombe Cottage was renamed The Bramery in the 1890s. It was located to the west of that main farm-house building, rather than to the east like the existing trade park called The Bramery. The Nicholson family managed the coal business for many years, but the last of the Nicholsons finally left The Bramery in 1931. The executor conveyed The Bramery to Arthur Whitton. Also addressed as no. 46 Alstone Lane, it was demolished in the 1950s. The industrial road which is now called The Bramery existed by 1965 although it was not formally named until more recently.

## 9. ALSTONE MANOR

On the other corner of Alstone Croft was a farmhouse. It was likely amongst the most ancient farmhouses in the village. It is shown on Coates's 1776 map, and in 1831 it was owned by absentee landlord Richard Roy. (In 1840 Richard Roy was living at the mansion called Grovefield, which is the location now known as Arle Court).

Then John Williams the coal merchant lived here in the 1850s and 1860s. His business interests were fairly extensive: as well as the coal wharves opposite his residence, described later, they included a large site on Gloucester Road (where Travis Perkins and Amethyst Honda are today). On that site were the Alstone & Dean Forest Coal Wharves, the Royal Forester's Inn with skittle alley, and the Alstone Brick & Tile Works. When he bought the Brick & Tile Works in 1855, John immediately modernised the business by introducing a steam pug mill which considerably speeded up the laborious process of preparing the clay for brick-making.

John Williams named his residence Alstone Manor, although we are uncertain about the antiquity of this name. The 1891 sales particulars give the dimensions of the grounds in this particular farmyard as 200ft square, an almost universal size for medieval farmsteads, (one acre in area). They also confirm that it was an 'old-fashioned half-timbered residence'. It was never a manor house in the sense of being the dwelling of the lord of the manor. (Conceivably, it may once have been the convenient central location where the men of Alstone tithing had held meetings regularly, in order to discuss their official responsibilities:- such things as road-maintenance and who should be disciplined at the nearby whipping post).

John Williams died in August 1870, and the 1871 census shows that Alstone Manor was being let to a retired Indian Army surgeon, Henry Pitman. But Mary the widow of John Williams was back in the manor for the 1881 census. Then the Williams family sold Alstone Manor in 1888. Demolished maybe around 1930, the location is now approximately 45-7 Alstone Lane.



## 10. BRIGHTON COTTAGES

In 1826 Samuel Wilderspin, the pioneer of infant schools in the British Isles, visited Cheltenham at the request of Francis Close to set up an infant school in Alstone. In 1824 Close had already started a Sunday School, attended by over 200 children in the upper floor of an old farmhouse in Alstone, (Alpha House, on the Spirax Sarco site, St. George's Road).

Samuel Wilderspin had discovered from experience that the best way to teach infants, (for whom there had been no previous daily provision in Britain), was 'to descend to their level and become a child' – the infant

learns through playing and doing. In April 1827 Wilderspin's new purpose-built Alstone Infant School was opened here in Alstone Lane, for up to 150 infants aged from 18 months to seven years. The farmers of Alstone had loaned their wagons to transport the building materials, and the poor had contributed plants and shrubs for the playground. The gentry came from far and wide to watch public examinations of



the infants, and were delighted to hear them singing the alphabet, pence tables, and other arithmetical rules all put to rhyme and music.

A second infant school was opened in St. James' Square in November 1828, of which the building still stands, but there Francis Close did not consult Wilderspin on its construction or staffing. Wilderspin's liberal ideas conflicted with Close's evangelical principles, and the two men publicly disagreed as to how the Infant Schools should be run.

Alstone Infant School became associated with the new Alstone church, Christ Church. In 1843 the building was enlarged to accommodate the junior boys of the newly created Christ Church School. In 1849 the boys were moved to the newly erected school building in Malvern Road. But the infants continued at Alstone Lane, until 1858 when they joined the other children at the Malvern Road site.

The original 1827 schoolhouse was then closed and sold off. Even at this stage Francis Close, by then the Dean of Carlisle, expressed some disagreement with events. He wrote a rather sniffy letter on lilac notepaper dated 15 May 1858 in response to a request for his signature, as a trustee,

authorising the disposal of the Infant School. 'Those who are on the spot must be the best judge of local wants, although I always felt a doubt as to the desirability of moving the infants School further from the abodes of the parents... I trust to you for the law of the case – I suppose I am doing thereby what is quite legal.' He was reassured in a letter from Robert Sole Lingwood, the solicitor handling the sale: 'Since the new school house has been opened, more Infants have been instructed because it is central to the district, and the new room provides for the wants of the children, whereas the old building was bad in every respect. There is no doubt about your legal power to sign the deed now sent, and the School Committee of course hold you harmless'.

The original schoolhouse was sold in 1858 to John Manning, gardener and seedsman of Brighton Gardens in Arle Road. He demolished it, and built at the front of the site the current houses, sometimes known as Brighton Cottages, at nos. 48 & 50 Alstone Lane. The school building had been located behind these, (at the end of The Bramery, near the unit presently occupied by the 727 Taxi company).

## **11. MARION COTTAGES**

Marion Cottages at nos. 52, 54 & 58 Alstone Lane are officially listed, described by the heritage authorities as formerly one house of the 1700s – (nos. 52 & 58) – which are attached to a black-and-white cottage of the 1600s – (no. 54). We cannot fail to notice no. 54, an attractive timber-framed building which sits on a Cotswold-stone plinth. This has survived as a genuine piece of old Alstone. It is the most obviously ancient building in the area, although this volume should clarify just how many other local buildings are older than they look. The owner of this group of houses in 1831 was Mr. Snelus. The 1851 census return shows the three dwellings were then inhabited by a scavenger, a poulterer and a bone-cutter! These occupations were typical of the cottagers of Alstone village.



**Marion Cottages, listed buildings,  
nos.52/54 Alstone Lane. (2001 M.H.)**

The name Marion Cottages may or may not be ancient – it appears in directories and later census returns. Notable in the 1881 census is the Addis family here. Both parents and all their eight children were described as being born in Alstone, a fact which may not sound remarkable, but a truly local household is rare in these census records. Generally, in any sizeable Alstone family, at least one member was not born in the village. For example, at no. 3



**Marion Cottages. The rear of no. 54 with no. 58  
Alstone Lane. (2005 D.E.)**

Marion Cottages in 1881 lived Sarah Pittman – she and her children were born in Alstone but her husband came from Prestbury, whilst her mother and brother who also lived there were born in Cheltenham.

## **12. ALSTONE LANE TRADING ESTATE**

Alstone Lane Trading Estate was created in about 1966 (under the name of Alstone Lane Industrial Estate). It occupies the former Williams' coal wharf, (recorded here from 1844 onwards). See the chapter in our *Volume One* p. 20, and also above on Alstone Manor, regarding the Williams family as coal merchants here. A smithy is marked at the entrance here on the 1850s Old Town Survey map.

*From an advert in Rowe's 1845 Cheltenham guide:*

**JOHN WILLIAMS,**

**COAL MERCHANT,**

**382 and 383, HIGH STREET,**

**And at the Railway Wharf, Alstone,**

Has always on hand a very large stock of COAL, with which parties  
can be immediately supplied.

*The best Derbyshire Main for Parlour use.*

Staffordshire Block, and Forest of Dean Coals.

*Orders received at his Brush Manufactory, or at Alstone Wharf.*

### 13. (LOWER) ALSTONE COTTAGE

A building here is apparent on the 1776 map. The owner in 1831 was Mr. Snelus. Its name Alstone Cottage is given in the 1841 census – a Miss Hannah B. Snelus lived here then, and for most of her life. We know that in 1870 when John Williams the coal merchant died, his son John Henry was living here at Alstone Cottage. But he had little time to enjoy the management of the company: the 1871 census shows that he had paralysis, probably as the result of a stroke. Instead his brother-in-law John Nicholson, who lived at Newcombe Cottage previously mentioned, was the Managing Clerk.

