

perspectives

CHELTENHAM ARTS CULTURE

Cheltenham Arts Council: awards_funding_publicity_events listings



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June – September 2020

*The Arts after Coronavirus • CAC Awards 2020
Local History • Poetry • Writing Competition
Meet the Members • Prestbury History*

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PERSPECTIVES TEAM

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Dear Readers

Welcome to the summer edition of Perspectives! I hope this finds you well and in good spirits in a world turned upside down by a tiny micro-organism. I did wonder, a couple of months ago, whether we would be able to produce this issue, as so much has had to be cancelled or postponed, but I'm delighted to say that we have plenty to keep you interested and entertained. You won't be surprised to see that the Listings section is much shorter than usual; no-one knows when normal service will be resumed, so if you do see an event you like the look of, please check the relevant website before doing anything else.

We start with a very pertinent and thought-provoking article from Adrian Barlow (Chair, Friends of The Wilson) about the Arts after Coronavirus. We also hear from Musica Vera chamber choir about their new conductor, from Cheltenham Poetry Society about a new book of poems on Gloucestershire, and we find out about a Christian Arts Festival planned for 2021. The Gloucestershire County History Trust gives us an insight into the research going on before publication of a book on the history of Cheltenham, and you can have a go at writing yourself, in a competition organised by the Gloucestershire Writers' Network. Our "Meet the Members" section this month features Prestbury Local History Society. Last but not least, there's some feedback from the Blue Moon Harmony Choir, showing how grant money from

Cheltenham Arts Council was used to enhance their singing experience.

One of the events that has been postponed was CAC's own Awards Ceremony. We are hoping to reschedule it at some point later this year, but in this issue of Perspectives you can get a sneak preview and find out who won the awards. Congratulations to everyone!

To end on a positive note, I must say that the imagination and innovation shown by everyone during this crisis has been really heartening, and has arguably made the Arts more accessible for some. From stay-at-home choirs and instrumental groups using videoconferencing technology, to social media posts recreating famous artworks using just the stuff you have at home; from the vast array of theatre productions now available online free of charge, to impromptu musical performances for neighbours from a bedroom window, and people helping to transcribe digital archives to make future research easier – there's something going on to suit everyone while we stay indoors. To paraphrase the hit song from "Titanic" – my Art will go on (sorry). In all seriousness, though, the importance of the Arts for our general wellbeing and mental health has rarely been clearer, and we must make sure that that message has plenty of publicity as we head towards the light at the end of the tunnel.

Rachel Tedd

PERSPECTIVES EDITOR

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*Perspectives is produced three times a year.
The next issue will span October 2020 – January 2021.*

**SUBMISSION (ADS AND EVENTS) MUST BE WITH US BY THE END OF JULY FOR
CONSIDERATION FOR THE NEXT ISSUE. PLEASE EMAIL EVENT DETAILS TO
PERSPECTIVES.LISTINGS@GMAIL.COM**

THE ARTS AFTER CORONAVIRUS

ADRIAN BARLOW (CHAIR, FRIENDS OF THE WILSON)
GIVES US HIS PERSPECTIVE

It's impossible to know, yet, how long it may take for life to get back to normal. It's just as impossible to know what the new 'normal' will be like. It's a safe bet, however, that as far as the arts are concerned 2021 will not be like 2019. For a start, there will be fewer small independent museums. The Director of the Florence Nightingale Museum in London has already spelled out the dangers: 'Prolonged closure and decimated tourist markets now threaten the future of the museum as we rely heavily on admissions income to support our small charity, which receives no core funding from the government or elsewhere.'

Think of the small independent museums in our area and how the lockdown must be affecting their income (not to mention their reserves, if they have any). Some have been prompt and adventurous in their response: the Holst Birthplace Museum, for instance, had been due to run a Victorian Easter Festival at the museum across the holiday weeks with special activities – crafts, gardening and cooking among them; instead, it rapidly converted these into entertaining virtual activities accessed from the Holst's website. Such adaptability is what all museums and galleries now need, but no amount of virtual engagement can make up for the loss of live visitors enjoying a first-hand experience and spending money in a museum's shop or café. An emergency fund (£160m) has been set up by Arts Council England to support arts organisations and individuals, but competition for grants is already intense and the criteria are inevitably quite restrictive.

