

**AROUND
KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD
PAST
AND
PRESENT**



Journal of
Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

Series 2. No.2. 2002

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PAST & PRESENT

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Published by

Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

Series 2. No. 2. 2002

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Cover Illustration:

The High Street end of Charlton Road in 1957 before the houses and other buildings were demolished to make way for the featureless block in which the HSBC Bank and Chew Valley Restaurant are now housed (D.Elliott)

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CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Barbara J. Lowe

The English Police system has its origins in the Saxon Tything. A Tything consisted of 10 free men who had to be aged over 12, each called a Tythingman. Knights, clergy, barons, servants or women were excluded. A Hundred was 10 Tythings, the Hundred courts met in the open air. The Keynsham Hundred met under an ash tree at Odwood Down.

A Shire was a group of Hundreds headed by a Shire Reeve (Sheriff) who kept the Peace of the Realm. The Assize court was instituted by Henry II in lieu of Trial by Battle for property disputes. Each county sent results to Westminster. This system was not abolished until 1972 when it was replaced by the High Court and Crown Court.

Manorial courts had generally replaced the Hundred courts by the end of the 13th century, although Keynsham was still holding a Hundred court in 1819.

The Court Baron was a civil court relating to land held of the Manor and the Court Leet was for petty criminal offences. These were both abolished in 1922. Petty Sessions replaced the Court Leet.

Keynsham Court House was mentioned in 1613. The one which stood on the corner of Back Lane on Bath Hill was demolished in 1977, three weeks after it had been awarded Grade II * status.

The Court of Pie Poudre met in a Tolsey or above the Market House and was responsible for the administration and maintenance of law and order during the market. Keynsham Market House is mentioned in the 18th century. We believe it stood in the High Street at the bottom of Charlton Road. It was demolished in 1822 for road widening.

In 1361 Knights of Shire became J.P.'s. They were chosen by the King from Dukes, Gentlemen, and those with knowledge of the law. They were responsible for the safety of the Shire and general administration. From 1565 they had the power to commit offenders to prison until the next Quarter Sessions for all kinds of crime.

Quarter Sessions were held by two J.P.'s in Session, as often as necessary but at least four times a year. They were empowered to sentence prisoners, refer serious offenders to Assizes, levy rates for repair of roads, bridges, etc., licence traders and fix wages.

The term Constable derived from Comes-Stabuil, meaning master of the horse. Originally it was a high Military Office involving maintenance of armour and mustering soldiers. In the 13th century it became concerned with law enforcement. As unpaid Officers of Manor or Tything, they were elected annually.

Under Tudor legislation the ecclesiastical parish unit became Civil Administrator. The Constable became Parish Constable, still unpaid, and elected at the Springtime Parish Vestry Meeting. This was a compulsory office, refusal meant being placed in the stocks and fined 6s. 8d. (34p). Their duties were to arrest wrong-doers, if necessary calling on any member of the public to assist them. Refusal meant being taken to court. The Constable had to carry out the punishment which could include being put in the stocks or a whipping. He also served summonses and warrants. He also had to move paupers out of the parish if they could not prove their right to stay and report all crimes to the Quarter Sessions. This was often dangerous and was a very unpopular job, some people paid poor men to do the job for them. Rewards for information led to people becoming professional thief takers.

In 1829 Robert Peel's Police Force of paid constables was established for the Metropolitan area. There was resistance to the expense and what was seen as infringement of liberty. In 1835 a Municipal Corporation Act reformed boroughs. Each had to elect a Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses to form a Watch committee, provide a Constable and station house.

The 1839 County Police Act empowered JP's to establish a Police force for a county or part of it. This was not compulsory and was widely ignored as being too costly. In 1842 the Parish Constables Act required JP's to set a table of fees and allowances for serving summonses and warrants etc.

They were expected to provide a lock-up for prisoners before committal instead of taking them to an inn or beerhouse. They had the power to appropriate existing lock-ups, cages, strong rooms etc., or provide new facilities. If new, they had to appoint superintending constables to have charge of them and pay them out of the County rate. This again, was not compulsory, so Keynsham did nothing!

By 1850 crime was increasing in this area and there was no resident JP. The Vestry appointed an extra Parish Constable, still unpaid. Examples of crime included highway robbery and assault, which meant being sent to the Assizes. Trespassing in order to kill game or lodging in an outhouse (rogues & vagabonds) was punished by 14 days hard labour. Illegitimate child support was 1s.6d (7.5p) plus 12s.2p (61p) costs.

Punishments for stealing the following varied from 14 days labour to three years:- sheep, 2 ducks, 4 chickens, a lamb, potatoes, sacks of apples, 4 cwt. hay, half a quartern loaf of bread, a towel and half a pound of cheese, 1½ bushel wheat, a silk purse, a till of silver & copper money, a gold watch, a gold pin, a lead trough and a gate post.

Hard Labour (HL) was introduced in 1706 as additional punishment to imprisonment without the option of a fine. (Abolished 1948)

In 1852 Keynsham Parish General Vestry suggested appointing a paid Constable but decided against it. It was also proposed to build a lock-up and they accepted Mr Morgan's plans for a building to accommodate the constable and 3 prisoners in separate cells, to be sited on land between the Churchyard and the Black Horse. There is no record of it being built but we had one by 1857.

In 1855 Bristol Watch Committee complained about having to assist Keynsham by committing prisoners to a police station belonging to the City of Bristol.

It became compulsory in 1856 for counties to establish Police Forces and Somerset decided to appoint: -

1 Chief Constable at £500 pa plus £100 allowances
4 Superintendents at £120 pa plus £40
8 Inspectors at £90 pa
30 Sergeants at 23s. a week (£59.16s pa) (£59.80p)
100 1st Class Constables at 19s. per week (£49. 8s pa) (£49.40p) New recruits
169 2nd Class " at 16s. " (£41. 12s pa) (£41.60p) "

PC No. 1 - Charles Mizzen - was appointed on 1st September 1856.

Keynsham's first PC was PC50

In 1857, Benjamin Paget is recorded as Constable for Keynsham and George Hookway for Saltford. Whether B.Paget was PC 50 is unclear.