Gone by 1901, the location of Alstone Cottage is now St. George's Business Park, close to the level crossing, currently the premises of High Water.

### 14. YEW TREE FLATS

No. 55 Alstone Lane was a house named Yew Tree Cottage (e.g. in the 1851 census). Built maybe around 1830, the owner in 1831 was Mr. Bucknall. It was demolished as recently as January 2005, and by the end of that year was replaced by the block of four new maisonettes called Yew Tree Flats. As elsewhere in Cheltenham,



the simplicity of period **Yew Tree Cottage shortly before demolition. (2004 D.E.)** architecture for artisan

housing – (or even for prestige housing) – means that maybe no-one even notices when old buildings like this are demolished.

### 15. NORTON HOUSE

There was previously a farmhouse at this location, shown on Coates's map and named Alstone Farm in the 1844 directory. The farmhouse's distinctive name suggests it was perceived of, by at least some people, as being at the heart of the old village, (along with Alstone Cottage opposite). The estate of Alstone Farm in the 1830s was 64 acres, belonging to Henry Butt. Part of this was lost to the 1840 railway line, (that section between

**Norton House flats, on the site of the farmhouse of the same name. (2006 D.E.)**



Alstone Lane and Arle Road). More of its land was soon to become part of Rowanfield's cluster of market gardens, (for example, those at Cyprus Cottages). By 1861, having lost most of its farmland, the farmhouse had become known as Norton House. The 1881 census lists the resident as George Payne, market gardener of the remaining land of 9.5 acres. The name Norton House became carried over to the 1961 block of eight flats which are now here.

## **16. SIGNAL BOX**

The railway line was opened in 1840, dividing Alstone Lane in two. The signal box which looks over the level crossing dates from 1891. The term Paddy Gates, which is often used locally for the crossing itself, presum-

**Alstone Lane level crossing, affectionately referred to as The Paddy Gates. (2005 D.E.)**



ably refers to an Irish navvy who worked on the building of the railway; (unless a local reader can tell us differently).

In 1890 John Moulder, the Midland Railway gatekeeper at this level crossing, met a tragic death. He had what was described at the inquest as a fit of apoplexy and fell from his seat in the keeper's box, landing with his head against the bars of the stove. By the time John was found by a lad named Walter Henry Dufour, (whose family lived at nearby Westfield House), his face had been badly burnt despite only a small fire in the stove. He died a few days later without regaining consciousness. John Moulder's son Charles was a law stationer who was living at The Yew Trees (no. 87 Rowanfield Road) at the time of his father's death. Charles was a man of many talents who taught shorthand and was also the chief bell-ringer at St. Mark's Church. Charles had married Mary Manning, whose family owned Brighton Gardens in Arle Road. (It was her uncle John Manning who had purchased the original Alstone Infant School building).

The late Peggy Ashton recalled that in her childhood there were ponds near the Paddy Gates that were full of newts! And Alstone Lane beyond the Paddy Gates was then just a cinder track with hedges either side and fields beyond.



## Part Two

### EDGES OF ROWANFIELD

**W**e continue down Alstone Lane, beyond the level crossing. If you the reader are actually walking this tour and you find that the level crossing gates are against you, then the next few buildings can be observed in the distance before the Guided Tour returns to this side of the railway.

Rowanfield Road had long been an unmade track through to Libertus Road. It was still a private street until 1934 when it was adopted to become a proper road by Cheltenham Borough Council. The street-name Rowanfield Road took a while to become official; it is referred to as 'the Rowanfield Road' in 1872. But until well into the 20th century it was still also known locally as the Cinder Path.

Another old name for the same road was St. Stephens Lane, still being used for example in an 1886 advertisement for sale of land, and in a property deed of 1896. Despite appearances, this last name had no connection with any church called St. Stephen's - it derived from being the road which led to a plot of ground called Stephens Close. This is an old field-name which can be found documented - for example in 1719 - as being beside the house of a John Stephen.

### 17. WESTFIELD

John Stephen's 18th-century house was perhaps at the location of Westfield, which is no. 66 Alstone Lane. Coates's 1776 map shows that there was already then a dwelling here, and the cottage here was owned by Richard Roy in 1831. The current building is early Victorian. The name Westfield goes back at least to 1869.

In 1851 the George family lived here, who were well known bakers in Cheltenham. The firm of George's Ltd was founded by David George, a pastry cook and confectioner, in about 1800. David George is credited with inventing the 'Dripper', a local favourite for nearly 200 years. The bakery expanded to have premises all around Cheltenham including the High Street, Clarence Street (George's Model Bakery), and Montpellier Walk. There were also branches in Worcester, Cardiff, Malvern and Weston-Super-Mare. (The business closed in 1940).

Following her visit to Cheltenham in 1897, the Princess of Wales requested George's recipe for their vanilla biscuits, enhancing their already established reputation. William F. George, one of David George's descendants, lived at Westfield with his family for nearly 30 years, being described in the 1871 census as a confectioner employing 15 men. It was probably Wil-

liam who built a bakehouse at the back of Westfield (which was eventually converted into a dwelling).

Walter Wilkins, a stockbroker and accountant, was living at Westfield with his family by 1881. His son, Edward Weedon Wilkins, married Emmeline, a daughter of the previous inhabitant William F. George. Ten years later, Walter Wilkins is recorded living in the grander villa Alstone Lodge (see below), and Charles Dufour was the new owner of Westfield.

Charles Dufour's father John had been born as a British subject in Lisbon in c.1803, and was living in Cheltenham by 1851 as the licensee of the Greyhound Inn in North Place, and then lived in Alstone in his retirement, at no. 1 Waine's Cottages, (that is, no. 27 Gloucester Road). Charles Dufour himself had a varied career and was a bit of an entrepreneur. At the start of the 1880s he was living in Swindon Road working as a market gardener, but moved to Westfield soon after, where he branched out as a speculative builder. He was responsible for building some of the terraces of houses in Roman Road, and also Alpine Villas (now nos. 250-54 Gloucester Road). With his improved status, Charles appears on house deeds as 'Charles Christopher Dufour, Gentleman', but in 1891 he was said to be a gardener, when wrongly accused of stealing 63 lbs. of gooseberries from William Higgs of Rowanfield Road. The 1891 census records Charles Dufour as a pork butcher, and by the mid-1920s, when aged in his 90s, he was listed in the directories as a shopkeeper in Tewkesbury Road.

During Charles Dufour's ownership, Westfield had been divided into two dwellings. The wing called no. 2 Westfield was sometimes known as Northfield, now no. 2 Rowanfield Road. Also, the bakehouse had been converted into a dwelling (now no. 4 Rowanfield Road) in about 1900, and Charles Dufour was living there following the failure of some of his business interests.

The next owner of Westfield after Dufour was William Henry Stucke, an architect. In South Africa he is well-known for his buildings, particularly in Johannesburg where he spent most of his adult life. His father, Henry, had been a tailor in Cheltenham who was prominent in the temperance movement and in the running of the Y.M.C.A. in Cheltenham, before his tragic death by drowning at Aberystwyth in 1866 aged only 37. (In 1861 Henry Stucke had bought the old neo-classical Literary & Philosophical Institute building in the Promenade, replacing it with a tailor's shop and workshops).

Westfield had a succession of different owners during the 20th century, and still stands today as a well-maintained Victorian villa. The interior is of interest as there are wall-paintings in the principal reception rooms,



mainly pastoral scenes containing cherubs and such-like. Terry Jones, whose grandparents lived in the house in the 1930s, recalled one of these pictures in his book *A Stroud Valley Childhood* – '... there was a huge picture that covered the whole length of the room of some shepherd or other having a dream and lots of funny little boys floating around in the air blowing trumpets above him'. Unfortunately the pictures are not signed, and so one can only guess which one of the many residents was responsible for these artworks.

