

AROUND KEYNSHAM & SALTFORD PAST AND PRESENT



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AROUND
KEYNSHAM & SALTFOED
PAST & PRESENT

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Journal Edited & Produced by Brian Vowles.

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Cover illustration;
Leisure Trip on the River Avon entering the locks at Keynsham
in the 1930s

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from the society's website; www.keysalthist.org.uk

Notes from the Chairman

The historian always has the benefit of hindsight! A review of Keynsham and Saltford over the last hundred years shows that there have been some periods when very little has changed and others when there have been significant developments, to industry, housing, transport and so on. Inevitably, it is new construction that usually makes the biggest impact. This affects what we see as we lead our daily lives; often it involves losing green fields or countryside to bricks, concrete and tarmac and for many people this jars with a natural attachment to their surroundings and their past. In the 1960s there was a period of economic growth combined with a fashion, which now seems almost reckless, for demolishing the old and replacing it with new, “more efficient” structures. Many local buildings of historical interest were lost to modern replacements and new construction included large areas of housing in Keynsham, with associated schools, the Town Hall and Temple Street schemes, High Street shops and the by-pass.

Following that, although the 1980s saw areas of new housing built in both Saltford and Keynsham, was a fairly long period of relatively little new construction. But all that changed in the last few years, with substantial housing development in west Keynsham, the new Civic Centre, the redevelopment of the Somerdale site and schemes for east Keynsham in the planning process. Few would question the need for new residential building but while it is sad to see our countryside shrink, there can be compensations for the historian and archaeologist. Legislation now requires that developers undertake archaeological surveys at the planning stage to ensure that, at the very least, records are made before any ancient remains are covered or destroyed. Locally, this requirement has led to the discovery of extensive Roman remains at Somerdale, which appear to confirm that the

settlement of Trajectus was indeed sited at Keynsham. Taken with the findings of the last two years from work at the Durley Hill Roman site - and there is likely to be further excavation of this in the coming years - it does seem increasingly probable that Keynsham was a site of some significance in the Roman era. Whilst our Society is not explicitly an archaeological one, there is no fixed boundary between the disciplines of history and archaeology and we have always included the study of the earliest days of our communities in the scope of our activities. It is good to know that there is much more to be revealed about our Roman forebears and we hope to be able to report on recent discoveries in a future issue of the Journal.

Turning to the current volume, we have the results of research into a variety of topics in both Keynsham and Saltford, plus some personal reminiscences. In Keynsham, articles cover education, with the early days of Broadlands School, and industry, describing the fires that were a constant hazard in the 19th century Albert Mill. At Saltford, the old boundary marker stones around the village are described. On the biographical side we feature two very different characters: Admiral Benedictus Kelly, who played a part in eradicating the slave trade and spent the latter part of his life in Saltford, and politician Lucy Middleton (nee Cox) who was born in Keynsham. The contributions that our editor receives from members and others as well as those he researches himself provide a record of a remarkably wide range of aspects of our local history and I hope you enjoy reading them.

Richard Dyson

Chairman

Early Days at Broadlands

By Brian Vowles.

The first mention of a new school for Keynsham came in the Western Daily Press on Wednesday 2nd January 1924 when at a meeting of the Somerset Education Committee concern was expressed that there was a severe lack of secondary schools in North Somerset. A large number of children in North Somerset were attending Bristol secondary schools and the committee was paying £700 per year for them. This was in addition to the fees paid by parents and Bristol would soon require the whole of its own accommodation. So it was proposed that a new school be built either in Long Ashton or Keynsham and Mr C. Willoughby (a Keynsham Parish Councillor) argued the case for Keynsham by emphasising that the town would be growing at a faster rate than any other in Somerset over the next ten years, citing in particular the expansion of the Fry's factory.

At the same meeting it was stated that there was a growing opinion that secondary education should be free but the committee concluded, that in spite of the reduction in wages, there was enough provision for those qualified to need financial assistance to obtain it under the present regulations.

Progress was slow. Then the Western Daily Press, on Thursday 24th January 1929, reported that ...

SOMERSET EDUCATION. Scheme for "Modern School" Keynsham. At a meeting of the Somerset Education Committee at Bridgwater yesterday, H. H. Shepherd presiding, the Elementary Education Sub-Committee brought forward a recommendation for the provision of a new elementary school for 280 senior children Keynsham, together with a combined

special subjects centre and science room, and that the plans be drawn to allow for further extension of the premises necessary at a future date. J. Cooke-Hurle felt the school might one day become what the Board of Education called a "modern school." It seemed to him that with a school of this type they should provide sufficient land for a playing field. That did not mean as much extra expense as the committee might think, because if there was no playing field very large playgrounds would have to be provided at considerable expense, which would go a long way towards buying the additional land. Land would be required for instruction in gardening and one or two of the schools in the county were already giving instruction in poultry keeping. This seemed to him to point to a site of five or six acres. It might be that there were such recreation grounds in Keynsham, and the provision of playing fields unnecessary. Inquiries should be made. He moved that the Elementary Education Committee be asked to consider the provision of sufficient land for playing fields. Col. E. C. Pemberton seconded the motion, which was agreed to, and the sub-committee's proposals were adopted.

But where to build it? At a meeting of the parishioners on 3rd October 1929 to consider the education facilities at Keynsham it was announced that a central school would be built by the county council on Bath Road on land given by Messrs. J.S.Fry and Sons. This would accommodate 280 boys and girls and would provide facilities for instruction in woodwork for boys and domestic science for girls.

On Wednesday 15th July 1931 the Western Daily Press announced...

KEYNSHAM'S NEW SCHOOL DELAYED. Site to be acquired by compulsory order. At the monthly meeting of Parish Council, John Allen presiding, a reply was read from

the Somerset County Education Committee regarding the proposed new school. It was to the effect that the Education Committee was as much concerned as the Parish Council in the delay in providing the new school at Keynsham and was taking step to obtain a Compulsory Order to acquire the land. They were doing all they could to expedite matters.

Almost a year later things had still not progressed as the Western Daily Press reported on Wednesday 15th June 1932...

KEYNSHAM SENIOR SCHOOL. Uncertain When Building Will Commence. At the monthly meeting the Keynsham Parish Council, the chairman (Mr John Allen) presiding, a letter was received from the clerk of the Somerset Education Committee stating that it could only report that the committee had taken steps to prepare plans for the new senior school, which provides accommodation for six or seven classrooms, with possible extension to ten classrooms, with science rooms, assembly hall, and rooms for manual instruction and instruction in domestic subjects. These plans have been submitted to the Board of Education for their consideration. The writer regretted that he was not in a position to give any undertaking at present as to when the actual building of the school would be proceeded with. The chairman (Mr John Allen) moved that a letter be sent to the Board of Education with a copy of the correspondence, urging the Board to press the Somerset County Education Committee to proceed with the scheme for the provision of better school accommodation for the parish.

In December 1933 the Committee agreed to raise a loan of £15,050 for the erection of the new school and on 10th November tenders were invited for its construction. On 3rd January 1934 the local newspaper reported...

KEYNSHAM SENIOR SCHOOL. The Elementary Education Committee reported that in October 1931, the Council approved of the purchase site for a new senior Council School at Keynsham, and, but for the financial situation, earlier steps would have been taken to provide it. The position now was that the schools at Keynsham were seriously overcrowded and the statistics of births in the district during the past four years, disclosed a steady increase, not only in Keynsham itself but also in the whole district which it was intended should be served by this school in the Committee's proposals for reorganisation. Apart from this statistical information there were two important factors which had a bearing on the question. Messrs Fry and Sons were rapidly completing a large factory, and there would be a transference of certain clerical members the staff there. A new paper mill Keynsham was rapidly approaching completion which would give employment to 100 people. The Committee were satisfied, with the urgent need for proceeding with the school and recommended the Council to proceed with its erection. In reply to Mr Hobhouse, Mr H. Shepherd said the existing school would be used as a junior school

So finally in 1935 the new school buildings were completed at the top of St Francis Road and given the title "Keynsham Council Senior School" with 10 staff and 222 children to be enrolled from the local feeder schools of Keynsham Junior, Compton Dando, Norton Malreward, Whitchurch and Saltford.

On 26th June it was declared open by Mr H. Shepherd, the Chairman of the Somerset Education Committee and after the singing of "O God our help in ages past" by the school children, a vote of thanks to Mr Shepherd was proposed by Mr C. Willoughby and seconded by Miss Gwendoline Wills.



The opening of Keynsham's new school by Mr H. Shepherd the Chairman of Somerset Education Committee on Wednesday, 26th June 1935.

The meeting closed with a prayer from the Rev.E.W.Labrum. The newly appointed headmaster, Mr Harold Baker had only taken up his post on 23rd June and he had had just a few days to prepare for the event. The school doors officially opened to its first intake of pupils on 1st July 1935.