STORY. In Feb. 1857, a Mr J. Grant was attacked by Highwaymen in Brislington and men named Butler and George were charged. They were handcuffed and detained upstairs in Keynsham Lock-up. When PC 50 checked them, he thought they were firmly handcuffed and asleep, but they had freed themselves and later escaped through the window. Butler was soon recaptured and committed by Keynsham Magistrates but George carried out another robbery near Bath and again was put in Keynsham Lock-up. PC50 had been provided with leg irons but did not use them and George again escaped out of the window, dropped into the garden below and got away, whilst PC 50 was in the next room. This time, George could not rid himself of the handcuffs and the Hanham ferryman spotted them and refused to take him over. A crowd detained him whilst the police were called. Poor PC50. The Press made a meal of it.

KEYNSHAM POLICE STATION.

The Plans cannot be located at present, but I have been promised information as soon as the Police find them. The Land was purchased in early 1857 but there was difficulty in getting a £30,000 loan. Probably built by 1859 as a residence for 1 Sergeant and family and 1 Constable, with 2 or 3 cells. It was Demolished in 1972.

UNPAID CONSTABLES SWORN IN.

1843

KEYNSHAM

John Cantle
William Bason
George Chappell
Henry Carter
William Belston jun

Farmer
Butcher
Carpenter

SALTFORD

William Bookman
William Greenwood

1850

Francis Bees
George Chappell
George Brown
Job Cantle
Jacob Strange
John Chappell jun
William Clark

Saddler (Mason's Arms)
Butcher
Farmer (CK)
Basket Maker
Pork Butcher
Shopkeeper

Samuel Bruce
Thomas Collier

1851

Job Cantle
George Chappell
James Gifford
James Fray
John Gerrish
John Chappell jun
Jacob Strange

Basket Maker
Butcher
Farmer (CK)
Blacksmith
Butcher
Shopkeeper
Pork Butcher

Samuel Bruce
James Humphreys

1852

John Chappell
William Harvey
Thomas Harvey
Charles Hudson
Henry Homeygold
Jonas Iles
George Brown

Basket Maker
Smith
Painter
Tailor
Labourer
Shopkeeper & Shoemaker
Farmer (CK)

John Gray
Thomas Hellier

1854

James Gifford
Samuel Fear
James Ford
Edward Flower
John Iles
John Chappell sen
James H. Cantle

Farmer (CK)
Plumber & Glazier
Capt. RA
Sweep
Grocer & Draper

1857

Benjamin Paget

George Hookway

CRIME IN KEYNSHAM

1851	3 to the Assizes 11 to Quarter Sessions 19 summarily convicted Petty Sessions
1852	8 to the Assizes 16 to Quarter Sessions 16 summarily convicted Petty Sessions
1853	0 to Assizes 9 to Quarter Sessions 8 summarily convicted Petty Sessions
1854	5 to the Assizes 11 to Quarter Sessions 15 summarily convicted Petty Sessions
1855	0 to Assizes 8 to Quarter Sessions 17 summarily convicted Petty Sessions

TYPES OF CRIME & PUNISHMENTS 1856-1862

(To avoid offence surnames of offenders have been omitted)

Abbreviations: HL - Hard Labour PS - Penal Servitude Mo - month
SM- Shepton Mallet g.b.h. - greivous bodily harm.
To convert old money: 1/- (one shilling) = 5p
CK Chewton Keynsham

OBSTRUCTION

Name Age

George wagon on footway fine 10/— costs 13/6

EVADING TOLLS

Robert	dog removed from cart	“	“
Thomas	horse “ “ “	“	“

DRUNK & RIOTOUS BEHAVIOUR

George	19	in public street	7 days or 2/6 + 6/6 costs
Mary	50		7 days or 5/- + 6/6 costs

ASSAULT

Williamm	19	intent g.b.h. Rob Scammell	recognizance £20
James	37	beating John Crew	2 mo or £1/2/6+ 17/6
Henry	23	“ “	2 mo or ditto
John	29	beating wife	1 cal mo HL
Harriet	24	assaulting H. England & wife - workhouse officers	14 days (2 previous)

MISBEHAVIOUR IN WORKHOUSE

Sarah	30		14 days
John	18		14 days HL
Samuel	48		14 days HL
Marshal - Alias Martha	22	broke glass	21 days HL
		14 days 1854 and 1856	

DROPPED STONES ON GWR

Geo	17		6 weeks or £5 + 5/6
-----	----	--	---------------------

TRESPASS FOR GAME

William	23		21 days or £1 + 10/-
Charles	32		2 mo HL or £3 + 6/9
William	26		“ “ “

LICENSING LAWS

John	36	opening before 12.15 Sunday	3 mo or £5
------	----	-----------------------------	------------

KEEPING THE PEACE

Jos	22	could not get surety to keep the peace with A. Bowker	6 mo unless.....
-----	----	---	------------------

ARSON

Charles		a tramp set fire to straw in the night paupers building when locked in alone	
		Bucket of water saved his life	1 mo HL

COUNTERFEIT

Name	Age		
James	25	dud 1/- to S. Chappell	
		same day to E. Ollis	discharged
Mary	36	dud 1/- to R. Ruddle. 83 others in possession + 2/6	3 mo HL

Henry	27		
Thomas	27	dud 2/6 + 13 others	5 mo HL
Eliz	23		each
Charles	66	dud 1/- to F. Fear dud 2/- to M. Scammell (9 mo for base coin at Taunton previous year)	18 mo HL
John	17		
James	40	dud 1/-	1 year HL
John	30	+ 36 in possession	each
<u>STEALING</u>			
James	62	3 Geese (P.S. substituted for Transportation in 1857) sheep 18 mo, fowls 12 mo.	6 years PS 3rd offence -
George		17 fowls	4 mo HL SM
George		20 lambs	3 years PS
William	17	3 fowls from Wm. Hutchings, surgeon	1 mo HL
Richard	15		
Henry	15	scrumping apples	14 days HL
George	14		each
James	14		
Samuel	35	apples	6 weeks HL
James	28		each
Robert	18	half a quartern (4lbs weight) loaf	
Benjamin		2 lbs cheese from E. Holloway	6 weeks HL
George	17		each
Thomas	37	2 sacks mangold wurtzels	3 years PS
George	14	horse beans from Benj. Paget	21 days HL
James	15	bolster case	21 days HL
George	30	counterpane, sheets, quilt, towels, blanket, stockings, 6 dusters, macintosh sheet from Master C. Fox	6 cal mo HL
James	40	trousers, waistcoat from Wm. Bees	14 days
William	25	sovereign and for beating PC	4 mo HL
Edward	20	4 guineas, 40 sovereigns, 2 gold rings, gold eyeglass, 2 seals, £5 note from Richard Mortimer (Manager at Avon Brassmill)	12 mo HL (Taunton)
		again: 7 gold rings, 3 sovereigns from H. Copeland, Prospect House	3 years PS
Stephen	23	13/3d (66p)	2 cal mo HL
George	17	purse and 8/3 from M. Janes (previously 6 pigeons from Thos. Godfrey - 6 weeks)	3 years PS
Chris	48	lead from Henry Mynors of Chewton Place	2 mo HL
George	47	butchers steel	died in prison
William		(Tramp) soap from Keynsham Union (Workhouse)	14 days HL

MANSLAUGHTER

Jas 34 of Sarah Ford Transported for life (after 1857 commuted to Penal Servitude)

GAOLS

Taunton House of Correction, usually called Wilton House.