## 18. FARM COTTAGE

No. 65 Alstone Lane is an early Victorian building (here by 1860), known as Farm Cottage because it was associated with Alstone Farm on the other side of the railway. It was recently (c.2000) gutted and renovated, and divided into three dwellings. (The current owner of one of these refers to his dwelling as Railway Cottage). The 1881 census shows as resident here Mr. Charles Arundell, market gardener of 7 acres of land.

Coates's 1776 map would suggest that there had once been an even earlier building here, and further evidence for that exists in the name documented for the adjoining plot of ground, which was Old House Piece.

## 19. SCHOOL MEAD

By the junction of Rowanfield Road and Alstone Lane, the corner piece of land was in 1831 occupied by a building belonging to Mr. Herbert. It was later owned by the Revd. George Pruen Griffiths, the first vicar of nearby St. Mark's Church. In 1861 a National School for Boys and Girls opened here, with Revd. Griffiths and the churchwardens of St. Mark's as the trus-



tees. It is likely that the school building was designed by John Middleton, a Cheltenham architect who became well-known in the area. (It was he who designed St. Mark's Church, which was consecrated in February 1862).

An Infant Schoolroom was added in 1873, but the school became very crowded, so in 1887 another school building was opened at the corner of Roman Road and Rowanfield Road to house the boys' department of up to 150 pupils. In 1914, by exchange, the boys were moved back to the original building. (The other building became the St. Mark's Infant School, and then became the separate Red Roofs Primary School for a short while in the 1970s before its closure).

The St. Mark's School for boys and girls continued at the corner of Alstone Lane, until April 1934 when it became the Christ Church Junior School, for boys and girls aged 7 to 11 years. Meanwhile the St. Mark's Junior School moved into its Hatherley Lane branch [which had opened in 1878 for 100 children]. (The Malvern Road school buildings housed the Christ Church infants' and senior girls' departments from 1934 until the 1970s).

In 1977 the scholars were moved to their current Malvern Road site and the school buildings at this site were demolished. The Log Books and Registers still survive. Famous former pupils from here include the film actor who played (or operated) the role of R2-D2 in Star Wars, Kenny Baker. This location was redeveloped c.1990 as starter homes and flats, including the new road called School Mead.



## 20. ROSE COTTAGES

Rose Cottages or nos. 70-74 Alstone Lane, are a terrace of three. The 1831 map shows a building at this location, belonging to Mr. Herbert. In August 1864 a fire occurred destroying the terrace of three Rose Cottages. An adjoining cottage, belonging to William Cook, was also damaged. Rose Cottages then belonged to the Revd. G.P. Griffiths, (who had set up the adjacent school). The press reports of the time show that the cottages were timbered with thatched roofs. Mr. and Mrs. Cox ran a laundry in the end cottage and it was thought that a spark from the chimney of the laundry had ignited the thatch. One of the laundresses employed there spotted a patch of flames in the thatched roof, but despite hoses bringing water from the main in Gloucester Road nothing could be done to save the properties. Rose Cottages were rebuilt in the rendered brick we see today, in exactly the same location; (so, the basements of the current dwellings maybe date to the earlier part of the 19th century).

## 21. LYNDALE TERRACE

Woodbine Cottages were a pair, latterly nos. 78 & 80 Alstone Lane. These cottages, (maybe then a single dwelling), were here in 1831, owned by Richard Roy, recently acquired by him from Mr. Stone. They have since around 1980 been replaced by a row of eight houses called Lyndale Terrace.

The Manor Court Book, way back in 1778, refers to a piece of land here called 'Wet Furrows with a pool called Broad Pool at the North end'. The 1831 map shows where this pool was; although by that date, far from being 'broad', it was not much wider than a ditch. This long thin pond was nevertheless the largest area of standing water in the village, and it separated the highway Alstone Lane from the adjoining line of cottages. It started at Westfield and continued beyond Woodbine Cottages to where Bishop Court is today. Soon after, this watery area would seem to have been filled in or covered, with the intention of giving these cottages front gardens, but in the event the ground was taken in to widen Alstone Lane.

Since Woodbine Cottages stood at the end of the houses in the village in 1831, we will use Lyndale Terrace as the edge of the village of Alstone for the purposes of this guided tour. We could proceed further along Alstone Lane. But rather than get into the territory of Rowanfield's Victorian market gardeners, which need to have their own story told separately, we will turn around, and return over the railway crossing.

## Part Three

### CROFT – ORIGINAL

We resume our guided walk by turning aside from Alstone Lane. Turn left at the road junction, to cover the length of Alstone Croft.

#### 22. DERRETT'S COTTAGES

The seven cottages sometimes called Derrett's Cottages were in existence by 1831. At that date nos. 1-5 Derrett's Cottages were a terrace of five small dwellings owned by Mr. Troughton. Of these, nos. 1-4 were demolished as part of slum clearance in 1939, and replaced by three, (now nos. 52-6 Alstone Croft). No. 5 had by then already been redeveloped. The former nos. 6 & 7 Derrett's Cottages stood separately, and still stand, now numbered 60 & 62 Alstone Croft respectively.

A building is shown at the location of no. 60 on the Inclosure Act map of 1831. Benjamin Derrett lived here. Although his profession is described as a labourer in 1841 and 1844, the 1851 census calls Benjamin Derrett a 'Proprietor of Houses', aged

72. Most probably he was a builder, who acquired and then renovated or rebuilt the seven cottages named after him.

Benjamin's son Joseph inherited the row of properties, but he died around 1870, leaving a widow Mary Ann, who was 20 years younger than him, and six children. She lived on at no. 1 Derrett's Cottages into the 1890s, but struggled to retain ownership of the cottages. In 1893 Mary Ann had taken out a mortgage through Daniel Cook, (market gardener of Alstone House), for £30 on no. 6 Derrett's Cottages, in which she now lived. She defaulted on the repayments and so he claimed possession of the property and sold it to his daughter, Clare Emma Adcock (nee Cook). Mrs. Adcock already owned nos. 1-5 by this time. She was the wife of Matthew Henry Adcock, bootmaker, whom she had married in 1872. (The Adcock shoe shop still in Bath Road was set up by this family). Members of the Derrett family continued to live elsewhere in Alstone Croft into the 20th century,



but no longer had any involvement with Derrett's Cottages.

No. 60 was redeveloped nearer to the highway as part of a pair with no. 58 some time before 1923. As for the present no. 62, it is also shown on the 1831 map, owned by Mr. William Dore, (who was still living here in 1844), and it too was extended westwards, but in this case it was done some time before 1887. Mr. Dore's cottage had probably been very old in origin, as old as Vine Cottage adjoining.

It might be thought that ownership of little old cottages such as these, in centuries gone by, was passed down the generations from father to son. (We fondly imagine that life was simpler in those days!) But our local historical documents indicate otherwise. The names recorded locally in the Lay Subsidy Roll of 1334 for Alstone and Arle do include the surnames Dawe and Dore. These may even be ancestors of the William Dore who 500 years later lived at 7 Derrett's Cottages, but the family had not been living here in the intervening centuries. (Two of the longest-standing Alstone surnames were Sturmeay and Lane).

## **23. WILLIAMS'S COTTAGES**

Directly opposite Derrett's Cottages and backing onto Alstone Manor there was once a farmhouse, as is shown on early maps. In 1831 this farmhouse had been in the ownership of John Gregory Welch (who lived at Arle House in Village Road). We have not discovered a name recorded for this old farmhouse, but maybe it was the original Croft after which the highway is named. The narrow strip of land (2 acres) all along the west side of the street called Alstone Croft had belonged to this farm.

It was perhaps part of this farmhouse that became the Apple-tree beer house, recorded somewhere in this vicinity in the 1844 directory. Its proprietor Thomas Simmon(d)s became insolvent and sold up in 1846.