The school quickly settled to its role and soon was holding sports and cultural events. For example on 22nd and 23rd March 1938 an ambitious concert included gymnastic exercises, Scandinavian dances in national costume, selections by the school pipe band, songs by the school choir, recitations,



A scene from "Sleeping Beauty" performed on 22nd/23rd March 1938

an amusing mime, "The Sleeping Beauty," by 18 of the girl scholars, and scenes from "Mid-summer Night's Dream."

During the meeting of the Keynsham Athletic Sports Club on 29th July 1939 the school made a fine showing in the events against other schools from the area.

But then just four years after its inauguration dark clouds began to spread throughout Europe. As 1939 wore on a creeping realisation dawned on the populace that war was now not a question of 'if' but 'when' and precautions to cope with the conflict ahead were beginning to be seriously examined. Ominously on 2nd May, four months before war was declared, a representative of the County Architects staff visited the school to select sites for Air Raid shelters for the children.

Then, when Hitler invaded Poland on 1st September, schools throughout the land closed temporarily to receive evacuees. Ever since the merciless onslaught on Guernica on 26th April 1937 during the Spanish Civil War when the horror of unrestricted bombing had shown the future intentions of the Third Reich, defence against such aerial warfare and its targeting of a civilian population had become paramount in the thoughts of the government. Although war was not actually declared until 3rd September 1939, under a previously arranged plan (it was anticipated that bombs would rain down the moment the war started) on September 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th train loads of evacuees from London's East End arrived at Keynsham Station and made their way to the local reception centre at Bath Hill School. This group of 805 evacuees consisted of 368 unaccompanied children and teachers, 434 accompanied children and 3 expectant mothers and when Keynsham Senior School did reopen on 14th September it took in 35 children from St Vincent's R.C., Marylebone, with 3 staff headed by a Sister Gerrard. From Smeed Road School,

Hackney came 14 pupils and 3 from Central School with many of the younger children joining the junior school in the room at the rear of the Bethesda Chapel Hall on Temple Street.

1939.	58		
	During the holidays the school has been painted on the outside by Messrs Wiggins of Keynsham.		
1 st Sept.	The school closed to-day (in common with other schools in receiving areas) owing to the evacuation of school children from London.		
14 th Sept.	The school re-opened to-day working on a "single-shift" system. Accommodation for evacuees was provided as follows.		
	School.	Teachers.	Number.
	St Vincent's RC.	Mrs Gylvaer	
	0289. St Marylebone.	Miss Ball	35.
	41.	D.S.	
	Sister Gerard (Miss M. Hayes) is the Head Teacher.		
	Smeed Rd.	Mrs F.	14 boys
	662. L.C.C.	Hooper T.C.	3 boys
	Miss Lidman is the Head Teacher. 9 accompanied by parents		

The page from the school log recording the day WWII broke out.

A reorganisation of the school's curriculum to cope with the influx was then discussed during visits by Miss Harrison, an H.M.I, County Inspector Snelgrove and Dr. Jagger, a District Inspector from London. Later the number of evacuees in the school rose to 60 including 9 pupils from Our Lady of Dolours R.C., Desborough Street, Paddington but as the 'phoney war' progressed, within three months, over half of them had returned to London; although when the blitz started with a vengeance in the autumn of 1940 a fresh wave of evacuees arrived on 4th October.

However by June 1942 the total in the area had been reduced to 272, by March 1943 182, in 1944 139 but some, of course, made their permanent home in the town.

As many of the evacuees were catholic, accommodation for separate religious ceremonies and instruction had to be improvised. Domestic science was to be taught to the girls and the boys shared the gardening duties. Rural skills like bee-keeping and dairying were also to be taught to many of these children who never before had even seen a cow.

As if this disruption to the curriculum was not enough the winter of 1939/40 was one of the coldest on record. After assembling on 22nd January 1940 the school had to be closed due to burst pipes and frozen lavatories. On the previous Saturday night the temperature had fallen to -13° C and, due to the fuel shortage, it was still closed a week later. Although it was able to reopen soon afterwards when the Bath Coal Company agreed to deliver a part of its needs, the weather remained bad and up to 2nd February numbers were down to 52.7%. On that day a Miss Peake came to the school to discuss rationing and school dinners.

On 5th June Mr Draper H.M.I. called in relation to Evacuation Plan IV and visited the Women's Institute Hut and the Social Service Hut, the only possible places available for the education of juniors and infants should the necessity arise. These places had been previously been declared unsuitable on sanitary grounds by the U.D.C but by 14th June the Women's Institute Hut just off Bath Hill was being used by Miss Lewis for her practical dairying classes.

Following the Dunkirk evacuation when the Luftwaffe seized bases in France, real concerns arose regarding the safety of the children should the area come under attack. The head consulted the Chief Education Officer to ask if the children could be distributed across a nearby field and in a lane where there was a bank, a hedge and tree cover. The local A.R.P organiser Major Chappell agreed but added that it might be wiser to seek shelter in local houses. On 10th June the county architect examined the school premises for suitable rooms to be used as refuge areas and he decided that the domestic science room, the flat and corridor, the staffroom, the vestibule and science laboratory were all satisfactory for this purpose.

On 20th June 1940 the long anticipated first air raid sirens sounded; lessons were disrupted and the children scrambled to their allotted stations. During the following month this became an almost daily occurrence. On 2nd July it was 9am – 9.30 am, on 3rd 12am - 12.30pm, on 4th 8.10am - 10 am and again 3pm - 3.45pm. After the weekend, on 8th July it was 9am – 10.40am, 15th 10am – 2.45pm, 18th 11am - 12.10pm and on 19th 3.30pm. – 5.20pm. As the air raid warnings carried on through the nights, pupils' sleep suffered so it was decided on 23rd July to delay the starting time of the school day to 10am. On 24th July the sirens went at 3.15pm – 3.50pm, and on 25th from 1.45pm – 2.30pm before the school

closed for the summer holidays from 2nd August to 3rd September.

After they returned, the disruptions to the school day started once more and these continuous interruptions to lessons went on throughout September, October, November and December as the blitz became more savage. On 30th September 1940 successive trains brought their loads of evacuees from London with further arrivals on 4th October and these in turn were divided between the Keynsham schools.

Owing to the five-hour heavy raids on Bristol on Sunday night 24th November 1940 that brought chaos to the city, only 57 children arrived for their lessons the following day. The Bristol Tramways bus did not appear so none of the Whitchurch or Norton Malreward pupils were able to get to school. On the next day, 26th November, the number rose to 106 but still none appeared from the two areas mentioned above. On 27th six pupils from Whitchurch did arrive to boost the numbers to 112 but attendance continued to be poor and on 3rd December following another five-hour extensive raid on Bristol only 123 answered the register. Further heavy raids on Bristol during January, March and May 1941 continued to affect the attendance figures as the children's sleep was disrupted by the shattering blast of the ack-ack aimed at the droning bombers passing overhead and the anticipation of explosives landing on their homes.

On 31st May 1940 it was noted that one of the refugee pupils, Kurt Deutsch passed the entry exam for the Bath Technical School and was offered a "*place under the conditions of entry for refugee children*". It is possible that he may have arrived under the Kinder transport scheme that allowed a number of Jewish children to escape from Germany before the war started.

On 14th January 1941 a problem arose with the school meals when the cook tendered her resignation so on the following day it was decided that "*Mrs Morgan with the older girls would take advantage of the opportunity offered to carry out a dinner scheme*".

On 2nd June the school was closed to cover the requirements of the Somerset Agricultural Committee presumably because, being a rural area, pupils were needed to bring in the harvest in the absence of the many labourers who had been conscripted.

The air raids continued throughout the next year until Hitler turned his attention to Russia and his bombers had new targets, but by then, the worst was over - although they were not to know that. Perhaps a little late in the day blackout was installed by Maggs of Bristol on the school's windows on 1st August 1941 when it closed for the annual holidays. After they returned the question of fire-watching arose. The co-operation of the local fire guard service was sought and it was decided that not less than 3 members of staff should be on duty at a time. They would be equipped with a steel helmet, a suit of overalls, a pair of gumboots, a camp bed with a mattress, a pillow and 2 good quality blankets. On 20th October the fire guard officer called at the school and decided that local St Francis Road personnel would cover the school on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays with the staff on duty on the other evenings.

Poor attendance returned on 1st May 1942 following the devastating Bath blitz over the previous weekend and it was intended that blast walls were to be constructed in June 1942.

In 1943 Temple Street Infants School was closed for structural repairs and the children were accommodated at Bath

Hill. Consequently the 3rd and 4th year juniors had to be transferred temporarily to the new senior school and they remained there until 1946.