This underwent improvement in 1842 to become the County Gaol as well as House of Correction

80 prisoners worked on the new prison, given extra food for extra work. The Gaol received County debtors from Ilchester Gaol when it was completed. A new day room for prisoners to sit occasionally together at desks with books was provided.

Shepton Mallet House of Correction

There were 22 stalls for breaking stone. Compartments in tread wheel to separate the prisoners, 40 on 14/15 off.

322 single cells, 12 larger cells and 12 day cells for males. Women mostly together in 1 large room. 2 men at a time at pump for raising water

Some tailoring & shoemaking. Women wash, iron and mend.

Two-thirds were on H.Labour. Mainly agricultural labourers in 1840's with women and boys sent from workhouse.

1866 Rules.

Cleanliness, limewashed walls . Weekly wall washing. Thermometer in different parts. Males in separate cells or 3 or more together.

No HL.on Sundays, Xmas Day, Good Friday, Public Feast Days.

Divine service — Chapel

Surgeon examined each one on entry and leaving. Twice a week visit, daily to those in punishment cells.

Matron and Infirmary. Instruction given in reading and writing.

Diet

According to class 1 to 5.

Class 2 - after 1 week and up to 1 month

Breakfast 6 oz bread [5oz women] [1 pint gruel]

Supper 6oz bread [5] Sunday 8 oz bread [6] loz cheese

Dinner Mon, Wed, Fri. Bread 6 oz [5] Indian meal pudding 8oz [6]

Tue, Thur, Sat. Bread 6oz [5] potatoes 12oz [8]

After 6 months (class 5) extra pint gruel, extra potatoes and either 1 pint soup or 12oz suet pudding. [Brackets Women's Allowance]

HL 1st class

tread wheel, crank, shaft pump, capstan, stone breaking, flax beating by swingle and flax breaking by crank, rope beating: oakum picking as supplementary.

HL 2nd class

Oakum or rope picking, tailoring, shoemaking, mat making, weaving.

Not HL

Oakum picking, mat making or other industrial labour.

1st 3 months HL 1st class. 8 hours tread wheel, crank or stone breaking and 2 hours Oakum picking.

2nd class HL 10 hours oakum picking.

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FIRE AND WATER

Trevor Whitehead's article "Fire fighting in Keynsham", published in the book "Keynsham and Saltford — Life and Work in Times Past 1539 - 1945", records that the town had a fire engine from as early as 1776 and an organised fire brigade after 1904. However many other communities in North Somerset had no such provisions and were obliged to look to larger neighbours for help should a serious fire occur.

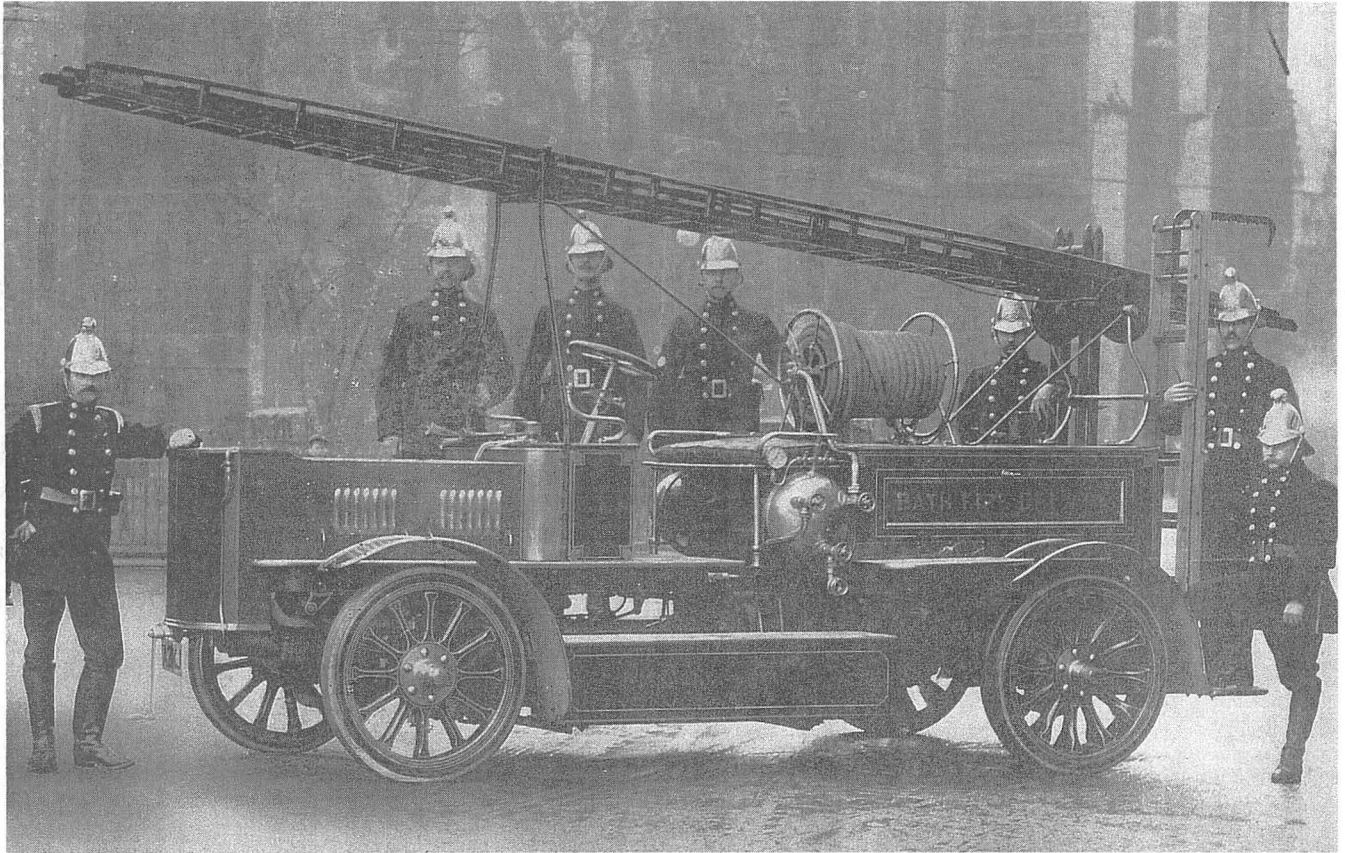
Help was not always forthcoming. A national newspaper in the 1920s stated "Rural firemen would watch their mothers burn from across the street rather than cross their district boundary." This criticism was somewhat exaggerated and unjustified. It was not the firemen's choice to stand idly by. Rather they were constrained by rules and regulations imposed on them by their district councillors.

