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BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE NOTES AND QUERIES

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The north and south doorways of Quenington church

For a village church to have both north and south doorways aligned and richly carved in the 12th century is in itself remarkable, but for both to illustrate cutting-edge forms and innovative iconography reflects the wealth and intellectual engagement of the patrons – in this case Agnes de Lacy at Quenington. The family, supporters of William the Conqueror, were powerful and, no doubt, both well advised and pious (responsible for Kempley and South Cerney amongst other foundations). The Quenington south doorway has been identified by many as portraying the first Coronation of the Virgin still in her original site in Europe.[1] However, Rita Wood in her recent *Transactions* article makes a different case for the iconography of the tympanum of the south doorway: she claims the subject to be Ecclesia being crowned by Christ.[2]

I would like to put the case once more for the south door to depict the Coronation of the Virgin, for the most simple of reasons. In Brayley and Britton's *The Beauties of England and Wales*, we read: 'this, and the following extract, are from Mr S. Lysons' Description of Quenington inserted in the tenth volume of the *Archaeologia*, and illustrated by three engravings'.[3] Sure enough, there in *Archaeologia* volume ten,[4] as yet unweathered, the Virgin is plainly depicted by Lysons with the Dove of the Annunciation in her hands, which are resting on her lap (Fig. 1). Engraved *c.*1790, this makes the case for the iconography of the south door to be certainly that of the Coronation and indeed the Annunciation, not the Crowning of Ecclesia. I concede that the drawing of the Dove

Fig. 1. Lysons' engraving of the tympanum of the south doorway of Quenington church.

1. *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200* (Arts Council exhibition catalogue, London, 1984), no. 115.
2. R. Wood, 'Romanesque sculpture at Quenington and South Cerney', *Trans. BGAS* 132 (2014), 97–124.
3. E.W. Brayley and J. Britton, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, V (1810), 637.
4. S. Lysons, 'Description of the church of Quenington in the county of Gloucester', *Archaeologia* 10 (1792), pl. facing p. 129.

may be as speculative as the drawing of the chalice in Rita Wood's paper, but I doubt it, due to the reputation for accuracy of the engraver.

The south doorway at Quenington has suffered erosion more than the north. In 1950 a panel of perspex was put in place in Waller's 1880s porches as a protection in the upper part of the porch, the resulting microclimate causing much deterioration to the surface of the stone. On the north portal, depicting the Harrowing of Hell, the pleat folds and the drilling are fresh. Both doors were restored by Nimbus Conservation Ltd in 1991 and won a Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings award that year.

Rita Wood does provide food for thought in suggesting that the South Cerney doorway may be after those at Quenington. She points out the interesting relationships between the two churches which are, geographically, not far apart: the Harrowing of Hell at South Cerney is the reverse of the design of that at Quenington. However, it is possible that the exquisite fragments of a Crucifixion, a head and a foot of Christ uncovered in 1913, influenced the north doorway at Quenington. These fragments, now in the British Museum, are both considered by George Zarnecki, Richard Marks and Neil Stratford to be English and to date in the second quarter of the 12th century – fresh evidence has come to light through dendrochronology.[5] The Quenington heads all show the same features: wig-like hair, large eyes and down-turned mouth. The Harrowing of Hell at Quenington has a vigorous Christ with lance in hand trampling on a bound, cloven-hooved Devil and saving Adam and others coming out of the whale's mouth – an image also found on the near contemporary Albani Psalter. The orders surrounding the door are a riot of decorative form, more in keeping with metalwork or ivories of the time.

The south doorway, on the other hand, seems to come from a different tradition, leaving behind the pleat folds, drilling, interlace and Winchester acanthus, although the heads of Christ and Mary are still beholden to the South Cerney crucifix. Instead, beak heads and chevron play an important part. The carving of the tympanum of the now-famous Coronation is naïve in comparison to the north door. There is another decorative link with South Cerney, along with hares appearing in the beak heads. There are strange, decorative, beaded 'hinges' binding the lateral orders. These are found along with chevron at South Cerney. The outer order at South Cerney has decorated 'eyebrows'. At Quenington this form is there, but only incised into the stone and then stops half way down the doorway as if the carver lost interest. At South Cerney these 'eyebrows' are fully developed. Details like this could possibly also suggest that Quenington was after South Cerney, the carvers using South Cerney as a mine of ideas. Of course, the converse may be true, as the carving has less clarity than that at Quenington, the carvers at South Cerney condensing the doors at Quenington into one and the Coronation being omitted.