The Bristol A.R.P authorities sent out their gas van on 27th May 1943 and, having had their gas masks checked, 100 children filed through the van. This was repeated on 15th July for those 91 who had missed the previous exercise.

Demands on the staff escalated at a time when their numbers were dropping (one teacher Mr Rumnals who had been conscripted in October 1940 was unable to return until 2nd April 1946). On 8th July the deputy head, Mr Leslie Cheasley, was taken ill with a duodenal ulcer probably brought on by stress. In addition the school garden was now expected to produce vegetables for the school meals with the head responsible for the cost of seeds, manure, pea and bean sticks and for the sale of surplus food adding to his many other duties.

The school was kept open during the holidays with a rota of three teachers per week running additional activities. On 11th October, not surprisingly, the head was ordered by his doctor to rest being on the verge of a breakdown and in November this happened again. His deputy Mr Cheasley, who had by then returned to school, was forced to make more changes to the curriculum due to the lack of staff.

Harold Baker had been the head since the school opened, but it all had become too much and he was forced by his continued ill health to retire altogether later that month.

Even by 6th December the county authorities had not been able to recruit any supply teachers and before the school closed for the Christmas holidays it was decided that the

adverse conditions made it impossible to hold the normal end-of-term exams.

Staff shortages continued to be a recurring problem throughout the war and on 14th January 1944 the acting head was forced to take a class of 81 pupils for most of the day! A year later fuel shortages caused the closure of the school on 16th/17th January 1945 and although it opened on 18th it was forced to close again on 29th January following the severe weather which caused burst pipes, frozen lavatories and a broken heating system.

The problem of providing of school meals was solved when in January 1944 Somerset County Education Committee opened a central kitchen at St Francis Road to provide meals for up to 1000 children daily. These were not only for the school's pupils who had travelled some distances from the villages of Saltford, Compton Dando, Whitchurch and Norton Malreward but to all the other schools in the area. Distribution was achieved with the use of the yellow vans of the Somerset School Meals Service (although at first production was limited by the lack of sufficient workers in the kitchen).

The end of the war for the school came at last on 8th/9th May 1945 when it closed for 'Victory in Europe Days' and on 10th May a service of thanksgiving was held at the school at 3pm.

The school closed again on 5th July when it was used as a polling station for the general election that was to oust the wartime leader Winston Churchill and sweep in the Labour Party with an unanticipated landslide victory. In addition, as 10th and 11th September 1945 were regarded as VJ Day holidays, the school did not reopen until 12th September.

The school was used to announce the results of the County Council Elections on Saturday 2nd March 1946.

In October 1946 the popular headmaster Mr E Connock, who had taken over from Mr Baker in 1944, left to take up a similar position at Whitchurch County School.

By 1949 normality had returned and on Saturday 9th July the school announced that it would hold a garden party on the following Wednesday, at 6 p.m. featuring the School Silver Band, folk dancing, a physical training display, skittles, sideshows and refreshments. The admission fee would be 6d.

During these years somehow it had coped with the stresses caused by the huge influx of evacuee children, the threat of bombing, shortages of fuel, equipment and staff in the spirit of "Keep Calm and Carry on". The pupils had acquitted themselves well. They had continued to attend school in difficult circumstances and they had contributed to war effort in many different ways, for example collecting in 1942 2¼ tons of waste paper and on 21st June 1943, 1974 books for the 'Book Salvage Drive'.



Advertisement for a garden party at the school in 1947

Now the time had finally come to try to re-establish a normal educational service and following the 1944 Education Act, its role became that of 'Keynsham County Secondary Modern School'.

In 1956, with the opening of the Wellsway Secondary Modern School, the school was renamed 'Broadlands' (as it lay close to Broadlands Farm) to differentiate it and it celebrated its Silver Jubilee on 1st July 1960. It expanded significantly between 1963 and the early

1970's; five new buildings were built to accommodate the raising of the school leaving age from 14 to 16. Also at this time, part of the Crown Field off the old Bristol Road was acquired as a new playing field for the expanding school, with access via a new footbridge. Broadlands School took in its first fully comprehensive intake in September 1970 although for years its reputation as a lesser academic establishment persisted in the minds of the public when compared to Wellsway School's original grammar school roots.

In keeping with the times, on 1st December 2012, Broadlands became 'Broadlands Academy' a member of Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), the operational arm of the Greensward Charitable Trust which is a federation of academies.

SOMERSET EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Keynsham Evening Institute

SESSION 1949—50

ENROLMENT at Keynsham County Secondary School on September 5 & 6 from 7—9 p.m., or at first meetings of Classes.

Classes Commence on Monday, Sept. 12

Subjects —

NEEDLEWORK	EM BROIDERY	WOODWORK
OLD TIME DANCING	FOLK DANCING	DRAMATICS
CHORAL WORK	BOOK BINDING	BALL ROOM DANCING
FRENCH (Intermediate and advanced)		
RECREATIONAL PHYSICAL TRAINING		
MATHEMATICS	BOXING and FENCING	WEAVING
	LEATHERWORK	

Details of Time-Table and further particulars on leaflet from Superintendent: Mr. R. D. LANNING, 28, Broadlands Avenue, Keynsham.

After the war the school was also used for
adult education classes

Boundary Stones found in Saltford

by Hilary Smedley

The Land Acts 1850 was passed by Parliament in response to numerous requests to free up the sale of small portions of land. These plots had been cultivated by hand tools up to this time, and were small holdings and allotments especially in villages, where they had been passed to various members of a family on death of the owner. On the edge of each plot, boundary stones were placed with initials of the owner carved on the top surface of the front face. These allotments were small in size and could be anywhere in the village, so by selling or swapping, owners were able to combine these plots and make a larger acreage for cultivation. When the field on which they stood came to be farmed by one person - by this time it would be pasture and not plough or corn land - the stones were a nuisance particularly after the advent of the mowing machine and other hay implements, so many were removed. This situation was true in Saltford, and from 1801 to 1891 the acreage affected was 890 acres.

On 27th February, Jacob Henry Cotterell, of the city of Bath, Land Surveyor, the valuer *“acting in the matter of the enclosure of Saltford Common Mead, situated in the parish of Saltford in the county of Somerset, hereby give notice that I shall hold a meeting on the 23rd day of March 1850, at the Crown Inn, in the said parish at 10 o’clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of renewing claims in writing from all persons claiming any common or other right or interest in the said Common Mead, and each claim state the several particulars, in respect whereof they are made, distinguishing the claims in respect of freehold, copyhold, customary and leasehold property from each other, and mentioning therein the place of*

abode of the respective claimants of their agents at which notice in respect of such claims may be delivered". Meetings were held at different times of the year, the latest being in November.

Saltford Mead was land owned by George Norman whose farm was Norman House in the High Street. It stretched down to the river, along to the bottom of Saltford Hill and included the Ship - an old coaching inn with stables. At the rear of the house, several stones of a different type were put there from the Mead, one bearing the name T Hill.

At the entrance to the old cowsheds and stables in The Shallows, during site excavation, three more boundary stones were revealed, one bearing no initials, the other two having on them PF and JE respectively. PF were the initials of Perrot Fenton who lived in Avonside in the High Street in 1819 and died in 1837 in the house now renamed Jeffrey Lodge. He was very active in the village and given to good deeds. In the Valuation Roll of the Parish 1829 -1837, he owned the dwelling house, upper and lower vineyards, Mead Lane, Common Meadow, Nursery ground in the Street, Townsend, Orchard and the Mallows. This is the area from the top of the High Street, and where an ancient right of way (public footpath now), crossed over land (now the railway line cutting and bridge) to the stile at the top of Saltford Hill.

Perrot Fenton paid to have the large King James bible in the Church repaired and rebound in 1821. It used to reside in the glass case on the window sill by the font, but on being sent to the Diocesan restoration room for repair, it was found to be a rare edition, and they have requested that it stays there. Also he gave a silver flagon to the Church (the initials P.F. are underneath), and this is part of the Communion plate.

The following parcels of land were owned in Salford Mead in 1850 after the railway was built by the following people:- Harford and Bristol Brass Company, Edward Willams (bachelor), George Flower, Lamorock Flower, Avril wife of Benjamin Collins-Wooley, George Norman, Phyllis wife of Richard, Herbert Major, Anna Lavina Little (widow), James Gully and Sarah his wife and Hannah Densley (widow).