The underlying problem was money — or rather — lack of it. Prominent among the larger neighbours mentioned above were Bristol and Bath. Neither of their fire brigades in the later decades of the 19th century and earlier ones of the 20th was over endowed financially. It was often a struggle to provide sufficient funds to pay firemen and buy equipment to protect their own citizens without going to the aid of outside communities who did not contribute financially. Moreover there was no national legislation that compelled local authorities to provide fire brigades.

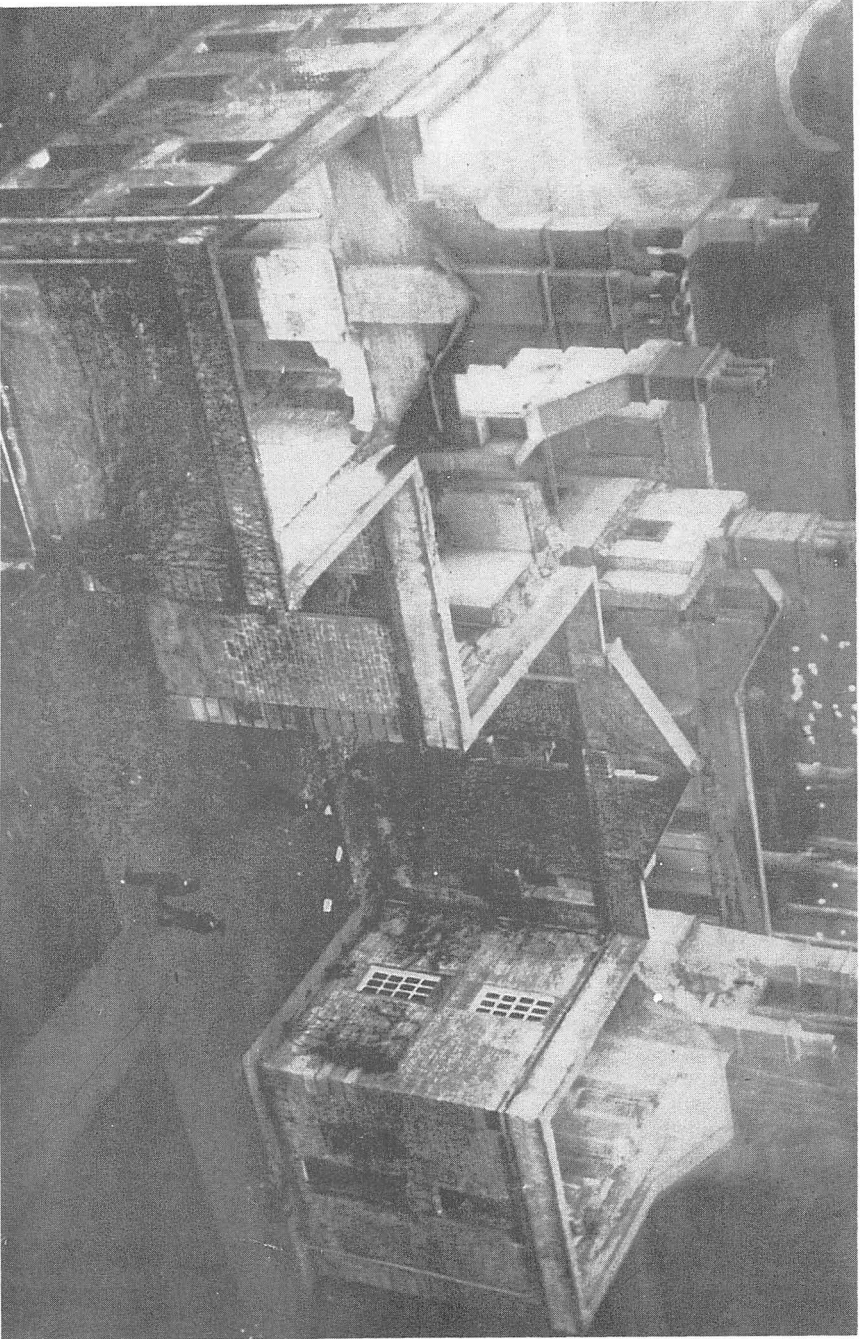
But even if help was offered it was not always appreciated. When Bathford House, a large property in the parish of Bathford, caught fire in the early hours of 23 November 1913 there was a frantic telephone call to Bath Fire Brigade. The fireman on watch room duty consulted his Chief Officer, William England, who decided the brigade would attend, although the fire was outside the city boundary. Subsequently he wrote in the official logbook "I made up my mind to go with the object of endeavouring to save life and render first aid to anyone should they be injured."

On arrival everyone was found to be safe and unhurt. The tenant Major Tod was away but servants were busy salvaging furniture from the house, part of which was by now burning furiously. Detailing three of his men to assist with the salvage work William England ordered the rest of the brigade to return to Bath with the engine. He finished writing his report in the logbook with the words "I venture to think the Committee of the Brigade approve of what I did in the interests of humanity."