Williams's Cottages replaced the old farmhouse. They were a terrace of four or five cottages which stood here from the 1850s to around 1940, and then were replaced by the current nos. 41-7 Alstone Croft.

## **24. LAUREL, WEST & DERBY COTTAGES**

As for nos. 46, 48 & 50 Alstone Croft, the 1831 Inclosure Act mentions one house here, belonging to the Higgs family, but probably all three houses were already standing in the 1820s. Directories call no. 50 Providence or Laurel Cottage, no. 48 (at the rear) West Cottage, and no. 46 Derby Cottage.

## **25. MALVERN VIEW & ROSETTA COTTAGE**

As the site at nos. 32 & 34 Alstone Croft was copyhold land until 1909, it can be traced back through the Manor Court Books until at least 1729

when it belonged to James Eckly. (The oldest standing gravestone in the parish churchyard is that of a Robert Eckly who died 25 February 1624, almost certainly of the same family). In 1729 James Eckly sold the site, which included buildings, a garden and an orchard, to yeoman John Cook. John Cook's daughter Elizabeth inherited it in 1763, and she and her husband John Squires took out a mortgage on the land under John De la Bere. In 1771 neighbour William Stroud bought part of the property - the south bay of a barn sited there together with the ground around it.

Stroud converted his newly acquired premises into two tenements which he then sold on. In 1773 the Squires and De la Bere sold the rest of the property - a remaining building, garden and orchard - to yeoman William Cooke. By then the rest of the barn had been converted into three tenements, which were to become the present nos. 32 & 34. These passed through a succession of owners before coming into the hands of the Jenkins family in 1810. This family still owned the property at the 1831 Inclosure Award.

In 1832 William Jenkins sold the property to Thomas Fisher, a stonemason of Cheltenham, and he owned it until 1851 when he sold the site to James Little, a coach-builder. The building now no. 32 was used as a grocery shop from about 1861 until the end of the century. James Little built a cottage next door to live in, now no. 34, which he named Rosetta Cottage. James bequeathed the buildings to his niece Louisa, who was married to Charles Cook. The property remained with the Cook family until 1909 when it was sold to a plasterer named Charles Philip Long. He renamed no. 34 Longhope after himself, and then during his ownership the two premises were consolidated under that name. By the middle of the 20th century, no. 34 had acquired the name Malvern View, whilst no. 32 became Longhope and then later acquired the name Rosetta Cottage. It is interesting to note that one of the interior walls of the current Rosetta Cottage is much thicker than all the others, suggesting that it was once an outside wall, perhaps part of the original barn which those previous owners converted to tenements. So nos. 32 & 34 Alstone Croft might be described as a 'barn conversion'!

## **26. CROFT PLACE**

The terrace of four, now nos. 6-12 Alstone Croft, were originally known as nos. 1-4 Croft Place. They can be discerned on the Ordnance Survey 1828 map. The owner in 1831 was Mr. J.C. Straford. In 1841-4, two of the cottages were occupied by Christopher White and Reuben Cozier. These two men were both whitesmiths, (that is, metalworkers who worked with tin, light metals and white enamelled goods such as pots and pans).



**2-12 Alstone Croft, with the row of four called Croft Place to the right. (2004 D.E.)**



**Part of the 1831 map of Lower Alstone showing public foot-paths to be stopped-up. We have added the Inclosure Act allotment reference numbers.**

To be honest, these cottages have all of the visual appeal of a cardboard box. The architecture of the frontages gives no suggestion of their age, and their historical character could be so easily missed. These could be described as having the authentic Alstone architectural style, even though they may have been altered since. The bricks and building materials would certainly have been found locally. Whether such buildings should be officially listed is another issue. Practical and unpretentious – the influence of the Regency architectural fashion was somewhat irrelevant at this level.

## Part Four

### A SKYLINE OF CHIMNEYS

We cross Arle Road and proceed along Arle Avenue.

#### 27. SIX CHIMNEYS FARM

The house “Six Chimneys Farm” was so called because of the impressive line of six tall chimneys in a single block running back from the highway along the length of the north-east side of the building. These would be typical of Elizabethan period architecture. (The farm-house was labelled by the Ordnance Survey as formerly a “manor house,” though on unknown evidence: compare “Alstone Manor” described earlier in our walk). A detailed account of the building, especially in 1826, is in our *Volume One* pp. 58-62. Local people used to hurry past, believing it to be haunted. Certainly wreathed in smoke in this photograph it looks weird.

**Six Chimneys Farm, circa 1930.**



As a working farm, Six Chimneys Farm was measured at 120 acres of land in 1726 when James Beckett sold it to its last owners, Jesus College, Oxford. The College leased out the land to various farmers over the decades. Then, in 1809, three and a half acres of its lands were taken for the building of the new turnpike road and tramway. In 1838, 54 acres are recorded



as having been sold to the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway Co. Later sections sold were in 1898 to the gas works, and in 1906-28 to Cheltenham Corporation for schools.

The last tenants of the land were the Prude family. George Prude married Mary Moss of Six Chimneys Farm in 1873, and then he took over the tenancy as farmer here for 25 years from 1877 until 1901. His eldest son William Prude was then here for the following 30 years. As the grounds of the property shrank under development, William moved onto a smallholding on the opposite side of the lane. His new dwelling house was located amongst some old agricultural buildings located behind Alstone House.

In 1935, Six Chimneys Farm-house was sold to Western Estates. It was purchased as land for new housing, along with the adjoining stretch of ground alongside Arle Avenue, (which was known until then as Six Chimney Lane). Sadly, the farm-house, which up to that time must have been one of the oldest surviving houses in Alstone, was demolished in 1936. Its former location is now no. 35 Arle Avenue.

The remnants of the old Jesus College estate were 9 acres of land sold in 1959 to Gloucestershire County Council for St. Benedict's School, and then finally, 3 acres of land beside the railway which were sold in 1973 to Alstone Developments Ltd in order to extend the Cheltenham Trade Park. That was the end of the Jesus College connection to Alstone.

## **28. ALSTONE**

Roughly opposite Six Chimneys Farm there used to be a cluster of agricultural outbuildings. These were used by Daniel Cook and other 19th-century market gardeners who inhabited Alstone House. By 1909, they were acquired and used by William Prude of Six Chimneys Farm, because the lands of that property were being rapidly lost to development. When Six Chimneys Farm-house was due for demolition, William Prude turned these outbuildings into his residence, which he addressed simply as Alstone.

In 1939 Mr. and Mrs. Prude, along with Ann Mason of nearby no. 1 Sandfield Cottages, attempted to sell this 7.5 acre smallholding to a housing developer. However, when they applied for planning permission, the Council insisted the land was only appropriate for factories, owing to the proximity of the Gas Works. (Their concern at the time was smell as much as safety). And so in due course the Cheltenham Trade Park occupied the site.

## **29. ALSTONE HOUSE**

Alstone House is an officially listed building. The tall, imposing archi-

texture of the frontage is specifically typical of Queen Anne period, c.1703. This frontage has been built onto the remains of a much older house with low ceilings and massive oak timbers, suggesting that this riverside site has been occupied for many hundreds of years.

A very detailed inventory was drawn up in 1724 of the possessions of the owner Richard Hyett, which gives a good description of the house's interior layout and its contents. See our *Volume One* pp. 62-8. Revd. John Sargeaunt is recorded as the owner in 1831, although the 1832 Land Tax return suggests that it was Mr. W. Wood who was actually resident here.



**Alstone House, 1993. (PRI 14CE).**

The trade of tanning or leather-making was a speciality of many Alstone families down the centuries. In the 20th century, the village industry became centred beside Alstone House. The company of A.H. Taylor formerly in Albion Street bought the business site in 1940 from William Bailey, wool stapler and skin merchant, who had been working here since the early 1900s. See our *Volume One* pp. 18/19 for more about the last days of tanning here. Taylors operated here until 1992, when they bowed out under public pressure. It may be thought that the local residents were a bit intolerant in calling for this industry to be closed down. However, viewers of Tony Robinson's recent TV programme describing *The Worst Jobs In History* might recall that tanning came top of his list. Turning skins into leather was hard, tedious and very unhealthy work, but worst of all, it involved a whole series of desperately smelly processes.