In Cheltenham itself, the cancellation of

several festivals planned for this summer – of which Jazz, Science and Music are only the three most high-profile – will have an immediate impact on planning for next year's programmes. Announcing the cancellation of the Music Festival, the organisers said, 'At the forefront of our minds are the wonderful artists and ensembles who will no longer be able to perform in Cheltenham this summer. We are working hard to find a way to bring them back as soon as we can.' There are hopes that the Literature Festival (if even this can escape cancellation) may be expanded to include some of the acts and performances that have been lost already this year. Nevertheless, the impact of cancellations on this scale, particularly for young freelance musicians in the early stages of their career, can only be daunting.

The same is of course true for actors. The young, small companies who perform in the Everyman's Studio space bring work of energy and imagination that captivates young audiences and sustains the faith of their parents and grandparents in the importance of live theatre. The Director of Birmingham's Old Rep, which specialises in performances, workshops and creative projects for young people, has issued a timely reminder: 'The magic of theatre lies in its live performances and this,' he has warned, 'is not something that can be experienced in the same way remotely.'

Accessing the arts remotely is something we are all having to do just now – and thank goodness we can at least do this. But once we eventually get out and about again, it will be fatal to continue treating the arts as a virtual commodity, absorbed passively in front of a screen. Our active face-to-face support for the arts as audiences, as

visitors, as participants, and as advocates too, will be crucial; this at a time when Government support for the arts will certainly not be a top priority and when the National Lottery Heritage Fund has already announced it will be focusing mainly on support for existing major grant-funded projects.

After Coronavirus – and not just afterwards, but right now too – the Arts in all their diverse forms will rely on their friends, and in many cases on Friends' organisations, more than ever.



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CAC AWARDS CEREMONY 2020

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS

Cheltenham Arts Council's awards ceremony is always a highlight of the year – it's an event where we come together to celebrate excellence, commitment and achievement across a wide spectrum of the Arts in Cheltenham. Unsurprisingly, we have had to postpone this year's ceremony, but we are delighted to name this year's winners below. We hope to be able to present them with their well-deserved awards in person, and to bring you some photos of the ceremony, in the not-too-distant future. Congratulations to them all!

WEBSTER CUP

The Webster Cup is awarded to the most promising young person under 18 years of age, for achievement in any branch of the arts in the preceding year. This year, our winner is **Emily Chestney** (nominated by Balcarras School).

CHELTENHAM OPERA GROUP CUP

This cup is awarded to an individual or group for enterprise and innovation in music-making. This year, the winner is **Beverley Whitaker** of Cheltenham Community Choir and Cheltenham Operatic and Dramatic Society.

VISUAL ARTS AWARD

Our newest award, now in its second year, is awarded for excellence in the field of visual arts. This year's winner is **Niki Whitfield** of Open Studios.

CHARLES IRVING SPONSORSHIP AWARD

This is an award to recognize a local business for their support of local arts groups. This year, we are very pleased to give the award to **Chapel Arts**, which received nominations from both the Cheltenham Music Festival Society and Cheltenham Camera Club.

JOYNER CUP

This cup goes to the most outstanding of each year's award nominations, and this year we recognize the contribution of **Michael Newman**, who was nominated by Cheltenham Poetry Society.

CITATIONS

Citations were awarded to **Hannah Hughes** (Beauregard Youth Choir), **Mary Mackenzie** (Cheltenham Music Festival Society), **Robert Padgett** (Cheltenham Opera Society) and **Heather Parker** (Cleeve Chorale).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN WORDS AND PICTURES

NEW BOOK, INSPIRED BY THE COUNTY

'Poetry from Gloucestershire' – an anthology of poems and photographs celebrating our wonderful county – has recently been published, featuring the work of twelve Cheltenham Poetry Society (CPS) poets.

The book is a companion volume to the CPS anthology 'Cheltenham 300' published in 2016 in celebration of Cheltenham's tercentenary as a spa town. Both books were jointly edited by Sharon Larkin and Roger Turner and, with keen photographers in the Society, they found no difficulty in sourcing photographs to accompany the poems.

