

## Social History

Francis Boorman

### ***Population and Social Structure [by Anthea Jones]***

From the 16th century figures of households, families or communicants, from which estimates of Cirencester's population can be calculated, relate to the parish as a whole including the townships of Baunton (until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century), Chesterton and Wiggold. Early taxation records were collected by township, and so on occasion specify Baunton, Chesterton and Wiggold separately. The chantry commissioners certificate (which excluded Baunton) in 1548 returned 1,400 communicants, while Bishop Hooper's visitation in 1551 returned 1,460. This suggesting a population including non-communicating children of a little under 2,000.<sup>1</sup> In the 1563 diocesan returns Baunton appeared as a chapelry with 12 households, while Cirencester had 320 households, suggesting a population of between 1,411 and 1,577. The 1603 census has no separate return for Baunton.<sup>2</sup> From the mid-17th century Baunton was recognised as a separate parish.

The 1603 ecclesiastical census returned 1,825 conformists and six recusants for Cirencester; suggesting a total population of around 2,750.<sup>3</sup> In 1608 352 men were mustered in the town but the relationship with households or overall numbers is uncertain.<sup>4</sup> There were 700 families in Cirencester in 1650, suggesting a population of 3,000 – 3,300.<sup>5</sup> In 1676 there were 1,745 conformists in Cirencester, and 155 nonconformists, suggesting a population of 2,850.

Atkyns suggested at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Cirencester had a population of 4,000 and 800 houses, but Rudder argued from the number of baptisms and burials that this figure was too high.<sup>6</sup> The response to Bishop Benson's Visitation enquiry returned 3,800 inhabitants, and 3,797 for Cirencester was added to an enumeration of Tetbury in 1741.<sup>7</sup> According to Rudder an 'exact account' in 1775 recorded 3,878 people and 838 houses.<sup>8</sup> The population was 4,130 in 1801, 4,540 in 1811 and 4,987 in 1821.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Charities and Social Welfare [by John Loosley]***

According to the terms of John Jones's service, the properties were to be sold after 60 years by the feoffees and the proceeds used as the churchwardens and feoffees should decide.<sup>10</sup> At some point

<sup>1</sup> J. Maclean, 'Chantry Certificates, Gloucestershire' *Trans. BGAS* 8 (1883-84), 284; J Gairdner, 'Bishop Hooper's Visitation of Gloucester', *EHR* 9 (1904) 111; John S Moore, 'Episcopal visitations and the demography of Tudor Gloucestershire', *Southern History* 22 (2000) 74-8.

<sup>2</sup> A Dyer & D M Palliser eds., *The Diocesan Population Returns for 1563 and 1603* (2005), 171, 338.

<sup>3</sup> Dyer & Palliser, *Diocesan Population Returns for 1563 and 1603*, 338.

<sup>4</sup> Smith *Men and Armour*, 239-43.

<sup>5</sup> Moore, 'Episcopal visitations and the demography of Tudor Gloucestershire', 75.

<sup>6</sup> Rudder, *Glos.*, 368.

<sup>7</sup> *Benson's Survey*, 149; GA D566/Z/11.

<sup>8</sup> Rudder, *Glos.*, 368.

<sup>9</sup> *1851 Census*, population tables.

<sup>10</sup> See Medieval Cirencester, religion, John Jones's service.

the feoffees or churchwardens decided to retain the properties and continue the Jones charity. In 1719 it was agreed that the churchwardens of Cirencester should be permitted to receive the rents upon trust, applying £8 towards the grammar school and the residue for the maintenance of the parish church. The properties in Dyer Street were sold in the 20th century, but the other properties were retained and the trust continued in 2017.<sup>11</sup>

In his will Humphrey Bridges (d. 1598) gave a rent-charge on a tenement in Cricklade Street of 20s. to the poor of St Lawrence's Hospital on Good Friday and a further 20s. on Christmas Eve.<sup>12</sup> His wife, Elizabeth Bridges (d. 1620) gave 5s. per week to five poor widows of Cirencester.<sup>13</sup> These poor widows were accommodated in an almshouse in Dollar Street called Hodden House, to which she gave £40.<sup>14</sup>

By an indenture of 1779, John Day of Lechlade left the rent on three cottages, Parsonage House and 90 a. of land in Pinkney (in Sherston, Wilts.) with the great and small tithes, to be distributed amongst the poor Anglican housekeepers in Cirencester.<sup>15</sup> Payments were to be between £3 and £15 per year. The intention of the charity was to relieve the unavoidable misfortunes of accident, decay of trade, and old age and to encourage industry. No one should be eligible unless he or she had rented a house in Cirencester of at least £3 per year including taxes.<sup>16</sup>

John Webley by his will of 1598 gave the rent-charge on a house in Gosditch Street, exchanged with Lord Danvers in 1607, and £1 6s. 8d. charged on the Greyhound Inn in Dyer Street to be distributed to the poor on Good Friday.<sup>17</sup> Alice Avening in 1598 gave the rent of £2 from a house in Dollar Street to the poor on Good Friday, as did Rowland Freeman by his will of 1658 from rent on a house and garden in Cecily Street, now incorporated into Earl Bathurst's park.<sup>18</sup>

William Hooper by his will of 1605 gave the rent-charge of 40s. on two houses in Little Silver Street to the poor on Good Friday.<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey Bathe in 1618 gave part of the rent-charge on a house in Cricklade Street to the poor, as did William Blomer in 1614 on a house in Gloucester Street.<sup>20</sup> In his will of 1638 George Monox, a merchant and sheriff of London, left houses in Dyer Street, Black Jack Street and Coxwell Street, the rent of £23 10s. to be distributed to the poor yearly on St Thomas's day.<sup>21</sup> John Paethe in 1641 gave a rent charge on a property in Dollar Street of £2 to decayed butchers and the residue to the common poor.<sup>22</sup> Sir Anthony Hungerford of Down Ampney, by an indenture of 1642, gave the rent-charge on 4 a. of land called Westmead in Ampney Crucis, to a coat and 12d. each to 11 aged and imperfect persons.<sup>23</sup> On the left sleeve of each coat should be the letters A.J.H. in red cloth. By 1821 the rental income of £9 was insufficient sufficient

<sup>11</sup> TNA, PROB 11/17, ff.106v-107; GA, 913.362REE/CL.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, PROB 11/91/390.

<sup>13</sup> TNA, PROB 11/136/389.

<sup>14</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 5/1.

<sup>15</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 413.

<sup>17</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>18</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>19</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>20</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2; P86/1 VE 2/1.

<sup>21</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 12.

<sup>22</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 14.