Empty and run-down for some years, Alstone House was made habitable again in 1998. The current owners are lovingly restoring it to its former glory, conserving the period features of this fine building. Suffice to say, this property and the mill opposite are two very valuable pieces of Alstone's history which have defied time and developers.

### **30. LOWER ALSTONE MILL**

Lower Alstone Mill is now represented by Mill House and the Gas Works Club in Arle Avenue. These buildings look to date from around 1840, but



**Mill House in Arle Avenue before the bridge and culvert were rebuilt. (2004 D.E.)**

could be of very ancient foundations. The corn mill is marked on Coates's 1776 map as 'Mr Neal's Mill', referring to William Neale. This William Neale died in 1777, but the Neales were tenants of the mill, father and son, for many years. Mr. Motley is recorded as the owner in 1831. It ceased working operation by the time of World War I. The social club opened here in the 1950s, and the outbuildings at the back are over the site of the mill-pond.

Alterations made during the flood-alleviation works in 2005 briefly revealed the loft entrance in the gable, where corn would have been hoisted into the top of the mill workings. Below this gable, the late-19th-century extension which contained the engine-house was demolished in order to realign the river-bed under the new 2005 foot-bridge.

The terms Upper Alstone and Lower Alstone were perhaps first applied

to the two corn mills. Historically, it is impossible not to wonder: just how ancient were Alstone's two mills?

A recent publication, *Mills and Milling in Gloucestershire* by M. J. A. Beaucham (2005) pp. 68-70, gives a little of the 19th-century history of the two buildings. But the author does not mention Coates's 1776 map, on which it is clearly shown that both corn mills already existed at that earlier date.

Before 1776, the records refer only to Alstone Mill, which suggests that only one mill existed - but it is not clear which one of the two. By modern logic, Lower Mill should be the oldest, as it seems a more convenient location for most of the villagers. However, for some reason, medieval mills were often located between villages, (perhaps resulting in the reputation that millers had as outsiders in the community). Upper Mill was located at a natural waterfall, (close to the one which now exists underneath the Jubilee Bridge), a location which was thus more practical because it gave more power to the mill wheel.

Going back to 1086 in Domesday Book, the five mills mentioned at that date in Cheltenham have been assumed, by almost all published authors on the subject, to correspond to the five which existed on the Victorian River Chelt, including both of Alstone's. Although this assumption could possibly be correct, it ignores the fact that the parish of Cheltenham in the time of Domesday was a larger territory; until 1180 it incorporated Charlton Kings where there could have been at least two further mills. Recent research into the Cheltenham Manor Court Rolls has shown that at one time there was at least one mill on the Hatherley Brook (which is also within Cheltenham parish), during the years 1526-8 in the Westal tithing. And there is no reason why there might not once have been other water-mills on that same stream, at Naunton or Harthurstfield. So all in all, the evidence of where Cheltenham's five most ancient mills were still needs to be examined.

### **31. BRADA COTTAGE, LOWER MILL STREET**

The bridge over the River Chelt was closed to cars in 1995 as a traffic-calming measure, and then it was rebuilt in 2005 as part of the Environment Agency's attempts to calm the river. We need to cross the footbridge and turn right.

One could perhaps say that the coming of the Gas Works set the scene for the destruction of the once lovely countryside of Lower Alstone. The Lower Mill Street area was a community in itself that deserves a book of its own. It is described briefly in our *Volume One* pp. 52-5. A surprising number of houses were once here, along with pubs, and a school which was also used as a church. All of these were created by the needs of the

Gas Works and associated industries, and then all were gradually cleared because of the various phases of expansion of the same Gas Works.

The one surviving house, Brada Cottage at the car breaker's yard, is re-



**Car breakers' yard at the corner of Lower Mill Street,  
Brada Cottage. (2007 D.E.)**

corded here in 1872. The Gas Company had put forward an Act to Parliament to enable them to build a rail link connecting the Gas Works to the Midland Railway. This required the closure of the public highway called Alstone Terrace. The name of Thomas Bromage of Brada Cottage heads up the 1872 petition to Parliament against this road closure, (as detailed in our *Volume One* pp. 53-5).

## Part Five

### SCHOOL TIE

**H**aving reached Gloucester Road, we turn right towards our starting point.

In the 18th century, the roads through Cheltenham were in such poor condition that the Royal Mail coaches bypassed the town. A horse-drawn-tram railroad was built in 1810, and this took some pressure off of the existing roads. Forest of Dean coal could then reach the rapidly expanding town by rail (from Gloucester Docks) instead of along Tewkesbury Road (from the Coombe Hill Canal). Also in 1810, the highway we call Gloucester Road was built alongside this railroad. This opened up the fields of Alstone for development. (See *Volume One* p. 48).

In fact very little development took place alongside the new Gloucester Road until after the 1830s Inclosure Act. Until then, all of the houses throughout the whole area described in this book had a single address – Alstone – and the roads had no formal or official names. By 1844, many new houses had been built in the area, so to help clarify locations and addresses the terms Upper Alstone and Lower Alstone had come into use. Gloucester Road was used as the dividing line between the two, (as in the 1844 street directory), although Gloucester Road was still then rarely used formally as an address, because most residential developments were near the road rather than immediately alongside it.

(Unfortunately, the Ordnance Survey on their Victorian maps incorrectly marked “Upper Alstone” as the area around Alstone Avenue, whilst marking “Lower Alstone” as the area towards the railway station. So, local usage had to fight against the influence of the official mapping agency. This confusion could be one reason why our area lost its identity – eventually it became easier to ignore the existence of a place called Alstone altogether.)

### 32. GLOUCESTER ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

The building called Old House (or Old Farm) was formerly on Gloucester Road. Although it is no longer in its original location, this building does still stand. It is a timber-framed house of perhaps the 1600s. In 1831 it was part of the Six Chimneys Farm estate. It is perhaps the tenement building described in 1826 as in such poor repair as to sway in the wind; (see our *Volume One* p. 61). The house seems to be recorded in the 1844 directory under the name of Alstone Brook Cottage. Fortunately for posterity it was bought by someone who had a sense of history: in 1928 the house was dismantled, piece by piece, and transferred to Rossley Manor at Dowdeswell, where it can still be seen today beside the A40 through the trees. So an-



**Old Farm in 1928, before it was moved in 1929.**

other piece of Alstone history was saved, if relocated. ( For any object over 300 years old to be in a good enough condition to be re-used says a lot for its quality. Timber is not a weak or shoddy building material).

Old House's former site is now occupied by the playground of Gloucester Road Primary School. This school opened in 1907 as Cheltenham's first purpose-built, state-run primary school.

### **33. SCHOLARS COURT**

Construction of the Gloucester Road Elementary School was commenced in 1905, and it opened in 1907 for 370 boys, 370 girls and 360 infants. The first headmaster was John Davis, who had been master of the boys at Christ Church Boys School.

In wartime, from 1915 to January 1919, like several of Cheltenham's larger buildings, it was in use as a temporary general hospital. This one was dubbed St. John Voluntary Aided Red Cross Hospital, staffed by the No. 108 Gloucestershire Voluntary Aid Detachment. Miss Woodward was the Commandant in 1919. She noted that it had 180 beds, and that 52 voluntary helpers had worked faithfully right through the life of the hospital, with continuous assistance from the St. John Ambulance Brigade. A total of 2,995 patients were treated here.

The buildings were reinstated for education in 1919. In 1920, next to the elementary school, Cheltenham Central School opened for the 'advanced

instruction' or secondary education of 560 pupils, divided into separate boys and girls departments.

