ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
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We would especially like to thank the Gloucestershire Victoria County History team, Nick Herbert and John Jurica, for allowing us access to unpublished typescripts of Volume V for the Forest of Dean and to their preliminary work on Northleach.
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THIS REPORT
The Cheltenham archaeological assessment was originally written in 1998. The text was reformatted and the maps redrawn in February 2007. The Cheltenham information originally formed part of the larger report covering the whole of Cheltenham Borough and, as a result, maps and diagrams retain the numbering from this larger report.

FIGURES
Map 1  Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: Cheltenham Borough
Map 2  Cheltenham SMR Information: Prehistoric
Map 3  Cheltenham SMR Information: Roman
Map 4  Cheltenham SMR Information: Early Medieval
Map 5  Cheltenham SMR Information: Medieval
Map 6  Cheltenham SMR Information: Post-medieval
Map 7  Cheltenham: Medieval Plan Components
Map 8  Cheltenham: Development by Period

A note about the maps

The SMR maps in the original Historic Towns Survey (i.e Maps 2-6) are now out of date and have not been included within this revision although references to SMR numbers remain in the text. For up to date SMR information readers can contact the SMR on 01452 425705 or via email at archaeology.smr@gloucestershire.gov.uk. The other maps have been refreshed using current software and retain their original numbering as referred to in the text.

Original description of SMR maps

*SMR maps*: these maps show a selection of sites relevant to the discussion of the development of each town. The maps are not intended to provide a comprehensive gazetteer of all recorded archaeological sites in the settlements, and should therefore be only be used in the context for which they were produced. For further information about the archaeology of any area, the Sites and Monument Record should be consulted directly.

*Plan component maps*: these maps are intended to indicate the most likely areas of settlement in each town during the Medieval and Post-medieval periods, on the basis of present archaeological knowledge. They should not, however, be regarded as definitive, and the interpretations made will require revision as new evidence emerges from future work.
ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Anon   Anonymous
C.    circa
C    Century [e.g. C12]
EH   English Heritage
GSIA   Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology
km   kilometres
m   metres
n.d.   Undated
O.D. Ordnance Datum
O.S.   Ordnance Survey
PCNFC    Proceedings of the Cotteswold Naturalists Field Club
RCHME   Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)
SMR   Sites and Monuments Record
SMR 12345    An SMR site which is shown on the accompanying maps
SMR 12345* An SMR site which is not shown on the accompanying maps
TBGAS   Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society
TRE   Tempus Rex Edwardus (i.e. during the reign of king Edward the Confessor)

PERIODS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

Palaeolithic  500,000 B.C. – 10,000 B.C.
Mesolithic  10,000 B.C. – 4,000 B.C.
Neolithic  4,000 B.C. – 2,200 B.C.
Bronze Age  2,200 B.C. – 700 B.C.
Iron Age  700 B.C. – A.D. 43
Roman   A.D. 43 – 410
Early Medieval  410-1066
Medieval   1066 – 1540
Post Medieval  1540 – 1901
Modern   1901 – present

POPULATION FIGURES

The text for each town considered in the GHTS includes a section about the historic population of the parish in which the settlement lies. This information has been drawn from a variety of sources, mainly taxation returns, ecclesiastical returns and what can generally be referred to as censuses. The nature of these sources often makes it unclear what area was included within the survey, and in many cases suburban developments were excluded from the figures. It is also important to note that the accuracy of the information available is variable, and relates to a society which was not accustomed to the same degree of numerical accuracy demanded today. Some enumerations were the result of antiquarian interest in the growth of settlements and were included within descriptions of the nature of the town, as is the case with the figures given by Atkyns (1712) and Rudder (1779). Other population surveys were required by the ecclesiastical authorities, and in the case of Gloucestershire, there were a number of such surveys in 1563, 1603, 1650 and 1676. The 1563, 1603 and 1676 surveys were intended to indicate the number of communicants, papists and nonconformists in the parish. As the surveys were undertaken by the local clergy, there may well have been a temptation to play down levels of nonconformity. The 1650 survey was intended to give an indication of levels of pluralism, as well as to indicate the general size of the communities served.

The figures recorded in these surveys could be for communicants (i.e. anyone over the age of 16), men and women over 16, men, women and children, men over sixteen only, householders, households or families. In the case of
Gloucestershire the figures generally relate to households, families and communicants. In order to gain a better indication of the true size of the population of a parish, calculations need to be made to convert communicants and households into men, women and children of all ages. It has generally been accepted that to convert households into individuals the given figure should be multiplied by 4.25, while to add children under 16 to the number of communicants the figure should be multiplied by 1.5, based on the assumption that children made up approximately 33% of the general population.

It is possible to view the figures arrived at by these means as simplistic but it has been shown that they generally fit quite well with data from other seventeenth century sources (see Whiteman A (ed.) 1986, *The Compton Census of 1676*, for a full discussion of the issues). It is not intended that the figures given in the following text should be seen as correct values, but it is hoped that the information will provide an approximate indication of the order of size of the parish at a time when there were few other sources of information available.
THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

town n. 1. a densely populated urban area, typically smaller than a city and larger than a village. 2. a city, borough or other urban area.

urban adj. 1. of, relating to, or constituting a city or town. 2. living in a city or town. ~ Cf. rural.

1 Introduction
The Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey was undertaken between 1995 and 1998 by Antonia Douthwaite and Vince Devine of the Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology Service and was funded by English Heritage as part of a national programme of county-based extensive urban surveys of small towns in England. All of the 37 settlements included in the survey once had, or have now, some urban characteristics, and range in date and type from the Roman towns of the Cotswolds through to the Post-medieval industrial settlements of the Forest of Dean and Stroud valleys (Table 1). Not all the settlements are urban at the end of the twentieth century: some are now greenfield sites and others are small villages, although a few have survived as urban foci for modern communities. Both Gloucester and Cirencester were omitted from the project since they were identified by English Heritage as major historic towns, with a considerable history of archaeological investigation meriting individual and detailed study (English Heritage 1992).

The extensive urban surveys were designed as tripartite projects to include: the enhancement of the county Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), in order to provide a comprehensive database for each settlement, the preparation of assessment reports which would summarise the state of archaeological knowledge for each settlement and the design of a strategy for the management of the archaeology of each town to be implemented mainly through the planning system. The database is now held as part of the Gloucestershire SMR, while the assessment and strategy reports each take the form of separate volumes covering the administrative districts of Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud and Tewkesbury. All three phases of the projects were based on the use of secondary, published sources, involved no fieldwork and were tightly constrained by the available resources.

Previous work on towns highlighting their archaeological potential and their vulnerability to development was undertaken in various parts of England, including Gloucestershire (Leech 1981), in the early 1980s. Changes in approaches to the management of the urban archaeological resource since then, particularly the greatly enhanced opportunities for its protection from the adverse effects of development through the planning system, prompted the new urban surveys of the 1990s.
2 The concept of urbanism

A town is a permanent human settlement with two chief and essential attributes. The first is that a significant proportion (but not necessarily a majority) of its population lives off trade, industry, administration and other non-agricultural occupations. The second... is that it forms a social unit more or less distinct from the surrounding countryside (Reynolds 1977, ix).

Although most people understand the term “town” in the modern context, the definition of urban areas in the past is far more varied, and modern concepts of urbanism tend to confuse more than they elucidate. For every period contemporary documents reveal a plethora of terms to describe settlements, depending upon their social, economic and legal status. Under the Roman empire there were seven distinct terms which could be used to place a settlement and its inhabitants in its context: civitas, colonia, municipium, oppidum, urbs, vicus and πόλις (polis). Any attempt to equate these words with modern terminology creates considerable confusion as there are just as many English terms to describe the status of any urban settlement: town, city, urban district, municipality, county borough, borough, any or all of which may or may not be a direct equivalent to the Roman terminology. Similarly, there are numerous Early Medieval and Medieval terms relating to settlements, including vill, burghus, burh, wic and urbs, some of which had very specific meanings while others are more difficult to define with precision.

This varied terminology has led archaeologists and historians to attempt to define urban status in terms of the roles towns played and their physical attributes which have survived in the archaeological record. This approach has been most successful in relation to settlements of the Early Medieval and Medieval periods, based on the work of Beresford (1967) and Biddle (1976), who have defined a town as a settlement possessing a combination of the following:

1) defences  
2) a planned street system  
3) market(s)  
4) a mint  
5) legal autonomy  
6) a role as a central place  
7) a relatively large and dense population  
8) a diverse economic base  
9) plots and houses of urban type (burgages and burgage tenure)  
10) social differentiation  
11) complex religious organisation  
12) a judicial centre  
13) the possession of a borough charter  
14) a reference to the settlement as a burgus or representation by its own jury at the eyre  
15) that it was taxed as a borough  
16) that it sent members to any Medieval parliament

Table 1 below illustrates where there is documentary evidence for some of the main urban characteristics of towns included in the Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Defences</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Mint</th>
<th>Borough charter</th>
<th>Burgages/burgess tenure</th>
<th>Legal autonomy</th>
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<td>1154-89</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Fairford</td>
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<td>1221</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>King’s Stanley</td>
<td>1253</td>
<td>C13/14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lechlade</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Newent</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>C13</td>
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<td>1187</td>
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<td>Northleach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prestbury</td>
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<td>St. Briavels</td>
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<td>C14</td>
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<td>Stow-on-the-Wold</td>
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<td>C12</td>
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<td>Stroud</td>
<td>1570-1607</td>
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<td>1252</td>
<td>1253</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: indicators of urban status in the Medieval period
3 Urbanism in Gloucestershire

3.1 The Roman period

The concept of urbanism is often considered to have been a continental imposition brought to Britain by the invading Roman army during the first century A.D. The geographer Strabo, writing during the late first century B.C. and the early first century A.D. implied that the backwardness of western Europeans outside Italy was due to their hunting and raiding way of life and that once they were converted to a settled agricultural existence, urbanisation would develop of its own accord (Wacher 1995, 33). However, there is evidence that some Iron Age hillforts and enclosures had begun to take on urban functions before the Roman conquest of A.D.43. The Iron Age settlements of Bagendon and Salmonsbury Camp in east Gloucestershire appear to have been densely populated, with streets, arrangements of dwellings and ancillary buildings, along with defences, and to have acted as centres of political, commercial and administrative activity (Friar 1991, 386). Compared with Roman towns they may still have been extremely primitive, and the imperial government would have been keen to establish towns on the Mediterranean scale which were an essential part of the Roman way of life, and also facilitated the tasks of administration, the collection of taxes, education and policing. Towns may also have been seen as a means of furthering the acceptance of the Roman government among the native population.

The earliest Roman towns to develop would have been those on which the administration of the province was based - the civitates and the coloniae - some of which were based on early forts, while others derived from settlements of veterans who were given land at the end of their period of military service (e.g. Gloucester). Smaller towns developed around the other early forts where merchants and other civilians gathered to service the army, or at other significant locations on the network of Roman roads, such as the Foss Way or Watling Street, to serve the imperial messenger service along with other travellers who would need somewhere to stop overnight, to eat and change horses, and possibly to trade. Unlike the civitates and coloniae, there is little evidence of planning in many such settlements, which are more likely to have developed organically.

The Roman small towns at Bourton-on-the-Water, Dorn, Dymock, Kingscote and Wycomb (Andoversford) were included in the historic towns survey. At Bourton there are suggestions of continuity of occupation from the Iron Age into the Roman period; the Iron Age enclosure of Salmonsbury Camp lies just over 1km to the east of the Roman small town. The Roman settlement was initially focused around a posting station (mansio or mutatio) on the Foss Way near its crossing of the River Windrush, but then spread eastwards towards Salmonsbury Camp. Dorn is also thought to have served an administrative function during the later part of the Roman period (the late third to fourth centuries), possibly as a site where the official taxes (the annona) were collected; the defences around the eastern part of the site may have been constructed at this time. The Roman settlements at Kingscote and Dymock may also have had military origins – there is a suggestion that there may have been an early fort at Dymock from which a small agricultural and metal-working settlement developed, while considerable material of first century date has been found at Kingscote which then developed into a market centre, covering about 200 hectares by the later fourth century. Unlike the other Roman settlements in Gloucestershire, Wycomb is not associated with any major road and it is thought to have grown up around a site of ritual or religious significance pre-dating the Roman conquest. A settlement would have developed there either to serve the pilgrims and visitors to the site, or as a market centre for surrounding communities which were often associated with ritual sites.

Some Medieval settlements in Gloucestershire may also have developed on sites of Roman activity, including Bisley where there is evidence for Roman ritual activity, possibly associated with the wells; King’s Stanley, where there is evidence for a large Roman villa in the area of the later church; and Lydney which lies close to the Roman cult centre at Lydney Park. The nature of the relationship between the Roman and later settlements is not understood, and it is not clear to what extent the existence of Roman activity influenced the siting of later settlements.

The end of the Roman period in Britain is often thought to have been marked by a hiatus in urban life. There is little evidence for continuity of occupation in urban areas into the fifth century in the county, and it appears that the function of the towns died with the culture that they had been founded to sustain (Wacher 1995, 417). The fact that many sites were reoccupied in the later Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods may be due more to the fact that, by accident of geography, the sites were suitable for the economic and administrative functions of the period, just as they had been during the Roman period.
3.2 The Early Medieval period

The popular perception of the Dark Ages as one of deserted Roman towns, dilapidated villas and a reversion to barbarism still persists to a certain extent, and until 50 years ago academics were still debating the question of whether Anglo-Saxon towns existed at all. Roman towns fell out of use for a time, perhaps because they were too superficial an imposition on a society to which the idea of formal towns was alien. It is likely that the renaissance of internal and external trading networks prompted the increased centralisation of the production and sale of goods. From the eighth century specialist trading centres, such as Southampton and Ipswich, developed. Elsewhere the main impetus for urban development may have been a desire to control and promote economic activity, including the striking of coinage. A second important factor in the development of urban communities were the Scandinavian raids of the eighth and ninth centuries, which prompted Alfred and his successors to create the fortified settlements known as burhs. Some were established on the sites of Roman towns, while others were newly founded, but all were provided with defences of earth, timber or stone. The interest of the ruling elite in the promotion of towns gathered force throughout the later part of the Anglo-Saxon period, with increasing controls and prescriptions on the activities permitted within and outside urban areas: legislation of Edward the Elder and Aethelstan attempted to restrict trade to the towns, while the reform of the coinage by Eadgar in A.D.973 meant that the coins could only be struck in a burh.