<sup>23</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 8/1-2.

to supply 11 coats, but upwards of 50 coats were provided from this and other funds.<sup>24</sup>

John Chaunler in 1654 gave the proceeds from rent of a house in Cecily Street which was purchased by Lord Bathurst in 1736.<sup>25</sup> Edward King in 1692 gave the rent from two houses in Coxwell Street for four large coats for two poor men and two poor women, but not more often than every two years to the same person, nor ever again to anyone who should apply the garment to any other use besides his or her wear.<sup>26</sup> John Master in his will of 1695 left half the interest from £200 to poor housekeepers as did Revd William Masters and Mrs Winifred Masters in 1716.<sup>27</sup> Richard Note in 1697 gave the rent from a house and garden in Cricklade Street to clothe poor old men at Christmas.<sup>28</sup> John Timbrell in his will dated 1793 left £134 in Consolidated Stock of which part of the interest to be distributed in bread to the poor.<sup>29</sup> An estate of 40 a. at South Cerney was purchased with money donated by Samuel Coxwell, George Monox, Sir Henry Pratt, William Blomer and Mrs Chambers.<sup>30</sup>

Other charities providing for the poor included that of Philip Marnier, who by his will of 1587 gave a rent-charge on two houses in Dollar Street and property in Coxwell Street, 6s. 8d. for a sermon on the 1st Friday in Lent and the remainder to be distributed to any poor people present at the sermon. The distribution in the Church after the sermon caused disturbances, so it was distributed to the poor in their own houses. He also gave £80 in trust, £20 to be lent to four poor men of trade in Cirencester yearly without interest and also to four men in Burford, Tetbury and Minchinhampton.<sup>31</sup> The two houses in Dollar Street were leased by Earl Bathurst and the garden, timber yard and stables in Coxwell Street by Revd. Lewis Clutterbuck, but at rents considerably below their value. In 1829 both Earl Bathurst and a representative of Mr Clutterbuck agreed to re-lease them at current values. By 1829 the £80 had been lost due to default of the borrowers.<sup>32</sup>

In 1595 John Morse provided for two poor widows<sup>33</sup> and Elizabeth Cripps in 1713 and Mrs Clutterbuck in 1783 gave the income from Old South Sea annuities, to be distributed yearly to ten poor widows or unmarried women of Cirencester at Christmas who were not receiving alms.<sup>34</sup>

Nicholas Edwards in a will of 1711 provided coats for two poor men and two poor women at Christmas and 20 loaves on St Thomas's Day for the poor.<sup>35</sup> Isaac Tebbatt by his will of 1732 gave the interest on £20 to buy 40 loaves of bread for the benefit of the poor of Castle Ward.<sup>36</sup> In 1829 the Charity Commissioners found that although the sum of £20 no longer appeared, the churchwarden still gave 20s. a year of bread to the poor of Castle Ward.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 406.

<sup>25</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>26</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2; *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 409

<sup>27</sup> GA, P86/1 CH20/11.

<sup>28</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 411.

<sup>29</sup> GA, P86/1 CH18/1.

<sup>30</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 407.

<sup>31</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 10/1-6, *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 401.

<sup>32</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 401.

<sup>33</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>34</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, PROB 11/526/272.

<sup>36</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>37</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report (1829)*, 408.

Sir Thomas Rowe in 1637 gave the rent-charge on property in Wapley called Moswell for apprenticing orphans or poor boys, and every 3 or 4 years to a boy of Rendcombe if presented.<sup>38</sup> The trustees, minister and parish officers were to choose the boys following a sermon preached on 13 September.<sup>39</sup> James Clutterbuck in a will dated 1683 provided funds for apprenticing a poor boy of Cirencester. In 1795 the original sum of £100 plus accumulated interest of £46 was used to purchase £200 3% consols.<sup>40</sup>

In a will dated 1706 Thomas Perry left £100 to purchase property in Upton St Leonards, the rent of which to be used for apprenticing a poor boy.<sup>41</sup> This property consisted of 2 a. 2 r. of pasture land with a small house and blacksmith's shop. In 1822 the house was in a dilapidated state and William Gillman of London advanced £60 towards the cost of rebuilding, to be repaid out of the rent with 5% interest.<sup>42</sup> Richard Matthews in his will of 1727 left £150 to purchase property, the rent of which to be used for apprenticing a poor boy from Cirencester in London. Thirty-one acres of land was purchased in South Cerney. On enclosure in 1814 the holding was increased by 4 or 5 a. In 1829 the rent amounted to £27. The trustees, consisting of two members of the Presbyterian congregation and two of the Quaker meeting, decided to apprentice boys in conjunction with the trustees of the Yellow School.<sup>43</sup> William Forder of Ampney Crucis left money for apprenticing a boy every three years,<sup>44</sup> whilst Elizabeth Edwards in 1726 gave the interest on £100 for apprenticing a poor child of the charity school.<sup>45</sup> Samuel Cockerell in his 1733 will left the rent-charge on property in Blackfriars, Gloucester for the placing out of a poor boy of Cirencester to a captain of a ship or some other trade in London or Bristol, although the Charity Commissioners in 1829 were unable to establish if it was ever in operation.<sup>46</sup> The Cirencester Society, established in London in 1701, bound a poor boy of Cirencester as apprentice at their annual feast.<sup>47</sup>

Jane Overbury in her will of 1772 gave £150 in annuities, interest on £100 to the Baptist minister in Coxwell Street and interest on £50 to poor Baptists.<sup>48</sup> In her will dated 1815 Catherine Stephens bequeathed the interest from £450 to the Baptist minister.<sup>49</sup>

### *Poor Relief*

The poor of Cirencester had been provided for by the gild funds, but after they were dissolved in the 1540s there was little provision.<sup>50</sup> Distribution of garments and money was eventually funded by endowments of the various parish charities and there was a distribution of offerings at Easter and Christmas. These were carried out by the churchwarden for the poor<sup>51</sup> and the churchwardens

<sup>38</sup> GA, P86/1 CH 20/2.

<sup>39</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 403.

<sup>40</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, PROB 11/494/227; GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>42</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 421.

<sup>43</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1.

<sup>44</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>45</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3; *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 412.

<sup>46</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 412.

<sup>47</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3.

<sup>48</sup> GA GDR 1774/175.

<sup>49</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 422.

<sup>50</sup> W. St. Clair Baddeley, *A History of Cirencester* (Cirencester, 1924), 229.

<sup>51</sup> GA, P86a/CW/2/1.

acted as overseers of the poor, following their establishment in 1597.<sup>52</sup> Appointments to the separate post of overseer were recorded from 1624 and the procedure for setting the rates was announced in 1637, in which a rate was announced by the parish officers and the inhabitants could then raise objections before the rate was confirmed by the magistrates.<sup>53</sup> In 1660 the poor rate was payable monthly at a collectors' table in the church and the collectors given warrant by the justice to distrain non-payers.<sup>54</sup> In 1667 a register was established for the overseers to record their weekly disbursement at the same time as the supervisors of the highway were instructed to begin keeping accounts.<sup>55</sup>

To prevent poor relief becoming too great a financial burden, bonds were entered into by newcomers, or others on their behalf, as insurance against them becoming dependent upon the parish. These were recorded by the churchwardens from 1601 and in the vestry book from 1633. For some bonds the relationship of the person paying to the recipient was recorded and sometimes also the occupation of the recipient.<sup>56</sup> The value of the bond was typically £30.<sup>57</sup> Bonds were also entered into for bastard children and indentures for poor children.<sup>58</sup>

Following the Poor Relief Act of 1662 settlement certificates were required for outsiders to live in Cirencester, which ensured that they could be returned to their parish of origin if they needed relief.<sup>59</sup> Certificates for residence in Cirencester were recorded from 1688 to 1690.<sup>60</sup> Several removal orders to parishes in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Warwickshire were recorded in the vestry book for the first time in 1759.<sup>61</sup> Of continuing importance to financial responsibility for poor people, the boundaries of the parish were regularly rehearsed in the ancient ritual of perambulation, which continued well into the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup>

### **Workhouse [by Louise Ryland-Epton]**

Cirencester workhouse, opened in 1725, in a large converted house given to the parish for the purpose by Lord Bathurst.<sup>63</sup> The new institution was situated just outside of the town centre and was one of its largest structures, set within extensive gardens and grounds.<sup>64</sup>

The vestry contracted Gabriel Cooke as its first master at a salary of £50 per annum for three years.<sup>65</sup> The contract was renewed in 1727, 1730 and in 1734.<sup>66</sup> During this period, the parish overseers paid the poor rates directly to Cooke and stopped providing relief to the poor outside

<sup>52</sup> S.E. Harrison, *The Cirencester Vestry Book During the 17th Century* (1914), 12.

