

AROUND  
KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD  
PAST  
AND  
PRESENT



Journal of  
Keynsham & Saltford Local History Society

Series 2. No.5. 2005

AROUND  
KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD  
PAST & PRESENT

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Published by

Keynsham & Salford Local History Society

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Cover Illustration:

Keynsham c. 1960

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## KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of this society and we shall hold a special exhibition to commemorate this on 1st October 2005. We hope you will all join us on that occasion.

We hope present members will be interested in the following minutes and programmes of the early days of the society.

### Foundation of the Society.

During the months of February, March and April, 1965, three informal discussions were held in the old Library (Court House) building in Keynsham, between Mr. M.C.E. Bird, Keynsham County Branch Librarian, Mr. R. Vince, Keynsham representative of the "Bath Chronicle & Herald", and Mrs. Y. Snelling, who had recently completed work on a new guide-book to Keynsham and Saltford for the U.D.C..

On the third occasion it was formally agreed that an effort should be made to interest the people of Keynsham and Saltford in their own history and antiquities, drawing in those who had already shown such an interest; and that the founding of a society for this purpose was the best means.

To form a nucleus for the necessary discussion and enquiry, the names of three other Keynsham residents likely to be interested and willing were suggested i.e. Miss M. Fairclough, Miss D. Fray and Mrs. S.R. James. Mrs. Joan Burt, assisting Mr. Vince, kindly volunteered to undertake any secretarial work necessary until the nucleus of a society should be formed.

Miss Fairclough, Miss Fray and Mrs. James were contacted, and expressed their willingness to assist the project and an inaugural meeting was therefore arranged and held in the Court House building on Monday, May 3rd, 1965, with the seven founder members all present. Mrs. Snelling was by general consent asked to preside.

The general aims of the society to be formed were debated, and many more names of residents likely to be interested were submitted to the pro tem Hon. Sec.. It was then proposed and seconded that the "Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society" (or such alternative title as should be later decided upon) should be deemed to have been founded on this date and by these persons: and further that Mrs. Snelling should continue as pro tem Chairman until such time as, at a larger gathering, the society could be provided with a full complement of officers and a constitution.

Miss Fairclough kindly offered a room in her home for the next meeting, and the

date of Friday, May 14th, 1965, was agreed upon. The Hon. sec. was requested to write and invite all the Keynsham and Saltford residents whose names had been put forward to be present on the forthcoming date and with this the meeting closed.

On Friday May 14th, 1965, the meeting so arranged was held at 78, Park Road, the home of Miss M. Fairclough, at 7.30 p.m.

Present were :~

Mr. Allen	Miss Fairclough	Mr. Linfield
Mr. Bird	Miss Fray	Mr. Scott
Mr. Bransom	Mr. Freeman	Mrs. Snelling
Mrs. Day	Mr. Gibbons	Mr. & Mrs. Vine

Mrs. Snelling, in the chair, welcomed and thanked all those present for their interest and attendance, noting as a good omen for the future success of the Society that there were present, in addition to those contacted by the Secretary, some residents who had come in response to a note of the Society's founding in the local newspaper. For which notice Mr. R. Vince, in his absence, was warmly thanked.

The Chairman explained briefly to newcomers the general idea of the Society, introduced all present to each other by name, and invited a debate, so that each might make any relevant observations upon the future of the Society.

It was finally generally agreed that the first necessity was a working complement of officers to conduct the Society's affairs, and the following were elected, to assume duty immediately :-

Chairman: Mr. P. Bransom  
Vice-chairman: Mr. F. S. Vine  
Secretary : Mrs. J. Burt  
Treasurer : Mrs. Y. Snelling

Owing to the lateness of the hour it was not possible to go into the question of a regular future Venue, but Miss Fairclough kindly offered, in lieu of her own home, that of her Aunt Miss Fairclough, at 40, Charlton Road, for the next meeting and this offer was gratefully accepted, the date to be Friday, June 11th, 1965

## Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society

Minutes of a General Meeting of the Society held at 40, Charlton Road, Keynsham, 11th June, 1965. In the Chair, Mr. P.Bransom.

### Members Present:—

Mr. W.P.Freeman, Mrs. Benfield, Mrs. S.R.James, Mr.K.Gibbons, Mrs .Y.Snelling Mr. R. Scott, Mr. G.W.Besant Mrs. C.Smith, Mr. R.Day Miss.D.G.Fray, Miss P.Adams, Mr.& Mrs. P.S.Vine, Mr. Linfield, Mrs.R.Day & Miss M.Fairclough.

### Constitution and Rules

The Chairman put before the meeting an outline of a suggested Constitution and Rules, made in collaboration with the Vice-Chairman, Mr. F.S.Vine. With various amendments made as indicated in the attached copy, the suggestions were adopted with a vote of thanks to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

### Study Groups and their Membership.

It was decided to institute groups of study which members could join according to their interests. Those suggested were: —

Inns and Alehouses; Industry; Domestic Architecture; Communications; Places of Worship; Law and Order; Schools & Education; Folklore.

Members present indicated which groups were of interest to them.

### Honorary Secretary

As the Acting Secretary, Mrs. J.Burt was unable to continue, Mrs. J.Day was duly elected, honorary Secretary.

### Acting Committee

An acting committee was elected consisting of the Chairman, Mr. P Bransom; Vice Chairman. Mr Vine; Treasurer, Mrs. Y.Snelling, & Secretary, Mrs.J.Day, with Mrs. F.S.Vine, Mr. G.W.Besant, and Mr. E.G.Linfield, to attend to making an announcement of the Society's activities to the Press, and any other matters which might arise, until Members of the Committee could be properly elected.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting.

Subsequently, on 9th July, 1965, a special meeting was held and officers appointed. In addition to the Chairman (Mr Charles Browne), Vice-chairman (Mr F.S. Vine), Treasurer (Mr A. Woolrich) and Secretary (Mrs Joan Day), 70 local people had joined the society. Of these, Mr Charles Browne, Mrs Joan Day, Mr Jonathan Gibbons, Mrs Barbara Lowe, Mrs Connie Smith and Mrs Sue Trude are still members.

The second SUMMER MEETING of the Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society took place last Thursday June 23rd. Over fifty people had congregated at the Keynsham Abbey site for a tour of the excavations conducted by Mr. E.J. Mason; the archaeologist in charge of the Bristol Folk House group. Digging was actually taking place on the side of the bye-pass as the party went round which added considerable interest to the meeting.

Throughout his tour Mr. Mason sketched in the background history of the Abbey beginning with the stones, fragments of columns and arches on the Fry's site. From here the party visited the Fry's museum to see other materials including a set of Keynsham Abbey tiles recently retrieved from Bath Abbey. Across the new bridge to the town side of the bye-pass, Mr. Mason showed the group some most interesting examples of roof bosses dug out from the middle of the new road and described the present excavation of the spiral staircase which is to be left "in situ" for the benefit of future generations as fragmentary evidence of the past glory of Keynsham's great abbey.

Finally, the group was taken back to the other side of the road. It was a most stimulating experience to be standing there on the site of the main excavation where several tomb slabs have been uncovered in the East end of the abbey and looking across at the exposed walls and staircase on the other side with the present church standing majestically in the background.

This excavation has been a difficult job with Mr. Mason and his team of workers always aware that there were few historical records of the site and layout of the abbey to help them. Now eight hundred years after its foundation it would be most appropriate if a permanent museum could be set up on the side of the park to house all the wonderful fragments, tiles and other objects which have been discovered. As Mr. Mason pointed out, too, that so much help was given by the contractors and Messrs. Fry and co. that the excavators could work most efficiently.

## Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society

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Hon. Secretary: MRS. J. M. DAY, HUNTERS HILL, OAKFIELD ROAD, KEYNSHAM, BRISTOL. Tel: KEYNSHAM 2216

### Winter Programme 1966 - 1967

#### 1966

September 16 <sup>th</sup> FRIDAY	Visit to J.S.Fry and Sons Museum	Mr Charles Browne will act as guide to the Roman Remains
October 14 <sup>th</sup> FRIDAY	Ellsbridge House	The Geographical Background of Saltford and Keynsham A talk by Mr R. Gardner
November 17 <sup>th</sup> THURSDAY	Victoria Methodist Schoolroom	Coal Mining in the area around Keynsham A talk by Mrs Dorothy Winter
December 8 <sup>th</sup> THURSDAY	Victoria Methodist Schoolroom	A Members' Evening Films and slides of local historical interest

#### 1967

January 20 <sup>th</sup> FRIDAY	Ellsbridge House	Ways and Means in Local History. The use of documents and records, with particular reference to the 'Courage Records' A talk by Mrs Frances Neale
February 23 <sup>rd</sup> THURSDAY	Saltford Church Hall	The subject to be announced at a later date
March 17 <sup>th</sup> FRIDAY	Ellsbridge House	Annual General Meeting and Group Activity/Members Reports
April 20 <sup>th</sup> THURSDAY	Victoria Methodist Schoolroom	The Shortwood to Keynsham Coal Tramway A talk by Mr P.J.Stuckey

During May and June outdoor meetings will be arranged, either walks or practical surveys etc. Depending on members requirements

Meetings will generally commence at 7-30 pm. Alterations and/or additional meetings etc. will be posted on Notice Board outside Public Library and in local press. Current subscriptions (minimum of 7/6 for adults and 5/- for juniors) to Mr A. Woolrich 35 Bath Hill Keynsham. 1967 subscriptions will be due on January 1st



## *Keynsham and Saltford Local History Society*

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*Hon. Secretary: MRS. J. M. DAY, HUNTERS HILL, OAKFIELD ROAD, KEYNSHAM, BRISTOL. Tel: KEYNSHAM 2216*

### Summer Programme 1967

- May 19th  
FRIDAY      A short walk round a few places of historic interest in Keynsham, to be led by members of the Society. Meet at the Parish Church at 7.30 pm.
- June 1st  
SATURDAY      A visit to the archaeological site at Butcombe, arranged by our Chairman Mr. Charles Browne. Meet at 'Row of Ashes' Farm (near Bristol Airport) at 3.30 p.m. Those able to offer lifts to members, and those requiring them please contact secretary.
- June 13th  
TUESDAY      A river trip on the specially chartered S.S. 'Kingstonian', from Keynsham Lock to Bristol Bridge and back, with a commentary on the historical points of interest en route. Large saloon with licensed refreshments available. Get your tickets from the secretary as soon as possible please to ensure that we have the minimum number to make the trip possible (6/6 prior to day of trip, 7/6d for tickets purchased on the day) Reduced prices for children. Members of the public welcome as the boat carries 200. Leaving Keynsham Lock 7.30 p.m., and returning 10 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.
- July 6th  
THURSDAY      A walk along part of the Stockwood-Keynsham Coal Tramroad arranged by Mr. P. Stuckey. Meet at Willsbridge at 7.30 p.m. prompt. Again, those able to offer transport, and those requiring it please contact secretary.
- September 23rd  
SATURDAY      A walk along the newly rediscovered Saltway, south of Saltford, led by Mr. Charles Browne. Meet at the 'Crown', Saltford, at 2.30 p.m. It is hoped to make arrangements for those who would like to join this walk, but cannot manage the whole distance of five miles or so.