The early church also played a significant role in the development of towns. From the seventh century onwards minsters were founded to serve as centres for the conversion and administration of large areas of England. A minster usually consisted of a church and outbuildings within an enclosure, served by a priest and a number of monastic or secular assistants. Such concentrations of priests would have required goods and services, which would in turn have attracted secular settlement to the area to serve those needs, and it is possible that these complexes may have provided the closest equivalent to towns in England until the creation of the burhs in the ninth century.

The tenth and eleventh centuries therefore saw the steady establishment of towns as centres of trade, finance, administration and ecclesiastical affairs, functions which continued into the post-Conquest period and have come to be viewed as indicators of urban status.

In Gloucestershire there is evidence that early minsters were founded at Tetbury, Berkeley, Cheltenham, Bishop’s Cleeve, Blockley, Bisley, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe and it is possible that their existence played a significant role in the development of urban functions at those sites. Winchcombe is also the only example of a burh in Gloucestershire, founded in the seventh or eighth century at the site of an early minster which developed into a monastic house, with a Mercian royal palace and a mint, surrounded by a defensive enclosure. For a while during the early eleventh century, the settlement was important enough to stand at the centre of its own shire - Winchcombeshire - until it was incorporated into Gloucestershire c.A.D.1017.

3.3 The Medieval period

From the tenth to fourteenth centuries the process of urbanisation acquired momentum as first royal and then secular and ecclesiastical landlords began to promote existing villages to urban status, or to found completely new towns on virgin sites. Towns were important as a source of income from markets, taxes and tolls. Existing settlements had the added advantage of containing the remains of the Anglo-Saxon administrative structure, with military and fiscal obligations, and many were also episcopal sees. They housed large clusters of the population and many stood at important road junctions or river crossings. Artisans and merchants also found that the towns presented opportunities for the creation of wealth and the advancement of social status.

Medieval landowners were quick to promote the development of urban communities on their land, obtaining income from property rents and tolls levied on trade and commerce. This revenue could be controlled through the establishment of a market in a specific area within the settlement and in the period 1199-1350 around 2500 market grants were issued.

In addition to the foundation of a market, many landlords attempted to promote existing villages to borough status. The grant of a borough charter conferred a number of privileges of administrative, tenurial and legal character, the most important of which was the right to burgage or freehold tenure, for a rent and without labour services. In the period from 1199-1350 c.370 new boroughs were created by the king, lords and bishops. One of the most characteristic features of towns of this period is the burgage plot - long, thin strips of land extending back from the main street which allowed as many burgesses as possible access to the street frontage and the trade
which it afforded. In Gloucestershire at least 22 small towns acquired borough status during the Medieval period, with most charters being granted during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tewkesbury</td>
<td>by 1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winchcombe</td>
<td>by 1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chipping Campden</td>
<td>1154-1189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newnham</td>
<td>1187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dursley</td>
<td>C12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stow-on-the-Wold</td>
<td>C12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetbury</td>
<td>c.1211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairford</td>
<td>c.1221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northleach</td>
<td>c.1227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lechlade</td>
<td>c.1235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wotton-under-Edge</td>
<td>1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dymock</td>
<td>C13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newent</td>
<td>C13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestbury</td>
<td>C13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s Stanley</td>
<td>C13/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreton-in-Marsh</td>
<td>C13/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minchinhampton</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham</td>
<td>1313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painswick</td>
<td>1324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Briavels</td>
<td>C14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: earliest documentary references to borough status.

The units of settlement described as towns during this period were plentiful but remained very small, about 95% of the population of England was still rural, and the main difference between the new towns and the rural villages was that the former contained a substantial proportion of traders and craftsmen whose services would be drawn on by the villagers of the surrounding area (Palliser 1987, 55). This pattern of new foundations and promotions continued until the outbreak of the Black Death (1348-1369) which effectively curtailed the creation of new towns. Up to this time, town growth had been achieved mainly through the attraction of immigrants from surrounding rural populations, who were accommodated through the infilling of open areas and the sub-division of existing burgage or tenement plots.

The Norman and later Medieval town was thus an important instrument of political, administrative and economic control, flexible enough both to exert control over an area and to allow it to be exploited commercially. Through this process English towns were adapted to become a major economic force.

The Medieval small towns of Gloucestershire fit into this general pattern. A number of settlements in the central and eastern part of the county, such as Berkeley, Cheltenham, Tetbury, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe had begun to develop during the Early Medieval period, but the vast majority of the towns in the county owe their existence to the Medieval fashion for founding new markets and boroughs during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Table 3 shows the market towns in the county and the dates at which they received their market charters: 15% of all Medieval market grants were made during the twelfth century, and 55% during the thirteenth century.
### Table 3 Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey: market charters by date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOWN</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tewkesbury</td>
<td>by 1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winchcombe</td>
<td>by 1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>by 1086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairford</td>
<td>c1100-1135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stow-on-the-Wold</td>
<td>1107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chipping Campden</td>
<td>c1180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newnham</td>
<td>C12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Briavels</td>
<td>1208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lechlade</td>
<td>1210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetbury</td>
<td>1211-1287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northleach</td>
<td>1219/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dymock</td>
<td>1225/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham</td>
<td>1226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreton-in-Marsh</td>
<td>1228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frampton-on-Severn</td>
<td>1245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestbury</td>
<td>1249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wotton-under-Edge</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painswick</td>
<td>1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newent</td>
<td>1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King’s Stanley</td>
<td>1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydney</td>
<td>1268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minchinhampton</td>
<td>1269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Stanley</td>
<td>1307-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitcheldean</td>
<td>1328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleford</td>
<td>C14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dursley</td>
<td>1471/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroud</td>
<td>1570-1607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisley</td>
<td>1687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nailsworth</td>
<td>C18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinderford</td>
<td>1869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amongst the boroughs founded after 1086, some appear to have been added on to existing non-urban settlements, while others could have been new creations. Towns in the first category include Stow-on-the-Wold, Northleach, Moreton-in-Marsh, Chipping Campden, Wotton-under-Edge and possibly Dursley. Such settlements generally comprise a large market area which is sometimes triangular or square, and sometimes formed by widening the main street to allow stalls to be set up along its length, with burgage plots fronting onto all available sides. The earlier settlement, to which the borough was attached, can often be seen in a less regular pattern of property boundaries, usually clustered around the church. Towns of the second category include Fairford, Lechlade and Painswick. These settlements also have a well defined market area, but a more complex street pattern, incorporating more than one main street, with burgages also laid out along the subsidiary streets.

The history of the development of towns in the Forest of Dean, is rather more diverse. Some followed a pattern similar to those outlined above, of foundation and development around a market during the Medieval period and thus have a similar layout, such as Newent and Newnham; St. Briavels was connected closely with the development and administration of the Royal Forest of Dean. Other settlements – Coleford, Lydney and Mitcheldean - were the product of the industrial development of the Forest, based on the exploitation of its natural resources, particularly iron and coal.

The Stroud valleys, which would become such an important area of settlement during the Post-medieval period, show little evidence for urban development during the Medieval period, apart from areas at the edge of the Cotswold Scarp such as Dursley, Bisley and Painswick, where the settlement pattern is similar to that found elsewhere on the Cotswolds. The main reason for this is likely to have been the nature of the terrain, which was...
mostly unsuitable for Medieval industries and agricultural exploitation, but which was ideally suited to Post-
medieval advances in manufacturing techniques.

3.4 The Post-medieval period

The mid-sixteenth century marked a further important phase in the development of English towns. The
dissolution of the Monasteries and the suppression of religious houses, especially friaries, chantries and
pilgrimages had an enormous impact on urban life. Large areas of land and buildings were put up for sale, and
were converted into houses or redeveloped by their new, secular owners. The economic impact on towns
dependent upon church landlords or pilgrimage cults was therefore severe. Other factors also affected the
success of the small towns founded during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Some failed because they had been
poorly located, others because of direct competition from near neighbours, and yet others due to the economic
changes of the period. Many of the towns which continued to flourish did so by specialising in a certain product
at market, such as cheese, wool, grain or leather goods, while others specialised in a particular industry or
manufacturing process.

During the later Medieval period changes to the industrial and commercial geography of England also had a
significant effect upon the development of towns in the country. One of the main English exports up to the
fourteenth century had been raw wool, which was shipped to the continent where it was made into finished cloth
to be sold back to England. The wars with France in the early fourteenth century forced an end to this trade,
providing the opportunity for the production of cloth to spread rapidly through the rural areas of England. Within
a few years finished cloth had replaced raw wool as one of the country’s main exports. Numerous small
settlements began to develop in rural areas to service this trade, away from the constraints of the town guilds,
which enabled cloth to be produced more cheaply, thereby competing with the Flemish weavers who had
dominated the trade up to this time. These settlements were strikingly different from those of earlier towns; they
were not confined within town walls and were often not connected to earlier settlements, but took the form of
straggling developments along the sides of valleys. The new cloth industry thus allowed small rural settlements
in favourable locations to develop into prosperous towns.

The effect of these economic changes was felt very strongly in Gloucestershire where the towns of the
Cotswolds had specialised in the marketing of locally produced wool. Many of these towns, such as Northleach
and Winchcombe, fell into decline during this time as they were not located in areas suitable for the
manufacturing of woollen cloth. Prosperity spread instead to the valleys around Stroud where easy access to high
quality Cotswold wool, to abundant supplies of fuller’s earth, to water of a quantity sufficient to drive a number
of mills and to Bristol as an outlet for the finished product allowed numerous small valley hamlets to develop
into towns serving the cloth industry. Three kinds of English cloth were produced, the finest of which was
broadcloth; kerseys were a lighter, cheaper and often coarser cloth and worsteds were the cheapest and did not
require fulling. Gloucestershire held foremost place in the production of broadcloth, mainly due to the steep-
sided valleys in the Stroud area which were well suited to the creation of reservoirs for the large fulling mills,
and later for the dyehouses for the coloured cloth which supplanted the finished broadcloth. This is how
settlements such as Chalford, Nailsworth and Stroud developed from the later fourteenth century, spread out
along the sides of the river valleys and clustered around the mills. Within these towns evidence for the cloth
trade is well preserved, not only in the form of large mill buildings, but in the architecture of the houses of the
weavers, who produced the cloth, and the large, commodious dwellings of the clothiers who owned the mills,
and distributed the wool to be woven.

In the Forest of Dean the settlements which developed during the Medieval period - Lydney, Newnham, Newent,
Coleford and Mitcheldean - did not expand or develop greatly between the later Medieval period and the
eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, when new industrial techniques were developed and large scale mining
operations began as the free miners were persuaded to sell their rights to speculators and entrepreneurs. This
industrial activity was so concentrated in the area of Cinderford Bridge that a new town developed purely to
service the requirements of the mine owners and their workers.

From the mid-seventeenth century the conglomeration of buildings and social classes which had characterised so
many Medieval towns was superseded by the introduction of new urban styles from the continent, which
reflected the growing prosperity of the period. The concept of large open circuses, squares and terraces of
elegant town houses dominated the urban scene for the next two centuries, exemplified in the Gloucestershire
context by the development of Regency Cheltenham, with its pump rooms, promenades, elegant terraces and
town houses. Elsewhere the picture was not quite so pleasant, the industrial towns also had terraces, but these
were usually ‘blind-backed’ or ‘tunnel-backed’ with inadequate sanitation for the large families who occupied them. This form of dwelling can still be seen at Lydney and in the Oldbury development at Tewkesbury (although the houses have been modernised for modern use). Innovations in methods of transport also played an important role in the development of settlements, encouraging the separation of commercial, residential and industrial areas, as people no longer had to live in the same area that they worked. Most of the Gloucestershire small towns show some evidence of nineteenth century redevelopment, and most also have examples of Victorian civic pride in the form of public buildings such as libraries (Stroud) and town halls (Bisley, Stow-on-the-Wold, Nailsworth and Painswick).
4 Conclusions

Perhaps the most striking conclusion of this survey of the historic small towns of Gloucestershire is its demonstration that, despite documentary evidence of the Medieval or earlier origins of the majority of settlements, there is as yet very little archaeological evidence for most of them.

The town centre redevelopments of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s were not generally preceded by archaeological investigation and during this period many sites of high potential in the historic cores of small towns were destroyed without record. It was not until the later 1980s, and the advent of Planning Policy Guidance 16 (DoE 1990), that a more systematic approach to the archaeological evaluation and recording of sites in small towns became possible. Most recent large scale development has, however, tended to be away from the street frontages in the historic cores of towns, and the archaeological investigation in the latter areas has therefore been on a very small scale.

The summary of archaeological evidence provided by the Gloucestershire Historic Towns Survey assessment reports and the policies contained in the strategies will, however, provide a good basis for ensuring that, in the future, sites of archaeological potential in small towns are managed appropriately and not developed without an assessment of the archaeological implications and implementation of suitable mitigation strategies.
5 Bibliography

Beresford MW 1967, New Towns of the Middle Ages.
Heighway C 1987, Anglo-Saxon Gloucestershire.
Ottaway P 1996, Archaeology in British Towns.
Russo DG 1998, Town origins and development in early England c.400-950 A.D.
Snyder CA 1997, A Gazetteer of Sub-Roman Sites in Britain.
HISTORIC TOWNS IN CHELTENHAM BOROUGH (Map 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Borough charter</th>
<th>Burgages/ burgess tenure</th>
<th>Legal autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham</td>
<td>Small market town; Resort town</td>
<td>1226</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestbury</td>
<td>Small market town</td>
<td>1249</td>
<td>C13</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The administrative district of Cheltenham was created during local government reorganisation in the early 1970s. The district is situated in the north of the county on the low-lying land of the Severn Vale, close to the foot of the Cotswold escarpment. Until the early 1990s it contained only the town of Cheltenham, but it now also incorporates the settlement of Prestbury, which together form one continuous urban area. Both developed as small market towns in the Medieval period, probably from earlier settlements, but Cheltenham rose to prominence during the eighteenth century when the medicinal nature of its saline waters was first recognised. Following a visit by George III and his family in 1788, the spa became increasingly popular with fashionable society, growing to rival Bath and becoming the favourite resort of fashion, and the shrine of health (Goding 1863). The spa town also became a favourite retirement place for Indian Army officers and others who had served the Empire abroad, which led to the foundation of a number of schools and institutions which have retained their importance to the present day. The economy of the area is today based on light industry and leisure.