But Major Tod did not approve! He wrote letters of complaint to Bath's Fire Brigade Committee and to the local newspaper alleging that the fire brigade were without proper appliances and did not attempt to extinguish the fire. Many newspaper readers sympathised with him but the Fire Brigade Committee remained unrepentant. The Town Clerk was



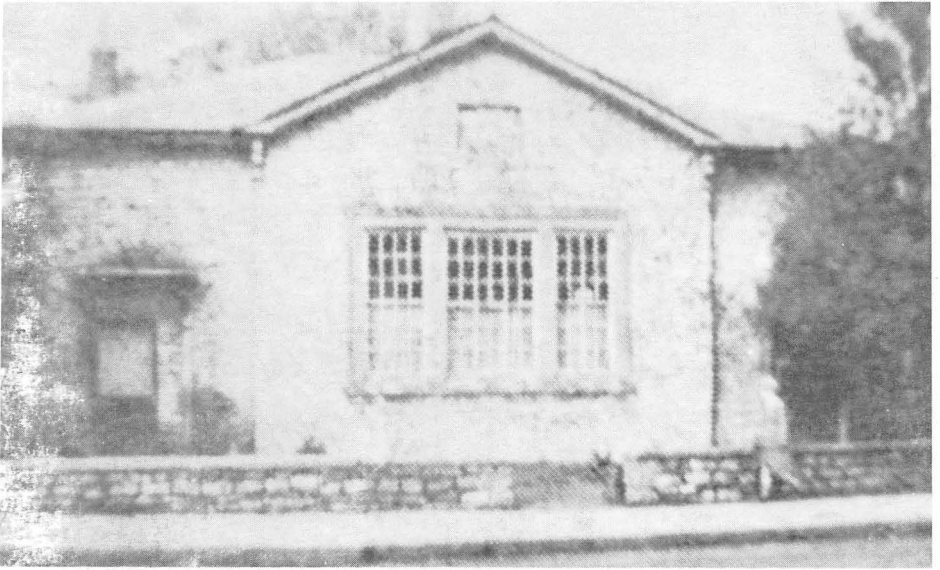
1. Chief Officer William England (standing left) with members of Bath Fire Brigade who attended the fire at Bathford House on 23 rd November 1913



2. The burnt out shell of Bathford House after the fire



3. Chief Officer James Hurst (standing left) with members of Bath Fire Brigade in 1938. CO Hurst found emergency water supplies in villages such as Corston, Kelston and Newton St Loe to be woefully inadequate



4. Old Church Hall, Station Road (formerly School)



5. The British Legion, Charlton Road (present day)



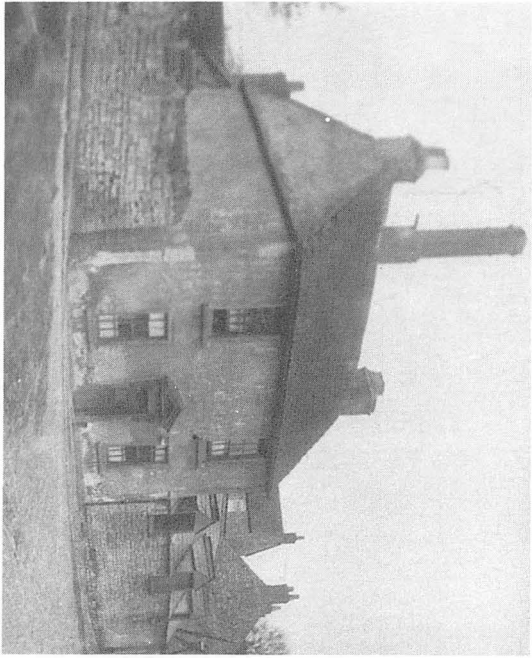
6. Standards being Paraded through Keynsham (c1985) Photo courtesy British Legion



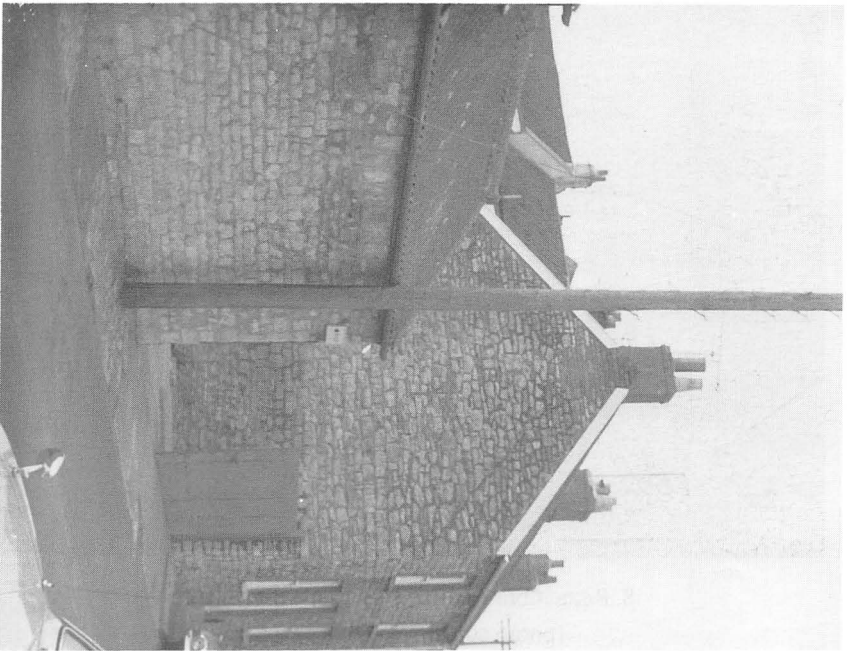
7. Standard bearers of the Royal British Legion lower standards during the playing of Last Post at the memorial gates at Keynsham Memorial Park during a service to mark the 40th anniversary of the end of the war against Japan



8. Remembrance Day, Keynsham Churchyard
(photo courtesy British Legion)



9. Keynsham Gas Works c1900



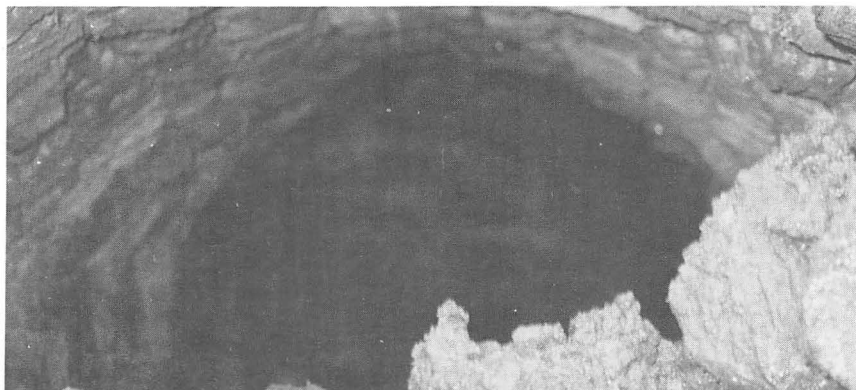
10. Keynsham Gas Works c1972



11. Remains of Retort House



12: Remains of the larger of two gasometer pits



13. Culvert under old gas works, Dapps hill



14. Culvert , sluice down stream leading under road, to River Chew



15. West wall of culvert, Gas Works, Dapps Hill

instructed to inform Major Tod that some years previously the services of Bath Fire Brigade had been offered to the parish of Bathford under a formal contract. The parish would pay a fixed annual fee based on rateable value, plus a scale of charges on any occasion when it was necessary to call the brigade. Bathford Parish Council refused to sign, thus leaving the village and Bathford House without fire protection.