Might those working on the Quenington north door be looking at northern European patterns and metalwork, whilst those working on the south doorway (influenced too by the South Cerney head) favoured the bold shapes of chevron and beak heads from France, both workshops working together at the same time, *c.*1130? This is fanciful, but are there many other examples of two doors with a common source (e.g. South Cerney), yet each being so different?

The de Lacy family were rich, cultivated and able to attract the best craftsmen and advice. Might it be that having a north and south doorway of such significance also reflected liturgical invention? Quenington is hardly Durham, but the question is worth asking. The Virgin with the Dove of the Annunciation in her lap is surely a rarity. The importance of the Coronation is hindsight. But rare too is the beautiful lobed form of the painted mandorla around Christ on the

5. R. Marks, 'From Langford to South Cerney: the Rood in Anglo-Norman England', *Jnl of Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.* 165 (2012), 172–210, containing a discussion of the two doors with a good range of illustrations.

chancel ceiling of the church at Kempley, also commissioned by the de Lacy family and at about the same time. It is more a form found so much later in Decorated Gothic architecture.

We are looking at a case of innovative, educated patronage. It would be so interesting to discover the sources.

LUCY ABEL SMITH

45
The Medieval Wall Paintings of Berkeley Church

In 1938 the art historian E.W. Tristram restored the wall paintings in Berkeley Church. Below is reproduced his original report made on 21 December 1936 'at the request of the Dean and Chapter [of Bristol] made some time ago'. It is transcribed from a typed copy of unknown provenance, but probably from the papers of Canon Eric Gethyn-Jones, erstwhile vicar of Berkeley.

> Although the paintings are entirely or almost entirely a restoration executed about 70 years ago, immediately after the fabric was restored in 1865, they are of considerable interest. To some extent, there can be no doubt, they are a reproduction of the mediaeval painting which at that date was found upon the walls, beneath layers of limewash. How closely the lines of the original were followed it is now difficult to determine. There are some obvious inaccuracies, since ornament of an early character occurs on architectural forms of a later date. Elsewhere the designs are much more convincing, and on the whole I am inclined to think that the work is sufficiently near the original to justify its preservation on account of its value as a record. Although harder and more mechanical in quality than the original would have been, it nevertheless does, in my opinion, beautify the large expanse of the chancel walls.
>
> At the restoration the church was treated throughout in a similar way. In the Nave there are definite remains of original painting of the 13th and 14th centuries, and the restored work here is convincing in character.
>
> The walls of the church were entirely replastered in the restoration of 1865, no doubt on account of the condition of the original plaster. In parts, especially on the south wall, where water has penetrated, the later plaster has come away from the walls and in other parts it is loose and perished. Similarly some of the restored painting is well-preserved and some perished, some disintegrating and some in a dirty condition.
>
> I would suggest that the walls be replastered where necessary, and that the painting be fixed, cleaned, preserved and repaired. The chancel is large in scale and in consequence the cost of carrying out these suggestions satisfactorily would be about £120, exclusive of scaffolding, which no doubt would be provided locally.

DAVID SMITH

46

‘To compose their controversy’: the role of magnates in local dispute resolution in 14th-century Gloucestershire

Among the many fascinating snippets of information provided by John Smyth of Nibley from documents which no longer survive, he relates that during the accounting year 1345–6 Thomas, Lord Berkeley (d. 1361) gave £20 to ‘Acton and Clivedon two of his servants that contended in a title of land, the better to compose their controversy’.[6] He does not identify ‘Acton and Clivedon’ more precisely, and there were many individuals of those names living at the time, but there are clues to the background of this ‘controversy’.

John de Acton of Iron Acton (d. 1275–85) had greatly enlarged his estate by his marriage to Margaret, daughter and coheir of Sir John de Aller, who brought him by 1272 a moiety of the manor of Aller (Som.), quarter parts of the manors of Wanstrow and Stathe and other appurtenant holdings in Somerset.[7] He and Margaret had three sons, John the elder, John the younger and Odo. By fines of 1285 and 1288 the widowed Margaret settled the greater part of her inheritance on John the younger. She granted Stathe to him in fee simple, and Wanstrow, with the reversion of Aller after her own death, to him and his issue with remainder to Odo and his issue.[8] John the younger died without issue and Odo succeeded to Aller, but then reached an agreement with the eldest brother John II during the 1290s. He surrendered Aller to John and received in exchange the manors of Fiddington (in Ashchurch) and Kingston in Slimbridge (Glos.), Kentlesworth in Marnhull (Dors.) and Wanstrow and a £10 rent in Glastonbury (Som.).[9]