Additional Programme Information or alterations will be posted on our Notice Board outside Keynsham Public Library.

## A KEYNSHAM MAN AT TRAFALGAR

Dennis Hill

A telephone enquiry earlier this year from a Bath resident, Bob Needs, led me to speculate on the possibility of men from Keynsham or Saltford having taken part in the Royal Navy's famous victory, against the combined French and Spanish fleets at the battle of Trafalgar on 21st October 1805.

Bob Needs had been spurred on in his enquiries in view of 2005 marking the bicentenary of the battle, and with the knowledge from his own research that his ancestor Thomas Needs was definitely there as a member of the crew of *HMS Conqueror*. But was he a Keynsham man? The clue lay in a cryptic reference in a naval record giving Thomas Needs' address as The Key Inn, Somerset. Could this have been an abbreviation for The Keynsham Inn?

I duly checked all files in our Society archives relating to Keynsham inns and alehouses. There were references to several such establishments during the later decades of the 18th century. Some changed name from time to time, but no trace of The Keynsham Inn.

Then came a stroke of luck. Bob Needs had also told me that Thomas Needs was 40 years of age in 1805 and that three years earlier he had made a will naming Amos Needs and Sarah Needs as beneficiaries. Our archives revealed a family tree prepared a few years ago by a member of the Wiltshire family and showing among 18th century Ollises the marriage of Sarah, widow of Anthony Ollis, to Thomas Needs. Thomas and Sarah's eldest child, also Thomas, was baptised in Keynsham Parish Church on 11 August 1765. This Thomas was therefore 40 years of age in 1805. Furthermore his siblings included Ames (possibly a misreading of Amos) and Sarah.

This proved beyond reasonable doubt that there was a Keynsham man at Trafalgar. But might there have been others? Statistically it seems unlikely. The total number of men serving in the British fleet at Trafalgar would have been about 18,000. But evidence gathered by historians shows that as many as one in three were from Ireland (these were mostly volunteers) and that there were also sizeable minorities from countries in continental Europe, leaving perhaps as few as 10,000 coming from England.

The 1801 census shows the population of Keynsham as 1,591 while that of Saltford was 221. The total population of the country at that time was 16,345,646. Thus only 1 in 9,000 of the country's population lived in our local communities, so statistically it seems likely that Thomas Needs would have been the only man from Keynsham or Saltford to have served at Trafalgar.

Royal Navy press gangs were particularly active in British seaports in the years leading up to Trafalgar. The gangs virtually kidnapped unsuspecting men, often



J. K. Blair

A BRITISH SEAMAN! A HEART OF OAK!

One of the BRAVE TARS who Fought for, and PROTECTED, this  
HAPPY ISLE.

God and a Seaman all do adore  
For time of War, and oft before

Now War is o'er and all things righted  
Remember Tacks with love we have delighted

London Pub. 15 Decr. 1791 by R. Ackermann, Typographer of Arts, 101 Strand.

A TYPICAL BRITISH SAILOR (from Masefield J. 1905)

those who were the worse for drink, in order to reinforce the crews of the Royal Navy's ships. The men targeted were supposed to be experienced seamen, such as members of merchant ships crews, but inevitably other less suitable candidates were caught in the net. Large ports such as London, Portsmouth and Plymouth bore the brunt of the recruiting drive. The Lord Mayor of London also sent many potential recruits. These were generally men of the upper classes, who had been found drunk in the streets and in bawdy houses, and who feared to see their names appearing in the magistrates' lists or court reports. They preferred to take their chance at sea, but on the whole made poor sailors.

Little is known of Thomas Needs' career in the Royal Navy, but there is evidence that he transferred to *HMS Conqueror* from the *Salvador del Mundo* on 2nd May 1803. The *Salvador del Mundo* was a captured Spanish ship, and in 1803 was held at Cawsand Bay near Plymouth as a receiving ship into which new recruits to the Royal Navy were placed before being allocated to the ship in which they were to serve at sea. The *Salvador del Mundo* would have been particularly busy during 1803 as it was the year of the Hot Press. This was the name given to an intensive recruiting campaign by the Royal Navy instigated on 9th March of that year and designed to add 10,000 sailors to the 50,000 already serving in the fleet. The press gangs were therefore more than usually busy.

Even so there were considerable numbers of volunteers, and Thomas Needs may have been one of them. This may be hard to believe, given the extremely harsh conditions under which ordinary seamen in the fleet were compelled to serve. But for many recruits life at home in England was hardly better. There had been a series of disastrous harvests in the late 1790s leading to very high food prices and much social unrest, including riots. It was reckoned that there were as many as 1 million paupers in the country by 1803. During 1801 a third of the population of Bath, some 10,000 people, had been subsisting on a weekly distribution of rice. The prospect of adventure in the Royal Navy and the chance of sharing in prize money therefore often appealed to the country's young men. Every volunteer received a bonus of £5 on joining.

The old saying "Join the Navy and see the world," may also have been somewhat appropriate as far as Thomas Needs was concerned. He probably went to the Mediterranean initially, as it seems that *HMS Conqueror* was part of Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson's fleet that was charged with keeping the French fleet confined to the Mediterranean port of Toulon. This virtual siege was to last almost two years, until April 1805 when the French broke out and crossed the Atlantic to the West Indies. Nelson's fleet including *HMS Conqueror* pursued them all the way and eventually anchored off Barbados early in June. But the French proved elusive and a few days later were heading back across the Atlantic with the British in hot pursuit. It seems unlikely therefore that Thomas Needs and his comrades would

have had an opportunity for shore leave in the sunny West Indies! Eventually, after an inconclusive battle on 22nd July against a British fleet under Vice-Admiral Calder off the north west coast of Spain, the French joined up with their Spanish allies at Cadiz. From here their combined fleet sailed in early October, bound again for the Mediterranean with reinforcements for the French army in Italy. But the British fleet under Nelson was waiting to intercept them and on 21st October 1805 the two fleets met in battle off Cape Trafalgar near the entrance to the Mediterranean.

By this time Thomas Needs had risen from the ranks of ordinary seamen to become a Petty Officer with responsibilities as a signaller. *HMS Conqueror* was fourth in the first line of ships, led by Nelson on *HMS Victory*, to attack the combined French and Spanish fleet. Perhaps as a signaller Thomas was involved in passing on Nelson's famous message in flags to ships further down the line. "England expects that every man will do his duty."

Nelson's signal was sent at 11.48am and soon afterwards battle was joined. *HMS Conqueror* was right in the thick of the action. One of the priorities of the British fleet was to disable the enemy ships by demolishing their masts through accurate gunfire. Without masts and sails the disabled ships became difficult to manoeuvre and were therefore easier targets. It was generally acknowledged that although the French ships were of superior construction, the British sailors, especially the gun crews, were better trained than their French counterparts and could fire more rapidly and accurately. This ability proved vital in the eventual outcome of the battle.

At a crucial stage in the attack, men on the main deck of *HMS Conqueror* were ordered below. Thus they were less exposed to enemy gunfire and were able to reinforce the lower deck gun crews and help to maintain the rapid rate of gunfire. Perhaps because of this plan *HMS Conqueror* suffered fewer casualties than almost every other ship in the British fleet. Only three were killed and nine wounded out of a total complement of more than 600, although an unfortunate young man from Bridgwater, Aaron Crocan, drowned when he fell overboard several hours before the battle started.

In contrast casualties on *HMS Victory* were much higher, with 57 killed and 102 wounded, although her crew was probably a third greater in number. Nelson was fatally wounded by a sniper's bullet shortly after 1pm and died three hours later. By then eighteen of the French and Spanish ships had been destroyed or captured. Among those who capitulated was the French Vice-Admiral Villeneuve who surrendered his flagship *Bucemaure* to Captain Israel Pellew of *HMS Conqueror* shortly after 2pm. But it was one thing to accept the surrender of an enemy ship and quite another matter to secure it and bring it to a safe port, so that the prize money could be claimed. A prize crew numbering about 70 men - sailors and Royal marines

was transferred from *HMS Conqueror* to the *Bucentaure*, and the French ship was taken in tow. But the tow soon parted and, with darkness falling, Captain Pellew decided to take no action until morning.

During the night both ships drifted towards the Spanish shore. The tow was reconnected briefly after daybreak, and the *Bucentaure* was hauled slowly seaward. But, as the day progressed, the weather deteriorated, with westerly winds rising to gale force, accompanied by torrential rain. The tow parted and the crew of *HMS Conqueror* had to fight to keep their ship away from the rocky shoreline. In these conditions they were no longer able to maintain close contact with the *Bucentaure*. Despite suffering considerable casualties in the battle *Bucentaure* still had at least 500 fit sailors, and they gradually came to realise that it would be possible to overpower the prize crew and get the ship to a Spanish port. In order to avoid yet more bloodshed two of the surviving French officers persuaded the leaders of the prize crew to surrender, and thus the tables were turned.

But as sea conditions deteriorated and with only an inexperienced pilot to guide them, their chances of success diminished. Even with the British and French sailors working together in the darkness of the evening of the 22nd October they were unable to prevent the ship striking rocks in the approaches to Cadiz harbour. Eventually at midday on the 23rd the ship was abandoned, and all survivors were taken off in boats belonging to other ships in the French and Spanish fleet. Most of the British prize crew was transferred to a French frigate and, it is recorded, were well treated.