From 1952 it was known as the Technical High School. In 1972 the pupils were moved en masse with their staff to a new purpose-built school at Bournside, taking this school's traditions with them. We know that the registers from the old school survive and are kept at Bournside: but sadly the log books, which could tell us so much, disappeared at the move. The full story is in our *Volume One* pp. 78-82. Briefly the buildings here were known as Christchurch With Elmfield School, and then most recently as the Christchurch Annexe of Gloucestershire College of Art & Technology, until their demolition in 2002. Housing called Scholars Court was built on the site in 2003.

The old school had been built on the traditional pattern, and looked very much like Naunton Park School and Elmfield School, which still stand. You can see that the architects of Scholars Court have drawn some inspiration from the earlier red-brick architectural style.

### 34. ALBION HOUSE

On the opposite side of Gloucester Road is a sturdy looking building. Known as the Albion Inn since at least 1841, it was most likely built by the owners of the Albion Brewery (in Market Street) during the 1820s. In recent years it became a dwelling called Albion House or no. 58 Gloucester Road, and in



Central School c. 1940s



Albion House, former pub. (2004 D.E.)



2005 the building was converted into a dental surgery.

### **35. ALSTONE PLACE**

Nearby, Alstone Place was initially a pair of houses, now nos. 78 & 80 Gloucester Road. Like Albion House, they were apparently built by those Albion Brewery people during the 1820s: at any rate, in 1831 all of this group of properties were in the ownership of the same man, namely Baynham Jones esquire. Much later the semi-detached pair became a part of the existing long terrace which is now addressed as nos. 60-80 Gloucester Road.

### **36. THE NEW PENNY**

At no. 82 Gloucester Road, the New Inn is recorded in the 1844 directory as a cider house. In the mid-19th century, one of the tenants was Abel Cook. Like others of his family he was a market-gardener but, whilst also selling beer at the New Inn, he was adjudged bankrupt.



**78 & 80 Gloucester Road. (2004 D.E.)**



**The New Penny, formerly The New Inn public house. (2005 D.E.)**

The pub was re-named the New Penny, commemorating when decimal currency was introduced in 1971. Whitbread Breweries changed the name of several of their pubs in the early 1970s, because they had a great many called The New Inn. It was closed down in June 2006, ending at least 160 years here of propping up the bar. The whole culture of going to the local pub seems to have lapsed recently, partly through the ban on smoking. Most pubs have gone for a more classy experience as an eatery, or become a venue for watching live sport on TV. Others have drawn customers who have run the edge of legality with drugs, and it was to the frustration caused by these that the New Penny fell victim.



**Elm Cottages shortly before demolition. (1983 M.H.)**



**New houses on the site of Elm Cottages. (2005 M.H.)**

## Part Six

### A TRANSPLANTED COMMUNITY

**T**he New Penny at the crossroads will be described in Walk Two. To conclude our Walk One, (our tour of Lower Alstone), we walk a few yards down Arle Road and then return to our starting point via Alstone Avenue. So first, turn right at the traffic lights.

#### 37. ELM COTTAGES

Notice at the corner of Gloucester Road the first houses on the right, nos. 1 & 1a Arle Road, and compare with this photo of the original no. 1 Arle Road, taken shortly before its demolition, which was in 1983.

In 1831 at this site is recorded this cottage, belonging to Mary Betteridge. It is apparent on the old Ordnance Survey large-scale maps that the building here was actually a pair of semi-detached dwellings, (the tail-end being latterly addressed as no. 27 Gloucester Road). It may be that the cottage had always been two dwellings: the 1832 Land Tax return indicates that Alstone property owned by Betteridge had two residents, named Thomas Warrell and Thomas Waine. Later directories tell us that the name of these cottages was Elm Cottages, although the 1841 census records Thomas Waine's abode here as apparently an ale house called the Three Tuns (or Tons), and states his occupation as being a milkman. The Waine family continued in the farming industry here until at least 1941 and continued to live very nearby until at least 1959.

#### 38. SANDFIELD PLACE & AVENUE VILLAS

Nos. 1-4 Sandfield Place, now 7-15 Arle Road were built in the late 1880s. Avenue Villas, now 17 & 19 Arle Road, were added in the same architectural style about twenty years later when Alstone Avenue was being built.

Former local resident here Rosemary Jarrett recalls her childhood:

"Mum always told us Arle Road was an ancient drovers' road and indeed we ran indoors when the cows were driven past on the way to the abattoir. Once a cow came up the side way and couldn't turn round and had to be manoeuvred into our back garden and out!

Mr. and Mrs. Howells ran the grocery shop on the corner of Arle Road and Gloucester Road and sold almost everything. And occasionally we were allowed to go to the corner to take car numbers:- not much came up Arle Road in those days. But, there were often a lot of drunks and unsavoury customers using the New Inn opposite!

There were two sand pits – one on the corner of Six Chimney Lane and Arle Road, the other over the bridge on the left, (now Christ College's play-

ing field). We loved to watch the activity going on and the waste brought in to fill the hole. Mum often wondered whether the garden of the bungalow built later would drop with compaction.

We walked often down Arle Road, through the lane to Jocker Brown's field, out into Village Road and back up Alstone Lane, mum stopping constantly talking to the Cooks, Sindreys, and seemed to know everyone. One particular character was 'Dribbly Liza' – whom we weren't allowed to make fun of.

Mum remembered the Central School being a hospital for the war wounded. But we watched the boys in the playground! Mr. Nutt wouldn't throw their balls back – but we always had a shouted 'Thank you' when we obliged. Also, I remember the masters at the Central School always wore gowns and mortar boards – even in the playground. A bit different these days.

We were four daughters growing up in Sandfield Place, and needed a bigger house. Then with all the controversy of the Pates Avenue development being



**Avenue Villas are the pair on the left, and Sandfield Villas are the two pairs on the right. (2006 D.E.)**

built, the time seemed right to move on – we moved in 1934 to Sandford Mill Road. I do remember the neighbours disapproving of the new people who would be coming into the area from a slum clearance. But we thought it was a lovely place to grow up.

We were called Sandfield Place – the Salters, the Nutts, Hunts (us), Stilings, Malverns and then Waine's barn. Outside the back bedroom of nos. 4 & 3 was a big open tank which caught the rain water and fed down to the scullery. This had to be cleaned out every summer. I doubt if it's still there.

Never have I forgotten the smells of Taylor's skin yard – or Gassy Lane as it was called. The Six Chimneys I remember but not knocking it down. But we waited patiently to see the big chimney fall [at the electricity works]

– standing on Arle Road bridge – but it happened at night!"

(See the book Reginald Acock *Electricity Comes To Cheltenham* (1995) for an explanation of this last event in 1934, or see our *Volume One* p. 31). The 1934 street directory confirms Rosemary Jarrett's account of the names of the residents then. Edwin Waine the farmer lived at 1 Sandfield Place, and apparently owned also a barn at the other end of this row of houses. Resident at 2, 3 & 4 Sandfield Place were Salter, Nutt and Hunt. At 1 & 2 Avenue Villas lived the Stiling and Malvern families.

### 39. ALSTONE LODGE

On the opposite side of Arle Road used to stand the house called Alstone Lodge. It was maybe not quite as grand a mansion as nearby Alstone Lawn, but was still a substantial and imposing villa.

We have traced the site back to 1729 in the Manor Court Books. At that time, part of this site consisted of a Pidgeon House and about an acre of land, which belonged to James Beckett; (his wife was a daughter of the Richard Hyett of Alstone House described above). He sold the property to the Sturmy family, who added to it, as in 1757 it was described as 'that tenement in part of which a Pidgeon Loft now is, or lately was, together with the homestead and adjacent close of ground or orchard containing 112 acres.' By the 1750s the property included two stables and a garden enclosed by a brick wall, besides the house and a cherry orchard. By 1808 the property, known as Hinde's Orchards after a previous owner, extended to five acres and included the newly erected dwelling-house called Alstone Lodge. When sold in 1810 it was described as a 'A NEWLY-Erected Villa, called ALLSTONE LODGE.... The House forms a handsome brick edifice'.