Goding J 1863, Norman’s History of Cheltenham.
CHELTENHAM

What a contrast does Cheltenham make to Bath, where you seldom meet any fashionable company in the streets earlier than ten or eleven o’clock;...but here...soon after six the walks are filled, and the company seen thronging to the well with avidity; most of them with glasses in their hands, for the sake of being more speedily served - such is the general anxiety to imbibe the virtues of the celebrated spring (Browne c.1805).

Cheltenham...is what they call a watering place, that is to say, a place where East India plunderers, West India floggers, English taxgorgers, together with gluttons, drunkards and debauchees of all description, female as well as male, resort, at the suggestion of silently laughing quacks, in the hope of getting rid of the bodily consequences of their manifold sins and iniquities (William Cobbett 1826).

1 Introduction
Cheltenham (SO 964225) lies immediately to the west of the Cotswold escarpment, about 12km north-east of Gloucester. The earliest settlement was situated on a narrow terrace of the Cheltenham Sands alongside the River Chelt; the town has since expanded across the alluvial deposits of the Chelt valley and onto the surrounding Lower, Middle and Upper Lias clays. The western side of the town lies at about 50m O.D., rising gently to c.75m O.D. on the eastern side. At the very eastern edge of the urban area the Cotswold scarp rises steeply from c.75m to c.250m.

The settlement was a small market town during the Medieval period, but rose to national prominence during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries following the discovery of saline and chalybeate springs, at a time when the medicinal properties of mineral water were being promoted by the medical profession as a cure for all ills. Cheltenham was the first major rival to Bath during the later eighteenth century.

2 The Prehistoric period
There is considerable evidence for Prehistoric activity in and around the area of modern Cheltenham, although the majority of this consists of antiquarian observations and artefacts found by chance or during development.

2.1 The Palaeolithic period
In 1854 the Cheltenham Examiner reported the discovery of the decayed remains of former vegetation, the gigantic horns of a fossil ox and the lower jawbone of a human being with nearly all its teeth (SMR 6609) during the cutting of the main sewer close to the Bath Road (SO 940210) at a depth of about 3.5m. The finds were given to a Dr. Wright for examination, but there is no record of his conclusions.

Palaeolithic remains are also believed to have been found near Alstone Mill (SO 942226) in 1854, during cutting for the same sewer line. An oak tree was identified at a depth of nine feet, and in the same place but deeper were some very large deer’s antlers (SMR 9412).

2.2 The Neolithic period
A Neolithic long barrow (SMR 5421) was recorded by several nineteenth century antiquarians as lying in the general area of St. James’ Square (SO 94552250), although no exact location was given. Goding (1863, 2) recorded that it stood at a spot called Paradise where the Old Workhouse Lane led to a few cottages in a hollow, surrounded by a bank by which flowed the River Chelt, and Witts (1880, 199) described it as having three large unhewn stones set upright with a massive stone covering them. The monument also appears in a painting of St. James’ Square by Westall, c.1830, which indicates that it may have stood close to the Infants’ School. The barrow was excavated in 1832 when heaps of broken urns, stone implements, fragments of human bones and personal ornaments were recovered. Goding recorded that the area was later used for clay extraction and brick making, when further bones, flints and pottery were discovered. In 1846 the hole from which clay had been dug was filled in, prior to the construction of the Great Western station, and any further remains relating to the monument are likely to have been destroyed (OAU 1997, 2; Hart 1981, 2).
A thick and crudely shaped nephrite axe (SMR 5476) was found just below the ground surface at SO 961218 in 1930. There is a faint possibility that it may have had an ethnographic rather than archaeological origin, but it is highly uncertain.

Six flint flakes of Neolithic or Bronze Age date (SMR 9351) were found at a brickyard north of the former Leckhampton station (SO 94842051), while three flint artefacts of Mesolithic, Neolithic or Bronze Age date (SMR 9354) were found during excavations in 1975 at SO 95222227.

A Neolithic polished stone axe was found near Cheltenham (SMR 9403) as were two Neolithic flint scrapers (SMR 9404).

During housing development at SO 956211 in 1976, many flints were found some of which had been worked, and several of which were microliths (SMR 10998).

### 2.3 Bronze Age

During the later nineteenth century a Bronze Age stone axe-hammer was found at SO 946226 (SMR 5419), and a Bronze Age coarse ware pot, ornamented with rouletting and scored chevron designs was found somewhere in Cheltenham (SMR 9417).

Excavations in Sandy Lane (SMR 6574; SO 95451972) in 1950 and 1971 appear to have revealed evidence for Neolithic or Bronze Age occupation mainly in the form of flint artefacts, while a Bronze Age beaker (SMR 5432) was found in Hall Road in 1964 during the construction of a new housing estate (Saville 1975, 22).

### 2.4 Iron Age

A fragment of an Iron Age cooking pot (SMR 5453) was found at SO 950220, near Cheltenham. An uninscribed gold stater (SMR 5455; Evans type B:6) was discovered in 1864 in the same general area, while a rim sherd of probable Iron Age pottery and a fragment of bronze (SMR 5470) were found at SO 968225.

The excavations at Sandy Lane, referred to in 2.3 above, also revealed evidence for Iron Age settlement (SMR 3772; SO 95461972). Material recovered during the 1950 season included pottery sherds and numerous animal bones, and investigations in 1971 revealed further Iron Age material contained in a deposit of hill-wash (RCHME 1976, 23).

Excavations on the site of the new Cheltenham Library (SO 9476422544) between 1986 and 1987 revealed five groups of features (SMR 9200), of which two were probably Iron Age. These features comprised a pair of shallow, round-bottomed ditches which have been interpreted as the western and northern arms of an enclosure of unknown size. Both ditches contained Iron Age pottery and fragments of loom weights. The second feature was a large U-section, undated, ditch in which a dog had been buried when it was partly backfilled. Its interpretation as Iron Age relies upon the absence of Roman, Medieval or Post-medieval artefacts and its association with the other ditch (Wills 1987, 39). This evidence from the Library site suggests domestic occupation on the gravel terrace north of the River Chelt during the Iron Age.

### 2.5 Undated

Urns, arrowheads, bones and flints (SMR 5422) are recorded to have been found in a ravine near a place called Paradise (SO 94492238) which was filled up in 1846 during the construction of St. James’ Station, and which may be connected with the site of the long barrow described in 2.2 above.

### 3 The Roman period

Cheltenham lies about 12km to the north-east of the Roman town of Glevum (Gloucester) and in an area of extensive Roman settlement, but it is not associated with any of the main communication routes of the period. Most of the Roman material from the town consists of chance finds, and there are unsubstantiated antiquarian references to both a cemetery and Roman buildings. There is, however, no clear indication of settlement on the site of the medieval town. Recent archaeological investigations have produced more reliable evidence for Roman activity in an area of the nineteenth century town, and on the southern fringe of the modern settlement.

The possible Roman cemetery (SMR 5433) is described by Goding as having been discovered during the 1820s at the brick works in the area of St. James Square (SO 94402247). Long stone-built chests containing bones, glass bottles,
vases and coins were said to have been found by workmen, along with a number of lead coffins which were later sold to a local plumber.

Possible late Roman pottery was found at SO 94752045 in 1834 by workmen digging for clay. Foundations for a stone building and an Anglo-Saxon spearhead were also found in other areas of the site (SMR 5242). In 1894 “Roman paving” was recorded at Sandford Bridge (SMR 6617) (Cardew 1894, 57), but nothing further has been found in the area to support this report.

Goding also refers to the site of a Roman villa standing near the river, to the rear of Little Bayhill Terrace, in an area which had traditionally been known as the “Cold Bath” (SMR 6615). He then relates how he and many other residents of the area had dug up and preserved many coins, bath tiles, tessellated pavement and portions of pottery (Goding 1863, 16). However, as he does not make reference to this site in his publication of c.1853, and as such a feature is not referred to by any other antiquaries, Goding’s account should be treated with a degree of caution.

The fragmentary remains of a child and adult, including parts of two skulls and some finger bones were recovered in 1953 in a garden at SO 95072060 (SMR 5468). They are alleged to be Roman, although no firm dating evidence is available (Hart 1981, 3).

Ten sherds of Romano-British pottery, including two fragments of Samian ware were found on Evesham Road in the early 1980s, along with a considerable quantity of slag and a bronze pin (SMR 9741) (Rawes and Rawes 1986, 45). An archaeological evaluation immediately adjacent on West Drive (SMR 18486; SO 952233) revealed evidence for further Roman activity in the form of field boundaries, ditches and pits. No evidence for structures was recovered although the presence of roof tiles indicates that there may have been buildings in the area (Bateman 1997).

Similarly, recent work along Up Hatherley Way to the south of the modern town (SMR 16916; SO 92991979) revealed Roman artefacts including pottery sherds, coins, a brooch and a ring. Possible evidence for occupation was also discovered in the form of ditches, pits and a wall (Goult 1996, 3-4).

A large number of Roman coins have been found in and around Cheltenham, providing further evidence for Roman activity in the area. The find spots are summarised in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMR No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>NGR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5434</td>
<td>Coin of Constantine I found 1965</td>
<td>SO 930230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5435</td>
<td>One coin of Constantine I and one coin of Carausius</td>
<td>SO 946231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5436</td>
<td>Coin of Maximinus I found 1934</td>
<td>SO 948232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5471</td>
<td>A coin of Julia Titi and a sestertius of Marcus Aurelius found during C19</td>
<td>SO 950220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5472</td>
<td>Bronze coin of Theodosius found</td>
<td>SO 955230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5473</td>
<td>Roman coins found at Hales Road</td>
<td>SO 960221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 5475</td>
<td>Two Roman urns filled with ashes and c.1000 coins found, 1816</td>
<td>SO 95052238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 6614</td>
<td>Hoard of coins found 1818, and numerous solitary coins have been found in the area since that date</td>
<td>SO 94802142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 7353</td>
<td>Coin of Constantine found 1934</td>
<td>SO 970240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9400</td>
<td>Coin of Gratian excavated 1823</td>
<td>SO 944225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9405</td>
<td>Number of coins found near St. James Station</td>
<td>SO 944224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9406</td>
<td>Bronze coin of Claudius II Gothicus found 1912</td>
<td>SO 900200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9407</td>
<td>Siliqua of Valens discovered during laying of tramway, 1908</td>
<td>SO 900200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9408</td>
<td>Antoninianus of Gallicius found in Cheltenham</td>
<td>SO 900200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 9425</td>
<td>Roman coin found on the Pittville Estate, 1968</td>
<td>SO 950230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMR 16915</td>
<td>Coin of Constans found 1993</td>
<td>SO 95262223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 The Early Medieval period

The origin of Cheltenham, like the origin of almost every other town, is involved in doubt and obscurity (Ruff 1803, 1).

The first documentary reference to Cheltenham is in an account of the Council of Cloveshoe which was held in A.D. 803, and at which a dispute between the Bishops of Worcester and Hereford was settled. The dispute had originated
when both bishops claimed the right to the revenues of a monastery at Celtanham (Cheltenham), which the bishop of Worcester said he had been drawing for the previous thirty years (Finberg 1961, 83; Knowles and Hadcock 1973, 470). This would indicate that there had been a church or monastic foundation at Cheltenham since c.A.D.773. There are no other references to a monastery or any other religious foundation at Cheltenham, and it has been assumed that it was either destroyed by the Danes, or absorbed by the church at Worcester before c.809 (Knowles and Hadcock 1973, 470; Hart 1981, 18). The location of this monastery is unknown, but there is a long standing tradition that it stood in the Cambray area, as described in 1692 by John Prinn: *Anciently there was a Priory within the Towne...located in a house which fronted the High Street between the present Barclays Bank and the entrance to Cambray* (Hart 1981, 18).

The Cheltenham monastery (SMR 5416) may in reality have been a minster church. This is suggested by the size of the church’s Domesday landholdings which were larger than usual for a parish church, and the reference to *priests*, which also indicates a greater level of importance (Hart 1981, 18). It is also of interest that the earliest references to the chapels at Leckhampton and Charlton Kings indicate that they were dependent upon a mother church at Cheltenham (Hart 1981, 18).

There are no further references to Cheltenham from the time of the Council of Cloveshoe until Domesday Book in 1086. By the reign of Edward the Confessor Cheltenham was held by the Crown, although it is not known when or how this occurred (Hart 1981, 20).

A small number of finds of the Anglo-Saxon period have been made in the vicinity of Cheltenham throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, indicating some form of Early Medieval activity in the area. A spearhead was found at SO 94752945 in 1834 about 2.7m below ground level. Other objects including an iron trident, an adze and pottery were also found in the same area (SMR 5423). A second spearhead was found at SO 95732198 (SMR 5469).

5 The Medieval period

*A longe Towne haveynge a market. There is a brook on the south syde of the Towne* (Leland 1546, quoted in Latimer 1889/90).

5.1 Domesday Book

Cheltenham is recorded under the lands of the King. A priest named Reinbald held the 1.5 hides of church land, along with 20 villagers, 10 smallholders and 7 slaves. An unspecified number of priests are also recorded, along with two mills. King William’s reeve is said to have added 2 smallholders, 4 villagers and 3 mills to the manor. The manor paid £9 5s and *3000 loaves for the dogs* before 1066; but at the time of the survey this had changed to £20, 20 cows, 20 pigs and 16s for bread (Moore 1982).

5.2 The placename

Cheltenham is first recorded as *Celtan hom* in A.D.803, which had become *Chinteneham* by the time Domesday Book was written (1086). During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the name was written variously as *Chilteham* or *Chiltenham*, and by the fourteenth century *Cheltenham* had become standard (Smith 1964, 101).

The name may have originated from that of a water meadow near the Chelt, and thus might be interpreted as ‘Celta’s water-meadow’ (Smith 1964, 103). Alternatively it has been suggested that the name is derived from *Chelt* meaning ‘height’ or ‘cliff’, and *ham* meaning ‘a settlement’ i.e. the settlement below the cliff or scarp (Hart 1981, 17).

5.3 The status of the settlement

Cheltenham appears to have achieved urban status relatively early in its history, for although there are no references to burgesses in the market charter granted in 1226, by 1307 the settlement is referred to as an urban community (Hart 1981, 37). Beresford and Finberg have identified that Cheltenham was called a borough in the tax lists of 1313 and 1336 (1973, 112) and by the period for which Court Rolls survive (1332/3 onwards) the bailiff of the borough had emerged as an important official within the government of the town (Hart 1981, 37).