Perrot Fenton's Stone

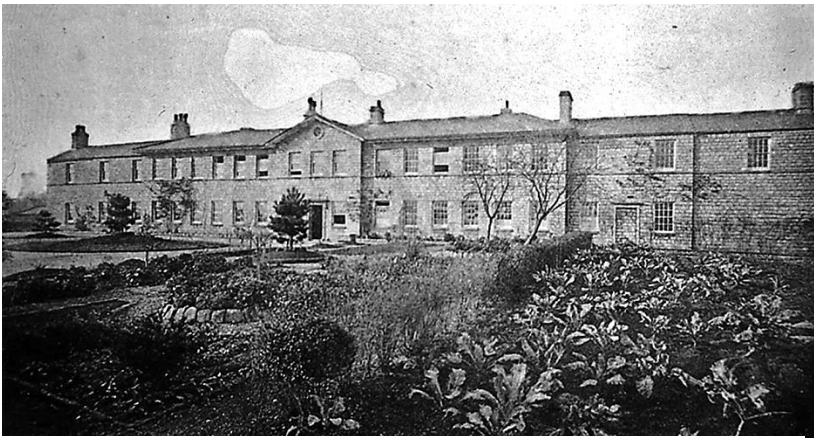
Some land was owned by the Feoffees (a charity for the poor in Keynsham administered from a house on Dapp's Hill). They were Richard Brickdale Ward, John Bazell Doveton, John Keys of River Avon Company, Herbert Evans, George Evans and widow. A large acreage was bought by Bath Sewerage Works in 1910.

In some cases it has been difficult to find the full name of those initials on the stones. PF is Perrot Fenton and he has already been mentioned. BWC is probably Bath Water Company. JL could be John Liles of Rose Cottage. (*I have found this name in the Bath Directory 1915, and Jack Liles lived there in the 1960s when I came to live here in the village*). T Hill is another one, and J E is James Edgell who owned the house and lands called Avon Farm. A lot of these can be seen at Spion Cop arranged on the floor of a barn, and the owner is willing to show them to interested people. *My acknowledgments go to Richard Stabbins for letting me photograph his stones and to 'The History of Salford Village by Percy Sims.*

Great Fires at Dapps Hill

By Brian Vowles

At about midnight on 13th March 1873 P.C. Kingcott of the Somerset Constabulary was patrolling his beat through the streets of Keynsham when he noticed a glow in the sky in the direction of Dapp's Hill. A quarter of an hour earlier when he had passed through the area nothing was amiss but now something was very wrong! He hurried to the scene and was shocked to discover that flames were pouring from the first and second floor windows of the large mill that stood next to the River Chew, a few yards below the Union workhouse.



The Keynsham Union Workhouse built in 1837

About the same time the unusual howling of a dog kept on the premises woke up both the manager of the mill, Mr Revell who lived in an adjacent cottage, and a neighbour, a saddler called Williams. Horrified by the sight and smoke drifting towards his home and the danger it posed, Revell roused his wife and children, who, clad only in their nightwear, scurried up to the safety of the workhouse where the matron

and the master of the institution, Mr and Mrs Holt, welcomed them in. Mr Holt, previously wakened by the incorrect news that a portion of the workhouse containing the children's dormitory was on fire, had already grabbed the keys and rushed to make sure that this was not the case.

All had been well when the workmen employed at the mill had left at seven o'clock on Thursday night and again when Mr Revell had done his rounds two hours later but now flames were roaring through the building. A great crowd of villagers gathered anxious to help and, aided by those inmates of the workhouse deemed fit and healthy enough by Mr Holt, proceeded to save the manager's belongings and rescue the four panicking horses from the stables.

The little parish fire engine under Mr Harvey, which was normally kept in the church porch, had been hitched up and rushed to the scene but, although plenty of river water was available, its hand-worked pump could only deliver a mere dribble to the seat of the blaze. Meanwhile a messenger had ridden post haste to the Bristol Offices of the Royal Insurance Fire Brigade arriving there at ten past two. Under orders from the superintendent, Mr Brown, the men harnessed their horses to the engine and galloped at full speed along the turnpike road to Keynsham arriving at the mill at three o'clock. But by then it was too late and the fire had engulfed the whole building (what a difference today's mobile phones would have made).



A mill on this site had been recorded in the Domesday Book and it had been mentioned in the deeds of the great

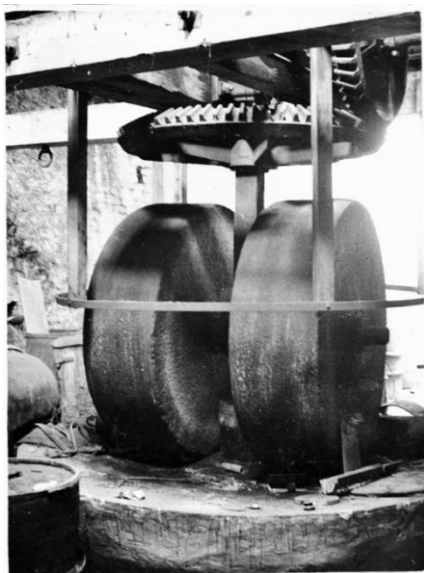
Keynsham Abbey. After the dissolution of the monasteries the South Mill was included in a list of properties held in Somerset by James I but it had changed its function to that of a fulling mill, scouring and finishing woollen cloth, in common with many other mills on the Chew. By 1830 it was described as *'The Cotton Mills on the River Chew, comprising a large stack of building with five floors, now used as a flax mill, with one water wheel and a fall of twelve feet - also a small dwelling house adjoining'*. Following a previous fire the mill had been rebuilt and in 1836 it was described as *'a newly-built grist mill, containing four pairs of stones, with an unfailing supply of water from the River Chew'* and it was still being described as a corn mill or grist mill until the early 1850s.

Then the Blue Lias Lime Company took over and adapted the mill to process the local Keynsham blue lias limestone which when burnt yielded an 'excellent hydraulic cement' much in demand for building purposes. It had the property of drying out slowly, even under very wet conditions, and quantities of this material are said to have been exported through the Port of Bristol. One newspaper, reporting the memories of an old local workman, referred to twenty one limekilns at the bottom of Dapp's Hill where South Mill was situated. After burning, the stone was finely crushed, and the mill equipment would have powered edge runners for this purpose. Some years prior to the date of the fire, a new firm called the Keynsham Lime, Paint and Colour Company had taken over the South Mill from the Blue Lias Lime Company with a Mr Owen of Victoria Street, Bristol becoming the owner of the business and when he had left his premises at half past six on the previous evening all was intact.

Then it was described as being of *"a very extensive character, comprising a mill, dwelling-house (Mr Revell's cottage?) warehouse, stable etc."* The mill was a substantially

built structure over 100 feet long, 60 feet high, and between 30 and 40 feet long; divided into three floors it was filled with a large quantity of valuable machinery. Eleven pairs of grindstones were in use when the fire broke out and four more pairs were about to be installed. In the fire all these valuable stones were destroyed as was a large stock of materials used for making colours. 300 barrels of the hydraulic cement were also stored in the warehouse.

It could have led to a much greater catastrophe as the Keynsham Gas Works were situated just across the road and pieces of burning material frequently landed on the gasometer. However the stables, the engine house and Mr Revell's cottage were all saved but the mill itself was entirely gutted with the machinery all bent and twisted by the inferno. The amount of damage was estimated at between £5000 and £6000 but fortunately the loss was covered by insurance.



Crushing stones used at the Albert Mill

The origin of the fire remained unknown but it was suspected that it was caused by friction generated by the grindstones against their wooden supports. Between 20 and 30 men and boys were employed at the mill and they all lost not only their tools but also their livelihoods. At the time the industry was in the process of being greatly extended with new machinery and equipment being installed which would

have provided employment for 150 hands in all, but the disaster ended the whole business.

For some time following the fire the works were allowed to remain as ruins but the premises were rebuilt and a Mr Gould joined the Thomas family as a financial partner and the new business opened in 1874 known as Gould, Thomas and Company, a name which continued until recent years.

However it had only been working a few months when a second disastrous fire occurred in 1875.

The scenario of 1873 was repeated once more. At about half past four on Saturday 9th January 1875 a man who was going to work, seeing a strong light shining from one of the windows and thinking that something was wrong, climbed over the gate and found the building alight. Almost simultaneously Mr Thomas who lived next to the mill heard a noise in the yard and looking out of his window discovered that flames were flaring through the window of the rasping room.

Again, the parish fire engine was rushed to the site but after just a half an hour the old machine collapsed. Messengers were dispatched to Bristol - this time to the offices of the Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance Company. Their engine was immediately horsed and together with a number of the fire brigade under a Mr J B Ivy, the superintendent of the company, they galloped to the scene of the conflagration. When they arrived several hours after the fire started, the two streams of the Chew provided a plentiful supply of water and this enabled the firemen to concentrate on saving the right wing of the building containing a large quantity of valuable machinery worth £500 to £600. The main part of the structure, 128ft long by 28ft wide was entirely burnt out however - although the walls were prevented from falling down. The total

damage was roughly estimated to be valued at about £1,200 but the business was said to be fully insured. Although the contents of the works were not of a very inflammable nature the fire raged furiously for several hours and the firemen had to keep pouring on copious amounts of water until two o'clock on Saturday afternoon when it was considered to be safe for them to return to Bristol.