It seems unlikely that Thomas Needs was involved in the prize crew's adventure. *HMS Conqueror* rejoined the main fleet under Vice-Admiral Collingwood, Nelson's second-in-command, and was put to work taking men off those prize ships that were still held, but Collingwood had decided to sink these ships once evacuated, rather than risking their recapture by the French. *HMS Conqueror* then took a disabled British ship, *HMS Africa* in tow.

With the loss of so many prize ships — four had managed to escape with the *Bucentaure* towards Cadiz, and another four reached the Spanish coast further north - it is perhaps not surprising that there was a considerable reduction in the prize money payable to the sailors in the British fleet. Payments were also delayed until the summer of 1807. Records show that Thomas Needs, as a petty officer, received £10-1 4s-0d (£10.70), considerably more than an ordinary seaman who only had £1-1 7s-6d (£1.87), but paling to insignificance beside a captain's share, £973. To put the payments into perspective Thomas Needs' regular pay as a petty officer would have been about £2—5s-6d (£2.27) a month.

But the government, perhaps bowing to popular sentiment, anticipated the prize money payments by making a special extra payment of £300,000 to the fleet in 1806. This was rather more generous than the prize money total so that with the

same proportions applying Thomas Needs received £26-6s-Od (£26.30) as his share of the 1806 payment.

Undoubtedly Thomas Needs and his colleagues in the Royal Navy were the heroes of their times. Since 1803, England had stood alone against France, and was in constant danger of invasion, just as it would be 135 years later, in the summer of 1940. when the fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force repelled the German Luftwaffe, and frustrated Hitler's ambition to send his ground forces across the English Channel.

So high was the fear of invasion between 1803 and 1805 that this period was known as "the Great Terror", and detailed plans were drawn up to evacuate the civilian population from seaside communities on the south coast. By the summer of 1805 Napoleon Bonaparte had defeated all rival armies on mainland Europe and was able to concentrate 160,000 soldiers in and around Boulogne, with 2,300 barges ready to ferry them across the English Channel. All he needed were sufficient battleships to hold off the British navy for a few days to enable his army to cross. But that was never to be. Villeneuve's failure to defeat Calder and get his fleet into the English Channel after his return from the West Indies meant that the invasion could not take place.

Victory at Trafalgar consolidated the Royal Navy's superiority at sea. It enabled the British army to invade the Iberian peninsula in 1808 to attack Napoleon's army and gradually led to him losing his military stranglehold on mainland Europe. Thomas Needs lived another twelve years after his adventures at Trafalgar and doubtless had many exciting stories to tell members of his family when he returned to England. Alas, if his memories were ever written down, they do not appear to have survived and we can only imagine his experiences, based on official records and remaining testimonies of a few of his comrades.

Another lasting testimony will be established in 2005. Ships such as *HMS Conqueror* were constructed largely of English oak and as many as 3000, trees had to be felled to provide enough timber for a single ship. There were 27 ships in the British fleet at Trafalgar and the Woodland Trust, which cares for more than 1,000 woodland areas throughout the United Kingdom, is aiming to establish 27 new woodlands this year, each named after a ship in the fleet. The commemorative wood for *HMS Conqueror* will be in Devon, near the A380 at Shiphay, just to the west of Torquay.

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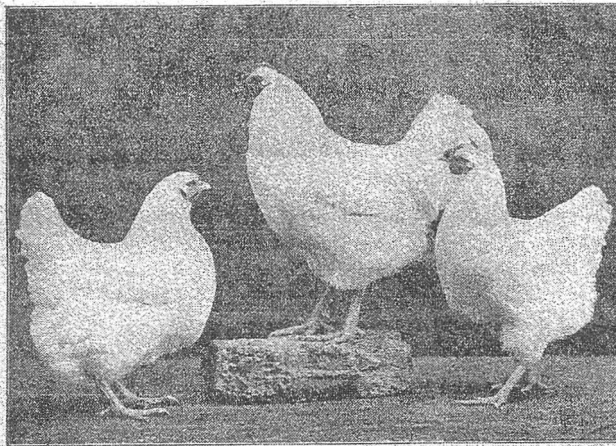
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1st and Challenge Bowl Club Show, York. 1st and Special, Dairy Show. 2nd Crystal Palace.

## Jack Titley

ABBOTSFORD, KEYNSHAM,

SOMERSET.

*Breeder of High-class  
Utility Poultry*

BLACK & WHITE LEGHORNS,  
WHITE WYANDOTTES,  
RHODE ISLAND REDS  
AND  
LIGHT SUSSEX.

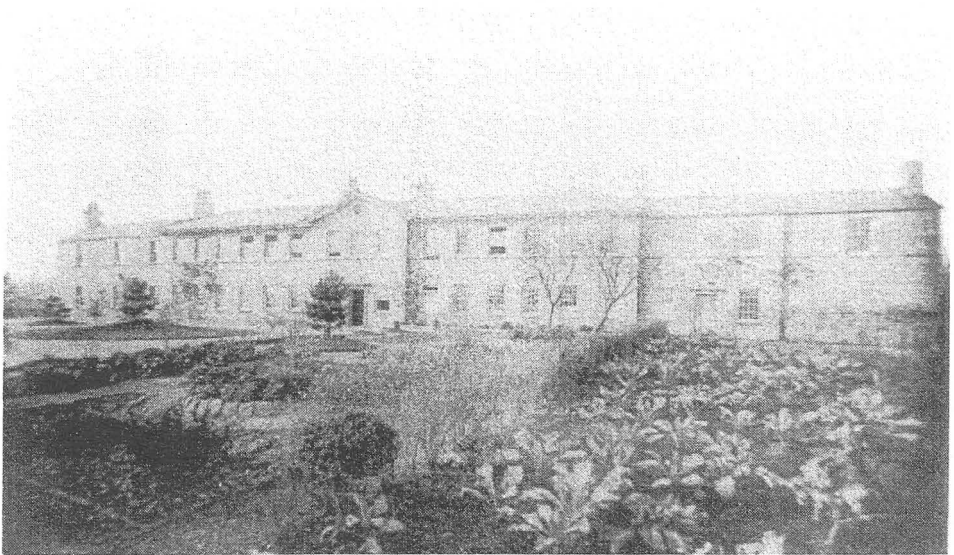
*Sittings of Eggs and Day-old Chicks  
in season*



## Children in Keynsham Workhouse

Elizabeth White

*The evening arrived: the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself behind the copper: his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served out; and a long grace said over short commons. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered to each other and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbour nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, bowl and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity: 'Please, sir, I want some more.'*



There are very few photographs of Keynsham Workhouse, and none that we have found of its inmates. This shows the frontage with a good crop of brassicas in the garden. Notice the chimneys.

The picture of little Oliver Twist asking for more to eat is probably the determining factor in the public attitude to the Victorian Workhouse. However this picture did not refer to the workhouse but to the parish poor house which preceded it. Parish poor houses had been established in 1601 by the Great Elizabethan Poor Law.

This system of poor relief, by which each parish looked after its own poor, had worked reasonably well in small communities, villages and small towns, until the coming of dramatic economic and social changes with the onset of industrialisation, which brought about the growth of large towns, population growth, and periodic economic slumps, affecting both town and country. In the stressful years after the Napoleonic Wars (ended 1815) the cost of poor relief rocketed. In Keynsham the cost of maintaining the poor, even at a lower standard, was over £1000 a year, at a time when the population was 1,748 (1811 figure). Largely due to the cost, there was pressure to reform the Poor Law, so an Amendment Act was passed in 1834, before *Oliver Twist* was serialised in 1837. There was not time from the passing of the act in 1834 for the ratepayers to meet, to agree to form a union of parishes, to choose a site, to find a mortgage, to select an architect, to build the new workhouse, to staff it and to admit the inmates, and for the new system to have acquired a bad reputation by 1837, when the public first read of *Oliver Twist*. The new workhouses inherited the odium of the worst features of the old system before they even opened. What were they really like? Was Keynsham Workhouse as bad as the most notorious workhouses, such as Andover, where the starving inmates fought over the gristle on the bones they were supposed to be crushing, or Ilchester, where the inmates died like flies from disease, or some of the London workhouses, where the death rate for illegitimate babies was over 90%? What sort of life did the workhouse child have in Keynsham, and what sort of adult life could he expect? Does Keynsham Workhouse bear out the Dickensian stereotype of workhouse conditions? This article deals with children in the workhouse in the early years, up to the middle of the century. Subsequent articles will deal with the changes that were made later in the century, and with the death rates of babies and children in our local workhouse, which is now Keynsham Hospital.

### **Keynsham Union**

Keynsham Union Workhouse was run by its unpaid Board of Guardians, who were gentlemen, one from each of the 19 parishes which comprised the Keynsham Union. These were Keynsham itself, Brislington, Whitchurch, Queen Charlton, Saltford, Compton Dando, Corston, Northstoke, Kelston, Burnett, Newton St Loe, Marksbury, Stanton Prior, Priston, Bitton, Hanham, Oldland, Mangotfield, and Siston. There was a full time Clerk, to see to the administration, a Master, whose wife was usually the Matron, to run the workhouse. Regulations came thick and fast from the three Poor Law Commissioners who were charged with getting the system up and running. The most important aim was to reduce the cost of pauperism; to shame the pauper into finding work. There was a wide spread belief that old system encouraged malingering. To discourage any but the totally

destitute from seeking relief, relief could only be obtained by entering the workhouse where conditions were to be harsher than those outside. Only the aged poor, who could still look after themselves, were supposed to receive 'outdoor relief, usually in the form of a bread allowance and a tiny sum of money. As became clear in the first pages of the admission register, the workhouse was not filled with the able-bodied poor. In the 7th week of its existence in 1838 just one man was admitted, in 18 names. He was a 40 year old miner from Mangotsfield who was unable to work through being partially disabled (though it does not say how). He brought a wife and 5 children with him. Also admitted at the same time was a deserted wife from Bitton, 'who came with her 5 children. She is described as a 'chorewoman'. There was also a widow, a seamstress, from Compton Dando who had three children with her. The final entry on the page is that of a single servant girl from Bitton, who brought with her the cause of her admission, an illegitimate child. The workhouse was full of children. In 1841 in the three summer months there had been 45 men, 49 women, and 89 children. Numbers in the house were always at their lowest in the summer. In official parlance the word 'workhouse' was soon dropped; and it was simply referred to as the union. In common parlance it was always the workhouse, even in the 20th century when, taken over by the County Council, it was renamed St Clement's House. For many it was still the workhouse long after the remnants of the system were swept away in 1948

### **.Children in Keynsham Workhouse**

The admission registers reveal what kind of children entered the workhouse. They were the children of deserted wives and widows, illegitimate children, orphaned children, abandoned children, and the mentally and physically handicapped. Once admitted they were cleaned, (probably by bathing) and given the workhouse clothes and boots. Many of the garments were made in the workhouse. In 1837, prior to its opening, tenders were requested which give some idea of what they wore. They wanted such items as real Welsh flannel, skirting calico, and serge. Inmates were provided with ready made stockings and handkerchiefs. The men and boys had hats and caps. The women had stays, and check material for aprons. The provision of boots and shoes was a heavy expense, and explains the Union's determination to pursue absconders who left with the Union's clothes and boots on. If they left of their own volition, which many did, their own clothes were returned to them.