<sup>53</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.55.

<sup>54</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.72.

<sup>55</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.77.

<sup>56</sup> GA, P86a/CW/2/1; P86/1/VE/2/1.

<sup>57</sup> S.E. Harrison, *The Cirencester Vestry Book During the 17th Century* (1914), 15.

<sup>58</sup> GA, P86a/CW/2/1.

<sup>59</sup> 14 Chas. II, c. 12.

<sup>60</sup> GA, P86a/CW/2/1.

<sup>61</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.156.

<sup>62</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/7/1.

<sup>63</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 15 Oct. 1724.

<sup>64</sup> GA, D2525/P6.

<sup>65</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 15 Oct. 1724.

<sup>66</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 22 Mar. 1727, 19 Mar. 1730, 29 Mar. 1734.

the workhouse, which was intended to provide the only source of parish assistance.<sup>67</sup> Inmates were employed in woollen and yarn manufacture and required to wear brown jackets, or later badges, to identify themselves.<sup>68</sup> The workhouse was initially considered very successful, saving the parish £140 per annum in its first five years alone.<sup>69</sup> The work undertaken by the inmates raised an income which was used to offset the institution's running costs.

Between 1736 and 1751 the workhouse was managed by 'governors' or 'guardians' of the poor who were appointed annually.<sup>70</sup> The daily operation was entrusted to a workhouse master. Endeavours were also made to provide for the inspection of the workhouse and the work completed by inmates.<sup>71</sup> It remained the policy to only provide relief to the poor on the premises, although this could be waived, generally for short periods, with the agreement of overseers and church wardens.<sup>72</sup>

In 1751 John Ellis became governor of the workhouse with a salary of £20, which increased to £40 a year later.<sup>73</sup> He was replaced in 1759 by Edward Gingell, a narrow weaver, who was paid 1s. 10d. per inmate and allowed to keep any profit from their work.<sup>74</sup> The parish later reverted back to paying a salary.<sup>75</sup> Gingell remained in post until 1772 when, as the ex-governor, he was called on to settle his account with the parish.<sup>76</sup> Gradually the poor started to be relieved outside of the workhouse context and by 1776 the cost of poor relief had risen to £957.<sup>77</sup> After Gingell's departure the vestry tried unsuccessfully to contract out the management of the workhouse.<sup>78</sup> In 1778 the poor rates account was in debt and several men had to lend money to the parish.<sup>79</sup> Later overseers were admonished for the levels of uncollected rates.<sup>80</sup> Rising demand for parish relief continued and by 1785 expenditure had risen to £1,300.<sup>81</sup>

In 1781 Samuel Webb became master of the workhouse.<sup>82</sup> He was characterised as an adept financial administrator.<sup>83</sup> He left after ten years, but returned in 1798 to a larger role managing the entire parish poor.<sup>84</sup> This followed a period described by Rudder as a great dearth, which left the

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<sup>67</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 15 Oct. 1724; Anon, *An Account of Several Work-Houses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor*, (London: Joseph Downing, 1725), 105.

<sup>68</sup> Anon, *An Account of Several Work-Houses* (1725), 105; GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, Vestry Minutes 15 Oct. 1724, 16 Sept. 1743, 23 Feb. 1753.

<sup>69</sup> Anon, *An Account of Several Work-Houses* (London: Jos. Downing, 1732), 110.

<sup>70</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 14 Oct. 1736, 6 Oct. 1737, 6 Oct. 1738.

<sup>71</sup> GA, P86/1 IN 6/3; P86/2 VE 2/1, 30 Oct. 1741, 4 Sept. 1761.

<sup>72</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 8 Oct. 1742, 11 June 1743, 30 Nov. 1750.

<sup>73</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 12 Apr. 1751, 3 Apr. 1752.

<sup>74</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 7 Sept. 1759.

<sup>75</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 5 Oct. 1762.

<sup>76</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 4 Dec. 1772.

<sup>77</sup> *Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor*, (London: House of Commons Papers, 1776).

<sup>78</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 4 Dec. 1772, 15 Apr. 1775, 15 April 1776, 22 May 1778, 18 Apr. 1780, 26 May 1780.

<sup>79</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 10 Dec. 1780.

<sup>80</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 20 Apr. 1781, 16 Apr. 1784.

<sup>81</sup> *Abstract of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor* (London: House of Commons Papers, 1787).

<sup>82</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 20 Apr. 1781.

<sup>83</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 319.

<sup>84</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 29 Apr. 1791, 13 Apr. 1798.

town's poor penniless and severely pressed by hunger.<sup>85</sup> But despite this effort to engage effective management and other methods employed to deter applications for aid, the cost of parish relief continued to spiral, reaching £3,295 in 1803.<sup>86</sup> More people were also relieved outside the workhouse despite it being filled to capacity; 120 were relieved in the workhouse and 170 received outdoor relief, not including dependent children.<sup>87</sup>

In 1810 the parish refocused the objectives of the workhouse by voting to adopt the provisions of Gilbert's Act.<sup>88</sup> Under the terms of this voluntary legislation, a workhouse was intended to provide a refuge for the impotent poor. The able bodied were to be excluded and instead found work or be provided with outdoor relief. Consequently this group were gradually removed from the Cirencester workhouse. The parish also adopted the Speenhamland system of subsidising wages. Those accommodated inside the institution were now almost exclusively the most vulnerable: the old, sick or infirm. In 1828 the workhouse population comprised of 51 individuals of whom 27 were 'infirm', six were 'idiots', four were 'unwell', one blind, one deaf, one 'infirm and cripple', two were there for an unspecified reason and three women were pregnant. Only one was labelled 'capable of maintaining his family.'<sup>89</sup>

The first governor under Gilbert's Act was John Hill. He was replaced the following year by William Chamberlain and his wife, who were paid £70 and made responsible for all those receiving relief both inside and outside.<sup>90</sup> Chamberlain reported to the Rev Pye and other annually appointed guardians who took responsibility for the oversight of the management of the poor. In the years after the implementation of Gilbert's Act the cost of parish relief fell. In the year ending Easter 1813 the cost of maintaining the parish poor was £3,413. In 1814 it was £2,702 and fell to £2,513 the following year.<sup>91</sup> The number of inmates in the workhouse also dropped significantly. By 1821 the average number of paupers in the workhouse had fallen to 57.<sup>92</sup> A new poor rate was ratified in 1814, but collecting it became increasingly difficult. In 1818 the vestry appointed a salaried overseer whose sole duty was to collect the poor rate, but later resorted to calling on the overseers not to delay and to collect rates 'without exception.'<sup>93</sup> By 1827 the poor account was in serious debt.<sup>94</sup>

Inside the workhouse conditions were austere. An inventory of 1811 reveals the poor were generally accommodated in dormitories, with a certain degree of segregation of the sexes, and the young. Unlike the majority of the institution's population, the children were provided blankets and heating. They were also likely to have received a rudimentary education.<sup>95</sup> Labour remained an important aspect of the regime and, despite any individual infirmity, there was an expectation that

<sup>85</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 153-4.