The stock, machinery and fittings were fully insured with the Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance Company and undoubtedly this precaution saved the dyewood industry at



Workers at the Albert Mill between 1900 - 1910. Note the pile of logs waiting to be processed.

South Mill as the business resumed and soon it developed into a major employer in the village.

Possibly because of the fire, additional premises were taken as a temporary measure at Albert Road in Bristol and as a consequence the South Mill became renamed the Albert Mill, or the Logwood Mill. It is possible that when houses were built in Keynsham for the mill workers the site was also named 'Albert Road'

The commercial processing of dyewood continued at the Logwood Mill, just in occasional batches, until the early 1960s. The final load of logwood, the main commercial dyewood, was processed in 1964. Then after lying idle for years the Albert Mill was converted into flats in 1988 and its warehouse site on Albert Road developed as 'Harriet's Yard'.



The conversion of the mill into apartments in 1988

My Wartime Childhood Part 3

by Brenda Stone

This is the third episode of Brenda's wartime reminiscences of the time she was evacuated from Bristol to live with her grandparents at Farmborough and as such reminds us of a lost world.

Food being rationed, delivery day once a fortnight from the Radstock Co-op was like a visit from an old friend. The flour and sugar were packed in blue bags folded over at the top. Towards the end of the war, sometimes there might be a little sherbert which came in a white triangular bag. Although it soon got sticky it made quite a sharp "lemonade". In the winter a drink was home-made from a good spoonful of blackcurrant jam (previously made in the summer) topped up with hot water and stirred. Gran would also try to bake a little cake of some sort to have with a cup of tea to enjoy by our delivery man. Of course any brown paper was recycled and pieces of string carefully coiled and saved in the kitchen drawer – a practice I still do but it infuriates my children who belong to this throwaway era. When I think of my Grandad digging his enormous plot, four ridges across the width, no wonder he was happy for me to help him by dropping in the "tatties" when planting or even weeding after school. I can still picture him wearing his 'weskit' and muffler summer or winter through as he believed that if it kept out the cold it would also keep out the heat. However even now the gardening experience I picked up then is literally bearing fruit as in my advanced years I am still growing my own vegetables and fruit.

We also went fishing as a family as Grandad had a stretch of water at Christian Malford and Midford. Gran would make up a picnic, fill up the thermos and off we went. It was at

Midford that I remember seeing a mother duck encouraging her little balls of fluff jump from the middle of a pollarded willow 6 feet into the water which for me was quite a magical moment. During the winter it was rabbit shooting time using ferrets although they were not my favourite animals as they nipped badly. However the catch made a wonderful casserole for supper and provided another useful winter by-product as, after Grandad treated the skins, Gran and I sat and stitched warm gloves for all the ladies of the family. I'm cross that I never kept a pair as they lasted for ever. Holidays were non-existent unless of course you went to stay with a relative in the breaks between school terms. I do remember a bus trip to Weston and a walk to Anchor Head. I wore my woollen swimsuit that sagged to my knees when wet after a dip in the murky waters. This was closely followed by a shiver under a towel before Gran came up trumps with a meat pie to satisfy the appetite as usual.

Entertainment was in short supply. The odd celebratory dance took place at the Nissan hut and the radio played a major part in our lives. Friends seemed to be much more important then and we talked constantly to each other. On some Saturday evenings Ernie Fear, his wife and his mother-in-law who lived at Hobbs Wall would ask us up for the evening. Grandad and Ernie would play cribbage with matches in the board marking the "15/2, 15/4 and one for his nob" whilst the ladies and I would play Snakes and Ladders, Ludo and on special occasions Tiddlywinks but it was very easy to lose the counters which were difficult to replace. The other delight that Ernie had in store for me was to see the enormous chrysanthms with paper bag hats on. That glorious smell was something you either loved or hated. When Ernie returned the visit he always brought with him his spaniel and the two men enjoyed a glass of beer together whilst discussing 'important matters'.

I would like to complete my wartime thoughts with a confession. One weekend when my mother joined us we started a bedcover together. Material was in short supply and we ended up with an uninspiring narrow beige fabric called “craish” which had to be joined to make the required size. The design had to be drawn on with a pencil as Mum couldn’t get a transfer. She had some metal templates which were sewed over and over with tapestry wool until it was thick like a flat bobble. Then it was cut through the centre with sharp pointed scissors and opened out to form a flower or butterfly shape. This was joined with chain-stitch stems and satin-stitch leaves. Sadly by the time the war came to an end it still was unfinished so it was put away in a blanket box. My mother then passed it on to me when she was in her seventies with the words *“finish this as I shall never do it”*. So it was transferred to my blanket box where it still languished until two years ago when I got it out and sat at it until it was complete. It was finally finished before I fell off my twig and it had only taken seventy years to do it!



Mrs Brenda Stone and the finished bedcover

So take heart all those ladies with unfinished garments or knitting lying at the bottom of the wardrobe, there is still time!

Lucy Cox – A Politician born in Keynsham

By Brian Vowles

On 1st October 1889 a 29 year old Sidney John Cox married Ada Britton a girl from Queen Charlton at St John the Baptist Parish Church in Keynsham. He was a wire drawer at the Keynsham Brass Mills who moved by his conscience became a “passive resister” In 1904 he, along with 12 other respectable non-conformist townfolk, withheld his contribution to the Poor Rate as a protest against the 1902 Education Act as *“it permitted sectarian teaching at public expense in schools at which non-conformist children are compelled to attend, and in many cases the teaching is of a Roman Catholic character and diametrically opposed to our convictions”*. They were taken to as court but the outcome is unknown. Again at the Keynsham Petty Session on Friday October 15 1915 he was one of four passive resisters, who although they did not appear, were summoned for the non-payment of a portion of the Poor Rate made on April 20. The amounts they withheld ranged from 2s to 3s 9d. C. H. Abbott, assistant overseer testified that the amounts were unpaid, and the bench ordered one distress warrant to issue to cover the four cases. Whether they paid up is not recorded. The family lived at 16 Albert Road, Keynsham but later moved to 45 Park Road where Sidney died in 1949.

Some of his beliefs were to influence his daughter Lucy Annie Cox who was born on May 9 1894. She entered Keynsham Primary School on 4th February 1901 and she seemed to excel at all she attempted. In August 1906 she took first place in the Under-14 class to create a bouquet of flowers at the Keynsham Flower Show and in the 1911 Bristol Sunday School Union scholars’ examination from Keynsham Baptist Church she took 4th prize with an essay on Elijah. A intelligent

girl she gained a Somerset County Scholarship in 1908 at the age of 14 to study at Colston Girls' School in Bristol and there won a two year scholarship to become a pupil teacher which was how she was described in the 1911 census.

Following training at Bristol University she worked for ten years in various schools in the west of England and from these lowly origins she went on to become an important international socialist propagandist and politician in later life. As previously mentioned she had developed a strong interest in politics from her father, a radical Liberal with pacifist leanings and in 1916 she joined the Independent Labour Party (ILP) although she later recalled that *“at sixteen she was strongly feminist, at twenty strongly pacifist and at twenty two joined the ILP”*.

In 1919 aged 25 she became secretary of the Keynsham branch and attended the annual conferences. On Saturday 23 August 1919 she took part in a procession that was held in Keynsham under the auspices of the local Labour party. One of those attending was Ernest Bevin (then the organiser of the National Dockers Union and later to become Minister of Labour in Churchill's wartime coalition government and Foreign Secretary in the post-war Labour government 1945-51). Very prominent in the procession were members of the National Federation of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers. The Federation banner was borne in the procession and there were four other banners bearing their phrases such as *“Work not Doles”*, *“Industry not Idleness”*, *“1914 wanted 1919 query”*. Deeply affected by the slaughter of her generation she became increasingly involved in pacifism as well as her activities for the Independent Labour Party and joined the No-More-War movement.

The British No-More-War Movement (NMWM) was founded in 1921 as a pacifist and socialist successor to the No-

Conscription Fellowship. For the first two years of its existence, it was known as the No-More-War International Movement and it became the British section of War Resisters International. Chaired by Fenner Brockway, it asked members to strive for revolutionary socialism but not to take part in any war and Lucy took up the cause travelling around the country speaking on its behalf. By 21st September 1924 when a mass rally took place in the Gloucester Corn Exchange Lucy had become the secretary of the movement. In April 1925 she was speaking in Plymouth and in Bristol on Wednesday 11th November 1925...