The new owner was Brook Kay. He added to the land by buying for £25, (from the nineteen or so other commoners of Alstone), a redundant stretch of highway and a pond, and also a small triangular piece of Alstone Green measuring 40 by 20 feet. Brook Kay moved to London in 1818, upon which Michael and Harriet Semper became the next owners. They were followed from 1831 to 1881 by George Daubeney. (The full stories of the Sempers and Daubenys are in our *Volume One* pp. 68-70).

Edward Wilkins bought the house in 1883. He was married to Emmeline George of the baking family, and was the son of Walter Wilkins who lived in Westfield House, (described previously). The mansion had gone by about 1904. The gardens and grounds are now occupied by the street called Alstone Avenue and also by nos. 29-91 Gloucester Road. The actual location of the villa itself would now be in the space between 8-11 Alstone Avenue on one side and 39-45 Gloucester Road on the other.



**Lithograph of Alstone Lodge (1881).**

## **40. ALSTONE AVENUE**

Nos. 10-55 Alstone Avenue were built in 1904/05, specifically to re-house some of the people displaced by the GWR's construction of the Honeybourne Line. This included residents forced out from Great Western Road. The following newspaper articles give some idea of the attitude taken in those days.

### **Extracts from the *Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic* February 27th 1904**

*I am not surprised that the authorities of the Great Western Railway Company took some time to consider the tenders that were sent in by January 19th last for the erection of 42 houses in Alstone Lane, in place of the 60 odd ones that will be pulled down near Lower High Street in the construction of the Honeybourne Line. There was a good competition – some 40 tenders, by builders in all parts of the country, and I understand from various tenderers that the amounts range from £16,000 to about £20,000. Even taking the lowest figure, that would work out at about £400 per house, exclusive of the cost of the land, giving a stiff price for a workman's domicile, and certainly putting it quite*

*beyond the reach of the dispossessed occupiers of the much inferior houses to be demolished. But then, I remember, these new houses are sanctioned by the Local Government Board, which, as a rule, require model dwellings. The contract has gone to a Cardiff firm of builders.*

### **October 8th 1904**

*We can, I think, also await with confidence the speedy commencement of the Honeybourne Railway. I hear that the tenants of the still-occupied houses near St. George's Road bridge have received notice to quit by December 31st next, and that about a dozen of the 42 houses that the Great Western Railway Company are having erected in Alstone Lane are ready for occupation. These things all denote preparation for the contractors.*

### **December 3rd 1904**

*Twelve of the 46 model houses that the Great Western Railway Company is having built at Alstone Avenue, Cheltenham, to replace those small dwellings to be pulled down in Lower High Street quarters, are ready for occupation, though I question if the rent asked for each, £16 a year and rates, is within the reach of the tenants to be dispossessed in the course of time.*



**Part of the terrace nos. 10-55 Alstone Avenue. (2006 D.E.)**

## Part Seven

### AT THE VILLAGE GREEN

When Gloucester Road was built across it, in 1810, nearly half of Alstone Green disappeared under its width. So it was only a small area of village green, (about the size of the one that can still be found at nearby Badgeworth village). It was really just the space around the junction of five roads, and only as long as the distance between the Calcutta and the King's Arms.

Looking at the early maps, on which the Green is marked, we can see that Alstone Lane led off to the west, as it still does. To the north, a way led into the fields, where the Calcutta Inn was built. A route to the south also turned into a path into the fields. To the south-east led a right of way called Lad's Lane, of which Coates's 1776 survey was specifically commissioned to assess the usefulness, before it could be blocked off. To the east led a short highway, which is now part of St. George's Road, but in those days this only reached as far as its present junction with Great Western Terrace.

#### 41. ST. GEORGE'S GATE

The road junction here has generally been known by the name of Calcutta, after the adjoining public house. Calcutta still appears for example on bus timetables: we will see for how long usage of this term will survive. As for the Calcutta Inn, tucked into the corner of Gloucester Road and St. George's Road, it existed by 1841 and was demolished in 2003. The pub's name probably related to Cheltenham's associations with India, for many ex-Indian Army officers retired to the town. It was replaced in 2005 by St. George's Gate flats.

The part of the building which faced St. George's Road was Gloucester Road Post Office from 1888 to 1915 and appears in photographs to have then had a checker brickwork exterior, (although in recent decades the building had a rendered facing and a classical-style parapet around the





roof, giving it a Regency appearance). The late Peggy Ashton recalled that in the 1930s a Miss Prew kept a small sweet shop in this part of the Calcutta. The Post Office had been moved to no. 116 Gloucester Road briefly, and then to the front room of no. 110 Gloucester Road where Sidney Spencer was the sub-postmaster.

## **42. VICTORIA PARADE**

There were five cottages scattered around Alstone Green according to Merrett's 1834 map. The present nos. 128 and 138 Gloucester Road appear to have been adapted from two of these original five cottages. These two were maybe built around 1831, on the village green itself, with their ownership being transferred at around that date from Mr. Larnier to Richard



**Victoria Parade. (2005 D.E.)**

Roy. Then in the early 1850s it appears from maps that they were redeveloped by adding a line of four more houses in the space between them, to create the existing terrace of six sometimes called Victoria Parade.

The pedestrian gate of no. 3 Victoria Parade (now no. 132 Gloucester Road) is of a very individual design, made by Charles William Hancock, a craftsman who grew up in this house. He and his father were ornamental ironworkers. Charles was awarded a silver medal at the Crystal Palace Industrial Exhibition in 1889 for a fine ironwork panel which is now in the Cheltenham Museum. He went on to work for H.H. Martyn's, producing pieces of excellent quality that helped to establish the firm's international reputation for fine craftsmanship. The interior of no. 3 recently contained other signs of Charles's work, such as individual coat hooks in a flower design, and unique fire-backs and hoods with art nouveau patterns of

flowers, leaves and curves. A recent owner, when told of the history of the house, had gates for vehicular access made in a similar style.

### 43. THE KING'S ARMS

The King's Arms at no. 140 Gloucester Road is recorded in 1844 and shown on the 1850s O.T.S. map. The pub may have developed out of the third of these five old cottages mentioned above at the village green. This one perhaps also dated from around 1831 when it was owned by Mr. Smith. In mid-Victorian times (before 1887) the whole pub was rebuilt as we see it now. The earlier building had been larger and set back from the main highway.



**The King's Arms, flanked by brand new St. George's Gate flats and Emerald Cantonese. (2005 D.E.)**

### 44. EMERALD CANTONESE

A fourth old cottage on the old village green is recorded in the 1831 Inclosure Act as belonging to a Mr. Wood. This was probably the oldest of all these cottages as it was presumably Wood House, the only building



**Emerald Cantonese Cuisine. (2005 D.E.)**

marked and named at Alstone Green on an 1820s sketch map (of the lands of Six Chimneys Farm). Coates's 1776 plan also shows just one building on

this side of Alstone Green. The location is now a take-away, Emerald Cantonese Cuisine at no. 142 Gloucester Road, which occupies a late-Victorian building on the same site.

This walk should ideally continue to the railway station, but we have to finish somewhere. We hope to publish a second walk covering the upper part of Alstone village, around Millbrook Street, in another publication.



**Jubilee Bridge over Millbrook Street in stormy weather. (2007 D.E.)**

## SOURCES for the Guided Tour

These are some of the archive records most referred to here:-

Coates's 1776 plan: it looks like a sketch, but it was a serious survey, and the buildings shown on it can be assumed to be in their correct locations.

The Arle and Alstone Inclosure Act was published in 1830-35. Throughout our text we have used the date 1831, since that is the date at which the ground was surveyed and the ownership of every building was assessed.