<sup>86</sup> *Abstract of Answers and Returns under Act for procuring Returns relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England* (London: House of Commons Papers, 1803-4), 174.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 175.

<sup>88</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 27 Apr. 1810.

<sup>89</sup> GA, P86a VE 3/1-7.

<sup>90</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 27 Apr. 1810, 15 May 1811, 15 Nov. 1811.

<sup>91</sup> *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns made pursuant to an act* (London: House of Commons Papers, 1818), 146.

<sup>92</sup> GA, P86a VE 3/1-7.

<sup>93</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 29 Apr. 1814, 8 Apr. 1820, 5 May 1826.

<sup>94</sup> GA, P86/1 VE 2/1, 27 May 1827.

<sup>95</sup> GA, P86/1 OV 2/1.

everyone would work, often still in aspects of woollen cloth manufacture.<sup>96</sup> Residents had access to medical care and a diet which was better than that available to the poorest labourer outside.<sup>97</sup>

## ***Education [by Pam Ferris]***

### **Cirencester Grammar School**

Following the dissolution of Winchcombe Abbey the £10 endowment for the school ceased and the parishioners were obliged to fund the incumbent Thomas Taylour at their own expense, providing a salary of £7 and a house. The commissioners confirmed the stipend to be paid from the Court of Augmentations, but provided no endowment of lands.<sup>98</sup> Following the abolition of the Court of Augmentations, no stipend was forthcoming for several years until the schoolmaster, William Arderne successfully applied for its resumption. This represented a third of the fees paid to the schoolmaster and usher, the remainder being made up by the parishioners until 1582, when the payment from the Crown was increased to £20. In 1584/5 the payment was made to Thomas Elmes/Helme.<sup>99</sup> Under Anthony Ellys, the master or usher in 1571, the school roll was 100 to 120 scholars.<sup>100</sup>

Dissatisfaction with Thomas Elmes's management of the school led to attempts to remove him. During a commission of enquiry it was alleged that Elmes was incompetent and that the number of scholars had declined to 40.<sup>101</sup> In 1594 the graduate John Bowden was appointed schoolmaster,<sup>102</sup> but Elmes was reappointed in 1603.<sup>103</sup> A Commission of Charitable Uses in 1603 concluded that the townsmen had withheld payment of £8 from the schoolmaster since 1583 and issued a decree declaring it obligatory, but this was not observed.<sup>104</sup> Elmes remained in post until 1619. From 1612 to 1616 John Elmes was appointed undermaster.<sup>105</sup> In 1616 four undermasters were appointed alongside Elmes by the bishop of Gloucester: John Elmes, Edmund Windowe<sup>106</sup>, Anthony Chapman<sup>107</sup> and Henry Topp.<sup>108</sup> In 1622 Henry Topp replaced Thomas Elmes as schoolmaster,<sup>109</sup> remaining in post after his appointment as minister at Baunton in 1623.

The vestry drew up statutes for the school in January 1620, reissued in 1641 and 1677<sup>110</sup> These regulations formed the basis for a contract with the master, who was required to attend a public

<sup>96</sup> GA, P86/1 OV 2/1; GA, P86a VE 3/1-7.

<sup>97</sup> GA, P86/1 OV 2/1; GA D1070/I/43; Sir F. Eden, *The State of the Poor: A History of the Labouring Classes in England* (London, 1797).

<sup>98</sup> A. F. Leach, *English Schools at the Reformation* (1896), pt. 2, 84-5.

<sup>99</sup> *VCH Glos. II*, 390-1.

<sup>100</sup> *VCH Glos. II*, 391-2.

<sup>101</sup> *VCH Glos. II*, 392.

<sup>102</sup> CCEd 129968.

<sup>103</sup> CCEd 149872.

<sup>104</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.122 a, b

<sup>105</sup> CCEd 149871.

<sup>106</sup> CCEd 167938.

<sup>107</sup> CCEd 129990.

<sup>108</sup> CCEd 75810.

<sup>109</sup> *VCH Glos. II*, 394.

<sup>110</sup> GA, P86/1/SC/1/1 and 1/2. The statutes were reissued in 1641 and 1677.

vestry meeting, sign the orders and pay a bond of £200 undertaking to adhere to them. Patronage of the school was in the hands of the manorial and parish authorities, listed by function and described as Visitors or Governors, who were responsible for all matters, including appointment and dismissal of the master.<sup>111</sup> The statutes required that boys were able to read the English Testament on admittance to the school. The sons of townsmen paid 12*d.* and sons of 'out dwellers' 3*s.*; poor children were to receive a free education. Religious teaching and church attendance were specified, as were standards of behaviour, for the boys and the master. The only reference to the curriculum relates to use of Latin. Clauses inserted in 1641 stipulate minimum attendance, fining of parents in case of non-attendance, and lengths of school day and term.<sup>112</sup>

The composition and the inadequacy of the stipend; the condition of the schoolhouse in Dyer Street and the extent of vestry control over the master remained sources of contention. In 1639 the issue of the £8 annuity from the Jones trust arose again. Topp was given notice by the churchwardens, accused of lack of diligence and not having provided an usher to assist in the school.<sup>113</sup> He too refused to leave his position and the dispute continued until 1641.<sup>114</sup>

His replacement William Taylor left the town in 1643 and Topp returned as schoolmaster until 1649, albeit threatened by the vestry with court action to recover the schoolhouse from him.<sup>115</sup> The Exchequer payment ceased in 1645 and was unreliable thereafter, some townsmen taking it upon themselves to guarantee payment to the then schoolmaster Hector Ford.<sup>116</sup> Ford left in 1660 to be replaced by John Hodges in 1661.<sup>117</sup>

The Governors' assertion in the statutes that the fees would be spent on books, any surplus going to items such as repairs to the schoolhouse, was not followed through. Elmes claimed that £200 worth of repairs to the schoolhouse were required in 1609. After he left some work was carried out and more when Topp left, causing a parish deficit of £115 7*s.* 9*d.*<sup>118</sup> Following extensive work, including reconstructing the frontage and adding stone mullion windows, in 1663 it was decided that in future repairs should be disbursed from the church rents by the churchwardens as required.<sup>119</sup> In 1759 the Cirencester Society in London resolved to contribute ten guineas towards repairs to the school.<sup>120</sup> Books fared no better - in the time of Nathaniel (or John) Gwynne (1664-1677) there was only one book in the school.<sup>121</sup>

In 1677 John Parkinson was appointed by a patent under the great seal.<sup>122</sup> In 1754 Francis James was granted by patent, while Henry Wightwick was nominated by an alleged majority of the electors.<sup>123</sup> The intractability of the parties was exacerbated by a contemporary dispute over the

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<sup>111</sup> GA, P86 Sc1/1.