“PEACE MEETING AT HEBRON. By permission of the Rev. G. Langley, a "No More War" meeting was held in the Hebron Chapel, the speaker being Miss Lucy A. Cox (general secretary the "No More War" Movement, the British section of the War Resisters' International), who stated that right through the ages war and armaments had utterly failed bring security to any nation, and to-day we were far from being secure. Dealing with disarmament, the speaker said no one would attack a defenceless country. Mr Cann, the chairman, thanked Miss Cox for her address.”

These addresses around the country continued and on Monday 18 November 1929 her target became...

THE BOY SCOUTS. No More War Movement's Protest. A vigorous protest against the military training of adolescents which, it was stated, was being instilled through the Boy Scouts movement and Cadet Corps, was made at a No More War Conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne on Saturday. A resolution was carried calling on the Government, to desist from making grants towards the establishment or maintenance of Officers Training Corps and Cadet Corps. Miss. Lucy Cox, general secretary, moving the resolution, said the Government was spending £ 100,000 yearly for the upkeep of 900 officers

and 38000 cadets. In order, to counteract military propaganda among youths, a resolution was passed, urging branches of the movement to establish woodcraft folk groups and other pacifist organisations.

On Saturday 1st February 1930 Lucy addressed delegates from Gloucester, Bristol, Cardiff, Cheltenham, Stroud, Swindon, Weston-Super-Mare, Stonehouse and Whiteway, who were attending the half-yearly conference of the Middle-West Federation of the No More War Movement, held at the Tyndale Schoolroom.

Later that year on Wednesday 15th October 1930 the North Bristol branch of the No More War Movement held a public meeting at the Fishponds Schoolroom, Wharf Road. Lucy, still the general secretary of the movement, said that *“though the unemployment and various other problems were important, yet first and foremost was that of international affairs. All other social problems stood little or had no chance whatever of being solved whilst £110,000,000 was being spent annually by this country building up and maintaining an army, navy and air force. It was no good waiting until a war was imminent to work for peace. Now was the only time in which a true, lasting peace could be built up, and it was the duty of everyone to see that that was done”*.



It was time for Lucy to try to become an M.P.

From the Kent & Sussex Courier - Friday 01 May 1931

“WOMAN TO CONTEST SEVENOAKS DIVISION. Miss Lucy Cox, the newly adopted prospective Labour candidate for the Sevenoaks Division, has

sometimes been called the Barrister of the Peace Movement because of her ability to marshal facts and arguments in support of the views she is presenting. Miss Cox, who is of Somerset birth, is the second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Cox, of Keynsham. She left that district some seven years ago at the invitation the National Committee of the No More War Movement to become their Organising Secretary. The following year she became the General Secretary of the movement and in the intervening years has become well-known all over the country for her strong advocacy of personal responsibility for peace and of total disarmament. Her work within the Labour movement has sometimes been lost sight of, because her name is so much more often associated with propaganda for peace. But, that her efforts here, too, have not been negligible, can be judged by the fact that from 1922-24, while still ineligible for the franchise, she was one of the vice-presidents of the Frome Divisional Labour Party. In the Labour movement of the South-West of England she is even yet probably better known for the work she did from 1921-24 as Hon. Secretary of the South-Western Divisional Council of the I.L.P. than for her subsequent activities. Miss Cox is a teacher by profession. A Somerset County Scholarship won at the age of fourteen, enabled her to pass to the Colston's Girls' School, Bristol, and later she studied at Bristol University. One result of her adoption will be a considerable impetus to Labour activities throughout the Sevenoaks constituency. Already meetings are being arranged in various parts of the Division".

However on Wednesday 14th October 1931 it was announced that "*Miss Lucy Cox, general secretary of the No More War Movement, was adopted last night as the Labour candidate for South Paddington, in opposition to Vice-Admiral E. A. Taylor*".

She lost by 22,674 votes

Lucy Cox left the No-More-War movement in 1932 to concentrate on her work for the Labour Party and was adopted for the West Riding of Yorkshire constituency of Pudsey and Otley. At the Labour Party Conference in 1935 Lucy Cox (Pudsey) stated "*We do not need an international police force. We need an international lunatic asylum.*" Her fellow pacifist Dr. Alfred Salter M.P., made this proposition: "*We should advise Abyssinia - Throw down your arms and refuse to fight. Offer hospitality to the invader, and trust in the whole world and in the return to sanity and decency to the Italian people ultimately to restore your independence*" Unfortunately this did not fit il Duce Benito Mussolini's plans for a new Roman Empire! At Pudsey and Otley she came third in the 1935 election polling just 23.3% of the vote.

On 1st May 1936 (May Day) aged 41 she married, at Caxton Hall Westminster, James Middleton, the secretary of the Labour Party, with whom she had been having a relationship.

Her political ambitions improved when in the following year, she became Labour candidate for Plymouth Sutton, the seat held since 1919 by Nancy Astor, the first woman to sit in the House of Commons. With a general election suspended because of the outbreak of war in 1939, the now Lucy Middleton abided by the national 'electoral truce' between the major parties for the duration, though this did not mean she had dropped her candidature for the seat.

But she did not face Nancy Astor in the July 1945 general election because Astor had earlier declared that she would not stand again and in the landslide that brought Attlee's Labour Government into power, Lucy Middleton gained the seat from the Tories. She made her maiden speech on 20th August in a debate on foreign affairs and world peace, describing this as "*of all priorities the most important*

priority.” In this post-war Parliament, she remained active on international matters, participating in parliamentary delegations to various European countries.



Lucy Middleton nee
Cox, c. 1950 (National
Portrait Gallery)

She also managed to find time occasionally to raise issues more relevant to her Somerset birth place, as in her question on the proposed Keynsham Bypass on 21st April 1947 when she asked the Minister of Transport *“when it is expected that work will be commenced on the proposed new section of the Bristol-Bath road to by-pass the village of Keynsham”* and another question on 11th February 1948 about telegram deliveries to Keynsham, when she asked the Postmaster-General *“during what hours telegrams are delivered in the village of Keynsham, Somerset; why telegrams are accepted for but not delivered in this village on Saturday afternoons; what steps are taken to inform senders that their telegrams will not be delivered until the following day; and, where no such information is given, what steps are taken to reimburse senders for the cost incurred”*. The latter arose because of a telegram she herself had sent to her husband there, which was delivered very late.

It is worth noting that after becoming an M.P. her opinion of the Boy Scouts had changed somewhat since 1929 when she opened a fair held in St. Simon's Church Hall. Plymouth in May 1950 for the 32nd (St. Simon's) Plymouth Scout Troop. Then she said that at the end of an inquiry into the usefulness of organisations working for youth, she had the definite impression that the only organisation in the country

which really, catered for the needs of growing boys in every sense was the Scout movement, although other organisations were doing useful work. She referred particularly to the international activities of the movement, in which she was quite sure it was doing a very great and useful work.

Though she held on to her Plymouth Sutton seat in the 1950 election, she lost in the election of the following year, when Churchill returned to power and the winning Tory was Jackie Astor, Nancy's son. She tried to regain it in 1955, but failed, and the following year was not re-nominated as its Labour candidate. Nevertheless she remained active for the rest of her life, advising the Labour Government and running the charity War on Want for 10 years from 1958.

She was a member of Wimbledon Labour Party when the idea of publishing a book on the contribution of women to the labour movement was put forward as a way to celebrate International Women's Year in 1975. The Labour Party agreed to publish the book, and Lucy Middleton edited the essays of the nine younger women she had invited to contribute. When it was finished the Labour Party General Secretary decided there was no money to publish the book, but Croom Helm agreed to publish it as "*Women in the Labour Movement, the British experience*" in 1977. By October 1983, however, declining health forced her to enter Wandle Valley Hospital, Carshalton, where she died on 20th November 1983 from a cerebral thrombosis and Parkinson's disease aged 89.

In her native town little is known of this remarkable woman's concerns for mankind and her idealistic, but as some might say naïve, pursuit of peace and the question remains - should her birthplace have a plaque (as with Ernie Bevin in Winsford and Earl Alexander at Weston-Super-Mare,) or perhaps a road named after her as in Trescothick Close (for the England cricketer)?

Saltford's Liberator of Slaves, Admiral Kelly

by Phil Harding, Chairman of Saltford Environment Group and leader of SEG's online 'History of Saltford' project.

Introduction

On 1st October 2016 the MP for North East Somerset, Jacob Rees-Mogg, unveiled a Blue Plaque at Saltford House, High Street, Saltford commemorating Admiral Benedictus Marwood Kelly who lived there from 1856 until 1867. But just who was this naval officer, liberator of slaves and benefactor and why didn't we know more about him and the amazing contribution he made to help end the grotesquely cruel African slave trade before?