Other villages did sign up, including Saltford and Newton St Loe. But when agreements were revised in the late 1920s there was some haggling over the annual fees. Generally these had been worked out on the basis of £1-1-0 per £1,000 of rateable value. The fee for Newton St Loe came to £13-5-0 but was reduced to £10 on appeal. Saltford Parish Council jibbed at their fee of £50 but Bath refused to reduce it. How the matter was resolved is not recorded. Hourly charges for the brigade attending a fire included £4-4-0 for the engine, five shillings for the Chief Officer and four shillings per fireman. No agreements were to be made with villages whose parish churches were more than 10 miles from the centre of Bath.

Thus villages such as Chew Stoke fell outside the scheme. When a serious fire involving a shop, petrol station and paraffin store broke out in the small hours of Boxing Day 1926 villagers were in a quandary as to where to look for help. A visitor, who tried to lend a hand, later wrote a report for the Western Daily Press. At a critical moment as the fire raged he found out that there was not a single fire engine "in the whole of the Clutton Union". He was inclined to telephone the Clevedon Fire Brigade — more than 12 miles distant - (he was a friend of their Chief Officer) as he already knew that the much nearer Bristol brigade would refuse to come. Then the operator at the local telephone exchange suggested trying Radstock, slightly nearer than Clevedon. This call proved successful and Radstock Fire Brigade duly attended, their 30-year-old engine, designed for horse traction, towed behind the Radstock Co-operative Society's motor lorry. The firemen travelled on the open flat bed of the lorry, huddled under a tarpaulin to protect them from the freezing night air.

But even when fire brigades did get to rural fires attempts to extinguish the flames were frequently frustrated by inadequate water supplies. The person calling Bath Fire Brigade (by telegram!) to a fire at Swinford in the parish of North Stoke on 13 November 1902 had the foresight to ask for extra hose to be brought. The only water supply was the river, a considerable distance from the fire. Without the extra hose the fire would have been beyond reach.

There was often little improvement in rural water supplies during the next three decades. Many inadequacies were highlighted in a survey carried out in the Bathavon Rural District Council area in 1938. The catalyst was the Fire Brigades Act 1938, passed as the threat of war in Europe loomed. Under the Act all local authorities, right down the most sparsely populated rural district, were designated fire authorities and were obliged to set up fire

brigades or at least make proper arrangements with a neighbouring council for the latter's brigade to come when needed. However there was also an obligation under the same Act for every fire authority to provide an adequate emergency water supply for fire fighting.

In accordance with the Act, Bathavon Rural District Council wished to have Bath Fire Brigade attend all fire in its area and in anticipation, the RDC's surveyor and Bath's Chief Fire Officer, James Hurst, toured the villages to check out the emergency water supplies. Such supplies as they found were often woefully inadequate.

Thirteen parishes surveyed — Camerton, Charlcombe, Combe Hay, Corston, Dunkerton, Kelston, Newton St Loe, North Stoke, Priston, St Catherine's, Tunley, Upper Swainswick and Woolley — had only two fire hydrants between them, both in Corston, 100 yards apart on a water main belonging to the West Gloucestershire Water Board. The only emergency water supply in Newton St Loe was a pond in the grounds of Earl Temple's residence. The village's domestic water supply was from a tank on the Corston to Marksbury road but there was no access to this for fire brigade pumps.

Kelston had two ponds, but "very considerable lengths of hose would be needed to reach Kelston Park or the portion of the village on the main road nearest to Bitton." In Priston, "a scattered area, mainly large number of farmhouses" the only water for fire brigade purposes was "a small stream by the main road. It would take hours by damming the stream to obtain a supply - then it would only last the pumps a few minutes."

Accordingly Bath's Town Clerk wrote to the Clerk to Bathavon RDC in November 1938 to state that Bath Fire Brigade was not prepared to protect the villages. But early in 1939 a report in the Bath Chronicle indicated that protection would be offered once improved emergency water supplies were in place. It seems then that the necessary improvements were carried out. But total protection could not be extended to all villages in Bathavon as a few were too far away for Bath's fire engines to reach them within the time limit laid down by the Act. A small fire station was therefore set up at Peasedown St John staffed by local volunteers supervised by an experienced fireman seconded from the Bath brigade. They were equipped to carry out initial fire fighting until reinforcements arrived from Bath.

All these local schemes were however short-lived. They were swept away and replaced by the National Fire Service that came into being under wartime conditions on 18 August 1941

Dennis Hill
8th July 2002

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION - KEYNSHAM BRANCH

The Royal British Legion was founded in 1921 when a policy and a set of principles were produced:

The Legion shall be democratic, non—sectarian and not affiliated to or connected directly or indirectly with any political party or political organisation.

The Legion shall be created to inaugurate and maintain in a strong, stimulating, united and democratic comradeship all those who have served in Her Majesty 's Navy, Army, Air Force or any Auxiliary Forces so that neither their efforts nor their interests shall be forgotten, that their welfare and that of the dependents of the fallen may be safeguarded and that just and equitable treatment shall be secured to them in respect of the difficulties caused in their lives as a result of their services.

The Keynsham Branch of the Royal British Legion was founded in the late 1920's. The first postwar meeting was held in 1946, and subsequent meetings took place in the old Church Hall in Station Road (now demolished). Membership at that time was 58.

The Legion later moved to a room in the premises of Mr E. Morgan, a barber in Keynsham High Street, but in 1950 they moved to their present position in Charlton Road. The Legion purchased a cottage from Messrs. Fear & Clark. in the forecourt of which was an auxiliary water tank, a remnant of the 2nd World War. (see cover photo)

The Committee then set to work using their combined talents to convert the cottage for their meetings. In 1951 a social club was formed and this led in 1954 to a skittle alley being built. A sports room was added in 1958 and in 1978 they rebuilt their premises to its present day size.