John II died in 1312, having added the manor of Cheddar (Som.) to his estate by his marriage to Sibyl, daughter of Maud Giffard (d. 1297),[10] and having married his heir, John III, to Helen, daughter and coheir of John le Brun. John III, aged 22–24 in 1312, had been married to Helen for at least ten years. By fines of 1302–4 Brun had settled his Gloucestershire properties of Eycot, Elkstone and Winstone on John and Helen and their issue with remainder to Helen’s sister Elizabeth and her husband William Malerbe and their issue, and the right heirs of John’s father John II.[11] At the same time, Brun’s manor of Beercrocombe (Som.) was granted direct to the Malerbes and Elizabeth’s issue, with remainders to the Actons and Helen’s issue and the right heirs of Brun, and the manor of Rodden by Frome (Som.) was granted by John Giffard of Boyton

6. J. Maclean (ed.), *The Lives of the Berkeleys by John Smyth of Nibley* (BGAS, 1883), I, 343.
7. *Calendar of Patent Rolls* [*Cal. Pat.*] 1266–72, 693.
8. The National Archives [TNA], CP 25/1/197/12, nos 13, 14, 39.
9. TNA, KB 27/323 mm. 54–55. Kingston had been acquired by John I between 1275 and 1279 and it passed to Odo between 1291 and 1300: B Wells-Furby (ed.), *The Great Cartulary of Berkeley Castle c.1425* (BGAS Glos. Record Series 28, 2014), 371–2.
10. *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem* [*Cal. Inq. p.m.*], V, 411. It is not clear whether Sibyl’s father was Maud’s first husband Baldwin de Freville (d. 1257) or her second William Deverois (d. 1265): *Calendar of Fine Rolls* [*Cal. Fine*] 1272–1307, 168; *Cal. Pat.* 1247–58, 211, 540; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* II, 709; *Complete Peerage*, IV, 302–4. Some time after 1286 William Deverois, son and heir of William (d. 1265), granted his manor of Cheddar to Sibyl and John, but he had also granted Deverois property to Maud and her Freville children: *Calendar of Close Rolls* [*Cal. Close*] 1279–88, 417: *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, 411; TNA, CP 25/1/284/21, no. 62; *Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire*, VIII, 257.
11. TNA, CP 25/1/75/38, no. 215; CP 25/1/75/39, nos 231, 240; *Cal. Pat.* 1301–7, 131.

to Brun and his wife Margery, and the Malerbes and her issue, and Helen and her issue, and the right heirs of Brun.[12]

Brun and his wife had probably died by April 1310, when Rodden had passed to Malerbe,[13] but both Brun daughters died without issue within a few years. Helen was dead by April 1317, when Acton was married to Milicent,[14] and by the time Malerbe died in 1318–9 he was married to a Margery.[15] Under the terms of the settlements, on Malerbe's death Rodden was to revert to Brun's right heir, and this was presumably Sir Matthew de Clevedon of Aller, because his son and heir Sir John was holding Rodden by 1333.[16] Beercrocombe reverted to John de Acton for life,[17] with remainder to the right heir Clevedon, but by a fine of Easter 1346 Acton granted the manor to his cousin John (IV), son of Odo, and his heirs.[18] This, it might seem, was the root of the controversy between 'Acton and Clivedon' in 1345–6; but, by another fine made a few months later, Clevedon quitclaimed Beercrocombe to John IV.[19] It is likely that Acton's grant of Beercrocombe was part of the resolution of the dispute, not its cause.

Matthew de Clevedon and his son John were descended from John de Aller's other daughter and coheir Elizabeth, wife of Raymond de Clevedon, and held the other moiety of the manor of Aller. Although Matthew was probably still holding the manor in 1330,[20] an agreement about it was made on 17 November 1325 between John de Clevedon and John III de Acton.[21] Probably as a result of this, by a fine of October 1335 Acton settled his moiety of Aller on himself and his male issue with remainder to Clevedon and his heirs.[22] John son of Odo recorded his claim on the dorse of this fine and Odo, who died in 1339–40, brought a suit against John III for the manor on the grounds of the fine of 1288. Odo's son John was pursuing this in King's Bench in 1341, but his claim, as heir by the entail apparently created by that fine, was compromised by his father's exchange with John II.[23]