Having lived in Saltford since 1991 I had heard that a certain Admiral Kelly once lived in Saltford House but not much was said or published about him. However, having carried out extensive research on the Admiral including a visit to meet the current Squire of Kelly in Devon, I was astonished to discover what a remarkable life he had lived and in particular his important contribution to help end slavery. Yet even more than that, having entered the Royal Navy at age 13 he gave significant support for the education of children in the 19th Century paying by bequest and with precise instructions in his will for the construction of the boarding school Kelly College in Tavistock (now known as Mount Kelly) and during his time whilst he lived in Saltford providing financial support to our local school and helping the poor in the village.

During his active career and before his work freeing slaves Benedictus Kelly whilst in the junior ranks of the navy served on several famous warships fighting the French and Spanish Fleets in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.

In June 2016 Saltford Parish Council sought and finally obtained planning permission from Bath & North East Somerset Council for a blue plaque acknowledging Admiral Kelly's residency to be fixed to one of the Grade II listed stone entrance gate posts at Saltford House. Saltford House was Admiral Kelly's home in Saltford from 1856 until 1867 when he died there. This is the first (and possibly only) blue plaque to be permitted in Saltford's Conservation Area.

Family life

Benedictus Marwood Kelly was born in 1785, at Holsworthy, Devon and died aged 82 in 1867 at Saltford House, Somerset, after a very eventful life. The son of Benedictus Marwood Kelly (1752 - 1836), who was a lawyer and private banker, and Mary Coham, he was a descendent of the distinguished and ancient Kelly family of Kelly House, Kelly, Devon. At one time it was considered highly probable that Benedictus Kelly would inherit Kelly House as his 1st cousin Arthur Kelly (b. 1804) who was the heir to Kelly House was thought to be too weak to survive childhood. However Arthur inherited the house aged 19 in 1823, the year after Benedictus retired from active naval service, and thereafter Arthur lived on into adulthood and fathered 10 children!

Perhaps partially as a result of this disappointment for Benedictus he became somewhat estranged from the Kelly family in Devon. He married late in life twice. He married his first wife Mary Ann Price when he was 52 but sadly she died in childbirth a year after their marriage. He married his second wife Juliana Boyd in 1855 when he was 70 but he and Juliana had no children to survive him and tell his story. Benedictus and Juliana moved to Saltford the following year when he purchased the late-Palladian style Georgian 18th Century house, Saltford House.

His widow Juliana survived him and from her wealth paid for the construction of Saltford School in Queen Square in 1874 which has since become the Church hall for St Mary's church. Like her husband, she was a great benefactor in the village, helping the poor, and was affectionately known as 'Mrs Admiral Kelly'.

A remarkable hero

Benedictus joined the Royal Navy in October 1798 as an Able Seaman at age 13 at a time when childhood was short-lived. Had he been of a 'lower social order' he might have joined even earlier. The rank of Able Seaman was only temporary for passage out to join *HMS Volgate* in the Mediterranean as a Midshipman where he spent just three weeks in November 1798 before being transferred to his Uncle's ship *HMS Gibraltar*.

Aided by the supervision and guidance of his uncle, Captain William H Kelly, at a time when the Royal Navy was fighting the combined forces of the French and Spanish fleets, Benedictus became an officer rising eventually to the rank of Admiral in 1863 on the reserve list. He never served in active service as an Admiral, only as a Captain but in very dangerous and, for those serving at sea, uncomfortable times. Indeed the stress and conditions were so bad that they took their toll on Benedictus and he retired on health grounds in 1822.

During Kelly's active service in the Royal Navy (1798-1822), some of the sailors under his command on the ships on which he served would have been pressed men. The Royal Navy faced a shortage of qualified seamen during wartime so that at the time of the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805, over half the Royal Navy's sailors were pressed men forced into service by "The Impressment Service" (known as Press Gangs).

The controversial power of the Impressment Service to conscript was limited by law to seafarers, "*eligible men of*

seafaring habits between the ages of 18 and 55 years", including merchant seamen, longshoremen and fishermen. British impressment was abandoned in 1815 following the end of the Napoleonic wars.

Whilst serving on HMS Gibraltar he attended the 1800 expedition to Ferrol (on the Atlantic coast of NW Spain) and then the Egyptian campaign of 1801 when the Royal Navy carried and escorted troops to Aboukir Bay, Egypt, to drive French forces out of Egypt.



Painted in 1838 when Captain Kelly was aged 52 or 53 this portrait is by the Italian painter Paulo Teroni. It was probably painted in Florence whilst he was on honeymoon with his first wife, Mary. The painting was at one time hanging on a wall in Saltford House; this image has been reproduced by kind permission of Mount Kelly where the painting hangs in the school library.

Sultan Selim III, the Ottoman sultan from 1789 to 1807, awarded the "Order of the Crescent" otherwise known as "The Sultan's Medal for Egypt, 1801" to Officers (gold) and NCOs (silver) for the liberation of Egypt from the French. Kelly is seen wearing the Sultan's medal in his 1838 portrait painting.

In 1801 whilst serving on *HMS Gibraltar* Kelly (age 16) he was wounded during a boat attack on the French

defences at Porto Ferrajo (now Portoferraio) on the Mediterranean island of Elba (near Corsica). The nature of his wounds is not known.

This was during the French Wars following the French Revolution. The French were holding the fortress town of Porto Ferrajo under siege following their occupation of mainland Tuscany. The town was heavily outnumbered by the French but the Royal Navy came to the rescue and the French lost all their frigates that had been sent to blockade the port.

In 1804 at age 19 possibly the most famous ship Kelly served on in his whole naval career was *HMS Temeraire*; he was a Midshipman at the time. A Midshipman was an officer cadet or a commissioned officer candidate of the most junior rank. In October 1805, whilst Kelly was serving on the schooner *HMS Eling* patrolling the Channel, *HMS Temeraire* itself saw action at the Battle of Trafalgar.

During the battle *HMS Temeraire* followed and then came to the rescue of the stricken *HMS Victory*. In a dramatic battle *HMS Temeraire* fought and captured two French ships, the *Fougueux* and the *Redoutable*.

This won the ship public renown in Britain and JMW Turner famously painted his own impression of its journey to the breaker's yard in 1838, coincidentally the same date of Kelly's portrait painting. The Turner painting was known as "The Fighting Temeraire" and was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1839. In 2005 this evocative oil painting was voted the nation's greatest painting in a poll organised by BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

Saving slaves

But it is Kelly's work on the West Africa Squadron intercepting slave trading ships from 1818 to 1822 where he freed over 350 slaves and many more slaves were also freed

during his leadership of the West Africa Squadron for most of the time he was in charge of *HMS Pheasant* that deserves recognition and our admiration.

Before 1807 Britain had been a major trader in slaves and the Royal Navy itself had assisted that trade by escorting slave ships down the African coast and fought major battles for control of the 'sugar islands' of the West Indies. At the end of the 18th Century an average of over 150 slave ships left the ports of Liverpool, Bristol, and London each year. They carried goods (e.g. copper or brass goods including pots and pans, cutlery, trinkets, cotton cloth, guns and alcohol) to be traded for slaves (kidnapped men, women and children) on the West African coast who were then taken to the West Indies to be sold at slave auctions. Brass goods made at the brass mills along the River Avon including at Saltford Brass Mill were used for slave trading.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807 was passed after the parliamentary campaign against the British slave trade led by William Wilberforce. As a direct consequence the Royal Navy established the West Africa Squadron (or Preventative Squadron) in 1808.

The role of the squadron was to suppress the Atlantic slave trade by patrolling the west coast of Africa. The squadron's home base was Portsmouth and between 1808 and 1860 at considerable expense it captured or destroyed 1,600 slave ships freeing 150,000 Africans. The United States Navy became involved and assisted the West Africa Squadron from 1820.

Having captured a slaving port in West Africa, in 1819 the Royal Navy created a naval station and renamed it Freetown. By the 1850s, around 25 vessels and 2,000 officers and men were on the station. Freetown would become the

capital and largest city of the first British colony in West Africa, Sierra Leone.

Most of the slaves freed would choose to settle in Sierra Leone to avoid the very real risk of being re-captured and enslaved again, a danger they faced in any other part of Africa at that time.

Despite the prize money paid to naval officers and men for captured ships, as well as 'head money' for released slaves, the Royal Navy considered the West Africa station at Freetown one of its worst and least popular postings and earned the description "*White Man's Death*". This was due to the prevalence of tropical diseases which led to a great loss of life; indeed several of Captain Kelly's men died from yellow fever. This provided Royal Navy surgeons with experience to fight such diseases but even Captain Kelly's ship's surgeon, Mr Dunbar, died from the disease.

Such patrolling of the coast was arduous, unpleasant, dangerous as the slave traders were sometimes violent in their attempts to avoid capture, and often frustrating. The slavers sometimes had faster ships but by the 1840s paddle steamers were deployed by the squadron; these had the advantage of independence of the wind and a shallow draught which enabled them to patrol the shallow shores and rivers.