<sup>112</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.122 a, b

<sup>113</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.56v, 58 b

<sup>114</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.60 a

<sup>115</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.65.

<sup>116</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.68

<sup>117</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.73v.

<sup>118</sup> GA, P86/1/SC/1/1; P86/1/IN/6/3, f.61v

<sup>119</sup> GA, P86/1/SC/1/2; P86/1/IN/6/3, f.75v.

<sup>120</sup> J. Ireland, *The History of Cirencester Grammar School* (Cirencester Old Grammarians Reunion Committee 1993), 54

<sup>121</sup> Ireland, *History of Cirencester Grammar School*, 51.

<sup>122</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/3, f.85v

<sup>123</sup> Ireland, *History of Cirencester Grammar School*, 54.

parliamentary election. The legal decision finally supported James and as a result the master was appointed by the Lord Chancellor until 1881.<sup>124</sup>

The schoolhouse again became an issue under John Washbourn (1764-1805), when a new wing was added to accommodate his family and 20-30 boarders.<sup>125</sup> He had no free scholars but concentrated on the more profitable country boarders.<sup>126</sup> The status of the school in 1780 was reflected in the fact that he had to pay for seats in church, as the private schools did.<sup>127</sup> In 1783 Washbourne dispensed with the boarders, though he retained the house and remained as master until his death in 1805.<sup>128</sup> He was replaced by Revd James Buckoll, who charged day pupils 8 guineas p.a. and boarders 30 guineas.<sup>129</sup> James Grooby was master of the grammar school from 1810<sup>130</sup> and Rev. H. Wood from 1823.<sup>131</sup>

## Charity Schools

A group of Cirencester residents instituted a charity school in 1714<sup>132</sup> to teach and cloth 40 boys and 20 girls, while younger children were to be taught in dame schools.<sup>133</sup> The chief benefactor was Thomas Powell, who in his lifetime contributed £15 p.a. by way of a 99-year Exchequer annuity.<sup>134</sup> The school became known as the Blue School, from the colour of the boys' uniforms. The school's initial fund was £228 10s.<sup>135</sup> At his death in 1718 Powell left a share of profits from land in Cricklade (Wilts.) towards educating and clothing the poor of Cirencester.<sup>136</sup> The share allocated to the school was three-quarters of the £20 rental income.<sup>137</sup> The initial fund grew till it was £428 5s. 6d. in 1755. This sum was regarded as the capital of the school and invested by the churchwardens.<sup>138</sup> Rebecca Powell (d. 1722), Thomas's widow, left the bulk of her estate in trust for a number of charitable purposes, including erecting, endowing and establishing a charity school or schools.<sup>139</sup> Legal wrangles prevented early establishment of her school,<sup>140</sup> but in 1725 it was decreed that the charities should be set up as stated in the will.<sup>141</sup> In 1737 Mark Thurston, a Master of the Court of Chancery reported that two competing schemes had been presented to him,

<sup>124</sup> Ireland, *History of Cirencester Grammar School*, 55.

<sup>125</sup> Ireland, *History of Cirencester Grammar School*, 57.

<sup>126</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 309.

<sup>127</sup> GA, P86/1/IN/6/4.

<sup>128</sup> *VCH Glos.* II, 395.

<sup>129</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 8 July 1805.

<sup>130</sup> GA, GDR 333.

<sup>131</sup> *VCH Glos.* II, 395.

<sup>132</sup> GA, P86a/CH/2/1

<sup>133</sup> GA, P86/1/1N/6/3 f.9

<sup>134</sup> GA, P86/1/1N/6/3 f.9

<sup>135</sup> GA, P86a/CH 2/1

<sup>136</sup> D225/Z13; *VCH Wilts.* XVIII, 81.

<sup>137</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 393.

<sup>138</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 392.

<sup>139</sup> GA, P86/CH/1/7

<sup>140</sup> GA, R/79/370 GS

<sup>141</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 396.

neither of which he wholly supported.<sup>142</sup>

Following the 1737 Chancery judgement, and confirmation of the scheme the following year, a schoolhouse was purchased and fitted up at a cost of c. £1200, while £212. 8s. was to be applied to maintaining 20 boys and teaching them to write and cast accounts. The boys were also to be trained as stocking weavers, for which frames would be supplied. At least one boy each year should be set up with a frame and some worsted, in the hope that this would provide a source of employment for them and of wealth for the town. Twenty girls were also to be clothed and taught to read, say their prayers and catechism and to spin, at a cost of £28.10s. per year. A further £10 yearly would place two apprentices to husbandry, those least likely to be successful at weaving.<sup>143</sup>

This became the Yellow School, a separate institution from the Blue, although the Court of Chancery in 1737 decreed that £20 should be contributed to the Blue School from the estates bequeathed for the Yellow School.<sup>144</sup> In 1744 the same court decreed that the product of a principal sum of £580 should be paid for the benefit of the Blue School (to compensate for future loss of the Exchequer annuity).<sup>145</sup>

In 1737 the yearly value of the Yellow School endowment was £226 2s. 3d. in real estate, while personal estate amounted to £5,443 13s. 7d., reduced to £3443 13s. 7d. after purchase and fitting-out of the house.<sup>146</sup> The house in Gloucester Street was built in 1738-40.<sup>147</sup> The vicar's accounts include £25 paid to Lord Bathurst in 1739 for the purchase of a smaller house to be joined to the charity school.<sup>148</sup>

In October 1739 Thomas Arrowsmith, stocking weaver, was appointed master at £30 p.a.; his wife was employed at £6 p.a. to teach 20 girls. John Hall and his wife Elizabeth were to reside in the 'charity house' and take care of the boys there at £30 p.a. Ten of the older boys from the Blue School were to be elected to attend this school.<sup>149</sup> By September 1740 the boys had been elected, but the vicar refused to pay for clothing and maintenance without a further order from Chancery.<sup>150</sup> The Governors ordered that the boys should come to school but were not to be clothed, fed or received into the house until the order had been obtained.<sup>151</sup> John Hall resigned in 1743, when Arrowsmith and his wife took over the care of the boys, while his son Obadiah taught the weaving and John Nelmes was employed as writing master.<sup>152</sup> In 1761 Obadiah Arrowsmith agreed to pay £20 an hour in return for retaining the profits from the weaving, with an additional £20 for any year when no boy was established with his own frame.<sup>153</sup> When boys were set up as stocking weavers, Arrowsmith undertook to take all well-made goods at the market rate.<sup>154</sup> In 1773

<sup>142</sup> GA, P86/1/1N/6/3 f.9

<sup>143</sup> GA, P86/1/1N/6/3, f.9

<sup>144</sup> GA, P86/1/1N/6/3, f.9

<sup>145</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 394.

<sup>146</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 396.

<sup>147</sup> Verey and Brooks, Glos. I, 269.

<sup>148</sup> GA, D1441/box2521/2.

<sup>149</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Oct. 1739.

<sup>150</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Sept. 1740.

<sup>151</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Sept. 1740.

<sup>152</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Aug. & Sept. 1743.

<sup>153</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Sept. 1761.

<sup>154</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Sept. 1762.