12. TNA, CP 25/1/198/14, no. 5; Somerset Record Office [SRO], DD\SAS\C/795/FR/25.
13. SRO, DD\SAS\C/795/FR/27.
14. TNA, CP 25/1/76/48, no. 164.
15. Malerbe had in 1312 settled his manor of Shipham (Som.) on himself and his issue with remainder to Matthew de Clevedon and his issue. William was alive on 15 April 1318, but dead by May 1319, when Shipham had reverted to Matthew, and in 1321 his widow Margery leased her dower portion of the *curia* of Shipham to Matthew: TNA, CP 25/1/198/16, no. 19; *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells*, I (HMC, London, 1907), 198, 501, 503, 504. The other Malerbe manor of Standerwick (Som.) also passed to the Clevedons of Aller: SRO, DD\SAS\C/795/FR/37.
16. SRO, DD\SAS\C/795/FR/32.
17. Acton was holding it by 1321–2: *Cal. Close* 1323–7, 428; *Cal. Pat.* 1324–7, 277.
18. TNA, CP 25/1/199/24, no. 47.
19. Ibid. no. 59.
20. T.S. Holmes (ed.), *The Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1329–63* (Som. Rec. Soc. 9–10, 1896), 57.
21. *Cal. Inq. p.m.* IX, no. 60. The agreement was made by an indenture witnessed by Sir John de Membury, Sir Henry de Lorty, Sir John de Durburgh, Robert Martin and others, and the indenture was dictated by Peter Chubworth and written by Walter Joye. Acton gave Chubworth a silk purse and one mark for his attendance and Clevedon gave Joye 40*d*. for his work. It was made a few days after the baptism of Edmund Cheyne at Clevedon, but this John de Clevedon was certainly John of Aller, and not his cousin John of Clevedon, because this John was still alive in April 1347, while John of Clevedon died in 1336: J. Maclean, 'The Clevedon family', *Proc. Som. Archaeol. & Nat. Hist. Soc.* 41 (1895), 35–7.
22. TNA, CP 25/1/199/22, no. 5. On 7 June 1335 Clevedon acknowledged a debt of £400 to Acton: *Cal. Close* 1333–7, 492.
23. TNA, KB 27/323, mm. 54–55.

This was the type of dispute over land which might take years to resolve, and in the meantime create lawlessness and disorder within the community, such as that which followed the death of Sir Simon Basset in 1364–5 between the daughter of his eldest son, who had predeceased him, and his younger sons by his second marriage.[24] Berkeley evidently stepped in to prevent this possibility. His role in resolving the dispute probably involved not only the gift of cash in 1345–6, but also mediation of a practical negotiated compromise by which John son of Odo was granted Beercrocombe, which would otherwise have reverted to Clevedon on Acton's death, in exchange for abandoning his claim to Aller, which would then be reunited in the hands of Clevedon.