In 1977 a Royal British Legion women's section was founded and by 1990 the membership of the Legion had topped one thousand. Each year the Legion is allocated two tickets for the Remembrance Day Service in the Royal Albert Hall, those interested approach the committee which then decides the distribution of the seats.

The Keynsham Standard has been paraded at the Royal Albert Hall on two occasions, once in the 1970's and again, in the 1980's when George Parsons and James Cook respectively were the Standard Bearers. Peter and Mary Buck are the current Standard Bearers and each year on Remembrance Sunday the local branch of the Royal British Legion parade through Keynsham from St. John's Parish Church to the Memorial Park Gates to lay the poppy wreaths. Each year we see the poppy sellers on our streets, some having performed this task for many years. An award is given for 25 years service as poppy seller.

The reintroduction of the two minutes silence on the 11th November in shops, offices and the streets of our country seems to be gaining more and more recognition. This is a heart-warming trend especially for those who have been personally involved in the various conflicts around the world.

Mr F BoIwell is the present Welfare Officer of the Keynsham Branch and help is given to members in accordance with the policy set out in 1921.

Sue Trude acknowledges with thanks the present President, Mr L Wiltshire, for all his help in writing this article and his permission to use the photographs.

Sue Trude

REMEMBERING



Why do you still march old man,
With medals on your chest?
Why do you still grieve old man,
For those friends you laid to rest?
Why do your eyes gleam old man,
When you hear those bugles blow?
Tell me why you cry old man,
For those days long ago?



I'll tell you why I march young man,
With medals on my chest.
I'll tell you why I grieve young man,
For those I laid to rest.
Through misty fields of gossamer silk
Come visions of distant times.
When the boys of tender age
Marched forth to distant climes.
We buried them in a blanket shroud,
Their young flesh scorched and blackened,
A communal grave, newly gouged,
In blood-stained gorse and bracken.
And you ask me why I march, young man?
I march to remind you all,
That but for those apple-blossom youths
You'd never have known freedom at all.

Lest We Forget

THE KEYNSHAM GAS CO. LTD

The Keynsham Gas Co Ltd. was incorporated on the 2nd September 1857 under the Joint Stock Companies Act 1856. The gas works were brought into operation for the first time on the 16th January 1858 when, according to the contemporary report “ the streets and shops were beautifully illuminated” .

The work had been undertaken by T. Atkins & Son of Chepstow, the works being the 43rd of similar works put up by these contractors. The works were capable of producing 24,000 cubic feet of gas in 24 hours, the gasholder delivering 15,000 cubic feet of gas in six hours. The contract, including laying the mains, came to the sum of £1,475. The ovens were on Clift’s patent principle, and consisted of two stacks, one having a single oven, the other being composed of three ovens surrounding one furnace. The buildings and apparatus were exceedingly neat and compact, and did great credit to the talent and ingenuity of the engineers.

At a General Vestry Meeting held on the 18th July of that year it was “resolved that a successor to the late Henry Iles as Overseer of the Poor be appointed at a salary of £30 per annum. His duties were to include the making and collecting of any Rate for the purpose of Lighting the District of the Town of Keynsham... etc.~

”Messrs. Wyatt, Barrell & Chappell were appointed Lighting Inspectors and the first entry in their account book for the 6th November 1858 shows that the sum of £44.15.1½d was paid to the Gas Co. for lighting the town. This was collected by means of a lighting rate and had to include enough to cover the salary of the Inspectors’ clerk and rent of offices for meetings. This was a room at the Lamb & Lark (sadly demolished 30 years ago) where the majority of meetings of official bodies took place, refreshment being close at hand.

By 1859 the inspectors were having trouble with vandals! Surprise, surprise!. They spent 6.0d. (3Op) on having notices printed offering a reward for information as to parties damaging the lamps. In 1862 William Ollis was paid 3/6d for posting bills offering a reward for information against those who were damaging the gas lamps. Mr. Charles Harvey had the annual contract for painting the lamps. The Harvey family were the town’s main decorators, carpenters and painters over a very long period. More wilful damage was reported in 1869.

We now come to the year 1876. When a row erupted over the setting of the Lighting rate in November 1876, the Bristol Times & Mirror faithfully reported it.

The Keynsham Petty Sessions were held at Keynsham Police Station (built in 1858) until 1936 when the Magistrates Court was built on land behind the house. We are very grateful to Miss Mary Fairelough for recording the old police station in a series of photographs before it was demolished in the early seventies.

Two ratepayers were summoned to the court by the churchwardens and overseers for non-payment of a lighting rate. These were Mr. Thomas Read, a farmer of 300 acres at New Barn Farm (now called Uplands Farm) on the Wellsway, who figured prominently in the life of Keynsham and owed 10/11½d, and Mr. Francis Paget (of the Burnett Paget family) also a farmer of Chewton Keynsham who had been assessed at 7/11d.

The case went into the most minute details of how the lighting rate was set including-posting notices on all the church doors. The significant factor in all this is that these two farmers lived in Chewton Keynsham and very probably resented having to pay for the lighting of all the town of Keynsham. The arguments went on so long that a decision had to be deferred to the next court. However, it was agreed that Read had been over assessed by the sum of a farthing and Paget by 3d. A lengthy discussion ensued on how the new amounts could be applied for. The solicitor's costs must have been a great deal larger than the disputed amounts but obviously a matter of principle was at stake here!

As a postscript, by 1891 there were 51 gas lamps and I am very pleased to report that a couple of these still exist in the Dapps Hill Conservation Area converted to electricity. In 1892 however, £80 was paid to the Western Counties Electric Light and Power Syndicate Ltd. in payment of the lighting account. At £20 cheaper than the gas tender it was the obvious choice and highlights the early introduction of electricity to Keynsham.

In 1921 the Gas Co. launched the issue of 450 7½% Non-Cumulative Participating Shares of £10 each explaining that the proceeds were required for the reconstruction of the plant, mains, services and meters. However, by 1928 they were in voluntary liquidation and were subsequently taken over by the Bristol Gas Company with a direct supply from Avon Street to Keynsham.

FOOTNOTE.

Early in September 2001, Bristol Gas Contractors began to demolish the remains of Keynsham's old gas works. The site was scheduled for an housing development and the old gasometer pits and Retort House pit had to be rendered safe and backfilled. The Contractors kindly allowed Margaret and I to enter the then rather boggy site in order to make photographic records for the LHS archives, even providing us with oversize wellies!