In one of the earliest surveys of the property of the manor of Cheltenham, which is thought to have been taken in the middle years of the reign of Henry VI (1422-1461), a list is given of 359 Cheltenham tenants with their holdings, which includes 130 burgage tenants and 142 copyhold tenants (Hart 1981, 40).
5.4 The manor

Little is known about Cheltenham until the time of the Civil Wars between Stephen and Matilda (c.1139-1142), when, during the period in which she considered herself queen, Matilda gave Milo, Sheriff of Gloucestershire, certain Crown lands, including Cheltenham. He in turn granted part of the manor to Walter de Ashley, creating the semi-independent manor of Ashley (Hart 1981, 24).

In 1232 Henry III granted the town of Cheltenham, with other properties to his wife Eleanor of Provence for her lifetime as part of her dowry. In 1244 the town passed to the Bishop of Hereford, and finally in 1247 it was granted to the Norman abbey of Fécamp in exchange for its English coastal possessions (Hart 1981, 27-28). In 1414 all English properties of alien foundations were confiscated to the Crown by an Act of Parliament, breaking the connection between Cheltenham and Fécamp (Hart 1981, 31). The manor then passed to a number of secular landowners until 1415, when Cheltenham was granted to Henry V’s newly founded Augustinian monastery of St. Saviour and Bridget of Syon at Twickenham, in whose hands it remained until the dissolution (Hart 1981, 31-32). After the manor was granted to Syon, there are no references to the lord of the manor (the abbess of the order) visiting the property although it is believed that the abbey maintained two stewards to oversee their interests at Cheltenham (Hart 1981, 46).

One of the important features of Medieval Cheltenham was the manor house which is thought to have stood on some part of the site now occupied by St. Matthew’s church and the police station (SMR 20378). It is thought that its grounds may have stretched as far as the site of the Plough Hotel, now the Regent Arcade, on the east and to the churchyard of St. Mary’s on the north (Hart 1981, 43-44), although its extent to the south and west is unknown. Many references to the repair and upkeep of the structure and to the wall of the manor suggest that the manor house lay within a walled enclosure (Hart 1981, 44).

5.5 The church

Reinbald, who is recorded in Domesday Book as holding the church lands in Cheltenham, is thought unlikely to have been a priest there as he held sixteen other livings. This same Reinbald is believed to have held the office of Chancellor under William I, and to have been Dean of a college of secular canons at Cirencester (Hart 1981, 22). At his death, his landholdings passed to his college at Cirencester and became part of the endowment given to Henry I’s new abbey at Cirencester in 1133. This endowment specifically includes the church of Cheltenham, with the land thereof and the mill, and the chapels, and other appurtenances to the said church belonging (Hart 1981, 22). Cheltenham church belonged to Cirencester abbey for the next 400 years, until the dissolution (Hart 1981, 23).

The church is dedicated to St. Mary (SMR 5414). The earliest fabric is late Norman in date, and is thought to be contemporary with the building of Cirencester abbey, while the lower stages of the tower are Early English. The spire, arcades of the nave and the tombs built into the wall of the north aisle are all fourteenth century (Hart 1981, 52).

During the later middle ages two chantries were established within the church, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Catherine, with endowments to support two priests to say mass in perpetuity for the souls of the founders and all Christian souls (Hart 1981, 52).

Cirencester abbey was suppressed in 1540, and the rectory of Cheltenham was among the properties confiscated to the Crown. The Valor Ecclesiasticus, which was taken in 1535, described Cheltenham rectory and gave its value:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cheltenham: To wit, a charge consisting of the rent of the site of the} \\
\text{rectory there with all the tithes pertaining to the said rectory, together} \\
\text{with the demesne land and with the rent of a mill and other tenements in} \\
\text{the demesne there let to Thos. Pallker by indenture at lump rent.} \\
\text{Fines derived from a View of frank pledge held there annually} \\
\text{are of value} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
£73 13s 4d \\
£0s 8d \\
£73 17s 0d
\end{align*}
\]

5.6 The priory

A priory at Cheltenham (SMR 5420) was mentioned at a Synod held in Gloucester in 1086. The monks were under the rule of St. Benedict, and one, a Richard de Cheltenham, became abbot of Tewkesbury during the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483). The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 marks the site of the priory immediately to the west of the parish church of St. Mary. There is no other record of a monastery at Cheltenham in the Domesday
Survey, or at any later date, and the church at Cheltenham is referred to in Medieval documents in a way which implies that it was independent of any collegiate foundation, which is also supported by its purely parochial plan and arrangement. The reference to a monastic house may thus be either spurious, mistaken or relate to a very short-lived foundation.

5.7 Markets and fairs

In 1226 Henry III made a grant to the inhabitants of the manor of Cheltenham that they should have the right to hold one market each week on Thursday and one Fair each year to last for three days, on the eve, day and morrow of St. James’ Day (Hart 1981, 27).

A market house and booth hall (SMR 6619) are mentioned in the Court Book of the sixteenth century, and at the end of the reign of Elizabeth I there is evidence that a Court of Pie Powder (derived from the French Pieds Poudre) had been in existence for many centuries (Hart 1981, 64). It is not known whether the structures survived into the Post-medieval period, but it is possible that the Medieval market hall may have stood in the High Street opposite the Plough Hotel (now the Regent Arcade), with the High Cross close by (Hart 1981, 65).

5.8 Trade and industry

One of the five mills referred to in Domesday Book is thought to have stood on the River Chelt in the Cambray area of the modern settlement (Hart 1981, 20), possibly on the site later occupied by Barratt’s Mill or Cambray Mill (SMR 6621; SO 95202208). Two other mills are thought to have been in Alstone tithing (SMR 6622 and 6623), to the north-west of the centre of Cheltenham. Little is known about the history of these mills, apart from their locations (Saville 1975, 25). There is also a reference to a fulling mill at Cudnal during the reign of Henry V (1413-1422) which has lately fallen into disuse and by the assent of all it is let by copy of Court Roll for term of his life to Robert and Joan Walker... Fulling is again mentioned in an early record of Edward III’s reign (1327-1377) and weavers were among those who were tried before the sessions for demanding extortionate wages (Hart 1981, 47-48). There is, however, little good evidence that Cheltenham was a centre for weaving, fulling or any other aspect of the cloth trade, and as the market declined during the later Medieval period, it is more likely that agriculture and the processing of agricultural produce provided the main source of income for the town’s inhabitants (Hart 1981, 48). Surviving records mention slaters, carpenters, weavers, bakers, brewers, millers and other craftsmen (Hart 1981, 47).

Evidence for a Medieval quarry (SMR 9201) was found during excavations at SO 94762254 in 1987 and it thought to have been dug for the extraction of sand (Wills 1987, 39).

6 The Post-medieval period I (1550-c.1700)

In the Survey of Church Livings in Gloucestershire taken in 1650 Cheltenham was described as a Market Towne... about 350 families there (Hart 1981, 103), while at the very end of the seventeenth century John Prinn, steward of the manor, described Cheltenham at the beginning of the Court Book as: Situated on the eastern side of one of the most fertile valleys in ye world, and an ancient Market Town... Its soil is sandy and very natural for carrets, cabbages and turnips - inasmuch as the whole neighbourhood is annually furnished with these for sundry miles around from this towne which is one street continued with the buildings on each side for a full half mile (Hart 1981, 113).

6.1 The manor

By reason of its endowments, the monastery of Syon was one of the most wealthy in England, and was thus among the first to be dissolved by Henry VIII in 1540, following which the manor of Cheltenham, along with all other of the abbey’s properties, was confiscated to the Crown (Hart 1981, 33). Together with the rectory of Cheltenham, which had also been seized by the Crown, the manor passed through the hands of a series of secular landlords until it was bought by Sir Baptist Hicks in 1612 (Hart 1981, 55-56). In 1628, after his death, the manor was purchased outright by John Dutton, and it remained with his family for the next 200 years and more (Hart 1981, 88).

6.2 Ecclesiastical history

St. Mary’s remained the only church in the town until after the discovery of the mineral waters on which the later prosperity of the settlement was based. Although many of the nonconformist groups had their origins at the very end of the seventeenth century, they are all discussed together in section 7.2 below.
6.3 Markets and fairs
Markets and fairs continued to be held in Cheltenham as they had been during the Medieval period. There are references to a market house in 1559. In the early seventeenth century it was stated that there were two market houses within the Towne of Cheltenham which stoodeth in the streets... for the market people’s use; these may have been the market house and the booth hall, which stood in the High Street, with the booth hall being used as an additional market house and for the holding of the Courts (Hart 1981, 87). In 1655 a new market house (SMR 6618) was erected as a free-standing building near the centre of the High Street, between Winchcombe Street and the Plough Inn (now the Regent Arcade). The structure was built of stone with stone pillars and survived until 1786 when it was again replaced (Hart 1981, 108).

6.4 Trade and industry
Smith’s Men and Armour for Gloucestershire, compiled in 1608, lists all the able-bodied men within the borough of Cheltenham, and gives their trade or occupation. Among those listed are: 6 weavers, 27 labourers, 13 malsters, 4 smiths, 16 tailors, 4 carpenters, 5 glovers, 18 husbandmen, 13 shoemakers, 6 bakers, 4 mercers, 2 tuckers, a silkweaver, a milner and an innkeeper.

6.4.1 Tobacco
During the seventeenth century tobacco was cultivated in Gloucestershire on a scale great enough to threaten the prosperity of the Virginian growers, as well as to upset the Bristol merchants, who feared a decrease in their carrying trade. The practice also upset the Government which objected to the losses to the exchequer due to the decrease in customs duties levied on imports of Virginian tobacco (Hart 1981, 104). In 1619 King James I, who abhorred the smoking of tobacco, proclaimed the growing of the crop in England to be illegal (Hart 1981, 104).

The exact location of the plantations in Cheltenham are unknown, although a report by William King, who was sent by the Privy Council in 1634 to enforce the uprooting of illegally planted tobacco crops, states that the inhabitants of the towns of Winchcombe, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Arle and Charlton Kings have at the time great store of tobacco growing contrary to His Majesty’s proclamation (Hart 1981, 104). When the King attempted to have the crops uprooted, the inhabitants of the towns defended them with considerable force, and riots followed every attempt to destroy them (Hart 1981, 105).

In 1652 Cromwell’s Long Parliament passed another Act prohibiting the cultivation of English tobacco, in response to which the local growers sent a petition to Parliament asking for leniency (Goding 1863, 227), which raised enough sympathy for another Act to be passed allowing the planters to enjoy the English tobacco by them planted this year only without interruption and so it was not until 1655 that Cromwell attempted to have the earlier Act enforced, but with little success (Hart 1981, 106).

Immediately following the Restoration, another Parliamentary Act was passed which ordered all tobacco plants in England to be uprooted and a fine of 40s per rood of crop planted to be imposed. Once again attempts to enforce the law failed, with the growers of the neighbourhood rioting (Hart 1981, 107). It was not until the price of Virginian tobacco plummeted that the risk of attempting to grow continuously uprooted crops became a futile effort and the production of tobacco in Gloucestershire ceased.

6.4.2 Mills
It is likely that Cambray Mill and the two mills in Alstone tithing (SMR 6621, 6622 and 6623), referred to in section 5.8 above, continued to be worked into the Post-medieval period. As Cheltenham was not closely involved with the manufacturing of woollen cloth, it is likely that they continued to be used as grist mills for the milling of grain.

6.4.3 Brewing
Brewing was an important source of income, even though the malting industry must have fluctuated considerably during the so-called famine years of 1587, 1609 and 1622, when grain was said to be very scarce in Gloucestershire (Hart 1981, 79).

6.5 Cheltenham and the Civil War
In 1817 masses of nearly perfect skeletons without coffins (SMR 6626) were found at SO 95052245, about 0.6m below ground surface, covered by a large flat stone; they are thought to be of Civil War date. A quantity of
skeletons, bullets and coins of the Civil War period are said to have been found at SO 944225, when Jessop’s Nursery was first cultivated in 1823. Human remains were also found in abundance when the foundations were being dug for the Infants’ School Room, the Grove Street Bethel chapel, St. Gregory’s church and St. George’s Square. Other skeletons have been exhumed in the area from time to time (SMR 6631). Portions of pistols, buttons and coins of “Royalists” were found when foundations were dug for houses at the bottom of Imperial Square, opposite Cambray Spa at SO 949220 (SMR 6630).

6.6 The school

While investigating the two chantries of the church at the time of the dissolution, the Church Commissioners recorded that one of the priests, Sir Edward Grove was charged by special covenant... always to teach their [the inhabitants of Cheltenham] children. The Commissioners therefore recommended the same to be a meet place to establish some teacher and erect a Grammar School, so it might stand with the King’s Majesty’s pleasure (Hart 1981, 57). It is thought that the recommendation was accepted in principle as Sir Edward Grove continued to be paid through to the reign of Edward VI, while in 1574, Queen Elizabeth granted the property of the chantries to one of the former Commissioners, Richard Pate of Minsterworth, to enable him to carry out his intention of maintaining a Free Grammar School in Cheltenham (Hart 1981, 57).

The endowment was for a minimum of 50 scholars, of whom four were to be taught Latin and Greek, at least five were to be taught enough Latin to enable them to translate their native tongue into it and eighteen were to be given some teaching in Latin (Hart 1981, 58).

6.7 Pate’s almshouses

The almshouses (SMR 6627) were founded in 1574 by Richard Pate and they were designed to accommodate six poor people. The building consisted of a stone house with an attached chapel, a courtyard and a garden and orchard at the back, reaching as far as Albion Street. The building was demolished c.1811 (Goding 1863, 2; Hart 1981, 3), when new almshouses were constructed on Albion Street (SMR 19710).

7 The Post-medieval period II (1700-1880)

7.1 The manor and the status of the settlement

The manor continued to be held by the descendants of John Dutton throughout much of this period. In 1786 a new governing body for the town was established by Act of Parliament, appointing 58 commissioners, and changing the rural community into a paradise for speculators and developers (Verey 1980, 123).

7.2 Ecclesiastical history

Few towns of equal extent in the Kingdom possess so many churches and chapels, or can boast so efficient and devoted a body of clergy, both in and out of the Establishment (Blake and Beacham 1982, 83).

Religion never flourished much in Cheltenham....and as the town became a fashionable resort for the gentry, it became thereupon a seat of gaiety and worldly pleasure, and on that account still more unfavourable to genuine piety and religion (Anon 1809, in The Church Book Belonging to Salem Chapel).

