

HERITAGE WALK SERIES

Produced for Heritage Open Days



Number
12

FROM AN URBAN MEADOW TO A SOBER PARROT

by Neela Mann

As part of Heritage Open Days we are taking you on a walk around 12 of **TURF's Cheltenham** independent food outlets. At each venue you can read an historic story of who worked there.

Start your walk in Rodney Road at No. 24 – The Urban Meadow – and read what you could have done in this building.

Walk towards the High Street and read what is behind the building of **Purslane** (No.16) on your right. The House jutting onto the pavement on your left, Rodney Lodge, was built in 1806, named after Admiral Lord Rodney who had lived in Cheltenham.

The building on the left corner of the High Street, is now **Lloyds Bank**. In 1783 on this site were the Assembly Rooms – the focal point of Regency Society. Rebuilt in 1816 the huge ballroom was 82 ft long by 40 ft high with 11 crystal chandeliers. The Duke of Wellington – hero of the battle of Waterloo in 1815 – and 1400 “personages of distinction” attended the opening ball. Johann Strauss, composer of the *Blue Danube Waltz* came in the 1830s, Charles Dickens gave readings from his books four times in the 1860s and in 1884 Oscar Wilde lectured on aestheticism.

In 1900 the building was sold to Lloyds Bank for £13,800 and demolished. The bank's building was designed by F.W. Waller, an architect from Gloucester who was also the main architect for the Lloyds Bank company. Waller also designed Cheltenham's Town Hall. Note the skep (beehive) carved high up on the building. The skep was the original logo of Lloyds Bank in 1822 and was used as an early security measure to identify Lloyds' banknotes. It represented thrift and industry. The Cheltenham branch was the first of the bank's country branches to have a telephone but it was only to be used in cases of emergency!

Turn round and walk back down Rodney Road to the turning into Regent Street. Rodney Road was originally called Engine House Lane conveniently close to the River Chelt to take on water. Turn right into Regent Street. The Dragon and Onion lamp post on the left was designed by the Borough Surveyor Joseph Hall and cost £9 19s. Hall also designed Neptune's Fountain in the Promenade in 1893. This lamp was first lit on 11th November 1896.

Walk round the corner. The whole of Regent Street in 1811 had been The Regent Gardens, supposedly named for the Prince Regent who visited in 1806, who later became King George IV. Here there was a Ball Room, Post Office, Billiard Room, the Regent Baths, musical promenades, balloon flights, fireworks, a circus and even a duel was fought here. What it didn't have was a spa, so it tended to cater for the middle and tradesmen classes. The houses on the right were built from 1825-38.

Read more histories at No. 20 (**The Find**), No. 16 (**Domaine 16**), No. 13 (**Woodkraft**) and No. 6 (**Bar Padron**)

In 1891 the Theatre and Opera House (now **The Everyman**) opened. It was built on the site of numbers 7, 8 and 9 Regent Street and the Plough Hotel's paddock.

Art Works

 Cheltenham
Civic Society

T U R F

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Turn round and walk back, turning right into Ormond Place, cross the Promenade and walk along Crescent Terrace towards the bus station. Stand on the corner of Clarence Parade. In front of you is Royal Crescent, built by Joseph Pitt (of Pittville), intended as first-class lodging houses for Cheltenham's many visitors. By 1820 fourteen of the eighteen houses had been built. The eleven year old Princess Victoria (later Queen), in 1830, visited her uncle the Duke of Gloucester who lived at No. 18. She didn't stay but was driven through town and took the waters at Montpellier Spa (The Rotunda). Her grandfather, King George III and his family, popularised the town as a spa, having stayed in Cheltenham for 5 weeks in 1788.

Yates Bar on your right used to be the offices of the *Gloucestershire Echo* for almost 100 years. Over this time the newspaper company bought up Nos. 1-6 Clarence Parade. The printing presses were in the basement. The fronts of these houses have been restored.

Turn right into Clarence Parade and see what happened to the "pillar of society" at No. 2 Clarence Chambers (**Lumière**). Then turn left and find out what you could buy at **L'Artisan** (No. 30 Clarence Street) in 1845.

Cross over the road and walk to Well Walk. Glance across to John Dower House in Crescent Place built in 1820. In 1827 the Duchess of Clarence (George III's daughter-in-law) came to stay when this house was Liddell's Boarding House. The dignitaries of the town arranged for the horses of her carriage to be replaced by men who drew her carriage along the street, which was then under construction. Liddell asked if he could rename his hotel and the previously unnamed street in her honour. The Duchess became Queen Adelaide in 1831 when her husband was crowned King William IV, which is why the royal coat of arms is above the portico.

Turn into Well Walk. This is part of the original Well Walk laid out by the "father of Cheltenham" Captain Henry Skillicorne who developed the spa. In 1740 he planned a walk and planted 132 elm and lime trees on Well Walk which stretched from the St. Mary Minster Church up to what became known as the "Royal Well" (after George III's visit in 1788). The well is now under the Princess Hall at the **Cheltenham Ladies' College**. Walk to the end of Well Walk and on the corner on the left is **GL50** which was not serving innovative, gourmet food in 1827!

Walk left to the end of Chester Walk and turn right into St. George's Place and walk half way up to **O'Hara's Coffee House** at No. 35, on the corner of Jenner Walk. Admire the Georgian shop front. The row of houses on the right were referred to as "the Harley Street of Cheltenham". From 1795, at No. 8 lived Dr Edward Jenner, the pioneer of smallpox vaccination. At the chapel at the end of Jenner Walk he and the Rev. Rowland Hill, would vaccinate the congregation after services!

Turn round and walk up St. Georges's Place to where it meets Clarence Street. The Strozzi Palace on the corner used to be an electricity sub-station. It was designed by the Borough Surveyor, Joseph Hall, whose work you met before in Regent Street.

Cross Clarence Street and continue to St. George's Place. This used to be called Still's Lane and was the only access to Skillicorne's spa well by carriage. To your right is Shaftesbury Hall built in 1869 to house the female students of the Teacher's Training College and originally called St. Mary's Hall. The Earl of Shaftesbury was the first President of the college's 200 Life Governors. It was designed by J.T. Darby, a Cheltenham architect who designed the Winter Gardens which was a Crystal Palace-type building in Imperial Gardens. Darby's family ran the Lansdown Hotel.

Opposite is what used to be Barnby Bendall's No. 3 Depository. Read the story at **Muse Brasserie**. Carry on down St. George's Place and turn right into St. James's Square. Half way down on the left is Synagogue Lane. The Synagogue was designed by William Hill Knight who lived at No. 4 St. George's Place in 1837. Consecrated in 1838, the synagogue has the oldest Ashkenazi furniture in England. Opposite the lane is **The Sober Parrot** – but not in 1896. Round the corner, No. 10 was the home of Alfred Lord Tennyson's mother and sister where he lived from 1846-1850. There is a story that his mother had a talking parrot which had belonged to the Station Master at St. James's station opposite but the parrot kept giving out the wrong train announcements!

This leaflet was written for Cheltenham Heritage Days 2021 by Neela Mann, local historian.
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