In January 1886 a verbatim report on an “important prosecution” on the non-payment of the lighting rate at Keynsham was reported in the paper. The magistrates were Clayfield Ireland, the squire of Brislington, Harford Lyne, Lord of the Manor of Keynsham who lived in the Manor House, Manor Rd, and a Mr. Lean.

Photograph 11 page 21 shows the underground remains of the Retort House and photograph 4, the base of the larger of the two gasometer pits. Towards the end of March 2002, construction workers moved on to the site to begin laying out the house foundations and services. In doing this a large, well—constructed, stone-lined culvert was exposed. This ran West to East down the site, perpendicular to, and under, the road, immediately South of the still extant Manager’s House.

On the hill to the West of the site, Keynsham Union Workhouse was constructed in 1836. It would appear that this large, well built stone culvert constituted the drainage system from the Workhouse to the River Chew below. There was a sluice gate to control the flow at the bottom of the slope before the culvert passed under the road.

The workmen recovered a Paterson’s (Glasgow) “Camp” coffee and chicory bottle and a Mason’s (Chelsea) O.K. bottle from the culvert. Photographs 13, 14, and 15 page 22 show the construction of the culvert. What a wonderful view there must have been from the Workhouse in 1836, before the Gas Works and houses were built later in the century.

Barbara Lowe

THIS IS TEXT OF A TALK GIVEN BY MARY FAIRCLOUGH TO THE
ROTARY CLUB OF KEYNSHAM AT A LUNCHTIME MEETING IN
APRIL 1989

Gentlemen,

You have asked me to speak on "The Environment". There is a buzzword very rife at the moment for use when that subject comes up - Doom and Gloom. It's the sort of phrase that's invaluable in elections if you can suggest that your opponent is indulging in it - rhythmic, catchy, sticks like a burr and somehow belittles its subject. But the thing we have come to call "The Environment" is going beyond the reach of phrases.

Persons in certain positions are beginning to feel they had better jump on this dangerous bandwagon, because more and more people are actually saying, not "something ought to be done" but "what can be done about - Acid Rain, the Ozone Layer, the Rain Forests, the Greenhouse Effect", and even working up to demand that things actually be done, not just promises to "halve such-and-such a trouble by 1995" or "reduce it by so- and-so % by the 21st century". But, it still means spending money - losing money - it will touch our sacred pockets - perhaps the hole in the Layer can be patched or something -

"And the parrot said to the falling tree,
Wait, brother, till I fetch a prop!"

Because this is a time when Time is running out. I have lived through such a time before. When I was an Art student back in the thirties, in spite of the Depression, in spite of the manifest hell that was brewing up, we were hopeful and angry - we thought the world could still be saved and magnificently rebuilt - especially if They would only turn Us loose on it - and in Spain La Passionaria was saying "Better die on your feet than live on your knees" — even our buzzwords had a certain magnificence in those days, and my Mother who was a genius at dealing with swelled heads said "Do your best in your own little corner", which was infuriating... and I am five-and— seventy, and Oh, it's true, it's true, up to a point, and if you can honestly decide where the corner ends.

The thing is, I have lived all my life in Keynsham, I worked from home as a freelance illustrator and Keynsham is my corner. We didn't talk about "The Environment" in the old days; it was just "the village" and the country round it, and it was good, by and large. I knew all the country within walking distance and it was beautiful, cared for, well-farmed, hedges laid, road-side verges and ditches properly kept, and if you met more than 2 cars in an afternoon's walk you mentioned it at teatime.

Looking back, I know I am fortunate - I saw it while it was still so. The basis of the orderly beauty was of course cheap labour just as the basis of ancient Athens was slavery - but the beauty was real. And the Gods know Keynsham is no Athens but in the Local history Society's archive we have an aerial shot and a view from the Church tower, both from the early 1920's. High Street and Temple Street show as a double row of buildings, very varied, and almost lost in apple trees - nearly every house — they were houses - with shops, not just shops - had its own back garden and often orchard. Now from the same viewpoints. "Where are all the orchards gone? Gone to car parks, every one".

Does anyone remember Flanders House? Big 17th century house at the bottom of Bath Hill, where the BMX track is now? When my parents were married in 1904 they came to live up in Avon Mill Lane - Avon Road as it now is - and they became friendly with the Irish family, the Parnells, who lived at Flanders House. They were all sitting out in the front garden by the river one summer evening, my Mother said, when there was a frightful roaring and rattling and crashing and a genuine 1904 motorcar passed by - Arrol Johnson, probably, but she didn't know - and hared up Bath Hill in a cloud of dust, and they all laughed and said why on earth would anyone want one of those things - except O'Connor Parnell. He said "Don't laugh at it. Those things are going to make more difference to our lives than anything else since the wheel itself was invented".

Now Flanders House is gone and the site is probably going to be another car park - a damned inconvenient one - and Keynsham is being slowly choked by its own geography and "those things". And again time is running out. The actual number of "those things" will have to be controlled, all over Britain however much we protest, which we shall. And again, where does one's own corner end?

I was talking once to a young Executive - very pleasant and intelligent, and we got on to changes taking place in High Street, particularly to upper storey windows, which I lose my temper about rather easily, I'm afraid. He said, well, they weren't anything very special anyhow - the whole High Street wasn't particularly special, he didn't see that it mattered much what was done to it. When I translated that as "If a thing's bad, might as well make it worse", he was genuinely shocked, but that is what he was saying. And that is, very largely, what Keynsham has done since about 1946.

We had, of necessity, to grow. Being a living place we had a necessity to change. But we - I'll only speak for Keynsham, my corner, but I've seen Bristol - we had the bad luck to grow when architecture was at what I hope was an all-time low. We threw away things like Flanders House, Old Temple Street, a handful of handsome old buildings in the High Street.

Well, O.K, but stand outside the Baptist Church some time and look at the other side of High street and see what we put in their place.

And we have destroyed and continue to destroy small, unimportant but comely things, odd windows, doors - an entrance to an old stableyard that was still perfectly adequate when the stable became a garage, but it was demolished and the new entrance is an eyesore by any standard.

Cumulatively these things are part of the Environment of a small town and we should be wise to preserve them until we can put something better in their place.

As it is we are in many ways making ourselves dull. And Enlightened Self Interest might suggest that dullness is bad for trade.

Gentlemen I hope I haven't given you indigestion.