The increase in population and the influx of seasonal visitors throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, associated with the development of Cheltenham as a spa, put a considerable strain on the church. It soon became clear that St. Mary’s could not support the numbers wishing to attend services and in 1820 a second Anglican church was built, while attempts were made to increase the available accommodation within St. Mary’s. The inability of the Anglican churches to accommodate all who wished to attend services, along with the severe lack of provision for the poor of the town, stimulated the activities of the nonconformist groups, and for many years they maintained the fastest growing and largest congregations in Cheltenham. There were building spates throughout the nineteenth century, the first being c.1808-1820, after which there initially appears to have been sufficient capacity for the town’s main religious groups. However, by 1831 only about 31% of the population of Cheltenham could be accommodated within the existing Anglican churches, and further provision was again required due to the continued increase of the town’s population, with new housing developments lying far away from the existing chapels and churches, and congregations beginning to outgrow their places of worship. A number of religious schisms lead to the formation of breakaway religious groups, and new denominations began to appear in the town necessitating the construction of additional places of worship.
7.2.1 The Anglican churches

St. Mary’s (SMR 5414)
From c.1820 attempts were made to increase the available space within the church by adding extra ground floor pews and wooden galleries, making the maximum capacity of the church 1165 seats (Blake 1979, 2). The church had already undergone piecemeal restorations from the late eighteenth century, but still the Medieval fabric continued to deteriorate, partly due to age and partly to floor loading problems created by the internal galleries. By 1858 the removal of the existing pews, galleries and fittings of the church was considered to be absolutely necessary, and the entire restoration of the interior of the church was most desirable. In 1859 the structural and sanitary condition of the church was found to be much worse than previously thought, when the installation of new pews in the south aisle revealed that in consequence of the decay and crumbling of the mortar between the covering slabs of the vaults and the breaking up of coffins there exists....free communication between the gases contained in the coffins and the general air of the church..... St. Mary’s was immediately closed and a temporary church of corrugated iron which could house 1500 persons was erected (Blake 1979, 34). The church re-opened in 1861, but as no extra seating could be installed the congregation was split until St. Mary’s was again closed in 1875, when the galleries were removed and the nave restored. By 1877 the church had achieved its present form, except for the south porch which was added in 1890 (Blake 1979, 35).

Cheltenham chapel (SMR 19692)
The Cheltenham chapel was built by Rowland Hill and his supporters, prompted by the lack of accommodation within the existing churches and chapels. Between 1795 and c.1820 the chapel was nondenominational, in order to attract as many people as possible, with the pulpit being open to all preachers, although the services were said to be very Church of England in nature. The chapel was built in St. George’s Square, contained 1000 seats, and was described as plain, neat and commodious, with a suitable vestry shortly after it had been completed. The chapel was a success, although its nondenominational stance became its weak point, as the Anglican and nonconformist congregations gradually built new churches and chapels of their own and attendance began to drop. By 1850 a great deadness prevailed and the attendance was reduced to very small numbers. In 1851 the chapel was reorganised as a Congregational chapel until 1857 when the congregation was dissolved and the chapel closed (Blake 1979, 5-6).

The proprietary chapels of the 1820s
In 1821, before the second Anglican church was opened, the population of Cheltenham was c.13,000, made up of residents and visitors who had to attend church in neighbouring villages, such as Prestbury and Charlton Kings. This arrangement was considered unacceptable, especially for the poor who could not afford to rent pews. As only 190 sittings in St. Mary’s were specifically set aside for the poor, many resorted to the nonconformists chapels which were growing up and offering alternative places of worship. One approach to rectifying this situation was the construction of three new Anglican Churches. Unfortunately all three were built on the proprietary system whereby money was raised by selling a certain number of shares in the building, with each shareholder receiving one or more pews within the new church according to the number of shares purchased. These pews could then be used by the shareholder’s family or rented out. Although one fifth of all the sittings had to be reserved for the poor, there was still a significant bias against the poorer members of the community who could not afford to buy shares or rent pews.

Holy Trinity church (SMR 8447) in Portland Street was built between 1819 and 1823, and when consecrated it was described as being completely in the fields. It was, however, soon entirely surrounded by houses of the Pittville Estate. The church seated 1350 people, with 440 free sittings (Blake 1979, 14). Alterations were later made to the interior of the church by John Middleton c.1877 (Verey 1980, 131).

The church of St. James (SMR 8441) in Suffolk Square built between 1825 and 1830 is renowned as taking longer to build and having more problems than any other church in the town. It was intended that the church should have 1500 sittings, but problems arose due to the end of the early nineteenth century building boom and the collapse of several national and provincial banks. Once the church opened it was an immediate success and by 1840 the congregation was the most affluent and fashionable of any in Cheltenham. More recently the church was declared redundant and it now acts as the parish hall for St. Philip and St. James in Leckhampton (Blake 1979, 14-18).
St. John’s church in Berkeley Street (SMR 19865) was the third and smallest of the proprietary chapels, built between 1827 and 1829. The church served the rapidly growing population at the eastern side of Cheltenham, where such accommodation is very much wanted, for as it is at present, in very wet weather, many families in consequence of the great distance of the Old town and Trinity Church are entirely precluded from attending any place of worship unless they run the risk of severe illness from sitting two hours in wet clothes. St. John’s was built in the Greek revival style, but was substantially altered in 1870, and in 1967 it was declared redundant and demolished (Blake 1979, 18-19).

The building of the three proprietary chapels provided around 3700 additional Anglican sittings in the town, but only 900 were specifically set aside for the poor, and in 1825 it was proposed to build a free church destined for the town and placed in the very centre of the poor population where the majority of the seats were free. Unfortunately the slump in the town’s economy in the later 1820s meant that it was not until 1829 that building work could begin. A site was chosen to the north of Swindon Lane, adjacent to an overflowing and increasingly poor population. The church, dedicated to St. Paul (SMR 8458), was completed in 1831, containing 1230 sittings set aside as free and the remainder were charged with rents averaging £1 a year, which was rather lower than other churches in order to give facilities to tradesmen and others who may wish to hire sittings. All sittings were also in pews, to reduce the differences between those who paid and those who did not (Blake 1979, 19-20).

The increasing population growth put a strain both on the churches and on burial facilities in the town. In c.1830 the Parish Vestry acquired an orchard on the southern side of the Lower High Street to be used as a burial ground, which was cleared between 1830 and 1831, during which time a new burial chapel dedicated to St. Mary (SMR 8456), was also built. The first burial took place on 19 September 1831 and the ground remained in use until the opening of a new cemetery in 1864 (Blake 1979, 20-21).

The churches of the 1830s-1840s

The increase in population in the 1830s lead to the construction of more proprietary chapels in order to accommodate the enlarged congregations.

Christ Church (SMR 8439) in Malvern Road was built between 1837 and 1840 as a proprietary chapel to serve the township of Alstone, which had a population of around 3000, but no church. The church was consecrated in 1840 and contained 2075 sittings, of which 485 were free (Blake 1979, 28-29).

The church of St. Philip (SMR 8362) in Leckhampton was built between 1838 and 1840 to serve the growing population of the part of the parish around Norwood Street and Bath Road, the population of which consisted mainly of mechanics and labourers. The original scheme was for 800-850 sittings, of which at least half were to be free, however, in 1839 construction work was stopped due to lack of funds, and in 1840 the partly built church was converted into a proprietary chapel by selling 180 of its sittings as private pews. The church was opened in 1840 and served the artisan community around Norwood Street and The Park area for almost 40 years, until it was removed to make way for a larger church in 1879 (Blake 1979, 29-30).

The church of St. Peter (SMR 8445) in Tewkesbury Road (1847/49) was also built to accommodate the working population of the town. The area was described as containing 3000 souls, the great majority very poor, and it was proposed to build a church of 800 sittings, at least half of which should be free, along with seats for children of the National and Sunday Schools (Blake 1979, 30-31).

St. Luke’s church (SMR 8450) in College Road was built in 1853-4 partly as a place of worship for pupils at the nearby Gentleman’s College, and partly to serve the fashionable Sandford area (Blake 1979, 31-32).

The church of St. Matthew (SMR 8443) was built 1877-1879 by Ewan Christian and is considered one of his best works. The tower and spire were added in 1883-4 and removed in 1972 (Verey 1980, 130).

The churches of John Middleton, 1860-1883

Between 1860 and 1883 five new churches were built on the eastern, western and southern fringes of the town. Each church was designed to be built in stages as the number of worshippers increased and as the availability of funds permitted.
St Mark’s church (SMR 8442) in Lansdown was built between 1860 and 1866 to serve the western part of Christ Church district known as Lower Alstone, and which contained the majority of the district’s poor. It was planned that the new church should contain 500 sittings, half of which were to be free. The nave and chancel were the first stage of the scheme and were completed in 1861, although they were not consecrated until 1862. The tower and spire were added in 1866 and between 1888 and 1889 the church was further enlarged by the addition of the present transepts (Blake 1979, 37).

The church of All Saints (SMR 8438) in Pittville was built between 1865 and 1868, providing valuable sittings in the overcrowded Trinity district. It was specifically built for High Church, Tractarian worship in a town dominated by Low Church evangelicals. All Saints was consecrated in 1868 even though the interior decoration was unfinished, and the proposed 200 foot high spire was never built (Blake 1979, 37-38).

The church of the Holy Apostles in Charlton Kings (SMR 8459) was built between 1866 and 1871, as a church of 700 sittings, one third of which were to be free. The tower and spire designed for the structure were never built (Blake 1979, 38-39).

St. Stephen’s church (SMR 8446) is the smallest of the churches designed by Middleton, and was built between 1873 and 1883 to serve the part of Christ Church district known as Tivoli. The earliest part is the chancel which was begun in 1873 and completed a year later. It held only 250 people and by 1878 enlargement was necessary which was proposed to be achieved through the addition of a nave and side aisles. In 1881 funds were sufficient for this work to begin and when they were completed the church could seat 650 people (Blake 1979, 39).

The church of St. Philip and St. James in Leckhampton (SMR 8362) was built between 1879 and 1882 on the site of the earlier church of St. Philip, which in 1882 was described as having been well suited to the poor and sparsely populated district for which it was designed, but wholly inadequate for the improved and wealthy neighbourhood which has sprung up around it. In 1879 a subscription to enlarge the church was launched and the old church continued in use while the new one was built around it. The new church, which seated 800 was completed in 1882 (Blake 1979, 39).

7.2.2 Nonconformity

There is little information available about early nonconformity in Cheltenham, although Bishop Shelden’s religious survey of 1676 recorded 97 nonconformists in the town. This number is thought to have been composed mainly of Anabaptists and Quakers (Blake 1979, 3). Cheltenham Baptists are thought to have formed part of a congregation meeting in Tewkesbury from 1655, and there is also a tradition that a Quaker congregation existed in the town by c.1660. All the nonconformists groups originally met in private houses or hired rooms, although between 1690 and 1702 the Baptist congregation met in a converted malthouse. Gradually purpose-built chapels came into use in the lanes and alley-ways running off the High Street (Blake 1979, 3).

The Quakers

A Quaker meeting house (SMR 9422) was built on the north side of Manchester Walk in 1701-2. The chapel held 200 people, and was extensively rebuilt in 1757-8. It remained in use until the new chapel was built between 1835 and 1836, when it was sold to the Unitarians then to the Primitive Methodists, and was finally demolished towards the end of the nineteenth century (Blake 1979, 3).

Between 1835 and 1836 a new Quaker chapel (SMR 20379) was built in Manchester Place, on a piece of land adjoining the old chapel which the congregation had outgrown by the 1830s. The building was used as a chapel until c.1917 and it now forms part of St. Paul’s College Adult Education Centre (Blake 1979, 24).

The Baptist community

The first Baptist chapel was built in 1701 on the north side of Manchester Walk (SMR 9423). It was very small, about 38 feet by 20 feet, and needed extensive repairs in 1785. By 1818 it was no longer considered suitable and was demolished in 1820, following which the site was reused for the present chapel (Blake 1979, 4). In 1820 the Bethel Chapel (SMR 8455) on Knapp Road was built to replace the eighteenth century building. The site was adjoined by a small burial ground, and the building is now a Christadelphian Hall (Blake 1979, 10).
The construction of the Old Salem chapel in Regent Street (SMR 19866) in 1835-6, was due in part to an influx of radical antinomians into the moderate congregation. Many of the newcomers had attended High Calvinist ministries and although they were accepted into the Baptist church, it was not a happy union. In 1827 the pastor resigned and in 1828 the more respectable part of the members and hearers withdrew completely. A new pastor was appointed and he managed to maintain harmony until 1835 when he and a majority congregation withdrew, meeting in the Clarence Gallery on Clarence Street until a suitable site for a new chapel could be purchased. When a site could not be found the congregation bought Barrett’s Riding School in Regent Street (SMR 20380) and fitted it out as a galleried chapel. The building remained in use until 1845 (Blake 1979, 24).

The Clare Street tabernacle (SMR 20381) was built c.1836, and is one of the least documented chapels. It is known to have been used by the Cambray Baptists in the mid-1840s, but by 1854 it had been occupied by the Church of the Latter Day Saints. The chapel has since been demolished (Blake 1979, 24-25).

The Salem chapel (SMR 8449) in Clarence Parade was built between 1843 and 1844 to replace the small Regent Street Chapel (Blake 1979, 26).

Cambray Baptist chapel (SMR 8452) in Cambray Place was built between 1853 and 1855 and has its origins in a split amongst the congregation of Bethel Chapel. In 1843 Reverend Leader and 42 members withdrew and met at the Clare Street Tabernacle, and then from 1844 at the former Ebenezer Chapel. As the congregation grew it was decided that a new chapel should be built at Cambray Place, which was described as a commodious place of worship, with a handsome Italian facade and elevation, without being too costly or out of character for such a purpose when it was opened (Blake 1979, 27).

The Methodist community
The Albion Street chapel was built c.1723 on the south side of the street opposite Pate’s Almshouses. The history of the building is obscure, but it is known to have been occupied by Methodists from 1764 until sometime between 1785 and 1810. By 1825 the building was in a very dilapidated state and was demolished shortly after, being replaced by the Mechanics’ Institute. In c.1850 the chapel is said to have been able to hold 150-200 people (Blake 1979, 4).

Between 1812 and 1813 the Ebenezer chapel (SMR 9428) was built on King Street to re-house the Wesleyan Methodist congregation which had outgrown the Meakings Passage chapel. When the building was opened, it was described as an elegant pile.....constructed on the most accommodative system, with a circular gallery capable of containing 1000 auditors, and wholly spacious and tasteful. The chapel was occupied by Wesleyan Methodists until 1840, when it passed to the Baptists who had seceded from Bethel chapel (1844-55) and then to a Primitive Methodist meeting (1859-1934) (Blake 1979, 8-9).