'Poetry from Gloucestershire' covers the length of the county from Alderton, Winchcombe and Tewkesbury in the north to Blakeney, Berkeley and Chipping Sodbury in the south. There are poems set in Cheltenham and Gloucester; Cotswold villages such as Bourton on the Water and Lower Slaughter; the Forest of Dean including Puzzlewood and The Sculpture Trail; poems set alongside the Severn and Windrush; a trip on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway; a visit to Nature in Art, and finishing with a glimpse of the Severn Crossing. Landscape, flora and fauna, and various colourful Gloucestershire characters make an appearance in what CPS believe is a varied and enjoyable collection of poems and pictures.

The idea for the anthology came during the Society's annual writing retreat at Dumbleton Hall – a day when CPS members take time out to think about, and to write, poetry, as well as getting to know each other better. At their 2019 retreat, the poets took 'Gloucestershire' as their theme



and decided to publish the resulting poems in a book.

Contributing poets include long-standing CPS member Michael Newman, who joined the Society in 1977 (Editor's comment: and is this year's recipient of CAC's Joyner Cup award), current chairman Roger Turner, former chair Sharon Larkin, David Ashbee, Stuart Nunn, Robin Gilbert, Sheila Spence, Belinda Rimmer, Gill Wyatt, Catherine Baker, Alice Ross and Annie Ellis. The book can be purchased (£9.99) from the poets; from Suffolk Anthology Bookshop in Cheltenham; Alison's Bookshop in Tewkesbury, or via email to CheltenhamPoetrySociety@gmail.com or to the publisher Eithonbridge@gmail.com

As well as their annual retreat and occasional readings and recitals, Cheltenham Poetry Society runs a monthly writing group for experienced poets, workshops for new and developing poets, and a poetry reading group for those who want to learn more about poetry and to share poems they have found interesting or enjoyable. Anyone who would like to find out more about Cheltenham Poetry Society is invited to email cheltenhampoetrysociety@gmail.com

Sharon Larkin

FEEDBACK FROM OUR GRANT RECIPIENTS

BLUE MOON HARMONY CHOIR

The Blue Moon Harmony Choir sent in their thanks for grant funding from Cheltenham Arts Council that has enabled them to replace their ageing audio equipment.

The new equipment allows the choir to amplify the piano, and simultaneously enables use of microphones and headsets. The neck-band plugs into the transmitter and fits around the back of the neck and over the ears like glasses, and is a discreet beige in colour. The transmitter is operated by a switch.

The new equipment means that both rehearsals and public performances will now run more coherently, and hopefully with greater audience enjoyment.



bluemoonharmony.co.uk



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HISTORY IN THE MAKING

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY HISTORY TRUST

This article profiles the work of the Gloucestershire County History Trust, a Cheltenham Arts Council affiliate and the charity behind the continuing work of the Victoria County History locally.

‘Of making many books there is no end’ – still as true today, when we expect almost everything to be online, as it was for Ecclesiastes in Biblical times. The Victoria County History (VCH) of Gloucestershire now numbers twelve stately red hardback volumes, with parish-by-parish coverage of over half the county, and three more are in the pipeline. What’s the Cheltenham angle, then?

Well, one of the three books-in-waiting is centred on Cheltenham parish and its immediate neighbours – in effect, the present borough – covering just about everything from prehistoric times to the present day, wherever the facts can be firmly documented. The key feature of the VCH approach is its rigorous grounding in original source material. Every statement carries a reference, a firm footing which anyone wanting to delve further into a particular topic can rely on.

The first visible product of the new Cheltenham research was the 2018 paperback *Cheltenham before the Spa*, aimed in part at dispelling the widespread notion that before Messrs Mason and Skillicorne came along in the early 1700s, the place was little more than a village. A village, forsooth! Don’t folk realise that Cheltenham was a royal manor, a well-regulated borough, and a market town serving a wide hinterland? The development of the spa certainly transformed the place for ever, but there



was plenty to record in the centuries before, and this paperback, researched by two academic historians, is our proof.

If Cheltenham up to 1740 was enough to fill a paperback, then you can imagine that a thorough account of the years 1741 to 2020 might take a deal of further work and pages. The research continues, using a combination of paid work and a large number of capable volunteers, with all the interim results available for public use and comment on the local VCH website, <https://www.vchglosacademy.org/> Structured in standard VCH sections, the latest drafts cover all aspects of local history up to 1945, with the more recent chapters taking parts of the story through to the present day – obviously well within living memory, and where we expect today’s Cheltonians (whether native or adoptive) to be able to fill in gaps or check the details. Please do have a look, because we do want every statement to be accurate and complete by the time we go to press with this volume.