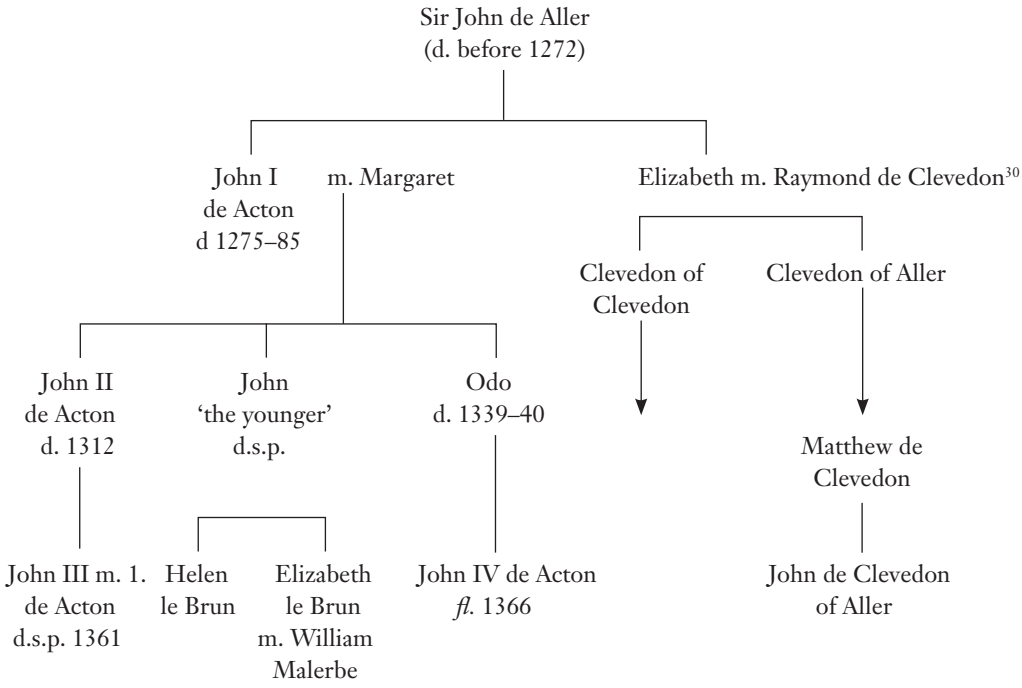
The reason why Berkeley became involved is rather curious. This may be found in Smyth's statement that 'Acton and Clivedon' were 'two of his servants'. If they were retainers, or at least members of his affinity, Berkeley's role may be clearly understood; but, although Berkeley was to marry in 1347 Clevedon's cousin Katherine of the Clevedon branch and there is evidence of a loose relationship between Berkeley and John III de Acton,[25] no evidence has yet come to light of a direct relationship with either John IV de Acton or with John de Clevedon of Aller. Smyth may have had better information from documents which are no longer extant, but in any case it is clear that Berkeley was familiar with the families. Aller itself lay on the very edge of his own 'country', although part of the estates of both branches of Actons and both of Clevedons lay well within it. It would seem that he was acting not to prevent a rift within his own close affinity, but in a wider role, presumably as the senior figure with which both parties were familiar. His intervention was not necessarily disinterested. By a fine of November 1346 Acton's manor of Cheddar was settled on himself for life with reversion to Berkeley,[26] and Berkeley also obtained the manor of Kingston from John son of Odo by 1349.[27]

The dispute may have had consequences which were of some significance for Gloucestershire. It may have been because John III resented the actions of his uncle Odo and cousin John that he settled the reversion of the rest of his estate, i.e. Elkstone, Winstone, Iron Acton (Glos.) and Pennington (Hants.), on Sir John Poyntz (d. 1375). Poyntz was the son of Hugh, Lord Poyntz (d. 1311) by his second wife Maud (d. 1361).[28] He is conventionally identified as Acton's nephew and heir, but it is clear from the lawsuit of 1341 that this was not the case because John son of Odo was claiming as the next heir of John III.[29] The family descended from Poyntz later had a long and distinguished career in Gloucestershire.

BRIDGET WELLS-FURBY

24. N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: the Gloucestershire gentry in the fourteenth century* (Oxford, 1981), 190–3.
25. He witnessed Berkeley charters in 1343 and 1348: Berkeley Castle Muniments, SC521 [A2/17/3]; R.M. Haines (ed.), *Calendar of the Register of Wolstan de Bransford, Bishop of Worcester, 1339–49* (Worcs. Hist. Soc. n.s. 4, 1966), 659–61, 907.
26. TNA, CP 25/1/199/24, no. 61.
27. Wells-Furby, *Berkeley Cart.* 372–3.
28. The manor of Lullingstone (Kent) was settled in 1309 on Nicholas and Maud and their issue, and by 1371 it was in the hands of John Poyntz: TNA, CP 25/1/100/83, no. 53; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* V, no. 411; *Cal. Close* 1369–74, 286. The circumstances of Acton's settlements are unfortunately confused, chiefly by what appears to have been an inaccurate inquisition *post mortem*, which does not survive, on Acton's death, but the outlines are clear: TNA, CP 25/1/77/66, nos 266, 272; CP 25/1/206/24, no. 64; CP 25/1/206/26, nos 71–2; *Cal. Pat.* 1343–5, 52; 1345–8, 199; *Cal. Fine* 1356–68, 197–8; *Cal. Close* 1360–4, 317–18, 321; 1364–8, 61–2; *Cal. Inq. p.m.* XIV, no. 321.
29. *Complete Peerage*, X, 674–5. Maclean gives no references for his statement: J. Maclean, 'The manor of Tockington', *Trans. BGAS* 12 (1888), 132.