The Gas Green chapel (SMR 9429) on Baker Street was built c.1836 for Primitive Methodists. In 1848 it was bought by the Congregational Union, but has since become a Baptist chapel (Blake 1979, 25).

The Wesleyan chapel (SMR 8453) in St. George’s Street was built 1839/40 and was one of the hundred new chapels built to celebrate the centenary of Methodism. In 1842 the Methodists were considered to be the most numerous and influential of the nonconformist groups, and those in Cheltenham had outgrown the Ebenezer Chapel by the 1830s. The site of which, in a narrow lane off the Lower High Street, was probably also seen as a disadvantage. A plot was acquired on St. George’s Street and the new chapel opened in 1840, when it was described as a plain square building having...a deep portico supported by four pillars in front. The chapel was occupied by Methodists until 1971 since which time it has been used as a warehouse (Blake 1979, 25).

The Bethany chapel in Regent Street is thought to have been built for the Association Methodists c.1840, and to have been occupied until the Royal Well chapel was built in 1865. The building is now known as Regent chapel (SMR 19867; Blake 1979, 25).

The Bethesda chapel (SMR 9426) on Great Norwood Street was built in 1845-6 and is thought to have had its origins in an outdoor preaching place established by the Methodists in 1828 to serve the growing artisan community in the area adjacent to Bath Road and Norwood Street. The first small chapel on the spot was built in the 1830s, but was soon outgrown and in 1845 a new chapel was built slightly to the north of the
original chapel which was then sold and subsequently demolished. The new chapel was enlarged in 1867 and still serves the Bethesda Methodist congregation (Blake 1979, 26).

**The Presbyterians**
The Old Chapel on Meakings Passage, off the High Street, is said to have been built c.1730, possibly for a Presbyterian congregation, but was successively occupied by a number of different denominations, including the Methodists. In 1817 it was taken over by a Baptist congregation, and in 1824 Meakings Passage was demolished to make way for Pittville Street (Blake 1979, 4).

The Presbyterian church of St. Andrew was built at the corner of Fauconberg Road and Montpellier Street in 1885 by Thomas Arnold (SMR 8457; Verey 1980, 132; Little 1952, 1).

**Roman Catholicism**
The Roman Catholics were the last nonconformist group to establish a permanent place of worship in Cheltenham. In 1676 only four Catholics were recorded in the town, but numbers steadily increased during the seventeenth century, with refugees from revolutionary France swelling the numbers considerably during the eighteenth century. The Catholic congregations usually hired rooms, until in 1809 a plot of land was purchased in Manchester Place, and in 1810 a neat commodious edifice was built, capable of holding 300 people (SMR 8440). This chapel was later enlarged to hold about 500, but in 1854 it was demolished to make way for the new Catholic church (Blake 1979, 6-7).

The Catholic church of St. Gregory the Great (SMR 8440) was built between 1854 and 1876 to replace the small Catholic chapel of 1809/10, and is one of the largest and costliest Victorian churches in Cheltenham. Before its completion it was described as unquestionably one of the finest modern structures that the town can boast of. The chancel was opened for worship in 1857 when the tower and spire were begun. The building was not finally completed until 1876 when the present nave was built, and the church was consecrated in 1877 (Blake 1979, 32-33).

**The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion**
In 1816 the Portland chapel (SMR 8451) on North Place was built by Robert Capper, a Calvinist, who had attended Cheltenham chapel, but who withdrew in 1815 and built his own place of worship. In 1819 the chapel was gifted to the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, by whom it is still owned (Blake 1979, 9).

**The Congregationalists**
Snow’s chapel in Grosvenor Street (SMR 19787) was built between 1817 and 1818 for the Reverend Snow, who preached there until 1822 when he underwent a third religious conversion (this time to the Anglican faith) and dissolved the congregation. The chapel was closed, and attempts to convert it for Anglican worship failed. In 1827 it was sold and reopened as a Congregationalist chapel, named Highbury, remaining in use until 1852 when it became a school, and today it is a youth club (Blake 1979, 9-10).

The Congregational chapel in Winchcombe Street (SMR 20383) was built between 1850 and 1852 to rehouse the congregation which had been meeting at the former Snow’s chapel from 1827. The chapel closed in 1932 when the congregation moved to the present Highbury chapel in Priory Terrace and the building was demolished (Blake 1979, 26).

**The Unitarians**
The Bayshill Unitarian chapel (SMR 8448) was built 1842-1844 for a congregation which is thought to have been established in 1832 (Blake 1979, 26).

**The Jewish Community**
A Jewish congregation existed in Cheltenham by 1823 and originally met for worship in a room in St. George’s Place, adjacent to Manchester Walk, which they soon outgrew. In 1834 a plot of land on which to build a synagogue (SMR 8454) was bought in St. James’ Square, the building was opened in 1839 and is still in use today. In 1844 a plot of land in Elm Street, off Tewkesbury Road was acquired for a burial ground, and this is also still in use today (SMR 20384) (Blake 1979, 32).
7.3 Markets and fairs

The market is on Thursday, when butter and poultry are brought from the neighbouring villages; and since the great increase of visitors, the country people bring in poultry, and the hucksters bring salmon, eels, gudgeons, carp, tench, and other fresh water fish from the Severn every day in the week during the season... (A Tour of Cheltenham Spa, 1805, quoted in Goding 1863, 289).

Cheltenham’s markets and fairs of Medieval origin continued to be held throughout the period in which the spa town was developing, but as they were traditionally held in the High Street, which was also the principal promenade until the construction of The Promenade, they proved rather an inconvenience to the fashionable visitors who resorted there for their health.

According to Goding (1863, 288) fairs were held on the second Thursday in April, on Holy Thursday, 5 August, the Thursday before and after Michaelmas day, the second Thursday in September and the third Thursday in December. He also recorded that all kinds of cattle and provisions were sold in the market: horses were collected for sale at the top of Winchcombe Street and Albion Street; horned cattle and sheep were sold near Henrietta Street and pigs in the Fleece yard (Hart 1981, 185).

In the first Cheltenham Guide, published in 1781, there is reference to the High Street which was greatly encumbered with certain old coarse buildings supported on stone pillars...called the Corn Market and the Butter Cross (SMR 6618). In 1786 the market house was pulled down and replaced, although the original site was laid into the street in an attempt to improve the aspect of the town to visitors. In 1803 this market house was described in Brown’s Guide as far too small to contain one half of the marketable produce that is constantly brought to the Towne... and so in 1808 a new market house was erected. This building had a council room on the second floor and a shambles adjoining. The 1808 Market House was subsequently replaced in 1822 as it had become too small for the volume of trade, and although attempts were made to extend it by transferring the vegetable market to a building to be erected in the Rose and Crown passage, the position was found to be unfavourable. Instead the fourth Market House in the space of 100 years was built on the site (Hart 1981, 174; 268). The new building, as described in 1826, was 84 feet long and 42 feet wide, standing in the centre of a spacious square (Hart 1981, 174).

The 1822 Market House was itself demolished in 1867 to make way for shops and the conversion of the arcade in which it stood into a public thoroughfare, now Bennington Street (Hart 1981, 219). In the following year (1868) pens were set up in the street for a cattle market, which the Town Commissioners found highly unacceptable, especially as the annual fairs were still being held in the High Street, and it was thought that this presented a bad impression to visitors. It was not until 1876 that the Commissioners managed to purchase the Albion Brewery site (SMR 20385), to which place all markets and fairs were removed, finally clearing the town of cattle pens and fairs (Hart 1981, 219).

7.4 Trade and industry

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the focus of employment in Cheltenham shifted from agriculture and the marketing of produce to a range of occupations closely related to the spas and the influx of wealthy visitors and residents. The most important growth areas in employment became domestic service, along with the building and retail trades. Professions such as medicine, the law and teaching also received considerable stimulus from the development of the spa town. In 1849 it was said that there are no manufactures and the great mass of the inhabitants depend upon the influx of visitors for their employment and support. Coaching inns were unable to cope with the great influx of visitors and so the letting of lodgings also became common practice. The first Cheltenham Directory of 1781 noted that 153 of the town’s principal inhabitants (over half of those listed) let lodgings during the season. The Directory also listed 40 laundresses and clear starchers. In 1823 400-500 people were employed in the building trade, and the value of contracts in hand for new houses amounted to £450,000 (Verey 1980, 123). In 1851 domestic servants made up 16% of the total population of the town over 20 years of age, and around 6065 individuals were involved in some sort of service employment, including 1020 laundresses and 1129 builders, carpenters, plumbers, glaziers, house painters and bricklayers. There were also 648 general labourers (Blake and Beacham 1982, 121).

The development of the retail trade was also a significant innovation of the early nineteenth century, during which time Cheltenham acquired its reputation as an important provincial shopping centre (Blake and Beacham 1982, 121). Rowe’s Guide lists the major types of shop to be found in the town at that time, and includes clothiers,
outfitters, grocers and tea dealers, cooks and confectioners, fishmongers and butchers, numerous chemists and druggists, and shops selling gifts and luxury goods (Blake and Beacham 1982, 122).

The largest and oldest of the nineteenth century breweries is the so-called “Original Brewery” (SMR 11324) which was established c.1760 on the north side of the High Street next to the Fleece Inn, and which was the predecessor of the brewery which still occupies part of the site (Blake and Beacham 1982, 123). The company merged with the Stroud Brewery in 1959, but was absorbed by Whitbread’s in 1966. The main buildings on the site date from 1898, when they were rebuilt following a fire which destroyed all but the basement of the brewhouse of 1818.

The manufacture of Cheltenham salts from the Cheltenham waters began in the 1730s. In c.1810 Henry Thompson established his Salts Laboratory in Bath Road where the waters from Montpellier were pumped, evaporated and crystallised. The salts were then bottled and sold throughout Britain and overseas (Blake and Beacham 1982, 123).

### 7.5 Cheltenham Spa

Cheltenham Spa reached its peak of popularity in the period between c.1790 and the 1830s after which the increased popularity of sea bathing and the renewed accessibility of the continental spas, following the Napoleonic Wars, took many potential visitors elsewhere. The main season in which it was fashionable to go to the resort at Cheltenham was from April to October (Blake and Beacham 1982, 34).

The good effects of Cheltenham Water, were described in 1803 as follows:

> It does not agitate the blood, or ferment the humours so much as common purges; is friendly to the stomach, less heating and less windy, and less apt to leave a worse constipation behind it: works off without heat, thirst, or dryness of the mouth, sickness, gripings, faintness or defection of spirits; but rather increases the appetite, and strengthens the stomach: and from its astringent quality it is justly concluded, that it not only dilutes and carries off viscous humours, but by strengthening the vessels, and restoring the lost tone of solid parts, it enables them to resist a fresh afflux of the same. It is particularly efficacious of the bilious complaints, obstructions of the liver and spleen, obstructed perspiration, loss of appetite, bad digestion, and all disorders which affect the primae viae (Ruff 1803, 77).

#### 7.5.1 Discovery and development of the Royal Old Well Spa (SMR 19869)

The Spa, or Pump Room, is open every morning for the accommodation of the water-drinkers, and when wet, or the weather unpleasant, it certainly affords a very comfortable protection... (Browne, c.1805). The first Cheltenham spa was discovered in 1716 when a flock of pigeons was noticed in a meadow just outside the town, pecking at a salty crust around a spring. The owner of the meadow recognised the possibilities, railed in the spring and built a thatched shed over it. The purgative properties of the water had been known to the inhabitants for generations, for Dr Lucas, who analysed the waters and gave them their fame, recorded that he had seen old men drink Cheltenham water by the quart without number and without experiencing any ill effect from so strange a practice, because they thought it wholesome to cleanse their bodies (Hart 1981, 115). This spring later became known as the Royal Old Well, and was the first, and for almost a century, the only spa in Cheltenham. As the practice of drinking water impregnated with salt had already become fashionable, the discovery at Cheltenham soon became widely known, and it became necessary to enclose the well, with water from the spa being sold both from the well and in bottles (Hart 1981, 115).

The saline waters of Cheltenham Spa were hailed by contemporaries as something of a cure-all, although they were particularly recommended for disorders such as: dyspepsia, eruptions, pimples, inflammations, exudations, scrofulous affections, ulcers of the legs, ophthalmies, rheumatism and gout, asthma and cough, female diseases, piles, gravelly disorders and worms (Dr Thomas Jameson 1809, quoted in Blake and Beacham 1982, 33).

In 1738 Henry Skillicorne had bought most of the Bayshill Estate, deepened the well and built a square brick structure over it, with a small ballroom on the western side where those drinking the water could congregate, and a billiard room above. He then developed the Well Walk, an avenue with a double row of elm trees on either side leading from a rustic bridge across the Chelt to the well, and continuing with elm and lime trees for some distance beyond it (Hart 1981, 116). Skillicorne’s diary gives an indication of the numbers of visitors to the well during the years following its discovery. In 1743 there were 644, followed by 655 in 1748 (Hart 1981, 117).
During the mid-eighteenth century, there was a slump in the numbers of visitors to Cheltenham, and the second Guide Book, published in 1783, makes reference to the neglected state of the place for the last 30 years (Hart 1981, 122). One reason for the decline may have been the fear of smallpox, and although in 1757 Cheltenham was certified to have been free from the disease for six weeks, visitor numbers the following year remained low (Hart 1981, 122). The second reason for low numbers was the inaccessibility of the town; in the mid-eighteenth century the journey from London took three days, and for many years there was no direct coach service. In 1770 the journey time was reduced to 26 hours, but was still considered arduous (Hart 1981, 122). A third reason was the shortage of lodgings and the frequent lack of comfort in those available. It also appears that the inhabitants were less than eager to attract visitors, and many of the agents of development in Cheltenham during the eighteenth century were in-commers (Hart 1981, 123).