A 1960S VIEW OF THE FORMER BEDLAM FARM (NOW KNOWN AS NEWLAND VIEW), OFF THE OLD GLOUCESTER ROAD, COURTESY OF EILEEN ALLEN

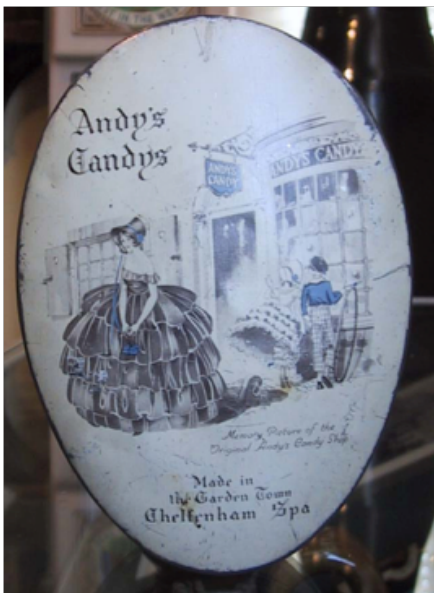


IMAGE COURTESY OF EILEEN ALLEN

Just thinking of the post-war period alone, there are dozens of strands to the town's story – the physical spread of the town's fabric to form the borough in its present shape, changes in local government (explaining why don't we control our own roads anymore...), the blossoming of the festival movement, the arrival of GCHQ (just one among many changes in the employment profile of the town), the changes in social make-up, educational provision, religious affiliation, transport, sport, popular culture – the list is almost endless.

And to show that there's history everywhere, even where you'd least expect it, just consider one strand of what we're currently working on – the north-western side of town, home to the Kingsditch Lane estate and many other commercial and industrial enterprises. In normal times, many of us are there every week for one reason or another, but does it have a history? Of course it does, and VCH research is documenting how

decisions and actions over the last 50 years have transformed what was once mostly agricultural/market garden land, itself concealing a layer of pre-history. The volunteers working on this have dubbed it the Bedlam project – for the entirely honourable reason that one of the precursor farms was Bedlam Farm. (The name Bedlam or Bethlehem reaches back much further, to medieval times, following the grant of the land to the charity hospital of St Margaret in Gloucester in 1250.)

Most of the relevant archives (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury council papers, as well as the county council's) are now at the Heritage Hub in Gloucester. Volunteers are working through these, piecing together the development sequence, and adding to them from online data. The documents and maps are supplemented by locally-sourced material (photos and the like) supplied by history-minded members of the Swindon Village Society. The volunteers have already established that the 'industrial' use of the area goes back well before WW II – Andy's Candys, a confectionery factory, was established on the Tewkesbury Road in the mid-1930s. There were two wartime factories, including a Gloster Aircraft Co site, and for a time there were several sand extraction sites too.

As is so often the case, the world we see around us today is very much shaped by what came before (or, to quote Ecclesiastes again, there's nothing new under the sun), but everyone working on the VCH derives a real satisfaction from getting the facts of a story straight, and setting them down clearly, so that everyone, here and around the world, can benefit from the knowledge.

While we may be nearing the final leg with Cheltenham itself, there's still a lot to be done to complete the overall Cheltenham VCH volume, notably in Charlton Kings and Leckhampton. However, we feel we're getting there bit by bit – and it's financed entirely by donations and grant aid.

VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Gloucestershire

If you'd like to help, please contact Sally Self at projects.clhs@btinternet.com

LISTINGS: EVENTS DIRECTORY JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2020

EVENTS LISTED HERE ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE, CANCELLATION OR POSTPONEMENT DUE TO THE CURRENT CRISIS. PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE OF THE ORGANISATION CONCERNED BEFORE BOOKING TICKETS.