Harper's *Cheltenham Street Directory* of 1844 is the first to cover Alstone thoroughly. It clarifies that Gloucester Road was perceived as the dividing line between Upper and Lower Alstone.

The Old Town Survey (O.T.S.) made in 1855-56. This is a map, on a huge scale, and it names many of the buildings that it shows. This deserves much more research than we have done here.

*An Historical Gazetteer of Cheltenham* by James Hodsdon (1996). This modern text lists the origins of most streets, terraces and other grouped dwellings. Rather than duplicating his researches here, this volume updates them by including all the developments built in Alstone village centre between 1996 and 2007.

Thanks throughout to Gloucestershire Archives (GRO). *Volume One* here refers to our book *Discovering Alstone Volume One* (2006). A three figure number after the letters AAI means that the plot of ground can be found with this reference number in the 1830-35 Arle & Alstone Inclosure Act (GRO Q/RI 41).

INTRODUCTION. 1548 – see Hockaday Abstracts. Coates's map: QS/RE 1776A. SECTION 1. AAI 384. Cheltenham Local History Society Journal Vol.15 pp.45-48, (slightly abbreviated in Volume One pp.56-58) and CLHSJ Vol.16 pp.14-17.

2. AAI 424. CBC minutes Housing Committee 18/11/37 and 15/3/1947 (1154). Peggy Ashton interviewed in February 1998.

3. Page's Row AAI 425, there was also an individual house Flucks Cottage alongside at AAI 426.

4. Higgs' Cottages (also known as Higgs' Row) AAI 385. *Volume One* pp.21-3 and a photo of Alstone Court (2005 M.H.) is on p.84.

5. Pear Tree Orchard is AAI 423.

6. AAI 422.

7. AAI 388. See *The Buildings of England* by D. Verrey (1970 edition). Compare Brooks p.145 regarding a whipping post and stocks for Swindon Village in 1757.

8. MCB D855-M14 John Newcombe to James Beckett. Part of AAI 388. O.T.S. reads as Cottages, 1844 directory as Newcome.

9. AAI 414. See Volume One p.20.

10. AAI 390. School described in Hart p.211 and Osmond pp.18-19.

11. AAI 391. Wrongly identified by some writers as Derby Cottages.

12. Reference to Mr. Williams the coal merchant in Rowe (1845) p.3 and advert in Rowe's appendix p.xlvii.

13. AAI 394.

14. AAI 413, photo in *Volume One* p.86. (2001 M.H.)

15. AAI 410. (Named Norton Cottage in 1881).

17. AAI 395. Westfield 1869 see Hodsdon p.152. Stephens Close see *Cheltenham Probate Records 1660-1740* by A.J.H. Sale (1999) para.371.

18. Old House Piece is AAI 407.

- 19 & 20. Mr. Herbert's house is AAI 398. Red Roofs shown in photo in *Volume One* p.12.
21. AAI 400.
22. Nos.1-5 are AAI 420. Demolition see Council records eg. 8/5/39, 11/9/39. No.7 is AAI 421. Current nos.52-56 probably equate to application to Town Planning (5170) 23/3/39 by E.T. Stinchcombe.
23. Farmhouse is AAI 415. Simmonds insolvency sale of effects by Moore & Sons Auctioneers D2080 C65.
24. AAI 419.
25. AAI 418 'Houses'.
26. AAI 417. Sometimes called Croft Cottages e.g.1844.
27. AAI 433. Jesus College documents D8285.
28. Location was part of AAI 434. Town Planning minutes 23/1/39, 16/2/39, 18/5/39.
29. AAI 434, often called Lower Alstone House. See photo in *Volume One* p.63 (2000 M.H.) and Rowbotham & Waller pp.17-18.
30. AAI 432. Photo of mill and wheel c.1902 see Whiting (2) p.18. Photo c.1930 in *Volume One* p.34. Mill at Westal, see CLHSJ Vol 20 p. 20 or Rowbotham & Waller p.15.
32. AAI 431. VCH Vol.9 p.60. Photo from 1928 in Rowbotham & Waller p.14 and Whiting (2) p.18. Osmond p. 63 re school.
33. Osmond p.47/48. Interior photo of hospital in Whiting (1) p.134. website remembering.org.uk/vad\_gloucester\_road.htm. Osmond pp.52,54,55,74.
- 34 & 35. All parts of AAI 474. 35 is Albion Place in 1841 census.
36. see Edgell & Sandles p.37. Location is AAI 475, owner James Fowler in 1831, but it is not clear whether there was a building here then.
37. AAI 428. Elm Cottages named as Waine's Cottages, 1881 census, Sandfield Cottages 1901 census.
39. AAI 427. See also Bradbury p.124. Deeds D7063 Box 4 No. 2. Brook Kay sale to Semper D189/III/2.
41. Photo of Post Office in Whiting (2) p.19. See also photo on back cover of our *Volume One*. The 1841 census & 1844 directory list another pub in the vicinity called the British Tar Inn, perhaps in the cottage behind the Calcutta.
42. AAI 492.
43. AAI 493.
44. AAI 495.

## **CENSUSES: 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901**

### **MAPS: Thanks throughout the Guided Tour to the Ordnance Survey**

- 1776 G. Coates
- 1806 Edward Mitchell
- 1820 E. Cossens (Post Office)
- 1825 Griffith
- 1828 Ordnance Survey 1":1 mile
- 1831 Inclosure Act
- 1834 H. S. Merrett
- 1845 Lee
- 1855-7 Old Town Survey (O.T.S.)
- 1864 anon.
- 1887/1901/1921/1954&62 Ordnance Survey maps 25":1 mile.

## CHELTENHAM STREET DIRECTORIES:

1844 Harper

1839, 1840, 1841, 1844, 1861 Henry Davies (Annuaire)

1847 E. Hunt & Co.

1880, 1891 Cheltenham Post Office printed by Horace Edwards

1902, 1922 Built-Leonard

1911 W. Crawford (Annuaire)

1926, 1931, 1934, 1938, 1941, 1948, 1952, 1959. 1965, 1975 Kelly

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(2) *Cheltenham: A Second Selection* (1988)

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Thanks to the current owners and residents of all buildings mentioned: we hope you will consider this book as a tribute.

And last, but not least, to all those purchasers of *Volume One* who contacted us to express their pleasure in the publication and told us what happy memories it evoked.

Thanks to: Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Borough Council for permission to use the Old Town Survey on p.44;

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## CONCLUSION: A LOST VILLAGE

What does happen when an ancient village community becomes swamped by a nearby new town? One historian answered with these words:

'When it languishes and dies or is absorbed into some larger loyalty, the history of that particular community is at an end.'

The historian in question was H.P.R. Finberg, an expert on Gloucestershire. (*Local History: Objective and Pursuit*, p. 128). He had just been writing about Cheltenham as an example of one such expanding town. He was writing in 1952, so he may well have had Alstone specifically in mind as he wrote those words, observing how the new Rowanfield estate had finally cut off the old village centre from the countryside. Today, he might regret writing in such a way. Since then, the concept of heritage has changed out of all recognition. We could now easily have a separate museum for each one of the suburbs of Cheltenham. The Charlton Kings Local History Society has produced more than 50 volumes about the buildings and people of that small locality, and likewise there is certainly far more to say about the Alstone area than will fit into any one volume.

We have here published only a summary of our researches: hopefully there is enough substance for serious historians. Although these days the internet is the obvious place to record in-depth information, it is still valuable to have a printed record. Maybe long-standing local residents would like to pool their knowledge into some kind of local record office or folk museum, including their own experiences and photographs, plus any corrections or additions to this volume.

*'What was good and beautiful in the past  
amounts to a seasoning of the present.'* Anon.  
2008.



**The fountain in Montpellier Gardens**



**Royal Well Walk**