Selective pedigree of the Acton family:[30]



47
Cheltenham manor court records: an addendum

At p. xix of the Introduction to *Cheltenham Manor Court Books 1692–1803* (BGAS Gloucestershire Record Series 24, 2010), I stated that 'no properly enrolled leet business is apparent after 1698', also noting that one stray record for 1710 had been printed by John Goding in 1863. It remains true that no formal record of post-1710 court leet business has yet emerged, in marked contrast to the very orderly and sustained registration of court baron (copyhold) transactions in Cheltenham. However, an interesting cache of loose court leet papers has come to light during volunteer cataloguing work at Gloucestershire Archives; I am grateful to Mrs Sally Self for drawing them to my attention.

Gloucestershire Archives D 2025/7279 Bundle 1 is a bundle of *c.*100 slips, for the years 1786–1811, consisting entirely of one-sheet orders to the homage to take views of various nuisances or disputed points. Matters to be viewed include: boundaries requiring 'mearstones to be set'; ownership of trees on boundaries; new building alleged to be infringing 'ancient lights'; offensive gutters and drains; and posts blocking passages. The result of each view is recorded on the dorse, though usually rather briefly, as if the homagers were keener to prove that they had been out (and

30. The immediate descent from Raymond and Elizabeth is unclear.

were thus not to be fined for negligence) than they were on giving any definite opinion as to fault or liability. The slips provide numerous personal names, and additional dating information for several streets and premises, at a time when the town was expanding rapidly.

The general point to be taken from this is that in Cheltenham the twice-yearly court leet (or view of frankpledge) was still discharging business at this period, even if on a limited scale. Courts continued to be summoned throughout the 19th century, the emphasis increasingly on 'venerable formalities'. The final manor court in Cheltenham was held on 13 November 1925, when the focus of the day was a feast at the Fleece.

JAMES HODSDON

48
An excursion to Gloucester in 1944

Dr Basil Cottle, president of BGAS 1987–8,[31] was for long a prodigious diarist, but decided at some point in the 1970s to destroy all his early diary notebooks save one. The exception, begun in October 1943 and running to the end of 1945, was spared because it embraced most of his period as a civilian employee – a 'Temporary Junior Administrative Officer' – of the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park. Cottle's Bletchley service had begun in September 1943, very shortly after his medical discharge from the Army Education Corps, and continued until June 1946, when he took up his first post at Bristol University.

The surviving diary[32] has four main strands: a record of office life, personalities and happenings; detailed notes of places visited on days off (pre-figuring Pevsner in the sometimes lengthy record of each and every church); impressions of people encountered on his travels on foot, by train and by bus; and more personal matters. The passages of the diary shedding light on his Bletchley Park experience – he worked in Block D, helping with the decryption of German army and police Enigma messages, moving on after VE Day to work on Albanian material – are being edited for separate publication. However, the following non-Bletchley passage stood out as also deserving of record, detailing as it does how he spent a day in Gloucester during a spell of leave based at the family home in Cardiff in 1944. Besides being very typical of Cottle's diary style, it is an interesting snapshot of the city in wartime, and illustrates how much an enquiring 27-year-old contrived to fit into one day of his precious spare time.

> Next day, **23 Oct., Monday**, I get up early and get the train to Gloster – it is a dull trip in some ways but the view of Blakeney, and the Severn, and the Cathedral over the city are all thrilling. I see no suitable place [to stay], and all the decent hotels are full or requisitioned. In the morning I see or re-see the churches of S. John, S. Michael (now a food store), S. Mary de Crypt, S. Nicholas, and the Grey Friars and the Blackfriars (both remnants that could be <u>far</u> better displayed). My case (or haversack, rather) is a nuisance; after lunch<u>time</u>[33] I visit the Cathedral, when I have seen S. Mary de Lode and the sad ruins of S. Oswald's Priory, and walk round and round it many times, and finally meet in the cloisters a small stocky crop-haired quiet American airborne officer, tough but wonderfully well-informed on history and even architecture, and we walk round together, bumping into a party of Canadian airmen. Out into the city, talk near S. Nicholas, and part.

31. Obituary in *Trans. BGAS* 112 (1994), 249–50.
32. The notebook is in the possession of his literary executor, Dr Martin Crossley Evans.
33. Implicitly, lunch itself has been skipped.

Then I make out over the dock gates and to the forlorn scrap of New Llanthony Priory, and return the same way, feeling a little peckish. Meet my officer again outside de Crypt; then he returns to put his driver's mind at rest. Write a card to Alan in the grounds of the Cathedral, (note Butter Market and Scrivens Conduit) and walk quickly along London Rd. to the 2 wonderful thrilling almshouses – the little Norman fragment is especially delightful. Then comes an unexpected diversion – my invitation to take tea with R. Sigs-G.P.O. pensioner Bill Adams,[34] who is very kind and tells me all about his sailor sons and so forth. I give him 2/- as I go.