### **Accommodation**

Once in the workhouse, children over the age of two were housed in a separate area. The boys had 1 room for sleeping, 40'8" x 17'9", which contained 13 beds. The boys slept 3 to a bed, so 39 boys could be accommodated. Had they had more bedsteads it was estimated the room would take another 6 beds. Sleeping

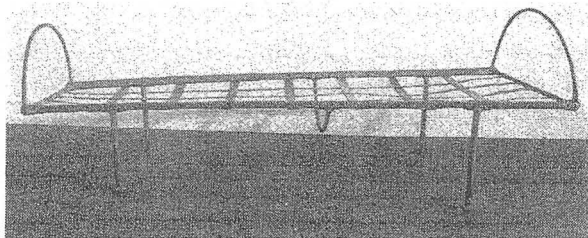
3 to a bed this would accommodate another 18, making 57 in all. The girls had 2 rooms. The larger was 24'x16' and contained 8 beds. With three girls to a bed there was room for 24 girls. It was thought this room could take another 6 beds, adding 18 girls to the total. The second room was smaller, 16'x14', and contained 14 beds, giving a total of 42 girls in the room, and a total of beds for girls of 66. It is possible that the clerk has put figures in the wrong columns as the figures in the documents do not add up, but the overall picture is clear. The children were crowded in, three to a bed. The workhouse would be under severe pressure in winter or in times of economic depression, when able bodied, but unemployed, paupers and their families would have to be admitted. Even in the sickwards, beds had to be shared. In the Boys 'itch' ward', a room 15'x13', the boys were two to a bed. The 'itch' was scabies, a common and highly contagious skin disease. At the time of the survey all 4 beds were empty. There was a similarly sized room for other infectious cases, also containing 4 beds. These conditions sound bad, but were probably better than the conditions of the poorest outside the workhouse. Some attempt was made to isolate infectious/contagious diseases, and the Medical Officer every workhouse had to appoint, was expected to provide a basic level of care. As Keynsham Union was so close to the town, the spread of infection from the house was always feared. The Guardians of the Poor here took rather prompter action than those Guardians whose workhouse was far from the town or village.

Children under two stayed with their mothers in the Female Sleeping Ward. This was 36'9"x16', and contained 14 beds. Each held two women and one child, making 42 in all. During the daytime these little ones, while their mothers were working, were cared for, after a fashion, in a single room with a fire place, (unusual in a workhouse). Their minders were other children who could not be accommodated in the school room because there was insufficient room. This room was also used by all the women, when they had a break from their work. The crowd around the fire was so bad that the Medical Officer in 1841 thought that, *there must be great discomfort for the infant children, and extreme toil for the children who are all day minding them, as there is no convenience for putting the infants (at least during the day) to sleep, or any amusement afforded those who are able to run about; so that they are continually exposing themselves to cold and damp running to and fro in the yard without any care or covering.*

He considered that overcrowding was the cause of the prevalence of illness among the small children.

The Board of Guardians, did make efforts to improve the children's conditions. The Medical Officer recommended a steady woman or Superintendent

*to see and attend to these children that they are well and properly fed and taken general care of. At present the school room is too full for all to gain advantage: the younger children become tired and then repair to the nursery. The ages of the children are too unequal to admit of one superintendant doing her duty in a proper manner to the whole.* Nothing further is mentioned in the minutes about these proposals, contained in the Medical Officer's report in 1841. It is possible that a suitable woman was found among the paupers. As she would not be paid, this could have been done without asking permission from London, and so may not have been included in the minutes, but in the Master's weekly report which was often not given in detail. In January 1842, when the workhouse was very overcrowded they made another attempt to solve the problem. They sought estimates of the cost of putting an extra storey on the top of the Probationary ward. They had received the estimates by the following week, but nothing more is heard of the scheme. There were members of the Board who opposed any increase in expenditure. The ratepayers felt that conditions in the workhouse were too comfortable and encouraged idleness, and were not backward in saying so. The Board found other ways of creating a bit more room. The schoolmistress and the Nurse were to share a bedroom, and the chapel was used as the schoolroom. Part of the stable was turned into a ward for vagrants. Not until 1854 did the Schoolmistress get her bedroom back. By this time the economic situation had improved and the 'Hungry Forties' were over. Fewer paupers were applying to the workhouse for relief. The workhouse had been built for 300. It is difficult to know how they managed to squeeze in more than the 232 they had beds for in 1841.



We do not know what kind of beds they had in Keynsham Workhouse. This single bed is from thetford Workhouse. At Keynsham the men had single beds. Other workhouse beds seem to have been wider but shorter and could have been shared. They would have had straw-filled mattresses, (later replaced by flock), with course sheets and blankets. Presumably they had pillows with pillowcases, because an inmate was punished for taking and cutting up a pillowcase to make herself a purse.

## Children's Diet

Children in the workhouse were given much the same food as the adults, only in smaller quantities, with a little more milk and water. All the inmates had three meals a day: breakfast, dinner and supper. The times of meals varied from summer to winter. In summer they rose at 5:45 am, breakfasted from 8-9am, worked until dinner at 1pm, for which they had an hour. Supper was at 6:30 pm and the adult bedtime was 8pm. The winter time table began half an hour later and there was an hour less in the morning and afternoon work. Bedtime was also half an hour earlier at 7:30pm. These are very long hours for small children, and being up and about for more than two hours before breakfast must have been difficult for many children who were growing quickly.

For breakfast there was bread and gruel, though the children had milk and water, it is not clear whether this was in addition to the gruel or instead of it. The gruel was made with 4oz of sugar to a pound of oatmeal and flavoured with allspice. Mr Hutchings tried to get the gruel removed from the dietary, as well as the milk and water, because he said all too often it was water with milk, because of the great difficulty in obtaining milk (This seems very strange in what was known as a dairy county.) He wanted tea or cocoa to be substituted. For dinner twice a week there was meat (4oz) with potatoes and other vegetables (16oz). Later this man's ration was increased to 20 oz of potatoes and vegetables. Women and children had slightly less.

By 1851 a committee, enquiring into economies that could be made, recommended that the meat be roasted and not boiled. They had tried both methods and found that there was less shrinkage when the meat was roasted, and a 191b joint would yield two pounds of dripping which could be used, whereas the liquor in which meat was boiled was just given to the pigs. This reveals something of cooking methods; one wonders how long they would roast a 191b joint and how edible it was at the end of it!! Another day they had meat and vegetable soup, with 8oz of bread for a man. Two days a week they had bread and cheese. One day the dinner was a baked rice pudding cooked with milk, suet and sugar, and Sunday's dinner was a suet pudding, sweetened with sugar or treacle and flavoured with allspice. A man's portion was 14oz. Supper was always bread and cheese, with more gruel. Bread, everywhere the staple food of the poor, was eaten in large quantities. A man was allocated more than 7 lbs of bread a week. The quality of the food is difficult to assess, but the Guardians did order the return of any food-stuffs that were substandard, and threatened the suppliers with the loss of the contract if they supplied substandard goods again. It would seem that the inmates probably had as much food as a poor family outside the workhouse. The sheer monotony of the diet helps to explain why the boys went scrumping apples from the neighbouring properties! The Board of Guardians personally paid for the in

mates Christmas dinner, complete with plum puddings and ale or beer to drink. Sometimes a benefactor would provide a dinner for the inmates at other times, and the children were taken to games and a tea in places like Brislington House. The Guardians also paid for the children to have an orange each at Christmas.

### **The Care of Sick Children.**

Between the constraints of a centralised system and the ratepayers' demands for economy the Guardians tried to care for sick and handicapped children. The children's conditions were the concern of the Medical Officer and of local clergymen. After the appointment of Thomas Oxford as Clerk in 1841 these issues were more frequently raised. This is possibly due in part to a decline in standards because of overcrowding but also possibly due to the fact that they felt there might be more sympathetic response. It is from this time that paupers' complaints are recorded in the minutes, some of which were upheld. The Medical Officer was entitled to order special diets for the sick, the insane and the children. He ordered that the insane were to have meat every day for dinner. Sick children also had a different diet. They had bread and butter and tea ('properly sweetened') for breakfast, dinner was meat and potatoes, and supper bread and gruel. For those needing a lighter diet, dinner was broth with pearl barley, or baked rice pudding. For those with fevers all meals were gruel and bread, with the bread to be served as toast and water, and a pint of tea. The Medical Officer was able to order brandy, porter and beer, when he considered them necessary, but there is no evidence the children got them. As the century progressed, paid (and later qualified) nursing care was provided, but in the early days, care had to be provided by other inmates, who may or may not have had any skill or sympathy. Keynsham was not a healthy place, probably due to a polluted water supply, and when infections struck the workhouse, they rapidly spread. In the outbreak of cholera in 1854 the inmates suffered and the children were the most vulnerable. However with the rudimentary knowledge of health and hygiene in the 1840's and 1850's, it is probable that the children did no worse than the children of the very poorest outside.