VISUAL ARTS

Gardens Gallery

Montpellier Gardens, the gallery will re-open as soon as govt. guidance allows, please see gardensgallery.co.uk

MUSIC

Charlton Kings Choral

Society Concert Sat 3 Oct, 7.30pm St Andrew's Church, Montpellier, A Little Lighter Music: Sullivan: Trial by Jury, Chilcott: A Little Jazz Mass, Shearing: Psalms and Sonnets. This is the proposed date for the concert postponed in May, please check ckcsonline.org.uk for latest details

STAGE

Promenade Productions

this summer's 'Chicago' is postponed until 2021, but please see promenadeproductions.co.uk for panto season details or to sign up for ticket date notifications

Cheltenham Poetry Festival postponed until spring 2021, please see cheltenhampoetryfestival.com for online poetry offerings and our e-zine launch

LECTURES & MEETINGS

Cheltenham Poetry Society Reading Group Meeting Tue 16 Jun, 7-10pm, £4, Parmoor House, Lypiatt Terrace, further info for all Cheltenham Poetry Society events listed is available from Sharon Larkin 07540 329389

Cheltenham Poetry Society Members' Writing Group Meeting Tue 30 Jun

Cheltenham Poetry Society Workshop Tue 7 Jul, 7-10pm, £5, Parmoor House, Lypiatt Terrace,

Cheltenham Poetry Society Away Day Thu 23 Jul full day writing retreat, rescheduled from May

Cheltenham Poetry Society Members' Writing Group Meeting Tue 28 Jul

Cheltenham Poetry Society Reading Group Meeting Tue 18 Aug, 7-10pm, £4

Cheltenham Poetry Society Members' Writing Group Meeting Tue 25 Aug

Cheltenham Poetry Society Workshop Tue 1 Sep, 7-10pm, £5, Parmoor House, Lypiatt Terrace

Cheltenham Poetry Society Members' Writing Group Meeting Tue 29 Sep

Cheltenham Local History Society Tue 22 Sep, 7.30pm Municipal Offices, Early Gloucestershire Motor Vehicle Registrations, with Martin Boothman and Peter Barlow. Please see cheltlocalhistory.org.uk

CHELTENHAM'S CHRISTIAN ARTS FESTIVAL

LOOKING FORWARD TO EDEN 2021 - RESTORING PARADISE

The Christian Arts Festival joins sadly with all the other festivals in postponing its Festival of Stars in Whaddon because of COVID-19. The festival was due to take place on Saturday 13th June 2020. However, we're hoping to hold the event either later this year or as part of the larger 'EDEN: Restoring Paradise' festival taking place across Cheltenham and the surrounding areas from 24th April to 9th May 2021. Please see www.christianartsfestival.org for more information.

we can bring together local artists and performers, from painters and stone crafters to comedians and musicians through exciting exhibitions and exhilarating performances that unite people from different spiritual perspectives in a common appreciation of the Arts.

There's the opportunity now, in lockdown, to take part in an Art Competition on the theme of EDEN, to choose the image for next year's Festival brochure, and there is prize money on offer. There are three



CHRISTIAN ARTS FESTIVAL, 2019

We are delighted that our plans for next year's festival are proving to have contemporary relevance through the theme "EDEN - Restoring Paradise": beauty, care, destruction, restoration. It is good to focus on brighter, colourful and more joyful times ahead when

age groups, and the artwork may be in any medium. An exhibition of entries will be on display at the Gardens Gallery from 2nd to 8th December 2020. You can submit as many entries as you like online by the deadline of 1st October 2020.

Please refer to our website for terms and conditions: www.christianartsfestival.org

As spring unravels before our eyes, we are becoming more and more aware of our earth space and growth; a splash of living colour that catches our attention and elicits a smile or a chuckle or a sigh of deep satisfaction. During the present crisis and restricted times outdoors, we are even more acutely aware of the beauty emerging around us. How uplifting it is to hear how ecosystems are finding balance and that whole landscapes are beginning to repair themselves.

We look forward to celebrating the signs of healing to our earth through two weeks of creativity next April and May, as well as the challenges explored responsibly, consciously and prayerfully by our artists and performers. As believers in a Creator God of bountiful provision, we recognise our falling short of caring for our planet, and yet we see signs of hope and joy in its renewal. We relish the opportunity to share



PAINTING BY SHILOHA LEVI

the possibilities of a 'Paradise Regained' through the Arts in painting, music and drama.

Our proposed plans include a live Arts Trail, where visual artists share their creativity and stories in the streets, arcades and parks across Cheltenham; a drama called "Planet of the Plants"; another of our highly-acclaimed Big Sing events in the Town Hall, as well as an outdoor live Music and Comedy day with contributions from many community groups.

Who knows what 2021 will bring ... just some seed-thoughts sparked off from the one word theme of EDEN through a festival platform which can lead to so much more; just as one dandelion leads to far-flung wind-blown offspring.