Arrowsmith was replaced by Joseph Blake, who resigned in 1775.<sup>155</sup>

By 1786 the Trustees were questioning the basis of the scheme: 20 boys were too many to be learning the trade as only one could be set up each year with a frame and wool, and the boys were expensive to maintain. It was agreed to reduce the number of boys to 12. The other eight would be sent to Quarterly schools to learn their catechism and to read, and then be admitted into the house as vacancies occurred. Only the eight oldest boys would be taught to weave stockings and three boys would be apprenticed each year to husbandry or trades.<sup>156</sup> The girls' education having been neglected for some years, new regulations were also drawn up concerning their clothing, and education. Girls would attend the Quarterly school for the first year, followed by two years at the dame school learn to spin and be taught by the master to read, write and cast accounts.<sup>157</sup> Later a spinning wheel, New Testament and prayer book were given at the end of three years to any girl who had obeyed the rules of the charity.<sup>158</sup>

In June 1787 Robert Warburton of Bath, framework knitter, was appointed master at a salary of £130 p.a., agreeing to take the work of the boys set up in business at a market rate.<sup>159</sup> Within a few months he had been sacked and replaced by Samuel Webb as master, while James Viner was appointed to supervise the framework knitting.<sup>160</sup> Rudder drew attention to the fluctuating income from the school's production of stockings in its first decades, reflecting the different terms under which the masters were employed. Between 1776 and 1788 the income was £50 a year, although the that had improved under Webb.<sup>161</sup>

In 1814 Chancery ordered an enquiry<sup>162</sup> into the charity and whether a new scheme for the application of the assets would be beneficial to the town. The 1816 report concluded that the attempt to establish the manufacture of worsted stockings had failed and using the funds for this purpose was no longer useful. The amended scheme of 1827 decreed that 40 poor boys and 20 poor girls should be kept properly clothed, taught reading, writing and arithmetic, educated according to the principles of the Church of England, and the girls instructed in knitting and plain needlework. When their education was complete they should be set up as apprentices, if the Governors saw fit, and a replacement pupil elected in each place. The costs of the schools should be taken from the income of the charity, any residue being applied to placing as poor children as apprentices at not more than £10 per placement.<sup>163</sup>

#### *Private Schools*

In 1786 Mrs Field purchased items for her boarding school from Timothy Stevens, printer and stationer.<sup>164</sup> A directory for 1792 lists three boarding schools run by women, and also two school-masters.<sup>165</sup> In 1794 Thomas Fowler advertised a boarding school teaching Latin, English,

<sup>155</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Mar. 1773 & Sept. 1775.

<sup>156</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Dec. 1786.

<sup>157</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Dec. 1786.

<sup>158</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Oct. 1787.

<sup>159</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, June 1787.

<sup>160</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Oct. 1787.

<sup>161</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 317-8.

<sup>162</sup> GA, D1441/box 2526/4, Sept. 1814.

<sup>163</sup> *Charity Commissioners Report* (1829), 398 -9.

<sup>164</sup> GA, D9125/1/7870.

<sup>165</sup> *The Universal British Directory* (1792 ), Cirencester

mathematics and bookkeeping. In 1798 he moved to premises in Silver Street, vacated by Miss Darke.<sup>166</sup> Miss Darke had moved to a 'commodious house' in Cricklade Street, 'for many years a very eminent boarding school for young ladies'. Her terms for boarding were 18 guineas a year and she offered music, dancing, drawing, French and writing, taught by approved masters.<sup>167</sup>

During the 19th century, Cirencester had an average of around six private boarding and/or day schools. Some of these were short-lived and most small. Those that persisted often had more than one address. Several were family enterprises. By 1820 Thomas Fowler had been joined by his son.<sup>168</sup> Of the schools listed in 1820 and 1822, only Elizabeth's Sheppard's ladies boarding school in Coxwell Street with 10 boarders was still in existence in 1841.<sup>169</sup>

## Social and Cultural Life

### Theatre

Plays were held regularly in Cirencester in the 17th century; the boys from Powell's school were permitted to attend no more than one play a week in 1620 and never on fair or market days.<sup>170</sup> During the early 18th century a travelling theatre company probably visited from Bath and numerous other entertainments were available, ranging from performing dogs to popular science demonstrators.<sup>171</sup> Charlotte Charke, disowned daughter of the playwright Colley Cibber, travelled to Cirencester with the theatre company of a Mr Linnett.<sup>172</sup> The Three Cocks Inn held a theatre in its yard where a company had a six-week residency in the summer of 1753, with extra performances to coincide with the races.<sup>173</sup>

John Boles Watson, proprietor of a theatre and company in Cheltenham, opened a new playhouse in Cirencester in 1794, with performances on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights.<sup>174</sup> A carpenter, William Fisher, built a new theatre in Gloucester Street which he immediately leased to Watson, although he retained the right to use the building when Watson's company was not performing.<sup>175</sup> Cirencester's new theatre was advertised in February 1799 by the proprietor, although the takings of the first night were pledged to the builder.<sup>176</sup> A benefit for the actor Samuel Seyward was held in May 1799.<sup>177</sup>

Following a winter season in 1801–2, which took advantage of the expanded potential audience provided by the North Gloucestershire Regiment, there is no evidence of any plays staged in the

<sup>166</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 20 Jan. 1794 and 8 Jan. 1798.

<sup>167</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 15 Jan. 1798

<sup>168</sup> Gell and Bradshaw, *Directory* (1820).

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*; *Pigot's Directory* (1822-3); *Robson's Commercial Directory* (c.1840); 1841 census.

<sup>170</sup> GA, P86/1/SC/1/1.

<sup>171</sup> A. Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds: the Boles Watson Family and the Cirencester Theatre* (London, 1993), 17.

<sup>172</sup> C. Charke, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1759), 189–197.

<sup>173</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 12 June 1753.

<sup>174</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 31 Oct. 1794; A. Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds: the Boles Watson Family and the Cirencester Theatre* (1993), 34–5.

<sup>175</sup> GA D2525/Box73/Bundle10; Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 37–9.

<sup>176</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 11 Feb. 1799.

<sup>177</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 13 May 1799.

theatre for the next five years.<sup>178</sup> John Boles Watson temporarily retired due to ill health in 1803 and management of all his theatres including Cirencester was taken over by two London actors, Edward Ray and George Collins. Financial difficulties forced the builder William Fisher to sell the theatre and several other buildings to Joseph Pitt in 1806.<sup>179</sup>

A short season of plays was advertised in 1807, with performances once again falling on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Cirencester's performances were 'previous to the Cheltenham Season' and obviously subordinate.<sup>180</sup> Watson also returned to produce plays on Mondays in June 1807.<sup>181</sup> Reports of plays lapsed once again between 1807 and 1810 suggesting another lean period for the theatre, although a successful one-man show sold out in October 1810 and there was a full summer season in 1811.<sup>182</sup> John Boles Watson gave up management of the theatre to his son of the same name in 1811 and died in 1813.<sup>183</sup>

John Boles Watson II continued his father's policy of enticing stars from London to sell tickets, eliciting poor reviews but maintaining the theatre business into 1815.<sup>184</sup> No plays were performed in the Gloucester Street theatre in 1816, but a strolling company performed a season of plays at the King's Head Assembly Rooms, which continued to be used sporadically as a theatre.<sup>185</sup> Several benefits were held at the Gloucester Street theatre, but John Boles Watson II ran into financial problems and lost the lease on the theatre in 1819.<sup>186</sup>

Henry Bennett repaired the theatre and staged a season in 1821.<sup>187</sup> John Boles Watson III, the son of John Boles Watson II, took over proprietorship of the family theatre circuit and occasionally leased the Cirencester theatre to other companies and performing there with his wife in the 1830s, but it gradually fell into disuse. The theatre was converted into residential buildings and continues to be used as such in 2017.<sup>188</sup>

## Cirencester Park

Allen Bathurst was a patron and often a banker to a circle of literary luminaries. He was alluded to in poems by Alexander Pope and John Gay, who enjoyed lengthy stays at Cirencester Park during the first half of the 18th century, as did Congreve, Swift and Prior.<sup>189</sup> He even co-published Pope's *Dunciad*.<sup>190</sup> Bathurst was himself a highly accomplished silviculturist and created the magnificent Cirencester Park under the influence of Pope's ideas and with his collaboration.<sup>191</sup> Features such as

<sup>178</sup> GA D10820/Box 144/1/1 and D10820/Box 144/1/2; Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 57, 70.