I also have snack in Woolworth's, just speaking to a sturdy little countryman of about my own age. In evening eat my chocolate and apples under the shadow of the tower, and talk a very long time in Westgate St. to a fair looking, and very well-spoken, Yank private; he is mainly concerned with the Royal Family and with British institutions, and I do a darned good job of work.[35] I talk to two RAF Cpls., middle-aged and witty; an amusing young NFS[36] messenger, very smart in his uniform; walk to the Almshouses with a tall, nice-looking, slightly drunk Canadian air force officer, very affable; and have a wonderful walk well out of town with a Canadian Flight-Sgt, perhaps 35, just finishing an evening with his newly-acquired girl. Thus passes most of the eve, but a substantial part had been spent with the priest of S. Peter RC. Lively argument about dances, which lead to so many good Cartholic marriages; and the lovely sequence of "Good Lord!" - "Amen [cross]". He makes many mis-statements, and I get in a host of good cracks.[37] All this because there's no train between 6.15 and 1.5 a.m.

Dull journey back with a lot of soldiers, and have to wake the folks up.

JAMES HODSDON

49
The County Archives in the 1960s and 1970s

The expansion of the Gloucestershire Record Office (GRO, now renamed Gloucestershire Archives) in this period is published in its Annual Reports. *This essay touches on some of the unpublished aims and impediments that occurred at this time of restraint and reform in local government.*

After three years in the Essex Record Office, I returned in 1961 to my homelands as the Gloucestershire senior assistant archivist. The Office, in a house in Berkeley Street backing the Shire Hall, consisted of two small rooms for the County Records Officer, Irvine Gray, his secretary, a 'repairer' of damaged documents and an office boy and a larger room for the occasional researchers, a junior archivist and me. Away in Shire Hall were two underground strongrooms. Gray, scholarly, patient and possessing a mischievous wit, became a good friend. I soon found that he shared my belief that county record offices had a responsibility towards privately-owned papers not in their custody. I also believed that it was time for collection-hunting to give way to study. Gray had held occasional exhibitions, provided an annual day for sixth-formers and evening courses for adults, but I wished to see these minimal services extended to the schools. With his agreement, I began to contact teachers.

34. Almost certainly a stranger he has fallen into conversation with, and discovered the life-history of.
35. i.e, in enlightening him.
36. National Fire Service.
37. Raised in a Primitive Methodist family, and later a member of the Church of England, Cottle was always ready to score debating points off 'Cartholics'.

As an early step one teacher and I produced the guide for local historians, *Gloucestershire, a Local History Handbook* (1968), which was followed by a series of teaching aids, *Signals* (booklets) and *Signs* (slide packs) and a selective catalogue of *Archives for Schools*. It became evident, however, that although the aids were popular in the schools, the teachers helping their production were frequently on the move, and that even a year's appointment proved too short a time to learn the ways of the Office and complete a publication.

Further progress was thwarted in the last years of Gray's time by difficulties over which we had no control. The house in Berkeley Street had to be evacuated because of dry rot and coincidentally strongrooms had to be abandoned for the rebuilding of the Shire Hall. Not only did the junior archivist and I spend 18 uncomfortable months, including that viciously cold winter of 1962, in St Mary's Gateway, where the cathedral's archives were stored, but we three men on the staff had to shift the total contents of strongrooms back and forward between Shire Hall and Berkeley Street. The reward was a new searchroom, offices and strongrooms grouped together at the north-west corner of the Shire Hall. In this, my first experience of planning office accommodation, I learnt that architects' plans might not allow for the multitude of pipes that would occupy the proposed book-shelved walls. However, with some adaption, these rooms remained the headquarters of the Record Office for the next 11 years.

I succeeded Gray in 1968. My first act was to seek the councillors' agreement to replace my title of County Records Officer by the then conventional name, County Archivist. Secondly, I felt strongly that both the county councillors and ratepayers deserved more information about our work. Therefore, from 1969 a printed annual report was published. Even more openly, from 1976–7 the report included the full cost of the GRO's staffing, 'rent' for accommodation and all other expenses, which amounted to only 1.2% of the County Council's budget. Thirdly, I insisted that the many collections from private owners must be called 'loans' rather than 'deposits', as was the universal habit, to make quite clear that we were only custodians and that owners might at any time remove some or all of their possessions.