The Royal Navy regarded any ships transporting slaves to be pirate ships. The 22-gun sloop *HMS Pheasant* under the command of Captain Kelly between 1818 and 1822 intercepted and examined several Portuguese, French and Spanish vessels suspected to be capable of carrying slaves. They captured and detained three Portuguese slave trading ships. The first of these was on 30th July 1819 the *Nova Felicidade* with 71 slaves on board. In October 1819 the *Vulcano* also known as *Volcano do Sol*, with 260 slaves on board, was captured but subsequently escaped when Kelly's men were murdered by the

Portuguese. Having re-captured the ship they sailed it to Bahia in Brazil where the cargo of slaves was sold, including the kroomen (African sailors recruited locally into the Royal Navy). Finally in January 1821 the *Adelaide* with 232 slaves on board was captured and detained.



A painting of HMS Pheasant appears on this 10p Ascension Island stamp. Dated 1819 this was whilst Captain Kelly was in command of the ship. The West Africa Squadron used Ascension Island as a supply depot, a most probable explanation for why *HMS Pheasant* appeared on this postage stamp.

A further 50 slaves were freed by Kelly from mainland Africa. According to the ship's log on 26th August 1820 Kelly went ashore from *HMS Pheasant* at Dutch Accra (Ghana) to "*compel the natives to deliver up a number of slaves.*" Kelly's request was refused. Kelly returned to *HMS Pheasant* and his ship bombarded the town.

After two hours of the bombardment a message was received that the slaves would be handed over. He went ashore the next day (27th August) – surely at great risk to himself - to make arrangements for their reception. 50 men, women and children were taken aboard on 29th August and they were taken up the coast to the colony of liberated slaves in Sierra Leone.

Kelly's 1819 court evidence that helped end slavery

This aspect of Kelly's naval service, the capturing of slave ships and freeing of over 350 slaves, was further and greatly enhanced as a result of the traumatic evidence he gave to the Court of Sierra Leone in 1819. This was about the disgusting and inhumane condition he found some of the slaves to be in. His choice of words was so compelling that his evidence was used in several publications at the time to try and finally stop the trade. When the "Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa" was instituted 20 years later in 1839 Kelly's evidence was reproduced in the prospectus. Prince Albert was the Society's President and he with his new wife Queen Victoria helped to fund it.

The African Institution Report (London, 1820) recorded the evidence Captain Kelly gave to the Court at Sierra Leone concerning the capture of *Nova Felicidade*. Not only does it describe the horrors that Kelly found, but his words show his compassion as he described the distressing condition of the 71 slaves held on the *Nova Felicidade* when it was seized by *HMS Pheasant* on 30th July 1819. Captain Kelly's evidence was as follows:

"I do further declare, that the state in which these unfortunate creatures were found is shocking to every principle of humanity; seventeen men shackled together in pairs by the legs, and twenty boys, one on the other, in the main hold, a space measuring eighteen feet in length, seven feet eight inches

main breadth and one foot eight inches in height; and under them the yams for their support.

One of these unfortunate creatures was in the last stage of dysentery, whose natural evacuations ran involuntary from him amongst the yams, creating effluvia too shocking for description.

The appearance of the slaves, when released from their irons, was most distressing; scarcely any of them could stand on their legs, from cramp and evident starvation. The space allowed for the females, thirty four in number, was even more contracted than that for the men, measuring only nine feet four inches in length, four feet eight inches main breadth, and two feet seven inches in height, and perhaps during the day allowed to come on deck, they did not present so distressing an appearance as the men."

The African Institution Report went on to say: "*By the care and attention of Captain Kelly, his officers and crew, the lives of all these poor creatures were saved, except one, who died on the passage to Sierra Leone... after a regular examination of witnesses the slaves were landed at Sierra Leone, on the 20th August, and sent to the town of Bathurst.*"

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807 abolished the trading in slaves and encouraged British action to apply pressure to other European countries to abolish their own slave trades, but it did not abolish slavery itself. It was 26 years later when the Slavery Abolition Act 1833 abolished slavery throughout the British Empire.

Before 1835, and during Kelly's active service in the early days of the West Africa Squadron, the Royal Navy was only allowed to take slave ships that actually had slaves aboard, not those clearly used for the purpose of legitimate trade. That had meant that the crew of slave ships being pursued had a reason to throw their slaves overboard before

capture so as to avoid confiscation of the vessel. Thereafter the presence of manacles and chains, extra planking or water storage in ships intercepted was deemed as evidence of illegal slave trading.

It took almost 60 years of diplomacy and naval patrolling to finally end the Atlantic slave trade. The Royal Navy patrols were not without controversy and had led to strong political debate questioning the high financial cost and purpose of the patrols. However Captain Kelly's distressing evidence to the Court of Sierra Leone had helped strengthen the case against slavery and for this we have a duty to recognise what he did for the benefit of others whilst at great personal risk to himself and the men serving under him.

Kelly's later life and bequest

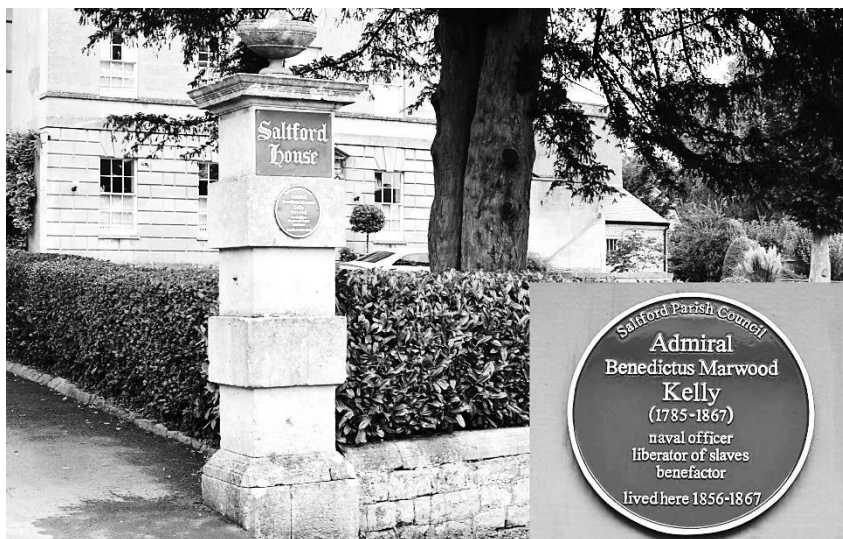


Admiral Benedictus Marwood Kelly photographed in his 70s in the 1850s – at about the time he moved to Saltford.

Benedictus Kelly did many other remarkable things in his naval career and then in the city of London where for example he was one of the first Directors of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (c.1839), Director of two railway companies (the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway and the Bristol and Exeter Railway) and Managing Director of London Bridge station.

Admiral Kelly died aged 82 at Saltford House on 26 September 1867 and was buried at the parish church of the village of Kelly, near

Lifton, West Devon. When he died he left a very large bequest to pay for the building of Kelly College in Tavistock; a school for the sons of naval officers etc. That school was recently renamed Mount Kelly and is renowned for producing many national top flight swimmers including Olympic silver medallist at the Moscow 1980 Olympic games, Sharron Davies.



Footnote: Saltford House is a private residence and is not open to the public. However Admiral Kelly will be a theme for the biennial Saltford Festival in June 2017 as 2017 will be the 150th anniversary of Admiral Kelly's death.

The web page dedicated to Admiral Kelly which carries full details of his remarkable life and his many exploits and the reference sources for the research that revealed his life story is at:

<http://www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk/history/history010.html>

Goodbye to a Friend

On Christmas morning 2016 society member Gillian Rosmé Roberts (née Cante) the wife of Dr Peter Roberts of Durley Grange, Keynsham lost her four year fight with cancer.

Gill, the author of an article in a previous journal, found great enjoyment in researching her family history – she treated this exercise as others might their knitting, and would get the ancestors out whenever she had a spare moment!

The parish records show Cantles to have been living and working in Keynsham since the 1640's. Sadly, there are no male Cantles living currently in the Bristol area and thus the name has died out. Both Gill's grandparents were engaged in local industry. Her paternal grandfather, Albert Cante, was the manager of the Polysulphin Soapworks in Keynsham, and her maternal grandfather, Walter Gully, was a manager at the Golden Valley Paper Mill in Bitton.

It had been Gill's intention to complete an article on the Polysulphin works and her research archive has been passed to her sister, Rosemary Storkey.

Gill was baptized, confirmed and married in the Parish Church of St John the Baptist. On 3rd March 2017 members of the Society joined over four hundred friends, colleagues and family at a memorial service to pay tribute to a remarkable woman.