<sup>179</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 76–7.

<sup>180</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 4 May 1807.

<sup>181</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 1 June 1807.

<sup>182</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 85–90.

<sup>183</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 94–8; *Glouc. Journal*, 22 Mar. 1813.

<sup>184</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 99–104; *Chelt. Chronicle*, 5 Nov. 1812; *Glouc. Journal*, 20 Feb. 1815; GA, D10820/Box 144/1/3.

<sup>185</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 105–13.

<sup>186</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, chapters 13 and 14.

<sup>187</sup> GA, D10820/Box 144/1/4–9.

<sup>188</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 173–7 and 201.

<sup>189</sup> J. Lees–Milne, *Earls of Creation: five great patrons of eighteenth-century art* (Harmondsworth, 2001), 28–9.

<sup>190</sup> Lees–Milne, *Earls of Creation*, 32.

<sup>191</sup> Lees–Milne, *Earls of Creation*, 40–53.

the Wood House or Alfred's Hall were constructed which were later used by the town's residents.<sup>192</sup> Literary interest in the Park continued through the 18th century. Sir Joseph Mawbey was inspired by Lord Bathurst's gardens to write a poem of 1759 beginning 'In these fair woods, whilst thus unseen I rove', which also mentions Lord Bathurst.<sup>193</sup>

## Music

Sporadic evidence is available that the people of Cirencester enjoyed professional musical entertainment from at least the 17th century. Two musicians were listed in the town in 1608.<sup>194</sup> Musician Thomas Whale had his will proved in 1648.<sup>195</sup> A bell ringing club was founded at the Black Horse in 1794.<sup>196</sup> Before c.1770 a series of concerts was held at Alfred's Hall complete with refreshments. Beginning as an amateur and private affair, it came to be known as the Woodhouse concert and during the 1770s tickets were issued due to its increasing popularity.<sup>197</sup> Professional musicians were added to the ensemble as the concerts became popular with the local nobility and gentry, but enthusiasm for the event waned and it was discontinued around 1788.<sup>198</sup>

## Cirencester races and other sport

Cerney Downs was home to outdoor pursuits popular in the area around Cirencester including hawking, hunting and coursing. Horse racing took place on Cerney Downs from at least the early 18th century and it was the venue for the annual Cirencester races. A new course was established there in 1756.<sup>199</sup> The races were accompanied by numerous entertainments in Cirencester town, including cock fights and theatre performances.<sup>200</sup> Balls were held in Cirencester on the two nights of the races and in 1790 an ordinary (a fixed-price meal) was available at the King's Head on the first day and the Ram on the second.<sup>201</sup> Rudder claimed that the racing dwindled to two days and then became biennial, rotating with the Tetbury races.<sup>202</sup> Cricket was played in Cirencester from at least the 1760s, with the first recorded match in 1769.<sup>203</sup>

## Bull Club

The Bull Club was a convivial dining and drinking club that was supportive of Unionism and Conservatism. It was reputedly founded in support of the Jacobite cause and, while its foundation has been dated to 1745, it was probably significantly earlier. The Club was may have been named after the Bull Inn where the majority of its early meetings were held. The first complete membership list is from 1746 and includes many leading men of the town including Henry

<sup>192</sup> Lees–Milne, *Earls of Creation*, 44–6.

<sup>193</sup> *London Courant and Westminster Chronicle*, 26 Jan. 1781.

<sup>194</sup> Smyth, *Men and Armour*, 239-43.

<sup>195</sup> TNA, PROB 11/205/372.

<sup>196</sup> GA, P86/1/SP/1/1.

<sup>197</sup> *Oxford Journal*, 14 Aug. 1773.

<sup>198</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 132–3.

<sup>199</sup> VCH Glos. VII, 150.

<sup>200</sup> Denning, *Theatre in the Cotswolds*, 20–1.

<sup>201</sup> *Oxford Journal*, 17 July 1790.

<sup>202</sup> Rudder, *Cirencester*, 161.

<sup>203</sup> *Glouc. Journal*, 29 May 1769.

Bathurst, Thomas Master, Robert Croome and John and Edward Cripps. Meetings were held on a weekly basis until 1832, when they were confined to the monthly general meeting and an annual meeting. Activities included wagering, possibly bull-baiting and occasional acts of charity, such as distributing £20 of bread in January 1758. Numerous toasts were drunk at meetings, including to Church and King and to Lord Bathurst.<sup>204</sup>

## ***Influential Townspeople [by Alan Parris]***

### **Strange/Straunge**

As bailiff of Cirencester manor at the Dissolution Robert Strange exercised great influence in the town and bought the manor of Somerford Keynes (Wilts., later Glos) in 1554.<sup>205</sup> Thomas Strange (d.1592), probably his son or nephew, was elected MP in 1572. He was a sheep farmer and sat on committees relating to land ownership and the wool trade.<sup>206</sup> Robert's grandson Robert Straunge (c.1587–1630) was also MP for Cirencester in 1614 and was buried with his parents in Somerford Keynes.<sup>207</sup>

### **George**

The George family played an important role Cirencester and the surrounding district from the 14th century or earlier.<sup>208</sup> Lord of the manor of nearby Baunton, Christopher George married Anna, the eldest daughter of Robert Strange, and his brother John George was married to another of Strange's daughters.<sup>209</sup> One of John's sons, Robert George, was a treasurer of Cirencester parish in the early 17th century.<sup>210</sup> Robert's son John George was elected several times as MP for Cirencester in the 17th century and helped to organise the Parliamentary defences in the town during the civil war, although he switched sides following his capture by Prince Rupert.<sup>211</sup>

### **Master**

Richard Master (d. 1587/1588) was royal physician to Queen Elizabeth I from 1559 and was president of the College of Physicians. In 1568 he was granted the former abbey of Cirencester for £590, where he bought out the other tenants to expand his landholding and then built a substantial house.<sup>212</sup> The Cirencester estate was inherited by his eldest son George Master (c.1566-1604). George Master was elected to parliament for the borough of Cirencester in 1586 and 1589, beginning a long line of Masters who served as MPs. Like his father he was a wealthy man and

<sup>204</sup> GA, D19820/A3-1/b.

<sup>205</sup> See Medieval, Manorial Administration; GA, D4871.

<sup>206</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Strange, Thomas (d.1594), of Chesterton, Cirencester, Glos.