### **Education**

The Board of Guardians had the duty to see that the children in the workhouse received some elementary education and some training so that they could earn their livings. They were not, of course, to be educated above their station, however bright they were. In the 1830's there were no state schools. Since 1833 a very small amount (£20,000) had been given for school building to the two societies that provided education on the monitorial principal, (the National Society and the British and Foreign). This system, by using one teacher to teach older children, who then taught the same thing to the younger children, enabled a large number of children to be given some very elementary education. It proved very difficult to use this

system with the children in the workhouse, and discipline was always a problem. Many of the children had run wild all their lives and were very street wise. The Guardians advertised for a school mistress soon after the Workhouse opened. The Bath Chronicle for April 8~ 1841 carried an advertisement for

### **KEYNSHAM UNION SCHOOLMISTRESS**

*Wanted by Keynsham Union Workhouse a respectable person between the ages of 25-45 years to fill the position of a schoolmistress. She must be well trained in a system of National Education, able to write a good hand, well acquainted with the rudiments of arithmetic and without encumbrances. Salary £20pa and such provision as the House affords. She will be required to reside in the House and make herself generally useful. Strict credentials of character as to sobriety, honesty and morality, as well as the ability to discharge the duties of the above situation, will be required, together with a specimen of handwriting will be required*

A Miss Venton was appointed but only stayed to the end of the year. The job was a very difficult one. The numbers she had to deal with were very large, and few of the older children were suitable as monitors to teach the younger ones. The children were frequently in and out of the workhouse as many women left for short periods if they managed to find work. The school mistress found it difficult to discipline the boys, especially as there was no corporal punishment (officially, that is). The Guardians had discussed when corporal punishment was allowed. It was only permitted to be used by the Master of the House. It does not seem to have been used on children and very rarely on adults. Another school mistress, Miss Scully, was frequently told by the Guardians that she must enforce her commands, but without any practical instructions as to how she was to achieve it. The discipline of the boys improved when the Master, Mr Booker (Bowker), took over the teaching of the boys over 10 years old. In 1845 the Guardians decided to appoint a schoolmaster for the boys. The boys learned gardening and field work. By 1854 a few boys were able to learn shoe repairing, instructed by a cobbler who came in each week to repair boots and shoes. The school mistress was renamed the industrial teacher, and spent the majority of her time teaching the girls sewing knitting and laundry work. By 1851 they had had 4 schoolmasters in 6 years, when Mr Richard Woolright arrived, who stayed more than 30 years. Similar changes happened with the schoolmistress, until 1858 when Miss Batt came and stayed 9 years. She was succeeded by Miss Barrett who stayed more than 20 years.

### **Punishments**

The Punishment Book reveals the kinds of mischief the boys, and a few girls, got up to, and the punishments they received. It also reveals the sullen insubordination,



threats and examples of actual violence that the a few of the inmates inflicted on the staff and their fellow inmates A sample page from 1840 reveals that between February and December 27, paupers, some of whom were children, received official punishments. Two boys were caught fighting; one had 12 hours in the refractory ward and forfeited his breakfast, the other was put hard to work, but also lost his breakfast. Six boys were punished for disorderly conduct in their bedroom. Another lad, described as a very bad boy, broke a window; he had two hours in the refractory ward and lost his supper. Girls' offences were in the form of insulting behaviour to the matron and the schoolmistress. All the punishments were confinement in the refractory ward and loss of meals. This seems to have been either an outbuilding or a cellar. It is possible they were chained to keep them in. This may have given rise to the belief, sometimes expressed that the inmates were kept chained up. In fact they were not allowed to be kept in confinement for more than 24 hours without the sanction of the Board of Guardians. Very serious offences were dealt with in the magistrates' court

Of course, there were unofficial punishments. The children were beaten by the school teachers. In March 1854 an inmate, Elizabeth Britton, wrote a letter to the Board of Guardians that the schoolmistress, Miss Humphreys, had severely beaten her two year old son and that she frequently ill treated the little ones. She was never present when the girls had their meals and the older girls were in the habit of taking the little ones bread to sell to the women.(One wonders where they got the money from!). The Board made inquiries and found the accusations proved. At the April meeting the school mistress was reprimanded, and reminded that she had no authority to beat children. She was ordered always to be present at the children's meal times and stop the taking of food from the little ones. The girls were all questioned, and admitted selling bread and knowing girls who had stolen bread. The Guardians did take action to right abuses, as they did in 1861 when the Work House Master was sent to the magistrates' court for striking an inmate. He was found guilty and fined ten shillings (50 pence)

### **Children's Employment**

When the children were old enough they were listed as being 'capable of going out to service'. Some of the names in the punishment book are listed in the quarterly statement of accounts for September 1841 as 'capable of going out to service'. They are all described as between 11 and 14. It is difficult to know how accurate these ages are as all the children were born before the compulsory registration of births. It was in the interest of the workhouse for them to have reached those ages

and the children were unlikely to complain of something that might get them free from the workhouse. The age does seem to be older than the age at which the children of the poor started work. Children as young as 7 or 8 could be employed in a country area, picking stones, bird scaring, bringing in animals, haymaking and harvesting, especially of potatoes. The log books of Saltford school show that this continued in the 1880's, and very few children were in school over the age of 12 and even for younger ones attendance was spasmodic, better in the winter than the summer when they could get work. Finding an employer willing to take pauper children was extremely difficult. They tended to be employed in the poorest jobs with the worst employers. The Poor Law Authorities were aware of the problem. In 1862 they wrote to each Union about the employment chances of these children. The Clerk to the Thornbury Union replied saying that these children did not do so well partly because of lack of intelligence in the children themselves, *The result, I consider, of the monotony of workhouse life, and partly due to the aversion which the most respectable classes of employer have of engaging servants from the workhouse so long as they can obtain them from the families of independent labourers or the outdoor poor, in consequence of which the children sent out from the workhouse have not generally, in my opinion, an equal chance with the other children on starting in life.*

The life chances of these children were poor. 'Born in the workhouse, die in the workhouse' was all too often true. It was also true that some of the illegitimate baby girls born in the workhouse gave birth to their illegitimate children a generation later.

## **Conclusion**

It seems that Keynsham Union, while working within the law, was not providing conditions which were poorer than those of the poorest outside, which is what was supposed to happen to deter paupers from seeking relief. It does seem to have been more humanely administered than the worst of other workhouses. We do not know how many other workhouses were like Keynsham. But even here, paupers were deterred from entering: numbers of paupers did drop, and poor rates went down. Some of this was due to improved economic conditions, but more was due to the stigma which entering the workhouse brought and which lay most heavily on the innocent, the children. They were probably better fed, clothed, and housed than the poorest children outside. But the stigma made the workhouse a place of dread and gloom. The plight of the children did arouse sympathy and by the end of the century the authorities were prepared to look at different ways of breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

## Sources

There is a mass of documents at the Somerset Record Office relating to the Keynsham Union, all under *D/G/K*. Unfortunately they are not all consecutive, and one record often cannot be matched with a different record of the same period. Here I have principally used:

Guardians Minutes *D/G/K 8a2(1841—42 D/G/K 8a10 (1853—54)*

Offences and Punishment book *D/G/K 87/2 (1842—1875)*

Statements of Expenditure *D/G/K 57/27*

Admission and Discharge Book *D/G/K 60/1 (1836—38)*

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## Rookehill, Rookhill and Rockhill

Margaret Whitehead

### *INTRODUCTION*

Unravelling the origins of Rookehill Farm, Rook Hill House and Rockhill Farm (now House) has challenged Barbara Lowe and one over the years. Recently, an opportunity to continue our research into the two farms arose as a result of invitations to visit both properties by their interested owners. The more information we recovered, the deeper became the confusion. Rockhill Farm appears to have acquired its name sometime in the middle of the 19th century whilst Rookehill Farm is documented as early as 1649 and Rookhill House c. 1722.

We first considered the origin of the names Rookehill Rockhill. An entry in the Waywardens Accounts of 1770 recorded work being done on “Rock hill, Rouck Hill or Ruck Hill”. (A Waywarden was a road surveyor. Please see our *History of Keynsham & Saltford 1539-1945*, edited by Elizabeth White.) This hill appears to have been the steep lane leading from Steel Mills to Wellsway,. Whether the name Rockhill Rouckhill also arose from a person’s name, from the rocky nature of the terrain or from a colony of rooks, is open to conjecture.

After the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1539, Keynsham was eventually sold off It became dominated by two great families, i.e. the Bridges and Whitmores. Henry Bridges bought the Abbey site and associated land in 1552 and the family continued to live here for much of the time until the early 18th century. However, by the time the family became bankrupt in 1854, all the property had been sold.

The Manor & Hundred of Keynsham with its appurtenances was purchased by Mrs Ann Whitmore, the widow of a wealthy London merchant, in 1613. This family never lived in Keynsham, but their stewards successively administered the manor. Manorial records show that some of them lived at Rookehill Farm. This fact, coupled with the undoubted age of the buildings, indicate that the farm existed by this date.

The Whitmores, facing the financial difficulties experienced by many rich families in the 18th and 19th centuries, sold off all the property and land in 1767 to a Londoner, Arthur Greenwollers. He is described as a gentleman and was most likely to have been a property agent or speculator. He then, in turn, sold off the Keynsham estate piecemeal, which accounts for many Keynsham property deeds reciting back to this date, even where it is known, or suspected, that the houses are older.

The Lyne family of both Bristol and Bath began buying up leases to parcels of land in the late 17th century belonging to both the Bridges and Whitmores. This has made our research into Keynsham houses and lands more complicated. The

1841 Tithe map shows the respective layouts of both farms. When the remnants of the property belonging to the Manor of Keynsham were sold by Henry Lyne in 1889, the sale included Rookhill Farm. Thus ended a history which had begun with the Manor & Hundred of Keynsham being granted to the Augustinian Abbey of Keynsham at its foundation in the second half of the 12th century.

### **Rockhill FarmHouse**

We were invited to visit Rockhill House to meet Robert Waterhouse, who is an archaeologist specialising in the history of buildings, to learn something about the history of the house. It has been sub-divided into a number of separate dwellings in recent times. Our hosts had been endeavouring to find out more of the previous history of the house and farm but little more had come to light. The available deeds recite back no further than immediately after the second world war when it was purchased by members of the Spencer family. They were responsible for developing part of the land into the residential caravan site and small industrial units still in existence today and which are still in their ownership.

At present, the house is divided into three parts, each having a separate portion of the, hitherto unknown, magnificent, medieval, barrel vaulted cellar (50ft long by 7ft high) which runs the length of the house. The two end portions are 17ft wide but the central portion is only 12ft wide. This would appear to be due to the insertion of the 'grand' staircase when the house was remodelled. All are being used as part of the living accommodation and are in a perfectly dry and sound condition. There is a two storey elevation abutting the rear of the house which Robert Waterhouse described as a 'chamber block' which could have been built any time between 1200 — 1400, but which he believes can be dated to between 1250-1350. This would have been part of a Hall and Chamber Block construction, with a raised ground floor above the cellar. He is also of the opinion that the house was rebuilt around 1820 as a plain stone farmhouse, twice the width of the old Hall, but with no bay windows. The front of the house was reversed to face south, the old well filled in and a new one dug at the back. This substantial holding was originally owned by Keynsham Abbey and was included in the Bridges property in 1552.