In the following few years in the new office, Tony Wherry (senior archivist 1968-76) and his assistant archivists systematically collected and catalogued unexplored resources for the county's history. There is not space here to name these archivists and others who raised the reputation of the GRO, but after some 50 years ten of us are still in touch. Alongside the nationally-important family papers of Hicks-Beach, Jenner-Fust and Lloyd-Baker were the new fields of Nonconformist chapels, the registration of cars, police headquarters and business archives, such as those from Cam Mills and Lister engineers.

Anglican parish records presented a particular problem. In 1971 the Mormon Church offered to microfilm all the Anglican parish registers in the diocese. For their protection and public access it was a good arrangement, but I anticipated that the clergy might disagree (as, personally, I would). To my surprise, after consulting the bishop and the diocesan assembly, I met no opposition. The microfilms certainly helped the increasing number of family historians, for whom staff and searchroom were inadequate. Later, when financial savings were required, I considered introducing charges for these enquiries on the grounds that they were purely for personal enjoyment, but the idea never had to be tested.

Unhindered progress did not last. The Local Government Act 1972 broke up centuries-old county government and boundaries. South Gloucestershire with Bristol, Bath and parts of Somerset became a new county of Avon. All local councils including Gloucester City were reformed. Because each council was required to find its own solution, the future of the two Gloucester city archivists and the city's archives was left in doubt. To help Avon to establish a county archive service, I called meetings of the affected archivists, but there was no desire to alter existing arrangements. My own view was simple. Pre-1972 official records stayed in Gloucestershire, unless they were in current

use; post-1972 records were Avon's responsibility; private papers would remain in the GRO until their owners wished to remove them. The councillors approved wholeheartedly. It was quite a relief as there was much work needed to salvage the historical records of councils that had no system of order or safe storage. At one Cotswold council the records from 1894 lay in piles where they had been tossed over the years. Some wag had built a tower of rating account books to the height of the ceiling – when I reached for the highest volumes the ceiling fell upon me.

In two years the Act had brought changes that would never otherwise have taken place. The county and city archive services were placed together with their documents spread in eight buildings with staff in two of these. The necessary unpopular bonding was achieved by moving people around into new posts. For myself I aimed to recover the situation held by Gray as the head of a department. Though now larger and strengthened by legislation, the GRO had become absorbed among other mixed committees. By calling attention to myself and the work of the Office, I became invited to the meetings of the heads of departments and even given a rarely-used seat at Council meetings. More importantly, I was better placed to canvass for a new record office.

A functioning archive always needs more space. Even though only chosen records are kept, the quantity inevitably grows and so does the number of users. By 1972 it was clear that there was only space for two more years. By 1974 the 15 staff and records were again overflowing into Berkeley Street, and the new inflow following the Local Government Act reinforced the case for new accommodation. Thoughts ran on a freestanding new building, perhaps on the edge of the city, like the record offices of Somerset and Cornwall. The cost would be about £1 milllion. My proposition was flatly turned down. Instead, an existing building was suggested. For strong practical reasons I rejected an 18th-century town house, St Nicholas church in Westgate Street and Highnam Court, 3 miles from the city. Then I was shown a former city school, built in 1924, in the city centre near to railway and bus stations. It had ceilings high enough to insert a second floor, a large playground and a house suitable for a caretaker. I sensed that I would not get a better offer so, warning that it would only have a 20-year life, I accepted. One hundred thousand pounds "and not a penny more" was allowed for its conversion. A design was created to separate the staff offices and strongrooms from the public reading rooms, which were to be 'silent', except for the one devoted to the finding aids that generated conversation. The work was safely completed in April 1979 within the estimated cost. For the first time the office was closed whilst the senior assistant archivist, Nigel Wratten, directed the monstrous move of the archives. The immediate effect of the new freestanding building was the arrival of two collections that would never have been deposited in the Shire Hall. The dean of the cathedral approved the removal of the cathedral's records from St Mary's Gateway and, after inspecting the work on their old school, the city's councillors deposited the city's great archive, for which I immediately allocated a cataloguer. For the first time all the historical archives of city, county and Church were together for study, with only the official government papers left in the Shire Hall.

At the end of 1979 I left Gloucester to take up a post at the Royal Commission of Historical Manuscripts. My successors have brilliantly overcome my forecast that the building would only serve for 20 years by extending the property and enlarging the buildings.

BRIAN SMITH