Work on the expansion of the Royal Old Well continued through the later part of the eighteenth century, with the Long Room being added in 1776 on the east side of the pump, making visiting the well more convenient for large parties and for the holding of social events (Hart 1981, 123). Unfortunately the local inhabitants did not appear any more willing to make arrangements for visitors, as described by one visitor to Cheltenham, who published his impressions in the Morning Post of 1780:

*The town of Cheltenham...would in all probability have remained unnoticed ‘till the end of time had not the spa attracted the attention of the public. This seems to be the general opinion of the inhabitants, if we may judge from the little pains to decorate or improve themselves or their habitations. They likewise seem displeased that chance should have brought them to public notice, by their constant opposition to every improvement for the convenience and accommodation of those who visit them.*

The visit of King George III in 1788 (see 7.5.8 below) began the process of making Cheltenham a popular resort but even 10 years after the event, the inhabitants were still reluctant to make improvements to the town. As Fosbrooke described Cheltenham c.1798: *...the only conspicuous objects were...Fauconberg House and a double range of buildings in the High Street above the “Plough”...which were the only habitations considered fit for the reception of wealth and title.*

In 1800, 2000 visitors to Cheltenham were recorded, with a resident population of 3076 in 1801. Development was beginning to take place on a larger scale, especially at the eastern end of the High Street, although there were still four main blocks on the expansion of the settlement. The supply of water at the Royal Well Spa was inadequate to fill the requirements of all the visitors, most of who came to drink the waters for medicinal purposes. The continued shortage of lodgings for visitors was also a problem, although in around 1805 it was said that *...with all the additions which successful speculators are yearly making to it [Cheltenham] will soon be capable of accommodating the company which resort to it, though at present it is not, in consequence of which, lodgings have been filled up at Charlton Kings, Sandford, Arle, Prestbury,...which are frequently replenished by the overflow of company which resort to this spot* (Browne’s Guide, c.1805). Communications routes into the town were still poor and the condition of the roads made travel to the town unpleasant, as well as holding up the supply of materials needed to repair the roads and build new lodging houses (Hart 1981, 137). The other bar on development was the fact that most of the land on which speculators wished to develop, especially on the northern side of the High Street, did not become available until enclosure (Hart 1981, 137).

The Royal Old Well Spa was pulled down c.1848, removing the feature which had brought the town its fame and fortune (Hart 1981, 195). A new building was erected on the site, which was known at first as the Royal Wells Music Hall, and which later became the Theatre Royal. The dispensing of the spa waters was relegated to a small conservatory at one end of the Long Room. This was still not enough to maintain interest in the building, and the land was bought up by the governors of the Ladies College in 1889. The college continued to repair and maintain the structure until 1897 when it was demolished and replaced by the present Princess Hall (Hart 1981, 222).

### 7.5.2 New springs

The problem of finding more water was solved by the discovery of new springs during the early nineteenth century. In 1801 a chalybeate spring was located near Barrett’s Mill in Cambray (SMR 9415). This was impregnated with iron rather than salts and added a further dimension to the town’s supposed medicinal advantages. These waters had a diuretic effect and, according to one contemporary writer, were recommended for *Nervous diseases, debility of the digestive organs, chronic inflammation of the eyes, convulsions, epilepsy and sterility in females* (Blake and Beacham 1982, 34). A second spring was discovered
in the grounds of Wellington House (Hart 1981, 139), and a short lived spa was built in Alstone in 1809 (SMR 13022), which had an octagonal pump room and a square garden. The latter had closed by 1834 (Hart 1981, 139; Blake and Beacham 1982, 34).

7.5.3. Montpellier Spa

The first pump room at the Montpellier Spa (SMR 474) was built in 1809, standing on the present site of Lloyd’s Bank. It was a long and unpretentious building with wooden pillars and a veranda, with a small structure over the centre for an orchestra. A tree-lined walk was laid out as an approach, along with gardens opposite the pump room (Hart 1981, 139). In 1817 the rather primitive early structure was demolished and the present building, complete with lion couchant, was constructed. In 1825 John Papworth added the domed circular room which became known as the Rotunda, and which was used as a ballroom (Hart 1981, 139).

The decline in the numbers of visitors to Montpellier Spa during the mid-nineteenth century was more gradual than at some others, but before 1840 the proprietors found it necessary to build a row of shops on the western side of the Grand Walk (Hart 1981, 176). Although the spa retained its popularity for longer than the others, it was used more for balls and concerts at the Rotunda than for the drinking of the waters (Hart 1981, 195).

7.5.4 Sherbourne Well/The Imperial Spa (SMR 15962)

In 1818 another important spa was built on the site of the present Queen’s Hotel. It was called Sherbourne at first as a tribute to the lord of the manor but soon after it had opened to the public, the Sherbourne Well was renamed the Imperial Spa. The approach to this spa was also planted with a double row of trees, which was at first known as Sherbourne Walk, but which became known as The Promenade after a few years (Hart 1981, 139-141). The well was in daily use for two years, during which time three hogsheads of water (about 156 gallons) were drunk from it every morning (Hart 181, 137)

By the mid-nineteenth century the fashion of drinking medicinal waters was on the wane and the period of prosperity for the pump rooms was drawing to a close. The Imperial Spa was pulled down in 1837 and re-erected on the west side of the Promenade where it remained until it was demolished to make way for the Regal cinema. The Queen’s Hotel was then built on the original site of the spa (Hart 1981, 176).

7.5.5 Pittville Pump Room

Construction work began on the Pittville Estate in 1826, the centrepiece of which was the Pittville Pump Room (SMR 9625). The room was designed by John Forbes, and was the largest and most beautiful of all the spa buildings. It has been described as the finest surviving Regency building in Cheltenham, but it has also been criticised as a stilted high shouldered and rather graceless building by Sir Hugh Casson (Hart 1981, 170). Although the foundation stone of the pump room was laid in 1825 the structure was not completed until 1830, by which time the fashion for drinking English spa water was beginning to wane, and the distance of the estate from the town began to prove a handicap (Hart 1981, 172).

The Pump Room is a two storied building, with an Ionic style colonnade, surmounted by a dome. Inside was a ground floor assembly hall, a small card room and an oval room which contained the pump. Upstairs was the library, reading room and a billiard room (Blake and Beacham 1982, 34).

7.5.6 Cambray Spa

In 1807 a second chalybeate spring was discovered in Cambray and waters were dispensed from a house in Cambray Place. This eventually changed hands and a new saline well was opened, called Cambray Spa (SMR 13024), which stood at the corner of Rodney and Oriel Roads in 1834, and which had a gothic style octagonal pump room (Blake and Beacham 1982, 34). In 1873 Cambray Spa was converted into a Turkish Baths, which it remained until demolished in 1938 (Blake and Beacham 1982, 34).

7.5.7 The Cold Baths

For certain complaints, a course of hot, tepid or cold baths could be prescribed, rather than simple drinking of the waters, and for this purpose a Cold Bath was opened near the Chelt and about 200 yards from the Royal Old Well soon after the spa was established. By 1780 it had fallen into disuse and it was succeeded in 1787 by a suite of warm and tepid baths which were located in the High Street. In 1806 Henry Thompson opened a suite of baths at Montpellier, which remained the most important in the town thereafter (Blake and Beacham 1982, 33).
7.5.8 The visit of George III
In 1788 George III, with Queen Charlotte and three of their daughters, spent five weeks at Cheltenham taking the waters and being entertained in the theatre and Assembly Rooms. This unprecedented event made Cheltenham popular as a summer resort (Verey 1980, 123).

7.5.9 Entertainment
As the Royal Old Well began to be developed during the middle of the eighteenth century, a very small malt house standing in one of the lanes leading off the High Street, was converted into a primitive theatre for the entertainment of the visitors to the well, and in 1781 a Master of Ceremonies was appointed, marking the social pretensions to which the new resort town was aspiring (Hart 1981, 117).

The other main resort of fashionable company, apart from the spas, were the Assembly Rooms (SMR 20386), which stood on the south side of the High Street adjoining Rodney Road. From the mid-eighteenth century until 1900 four separate buildings occupied this site, until the rooms were demolished to make way for Lloyd’s Bank. The first structure was a ballroom which was established by a Mrs Stokes in the former dining room of a house called Powers Court. In 1784 Thomas Hughes replaced this with a new building known as the Lower Rooms, to distinguish it from a second ballroom, known as the Upper Rooms, which stood at the corner of the High Street and Cambray Place. The Upper Rooms were also established in 1784 and remained in use until 1809 after which they became an auction room and then a literary salon (Blake and Beacham 1982, 47-48). The Lower Assembly Rooms were demolished in 1810, and a third building opened on the site in June the same year with a ball to celebrate the king’s birthday. These rooms were themselves demolished in 1816 and another new building was constructed, which was opened by the Duke of Wellington (Blake and Beacham 1982, 48).

Another attraction was the theatre which was originally a converted malt house in Coffee House Yard off Pittville Street, and which is thought to have been established before 1758. The site has since been redeveloped and the location lost. In 1782 a new theatre (SMR 20382) was opened in Grosvenor Terrace, which was described as very neat and commodious and having two rows of boxes all round. This building was replaced by an even larger theatre at Cambray which remained in use until it was burnt down in 1839 (Blake and Beacham 1982, 48).

Cheltenham races also proved popular with the visitors. The first races were held on Cheltenham Hill in August 1818, and were so successful that it was decided that they should become an annual event. In 1819 the Cheltenham Gold Cup was run for the first time. After the grandstand was destroyed by fire in 1830, the races moved to Lord Ellenborough’s Prestbury Park, where they have been held ever since (Blake and Beacham 1982, 48).

Cheltenham also had a number of circulating libraries, the earliest of which was established by Samuel Harward in 1780, and by 1830 there were nine separate libraries in the town. The largest was Williams’ Library, which was established in 1815, and which moved to new premises next to the Assembly Rooms in 1816 (Blake and Beacham 1982, 49). The town also had a museum and an important picture gallery for a time. Maine and Tatlow’s Museum at Montpellier was established in 1816 or 1817, and had a mainly geological collection. Many of the exhibits were for sale, and by the time of its closure in 1843, Maine’s Museum had virtually become a shop for the sale of curiosities and fancy goods (Blake and Beacham 1982, 49). Lord Monmouth’s picture collection included works by Holbein, Titian, Rubens and Velasques, and was installed in two specially built wings at Thirlestaine House in Bath Road c.1838. The collection was regularly opened to visitors until his death in 1859 (Blake and Beacham 1982, 49).

7.6 Schools
Cheltenham College was founded in 1841 and was the first new English public school founded in the nineteenth century, forming the model for many successors (Hart 1981, 199). It was here that the sons of gentlemen could receive an education conducted strictly in conformity with the principles of the Church of England. The school opened with 120 pupils in three rented houses in St. George’s Road, and by June 1843 the number of pupils had doubled and the school had been removed to a spacious new college in Bath Road (Blake and Beacham 1982, 94).

Cheltenham Ladies College was founded between 1844 and 1859 at Fauconberg House in St. George’s Road, which was also used as a boarding house. In 1871 the purchase was made of part of the grounds attached to the Royal Old
Well Spa, on which was erected the first section of the new buildings which eventually came to cover the entire site of the former spa (Hart 1981, 201-202).

7.7 Cheltenham after c.1850

The influence of the schools and the evangelical movement had some interesting effects upon the settlement, some of which are indicated by the Cheltenham Guide of the 1860s: *The town is no longer a type of fashionable watering place...The frivolities once so prevalent here are now more honoured in the breach than in the observance... Education has also powerfully done its work for good in Cheltenham. The gross and vicious habits of a past generation have fled or died out before the spread of education and intelligence, and a comparatively moral tone now permeates all classes* (Quoted in Hart 1981, 208).

During the nineteenth century, the resort did not only attract wealthy visitors, but also large numbers of poor people trying to escape the hardships of life in other parts of the country, and for whom the chances of employment must have seemed greater in a rapidly expanding settlement (Hart 1981, 184). Cheltenham was, however, mainly known for the large numbers of educated and retired inhabitants, especially those who had returned to England after service in India. *Altogether the number of well educated and interesting persons here largely exceeds the proportion usually met within towns of this size* (Garrett 1901).

This rather smug statement can be contrasted with a view of the town in 1902: *There are low class brothels too, well known to the police, and slums which would be a disgrace to London or New York...; girls of fifteen carrying their own babies in their arms like bundles of rags and openly confessing themselves to be the mothers...it is not all this which grieves me so much as the ignorance of it in the Christians - these correct Evangelical Protestants. They don't want to known of it; ...(Oh, the churches... in this correctly Evangelical Cheltenham, they are so comfortable - so properly Evangelical that they catch you up if you pronounce a single word which is not pure low Christian Shibboleth....* (JM Butler 1902, quoted in Hart 1981, 320).

During the early twentieth century there were moves to revive the popularity of the waters based on the new Central Spa which opened in the recently built Town Hall in June 1906. Waters from Pittville and Montpellier could be drunk there and there was a large adjoining lounge for the comfort of the water-drinkers. Water is still available at the Town Hall and Pittville, but no longer forms a major attraction to visitors to the town (Blake and Beacham 1982, 36).

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 Roads

In the early days of the spa, c.1738, the journey from London to Cheltenham took three days; by 1773 this had been reduced to 26 hours, and in 1783 this had again been reduced to 18 hours. It was not until 1826 that the journey time was again reduced to 10.5 hours on the fast coach, and it was estimated that in the period immediately preceding the construction of the railway 30-40 four-horse coaches passed through the High Street each day (Hart 1981, 213).

During the early nineteenth century, three Acts of Parliament were passed allowing new roads to be made: the New Bath Road (1813) which passed through Cambray and Bath Street to Leckhampton, a second road which was completed in 1810 and which left Cheltenham via Portland Street and passed through Evesham and Alcester to Birmingham, and the third was a new road to Gloucester (1809) which is still the main Cheltenham to Gloucester road (Hart 1981, 138).

7.8.2 The railway

In 1840 the railway between Cheltenham and Gloucester was opened, with a station at Lansdown (SMR 11330), as part of the new line from Birmingham. In 1844 an Act of Parliament was passed to allow the construction of a short line between Lansdown and the new GWR station which was to be built in St. James’ Square (SMR 16293), and when this station was opened in 1847 Cheltenham was brought into direct contact with Birmingham, Bristol and London (Hart 1981, 214). Within a few years of the opening of the station, all the coaches had disappeared from the High Street and one of the oldest coaching inns (The George) went out of business completely (Hart 1981, 215). The station was closed in 1966 and demolished shortly afterwards.
8 The modern settlement

There has been extensive modern development within the historic core of Cheltenham and also in the surrounding areas. A new store for Cavendish House was built on the Promenade during the 1960s, at the same time that new blocks were added in Pittville Street and Winchcombe Street. The style of these buildings was very modern and not in keeping with the Regency appearance of the majority of buildings in the town. Large new stores have also been built on the north side of the Lower High Street, while most of the buildings along the main shopping streets have been provided with modern fronts and interiors. Elsewhere the Regency appearance of the town has been maintained, even though the buildings themselves have been adapted to modern commercial purposes; for example most of the structures which would originally have been hotels or private houses standing around the main wells are now offices or shops and the large gardens which would have been laid out to the front of them have been converted into car parks. Throughout the twentieth century the core of the town has been surrounded by housing estates, with the greatest amount of development taking place in the area to the north-west between Gloucester and Tewkesbury Roads. Outlying settlements, which were originally small rural villages, such as Prestbury and Charlton Kings, have been drawn into the greater urban sprawl of Cheltenham.