Rockhill is listed in the 1841 tithe survey as belonging to the Duke of Buckingham & Chandos. The senior branch of the Bridges family inherited the Keynsham property after the death of Harry Bridges. He was the last of the Keynsham Bridges and died in 1728, leaving no legitimate heir. It passed to the Duke of Chandos and subsequently, as a result of no male heirs, to the Duke of Buckingham & Chandos. The estate had to be put up for sale initially in 1841 due to massive debts, we believe Rockhill was sold soon after that. As a result of research, we know the names of several occupants/owners of the house and farm in the second

half of the 19th century

There is, unfortunately, no clue as to who rebuilt the house in c. 1820. It was unlikely to have been the Chandos family as they were already facing financial difficulties. It was not unknown for a well off tenant to do the work themselves, the property then being subject to a much reduced rent. Maps available subsequent to the tithe map show the various small alterations to Rockhill House

One of the sources in the society archives is transcriptions of notices of leases for sale from a variety of Bristol newspapers. Felix Farley's Bristol Journal featured numerous advertisements of properties, both domestic and industrial, in its pages in the 18th century, including many in Keynsham. Of the many quoted only one property is not listed as 'being on the turnpike road 5 miles from Bristol and 7 from Bath etc' but as 'pleasantly situated at the South End of Keynsham' This was in 1776. It's description would seem to match that in a survey of 1813 of the Chandos property, the tenant being listed as Henry Bardine, Yeoman. The accompanying map shows it in outline and has a footnote to the effect that 'the roof of this house and almost all the buildings belonging to this farm are in a bad and ruinous state.' The only other reference found so far to Henry Bardine, is in the Vestry Minutes where he is listed as an Overseer of the Poor in 1813. It is shown as Folly Farm on the first O.S. map of 1817 and is mentioned as such in the General Vestry minutes in November 1825 when it was minuted that it appearing that Mr Thomas Ford<sup>2</sup> Surveyor of the Highway, having been interrupted and refused by Thomas James the Surveyor of the Turnpike road in using the Dragon's Hill<sup>3</sup> quarry this Vestry have directed the Surveyor of the Highway to apply to the Justices for a license to enter and quarry in the Quarry at Rooks Hill on the Folly Farm. This Vestry being of the Opinion that the said Quarry will be most convenient to the Parish and least injurious to any occupier and the same quarry last mentioned having been and is a Parish Quarry for 30 years last past or more' (This minute was signed by ten members of the Vestry)

It is not known how it acquired the name of Folly Farm, but at a guess it could have been because the surrounding land is extremely stoney, and perhaps had not been improved in any way. This is probably why, when the remains of the manor lands were put up for sale in 1889, some of the plots of land which formed part of what is now the Chandag estate were described as being 'capital building land' etc By this date a member of a ubiquitous Keynsham and Brislington family has begun to emerge as a significant figure in our research. The Vestry minutes of the previous month of October 1825 recorded:

'It appearing that a balance due to the Parish from Mr John Wiggins of £92.1s 0<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d (£92.6p) and that immediate proceedings be taken for the recovery, Mr. Samuel Wood being prepared to act as Overseer to the end of the year. Agreed and accepted, his salary to be £30 a year from the Parish and £5 from

each of the other Overseers. Mr James Long agreed to guarantee Mr. S. Wood.' Two years earlier. Mr Samuel Wood is shown on the 1813 estate map to be renting a large quantity of land in Keynsham, both around Rock Hill Farm and also part of what is now the Memorial Park adjacent to the Parish Church. One of the chief difficulties in trying to chronicle the tenants of the well documented Keynsham farms is that they seemed to move frequently between farms. We decided that if they did well they were probably able to move 'up the ladder' to either a larger or more profitable farm.

With research being carried on by both ourselves and Dave Edgell, a society member who runs a business in one of the industrial units at Rockhill and lives in the 'chamber block', more facts began to emerge.

Samuel Wood was paying rates of £4. 6s. 9d (£4. 34p) in 1834 on a house and land. He is listed in the tithe survey of 1841 as occupying Rockhill farm and leasing a large quantity of land all over Keynsham from the Duke of Chandos. He appeared in a Bristol Trade directory as a wine merchant, the cellar would have been ideal for the storage of this commodity. It was thought at first, that he purchased the farm as a sitting tenant when the Keynsham estate was first put up for sale in 1841. However, the 1851 census cites the occupier as William Comer, aged 55, a farmer of 150 acres and employing 5 men. In 1841 Comer was renting Park Farm in Station Road (the house with the listed arch next to St. Augustine's general practice). It is possible that he purchased Rockhill when the Bridges property was sold up. There has not been time to check either the 1861 or 1871 census returns for Keynsham to establish who was in the property during that period.

Research into the Wood family became very confusing when it was discovered that the above Samuel married a Mary Ann Long. She must have been related to the James Long cited above in 1825 as guarantor. His son Samuel, subsequently married a Mary Ann Taylor! Both father and son, along with other members of the extensive Wood family were in farming. We were helped in sorting out the tangle by Jonathan Gibbons (Vice-Chairman of the Society), as these Woods are included in his family tree. By the 1881 census Samuel Wood, senior, is residing in the Paragon, Bath, in the home of his daughter Mary Ann (another one!) aged 58, and his son James aged 49. James is another family name. His father and brothers are also recorded leasing farms and land in the town. Samuel's death occurred in Bath in 1895 when he was ninety years old.

Samuel's nephew, Charles Harris Wood, was the next member of the family to arrive on the scene. He had also been renting several Keynsham farms prior to this. We do not know yet know the date he moved into Rockhill. Mr Waterhouse said that the house was given a complete 'facelift' around 1860 with bay windows of Bath stone being inserted on the front of the house with other Bath stone features. The Bath stone 'look' was very much the fashion at this time. Charles

Harris Wood is listed in a return of Keynsham owners of land in 1873 with just over 79 acres. The Wood families all appear to have been financially well off In the 1875 Kelly's Directory he is listed in both the private resident section and in the commercial section. After his first wife died he married again and is listed in the 1881 census as aged 56 and is described as a farmer with 150 acres. He and his second wife had a large family of young daughters. He continued to be listed at Rockhill until 1894 shortly before he died.

The next owner was Francis Adolph Fry, a member of the quaker family who were the owners of Fry's chocolate company. He purchased Rockhill in 1895 but lived there for only a short time. It was then bought by Robert Alner Bowring in 1901, along with a large quantity of land in the vicinity of the house. He was working as an auctioneer in Cardiff and had inherited a substantial sum of money from a cousin in 1897. He lived there with his wife and family until he died in 1934. His wife died in 1938 and in 1939 the house and a considerable quantity of land was auctioned off at the Grand Hotel in Bristol. It is not known who bought the property but it was used during the war for billeting American airmen with the officers occupying the house and the men in the ancilliary buildings. One Keynsham resident who lived close by remembers, as a child, seeing American airmen sitting in coaches, presumably waiting to go on duty. There was also an army camp in Courtney Road where Italian prisoners of war were based and a base at Somerdale Garage on the Bath Road. He also remembers that after the war the field between the front of the house and Hurn Lane was used for point-to-point horse racing until around 1950. A building marked on the 1817 O.S. map as the 'woad house' is listed as such in the 1813 survey, but in recent times this has been converted into a house. When the Keeling family took over the 40 ft. deep quarry and limekiln which was situated between Rookhill House and Rockhill they kept a bright blue light aeroplane in the old woad house. Journal Vol. 6 has an article on the growing of woad in Keynsham.

The 1939 sale notice particularly points out 'the well-built and commodious ranges of Stabling and Out-houses with accommodation for 30 horses'. A hunt used to take place from Rockhill. It followed a route across Wellsway and into the large field which runs along between Wellsway and the river, which was owned by the Bowrings. It was during this period that the lane running up from Steel Mills to Wellsway became known as Bowring's Lane. Many lanes in Keynsham were frequently named after a family associated with them in the past. Immediately after the war, one of the barns which lies parallel to the road, was opened as a PNEU school for primary age children, by Mr Hugh Folliot. It then moved to The Lons at Bitton in 1951. Rockhill House was Grade II listed in 1975 but removed from the list in 1995, as was Rookhill Farm.



Unfortunately these were just two of the many Grade II listed buildings in Keynsham which were then removed from the list, in many cases, unjustifiably. We are of the opinion that it was 'official' policy to delist buildings in places regarded as unimportant, as, in their view, Keynsham undoubtedly was. This was in order to limit the demand for grants to aid owners and allow development of the sites.

- 1 The poor rates were administered by the Overseers of the Poor who were nominated and appointed at regular intervals by the General vestry Meetings held in the Parish Church.
- 2 Thomas Ford is recorded on a number of occasions as being of Rook Hill Farm. This is one of the very common family names in Keynsham and the surrounding area.
- 3 The quarry at Dragon's Hill was on the site of Dragon's Hill Court

### **Rookehill Rook Hill**

This farm is situated on the west side of the Wellsway overlooking Dapps Hill. However, confusion has been caused since the early 1970's when the property changed hands and the new owners, Mr and Mrs Peggram, attached a sign to the wall of the house stating it was 'Rockhill Farm'. It is appreciated that the two names could be easily mixed up particularly if taken from handwritten deeds. The Peggams began the task of renovating the house and uncovered a large fireplace with a substantial wooden beam going right across the width of the room described as the Parlour in the 1889 sale.

One of the main frustrations for researchers is that many deeds refer to 'a messuage or tenement' without any clue to where it is, or was, situated. Rookehill Farm is one of the few mentioned by name. The earliest reference we have found to this farm is in the counterpart of a lease of "the messuage called Rookehill" and several lands containing 51 acres, by Sir Thomas Whitmore to Robert Randall, his daughters Joan and Anne and son John, in 1649. Robert Randall, and his father before him, were successive stewards to Sir Thomas, who was lord of the manor of Keynsham. Before 1673, the copyhold tenancy (now with 75 acres of land) was in possession of Robert Randall's widow, Joane, who then married Andrew Innys. In 1673, Andrew became steward to Sir Thomas, but after he died, his younger brother, Martin, became steward in 1695. Martin had married a widow, Joan Webb. The field names of the lands granted to these stewards are stated in the 1740 lease by Thomas Whitmore to Samuel Pye, a portion of which is appended here.