Nikki Seville

Christian Arts Festival
24 April – 16 May 2021

EDEN
Restoring Paradise
Beauty, Care, Destruction,
Restoration

Art Competition and Exhibition
The Gardens Gallery,
Cheltenham
2 – 8 December 2020

1st prize Image for Christian Arts Festival 2021 brochure
3 Age Categories
Submit entries by 1 October 2020

Refer to website for terms and conditions
christianartsfestival.org

Life Believe that you can have life, even in the fullness of it

CHRISTIAN ARTS FESTIVAL

COMMUNITY FUND

celebrate challenge entertain engage

GLOUCESTERSHIRE WRITERS' NETWORK

WRITING COMPETITION ON THE THEME OF 'MY WORLD'

Who could have imagined the disruption to everyone's existence that has been caused by recent events, our world literally turned upside down, our routines changed beyond recognition? The spoken and written word have never been more important to inform, entertain, and distract us.

We are all travellers, our journeys a unique experience influenced as much by those qualities that define us as by the circumstances that surround us. We would like to hear stories and poems inspired by your experiences, your life.

The competition is open to anyone over 16 years of age with a connection to Gloucestershire, and the winners will be able to read their work at The Times and The Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival on 4th October 2020 (or at another enjoyable venue if the arrangements have to be altered).



Wishing you all the best of luck!

The GWN team

DETAILS

ENTRY FEE

£2.50 per poem/prose piece
£4.50 for two entries
£6.50 for three entries

For tips on how to get started, plus full terms and conditions, visit our website

www.gloswriters.org.uk

The closing date is midnight, 12 July 2020

MUSICA VERA

A NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSIC FOR THIS CHELTENHAM CHAMBER CHOIR

Musica Vera is pleased to announce the appointment of Matthew Clark as the Choir's new Director of Music, following the resignation of David Dewar in November last year after eight years with the Choir.

Matthew Clark studied singing with Rachel Nicholls before undertaking a degree in composition at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, where he developed an interest in conducting. He moved to Gloucester in 2016 to take up the role of bass lay clerk, and occasionally conducts the cathedral clerks and scholars in services at the cathedral and at the Three Choirs Festival. Matthew sings regularly with a variety of choirs and as a soloist. He has also written a large amount of vocal music, both solo and choral.

The Choir's first concert with Matthew was due to be held on 21 March in St Gregory's Church, Cheltenham, but this unfortunately had to be cancelled owing to the coronavirus. However, the Choir looks forward to many enjoyable and exciting concerts with Matthew in the future.

Angela Walker



MATTHEW CLARK, NEW DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

PRESTBURY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MEET THE MEMBERS

Prestbury is known as the home of the race course and the legendary Gold Cup. But did you know that there has been a village in Prestbury since before the Norman Conquest, with St Mary's church at its heart? There is an award-winning butcher and village store on the High Street, and many other local stores and businesses, including four public houses.

WI Hall unless otherwise specified. A current listing of talks and speakers is available on our website (see below).

We are always pleased to support researchers working on projects relating to the history of our parish, and details of our research meetings are available on our website. The society has several publications that are available for loan



CART OUTSIDE KINGS ARMS COURTESY OF EILEEN ALLEN

In January 2011, a group of enthusiastic and experienced local history researchers based in Prestbury formed the Prestbury Local History Society. The aim of the society was to 'advance the education of the general public by promoting the study of local history of Prestbury in all its aspects'. This aim has been continued by the current committee and members.

The society holds regular monthly meetings, with topics ranging from local identities to policing and Prestbury public houses. The talks aim to stimulate public interest and appreciation of the local history of Prestbury. However, talks regarding our neighbouring areas (e.g. Cleeve Hill) also give an understanding of how Prestbury has developed. Meetings are normally held on the fourth Monday evening of each month except July, August and December, at the Prestbury

through our local library or can be purchased via email or at our meetings.

Our archive contains a variety of photographs, articles and maps. Items are available to view at our meetings and once a month in the library (dates and timings are available on our website). However, if there is a specific request then please contact the committee via email as below. All donations are gratefully accepted.

As an enthusiastic and friendly society, we would like to invite you to attend one of our meetings, which are free to members and £2 to non-members. If you have any queries, please contact us on prestburyhistory@gmail.com and our website is www.prestburyhistory.com