<sup>207</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Straunge, Robert (c.1587-1630), of Cirencester, Glos. and Somerford Keynes, Wilts.

<sup>208</sup> D. Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth: the People of Cirencester, 1117-1643* (Woodbridge, 2011), 135.

<sup>209</sup> Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 101

<sup>210</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.44; Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 205.

<sup>211</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, George, John (1594-1678), of the Middle Temple and Cirencester, Glos.; Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 235.

<sup>212</sup> *ODNB*, Master, Richard (d. 1587/8)

bequeathed his wife an annuity of £200 and his four younger children £1000 each.<sup>213</sup>

George's eldest son William Master (1600-1662) was elected to Parliament in 1624 but supported the king in the Civil War, who visited his house in 1643 and 1644. He was a justice of the peace for Gloucestershire for much of his life.<sup>214</sup> The family line continued with Thomas Master (1624-1680), who became an MP, JP for Gloucestershire and commissioner for assessment upon the Restoration in 1660. He created a family vault at Cirencester.<sup>215</sup> Thomas Master II (1663-1710) held all of the same offices and welcomed Queen Anne to his house in 1702.<sup>216</sup> Thomas Master III (1690-1770) was a long-serving MP for the area, with a High Tory leaning. He held a place on the Gloucestershire magisterial bench.<sup>217</sup> His first son, Thomas Master IV (1744- 1823) was sheriff of Gloucestershire from 1771 to 1772 and an MP for Gloucestershire for 12 years from 1784.<sup>218</sup> His brother Richard Master (1746-1800) reached the rank of major before retiring from the Army in 1787 and was MP for Cirencester from 1785 to 1792, when he was unseated by petition. Richard was made consul at Algiers in 1797 and governor of Tobago in 1799.<sup>219</sup>

### Coxwell

John Coxwell was born in 1516 and lived to be 101. A successful clothier, he bought and rented several properties in Cirencester, some of which had been part of the abbey estate before the dissolution, such as the Ramme Inn and the tithes and farm of Chesterton. He also acquired Ablington manor in nearby Bibury. He was one of a generation of merchants who helped to revive Cirencester in the late 16th and early 17th century. He lived for a time in a house in Abbot Street, which was later renamed Coxwell Street in his honour.<sup>220</sup> Coxwell was one of the two treasurers for the parish with Robert George in 1613 and continued in the position until his death in 1617.<sup>221</sup> His third son Samuel Coxwell married Mary Strange, sister of the aforementioned Robert Strange, in 1615 and the couple inherited many of John Coxwell's lands around Cirencester and Gloucester. Samuel Coxwell died in 1625 when his son John was six years old and so much of his fortune passed temporarily to the Crown.<sup>222</sup>

### Bathurst

Since Sir Benjamin Bathurst (1635–1704) purchased Oakley Park in 1695, the Bathursts have remained a very influential family in Cirencester. As lords of the manor, they were dominant in local affairs with responsibility for the courts leet and halimote, as well as appointing key local

<sup>213</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, George (c.1556-1604), of Cirencester Abbey, Glos.

<sup>214</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, Sir William (1600-1662), of Cirencester Abbey, Glos.

<sup>215</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.74.

<sup>216</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, Thomas I (1624-80), of Cirencester Abbey, Glos.; Master, Thomas II (1663-1710), of Cirencester Abbey, Glos.

<sup>217</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, Thomas (1690-1770), of Cirencester Abbey, Glos.'

<sup>218</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, Thomas (1744-1823), of The Abbey, Cirencester, Glos.

<sup>219</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Master, Richard (1746-1800)

<sup>220</sup> Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 201–4.

<sup>221</sup> GA, P86/1/VE/2/1 f.44; Rollison, *Commune, Country and Commonwealth*, 205–6.

<sup>222</sup> *Abstracts of Gloucestershire inquisitiones post mortem: returned into the Court of Chancery in the reign of King Charles the First*, part 2 (1895), 56-9.

positions such as the bailiff.<sup>223</sup> Six of the family sat as MPs before 1825 and the family had the strongest electoral influence over Cirencester borough, with men such as James Whitshed sitting on the family interest.<sup>224</sup> Several of the Bathursts were notable political figures on the national stage, tending to be strongly Tory. Allen Bathurst, first Earl Bathurst (1684–1775) was an MP for Cirencester and opposed the Court and Walpole’s administration, particularly on issues such as the South Sea scheme and the convention with Spain. He was made a peer in 1711 as Lord Bathurst, Baron Bathurst of Battlesden in Bedfordshire, and made an Earl in 1772.<sup>225</sup> He was cofferer to Queen Anne and was made a privy councillor after Walpole’s fall from office.<sup>226</sup> He was friends with Alexander Pope, who helped him to design Cirencester Park and referred to him in verse, as well as with other literary figures such as Addison and Swift.<sup>227</sup> Of the next generation, Henry Bathurst, second Earl Bathurst (1714–1794) rose through the legal profession despite his limited oratorical talents to become Lord Chancellor in 1771. He was also made Speaker of the House of Lords. He was raised to the peerage as Baron Apsley and was visited at Cirencester Park by King George III and Queen Charlotte in 1788.<sup>228</sup>

Henry Bathurst II, third Earl Bathurst (1762–1834) was MP for Cirencester from 1783 and succeeded to the peerage in 1794. In the 18th century he received several political appointments, including lord of the Admiralty and Treasury, and a commissioner of the Board of Control. However, his political career really flourished from the beginning of the 19th century. A close personal friend of Lord Grenville but political supporter of Pitt, he remained an unofficial adviser to the former and occasionally acted as an intermediary between the two.<sup>229</sup> On a visit to Pitt’s house in London in 1786, he was robbed by a highwayman near Lewisham.<sup>230</sup> He became master of the Royal Mint in 1804 and entered cabinet as president of the Board of Trade in 1807.<sup>231</sup> He was highly influential in foreign affairs as secretary of state for war and the colonies, and ended his career as lord president of the council from 1828.<sup>232</sup> He twice acted as Foreign Secretary, awaiting Lord Wellesley’s return in 1809 and during Castlereagh’s absence in 1814, and occasionally entertained foreign dignitaries or colleagues such as the Duke of Wellington at Cirencester.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> See Local Government, Borough Administration.

<sup>224</sup> *Hist. Parl. Commons*, Cirencester 1754–1790.

<sup>225</sup> *London Packet*, 20 Sept. 1775.

<sup>226</sup> *ODNB*, Bathurst, Allen, first Earl Bathurst (1684–1775)'

<sup>227</sup> G. Sherburn (ed.), *The correspondence of Alexander Pope*, vols.1–3 (1956); *London Packet*, 15–18 Sept. 1775.

<sup>228</sup> *ODNB*, N. G. Jones, 'Bathurst, Henry, second Earl Bathurst (1714–1794)'

<sup>229</sup> HMC, *Bathurst*, 54–6, 43–4.

<sup>230</sup> *London Chronicle*, 8–10 Aug. 1786.

<sup>231</sup> HMC, *Bathurst*, xi, 41–2, 57.

<sup>232</sup> *ODNB*, N. Thompson, 'Bathurst, Henry, third Earl Bathurst (1762–1834)'

<sup>233</sup> HMC, *Bathurst*, 136, 267, 473–7.