The next references to Rookehill Farm occur in a 99 years lease to Thomas Ford, a Victualle, and a rate assessment for four shillings and sixpence (22<sup>d</sup>p). In 1782, Hannah Ford's estate was rated at three shillings and nine pence (18p). A Lease and Release, dated 18th & 29th November 1794 recites:.....between Edward Lyne Esq., to Charles James. Several pages of houses and land including 'that messuage, tenement, garden and orchard called Rookhill containing by admeasurement 1 acre

2 roods 15 perches, bounded on the East by a high road leading from Keynsham to Burnett and on the West by a lane leading from Cooks Bridge (Dapps Hill) to Upfield. **The lease recites that it was conveyed to Dr Edward Lyne (deceased) by Arthur Greenwollers in February 1768.** This is an example of the Lynes buying up parts of the Manor property.

## **ROOK HILL HOUSE**

This is the house lying parallel to, and on the east side of the Wellsway near its Bath Road end. The front portion has the appearance of dating from about 1790/1800 but, attached to the rear of this, is a very large stone built lime kiln. The history of this house is difficult to decipher because of confusion with Rookhill Farm and can only be distinguished, with certainty, on the later census returns and entries in trade directories.

It would appear that the house was bought by the Lynes either at the time of the first sale of the Bridges property or during the final phase in 1858. It appears on the 1889 sale notice as Lot 1. The 1840 Tithe Survey records that the house was both owned and occupied by a Robert Hughes which seems to confirm that it was in private ownership up to this time.

One interesting fact has emerged from information contained in the society archives. It seems that at least three artists lived at Rook Hill House in the 19th century according to research carried out by the late Miss Mary Fairclough, herself an artist and founder member of the society. These were W.H. Hopkins, John Syer and William W. Gosling. A letter (also in the archives) written by Hopkins on October 31st 1856 from Rook Hill House and addressed to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Keynsham Parish Church, took the form of an application for a faculty to assign both him and his family a pew in the church. All three artists were associated with Bristol where their work was exhibited. These facts are borne out by a recent owner discovering a plaster head in the garden, which would have been used as a model.

From perusal of the 19th century trade directories and census returns, the house had a string of tenants who were there for a short time and appeared to be professional people or of independent means. The particulars from the 1889 sale notice are shown overleaf.

# PARTICULARS.

The whole Property comprised in these Particulars will be offered first in One Lot, and if not Sold, will immediately be offered in the following or such other Lots as the Auctioneer may determine.

## LOT 1.

# ROOK HILL HOUSE,

Situate close to the Eastern entrance to Keynsham from the Bath Road.

No. on Tithe Map.	Description.	State.	Quantity.			Total Quantity.		
			A.	B.	P.	A.	R.	P.
1394	Garden ... ..	Garden ...	2	0	14	2	0	14
1395	Rook Hill House, Garden, &c.							
1396	Orchard ... ..							

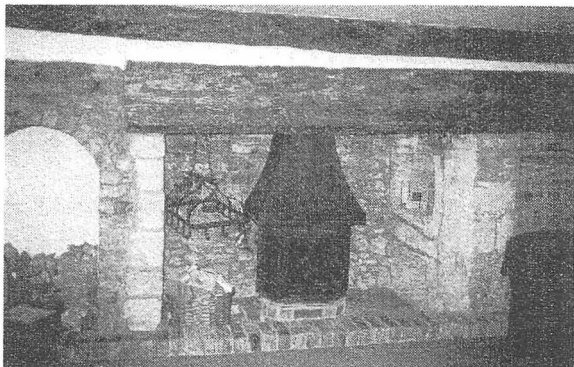
Land Tax 13/4.

The Timber in this Lot has been valued at £12:3s. 6d.

This House is in the occupation of Mr. James Cox, at £40 per annum, whose tenancy expires at 29th September, 1889. It contains on the Ground Floor—Drawing Room, 16ft. by 14ft., Dining Room, 16ft. by 11ft. 6in., Parlour, Kitchen, Back Kitchen and Larder, Coal-house and Wash-house. On the First Floor are three Bedrooms and Dressing Room with two Attics and Box Room.

The Buildings comprise Stable, Coach-house, two Pigsties, and small Cow-house.

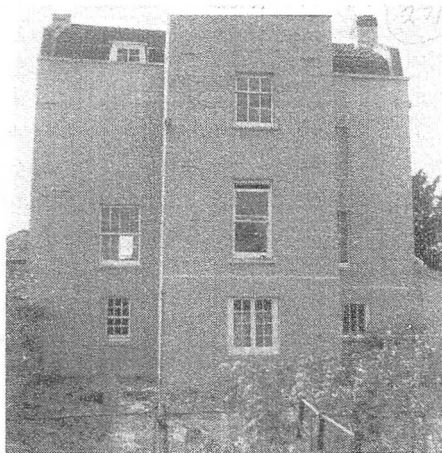




Rookehill Farm  
Fireplace



Rockhill Cellar  
East Side



Rookhill House  
Eastside showing  
lime kiln

MANOR OF KEYNSHAM

THOMAS WILITMORE ESQ. to MR SAMUEL PYE. LEASE 99 YEARS

Date: 19th May 1740. Rent 13s. 6d. Heriott 5s. Fine £40

THIS INDENTURE made the nineteenth day of May in the thirteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the second by the grace of God of great Brittain, France and Ireland King Defender of the faith and so forth and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and forty between Thomas Whitmore of Apley in the County of Sallop Esquire of the one part and **Samuell Pye** of the City of Bristoll Surgeon of the other part. WITNESSETH that the said Thomas Whitmore as well for and in consideration of free surrender to be to him made by the said Samuell Pye of all his estate right title and Interest of in and to the premises herein after mentioned which he holdeth by two severall Indentures of Lease the first bearing date the twenty first day of August one thousand six hundred and ninety five of the grant of Sr William Whitmore Barronett dec'd determinable on the deaths of Joan Webb Martin Innys and Randolph Webb the other bearing date the twenty-ninth day of August one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight of the grant of the said Thomas Whitmore Esquire and determinable on the deaths of the said Samuel Pye ##### and Mary his daughter as of the sum of forty pounds of lawfull money of great Brittain to him in hand well and truly paid by the said Samuell Pye before the ensealing and delivery hereof the receipt whereof he doth hereby acknowledge and himselfe to be therewith fully satisfied and thereof and therefrom doth clearly acquit exonerate and discharge the said Samuel Pye his Executors and Administrators by these presents he the said Thomas Whitmore hath demised granted and to farme lette and by these presents DOTH demise grant and to farme let set unto the said Samuel Pye ALL that messuage or **Ffarme** called Rookhill with a Barn stall hayhouse backside and orchard adjoining one Close of meadow called home Mead containing Two acres six acres and a halfe of meadow in Broadmead and one acre and a halfe of meadow called Clarke Mead halfe an acre of meadow in Little Hills one Close of pasture called Hills containing four acres and Close of pasture called Moore Close containing 6 acres and Close of pasture called Little Hills containing one acre and an halfe one Close of arable land called Bryants 'Ume' containing fifteen acres nine acres of arrable land in uper Edgeland in Downfield one Close of arrable at Saltfords Ditch containing four acres and one Close of pasture called Luccocks containing two acres eleven acres and an halfe in Upfield and twenty one acres and a halfe of arrable land in Middlefield ALL which said

premises are situate lying and being in the Parish and Mannor of Keynsham in the County of Somerset And all ways paths passages waters water courses proffitts Commodities and appurtenances whatsoever to the said Messuage Tenement farme and premises hereby demised belonging or in any wise appertaining Except and always reserved out of the present demise and grant unto the said Thomas Whitmore his heirs and assigns the bodyes of all Timber Trees and of all other Trees likely to prove Timber standing growing or being or that shall stand grow or be in or upon the said demised premises or any part thereof together with all quarries veins and mines of Coals stones and metalls AND ALSO doing suit and service to and at the Court and Courts of the said Thomas Whitmore his heirs and assigns to be holden and kept for his and their Mannor of Keynsham aforesaid when and as often the same Court and Courts shall be there held and kept upon reasonable summons and warning in that behalfe to be given and there to be sworn to present with the homage and so ordered ruled and justified by the Steward and homage there for the time being being in all things as other the tenents of the said Mannor have been or ought to be for or in respect of their severall Tenements there.

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## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY STYLE. Sue Trude

The following extracts have been taken from the minute book of the Keynsham & District Horticultural Association.

The trouble with minutes of meetings is that sometimes they only record the beginnings of an altercation/dispute and leave you wondering what happened afterwards.

The prizes, donated by the seed merchants, individuals and the Association, were highly contested and, although small by modern standards, they were well worthwhile in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then, as now, the prestige of winning was of major importance and prize giving often caused a few problems, as the following quotes will illustrate.

Some exhibitors were suspected of displaying produce not grown by themselves. A sub-committee was appointed to visit every garden of the would-be exhibitors but this was opposed by one member who said that they should only inspect a garden if they had "well grounded suspicions".

Several members visited Mr Witherspool's garden the Saturday before the show when he had no blooms fit for exhibition yet he exhibited six blooms at the show. Again, on show day, he received a garden visit when it was decided he might have managed four blooms but the other two must have come from elsewhere, and as he had no satisfactory explanation, he was disqualified and deprived of all his prizes for that year and disqualified for a further three years.

In 1888, Mr Copper also had similar penalties imposed as he had exhibited broad beans although he had none growing in his garden, but Mrs Belter was only deprived of her prizes as it was thought she was "ignorant of the fact that she could not procure flowers from another source". (Mr Belter was a committee member!!)

A complaint was made against a Brislington exhibitor in 1890 with regard to his onions, but he was allowed to keep his prize but warned that he would be closely watched in future.

In 1891, there was an objection lodged against a Mrs Gregson on the grounds that she did not personally arrange her exhibited bouquet. Her prize was withheld until some ladies watched her make up 2 bouquets. They were judged to have no shape, form or colour etc. So Mrs Gregson was deprived of her prize and the same went for Mr Gregson for aiding and abetting her and both were disqualified for three years. Mr Gregson's prizes were withdrawn from the cottage garden class as it was stated that his garden exceeded  $\frac{1}{2}$  an acre. [A cottager was defined as someone who grew produce for enjoyment and domestic use, not for profit.]