9 Population figures

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For a full explanation of this table, see page 6 above.

10 Plan analysis (Maps 7 and 8)

10.1 Discussion

10.1.1 Medieval (Map 7)

Until the development of Cheltenham as a spa resort in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the town consisted of one long street, the High Street, with a number of lanes and streets running off it to the north and south. This layout persisted into the Post-medieval period, giving rise to Leland’s description of the settlement as Cheltenham Street in the mid-sixteenth century.

The early settlement at Cheltenham developed on a band of Cheltenham Sand which would have provided the inhabitants with a light, well-drained soil. The most probable focus of the earliest Medieval settlement in Cheltenham is the church of St. Mary (Area 1) which stands on the southern side of the High Street. The existing building is twelfth century in origin, but it may lie on the site of an earlier minster church. The putative Medieval monastery (Area 2) is also suggested to have been in this area. The manor house (Area 3) is believed to have stood to the south of the churchyard, and although the full extent of its holdings is not known, they may have extended as far north as the churchyard, and as far east as the modern Regent Arcade. The combination of church, manor house and the site of the possible minster and monastery indicates a concentration of secular and ecclesiastical power in the central part of the town.

A second important focus of Medieval settlement was the weekly market and annual fairs which were held in the High Street (Area 4). The Medieval market house is thought to have occupied the same location as its successors, standing in the middle of the street, between the Plough Hotel (now the Regent Arcade) and Winchcombe Street. The Booth Hall and High Cross are also likely to have been in the same area. Both sides of the High Street were lined with narrow burgage plots and tenements (Areas 5-10), divided by narrow alleys and defined to the rear by back lanes. The original lines of many of these plots can still be seen on early maps and in the modern property boundaries to the north and south of the High Street, despite
seventeenth and eighteenth century redevelopment of the area. The area of possible Medieval settlement on Map 7 is based on the property boundaries shown on the 1806 Inclosure map. The group of buildings immediately to the north and east of the modern churchyard of St. Mary’s (Area 14) may represent infilling of an early market area during the later Medieval period, as competition for a property fronting on to the market place became increasingly sought after. The only surviving Medieval structure in the town is the church of St. Mary, although it has undergone several rebuildings and much of the original form and fabric has been replaced.

To the south of the High Street is the River Chelt, along which documentary sources indicate a number of mills stood. The locations of three of these are known today, one at Cambray (Area 11), and two in Alstone (Areas 12 and 13).

10.1.2 Post-medieval (Map 8)

In the seventeenth century, Cheltenham was still described as a market town lying along one main street, but following the discovery of the first medicinal spring on the southern side of the Chelt in 1718, the settlement began to develop and expand substantially. A good sequence of eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century maps shows this expansion clearly. The Coates Road Plan of 1776 shows Cheltenham still as one long street, with a number of smaller lanes running off the High Street to the north and south. Very few buildings are shown to the south of the church, or to the north of the High Street, although some of the more important country houses and farms are illustrated, e.g. Gallipot Farm House.

During the later eighteenth century a watercourse ran down the High Street, fed by the ponds at the Cambray Mill. Stepping stones were provided near the Plough Hotel and later near the Fleece Inn, and there were also two plank bridges, which occasionally sank into the mud, to allow the inhabitants of the north side of the street to cross over to the church. By 1806 some construction had taken place around the Royal Old Well, and the Well Walk, which was laid out at this time survived until around 1835 when the area which it had occupied was redeveloped for housing. The popularity of the waters at Cheltenham increased the need for lodging houses to accommodate all the visitors, as well as for places in which they could be entertained.

The increase in visitors put a strain on the single well, and new springs were sought. Alstone Spa, to the west of the town, opened in 1809, as did the Montpellier Spa and the Sherbourne Spa, which later became the Imperial Spa. Walks and rides grew up around both the Imperial and Montpellier Spas which were gradually lined with individual villas and terraces of houses, while the open squares to the north of each remained undeveloped areas in which the visitors could promenade after drinking the waters. The approach to the Imperial Spa was planted with a row of trees and eventually became known as The Promenade, replacing the High Street as the main place in which visitors could walk.

In 1800 the town was still described in Stenton’s Directory as having but one principal street, and many good lodging houses which stand out of the street are situate in places which have no name. This shows that development had begun to take place, but with no coherent plan. New development at Cheltenham really took off in the early nineteenth century, the developers trying to attract wealthy and cultured visitors and residents to the town. Royal Crescent and the houses around St. George’s Square had been completed by 1809 or 1810, and by 1820 the Post Office map of the town shows considerable building was taking place in the area of the Upper High Street where Berkeley Place, Oxford Parade, Priory Buildings, North Place and Portland Street were being laid out. To the south of the Street in Cambray Field between 1802 and 1803 a large number of detached houses, some shops, a bank and a new theatre were built, while the terraced houses in the new Cambray Street had been completed by around 1820, fulfilling Ruff’s prediction that .The pleasant meadow of Cambray will soon be covered with houses of the first taste and elegance (1803, 23). To the north-west of the High Street the main artisanal areas were laid out by around 1812, having been begun in 1806. This area included Sherbourne and Rutland Streets, Sherbourne Place, Gloucester Place, King Street and Milsom Street.

From about 1815 the main speculative builders began to arrive in Cheltenham, bringing with them a plan to move away from the construction of individual houses to the building of extensive estates as a coherent and attractive whole: Cheltenham is not now the mere summer retreat...it has now, with its 20000 inhabitants, assumed the aspect of a city.....The bold speculation laid out its terraces, its pleasure grounds, its attached enclosures, its plantations, walks and approaches worthy of the environs of a palace... (S.Y. Griffiths, 1826 quoted in Hart 1981, 164).
The development of the Lansdown area along these lines began in 1826 with the construction of Lansdown Place followed by Lansdown Crescent and Lansdown Terrace and Parade, all of which had been completed by around 1836. The development of Pittville also began in the mid-1820s when the foundation stone of the Pump Room was laid. It is thought that the proprietors of the estate hoped, and may indeed have expected, that an entirely independent settlement would grow up, possibly even as a rival to Cheltenham, as described by Henry Davies in 1834:...everything promised fair for its becoming, as was indeed intended, the nucleus of a second town, rivalling its parent Cheltenham both in extent and in importance (quoted in Hart 1981, 172).

Unfortunately although things started well for the developers, the collapse of the local economy in the later 1820s meant that some of Joseph Pitt’s original plans had to be altered. However, in 1838 Catherine Sinclair visited Pittville and described it thus: We drove in a horse fly to Pitville [sic] in the suburbs of Cheltenham, a scene of gorgeous magnificence. Here a large estate has been divided into public gardens, and sprinkled with houses of every size, shape and character....so fresh and clean, you would imagine they were all blown out at once like soap bubbles (quoted in Blake and Beacham 1982).

In 1833 it was intended that The Park should be laid out as an oval tree-lined carriage drive enclosing a central park and zoological gardens. Unfortunately, this development did not occur, and the area was subsequently laid out as a pleasure gardens with a number of detached or semi-detached villas with neo-Greek details.

The large scale development of the Bayshill Estate was started in 1843, on land to the west of the Promenade. In 1843 this area was...until lately, occupied as pasture and orchard....but already two handsome rows of houses, called Royal Well and Bayshill Terrace, have now been erected, as also a number of detached villas several of which are occupied by resident families of affluence and station, and others are in an unfinished state (Davies 1843, quoted in Hart 1981, 172). It appears that the estate had been virtually completed by 1845. By 1850 almost the entire length of the High Street had been either refronted or rebuilt in the move to improve the appearance of the settlement. The scattered nature of the spas of Cheltenham was a significant factor in the development of the town. No one concentrated area of water-drinking could be developed, but due to their dispersed nature each well needed its own building and acquired a neighbourhood of surrounding houses. The easy lie of the ground also contributed to the development of Cheltenham as the most dispersed, spacious and architecturally varied of the English spa towns (Little 1952, 31).

From the 1860s the main focus of new building was concentrated on churches and schools, for which Cheltenham also became renowned. Much of this construction has continued into the present, with the erection of four Anglican and nonconformist churches and chapels during the course of the present century.

Until the later nineteenth century the weekly market continued to be held in the High Street, with additional areas for the sale of livestock in Henrietta Street (pigs) and Albion Street (horses), until all markets and fairs were moved to the site of the Albion Street brewery in the late nineteenth century.

Modern development has mainly taken place around the core of the Regency town, although retail development has also occurred along much of the High Street.

**10.2 Plan components**

**10.2.1 Medieval (Map 7)**

1. The church and churchyard of St. Mary
2. Possible site of the Medieval priory
3. Possible site of the manor house and grounds
4. Market place
5. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the north side of the High Street
6. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the north side of the High Street
7. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the north side of the High Street
8. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the south side of the High Street
9. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the south side of the High Street
10. Possible area of Medieval settlement fronting on to the south side of the High Street
11. Site of Cambray mill on the River Chelt
12. Site of Upper Alstone mill
13. Site of Lower Alstone mill
14. Later Medieval infilling of the churchyard

**10.2.2 Post-medieval and modern**

It is unlikely that Cheltenham expanded much beyond the single main street of the Medieval town described above until its development as a spa in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Map 8 charts the development of the town through the nineteenth century from information provided by the series of historic maps listed in section 13.2 below. The Medieval core is shown on the map, although many of the buildings had been rebuilt or refronted by c.1820. Twentieth century development in the areas around the town has not been colour coded, but can be seen on the base map.

**11 Future research**

Most historical interest in Cheltenham has centred on the town’s success as a spa resort. Recent archaeological investigations have revealed that the settlement may have had a much longer history, beginning in the Prehistoric or Roman periods, although only a tantalisingly small amount of information is available about activity in the area during those periods. The following themes are priorities for future research:

1. Prehistoric settlement: the extent and character of Iron Age, or earlier, occupation in the area of the core of the Medieval settlement. Iron Age activity has been identified close to the Medieval church of St. Mary, and may represent settlement along the gravel terrace on which the Medieval settlement was subsequently located.

2. Roman settlement: evidence for Roman activity and occupation within the area of the Medieval settlement is mounting, and may indicate the existence of settlement in the area.

3. The Early Medieval minster or priory: documentary references indicate that there may have been some form of early religious foundation in Cheltenham. Such a foundation is likely to have been in the area of the modern church of St. Mary, although no evidence has yet been found to support the existence of either foundation.

4. Early Medieval settlement: an early ecclesiastical foundation at Cheltenham may have been accompanied by an early settlement, focused around the church of St. Mary; and evidence for such a settlement may be preserved beneath the present structures surrounding this area.

5. The Medieval manor house: documentary sources imply that the Medieval manor house and lands lay in the area of the present church, to the south of the High Street. Once again no archaeological evidence has yet been found to confirm these sources.

6. The Medieval settlement: in Cheltenham this would have stretched along both sides of the High Street, and evidence relating to this period of occupation may have been preserved beneath the present structures fronting on to the High Street. As yet very little archaeological evidence for Medieval occupation has been identified.

7. The Royal Old Well Spa: the location of the first of the saline well in Cheltenham is known from documentary and cartographic sources, and evidence relating to the building and its well may have been preserved beneath the buildings belonging to the Ladies’ College which now occupy the site.

**12 Sources**

**12.1 Primary historical sources**

There are very few original documents relating to Cheltenham, apart from the records of the Council of Cloveshoe, and some Medieval surveys of the extent of the manor and borough. These have not been consulted directly, but where they are referred to in the text, the information has been drawn from secondary (published) sources.

**12.2 Secondary historical sources**

The importance of Cheltenham as a resort town has stimulated interest in the history of the pre-eighteenth century settlement. Although Cheltenham has not been covered by the Victoria County History for Gloucestershire, there are a number of modern histories of Cheltenham (Hart 1981, and Blake and Beacham 1979, being amongst the most useful and accessible), as well as numerous nineteenth century histories and guides to the town. These volumes
contain information about the Regency town, but give very sparse accounts of earlier settlement in the area. The records, journals, letters and accounts of visitors to Cheltenham in all periods also cast useful light on the impressions of those who saw the spa at the height of its popularity.

12.3 Archaeological sources

Far less is known about the below ground archaeology of Cheltenham compared to its documented social and architectural history. The state of knowledge by the mid-1970s has been usefully summarised by Saville (1975). Many antiquarians and historians of Cheltenham recorded observations and finds which were brought to their attention, but in the main, the objects they recorded have been lost, and the nature of the descriptions prohibits definitive assessment of the information. Much twentieth century development within the core of the Medieval town, including a large area of shopping development along the Lower High Street and the Regent Arcade, was undertaken without archaeological recording. It has only been within the last fifteen years that observations have been systematically recorded and that archaeological investigation has been routinely secured in advance of development through the planning system. During that time there has, however, been very little development within the core of the Medieval town. Recent work in areas beyond the core of the Medieval settlement has begun to reveal evidence for significant Prehistoric and Roman activity, but information relating to the Early Medieval and Medieval periods is still extremely limited.

12.4 Maps

There are a large number of maps available for Cheltenham, dating from the later eighteenth century onwards. One of the earliest, the 1806 Inclosure map, provides a useful guide to the likely extent of Medieval settlement. The building boom of the early nineteenth century is well illustrated by these maps, as each stage of expansion can be traced through the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s (see section 13.2 below). The Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1887 illustrates how the town continued to expand, and, when compared with a modern map of Cheltenham and its environs, shows how much new development has been added on to the Post-medieval core since c.1890.

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13.2 Maps
Coates Road plan, showing the roads leading from Arle Cross to Pillford Lane, 1776
Cheltenham Town Centre from the 1806 Inclosure Map (from Saville 1975)
Mitchells map of Cheltenham, 1806
Plan of the Town with the Situation of the Mineral Wells at Cheltenham, 1809
Town of Cheltenham, 1810
The Post Office Map of Cheltenham, 1820
Plan of the Town with the Situation of the Mineral Wells at Cheltenham, 1825
Plan of the Town of Cheltenham, 1832
Merrett’s map of Cheltenham, 1834
Plan of the Town of Cheltenham, 1843
New Plan of Cheltenham compiled from the recent Railway Surveys, 1843
Ordnance Survey first edition 25”:1 mile map, 1887