Mr Kilroy was awarded a prize for his shallots but the Committee was informed that Mr Kilroy had only red shallots in his garden, not white. Similarly, with his dahlias, only two had been cut off from the bed but there were 15 on show, therefore he was deprived of his prizes and disqualified for three years for acting dishonestly, and called before the Committee to be reprimanded.

In 1895, Mr Coggins had produced 8 or 10 plain tomatoes, but in his house (greenhouse perhaps) there were only crinkly plants. In 1896, Mr Jay went to see Mr Rawson's garden to find out if he did indeed have any cucumbers.

In 1899, Mr Pester was disqualified as he refused to allow judges to examine his garden.

In 1905, Mr Waverly, one of the oldest exhibitors, refused to enter the competition as he had taken great exception to his garden being scrutinized, it being the first time in 20 years that his word had been questioned. A Committee member was appointed to visit Mr Waverly to smooth things over. That same year, three contributors withdrew their entries following a visitation.

1897 was certainly not a good year for the Association, as the minutes recorded; July — “The fireworks artist offered a choice of final pieces and “The Queen's portrait was chosen.” Then, in August — “Much glass was broken at the Colour Works, caused by the explosion of a mortar in connection with the firework display”. [Did Q. Victoria go up in smoke?!!] The Committee did not recognise the claim for damages, saying that it was the fault of Mr Crane (firework artist) due to negligence.

As there were up to 34 members of the Committee, certain problems arose. In March 1887, a letter was received from Mr Sherwood Smith refusing to serve on the committee.

Mr Read, in April 1887, wished to have rule 2 altered, but no one would second the motion, so Mr Read requested that his name be struck from the Committee. A meeting of the Committee was held on January 28th, 1897, and another on February 6th, both being declared invalid by a meeting on February 13th when it was decided “that we start de novo”. Now what was that all about?!

A letter from Mr King stated that his special prizes would be withdrawn in future if the new rule as to cottages was persisted in. [The cottagers had to reside within 5 miles of the show.]

It was then proposed that a deputation should wait upon Mr King to explain and ask him to reconsider. At the next Committee meeting, Mr Gibbons said there had been no formal meeting with Mr King and the sub-committee were not prepared to report. At a later meeting, in June, it was said that Mr King had been under a misapprehension and he would continue his prizes for this year. Problems with members of the Committee resigning, then withdrawing their resignations seemed to be a common occurrence — (could it have been a form of moral blackmail?.)



Messrs Geof fry and Coxly were two such members, who withdrew their letters of resignation after having received some correspondence from the secretary asking them to reconsider their decisions and informing them that the matters which the Committee presumed had upset them, would be considered at the next meeting when all parties would be present. (One wonders what that was about.) A letter was read from Mr Poulton and it was decided that the secretary should reply in like manner! At a later meeting, Mr Gilmore reported that "the case of Wilson v the Society had been decided in favour of the Society". All very intriguing. At the Committee meeting the month following the above incident, the secretary read letters from Messrs Sheppard and Snell resigning as members of the committee owing to what they considered "the irregular proceedings" which took place the previous month. Once again, the secretary wrote asking them to reconsider. On reading these minutes I felt that a standard letter could have been used on each occasion.

Getting a celebrity to open the proceedings was not always a straight-forward affair. In July 1897 [that year, again], Mr Llewellyn MP was asked and he accepted, but later said he was unable to open the show as promised. The Committee wrote informing him that his name was on all the Posters and Adverts that had been distributed in the area and "that it was desirable he keep faith with the public". A week or two later, Mr Llewellyn informed the Committee that, after all, it was likely that he could, and would, open the show.

In 1903, a list of possible persons was compiled, as follows; Lord Methuen, Sir Redvers Buller, Rt.Hon. Walker Long, Countess of Warwick, Earl Temple, Duke of Beaufort, Mr Stope and the Mayor of Bath. Over the ensuing months, all declined because of other commitments. What happened eventually was not recorded.

All this goes to show what a lot of rivalry was engendered among those hoping to win a prize and one cannot help wondering how long these feelings lasted and whether it soured some relationships for good or whether it was friendly rivalry. I certainly would not have envied the judges their task.

Each year a little booklet listed the 220 or so classes which were divided into 12 sections. Two of these were separate sections for girls and boys under 12 years, and two others for girls and boys under 17 years. The cost of the booklet was covered by advertisements.

## THANKSGIVING FOR REV. STEPHEN WELLS SALTFOED RECTOR 1956- 1987

### STEPHEN'S LIFE

Stephen Glossop Wells was born in Eastleigh, near Southampton, on August 3 **1922**. When he was 8 the family moved across Hampshire to Overton. He went to Forres School, in Swanage, and then to Marlborough, in Wiltshire. After nearly two years at Corpus Christi, Oxford, reading Greats (Latin and Greek), he joined the Eighth Army under Montgomery and spent the years **1942–5** in the Middle East, North Africa and Italy, manning heavy artillery. Like many of his generation he was reluctant to talk about his war experiences. He shuddered to recall the horrifying slurns of Cairo and the relentless shelling of Italy. In addition to his perennial asthma he continued to bear the effects of yellow fever from Beirut, and his hearing was permanently affected by his lengthy proximity to the guns. While still in uniform he went to a clergy selection conference in Venice in **1945**, before returning to Oxford to complete his degree. He then moved to Cambridge, where he read theology at Westcott House. He spent the years **1950—6** in the East End of London before moving to Saltford, near Bath, where he lived until 1987. After three years at Ashbrittle in Somerset, he retired to Berkhamsted in **1990**.

### STEPHEN'S MINISTRY

He was ordained in **1950**, answering a call to preach good news to the poor. He joined the flourishing East End parish of All Saints', Poplar, under the leadership of Fr (later Bishop) Mark Hodson. He spent a great deal of time on youth and pastoral work and was deeply shaped by the reality of poverty and the destruction wrought by the war.

When Mark became Bishop of Taunton, he called Stephen to St Mary's, Saltford in **1956**. Taking over in challenging circumstances, Stephen gradually built up a wonderful ministry and congregation. After a year in Chatham, Ontario, in **1964—5** he returned to a renewed mission in what was now growing into a large commuter village. In 1976 he took on the additional parishes of Corston and Newton-St-Loe. In **1980** he became Rural Dean of Chew Magna, and in **1984** he was made a Prebendary of Wells Cathedral. The strength and diversity of St Mary's congregation, particularly the youth work, became widely admired. Several whom Stephen had nurtured followed him into the ministry. Stephen's gifts with children, his ministry to the grieving and despairing, and his openness in the face of changes and challenges, together with his extraordinary dignity, humour and gentleness, were recognised by everyone. These **31** years were the heart of his life. We were privileged to have him in our village. In 1987 (when others might have retired) he moved to Ashbrittle, becoming Team Vicar of the Wellington Team

Ministry. 1990 brought a move to Berkhamsted, and official retirement. However in countless ways, at St Peter's and All Saints, and in innumerable churches, towns and villages round about, leading worship, praying with and teaching individuals, giving encouragement and sharing joys and sorrows, he continued to make Christ known as faithfully and significantly as ever.

In 2001 hundreds gathered at St Peter's to celebrate Stephen's priestly golden jubilee. He chose two texts for that day: 'Apart from me, you can do nothing'; and, 'I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens ~me'. These words spoke deeply of his profound sense of inadequacy for the tasks God had given him, but also his joyful confidence that, despite many setbacks, God had given him everything he needed to be his disciple and witness.

At the end he was everything he had ever been. He was a priest, a faithful loving servant who exhibited every one of Paul's fruits of the Spirit. He was a loving husband. He was a constant and inspirational father. He was a selfless friend and tireless correspondent. And he was the epitome of the devoted grandfather, forming trusting friendships with his grandchildren that reflected the generous, yearning companionship of God.

May our sadness be matched by the angels' rejoicing. br Stephen Wells was God's gentle man.

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## BITS and PIECES.

### DID YOU KNOW?

During World War I, conkers were used to manufacture acetone, an essential ingredient of cordite and in World War II they were used to produce activated charcoal for gas masks. Part of the “war effort” in World War II was to collect conkers, for which you were paid 10 pence a stone (14 lbs).

### THE CHARLTON CINEMA.

Many of you will have been saddened by the destruction of Keynsham’s Charlton Cinema. Do any of you have memories of visiting it? Can you remember any particular film and why you remember it? Was it frightening, funny, beautiful or rotten. Who did you go with your first boy/girl friend? Please write just a sentence or so for our next journal so that we can put together all your memories.

In the 1950’s, Lockingwell Road was the last one out of Keynsham and Sue Trude remembers cycling down from there with her husband to see the films. They propped their bikes against the cinema wall whilst they watched the film and then cycled back up that then dark, lonely road.

### THE PALM COURT.

Another place of which some of you have memories, was the Palm Court of the Lamb & Lark Hotel. Did you attend Balls there? Was there a live orchestra? Please share your reminiscences with us.

You can send them anonymously if you wish.

### VE and VJ DAYS.

Again, as this is the 60th anniversary of VE and VJ Days, can you remember how you celebrated? I was a schoolgirl at Taunton and, on the evening of VE Day, in company of family and friends, we walked the two miles into the centre of town to sing and dance on the “Parade” there. I particularly remember a Scottish Piper who rendered various lively, if discordant, tunes for us. We had never encountered a Scot before and we had great difficulty in understanding his speech. St. Mary’s Church was open, all the bells ringing and several short services were held at intervals during the evening. There were, of course, no drunks about. No one I knew then ever visited a public house or had alcohol in the house. It was not “done” and we were all too poor to waste money. (I had my first alcoholic drink (a gin and orange) when I became engaged to be married!) What are your memories and do you have any memorabilia you would be prepared to lend for our exhibition on 1st October?

ED

# W. TAVENDER,

*Retail Dairyman,*

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*ALL GOODS*

*AT CITY PRICES.*

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# C. WATTS,



MILWARD DAIRY,

HIGH STREET, KEYNSHAM.

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*NEW MILK delivered Daily to all parts of Keynsham.*

*Fresh Butter, Devonshire Cream and New-laid Eggs.*

